



Demography in Perspective

Population Europe's Impact Strategy

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About this document:

Demography is highly policy-relevant, which calls for dialogue between relevant decision-makers and experts from science, politics, business, civil society and other practitioners.

Population Europe is the network of Europe’s leading demographers that has facilitated inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue between these groups for more than 15 years. The network integrates a wide range of stakeholder expertise and stands out as being exceptionally versed in discussing evidence on topics such as ageing, family, migration and diversity.

This document lays out Population Europe’s structure and programme of activities and how these lead to its intended outcomes and impacts. In particular, it guides the recently launched “Population Europe Policy Lab”, which provides a structure for transdisciplinary formats used by the organisation. This Impact Strategy is based on Population Europe’s experience with stakeholder engagement and the advice of the Advisory Board of the Population Europe Policy Lab, which had its inaugural meeting on 30 November 2024 in Berlin. We sincerely thank the members of the Advisory Board for their valuable comments and suggestions.

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1 Population Europe – About Us and How We Work

1.1 A Resource for Evidence-Based Policy-Making

The Population Europe network was launched in 2009. Today, it includes over 40 leading demographic research centres and more than 250 eminent population experts across Europe. With its Secretariat hosted by the Max Planck Society in Berlin and affiliated with the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Population Europe provides a unique knowledge pool for evidence-based decision-making when it comes to population-related topics.

In addition to its network members, Population Europe maintains collaborative relationships with a number of leading international organisations, governments and civil society groups. This includes the European Commission, the OECD and various agencies of the United Nations (IOM, UNECE, UNFPA), as well as governments at the national and regional levels across Europe, and non-governmental organisations, including AGE Platform Europe, CIVICS Innovation Hub and COFACE Families Europe. Population Europe's partners outside of Europe include the Population Reference Bureau in Washington D.C., and the African Institute for Development Policy in Lilongwe, Malawi, and Nairobi, Kenya. The Secretariat also has established partnerships with international and national associations that represent the research community, such as the European Association for Population Studies, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, and the European Consortium for Sociological Research.

The Impact Strategy presented in this document specifically guides the “Population Europe Policy Lab”, which was launched in 2024 and is an infrastructure designed to promote cross-fertilisation between demographic research and practice. A number of projects, in which the secretariat of Population Europe is a consortium partner, e.g. “FutuRes: Towards a Resilient Future of Europe” (2023-2026) and “We-ID: Identities – Migration – Democracy” (2025-2028), include policy labs, as do EU-funded projects of other partner institutes and collaboration partners. However, projects such as FutuRes or We-ID have limited durations and defined thematic scopes. Therefore, the Population Europe Policy Lab provides an overarching

structure that continues to be a forum for inter- and transdisciplinary exchange that is sustainable outside the realms of these projects.

Population Europe will regularly update this impact strategy, including its tools and methods (e.g. with regard to social media use, video and graphic tools, transdisciplinary approaches, key performance indicators) to take on the challenges ahead. This strategy reflects the dynamic at the science-policy interface in recent years, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, in which scientists are expected to make their knowledge more accessible to the public and to provide policy recommendations that stem from their work.

1.2 Population Europe's Role at the Science-Policy Interface

Demography shapes the trajectory of many policy areas. For instance, population dynamics are highly relevant for public health, family support, migration and integration policies, education, employment and labour markets, long-term care, and pension systems. Population Europe plays a role in raising awareness about demographic changes and how they will shape Europe's future. Crucial to this is providing decision-makers and governments at the European, national, regional and local levels with accessible and up-to-date data, evidence-based insights, and methodologically rigorous demographic analyses on current and future population trends.

Today, this is more necessary than ever: while the democratisation of knowledge has been a benefit to societies by permitting a fast, unencumbered, global flow of facts and arguments, it also means that self-styled "experts" without adequate training, qualifications and experience in research or science communication can disseminate inadequate or erroneous information, or even "fake news". This includes conspiracy theories and other irrational arguments. The "studies say so" argument is often used without checking the reliability of the data sources and the methods applied, or the qualifications of the authors behind them.

Decision-makers must therefore depend on reliable information that is subjected to thorough scientific quality control mechanisms. Analysing and comparing population trends of countries, regions, and local communities, as well as at the level of individuals, families, generations and different population groups over the life course, is a complex task that requires a high level of knowledge and training. The Population Europe network holds this

expertise, as it is composed of demographers from across Europe bound to the highest standards of scientific quality and adherence to the rules of good scientific practice.

In its work at the science-policy interface, Population Europe acknowledges and works with the distinctive rationales of the policy arena and the world of science. Scientific argumentation must consider the existing research literature, divergent interpretations and minority opinions, and it must be clear about the limitations of existing evidence or missing data, as well as identify different outcomes of analyses, research gaps and uncertainties. Science cannot be bound by majority decisions, party manifestos or the will of an electorate; it must stick to what can be learned from the evidence and apply rigorous scientific quality control. Policy work, however, generally has a mandate from the electorate and is driven by a political or social agenda. Science also has different time scopes compared to the policy arena, which is often forced into shorter-term decision-making.

Population Europe (and its Policy Lab) therefore makes demographic expertise accessible to other disciplines and to non-academic stakeholders by serving as a bridge and facilitator for knowledge exchange. This is accomplished through inter- and transdisciplinary stakeholder dialogues and engagement, as well as dissemination and communication activities, including online and print publications targeted at scientific and non-scientific audiences. The topics worked on in the Policy Lab are always related to the most pressing issues associated with demographic change, at the local, regional, European and international levels.

2 Impact Pathway

2.1 Audiences and Formats

From the start, the primary objective of Population Europe has been to disseminate demographic research to key actors in political, economic, and social domains. However, as the political environment and needs of politicians, decision-makers, and policymakers have changed, the organization has consequently shifted to a more transdisciplinary approach, meaning that rather than a one-way dissemination strategy following the research process, the aim is to enable continuous knowledge exchange and to integrate mutual learning.

More concretely, Population Europe's Policy Lab facilitates access and opportunities to discuss demographic issues that are of interest to decision-makers and other stakeholders. Such platforms at the science-policy interface allow researchers to engage more effectively with stakeholders and opportunities to learn from practitioner experience. Ultimately, this approach leads to better research design, as well as better calls for action, policy recommendations, and decision-making options, because they are informed by both scientific evidence and practitioner experience.

The Policy Lab's activities can be initiated by either research (for example, if there is new research being designed or outcomes to be discussed) or policy (for example, if there is a demography-related policy challenge that would benefit from more scientific perspectives). The process typically starts with systematic analysis of potentially relevant audiences from research, policy, business and society, and holding agenda-setting meetings with these stakeholders to understand the context and needs from different perspectives. The Policy Lab's activities could also be initiated, for example, by scenario-building and simulations carried out by experts in Population Europe's network. Specific formats for exchange can be organised through the Lab to allow researchers to stress-test and elaborate on these simulations with decision-makers and other relevant experts, which leads to more accurate analyses and products more useful for policymakers.

Depending on the topic, audience and intended outcomes, further exchanges are subsequently organized to bring together identified stakeholders in the form of, for example: cross-sectoral and trans-regional workshops, invitation-only meetings of high-level experts and government representatives under the Chatham House rules, and large stakeholder meetings with the general public. Other formats for engaging stakeholders include the co-organisation of events and the co-writing of publications.

Facilitating comparative analyses across space and time is also an important feature of Population Europe and its Policy Lab. Demographic phenomena often occur in multiple places and/or points of time. Having access to comparative analyses is useful in policy and research design, which often relies on models and experiences from analogous and alternative contexts. In cases in which data are scarce or inaccessible, comparisons can also be helpful for understanding general trends from data sources accessible in other places. Bringing

experts together to interpret and to analyse different contexts is another strength of the transdisciplinary approach.

Saying that, population trends and corresponding policies in one country may not work the same way or be as effective in another. A “one size fits all” approach to understanding population dynamics and policy approaches is rarely, if ever, appropriate. Inter- and transdisciplinary expertise, gathered through in the context of the Policy Lab, can result in insights into the cultural, political, institutional, legal, socio-economic, spatial, and other dimensions of population development that need to be considered in research and policy design.

In this respect, Population Europe benefits from the fact that demography is a highly interdisciplinary field of research in itself. In addition to its core in empirical social science, it brings together the perspectives of other academic disciplines within a methodological framework. The disciplinary range of Population Europe’s partner institutes is evidence of this. These institutes and the network’s individual experts come from a wide range of social sciences, life sciences and humanities, including but not limited to: demography, mathematics, data science and statistics, biology, epidemiology, medicine, psychology and public health, political science, law, history, geography, urban planning, anthropology, sociology and economics. The interdisciplinary nature of demography is a strength because it allows for a deep understanding of issues and the capacity to solve complex challenges.

Estimates and best guesses are part and parcel of political discourse, especially in crisis situations, when decisions have to be made under time pressure, high risk and uncertainty. In this context, Population Europe stands by to provide advice and forums for exchange. It is particularly important in such situations to responsibly “curate” and at the same time “co-create” knowledge within a mutual learning process, including on timely political matters.

2.2 Input – Population Europe’s Resources

The Policy Lab is an integrated part of Population Europe’s activities. Therefore, an overview of the network’s resources is provided below.

The most important resource of Population Europe and its competitive advantage is the highly valued advice and contributions of numerous eminent experts, partner institutions and

collaboration partners from different countries across Europe. The breadth of this knowledge pool allows the network to address a great variety of topics and policy issues with a wide regional scope.

Population Europe's activities are entirely third-party funded (with the exception of office space and administrative and IT support for the Secretariat, which is provided by the Max Planck Society), and its work revolves around projects. Between 2009 and 2025, Population Europe has developed and managed a fundraising portfolio in a cost-effective manner: with an average of 5-6 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, the Secretariat has raised money and been involved in 39 projects, both as the sole project implementor and as a project partner.

These projects have been funded by the European Commission's Directorates-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2 projects) and for Research and Innovation (8 projects), the German government (11 projects), public research funding organisations (8 projects), private foundations (8 projects) and private companies (2 projects).

In total, Population Europe's Secretariat has raised an average of more than 580,000 Euros per year for its projects. It has also been the principal investigator, project leader, or contractor in 22 of these projects (58%).

2.3 Output – Population Europe's Activities

Over the past 15 years, the Population Europe Secretariat, together with network partners and experts, has organised an average of more than 20 events, conferences, workshops and meetings per year (which since 2024, are held mostly within the framework of the "Population Europe Policy Lab"). Notable and regular public events include the annual Berlin Demography Days and European Day of Demography, as well as the monthly Tuesday Dialogue series, co-organised with the Einstein Center Population Diversity. There have also been numerous project-related events, including invitation-only meetings, workshops and hearings with high-level experts and decision-makers from academia, politics, business and civil society.

In addition, Population Europe has published almost 50 publications per year (including discussion papers, policy briefs, policy insights and population digests). Its social media channels have more than 9,000 followers on X and almost 1,250 followers on LinkedIn (as of February 2025). The organisation has also been active on BlueSky since January 2025.

Furthermore, Population Europe has developed innovative tools for engaging with broader audiences, including a traveling exhibition, teaching materials, apps and quizzes, myth-busters, podcasts, video interviews and infographics.

With the S.M.A.R.T. principles (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) in mind, the Population Europe Secretariat uses transparent key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure impact and to continuously monitor whether the activities are appropriate in terms of input of labour, direct and indirect costs, and cost-effective in terms of output and the tools used. The KPIs are individually tailored to the dissemination requirements of each project, its thematic and regional scope, and the financial capacities within the project budget earmarked for dissemination activities.

2.4 Outcome – Population Europe’s Scope

The activities and professional standing of Population Europe enable it to connect its academic network with representatives of the European Commission, members of the European Parliament, national, regional and local governments and parliaments, as well as with representatives of civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations.

As described in Section 2.1, the formats for these exchanges are targeted, and goal specific. For example, invitation-only meetings are particularly important for addressing, in a confidential atmosphere, the information needs of experts in government administrations and services who are in charge of preparing proposals, reports, draft legislation, decision papers and speeches and supporting the implementation of decisions. On the other hand, public events with key figures from politics, business and civil society, such as members of the European Commission and the European Parliament, national and regional authorities, entrepreneurs, key civil society actors and other bodies, allow for more thorough agenda-setting and activation of a wider public for demographic policy issues.

Population Europe takes advantage of hybrid formats to reach wider audiences, and offers interpretation in different languages when relevant and possible. Depending on the set-up, target-groups, and regional scope, some of the events are aimed at more international audiences – e.g. in the case of the Berlin Demography Days 2024, there were participants from more than 90 countries worldwide.

Population Europe actively manages a continuously growing mailing list (with currently almost 12,000 subscribers), that includes people in governments, the scientific community, the private sector, civil society and the general public. One of the main functions of this list is to inform people about the latest demographic research, recent publications and up-coming events from Population Europe and its partners.

2.5 Impact – Theory of Change

Population Europe's impact strategy is based on two premises: first, that providing access to academically rigorous and trustworthy information to decision-makers is critical for positive societal development, and second, that Population Europe's success as a "knowledge broker" depends on the trust of stakeholders who contribute their expertise and use the knowledge that arises from its activities.

With this in mind, the Population Europe Secretariat is active in keeping up-to-date with policy issues as well as government structures and processes. The mailing list, mentioned above, offers a way to provide access to information to a wide range of interested stakeholders in Europe and globally, as well as to maintain and to build trusting, professional relationships.

Furthermore, by providing strictly impartial information, careful selection of experts from scientific and non-scientific backgrounds for events, and referring primarily to peer-reviewed materials, Population Europe strives to ensure that its audiences can be confident that the information made available through its Policy Lab and other activities is based on the latest and highest quality scientific evidence.

Population Europe defines its role as science-driven, and as part of a wider impact network, in which advocacy and non-governmental organisations, social partner lobbying organisations, political party organisations, administrative bodies and government agencies play specific and important roles. Often these actors contribute knowledge, experience and networks of practitioners and people with "lived experience", which, together with high-level academically-led work, can lead to the most effective advice for policymakers.

Consistent collaboration with decision-makers and practitioners has proven to be the most effective way for Population Europe to have impact. Of course, it is not possible to include

entire stakeholder communities in a single event or publication. However, Population Europe's strategy is to be as representative as possible of the people impacted by the research. The Secretariat therefore invites and works with multiplier organisations, such as large networks of regional or sectoral stakeholders, some of which represent many thousands of members across Europe.

Maintaining these external links also creates pathways for wider social impact: together with experienced civil society partners and practitioners, Population Europe experts can contribute their skills in data analysis and evidence-based policy evaluation, without overstepping the boundaries of their competence. Exchanging directly with socially disadvantaged groups and vulnerable individuals who may be most affected by demographic policies, for example, requires different skills, such as those of therapists, social workers and advocates, or health professionals, and is not within the realm of Population Europe's work.

When it comes to bringing in perspectives of "lived experience" related to demographic issues in the context of the Policy Lab, Population Europe's public events can provide valuable insights. In recent years, the network has developed a range of tools to engage with broader audiences on demographic topics. Population Europe's network also has access to a wide range of survey data based on a large sample of respondents, which allows analysis of living conditions, interests and perceptions of often many thousands of individuals at an aggregate level and at different stages of their life course. This includes longitudinal research infrastructures, such as the "Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe" (SHARE) with more than 140,000 respondents in 27 countries and the "Generations and Gender Survey" (GGS) with information from over 200,000 individuals from 20 countries.

Depending on the availability of resources, Population Europe also provides access to demographic research and engagement through educational activities (see section 2.3). This includes working with partners to create materials for classroom teaching and events with student groups. In addition, the Secretariat has provided work and training opportunities for more than 22 student assistants and interns between 2009 and 2025, and has hosted a number of visiting scientists, research coordinators and science communicators from partner institutions for staff exchanges and secondments.

In the future, Population Europe aims to invite decision-makers from politics, business and civil society organisations to spend time "in-house" with its team to dive into demographic

issues and policy concerns, as well as data journalists and other social media representatives who could benefit from direct access to demographic research methods and data analysis. Another element is to offer training for students and more advanced researchers on communication with the policy arena.

Taking its role and activities into account, it is clear that measuring the impact of Population Europe's work through scientific citations or references in policy documents, is insufficient. Policy decisions, for example, are usually based on a wide range of information, sources and societal discourses, of which scientific advice is only one and is often not cited or referenced unless it is commissioned research. Therefore, Population Europe measures its impact in part by the quantity and quality of relevant interactions between research experts and people from policy as well as stakeholders in business, media and civil society. Such interactions can include meetings, visits to online publications, social media followers, interviews, and direct feedback.

Population Europe's impact strategy ensures that its network (and Policy Lab) maintains its high standards as a forum for trustworthy demographic knowledge and exchange. Building bridges between demographers and decision-makers in other sectors, providing opportunities for mutual learning, and offering opportunities for public exchange about the future of the population and society makes this powerful. This is how Population Europe strives to have the most positive impact at international, national, regional and local levels.

3 Annex

3.1 Members of the Advisory Board of the Population Europe Policy Lab

1. [Arnstein AASSVE](#)

Professor in Demography, PI of the Horizon Europe project “Towards a resilient future of Europe” (FutuRes), Bocconi University, Milan (Chair)

2. [Matthias BERGMANN](#)

Senior Researcher at the Institute for Social-Ecological Research in Frankfurt a. M. and Honorary Professor at the Institute for Ethics and Transdisciplinary Sustainability Research at the Leuphana University Lüneburg, Berlin

3. [Agnieszka CHŁOŃ-DOMIŃCZAK](#)

Director of the Institute of Statistics and Demography and Vice Rector for Research at SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Chair of the Government Population Council in Poland

4. [Helga A.G. DE VALK](#)

Director of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, The Hague

5. [Naika FOROUTAN](#)

Director of the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), Berlin

6. [Christian KOBSDA](#)

Head of the Berlin Office of the Max Planck Society

7. [Michaela KREYENFELD](#)

Director of the Einstein Center Population Diversity and Professor of Sociology at Hertie School, Berlin

8. [Wolfgang LUTZ](#)

Founding Director of the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital, Vienna

9. [Melinda MILLS](#)

Director of the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science, Oxford

10. [Claudia NEU](#)

Professor of Sociology of Rural Areas at the University of Gottingen / Kassel

11. [Jürgen RENN](#)

Founding Director of the Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology, Jena

12. [Jennifer D. SCIUBBA](#)

President and CEO of the Population Reference Bureau, Washington, D.C.

13. [C. Katharina SPIEB](#)

Director of the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB), Wiesbaden, and
Professor for Population Economics at the Johannes-Gutenberg-University Mainz

14. [Pieter VANHUYSE](#)

Professor of Political Economy and Public Policy at the University of Southern Denmark,
and Chair at the Danish Institute for Advanced Study, Odense

3.2 Population Europe's partner institutes (as of February 2025)

1. Austria, Vienna:
Vienna Institute of Demography
2. Austria, Vienna:
Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (IIASA, OeAW, University of Vienna)
3. Belgium, Antwerp:
University of Antwerp, Centre for Population, Family and Health
4. Belgium, Brussels:
Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels Institute for Social and Population Studies
5. Belgium, Louvain-la-Neuve:
Université catholique de Louvain, Research Centre on Demography and Societies
6. Bulgaria, Sofia:
Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
7. Czech Republic, Prague:
Charles University, Department of Demography and Geodemography
8. Denmark, Odense:
University of Southern Denmark, Interdisciplinary Centre on Population Dynamics (CPop)
9. Estonia, Tallinn:
Tallinn University, Estonian Institute for Population Studies
10. Finland, Helsinki:
University of Helsinki, Helsinki Institute for Demography and Population Health
11. Finland, Helsinki:
Väestöliitto, Population Research Institute
12. France, Paris:
Institut National d'Études Démographiques

13. Germany, Munich:
Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy
14. Germany, Munich:
Munich Research Institute for the Economics of Aging and SHARE Analyses
15. Germany, Rostock:
Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research
16. Germany, Rostock:
University of Rostock, Chair for Empirical Social Research and Demography
17. Germany, Wiesbaden:
Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)
18. Hungary, Budapest:
Hungarian Demographic Research Institute
19. Italy, Florence:
European University Institute (EUI), Comparative Life Course and Inequality Research Centre (CLIC)
20. Italy, Milan:
Bocconi University, Dondena Centre for Research on Social Dynamics
21. Italy, Rome:
University of Rome 'La Sapienza', Department of Statistical Sciences
22. Lithuania, Kaunas:
Vytautas Magnus University, Demographic Research Centre
23. Netherlands, Groningen:
University of Groningen, Population Research Centre
24. Netherlands, The Hague:
Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
25. Norway, Oslo:
Centre for Fertility and Health – Norwegian Institute of Public Health

26. Poland, Warsaw:
Warsaw School of Economics, Institute of Statistics and Demography
27. Russian Federation, Moscow:
National Research University Higher School of Economics, Vishnewsky Institute of Demography
28. Slovak Republic, Bratislava:
Demographic Research Centre
29. Spain, Barcelona:
Centre for Demographic Studies at the Autonomous University of Barcelona
30. Spain, Barcelona:
Pompeu Fabra University, DemoSoc Research Group
31. Spain, Madrid:
Spanish National Research Council, Center for Humanities & Social Sciences, Institute of Economy, Geography & Demography, Research Group on Demographic Dynamics
32. Sweden, Lund:
Lund University, Centre for Economic Demography
33. Sweden, Stockholm:
Stockholm University Demography Unit
34. Sweden, Umeå:
Umeå University, Centre for Demographic and Ageing Research (CEDAR)
35. Switzerland, Lausanne / Geneva:
Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research LIVES
36. Switzerland, Zurich:
University of Zurich, Population Research Center
37. United Kingdom, London:
London School of Economics and Political Science
38. United Kingdom, London:
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Population Studies Group

39. United Kingdom, London:

[UCL Social Research Institute](#)

40. United Kingdom, Oxford:

[Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science](#)

41. United Kingdom, Southampton and St Andrews:

[ESRC Centre for Population Change](#)