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Trends in Demography and Migration in Serbia

The Art of Depopulation

1. Introduction

The demographic features of Serbia do not differ significantly from the similar indicators of Western Europe (with the exception of migration). The aim of this chapter is to point out the most important tendencies regarding the demographic trends. This will include the perceptions of the decision-makers and the analysis of the national strategies with the intention to find a solution to the current situation. The last part of the study deals with the issue of migration, pointing out the consequences of the two Yugoslav Wars and the powerlessness of the government concerning the constant decrease of the population. At the moment, the population of Serbia is decreasing by 35,000 people per year, 10–15,000 of which is due to the extent of emigration. According to the tendencies, this trend may be slowed down to some extent, but it is expected to remain influential in the long run.

2. General trends after 1990: The background of the declining population

2.1. Changes in fertility

The rate of fertility in Serbia has seen a dramatic decrease.

Following the Second World War, on average 3.05 children were born for every woman, which was an outstanding result (RAŠEVIĆ 2004). The first major decrease was in 1995, when the rate of child birth declined, and at this point only 2.81 children were born for every woman. After the period of constant decline, the next milestone event took place during the First Yugoslav War, when, for obvious reasons, the number of children born was less than two for every woman. By 2016, this number further decreased to reach a mere 1.46 (Statista.com 2016). Between 2006 and 2016, the rate of fertility has stabilised around this number. Compared to that of what was seen in the 1980s, it can be said that the period of moderation set in around the start of the war, with the low point of 1.38 children in 2007. According to the 2011 census data, in case of those identifying themselves as Bosniaks, Romanians, Albanians or Muslims, this number reached an average of almost three children for every woman.

The natural decrease in the population of Serbia has been a problem since 1992, when the number of child births was lower than the number of deaths. By 2016, the number of

live births was two-thirds of the number of deaths. This is explained by the Yugoslav Wars, the high rate of emigration (to be discussed further on), and the increasing rate of poverty emerging in the 1990s. This decade did not provide the necessary conditions for raising children, and thus the number of couples taking this step also declined. During the time of the economic recovery of the 2000s, it was this decreased willingness to start a family that made it more difficult for a demographic growth to take place.

In recent years, less than 70,000 babies were born in Serbia annually, while the highest birth rate was around 150,000 children in the first half of the 1950s. The decrease in the fertility rate and the lower number of child births resulted in the significant population ageing, and so by 2018, Serbia has made it to the top ten of the countries with highest median age. One of the important transformational changes of fertility is the aforementioned late childbearing starting from the year 2000, which is also reflected in the increase of the average age of women having their first child. In 1950, this was 27 years, which by 2002 decreased to 25.3 (an all-time low), and increased again to 29.6 by 2017. In the urbanised areas, the average age of women having their first child is 30.4 years, while in the rural areas, it is 27.8 (Vajma.info 2017).

Infertility is also an emerging problem for the country, because it affects 10% of the population at the age of being able to bear children. According to official figures, the target number of birth rates is set at 2.1 in Europe, while in reality it is closer to that of 1.58. This rate is even worse in Serbia, where the number is 1.5 children for every family, and every third couple has no child at all.

2.2. Transformation of family behaviour

The average age of those getting married for the first time is currently 28.2 years among women and 31.2 years among men. Regional variations are seen for these figures as well, because in the South of the country the average age of getting married for the first time is 27.3 years among women while in the region of Belgrade it is 31.7. In the South of the country, the average age of getting married is 31.2 years among men, and in the region of Belgrade it is closer to 34.9 years (PETROVIĆ 2018). In 2016, the vast majority of marriages (31,669) took place between those of same nationalities, and the number of mixed marriages was only 4,552. Besides late marriages, the low intensity of marriages is also an increasingly common tendency, as young adults tend to choose other forms of relationships. With the decline in the number of marriages and the increased age of getting married, the number of singles is also increasing, following the Western European trends. In case of Serbia, this has led to a drastic change, since the ratio of singles among men between 30 and 34 years has rose up from 39% in 1991 to 52% by 2011. With regards to divorces, in 1991 the number of divorces was 1.06% for every 1,000 people (8,018), which was still over 1.3 in 2002 (9,982) (KOCIĆ et al. 2008, 42), and 1.3 in 2017 (9,262) (Mdpp.gov.rs 2018). While in 2003 every fifth marriage ended in divorce, this ratio has become even higher and according to the latest figures, every fourth marriage ends in divorce by now. As for the number of divorces, in 2016 there were 9,000 of them, most of which took place in the North of the country (5,511 cases). The average age of men getting

a divorce is 43.5 years, while for women it is 40. The mothers are given custody over the child(ren) only 40% of the time.

2.3. Changes in mortality

The mortality rate in Serbia after the year 2000 can be regarded negative. During the 1950s and 1960s, on average the mortality rate was around 60,000, which by the 1970s exceeded 70,000, and 80,000 by the 1980s, and so the rate of mortality increased in proportion to the increase of the number of people. Starting from 2000, however, it was over 100,000, which has not produced better numbers ever since. In 1953, life expectancy for men was 57.7 years, which increased to 68.5 by 1990. For women, this number started from 60.4 in 1953 and reached 74.2 by 1990 (Worldpopulationreview.com [s. a.]). Based on the latest available data, the current numbers are 72.8 for men and 78.8 for women. In spite of the changes in the rate of mortality, Serbia is lagging behind the average of the European Union (which was 78.1 for men and 83.6 for women in 2014). The reasons behind the unsatisfactory statistics is partly due to the underdeveloped healthcare system, since a large part of deaths are the results of vascular disease, heart attack and tumours (IHME 2016).

2.4. Demographic ageing

The rapid changes in fertility and mortality rates have led to intense demographic ageing in Serbia. The country is among the states struggling with the issue of the most rapidly ageing population (PENEV 2014), due to the decrease of fertility rates and the increase of the average life expectancy. Those having been born between 1950 and 1980 are facing the problem of gradual ageing, while the ones being born later start a family at a later and later time and at the same time with fewer children per family. The effect of the wars in the 1990s on the ageing of the Serbian society is something that also needs to be considered. During the 1990s, the rate of emigration and its effects on the changes of the population cannot be neglected, because it was mostly the younger generations (under the age of 40) that were affected by this phenomenon. The period between 2002 and the present days has seen a rate of emigration similar to that of times of peace, when it was mostly the younger generation that decided to leave the country, adding to the increased rate of ageing.

2.5. Changes in the educational structure

The improved and expanding educational system was another factor contributing to the changes in the number of marriages and childbearing in case of the younger generations, the delayed cases of which were previously a result of widespread secondary school education, while in recent decades they have been influenced by higher education and career building. The statistical numbers all seem to support the above, as while in 1953 43% (the largest part of the population) did not have educational attainment, 42% finished elementary

school (4 years), according to a 2011 survey 20.76% finished the first eight grades, 48.93% finished secondary or grammar school, and 10.59% managed to get a degree from university and 5.65% from college, 11% had incomplete primary school, and 2.68% were without educational attainment (RZS 2013, 33). 30% of the people in the age group between 30 and 34 have a higher education degree (RZS 2013), the number of illiterate people has dropped by 50% (to 127,000 people in 2011), out of whom 82% were women (with an average age of 71 years and mostly living in rural areas).

2.6. *The ethnic structure*

The ethnic composition of the Serbian society has undergone a major change by the turn of the millennium. The primary reason for this was the period of wartime between the different ethnic groups, pushing many to leave the country, and also the assimilation of mainly the minority groups, which proved to be successful. A third important element was the result of the natural reduction of the population. The significant amount of “disappearance” of the Muslim minorities (Albanians and Bosniaks) is apparent. Finally, the decrease in the number of Hungarians and Croats has produced the largest values.

With respect to the absolute values, the Serbian majority of the population has grown and consequently, their relative number within the whole of the society has grown. The figures obtained from the survey conducted in 2011 clearly show that there are two main communities that have seen large growth in numbers. It is important to note that the growth in the number of Vlach people is due to the self-reclassification of the people not identifying themselves as Roma, but still considered one nonetheless. In the last 60 years, the Roma population has tripled in number, the reason for which is the high rate of reproduction. Experts warn that the statistical figures do not reflect the reality, as there are many who do not identify themselves as Roma people, and therefore the estimated number was somewhere between 250,000 and 400,000 in 2002. The Roma NGOs, however, predict that this number is closer to 750,000 (OSCE 2008, 20). It is also important to note that the mortality rate among the Roma population is four times higher than the country average. The community lives under similar circumstances which characterises the Balkan region, and are given similar opportunities as in Western Europe, and the discrimination impacting them is very significant. Furthermore, the rate of unemployment among the Roma population is much higher than in case of other ethnic groups, and they also excel as regards crime rates. The government has worked out several programs and has launched numerous projects all with the aim of reintegration, all of which are yet to prove to be fruitful.

Table 1
Ethnic composition of Serbia (1953, 2011)

	1953		2011	
	Capita	%	Capita	%
Serbs	5,152,939	73.83	5,988,150	83.32
Albanians	565,513	8.10	5,809	0.08
Bosniaks	—	—	145,278	2.02

	1953		2011	
	Capita	%	Capita	%
Bulgarians	60,146	0.86	18,543	0.26
Bunjevci	–	–	16,706	0.23
Vlachs	28,047	0.40	35,330	0.49
Goranci	–	–	7,767	0.11
Yugoslavs	–	–	23,303	0.32
Hungarians	441,907	6.33	253,899	3.53
Macedonians	27,277	0.39	22,755	0.32
Muslims	81,081	1.16	22,301	0.31
Germans	46,228	0.66	4,064	0.06
Roma people	58,800	0.84	147,604	2.05
Romanians	59,705	0.86	29,332	0.41
Russians	7,829	0.11	3,247	0.05
Ruthenians	23,720	0.34	14,246	0.20
Slovaks	75,027	1.08	52,750	0.73
Slovenians	20,717	0.30	4,033	0.06
Ukrainians	–	–	4,903	0.07
Croats	173,246	2.48	57,900	0.81
Montenegrins	86,061	1.23	38,527	0.54
Other	68,917	0.99	17,558	0.24
Did not declare	–	–	160,346	2.23
Regional affiliation	–	–	30,771	0.43
Unknown	1,994	0.03	81,740	1.14
Summa	6,979,154	100	7,186,862	100

Source: RZS 2012, 14–15

2.7. Regional heterogeneity

In the 1990s, Serbia was characterised by great differences between each region (SZÜGYI 2015), and in the 2000s, the main focus was to change this situation. As the European integration process continued, the NUTS system was gradually adopted, and the (more developed) region of Northern Serbia was created, followed by the less developed region of Southern Serbia, in compliance with the NUTS1 system. The standard of living the regions of Northern Belgrade and Vojvodina are higher as regards the unemployment rate and GDP, while in the case of Šumadija, Western Serbia and Southern and Eastern Serbia, lower income rates and emigration still prevail. At this point, the fifth NUTS2 region is not discussed (Kosovo and Metohija), because it has not been considered an integral part of the bigger Serbia since 2008.

Serbia is on the way to becoming a homogeneous Serbian state, but it is important to address the territorial spread of the ethnic groups discussed in the previous chapters. According to the poll numbers, the largest minority groups are found in the Vojvodina region and the border areas, close to the parent state. Its historic background makes the Sandžak region an exception, which is mostly dominated by the Bosnian minority groups, who are less interested in keeping close relations with the other Bosniak groups scattered all over

the other parts of Serbia. Regional diversity can be seen among the different regions of the country, as well as someone living in Southern Serbia identifies themselves to be of different ethnicity than those living in areas, such as Vojvodina or the capital city. This trend can also be experienced between native Serbians and those that only settled in the country as refugees during the time of war. All these factors may sometimes lead to tensions even within the same ethnic groups.

3. Population outlooks and decision-makers' reactions

As seen in the previous chapter, the fertility rate in 2016 reached 1.46, which is expected to get closer to 1.67 by 2030, and 1.73 by 2050. It is a slow increase, but the population of the country will still decrease in number. By 2050, the rate of population drop will rank Serbia on the 116th place in the world ranking (Worldometers.info s. a.). The estimates published in 2009 predict that the number of people under the age of 18 will only grow from 17.3% to 18.6% by the year 2030, while for those over 65, it will change from 17.3% to 22% by 2030. These figures suggest that while in 2007, Serbia was in first place within Europe with regards to the highest number of young people, the country will drop to the 4th place by 2030, and the current 5th place regarding the people in the over-65 age group will change to the 24th place (STOJILKOVIĆ GNJATOVIĆ – DEVEDZIC [s. a.]). This is still a decent value compared to the whole of Europe, but the problem of ageing will seriously impact the country. By 2030, the median age will reach 43.2, and 46.4 by 2050 (Statista.com [s. a.]). The reasons behind this trend are attributed to the reforms of the pension scheme, the growth in the number of newborns, the improvements of the healthcare services and social security.

The future projections of the Minister without Portfolio puts things in a somewhat different perspective. The official predictions include two different scenarios. According to the analysis with the lowest values, the number of people under the age of 15 will reach 11.7% in 2041, compared to 14.4% in 2011, and the amount of people in the over-65 age group will change from 17.3% to 25.5%, while the ratio of those in the over-80 age group will more than double, from 3.5% to 7.8%. At the same time, the median age will grow from 42.1 to 46.5. The optimistic scenario shows different numbers: people under the age of 15 will add up to 15.9% of the population, the age group over 65 will reach 23.6%, and people over 80 will amount to 7.3% of the population, with a median age of 44.1 years (Mdpp.gov.rs [s. a.]).

In 2006, when the National Strategy of Ageing was drafted, the demographical priorities were not on the agenda, and so at this time, the government put emphasis on the social security, social integration and maintaining the standard of living of these social groups (National Strategy on Ageing 2006). The strategy was covering the period between 2006 and 2015 and was later not extended, which presently leaves the Serbian government without a separate document that would address this issue.

The Serbian government first started dealing with the issue of population decline when the Pronatalism Strategy containing 8 directions and about 70 different measures was adopted. The goals of the strategy are the following: 1. Reduction of economic costs of childbearing; 2. Reconciliation of working life and parenting; 3. Alleviation in the psychological costs of parenting; 4. Promotion of the reproductive health of adolescents;

5. Fight against infertility; 6. Towards healthy motherhood; 7. Education on population policy; 8. Activation of local self-governments.

In 2015, the Serbian government adopted the National Youth Strategy for the period between 2015 and 2025. Ensuring social reproduction meant that the strategies of the government for the youth has gained more importance, with the aim to determine the future basis of the Serbian society. The top priority was set to be providing them access to the labour market and improving their standard of living. The goal is to improve their employment numbers, general health condition and welfare, increase the level of qualification, their active participation in the society, the re-integration of the socially vulnerable groups, to promote mobility, and finally their involvement in creating cultural content (National Strategy on Youth 2015).

“In December 2016, the Government of the Republic of Serbia established a Population Policy Council, composed of nine different ministers, representatives of the Commissariat for Refugees, Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, National Statistical Bureau, and Centre for Demography of the Institute of Social Sciences. Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić is chairing the Council, which will propose different measures and policies for stimulating birth rate in Serbia and improving overall population policies in Serbia” (Perform.network [s. a.]). The demographic strategy for the next 30-year period was adopted by the Serbian government in 2018, which sets the issue of emigration and its decrease as its top priority, by enabling economic activities, promoting an increasing number of births, reducing infant mortality, and increasing the living standards of the middle-aged and older classes and their rate of participation in the labour market. The strategy sets out the reduction of the cost of raising a child, improving the chances of people raising their child(ren) to find employment, keeping reproductive health, tackling the problem of infertility, promotion of healthy motherhood and the involvement of the local governments in the field as some of its general aims (Birth Strategy 2018, 16). Various instruments have been allocated in order to achieve these goals, the screening of which has been split between the ministries with the aim to align the implementation of the inter-ministerial demographic strategy.

The new family policy law entered into force in January 1, 2018, but it will only be adopted in practice from 1 July 2018, which, in accordance with the strategy, contains the legal requirements as well, and also covers the scope of activities. For instance, the mother, and in some instances the father too, is eligible for family allowances upon the birth of the child. The amount of the allowance used to be 39,500 Dinars (334 €) after the first child, which from 1 July will increase to 100,000 Dinars (845 €). Prior to the new policy, the allowance was set out to be 154,472 Dinars (1,305 €) (paid in monthly instalments of 6,436 Dinars [54 €] per month for a period of 24 months), while after the third child, 370,713 Dinars (3,133 €) was determined (11,584 Dinars [98 €] for a period of 24 months). The mother or the father was eligible for 370,713 Dinars (3,133 €) after a fourth child (monthly 15,446 Dinars [130 €] in instalments for 24 months). Mothers or fathers paying property tax on a taxable amount of more than 30 million Dinars (253,526 €) are not eligible for family allowance (PESEVSZKI 2018). The government provides additional subsidies for those living in the region of Vojvodina; here the allowance after a third child is set out to be 12,000 Dinars (101 €) per month.

The question of maternity (or paternity) leave is regarded an important issue, and the mothers and fathers in Serbia are all eligible for it for a period of not more than a year.

The legislative background for it, however, proved to be inflexible, and lead to great stiffness in practice. A similar issue was the gender-based inequalities appearing in the wages, because in 2014, the women with the same qualifications earned 76% of the wages paid for men, and therefore, it was more often than not the men who were “forced” to seek employment instead, not using this opportunity.

Another major problem is infertility, which concerns 10% of the total population of Serbia. To provide a solution for it, starting from the end of 2017, the Serbian government subsidises three insemination attempts, and has increased the upper limit of eligibility from 38 to 42 years (Mno.hu 2017). Vojvodina also addresses the issue of fertility, contributing to the costs of artificial insemination with an annual amount of 200,000 Dinars for the second, third and every successive child (Vajma.info 2018).

The pension scheme in Serbia is based on two pillars: the state pension scheme binding for all, and the supplementary pension funds scheme. There are ten available of the latter, but their relevance is rather low, even though the state subsidises voluntary pension fund membership. The retirement age for men in Serbia is 65 years, and for women it is 62 years and 4 months, but to be eligible for the retirement benefits, one has to have at least 15 years of active employment covered by pension contribution. The reform of the pension scheme was launched as a result of the economic crisis of 2008. One of the reform efforts is the existing measures of state budget cuts, where 10% of the pension is deducted as solidarity contribution. The other one is to converge the age of men and women, as a result of which by 2032, both men and women can retire at the same age. Those who have 40 years of employment, but their age does not reach the age set out in the statutory rules are eligible for early retirement. This, however means that before reaching the age of 65, they receive a reduced amount of pension (a monthly 0.34% reduction).

As discussed in the first chapter, it is the Roma population that faces the biggest problems paired with a dynamic population growth. In order to remedy their situation, the Roma Convergence Strategy was drawn up in 2016, with its main goals set out for the period lasting until 2025. The main priorities of the strategy include education, housing, employment, healthcare and social security, which are all areas where a decisive progress must be made in order to increase the standard of living. The strategy does not specify expectations regarding the demographic concerns (The Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma 2016).

According to official numbers, the largest minority group in Serbia is the Hungarian, but their numbers have drastically decreased in the recent decades. In order to avoid a further drop, the Hungarian National Council¹ drew up a Population Action Plan for the period between 2013 and 2017. The document contained five strategic goals: 1. The mitigation of the economic disadvantages of childbearing, providing child-friendly employment opportunities; 2. Increased mental and ethical appreciation for childbearing and maternity; 3. Encourage and subsidise matureness for maternity and paternity; 4. The protection of the lives of the mother and the foetus; 5. Secure acceptance for childbearing, and the idea of family in the minds of the public through education and the media (Population Action Plan 2013). The local governments proposed actions for the media, the minority institutions, civil

¹ The Hungarian National Council is the institute for safeguarding the cultural autonomy of the Hungarian people in Serbia.

society organisations, the churches and private enterprises to support the preservation of the Hungarian population. Unfortunately, the hopes for the Action Plan have been dissipated rather quickly, because the birth-rate of the Hungarian population is still low, and the rate of emigration is still high.

4. Migration trends: Perceptions and responses

Apart from the natural reduction of the population, another concern is emigration. Serbia is traditionally a country of emigration. The reasons behind the migration trends of the last 25 years were economic in nature and also necessitated by the devastation of the Yugoslav Wars. The war between 1991 and 1995, which led to the fall of Yugoslavia, significantly changed the ethnic composition and population numbers of the region. During this time, Serbia became mainly a host country for immigrants, where a large number of refugees of the former Yugoslavian regions came to seek shelter, and whose number exceeded the number of emigrants. This fact is underpinned by the positive migration balance of Serbia (and Montenegro) between 1990 and 1995, with a growth rate of 3.9% for every 1,000 people. The number of emigrants and immigrants levelled off by 2000 (BONIFAZI 2011). The first period (1990–2000) was marked with the regional armed conflicts and serious social and economic turbulences. The international community imposed sanctions on the FRY twice, in the period of 1992–1995 and in 1998; a year later NATO intervention resulted in the bombing of the country. In this period, Serbia received a large number of refugees originating from other former Yugoslav republics; according to the refugee registration from the year 1996, the number amounted to 523,000 refugees and 72,000 war-affected persons. The second period, from October 2000 till the present time, is a period of recovery. In the first half of political and economic transition period (2000–2005) the emigration rate more than doubled, compared to the previous period, reaching –7%. In fact, the number of those who have left Serbia had been declining since 2000. However, as many migrants had already left Serbia during the nineties for a temporary stay abroad (attending universities or in training) and did not have to return back to their home country to seek an immigrant visa, they only changed their status from temporary to permanent resident in the 2000–2005 period, thus contributing to a high negative migration rate for this period. Therefore, the majority of those 339,000 persons counted as net migrants who had been living abroad since the 1990s (European Commission 2012).

The 2002 census recorded a total of 414,839 persons working and living abroad, representing (5.3%) of the total population of the Republic of Serbia. The data obtained in the 2002 census show that out of the total number of people from central Serbia working and living abroad, most are situated in Germany (23.0%), followed by Austria (22.1%). These countries which host almost half (50.4%) of all persons working and living abroad are followed by Switzerland (17.5%) France (7.3%), Italy (5.3%) and Sweden (3.3%), while the share of other European countries is significantly lower (Migration Profile of Serbia 2013). Overseas countries that are interesting for students and highly educated persons, popular new destinations are Italy (attractive for those with high school) and Great Britain (popular with the most educated youth) (IOM 2016). The data provided by World Bank show

that the emigrants leaving the Republic of Serbia were 196,000 in 2010 (2.0% of the total population) (Migration Profile of Serbia 2013).

As regards labour migration in 2009, the Republic of Serbia has been primarily acting as a country of origin. "Comparing the scope of flows of migrants from Serbia arriving for work-related purposes, it is possible to single out four key destination regions, listed in the order of priority: (1) Mobility within the Western Balkan region (prime destination countries being Montenegro and Croatia); (2) Employment in Eastern European countries (Russian Federation, Belarus and others); (3) (Temporary) labour migration towards the EU; (4) Regular and permanent employment migration of Serbian nationals in overseas countries (Canada, US, Australia)" (MANKE 2010, 12), mainly for highly skilled migrants (and migration for the purpose of family reunification).

It would be crucial to have the exact statistical data to be able to precisely study migration and emigration. These, however, are not available because Serbian emigrants do not tend to register themselves as employees in the country of destination, which makes their tracking difficult (UNICEF [s. a.]). The figures of the 2011 Census show that emigrants that originated from Serbia were in majority made up of those working abroad (51.3%), together with their family members (36.4%) registered as dependents, while the number of students was as low as 3.9%. It was predominantly men that were represented among those working abroad, while for family members the opposite was true. As for the students, there were slightly more women among them. "Consistently in the registered emigrant contingent by far the highest share, 80.5%, were persons of ages 15–64, followed by children under 14 (16.2%) in the structure of this contingent, and the smallest share were elderly of 65 and more years of age (3.3%)" (RAŠEVIĆ 2016, 19). The education structure of the emigrants registered by the 2011 Census also proved to be better than the statistical numbers in relation to the population in the country. 6.0% of the emigrants aged 15 and above had not either completed primary school or had no primary school education at all, while 27.5% of the emigrant contingent was registered with completed primary school, 38.8% with high school and 15.7% with higher education. The Census prior to the one in 2011 registered a worse education structure. In addition, the 2011 Census showed that the distribution of external migrants in accordance with the length of stay differed from the relevant distribution obtained from the previous Census in the number of persons that had been abroad for under 4 years (42.3%). "This can be explained by methodological and organizational solutions of the 2011 Census, increased departure of asylum seekers, negative effects of the global financial crisis in Serbia and receiving countries, and/or possibly by circular migration" (STANKOVIĆ 2014). Persons that had been abroad between 5 and 14 years participated with 26.5% and those that had been outside the country for 15 and more years participated with a share of 31.2% in this structure (RAŠEVIĆ 2016).

As regards the changes of the migration in Serbia, the experts have developed two scenarios. The Czech scenario estimates that the integration process of the country will further increase the rate of emigration, being mostly economy-driven in nature, because economists say that the lagging-behind cannot be made up for in the next decade. The number of people emigrating will be counterbalanced by people emigrating from third countries, which will still remain lower. The Polish scenario predicts that the EU accession will result in an exponential and intensive emigration wave, which will probably be short-lived. This scenario is backed by the statistical surveys conducted in recent years,

the fact that the legally employed people of the Western European baby-boom generation will have retired by 2020, and also the prevailing differences in wages between Serbia and the Western European states (NIKITOVIĆ [s. a.]).

The strategy addressing the issue of migration in Serbia was adopted back in 2009. The introductory part and the justification for adopting the strategy is clearly about Kosovo and the status of the Serbian refugees fleeing Kosovo. According to the strategy of the government, there are about 4 million Serbian citizens living abroad, about half of them in either of the EU member states, and the other half in overseas countries. Three main priorities have been identified (Strategy for Migration Management 2009):

- (1) Establishment of mechanisms with an overall and coherent control system for the migration trends. The main task is to converge with the EU norms, migration-related data collection and the continuous updating of the migration profile of the country. There are no specified goals or measures set out for the problem of emigration.
- (2) Improvement in the strategic, legal and institutional framework of the uniform treatment of migration. It includes actions such as convergence with the European asylum policy, convergence with sectorial policies, increasing the capacity and the level of coordination of the institutions concerned with migration.
- (3) Protection of the rights of the migrants, providing assistance with their integration and social acceptance, and raising awareness of the issue of migration. The goal set out is the enhancement of accountability, development of the staff of civil and government institutions concerned with the issue and strengthening inter-cultural relations.

The document consisting of a mere 52 pages is mainly concerned with the status of the refugees and was intended to promote legislative harmonisation. It occasionally also referred to the improvement of institutional capacities. The initiatives were, however, barely realised due to the economic crisis and the inertia of the government.

The renewal of the strategy addressing the issue of migration has not taken place up until today, so the Serbian government currently lacks a comprehensive, long-term document addressing immigration, emigration and the question of migration as a whole that is available for the public entities, the private sector and the members of the Serbian society alike.

5. Conclusion

Similarly to the other states of the Central and Eastern European region, Serbia is also battling with demographic changes. One of the serious problems is the deterioration of the indicators pertaining to fertility rates, and an atmosphere of increased determination to leave the country. The government has been trying to face the matter of natural decrease in population, resulting in coordinated actions since the change of government in 2016, putting Slavica Đukić-Dejanović, Minister without Portfolio in charge of demography-related matters. Thanks to his work carried out so far, the national strategies have been aligned, which for one thing means the coordination of the labour market, educational, youth and

healthcare systems. The question of demographics has gained political weight within the government, leading to the introduction of various reforms; the reform of the pension scheme, the modernisation of the healthcare system and the increase in employment levels are all priorities that are necessary to be able to solve the problem at hand.

The management of migration is also a serious problem, because the increased level of emigration, a result of the Balkan Wars, still prevails. In the 1990s, the rate of influx of immigrants in Serbia was high, which mostly meant the Serbians living in the surrounding countries resettling due to the Balkan Wars. Starting from 2015, the new migration crisis brought forth an increased number of asylum-seekers, only a handful of whom seek to settle in the country permanently.

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