



Demographic Threats Facing Poland on the Basis of a Poll of Students of Poznań University of Economics and Business

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Abstract

This paper makes an attempt to identify demographic threats facing Poland based on the polls taken among students of a higher education institution specialized in economics. For the purpose of the study conducted among the students of the Poznań University of Economics and Business on young people's attitudes, including their system of values, the empirical data obtained using a questionnaire were gathered and aggregated. As the result, factors exerting influence on the demographic attitudes of academic youth were assessed. This provided the basis for formulating recommendations with respect to the state's demographic policy.

Keywords: demography, family policy, value system, university students' attitudes, Poznań University of Economics and Business, Poland.

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Introduction

While examining some aspects of the demographic situation in Poland on the grounds of economic sciences its negative features are being indicated with increased frequency. In enumerating those features, one usually points out the rise in unemployment and fall in births, particularly in the context of the declining standard of living. This refers predominantly to the young generation who faces having to turn to migration when looking for

growth opportunities. The declining number of men and women who decide to legalize their relationship and start a family leads to a completely new and unique social situation. One of the reasons of this development is a shortage of decent work for decent wages providing young people with at least a minimum subsistence. Consequently, their dilemmas emerge: whether to follow one's natural desire to marry and have a family, or whether, being guided by cool rationalism, make an attempt at attaining professional

self-actualisation no matter at what cost, thus postponing family plans until some indefinite distant future? Viewing the situation in this light, the identification of students' attitudes towards family life and professional career, that is, programming their personal future is no longer a theoretical and **Abstract** issue. It seems that the demographic situation in Poland is turning into one of the key problems whose impact on economic and social development calls for a genuine scientific debate.

The demographic threats facing today's Poland do not represent merely a popular topic for media-networks journalism. This is social reality resulting from the state's policies. After 1989 the birth rates in Poland have been characterized by a steady trend which does not guarantee a basic replacement rate. The new generation forms communities which are smaller by nearly one third than those created by their immediate ancestors, and this situation is by no means offset by people's longer lifespan. Aging of societies is not without consequences for the economies and budgets of individual countries. It leads to shortages in labour market and explosion of migration from different countries, environments and cultures. All this generates entirely new problems which have so far been poorly identified, posing a direct threat to sustainable economic and social development.

The present paper makes an attempt to answer the question what factors underlie the behaviour of young people forming the academic environment who do not choose to start a family or enlarge it. We propose to verify the hypothesis which assumes that the main reasons behind the youth attitudes against family is lack of job and housing security, as well as the weakness of the government's family policy. The next step involved designing and conducting a study

employing the authors' own questionnaire. For the data analysis, certain methods of descriptive statistics were used. In addition, a comparative analysis of some legislative measures affecting the demographic processes was conducted¹. As the result, conclusions and recommendation were formulated using the descriptive analysis.

Poland's Demographic Situation and its Potential Threats

As science, demography formulates patterns pertaining to the population development in specific social and economic conditions on the territory under consideration. The term does not mainly refer to a statistical and analytical description of the population's state and structure. It is also concerned with investigating and assessing the changes which have occurred as the result of peoples' migration so far (Holzer, 2003, p. 12). The consistency between the paradigms of demography and the strategies of development of the European Union, including Poland, appears self-evident. Yet, far from being self-evident are the practical instruments supporting the demographic policy, which, by the very definition, should aim at sustaining demographic balance in the European Community; however, this is not reflected in reality. Amongst the factors which are characteristic for Poland's demographic situation, the following have been distinguished: population growth, fertility rate and average life expectancy for people over 60 years old.

The relationship between the population growth and the number of people,

¹ Sometimes legislative practices can completely determine students' attitudes. Still, some attitudes of young people against family should come as no surprise considering that a single mother comes first before a married mother, when enrolling the child in a nursery.

Table 1. Rate of natural increase in Poland in 2004-2014

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
-0,2	-0,1	0,1	0,3	0,9	0,8	0,9	0,3	0	-0,5	0

Source: <http://www.stat.gov.pl> [accessed on 14.02.2016].

usually given per 1000 population, is described by rate of natural increase. The population growth is the difference between birth rate and death rate in a given period. This indicator is one of the tools used for monitoring demographic processes of a country under study. The identification of these processes allows the programming of actions which aim at adjusting social policy to the effects brought by social and economic changes and at countering the adverse phenomena (GUS [Central Statistical Office], 2011). The variation in the rate of natural increase, determined for Poland in 2004-2014, is illustrated in Table 1. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office, Poland's population at the end of 2011 was equal to 38 538 447, showing an increase by 8581 population. At the end of 2010, this increase, compared to the previous year, was almost 33 thousand people. The positive population increase in 2010 is characterized by 0,9 value of the rate of natural increase, which means that there were additional 9 people per 10 000 population (in 2009, there were 8 people, and in the early 90' of the last century, there were over 40 people per every 10 000 population). Since 2004 there was an increase in the number of births. The positive rate of natural increase was sustained between 2006 and 2012. Moreover, in 2013 a negative rate of natural increase was recorded (it reached -0,5 value), which implies that there were 5 fewer people per 10 000 population. It is worth noting that the rate of natural increase results from the fact that

the "baby-boom" generation from the early 80' entered their adult stage of life (the trend of the demographic boom was estimated up to 1988, included). From the perspective of international comparisons, it is worth pointing out that the rate of natural increase recorded for 2010 at the level of 0,9 reflects Poland's persistent place in the group of the EU aging countries (CSO, 2011). Then, at the end of 2014, Polish rate of natural increase reached 0,00 level. The spatial diversity of the rate of natural increase in Poland by voivodships – from the point of view of the value of the rate of natural increase – is presented in Figure 1 and Table 2, showing values for both . Pomorskie voivodship is characterised by the highest rate of natural increase in Poland, where the value of the rate in 2014 equalled +2,00. It means that there were 2 people more per 1000 population in this region. Satisfactory values of the rate were recorded in Wielkopolskie voivodship (Greater Poland) (+1,7), where the Poznań University of Economics and Business is located, being the object of the study presented in this paper, and also in Małopolskie voivodship (+1,4). We have a different situation in Świętokrzyskie voivodship (-2,3) and Łódzkie voivodship (-2,8), where per 1000 population there are nearly 3 fewer people. Analysing the spatial diversity of the rate values across Poland's voivodships, it is not possible to indicate one general and clear relationship. The demographic situation is affected by certain trends: the positive values of the rate under

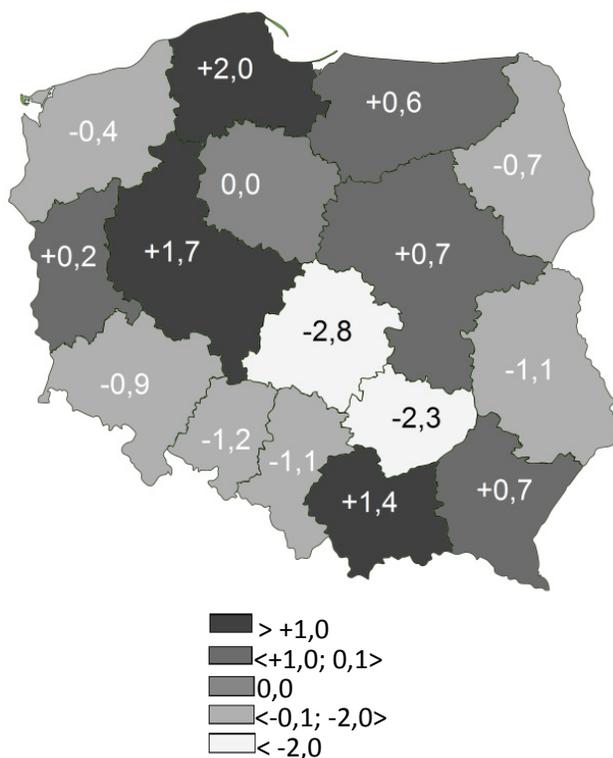


Figure 1. Spatial diversity of the demographic situation in Poland based on the value of the rate of natural increase (2014)

Source: Authors' own study based on the CSO data, according to <http://www.stat.gov.pl> [accessed on 14.02.2016].

discussion are more likely to be recorded in voivodships with a relatively high rate of economic development. A similar trend can be observed in voivodships where conservative social and economic attitudes dominate, and where traditions of the organic work, influenced by history and culture, are still present (Wielkopolska). Moreover, a low or negative rate of natural increase was recorded in the voivodships on the border with Germany (Dolnośląskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Lubuskie), as well as those which are in the sphere of influence of our Western neighbour

(Opolskie and Śląskie voivodships). On the other hand, in the voivodships bordering with Slovakia (Małopolskie and Podkarpackie) positive values of the rate of natural increase were recorded. Furthermore, it was observed that the demographic situation in Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship corresponds to the average rate recorded for Poland (0,00). The classification of the voivodships according to the competitive position of the rate of natural increase is shown in Table 2, with Wielkopolskie voivodship being distinguished against the background of the rest of the voivodships.

Table 2. Natural population increase in Poland per 1000 population by voivodships (as of 31.12.2014)

POLAND (average value)		0,00
Position	Voivodships	Value of the rate of natural increase
1	pomorskie	2,00
2	wielkopolskie	1,70
3	małopolskie	1,40
4	podkarpackie	0,70
5	mazowieckie	0,70
6	warmińsko-mazurskie	0,60
7	lubuskie	0,20
8	kujawsko-pomorskie	0,00
9	zachodniopomorskie	-0,40
10	podlaskie	-0,70
11	dolnośląskie	-0,90
12	śląskie	-1,10
13	lubelskie	-1,10
14	opolskie	-1,20
15	świętokrzyskie	-2,30
16	łódzkie	-2,80

Source: Authors' own study based on <http://www.stat.gov.pl> [accessed on 14.02.2016].

Another indicator of demographic situation is total fertility rate. The value of the total fertility rate corresponds to an average number of children that would be born to a woman over her reproductive life time (15-49 years old), assuming that she would give birth with the intensity observed for the year under consideration, i.e. assuming that partial fertility rates in

this time are constant [CSO 2011, CSO, 2015]. This index provides indirect information as to the demographic risks arising, among other things, from the declining total rate of fertility, low natural population increase and aging process of the society. The values of the total fertility rate for Poland in the years 2004-2014, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Total fertility rate in Poland in 2004-2014

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1,23	1,24	1,27	1,31	1,39	1,4	1,38	1,3	1,3	1,26	1,33

Source: <http://www.stat.gov.pl> [accessed on 14.02.2016].

In the early 21st century changes have been observed in Poland with respect to the model of family and procreation attitudes bringing decline in the total fertility rate. These trends may lead to an irreversible aging of society. In spite of the growing number of births in the years 2004-2009, the level of reproduction does not guarantee the basic replacement rate. Ultimately, the number of the working-age population is declining. The implications of such demographic situation for the macro-economic condition of the country, including its budget, may prove to be considerable in the future. Therefore, one searches for an optimum value for the total fertility rate. It appears that the total fertility rate ranging between 2,10 and 2,15 would reflect a favourable demographic situation. This represents a situation in which a woman in the reproductive age group would give birth on average to two and more children.

Analysing the data on total fertility rate in Poland, it was noticed that in the years 2004-2010 the value of the indicator under discussion was growing. For example, in 2010 (value of +1,38), compared to 2003, there was an increase of 0,16 percentage point. At the same time, 2003 saw the lowest total fertility rate for over 50 years (+1,22). Although it is true that in the first half of 2014 there was a significant increase in the total fertility rate, the first increase in six years (there

were 186 900 children born, which is 5 400 more than in the same period of the previous year), that does not mean that the trend is sustainable.

The indicator describing **average further life expectancy** of people who are 60 is also employed when analyzing Poland's demographic situation. This parameter shows the number of years people who are 60 years old are still to live, assuming the unchanged level of mortality from the period for which the life expectancy tables were drawn up. The rate of the average further life expectancy is determined both for men and women. Longer life expectancy of the population is a relative indicator of the improvement of life quality, being as such the reflection of the society's state of health. This trend is also a challenge for the government's policy on financial stability of pension systems, labour market and social care [CSO, 2011, CSO, 2015]. The changes pertaining to the average further life expectancy of men and women in Poland at the age of 60, for the years 2004-2014 are presented in Table 4.

While analysing the values of the indicator accounting for average further life expectancy the observation made was that in the years 2004-2014 there was a systematic increase in the life expectancy of Poland's population. This trend appears durable in its nature. This indicator provides information that the average further life span

Table 4. Average further life expectancy of people who are 60 years old, by gender (in years) for Poland in 2004-2014

GENDER/ year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Woman	22,5	22,7	22,8	22,9	23,1	23,2	23,5	23,8	23,8	23,9	24,3
Man	17,4	17,5	17,7	17,7	17,9	17,9	18,3	18,5	18,6	18,7	19,2

Source: <http://www.stat.gov.pl> [accessed on 14.02.2016].

of the man who in 2014 was 60 years old will be by roughly 1,8 years longer than the life expectancy of the man who turned 60 in 2004. It was also recorded that the average further life expectancy for women was extended in the last decade by a similar period of 1,8 years. In Poland we encounter the phenomenon of excess mortality among men. This implies a significant difference between women's average further life expectancy and that of men (for 60-year olds). This difference, both in 2004 and 2014, was over 5 years (5,1). Despite the positive trends being observed in connection with the longer life expectancy recorded for the Polish population, it still lags considerably behind the values recorded for the European Union. The average further life expectancy in Poland is presented in Figure 2. It seems that the average life expectancy of men and women will continue to grow, which will ultimately lead to a greater number of elderly people

in our society. This situation would certainly pose no demographic threat were it not for the sustainable decline of the overall Poland's population [CSO, 2015].

The phenomenon of men's excessive mortality belongs to the demographic factors which are marginalised. This view is still held although excessive mortality has been observed in all age groups whereas the differences which have been identified are growing along with age. This trend, however, cannot be disregarded when assessing the threats to Polish families being created, developed, and in particular made stable and enduring.

A further indicator of potential demographic risks is natural mobility of population. This indicator is illustrated in Figure 3 for the years 1990-2012. It has been observed that there was a significant decline in the number of Poland's population, which over two decades was reduced by nearly 179 000 population.

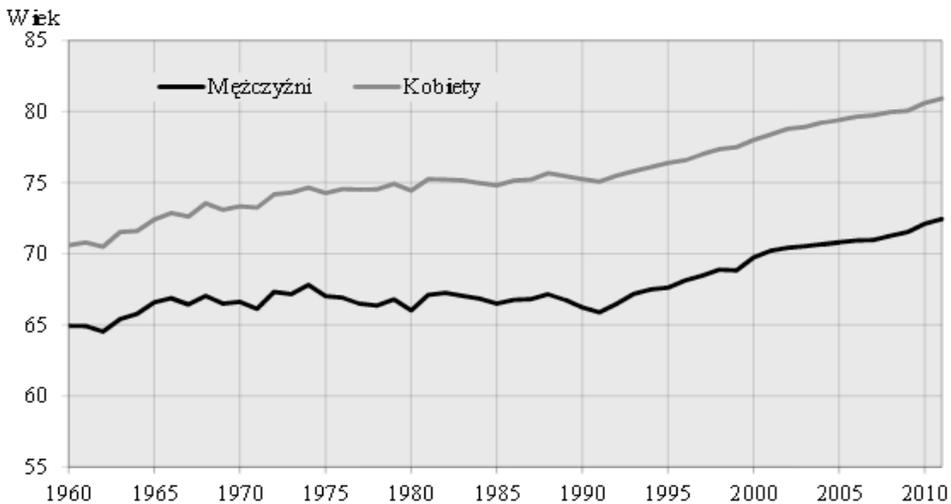


Figure 2. Average life expectancy in Poland in the years 1960-2011

Source: http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/L_podst_inf_ov_rozwoju_dem_pl_do_2012.pdf [accessed on 14.02.2016].

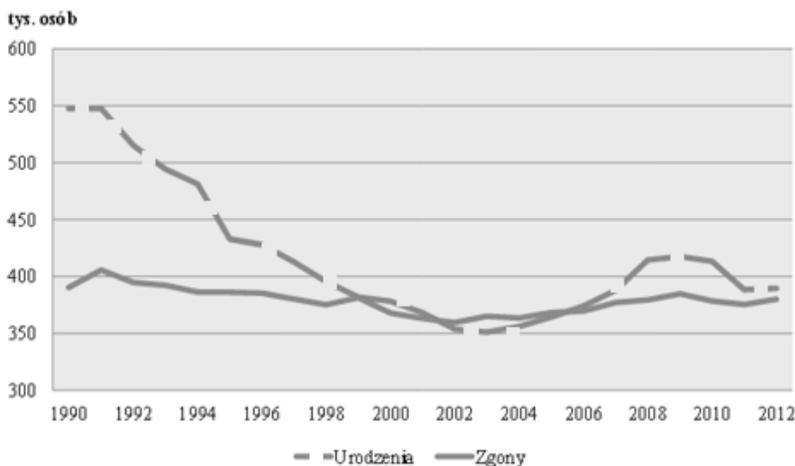


Figure 3. Natural mobility of Poland's population in the years 1990-2012.

Source: http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/L_podst_inf_o_rozwoju_dem_pl_do_2012.pdf [accessed on 14.02.2016]

Based on the analysis of natural mobility in Poland, it was found that in 2012 the number of births and deaths was nearly equal. However, the years 2002-2005 saw a strong negative trend, for the number of children being born was significantly smaller than that of deaths. If such situation persists over a longer period of time, it can lead to a demographic disaster. What may prove to act as counterbalance would be favourable changes in the quality of life, improving the society's overall state of health (CSO, 2015)..

Demographic Forecasts vs. Threats from an Ex-Ante Perspective

One cannot conclude on the basis of the available demographic analyses that the decline in the total fertility rate that is being observed is a completed process. Exploring the attitudes displayed by the contemporary youth who find increasingly less interest in forming enduring and formal marital and family bonds seems to suggest the opposite trend, conducive to further reduction in the number of births.

The factors determining the attitudes of the procreation generation, identified by scholars on the socio-economic plane, comprise, among others, professional career (including education), housing conditions, employment conditions and wages, which are generally referred to as the concept of socio-economic security. Even optimistic forecasts of an increase of the total fertility rate in Poland do not seem to ensure the basic replacement rate (Kotowska, 2008). A medium term perspective for total fertility rate is presented in Table 5.

The analysis of the CSO forecast allows the observation that for the year 2010 it was underestimated (actually total fertility rate was +1,38). Furthermore, all the forecasts presented are optimistic, showing a small and steady increase of the rate up to 2030 (second average variant according to CSO), or a very dynamic increase (Eurostat forecast). But do actual prerequisites exist for making only positive forecasts of the fertility rate in Poland? It seems that their correction is not to be avoided. It appears necessary to take

Table 5. Total fertility rate – an analysis of some forecasts of the demographic perspective 2020-2030.

Years	Total fertility rate		
	CSO Second average variant year 2007	Eurostat 2004 – 2050	CSO 2003 – 2030
2005	1,24	1,19	-
2010	1,32	1,19	1,10
2020	1,37	1,42	1,20
2030	1,39	1,58	1,20

Source: E. Kotowska, Analiza płodności oraz założenia progностyczne, Warszawa, January 2008.

into consideration the changes in the political and macroeconomic situation, and, in particular, the increased migration in Europe, which reduces the actual level of life quality and its socio-economic security.

Figure 4 shows the forecast of the Central Statistical Office pertaining to the number of births and deaths. According to CSO experts, the number of births may be subject to minor changes up to the year 2020 (approximately 340 000 a year). After that, the

prediction is that there will be a steady decline up to 315 500 population in 2020 and 232 700 in the year 2030. The decline in the number of births is justified by the fact that the generation of women from the demographic decline will enter the age of the greatest fertility, and whose number will be reduced comparably. For the years 2016-2020 the forecast for natural population increase is negative, which is only to get worse in Poland after the year 2020.

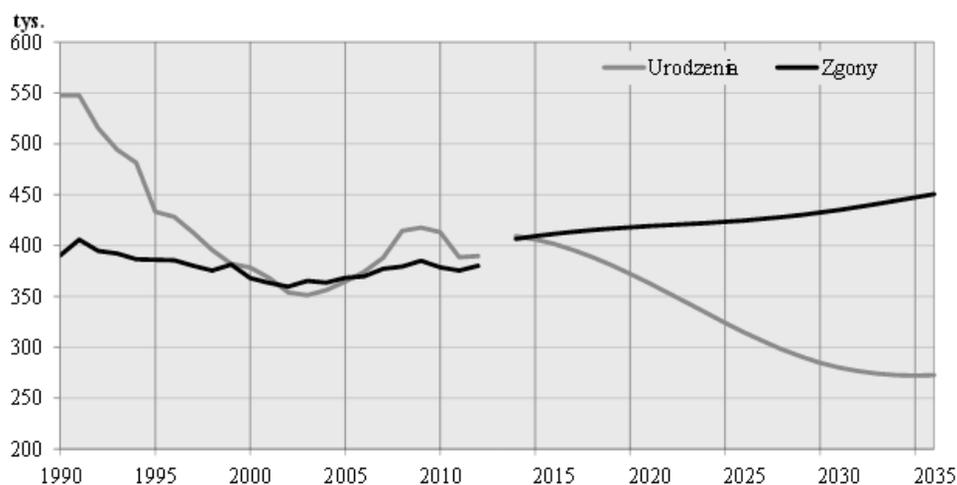


Figure 4. Relation of births to deaths in Poland in the years 1990-2012 against the background of the forecast up to 2035.

Source: http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/L_podst_inf_o_rozwoju_dem_pl_do_2012.pdf [accessed on 14.02.2016].

Demographic Profile of the Student Population of Poznań University of Economics and Business

In referring to Poland's demographic situation thus identified, a study was devised and carried out on the attitudes of academic youth towards family life. An attempt was made to identify demographic risks arising from the students' diverse attitudes. It was assumed that the micro-community of the students at Poznań University of Economics and Business, located in Wielkopolskie voivodship, which by attracting young people from a variety of regions in Poland and thus being characterized by the positive demographic indicators, may provide a relatively coherent picture of the overall demographic situation. The personal scope of the study is further justified by a particular role of university as a community which aggregates leading trends in economic, entrepreneurial and social attitudes, and behaviours evinced by the young generation of Poles (Rosa and Wanat, 2013, pp. 13-23).

The evaluation of students' attitudes is not an easy task, indisputably defined in the methodology. The diversity of attitudes and values, their relativism and freedom in providing a definition pose a challenge to the research process. In sociology the term value applies to an idea or institution, a real or imaginary object towards which individuals or communities adopt an attitude of respect, endowing it with an important role in their life, and possibly feeling a sort of compulsion when striving for it (Szczepański, 1967, p. 58). The paradigm of the value encompasses the systems of human cognitive categories which human beings employ to describe and evaluate the world, providing a basis for the choices they make. These systems are not of a universal category. Specific goals do not carry the same weight in

every environment (subpopulation). The system of values is largely shaped by individualized needs, attitudes and even aspirations of the individual (Ignatczyk, 2002, pp. 17-22).

Young people were chosen for this study, for they have been considered one of the main social groups shaping the demographic situation of the territory under consideration² A particular role of young university students is defined by: "process correlates of their functioning – [...] a seeming independence (adulthood) still unburdened by broader responsibilities and the psychology of students' omnipresence which does not force one to stabilisation, relatively big mobility, the presence of strong social role models, a characteristic openness to new ideas and social, cultural and ideological proposals" (Piechnik-Borusowska, 1998). Individuals who are still in the process of learning represent a natural capital of every society, albeit not always sufficiently recognised, with the academic youth being a sort of a social barometer playing an important role of voicing the views entertained by a considerable portion of the public (Wawro, 2014, p. 7)

The distinctiveness of the population of the university students and the potential they have at hand in the process of creating and passing on the civilisational and cultural heritage make them a valid subject for the research on attitudes and ultimately the demographic explorations on the grounds of economic sciences (Klaus and Wanat, 2013, pp. 40-58). Therefore the attempt to identify the values which the university students follow and ultimately apply leads to the establishing of the key factors affecting pro-family or anti-family stances. This is also of

² The personal scope of the study comprised youth who are at the last stage of the education process, that is academic youth.

no little significance for the overall society.

The survey was conducted on the population of students attending Poznań University of Economics and Business (N=2000), in March 2014, using the authors' questionnaire³. Women made

³ In 2014 the number of students attending Poznań University of Economics and Business was 8107 (including 4938 women, making up 61% of the population). The survey under discussion comprised a sample of 2000 students (including 1400 women, making up 70% of the population). Respondents were chosen randomly. In determining the minimum size of the sample by using the method proposed by Steczkowski, the number thus obtained was 367 persons (estimation error 5%) (cf. Steczkowski, J., 1995, *Metoda reprezentacyjna w badaniu zjawisk ekonomiczno społecznych*, PWN, Warszawa – Kraków). By adopting the sample of 2000 students the error of estimate was at the level of 2%. We refer to the sample as representative when the relationships occurring within the sample between variables correspond to the same relationships in the general population. In the survey, a significant feature, under correct drawing of the sample, proved to be gender (age differentiation has a small significance owing to the fact that the majority of students are at the age typical for higher education). In this case every element of the general population shows a similar likelihood of entering the sample. This criterion decides on the correctness of sample selection (cf. Sokołowski A. (2004): *O niewłaściwym stosowaniu metod statystycznych*. StatSoft Polska, Kraków, <http://www.statsoft.pl/portals/0/Downloads/Naukowe1.pdf> accessed on 31.08.2016]. The survey presented in this paper is distinguished by the representative sample because of its socio-demographic features (including gender, age, place of residence). Correct selection and representativeness were verified for the feature "gender", which key in the analysis of answers, In the designed survey, gender does not constitute a criterion determining the answers given by the students surveyed. The feature functions in the survey scenario as one of the criteria

up 70% of respondents and men 30%. The study covered both full-time students (83% of the surveyed) and extramural students (17% of the surveyed). Respondents were asked, among other things, whether they wanted to have children and if so, than how many. Next they were asked in what conditions would prevent them from having children, and what conditions would be conducive to procreation, that is, in what conditions they would make a positive decision as to the enlargement of family.

The age structure of respondents is presented according to the year of birth in Table 6, and in addition in graph 5. Students born in the years 191-1994 made up the majority of respondents, representing a typical age group for the studying youth (in the course of subsequent levels of education).

When asked about the factors which should be considered, after getting married, as coming before having children, preceding the procreation decision or even excluding it, the majority of respondents indicated in the first place career (60%) or obtaining a high professional position (30%). Every tenth respondent reported prosperity to be more important than having children. The large majority of young people would be willing to give up having children just to ensure an adequate social and material position. These attitudes are illustrated in Figure 6.

which are informative in nature (cf. Popek and Wanat 2014). In the surveyed group, the majority was made up of students born in the years 1991-1994 (the interval of 5 years, the usual age group of academic youth in the time frame considered). The adopted statistical criteria allow inductive conclusion, made on the basis of the results produced by the empirical study – in relation to the factors which are identified. The work did not explore forecasts and the likelihood of changes occurring in the demographic situation in Poland.

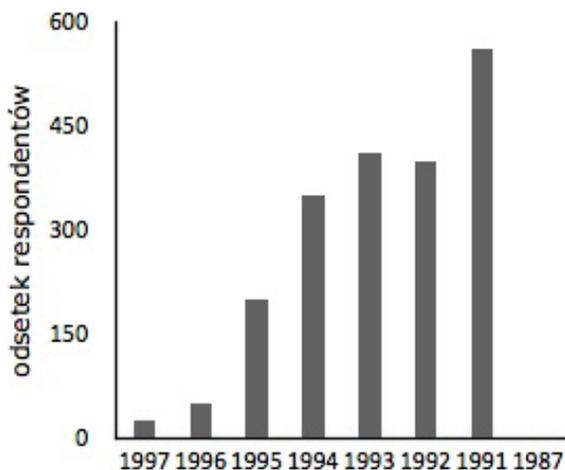


Figure 5. Number of respondents by date of birth

Source: Authors' own study

Table 6. Birth year

birth year	percentage of respondents
1997	27
1996	50
1995	200
1994	350
1993	410
1992	400
1991	560
1987	3

Source: Authors' own study

When asked what conditions would have to be fulfilled for them to decide to have their first or another child, in the first place respondents reported the income criterion (50% of the surveyed), explaining that what they had in mind was to see their income rise.

Besides, the following was also mentioned: family's help in raising children (30%), easier access to nursery and pre-school (15%). These responses show that as many as 45% of students expect help in the functioning and development of the family, both from

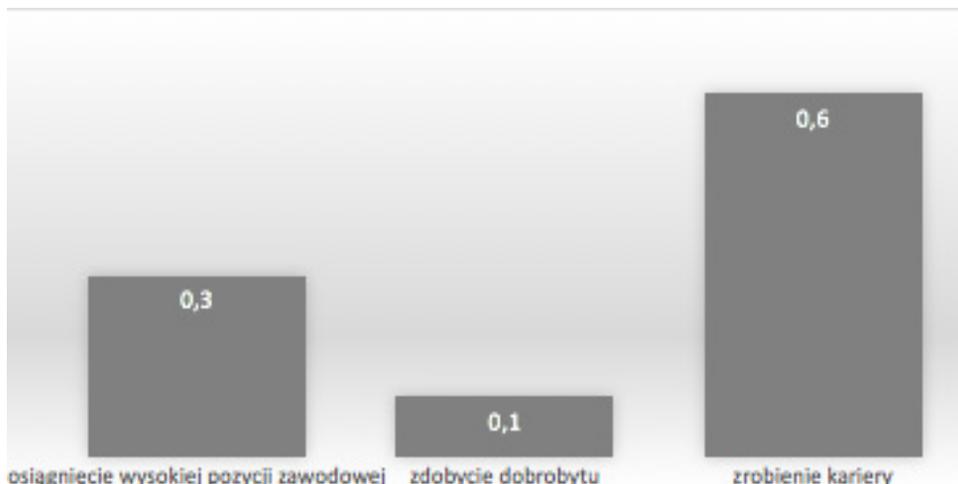


Figure 6. What goals or values would make you, after getting married, give up having children?

30% - obtaining a high professional position
 10%-attaining prosperity
 60%- career development

Source: Authors' own study

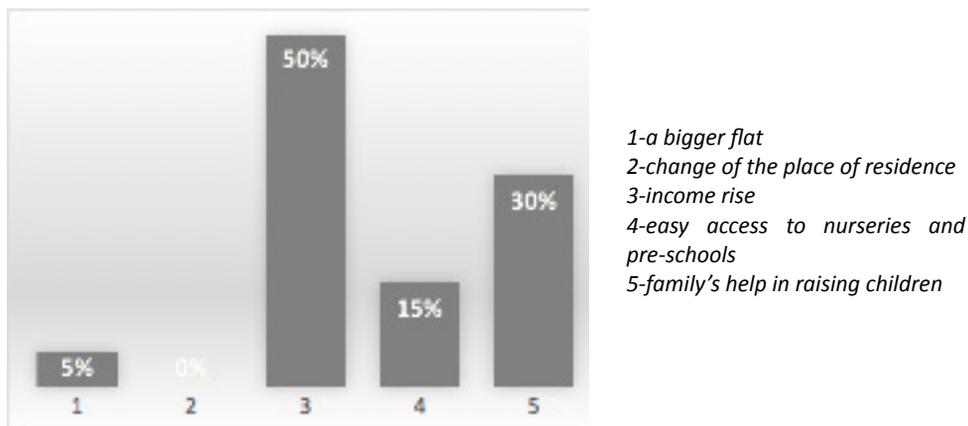


Figure 7. What conditions do you consider to be necessary for you to decide to have the first or another child?

Source: Authors' own study

the state and from their family. The determinants of students' positive attitudes towards procreation are illustrated in Figure 7.

It appears that the answers of the academic youth thus illustrated are determined by fear of responsibility and having to make a personal effort in order to face the challenge of taking care of family in terms of its functioning and development. The anxiety of not being able to cope with this challenge makes students adopt their careful and at times negative attitudes towards family life. The change of the state's family policy aimed at eliminating the potential barriers of students in terms of their procreation attitudes may ultimately affect the attitude change by building public trust.

The verifier of the reliability of the survey were the questions posed purposefully in the final stage of the questionnaire. Respondents, who previously characterized their attitudes toward family life, later provided answers to the question whether they would like to have children, and if so, how many. The answers are presented in Figures 8 and 9, respectively.

Notwithstanding the answers identified in the previous group of answers indicating the range of students' procreation barriers, their potential escape from responsibility, cult of materialism and of the easy way, still, it was shown that a clear majority want to have offspring (80%), of whom as many as 70% want to have two children, 15% three and 5% even more. Likewise, only 5% of respondents say that they do not desire to have children in future.

The aggregation of the results obtained allows one to make, at least, a preliminary observation that the anti-family attitudes of the academic youth depicted as allegedly prevailing are not true. The survey conducted at the Poznań University of Economics and Business suggests that in the vast majority students' attitudes are characterized by the traditional system of values in which the priority of marriage and family in one's personal and social life is recognised. Every seventh person in the survey wishes to have two children, which, provided appropriate conditions are created, seems to postpone the risk of the

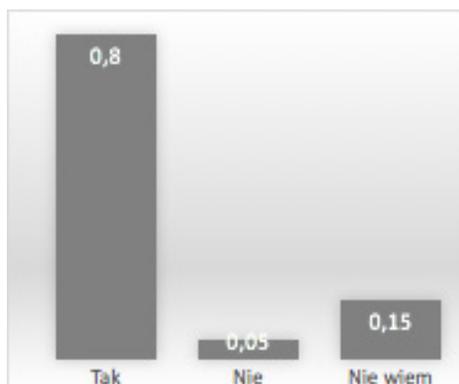


Figure 8. Would you like to have children?

Source: Authors'own study



Figure 9. How many children would you like to have?

Source: Authors'own study

demographic threats. But is that really the case? To what extent will students' attitudes be conditional on the government's family-friendly policy on development? The analysis of students' answers allows a selection of the priorities to be made as regards the socio-economic security for the new families. Those include: financial security (decent job and wages – 60% of respondents), multi-generational security (family's help in raising children, that is, financial security of grandparents in the form of decent social security – 30% of respondents), security in terms of children care (easy access to nurseries and pre-schools, parent-friendly employment, a high quality of public services, including pre-school education – 15% of respondents).

To conclude, the findings lead us to confirm the thesis formulated at the beginning of the paper, where it was assumed that the main reason behind the anti-family attitudes of the young people is the lack of job and housing stabilization. This situation is linked directly to the lack of financial security, being one of the consequences of the weakness of the state's policies on family. Moreover,

it is possible to deny the opposite hypothesis, which appears to suggest that academic youth do not want to get married, start family and have children, they espouse only anti-family attitudes and those concerned with consumption of goods. If 80% of respondents who are students of Poznań University of Economics and Business report that they want to have children and wish to raise them as a married couple in a family, it is hard to ignore this finding as accidental or tendentious. Young people are trying to explain this certain distance towards active procreation attitudes by referring to their disappointment with the government's ineffective family policy, which is inadequate considering the needs and the demographic situation. Furthermore, the links between students' views and political preferences have not been demonstrated. The issue of the model of the state's pro-family and demographic policy should be the object of the on-going studies, also those on the grounds of economic sciences, and yet above all, it should be the object of active and free of demagogy actions undertaken by the competent government departments responsible for those policies,

as well as local government units and non-governmental organizations⁴. While drawing up development poli-

⁴ It appears that only sound and honest research in the field of demography and an on-going monitoring of the demographic situation together with its economic and social context has a chance to free the socially sensitive subject from demagogy, political manipulation and pseudo-scientific investigations. Interdisciplinary research provides the opportunity for eliminating the alleged near return of the “tribal” concept of the development of civilization which questions the rationale behind the model of a state which is based on natural development of family. A similar empirical explanation is demanded by the fear that one’s basic needs will not be met, as experienced by the ever growing human population in the face of the shortage of resources and lack of possibilities to satisfy people’s basic needs here on earth. Those doubts are further strengthened by the concepts of “labour-saving scientific and technological progress” and “anthropogenic burden on the natural environment”. Those paradigms are accompanied by a vision of societies as living solely from social welfare. Critics of the pro-family development policy seem to be giving up too easily on historical experience and perspective. In the last century similar theses were formulated by theoreticians of diverse totalitarian systems attempting to implement them in practice. The real consequences of the totalitarianisms of the XX century should provide a counterbalance to so called “modern” ideas (cf.: Alex Callinicos, Justin Rosenberg, *Uneven and combined development: the social-relational substratum of „the international”?* *An exchange of letters*, „Cambridge Review of International Affairs”, 2008, vol. 21, no. 1, sp 81). This by no means excuses scientists from monitoring and evaluating the demographic situation. Research methodology should additionally be strengthened by the “grammar of the universal moral law” whose Advocate said, “a nation that kills its own children has no future” (cf. John Paul II, *Przemówienie do Zgromadzenia Ogólnego Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych w 50-lecie jej*

cies, it appears necessary to create a Polish model of the demographic leadership, based on the paradigms of the new institutional economics (Wanat and Potkański, 2010, pp.182-185), whose weakness, which may come as a surprise, has even been detected by the new National Urban Policy (2015, pp. 95-101)

Summary

One of the most basic, if not the most important, questions addressing young people today is the issue of the future. In the centre stage of students’ dilemmas is the decision whether or not to marry and have a family. Not only does total fertility rate depend on those choices, but also Poland’s demographic security. Albeit research has shown a far-reaching relaxation of moral norms among young people, marriage, family and the willingness to have children still belong to those life values which are strongly pronounced and openly declared. If it were to depend only on declarations, the future and stability of marital bonds and thus formed families would be quite safe, along with Poland’s demographic future. Next to the personal desire of family happiness as expressed by the country’s young citizens, what is also necessary is a similar respect shown by the state for the family and marriage institution and for the children who are being planned and brought into this world, and ultimately for the durability and future of the Polish families. From the economic point of view, apart from the numerous other aspects, the well-functioning families ensure a sustainable and balanced development, and economic stability of the country. For it seems that this is precisely the family, making up a household, sometimes described as an exemplary nano-enterprise, which

powstania, 5 October 1995, 3: *Insegnamenti XVIII/2*, 1995, 732].

in the first place contributes, at least on a nano-scale, to the country's competitive potential, with the family's development and efficiency being what decides on the country's economy competitive place (Lis and Wanat 2014, p. 79). In this context, disregarding pro-family policies is a trap for the economic policy which, while implementing long-term macro-economic objectives, seems to be forgetting about the foundations of development, thus risking not only the onset of potential crisis, but even long-term failure.

The government can use, and occasionally does so, various tools of support for family policies which tend to depend on the political situation. Amongst those tools it is worth mentioning, for example, longer parental leave (the most recent regulations refer to the changes which have been in force since 2 January 2016; see <http://www.rodzicielski.gov.pl/> accessed on 14 February 2016), Large Family Card (operating as a discount scheme with further allowances for families 3+; see: <https://rodzina.gov.pl/duza-rodzina>, accessed on 14 February 2016), benefits for parents with a newly born child in its first year of life, applying above all to uninsured persons, including students, the unemployed and those working on the basis of service contracts (effective since the beginning of 2016, named "kosinakowe" after minister Waldemar Kosiniak-Kamysz, or new "becikowe" [one-off payment to which every family with a newly-born child is entitled]), as well as a long-term child-support benefit offered to parents under "Program Rodzina 500 plus" (a support scheme introduced on 1 April 2016, on the basis of the Act of 11 February 2016 on State Aid for Child-Support, see <http://www.mpips.gov.pl/wsparcie-dla-rodzin-z-dziecmi/rodzina-500-plus/>, accessed on 3 May 2016).

Those instruments have been operating too shortly yet to allow for an ex post assessment of their economic effectiveness. In particular, apart from the optimistic forecasts, no assessment is available for the most recent from the support tools offered to Polish families, which is "Program Rodzina 500 plus". The programme exemplifies a systemic multi-year child-support benefit (it covers every second and subsequent child up to the age of 18, or sometimes even up to 25) which, however, does not cover all pro-demographic factors. The weaknesses of the programme, which can be identified already at its early stage, pertain, above all, to the fact that the support is not directed at children at the moment of their conception. Based on medical science, it has clearly been demonstrated that the prenatal period is what has a decisive impact on child's health and development. A possible extension of the the time frame of this benefit, starting with the first days of the child's life seems neither impossible nor exceedingly difficult in formal terms. It is likely that the introduction of the abovementioned regulation would affect the focus of the programme, moving it more towards the pro-demographic function and away from its dominant consumption-oriented function. Moreover, it is difficult to explain the rationale behind the programme's covering families with the highest income. The child-support benefit proposed by the government is irrelevant to those families in terms of motivation – from the point of view of the development of the family, nor does it represent any kind of support tool, for the money proposed under the programme has absolutely no affect on the budgets of the most affluent families, thus quite unnecessary burdening the state budget. The arguments in support of this situation based on the principle of social equity

are also mistaken. This issue can be solved using a straightforward procedure for determining a fair income threshold which all those applying for the benefit should meet, submitting their intention merely in a declarative form (a declaration), which the government can easily verify on a random basis through its financial and tax services. The Act “One zloty for one zloty”, which has been in force since 1 January 2016, is an example of a middle-way solution. Under the act, families who are in excess of the threshold do not lose the government’s financial support, and according to the rule “one zloty for one zloty”, their benefits will be gradually reduced corresponding to the increase of their income (see: <https://rodzina.gov.pl/swiadczenia/zasilek-rodzinny>, accessed on 3 May 2016).

In order for the measures of pro-family policies to be efficient, they should be comprehensible to their addressees, easily accessible, user-friendly, free of excessive red tape, just and, above all, effective, that is, directed at where they will fulfil their objectives. Furthermore, the mechanisms of development policies should be focused on solving the key family problems which have been identified and not to strengthen them by occasionally supporting various pathologies “alongside” (such as, for example,

the one-off payment child-support, or the single mother support for getting a place in a nursery or pre-school while discriminating against married couples).

The identification of the demographic threats in light of the poll of students of the Poznań University of Economics and Business leads to the observation that the attitudes of academic youth towards family life are largely shaped by the state’s social and economic policies. In terms of the family policies, respondents’ assessment was negative. To sum it up, it is necessary to emphasise that Polish policies directed towards changing the demographic situation should, above all, be characterized by quality and efficiency. Therefore they cannot be based on ad hoc and short-term measures, or merely represent the institutional reflection of election promises. An indispensable requirement for the Polish family policies to succeed appears public trust, for only in such climate can Polish families be formed and flourish, thus creating the elements of the country’s well-being. Reversing Poland’s demographic deficit is in itself obviously not enough to prevent the demographic threats which have been identified. Still, it is a necessary step in the socio-economic process of the country’s development to the benefit of the future generations of Poles.

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Zagrożenia demograficzne Polski w perspektywie opinii studentów Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Poznaniu

Abstrakt

W pracy podjęto próbę identyfikacji zagrożeń demograficznych w Polsce w świetle opinii studentów wybranej uczelni wyższej o profilu ekonomicznym. Do badań postaw młodzieży i ich systemu wartości, przeprowadzonych w środowisku studentów Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Poznaniu, zgromadzono i zagregowano dane empiryczne, uzyskane przy pomocy kwestionariusza ankiety. W rezultacie dokonano oceny czynników, wywierających wpływ na postawy demograficzne młodzieży akademickiej. Na tej podstawie sformułowano rekomendacje dla polityki demograficznej państwa.

Słowa kluczowe: demografia, polityka rodzinna, system wartości, postawy studentów

