

Press Release

Challenges for youth and elderly in changing times

Tirana, 25 November 2015 – Life dynamics nowadays has brought down fertility in Albania, from the highest Total Fertility Rate in Europe to the current level of 1.7 children per woman, well below the replacement level that is required to sustain the population size. As a result, the composition of Albania's population has radically changed between the census snapshots of 1979 and 2011, where before the proportion of children under 15 was 37 percent, it is now only 21 percent, shows the evidence coming from INSTAT secondary analysis of data on Youth in Albania.

This decline will be the driving force for ageing population in Albania, a process which has already started and felt in the Albanian society. Due to the combined effect of increasing life expectancy, reduced fertility and emigration of young adults, the population share of elderly – defined as persons aged 65 and over – increased from 5 to 11 percent in the period 1989 to 2011, according to the second study by INSTAT on Population Ageing.

The purpose of these studies is to put the focus on population dynamics, by ensuring a clear picture of the current situation of young people and elderly in Albania, based on in-depth analysis of data from CENSUS 2011 and other latest INSTAT surveys.

- An estimated 225 thousand young people emigrated in the 2001-2011 inter-census period, most to Italy and Greece. This represented a major factor in the overall population **decline of almost 9 percent** in this period.
- The young emigrant population **increasingly consists of women**, as a trend noticed in the last decade 2001-2011.
- In 2011 the percentage of youth aged 25 to 29 with **completed tertiary-level education was 24 percent**, compared to only 8 percent in 2001.
- More recent information show a further deterioration of 15-29 years old youth labour market indicators: **a lower labour force participation rate (from 43 down to 28 percent)**, and a higher **unemployment rate (from 22 up to 33 percent)**.
- For those youth who did find a job, **high levels of skill mismatch** are observed. The mismatch rate for tertiary-educated youth workers was a very high **34 percent** in 2011.
- **Only 12 percent** among married youth and **29 percent among sexually active non-married peers** adopted modern contraceptive methods to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies.
- As a consequence, we a **high abortion rate** in Albania, which means that of **every six pregnancies, one is terminated by an induced abortion**. And only last year, **6.4 thousand women** faced the avoidable health risks of an induced abortion.

On the other hand, the increasing number of the elderly presents challenges and requires preparedness to best cope with them:

- This ageing process will continue for several more decades: the number of elderly is projected to reach **33 percent of the total active population** by 2031.
- The 2011 census recorded that **23 percent of the elderly were disabled** (compared to only 3 percent in the adult population below 65 years of age).
- Almost **half of the elderly women have become widowed** and are bereft of the practical and emotional support that marriage usually provides.

- Some **30 percent of the elderly are living in a two-person household**, usually together with the elderly – spouse and **8 percent is living alone**, which makes these people potentially vulnerable persons.
- For 2012, the proportion that was **unable to achieve a consumption level** that is considered the minimum for a basic standard of living was estimated at **10 percent**.
- A similar **10 percent** of elderly are **still engaged in work**.
- The access to modern communication means remained low: **only 15 percent of elderly have a computer** and only **9 percent have internet connection** at their home. Possession of **mobile phones**, on the other hand, is available to **83 percent**.

A composite index of vulnerability using living arrangements, disability and income dependency as input variables, shows a **wide spread of vulnerability** across the country, but with **highest concentrations in the north-east of Albania**. Has, Kukës, Dibër, Bulqizë, Klos, Mat and Pukë in the north-eastern part of the country are the municipalities with the highest vulnerability levels.

Mrs. Emira Galanxhi, the Social Statistics Director, on behalf of the General Director of INSTAT, Mr. Gjergji Filipi emphasized the importance of understanding this deep demographic transformation, the social and economic challenges this transformation poses on the society, and behaviors and decisions included in these experiences. “It is as important that Albanian society and decision-makers are well prepared to face these issues, which will have their social and economic impact on the society in the decades to come”, said Mrs. Galanxhi.

“A better understanding of how young and older people in Albania are doing is the basis for better social and economic arrangements”, said Ambassador of Switzerland in Albania, Mr. Christoph Graf. “To take good policy decisions, reliable data, facts and figures are key in Albania, a country where assumptions, perceptions and interpretations often prevail, thus blurring reality and the search for truth”. Ambassador Graf also mentioned some interesting and worrying findings from the two studies such as the emigration trend among the young and the population ageing.

“Young people in Albania still constitute a significant proportion of Albania’s population, therefore, investing in the education and health, including sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and young people is of utmost importance Albania’s productivity and development in the future.

As people are the center of development, their rights, needs and well-being, should be at the center of our policies, strategies, and development plans.”, - said Dr. Manuela Bello, UNFPA Albania Assistant Representative.

These two studies were carried out by INSTAT and UNFPA, in the in the framework of “United Nations Support to Social Inclusion Programme in Albania” funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania, and coordinated by the National Center for Social Studies.

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