
The Policy of Immigration in Croatia

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Ministry of Immigration of the Republic of Croatia

Summary

In today's world, migrations of populations are increasingly more frequent due to a variety of reasons. Different states approach this issue in a different way. Thus, we may distinguish between those that employ more restrictive immigration policies and those that are open to immigration.

The Republic of Croatia has built its immigration policy on the fact that it is among the countries with the biggest diasporas in the world. Since its people emigrated from Croatia for many years after World War II, the new Croatian government after the independence shaped its immigration policy that was supposed to stimulate its emigrants to return to Croatia. The Ministry of Immigration was founded with the task of implementing the state's policy of immigration regarding the return of emigrants.

1.0 General Definition of Immigration Background Context

Although the reasons people migrate across borders are as varied as the individuals in question, the root causes can be classified into two distinct categories – either to distance oneself from unfavourable conditions in the country of origin, or for the attraction of the target country. When a combination of the motivations occurs in an individual, a family, or a corporation – migration is sure to occur.

For most developed countries, especially those with a relatively prosperous standard of living in comparison to their neighbours or the rest of the world community, normal concerns about border security, visa requirements for tourists and workers, and the influx of new permanent residents becomes a series of questions that require resolution through a defined policy that can be applied to all of the above issues, as well as a myriad of questions that arise as a result of the influx of people into a given region or country. This policy is usually summarised as a country's immigration policy.

Immigration policy is usually defined as “pro-immigration” or “restrictive immigration” – depending upon the goals of the country in question. If immigration is actively encouraged, with an emphasis to targeting specific population groups – the country is deemed to have a “pro-immigration” policy. If a country's laws and legal system discourage immigration, with an emphasis on preferential treatment of domestic citizens, then the country obviously has a “restrictive immigration” policy.

2.0 The Republic of Croatia – “Pro” or “Anti” Immigration?

With regards to the above definitions and context, the Republic of Croatia definitely falls into the category of countries with a “pro-immigration” policy.

With the changes in Eastern Europe in 1989-90 as a background, Croatia also underwent a dramatic political transition from a ‘socialist’ autocratic regime, to a democratic system of government focused on economic transition to a market economy. The culmination of this process was the elections held in April 1990, where the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – HDZ*) was swept into power in a wave of voter enthusiasm. Since this represented a significant reversal of politics in Croatia (and Yugoslavia), political opponents to the previous regime (many of which where exiled in the various Croatian émigré communities worldwide) became a strong financial and political base for the newly elected government. A basic tenement of the new government, thus, was a reversal of the previous policy of encouraged emigration, and encouragement of émigré Croats to return to their homeland. This has been reflected in a significant number of laws passed, in definitions of government economic and development policies, in the active contacts high-level government officials have maintained with the émigré community from 1990 onwards, and most significantly, the establishment of the Ministry of Immigration in November 1996.

Immigration policy has been clearly defined in the Republic of Croatia, and has been significantly amended to become more and more “pro-immigration”, culminating in the latest activities of the government planned for 1999.

3.0 Immigration Trends in the Republic of Croatia

Although strict records on the number of immigrants have not been maintained from 1990 until 1995 inclusive, even fewer records exist on the number of people that have permanently departed Croatia in the same time frame. Additionally, the government’s policy of creating a distinction between immigration and war-related migratory movements has made analysis of population movements slightly more complicated – for which a greater tolerance of error has been factored. For purposes of simplicity, two sources of data were used in compiling statistics on the number of true “immigrants” in Croatia, and the elimination of refugees from neighbouring countries from these calculations – even when these same refugees arrived from third countries (i.e. Germany) after prolonged periods of residency.

The primary source of data is residency cards maintained by the Ministry of the Interior, and filled out by all residents of Croatia whenever a change of address is effected. Since listing the previous address is a requirement of the form, and all the data are computerised, it is a relatively simple matter to isolate all individuals who listed another country as their previous address of residency. Similarly, it is relatively simple to eliminate those who list countries formed from the break-up of the former Yugoslavia from this data, although individuals who list Slovenia or Macedonia as their previous country of residence must be examined more closely to determine in what sense their

establishment of residency is related to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, or is a classic case of immigration.

The second source of data emerges from a unique formulation of customs laws in Croatia. One of the motivational factors for immigration to Croatia is an exemption from duties and customs fees on the importation of household effects – up to a value determined by the number of years spent in residency abroad. Since this customs exemption requires significant documentation, it is possible to isolate those individuals that meet the above definition of “immigrants”. However, since a significant number of families have only one individual whose name appears on customs documents, or a significant number of individuals (students, immigrants with few household effects, etc.) do not import household effects with the exemption, this data can serve only to confirm the residency card data on randomly selected individuals.

The results of this analysis reveal a summary of the data as follows:

Table 1. Number of immigrants to Croatia by year (1990-1998)*

Year	Number of immigrants
1990	193
1991	86
1992	14,269
1993	6,110
1994	3,169
1995	2,956
1996	5,396
1997	6,988
1998 (projected)**	6,850
Total:	45,967

* This data does *not* include refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro), Slovenia, or Macedonia.

** 1998 data is projected based upon available data for January through June 1998.

Fig. 1. Number of immigrants to Croatia by year (1990-1998)

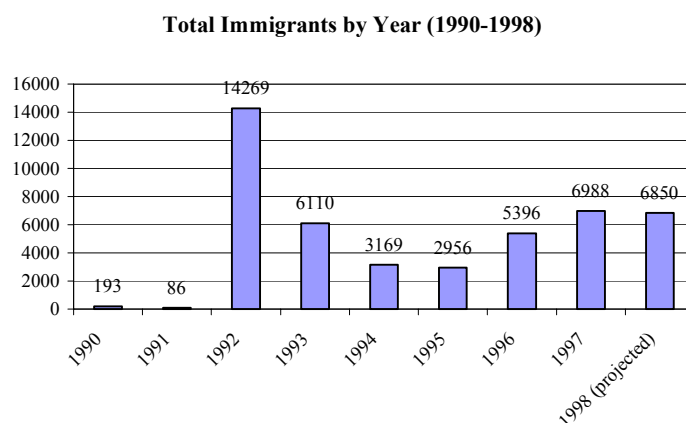


Table 2. Number of immigrants to Croatia by country of origin: 1991-1998* (sample countries presented represent those with the highest numbers of Croatian émigré communities)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998**
Germany	35	7,613	3,358	1,398	1,358	1,950	2,826	2,770
Austria	7	1,057	472	363	452	752	1,115	1,093
Canada	-	260	128	66	97	178	245	296
Australia	2	90	90	128	125	294	363	395
U.S.A.	6	190	228	114	97	181	212	215
Switzerland	7	1,559	528	294	288	366	546	505
France	5	632	304	43	42	67	86	55
Italy	1	90	162	122	123	175	183	199
Sweden	2	627	201	48	37	84	102	91
Romania	-	-	6	63	118	261	138	258
Other	21	2,061	633	530	219	1,088	1,172	973
Total:	86	14,279	6,110	3,169	2,956	5,396	6,988	6,850

* This data does *not* include refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro), or Macedonia. Data for 1990 (193 immigrants) is not available sorted by country.

** 1998 data is projected based upon available data for January through June 1998.

Fig. 2.1. Immigration from Germany into Croatia by year.

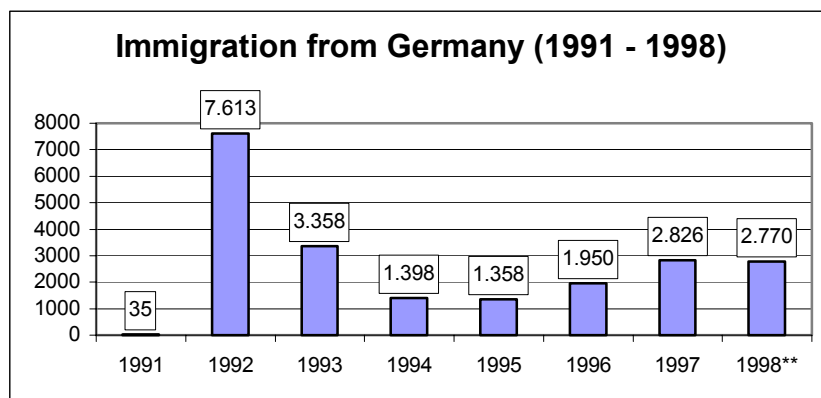


Fig. 2.2. Immigration from Austria into Croatia by year.

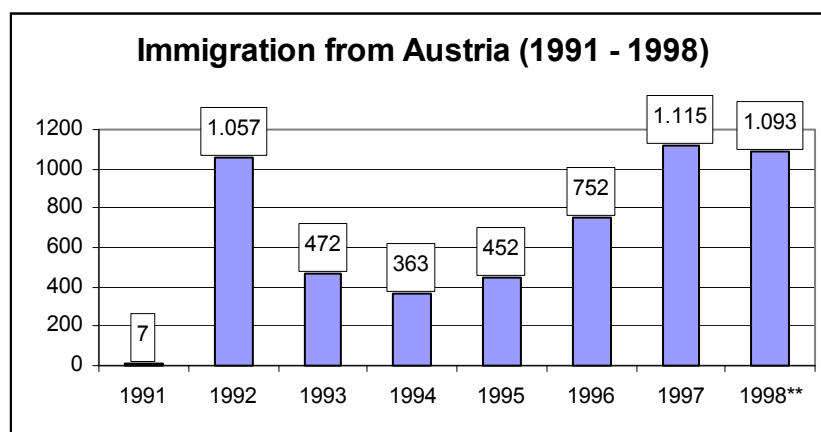


Fig. 2.3. Immigration from Canada into Croatia by year.

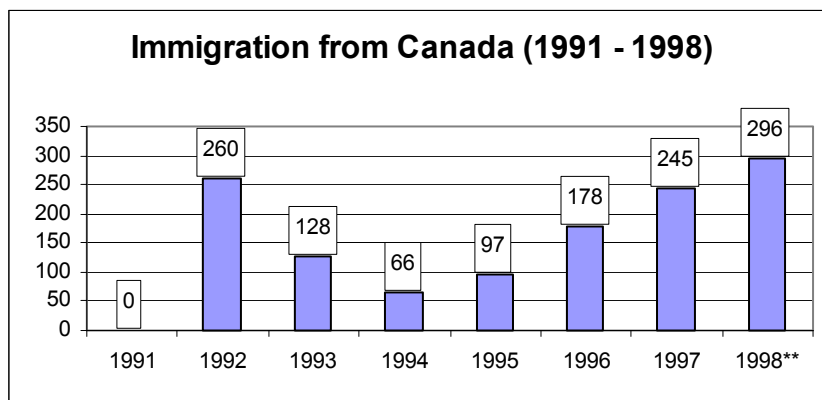


Fig. 2.4. Immigration from Australia into Croatia by year.

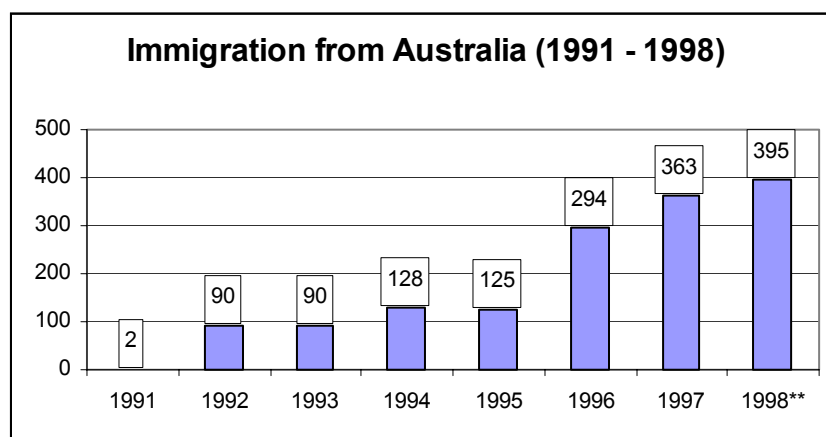


Fig. 2.5. Immigration from the U.S.A. into Croatia by year.

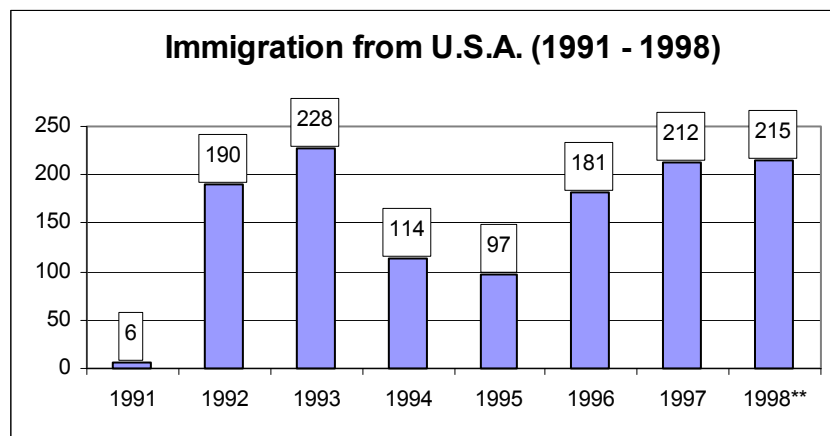


Fig. 2.6. Immigration from Switzerland into Croatia by year.

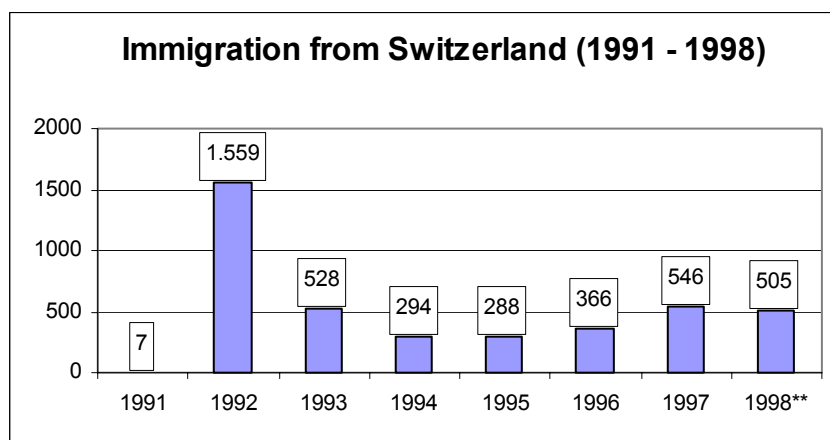


Fig. 2.7. Immigration from France into Croatia by year.

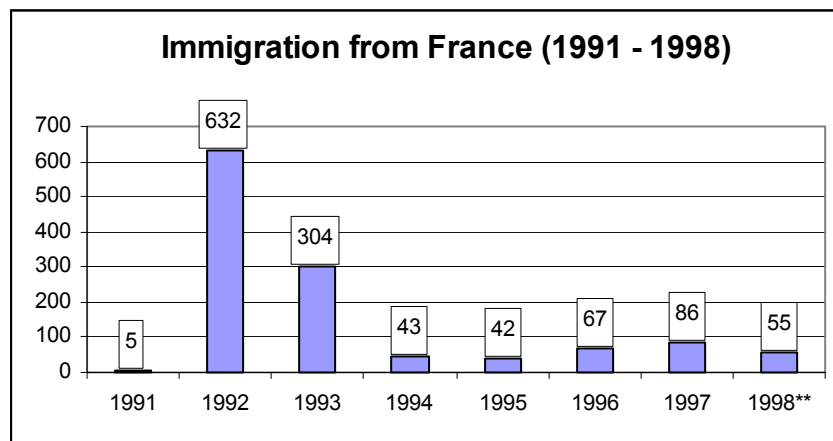


Fig. 2.8. Immigration from Italy into Croatia by year.

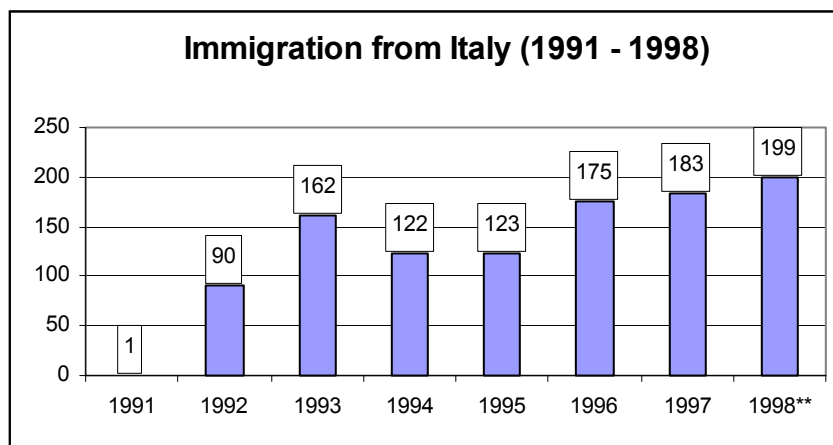


Fig. 2.9. Immigration from Sweden into Croatia by year.

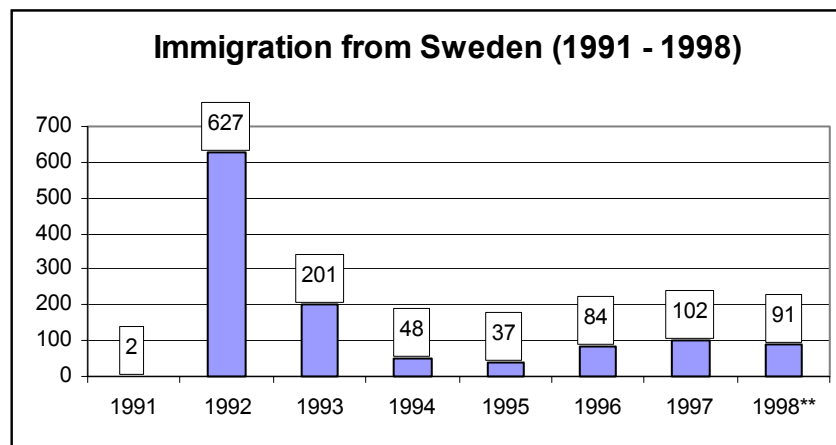
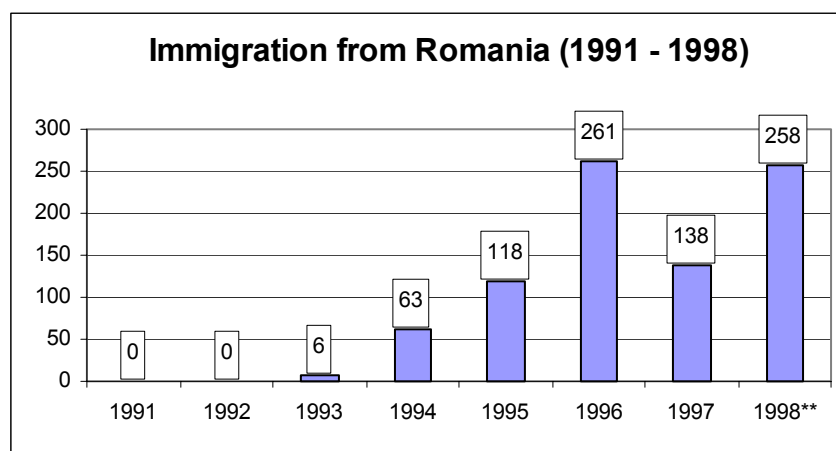


Fig. 2.10. Immigration from Romania into Croatia by year.



3.1 Data Analysis – Conclusions

From the presented data, a number of conclusions can be drawn immediately. It is interesting to note that the first significant numbers and the greatest number of recorded immigrants occurred in 1992 – a full two years after Croatia's declared independence. Secondly, a significant downward trend was in evidence in the trend 2 years after 1992,

which was reversed and the numbers have been steadily climbing through to 1997, and levelling off in 1998. Thirdly, from the analysis of the country of origin data, it is obvious that immigrants from Germany represent full 50% of the recorded immigration in Croatia. This statistic is relatively consistent throughout the 7 years for which adequate data exists. It is also the data group that has the greatest effect upon general trends (i.e. a rise in the number of immigrants from Germany will create a rise in the general trend – almost regardless of the data from other countries).

An analysis of the countries of origin reveals:

- 1994 and 1995 show the lowest numbers of immigrants in the period from 1992-1998 for all countries except Australia and Romania
- from 1991 onwards, Australia shows a positive growth trend
- from 1993 onwards, Romania shows a growth trend, with the exception of 1997.

Since Australia and Romania appear to be anomalies in the trends shown in other countries, it stands to reason that the impetus for these countries has less to do with the immigration policies and conditions in Croatia than other factors. With Romania, the worsening economic situation is a significant impetus for rising numbers of immigrants from Romania – especially as Croatia's economy improves after the hostilities of 1991-1995.

Australia's continued positive trend is indicative of a different nature of immigration. Australia's relative isolation from the rest of the world, especially its physical distance from Europe, fosters nostalgia for the return of *Australian* immigrants to their country of origin. Since this is also true for Croats living in Australia, it is expected that the numbers of "returning Croats" from Australia will rise steadily in the foreseeable future.

3.2 Immigration Trends – 1990, 1991 and 1992

With Croatia's independence in 1990, a "return" of political émigrés was expected in relatively large numbers. Namely, the socialist regime in power until 1990 was responsible for the mass exodus of large numbers of Croats from 1945 to 1990, with a peak exodus occurring in the mid- to late- 1960's, primarily due to economic reasons and liberal immigration policies in Western Europe, North America and Australia. Since a significant portion of this émigré community was not able to travel freely to their "homeland", a change in the political regime was expected to open the floodgates of sentiment and the return of political (and economic) emigrants.

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In 1992, over 14 thousand people established permanent residency in Croatia.

Analysis of available data and interviews with several hundred immigrants from 1992 has revealed why 1990 and 1991 results were disappointingly low. Namely, after the independence of Croatia in 1990, those individuals who *then* decided to move to

Croatia required full two years of preparation before the migration could actually take place. In most cases, especially those from overseas countries such as Canada and Australia, work obligations, with associated pension plans, were a key factor in delays of implementation of an overseas move to Croatia.

Similarly, families with children of school age experienced reticence in moving the entire family to another continent with the inherent difficulties in language, school system and cultural adaptation that the children would experience. Finally, the simple process of selling one's home, disposing of vehicles and household effects that aren't necessary or usable in Europe, and establishing residency (i.e. purchasing real estate in Croatia) is a process that required on average 9 months to a year to execute.

In 1991, an additional factor that influenced a low number of immigrants was the intense armed conflict in Croatia.

The backlog of those that decided upon moving to Croatia in 1990, and couldn't effect the move until 1992 is a significant source of the high numbers of immigrants in 1992. To a certain degree, it is also the war in 1991 that *positively* influenced high immigration numbers in 1992. In explanation of this seemingly contradictory statement, interviews with a number of individuals have revealed a complex emotional drive that contributed to their moving to Croatia. In short, the 1991 conflict was a motivational factor for large numbers of the émigré community driven by patriotism to participate and contribute to the defence of the fledgling Croatian republic. The initial aggression resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties, large areas of the country becoming occupied by hostile (Serb) forces, and doubts as to the ability of Croatia to survive as an independent state. Also, the fact that international recognition wasn't immediately forthcoming contributed to the general mood of despair and urgency within the Croatian émigré communities. However, as 1991 progressed, it became apparent that the newly established Croatian Defence Force (*Zbor narodne garde* – ZNG) was holding its own in key battles; international recognition seemed imminent in January of 1992; there was talk of United Nations peace keepers arriving in 1992 who would bring the hostilities to a standstill. This combination of conditions seems to have been the unique impetus for many of the interviewees who arrived in Croatia in 1992 from Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, the U.S.A. and even South Africa.

Thus, 1992 represents a benchmark year for immigration to Croatia– the result of years of pent-up desire to 'return to the homeland'; a newly found desire to personally contribute to the defence effort in Croatia; and hope that the experiment of statehood and independence might actually be successful – reinforced by the international recognition of Croatia by the European Union, Canada, the Vatican, the United Nations, and a number of other countries world-wide. Ultimately, the Croatian immigration policy was not a factor in promoting immigration in 1992 – rather, it was a unique set of circumstances that created a highly successful "year" for immigration to Croatia in 1992.

3.3 Immigration Trends – 1993, 1994 and 1995

As mentioned earlier, the data on total immigration by year (table 1) also shows a significant downward trend from 1992 through 1993 and 1994, levelling off in 1995 before rising in 1996 onwards.

Since it is technically impossible to interview non-existent immigrants as to their motivations for not moving to Croatia, an analysis of this trend requires some conjecture and interviews with individuals who defied the trend and *did* move to Croatia in this time frame.

If 1992 is recognised as the first year in which “political emigrants” responded to the 1990 change in the political regime in Croatia, a general assumption may be made that events in Croatia affect immigration numbers as much as two years later. Thus, if 1993 is a year in which a disappointingly low number of immigrants arrived in Croatia, a key consideration of the reasons behind this must lie in the events of 1991. As mentioned earlier, 1991 was a year of intense armed conflict in Croatia and this would seem to be a simple explanation for decreased numbers of immigrants.

However, since 1992 represents a stabilisation of hostilities, the arrival of UN peacekeepers and international recognition of Croatia, it would be expected that 1994 would show an increased number of immigrants. In 1994, we see that the downward trend in immigration numbers is continued, with even fewer numbers arriving in 1994 compared to 1993.

Since there must be an underlying reason for the contradiction in results and expectations, it is logical to assume that Croatia’s immigration policy or the lack thereof has become a significant factor by 1994. This conjecture is verified by a number of interviewees who arrived in 1994 and have stated that their decision to move to Croatia in 1994 did not seem urgent (unlike 1992 immigrants), and was rarely motivated by political decisions or legislative, motivational factors. In fact, relatively few individuals (approximately 20%) of the 1994 immigrants were aware of, or took advantage of the available customs exemptions for import of household effects.

It is in recognition of this fact, and significantly, in recognition of the importance of positive immigration growth that the ruling HDZ party in Croatia at their annual convention in 1994 re-affirmed their ties to the Croat émigré communities, and promised to create a Ministry whose primary function would be to “contribute to the conditions necessary to promote immigration, the return of émigré Croats, and to foster their integration into the social, economic and political life of the Republic of Croatia”. It was also in the 1994 parliamentary elections that 12 representatives of the émigré community were elected to the House of Representatives, under an amendment to the election law¹.

¹ It is this same election law that is now a political issue in Croatia, and in Croatia’s dealings with the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and U.S. diplomacy. Since the émigré community is overwhelmingly in favor of the HDZ party, the 12 representatives proportionally elected to parliament create a significant voting block in legislative procedures. The opposition in Croatia has called for an amendment to election laws that would nullify this advantage, and to date, have received the tacit support of the international community in this initiative.

Using the 2-year delay principle described earlier, one can then expect 1996 immigration results to increase significantly over those of 1995. The data confirms this trend, and demonstrates that positive immigration growth took place in 1996 from all the sample countries.

3.4 Immigration Trends – 1996 Onwards

In short, 1996 and 1997 demonstrate significant year-on-year increases in immigration, influenced primarily by the positive political developments of 1994 and 1995. Since Croatia's military activities in 1995 (*Operation "Flash" in May 1995, and Operation "Storm" in August 1995*) successfully resolved the occupation of portions of Croatia, and ensured the security of Croatia's citizens and statehood, the 1997 immigration results can be attributed to these events.

In the projected 1998 results, a levelling off of numbers is seen for all the sample countries with the exception of Australia and Romania², which show significant growth in 1998.

3.5 Immigrant Profiles: Who? The Benefits for Croatia

Croatia as a country is faced with serious existential questions, arising from the current demographic trends. Several years of declining birth rates and a rapidly ageing population have created a growing segment of society dependent upon an ever-shrinking workforce. Economic repercussions of this trend are already evident – unskilled and semi-skilled labour is in high demand, while a growing portion of university graduates and skilled workers are unemployed; the state pension funds are struggling to maintain payments and will be bankrupt within a quarter century unless significant reforms are instigated; salaries in Croatia are burdened with high pension fund contributions; the state budget is faced with a growing social component from year to year; a general migration of the population is occurring from rural and less-developed areas towards several urban centres.

Although it would be a mistake to state that a growing immigration trend will solve all of the above problems, it is likewise a mistake to disregard the importance of positive population growth through immigration. Croatia's Ministry of immigration has thus identified four specific target groups for immigration, although it is standard policy to welcome each individual regardless of how well they fit the following profiles:

Students are a priority group for Croatia, since it has been shown that they adapt easiest to the cultural and economic environment in Croatia, and experience the fewest

² Although no South American countries' data was presented here, it is interesting to note that South America as a region closely imitates Australia in numbers of immigrants, and the constant growth trend. However, these results are directly related to the increased activities of Croatia's Ministry of Immigration, which has an active program of helping finance the costs of moving to Croatia for families from Chile, Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Venezuela.

problems in full integration to Croatian society. Thus, the scholarship program³ run by the Ministry of Immigration has proven to be very successful.

Youth and Professionals have proven to be a harder target group to attract to Croatia. Under the heading ‘youth’ are included all persons who have finished their education (at all levels) abroad less than 5 years after their arrival in Croatia. ‘Professionals’ are considered to be all those who are in possession of university degrees (graduate or post-graduate). Since unemployment is relatively high in Croatia, and there is limited demand for university graduates, the prospects for employment are not enough to stimulate immigration into Croatia for this group. However, within the civil service, and a growing number of companies in the private sector, this group of immigrants is being sought out for employment because of their language skills, past work experience, and management potential.

Entrepreneurs and Investors are popularly considered to be the most important group of immigrants in Croatia. Croatian media have also contributed to the common perception that immigrants from Germany, Canada, the U.S.A. and other western countries are investors who will open factories, create thousands of jobs and improve the standard of living for all Croats. Reality presents a slightly different face. Most entrepreneurs / investors set up small businesses (defined as businesses with fewer than 100 employees), with the main portion of investment in real estate. Although investment by immigrant and returning Croats amounted to approximately 3.5 billion *kuna* (about \$ 0.5 billion U.S.) in the period from 1993-1997, this figure is significantly below expectations. Several initiatives by the Ministry of Immigration are aimed at increasing immigrant investment and entrepreneurship; however, the most influential factor in investment growth in the future will be the economic health of Croatia itself.

Seniors as a category are an easily identifiable group of immigrants and are very welcome in Croatia. Although there are some social costs associated with seniors (health care, accommodation problems, etc.), the economic benefit has proven to far outweigh any costs. Quite simply, an analysis by the Ministry of Immigration has shown that in 1998, foreign pensions in excess of 139.9 million *kuna* (approximately \$ 22.5 million USD) per month are paid to residents of Croatia. This transfer of funds from other countries is vital to Croatia’s economy – especially since exports from Croatia are far below the level of imports. This current account deficit is problematic, but tourism, service exports, and fund transfers into Croatia from abroad offset negative effects upon the economy.

The following tables and graphs figuratively demonstrate the results of the “Pension Survey” performed by the Ministry of Immigration.

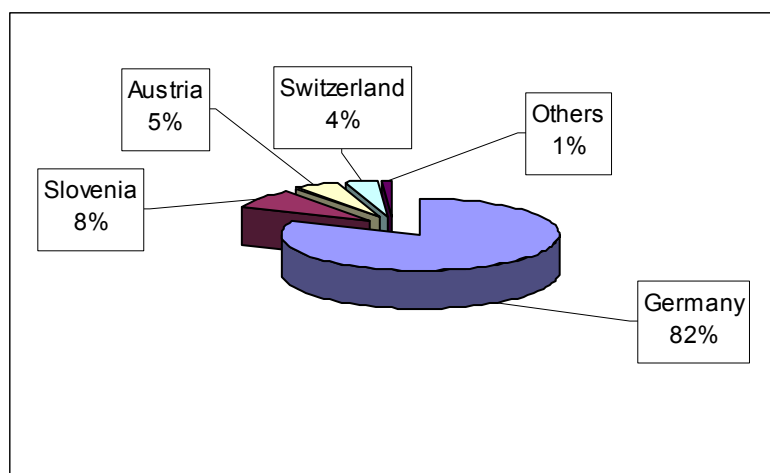
³ In 1997, the Ministry of Immigration awarded 120 scholarships to students from other countries that enrolled in Croatian universities. In 1998, 168 scholarships were awarded, while the 1999 budget foresees over 200 scholarships. It has been shown that over 75% of students awarded scholarships decide to remain in Croatia after their final year of university.

Table 3. Monthly pension transfers from abroad to bank accounts of Croatian residents by country

Country	Total transfer (in kunas)
Germany	114,045,383.72
Slovenia	11,571,554.94
Austria	7,227,999.34
Switzerland	5,506,103.62
Others	1,566,148.38

In tabular or graphical form, the predominance of pensions from Germany is easily apparent.

Graph 3.1. Monthly transfers of pensions from abroad to Croatian residents by country



The presented data was collected during November and December of 1998, by polling commercial banks in Croatia. Twenty two banks responded to the query, identifying accounts to which pension payments were being made from foreign governments, the number of such accounts, and the value of payments. A total of 79,758 persons in Croatia receive such pensions according to the data supplied by the 22 banks.

4.0 The Ministry of Immigration, Republic of Croatia

Since Croatia established a Ministry of Immigration in November of 1996, it is only the activities of this Ministry through 1997 onwards that can be discussed. The organisational concept of the Ministry reflects the various profiles of immigrants who are returning, and the operational activities that the Ministry undertakes to promote

immigration to Croatia. The highest authority in the Ministry is the Minister, and his Office of the Minister (which includes the deputy minister, a chief of staff, and administrative staff). The Office of the Secretary of the Ministry handles the administration of the Ministry (accounting, payroll, procurement, legal, personnel, information technology, and mail/fax communication departments), while five Ministry sections deal with the immigration activities of the Ministry. These five sections are as follows:

1. Section for international co-operation I
2. Section for international co-operation II
3. Section for economic, investment, and entrepreneurial support
4. Section for social support and integration
5. Information and public relations department

Since these five operational sections actually promote immigration to Croatia, and handle most of the contacts with potential and actual immigrants, each section is more comprehensively described below.

4.1 The Ministry of Immigration – Operational Activities by Section

The *Section for International Co-Operation I* (SIC-1) is headed by an assistant minister and is divided into three departments. These departments are geographically divided into areas of responsibility as suggested by their titles:

- Europe Department
- South America Department
- Department for international co-operation I

Since this Section covers Europe and South America, contacts with Croatian émigré communities throughout Europe and South America are filtered through this department. Similarly, this Section is responsible for generating appropriate-language translations of promotional materials and organising visits to these communities by selected speakers from within and outside the Ministry. Also, this Section co-operates with governmental and non-governmental organisations and associations within Europe and South America that in any way are involved with promotion of Croatian immigration.

The *Section for International Co-Operation II* (SIC-2) is headed by an assistant minister and is divided into three departments. These departments are geographically divided into areas of responsibility as suggested by their titles:

- Asia, Australia and New Zealand Department
- North America Department
- Department for international co-operation II

Although this Section covers North America, all of Asia, Australia and New Zealand, the greater geographical coverage is offset by the fact that most of Croatia's immigrants come from Europe. As with SIC-1, this Section also maintains contacts with Croatian émigré communities throughout North America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, and queries are filtered through this section to other sections within the Min-

istry. Similarly, this section is responsible for the organisation of visits to these communities by various speakers, and co-operation with organisations and associations within these regions.

The *Section for Economic, Investment, and Entrepreneurial Support* (SEIES) is headed by an assistant minister and is divided into three departments. These departments are divided according to the types of economic activity immigrants undertake upon their arrival in Croatia. The departments are:

- Department for small businesses and trade
- Investment Support Department
- Advisory Department for Customs and Taxation

The essential difference between the first two departments is the relative size of the investment activity and the type of investment. For example, typical small businesses with less than 10 employees and a total investment value of under \$500,000 USD will certainly be within the jurisdiction of the *Department for Small Businesses and Trade*. However, larger investments, those involving privatisation of state-owned property, investment in the stock market, bonds, insurance and banking are of a financial nature under the jurisdiction of the *Investment Support Department*. Finally, the *Advisory Department for Customs and Taxation* is a support service for this Section, and the Ministry as a whole. It is a common practice that a representative of this Section is included in any visit to émigré communities worldwide, since economic questions are a deciding factor for families planning to immigrate to Croatia.

The *Section for Social Support and Integration* (SSSI) is headed by an assistant minister and is divided into three departments. These departments are divided according to the types of queries and problems they solve for immigrants, as their titles suggest:

- Department for transportation and housing
- Department for youth and educational support
- Department for health, social services and integration

Additionally, within this Section, regional “Integration Offices” have been organised throughout Croatia. These offices are also support offices for other Sections of the Ministry requiring information or co-operation with local (city or county) officials.

The *Department for Transportation and Housing* is responsible for arranging transportation of passengers and personal effects of families from South America (who are unable to finance their immigration to Croatia), and their temporary accommodation in facilities maintained by the Ministry or under contract with the Ministry. In 1998, 79 families (a total of 320 individuals) from Chile, Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Venezuela received assistance in the form of pre-paid airfare and / or cargo transport of personal effects. In addition, this department provides placement assistance to senior citizens in Croatia’s state and private retirement homes.

The *Department for Youth and Educational Support* provides assistance to younger immigrants who are enrolling in school or university in Croatia, or those who have finished their education abroad and require equivalency ratification of their certificates, diplomas, and degrees. Also, this department distributes between 100 and 120 scholar-

ships annually to students from abroad that have enrolled in Croatian universities. The scholarship program has proven immensely successful for Croatian immigration, since approximately 75% of those who receive scholarships decide to remain in Croatia after their graduation.

The *Department for Health, Social Services and Integration* provides assistance to individuals who have difficulties outside the scope of activities of the other departments already described. A small number of immigrants rely on social assistance due to unemployment, or require hospitalisation and treatment for injuries or illness and are unable to obtain health insurance. Similarly, this department extends the biggest effort in positively integrating individuals into the communities that receive them – the regional offices of the Ministry play a vital role in this respect.

Finally, the *Information and Public Relations Department* has a vital role in the Ministry's activities. This Department is responsible for all media relations for the Ministry, including organisation of public appearances of the Minister, deputy minister and assistant ministers. Similarly, this department handles publishing activities of the Ministry (including a monthly informational magazine titled "BILTEN"), and regular maintenance of the Ministry's Internet Web page. In addition to these tasks, this department handles press releases, press conferences, and speech writing.

4.2 The Ministry of Immigration – 1999 'Immigration' Activities

In 1999, Croatia's Ministry of Immigration plans a continuance of all activities undertaken in 1998, with a significant expansion of activities in stimulating entrepreneurship and economic investment of immigrants. This seems ambitious in light of the freshly published national budget for 1999, in which the Ministry of Immigration has a 10% reduction in resources compared to 1998. However, in the law on budget spending for 1999 (*Zakon o izvršenju proračuna 1999. godine*) article 49 announces a new program: a total of 20 million *kuna* (approximately \$3.3 million USD) has been set aside to subsidise small business start-ups amongst new immigrants.

In summary, the 1999 activities include:

- support services for all categories of immigrants: students, skilled professionals, entrepreneurs, investors, retirees, seniors, and socially dependent individuals;
- participating in the writing of new laws and amendments to existing laws to create more favourable conditions for immigration;
- establishment of a 20 million *kuna* subsidised loan (i.e. low-interest) program for immigrants' business start-ups;
- an expanded scholarship program distribution of stipends to 150 students
- publishing books, brochures, magazines and pamphlets promoting immigration to Croatia and distribution of the same to émigré communities world-wide;
- visiting émigré communities with various speakers to promote immigration to Croatia;
- subsidised health insurance and services for immigrants;
- subsidised airfare and transportation for immigrants of limited means and resources;
- temporary housing and accommodation for qualified immigrants;

- assistance in priority listing for immigrants in other government programs (i.e. selling of state assets such as farmland, etc.)

The activities described above are expected to provide a sound basis for immigration growth through 1999 and to the new millenium.

5.0 The Future

Croatian immigration policy in the near future must become more liberal and must actively encourage immigration from all the identified target groups. This encouragement must not be restricted to public relations and marketing campaigns, but should devote considerable funds to economic incentives and social support for immigrants, as well as large increases in the number of case officers employed by the Ministry of Immigration.

Since immigration issues overlap with economic policy, demographic development, foreign affairs, border control and national security, it is imperative that an inter-ministry council be formed to address these issues. Ultimately, it should be expected that several tasks performed by various institutions be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Immigration: disbursement of visitor visas and work permits to foreign nationals; determination of residency status of foreigners; handling citizenship requests from immigrants and Croatians living abroad.

In Croatia, it is popular to look at Israel as a role model for successful immigration policy – in 1997, over 66,000 people immigrated to Israel. However, Israel's Ministry of Immigration Absorption, has approximately 3000 employees. In comparison, Croatia's 39 employees working at the Ministry of Immigration from 1996 through 1998 have shown impressive results.

A dedication to positive immigration in Croatia undoubtedly means that the Ministry of Immigration in Croatia should be strengthened in personnel and budgetary resources in future years, so that the benefits of immigration that have been demonstrated to date may be continued and increased.

Translated by the author