

9. International comparison

Tab 9.1: Basic demographic characteristics in the selected countries in 1990 and 1998

	SR	CR	Hungary	Poland	Austria	EU 15
	1990					
Ageing index	41.4	59.4	64.5	39.4	86.9	84.8
Mean age of women at 1st marriage	x	21.4	21.5	22.7	25.1	25.3
Divorce index	21.9	35.2	37.5	16.6	36.0	27.8
Total fertility rate	2.1	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.5	1.6
Mean age of women at 1st birth	22.1	22.5	22.5	23	26.1	x
Life expectancy at birth - males	66.7	67.5	65.1	66.5	72.5	72.8
Life expectancy at birth - females	75.5	76.0	73.8	75.6	79.0	79.4
Infant mortality rate	12	10.8	14.9	16.0	7.8	7.6
Natural increase per 1000 population	4.8	0.1	-2.0	4.1	1.0	1.8
Net migration per 1000 population	-0.4	0.1	0.0	-0.0	1.6	2.8
	1998					
Ageing index	55.4	80.6	84.1	58.4	90.9	93.0
Mean age of women at 1st marriage	22.5	25.8	24.0	23.4	26.7	26.5
Divorce index	33.9	58.8	57.4	21.6	45.7	36.1
Total fertility rate	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.3	1.5
Mean age of women at 1st birth	23.3	24.4	24.5	23.9	26.1	x
Life expectancy at birth - males	68.6	71.1	66.1	68.9	74.8	74.6
Life expectancy at birth - females	76.7	78.1	75.2	77.3	80.9	80.9
Infant mortality rate	8.8	5.2	9.7	9.5	4.9	5.2
Natural increase per 1000 population	0.8	-1.8	-4.3	0.5	0.4	0.8
Net migration per 1000 population	0.2	0.9	0	-0.3	0.6	1.2

The demographic development of each country is in some sense an indicator of changes, which are being carried out within its economic, political and social development. Moreover, the population development is affected also by other factors, which were the result of changes in previous conditions or changes in the biosocial basis of the demographic reproduction process.

The current demographic situation in Europe is the result of a long-term historical development. Europe belongs among those world areas in which the demographic development has made a significant progress.

The population development in the Slovak Republic is closely related to the population development of the whole Europe, in which, with only negligible exceptions (e.g. Albania and Turkey), the process of the demographic revolution has been finished. In the West, North and Central parts of Europe it was done practically before the World War II, in other parts of Europe, immediately after the World War II.

In the post-war population development in Slovakia, within the framework of the former Czechoslovakia, as well as in other former socialist countries of Central Europe, two significant milestones existed. It was the period of the second half of sixties when the remarkable differences in the population development

between the countries of Western Europe and the so-called East Block started to be visible and the period at the beginning of nineties when the demographic development in the post-communist countries sharply reacted to the political and social changes.

The demographic development after the World War II was in whole Europe roughly the same and its most significant feature was the post-war compensation. The mortality decreased and the nuptiality and natality increased. This period lasted until the half of sixties. In the second half of sixties the period of deep changes in the reproduction behaviour started in Western Europe. The nuptiality and natality decreased, the forms of cohabitation changed, the number of children born outside marriage increased, the divorce grew. The decrease in mortality was ongoing and the length of human life was prolonging.

In the former East Block countries such significant changes did not occur. Rather the opposite was true, the development from the post-war period reinforced even more. The nuptiality and natality were still increasing, the mortality stagnated and in some age categories, mainly of men, it was even increasing. The orientation to the traditional family was moreover reflected also in a lower share of children born outside marriage. The 40-

years isolation of the East Block countries appeared also in the population development. The result was a different way of the reproduction behaviour of population, which had a consequence also in the greater unevenness in the age structure.

The transformation period after the change in the political system was in all post-communist countries characterised also by changes in the reproduction behaviour of population. The changes in nuptiality and fertility are more significant than changes in other characteristics at which the inertia and/or several non-demographic factors were to a greater extent observable. The demographic trends are in all transition countries of the Central Europe similar; the characteristic feature is the diminishing of differences in the demographic development between particular countries.

Age structure of population

The age structure of population of the Slovak Republic is due to the previous development uneven. The unevenness is best visible from its graphical presentation in the age pyramid. Not too calm 20th century significantly influenced the population development of the majority of European countries and considerably deformed their age structure. The consequences of both war conflicts from the first half of the century and the economic crisis of thirties, where the lower numbers of live births were reflected also in the lower numbers of persons living nowadays, can be seen from the age pyramids.

As compared to the age structure of the population of the European Union countries (EU 15), the age structure of the Slovak population is in several time periods more uneven, although the similar contours are to be found in a certain part of the age pyramid. The shapes of pyramid for persons born before 1930 are similar but the low natality in the period of the World War I at both genders has also a similar form. The period of seventies is different as the increase of the natality and fertility levels occurred in Slovakia. It was caused not only by the compensation of the previous low level of fertility but also by the fact that the numerous population age groups of women entered the age of the highest fertility and, furthermore, due to the pro-natality government policy, several pro-natality economic measures were adopted. By the decrease in fertility during the last twenty years, the basis of the age pyramid sharply narrows which indicates a new unevenness in the age structure of the Slovak population for the future.

The ageing of population is a problem not only of Slovakia but also of the whole Europe, although in West European countries it is more remarkable than in our country. By the fact that the length of life of population of these countries is longer, the share of the population at older age is in these countries higher. The highest share of population aged 65 and more (in 1998) was in

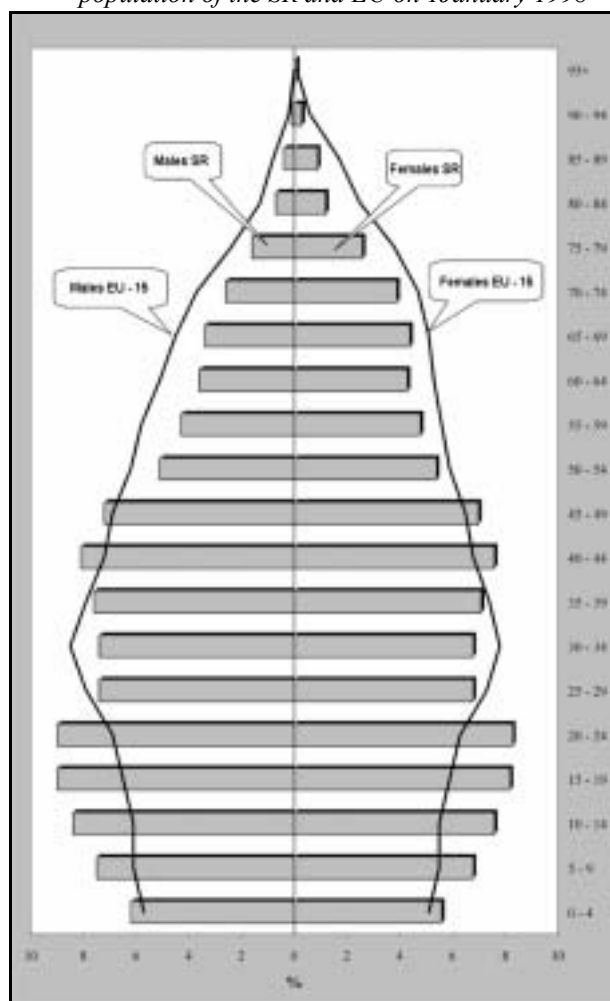
Sweden and Italy - in both countries 17.4%, then in Greece - 16.9% and in Belgium - 16.6%. In the Slovak Republic is the share of this age group one of the lowest in Europe - 11.3%.

Due to the fact that the natality was in majority of West European countries during eighties and nineties lower as compared to Slovakia, the children component in their population is represented by a lower share as in the Slovak Republic.

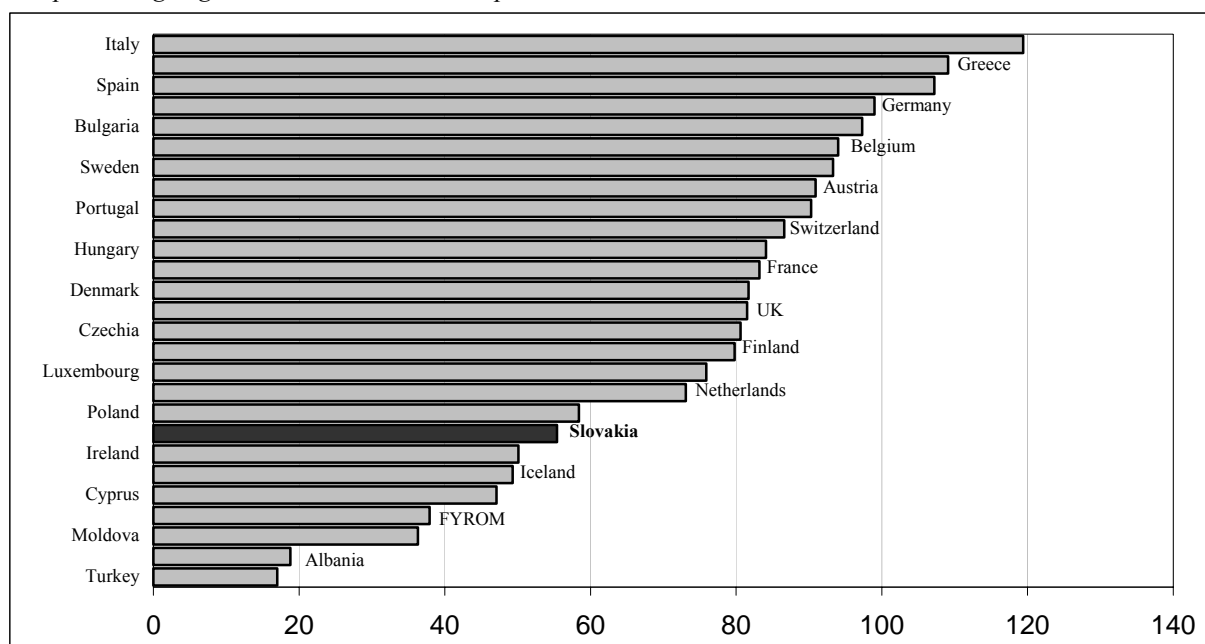
For the purposes of an international comparison of the age structure are, as a rule, used the shares of population aged until 15 and over 65 and their ratio called ageing index.

According to the above-mentioned criterion, the country with the youngest population in Europe is Turkey where in 1998 only 17 persons aged 65 and more fell on 100 persons being younger than 15 years. The young population is to be found in Albania too, with ageing index 18.8. The ageing index was below the value of 40 also in Moldavia and Macedonia.

Graph 9.1: Comparison of the age structure of the population of the SR and EU on 1 January 1998



Graph 9.2: Ageing index in the selected European countries in 1998



The country with the oldest population in Europe is Italy where 119.4 persons aged 65 and more fall on 100 persons in the pre-productive age. In practise it means, that persons aged 65 and more prevail over the children component of population. The similar situation was also in Greece (the ageing index 109.1) and in Spain (the ageing index 107.2). The high ageing index being over 90.0 was recorded also in other European countries, e.g. in Germany, Bulgaria, Belgium, Sweden, Austria and Portugal.

The Slovak Republic is classified by its age structure among the ten European countries with the youngest population, however, the decrease in natality and the expected increase of the population aged 65 and more can mean that the ageing index in Slovakia will be growing.

Nuptiality and divorce

The nuptiality and divorce belong among processes, which influence the demographic reproduction to a great extent. The nuptial and divorce behaviours of the population are closely related to national traditions, cultural habits and moral norms.

The international comparison of demographic aspects of nuptiality and divorce is due to above mentioned reason complicated especially with regard to different legal norms in particular countries. Demographically advanced countries, however, are getting closer according to their behaviour in this area and such a comparison between them is possible. Although smoother rates measuring both processes exist, we shall make the comparison by crude rates, the total marriage rate and total divorce rate.

In the post-war period, within the European cultural framework, marriage was a general event and individual communities differed only by age at marriage. Only

a small part of men and women remained outside marriage. The values of a crude marriage rate were in the majority of countries around 7 -11‰ and the values of the total marriage rate were situated, as a rule, above the level of 0.8, in some countries they were even higher. It means that they corresponded to the state where nearly all potential brides and grooms contracted a marriage.

The nuptiality level was until the end of eighties relatively different in particular countries. It moved within the range of 4-11 marriages per 1000 population, exceptionally even over, but also below the presented boundaries. The following countries had the highest crude marriage rate: countries of the former Soviet Union – Moldova (11.5‰), Russian Federation (10.6‰), Belarus (10.1‰), Latvia (9.8‰), Ukraine (9.3‰), and Lithuania (9.2‰). The lowest level, below 6 marriages per 1000 inhabitants was in Sweden (4.5‰), Denmark (5.2‰), Norway (5.4‰), Switzerland (5.7‰) and Italy (5.7‰).

In West European countries the nuptiality indicators started to fall in the half of sixties. The whole complex of economic, social and psychological factors was in the background of this fact. The liberalisation of social norms but also the tendency to the individualistic way of life belongs to the most important factors. Firstly, the nuptiality decreased in Scandinavian countries, later the West and South Europe joined these countries. In the countries of the former East Block the high level of nuptiality maintained until nineties. In 1990, the crude marriage rate from these countries was the highest in Belarus (9.7‰), Moldova (9.7‰), Ukraine (9.3‰), Russian Federation (8.9‰), and in the Czech Republic (8.8‰); the lowest one was in Hungary (6.4‰), Poland (6.7‰), Bulgaria (6.8‰) and Slovakia (7.6‰).

Since 1990, the intensity of nuptiality has rapidly decreased also in these countries and currently it reaches the values close to the level which is common in the West European countries. In 1998, the crude marriage rate reached in Slovakia the value of 5.1‰, similarly as in Germany and Spain. The lowest crude marriage rate has Sweden (3.6‰), Estonia (3.7‰), Slovenia (3.8‰), and Latvia (3.9‰).

An interesting view on the intensity of nuptiality can be obtained also by the means of the total marriage rate of women. According to the newest available data, the lowest nuptiality in 1998 was in Estonia (0.35) and Lithuania (0.39). In some other countries, the level of total marriage rate was below 0.5. The following countries belonged to this group: Hungary (0.46), Slovenia (0.45) and Sweden (0.41). The Slovak Republic belongs to the group of countries with the total marriage rate being within the range of 0.55-0.65. In addition to Slovakia (0.56), the members of this group are, e.g. Italy (0.60), Ireland (0.61), Iceland (0.62), Switzerland (0.62), Poland (0.63) and Denmark (0.64), hence, the intensity of nuptiality of single women corresponds to 60-64 % of the potential number of marriages. Higher level of the total marriage rate is currently only in Croatia (0.70), Portugal (0.77) and Turkey (0.82).

The Central European countries, including Slovakia and Baltic countries, belong according to the decreasing tendency in nuptiality to the broader European average. A certain explanation of a decreasing tendency in nuptiality is the increase of the average age of single brides. It can happen also due to the fact that part of engaged couples postpone the decision to marry to an older age.

During the last twenty years the already mentioned increase of the mean age of women at first marriage occurred in the majority of European countries. Around 1970, the mean age of women at first marriage was mostly below 24 years, in eighties, mainly in Netherlands, Austria, France and United Kingdom, the mean age of women at first marriage increased up to 25-26 years. In Sweden and Denmark, it was higher than 28 years and in Switzerland it approached this value.

Also in nineties the mean age of women at first marriage was increasing nearly in all European countries. It is increasing also in the Slovak Republic, however, it still belongs in Europe to the lowest (in 1998 it was 23.1 years). The low age at first marriage is also in Belarus (22.1 years), Moldova (21.7 years) and Turkey (22.6 years). The highest mean age at first marriage is in Iceland (29.7 years), Denmark (29.4 years), Sweden (29.2 years), Ireland (27.8 years), Switzerland, France, Netherlands and in Finland (in each it is 27.6 years).

The international comparison of data on the level of divorce is complicated not only due to a different legislation but also due to a changing valuation ranking of population and the increasing share of cohabitations without marriage, on the collapse of which there is no official statistics. Actually, a continuation of the impact of conditions related to the overall dynamics of the

economic and social development of the modern age is the subject of this process. It is mainly the reinforcing of the free choice of people in all spheres of life, regardless whether it is the choice of occupation, decision-making on the number of children, choice of the partner for the rest of life, emancipation of women or the decision-making in order to retain the marriage. The experiences from European countries, which have run through the demographic transition, show that the changing priority-setting of people leads rather to the increase in divorce and that even the decreasing nuptiality does not have a consequence in the decrease of divorce.

In the majority of European countries the level of divorce was until seventies very low. Measured by the crude divorce rate it was higher than 1.5‰ in 1970 in Hungary and the Czech Republic (both at the level of 2.2‰), moreover, in Denmark (1.9‰) and in the countries of the former Soviet Union. In Slovakia, the divorce rate reached a very low level and in 1970 it was only 0.8‰. However, since 1970 divorce has started to increase, in some countries it has increased very fast. The exception was only Ireland where divorce did not exist according to law (in Italy divorce has been permitted only since 1971). In the Slovak Republic divorce increased gradually from 0.8‰ in 1970 up to 1.7‰ in 1990. Also in nineties it had the tendency of a slight increase.

The divorce level measured by the total divorce rate was in 1970 the highest in Latvia (0.51); Estonia was very close to this level. Until 1990, the total divorce rate gradually increased nearly in all European countries. In Sweden and Denmark it reached the level of 0.38. The low total divorce rate was in 1990 in Italy (0.08), Slovenia (0.14), Poland (0.15), Bulgaria (0.17), Romania (0.19) and in Slovakia (0.24). Currently it is the highest in Sweden (0.50), Finland (0.48), Norway (0.44), the United Kingdom (0.43) and in the Czech Republic (0.42). The Slovak Republic, belongs currently among European countries with a lower level of divorce.

Natality and abortion

When analysing and evaluating the population development the greatest attention is drawn to the natality and fertility processes. The level of natality is one of the two main criteria for judging the demographic situation in the country.

For the international comparison of a natality situation, the most appropriate indicator is the total fertility rate, which is, as a contrast to the crude birth rate, not distorted by differences in age structure of countries being the subject of comparison.

In sixties, the total fertility rate in West European countries mostly reached the value higher than 2.5. The Ireland and Iceland were out of average with the total fertility rate being over 4.0. In Ireland it was caused mainly by the strong impact of Catholicism rejecting the induced abortion not only in legislation but also in practise. In Iceland it was due to the tradition of big families. In the beginning of sixties, the highest total

fertility rate (over 6.0) was in Albania and Turkey with their “non-European” population behaviour corresponding to a non-regulated natality in developing countries. The high feasible fertility was also in the countries of Pyrenean peninsula.

Since the half of sixties the fertility in Europe started to fall. Between 1970-1980, the total fertility rate decreased in all European countries, except for Poland (increase from 2.20 up to 2.28), and the former Czechoslovakia (increase from 2.07 up to 2.16). For the first time the total fertility rate fell in many countries below the level of 2.0, mostly in the former West Germany (down to 1.45) where the falling number of births started to be considered as a problem.

The total fertility rate above 2.0 remained until 1990 in Albania (3.03), Turkey (2.99), Iceland (2.31), Ireland (2.13), Sweden (2.13), Poland (2.04) and in Slovakia (2.09). In Germany, Austria, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and in Spain it fell below the level of 1.5. The lowest level, paradoxically, was in catholic countries – Spain (1.36) and Italy (1.33).

After 1990 the trends in fertility were not in particular countries the same. In the majority of West and North European countries the values of total fertility rate remained stable at the level of 1.5-1.8, or slightly decreased. The fall down to very low levels (1.2-1.3) was recorded in Italy, Spain and Greece. On the contrary, the high fertility was in Iceland (2.08) and in Albania it was even more (2.70).

The development in the East Europe in nineties was indicated by a deep fall of fertility. The most dramatic fall occurred in Latvia where during 1990-1998 the value of the total fertility rate decreased from 2.02 down to 1.09, i.e. by 46%. The great decline of the total fertility rate was recorded also in Estonia, Bulgaria, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Romania and Ukraine. The majority of East

European countries, thus, approached the countries with a long-range very low level of fertility.

The lowest level of total fertility rate in Europe was in 1998 in Latvia (1.09), Bulgaria (1.11), Spain (1.14), the Czech Republic (1.16) and Italy (1.19). On the opposite end of the scale were Finland, Norway and Ireland having the total fertility rate in between 1.7-1.9 and Iceland (2.05).

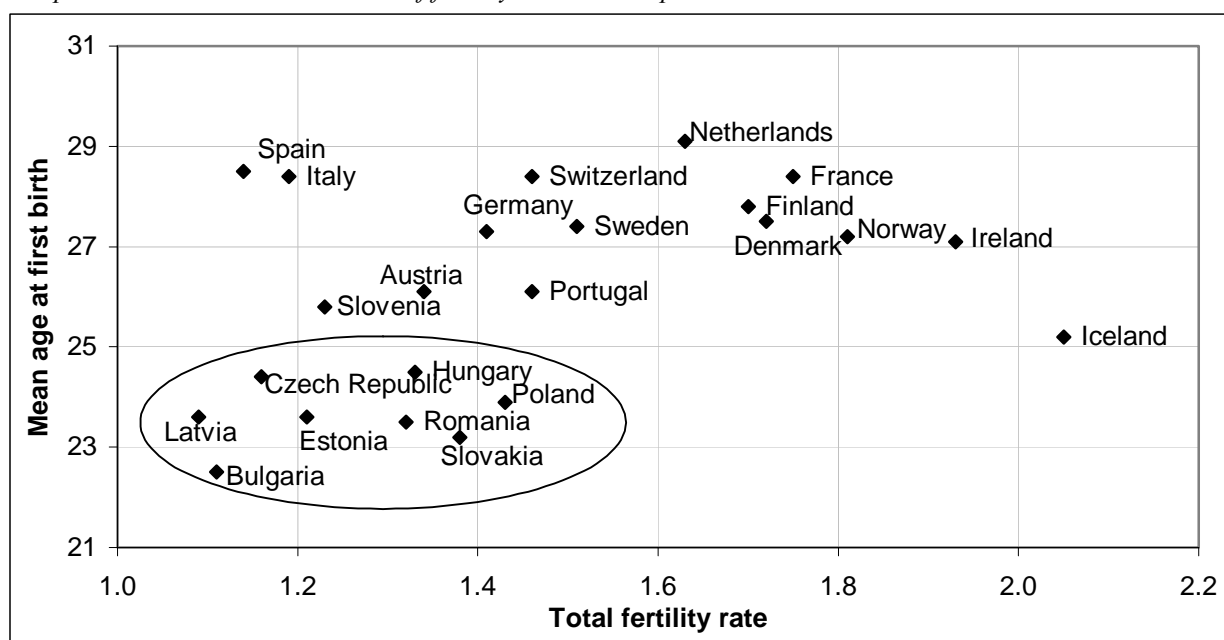
From the overview of the fertility indicators we can say that the prevailing part of European population is not currently able to ensure their reproduction (the level of the total fertility of 2.1 corresponds to it) and the decrease of fertility is, in general, ongoing.

In addition to the gradual closeness of the level of fertility intensity indicators, the second Europe-wide tendency is the increasing mean age of mothers at the first birth. This trend started at the end of seventies in the North and West Europe and a little bit later also in South European countries. In 1990, the mean age of mother at the first birth reached the level of 26-28 years in many Western countries.

In the East Europe the mean age of mothers at the first birth started to grow only recently. Until now, the East European women became mothers by 4-6 years earlier, in average, than women in Western countries. Within Europe, the highest mean age of mothers at the first birth was in 1998 in Netherlands (29.1) and also in Spain (28.5), Italy (28.4), Finland (27.8), Denmark (27.5), Sweden (27.4), Germany (27.3), United Kingdom (27.3) and Ireland (27.1).

The Slovak Republic is, after Bulgaria, the country with the lowest mean age of mother at the first birth (23.3) at all, although recently it is gradually shifting towards the older age. In Poland in 1998 it reached 23.9 years, in the Czech Republic 24.4 years and in Hungary 24.5 years.

Graph: 9.3: Selected characteristics of fertility in some European countries in 1998



Within the demographic statistics, data on abortion belong to less reliable and it is hard to compare them internationally due to different legislation in individual countries. Some countries even do not submit the information on abortion, e.g. Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus, Turkey etc. It might be because abortions are not permitted in the given country or are not statistically registered.

A certain idea on the level of induced abortion within the international comparison framework can give the abortion index in which the number of induced abortions is related to the number of born children. During the last decades, many countries have a liberal attitude on abortion. When high quality contraception had not been available in these countries, it led to its replacement exactly by the induced abortion. The

abortion index reached in some countries 80-90%. In other countries the number of induced abortions exceeded even the number of births (Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia etc.).

In the Slovak Republic, the abortion index reached the highest value in 1988 – 70.9%. After a significant decrease in the level of abortion in nineties, the Slovak Republic currently belongs among countries reaching the average values; in 1998 the abortion index reached 46.1%.

The extremely high level of abortion with the abortion index being over 110% is in Bulgaria, Estonia, Ukraine, Russia and Romania. The lowest level of abortion is in Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Greece and some other countries (the abortion index 10-30%).

Tab. 9.2: Overview of demographic indicators in 1998 in EU countries

	Age structure (%)				Aging Index	Mean age at first marriage		TRF	Mean age at first birth	Life expectancy at birth		Infant mortality rate	Increase per 1000 population	
	0-14	15-44	45-64	65+		Males	Females			Males	Females		Natural	Total
Belgium	17,7	42,2	23,5	16,6	94,0	27,8 ¹	25,7 ¹	1,53	27,0 ⁴	74,8	81,1	6,1	1,0	2,1
Denmark	18,2	41,6	25,3	14,9	81,7	31,6 ¹	29,9 ¹	1,72	27,5 ²	73,7	78,6	4,7	1,4	3,5
Germany	16,0	42,7	25,5	15,8	99,0	29,3 ¹	26,7	1,33	27,7	74,0	80,3	4,9	-0,8	-0,2
Greece	15,5	43,6	24,1	16,9	109,1	30,2 ¹	25,9	1,30	26,8 ²	75,5	80,8	6,8	0,0	2,1
Spain	15,3	46,1	22,2	16,4	107,2	29,2 ²	27,1 ²	1,15	28,5 ²	74,3	81,5	5,5	0,1	1,2
France	19,0	42,4	22,8	15,8	83,2	29,4 ²	27,6	1,75	28,4 ²	74,6	82,3	4,7	3,4	4,1
Ireland	22,7	46,0	20,0	11,4	50,1	29,7 ³	27,9 ³	1,93	27,1	73,4 ¹	78,6 ¹	6,2	6,0	13,6
Italy	14,6	43,2	24,8	17,4	119,4	29,8 ²	27,1 ²	1,19	28,4 ²	74,9 ¹	81,3 ¹	5,5	-0,9	0,9
Luxembourg	18,8	43,7	23,2	14,3	75,9	29,3 ¹	27,6	1,67	x	74,1 ¹	79,8 ¹	5,0	3,5	12,9
Netherlands	18,5	44,0	24,0	13,5	73,1	29,8 ¹	27,6	1,63	29,1	75,2	80,6	5,2	4,0	6,7
Austria	17,8	44,2	23,4	15,5	90,9	28,9 ¹	26,7	1,34	26,1	74,8	80,9	4,9	0,4	0,9
Portugal	16,9	44,8	23,1	15,2	90,3	27,0 ¹	25,0 ¹	1,46	26,1	71,7	78,8	6,0	0,7	2,2
Finland	18,4	40,8	26,1	14,7	79,8	29,3 ¹	27,6	1,70	27,8	73,5	80,8	4,2	1,5	2,4
Sweden	18,6	39,2	24,9	17,4	93,3	31,6 ¹	29,2	1,51	27,4 ²	76,7	81,8	3,6	-0,5	0,8
United Kingdom	19,2	42,1	22,9	15,7	81,5	28,8 ²	27,3	1,70	26,7 ²	74,3	79,5	5,7	1,5	3,7

¹1997, ²1996, ³1995, ⁴1993

Mortality

The mortality, together with fertility, represents the basic component of the reproduction of population. To express its level it is possible to use many indicators, however, for the international comparison the indicator of the infant mortality rate and mainly the life expectancy at birth are most frequently used.

The indicator of infant mortality rate has a special position within the characterisation of mortality relations. In seventies and eighties in all European countries a continuous decrease of infant mortality rate occurred, in some countries faster, in some countries slower, depending on its level at the end of sixties. The infant mortality rate decreased mostly in countries in which the second demographic transition finished only after the World War II or even later. Despite the rapid decrease, the infant mortality rate remains in these countries above the European average. In 1990, the infant mortality rate was in Turkey at the level of 58.0‰, in

Albania 28.3‰, Romania 26.9‰, Poland 19.3‰, and in Moldova 19.0‰. The Slovak Republic is, by its value of infant mortality being 12.0‰, classified among 14 European countries with the level of infant mortality rate in the range of 10.0-15.0‰. The lowest level of infant mortality rate in 1990 was recorded in Finland (5.7‰), Iceland (5.9‰), Sweden (6.0 ‰) and in Belgium (6.6‰).

In nineties, the decrease of the level of infant mortality rate continued and currently many European countries reach low values, however, substantial differences still exist. According to the latest available data the values lower than 5 dead children under one year per 1000 live births were recorded in 9 European countries: Austria and Germany (both by 4.9‰), Switzerland (4.8‰), France and Denmark (both by 4.7‰), Finland (4.2‰), Norway (4.0‰) and the lowest level of infant mortality rate was in Sweden (3.6‰) and Iceland

(2.6‰). The Slovak Republic, by the level of infant mortality 8.8 is being put on the 16th place in the European rank.

The values of infant mortality rate higher than 14 were registered in 1998 in Bulgaria (14.4‰), Latvia (14.9‰), Russian Federation (16.5‰), Moldova (17.5‰) and in Romania (20.5‰). The values over 28‰ are reported by Albania (28.3‰) and Turkey (37.9‰).

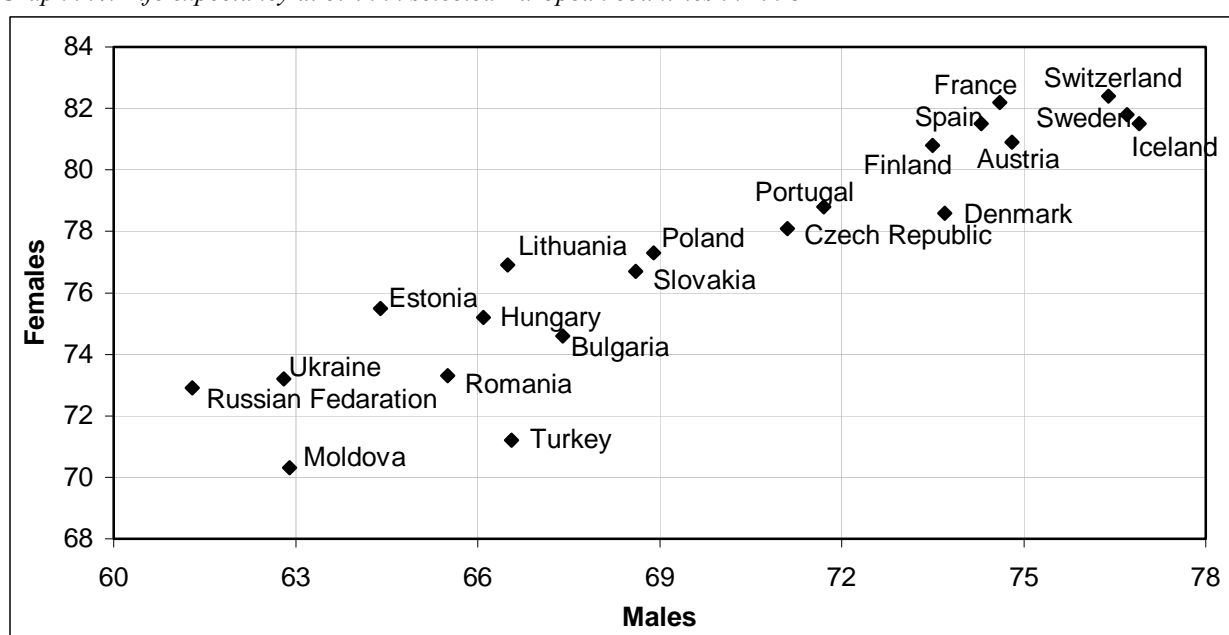
Another suitable indicator of the level of mortality and living conditions is the life expectancy at birth. In the post-war time period the values of the life expectancy at birth gradually increased in all advanced countries of Europe. The development slowed down at the beginning of sixties and in some countries the indicators of the life expectancy at birth during several

years stagnated at the level of 65-70 years for both genders.

In West, North and South European countries the increasing trend of the end of sixties has been gradually recovered mainly thanks to the improvement in the death rates at older age categories. The ascending trend of indicators on the life expectancy continued in the majority of European countries also in seventies and eighties.

In case of men, 14 countries of Western Europe had the values of the life expectancy at birth in 1980 higher than 70.0 years, of which the highest was in Iceland (73.9), Sweden (72.8) and Netherlands (72.5). In women population, the highest values were in Iceland (79.4), Netherlands (79.2) and Norway (79.0).

Graph 9.4: Life expectancy at birth in selected European countries in 1998



The situation in the East Block countries, where the mortality indicators had changed only negligibly, sharply contrasted with the above-mentioned development. The stagnation of values of life expectancy at birth, especially for men (at the level of 65-67 years), lasted nearly three decades, in some countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia) even a slight decrease occurred during 1980-1990. From the former socialist countries, the life expectancy at birth increased during the observed time period mainly in the Czech Republic by 0.8 years up to 67.6 years, in Poland by 0.5 years to 66.5 years and in Romania by 0.1 years to the level of 66.6 years. In 1990, the Slovak men, according to the value of the life expectancy at birth being 66.7 years, were, after Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, on the third position among the former socialist countries. The mortality trends for women were similar, although less significant. The death rates in case of women were improving also in seventies and eighties, although less fast as in the Western Europe. During 1980-1990 the

life expectancy at birth for women increased in all post-socialist countries, mostly in the Czech Republic by 1.6 years up to 75 years, in Slovakia and Romania by 1.2 years up to 75.4 and 73 years respectively. In the period after 1990, the worsening of overall mortality indicators occurred in several East European countries. It was related to the economic and political problems and the overall social instability. It was reflected in the decrease of the life expectancy at birth especially in countries of the former Soviet Union and Bulgaria and in Romania in case of men. From the countries of the former Soviet Union it was mainly in Moldova where during 1990-1998 the value of the life expectancy at birth for men decreased by 2.1 years down to 62.9 years and for women by 1.5 years down to 70.3 years, furthermore, in Russian Federation – for men by 2.5 years down to 61.3 years and for women by 1.4 years down to 72.9 years; in Ukraine for men it was a decrease by 3.1 years down to the level of 62.8 years and for women by 1.8 years down to 73.2 years; in Belarus for men, the decrease

was by 3.6 years down to 62.7 years and for women by 1.2 years down to the level of 74.4 years.

A slight decline in the life expectancy at birth for men occurred also in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In Bulgaria the life expectancy at birth for men decreased by 0.6 years to 67.4 years and for women by 1.4 years to 74.6 years. The Slovak Republic, according to the development of its mortality, differs from the above-mentioned post-communist countries. It represents, together with the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, but also with Hungary, a group in which the values of the life expectancy at birth have prolonged since 1990 and are part of the trend prevailing in the rest of advanced Europe. However, by the value of the life expectancy

at birth for men being 68.6 and for women 76.7 years, it still remains in the bottom part of the European rank and is significantly backward as compared to Western countries. The highest values in the life expectancy at birth in Europe are for men in Iceland (76.9), then in Sweden (76.7) and Switzerland (76.4) and for women it is in the Switzerland (82.4), France (82.2), Sweden (81.8), Spain and Iceland (both by 81.5) and Norway (81.3).

It can be assumed that the differences in the mortality relations between European countries will be continuously diminishing, however, the prolonging of the life expectancy towards the values achieved in the advanced Europe will be a long-term matter.