



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Hon. Christopher H. Smith

[Print](#)

Chairman - Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

Good afternoon and welcome to our witnesses and everyone joining us. Today we will examine demographic trends in the OSCE region, which is comprised by the 56 member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe - every country of Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as the US and Canada. Dramatic demographic changes are already underway in the region - and there are sure to be dramatic consequences for the security, economic, and human dimensions of the OSCE. "Lawmakers need to start thinking about these now - and we hope the executive branch will also be paying close attention.

The fact is that most OSCE countries are in demographic decline, many of them in rapid decline. Only a handful of the OSCE's 56 member states are at or above replacement level.

In many of them military planners are asking the question how or even whether they will be able to provide for their security in a few generations - because that is the way demography works, current birth rates pre-program developments long into the future.

Likewise with the economy. It is far from clear how, in many of the most rapidly declining countries, how economic growth can be sustained by a declining population - or, to touch on the most pressing specific, how the numerically smaller younger generations will even begin to provide for the larger older generations.

As to the human dimension of the OSCE, it is alarming and sad to see xenophobic and ultranationalist violence fueled by one nation's perceptions of long-term decline vis-a-vis another group. Similarly with migrants, when a country faced with a shrinking workforce calls on foreign workers, who in difficult economic times find themselves discriminated against and targeted.

It is particularly ugly when some dominant social groups respond to their own demographic decline by proposing to engineer a corresponding decline in other groups - whether this is proposed overtly by racist demagogues or covertly by groups of international elites adept at hiding their real intentions behind other ideologies, it is a factor in a number of OSCE countries.

I look forward to our witnesses' testimony - on this subject that will certainly demand the OSCE's attention well into the future.