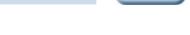
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Will Population Ageing Necessarily Lead to an Increase in the Number of Persons with Disabilities? Alternative Scenarios for the European Union

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Abstract

There is a widespread expectation that the combination of significant population ageing in Europe over the coming decades, along with the fact that the elderly are more likely to have disabilities, will result in a large increase in the total prevalence of disability and the need for significantly expanded care facilities for the elderly. Recent evidence from the U.S., however, suggests that disability rates of the elderly are declining and that further declines could be expected in the future. In this paper we present alternative demographic scenarios for the European Union (EU-15) that distinguish between people with and without disabilities by age and sex. The results show that under the assumption of a constant age-specific disability profile, we indeed expect a significant increase in the total number of people with disabilities due to population ageing. However, if the age profile of disability is shifted to the right (i.e., to higher ages) by one, two, or three years per decade, the scenarios show a much lower or no increase in the number of persons with disabilities in Europe over the coming decades.

Full article