

# Depopulation of Europe and Russia as a factor of national security diminution

## Despoblamiento de Europa y Rusia como factor de disminución de la seguridad nacional

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#### ABSTRACT:

The article concludes that the reduction of the population should be counteracted by a reasonable anti-depopulation policy. The conjugation of depopulation and social and economic processes occurring in Russia and Europe is characterized by a highly heterogeneous, polarized natural landscape and settlement structure, marked spatial differentiation of the main demographic, natural and economic determinants. In its content, the problem of depopulation has not become only purely scientific, acquiring its political, economic and ethnic sense. All these postulates did not become a factor of rational actions and high responsibility of the relevant bodies for the implementation of the tasks assigned, which weakens the geopolitical security of states. The purpose of this work is scientific justification of methodological and theoretical approaches to an assessment of demographic processes in Russia, their similarity and features in comparison with the developed countries where active inflow of migrants darkens the true picture and the main factors of depopulation.

**Keywords:** population, depopulation, causes of depopulation, geopolitical security.

#### RESUMEN:

El artículo concluye que la reducción de la población debe contrarrestarse con una política razonable de lucha contra la despoblación. La conjugación de la despoblación y los procesos sociales y económicos que se producen en Rusia y Europa se caracteriza por un paisaje natural altamente heterogéneo, polarizado y una estructura de asentamiento, marcada diferenciación espacial de las principales características demográficas, naturales y determinantes económicos. En su contenido, el problema de la despoblación no se ha convertido sólo en puramente científico, adquiriendo su sentido político, económico y étnico. Todos estos postulados no se convirtió en un factor de las acciones racionales y de la alta responsabilidad de los cuerpos relevantes para la puesta en práctica de las tareas asignadas, que debilita la seguridad geopolítica de Estados. El propósito de este trabajo es la justificación científica de enfoques metodológicos y teóricos para una evaluación de los procesos demográficos en Rusia, su similitud y rasgos en comparación con los países desarrollados donde la afluencia activa de migrantes oscurece la imagen verdadera y los principales factores de despoblamiento.

# 1. Introduction

Today, a number of countries experience a long-term decline in population: Japan, Eastern and Western Europe, Russia, the countries of the former USSR. Currently, they continue to grow slowly, but soon will join Greece, Spain, Cuba, Uruguay, Denmark, Finland and Austria. Therefore, the question emerges which goal is desirable and important: an increase in the population or an increase in the quality of life and the level of well-being. The loss of population makes it difficult to use resources, threatens the geopolitical security of states and changes the geography of the population. What is more important – the preservation of basic values and culture, a permanent population, or the state? In the USA, the national doctrine suggests that, by order of importance, the first place is occupied by the values declared by the country, the second place – by the population, the third – by the territory. The USA is ready to sacrifice the population for the sake of protecting values, and the territory – for the protection of the population. Current demographic trends will lead to replacement of degenerating ethnic groups of developed countries with more prolific communities of others; the problem of unlimited growth of the population of the poorest countries of the world, at the same time, will remain (Russia on the way to a modern dynamic and efficient economy, 2013).

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## 2. Methodology

The study of the process of depopulation was accompanied by collection, review and systematization of Russian and foreign phenomena and processes, which made it possible to identify the general trend of declining fertility and rising mortality in different countries, which depended little on their social and political structure and other characteristics, although they were interrelated with state activities and their security (van den Brink, 2009). The methodological basis of the study was the system approach, cause analysis, logical and mathematical modeling, etc. The theoretical basis was the works by leading Russian and foreign researchers and specialists in economic theory, economic geography and demography. The most relevant for the study are the commonness of the world's population reproduction processes and their specificity in Russia, where, for example, the rate of decline in fertility is comparable with that in the richest countries and the excessive mortality in the poorest countries (Deren, 2016). In this case, the brain drain is not offset by immigration. The results of the research made it possible to identify the most acute problems in the current and expected demographic situation in the country and identify the main directions of policy as the most important to ensure the geopolitical national security.

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## 3. Results

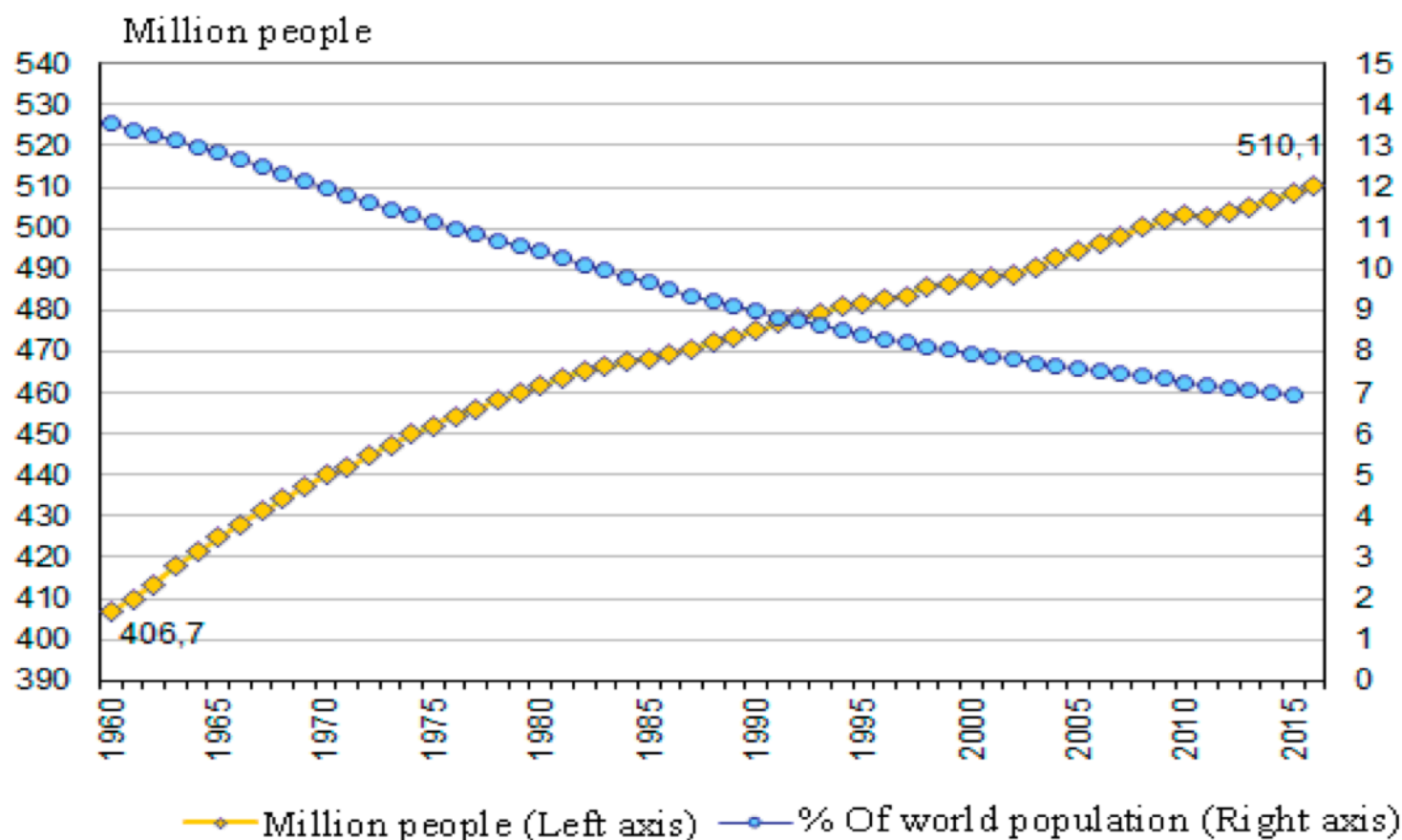
### 3.1. Current trends in the natural decline in the population of Europe

Among the problems faced by Europe at the beginning of the 21st century, one of the most serious was the unfavorable demographic situation. This follows from the dynamics of the number of Europeans and their share in the world population. Depopulation in developed countries and in Russia is not a feature of a "compensating" or "balancing" social process, since it does not eliminate either the cause or the consequence of "global overpopulation". One of the problems of many countries in the world, for example, Greece, Germany, Ukraine and Russia is the reduction in the population, which can generate crises in these countries, undermining their economies and foundations.

According to preliminary estimates by Eurostat, the aggregate population of the European

Union (EU-28) at the beginning of 2016 was 510.1 million people. A steady growth trend persisted for more than half a century (Lutz, Scherbov, Sanderson, 2001). Compared with the 1960s – the beginning of the period for which data are collected – the population of the EU-28 increased by 103.3 million people, or by 25.4% (Figure 1). Despite the steady growth of the absolute population of the EU-28, its share in the total world population is steadily declining, from 13.5% in 1960 to 6.9% in the middle of 2015.

**Figure 1.** The size of the population of the European Union (EU-28), at the beginning of 1960-2016, million people and % of the world's population

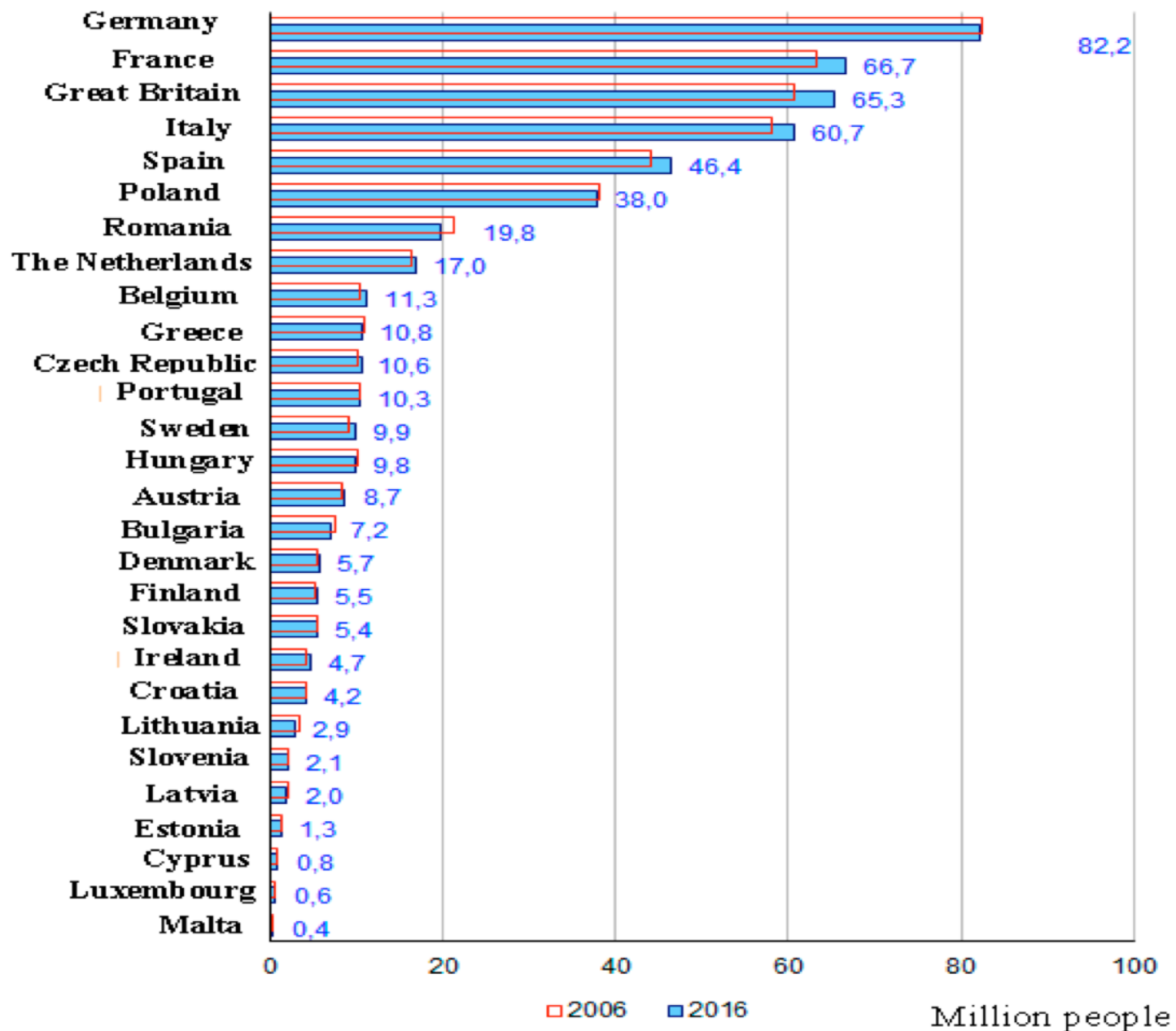


Source: Eurostat. Population change – Demographic balance and crude rates at national level (Last update 04.08.2016, retrieved on 12.08.16); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, DVD Edition. POP/DB/WPP/Rev.2015/POP/F01-1.

The population of most European countries will decline in the next generation. In fact, the end of the world's demographic explosion has come. In virtually all societies, from the poorest to the richest, the birth rate among women is declining. In order to maintain the stability of the population, the birth rate should remain at the level of 2.1 births per woman. This parameter in Western countries have been slowly and steadily declining during the last 200-250 years; now in the vast majority of countries the number of children is less than 2.0. In the EU this parameter is 1.4, and in some countries even less: in Germany – 1.3 (30 years of depopulation), in Spain – 1.15, in Italy, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria – 1.19.

More than half of the population of the European Union (53.9% of the total population of the EU-28 at the beginning of 2016) are concentrated in the four most populous countries – Germany (16.1%), France (13.1%), the UK (12.8%) and Italy (11.9%). In terms of population, Spain (9.1%) and Poland (7.4%) also adjoin them, and the share of the population of each of the other member countries of the union does not reach 4% (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Population of the EU-28 countries as of January 1, 2006 and 2016, million people



Source: Eurostat. Population change – Demographic balance and crude rates at national level

The rate of population growth in Europe now is 0.21% per year. Most European countries are in a state of decline and rapid aging of the population. The population is most often declining due to both natural and migration loss. The exception is Italy, where the population declined only because of natural decline with a low migration rate. Mostly due to natural decline in 2015, the population of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Romania decreased.

In 2015, natural decline was recorded in 13 EU-28 countries, among which it varied from -0.1 ‰ in Spain to -6.2 ‰ in Bulgaria. The most intensive natural increase, despite the decline, is still typical for Ireland (7.7‰). Approximately half the natural increase is in the population of Cyprus (3.9‰), Luxembourg (3.7‰) and France (3.0‰), and in the remaining countries, where the number of births exceeded the number of deaths, it was from 0.2 in Austria to 2.7 ‰ in the UK. In the Czech Republic there was a fixed zero natural increase.

The most significant absolute decrease in the population was noted in Italy (-130 thousand people), Romania (-111), Greece (-64) and Bulgaria (-48). In other countries the decrease was less than 40 thousand people.

### 3.2. Analysis of the European trend of population aging

According to the EU statistical agency, the population of the 27 countries will grow from 495 million people to 521 million by 2035, but after that it will drop to 506 million by 2060. Life expectancy will continue to increase and the number of people over 80 years will grow from 22 million now to 80 million in 2060.

In the 21st century, the number of senior citizens in Europe is continuing to increase.

Compared with developing countries, where the aging process is now at the fastest pace, the European region is characterized by a slowdown in the growth of the aging population. In 1985-2000, population aged 65+ increased by 25%, in 2000-2015 – by 21.4%. In 2000, every fourth elderly person of the world lived in Europe – 25.5% (see table 1), currently – every fifth (21.3%) (Demographic situation in Europe).

**Table 1.** Dynamics of distribution of persons aged 65+ in Europe

Mesoregions	Number, million people		Share in the European / world population at the age of 65+,%	
	2000	2015	2000	2015
Eastern Europe	39,3	43	36,8	33,1
Northern Europe	14,6	18,4	13,7	14,2
Southern Europe	23,9	30,6	22,4	23,6
Western Europe	29,1	37,8	27,2	29,1
Europe	106,9	129,8	100,0	100,0
world	418,9	608,2	25,5	21,3

Source: (Eurostat Euroindicators)

In the world and European countries, there is an annual increase in the number of long-livers – the population aged 80+ and 100+. The number of people aged 80+ is 125.3 million in the world, and 35 million in Europe. The share of Europe in the world population structure of 80+ years is 27.6%, and in comparison with 2000 it decreased at the expense of the developing countries of Asia. The region's share of 100+ years old population structure remained stable – 24%. More than every third resident over 100 years old resides in Southern and Western Europe. Lower life expectancy in Eastern Europe (table 2) compared with other mesoregions causes the low proportion of this age group in the population structure of Europe – 16.7%

**Table 2.** Top 5 countries in Europe by the share of people aged 60+ in the population structure, %

5 countries with a maximum proportion of people aged 60+ in the population structure				5 countries with a minimum proportion of people aged 60+ in the population structure			
2000		2015		2000		2015	
Italy	24.1	Italy	28.6	Iceland	15.0	Luxembourg	19.1
West Germany	23.0	West Germany	27.6	Ireland	14.5	Macedonia	18.5
Greece	22.8	Finland	27.2	Moldova	13.7	Ireland	18.4
Bulgaria,	22.2	Portugal	27.1	Macedonia	13.6	Albania	17.8

Sweden							
Belgium	22.0	Greece	27.0	Albania	10.4	Moldova	16.6

Source: (Eurostat Euroindicators)

Thus, by 2030 the number of able-bodied population (aged 15 to 64) in Europe will decrease by 20.8 million people. It can be concluded that the aging in the world and European countries is characterized by higher annual growth rates of population and extremely high annual growth rates of the number of long-livers in comparison with the whole population.

### 3.3. Tendencies of demographic processes in Russia and assessment of their impact on national security

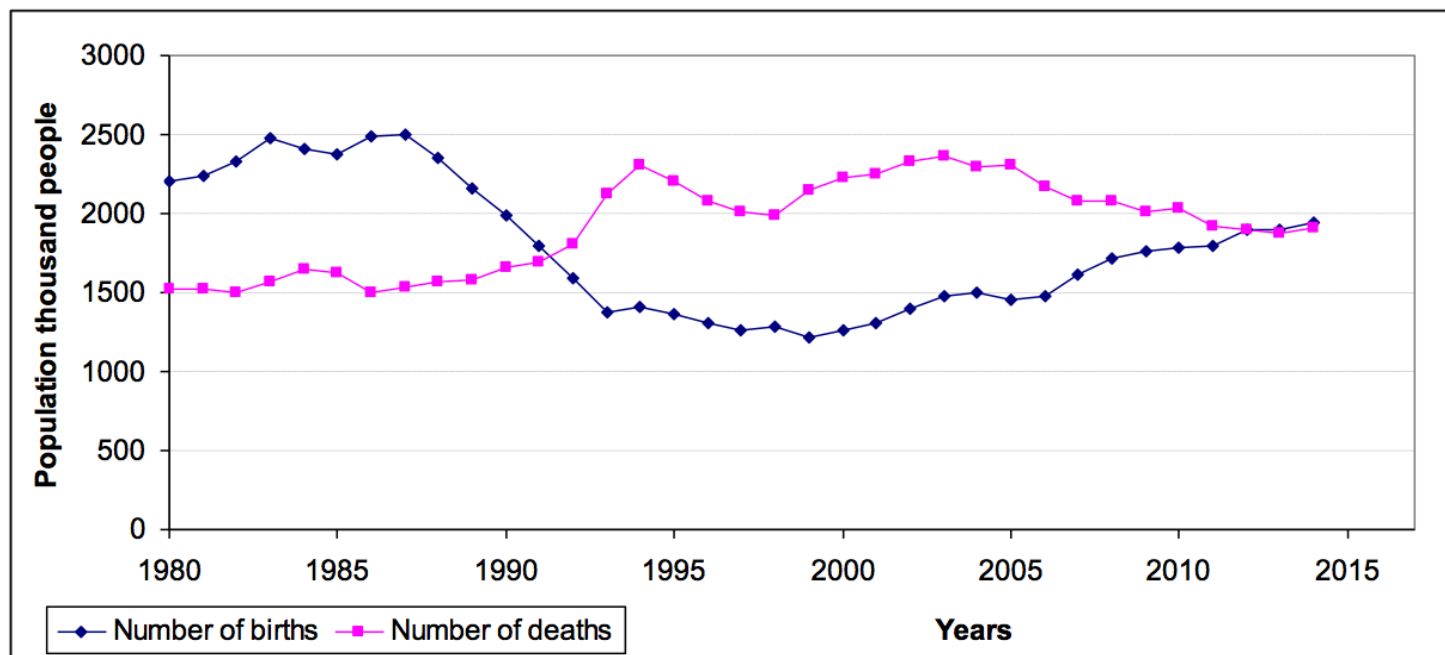
Through the history of Russia, the population constantly (except in wartime) was increasing: in 1719, there were 15.8 million people in Russia, in 1897 – 128.2 million, in 1917 – 171.8 million, in 1990 – over 280 million people. From 1917 to 1990, the population of the RSFSR increased from 90 to 148.3 million people (Deren, 2016).

The population decline is a direct threat to the national security (Figure 3). But even more serious factor is the decline in the quality of human resources that occurs in all areas:

- deterioration in physical health: more than 2.3 million tuberculosis patients, AIDS is becoming a national catastrophe (today there are 38,000 HIV-infected persons, by 2020 they will reach 1 million, 80% being 15-25 years old, an entire generation would die); annual increase in the incidence of hepatitis B reaches 20%;
- severe living conditions and low levels of consumption activate the growth of lice, which is known as the disease of the poor and disadvantaged;
- over 70% of Russia's population live in protracted psycho-emotional and social stress, which causes the growth of depressions, reactive psychoses, severe neuroses, alcoholism, drug addiction, antisocial outbreaks;
- widespread alcoholism of the population; alcohol consumption per capita is almost 2 times higher than the level defined by WHO as dangerous;

Nearly 4 million Russians have tried drugs. Since 1997, mortality from their use has increased 12-fold, and among children – 42-fold.

**Figure 3.** "Cross of the Russia's nations" – the dynamics of mortality and fertility in the period from 1980 to 2014



Source: Population of Russia: number, dynamics

Calculations show that the rate of annual population growth in the world, reaching a maximum (about 2%) in the 1960s, began to decline, now amounts to just over 1%, and by 2050 will be below 1%. The total number of people will also reach a maximum (about 7.5 billion people) and will go down. But depopulation has already affected almost all developed countries, especially Europe. According to the UN, in 1900 the population of Europe was 26% of the world, in 2000 – 12.3%, and 7% is expected in 2050 (Demchenko, 2003).

Since 1992, simultaneously with the onset of revolutionary changes, depopulation began in Russia (Concept of the demographic development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2015). According to official data for 1992-2013, 31.3 million of Russians were born, and 44.6 died. While from 1970 to 1990 the population of Russia increased by 17 million people, from 1990 to 2012 – it decreased by 5.2 million people, which is comparable with the population of 5-6 regions, similar to the Smolensk region (Vishnevsky, 2013). Despite the substantial predominance of the immigration process over the emigration process and the accession of Crimea with 2.3 million people in 2014, the number of Russians from 1992 to 2016 declined from 148.3 to 146.3 million.

Today, Russia's policy includes measures and actions that support and strengthen family; stimulation of birth rate growth; strong support for the families in which each next child is born; creation of appropriate conditions for the growth of employment of women with young children, organization of their free vocational training and retraining; creation of conditions for enhancing the life expectancy; improving reproductive health through early detection and adequate treatment of diseases, improving preventive, therapeutic and diagnostic care; creation of conditions for self-realization of the young; protection and improvement of working conditions; prevention of injuries and external factors of mortality, including traffic accidents, which have become today a "weapon of mass destruction" in Russia.

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## **4. Discussion**

The tendency of strengthening the government's attention to the problems of Russia's demographic development was manifested in the early 1990s: a system of state authorities was formed, responsible for monitoring the demographic situation and forecasting its course, developing and implementing a set of measures for demographic policy.

Within this complex demographic situation in the EU, particular attention is attracted by Germany and the UK. Germany has a policy of encouraging fertility. Speaking about the specifics of the UK's demographic policy, it must be emphasized that the state adheres to a restrained policy towards increasing the birth rate and is very tough in migration policy.

Even with huge expenditures on demographic programs, provided they are implemented sequentially, the effect can appear not earlier than in 30-50 years. But today it is clear to everybody that a purposeful demographic policy is the only way that makes meaningful all the reforms implemented in Russia.

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## **5. Conclusion**

For Russia at the present stage of development, the demographic problem has become one of the determining levels of the country's national security and its economic development.

Decrease in the number of able-bodied population by an average of 900 thousand a year, an increase in the population structure of the elderly and senior people, low birth rate demanded the adoption of actions by the state to stimulate birth rate, attract labor resources from near and far abroad, and to develop national projects (Cutfield, 2013).

Despite the fact that in 1992 (with the appearance of the "cross of Russians", which demonstrated the beginning of a long-term trend of exceeding the death rate of people over their birth rate), the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation passed a resolution "On urgent measures for studying the population and demographic prospects of the Russian Federation" (No. 4182-1), at the state level the new Russia's attention was paid to the problems of

depopulation after 2000 only. In 2001, "Concept of the demographic development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2015" was adopted, which was replaced by the new "Concept of Russia's demographic policy for the period until 2025" in 2007, and in 2003 "Concept of healthcare in Russia" was adopted. In 2006, the State Program to promote voluntary resettlement of compatriots residing abroad in Russia was launched. In 2009 a new State Program "Development of healthcare in Russia" was adopted; similar official documents were also adopted in the regions.

These, as well as many other official documents, clearly defined goals, principles, tasks, main directions of demographic policy in Russia, mechanisms for its implementation and deterrence of depopulation as a threat to the security of the country and the state. But practice shows that these postulates have not yet become a factor of specific rational actions and high responsibility of the relevant bodies for the implementation of the tasks outlined. Obviously, this is why the specialists of the Russian Academy of Sciences predict a surge in a new wave of depopulation of Russians in the near future.

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