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Facing New Patterns of International Migration: Demographic Implications in the Region of Former Yugoslavia

Vladimir Nikitovic, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade

The region of the former Yugoslavia has been experiencing population decline, among the first in the world, since the dissolution of the country in 1991 due to below-replacement fertility and net emigration. Recent sudden influx of asylum seekers from West Asia and North Africa opened an issue of future migration in the region. Starting from the *migration cycle concept*, as introduced by H. Fassmann and U. Reeger (2012), which assumes general shift from an emigration to an immigration situation in conditions of the below-replacement fertility, we discussed whether the transition to the net immigration stage is possible across the whole region by the mid-century and what might be the effects of the assumed international migration patterns on future demographic change in the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. Given that the transition to net immigration directly depends on economic progress, further enlargement of the EU towards the Western Balkans is taken as a prerequisite for the model and empirical considerations in the paper. The stages of the migration transition are interpreted in relation to the symbolic turning point of the process in this area, which is set in 2035 implying that all successor states of the former Yugoslavia will certainly join the EU by the time. In order to get a methodologically consistent set of projections across the region, we used the model prepared by the UN Population Division for the 2015 UN World Population Prospects. It turns out that the transition to stable net immigration will increasingly gain in importance over the next decades given the expected negative demographic momentum in the area, which will affect even Kosovo – the youngest European population. Therefore, the migration transition should be the ultimate policy goal for the whole region of former Yugoslavia, as the case of Slovenia proves it the best.

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