

Rebeka Mesarić Žabčić, Nikola Šimunić

Selected Demographic Aspects of Contemporary Migration Trends between Croatia and Austria

After Croatia's accession to the European Union, a trend of increased emigration of Croatian citizens outside the borders of Croatia was noticed. The aim of this paper is to map selected demographic characteristics of contemporary migration trends between Croatia and Austria in the period from 2013 (Croatia's accession to the European Union) to 2020. The paper uses classical demographic statistical-mathematical analytical methods in combination with GIS analysis. The paper is based on official Austrian statistics with a focus on Croatian citizens. The spatial framework of the research is the state level and the Austrian NUTS 3 regions (Gruppen von Gemeinden). According to Austrian statistics, a total of 14,011 Croatian citizens emigrated from Austria to Croatia, and a total of 33,127 Croatian citizens immigrated to Austria from Croatia, which means that Croatia recorded a negative overall migration balance compared with Austria (–19,116 Croatian citizens). As a result, Croatia lost an average of approximately 2,730 people a year due to the emigration of Croatian citizens to Austria.

Keywords: Austria, European Union, Croatia, Croatian citizens, migration.

Izbrani demografski vidiki sodobnih migracijskih gibanj med Republiko Hrvaško in Avstrijo

SPo vstopu Republike Hrvaške v Evropsko unijo je moč opaziti povečano izseljevanje hrvaških državljanov izven meja Republike Hrvaške. Namen prispevka je prikazati demografske značilnosti sodobnih migracijskih gibanj med Republiko Hrvaško in Avstrijo v obdobju od leta 2013 (pristop Republike Hrvaške k Evropski uniji) do leta 2020. V prispevku so uporabljene klasične metode demografske statistično-matematične analize v kombinaciji z analizo GIS. Prispevek temelji na uradnih avstrijskih statističnih podatkih, poudarek raziskave pa je na hrvaških državljanih. Prostorski okvir raziskave zajema državno raven in avstrijske statistične regije NUTS 3. Po avstrijskih statističnih podatkih se je iz Avstrije na Hrvaško izselilo skupno 14.011 hrvaških državljanov, iz Hrvaške v Avstrijo pa se je priselilo kar 33.127 hrvaških državljanov, kar pomeni, da je Hrvaška v primerjavi z Avstrijo zabeležila negativen migracijski saldo (–19.116 hrvaških državljanov). Z izseljevanjem hrvaških državljanov v Avstrijo je Hrvaška v povprečju izgubila približno 2.730 prebivalcev na leto.

Ključne besede: Avstrija, Evropska unija, Hrvaška, hrvaški državljani, migracije.

Correspondence address: Rebeka Mesarić Žabčić, Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Trg Marka Marulića 19, HR-10000 Zagreb, e-mail: rebeka.mesariczabcic@pilar.hr; Nikola Šimunić, Institute for Physical Planning of Lika-Senj County, Ulica dr. Franje Tuđmana 4, HR-53000 Gospić, e-mail: nikola.simunic@licko-senjska.hr.

1. Introduction

External migration implies spatial mobility with temporary or permanent emigration outside the state borders (Nejašmić 2005). Emigrants can be generally divided into legal emigrants, illegal (undocumented) emigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Weeks 2020). Weeks (2020) states that emigration can involve an individual and/or a family, and ghost towns are not necessarily an indicator of community disappearance, but resettlement. However, in the Croatian case, emigration is largely negatively contextualized, as the local population moves outside Croatia.

Croatia is traditionally an emigrant country, and almost four million Croats live around the world. Emigration of Croats outside the national borders, influenced by various pull and push factors, has been facilitated by the removal of previous administrative barriers, with the last emigration wave beginning with Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013 and continuing until today. By 1 July 2020, i.e., seven years after Croatia's accession, Austria abolished the work permit requirement for Croats as well as all forms to be submitted when applying for a job, resulting in faster and easier employment in Austria. On that date, the labour market was liberalised and employment in Austrian companies, with Austrian and Croatian employers, became easier. Some Croatian citizens welcomed the removal of barriers to employment with enthusiasm and, accordingly, a new major wave of emigration of Croatian citizens to Austria is expected, especially since Austria is geographically close to Croatia.

Due to the emigration of young adults in the fertile age, mostly highly educated, but also people with professional occupations, Croatia is facing worrying demographic problems with far-reaching consequences, primarily reflected in the demographic structure of the population. Migrations affect both birth and mortality rates, as well as the population structure (demographic, economic, social, ethnic and other). The emigration of young adults causes negative demographic trends, natural depopulation, and an increased share of the elderly population (Peruško 2016). At the academic level, a recurring problem for migration research is the significant disparity in the data presented by Croatian official statistics and those of destination countries.

2. Research Methods

The paper focuses on Croats who emigrated to Austria, and not on the Burgenland Croats who hold the status of an official minority in Austria. In Austria, migration statistics are based on data from registrations and de-registrations obtained from the Central Register of Residence (CRR). The Austrian statistics of migration and population since 2002 are based on the same data source and thus represent consistent statistics. Migration and population statistics include

all persons who have registered their residence in Austria for at least 90 consecutive days.

Migration statistics in Austria indicate all changes of residence within Austria, from abroad to Austria or from Austria to abroad, since reporting a change of residence is required by law. The 1995 Residence Act defines the basic concept of residence, and migration statistics in Austria since 2002 consist of quarterly data obtained from the CRR. The registration offices enter the relevant data in the CRR, while the Federal Ministry of the Interior submits all applications and cancellations processed in the CRR to Statistics Austria. Therefore, the authors use Austrian statistics data in the desk-analysis method, which entails the analysis of available statistical data. This type of analysis enables the research of possible social changes and behaviours in certain societies.¹

The GIS analysis was also used, based on the application of GIS as a research tool for the calculation and visualization of data. The authors vectorised the Austrian regions' borders, created a GIS database, and calculated the spatial relationships of migration changes in statistical tools. The classification and spatial statistic methods in the GIS environment were applied.

3. Theoretical Framework, Research Subject and Objectives

Croatia has traditionally been an emigrant country whose population has been displaced around the world due to economic and/or socio-political circumstances and motives that have consequently been a strong repressive factor and cause of emigration (Mesarić Žabčić 2012; 2014). Migration is also a very important determinant of the population of Croatia (Živić et al. 2005). The problem of population migration is not faced by Croatia alone but is a global and transnational issue (Perić Kaselj et al. 2021). Migration is not a simple mechanical phenomenon that takes place in society, but rather a complex social process full of dynamics and demographic factors (Lajić 2002).

In recent years, negative trends in the demographic development of Croatia (depopulation, natural decline, the ageing process, etc.) have gained dramatic proportions, ranking Croatia among the European countries with the most unfavourable demographic processes. A possible cause of this situation is the extremely negative migration balance, i.e., the growing number of emigrants from Croatia compared to the number of immigrants (Pokos 2017).

The last big wave of emigration began with the global economic crisis in 2008 and intensified with Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013. It is perhaps the most unfavourable so far as it takes place in a context of reduced birth rates, natural decline, total depopulation, and rapid ageing. The true extent of contemporary and past emigration is not known as many residents do not

report a change of residence before leaving, although they are obliged to do so under the 2012 Residence Act (Pokos 2017).

For every country, human capital is the most valuable capital. Without population, there is no progress and development. The three basic demographic processes are fertility, mortality, and migration. By close analogy, we can say that Croatia is characterized by low birth rates, demographic ageing, and large emigration (Ivanda 2017). These conclusions of demographers were taken into account in this study of contemporary migration trends between Croatia and Austria. Consequently, the lack or shortage of population, especially the younger generations, leads to the destabilization of the basic systems of the state: labour force, pension, health, education, and financial system (Lajić 2007; Hollifield 2012; Martin 2015). Globalization, availability of information, and the legal and organizational ease of movement all make people move faster and easier. The competition among the population, which can be viewed as labour, consumer or human capital, now involves all EU countries and is likely to increase in the future (Mesarić Žabčić 2021). After Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013, a large wave of emigration began that is difficult to stop and continues today. As the theory of Massey's law on migration claims, international migration is much harder to stop than to start (Massey et al. 1993).

As a member of the EU, Austria, due to its proximity to Croatia, is very attractive as a country of work, higher standards, and better legal order.

Throughout history, a whole range of push and pull factors have created and dictated the emigration of the population. High unemployment, an unfavourable economic situation, the inability to find a job in one's profession, the inability of promotion, and the inability to solve the housing situation are just some of the many personal, psychological, and even economic factors triggering the decision to emigrate. People are attracted by the opposite factors and thus move to countries/societies that offer everything that, generally speaking, implies a satisfactory standard of living (Čizmić & Živić 2005; Akrap et al. 2017).

Nowadays, corruption and nepotism are often highlighted as motives for emigration (Jurić 2017), while the decline in total employment, long waits before finding employment in one's profession, and the impossibility of permanent employment (Župarić Ilić 2016) continue to feed a negative demographic trend with major consequences for the basic Croatian systems (Balića 2019). Emigration from Croatia partly reduces the pressure on the labour market as it reduces the number of unemployed in Croatia, yet it also reduces labour supply, which is likely to have long-term negative economic effects with lower GDP and a certain collapse of the pension system as we know it today.

Labour market conditions directly affect migration. According to Lowry's (1966) migration model, the level of employment and income has a direct impact on migration. People move out of low-income and high-unemployment

areas to areas with high incomes and low levels of unemployment (Lowry 1966, cited in Wright & Ellis 2016). In addition to the economic reasons for migration, the latter can also be triggered by certain political, social and demographic pressures (Cox 1976), which can certainly be linked to the situation in Croatia where emigration is associated with reduced job opportunities (especially in rural areas), but also to the general situation within the society (insecurity, corruption, etc.). In Croatia, especially in rural regions, there is a trend of selective emigration (Nejašmić 2005; Lajic 2007; Živić et al. 2005) that contributes to negative demographic trends. This is confirmed by the new 2021 census, according to which all Croatian counties (NUTS 3 regions) recorded a decrease in population in the last intercensal period (2001–2021) (total decrease of –396,360 people), which confirms the prevalence of total depopulation.²

According to official data from the Austrian Statistical Office,³ a total of 8,451,860 people were registered in Austria in 2013, of which 7,447,592 were Austrian citizens (88.1 %) and 1,004,268 were foreign citizens (11.9 %). Regarding the total number of foreign citizens, the citizens of the European Union (EU27, excluding Austria) accounted for 465,744 citizens (46.4 % of foreign citizens), while foreign citizens from other European and world countries accounted for 538,524 citizens (53.6 % of foreign citizens). Among foreign nationals from other EU countries recorded in Austria in 2013, Germany (33.9 % of foreign nationals from the EU), Croatia (12.6 % of foreign nationals from the EU), and Romania (11.4 % of EU foreign nationals) stood out.⁴

Seven years later, in 2020, a total of 8,901,064 inhabitants were recorded, of which 7,414,841 were Austrian citizens (83.3 %) and 1,486,223 foreign citizens (16.7 %). Regarding the total number of foreign citizens, citizens of the European Union (EU27, excluding Austria) accounted for 757,420 citizens (51.0 % of foreign citizens), and foreign citizens from other European and world countries accounted for 728,803 citizens (49 % of foreign citizens). Among the foreign nationals recorded in Austria in 2020, Germany (26.4 % of foreign EU nationals), Croatia (11 % of EU foreign nationals) and Romania (16.3 % of foreign citizens from the EU) (Table 1) stood out again.⁵

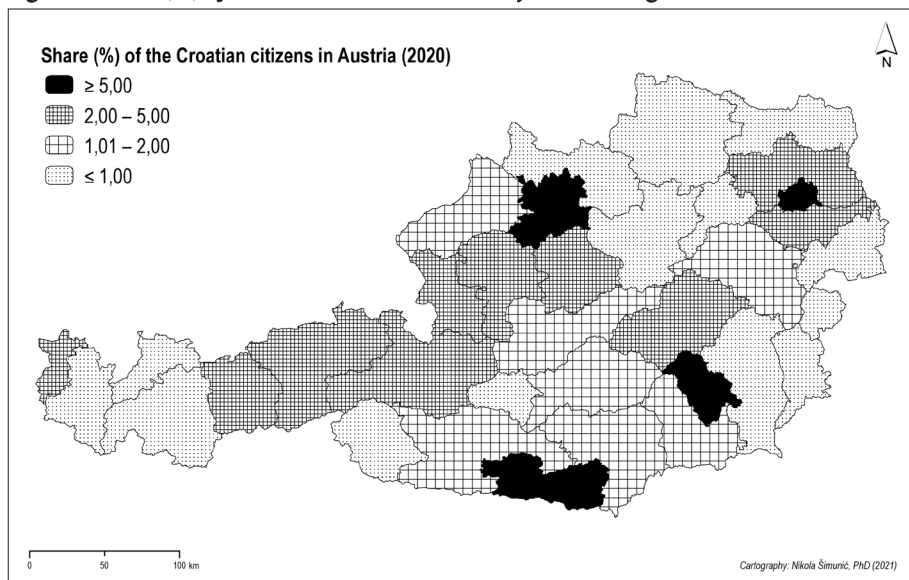
The NUTS regionalisation implies the analysis of the territory of the EU member states by statistical regions of different levels. The basic distinctive criterion is the number of inhabitants, resulting in three NUTS levels. According to these criteria, in Austria, there are three NUTS 1 regions (groups of federal states, *Gruppen von Bundesländern*), nine NUTS 2 regions (federal provinces, *Bundesländer*), and thirty-five NUTS 3 regions (groups of municipalities, *Gruppen von Gemeinden*).

Table 1: Population of Austria by citizenship (selected countries) in 2013 and 2020

Citizenship	2013	2020	Population change 2013–2020 (%)
Austrian	7,447,592	7,414,841	-0.44
Foreign total	1,004,268	1,486,223	47.99
Belgian	1862	2653	42.48
Bulgarian	14,144	32,528	129.98
Cypriot	125	259	107.20
Czech	10,232	14,182	38.60
Denmark	996	1230	23.49
Estonian	385	590	53.25
Finnish	1301	1721	32.28
French	6869	9011	31.18
Greek	3695	7393	100.08
Croatian	58,619	83,596	42.61
Irish	1058	1800	70.13
Latvian	1045	1761	68.52
Lithuanian	1086	1652	52.12
Luxembourgish	634	1187	87.22
Hungarian	37,004	87,516	136.50
Maltese	74	122	64.86
the Netherlands	7498	9739	29.89
German	157,793	199,993	26.74
Polish	45,965	64,429	40.17
Portugal	2260	3989	76.50
Romanian	53,261	123,459	131.80
Slovak	25,333	43,621	72.19
Slovene	9592	21,441	123.53
Spanish	4272	7901	84.95
Swedish	2810	3157	12.35
Italian	17,831	32,490	82.21
EU	465,744	757,420	62.63
Other foreign	538,524	728,803	35.33
TOTAL	8,451,860	8,901,064	5.31

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022a (author's calculations).

Figure 1: Share (%) of Croatian citizens in Austria by NUTS 3 regions in 2020



Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022a; GISCO 2020.

Observed through the prism of the geographical distribution of the share of Croatian citizens by Austrian NUTS 3 regions, the largest share of Croatian citizens (2020) was recorded in the regions of Wien (22.67 %, i.e., 23,128 Croatian citizens) and Graz (11.25 %, i.e., 9,406 Croatian citizens) (Figure 1).

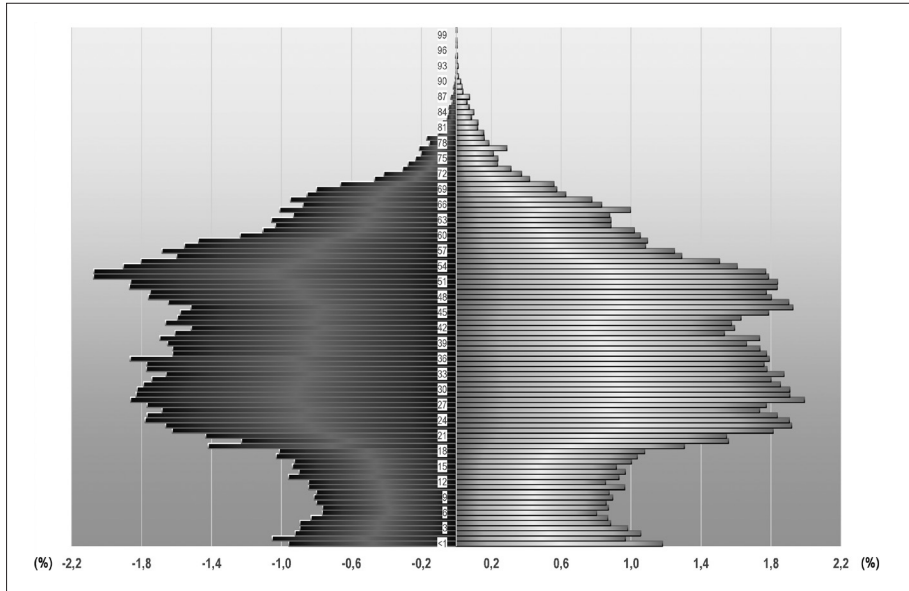
The age-sex structure of the population reflects the composition of the population by age and sex and is a good indicator of the current state of the population and a predictor of future trends in population development. According to Austrian statistics on Croatian citizens, it is possible to create an age and sex pyramid of Croatian citizens in Austria (2020) and analyse it.

It should be kept in mind that the age and sex pyramid shows the recent age and sex composition of Croatian citizens in Austria and is mainly the result of the migration of Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria on the one hand, and the dynamics of losing Croatian citizenship on the other, which is regulated by Austrian legal provisions.⁶

The age-sex pyramid (constrictive pyramid) shows a prevalence of the elderly population (working contingent) (Figure 2).

Most often, according to age, the population is divided into 3 cohorts: young (0–14 years of age), mature (15–64 years of age) and old (65 and older). In 2020, Austria recorded 11,259 Croatian citizens in the young category (13.47 %), 65,705 in the mature category (78.60 %), and 6,632 in the old category (7.93 %).

Figure 2. Age-sex pyramid of Croatian citizens in Austria in 2020



Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022a.

The fact is that at management levels in the countries of immigration, immigrants (especially highly educated ones) are viewed from the perspective of their potential contribution (in terms of intellectual and professional competencies) to the society they immigrate to (Hercog 2019). A similar process of brain drain, i.e., emigration of the highly educated labour force, was recorded in neighbouring Slovenia (Josipović 2020).

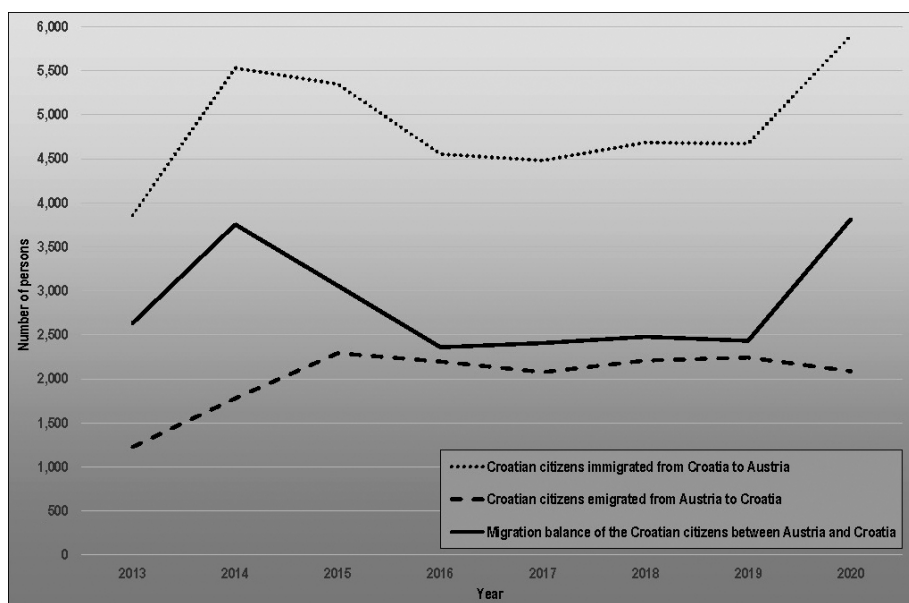
Long-term emigration limits economic growth considering that in most cases the ones who emigrate are younger people at fertile age who are also the greatest contributors in the sense of payment of taxes and health and pension contributions (Šterc 2016; Mesarić Žabčić 2021).

4. Selected Features of Migration Movements of Croatian Citizens between Croatia and Austria (2013–2020)

According to Austrian statistics, a total of 39,025 Croatian citizens immigrated to Austria from Croatia (2013–2020), while 16,096 Croatian citizens emigrated from Austria to Croatia. Thus, the migration balance of Austria compared with Croatia (in terms of immigrated Croatian citizens) was positive and amounted to 22,929 persons. On average, in the observed period, about 4,900 Croatian

citizens a year immigrated to Austria, while about 2,000 Croatian citizens emigrated from Austria to Croatia, which means that Croatia lost on average about 2,900 Croatian citizens every year. Croatia is deemed a less developed country in terms of economy and population and is more prone to emigration in the context of globalisation processes, especially after EU accession which sees an increased emigration of the able-bodied population (Jurić 2017). The largest group of potential emigrants (migration potential) consists of those who are dissatisfied with the economic situation in the country and believe they can capitalise on knowledge in foreign markets (Božić & Burić 2005).

Figure 3: Migration movements of Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria and vice versa (2013–2020)



Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022b.

With Croatia's accession to the EU, the number of registered Croatian immigrants from Croatia to Austria increased by 43.4 % in the first year of membership. After that initial wave, the immigration of Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria decreased in the following years and stabilized at around 4,700 people a year. In 2020, the immigration of Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria intensified. On the other hand, the emigration of Croatian citizens from Austria to Croatia (known as return migration) increased until 2015 when it stabilized at about 2,200. It can be assumed that these are people who may not have found adequate employment in Austria or have completed their short-term (perhaps study) stay there and returned to Croatia. Accordingly, the positive (for Aus-

tria) migration balance grew until 2014, then decreased and stabilized at around 2,400 people a year, and later increased again (Figure 3).

The age-sex structure of immigration/emigration is a very important aspect because it can contribute to the immigration area (immigration of the younger population) and be very unfavourable for the emigration area (emigration of the bio-reproductive base), but also (less often) vice versa. Since the population is most often divided into young (up to 19 years of age), mature (20–64 years of age) and old (65 and older) (Nejašmić 2005), it is possible to identify possible structural changes in migration.

In the observed period (2013–2020), 7,190 young people (18.42 %), 31,194 mature people (79.93 %) and 641 old Croatian citizens (1.64 %) immigrated to Austria from Croatia. It is interesting to note that among mature Croatian citizens, younger age groups (especially 20–24 years of age) prevailed, which shows that a significant part of the emigration wave from Croatia to Austria consists of students and job seekers. Among the Croatian citizens immigrating to Austria (2013–2020), there were 22,408 men (57.42 %) and 16,617 women (42.58 %). Persons of mature age prevailed both among male (82.31 %) and female immigrants (76.73 %).

Table 2: Immigrant and emigrant Croatian citizens on the route Austria–Croatia (2013–2020)

	Male						
	0–19		20–64		65 +		Total
	aps.	rel.	aps.	rel.	aps.	rel.	
Immigrants	3709	16.55	18,443	82.31	256	1.14	22,408
Emigrants	685	7.00	8498	86.78	609	6.22	9792
	Female						
	0–19		20–64		65 +		Total
	aps.	rel.	aps.	rel.	aps.	rel.	
Immigrants	3481	20.95	12,751	76.73	385	2.32	16,617
Emigrants	583	9.25	5197	82.44	524	8.31	6304
	Total						
	0–19		20–64		65 +		Total
	aps.	rel.	aps.	rel.	aps.	rel.	
Immigrants	7190	18.43	31,194	79.93	641	1.64	39,025
Emigrants	1268	7.88	13,695	85.08	1133	7.04	16,096

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022b (Author's calculations).

5. Migration Movements of Croatian Citizens between Croatia and Austria (2013–2020) at the Austrian Regional (NUTS 3) Level

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The regional analysis of the migration of Croatian citizens on the Austria–Croatia route was conducted at the Austrian NUTS 3 level (35 statistical regions). Persons with Croatian citizenship and Croatian descent were taken into account. These persons are not necessarily Croats by nationality, that is, they are not necessarily born in Croatia.

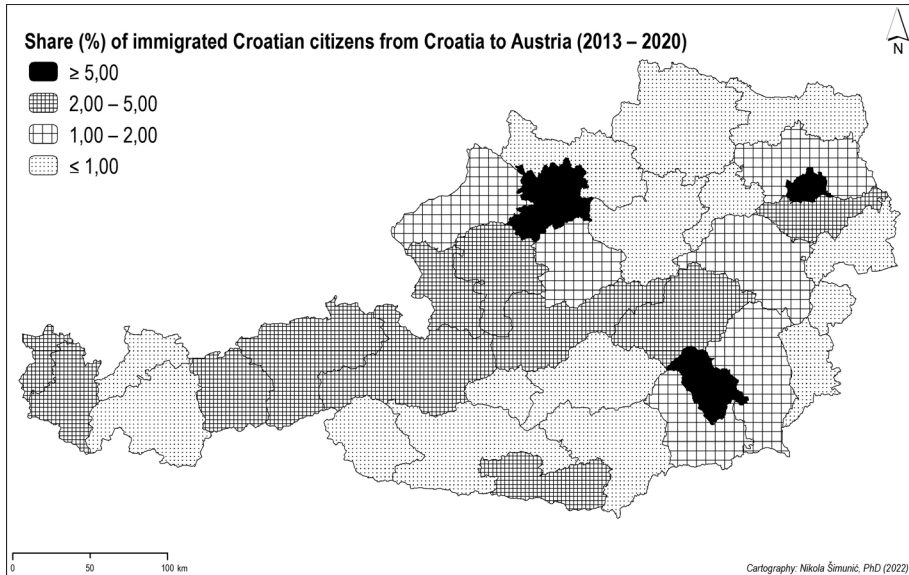
In the period 2013–2020, all Austrian NUTS 3 regions recorded a positive overall migration balance of Croatian citizens with Croatia.⁷ Some NUTS 3 regions recorded a more prominent total migration balance of Croatian citizens with Croatia, such as the NUTS 3 regions of Vienna (positive migration balance +5,359 persons; 23.37 % of the total positive migration balance for Austria compared with Croatia), Graz (positive migration balance +3,541 persons; 15.44 % of the total positive migration balance for Austria compared with Croatia) and Linz-Wels (positive migration balance +2,567 persons; 11.20 % of the total positive migration balance for Austria compared with Croatia), and some recorded a less prominent total migration balance of Croatian citizens from Croatia, such as the NUTS 3 regions of Weinviertel (positive migration balance +15 people; 0.07 % of the total positive migration balance for Austria compared with Croatia), Mittelburgenland (positive migration balance +32 people; 0.14 % of the total positive migration balance for Austria from Croatia) and Waldviertel (positive migration balance +37 persons; 0.16 % of the total positive migration balance for Austria from Croatia).

According to Austrian statistics (2022), most of the previously mentioned 39,025 Croatian citizens immigrated from Croatia to the NUTS 3 regions of Vienna (28.06 %), Graz (14.75 %) and Linz-Wels (9.64 %). In the same period (2013–2020), as many as 20,472 Croatian citizens from Croatia moved to the mentioned NUTS 3 regions. The NUTS 3 region of Vienna consists, at the lower level of the regional breakdown, of 23 municipalities. Most of the Croatian citizens were recorded in the southern and central parts of the region/city. These areas are the municipalities of Favoriten (2,971 Croatian citizens; 12.85 % of Croatian citizens of the region) and Ottakring (1,920 Croatian citizens; 8.30 % of Croatian citizens of the region).

On the other hand, the lowest number of Croatian citizens immigrating from Croatia to Austria (2013–2020) was recorded in the NUTS regions of Weinviertel (0.12 %), Osttirol (0.16 %) and Mittelburgenland (0.20 %). In the same period, only 186 Croatian citizens from Croatia moved to the mentioned NUTS regions. An insight into the structure of the population at the micro-level (2020) shows that, out of only 163 Croatian citizens living in the NUTS 3 re-

gion of Osttirol, most of them were recorded in the eastern part of the region. This is the municipality of Lienz (117 Croatian citizens; 71.78 % of Croatian citizens in the region), with only 11 municipalities (or 33 in the NUTS 3 Osttirol region) having 1 or more Croatian citizens (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Share (%) of immigrated Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria according to NUTS 3 regions 2013–2020



Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022b; GISCO 2020.

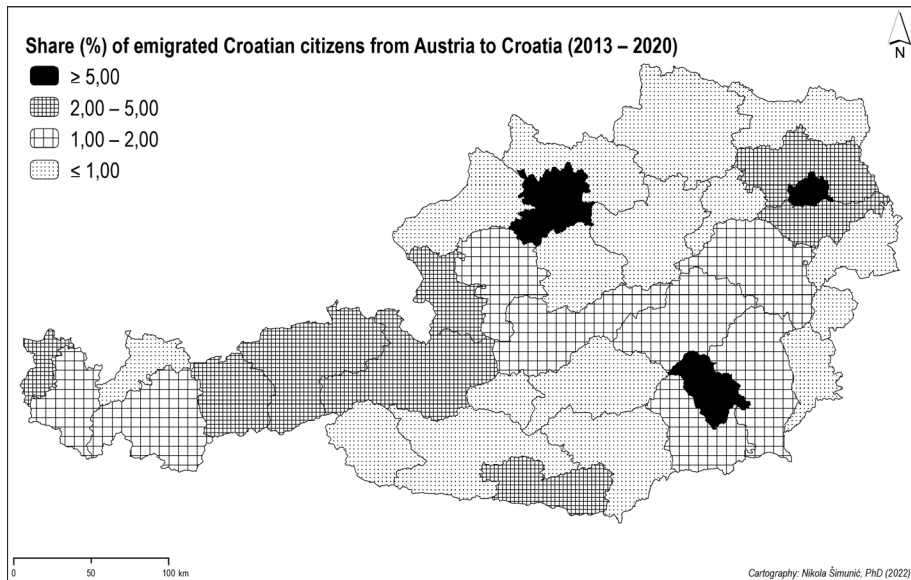
2020 saw the maximum immigration of Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria (Appendix 3). Compared to the previous year (2019), there was an increase in the immigration of Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria in as many as 26 (out of 35) Austrian NUTS 3 regions. The largest increase in relative terms was recorded in the NUTS 3 regions of Sankt Pölten (the change index 2020/2019 was 380.00) and Weinviertel (the change index 2020/2019 was 333.33), while in absolute terms the largest increase was recorded in the NUTS 3 regions of Vienna (+448) and Linz-Wels (+220).

The above-mentioned data from Austrian statistics show that total immigration to Austrian regions has been intensifying. Vienna is still as important to Croatian citizens (as a destination for migration) as it was at the beginning of the observed period.

According to Austrian statistics (2022), out of the previously mentioned 16,096 Croatian citizens that emigrated from Austria to Croatia between 2013 and 2020, most of them emigrated from the NUTS 3 regions of Vienna (34.75 %), Graz (13.77 %) and Linz-Wels (7.42 %). In the same period, 9,005 Croatian

citizens emigrated from Croatia to the mentioned NUTS 3 regions. The lowest number of emigrated Croatian citizens from Austria to Croatia (2013–2020) was recorded in the NUTS 3 regions of Osttirol (0.12 %), Weinviertel (0.19 %) and Mittelburgenland (0.26 %). In the same period, only 92 Croatian citizens from Croatia emigrated from the mentioned NUTS 3 regions (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Share (%) of emigrated Croatian citizens from Austria to Croatia by NUTS 3 regions 2013–2020



Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022b; GISCO 2020.

2015 saw the maximum emigration of Croatian citizens from Austria to Croatia. Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in the emigration of Croatian citizens from Austria to Croatia in 25 (out of 35) Austrian NUTS 3 regions. The largest increase (in relative terms) was recorded in the NUTS 3 regions of Sankt Pölten (the change index 2015/2014 was 242.86) and Rheintal-Bodenseegebiet (the change index 2015/2014 was 213.79); in absolute terms, the largest increase was recorded in the NUTS 3 regions of Vienna (+184) and Linz-Wels (+60).

By comparison, in 2019, there was an increase in the emigration of Croatian citizens from Croatia to Austria in 19 (out of 35) Austrian NUTS 3 regions compared to the previous year. The largest increase in relative terms was recorded in the NUTS 3 regions of Mühlviertel (the change index 2019/2018 was 1000.00) and Außerfern (the change index 2019/2018 was 240.00), and in absolute terms in the NUTS 3 regions of Tiroler Unterland (+39) and Pinzgau-Pongau (+29).

Data from the Austrian statistics suggest that the total emigration from the Austrian regions decreased and is not as intensive as in 2015. It is possible to assume that the majority of Croatian immigrants from Croatia made their living in Austria, that is, they managed to get a job. Return migrations were certainly significant enough, mainly due to the student population returning to Croatia after completing their studies (or a semester). Among the returnees, there are also families who did not manage to settle down in Austria.

6. Conclusions

The paper examines selected demographic characteristics of the migration contingent consisting of Croatian citizens of Croatian origin who moved from Croatia to Austria and from Austria to Croatia (return migration) in the period between 2013 and 2020. Austrian statistics are accurate and provide an insight into certain demographic characteristics based on which it is possible to draw some synthetic conclusions.

A total of 16,096 Croatian citizens emigrated to Croatia from Austria (2013–2020), and a total of 39,025 Croatian citizens immigrated to Austria from Croatia, which means that Croatia recorded a negative overall migration balance compared with Austria (–22,929 Croatian citizens) in the observed period.

This is because the Austrian labour market is relatively close to Croatia and migration has been made easier after Croatia's accession to the European Union. There is also a certain developmental disparity between Croatia and Austria which, combined with historical factors (the former affiliation of parts of Croatia to Austrian territory and a significant community of Burgenland Croats), is a very pronounced pull factor for emigration from Croatia to Austria. Although emigration from Croatia to Austria has stabilized in recent years, an increase in emigration in the post-pandemic period is possible.

It is important to point out that all Austrian NUTS 3 regions recorded a positive migration balance with Croatia, with the most attractive regions for immigration for Croatian citizens being the NUTS 3 regions of Vienna, Graz and Linz-Wels. These are, of course, the largest Austrian metropolises which, due to greater employment opportunities, are very attractive destinations for Croatian citizens.

In the context of the age structure of Croatian citizens who immigrated from Croatia to Austria, there were 6,220 young people (18.78 %), 26,349 mature people (79.54 %) and 558 old people (1.68 %). Among the mature Croatian immigrants, younger age groups (especially 20–24 years old) prevailed, which shows that a significant part of the emigration wave from Croatia to Austria consists of Croatian students and job seekers. Among Croatian citizens who immigrated to Austria (2013–2019), men prevailed (56.94 %) over women (43.06 %).

It can be concluded that Austria is a very attractive migration destination for Croatian citizens. Younger people mostly move to Austria due to greater employment opportunities, while students most often return to Croatia after completing their studies.

According to research by Ščukanec (2017), most of the younger emigrants plan to return to Croatia either in retirement or when the conditions for employment in Croatia improve, which will certainly contribute to the demographic renewal of Croatia as well as to the increase of knowledge and capital investments, which will especially affect the development of rural areas.

Considering the broader migration issues, we believe that Croatia should take a strategic approach to planning its migration policy since migration is a strong destabilizing factor in Croatia's demographic trends.

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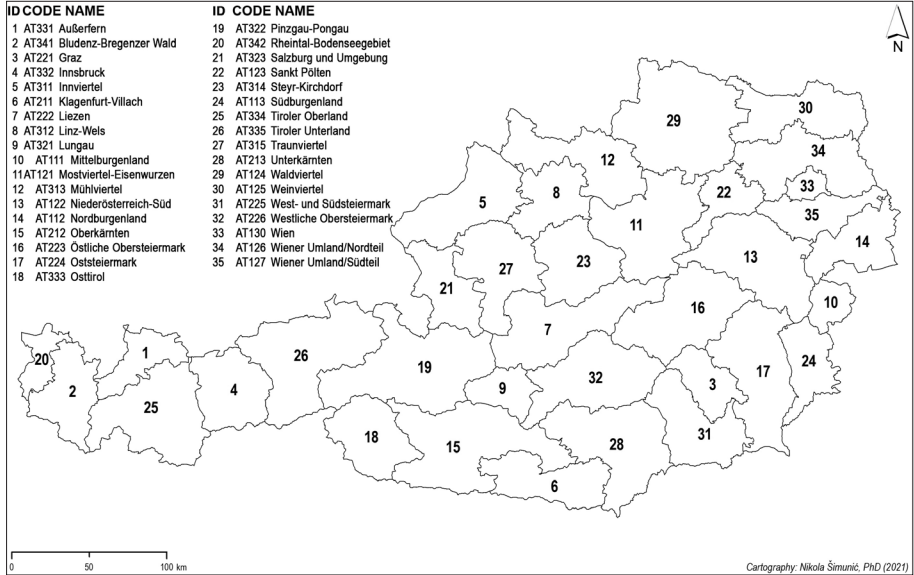
Notes

- ¹ More about desk analysis in Milas 2009.
- ² The County of Vukovar-Sirmium recorded the largest decrease in the population (population change index –80.46) and the City of Zagreb the least (change index –97.46). Negative demographic trends are most clearly seen from the data confirming that a decrease in the population (2011–2021) was recorded in 91.37 % of Croatian cities and municipalities (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2012; 2022).
- ³ Numerous authors have warned about the discrepancy in the statistics on emigration between Croatia (Croatian Bureau of Statistics) and foreign countries (Pokos 2017; Rajković & Iveta 2017; Jurić 2018; Jerić 2019). That is one of the reasons why the authors of this paper use only data from the Austrian statistics.
- ⁴ This data should be viewed through the prism of the total population of the mentioned countries (2013): Germany – 80,523,746 inhabitants (almost 19 times more than Croatia); Croatia – 4,262,140 inhabitants; Romania – 20,020,074 inhabitants (almost 5 times more than Croatia) (Eurostat 2021).
- ⁵ Continuing the comment in the previous footnote, the population of the mentioned countries (2020) was: Germany – 83,166,711 inhabitants; Croatia – 4,058,165 inhabitants; Romania – 19,317,948 inhabitants (Eurostat 2021).
- ⁶ Bundesrecht konsolidiert 2022.
- ⁷ By comparison, in the previous eight-year referential period (2005–2012), 15 Austrian NUTS 3 regions recorded a negative migration balance of Croatian citizens with Croatia (STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022a).

Appendices

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Appendix A: 1 NUTS 3 regions of Austria (2021)



Source: GISCO 2020.

Appendix B: Croatian citizens in Austria by NUTS 3 regions (2013–2020)

NUTS 3 regions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Außerfern	278	277	285	280	280	288	301	313
Bludenz-Bregenzer Wald	341	374	438	530	618	685	720	751
Graz	5422	5891	6521	7095	7583	8168	8737	9406
Innsbruck	1687	1777	1886	1939	2001	2032	2093	2140
Innviertel	871	913	1002	1058	1144	1183	1241	1344
Klagenfurt-Villach	3190	3356	3530	3657	3797	3901	4093	4301
Liezen	904	968	1093	1173	1259	1339	1413	1492
Linz-Wels	5377	5708	6249	6699	7135	7620	8098	8616
Lungau	94	109	111	131	143	168	187	197
Mittelburgenland	107	108	124	143	148	155	152	157
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	274	300	309	334	334	356	378	401
Mühlviertel	107	114	120	147	149	162	179	191
Niederösterreich-Süd	814	851	919	982	1037	1070	1121	1148
Nordburgenland	526	554	595	633	660	684	714	728
Oberkärnten	758	761	794	822	830	855	881	915

NUTS 3 regions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Östliche Obersteiermark	1604	1677	1798	1896	2025	2117	2271	2462
Oststeiermark	380	406	459	486	533	571	617	661
Osttirol	130	139	147	155	154	150	157	163
Pinzgau-Pongau	1725	1807	1898	2037	2113	2206	2356	2445
Rheintal-Bodenseegebiet	1519	1573	1715	1809	1922	2000	2068	2134
Salzburg und Umgebung	3398	3438	3585	3677	3767	3898	3976	4057
Sankt Pölten	330	337	379	382	399	417	429	426
Steyr-Kirchdorf	1142	1207	1317	1424	1509	1604	1669	1744
Südburgenland	221	235	256	256	258	260	268	276
Tiroler Oberland	317	311	321	334	350	393	431	458
Tiroler Unterland	2047	2167	2250	2348	2453	2621	2782	2900
Traunviertel	1881	1943	2068	2229	2331	2444	2612	2717
Unterkärnten	682	701	715	761	784	810	806	844
Waldviertel	137	131	135	165	160	152	158	145
Weinviertel	142	149	148	164	182	203	210	229
West- und Südsteiermark	619	654	682	741	797	876	1019	1173
Westliche Obersteiermark	807	840	909	954	985	999	1021	1050
Vienna	17.596	18.789	20.038	20.933	21.498	22.089	22.530	23.128
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	1738	1825	1971	2078	2135	2278	2307	2372
Wiener Umland-Südteil	1454	1569	1708	1796	1861	1928	2004	2112
TOTAL	58.619	61.959	66.475	70.248	73.334	76.682	79.999	83.596

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022a.

Appendix C: Croatian citizens who immigrated from Croatia to Austria by NUTS 3 regions (2013–2020)

NUTS 3 regions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020.
Außerfern	14	24	11	12	18	16	29	23
Bludenz-Bregenzner Wald	60	77	116	119	124	100	105	83
Graz	474	693	704	647	689	773	823	955
Innsbruck	112	147	125	109	99	107	103	135
Innviertel	50	87	79	73	62	62	72	81
Klagenfurt-Villach	194	204	181	182	183	190	199	228
Liezen	73	132	120	123	112	98	118	90
Linz-Wels	327	553	510	415	462	445	415	635
Lungau	22	16	20	15	37	26	25	21
Mittelburgenland	3	14	21	8	12	7	6	8
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	17	38	30	7	18	15	14	17

NUTS 3 regions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020.
Mühlviertel	10	16	23	4	8	7	15	12
Niederösterreich-Süd	57	61	76	46	48	35	35	64
Nordburgenland	31	47	53	29	24	38	31	33
Oberkärnten	21	42	33	28	33	45	42	60
Östliche Obersteiermark	75	125	123	124	107	154	204	197
Oststeiermark	22	64	54	56	51	66	66	54
Osttirol	9	9	7	4	5	12	6	10
Pinzgau-Pongau	104	121	168	142	145	184	163	186
Rheintal-Bodenseegebiet	83	168	167	131	98	122	122	165
Salzburg und Umgebung	126	188	159	144	159	156	130	235
Sankt Pölten	9	30	19	19	10	8	10	38
Steyr-Kirchdorf	54	118	121	85	74	83	67	94
Südburgenland	22	29	25	18	12	16	8	15
Tiroler Oberland	32	42	40	46	60	58	64	41
Tiroler Unterland	162	134	173	169	200	230	199	166
Traunviertel	81	165	157	132	136	139	134	167
Unterkärnten	30	28	52	50	31	35	42	48
Waldviertel	0	7	20	9	10	6	10	19
Weinviertel	1	3	8	11	4	5	3	10
West- und Südsteiermark	48	58	81	79	85	112	111	119
Westliche Obersteiermark	29	74	52	45	31	38	37	58
Vienna	1328	1753	1615	1320	1145	1157	1093	1541
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	80	133	114	70	95	52	64	138
Wiener Umland-Südteil	97	131	92	82	94	87	107	152
TOTAL	3857	5531	5349	4553	4481	4684	4672	5898

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022b.

Appendix D: Number of Croatian citizens who emigrated from Austria to Croatia by NUTS 3 regions (2013–2020)

NUTS 3 regions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Außerfern	7	21	10	8	7	5	12	8
Bludenz-Bregenzer Wald	16	17	30	37	53	48	73	46
Graz	146	224	270	297	287	346	327	320
Innsbruck	30	54	82	67	59	58	62	59
Innviertel	7	13	23	14	23	17	21	23
Klagenfurt-Villach	58	96	90	83	111	71	88	82
Liezen	24	22	24	38	26	27	36	35

NUTS 3 regions	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Linz-Wels	66	132	192	147	167	176	158	157
Lungau	10	4	7	4	3	15	12	18
Mittelburgenland	2	4	4	3	4	13	3	14
Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen	2	13	6	10	3	8	8	3
Mühlviertel	2	6	5	7	4	1	10	7
Niederösterreich-Süd	22	25	41	33	39	16	32	16
Nordburgenland	14	11	20	13	26	23	19	11
Oberkärnten	9	10	13	16	11	15	17	17
Östliche Obersteiermark	22	27	42	45	28	43	44	57
Oststeiermark	6	16	23	18	17	29	34	28
Osttirol	2	2	0	4	3	3	1	5
Pinzgau-Pongau	30	26	36	50	32	40	69	72
Rheintal-Bodenseegebiet	28	29	62	52	56	65	52	33
Salzburg und Umgebung	65	79	100	80	69	71	75	79
Sankt Pölten	5	7	17	4	9	7	9	7
Steyr-Kirchdorf	9	17	17	13	18	20	25	22
Südburgenland	8	12	22	14	12	6	6	7
Tiroler Oberland	32	27	27	24	19	30	38	36
Tiroler Unterland	42	57	61	64	62	70	109	94
Traunviertel	21	34	37	37	35	33	32	36
Unterkärnten	15	9	8	15	7	20	10	10
Waldviertel	0	4	6	4	13	5	5	7
Weinviertel	1	0	4	2	8	6	3	6
West- und Südsteiermark	16	25	30	30	22	29	22	49
Westliche Obersteiermark	18	11	22	18	14	10	11	11
Vienna	428	664	848	826	729	769	705	624
Wiener Umland-Nordteil	32	35	57	58	44	54	44	34
Wiener Umland-Südteil	30	44	55	60	55	58	69	52
TOTAL	1225	1777	2291	2195	2075	2207	2241	2085

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2022b.