

ASPECTS OF THE PHENOMENON OF DEMOGRAPHIC POPULATION AGING IN ROMANIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The world population, especially the European one, faces a serious process of demographic aging, whereas the number of the over-60-year old persons shall increase very fast in the following years, if it is to be compared with the young, respectively the adult population. Romania does not make an exception when it comes to this trend, especially now when the negative demographic balance sheet shall cause a step-by-step decrease in the number of the inhabitants, while the life expectancy average shall continue to be situated below the European average. The Republic of Moldova finds itself among the other European countries where the weight of the elder population is in a continuous growth, and the appraisals indicate even its doubling the following two decades, namely in the period of time when the generations born after 1990 shall get to the reproduction period.

Key words: demographic aging, elder population, social care, life expectancy

The demographical aging of the population represents a biological phenomenon and at the same time irreversible, which affects the entire world population.

From a demographical point of view this phenomenon can be defined by the tendency of increase of the share of the old age population, aged 65 and over, whereas the share of the young and adult is reduced.

At world level, the size of the old age population has increased from less than 100 million persons, before World War II, to over 200 million persons in 1950. In the '90s the number grew to around 460 million old age persons, while a decade later their number reaching 600 million persons (590 millions in 2000). In the future it is estimated that this population group shall continue to grow, getting to be double in a relatively short period of time of around a quarter of a century, reaching the value of 1,2 billion elder persons in the year 2025 (Fig. 1.).

Conventionally there has been established that the phenomenon of demographic aging within a population depends on its percentage with regard to the other two major age groups, young and adult respectively. Thus a population is regarded as being young, if the share of the old population is smaller than 7,0 %. In the case in which the share of the old population varies between 7 % and 12 %, the process of demographic aging is in full swing, and a share higher than 12 %, indicates the fact that we have already a demographically aged population.

As a global phenomenon, the demographic aging also has several consequences directly linked to the aspects of the daily life, such as the manifestation of problems of social, medical, nature, increasing the number of

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asylums which require higher and higher expenditures, etc. This process also has consequences upon the structure of morbidity and mortality of the population, upon the life conditions in general.

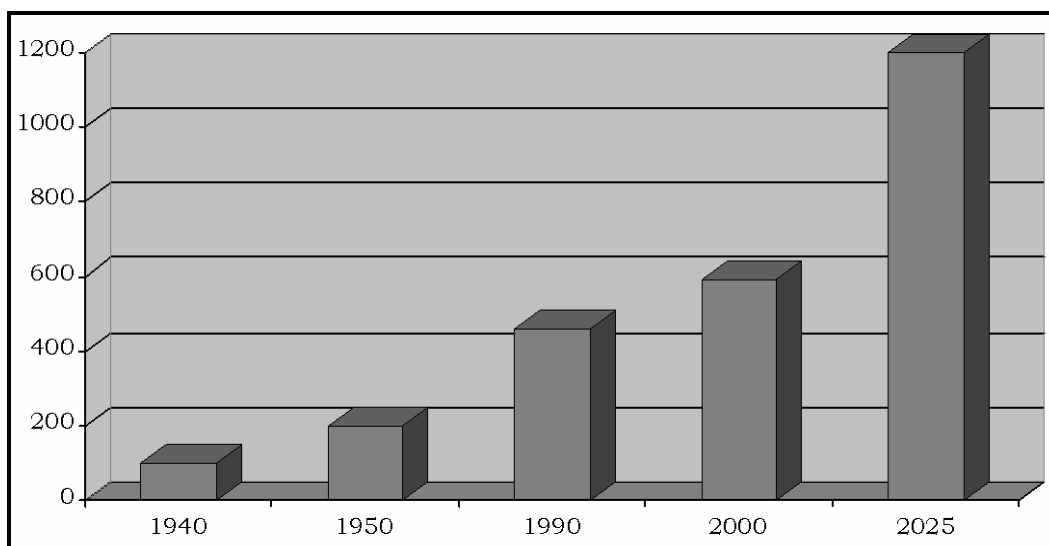


Fig. 1. The evolution of the number of old persons at the world level.
Data source: World population data sheet (2007)

The process of demographic aging of the population is due particularly to the decrease of birth rate, but also to the decrease on a long term of fertility, which is perhaps the most important determining factor of the demographic aging, having important consequences for the social policies, especially for the systems of pensions, health and education.

Both Romania, and the Republic of Moldova are confronted with an obvious process of demographic aging of the population, especially due to the constant decrease in the birth rate and fertility in the last years and the consequence of which has determined an important reducing of the young population comprised between 0 and 14 years old. Thus the natural negative balance of the population makes that the number of inhabitants to progressively decrease, while the average life expectancy remains further on below the European average (76 years), respectively 69,2 years in Romania and 68,8 years in the Republic of Moldova and it is on the increase in the future as well.

In the period of time between the last two censuses (1989, respectively 2004), the young population aged between 0 and 14 years old from the Republic of Moldova has been considerably reduced with 564,8 thousand persons, respectively, from 27,9 % in 1989, to 19,09 % in 2004. During the same time, the old age group of population aged 65 and over, in spite of the fact that it decreased with almost 50 000 persons, based on the general reducing of the country's population, the value in percentages of this age group has increased over 2 % (see. Table 1.a and Fig. 1.a.).

Based on the decrease of birth rate and of an increase in mortality, the phenomenon of demographic aging, has lead in this interval to a diminishing of the total population of the Republic of Moldova, certainly with implications upon the work force offer.

Table 1a. The structure on major age groups of the population R. of Moldova
(Data source: BNS – Rep. Moldova)

Censuses	Total Population	Young Population (0-14 years old)	Adult Population (15-64 years old)	Old Population (65 years old and over)
1989	4 335 600	1 211 000	2 578 000	546 000
	100,0 %	27,93 %	59,46 %	12,59 %
2004	3 383 252	646 152	2 240 669	496 431
	100,0 %	19,10 %	66,23 %	14,67 %

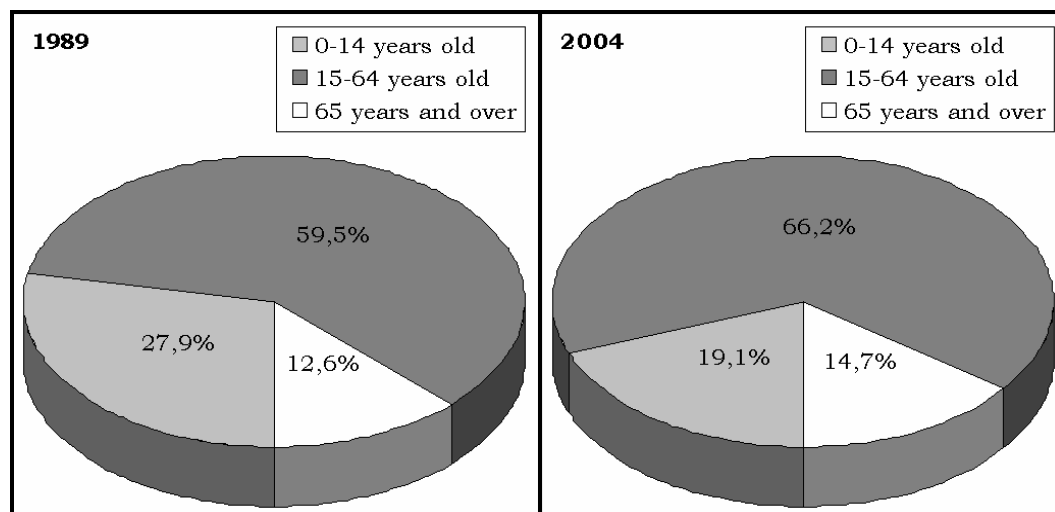


Fig. 1a. The Structure on major age groups of the population R. of Moldova
Data source: BNS – Rep. of Moldova

This phenomenon of demographic aging is perhaps even more obvious in Romania, where on the same background of decreasing the total population from the last but one census onwards; there is also felt an important reducing of the young age group, the percentage value of which has dropped from 22,4 % in 1992 to 16,7 %, value registered at the last census; however, the way it can be observed in the table 1.b. and figure 3 1.b., the tendency of reducing is obvious (15,6 % in 2005).

Analysing the evolution of the old age population, one can clearly observe that, unlike the young one, there is a tendency of increase, from 11,1 % in 1992, to 14,0 % in 2002 and 14,8 % in 2005.

Table 1b. The structure on major age groups of Romania's population
at the last two censuses and in the year 2005.

Data source: The population censuses: 1992, 2002 and Romania's Statistical Yearbook: 2005

Censuses	Total Population	Young Population (0-14 years old)	Adult Population (15-64 years old)	Old Population (65 years old and over)
1992	22 788 969	5 102 253	15 153 630	2 533 086
	100,0 %	22,39 %	66,50 %	11,12 %
2002	21 794 793	3 632 680	15 101 092	3 061 021
	100,0 %	16,67 %	69,29 %	14,04 %
2005	21 623 849	3 372 705	15 059 698	3 191 446
	100,0 %	15,60 %	69,64 %	14,76 %

The old age population aged 60 and over has thus continuously increased, getting to be almost 1,3 times more numerous in 2005, than in the 1990s. In the future, the process of demographic aging shall continue for sure, however, with different intensities.

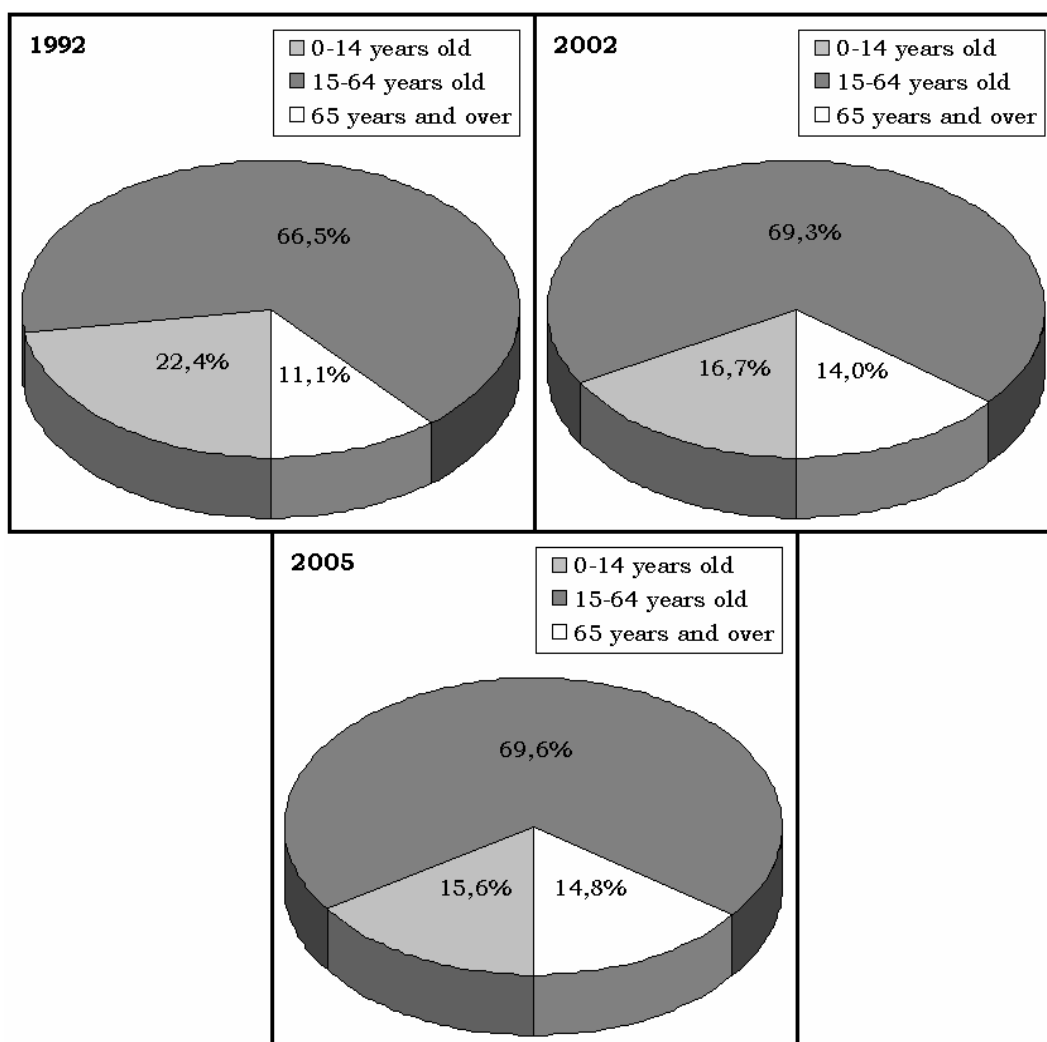


Fig. 1b. The structure on major age groups of Romania's population

Data source: The population censuses: 1992, 2002 and Romania's Statistical Yearbook: 2005

The demographic aging, combined with the reduced birth rate, shall produce negative effects upon the future numbers and structure of the labour force, upon the index of economic dependency and schooling, as well as upon the budget and the social security system, both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova.

At present, it is considered that both Romania's population and that of the Republic of Moldova is not aged, but predominantly formed of young and adult people. In spite of all this, on the background of the decrease in the birth rate, this is but a transition towards the same crisis which goes on as well in the European Union countries (fig. 2 and 3).

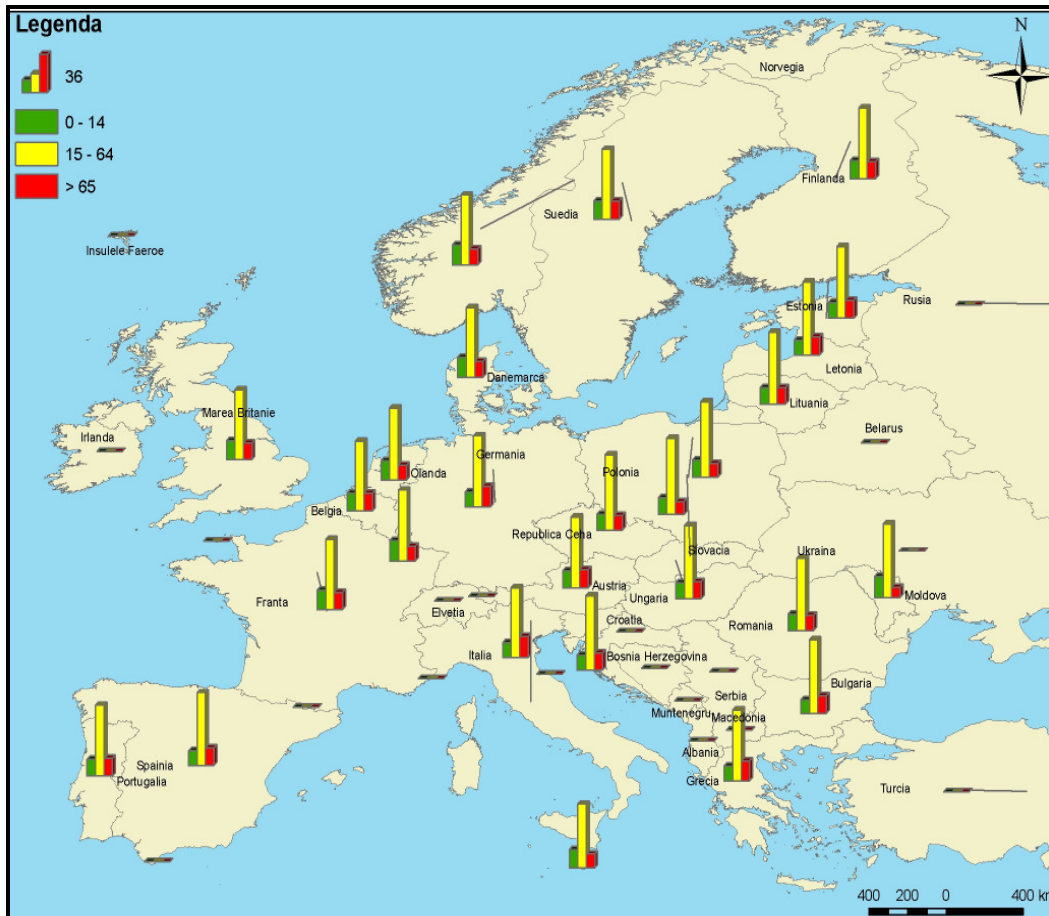


Fig. 2. The distribution on major age groups of the population of the EU member states and of the Republic of Moldova;
Data source: World Population Data Sheet 2007

The major changes in the structure of the population of the European Union require at the same time also structural changes at an economic level, changes of infrastructure, of health care and social assistance specific to the old age population.

The aging of the population is no longer something that shall take place at a given time in a distant future, but this phenomenon has already begun to manifest itself. In this sense, if we consider the fact that beginning with the years after World War II and until the '60s, our continent has confronted itself with a real demographic explosion, known under the name of „boom baby”; the persons born during that time interval have grown older reaching the age of 60 years old and over, entering the category of the old age segment.

According to the forecasts made by the European Statistics Institute, Eurostat, the aging of the European population is in continuous growth, thus at the level of the year 2006, 16,5 % of the European Union inhabitants were 65 years old and over. In the future the forecasts are more and more negative, so that this share might increase to 18 % in 2010 and even 25 % in 2030 and this in the case in which the governments of the member states won't take measures.

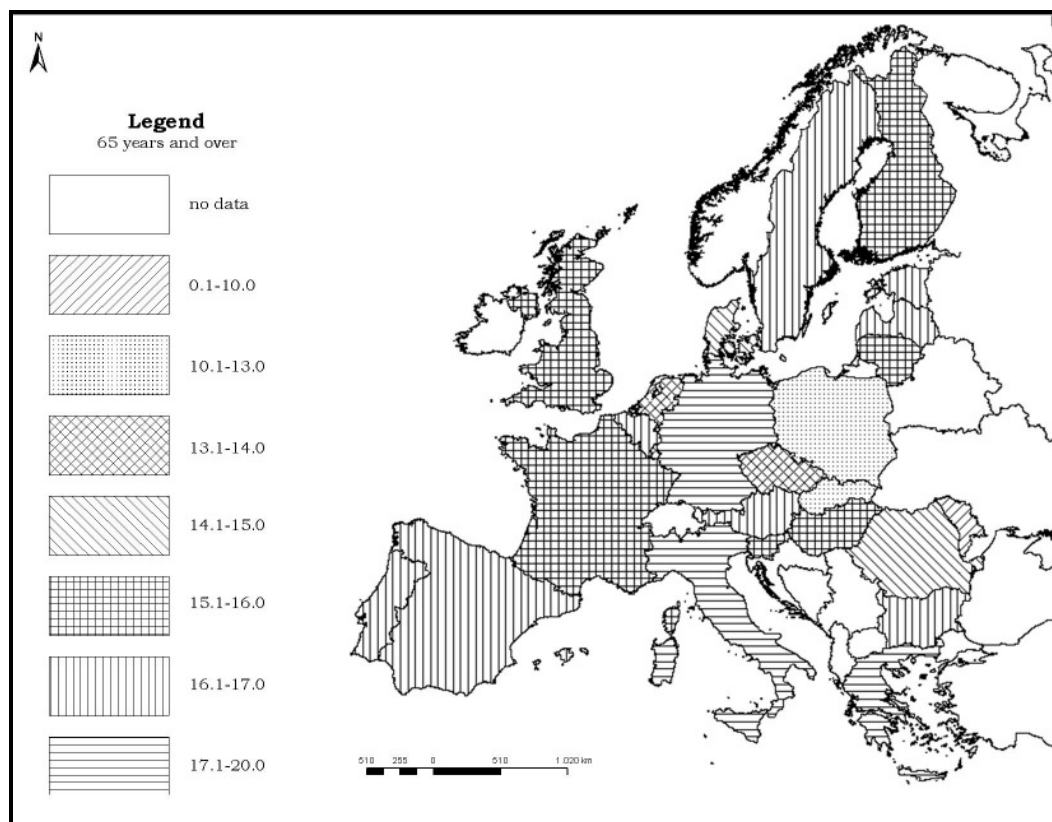


Fig. 3. The distribution of the old age population at the level of the EU member states and of the Republic of Moldova;
Data source: World Population Data Sheet 2007

Further on we could state that these important demographic changes are superposed over a change in the family life in Europe.

Thus the youth is less and less willing to set up a family for themselves, and when reaching this moment, they already are at an advanced age.

The average age at which the women get married has increased from 24,8 years old in 1990 to 27,4 years old in 2003, and in the case of men it has increased from 27,5 to 29,8 years old.

In contrast with these, it has become common thing in the most states of the European Union, the living without legitimate marriage of the two spouses, thus a percentage between 25 and 50 % of the children are born outside marriage.

Conclusively, one can assert that the tendency of decrease of the population, combined with the continuous deterioration of the structure on age groups of the population can have numerous implications upon the durability of the social security system. The danger consists in the dis-balancing of the demographic structure of the population because of the low levels of the fertility rate, but also because of the fact that the percentage of the old population is growing bigger. In this respect, the number and proportion of the young people shall diminish simultaneously with the increase of the number and proportion of the old people.

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