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The labour market position of immigrants in Serbia: current status and possibilities for research

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ABSTRACT

An unfavourable position in the labour market relative to that of the local population is one of the specific problems that affect the immigrant population. The aim of this paper is to highlight the position of immigrants in the labour market in Serbia. Special emphasis is placed on discussing the possibilities of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for studying immigration and the position of immigrants within the labour market in countries with pronounced emigration and a low inflow of foreign labour, as is the case in Serbia. The findings are based on the implementation of a qualitative inquiry and additional processed data from the LFS from 2014 to 2018. Given that the majority of people who immigrated to Serbia were from the former Yugoslav republics, the country of birth criterion was used to separate the immigrant population. The research results show that the age-sex structure of working-age immigrants is not specific to economic migrants. Those born abroad do not have a higher unemployment rate than the domestic population, although they are more affected by the problem of long-term unemployment. Based on the analysis of LFS data, a review of contemporary empirical research, and findings obtained from Serbian experts for the purposes of this paper, both the limitations and the confirmed potentials of the LFS for studying the position of immigrants in the Serbian labour market were discussed. Moreover, the need for methodological advancement in terms of the coverage of the immigrant population was emphasised.

KEY WORDS

immigration | unemployment | labour market | Labour Force Survey | Serbia

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INTRODUCTION

There are many challenges that confirm the need for a better understanding of the patterns and processes involved in migration, the labour market, and human capital in Serbia (Nikitović et al. 2013). The main ones are: long-term low fertility and the trend of low birth rates; a decrease in the total population; the accelerated and pronounced ageing of the population; complex and intensive two-way migration, with increasingly pronounced and complex emigration trends of a population that is on average younger and more educated than the population in Serbia (Penev and Predojević-Despić 2019). Recent projections indicate a high degree of certainty in the steady decline of the Serbian population (Nikitović 2016; Penev 2014, 2018) and the intensive ageing of the population, which will certainly have a negative impact on the structure of the labour market. In the coming period this will strengthen the importance of immigration for mitigating the negative trends in demographic and labour market processes. Economically developed Western European countries have long applied the concept of importing members of the workforce to ensure the smooth functioning of the labour market and economic development. However, Central and Eastern European countries are going through various characteristic stages of the migration cycle, in the process of transitioning from emigration to immigration countries (Drbohlav 2012; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2013). It has been noted that recent migration trends in this region are connected to political and socio-economic changes, as well as to the progress made towards European integration (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2013; Fassmann, Gruber and Németh 2018).

At the international level, experts in the fields of science and public policy agree that in the future, development through a complex mechanism of social changes will condition the extent and diversification of migratory movements in a large number of countries, with implications for the regions of origin, transition, and destination (OECD/EU 2018; Eurostat 2018). They also agree that data on international migration is not reliable enough to predict future migration trends and patterns, nor to advance policies in a timely manner for the faster and more successful integration of immigrants (United Nations 2019; Fassmann, Gruber and Németh 2018; Predojević-Despić and Penev 2016; Grabowska-Lusinska 2013). It is therefore of utmost importance to ensure a greater number of reliable data sources and internationally comparable variables for monitoring changes in the extent of migration, migrant characteristics, and the levels of integration achieved by different immigrant groups (OECD/EU 2018; Eurostat 2018; Predojević-Despić and Penev 2016; Grabowska-Lusinska 2013).

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is one of few surveys conducted regularly in a large number of countries using a consistent methodological approach. Its primary objective is not to monitor

the size and characteristics of the migrant population, but to study the position of diverse, and in particular vulnerable groups in the labour market (Pavlović, Bjelica and Domazet 2019). However, it could be an important source of data for the study of international migration trends (Grabowska-Lusinska 2013) and an invaluable source for monitoring the socio-demographic traits of the immigrant population and its position in the labour market (Fahey, McGinnity and Quinn 2019). Analysing the position of immigrants in the labour market in countries with a large number of immigrants, with the view of advancing policies on the integration of foreign labour into the labour market, is the most common way to use LFS data obtained through regular annual surveys, as well as additional ad-hoc migration modules (Calmfors, Sánchez Gassen 2019; Lipps et al. 2013). However, although little research has been done on the topic, it has shown that the LFS can be used for similar research in a country with a low inflow of foreign labour (Botrić 2009, 2015a, 2015b). Certain pilot studies have also addressed the issues of emigration and labour mobility (Hazans 2019, 2018). Moreover, there are attempts to get estimates of the number of emigrants, by introducing additional LFS modules in emigration countries (Blasko 2014). The combination of LFS data from emigration and immigration countries also provides data on the number and position of emigrants in the labour market in other countries (Grabowska-Lusinska and Okolski 2009; Grabowska-Lusinska 2013). The aforementioned research could shed light on the problem of the elusiveness of new forms of migration, especially in the EU (Grabowska-Lusinska 2013; Mouhoud and Oudinet 2010).

Only recently has the LFS been used as a source for migration research in Serbia (Nikitović et al. 2013; Marjanović 2015). Therefore, the authors rely on theoretical knowledge about the relationship between migration and the labour market, as well as on the current possibilities of using LFS data in countries that, like Serbia, do not have pronounced labour immigration (Hazans 2018; Eurostat 2018; Grabowska-Lusinska 2013). The aim of this paper is to point out the possibilities of the LFS for studying immigration and the position of immigrants within the labour market of countries with pronounced emigration and a low inflow of foreign labour, as is the case with Serbia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In addition to the population census, the population register, and other administrative sources, the LFS is the only data source capable of providing a wide range of data on international migrants. Unlike the population census, which provides a large amount of data on migrants and migration stocks, the dynamics of LFS implementation allow for the continuous monitoring of migrant flows and characteristics of labour migrants, with a high degree of international data comparability (Eurostat 2018; Fahey, McGinnity and

Quinn 2019). In the LFS, variables can be arranged into any desired combination, which is more difficult to do with the population census, and in some cases even impossible (Eurostat 2018). Registries and administrative sources provide perhaps the most comprehensive picture and allow for regular monitoring of migration features. However, the practice has shown that in EU countries, i. e. under the conditions of free movement of workers, there is visible sub-registration of migration occurrences, especially those related to emigration, and quite often even basic data on migrants is missing or incomplete (Eurostat 2018, Gárdos and Gödri 2013). Moreover, errors can occur. For example, comparisons between the Work Registration Schemes (WRS) and LFS data in the UK show a significant difference in data between formal and informal sectors of immigrants from Poland (Grabowska-Lusinska 2008, 2013).

Pilot research based on LFS data in countries with a low influx of immigrants and pronounced emigration has shown that the potential of the LFS as a source of data on the scope and forms of international migration, as well as the characteristics of migrants, is significant (Eurostat 2018; Hazans 2018; Gárdos and Gödri 2013). It has been noted that the LFS "may provide viable means for creating innovative LFS-based databases and innovative analytical approaches" (Grabowska-Lusinska 2013:46). A unique migration database based on the Polish LFS was created. In addition to obtaining a better picture of the extent of emigration from Poland, significant data was also obtained on the characteristics of emigrants, their regional origin, destination choices, as well as differences between migrants who emigrated before and after EU accession (Grabowska-Lusinska 2013; Grabowska-Lusinska and Okólski 2009). For the determination of the rate and the analysis of complex waves of intense emigration from Latvia, LFS data was used to determine mobility rates, the characteristics of emigrants and returnees, brain-drain rates, and differences over the period from 2000 to 2014 (Hazans 2018, 2019). In this regard, visible differences in migration patterns were noted. It was also concluded that EU LFS-based data on emigrants (especially recent emigrants) from small or low-emigration countries is less reliable because of the small sub-sample size and the small share of immigrants in the EU from low-population countries. Under such circumstances, relying on migrant citizenship data can lead to significant sub-registration and incorrect conclusions (Hazans 2018). A pilot study conducted in Hungary and Serbia in 2014 introduced an innovative ad-hoc LFS module in both countries, in order to estimate emigration and to provide estimates on the distribution of the emigrant population, as well as to build and use a representative sample of emigrants in a subsequent emigrant survey. Although the study was the first of its kind, it provided valuable methodological insights and showed that systematic data can be collected in an indirect manner through the LFS (Blaskó 2014). LFS data from destination

countries was also used to assess the dynamics of settlement processes in both pre-accession and post-accession periods. The research was based on the UK LFS for immigrants from Poland. This particular use of the LFS was meant to help "discuss the potential ways in which an uncovered diversity of living arrangements of Polish newcomers might shape their settlement practices" (Osipovič 2007, as cited in Grabowska-Lusińska 2013: 55).

The analysis of differences between the characteristics of employed and unemployed people in the Croatian labour market based on the LFS indicates the possibility of monitoring the position of immigrants and the local population in the labour market over time, as well as comparing differences in their position in periods before or after major economic crises, and the implementation of the econometric methods (Botrić 2015a, 2016).

However, the LFS has significant drawbacks. Since it was not primarily intended for monitoring the immigrant population, significant delays may occur when noticing their presence in sampling frames. This is due mainly to the time required to register/deregister (Eurostat 2018). The LFS is based on the definition of the usual resident population, so it cannot provide data on the increasing prevalence of shorter-term labour mobility. In addition, although all countries where the LFS is conducted use the same concepts, definitions, and classifications, and cover the same set of characteristics, there are differences in the migrant groups covered (Eurostat 2018; Gárdos and Gödri 2013). There is also often a problem with the representativeness of data for small immigrant groups. That's why it's common for significantly different ethnic groups to be grouped into the same category, which leads to incorrect conclusions. Another disadvantage is that no data is being collected on the second generation of immigrants born in the country of immigration. In addition, lower response rates among migrant populations have been found internationally (Font and Méndez 2013), especially among migrants with shorter migration periods and non-EU migrants. One of the reasons for this is a lack of confidence in state institutions, while immigrants with less knowledge of the host country's official language are generally not surveyed (Mieriņa 2019; Fahey, McGinnity and Quinn 2019; Eurostat 2018). For methodological reasons, migrants who are institutionally cared for are not registered. This includes asylum seekers residing in collective centres. One of the problems is that migrants who were in the international protection system for some time but are no longer in that system cannot be statistically identified (Fahey, McGinnity and Quinn 2019), although they belong to one of the most vulnerable social groups. The above limitations show that a detailed analysis of LFS results is only possible at the aggregated territorial level (Gárdos and Gödri 2013).

The sub-registration of immigrants has been somewhat overcome by the introduction of special LFS migration modules. So far, two modules focusing on the labour market situation of

migrants and their immediate descendants have been implemented in EU countries – in 2008 and 2014 – while the next one is planned for 2021. A large sample provided significant data on the reasons for migration and the position of the first and second generation of immigrants. However, the questions are retrospective, and their scope is limited (Mieriņa 2019; European Commission/OECD 2016). Thus, the existing ad-hoc migration modules cannot currently provide regular monitoring of the changes in the labour market brought on by rapid and diverse migration flows (Fahey, McGinnity, and Quinn 2019; Eurostat 2018).

To improve the quality of data, the coverage of migrant populations, and international comparisons of LFS results, several methodological aspects are important, such as sample size, sampling frames, frequency of data collection, and the differences in data collection by country (Gárdos and Gödri 2013; Grabowska-Lusinska 2013). The definition of household membership is not fully harmonised across countries (Blaskó 2014). The scope is significantly conditioned by the choice of the sampling frame. The sample based on the population register provides significantly better coverage than the sample based on the population census (Fahey, McGinnity and Quinn 2019; Eurostat 2018). Since 2014, the sampling frame in Serbia has been the 2011 Population Census (prior to that it was the 2002 Population Census). However, the *enumeration areas*[1] are not updated, leading to an increase in non-coverage over time. Changing the basis of the LFS from the population census to the population register provides more opportunities for migration research. Collecting some of the answers from the register is thought to unburden the household questionnaire and make room for an additional module on migration without overburdening the respondents. Although national supplements on migration are rarely included in the LFS, it has been shown that there is potential for their exploitation (Blaskó 2014). Immigrant sub-registration can also be linked to the particular spatial distribution of immigrants, which is often not in correspondence with the sampling methodology (Gárdos and Gödri 2013). Therefore, experts propose to boost the immigrant subsample to ensure representativeness at the analysis stage, since booster samples are common practice in other European countries (Fahey, McGinnity, and Quinn 2019).

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

The economic integration of immigrants, both voluntary and forced, is considered a key element of successful integration into the host society (Ager and Strang 2008; Connor 2010; Predojević-Despić and Lukić 2018). The most commonly studied indicators of the integration of immigrants in the

[1] An enumeration area is the smallest geographical unit usually allocated to a single enumerator during census enumeration.

labour market of the host country are unemployment rates, representation in certain occupations, income rates, self-employment, and number of hours worked. (Council of Europe 1997). "The economic integration of immigrants depends both on the structural constraints and opportunities in the society of the host country, as well as their socio-demographic characteristics" (Lukić 2016: 85).

International comparisons based on LFS or European Community Household Panel (ECHP) data have shown that in almost all immigration countries, immigrants have a lower employment rate than the local population (OECD/European Union 2015; OECD/EU 2018; Peracchi and Depalo 2006). This is especially true of forced migrants (Yu, Ouellet and Warmington 2007; Connor 2010). It is not only low-skilled immigrants who face lower employment rates, but also those who are highly skilled and educated, thus an improvement in education is not always accompanied by a corresponding improvement in economic integration (Eurostat 2018; Ek and Skedinger 2019;). Job security and the availability of a wider range of occupations are also linked to educational attainment, language proficiency, and work experience in the host country (Bonfanti and Xenogiani 2014). It has been shown that compared to the local population, immigrants perform a significantly greater share of so-called 'simple' occupations, and commonly have jobs that carry health risks (European Commission/OECD 2016; OECD/EU 2018). By the same token, they are less likely to have high-profile occupations. This is particularly true of EU countries, and studies show that this ratio has worsened over time (Ek and Skedinger 2019; Eurostat 2018; Bonfanti and Xenogiani 2014). Age and gender are also important determinants of the economic integration of immigrants, and thus women and older workers are likely to face poorer outcomes in the labour market (OECD/European Union 2015; Peracchi and Depalo 2006). Moreover, the length of stay in the host country is considered an important indicator of integration, as it takes time to build social capital and informal contacts that make it easier to find a job and integrate into the labour market (Lukić 2016; Montgomery 1996; Peracchi and Depalo 2006). According to the findings based on the ECHP longitudinal household survey, the largest differences in the labour market between immigrants and the population of the host country are present in the first years of immigration, while most of the differences tend to disappear after 20 years (Peracchi and Depalo 2006).

Serbia has a long tradition of emigration, primarily for economic reasons (Predojević-Despić and Penev 2012; Predojević-Despić and Penev 2016). During the turbulent 1990s, people also emigrated for political-security reasons, and the significant intensification of migration in both directions was one of the main characteristics of demographic changes (Penev and Predojević-Despić 2019; Predojević-Despić and Penev 2014). At that time, a large number of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and

Croatia fled to Serbia. During that period, more than half a million people (mostly of Serbian nationality) settled in Serbia. The large influx of forced migrants also had visible demographic consequences, primarily the increase of the country's total population between 1991 and 2002, despite the negative population growth (Stevanović 2005; Lukić 2015; Penev and Predojević-Despić 2019). Their socio-cultural integration was facilitated by the fact that they share linguistic and ethnic origins with the host society. Recent empirical research shows that economic integration posed a major challenge for these migrants, since they arrived during a period of transitional economy and high unemployment rates among the local population (Lukić 2016; Predojević-Despić and Lukić 2018). In Serbia, a more intensive decrease in the unemployment rate of forced migrants from the former Yugoslav republics was observed only after 2008 (Komesarijat za izbeglice Republike Srbije 2008; Lukić 2016), more than 10 years after the arrival of the first refugees. This supports Stein's (1981) findings that it takes about 10 years from the moment of immigration for refugees to reach some stability in terms of their lost socio-economic status.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of the analysis, additionally processed data from the Labour Force Survey of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, as well as secondary statistical data sources (2011 census data) were used. In order to analyse and interpret the data appropriately, during processing, a lack of occurrences or too small a number of occurrences for the analysis was marked.[2]

In 2014, the LFS was conducted quarterly, and since 2015 it has been carried out continuously. In the five-year data series for the period from 2014 to 2018, between 95,000 (2014) and 134,000 (2016) people were surveyed annually. Data on the labour activity of 82,700 to 116,400 people were collected annually, which was 1.4% to 1.9% of the total population aged 15 and over in Serbia (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). The LFS data, conducted by SORS, is comparable to the LFS data of other countries. The definition of the target population is: households and persons referring to the 'usual population' that reside in the territory of the Republic of Serbia excluding the region of Kosovo and Metohia (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2019). The LFS is a potential source of data on migrants, but due to technical and methodological obstacles relating to the definition of migrants, i.e. the sample size, this dimension has not yet been used (Nikitović et al. 2013). The data obtained from the sample of migrant stock by nationality and country of origin is not published, but can be obtained through additional data processing upon request. Data processing involves logical control, and the non-

2 In the additionally processed data, explanations are given in the table (*, few occurrences) or (-, no occurrences).

response rate is around 20% (Nikitović et al. 2013).

The findings of the project SEEMIG indicate the need for additional processing of LFS data based on the criteria of citizenship or country of birth in order to identify immigrants (Nikitović et al. 2013). Therefore, for the purposes of identifying the immigrant population, additional data was processed based on country of birth rather than citizenship for people who had lived in the sampled household for more than a year. This methodological procedure was chosen because of the immigration of a large number of people from the former Yugoslav republics, especially in the 1990s. According to the 2011 Census 770,528 people in Serbia were born abroad, of which 687,948 were from the former Yugoslav republics. This procedure is consistent with a related study by Botrić (2009, 2015a, 2015b) using Croatia as an example. The analysis in the paper focuses on people aged between 15 and 64.

The hypothesis is that people born outside of Serbia have a less favourable position in the labour market compared to the population born in the country. Demographic and socio-economic factors affecting immigrant unemployment people (those available based on the LFS questionnaire) were also examined. Included are the following: gender, age, education, occupation[3], and country of birth, viewed through the prism of unemployment and long-term unemployment. Economically inactive people were excluded from the analysis. The average for the period from 2014 to 2018 was analysed, but accompanied by any applicable changes. In addition, separate descriptive statistical analyses were conducted for people born in Serbia and for those born outside of Serbia.

People's age was defined on the basis of their year of birth, while occupations were categorised according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). The educational attainment achieved was categorised into three groups (low education, medium education, and high education), according to the LFS classification. The low education group includes the following categories: without school, 1-3 grades of primary school, 4-7 grades of primary school, and primary school. In the medium education group, the categories are: 1-2 years of vocational secondary school, 3 years of vocational secondary school, 4 years of vocational secondary school, high school and specialisation after high school. The high education group includes the following categories: college, university, integrated studies, master's degree, and PhD.

The definition of employment according to the LFS is in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition and evaluates both the formal and informal employment of people selected in the sample. The unemployed are: people who did not have paid work during the reference

[3] On the recommendation of LFS experts, in the case of unemployed people, the occupation was taken into consideration for those who had work experience in the past eight years.

week, provided that they had actively sought employment in the past four weeks and were ready to start working within the next two weeks if someone offered them a job, as well as people who did not seek employment in the past four weeks because they had found a job that they need to start within three months at the latest. The definition of long-term unemployment is in line with the Eurostat definition, which covers people seeking active employment for a year or longer.

The opinions of a group of experts from various subspecialties employed by SORS were collected using qualitative inquiry, on the topic of the sample, scope, and possibilities of using the LFS to study the population of immigrants and their position in the labour market in Serbia. There were seven experts consulted. The experts are employed by SORS, belong to different professions (mathematics, economics, sociology, etc.), and are involved in numerous sets of LFS activities: development and testing, data collection, data processing, the production of statistical tables, etc. All of them were consulted through questionnaires in at least two rounds and interviews about LFS possibilities for this type of research, as well as on the possibilities of advancing the LFS to study international migration. The field work was done in November and December 2019.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The opinions of the group of experts confirmed the possibility of using the Labour Force Survey to study the immigrant population in Serbia, with the proposed definition of immigrant (based on country of birth) being the only possible one in the given social context of Serbia. It has been confirmed that the data series is comparable for the period from 2014 onwards. In the experts' opinion, an annual scope of immigrants is sufficient for this type of study, given that the sample for the LFS is of sufficient size. It is believed that the results from the LFS questionnaire can be used for the main selected indicators of analysis (employment and unemployment), and that the presented data can show the trends of the given phenomena. However, it has been emphasised that the size of the grade level must be taken into account, since the sample for immigrants was relatively small in size, and breaking it into overly small domains reduces the number of occurrences, which could render the observed data unreliable. Therefore, the analysis excludes findings where the number of occurrences, during additional data processing, was marked as small or insufficient. According to experts, the non-response rate was between 15% and 20%, which is similar to the results in other European countries.

General characteristics

Data from the Labour Force Survey from 2014 to 2018 indicate that people over 15 years of age born abroad make up an average of 10.8% of the Serbian population over 15 years of age. These people were mostly born in the former Yugoslav republics, while fewer than 1% of people over 15 years of age

were born abroad. If one looks at the workforce (ages 15-64), people born abroad account for 9.4% of the workforce in Serbia (Table 1).

Table 1 Age and gender structure of working-age people born in Serbia and born abroad, 2014-2018 average

Age group	15-24		25-49		50-64		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Born in Serbia								
Male	380,619	17.8	1,100,289	51.4	659,343	30.8	2,140,251	100
Female	358,888	17.1	1,055,537	50.2	688,939	32.8	2,103,364	100
Total	739,507	17.4	2,155,826	50.8	1,348,282	31.8	4,243,615	100
Born abroad								
Male	11,127	5.6	99,538	50.5	86,351	43.8	197,016	100
Female	11,046	4.5	120,543	48.9	115,138	46.7	246,727	100
Total	22,173	5.0	220,081	49.6	201,489	45.4	443,743	100

Source: Authors' calculations

The analysis of the LFS data from 2014 to 2018 reveals differences in the structure of the labour force by age and sex, between the populations born in the country and those born abroad. In terms of age, the working-age population of people born outside of Serbia is older, with a significantly smaller share of the youth (15-24 years old) and a greater share of people aged 50-64 compared to the population born in the country. Moreover, the share of women in the labour force born abroad is 55.6%, which is greater than that of the labour force born in the country (49.6%) (Table 1).

Women are generally more numerous when it comes to peeople who have moved to Serbia from abroad. According to the 2011 Census, international migration to Serbia is 'predominantly female' (53.7%), or 'overwhelmingly female' (55.3%) if women from the former Yugoslav republics are taken into account (Lukić 2020).

Differences in the age-sex structure of the working-age population born in the country and the working-age population born abroad can be partly explained by the higher levels of immigration of women due to marriage, as indicated by administrative statistical sources (Government of the Republic of Serbia n.d.), but also by the specifics of the age-sex structure of the immigrant population, which largely consists of tpeople who fled Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia due to the conflict in the 1990s. Namely, data from the 2011 Population Census indicates that the share of widows at a younger age is greater for forced migrants than for the rest of the Serbian population, due to war casualties among the working-age male population in the former Yugoslav republics during the 1990s (Lukić 2014). In addition, differences in the sex structure can be partly explained by the possible more pronounced migration of the male population born in Croatia. Many members of this population (47.4%) hold dual citizenship (Lukić 2015: 36) and can easily enter the labour market in European Union (EU) countries for short or long periods of time to perform in-demand

jobs, especially in construction, crafts, and related occupations that more commonly involve male workers.

Age is an important influencing factor in the integration of immigrants into the labour market. Since the majority of the population born outside of Serbia consists of forced migrants displaced from the former Yugoslav republics in 1990s, their structure is represented by older cohorts, with the largest share of people aged between 50 and 59 in 2011 (Lukić 2015). This fact reflects the differences in the working-age population born in the country and born abroad.

Data on the length of stay in the country of people born abroad (aged 15-64), viewed in the context of unemployment, shows that as many as 94% of these unemployed peeople have lived in Serbia for more than 10 years, 6% for five to 10 years, while the number of occurrences of people residing in the country for up to five years is too small to be considered for analysis.

Employment and unemployment

The data for the period from 2014 to 2018 indicates that in both observed populations, about two-thirds of the working-age population are economically active (Figure 1). Unemployed people born abroad aged 15-64 account for an average of 41,991, i. e. 8.4% of the total unemployed population in Serbia. An average of 250,129 persons born abroad are employed, which is 9.7% of the total employed population in Serbia.

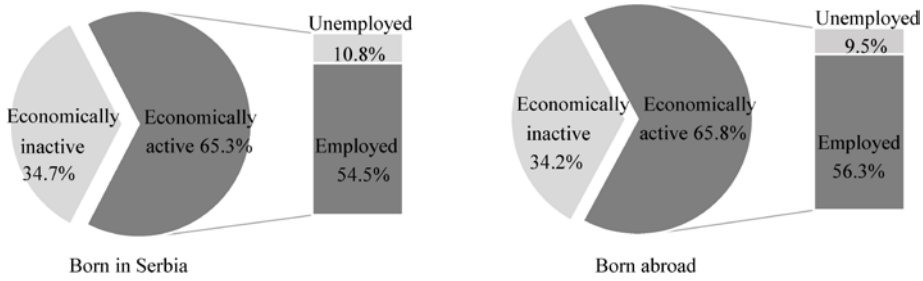

Figure 1 Population born in Serbia and born abroad by economic activity, 2014-2018 average (%)

Source: Authors' calculations

Between 2014 and 2018, the average unemployment rate [4] of people born in Serbia was 10.8%, while it was 9.5% for people born abroad. In both observed populations, there was a visible trend of decreasing unemployment rates during the observed period, which is, more pronounced for the population born in Serbia.

A report on the position of the labour markets of the countries that are in the process of accession to the EU, based on the LFS, indicates that for the majority, there is a trend of a continuous decrease in unemployment rates from 2014 and onwards (Eurostat 2019). However, these countries have

4 Share of unemployed people in the total population aged 15-64.

significantly higher unemployment rates than the average of the 28 EU member states. From 2014 to 2017 in Serbia, these values range from 19.4% to 13.6%. When it comes to the long-term unemployment rate, in Serbia in 2017 it was more than twice (8.2%) that of the average of EU-28 member states (3.4%) (Eurostat 2019).

In almost all member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the EU, immigrants have a higher unemployment rate compared to the population born in the country. The unemployment rate of foreign-born people in EU countries was on average 5.8 percentage points higher than that of those born in the host country (2012-2013), i. e. 4.3% (2017) (OECD / European Union 2015; OECD/EU 2018). We can, therefore, conclude that peeople born outside of Serbia, with an unemployment rate lower by 1.3 percentage points compared to those born in the country, are nevertheless in a better position in the labour market compared to immigrants in other countries. Their integration into the labour market is certainly helped by sharing a language with the host country and the fact that the majority of them have obtained citizenship of the Republic of Serbia (Lukić 2015). Our findings on the somewhat lower unemployment rates of immigrants compared to the population born in the country oppose the findings of a similar study by Botrić (2015a, 2015b) based on data from the LFS in Croatia, where the majority of immigrants are also from the former Yugoslav republics. That both countries have halfway favourable policies in the area of labour market mobility, as one of the areas within the policy of immigrant integration, is shown by the 2014 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) indicators [5] (Huddleston 2016; Huddleston et al. 2015). These indicators of immigration policy are based on a qualitative expert evaluation of the existing laws and regulations in the country, both general and sectoral ones. In Serbia, from 2012 to 2014, positive changes were observed in the development of policies in the field of immigrant mobility in the labour market, according to the values of the MIPEX index (Lukić 2018).

The differences in average unemployment rates between the population born in Serbia and the foreign-born population are greater among women (10.1% vs. 8.5%) than among men (11.4% vs. 10.7%). This can be partly explained by the more unfavourable age structure of women born abroad, which could have made it more difficult to find a job and left them in a less favourable position within the labour market. The findings of a small number of qualitative studies on female forced migrants indicate that the lack of information and social networks are some of the problems that hinder their re-entry into the labour market (Grupa 484 2006). Slightly more than half of the unemployed population born in Serbia are men (53.6%), while the share of men and women born abroad is equal (50.0%). When it comes to employed people,

[5] On a scale from 0 to 100, the registered values are 50 for Serbia and 54 for Croatia.

43.3% of the population born in Serbia are women, while the share of those born abroad is greater, accounting for 49.4%.

In terms of the relative share, the number of unemployed people born abroad with no work experience (18.5%) is visibly smaller compared to the unemployed people born in the country (28.9%). In addition, among the number of unemployed people born abroad, there is a greater share of those who had work experience more than eight years ago (17.8%) compared to the unemployed people born in the country (11.9%). In both populations, women are prevalent among those without work experience and those who had it eight years ago, thus, as stated earlier, we can conclude that the position of women in the labour market in Serbia is generally worse than that of men.

Compared to the population born in the country, there are fewer people frorn abroad who have no work experience, as there are fewer younger people in the working-age population, and thus within both the employed and the unemployed. In this regard, our findings are consistent with the findings of Botrić (2015b) that these immigrants do not constitute the younger population, which is characteristic for economic migrants, but are more similar to the population in the host country. Nikitović and Lukić (2010) point to the short-term positive demographic effects of arrivals of refugees from the former Yugoslav republics to Serbia. A greater share of unemployed people born abroad who had work experience eight years ago, compared to the locally born unemployed, indicates a long absence from the labour market of a part of this population, problems in adjusting to new socio-economic conditions, and high participation of these people in the structure of employees in the grey zone.

Secondary education is predominant in both employed and unemployed immigrants[6]. The educational attainment of the immigrant population aged 15-64 is slightly more favourable than that of the population in the country, and consists mainly of a smaller share of people with lower education and a greater share of people with higher education. In terms of sex and employment (Figure 2), the differences are greatest in the male employed population. It can be concluded that this is also influenced by the age structure, with longer periods of employment for those born abroad due to the lack of conditions for retirement.

Differences are also observed by age, especially in the 50-64 age group (Figure 3). These characteristics are partly due to differences in the age structure of the populations born in the host country and those born abroad.

Among the unemployed, whether born in Serbia or abroad, there is a greater share of women with higher education (26.6% for those born in Serbia and 27.1% for those born abroad) than men (15.8% and 17.9%). However, the share of men with high-

[6] Data on education disseminated by age and sex groups is not adequate for analysis in the case of the 15-24 age group, due to the small number of occurrences when looking at the population of people born abroad.

er education born abroad among the unemployed is slightly greater than in those born in the country. Furthermore, the greater share of unemployed people born abroad with higher education aged 50-64 years (18.4%) than those born in the country (14.5%), indicates increased difficulties regarding employability among older immigrants with higher education.

Figure 2 Employed and unemployed, born in Serbia and born abroad, by education and sex, 2014-2018 average (%)
Source: Authors' calculations

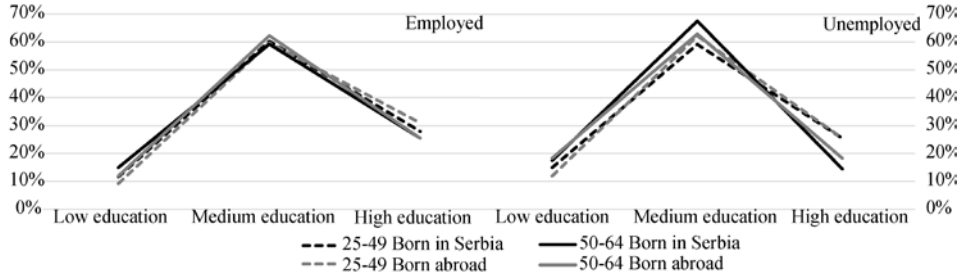

Figure 3 Employed and unemployed, born in Serbia and born abroad, by education and age groups (25-49 and 50-64), 2014-2018 average (%)
Source: Authors' calculations

Although the differences in the structure of the employed and unemployed by education are to some extent the result of differences in the age structure, the findings suggest a more unfavourable position in the labour market of the older population born abroad compared to people of the same age born in Serbia, and also compared to the younger population born abroad. Highly educated older immigrants are in a particularly unfavourable position. It can be assumed that they were unemployed after forced migration to Serbia. In addition to unfavourable labour market conditions for the older population in particular, the reasons may be related to the relatively long time it takes to resolve their legal status, as well as their lack of social networks among the domestic population.

Another indicator of the more unfavourable condition in the labour market faced by persons born outside of Serbia can be seen in the contingency analysis of employees aged 15-64 according to their working status and

occupation. Regarding employment status, within the population born abroad compared to the population born in Serbia, somewhat greater shares of employed workers are visible (76.8% to 72.3%), as are self-employed workers with employees (4.6% to 3.5%). In the same group, a somewhat smaller share of self-employed workers without employees (14.0% to 17.7%) and assisting household members (4.6% to 6.5%) are noticed.

Furthermore, even though there is a greater share of the employed, a greater share of self-employed workers with employees indicates that it is more difficult to employ the population born outside of Serbia. The smaller share of assisting household members is the result of the smaller share of the agricultural population born abroad.

The occupational structure of employed workers indicates that there is a significantly smaller share of foreign-born workers in agriculture and related fields, and a slightly greater share in simple occupations, trade services, experts, and artists. Viewed by age, the differences are more pronounced. This is especially true for the 50-64 age group, in which these differences are more noticeable than in the 25-49 age group (Figure 4). These differences also provide evidence of the better integration of the second generation of immigrants, i.e. those who came to Serbia as children but whose parents immediately after arriving in Serbia mostly did not own agricultural farms.

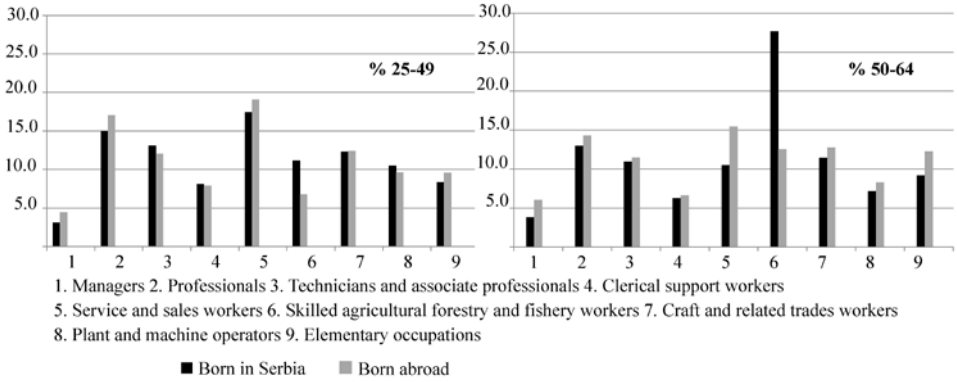

Figure 4 Employees aged 25-49 and 50-64, born in Serbia and born abroad, by occupation, 2014-2018 average (%)
Source: Authors' calculations

Viewed by sex, immigrant women are most commonly engaged in trade and services (21.3%), as experts and artists (18.1%), and in simple occupations (13.4%); while men are engaged in crafts and related work (19.1%), as machine operators (13.9%), and in service occupations (13.9%). The analysis of the data indicates a smaller share of women born in Serbia employed in simple occupations (8.5%) compared to immigrant women (13.4%).

The differences between the unemployed people born in the country and the unemployed people born abroad by occupation (for those who had work experience in the past eight years) are very small. The small number of occurrences, however, makes it impossible to analyse data for unemployed farmers, experts and artists, managers, and foreign-born military personnel, as well as for military personnel born in the country.

Long-term unemployment

According to Botrić (2009), the high and constant share of long-term unemployment in total unemployment is seen as an indicator of structural problems in the labour market. The average share of long-term unemployment in the total unemployment from 2014 to 2018 amounts to 63.7% for people born in Serbia and 65.1% for people born abroad. These figures range from 42.2% to 44.9% when it comes to more than three years of unemployment. Among the population born abroad, the sex structure of the long-term unemployed is balanced (the share of women is 50.4%), while among people born in the country, there is a slightly greater share of long-term unemployed men (the share of women is 46.5%) (Table 2).

Table 2 Educational structure of people born in Serbia and people born abroad who have been unemployed for a year or longer (15-64 years), 2014-2018 average

Highest educational attainment	Low education		Medium education		High education		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Born in Serbia								
Male	26,300	16.9	104,960	67.5	24,180	15.6	155,440	100
Female	19,920	14.8	81,640	60.5	33,440	24.8	135,000	100
Total	46,220	15.9	186,600	64.2	57,620	19.8	290,440	100
Born abroad								
Male	1,900	14.0	9,080	67.0	2,580	19.0	13,560	100
Female	2,000	14.5	8,340	60.5	3,440	25.0	13,780	100
Total	3,900	14.3	17,420	63.7	6,020	22.0	27,340	100

Note: There are no people without education or the occurrence is small (not published).
Source: Authors' calculations

As with the short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed immigrants in Serbia are predominantly people with secondary school education. The analysis of data on the education of the long-term unemployed population concludes that foreign-born people have attained a higher degree of education than those born in Serbia. Namely, there is a slightly greater relative share of long-term unemployed immigrants who are highly educated, and a smaller share of the same group with lower education, compared to the population born in Serbia. These differences are largely the result of differences in the educational structure between the male population born abroad and the male population born in the country.

The differences in the educational structure between the population of long-term unemployed people born in Serbia and long-term unemployed

people born abroad by age (if we look at the 25-49 and 50-64 age groups) are the largest when it comes to the population over 50. These differences are evident in secondary and higher education, indicating a greater share of highly educated older workers born abroad who are long-term unemployed.

When it comes to the unemployment of more than three years, the findings on the greater share of long-term unemployed immigrants compared to the population born in the country are consistent with the findings of Botrić (2015b) in Croatia. In terms of sex, both populations are dominated by men, except for those born abroad seeking employment for more than three years (Table 3).

Table 3 Unemployed persons, born in Serbia and born abroad, by length of job search, 2014-2018 average (%)

	Born in Serbia			Born abroad		
	< 1 year	1 to 2 years	3+ years	< 1 year	1 to 2 years	3+ years
Male	53.7	52.7	53.9	50.9	51.9	48.2
Female	46.3	47.3	46.1	49.0	48.0	51.7
Total	36.4	21.4	42.2	34.5	20.7	44.9

Source: Authors' calculations

The analysis of the data indicates that the sex structure of the long-term unemployed in Serbia is in line with the sex structure of the workforce of the two observed populations. However, in terms of the time needed to get employed, foreign-born women are in a more unfavourable position in the labour market compared to men, as they account for more than half of the unemployed population born abroad who have been seeking jobs for more than three years, which is not the case with the Serbian-born population.

It has been noted that foreign-born unemployed people are less likely to be registered with the National Employment Service (NES). Data on the number of unemployed people born abroad, registered with the NES, and receiving benefits cannot be taken into account for analysis, given the small sample size (Figure 5).

However, it is noted that in Serbia, few unemployed people born abroad are registered with the NES. This is not an isolated casel; it is also observed on the basis of the LFS at the EU level (OECD/EU 2018) and in the case of Croatia (Botrić 2015b), as well as the population of Polish people in the United Kingdom (Grabowska-Lusinska and Okólski 2009). It has been noted that immigrants generally seek less help from relevant institutions and receive fewer unemployment benefits compared to people born in the country. This points to the need for qualitative research on this topic, which would further shed light on these findings in terms of whether these people are aware of their rights, or may not approach the relevant institutions for other reasons, such as working in the informal or 'grey' economy.

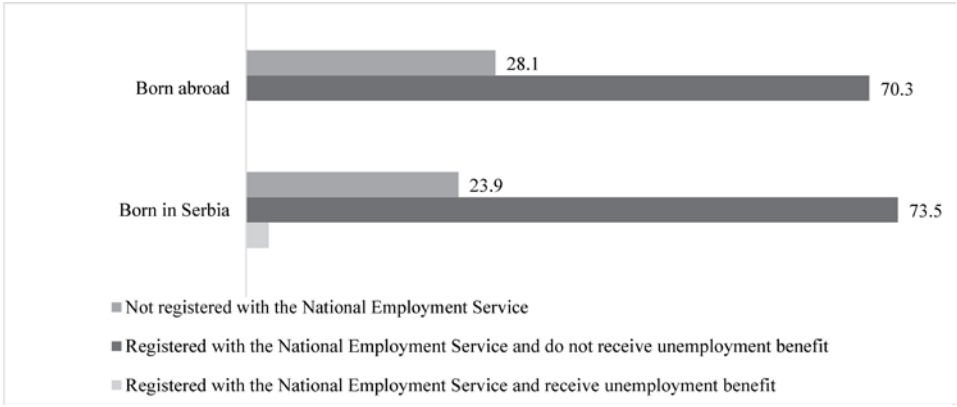

Figure 5 Unemployed people born in Serbia and born abroad according to their registration with the National Employment Service, 2014-2018 average (%)
Source: Authors' calculations

CONCLUSION

Our findings confirm that the length of stay of immigrants in their host country has a positive impact on their socio-economic adjustment (Montgomery 1996; Peracchi and Depalo 2006) and that immigrants of ethnic origin from neighbouring countries can have generally good labour market outcomes (OECD 2007). Furthermore, given their age structure, immigrants do not have a significant impact on mitigating the effects of population ageing in Serbia in the labour market. Findings indicate that the population born abroad does not have a higher unemployment rate compared to the population born in Serbia. This can be attributed to the specificity of their origin (the former Yugoslav republics) the fact that they share a language with the host society, and that the majority of them have obtained citizenship of the Republic of Serbia. However, in line with the set hypothesis, it can be concluded that the position of immigrants in relation to the domestic population is more unfavourable in terms of the structure of employment and unemployment. This is particularly evident through the slower decline in unemployment rates, the poorer structure of the unemployed in terms of their long absence from the labour market, and the structure of occupations. Certain categories of immigrants stand out as particularly vulnerable.

In line with the defined goal, the findings indicate that the LFS provides significant opportunities for studying immigration and the position of immigrants in the labour market in Serbia. Consequently, to the authors' knowledge, this report is the first attempt to use LFS data in Serbia for these purposes, so it is concluded that the potential of the LFS has so far been unexploited. Furthermore, the analysis of LFS data, as well as the impossibility of analysing the results for immigrant groups with a smaller number of cases, indicates that in Ser-

bia there is a significant need for methodological advancement of the LFS.

For example, crossing data on age and long-term unemployment would certainly be useful, although it could not be realised due to the limitations of the small number of occurrences, and thus, the unreliability of the data. There is also a need for an LFS based on the population register, which would allow for significantly better coverage of immigrant populations.

Given the numerous challenges posed by contemporary international migration, in terms of scope, diversity, and causes of migration, as well as integration opportunities, there is a great need to find an innovative approach that will allow for the improvement and better utilisation of the existing databases, and the creation of new ones. In this respect, the LFS plays an important role.

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Položaj imigranata na tržištu rada u Srbiji: trenutni status i mogućnosti za istraživanje

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SAŽETAK

Polazeći od teorijskih znanja u oblasti migracija i tržišta rada i postojećih analiza podataka o migrantima na bazi Ankete o radnoj snazi (ARS) Republičkog zavoda za statistiku (RZS), u radu se istražuju najvažnije karakteristike imigranata na tržištu rada u Srbiji. Cilj je da se ukaže na mogućnosti ARS-a za proučavanje imigracije i položaja imigranata na tržištu rada u zemljama sa izraženom emigracijom i niskim prilivom strane radne snage, na primeru Srbije. Korišćeni su dodatno obrađeni podaci ARS-a za 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017. i 2018, i sekundarni statistički izvori podataka, pri čemu je prilikom obrade obeleženo ukoliko pojava nema ili je njihov broj suviše mali za analizu. Kriterijum za izdvajanje imigranata, uz uslov da žive duže od godinu dana u uzorkovanom domaćinstvu, bio je država rođenja, a ne državljanstvo, jer su imigranti u Srbiji uglavnom doseljeni iz bivših jugoslovenskih republika, naročito počev od 1990-ih.

Sprovođenjem kvalitativnog istraživanja putem popunjavanja upitnika u najmanje dva kruga, ali i intervjua, prikupljena su mišljenja grupe eksperata različitih profesija i užih specijalnosti, zaposlenih u RZS, na temu uzorka, obuhvata i mogućnosti korišćenja ARS-a za proučavanje položaja imigrantske populacije na tržištu rada u Srbiji. Eksperti su konsultovani i o mogućnostima unapređenja ARS za proučavanje međunarodne migracije. Ovo istraživanje je, prema saznanjima autora, prvi pokušaj analize položaja imigranata na tržištu rada u Srbiji zasnovan na ARS, kao i diskusije o mogućnostima ARS-a za istraživanje emigracije/imigracije.

S obzirom na starosnu strukturu, imigranti ne utiču značajnije na ublažavanje posledica starenja stanovništva Srbije po tržište rada. Nalazi ukazuju da rođeni u inostranstvu nemaju veću stopu nezaposlenosti u poređenju sa stanovništvom rođenim u zemlji, što se može pripisati specifičnosti porekla i dužini boravka u Srbiji najvećeg dela ove populacije. Ipak, uočava se njihov nepovoljan položaj na tržištu rada, na šta ukazuje sporije smanjivanje stope nezaposlenosti, te lošija struktura zaposlenih, kao i nezaposlenih u pogledu dugog odsustva sa tržišta rada. Određene kategorije imigranata, kao što su stariji muškarci, izdvajaju se kao posebno ranjive.

Na osnovu analize podataka ARS, pregleda postojećih empirijskih istraživanja, kao i nalaza dobijenih od stručnjaka iz Srbije za potrebe ovog rada, diskutovana su ograničenja i potvrđeni potencijali ARS za proučavanje položaja imigranata na tržištu rada u Srbiji. Takođe, istaknuta je potreba za metodološkim unapređenjem Ankete, naročito u smislu boljeg obuhvata imigrantske populacije. S obzirom na brojne izazove koje donose savremene međunarodne migracije, bilo u smislu obima, raznolikosti i uzroka migracija, kao i mogućnosti integracije, postoji ogromna potreba za pronalaženjem inovativnog pristupa koji će omogućiti unapređenje i bolju iskorišćenost postojećih i stvaranje novih baza podataka. U tom smislu, Anketa o radnoj snazi ima važnu ulogu.

KLJUČNE REČI

imigracija | nezaposlenost | tržište rada | Anketa o radnoj snazi | Srbija

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