

Conference Theme: **Population ageing**

(Provisional) title of the presentation: **The level and dynamics of population ageing in Poland in the years 1988-2002**

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**Poland**

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a substantial progress of population ageing in Europe. An ageing of populations is impacting on vital demographic events, notably fertility, migration and mortality. Currently there are approximately 115 million people aged over 65 in Europe and their proportion in the total population reached 16%. However, it is realistic to argue that the situation among the European countries according to the level of ageing has been largely diversified at the turn of the century. East and West, North and South of Europe are at different stages on a continuum moving from a relatively balanced age structure to one where the elderly component dominates.

In Poland, during the period of socio-economic transition, profound changes in population growth have taken place. A rapid decline in fertility below replacement level and a decrease in migration, especially from rural areas to towns, have caused the depopulation of some areas. This was also connected with acceleration of population ageing process. In the 1970s and 1980s population decline occurred mostly in rural areas and small towns because of the entrance of industrialization and urbanization. The significant fall in spatial mobility from rural areas in the 1990s caused by the housing shortage and the high unemployment rates has led to a decrease in the demographic dynamics in towns contributing to the development of suburban areas around the largest centres. In the years 1988-2002 the number of population aged 65 and over increase from 3 727 to 4888 thousand (from 9,8 to 12,8% of total population) whilst the total population rose only by 0,1% (from 37,9 to 38,2 million).

The aim of this article is to present a spatial distribution of the state and dynamics of population ageing of the Polish population, in particular determining any differences between urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The analysis was based on microscale units (communities) in the intercensal period 1988-2002. Ageing indices were calculated, especially old-age dependency ratios. A dynamic ageing index was also used on the basis of percentage changes between two age groups (0-14 and 65 and over).

Although, the most advanced stage of ageing is in rural areas, the highest dynamics of the process is observed in towns. This refers to large cities, towns with a dominating industrial base, as well as the smallest towns. It can be assumed that the changes are largely impacted on by the socio-economic situation in Poland. The economic crisis, high unemployment rate, and difficult situation on the housing market have resulted in the decrease in migrations of young population to towns, and the birth rate has significantly dropped in the period studied. In the spatial layout, the division of Poland into the demographically young northern and western areas and the relatively old central and eastern areas is still visible, although the former areas are now experiencing more rapid dynamics of ageing, and the differences are likely to disappear in the future. The worst situation is in the rural communities located along the eastern border, in particular the Belarus border. Policy makers face the challenge of making these areas, which since 2004 have constituted the eastern frontier of the EU. Furthermore, unfavourable changes in the age structure characterise the areas with restructuring mining industry (Upper and Lower Silesia), and which are nowadays depopulated.