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THE ETHNIC ASPECTS  
OF DEMOGRAPHIC  
PROCESSES  
IN THE BALTIC  
REGION STATES



*This article focuses on the problems pertaining to the regionalisation of geo-demographic situation in the Baltic region. Particular attention is paid to the influence of ethnic factors on the parameters and trends of demographic processes. The author comes to a conclusion about the achievement of demographic homeostasis in most ethnos-nations in the Baltic region.*

**Key words:** Baltic Region, population, geo-demographic situation, ethnic groups, natural movement.

The demographic processes in the countries of the Baltic macroregion are characterised by deep stagnation, depopulation in most coastal regions, ageing population, and differently directed and contradictory streams of international and interregional migration. In whole, the historical maximum of the Baltic region population size, in the framework adopted in this study, was achieved in 1995—77,009 mln people. In the beginning of 2010, regional population amounted to 76,963 mln people slightly outstripping the level of 1990 thanks to the positive migration rate, while total depopulation over the last 20 years reached almost 250 thousand people. At the same time, the geo-demographic situation, its dynamics and territorial features significantly differ throughout the Baltic macroregion not only at country but also regional levels.

The spatial aspects of differentiation of geo-demographic situation in the Baltic region are reflected in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region [1] and the documents of the Baltic 21 expert group on sustainable development of the Council of Baltic Sea States [2, p. 7]; they became the subject of a number of research publications [3—8], among which I would like to mention those prepared at the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University. However, research works overlook the ethnic parameters of the geo-demographic situation and their influence on the demographic processes in the Baltic macroregion<sup>1</sup>. In its turn, the need to take into account ethno-demographic factors has the following objective reasons.

1. For more than 1,000 years, the region has been dominated by nation states consolidated in monoethnic territorial frameworks. The clashes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the unification of once polyethnic territories (Poland, Lithuania); constitutional nationalism<sup>2</sup> in Latvia and Estonia has resulted in a considerable homogenisation of the ethnic structure of population. Thus, we

<sup>1</sup> There is an article of Latvian authors on the issue [9], although, today, it has lost its topicality.

<sup>2</sup> A concept defined by Robert M. Hayden as a constitutional structure that grants privileges to the national ethnos in comparison to the other permanent residents of a certain country [10, p. 2].

can state a priori that the difference in demographic process and trends in the countries of the Baltic macroregion are also affected by the factor of ethnic differentiation.

2. In a number of the Baltic region states, there are autochthonous (the Izhorains in the RF and the Livs in Latvia) and long settled (the Karaims in Lithuania and the Walloons in Sweden) smaller ethnic groups, whose demographic parameters can differ significantly from those of the dominating ethnos-nation.

3. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, permanent and labour migration in the region became a powerful factor accelerating changes to the ethnic structures of population both in the recipient (Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, constituent entities of the RF) and sending countries (derussification in the Baltics).

4. The increase in illegal migration and the shift in civilizational outcomes of migration (from acculturation and integration to the multiple identity of migrants) make international borders transparent and lead to the formation of stable and numerous populations of different ethnicities, which maintain strong humanitarian and cultural ties with the emigration country and do not feel the need to learn the language and the culture of ethnos-nation. It results in the change in ethnic composition of recipient countries. This process of ethnic succession was called by David Coleman "third demographic transition", i. e. a situation when low fertility in the recipient country leads to a change in migration policy, which increasingly affects the population composition. Finally, it may result in the total change in this composition or the replacement of the current population with the one composed by either migrants or their decedents, or mixed population [11, p. 444].

Despite tangible ethnic successions, in the countries where they are most pronounced (Germany, Sweden, and Denmark), the ethnic composition of population remains terra incognita for statistical registers and censuses, which complicates significantly the ethnodemographic analysis of the population of these countries.

**The regional framework of the study.** Since all the countries of the Baltic macroregion, except the Russian Federation, are EU member states, the scope of research will be defined in accordance with the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS 2006 EU27), which was adopted by Eurostat more than 30 years ago [12]. The identification of regions and countries of the Baltic macroregion is conducted according to the following principles:

— countries and regions (in case of federative states) should have access to the Baltic Sea;

— basic regional research unit is a NUTS 2, whose population, according to Eurostat ranges from 0.8 to 3.0 mln people [12, p. 10]. The three Baltic States comply with these requirements (EE00 — Estonia, LV00 — Latvia, LT00 — Lithuania), as well as two coastal federal states of Germany (DE80 — Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and DEF0 — Schleswig-Holstein). In Russia, it is three constituent entities: Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad and Kaliningrad regions.

— Denmark (5 NUTS 2) and Sweden (8 NUTS 2) are included in whole, since all the regions have access to the Baltic Sea. Finland, where 4 out of 5 NUTS 2 are coastal, is also included in whole;

— Poland, where only 3 NUTS 2 out of 16 have access to the sea (West-Pomeranian, Pomeranian, and Warmian-Masurian voivodeships) is included in whole as a unitary state;

— Out of 27 EU member states 7 belong to the Baltic macroregion; 12 out of 97 NUTS 1 and 25 out of 271 NUTS 2 have access to the Baltic Sea. In comparison to the subregions constituting the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) the scope of research does not cover Norway, Karelia, and the Pskov and Novgorod regions); however, the BSSSC includes only three coastal Polish voivodeships.

**The ethno-statistical exploration of the Baltic macroregion.** By the availability of statistically registered ethno-demographic indicators the countries under consideration can be divided into the following groups:

1) Censuses reflect the ethnic composition of population; there are current records of natural and migration movement by major ethnic groups, which makes it possible to assess the ethnic structure of the country — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.

2) Censuses reflect the ethnic composition; current records of natural movement by the title ethnic groups of the RF and former USSR were kept before 2000; the ethnic composition of migrants was being registered until 2008 — the Russian constituent entities.

3) Censuses resumed the practice of registering the ethnic composition of population — Poland (the census of May 20, 2002).

4) Censuses reflect the ethno-linguistic composition. A register presenting the current population distribution according to languages spoken is compiled between censuses — Finland.

5) Censuses did not contain data on the ethnic composition of population and were replaced by registers. The data on foreigners embrace the countries of origin and the number of children born to parents of a foreign origin — Denmark, Sweden.

6) Censuses do not contain data on the ethnic composition of population. There are data on the number of foreigners by countries of origin and the natural movement of foreigners — Germany.

Thus, the availability of ethno-demographic data differs significantly throughout the macroregion. The still high percentage of ethnos-nations in the countries of group 5—6 makes it possible to evaluate their ethno-demographic characteristics on the basis of general demographic data.

**The dynamics of population size and ethnic composition in the countries of the Baltic region.** The change in the ethnic structure of population by countries and regions is differently directed, which stems from the nature of natural and migration movement and the governmental ethnic policy. By the correlation of population change components and the trends in alteration of ethnos-nation share over the last 20 years, countries can be divided into the following groups:

*1. Countries with stable depopulation and a positive net migration rate.*

— Germany (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein). Here, the depopulation rate is insignificant, until 2000, it was compensated by net migration. In 1990—2010, regional population diminished from 4,540 to 4,483 thousand people or by 1.3%. The repercussions of the geopolitical divide in Germany in 1945—1990 affect the nature of demographic process in the Baltic regions of the country. The population of the western part (Schleswig-Holstein) increased in 1990—2010 by 9%, while, in the eastern part (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which brings together the former districts of the GDR — Rostock, Schwerin, and Neubrandenburg), population decreased by 14%. Given the same depopulation level in Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (–3.2% in 2009), net-migration is stably positive (+2.4% in 2009) in the west and negative (–4.8%) in the economically depressed East. In terms of demographic process, this correlation makes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern not dissimilar to the Baltics.

The share of foreigners in the population of the Baltic regions of Germany in 1990—2009 increased from 2.8 to 4.1% (186.6 thousand people). This indicator is significantly lower than the national average (8.8%), but if the share of foreigners in Germany reached its peak in 1997 (9.1%), in these regions it is still growing. The differences in migration attractiveness of the western and eastern parts of the Baltic zone are responsible for a significant disproportion in terms of foreign population. If in Schleswig-Holstein it amounts to 5.2%, in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern it is 2.4%. In view of the pace of naturalisation of foreigners in the country (more than 4 mln people in 1981—2009, i. e. their share among the citizens of Germany does not exceed 5%), one can assume that the share of ethnic Germans in the Baltic zone of Germany is more than 92%.

— Russia (Saint Petersburg, the Leningrad and the Kaliningrad regions). Here, the depopulation rate exceeds the positive net migration rate, which resulted in a 5.1% population decrease in 1990—2010 (from 7551 to 7168 thousand people). However, in the Leningrad region in 1990—1998 and the Kaliningrad region in 1990—1998, 2007, and 2009, in Saint Petersburg in 2009, migration was compensating for the natural population decline. Due to high net migration rate and a lower depopulation rate, the population of the Kaliningrad region increased over that period by 6.4%. According to the censuses of 1989 and 2002, the share of Russians decreased on the Baltic territories of the country from 88.3% to 85.5%. However, in the Kaliningrad region it increased from 78.5% to 82.4%, while Saint Petersburg became the leader in terms of derussification (89.1% and 84.7% respectively). The increasing migration stream against the background of a stable decrease in the share of Russians on the Baltic territories of the RF in the 21<sup>st</sup> century makes it possible to make a conclusion that their share is still decreasing and does not exceed 83%.

*2. The countries with stable depopulation and a negative net migration rate — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.*

The superposition of natural decline and migration outflow in the Baltics resulted in the most dramatic population decline in the Baltic macroregion, which took place against the background of a significant change in their ethnic composition towards the prevalence of ethnos-nations. In 1990—2010, the population of the Baltics decreased by 12.8% (from 7932 to 6917 thousand people) and was outstripped by the Baltic territories of Russia. Total depopulation amounted to 1014 thousand people, while negative net migration amounted to 371,000 people, i. e. depopulation accounted for 73% of the negative population growth in the Baltics. By the nature of demographic situation the Baltics can be divided in two groups. The first one is constituted by Estonia and Latvia, where the population decline rate is higher than the regional average (14.7 and 15.7%, respectively), the second one is represented by Lithuania, where population decreased by 8%. Thus, the rate of population decrease in the Baltics is in inverse proportion to the share of ethnos-nations.

The ethnic structure of population of the Baltics has been constantly changing over the last 200 years. So, in 1795—1914, the share of ethnos-nations in Latvia and Lithuania was decreasing (from 70.2 to 53.5% and from 80.2% to 64.8% respectively) [13, p. 124—126]), while in Estonia it increased slightly (84.4 and 89.8% [ibid, p.126]). As a result of the collapse of the Russian Empire and the establishment of nation states, the share of ethnos-nations increased throughout the Baltics. By the mid-1920s, the percentage of Latvians in Latvia amounted to 73.4, that of Latvians in Lithuania to 69.2%, and Estonians in Estonia to 92.4%; in 1939, on the eve of the voluntary accession to the USSR, these figures were 74.6%, 72.3%, and 91.8% respectively [ibid, 124—129]. Incorporation into the USSR and the events of World War II had different consequences for the ethnic structure of the Baltics. If in Estonia and Latvia the share of ethnos nations had decreased dramatically and was decreasing throughout the Soviet period, in Lithuania the percentage of Lithuanians had increased and was stable until the late 1980s (table 1). The disintegration of the USSR led to the increasing consolidation of ethnos-nations in all Baltic States, especially, in Estonia and Latvia (table 1). In these countries, an active ethnocentric policy is being carried out in the framework of constitutional nationalism in order to implement the principles of ethnic democracy<sup>3</sup>. As a result, the percentage of Russians dropped over the period of 1989—2010 from 30.3 to 25.5% in Estonia and from 34 to 27.6% in Latvia. Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians comprise the majority of resident aliens in Estonia<sup>4</sup> and Latvia<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Unlike civil territorial democracy (which guarantees equal rights for all citizens independent of their ethnicity), ethnic democracy, according to Graham Smith, grants an institutionally superior status for the indigenous nation independent of its size in the state [14, p. 148].

<sup>4</sup> In Estonia, the term "määratlemata kodakondsusega isik" denotes de facto stateless people; their number exceeds 100,000 people or 8% of the country's population [15, p. 34].

Table 1

**Changes in the ethnic structure of the Baltics, 1989—2010**

	Latvians				Russians				Belarusians				Ukrainians			
	1989		2010		1989		2010		1989		2010		1989		2010	
	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%						
Latvia	1387.8	52.0	1335.6	59.4	905.5	34.0	620.0	27.6	119.7	4.5	80.3	3.6	92.1	3.5	55.3	2.5
	Latvians				the Polish				Russians				Belarusians			
	1989		2010		1989		2010		1989		2010		1989		2010	
	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%						
Lithuania	2924.3	79.6	2765.6	83.1	258.0	7.0	221.5	6.0	344.5	9.4	161.7	4.8	63.2	1.7	35.9	1.1
	Estonians				Russians				Ukrainians				Belarusians			
	1989		2010		1989		2010		1989		2010		1989		2010	
	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%						
Estonia	963.3	61.5	922.4	68.8	474.8	30.3	342.4	25.5	48.3	3.1	27.7	2.1	27.7	1.8	15.5	1.2

Sources: compiled and calculated by the author according to [16—19].

In Lithuania, the share of Russians decreased almost twofold — from 9.4% to 4.8%, in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were outnumbered by the Polish.

All in all, in 1989—2010, the size of ethnos-nations in the Baltics decreased from 5275.4 to 5023.6 thousand people or 4.8% due to depopulation and migration, and their share in the region's population increased from 66.7% to 72.6% (in comparison to 76.6% in 1939).

3. *Natural increase, all in all, compensated for the negative net migration rate — Poland.* In 1990—2010, the population of Poland increased from 37,998 to 38,167 thousand people. Over this period, natural increase amounted to 628.9 thousand people, while emigration exceeded immigration by 647.6 thousand people. It is worth mentioning that in 2002—2005, Poland experienced depopulation and the natural increase was lower than the negative net-migration. Thus, the maximum population size was achieved in Poland in the beginning of 1997 — 38,924 thousand people — which is 3.3% more than the current population size. The ethnic composition of Poland is highly stable and, despite emigration, the share of the Polish in the population of the country does not differ much from that registered by the census of May 20, 2002—96.7%.

4. *Countries with stable natural and migration increase — Denmark, Sweden, and Finland.* In the Baltic macroregion these countries form a group with the most favourable demographic parameters. In 1990—2010, the population of the three countries increased from 18,637 to 20,227 thousand people or by 8.5%. The population increase rate was a little higher in Swe-

<sup>5</sup> Latvian law distinguishes "nepilsoņi" from stateless persons. On January 1, 2010, the number of resident aliens amounted to 343.3 people [16].

den — 9.5% and a little lower in Finland (7.6%). In 1990—2010, the natural increase in these countries amounted to 583.4 thousand people and the positive net migration rate to 1,006.6 thousand people. Thus, the contribution of migration to the population increase accounts for 63% ranging countrywise from 41% in Finland through 63% in Denmark to 74% in Sweden. So, Sweden is the only country of the Baltic macroregion, where natural increase is still the major source of population growth.

The ethnic structure in all three countries is characterised by the absolute domination of ethnos nations, although their share is gradually decreasing due to migration inflow. In Sweden the share of born abroad population increased from 4% in 1961 to 14.3% in 2010 (from 300 to 1,338 thousand people). In Denmark the share of those born abroad or to foreign parents increased from 4.5% in 1990 to 9.8% in 2010 (from 231 to 542.7 thousand people). In Finland non-native speakers accounted for 6.5% in 1982 and 9.3% in 2010 (311.2 and 499.2 thousand people respectively).

Thus, it is difficult to identify a common trend in the changes to the ethnic structure of population in the countries and regions of the Baltic macroregion over the last 20 years. The Baltic zone of Germany and the constituent entities of the RF are characterised by the decrease in the absolute population size and the percentage of ethnos-nations; the Baltics witness the increase in the share of ethnos-nations against the background of population decline; in Poland the number and share of the Polish is stable; in Scandinavian countries and Finland, the number of ethnos-nations is increasing dissimilar to their percentage (table 2).

Table 2

**The dynamics and share of ethnos-nations  
in the Baltic macroregion in 1990—2010**

Germany <sup>1</sup>		Russian Federation		Baltic States		Poland <sup>1</sup>		Sweden, Finland, Denmark		Total	
1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%	1,000 people	%
1990 <sup>2</sup>											
4309	95.0	6668	88.3	5275	66.7	36810	96.9	17329	93.0	70391	91.8
2010											
4125	92.0	5949 <sup>1</sup>	83.0 <sup>1</sup>	5024	72.6	36831	96.5	17847	88.2	69776	90.7

*Comments:* <sup>1</sup> the authors' estimation; <sup>2</sup> 1989 for the RF and the Baltics.

Sources: compiled and calculated by the author according to [16—25].

All in all, despite the apparent stability of the ethnic structure of population in the period analysed, the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became a turning point in the ethno-demographic history of the Baltic macroregion, as both number and share of ethnos-nations started to decline.

**The ethno-demographic differences in natural movement.** Despite the increase in diasporas of different ethnicities in the countries and regions of the Baltic macroregion, the general parameters of natural movement of population reflect the features of demographic reproduction of ethnos-nations. The countries, where the share of ethnos-nations is minimal — Latvia and Estonia — register natural movement by main ethnic groups. By the correlation of the birth and mortality rate in the Baltic macroregion, where total depopulation amounted to 246.6 thousand people in 1990—2009, one can distinguish the following groups of countries and regions.

1. *Germany.* Depopulation began long before the period analysed (in Schleswig-Holstein in 1972, in Mecklenburg Vorpommern in 1969) and stemmed from the commencement of fertility period of small-numbered cohorts of those born during the war. According to the forecast until 2060, depopulation in the two states of Germany will continue (see [26]). German statistics make it possible only to estimate the birth-mortality rate difference between citizens of Germany and foreigners. According to 2008 data, the birth and mortality rates of German citizens in Germany amounted to 8.7% and 11.0% respectively, those of foreigners to 4.7 and 2.6%; in the two states these indicators reach 8.1 and 11.1% for German citizens and 4.2 and 3.1% for foreigners (calculated according to [21]). Thus, the level of depopulation of German citizens in the Baltic zone of Germany is a little bit higher than the national average (–3.0 and –2.3%). The features of age and sex structure of foreign population accounts for its low fertility and mortality against the background of insignificant natural increase. Correspondingly, the share of foreigners in demographic events in Germany is lower than their percentage in the country's population by 1.8 times regarding the number of births and 3.7 times regarding the number of deaths.

2. *The Baltics and the Baltic zone of the Russian Federation.* Depopulation dates back to 1990—1994 and reached high levels: –4.0% in Lithuania (2006), –5.3% in Estonia (1995), –7.0% in Latvia (1995), –9.2% in the Kaliningrad region (2005), –10.8% in Saint Petersburg (1993) and –13.1% in the Leningrad region (2003). Despite the decrease in depopulation rate in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to a forecast until 2030, the prevalence of mortality over birth rate will take place in all mentioned countries and regions over the whole forecast period (see [27, p. 18; 28, table 2.7]).

The availability and level of ethno-demographic statistics of natural movement in the Baltics and the RF differ significantly. In Russia, the A03 form (the deceased and the born by nationality) lost its representativeness in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century after the mass replacement of Soviet passports; although in the records of register offices, the "nationality" paragraph still does exist. On the one hand, the 1990s data showed the close correlation of depopulation magnitude with the share of Russian population at the regional level, on the other hand, the level of depopulation of Russians in the Baltic zones of the Russian Federation has always been lower than that of total population. For example, in 2000 in Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad region, the level of depopulation of Russians equalled that of total popula-

tion (–9.4 and –12.1 % respectively; calculated according to [29]). Thus the current level of depopulation of Russians in these regions of the Russian Federation can be estimated at 4%.

Lithuania publishes data only on mixed ethnicity marriages. Taking into account the domination of Lithuanians in the country's population, one can assume that in 2009, the level of their depopulation did not exceed 1.5%.

Lithuania and Estonia produce the most detailed ethno-demographic statistics among the countries of the Baltic macroregion (table 3).

Table 3

**Natural increase/decline of main ethnic groups  
in Latvia and Estonia in 1990 and 2009, %**

Country	Estonians		Latvians		Russians		Ukrainians		Belarusians	
	1990	2009	1990	2009	1990	2009	1990	2009	1990	2009
Estonia	1.1	1.0	–1.3	–1.4	2.7	–1.8	7.2	–5.8	4.0	–13.6
Latvia	–8.8	–12.2	1.1	–1.5	1.0	–6.2	7.5	–7.1	2.3	–12.4

Sources: the author's calculation according to [18; 19].

The data of Table 3 clearly show that, in the post-Soviet period in the Baltics, which carry out the policy of constitutional nationalism, the demographic indicators of ethnoscations are much better than those in the countries of the then "colonisers". In Estonia depopulation of Estonians was observed as early as the Soviet period (1978—1981 and 1985), which was a unique phenomenon for title ethnic groups in the Soviet republics. In 1991—2007, the depopulation of Estonians amounted to 41.1 thousand people, while its maximum — –4.5% — was achieved in 1994—1995 (that of Russian population amounted to –6.6%). Since 2008, natural decline has changed for insignificant natural increase, which, according to the forecast, can persist until 2012. The depopulation of Latvians in Latvia started in 1992 and, in 1992—2009 amounted to 83.8 thousand people. The maximum depopulation of Latvians fell on 1995 (–5.6% in comparison to –8.2% among the Russian population).

3. *Poland*. Insignificant depopulation was registered in 2002—2005, but from 2013, mortality will stably outstrip the birth rate. In view of the ethnic structure of the country's population, the level of natural increase among the Polish did not exceed 1%.

4. *Denmark, Sweden, Finland*. Despite the fact that, in Denmark and Sweden, depopulation was registered in 1981—1988 and 1997—2001 respectively, what these three countries have in common is that natural decline will become a constant phenomenon not earlier than 2030—2033 in Sweden and Finland and 2040 in Denmark.

Danish statistics make it possible to estimate the birth rate among the Danish population and foreigners. In 2009, the birth rate amounted to 10.7% among the Danish and 17.5% among foreigners, i.e. the difference according to this parameter was substantial. Since the mortality rate of total popu-

lation equalled 10.0% in this country, the natural increase rate among the Danish did not exceed 0.5% in 2009. Sweden and Finland do not produce statistics on natural movement by ethnic groups and population of foreign origin. Taking into account the share of ethnos-nations in these countries, the natural increase among the Swedish and the Finnish did not exceed 2.0%.

Thus, in terms of natural movement, all ethnos-nations in the Baltic macroregion are characterised by demographic homeostasis with low birth and mortality rates. In 2009, the natural increase in ethnos-nations amounted in the Baltic region to only 0.2‰. Demographic balance depends on certain socioeconomic and historical conditions, the stage and ergodicity of demographic processes, and the age of ethnic systems. Out of nine ethnos-nations of the Baltic regions, only four experienced depopulation in 2009; most intensive depopulation was registered in the German and Russian regions situated on the Baltic Sea. After 2013, this number will increase to six, after 2040, all ethnos-nations of the Baltic region will be characterised by depopulation, which will make migration policy and the issues of cross-cultural interaction in polyethnic societies even more topical.

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