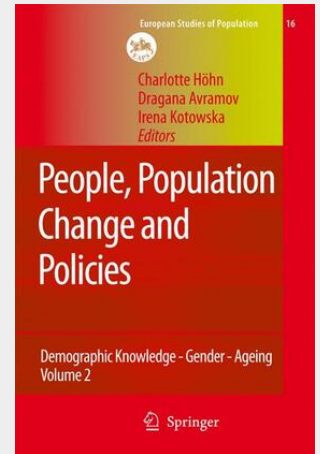


People, Population Change and Policies

Lessons from the Population Policy Acceptance Study Vol. 2: Demographic Knowledge - Gender - Ageing

European countries, including the DIALOG countries, have faced a major demographic change and transition in the last thirty years. They are experiencing long-term downward trends in fertility, leading to demographic ageing. Fertility rates are now below replacement level in nearly all countries. As a result, natural population growth rates are starting to decline, or population sizes are falling outright. At the same time, the proportion of elderly dependants continues to grow while the working-age population declines in absolute and relative terms (see Kontula and Miettinen 2005). Moreover, net immigration, which potentially could offset declines in working-age population, remains generally low in most European countries (Grant et al. 2004). There are a great number of societal problems that arise from this demographic transition. The International Monetary Fund (2004) argues that the impact of incoming demographic changes on economical growth could be substantial. The historic association between demographic and macro-economic variables suggests that the projected increase in elderly dependency ratios and the projected decline in the share of the working-age population could result in slower per capita GDP growth, and lower saving and investment (IMF 2004, 147). For example, the estimates suggest that demographic change could reduce annual real per capita GDP growth in 11 advanced countries by an average of 1/2 percentage point by 2050, i. e., growth would be 1/2 percentage point lower than if the demographic structure had remained the same as in 2000 (IMF 2004, 147).

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