

## Conclusion

Similarly as in other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe in transition, Slovakia has registered a decade of significant changes. This statement is related also to the field of the population development. Demographic changes were so remarkable that we are speaking about a transition to a new model of the reproduction behaviour.

The current population development in Slovakia is characterised by a deep fall in nuptiality, fertility and abortion, an ascending trend in the development of divorce, a gradual improvement of the mortality level and by changes in the forms of partner coexistence. The consequence of above mentioned development is the declining natural increase of population, which is approaching the zero value, as well as the changes in the structure of population and families. The decisive part of the mentioned changes happened in Slovakia in the first half of nineties, thus, during a very short time period. The same processes, which ran in the advanced countries of the West and North Europe from the half of sixties until the end of seventies, are in question.

In some cases the reaction to the external incentives was fast (nuptiality, fertility) and the level of these processes in Slovakia has already reached values, which are quite common in the advanced countries. If other demographic processes are concerned, the current differences in the level are given by the difference in the starting point and the longer inertia of particular processes or they are caused by circumstances, which have their historical and cultural background. It is likely that the differences in levels of some processes will retain also in the forthcoming years.

Thus, what development can be expected in the future? It is likely that the future decade will be, from the demographic standpoint, less dynamic as the previous one. In the forthcoming ten years we can expect the continuation of current trends, which show the tendency to stagnation or to only minor changes. In some cases also the changes in trends are possible, as a consequence of compensation effects for the development in nineties. Nevertheless, no radical changes will be in question. The further political and social development and the ongoing process of transformation will have a remarkable impact on this development.

In general it can be expected that the decisive demographic events of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the ageing of population and migration. However, these processes will influence more significantly the situation in Slovakia only after 2010. After this time period also other significant changes in the population development cannot be excluded. Mainly the development of migration will be the decisive factor from this point of view.

It is likely that nuptiality and fertility in Slovakia have already reached the values below which they should not fall any more. With regard to the nuptiality, it is questionable to what extent the current development

was a postponement of marriages to the older age or the decision to coexist without marriage. The development at the end of nineties indicates that in majority of cases it was probably the postponement of marriages.

For the development of natality will be decisive whether the fall in nineties was caused by the postponement of births to an older age or by a long-term attitude to a smaller number of children or even by a planned extensive childlessness. It is likely that a combination of first two possibilities is in question. It means that a compensation effect should reappear (at least partially), i.e. the feasibility of the postponed births, which should slightly increase the fertility level in the very next future. It could mean the reinforcement of the two-children model of family, which weakened in nineties (maybe only temporary). The model of family with many children is surely the question of the past, on the other hand, the extensive planned childlessness is also not expected. A more radical change in the development of natality, which could change the decreasing trend in the number of population in the very next future, seems not to be very likely.

It is likely that the development of divorce and abortion will maintain the heretofore tendencies. It means that the divorce will be moderately increasing and abortion slightly decreasing.

A more significant and long-term improvement in mortality will depend firstly on the development of the standard of living. The situation in neighbour countries, where the transformation process of society was more advanced than in our country and brought also a remarkable improvement in mortality, indicates the expressive potential for the decrease of mortality in Slovakia.

A higher territorial mobility of population will depend on the economic and social development of regions and on the creation of the market with dwellings. The external migration existed in Slovakia only at a symbolic level. It is likely that this state will not last too long. The demographic development in the advanced countries and the finalisation of integration processes in Europe will bring more possibilities for self-assertion abroad. On the contrary, the expected increase of the prestige of Slovakia abroad will increase the attractiveness of our country for immigrants from developing countries by which the consequences of the current, and mainly from the expected, population development should be partially compensated.

Among the changes in the age structure of population the ageing of population will still be more and more dominating. A significant acceleration of this process will appear after 2010 when the powerful post-war age groups will enter the post-productive age and, on the contrary, the weak age groups from the beginning of nineties will reach the age of the highest fertility. The consequences of these changes, mainly on economy,

healthcare and social systems, will be probably one of the most serious social problems.

The impact of the current population development on the number of population in the very next future is quite obvious. If the more favourable case happens, the fall of the population increase will temporary stop and the shortage is to be expected around 2010 at the latest.

If the less favourable case occurs, the fall in the natural increase will go on and during 2-3 years it will change into a decrease. The development of the number of population after 2010 will depend to a great extent on already mentioned development of the external migration.