

## Editorial

Dear Readers,

As long ago as August 2006 at a federal press conference Angela Merkel stated “anyone who knows how to successfully manage demographic change is to be congratulated”. Today, ten years later, the need to confront the challenges posed by demographic change has not lost its urgency. On the contrary, while global population numbers continue to rise, the German and European populations are shrinking and ageing. In his comments for this issue, Meinhard Miegel predicts that this is bound to lead to a considerable loss in importance sooner or later. Miegel believes it will be unavoidable to adapt to immigration and use it to one’s own advantage if Germany and Europe wish to continue playing an important role on the global stage.

However, Europe is not alone in facing enormous challenges from demographics shifts. The Japanese population is currently ageing at the fastest rate of all. The resulting financial and political problems are exacerbated by the difficult economic situation, as Akim Enomoto and Hannes Bublitz report in their article. They believe only a complete reorientation in the country’s immigration policy and genuine progress in improving gender equality can save Japan from the devastating impact of an overaged population.

In his article on Latin America, Karl-Dieter Hoffmann illustrates that the issue of an ageing population no longer only affects traditional industrialised nations. Latin America is the first region in the so-called Third World to undergo a demographic change similar to that experienced by Europe and North America, albeit in a far shorter time. The consequences of the rapid ageing of the population are particularly problematic where the provision for old age is concerned, as few people in Latin America are entitled to a state or private pension.

The demographic challenges in Israel are of a totally different nature. There, the average birth rate is higher than in any other Western country, but distributed very unevenly among the different sections of the population. Numbers are rising particularly strongly in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community and in the Arab minority. In their article, Anna Jandrey and Eva Keeren Caro illustrate how the shifts in the relative figures of the majority and the minorities not only fuel political and religious tensions in the

country, but may ultimately come to threaten the secular Jewish nature of the Israeli state.

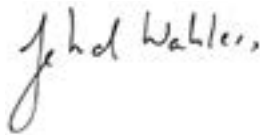
The demographic development on the African continent is virtually dramatic. As Serge Michailof explains in his article on Sub-Saharan Africa, the population explosion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will most likely be followed by a second one in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Under these circumstances, even the smallest climatic changes can result in food shortages and famines of gigantic proportions and trigger large migration movements, mostly within Africa but potentially also towards Europe.

A similar scenario can be envisaged for North Africa and the Middle East as well. The main drive for migration here arises from the fact that the development of the labour market is not keeping pace with the rapid rise in the figures of the increasingly better-qualified job seekers. As long as this discrepancy persists, political instability and therefore also the number of migrants from this region will continue to increase, as Reiner Klingholz and Ruth Müller show in their article.

While the demographic developments of one region of the world differ from another the repercussions of demographic change cannot be limited to the respective region. The articles in this issue illustrate the extent to which the world is interconnected today and the need for cooperation with respect to this issue. Against this backdrop, it is particularly incumbent upon those who contemplate ways of successfully managing demographic change to step up their efforts.

I wish you a stimulating read.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'G'.

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