

YOUIND - Policy Analysis

YOUTH OUTMIGRATION FROM INDUSTRIAL TOWNS

Input Paper

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Abstract

This document explores the issue of youth outmigration and demographic change in the context of industrial small and medium-sized towns in Central Europe. It maps out the general status of research in this field, highlighting an existing knowledge gap. The text also analyses two case studies from Slovenia and Austria, the town of Idrija and the region Steirische Eisenstrasse. It investigates demographic development processes with a focus on youth, as well as policy responses and governance aspects. In a conclusion, it derives some lessons learned from both the literature review, as well as from the case studies, highlighting drivers of outmigration, impacts and policy responses.

Summary (GER)

Im Fokus dieses im Rahmen von YOUIND entstandenen Input-Papers steht die Analyse des Themas Jugendabwanderung und demografischer Wandel im Kontext industrieller Klein- und Mittelstädte in Mitteleuropa. Im ersten Teil wird durch eine Literaturanalyse der allgemeine Stand der Forschung in diesen beiden Bereichen dargestellt. Es zeigt sich, dass dieses Thema in diesem spezifischen Kontext bisher kaum diskutiert wurde und somit eine Wissenslücke offenbart, die sowohl auf wissenschaftlicher, wie auch auf praktischer, angewandter Ebene existent ist. Diese Erkenntnis ist für den Kooperationsraum Slowenien-Österreich von besonderer Relevanz, da es auch hier eine Vielzahl industriell geprägter Orte gibt, die sehr wichtige sozio-ökonomische Funktionen erfüllen.

In einer zweiten Analyse widmet sich das Dokument den beiden YOUIND-Partnerregionen Idrija und der Steirischen Eisenstrasse. Demografische Entwicklungsprozesse, im Speziellen mit Fokus auf die Bevölkerungsgruppe der Jugend, sowie politische Gegenmaßnahmen und Governance-Aspekte werden hierbei aufgezeigt. Die Schlussfolgerung beinhaltet einen Überblick der „lessons learned“ auf Basis der Literaturlauswertung und der Fallstudien. Es wird deutlich, dass nicht nur ökonomische, sondern auch soziale Faktoren, beruhend auf Bildung und der Intention eine Familie zu gründen, wichtige Motivatoren für Abwanderung darstellen. Abwanderung erfolgt dabei oft entlang spezifischer Jugendgruppen, eng gebunden an Geschlecht und Bildungsperspektiven. Gerade bei bestimmten Gruppen (z.B. Frauen, nicht-technische Berufswahl) könnte die industrielle Prägung der Fokusregionen die Abwanderungsentscheidung begünstigen. Hier bedarf es eines besseren Verständnisses der Prozesse auf regionaler Ebene.

Das Dokument unterstreicht weiterhin die Notwendigkeit eines sektoren-überreifenden, strategischen Ansatzes, der durch eine Vielzahl von regionalen Akteuren getragen wird. Als wichtige Maßnahmen gelten dabei die Verbesserung der Lebensbedingungen Jugendlicher in der Region, sowie die Forcierung der Zuwanderung neuer, bzw. abgewanderter Bevölkerungsgruppen.

Izveček (SLO)

Namen tega poročila, ki je bilo narejeno v okviru projekta YOUIND, je analiza teme izseljevanja mladih in demografskih sprememb v malih in srednje velikih industrijskih mestih v Srednji Evropi. V prvem delu je s pomočjo pregleda literature predstavljeno splošno stanje raziskav na teh dveh področjih. Izkazalo se je, da se te teme v tem posebnem kontekstu doslej še ni veliko obravnavalo, kar kaže na vrzel v znanju tako na znanstveni kot na praktični, uporabni ravni. Ta ugotovitev je še posebej pomembna za območje sodelovanja Slovenija-Avstrija, saj je tu tudi veliko takšnih industrijskih krajev, ki opravljajo zelo pomembne družbeno-gospodarske funkcije.

V drugem delu je dokument posvečen dvema partnerskima regijama projekta YOUIND, in sicer Idriji ter Štajerski železni cesti. Izpostavljeni so demografski razvojni procesi, zlasti s poudarkom na mladem prebivalstvu, pa tudi politični ukrepi in vidiki upravljanja. Sklep vsebuje pregled »pridobljenih lekcij« na podlagi pregleda literature in študij obeh primerov. Jasno je, da so pomembni motivi za izseljevanje ne le gospodarski, temveč tudi družbeni dejavniki, ki temeljijo na izobraževanju in načrtovanju družine. Selitve se pogosto dogajajo v določenih skupinah mladih, tesno povezanih s spolom in možnostmi izobraževanja. Industrijski značaj regij bi lahko zlasti nekatere poklicne skupine (npr. ženske, netehnični profili) prisilil k odločitvi za selitev. Tu je potrebno boljše razumevanje procesov na regionalni ravni.

Dokument poudarja tudi potrebo po medsektorskem strateškem pristopu, ki ga podpira veliko število regionalnih akterjev. Pri teh ukrepih se pogosto uporabljajo strategije izboljšanja življenjskih razmer za mlade in priseljevanja novih ali nekoč odseljenih ljudi (nazaj) v regijo.

Summary (ENG)

The focus of this input paper, which was developed within the framework of YOUIND, is the analysis of the topic of youth outmigration and demographic change in the context of industrial small and medium-sized towns in Central Europe. In the first part, the general state of research in these two areas is presented through a literature analysis. It is shown that this topic, in this specific context, has hardly been discussed so far, which thus reveals a knowledge gap that exists both on a scientific and on a practical, applied level. This finding is of particular relevance for the cooperation area Slovenia-Austria, as there are also a large number of such industrially shaped places, which perform very important socio-economic functions.

In the second analysis, the document is dedicated to the two YOUIND partner regions Idrija and the Styrian Iron Road. Demographic development processes, especially with a focus on the youth population, as well as political countermeasures and governance aspects are highlighted. The conclusion contains an overview of the "lessons learned" on the basis of the literature review and the case studies. It becomes clear that not only economic but also social factors, based on education and family planning, are important motivators for emigration. Furthermore, it often takes place along specific youth groups, closely linked to gender and educational perspectives. Particularly for certain groups (e.g. women, non-technical career choices), the industrial character of the focus regions could force the decision to migrate. Here, a better understanding of the processes at regional level is needed.

The document also underlines the need for a cross-sectoral, strategic approach supported by a large number of regional actors. In its measures, the improvement of the living conditions for young people, as well as the immigration of new or once-emigrated people (back) to the region are often applied strategies.

Key take-aways

- Few research items on the topic of industrial town's youth outmigration and demographic change, also a lack of good practices exist
- Outmigration triggers a downward spiral affecting a range of socio-economic aspects
- Reasons for (youth) outmigration are based on highly complex, individualised decision making, statistical data on this issue remain open to certain flaws
- Economic factors are generally overestimated in regard to outmigration processes. Literature highlights education, family-planning next to work as major reasons for youth outmigration
- Youth outmigration is a highly selective process, often layered by gender and education. More research is needed to understand this process better, developing target group-based approaches
- For industrial regions especially, the rather mono-structured economy, based on industrial image and traditional role models, seems to be in particular relevant to push certain groups of youth (e.g. women) towards leaving
- Soft factors, such as housing, mobility, social & cultural life (associations, sports clubs etc.), as well as family and friends are important reasons to stay in the region and therefore demand political attention
- The shrinkage of the local labour-pool for companies requires new forms of communication and recruiting strategies by companies
- Regional governance level is the level in charge; as a cross-cutting issue affecting various sectoral agencies and institutions, demanding wide actor involvement. Strategic, integrated policy making is desired, instead of sectoral stand-alone initiatives or simple ignorance on local, municipal level
- Existing policy responses often focus on (re-)immigration of former inhabitants, as well as strengthening of soft factors in youth environment and regional story-telling – all approaches have certain limits and are conceptually often weak

1. Introduction

This paper is one of the first academic outputs of the YOUIND project – ‘Youth outmigration and institutional capacities in industrial towns’. The aim of the document is to analyse the situation of the two project partner regions (PPs), the Austrian Steirische Eisenstrasse (Styrian Iron Route) (VESTE) and Slovenian region around the town of Idrija (Fig. 1). It will do so by reflecting on the general status-quo in both regions, with a special focus on aspects relevant to youth and outmigration. The document therefore provides a brief analysis, based on a review of existing policies and projects in both industrial regions. Furthermore, it will help to identify possible stakeholders for the networks.

The paper provides an academic input to the planned activities of the two regional project partners over the project run-time until spring 2022. It will set the frame for the partners’ activities, creating at first a common understanding of the topic and moreover, a better awareness for the situation in both regions. By highlighting the joint challenges faced, this deliverable will foster cross-border knowledge exchange and prepare the ground for regional and further cross-border actions. To establish a joint understanding between PPs is an important step within the workgroup, thus this document will serve as a reference point to all partners and their stakeholders for their project activities.

The general structure of the document is as follows: starting with this preface, chapter two serves as an introduction to the phenomena of youth outmigration from industrial towns, reflecting briefly on academic knowledge on the topic. Chapter three and four will then analyse the two case study regions regarding their regional status-quo and policies relevant to the topic. This is mainly done on the basis of existing studies and expertise. Chapter five will then offer a general synopsis/conclusion comparing the regions in their challenges and activities under the topic of youth outmigration. It also will highlight specific lessons learned and aspects relevant for the further fostering of capacities in both regions.

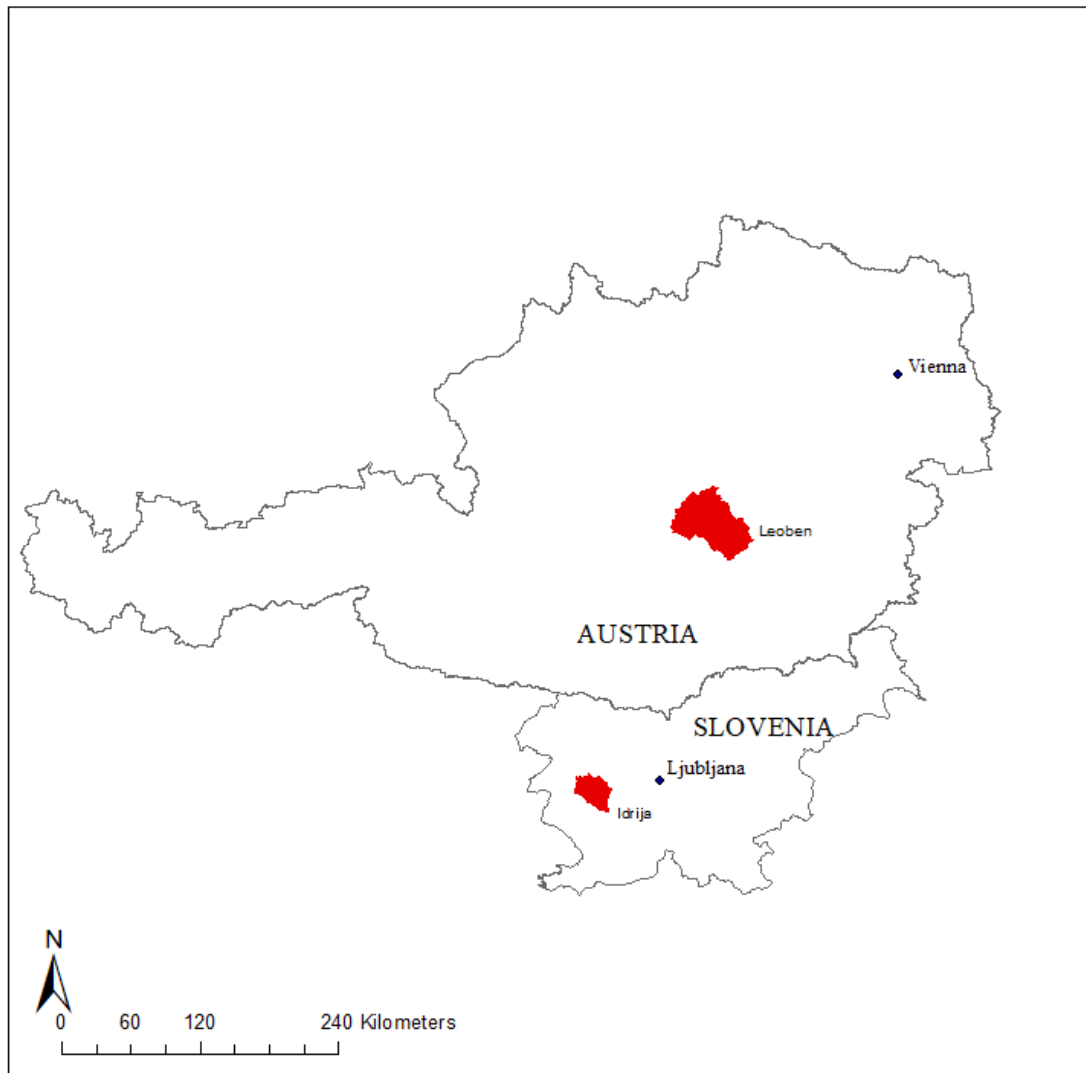
By its character this paper is closely interconnected to the second input paper on ‘Good practices’ (D.T.1.2.1), in which the academic partners reflect on additional good practices on the mitigation of youth outmigration, based on academic literature and applied projects across Europe. Core findings from both input papers were presented to project partners at the joint stakeholder workshop in Idrija (23.9.+24.9.2020, D.T.1.2.2), as well as being distributed in their final outlines in a printed version.

Both input papers were in their structure and outset prepared as a joint collaboration by the University of Graz, Department of Geography and Regional Science (AUT, PP1) and the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Anton Melik Geographical Institute (SLO, PP2). For this input paper the University of Graz assumes overall responsibility.

The results are based on communication and information exchange between project partners, data and literature research, as well as interviews with regional stakeholders, from administration,

companies and associations. The final version of this paper was additionally updated with inputs from the joint stakeholder workshop in Idrija.

Figure 1: Overview map VESTE and Idrija



(Source: Own graphic, Sandriester - Map basis: data.gv.at, BEV, www.gadm.org)

2. Framing the topic: Youth outmigration in industrial towns

The YOUIND project combines two elements, namely youth outmigration and industrial towns, which are seldom addressed specifically in the academic and public discussion (see also 'good practice paper, D.T.1.2.1. for more details). It thereby strives for a better understanding of the status of youth in predominantly industrial towns, shedding a light on the phenomena and reasons of outmigration, as well as possible policy responses. For doing so, this chapter will provide a short overview on the academic debates on the two elements under consideration here.

2.1. On small and medium-sized industrial towns

The industrial town may seem as an obsolete urban structure that has vanished from the political agenda of the Global North and has been moved to countries of the Global South over the last few decades (Pipan, 2018). However, some studies in Europe suggest that while deindustrialisation was particularly noticed in larger metropolitan cities, smaller towns still retain a significant share of the economic base in the industrial sector (Koceva et al., 2016; Servillo et al., 2017). There have been numerous studies on the negative impact of deindustrialisation and urban decline in (old) industrial regions (Müller et al., 2005; Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018). The ESPON project TOWNS, has focussed on small and medium sized towns (SMSTs) in Europe (population between 5,000 and 50,000). It has shown that traditional industrial towns face a problematic future, as a higher proportion of employment in industrial activities is associated with poorer job growth (Servillo et al., 2014). The results from this study also show that industrial SMSTs have larger unemployment rates compared to SMSTs with jobs in the service sector. According to Hamdouch et al. (2017), the majority of industrial SMSTs have had lower employment growth rates since 2000. Only few examples of the positive externalities of industrialism on contemporary urban development were highlighted. Some authors argue that certain types of industrial towns in Switzerland (Meili & Mayer, 2017) and Slovenia (Bole et al., 2019) can be economically successful and innovative. Older industrial regions were also recognised as more resilient to the recent economic crisis (Plöger & Kohlhaas-Weber, 2014; Hoekstra, 2017), or they had lower unemployment rates in contrast to non-industrial ones (Hoekstra, 2017). Youth as a target group in small and medium sized industrial towns is hardly a topic of research. Even demography, migration and mobility are rarely discussed in this context. A typology of small towns in the Czech Republic indicates that industrial towns have higher unemployment rates and face population decline (Vaishar et al., 2016). In Switzerland two industrial types – high-tech and low-tech towns – typically exhibit lower population growth rates in contrast to service-economy or residential towns, but show better economic performance (Meili & Mayer, 2017). In Slovenia industrial towns are not so different from non-industrial ones in demographic terms, with an interesting nuance: industrial towns have a lower ageing index opposed to non-industrial towns indicating a better demographic outlook (Bole et al., 2020).

In summary, industrial towns remain important in Europe and especially in Central Europe, where signs of re-industrialisation are also visible. They play an important role not only as economic producers of various goods but also as places of vibrant industrial heritage, culture and values.

2.2. On youth outmigration

While international migration flows have a firm and prominent place in Europe's contemporary media and politics, internal migrations within countries receive much lesser attention both in the media, as well as in migration research (e.g. Fassmann, 2012; King & Skeldon, 2016). This is a rather unbalanced picture on migration processes, as Schorn & Gruber (2018) show for Austria, where in 2016, internal migration flows were double the number, than international (im)migration. When internal migration is discussed in literature, it is often within the focus of population loss in rural areas (e.g. Jamieson, 2000; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Shucksmith, 2010; Haartsen & Thissen, 2014). Albeit the notion in literature of what is 'rural' or 'peripheral' often remains vague, omitting the given diversity of 'non-agglomeration' and 'core' regions¹.

Small and – medium sized industrial towns, as a specific focus of the YOUIND project, are not discussed specifically in regard to their population development, despite being often places of important regional employment, infrastructures and services (see 2.1.), therefore serving as 'anchor' towns in regions affected by population loss (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2018).

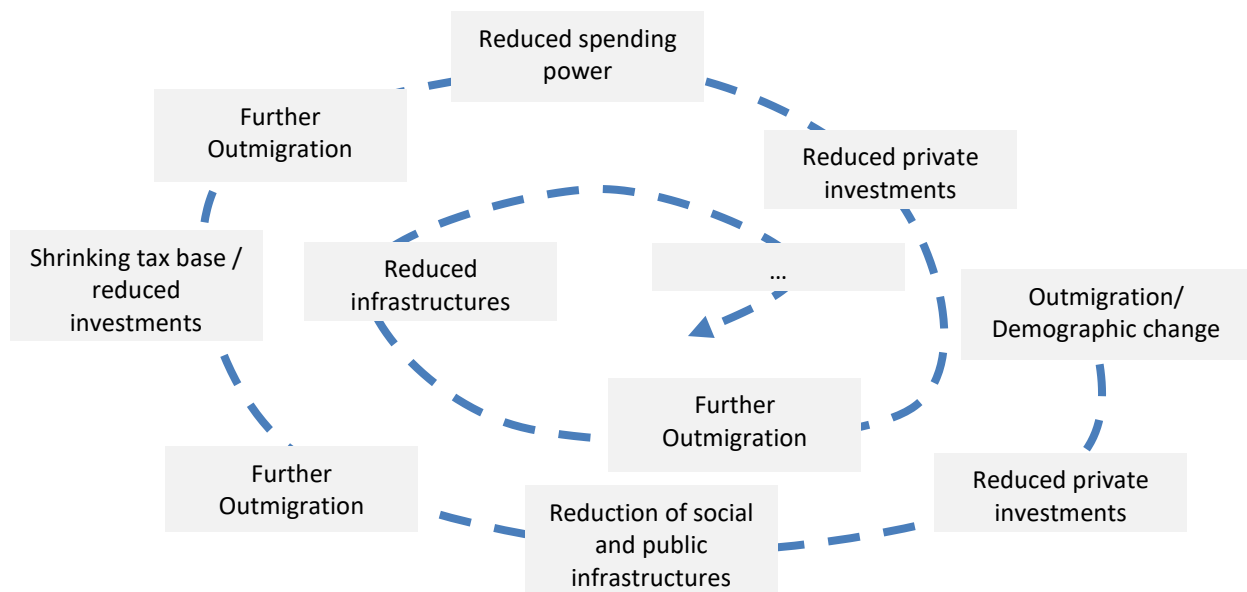
Nevertheless, there is academic agreement on the drivers of these demographic changes, which are based on declining birth rates across Europe and higher mobility within certain groups of the society – here especially younger people (see Gruber & Schorn, 2019). Major push-factors for migration are named as education, work and family foundation – all factors especially influencing migration patterns of people between 16-29 years (King et al., 2016; King & Williams, 2018). It is thereby important to note, that work is only one of the factors triggering migration processes. Given these underlying factors, youth outmigration is selective. Unlike European migration patterns in the 1960s and 70s, when mostly unskilled migrations towards industrial centres prevailed in many countries, now often skilled and highly qualified labour moves towards urban centres (King, 2002; Fratesi & Perocco, 2014; more detailed see Lulle et al, 2019). This goes hand in hand with gendered mobility patterns, where especially highly qualified women are leaving rural regions, thereby increasing processes of demographic change (e.g. Kröhnert, 2009; Weist & Leibert, 2013; Fischer & Weber, 2013; Leibert, 2016).

The result of demographic changes on regions and their development have been widely documented in academic literature (e.g. Müller, 2002; Faggian et al., 2017). Here, the resulting and on-going urbanisation on an European scale has triggered various problematic processes in terms of regional development, both in immigration, as well as emigration regions (e.g. Perrons, 2009). Especially the case of Eastern Germany in the 1990s and 2000s is exemplary (Dienel et al., 2005). In emigration regions youth outmigration impacts negatively on the overall civil society and social life, as social

¹ A somewhat more detailed picture on European level is provided in the two ESPON projects ESCAPE and PROFECY (www.espon.eu)

infrastructures such as associations, sport clubs, NGOs etc. often miss fresh impetus and face reduced membership. There is also a negative effect on public infrastructures and housing markets, depleting investments and creating a shrinking tax base (see Fig. 2). These processes foster additionally negative images and economic deficits – this structural downward spiral in the end affects all walks of life in the regions, a fact acknowledged by various European projects, such as INTESI²).

Figure 2: Filtering down process of demographic change



(Source: Own graphic – Harfst, based on Bernt, 2002)

On the other hand, literature also highlights the positive aspects of outmigration, especially focusing on the benefits of return migration of formerly out-migrating youth (Hartesen & Thissen, 2014). The phenomena, being relatively new in migration research, is said to have various positive effects on regional development of the receiving regions (Schorn & Gruber, 2018). Nevertheless, the true geographic and statistical scale of this phenomenon, especially in national and regional contexts, is not clear and academic reflection on the topic is rather weak (an exception is Lang, 2013) with only few studies from Eastern Germany discussing the topic in more detail (e.g. Nadler, 2014; Fuchs & Weyh, 2015; Nadler, 2018).

Central Europe, and within it the cooperation area of the SI-AT Programme, in general is not an exception in these processes, it is rather often portrayed as a region of (transnational) outmigration,

² INTESI Project (INTERREG Alpine Space, 2015-2018) focused on the provision of services and goods of general interest in peripheral, alpine areas marked by demographic change (www.alpine-space.eu/projects/intesi/en/home)

albeit the prevailing spatial pattern is much more complex (Wallace & Stolla, 2001; Fassmann et al., 2018). Various INTERREG projects have discussed these changes and have developed policy recommendations for different regions (e.g. YURA, DEMOCHANGE, YOUMIG³), albeit a specific focus on industrialised towns, besides some exceptions (e.g. Marot, 2012), is missing in most of the literature.

As a final note it is important to state that the analysis of intra-national and especially regional migration patterns suffers from inconclusiveness in regard to youth outmigration. While an overall shrinkage of the number of young people is easily traceable for municipalities and regions, the spatial dynamics and motives are much harder to decipher. A combination of migration and commuter data, youth unemployment figures, open job postings, certain infrastructure provisions etc. might shed a better light on migration patterns and functional aspects in a wider region, but the data remains (especially in regional or intra-regional migration) only a narrow window through which the complex, dynamic and highly individualised processes of migration can be viewed.

2.3. Conclusion: Youth outmigration from industrial towns?

The often negative image of many industrial regions is easily underlined by processes of youth outmigration from such places, matching the prevailing stories of rusty regions, where there is no future for young people. But even many successful industrial regions often offer a wide range of employment opportunities for young people, they are still facing massive demographic changes and outmigration, especially of younger inhabitants. Such outmigration from economically successful regions also contrasts the wide-spread believe and historic background that only economic factors trigger outmigration processes.

It is therefore important to note that young people leave communities for a wide range of subjective, biographical, interrelated and relational reasons, only some of which are directly linked to the availability of jobs locally. Most of the evidence suggests that individuals tend to benefit from leaving, at least in terms of income, education and life experiences. But this is not to deny that it is possible to earn a liveable income, gain valid knowledge and experience a rich life within industrial communities – a factor that might be not enough highlighted, especially in such specific places which in the past have experienced economic crisis and high uncertainties regarding social security for its inhabitants. It might be the case that inward and outward perspectives and stories meet to even encourage youngsters to leave instead of first taking into account existing regional employment and education offers.

Therefore, rather than focussing on economic factors alone, it is important to state that small and medium-sized industrial towns possess rather a mismatch in employment, educational offers and issues regarding family foundation – with all three aspects obviously overlapping. Adding these factors to the anyway highly mobile societies in Europe, the problem might be rather seen as one of

³ YURA – ‘Your Region Your Future’ (INTERREG CENTRAL, 2010-2013); DEMOCHANGE – ‘’, (INTERREG Alpine Space, 2009-2012); YOUMIG – ‘Youth outmigration in the Danube region’ (INTERREG DANUBE, 2017-2019)

not attracting enough in- or re-migration than a failure to offer youth a proper perspective to stay. In this regard it is important to create and sustain communities with the characteristics that make life attractive to return migrants and new in-migrants, as well as inclusive and respectful structures for the young people who have decided to stay. This might entail a re-thinking of necessary social and cultural infrastructure when talking about demographic change, incl. the needs of younger inhabitants as well (Fertner et al., 2015).

Herein lays one of the major challenges for industrial towns and regions. With demographic change already impacting on social and public infrastructures, accelerating demographic processes make such places even less attractive to live in. It forms an increasing challenge to companies as local labour pools decline and new ways to attract skilled workers need to be found, requiring a shift in perspective, also from the employer side.

The following two examples are two such regions from a Central European viewpoint, standing for many small and medium-sized towns in the region, facing similar processes and perspectives.

3. Case study VESTE

The 'Steirische Eisenstrasse' (Styrian Iron Route) is an old industrial region in the province of Styria (Austria). The region was shaped over centuries by mining and steel production. From the 19th century onwards, it was one of the industrial centres of Austria. It is still the location of Central Europe's biggest operating ore mine in the town of Eisenerz at the Erzberg, whose silhouette has become a national symbol (Posch et al., 2004) and states a USP in its regional and touristic marketing strategies. The region also created a typical industrial and mining culture in the "cradle of Austria's industrialisation", with many industrial monuments and customs still in place. The mining university of Leoben is nowadays one of the leading universities in the international ranking. Today the region is home to the voestalpine steelmaker with its production site in Leoben-Donawitz. Additionally, the region has various other outstanding industrial global players such as AT&S and RHI in its wake, cementing the region's place as an innovation-driven manufacturing hub in the Austrian and global context.

Nevertheless, due to globalisation and modernisation processes, industrial production has steadily lost importance for the region – especially in terms of employment – over the past 60 years. The economic transformation process has brought a variety of social changes, most notably profound demographic change in the region, and here especially the outmigration of younger people. It is herein, where one of the greatest development challenges in the region currently lies.

3.1. Socio-economic development

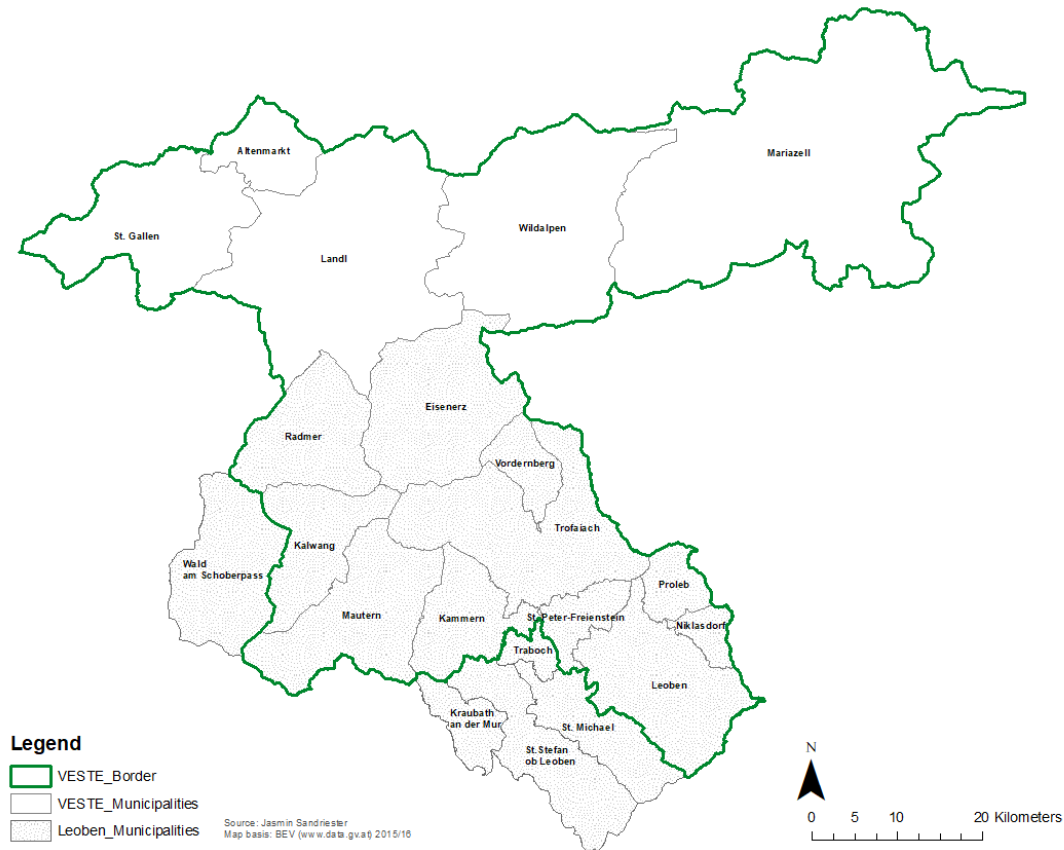
The Steirische Eisenstrasse consists mainly of municipalities in the district of Leoben and some adjoining municipalities in the district of Liezen. It forms a geographically, historically and economically homogeneous region, build around ore extraction and metal production. Today's internal and external perceptions (identity and image) are still deeply influenced by its industrial past, which is often carefully preserved as heritage and monuments. In 2018 the region was also awarded the UNESCO title of immaterial heritage for the miner's customs and traditions. Cultural, economic and administrative centre of the whole region is the town of Leoben with 24.750 inhabitants in 2019 (see LEADER, 2017).

The area can be roughly divided into the following geographical and functional zones:

- Leoben including Niklasdorf as the urban core zone along the main river Mur
- The rural valleys Vordernberger Tal (capital: Trofaiach) and Palten-Liesingtal along the A9 motorway; both situated on the southern side of the Eisenerzer Alps
- The region around the Erzberg in the centre of the steep Eisenerzer Alps and the Hochschwab mountain range
- The Eisenwurzen region in the northern Eisenstrasse, reaching as far as the Lower Austrian border

While being culturally and historically connected via a shared socio-economic, functional complex, the region is rather heterogenous in their development trajectories and perspectives: While the southern, more densely populated area of Leoben-Trofaiach-St. Michael (along the A9/S6 road corridor) contains most of the administrative, economic and educational core activities⁴ and therefore has stabilised in its demographic development in recent years; the more peripheral, mountainous municipalities (such as Vordernberg, Eisenerz, Radmer) all face on-going processes of demographic and economic change, which leave already their direct imprints on the affected places and its social relations. In addition to these general regional trends, there is also a problem in an unbalanced micro development. Some central locations, often marked by old industrial settings, face outmigration at the benefit of residential areas outside the urban centres – which results in a serious dislocation of existing social infrastructures within the region, as well as an imbalance in tax bases (Maier et al., 2014; LEADER, 2017).

Figure 3: Map of wider region



(Source: Own design - Sandriester)

⁴ The wider region has a range of education insitutions such as Handelsakademie (HAK) – Bildungsanstalt für Kindergartenpädagogik (BAKIP) – Höhere Technische Bundeslehranstalt (HTL) – Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe (HLW) • Höhere land- und forstwirtschaftliche Schule (HLFS) • Schule für Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege (DKS, DKP) • Lehrbildende höhere Schule (Kolleg für Sozialberufe) Additionally, Leoben is a Universtiy town (Mining University), (vgl. Verhounig/Steinegger 2013, 29f.). The region pursues additional educational centres (University of Applied Science and an international school)

After a severe economic crisis in the 1980s, which affected especially the heavy industrial complex on which the region depended, the region now can look back at a successful restructuring process. Today, its economy is much more diversified, albeit with a clear prevailing focus on manufacturing and industry. State interventions and the location of new innovative companies have led to a repositioning of the region as a high-tech cluster and a driver of innovation on a national and global scale with various F&E companies situated in the area. For Leoben, the existence of the technical university and the town's rank as an administrative centre, have both helped in the regional restructuring process. The region is therefore highly entwined with the global market economy and has a high demand in skilled labour force. Accordingly, employment and economic data for the region are compared to state and national level slightly positive (Maier et al., 2014, Lampl, 2016).

3.2. Population development

The district of Leoben and the wider region were classical outmigration regions over the past decades. The district has lost 16% of inhabitants since 1990, with the demographic drivers mainly being migration, while natural population development factors (deaths, birth) remain, on a low level, rather stable (Koch, Gstach, 2013). Accordingly, the share of the younger population (15-29 years) shrank from 22% to 14%, while the share of +65s rises steadily. The main town of Leoben lost around 8.000 inhabitants since 1990.

While shrinkage was a constant feature in the last 30 years across the wider region, population development in recent years has followed the region's structural divide. Here the central area of Leoben -Trofaiach - St. Michael now shows a stable development, while especially the northern, peripheral municipalities show both, in terms of birth and migration figures, the greatest population loss. Municipalities like Eisenerz and Vordernberg saw the loss of about a ¼ of their population in the last 20 years. Leoben is one of the oldest districts in Austria, with an average age of about 47 years (Maier et al., 2014). Overall, the district has with 10% a rather high proportion of foreigners for a rural district, which are traditionally concentrated in and around the city of Leoben. The share of men and women is within the state average (Land Steiermark, 2020a).

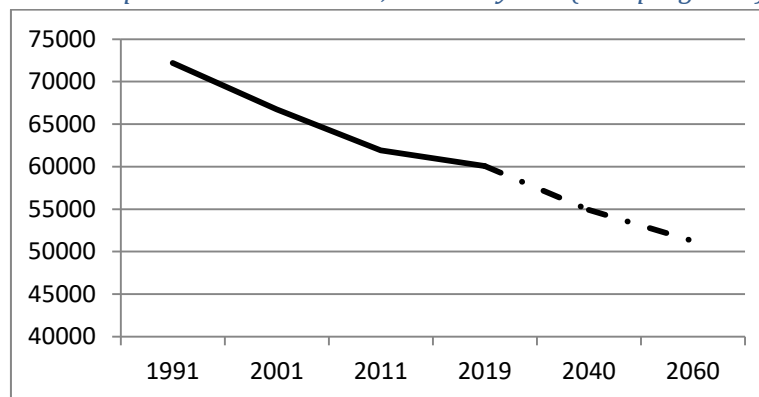
According to the latest population prognosis until 2060 these trends are set to continue. While the prognosis on municipal level within the region is somewhat mixed (again driven by a centre-periphery divide), the overall trend is rather simple – within the next 30 years the region is set to lose about 9.000 inhabitants (-15%). Especially worrying in this regard is the shrinking share of population in employment age (20-64 years) which is set to decline until 2040 by 20% (-7.500) and until 2060 by a ¼ (-9.000) (Land Steiermark, 2020b).

Overall, the region suffers demographically (albeit geographically uneven) from low birth-rates and high outmigration, especially from younger inhabitants. A major outmigration target is Graz, as the cultural and educational centre in the state of Styria (Steiermark). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the stable population development of the central area around Leoben is also due to in-migration (ÖREK, 2017). This area also sees high rates of work-related in- and out commuting - both within and

outside the district. Especially the vicinity of the Leoben area to Graz allows easy daily commuting in both directions, while the more northern part of the district suffers from poor transport infrastructures.

Overall, this population development raises a range of issues regarding public, private and social infrastructures, as discussed in chapter 2. This requires new concepts and ideas both on political level, as well as from the population itself. The shrinkage of the local labour-pool for companies requires new forms of communication and recruiting strategies by companies.

Figure 4: Population development Bezirk Leoben, selected years (incl. prognosis)



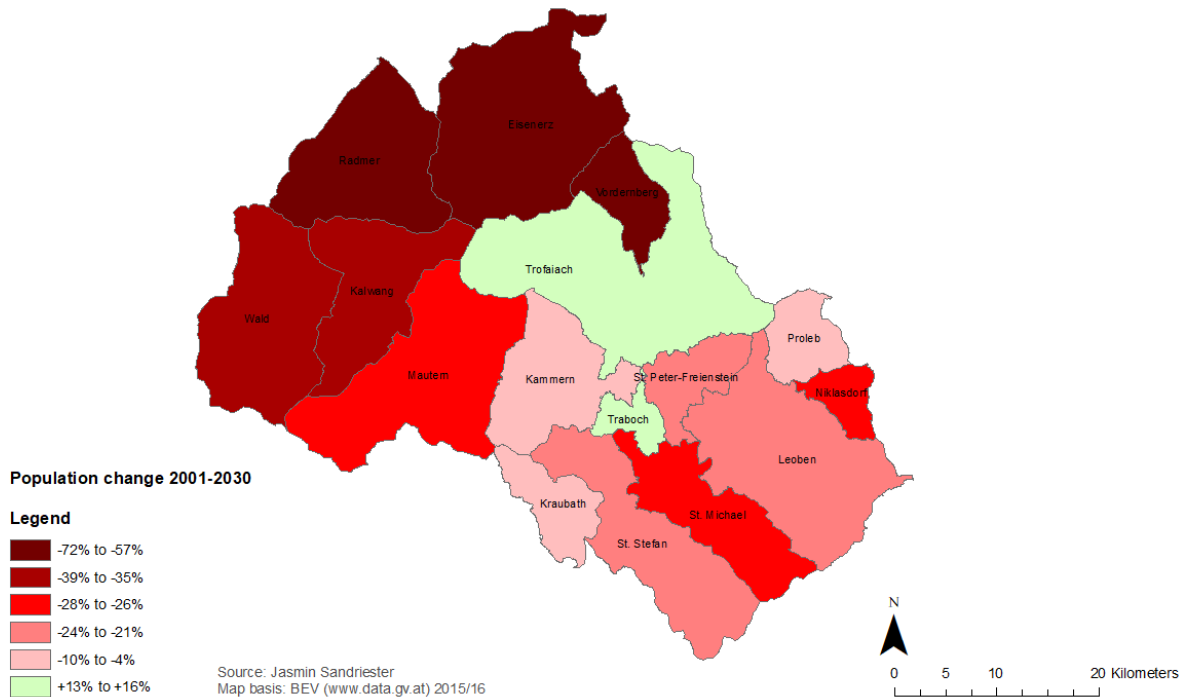
(Source: Land Steiermark, 2020b)

Figure 5: Population development Bezirk Leoben by municipality

Municipality	2001	2015	2020	2025	2030	% Change 2015-2030	% Change 2001-2030
Eisenerz	10068	4330	3746	3246	2850	-34,18	-71,69
Kalwang	1443	1032	990	932	885	-14,24	-38,67
Kammern i. L.	1524	1620	1569	1516	1467	-9,44	-3,74
Kraubath a.d. M.	1287	1262	1228	1195	1164	-7,77	-9,56
Leoben	31989	24695	24528	24482	24363	-1,34	-23,84
Mautern i. Stmk	2407	1787	1787	1760	1735	-2,91	-27,92
Niklasdorf	3349	2556	2510	2469	2432	-4,85	-27,38
Proleb	1424	1557	1451	1393	1340	-13,94	-5,90
Radmer	1006	610	536	475	430	-29,51	-57,26
St. Michael i. OS.	3608	2991	2883	2762	2666	-10,87	-26,11
St. Peter-F.	2767	2380	2321	2237	2173	-8,70	-21,47
Sankt Stefan o. L.	2181	1917	1820	1738	1665	-13,15	-23,66
Traboch	1122	1384	1330	1298	1267	-8,45	12,92
Vordernberg	2109	1018	962	909	865	-15,03	-58,99
Wald a. S.	804	602	566	543	523	-13,12	-34,95
Trofaiach	8951	11208	10919	10655	10410	-7,12	16,30

(Source: https://www.data.gv.at/katalog/dataset/land-stmk_bevlkerungsprognose)

Figure 6: Population development Bezirk Leoben by municipality



(Source: Own design – Sandriester)

3.3. Issues of youth outmigration in the VESTE region

The topic of youth outmigration is a constant topic for the last 20 years in the region. Actors within the region are well aware of the challenges these developments pose and have identified the topic as being of strategically important for the region’s development. In the last decade this has resulted in a range of studies and projects dealing with the topic, mainly asking for (em-)migration reasons according to different target groups. Main points in the studies were interconnected issues of image, identification, general attractiveness of the region, youth-related infrastructures, as well as general youth perspectives (see for details Lampl, 2016).

These studies generally underline an overall positive attitude of the youth towards their region and a general satisfaction of living there. Named negative aspects are often connected to a lack of infrastructures (both transport and leisure) and a general view that non-industrial employment opportunities are missing in the region, therefore forming an important trigger for outmigration decisions. The latter aspect is valid especially for younger women, as they present a driver of demographic processes. Here the image of the region as industrial-male-labour oriented is still prevailing, albeit the (successful) efforts of companies in this sector to close the gender gap, at least

in their apprenticeship programmes. Nevertheless, from our own research conducted for this paper, it also transpired that traditional (industrial) values regarding the role of women in the region persist and are mirrored by a lack of important infrastructure provisions, such as childcare; as well as a lack of inclusive political decision-making on municipal level. These aspects might not be only important soft factors triggering outmigration, but also elements prohibiting (re-)migration into the region.

As highlighted in chapter 2, migration decisions are highly individualised. In the case of existing studies on youth outmigration from the region both by Maier et al. (2014) and Lampl (2016) highlight the fact that only few studies take into account different educational backgrounds, thereby generalising 'the youth' in the region, while ignoring the different world-views, motivations and decision-making processes between different kind of people aged between 19 and 29.

3.4. Policy landscape and actors

The policy landscape around the topic in the VESTE region is rich in actors, being in one way or the other involved in the topic. The most important ones for the topic are:

- Traditionally, for the Austrian context, mayors of towns and municipalities have a strong role in planning and local infrastructure provisions. From our own research and interviews in the region, the awareness and importance of the topic is by far not equally shared among mayors, so activities in regard to youth outmigration and demographic change differ between municipalities.
- The 'Association Styrian Iron Route' (Verein Steirische Eisenstrasse / VESTE) is a regional cooperation platform comprising 16 municipalities. It is a key player for regional development with members being the region's municipalities (including Leoben). It provides a hub for all regional activities (i.e. involvement of stakeholders, funding for studies and implementations, knowledge transfer). Topics covered are urban revitalization, industrial culture & heritage and regional development. Outmigration is a cross-cutting issue within the work of VESTE.
- The LAG Steirische Eisenstrasse (EU Leader programme for regional development) is an important funding provider in the region. Its fields of action mainly revolve around regional development in a wider sense, thereby fostering local initiatives and projects. This approach has been strategically enshrined in the consecutive regional 'LEADER' strategies. Demographic change and youth outmigration are not explicit topics within the latest strategy, but many activities target the improvement of soft factors relevant for this topic.
- The Wirtschaftskammer Steiermark in Leoben (WKO, Chamber of Commerce) is an important player for companies and regional development in the regions. It provides a platform of exchange between business and politics and institutions the region. Especially through the

topic of 'skilled labour' and 'apprenticeship schemes' the topic of youth outmigration is relevant in the chamber's work.

- Regionalmanagement Obersteiermark Ost is the regional development agency for a wider area, including the Steirische Eisenstrasse, the district of Leoben and parts the neighbouring districts. It addresses demographic change and youth outmigration in its target fields and has been an important driver for many youth-related studies and projects in the region over the last 10 years. It also is responsible for implementing the regional youth strategy.

Overall, the region has a variety of historically-grown structures, which see some overlaps in their activities. This is also an expression of traditional rivalries between municipalities, institutions and actors within the region. These antagonisms seem to have somewhat eased within the last decade, providing now a more integrated approach to the regional development, with more coordination and a somewhat clearer division of labour between the institutions. Nevertheless, an overall holistic approach to the topic of demographic change and youth outmigration across the different actors is missing with many initiatives remaining on a project-based approach only.

An additionally important feature for regional development is the traditionally good connection of the region to the national government and policies, which in the past have secured a steady influx of additional funds for regional development and processes of structural change.

3.5. Policy instruments and projects developed

Policy instruments and projects relevant to the youth and outmigration topic are applied across all policy levels relevant to the region. We will map them here in excerpts:

- On the local and municipal level there are a range of different measures in place, which are mostly individual activities of single municipalities. These can be provision and upgrading of youth-related infrastructures (e.g. night bus line), providing certain benefits for taking residency (e.g. student bonus in Leoben) or project fostering political youth participation ('Mitmischen' project in Trofaiach). Many companies run their own marketing and awareness-raising campaigns on how to retain and attract workers and apprentices, but only a few joint formats exist ('jobdays Leoben'). While some (bigger) companies have applied progressive work arrangements and actively engage in providing social infrastructures (i.e. childcare), a joint initiative, combining a range of different actors and companies, such as the 'Kraft. Das Murtal' (www.kraft.dasmurtal.at) in a neighbouring district, has so far not been established. Also, youth migration and youth opportunities as well as the mediation of culture are not well-established items in school curricula, mainly depending on engaged teachers.
- At regional level the regional development agency 'Regionalmanagement Obersteiermark Ost (RMOO)' is the main driving force on the topic. The agency is not only in charge of implementing the regional youth strategy, but furthermore is additionally active in running

various high-profile image campaigns targeting both internal identities, as well as the outside image of the region ('Obersteierstark'). An additional project deals with tools to foster immigration to the region, specifically targeting skilled labour force and outmigrated 'would-be returnees'. Additionally, the RMOO has a range of projects connected to (youth) outmigration, focussing on women ('Frau was wüst'), the general information and activation of youth ('Projekt Jugendregion') and the economy-school nexus, which was identified as an especially relevant field of action ('Come Back and Create'; 'Kids4Material'). Additionally, the RMOO hosts twice a year a workshop with stakeholders from regional institutions, companies and actors on different regional topics, providing a platform for intra-regional exchange.

- At state (Steiermark) level youth and youth outmigration is split in various sectors (i.e. education, planning, economy, demography): Here, a holistic approach to the topic is absent. The A17 department of regional development and planning in Styria is fostering exchange on the topic both on national, as well as the regional level. The state also provides the regional budgets, which regional management agencies can use to tackle such issues. Nevertheless, the issue of youth outmigration – despite being realised as pressing in many Styrian planning regions, is more seen as a regional problem, which also demands regional solutions.
- At federal level the topic of youth outmigration is not receiving a broad feedback, as Austria is – by absolute figures – rather recognized as an immigration country with all the bigger cities gaining population. Therefore, the topic has no real policy agenda in the background, despite being evoked occasionally during election campaigns. Nevertheless, at the administrative-technical level, the planning community has these questions firmly on the radar, having provided lately a comprehensive overview on outmigration from rural spaces and relevant policy recommendations (ÖREK, 2018). Additionally, a 'Masterplan on rural spaces' has been developed on national level, albeit lacking concrete policy elements to gain momentum.

4. Case study Idrija

Idrija is an old industrial town in western Slovenia. It is notable for its 500-year long tradition of mercury mining. Together with the Spanish mine at Almadén, it has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2012. The mine was closed down in the 1990s, but the town has preserved many technical monuments and intangible heritage. Apart from the second largest mercury mine on the world, Idrija distinguishes itself also for the oldest preserved theatre house in Slovenia, the first secondary school with lessons in Slovenian (since 1901), its tradition of punk bands since the late 1970s (Kuzle, Šund, Zablujena generacija ...), and even more traditional, the Idrija Lace Festival. Idrija was also given the Alpine Town of the Year award in 2011 for its commitment to climate protections. The municipality's strong economy is nowadays driven by the Idrija-based international companies Kolektor and Hidria.

Despite a long and rich history and favourable economic conditions, Idrija faces few challenges today. Due to the remoteness of the entire area from Slovenia's main transport axis and non-existent train connections, the area is a transport cul-de-sac. Poor accessibility and surplus of technical workplaces in contrast to non-technical ones have characterised the demographic profile in the last decades with population ageing and outmigration of young people. Creating favourable conditions for the youth to live and work in Idrija seem to be one of the toughest challenges of the local community.

4.1. Socio-economic development

Past socio-economic development of Idrija is closely connected to the mercury mine and various 'spin-off' industries after its closure. It was the second biggest mercury mine in the world and played a significant role in international economy. This implies that Idrija was internationally orientated, which is a legacy continuing even after the mine closure in 1990. It is considered that Idrija's present-day stable socio-economic development is reflected in past values and traditions, mainly openness, commitment to knowledge, innovation and solidarity. Today this small town is on the world map because of two international high- to medium-tech firms, which are competitive on an international level (Urbanc et al., 2012).

From the socio-economic perspective the municipality of Idrija could be roughly divided into three parts:

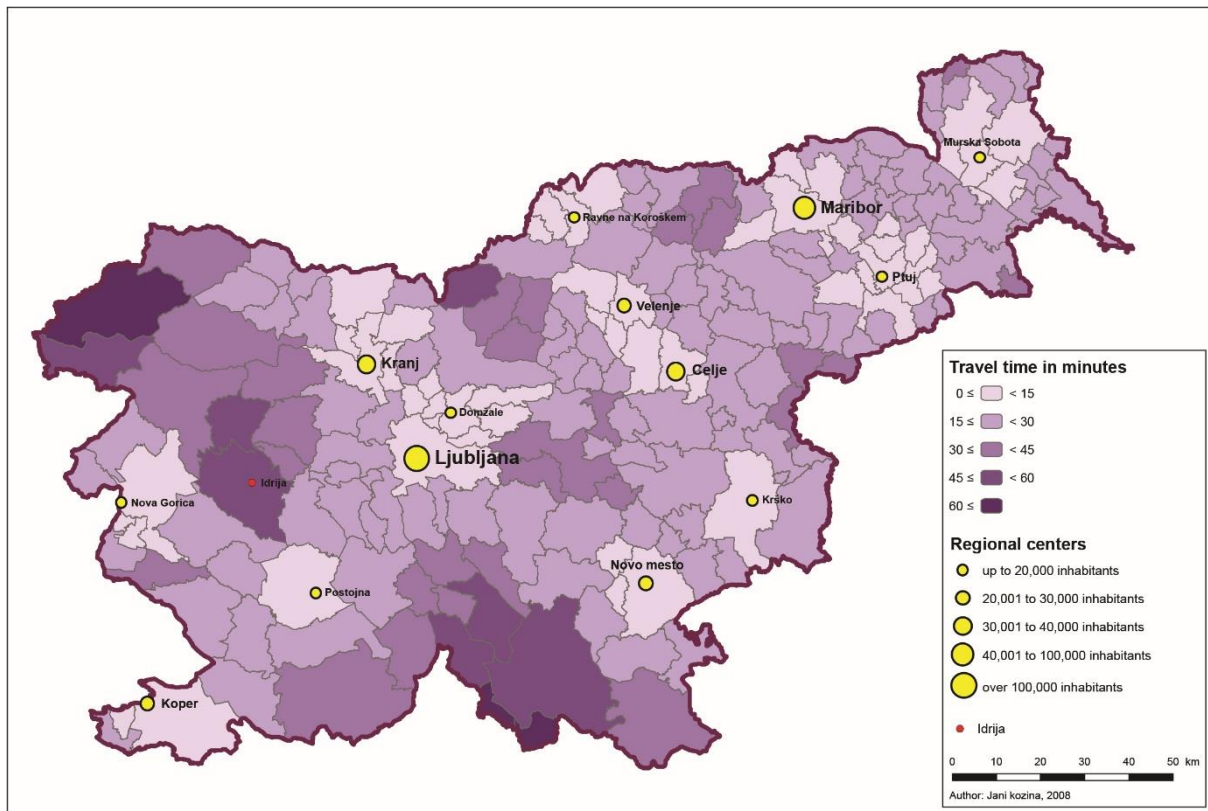
- The central urbanised parts in the valley of Idrijca river where the two major corporations are located (settlements of Idrija and Spodnja Idrija);
- The central urbanised parts are surrounded by rural settlements in the valley (Kanomlja, Idrijska Bela), which sustain some agricultural activities but are a pool for workers in the nearby industrial plants;
- Higher plains that surround the valley, which are scarcely populated and rural (forestry, agriculture) like Vojsko, Črni Vrh, etc.

During the exploitation of the mercury mine from the 16th century on, the town became one of the most important economic centres in this part of Europe, reflecting physically and mentally in the town: it became a centre of trade, science and innovations. It grew until the 1970-ies and had important institutions such as the first Slovenian intermediate school, first forms of organised health and social care facilities. In the socialist era after WW2 some important changes happened. Due to the ideological actions of creating a proletariat society, new industries developed that employed mainly female workforce (electronics industry), since the male workforce worked in the mine. This caused rapid de-agrarization of the rural plains and growth of urban settlements in the valley (Kladnik, 2010). This trend continued till the 1990-ies, when the mine started to close due to lower prices of mercury and the drop in ore quality.

The closure of mercury mine coincided with the end of socialism and the entry into global market economy. Interestingly, the mine closure did not have significant negative socio-economic impacts, since the restructuring of economic activities from mining into electronic industries started decades before. The transition from mining to manufacturing was soft and was a continuation of extreme export orientated production based on endogenous sources and closed innovations of the two major companies. The success of local companies is perhaps also due to low labour costs, since the average income was below Slovenian average (Kavaš & Koman, 2010). This era is marked by population stagnation on a municipal level with slight suburbanisation trends: the two urban centres show slight outmigration while closer rural settlements in the vicinity were growing (Kladnik, 2010).

The socio-economic situation today seems stable. Although the financial crisis of 2008 had some temporary negative effects (Kavaš & Koman, 2010) the unemployment is low (around 4% in the general working population and 4% in the youth category from 25y to 29y) with stable demographic situation and positive economic indicators. However, there are weaknesses that could pose a potential threat: the two large employers had silently created a very mono-structural economy with limited job opportunities in other sectors. This mono-structural job offer can potentially lead to out-migration of youth and other workers unwilling to work in the industrial sector. This vulnerability was acknowledged in the past by local authorities that tried to create job opportunities especially in tourism and services. This resulted in the proclamation of UNESCO World Heritage site in 2012 and various other activities and projects directed towards creating jobs in the tourist, cultural and other service sectors (Urbanc et al., 2012).

Figure 7: Accessibility of Idrija - car travel time to next regional centre (Gabrovec et al. 2010)



(Source: Kozina, 2008)

4.2. Population development

The number of inhabitants in the municipality of Idrija has not changed significantly in recent decades. Between 1991 and 2020, the overall decline was 2%, with significant differences between the age groups. While the share of young people (15-29 years) shrank from 22% in 2000 to 14% in 2020, the share of elderly (65+) rose in opposite from 15% in 2000 to 23% in 2020. The ageing index went from 93 to 158 in the same period. These trends are a consequence of declining birth rates and outmigration, especially to Ljubljana as the capital city (Šircelj, 2006; Fridl, Repolusk, 2010).

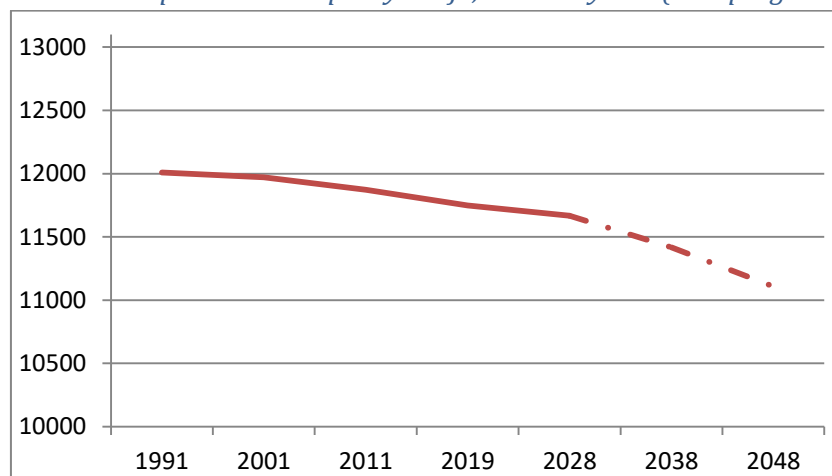
There are also significant differences between men and women. While the share of men even increased by 3% during this time, the share of women decreased by 6%. The gender differences can be partly explained by the structure of the local economy that attracts mainly male engineers from technical industries and partly managerial staff, while a large part of experts from other sectors more frequently dominated by women travel to work elsewhere. More highly educated people out commute from the municipality for work every day than commute to the municipality. Nevertheless, the municipality has a positive balance of daily labour mobility. The surplus consists mainly of workers who have completed secondary or vocational school (Fridl, Repolusk, 2010).

Population trends are significantly different also between the urban centres and the rural hinterland. The town of Idrija, like most Slovenian urban settlements, has been slowly declining since 1980, and Spodnja Idrija as the secondary urban centre only since 1995. Rural settlements have witnessed stagnation since 1990s, and in some cases a slight increase in population, mainly due to migration of older population within the municipality (Fridl, Repolusk, 2010).

According to the population prognosis from 2018 until 2038 these trends are set to continue. The demographic projection, made on the basis of natural and migration statistics, shows that the municipality will lose 7% of its population in the next twenty years. The contingent of elderly (65+) would increase the most – by 27%, and the contingent of the workforce aged 30 to 64 would fall the most – by 19%, while the share of young people (15-29 years) would fall by 7% (Repolusk 2019). The population will continue to age, so the problem of local labour renewal will arise. The problem can only be mitigated to some extent by migration from elsewhere, but there are both local (little room for settlement expansion) and global constraints (competitiveness to other urban centres).

The problem of population ageing due to declining birth rates is no more acute in Idrija than elsewhere in Slovenia. In some parts of the municipality, the phenomenon is mitigated by only a small number of immigrants, whose impact is not long-term. In the near future, the entire municipality will face a number of problems, first due to the high proportion of elderly people, especially compared to the number of employed, and later due to the provision of a minimum number of inhabitants who, according to some state documents, should maintain settlement structure, cultural landscape and infrastructure network. Further economic and social development can be ensured by the municipality mainly through direct and indirect investments in younger generations, by providing appropriate environmental and living conditions, by continuity of quality and diverse educational programs, by attractive cultural and recreational offer and by a stable local labour market (Fridl, Repolusk, 2010).

Figure 8: Population development municipality Idrija, selected years (incl. prognosis)



(Source: Statistical Office Slovenia)

4.3. Issues of youth outmigration in Idrija

The topic of youth outmigration in Idrija has not received much attention so far. One of the reasons is probably the fact that the municipality is demographically and socio-economically quite stable with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, also among the youth. However, certain analyses indicate that the number of youth (also the one who are included in educational programmes) has been declining in the last decade due to general negative demographic trends (Fridl, Repolusk 2010) and will further decline due to a negative birth rate (Repolusk 2019). The municipality is aware of the importance of youth for the local future, which is reflected by the fact that youth have been receiving a lot of attention especially in strategic documents (e.g. Innovative strategy of sustainable development) on the fields of education, creative sector, leisure, housing, scholarship, city branding and entrepreneurship. In the strategy, youth were also recognized as one of the key priorities, mainly through retaining them but also attracting them from elsewhere. A possible outmigration to bigger urban centres was recognized as a threat. Paying attention to youth is also visible through the Youth Strategy (Strategija za mlade, 2015); the analysis within the strategy did not detect the outmigration, but showed a willingness to provide a best possible living conditions for youth through five strategic priorities (residential environment, innovative economy, solidarity, infrastructure, recognisability and cohesion). However, the range of (potential) youth outmigration has not been known so far.

A more comprehensive insight on the issues of (potential) youth outmigration was only possible recently with the online survey in 2020 among the local youth about the situation and activity of youth (N=210), prepared as an input for the new municipal youth strategy (the survey was carried out by The Idrija 2020 Association, the Idrija Youth Center and the Association of Friends of Youth Idrija). Although the majority of respondents were satisfied with living in Idrija, the area shows quite a high proneness to youth outmigration: only around a third of respondents (29.2%) declared that they do not intend to move. Contrary, two fifths (40.0%) are prepared to move out temporarily due to study or work, 18.0% of them wish to do so permanently and 4.3% think of living abroad. The situation is still not critical as all these respondents like to live in Idrija, while only a small amount (8.5%) of respondents do not feel good with living here and would like to move out as soon as possible. However, if the living conditions will not improve or even deteriorate, the outmigration can turn into a serious issue. In a similar question, almost four fifths of respondents (79.1%) expressed their readiness to move out in order to find a decent job. Among the main conditions for staying in the area in the adulthood, job provision also for the partner (46.5%), better job (45.6%) and liveability and diverse social offering (40.5 %) was named. Therefore, the municipality and other local actors will have to continue with their efforts in order to retain the youth.

4.4. Policy landscape and actors around the topic

The policy landscape around the topic of youth outmigration in the municipality of Idrija is rich in actors, being in one way or the other involved in this field. The most important ones are:

- The Municipality of Idrija is a central policy actor in the field of youth issues. It recognizes the importance of youth within the municipal strategy and its development priorities. Each of the development priorities also covers the field of youth, but it is not approached individually, but within the framework of general development policies. In addition, the municipality of Idrija adopted the Youth Strategy in 2015, which is currently under revision. The municipality of Idrija received the national title of Youth-Friendly Municipality in 2014 due to measures in the field of youth policy, which places it among one of those municipalities that pay special attention to young people.
- The Idrija-Cerkno Development Agency prepares, coordinates and implements development projects on the topics of entrepreneurship, rural development, adult education, regional development and sustainable use of cultural heritage. Youth is a cross-cutting theme within these topics.
- The Idrija 2020 Association was established in 2012 to develop youth sector and youth policies in the spheres that go beyond the programmes of many youth organisations – local strategic development, entrepreneurship, revitalisation of heritage and promotion of new creative approaches, all with the aim of facilitating the development into a youth friendly municipality. In order to tackle the outmigration of youth from small and semi-peripheral towns, the association developed HeritageLab as a comprehensive incubation program for young people that aims to use the existing concepts of innovation incubation and apply them to the institutionalised heritage sector, creating new businesses and services.
- The Youth Center Idrija is a community space and youth node that functions as a meeting place for young people and increasingly for the whole community of Idrija. It was formed as an umbrella organization by 3 local NGOs. Youth volunteers renovated the 300 m² spaces given by the local government and furnished them with second-hand and DIY furniture, donated by inhabitants and businesses of Idrija. In 2015, additional 40 m² were acquired to host youth-led makers' and hackers' space.

In addition to these actors, the municipality of Idrija hosts five youth organizations: Idrija Students Club, Association of Scouts Idrija, Association of Scouts Spodnja Idrija, Rural Youth Association Vrsnik-Ledine, Zakonctedna Association. They are very self-initiative and diverse in programs. However, most of their activities are concentrated in urban centres and at the end of the weekends (Strategija za mlade 2015).

However, it is not only youth organizations that deal with young people – most of the time young people are in contact with other organizations such as Jurij Vega Grammar School Idrija, Idrija Public Library and Reading Room, Centre for Social Work Idrija, Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia - Labour Office Idrija, Association of Friends of Youth Idrija. They take important steps towards realizing the strategic agenda through regular contacts with young people and a professional approach. Their advantages are establishment in the local environment and ambitious development

programs. However, their weaknesses are related with low level of cooperation between organizations and lack of a comprehensive and integrated approach to young people. As key challenges are described systematic approach to youth problems and establishing closer partnerships with youth organizations (Strategija za mlade 2015).

4.5. Policy instruments and projects developed

The key general strategic document of the municipality is the Innovative strategy of sustainable development of Idrija (Inovativna strategija ... 2011; 2018). Five development priorities were defined: 1) quality of living environment, 2) innovative economy, 3) infrastructure, 4) mutual society, 5) visibility and cohesion. The strategy was updated and revised in 2018, when indicators and target values were added for monitoring purposes. Throughout the strategy, a lot of attention is paid to youth and among the indicators, retaining and attracting youth is also listed.

The key strategic document for youth is the Strategy for youth in Idrija 2015-2020 with an aim to develop the youth sector, defining concrete municipal measures and financial sources for youth development and defining the process of evaluation of measures in the field of youth policies. The strategy is comprehensive, evidence-based (e.g. a survey of living conditions among youth) with well-defined vision, goals, priorities and measures. It builds on existing local industrial culture (along principles of solidarity, inclusiveness, and ambitiousness), focusing on jobs, housing and inclusion.

Numerous projects in the field of participation (e.g. Youth Shaping Alpine Municipalities), financing and spaces, informing, employing, education (e.g. Comenius Regio-HOMAI), housing, and mobility (e.g. Youth Alpine Express) for youth have been developed by the municipality in the last two decades. They tackle youth outmigration indirectly through improving various domains of life of the youth (Strategija za mlade 2015). Among the recent projects, HeritageLab, developed by the Idrija 2020 association and the ID2020 institute, needs to be mentioned as it is a comprehensive and award-winning incubation program for young people that aims apply the existing concepts of innovation to the field of the cultural heritage, creating new businesses and services.

On the sub-regional level, some youth projects were being developed within the Idrija-Cerkno Regional Development Agency, such as co-working space and business incubator or improve attractiveness of cultural heritage through visualization and interpretation (Idrijsko-Cerkljanska ... 2020). None of the documents or projects deal with the topic of youth outmigration specifically.

On the national level, youth sector is well-developed and diverse from the organizational point of view and is rich with various actors and bodies, representing youth's interests. The youth policy is defined in the Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector (2010) as a harmonised set of measures of various sectoral public policies. In 2013, the Resolution on the National Youth Programme was adopted for the period 2013–2022 as a principal strategic document (Resolucija o Nacionalnem, 2013). Formally, youth issues and interests are represented by the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, the main political body on the national level, operating since 1991 as an autonomous body within the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Despite the diversity of actors, activities and programmes, the topic of youth outmigration has not been specifically addressed so far. The



research on the topic show that in the period from 2010 to 2016, the number of young people leaving Slovenia has almost quadrupled: young people with higher socio-economic status are substantially more likely to emigrate especially due to pull factors, such as improvement of the standard of living and their emigration is well thought-out, often including plans for returning home. One of the policy recommendations was to focus on positive evaluation of newly gained knowledge and experiences gained abroad and acknowledge these within the process of integration of young people (Naterer et al. 2019).

5. Joint synopsis

(1) General status-quo

Although the project partner regions are different case-studies in size, their overall socio-economic structures and challenges in regard to youth outmigration and demographic change are very similar: Both regions have a distinct industrial background, both in past and present, with a higher than average share of industrial employees than state and national averages. The manufacturing sector itself is in both regions similarly structured around some stronger and bigger companies, albeit the Austrian example is (by its size) already much more diverse in its economic structures than the Slovenian region. Leoben is also favoured in its location factors by being an administrative centre and a university town, entailing diversified services and function to a larger degree than in the Idrija case. Both regions have very good economic indicators, with (on average) higher income structures and better employment indicators than the state and national averages.

Nevertheless, both regions are rather peripheral in a regional and national context, even though at least the central part of the Austrian region is well-connected by motorway and train services. Their vicinity to major agglomeration areas (as Graz and Ljubljana) results in high (in and out) commuting rates, especially in the Austrian case, indicating a mismatch in regional job markets and living preferences. Despite this, inhabitants in the regions state a high satisfaction of life within the region, a figure also high among youth.

In the two regions, demographic development and here especially, youth outmigration, is a major development challenge. Population figures are shrinking, albeit the process is more severe in the Austrian case, with Idrija, rather stagnating in the last decades. Both developments are mainly driven by outmigration. Population prognoses show that their demographic development will continue/become major development challenge for these regions in the next decades. This underlines the theoretical assumption that not only economic factors determine migration trends, but that there are diverse reasons for outmigration, often also connected to soft factors, such as the quality and availability of social and cultural amenities. In both cases aspects of selective migration pattern (push factors) can be named – maybe typical for industrial regions in general. These can be described as traditional family values (esp. hindering women in making a professional careers in the region); a lack of realisation/appreciation of local (employment) opportunities; lack of social and economic infrastructures (e.g. child care, service economy, creative industries; out-dated image of companies and region as such (manufacturing, conservative mind-set, resistance to change and local clientelism); traditional, technical + manual focus of labour market. These aspects especially affect women and people with higher education (especially outside the engineering sector) negatively and can form significant push-factor for those groups. This is especially dramatic, as these two groups are usually seen as important drivers of the future economic, social and demographic development.

(2) Policy responses

Both regions are today economically successful after decades of structural change. Nevertheless, underlying problems in regard to their demographic development remain a big development risk. The two administrations have realised this aspect as a major challenge and have thought to understand and tackle this phenomenon better via different studies and projects, especially in the Austrian case as here the demographic processes have been much more pronounced and long-lasting. Nevertheless, a holistic and strategy-based approach on the issue is missing in both regions to this day.

Given the long-term character of the problem, it is not astonishing that the Steirische Eisenstrasse has conducted more comprehensive studies, which resulted in more pilot projects for youth involvement on municipal and district level, as well as more pro-active involvement of stakeholders (e.g. mayors, youth management, and companies). These regional policy responses focus mainly on generating a better story-telling/image of the region, also by trying to actively integrate schools and companies in this process. An overall aim is to create better awareness of the possibilities within the region, as well as to attract (re-)migration into the region.

In the case of Idrija the region has a rich structure of youth organisation, which traditionally participates in political decision-making, as set out in various ambitious development programmes. Nevertheless, given the rather stable population development so far, there is a lack of a systematic approach to youth problems and issues of youth outmigration. Here, against the background of the latest population prognosis, more efforts will need to be invested to provide a more coordinated approach towards this issue.

Overall, policy responses in the field of youth outmigration and demographic change remain patchy in both regions. Competences and policy approaches remain split across various organizations and governance levels, with the knowledge gain from projects often not being mainstreamed. While (at least in the Austrian example) many stakeholders have realized the importance of the topic, joint action – either by the economic or social sector remains scarce, here single solutions by single companies or institutions prevail.

(3) Lessons learned so far

In general, the topic of youth outmigration and industrial towns is not well covered in academic research and practical implementation. Very few good practices seem to exist. Therefore, this paper provides a much needed input by highlighting some of the complex, underlying processes which are driving youth outmigration and demographic change in industrial small and medium-sized towns.

The cases show the diversity of industrial towns and their development paths, although both regions discussed here, can be seen as rather positive examples, securing their industrial cores over decades and integrating them successfully into globalised production pattern. Nevertheless, in both cases the impacts of demographic change on the social and economic development are visible already and set to increase within the next decades, posing a range of development challenges for the future. The first outcomes of such persistent changes in the demographic structure can be already witnessed in

both regions, either socio-economic as for example in the provision of services in peripheral areas; or administrative, as municipal mergers as in the case of Austria.

The analysis here also makes clear that (for the time being) the challenges connected to youth outmigration and demographic change will need to be addressed on local and regional levels, rather than on national level, where there prevails a lack of understanding and coordination for this issue. Planned projects such as the Slovenian Demographic Fund still remain too patchy in their possible impact in regard to youth, as to be taken into account on this issue. Such programmes are also often space-blind and not able to take into account place-specific factors such as industrial backgrounds and cultures.

The analysis here emphasises that any such policy responses should involve various, cross-sectoral stakeholders (e.g. schools, companies, administrations...), as the topic is a cross-cutting issue. In their outreach such initiatives should address both current youth in the regions, as well as forms of (re)migration.

Some of the policy options from the literature can be also found in both regions discussed here, albeit not yet in a holistic, strategic set, but rather as ad-hoc project-based approaches. Here, both regions need to develop more comprehensive, inclusive strategies. Reviewing the applied approaches, some important aspects remain rather insufficiently covered, especially in regard to soft factors that would retain people in the region. This would need a much more coordinated approach within the areas, but more knowledge exchange on national and European level. Interconnected to this, is also the lack of research on good practices. In general, existing policies display a lack of understanding the different needs and perspectives of the 'youth', especially in regard to differences between education level and gender aspects. Here the image and self-perception of the region, as industrial-male-labour oriented might not help to retain certain groups. The policy focus on 'winning back' people who left (or even complete 'newcomers') tends to be often viewed as a valid policy option, despite certain open questions, especially in regard to specific target groups, their needs and the real size of the targeted group, as well as the impact of such campaigns. More research and practical evidence is needed to properly assess such approaches.

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Interviews with regional stakeholder

Interview 1: LEADER Management Steirische Eisenstarsse, - Gerfried Tiffner,

Interview 2: Regional Management Obersteiermark – Fr. Mag. Haßler

Interview 3: Wirtschaftskammer Leoben (WKO) – Hr. Herr Sumnitsch

Interview 4: VOEST Alpine – Hr. Mag. Robert Riegler

7. About the YOUIND project

YOUIND deals with the issue of youth outmigration from peripheral industrial towns and regions from an industrial-cultural perspective.

The SI-AT INTERREG programme area is characterized by a relatively large number of industrial enterprises, which are often located in small and medium-sized towns. These places are facing new challenges, as new trends (e.g. Industry 4.0), increasingly demand for new, highly skilled workers. These employees are difficult to find, as especially younger people do not see these regions as attractive and leave, rarely to return. These developments do not only threaten industry, but also the socio-economic development of entire regions within the programme area.

To address this largely neglected issue, the YOUIND partnership combines academic and regional knowledge to raise institutional capacities. Both partner regions – Idrija and the Steirische Eisenstrasse – are rich in their industrial past and present, with both of them being on the UNESCO's heritage list and are today sites of global companies such as Kolektor and Voestalpine. The project seeks to use this specific industrial culture of place as a potential for strengthening the institutional capacity on youth outmigration in order to link young people closer to their region.

YOUIND will raise awareness on the topic via:

- Fostering cross-border knowledge exchange between stakeholders and developing long-term network structures in the regions, involving youth, business and institutional actors
- Developing jointly highly visible pilot activities on youth and industrial culture
- Long-term regional action-plans and transnational strategic advice

The aim is to promote social innovation and improve institutional capacities through pilot actions and long-term action planning. The partnership will also translate project findings to transnational policy recommendations, distributing knowledge on emerging topic within the programme area.

The YOUIND project is implemented by the SI-AT cross-border INTERREG A programme and co-funded by ERDF. The project run-time is from spring 2020 to spring 2022. For more information and regular project updates and results, please visit:

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/YOUIND-Youth-outmigration-and-institutional-capacities-in-industrial-towns>

For more information on the project partner visit:

www.geographie.uni-graz.at

www.eisenstrasse.co.at

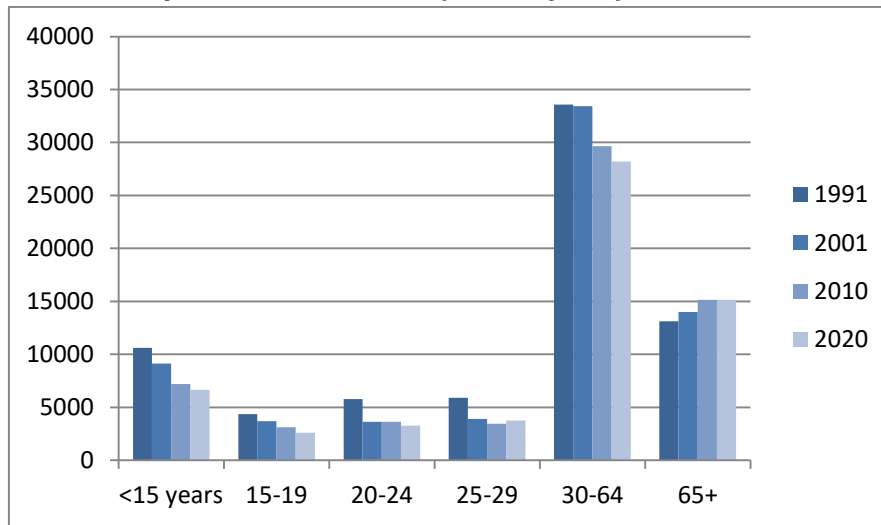
www.zrc-sazu.si

www.visit-idrija.si



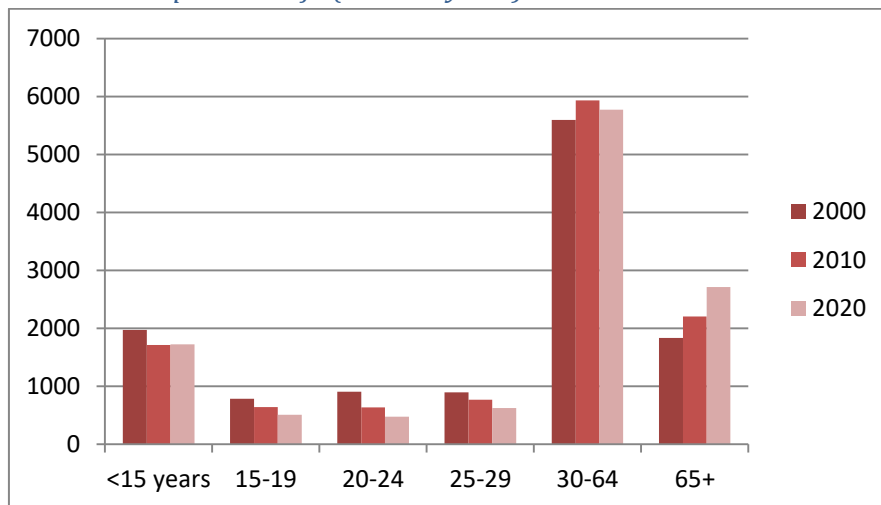
ANNEX - Statistical factsheets VESTE/IDRIJA

Fig. I Age structure development district Leoben (selected years)



Source: Statistik Steiermark

Fig. II Age structure development Idrija (selected years)



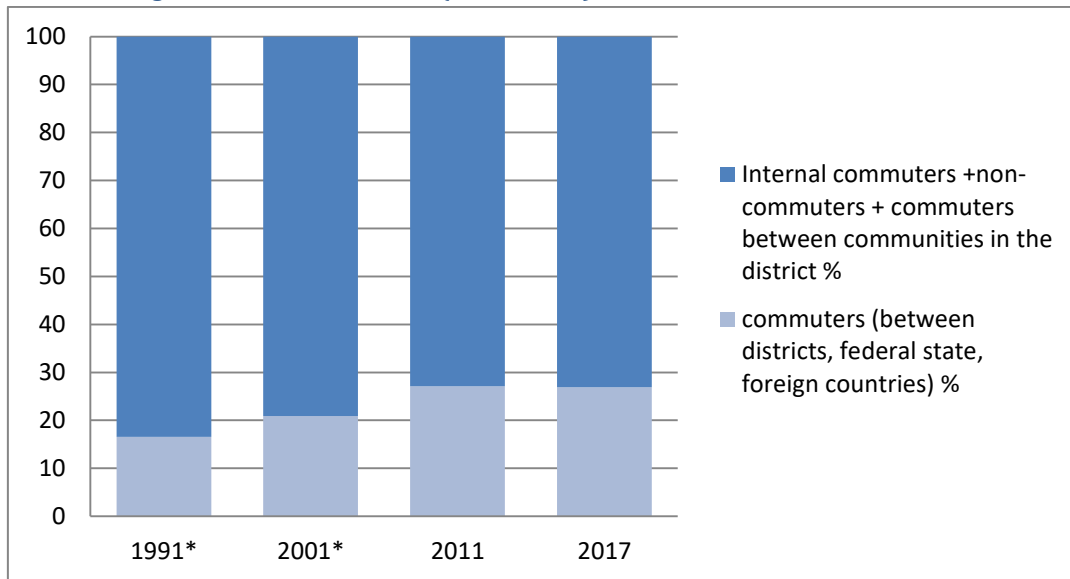
Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Tab. I Comparison population development state and national trends (1991-2019)

Area	1991-2019 (oct)
District Leoben	-17%
Steiermark/Styria	+14%
Austria	+6%
Idrija	-2%
Slovenia	+6%

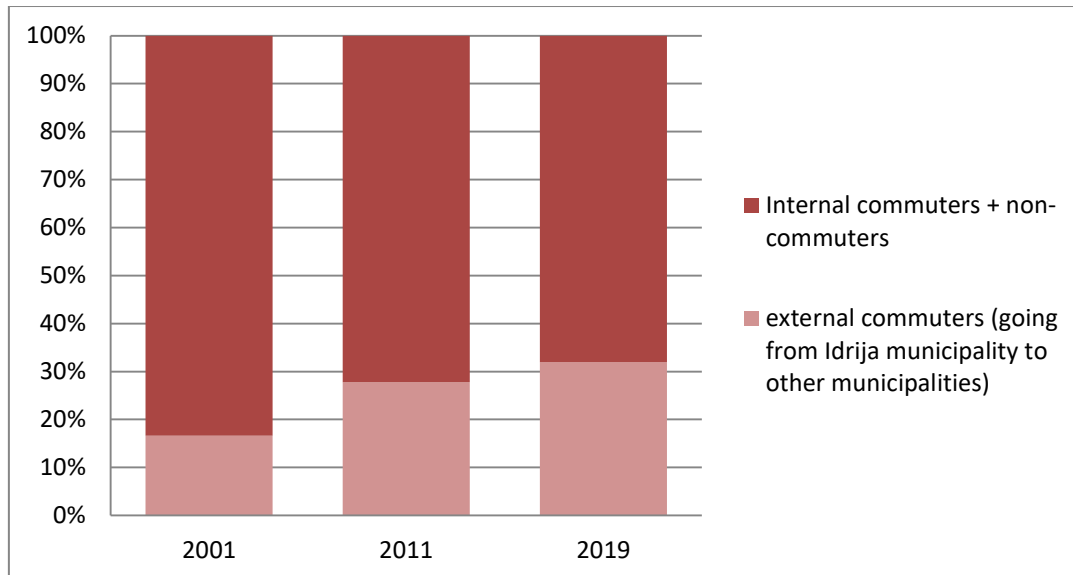
Source: Statistik Austria + Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Fig. III Commuting share District Leoben (1991-2019) in %



Source: Statistik Austria

Fig. IV Commuting share Idrija municipality (2001-2019) in %



Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Tab. II: Unemployment comparison (gender split), 2019

2019	Leoben	Styria	Austria	Idrija	Slovenia
Men	5,9%	6,2%	7,6%	4,2%	8,4%
Women	6,2%	5,8%	7,1%	3,8%	7,2%
Overall	6,1%	6%	7,4%	4,0%	7,7%

Source: Statistik Steiermark + Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Tab III: 5 biggest companies (employment), 2019

Leoben	Name	Employees, approx.	Sector
1	voestalpine Stahl Donawitz GmbH & Co KG	1300	Steel, manufacturing
2	AT & S Austria Technologie & Systemtechnik AG	1200	Semiconductors, manufacturing
3	voestalpine Schienen GmbH	600	Steel, manufacturing
4	KNAPP Systemintegration GmbH	600	Logistics
5	RHI	300	Mining products, manufacturing
Idrija			
1	Kolektor Idrija (Kolektor Holding, Kolektor Group)	1500	Engineering, Electronics, Construction
2	Hydria Holding	800	Engineering, Electronics
3	Lindlab	200	Air conditioning
4	ZIDGRAD	100	Construction
5	Brus	75	Transportation

Source: www.leoben.at, www.topofstyria.at, Bysnode data, personal inquiry

Tab. IV: Mobility – commuting time the regional centres

Leoben - Graz	Car	Train/Bus
	60 min	50min
Idrija - Ljubljana		
	50min	70min