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Olga Penina, *Regional Mortality Disparities in the Republic of Moldova*. Centrul Editorial-Poligrafic Medicina, 2022, 116 pages.

More than 30 years after the end of the Soviet Union, Europe's attention is once again turning to the east, where the Russia–Ukraine conflict continues apace. EU member states that share borders with the two countries, such as the Baltic countries, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania, fear that the conflict will spill over onto their territory and, consequently, are facing the challenge of large migration flows.

The same questions face another country that, while not part of the EU, is knocking on its door: Moldova. This country of 2.5 million inhabitants still bears scars from the breakup of the Soviet Union, most notably the unrecognized secession of Transnistria in September 1991. In Moldova, often described as the poorest country in Europe, life expectancy at birth is very low by European standards: in 2020, it was 13 years lower than that of French men.

The principal merit of Olga Penina's book is its detailed presentation of data on life expectancy, a major marker of development, across Moldova's recent history.⁽¹⁾ Going beyond the traditional analyses of national mortality tables, the book offers an exhaustive description of Moldovan geography based on a reconstruction of regional mortality tables (35 districts) for 2012–2016. Using cause-specific mortality statistics, she presents a detailed analysis of inter-regional disparities over the period.

The sheer size of these disparities is one of the striking results presented in the book. In France in 2014, the gap in life expectancy at birth for women between the most and least advantaged *départements* was 3.7 years. In Moldova, the corresponding difference between the capital Chisinau and the Cimişlia district, 70 km further south, was 7.6 years for the 2012–2016 period. The maps in the book are also revealing: life expectancies in the south and the north of the country are much higher than in the centre, except for Chisinau, where both men's and women's life expectancies are the highest in the country. Finally, Penina's analysis of causes of death highlights the central role of cardiovascular and digestive diseases in explaining inter-regional differences in female mortality. The cardiovascular revolution appears to be under way in the regions with the highest life expectancies, but not elsewhere. For men, the unusually high proportion of deaths from external causes (suicide, homicide, accidents, etc.) is striking, to say the least.

Anyone with an interest in issues of mortality can use this concise and clear book to improve their knowledge of a country whose visibility has continued to increase in recent months.

Florian Bonnet

(1) The book is available at: https://github.com/PeninaOlga/RegionalMortalityDisparities/blob/main/Penina_RegionalMortality.pdf