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Europe will need immigrants
Rainer Münz

In the 21st century, Germany and most other European countries are facing an aging and shrinking population.

Today some 82 million people are living in Germany. During the next 50 years - under the condition of zero-immigration - Germany's population would decrease by 24 million (total population 2050 without immigration: 58 million). And the share of people above age 60 would almost double from 23 percent (2000) to 40 percent (2050).

This development will most certainly not happen as immigration is most likely to continue. But even with a net immigration of 200.000 persons per year the number of people living in Germany would decrease by 12 million over the next 50 years (total population 2050 with a net gain of 200,000 immigrants per year: 70 million). And the share of people above age 60 would still go up from 23 percent (2000) to 36 percent (2050).

The demographic lesson is obvious: The process of population aging cannot be reversed through immigration. But immigration can reduce shortages of skilled and unskilled labor. And it can increase the number of people paying taxes and contributing to social security systems.

The aging and shrinking of our population is a major political and economic challenge. And it constitutes a new and marked difference between Europe and North America: In contrast to Europe the US and Canada will have population growth throughout the 21st century. These two countries will have a younger population. They will continue to attract immigrants in substantial numbers. And they will be competing with the EU member countries for high skilled and other qualified migrants.

From a German and European point of view the urgent, but also controversial questions are:

- To what degree should the process of aging and shrinking be balanced through the systematic recruitment of immigrants?
- What kind of immigrants (and how many of them) would a country like Germany want to attract?
- And who are the likely immigrants we are able to attract at the moment?
- How do we have to change conditions of admission, access to the labor market, and absorption in order to get the kind and number of immigrants that we will be looking for?
- How can we get the support of the electorate and the „native“ population for the necessary changes in the fields of migration and immigrant absorption?
- Should (and could) there be a balance or link between asylum policy and regular migration policy?

