

The permanence of temporariness: from short-term solutions to long-term realities

How... why do we address structural long-term challenges by using short-term and temporary solutions?

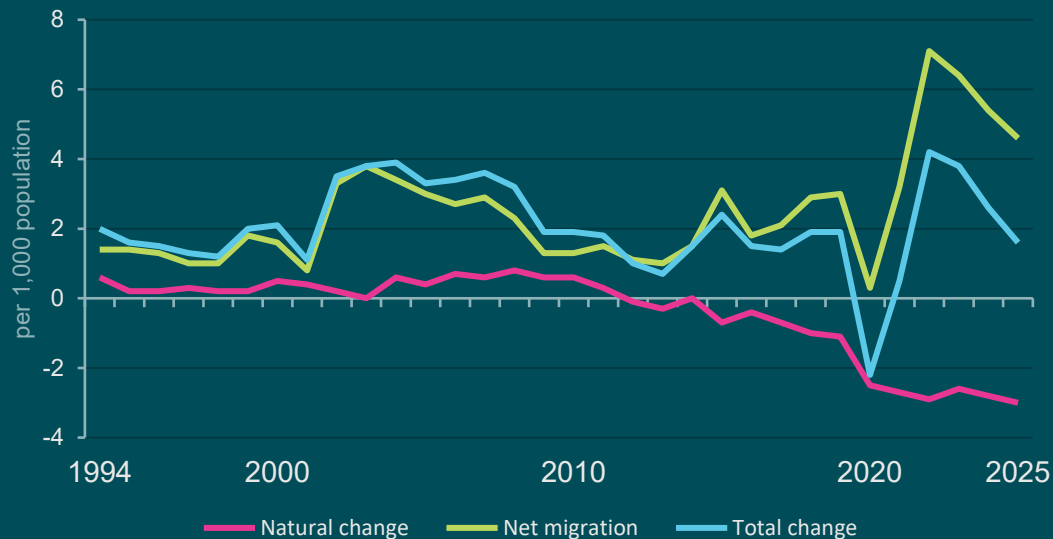
Beyond international protection: rational policy choices or hope?

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Session I: Temporality as Norm | karolis@diversitygroup.lt

The elephant in the room: EU population change by components



Total change = natural change + net migration.

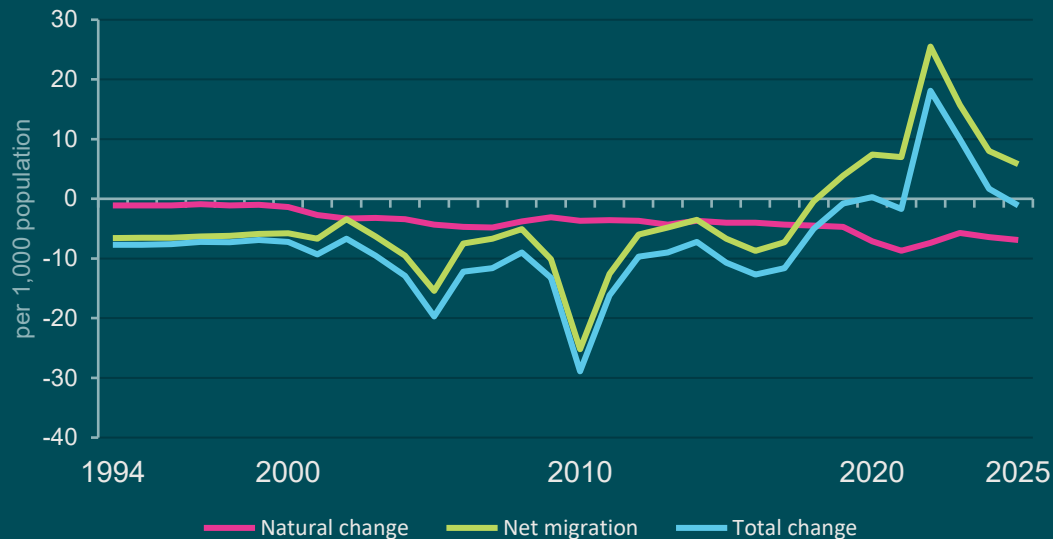
Natural change has been negative since 2012. Net migration hasn't — not once in three decades.

Migration is essentially the only reason EU population still grows.

Source: Eurostat, *demo_gind*, EU27_2020.



Lithuania: even migration no longer fully offsets natural decline



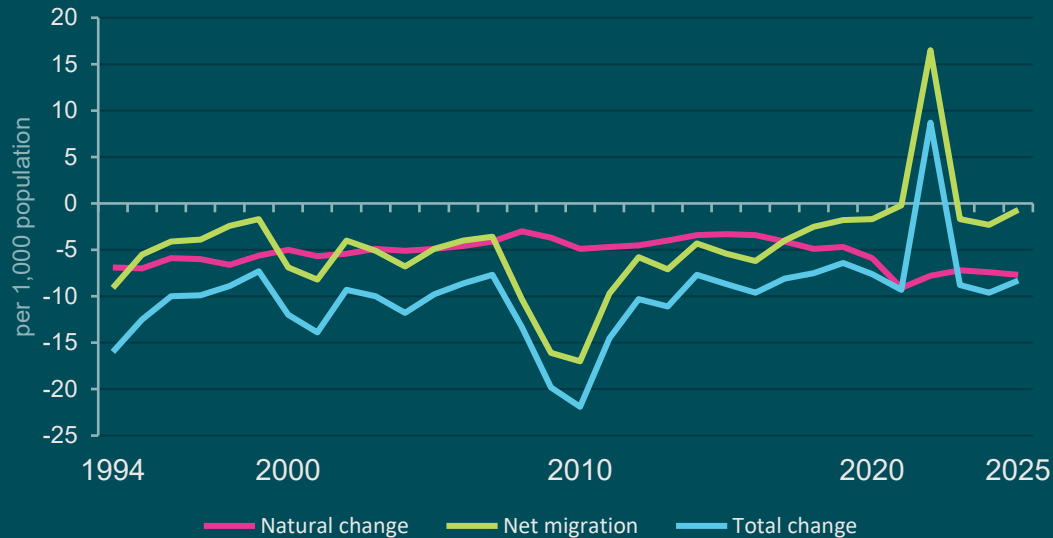
Natural change has been negative every year since 1994 and keeps deepening: -6.9 per 1,000 in 2025 (EU: -3.0)

Migration peaked at +25.5 in 2022 (Ukraine). By 2025 it's still positive (+5.8), but no longer enough to offset the decline. Total: -1.1

Source: Eurostat, demo_gind, Lithuania.



Latvia: the 2022 migration surge has faded



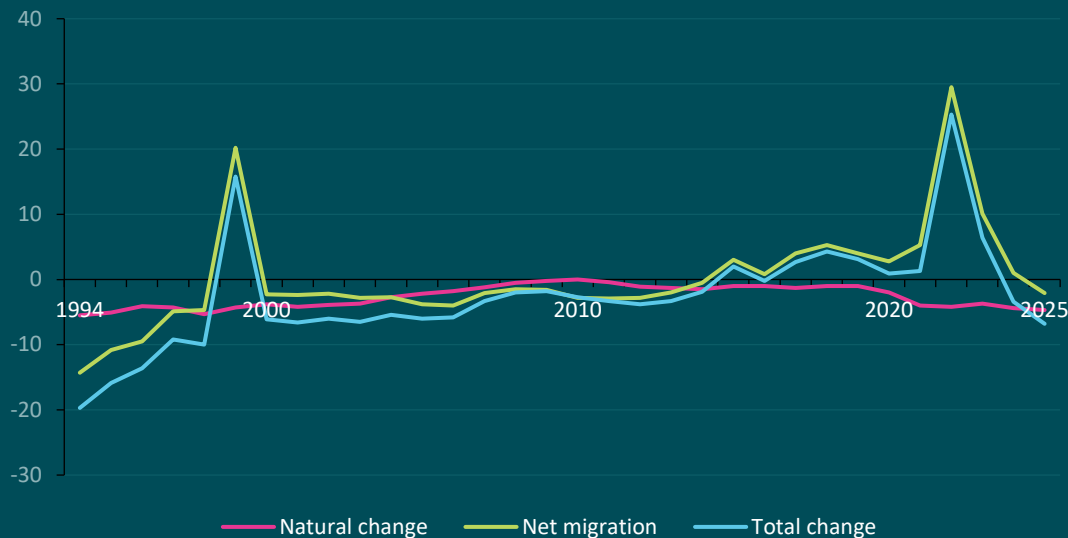
The 2022 spike was as sharp as in Lithuania: net migration hit +16.5, but then it did not last.

By 2025, migration itself is negative (-0.7), alongside natural decline (-7.7). Total: -8.3; the steepest in this comparison

Source: Eurostat, *demo_gind*, Latvia.



Estonia: both natural change and migration are now negative



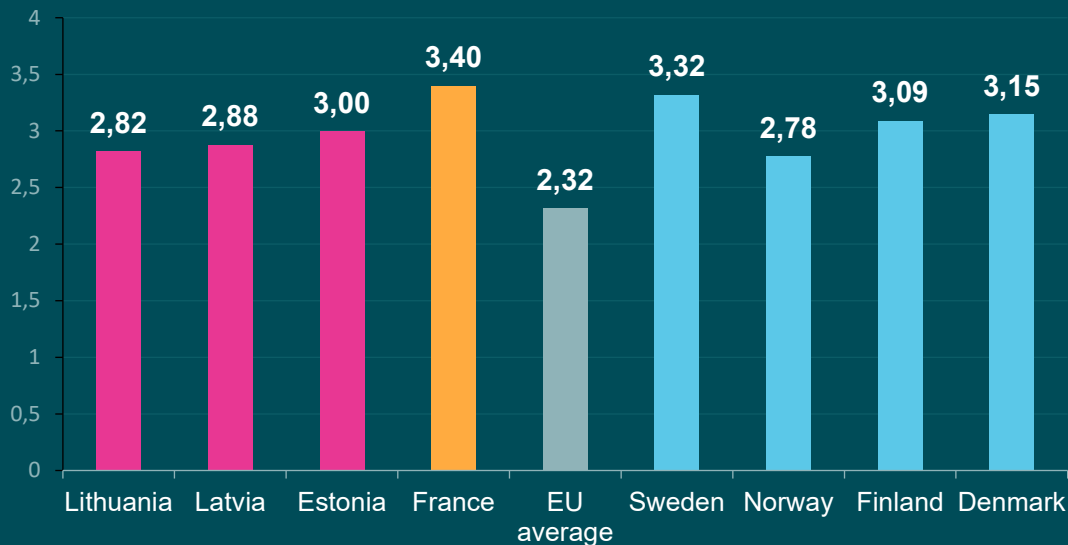
2025: natural change -4.7, and net migration has also turned negative (-2.1): unlike Lithuania or Latvia. Total: -6.8.

Source: Eurostat, demo_gind, Estonia

Note: the 1999 spike reflects population-register reconciliation ahead of the 2000 census, not an actual migration wave.



The biggest spenders on family policies don't escape low fertility

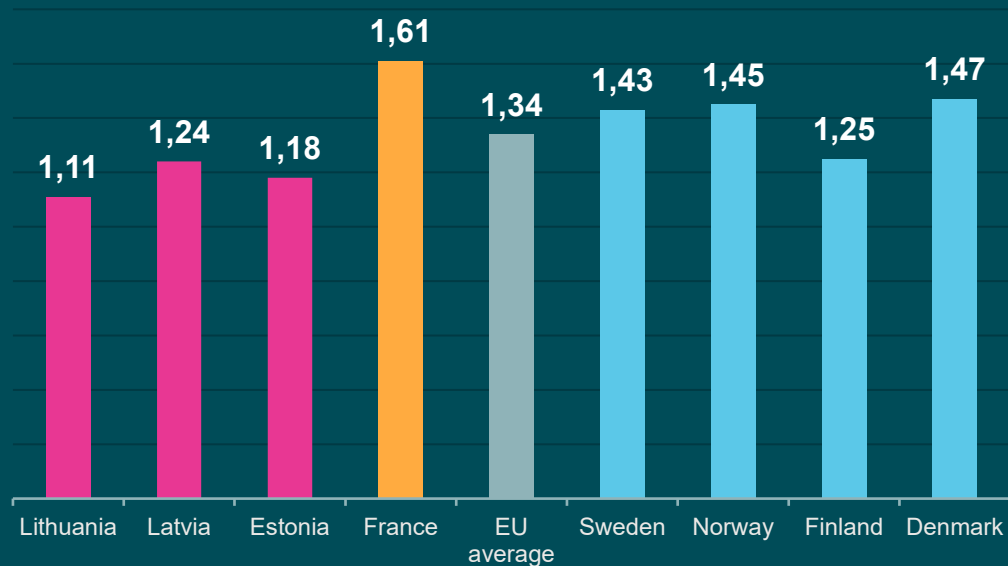


- Sweden and France spend the most (3.3-3.4% of GDP): neither comes close to the 2.1 replacement threshold.
- With tax breaks counted, Lithuania and Latvia are no longer the low spenders: both sit above the EU average.

Source: OECD SOCX; Eurostat; OECD PF1.1.



The arithmetic underneath — Baltic and Nordic alike, no temporary scheme/approach changes it



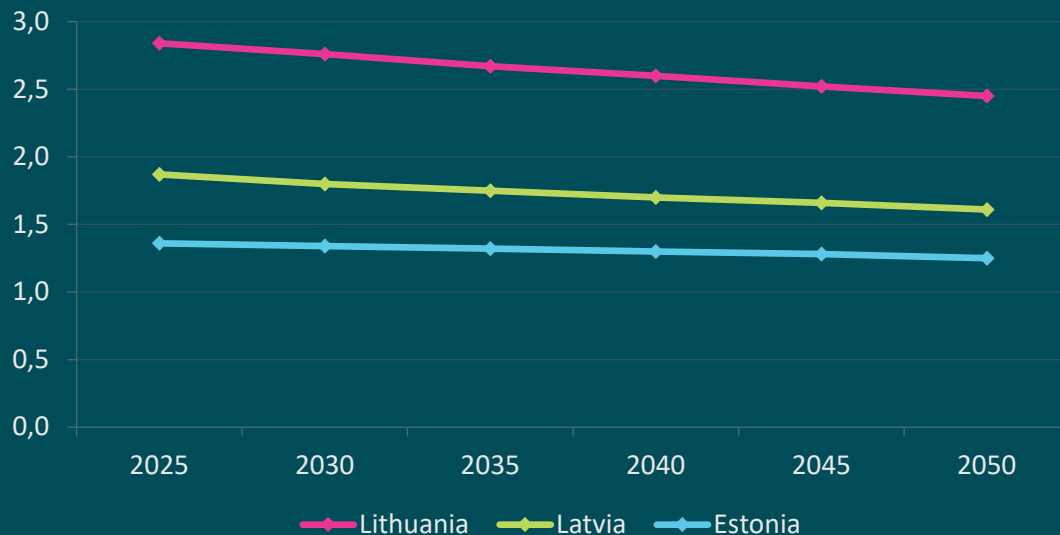
Replacement threshold: 2.1. Every country here sits well below it: Lithuania (1.11) among the lowest fertility rates in the world.

The Nordics are not exempt either: Finland (1.25) is still far below the 2.1 threshold, though higher than Lithuania's 1.11. This is exactly why Denmark and Sweden's natural change (previous slide) is still barely positive: fertility this low hasn't caught up with the population's age structure yet, but it will.

Source: Eurostat, *demo_find* (TOTFERRT), 2024.



The Baltic states on natural change alone: population to 2050



*Being fewer may be fine...
but how few is too few?*

Source: Eurostat, EUROPOP2023 projections (proj_23ndbi), natural change only (zero net migration assumed), population on 1 January, in millions.



• Structural and long-term challenges, temporary tools: **the policy mismatch**

- Development require long-term policy response, we keep choosing *ad hoc*, temporary tools instead
- International protection is drifting from permanent status to temporary
- Labor migration is moving from long-term settlement to circular, restricted and insecure schemes
- Focus on labor migration quotas, zero attention to EU solidarity mechanism
- Using integration tools/measures as control mechanism instead of fostering social cohesion
- Instead of building policy coherence for development, we operate within isolated policy silos
- **Hope and ignorance**



MIGRATION: if managed, what it gives and what it takes...

SHORT-TERM MIGRATION FILLS VACANCIES	LONG-TERM MIGRATION BUIDS NATIONAL CAPACITY
✗ Skills and productivity do not have time to accumulate	✓ Skills, experience and productivity grow over time
✗ Unstable tax base and recurring turnover costs	✓ Stable, long-term tax contribution and GDP growth
✗ Little demographic renewal	✓ Families, children and long-term population stability
✗ Weak incentives for integration and community ties	✓ Natural integration, social capital and institutional trust
✗ Greater risk of dependency and exploitation	✓ Greater autonomy, mobility and entrepreneurship
✗ Primarily solves today's labour shortage	✓ Builds tomorrow's economy and society



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION: temporary uncertainty vs. durable protection/solution

SHORT / INSECURE PROTECTION	PERMANENT / DURABLE PROTECTION
✗ Uncertainty: insecure status limits long-term planning and integration	✓ Predictability: stability enables people to rebuild their lives and integrate
✗ Integration: weaker incentives to invest in language, work and community (both-ways)	✓ Integration: security enables sustained participation
✗ Human capital: skills and experience may be lost through prolonged uncertainty and potential departure	✓ Human capital: skills, experience and knowledge are retained and developed
✗ Institutional capacity: weakens institutional memory, expertise and crisis preparedness	✓ Institutional resilience: builds institutional memory, expertise and crisis capacity
✗ Short-term approach: recurring uncertainty creates administrative and social costs	✓ Durable approach: strengthens social and institutional resilience
✗ Limited structural impact: does not address longer-term demographic and labour-market challenges	✓ Long-term contribution: can help address structural demographic and labour-market gaps + GDP growth



- **Temporariness is a symptom of a deeper shift: migration is securitized... data-driven arguments are lost... emotions and politics of fear dominates...**

- Turn to temporariness is not accidental
- From migration and development nexus to national security
- From data-driven discussion to one driven by politics of fear, emotions and ideology
- The cost is threefold: migrants lose first; society loses its capacity to separate fact from manipulation; the state loses when serious governance is replaced by performance



- **Migration control VS migration management**

The question is not which migration channel should we restrict, but what mix of pathways best serves long-term economic, demographic, social and humanitarian interests



- Consequences of politics of fear



A deliberate act of provocation: How a biker protest and a pig's head at Kaunas Mosque on September 11 sparked national outrage



• **Thank you**

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