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# MIGRATION TRENDS IN CROATIA

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Zagreb, 2017

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Naklada: 300 primjeraka

Tisak: Kolor Klinika, Zagreb 2017.

ISBN 978-953-95835-5-0

The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Hanns Seidel Foundation.



 **Auswärtiges Amt**

This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany.

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### Map of Croatia

(Source: <http://www.mapland.com/maps/europe/croatia/large-detailed-political-map-of-croatia-with-roads-cities-and-airports.jpg>)

## 1. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PHENOMENA OF MIGRATIONS

The phenomena of migrations is becoming increasingly relevant in the contemporary period. It is acquiring a growing impact on current geographical, demographic, anthropologic, economic, historical, cultural, political and other determinants of nowadays' life. Hence, it is quite clear that the very issue of migrations represents a multidisciplinary field of research.

Every migration includes territorial mobility, however not all of them can be regarded as migrations. This complex phenomenon is obviously a subject to different interpretations, depending on the aspect of it that is taken into consideration. The spatial aspect divides the migration into intra-state and international, but also long-distance and short-distance. Furthermore, the character of migrations is multiplying its complexity over the course of time. As an illustration, contemporary migrations verge from internal and external, voluntary and forced, political and economic, etc.

Basically, migrations can be divided into three categories: general, special and combined. **The first category** provides a very basic concept that encompasses all physical dislocation of humans from one place to the other. Its principal weakness is related to its unselective approach that does not differentiate migrations from other types of spatial movement of humans. Some more detailed general definitions relate migration to permanent changes of residence and affiliation of persons and groups to their new community. **The second category** highlights the aforementioned multidisciplinary character of the phenomena, viewing the migration through the lenses of different disciplines (demography, economy, culture, politics, security, anthropology, geography...). Depending on the profile, the definitions are focusing on different sets of indicators relevant for their research. **The third category** offers a combination of general character of migrations with one of its specific determinants. For example, if migration is defined as a permanent movement of persons from one place to another in search for a job or for a security, we are obviously dealing with the combined definition of the phenomena.

Taking into account the contemporary dynamics of migration, in particular those that represent a challenge for the Southeast Europe as a region and the EU as such, it seems obvious that combined definition provide the most appropriate framework for this research.

Croatia, as a country in the abovementioned region and the southeastern-most EU member state, let alone Greece, represents an interesting case due to the fact that it is a traditional 'emigration state' increasingly forced to deal with the issue of immigration in recent period. Apart from that, as the crisis calls for common EU solutions, Croatia has been forced to act responsibly as a new member state, being exposed to the migrant flow and coping with it in a very unpredictable post-conflict environment of Southeast Europe. The fact that the country was being faced with it in the period of pre-election campaign unveiled the volume of the impact of crisis on political processes in Croatia, and the other way around, at least to a certain extent with regards to the way the crisis was managed at the national level.

All of the above calls for the thorough analysis of country's migration profile and trends that are about to determine the dynamics of societal developments in Croatia and beyond in the forthcoming period. Due to constant changes and need for adaptations to new developments, this analysis should represent an interesting and useful tool for decision-makers.

## 2. CROATIA AND THE PHENOMENA OF MIGRATIONS IN EU AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

### 2.1. EU policy on migrations – achievements and challenges ahead

The development of common EU migration policy, including the policy of asylum, actually reflects the pace of the entire process of EU integration and institution-building. The main idea is that the policy to be adopted provides an appropriate structure reflecting diverging reality on the ground in member states and fosters the maximisation of profit from increased partnership between community and national institutions in the implementation period. The aim would be to link more firmly the legal immigration to the community development, increase coordination among EU member states and cooperation with other countries, as well as to strengthen the capacities to combat illegal immigration and related organised-crime activities.

So, while there is a clear understanding within its institutions that contemporary challenges seek for a common and comprehensive EU policy, and there is an obvious track record of developments in that direction, the single policy document still does not exist. The issue of solidarity among member states and with those in need for refuge and immigration, as one of basic principles of functional immigration policy (laid down in Article 80 of TFEU) is frequently questioned, especially in times of crisis when member states should take the share of burden of a common policy. That was clearly displayed with the crisis in 2015/2016 when EC quota proposal sparked many tense debates and mutual accusations.

Fundamentally, the legal basis for the EU common policy in the field of migrations has been laid down in the Art. 79 and Art. 80 of the Lisbon Treaty. In principle, while there is a tendency of strengthening of competences at the community level, there is still a strong role of individual member states. *Per exemple*, while the EU has some competences in determining conditions for access and settlement for third-country citizens and may help foster the initiatives and measures undertaken by member states in the field of integration of legal immigrants, the admission rates for immigrants are still determined by member states and the provisions for harmonisation of national legislature in the field of integration are yet to be defined.

Actually, the EU has the strongest competences in fighting uncontrolled immigration, in particular in combat against illegal immigration through the means of effective return policy. In that particular field it is authorised to conclude effective readmission agreements with countries of transit or origin.

In an attempt to define a balanced approach to the issue of immigration – managing properly legal immigration, fighting against illegal one and co-operating closely at the international level in this field with different actors – the EU has made some visible achievements.

In the field of decision-making, the Lisbon Treaty brought in the qualified majority co-decision and strengthened the position of the Parliament at the expense of the Council, i.e. strengthening the

community's role *vis-à-vis* the one of member states. However, the decisive role of member states through the Council in the case of crisis has been secured by authorising that body to introduce provisional measures.<sup>1</sup>

There were also different developments and activities undertaken by the EU in the field of different policies related to the issue in our focus. Exemplary, the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility<sup>2</sup> as been the fundamental framework for the EU external migration and asylum policy. It is based on enhanced co-operation with the countries of origin and transit, enriched with an opportunity to form so-called 'mobility partnerships' with other parties, which contain a variety of measures (development aid, combat against illegal migration etc.) beyond readmission agreements.

The consequences of recent turbulent developments in MENA countries brought the issue of migration to the forefront of the EU's agenda. The Resolution of European Parliament<sup>3</sup>, published in April 2015, strongly reiterated EU's commitment and responsibility for the aforementioned and called for concrete actions (increase funds and other resources, deploy missions where needed and provide care for immigrants based on the principle of solidarity). Following that, the EC published so-called 'European Agenda on Migration' in May 2015<sup>4</sup> declaring the immigration one of its top priorities and introducing prompt and long-term measures for that specific issue.

The prompt measures included multiplying the capacities and funding for Frontex's operations Poseidon and Triton in 2015 and 2016. What was the most important set of measures, but also the one that provoked the most tensions and criticism, was the one invoking the principle of solidarity from the Lisbon Treaty and proposing the temporary system of distribution of asylum-seekers that should lead consequentially to EU's relocation scheme in crisis situations. Linking actions in the field of migrations with other policies, there was also an envisaged scenario to deploy CSDP mission to combat networks of organised crime and fight the growing problem of trafficking with migrants.

In the particular field of asylum, the Amsterdam Treaty has established a common European asylum system in order to harmonise certain aspects of national asylum procedures, enhance their functionality and prevent their misuse. Its fundament lies in harmonisation of standards of acceptance and protection

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1 The Lisbon Treaty, Article 78(2016): <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-the-functioning-of-the-european-union-and-comments/part-3-union-policies-and-internal-actions/title-v-area-of-freedom-security-and-justice/chapter-2-policies-on-border-checks-asylum-and-immigration/346-article-78.html>

2 The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (2016): [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/index_en.htm)

3 European Parliament (2015): European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 on the latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P8-TA-2015-0176>

4 European Commission (2015): European Agenda on migration in May 2015, in: Migration and Home Affairs, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/index_en.htm)



of asylum seekers. In practical terms, it is based on functional co-operation and solidarity among member states, as well as with the countries of origin and transit states.

The so-called Dublin Regulation is a legal act that provides a framework for determination of member state responsibility for the examination of the asylum application, aiming at preventing multiple applications for asylum. The functional problem of the system is the fact that it has been based on the principle of first-entry member state, which means the member state in which an emigrant entered first is responsible for the examination of his/her asylum application. The assumption of existence of adequate and comparable levels of human right protection and standards in all EU member states and of mutual confidence and solidarity among them proved also to be somewhat questioned in the times of crisis in 2015, which significantly affected the overall efficiency of the entire system at the EU level.<sup>5</sup>

In accordance with its Global Approach to Migrations and Mobility, the EU promotes international protection and support to non-EU countries and their asylum systems. The main idea is to foster the protection system as close as possible to the country of origin.

With the aim to support the efforts in the field of asylum policy at the national level, the EU has established a European Fund for Refugees, providing approximately 630 million € in the period between 2008 and 2013 for the support of member states with the extensive number of asylum seekers that is heavily burdening their absorption capacities.

In principle, while there are guidelines from the EU level that should be taken into account at the national level, every member state implements its own immigration policy in practice. However, there are some examples that prove somewhat different. The Schengen Agreement actually has an important role for the development of the asylum system due to the fact that the Schengen Area developed common rules regarding the process of application for asylum, issuing short-term visas and border control.

The development of an integration policy at the EU level represents quite a challenge due to the fact that the authority for development and implementation of those policies rests still at national, and not the community level. The European Council has adopted the document entitled 'Common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union' in 2004, with the aim to facilitate harmonisation of policies at national levels, i.e. provide general guidelines for policy-makers at the national level. Still, the way member states will organize their integration policies depends very much on their specific individual needs and context. Actually, the development of basic common EU principles in the field of integration is important not only due to the aforementioned, but also due to growing need for harmonisation in this specific field. How difficult that is has been recently displayed when EU member states found it very complicated to find a common ground on quotas for immigrants, which dramatically affected the entire capacity of the EU to respond effectively to an emerging crisis.

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5 Goldner Lang, Iris (2013): Is there solidarity on asylum and migration in the EU?; Croatian Yearbook on European Law and Policy, Vol 9 (2013), <http://www.cyelp.com/index.php/cyelp/article/view/172/111>

## 2.2. Croatia's policy on immigration – challenges of convergence with the EU

Croatia has always been very attractive for foreigners, particularly due to its geographic position – captured between the Mediterranean, Central Europe and the Balkans – and favourable overall living conditions. Nevertheless, the post-conflict and post-socialist political and economic environment, coupled with economic difficulties and declining living standards, have boosted the emigration trends and lined-up Croatia among the states with highest emigration rates.

Especially in the period after the accession to the EU, the country experiences increasing trends of both immigration and emigration, having the second trend been dominating and creating a negative migration saldo.<sup>6</sup>

Development of national migration policy was a consequence of two parallel processes: 1) increased relevance of the issue of migration at regional, European and global level and 2) conditionality in the process of EU accession, with the latter obviously having a prevailing impact.

The first official policy document<sup>7</sup> was adopted in 2007 in the midst of the EU accession process. The aims and goals were set very generally and only 17 measures and activities were envisaged, relating predominantly to adoption of legislature. As one could imagine, there was barely any visible track-record of implementation and investments in the organisational infrastructure in the period when the issue was not dominating the wider regional, European and international discourse.

Again, two processes affected the dramatic change in relevance of immigration policy: 1) Croatia's accession to the EU and assumption of responsibility for implementation of EU policies in this specific field; 2) geostrategic turbulences in MENA region and their consequences in the field of migration. In other words, in a very short period Croatia turned from a candidate state dealing with migrations, as with just one of topics in the EU accession process, to an EU member state on an immigration route to the EU in a very difficult regional environment burdened with consequences of security dysfunctions in the 90s. In such set of circumstances, it was obliged to implement common EU provisions and measures in this specific field, maintaining autonomy in decisions on numbers of accepted immigrants and asylum-seekers and having at least limited possibility to influence the development of EU policy in this field as its newest full-fledged member state.

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6 Državni Zavod za Statistiku Republike Hrvatske (2014): Migracija Stanovništva Republike Hrvatske u 2013, Zagreb, 15. srpnja 2014., broj 7.1.2., ISSN 1330-0350, [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/publication/2014/07-01-02\\_01\\_2014.htm](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2014/07-01-02_01_2014.htm)

7 Migration policy of the Republic of Croatia 2007/2008 (2007): <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/index.cfm?action=furl.go&go=/librarydoc/migration-policy-of-republic-of-croatia-for-2007/2008>

After a certain period, the new Migration policy<sup>8</sup> was adopted in the 2013, which is very illustrative given the fact that it was passed in the parliament only few months prior to the EU accession itself. The document focuses on securing that the migration trends will have a positive impact on country's overall development, especially in the field of economy. It aims at increasing the efficiency of the state administration and ensuring good coordination of its bodies in order to respond adequately to challenges of migrations. Obviously, the main aim of the document was to prove satisfactory level of alignment with the *acquis* and EU policies in this specific field, so there was limited consideration of national priorities and trends. Clearly, the document misses affirmative approach to the subject where migration can be used as a producer of a variety of positive trends in the society.

It seems understandable that the changed international position of Croatia, jointly with current trends in the field of migrations, will additionally push for a more adequate conceptualisation of challenges and opportunities the country, jointly with the EU as a whole, faces nowadays. Estimated trends of increase of number of asylum-seekers will only add to that, raising the issue of quality of current policy framework at different levels, flexibility of existing institutional set-up and capacities at the national level to use the potentials of existing setting for sustainable growth and development.

In the field of asylum, Croatian system is largely aligned to main international standards, and EU's ones in particular. At the level of fundamental political rights, the Croatian constitution guarantees protection of aliens and persons without citizenship. Furthermore, it guarantees the protection of national, religious and other minorities, as well as exercise of their expression of national and cultural identity, as well as use of their languages.

In this field as well, the conditionality in the process of EU integration had a crucial role for development of legislature and institutional set-up. The first Asylum Act was passed in 2003 and only following few changes during the next decade, in 2013 it became fully aligned with the *acquis*. In accordance with that, the first Aliens Act, prescribing the conditions of entry, movement and labour of aliens, was adopted in 2003. Similarly to the aforementioned example, it took approximately a decade of reforms and changes to have this act finally completely aligned with the EU's legislature.

With so-called Action Plan for the removal of obstacles to the exercise of particular rights in the area of integration of foreigners in the Croatian society, for the period of 2013 to 2015<sup>9</sup> equal status in different spheres of life has been guaranteed to foreigners, especially in the field of education, labour and residence.

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8 Migration Policy draft proposal number 11 (2013): Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2013 – 2015, Zagreb [http://www.mup.hr/UserDocsImages/minstarstvo/2013/Migration%20policy%20RoC\\_en\\_2013%2002%2005.pdf](http://www.mup.hr/UserDocsImages/minstarstvo/2013/Migration%20policy%20RoC_en_2013%2002%2005.pdf)

9 Vlada Republike Hrvatske (2013): Akcijski plan za uklanjanje prepreka u ostvarivanju pojedinih prava u području integracija stranaca za razdoblje od 2013. do 2015. godine <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/30092013/Akcijski%20plan%20za%20uklanjanje%20prepreka%20u%20ostvarivanju%20pojedinih%20prava%20u%20podru%C4%8Dju%20integracije%20stranaca%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202013%20do%202015%20godine.pdf>

Comparatively, Croatia has gone furthest in the region in development of asylum system, its legislation and institutional infrastructure in particular. However, the implementation and capacities of the system itself are far from perfect, which has been clearly displayed with the immigration crisis in 2015. So, while there is a legislation in place that has been entirely harmonised with the *acquis*, there is still a need for improvements in different fields of practical work, especially in fight against illegal immigration, regional cooperation in the area of labour migration and improvement of educational and working opportunities for immigrants and asylum seekers. On top of that, there is a fact that Croatia has never been a destination country (for statistical data, please see p.15), hence its real capacities have never been properly tested in this particular field. However, its recent accession to the EU and developments in the wider surroundings are slightly changing the trends and the country will gradually be losing its status of entirely transit state for those attempting to reach Western Europe. This will undoubtedly change the pattern of discourse about immigration and increase pressures at the state administration level to consolidate its policy in the field of migration, making it reasonably aligned to fundamental European values and principles and capable of generating growth and using current immigration trends for sustainable development at the national level.

### 2.3. Challenges of regional cooperation

The region of Southeast Europe has unfortunately been known as a generator of instability only few decades ago and regional cooperation was feasible for quite a long period under the guidance or even pressure from abroad. The EU championed fostering regional cooperation, making it one of fundamental elements of its conditionality policy towards the region. Regrettably, in the eve of any looming crisis, or even in the period of pre-election campaign, the rhetoric in the region changes and mutual confidence hits the lowest level.

The same happened with the immigration crisis in 2015. Regardless of the fact that generally all countries in the region have the basic legislature and rules of procedures in place as a consequence of their EU accession processes, the volume of the crisis has put an unprecedented pressure on institutional and management capacities of each of them. This, of course, opened a possibility of mutual accusation in the wider region in an attempt by different countries to minimise the costs and the share of burden they have to carry in a joint attempt to solve the crisis. The fact that all countries had to sign the readmission agreements with the EU in early stages of their accession process, complicated even more their efforts to implement consistently the existing legislation and comply fully with the international standards. In the environment where the EU member states also showed absence of elementary compromise necessary for adequate joint EU response to the crisis, the countries in the region found it very difficult to cope with the challenge and actually failed to develop any regional compromise that could have potentially been helpful.

Instead, they attempted to respond with *ad hoc* policies, acting in a very unconsolidated way and investing more efforts into mutual accusations than on attempts to find viable solutions to the looming crisis. Having said that, one has to take into account the fact that it was very difficult to find a regional framework for management of crisis unless at least one of two conditions were met: stabilisation in the area of conflict/

countries of origin or a compromise on a sustainable joint approach by the authorities of countries of destinations/the EU as a whole. Not only has there been a lack of joint consolidated approach in the EU, but more than few member states has reintroduced border controls and security checks at their national flanks within the Schengen area, focusing mainly on defending national interests and attempting to downsize the share of burden they have to carry. The entire environment has been additionally burdened by estimations of security threat carried by an uncontrolled influx of a vast number of immigrants.

In general, not only among the non-EU states in the region, but also among member states affected by the crisis, this period marked increased tensions in bilateral relations. Some of them started amending relevant legislature and even sending military to national borders within the EU and building walls and fences (Hungary, Slovenia), while others ended up having a bilateral 'trade war' and closing border crossings (Croatia and Serbia). Obviously, the crisis was very much exploited by politicians to heat the regional animosities and acquire short-term political gains at the national level.

Croatia was a very interesting case due to the fact that the peak of crisis coincided with the pre-election campaign and it revealed that the country actually did not have a consent about optimal ways of responding to the crisis, not to speak about a consolidated national policy. As it was the case elsewhere, the issue of immigration was not at the agenda prior to causing severe consequences in 2015. Needless to say, the opposition was heavily criticizing the government for mismanagement of crisis and inadequate response to potential threats to national security, as well as for ill communication with majority of neighbouring states. However, the new government that took office in early 2016 actually brought no changes to policy of dealing with the immigrant crisis after it assumed power, which clearly displayed similar amount of unpreparedness as the incumbent government and highlighted exclusively political motives for criticism in the pre-election campaign. It remains to be seen how the new government will tackle the challenge.

Croatia is clearly a showcase of *ad hoc* policy-making and absence of viable concept of crisis management for vast and uncontrolled immigrant influx that happened in 2015, applicable to majority of countries in the region and EU member states affected by the crisis. As the crisis developed and countries on the route (Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia) started closing their borders for particular groups of immigrants, creating enormous pressure at the Greek-Macedonian border, it became clear that its complexity and potential consequences require a broad consent by all parties concerned.<sup>10</sup>

Not only did the crisis seriously questioned the concept of free movement in the Schengen area but it also dramatically jeopardised the EU's capacity to gain consensus and its legitimacy accordingly. It also became rather costly for almost all parties concerned and threatened to destabilise the region and the EU as such, not to speak about potential geostrategic consequences on the wider scale.

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10 BalkanInsight (2016): Balkan States Close Borders in Domino Effect, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/balkan-migrants-rute-is-no-more-slovenia-declares-03-09-2016-1>

A number of high-level meetings within the EU and with countries in Southeast Europe, as well as with third countries – Turkey in particular, yielded increased assistance of EU institutions to affected member states and upgraded cooperation with countries in the region and Turkey. The aim was to control and downgrade the influx of immigrants by improving border-control and information-exchange, with the EU providing the financial support. Accordingly, the 3 billion € deal with Turkey was signed, in order to improve the status of Syrians in shelters in Turkey, ensure full compliance with EU-Turkey readmission agreement and facilitate the process of visa-liberalisation for Turkish citizens in Schengen area.

The nature of crisis that required a joint approach led to compromising solutions and co-operative approach among EU members and non-member states in the region within the framework of Berlin Process and at the High-level conference on the Eastern Mediterranean/Western Balkans Route held in Luxembourg on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015, where wide set of responsibilities in the field of support to affected countries, addressing the root causes of displacement, as well as fight against organised crime in the field of migrations have been taken by partner countries.<sup>11</sup> The accent was put on return and readmission, information exchange, coordination, joint operations to fight smugglers' networks and organised crime, enhanced cooperation between border police forces at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Berlin Process held in Paris.<sup>12</sup>

Also, an agreement on a broader regional level (incl. representatives of few member states outside SEE, the European Commission, European Council, UNHCR, Frontex, etc.) was signed, consisting of 17 points.<sup>13</sup> In a variety of practical measures, countries have taken the responsibility to nominate a person of contact in order to foster the information-exchange and hence improve the control of the transition of immigrants through the route, as well as strengthen border management (in particular of external EU border). Again, the EU took the responsibility to financially support the mentioned measures through IPA II fund and other additional channels.

Apart from the abovementioned, a number of bilateral agreements and protocols have been signed which helped the situation to normalise and become controllable. For example, Croatia and Serbia signed the agreement that came into force in early November 2015, which helped the authorities to control the movement of immigrants, reduced the income of traffickers, who were profiting large amounts of money from lack of order in transit of immigrants, and facilitated the development of capacities for temporary accommodation during the winter season.

While the tensions declined and the entire crisis seems to be temporarily under control, the regional co-operation in this particular field will depend pretty much on the external pressure of crisis and quantity of

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11 Council of the European Union (2015): High-level Conference on the Eastern/Mediterranean/Western Balkans Route - Declaration <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12876-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

12 Final Declaration by the Chair of the Paris Western Balkans Summit, 4 July 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/policy-highlights/regional-cooperation/20160713-01.final-declaration-by-the-chair-of-the-paris-western-balkans-summit.pdf>

13 European Commission (2015): Meeting on the Western Balkans Migration Route: Leaders Agree on 17-point plan of action, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-5904\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5904_en.htm)

required burden-sharing. In other words, none of the countries in the region has a developed capacities for accommodation of larger number of immigrants and they openly stated their refusal to be treated as 'the hot-spot' for immigrants. Regardless of that, it is likely that the number of those seeking asylum or subsidiary protection will rise, although very modestly, challenging existing regional capacities and complicating political discourse at the national level in Southeast Europe.

### 3. IMMIGRATION TO CROATIA

In present period, the migration of population in general is getting more frequent due to different political, economic, security, cultural and other reasons. In the case of Croatia, finding exact data on immigration and adequately estimating its impact on societal trends and dynamics is easier said than done. Namely, due to the fact that the country only recently regained its sovereignty, being part of different multinational states during last few centuries and changing territorial quantity and shape, it is difficult to acquire exact figures on immigration for Croatia exclusively. However, the trend of immigration into Croatia exists and dates back to 15<sup>th</sup> century when there were movements of people from other parts of Austro-Hungarian Empire (Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia etc.). After the 1st World War and the dissolution of Monarchy the political situation changed, and so did the territorial boundaries of Croatia, which led to new wave of movement of population within and across these boundaries. The same trend characterised the inter-war period and the one after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century marked Croatia with significant inflows of population from other Yugoslav republics and wider Southeast Europe, mainly due to economic or educational reasons. There was also a noticeable trend of immigration from Middle East countries for the same set of reasons, mainly due to the fact that former Yugoslavia had close bonds with so-called non-aligned states. After the violent dissolution of former Yugoslavia, many refugees from other former Yugoslav republics moved to Croatia for security, political and economic reasons, getting an international character in the new regional environment. The immigration policy and related legislature during last decade or so has been framed in accordance with the *acquis* of the EU in the attempt to harmonise the policy at the national level with the European one. However, prior to immigration crisis in 2015 the system and policies at the national level have actually never been tested in practice, let alone the refugee crisis in early 90s, due to very low number of immigrants and asylum seekers in comparison with the EU average.

#### 3.1. Numbers and statistics

As it was previously already stated, Croatia does not have ‘a numerical evidence’ of being a typical destination state for immigrants, especially for those from other continents. The numbers and statistics clearly show that. For example, during last decade or so there were less than 5000 asylum seekers from around the globe, with almost barely noticeable number of those approved. Also, in the same period there was less than one hundred recognised refugees and sixty-five persons under subsidiary protection mechanisms.<sup>14</sup> So, in principle, other than the challenge of the refugee crisis from the early 90s, there were almost no significant new challenges to the country’s system prior to big influx from the Middle East in 2015.

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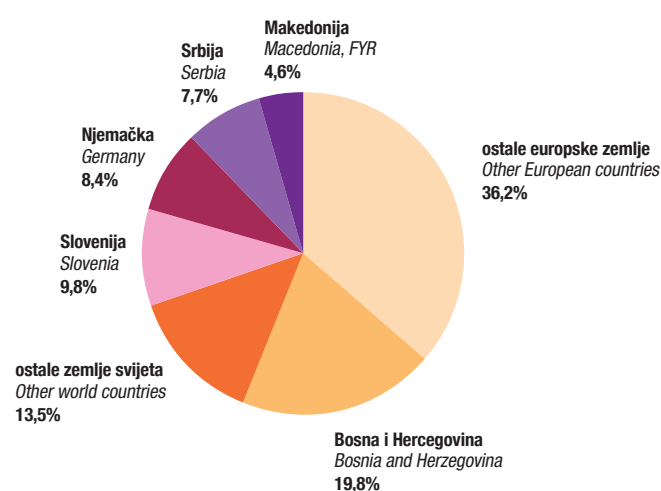
14 Jasna Barberić (2015): Asylum in the Republic of Croatia one year after accession to the European Union, <http://www.unhcr.org/research/working/54dca6ee9/asylum-republic-croatia-year-accession-european-union-jasna-barberic.html?query=subsidiary%20protection%20croatia>



While Croatia is known to be ‘an emigrants’ state’, the process of accession to the EU and changes in its immediate surroundings and beyond seem to be slightly changing the country’s profile. While in the period between 2005 and 2008 there is a limited record of both immigration and emigration, the accession to the EU had obviously brought down some barriers for Croatian citizens and increased the attractiveness of Croatia for foreigners. According to statistics from 2014, citizens of following states have moved to Croatia:

Foreign nationals immigrated to Republic of Croatia, by country of citizenship, 2015

**G-2. STRANI DRŽAVLJANI DOSELJENI U REPUBLIKU HRVATSKU U 2015. PREMA ZEMLJI DRŽAVLJANSTVA**  
**FOREIGN NATIONALS IMMIGRATED TO REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, BY COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP, 2015.**



Source: [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/publication/2016/07-01-02\\_01\\_2016\\_files/image003.jpg](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2016/07-01-02_01_2016_files/image003.jpg)

In numbers, in 2014, there were 10638 persons moving from abroad to Croatia. Significant share of these immigrants are coming from neighbouring countries, BiH in particular. In this context it is important to mention that large majority of those immigrating from BiH actually have Croatian citizenship (as majority of Croats in BiH do), which actually changes the entire context of the statistics due to the fact that those immigrants could also be classified as returnees.

Even during the immigrant crisis (15<sup>th</sup> September 2015 – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016), when 650 thousands of people passed through Croatia, there were actually only 22 of them who wanted to stay and seek asylum in Croatia. So, obviously the country was only a transit destination and the huge influx of immigrants heading westwards did not change the statistics and the country profile significantly. Even EC’s quota’s that Croatia agreed to accept (1,87% of the total EU amount) will not dramatically change the immigration figures, but will for sure bring new dynamics into the system at the national level. However, due to the changing geostrategic environment and new international position of the country (EU member state), it is unlikely that Croatia would remain only a transit country in the long-term period, so it is reasonable to expect the gradual increase of number of immigrants and asylum-seekers.

## 3.2. Institutional set-up

### Ministry of Interior (MoI)

Ministry of Interior represents the main state body dealing with issues related to immigration. It is responsible for registering foreigners and regulating their status in Croatia. The issue of foreigners and asylum seekers is under the authority of Directorate for Administrative and Inspection Affairs. Within it, there is a section for foreigners and asylum, dealing with statutory issues, different asylum-related issues, visas and accommodation for legal asylum seekers. On the other hand, the Directorate for Borders predominantly deals with illegal asylum seekers. The Department for Illegal Migrations, the Adoption Centre for Foreigners and Mobile Unit for Border Surveillance, together with the National Coordination Centre that is responsible for information exchange among member states, are dealing specifically with the aforementioned issues. Another institution, very important in this regard and chaired by the Minister of Interior, was the Headquarters for Coordination of Activities, established by the Government on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015. As it is clearly visible from its name, its main task is to coordinate the activities of different bodies and organisations dealing with the issue of migrations in the period of crisis.<sup>15</sup>

Taking into consideration very low number of asylum seekers, the institutional capacity of the system has never actually been properly tested. However, the process of accession to the EU fostered capacity development in this specific field, stimulating the enhancement of cooperation with non-governmental and international organisations.

### The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare ensures health services and provides lodging for asylum seekers during first two years of their stay in Croatia, while Ministry of Science, Education and Sports offers Croatian language classes and provides basic educational possibilities.

One of obligations taken an route to EU membership - to develop a migration policy at the national level - has led to formation of an inter-sectorial body entitled Permanent Commission for Implementation of Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society. The body is responsible for coordination of different state institutions and their activities in this specific field at the highest level.

### National Protection and Rescue Directorate

National Protection and Rescue Directorate is a leading organization for the protection and rescue of people, assets and environment in the Republic of Croatia. In the period of migration crisis it provided

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15 Lidija Pentavac, presentation at the conference „Trends in migration: The Aspects of the emigration and immigration in the Republic of Croatia“, Hanns Seidel Foundation and Institute for Development and International Relations, 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, Zagreb

a logistical support to the process of admission of immigrants and their accommodation. It mobilised the civil protections units of the state and provided hygienic-sanitary equipment, as well as fostered the process of improvement of conditions in admission centres on the ground.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Croatian Red Cross (CRC)**

The Croatian Red Cross has a mandate to address the humanitarian concerns of migrants “living at the margins of conventional health, social and legal systems”, throughout their journey. Apart from that, the organisation was very active in providing assistance to family reunification during the 2015 crisis. The CRC with UNHCR is implementing two main projects, which is illustrative of its scope of work.

The CRC, with UNHCR support, implements the project ‘Community Services Support to Reintegration of Croatian Refugees’, dealing with issues related to the sustainability of return and social exclusion of vulnerable minorities in the return areas. The focus is on solving difficulties in meeting basic humanitarian needs and accessing to statutory rights as well as basic social services.

With the support of same organisation, it is also implementing the project Community Services for Asylum Seekers and Recognised Refugees, aiming at meeting the needs of asylum seekers accommodated in the reception centres as well as needs of refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection during their integration process.<sup>17</sup>

### **Croatian Law Centre (CLC)**

Croatian Law Centre is a non-governmental and not-profit organization, gathering legal experts, founded with the main aim to promote rule of law in Croatia. CLC has focused its activities on four main areas: protection of human rights, judiciary, public administration and education. Within the area of human rights protection, activities include provision of free legal aid to citizens and other NGOs, dealing in particular with the issue of human trafficking.

In the area of education, the accent is given to fostering capacities and skills of the legal practitioners, while the focus is primarily on vulnerable and marginalised groups in Croatia (asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, Roma people, refugees, mentally and physically disabled), NGOs and citizens.

With the support of UNHCR, the Centre conducts projects dealing with institutions responsible for border management with the aim to ensure access to territory for asylum-seekers and enhanced refugee status procedures.

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16 National Protection and Rescue Directorate (2016): <http://www.duzs.hr/page.aspx?PageID=248>

17 UNHCR, Croatian Red Cross (2016): <http://www.unhcr.hr/partners/hrvatski-crveni-kriz>

Other than the aforementioned non-governmental organisations, there are many more dealing with issues in the centre of our research. Here in particular we have in mind the activities of local municipalities and counties. However, space limits of this publication do not allow detailed elaboration of all of them, which does not necessarily underestimate their importance and contribution.

Interconnectedness and complexity of issues at stake are giving an international dimension to tackling migrations. For that reason, the institutions mentioned above are closely cooperating with numerous international organisations specialised for issues in our focus, such as already mentioned UNHCR, IOM, UNDP and others.

Since International Organization for Migration (IOM) proved to be intensively involved not only in activities on the ground, but also on developing methodological frameworks and tools for the analysis of this specific phenomena, it deserves to be mentioned here, regardless of the fact that it is not genuinely Croatian organization. Currently, IOM conducts two important projects that have a concrete impact on the capacity to tackle the challenge of immigration adequately. The first is called Mobility Tracking Matrix<sup>18</sup>, which is a tool for the determination of routes migrants are using and for tracking their further motion. This is important for detecting present and future needs of people and consequently for adjustment of IOM activities. Migration Crisis Operational Framework<sup>19</sup> is a model whose purpose is to give support and protection to the most vulnerable groups of migrants and to promote respect of human rights and dignity.

### 3.3. Political impact

Unlike the emigration, the issue of immigration did not have a significant influence on the development and dynamics of Croatian politics prior to the immigration crisis in 2015 that happened in the midst of pre-election campaign. Namely, as it was previously stated, the numbers and statistics simply categorised the immigration issue as the one of minor political influence and, unlike during the previous pre-election campaign, it actually never represented an issue for political debates and election programs, like it did in some EU member states.

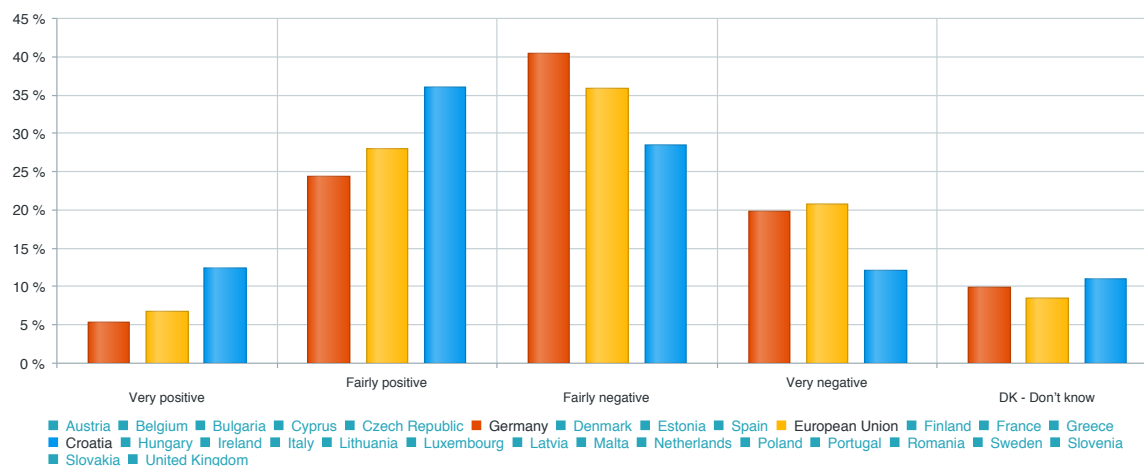
This is predominantly due to the fact that comparative numbers and impact on society and labour market generate different feeling of the overall population which is, of course, reflective at the elections and hence in programs and activities of political parties as well. It is illustrative to compare the opinion polls in Croatia and Germany, which has a significant number of immigrants and this issue is being increasingly politically relevant. As one can see, even before the 2015 crisis erupted, the issue was far more sensitive in Germany than in Croatia. The data on EU 28 shows that Croatia is still much less sceptical than the EU average when it comes to immigration.

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18 International Organisation for Migration (2016): IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, <http://www.iom.int/video/ioms-displacement-tracking-matrix-dtm>

19 International Organization for Migration (2016): Migration Crisis Operational Framework, <http://www.iom.int/mcof>

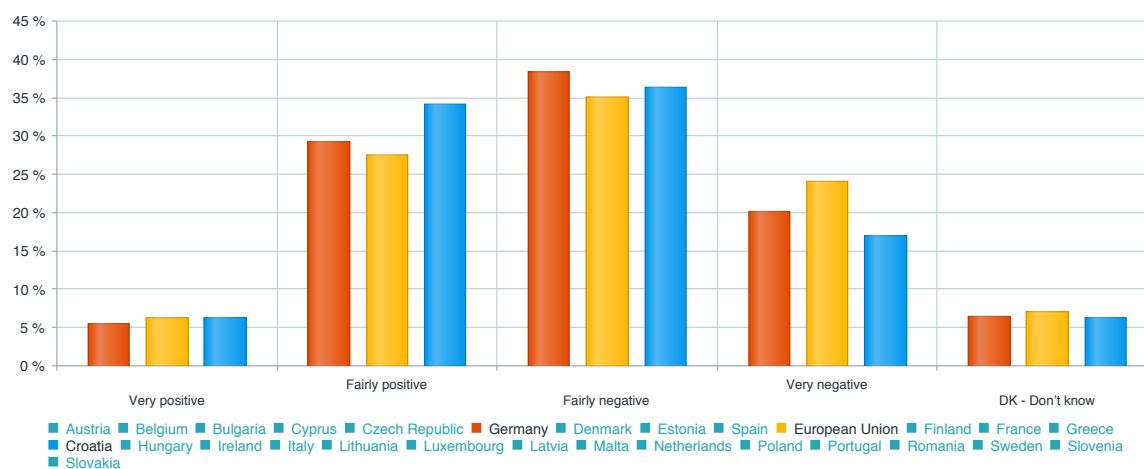
Please tell me whether each of the following statements evokes a positive or negative feeling for you.  
 Immigration of people from outside the EU  
 (11/2014)



Source: Eurobarometer, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/theme Ky/59/groupKy/279>

However, only a year later, when a crisis erupted and started affecting Croatia intensively, showing substantial loopholes in the state’s capacity to respond, the overall feeling of the public started changing significantly, which is clearly visible from the following chart.

Please tell me whether each of the following statements evokes a positive or negative feeling for you.  
 Immigration of people from outside the EU  
 (11/2015)



Source: Eurobarometer, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/theme Ky/59/groupKy/279>

The difference in the opinion polls in Croatia shows the fact that actually there were very few stakeholders seriously dealing with the issue of immigration before the crisis erupted. After it did, many difficulties occurred, especially of material and financial character, bringing the issue at the forefront of the agenda especially in the pre-election campaign.

So, clearly an issue of immigration became a political topic in the pre-election campaign, not only sparking a fierce debate between the government and the opposition, but also negatively influencing the regional dynamics and cooperation. Obviously, the 2015 crisis should be regarded as a trigger for actions and a reminder that the strategic approach to this specific issue at the national level is missing and should be developed by using specific knowledge and experience gained in contemporary environment. It seems clear that, for a country like Croatia, seeking for compromises and a co-operative approach to this specific issue in its closed and wider surrounding hardly has any alternatives.

### 3.4. Cultural impact

The cultural impact of immigrants on the society of recipient state is becoming an increasingly relevant topic, especially in some EU member countries. Namely, other than the fear of socio-economic threat, related mainly to parameters of labour market and welfare system, the one related to socio-cultural threat and exclusivity is attracting the interest of the public and influencing the political discourse throughout the EU and beyond.

So, while the number of immigrants from regions with significant cultural differences is still too low to calculate the socio-cultural impact, which has been clearly shown in the graph on the page 17, the estimations and predictions about the forthcoming trends of increase in number of immigrant from distant countries of origin and the change of so-called 'migration pattern' in Croatia are inviting for different research projects on the attitude of Croatian public towards that specific issue. It is clear that, in the contemporary migration context, each state has to find a way of incorporating the migration trends into its developmental framework, utilizing its resources to protect basic human and minority rights, framing it into sustainable and implementable migration policy.

The basis of a migration policy for any EU member state is actually in the integration policy, which encompasses a process of mutual adaptation of both the recipient society and immigrant population. In principle, there are two major patterns of integration of immigrants – assimilationist and pluralist. The first one is related to the process in which they adopt the entire system of values and norms of the recipient society and are actually being culturally captivated by it. The second, that can be multi-cultural and inter-cultural, is actually based on recognition of cultural differences and their equal status. The first subcategory is based on the peaceful coexistence of different cultures, while the second goes one step further in stimulating the inter-cultural dialogue and exchange, in an attempt to create an environment of shared values and synergy within the society. While there is, at least nominally, an overall impression that pluralistic policies have gradually replaced the assimilation policies, the public in the majority of Western European countries still supports the idea of 'a homogeneous society'. That leads to distortions in perception of immigrants, who are being regarded as a threat to cultural identity and national security. In that sense, the so called cultural aspect, directly related to perception of norms and values, becomes fairly important. Basically, the host society tend to overestimate the importance

of domestic culture and accordingly to significantly underestimate the culture of immigrants, perceiving it different and incompatible.<sup>20</sup>

In Croatia's case, due to increasingly dynamic global and European integration processes, characterised with free movement of labour and persons, one can expect an increase in the field of immigration in the mid-term period, which would obviously change the migration profile of the state. On the other hand, strong ethno-nationalist mobilisation within the national state-building process in the 90s has created strong sense of 'we-ness' and self-perception that is being reflected also in the field of migration policies, making the society less flexible and willing to accept different socio-cultural patterns.

The research of attitude towards migrants in Croatia<sup>21</sup> showed that there is a visible perception of socio-cultural threat from immigrants, characterised with negative attitude towards anticipated impact of cultural interaction with migrants. The essence of that reaction is directly related to non-acceptance of differences and incompatibility of different cultures and a necessity to protect domestic culture. In general, the respondents in this research showed significant level of xenophobia and lack of readiness to accept immigrants. As expected, the socio-cultural threat and exclusion was dominant in potentially socially deprived groups (less educated, with low socio-economic status).

Obviously, the upcoming expected increase in number of immigrants in Croatia will bring serious challenges to integration policies. With existing deficient system, the state will find it very difficult to capitalize on potentials it will bring along. Therefore, the country has to show systematic capacities to anticipate the consequences of existing migration trends and to prepare political, economic, as well as educational set-up for the upcoming challenges in this specific field.

### 3.5. Economic impact

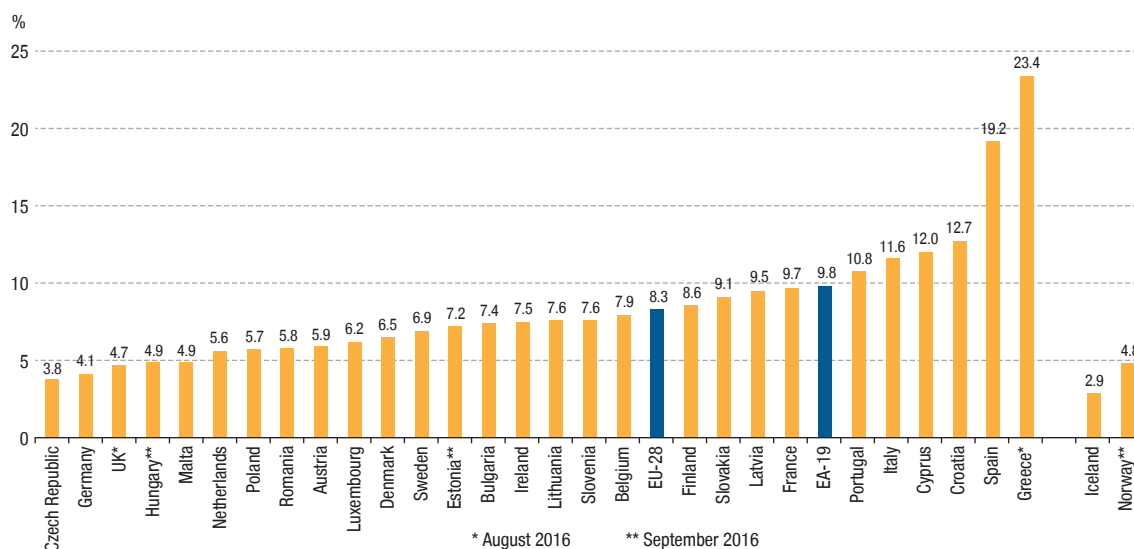
The same as in the case of cultural impact, the numbers of immigrants, especially non-European, are too low to be able to calculate implications for macro-economic figures and welfare system. Additionally, Croatia is suffering from one of largest unemployment rates in the EU, which makes it nominally less attractive for economic immigrants and actually increases emigration rates, especially of highly-skilled labour.

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20 Penninx, R, Spencer, D, N. van Hear (2008): Migration and Integration in Europe: The State of Research, ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, <https://sange.fi/norface/files/migration-COMPAS-report.pdf>

21 Čačić-Kumpes Jadranka, Gregurović Snježana, Kumpes Josip (2012): Migracija, integracija i stavovi prema imigrantima u Hrvatskoj, *Revija za sociologiju* 42 (2012), 3: 305–336

## Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted, December 2016 (%)



Source: Eurostat, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics)

However, the increase of economic emigration from Croatia and of a need for cheap and flexible working force – two characteristics barely acquainted with Croatian labour – will stimulate the increase of influx of workers from non-EU members in Southeast Europe. This is so in particular due to the fact that there is barely any language and cultural barrier for the newcomers and hence they will find it relatively easy to integrate in Croatia, at least economically. This has a potential to change the pattern of the state in the mid-term period, from being entirely emigrant to increasingly immigrant. While membership in the EU contributes to both emigration and immigration, the political consolidation that came along with the reforms processes stimulates the increase of immigration, in particular from poorer and less stable neighbouring countries. In principle, the pooling factors were growing deficits at the labour market and long trends of aging population, as well as wages that were comparably higher than in the neighbouring countries. Some sectors of the economy, like shipbuilding industry, construction and tourism, relied in particular on immigrant workers. However, the global economic crisis and significant decline of economic activities during the last five years or so affected also the dynamics of immigration. This is visible from a substantial down-fall of annual number of working permits issued for foreigners – from 8397 in 2008 to 2315 in 2016.<sup>22</sup>

So, while it is a fact that actually the migration balance is negative from 2009 onwards due to different negative macroeconomic trends that were mentioned beforehand, the contemporary integration processes are affecting migration trends through enhanced freedom of movement of workers and it is not unlikely that increased immigration to Croatia will occur in the forthcoming period.

22 Vlada Republike Hrvatske (2016): Odluka o utvrđivanju godišnje kvote dozvola za zapošljavanje stranaca za kalendarsku godinu 2016, Članka 74. Zakona o strancima (Narodne novine, br. 130/11 I 74/13), [http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2016\\_04\\_39\\_1027.html](http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2016_04_39_1027.html)



The economic crisis, on the other hand, also significantly affects the public support for the integration of immigrants. Even if there is no reliable evidence to the fact that immigrant workers are directly taking job opportunities from domestic labour, the feeling of imported economic threat in the period of economic crisis is no less relevant.

The research in Croatia<sup>23</sup> shows that 75,9% of respondents think that immigrant workers have to adapt to values of Croatian society if they want to work there, 59,3% think that foreign workers would be a burden to existing labour market, the same percent of them think that domestic workers should be given priority in case of equal competences and 55,3% of them thinks that the government should introduce a ban on import of foreign labour.

The first response, authors correctly argue, actually reveals that respondents think that integration of immigrants into domestic market should be conditioned with cultural assimilation, which relates our two sub-topics in a very interesting way.

Overall, one can conclude that the public attitude towards potential increase of immigrants is actually a product of strong national homogenisation in the early 90s and inherent understanding that anything coming from abroad may endanger the domestic political and economic system. Even in the situation when there is a limited number of immigrants, which means that the society as a whole barely notices their presence and carries no burden of it, the projections of change of migration pattern provokes reactions among respondents, especially among those of lower social status and education.<sup>24</sup> The general attitude of the public obviously shows that there will be strong dissonance between its sentiment and growing obligations and challenges for the state in the period to come.

Again, in accordance with the growing trends of immigration into the EU, it is likely that Croatia will hardly remain exclusively an emigrants' country. Obviously, an increasing number of immigrants would opt for settling in Croatia. This calls the state actors, but also non-state ones, to build-up their efforts dedicated to sensibilization of general public, and of youth in particular. This should foster the capacity of the society in general to adequately respond to the forthcoming challenges in the specific field of migration.

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23 Ibid pg. 25

24 Mesić M., Bagić D. (2011): Stavovi hrvatskih građana prema kulturnim različitostima, Migracijske etničke teme (27), 1:7-38

## 4. EMIGRATIONS FROM CROATIA

Croatian emigration was a subject of research of historians, ethnologists, demographers, geographers and many others for quite a long period. First recorded emigrations date back to 15<sup>th</sup> century which brings us to the conclusion that 'Croatia is one of European states with largest emigrants' community'.<sup>25</sup> The history of migration in Croatia actually can be divided in five periods. The first one, from 1880s to the 1st World War, was characterised with the emigration to the United States, South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The second period, between the two world wars, was marked with the emigrations to Western European states (Germany, Belgium, Austria and France). The third one lasted from 1940 to 1948, i.e. the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and the immediate post-war period when there was a significant record of migration to Argentina and other Latin American states, as well as to the Northern America. The fourth period, between 1965 and 1990, was marked by emigrations to the Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The fifth one started with the violent dissolution of former Yugoslavia in 1991 and lasts until today.

In principle, one can speak about three categories of Croats abroad: Croatian emigrants, Croatian minorities and Croats as a constitutional nation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>26</sup> Even a very basic and brief glance at the trajectory of emigrations from Croatia shows the intensity and relevance of the subject matter. However, in order to understand the scale and the volume of the issue, one has to make an effort to analyse the numbers, i.e. the statistics. While trying to preserve the capacity to show longer trends, due to space limits of this piece, we will have to concentrate predominantly on the most recent figures.

### 4.1. Numbers and statistics

It is widely known that Croatia has one of largest diaspora communities among the states of comparable size and population. Different statistics and methodologies used for measuring the quantity of that phenomena make it quite difficult to opt for one that should be considered as the most appropriate and reliable. According to data of the State Office for Croats Abroad, approximately 3 million of Croats and their descendants live abroad. Based on estimations from individual countries, the Office offers the following numbers:

Argentina approx. 250 000	Italy approx. 60 000
Australia approx. 250 000	Luxembourg approx. 2 000
Austria approx. 90 000	The Netherlands approx. 10 000
Belgium approx. 6 000	Norway approx. 2 000
BiH approx. 450 000	New Zealand approx. 40 000
Bolivia approx. 5 000	Paraguay approx. 5 000
Brazil approx. 20 000	Peru approx. 6 000

25 Mesarić Žabčić Rebeka (2012): The importance of the Croatian Diaspora for the development of the Republic of Croatia: Examples from Australia and the USA, *Croatian Studies Review* 8, 130 – 147

26 Državni ured za Hrvate izvan Republike Hrvatske (2016): Zakon o odnosima Republike Hrvatske s Hrvatima izvan Hrvatske, <http://www.hrvatiizvanrh.hr/hr/hmiu/zakon-o-odnosima-republike-hrvatske-s-hrvatima-izvan-republike-hrvatske/47>

Canada approx. 250 000	South Africa approx. 8 000
Chile approx. 150 000	Sweden approx. 35 000
Denmark approx. 1 000	Switzerland approx. 80 000
Ecuador approx. 4 000	Uruguay approx. 5 000
France approx. 40 000	United Kingdom approx. 5 000
Germany approx. 350 000	United States of America approx. 1 200 000
Ireland 4 000* <sup>27</sup>	Venezuela approx. 5 000

Source: State Office for Croats Abroad,

<http://www.hrvtiizvanrh.hr/en/hmiu/status-of-croatian-immigrants-and-their-descendants-abroad/15>

In principle, the number of emigrants is determined by census that is being conducted every decade. According to data of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, from 2014, the overall number of population shrank from 2001 to 2011 by 152 571 persons.

Stanovništvo prema popisima stanovništva						Population by Censuses	
	1961.	1971.	1981.	1991.	2001.	2011.	
Stanovništvo	4 159 696	4 426 221	4 601 469	4 784 265	4 437 460	4 284 889	Population
Gustoća stanovništva na 1 km <sup>2</sup>	73,6	78,3	81,4	84,6	78,4	75,7	Population density per km <sup>2</sup>
Prosječna starost stanovništva: muškarci	30,53	32,44	33,80	35,37	37,5	39,9	Average age of population Men
žene	33,26	35,48	37,14	38,71	41,0	43,4	Women
Očekivano trajanje života: muškarci	64,28	65,65	66,64	68,59	71,1	73,8	Life expectancy: Men
žene	69,02	72,33	74,15	75,95	78,1	79,9	Women
Broj kućanstava	1 167 586	1 289 325	1 423 862	1 544 250	1 477 377	1 519 038	Number of households
Prosječan broj članova u kućanstvu	3,56	3,43	3,23	3,10	2,99	2,80	Average number of persons per household
Udio nepismenih osoba, %	12,1	9,0	5,6	3,0	1,8	0,8	Share of illiterate persons, %
muškarci	6,4	4,7	2,5	1,2	0,7	0,4	Men
žene	17,2	12,9	8,4	4,8	2,8	1,3	Women

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Croatia in numbers 2014, Zagreb 2014, p. 7

Relying on Eurostat data<sup>28</sup>, it is possible to get an annual estimation of average population rate at the national level. These numbers are also confirming the aforementioned declining trends. While in 2012 the overall number was 4 275 984, already in 2015 it dropped down to 4 225 316. The difference between the two figures, of course, cannot be exclusively related to emigration trends but may be indicative indeed of that phenomena as well, both registered and unregistered. Overall, the statistics of migration is very challenging due to the fact that it is difficult to track and measure the movement of adults in the contemporary period. Today, an adult or a family can travel from the country of residence to the final destination without having to seek permission or even registering it.<sup>29</sup> So, the aforementioned 'dislocations' may be short-term and temporary, but a number of them in the last few decades remained permanent and unregistered.

For that reason, among others, these issues are regulated by the Permanent Residence Act<sup>30</sup> (Official Gazette 144/12; 158/13). Therefore, the official statistics for emigration from Croatia can actually reflect

27 Allocation of Personal Public Service Numbers (PPSN's), (2015) [http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/ppsn\\_all\\_month15.pdf](http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/ppsn_all_month15.pdf)

28 Eurostat (2016): <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

29 Mesarić Žabčić Rebeka (2007): Temeljne značajke iseljavanja hrvatskog stanovništva s posebnim naglaskom na iseljavanje u proteklih petnaest godina, Dve domovini/Two homelands (26):97-115, Inštitut za slovensko izseljenstvo ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana

30 Narodne Novine (2012): Zakon o prebivalištu NN 144/12, 158/13, <http://www.zakon.hr/z/557/Zakon-o-prebivali%C5%A1tu>

only the registered cases. For example, the data for 2014 takes into consideration only those who left their place of residence for the period of more than one year and notified the Ministry of Interior.

### Emigration of Population of the Republic of Croatia

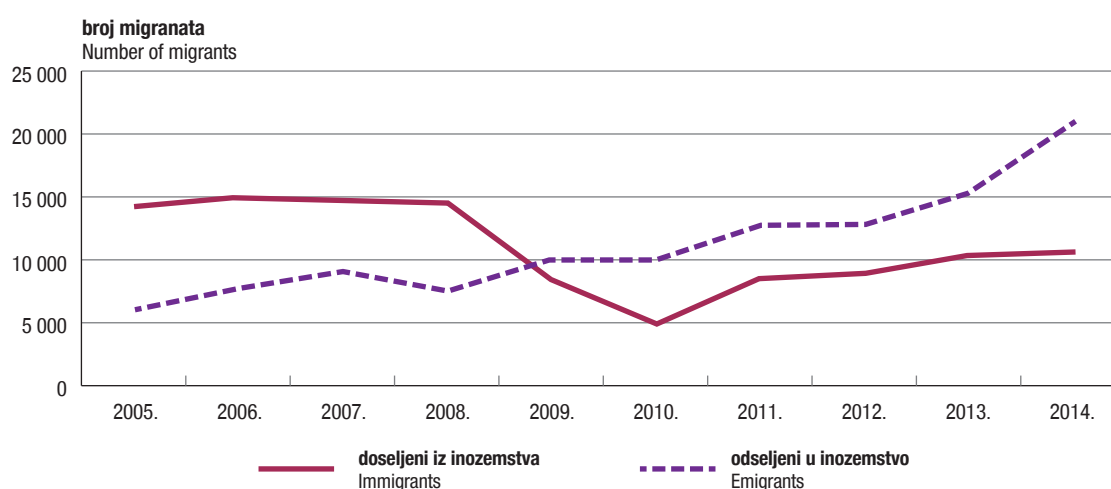
Year	Number of Emigrants
2005	6.012
2006	7.692
2007	9.002
2008	7.488
2009	9.940
2010	9.860
2011 <sup>1)</sup>	12.699
2012 <sup>1)</sup>	15.262
2013 <sup>1)</sup>	15.262
2014 <sup>1)</sup>	20.858

1) For the purposes of alignment with the international standards and the *acquis* of the EU, the data from 2011 onwards are being processed in accordance with the new methodology.

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Migration of Population of the Republic of Croatia in 2014, Zagreb, 2015, [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/publication/2015/07-01-02\\_01\\_2015.htm](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2015/07-01-02_01_2015.htm)

According to the same source, out of the number of emigrants from Croatia, 93,7% were Croatian citizens and 6,2% were foreigners. In total, for the year 2014, Croatia had the negative net migration with foreign countries that amounted to -10 220.

**G-1. SALDO MIGRACIJE STANOVNIŠTVA REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE S INOZEMSTVOM OD 2005. DO 2014.**  
NET MIGRATION OF POPULATION OF REPUBLIC OF CROATIA WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES, 2005 – 2014



Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Migration of Population of the Republic of Croatia in 2014, Zagreb, 2015, [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/publication/2015/07-01-02\\_01\\_2015.htm](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2015/07-01-02_01_2015.htm)

Already having a label of emigrants' state, Croatia should be concerned with increasing trends of emigrations and negative saldo with other countries, especially when speaking about highly skilled labour. In that regard, the problem of aging population becomes even more serious and possible long-term effects on

macro-economic stability might become paramount. Therefore, the country needs adequate policies and institutional set-up to amortise the potential impact of aforementioned existing trends and to maximise possibilities for profit and development at the national level. This is actually becoming increasingly visible in the framework of new demographic policies of current government. However, it will take some time to test proper implementation and impact on society.

## 4.2. Institutional set-up

### State Office for Croats Abroad

The State Office for Croats Abroad is a central state administration body that deals with the relations between the state and Croats abroad. The Republic of Croatia has recognised the importance of relations between the two sides, as well as of maintenance, development and strengthening of Croatian culture and language. Hence, the State Office's core task is to protect rights and interests of Croatian communities abroad and provide assistance for maintenance of their particular identity. It is tasked to coordinate and supervise the activities of relevant ministries, other state administration bodies and different stakeholders from the state with Croats and their communities abroad. Within the framework of its competences, it also undertakes actions necessary to create preconditions for the return of emigrants to Croatia and their incorporation into the economic and political life in the country. There are six main programs conducted by the State Office: 1) Support to Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina; 2) Support to Croatian Minority in twelve European states; 3) Support to Croatian diaspora communities; 4) Support to studying and researching of Croatian language; 5) Support to different kinds of scholarships and 6) Support to financing special needs and projects of particular interests for Croats in new states.

### The Croatian Heritage Foundation

The Heritage Foundation of Croatia, called today the Croatian Heritage Foundation, was found in the early 50s, while its journal 'Matica' has been published for consecutive 65 years. From the early 90s and Croatian independence, different channels of communication and opportunities for support and cooperation with the diaspora in various fields, from culture to sports and economy, have been opened. The Croatian Heritage Foundation is a central national institution dealing with societal and economic activities relevant for the position of Croatian communities and ethnic minorities abroad. The Foundation gathers intellectuals, organises lectures and promotions of different publications of Croatian authors in various countries around the globe.

The Foundation constantly attempts to adopt to new environment and organises different specific cultural, educational, sport, publishing and informative programmes for Croatian communities abroad. It provides different opportunities for active contacts and permanent dialogue among Croatian diaspora members, helping to preserve their heritage and ethno-cultural profile. It also takes part in various humanitarian, ecological and developmental programmes of different civic initiatives, the ones of governmental agencies

and bodies of regional/local administration, contributing to divergence and dynamics of societal dialogue between the diaspora and the state. During last two decades, the particular attention has been paid to creation of digital repository that contains all publications and books published by the Foundation in an electronic form, displaying also the intention to preserve written pieces and make it easily accessible to everybody nowadays.

### **Croatian World Congress**

Croatian World Congress has been founded in 1993 and became operational in 1994 as a non-profit, non-governmental and non-party organisation. It attempts to connect all emigrants of Croatian descent, their organisations and institutions around the globe, fostering unity and ensuring continuity of societal, cultural, spiritual and sport heritage. It also fosters humanitarian activities for reconstruction and development, culture, education and sports, as well as for marketing and information, attempting to stimulate return to Croatia and strengthen the links between the state and diaspora.

As a widely recognised organisation, Croatian World Congress acquired the consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and is invited to designate representative(s) to participate in the work of its different commissions.

### **Croatian Bishops' Conference**

The role of the Catholic Church, its parishes, communities and clergy in particular in Croatian diaspora cannot be overestimated. It had a central role in almost each community, especially during the times of Austro-Hungarian monarchy and Yugoslav federation when it represented a crucial pillar for preservation of Croatian identity and culture. Catholic missions actually had a very important societal, cultural and even economic role due to the fact that they provided networking for initially poorly developed and barely connected communities, thus opening different opportunities for community engagement and business development. So, the role of these missions obviously went beyond transmission of basics of common religion from one generation to the other, especially during the period of intense support to creation of contemporary Croatian state following the fall of Berlin Wall and dissolution of former Yugoslavia.

Contemporary Croatian pastoral missions abroad are organised by the Croatian Bishops' Conference, founded in 1993 by the decree of the Holy See. It has taken 'the managerial role', on behalf of Croatian Catholic Church in coordinating and supporting all its actions around the globe.

Overall, while in general there could always be improvements in the institutional set-up and framework of Croatian diaspora, its activities and impact on political processes in Croatia have been clearly visible over a course of many decades which is also rather telling about the functionality of its institutions.

### 4.3. Political impact

Political activities of Croatian emigrants go way back to their first communities and missions abroad. It started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Northern America and New Zealand, with first manifestations and protests, as well as fund-raising with the aim to support the position of Croatian national corpus within the political framework of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In line with the abovementioned political motives, the diaspora communities were publishing numerous publications, covering political and economic developments in Croatia and in the communities worldwide themselves. Obviously, there is a clear and long-lasting track-record of political and financial contribution on the side of the diaspora that had a significant impact on Croatia's political reality in any given period.

As mentioned above, there was a significant presence of religious missions of the Catholic Church among the Croatian emigrants that were having an important role not only in transmission of religious practice from one generation to another but also in preserving national identity and tradition. That was significant in particular during the times of former socialist Yugoslavia, when actions of well organised diaspora communities with the outspoken national sentiment were considered a threat for the political regime of former Yugoslavia. Numerous actions were undertaken by its intelligence to neutralise the increasingly influential Croatian emigrant community, especially some of its groups that were considered extremist.

In general, the struggle between 'the unionists' political elites in former Yugoslavia and 'the independists' continued even after the fall of the Berlin Wall when the later were strongly supporting the idea of Croatian statehood and sovereignty and providing extensive help in the period of Homeland War.

When it comes to formation of branches of political parties in Croatian diaspora, Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka – HSS*), as the oldest party, dominated the political spectrum of emigrant communities for a long period. In the late 80s, Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – HDZ*) developed rapidly in Northern America and Western Europe, as well as in Australia and Oceania, basically being built on the idea of Croatian statehood. It is important to mention that the diaspora was extensively funding the pre-election campaign of the HDZ and early building process of new security sector. For example, in March 1991, 'A Committee for Charitable Help in Croatia' started operating, together with numerous other charitable funds of Croatian diaspora around the globe.

In principle, there are five aspects of the role that Croatian emigrants play, or can play for contemporary Croatia: promoters of Croatia abroad, a bridge to other nations and cultures, lobbyists for Croatia's interests around the globe, supporters of development of Croatia and carriers of changes and modernisation of Croatia.<sup>31</sup>

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31 Božo Skoko (2016): Zašto smo odbacili Hrvatsku Dijasporu?, [http://www.bozoskoko.com/hrvatski/detalji-vijesti\\_14/zasto-smo-odbacili-hrvatsku-dijasporu\\_15/](http://www.bozoskoko.com/hrvatski/detalji-vijesti_14/zasto-smo-odbacili-hrvatsku-dijasporu_15/)

From the early days of Croatian contemporary statehood until today, a number of emigrants (politicians, writers, sportsmen and others) returned to Croatia and actively have taken part in societal, political, economic and other developments. Some of them assumed highest positions in Croatian state administration, while the best show-case of their impact on Croatian politics (and parliamentary life in particular) remains the fact that a separate electoral unit is reserved for Croatian diaspora, ensuring permanent presence of its representatives in Sabor (Croatian parliament).

One can conclude that recent political developments and security dysfunctions in former Yugoslavia have significantly influenced contemporary migrations in Croatia. Previously dominant forms of migrations (labour migrations to Western Europe and Northern America) became of secondary importance, both in terms of volume and overall significance. With the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, the typology of migration in Southeast Europe changes and so does its political significance. Former internal trends became international, applying different principles and norms, while ethnic descent of migrants becomes increasingly relevant, having an overall impact on political geography and trends in the region, Croatia included.

However, the accession into the EU has downed many obstacles for Croatian citizens to start working in different EU member states and first trends show that the economic emigrations are likely to grow in the forthcoming period, with serious impact on macroeconomic indicators at the national level. It seems clear that the logics of a single EU market and different working opportunities stimulate the mobility of labour, especially those who are highly skilled. This is happening in majority of member states, including those that are highly developed. Therefore, the state system has to be capable of dealing with the consequences of impact of the principle of freedom of movement of workers within the EU market on the migration trends at the national level.

#### **4.4. Cultural impact**

The issue of cultural identity is directly related to the political activities of Croatian diaspora. The dynamics of these processes, due to specific circumstances abroad, are frequently much higher among emigrants than in Croatia itself. Namely, preserving cultural heritage means retaining national identity, especially in the domestic political context of federal multinational state or European integration. As an illustration, it is important to mention that until 1970's, the diaspora could not use the prefix 'Croatian' for the names of its institutions. Especially in Europe, at that time there were only Yugoslav organisations. Only in early 1980's, some modest changes in that regard started taking place in Australia.

Nevertheless, the years of living abroad led to intense processes of adoption of and the adaptation to elements of foreign cultures. Namely, the cultural exchange in Europe led to visible changes, particularly in style of living and working habits. While the first generation has not been affected that much and was consequently less integrated, the second and the third one went through a very intense processes of elementary and secondary education, as well as the one at graduate and post-graduate level, that influenced significantly their system of values and the way of life.



In broad terms, it seems obvious that the cultural 'push factor' for emigration has been the discrimination based on ethnic, confessional or some other determinant while the cultural 'pull factor' should be related to discriminatory relief and return to the homeland.<sup>32</sup> So, it is obviously difficult to map and determine the main elements of contemporary cultural identity of Croatian emigrants, mainly due to two reasons. The first relates to the lack of objective and adequate research due to circumstances and the environment in which it found itself in the second half of previous century (former SFRY) and even after the declaration of independence. Namely, all political and intellectual endeavours of Croatian emigrants were motivated by and directed towards different forms of struggle for formation of a sovereign national state and its long-term consolidation. Notably, even the manifestations with the cultural fore-sign were predominantly marked with that major intention.

On the other hand, there were only modest attempts in Croatia to analyse Croatian diaspora that were obviously limited by the political context of former SFRY and stereotypes that actually prevented the creation of a more objective picture.<sup>33</sup> The second reason is related to contemporary processes at the global level that affect both Croatia and its diaspora. The trends of globalization and regional integration have a significant impact on the processes in focus of this research, making contemporary efforts in the field of analysis and research increasingly complex and achievements modest. Namely, these processes are undeniably liberalising the movement of persons and making it more difficult to measure and estimate their impacts. Hence, it is becoming increasingly difficult to quantify migrations and assess their cultural dimension, especially having in mind also the impact of these processes on dynamics and level of cultural exchange in multi-cultural environment.

#### 4.5. Economic impact

Croatia has gone through paramount economic and demographic changes with long-term negative consequences in a relatively short period. Regardless of the fact that the economy of former Yugoslavia profited extensively from a lucrative political and geostrategic position during the Cold War, the country itself actually never went through the process of thorough industrialisation comparable to one in Western countries. It resulted in very low demand for labour in Croatia and parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina inhabited with Croats, leading to significant amount of economic migration to the countries of Western Europe and Northern America.

The economic processes in the early 90s were marked at the same time with globalisation, transition from centrally planned to market economy, topped with destructions of war and great losses in the field of human capital and infrastructure. The transitional mismanagement has made the economy uncompetitive and far from ready for integration into a larger market. On the other hand, Croatian workers have the

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32 Puljiz Vlado, Tica Josip, Vidovic Davorko, (2014): Migracije i razvoj Hrvatske, podloga za Hrvatsku migracijsku strategiju, Hrvatska Gospodarska Komora, Zagreb

33 Čizmić Ivan, Sopta Marin, Šakić Vlado (2005): Iseljena Hrvatska, Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, Institut za društvena istraživanja Ivo Pilar, Zagreb

opportunity to work abroad for already a few decades. Any further emigration, regardless of the region of departure, represents an additional loss of human capital, raising a question mark over long-term sustainability of health and welfare system. This additionally complicates the functionality of the entire state administration and their legitimacy as such.<sup>34</sup>

The process of emigration from Croatia and immigration to it has been conducted since July 2013 in a new EU 28 environment. Both processes are becoming a subject of regulation beyond economic, social and demographic outreach and space. Basically, membership in the EU removes various obstacles in the field of free movement of persons, making both processes less limited and increasingly difficult to track and control. In that light, an increase of emigration of highly skilled labour can be expected in the period to come, especially due to potential effect of dynamics of European market on changing the current mobility of labour in Croatia. Obviously, there is a growing probability of short-term loss of human capital, in particular young and highly-skilled labour, which may lead to a long-term loss of social capital. Aging population and emigration represent serious problems threatening to cause decreasing functionality of business community. Croatia is placed among thirty countries in the world with the most significant problem of brain-drain.<sup>35</sup>

Positive impacts of emigration are visible in so-called reverse effects, consisting of the following elements: remittances, return after acquiring additional knowledge and skills, possibilities of creating business networks, etc. It is broadly known that diaspora had extensively organised funds for material and financial support in the first phase of creation of sovereign Croatia and Homeland War. The remittances are being sent from that period onwards to their relatives in Croatia, while donations to different organisations and foundations enabled post-conflict reconstruction as well as institutional and business development. The illustration in numbers is more than telling. Namely, Croatian diaspora is channelling more than 1.1 billion € annually to Croatia, which is more than the total of the entire annual FDI amount.<sup>36</sup> Namely, many returnees are currently employed in their own SME's founded abroad or in Croatia upon their return.

Obviously, generating more intense remigration would have had a cumulative positive impact on Croatia's economy. For that purpose, there should be an implementable programme of remigration that should facilitate return to Croatia, overcoming administrative obstacles, finding appropriate accommodation and tax relieves for a certain period, especially for highly skilled labour. Despite visible improvements in migration policies, highly functional and flexible system that should stimulate increased trends of remigration is still missing. The consequence is a relatively small number of returnees to Croatia and low level of impact of Croatian emigrants on societal and economic development of the country, despite significant potentials and capabilities shown in the state-building period.

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34 Ibid pg. 38

35 Ibid pg. 38

36 Veljković Sandra (2014): Dijaspóra u Hrvatsku godišnje pošalje 1,1 milijardu eura, Večernji list, <http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/hrvatica-u-svedskoj-izracunala-dijaspóra-nam-godišnje-posalje-11-milijardu-eura-952683>

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

As we can conclude from everything that has been analysed in this research, migrations are becoming one of determining factors of contemporary societal dynamics in regional, European and even broader global context. Croatia is obviously not an exception and is being increasingly affected by both emigration and immigration trends.

Being a traditional 'emigrants' state' with large diaspora community, it has relatively developed legislative framework and institutional set-up created with the aim to foster the links between homeland and communities abroad. Still, the efficiency and creativity of the way they are used is below satisfactory and seems to be failing to achieve the desired result. The scale of remigration and direct investment of diaspora into Croatian economy should be increased. Different policies and mechanisms that should stimulate the above-mentioned are still under-developed and have not enough capacity to serve as a catalyser for visible improvements. Level of political culture and business environment in Croatia significantly contribute to that. On the other hand, current employment opportunities and living standard are additionally stimulating the increase of emigration rates, especially of highly skilled workers, which threatens to have a devastating impact on the macro-economic stability, not to speak about demographic and political aspects. Therefore, at the national level, there should be more determination into existing efforts to deal with these challenges and to upgrade the overall macroeconomic performance.

Apart from that, in the recent period, country is forced to deal with the issue of immigration. Obviously, geostrategic posture of increasingly unstable environment is provoking a massive exodus of people along the lines of Balkan route, producing a great pressure on management and absorption capacities of countries in Southeast Europe, Croatia included. With the legislature adopted mainly under the pressure of conditionality in the EU accession process, Croatian system have actually never been tested in practice due to very low number of immigrants and asylum-seekers during last decade or so. The 2015 uncontrolled influx of immigrants unveiled all its loopholes and inconsistencies that should be taken into account and tackled in the upcoming period. *Ad hoc* policies and lack of capacity to gain compromise during the crisis even at the level of executive calls for reconsideration of national migration policy. This is so especially due to the fact that Croatia, as an EU member state, will have to participate in policy-making at the community level and share the burden of its implementation. Expected modest rise of number of immigrant and asylum-seekers are inviting for reconsideration of integration policies and existing capacities of its educational and labour dimension. Last but not the least important, potential security risks of a failure to tackle this specific issue appropriately should be seriously taken into the account due to Croatia's geographic and political environment and dependence of economy on its service branch.

Taking into account country's limited resources, ranging from material and human capital to strategic and political relevance at the international level, co-operative approach at the regional, European and international level obviously has no alternatives. Hence, Croatia has to invest additional efforts into finding partners within the EU, region and beyond that would help advocating for a responsible and sustainable policy capable of ensuring security, development and growth that could be derived from existing phenomena of migrations and its consequences in contemporary international environment.

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Zagreb, 2017