

NEWS AND COMMENTS

DEMOGRAPHY IN EUROPE – ON THE BASIS OF THE DATA OF THE EPC CONFERENCE 2008

The biennial European Population Conference (EPC) of the European Association for Population Studies was held 9–12 July 2008, in Barcelona. Founded twenty five years earlier, in 1983 (as successor of other organizations) it is the most important organization of the demographers. The biennial EPC conferences are reckoned as the most prestigious events where lectures can be held and posters can be presented only after a profound professional clarification. In Barcelona the more than one thousand participants on one hundred sessions could listen to more than four hundred presentations, the number of the posters was around 250.

Here we present in an irregular report or rather in a brief sociological analysis, from which countries the active participants of the conference (the session chairs and discussants) came from, and which countries, country groups they examined in their presentations. We hope that the results thus presented will provide insight into the present situation of demography in Europe.

The presented data are taken from a database, which contains the role of participant (for example: presenter), the country of origin, the institution and where it is seated, and the examined country, country group. The source of this database is a booklet containing the conference program and abstracts, which data might differ occasionally from the actual events (presentations could be cancelled, in some cases the examined country could change compared to what was demonstrated in the abstract etc.). In case of presentations with multiple authors it is always the author indicated at the first place whose data get into the database, and from the authors side we always took the indicated institution for the sending institution.

Especially in case of migration studies it was difficult to establish which should be the examined country, whether the country of origin and/or the host country should be registered in the database. It generated no serious problem in practice, as in almost all cases it was easy to decide what the subject of the examination is. For example, in the presentation “The demographic behaviour of second generation Turkish, Serbian and Italian immigrants in Germany” the examined country is Germany, while in the presentation “The effects of the emigration on the Albanian labour market” it is Albania.

In case of essays comparing two states indeed (for example: “Why the Italians consider their health state worth than the French”) both examined countries were put into the database. The studies examining more than two countries are termed as a “multinational comparison”, and in this category we differentiated according to the comparison, whether it covers only European, Asian, etc. states, or it refers to continents. In some cases (for example in strictly theoretical presentations) examined countries could not be named.

Let’s review first what countries the lecturers come from talking at the conference. The 96.5% of the 427 presentations were related to countries, that is the proportion of theoretical presentations is negligible. Examining the countries it is striking that demography in Europe is typically science of the nation-state. In the majority of the presenta-

tions, in almost four fifths of them (72.8%), the presenters were talking about a single country.

About the 8% of the presentations compared two countries, while “real” international investigation, where data of at least three countries were compared, appeared in 15.7% of the presentations. Most of these (9.8% of all presentations) examined exclusively European countries, while only 5.9% were international comparisons covering at least three countries, that dealt with state(s) outside Europe.

According to the presentations referring to the same country Italy leads the list of countries (41 presentations), after it fairly lagging comes Spain (27 presentations), the United Kingdom (21) and France (19).

There were six presentations on Hungary, which was enough only to take the sixteenth place on the countries’ list, while considering the members of the EU only, it took the tenth place. Among the newly joined states, behind Poland (9) and Romania (7) Hungary holds the third place concerning the number of presentations.

Out of the 27 member states of the European Union 24 were analysed in a separate presentation, only Cyprus, Luxemburg and Slovakia were exceptions.

In the case of the European areas outside the European Union almost all states were represented by separate presentations, but there were more exceptions, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia from the Balkans, and European members of the former Soviet Union, such as Ukraine and some Caucasian republics were not represented either.

Out of the countries outside Europe at least five presentations dealt with the USA (14), India (10), Canada (7) and Australia (5). Beyond them several dozens of extra-European countries were analysed at the conference in 1–4 presentations. In connection to countries outside Europe the role of scientific organizations is striking. On the one hand there were strikingly few presentations about Arabic and Black Africa, though these territories may have crucial role concerning the demographic future of Europe. These states are underrepresented also because this area has a well-functioning regional demographic society (AUPS with its center in Dakar). Similar, but converse is the relationship concerning Asia, the serious European presence of these countries obviously can change when the Asian Population Association, “being in the phase of birth” for a long time, will successfully establish itself.

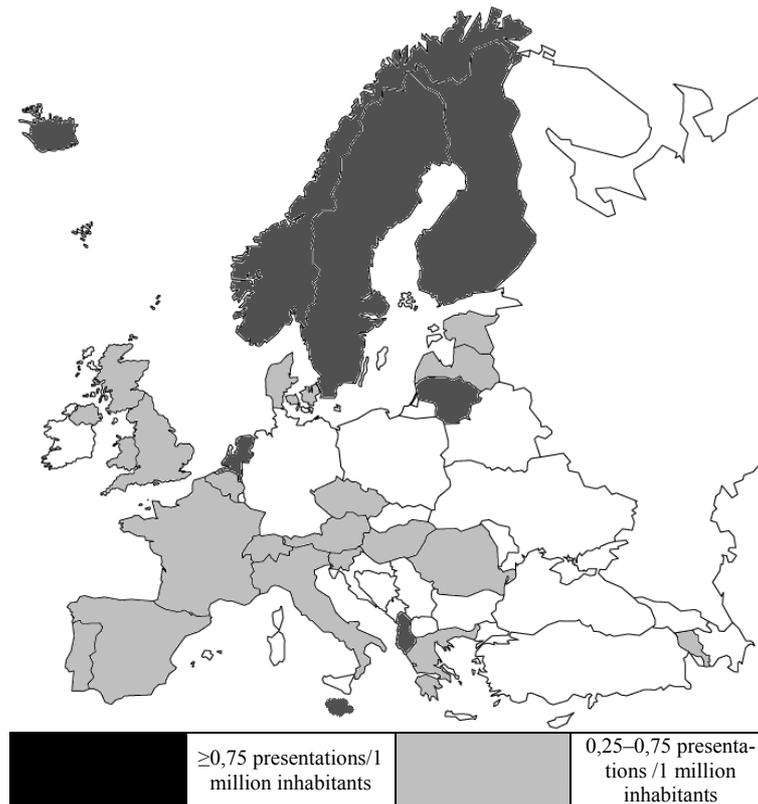
In the following we present a weighted order of the examined countries, also including those presentations, which compared two countries, “as half ones”. (In brackets we indicate only the order of the single presentations about the given countries. The difference is not considerable.)

Table 1
Weighted order of the examined countries

1. Italy (1)
2. Spain (2)
3. Great-Britain (3)
4. France (4)
5. Netherlands (5)
6. Germany (6)
7. The United States (7)
8. Sweden (9)
9. Russia (8)
10. India (10)
16. Hungary (16)

A good demographer has to take into consideration that the individual countries differ largely in population size. To filter out the distorting effect resulting from the size of the population we produced a variable indicating “presentation-frequency”. On the map below we marked the countries with dark grey where at least 0.75 lecture can be related to one million inhabitants and highlighted with light grey the countries where the presentation per one million inhabitants coefficient reaches 0.25. A strikingly large number of presentations compared to the number of inhabitants can be observed concerning North European states. Among the reasons – except the traditions – we probably have to mention the extensive registry databases characteristic for these states which are accessible for researchers as well, creating perfect opportunity for demographic analysis and thus attracting researchers coming from different parts of the world. Albania’s better position probably can be explained by the special population development in European relations the country is characterized by very high fertility and migration.

As opposed to Albania some other states of the Balkan, and former members of the Soviet Union are underrepresented. Compared to the proportion of the population very few presentations dealt with this area. Similar situation can be observed concerning Germany and Poland – there were fewer presentations about these countries than the demographic significance of these states would indicate.



Map 1

*Number of presentations per one million inhabitants in Europe
(in countries which presentations were dealing with)*

Of course, the examined, introduced countries differ a lot from those where the researchers work. On the one hand countries in the periphery (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Armenia etc.) can be characterised by the fact that studies about these countries are written elsewhere. On the other hand there are countries, where considerable part of the researchers examine the demographic situation of other states or carrying international comparative examinations (United Kingdom, Germany, Austria etc.) Between these two types inward looking countries can be found where the researchers almost exclusively deal with their own countries, while at the same time researchers living elsewhere scarcely deal with these countries. To this latter group belongs among others – Italy and Turkey – Hungary as well.

Before we do a more detailed grouping, it is worth presenting the “top list”. Italy is ahead concerning the workplace of authors (with 51 authors residing there), but its

advantage is not so great over the runner-up United Kingdom (45) and the United States (44) holding the third place. Germany is the fourth, while the Netherlands and Spain compete for the fifth place. In these six states more than half (54.8%) of the presenters of the conference work. In the first ten there are yet France, Poland Austria and Russia. Hungary shares the 16–20. places with the Czech Republic, Turkey Australia and Mexico.

Similarly to the authors the session chairs also contributed to the representation of given countries. For this reason here we also present the order in which we take into consideration the authors and the session chairs as well.

Table 2
*Contracted order of the authors and session chairs.
In brackets order of the authors only*

1. Italy (1)
2. Great Britain (2)
3. The United States (3)
4. Spain (5–6)
5. Germany (4)
6. Netherlands (5–6)
7. France (7)
8. Poland (8)
9. Austria (9)
10. Belgium (12)
14. Hungary

The workplace of the authors and the session chairs can be grouped not only by countries but by types of institutions as well. At first glance it might seem surprising that only 22% of the presenters work in institutions for demographic studies. The rate of those working in research institutions but not of demographic type is 7%. In addition to this there are some 5% working in offices of national statistics (characteristically that of North-European states), and more than 2% in other institutions of civil service (such as ministries). Not counting some other smaller groups (associates of international organizations etc.) it can be stated that – according to the academic traditions of most of the sending countries – about 63% of the authors of the conference work at universities, colleges.

The weight of institutes for demographic studies within the science is indicated somewhat better by the fact that among the session chairs the rate of researchers at demographic institutes is already 29% and also by the aspect that these institutes sent the largest contingent of presentations. For this reason it is worth examining separately the weight of the largest demographic workshops¹, and their areas of attraction.

¹ The University of Barcelona should belong to this list as well, which though – being the host of this conference – we did not take into consideration.

Table 3
Main characteristics of the most important institutes for demographic studies

| Name | Place | Presentations | | Within this examin- ing not only its „own” country (%) | Session leading | |
|-----------|----------|---------------|----------|--|-----------------|----------|
| | | number | rate (%) | | number | rate (%) |
| INED | Paris | 23 | 5.4 | 39 | 8 | 8.2 |
| MPIDR | Rostock | 22 | 5.2 | 77 | 6 | 6.1 |
| NIDI | Hague | 15 | 3.5 | 47 | 7 | 7.1 |
| LSE | London | 14 | 3.3 | 57 | 2 | 2.0 |
| WID | Wien | 10 | 2.3 | 70 | 3 | 3.1 |
| WSE | Warsaw | 6 | 1.4 | 17 | 1 | 1.0 |
| Hacapette | Istanbul | 5 | 1.2 | 0 | 1 | 1.0 |

It is evident that there are five really significant European institutions, as about one fifth of the presentations were made by researchers working there and more than quarter of the session leaders were affiliated with them. Four out of these five institutions are classical institutes of demographic research (Paris, Rostock, Hague and Wien) and one (London) is also an educational and scientific one. The larger institutes for demographic studies are of international character, at some of these places even the working language is English, not the national language. Most of the presentations made by the researchers from institutes in Rostock, Wien and London had no relation to the country where the institute is situated. Evidently the Max Planck Institute in Rostock is the most internationalised one, more than four fifth of the researchers were not dealing with Germany. The one in Istanbul and the smaller places of research that are missing from the chart typically can be considered as national institutions.

Striking is the absence of the significant Italian institutes. Typically one or two presenters arrived from Italy's many smaller scientific centres and universities, similarly to those from Great Britain, Spain and partly from Scandinavia. Concerning Italy they were for example from Bari, Bologna, Genova, Firenze, Milan, Messina, Napoli, Padova, Rome and Sassari, as opposed to them, from such "centralized" countries as France, Austria or even Hungary, all the presenters came from the capital city. Worth using that all the three Romanian presenters arrived from Cluj-Napoca. This difference of spatial distribution ruraly connection with the academic organizations of the states and with the internal situation of demography within the individual countries.

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