

REGIONAL MIGRATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract

The Republic of North Macedonia is always considered a highly intensive migration zone, characterized by the internal movements of its citizens, as well as the ongoing processes of emigration to other countries. This paper focuses on exploration and volume analysis, dynamics, trends demographic characteristics and volatility of migration modality in the country during the first decade of the 21st century, as well as their relation and effects on socio-economic factors. Given the differences in migration flows within the country, the expected results are foreseen in the discovery of relevant information about their changes, their trends, and the interaction between the basic indicators obtained by applying relevant statistical migration parameters and those that portray the development of statistical regions over a given period of time.

Keywords: *Republic of North Macedonia, immigration, emigration, regional development indicators, statistical conclusions, balance of migration.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The mechanical (physical) movement of residents, also known as "population migration" or "human migration", is a global, yet continuous and variable process over time. Human migrations appear in different modalities, such as permanent or temporary, internal (local, regional) or external (across borders), economically or politically induced, forced or voluntary, legal or illegal, etc. The reasons that initiate human migrations have different modalities, too, and both their volume and impact intensity varies in different time periods. As a result, the structure of the labour market changes and novel tendencies in regional development are initiated, as well. The Republic of North Macedonia has always been considered a highly intensive migration area, characterized by both exhaustive inner movements of its citizens, as well as continuous emigration processes towards other countries [1].

Historically, the internal migration flows within the Republic of North Macedonia have exhibited different intensities in specific time periods. In general, they still occur from villages to towns, especially towards the capital city of Skopje, both from rural and urban places. The most intensive wave of rural-to-urban migrations happened during the 1960's and 1970's, a time period known as "the industrialization period". During this period, it has been estimated that more than 175.000 inhabitants have left rural places and have moved into towns and cities, in order to resolve their existential problems. Such an immense migration flow has implied a "rural exodus" to cities, especially the city of Skopje, followed by significant consequences in the process of demographic aging both on a regional and geographic scale.

The phenomenon of migrations from the Republic of North Macedonia has a long tradition, lasting for more than 100 years. The prevailing destinations have always been the West-European

countries, as well as overseas countries, including the USA, Canada, and Australia. For instance, more than 170.000 Macedonian citizens migrated to only three West-European countries from 1998 to 2017, including Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, according to EUROSTAT, 2014 [2].

Those changes correspond to the phases of social and economic development in the country, also reflecting the changes in migration policies being introduced by the countries where Macedonian emigrants settle. In fact, the biggest emigrant wave of about 200.000 inhabitants, originating from the Republic of North Macedonia towards third countries, has begun after the country gained its independence in 1990. It was induced by the severe economic crisis that struck the country from the beginning of transition, since the poverty rate escalated enormously, and the unemployment rate leveled out above 30% in continuity. However, despite the dimensions of migration flows from the Republic of North Macedonia, the statistical evidence about such dimensions is relatively poor. Moreover, the exact number of Macedonian citizens staying and living out of the borders of the country cannot be determined precisely.

According to the existing analyses that are primarily based on the officially published population census data, the decrease in the Macedonian population due to international migrations is considerably smaller than the one caused by internal migration flows. In 2012, EUROSTAT has announced that the number of emigrant Macedonian citizens in foreign countries has reached 550.000, which represents 26% of the total number of inhabitants in the Republic of North Macedonia. On the other hand, the US Statistical Bureau claims that the number of Macedonian citizens' overseas and other countries is over 470.000, which is more than 100.000 less than the number given by EUROSTAT, 2014.

In general, the contemporary migrant flows from/into and within the Republic of North Macedonia have been induced by several dominant factors, including the following ones: the unfavorable overall economic situation, especially the unfavourable situation on the labour market, the high participation of young population in the total number of unemployed persons, and the problem of unemployed, yet highly educated people, which has escalated both in volume and structure during recent years. Furthermore, highly negative demographic trends are also evident, as well as significant differences in regional economic and social development, which altogether have led to severe social differentiation within the society, inequalities and differences, regional demographic disparities, unequal and unsustainable territorial distribution of the population, poor quality of life, as well as an absence of social cohesion.

The migration effect on the demographic image is twofold. First of all, it has a direct impact on the statistics, territorial distribution, and population structure. On the other, it determines the birth rate and the mortality rate due to the consequences of the changes in the gender and the age structure of the population. The places and regions hit by emigration flows suffer a lack of workers, and there are unexploited physical resources, as well. Quite the opposite, the places and regions to which immigrants migrate suffer a surplus of workers, leading towards unemployment, poverty, increased population density, as well as the decreased well-being of individuals and societies, otherwise known as the "quality of life".

I. Statistical Analysis of the Population Migration

Migratory movements in the Republic of North Macedonia have been expressed through the total number of immigrants and emigrants flowing in/ from the country, along with all of their modalities, observed in statistical regions (Map 1), for 2000, 2011 and 2017 [3].



Map 1. Statistical regions in the Republic of North Macedonia

Table 1. Total number of immigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia, by statistical regions (2000/2011/2017)

No	Statistical regions	Total number of immigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia		
		2000	2011	2017
1.	Pelagonia Region	1 118	1 100	919
2.	Vardar Region	702	616	599
3.	Northeast Region	988	597	751
4.	Southwest Region	1 127	1 088	1 054
5.	Skopje Region	6 022	2 014	2 807
6.	Southeast Region	969	754	882
7.	Polog Region	1 076	908	1 340
8.	Eastern Region	1 056	884	914
*	R. of North Macedonia	13 058	7 961	9 266

Source: Statistical Office of North Macedonia (data processed by the author)

Table 2. Total number of immigrants within the Republic of North Macedonia, by statistical regions (2000/2011/2017)

No	Statistical regions	Total number of immigrants within the Republic of North Macedonia		
		2000	2011	2017
1.	Pelagonia Region	1 058	709	554
2.	Vardar Region	685	445	430
3.	Northeast Region	972	386	417
4.	Southwest Region	1 034	710	579
5.	Skopje Region	5 903	1 952	2 734
6.	Southeast Region	963	617	630
7.	Polog Region	764	556	695
8.	Eastern Region	1 040	673	636
*	R. of North Macedonia	12 419	6 048	6 675

Source: Statistical Office of North Macedonia (data processed by the author)

Table 1 shows that the total number of immigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2011 has been 1.5 times (33.78%) less than the corresponding one in 2000, whilst in 2017 there has also been a decrease of 38.46% or 1.6 times since 2000.

The decreasing trend has been the most distinctive in the Skopje region (the number of immigrants in 2011 has decreased by almost 3 times or 66.55%, in comparison to 2000) whilst the smallest decrease has been observed in the Pelagonia region (the number of immigrants in 2011 has decreased about 1.6% in compared to 2000), whilst in 2017 the lowest decrease of about 6.5% is observed in the Southwest region in comparison to 2000. In 2017 we see an increase in the number of immigrants in the Polog region by 24.5% compared to 2000.

One should also mention that the total number of immigrants within the Republic of North Macedonia in 2011 has decreased by 51.3% compared to 2000, which is more than 2 times, whilst in 2017 it decreased by 1.8 times compared to 2000. Such a decrease is evident for all statistical regions within the country.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the number of immigrated persons within the country in 2011 has decreased by more than 2 times, compared to 2000. The decreasing trend is obvious in all statistical regions. From 2000 to 2011 the most prevalent relative decrease of the immigrant's flows within the country is noticeable in the Skopje region (66.93%), and in the Northeast region (60.29%), as well. The smallest decrease of the immigrant's flows within the country is evident in the Pelagonia and Polog regions (Table 2). In 2017, the decrease in the number of immigrants had the Polog region of 9% compared to 2000 [4].

Table 3. Total number of emigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia, by statistical regions (2000/2011/2017)

No	Statistical regions	Total number of emigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia		
		2000	2011	2017
1.	Pelagonia Region	1 107	1 044	1 026
2.	Vardar Region	774	689	831
3.	Northeast Region	1 166	737	870
4.	Southwest Region	1 080	1 969	1 095
5.	Skopje Region	5 320	1 416	1 844
6.	Southeast Region	1 071	761	882
7.	Polog Region	833	987	1 483
8.	Eastern Region	1 233	1 152	1 072
*	R. of North Macedonia	12 584	8 755	9 103

Source: Statistical Office of North Macedonia (data processed by the author)

The conclusions drawn from the statistical analysis of the data presented in Table 3 have indicated that the total number of emigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2011 has decreased by 30.43% in comparison to 2000. This is most evident in the Skopje region, where the decrease is 73.38% or 3.75 times. Such a decreasing trend is also evident in the East region, Southeast region, Northeast region, the Vardar region, as well as in the Pelagonia region. However, this is not the case with the Southwest and the Polog region, where an increase in the number of emigrants by 82.31% and 18.49% has been observed, respectively. In 2017, the lowest decrease was observed in the Southwest region by 1.4%, whilst growth was observed in the Vardar region (7.36%) and Polog (78%) compared to 2000.

Table 4. Total number of emigrants from the Republic of North Macedonia in foreign countries, by statistical regions (2000/2011/2017)

No	Statistical regions	Total number of emigrants from the Republic of North Macedonia in other countries		
		2000	2011	2017
1.	Pelagonia Region	12	0	0
2.	Vardar Region	7	0	0
3.	Northeast Region	30	23	3
4.	Southwest Region	13	921	0
5.	Skopje Region	56	21	1
6.	Southeast Region	22	7	1
7.	Polog Region	7	83	74
8.	Eastern Region	18	88	29
*	R. of North Macedonia	165	1 143	108

Source: Statistical Office of North Macedonia (data processed by the author)

Table 4 shows that the total number of emigrants from the Republic of North Macedonia in foreign countries in 2011 has increased 7 times, relatively to 2000. The increase is most obvious in the East and Southwest regions, as well as in the Polog region. Notwithstanding, the number of citizens from the Republic of North Macedonia who have emigrated abroad in 2011 has decreased by 62.5% in the Skopje region, as compared to 2000. In 2017 a visible increase is observed in the Polog region.

It should be also pointed out that in 2011 all statistical regions were facing a considerable decrease in the number of emigrated persons, bearing in mind the investigated modalities in the age structure, in relation to 2000.

II. Statistical Indicators of the Population Migration

Based on the data available about the population size (number of inhabitants), the number of emigrants, as well as the number of immigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia, which are given by statistical regions and for the period being observed (2000, 2011, 2017), we have computed the following statistical indicators: the migration balance, the rate of immigrants, and the rate of emigrants (Table 5, Figure 1), using the proposed metrics.

In the observed time period, the number of inhabitants has decreased only in the East region, by 11.73% (2011). Also, an insignificant decrease in the number of inhabitants is evident in the Southwest region. All other regions in the country faced an increased number of inhabitants from 2002 to 2011. The most significant increase in the number of inhabitants (15.5%) is evident in the Vardar region.

In the observed period, the population size in the Republic of North Macedonia in total has grown by 1.78% (2011) and the 2.56% (2017). In 2017, the number of population has decreased in the Eastern region (13.4%), Pelagoni (3.6%) and Southwest (0.8%). Whilst more visible growth is observed in the Skopje region by about 8.3% compared to 2000.

Table 5. Migration balance rates, by statistical regions (2000/2011/2017)

N	Statistical regions	Number of inhabitants (2002)*	Number of inhabitants (2011)**	Number of inhabitants (2017)	Migration balance rate [%] (2000)	Migration balance rate [%] (2011)	Migration balance rate [%] (2017)
1	Pelagonia Region	238.136	233.628	229.491	0.0461	0.2396	-0.4662
2	Vardar Region	133.180	153.822	152.410	-0.5406	-0.4745	-1.5222
3	Northeast Region	172.787	175.266	176.214	-1.0301	-0.7987	-0.6753
4	Southwest Region	221.546	221.517	219.702	0.2121	-3.9771	-0.1866
5	Skopje Region	578.144	605.899	626.071	1.2142	0.9869	1.5381
6	Southeast Region	171.416	173.056	173.476	-0.595	0.0404	0
7	Polog Region	304.125	315.964	321.199	0.799	-0.25	-0.4452
8	Eastern Region	203.213	179.387	175.939	-0.871	-1.4939	-0.898
*	R.N.M	2.022.54	2.058.539	2.074.502	0.2343	-0.3857	0.0785

Source: Statistical Office of North Macedonia (data processed by the author)

* There is no data for the number of inhabitants by statistical regions for the year 2000 in the Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of North Macedonia: 2000 (2001); therefore, we approximate these by the 2002 figures, given in the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics of the Republic of North Macedonia (2005), by assuming that there is no significant difference.

** The numeric values of data have been estimated according to Regions of the Republic of North Macedonia (2012) since the 2011 population census has been canceled due to uncertain reasons, which have not been clarified to date.

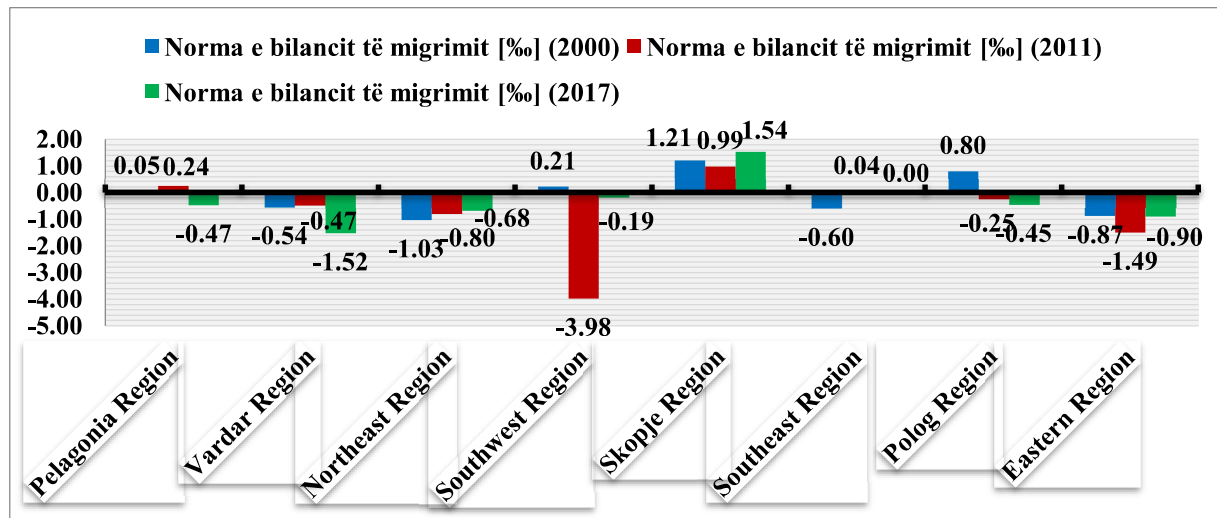


Figure 1. Migration balance rates in the Republic of North Macedonia, by statistical regions (2000/2011/2017)

In 2000, the number of immigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia was 3.63% higher than the number of emigrants, thus yielding a positive migration balance rate. According to the tables above, the number of emigrants in the Vardar region in 2000, as well as in the Northeast, Southeast and the East region, is higher than the number of immigrants, thus putting them into the class of emigration areas. On the other hand, the Pelagonia region has a balanced migration rate, whilst the Southwest region, the Skopje region, and the Polog region belong to

immigration areas (the number of immigrants is higher than the number of emigrants), since their corresponding migration balance rates are, respectively, 4.17%, 11.66%, and 22.58%.

In 2011, the relative increase in the total number of emigrants in the Republic of North Macedonia against the total number of immigrants was 9.97%, thus yielding a negative migration balance rate. In the Vardar region, the Northeast region, the Southwest region (81%), the Polog region, as well as in the East region (23.26%), the number of emigrants is higher than the number of immigrants, whilst in the Skopje region (30%), the Southeast, and the Pelagonia region, the number of immigrants is higher than the number of emigrants. The Southwest region and the East region are significant emigration areas. The Skopje region and the Pelagonia region remain immigration areas, whilst the Southeast region and the Polog region transit from immigration to emigration areas and vice-versa.

The migration balance rate value in the Republic of North Macedonia in the observed time /period has changed from a positive one (+0,2343‰) to a negative one (-0,3857‰), which means that more people emigrate than immigrate. Whilst in 2017 again we have a positive migration balance (+0.0785 ‰). The Skopje region has continuously retained the positive value of the migration balance rates. (Table 5).

On the other hand, the Vardar region, the Northeast region, the Southeast region, the Pelagonia region and the East region have continuously retained negative values of the migration balance rates. An insignificant increase in the migration balance rate's negative value has been observed in the East region, whilst the increase in the other regions' migration balance rates is rather significant.

A shift from a positive to a statistically significant negative value of the migration balance rate has been detected for the Southwest and the Polog regions. In 2000, the highest positive value of the migration balance rate has been detected in the Skopje region, whilst the highest negative value has been observed in the Northeast region. In 2011, the highest positive value of the migration balance rate has been detected again in the Skopje region, whilst the highest negative values have been observed in the Southwest and the East regions. In 2017, only the Skopje region (+ 1.5381 ‰) had positive value.

In 2000, the immigration rate's value was higher than the emigration one. The highest values of the immigration rate have been detected in the Skopje region (10.42‰), the Southeast region (5.65‰), as well as in the Northeast region (5.72‰), whilst its lowest value (3.54‰) is specific for the Polog region.

The highest values of the emigration rate have been detected in the Skopje region (9.20‰), the Northeast region (6.75‰), as well as in the Southeast region (6.25‰), whilst its lowest value (2.74‰) is specific, again, for the Polog region.

In 2011, the emigrant rate within the Republic of North Macedonia had a higher value (4.253‰) than the immigrant rate (3.8673‰), which is not the case as with 2000.

The highest immigrant rate values in 2011 can be detected in the East region (4.93‰), the Southwest region, as well as in the Pelagonia region, whilst the highest emigrant rate values are evident for the Southwest (8.89‰), the East (6.42‰) and the Vardar (4.48‰) regions ^[5].

In 2017, the highest immigration rate had the Eastern region (6.09 ‰) and Vardar (5.45 ‰), whilst emigration also has the Eastern region (5.19 ‰) (Figure 2). We note that in the Southeast region there is an equalization of emigration and immigration rate (5.08 ‰).

In 2011, there was a significant decline of these two measures' rates for the Southwest, the East, and the Northeast regions, where the values of the emigration rates are higher than those corresponding to the immigration rates. Only the Pelagonia region, along with the Skopje region, had a higher immigration rate compared to the corresponding emigration rate.

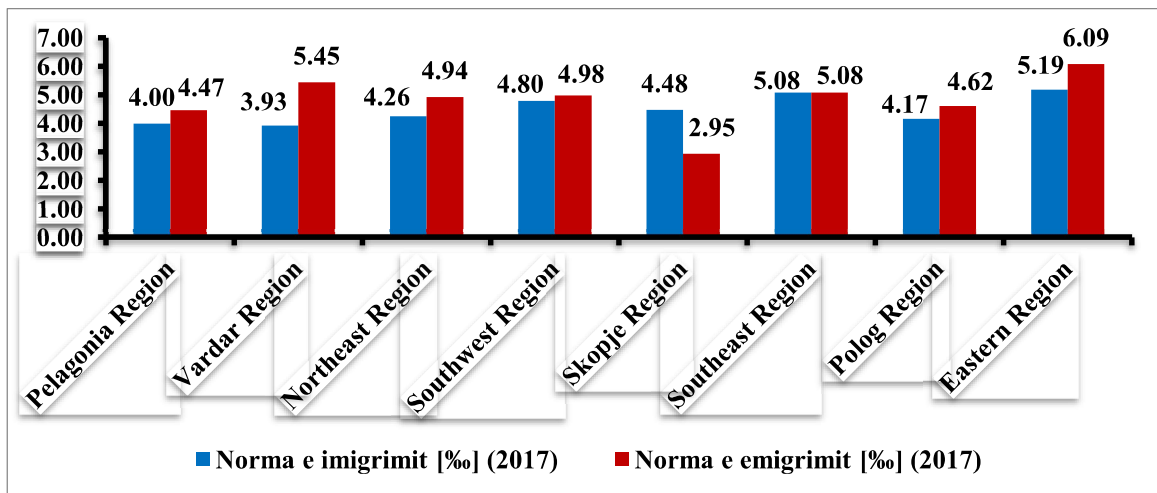


Figure 2. Immigration and emigration rates in the Republic of North Macedonia, by statistical regions, in 2017

If the available migration movements data, encompassing the migrations from/to Republic of North Macedonia from 2000 to 2017, is to be statistically analyzed and presented (Table 6, Figure 3), the following conclusions can be drawn: from 2004 to 2010, there is a continuous decrease of the internal migrations' intensity, except in the period from 2010 to 2011, when it shows an upward trend.

From 2003 to 2011, there was a continuous increase in the external migration intensity, which is both more evident and significant from 2003 to 2006. A decrease follows from 2006 to 2008, and afterwards there was a continuous increase in the external migrations number until 2015, whilst again the last few years are falling.

Table 6. Migration movement indicators for the Republic of North Macedonia (2000 – 2017)

Year	Population	Internal migration	External migration
2000	2 026 350	12 419	1 371
2001	2 034 882	10 400	1 688
2002	2 022 547	11 198	1 398
2003	2 026 773	11 058	1 289
2004	2 032 544	11 495	2 050
2005	2 036 855	11 411	2 791
2006	2 040 228	10 740	2 682
2007	2 043 559	9 438	1 467
2008	2 046 898	8 964	1 527

2009	2 050 671	7 785	2 051
2010	2 055 004	7 276	2 666
2011	2 058 539	7 612	3 386
2012	2 061 044	8 334	3 883
2013	2 064 032	7 915	3 472
2014	2 067 471	8 260	3 377
2015	2 070 226	8 050	4 892
2016	2 072 490	8 887	3 394
2017	2 074 502	8 962	3 050

Source: Statistical Office of North Macedonia (data processed by the author)

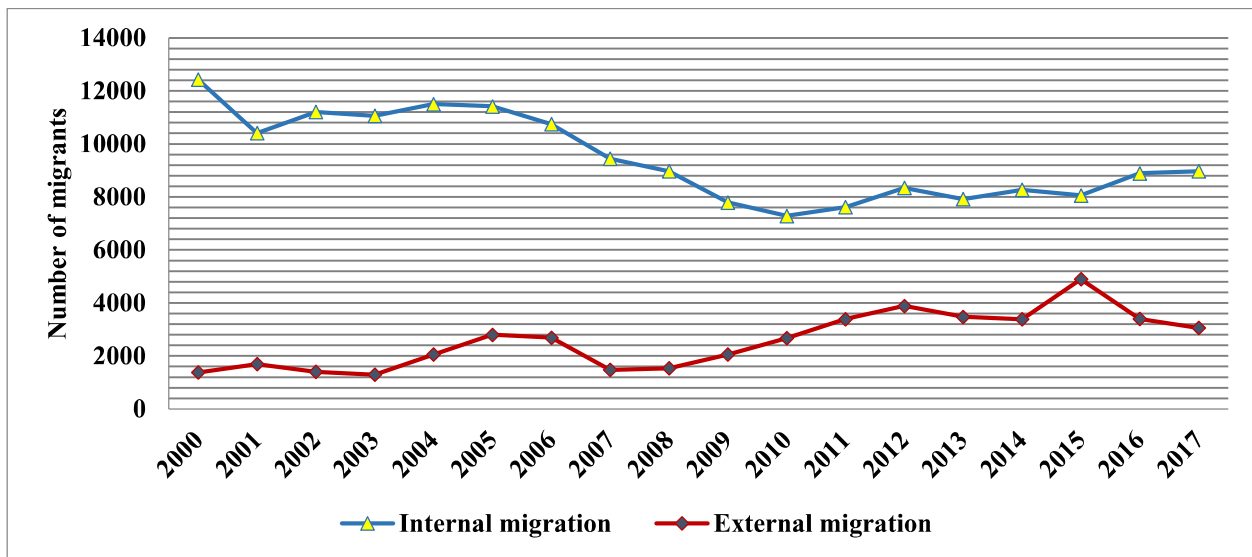


Figure 3. Internal and external migrations in the Republic of North Macedonia (2000 – 2017)

Conclusions

The population migration flows in the Republic of North Macedonia, being observed and analyzed by statistical regions in the specified period from 2000, 2011 and 2017 are continuous and varying processes, which have a significant impact on the further demographic image, structure, and development of the country. This assumption can be confirmed by the declining immigration rate, i.e. the decrease of the total number of immigrants in the country. The beginning of the 21'st century in the Republic of North Macedonia is also characterized by an evident decrease in the total number of migrants within the country, which is evident in all statistical regions. Quite the opposite, a significant increase in the total number of emigrant inhabitants towards third countries has been recorded for the same time period, i.e. the emigration rate is continuously rising. As a direct consequence of such trends, the migration balance rate transforms from a positive to a negative one, meaning that more inhabitants have emigrated than have immigrated from/into the country in this period of time.

The analysis of the internal migration time series for the observed time period shows that there is an obvious continuous decrease, whilst the one corresponding to the external migrations generally exhibits an increasing tendency.

Many socio-economic phenomena are thought to be causes for such immigration and emigration rates in the country, including the following ones: Gross Fixed Capital Formation, the Average Net Wage per employee, GDP per capita, as well as the Unemployment Rate. The statistical analysis confirms that all of these are negatively correlated to the Immigration and Emigration Rates. In addition, all of these have a more significant impact on the Immigration Rate than on the Emigration Rate.

Our statistical analyses also show that there are no statistically significant differences in the values of both the Immigration Rates and the Emigration Rates for all statistical regions within the country, for the compared time periods. An identical conclusion can be drawn for the structure of the immigrants regarding their gender, marital status, age, ethnicity and the reasons for immigration.

All these findings confirm and point to the necessity of continuous acquisition, arranging, analyzing, and assessment of relevant data about migration flows from/to and within the country, which already faces abundant problems and challenges regarding the population economic and social discrepancies, and undesirable demographic trends in the last decade. A further persistent study of the volume, dynamics, and types of migrations, leading towards creating annual migration profiles of the country, will have immense significance in planning demographic and socio-economic progress on a national level, which can facilitate the consistent implementation of the National Strategy for sustainable demographic development of the Republic of North Macedonia and other vital strategic documents.

However, the accomplishment of these goals relies on several key premises, including: (1) design, implementation, and maintenance of a unique national statistical database about migrants and migration flows, (2) better coordination and more intensive collaboration between authorities and all relevant governmental institutions, bodies, organizations, groups, and associations, as well as (3) wider and more substantial support to all research institutions, academia, and individuals treating the issue of migrations in the Republic of North Macedonia.

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