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Migration as opportunity for rural regions

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Migration as opportunity for rural regions

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Abstract: In spite of unbroken flows of migrants towards metropolitan areas and city regions, the growing relevance of immigration towards rural regions has increased significantly attention for these latter areas. Several OECD countries report on the rising phenomenon of international migration towards rural regions, and also Austrian rural areas are increasingly affected by this tendency over recent years. About 21% of Austria's population of foreign origin live in municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants (Statistics Austria 2010). The aim of this paper is threefold: 1) to reflect the extent of international migration flows for rural regions of Austria 2) to explain differences in migration patterns of national and foreign population, and between the various migrants' groups (referred to by countries of origin) and 3) to depict relevant migration paths of different population groups within Austria.

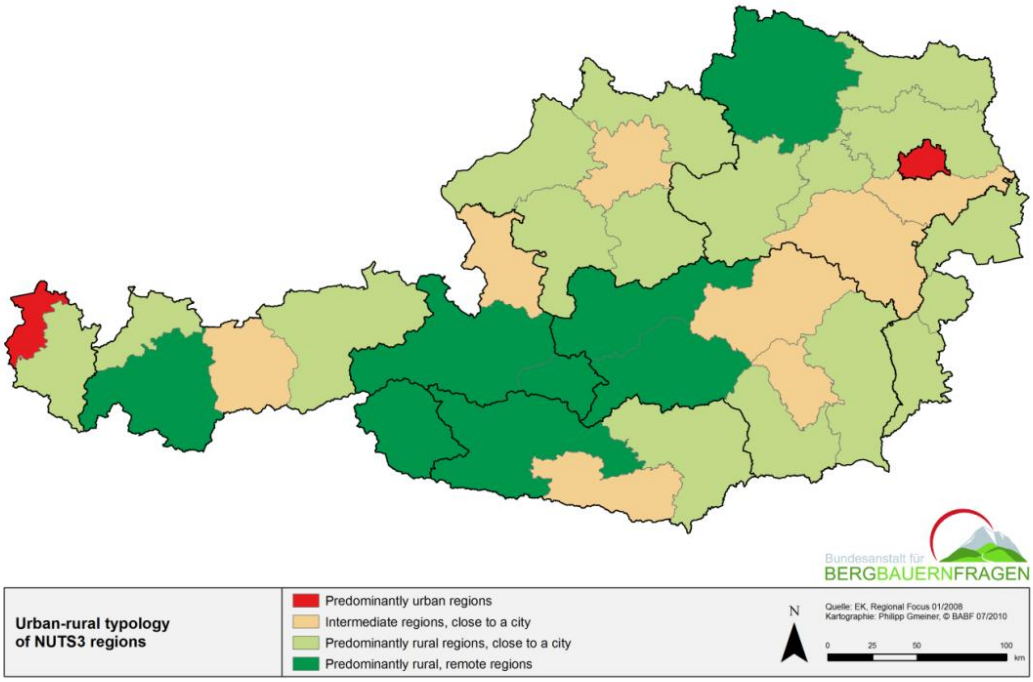
1. Introduction

Migration processes are bound to various time- and place-specific motives and personal backgrounds. International migration primarily occurs in a situation of long-term economic growth and simultaneous reduction of natural demographic reproduction leading to a significant labor shortage (Fassmann 2011, 62). But in addition to this quite often dominating motif of labor migration, there are other important causes and types of migration, like politically motivated migration or war refugees, immigration arising from family reunion, love and marriage migrants, etc. Migrations always imply changes in a reciprocal manner: on the one hand immigrants change the host society; on the other hand the host society also influences the behavior of immigrants.

The majority of new inhabitants that immigrated since the 1960s to Austria settled in the cities and metropolitan areas. This regional concentration led to the focus of analyses of migration processes in urban research and development. The awareness of the growing importance of migration towards rural regions has increased only recently due to the significant influx of migrants and the increasing visibility of migrants also in these areas. In some regions migrants take up a new position with regard to the maintenance of services of general interests in rural regions. Empirical findings confirm that migrants assume responsibilities of public life by offering services as hairdressers or are actively involved in various associations (Schader Stiftung 2011, 173ff and Staub 2001, 92ff). These examples demonstrate that a critical mass is retained by migrants, which can be decisive in the fields of local supply, health care, education, public transport, etc. Moreover, many analysts underpin the additional potential provided through a multi-cultural society resulting in new ideas and innovative activities for regional policy, in addition to the more popular concerns for adaptation and integration challenges.

For this reason, the focus is set in the present paper on migration processes in rural areas, analyzed at the example of Austria. At the same time the paper places special attention to the exchange relationship between rural and urban regions. Therefore, the recently adapted OECD classification by Dijkstra and Poelman (2008) will be used to analyze the intranational migration paths between urban and rural regions as the most accessible regional typology. Using this classification method allows differentiation of rural regions by including the criterion of accessibility to urban centers (45 minutes to the next city). Thus, beyond the original categories of 'Predominantly urban regions' (PUR), 'Predominantly intermediate regions' (IRC) and 'Predominantly rural regions', the last type was additionally differentiated into 'Predominantly rural regions close to a city' (PRRC) and 'Predominantly rural regions remote to a city' (PRRR).

Figure1: OECD typology adapted by DG Regio

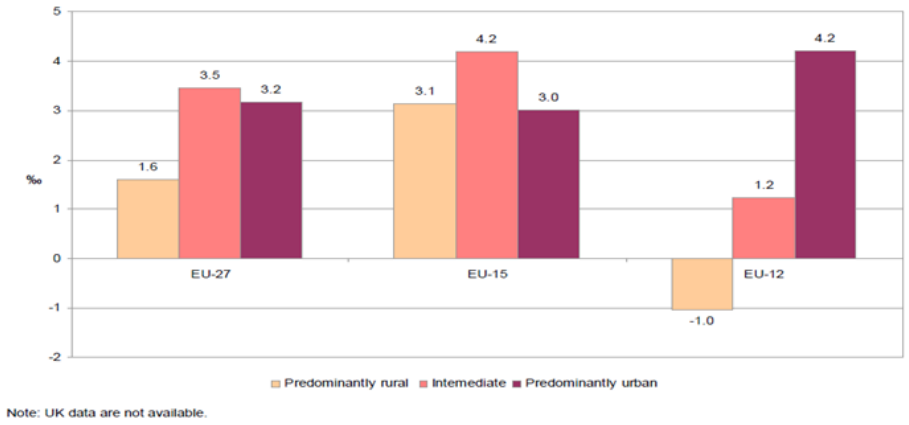


2. Migration trends in the European Union

In recent years all industrialized countries and particularly the European area is characterized by constantly high in-migration (Huber and Tondl, 2012). Calculating the balance of in-migration minus out-migration results in net migration, which tends to be positive throughout many regions of Western Europe. In general net migration rates are highest in Southwest Europe with a positive balance of more than 10 persons of 1,000 inhabitants per year (EC 2011, 249). In all EU27 Member States (MS) there is a positive balance, with intermediate rural

areas winning particularly strong through migration processes (with +3.5 persons per 1,000 inhabitants), followed by the urban regions. But also rural regions reveal positive net migration rates albeit to a much lower extent than the other two categories (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Net migration rates of EU-27, EU-15 and EU-12 in 2008 (in 1,000 of population)



Note: UK data are not available.

Source: EC 2011, p. 248

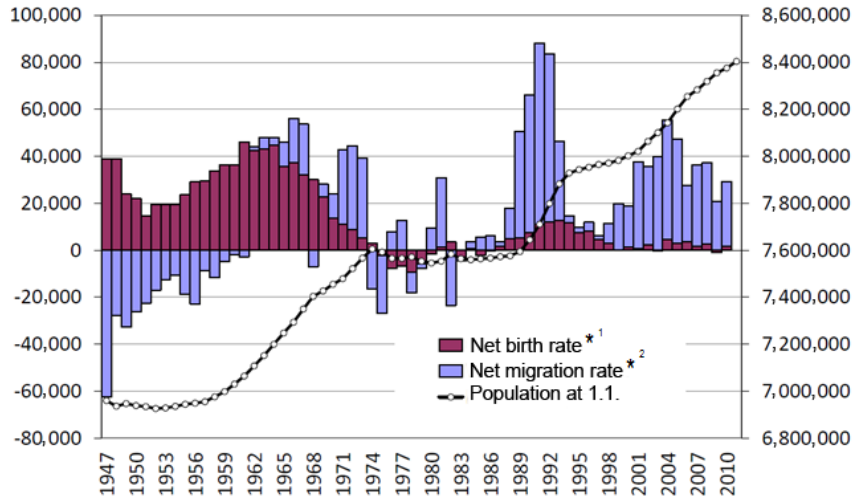
However there are significant differences between the "old" MS (EU-15) and the "new" ones (EU-12). This differentiation lead the focus on the positive net migration rates in rural regions of EU-15 (3.1‰) which is even higher than the migration balance for urban regions (3.0‰). The general data therefore confirms the rising interest of people to migrate also towards rural regions in Western Europe.

3. Demographic development in Austria

To better understand the extent and intensity of migration, a thorough investigation of the absolute amount of immigration and emigration cases is required. While the above mentioned net migration rates represent the balance of the two components, it is also important to consider the characteristics of both of these flows separately. Thus, although Austria is intensively characterized by immigration, it is also a state of emigration. This is most clearly expressed for Austrian citizens of whom more migrate abroad than return. The migration balance of Austrians has been slightly negative for decades with a last high wave of emigration immediately after the 2nd World War.

Nevertheless, Austria can also be understood as an immigration state at least since the foreign worker recruitment (1960s/1970s) from Turkey and former Yugoslavia, even if ups and downs occurred due to the different economic cycles and policy regimes (see Figure 3). With regard to the population trend of the recent decades, it should be noted that since the mid/ late 1980s the Austrian external migration (with other states) is continuously positive with an increased share of people from old and new Member States.

Figure 3: Population development of Austria

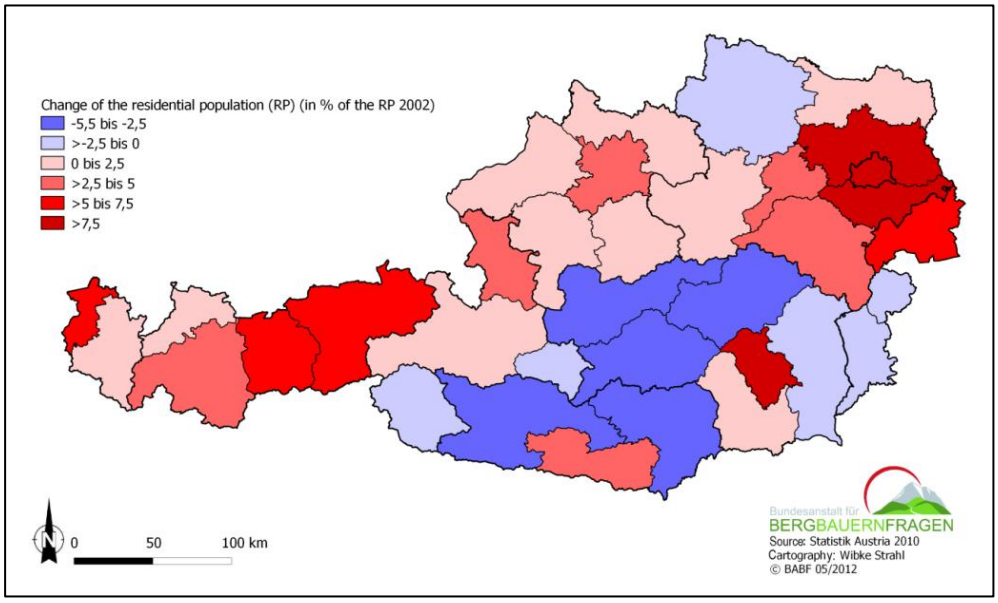


)*1 number of birth minus death
)*2 number of immigration minus emigration

Source: Marik-Lebeck (2011), Statistics Austria

Peaks of immigration were the period after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989; the Balkan Wars of ex-Yugoslavian countries in the early 1990s, the EU accession of Austria in 1995 and the related unbroken influx of people from other EU MS. Whereas the birth rate is comparatively negligible as an influencing factor of population growth, immigration turned to a key demographic factor.

Figure 4: Population Development 2002-2010 at the NUTS3 level



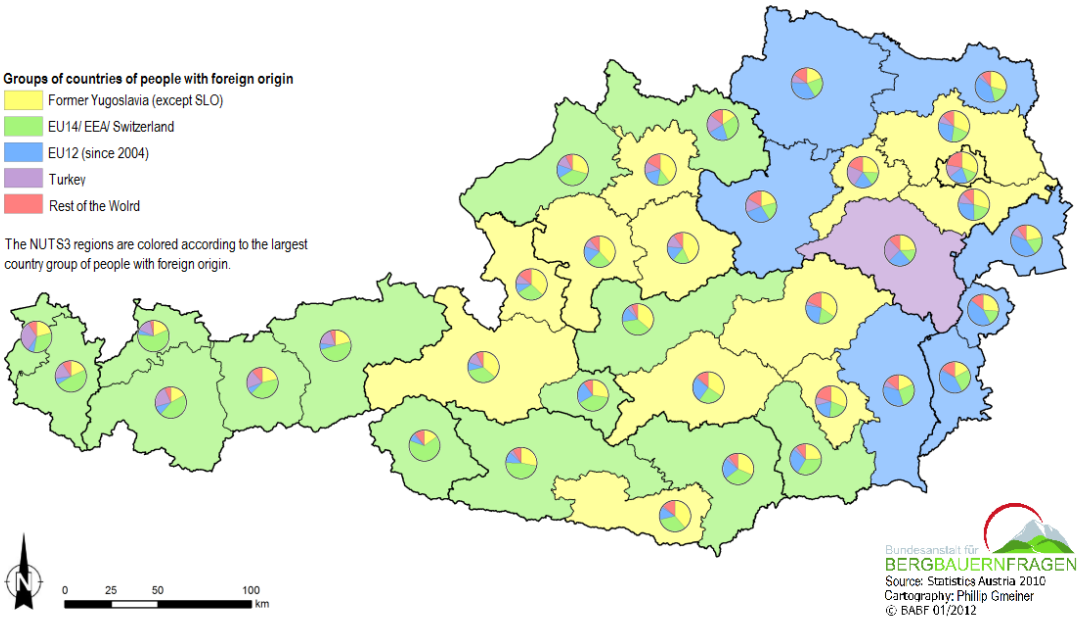
Total population growth (for the period 2002-2010) is in general positive, but with significant differences among regions. Figure 4 demonstrates that there are two axes of population development in Austria. Positive population growth, measured on the residential population of

2002, can be identified within the East-West axis, whereas the North and particularly the South (provinces of Styria and Carinthia), apart from the metropolitan areas of Graz and Klagenfurt, suffer from population losses. With few exceptions this means that especially peripheral rural regions are affected by population loss (declines of more than 2.5%), while intermediate and urban regions benefit in general from population growth. On the basis of the population forecast until 2050, calculated by the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK), these developments will continue or even exacerbate. While peripheral rural regions will be characterized by population losses in the coming years, the intermediate and rural regions close to a city will continue to grow.

4. Origin of migrants in regions of Austria

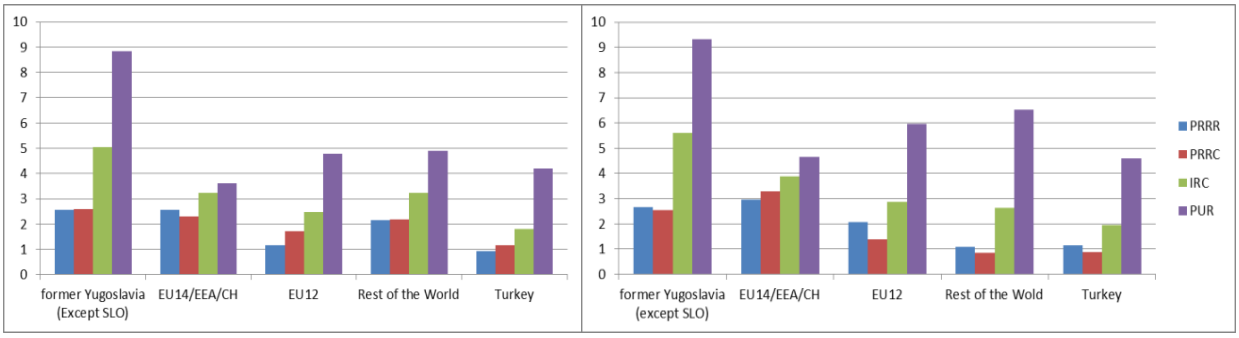
The Austrian population is characterized by an increasing heterogeneity. This is mainly due to continuous immigration from abroad which turned Austria into one of the main countries of immigration in Europe during the second half of the 20th Century (Fassmann 1995, 7). Nowadays 17.3% of Austria's population is of foreign origin (January 1, 2011) and 11% has a foreign nationality (Statistics Austria 2011). According to foreign origin people from the old EU MS, the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland tend to settle in the West and South of Austria (apart from the surroundings of the provincial capitals) while people from the new EU MS prefer to settle in the eastern part of Austria, particularly in the province of Burgenland, in the North and West of Lower Austria.

Figure 5: Percentage of people with foreign origin of residential population 2002-2010



However, apart from the border region between Germany and Upper Austria, people from former Yugoslavia (excluding Slovenia) are the largest immigrant group in many parts of the provinces of Upper Austria, Salzburg and Styria and in the extended metropolitan area of Vienna. People with Turkish origin are the most important group of migrants in the southern part of the province Lower Austria, but they also make up approximately one quarter of foreign people in some western regions (see pie charts of Figure 5). People from the "Rest of the World" settle mostly close to urban agglomerations, but their amount is higher in the East of the country.

Figure 6: Share of persons of foreign origin of residential population in 2002 (left) and 2010 (right), according to OECD typology (in %)



Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

The five immigration groups show the following pattern of regional distribution:

- People from former Yugoslavia (excluding Slovenia) live mainly in urban (9%) and intermediate areas (5%). There was a slight increase within these two types, whereas the proportion of former Yugoslavs, measured by the total residential population, stagnated in rural regions close to a city and even dropped slightly in rural remote regions. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in 2002 of all people of foreign origin the Ex-Yugoslavs were represented with the highest share of almost 3% in rural areas and this proportion remained nearly unchanged until 2010.
- In contrast, the proportion of people from the EEA, Switzerland and the old EU MS is relatively balanced between the OECD types, with a slight predominance on urban and intermediate regions. Over the observation period the share of these immigration groups has increased in all four OECD types, so that people from the old EU MS have replaced Ex-Yugoslavs as the largest immigrant group in rural regions. At this point, it is worth mentioning that the proportion tends to be higher in peripheral rural regions than in rural regions close to a city.

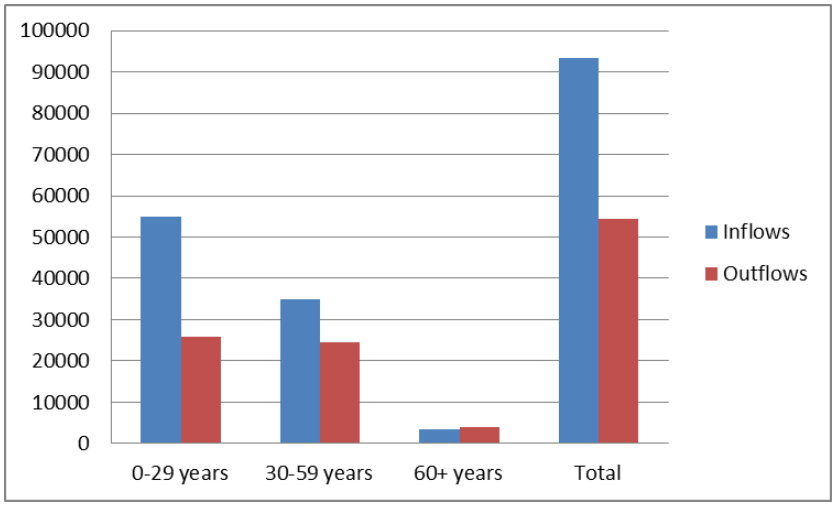
- People from new EU MS move increasingly into urban regions, but they have also reinforced their share of the residential population from 2002 to 2010 in rural regions close to a city as well as in rural remote regions.
- People of the category "Rest of the World" are proportionately more present in urban and intermediate regions. Their share in rural regions close to a city was still at 4% in 2002, however only 2% in 2010. This can be partly attributed to asylum applicants who were allocated in 2002 to the initial reception centers nationwide, and after receiving a residence and work permit they have moved increasingly into cities where employment offers are more frequent and manifold.
- The smallest change from 2002-2010 occurred for the Turkish population. Generally, these immigrant groups are increasingly encountered in urban and intermediate regions. Within these two types their share has risen slightly, whereas it has slightly declined in rural regions close to a city.
- Overall, the portion of persons of foreign origin in Austria's population has increased from 15% in 2002 to 17% in 2010. Thereby immigration has increasingly taken place in urban and intermediate regions, but with important spots of rural areas who also benefited from immigration.
- Approximately 19% of people of foreign origin live in rural regions (both categories).

5. External migration (International migration)

External migration has become a main influence on population development over the last decades in Austria. Official statistics rely on registration and deregistration of all people with main residences in Austria and thus can denominate immigrants and emigrants who cross the national border through their migration movement. In the years 2002 to 2010 almost 1 million people immigrated to Austria, 85% of them people of foreign nationality. On the other hand, almost 700,000 persons (including 71% of foreign nationality) emigrated from Austria in the same period. Migration, especially the positive balance of the external migration, arises due to the immigration of persons with a foreign nationality (+352.454), while the Austrians are characterized by a negative external migration balance (-42,568). The mobility of women of foreign nationality is lower than that of men; their share of immigration is 47%, and only 41% for out-migration. Consequently, a larger share of women of foreign nationality (than men) remains in Austria. With regard to the age distribution a large part of migration is undertaken by people under 30 years. Their share is almost 60% of immigration, measured by the total immigration of persons of foreign nationality, in case of emigration their share is relatively

low (48%). The proportion of people of foreign nationality under the age of 30, who are remaining in Austria, reaches therefore 75%. This trend of finding a "permanent" residence in Austria continues for middle-aged persons, but in a weaker form. Older people with 60 and more years are more frequent to emigrate than to immigrate, but they represent only a very small part of the migratory flows. Figure 7 represents graphically the age distribution of people of foreign nationality.

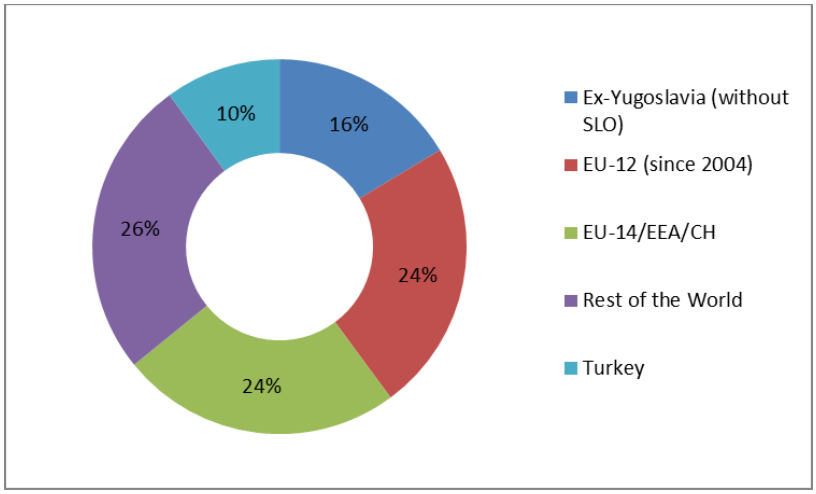
Figure 7: External migration of persons of foreign nationality – Immigration versus emigration by age groups 2002-2010 p.a.



Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

The external net migration by immigration groups, as summarized by Statistics Austria, provides information about the extent of the migration flows of the immigrant groups for the period 2002-2010 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: External migration by immigration groups 2002-2010



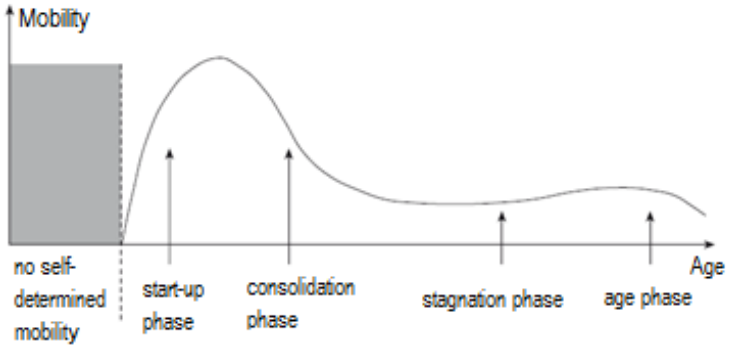
Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

The immigration group "Rest of the World" has the greatest extent with over one quarter of the whole external immigration between 2002 and 2010. But also people from the old and the new EU MS contribute with 24% each to the migration gains while people from classical immigration countries like Turkey and Ex-Yugoslavia have only a share of 10 resp. 16% of all immigration groups.

5.1 External net migration by age groups and OECD typology

The tight correlation between migration and age is well-known, and e.g. exemplified in the term of age-specific selectivity of migration processes. According to the life-cycle model of Killisch (1979), mobility shows the highest probability in younger age groups (here 0-29 years) which are located within the so-called start-up phase. It decreases rapidly during the consolidation phase of the middle-aged group (30-59 years) until it stagnates and then again reaches a marginal rise in the retirement phase (≥60 years). This model (see Figure 9) is also reflected in the in- and outflows or the net migration of people with a foreign nationality, analyzed by their age cohorts.

Figure 9: Mobility for life-cycle stages

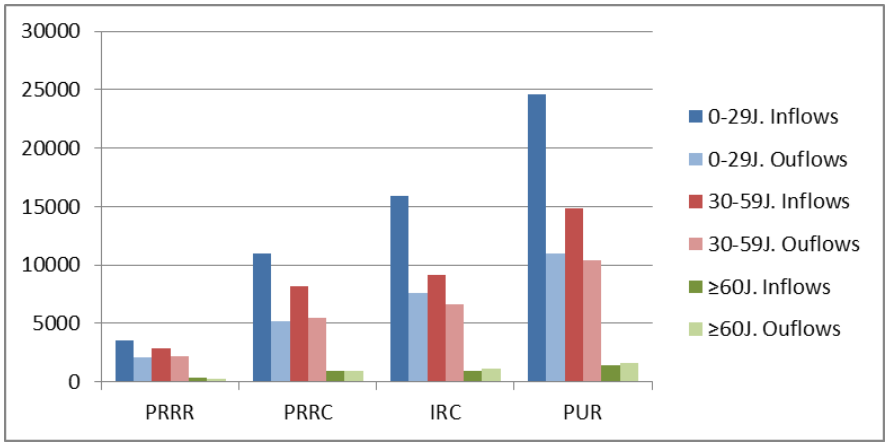


Source: Killisch (1979)

Moreover, a comparison of the immigration and emigration of people of foreign nationality according to age and regional types, demonstrates that the frequency of migration flows rises in absolute terms with increasing degree of urbanization (see Figure 10). The rural peripheral regions show the lowest international migration flows in absolute terms, although the migration balance are consequently positive for people under the age of 30 and middle-aged persons. People of 60 and more years have a slightly negative migration balance, but they contribute only very little to the migration flows in total. In rural regions close to a city as well as in intermediate regions the frequency of migration flows increases especially in the age group of under 30 years, which is mainly expressed by higher rates of immigration. However, the

migration frequency rises with persons of middle-aged (30-59 years) in the intermediate regions only to limited extent compared to the rural regions close to a city. The outflows in the intermediate regions increase slightly stronger so that the net migration rate in this age group is effectively lower than in the rural regions close to a city.

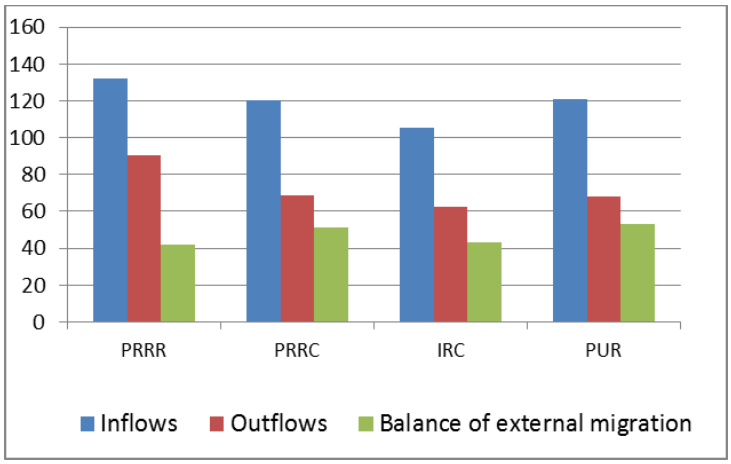
Figure 10: Annual in- and outflows of people of foreign nationality, according to the OECD typology (2002-2010)



Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

Following Figure 11 represents the inflow and outflow rates of persons of foreign nationality, measured by their population group.

Figure 11: External migration rates: inflows and outflows of people of foreign nationality according to the OECD typology



Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

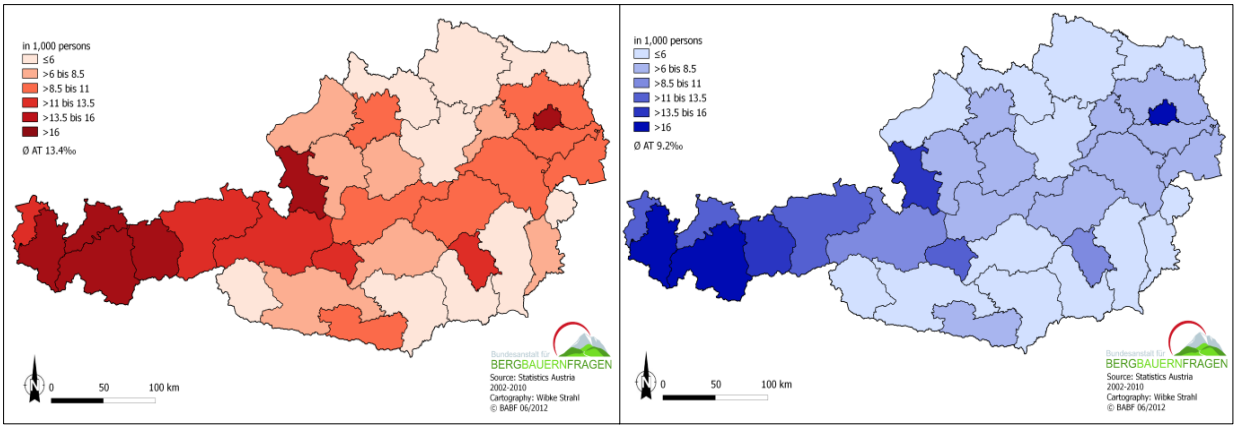
At the first view it becomes obvious that the frequency of migration flows of people of foreign nationality in rural regions, if they are set in relation to their population group, is not lower than in urban regions. Immigration rates are rather higher than in other regions; however also the emigration rates exceed significantly those of other regions. The rural regions close

to a city and the predominantly urban regions exhibit very similar migration rates. The result is that the balance of the urban regions is with almost 53 persons per 1,000 inhabitants only slightly higher than that of rural regions close to a city with 51 persons. The intermediate regions note lower migration rates. This approach reflects in particular the development of the contemporary trend and a possible shift between the various analysis groups. Due to the very similar balance sheet values it can be assumed that no massive relocation of residents with a migrant background occurred out of external migration flows.

5.2 External net migration rates

Based on the fact that the external migration rate consists of the immigration from abroad and the emigration from Austria to other countries, these two flows should be taken into account and analyzed separately (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Annual rate of immigration from abroad (left) and of emigration to foreign countries (right) 2002-2010



Overall, the annual immigration rate of 13.4 persons per 1,000 inhabitants is much higher than the out-migration rate of 9.2 persons, which implies that Austria's population is growing annually. Comparing the immigration with the emigration rate at the regional level, it is conspicuous, that the immigration and partly the emigration flows are more frequently within provincial capitals but also within the western regions. Consequently, a high spatial mobility occurs within these regions and their population growth is higher than elsewhere. In the northern and south-east borderland the immigration and emigration rates are much lower so that a lower spatial mobility is recognized. Figure 12 depict the two components of migration and highlight regions of particularly high immigration and emigration. Significant differences arise in distinguishing the external net migration between people of foreign origin and Austrian citizens. The annual external net migration rate of people of foreign nationality comprises an average of 4.8 persons per 1,000 inhabitants while that of Austrians is negative with -0.6

persons per 1,000 inhabitants. Only some eastern NUTS3 regions show minimal positive external net migration rates of Austrian people. But the more westerly, with some exception in the East and South, the more negative are the external net migration rates. In contrast, the external net migration rates of foreign citizens are entirely positive and compensate for the negative rates of the Austrians. Particularly high rates are available in the metropolitan area of Vienna and in the other provincial capitals, in the western regions as well as, to a lesser degree, in regions characterized by industry.

6. Internal migration

Internal migration refers to all flows within the boundaries of Austria, thus also the migration flows within a territorial unit (municipality, district, NUTS3 region) are included. In the years 2002 to 2010 almost 6 million migration flows were identified, the most of these took place over very short distances (41% within a municipality). About 70% of the internal migration is executed by Austrians. However, as Austrians represent 83% of the total population the intensity of internal migration of people of foreign origin is in relative terms substantially higher than that of Austrians.

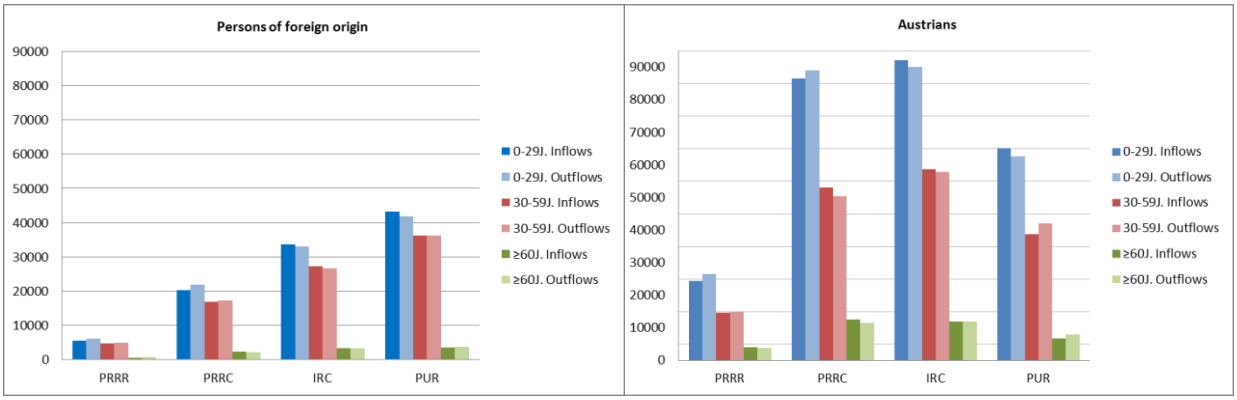
Further demographic differentiation allows an insight on other relevant impacts. E.g. women of foreign origin migrate with a share of 46% less often than men; by contrast the migrating Austrian women have a slight surplus with 51%. With regard to the age distribution it becomes clear that people under 30 years are again over-represented with a share of 52% of all persons of foreign origin. But this frequency is exceeded with 57% by Austrians of the same age group. However, people of foreign origin in the middle age group between 30-59 years are with a share of 43% considerably more mobile than the Austrians in comparison with 35%.

Within the internal migration the most represented immigration groups are people from former Yugoslavia (without Slovenia) with 9%, followed by people from the "Rest of the World" with 8%. Especially in the population group "Rest of the World" the internal migration flows are influenced by asylum seekers. Persons with a Turkish migration background participate rather low on the internal migration (5%), but also persons from the old EU MS as well as the new EU MS (4%) are relatively poorly represented although they provide the highest portions of people of foreign origin after the persons from former Yugoslavia.

6.1 Internal net migration by age groups and OECD typology

Also for internal migration people of the age group of 0-29 years (migrants as well as Austrians) are the most mobile, followed by middle-aged persons (30-59 years). Persons with 60 and more years, however, participate only rarely in migration processes. In absolute terms rural regions primarily lose population with an age of less than 30 years (Figure 13). But inflows and outflows of people of middle and high ages are quite balanced and the rural regions can even achieve population growth for people of this age cohorts (especially with regard to Austrians).

Figure 13: Annual in- and outflows of people of foreign origin in comparison to Austrians according to the OECD typology (2002-2010)

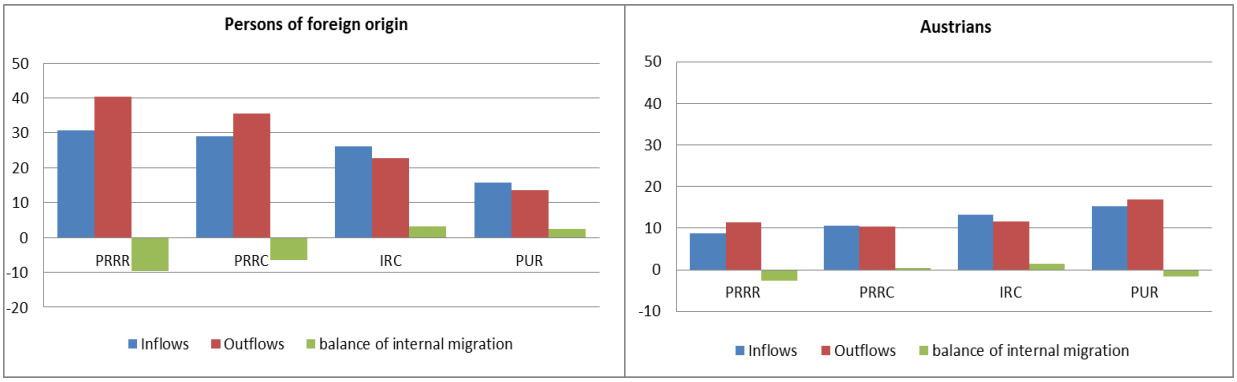


Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

Following Figure 14 demonstrates the inflow and outflow rates of people of foreign origin and of Austrians. Overall, it is striking that the migration intensity of people of foreign origin (measured by their population group) is much higher than that of the Austrians (measured by the Austrian population). This is in sharp contrast to the illustration in absolute terms (see Figure 16 above); where the migration frequency of foreign people is significantly lower due to their minor share of the volume of internal migration.

With regard to the net internal migration rates it should be noted that population decreases in rural regions due to negative internal migration flows of people of foreign origin, while both the intermediate and the urban regions reveal population increases. Through the internal migration of Austrians, the intermediate areas obtain most of their population increase, but also rural regions close to cities exhibit positive balances. However, the other two categories, rural peripheral and urban regions, show population losses.

Figure 14: Internal migration: inflows and outflows in ‰, according the OECD typology (2002-2010), measured by the respective population group



Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

Moreover, significant differences between the various immigration groups exist within their migration behavior as evidenced by migration patterns. Thus regarding the several internal net migration rates within the investigation period 2002-2010 people from "Rest of the world" immigrated much more to urban regions than they emigrated. On the other hand their emigration from rural regions was much higher than their immigration which led to a negative net migration rate. By contrast persons from both new and old EU MS emigrated from urban regions more often than they immigrated. Their inflows in rural regions close to a city were higher than their outflows and they were also higher in comparison to the inflows in intermediate regions. Intermediate regions benefited particularly from people from former Yugoslavia, but also from all other immigration groups. The net migration rates of Ex-Yugoslavians apart from the intermediate regions were similarly distributed in all other OECD categories. Turks in contrast show the same migration behavior even if in a weakened form as people from the "Rest of the World". They immigrated in intermediate and urban regions more often than they emigrated whereby their emigration from rural areas is much higher than their immigration (see Table 1).

Table 1: Annual internal net migration rates by immigration groups and OECD categories (2002-2010)

OECD categories	former Yugoslavia	EU-14/EEA/CH	EU-12 (since 2004)	Rest of the World	Turkey
PRRR	1,1	-0,9	-0,4	-3,4	-1,2
PRRC	1,0	0,4	0,7	-5,0	-0,8
IRC	2,6	0,2	0,4	0,5	0,4
PUR	1,1	-0,2	-0,6	2,7	0,3

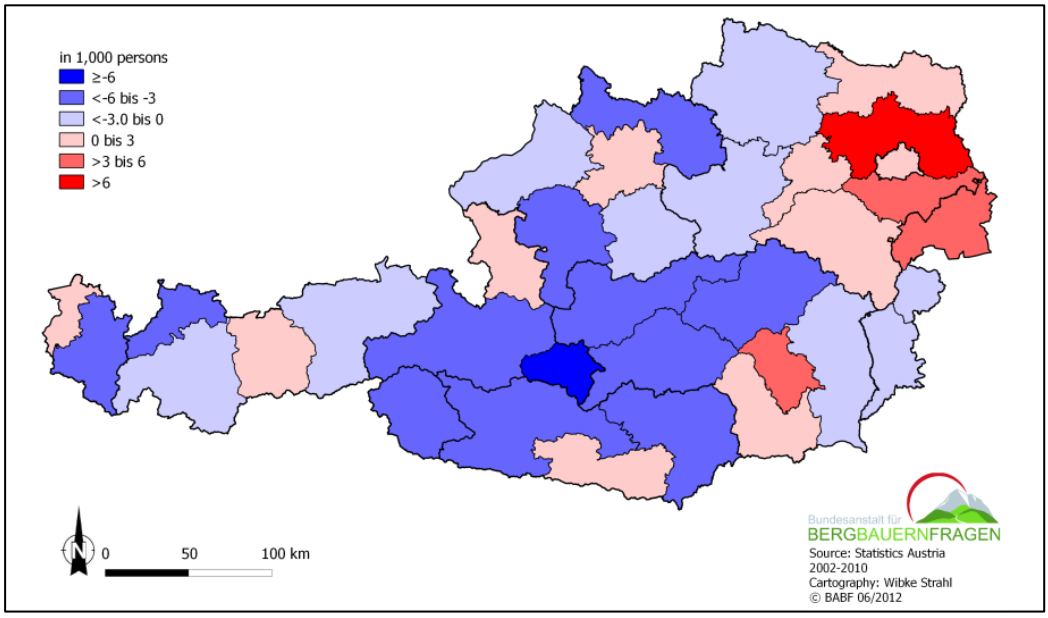
Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

6.2 Internal net migration rates

With regard to the annual internal net migration per 1,000 persons it is visible that particularly the eastern NUTS3 regions (metropolitan area of Vienna) and the provincial capitals extensively obtain population growth through internal migration flows.

In general population has significantly decreased in many, especially rural regions, by internal migration flows over the last nine years. Hence, within Austria a population movement from rural regions towards structurally stronger intermediate regions occurred, which has been exacerbated by the financial crisis in recent years.

Figure 15: Annual internal net migration rate (2002-2010), measured by residential population

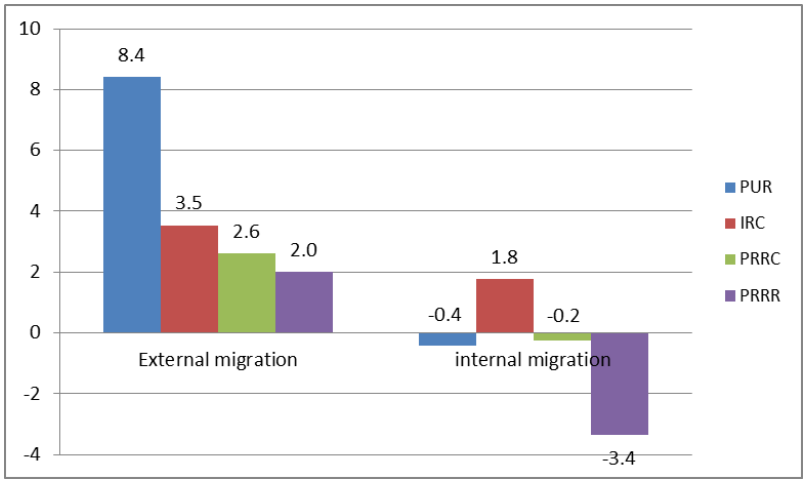


6.3 Net migration rates of external and internal migration - a comparison

Within external migration flows especially the urban areas show the highest population growths, but nonetheless, it is important to consider that the external migration balance for rural regions is positive as well. Internal migration is compared with external migration much more differentiated. Both types of rural regions lose inhabitants through the internal migration, as clearly visible in Figure 16, though, peripheral rural regions to a much higher extent.

In case of peripheral rural regions these population losses can be mitigated significantly due to immigration from abroad while in rural regions close to a city population losses can in fact be reversed. Intermediate regions benefit both from external and internal migration processes and are consequently the most popular immigration area.

Figure 16: Net migration rates per 1,000 inhabitants, 2002-2010

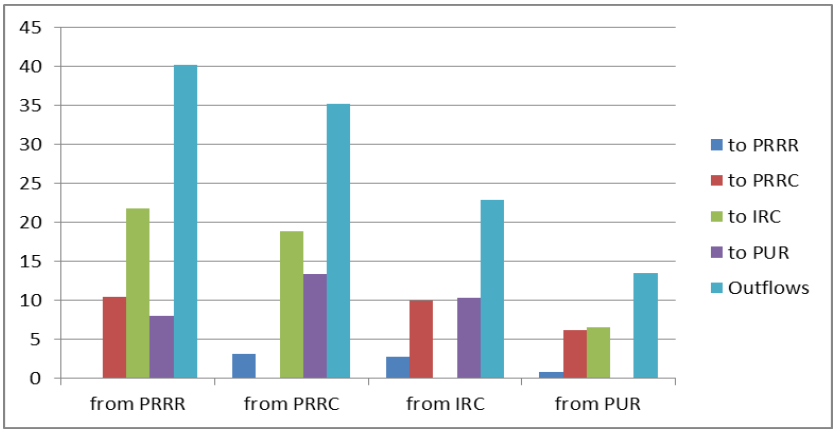


Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

6.3 Regional migration pathways

Internal migration flows seem to be much more significant than often suspected also for people of foreign origin. A closer investigation of the regional pathways requires a detailed analysis of the matrices of the Austrian regions (territorial units), represented as a point of origin and destination of the migration. These flows are presented in the following two Figures 17 and 18 to illustrate the interdependence of the regional categories according to the OECD typology.

Figure 17: Internal migration flows between regional types of people of foreign origin, in 1,000 inhabitants (2002-2010)



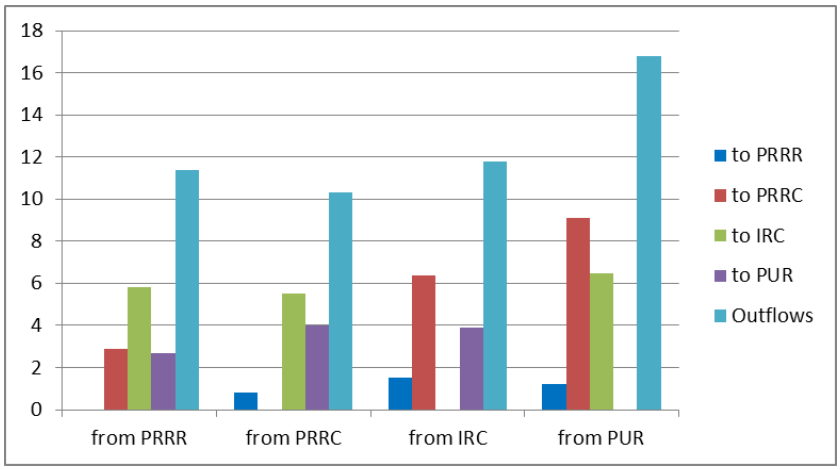
Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

In both Figures the outflows from the respective categories are depicted and distributed among the respective immigration regions of Austria. Due to the different magnitudes of flows it is evident that the migration flows, measured by the respective population group, for people of foreign origin are more significant than for Austrians. Overall, much more people of

this group have changed their residence during this period: All in all in the period 2002 to 2010 14.6% of the persons of foreign origin have migrated per year, while in comparison only 6.8% of the Austrians moved per year.

The migration matrix for people of foreign origin demonstrates not only a much higher level of emigration in the different types of regions, but it also indicates the direction. Thus, the outflows from the rural regions concentrate particularly on the intermediate regions. In comparison, the outflows of Austrians from rural regions are less pronounced. In particular, here emigration from urban areas exceeds all other regional categories, although a large part of the emigration flows into the intermediate areas. Nevertheless Figure 21 demonstrates that the rural regions close to a city have a high appeal to the Austrians. Thus different spatial patterns of behavior between people of foreign origin and Austrians can be realized from these presentations.

Figure 21: Internal migration flows between regional types of Austrians, in 1,000 inhabitants (2002-2010)



Source: Statistics Austria, BABF 2012

7. Conclusions

Data analysis and population forecast clearly demonstrate that the national population in Austria would have to face a significant decrease without a positive migration balance, resulting from continuous immigration into the country. While countries of origin changed over the last decades this requirement seems more and more undisputed.

Experiences can be drawn from migration of former Yugoslavia and Turkey starting in the 1960s/1970s and lasting until the beginning of the 1990s (low-skilled migrant workers, refugees and subsequently immigrating family members). This first wave was then continued through changes following the EU accession of Austria in 1995 and a specific main group of

migrants from the old and new EU MS (more skilled migrant workers, high educated migrants, pensioners, etc.). This shift within the country groups of origin also leads to changes in the population structure among the people who immigrated to Austria. While the external migration is positive in all Austrian regions, including peripheral rural regions, the internal migration of people of foreign origin, however, is specifically focused on urban regions. They do not yet participate at the same extent in the trend of suburbanization as Austrians who migrate most frequently towards intermediate and rural regions close to a city. Consequently, spatial differences in migration patterns between the Austrian and foreign population can be identified.

The absolute terms of the internal migration rather hide the relevance of it for the foreign population. Yet in relative terms it becomes clear that they exhibit a much higher intensity of internal migration (one migratory movement per year carried out by 14.6% vs. 6.8%).

Comparing external and internal migration of both the foreign and the Austrian population it becomes quite clear that the positive migration balance of the external migration mitigate (in case of peripheral rural regions) or even reverse (in case of rural regions close to a city) population losses based on internal migration processes. Thus, migration is an opportunity for rural areas to compensate population losses and consequently to provide a contribution for maintaining services of general interests.

In terms of the age structure, especially the working age population immigrates to Austria which is in the interest of the economy. This enables rural regions also a better position to cope with the challenges of demographic change, implications of shrinking processes, etc.

Apart from the impact of migration processes it is important to analyze the motives of migrants for immigrating into rural areas. Thus, the spatial proximity has a considerable influence on the migratory behaviour. Among other aspects this is reflected by the greatest immigration group in the eastern regions of Austria (see Figure 5), which is coming from the new EU MS – the Eastern European countries. In addition to the geographical location, age and gender, also many individual factors influence migration decisions but cannot be traced by statistical data. It is envisaged that some of these push and pull factors will be collected in detail by qualitative work in the both NUTS3 case study regions "Bludenz-Bregenzer Wald" in the West and "Southern Lower Austria" in the East of Austria in the further steps of the project.

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