

## Press release

Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik

Sybille Wenke-Thiem

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Research results, Scientific Publications

Biology, Construction / architecture, Economics / business administration, Environment / ecology, Law, Oceanology / climate, Politics, transregional, national

## The Impact of Demographic Change on Local and Regional Government

**Results of the Research Project of the German Institute of Urban Affairs for CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions): The Impact of Demographic Change on Local and Regional Government. Difu website <http://edoc.difu.de/orlis/DF10409.pdf>**

The German Institute of Urban Affairs conducted a study on the impact of demographic change on Local and Regional Government for CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions, [www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)). The publication can be downloaded from Difu website <http://edoc.difu.de/orlis/DF10409.pdf>.

All European countries are facing challenges from demographic change. These fundamental, serious developments have complex consequences for local and regional authorities. The impact of demographic changes will differ from city to city and from region to region. But they influence nearly every sphere of life: labour markets, housing markets, social security systems, infrastructure, urban/spatial planning, education, budgets and finances. Experience with the impact of demographic change has engendered strategies to face these developments in a number of countries and municipalities.

The study examines local authorities in four countries, namely the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany and Spain. It gives a first impression by documenting and synthesising the challenges facing municipalities in different European countries, in different spatial contexts and the measures taking in response to demographic changes. This first approach focuses on four important policy fields: social services, spatial planning (especially housing and transport), employment and social inclusion and local community activities.

The study gives an overview on general trends of demographic changes in Europe and the consequences for the regional and local levels. It describes in brief the demographic situation in the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany and Spain. A focus is on the consequences of demographic changes in the four policy fields. The challenges that demographic changes pose for these policy fields are illustrated by a lot of activities and reaction strategies that are realised by local and/or regional government in the four countries.

Demographic change and the discussion on how to deal with it is not only a complex issue but also a politically and emotionally highly charged subject. Although scientists have been providing demographic data for many years, it has only recently surfaced in public political debate - probably owing to the initially negative connotations of shrinkage and ageing. The political debate on ageing focuses more on its costs for the social insurance system rather than on its social and even economic potentials. This is the case in all the countries under study. Shrinkage, in contrast, seems to be a topic particularly relevant in eastern Germany where a natural decline of population is compounded by an extensive outmigration to West Germany, some cities have lost more than 20% of inhabitants since 1990.

On the local and regional government levels, most of the projects documented are in field of social services, especially infrastructure. Local authorities are attempting to adapt the social (and technical) infrastructure to changing demand in terms of the quality and extent of services. Many projects have already been implemented. In other areas, too, local authorities have started developing strategies for handling demographic change, covering a broad range of initiatives.

But very few local authorities are proceeding systematically by adopting an integrative strategic approach taking account of all the different and interlocking elements of demographic change. Much remains for local and regional authorities to do, and it will become increasingly urgent to develop local and regional strategies adapted to the specific local situation. It is necessary to foster greater awareness of the importance of demographic change and an understanding of it as a cross-sectional issue. The time for procrastination is past.

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Beate Hollbach-Grömig und Jan Trapp

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Further Information:

Dr. Beate Hollbach-Grömig

Phone: +4930 39001-293

email: [hollbach-groemig@difu.de](mailto:hollbach-groemig@difu.de)

Press Office:

Sybille Wenke-Thiem

Phone: +4930 39001-208/-209

Fax: +4930 39001-130

email: [wenke-thiem@difu.de](mailto:wenke-thiem@difu.de)

German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu)

Straße des 17. Juni 112

10623 Berlin

Germany

As a matter of course the press release is free for publishing. Please sent the www-link or a voucher copy to the press office after announcement. Thank you very much indeed!

Information about the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu):

<http://www.difu.de/english/>

URL for press release: <http://edoc.difu.de/orlis/DF10409.pdf> Study on the impact of demographic change

URL for press release: <http://www.difu.de/english/> German Institute of Urban Affairs

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