

First results of the Russian census

On 28 March, the Russian Statistics Office (Rosstat) announced the preliminary results of last year's census. Since the previous census in 2002, the population of Russia has fallen from 145.2m to 142.9m people (a fall of 1.6%). Although the declining population trend has not been reversed, positive changes can be noted; the pace of this decline has slackened, and the negative birth rate has been reduced. It will be very difficult for the Russian government to maintain these trends, though.

The North Caucasus stands out against the background of other Russian regions; a rise in the population of over 6% was noted there (with Dagestan the highest, at 15.6%). This leads to the assumption that the proportion of Caucasians in the ethnic composition of the Russian Federation has risen markedly. However, data on this subject will only be published in 2012. The reference data which has just been announced shows that Russia remains a heavily urbanised country: 73.7% of the population lives in cities (73.3% in 2002). Women make up 53.7% of the population, which is linked to high premature male mortality. In the period from 2005 to 2010, the decline in population has slowed markedly, from 700,000 persons annually in the period 2000-2006 to almost zero in 2009. But in 2010, there was another fall in the population, of about 83,400 persons. The number of deaths continues to significantly exceed the number of births, although negative population growth has been cut from -5.9 per thousand in 2005 to -1.7 per thousand in 2010. This has also alleviated the effects of the positive migration balance. These positive changes were brought about by the economic prosperity in recent years and a system of incentives for potential mothers (including very high bonuses for the birth of second and subsequent children). Now, however, the generation of the post-war baby boom at the turn of the 1950s is gradually beginning to die out, and the people born in the period of the population decline of the 1990s are entering reproductive age, which will foster the deterioration of demographic indicators. <agaw>