



C4 2025 – WG 2 – Position paper
Sub-Theme

“Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region”

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Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at analysing the complex interplay between demographic dynamics and socio-political developments in the Western Mediterranean, a region comprising Southern European Countries (Spain, France, Italy, Portugal) and North African States (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya). It explores how diverging demographic trends—aging populations in Europe and youthful population booms in North Africa—are reshaping economic, migratory, and security landscapes across the region.

The study begins by examining key demographic indicators, highlighting Europe's demographic decline and North Africa's sustained growth. It underlines the aging crisis facing European nations, where declining birth rates and increasing longevity are shrinking the labour force and straining welfare systems. In contrast, North African countries, with high fertility and youth bulges, face challenges related to unemployment, migration pressure, and service provision. These disparities contribute to increased migratory flows from Africa to Europe, driven by both economic aspirations and socio-environmental distress.

Migration emerges as a central theme, linking demographic imbalances to workforce dynamics and geopolitical instability. While European economies benefit from migrant labour in sectors like agriculture and construction, integration remains limited and uneven. Meanwhile, North African countries experience significant brain drain but benefit from remittances. Migration routes through the Mediterranean, particularly the Western Mediterranean and Western African Atlantic routes, have become key corridors for both regular and irregular flows, prompting European states to reinforce border controls and externalize migration management.

The paper further assesses the socio-economic impacts of these demographic shifts, emphasizing rising dependency ratios, healthcare and pension burdens, urbanization challenges, and the growing need for technological adaptation and labour market reforms. Coastal urban centres are facing infrastructural strain and environmental degradation, while internal regional inequalities intensify across both shores.

Lastly, the study analyses how African demographic expansion and resource scarcity contribute to regional instability, fostering intercommunal conflicts, political unrest, and recruitment by terrorist groups. These issues have direct consequences for Western Mediterranean security, reinforcing the need for trans-Mediterranean cooperation. Initiatives such as the Union for the Mediterranean, the EU-Africa Partnership, and bilateral agreements are highlighted as essential to managing migration, promoting stability, and fostering inclusive development across the region.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN	1
a) Population growth and differences between countries	2
b) Analysis of factors such as birth rates, mortality and migration	2
3. SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN	5
a) Urbanization and concentration of coastal populations	6
b) Migration patterns and workforce dynamics	7
4. IMPACT OF AFRICAN DEMOGRAPHY ON REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN	7
a) Relationship between population growth, lack of resources and regional tensions	7
b) Cooperation strategy between Mediterranean countries	9
c) Migrations and population movements: impact on borders, humanitarian crises	10
5. CONCLUSIONS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK	11
BIBLIOGRAPHY	13
ANNEX A: Western Mediterranean Region	Annex -2
ANNEX B: Demographics indicators	Annex - 3
ANNEX C: Migration flows through Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya	Annex - 15



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

1. INTRODUCTION

The Western Mediterranean encompasses countries such as Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal on one side (northern shore of the Western Mediterranean), and Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya on the other (southern shore of the Western Mediterranean) (Annex A). This area is at the heart of a rapidly evolving geopolitical and demographic transformation. Stretching across Southern Europe and North Africa, this region is marked by deep contrasts and increasing interdependence. On one side, European countries like Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal are grappling with aging populations, shrinking workforces, and urban saturation. On the other, North African states such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya are experiencing rapid population growth, youth bulges, and significant migration pressures. These dynamics are not isolated phenomena—they intersect with economic development, migration patterns, and regional security in ways that are shaping the future of the Mediterranean basin.

Demographic trends—particularly population aging in Europe and youthful expansion in Africa—are reshaping labor markets, straining social welfare systems, and amplifying socio-economic inequalities. At the same time, urbanization, resource scarcity, and the impacts of climate change are compounding vulnerabilities, especially in North Africa, where environmental degradation and economic exclusion are driving mass migration and social unrest. These phenomena, in turn, create new security challenges, including the rise of organized crime, human trafficking, and the expansion of terrorist networks exploiting demographic and economic fragility.

Migration lies at the core of the region's interconnected challenges. Driven by a combination of demographic imbalances, conflict, poverty, and climate stress, migration flows are placing increasing pressure on both transit and destination countries. The management of these flows—often marked by border externalization and uneven European solidarity—raises fundamental questions about humanitarian responsibility, regional cooperation, and the future of integration policies.

This paper examines the profound implications of demographic trends for the socio-economic and security landscapes of the Western Mediterranean.

2. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The Western Mediterranean region exhibits a diverse demographic landscape shaped by varying birth rates, life expectancies, and migration patterns. While European nations grapple with aging populations and declining fertility rates, North African countries experience higher fertility rates and youthful populations.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

a) Population growth and differences between countries

In Annex B you can see the demographic indicator “*population growth*” of both, the northern and southern shores of Western Mediterranean, for selected periods or dates between 1950-2100. The figures show the demographic decline, on a global scale, in the Western Mediterranean, in consequence of low population growth in the Euro-Mediterranean countries that has also contributed greatly to a balance shift in favor of the southern shores.

The diversity of the pace of demographic transition explains this reversal of demographic hierarchies in the Mediterranean basin. Demographic transition is the shift from a situation of low demographic growth, where high mortality and a high birth rate offset each other, to a new situation of quasi-equilibrium in which fewer births just about offset the number of deaths, which is also very low given the size of the populations.

The graphs also show that Italy, Portugal and Spain have reached its demographic peak, between 2000 and 2025, which means that, from now on, the population decline. The European exception is France. However, no decline is expected on the southern shore before 2060.

Regarding the aging trend of the European population as of 2010, estimates show that the population over 65 years of age could surpass the productive segment (25 to 65 years of age) as of 2075. The evolution curve in France is not as steep as in the other three European countries analyzed, but the trend is similar.

On the contrary, in the countries on the southern shores of Western Mediterranean, estimates indicate that the difference between the population under and over 65 years of age will be even more pronounced than at present in favor of the Africans, which shows that the difference between the productive segment of the population on both continents will be very significant, with the social, economic and security consequences that will be presented later.

b) Analysis of factors such as birth rates, mortality and migration

Regarding the demographic indicator “*birth and death rate*” the figures show that Italy, Portugal and Spain (since 2000 and 2025), the average annual number of deaths is higher than the average annual number of births. The European exception is France that is expected to achieve this record by 2035. However, on the southern shore that record is not expected to be achieved before 2060 (Annex B).

A young age structure, fertility above the level guaranteeing the replacement of generations of reproductive age, and mortality, although earlier on average than in the countries of the northern shore, nevertheless allowing almost the entire female population to survive to reproductive age (Plan Bleu, 2021).



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

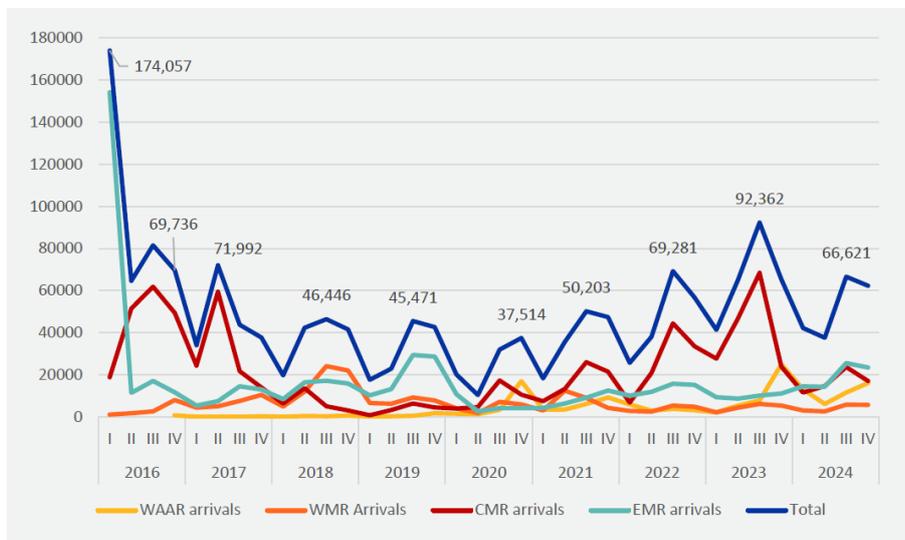
When analyzing the **migration factor**, and according with IOM (2025), since the early 2010s, migration routes from countries in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa regions through the Mediterranean Sea and to Europe have been used actively¹.

In order to understand migration trends in the Mediterranean region, the main routes of migrants and refugees travelling through the Mediterranean, Western African Atlantic, and Western Balkan to Europe are presented (IOM, 2025). Key countries in Europe on these routes include:

- Eastern Mediterranean route (EMR): Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece;
- Central Mediterranean route (CMR): Italy and Malta;
- Western Mediterranean route (WMR): Peninsular Coasts of Spain, as well as Balearic Islands, Ceuta and Melilla, also in Spain;
- Western African Atlantic route (WAAR): Canary Islands of Spain.

Thus, according these routes, the main data and trends are showed in the figure below, focusing on all four quarters of 2024, comparing them with the same periods in the previous years.

First arrivals to Europe, by route and by quarter, 2016-2024



Data source: International Organization for Migration (2025, p. 4)

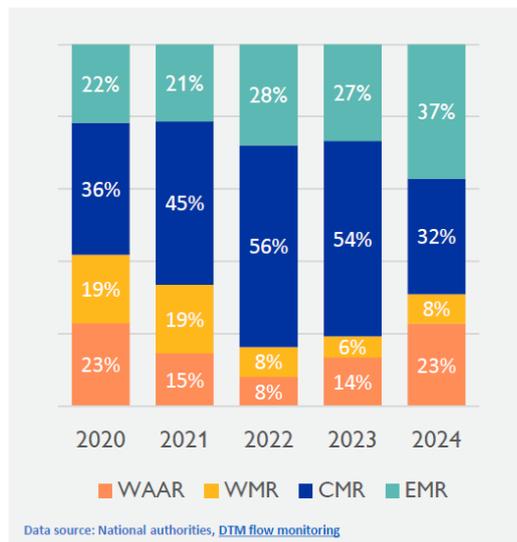
¹ In the wake of the large increase of mixed migration flows to Europe in 2015-2016, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) rolled out a Flow Monitoring system to monitor Mixed Migration Flows by land and by sea to Europe, as part of its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

Overall, in 2024, migration to Europe dropped by nearly a third, from 292,985 in 2023 to 208,679 in 2024. The EMR is the main route for the number of arrivals in 2024 (77,854, 37% of the total) (IOM, 2025).

Arrivals in Europe through the Mediterranean and WAAR, total by year, 2016-2024



Data source: International Organization for Migration (2025, p. 6)

The figure above shows the distribution of migrant and refugees' arrivals along the identified routes over the last 5 years. As presented, the WAAR and WMR routes have a lower flow. Yet, in 2024, the WAAR route showed a very significant growth, without indicating that this will be a new trend (IOM, 2025).

According with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD, 2024), in 2023, irregular migration to Europe through North African countries continued to rise, but the composition of migrants shifted significantly. Arrivals from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia declined due to strengthened cooperation with the EU and stricter local enforcement, while the number of sub-Saharan migrants surged, driven by instability in their home countries and growing hostility in North Africa. In Libya, despite political deadlock and humanitarian challenges such as Storm Daniel, economic opportunities improved in some areas, yet worsening conditions and expulsion policies pushed many migrants—originally intending to stay—to attempt the dangerous journey to Europe. With over 2,300 migrants missing in the Central Mediterranean and increased apprehensions by Libyan authorities, the ICMPD emphasizes that effective, humane migration management requires deeper cooperation among European, North African, and origin countries. Annex C shows in more detail the situation of migratory flows from Africa through the countries analyzed.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

3. SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

As highlighted in the precedent point, the Western Mediterranean region has witnessed profound demographic transformations over recent decades. These changes—characterized by declining fertility rates, an aging populace, rapid urbanization, and dynamic migration flows—are fundamentally reshaping socio-economic landscapes. This section examines the socio-economic ramifications of these developments, with particular attention to shifts in the labour market, pressures on pension and healthcare systems, urban development challenges, and issues of social integration (Ambrosetti, 2020).

A declining fertility rate in Europe diminishes the proportion of the working-age population, thereby introducing challenges in the labour market. For example, in countries such as Italy and Spain, projections indicate that the share of the labour force will continue to contract in the ensuing decades. This trend may contribute to a reduction in overall economic productivity, as a diminished workforce could impede growth unless productivity gains—achieved through automation, innovation, or enhanced labour participation by women and older workers—can offset the deficit. Moreover, a reduced labour pool may precipitate shortages in critical skill areas, including healthcare, technology, and manufacturing. Recent labour market analyses in Italy, for instance, highlight acute shortages in skilled labour which, in turn, adversely affect international competitiveness. In economies facing workforce contraction, investments aimed at augmenting productivity through technological innovation become imperative. Initiatives in automation, artificial intelligence, and digital transformation are being prioritized by both governmental bodies and private sectors in countries such as France and Portugal, with the objective of mitigating the impacts of a reduced labour force. Furthermore, measures to encourage higher female labour participation and to extend working lives via flexible retirement policies are considered essential components of an innovative, active labour market framework (Bloom & Sousa, 2010).

Moreover, an increased ratio of dependents (both children and the elderly) to working-age adults exerts considerable strain on public finances and social services. The implications include:

- *Pension and Social Security Stress:* Countries like France and Italy face mounting pressure on pension systems due to rising old-age dependency ratios, leading to more retirees per worker and greater fiscal burdens. France, for example, spends nearly 25% of public funds on pensions. Reforms in these countries include raising the retirement age, adjusting benefits, and encouraging private savings. Broader changes to tax and spending priorities—toward sectors like healthcare and infrastructure—are needed, along with efforts to maintain intergenerational fairness.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

- *Healthcare Expenditures:* Aging populations in countries like Portugal and Spain drive up public healthcare costs due to chronic illness and long-term care needs. These nations are expanding health infrastructure and adopting digital innovations like telemedicine to improve access. France, Italy, and Spain are integrating digital health tools, while North African countries such as Tunisia and Morocco focus on preventive care and promoting healthy lifestyles to reduce future healthcare demands.
- *Housing Market Dynamics:* In aging societies like Italy and Portugal, housing preferences are shifting toward smaller homes and retirement communities, increasing demand for elderly-friendly housing. Younger people migrating to cities deepens the urban-rural divide. Smart city projects in Spain, France, and Italy aim to improve urban infrastructure, while rural revitalization policies seek to balance regional development. In North Africa, Algeria and Morocco are investing in regional projects to boost non-coastal economies and ease urban pressures.

a) Urbanization and concentration of coastal populations

Urbanization is accelerating in the Western Mediterranean, with coastal cities like Barcelona, Marseille, Naples, and Lisbon experiencing significant population growth. This trend is largely driven by economic opportunities, a booming tourism industry, and migratory flows. At the same time, rural and inland regions are suffering from depopulation, further intensifying regional disparities.

The rapid expansion of coastal urban areas has led to substantial environmental degradation. In regions such as Liguria in Italy and Costa del Sol in Spain, urban sprawl has destroyed natural habitats and increased pollution. Densely populated coastal cities are placing immense pressure on essential infrastructure, including water supply, energy systems, and waste management. In North African cities like Algiers and Tunis, these pressures are exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and heightened vulnerability to climate change impacts, such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events.

To manage growing urban populations, cities like Madrid, Rome, and Casablanca require extensive investment in transportation, housing, sanitation, and public utilities. The rising demand for education, healthcare, and other public services can overwhelm local budgets and compromise service quality. In response, some cities are adopting smart city technologies to improve efficiency, as seen in Barcelona and Marseille's advanced transportation and energy management systems.

Urbanization has also deepened economic and social inequalities. Coastal cities attract more investment, while inland areas are left behind. Informal settlements and urban poverty are growing concerns in North Africa, while European cities face gentrification and rising housing costs. Despite these challenges, cities like Nice, Valencia, and Alexandria continue to thrive economically through tourism and innovation. Public-private partnerships are increasingly seen as vital tools for financing and managing sustainable urban development (Doignon, Blöss et al, 2023).



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

b) Migration patterns and workforce dynamics

Migration has long shaped the Western Mediterranean, evolving from traditional North African emigration to Europe into a complex dynamic involving labour migration, refugee flows, and brain drain/gain. Migrants often fill labour shortages in agriculture, construction, and services, particularly in Spain and Italy, bolstering economic activity and resilience through remittances and consumer demand. A diverse workforce can enhance innovation and productivity, though this depends on effective integration and education policies.

However, integration remains a challenge. Cultural differences can strain social cohesion, and migrants often face discrimination and confinement to low-wage or informal jobs despite legal protections in countries like Portugal and Spain. In response, European and North African governments are adopting varied strategies, including integration programs in Spain and Italy and diaspora engagement policies in North Africa.

North African countries—especially Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya—face significant brain drain, as skilled professionals emigrate. While this hinders domestic development, return migration offers opportunities for skill transfer and investment. Remittances also play a vital role in local economies, though overreliance can reduce local labour market participation.

Meanwhile, Europe's aging population contrasts with North Africa's youth-driven migration pressure. These demographic disparities contribute to political tensions and policy debates in countries like Spain, Italy, and France. Policymakers are now focusing on reforms that balance labour needs with social stability through integration, education, and inclusive employment strategies (World Bank, 2023).

4. IMPACT OF AFRICAN DEMOGRAPHY ON REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The demographic evolution in Africa has also major repercussions on regional security in the Western Mediterranean.

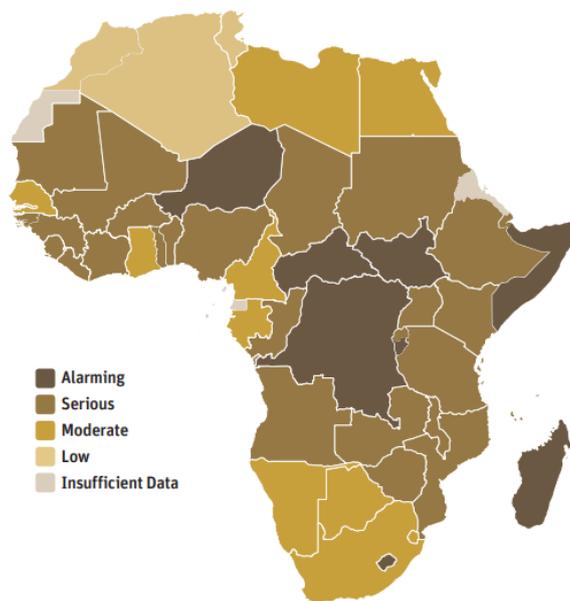
a) Relationship between population growth, lack of resources and regional tensions

Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, is marked by chronic political instability, fuelled by armed conflicts, humanitarian crises and ethnic tensions. The competition for natural resources, exacerbated by population growth, plays a crucial role in these conflicts. Such demographic expansion puts considerable pressure on often fragile African governments to provide basic services such as education, health and employment. The growing demand for natural resources, arable land and jobs can lead to intercommunal conflicts and political instability. It fuels tensions between communities and migration to urban areas and neighbouring countries.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

Food (un)security in Africa



Where people are going hungry in sub-Saharan Africa

Countries in which hunger is classified as *alarming* by the Global Hunger Index (GHI) are found almost exclusively in sub-Saharan Africa. The GHI score is based on statistics on undernutrition among the population as a whole and on three values for children under the age of five (stunting, wasting and mortality). Poor scores therefore point to the urgent need for action among young children. Undernutrition in childhood is particularly serious and has lifelong effects on health of a person. Food security strategies should consequently focus on children in particular.

Global Hunger Index 2023: Severity of hunger
(Source of data: Welthungerhilfe¹¹)

Data source: Berlin Institute for Population and Development (2024)

The inability to meet basic needs fuels social frustrations that can lead to popular uprisings or armed conflicts. The resulting chaos is often enough exploited and exacerbated by terrorists, especially branches of Al Qaida or the Islamic State.

Rapid population growth leads to an exponential increase in demand for natural resources (water, agricultural land) in a context where these resources are already limited. In North Africa, for example, water availability per capita has fallen by 75% since the 1950s. Climate change is exacerbating this situation: the desert is advancing in the Sahel at an alarming rate, further reducing arable land, leading to hunger.

These tensions over resources fuel intercommunal conflicts and often between groups following different lifestyles. In the Lake Chad basin, which has lost 90% of its surface area since the 1960s, the classical, even biblical clashes between farmers and nomadic herders are multiplying. These crises have a direct impact on the western Mediterranean because they leave local populations with the choice to starve or to migrate north. The influx of migrants in North Africa creates tensions with the receiving north African societies.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

Furthermore, the lack of economic and social opportunities for young people can fuel feelings of frustration and marginalization, creating fertile ground for recruitment by armed groups or extremist movements.

Youth unemployment is another key factor linked to African demographics. In North Africa, nearly 27% of young people are unemployed. This phenomenon is exacerbated by a high dependency ratio: each working person must support a large number of non-active individuals (children or elderly). This difficult economic situation, in combination with trafficking “offers” encourages emigration to Europe.

In the Sahel, a region where population growth is rapid (Niger has an average fertility rate of 6.8 children per woman) and political instability is chronic, unemployed youth become easy targets for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) or the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS). These organizations exploit social discontent to recruit and expand their influence. Especially for the young men it is often a choice between being bullied or participating in the bullying of others.

The conflicts in North Africa (Libya, Tunisia) have directly affected security in the Western Mediterranean. The Libyan civil war has transformed the country into a hub for arms being delivered to unstable regions with existing conflicts and human trafficking to Europe. In 2022, more than 90% of migrants arriving in Italy via the central Mediterranean had passed through Libya. These uncontrolled migratory flows are also linked to transnational criminal activities that further destabilize European borders.

b) Cooperation strategy between Mediterranean countries

Faced with these security challenges related to the evolution of African demographics, regional cooperation is essential to ensure security and stability in the Western Mediterranean. France, Italy, Spain and Senegal play a key role in promoting regional cooperation, particularly through development initiatives, counter-terrorism efforts and migration management.

To strengthen cooperation between Africa and Europe, several strategies have been put in place:

- ***Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)***

Created in 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) brings together 42 countries around common objectives related to peace, security and sustainable development. Among its initiatives are:

- The promotion of inclusive growth to reduce economic inequalities.
- Environmental projects aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change.
- Educational programs to improve the employability of young Africans.

- ***The EU-Africa Partnership***



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

The European Union, within the framework of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), has stepped up its efforts to stabilize its African neighbours by funding military and civilian operations in critical areas such as the Sahel or Libya. The European Peace Facility (EPF), with an annual budget of around €5 billion, notably supports African armed forces in their fight against terrorism. Moreover, the EU Commission invests, through the Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), around €400 million in different actions including Civilian Missions and election observation, focused on African countries.

- *The 5+5 Initiative*

Created in 1995, this 5+5 initiative is a forum for dialogue and regional cooperation bringing together ten countries from the western Mediterranean basin (5 European Union countries: France, Spain, Italy, Malta and Portugal; 5 Maghreb and Sahel countries: Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya), in order to strengthen regional security and stability.

- *Bilateral initiatives*

Countries such as France, Italy, Spain and Portugal have developed their own partnerships with African states:

- France plays a key role in the G5 Sahel with military operations such as Barkhane, aimed at combating terrorist groups in order to stabilize the region.
- Italy is working closely with Libya to limit migrant departures via the central Mediterranean.
- Spain is strengthening its relations with Morocco to secure its border enclaves (Ceuta and Melilla).
- Although focused on Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP: Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe) with the aim of accelerating their sustainable growth, Portugal also supports projects in countries such as Senegal through its Small Projects Fund (FPP) in various fields (health, education, environment and gender equality).

c) Migrations and population movements: impact on borders, humanitarian crises

The demographic evolution of Africa, combined with its political instability, directly contributes to migratory movements. According to UNHCR, more than 2 million people were displaced in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022 due to conflicts and persecution. These population movements lead to migrations to Europe via the Western Mediterranean. According to Frontex, around 86,000 migrants have attempted to enter Europe without a visa via this maritime route each year since 2018. In 2022, more than 100,000 migrants crossed the Mediterranean, of whom 42,000 migrants reached Spain by sea, a figure that has been steadily increasing for several years. These flows include:

- Political refugees fleeing conflicts in the Sahel or Libya.
- Economic migrants seeking a livelihood or simply a better life.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

These massive migrations are putting enormous pressure on European border infrastructures. Reception centres in Italy or Spain are often overcrowded, leading to social tensions in these countries. Countries deeper into Europe harden their policies and start to refuse taking migrants, exacerbating the situation for the frontline states.

Dangerous sea crossings regularly result in tragedies: more than 2,000 people die or go missing in the Mediterranean each year since 2014. These humanitarian crises also highlight the shortcomings in the European management of migration.

5. CONCLUSIONS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The Western Mediterranean is marked by a striking demographic divide. Northern countries—such as Spain, France, and Italy—are experiencing population decline and aging, while southern neighbors like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya are growing rapidly, with predominantly young populations. This demographic imbalance places distinct pressures on both regions. Europe grapples with shrinking workforces and stressed welfare systems, whereas North African states face high youth unemployment and mounting demands for urban infrastructure and social services.

Migration flows are shaped by this demographic contrast, alongside political instability, economic inequality, and climate pressures. The Western Mediterranean and Atlantic routes are increasingly traversed by migrants subjected to human trafficking and hazardous conditions. For Europe, migration is a demographic necessity but remains politically contentious. North African countries must manage both emigration and the growing presence of transit migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Urbanization in North Africa is outpacing infrastructure development, leading to deepening inequality and environmental strain. Meanwhile, European nations contend with uneven migrant integration and the loss of skilled labor from the South, reinforcing regional instability.

Security concerns in the region are complex and interrelated. Extremism, organized crime, maritime insecurity, and hybrid warfare all thrive in contexts of demographic stress and weak governance. Fragile states in the Sahel and North Africa provide fertile ground for extremist recruitment, with ripple effects reaching European shores. Maritime security operations, such as EU NAVFOR Med and Operation IRINI, aim to balance migration control with humanitarian responsibilities.

The digital sphere is also a growing security frontier. Extremists and criminal groups exploit online platforms to radicalize individuals, spread disinformation, and undermine institutions. Migrant communities, particularly those marginalized, are vulnerable to online manipulation, while Europe's critical infrastructure faces mounting cyber threats.

Climate change exacerbates the region's socio-economic and security issues. Rising temperatures, droughts, and sea-level rise intensify displacement, resource competition, and political unrest. Environmental instability is now recognized as a strategic concern, calling for integrated, long-term policy solutions.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

To address these challenges, structural reforms are crucial. Aging societies must adapt through pension reform, healthcare innovation, and more inclusive labor market policies, particularly enhancing female workforce participation and migrant integration.

Migration policy remains a politically sensitive area. European states must navigate the tension between border control, integration, and intra-EU solidarity. While Frontex leads maritime surveillance, bilateral deals with North African states aim to curb departures. The EU's €150 billion investment plan seeks to tackle the root causes of migration in origin countries by targeting poverty and food insecurity. Yet, migrant integration efforts remain fragmented and insufficient across Member States.

Innovation and education are vital for counteracting workforce decline. Investment in research and digital technologies, coupled with lifelong learning initiatives, can boost productivity and offset labor shortages. Urban and regional planning should focus on smart infrastructure and sustainable development to address urban sprawl and reduce rural disparities.

Demographic trends in the Western Mediterranean are reshaping labor markets, migration patterns, urban planning, and security frameworks. The European States of the Western Mediterranean must implement coordinated, forward-looking strategies that foster innovation, cooperation, and resilience. Only through integrated policy responses can demographic vulnerabilities be transformed into opportunities for shared prosperity and stability.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

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Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

ANNEX A: Western Mediterranean Region

Western Mediterranean (plus area of interest)



Data source: Adapted from GIS Geography (2025)



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

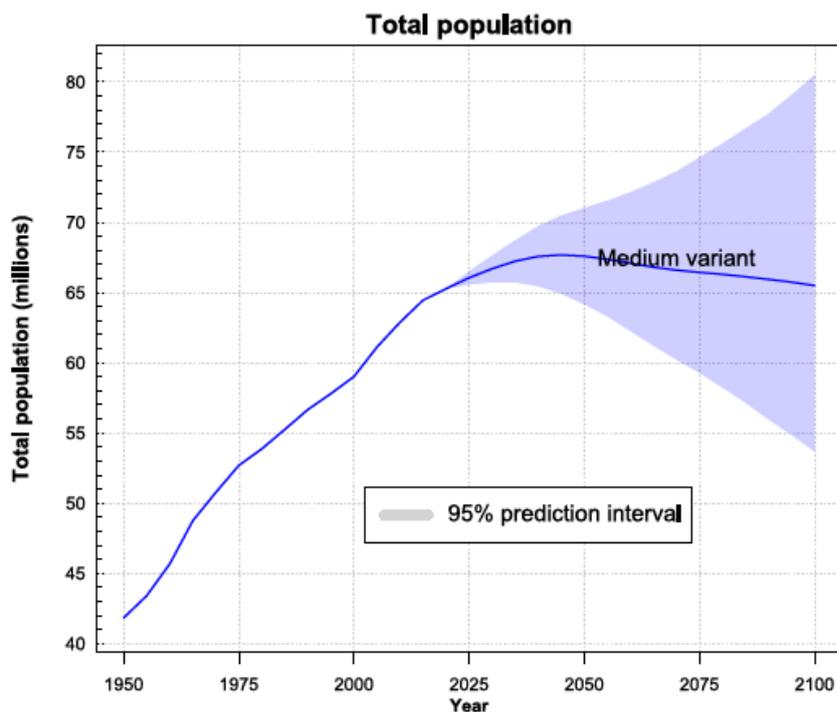
ANNEX B: Demographics indicators

In this annex the demographic indicators “*population growth*” and “*birth and death rate*” are presented for both the northern and southern shores of Western Mediterranean, during selected periods or dates between 1950-2100. In all tables and figures, values for 1950-2020 are estimates and those thereafter are projections (medium variant, and lower and upper 95 per cent prediction intervals for figures). All the graphics and figures below have been obtained from a UN study on World Population Prospects (United Nation, 2019).

A) DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR “POPULATION GROWTH”.

NORTHERN SHORE OF WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

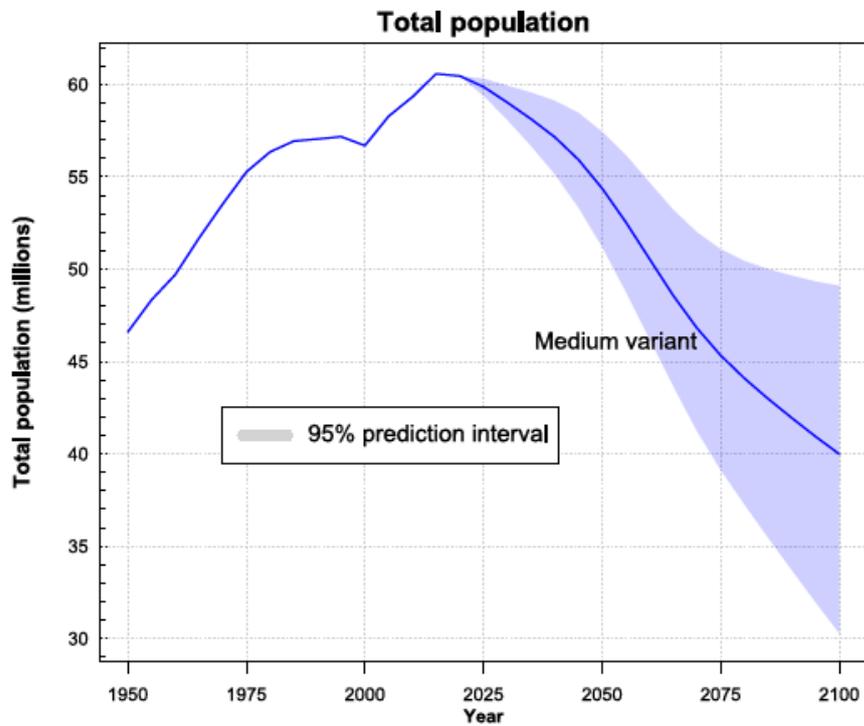
FRANCE



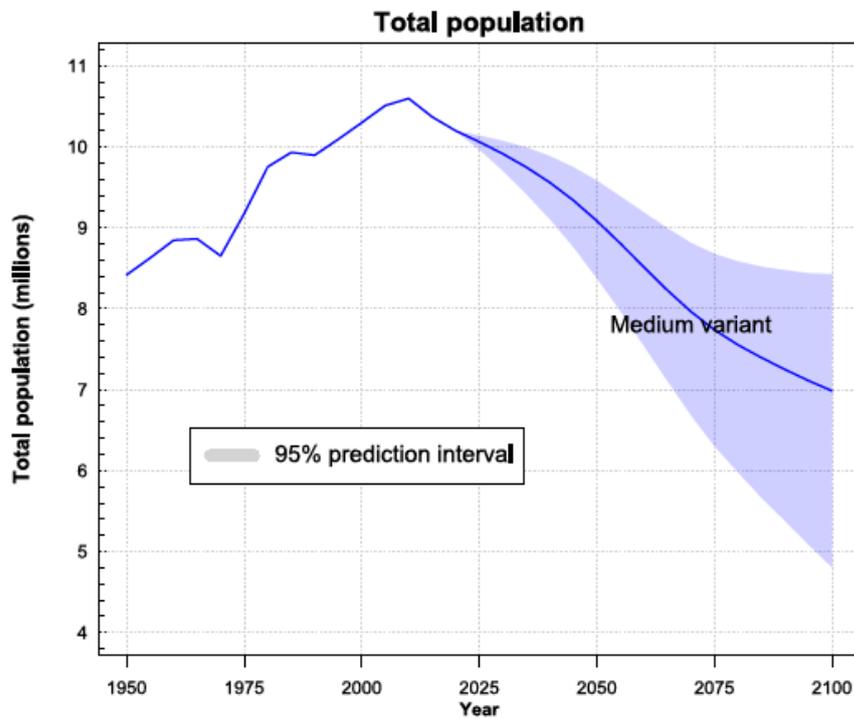


Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

ITALY



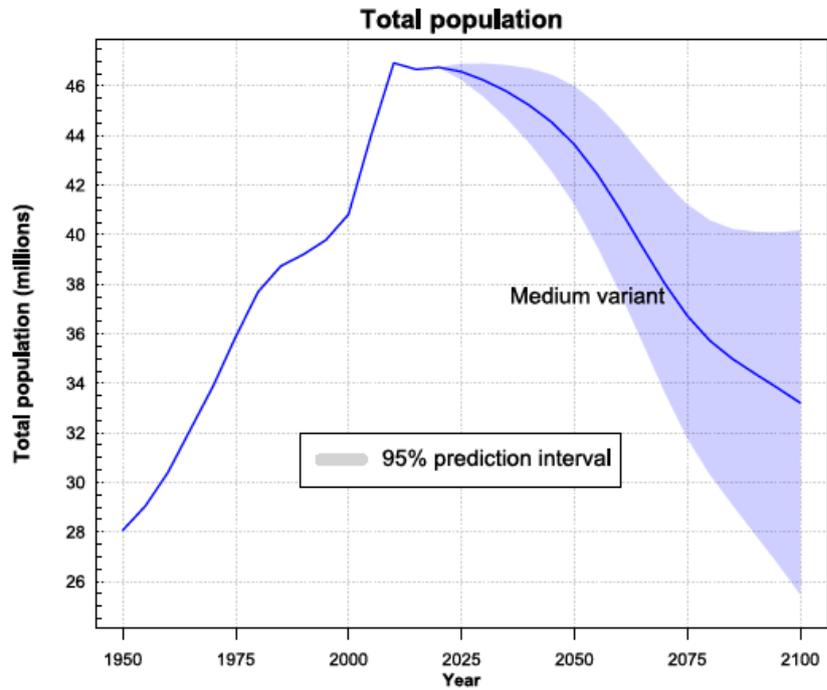
PORTUGAL





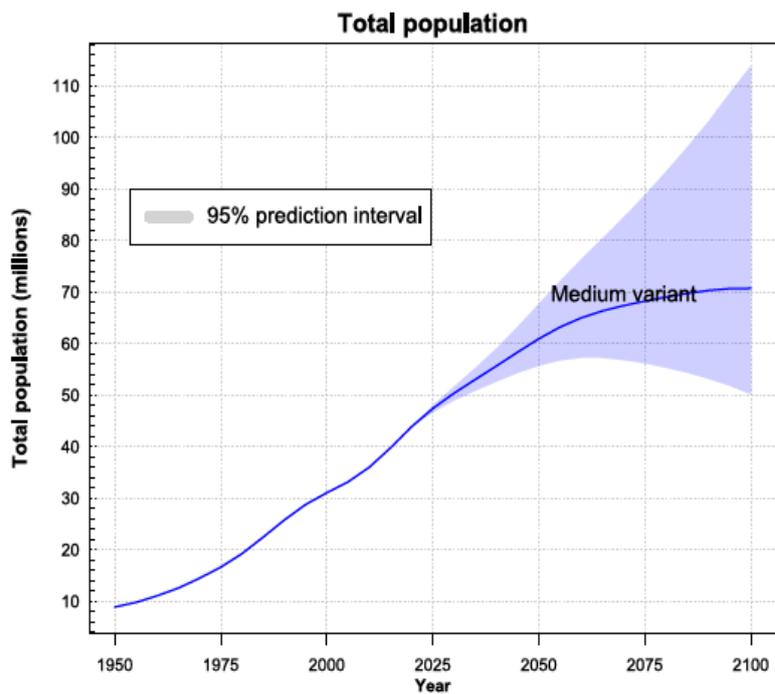
Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

SPAIN



SOUTHERN SHORE OF WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

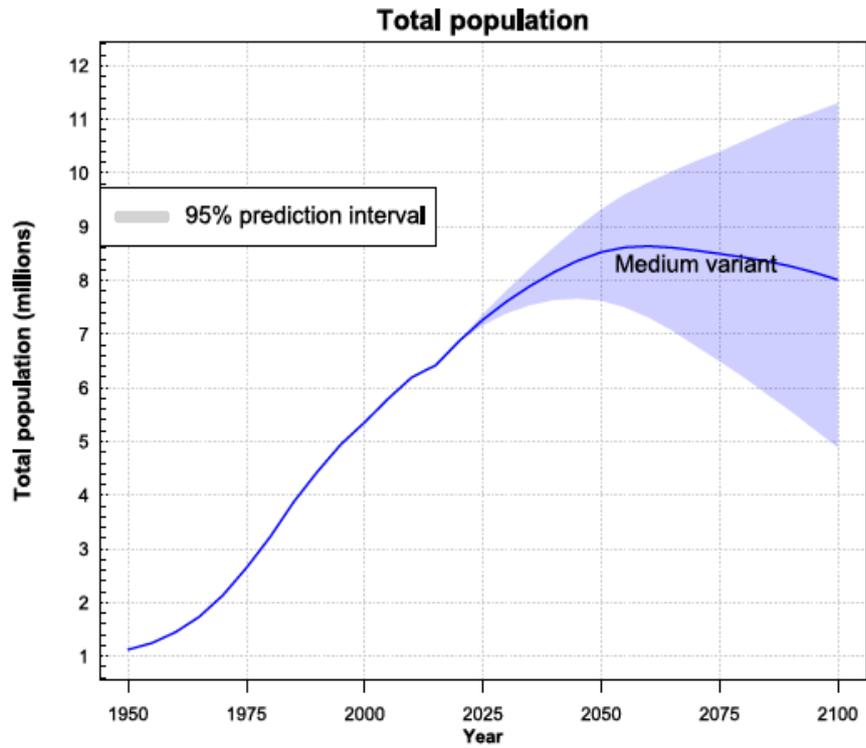
ALGERIA



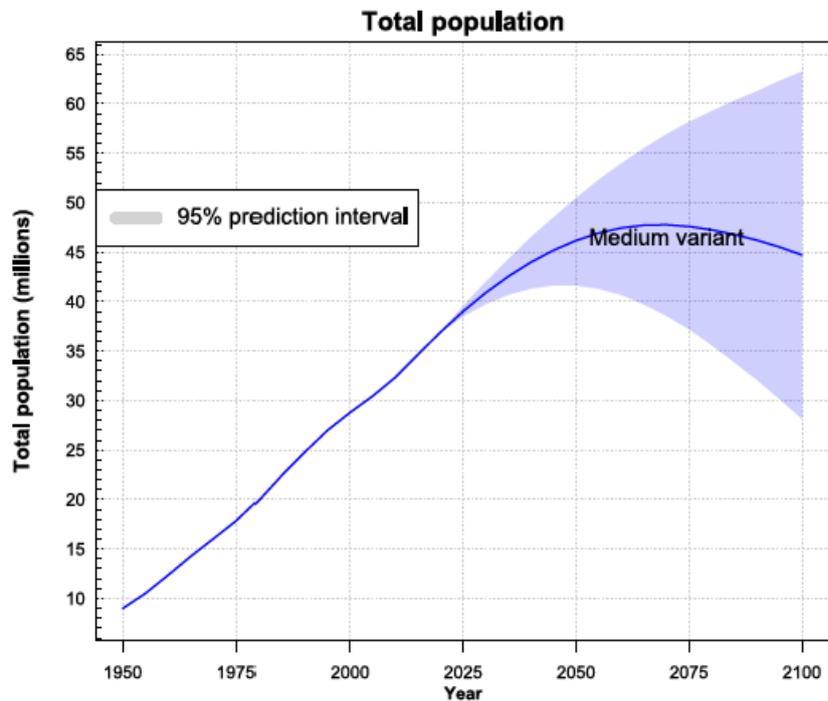


Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

LYBIA



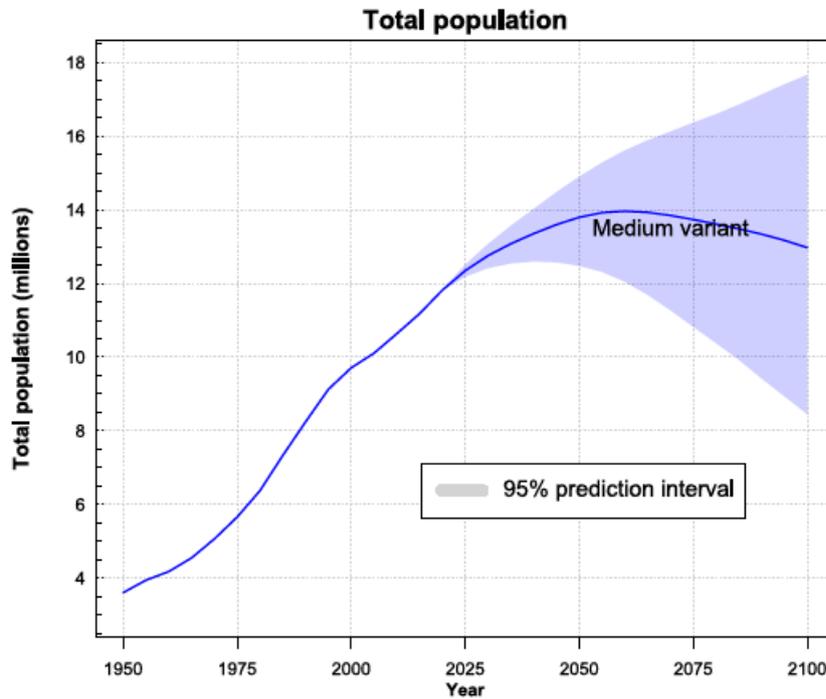
MOROCCO





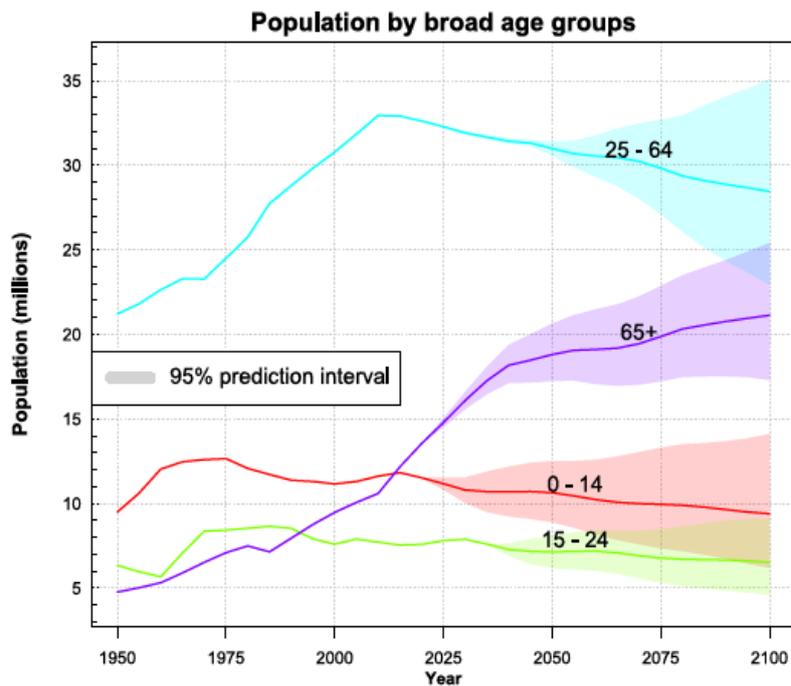
Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

TUNISIA



In the following graphs, the ageing trend of the European shore population since 2010 is presented. On the southern shore this trend is only estimated from 2050 onwards.

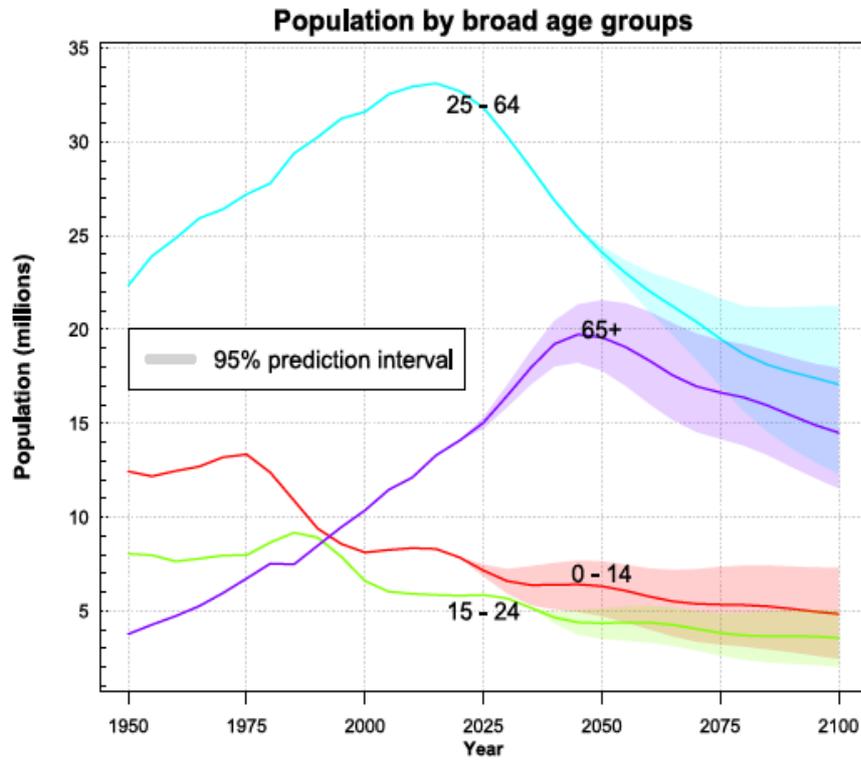
FRANCE



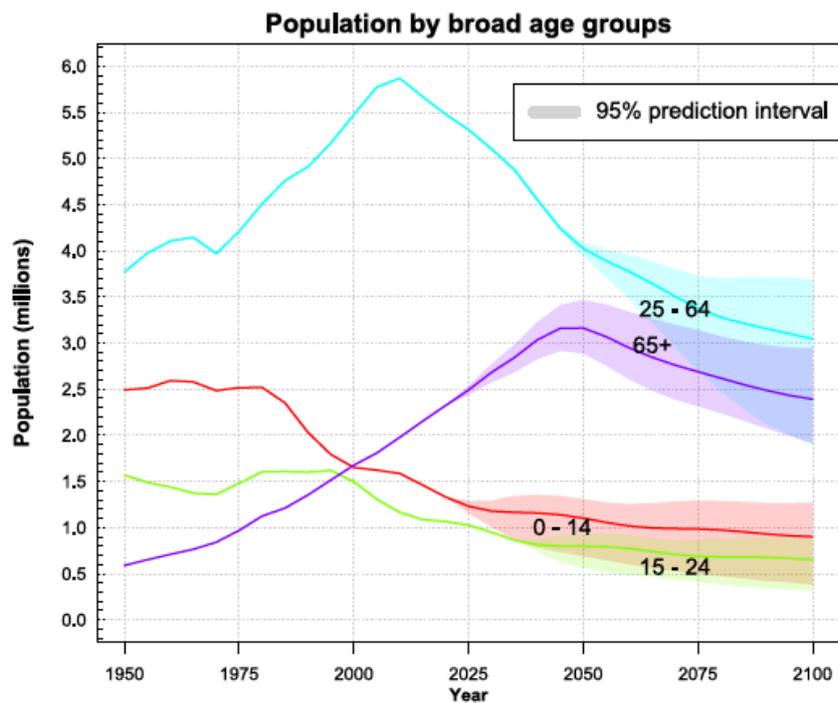


Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

ITALY



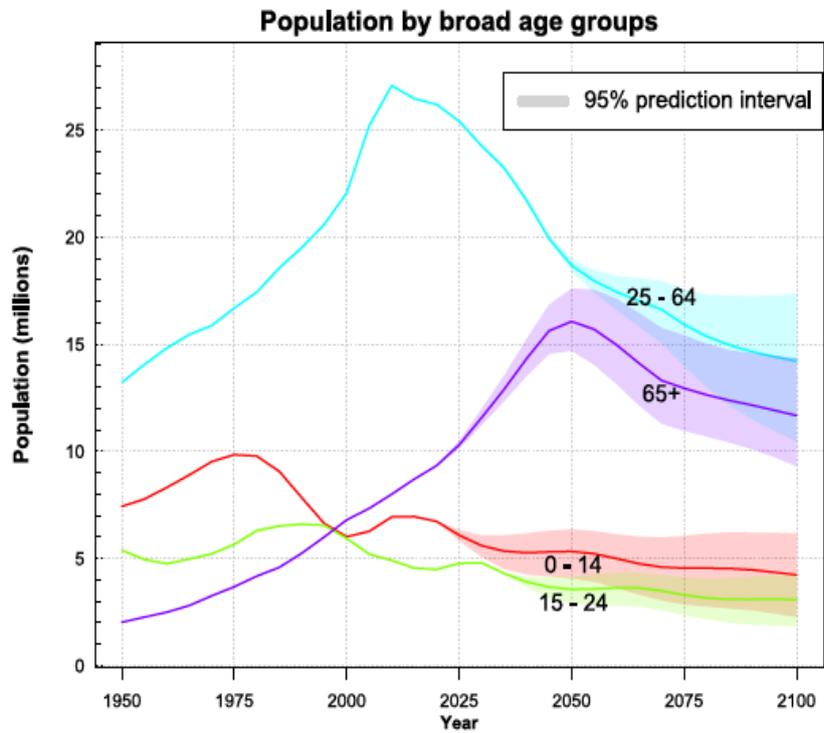
PORTUGAL



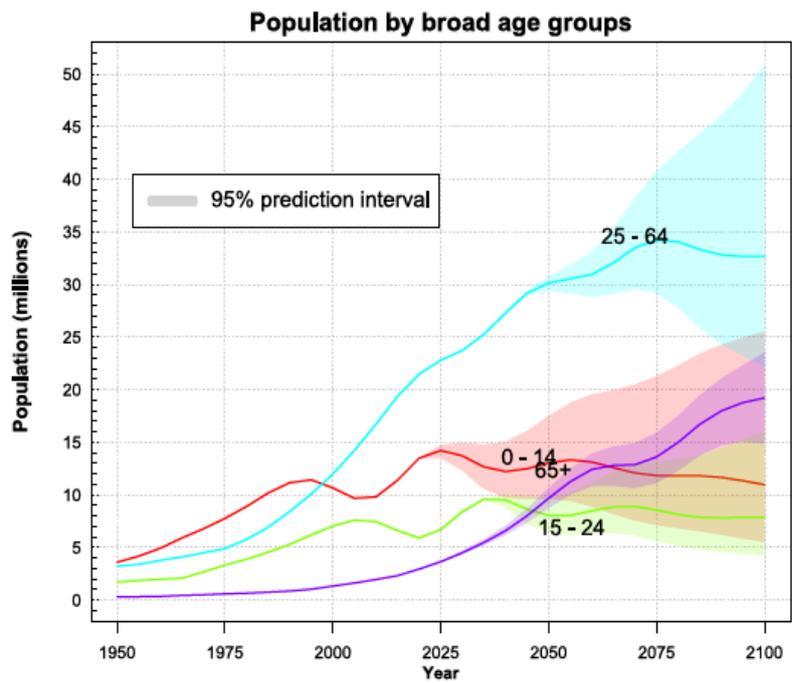


Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

SPAIN



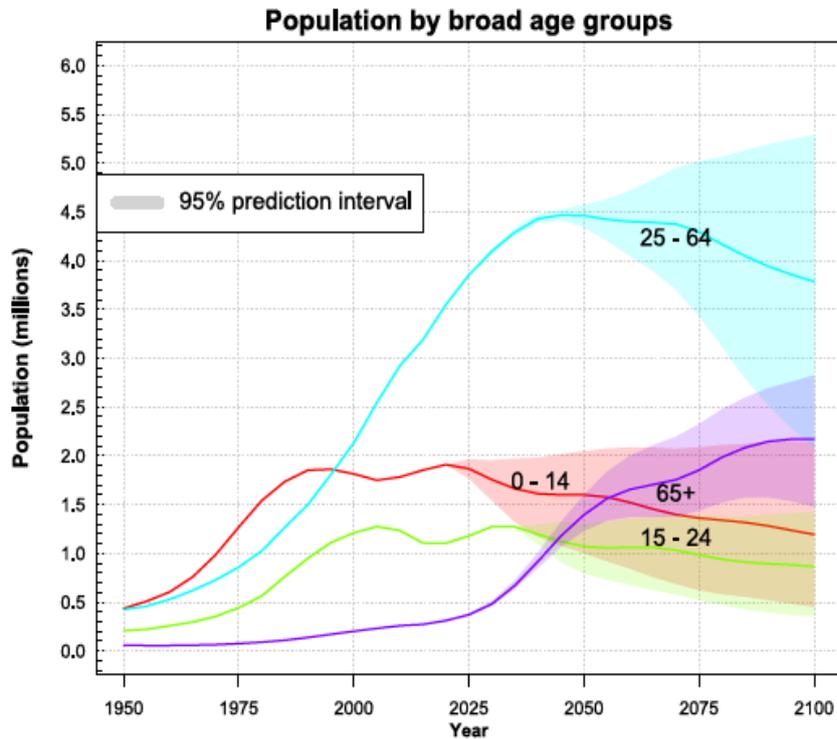
ALGERIA



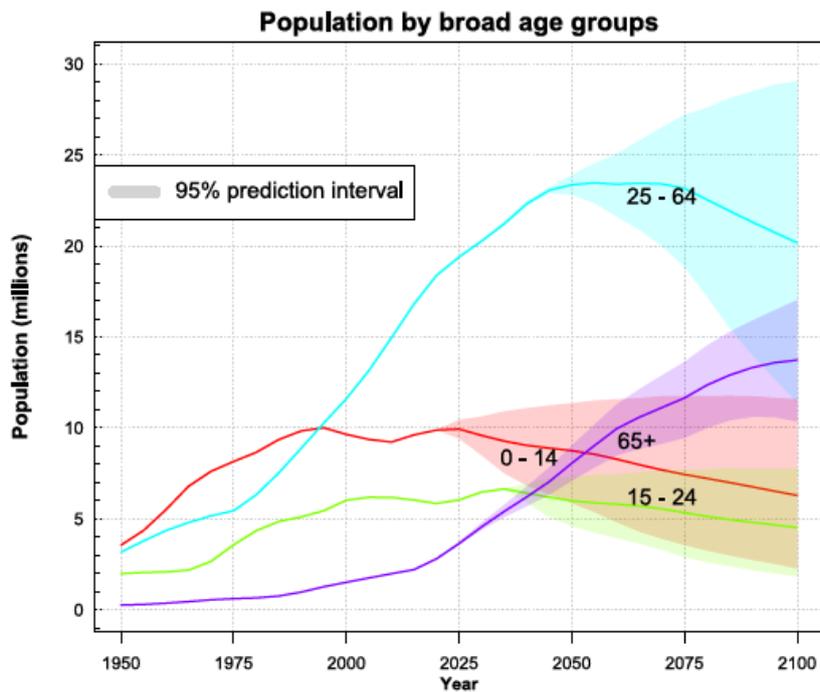


Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

LYBIA



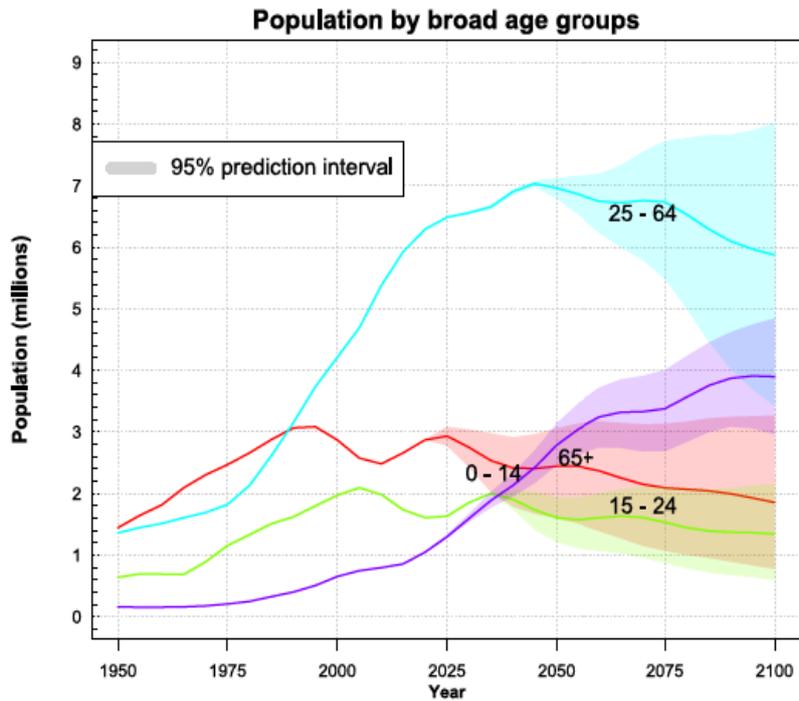
MOROCCO





Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

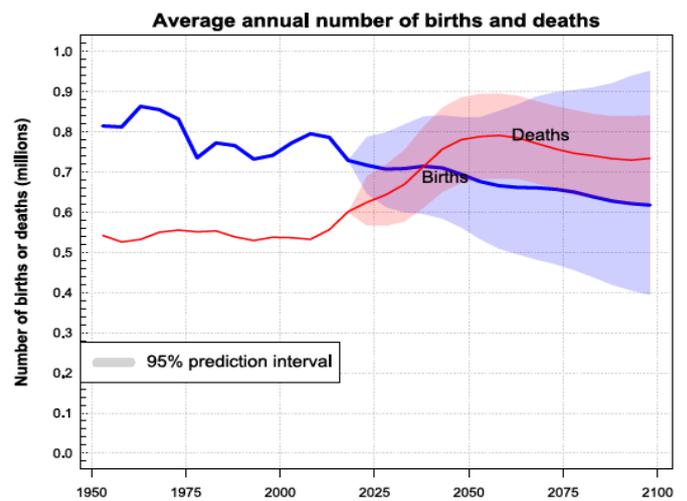
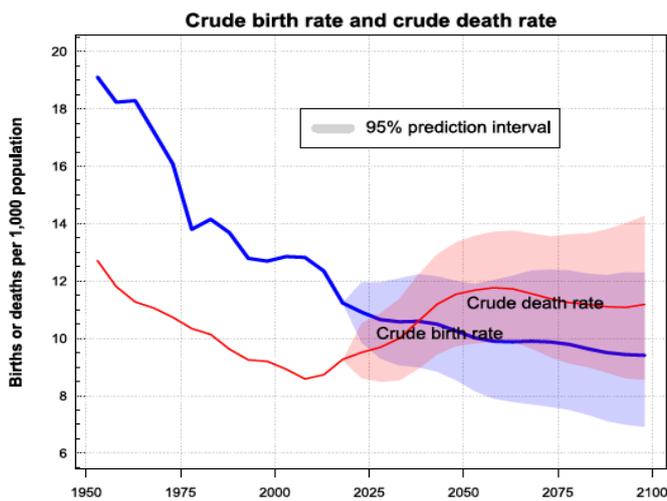
TUNISIA



B) DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR "BIRTH AND DEATH RATE"

NORTHERN SHORE OF WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

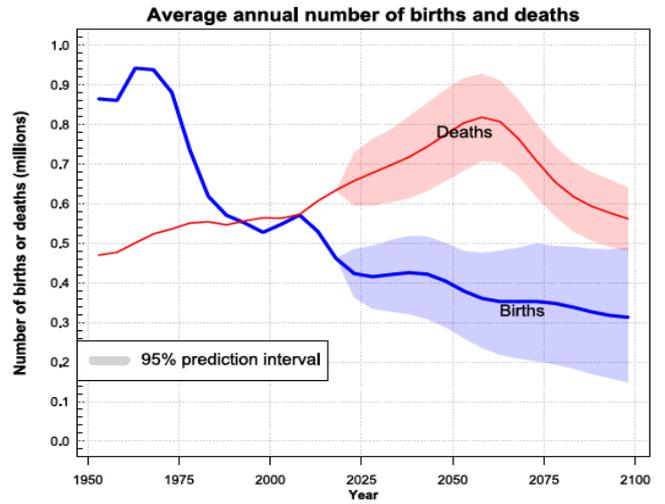
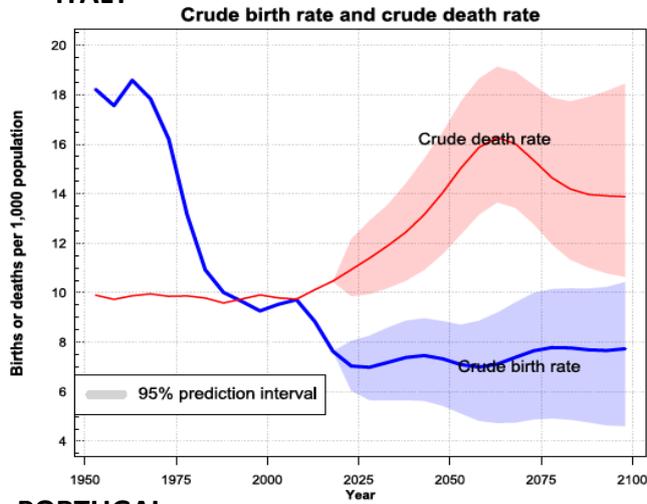
FRANCE



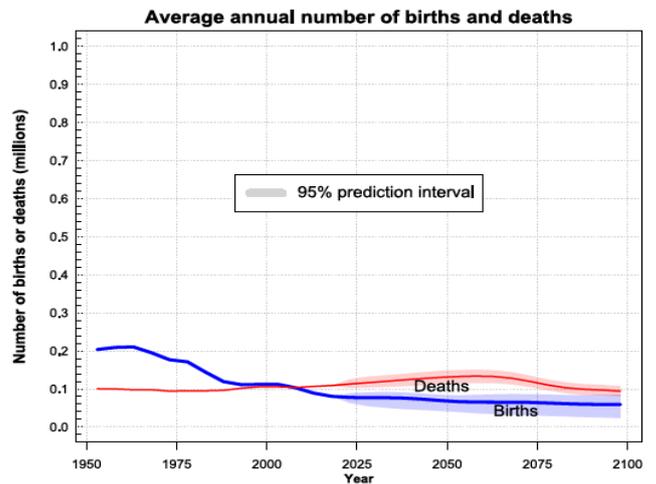
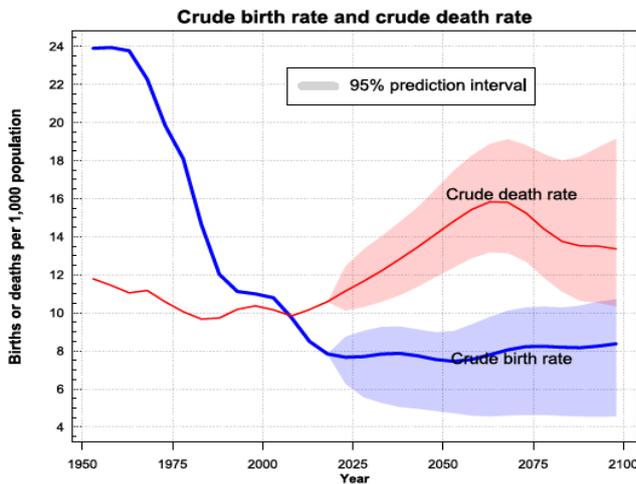


Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

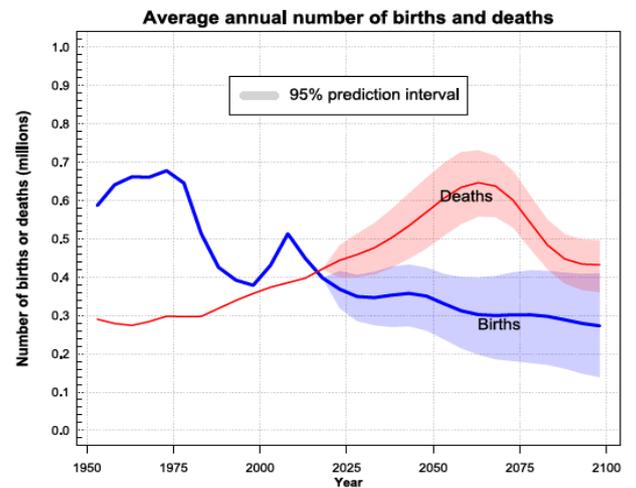
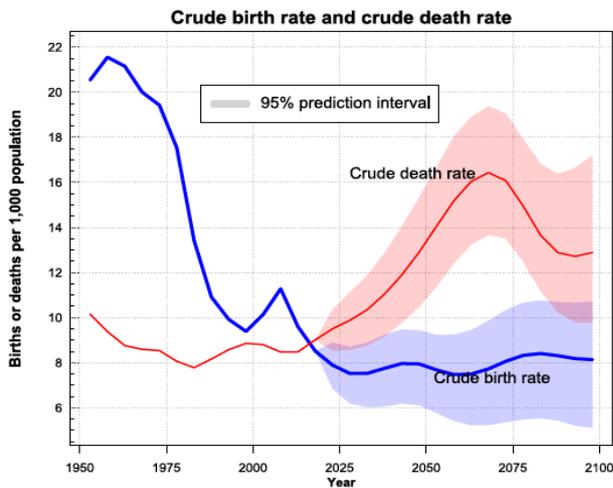
ITALY



PORTUGAL



SPAIN

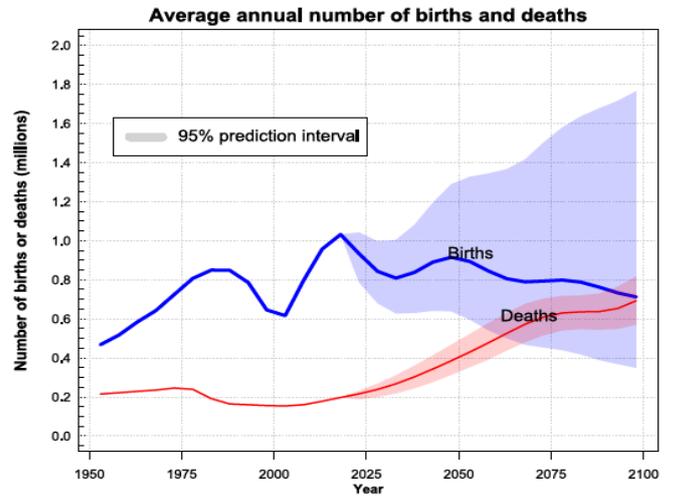
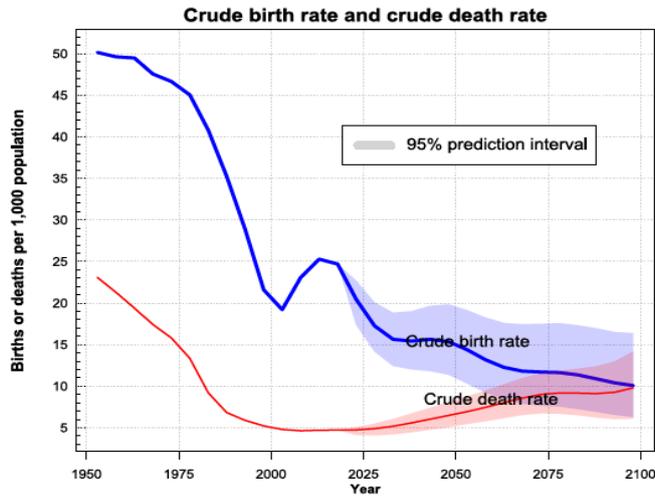




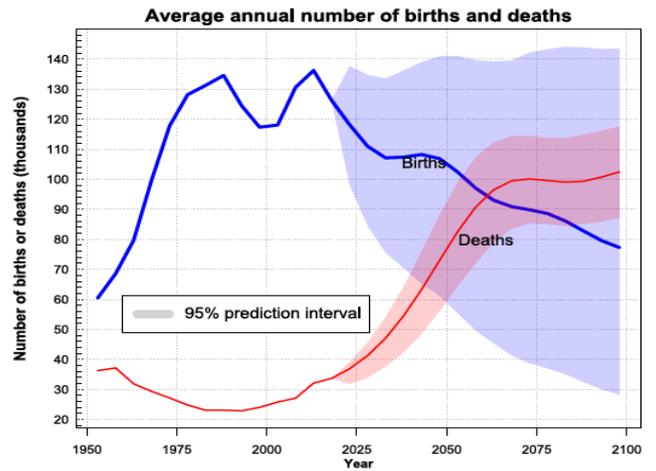
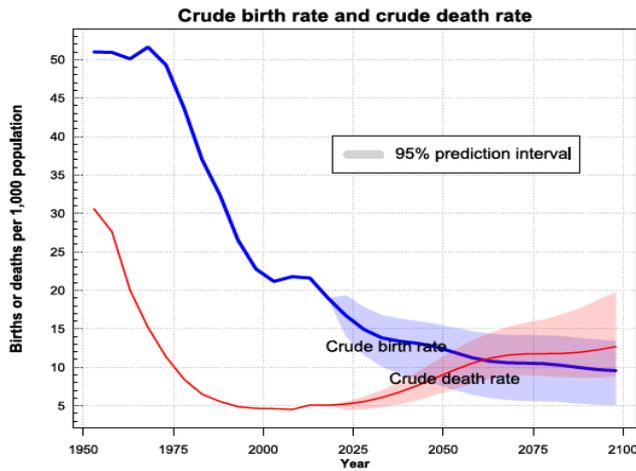
Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

SOUTHERN SHORE OF WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

ALGERIA



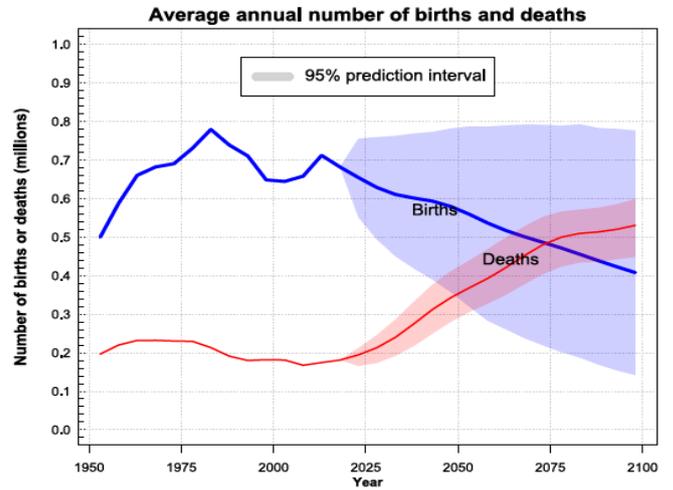
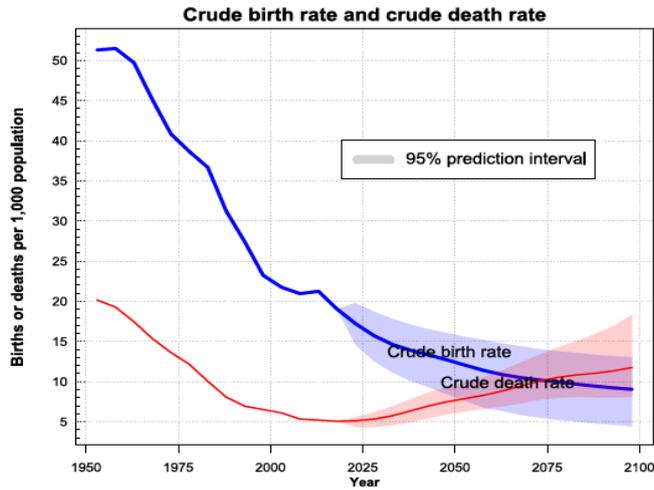
LIBYA



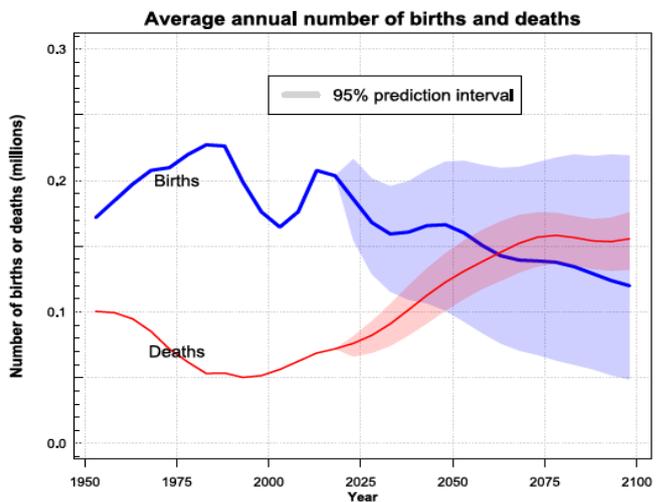
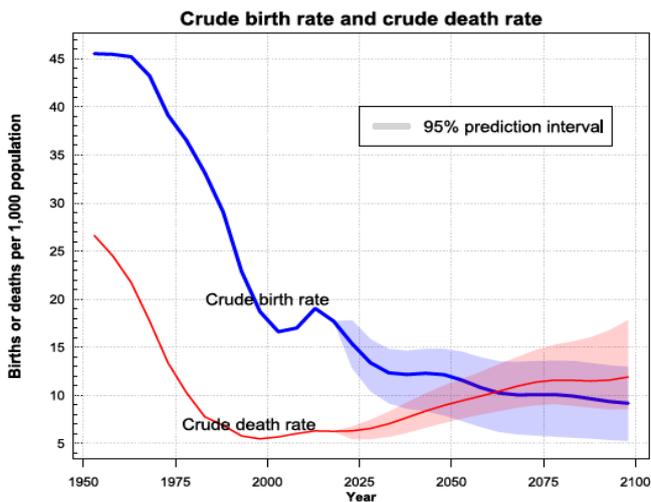


Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

MOROCCO



TUNISIA





Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

ANNEX C: Migration flows through Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya

In 2023, irregular migration to Europe through North African countries continued to rise, but the composition of migrants shifted significantly. Arrivals from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia declined due to strengthened cooperation with the EU and stricter local enforcement, while the number of sub-Saharan migrants surged, driven by instability in their home countries and growing hostility in North Africa (ICMPD (2024), see figure below).

Countries or areas of origin: arrivals to Greece, Italy and Spain
January – December 2024



Data source: International Organization for Migration (2025, p. 8)

Analyzing the matter in detail, we can distinguish some differences between the flows coming from Libya and those coming from the southwestern flank.

- *Migration flows through Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia*

According to ICMPD (2024), in 2023, the trend of increasing crossings continued along the main migration routes that link the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. What changed, however, was the composition of irregular arrivals in terms of main nationalities. Irregular crossings involving nationals from North African countries decreased significantly. Detected arrivals of Algerian nationals along the Central Mediterranean Route decreased by 50.9%, Moroccan nationals by 48.9%, and of Tunisian nationals by 13.4%. This development is a result of shifts to other migration routes but also of enhanced cooperation between North African countries and the EU on migration.



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

The increase of detections along the Central Mediterranean Route can largely be attributed to migrants from sub-Saharan countries of origin. Ranked in order of total numbers, detections related to nationals from Guinea grew by 452.1%, from Côte d'Ivoire by 305.3%, from Burkina Faso by 3,708.2%, from Mali by 568.0%, from Cameroon by 315.6%, and from Sudan by 373.0%. On the one hand, the steep increase in arrivals is attributed to the growing political and economic instability in countries of origin and the resulting lack of prospects, particularly for the young population. On the other hand, it is also a consequence of the increasingly restrictive stance of North African States towards migrant populations on their territory. A tense economic situation combined with emerging negative public narratives towards immigration led to a significant increase in the authorities' enforcement of anti-irregular migration measures. In order to escape the increasing social and political pressure, many migrants decided to leave for Europe instead (ICMPD, 2024).

North African countries are likely to continue pursuing a stronger focus on return to countries of origin for populations residing irregularly on their territories. Consequently, it is quite likely that many migrants will try to make the dangerous and expensive journey across the Mediterranean to reach Europe. It could therefore well be the case that, despite closer cooperation on migration issues increase in 2024 by way of secondary flows. Again, European and North African partners are called to devise mutually beneficial solutions addressing the return and secondary movements of irregular migrants (ICMPD, 2024).

- *Migration flows through Libya*

As per ICMPD (2024), traditionally, Libya is host to a large migrant population, composed of refugees, labour migrants and undocumented groups, as well as being an important point of departure for refugees and irregular migrants headed towards the EU along the Central Mediterranean Route. Following a trend already observed in 2022, this route gained further importance in 2023, with a 61% increase in irregular arrivals in the EU departing from Libya and Tunisia.

Migration environment and developments regarding departures towards Europe are closely linked to the political situation in the country. In 2023, two years after the indefinite postponement of the December 2021 Libyan national elections, a political impasse persisted between the UN-recognized, Government of National Unity (GNU) in Tripoli and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS) aligned with the Libyan National Army (LNA), a political stalemate that continues to exacerbate political and economic instability. The 2020 ceasefire generally holds, but clashes and violent incidents confirm persisting tensions. The humanitarian situation was further aggravated by the impact of Storm Daniel, causing significant casualties and displacing over 43,000 people (ICMPD, 2024).

The Libyan economy experienced a 14% growth in 2023, as reported by the World Bank, marking the highest increase in the Middle East and North Africa region. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) field reports indicate a rise in economic opportunities for migrants in certain municipalities. This increase is particularly notable in areas with relatively



Demography and its repercussions on the socio-economic and security dimensions in the Western Mediterranean region

stable security conditions and improved reliability of the electricity network. As per IOM, migrant unemployment rate remains steady at 16%, consistent with pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels of 17%. It should be noted that the fallout of Storm Daniel and a challenging economic situation disproportionately affected the more than 700,000 migrants in the country (ICMPD, 2024).

A large proportion of the crossings from Libya and other Southern Mediterranean countries did not involve migrants in transit, but people who had originally wanted to stay and work in Libya and other Southern Mediterranean countries, but who felt compelled to leave for Europe due to the economic situation and the expulsion policies geared at irregular migrants. Last year, Libyan authorities reported 11,465 people apprehended and returned, marking a significant increase compared to 2022 (ICMPD, 2024).

To conclude, Libya will most probably remain a key partner in 2024, despite the criticism of the Libyan authorities' actions regarding Human Rights violations and alleged illegal pullbacks of boats heading to Europe. A sustainable reduction in irregular crossings and prevention of deaths across the Mediterranean – IOM recorded 2,346 missing migrants in the Central Mediterranean in 2023 – is unlikely to be achieved through control measures alone. To this end, European countries, Libya and countries of origin will have to find mutually beneficial solutions that consider the priorities of both parties, and the needs and interests of migrants (ICMPD, 2024).