



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY
CRIS

Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies



Future Trends Series - GR:REEN Project

Title of the report

Demography and Migration: an Outlook for the 21st Century

Area

Demography

Reporter

Migration Policy Institute (MPI) – Rainer Münz

Type of the Reporter

Think tank

Periodically updated?

No

First issued year

2013

Latest update

/

Official website

www.migrationpolicy.org

Language available

English

Short summary

The MPI outlook states that economic and demographic disparities will shape the mobility of labour and skills during the 21st century. Richer societies in Europe, North America and East Asia already are experiencing rapid population aging. In the future, many rich countries will confront a stagnation or decline of their native workforces. The same will happen in some emerging economies, for instance in China. At the same time, working-age populations will continue to grow in other emerging economies and in most low-income countries.

Despite these trends, many highly developed countries and emerging economies continue to assume that today's demographic realities will persist. Fiscal plans and social policies often are based on assumptions of stable populations or continued population growth, leaving many countries unprepared to meet the demographic realities of the future.

The report identifies international migration and internal mobility as ways of addressing the growing demographic and persisting economic disparities, because they are the most efficient ways of lifting people out of poverty or increasing their income by giving them better access to formal and informal labour markets. The analysis also looks at the potential risks created by these two tools.

As a conclusion, the MPI outlook suggests what the policymakers should do – besides promoting migration - in order to mitigate all of the labour market challenges and economic disparities of the coming years and decades: youthful and growing countries must continue their efforts to create jobs at home; aging and declining countries have to increase their efforts to raise the retirement age as well as the labour force participation of women and marginalized groups.

Key trends

- **Economic trends.** Economic development during the 21st century will be characterized by higher growth in today's middle- and low-income countries and lower growth in current high-income countries. More people will be lifted out of extreme poverty, and more people will join the growing middle classes of current and future emerging economies. In many of these countries, this will almost certainly reduce emigration to Europe, North America and Australia, or even lead to significant return migration.
- **Demographic trends.** Demographic change in the 21st century will be shaped by decreasing birth rates and increasing life spans. These two trends – although largely unrelated – together contribute to demographic aging at a global scale and will have ramifications for future economic output, labour markets and welfare systems (at least in countries where such systems exist).
- **Migration and mobility trends.** Economic convergence and growing demographic disparities will have an impact on future migration policies. People will continue to move from youthful to aging societies and from poorer peripheries to richer urban agglomerations. The current geography of migration will, however, change. On the one hand emerging markets with higher economic growth will provide domestic alternatives to emigration. On the other hand, some countries – including China and Korea – will enter the global race for talent, and may become more attractive destinations for workers than some of today's immigrant-receiving countries, that are now enduring slow or no growth and high unemployment rates.
- **Risks trends.** Migrants will be likely to be exploited by employers, agents and traffickers, or to experience structural discrimination through labour laws, employment practices and social security systems.

Suggestions

- **For sending and receiving countries.** Increased demand for labour and greater global mobility of human capital will make it even more important for sending countries to invest in protecting the rights of their citizens living and working abroad; they also should encourage receiving countries to implement labour laws as well as minimum labour and social security standards that apply to natives and immigrants alike. Sending and receiving countries should also come to agree on minimum social security coverage for migrants as well as on the portability of acquired rights and benefits.
- **For policymakers.** Policymakers at all points of the migration process – sending, transit and receiving countries – should try to make the best use of cooperation at the bilateral, regional or even multilateral level in order to craft smarter policies that aim to create mutually beneficial solutions, reduce the costs and mitigate the risks of migration. At the same time, these policies should aim to maximize the possible benefits of migration by reducing wage discrimination and employment of migrants below their skill levels.
- **For governments.** Governments should look for new opportunities to collaborate on migration that will support economic growth in both sending and receiving countries.
- **For decision makers.** It is crucial for decision makers to consider and invest in long-term solutions that can be adapted to meet the changing needs of their economies and societies.

Methodology

Modelling

Reference to other trends reports? If yes, which reports?

- Franck Laczko and Lars Johan Lonnback, eds., Migration and the United Nations post-2015 development Agenda (Geneva: international Organization for Migration, 2013), http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/Migration_and_the_UN_Post2015_Agenda.pdf

- United Nations Development Program, The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World, Human Development Report 2013 (New York: United Nations, 2013), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2013>