

Title

Demographic change and school infrastructure: enrollments and school closures in Italy and Estonia

Abstract

Population aging is reshaping demand for social infrastructure in high-income countries, but implications for the sustainability of school systems remain underexplored. The talk provides evidence on two contexts, Italy and Estonia. Italy, is one of the world's most rapidly ageing societies, that has faced decades of low fertility and a shrinking cohort of school-aged children. Similarly, Estonia has faced a prolonged period of low fertility, especially after regaining independence. The studies leverage register data on school enrollments and school counts provided by the Italian Institute for Statistics from 1946 to 2024 and the Estonian Ministry of Education from 2005 to 2024. We combine such data with age specific population projections provided by Eurostat to estimate school demand until 2100. The findings show a decrease in enrollments in both countries that is mirrored by a decrease in the number of schools. School count projections based on the expected stock of school-aged individuals, suggest further school closures, but that would vary depending on the population projection scenario. Overall, the analysis shows how demand for schooling is shifting and highlights the policy challenge of maintaining equitable access, especially in communities at risk of losing local schools.

Bio: Risto Conte Keivabu is a postdoc in the Laboratory of Digital and Computational Demography of Emilio Zagheni at the Max Planck Institute of Demographic Research in Rostock (Germany). His research interests are in climate change, socio-demographic inequalities, health, population change, social infrastructures and demography. More precisely, in his work he tries to understand how climate change, environmental exposures and population dynamics affect health and social infrastructures.