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Preface

In Europe there is currently an increasing public awareness of the importance that demographic trends have in reshaping our societies. Concerns about possible negative consequences of population aging seem to be the major force behind this new interest in demographic research. Demographers have been pointing out the fundamental change in the age composition of European populations and its potentially serious implications for social security schemes for more than two decades but it is only now that the expected retirement of the baby boom generation has come close enough in time to appear on the radar screen of social security planners and political decision makers to be considered a real challenge and not just an academic exercise.

In Austria this new development has motivated the Academy of Sciences to greatly expand and internationalize its Institute of Demography which has been in existence for 25 years. The main idea behind this new effort is the understanding that today demographic analysis only makes sense if it aspires to be at the cutting edge of the international scientific debate. Taken seriously, this aspiration also challenges the traditional organization of demographic research in Europe which still functions largely along national lines although neither demographic knowledge nor demographic trends tend to stop at national boundaries. As a consequence this institute, now known as the Vienna Institute of Demography, sees itself as a European center of excellence in demography, based in Vienna and funded by Austria but not a traditional national institute. Its research is structured into four areas: comparative European demography, population dynamics and forecasting, population economics and analysis of demographic trends in Austria.

The Vienna Institute of Demography will also have several new series of scientific publications including the “European Demographic Research Papers” which only carry contributions with a pan-European or cross-national comparative focus and a less formal working paper series in addition to the ongoing series of books and reports. The “Vienna Yearbook of Population Research”, which you are holding in your hands, is a new kind of publication designed to primarily serve the increasing demographic research community in the Vienna area (including demographers working at IIASA) in terms of bringing their scientific work to the attention of the international research community. To achieve this, the Yearbook will combine original new articles with reprints of key articles in leading international journals. Both categories of contributions are subject to strict international anonymous refereeing. In this first issue of the Yearbook, reprints outnumber the new contributions, but we expect this ratio to change over time. It is a bit of an experiment, since to my knowledge this is the first publication series of this type in the field of demography. Please feel free to communicate your reactions to us (populationyearbook@oeaw.ac.at).

Wolfgang Lutz
Director, Vienna Institute of Demography

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Reprints

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