

## **Filling the gap in long-term professional care through systematic migration policies (Germany, 23-24 October 2013)**

### **Long-term professional care through migration policies in Croatia<sup>1</sup>**

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#### **1. What are the current situation and the recent trends concerning the lack of skilled workforce in long-term care and related migration policies in your country?**

Similar to other European countries, the Republic of Croatia faces an ageing society, a trend that becomes most evident in low birth-rates and growing proportion of elderly in the population. The proportion of those 65 years and over has increased from 13.1% in 1991 to 17.7% in 2011. (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2013) In 2004, the share of young people (under 14 years of age) and that of older people (65+) was practically identical. Demographic forecasts indicate that the ageing of the population will continue: by 2031, the share of older people in Croatia could range from 21.8% (best-case scenario) to as much as 25.4% (worst-case scenario). (Mrđen 2005) Accordingly, the need for LTC services in the population is increasing (especially community based services), and there are demands for developing a care infrastructure that can adequately cover long-term care needs of elderly people.

From 2001, the social welfare system in Croatia that defines long-term care providers has seen important and on-going reforms. The objective is to improve the quality of services, to facilitate accessibility and to develop alternative types of care. We believe that in this process, particular emphasis should be given to care in the community, making services more accessible and more consumer-oriented. But the extension of community based social services will only be possible through an intensified staff recruitment strategy, which should include cooperation between the government and the NGO sector.

Now long-term care was not addressed (and still is not) as a special social risk, but is covered in the broader context of means-tested social welfare policies. Long-term care is not established as distinctive welfare sector in Croatia. The core provisions are organised in the context of social welfare, a system following social assistance principles. Community-based care exists but is not very well developed.

At the same time, there is still no need for workforce from third countries on the Croatian labour market, but in the future labour shortages and increased demand for workers in the sector of long-term care are expected.

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Let's say that Croatia has traditionally been a country of emigrants. First destination countries would be Germany and Austria. In 2012, there were 8,959 persons that immigrated to the Republic of Croatia and 12,877 persons that emigrated from it. The Republic of Croatia had a negative net migration with foreign countries that amounted to -3,918. But no statistical data exists on the jobs that Croatian emigrant workers get in their destination countries, so it is not possible to assess the scope of Croatian LTC workers in other EU countries.

In this context emigration of Croatian workers depends on the situation on the labour markets of Western Europe and their needs for specific occupations and qualifications. However, according to the experience of the Croatian Employment Service (Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje) the Croatian emigration of workers to the markets of the EU continues, with a noticeable trend of mostly highly skilled and professional workers working abroad.

Croatia currently does not have a clear migration policy, but has addressed issues related to the migration of its workers to work in EU countries by signing a series of agreements with countries where there are Croatian workers.

On the other hand, as Croatia has become a member of the EU, the Croatian Government, based on the principle of reciprocity, adopted a series of national measures of provisional application of the rules on foreign workers.

Regarding workers from Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the UK, Croatia applies restrictions and transition periods in terms of employment opportunities on the Croatian labour market.

On February 22, 2013, The Croatian Parliament adopted the Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for 2013/2015 (Official Gazette, no. 27/13) in order that Croatia may have an active migration policy, based on the principles of freedom of movement, solidarity and humanity, while simultaneously taking care of the economic, social and cultural development of the community.

The purpose to be achieved by adopting this migration policy is to ensure that migratory movements in the Republic of Croatia are beneficial to the economic and social development of the country and society.

However, the migration policy does not address the workforce in the field of economy, nor long-term care for the elderly.

In line with the basic principles of the migration policy, based in constitutional norms and international conventions to which the Republic of Croatia is a party, standards that protect the rights of aliens to stay and work in the Republic of Croatia were incorporated into the new Aliens Act.

The new Act expands the categories of aliens who do not need a permit to work and reside in the Republic of Croatia, in order to ensure the protection of migrants and to promote their integration into the Croatian society that cannot be achieved without allowing access to the labour market.

Aliens may work in the Republic of Croatia on the basis of a work or business permit (Article 73(1) of the Aliens Act). In cases stipulated by the Aliens Act, aliens may work without a work or business permit.

There is a quota system of work permits in the Republic of Croatia. The Government of the Republic of Croatia establishes the annual quota of work permits as regards the extension of the already issued work permits and new employments, and may also set the quota for the employment of seasonal workers.



The annual quota of work permits shall define activities and professions eligible for employment of aliens and the number of work permits to be issued for each of these activities.

In line with the provisions of the Aliens Act regulating the work of aliens in the Republic of Croatia, aliens shall be guaranteed identical rights as provided in the labour law regulations of the Republic of Croatia regarding the employment and work conditions, that is, in collective agreements and arbitration rulings. The guaranteed rights shall refer to the maximum stipulated working hours and minimum rest periods, the minimum paid annual leave, the minimum wage rate, including the overtime wage rate, health conditions and safety at work, protective measures for the employment of expecting mothers, women and minor workers and ban of discrimination.

The annual quota of all work permits in Republic of Croatia in 2013 is 2,329.<sup>2</sup>

The annual quota for the extension of already issued work permits for foreigners in the Republic of Croatia in 2013 is 2,000.

The annual quota for new work permits in 2013 is 289, thereof in the health system 15 permits.<sup>3</sup>

In the Croatian Employment Service the Migration Information Centre (MIC) is part of the regional project "Capacity strengthening, information and awareness-raising in order to promote legal migration in the Western Balkans". In the Migration Information Centre it is possible to get information about:

- Visas;
- Employment and living conditions;
- Education abroad;
- Immigration programmes;
- The rights and protection of migrants;
- Opportunities to return to Croatia.

The Centre provides complete, concise and clear information, as well as coordinates with the relevant departments. Such centre could present a basis for preparation of a special strategy for the area of migrant workers and migration policy in the near future.

## **2. What should a comprehensive LTC staff recruitment strategy include, for example to prevent demographic impoverishment, "drain" or "cultural clash" effects etc.?**

- The old age dependency ratio in some 'sending' countries indicates that the recruitment of care staff from these countries might entail (future) difficulties in meeting the requirements to care for their own ageing population. Does your country experience such a situation?

The demographic trend in Croatia resembles the recent trends throughout other European countries. In Croatia, the population aged 65 and over now accounts for 17.7% of the population. (National Bureau of Statistics 2013) The share of this age group has been growing since the 1990s. This is consistent with the demographic

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.hzz.hr/docSlike/Odluka\\_\\_\\_%20utvrdivanju\\_godisnje\\_kvota\\_2013..pdf](http://www.hzz.hr/docSlike/Odluka___%20utvrdivanju_godisnje_kvota_2013..pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.hzz.hr/docSlike/Odluka\\_\\_\\_%20utvrdivanju\\_godisnje\\_kvota\\_2013..pdf](http://www.hzz.hr/docSlike/Odluka___%20utvrdivanju_godisnje_kvota_2013..pdf)



phenomenon occurring in other European countries where the elderly aged 65 and over account for between 17% (EU-25) and 17.2% (EU-15) of the population.<sup>4</sup>

This population structure is a consequence of long-term emigration of predominantly younger population and reduction of natural growth, which in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century turned negative. (Mrđen 2004) Croatia has a continuously decreasing proportion of young people (0-14) and an increasing proportion of elderly population (65+) on the other hand. Today in Croatia, the share of young people is at the level of 15.2% (with a further trend of decline), while the share of the elderly population accounts for 17.7% (with a rising trend) (Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2012). (Murgić 2009)<sup>5</sup>

Because of the demographic ageing the total population is expected to decline, male and female, while it is particularly interesting to note that the decline in the working population (M/15-64/ and W/15-59/) is expected to be lower (586,955, 20.6%); the share of the total population will be reduced from 64.1% to 61.3%. (Obadić Smolić 2007). Thus, it is possible to expect that the future demographic situation in Croatia will be worsened also by increased migration, especially, as already pointed out, because mostly young, well qualified and educated young people leave Croatia for jobs in other countries. This means that there will be fewer people active in the labour market. Therefore we consider that the demand for LTC staff in Croatia is expected to continue to grow in the next few years.

In the case of Croatia we would like to point out the factor of development in the transition period, which caused the loss of many jobs and early retirement of a large number of people. Also, the Homeland War resulted in significant retirements of young disabled people (veterans). Demographic processes, the specific situation in Croatia, warn of the fairly realistic possibility that Croatia may soon become faced with a very small influx of young labour force, and large number of retirees, and the need for long-term care for elderly people (Zivic, 2003).<sup>6</sup>

Such demographic data are an indicator of a *poor population situation* and the continuation of these trends could have far-reaching and serious consequences on the socio-economic development.

It will be important to, not only invest in the development of new services for the elderly but also to provide sufficient human and economic resources.

In case of the LTC workers, the number of professionals employed by the formal sector is relatively low, due to the low level of coverage of Croatian LTC services. In the Croatian welfare system mainly the dependent old persons stay at home thanks to informal care given by family or relatives. In most cases primary family carers exist, who take care of the older persons without any fees. Croatian families more often decide to keep their older relatives, who needs LTC, at home and provide them informal care instead of sending them to an institution.

Long-term care services for the elderly are beginning to be deinstitutionalised. Social welfare homes which typically provide institutional care are now providing some non-institutional care services. This is a result of the recent government strategy to deinstitutionalise care over time. Currently, it appears that informal caregivers are not recognised in the expenditure system for long-term care.

<sup>4</sup> [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/Croatia\\_LTC.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/Croatia_LTC.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Murgić, J., Jukić, T., Tomek-Roksandić, S., Ljubičić, M., Kusić, Z. (2009). The Ageing of Croatian Population. *Collegium Antropologicum*, 33(2), 701-705.

<sup>6</sup> Živić, D. (2003). Demografske odrednice i posljedice starenja stanovništva. *Revija za socijalnu politiku*, 10(3-4), 307-319.



- How to improve the mutual recognition of professional LTC qualifications and, a closely related issue, the promotion of LTC training?

First of all, in case of Croatia, there is a need for more specific data in order to determine LTC needs for workforce and possible extent of staff shortage.

Next step would be the mutual recognition of professional LTC qualifications. It should be ensured through the Croatian Qualifications Framework<sup>7</sup>. As Croatia currently does not have an appropriate mechanism of recognition of qualification of immigrant workers, it is clearly necessary to develop it.

Another possibility is the cooperation of employment bureaus through the EURES network<sup>8</sup>. The demand for Croatian workers in other EU countries is constant but not high. On the other hand the number of immigrant workers in Croatia has been slowly but steadily growing, and it is expected that this trend will continue.

Regarding skilled workers, those with the highest probability of being employed in the LTC are health care professionals. There is also a need for regulation of jobs in LTC, especially those which are not strictly in the field of health, such as jobs with lower qualification requirements, professionals who care about mental health etc.

Of course, there is also the prospect of implementing joint projects funded by the EU e.g. performing pilot projects for selective migration (identification and skills' assessment of potential migrants in areas of major migration pressure) and elaborating orientation and integration modules for migrant workers.

The Croatian Government has not yet designed any programme to increase the availability of LTC workers (national or foreign) or their competences, even if experts and policy analysis have been recognising the need to address this important issue (Rusac et al. 2011). Consequently there is no official statistics on recruitment, integration or return in source countries of migrant LTC workers in Croatia.

### **3. In a medium-long term perspective, should the focus be on strategies to promote "integration" in destination countries, or rather on return in source countries? What are the socio-economic implications of the two options?**

As it was the case with the countries that previously joined the EU, it is expected that Croatia will become more attractive for immigration in near future. We have to keep in mind that migration of workers and their families in other countries raises a number of socio-economic, demographic, cultural, legal and political issues of the countries involved in the process of migration of workers and their families.

In case of Croatia, the largest number of immigrant workers has come from the territory of ex-Yugoslavia. Because of cultural and language similarities these immigrant workers from the countries of former Yugoslavia do not have problems with integration. But there is an objective question whether those immigrants will be enough for LTC demands in the future. How to develop a migration policy for immigrant workers coming from culturally, historically different countries?

Croatia has not yet developed a model of integration or return in source countries of migrant workers which is clear, systematic and long-term planned. In the near future this should be a priority and Croatia should consider the possibilities of

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<sup>7</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/education/eu-australia/doc/peer/croatia.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/>



integration of immigrant workers coming from non-ex-Yugoslavian countries. After analysing the process of movement of people, identifying its typical directions, root causes and formulating the country's national interests, value and goals, the Strategy should identify the priorities and needed tools related to the demographic, migration and integration policy.

In this context, education of migrant workers in Croatia is regarded as another necessary step, despite existing obstacles (for example, Croatia does not have a significant foreign workforce in long-term care, and neither has it begun a public debate on the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated long-term care system).

Recognising the inadequate standards and regulations for informal care, the Croatian Nursing Association developed a protocol for the provision of nursing care two years ago, which envisions a more precise and standardised process of assessing care needs, and the opportunity to make recommendations for further care treatment, if necessary. The proposed protocol also sets education standards for nurses, which could be used in LTC staff recruitment.

Education is the key to integration and is closely linked and inseparable from other aspects of integration. In addition, the knowledge of the Croatian language could present a problem for employment of migrant workers in service jobs. A free language course for migrant workers in health care and LTC jobs would be needed in such a case. While the most significant is education, it is necessary to enable immigrants to learn the basic knowledge of the language, history and work of the Croatia.

In addition to education, safe employment is a central part of the integration process and essential for the full participation of immigrants in the society.

Based on our experience, workers providing LTC from Croatia, are women with families in Croatia (women over 45 years, difficult to employ), and they probably plan to return to Croatia. The countries where they come to work should have an interest in providing them support in their employment to avoid unregistered labour. On the other hand, the source countries should cooperate, so that these migrants would have sources of income upon their return home (pensions, avoiding paying unemployment benefits to those employed, but not registered).

In order to prohibit and eliminate discrimination against migrant workers, judicial protection needs to be ensured. Integration is a multi-year process, which consists of individual efforts of migrant workers and measures that the society and the state implement. We believe that the best results can be achieved through the implementation of integration measures at the local level and the involvement of various stakeholders, including the important role of NGOs.

In the context of socio-economic implications of migrant workers in LTC jobs, we see the possibility to postpone and to reduce institutionalisation and to reduce the social isolation of elderly people as another positive effect of the presence of LTC workers (even migrant workers).

#### **4. Which specific steps can be most effective in promoting gender balanced opportunities when implementing policies for migration in LTC?**

The vast majority of Croatian workers providing LTC, in institutionalised settings or privately employed by families, are women.



In 2012 the employment rate for women aged between 20 and 64 years was 50.2%. The employment rate for men was 60.6%.<sup>9</sup> Croatia still did not reach the goal of female employment rate set by the Lisbon Strategy at 60%, and it is not in line with the goal of Europe 2020 Strategy (75%).

Considering the conditions of work in Croatia, women are usually paid less than men, and are at higher risk of poverty. (Topolčić 2008) But still, the share of women involved in the labour market in Croatia constantly increased during the last two decades (Topolčić 2008).<sup>10</sup> We assume, the constant increase of female participation in the labour market will affect the availability of family care givers and push the need for hiring care assistants (Havelka 2001).<sup>11</sup>

In Croatia there is no official data on the number of workers (women or men) who have migrated to other countries to work in LTC, but assessable data show that 50.4% women and 49.6% men emigrated from Croatia (Central Bureau of Statistics 2013).

A series of different strategies have been recently analysed by the Croatian government at the national level to improve existing gender opportunities to involve a larger segment of workforce in the labour market.

Among them:

- National Strategy for Gender Equality for the Period 2011-2015;
- Project "Promoting equality on the Croatian labour market" conducted by the Croatian Employment Service;
- Labour market measures for young workers.

In the future, it would be important to plan measures for attracting both male and female persons to join their families in the destination country, and offer them training and adequate qualifications.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nd/swd2013\\_croatia\\_hr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nd/swd2013_croatia_hr.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Topolčić, D. (2008) Udio žena na tržištu rada, obrasci radne karijere i uloga države. Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, (6)98, 1023-1046.

<sup>11</sup> Havelka, M. (2001). Skrb za starije ljude u Hrvatskoj-potreba uvođenja novih modela. Društvena istraživanja, 1-2(63-63), 225-245.

