

European Population Forum 2004: Population Challenges and Policy Responses

12–14 January 2004
Geneva, Switzerland

Description of the Forum

Background

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) held the European Population Conference (EPC) in Geneva in 1993 and the Regional Population Meeting (RPM) in Budapest in 1998. The EPC was co-organised with the Council of Europe and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), while the RPM was co-organised with the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and the UNFPA. These two intergovernmental events conducted reviews of unprecedented demographic developments taking place in the UNECE member States and reached agreements and commitments on policies required to respond to these developments. These reviews along with the agreements and commitments are contained in the documents adopted at Geneva and Budapest, namely, the *Recommendations* (United Nations, 1994) and the *Conclusions* (United Nations, 1999, pp. 271-280) respectively.

The United Nations convened the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and the Twenty-first Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 1999. The ICPD conducted a general debate on population and related issues and their implications for social and economic development and adopted the *Programme of Action* (United Nations, 1995). At the Twenty-first Special Session “Governments affirmed their renewed and sustained commitment to the principles, goals and objectives of the Programme of Action” and adopted the *Key Actions for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development* (United Nations General Assembly document A/S-21/5/Add.1 dated 1 July 1999).

Objectives of the Forum

The UNECE will convene the European Population Forum 2004 in Geneva during 12-14 January 2004. The Forum will review recent salient population developments in the UNECE region, examine their key causes, review policy responses and draw lessons from them. It will consider important, newly emerging population changes, examine challenges they pose and identify best policy responses to them. In this context, the Forum will examine the implementation of the ICPD-related regional and global agreements of the 1990s in the UNECE region, particularly in countries in transition and, as appropriate, globally. Also, it will consider how the UNECE region can further the implementation of these agreements in the future.

Nature of the Forum

The Forum will be an expert meeting. Its participants will include noted experts from executive and legislative branches of government, academia, research, intergovernmental organisations and institutions, civil society, including non-governmental organisations, and the private sector. All participants will take part in the Forum in their personal capacity. The criteria for the selection of participants will be knowledge, expertise and maximal capacity to productively contribute to the Forum as well as to have the debate at the Forum reflected in their future work.

The Forum will offer an opportunity for an open debate of issues identified for the event (see below). Being an expert meeting, it will not negotiate or adopt any documents. Its outcomes will include a Chair's summary of deliberations, a report on the Forum to be prepared by the Secretariat and proceedings of the Forum to be published in a timely manner in paper and electronic formats.

The Government of Switzerland will host the Forum. High-level Swiss political personalities will take part in the Forum. The Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs will open the Forum and other high-level Swiss personalities will take part in it. The Executive Secretary of the UNECE and the Executive Director of the UNFPA will address the Forum. High-level personalities from the Council of Europe and the European Commission will also be invited to address the Forum and take part in its proceedings and deliberations.

The Forum will be co-organised by the UNECE, the Government of Switzerland and the UNFPA.

Overview of the Forum's programme

The programme of the Forum will feature opening and closing sessions, two keynote addresses and four thematic sessions.

Keynote addresses

Immediately after the opening session two keynote addresses will be presented, the theme of which will be "Population and development in the UNECE region during the last decade". A prominent European population scientist and a distinguished policymaker will present their views as academic and policymaker respectively on the recent regional developments and the challenges they have presented.

Immediately before the closing session two other keynote addresses will be delivered. The theme will be "Policy challenges of Europe's demographic changes: cross-cutting issues". A prominent European policy-making personality and a distinguished population scientist will present their views as policymaker and academic on policy responses societies have given to the demographic challenges and possible future developments in the region.

Thematic sessions

The four thematic sessions will provide an opportunity for an expert debate of salient population developments, their causes and policy responses. The sessions will feature panels consisting of prominent experts. In addition to chairs, who will act as moderators, each panel will consist of a lead panellist and four more panellists. The panel presentations will take approximately half of the time allotted for the thematic sessions. The remaining time will be allotted for general debate, including questions from the floor and responses by the panellist as well as concluding comments by the chair.

Two background papers will be commissioned for each thematic session from prominent population scholars of academia and research. They will focus on specific sub-themes and deal with relevant population changes, causes of the changes as well as past and requisite future policy responses, including best practices. These papers will provide scientific underpinning for discussions at the sessions. Their authors will not present the papers; however, the panellists, in particular the lead panellists, will draw and build upon them in their presentations. The papers will be submitted to the UNECE Secretariat and made available to the panellists so that they may consult them in a timely manner. At the same time, the papers will be made available to participants through a web site.

As appropriate, the crosscutting dimensions of the background papers and panel presentations will be the regional variations, gender inequalities, inter-generational relations and conditions of particular population groups, such as young people.

The programme of the Forum will include the following themes:

1. Global population and development trends: the European view

Countries of the region have a long-standing tradition of supporting population-related programmes worldwide through multilateral and bilateral technical arrangements. Since Cairo they have been in the forefront of supporting the implementation of the *Programme of Action* and have provided essential support to population and development activities in technical co-operation and to the UNFPA and its activities. Overviews of the global and regional implementations of the *Programme of Action* will be considered. The focus will be on progress made, lessons learned and constraints encountered as well as on modalities of sustaining implementation through new technical co-operation arrangements and new partnerships involving Governments, NGOs and the private sector. Perspectives on the implementation from UNECE donor and transition countries will be presented. Global population and development challenges in the coming decade and regional responses to them will be explored.

Background papers:

- a. The DAC Watch Compilation: An overview of donors' performance in sexual and reproductive health and rights

- b. Population and reproductive health issues in the ECE region: the political scene
- c. UNFPA Field Inquiry for the UNECE region

2. Childbearing and parenting in low fertility countries: enabling choices

In most of the UNECE countries fertility is at sub-replacement levels and in a number of instances at unprecedentedly low levels. A key element under this theme is to explore how and why such low levels of fertility arise. This will involve understanding the ways in which individual choices and lifestyle preferences, gender structures, value systems, time constraints, economic and housing circumstances, changes in the welfare state, and judgements concerning the medium- to long-term security of the partnership and childrearing environment interplay with reproductive choices. The special concerns regarding the choices, opportunities and constraints facing young people including, *inter alia*, employment, security, living arrangements, partnership and parenthood will also be covered. There will be a particular emphasis on the differing circumstances and contexts of southern Europe and of countries in transition. Public and private policies conducive to the reconciliation of paid and unpaid work and family life, and assistance to families with children will be examined in the broader context of achieving gender, intergenerational and economic equity and equality. Conversely, implications of these policies for parents, their children, families and society will be considered. In particular, various public and private policies enabling partnership and reproductive choices will be explored, in the context of evaluating their potential positive and perverse impacts.

Background papers:

- a. Choices, opportunities and constraints on partnership, childbearing and parenting: the patterns
 - b. Choices, opportunities and constraints on partnership, childbearing and parenting: the policy responses
- ## 3. Morbidity, mortality and reproductive health: facing challenges in transition countries

Central and Eastern Europe along with the Caucasus and Central Asia face a myriad of special population and health problems characteristic of the societies in transition. These salient issues include high morbidity and mortality, especially among adult male population; the spread of STIs and HIV/AIDS; and inadequate sexual and reproductive health conditions, often resulting in unwanted pregnancies. Under this theme due attention will be given to morbidity and mortality patterns by sex, age and social group and to sexual and reproductive health conditions, especially of younger people in the wider European setting. The causes will be examined in a life cycle perspective. This will cover determinants of health, including sexual and reproductive health, such as adverse economic conditions, poverty, life styles and cultural environment. Public and private policies conducive to redressing the situation will be considered. Special attention will be given to institutional arrangements, including access to reproductive health services and quality of care, with emphasis on prevention, especially of STIs and HIV/AIDS. Lessons will be drawn from recent successes in some Central European countries.

Background papers:

- a. Morbidity and mortality in transition countries in the European context
 - b. Reproductive health in transition countries in the European context
4. International migration: promoting management and integration

Complex international migration patterns and greatly different experiences with integration of migrants are the norm of the UNECE region, the space comprising countries with different positions and policies regarding international migration. Some countries continue to receive migrants, others are seeing persistent emigration, often resulting in brain drain, and yet others are at the same time seeing nationals leaving and foreigners arriving. Some of these are documented, others are undocumented; some move legally, others illegally; and yet some do so voluntarily while others are forced to migrate. Integration of migrants, including their participation in economy and society, is a challenge for the majority of the UNECE countries, raising issues of how foreigners and their families can best adapt to host societies and how these societies can efficiently facilitate this process. Under this theme, the recent trends in the different migration flows, in particular labour migration movements, will be reviewed. The root causes of international labour migration within and towards the region will be examined taking into account the different push and pull factors, including those relating to economic and labour market dynamics as well as the impact on receiving and sending countries, namely, their economies and labour markets. Policies of different countries seeking to manage labour migratory movements and integration and rights of migrants and their dependents will be reviewed. Past policies will be reviewed and requisite future policies will be explored. In this context, the North American experiences will be contrasted with those of the European countries.

Background papers:

- a. International labour migration, economic growth and labour markets: the dynamics of interrelationships
- b. Integration of migrants: economic, social and political dimensions