



EUROPEAN CONVERGENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH



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European convergence has many faces. This reflection focuses on the impact of the enlargement process on social research, in particular demography, including:

- Developing the human and social capital of researchers
- Developing new knowledge
- Developing channels of communication between research, policy making and civil society

Research is always at the forefront of societal change and science has no borders. Therefore, European co-operation in the field of demography already had an established history prior to EU enlargement. An important milestone in cementing scientific contacts between demographers from the CESEE and other European countries was the European Association for Population Studies (EAPS), which was formally established on March 31, 1983 on the initiatives of Dirk van de Kaa and Guillaume Wunsch who, following the idea of Günther Beyer, sought to institutionally strengthen collaboration on population studies in Europe.

Jerzy Z. Holzer, Director of the Institute of Statistics and Demography, was one of the founding fathers of EAPS. 30 scholars from 21 European countries, including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Romania signed up to the project. Since 1987, a regular EAPS European Population Conference has

been organized and researchers from the CESEE have increasingly shared their research outcomes with other colleagues. This collaboration, alongside productive scientific partnerships, enabled Polish researchers to participate in international projects and to undertake scientific visits to the leading demographic institutions. Moreover, Polish demographers contributed markedly to the EAPS activities. Between 1995 and 2008, Janina Józwiak was a member of the EAPS Council, including five years as President and four years as Deputy President. In 1997 and in 2003, Poland also organized the European Population Conference that gathers demographers from within and outside Europe to discuss contemporary problems and issues in demographic research. In particular, the 2003 Conference entitled "Populations of Central and Eastern Europe: Challenges and Opportunities" made it possible to disseminate knowledge about population change in this region of Europe just before the 2004 EU enlargement.

EU accession broadened the opportunities for international cooperation in demographic research, including technical training and the development and implementation of research projects. This facilitated the development of human and social capital among researchers, as well as stimulating the creation of new knowledge.



In the area of developing human capital in research on population issues, one of the initiatives that became possible in an enlarged Europe was the establishment of the European Doctoral School of Demography. The EDSD was founded in 2005 on the initiative of the European Association for Population Studies (EAPS). It currently receives the support of 12 universities (Amsterdam, Groningen, Lund, Roma, Rostock, Tallinn, Southampton, Southern Denmark, the Catholic university of Louvain-la-Neuve, the Warsaw School of Economics, the London School of Economics, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) and five research institutions (The Center for Demographic Studies CED in Barcelona, The French Institute for Demographic Studies or INED, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, The National Demographic Institute of the Netherlands. NIDI, Vienna Institute of Demography). The EDSD is open to students of all nationalities. Its participants develop an extensive network of contacts with established researchers from throughout Europe. Moreover, through Erasmus programmes and other similar initiatives, students and researchers from the new member states also have an opportunity to study and develop their academic abilities in universities and research institutes around Europe. Young researchers summarise their experience with EDSD in the following way:

"Participation in the European Doctoral School of Demography (EDSD) had an enormous impact on my professional life. First of all, thanks to the EDSD I had an unique opportunity to acquire knowledge in advanced methods in demography and statistics which I could not have obtained in my country. Also, being in the stimulating environment of the scientific institutions (MPIDR and INED) as well as meeting many prominent lecturers with an extensive experience in the field of demographic and social research broadened my horizons significantly, which was helpful in writing my PhD thesis and afterwards in preparing scientific papers and proposal for presentations at many national and international conferences. I learned not only theory but also practical issues (i.e. programming or organization of research) which I am using in preparing research grants and educating the students. Moreover, personal, informal relationships with other participants of the EDSD project (students and teachers) are of great importance as well. Finally, being a Dean of the EDSD allowed me to acquire/ develop exceptional organizational skills which I use in other educational projects at my university."

(Dr. Anita Abramowska-Kmon, Head of Demography Unit, Institute of Statistics and Demography, Warsaw School of Economics)

"Participating in the European Doctoral School of Demography (EDSD) had without a doubt an important impact on my scientific



development. I benefited greatly from the increased depth and breadth of knowledge and experience gained during this intense 11-month training. It allowed me to develop significantly my statistical as well as programming skills, which I use now to conduct sophisticated analysis of large databases that include demographic data. Since graduating from the EDSO program, I was able to present my research results at the most important and prestigious international demographic conferences, e.g. European Population Conference, Population Association of America (at which my poster received the award of PAA Poster Winner). Also, EDSO provided a very stimulating scientific environment which allowed me to expand my research network by meeting talented young scholars from all over the world. "
(Sylwia Timoszuk, researcher, Institute of Statistics and Demography, Warsaw School of Economics)

EU accession also broadened the opportunity to take part in international research projects. Such opportunities include participation in projects funded by Framework Programmes, such as the recent Horizon 2020 Programme, or European Research Council grants. Particularly valuable was the experience of being a member of a team responsible for the assessment of European projects. This helped Polish researchers to collect hands-on knowledge of developing successful research proposals.

The European standards in research policy, including conventions and rules for calls, procedures for review and the selection of research proposals are now also applied in national granting institutions. In Poland, the establishment of the National Science Centre and the National Centre for Research and Development was based on the European standards and practices that Polish researchers learned as they took part in the project assessment process at the European level.

The broadening of the European research cooperation builds new knowledge. This is achieved by extending the scope of research to cover developments in the new member states. The period of the transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy, represented a quarter of a decade of very intense social, economic and cultural transformations. This was an unprecedented social experiment. These changes provided an invaluable source for research in many areas. For example, the rapid change to a market economy included labour market transformations, accompanied by falling fertility rates, marked improvements in mortality, and rising migration. Family-related behaviours changed visibly in the line of indications of the second demographic transition theory that predicts a change toward very low fertility and a diversity of union and family types. The debates about changes of families and family types and factors underlying these processes observed in the CESEE and other



European countries enriched both theoretical considerations and empirical evidence.

Persisting low fertility and dramatic improvements in mortality rates, from which the numerous post-war cohorts could benefit, tended to accelerate population ageing in these countries. During this period, many institutions also evolved, including paradigm changes in pension systems, governance, education policy and many other areas. The outcomes of these institutional changes, as well as their further development, are an important research topic to researchers from all around the world.

It is worth noting that many of the European initiatives that build important and necessary social research infrastructures were also extended to the new member states. These included for example the European Social Survey, the Generations and Gender Programme, the Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe.

Furthermore, EU enlargement also stimulated a further harmonization of statistical data and information. Data collected in surveys such as the Labour Force Survey or the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions allow for conducting comparative research on a wider range of European countries.

Extended cooperation between researchers in population-related fields in a variety of forms called for new ways of knowledge exchange and communicating the research findings to a broader audience. The Population Europe is the network of leading research centres in the field of policy-relevant population studies including partners from all over Europe (among them from Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia). The Population Europe respond to the new needs of communication and dissemination of research activities and output. This unique knowledge pool disseminates the most relevant research findings to policy audiences and the public. The network has established collaborations with a broad range of stakeholders interested in population developments. Population Europe also has an extensive network of eminent population experts throughout Europe that are nominated by the partner institutes. These experts support the activities of the network, for example, by participating in various events and contributing to the network publications. One of the very first Population Europe event "Riding the Demographic Wave: Policy Options for the Ageing Baby-Boomer Generation in Europe" was organized in May 2012 in Warsaw under the auspices of the Polish President, Mr Bronisław Komorowski, contributing to a dialogue between researchers and policy makers in Poland and Europe.