



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT



Populations and Policies  
in the Baltic Sea States



## Healthy and active ageing – a privilege for everyone?

A new research project from the Max Planck Society brings those disadvantaged by demographic change to the foreground and takes a closer look at the countries bordering the Baltic Sea.

In recent years, leading representatives from science, politics and society have been promoting the idea that the ageing of society is a chance that should be used. Not only is the overall life expectancy continuing to increase, there is also the possibility to live longer in good health. Even more people will be able to work longer and be more active in their free time.

At the same time, it cannot be overlooked that in most European countries, there are increasing inequalities between individual population groups. A number of factors can decrease the chances of active and healthy ageing: Poor socioeconomic conditions, a low level of education, difficult family relations, early or permanent health impairments, a discontinuous work life or inadequate integration following migration. People who are exposed to these negative conditions are at a higher risk: For example, they start their working lives later or leave the labour market early, which then leads to care gaps in old-age insurance and a significantly lower life expectancy. Women and men are affected by these disadvantages to a varying degree.

Newer data shows that these population groups are growing. Inequality will thus be one of the most important socio-political questions for our society, in which key phrases like “old-age poverty” and “crisis in elderly care” are moving more into the public’s awareness. Therefore it is even more urgent to close big research gaps in this area.

With the international research project “*The Baltic Sea States Project*” (2016-2021), the Max Planck Society meets this scientific challenge and takes a closer look at the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Russian Federation and Sweden (Iceland and Norway will also be considered in this project) create a unique area for study: Not only did different socio-political traditions emerge in these countries, but politically dramatic developments have also taken place, most specifically the economic crises in the last decades and after 1989. More detailed information about the project’s research questions can be found [here](#).

The *Baltic Sea States Project* is led by the Directors Mikko Myrskylä and James W. Vaupel ([Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research](#), Rostock / Max-Planck Odense Center on the Biodemography of Aging), and Ulrich Becker and Axel Börsch-Supan ([Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy](#) / Munich Center for the Economics of Aging in Munich). The project’s coordination lies with the Secretariat of [Population Europe](#) in Berlin, the network of 30 leading demographic research institutes throughout Europe, hosted by the Max Planck Society.

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