

## Press release

### Representatives from 16 countries join the debates at the Berlin Demography Forum

Berlin, December 18, 2012 - At the second Berlin Demography Forum, which will take place in Berlin on January 9 and 10, 2013, the debate about demographic change will move from a purely German to an international level. Of the 40 speakers at the Forum, almost half will be coming from abroad. In this way, the Berlin Demography Forum responds to the international relevance of the topic, creates a platform for an exchange of best practices and distinguishes itself from other approaches to the topic.

Demographic change is not only a challenge for Germany. Europe as a whole and East Asia (China, Japan, Korea) are similarly affected by this development. A combination of low birth rates and increasing life expectancy means that the population in Europe and in East Asia is aging rapidly and will decline in future.

To counteract this development an international exchange of ideas is key and Germany, one of the countries most strongly affected in an international comparison, will be able to benefit especially.

This is why the Berlin Demography Forum places a strong emphasis on the international nature of its participants.

For instance, **Yves Leterme**, Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD, will give a keynote speech alongside the German Minister for Family Affairs, **Dr. Kristina Schröder**.

Participants of the individual panels include the Polish Minister for Labor and Social Affairs, **Wladyslaw Koziniak-Kamysz**, the French Minister for Health and Family Affairs, **Dominique Bertinotti**, the Italian Minister for Labor and Social Affairs, **Prof. Elsa Fornero**, **Arne Carlsen**, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, and **Prof. Weiping Jiang**, PhD, from the Population Development and Research Center in Beijing.

Two of the 'young experts', who will discuss the challenges of demographic change with representatives of the 80+ generation as part of the 'young expert panel', also have an international background.

The statements of some of the participants show just how controversial the debate surrounding demographic change really is:

**Dr. Gerhard K. Heilig**, Chief of the United Nations Population Division, states: "My personal goal in 2013 for a demographic initiative is to raise awareness that fertility levels in much of Europe are unsustainably low for many decades and cannot be compensated by increasing immigration. European countries should undertake more decisive measures that would empower women and men to realize their fertility goals."

**Dr. Gerhard Timm**, Managing Director of the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege e.V. (German Working Group for Non-governmental Welfare Services, BAGF): "An older, even a declining population is not a problem in itself. It becomes a problem, however, because all of our systems are based on growth. This is where we need to start. From a global point of view, our demographic development here in Germany is a blessing. Our planet is a finite system and is being destroyed by endless growth."

**Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, General Representative of Allianz SE for Government Relations:** "Longevity, migration and fewer children will change our societies. Demographic developments thus represent important regional and global security issues."

**Prof. Guangzhou Wang, PhD, CASS Population and Labor Economics Research Institute, Beijing,** states: "We need to acknowledge the reality that birth rates will remain low for the long term. We need to prepare for the challenges of such demographic change."

**About the BDF:**

*The Berlin Demography Forum is a cross-party, international platform for debate on demographic change. The forum brings international politicians, scientists, economists and representatives of society together to debate potential solutions and to contribute to sustainable development. The idea is also to raise the general public's awareness of the significance of demographic change. The forum is held once a year; the first event took place in January 2012. It was initiated by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and Allianz. Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger and Prof. Jörg Rocholl, PhD, are in charge of the conference. The forum is being organized by the ESMT European School of Management and Technology.*  
<https://www.berlinerdemografieforum.org>

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