

Regards sur la population de l'Europe du Sud-Est

Viewpoints on Population in South-East Europe

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· Name to count, count to measure, measure to understand, understand to act. The use of population statistics in Greece

Byron Kotzamanis

The collection of population data is based on some distinct conditions, i.e. inscription of enumerated persons in the civil registers, the place of their presence at census day and the place of their usual residence. These criteria have led to three different concepts of population: Legal, present (de facto) and resident population. However, until 1991, the statistical office process and diffuses census data referring only to present population (data concerning the demographic events are collected and disseminated as well at the incident site and in the place of usual residence).

At national level, the choice for a definition of population rather than another has limited impact on the study of demographic trends. However, at the sub-regional level, problems emerge related to the differences - in terms of number and structures - between de facto and resident population

The purpose of this paper is twofold:

a) To present and comment the differentials between de facto and resident population at sub-regional level in the 1991 and 2001.

b) To analyze the problems associated with the utilization of data using different concepts of population in order to calculate some demographic indices at the sub-national level.

Overview of Greek demographic statistics at national and infranational levels (<1940)

Byron Kotzamanis

This paper provides a overview of the demographic data available in Greece on population and vital statistics at national and sub-national level since 1940. The first objective is to present a detailed overview on the availability of these data (classified according to the administrative division of the country), covering both the population (census, inter-census estimates) and the basic demographic events (births, deaths, marriages). The second objective is to point out to the users some issues and problems related to the time series of these data, especially at sub national level.

Mobility: attempts to evaluate intensity differentials in Greek space

Marie-Noëlle Duquenne, Stamatina Kaklamani

The intensification of daily occupational mobility, regular between current home and secondary residence or related to the arrival of foreign population is a phenomenon more and more observed in Europe. If Greece does not escape this process, it seems nevertheless that the intensity of the labour mobility presents relatively strong differences not only from a region to the other one but also at intraregional scale. The diverse forms of mobility reflect mutations in the organization and the functioning of territories, especially in rural zones polarized by a small - medium urban center whereas the expansion of living space could contribute to a certain economic and consequently demographic revival of these "small" territories or rather geographical and/or socio-cultural territorial entities.

To address these various mutations, it is necessary to proceed to an evaluation of the different forms of mobility and their relative intensity widely conditioned by the spatial scale chosen. The objective of the present work is thus, on the basis of the last census data, to analyze the phenomena of mobility at relatively fine territorial scales (Local Administrative Unit - LAU1) and propose a valuation method of this type of mobility through appropriate indicators. This method takes into account the existence of specific spatial patterns that can affect the measurements of mobility that is the lack of independence between geographical observations as well as variables reflecting the non homogeneity of human behaviors.

The Western Balkans: a Europe demographically different and diverse

• *Byron Kotzamanis, Alain Parant*

The Western Balkans did not differ demographically from the zone extending from the Baltic to the Iberian Peninsula, characterized by higher fertility and mortality compared to the western and northern parts of the European continent.

Despite the effects of the conflicts and crises, mortality rate has decreased everywhere, without, nevertheless, filling the gap that distinguished these countries with the exception of Greece from the most advanced European ones with high life expectancy at birth with the exception of Greece. The trend regarding development of fertility was common everywhere, i.e. fertility decline and delayed child-bearing. With the exception of Kosovo, fertility decline is such that the strict replacement of generations at childbearing age is no longer guaranteed, although there are still considerable differences between the Albanian and Muslim settlement areas (Albania, Kosovo, part of FYROM and Serbia) and the others. Although marriage is always more frequent and early in the Western Balkans than in the other European regions, the trend is, all the same, marked by a decline in intensity and an increase in marriage age. This double trend has been intensified since 1990, accompanied by a divortiality increase.

Finally, the migratory maelstrom, inherent in armed conflicts and crises, for the last 25 years, also brings about its effects, leading the Western Balkans to experiencing a serious demographic crisis : general population decline, with Montenegro and FYROM being the only ones maintaining population growth, and population aging progresses very rapidly like in the rest of Europe.

Post-war fertility in Greece, trends and ruptures

Byron Kotzamanis, Jean-Paul Sardon

Greece is characterized by a delayed demographic transition (started as late as at the end of XIXth century) taking place without interruption until the '30s. For the three first post-war decades, it was considered as a special and atypical case as TFR seemed to ensure population reproduction until the early '80s, when, in the majority of Western European countries this indicator showed a rapid decline and stabilized thereafter largely to under 2.1 children /woman.

However, this relatively long period (from 1955 to 1980) was followed by a collapse of TFR placing Greece in the group of European countries showing the lowest fertility rates. While this indicator is stabilized for a few years at this level, it rose again in the 2000s and again began to decline after 2010, almost simultaneously with the emergence of the economic crisis. In this paper, period and cohort analysis of fertility are conducted based in the study of the evolution of the age-specific fertility rates, mean age of childbearing (all births and by birth order) as well of the parity progression ratio of the cohorts. The conclusions of this analysis are particularly eloquent. Indeed, while in cross-sectional /period analysis for a long time period the situation appears rather "comfortable", the cohort's fertility is rather worrying as the women born among the eve of the Great War and 1985 did not ensure their replacement.

Greece, having neither family policy nor a social security system ensuring a minimum of protection, has undergone a deep crisis, which is likely to continue. If its impact on the fertility tempo is more than obvious, we cannot exclude its influence on total fertility of the younger cohorts. Indeed, this country seems to have settled permanently in a fertility phase well below replacement level, which will ultimately lead to a decrease of total population and an acceleration of its aging.

Recent mortality developments in Greece at national and regional level

• *Konstantinos N. Zafeiris, Anastasia Kostaki, Byron Kotzamanis, Aspasia Tsoni*

The aim of this paper is the examination of the mortality developments in the first years of the 21st century in Greece, at national and sub-national level (UTS1 regions according to the European Classification system). The analysis is based on complete and abridged life tables by sex. Complete life tables were used for the analysis of mortality curves and their temporal changes. Life expectancy at birth and in various ages were also calculated and taken into account. The changes of life expectancy at birth were calculated based on the abridged life tables and a decomposition of these changes followed. At the outset, a fitting procedure was applied on the mortality (q_x) curves of the complete life tables consisting of a modified Heligman-Pollard procedure in combination with three cubic splines. Then, the accident hump was studied. Modal age at death was also used as an estimator for the age at which most of the deaths take place in the old age heap. Finally, the C-family indicators were used as estimators for mortality compression. Results indicate that the ongoing mortality transition was halted in the last years of the study; however, significant gains still exist in life expectancy in comparison with the year 2000. The variability among the populations studied is significant and refers to all mortality elements which were studied.

International migrations in Greece during the last decades: inversion of tendencies and refugees waves •

Byron Kotzamanis, Dimitris Karkanis

Throughout its history, Greece has not ceased to be simultaneously a land of attraction and repulsion, within a much larger group -the Mediterranean world- where migratory ebbs and flows are among the most intense in the world. The 1980s, however, are milestone years, and Greece begins to face a movement of unprecedented scale, resulting in a five-fold increase in the foreign population between 1991 and 2011, largely due to extra-EU immigration.

The 2000s, however, saw a gradual decline in European non-EU inflows and increased inflows from Asia and, more marginally, from Africa. Then, from the 2010s, the country has been going through a deep recession, the most serious one recorded in developed countries for a century. Since 2010 net migration has been reversing and becoming negative (- 250,000 for the five-year period 2011-2015).

Greece is no longer attractive to economic migrants from less developed countries, nor is it to the hundreds of thousands of refugees who flock after 2014. It has turned into a transit country for many of them -mostly those from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan- who wish to arrive in the northern European countries at any cost. The situation is deteriorating after the closing of the "Balkan route" and, despite the decline in arrivals during the past two years; the country is still facing a difficult situation, having to deal with two crises: the economic crisis and the refugee crisis.

Greece: a mosaic of voids and demographic overflows

• *Byron Kotzamanis*

In Greece, the combined play of demographic factors has led to shifts and significant inflections and ruptures since the end of World War II. During this period, total population growth took place to the detriment of the countryside and in the interest of urban areas (especially those of Athens and Thessaloniki), while spatial planning and decentralization policies have totally failed. Thus, a south-west / north-east axis has been gradually formed which, from now on, concentrates population and economic activities, whereas the mountains and the north and the center of the mainland have been gradually emptied with the exception of some rural hubs which, benefiting from being situated relatively close to an urban center and /or a tourist area, managed to maintain their population. The Settlement growth between 1951 and 2011 reveals 3 types of regions developments: i) the two metropolitan areas and a limited number of agglomerations, ii) a still living countryside thanks to the liveliness of small towns but, more and more, surrounded by communes that lose dynamism and iii) a countryside with towns thinly populated by elderly persons.

The demographic contribution of foreign immigration: methodological issues

• *Michèle Tribalat*

The estimation of the demographic contribution of foreign immigration tries to answer the following question: what would have been the demographic course of events in a country in the absence of foreign immigration over a certain period of time? The demographic contribution of foreign immigration during a certain period of time refers not to actual individuals but to the hypothetical population entirely due to foreign immigration. It differs in that from the population of foreign origin. It can be estimated in a retrospective or a prospective way. The demographic contribution of foreign immigration is the sum of the immigrants entered since the starting point and still there at the end of the period, and their offspring who would not have been there in the absence of foreign immigration. As far as I know, few contemporary demographers have tried to estimate this contribution by migratory waves, making a clear distinction between different immigration periods. But it has been the case in countries of immigration like US, Canada and France. This paper discusses different methodologies to estimate the contribution of past or future immigration based on a case study approach in those three countries and in the EU. In all cases, the length of the reference period and the availability of more or less detailed data play a key role in the question wordings and methodological choices.

Studying internal residential mobility with IPUMS census microdata •

Claire Kersuzan, Christophe Bergouignan

This paper evaluates the ability of census data disseminated by the Integrated Public Use of Microdata Series (IPUMS) to measure internal migrations within the two Balkans countries (Greece and Romania) involved in this program. This assessment is, first of all, based on general comments about quality and relevance of census data (place of current residence, place of birth, place of prior residence and/or date of last move), to measure internal migration. In this purpose, French data, more experienced by the authors, give large guidelines for this assessment, in terms of potential biases and in terms of ways to estimate their consequences. This assessment is also based on specific ways used by the two Balkan countries to take into account internal migrations with census data (type of questions - different between Greece and Romania -, changes in administrative and statistical districts, organisation of data collection, especially in Greece). Finally, this assessment focuses on effective data provided by the two statistical offices to the IPUMS project, particularly in terms of geographical accuracy. Despite numerous limitations, census micro-data disseminated by the IPUMS project, allow to study internal migrations in Greece and Romania, more for an exploratory analysis of internal migration patterns than to estimate their contribution to local populations dynamics. These limitations seem to affect more Romanian data than Hellenic data that allow to build more easily geographical clusters linked to typical internal migration patterns

Spatial dynamics in the Albanian regions. Demographic Statistics Development Program

• *Philippe Wanner, Mathias Lerch, Emira Galanxhi*

Albania has experienced major demographic changes since 1991, the year the first multiparty elections were held. Roughly one-fifth of the population has emigrated, with the main destinations being neighboring Italy and Greece. This international migration has occurred simultaneously with large-scale internal migration from the mountainous peripheral regions to the cities (mainly Tirana) and main ports. Internal migration has not only contributed to shaping the demographic structure of Albania and its prefectures, but the resulting urbanization has also changed Albanians' lifestyles and reproductive behavior.

The economic and political transition of the 1990s and the shift to a market economy have made the collection of detailed demographic statistics vital. Although Albania has gradually developed a system of population data collection, it is only partly suited to the requirements of planning.

Theoretical implications of the scale of analysis and of the population proportion studied on spatial regrouping measures

Aurélien Dasre

A number of statistical indicators can be used to measure the spatial segregation of populations. Two feature prominently in the literature: Duncan's index of dissimilarity and Theil's index of entropy.

A micro-simulation model was used to test the possible influence of the relative size of the study group on these two indices. The results show that, all other things being equal, entropy shows higher values when the study group represents almost 50%. That property therefore tends to limit the use of the entropy index in comparative studies. Conversely, the values for dissimilarity are not influenced by the relative size of the study group.

The presentation goes on to propose a method for breaking down the dissimilarity index so that it can be used to quantify the influence of different geographical scales on the intensity of clustering calculated without differentiating between scales. Applied to data for the Athens region, this methodology made it possible to show that whereas individuals with a low educational level cluster on a broad geographical scale (prefectures), individuals with the highest educational level cluster at two distinct geographical levels: prefectures and municipalities. The conclusions drawn from this empirical example therefore encourage the use of an approach that combines different geographical scales in any study of the spatial clustering of populations.

Transition of age structure in the Balkans

•*Maria Carella, Alain Parant*

The demographic window identifies the period during which countries can maximize the benefits of the favourable evolution of the age structure of the population. The work aims to analyze the phenomenon of demographic window in the Balkan countries during the period 1950-2015, with an extension in 2100, based its discussion on the most common approaches.

The first part is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the process of transition and transformation of the age structure of the population in these countries over the past 65 years. The second part tries to estimate, for each country, the opening and closing of the demographic window periods. The proposed typology of countries by the duration, intensity and completion date of their demographic windows based on this identification is linked to the United Nations 1950-2015 estimates and 2015-2100 projections (the 2015 Revision), arbitrarily choosing the high and low variants of the projections to give the widest possible measure of their uncertainty.

The challenge of population ageing in the Balkans

Khalid Eljim, Alain Parant

As a consequence of widespread and pronounced fertility decline, increasing life expectancy and generally negative net migration, the populations of the Balkan countries are ageing rapidly, and this process will accelerate over the coming decades.

For Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, a study was conducted to assess the impact of demographic ageing alone (specific effect) on these countries' social welfare systems and, above all, their pension systems.

The simulations performed using data from the United Nations Population Prospects (2015 revision) show that the countries concerned will need to substantially increase workers' pension contributions if the pensions of the growing elderly population are to be maintained at acceptable levels. This is not the only available option, but may be among those least problematic to implement. While the simulations confirm that the effects of ageing will be least dramatic in Serbia and Montenegro, they also show that Albania and FYROM may very soon find themselves in an extremely difficult situation, with the other countries rapidly following suit.

Population aging in Turkey: regional disparities, trends and prospects

• *Ceren Inan*

In Turkey, national demographic trends mask a strong spatial heterogeneity between eastern and western parts of the country; particularly in terms of fertility and mobility of persons. Any study of the evolution of Turkey's population therefore requires a regional approach and a regional decomposition of the trends at work. This study investigates the demographic aging of Turkey over the period 2010-2060 through a regional approach based on the Nuts 1 classification of Eurostat.

For all regions, our population projections show a future of strong demographic aging, with important regional disparities. The phenomenon is expected to affect eastern regions less than the western regions (most particularly Istanbul) which owe their younger age structures to immigration from eastern regions over the 1980-2010 period.

However, a characteristic of interregional migratory movements in Turkey is that they are accompanied by maintaining links with the region of origin and induce very frequent return migrations. If these links weaken regions in the East may experience an important population aging. The most extreme aging scenario for eastern regional populations will be that of a return migration undertaken only by aging adults and by the elderly.

Adverse sex ratio at birth in Southeast Europe

ChristopheZ. Guilmoto

Gender imbalances at birth have been studied for a long time in Asia and the cases of China and India already examined in great detail. In Eastern Europe, a surplus of male births has also been observed since 1991 in countries of the South Caucasus. This paper summarizes the state of statistical knowledge on the Western Balkans. It highlights sustained sex imbalances at birth and surplus male births in a number of countries located next to Albania. We review the situation in various countries from the former Yugoslavia as well as Albania's case. To do this, we use both birth registration data and census age and sex distributions. Additional qualitative studies are also used.

The gender ratio of births is excessively high in Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro according to birth registration data, while the imbalance is less pronounced in Macedonia (probably due to its population's diversity). Census figures, when available, tend to confirm the surplus of male births identified by marital status. There is a well-established imbalance and qualitative research has shown that it is linked to the desire to have boys and the use of sex-selective abortions. This son preference is deeply rooted in family patrilineal systems typical of this part of Europe, and this gender bias has historically been expressed by various demographic phenomena such as excess female mortality in childhood, fertility preferences according to the sex composition of the family, and prenatal selection. This analysis draws the outlines of an Albanian zone of influence that differs from the rest of the Western Balkans. In the other republics of the former Yugoslavia, increases in birth masculinity are indeed more modest and ephemeral, but they often correspond to important years of the conflict of the 1990s.

Crises and conflicts of the 1990s and 2000s in the Balkans and changes in the ethnic structure of their population

Goran Penev

At the end of the 20th century, events without precedent in the post Second World War Europe took place in the Balkans. Wars that resulted in millions of refugees, collapse of political regimes, and changes of economic systems have all directly altered demographic processes and structures, including the ethnic structure.

The change of the size of ethnic groups depends on their births, deaths, and net migration, but also on changes in the declaration of ethnic affiliation, as well as name changes of existing ethnic groups, and emergence of new ones. Despite notable progress in the statistical coverage of the ethnic structure of the region's populations, it is still impossible to give a complete ethnic profile of the Balkans. According to the available results of various censuses conducted in the region during the 1990s and 2000s, the ethnic composition varies greatly from country to country. In Croatia, homogenization is observed. In Macedonia, Albania, Greece, and Montenegro, certain heterogeneity, real or more or less virtual, can be observed. Bosnia- Herzegovina and Serbia are special cases: even though their respective ethnic structures seem globally highly heterogeneous, the ethnic structures of entities or provinces that constitute the two countries are far more homogeneous today than they were before 1991.

Homogamy: recent trends in the countries of the former Yugoslavia

• *Snjezana Mrdjen*

The analysis of the nuptiality on the territory of former Yugoslavia from 1970 to 2014 shows a strong decline in the proportion of marriages (first marriages and remarriages) concluded between members of different ethnic groups. Started in 1990 (the year marking the country's political burst) the decline covers all former republics and autonomous provinces of Yugoslavia, with the exception of Montenegro, until 2005.

While Vojvodina, despite the downward trend, still has about 19% of mixed marriages, in Kosovo there is no more than a total of 5 % of them, whereas the biggest change has been reached in Croatia where the share of interethnic marriages fell from 19% to 9%, in relation to a very strong change of the population's ethnic structure and a behavior change of the Croatian majority

In general, if the behaviour of men and women with regard to intermarriage are very close, endogamy however is more pronounced among women. It is in Montenegro that the disparity of endogamy rates by sex is the most important, but it is the Albanian and Muslim/Bosnian women (after 1990) who are the most endogamous on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Internal migration and urbanization in Albania: from the coerced regional balance to the overwhelming metropolitan area

Alain Jarne, Martin Schuler

The deep transformation of the Albanian space and society following the opening in 1991 is characterized by the strong development of the Tirana-Durres metropolitan area and the loss of vitality of almost all of the rest of the country besides the Southern coast area. In the Balkan context, the recent population dynamics in Albania shows now a very specific development after half a century of singular demographic trends: the birth rate has been very high and the mortality rate low. In addition, the restrictive territorial development policy applied by the communist government had almost frozen international migration and strictly controlled the internal migration, especially to urban places. Thus, Albania had entered in the 21st century with a population which had almost tripled since the war, but still was rural in its majority. The first census in post-communist Albania carried out in 2001 allows the understanding of the subsequent dramatic changes after the country's openness: sudden rupture causing a mass exodus to the cities (Tirana in particular) and to neighbouring countries (Greece and Italy) and a late but significant decline in the birth rate. The second census (2011) highlights the more durable trends and thus permits an interpretation on the longer-term prospects: metropolisation the Tirana-Durres area, substantial losses in most other cities, and a wide rural decline. This profound demographic but also social and economic differentiation of the regional pattern in Albania are major issues that the country has to face. The adoption of a significant territorial reform by the Parliament is one of the possible political answers. By focusing on regional and urban specificities, but also by grouping the results by agglomerations and communal types, our contribution allows to present some new insights on the demographic development during the recent periods in Albania.

The Croatian Population: Long Term Trends and Prospects

· Snjezana Mrdjen

In the beginning of the 1980s demographic transition was finished in Croatia. Demographic changes had begun already in the sixties - declining birth rates, rural exodus and emigrations to foreign countries - resulted in a general fall in the number of population, depopulation of the major parts of Croatian territory and strong concentration of population in only some major cities. In the territories most affected by these changes this process only grew stronger and became more visible due to the 1991-1995 war which resulted in massive departures leading to the desertification of entire areas of the territory.

The first part of this work consists of the analysis of the past demographic evolution (population growth, natural increase, net migration, ageing and density) of Croatian space according to a division of towns/municipalities. The second part is a typology of regions according their demographic vitality with emphasis on the most extreme situations.

In producing this work the data used come from Central Statistics Office of Croatia (Croatstat) as well as those from censuses and vital statistics. The analysis of these data posed problems related to the number of towns/ municipalities and a constant demarcation as well as comparable definitions of whole population (including or no individuals with more than a year long living in foreign countries), the reason why the territories analysis of demographic typology refers only to the data of three last censuses (1991, 2001, 2011).

Population in the islands of Greece •

Pierre Sintès

Long characterized by marginalisation in favour of the continent, fuelling the mass exodus of their populations, the Greek islands now seem to be benefiting from their past emigration, which puts them in a better position for coping with new human behaviors in the globalised world.

The Greek islands can be described as undergoing disenclavement. The population increase between the census of 1981 and 2001 almost caught up the losses suffered since the Second World War. However, population growth varies considerably between the southern Aegean islands, which have seen a large total increase, and the northern Aegean islands, with below-average growth. Overall, the average population density in the islands has increased, contrasting with the declines in previous decades.

The islands and their societies are now profoundly influenced by their new function as "pleasure peripheries". This contributes considerably to their permanent or seasonal attraction for many tourists, new residents and economic migrants, the latter often from the Balkans.

The influx of migrants - working and retired foreigners, returning Greek émigrés, Greeks with island holiday homes - is contributing to the islands' economic growth, but their presence is putting pressure on the landscape and raises the issue of the sustainability of this process.

The new Balkans face political post modernity •
Slobodan Milacic

This is an overview of the Balkans in transition to a new destiny as 'democratic states of law'. Over the same populations as before the 1989 events, new regimes engage in a political restructuring of their respective sovereign states in the direction of democratic transition or consolidation. These new states, all eager to be integrated into the European Union, continue to face many challenges: weakness regarding application of the rule of law, 'state capture' and political polarization that hinder the pursuit of basic reforms, a bridled media, and emergent civil societies that cannot play their role as a counterweight, keeping in mind ethno-nationalist tendencies that often undermine sovereignty and the development of a strong state, as well as a delicate balance between the minorities' rights and national cohesion (Kosovo, FYROM, Bosnia and Herzegovina), the painstaking quest of national identity (FYROM), limited sovereignty (Kosovo), or the absence of a functional state speaking with one voice (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The 'conjunction' of legal freedom and political democracy in the Balkans gives rise to a double paradox. For the countries in question, on the one hand, the creation of a democratized region and its integration into the new international context implies the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union, an integration that presupposes the transfer of elements of national sovereignty from candidate countries while the majority of them are still currently in a process of state formation and consolidation. The European Union, on the other hand, is assisting in the formation of those states whose competences it should one day reclaim.

**The western Balkans and their European integration •
Jean-François Drevet**

Having learned the lessons of their impotence during the 1990s wars, Member States as well as Community institutions deemed necessary to open up a European perspective to the Western Balkans countries, despite their territorial fragmentation, as soon as the accession criteria would be fulfilled. In 2000, by qualifying them as "potential candidates", Commission President Romano Prodi wanted to prevent their accession perspective from being subsequently challenged, as it is the case with some Eastern Partnership countries.

As a result of Iceland's withdrawal and Turkey's drift towards dictatorship, the accession process now focuses on the Western Balkans, with two countries under negotiation, Montenegro and Serbia, pending the others countries which still lack the administrative capacity to tackle the many obligations of accession. Moreover, their transition to market economy is long and difficult: their standards of living remain low and they suffer from very high unemployment rates. Their political life is sometimes chaotic and still hampered by the persistence of ethnic tensions.

However, thanks to accession, the cycle initiated at the beginning of the 20th century with the collapse of the Ottoman and then Austro-Hungarian empires, which led the Western Balkans into a process of successive bursts, will close. The cultural, social and economic backwardness which had favoured the emergence of a nationalism less and less compatible with multiethnic constructions imposed from above will end. For the European Union, the aim is to close the gap and finally contribute to the establishment of lasting stability in this part of the world.

Water management in a context of uneven population distribution

Alexandre Taithe

While not the only factor in water management, the urban/rural ratio is one of the most important. Agricultural use of water is an essential determinant of water policies. Demographics underlie complex equalisation payments between rural and urban areas, implemented through differentiated prices for water.

In the Balkans, as elsewhere, the use of water for agriculture has acquired a strategic dimension domestically, with high urban unemployment frequently encouraging national governments to favour ambitious agricultural policies aimed at keeping the rural population on the land and preserving political and social stability. Energy policy (particularly relating to hydroelectricity) follows a similar logic.

Water prices factor in variations in population density. Without financial transfers between users, the provision of water and sanitation to sparsely populated areas would be unaffordable for residents. However, as the Balkan countries integrate into the European Union, they will have to comply with wastewater collection and treatment standards, the cost of which could cause water rates to double over the next 15-20 years (which is what happened in France between 1990 and 2006). What impact will that have on the equalisation payments between different regions of each country, when populous regions will better offset investment and operating costs?

The route water takes from upstream to downstream is similarly accompanied by many equalization payments directly and indirectly linked to population density, with lower water prices compensating for the negative impact of a nearby dam or of residual water pollution from a city upstream.