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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MIGRATION CRISIS AND CRIME IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

ABSTRACT: The main problem discussed in the paper is the existence of a causal relationship between certain criminal phenomena in the Republic of Serbia and the European Union, on the one hand, and the migrant crisis, on the other. A special problem is represented by certain criminal acts that can be classified as a direct consequence of migrant population movements. The time frame is the period of the past ten years, during which the migrant issue has been considered one of the most topical issues in the European Union. The aim of the paper is to indicate the existence of a correlation between the migrant crisis and intensive criminal activity in the countries of the European Union, as well as in the countries located on the so-called migrant route. The hypothesis of the paper is that intensive migrant changes contribute to a change in the demographic picture and additional criminalization of Europe. The co-authors use analytical, historical, comparative and normative methods. The research results partially confirmed the hypothesis that the migrant crisis has an impact on the demographic picture of Europe, but the part that relates to the additional

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criminalization of Europe was not proven, because no parameters were established that could confirm this.

Keywords: *migration, population, crime, abuse, state border.*

1. Introduction

The migration crisis is a general term for the process of demographic change that began in mid-2010, when a large number of Asian and African populations sought new refuge and a place to live in developed European countries. Migrants from these areas began to seek a better life in Europe en masse and mostly came illegally, and the reason for their arrival lies in the poor economic and security conditions in their countries of origin. On the one hand, the high unemployment rate and extremely unfavorable economic situation, and on the other hand, wars and conflicts between different ethnic and other groups, resulted in a mass exodus of the civilian population. We can conclude that these were (and still are, because the migration crisis is still ongoing!) strong drivers, especially for younger people, for migration and seeking better and more peaceful living conditions in the countries of the European Union. The main problem discussed in this paper is the relationship between the aforementioned demographic, socio-economic and geopolitical changes in the world and the emergence of a new demographic picture of Europe, in the context of increased criminal activity and the emergence of certain forms of crime. Today, the structure of crime is focused on both national and international activity, with the predominant direction towards profit (Igrački, 2026, p. 65).

Many see the so-called Arab Spring as the main and essential reason for the large-scale migration of the population from Africa and Asia. First, the war-torn Syria, then the violent regime change in Libya, and so on, have led several countries from that region, from a relatively decent life, into serious problems. The war and revolutions have abolished existing legal orders, thereby creating conditions for the activities of various opposing groups, which ultimately resulted in anarchy, the suspension of human rights and freedoms, as well as a danger to their own lives and existence. The population of those countries had almost no choice before them, nor a certain future, so many sought salvation for themselves and their loved ones in Europe. They became migrants whose goal was to escape such political and legal uncertainty, from the huge crisis and major problems they were facing.

Entire migrant routes have been formed, each of which is uncertain in itself and carries enormous risks and problems. The main routes to European countries are as follows: the Mediterranean route, which is also the most dangerous and on which the largest number of migrants have lost their lives. It runs from North Africa, across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy and Malta. Then the Western Balkan route, which is overland, via Turkey, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, to Croatia, Hungary and other European Union countries. The Eastern Mediterranean route, which goes via Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Turkey and is partly overland, partly by water. The Western Mediterranean route, which connects Morocco and Algeria with Spain, via the Strait of Gibraltar. The West African or Atlantic route, which starts from the West African countries, Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia, by a long and dangerous sea route to the Spanish Canary Islands (Ilić, 2022, p. 165).

On African soil, there is another migrant route. This is a particularly dangerous direction of movement in East Africa or the so-called Horn of Africa, from where migrants head towards South Africa or go via Yemen to Middle Eastern countries. When it comes to Asian routes, the most famous is the so-called southwest route, which starts from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh via Europe (Antonović, 2017, p. 417).

In order to better understand this problem, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the concepts of migrants, asylum seekers and irregular migrants. Migrants are persons who move from their place of residence, both within the national borders of their country and abroad, for employment, better living conditions, education or for compelling reasons, such as wars and economic crises. Asylum seekers are persons who have left their country of origin and have applied for international protection – asylum in another country. The reasons for seeking asylum are mainly protection from persecution, war, violence and other reasons that can negatively affect the quality of life itself (Marušić, 2024, p. 41).

The initial hypothesis of the paper is that intensive migration changes contribute to the change in the demographic picture and the additional criminalization of Europe. The fact that European countries are flooded with a new population structure originating from other continents is an initial assumption that contributes to the formulation of the hypothesis. It is also further supported by statistical data, which are publicly available, as well as media coverage and reports by relevant European institutions engaged in security research. Also, the paper analyzes crime in the Republic of Serbia, in the period from 2015 to 2024, using analytical, comparative and normative

methods, with a special emphasis on property crimes, crimes against life and body, crimes against sexual freedom and unauthorized crossing of the state border.

In preparing the paper, the co-authors use data that is publicly available from available databases of both domestic and international institutions dealing with the fight against crime and its suppression. As for domestic sources, the database of the Republic Institute for Statistics and Informatics is used, namely the database of adult perpetrators of criminal offenses from 2015 to 2024, as well as the Report on the Results of the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Period 2018 - 2019 of the Development Strategy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2018 - 2023.

In the analysis procedure, the co-authors had a certain limitation due to the insufficient precision of the aforementioned reports, because they do not contain precise data on migrants as perpetrators of criminal acts. However, the causality of the crime rate can be linked to migrant processes based on the territorial principle, especially in border areas with the Hungarian-Serbian and Croatian-Serbian borders. For the purposes of the research, available data from different regions in Serbia were used: Belgrade, Vojvodina, Southern Šumadija and Eastern Serbia.

The research is limited to certain criminal acts, for which there is a reasonable assumption that migrants and the migrant population most often participated in their commission. These are the criminal acts of theft and robbery from the scope of property crimes, the criminal acts of murder and causing bodily harm from the scope of crimes against life and body, the criminal act of rape from the scope of crimes against sexual freedom, and the illegal crossing of the state border and human smuggling from the scope of crimes against public order and peace. Consequently, the penitentiary system in Serbia plays an extremely important role in the process of crime control and, in cooperation with other social mechanisms, forms a social reaction to crime and other sociopathological phenomena (Igrački, 2020).

2. Challenges and problems in Europe

Europe has been facing numerous challenges and difficulties for a long time. First of all, there is a problem in the demographic sense, which is increasingly visible. Depopulation, or the disappearance of the population, is gaining momentum. The problem of depopulation is multifaceted, as it includes social, security, cultural, legal and other problems that threaten the

stability of the oldest continent. The decrease in the total number of European inhabitants is the result of a number of (natural) factors, such as low birth rates, high mortality rates and high migration rates, the outflow of one population and the influx of another. Factors that have particularly contributed to the high mortality rate are the COVID 19 virus pandemic, which has left major consequences. The countries that suffered the greatest population blow during the COVID 19 pandemic were Italy, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria... (Radanović, 2024, p. 121)

COVID 19 has not only contributed to an increase in the mortality rate, but also to a decrease in the birth rate. The pandemic has contributed to the additional aging and illness of the European population, caused a shortage of labor, but also reduced population movement within the European Union itself. The pandemic has also caused certain criminological problems (Antonović, 2024, p. 220). The problem of depopulation is also reflected in the economic development of the European Union, as there is an increasing shortage of labor.

When the issue of the migrant population, which has been moving en masse to the European Union in recent years, became topical, some countries, especially Germany, opened their doors wide to a new workforce, with a particular interest in highly qualified labor, which is particularly scarce in this country. In addition to Germany, migrants, especially educated and skilled ones, have also been well received in other European countries, such as the Netherlands, Sweden and France, and today (regardless of qualifications), according to data from the International Labor Organization, they represent as much as 30 percent of the total labor force in Europe (Tabarošćak, 2024, p. 352).

The jobs that migrant workers mostly work in Europe today are physical work in construction, in agriculture as seasonal pickers and farm workers, in the health sector as caregivers, hospital workers and nurses, or technicians, in the catering sector mainly as waiters, cooks and kitchen support staff, in the transport sector as drivers and delivery drivers, while in the IT sector they work as programmers.

In the Republic of Serbia, according to recent data published by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, a total of 108,808 migrants were registered in 2023 who completed all procedures in asylum reception centers for migrants. After 2023, a smaller number of migrants were registered, and thus in 2024 “only” 19,603 migrants were registered. According to the same sources, around 100 thousand foreign citizens from different countries are employed in our country, but most of these persons are not migrants.

When it comes to migrants specifically, only 45 managed to find satisfactory employment here, which is a very small number compared to how many of them passed through the Republic of Serbia. One of the key reasons for this is that Serbia is not a desired destination country, but rather a necessary stopover point on the migrant route.

3. Migrants and crime

The influx of migrant populations into Europe, viewed as a whole, has caused numerous security threats, which have included, among other things, an increase in the crime rate. Migrants appear in a dual role - as perpetrators, but also as victims of criminal acts. Given that they represent a particularly vulnerable category, as they do not know the language, customs, culture and law of the country to which they have emigrated, they can often be the target of various types of fraud and abuse.

They are most often victims of the crime of human trafficking. They are promised assistance in illegally crossing the state border and in return are taken a large amount of money (Atanasov & Otašević, 2021, p. 170). In these situations, when they appear as victims of the crime of human trafficking, their difficult material and social situation is usually abused, force, threats, coercion, deception are used, and these persons are led and maintained in a state of delusion. In such circumstances, one of the most severe forms of human rights violations occurs, as victims are exposed to various forms of exploitation and serious violations of human dignity (Matijašević & Pavlović, 2009, p. 30).

They are also often victims of the criminal act of human smuggling. The expansion of human trafficking in the territory of the Republic of Serbia occurred at the end of the last decade of the twentieth century. At that time, Serbia faced a structural crisis in the political, economic, normative-legal and social spheres, as well as the entire public sphere of citizens (Igrački, Manojlović & Mijalković, 2024, p. 636). This usually occurs in situations where they are allowed to illegally cross the state border, bypassing legal procedures and controls. Smugglers exploit their difficult situation, as well as their desire to reach developed European countries as soon as possible, and demand large amounts of money from them for this illegal service (Igrački, 2016, p. 356). In fact, smugglers often deceive them, expose them to certain risks and problems, blackmail them with additional payments, and often do not transfer them across the border, but leave them in places where they can be

easily noticed and exposed to additional risks, in the form of arrests, mutual conflicts, and various dangers to their own lives, etc.

Previous experience shows that migrants also appear as victims of inhuman treatment, harassment, psychological and physical abuse, beatings, and officials often appear as perpetrators. In this regard, we note that the European Union Committee for the Prevention of Torture issued a statement in which it cited evidence of the existence of physical abuse of migrants by Croatian police officers, and particularly brutal acts include hitting, kicking, forcibly stripping, pushing, forcing migrants into the river, and similar inhuman treatment. It is common knowledge that they have not been welcomed in many European countries in recent years, especially as the crisis has spread, deepened, and the number of people arriving has increased.

Various criminal acts of a discriminatory nature were committed against migrants in Europe, exclusively because of their differences from the majority population. Due to their origin, language, religion, skin colour, and other personal characteristics, they were exposed to discrimination, while their integration into European society was hindered. At the same time, the acceptance of migrants by a part of the European population was limited, while after the first waves of migration, they were increasingly perceived as a social and economic burden on the Member States of the European Union. In addition to discrimination, migrants have also been subject to criminal acts in the form of violations of equality, as they have been placed in a less favourable position compared to the local population and denied access to certain benefits available exclusively to domestic citizens. This primarily refers to the accessibility of health and educational institutions, where they are often treated in an unfair and inhumane manner (Igrački, 2023, p. 472). Unfortunately, when it comes to the concept of human rights, they are not only violated by the migrant population, but there are entire regions in which the minority population does not enjoy all the necessary basic human rights. An example of this is Kosovo and Metohija, where the rights of members of the non-Albanian people have been significantly violated and threatened (Antonović, 2023, p. 167).

Migrants generally have a certain amount of money and mobile phones. So to speak, this is their "all property". However, even what they own is often the subject of theft. In addition to money and phones, their identity cards and documents were also taken away, thus denying them freedom of movement and the exercise of certain human rights to which they are entitled (Schilling et al., 2017, p. 299).

It is not uncommon for them to be victims of crimes against life and limb. These criminal offenses constitute one of the most serious forms of threats to security, and migrants are particularly exposed to them due to their vulnerable position (Subotin & Matijašević Obradović, 2020, p. 5). In this regard, cases of aggravated murder, murder, causing serious bodily harm, and the like have been recorded. These crimes are mainly committed by human traffickers and smugglers, who previously take large amounts of money from migrants. Migrant women are mainly victims of crimes of rape and prostitution (Bernstein, 2018, p. 116).

As already mentioned, migrants can also be found in the role of perpetrators of criminal acts. The reason for their criminal activity should mainly be sought in their lack of adaptation to the new environment, as well as their lack of acceptance. Many of them were involved in crime in their countries of origin, and they simply continued this activity in the new environment. According to Europol statistics, migrant crime is not higher than crime committed by the local population, and they appear as perpetrators of serious crimes such as theft, robbery, violation of public order and peace, drug trafficking, but also crimes against sexual freedom and the like.

The most common crime is the unauthorized crossing of the state border and smuggling of people, which will be discussed in more detail below. In addition to crossing the border illegally, they are also illegally staying on the territory of a certain state. The reason for committing this crime is the fact that they do not have personal and travel documents, and the only way to cross the border is illegally. In the territory of the European Union, illegal crossing of the state border is not treated as a crime, but as a misdemeanor. Then, situations have been recorded where they committed petty theft, in the form of pickpocketing, breaking into basements and common areas in buildings, stealing handbags and bicycles, food, clothing and cosmetics from shops, mobile phones and other easily accessible items.

Numerous cases have been recorded involving the use of forged identity and travel documents for the purpose of illegally crossing national borders, applying for asylum, obtaining employment, and accessing certain social rights. Some migrants have also been associated with criminal offences related to narcotic drugs, particularly the unlawful production and trafficking of narcotic drugs. In certain European countries, such as France, Germany, and Italy, migrant involvement in street-level drug dealing has been observed, mostly at lower levels of drug trafficking networks.

Criminal acts against sexual freedom were recorded in smaller numbers and were registered in Germany, Austria and Sweden, where they committed

sexual harassment, not only of women, but also of men. Unfortunately, the rate of rape of children and minors within the family circle is becoming increasingly common, especially in countries such as Canada, the USA, New Zealand, the UK and South Korea, where as many as 15 percent of girls and young women are raped by their closest relatives (Antonović, 2024, p. 97). European legislation firmly stands on the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children criminalizes incitement to witness sexual acts for persons who, according to the provisions of the signatory states, have not reached the age below which sexual intercourse with them is criminalized (Milović, 2021, p. 196). In the Republic of Serbia, two Pakistani migrants were arrested in 2016 for attempting to rape a woman in Subotica.

Criminal offences and misdemeanours in the field of labour relations have also been recorded. In Europe, migrants frequently engage in undeclared work, often using forged identity or travel documents or without the required work permits and visas, while employers fail to register them for mandatory social security. Such forms of employment frequently lead to serious workplace accidents, including fatal incidents, particularly on construction sites and other high-risk workplaces.

In the Republic of Serbia, several incident situations with elements of a criminal offense have been recorded in previous years, in which migrants participated. According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 2015, 34 criminal offenses were committed, while in 2016, there were a total of 103 criminal offenses in which migrants participated as perpetrators. According to the nature of the criminal offenses, in offenses against life and body, 5.2 percent of migrants participated in relation to the total number of criminal offenses. In property crimes, 25.6 percent of migrants participated. In terms of the commission of sexual offenses, migrants participated in 0.8 percent.

When it comes to more recent data from 2023 and 2024, there are statistical gaps and incomplete data. During 2023, 108,808 migrants entered the territory of the Republic of Serbia, while in 2024 there were drastically fewer, 19,483. In this two-year period, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia filed 600 criminal charges against 791 persons for the crimes of illegal crossing of the state border and human smuggling. In September 2023, the police in Serbia conducted an action to combat illegal migrants. On that occasion, 371 illegal migrants were caught in the area of Subotica, Sombor and Kikinda. Illegal weapons were also found with these illegal migrants, so proceedings were initiated against them for both illegal crossing of the state border and possession of firearms. In October 2023, in a

new action against illegal migrants, 4,500 of these migrants were discovered in the border areas.

4. Human Smuggling and the Migration Routes through the Republic of Serbia

One of the key goals of the migrant population is to reach their final destinations, which are the countries of Central Europe. On the so-called migrant route, they encounter numerous difficulties, which they try to overcome in various ways. Illegal crossing is the commission of the criminal offense of unauthorized crossing of the state border and human smuggling under Article 350 of the Criminal Code (2005). Due to these illegal crossings of the state border, mixed military and police teams were established in 2016 to patrol the border areas along the borders with Bulgaria and North Macedonia. These measures yielded certain results, as the number of illegal crossings decreased, but they did not solve the problem. Routes of illegal migration and methods of carrying out unlawful activities continuously evolve in response to emerging challenges and changing circumstances (Ristić, 2022, p. 99).

In order to reduce the rate of this type of crime, the state authorities of the Republic of Serbia have decided to tighten criminal sanctions for the criminal offense of unauthorized crossing of the state border and human smuggling. The influx of migrants on their way to the countries of the European Union, who pass through the Republic of Serbia, is monitored and controlled by a large number of human smugglers. For this reason, amendments and supplements to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia (2005) were initiated regarding the criminal offense of unauthorized crossing of the state border in terms of the punishment imposed. The previous penal provisions were not adequate, what is more, they were outdated. In some cases, “human smugglers” got away without prison sentences, with suspended sentences, because the Criminal Code (2005) allowed them to do so, and court practice also favored them with lenient sentences.

The 2016 Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia increased the minimum and maximum prison sentences for this criminal offense, so that anyone “who, with the intention of obtaining some benefit for himself or another, enables another to illegally cross the border of Serbia or to illegally stay or transit through Serbia shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of one to eight years”, instead of the previously stipulated sentence of six months to five years (paragraph 2). In paragraph 3, if the offense from the previous paragraph “is committed by

a group, by abuse of official position, or in a manner that endangers the life or health of the person whose illegally crossing the border of Serbia, stay or transit is enabled or a large number of persons are smuggled, the perpetrator shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of two to twelve years”, and previously it was from one to ten years. The following paragraph (paragraph 4) has also undergone changes in terms of the penalty imposed, so for the offense from paragraph 2 (which we quoted), if it is “committed by an organized criminal group, the perpetrator shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of three to fifteen years”, instead of the previous sentence of three to twelve years.

In the past few years, both due to geopolitical circumstances and better organization of the relevant state institutions, a smaller influx of migrants has been recorded, including those entering illegally. According to a statement by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia dated September 17, 2024, it is stated that from January 1 to September 2, 2024, Serbia recorded a 61.8 percent decrease in the number of illegal border crossings compared to the same period in 2023. At that time, 26,775 cases of human smuggling were recorded, and in 2024, 10,216.

The influx of migrants is also decreasing, so at the end of 2025, the reception center in Bujanovac accommodated 30 of them, while the other five reception centers accommodated about 200. According to data from the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, in 2025, about 9,500 people with migrant status were registered, which is a significant decrease compared to the previous year of 2024 by about 50%. These are mainly people from Afghanistan, Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, etc.

However, in the first six months of 2023, according to a report by the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs, 162 people (142 men and 20 women) were arrested for transporting migrants and 116 criminal charges were filed against them. More than 100 vehicles used for their transport were seized.

In July 2025, 11 people were arrested on suspicion of facilitating the transportation of migrants between December 2024 and April 2025. During that period, they organized the transportation of 160 migrants of undetermined citizenship, 13 citizens of Afghanistan, three citizens of Turkey and six citizens of Egypt, by picking them up in a van on the territory of the municipality of Dimitrovgrad, ensuring their transit and stay in Belgrade, and then their further transit and illegal transfer to European Union countries. This organized criminal group made illegal property gains by taking from 200 to 1,000 euros per migrant.

In the areas of Sombor, Apatin and Ruma, six members of an organized criminal group were deprived of their liberty, which during 2024 facilitated the unauthorized transit of at least 71 migrants through the territory of the Republic of Serbia (Nikolić & Gagić 2025, p. 552). This group facilitated transit from the areas of Pirot and Dimitrovgrad to Belgrade, with the aim of further unauthorized transit to European Union countries.

5. Conclusion

Based on the available data from the Statistical Bulletin, published by the Republic Office of Statistics and Informatics for the Republic of Serbia for 2024, we have come to the conclusion that a total of 24,835 criminal offenses were committed in the Republic of Serbia. The statistical parameters set in this research relate to the nationality of the perpetrators of criminal offenses, given that the subject of the research is migrants and their criminal potential. Of the total number of criminal offences committed, members of the Serbian people committed a total of 13,717 criminal offences (12,426 male persons and 1,291 female persons). Montenegrins committed a total of 9 criminal offences (all persons were male). Albanians committed a total of 25 criminal offences (24 male persons and 1 female person). Hungarians committed a total of 41 criminal offences (37 male persons and 4 female persons). Muslims committed a total of 18 criminal offences. Roma committed a total of 163 criminal offences (128 male persons and 35 female persons). Romanians committed a total of 7 criminal offences (6 male persons and 1 female person). Other peoples, including members of peoples from areas from which rapid migration flows originate, committed a total of 359 criminal offences (334 male persons and 25 female persons). In addition, there were 58 criminal offences whose perpetrators could not be identified by nationality (54 male persons and 4 female persons). The reason for this should be sought in the fact that a large number of migrants do not have personal identification documents, as a result of which they are registered as unknown persons whose identities have not been established.

Furthermore, the research according to the given parameters relating to the types of criminal offences committed in the territory of the Republic of Serbia indicates the following results. Of the total of 1,313 criminal offences against life and limb committed, Serbs committed 753 offences (707 male persons and 46 female persons), Montenegrins committed 1 criminal offence, Albanians committed 2 offences, Hungarians committed 4 offences, Roma

committed 15 criminal offences (12 male persons and 3 female persons), and members of other peoples committed 17 offences (all persons were male).

Of the total of 272 criminal offences against sexual freedom committed, Serbs committed 146 offences (140 male persons and 6 female persons), Roma committed 3 criminal offences (all persons were male), and members of other peoples committed 1 offence (a male person).

Of the total of 1,534 criminal offences against public order and peace committed, Serbs committed 762 offences (720 male persons and 42 female persons), Albanians committed 4 offences, Muslims committed 7 offences, Roma committed 9 criminal offences (8 male persons and 1 female person), Romanians committed 1 offence, and members of other peoples committed 50 offences (49 male persons and 1 female person).

According to the given criterion of territorial character, the following data is obtained:

A total of 5,330 criminal offences were committed in the Belgrade region. Serbs committed a total of 3,659 criminal offences (3,311 male persons and 348 female persons). Montenegrins committed 5 criminal offences, Albanians committed 2 criminal offences, Roma committed 1 criminal offence, and Romanians committed 1 criminal offence (all of the aforementioned offences were committed by male persons). Members of other peoples committed a total of 24 criminal offences (22 male persons and 2 female persons).

A total of 7,096 criminal offences were committed in the Vojvodina region. Serbs committed a total of 911 criminal offences (822 male persons and 89 female persons). Montenegrins committed 2 criminal offences, while Albanians committed 4 criminal offences (all persons were male). Hungarians committed a total of 40 criminal offences (36 male persons and 4 female persons). Muslims committed 2 criminal offences (male persons). Roma committed a total of 46 criminal offences (39 male persons and 7 female persons). Members of other peoples committed a total of 24 criminal offences (21 male persons and 3 female persons).

A total of 6,478 criminal offences were committed in the Šumadija region. Serbs committed a total of 4,816 criminal offences (4,374 male persons and 442 female persons). Montenegrins committed one criminal offence (a male person). Albanians committed a total of 4 criminal offences (3 male persons and 1 female person). Muslims committed 7 criminal offences (male persons). Roma committed a total of 58 criminal offences (57 male persons and 1 female person). Romanians committed one criminal offence (a male person). Members of other peoples committed a total of 199 criminal offences (188 male persons and 11 female persons).

A total of 5,931 criminal offences were committed in the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia. Serbs committed a total of 4,331 criminal offences (3,919 male persons and 412 female persons). Montenegrins committed one criminal offence (a male person). Albanians committed a total of 15 criminal offences (male persons). Hungarians committed one criminal offence (a male person). Muslims committed 9 criminal offences (male persons). Roma committed a total of 148 criminal offences (121 male persons and 27 female persons). Romanians committed a total of 5 criminal offences (4 male persons and 1 female person). Members of other peoples committed a total of 117 criminal offences (108 male persons and 9 female persons).

By applying the analytical method to the period 2017-2019 in the Republic of Serbia, and based on all available data on criminal offenses of general and special crime, and thanks to the application of operational activities to suppress all forms of general crime, the crime rate has decreased. During 2018, the total crime rate decreased by 6.06 percent compared to 2017. During 2019, the total number of criminal offenses decreased by 40.43 percent compared to 2017.

Through the implementation of good preventive measures, preventive and repressive work of the police in the Republic of Serbia, general crime decreased by 3.92 percent in 2018, and by 8.57 percent in 2019 compared to 2017.

Regarding organized crime, the Criminal Police Directorate filed a total of 23 criminal charges against members of organized crime groups in 2018. During 2019, a total of 25 criminal charges were filed against members of organized crime groups. These data indicate an increased number of newly discovered organized crime groups in the period. The number of detected criminal acts, especially with corrupt elements, in the field of high-tech crime has increased, thus achieving the indicators of defined measures and strategic plans in the Republic of Serbia.

When it comes to crimes against life and body, a total of 73,590 crimes were committed in 2024. Of these, the crime of murder occurred 98 times by known adult perpetrators. Aggravated murder occurred 103 times, one was a murder, two were child murders during childbirth, and in three cases there was involuntary manslaughter.

There were a total of 31,873 criminal offenses against property in 2024. Of these, theft occurred in 16,137 cases, aggravated theft in 6,571, robbery in 50, and robbery in 652. Illegal crossing of the state border and human smuggling were detected in 401 cases in 2024.

In this paper, by applying the presented research model and methods, the hypothesis that intensive migration changes contribute to a change in

the demographic picture and additional criminalization of Europe has been partially confirmed, namely in the first part of the stated assumption, which refers to the demographic part. The confirmation of the stated hypothesis is supported by the fact that, according to certain preliminary data from the organization "Human Rights Watch", around 29 million migrants arrived by the first half of 2025. The largest number of migrants came from Syria (19,251), followed by Afghanistan (12,914), Mali (10,079), Bangladesh (6,386), Egypt (6,137), Morocco (4,732), Senegal (4,616), Guinea (3,418), Tunisia (3,308) and Turkey (2,722).

The migration path was mostly directed towards Germany, followed by France, the United Kingdom, Austria, Italy and the Netherlands. During 2023, a new wave of migrants from Ukraine is expected, migrating to Russia (1,229,571), Poland (958,646), the Czech Republic (374,954), Slovakia (125,448), Lithuania (78,136), Romania (84,657), Portugal (53,688), Ireland (106,345), Spain (215,116) and Italy (188,965). Migrants from Syria mainly headed towards Germany (2,177,455), Great Britain (305,106), Belgium (113,408), Switzerland (110,843), Luxembourg (10,837), Austria (234,902), Sweden (163,777) and France (204,486).

The largest influx of migrants into Europe was in 2015, with 1,493,590 people, and in 2022, with 1,772,207 people. Therefore, based on these parameters, it can be concluded that the part of the hypothesis related to the change in the population structure of the European continent is confirmed.

When it comes to the additional criminalization of Europe, with a special focus on the Republic of Serbia, no relevant indicator provides exact data on the possible involvement of the migrant population in certain criminal acts. For the purposes of the research, the following parameters were selected: the type of criminal offenses, where property crimes, crimes against life and body, crimes against sexual freedoms and crimes against public order and peace are particularly highlighted. In contrast to these parameters, the parameter of nationality and the territorial parameter of the commission of criminal offenses were taken. It is concluded that members of the Serbian people are most frequently represented among the perpetrators of the aforementioned criminal offences, while the territorial parameter does not indicate increased criminal activity in border areas or areas where migrant reception centres are located.

From all of the above, it follows that migrant changes have a major impact on the demographic picture of Europe, but it cannot be confirmed that the migrant population has a major or any impact on crime in Europe, nor in the Republic of Serbia.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

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ODNOS MIGRANTSKE KRIZE I KRIMINALA U REPUBLICI SRBIJI

APSTRAKT: Osnovni problem koji se razmatra u radu jeste postojanje uzročno-posledične veze između pojedinih kriminalnih pojava u Republici Srbiji i Evropskoj uniji, s jedne strane, i migrantske krize, s druge. Poseban

problem predstavljaju određena krivična dela, koja se mogu podvesti pod direktnu posledicu migrantskih pomeranja stanovništva. Vremenski okvir predstavlja period od proteklih deset godina, koliko se migrantsko pitanje smatra jednim od najaktuelnijih pitanja na tlu Evropske unije. Cilj rada je ukazivanje na postojanje korelacije migrantske krize i intenzivnih kriminalnih aktivnosti u zemljama Evropske unije, kao i u zemljama koje se nalaze na tzv. migrantskoj ruti. Hipoteza rada je da intenzivne migrantske promene doprinose promeni demografske slike, kao i dodatnoj kriminalizaciji Evrope. Koautori se koriste analitičkim, istorijskim, komparativnim i normativnim metodama. Rezultati istraživanja delimično su potvrdili postavljenu hipotezu u delu – da migrantska kriza ima uticaj na demografsku sliku Evrope, ali nije dokazano da migrantska kriza utiče na dodatnu kriminalizaciju Evrope, jer nisu utvrđeni parametri koji bi to mogli potvrditi.

Ključne reči: *migracije, stanovništvo, kriminal, zloupotreba, državna granica.*

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