

ROMANIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRIA SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

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Abstract. *Migration is a social phenomenon that has profoundly affected Romanian society for the last three decades. Due to migration, in some receiving states, more representative communities of Romanians began to develop. One of these communities is that of the Romanians in Austria, which in recent years has developed steadily, becoming the second-largest minority community in this country. The influencing factors and the contextual environment influenced both the immigration and the socio-economic integration of the Romanians into the Austrian society. Evidence of this integration is given by a high rate of engagement in the labour market, entrepreneurship and the school system. Romanians are not only a well-integrated community, but also human capital that plays a particularly important role in certain areas of socio-economic life in Austria.*

Keywords: *Emigration, Community, Social, Romanian, Integration*

Introduction

Through this study I would like to highlight the real situation of the effective integration of the Romanian community into the Austrian social-economic environment. The methodology used in the research consists of an analysis, processing and personal interpretation of statistical data prepared by the competent profile institutions and the annual analysis reports published by the official agencies of Austria on topics specific to the fields analysed in this study. Another point of research is the review of rules and legislative provisions that legislate the issues that are the subject of the study. Personal observation and experimentation brought an additional contribution to this study due to membership in the community since 2009, by going through all stages of integration in Austrian society, starting from the receipt of the right of residence, study and the effective integration into socio-economic life.

1. Socio-economic and demographic contextual realities

1.1. Austria - contextual presentation

Austria is a central European country with a population of 8.9 million at the beginning of 2020 (Federal Statistic Office Austria, Population, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bevoelkerung/, accessed in 25.04.2020). The democratic governmental republic proclaimed its independence and neutrality in 1955, and it is divided into nine administrative regions called Land or Bundesland (Confederation Law, Articles 1 and 2). Each region/Land/Bundesland has limited autonomy, regional decision-making forums and a local administrative organisation. The most representative administrative region is Land Wien, which is also the capital of the country. With its 1.9 million inhabitants (Statistic

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Office Vienna, <https://www.wien.gv.at/statistik/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstand/>, accessed in 25.04.2020) it accounts for a fifth of the country's population, and manages to generate a quarter of Austria's total GDP, being the richest region alongside Salzburg. The official language of the country is German, but in certain areas of eastern and southeastern regions, Hungarian, Croatian and Slovenian are recognized as official languages as well. Austria has joined European values and the community, being a member of the European Union since 1 January 1995. It adopted the Euro currency four years later and joined the Schengen area in 2007 (Official website of the European Union, https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/austria_en, accessed in 9.05.2020).

1.2. Domestic socio-economic Context

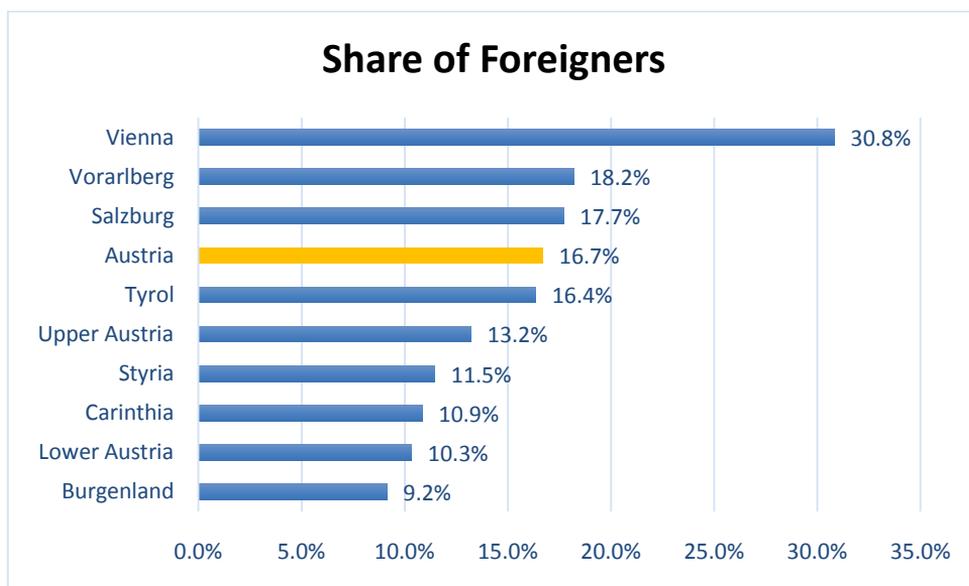
According to the World Bank classification, Austria is included in the category of countries with developed economies and high income. With a GDP / capita of 44,900 euros and 128% of the EU(27) average, it is among the top performing economies in the European Union. The country's wealth is not evenly distributed, with significant differences in economic performance and development between regions. Burgenland, the weakest developed region, accounts for only half of the welfare of the most productive regions, Vienna and Salzburg (Federal Statistic Office Austria, GDP, 2019, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/wirtschaft, accessed in 9.05.2020). This uneven development has a significant impact in terms of social phenomenon, the eastern and southern regions with the lowest incomes and fewer jobs available becoming a source of internal migration and a factor of influence for external migration. Austria does not have a minimum wage set by law. Instead, minimum wage is negotiated between the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and the Trade Union (ÖGB), and regulated in collective bargaining agreements, for 2020 it has been negotiated at the level of 1500 euros gross. For each field or group of activities, a collective labour contract that specifies the mandatory minimum wage level is provided (Austrian Economic Chamber Website, Employments contracts, <https://www.arbeiterkammer.at/beratung/arbeitsrecht/Arbeitsvertraege/Kollektivvertrag>, accessed in 10.05.2020). This method of establishing the minimum wage and contractual regulation ensures the protection of over 99% of the employed persons against remuneration below the assumed level. The social system is a complex product of the social democratic party that was at the helm of Austria for a long time. The most important component of social system is the Minimum Income for basic needs (bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung) restructured in 2019 and renamed as social assistance. This minimum income is established by law. It can be granted to citizens of Austria, the European Union as well as to those who enjoy refugee status (Consolidated Federal Law, Basic Social Welfare Law, paragraph 4). The applicants have the obligation to be registered in the database of the Office of Labour. This social assistance also includes medical insurance for each beneficiary. The amount of income varies from one region to another. It is established by law at national level and finalized via local laws by the administration of each region. This income was designed to reduce poverty, facilitate the integration of people into the labour market and to ensure a normal social life.

1.3 Ethno-national structure of the population, demographic realities

Austria is recognised as a state with a high openness and acceptance in terms of the treatment and integration of persons of another nationality, particularly those coming from different conflict zones of the world or from countries with totalitarian political

regimes. Currently, there are people of different nationalities coming from almost 200 (own preparation, data provided by Federal Statistic Office Austria) countries living in Austria. 16.7% of Austria's population is made up of people of other nationalities, born abroad, representing the first generation, placing Austria into the top of the countries of the European Union in terms of the share of foreign population. The percentage reaches 25% if the second-generation people are included (Federal Chancellery, Expert Council for Integration, *Integration Report 2019*, s. 18). About half of non-native people consist of citizens of the European Union. The share of foreigners in Austria has evolved positively thanks to government policies, starting from a share of only 1.4% in 1960, following an increasing trend in the 1970s to 4%, due to the invitation and integration of the Turkish and Yugoslav peoples into the labour market. The growth trend continued after the 1990s and increased significantly after 2004 with the admission of the eastern states to the European Union, at that time the foreign population representing less than 9%, 754,216 in 2004 versus 1,487,000 in 2020 (own preparation, data provided by Federal Statistic Office Austria). The share of people from EU countries in the foreign population of Austria increased from 35% to over 50% in the same time frame. The largest national minority communities are German (200,000), Romanians (123,451) and Serbs (122,364) (Federal Statistic Office Austria, Population by Nationality, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstruktur, accessed in 10.05.2020).

The territorial spread of foreign population can be seen in the graph below. It is mainly concentrated in Vienna, where over 800,000 foreigners live, representing 30% of the population of the city.



Own preparation, data provided by Federal Statistic Office Austria

2. Factors influencing migration, the institutional and legislative framework in Austria

2.1 Legal framework and competent institutions

The main regulations regarding migration and the rights of foreigners in Austria are: the asylum law, the police for foreigners law, the right of residence law, the law on establishing and acquiring nationality, the labour rights regulation of foreigners law and

the law on primary care. These normative acts also bring under regulation the organization and functioning of public institutions responsible for migration and foreigners, as well the subordinated organisations and agencies.

The institutions responsible for migration and integration are usually the ministries, which deal with a certain aspect of the migration, asylum and integration process.

With regard to migration, the main responsibility for the phenomenon lies with the Ministry of Interior and its subordinate structures, namely the Service for Foreigners and Asylum (BFA), which is the first instance for processing data on migration and asylum, respectively confirming the status of foreigners in Austria.

The responsibility for integration lies with the Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, which, through its subordinate agencies, has the integration of foreigners as its main objective.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection is responsible for labour market regulations and for the integration into the labour market of persons of foreign origin.

The most important institution representing the interests of foreigners is the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), which is under the Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. Through its activity, Integration Funds are facilitated for foreigners' linguistic, professional and social integration. Also, through publications and organised events, it has the role to facilitate access to information and establish the first contact between foreigners and the business and institutional environment in Austria.

2.2 The Status of Foreigners in Austria

Foreigners residing in Austria can be classified into four categories (Settlement and Residence Law, paragraph 8):

- People with mobility: citizens of the European Union who enjoy the status of European citizen and have full rights and obligations, like the natives. They may establish and carry out activities without restrictions within Austrian territory.
- Persons with the right of long-term residence: persons outside the European Community who wish to reside in Austria for a period of time longer than 6 months. In order to benefit from this status, a person must apply for the Red-White-Red pass, which is awarded through a scoring system based on different criteria. This pass is granted for various fields of activity such as work, highly qualified people or those that are a necessity to cover key sectors, as well as graduates or founders of start-ups.
- Persons with a right of temporary residence: persons from outside the Community who do not intend to settle in Austria for a long time, their presence being due to temporary activities such as study, research, projects, temporary work, etc.
- Fixed-term employees: persons who have the right to stay for a limited period of time in order to carry out defined activities. This category includes seasonal workers, persons seconded by temporary parent companies or the fulfillment of various contractual obligations.

2.3 Integration programs

The path of integration of foreigners into Austrian society depends on nationality and purpose of residence, with easier access for people from European Community countries. For working-age adults who want to temporarily settle in Austria, the main institution that opens the process is the Labour Agency (Arbeitsmarktservice). Every person that is not directly employed has the obligation to register with the territorial

agency before receiving any material or financial support. In the next stage they will be offered support for integration into the labour market. Those who cannot be integrated into the labour market right away can partake in projects for the assimilation of German language skills and qualification in certain areas agreed upon with the personal adviser.

For those interested in the academic path, regardless of nationality, the educational institution they choose will provide them with the necessary information and the process they must go through in order to study in the Austrian education system.

As regards third-country nationals, the integration process is largely similar from the time of registration in the Employment Agency's database. Until this condition is met, people must go through several stages in order to obtain the rights of asylum, residence and work.

The main institution that aims to integrate immigrants and asylum seekers is the Austrian Integration Fund, which coordinates all support work on linguistic, professional and social integration. The Employment Agency and the Austrian Integration Fund decide and recommend the optimal personalized solution that most effectively meets the personal integration needs of each foreign person, facilitating the takeover of the person in one of the specialized programs offered by the state through subordinate agencies or those offered by NGOs.

The multitude and diversity of integration programs offered is mainly due to the involvement of different institutions and organizations. Among the providers of integrative programs are: Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Economic Chamber, Chamber of Labour, Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, Minister of Labour, Social, Health and Consumer Protection, Ministry of Digitization and Business Location, Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign, the Ministry of Women, Family and Youth, as well as a multitude of NGOs such as: Caritas, Diakonie, Volkshilfe, Rotes Kreuz (Federal Ministry of European and International Opportunity, Data base Integration Projects, <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/integration/datenbank-integrationsprojekte>, accessed in 16.05.2020).

Integration programs are offered at national level, the costs being fully supported by the state or associations.

2.4 Social - economic factors

The socio-economic environment in Austria has been an important factor in favouring migration in general, Austria being one of the countries preferred by emigrants due to its generous social system, 109.3 billion euros, respectively 28.3% of the Gross Domestic Product represents total social expenditures in 2018. (Federal Statistic Office Austria, Welfare expenses 2018, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/soziales/sozialschutz_nach_eu_konzept/sozialausgaben, accessed in 9.05.2020)

Aspects of the social system that exert a positive influence on the formation of the Romanian community in Austria can be structured as follows:

a) **Labour.** The right to work and protection against discrimination stipulate that every person, regardless of nationality, colour, religion, sexual orientation or disability, is guaranteed and facilitated access to the labour market (Equal Treatment Law, paragraphs 16, 17 and 18). The primary purpose of state institutions, especially the Labour Office, is to get involved in the occupational activity of each person who has received the right of residence as soon as possible, paying special attention to each person.

- b) ***Social services to guarantee minimum income.*** They are offered for disadvantaged groups or those who are temporarily in professional inactivity. The minimum income insurance is well-regulated and granted to all categories of people with needments such as pensioners, the unemployed, people with disabilities, those with low incomes or asylum seekers. Their income is supplemented up to the level of the legal minimum ceiling (Basic Social Benefits Law, paragraph 1). The minimum income is established by law and mandatory for all regions, but its amount varies from one region to another due to being regulated by regional governments. For 2020 it has been set at between 838 euros in Burgenland (Burgenland Basic Social Benefits Law p.9) and 917 euros in Vienna (Vienna Basic Social Benefits Law p.5,6). Beneficiaries of minimum income (Mindestsicherung or Sozialhilfe from 2019) are granted not only financial aid, but depending on their needs can also benefit from social housing, coverage of utility costs, discounts and free food, means of public transport, sports activities and medical services fully covered.
- c) ***Social services for family and children.*** Austria accords special attention to families and children, offering financial incentives and services to encourage natality. Among the measures to support family are: flexible maternity leave, ensuring the preservation of the job during the maternity leave, financial assistance for childcare, child allowance, financial bonus for the family (from 2019, the amount of 1500 euros for each child per year for the working parents deducted from taxes), covering the costs of education and training etc. Due to family support measures, the birth rate increased from 77,752 to 85,535 children between 2008 and 2018 (*Ibidem*, natality, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bevoelkerung/geborene/, accessed in 25.05.2020).. While the number of newborns of Austrian nationality remained constant, the number of newborns from non-Austrian families increased continuously, rising from a share of 13.4% in the total number of newborns to 20.4% (own preparation, data provided by Federal Statistic Office Austria), confirming that the measures of social support for families has become a factor that generates migration.
- d) ***The health insurance system and the care of people with temporary disabilities, elderly and disabilities.***

The Austrian health insurance system is solidarity system, which means that all persons with the right of residence, regardless of age, gender, origin, social status or income, have equal and barrier-free access to adequate medical care. The employed persons are automatically registered in the insurance system. Other categories of persons must personally apply for registration. At the end of 2018, 99% of the country's population was insured (Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer protection, *Welfare State Austria-Expenses and Funding 2018*, s.28). Austria pays special attention to health and care by investing more than 10.4% of GDP in the health system annually, placing it alongside France, Germany and Sweden among the EU member states that give the largest share of GDP to the health system (Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer protection, *Austrian Healthcare System, Numbers, Data, Facts*, Edition 2019, s.5). This investment has started to produce results in the form of increased life expectancy. In the last 10 years, life expectancy has gone up by 2 years for men (to 79.3) and by 1.1 for women (to 83.9). Another positive effect is the improvement of the life period classified as a good health level. In the same time interval it has gone up by 2.7 years for men from 63.2 to 65.9 and by 4.9 years for women from 61.7 to 66.6 years (*Ibidem*, s.13).

Special attention is also paid to people with disabilities, temporary or permanent, and the elderly. Depending on the classification in one of the 7 health categories following an evaluation, a specialist doctor recommends the necessary care, at home or in specialized centres financed entirely by the state. Persons in these categories are offered either financial assistance, ranging from 160.10 euro for the persons classified in group 1 of care, to 1719.30 for those in group 7 (fully immobilised persons) to cover the costs of care, or specialised assistance from the responsible state or private agencies for these needs (Federal Allowance Care Law, p.4).

From an economic point of view, the factors that can have a positive influence on migration are:

- a) Average monthly net income above the European Union average and four times the value of net earnings in Romania, 2,664 euros in Austria (Federal Statistic Office Austria, Incomes, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/soziales/personen-einkommen, accessed in 19.05.2020) compared to 702 euros in Romania (National Institut of Statistic Romania, Presse Release, February 11, 2020).
- b) The facility to open a company. The formalities are simplified, the establishment of a company in simple forms, such as the One Proprietorship (Einzelunternehmen e.U), is done in one day, by simply registering in the trade register. The exercise of a liberal profession in the legal form of an Authorized Individual (Freie or reglementierte Gewerbe) for those who have a professional certificate is also done in one day, by registering with the administrative authorities in which they are domiciled (Austrian Economic Chamber, individual Enterprises, <https://www.wko.at/service/Austrian-Economic-Chambers.html> accessed in 9.05.2020).

2.5 Cultural and historical factors

Romania and Austria are two countries that are part of the European family and whose relationship stretches over several centuries. Austria is the de facto successor of the Habsburg (and Austro-Hungarian) Empire, which had a long-standing influence especially in Banat, Transylvania and Bukovina, leaving behind elements of cultural influence visible even today. For the Romanians from the mentioned historical provinces, which were under the Habsburg administration, as well as the entire Balkan area, Vienna represented the administrative, educational and cultural centre for which they developed a sentimental attachment. The phenomenon of migration and integration of people from these areas take historical and cultural forms and connotations. The migration and integration of Romanians in the economic, social, linguistic and cultural environment in Austria are positively influenced by the origin from an area of administrative and cultural influence.

2.6 Geographical positioning

By its geographical position, having a common border with the former communist eastern bloc, Austria represented the gateway to the democratic countries of the West. Austria's policy regarding political asylum, the care provided in the refugee reception centre Traiskirchen and the integration of refugees have made Austria the main option for emigration for the people from the communist east. If during the communist period Austria represented the road to civilization and freedom, today it represents, for Romanians, the nearest and most accessible developed country in the European Union. The intense flow of Romanian citizens in recent years, over 10,000 annually, demonstrates that Austria remains one of Romanians's top targets when it comes to emigration.

3. The actual community of Romanians in Austria

3.1 The main stages of the formation of the Romanian community

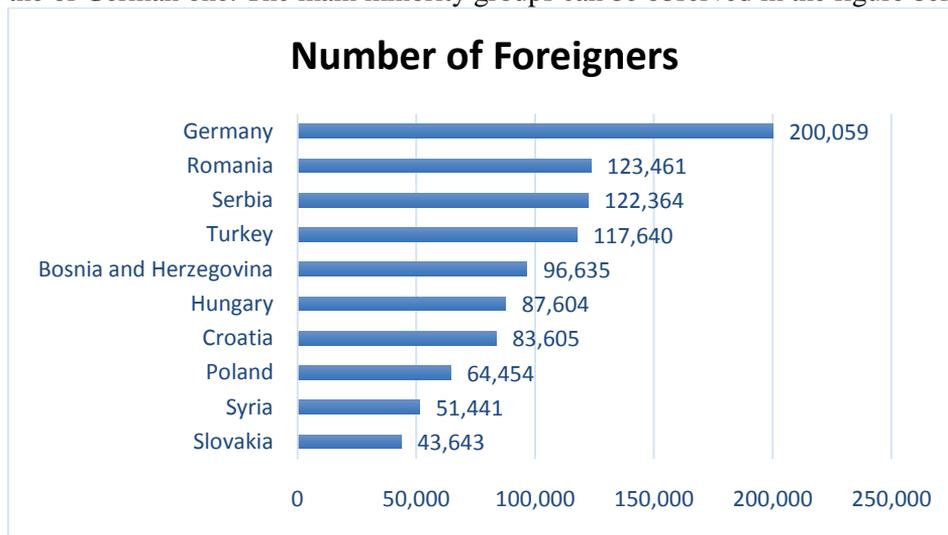
From the formation of the modern state of Austria in 1955 until today, the Romanian community has experienced a fluctuating evolution. It was influenced by the political systems of the two countries, bilateral relations and the admission to the European Union. Romania became part of EU, implicitly take advantage of EU basic principles namely, free movement within the European Union, the right of employment and establishment in the territory of any member state. The migration and formation of the Romanian community in Austria can be divided into the following periods:

- before 1989, the community was statistically insignificant and consisted mainly of people who wanted to emigrate due to the totalitarian regime in Romania. The number of visa beneficiaries was extremely low. All those arriving in Austria by illegally crossing the country's borders were granted political refugee status and were housed in the Traiskirchen emigrants' centre for a while. There, they were offered support for daily necessities and courses to facilitate economic and social integration.
- 1990-2002, influenced by the change of the Romanian political regime that allowed travel abroad, the Romanian community in Austria reached over 14,000 people. Until 1993 Romanians still benefited from the status of political refugees, receiving special attention from the Austrian state. Although movement was freer, entry into Austria after 1990 was still depending on whether or not one would receive a visa.
- 2002-2007, Romania was in the period of pre-admission to the EU and received the right to free movement within EU territory for all citizens. The visa requirement was eliminated, the trip being conditioned by the proof of financial resources set at 100 euros per day of travel and by the travel insurance. This measure led to an increase of over 100% in the annual number of Romanians who settled in Austria. Reaching a rate of 2000 people per year, the community accounted for 21,000 people at the end of 2006.
- 2007-2014, the period after Romania's admission to the EU when the rights of European citizens were the same throughout the Union, with one exception: free access to the labour market. Austria was one of the states that expressed its option to benefit from the right to postpone the opening of the labour market for Romanian citizens, except for the sectors with deficit in terms of labour force. Even though access to the labour market was limited, the community continued to grow by over 5,000 people annually, reaching over 53,000 by the end of 2013.
- Since 2014, Romanians have been enjoying full rights in Austria. The restrictions on access to the labour market were completely removed. The possibility to work legally was one of the factors that impelled the growth of the community even more, the number of Romanians settling in Austria rising to an average of over 10,000 annually. At the beginning of 2020, the community accounted for 123.451 people, which made the Romanians the second largest community of foreigners in Austria (Federal Statistic Office Austria, Population by Nationality, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerung_nach_staatsangehoerigkeit_geburtsland, accessed in 10.05.2020).

3.2 The current state of community in Austria

Due to accelerated growth of annual rate for Romanians who have settled in Austria since 2014, when the restrictive access to the labour market was eliminated, the

Romanian community has become the second most representative minority community after the of German one. The main minority groups can be observed in the figure below.



Own preparation, data provided by Federal Statistic Office Austria

The Romanian community has experienced a significant progressive increase since the elimination of visa requirements, both in absolute numbers and as a share in the foreign population. In 2002 the Romanians accounted for 2% (17.750), in 2007, the year of admission, 3% (21.882), reaching 8.3% (123.461) at the end of 2019 (own preparation, data provided by Federal Statistic Office Austria).

The Romanian community is spread throughout Austria, each administrative region registering the presence of Romanian nationals on its administrative territory. The distribution of Romanians is not a uniform one, but it is influenced by factors such as: proximity, well-being, job offer, preferential social system, the policy of local communities for the acceptance and integration of foreigners, etc. The largest community of Romanians is registered in Vienna, where 36.358 persons live, representing 29% of the Romanian community. The other administrative regions where a significant presence of Romanian citizens is recorded are: Lower Austria, Upper Austria and Styria, with approximately 22.000 (18%) Romanians in each region. A relatively low presence is registered in the remaining regions, each accounts for less than 5% of the community. From the data provided by the National Statistics Office, it can be observed that 50% of the community is established in the eastern regions of the country, 36% in the central regions and only 14% in the 4 southern and western regions.

4. The image of the effective integration of Romanian citizens in the socio-economic environment

4.1 Level of integration in the labour market

According to data provided by the Institute of Statistics and the Labour Office in 2018, almost 90% of Romanians in Austria were employed as persons in contractual employment relationships or as private entrepreneurs (Labor Market Service, *Report* 2019). Due to the social and integration model in Austria, which aims for each person, regardless of nationality, colour, religion, sexual orientation or disability, to be integrated into the labour market, the employment rate is much higher than in Romania, where it is 66.7% (National Institut of Statistic Romania, Presse Release, December 20, 2019). Every

person receiving unemployment benefits, guaranteed minimum income or other forms of social support has the obligation to be registered in the database of the Labour Office, must participate in the training courses offered and accept the jobs available for personal profile. Any refusal or rejection of job offers leads to a reduction or loss of financial support (Basic Social Welfare Law, p.9). During the period of unemployment, the beneficiary may leave the territory of Austria. However, the financial aid is suspended during that time. In the case of social assistance beneficiaries, the duration of the trip is limited and must be announced in advance, otherwise they risk losing their financial support. The Austrian model of social integration in conjunction with the goal of Romanian citizens who opted for Austria out of a desire to work, as stated in the report of the Labour Office, led to a high employment rate. For comparison, the employment rate of Romanian citizens is much higher than the employment rate of people from other nations that came to Austria earlier, such as the Turkish population which has an employment rate of less than 60% (Labor Market Service, *Report 2019*, s.49).

The factors that influence the level of employment are:

- average age registered among Romanians included in the category of active population (15-64 years) is 30.3 years (Federal Statistic Office Austria, *Migration and Integration Report 2018*, s.29).
- 50% have at least one professional certificate,
- 12%, apart from the holders of professional certificates, graduated high school,
- 13% of those employed in the labour market are university graduates.

From the number of those in activity 67% are listed as persons in a contractual employment relationship, 33% as entrepreneurs.

The unemployment rate among the community fluctuated between 2006 and 2017, following the general rate evolution. In 2018, the unemployment rate for Romanian nationals was 11.2%, below the rate of foreigners, which was 11.3%. It was much lower than the unemployment rate of those accepted as asylum seekers in the period 2014-2015, which was recorded at 50.9% for Syrians and 39.2% for Iraqis. Even compared to Turks (16.8%) or Serbs (29.5%), communities formed in the 70s and 80s, or those from the Russian Federation, which was at 30%, the rate of unemployed Romanians was lower. The unemployment rate registered among women is higher than that of men, 12.8% women compared to 10% men (Federal Chancellery, Expert Council for Integration, *Integration Report 2019* s.48-49).

One third of Romanians have developed businesses or carry out professional activities as authorized individuals. The proportion is much higher compared to the national average of 10%. In the formed communities, especially in Vienna, we find restaurants, confectioneries and shops with specific Romanian and Austrian products. In the category of self-employed persons, there is a special subcategory working in the social field of care with persons that need to be supervised 24/7. The number of people registered in the Austrian Chamber of Commerce as freelancers in the field of care at the beginning of the year was 98,961 of which 68,926 are registered as active, 99% being people of other nationalities, predominantly from Eastern Europe, almost half coming from Romania. The role played by the Romanian community in this field was highlighted especially during the actual crisis when social care was deeply affected by the limitation of mobility within the EU.

Regarding the beneficiaries of minimum income granted to temporarily inactive people unable to actively participate in the labour market or even active but with insufficient income to meet the minimum income criterion per family member established

by law, Romanian citizens do not appear among the leading nations which are: Syria (38,900), Afghanistan (15,500), Iraq (5,500) among asylum seekers or the other communities formed in previous decades like Russian (11,900), Turkish (9,400) or Serbian (6,500). The number of Romanians social assistance beneficiaries amounts to 4,400, around 4% of the community (Federal Chancellery, Expert Council for Integration, *Integration Report 2019*, s.61-63).

4.2 Integration into the educational system

The Romanian community is a young community both in terms of its formation and development, and in terms of average age. As mentioned above, the average age of active people is 30.3 years. An effective integration of the community presupposes an adequate educational and professional training in order to be assimilated to the integrative society. The Austrian education system offers a wide range of forms of education and training in response to the needs of the labour market. The school system not only offers the possibility of vocational training, but also facilitates its organisation, the development of occupational activities, the model of education with extended program in kindergartens, elementary schools, grades 1-4 and middle school, grades 5-8 being appreciated. During 2019, there were 5,712 children of Romanian nationality enrolled at kindergarten level, being the most significant group as a share among foreigners. At the level of students in elementary, middle and high schools, Romanians occupy a top place with over 12,000 children, while the number of those enrolled at university amounted to 1,407 (Federal Statistic Office Austria, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung/, accessed in 2.05.2020). The involvement of the community in the educational system is also at the level of pedagogy and teaching, being present in all school cycles, in different specializations, including those responsible for teaching the Romanian language in 27 schools for 366 children (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, *Information sheets on migration and school* , Nr.5/2019. s.14). The share of Romanian children attending a school is about 10%, the same level as the other minorities and Austrians.

4.3. Naturalisation of Romanians

Naturalisation is an important aspect of integration, respectively of the assimilation of the persons of foreign origin by the Austrian society. The aspirations of Romanian citizens to Austrian citizenship were motivated by the benefits generated by the status of full rights citizen, such as unrestricted access to the labour market, access to social and health insurance, right to education, free movement, protection and security of a democratic environment, etc. in the pre-admission period to the European Union. The naturalisation of Romanians has undergone variations over time, influenced by the political regime, bilateral relations, membership in the European community, loss of national sentiment. Three characteristic time intervals can be found according to statistical records:

- before 1989, the number of those who obtained Austrian citizenship was small, around 100 people per year, conditioned by political barriers to leave Romania in the communist system,
- 1990-2006, the period in which the number of naturalisations increased significantly to an average of 1000 people per year due to the opening of borders and the granting of the right to travel within the European Union,
- after 2007, the annual average of naturalisations decreased to 266 due to Romania's admission to the EU. When the rights and obligations for Romanians are identical to

those of the locals, the benefits of naturalisations don't justify their costs anymore. It should be noted that in the years 2018-2019, simultaneously with the political and legislative instability in Romania, there was an accelerated growth in naturalization from an annual average of 266 to 416 people.

Regarding the situation of naturalisations, Romanians are the most naturalised nationality among the countries of the European Union. In the last ten years, 2,682 Romanians have received Austrian citizenship (Ibidem, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_undgesellschaft/bevoelkerung/einbuengerungen/, accessed in 9.05.2020).

4.4. Political involvement

The Romanian community does not currently have a political organization or representatives in the Austrian Government and Parliament. It is in the process of forming and recognizing a political organization that will represent the interests of the community in the future. Although there is no political party, community members are involved in the political process as members of traditional Austrian parties. Some of them have won seats in local administration by serving as councillors in town halls, such as the one in Krems or the 11th district in Vienna

5. Conclusions

Due to the integration factors, the Romanian community in Austria has experienced a marked development in recent years, becoming the second largest community of foreigners after Germans. From the presented data, it can be stated that Romanians are a community well integrated in the social and economic environment in Austria. Romanian citizens are not just people who only need to be integrated, as it has been the case with other communities formed in previous decades, but are an important aspect of economic and social life in Austria, some areas such as qualified permanent care depending largely on the contribution of Romanian specialists.

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