

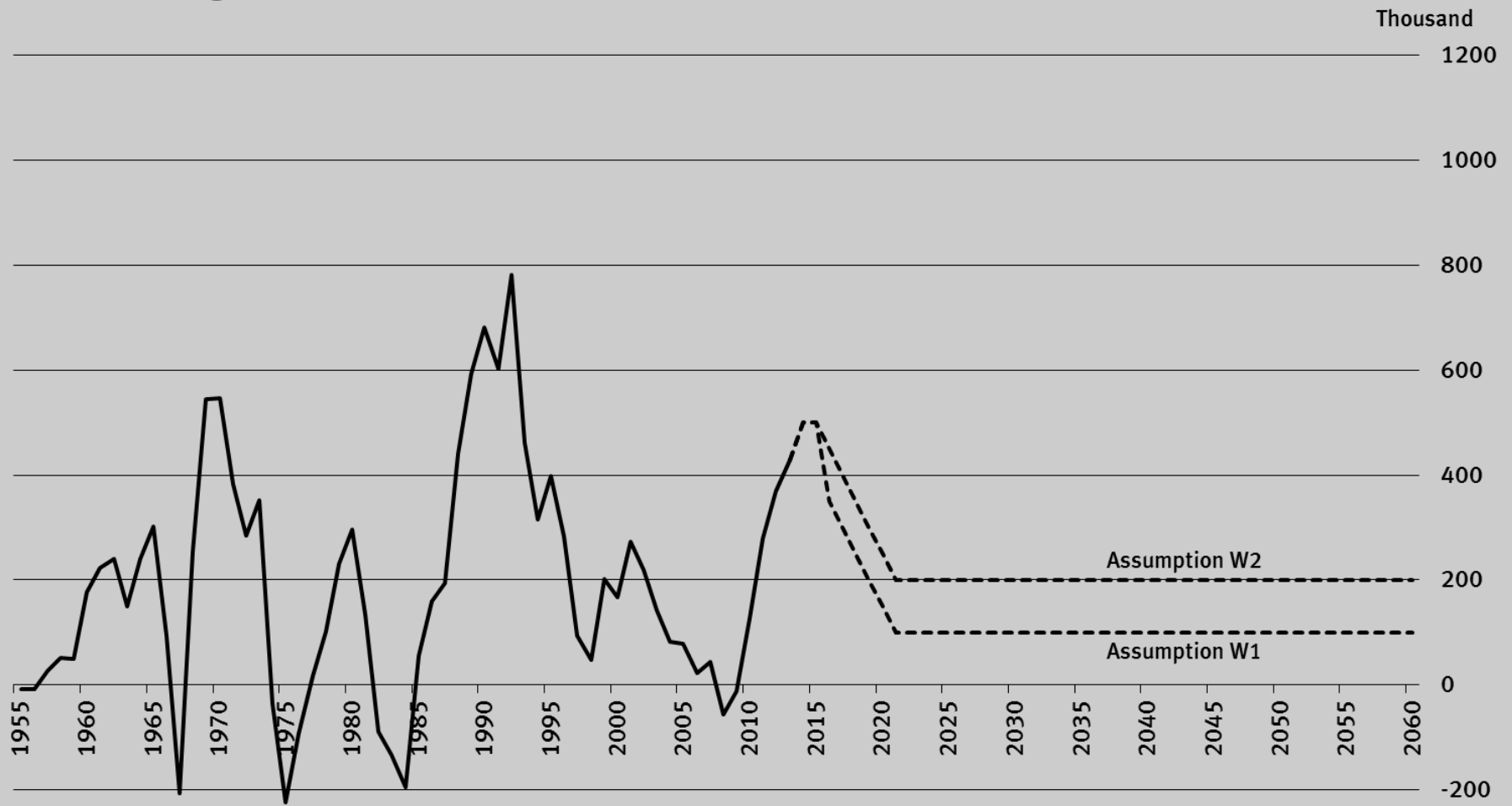
# RECENT REFUGEE INFLUX AND MIGRATION ASSUMPTIONS IN GERMANY – PUBLIC DEBATE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROJECTION MAKERS

**Joint Eurostat/UNECE Work Session on Demographic Projections**

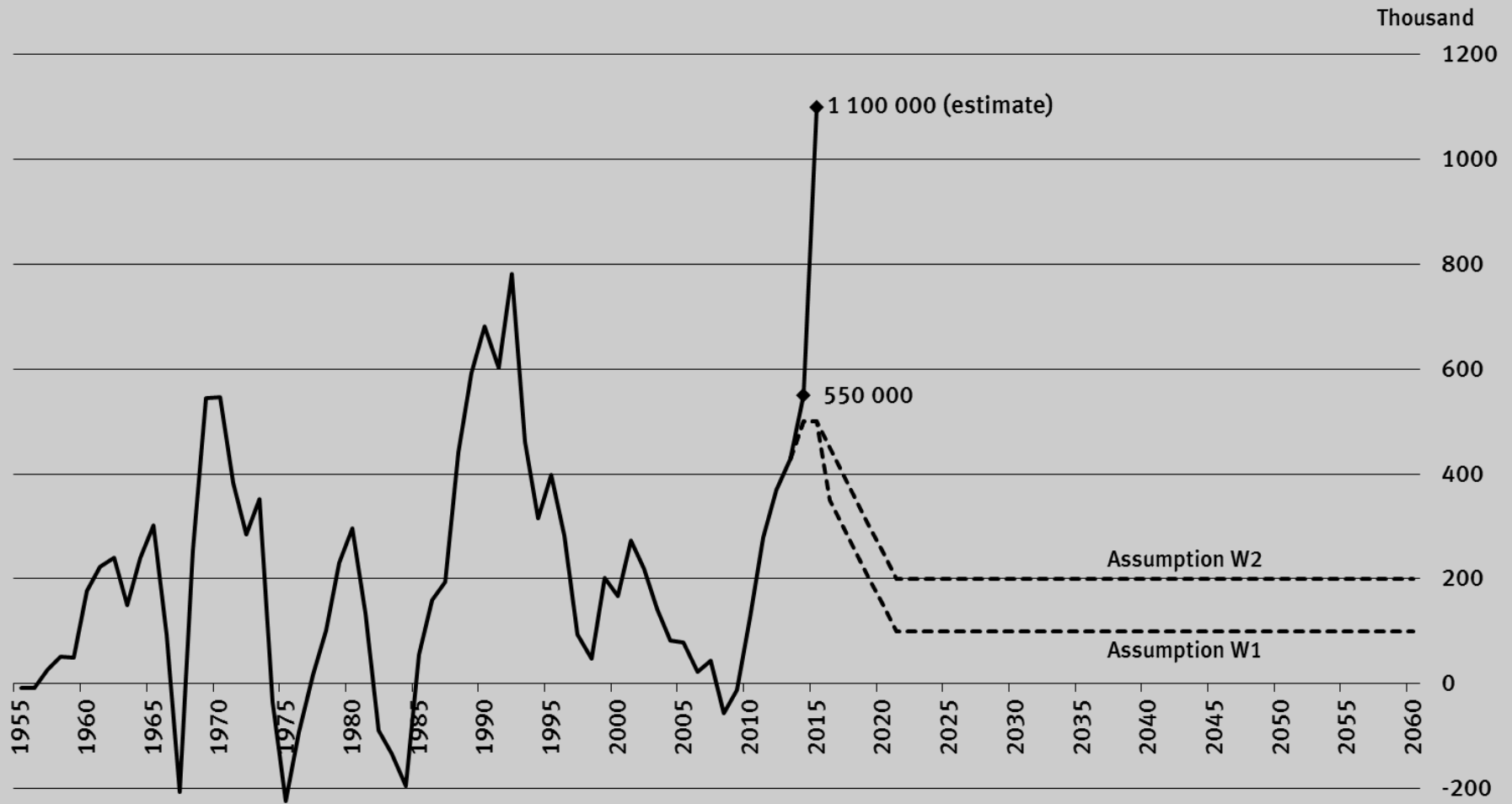
**Geneva – April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Felix zur Nieden**

# Net-migration across German borders



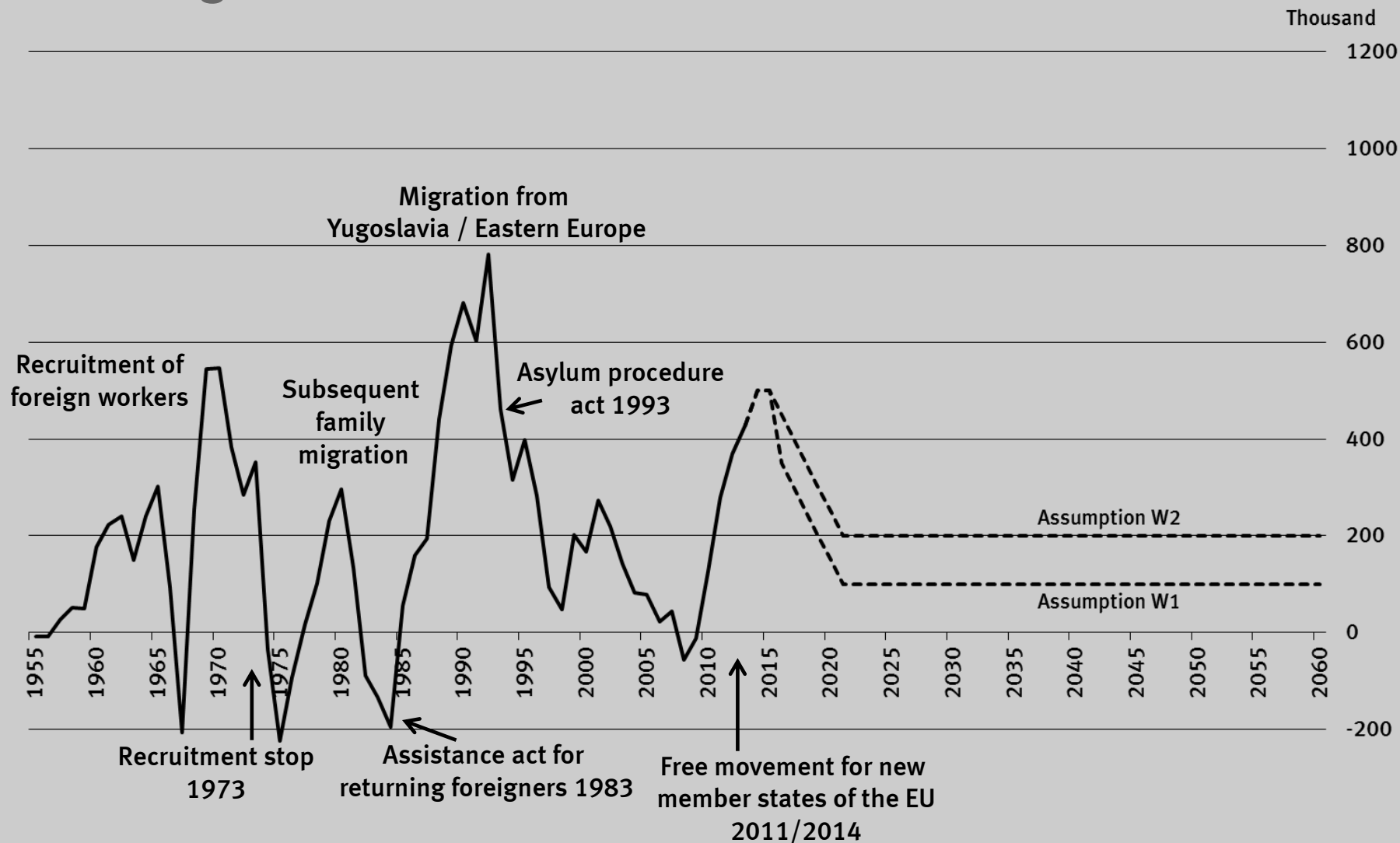
# Net-migration across German borders



## Outline

- **Migration for Germany – past and projected development**
- **Critical perception of the projection**
- **Reflection on points of criticism**
- **Conclusion: Opportunities for projection makers**

# Net-migration across German borders



## Assumptions on net-migration

- **Two assumptions W1 and W2**
  - W1 on average 130 000 per year
  - W2 on average 230 000 per year
- **Two model scenarios**
  - W0 zero net-migration
  - W3 on average 300 000 per year
- **Empirical age-structure of immigration and emigration is considered for all assumptions**
- **Clear statement that assumptions have to be interpreted as long-term averages and that point predications are impossible**

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## Critical reflection of the projection

- **Critical articles have been published in several German newspapers (e.g. FAZ, Sueddeutsche Zeitung)**
- **Very broad range of objections**
- **Starting point in each case the discrepancy between actual and projected migration numbers**
- **Shared argument: long term shrinking vs. current population increase**



## Points of criticism

- Projections are postulated as certain
- Only scenarios that lead to a long term shrinking
- Immigration is not interpreted as abiding theme
  - What would happen if the current inflow continues?
  - In the 90s migration went only down because of changes in law
  - Long term average has no predictive power – permanent migration pressure is foreseeable (“youth bulb” in Africa and in the middle East)
  - Recent development has shown that assumptions are “wrong and way to pessimistic”
- Deterministic projections are “pseudo-computable” and one should use probabilistic projections instead

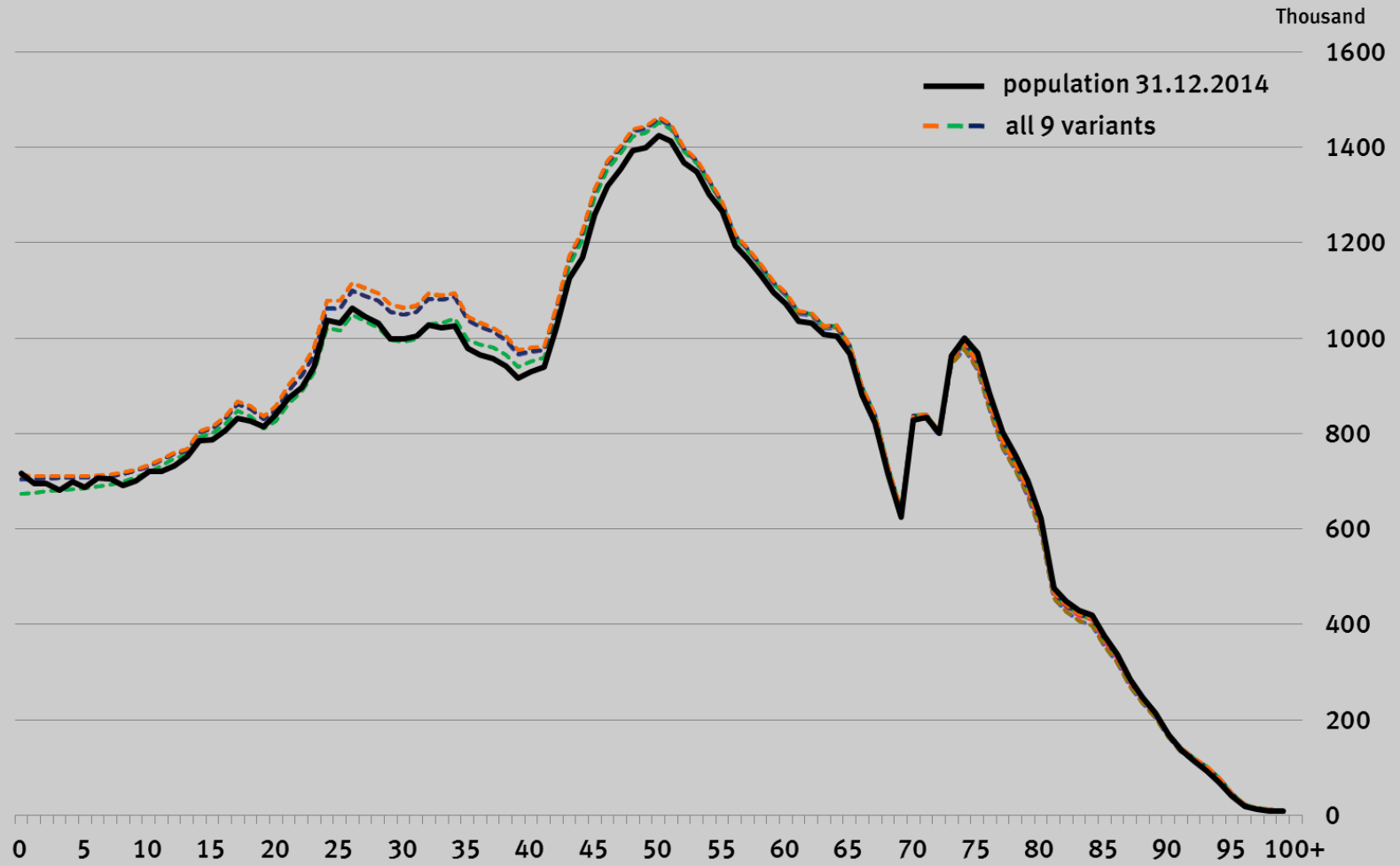
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## Projections are postulated as certainty

- Projections reveal the future development of the population in case the long term demographic trends continue
- Term “forecast” is avoided to underline the hypothetical what-if-character of the projection
- Events such as changes in law (e.g. immigration laws, family policies), epidemics or wars/crises and associated effects on demographic trends can not be considered
- Nevertheless population projections have a high relevance

# Projection (base year 2001) vs. real values for 2014



Source: 10th coordinated population projection

## Why long term-shrinking?

- **Is result of the expected increase of deaths and the expected decrease of the number of births**
  - Baby boom cohorts will reach high ages during projection horizon
  - Smaller cohorts will reach fertile ages
  - Expected birth deficit between 300 000 and 500 000
- **In theory a long-term shrinking could be prevented by permanent high net-immigration**

## Immigration as an abiding theme?

- Assumptions W2 includes net migration that is 1/3 higher than the long term average
- Phases of high immigration have always alternated with phases during which the migration situation was calmer
- Traditional countries of origin are projected to age and shrink themselves
- Policy changes that reduce further migration are as likely for the future as they were in the past

## Probabilistic projections?

- **Very similar steps compared to deterministic projections**
- **Events like the recent refugee influx will lead to discrepancies for any kind of projections**
- **No consensus on methods so far**
- **Main messages of deterministic and probabilistic projections are almost identical:**
  - **Shifts in age structure**
  - **Long term shrinking of the German population**

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## Opportunities for projection makers

- **Simply raising projected net migration?**
- **Broaden the interval of migration assumptions?**
- **Communicating the inherent uncertainty with probabilistic projections?**
- **Short term forecasts with econometric models?**

# Thank you for your attention!

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# Questions?

