

Introduction

Currently in our country, we observe significant changes in the demographic development which reflect the actual socio-economic situation and which can be indicated as a transition to the new model of the reproduction behaviour of the population. A significant decrease in nuptiality and fertility, an unfavourable development in divorces, despite certain improvement an unsatisfactorily level of mortality, changes in the development of abortion and migration cause other unevenness in the age structure of population, ageing of population, an increasing economic burden of population, changes in the structure of families and households, increasing of the average age at marriage and the average age of parents at the time of the childbirth. The natural increase of population is diminishing. The issue whether the long-term trends are in question or whether the break point in the current demographic development is to be expected after the end of the transformation period is to be considered as a very important one.

Due to the fact that those are events, which have the impact on several aspects of the social development, it is necessary to draw a higher attention to the study of demographic processes. The qualified decision-making in the field of economics, social affairs, employment, education, health, dwelling construction cannot be done without qualified, appropriately structured, variant and standby demographic information. On the other hand, all mentioned decisions and measures have a feedback on the population development, i.e. on the population and family structure, the development of mortality, natality, nuptiality, divorce, abortion and migration. These impacts have to be identified and quantified in time so they can be taken into account when adopting the necessary measures.

This publication would like to contribute to these objectives. It is a complex analytical publication in the field of demography, which should be the basis for the annual detailed evaluation of the demographic situation in the Slovak Republic. The inspiration for the elaboration of this publication was mainly the publication being released for several years by colleagues from the Department of Demography and Geodemography, Faculty of Natural Science, Charles University Prague.

Because this is the first publication of this type released in Slovakia after a long time, which, on the one hand, compensates the absence of such works in the past and, on the other hand, it creates a basis and a starting point for the future years, it is reflected partially in its contents and focus. The view backwards into the past is deeper as it has been preliminary expected. A significant part of this publication is formed by facts and figures – time series of all basic and many analytical demographic characteristics, the core of this work is in basic analyses. We assume that in the future the observed time horizon will be shorter whereas the analytical

standpoints on particular demographic processes should be deeper, more specific and less traditional.

The publication is intended mainly for those who are dealing with the population problems in different spheres of the social life – from ministries through the central and local government up to science, research and universities. It is, however, intended also for those who would like to be only informed about the current demographic development in Slovakia and are not dealing specifically with demography.

The publication is released as the second publication of the Demographic Research Centre within the Infostat's edition. In addition to the Demographic Research Centre team, also the experts from other workplaces – from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, the Faculty of Natural Science of the Comenius University and the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the Comenius University contributed to the creation of this publication. There were two reasons for creating such a mixed collective of authors. The main reason was the fact that the recent capacity of Demographic Research Centre did not allow to cover the whole observed area at the sufficient level. In addition, we are aware of the fact that the collective of authors exceeding the scope of one workplace allows obtaining a broader view on these problems and therefore we do not preclude the possibility of such an approach also in the future.

The complexity of this analytical publication lies, on the one hand, in the description of all aspects of the reproduction process and, on the other hand, in the detail of the description of particular demographic events. One chapter is devoted to each demographic process. At the beginning of each chapter, there is a brief characteristic of the relevant demographic process during 1950 – 1989, following by a detailed evaluation of the development during nineties. The conclusion of each chapter contains the description of regional differences in the development of particular process at the regional level.

The individual parts of the publication have been worked out and written by the following authors: the part on the population age structure by *Jana Chovancová – Mareňáková* from the Department of Human Geography and Demogeography, Faculty of Natural Science of the Comenius University, chapters on nuptiality and divorce by *Karol Pastor* from the Department of Probability and Statistics, Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the Comenius University, chapters on fertility and abortion by *Boris Vaňo* from the Demographic Research Centre, chapter on mortality by *Ján Mészáros* from the Demographic Research Centre, chapters on migration and also increase and the number of population by *Danuša Jurčová* from the Demographic Research Centre. In addition to the analysis of individual demographic processes, the publication contains also the international comparison common for all demographic processes, which has been elabo-

rated by *Michal Tirpák* from the Division of Demographic Statistics of the Statistical Office of the SR. In the appendix (made by *Milan Žirko* from the Division of Demographic Statistics of the Statistical Office of the SR), there are data on the movement of population for the SR from 1950 until 1999 (absolute and relative indicators). *Milan Žirko* has contributed also to the preparation of data for all chapters.

From the standpoint of time, all data presented in the publication cover the time period from 1993 up to 1999, thus, the period from the inception of the Slovak Republic until nowadays.

For comparison, tables contain also data for 1990 (the beginning of the transformation period) and for 1985 (the time period when the old model of the reproduction behaviour culminated). In the chapter devoted to the international comparison are data for 1990 and 1998. Thus, it is possible to compare the situation in the selected countries in the time period when the transformation period in the SR started with the newest data, which are available from abroad.

All data for the Slovak Republic being used within the preparation of this publication and which are presented in particular tables come from the data sources of

the Statistical Office of the SR. In the chapter on migration, also the data from the Ministry of the Interior of the SR were used. Data on other countries, which are presented in the chapter "International comparison", are taken over from the data sources of Eurostat and the European Council.

At this time, it is necessary to highlight a very good co-operation between the collective of authors and the Statistical Office of the SR, the result of which are data and characteristics being not released until now in our country. The fact that within a very short time the data for 1999 were included into the publication at full extent and thus the publication contains information really up to the most recent time period is also very significant.

Publication has been released in a limited edition in the Slovak and English versions. The publication is unmarketable and will be distributed among the representatives of the top government bodies, public administration, research institutes, universities and media in order to ensure the information for the professional and non-professional public at the sufficient level. Furthermore, both versions will be at full extent available on the web site of the Demographic Research Centre (www.infostat.sk/vdc).