

## PREFACE

Three years have passed since the researchers of the Demographic Research Institute at the HCSO wrote and published the previous demographic portrait of Hungary, which discussed the demographic processes characterizing the country. The aim of the 2012 issue is similar: to offer basic knowledge and accurate interpretations supported by data and based on solid scientific analyses for the benefit of all interested in the subject and to do it in a concise and easily understandable way.

Our present volume is basically characterized by continuity, i.e., it relies on the previous one preserving its subject matter and structure but it also has considerable novelties. The volume similarly consists of 12 chapters covering all major fields of demography, i.e., fertility, nuptiality, mortality, ageing, and migration. The individual articles dealing with these topics concentrate on introducing and interpreting the fundamental processes of the Hungarian society. Others like those dealing with family policy or retirement aim at introducing the current state of the relevant institutional

system. Last but not least, we do not omit population projection, either, which is probably the most popular and most debated issue of demography.

The structure of the individual articles is uniform this time, too, as far as it is made possible by the limitations posed by the subject and the available data. All topics are discussed in international comparison as we are convinced that this perspective is indispensable for the better understanding of Hungarian phenomena. We find it especially important to compare the Hungarian results not only with those in the Western European countries but also with those of the former socialist ones. Although we are interested in current processes (i.e., those of the previous two or three years), it is often indispensable to refer to earlier developments as well, mostly to the period beginning with 1989–90. Tendencies of still earlier periods are mentioned only in certain special cases.

The continuity of topics and perspective raises, however, the problem of whether our previous volume of 2009 is known to the Reader or not. If we postulate previous knowledge, it may be enough to concentrate on the developments of the previous five years. If, however, we want the present volume to be an independent reading in itself, we may often need to repeat ourselves. As we decided for the second option thinking that the volume should be an autonomous summary, several articles contain the extended versions of tables, trends, and interpretations present also in the previous book. At the same time, every chapter contains a substantial amount of new information and interpretations.

There are two major new approaches that were still missing in the 2009 issue. The first one is the emphasis on regional

differences within the country, aided by maps for an easier understanding.

The second one is the novel context of the recession in world economy since 2008. Every author in the volume tried to take this unique circumstance into consideration and examined its impact on demographic processes.

Our old principle remaining unchanged, we do not back our every statement by inserting technical references and do not enumerate all relevant theories and methods. We do think that they would rather hinder comprehension in a volume issued for the general public. Those interested in the Hungarian situation more deeply can find further information under the headings References and Further Readings at the end of each article. References and Further Readings do not aim to offer a comprehensive overview of the given topic, but are more limited in their scope: they provide insight into the Hungarian demographic situation through English-language literature. Hungarian articles, books are referred to only if they are used as the sources of data and tables. The English Home Page of the DRI ([www.demografia.hu/en](http://www.demografia.hu/en)) may be also used for providing further information. If the Reader needs more detailed information on a given topic researchers of the DRI can be also contacted.

This volume serves, namely, to make demographic issues widely available.

Similarly to the previous volume, not only the objective processes, events and relations are revealed but also their subjective aspect, i.e., the way the people concerned think about these issues, as well as their motives and values.

Although we analyse demographic processes mostly on the basis of time series and statistical correlations, we do not intend

to pour data on the readers. The interested public can find them in the Demographic Yearbook (*Demográfiai évkönyv*) published by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO). The present volume shows merely the most important trends, illustrated mostly by diagrams.

As it is common in similar volumes, the content of the individual chapters is summed up at the beginning of each chapter under the heading Major Findings.

Demography can be considered a 'lucky discipline' of empirical social science as it can rely on a huge number of data, and the events it deals with are relatively standardized and can be easily interpreted in international comparison. For our present purposes we used three basic types of sources that are different in nature. As regards births, marriages, divorces, and deaths we relied on the vital statistics regularly produced and published by the HCSO. The second important source was the census taken every ten years. Unfortunately, the results of the 2011 census are not available yet. Waiting for them would have considerably postponed the publication of the present volume and we could not have fulfilled our promise to publish a similar publication every three years. Our third source is the survey Turning Points of the Life Course by the Demographic Research Institute of the HCSO. This project of data collection and research enables us to make a dynamic analysis by following a certain group of people and taking a survey of the changes in their living conditions and values every three or four years. This project is part of the international Generations and Gender Program (GGP) in the framework of which the major demographic phenomena are studied in several European countries using the same methodology. Further sources were used as well, e.g., the European Social

Survey the findings of which can be met with in several chapters. All references are, naturally, duly indicated.

We hope that the present publication will meet the demands of the representatives of several fields and professions. It can be useful for decision makers in socio-political matters, researchers, university professors,

students, the press, and, hopefully, for the general public interested in population issues.

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