
MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The European Union was created and is founded on values which are the joint heritage and patrimony of the overall development of Europe, namely the ideals of freedom, unity and equality, peace and security, democracy, human and minority rights and the rule of law. The reason why migrants come to Europe is because it is safe, there is more democracy, there is more freedom, more tolerance, but also more social benefits, than in their countries of origin. The EU ensures the social needs of migrants are met through tax revenues. It also specifies the frameworks within which member states adopt the laws constituting the institutional integration infrastructure. Integration is the two-way process of adaptation between migrants and the receiving society, and therefore, the same effort is expected from immigrants who, fleeing conflict and poverty, have found the opportunity to start a new life in the country of immigration. However, many, once settled, do not want to integrate, but rather continue to live in Europe as they did in the countries from where they came. Numerous domicile residents feel that major ethnic changes are changing European culture too quickly, and that this could have unintended consequences, among other things, in terms of the economy. The objective of this paper is to identify the challenges related to migration, increase awareness of the issue, analyze and compare the integration efforts made by EU countries, and highlight the challenges they faced and the outcomes of their initiatives. The study involved comparing data from secondary sources and conducting a meta-analysis of relevant literature. Such research is significant in enhancing the migration process as continuous awareness-raising about this matter is one of the key solutions for embracing the changes in migration that affect us all.

Keywords: *migrants, integration policies, domicile population*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mass immigration to Europe began after World War II due to labor shortages, and this human flow could no longer be stopped. Europe has, from the home of European peoples, become home to the entire world. By accepting migration on a large scale, significant problems related to this acceptance have also come to light, which to date have not been fully resolved.

In the past half century, in parallel with the increase in the number of immigrants and the increase in the ethnic and cultural diversity of European societies, the “Old Continent” is trying to become a continent of integration. The necessity to develop systematic policies for the integration of migrants and refugees¹ into society further emphasized the movement of migrants towards

¹ The terms: refugee, asylum seeker and migrant are often used synonymously, although there are significant differences between these terms. According to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, refugees are individuals who had to leave their

Europe in 2015/2016. Therefore, the integration of migrants continues to be a challenge across the European continent, with numerous important issues such as low levels of employment, inability to find adequate housing, increased risk of poverty or social exclusion, but also concerns of the local population regarding the integration of migrants into the community. The EU defines integration as the process of the participation of migrants in the basic structural areas of the receiving country's society and their integration with that society. While member states are primarily responsible for integration, the EU can identify measures to encourage and support member states' actions in promoting it. At the EU level, the successful integration of migrants from third countries is considered a matter of common interest for all member states and a political priority to be achieved in different areas (education, access to the labor market, social policy, etc.) and at different levels (European, national and local) (Lalić Novak, Giljević, 2019, p. 164).

For a long time, primarily developed countries encouraged the arrival of migrants, who had a positive impact on the labor market. However, in the past few decades, these countries have reduced the possibilities of legal immigration, while at the same time, crisis hotspots around the world have generated migration and refugee crises. Moreover, in poorer countries, the desire to live in wealthier and more developed societies has increased, and the number of economic migrants has increased enormously. In some EU member states, due to the increasing arrival of foreigners, several political parties have been established (some are also ruling parties) that proclaim a very negative attitude towards migrants and further immigration in their programs (Dragović, Hasanović, Mikac, 2018, p. 248). Although the cultures of societies under the influence of new information and communication technology are significantly transformed, the old attitude of intolerance towards foreigners nevertheless remains within such transformed cultures (Milardović, 2013, p. 193).

On the other hand, the question arises of the adaptation of immigrants to the receiving countries, due to the political and cultural differences between them and the domicile population. In some environments, the second or even third generation of migrants cannot fit into society because of their attitude toward women, authoritarian culture, non-democracy etc. It seems that economic factors are not decisive for such a situation, but primarily sociocultural, since every immigrant is shaped by the culture and civilization from where they come.

Integration has been the subject of many heated discussions in Germany in recent years, largely triggered by the historical influx of migrants between 2015 and 2019. During this period, Germany received more than 1.8 million asylum applications. Discussions over how to deal with such a large refugee population soon focused on integration concerns. Questions were once again raised about the integration of immigrant groups who have a long presence in Germany, especially Turkish immigrants and their descendants, who make up the country's largest minority. An OECD study shows that, despite improving education, this group is still three times more likely than non-Turkish Germans to have issues with employment or to rely on government grants (Index.hr, 2021).

The main goal of this paper is to provide an insight into the problems of integration of foreigners in Europe. The integration of migrants is extremely difficult, and scientists must discover new models of how to implement this integration, because the current implementation models are unsatisfactory. In order for the integration of migrants in the EU to be implemented more successfully, it is important to constantly point out this topic, so that instead of raising tensions, awareness of the problem is raised.

This paper deals with integration policies in European countries, their positive sides (for example, the adoption of the document *Common Basic Principles*, which represents the essence of

country in fear of persecution on the basis of race, nationality or affiliation to a particular political group. A person granted refugee status shall be protected in accordance with international law and conventions. Asylum seekers are individuals seeking refugee status. If they are not considered refugees, they can be deported back to their homeland. The difference between refugees and migrants is that the latter does not leave their homeland due to persecution, but rather to satisfy their own needs, for example, studying in a foreign country, joining their family already abroad or for better economic opportunities. Migrants, unlike refugees, enjoy the protection of their government even when abroad (Kraljević, 2020, p. 264-265). As refugees are also migrants, they differ only from them in the motive of their departure from their homeland; for all newcomers to the European continent, the term migrant or immigrant or newcomer will be used in this text.

initiatives in the field of migration, the adaptation of national laws to emerging migrant situations, the acceptance of many cultural characteristics of migrants, etc.), and negative sides - which result in the unequal position of migrants in relation to the majority population, frequent delays in the integration process (for example, the second and third generations of migrants do not integrate any better than the first generation), the emergence of parallel societies and the creation of tensions among the domicile population that does not accept immigrants. An overview of integration events in Croatia was also presented, which is not a preferred destination for migrants, but rather they want to leave it as soon as possible and head for rich Western countries.

1.1. Model and Data

This paper analyzes secondary data and uses meta-analysis.

Various sources were used in the writing of this article, including books, e-books, articles, official documents of European Union bodies, and national (Croatian) and world statistics from official sources (Official Gazette, International Monetary Fund). Given that it is important what the media say about this topic, relevant and credible Internet sources were used.

The paper states and compares different approaches to the integration of migrants into the EU, and compares the economic situation of the countries from which the most migrants emigrate versus the EU countries that are the most desirable migrant destinations.

2. FRAILTY OF MIGRANT ACCEPTANCE POLICIES

More intensive writing about the integration of migrants in European countries began in the late 1970s and early 1980s. European states adopted integration policies that defined ways of including immigrants in the host society, while trying to avoid assimilation² and segregation³, one-way processes that preceded integration policies. Integration policies attempted to connect immigrants from other cultures with the societies they came to, through mutual adaptation and acceptance, and a desire to avoid the emergence of ethnically isolated groups.

In the European Commission's 2003 Communiqué on Immigration, Integration and Employment, the EU defined integration for the first time, stressing that it is a two-way process based on mutual rights and the accompanying obligations of legally staying third-country nationals and receiving societies, allowing for the full participation of migrants. This process includes the obligation of the receiving society to provide formal rights for migrants, enabling them to participate in the social, cultural, economic and civic life of the community, as well as to adapt them to the standards and values of the society and to actively participate in the integration process. Migrants do not need to give up their own cultural identity. The common fundamental principles of integration were adopted by the Council in 2004 and reaffirmed in 2014. These principles are the basis for all subsequent EU initiatives in the area of migrant integration. They contain a total of 11 rules relating to: integration as a dynamic two-way process, respect for the fundamental values of the EU, employment as a key part of the integration process, the necessity of learning languages, the history and institutions of society, the education of migrants and their descendants, equal and non-discriminatory access to institutions, public and private goods and services, encouraging interaction between migrants and citizens of the member States, freedom of religion and culture; unless this conflicts with other European inviolable rights or national regulations, the participation of migrants in democratic processes in the formulation of integration

² Assimilation involves the merging of one people with another by acquiring its language, customs etc. Assimilation policy is usually violent, implemented by some authority by all available means (school, language, media, offices, benefits, changing surnames, internment).

³ Segregation involves the segregation of a particular racial, ethnic, religious or class group on the basis of discrimination (Ravlić, 2007, p. 662).

policies and measures, especially at the local level, the inclusion of integration policies and measures in all relevant areas of public policy, levels of government and public services, and the evaluation of the success of the implementation of integration policies (Lalić Novak, Giljević, 2019, p. 166-167).

Employment was once considered sufficient for the successful integration of foreigners into society, however, nowadays, such thinking has been abandoned. In March 2021, German Chancellor Merkel, along with federal and civic leaders, announced as many as 100 new measures as part of the National Action Plan for Integration. Merkel stressed that real social cohesion requires more than rejecting hatred and violence, i.e. it requires tolerance and openness, because integration affects not only some groups of people, but society as a whole. This Action Plan particularly emphasizes the call for violence prevention and expansion of efforts against discrimination and strengthening social cohesion through education and social activities (Index.hr, 2021). In addition to philanthropic motivations, Merkel also recognized the economic benefits associated with addressing migration issues. She was well aware of data indicating that the retirement of the baby boomer generation would lead to a significant shortage of skilled labor, posing a potential threat to Germany's export-driven economy. This anticipated "demographic deficit" served as a driving force behind her pursuit of various reforms related to migration. By addressing the issue, she aimed to mitigate the potential economic impact and ensure a stable workforce for Germany's economy (Mushaben, 2017).

3. ATTITUDE TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS AND CREATION OF PARALLEL SOCIETIES

The real migrant wave towards Europe came when migrants from war-affected areas of the Middle East were joined by economic migrants from countries not directly affected by war. Many Europeans considered such a large number of people a threat to society and to the cultural, religious and national community. With negative attitudes of the local population towards their new neighbors, migrants are put in a marginalized position, which increases the risk of producing undesirable behaviors. Stigmatization, endangerment of human dignity and frequent threats can easily lead to an antisocial reaction in the migrant population.

More recently, the attitude towards foreigners on European soil has been based on two concepts. The first is the concept of xenophobia, Islamophobia, hostility, exclusion and intolerance, while the second is multiculturalism, ⁴inclusion, integration and tolerance. The debate over the integration and exclusion of migrants is also determined by the concept of a parallel society. There are more and more cities where islands of foreign culture are developing, parallel to the dominant culture of the society of the receiving countries (Milardović, 2013, p. 214)⁵.

An increasing number among the domicile population believes that the economic benefits of immigration are almost entirely of benefit only to the immigrants, since immigrants can benefit from public institutions and services that they have not previously paid. They also benefit from higher salaries than they could ever have in the country they come from. Very often the money

⁴ Multiculturalism is a public policy that, through education and media, promotes interest and knowledge about different cultures, as well as their equality and mutual respect. It was established in Canada in the early 1960s, initially as biculturalism and bilingualism, with the intention of building and consolidating communication and trust between Anglophone and Francophone citizens. Multiculturalism is accepted in the school programs of most democratic countries, with the aim of becoming familiar with and respecting different cultures and peoples, and above all, those with whom the majority in the country in question comes into contact (either as with members of old minorities or with communities of new immigrants). Multiculturalism is contrary to the policy of cultural assimilation, and close to cultural pluralism and relativism (Kovačec, 2005, p. 513).

⁵ The question arises whether migrants are willing to live in communion with the domicile population, or will there be conflicts between them? The answer was offered by American political scientist Robert Putnam (Rukavina, Bašić, 2016, p. 18), who studied the impact of multicultural society on the level of social solidarity in the United States. His research found that immigration and ethnic diversity reduce levels of social capital and social solidarity. A similar situation can occur in Europe. The first evidence of the deepening gap between the newcomer and the domicile population is the strengthening of right-wing extreme groups opposed to immigration (Rukavina, Bašić, 2016, p. 18).

they earn, or a considerable portion of it, ends up with their family abroad and never returns to the local economy. Media that advocate the claim that mass immigration enriches all residents and that everyone benefits from the wealth generated by immigrants are provided the counter argument that, even when the country's GDP increases as a result of the increasing number of workers, and it cannot be otherwise, this does not mean that individuals benefit from this (Murray, 2018, p. 50). Nevertheless, the higher the GDP per capita in a country, the greater the acceptance of migrants into the host society.

When it comes to welcoming migrants, multiculturalism must certainly be emphasized as an ideology and policy of acceptance in contemporary plural societies, where multiple cultures coexist within one political community, coexisting in the same physical, geographical or social space. The essence of multiculturalism is respect for each person and his or her choice, provided that this choice does not interfere with the freedom of others. Therefore, the principle of multiculturalism is to recognize the cultural diversity that exists in all areas and promote the right to this diversity. Politicians had hoped that such an approach would work well on European soil, however, it has not. Quite the contrary. Multiculturalism has been shown to strengthen parallel societies, encourage different cultures to live separately, separate from each other and from the rest of society. In 2010, German Chancellor Merkel gave a famous speech in Potsdam, where she made it clear that multiculturalism had failed and that all those who want to participate in the life of German society and to enjoy the social security measures that Germany offers them must learn German and respect German laws and constitution. Soon, Chancellor Merkel's position was publicly backed by British Prime Minister Cameron and French President Sarkozy, due to similar problems in their respective countries. With this, multiculturalism has - as a policy of promoting respect and tolerance for differences and an attempt to create a harmonious life between different groups by respecting these differences and consequently annulling prejudices - expectedly failed, according to many.

Multiculturalism in Europe had its origins in the Netherlands during the 1980s. At that time, the Dutch government embraced a policy of promoting multiculturalism, aiming to grant designated "ethnic minorities" a sense of "emancipation." This approach involved supporting separate state-funded ethnic institutions such as schools, hospitals, and media platforms (Penninx, 2020; Koopmans, 2009). However, this policy was accompanied by one of Europe's most significant failures in socioeconomic integration.

Compared to other European Union (EU) countries, the unemployment rate for non-EU migrants in the Netherlands was approximately twice as high as that of native-born individuals. In fact, the non-EU migrant unemployment rate in the Netherlands consistently remained at least three times higher than that of natives, despite fluctuations. By 1999, only around one-third of non-EU foreigners in the Netherlands were employed, while others, including many Muslim women, were either not active in the labor market or dependent on social benefits (van Oers, 2021; Joppke, 2007). Consequently, in 1998, the Dutch government introduced a Newcomer Integration Law to address these challenges. This law mandated that most non-EU newcomers participate in a 12-month integration course, which encompassed 600 hours of Dutch language instruction, civic education, and preparation for entering the labor market. The aim was to enhance the integration of newcomers into Dutch society and facilitate their access to employment opportunities. Overall, what began as an immigrant integration policy has, in many respects, transformed into a restrictive immigration policy (Oomen, Leenders, 2020; Joppke, 2007).

Due to the newly established conditions of integration, migrants and different migrant groups cannot be evenly integrated into society, as they do not have equal access to cultural, economic, social and political resources. This forces them to seek affirmation through ethnic enclaves rather than through the dominant culture of the host society and socioeconomic institutions.

4. SOME ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE INTEGRATION ISSUES

Immigration has an effect both on increasing the population and the structure of society as a whole, as well as the functioning of its subsystems. Organizational principles and manners of incorporating migrants i.e. policies, in receiving countries form the pattern of organizing immigrants. Although all documents of EU institutions related to the integration of migrants attempt to standardize the principles of integration, at the same time, the EU supports national and local authorities to adapt to the needs "on the ground" and do everything to make the integration and social inclusion of migrants as successful as possible. Nevertheless, immigrants are always expected to adapt to the new environment to the greatest extent and as soon as possible, than the host society is expected to adapt to the immigrants.

According to the 2011 census, there were 573,000 individuals of Islamic faith living in Austria. Compared to the 2001 census, this is an increase of 69.30 percent. In the last ten years, there has been an increase in the Islamization of Austrian society, especially with the arrival of the migrant wave in 2015/2016, after which Vienna became the largest Islamic city in Europe (Zovko, 2017, p. 30-31). Due to the new situation, Austria is trying to alleviate the difference between its society and immigrants. Consequently, in 2015, the Austrian Parliament voted to amend the Islam Act of 1912. The amended act has brought Austrian Muslims numerous benefits, such as the establishment of the Studies of Islamic Theology and the opening of six positions for teaching staff at the new Islamic Theology Study Program at the University of Vienna, starting in 2016. For the first time, the act also regulates pastoral care for Muslims in the military, prisons, hospitals and nursing homes, religious education of children and rites such as male circumcision. Austrian Muslims are also allowed to produce items of food in accordance with their religious regulations and to regulate ritual slaughter, which is a stumbling block in many European countries. The new version of the act gave the Islamic community the status of a public institution, provided that members of the Islamic faith cultivate a positive fundamental attitude towards society and the state and submit to Austrian laws. Overall, the amended Islam Act regulates in detail the status of the Muslim community and believers in the country. Its purpose is also to prevent the recruitment of extremists. It, therefore, prohibits funding of the Muslim community from abroad, allows foreign religious officials to remain in office for a maximum of one year from the act's entry into force, and obliges the Islamic religious community to remove imams sentenced to one year or more in prison (Al Jazeera, 2015). With this act, which seeks to avoid parallel societies, political Islam and tendencies of radicalization, a major concession was made to immigrants.

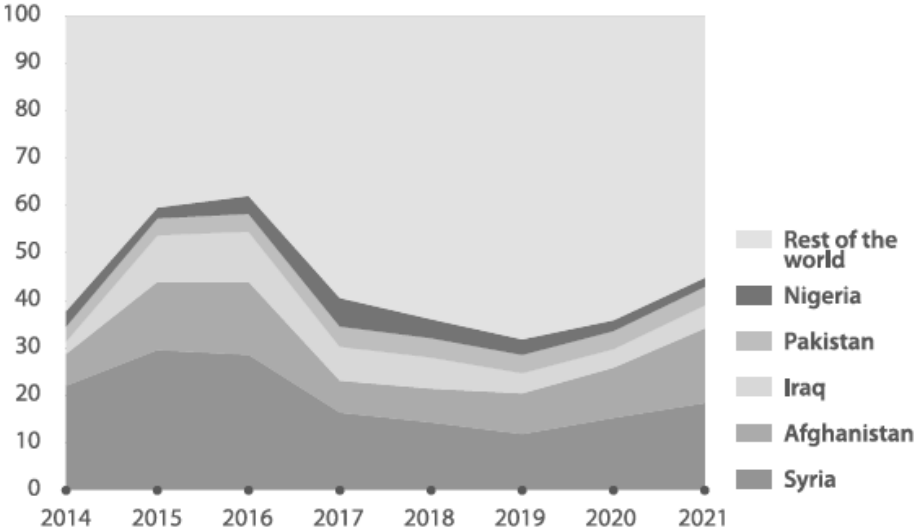
One of the countries in Western Europe that has done the most for its migrants is certainly Sweden. This applies not only to social policy; the Swedes have achieved impressive results in both the areas of education and culture. Sweden's positive attitude towards immigrant issues is based on the historical experience of Swedes with a Finnish ethnic minority within the country's own borders. This tradition has also transferred to the attitude towards minorities who have recently arrived in Sweden (Mey, 1986, p. 110). Today, as many as 19.6 percent of Sweden's population are foreign-born immigrants. Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been an increasing link between immigration and organized crime and violence on Sweden's streets. Patient Swedes know that their country is a prosperous country with a high standard thanks in large part to immigration. Just as it took years to integrate immigrants from the Balkans in the early 1990s into Swedish society, they believe that the same will be necessary to integrate immigrants in the 21st century (Muftić, 2020).

Migrations are correlated with the financial situation of countries. Most asylum seekers come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Nigeria (Eurostat, 2023), and according to data from the International Monetary Fund, these are among the poorest countries in the world. GDP per capita in Iraq is \$6,180, in Nigeria \$2,280, while Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan do not even provide this data (International Monetary Fund, 2023).

For comparison, GDP per capita in Austria is 56,800 USD, Sweden 55,400 USD. In terms of GDP in the EU, these countries are surpassed only by Luxembourg (132,379 USD), Denmark (68,830 USD) and Netherlands (61,100 USD). Croatian GDP per capita is USD 20,540 (International Monetary Fund, 2023).

Table 1 BDP per capita in 2023, selected countries (International Monetary Fund, 2023)

Country	GDP per capita in 2023.	EU membership
Luxembourg	132,370	yes
Denmark	68,830	yes
Netherlands	61,100	yes
Austria	56,800	yes
Sweden	55,400	yes
Finland	54,350	yes
Belgium	53,380	yes
Germany	51,380	yes
Croatia	20,430	yes
Iraq	6,180	no
Nigeria	2,280	no
Afghanistan	no data	no
Iraq	no data	no
Pakistan	no data	no



Graph 1 Country of citizenship of first time asylum applicants in the EU, 2014–2021 (Eurostat, 2023)

The integration of migrants into the receiving society is primarily the responsibility of the EU member states' themselves. More recently, a number of European cities have begun to develop their own integration policies, based on local experience. With its documents, the EU has introduced various measures-instruments in member states to strengthen social and economic cohesion and encourage national, regional and local authorities to work towards integration. These documents also contain contradictory requests. For example, immigrants are asked to gradually weaken ties with the society of origin, but at the same time to influence the democratization and modernization of the societies from where they come. Migration policies are sometimes designed in a systematic and programmatic manner, and sometimes constitute *ad hoc* measures, which, at least declaratively, seek to ensure fair treatment of immigrants by granting them rights similar to those of EU nationals.

5. INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN CROATIA

As in other European countries, the immigration and integration of migrants after 2015 is one of the important social issues in Croatia, although, in general, Croatia is not a country of immigration.^{6,7,8} Most migrants who apply for asylum in Croatia do so because they have not been able to reach richer European countries, and it is likely that they will attempt to do so from Croatia in the future, because Croatia is not their preferred destination.

However, it is also possible that this trend will change. On 1 January 2023, Croatia entered Schengen, and for Croatian citizens it is an important question what kind of changes this will bring henceforward in terms of migration. In the future, it will be possible to investigate changes before and after entering Schengen.

Formally, according to the currently valid Act on International and Temporary Protection⁹, migrants (applicants for international protection, asylum seekers, foreigners under subsidiary protection and foreigners under temporary protection in Croatia) have the right to reside in the Republic of Croatia, the right to family reunification, the right to accommodation, work, health care, education, freedom of religion, free legal assistance, social welfare, assistance in integration into society, the right to property in accordance with the 1951 Convention and the right to acquire Croatian citizenship in accordance with the regulations governing the acquisition of citizenship. They also have obligations, including respecting the legislation of the Republic of Croatia and attending a course on the Croatian language, history and culture (Jurković, 2018, p. 62).

Immigrants complain that, in Croatia, the procedure for issuing work permits takes too long. People who had to flee their homes and applied for international protection in Croatia have been waiting for a solution to their status for months and, during that time, they are mostly unable to work due to legal restrictions. A small number of those who receive protection and decide to stay in Croatia (only about six percent of asylum seekers) find it extremely difficult to land a job. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the total population of Croatia, there are less than one percent of foreigners who live and work in it (Grubiša, 2018).

⁶ This does not refer to the integration of returnees into the Republic of Croatia who do not have Croatian citizenship, i.e. returnees returning to Croatia on the basis of the Program for the Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons (Official Gazette 92/1998), housing provision and reconstruction. These persons must regulate their stay in the Republic of Croatia in accordance with the Foreigners Act (Official Gazette 130/2011). This refers to the integration of persons who have fled their countries due to war, political or some other life-threatening reasons.

⁷ Departures from Croatia are higher than arrivals, consequently, like all of Southeast Europe, it is rapidly emptying. However, there are more and more migrants in Croatia every day and it is likely that they will continue to do so, because the preconditions for the substitution of the working population have been created. The causes encouraging migrants to come to the EU, and therefore, to Croatia, today are primarily economic, social, war and climate change, and some have come to Croatia through resettlement programs from Turkey and transfer programs from Italy and Greece.

⁸ According to data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, in 2019, 40,148 people emigrated from Croatia, and 37,726 immigrated (MojPosao, 2020). According to the data of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics for 2021, 40,424 people emigrated from Croatia, and 35,915 moved in. The balance of migration of the population of the Republic of Croatia with foreign countries is negative (Županec, 2022).

⁹ The Act on International and Temporary Protection, which entered into force on 2 July 2015, with amendments from 1 January 2018, prescribes the principles, conditions and procedure for granting international and temporary protection, the status, rights and obligations of applicants for international protection, asylum seekers, foreigners under subsidiary protection, foreigners under temporary protection and the conditions and procedure for annulment and termination of asylum, subsidiary and temporary protection. In accordance with the aforementioned Act, an applicant for international protection is considered to be a third-country national or a stateless person who expresses an intention to apply for international protection pending the enforceability of the decision on the application. Exceptionally, the applicant may also be a national of an EU Member State where required by the provisions of Protocol 24 of the Lisbon Agreement. An asylum seeker is a refugee who qualifies for the recognition of asylum, while a foreigner under subsidiary protection is a person who has been granted protection, where he or she does not qualify for asylum, and for whom there is a real reasonable risk of suffering serious harm if returned to his or her country of origin. A foreigner under temporary protection is a person who has been granted temporary protection in the case when foreigners come to the Republic of Croatia in large numbers from a country where, due to war or a similar situation, indiscriminate violence or internal conflicts, human rights violations have occurred (Official Gazette 70/2015; Official Gazette 127/2017).

In recent years, there has been an improvement in the openness of employers to the employment of foreigners, but also the danger due to employers looking for very cheap labor to work in inhumane conditions, with salaries not corresponding to either work or life needs.

The numerous shortcomings in the functioning of the state system are trying to be compensated by international organizations, citizens' initiatives and NGOs, which help people under international protection to "move" through the system and achieve their rights. These organizations are social bridges that serve asylum seekers in order to socially link up with institutions on which depends the beginning of their integration in the areas of accommodation, employment, education and health care (Jurković, 2018, p. 65).

In general, Croatia is trying to cope with the problem of integrating migrants into its society, but it is not systematically engaged in this issue. It is also still far from recognizing the social, cultural and economic potential of accepting immigrants. On the other hand, poor Croatia is not attractive to migrants as a definitive destination for living, so many of them do not even bother to integrate.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper is to concisely highlight the challenges associated with migration and the urgent issues related to the integration of migrants. Given Europe's expansion and the opening of its borders, the number of migrants is expected to increase, necessitating continuous consideration of this situation. By fostering cooperation, it becomes possible to tackle the forthcoming challenges and overcome them successfully.

The integration of migrants, although a process with an uncertain outcome, has a largely positive impact on the society, culture and economy of European Union countries and is challenging for both migrants and their hosts. The standardization of integration documents helps national institutions and their migration policies, however, most important is how migration issues are solved at the local level. Consequently, the EU sets a common framework, which is sometimes unsuitable for application 'on the ground'. For example, increasingly being included in integration policy is securitization of migrants (due to terrorist attacks involving immigrants of the Muslim faith or their descendants), which may lead to other conclusions and encourage ethnic isolation of migrants. Immigrants should have the same rights and obligations as the domicile population, not only declaratively, but in reality, because integration is in the interest of all Europeans, as it promotes strong and harmonious communities. However, integration as a two-way process is not possible without the strong engagement of each individual migrant, who for starters need to master the language of the country in which they seek security and the future. Such engagement is hindered, among other things, by the continuous, transnational connections of migrants, which are the result of modern forms of communication and inexpensive transport. This association with the country of origin slows down the integration and social inclusion of persons of migrant origin into the host country's society. Moreover, migrants cannot integrate evenly because they do not have equal opportunities to access cultural, economic, social and political resources. When some of them manage to make a breakthrough, most often in question is success in the economic field. However, cultural factors have a greater impact than economic factors and remain in their cultural circle even after the economic upswing.

Overall, neither migrants nor their hosts are particularly satisfied with the integration of migrants in EU countries. It is the researchers who should formulate recommendations for the further development of public policies at the local, regional, national and supranational levels, as European countries must devise new models, processes and practices to alleviate this problem. At the same time, the role of cultural organizations, sports clubs and various youth associations should not be underestimated, where an attempt should be made, patiently, with small steps, to make the young population aware that Europe is their only home and that they should participate in profit making rather than in the exploitation of social transfers. For the elderly, it may already be too late. Even when they decide to change their attitude, old cultural patterns remain.

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