



European Economic and Social Committee

SOC/373
Legal immigration in the
context of demographic
challenges

Brussels, 15 September 2010

OPINION

of the

European Economic and Social Committee

on

The role of legal immigration in the context of demographic challenges
(exploratory opinion)

Rapporteur: **Luis Miguel Pariza Castaños**

In a letter dated 16 February 2010, and in accordance with Article 304 TFEU, Ms Joëlle Milquet, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities responsible for migration and asylum policy, asked the European Economic and Social Committee, on behalf of the future Belgian Presidency, to draw up an exploratory opinion on

The role of legal immigration in the context of demographic challenges.

The Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, which was responsible for the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 2 September 2010.

At its 465th plenary session, held on 15 and 16 September 2010 (meeting of 15 September), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 115 votes to 1, with 2 abstentions.

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1. Conclusions

- 1.1 The EESC considers that a holistic approach is needed to tackle today's demographic challenges, taking action on a number of economic, social and political aspects. Legal immigration forms part of the EU's response to the current demographic situation.
- 1.2 The mobility of EU citizens within Europe has fallen, and is lower than immigration of third-country nationals. The Committee considers that barriers to mobility within the EU should be eliminated and that this process should be made easier for European workers.
- 1.3 The EESC endorses the aim of the Europe 2020 Agenda to increase employment among 20-64-year olds to 75% by improving the participation of women and older workers and by integrating migrants more successfully into the labour market.
- 1.4 The common immigration policy should have a strategic approach that adopts a medium- and long-term vision, taking account of aspects such as the demographic context, labour market developments, integration, cultural diversity, fundamental rights, equal treatment, non-discrimination and cooperation with countries of origin.
- 1.5 The decision on admitting new migrants falls to each Member State. The EU could provide considerable added value, by means of a common policy and highly harmonised legislation.

- 1.6 Despite some national differences, the EU and the Member States need to have open legislation allowing immigration for employment purposes through legal, transparent channels for workers in both highly-qualified and less-qualified jobs.
- 1.7 Bearing the demographic challenge in mind, the EESC is of the view that the directives currently in force should be amended and new legislative instruments drawn up.
- 1.8 The adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon also represents the entry into force of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will make it easier for the EU to adopt a more balanced approach to immigration legislation and to demonstrate greater respect for human rights.
- 1.9 Nevertheless, Europe is now seeing an increase in intolerance, racism and xenophobia against immigrants and minorities. Politicians and others with influence in society, together with the media, must act with the utmost responsibility and set a clear political and social example in order to prevent such behaviour. The EU institutions must act decisively and civil society organisations must actively combat these ideologies and types of behaviour.
- 1.10 European legislation on immigration should ensure equal treatment, based on the principle of non-discrimination.
- 1.11 Cooperation with the countries of origin should not be based solely on combating irregular migration, return and border controls. Agreements should take account of the interests of all parties: the immigrants, so that their fundamental rights are guaranteed; the countries of origin, so that emigration can benefit their economic and social development; and the European host communities.
- 1.12 The common immigration policy should include integration, a two-way social process of mutual adaptation between immigrants and the host society, which should be supported through good governance in the EU, at the national level, and at the regional and local levels. A common European focus offers great added value, because it links integration to the values and principles set out in the Treaty, to equal treatment and non-discrimination, to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Europe 2020 agenda.
- 1.13 The EESC proposes that the European Commission request an exploratory opinion on the benefits of creating a European platform for dialogue with a view to managing labour migration.

2. The population of the European Union

- 2.1 The EU's population is approaching **500 million**¹. Over the last ten years there has been an upward trend, with a population increase of over 18 million people².
- 2.2 However, there are major differences between countries. The populations of Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania have gone down, while in the rest of the Member States, the population has remained stable or increased, especially in Spain, France, Italy and the UK. Marked regional disparities can also be seen in some Member States.
- 2.3 **Natural population** change has resulted in just over 3 million new inhabitants in the EU³. The countries which have had the highest absolute rate of natural change are France, the UK, Spain and the Netherlands, although positive rates have also been registered in other countries. The highest **negative rates of natural change** occur in Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.
- 2.4 **Europe's population is ageing**. The percentage of the population aged under 15 dropped from 17.7% in 1998 to 15.7% in 2008.
- 2.5 The percentage of the population aged over 65 increased in the EU from 15.3% in 1998 to 17% in 2008. This percentage has decreased slightly in Ireland and Luxembourg, while it is nearing 20% in Germany and Italy, and is over 18.5% in Greece.
- 2.6 **The age dependency ratio**⁴ in the EU has remained more or less stable in the last ten years, going from 49.2% in 1998 to 48.6% in 2008. In Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands the rate has increased in recent years; it has remained stable in France and Finland, and has dropped in the other EU countries, particularly in those where the proportion of children and young people has decreased most significantly.
- 2.7 **The total fertility rate**⁵ stood at 1.53 children per woman in 2006. This rate increased between 1999 and 2008 in all EU countries. It remains below 1.5 children per woman in many Member States, however. Only in France does it approach 2 children per woman.
- 2.8 **Life expectancy at birth** is increasing for the European population, averaging over 82 years for women and 76 for men.

1 Provisional data from Eurostat as at 1 January 2009.

2 Calculated on the basis of Eurostat data for 1999-2009, as at 1 January of each year.

3 Calculated on the basis of Eurostat data for 1999 – 2008 (number of births minus infant deaths).

4 Defined as the ratio between the sum of the population aged under 15 and over 65 and the population aged between 15 and 64.

5 Average number of children per women in the year, obtained by adding the fertility rates by age.

2.9 **Infant mortality⁶ is decreasing** in most Member States, with fewer than five deaths for every 1 000 live births across the EU in 2006.

3. **Migration in the European Union**

3.1 Europe is the destination for a small number of international migration streams and many people of immigrant origin have formed part of Europe's population for years.

3.2 In the Treaty and thus in the EESC's opinions, the term 'immigration' refers to individuals who are nationals of third countries.

3.3 Immigration is the main reason for the increase in the EU population between 1999-2008. Net migration has added almost 15 million people to the EU population⁷. It is negative only in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. There has been a slight increase in some Member States, whilst the highest migration rates are to be seen in Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the United Kingdom. Between 1999 and 2008, **most Member States had a positive net migration rate**, except Bulgaria (-215 600), Latvia (-24 700), Lithuania (-88 100), Poland (-566 100) and Romania (-594 700).

3.4 **Migratory flows are increasing the population** of the EU. Immigration is behind over 80% of the population increases in the last ten years.

3.5 In some EU countries (Italy, Malta, Austria and Portugal), net migration was equivalent to over 4% of the average population for the period, while in others, it was over 10% (Cyprus (11.64%), Spain (12.62%), Ireland (10.66%) and Luxembourg (11.08%)). At the other end of the scale, population decreases due to net migration ranged from 0.75% of the Latvian population to 2.62% of the Romanian population.

3.6 In 2008, the number of **foreigners** (including both EU and non-EU nationals) reached almost 31 million. Germany is the country with the highest foreign population (over 7 million), followed by Spain (5.3 million), the UK (4 million), France (3.7 million) and Italy (3.4 million); in all these countries, except Germany, the number increased in 2009. Greece and Belgium have around one million foreigners, while Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden have over half a million.

3.7 In the fourth quarter of 2009⁸ almost **11 million EU citizens were living in another Member State**. Of these, 2.5 million were living in Germany, 1.8 million in the UK, 1.6 million in Spain, 1.2 million in France and 1.1 million in Italy. Slightly lower numbers were also found

⁶ Infant mortality refers to deaths of infants, excluding stillbirths, up until the age of one.

⁷ Calculated using the following equation: migration = 2009 population - 1999 population - 1999-2008 natural rate of growth).

⁸ According to data from the Labour Force Survey.

in Belgium (642 900), Ireland (350 500), Luxembourg (191 000), Austria (322 200), the Netherlands (272 100), Greece (142 500) and Sweden (185 700).

3.8 Since the last quarter of 2005, the number of EU nationals living in another EU State increased by over 2.7 million, with Italy, the UK and Spain the most popular destinations for these internal movements, accounting for over 1.7 million.

3.9 In **2009**, the increase in the number of foreigners **dropped** to below a million, a similar level to 2006.

4. **The future of the EU population**

4.1 **The EU population in 2018 will be between 495 million and 511 million people**, according to Eurostat's demographic forecasts, the discrepancy between the two figures being due to the varying levels of migration that we will see over the coming years.

4.2 **Taking into account immigration by non-EU nationals, the EU's population for 2020 is projected at 514 million, rising to 520 million in 2030.** This forecast is based on a hypothetical yearly net migration rate of slightly less than 1.5 million.

4.3 **In 2020, therefore, population growth, including migration, is predicted to reach 14 million.** Of these, 5.3 million will be in Spain, 4 million in the UK, 1.4 million in Italy, 1.3 million in France, nearly 1 million in Ireland, around 500 000 in Sweden and Belgium, and just under 500 000 in Portugal. Conversely, there will be demographic losses of over 660 000 people in Romania, 530 000 in Germany, 419 000 in Bulgaria, whilst losses in Poland, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia will exceed 100 000.

4.4 **In 2020**, it is likely that the EU will have 845 000 more 0-14 year-olds than in 2008, 2.8 million fewer 15-64 year-olds, and almost 18.1 million more over-65s. Moreover, the number of 20-59 year-olds is set to decrease by 4.7 million. Thus, the forecast growth of the EU population will be due mainly to the over-65s, resulting in **higher demographic ageing**, with this age group comprising 20% of the population.

5. **The labour market in the EU**

5.1 The demographic variable in the labour markets should be considered in conjunction with other economic, social and political variables which fall outside the scope of this opinion.

5.2 Between 1998-2008, the population of active age rose by 12.1 million, of which just under 12 million were aged between 20 and 59.

- 5.3 **In 2009 there were around 218 million employed people in the EU**, 3.8 million fewer than the previous year. Over 24 million (11%) were in temporary employment. The average age for retirement from work was 61.4.
- 5.4 In the last quarter of 2009, **5.8 million EU citizens were working in another Member State**. Of them, 1.4 million were working in Germany, 1.1 million in the United Kingdom, 820 000 in Spain, 650 000 in Italy, 540 000 in France, 280 000 in Belgium, 190 000 in Ireland, 180 000 in Austria, 150 000 in the Netherlands and 125 000 in Sweden.
- 5.5 **Activity rates grew** in the EU-15 between 1998 and 2008 among all age groups, but with differences varying from 1% (age 15-19) to 10% (age 60-64). Male activity rates remained almost constant, except in the 50-70 age group, where they increased to 10% for the 60-65 age group. Female activity rates grew among all age groups, particularly the 30-65s, with a high of over 10% among 50-65 year-olds.
- 5.6 In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the inclusion of women in the labour market, but the **female activity rate still remains lower than the male rate**.
- 5.7 The potentially active population in 2020 will be 361 million, around **238 million of whom are likely to be actually active**⁹, leaving a remainder of 123 million people without an occupation. This would lead to an activity rate of 74.2% for 20-64 year-olds, slightly below the 2008 rate due to the changes in the demographic structure.
- 5.8 Taking into account unemployment rates¹⁰, **there are likely to be 221.5 million employed people in 2020**, which would translate to an employment rate of 69.3% for 20 to 64 year-olds.
- 5.9 However, the **Europe 2020** agenda¹¹ **proposes that employment among 20-64 year-olds should increase to 75%**, through greater participation of women and older workers and better integration of immigrants in the labour market.
- 5.10 Over 17.5 million **more** people could be employed in 2020 if the employment rate of 75% were achieved for 20-64 year-olds. There would still be over 76 million people without work in this age group, although this figure would also include people unable to work due to illness or disability.
- 5.11 There are major differences in the employment rates of the different EU Member States, which in 2009 ranged from a low in Malta of under 60% to a high in the Netherlands of around 80%, with some countries also already exceeding the 75% target. Consequently, the increase in the employment rate in countries that have low rates, i.e. below the EU average,

⁹ Estimation based on average activity rates for the fourth quarter of 2007 and first quarter of 2008.

¹⁰ Idem 9.

¹¹ COM(2010) 2020 final.

which covers most Member States - above the EU average but below 75% - could involve population movements within the EU.

- 5.12 One factor for the increase in employment rates is the improvement in the level of education of the population. In 2008, the employment rate for people aged between 15 and 64 was 84% for graduates, compared with 71% for people who had completed secondary studies and 48% for people with a lower level of education. The graduate activity rate was also clearly above the average of 66%. **Improved educational levels** could also be a factor for increasing productivity and helps to meet the growing demand for highly-educated workers.
- 5.13 With the current **economic** crisis, the labour markets are unable to offer work to everybody of working age (locals and immigrants) and the unemployment rate is around 10%. In February 2010, 23.01 million men and women of working age were **unemployed** in the EU, 3.1 million more than at the same time in 2009.
- 5.14 **Demographic ageing is accelerating.** As the baby boomers of the 1960s are retiring, the EU's active population is decreasing and the number of over 60 year-olds is increasing twice as fast as before 2007 – i.e. by two million per year, as compared to one million previously.
- 5.15 According to the European Commission¹², from 2020 onwards, the labour shortage will be even greater, which will make it difficult for Europe to maintain its levels of economic activity and employment - a situation that could last for decades.
- 5.16 In some Member States, it is becoming easier for older people to remain active in the labour market, as the actual age of retirement approaches the legal age, and there are even some legislative reforms to push back the retirement age beyond 65, as highlighted in the Commission Green Paper¹³.

6. **The role of immigration in the current demographic context**

- 6.1 The European Economic and Social Committee considers that a holistic approach is needed to tackle today's demographic challenges, taking action on a number of economic, social and political aspects. The EU should act on employment and training policies, on improving working methods, and on pension schemes, labour relations, active family policies, etc.
- 6.2 **Against this backdrop, immigration policy is an integral aspect of the policy decisions** that the EU must adopt.

12 COM(2009) 674 final.

13 COM(2010) 365 final.

- 6.3 The Committee would highlight the conclusions of the reflection group chaired by Felipe González, which has produced a document entitled **Europe 2030**¹⁴ which states that: *“the European Union’s demographic challenge will only be addressed through two sets of complementary actions: boosting labour market participation rates; and implementing a balanced, fair and proactive immigration policy”*. *“Migrant labour will be part of the solution to Europe’s future labour and skills shortages and the EU will need to develop a pro-active approach to immigration”*.
- 6.4 The EESC has adopted a number of opinions encouraging the EU to develop a common immigration policy to enable *people* to migrate to Europe, through legal and transparent procedures.
- 6.5 Europe is a destination for some international migration streams, because its relative prosperity and political stability are *considered* by some migrants to make it an attractive place in which to seek opportunities.
- 6.6 The EU should bear in mind that many immigrants have considerable **entrepreneurship** and that they start up businesses in Europe and help create new jobs.
- 6.7 **Mobility within the EU for work purposes is less substantial than immigration.** In recent years, it is Poles and Romanians who have been most active in exercising the right to freedom of movement within the EU. The EESC considers that the EU should promote and facilitate labour mobility for European citizens, and the EURES network should consequently be strengthened, and academic and professional qualifications recognised.
7. **Common immigration policy**
- 7.1 Common immigration policy is proving extremely difficult to formalise. Cooperation on combating illegal immigration and people-trafficking has improved, a number of agreements have been concluded with third countries and a European approach to immigration has been developed, but little progress has been made on legislation on the admission of new economic migrants, on conditions for entry and residence and on immigrants' rights.
- 7.2 When the common immigration policy is drawn up, account should be taken of the fact that each Member State has its own specific characteristics (in terms of their labour markets, legal systems, historical links with third countries, etc).
- 7.3 Common legislation on admission is developed through a number of directives covering the various categories of migrant workers' employment.

¹⁴ http://www.eu2010.es/export/sites/presidencia/comun/descargas/unioneuropea/May08_reflection_en.pdf.

- 7.4 European businesses wish to improve the international recruitment of highly-qualified migrant workers. With this in mind, the EU adopted the Blue Card Directive¹⁵, which the Committee supported, subject to a few proposed changes.
- 7.5 Nevertheless, no common legislation exists for other types of work, despite the fact that the EU will in future accept many immigrant workers to carry out jobs requiring medium-level and low qualifications.
- 7.6 In its contribution to the Stockholm programme, the Commission proposed that a European platform for work-related migration be set up, involving the social partners, but the Council did not accept this suggestion. **The EESC would like the Commission to consult the Committee on the value of setting up such a platform.**

8. Legislation

- 8.1 For the last two years, the Council has been discussing the Commission's proposal for a **framework directive** on immigrant rights¹⁶, which also provides for a single procedure. The EESC deems it of crucial importance that this directive be adopted under the Belgian presidency.
- 8.2 On 13 July, the Commission adopted **two new legislative proposals**: one on seasonal migrant workers¹⁷ and another on migrant workers moving temporarily¹⁸ to another Member State. The EESC will study the approach adopted in these proposals and will draw up the corresponding opinions.
- 8.3 The minimalist nature of Council **Directive 2003/86/EC** on the right to family reunification enables some national laws not to fully guarantee the right to family reunification to third-country nationals. This directive should be amended to ensure that immigrants who have resided legally for one year can apply to the authorities for family reunification in order to exercise their fundamental right to family life. The Committee also considers that reunited spouses or partners and children of legal age should be able to obtain permission to work. In October, the Commission will present a Green Paper on the matter.
- 8.4 The **Directive on students**¹⁹ has been in force for a number of years. In the EESC's view, individuals who hold the type of residence permit referred to in this directive should, when this expires, be able to apply for a work permit under a fast-track procedure, with the previous

15 Directive 2009/50/EC of the Council of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment.

16 COM(2007) 638 final.

17 COM(2010) 379 final.

18 COM(2010) 378 final.

19 Council Directive 2004/114/EC.

residence permit being extended. In 2011, the Commission will draw up a report on the implementation of this procedure.

- 8.5 Also in force is the **Directive²⁰ on researchers**. The Committee considers that a fast-track procedure should be established so that when people in this position complete their research project, they can obtain the Blue Card, authorising them to work. In 2012, the Commission will draw up a report on the implementation of this procedure.
- 8.6 One of the greatest problems suffered by many immigrants and many businesses in Europe, the **recognition of academic and professional qualifications**, needs to be resolved.
- 8.7 The EESC is of the opinion that to ensure that most immigration is legal and transparent, admission legislation should also take account of the work carried out in micro-enterprises and within families. In another opinion²¹ the EESC therefore proposed using a **temporary six-month entry and residence permit for the purpose of seeking work**.
- 8.8 Taking account of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EU must ensure the **universal protection of human rights** under European and Member State legislation.
- 8.9 **Human rights are universal**, irrevocable and protect all, regardless of condition or legal status. The EESC consequently drew up an own-initiative opinion²² proposing that the EU's legislation and policies on immigration and borders properly respect human rights.
- 8.10 European legislation on immigration should **ensure equal treatment, based on the principle of non-discrimination** (Article 21 of the Charter), and guarantee Article 15(3) of the Charter, according to which "*Nationals of third countries who are authorised to work in the territories of the Member States are entitled to working conditions equivalent to those of citizens of the Union*".
- 8.11 Equal treatment at work concerns working conditions, pay, dismissal, health and safety in the workplace, and the right to join a trade *union* and to strike. This also applies to equal treatment as regards other basic social rights such as healthcare, pension rights, unemployment protection and education/training.
- 8.12 The EESC is concerned to note that racism, xenophobia and intolerance are on the increase in Europe. The Committee welcomes the work of the European Fundamental Rights Agency.
- 8.13 In the Committee's view, some migration is temporary and in some cases circular, but experience suggests that much migration is permanent or long-term, which is why European

20 Council Directive 2005/71/EC.

21 [OJ C 80, 3.4.2002, p. 37.](#)

22 [OJ C 128, 18.5.2010, p.29.](#)

policies and legislation should always promote respect for human rights, the security of immigrants' legal status, integration and family reunification.

- 8.14 The EU and the Member States could conclude agreements with the countries of origin on a form of circular migration that facilitates migration through transparent procedures. The EESC supports the idea of **mobility partnerships**, which have been established with some countries of origin. The Committee proposes, however, that agreements be balanced, to ensure that they benefit all of the parties concerned: the migrants, countries of origin and EU Member States.
- 8.15 If a circular migration system is to work smoothly, Community legislation must offer highly flexible short-term permits, together with return procedures and guarantees of further employment in subsequent years. This will encourage many migrants to use legal channels, and not to remain in Europe illegally when their residence permits expire.
- 8.16 The EESC proposes granting frequent temporary permits of between three and nine months and which can be renewed for three, four or five years. Such procedures require financial and logistical resources and cooperation between employers and the authorities in the States of origin and host States and the unions.
- 8.17 The Committee wishes to sound a warning: circular migration hampers social bonding and integration and does not encourage workers to establish firm ties with businesses or to join unions. It also makes education/training more difficult.
- 8.18 Temporary entry arrangements could include **agreements on training and the recognition of vocational qualifications**, since temporary immigrants working in Europe would be able to improve their qualifications and, after returning, improve their job opportunities.
- 8.19 Migrants holding permanent status under the **Directive on long-term residents**²³ lose their legal status if they remain out of the country for 12 months.
- 8.20 To facilitate the movement of migrants and business- and labour-related initiatives in the country of origin, European legislation on migration should enable people to retain their right to permanent residence in the long term (for at least three years) and for return not to mean the loss of their work and residence permit in Europe.
- 8.21 Guarantees for **pension rights** acquired in the EU are essential, and reciprocal agreements will therefore have to be negotiated with the countries of origin, as will ratification of ILO Convention No 157.
- 8.22 The Committee proposes that EU Member States ratify ILO Conventions Nos 97 and 143, which refer to migrant workers. The EU Member States should also sign up to the International

Convention²⁴ on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as proposed by the EESC in an own-initiative opinion²⁵.

9. Cooperation with countries of origin

- 9.1 The EESC has proposed²⁶ that, under its external policy, the EU should promote an international legislative framework for migration.
- 9.2 The EU is currently signatory to a number of neighbourhood and association instruments. In the EESC's view, these agreements should consolidate their chapters on migration and mobility. The priority is to implement agreements for mobility between the EU and the neighbouring countries with which the EU already has economic and political cooperation links.
- 9.3 The Committee has adopted two opinions²⁷ proposing that migration to Europe should boost economic and social development in the countries of origin.
- 9.4 **Training in the country of origin** can make immigration policy easier to implement and help ensure that immigration is managed in a way that takes account of the professional needs of European businesses.
- 9.5 The EESC proposes that the EU conclude agreements with the countries of origin to facilitate the recognition of professional qualifications and training in the countries of origin.
- 9.6 Consideration should be given to the idea of the EU and the Member States funding training programmes in the country of origin and thus also contributing to the development of high-quality training bodies. Qualifications gained under such programmes should be recognised as European qualifications. These training programmes should be flanked by a fast-track procedure to obtain work and residence permits.

10. Integration policies

- 10.1 Integration is one of the goals on the Europe 2020 agenda. **Integration is a two-way social process of mutual adaptation** that takes place in the complex social relationships between individuals and groups of people. Integration processes develop slowly within social structures, such as the family, schools and universities, neighbourhoods and villages, the

23 Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents.

24 Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990.

25 [OJ C 302, 7.12.2004, p.49.](#)

26 [OJ C 44, 16.2.2008, p. 91.](#)

27 [OJ C 120, 16.5.2008, p. 82 and OJ C 44, 16.2.2008, p. 91.](#)

workplace, trade unions, employers' organisations, and religious, cultural and sports institutions, etc.

- 10.2 As the result of cooperation between the European Commission and the EESC, the **European Integration Forum** has been set up to enable civil society and immigrants' organisations to play a role in EU integration policies.
- 10.3 The EESC has drawn up a number of opinions promoting integration policies, and has set up a **permanent group** to promote integration and build on relations with civil society organisations and the Forum.
- 10.4 The EESC has adopted a new own-initiative opinion²⁸ entitled **Integration and the Social Agenda**, to ensure that the Europe 2020 Agenda consolidates the goal of integration, paying greater attention to the social consequences of immigration, migrants' employment situation, social inclusion, gender equality, poverty, education and training, health and social protection and the fight against discrimination.
- 10.5 The Spanish presidency of the EU also asked the EESC to draw up an exploratory opinion on the **Integration of immigrant workers**. That opinion²⁹ studies the importance to integration of employment, equal working conditions, opportunities and treatment. It also includes recommendations for the European and national authorities, and for the social partners.
- 10.6 The **Ministerial Conference held in Zaragoza** on 15 and 16 April 2010 called on the Commission to draw up a **new agenda for integration**. The EESC is working together with the Commission on drawing up an information report³⁰ on **The new challenges of integration**, which proposes that the new agenda should give persons of immigrant background a greater role in civic life and in the democratic process.
- 10.7 The two-way approach requires governments to ensure that national laws make it easier to grant **citizenship to immigrants applying for it**, with transparent procedures.
- 10.8 The EESC drew up an own-initiative opinion³¹ addressed to the Convention that drafted the Constitutional Treaty, calling for **European citizenship** to be granted to third-country nationals having long-term resident status.
- 10.9 In conjunction with the demographic challenge, the EU and the Member States face another major political and social challenge – that of integrating new citizens with equal rights and obligations. To this end, the rights of national and European citizenship should also apply to

28 EESC opinion of 17.2.2010, CESE 258/2010.

29 EESC opinion of 17.3.2010, CESE 450/2010.

30 Information report on "The new challenges of integration" - SOC/376.

31 Own-initiative opinion, OJ C 208, 3.9.2003, p. 76.

people of immigrant origin, who bring considerable ethnic, religious and cultural diversity to Europe.

11. **Irregular migrants**

- 11.1 The EESC wishes to point out that several hundred thousand people live in the EU without the proper legal papers work in the informal economy and in undeclared jobs and who are 'invisible' in official society and whose fundamental rights are not recognised.
- 11.2 The document produced by the Europe 2030 Reflection Group states the need to harmonise *'the rights of irregular immigrants across the EU'*. The EESC endorses this proposal.
- 11.3 As the EESC has proposed in other opinions³² it should be made easier for irregular migrant workers to regularise their personal situation, taking account of their working and social ties, on the basis of the commitment given by the EU Council as part of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum³³.

Brussels, 15 September 2010.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Mario Sepi

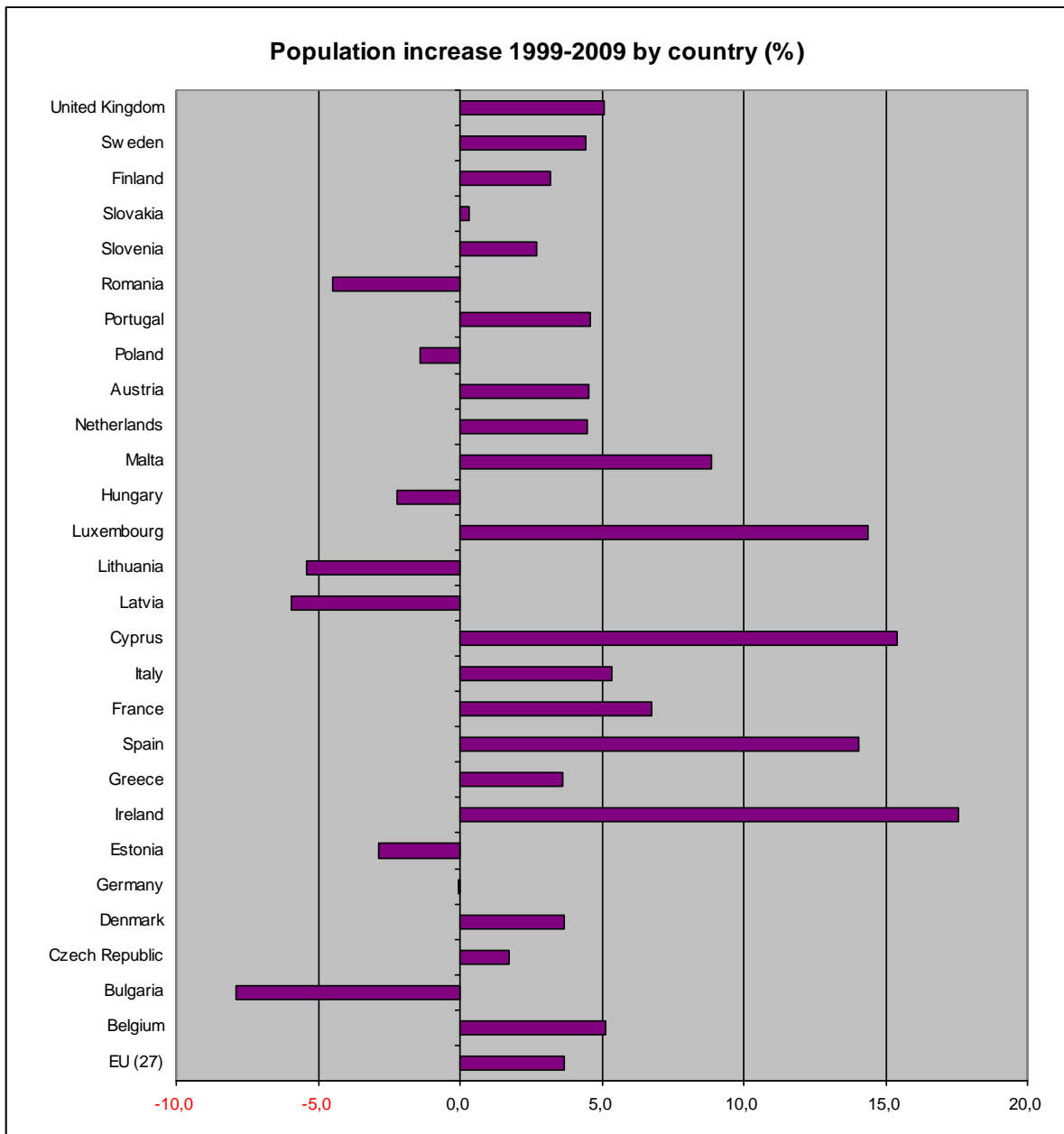
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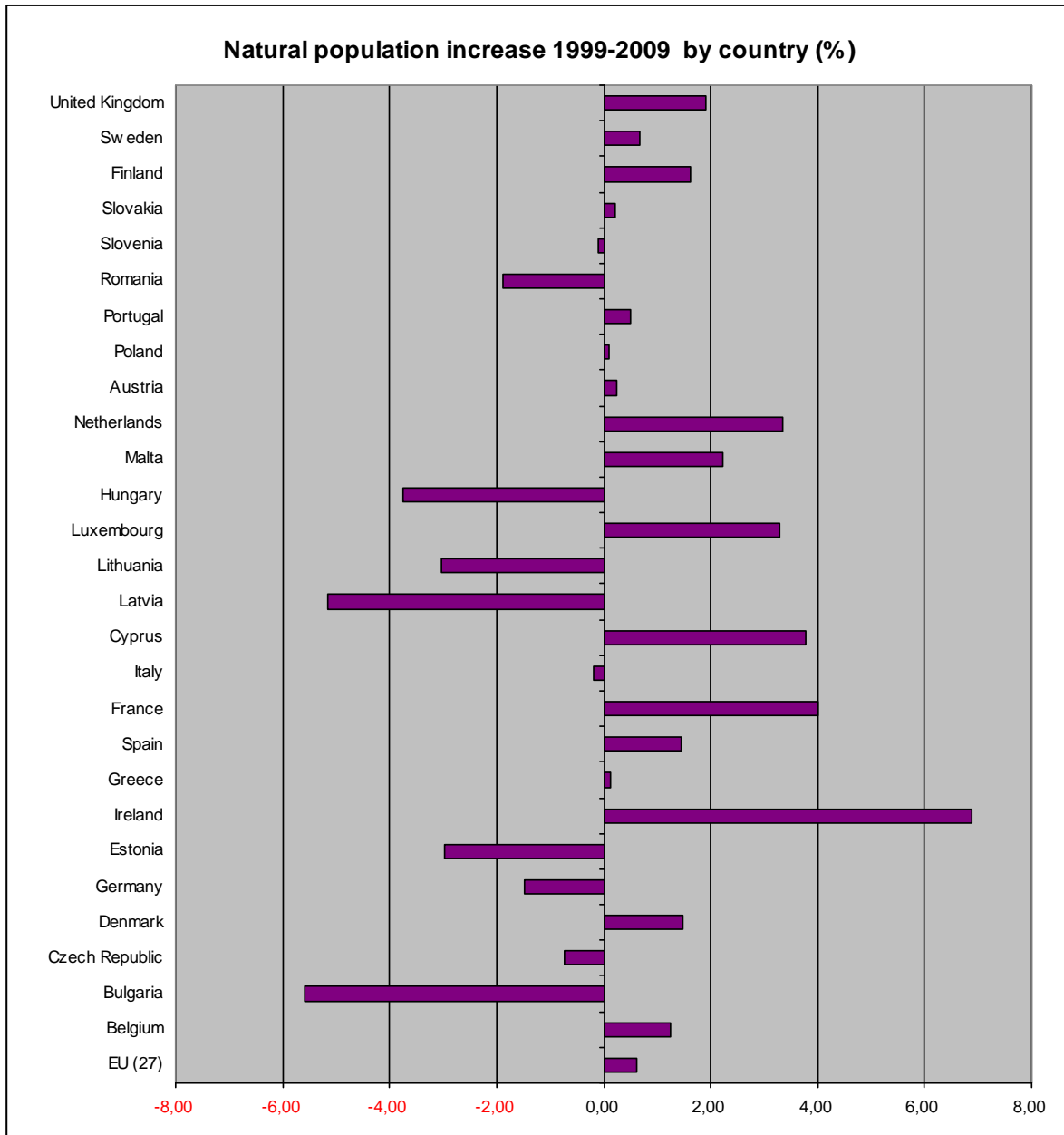
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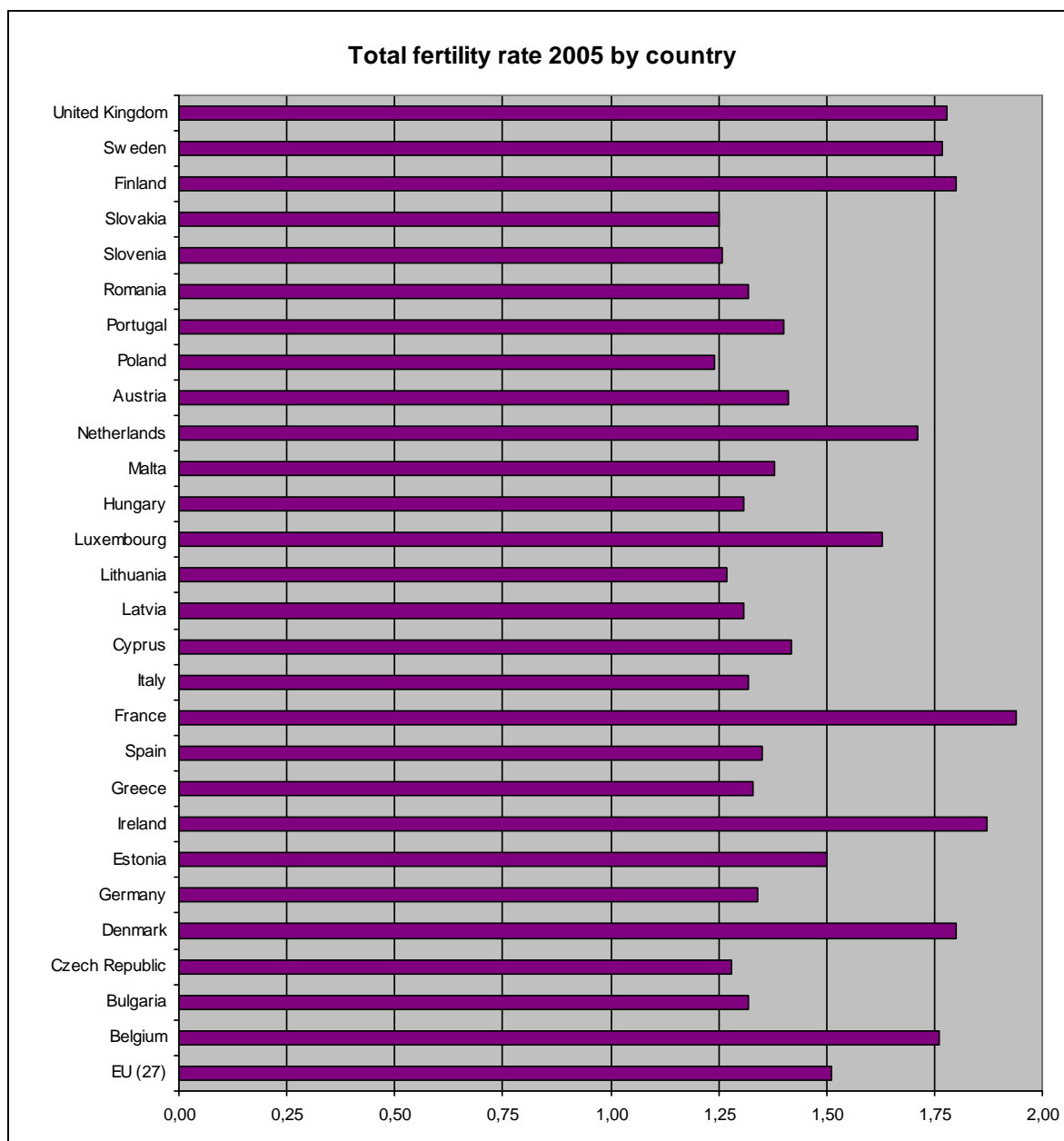
N.B.: Appendix overleaf.

³² EESC opinion of 17.3.2010, CESE 450/2010.

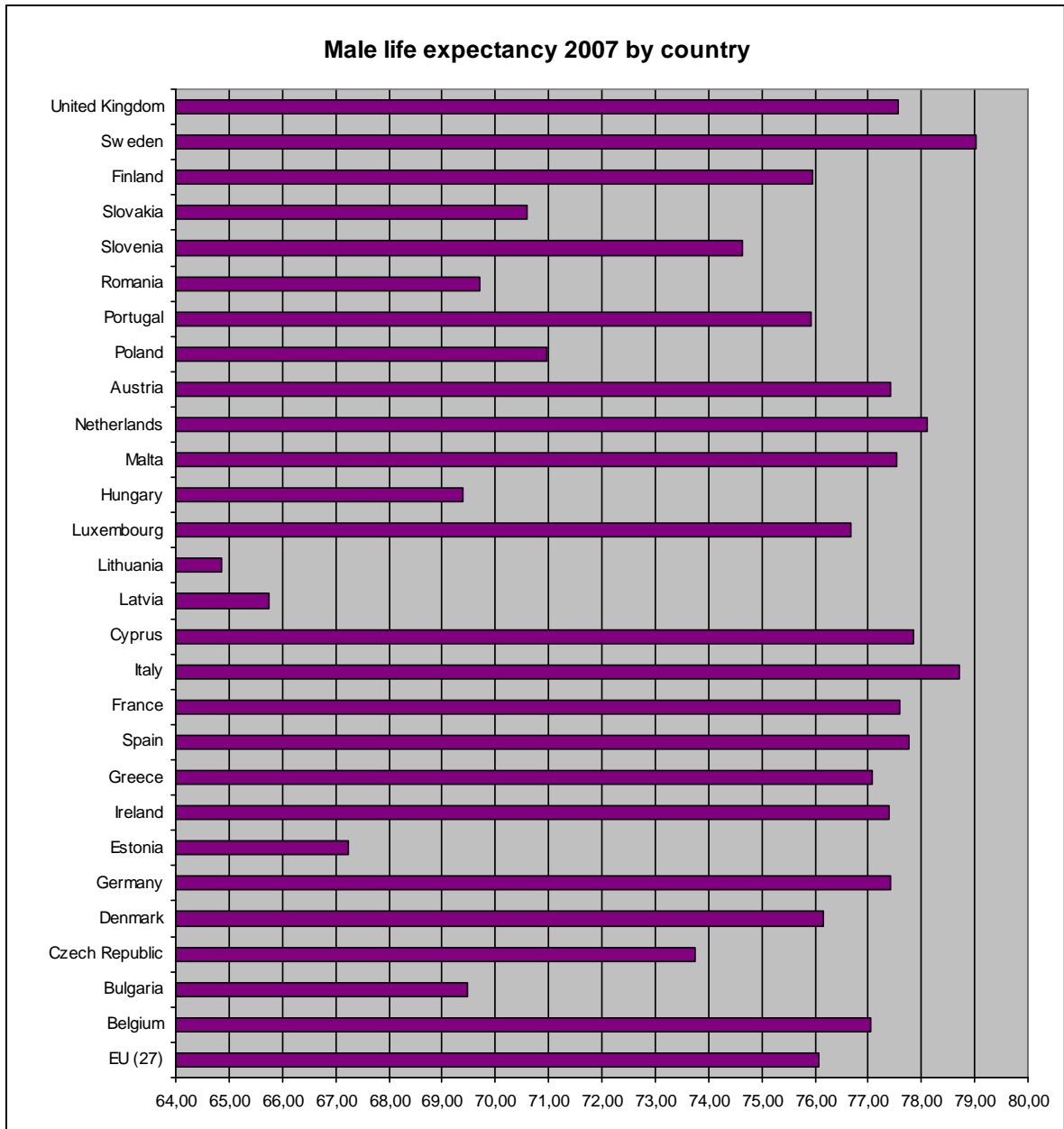
³³ Council of the EU 13440/08, 24 September 2008.

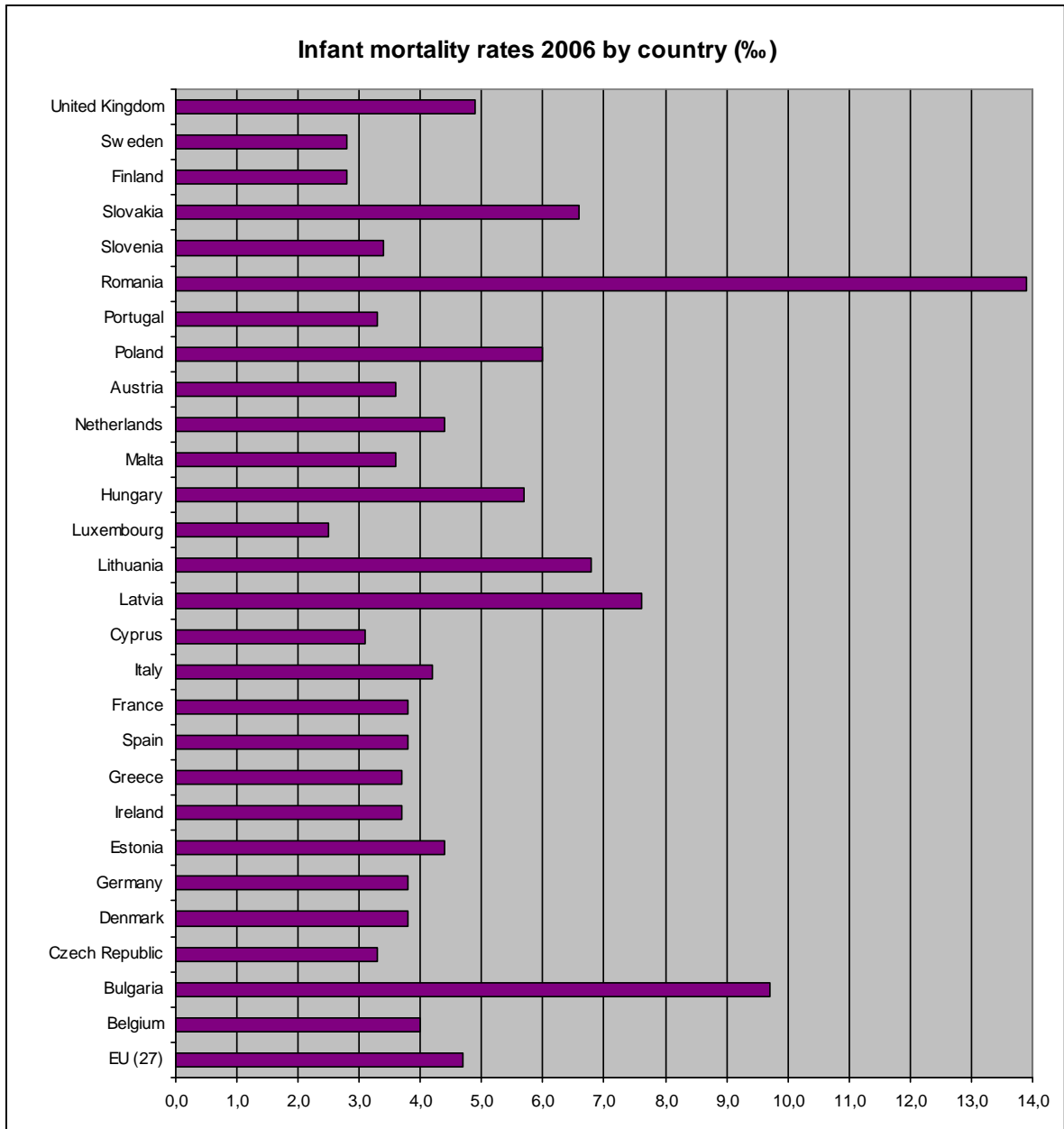


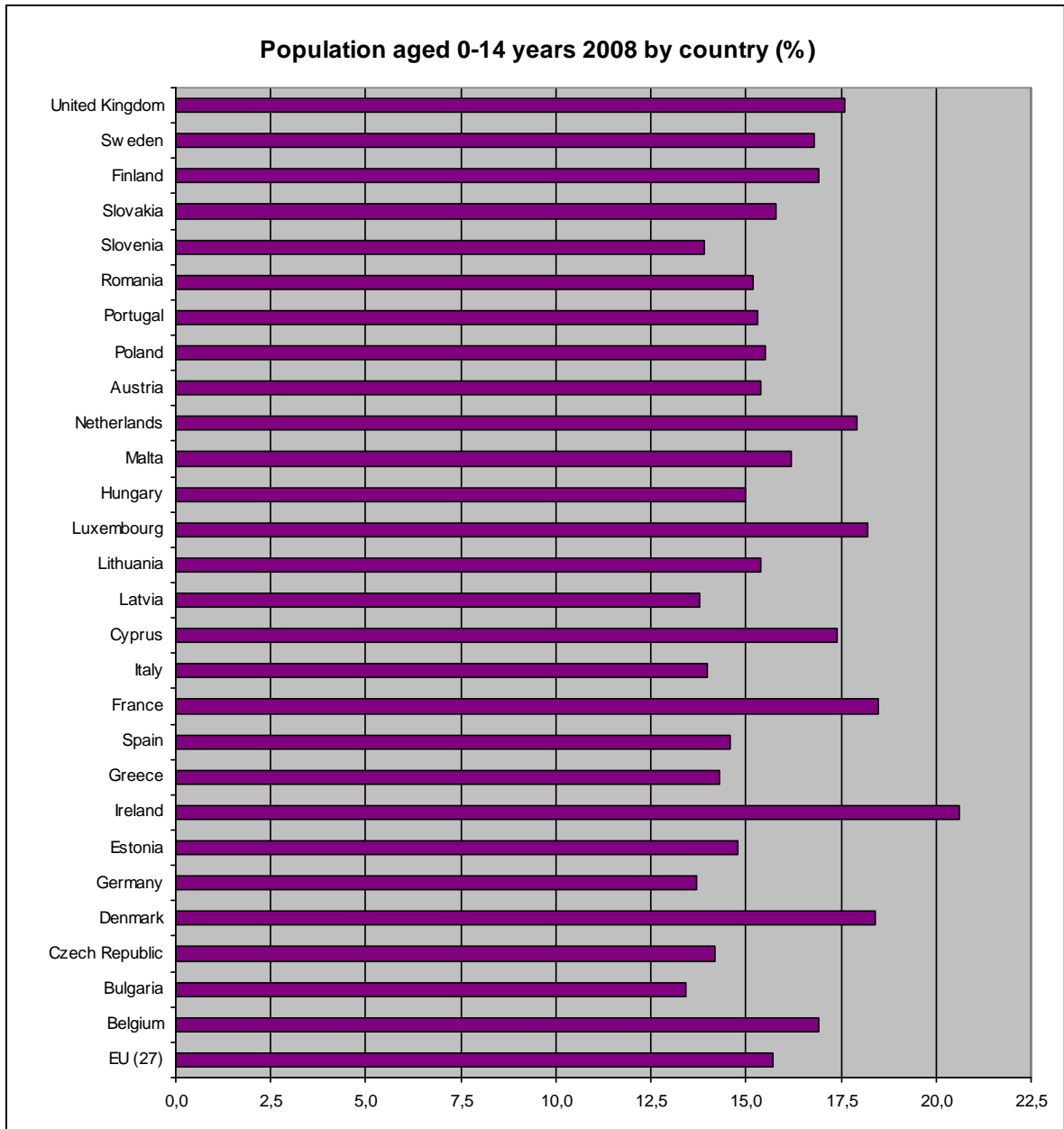


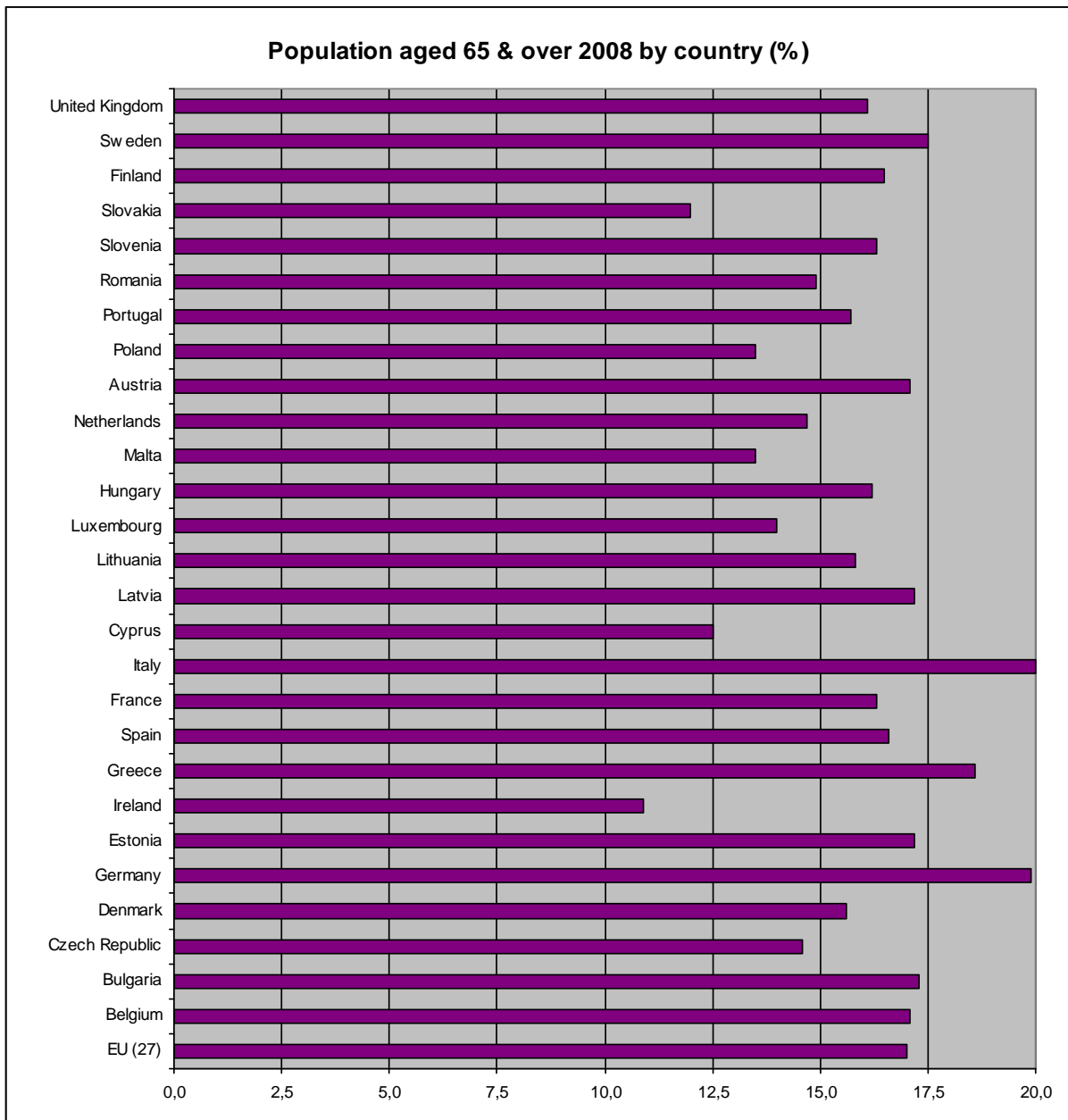


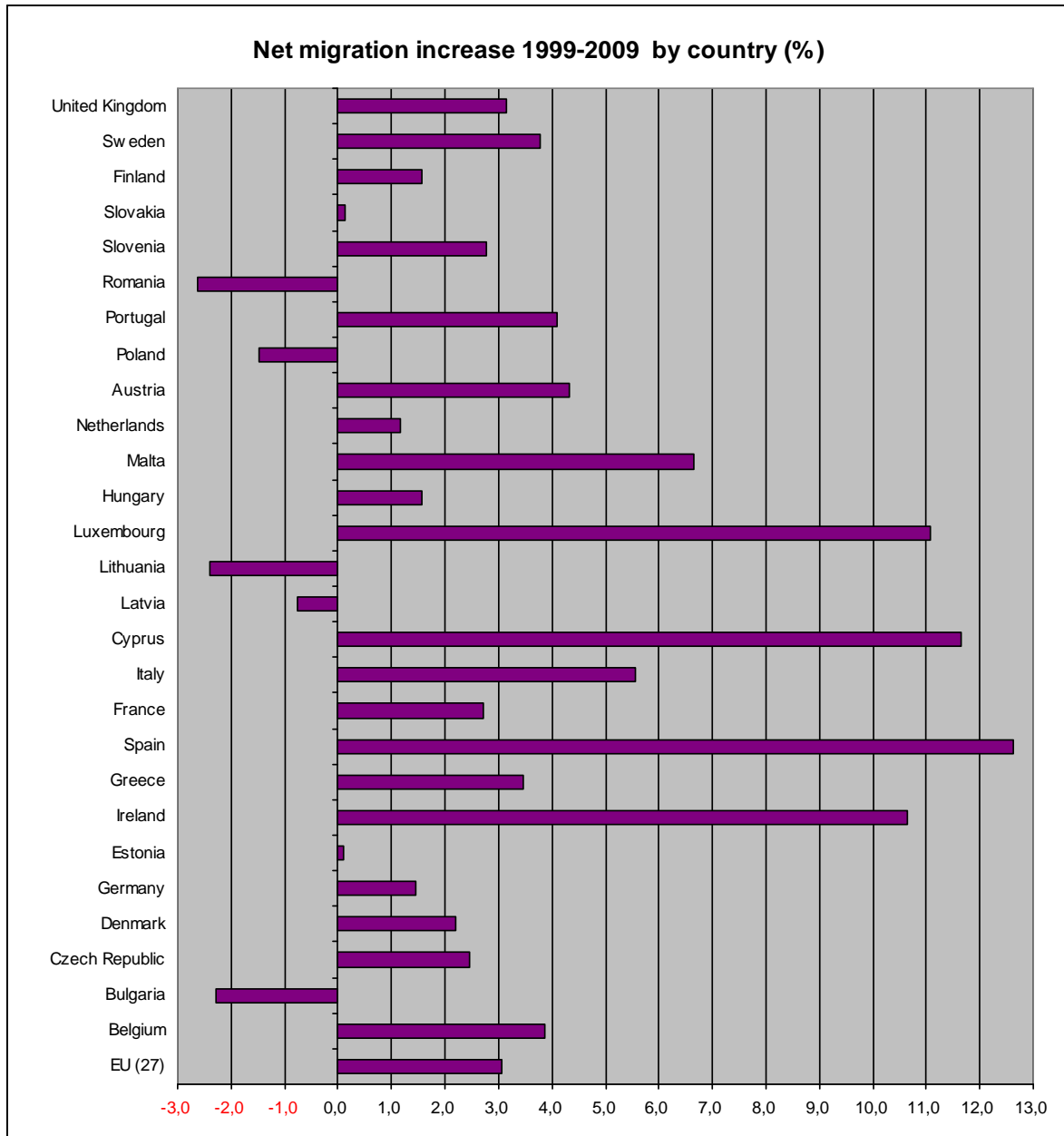












Population by sex and age on 1st January

...	2020			2030		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
0-14	78898118	40550018	38348100	75533359	38859382	36673977
15-64	331887286	166680046	165207240	321943607	162277173	159666434
20-59	273002109	137495703	135506406	259403882	131002887	128400995
65 over	103052228	44493154	58559074	122465113	53894014	68571099
Total	513837632	251723218	262114414	519942079	255030569	264911510
	Increase 2008-20			Increase 2020-30		
0-14	847.060	527.887	319.173	-3.364.759	-1.690.636	-1.674.123
15-64	-2.801.847	-881.495	-1.920.352	-9.943.679	-4.402.873	-5.540.806
20-59	-4.696.423	-1.707.773	-2.988.650	-13.598.227	-6.492.816	-7.105.411
65 over	18.143.463	9.223.218	8.920.245	19.412.885	9.400.860	10.012.025
Total	16.188.507	8.869.610	7.318.968	6.104.447	3.307.351	2.797.096

