

New wave of emigration from the Republic of Croatia

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Abstract

The paper deals with the recent emigration of the population from the Republic of Croatia. The entry of the Republic of Croatia into the European Union, on 1 July 2013, increased emigration to many countries of the European Union with simplified procedures of emigration. Attractive and repressive factors stimulate and trigger new emigrant waves outside Croatia towards European Union. Most of the emigrates are young people, whole families, people of fertile age, working active population, highly educated and people with professional qualifications, i.e. anyone who can find employment outside Croatia. Permanent emigration already leads to imbalances and shortages of workers in some sectors of activity such as hospitality, transportation, medical profession etc.

Although employment growth has been registered in January 2018, unemployment remains high. Employment growth does not mean a simultaneous drop in unemployment. It is to be assumed that high unemployment remains one of the consequences of emigration that takes on worrying proportions. The media discourse emphasises that people emigrate for personal reasons, in cases when they either have no job or cannot progress in their jobs, along with other known factors of emigration that are a key problem for the Croatian society. The loss to Croatian society resulting from the permanent emigration of the population can best be described as inadmissible in the broadest social context. The 'brain drain' has always been present. The most educated, most ambitious will always look for opportunities for advancement and training in their profession. Experience has shown that highly educated and qualified specialists are a type of modern nomad because they move to improved working conditions and use the opportunities for advancement. The consequences of emigration are long-term for the Croatian society and predictions for the future are not optimistic if something is not changed as soon as possible. The facts related to and consequences of this last wave of emigration for Croatian society are just some of the issues and reflections that will be considered in this paper.

Key words: Croatian emigration, emigration, migration, Republic of Croatia

Introduction

In recent years, negative trends in the demographic development of Croatia (depopulation, natural decline, aging process, etc.) have taken on dramatic proportions, which is why we find ourselves in the circle of European countries with the most unfavorable demographic processes in the history of the Republic of Croatia. One of the causes of this situation is the extremely negative migration balance, that is, the increasing number of emigrants from Croatia compared to the number of immigrants. The last major emigration wave began with the global economic crisis in 2008, intensified by Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013, and may be the most unfavorable so far, as it takes place in circumstances of reduced fertility, natural decline, overall depopulation and accelerated aging of the population. We do not know the true extent of emigration, not only contemporary but in earlier periods, since many residents do not announce their change in residence prior to their departure, although under the Residence Act 2012 they have an obligation to do so. The situation is similar with the registration of residence because many persons fictitiously apply in Croatia for social or other rights, and in fact live in another country (Pokos, 2017.). In Croatia, there are known cases of fictitious population from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

For each country, human capital is the most valuable capital. Without human capital, there is no progress and development in any country. Croatia is at the forefront of Europe in terms of numerous negative demographic indicators. The three basic demographic processes are fertility, mortality and migration. By a close analogy, we can say that Croatia is characterized by low fertility, demographic aging, and large-scale emigration (Ivanda, 2017). The lack of population leads to the destabilization of the basic systems in the country, first of all to the destabilization of the workforce system, and further and consequently the destabilization of the pension, health, education and financial systems. Massey's law of migration states that international migration is much harder to stop than to initiate (Massey et al., 1993). This appears to be the case in Croatian migration situation. As noted earlier in the beginning of this paper, after Croatia joined the EU in 2013, a large-scale emigration wave began which has been difficult to stop and continues to present day. Globalization, the availability of information, and the legal and organizational ease of movement make it faster and easier for people to move. Population competition, which can be seen as working, consumer or human capital, is now made of all EU countries.

The data of the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Republic of Croatia is different from the data of foreign statistical offices because they are based on residence remittances at the Croatian Ministry of the Interior due to those abroad often concealing their true residential address and represent only a fraction of the total population who emigrated. This situation is exacerbated by the Republic of Croatia Registry of population, so we do not have accurate data on emigration from Croatia. The full scale of emigration from Croatia will only be known after the results of the population census in 2021 have been released in 2022.

Reasons why population migrate

All migrations have a double effect, first in the place of departure, and the other at the place of arrival, affecting the population change, their distribution, and their structure (Akrap, 2017). Many factors affect the emigration of the population from Croatia. Some of the most influential factors which drive emigration are inadequate economic development, social factors such as political factors and corruption and physical reasons, and they can usually be classified into push and pull factors. Economic motives have been present in all human movements, but they are especially important regarding migration from the country of origin. Referring to the Croatian case, the following push factors related to emigration can be distinguished:

- Unemployment
- Loss of employment
- Low wages
- High rates of corruption
- Inability to progress at work and in the profession
- Inability to resolve housing issues
- General dissatisfaction with political parties

The lack of economic opportunity tends to push people to look for their futures outside the area of their origin. However, it is difficult to classify emigration with suppression factors alone, because often factors related to the country of origin are as important as factors related to the destination country. Most common pull factors are as follows:

- Possibility of employment or more and better jobs
- Advancement in the profession

- New or different activities: intellectual, recreative, business, social
- Safer living conditions
- The promise ‘of a better life’
- Lower rates of corruption
- Greater personal wealth
- Political security

Emigration in the Republic of Croatia is not a transient phenomenon, nor will emigration from this country end or cease tomorrow. That is why today we have high demographic losses due to emigration. After the last great wave of emigration in 1990, which was the result of the Homeland War in Croatia, the population is moving again outside the borders of their country. Therefore, today we are talking again about mass emigration to Western European countries, especially to Germany, Austria and Ireland.

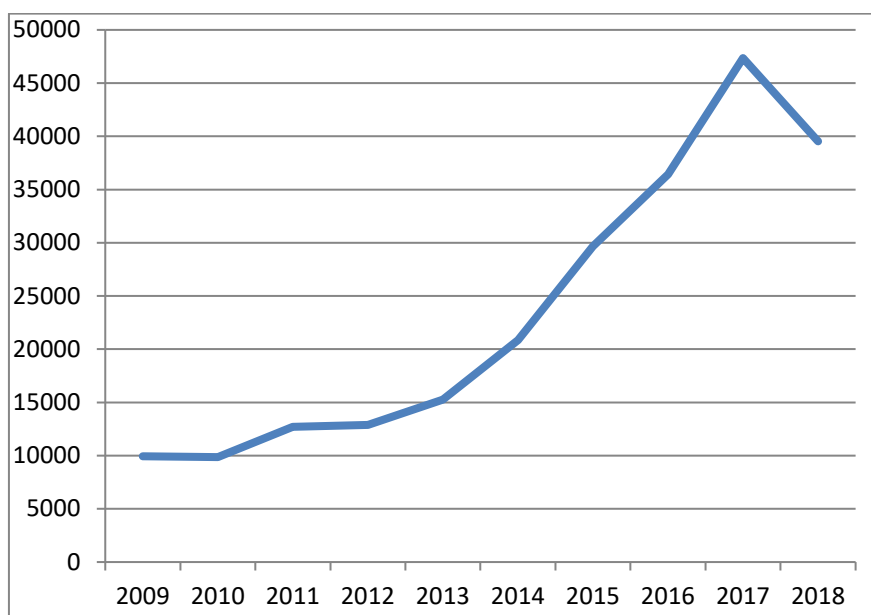


Figure 1. The official number of total migrants from Croatia 2009–2018
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia

In search of better living conditions, the most vital part of the population (people in between the ages of 19 and 45 years old) leaves Croatia, often with their whole family, which in the long run means endangering and destabilizing the overall development of the country. Emigration from

Croatia, which started several years ago, is a consequence of unemployment and the existential insecurity of the population created by the economic crisis, as well as the inability to change existing jobs and the inability to advance in the profession and in the workplace. All of the above, with constant political turmoil and altercation, led to the expulsion of the most vital part of the population from Croatia.

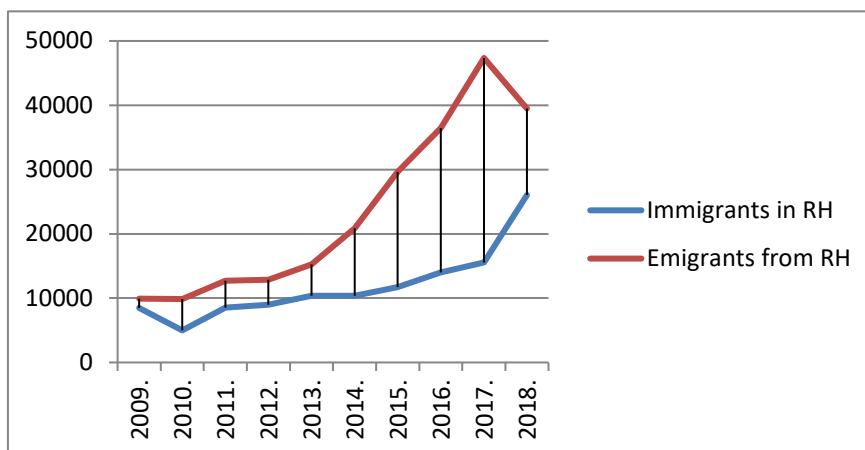


Figure 2. The migration balance of the Croatia population abroad 2009–2018
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia

Methodology

The research uses a quantitative demographic approach to the collection and analysis of statistical data.

Data collection and analysis: Data was collected from the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia 2009-2018 (www.dzs.hr), census documents from Ireland (Central Statistics Office, CSO, Ireland, 2016; DEASP, 2017), Austria¹ and Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt (2017) *Ausländische Bevölkerung Ergebnisse des Ausländerzentralregisters*). Data was analysed using statistical analysis, population projection and estimation, compared for data trends and inconsistencies and presented in graphic formats.

Limitations: We do not know the true extent of emigration, not only in the present but also in earlier periods, because many residents do not

¹ https://www.statistik.at/wcm/idc/idcplg?IdcService=GET_

deregister their residence before moving out, although according to the Croatian Residence Act 2012 they are obliged to do so. The situation is similar with the registration of residence because many people fictitiously register in Croatia in order to obtain social or other rights, but in fact live in another country.

Therefore, we have relatively inaccurate and unrealistic data for the population that registered or deregistered their residence in Croatia at the Ministry of the Interior between 2009 and 2018. These data are then presented by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) as immigrants, ie emigrants to / from Croatia, which makes them the only official data on external migration and will be so until Croatia finally introduces a population register, which the demographic profession warns more. of forty years. Although the reduced and presented data show an intensification of the emigration process in the observed period, especially from 2014 onwards, which is due to the previously mentioned reasons: the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union in 2013 and the obligation to deregister residence from 2014.

Explanation of preliminary data

Demographic trends in Croatia are getting worse, fewer children are born, and more and more people are leaving Croatia (Pokos, 2017). Figure 1 shows a steady increase in numbers of those who are moving abroad. In 2013 there were 15,262, while in 2016 there were more than twice as many emigrants from Croatia (36,436). In 2017 the figure had risen to 47,352.

In Figure 2 above, the blue graph shows the number of immigrants in Croatia. The red graph shows the number of emigrants from Croatia. The difference between moving in and moving out in an area is called a migration balance. The migration balance can be positive (mechanical population growth) or negative (mechanical population decline) (Wertheimer-Baletić, 1999; Pokos, 2017). Data therefore shows strong emigration tendencies (population exodus) and a negative migration balance.

These are statistics data of available statistics, and the analysis covered the most desirable European destinations to which the population of the Croatia emigrates. This paper does not cover emigration to countries outside Europe because the current trend is the emigration of Croatian citizens to European countries, which does not mean that the citizens of the Republic of Croatia do not emigrate to non-European

countries.

The destination countries

Germany

Most Croatian citizens migrate to Germany. Germany has always been the most attractive and desirable destination for emigration because of the view that it can provide better job prospects and living conditions, and it is the first country of choice for most Croatian citizens who decide to emigrate.

Stronger emigration towards Germany began after 2013 with the accession of Croatia to the European Union, with the sharpest rise in emigration in the 2014–2016 period following the lifting of the temporary employment restriction that were until then present in that European country. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Croatia data, since 1 July 2015 there has been 29,000 Croatian arrivals, which is more than half of the total number of all Croatian migrants in that period (Figure 3).

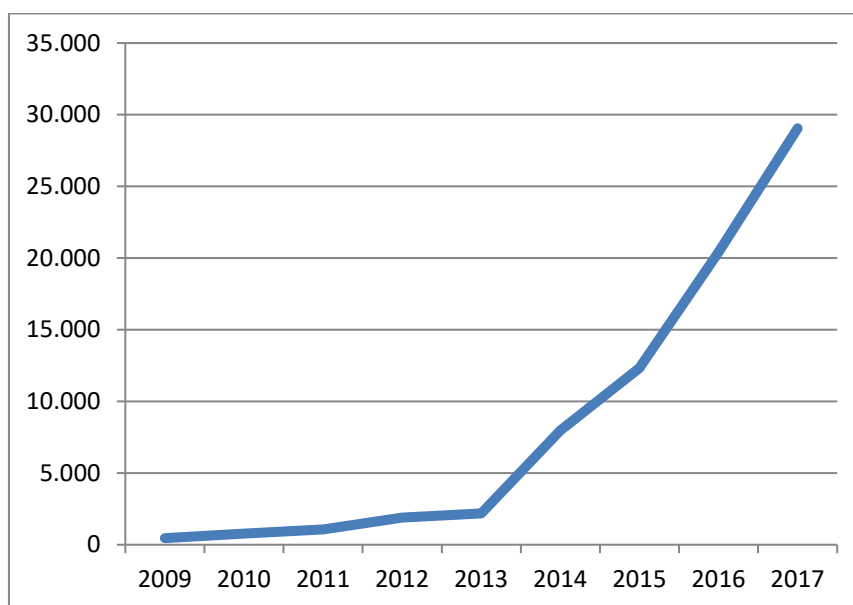


Figure 3. Number of total migrants from/to Germany from 2009 to 2017
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia

There are different methods of tracking immigrants to different European countries, i.e. there are different approaches to registering immigrants. We must be careful about interpreting statistics when

comparing foreign statistics data with the Croatian immigration statistics, since German data not only apply to immigrants from the Republic of Croatia, but also to all immigrants with Croatian citizenship. Therefore, German data will also include, for example, large numbers of Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatian citizenship (Figure 4). However, it is impossible to separate immigrant Croats in Germany from the Republic of Croatia from immigrant Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina (for more data see Pokos, 2017).

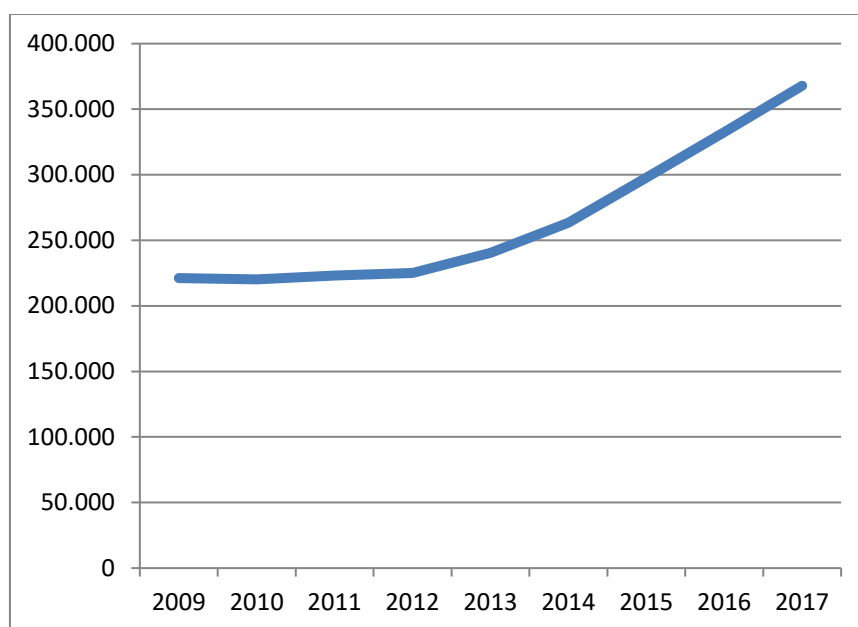


Figure 4. Number of Croatian Citizens in Germany 2009–2017 (as of 31 December each year) according to German statistics. Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2017) *Ausländische Bevölkerung Ergebnisse des Ausländerzentralregisters*

Ireland

For Croatian citizens, especially for young people, in recent years Ireland has become another very popular country and destination to live and work. This island country has opened its doors to Croatian citizens for work 2013. The number of Croatians living and working in Ireland can be tracked via the PPS number (Personal Public Service Number). PPS number indicates the unique personal number required by each

person for all necessary public services between the person and all existing institutions in Ireland.

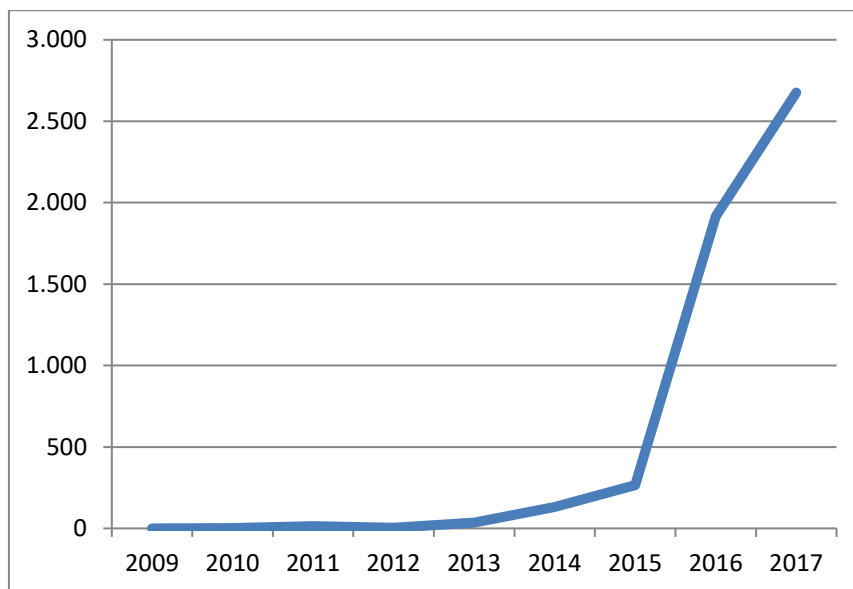


Figure 5. Number of total migrants from / to Ireland from 2009 to 2017.
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia

Until the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU, minimal numbers of Croatian emigrants to Ireland were recorded, although the 2011 Irish census determined 980 inhabitants born in Croatia. From the second half of 2013, more intensive immigration from Croatia will begin, because Ireland officially announced on the occasion of Croatia's accession to the EU that it will not restrict access to Croatian workers in its labor markets. The last Irish census from April 2016 recorded 5,202 inhabitants born in Croatia, which is an increase of 430.8 percent compared to 2011 (Pokos, 2017). Thus, residents born in Croatia recorded the largest relative increase between 2011 and 2016. After 2016, there was a significant decline in the immigration of Croatian citizens to Ireland (Figure 6).

Austria

Austria is yet another popular destination for Croatian citizens seeking for jobs and better living conditions. Due to its geographical proximity

to Croatia, it also gives them the possibility of more frequent travels home, which is important for many Croatian citizens when deciding on emigration and employment. “... *Better two hours to Graz or four hours to Vienna than so many to Rijeka, Zadar, Split ...*” are often spoken words of persons of working age who have found better working conditions in Austria.

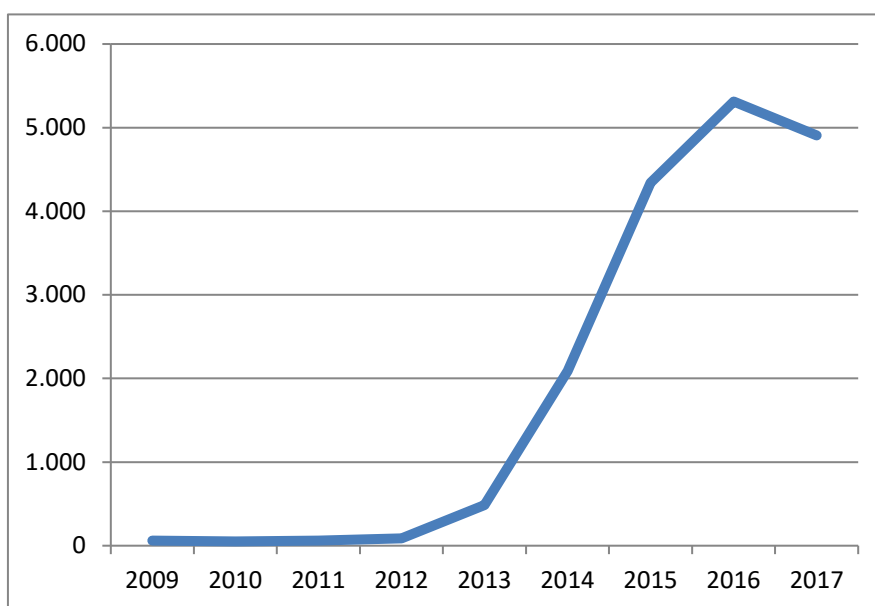


Figure 6. Number of immigrants from Croatia who received Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) in Ireland from 2009 to 2017.
Source: DEASP, 2017

In Figures 7 and 8, we see a obvious increase in the number of emigrants since 2014. According to Austrian data, the total number of Croatian citizens in Austria on January 1, 2015, was 66,475, at the beginning of 2016 70,248, while on January 1, 2017 there were 73,334 (Pokos, 2017). Austrian statistics also provide accurate data on the number of immigrants and emigrants by citizenship (as well as Germany), so the numbers of immigrants to Austria do not refer only to residents who immigrated from Croatia. In contrast to Germany and Ireland, in Austria it is observed that the largest number of immigrants was recorded in 2014, after which their number began to decrease. It is important to note that Croatian workers will have free access to the Austrian labor market in the middle 2019, so a further increase in the number of emigrants to

Austria can be expected.

It should be emphasized that in other European countries appealing to Croatian citizens for emigration and Great Britain, Switzerland and Italy.

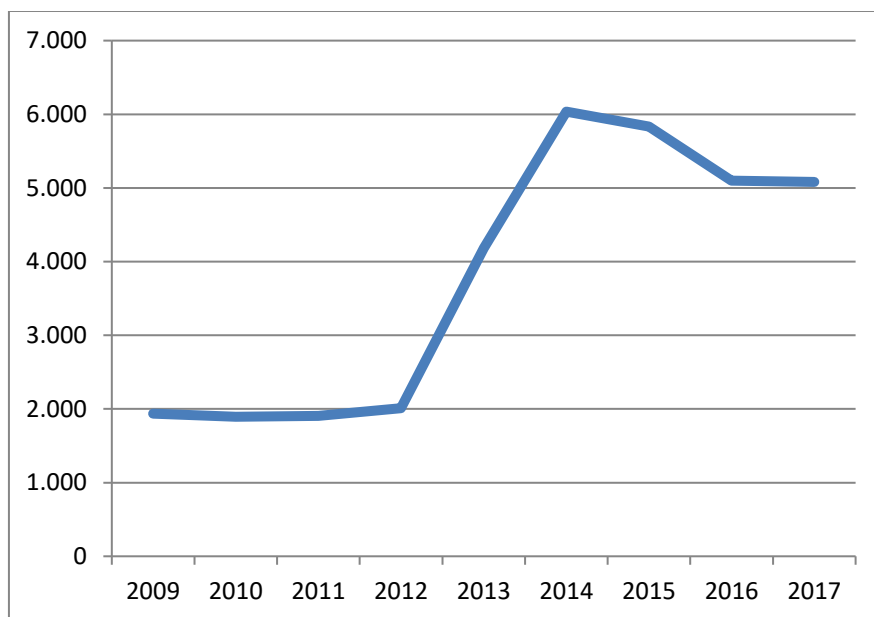


Figure 7. Recorded Croatian citizens immigrated to Austria 2009–2017 according to Austrian statistics.

Source: https://www.statistik.at/wcm/idc/idcplg?IdcService=GET_

Emigration consequences for the Croatian society

Emigration generally has a twofold effect on space, affecting demographic, economic and social structures of the population and characteristics of one and the other specific space. The consequences can be immediate (changes in the number and structure of residents of a particular area, population distribution, etc.) and can be long-term (related to the vital dynamics of a particular space, births, deaths, marriages, divorces, etc.) so they also have their temporal dimension.

The specific consequences of emigration to the country of origin are the loss of human capital, the most important resource of every state, depopulation of rural areas, declining birth rates, aging of the population, lack or insufficient labor force, instability of the pension and health care system, and dissatisfaction of the population living in Croatia today.

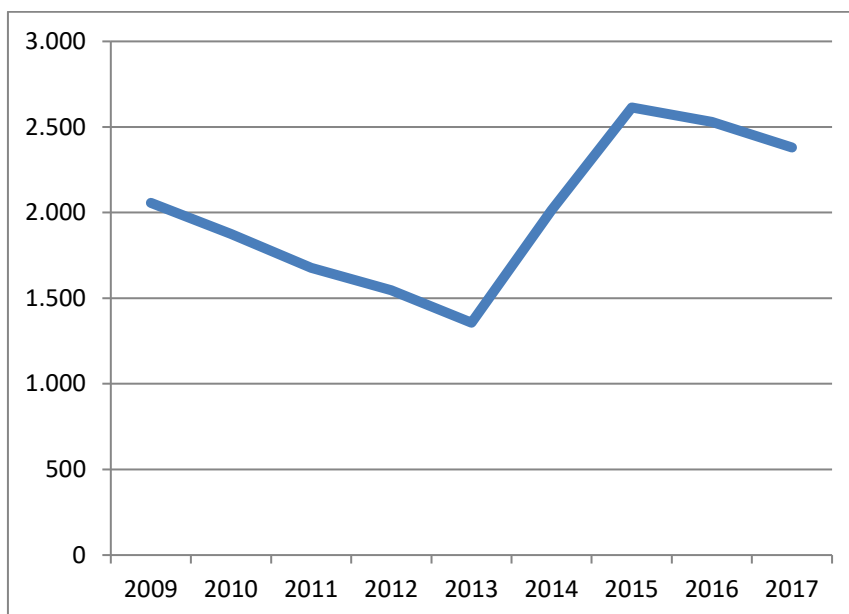


Figure 8. Recorded Croatian citizens emigrated from Austria 2009–2017
Source: https://www.statistik.at/wcm/idc/idcplg?IdcService=GET_

The logical question is whether it is possible to mitigate or at all possible to halt any of these negative trends, which have their roots back several decades in Croatian society due to socio-political turmoil and economic downturn, which brings us to a demographic and economic breakdown. It is difficult to answer this question because new globalization challenges create new problems and impose new questions. A well structured multidisciplinary strategic approach to population and demographic policy is required to address the current situation and create positive changes for Croatian society and the state.

Conclusion

What can be expected from the current trends and current situation in the future movement of the population of the Republic of Croatia? The overall Croatian population will continue to decline, with expected further demographic decline including the emigration of the younger working-age and fertile population.

Particularly significant and of concern regarding Croatia's professional industries are the increased departures of young people and entire families. Young people as a fertile, vital and able-bodied population

emigrate from Croatia, and in most of these cases emigration is definite and permanent, which in the long run represents a loss of demographic, economic and general social capital for Croatia. In the long term, such a situation is not optimistic for Croatian society and the Croatian state, while the social and economic consequences of population aging, and depopulation will have consequences not only at the local, regional but also national level.

Due to the aging population, the balance between rural and urban areas may be aggravated, local and regional differences may be increased, which may affect local and regional competitiveness, the collapse of the economic, educational, health and pension systems. The demographic revitalization of the Republic of Croatia should become a particularly important issue in the coming years and decades of all the governments, because according to the available data and estimates on the future demographic trends of Croatian demographers, it can be concluded that the citizens of Croatia will continue to grow older and become an older nation within the European Union due to the low birth rate, extended life expectancy and emigration outside Croatia.

This issue is not popular with the general public because most of the population do not realize that human capital is the most valuable capital of every society and state.

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Sažetak

U radu se govori o recentnom iseljavanju stanovništva iz Republike Hrvatske. Ulaskom Republike Hrvatske u Europsku Uniju, 1. srpnja 2013. godine započinje pojačano iseljavanje iz Republike Hrvatske prema mnogim zemljama Europske Unije što dodatno olakšava i pojednostavljena praksa nekadašnjih procedura iseljavanja. Privlačni i potisni čimbenici potiču i pokreću nove emigrantske valove izvan Republike Hrvatske prema zemljama Europske Unije. Iseljavanje iz Republike Hrvatske postala je gotovo svakodnevica i u najvećem broju iseljavaju osobe mlađe životne dobi, čitave obitelji, osobe fertile dobi, radno aktivno stanovništvo, visokoobrazovani i ljudi sa stručnim kvalifikacijama, dakle, svi koji mogu pronaći posao izvan granica Republike Hrvatske. Permanentno iseljavanje već sada dovodi do neravnoteže i manjka radnika u nekim sektorima djelatnosti poput ugostiteljstva, prijevoznitva, medicinske struke itd.

Iako je u siječnju 2018. godine zabilježen rast zaposlenosti, nezaposlenost je i dalje visoka. Rast zapošljavanja ne znači i istovremeni pad nezaposlenosti. Za pretpostaviti je da je i dalje visoka nezaposlenost jedna od posljedica iseljavanja koje poprima zabrinjavajuće razmjere. Svjedoci smo činjenice, ali i medijske komunikacije i interpretacije da se ljudi iseljavaju zbog osobnih nezadovoljavajućih uvjeta i to u slučajevima kada ili nemaju posao ili ne mogu napredovati, što je uz ostale poznate čimbenike iseljavanja ključan problem za hrvatsko društvo. Gubitak pak koji donosi permanentno iseljavanje stanovništva za hrvatsko društvo najbolje se može opisati pridjevom nenadoknadivo, u kontekstu najšireg društvenog značenja.

Odljev mozgova pojava je za koju možemo reći da je oduvijek prisutna. Najobrazovaniji, najambiciozniji, u onom pozitivnom smislu, uvijek će tražiti priliku za napredovanje, usavršavanja i slično. Praksa je pokazala da su visokoobrazovani i kvalificirani stručnjaci svojevrsni moderni nomadi jer se najvećim dijelom iseljavaju zbog usavršavanja i radnih uvjeta te mogućnostima napredovanja koji im se nude te tada odlučuju gdje će graditi svoj budući dom. Posljedice iseljavanja su za hrvatsko društvo dugoročne i predviđanja za budućnost nisu ukoliko se nešto u što kraćem razdoblju ne promjeni, optimistična. S čime će se sve hrvatski građani morati suočiti u budućnosti i koje su posljedice iseljavanja za hrvatsko društvo samo su neka od pitanja i promišljanja koja će se razmatrati u ovome radu.