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EU migration policy in response to Europe's ageing workforce?

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Foreword

First of all, I would like to express my special gratitude to Professor Jean-Christophe Defraigne, head of our program, for this final year of study, which has been particularly enriching.

I would also like to thank him for having supervised this thesis with his expert knowledge, his pertinent advice, his professionalism and his availability.

I would also like to extend my warmest thanks to my parents, my family, my boyfriend and my friends, who gave me their unfailing support during the writing of this thesis.

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to provide answers to the following research question: "EU migration policy in response to Europe's ageing workforce?"

The first part of this thesis focuses on setting the context of this issue. I will introduce the current global and European demographic context, highlighting how falling birth rates and rising life expectancy are contributing to an ageing population. The United Nations' projections for the ageing of the population are quite edifying: "The proportion of people aged of 65 years and above is increasing at a faster rate than those below that age. This means that the percentage of the global population aged 65 and above is expected to rise from 10% in 2022 to 16% in 2050. It is estimated that by 2050, the number of individuals aged 65 years or above across the world will be twice the number of children under age 5 and almost equivalent to the number of children under 12 years."[1]

Then I will analyze the potential impact of this ageing on various socio-economic aspects, including the labor market, healthcare systems, economic growth and the old-age dependency ratio.

The second part will be devoted to migration policies. I will examine the legislative framework put in place by the European Union (henceforth EU) from the founding of the European Community in 1957 to the present day. Particular attention will be given to the EU Blue Card directive, aimed at attracting highly skilled migrants. Indeed, European countries are generally more favorable to the migration of highly skilled workers.

Following this, I will explore other possible solutions caused by an ageing population, such as investment in research and development (R&D), changes in the organisation of work, and birth policies.

The final section will look at the rise of the far right in various EU member states on migration flows and technological progress in certain European countries. I will also highlight the difference between the rhetoric and the reality of the statements made by the political parties in power.

[1] UN. (2022). Ageing. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ageing

Given that English is not my native language, I have utilized software tools such as Deepl to enhance some of my formulations in this thesis. These tools have been useful in ensuring clarity and precision in my writing.

In conclusion, I will present the effectiveness of migration policies in addressing the problem of an ageing population and labor shortages, drawing on the various sections of this thesis to answer my research question.

I. Ageing population

1.1. Demographic trends

This section will first present an overview of the current global demographic situation and its evolution. Subsequently, the focus will then lie on the ageing of the population. Finally, we will look at the possible impacts of an ageing population.

1.1.1. General situation

According to the United Nations, the world's population keeps growing, but at a much slower rate than before. By 2030, the world's population is expected to reach 8.5 billion, 9.7 billion by 2050 and 10.4 billion by 2100. Although the population is still increasing, the growth rate is decreasing. It has fallen below 1% for the first time since 1950 (*see Appendix 1*). Between 1950 and 1987, the world's population doubled from 2.5 billion to 5 billion. At the current growth rate, it will take 70 years for the population to double again, reaching 10 billion people. (UN, 2022)

Moreover, by 2050, more than half of the world's population growth will be concentrated in just eight countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania. The countries of sub-Saharan Africa will continue to grow until 2100. However, Australia, Oceania, New Zealand, North Africa and Western Asia will see their populations grow more slowly until 2100. On the other hand, East and South-East Asia, Central and South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America could see their populations decline before 2100. (UN, 2022)

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimations, the population of the European Union in 2023 was 448 million. It is expected to peak at 453 million in 2026 and then to decline to 449 million in 2050 (*see Appendix 2*). Furthermore, the European Commission is in line with the guidelines issued by the United Nations with regard to demographic growth, pointing to a slowdown in recent decades. (European Commission, 2023)

If we take a closer look at the European countries in 2021, we can see that there has been an increase in population in 17 countries (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark,

Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden) and a decrease in the other 10 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Germany's population has increased by around 0.0481% in 2021. This is not the case for Italy, which observes a decline since 2014, nor for Greece, which observes one since 2011. (INSEE, 2022)

With regard to future estimations, the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) has produced forecasts of the total population in billions of the EU's most densely populated countries for 2050 and 2100.

	2050	2100
Germany	78	71
France	68	68
Italy	52	35
Spain	45	33
Poland	33	19

Figure 1: Total population (in billions) of the five most densely populated countries. Data retrieved from the INED database.

In addition, we can see a clear decline in population in the five most densely populated countries of the European Union, with the exception of France, which remains stable. Germany's population growth will fall by 8.97%, while Poland's growth rate will be negative at 42.42% by 2100. The other two countries, Italy and Spain, have negative growth rates of 32.69% and 26.67% respectively. (INED, 2024)

According to the European Union's Diplomatic Service, in 1950, the population of the current 27 EU countries represented 12.9% of the world's population. By 2020, this had fallen to 5.7%. By 2070, it is estimated that the European Union will account for just 3.7% of the world's population. (EEAS, 2020)

1.1.2. Population ageing

This brings us to our main focus for the analysis: the ageing of the population. According to INED, population ageing is defined as “an increase in the proportion of adults and elderly people in a population, due to a decrease in fertility and in mortality. Population ageing is the

consequence of the demographic transition. Until now, it has mainly concerned the Northern countries, where fertility and mortality have fallen sharply, though it is now starting to have an impact in the South. It is likely to be one of the major social changes affecting humanity in the 21st century."[2]

This change in population size is a consequence of the demographic transition process, which is characterized by population growth followed by a slowdown. This change is due to a combination of a change in age distribution, population ageing and a reduction in fertility. According to Ronald Lee, the beginning of this demographic transition occurred in low-income countries where, in the 20th century, the decline in mortality began and accelerated after the Second World War. (Ronald Lee, 2003) Today, many countries are in advanced stages of this demographic transition, with a working-age population that has either stabilized or is declining. Only in Latin America and in the Caribbean will the working-age population begin to decline after 2040. (UN, 2022)

The fertility rate can have an impact on the population of a country or region. A high fertility rate allows population growth, but when it starts to fall, the annual growth rate also falls, leading to an ageing population. According to Statista figures, the EU's average fertility rate has remained relatively stable over the last decade, going from 1.54 in 2011 to 1.53 children per women in 2021. The expected fertility rate is projected to be 1.68 children per women in 2060, following the estimation from the European Commission's 2006 report. Unfortunately, this rate is below the required replacement level of 2.1 children per women to maintain a zero-population growth in the long term. (UN, 2022) For example, France had the highest fertility rate in the EU in 2021, at 1.84 children per woman. However, this rate fell to 1.68 in 2023. (INSEE, 2024)

The European Union has a growing elderly population. Indeed, by 2050, the proportion of people aged of 65 years old and above will be close to 30%, compared with around 20% today. In 2022, there were 94.9 million people aged over 65 years old. An estimation by the OECD shows that by 2050, this population will reach 129 million *(see Appendix 3)*.

[2] INED. (2024). Population Ageing. Retrieved from https://www.ined.fr/en/glossary/population-ageing/

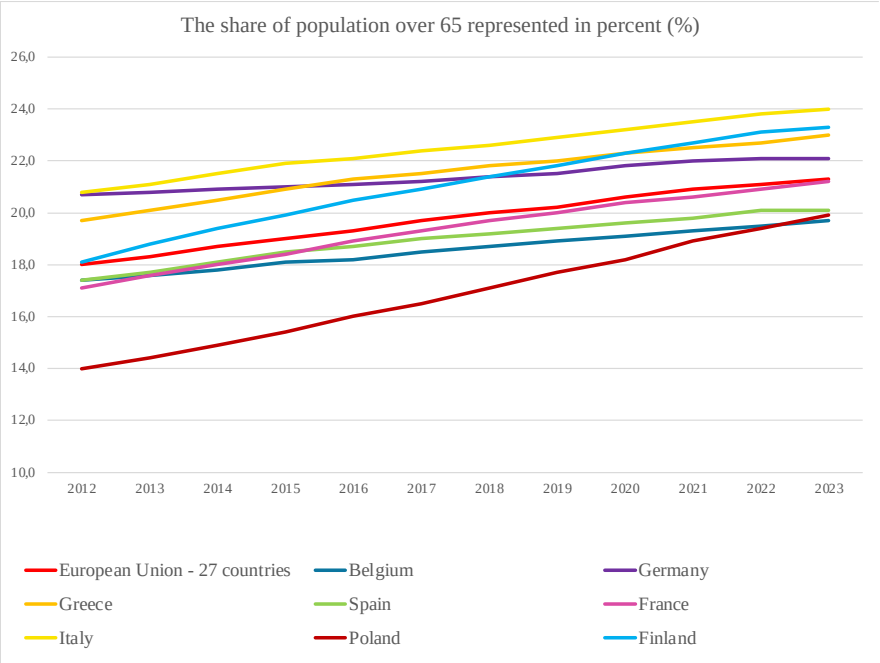


Figure 2: Evolution of the share of population aged 65 or above between 2012 and 2023. Data retrieved from the Eurostat database.

This graph is showing the proportion of the population considered to be elderly (aged 65 or above) in relation to the other age groups in the European population. Looking at the European Union as a whole, Figure 2 shows that this proportion is steadily increasing, reaching 21.3% in 2023, compared with 18% in 2012. Italy, Finland and Greece currently have the highest percentages of elderly population among the EU countries listed above. Poland, on the other hand, has one of the lowest percentages, but has shown significant growth over the years.

Take the case of Greece, which is facing a more serious demographic problem than some other EU countries. Greece is suffering from a combination of a low fertility rate and an increasingly ageing population. According to the Parliamentary Committee's report on demography in 2019, Greece's fertility rate was 1.24 children per woman, compared with 1.33 in 2015. This rate was well below the European average of 1.5 in 2015 and the replacement level needed to maintain a stable population. In 2018, the population reached its lowest level in 20 years. This decline has been partly due to significant emigration since 2010. In 2019, the Greek population stood at 10.4 million, which is expected to fall to 8.3 million by 2050. Greece, therefore, has a shrinking workforce, a phenomenon amplified by a growing percentage of people not working. This would impact on economic growth by increasing pensions and healthcare costs, and would have a negative impact on research and innovation, which are key to economic growth. (MacroPolis, 2019)

It is therefore important to recognize that population ageing is a general trend in Europe. However, this trend is reflected in different rates in different European countries, as we can see from the graph above. As a result, this variation in population ageing creates distinct challenges for each country.

1.2. The socio-economic challenges of an ageing population

The ageing of Europe's population can lead to various socio-economic challenges. These impacts can affect the labor market, increased pressure on care and health services, influence economic growth or even the old-age dependency ratio.

1.2.1. Labor market

The first analysis focusses on the impact on the labor market. The ageing of the population, together with a fall in the fertility rate, will lead to a reduction in the labor supply and therefore a reduction in the proportion of the population of working age.

However, several authors highlight the fact that life expectancy has been increasing for several decades. Elisabeth Rynning and John Ermisch in 2008, add that demographic change varies from country to country, but highlight that industrialized countries have been experiencing an increase in longevity since the early 1900s. They argue that as life expectancy rises, health improves and individuals are therefore on average more able to extend their working lives. (Rynning, 2008)

Life expectancy at age 65, 1980-2022
(years)

	Total								Males								Females							
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2019	2020	2021	2022	1980	1990	2000	2010	2019	2020	2021	2022	1980	1990	2000	2010	2019	2020	2021	2022
EU (¹)	:	:	:	19,4	20,2	19,3	19,2	19,5	:	:	:	17,4	18,3	17,4	17,3	17,7	:	:	:	21,0	21,8	21,0	20,9	21,1
Belgium	15,0	16,8	17,8	19,6	20,6	19,3	20,4	20,2	12,9	14,3	15,6	17,6	18,9	17,6	18,5	18,7	16,8	18,8	19,7	21,3	22,1	20,8	22,1	21,6
Bulgaria (²)	13,6	14,0	14,1	15,6	16,3	15,1	13,6	15,4	12,6	12,7	12,7	13,8	14,2	12,9	11,6	13,2	14,6	15,2	15,3	17,1	18,1	17,1	15,5	17,3
Czechia (³)	13,0	13,7	15,7	17,4	18,4	17,3	16,7	18,0	11,2	11,7	13,7	15,5	16,4	15,2	14,5	16,0	14,4	15,3	17,2	19,0	20,1	19,1	18,6	19,8
Denmark	15,7	16,1	16,9	18,4	19,8	19,8	19,6	19,5	13,6	14,0	15,2	17,0	18,4	18,4	18,3	18,2	17,7	17,9	18,3	19,7	21,0	21,2	20,9	20,7
Germany	14,9	16,3	18,0	19,5	19,9	19,7	19,5	19,3	12,8	14,0	15,8	17,8	18,3	18,0	17,8	17,6	16,3	17,7	19,6	20,9	21,4	21,2	21,1	20,8
Estonia	14,2	14,4	15,4	17,4	19,0	19,0	17,5	18,3	11,8	12,0	12,7	14,3	15,8	15,9	14,5	15,2	15,6	15,8	17,1	19,5	21,1	21,1	19,6	20,5
Ireland	:	15,2	16,4	19,3	20,8	20,7	20,5	20,5	:	13,3	14,6	17,7	19,4	19,4	19,2	19,4	:	17,0	18,0	20,8	22,1	21,9	21,8	21,6
Greece	16,2	17,0	18,0	19,7	20,4	20,0	19,2	19,4	15,2	15,7	16,7	18,2	19,0	18,5	17,6	17,8	17,0	18,1	19,2	21,0	21,7	21,4	20,7	20,9
Spain	16,4	17,5	18,8	20,9	22,0	20,5	21,4	21,3	14,7	15,5	16,6	18,6	19,8	18,4	19,2	19,2	17,9	19,2	20,7	22,9	23,9	22,4	23,5	23,2
France (⁴)	:	:	19,3	21,3	22,0	21,2	21,4	21,3	:	:	16,8	18,9	19,8	19,0	19,2	19,2	:	:	21,4	23,4	23,9	23,1	23,3	23,0
Croatia (⁵)	:	:	:	16,7	17,9	17,1	16,3	17,1	:	:	:	14,7	15,9	15,1	14,4	15,2	:	:	:	18,2	19,5	18,8	18,1	18,6
Italy	:	17,2	18,9	20,4	21,4	20,1	20,6	20,6	:	15,2	16,7	18,3	19,7	18,3	18,9	19,0	:	18,9	20,7	22,1	22,9	21,7	22,1	21,9
Cyprus	:	:	17,2	19,7	20,3	20,3	19,5	19,5	:	:	15,9	18,3	18,9	19,1	18,1	18,3	:	:	18,3	21,0	21,5	21,5	20,9	20,7
Latvia	:	:	:	16,1	17,4	17,0	15,6	16,6	:	:	:	13,1	14,4	14,0	12,7	13,7	:	:	:	18,1	19,4	19,1	17,6	18,6
Lithuania	15,3	15,6	16,1	16,7	17,9	16,8	16,1	17,0	13,4	13,3	13,6	13,8	14,8	13,6	13,2	14,1	16,6	17,0	17,8	18,8	20,0	19,1	18,2	19,0
Luxembourg	14,7	16,7	18,1	19,6	20,9	20,2	20,7	21,0	12,6	14,3	15,5	17,3	19,2	18,5	19,0	19,6	16,5	18,5	20,1	21,6	22,4	21,8	22,2	22,2
Hungary (⁶)	13,3	13,9	15,1	16,5	16,9	16,2	15,5	16,4	11,6	12,1	13,0	14,1	14,8	14,0	13,2	14,2	14,7	15,4	16,7	18,2	18,6	17,9	17,3	18,1
Malta (⁴)	11,8	:	17,0	19,9	21,1	20,5	20,7	20,6	10,7	:	15,2	18,5	19,4	18,9	19,5	19,2	12,8	:	18,6	21,1	22,5	22,0	21,8	22,0
Netherlands	:	17,0	17,5	19,5	20,3	19,5	19,6	19,8	:	14,4	15,4	17,7	19,0	18,2	18,2	18,7	:	19,1	19,3	21,0	21,4	20,7	20,8	20,8
Austria	14,9	16,6	18,1	19,8	20,3	19,6	19,6	19,6	12,9	14,4	16,0	17,9	18,7	17,9	18,0	18,0	16,3	18,1	19,6	21,4	21,7	21,0	21,1	21,1
Poland (⁷)	:	14,6	15,8	17,6	18,5	17,1	16,4	17,7	:	12,4	13,5	15,1	16,1	14,6	14,0	15,4	:	16,2	17,5	19,5	20,4	19,2	18,4	19,6
Portugal (⁸)	14,7	15,7	17,4	19,3	20,6	19,8	20,3	20,5	13,1	14,0	15,4	17,2	18,5	17,8	18,3	18,7	16,1	17,1	19,1	21,0	22,3	21,6	22,0	22,1
Romania (⁹)	13,4	14,3	14,8	16,1	16,9	15,7	14,6	16,3	12,5	13,2	13,4	14,2	14,9	13,4	12,5	14,0	14,2	15,2	15,9	17,6	18,6	17,7	16,4	18,1
Slovenia	:	15,6	16,9	19,2	20,1	18,9	19,3	19,7	:	13,3	14,2	16,8	18,1	16,9	17,2	17,8	:	17,1	18,7	21,0	21,8	20,6	21,2	21,5
Slovakia	13,7	14,3	15,0	16,3	17,9	17,1	15,4	17,1	12,0	12,3	12,9	14,1	15,7	14,8	13,3	15,0	15,2	16,0	16,7	18,0	19,7	18,9	17,1	18,8
Finland	15,1	16,2	17,8	19,7	20,6	20,6	20,4	19,7	12,6	13,8	15,5	17,5	18,8	18,8	18,6	18,0	17,0	17,8	19,5	21,5	22,3	22,2	22,1	21,3
Sweden	16,3	17,4	18,6	19,8	20,9	20,2	20,9	20,8	14,3	15,4	16,7	18,3	19,6	18,9	19,6	19,6	18,1	19,2	20,2	21,2	22,1	21,4	22,1	21,9

Figure 3: Life expectancy at age 65 between 1980 and 2022. Reprinted from *Eurostat* retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Table02_Life_expectancy_at_age_65_1980-2022_v1.png

This table shows life expectancy at the age of 65 from 1980 to 2022 for the various European countries. Since 1980, there has been a general increase in life expectancy for both men and women. However, in every country, women have a longer life expectancy than men. There are some variations between countries, such as between the Nordic countries and those in the south of the EU. Countries such as Norway and Sweden have higher life expectancy figures than countries such as Bulgaria and Romania. From 2020 onwards, we can see a break in this increase for certain countries (Denmark, Germany, Greece, …). This can probably be explained by the negative effects of Covid-19.

1.2.2. Care services

The increase in the number of people aged of 65 years old and above is putting pressure on public finances, especially in the most developed countries. "Public spending on ageing is estimated to increase by an average of around 4.75% of GDP by 2060 in the EU, in the form of spending on pensions, healthcare and long-term care."[3]

Analyses carried out by the OECD in 1988 indicate that the greatest increase in social spending would be on public pensions as a result of demographic change. This could compromise the

[3] European Think Tank for Solidarity. (2010). Ageing in Europe. Retrieved from https://www.pourlasolidarite.eu/sites/default/files/publications/files/affairessociales_vieillissementconstatsenjeux_0.pdf

balance of pension and social protection systems in general. Moreover, according to Ronald Lee in 2003, generous pension programmes and early retirement would have serious consequences for those who work by imposing heavy taxes on them. (Lee, 2003)

The political environment, therefore, has a crucial role to play with regard to the retirement age in order to limit the pressure on social spending. It is necessary to change the incentives for early retirement so that people work longer, to offer more flexible retirement arrangements, to reduce age discrimination by employers and to invest in improving the health of older people. This would reduce the burden of healthcare and allow older people to continue to contribute their knowledge to the economy. (Rynning, 2008)

1.2.3. GDP growth

The ageing of the population can undoubtedly affect economic growth in each country. A country with a large increase in the number of elderly people is more likely to experience slower growth than a country with a growing number of workers. Furthermore, the decreasing number of workers would not be able to counterbalance the negative impact of the health and pension costs of a growing number of elderly people.

In other words, GDP growth could be the first victim of this phenomenon. Similarly, inflation could be affected by the shift to a population that is less productive but consumes more. These effects could be countered by a higher participation rate among senior citizens and an increase in productivity through research and development (R&D). This increase in R&D would be accompanied by an increased need for capital to be invested. In addition, savings would start to fall as older people dipped into them to consume, which would have an impact on the rise in interest rates. In short, higher inflation and interest rates could be expected as a result of demographic change. Whether or not countries will experience a fall in GDP growth will depend on whether effective institutions and policies are put in place to deal with the challenge of ageing. (Mousset, 2023)

A number of studies have been carried out on the impact of ageing on economic growth. I will briefly list two of them.

The first study analyzed the negative effect of ageing on total factor productivity (TFP) growth. This indicator refers to the share of economic growth explained by factors such as technological

advances in organizational efficiency rather than increases in capital and labor. According to this study conducted by Shekhar Aiyar and Christian H. Ebeke in 2016, a one percentage point increase in the proportion of workers aged between 55 and 64 leads to a fall in total factor productivity of around 0.8 percentage points. Going forward, the ageing of the workforce will lead to an average annual decline in TFP growth of around 0.2 percentage points until 2035. As a result, if the workforce did not age, TFP could be around 25% higher than currently forecast by 2035. The countries most likely to be strongly affected by an ageing workforce include Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia and Ireland. (Aiyar & E. Ebeke, 2016)

A second study conducted by the National Bureau of Economic Research in 2022 analyses the impact of ageing on the US economic slowdown. It shows that the growth rate of GDP per capita fell by 0.3 percentage points per year between 1980 and 2010. This reduction varies between the different States and omits any political responses. In addition, between 1980 and 2010, the proportion of elderly people increased by 16.8%, resulting in a GDP per capita that is 9.2% lower than in a scenario without an ageing population. Between 2010 and 2020, the elderly population increased by 21%, implying a loss of annual growth of 1.2%. Finally, estimations for 2020 to 2030 indicate that the elderly population would increase by 11%, negatively impacting growth by 0.6% per year. From these estimates we can deduce that ageing has a negative impact on GDP growth, but that this negative impact would diminish over time. (Maestas & J. Mullen & Powell, 2022)

1.2.4. Old-age dependency ratio

Finally, another major impact of an ageing population is the old-age dependency ratio. The OECD defines this ratio as "the number of potentially inactive older people in relation to potential workers. Using the admittedly very arbitrary distinction that people aged 65 and over are totally inactive while those aged 20 to 64 are totally and equally productive"[4].

[4] OECD. (1989). Ageing Populations. Retrieved from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/401111720150.pdf?expires=1722417402&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=9797DE25C7CA2570B088F64B4E159E27

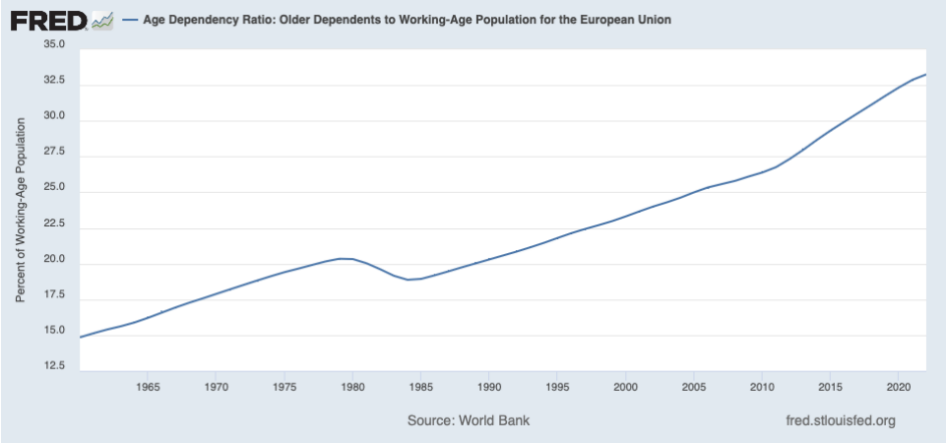


Figure 4: Age Dependency Ratio: Older Dependents to Working-Age Population for the European Union. Reprinted from *FRED* retrieved from https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SPPOPDPNDOLEUU

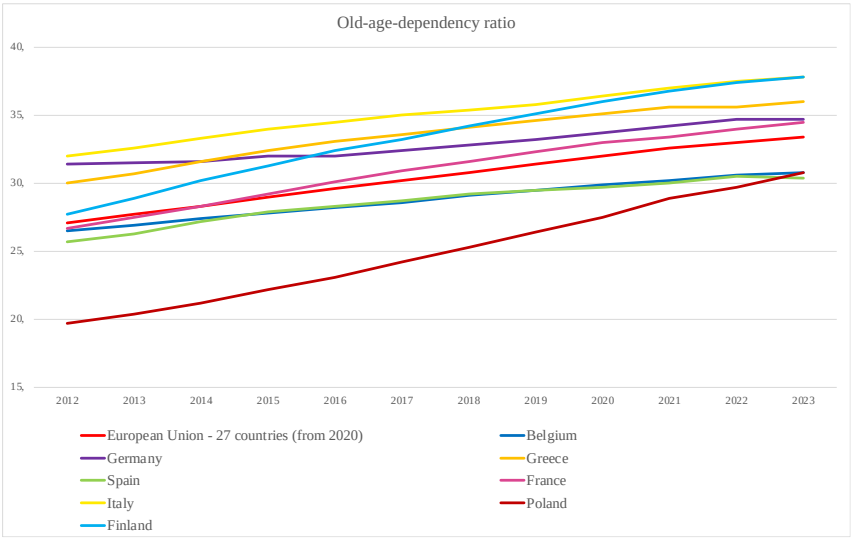


Figure 5: Old-age dependency ratio between 2012 and 2023. Data retrieved from the Eurostat database.

In order to understand how this ratio has changed over time, we will analyze Figures 4 and 5. Figure 4 shows changes between 1960 and 2023 in the ratio of elderly dependents (people aged above 64 years old) to the EU's working-age population (people aged between 20 and 64). The data is presented as the proportion of dependent people per 100 people of working age. The slight fall from the 1980s onwards could be explained by the birth rate policies implemented in previous years, by migratory movements or by improvements in living conditions and healthcare. Apart from this, there is a clear upward trend, from 15% in 1960 to 33% in 2023. Figure 5 also shows the evolution of this ratio for different EU countries between 2012 and 2023. The general observations suggest that the various EU countries are showing an upward trend in this ratio. Some countries, such as Spain, Greece and Poland, show a faster increase,

while France shows a more moderate rise. If we look at the highest trends to date, these are in Italy, Finland and Greece.

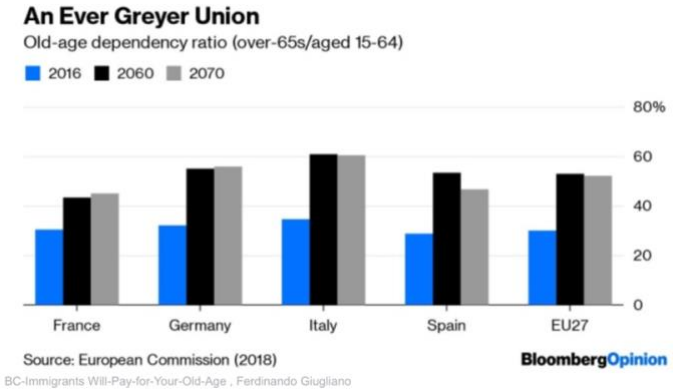


Figure 6: Old-age Dependency Ratio. Reprinted from *Bloomberg* retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2019-07-02/more-immigrants-would-help-solve-europe-s-demographic-time-bomb

As far as future forecasts are concerned, we can see from the graph in Figure 6 from Bloomberg in 2019 that the proportion of retired people in the working population will increase over time, although it should stabilize from 2060 onwards. If we take the case of Italy in 2060, for every person of working age, there would be 0.60 elderly people dependent on the financial support and services provided by the working population. An old-age dependency ratio of 60% indicates a relatively high burden on the working population, which will have to provide financial support for the elderly.

Axel Borsch-Supan is an economist at the Munich Centre for the Economics of Ageing. In 1994, he conducted a detailed analysis on the Germany's situation. According to his estimations, the old-age dependency ratio, which is equivalent to the number of pensioners for each working person, would rise from 0.35 in 2016 to 0.60 in 2060. Moreover, to keep this ratio constant at 0.35, Germany must increase net migration by more than 200,000 in order to have more workers. Indeed, he suggests it would require an average net migration of around 1.2 million people per year over the next 15 years. (Giugliano, 2019) However, this vision remains static, as the author considers a constant level of labor productivity without technological progress. In fact, Axel Borsch-Supan's estimate of the need for migration does not take account for possible changes in productivity, particularly through the use of artificial intelligence, as we will see in the next section.

In sum, managing the various negative impacts of population ageing requires policies that can meet the needs of older people while being financially viable. But this is a daunting task because developed and developing countries differ greatly in the speed of their demographic transition. Similarly, they do not all have the financial and institutional resources available to manage their own ageing populations. It is mainly the developed countries that are most affected by this issue, with their pension and healthcare systems under pressure. Despite this, they also have the greatest financial capacity to meet these challenges.

II. EU migration policy

2.1. Main EU migration policies

An ageing population has a direct impact on economies, particularly in Europe. Can Europe compensate for this ageing population by implementing migration policies?

First of all, a legislative framework was put in place in 1957 when the European Community was founded. This legislative framework was based on four freedoms: the free movement of goods, the free movement of capital, the free movement of services and the free movement of people/workers, which apply to all European citizens. The free movement of workers is enshrined in Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Articles 20 and 21 of the TFEU deal with the principle of non-discrimination in the freedom to move and reside within the EU. (Bradley & Tugran & Fries-Tersch, 2017)

Since then, migration and asylum issues have been addressed and reviewed on three occasions.

Firstly, at the time of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, migration policy was dealt with by the Member States under the third pillar, "Justice and Home Affairs". It operated on the basis of intergovernmental cooperation and issues of common interest. This period was characterized by a defensive attitude towards the arrival of migrants. "To this end, two non-binding Council Resolutions on migration for employment purposes were adopted: the first, on 20 June 1994, "on limitations on admission of third-country nationals to the territory of the Member States for employment purposes"; and the second, on 30 November 1994, "on limitations on admission of third-country nationals to the territory of the Member States for the purpose of exercising activities as self-employed persons"."[5] (IOM, 2009)

Secondly, the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 announced a second moment of change. Policies on the free movement of third-country nationals moved from intergovernmental cooperation to a genuinely common approach. During this period, we saw the appearance of directives on combating discrimination based on ethnic origin, employment and occupation (Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC). (Mavrodi, 2015)

[5] Mavrodi (2015). Common EU policies on authorized immigration. Retrieved from http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/107550/1/LSE_Ideas_common_eu_immigration_policies_may_2015.pdf

Finally, since the Treaty of Amsterdam, other changes have taken place. These have focused on the adoption of common EU rules and standards on the entry and residence of migrants for employment purposes, through various directives. These initially focused on the entry of highly qualified workers such as researchers, highly qualified professionals and specialist employees of multinationals, all from countries outside the EU. These rules were set out in Directives 2005/71/EC, 2009/50/EC/Blue Card and 2014/66/EU. Other directives will be drawn up thereafter, such as those on the rights and return of seasonal workers, in response to the need for low-skilled labor. (Mavrodi, 2015)

It should be noted that the introduction of a common migration policy in the EU has given rise to concerns in various Member States. They feared losing control over these migration policies. This fear obviously refers to the debate between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. The different positions of the Member States, influenced by the different political parties in power, made it more difficult to build a common migration policy. (Luedtke, 2009)

The proposal to create a common migration policy dates back to the 1999 Tampere Summit, which aimed to define a legal framework to regulate migration while meeting the needs of the labor market. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, each Member State was given the option of defining its own rules on the basis of common standards for migration policy in the EU. This implementation has resulted in a patchwork of different national regulations. (Jonjić & Mavrodi, 2012)

Today, migration policy is made up of three areas. The first involves mobility policy, with the free movement of European citizens within an internal market. Secondly, migration policy, which is traditionally dealt with under home affairs, involves the cross-border movement of third-country nationals. Finally, the third area deals with asylum policy. “The aim of the European Union's asylum policy is to offer an appropriate status to any third-country national in need of international protection in one of the Member States and to ensure compliance with the principle of non-refoulement (a fundamental principle of international refugee and human rights law which prohibits states from returning people to a country where there is a real risk that they will suffer persecution).” [6] (Dalla Zuanna & Hein & Pastore, 2015)

[6] European Parliament. (2023). Asylum policy. Retrieved from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/fr/sheet/151/politique-d-asile#_ftn1

Preference is given to attracting and authorizing highly skilled migrants. The EU's common migration policy makes it possible to welcome skilled migrants as well as those deemed useful for economic purposes. It also makes it possible to control the entry of individuals from unauthorized migration, who could create potential risks. All the directives adopted recently are consistent with this approach. They concern the harmonisation of migration policies for highly skilled professionals and low-skilled seasonal workers. (Jonjić & Mavrodi, 2012)

Through these various directives and standards, different categories of access and residence rights have been created for each class of worker. Migrants classified as seasonal workers have a right of residence of less than 9 months, and are not entitled to family reunification, movement to another Member State or specific remuneration. Students, on the other hand, are entitled to a right of residence of at least 1 year and to move to another European country, but are not entitled to family reunification. Researchers have more or less the same rights as students. They can only move to other Member States at the discretion of the latter. People working in the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) sector may be granted a right of residence of between 1 and 3 years, enjoy family reunification, move freely and receive special remuneration. Finally, people with the Blue Card (see description below) have the same rights as ICT workers, plus the right of residence for up to 4 years. (Mavrodi, 2015)

2.1.1. EU Blue Card Directive

2.1.1.1. History

As mentioned above, EU member states have a greater appetite for attracting highly skilled migrants. The "EU Blue Card" is a directive proposed by the Commission in 2007 that goes in this direction. It enables legal migration to be attracted, retained and increased in response to shortages of skilled labor. In this way, it increases the EU's competitiveness with countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada and China. It is, therefore, a major factor in the EU's economic survival. That's why I decided to take an in-depth look at Directive 2021/1883, otherwise known as the EU Blue Card Directive.

The legal basis for this is the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular points 3) a) of the first paragraph of Article 63 thereof, which provides that “the Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 67, shall adopt, 3) measures on migration policy within the following areas : a) conditions of entry and residence, and standards on

procedures for the issue by Member States of long-term visas and residence permits, including those for the purpose of family reunification; measures defining the rights and conditions under which nationals of third countries who are legally resident in a Member State may reside in other Member States."[7]

The proposal for this directive allowed preferential migratory treatment for highly qualified workers, granting them the right to family reunification and to move to another Member State after two years' residence. The proposal also included the right for highly qualified non-EU nationals to earn a gross salary equivalent to three times the minimum gross salary allowed in a Member State. The EU Blue Card was valid for a maximum of two years but could be renewed. (Jonjić & Mavrodi, 2012)

In 2007, the directive was not adopted. Certain proposals therefore had to be adapted. The period of validity of the EU Blue Card was extended from two years to four years, and is now renewable at all times. Remuneration was set at 1.5 times the average gross annual salary in the Member State concerned. However, a number of conditions have been maintained. Transparency for workers regarding the rejection of their applications for the EU Blue Card, as well as the possibility of appeal. Equal treatment in terms of working conditions, pay, recognition of diplomas and qualifications has also been maintained. Following these changes, the directive was finally adopted in 2009. (Jonjić & Mavrodi, 2012)

Member States then had until June 2011 to transpose the provisions of the directive into national law. All EU Member States have transposed the directive into national law, with the exception of Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom. All three have chosen not to incorporate this directive into their policy instruments and therefore not to facilitate the entry of highly skilled migrants into their countries. (Kahanec & Zimmermann, 2011)

In 2016, the Commission proposed a revision of Directive 2009/50/EC. This revision sought to amend a number of provisions by making the admission criteria more flexible, including; reducing the salary threshold, granting better conditions for family reunification, a shorter minimum length of employment contract and eliminating the individual asylum systems that each EU country has put in place, but the Member States were opposed to this. (Sandu, 2023)

[7] Article 63 of the Treaty establishing the European Community signed in Rome on 25 March 1957.

It was not until 2021, following a number of adjustments and amendments, that the Parliament validated the revision of Directive 2009/50/EC by approving Directive 2021/1883. This directive is intended to be even more attractive to highly qualified workers by making the admission criteria more flexible and inclusive. In particular, it lowers the minimum salary required to qualify for an EU Blue Card, and makes it easier to work and move between Member States. Member States had until November 2023 to amend this directive in their national legislation. However, after this date, several countries had still not notified the Commission of their transposed national measures. These countries include Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Spain, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden, i.e. 17 countries out of 27 (minus the three countries that did not want the directive in the first place. (European Commission, 2024)

France, for example, had still not transposed its legislation in January, and the European Commission sent it a letter of formal notice on 25 January. This means that the French authorities now have two months to respond and transpose their legislation, in order to avoid a reasoned opinion from the European Commission before the Court of Justice of the European Union. (ITAMA, 2024)

2.1.1.2. Features

We will now describe the conditions for admission to an EU Blue Card:

- "Have a valid work permit or a firm offer of employment for a highly qualified job lasting at least one year;
- Meet the minimum wage requirements in the Member State concerned (see below);
- For regulated professions: submit documents attesting to compliance with national legal requirements;
- For non-regulated professions: submit documents attesting to the fact that you have the required high-level professional qualifications;
- Present a valid travel document, a valid visa application or a valid visa (if required), as well as a valid residence permit or a long-term national visa (if applicable);
- Proof of health insurance (or a document certifying that an insurance application has been submitted).

- May not be considered a threat to public order, health or safety."[8]

The application can be made from outside or inside the European Union. It is important to note that holding an EU Blue Card does not mean that the worker can automatically and directly works in any EU country. The EU Blue Card makes it easier to work in a member country, but a number of conditions and procedures may apply before you can take advantage of it.

Each Member State retains the right to regulate the details of these criteria at national level. As a result, there are differences between Member States in the way the directive is applied in terms of the minimum wage, the period of validity, the cost of obtaining the card and whether or not the "labor market test" is used. The labor market test (LMT) is a mechanism used by some Member States to favor national workers in the first place. This means that an employer can only take on a migrant worker after having looked for a national worker. Some countries, such as Sweden and Finland, do not apply the LMT, while others, such as Spain and Italy, do. (European Commission, 2024)

2.1.1.3. Highly skilled workers will probably go to the north

We might now ask whether certain destination countries are favored by these migrants. The Scandinavian countries are often cited as having more favorable employment conditions and migration policies. Scandinavian countries include Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Although Iceland and Norway are not part of the EU, they are part of the European Economic Area. Denmark is excluded as it has not introduced the directive into its legislation.

Kahanec and Zimmermann conducted a study in 2009 in which they analyzed the perceived attractiveness of certain destination countries for migrant workers with low or high qualifications. Their study, based on surveys of migrants, tends to show that the Scandinavian countries are and will continue to be more attractive than the others.

The study shows that highly qualified workers have a better perception of Scandinavian countries than other European countries. According to their 2009 survey, skilled migrants rated Sweden as a favorable destination at 7.1. Germany is just behind with a rate of 6.8, and only 5.9 for France; the European average is 7.1. The ratings given by less-skilled workers follow

[8] EU Immigration Portal (2024). Blue card. Retrieved from https://immigration-portal.ec.europa.eu/eu-blue-card_fr

the same general trend, but with less pronounced differences. These figures may suggest that highly-skilled workers attach greater importance to certain countries, including the Scandinavian countries. They would therefore be more likely to go to the Scandinavian countries than to the southern countries of the EU.

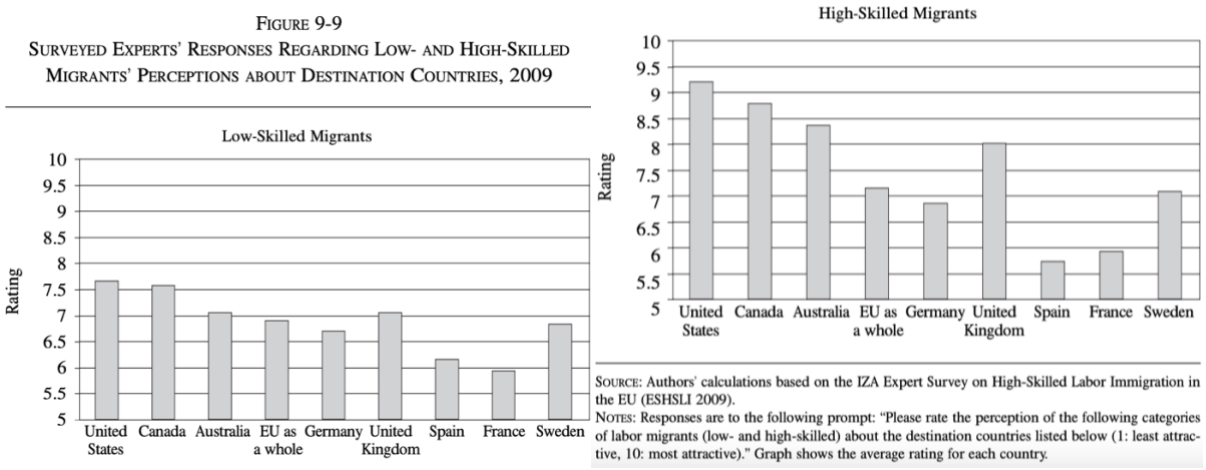


Figure 7: Low- and high-skilled migrants' perceptions about destination countries. Retrieved from https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/High-Skilled-Immigration-in-a-Global-Labor-Market.pdf?x85095

For them, the Scandinavian countries are characterized by economic prosperity. This is reflected in excellent working conditions and a high quality of life. These countries are generally generous welfare states based on a social-democratic tradition that emphasizes social welfare policies, high-quality education and health systems, and work environments conducive to work/life balance. (Kahanec & Zimmermann, 2009)

If we compare today these conclusions issued in 2009 with reality, we observe major differences. According to Eurostat figures, the number of EU Blue Cards granted has evolved as follows: 25,000 in 2017, 32,000 in 2018, 51,000 in 2019, 50,234 in 2020, 67,730 in 2021 and 81,851 in 2022 (*see Appendix 4*). In 2022, Germany issued the highest number of EU Blue Cards, with 63,242. Poland followed with 4,931 and France with 3,876. At the bottom of the list are Greece, Hungary, Malta and Slovakia, with fewer than 25 EU Blue Cards issued. The proportion of EU Blue Card applications in Sweden compared to other European countries is extremely low. In 2022, Sweden issued only 83 EU Blue Cards, compared with 390 for Finland, which for both countries is significantly lower than some other European countries (*see Appendix 5*).

One factor that could explain this is that the number of highly skilled workers in the Nordic countries is already significant. As shown on the Eurostat's maps below, in 2022, the Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland) had high percentages of highly skilled workers. This is indicated by blue and dark blue zones. In general, the lower percentages (in light green and light yellow on the map) are more located in central and eastern regions of Europe. Some regions in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and France also show high percentages of highly skilled workers.

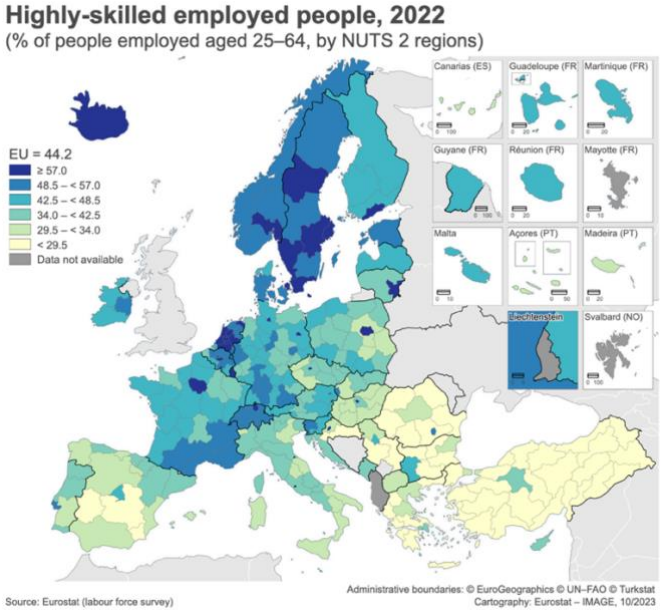


Figure 8: Highly-skilled employed people by region. Reprinted from *Eurostat* retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/fr/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20231004-1

Another factor can also be taken into account, the salary threshold for obtaining an EU Blue Card, in the job offer. To qualify for an EU Blue Card, the salary threshold must be €4,842.80 per month in Sweden and €5,209 per month in Finland. However, the salary threshold in Spain is €2,825 per month and €2,065.75 in Italy.

There are also other less important factors that may deter some migrants. As far as the EU Blue Card is concerned, for Sweden and Finland we can list the period of validity of the card, which is a maximum of two years, the time taken to issue the card, which is at least 90 days, the cost of the card, which in Sweden is €175 and €221 for renewal, and in Finland the cost is €480 and €430 for renewal. This compares with €160 for the cost of the card in Austria and €92 in the Czech Republic. (European Commission, 2024)

Generally speaking, the EU Blue Card is just one way of obtaining a residence permit. In fact, according to the Ministry of European Foreign Affairs, the EU Blue Card will be only the fifth type of residence permit issued in 2022. The other most popular residence permits are those issued for the purpose of working, family reunification, international protection and long-term resident status.

2.2. Other possibilities to answer Europe's ageing workforce

2.2.1. Migration

According to several authors, migration would make it possible to alleviate the demographic burden, i.e. ageing, and thus have a positive economic impact. According to Paul Demeny and a UN study in 2000, the EU needs 1.4 million net migrants a year to maintain its working-age population. (Parsons & Smeeding, 2009)

Highly skilled migration could generate economic growth but also bring new productive knowledge and technological growth. A study by Hunt and Gauthier-Loiselle in 2010 concluded that highly skilled migrants had contributed to significant growth in patenting activity in the US in several areas.

However, less-skilled migrants should not be overlooked. They would free up tasks that are currently carried out by skilled workers. This applies in particular to women, who often have to take on family and household tasks at the expense of their work. Having more less-skilled workers, such as housekeepers and care assistants, could free up more highly-skilled women. (Bloomberg, 2019)

Another non-negligible impact of migration is to be seen in terms of financial income for a country. Bonin et al in 2000, used a method to assess the fiscal impact of migrants in Germany. Without migration, Germany's annual budget deficit would be 6.1% of GDP. If 200,000 people immigrated each year, this deficit would fall by 5%, reducing the per capita tax burden by 18%. (Parsons & Smeeding, 2009)

However, according to Parsons and Smeeding in 2009, Europe cannot rely on migration to solve its demographic problems. In fact, they believe that too high a migratory flow risks changing

certain social and economic characteristics of the population quite significantly. These changes would then give rise to social divisions and economic tensions. Their proposal for solving Europe's demographic problem is rather to find domestic solutions.

2.2.2. Research & Development (R&D)

The first alternative solution that Member States could adopt to address the demographic problem would be to invest in Research & Development (R&D) in order to increase productivity.

In particular, the idea would be to move upmarket technologically. Europe could use more robots to avoid labor shortages in the labor market. In order to create and develop these robots and thus raise the technological level, it is important to encourage companies through policies aimed at increasing their capacity for R&D and robotization. These policies need to be put in place to improve innovation and technology, so that we can eventually overcome the labor shortage. This improvement should make it possible to maintain or even increase the level of production of goods and services and thus meet the needs of an ageing population. In short, innovation should make it possible to improve resource efficiency, and technology should make it possible to reduce the workforce through automation and robots.

The technology of generative AI is constantly evolving. Thanks to this, it will be possible to automate tasks in various sectors such as accounting, security, recruitment, customer relations and others, currently performed by skilled workers. This will enable the replacement and improvement of tasks by making them more reliable and much faster. (Pénicaud, 2024)

A study conducted by Acemoglu and Restrepo in 2017 demonstrated a positive correlation between an ageing population and an increase in the use of robots. They concluded that “a 1% increase in population growth is associated with about a 2% reduction in the growth rate of automation density (number of robots per thousand inhabitants).”[9] This means that an ageing population encourages countries to invest in the adoption of automation. On the other hand, for countries where the workforce is growing rapidly and benefits from higher rates of return on physical capital and lower wages, they reduce the incentive to invest in automation. Africa has a fast-growing population, so it invests less in automation. The ageing countries of Europe and

[9] ECONSTOR. (2020). Automation and Demographic Change. Retrieved from https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/215800/1/GLO-DP-0518.pdf

East Asia (such as Japan and South Korea), which have slow or negative demographic growth, have a high level of automation adoption. (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017)

According to estimates for 2030, robots will replace 37.9 million workers in a high-replacement situation, compared with 12.2 million in a low-replacement situation. This replacement will be most marked in Asia (Abeliansky & Algur & Bloom & Prettner, 2020). China is a perfect example, having embarked on a robotics revolution to support its strong productivity growth. According to McKinsey in 2015, if China wants to maintain its growth of around 6% per year, it will have to increase its GDP by 2% to 3% thanks to innovative activities. (Hartemann, 2019)

In the European Union, not all countries have the same level of research and development, and therefore the same capacity to bring about this revolution in automation, robotization and artificial intelligence. In fact, in 2020, GDP devoted to R&D in Sweden was 3.53%, compared with 1.41% in Spain. The European average was 2.2%. (*see Appendix 6*) (Statista, 2020)

2.2.3. Change in work organisation

The second solution that could be proposed would be to change the structure and organisation of work.

One possibility would be to extend working hours. In 2012, the employment rate of workers aged between 55 and 64 in the EU was below 50%. According to Axel Börsch-Supan in 2021, countries should push back the retirement age, even if these reforms will not be welcomed by the population.

Back in 2004, the European Commission pointed out that a low employment rate among older people means a loss of opportunities in terms of economic growth. It is therefore important to recognize older workers as an essential resource in the labor supply. Between 2006 and 2011, Eurostat reported that the employment rate of people aged between 65 to 74 years old increased by 15% in the EU. Many countries have responded by raising the retirement age.

In addition, Eurostat has produced a table providing information on the legal retirement ages in EU Member States, often showing a higher retirement age for men than for women. In 2020, the lowest legal retirement ages were 62 years and 6-8 months in Slovakia for both sexes, while the highest were 67 years in Greece and Italy. The table also includes subjective indications of

the ideal age until which people would like to work and the age until which they thought they could continue in their current job, according to a survey conducted between February and September 2015. In 2015, Bulgarians wanted to work until the age of 59.9 years old for men and 58.2 years old for women, while in Norway, men wanted to work until the age of 65.4 years old and women until the age of 64.1 years old. Contrary to the general trend observed in most EU Member States, women in the Netherlands and Finland wanted to work until a later age than men (*see Appendix 7*).

A forecast for 2040 in terms of maximum working age that would keep the size of the working-age population constant was made by the Commission in 2021. Countries such as Sweden and Ireland should see their working-age population increase. Eastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) as well as Portugal and Spain, on the other hand, should see their working-age populations fall, despite an increase in working life.

Early retirement also leads to a precipitous loss of human capital. Member States therefore need to introduce reforms and financial incentives to discourage early retirement and make it more attractive for older people to stay in work. This can be achieved through good working conditions in terms of health, safety and flexible working arrangements. It would therefore be necessary to focus on strengthening health measures and adapting the workload to maximize the productivity of older people. It is all the more common for companies to introduce better working conditions for older workers when they are large companies employing a high proportion of older workers and with an HR management system that incorporates quality of working life for all. (Zanardelli & Leduc, 2006)

Companies, in general, should increase and improve the integration of older workers, or even simply maintain the employment of older people in line with an increasing pensionable age. Alas, they tend instead to kick out their older employees because of a low productivity/wage cost ratio. (Vandenberghe, 2019)

Secondly, there may also be policies aimed at integrating more women into the labor market, as this is not yet the case in some countries such as Italy, for example (*see Appendix 8*).

According to a survey published by the Commission in 2024, between 1997 and 2019, the workforce in the eight countries in the sample (Germany, Spain, Italy, Ireland, the Czech

Republic, Romania, Sweden and France) grew by 21 million people, of whom 14 million, or 68%, were women. An increase of 22% of new well-paid jobs was held by men, compared with 31% by women. This increase for women workers in Europe is relatively significant, but was only made possible because women started from a much more unfavorable background with a lower employment rate. (Joint Research Centre of Commission, 2024)

In terms of differences in employment rates between women and men in certain countries in 2018, the employment rate for the European Union for women was 67%, while for men it was 78%. The countries with the biggest gaps in employment rates were the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Romania, Italy and Greece (*see Appendix 8*). In 2021, compared to 2018, the employment rate gap by gender didn't change significantly, and is still Romania, Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic and Malta (*see Appendix 9*).

2.2.4. Natalist policy

Finally, the third and last solution that could be proposed to combat the demographic burden would be to introduce a policy of increasing the birth rate, thereby increasing fertility.

Several countries are considering introducing policies in this area, such as South Korea, which could offer $70,000 for each baby. Trump has promised that, if he returns to power, he will grant bonuses in this area. For his part, Emmanuel Macron also wants to reorganize his country demographically. Sweden has a very favorable childcare program, yet its fertility rate is only 1.7. (The Economist, 2024)

The average birth rate in a high-income country is 1.6 children per woman (EU average). The replacement level required on average to maintain the size of the population without the need for migration is 2.1 children per woman. If we calculate the ratio of the two rates, we can conclude that each generation is 25% smaller than the previous one.

Here is a summary table from Eurostat of the total fertility rate for the EU and its countries, by average number of children per woman from 2017 to 2022:

TIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
GEO						
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	1.56 (b)	1.54 (ep)	1.53 (bep)	1.51 (bep)	1.53 (bep)	1.46 (bep)
Belgium	1.65	1.62	1.60	1.55	1.60	1.53
Bulgaria	1.56	1.56	1.58	1.56	1.58	1.65 (b)
Czechia	1.69	1.71	1.71	1.74 (b)	1.83	1.64
Denmark	1.75	1.73	1.70	1.68	1.72	1.55
Germany	1.57	1.57	1.54	1.53	1.58	1.46
Estonia	1.59	1.67	1.66	1.58	1.61	1.41
Ireland	1.77	1.75 (e)	1.71 (e)	1.63	1.78	1.54
Greece	1.35	1.35	1.34	1.39	1.43	1.32
Spain	1.31	1.26	1.23	1.19	1.19	1.16
France	1.89	1.87 (p)	1.86 (p)	1.83 (p)	1.84 (p)	1.79 (p)
Croatia	1.42	1.47	1.47	1.48	1.58 (b)	1.53 (b)
Italy	1.32	1.29	1.27 (b)	1.24	1.25	1.24
Cyprus	1.32	1.32	1.33	1.36	1.39	1.37
Latvia	1.69	1.60	1.61	1.55	1.57	1.47
Lithuania	1.63	1.63	1.61	1.48	1.36	1.27
Luxembourg	1.39 (b)	1.38	1.34	1.36	1.38	1.31
Hungary	1.54	1.55	1.55	1.59	1.61	1.56 (b)
Malta	1.26	1.23	1.14	1.13	1.13 (p)	1.08 (p)
Netherlands	1.62	1.59	1.57	1.54	1.62	1.49
Austria	1.52	1.47	1.46	1.44	1.48	1.41
Poland	1.48	1.46 (e)	1.44	1.39 (ep)	1.33 (ep)	1.29 (b)
Portugal	1.38	1.42	1.43	1.41	1.35 (bp)	1.43
Romania	1.78	1.76	1.77 (e)	1.80 (e)	1.81 (e)	1.71 (e)
Slovenia	1.62	1.60	1.61	1.59	1.64	1.55
Slovakia	1.52	1.54	1.57	1.59	1.63	1.57
Finland	1.49	1.41	1.35	1.37	1.46	1.32
Sweden	1.78	1.76	1.71	1.67	1.67	1.53

Figure 9: Total fertility rate between 2017 and 2022. Reprinted from *Eurostat* retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00199/default/table?lang=en

There has been a decline in all European countries. The average fertility rate for the EU27 fell from 1.56 in 2017 to 1.46 in 2022. In 2022, the lowest birth rate will be found in the south of Europe, particularly in Malta (1.08) and Greece (1.16). On the other hand, the highest fertility rates were in Romania (1.71) and Bulgaria (1.65). Both of these countries have seen their rates rise between 2017 and 2022. France is the number one country in terms of fertility, with a rate of around 1.8.

By way of comparison, South Korea currently has an extremely low fertility rate of 0.7, which would result in the loss of 60% of its population by 2100. (The Economist, 2024)

Japan has the highest rate of women without children (*see Appendix 10*). In addition, the average wage in Japan in 2021 was $39,711, compared with the OECD average of $51,670. The Japanese government has drawn up a plan for the next three years, as it believes that the next six years will be decisive in reversing the fertility rate. The measures include the removal of

restrictions on child allowance income, financial support for housing assistance, especially for families with several children, insurance cover for childbirth expenses, etc. (Katanuma, 2023)

Hungary was one of the first countries to introduce natalist policies and to spend almost 5% of this GDP on these measures. The implemented measures include financial assistance for people with children who are buying their first home, and lifelong tax exemption for women with four or more children. As a result, the fertility rate in this country has risen. (Martuscelli, 2023)

Poland introduced its “500 Plus program” in 2016. This program provides a payment of €120 for each baby born after a first child. According to the Commission, 55% of Polish children were covered by this program in 2017. Although the fertility rate rose after the introduction of this program, it has fallen very quickly since. (Martuscelli, 2023)

As mentioned above, France has the highest fertility rate in the EU. It provides a cash subsidy for families with children from the second child onwards, and this subsidy doubles from the third child onwards. Pension payments have increased by 10% for those with more than three children. (Martuscelli, 2023)

For their part, the Scandinavian countries have adopted a method of making it easier to have children. In Sweden, for example, parents pay only 11% of nursery fees. The proportion of children enrolled in crèches in Sweden is therefore higher than the European average of around 30%. Furthermore, parental leave is granted to both parents for a period of eight months. (Martuscelli, 2023)

The statistics office of Japan's Ministry of the Interior and Communication has published a graph showing the age composition of the female population. From 1920 to 1960, the largest proportion of women were aged between 0 and 19. Forecasts for 2040 indicate that women aged 40 to 59 and 60 to 79 will be the most numerous. Given that the fertility rate declines fairly rapidly after the age of 30 and sharply after the age of 37, the proportion of women of childbearing age will therefore be reduced. (Katanuma, 2023)

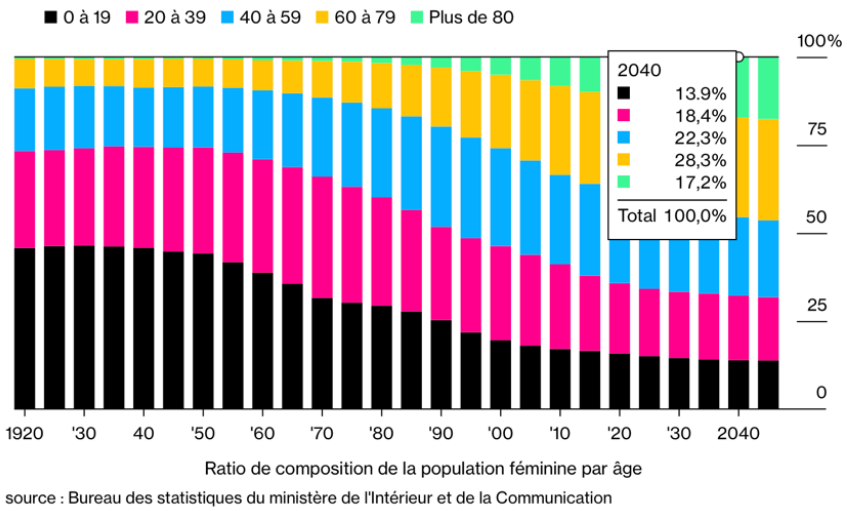


Figure 10: Age distribution of the female population in Japan. Reprinted from *Bloomberg* retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.co.jp/news/articles/2023-03-23/RRYJO4DWX2PS01

However, several authors claim that policies to stimulate births are a costly mistake and too complex to generate effective results. It is possible that pro-natalist policies that grant financial aid for each newborn will help some families to escape poverty. But, they argue, focusing on poor young women would be bad for countries. Indeed, a financial incentive would push poor teenagers into pregnancies that are then often linked to neglected health for the baby and the mother, generating additional costs for the country.

Moreover, the effects of a new baby boom would take about two decades to show results, as children grow up and reach working age. (Giugliano, 2019)

Finally, there are a number of problems associated with the introduction of birth rate policies. Firstly, not all countries have the same demographic profiles, which means that a common natalist policy would serve little purpose. Secondly, countries are fighting global warming, but boosting the birth rate is at odds with reducing the carbon footprint. Moreover, countries such as Japan and Korea, have shown that, despite substantial subsidies, the results on the birth rate are not always there.

In fact, people decide to have fewer children due to several factors as the high cost of housing, the difficulties for women to reconciliate work and motherhood and the lack of nurseries and access to schools. As long as domestic tasks are not shared equally between men and women, many women choose to limit the number of children they have. Simply increasing support for families or tax benefits is not enough, especially when costs are so high and subsidies do not cover real needs.

To conclude, I would also say that the birth policies of each country are also influenced by the political parties in power. For example, countries with a strong far-right presence prefer birth policies to migration policies. Last year, a conference on how to encourage Europeans to have more babies in Europe was organised in Budapest by Hungary's Viktor Orban. Among the participants was Italy's far-right prime minister, Giorgia Meloni. (Martuscelli, 2023)

III. Diverging political situations on migration

3.1. The rise of the far right

Far-right parties such as Italy's League and France's Rassemblement National argue that the European Union cannot afford to open its borders to solve its demographic crisis. For them, jobs and welfare protection must go to the natives first. Many economists as Paul Collier, Jennifer Hunt or even Paul Demeny argue the opposite, saying that migration is essential to help solve the EU's demographic crisis.

For several years now, we have seen a rise in the far right in various European countries. It therefore seems appropriate to analyze the relationship between migration rates and the rise to power of far-right parties. To do this, I will begin by analyzing the situation in the United States and the United Kingdom. Then I will look at the six EU countries where a far-right party is in power: Italy, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia and the Czech Republic. Finally, I will look at the case of France, where the far-right party Rassemblement National has recently been on the rise.

To be able to achieve a rapid rise, far-right parties in EU member states have made an "image adjustment". To attract a larger share of the electorate of right-wing and center-right voters, these parties have moved away from their extremist and neo-Nazi image. For example, Giorgia Meloni, president of the far-right Fratelli d'Italia party and Italian prime minister, frequently uses a more unifying slogan "I am Giorgia! I am a woman. I am a mother. I am Italian, and I am Christian." in her speeches to appear more human and closer to people.

This rise of the far right follows a number of recent crises such as the war in Ukraine, migration crises and the COVID pandemic. These crises and changes have engendered a sense of fear in people, which is reflected in more radical electoral behavior. People now see the far right as a source of protectionist solutions. These right-wing parties also advocate a return to more nationalist values and are therefore often Eurosceptic. (Moens & Hirsch, 2022)

The following graph from Statista shows the share of the vote obtained by certain right-wing Eurosceptic political parties in national and European elections from 2000 to 2023.

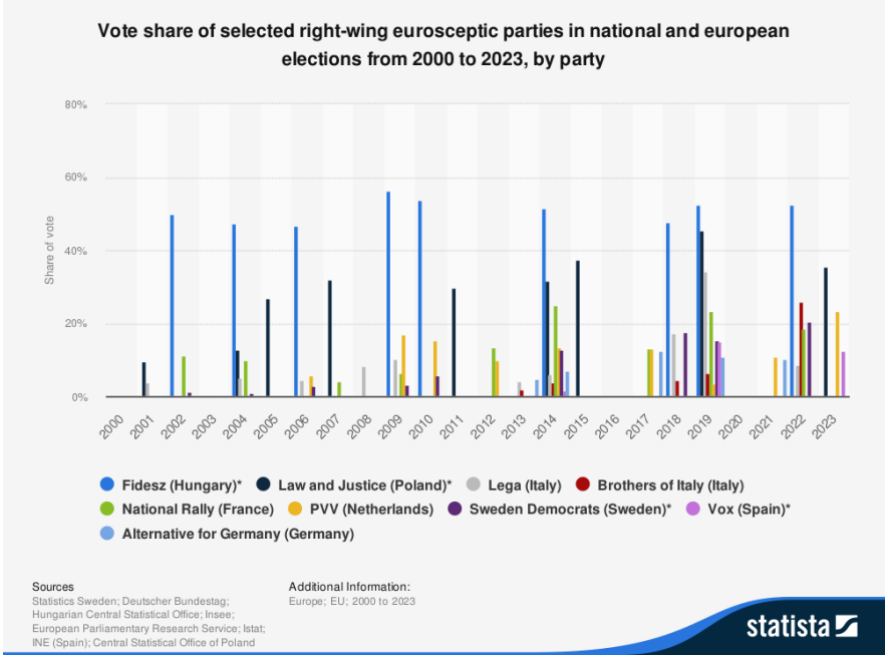


Figure 11: Vote share of selected right-wing Eurosceptic parties between 2000 and 2023. Reprinted from *Statista* retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1446794/vote-share-largest-eurosceptic-parties-eu/

There is a general trend towards the growth of right-wing Eurosceptic parties in several European countries, with significant shares of the vote in key elections over the last two decades. Some parties, such as Vox in Spain and AfD in Germany, show a more recent rise, reflecting more recent political changes in these countries.

Another Statista graph from 2023 illustrates the significant shares of votes for far-right parties in recent general elections in several countries.

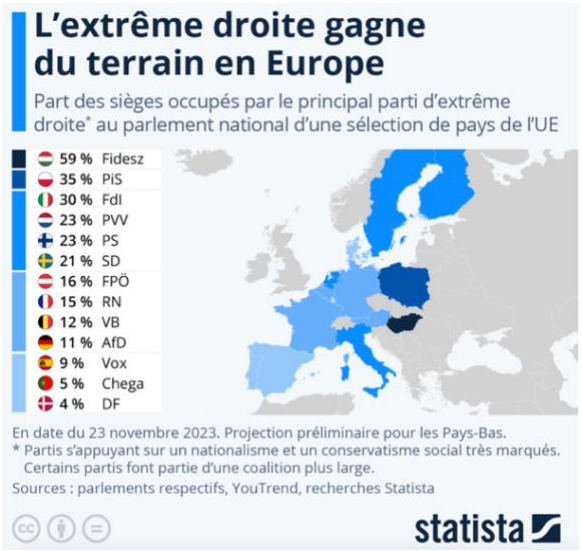


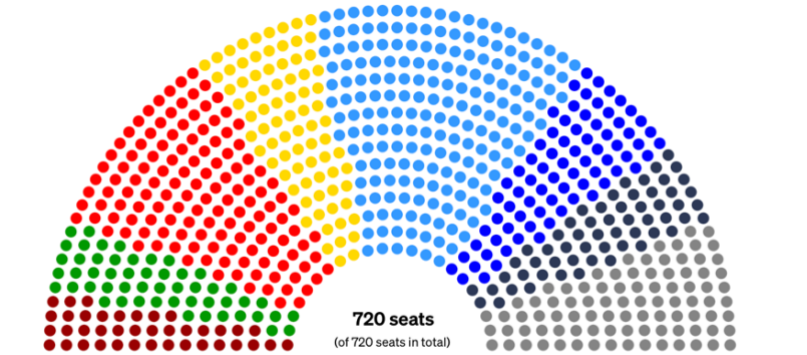
Figure 12: Vote share for far-right parties. Reprinted from *Statista* retrieved from https://fr.statista.com/themes/10062/la-montee-de-l-extreme-droite-en-europe/#topicOverview

This graph shows that many European countries record significant shares of the vote for far-right parties, often in excess of 20%. The presence of far-right parties is widespread across Europe, including both Eastern European countries such as Hungary and Poland, and Western European countries such as France and Italy.

In Belgium, too, the far right is on the rise, especially in Flanders. Vlaams Belang, a Flemish far-right party, won 13.77% of the vote in the June 2024 elections for the Chamber of Deputies. The NV-A, a more moderate party that nonetheless shares certain positions with Vlaams Belang, obtained 16.71% of the vote in these elections and is therefore the leading party in Belgium. In fact, its president, Bart De Wever, was appointed by the King to form the new government. Our neighbors, the Netherlands, saw a far-right party come to power in July 2024. Recently, a coalition between the right and the far right was formed to come to power. The Dutch government is now led by Dick Schoof, with the notable participation of far-right leader Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV).

3.2. European parliamentary elections 2024

The recent results of the parliamentary elections in June 2024 confirm the trend of the rise of the right. Here is a graph illustrating the results of these elections, with the gains or losses in terms of seats in parliament.



Click on a party to form a majority

Group	Seats	Change	Seats %
European People's Party	190	+14 ▲	26.4 %
Socialists and Democrats	136	-3 ▼	18.9 %
Renew	80	-22 ▼	11.1 %
Conservatives and Reformists	76	+7 ▲	10.6 %
Identity and Democracy	58	+9 ▲	8.1 %
Greens	52	-19 ▼	7.2 %
Left	39	+2 ▲	5.4 %
Nonaligned	89	+27 ▲	12.4 %

Participation: 51.08% (+0.42%)

Source : **European Parliament** and POLITICO

Figure 13: Results of the parliamentary elections in June 2024. Reprinted from *Politico* retrieved from https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-european-election-results-2024-swings-right-france/

There are seven political groups in the European Parliament: the European People's Party (EPP), Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe Group (Renew), Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), Identity and Democracy (ID), Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and the Left group (The Left). The EPP group is the center-right political group, while the ID and ECR groups represent the extreme right of the EU. The ECR group includes far-right political parties such as Fratelli d'Italia (FdI), the Sweden Democrats (SD), Law and Justice (PiS) from Poland and the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) from the Czech Republic. The ID group includes the Rassemblement National (RN) in France, the Lega in Italy, and the Freedom Party (FPÖ) in Austria. In the recent elections, all three political groups gained seats compared to the 2019 European elections, following general trends.

MEPs do not sit by nationality but by political affiliation, from left to right. In addition, 23 members are needed to form a political group. Some members do not belong to any political group and are called the Nonaligned. Each group has a chairman, a bureau and a secretariat, examines the reports of the parliamentary committees and tables amendments.

3.3. Situation by country

I will now analyze the far-right political parties in the selected countries and the impact on migration since they came to power. I will also add the aspect of the technological level of these countries in order to link these three factors. The countries selected are the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Hungary, Finland, Slovakia, Croatia, the Czech Republic and France.

3.3.1. USA

The Republican party won the 2016 presidential election and governed the US from 2017 until 2021. Trump had focused his campaign on reducing migration, claiming that undocumented migrants from Mexico were bringing drug-related crime. As a result, the number of people living in the US who were born in Mexico fell from 2017. In addition, Trump has blocked all forms of migration from Muslim-majority countries. As a result, migration from countries such as Iraq, Somalia, Iran or Syria was reduced to almost zero after he took office. (Lowther, 2020)

However, despite these "pleasing" figures for Trump, Obama's presidency (2009-2017) deported more people. In 2012, Obama deported around 409,000 people, compared with 260,000 for Trump in one year. The Obama administration carried out deportations based on more effective rules and focused on specific priorities. During Trump's presidency, the number of people from the rest of the world living in the United States rose by 3% from 2016 to 2019. The Trump administration deported more migrants indiscriminately, rather than specifically targeting criminals. This has slowed the pace of deportations. Moreover, the Trump administration also made it more difficult to obtain visas or legal status, overburdening the system. (Budryk, 2019)

In terms of expulsions, there are two categories: those who have been "removed" and those who have been "returned". Removals were expelled on the basis of a court order, while returnees were refused by the border authorities or asked to leave without an order. According to the BBC, Trump carried out as many removals as Obama, but fewer returns than Obama (*see Appendix 11*).

Biden's entry into office in 2021 was characterized by the removal of several Trump-era restrictions, such as the policy of rapid deportation of border residents known as Title 42. Compared to Trump, the number of people entering the US illegally more than doubled between

2020 and 2022 (*see Appendix 12*). However, since May 2023, Biden has deported 500,000 people in less than a year, more than Trump's annual totals of around 500,000 per year. This can be justified by the massive increase in migrants attempting to enter the United States since Biden's inauguration. (Miroff & Sacchetti & Frostenson, 2024)

Alongside the strict migration policies put in place by the Trump and Biden administrations, the United States continues to play an important role in technology and innovation. In the US manufacturing industry, the number of robots installed per 10,000 employees (= robot density) is showing positive trends. In 2017, the figure was no more than 200 robots per 10,000 employees. It has risen to 255 in 2020 and 265 in 2022. The United States therefore ranks seventh in the world, behind South Korea, Germany, Japan, China, Sweden and Switzerland (*see Appendix 13 & 15*). This increased robotization coupled with technological advances is enabling the United States to reduce its dependence on migration in response to the problem of an ageing workforce.

3.3.2. United Kingdom

In 2010, the Conservatives came to power. Their promise was to reduce net migration to less than 100,000 a year. During the Brexit period in 2016, this promise has been a central part of Conservative rhetoric which aimed at "taking back control" of Britain's borders. Indeed, Brexit exacerbated tensions within the Conservative party, with an influential right wing pushing for tougher policies. For example, many Conservatives preferred to leave the EU without a deal to avoid concessions on migration and other issues, despite the economic risks. (Gawthorpe, 2017)

Between 2017 and 2019, new Conservative MPs formed a 'New Conservatives' group led by Danny Kruger and Miriam Cates. This group lobbied the leadership for tougher migration policies. They pushed Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister since 2022, to reduce net migration below 226,000 a year, a target set by Boris Johnson in 2019. (Dawson, 2023)

Migration policies remained a subject of internal conflict. In December 2023, Home Secretary James Cleverly proposed legislation to overturn a Supreme Court ruling that the plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda was unlawful. This led to the resignation of Robert Jenrick, the Immigration Minister, because of disagreements over the measures to be taken. (The Economist, 2023)

In terms of net migration, there has been a big increase since 2021. By 2020, migration had fallen due to the Covid crisis. But since then it only increased, from 200,000 in 2000 to almost 685,000 in 2023 (*see Appendix 14*). Before Brexit, EU citizens accounted for between 59% and 77% of net migration between 2014 and March 2015. But since the 2016 referendum, net migration of EU citizens has started to fall to -76,000 in 2023 according to ONS estimates. (Sumption & Walsh & Brindle, 2024)

According to the International Federation of Robotics (IFR) report, the UK is lagging behind other countries in terms of robot density in the manufacturing sector. Indeed, in 2018, the UK ranked 22 globally in terms of robot density. By 2021, the density of robots per 10,000 workers was equal to 111. This figure, although lower than countries such as Hungary and Slovakia, has increased by 56% since 2015. In addition to this low rate of robot density, it should be added that since the Brexit, the number of workers from European countries has fallen. According to IFR Chairman Milton Guerry, it is imperative for the UK to invest in robotization to make up for the lack of migration policy and thus be able to progress technologically. (IFR, 2022)

3.3.3. Italy

Since 25 September 2022, Italy has been governed by Giorgia Meloni, a member of the post-fascist Fratelli d'Italia party founded in 2012. In October she became President of the Council in coalition with the Lega (also a far-right party) and Forza Italia (a conservative party). Previously, the far right was already present in the Italian government. Since 2021, the League has been part of the coalition led by Mario Draghi, former President of the European Central Bank, which has brought together parties from the left to the far right. It should be noted that the League is a political group founded by former fascists. Matteo Salvini, leader of the Lega party, had also governed from 2018 to 2019 in coalition with the populist 5-Star Movement, led by Giuseppe Conte. Salvini, leader of the Lega party, said “Another Europe without socialists in charge is possible and is necessary”[10] He also expressed his ambition to make the ID the third largest group in the European Parliament. Before last June's elections, ID was in sixth place with 62 seats. Following the elections, they gained nine seats, reaching only fifth place. (Sorgi, 2023)

[10] Politico (2023). Europe's far right flexes anti-Brussels muscles as it opens EU campaign. Retrieved from https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-far-right-florence-wilders-salvini-afd-identity-democracy/

Since Giorgia Meloni came to power, Italy has seen some changes when it comes to migration. Here is a graph showing the number of migrants arriving by sea from 2014 to 2023.

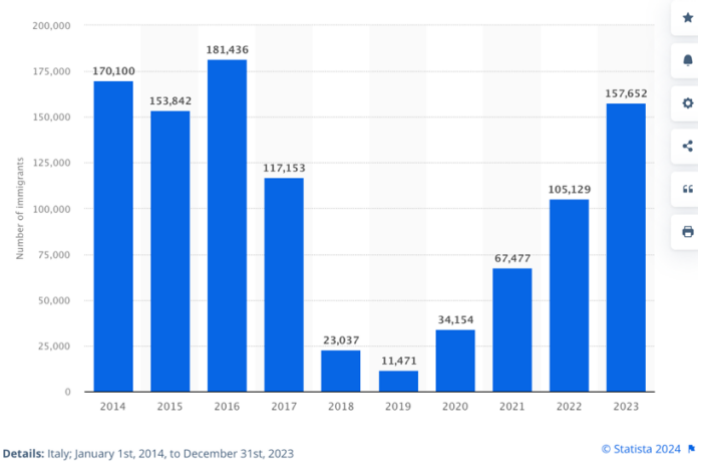


Figure 14: Migrants arrivals to Italy between 2014 and 2023. Reprinted from *Statista* retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/623514/migrant-arrivals-to-italy/

In 2023, around 157,000 migrants arrived in Italy by sea, far more than the 105,000 arrivals in 2022, and even more than the 67,000 in 2021. This number is close to the 2016 peak of 181,000 arrivals. In 2019, there were only 11,400 arrivals, after strict migration policies by the government backed by the League and the 5-Star Movement.

In September 2023, more than 10,000 people landed on the island of Lampedusa, while the refugee center has a capacity of just 192 people. Following this increase in arrivals, Meloni promised to reduce migration from North Africa. To fulfill this promise, she has introduced strict measures, such as restrictions on sea rescue charities, the extension of the detention period for migrants to 18 months, and the construction of new detention centers. (Roberts, 2023)

Despite these efforts, the results have been mixed. Meloni has also paved the way for legal migration to fill Italy's labor needs. In 2013, migrants, who represented 7.4% of the Italian population, contributed 12% of GDP. The government has increased work visa quotas for non-EU citizens to 452,000 for the period 2023-2025, an increase of almost 150% on the previous three years. (Armellini & Pollina, 2023)

At the far-right Atreju festival in Rome in 2023, Meloni admitted that she had not been able to keep her promises. She called migration “the most complex phenomenon I have ever had to

deal with”[11], saying “while the left thinks that the demographic problem can be solved by migration, we want to solve it by helping Italian families first and foremost to have more children”[10], adding that “children are the hope of every society”[10]. (Kazmin & Ricozzi, 2023)

This is why Italy is focusing all its efforts on a pro-birth policy. At the third edition of the Estates General on the birth rate, Meloni outlined the efforts made by the country, such as the construction of crèches, the strengthening of parental leave, the renewal of measures to help young couples buy their main home. Or the realization of social benefits in terms of tax-free bonus payments by employers for workers with dependent children (Italian Government, 2023). As we saw in a table produced by Eurostat in the previous chapter, the fertility rate in 2022 was 1.46, which is below the European average of 1.5.

While the Italian government's efforts to limit migration and stimulate the birth rate have been unsuccessful, the issue of technological development and robotization is becoming crucial to make up for an ageing workforce. However, the level of investment in R&D and robotization remains lower than in other European countries. In terms of gross domestic expenditure on R&D, Italy will see a slight increase between 2012 and 2022, rising from 1.25% to 1.3% of GDP. But it remained well below the European average of 2.25% in 2022. Looking at the other extreme, Sweden spent almost 3.5% of its GDP on R&D in 2022 (*see Appendix 15*). However, the density of robots in Italy is significantly higher than in other EU countries. In fact, according to IFR, the density of robots per 10,000 workers in 2020 was 224, outstripping Spain, Austria and France. Even so, France's robot density has fallen to 219 in 2022, which may limit its automation capacity (*see Appendix 13 & 16*).

3.3.4. Hungary

Viktor Orbán has ruled Hungary since 2010 with his far-right Fidesz party. For several years, he has been a source of embarrassment for the European Union and a threat to the European legal order. Neither the reports nor the legal actions launched by the Parliament and the Commission for violations of EU law have succeeded in dissuading Vikto Orbán. (Tobelem, 2024)

[11] Financial Times. (2023). Italy has failed to curb migration, Meloni admits at far-right festival. Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/6b6945a7-f45d-4767-8804-4b4474f16596

Although the Orbán government claims to respect EU rules on the treatment of asylum seekers, it has used the migrant crisis to push through a draconian law on migration. “Posing as the defender of Europe's so-called Christian civilization against an Islamic invasion, Orban's regime has left thousands of refugees languishing in fields and streets, forced others into squalid detention camps, and fired water cannons and tear gas at refugees gathered against the barbed wire fence Hungary has erected on its border with Serbia.”[12] Antonio Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has said that Hungary's policies are legally, morally and humanely unacceptable. (Kelemen, 2015)

In terms of migration, since Orbán came to power, Hungary has implemented excessively strict asylum policies, such as its vast border fence and its asylum policy. According to the Hungarian government, asylum seekers must apply in the first country they arrive in, making asylum policy virtually inaccessible. Despite this, Hungary is facing a significant increase in the number of migrants, rising from 28,000 in 2011 to 80,000 in 2021 (*see Appendix 17*). (Statista, 2024)

Hungary is also facing the challenges of an ageing population. In this context, to maintaining economic growth, making investments in R&D to develop technology may be a solution. However, Viktor Orbán does not seem to be investing more in his country's R&D than in welcoming migration policies. Indeed, investment in R&D does not exceed 2% of the country's GDP, which is lower than in most European countries (*see Appendix 15*). Hungary is therefore spending too little on R&D, which is holding back the innovation needed to meet the needs of its ageing workforce.

3.3.5. Finland

Petteri Orpo has been Prime Minister of eastern Finland since 2023. A member of the conservative and liberal Kokoomus party, he is positioned on the center-right. The new Finnish government is based on a coalition of four parties, including the anti-migration and Eurosceptic Finnish Party. Orpo's victory follows four years of social democratic leadership, marking a significant shift in the country's history towards a right-wing government. The rising influx of migrants to the Nordic state has contributed to the increase in support for Orpo. (Reuters, 2023)

[12] Foreign Affairs (2015). Europe's Hungary Problem Retrieved from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2015-09-20/europes-hungary-problem

As far as migration is concerned, the Finnish coalition government has agreed to reduce refugee quotas while maintaining the migration of skilled workers. Migration figures for 2023, announced by Statista, show an increase on previous years, with 73,236 migrants in 2023 compared with 31,941 in 2013 (*see Appendix 18*). It will be interesting to analyze migration trends over the next few years in relation to Orpo's accession to power.

Finland is renowned for its strong commitment to innovation, and has a high rate of investment in R&D in its country. Furthermore, Finland spends almost 3% of its GDP on R&D. Although this percentage will have fallen significantly between 2012 and 2022, it remains one of the highest in the EU (*see Appendix 15*). This investment in technological development allows the country to take advantage of solutions to combat the ageing of its population while maintaining a right-wing position in power.

3.3.6. Slovakia

Since 2023, Robert Fico has been back in power for the third time as Slovak prime minister. His government includes the far-right nationalist SNS party. Since his return, Fico has taken a firm stance against certain EU policies, particularly the war in Ukraine, and has been seeking to strengthen relations with China. His reforms of the Slovak judicial system have generated concerns about a possible deterioration of democracy, which could affect EU funding for Slovakia. (Lopatka & Baczynska, 2024)

Since Slovakia joined the EU in 2014, migration rose from 5397 migrants to 7686 in 2016 and 5733 in 2021 (*see Appendix 19*). Despite a relatively low proportion of foreigners compared to other EU countries, Slovakia experienced a significant increase in illegal migration in 2022, mainly due to an increased influx of transit migrants from the Western Balkans. (IOM, 2023)

While the Slovak government is becoming increasingly critical of certain EU policies, its technological development remains one of the weakest in the EU. Indeed, the country does little to invest in R&D to support the modernization of its industry (*see Appendix 15*). In 2022, Slovakia's investment in R&D was equivalent to 1% of its GDP. Furthermore, its density of robots in the manufacturing sector was equal to 175 robots per 10,000 workers in 2020. This is lower than in Sweden or Germany (*see Appendix 16*). This will not allow the country to counter the problem of an ageing workforce through technology and robotization.

3.3.7. Croatia

In Croatia, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković has formed a new government in alliance with the Patriotic Movement (DP), a right-wing nationalist party led by Miroslav Škoro. Founded in 2020, the DP represents a more radical alternative to the HDZ, the country's main governing party since 2015. Despite Plenković's efforts to distance the far right from the HDZ, many former members have joined the DP. The Patriotic Movement promotes strong Croatian nationalism, opposes migration, LGBT rights and supports a ban on abortion. (Hajdari, 2024)

In terms of migration, Croatia has seen a slight increase since 2008, with numbers rising from around 10,000 to 40,000 in 2019 (*see Appendix 20*). (Statista, 2024) This means that even with the HDZ coming to power, the flow of migrants has not decreased.

In the context of the strict nationalist policies of the Plenković government in coalition with the Patriotic Movement, Croatia is investing more and more in its technology. Indeed, investment in R&D doubled between 2012 and 2022, rising from 0.7% to almost 1.5% of GDP (*see Appendix 15*). Despite this growth, the country is still lagging behind the Nordic countries. Croatia must therefore continue to invest if it wants to respond to the problem of ageing in ways other than migration.

3.3.8. Czech Republic

Petr Pavel, a former NATO general, won the presidential election in 2023 in the Czech Republic. He supports the country's continued membership of the EU and NATO, as well as increased military aid to Ukraine to defend itself against Russia. “The ruling Spolu (Together) coalition, which includes Prime Minister Petr Fiala's Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian Democratic Union-People's Party (KDU-CSL) and Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity 09 (TOP 09), has backed Petr Pavel for the presidential election.”[13] ODS, the liberal and conservative Civic Democratic Party, plays a central role in this coalition.

Migration to the Czech Republic has risen sharply in 2022, from 25,000 in 2011 to over 350,000 in 2022. By 2023, when ODS comes to power, the figure has fallen to 140,000 migrants. (*see Appendix 21*). (Statista, 2024)

[13] Robert Schuman Foundation (2023). Petr Pavel elected President of the Czech Republic. Retrieved from https://www.robert-schuman.eu/observatoire/1985-petr-pavel-est-elu-president-de-la-republique-tcheque

In parallel with the fluctuating migration dynamics observed following the arrival of the ODS political party in power, the Czech Republic needs to invest more in these technologies to respond to the ageing of its workforce. In terms of R&D in 2022, its investment was almost equivalent to 2% of its GDP, placing it ahead of Portugal, Greece and Spain (*see Appendix 15*). Despite this, its density of robots in the manufacturing sector in 2020 was equal to 162 per 10,000 workers, well behind Sweden and Germany (*see Appendix 16*).

3.3.9. France

In France, the rise of the far right is symbolized by Marine Le Pen and her party, the Rassemblement National (formerly the Front National). In 2011, Marine Le Pen succeeded her father, the party founder and undertook a rebranding of the party and its more extreme positions; For example, she expelled her father after his controversial statements on the Holocaust. (Bader, 2016)

Marine Le Pen capitalized on various crises such as the European migration crisis, terrorist attacks in France, and Brexit, to promote a nationalist, Eurosceptic and anti-migration message. During the 2017 presidential elections, she managed to attract a broad voter base despite losing to Emmanuel Macron in the second round. (Bader, 2016) Her campaign strategy focused on the economic concerns of the French and was therefore praised by opinion polls. But still her program remains radical, particularly when it comes to the rights of foreigners, which could put France at odds with its international commitments. (Mayer, 2022)

Jordan Bardella, the new rising figure of the Rassemblement National, has also played an important role in redefining the party and presenting as a viable alternative to traditional parties. However, the Rassemblement National's program remains highly Eurosceptic and nationalist. (Caulcutt, 2024)

Despite the rise of the Rassemblement National, the party failed to win over enough voters in the last general election. With a total of 143 seats in the National Assembly, it did not allow them to form a coalition with all the smaller parties and manage France as initially planned.

Migration to France has been rising steadily since 2009, with 194,920 migrants entering the country. In 2020, there was a slight decrease to 233,093, no doubt due to the COVID pandemic. Finally, in 2022 the number of migrants entering the country was 320,330. This could perhaps

change if the far right comes to power in the next presidential elections in 2027 (*see Appendix 22*).

Against this backdrop of the rise of the far right and debates on migration, France continues to stand out for its investment in R&D and robotization. In 2022, France invested around 2.1% of its GDP in R&D (*see Appendix 15*). Furthermore, in terms of robotization, France has a density of 194 robots per 10,000 workers in 2020. This is higher than in Slovenia and the Czech Republic, but still lower than in Germany and Sweden (*see Appendix 16*).

3.4. The difference between rhetoric and reality

In conclusion, having analyzed several European Union countries as well as the United States and the United Kingdom, we can deduce that there is a divergence between rhetoric and reality when it comes to migration. In fact, since the far-right political parties have been in power, none of them has managed to significantly reduce migration in their country.

In the United States, for example, Obama deported more migrants than Trump, despite the presence of a far-right wing in the Republican Party. In the United Kingdom, since the Brexit, the number of migrants registered with the British social security system has increased, which is paradoxical given that one of the main aims of the Brexit was precisely to reduce migration. Furthermore, the six European countries with far-right parties in power and anti-migration campaigns have not achieved significant results with their measures. In Italy, Meloni has admitted that he has not been able to keep his promises on migration since coming to power.

It is therefore worth noting that, even under extreme right-wing regimes, governments continue to accept more and more migrants on work contracts. In time, these migrants will be able to acquire nationality and bring their families back to these European countries. This demographic dynamic could gradually upset the country's cultural identity. The presence of new Italian citizens, for example, could raise questions about the viability of strict nationalist policies. As a result, this situation could lead to a shift towards even more radicalized movements than those of today. The normalization of political parties once considered extremist could increase xenophobic tensions within this society.

We can therefore say that these governments, despite their anti-migration rhetoric, are either resorting to ineffective political measures, or announcing these measures solely in order to get themselves elected without implementing them afterwards. It is also possible that they are responding to the demands of employers and macroeconomic needs by seeking a more exploitable workforce.

In addition, it is important to consider the link between population ageing, Member States' migration policies and their technological advances. By investing in their technological resources, some countries, such as Germany and Sweden, will no doubt have no difficulty in compensating for the shortage of labor due to the ageing of the population, and thus limit their dependence on migration. On the other hand, some Eastern European countries (such as Hungary, Slovakia and Croatia) do not have the same technological capabilities, due to a lack of investment. Italy, for its part, has a high density of robots, but invests relatively modest amounts in research and development. Despite their nationalist rhetoric, these countries are constrained to accept migration in order to meet their economic needs. This paradox between rhetoric and reality could well end up creating social and economic tensions in the long term.

Conclusion

The ageing of the population in Europe is a phenomenon of concern that is intensifying year on year, raising socio-economic challenges.

The negative consequences of an ageing population include a shrinking workforce as well as increasing pressure on healthcare systems. These consequences require appropriate political responses, especially from the most affected European countries, otherwise European stability may be threatened.

European policies should also be able to contribute to addressing the problem of an ageing population. However, if we look at the EU Blue Card Directive in particular, it does not currently appear to be an optimal solution for countering the ageing of the workforce in Europe. Analysis of this directive has revealed that the number of cards issued remains relatively low. Furthermore, the situation is complicated by the rise of the extreme right in several European Union countries. Indeed, these political parties are opposed to the migration solution, even if their rhetoric is not always accurate. These two factors combined show the limitations of migration as a solution to the problem of an ageing population.

Other approaches must therefore be considered to counteract this ageing process. As explained in the second part of this report, investment in research and development (R&D) to stimulate technological advances seems to represent another alternative. Indeed, it is possible to offset the ageing of the workforce by encouraging automation and robotization. Some countries, such as Germany and the northern European countries, could respond to the ageing of the workforce by robotizing their industries. However, not all European countries have the same resources to invest in these technologies. For countries like Italy and some Eastern European countries, this solution is less viable. These nations should consider migration as an optimal solution, despite the presence of extreme right-wing parties in power.

Clearly, the problem of an ageing population is having a major impact on the future and the evolution of our society. This thesis demonstrates that different solutions exist, other than migration. Nevertheless, it is through a combination of strategies appropriate to the economic and political realities of each country that Europe can hope to meet the challenges raised by an ageing population.

At the same time, it is essential to note the limitations of this study. This dissertation is based on an analysis of existing literature. It would be wise to supplement this research with a quantitative study to explore the real impact of ageing in greater depth. A combination of literary and quantitative approaches could provide a more complete and in-depth view of the issue. In addition, further analyses of other European migration policies could be carried out to gain insights into the perspectives of migrant workers who are not highly skilled.

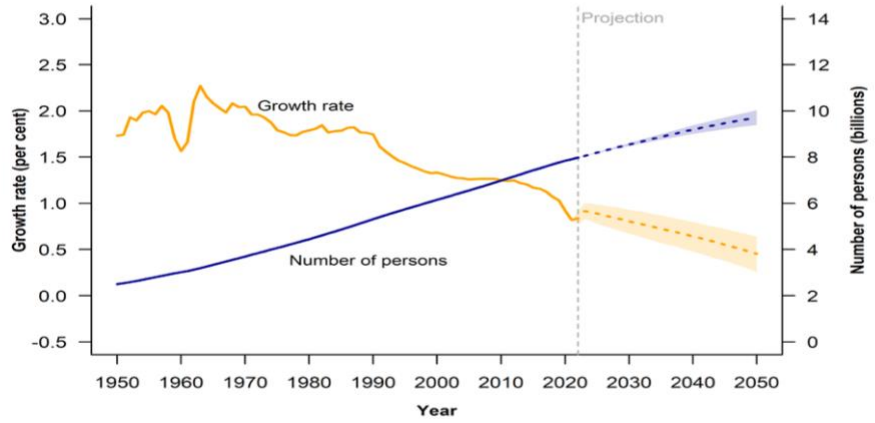
In summary, this work has contributed to a better understanding of migration policies in response to the ageing of the European workforce. The practical implications of this study are numerous and call for further research to deepen these discoveries and widen the field of possibilities in the future.

Appendices

1) Appendix 1: Estimated world population size and annual growth rate from 1950 to 2022

Figure I.1

Global population size and annual growth rate: estimates, 1950-2022, and medium scenario with 95 per cent prediction intervals, 2022-2050



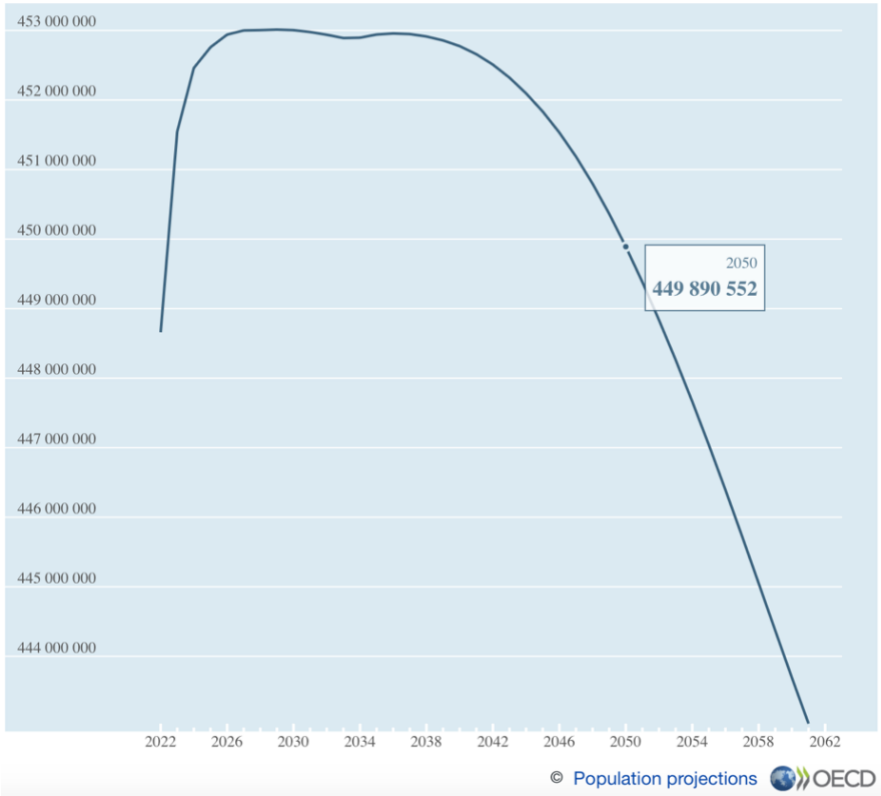
(UN, 2022. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/World-Population-Prospects-2022)

2) Appendix 2: EU estimated population between 2022 and 2061

Population projections

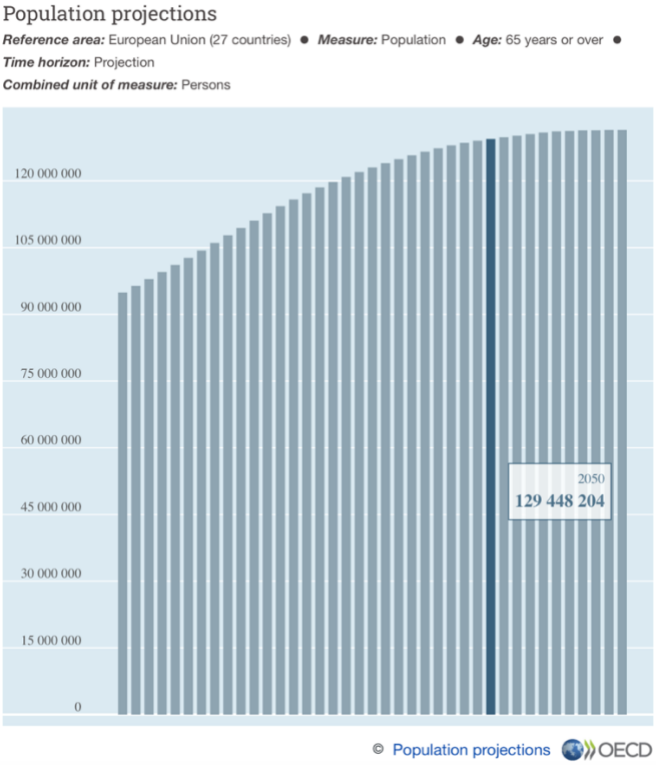
Reference area: European Union (27 countries) ● ***Measure:*** Population ● ***Time horizon:*** Projection

Combined unit of measure: Persons



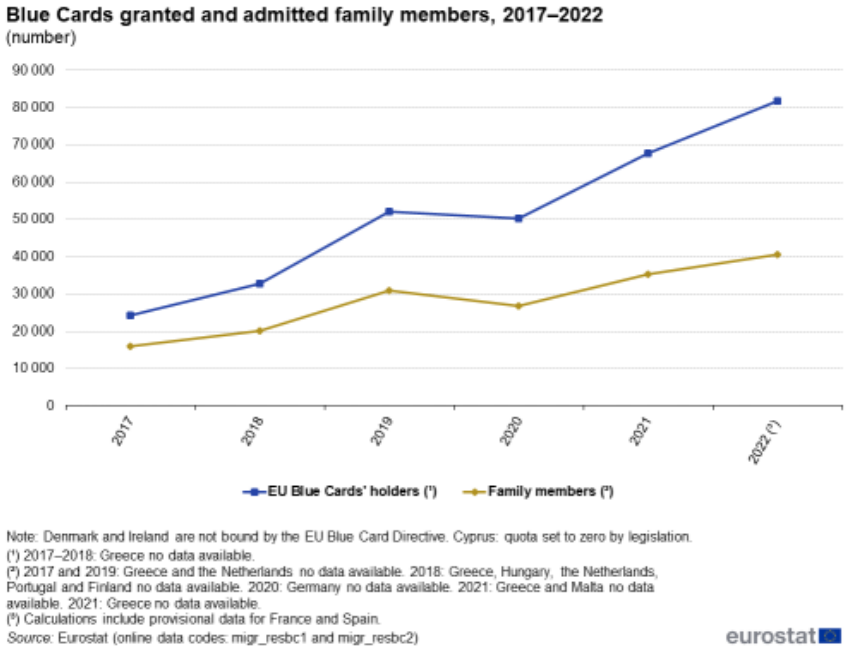
(OECD, 2024. Retrieved from https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?df[ds]=DisseminateFinalDMZ&df[id]=DSD_POPULATION%40DF_POP_PROJ&df[ag]=OECD.ELS.SAE&dq=AUS..PS._T..&pd=2022%2C2030&to[TIME_PERIOD]=false&ly[cl]=TIME_PERIOD&ly[rw]=AGE&vw=br)

3) Appendix 3: EU estimated population of people aged 65 and above from 2022 to 2061



(OECD, 2024. Retrieved from https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?df[ds]=DisseminateFinalDMZ&df[id]=DSD_POPULATION%40DF_POP_PROJ&df[ag]=OECD.ELS.SAE&dq=AUS..PS._T..&pd=2022%2C2030&to[TIME_PERIOD]=false&ly[cl]=TIME_PERIOD&ly[rw]=AGE&vw=br)

4) Appendix 4: Number of Blue Cards holders and family members admitted from 2017 to 2022



(Eurostat, 2023. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_–_statistics_on_authorisations_to_reside_and_work#:~:text=Table%201%20shows%20that%2C%20in,3%20876%2C%204.7%20%25).)

5) Appendix 5: Number of EU Blue Card holders and family reunification from 2020 to 2022

EU Blue Cards and linked family residence permits issued, 2020–2022

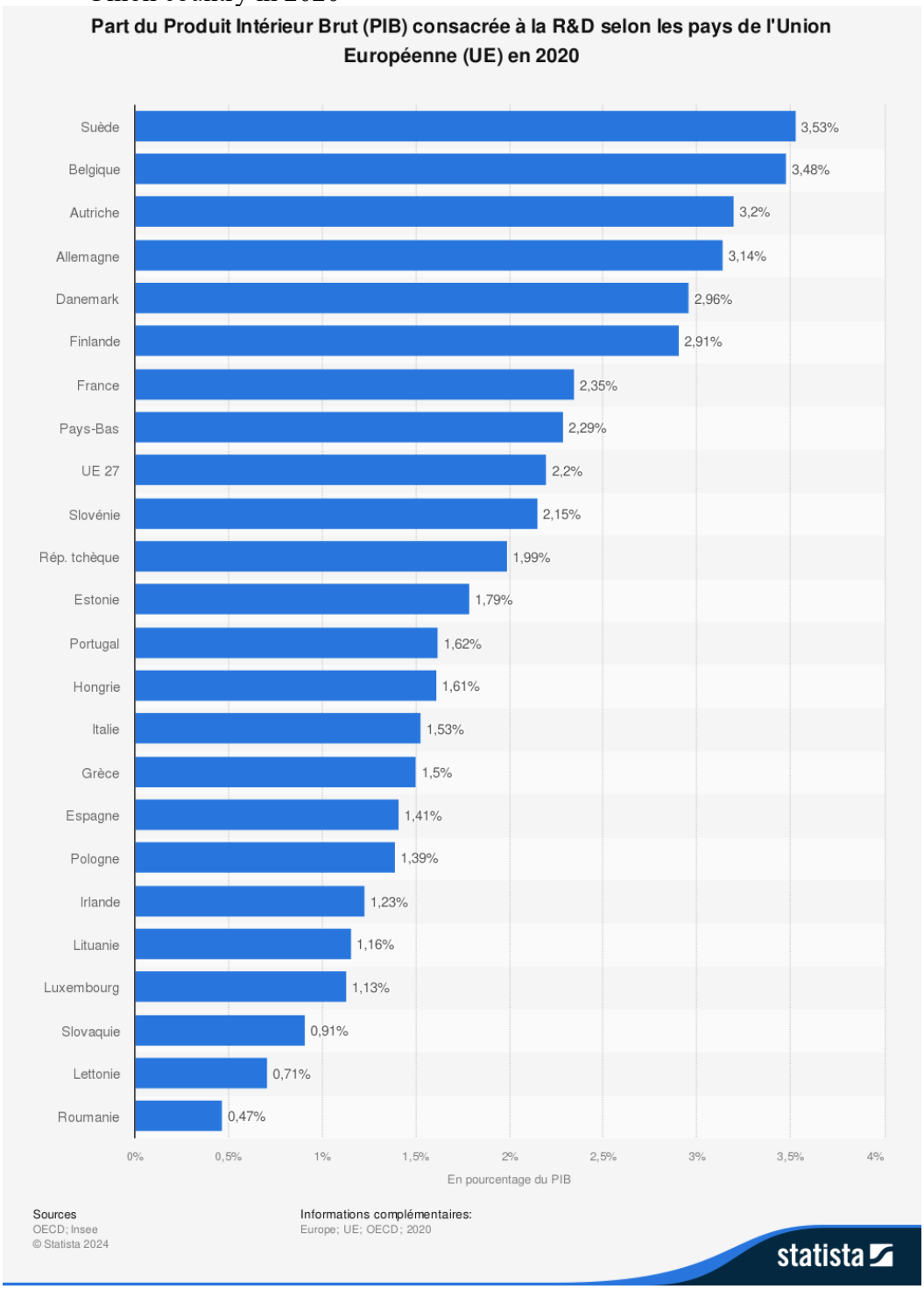
	EU Blue Card holders						Family reunification with EU Blue Card holders					
	2020		2021		2022		2020		2021		2022	
	(number)	Share of total (%)	(number)	Share of total (%)	(number)	Share of total (%)	(number)	Share of total (%)	(number)	Share of total (%)	(number)	Share of total (%)
TOTAL (*)	50 234	100.0	67 730	100.0	81 651	100.0	28 732	100.0	35 300	100.0	40 589	100.0
Belgium	117	0.2	114	0.2	124	0.2	93	0.3	99	0.3	121	0.3
Bulgaria	299	0.6	323	0.5	922	1.1	153	0.6	210	0.6	532	1.3
Czechia	366	0.7	671	1.0	636	0.8	150	0.6	253	0.7	270	0.7
Denmark	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Germany	43 227	86.1	57 671	85.1	63 242	77.3	21 911	82.0	28 148	:	30 254	74.6
Estonia	15	0.0	25	0.0	36	0.0	15	0.1	18	0.1	13	0.0
Ireland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Greece	3	0.0	12	0.0	22	0.0	:	:	:	:	:	:
Spain (*)	51	0.1	64	0.1	58	0.1	24	0.1	13	0.0	18	0.0
France (*)	2 032	4.0	1 864	2.8	3 876	4.7	1 106	4.1	1 327	3.8	2 259	5.6
Croatia	98	0.2	225	0.3	440	0.5	15	0.1	46	0.1	100	0.2
Italy	211	0.4	409	0.6	572	0.7	1	0.0	68	0.2	23	0.1
Cyprus	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Latvia	69	0.1	226	0.3	357	0.4	53	0.2	284	0.8	233	0.6
Lithuania	289	0.6	1 267	1.9	3 924	4.8	250	0.9	542	1.5	21	0.1
Luxembourg	484	0.9	697	1.0	1 011	1.2	531	2.0	701	2.0	1 054	2.6
Hungary	5	0.0	10	0.0	18	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	34	0.1
Malta	15	0.0	26	0.0	21	0.0	3	0.0	9	0.0	4	0.0
Netherlands	205	0.4	214	0.3	304	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Austria	223	0.4	312	0.5	501	0.6	276	1.0	403	1.1	505	1.2
Poland	2 251	4.5	2 980	4.4	4 931	6.0	1 818	6.8	2 578	7.3	4 138	10.2
Portugal	8	0.0	23	0.0	27	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.0
Romania	113	0.2	237	0.3	211	0.3	149	0.6	159	0.5	137	0.3
Slovenia	52	0.1	96	0.1	131	0.2	57	0.2	83	0.2	168	0.4
Slovakia	6	0.0	10	0.0	14	0.0	7	0.0	2	0.0	9	0.0
Finland	95	0.2	200	0.3	390	0.5	99	0.4	313	0.9	565	1.4
Sweden	20	0.0	54	0.1	83	0.1	21	0.1	43	0.1	109	0.3

: indicates not available or not applicable.
Note: Denmark and Ireland are not bound by the EU Blue Card Directive. Cyprus: quota set to zero by legislation.
(*) Total and shares based on available data.
(*) Provisional.
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr_resbc1 and migr_resbc2)

eurostat

(Eurostat, 2023. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_–_statistics_on_authorisations_to_reside_and_work#:~:text=Table%201%20shows%20that%2C%20in,3%20876%2C%204.7%20%25).)

6) Appendix 6: Share of gross domestic product (GDP) devoted to R&D by European Union country in 2020



(Statista, 2023. Retrieved from https://fr.statista.com/statistiques/1309262/pqrt-pib-recherche-developpement-union-europeennee/#:~:text=La%20France%20investissait%202%2C35,Lettonie%20avec%200%2C71%25.)

7) Appendix 7: Comparison between the statutory pension age in 2020 and the average ages up to which people want to work in 2015

Statutory pension ages and average ages up to which people want to work, by sex, February-September 2015 and 2020
(years)

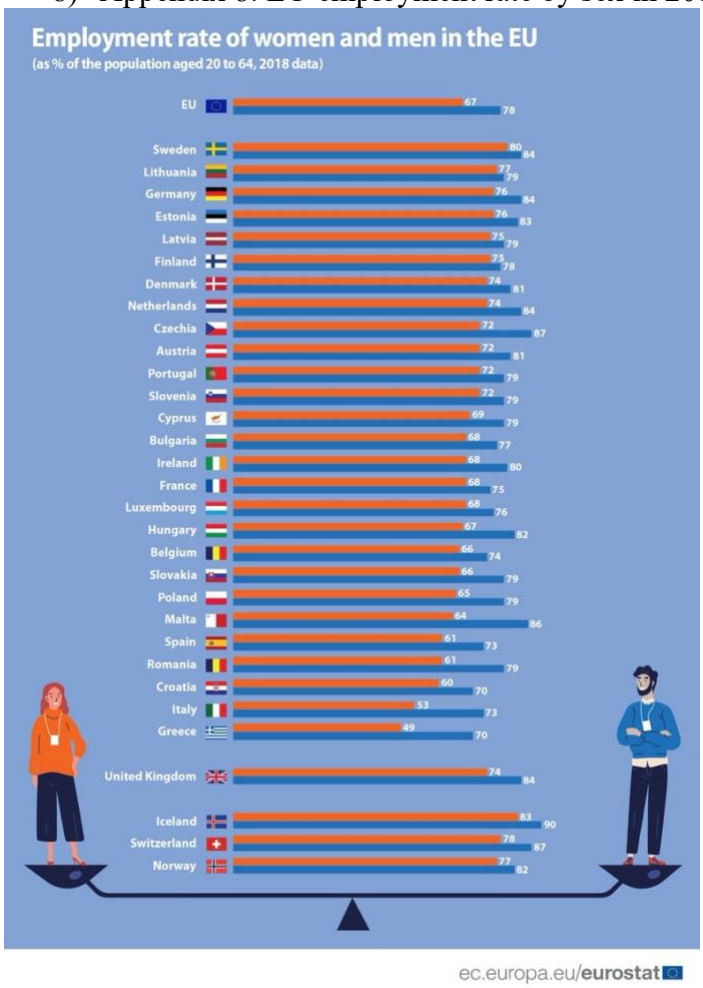
	Until what age do you want to work (as of February-September 2015)?		Until what age do you think you will be able to do your current job or a similar one (as of February-September 2015)?		Statutory pension age (as of 2020)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Belgium	60.6	59.9	64.2	63.2	65 years	65 years
Bulgaria	59.9	58.2	63.9	62.0	66 years 6 months	66 years 6 months
Czechia	61.3	59.7	64.0	62.9	63 years 8 months	63 years 8 months
Denmark	64.3	63.7	67.6	66.4	66 years	66 years
Germany	62.4	61.5	64.6	63.7	65 years 8 months	65 years 8 months
Estonia	62.4	62.0	64.1	63.3	63 years 6 months	63 years 6 months
Ireland	62.2	60.2	65.5	64.4	66 years	66 years
Greece	60.1	58.0	62.0	61.0	67 years	67 years
Spain	60.9	60.3	63.8	63.2	65 years 10 months	65 years 10 months
France	60.3	60.0	63.4	62.2	66 years 7 months	66 years 7 months
Croatia	60.9	58.8	64.5	63.0	65 years	62 years 6 months
Italy	61.0	59.4	64.8	63.9	67 years	67 years
Cyprus	57.6	56.9	63.8	62.6	65 years	65 years
Latvia	60.4	58.5	66.3	65.5	63 years 9 months	63 years 9 months
Lithuania	61.0	59.5	63.1	62.8	64 years	63 years
Luxembourg	59.2	58.6	63.4	61.8	65 years	65 years
Hungary	60.1	58.3	62.1	61.0	64 years 6 months	64 years 6 months
Malta	59.1	56.2	62.6	61.7	63 years	63 years
Netherlands	61.6	62.3	67.7	66.6	66 years 4 months	66 years 4 months
Austria	59.9	57.5	63.7	61.8	65 years	60 years
Poland	58.6	57.3	63.2	62.4	65 years	60 years
Portugal	62.8	62.2	65.8	64.4	66 years 5 months	66 years 5 months
Romania	59.2	58.6	63.2	62.0	65 years	61 years 3-5 months
Slovenia	58.2	56.6	63.6	62.4	65 years	65 years
Slovakia	60.4	59.1	62.6	61.5	62 years 6-8 months	62 years 6-8 months
Finland	62.2	62.3	65.3	64.1	65 years	65 years
Sweden	63.3	62.8	68.0	67.1	65 years	65 years
United Kingdom	61.3	60.7	65.6	64.6	65 years 7-12 months	65 years 7-12 months
Iceland	:	:	:	:	67 years	67 years
Norway	65.4	64.1	67.1	66.0	67 years	67 years
Switzerland	:	:	:	:	65 years	64 years

Note: definitions of the statutory pension age vary across EU Member States. The figures presented refer to the national statutory pension age (the age at which people are entitled to an old-age pension). When the pension age is defined as a range, the top limit is presented.
Source: Extending working life: what do workers want?, Eurofound, 2017 and the Finnish Centre for Pensions (https://www.etk.fi/en/)

eurostat

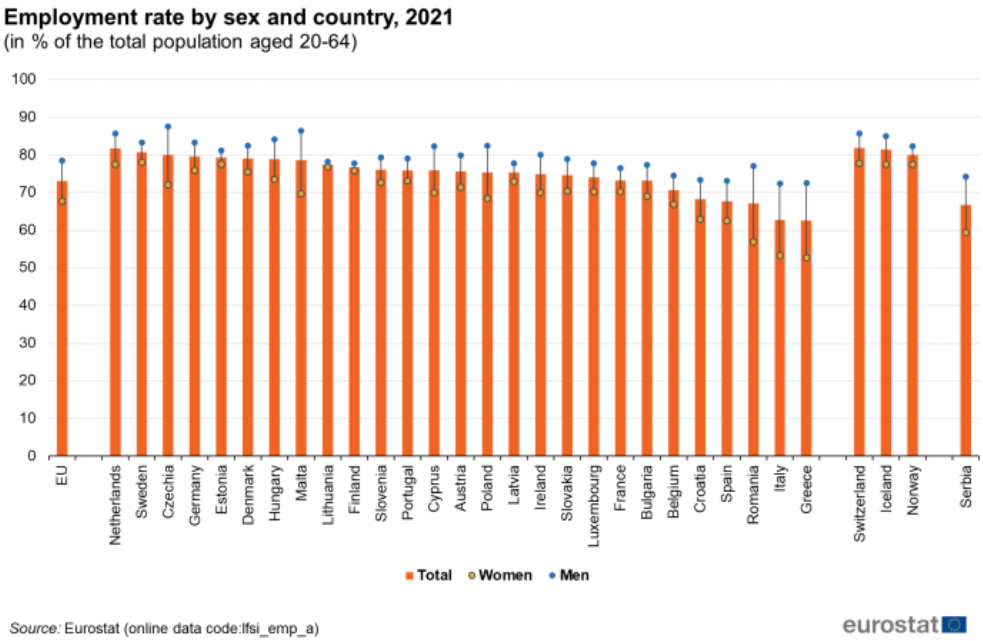
(Eurostat, 2023. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_working_and_moving_into_retirement#Duration_of_work_for_older_people)

8) Appendix 8: EU employment rate by sex in 2018



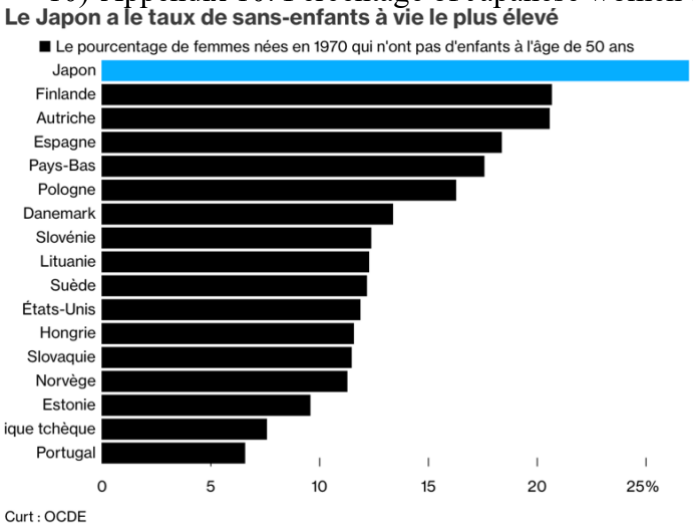
(Eurostat, 2020. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20200306-1)

9) Appendix 9: Employment rate by sex and country in 2021



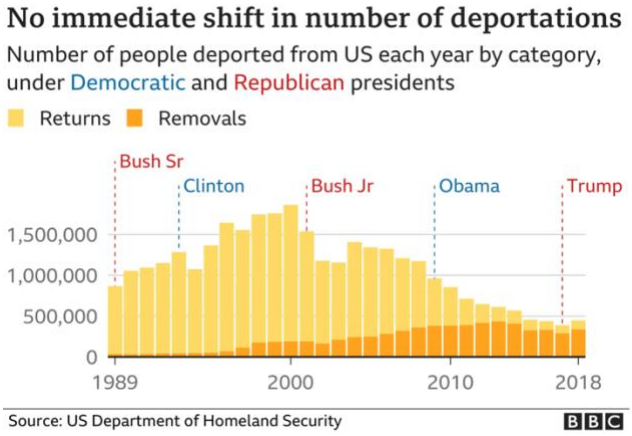
(Eurostat, 2022. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Demo_-_Dominique_-_GOPA&oldid=563299)

10) Appendix 10: Percentage of Japanese women aged 50 who were childless in 2020



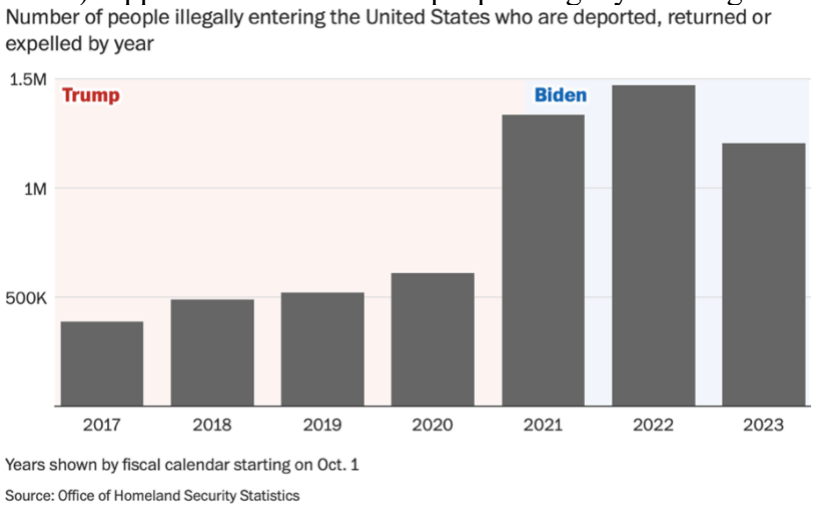
(Bloomberg, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.co.jp/news/articles/2023-03-23/RRYJO4DWX2PS01)

11) Appendix 11: Number of deportations under Democratic and Republican presidents from 1989 to 2018



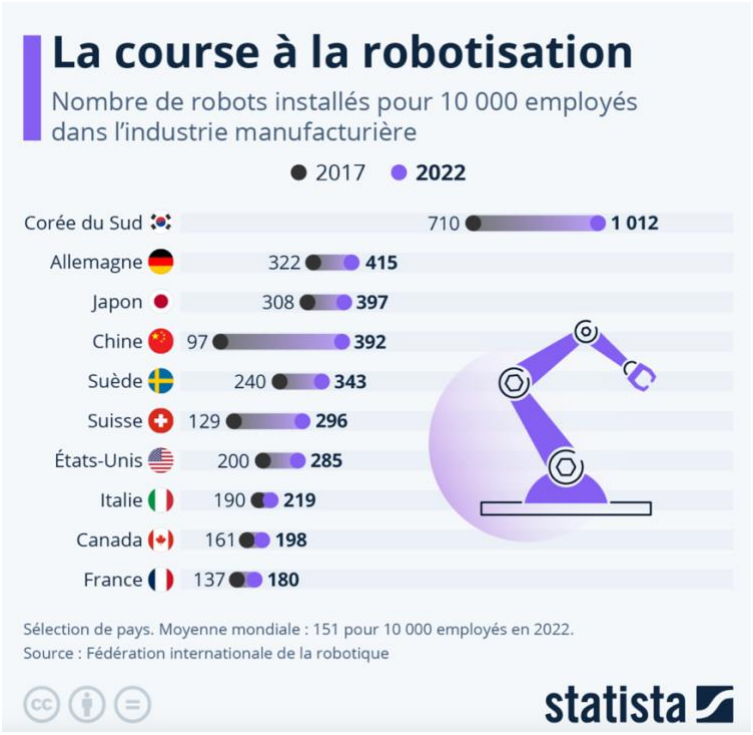
(BBC, 2020. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-54638643)

12) Appendix 12: Number of people illegally entering the US from 2017 to 2023



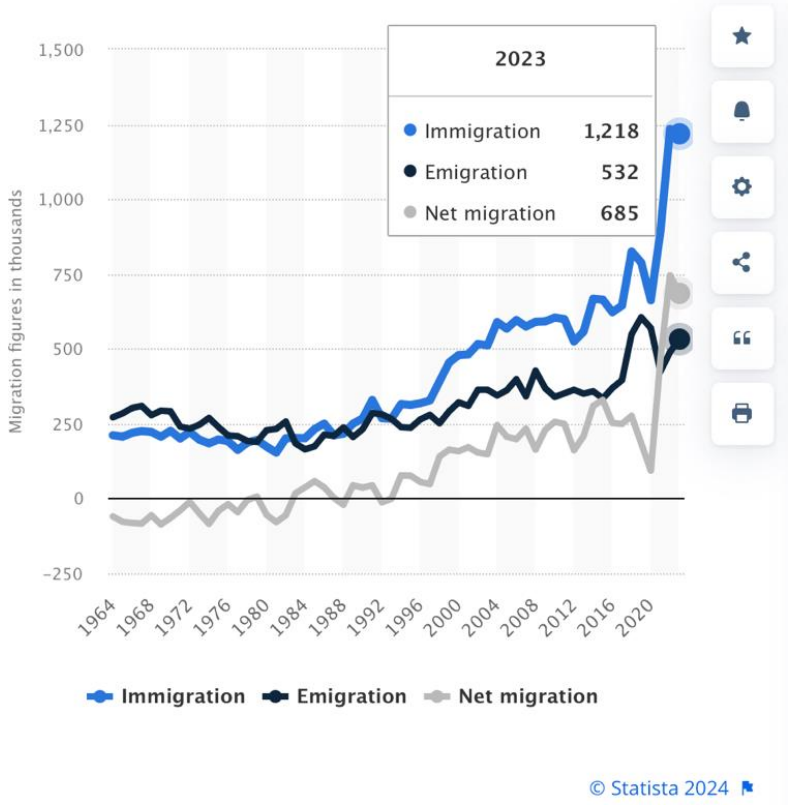
(The Washington Post, 2024. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2024/02/11/trump-biden-immigration-border-compared/)

13) Appendix 13: Robots installed per 10 000 employees in the manufactured industry in 2017 and 2022



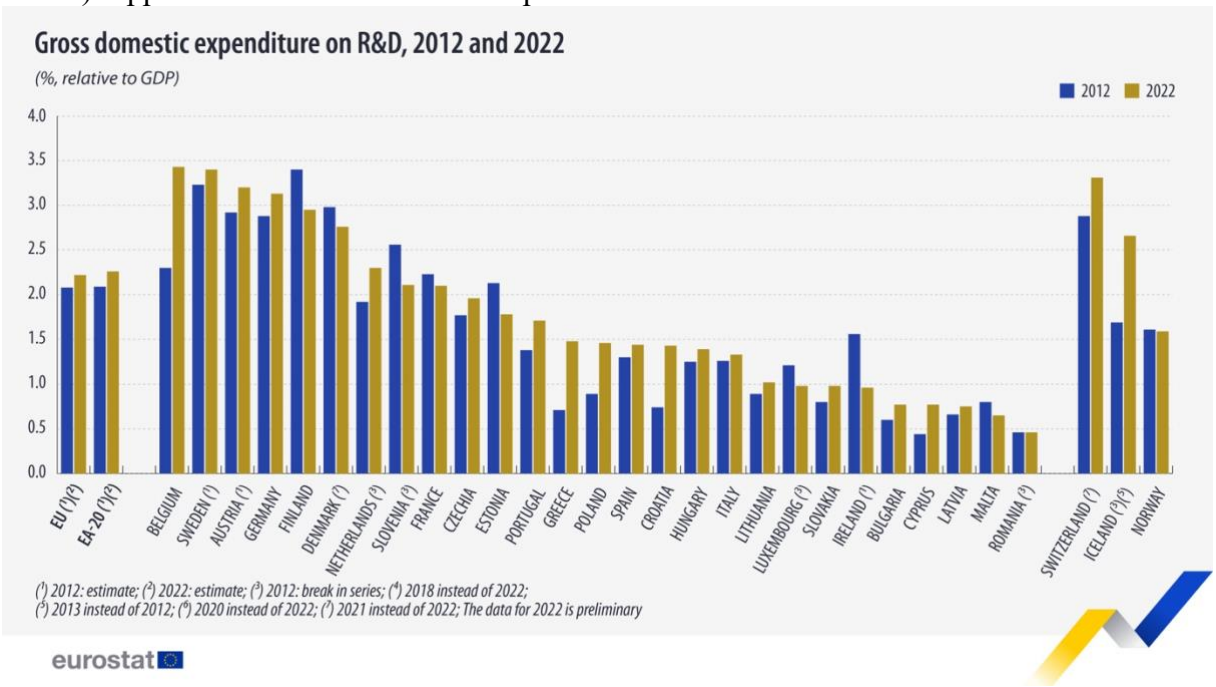
(Statista, 2024. Retrieved from https://fr.statista.com/infographie/15793/industries-les-plus-automatisees-densite-robots-industriels-par-pays/)

14) Appendix 14: Long-term migration figures in the United Kingdom from 1964 to 2023



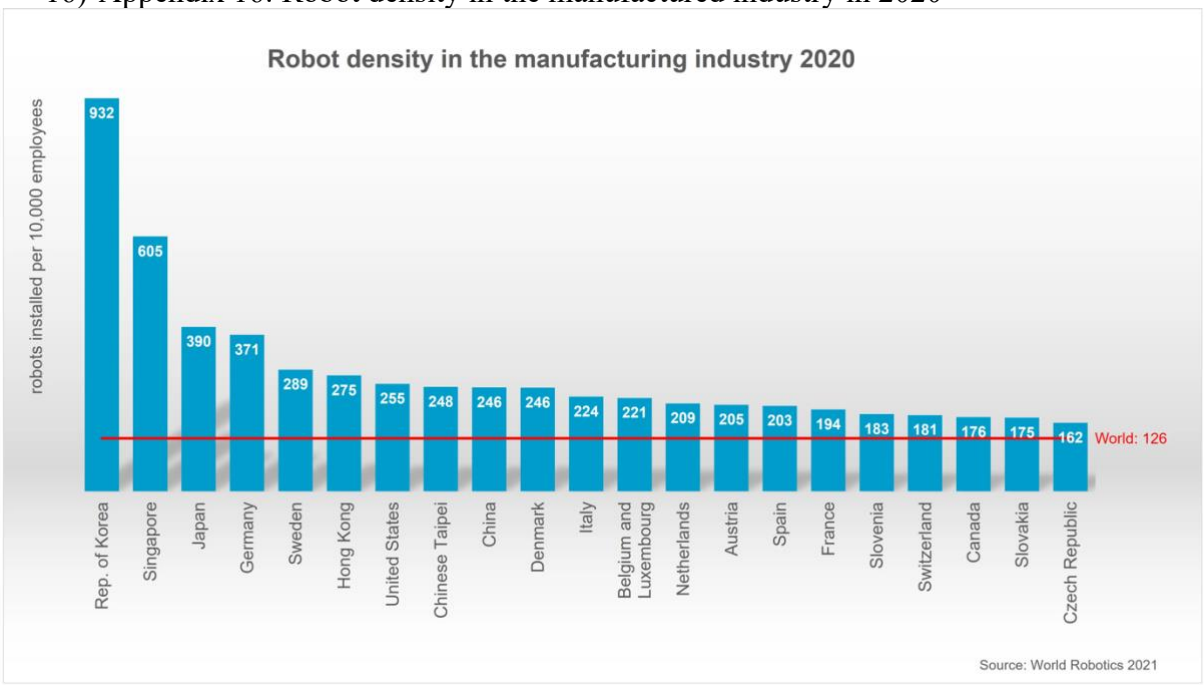
(Statista, 2024. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/283287/net-migration-figures-of-the-united-kingdom-y-on-y/)

15) Appendix 15: Gross domestic expenditure on R&D in 2012 and 2022



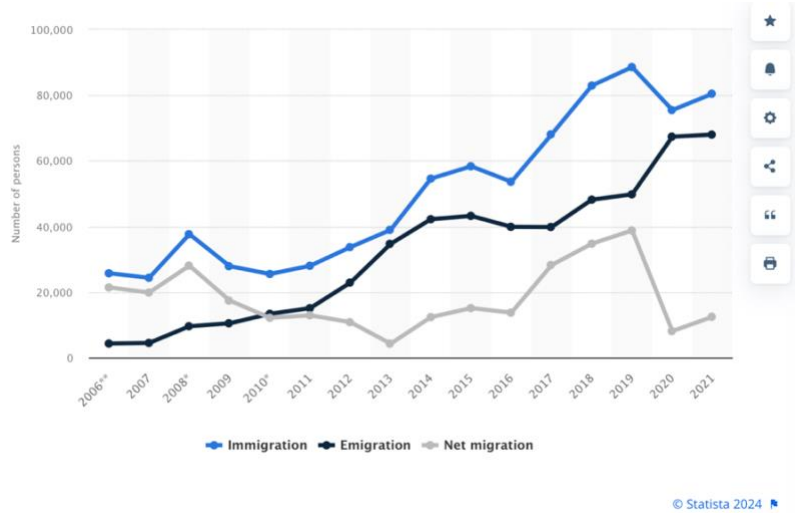
(Eurostat, 2023. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20231201-2)

16) Appendix 16: Robot density in the manufactured industry in 2020



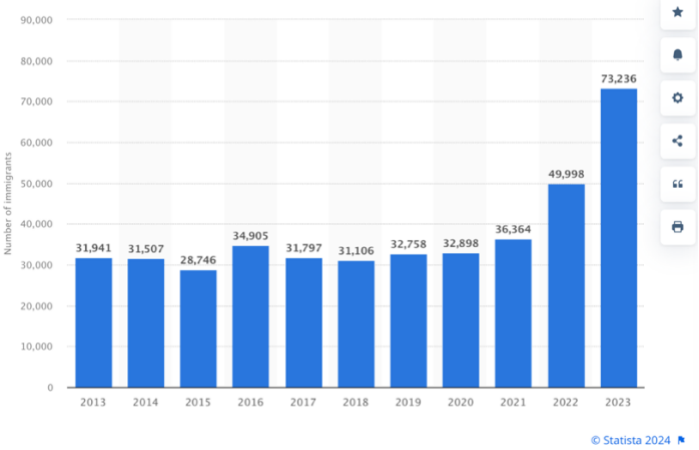
(IFR, 2021. Retrieved from https://ifr.org/ifr-press-releases/news/robot-density-nearly-doubled-globally)

17) Appendix 17: Net migration (immigration minus emigration) in Hungary from 2006 to 2021



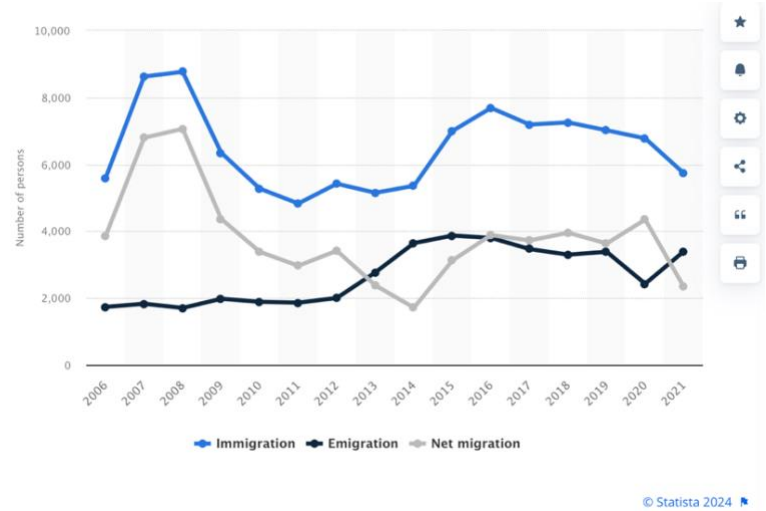
(Statista, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1011177/hungary-net-migration/)

18) Appendix 18: Immigration to Finland from 2013 to 2023



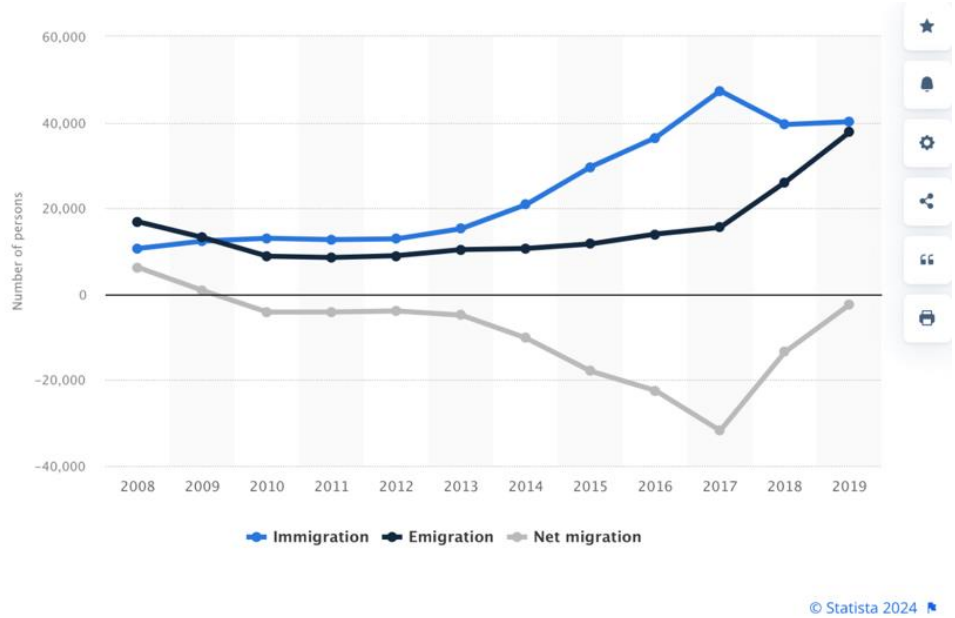
(Statista, 2024. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/530476/number-of-immigrants-to-finland/)

19) Appendix 19: Net migration (immigration minus emigration) in Slovakia from 2006 to 2021



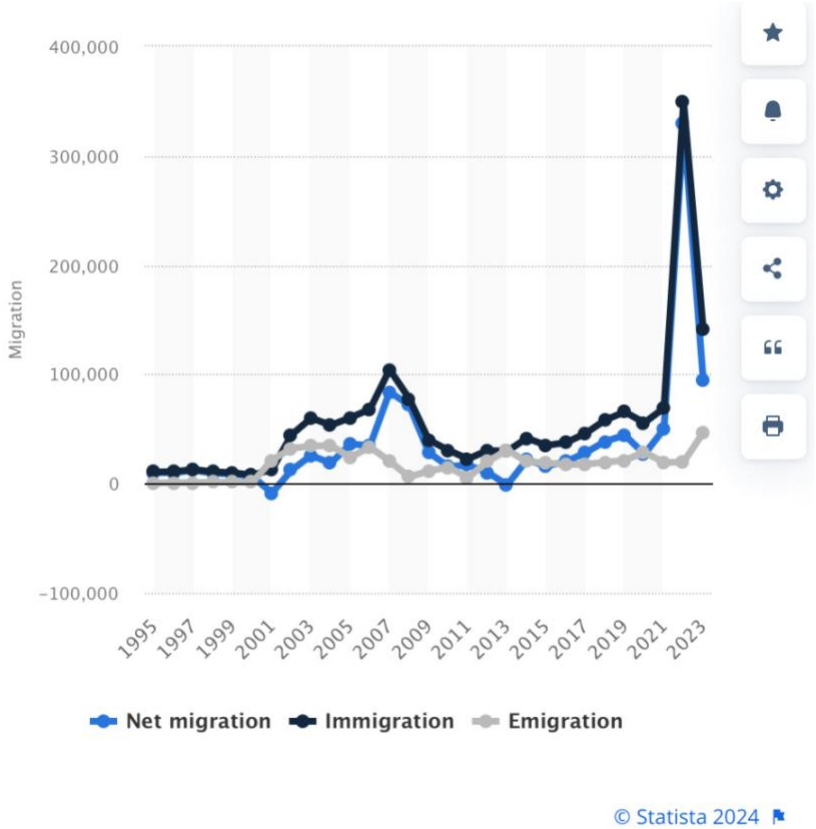
(Statista, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1011200/slovakia-net-migration/)

20) Appendix 20: Net migration (immigration minus emigration) in Croatia from 2008 to 2019



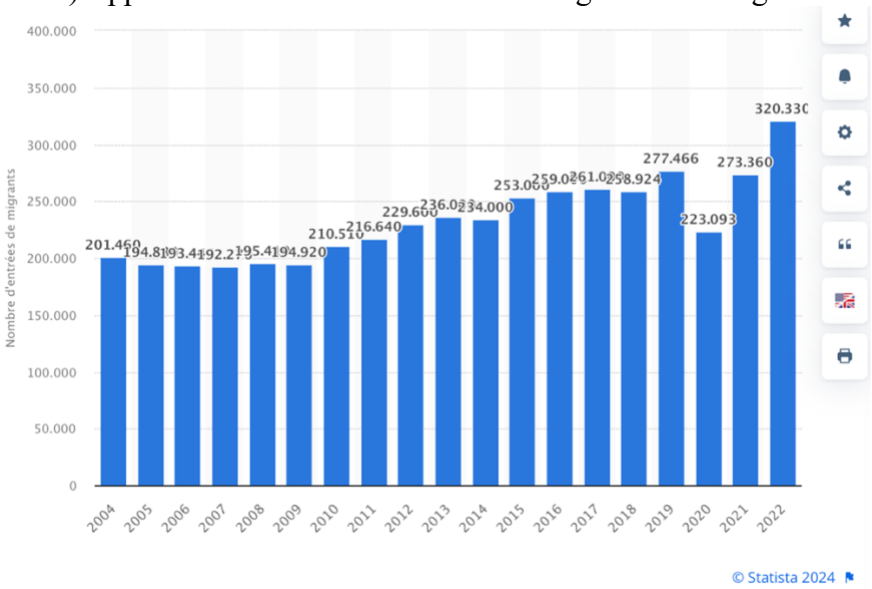
(Statista, 2021. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1269082/croatia-net-migration/)

21) Appendix 21: Net migration (immigration minus emigration) in Czechia from 1995 to 2023



(Statista, 2024. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1232825/change-of-population-by-migration-in-czechia/)

22) Appendix 22: Total number of new migrants entering France between 2004 and 2022



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