Demographic Change and the Balance of Power in Europe

Will Population Trends Translate into New Political Conflicts?

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Paper for the session
"The demography of political conflict and violence"
chaired by Joseph Chamie at the PAA 2005

Abstract

While many studies on Europe focus on the consequences of population aging on the policy-level (e.g. social security), remarkably little attention has been paid to the politics-level. European societies are aging as a result of demographic change and the majority of them will shrink in population size, too; some to a relatively large extent (e.g. Italy), others less so (e.g. Germany). A few countries, however, will add to their population size (e.g. France). Our question is to what extent these developments will affect the balance of power in European Union institutions. Using UN data on all 28 member and candidate countries of the EU, we will give a comparative perspective on demographic developments in Europe until 2050 to analyze the extent to which the distribution of votes in the Council of the EU will be affected. Another question we seek to answer is whether new lines of political conflict (in addition to the traditional ones, e.g. large vs. small or northern vs. southern states) are likely to emerge, also in light of a possible Turkish accession to the EU. Our analysis shows that due to new provisions of the European Constitution population growth and decline will have a major impact on the EU balance of power of the future.

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Demographic change will be driving politics in Europe for the next decades to come. Having ignored this fact for a long time, policy-makers now begin to realize that changing population structures do have an impact; consequently, they request to be provided increasingly with scientific information on these trends. Many studies largely focus on the policy-level, as low fertility and increasing longevity place substantive demands on the design of future public policy in almost all European countries. While interest has focused on the consequences of population aging in health, migration, and social security, remarkably little attention has been paid to the political level as such (Demeny 2003). Demographic change, however, has caused European countries not only to age; it has also affected population size: The majority of the European populations will shrink; some to a relatively large extent (e.g. Italy and Spain), others to a lower degree (e.g. Germany). In a few cases, population size will move into the opposite direction, as some countries will experience population growth. Suffice it to mention France.

In this paper, we will address the question to what extent the changes in population size will affect institutional arrangements in the European Union (EU) and therefore the balance of power between the member states.

After a brief discussion on the role the weighting of votes plays in the EU political process, this paper first addresses the question of the extent to which movements in population size have had an influence on EU power structure. Second, we present a comparative perspective on population developments in the 28 member and candidate countries of the EU. The third part investigates whether these trends will affect the power structure in the Council of the European Union, one of the most powerful European institutions. Special attention will be paid to demography's impact on classical conflict lines, such as larger vs. smaller and northern vs. southern countries.

For our historical analysis on the impact of demographic trends on the institutional power structure, we use a qualitative approach, i.e. we perform text analyses of relevant official documents and related literature. Our demographic prognosis is based on data from the UN 2002 Revision.[1]

1 As population counts are given in 5-year-intervals, we apply cubic spline interpolation to get data for each year.

1. The importance of representation in the European Union

The political system of the EU is built on the principles of legitimacy, efficiency, transparency as well as the appropriate representation of the member states and their citizens in the Union's central institutions, such as the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.[2] From a historical perspective, the EU's search for a representational system acceptable to all member states can be compared to the founding phases of federal systems. It is also reminiscent of e.g. the constitutional convention in Philadelphia in that the fathers of the American constitution were divided over the issue of adequate state representation on the federal level (Virginia vs. New-Jersey-Plan).

In contrast to federal systems, EU member states retain their status as independent entities under international law; therefore, they are in principal equal. However, as European integration deepens and enlarges, the question of a representational system reflecting actual population size has become a pressing issue. This, because deepening and enlargement has led to greater heterogeneity in the Union.

Further, the more competences and financial means are transferred from the member states to the Union, the more importance assumes the issue of institutional arrangements. The development of the European Parliament provides a very apt illustration of this trade-off between representation and competences: As long as the Parliament was devoid of significant powers, the demographically disproportional distribution of mandates remained unquestioned by the largest member states; this despite the fact that they were considerably disadvantaged and despite the fact that the

2 The Council of the European Union is considered to be the Union's main decision-making body. It represents the member states, and its meetings are attended by one minister from each of the EU's national governments. Its composition depends on what subjects are on the agenda. If, for example, the Council is to discuss financial issues, the meeting will be attended by the Financial Minister from each EU country.
The European Parliament on the other hand is directly elected by the EU citizens and has three main roles: First, it shares with the Council the power to legislate. Second, it supervises all EU institutions, and in particular the Commission. It has the power to approve or reject the nomination of Commissioners, and it has the right to censure the Commission as a whole. It also shares with the Council authority over the EU budget and can therefore influence EU spending.
The Commission is supposed to be the politically independent one among the EU institutions. Its main functions are to represent and uphold the interests of the EU as a whole, and therefore it proposes legislation, policies and programs of action and it is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Parliament and the Council. The Commission currently has 25 members, i.e. one so-called "Commissioner" per country.
(European Union 2005).

institutional representation did not meet the basic requirements of a democratic political system. This disproportional representation had been the result of a representation ratio that had remained unchanged since the foundation of the EU. It is only with the extension of the Parliament's competences that a new distribution of mandates that better reflects the actual population size of the member states was politically desired and finally established.[3]

That little attention has been paid to the role of demographic issues in the design of the European power architecture is also illustrated by the Council, considered to be the Union's most powerful institution ever since its foundation. Even though the six member states of the early European Community largely held different numbers of mandates in the Council, all decisions had to be taken by unanimity, thus reducing the distribution of votes to a purely symbolic arrangement without substantial political effects (Hosli 2000).

1.1 A short typology of representation

Following the classical structure of federally organized political systems, two main forms of representation can be distinguished: a) the arithmetic principle, by which all member states are considered to be equal regardless of population size and therefore hold the same number of mandates in the decision-making bodies; b) the geometric principle. It emphasizes the democratic element of the political system by linking the number of member state representatives to the number of people to be represented. Preferences within the European Union as to political representation heavily depend on the size of the country in question: Mid-sized and smaller countries demand that the geometric principle only be applied to the European Parliament, while the arithmetic principle be the voting structure of the – still more powerful – Council (Lang/Maurer 2003). Larger member states generally insist on adequate representation reflecting their population

3 However, the new ratio still follows the principle of "digressive proportionality" in order to protect the minority of smaller member states: every member state has a minimum of 5 seats, the maximum being 99. Currently, the European Parliament has 732 members. As of 2007, the mandates of the then new member states of Bulgaria and Romania will simply be added to the current number, resulting in a total of 786 seats. In light of the efficiency debate, the new European Constitution – which is to be enacted as of 2009 – will limit the Parliament's size to 750 mandates, assigning a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 96 seats to the member states according to population size (cf. Art. I-20 of the European Constitution).

size, i.e. they favor the geometric principle. For political reasons and in order to prevent large member states dominating the smaller ones, a *de facto* compromise between the two principles had been set in place, generally resulting in the over-representation of countries with relatively small population size (Borkowski 2003).

In contrast to other federally structured political entities, EU power architecture is not only impacted by population size. Other factors, too, determine the influence each single member state exerts on the European level: these are, e.g. its economic capacity, its international standing, its defense capacities and the historic role the country has played in the European integration process; as to the latter, suffice it to mention the question whether the member state belongs to the founding members of the EC (Janning/Giering 1999). Of further importance is the ability of the country's main political actors to formulate common national positions on European questions, its flexibility in negotiations, as well as its human resources (Soetendorp 1999). The latter is crucial to a member state's adequate participation in the pre-negotiation phases of the European decision-making process, which is, after all, time consuming as the process includes a large variety of committee work on different levels. Other factors, such as national public opinion in support of or against European integration have an impact, too.

Finally, member state power on the European level depends on the state's relationship with potential allies. EU member states have formed several more or less stable coalitions, such as the Franco-German alliance, which traditionally aims at accelerating European integration. In some policy fields – especially as to the military and defense – Franco-German cooperation has been extended to include the United Kingdom. The Benelux states (Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg) have intensified their co-ordination activities with the Northern European member states (Sweden, Denmark, and Finland) in order to further the interest representation of the smaller EU member states. The coalition of Southern European states (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece) has been aiming at retaining the system of agricultural and economic subsidies currently in place, whereas the group of net-contributors (amongst them Germany, The Netherlands, Austria, and Sweden) have been trying to reduce subsidies and increase efficiency (Hosli 1996).

These long-term coalitions are overlapped by ad-hoc co-operations on different policy-fields (Soetendorp/Hosli 2001). They may become a more common

phenomenon in light of the most recent EU enlargement to 25 member states, in view of another wave of enlargement (i.e., this would increase the size of the EU to 27 member states in 2007), and in light of the possible accession of Turkey, all of which are developments that make for greater heterogeneity of national interests on the European level (Maurer 2004).

The analysis of demography's impact on the EU balance of power later on in this paper will focus on the traditional coalitions (northern vs. southern European states, net receivers vs. net contributors, and large vs. small states), but also on plausible new conflict lines, e.g. new vs. old member states, and countries with growing populations vs. states with declining population sizes.

1.2 The political impact of the distribution of votes in the European Union

Looking at the outcome of the Council's decision-making process, we can see that most of the decisions have been taken by majority vote and without direct confrontations between the member states, e.g. the northern and southern ones (Hadler 2003). From this observation, one cannot conclude, however, that the distribution of mandates within the Council is of no importance. Since 1986, the system of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) has been continuously extended to apply to additional policy areas. In fact, QMV has become the Council's predominant decision-making procedure (Hayes-Renshaw/Wallace 1997, Tömmel 2003). By the same token, it has been strengthening consensus politics: The dismal prospect for a member state to be defeated by QMV and the high political costs that this would entail adds to the state's motivation to compromise and find the broadest consensus possible (Moberg 1998). Nevertheless, it is not on a seldom occasion that at least one member state was outvoted by majority. In 2003, 137 of a total of 197 Council decisions were taken by QMV, only 57 by unanimity, and 3 by single majority. This compares to 123 QMV decisions, 57 unanimous, and nil single majority decisions in 2001 against a total of 180 Council decisions (Hartwig 2002, Hartwig/Maurer 2004). Roughly a fifth of decisions had to be accepted by at least one member state that had originally voted against or abstained from the bill to be passed.

The corresponding figure for 2003 is 30 percent (Hartwig/Maurer 2004, Maurer/Wessels 2003).[4]

Changes in the institutional vote distribution naturally affect the Council's member states – as individuals as well as groups – in terms of the balance of power and representation as to population size (Giering 2001). The weighting of votes in the Council thus is a highly political issue, as it not only determines the different constellations of possible voting majorities and blocking minorities, but also each member states' power status within the Union.

The EU's Intergovernmental Conferences[5] in Brussels (June 2004) and Nice (December 2000) illustrate quite nicely how difficult it is for member states to adjust to changing institutional voting structures due to the accession of new member states or changing population size. As late as 27 years after the first modification to the number of mandates in the Council following the first round of EC enlargement from six to nine members in 1973, the Intergovernmental Conference in Nice aimed at re-designing the balance of power in the Union, adjusting for the accession of 10 new member states in 2004, and another 2 in 2007. This reform was indispensable, as keeping the old rules would have clearly led to a democratic deficit: With a tight decision by Qualified Majority Voting, only around 50 percent of the European population would have been represented by the member states passing the bill (Giering 2004).

1.3 European voting architecture and the demographic weight of the member states

The number of votes for each member state in the Council has been dependent on its population size ever since the Treaties of Rome that gave birth to the European Union. The mandates did not increase proportionally with population size, however. In fact, they were downscaled to protect smaller countries against undue influence exerted by the larger ones. In the course of different enlargement rounds, it was mostly countries with small or mid-sized populations that joined the EU, so that the relative weight of the larger member states has decreased continuously.

4 In 2003, the United Kingdom faced the highest number of outvotes of all member states (9), followed by Denmark (8), Germany, Austria, and Spain (7 outvotes each).

5 Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) are summits of all EU Head of States and Governments in order to revise existing EU treaties or adopt new ones, such as the European Constitution.

This imbalance was sought to be addressed by two mechanisms: firstly, the principle of unanimity decisions to apply to core policy fields; secondly, the regulation that a blocking minority of 23 votes as to majority decisions could only be formed by a coalition of at least one small and two larger member states. During EU enlargement towards Northern Europe, the new member states – traditionally, smaller countries with a strong tradition of national sovereignty – demanded a change to this regulation to provide them with greater influence. They were unsuccessful in their endeavor, however, owing to strong opposition from the United Kingdom and Spain. The Ioannina Agreement of 1994 left the new provisions for a blocking minority effectively unchanged (Hayes-Renshaw/Wallace 1997).

1.4 The Nice dispute over the distribution of votes

The current distribution of votes in the Council of the European Union (cf. table 1), which will be in force until November 2009, is the result of negotiations at the Intergovernmental Conference in Nice in December 2002. The European heads of state and government were at loggerheads with each other over vote weighting. Many different interests had to be considered and this added to the intensity of the conflict. The large member states aimed at correcting what they regarded representation in the Council to their disadvantage and based the legitimacy of their demand on the official resolutions of the Amsterdam Treaties of 1997. Here, the countries with large populations had agreed to waive their right of dispatching two Commissioners to the European Commission (all other countries are assigned one position only) after the 2004 enlargement round to guarantee the efficiency of this body. A prerequisite for this concession, which after all implied a reduction of large state power, was the official assurance to adjust the representational system in the Council according to demographic aspects, in parallel with the reform of the Commission's composition.

The large member states finally succeeded at the Intergovernmental Conference in Nice. The compromise entails a minimum of 3 mandates in the Council for the smallest member states and a maximum of 29 seats for the largest ones. Even though all member states of the "old" EU-15 have gained mandates, the gain in power for the large countries has been especially large. The revaluation factor for Germany has been 2.9 and

for Spain 3.4 even, whereas Ireland had to accept a factor of 2.3 and Luxembourg a mere 2.0. The balance of power within the Union clearly has moved towards the states

EU Member State	Population in 1,000 (by the year 2007)	Votes in the Council of the European Union
Malta	400	3
Luxembourg	477	4
Cyprus	823	4
Estonia	1,266	4
Slovenia	1,972	4
Latvia	2,223	4
Lithuania	3,364	7
Ireland	4,114	7
Finland	5,239	7
Denmark	5,404	7
Slovakia	5,421	7
Bulgaria	7,640	10
Austria	8,113	10
Sweden	8,913	10
Hungary	9,691	12
Portugal	10,088	12
Czech Republic	10,196	12
Belgium	10,391	12
Greece	10,991	12
Netherlands	16,425	13
Romania	22,130	14
Poland	38,458	27
Spain	41,255	27
Italy	57,024	29
UK	59,916	29
France	61,210	29
Germany	82,586	29

Table 1: Distribution of votes in the Council of the European Union

of large populations, this to the disadvantage of the new member states, as most of them have mid-sized or small populations. Among other factors, some observers put this down to the fact that France – which harbors concerns of the new European members potentially playing a "destructive" role – headed the negotiations in Nice (Giering 2001).

From a theoretical perspective, the provisions of the Conference in Nice are still deficient as to democratic representation. The four largest member states hold 29 mandates each, even though the largest (Germany) has roughly 25 percent more inhabitants than any of the other three states. Furthermore, Poland and Spain, whose population counts in total add up to less than Germany's population size, were assigned 27 seats each.

One of the most important results of the Intergovernmental Conference in Nice, however, was the introduction of a demographic factor to the Council's voting procedure: On request by a member state it has to be checked whether a decision taken by Qualified Majority Voting (at least 232 votes out of 345 plus the majority of states, currently 13 out of 25) represent at least 62 percent of the Union's total population (cf. Art. 3 of the Nice Treaty). If this requirement is not met, the bill in question will not be passed. The demographic factor increases the likelihood of political blocking in the Council, but it is only Germany that has a realistic chance to do so: Due to its population size, this country needs only two allies among the larger states with 29 votes. All other countries need at least three allies (Wiedmann 2001).

The new voting procedure for the Council of the European Union established by the Nice Treaty took effect in November 2004 and applies through to November 2009. Although it is a step in the right direction in that it improves efficiency, transparency, and democracy in EU decision making, it is not a suitable solution to address the challenges of an enlarged Union. It is approximately twice as difficult now to form a qualified majority among the 25 member states as it is to reach the equivalent number of votes among 15 member states (Baldwin 2001). The Union's ability to take complicated and highly controversial decisions, such as on Structural Fund reorganization or on agricultural subsidies, is therefore in danger of being limited significantly without additional and substantial reforms to the voting procedures. In 2007, two countries – Romania and Bulgaria – will join the European Union, complicating the situation even further. The likelihood of building quorate coalitions will fall to an "all-time low"

(Wessels 2004) within the next years. It is a logical conclusion, therefore, to suggest linking European Constitution negotiations to the questions of how to improve the Council's capacity to act and how to guarantee a fair distribution of votes at the same time (Kirsch 2004).

1.5 Voting arrangements under the European Constitution

In December 2003, the first attempt by the EU heads of state and government to reach a consensus on the voting arrangements of the European Constitution failed. The largest contention arose over the so-called "double majority"[6] system proposed by the Constitutional Convention (Kirsch 2004), according to which a bill passes by Qualified Majority Vote in the Council provided that at least 50 percent of the member states representing at least 60 percent of the total European population vote in favor of it (Janning 2004). This charmingly simple formula was complicated in the course of finding a compromise, though, in that 5 percent was added to both figures. Further, bills not emanating from the European Commission or the Council of Ministers require a "superqualifying" majority of 72 percent (Emmanouilidis 2004, Wessels 2004).

Whilst these arrangements clearly are to the advantage of large member states, the regulations on blocking minority in the Council penalize them, though slightly: A bill can only be blocked if at least four states representing at least 35 percent of the total European population vote against it. Thus, the traditional coalition between France, Germany, and the United Kingdom will not be able to obstruct bills without the support of a fourth member state (Emmanouilidis 2003). The double majority, therefore, reflects the political nature of the European Union not only as a Union of states but also as a Union of citizens (Emmanouilidis/Fischer 2003).

At the same time, it increases the relative power of the large member states: Compared to weighted voting, the share of mandates for Germany according to the demographic factor increases from 8.4 to 17.0 percent, and to roughly 12 percent for Italy, France, and the UK (Busse 2004). In the EU-25, these four countries together hold a share of currently roughly 53 percent, which is close to the threshold of 65

6 In contrast to the "triple majority", which was established by the Nice Treaty: majority of member states, majority of weighted votes, and majority (at least 62 percent) of the total European population.

percent and requires only a few more coalition partners to be effective. Additionally, the weighting of votes as to the Council's Qualified Majority Voting procedure has been abolished under the European Constitution, so that every member state needs to contribute exactly one vote to reach the threshold of 55 percent. Thus, the four large member states have greater freedom in choosing their coalition partners: Even countries with very small population sizes can now meet both criteria of QMV should they join the "Big 4".

Compared to the provisions of the Nice Treaty, the new voting procedures of the European Constitution clearly increase efficiency, even though the simple double majority originally proposed (i.e., 50 percent of states, 60 percent of the population, no additions) would have been more efficient (Baldwin/Widgren 2004).

In sum, the European Constitution, adopted by the European heads of state and government on June 18, 2004 and to be ratified in all member states by either referenda or national parliamentary decision, creates a shift of power towards the largest but also the smaller member states, as the former need to rely on the support of the latter. The abolishment of weighted voting enhances the relative power of the small countries compared to mid-sized member states (Emmanouilidis/Fischer 2003). The position of Germany has improved significantly, whereas the mid-sized member states with a population size of around 10 million are the "losers" of double-majority, amongst them The Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Hungary, and the Czech Republic (Baldwin/Widgren 2004).

2. The demographic status quo and a prognosis for EU member states and accession candidates

With population size now being the only geometric representation element in the voting architecture of the Council of the European Union, the question of how sensitive this system is towards demographic change moves into the centre of interest. Developments in European population sizes within the next 50 years will differ enormously from country to country. It therefore seems appropriate to categorize the EU member and accession states; this for the purpose of the following demographic analysis.

Five groups can be formed according to population: one for the largest countries, three categories for the mid-sized member states, and one group for the smallest countries.[7]

2.1 The largest countries: Germany, Turkey,[8] France, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Poland

In 2000, Germany, Turkey, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Poland were the most populous countries in Europe. With 405 million inhabitants altogether, they hold a share of almost three quarters (73.6 percent) of the total European population (551 million people), which is expected to increase slightly by about 2 million people by 2050. The seven largest countries, however, will witness the largest population growth: 422 million people will represent 76.5 percent of all Europeans by that year. A closer look reveals that this growth will be based almost exclusively on the demographic development of Turkey: Excluding this country from our analysis, the figures are as follows: The six largest countries today have 337 million inhabitants, which corresponds to 69.9 percent of the European population total (482 million). By 2050, the EU population will have shrunk by about 28 million to 454 million people. However, the total population of the six largest member states will not decline as fast as the European total; their share will therefore increase, though slightly, to 71.4 percent (324 million).

Let us now consider the details: Four of the largest countries will experience in part a plunge in population size; among them Italy, which will register the most dramatic one: By 2050, only 45 million people are forecast to inhabit the region between the Alps and Sicily, constituting a decrease by 12.6 million or 22 percent. The population decline in Poland will be almost as intense: By the same year, it will have 33 million people only, i.e. 15 percent less compared to 2000. Spain is equally expected to lose more than 8 percent of its population within the same period (representing a decrease to 37 million people). Among the largest countries with shrinking populations, Germany will possibly face the smallest decline, i.e. by about 3.8 percent to slightly more than 79 million people, this after an initial and slight population growth lasting until 2014.

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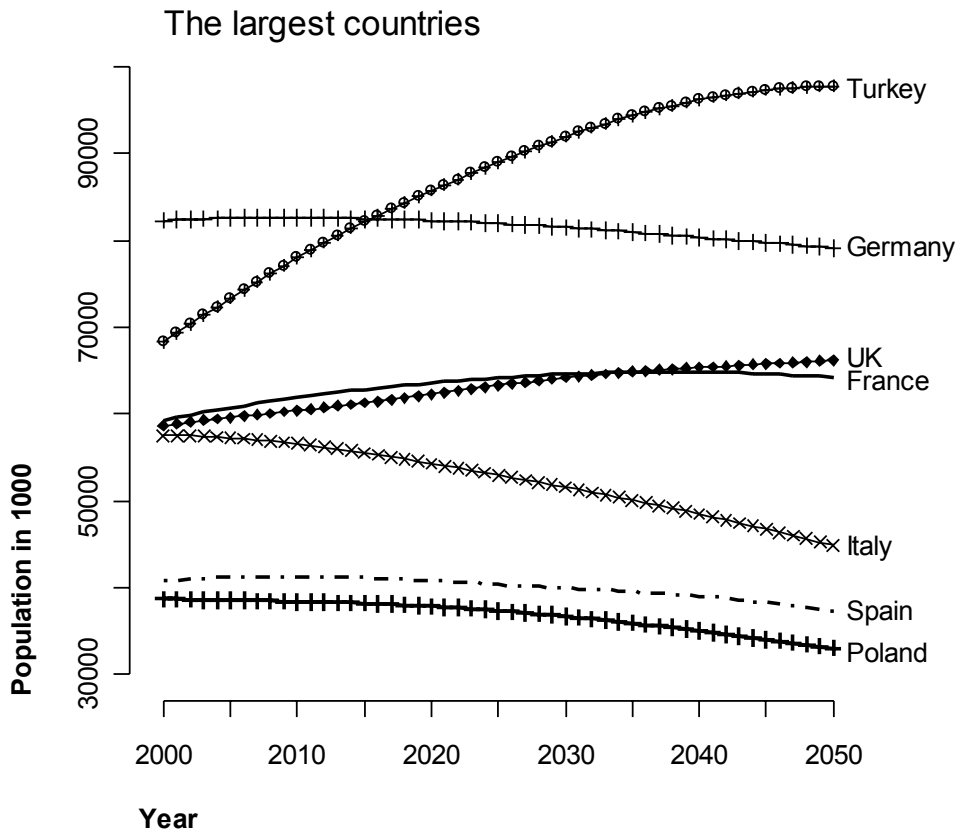
7 The following analysis is based on data taken from the 2002 Revision of the United Nations World Population prospects (medium variant).

8 Due to its remarkable demographic development as well as its potential impact on the future of the balance of power in Europe (cf. section 3.2), Turkey will now be included into the analysis.



Graph 1: Population development in the largest EU member/candidate states

The other three large countries, by contrast, will add to their populations within the next 50 years. France and the United Kingdom will experience a very similar development: Currently, France has 59.2 million inhabitants; in 2050, this figure will read more than 64 million. The UK of today registers 58.6 million people; 50 years on there will be more than 66 million. In 2035, the UK population will have exceeded the French counterpart for the first time ever.

These growth rates seem to be just minor ones compared to Turkey. By 2050, the Turkish population will literally jump from 68 million today to 98 million, representing an increase by 43 percent. Thus, Turkey will possibly be the most populous member state of the European Union in fifty years to come. As early as in 2016, Turkey will have

more inhabitants than Germany, today Europe's most populous country. By the mid-21st century, the difference between the two population sizes will have amounted to 18.6 million. The new ranking of the seven largest European countries will then be as follows: Turkey, Germany, followed by the UK, France, Italy, Spain, and Poland.

2.2 The mid-sized countries of the European Union

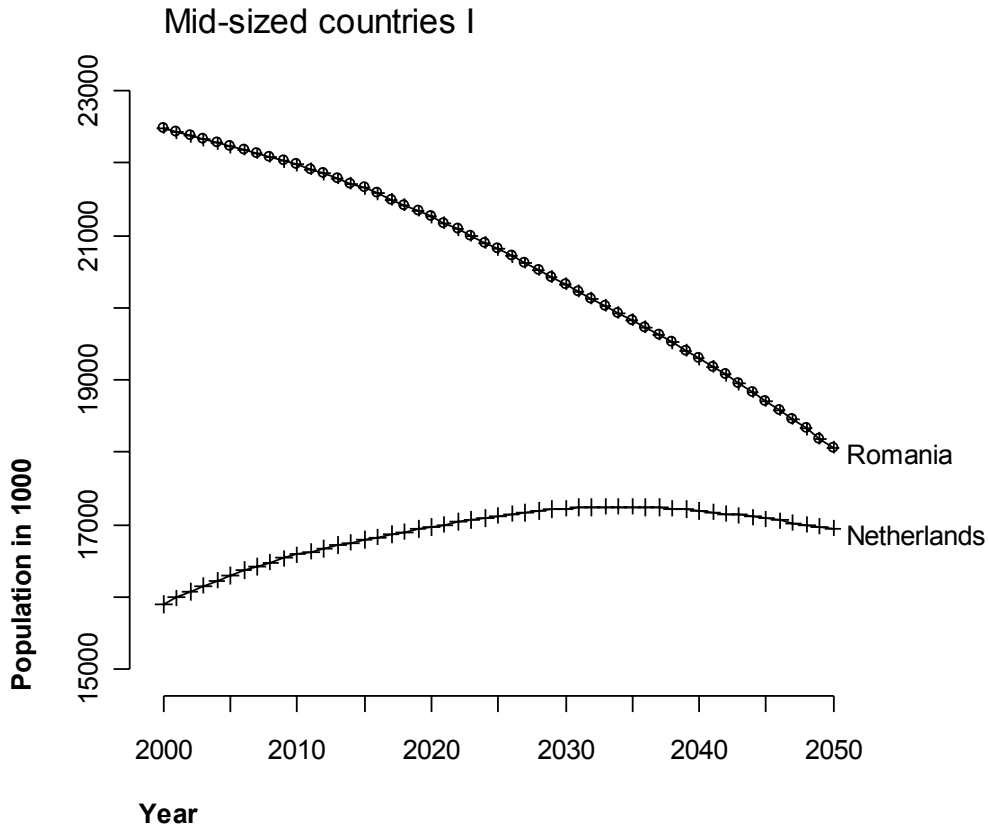
Categorizing the mid-sized countries is problematic in that they represent a heterogeneous group: Even though they are sufficiently distinct from the largest and the smallest states, they differ between them in population size as well as demographic development. Thus, we split the mid-size category into three subgroups for a more detailed description.

In 2000, the mid-sized countries were inhabited by roughly 144 million people, corresponding to a share of 26.1 percent of the European total (29.7 percent, if Turkey is excluded). With 128 million people in 2050, the share will have decreased to a value of 23.1 percent (and increased to 28.1 percent without Turkey).

2.2.1 Mid-sized countries I: Romania and the Netherlands

The group of mid-sized countries is headed by Romania and the Netherlands. The former registered 22.4 million inhabitants in 2000, the latter 16 million. In the next 50 years, the two states will experience different developments as to their population sizes. That of the Netherlands will at first grow until 2034 to a size of 17.2 million, and then slightly decline to 17.0 million until 2050, which is 6.6 percent more than its 2000 figure. Romania, by contrast, will face a major population decline by 4.4 million people to 18 million in 2050 (19.6 percent less than in 2000). The graph shows, that this decline is almost linear.

As a result, the population size of Romania in 2050 will be almost equal that of the Netherlands. Both countries then will still have populations twice as large as that of Belgium, the latter which will head the second group of mid-sized countries in 2050.

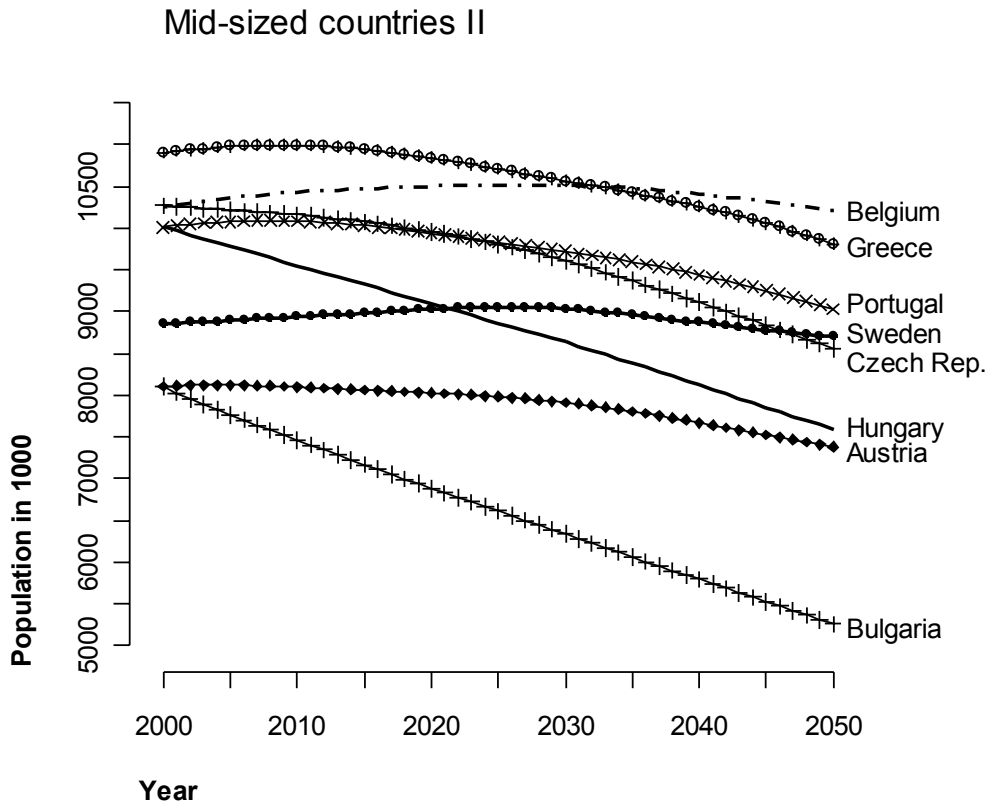


Graph 2: Population development in mid-sized EU member/candidate states I

2.2.2 Mid-sized countries II: Greece, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Portugal, Hungary, Sweden, Austria, and Bulgaria

Eight mid-sized countries make up the second group. According to the population counts in 2000, the ranking between them is as follows: Greece, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Portugal, Hungary, Sweden, Austria, and Bulgaria. Demographic developments within the next 45 years will alter this order significantly: In 2050, two countries – i.e. Belgium and Sweden – will have been able to keep their population sizes almost constant, due to slight initial increases followed by slight decreases. The populations of the other six countries will have declined – in part drastically, even. With a minus of

more than 35 percent to reach 5.2 million people, Bulgaria will be affected in particular. Hungary will have 2.4 million inhabitants less than in 2000 (minus 24.2 percent). The population decline in Greece, the Czech Republic, Portugal, and Austria is expected to be less steep, however. The Greek population figure will drop from currently 11 to 9.8 million people (minus 9.9 percent), Portugal will shrink by the same percentage to 9 million in 2050, Austria will register 9 percent less people 50 years from now (down to 7.3 million), and the Czech Republic will lose almost 17 percent of its population (8.5 million inhabitants in 2050).



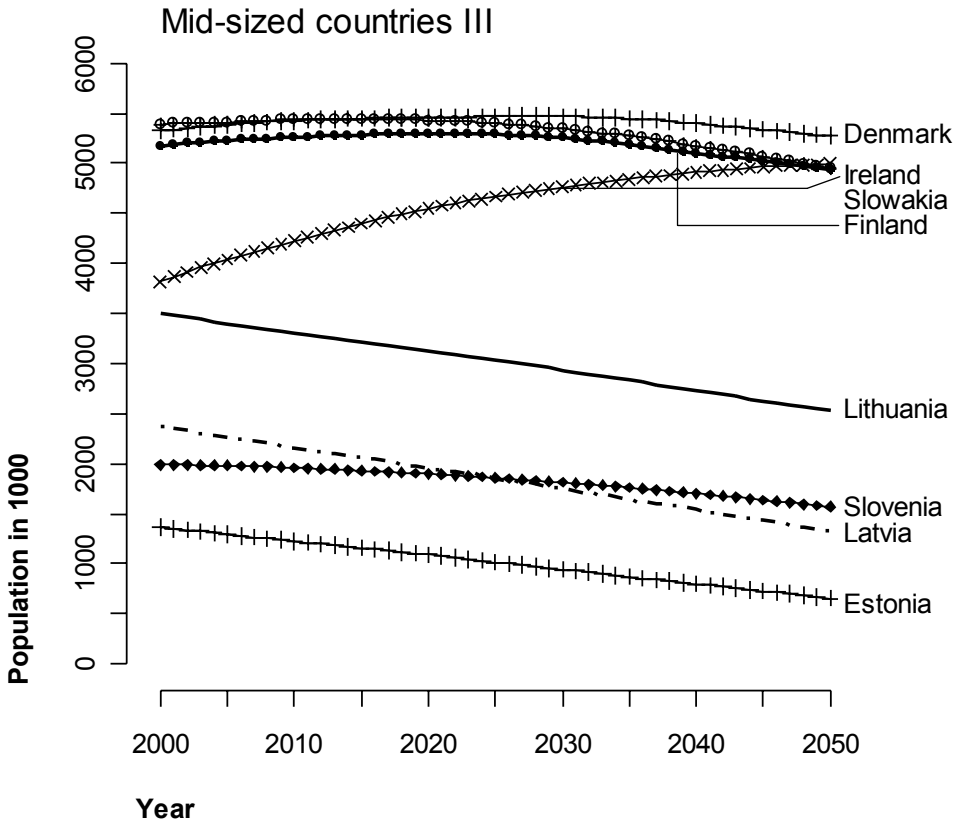
Graph 3: Population development in mid-sized EU member/candidate states II

Belgium will displace Greece as the largest country in this group, followed by Greece and Portugal; Sweden is expected to move from position 6 to 4, the Czech Republic will probably move down three positions (from 2 to 5), with the Hungary, Austria, and

Bulgaria being the taillights. In sum, the mid-sized countries of the second group will be close to each other in terms of population size in 2050, with figures ranging from 7.4 to 10.2 million. Only Bulgaria will stand out from this group, with a population of 5.2 million.

2.2.3 Mid-sized countries III: Slovakia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, and Estonia

The three largest countries in this group (Slovakia, Denmark, and Finland) will possibly experience a very similar demographic development within the next 50 years. By 2015, their population sizes will have grown slightly – in Denmark this growth is expected to last another 15 years –, followed by moderate declines. Slovakia will lose 8.2 percent of its population (down to 4.9 million), the Finnish counterpart will decline by

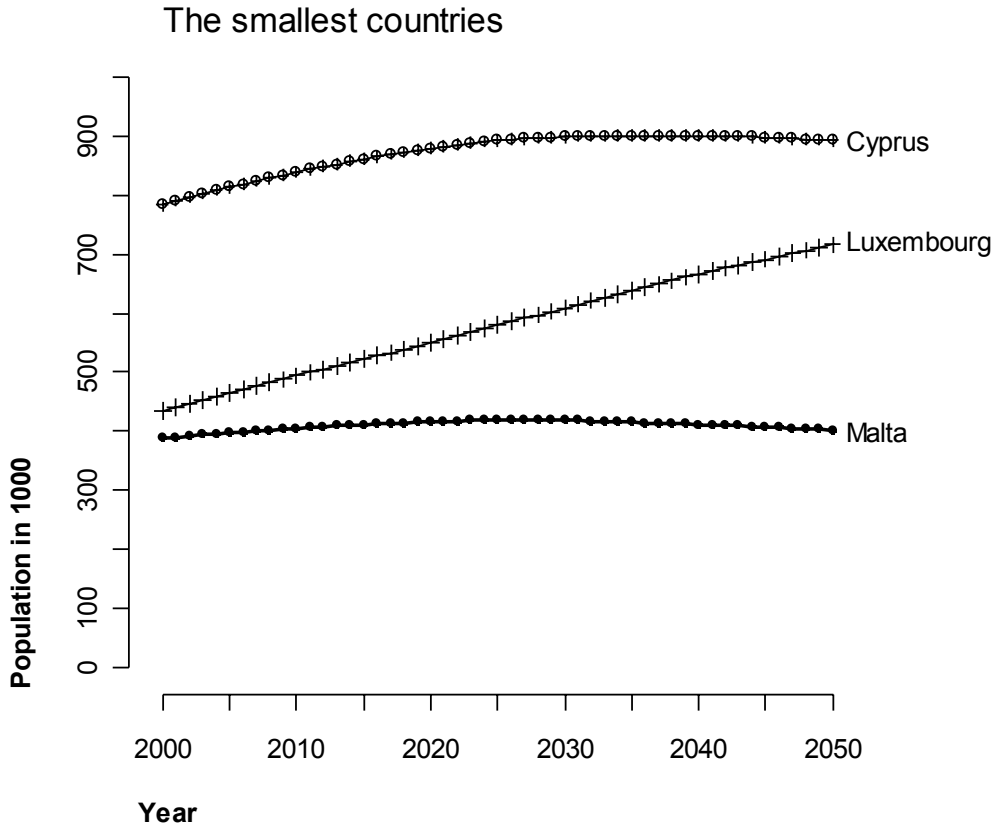


Graph 4: Population development in mid-sized EU member/candidate states III

4.6 percent (down to 4.9 million). Denmark's population will stay almost constant, registering a decline as little as around 1 percent to 5.2 million.

By 2050, Ireland will have caught up with this leading group, owing to steep population growth. With a size of almost 5 million people, the green island will then have 31 percent more inhabitants than today. Lithuania (minus 28 percent), Latvia (minus 44 percent), Slovenia (minus 21 percent), and Estonia (minus 52 percent), by contrast, will move into the opposite direction in the next 50 years. The population development in Estonia is especially striking as this country will lose more than half of its inhabitants; with 657,000 people in 2050, it will have fallen significantly to below the 1 million mark.

2.3 The smallest countries: Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Malta



Graph 5: Population development in the smallest EU member/candidate states

Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Malta are the smallest member states of the European Union. Their population sizes are significantly smaller than 1 million. In 2000, their figures added up to a share of only 0.29 percent of the European total (0.33 percent excluding Turkey); in 2050, this share will have risen to 0.36 percent (0.44 percent excluding Turkey) due to relatively steep population growth in Luxembourg (plus 64.6 percent) and Cyprus (plus 13.9 percent), and a slight increase in Malta (plus 3.3 percent). None of these countries, however, will reach a population size of 1 million within the next 50 years.

3. Growing and shrinking populations in Europe and their impact on the voting architecture of the Council of the European Union

What impact do the demographic developments described above have on the voting architecture of the Council of the European Union? Strikingly, this question has not been addressed on the political level in Europe so far: The member states of mid-sized populations have addressed some of the criticism involving the demographic factor, first in Nice and then during the Constitutional Convention. The debate on unfair mandate distribution in the European Parliament has brought the problem of a proportional representation to the forefront of the public mind. In both cases, however, discussions centred on the demographic status quo. The question as to the extent to which the new constitution will affect existing power constellations in view of demographic developments after 2009 has not been addressed at all.

This is very astonishing, as prognoses of demographic developments truly are reliable. Population processes – migratory movements excluded – generally have a time lag: A baby born today may become a father or mother in about, say, 20 years' time; thus only then contributing to maintaining the population size. This time lag makes it easier to look into the demographic future (Vaupel 2004).

Assumptions on the political future of the European Union, however, are slightly more risky. After all, in the next few years the EU faces the danger of decision deadlock owing to the voting provisions of the Nice Treaty – which are not suitable for a Union of more than 15 states. Public grievance in the EU on that matter may be expressed in

negative referenda results on the European Constitution, therefore effectively blocking its coming into being.

We assume, however, that the European Constitution and its voting provisions for the Council of the European Union will come into effect in November 2009 and continues to be applicable until 2050, the time framework for our analysis, even for a Union further enlarged.[9]

3.1 The demographic impact on the distribution of votes in a European Union of 27 states

The relative power of the 27 EU member states will change significantly (after the next enlargement round in 2007) due to the demographic factor in the voting provisions and different demographic developments forecast for the next 50 years. First, the new voting arrangements of the European Constitution will reduce the voting weight of France compared to Germany, even when considering current population counts: The Nice Treaty assigned France the same number of votes as Germany (29); however, the demographic factor (at least 62 percent of the total EU population is needed for a bill to be passed) worked to the disadvantage of this arrangement to a certain extent. Given the new regulations of the European Constitution, the equal treatment of Germany and France, on which the Franco-German alliance – the motor of European integration – was based, will no longer be effective as of 2009.

By this year, different demographic developments in both countries will have resulted in an EU-27 population share of 12.7 percent for France and almost 17 percent for Germany; with the share corresponding to the relative voting weight. However, this gap, which also affects the power balance between the two countries relative to the other European member states, will not be permanent. Until 2050, the population share will converge slightly due to population growth in France (a share of 14.1 percent then) and decline in Germany (a share of 17.4 percent then) – and with it the relative voting weighting of the two countries.

At the same time, the power of Poland and Spain – the "winners" of the Nice negotiations – will continue to be weakened, and quite drastically so, due to strong

9 For a detailed overview of the different coalitions, see Tables 2 and 3 in the Annex.

population decline in both countries. Whilst Poland and Spain have gained disproportionably in power owing to the Nice negotiations, which assigned them 27 Council mandates each, thereby placing them on a par with France and Germany, countries, that are, after all, much larger states (Baldwin/Widgrén 2004), France will have roughly 50 percent more relative voting power as of 2009 than Spain (12.7 percent compared to 8.5 percent) and Poland (a population share of 7.9 percent), and as of 2050 even 75 percent more (a population share of 14.1 percent for France, 8.2 percent for Spain, and 7.3 percent for Poland).

The consequences of population growth and decline in the European Union on its power structure are very striking when we look at country groups and possible coalitions. Considering the central and eastern European states (CEE)[10] to be one of these coalitions, their demographic development will lead to an EU-27 population share of only 21 percent in 2009 and 18.4 percent in 2050. If Turkey joined the EU, the figures would be even more dramatic. In an EU-28, the CEE states would have a share of population relative to votes in the Council of only 15.1 percent in 2050.

As all of the CEE states will experience population decline during the next 50 years, their relative weight as a country group will shrink accordingly. Even if they formed an extended coalition, for example with other shrinking countries, such as Italy and Greece, they would not be able to meet the requirements even for a blocking minority (at least 4 member states representing at least 35 percent of the EU population total) as of 2011. In contrast, those member states with growing populations – France, UK, Ireland, and the Netherlands in coalition with Belgium – will be able to form a blocking minority as soon as 2040.

3.2 The scenario of Turkey's accession: a demographic and power-strategic perspective

The advantages and disadvantages of Turkey's impending accession to the European Union have been discussed not only in view of economic and political issues involved, but also in light of the country's demography (Gümrükçü 1989, Steinbach 2002), the latter owing to its extraordinary population structure as far as the European context is concerned. The Turkish population is very young: In 2000, more than 30 percent of the

10 Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

inhabitants were younger than 15 years, whereas Germany, for example, had a share of 15.6 percent in the same year (UN 2005). Reproductive behavior is also changing in Turkey: Its population is expected to grow steadily from today's 72 million to 85 million in 2020 and almost 98 million people in 2050.

Two demographic aspects have been the focus of political discussion on Turkey's possible accession: First, fears abound the potential and large emigration pressure from Turkey, making for an emotional debate. Many EU citizens, and especially Western Europeans, are concerned about the potential influx of poor Turkish citizens in large numbers; this influx would then intensify current integration problems, for example, in Germany's or France's urban areas. Experts, however, assume that Turkey's EU-accession and the expected economic growth that would be resulting enhances the education level of Turkish migrant labor, and that accession also attracts Western Europeans to Turkey (Independent Commission on Turkey 2004).

Turkey's increasing demographic weight is not only relevant from the perspective of migration. It is just as important for the balance of power in the EU. Due to the introduction of a demographic factor to the voting system of the Council of the European Union, the population size plays a much larger role than in the original system of solely weighted mandates. Following the assumption that aging (shrinking) societies set different political priorities e.g. in education, immigration, and security than "young" societies, such as Turkey, France, the UK, or Ireland, it is very likely that demographic change will add a new conflict line to EU decision-making.

Even though this cleavage between old and young countries would also apply to a Union of 27 member states, the political-demographic weight of Turkey would strengthen it: In 2013, which is considered to be a possible accession year for Turkey (Demiralp 2004), the country will have almost as many inhabitants as Germany; three years later, the 28th member state would then be the most populous country of the EU.

What would the implications be as to coalition-building? As soon as in 2020, the new member states of EU-27 (central and eastern European countries plus the Baltic states, Malta, and Cyprus) will loose their potential to form a blocking minority even when in coalition with other shrinking and aging societies, e.g. Italy and Greece. Provided that Turkey is included in this coalition, however, the threshold of 35 percent for a blocking minority would be met permanently. If the new member states of EU-28 changed their coalition partners from the two southern member states to e.g. Belgium and Ireland –

two of the smaller countries with increasing or, at least, stable populations – it would still take at least as long as 2020 for the coalition to gain sufficient power to effect a blocking minority.

The political-demographic weight of Turkey is very obvious when looking at the few EU member states with growing populations; in EU-27, these are France, Ireland, Netherlands, and the UK[11]. Whilst these countries are only able to keep a blocking minority when they include e.g. Belgium in their coalition, the five growing states in EU-28 will be able to meet the threshold of 35 percent without difficulty. Even if the Netherlands drops out of the coalition, the remaining four member states will be able to block decisions of the Council of the European Union. This means that the states whose population is aging and shrinking significantly will lose their voting majority in the Council of EU-28 as soon as 2020. In a Union with only 27 member states, however, these states would not have to experience such a loss of power. Only when a country such as Belgium, which in contrast to most of the other "traditional" EU member states will have a population that remains constant over the next five years, forms a coalition with the growing states, the states with shrinking populations will loose their voting majority in EU-27, and this as of around the year 2045.

Turkey's accession to the EU would also alter considerably the balance of power between the net contributors and net receivers in the Union. Whilst the traditional net contributors (Austria, Belgium, Germany, UK, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Sweden) would retain a blocking minority in a Union of 27 states, this would not be the case for EU-28: Then, the coalition of net receivers (including Turkey) would meet the threshold of 35 percent of the population share, in contrast to the coalition of net contributors.

3.3 The accession of Turkey and the timing aspect

Continuing population growth in Turkey provides us with a reason to shortly elaborate on the question, whether and if so, to which context there is a connection between the demographic development and the date of a Turkish accession to the EU. This question would in fact have been of large relevance under the provisions of the Nice Treaty: Here, each member state has been assigned a fixed number of mandates in the Council

11 Luxembourg and Cyprus are excluded here due to their very small population sizes.

of the European Union according to its population size. In light of these arrangements and from a strategic point of view for the other EU states, there would have been large support for a Turkey's accession as soon as possible, as in this case only the current Turkish population size would have been the basis for its representation in EU bodies, without the necessity of taking into account the enormous population growth of the future.

The new European Constitutions has made these considerations obsolete. Since the political weight of a member state relative to a coalition of several countries is measured according to its current share as to the total European population, demographic changes have an effect *per se* and do not depend on the skills of a candidate country's negotiators.

Whether this automatism diminishes Turkey's chances to join the EU is speculation, for sure. However, it stands to reason that demography's impact on the power structure of the European Union might inspire the decision makers of the national governments negatively affected to think about further modifications to the voting provisions in the Council of the European Union.

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Voting majorities and blocking minorities in the Council of the European Union according to the provisions of the European Constitution and demographic developments in a European Union of 27 member states

Coalition	Year	No. of members in the coalition	Share in total EU population (%)	Voting majority at least 55 % of states (at least 15 states) and at least 65 % share in total EU population	Blocking minority at least 4 states and at least 35 % share in total EU population
EU-15 (old member states)	2009	15	78.9	Yes	Yes
	2020		79.4	Yes	Yes
	2050		81.4	Yes	Yes
The 6 largest states	2009	6	70.1	No	Yes
(D, GB, F, I, E, PL)	2020		70.4	No	Yes
	2050		71.4	No	Yes
Benelux and Northern Europe	2009	6	9.7	No	No
(B, NL, L, S, DK, FIN)	2020		9.9	No	No
	2050		10.3	No	No
New member states	2009	12	21.2	No	No
(EU-27 without EU-15)	2020		20.6	No	No
	2050		18.7	No	No
New member states+B+IRL	2009	14	24.2	No	No
	2020		23.7	No	No
	2050		22.0	No	No
New member states+E+I	2009	14	41.4	No	Yes
	2020		40.3	No	Yes
	2050		36.7	No	Yes
New member states+I+GR	2009	14	35.2	No	Yes
	2020		34.1	No	No
	2050		30.7	No	No
New member states	2009	18	65.0	Yes	Yes
+D+I+E+NL+B+DK	2020		64.4	No	Yes
	2050		61.3	No	Yes
States with	2009	4	29.4	No	No
growing populations	2020		30.4	No	No
(F, GB, IRL, NL)	2050		33.5	No	No
Growing states+B	2009	5	31.5	No	No
	2020		32.6	No	No
	2050		35.8	No	Yes
EU-27 without	2009	23	70.7	Yes	Yes
growing states	2020		69.7	Yes	Yes
(without F, GB, IRL, NL)	2050		66.5	Yes	Yes
EU-27 without	2009	22	68.5	Yes	Yes
growing states (F, GB, IRL,	2020		67.4	Yes	Yes
NL) and without B	2050		64.2	No	Yes
Central and eastern European	2009	10	21.0	No	No
states (BG, CZ, EST, H,	2020		20.4	No	No
LT, LV,PL, ROM, SK, SLO)	2050		18.4	No	No
Central and eastern European	2009	17	66.0	Yes	Yes
states (CEE)	2020		64.8	No	Yes
+GR+P+E+I+A+D+S	2050		61.6	No	Yes
Mediterranean states	2009	7	37.5	No	Yes
(CY, E, F, GR, I, P, M)	2020		37.3	No	Yes
	2050		36.7	No	Yes
Net receivers	2009	14	34.8	No	No
(E, GR, P, IRL	2020		34.1	No	No
+CEE states)	2050		31.8	No	No
Net contributors	2009	7	38.6	No	Yes
(A, B, D, GB, L, NL, S)	2020		39.0	No	Yes
	2050		41.6	No	Yes

Annex: Table 2 (for country abbreviations cf. Table 4)

Voting majorities and blocking minorities in the Council of the European Union according to the provisions of the European Constitution and demographic developments in a European Union of 28 member states

Coalition	Year	No. of members in the coalition	Share in total EU population (%)	Voting majority at least 55 % of states (at least 15 states) and at least 65 % share in total EU population	Blocking minority at least 4 states and at least 35 % share in total EU population
EU-15 (old member states)	2009	15	68.0	Yes	Yes
	2020		67.5	Yes	Yes
	2050		67.0	Yes	Yes
The 6 largest states	2009	6	67.4	No	Yes
(TR, D, GB, F, I, E	2020		68.3	No	Yes
– without Poland)	2050		70.5	No	Yes
Benelux + Northern Europe	2009	6	8.4	No	No
(B, NL, L, S, DK, FIN)	2020		8.4	No	No
	2050		8.5	No	No
New member states	2009	13	32.0	No	No
(EU-28 without EU-15)	2020		32.6	No	No
	2050		33.1	No	No
New member states+B+IRL	2009	15	34.6	No	No
	2020		35.2	No	Yes
	2050		35.8	No	Yes
New member states+E+I	2009	15	49.4	No	Yes
	2020		49.2	No	Yes
	2050		47.9	No	Yes
New member states+I+GR	2009	15	44.0	No	Yes
	2020		44.0	No	Yes
	2050		43.0	No	Yes
New member states	2009	19	70.0	Yes	Yes
+D+I+E+NL+B+DK	2020		70.0	Yes	Yes
	2050		68.1	Yes	Yes
States with	2009	5	39.0	No	Yes
growing populations	2020		40.9	No	Yes
(TR, F, GB, IRL, NL)	2050		45.3	No	Yes
Growing states +B	2009	6	40.9	No	Yes
	2020		42.7	No	Yes
	2050		47.1	No	Yes
EU-28 without	2009	23	66.9	Yes	Yes
growing states	2020		65.1	Yes	Yes
(without TR, F, GB, IRL, NL)	2050		60.9	No	Yes
EU-28 without growing	2009	22	59.1	No	Yes
states (TR, F, GB, IRL, NL)	2020		57.3	No	Yes
and without B	2050		52.9	No	Yes
Central and eastern European	2009	10	18.1	No	No
states (BG, CZ, EST, H,	2020		17.3	No	No
LT, LV,PL, ROM, SK, SLO)	2050		15.1	No	No
Central and eastern European	2009	17	56.9	No	Yes
states (CEE)	2020		55.1	No	Yes
+GR+P+E+I+A+D+S	2050		50.7	No	Yes
Mediterranean states	2009	8	46.0	No	Yes
(CY, E, F, GR, I, P, M, TR)	2020		46.8	No	Yes
	2050		47.9	No	Yes
Net receivers	2009	15	43.6	No	Yes
(E, GR, P, IRL	2020		43.9	No	Yes
+CEE states+TR)	2050		43.9	No	Yes
Net contributors	2009	7	33.3	No	No
(A, B, D, GB, L, NL, S)	2020		33.3	No	No
	2050		34.3	No	No

Annex: Table 3 (for country abbreviations cf. Table 4)

Abbreviation	EU Member/candidate state
A	Austria
B	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
D	Germany
DK	Denmark
E	Spain
EST	Estonia
F	France
FIN	Finland
GB	Great Britain
GR	Greece
H	Hungary
I	Italy
IRL	Ireland
L	Luxembourg
LT	Lithuania
LV	Latvia
M	Malta
NL	Netherlands
P	Portugal
PL	Poland
RO	Romania
S	Sweden
SK	Slovakia
SLO	Slovenia

Annex: Table 4