

Review of the monograph “Population of the Republic of Moldova after 30 Years of Independence: Major Challenges and Policies Needed”

(Editor – Dr.hab. Olga Gagauz)

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The collective monograph “**Population of the Republic of Moldova after 30 Years of Independence: Major Challenges and Policies Needed**” is prepared by a group of Moldovan demographers from the Centre for Demographic Research of the National Institute for Economic Research (dr.hab. **Olga Gagauz**, dr. **Mariana Buciuceanu-Vrabie**, **Irina Pahomii**, **Vitalie Stirba**, **Tatiana Tabac**, **Ecaterina Grigoras**). The monograph is devoted to an exhaustive analysis of the population dynamics and the main demographic process in the light of socio-economic changes in the Republic of Moldova during the 30 years of independence.

After declaring its independence in 1991, the Republic of Moldova, like the other newly independent states, experienced numerous social, economic and political disturbances. Certainly, these changes have had a significant impact on population structure and main demographic processes such as fertility, mortality and migration. The overall negative vector of the country's demographic development is first and foremost due to mass migration of the Moldovan population, lower fertility and high mortality. The short- and long-term effects of these demographic shifts on the country's socio-economic development and national security are extremely serious and require evidence-based policies. From this standpoint, this monograph can be used as a guide for decision-makers in the process of developing and implementing public policies. One of the greatest strengths of the manuscript is the reliability of the statistical data used by the authors, including the own population estimates of the Centre for Demographic Research, which can sometimes differ significantly from officially published data. A further important feature is that the analysis is given in the context of the principal public policies of the past three decades, which makes it possible to assess their impact on demographic dynamics. Finally, the in-depth analysis of population change and its main components allowed the authors to develop different scenarios on the future dynamics of the Moldovan population and to formulate a set of practical recommendations for decision-makers.

Chapter 1 presents the main information on changes in population size and structure and raises the issue of the quality of population data. In particular, the authors provide detailed information about the data sources available for population estimates in Moldova and compare them to their own estimates. Particular attention is given to the evolution of the population in the territorial profile, which should be of particular interest to policymakers.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the evolution of fertility in Moldova and its main determinants such as education and ethnicity. The combination of transversal and longitudinal approaches enabled the authors to depict the true picture of the fertility transition in Moldova in the European context. Further, the evolution of fertility in the country is explained very clearly through the prism of the second demographic transition. A special interest, therefore, concerns the detailed analysis of births outside marriage and the differentiation of fertility by the level of education. The authors give a critical insight into the various factors that have contributed to the decline in fertility in Moldova, from the economic crisis of the 1990s and social anomie theory to the impact of COVID-19 pandemics in 2020.

Chapter 3 focuses on the analysis of mortality and life expectancy in the country, reflecting changes in the health of the population over the past thirty years. The authors examined the contribution of changes in mortality by age and cause to the changes in life expectancy at birth over three different periods (1991-2000, 2000-2010 and 2010-2020). To better understand the differences and similarities with other post-Soviet countries, the authors provide a comparison with Estonia, where mortality was almost identical to that of Moldova immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition, the authors competently analysed the issue of high working-age mortality from the perspective of premature mortality, including years of potential life lost, and cause-specific avoidable

mortality. Special attention was given to mortality due to COVID-19 infection and its impact on life expectancy changes in 2020.

Chapter 4 looks at the most challenging demographic issues for Moldova, namely population migration. The authors start with a very clear description of terminology and data sources on population migration. On the basis of various statistical sources, including mirror statistics of the destination countries (mainly Russia, Italy) and border crossing migration data, very valuable information on the evolution of migration flows for the study period is presented. The citizenship naturalization process in the main destination countries may be of particular interest to the reader.

Chapter 5 deals with the population projection drawn up for the period 2019-2040. It is important to stress that population projections are based on different scenarios for future trends and patterns in fertility, mortality and migration resulting from the study of long-term demographic changes. Another important feature of the presented population projection is that it refers to the concept of the usually resident population recently adopted by the national statistical office.

Chapter 6 discusses the changing social and economic conditions of the Moldovan population during the period of independence, which has a direct influence on demographic dynamics. Using representative national sociological investigations, the authors provide a detailed analysis of the social well-being of the Moldovan population, access to health services, labour force and its quality and capitalization in the local marketplace. An important conclusion concerning the poor and even declining quality of life and the increasing income inequality of the population is made.

The monograph concludes with key findings and a set of practical recommendations that are based on the concept of “demographic resilience”. The authors underline that the process of depopulation associated with a rapid population ageing in Moldova cannot be solved solely by improving the country's economic conditions. They consider that the reduction of migration, which is a key factor of depopulation in the country, is only possible with significant improvements in all aspects of people's lives. The recommendations addressed to policymakers are directly based on the results of the authors' study, are clearly formulated and align with contemporary theoretical and practical concepts of demography.

The monograph is distinguished by a high level of approach to the topic, accompanied by high-quality graphs, maps and tables, which contributes to an easy perception of the presented material. The authors used rich and relevant literature sources, including references to their own writings, some of which have been presented in scientific journals and conference proceedings. The monograph is written in a professional style in Romanian and is well organized. The authors express their thoughts clearly, technical terms are used, but their definition is clearly explained.

I respectfully recommend the publication of the monograph “Population of the Republic of Moldova after 30 Years of Independence: Major Challenges and Policies Needed” (Editor – Dr.hab. Olga Gagauz), and I hope that it will serve as a practical guide by decision-makers in the field of demographic policies.

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