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REGIONAL DIFFERENCES OF POPULATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE YEARS 2001-2007

1. Introduction

After 1989 big social changes can be observed in the area of today's Czech Republic. These changes have been caused by deep political, economic and social transformation and they have influenced all spheres of human life including demographic behaviour as well as the overall population climate in the society.

According to the majority of Czech demographers (e.g. Pavlík [8, 9], Rychtaříková [14, 15]) the changes in demographic behaviour of the Czech population in 90s were similar to the changes that were happening in the developed European countries in 70s and 80s, that is so called the second demographic transition. The speed of these changes in the Czech Republic was unexpected.

The birth rate has dramatically fallen and although there was a positive development of the mortality rate already in 1994 a natural change decrease can be observed. The fall of the birth rate continued until 1996 when the number of born was 90 000. The level of the birth rate remained very low until 2001, in the following years there was a moderate increase in the number of born. In 2007 a statistically higher birth rate can be noted, almost 115 000 children were born.

Similar development of reproduction processes has proceeded in the majority of developed countries in Europe and in present it can be seen in other transforming states of the central and southern Europe and in the states that have freed themselves from the connection with Russia within former USSR. In 1999 Italy, Spain, Latvia and Bulgaria had the lowest total fertility (i.e. under 1,2).

It can be said that similarly to population behaviour in the European countries during the demographic revolution that was caused by socioeconomic changes originating in the industrial revolution there is a rapprochement of population demographic characteristics in the Czech Republic and the population of the developed European countries due to the transformation in the Czech Republic.

Although the population ages the number of dead decreases, especially the abortion rate and the level of natimortality that decreased already in 2007 down to 3,1‰ (in international comparison it is an outstanding number). The overall number of abortions decreased from the maximum 125 000 reached in 1988 to 41 000. The interruption rate fell from 110 000 in 1988 to 25 000 in 2007. The result of this responsible behaviour was not only improvement in physical and mental health of hundreds of thousands women and girls that “escaped” the interruption in the transformation period due to their more responsible behaviour than in the period before 1989, but also a distinct economic effect.

2. Population development and population politics

In the last few years news about decrease in the birth rate (although it is not true anymore) and about children being a luxury have been occurring in the Czech media. The authors of this news ask for a quick state intervention. According to these often unnamed experts the main reason is the financial uncertainty of young people, high unemployment rate in the region and low social benefits. There is allegedly no hope for improvement. The economist Miroslav Ševčík sees the cause besides other reasons in high tax burden which lies on the inhabitants of the Czech Republic. In addition to the experts' points of view so called ordinary people present through the media their opinions that cash birth grants and parental benefits are really low and therefore they are not going to become parents.

The views on the population politics (its need or uselessness) differ not only among the experts from demography, geography, sociology, economy, but also among politicians and public. The views vary from calls for immediate adoption of for population politics (e. g. a demographer Milan Kučera [11], a politician Zdeněk Škromach) to rejection of any possible state intervention into the private life and the right to decide whether or when to have children and how many (e.g. Loužek [6, 11]).

According to Zdeněk Pavlík [8, 9] the population politics (disregarding if it is separate or a part of the social politics) transcends the objectivity of demographic process analyses. It is therefore a part of the state politics or a part of the individual political party politics and scientific demographic works should not deal with it.

A discussion about the for-population politics is not dignified according to Vilém Barák, a redactor of the newspapers *Mladá Fronta Dnes*. He says that this discussion does not belong to the well-mannered society and it should be a taboo as well as the discussion about the most intimate things of a human life. It resembles the Nazi politics of blood and land in which women should have ensured through reproduction enough warriors for gaining more space for living. The communists on the other hand needed soldiers to march to Rhine.

Milan Kučera [11] rejects that the for-nativity politics should be considered as social engineering as it is done by many. At the same time in my opinion he overestimates the influence of accepted for-population measures from 70s. Jiřina Kocourko-

vá [11] says that for-natality measures have only short-term influence and they lead to faster birth of a child. Increase of fertility level is followed by its decrease as for example in the 2nd half of 70s in the former Czechoslovakia.

Generally speaking the whole for-natality politics is based on presumption that the societies as well as the individual members of the society want more children, but the social situation does not allow them bringing the “wanted” number of children into effect. The state therefore has to intervene with the for-population politics and to increase the birth rate through some form of a family with children support as for example children allowance.

According to Rabušic [11, 12] if the opulent for-natality measures were immediately accepted, it would cause again another population wave but probably it would not lead to fathering of more children.

In my opinion the for-population measures of this type (the state thinks that it knows best when its inhabitants should have children and how many children they should have) are not acceptable in the democratic society and remind the totalitarian regimes period. In the socialistic Czechoslovakia the late acceptance of for-population measures at the beginning of 70s caused creating of population wave in 1973-1976 that negatively resulted in the problems with children placing into preschool institutions. Later it lead to shift work in teaching at elementary schools, problems in placing the children to secondary schools, and their lower chances to pass the entrance exams to universities (at the turn of 80s and 90s the number of accepted students was considerably lower than today.)

The Nazi German politics within this topic was already mentioned above. However similar extremes were reached in the socialistic Rumania at the time of N. Ceausescu when the abortion was not allowed because the state should have grown in population. It lead to (as always in the similar cases) illegal abortions that for women meant not only a great health risk but also a criminalization with high punishments.

On the other hand The People’s Republic of China and The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have wanted to decrease the birth rate. The families with more children have been punished and the model of one child has been preferred. This politics brought today’s lack of brides for the generation of men born in the period where 1170-1180 boys fall on 1000 girls. This situation has its roots in the fact that in China a son is more historically valued than a daughter.

The deviation from the natural biological rate of born boys and girls (1060 boys statistically fall on 1000 girls) was caused by largely wide-spread killing of female babies or frequent abortions of female sex foetuses after ultrasound examination finding a foetus being a woman. Nowadays in China there is a great black market with brides and the state prepares a regulation of abortions because of this as well as it plans compensation for families without a son.

However, in my opinion the change of population behaviour happens because of the influence of the tendency to have a successful professional carrier and a high

social status. The other reasons are the opening of the borders resulting in the possibility to travel, increased number of places at universities (in the first part of the new millennium about one fourth of population years study at some university, at the beginning of 90s it was only one seventh of young people from relevant generations).

People decide to have babies according to their values. Each of potential parents thinks about the things that they are willing to sacrifice from their comfortable life full of pleasures. More and more people in the developed countries stay for their whole life “single” and decide to build a career without the possibility of its slowing down by a family or children. They have enough time and enough money for their own interests and they can do their hobbies whenever they want. Ivo Možný [7] speaks about so called “Peter Pan complex”, that is to say the fact that a certain part of population rejects to become adult and accept parental duties. The illusion of ever-lasting youth ends at the time when people become parents. He says also that the chance for a change is connected to behaviour of the elite who consider a big family as a sign of successfulness and to certain extent as a proof of luxury as well. The others could follow them as usually. There are also frequent discussions about the “quality” of population. Educated women (their percentage is still growing) very often decide to become children less for their whole life because of the career as for example Možný [7] says. According to our own research among the students of Faculty of Social and Economics only the minimal number of girls wants to remain children less. Peter Kačírek [2, 3] says that in the 2nd half of 90s the number of educated mothers grew in the Ústí nad Labem region. Increase of the birth rate is therefore not drawn by the mothers with low education. “From the point of view of education and age structure of mothers and the sequence of childbirths in the Ústí nad Labem region the increase of birth rate in the period between 1996 and 2000 was influenced mostly by the segment of born from the first sequence with secondary school education with school leaving exam in the age group 25-29 years, the second most important segment was the childbirth of the first sequence by the women with university education in the age of 25-29. It is clear that it is realization of a part of held back fertility of strong populous generations of 70s.”

3. Regional differences in population development

Present population development in the Czech Republic is strongly influenced by the development in the transformation period after 1989. In the socialism the ageing of population could have been observed in the Czechoslovakia, especially in the Czech Republic. The development was not however homogenous. The regions with preferred economic activities (heavy industry, energetic raw material mining, energetic) aged due to controlled migration at more slow pace. At the end of 80s the youngest age structure was registered in the Sokolov, the Chomutov and the Česká Lípa region. On the other hand the area of the central Bohemia aged at the greatest speed. The transformation brought essential changes in intrastate as well as interna-

tional migration movements. However migration to the central Bohemia has grown since the beginning of 90s due to the attractiveness of Prague for example the Prague-west and the Prague-east regions had in 1992 almost zero migration saldo that has changed to the highest positive saldo among all the regions in the Czech Republic. A decisive sign of transformation successfulness of Prague and the central Bohemia is a high rate of educated and highly qualified migrants in the overall migration saldo of Prague and its wide neighbourhood.

Migration movements in the transformation period influence strongly regional differences in present population development. Zonality east-west is very characteristic for these migration movements, that means that intrastate migration observation shows that Moravia loses its inhabitants due to migration to Bohemia and especially to attractive Prague and the central Bohemia. That applies for intrastate as well as international migration.

If we observe the regional differences on the level of 77 statistic units (Czech regions), it could be said that the majority of regions got out of the negative values of natural and overall population increase to the positive numbers in 2001-2007. The number of born children increased about 25 000 and the number of died decreased continually and slowly which is in the agreement of the overall population development. In 2007 67 regions had a positive value of natural population increase, by 13 regions it was 2‰ and more. All these 13 regions were in the Czech regions, there was no Moravian region. The majority of the regions are in the central Bohemia. Only 8 regions have the overall negative population increase. In Bohemia these regions are Most and Sokolov where there is a continuation of migration of workers from flopping energetic industry. In Moravia 6 regions have these characteristics. 5 of the regions are in the North Moravia and one region is in the South Bohemia.

The Czech Republic is more and more attractive destination country for foreign migrants and this fact strongly influences the overall migration saldo of the individual regions. The biggest influence of foreign migration can be seen in Prague and its neighbourhood, then in the Cheb and the Karlovy Vary region and also in other bordering regions. The most dynamic development of migration saldo is besides the central Bohemia in the area around other big cities (rural regions of Plzeň and Brno). In the last years the migration saldo has distinctively grown in Litoměřice region. In 2007 it was the third highest saldo after the Prague-west and the Prague-east regions (31‰). This clearly shows the phenomenon of Prague because there is a good interconnection of especially Roudnice area with Prague due to the railroad and the highway connection. It enables to commute daily to Prague and its agglomeration. Moreover the price of the land is considerably lower than in Prague and its near neighbourhood, which can be seen in the quick growth in family houses building.

The figures in the chart show how the migration development influenced present population development. In 2004 natural population increase was negative in the Czech Republic; however in the Prague-east and the Prague-west the numbers were positive. In 2006 in the Czech Republic natural population increase was after many

years positive but the level of natural population increase in the Prague-west and the Prague-east regions was many times higher and the numbers of natural population increase in these regions are still considerably higher than in the other regions of the Czech Republic. This development continues dynamically in 2007 when the significance of central Bohemian area on the overall migration grew. The highest value of migration figures within natural population increase was reached in the first quarter of 2008. The Prague-east and the Prague-west regions had natural population increase on the level of 4, 9 and 7, 1‰ and migration saldo 51, 9 and 64, 3‰. Overall natural population increase of inhabitants in the Czech regions is due to migration higher than in the preceding period. It could be said that the difference between western and eastern part of the Czech Republic has deepened and within this subsystem Prague and its neighbourhood has more and more dominated.

4. Conclusion

Population development in the transformation period in the Czech Republic and in the last years is very versatile. These changes are relatively dynamic. After initial rapid decrease of fertility down to 90 000 children a year (1996-2001) there is increase of the birth rate (in 2007 circa 115 000 of born) in the recent years. According to anticipatory results for the first quarter of 2008 increase of the birth rate is high. It leads to postponed childbirth of strong populous years 1973-1976. The age of fathers and mothers grows as well and this is not an unfavourable phenomenon. The overall fertility in the first quarter of this year is 1, 5, the value is considerably higher than the projection of inhabitants of the Czech Republic in 2002 expected. Although there were no for-population measures accepted the number of children is higher than in the expected projection. This shows the fact that the majority of young people is decided to be parents in favourable time.

Regional differences in population development are deepening. These differences are the result of preceding migration development in the transformation period. The greatest population growth is in Prague and its neighbourhood where the population age in the slowest pace (due to migration as well as reproduction of these migrants).

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REGIONALNE RÓŻNICE ROZWOJU LUDNOŚCI W REPUBLICE CZESKIEJ W LATACH 2001-2007

Streszczenie

Rozwój ludności w okresie transformacji w Republice Czeskiej, a także w ostatnich latach, okazuje się być procesem niezwykle zróżnicowanym. Zachodzące zmiany mają charakter dynamiczny. Po wstępnym gwałtownym spadku urodzeń do 90 000 noworodków rocznie (w okresie 1996-2001) nastąpił wzrost liczby urodzeń w ostatnich latach (w roku 2007 przyszło na świat ok. 115 000 dzieci). Według wstępnych szacunkowych obliczeń w pierwszym kwartale 2008 r. przyrost naturalny był stosunkowo wysoki. Jest to wynikiem opóźnionego wzrostu urodzeń związanego z wyżym demograficznym z lat 1973-1976.

Zróżnicowanie regionalne pod względem rozwoju ludności ulega pogłębieniu. Jest ono wynikiem migracji ludności w okresie transformacji. Najwyższy przyrost naturalny obserwuje się w Pradze i jej okolicach, gdzie okres starzenia się ludności jest przedłużony (w związku ze zjawiskiem migracji oraz reprodukcji pokolenia migrującego).