

The «gas conflict». A significant event occurred at the very beginning of 2025. According to the transit contract between Gazprom and Naftogaz (which expired on December 31, 2024), gas from the Russian Federation ceased flowing to European countries through Ukraine.

The imposition of sanctions is associated with negative consequences, but it is worth noting that there are also positive consequences.

Firstly, there is the stimulation of innovation. This process entails the transformation of production, meaning it encourages the state to explore alternative solutions and technologies that can substitute for imported ones, thereby increasing competition within the country. It is important to highlight the statistical data of the Republic of Belarus as of April 3, 2023: in 2022, the share of shipped innovative products from organizations within the Ministry of Industry was 42.6 %, while in January-February 2023, this figure increased to 43.6 %. In 2022, the volume of import-substituting products, according to the Ministry of Industry, was \$4.6 billion.

Secondly, there is an increase in domestic production. Due to the suspension of imports of goods from other countries, there was a need to increase domestic production. Thus, as of August 16, 2024, it was known that in the first half of 2024, the output of both food and non-food products increased. The gross domestic product during this period amounted to 105 %. Retail turnover increased by 11.5 %, agricultural production increased by more than 10 %, and industrial goods by more than 7 %.

Thirdly, the export of national goods is worth mentioning. Following the imposition of Western sanctions, the Republic of Belarus began to reorient its exports to «friendly» countries. In 2024, Belarusian products were exported to 69 countries. The main trading partners are the Russian Federation and China. Belarusian exports to Russia increased by 5.3 %, amounting to \$24.3 billion.

All in all, in the current circumstances, where economic interdependence is significant, the different global uses of restrictions pose systemic risks to the stability and growth of the global economy as a whole.

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DEMOGRAPHY AND MIGRATION IN WESTERN EUROPE

Демография и миграция в Западной Европе

In recent decades, Western European countries have been facing a range of demographic changes that pose a challenge to both social stability and economic development. Among these changes are the long-term decline in birth rates, the gradual

aging of the population, the decrease in the number of people of working age, and the growing pressure on pension, healthcare, and social security systems.

As natural population growth becomes less significant or even negative, migration – both internal and external – is seen as one of the key instruments for compensating demographic deficits. Nevertheless, migration in itself is not a universal solution: what matters are the types of migration, integration, and labor mobility involved, as well as how national policies adapt to new realities.

The relevance of this study stems from the necessity for Western European countries to strike a balance between maintaining economic competitiveness and ensuring the sustainability of social systems amid demographic aging, declining birth rates, and migration flows. Crucially, migration policy and demographic dynamics are interdependent: addressing one aspect does not eliminate persistent challenges related to migrant integration, resource allocation, and the long-term reproduction of the population.

The aim of this study is to analyze how Western European countries respond to demographic challenges through migration policy: what strategies are employed to attract migrants, what results these strategies yield in terms of compensating for labor shortages and maintaining stability, and what risks are associated with such approaches.

The study produced the following key findings.

First, demographic trends in Western Europe show a declining working-age population and a growing elderly share. This dynamic increases pressure on pension and healthcare systems, raises public spending, and slows economic growth. Second, migration helps alleviate these pressures. Most Western European countries maintain a positive migration balance, offsetting natural population decline. However, migration alone cannot fully compensate for low fertility and aging. Third, migration policy is constrained by integration challenges, labor market inclusion, and social cohesion. Effective strategies combine migration with family support and labor activation.

Western European countries apply different models: some focus on skilled migrants, others on broader labor needs. Integration is essential – without it, migration's benefits are limited.

Based on these results, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, migration is not a standalone solution but part of a broader demographic strategy. Second, integration is key to policy success – requiring access to labor markets, language training, qualification recognition, and social inclusion. Third, policy must reflect national and regional differences in fertility, age structure, and migration patterns – there is no universal model. Fourth, demographic shifts require adaptation of welfare and pension systems: even with migration, pressure may rise if the labor force does not grow proportionally.

Thus, the study confirms that demographic challenges in Western Europe are systemic and long-term. Migration policy plays a vital role, but only in combination with internal measures aimed at increasing birth rates, expanding labor participation, and ensuring sustainable population and economic development.