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“The impact of system transformation on demographic processes
in selected countries of Eastern Europe”

The title of the study indicates the complexity of the analysed problem. This paper is planned to be presented at the European Demographic Conference. A demographic perspective requires research to cover longer periods, as certain trends and patterns in demographic processes can only be observed in a longer time perspective. The title also features Eastern Europe as a spatial concept. That part of the continent, by the decision of the superpowers after the Second World War, was under the influence of the, now derelict, political Marxist doctrine. It should be noted, however, that this was what granted that part of Europe certain historical coherence – for nearly half a century. Under European conditions, several decades without wars is not easy to come across in the continent’s history. That period of relative peace should be divided into certain phases characterised by the increased influence of certain factors. The post-war period was, from a demographic point of view, mainly the time of demographic compensation. All European countries, and Eastern Europe in particular, were rebuilding their demographic potential. In Poland (the author’s home country) at the turn of 1960’s and 70’s, there were the first obvious attempts at dismantling, or at the very least civilizing, of the prevailing totalitarian Communist regime. And, as is currently evident, those attempts have succeeded, as already three decades have passed since Poland (and later in other Eastern European countries) started undergoing a comprehensive system transformation in 1989. This introduction, however lengthy, highlights the background of the demographic processes. Looking at discussing those processes during the transformation period, to reveal their unique nature (providing it exists), one needs to compare not only the processes that took place over the so-called transformation period, but also in earlier years. The above observations allow to formulate the objective of this study, which is to indicate to what extent the demographic processes in Eastern European countries have been shaped by the circumstances of the political transformation.