

## Chapter 11

# The Potential for Naturalisation in Austria: A Statistical Approximation

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### Abstract

Naturalisation in Austria, as in most countries, is bound by certain conditions. Among others these entail an uninterrupted stay in the country for at least ten years (in special circumstances, only six years are required). Information from the Central Residence Register processed in the population statistics of Statistics Austria allows for an estimation of how many people currently living in Austria would fulfil this specific condition and therefore potentially qualify for naturalisation. The chapter presents the results of these estimations, disaggregated by citizenship, age and region of residence. EU/EFTA citizens in Austria have little propensity for naturalisation. Among non-EU/EFTA citizens, the propensity for naturalisation was higher and increasing over time. The naturalisation of all non-EU/EFTA citizens with ten years or more of residence in Austria would reduce the share of foreign citizens there from 16.7 to 13 per cent. This would roughly offset the increase in the foreign population in Austria in the last five years. The naturalisation of eligible EU/EFTA citizens would further reduce the foreigners' share in the population to 10 per cent. If persons with a residence period of between six and ten years were also all naturalised, the percentage of foreigners would drop even further to 7.5 per cent, less than half the actual share recorded on 01 January 2020. At a regional level, Vienna has the highest potential for naturalisation, followed by Vorarlberg and Salzburg, if only non-EU/EFTA citizens residing there for ten years or more are counted.

### 1. Introduction

In this section, I first provide an overview of the conditions for naturalisation in Austria and compare them with other countries; I then describe the actual length of stay of the non-citizen population in Austria. As in most countries, naturalisation in Austria depends on certain conditions, with the Austrian Citizenship Act stipulating several dimensions of pre-requisites:

- a minimum length of continuous registration with a main residence in Austria;
- a clean criminal record of the person applying for naturalisation;
- a minimum proficiency in German (currently at level B2);
- a pass in a civic knowledge test;

- an affirmation of Austrian civic values;
- a sufficient income and no claiming of social benefits; and
- the renunciation of any other citizenship.

Of these, only the minimum length of stay in Austria is statistically quantifiable and thus may be used for an estimation of how many people currently living in Austria would potentially qualify for naturalisation. The minimum length of uninterrupted stay in Austria required for naturalisation is basically set at ten years but may be shortened to six for those spouses of Austrian nationals with a duration of marriage of more than five years. It may equally be reduced to six years for particularly well-integrated immigrants (who have committed to at least three years of volunteering in non-profit organisations or showing other relevant commitment) or where there are other considerable reasons. The citizenship law regulates the extent to which residence in Austria must be uninterrupted and that, of the ten years required for ordinary naturalisation, the applicant must have held a permanent residence (settlement) permit for at least five. These further conditions are not captured in the population statistics but they do imply that many immigrants with ten years' residence are still not eligible for naturalisation.

Thus, when looking at the length of stay in Austria, it is particularly interesting to know about the number of people with foreign citizenship who have been residing in Austria without interruption for ten years or more. In addition, it seems feasible to differentiate between EU or EFTA and third-country nationality, as EU/EFTA citizens largely have the same rights as Austrian nationals and thus may be less inclined to aspire to Austrian citizenship.<sup>1</sup> A further categorisation of people residing for less than ten years into a group staying less than six years and those staying between six and ten years also seems feasible in order to detect the number of those who potentially qualify for early access to Austrian citizenship after six years of residence. Data for this analysis have been produced by looking at the latest start date of a record of uninterrupted registration of a main residence in Austria.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, a time span up to different reference dates

<sup>1</sup> Legally the right for non-discrimination applies to European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA, comprised of Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) citizens. Swiss citizens have *de facto* been accorded the same rights in mutual agreements between Switzerland and the EU. As the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is comprised of all EEA members plus Switzerland, "EU/EFTA" is used as a collective term in this analysis for foreigners enjoying largely the same rights as Austrian nationals.

<sup>2</sup> Gaps in registration are allowed for up to 90 days, as this is the length of validity of tourist visas and, at the same time, the minimum period of absence required before re-entering the country with a tourist visa after expiry of a previous visa. We can assume that people with an expired residence permit during their stay in Austria will also be de-registered by the competent authorities – unpublished research by the author for the period 2002 to 2007 has shown that about one third of all de-registrations in Austria are made by the authorities. For third-country nationals these usually reflect expired residence permits but are only performed if the person

has been calculated and classified into three categories, as specified under Austrian naturalisation law: continuous residence of less than six years, of six to ten years and of ten years or more. As register-based data from the Austrian Population Statistics database (POPREG) go back to the beginning of 2002, a study on the length of residence is feasible for 01 January 2012 at the earliest.

## 2. Comparison with other countries

Conditions for naturalisation differ widely among EU member states (Bauböck, Honohan, Huddleston, Hutcheson, Shaw and Vink 2013). There are significant differences in the use of *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis* for migrant-origin populations. In addition, all member states specify a certain minimum length of residence which is required for naturalisation. This ranges from four to ten years. Austria, with a general threshold of ten years (and six years for accelerated access to citizenship) is at the upper limit of this range. Moreover, there are different levels of additional requirements such as language skills, civic-knowledge tests and cultural assimilation requirements. Although this is less-common practice among EU member states, Austria has also set quite demanding requirements for naturalisation as far as employment or economic resources are concerned. These may also further reduce the propensity for naturalisation of foreign citizens otherwise fulfilling the prerequisites.

Rössl and Valchars (2019) indicate that, in 2019, the minimum requirement for naturalisation in Austria for a single person was €933 of monthly net income after payment of rent, allowances and loan rates (and no use of social benefits).<sup>3</sup> In addition, there were several administrative fees. Naturalisation in 2019 cost €1,115.30 for a single person, plus the respective state tax and the considerable costs for the translation and certification of documents (Wagner 2019). Overall, these requirements constitute a high social barrier to naturalisation. A considerable share of the Austrian population – both citizens and non-citizens – would be unable to overcome this barrier, despite their income from employment. Income statistics for 2018 (Statistics Austria 2019) show that, in Austria, irrespective of citizenship, more than 25 per cent of employees (>30 per cent of females and >20 of males) earn less than this requirement, as many of them are in unstable employment. For blue-collar workers, among whom foreign nationals are over-represented, more than 50 per cent of females and over 25 per cent of males have less income than is required for the granting of Austrian citizenship.

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concerned is not present at the last known address. Data may be less accurate for EU/EFTA citizens, as information on persons leaving the country is usually not immediately available to the authorities. However, annual population counts for tax-sharing needs link several administrative registers and identify nominal members (having left the country) in this way.

<sup>3</sup> Proof of the necessary income must be provided for an average of 36 months out of the last six years prior to the application for naturalisation – and, in any case, for the last six months immediately preceding the application (Rössl and Valchars 2019, 305). Furthermore, income requirements are adjusted for inflation every year.

Before turning to the potential for naturalisation, we should first examine the actual number of naturalisations occurring in Austria compared to other European countries. The European Statistical Office, Eurostat, collects raw naturalisation rates for each member state – that is, the number of naturalisations in relation to the foreign population registered in that member state. For the comparison, it seemed feasible to look at naturalisation rates during those years for which Austrian population data on length of stay are also available. As the Austrian population register started in 2002, the number of people with a length of stay of more than ten years in Austria could first be established for the reference year 2012. Taking the period from 2012 to 2020 as a reference, it ought to be feasible to separate a pre- and post-2015 period, as the composition of immigration into the EU in 2015 and 2016 differed markedly from that in other years.

Compared to similar European countries of immigration, Austria has low naturalisation rates – the raw naturalisation rate in EU/EFTA countries during the 2012–2014 period was 2.64 naturalisations per 100 resident foreigners. Austria had 0.73 and was thus comparable to countries like Czechia (0.70) and Denmark (0.89). Most European countries with larger immigrant populations had higher rates – e.g. Germany (1.69), France (2.44), Italy (2.18) and the Netherlands (4.17). Switzerland had 1.79 and Norway 3.12 naturalisations per 100 resident foreigners. However, the highest rates were observed in Sweden (7.24).

Yet raw naturalisation rates do not clearly reflect the differences in eligibility of the resident foreign population in different countries.<sup>4</sup> For a first approximation of potential differences, it may be useful to disaggregate data by EU and non-EU citizens. The rates in this case vary more markedly, being somewhat low in general for EU citizens and significantly higher for non-EU citizens. This reflects a general pattern whereby naturalisation is less relevant for EU citizens, as they enjoy largely the same rights as nationals. Under EU law, long-term residents in Austria with EU/EFTA citizenship face few legal restrictions in their daily lives in Austria – they enjoy, for example, greater security of residence, free access to employment and the right to non-discrimination on the grounds of nationality – and thus have less incentive to naturalise than other foreign citizens.

The average naturalisation rate for EU citizens in the period 2012–2014 was 1.14 for all EU/EFTA countries. There was a significant exception in Hungary (11.89), resulting from the granting of dual citizenship to ethnic Hungarians residing in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia (Vojvodina). Austria (0.21) was among the lowest-ranking groups, together with Spain (0.14) and Slovakia (0.12) – although apparently for different reasons. Spain had a massive economic crisis during this period, while Slovakia has very few residents from other EU member states. For Austria the cause seems to be different: while most EU member states tolerate dual citizenship generally or specifically for EU/EFTA citizens,

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the use of raw naturalisation rates in Austria, see Reichel (2012). Wanner and Galleano (2020), in their study of Switzerland, plead for the use of standardised rates in order to avoid the influence of different compositions of the resident foreign population.

Austria requires them to renounce their previous nationality, which helps to explain the particularly low naturalisation rates among EU/EFTA citizens in Austria.<sup>5</sup>

On average, 4.05 out of 100 resident non-EU citizens were naturalised in 2012–2014 in EU/EFTA countries. High rates could be observed in Sweden (9.96), the Netherlands (7.91) and Norway (7.23). To a lesser extent, Spain (5.95), Poland (5.25) and Belgium (5.57) also had high naturalisation rates. Germany (2.28), Italy (2.83) and Switzerland (2.68) were all below average, although still higher than Austria (1.14). Czechia (0.90), Slovakia (1.09) and Slovenia (1.45) had similar rates to Austria.

**Table 11.1. Residents who acquired citizenship as a share of resident non-citizens by former citizenship 2012–2018 in selected EU/EFTA countries (in %)**

	2012–2014			2015–2018		
	All foreign citizens	EU citizens	Non-EU citizens	All foreign citizens	EU citizens	Non-EU citizens
<b>EU, EFTA</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>3.84</b>
Belgium	2.53	0.91	5.57	2.49	1.03	5.24
Czechia	0.70	0.38	0.90	0.67	0.33	0.89
Denmark	0.89	0.18	1.34	2.02	0.60	3.02
Germany	1.69	0.83	2.28	1.31	0.86	1.66
Spain	3.55	0.14	5.95	2.37	0.14	4.08
France	2.44	0.64	3.30	2.53	0.64	3.42
Italy	2.18	0.55	2.83	3.16	0.92	4.13
Hungary	8.52	11.89	4.07	2.39	3.32	1.36
Netherlands	4.17	0.40	7.91	3.21	0.59	6.29
<b>Austria</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>1.13</b>
Poland	4.22	1.59	5.25	2.57	0.77	3.03
Slovenia	1.48	2.29	1.45	1.36	0.39	1.55
Slovakia	0.35	0.12	1.09	0.79	0.39	2.08
Sweden	7.24	3.24	9.96	7.51	3.89	9.49
Norway	3.12	0.53	7.23	2.67	0.40	6.55
Switzerland	1.79	1.28	2.68	2.07	1.72	2.75

Source: Eurostat [migr\_acqs].

Overall, this picture did not change substantially during the 2015–2018 period,<sup>6</sup> although naturalisation rates tended to be a little bit lower. This was mainly the result of an increase in the overall foreign population in most EU member states in 2015 and 2016, while the

<sup>5</sup> See the contribution of Peters and Vink – in [Chapter 6](#) of this book – on the impact of renunciation requirements in the Netherlands.

<sup>6</sup> The latest year with data available at a European level was 2018 at the time of writing (May 2020).

absolute number of naturalisations did not change much. As in the previous period, naturalisations among EU citizens were fairly low in most countries. The EU/EFTA average was 0.95 per 100 EU residents, with Sweden (3.89) and Hungary (3.32) again being notable exceptions, although the latter did not come anywhere near the exceptional figures of 2012–2014. At 0.23, Austria's naturalisation rate was the second-lowest.

Naturalisation rates varied more among EU/EFTA countries for non-EU citizens, ranging from 9.49 in Sweden to just 0.89 in Czechia. Austria was also on the lower edge for this group, registering 1.13 naturalisations per 100 resident non-EU citizens in 2015–2018.

Overall, we can see that Austria has very low naturalisation rates given the size and duration of settlement of its foreign population (see [Chapter 2](#) by Haller in this volume). Countries with a similar population structure to Germany and, to a lesser extent, Switzerland, have higher naturalisation rates, although these are still low in a comparative perspective for Western Europe. Austria seems to be more in line with Central European countries like Czechia, Slovakia and Slovenia – which, however, have much smaller populations of foreign citizens stemming from more-recent immigration. As shown by Bauböck et al. (2013) and Stadlmair (2017), the options for retaining dual citizenship are less generous in Austria than in other Western European EU member states. While these tolerate dual citizenship, whether generally or specifically for EU/EFTA citizens, Austria also requires EU/EFTA citizens to renounce their previous nationality, which helps to explain the particularly low naturalisation rates among this group in Austria. Labussière and Vink (2020) show, for the Netherlands, that more-restrictive institutional circumstances, such as mandatory civic integration and restrictions on dual citizenship, lead to later and less-frequent naturalisations among migrants, despite their similar eligibility.

In addition, the timing of naturalisation may play a decisive role. Several studies (Labussière and Vink 2020; Peters, Vink and Schmeets 2015; Reichel 2011) show that some migrants may wish to access citizenship as quickly as possible. Others may not be interested initially but may develop an interest later. Timing is mostly related to a migrant's origins, age at immigration, reason for migration or mode of entering the host country. Younger immigrants and those with a native partner naturalise more often. Apart from naturalisation policy, the differences in naturalisation rates observed may also stem, to some extent, from differences in the eligible population. Let us now turn, in a first step, to the establishment of the total number of the foreign population in Austria eligible for naturalisation on the basis of length of residence.

### **3. The actual length of stay of the resident population in Austria**

Of the 8,902,600 people registered with a main residence in Austria for more than 90 days on 01 January 2020, more than four-fifths (81.1 per cent or 7.2 million people) had been living there for more than ten years. A little over half a million (6 per cent) had a registered length of residence of between six and ten years, while around 1.15 million

(12.9 per cent) had been in the country for less than six years. Of course, for Austrian nationals, these figures mostly reflect births occurring during the previous ten years<sup>7</sup> and, to a certain (but fairly small) extent, naturalisations<sup>8</sup> or Austrian citizens returning to Austria from abroad and taking up residence there.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, for foreign citizens residing in Austria, the share of births is much less important. During the period 2014 to 2019, some 102,876 births of foreign citizens occurred in Austria. In comparison, the overall number of foreigners having registered in Austria for the first time during this period is nearly five times greater at 917,680. Nonetheless, there were only 667,618 foreign citizens on 01 January 2020 with a period of stay of less than six years. The difference with the number of immigrants and births is due to the emigration and death of members of this group.

**Table 11.2. Population in Austria on 1/1/2020 by citizenship and length of registered stay**

Population on 1/1/2020	Registered length of stay on reference date						
	Total	< 6 years		6–10 years		10+ years	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All citizens	8,902,600	1,152,391	12.9	533,812	6.0	7,216,397	81.1
Foreign citizens	1,487,020	667,618	44.9	224,197	15.1	595,205	40.0
% of total	16.7	7.5		2.5		6.7	
<b>EU/EFTA</b>	<b>778,844</b>	<b>380,161</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>133,933</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>264,750</b>	<b>34.0</b>
% of total	8.7	4.3		1.5		3.0	
<b>Non-EU/EFTA</b>	<b>708,176</b>	<b>287,457</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>90,264</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>330,455</b>	<b>46.7</b>
% of total	8.0	3.2		1.0		3.7	

Source: Statistics Austria, Population Statistics – Preliminary results for 1/1/2020.

Foreigners having lived for ten years or more in Austria on 01 January 2020 – and thus potentially eligible for naturalisation – made up 40 per cent of the overall foreign population. In absolute numbers, this group covered almost 600,000 people and represented 6.7 per cent of the total population. Thus, if all these people were to be naturalised, the share of foreign citizens in the total population would drop from 16.7 to just 10 per cent. In a

<sup>7</sup> There were 408,569 births of Austrian citizens in Austria in the period 2014–2019 (six years prior to 01 January 2020). A further 264,227 births occurred during 2010–2013 (between more than six and ten years prior to 01 January 2020).

<sup>8</sup> There were 53,911 naturalisations of people residing in Austria during the period 2014–2019 and a further 27,469 during 2010–2013.

<sup>9</sup> Between 2012 and 2019, some 123,980 Austrian citizens immigrated to Austria. However, not all of these may have remained permanently in the country, as there were also 167,520 emigrations of Austrian citizens during the same period.

first step, we may thus conclude that the potential for naturalisation in Austria amounts at least to some 600,000 people. However, we have to take into account several factors in order to approximate the number more closely.

Around a further 225,000 foreign citizens had been in Austria for between six and ten years by 01 January 2020, comprising a share of 15 per cent of the foreign and 2.5 per cent of the overall population. Members of this group would potentially qualify for early access to Austrian citizenship. If all members of this group made use of this opportunity, the share of remaining foreigners in the total population would come down further to 7.5 per cent.

These 7.5 per cent of the population represent the 670,000 foreign citizens who had lived in Austria for less than six years by 01 January 2020. They account for 45 per cent of the foreign population. Their share clearly reflects the large migration inflows to Austria during recent years. EU and EFTA citizens boasted a higher share of people with less than six years of residence in Austria (48.8 per cent) than third-country nationals (40.6). In other words, almost half of the EU/EFTA citizens living in Austria on 01 January 2020 moved there within the previous six years while, among third-country nationals, the share was only two-fifths. This can be traced back, on the one hand, to greater mobility among EU/EFTA citizens – who also face fewer restrictions for residence in Austria. On the other hand, EU/EFTA citizens in Austria are mostly German citizens whose immigration is driven, to a great extent, by migrants returning once their education is finished and thus staying for shorter periods in Austria.

Under current law, these people would not be eligible for naturalisation except in cases of its extension to the underage family members of naturalised persons. In order to determine the potential for naturalisation within this group, we would need to take a closer look at the age structure of the population, as set out below.

After having roughly determined a starting point for the potential for naturalisation in Austria, we need to fine-tune this number. As a first additional argument, we need to take into account that EU/EFTA citizens have little incentive to naturalise, as explained in Section 2 above. Of the almost 600,000 foreigners (6.7 per cent of the total population) with a residence of ten years or more in Austria, about 330,000 (55 per cent or 3.7 per cent of the total population) were third-country nationals and only 265,000 (45 per cent or 3 per cent of the total population) held the citizenship of an EU or EFTA member state. This mainly reflects the large number of immigrants from the Western Balkans and Turkey who arrived in Austria between the mid-1960s and the early 1990s and who have still not acquired Austrian citizenship, for whatever reason.

We may thus assume that naturalisation is more likely for the 330,000 people with third-country nationalities residing in Austria for more than ten years. This group represents 22.2 per cent of all foreigners living in Austria and 3.7 per cent of the total population. If all members of this group were naturalised, the share of foreigners in the Austrian population on 01 January 2020 would fall from 16.7 to 13 per cent. If all eligible EU/EFTA



citizens were also naturalised, the share of the foreign population in Austria would drop further to just 10 per cent.

#### **4. The potential for naturalisation among different groups of non-citizens living in Austria**

Let us now investigate the main issue of this chapter – the potential for naturalisation of non-citizens living in Austria. We first take a closer look at particular nationalities whose potential for naturalisation differs to some extent. Three groups are considered here: EU/EFTA nationals, European third-country nationals and non-European third-country nationals. Subsequently, we also describe their age structure and any differences between the Austrian provinces regarding the share of non-citizens.

##### ***4.1 Naturalisation potential among the EU and EFTA nationalities living in Austria***

For the sake of completeness, we start with EU/EFTA citizens and determine the share of persons in this group residing in Austria for ten years or more. At roughly 265,000 members, they represent 17.8 per cent of all foreigners and 3 per cent of the total population. Within this group there are about 124,000 nationals of EU member states prior to 2004 and other EFTA countries (8.4 per cent of all foreigners and 1.4 per cent of the total population). The largest cohort within this subgroup is formed by Germans, with almost 88,000 persons living for ten years or more in Austria. Also notable are Italians, with nearly 10,000 persons potentially eligible for naturalisation.

A larger subgroup is formed by citizens of the 13 EU member states that joined after 2004. Overall, there are about 140,000 people with these nationalities who have lived in Austria for more than ten years, representing 9.4 per cent of all foreigners and 1.6 per cent of the total population. The largest nationalities among this sub-group are Croatians, with almost 50,000 people, followed by Poles with 27,000 and Romanians with 24,000 respectively. Compared to the overall number of people with the same citizenship residing in Austria, Hungary (14 per cent), Bulgaria (17.2 per cent) and Romania (19.3 per cent), in particular, have low shares of long-term residents. This clearly reflects the transitory restrictions for access to employment which applied to citizens of these EU member states. Austria was among those countries that used the maximum seven-year period for these restrictions, which were only lifted in 2012 for Hungary and in 2014 for Romania and Bulgaria and which held back larger migration inflows to Austria before these dates. In contrast, the very high share of Croatian nationals residing for more than ten years in Austria (almost 60 per cent) stems from immigration during the guest-worker period or the Balkan crisis in the 1990s. As shown later, this share is similar or even higher for Serbian (65 per cent) and Bosnian (68.1 per cent) citizens, clearly indicating a common migration pattern for these three countries that has only been altered by Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013 and the resulting facilitation of migration to Austria.

**Table 11.3. Population in Austria on 1/1/2020 by EU/EFTA citizenship and length of registered stay**

Population on 1/1/2020	Total	Registered length of stay on reference date					
		6–10 years		10+ years			
		No.	% same ctz	No.	% same ctz	% all for- eigners	% total pop.
<b>EU/EFTA</b>	<b>778,844</b>	<b>133,933</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>264,750</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<i>EU member states prior to 2004 (14), EFTA</i>	<b>303,461</b>	<b>51,568</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>124,422</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Germany	200,059	35,329	17.7	87,974	44.0	5.9	1.0
Italy	32,506	5,195	16.0	9,654	29.7	0.6	0.1
<i>EU member states after 2004 (13)</i>	<b>475,383</b>	<b>82,365</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>140,328</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>1.6</b>
Romania	123,461	21,311	17.3	23,810	19.3	1.6	0.3
Hungary	87,604	18,982	21.7	12,261	14.0	0.8	0.1
Croatia	83,605	6,670	8.0	49,634	59.4	3.3	0.6
Poland	64,454	13,042	20.2	27,063	42.0	1.8	0.3
Slovakia	43,643	9,612	22.0	10,703	24.5	0.7	0.1
Bulgaria	32,566	5,522	17.0	5,604	17.2	0.4	0.1
Slovenia	21,461	3,727	17.4	4,992	23.3	0.3	0.1

Source: Statistics Austria, Population Statistics – Preliminary results for 1/1/2020.

#### **4.2 Naturalisation potential among European third-country nationals living in Austria**

We now turn our attention to people with third-country nationality who have resided for more than ten years in Austria. Of the 330,000 members of this group, 193,000 (58.3 per cent) are from European non-EU/EFTA countries. The largest groups are formed by nearly 80,000 Serbian citizens and 66,000 Bosnians. Other notable nationalities among this group include those from the Russian Federation, with 15,000 citizens residing for more than ten years in Austria, as well as 14,000 North Macedonian and 13,000 Kosovan citizens.

The single largest nationality among third-country nationals residing for ten years or more in Austria is Turkish. About 83,000 persons belong to this group, representing 5.6 per cent of all foreigners and 0.9 per cent of the total population. Turkish citizens make up an especially high share of residents living for over ten years in Austria (70.8 per cent), reflecting that immigration from Turkey to Austria has been quite low (at about 3,000 people per year) over the last 15 years. Taking together European third countries and Turkey, about 275,000 people have been resident in Austria for ten years or more and would potentially be eligible for naturalisation. This represents 83.5 per cent of all

third-country nationals in this group as well as 18.6 per cent of all foreigners – irrespective of the length of stay – and 3.1 per cent of the overall population.

**Table 11.4. Population in Austria on 1/1/2020 by non-EU/EFTA citizenship and length of registered stay**

Population on 1/1/2020	Registered length of stay on reference date						
	Total	6–10 years		10+ years			
		No.	% same ctz	No.	% same ctz	% all for- eigners	% total popn
<b>Non-EU/EFTA</b>	<b>708,176</b>	<b>90,264</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>330,455</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>3.7</b>
<b>European non-EU/EFTA (incl. Russian Fed.)</b>	<b>321,182</b>	<b>39,224</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>192,610</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>2.2</b>
% non-EU/EFTA	45.4	43.5		58.3			
Serbia	122,364	12,805	10.5	79,506	65.0	5.3	0.9
Bosnia	96,635	9,059	9.4	65,824	68.1	4.4	0.7
Russian Fed.	32,868	6,479	19.7	15,150	46.1	1.0	0.2
Kosovo	26,047	4,611	17.7	12,994	49.9	0.9	0.1
North Macedonia	24,100	3,102	12.9	13,576	56.3	0.9	0.2
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>117,640</b>	<b>13,095</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>83,283</b>	<b>70.8</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>
% non-EU/EFTA	16.6	14.5		25.2			
<b>European non-EU/ EFTA + Turkey</b>	<b>438,822</b>	<b>52,319</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>275,893</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>3.1</b>
% non-EU/EFTA	62.0	58.0		83.5			

Source: Statistics Austria, Population Statistics – Preliminary results for 1/1/2020.

### 4.3 Naturalisation potential among non-European citizens living in Austria

On 01 January 2020, about 270,000 citizens of non-European countries were living in Austria, about 38 per cent of all non-EU/EFTA citizens. Of these, only 20.3 per cent (55,000 people) had been resident in Austria for ten years or more. A further 14.1 per cent (38,000 people) had lived there for between six and ten years. Correspondingly, the vast majority of almost two-thirds (177,000 people or 65.7 per cent) of non-European citizens living in Austria had entered the country during the previous five years.

This distribution can be mainly attributed to citizens of just two countries: with about 51,000 from Syria and 44,000 from Afghanistan, these two countries each had more nationals living in Austria on 01 January 2020 than those originating from the African continent as a whole (about 36,000 citizens of African states) or North, Central and South America together (23,000 citizens). Yet, only very few of them had been living in Austria for ten years or more: among Syrians the share was 1.3 per cent (682 people); among Afghans, it was a little higher at 7.9 per cent (3,500 people), indicating

that immigration from Afghanistan to Austria had started to increase slightly earlier. The share of people staying between six and ten years was quite a bit higher for both nationalities as well: some 2,400 Syrian citizens (4.6 per cent) and almost 8,000 Afghan citizens (18.3 per cent) fulfilled this condition. Overall, of 192,000 Asian citizens living in Austria on 01 January 2020, only one sixth (32,000 people or 16.8 per cent) had been there for ten years or more.

**Table 11.5. Population in Austria on 1/1/2020 by non-European citizenship and length of registered stay**

Population on 1/1/2020	Total	Registered length of stay on reference date					
		6–10 years		10+ years			
		No.	%	No.	%	% all for- eigners	% total popu- lation
<i>Non-European citizens</i>	269,354	37,945	14.1	54,562	20.3	3.70	0.60
<i>% of non-EU/EFTA</i>	38.0	42.0		16.5			
Africa	35,629	6,282	17.6	10,068	28.3	0.70	0.10
North America	10,218	1,312	12.8	3,752	36.7	0.30	0.04
Central + South America	12,955	2,055	15.9	4,388	33.9	0.30	0.05
Asia (w/o Turkey, Cyprus)	191,930	25,345	13.2	32,249	16.8	2.20	0.40
Syria	51,441	2,361	4.6	682	1.3	0.05	0.01
Afghanistan	43,585	7,964	18.3	3,457	7.9	0.20	0.04
Iran	14,896	2,456	16.5	2,291	15.4	0.20	0.03
Iraq	13,479	1,121	8.3	1,142	8.5	0.10	0.01
Australia + Oceania	1,580	229	14.5	554	35.1	0.04	0.01
Unknown, stateless, unclear	17,042	2,722	16.0	3,551	20.8	0.20	0.04

Source: Statistics Austria, Population Statistics – Preliminary results for 1/1/2020.

In contrast, the share of people staying for more than ten years in Austria was significantly higher for citizens of other continents: at 10,000 out of 36,000 African citizens, it was 28.3 per cent. A further 6,300 members of this group (17.6 per cent) had lived there for between six and ten years. For the Americas as well as Australia and Oceania, about a third of these nationals fulfilled this criterion (all in all about 19,000 persons) and a further 15 per cent (10,000 people) had been resident for between six and ten years. Finally, among people with an unknown or unclear nationality, as well as for stateless persons, the share of those residing for ten years or more in Austria was about 20.8 per cent (concerning 3,600 people), while a further 16 per cent (some 2,700 people) had been in the country for six to ten years.

After having explained in detail the composition of the foreign population resident in Austria for ten years or more, we now turn to the age structure of the foreign population in order to determine the demographic potential for the extension of naturalisations to underage family members.

### 5. Age structure of the foreign population in Austria by length of residence

The share of people under 18 on 01 January 2020 was a little higher among foreign citizens (20.3 per cent) than in the total population (18.3 per cent). In absolute numbers, some 300,000 foreign citizens were less than 18 years old, of whom 160,000 came from third countries and 140,000 from other EU and EFTA countries. The vast majority of underage foreigners (185,000 people or 61.2 per cent) had been in Austria for less than six years. Only about 18.9 per cent (57,000) had been registered in Austria for between six and ten years and 19.8 per cent (59,800) for ten years or more. If we consider the last two groups to be already included in the potential for ordinary or early naturalisation, the additional potential stemming from the extension of naturalisation can be set, at most, at 185,000 people or 2.1 per cent of the total population. Of these, 86,700 held EU/EFTA citizenship (1 per cent of the total population), while 97,800 were underage third-country nationals, who represented 1.1 per cent of the total population.

**Table 11.6. Underage population in Austria on 1/1/2020 by citizenship and length of registered stay**

01.01.2020	Population aged under 18 years		Registered length of stay		
	Total	% all ages	< 6 years	6–10 years	10+ years
All citizens	1,628,649	18.3	607,529	331,084	690,036
Foreign citizens	<b>301,288</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>184,509</b>	<b>57,002</b>	<b>59,777</b>
% total population	3.4		2.1	0.6	0.7
EU/EFTA	140,922	18.1	86,737	29,710	24,475
% total population	1.6		1.0	0.3	0.3
Non-EU/EFTA	160,366	22.6	97,772	27,292	35,302
% total population	1.8		1.1	0.3	0.4

Source: Statistics Austria, Population Statistics – Preliminary results for 1/1/2020.

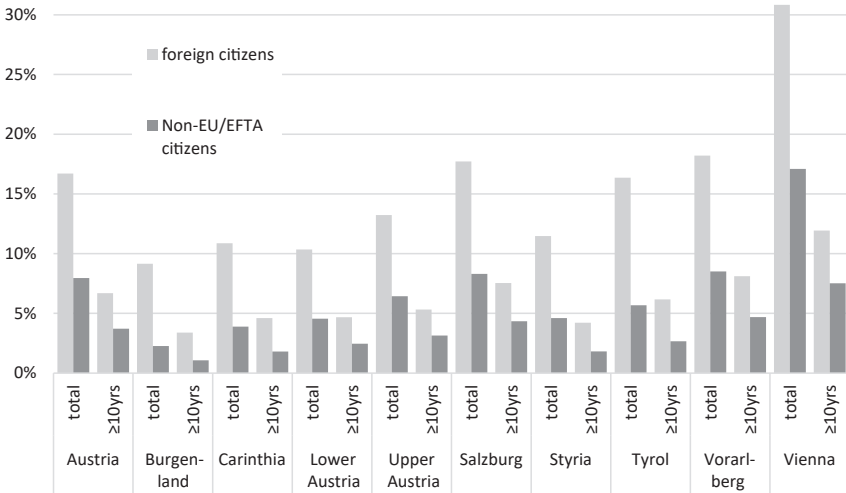
If we now add this potential additional 98,000 underage third-country nationals residing less than six years in Austria (1.1 per cent of the total population) to the 330,000 people with third-country nationalities residing in Austria for more than ten years (3.7 per cent of the total population), we can conclude that the potential for naturalisation would be about 428,000 people. This represents 4.8 per cent of the total population, so that the naturalisation of all members with this potential would reduce the share of foreign

citizens in Austria from 16.7 to 11.9 per cent. If we then add the underage EU/EFTA population residing in Austria for less than six years – about 87,000 (1 per cent of the total population) – to the roughly 265,000 EU/EFTA citizens eligible for naturalisation (3 per cent of the total population), we arrive at 352,000 people. This corresponds to 4 per cent of the total population. Naturalisation of all members of this second group would further reduce the share of foreigners in Austria to 7.9 per cent.

**6. Regional differences in the potential for naturalisation in Austria**

Because of the uneven distribution of the population with foreign citizenship within Austria, there are large regional differences in the potential for naturalisation in Austria. As can be seen in Figure 11.1, the share of foreign citizens residing in Austria for ten years or more varied greatly between the federal provinces. For Austria as a whole, the share of foreign citizens was 16.7 per cent on 01 January 2020, among whom the share of non-EU/EFTA citizens was 8 per cent. Around 6.7 per cent of the population were foreign citizens who had been living for ten years or more in Austria, while 3.7 per cent were non-EU/EFTA citizens who had lived for a similar time there.

**Figure 11.1. Share of foreign citizens (among them, non-EU/EFTA citizens) in Austria on 1/1/2020 by federal province and length of registered stay (%)**



Source: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Population Statistics – People residing ten years and more in AT are eligible for naturalisation.

Four of the nine federal provinces had significantly lower shares of foreigners than the national average. The lowest shares were recorded (in ascending order) in Burgenland at 9.2 per cent, Lower Austria at 10.3, Carinthia at 10.9 and Styria at 11.5 per cent. Consequently, these federal provinces also had low shares of foreigners who had been living there for ten years or more – the lowest in Burgenland at 3.4 per cent, followed by Styria with 4.2 per cent, Carinthia at 4.6 per cent and Lower Austria at 4.7 per cent.

The corresponding share of non-EU/EFTA citizens was also quite low in these federal provinces: it was lowest again in Burgenland at 2.3 per cent of the total population, followed by Carinthia at 3.9, Lower Austria at 4.5 and Styria at 4.6 per cent. The share of non-EU/EFTA citizens resident for ten years or more was thus very low, starting at just 1.1 per cent of the population in Burgenland, followed by 1.8 per cent each in Carinthia and Styria and 2.5 per cent in Lower Austria.

Three federal provinces had roughly the same shares of foreign citizens as the national average. These were Tyrol at 16.4 per cent, Salzburg at 17.7 and Vorarlberg at 18.2. The share of foreigners residing for ten years or more in Austria was 6.2 per cent in Tyrol while, at 7.5 per cent in Salzburg and 8.1 per cent in Vorarlberg, it was higher than the national average of 6.7 per cent.

At 5.7 per cent, the share of non-EU/EFTA citizens in Tyrol was significantly lower than the national average (8 per cent), while Salzburg (8.3) and Vorarlberg (8.5) had shares largely corresponding to it. The share of non-EU/EFTA residents of ten years or more was 3.7 per cent for Austria as a whole but lower in Tyrol at 2.7 per cent and higher in Salzburg (4.3 per cent) and Vorarlberg (4.7).

Vienna is clearly distinct compared to all other federal provinces. At 30.8 per cent of the total population, it had by far the highest share of foreigners on 01 January 2020. Non-EU/EFTA citizens made up 17.1 per cent of the population. Yet, the share of foreign citizens residing there for ten years or more was only 11.9 per cent and that of non-EU/EFTA citizens was 7.5 per cent. Thus, despite a very large population base of foreign citizens, even in Vienna the majority of foreigners were not (yet) potentially eligible for naturalisation. If all people with a sufficient length of stay were naturalised in Vienna, this would bring down the share of foreigners to around 18.9 per cent still. If all potentially eligible non-EU/EFTA citizens were to opt for naturalisation, the share of foreigners in Vienna would be reduced only to 23.3 per cent. Due to the concentration of recent migration inflows to Vienna, the share of foreigners would thus remain quite high, if even all potentially eligible migrants opted for naturalisation.

## **7. Evolution of the potential for naturalisation in Austria since 2012**

Data on the length of registration of a residence in Austria have been available since the beginning of 2002. This means that the first date for which the number of people residing in Austria for ten years or more can be determined is 01 January 2012. Starting

from this date it is interesting to analyse how the number of people who are potentially eligible for naturalisation in Austria has evolved over time.

Taking into account the changes in migration inflows to Austria which occurred in 2015 and 2016 (a much higher share of immigrants from non-EU/EFTA countries than both before and afterwards was noted during these two years), it is also useful to include 01 January 2015 in the analysis. The number of people present at different dates for between six and ten years – and thus potentially eligible for early naturalisation in Austria – has been omitted in this analysis, as such retrospective figures are not very relevant if the members had been living for ten years or more in Austria at the moment that it was carried out.

We start by looking at the evolution of the overall number of foreigners in Austria during the period 2012–2020. On 01 January 2012, there were about 950,000 foreign citizens registered in Austria, then representing 11.3 per cent of the total population. By 01 January 2015, their number had increased by about 200,000 (+20.5 per cent) to nearly 1.15 million. This increase was mainly driven by a rise in the number of EU/EFTA citizens.<sup>10</sup> While there were roughly 450,000 EU/EFTA citizens living in Austria at the beginning of 2012, three years later their number had risen to nearly 580,000 (+29.3 per cent). In contrast, the number of non-EU/EFTA citizens rose by only 60,000 (+12.6 per cent). In absolute figures, the number of EU/EFTA citizens outstripped that of non-EU/EFTA citizens during that period. The share of non-EU/EFTA citizens among foreigners in Austria consequently fell from 52.9 per cent on 01 January to 49.5 per cent on 01 January 2015.

Over the five years from 2015 to 2020, the number of foreign citizens in Austria rose by 341,000 people (+29.7 per cent), increasing from 1.15 million to 1.49 million. The number of EU/EFTA citizens increased by a third (200,000 people or +34.5 per cent) from 580,000 to 780,000 during this same period, while that of non-EU/EFTA citizens went up by a quarter (141,000 people or +24.9 per cent) from 570,000 to 710,000. Thus, even though there were large increases in immigration flows from non-EU/EFTA countries in 2015 and 2016, these were offset by even larger immigration flows of EU/EFTA citizens occurring constantly from 2015 to 2020.

The development of the number of foreign citizens who had remained in Austria for more than ten years overall followed the same pattern as that of the foreign population as a whole, albeit less pronounced. On 01 January 2012 there were about 375,000 foreign citizens who had been living ten years or more in Austria. By 01 January 2015, their number had increased by a quarter (94,000 or +25.2 per cent) to nearly 470,000. Among this group there were more non-EU/EFTA than EU/EFTA citizens. On 01 January 2012, the number of non-EU/EFTA citizens residing in Austria for ten years

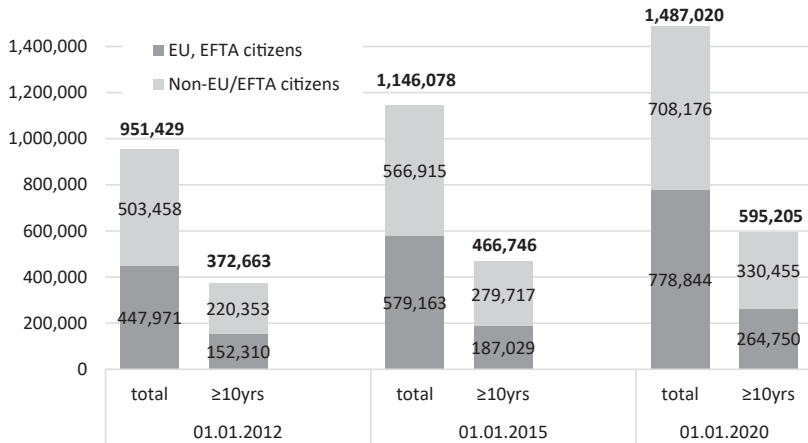
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<sup>10</sup> The numbers have been corrected for the accession of Croatia to the EU on 01 July 2014. For the purposes of comparison, Croatia is also included under EU/EFTA countries on 01 January 2012.



or more was about 220,000, compared to just over 150,000 EU/EFTA citizens. Over the following three years their number increased by nearly 60,000 (+26.9 per cent) to 280,000 for non-EU/EFTA citizens but only by 35,000 (+22.8 per cent) to nearly 190,000 for EU/EFTA citizens.

**Figure 11.2. Evolution of foreign population in AT 2012–2020 by selected citizenship and length of stay**



Source: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Population Statistics – Preliminary figures for 1/1/2020.

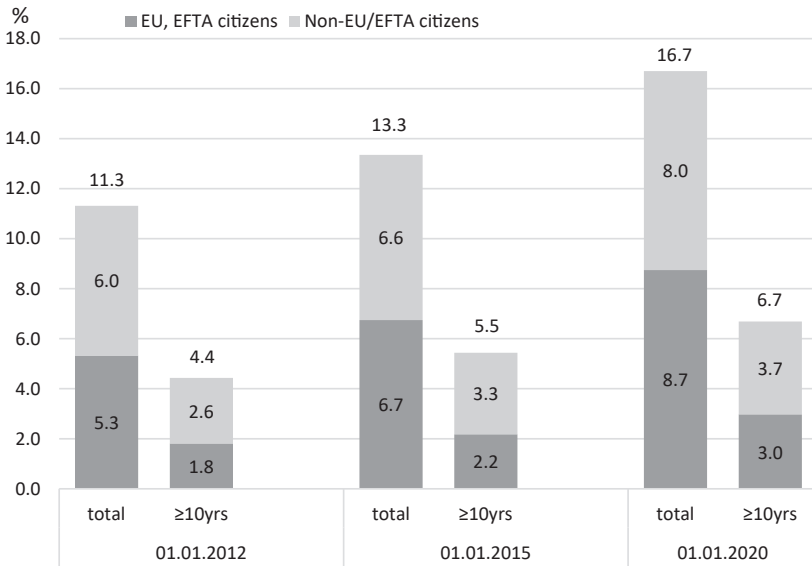
The further evolution from 2015 to 2020 was as follows: the number of EU/EFTA citizens grew by about 78,000 (+41.6 per cent) to 265,000 during this period. This large increase reflects the strong inflows of immigrants from Central European EU member states after the lifting of labour-market restrictions in Austria in 2012. The number of non-EU/EFTA citizens staying for ten years or more rose only by 50,000 (+18.1 per cent) to 330,000 over the same five years. This is clearly linked to quite low numbers of immigrants from non-EU/EFTA countries in the years after the amendment of the Austrian Foreigners Residence Act in 2006, which set out several restrictions to the immigration of non-EU/EFTA citizens to Austria.

We now turn to the evolution of the share of foreigners and their different sub-groups in the total population in the period 2012–2020. The share of the overall foreign population in Austria progressed from 11.3 per cent in 2012 to 13.3 per cent in 2015 and to 16.7 per cent in 2020. This translates into 0.67 per cent annually for the period 2012–2015 and 0.68 per cent for 2015–2020. Despite the massive inflows of 2015 and 2016, there is not much overall visible difference between the two periods.

For EU/EFTA citizens, the share evolved from 5.3 per cent in 2012 to 6.7 in 2015 and 8.7 in 2020. This corresponds to 0.47 per cent annually for the period 2012–2015 and 0.4

per cent for 2015–2020. Non-EU/EFTA citizens made up 6 per cent of the population in 2015, followed by 6.6 per cent in 2015 and 8 per cent in 2020. For the annual increases, this translates into 0.2 per cent during 2012–2015 and 0.3 for 2015–2020.

**Figure 11.3. Evolution of share of foreign population in AT 2012–2020 by length of stay (%)**



Source: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Population Statistics – Preliminary figures for 1/1/2020.

Turning now to the share, in the total population, of foreign citizens resident for ten years or more in Austria, this was 4.4 per cent on 01 January 2012, followed by 5.5 per cent at the beginning of 2015 and 6.7 per cent at the start of 2020. The annual increase was thus 0.4 per cent in 2012–2015 and 0.2 in 2015–2020. These figures clearly reflect the overall low immigration figures to Austria from 2005 to 2010.

The picture gets a little more diverse if we again split the share of foreigners for EU/EFTA and non-EU/EFTA citizens. In 2012, just 1.8 per cent of the population were EU/EFTA citizens who had been residing in Austria for ten years or more. In 2015, their share had progressed to 2.2 per cent and by 2020 to 3 per cent. In terms of annual growth, this means 0.1 per cent for 2012–2015 and 0.2 per cent for 2015–2020.

For non-EU/EFTA citizens living in Austria for ten years or more the share in the total population was 2.6 per cent in 2012, 3.3 in 2015 and 3.7 in 2020. This translates into a growth of 0.2 per cent annually for 2012–2015 but less than 0.1 per cent annually for 2015–2020.

## **8. Interim conclusion: the evolution of the foreigners' share, if the potential for naturalisation had been fully exploited**

Summing up the data thus far, we can say that, in 2012, there were about 375,000 people who were potentially eligible for naturalisation, of whom some 220,000 non-EU/EFTA citizens were more likely to acquire Austrian citizenship. This corresponds to 4.4 and 2.6 per cent of the then-total population respectively. If all such potential had been realised, the share of the foreign population would have dropped from 11.7 to 7.3 per cent of the population or to 9.1 per cent if only non-EU/EFTA citizens were counted as likely candidates for naturalisation.

In 2015, the number of potential candidates for accession to Austrian citizenship had increased to around 470,000 people, of whom 280,000 were non-EU/EFTA citizens. This translates into 5.5 and 3.3 per cent of the then-total population respectively. Realising this full potential for naturalisation would have reduced the share of foreigners in the total population from 13.3 per cent to 7.8 or 10 per cent. Compared to 2012, the increase in the foreign population would therefore have been reduced from 1.6 to 0.5 per cent or 0.9 per cent if only non-EU/EFTA citizens were counted.

In 2020, the number of foreign citizens resident in Austria for ten years or more had risen to nearly 600,000 people, of whom some 330,000 were non-EU/EFTA citizens. In terms of the overall population, this accounted for 6.7 and 3.7 per cent respectively. If all those potentially eligible for naturalisation had used this option, the share of foreigners would have dropped from 16.7 to just 10 or 13 per cent of the total population. In relation to 2015, the share of the foreign population in these cases would have been reduced from 3.4 to 2.2 per cent or 3 per cent for the non-EU/EFTA population only.

Comparing the two periods – 2012–2015 and 2015–2020 – reveals that current legal conditions for naturalisation entail similar quantities for the potentially possible reduction of the foreign population through naturalisation. The reduction may have been a maximum of 1.2 percentage points for the overall foreign population and a maximum of 0.7 for the non-EU/EFTA population only. This situation may change at some point in the mid-2020s, once many of the immigrants from 2015 and 2016 reach a length of residence in Austria of ten years or more. Otherwise, the dominance of intra-EU/EFTA immigration to Austria means that naturalisation rates are not very likely to go up for the foreseeable future, except in unexpected circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

## **9. Naturalisation propensity in Austria 2012–2019**

This brings us to the final point of the analysis. After defining the potential numbers of people being naturalised, we can compare the evolution of these figures with the

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<sup>11</sup> E.g. if a process of disintegration of the EU/EFTA occurs.

actual naturalisations recorded in Austria during the period 2012–2019. From this, we can approximate the share of people actually being naturalised among the population recently eligible for naturalisation in Austria (i.e. the propensity for naturalisation among the different sub-groups of the foreign population in Austria).

As we have seen in the previous section, the number of foreigners staying for ten years or more in Austria and thus being potentially eligible for naturalisation increased by 94,083 during the three years between 01 January 2012 and 01 January 2015. During this period there were 21,967 naturalisations recorded in Austria.<sup>12</sup> We can add together these two figures to determine the potential number of naturalisations during this period. If naturalisations actually occurring are set in relation to this overall figure, we arrive at a naturalisation rate of 18.9 per cent. This means that about one fifth of the people who are potentially newly eligible for naturalisation in Austria during 2012–2015 have actually been granted Austrian citizenship during this period.

**Table 11.7. Evolution of foreign population in Austria staying ten years or more in Austria 2012–2020 and naturalisations in Austria, 2012–2020**

		Foreign citizens	EU, EFTA citizens	Non-EFTA citizens
01.01.2012		372,663	152,310	220,353
01.01.2015		466,746	187,029	279,717
2012–2015	difference	94,083	34,719	59,364
	naturalisations	21,967	3,436	18,531
2012–2015	<i>difference incl. naturalisations</i>	<i>116,050</i>	<i>38,155</i>	<i>77,895</i>
	<i>naturalisation rate %</i>	<i>18.9</i>	<i>9.0</i>	<i>23.8</i>
01.01.2020		595,205	264,750	330,455
2015–2020	difference	128,459	77,721	50,738
	naturalisations	45,654	7,892	37,762
2015–2020	<i>difference incl. naturalisations</i>	<i>174,113</i>	<i>85,613</i>	<i>88,500</i>
	<i>naturalisation rate %</i>	<i>26.2</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>42.7</i>

Source: Statistics Austria, Naturalisation Statistics 2012–2019; Population Statistics for 1/1/2012, 1/1/2015 and 1/1/2020 – Preliminary results for 1/1/2020.

As can be expected from the legal conditions mentioned above, there are marked differences in naturalisation rates for EU/EFTA-citizens on the one hand and non-EU/EFTA citizens on the other. While less than one tenth (9 per cent) of the newly eligible EU/EFTA citizens actually gained Austrian citizenship during 2012–2015, nearly a quarter (23.8 per cent) of the newly eligible non-EU/EFTA citizens did so.

<sup>12</sup> Only cases of people residing in Austria were included in this count. There were a further 251 naturalisations of persons residing abroad – 99 of these covered former EU/EFTA citizens and 152 covered former non-EU/EFTA citizens.

During the period 2015–2019, the number of annual naturalisations in Austria increased slightly to reach a total of 45,654<sup>13</sup> being recorded over these five years. The overall naturalisation rate was higher than in the previous period, increasing to more than a quarter (26.2 per cent) of newly eligible foreigners. As the naturalisation rate for EU/EFTA citizens remained quite stable, at less than one tenth (9.2 per cent), the increase was exclusively due to a significantly higher share of non-EU/EFTA citizens (42.7 per cent) becoming newly eligible. Yet, even these higher rates only represent a minority of the newly eligible population.

This underlines that there ought to be significant other factors contributing to the low naturalisation rates in Austria.<sup>14</sup> Reichel (2011) and Bauböck et al. (2013) note that actual naturalisation numbers are determined by several factors. Firstly, the income situation of migrants plays an important role, both in the need for them to earn over a certain threshold as a prerequisite for naturalisation and in relation to being able to afford the cost of high naturalisation fees in Austria. Secondly, individual life plans related to the family extension of naturalisation or return-migration plans (often at retirement) certainly influence the decision to naturalise and at which point in time. Thirdly, migrants may maintain an emotional attachment to their citizenship of origin or have an instrumental interest in keeping it – e.g. to retain the possibility of real-estate ownership or inheritance in the country of origin, which is often prohibited for non-citizens. Finally, naturalisation figures are determined not only by eligibility and propensity but also by administrative decisions to grant or deny citizenship. This means that withdrawn applications and rejection rates should also be taken into account when interpreting actual naturalisation numbers, although official data on these are missing in Austria.

We may thus conclude that gaining Austrian citizenship is primarily attractive for non-EU/EFTA citizens and much less so for EU/EFTA citizens. Yet, even though the numbers of non-EU/EFTA immigrants to Austria rose briefly during 2015 and 2016, we may expect only a limited demand for naturalisation in the coming years. Many of the arrivals of 2015 and 2016 either do not fulfil the other prerequisites for naturalisation or lack the financial means to cover the considerable fees and other costs of this procedure.

## 10. Summary and conclusions

In this study, we have examined only one of the pre-requisites for naturalisation under Austrian law – the length of continuous residence in the country. As an approximation, calculations have been based on the criterion of length of stay of ten years or more in

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<sup>13</sup> Between 2015 and 2019 there were a further 564 naturalisations pertaining to people living abroad; of these 176 covered former EU/EFTA-citizens and 388 former non-EU/EFTA citizens.

<sup>14</sup> For a general discussion of immigrants' propensity to naturalise, see also [Chapter 2](#) by Max Haller in this volume.

Austria. Early access to naturalisation under certain conditions after six years of residence would, for most sub-groups of foreign citizens, add a further half the number of potential members.

We have argued that there is little incentive for EU/EFTA citizens to apply for citizenship, as they largely have the same rights as nationals (except for voting in regional and national elections) and are generally disinclined to renounce their current citizenship. Low naturalisation rates of about 1 per cent of residents or about 9 per cent of people being newly eligible to acquire Austrian citizenship confirm that this not a relevant interest for most EU/EFTA citizens residing there. The size of the eligible EU/EFTA citizen population on 01 January 2020 was 265,000 (3 per cent of the total population) based on a residence of ten years or more, adding 134,000 (1.5 per cent) if also including people with six to ten years of residence in Austria.

Among non-EU/EFTA citizens, the propensity for naturalisation was much higher and increased over time from about a quarter (24 per cent) in 2012–2015 to more than two-fifths (43 per cent) in 2015–2019. Overall, about 330,000 non-EU/EFTA citizens were resident in Austria for ten years or more on 01 January 2020 – 3.7 per cent of the total population. A further 90,000 non-EU/EFTA citizens potentially qualify for early naturalisation, as they have been living in Austria between six and ten years. This corresponds to a further 1 per cent of the population. The naturalisation of all non-EU/EFTA citizens with a residence of ten years or more in Austria on 01 January 2020 would reduce the share of foreign citizens in Austria from 16.7 to 13 per cent. This would roughly offset the increase in the foreign population in Austria during the last five years. The naturalisation of eligible EU/EFTA citizens would further reduce the foreigners' share in the population to 10 per cent. If persons with a residence of six to ten years were also all naturalised, the percentage of foreigners would drop further to 7.5 per cent, less than half the actual share recorded on 01 January 2020.

The underage population of non-EU/EFTA citizens living less than six years in Austria accounts for 98,000 people or 1.1 per cent of the population. Minors with non-EU/EFTA citizenship resident for six to ten years amount to 27,000 people or 0.3 per cent of the total population.

At the regional level, Vienna has the highest potential for naturalisation, followed by Vorarlberg and Salzburg, if only non-EU/EFTA citizens resident for ten years or more are counted. This differs a little from the ranking of federal provinces with regards to the overall share of foreigners, where Tyrol and Upper Austria also rank highly.

Compared to the potential figures, the real naturalisation figures are very low, especially when compared at the European level. Austria is, in this respect, similar to neighbouring Czechia, Slovakia and Slovenia – which, however, all have much smaller foreign population stocks. Germany and Switzerland, which have similar shares of foreign citizens to Austria, have somewhat higher naturalisations rates, even though these are still low when compared to Sweden, the Netherlands or France.

Low naturalisation rates in Austria may thus well be the result of the many other prerequisites to be fulfilled apart from six or ten years of residence. Not the least among these is the strong restriction of dual citizenship under Austrian law. However, naturalisation rates seem to be strongly influenced by economic requirements, as Stadlmair (2017) found out in his comparative study of naturalisation practises among EU member states. Thus, the decisive factor here may well be Austria's very demanding economic preconditions for naturalisation. As discussed at the beginning, a very substantial part (about a quarter) of all Austrian employees do not earn enough from their gainful employment to fulfil these conditions. Further research is needed to determine to what extent certain nationalities are affected by these income requirements. In a second step this could then be linked to the different propensities for naturalisation observed among the various groups of foreigners living in Austria.

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