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Demography and Migration in Slovenia since Gaining Independence

1. Introduction

The failure of state socialism and the processes which took place in Central and Eastern Europe gave the Slovenians not only a new political system, but also the opportunity to create an independent state, for the first time in history. After more than a quarter century of statehood, Slovenia looks back on a more successful period than most of the other former communist countries, and it had a special path of post-communist transition. The Slovenian transition process deserves special attention because of the key role it played in the disintegration of Yugoslavia and its relative economic and social success, which had its demographic effects as well.

The possibility of the emergence of an independent Slovenia was the result of the developments mostly based on the declared will of the Slovenian political elites and citizens and the changes in international relations, as the long-time interest of the great powers for the existence of a Yugoslav federation disappeared. It was due to the support of these great powers that the Yugoslav state was created in 1918 and was “brought back to life” after the Second World War. Secession in 1991, however, was made much easier by the fact that apart from an “indigenous” Hungarian and Italian minority, a negligible number of other minorities and immigrants, who came mainly from other parts of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was ethnically relatively homogenous (PRUNK 1996, 8). Labourers from the other Yugoslav republics came mainly in the second half of the 1970s. While in the 1980s the rate of guest workers was between 100,000 and 150,000 in a country with a population of just under two million (REPE 2002, 27).

After the declaration of independence, the Slovenian economy underwent a phase of temporary decline. Similarly to the other ex-socialist countries of the region, the transition brought a serious economic recession in Slovenia, too: in 1993 the GDP only reached 70% of the 1987 level (16 billion USD). The Slovenian economy went through a double transformation: from a socialist economy to a market economy and from a regional into a national one (KOYAMA 2003, 15). The losses suffered by business interests in other member republics were negligible when compared to the decline caused by losing a common Yugoslav market of 23 million people. According to certain calculations, Slovenia lost 45.2% of her total exports, while unemployment grew from 2.6% in 1989 to 7.3% in 1991 and reached 9.1% in 1993, to remain a serious problem for the coming years (KOYAMA 2003, 16). Unemployment mostly affected the region of Maribor and had a heavy impact

on young people at the beginning of their career and unskilled labourers. At that time, the main ambitions of Slovenian companies were to break into Western markets and undergo technical modernisation.

Owing to a fortunate initial position, Slovenia was able to perform the structural transformation of its economy without involving foreign capital on a massive scale. Thus the political and economic elite did not need to seek the favours of international financial organisations and foreign investors. Avoiding political shocks and rejecting foreign advisors proved useful for the economy and as a consequence, the indicators of the Slovenian economy were better, the costs in social terms lower than in most other countries of the region. This relative success was mostly owing to a better starting position. The post-communist transition did not force Slovenia to sell out her collective property and privatisation caused less damage to the national economy.

The structure of the economy has changed strongly since 1991. The share of income from agricultural activities in GDP decreased by more than half, from 5.7% to 2.1% in 2017. The share of income from industry and construction, which amounted to 44% of GDP in 1991, was 33.9% in 2017. On the other hand, the share of income from services increased sharply, from 50.3% to 64.8%; Slovenia's most important trading partner from gaining independence was continuously Germany. A Slovenian, born at the end of the 1980s, has changed three currencies, the comparison between average wages in the last twenty years is thus very hard. The comparison of data on how long it took to earn money for a particular product or service in 1991 and how much in 2017, shows that for the majority of products, less work should be done. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS), gross domestic product (GDP) per capita amounted to 5,100 Euros in 1991, while in 2017, it was more than four times higher, 21,000 Euros, when Slovenia ranked 16th in terms of GDP per capita among all the member states of the European Union (RTVSLO 2018b).

2. Demographic trends in the independent Slovenia and scenarios for the future

The population of Slovenia has been stagnating at around two million since 1991, but with an increasing proportion of elderly citizens. On 1 January 2017 the population of Slovenia consisted of 1,025,125 men and 1,040,770 women. The proportion of women among citizens was 51.3% this share has been slowly decreasing for a number of years. (RAZPOTNIK 2017b) The population (according to the population census 2002) consists of Slovenes 83.1%, Serbs 2.0%, Croats 1.8%, Muslims (including Bosniaks) 1.6%, Hungarians 0.3%, Italians 0.1%, others 2.2% and 8.9% of unknown ethnic background. (Government of the Republic of Slovenia s. a.) After 1992, the number of births dropped, the rate of natural increase became low. At the same time, life expectancy started to grow, with the proportion of the over 65 years old citizens increasing from 10.6% in 1990 to 17.9% in 2015. (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 3). The average age of the population of Slovenia increased by more than seven years since independence. The demographic projection scenarios make it clear that the demographic transition to a society with an ageing population will intensify in the coming years and decades.

Life expectancy at birth is constantly rising, from 74.1 in 1995 to 80.5 years in 2015 and it is projected to increase in the future. Girls born in Slovenia in 2017 can expect to live 83.7 years, while boys just over 78 years. (RTVSLO 2018b) The fertility rate (1.58 children per woman in 2016) is not sufficient for the replacement of the population, since it should be at least 2.1 children per woman (ŽNIDARŠIČ 2016). The authors of the demographic projections prognosticate that Slovenia can expect an increase of the population in the coming few years, but after a peak in 2025, the age structure of the population will transform. By 2035, for 100 active citizens in the 15–64 age group, there will be 64 dependents (young and elderly) citizens. The life expectancy at birth will be 83.4 years, and the median age of the population will grow from 36 years in 1995 to 48.1 years by 2035 (SAVARIN 2016). The proportion of children under 14 years will fall by 5%, the active population (between 15 and 64 years) will decrease by 1% (Republic of Slovenia – Statistical Office 2016). In the school year 2017–2018, the number of primary school students was almost 44,000 lower than in the 1991–1992 school year. However, the number of children in elementary school has been increasing again since 2011, as a result of an increase in the number of births in the period of 2004–2010 (RTVSLO 2018b).

By 2060, every third Slovenian could be 65 years old or older (JACOVIĆ 2015). According to the EUROPOP2013 population projections, Slovenia's population will be 2.041 million at that time, so nearly on the same level, as in 2017. Increasing life expectancy will raise the age dependency ratio from 57.1 in 2013 to 98.0 in 2060 (RAZPOTNIK 2017b). The main scenario calculates with a relatively high migration increase in the future, despite modest migration in the last years (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 3). The decline of the number of births since 1980 has led to a decrease in the number of women of childbearing age in the last years and this trend will continue in the coming decades. In 1991, there were less than 400,000 pensioners in Slovenia, while in 2017, their number was 616,000. In 1991, the ratio between the number of pensioners and insured persons was 2.0, in 2017 it was 1.49. At the same time, the wage-to-pension ratio is worsening. In 1992, average net retirement pensions reached 78.4% of the net wages, while in 2017, it was only 58.4% (RTVSLO 2018b).

By 2060, the number of elderly citizens would exceed the size of the working age population, the latter would decrease by half a million in comparison with 2013. There are two scenarios, the main projection scenario assumes an increase in the fertility rate from 1.56, the average level of the last few years, to 1.75. In spite of the fact, that in international comparisons, Slovenia has a relatively favourable family policy and related measures, it is questionable whether it would be enough to increase the birth rate. The low fertility scenario assumes a decrease in the fertility rate to 1.40 by 2060, it means that it calculates with around 2,000 less newborn children annually in 2014–2060 compared to the main scenario (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 4). Demographic projections show that the population of Slovenia will continue concentrating in the mostly central, more urbanised part of the country (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 14).

3. The main demographic challenges of Slovenia

Demographic trends will affect social protection systems and fiscal sustainability. The ageing of the population will increase the pressure on expenditure of pensions, health care and long-term care. The European Commissions' long-term projections, based on EUROPOP2013 demographic projection scenario, show that without changes, the age-related public expenditure would reach about one third of the Slovenian GDP by 2060. This is among the highest in the EU, and the European Commission also emphasises that Slovenia is the only EU member state with a high long-term risk regarding its fiscal sustainability, and it also ranks among the group of countries with a high risk over the medium-term (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 8).

The ageing of the population causes the most acute problems for the pension system. The ratio between insured persons and pensioners is worsening rapidly since 2001 (2000: 1.80; 2015: 1.37) (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 9). The Slovenian pension legislation ensures relatively early exiting from the labour market. In 2015, the Slovenian government succeeded in the stabilisation of the ratio between insured persons and pensioners, but the prognosticated demographic change will make it a temporary state. In the last few years, Slovenian budget transfer to the pension fund exceeded 1 billion Euros per year. The pension system is already unsustainable. According to the projections of the European Commission, in approximately two decades, the number of pensioners will exceed the number of insured persons.

To a functioning health care system, the country will also have to use a greater share of GDP, due to mainly demographic but also non-demographic factors. The projections of the European Commission assume an increase from 5.7% to 6.8% of GDP in 2030 and 7.5% in 2060. According to several studies conducted on Slovenia, the efficiency of the health care system is average, but with a gradual improvement in efficiency, it would be possible to significantly slow expenditure growth over the long term. The number of healthy life years is very low compared to other EU countries. In Slovenia, there is no comprehensive system for long-term care, while according to the scenario of the European Commission, the share of public expenditure on that will more than triple (to 4.2% of GDP) by 2060. (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 9–11).

The decreasing of the working age population has been a rising problem in years of growing economy. The shrinking Slovenian labour force could slow productivity growth and reduce the potential for economic growth. The activity rate in Slovenia is high among the adult population (30–54) and the country has the highest female activity rate in the EU, but is below the EU-average among young and elderly citizens (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 5). If the economic activity remains high and the migration modest, in this case, increased recruitment needs could not been satisfied in the future by higher employment among young and elderly citizens.

The low employment rate of the older population (55–64) in Slovenia is caused mainly by the low retirement age of those with the required statutory years and insufficient incentives to remain in employment. The Slovenian Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (UMAR) emphasises some key factors in connection with that: “(i) undeveloped age management in companies; (ii) a failure to adapt work conditions to older workers; and (iii) an active employment policy and educational policy that does not

promote lifelong learning among the older population and fails to equip them with the right skills." UMAR suggests the following: "(i) implementation of training programmes for older employees in the context of lifelong learning; (ii) implementation of programmes to change opinions and stereotypes about older employees; and (iii) promotion of intra-company active ageing strategies" (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 6–7).

Another problem is the late entry of young people (20–29) into the labour market, what is caused by the fact that the average rate of participation in education is relatively high in Slovenia. The rate of participation in education among young people is gradually rising; for 18-year-old citizens it grew from 67% to 82% between 1998 and 2012. As a result, the share of 25–34-year-olds with tertiary education has also grown. In 1996, the share of people in the 25–34 age group with tertiary education was 15%; by 2015 it reached 41%. The increased participation in education on the other hand delays the entry into the labour market. The share of employed persons in the 15–24 age group thus fell from 38% in 1996 to 30% in 2015 (Republic of Slovenia – Statistical Office 2016). According to European Commission projections, the enrolment in primary schools will increase until 2020; on the other hand, the number of students in secondary schools and tertiary programmes will decrease.

The Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 deals with the effects of demographic changes of the coming years. The government realised the problems of increasing pressure on the financial sustainability of social protection systems. The current regulation of compulsory social insurance is already insufficient to demand, since the financing of social protection systems requires additional funding from the state budget. Due to an ageing population, growing expenditure on pensions, healthcare and long-term care, and also the increasing amount of precarious work, these demands will be even more difficult to finance, changes of the current regulations will be needed. Slovenia's development goals are the following: "a) introducing the concept of sustainable working lives, which allows employees to work longer and retire healthy; b) creating high-quality jobs which create high value added, are environmentally responsible and provide conditions for adequate pay and a high-quality work environment; c) promoting the increased inclusion of marginalised and underrepresented groups on the labour market; d) adapting jobs and the organisation of work to demographic changes, technological developments and climate changes; e) improving the secure transparency system and reducing the dangers of unemployment and inactivity, particularly in areas with high unemployment; f) promoting employer activities designed to improve employees' physical and mental health, occupational health and safety and make it easier to balance work and care responsibilities; g) promoting the employment of both sexes in gender atypical and deficient professions" (Šooš et al. 2017, 12).

The Slovenian Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (UMAR) suggests to solve problems, such as high segmentation in the labour market for young people and relatively low social and economic inclusion of the elderly, through the reform of the social protection system, strengthening lifelong learning, promoting a healthy lifestyle, adapting the working and living environment (ZUPANČIČ 2018, 7). On the other hand, UMAR emphasises, that social inclusion and participation in society of the elderly are relatively high in Slovenia, and they see improvement of the situation of the elderly and the health status of the population. They state that the recovery of the economy also improved the material position of the population, the risk of social exclusion and income

inequality of the population that have deteriorated in the crisis has been improving since 2015; in both areas Slovenia remains much more successful than the EU average. Beneficial results and improvements in recent years are also present in the field of gender equality, participation in society and discrimination. However, there are still significant inequalities in the labour market what is reflected in the relatively high proportion of overtime and temporary employment, especially among young people. There is also a relatively low rate of older workers' employment and a high risk of elderly women's poverty, which increases the risk of their social exclusion. The elderly people are also characterised by a low participation in society and increased exposure to discrimination. Health care is marked by positive movements, but in Slovenia, a significantly smaller share of life is spent healthy than the EU average. Although access to public services, with the exception of long-term care, is relatively good, the rapid ageing of the Slovenian society is increasingly influencing the sustainability of social protection systems (ZUPANČIČ 2018, 10).

In Slovenia, there was a debate for years about the government's plans for a special demographic fund, the Demographic Reserve Fund (DRS) that would cover pensions in a few decades, solving the problems of the unsustainable Slovenian pension system. The question of the fund was the source of huge tensions between the parties of the 12th government of Slovenia (2014–2018) led by Miro Cerar: the Modern Centre Party (SMC), the Social Democrats (SD) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS). DeSUS advocated an independent and autonomous demographic fund, claiming that the fund would be only an "empty box" if it would be created the way the Ministry of Finance plans (FAJNIK 2017). In January 2018, the parliamentary group of DeSUS filed a bill on the demographic fund, as a stand-alone action in the legislative process. The leader of the party, Karl Erjavec explained that this was a necessary step, because otherwise the state will not be able to provide money for pensions to today's middle and younger generation (RTVSLO 2018a). Experts emphasise, that the battle was about whether the Demographic Reserve Fund should be a truly "independent autonomous fund" or only a dividend recipient. The battle for DRS was thus not a battle to improve the position of the pension fund, but rather about who will manage the state property. It was a battle for political influence, for the possibility of recruiting own personnel in control and management positions in companies. If DRS will independently manage its portfolio, its managers will also have this power, but if it is merely a portfolio investor, it will only be entitled to annual dividends, without affecting recruitment (DAMIJAN 2017).

The views expressed by the parties regarding demography and pension issues are evident from their programs that were published in the campaign before the parliamentary elections in the summer of 2018 (TOPLAK 2018). Most programs do not provide a deep analysis of the problem. The most popular Slovenian party, the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) supports the creation of a demographic fund and the regulation of the long-term care system for the elderly. They want to make it easier for pensioners to work after retirement. The party is committed to support families by reducing VAT and supporting childbirth allowance for multiple births (SDS [s. a.]). SDS would provide tax relief for young families when purchasing their first home. The centre-left List of Marjan Šarec (LMS) would also help pensioners to work after retirement. They are the proponents of a comprehensive pension reform (with a minimal net pension of 600 €) and the establishment of a long-term care system for the elderly (Lista Marjana Šarca [s. a.]).

The party of the former Prime Minister Miro Cerar, the Modern Centre Party (SMC) also supports the creation of a demographic fund. They would encourage new jobs improving care for elder people, people with disabilities and others who need help to facilitate independent living. The SMC does not have a special chapter in their programme on demographics, but they stated that the state should change housing funds for favourable rent/construction for young people, young families and the elderly. It would also strengthen the role of the kindergarten as a place of socialisation (Stranka modernega centra [s. a.]). The centre-left Social Democrats (SD) would establish a long-term care system and introduce a reserve demographic fund, higher income tax relief for families, facilitating measures for reconciling work and family life. SD would set up a free kindergarten program (Samozavestna Slovenija 2018). The centre-right New Slovenia (NSi) plans a pension reform by introducing a compulsory second pillar. They also promised tax deductions for families, facilitating the reconciliation of family and professional life, a positive attitude towards reconciling family and professional life. In the year after the marriage, they would give each spouse an additional day off (N.Si [s. a.]). The left-wing, *The Left* (Levica) emphasises the importance of measures to stop the departure of young people abroad by “fair pay for fair work”. They claimed that the minimum wage should be raised, with which other wages will raise as well, thereby increasing the payments into the pension fund. The Left would extend maternity leave for women. They would extend the right to paid parental leave for man and they also emphasise the importance of free kindergartens (Levica 2018). The Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) calls for the introduction of individual accounts of insured citizens, which will enable the insured to inspection concerning the status of paid contributions and immediate calculation regarding the amount of the pension. The party claims the pensions should be adjusted to 70% with wage growth and 30% with inflation growth. DeSUS would establish an office for the elderly and an advocate for them (Program Stranke 2011).

4. Migration trends and their perception

Slovenian Lands had more emigrants than immigrants for decades, net migration became positive during the 1960s. Due to political changes in 1991, net migration became temporarily negative, but after that, traditional immigration streams from some former Yugoslav republics resumed soon (Zavod Republike Slovenije za statistiko 1995). At the end of 2016, 114,438 foreign citizens represented 5.5% of Slovenia’s population (RAZPOTNIK 2017b).

In the period between 2005 and 2009, immigration was growing especially in the construction sector, but the majority of immigrants did not get citizenship, so they were forced to leave when a lot of employers collapsed due to the economic crisis. From 2010, there is a weak recovery of immigration, with a slight surplus. Immigration alone amounted to more than 30,000 before the financial crisis of 2008, while it has stabilised around 15,000 after 2010. In the last years, Slovenia’s migration surplus is lower than in the 1990s (JOSIPOVIČ 2018, 3).

In 2016, Slovenia had positive net migration of *foreign nationals* for the eighteenth consecutive year: 7,006 more individuals immigrated to Slovenia than emigrated from it.

However, it was also the seventeenth consecutive year when the net migration of citizens was negative: the number of those leaving was for 5,955 higher of those who returned to the country. In 2016, 16,623 people immigrated to Slovenia and 15,572 emigrated from it. The number of Slovenian citizens immigrating to Slovenia in 2016 was 2,900, in the same year 13,800 foreign citizens came to the country, while 8,800 Slovenian citizens and almost 6,800 foreigners emigrated from Slovenia. Net migration in 2016 was the highest since 2011: 1,051. Most foreign immigrants come to Slovenia usually from Bosnia and Herzegovina (35% of all foreign immigrants in 2016), and many come from Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia and Macedonia. The most popular destination of emigrants with Slovenian citizenship is usually Austria (27% of all emigrants in 2016), followed by Germany (20% in 2016), Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In 2016, the educational structure of emigrants was similar to that of the entire population of Slovenia.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, among the 16,623 people, who immigrated to Slovenia in 2016, nearly two thirds were in the 25–64 age group. Among them 23% had basic education or less, 58% had upper secondary education and 19% had tertiary education. 69% of the 15,572 people who left Slovenia in 2016 were in the 25–64 age group. Among them, 20% had basic education or less, 55% had upper secondary education and 25% had tertiary education. Nearly 36% of immigrants with Slovenian citizenship in the 25–64 age group had tertiary education, while among foreign immigrants the share of tertiary educated was significantly lower: 15%. Among emigrants in the same age group, the difference was even more pronounced: 36% of emigrants with Slovenian citizenship had tertiary education, while about 12% of foreign emigrants were tertiary educated. Among those who immigrated to Slovenia in 2016, 106 held a doctorate of science; among emigrants, 156 had attained this level of education (Republic of Slovenia – Statistical Office 2016).

Emigration from Slovenia started to grow exponentially from 2005, especially among young people (the majority of those leaving is under 35) and have high levels of education. The level of daily labour mobility is also growing. Peripheral areas, especially the north-eastern part of the country suffer more from emigration and brain drain than the central parts of Slovenia (JOSIPOVIČ 2018, 9).

Net migration is the most uncertain factor in the future scenarios. It has been strongly contingent on the structure of Slovenia's economic growth in the last decade. Economic growth was the highest in 2007–2009, driven by construction activity, so migration was high, too; but after that, it has been almost non-existent. Slovenia needs a more suitable migration policy, since without positive net migration the working age (20–64) population would shrink (Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development 2016, 3). In 2016, 110,459 internal migrations (changes of residence within a country) were detected. The majority of residents who changed their settlement of residence (80%) moved to another municipality. More than a half of internal migrants were 20–39 years old (RAZPOTNIK 2017a).

5. Effects of the 2015 migration crisis, views of the political parties on immigration

The so-called Balkan Migration Route switched to Slovenia when Hungary closed its border with Croatia. After a crisis situation on her southern border in October 2015, Slovenia, a country on the edge of the Schengen Area, started to build a razor-wire fence from the next month. The government stated that the country needed the barrier to control the flow of migrants, especially because it lacked manpower and equipment to handle the influx of thousands of people, who wanted to cross the country on their way towards Western Europe. Slovenia amended the country's defence law, passed a bill that allowed police to seal the 670-kilometre long border with Croatia to prevent migrants from entering the country. Between 17 October and mid-November 2015, over 200,000 migrants entered the country.

Since the crisis, the question of immigrants became one of the most important topics of Slovenian politics and has been one of the central themes before the parliamentary election in June 2018. Parliamentary political parties have different views on the key question, whether migrants are a security or a humanitarian problem. The more the party is on the political spectrum on the left, the more they look migrants from a humanitarian point of view, and contrary: while parties from the right tend to emphasise the security component (Delo.si 2018).

The winner of the parliamentary election in 2018, the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) had a campaign largely based on anti-immigration rhetoric. The party is pro-European, but anti-immigrant and strongly opposes to EU asylum quotas. In their opinion, each country should provide its own security. They advocate consistent protection of the Schengen border. For those who are real refugees, they would offer adequate shelter (SDS [s. a.]). In the campaign, SDS emphasised that the question is the existence of the EU, its culture and values. The SDS believes that migrants are an economic problem and warns that Slovenia does not distinguish between refugees and migrants.

As a result of the election in 2018, and due to the anti-immigration campaign, the nationalist Slovenian National Party (SNS) led by Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti became a parliamentary party again, after a seven years long break. The party is renowned for its Euroscepticism and it opposes Slovenia's membership in NATO. The leadership of the SNS emphasise, that there should be no migrants in Slovenia and they want to mobilise the Slovenian army on the border in order to stop immigration (Demokracija.si 2018).

On the other hand, members of the left-wing The Left (Levica) say that refugees are not a problem, the real problem is that the issue has been used by the right-wing parties to instigate intolerance and hatred. The party advocates a "human attitude towards refugees", claiming that the conflict in the Middle East should come to an end and that Slovenia needs to leave the NATO alliance (Levica 2018).

The centre-left List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ) emphasises, that the Slovenian border should be adequately protected, including by the fence at the border. The opinion of LMŠ leaders is that EU-members should protect external borders together.

The centre-left Social Democrats (SD) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) believe that this is primarily a humanitarian crisis, but the security problem should not be neglected, in accordance with internal and European law. The SD emphasises, that "Slovenia remained a humanitarian state during the crisis, showed

humanity and helped the people". They think that modernisation of the national security system is necessary (Samozavestna Slovenija 2018).

The leading party of the former coalition between 2014 and 2018, the Modern Centre Party (SMC) considers that it is a humanitarian and security issue. The state must grant national security, as well as the security of its citizens and the party emphasises that strengthening of the army and the police is necessary (Stranka modernega centra [s. a.]). The question of immigrants was the source of tensions between the leaders of SMC.

The centre-right New Slovenia (NSi) shares the view that it is primarily a security issue and also a humanitarian question, but they have no dilemma that the state must have control over its borders. They advocate the closure of the border and a clear message to migrants that the Slovenian border is sealed off. They think police and the army should protect the border, and "it must be closed for the protection of the lives of migrants" (N.Si [s. a.]).

Concerning the question whether to remove or even pull more wire fences on the southern border, most of the parties argue that due to the current situation on the Balkan route, the fence should remain. Only the Left stands out on this issue, they would immediately remove it from the border. There are small differences between the parties in this topic, because some (SMC, LMŠ, SD) would replace the wire fence with a panel fence, while the right-wing parties pay no attention to this kind of difference. Some parties, including DeSUS would use more sophisticated and technically perfected protection approaches on the southern border (modern technology, satellite images, more helicopters).

Apart from The Left, who says that spending on military needs should not be increased, all other political parties would spend more on the defence and security system. SDS leadership thinks Slovenia should invest more, "if it wants the army to survive". DeSUS insists on the reintroduction of military service for all young people, which would last only three months, during which time they would gain basic military knowledge. While The Left opposes the formation of two medium battle groups, for which Slovenia will spend 1.2 billion Euros by 2025, all other political parties point to a "dynamic and unpredictable" environment, which will require more resources (Delo.si 2018).

A longer perspective (studies from 2002 onwards) shows that the Slovenian public opinion at the declarative level is relatively open to migration, but it becomes much more restrained when refugees appear at the state borders. After the refugee crisis of 2015, Slovenia's public opinion became more polarised regarding the issue. It is expected that the public opinion will move in line with the greater or lesser presence of refugees at the border as the key reference point of (non)support. (ZAVRATNIK et al. 2017, 882).

6. Summary and outlook

The median age of the population of Slovenia increased by more than seven years since gaining independence and the demographic transition to a society with an ageing population will intensify in the coming years and decades. The key feature of the changes is a decrease in the proportion of the working age population and an increase in the number of elderly people. The process of population ageing will be more intense in Slovenia than in the other EU member states.

The inevitable ageing of the population, the demographic trends will affect social protection systems and fiscal sustainability. There will be an increased pressure on expenditures concerning pensions, health care and long-term care. The establishing of a stable pension system will be a challenge; the health care system will have to use a greater share of GDP. The increasing proportion of the older population will increase the pressure on age-related general government expenditure. Demographic changes increase the need for planning, construction and transport policies adapted to fulfil the needs of elderly people.

The decline of the working age population will impede economic growth. Assuming migrations remain modest, even higher employment among young and elderly people will not be sufficient to meet the increased recruitment demand driven in case of a stronger economic activity. An altered age structure of the reduced supply of labour could also slow down productivity growth and affect the structure of consumption. The demographic change requires reforms in the education system as the demand for lifelong learning.

It is necessary to conduct active employment policies for the elderly, which represent the majority of the long-term unemployed people in Slovenia and represent the main labour force reserve. The net migration of Slovenia is the most uncertain factor in the future scenarios, because it has always been strongly contingent on the structure of Slovenia's economic growth in the last decade. From 2010, there is a weak recovery of immigration with a slight surplus, and it has stabilised around 15,000 after 2010. Slovenia needs a more suitable migration policy, and without migration growth, the working age population would shrink. In this regard Slovenia enjoys a particularly favourable position due to its connections with other countries of the former Yugoslavia.

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