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**THE FUTURE OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH:
ESTIMATES FOR AUSTRIA AND FOR THE PROVINCES
OF BURGENLAND, CARINTHIA AND VIENNA**

ANNE GOUJON AND CLAUDIA REITER

Abstract

Secularization and migration have substantially affected the place of the Protestant Church in the Austrian society in the last decades. The number of members has been shrinking markedly from 447 thousand members in 1971 to 278 thousand in 2018. The trend is visible across all provinces, although the magnitude is stronger in Vienna where both disaffiliation and international migration are stronger: In the capital city, the Protestant population diminished from 126 thousand to 47 thousand over the 1971-2018 period. Using population projections of membership to the Protestant Church, we look at the potential future of affiliation to the Protestant Church in Austria, and in three provinces: Burgenland, Carinthia, and Vienna from 2018 to 2048, considering different paths of fertility and disaffiliation. We also look at the impact of different scenarios regarding the composition of international migration flows on affiliation to the Protestant Church. Our findings suggest that in the absence of compensatory flows, the Protestant Church will keep shrinking unless it manages to stop disaffiliation. The projections also show that migrants, especially within mobile Europe, are a potential source of members that is at present not properly contributing to membership in Austria. According to the TREND EUROPE scenario, which is – seen from today – the most likely scenario with a continuation of declining entries and increased exits, the Protestant population in Austria would still decline from 283 thousand in 2018 to 144 thousand in 2048 (-49%). At the level of the three provinces, the decline would be faster in Vienna (-42%, from 47 to 27 thousand) than in Burgenland (-26%, from 32 to 24 thousand) and Carinthia (-37%, from 48 to 30 thousand). According to this scenario, by 2048 the Protestant population would correspond to 1.5% of the total population of Austria (1.3% in Vienna, 7.3% in Burgenland and 5.4% in Carinthia). Other scenarios reflect the potential impact of different religious composition of future migrant flows, as well as changing disaffiliation patterns. Only under the LIFT scenario, which assumes a reduction in exits by 50% and more migrants enrolling to the Protestant Church, we see an end of the haemorrhage and even an increase in the number of Protestants in Vienna.

Keywords

Protestant Church, Austria, Austrian provinces, membership projection, secularization, migration.

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The future of the Protestant Church: Estimates for Austria and for the Provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia and Vienna

Anne Goujon and Claudia Reiter

1. Introduction

Protestant communities have existed as a minority religion for a number of centuries in Austria, a predominantly Roman Catholic country. Since the 1970s, these two Christian denominations have been facing important changes through two main forces: secularization and migration.

Secularization reflects the fact that religion gradually loses the overarching importance that it had at one point in people's lives as a result of modernization and enlightenment. While religion is still part of the cultural identity of most people, it has become more of an individual characteristic. Secularization has led to a decline in religiosity with less people believing and practicing the religion they were born into. While these phenomena are present across the Global North, they are more visible – and definitely more measurable – in countries with church taxes, whether they are collected by the government (Germany) or directly from registered members of churches to fund those religious organizations such as in Austria (church taxes also exist in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Switzerland in Europe). The secularization trend is reinforced by the weak transmission of religion from parents to children, so that the number of baptized children also decreases.

Migration also affected the space allocated to more traditional religious communities by increasing competition in the faith market, and therefore religious diversity. In the past thirty years, migration to Austria increased primarily as a result of the increase in the demand for labour, and also crises in neighbouring countries such as the Yugoslavian war and the break of the Berlin Wall. More recently, the war that erupted in 2011 in Syria and other conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, and dire poverty in further countries of origin led more people to look for living options elsewhere. Over a period of several decades, migrants to Austria have brought with them religious traditions that had been rare in the population before, particularly traditions from Islam and Orthodox Christianity.

The changes brought by secularization and migration are reinforced by the main demographic trend affecting Austria and many societies in the global north today that is ageing. While longer lives mean more potential years of membership to the Protestant Church, ageing also results from less children being born, implying that the renewal potential is not guaranteed.

While trends of secularization, religious diversification and aging, which are shaping the religious landscape of Austria today, are quantifiable, the future is largely unknown.

The database of the Protestant Church shows a substantial decline in the number of adherents to the Protestant Church¹. It went from 447 thousand members in 1971 to 278 thousand in 2018, hence a decline by 38% (-1% average annual growth rate), while at the same time the population residing in Austria has increased from 7.9 million to 8.8 million, hence an 11% plus (+0.3% average annual growth rate). These figures set the scene for projections aimed at quantifying future membership in the Protestant Church from 2018 to 2048, based on several scenarios for Austria and three provinces: Burgenland, Carinthia and Vienna. The work presented in this paper distinguishes itself from the two main other projection exercises that have been conducted so far. While Goujon et al. (2017) focused on affiliation (self-identified association with Protestantism), we examine here the future of membership. The latter was also at the core of the projections developed by Fliegenschnee et al. (2004), which we update here with more recent input data in terms of demographic and membership trends.

Following this introduction, in section 2 we look at the changes that have occurred since 2001 in the Protestant population using census and membership data from the Protestant Church. In section 3, we briefly review previous work that has projected the Protestant population. The data, methods and scenarios for projecting the number of members to the Protestant Church to 2048 are detailed in section 4. The last section will present the scenario results.

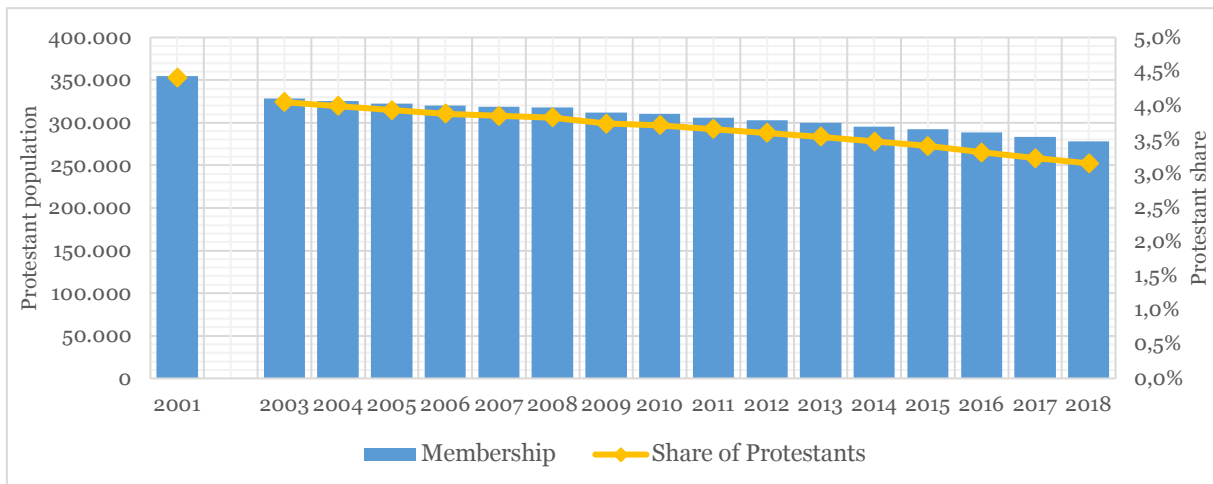
2. Members to the Protestant Church since 2001

As previously mentioned, the structure and size of the Protestant Church in Austria have been considerably changing for the last years. While back in 2001, about 376 thousand people living in Austria belonged to the Protestant Church (according to census information), the number has significantly decreased ever since, with only about 278 thousand people being affiliated to the Protestant Church today – despite continuous population growth in Austria. Consequently, the share of Protestant Church members among the total population has diminished substantially as well – from 4.4% in 2001 to only 3.2% in 2018.

Figure 1 depicts the development of Protestant Church membership in Austria since 2001, highlighting the clear downward trend, both in terms of absolute membership numbers and relative share in the total population.

¹ The database only includes members from the A.B. Protestant Church (Augsburg confession). Members from the Reformed Tradition belonging to the H.B Protestant Church (= Helvetic i.e. Swiss Confession) are not included. The majority of Protestants in Austria (about 96%) belong to the A.B. confession.

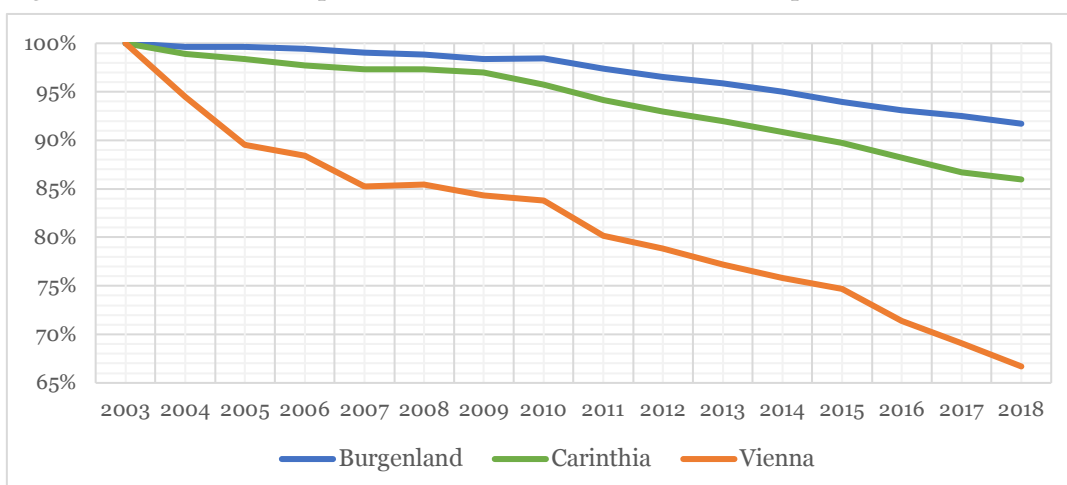
Figure 1. Protestant Church membership (A.B. Confession), Austria, 2001-2018



Sources: 2001: Statistics Austria (Census); 2003-2018: Protestant Church Austria (Amtsblatt für die evangelische Kirche in Österreich)

Similar trends can be observed in the provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia and Vienna – although at different pace and magnitude. Figure 2 presents the annual development of Protestant membership as a percentage of the number of members in 2003 (2003=100). The loss in the number of affiliates is much more marked in Vienna, the more secularized capital, than the two mainly rural provinces, Burgenland and Carinthia. Nevertheless, substantial and continuous membership decrease happened to be a general trend for the Protestant Church in all parts of Austria (see also Figure 4). It is worth noting that, though, that the number of members in Carinthia (~58 thousand) and Burgenland (~37 thousand) has remained constant between 1971 until 2001, while membership was already on the decline in Vienna from 126 thousand to 72 thousand during the same 30-year period (see Figure 5).

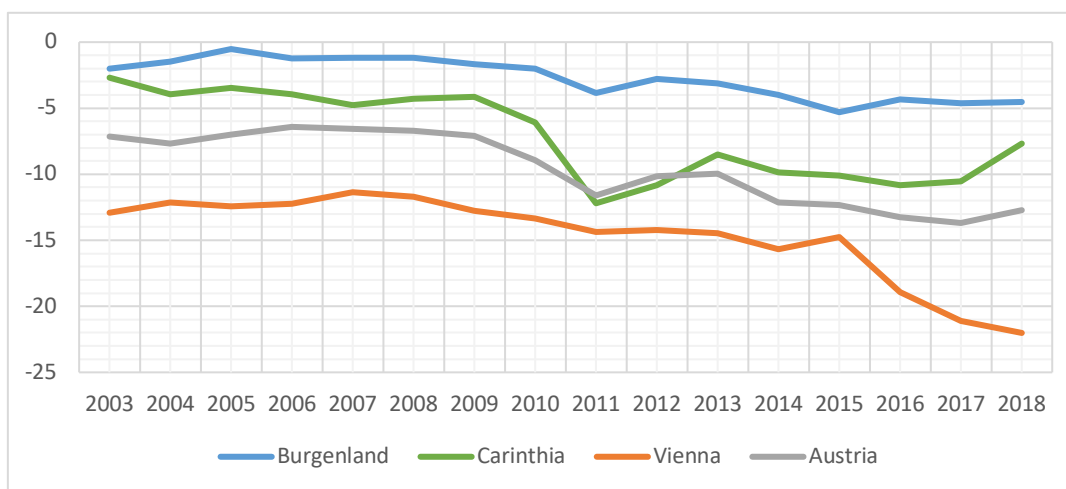
Figure 2. Annual development of A.B. Protestant membership (2003=100), 2003-2018



Source: Amtsblatt für die evangelische Kirche in Österreich 2004-2019

The main reason behind the strong decline over the last fifteen years lies in the increasing numbers of Church exits. Figure 3 depicts the net exit rates (entrants minus exits divided by the number of Protestant Church members per 1,000 of population) for Austria, Burgenland, Carinthia, and Vienna. As can be seen, this rate was negative for all years and regions, i.e. more people left the Protestant Church than entered it. However, pace and magnitude of this trend vary again across provinces, with Vienna being at the forefront during the whole period.

Figure 3. Net exit rate for Protestant Church A.B. (2003=100), 2003-2018



Source: Amtsblatt für die evangelische Kirche in Österreich 2004-2019

3. Estimating and Projecting the Protestant Population

There have been several attempts at estimating the religious composition of Austria, especially after Statistics Austria removed the question about the religious affiliation from the census questionnaire². In the early 2000s, the Protestant Church was also interested in understanding what the observed trends would imply for its future membership. It was in this context that Fliegenschnee et al. (2004) projected future affiliation to the Protestant Church to 2031, based on the census counts of 2001 and information about the demographic and religious mobility (exit and entrance) behaviour in the Church, and on several scenarios about future developments. The estimates are shown in Table 1.

With 288,328 members in 2016, the actual number of Protestants (A.B.) lies between the projection results according to the 'doubled exits' and 'constant' scenarios . Both scenarios

² Austrian censuses used to enumerate the religious affiliation of the population until 2001. Since then, Austria has moved to a complete register-based census. Even though data on religious affiliation are still collected in the ZMR (Zentrales Melderegister), filling one's religion in the Meldezettel is not compulsory and thus data on religious affiliation are not released anymore.

also predict the members in Vienna, Burgenland, and Carinthia very accurately. In the 'constant scenario', based on the data from 2001 and following the fertility, mortality and migration projections of Statistics Austria, constant entry and exit rates were assumed. Moreover, children born to Protestant mothers were assumed to be baptized as Protestants. In the 'doubled exits scenario', the demographic parameters were the same as in the constant scenario, but the exit rates were doubled by the end of the projection period in 2031. Other scenarios were considered as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Projected Protestant population in Austria, Vienna, Burgenland and Carinthia according to six different scenarios, from 2001 to 2031

	Demographic	Constant	Halved exits	Doubled exits	Weak identity	Strong Identity
Austria						
2001	354,559	354,559	354,559	354,559	354,559	354,559
2016	333,945	<u>299,650</u>	310,228	<u>278,607</u>	315,752	353,225
2031	306,917	245,083	274,619	191,685	271,283	346,208
Vienna						
2001	64,085	64,085	64,085	64,085	64,085	64,085
2016	60,436	<u>49,131</u>	52,322	42,784	57,034	61,764
2031	55,999	36,512	44,808	22,868	49,396	58,703
Burgenland						
2001	35,075	35,075	35,075	35,075	35,075	35,075
2016	33,069	32,669	32,883	<u>32,249</u>	31,247	33,780
2031	30,400	29,639	30,308	28,353	26,845	31,848
Carinthia						
2001	56,717	56,717	56,717	56,717	56,717	56,717
2016	54,587	51,412	52,514	<u>49,228</u>	51,487	55,797
2031	51,300	45,351	48,580	39,306	45,175	53,798

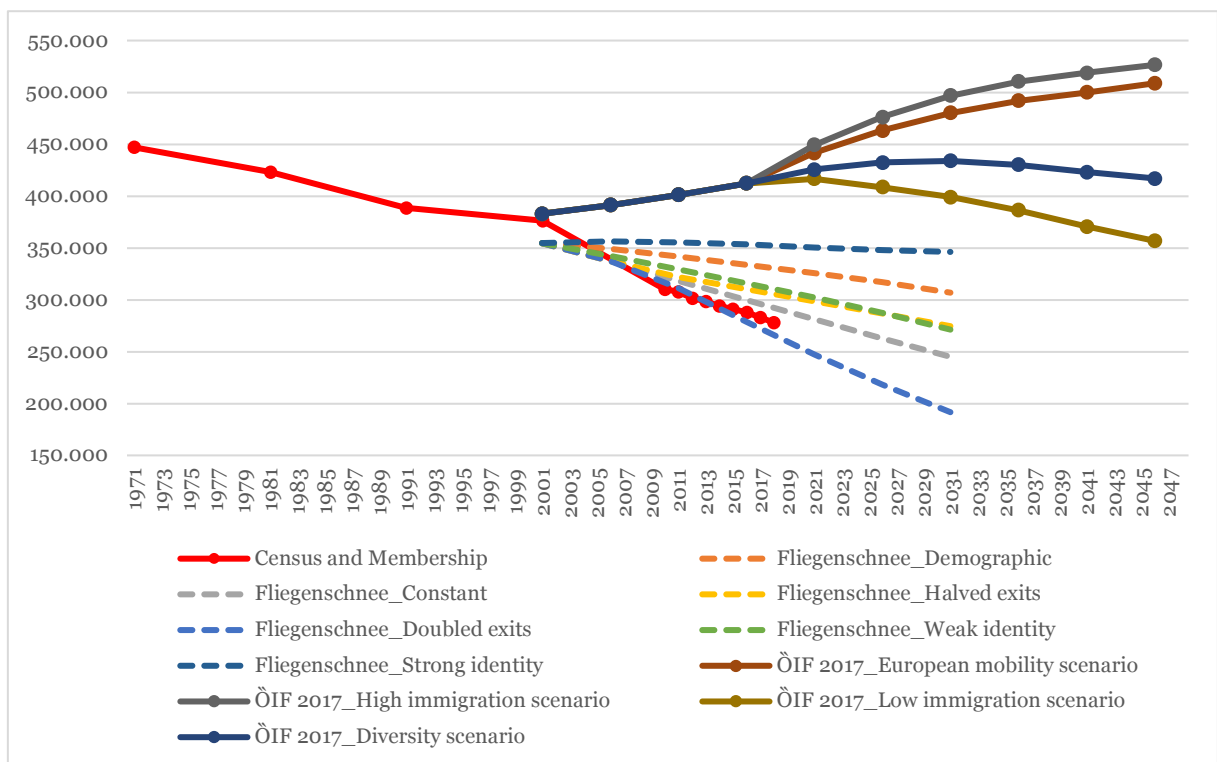
Source: Fliegenschnee et al. (2004).

Note: The projected membership numbers that are close to the actual measure in 2016 are underlined.

Several studies have reconstructed and projected the affiliation to different religions in Austria (Goujon et al. 2007, 2017), Vienna (Goujon and Bauer 2015; Goujon et al. 2017), and Vorarlberg (Goujon et al. 2018). Results in terms of Protestant population of Austria and Vienna are shown in Figures 4 and 5 below. The figures also include the actual number of members from 1971 to 2018. The projections all start from the 2001 census, the last time information on religious affiliation was collected by the Austrian census, and reconstruct the later size of the different religious affiliations based on estimates and hypotheses about their fertility, migration and religious mobility patterns. While these projections estimate the potential of believers affiliated to the Protestant Church, they are different from

membership, especially because the projections assumes that Protestant migrants who are coming to Austria are counted as Protestants, whether or not they become members of the Protestant Church. In fact, the number of Protestants is noticeably higher in the reconstruction compared to that in the membership database of the Protestant Church for 2016 (+124 thousand for Austria and +32 thousand for Vienna) and the difference is increasing over time, meaning that probably a large share of those migrants do not join the Protestant Church.

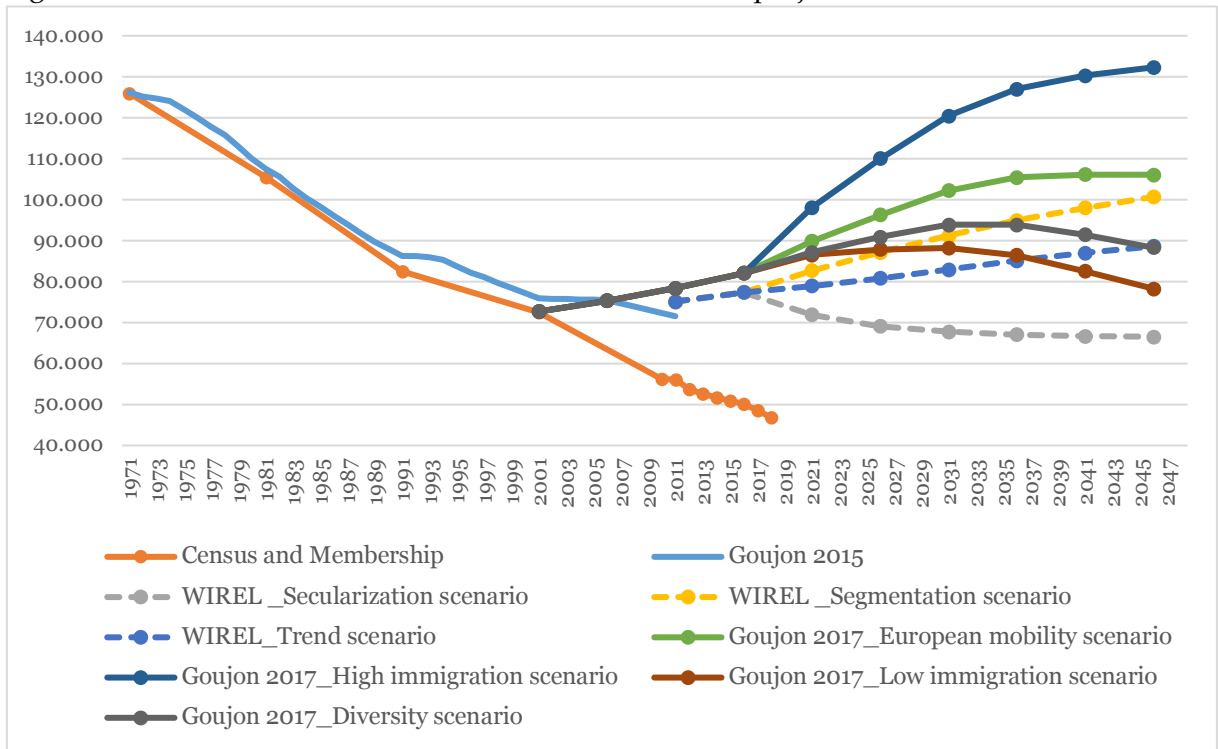
Figure 4. Number of Protestants in Austria, estimates and projections, 1971-2048



Sources: 1971-2001: Statistics Austria (Censuses); 2003-2018: Protestant Church Austria (Amtsblatt für die evangelische Kirche in Österreich); Fliegenschnee et al. 2004; Goujon et al. 2017 (for the ÖIF – Austrian Integration Fund)

To estimate the share of potential migrants that have become members, we simulated the entry into the Protestant Church of Protestant migrants in the 2001-2016 period, using an iterative method based on the projections by Goujon et al. (2017). The results show that the projections would match best the actual number of members between 2001 and 2016 when 30% of Protestant in-migrants to Austria had joined the Protestant Church over the period; and for Vienna, the share replicating the same membership result is around 60%. The higher share in the case of Vienna can be understood by the fact that many migrants are Austrians moving internally from another province. These findings are used in the projections that follow.

Figure 5. Number of Protestants in Vienna, estimates and projections



Sources: 1971-2001: Statistics Austria (Censuses); 2003-2018: Protestant Church Austria (Amtsblatt für die evangelische Kirche in Österreich); Goujon et al. 2015; WIREL 2015; Goujon et al. 2017 (for the ÖIF – Austrian Integration Fund)

4. Data, Methods and Scenarios

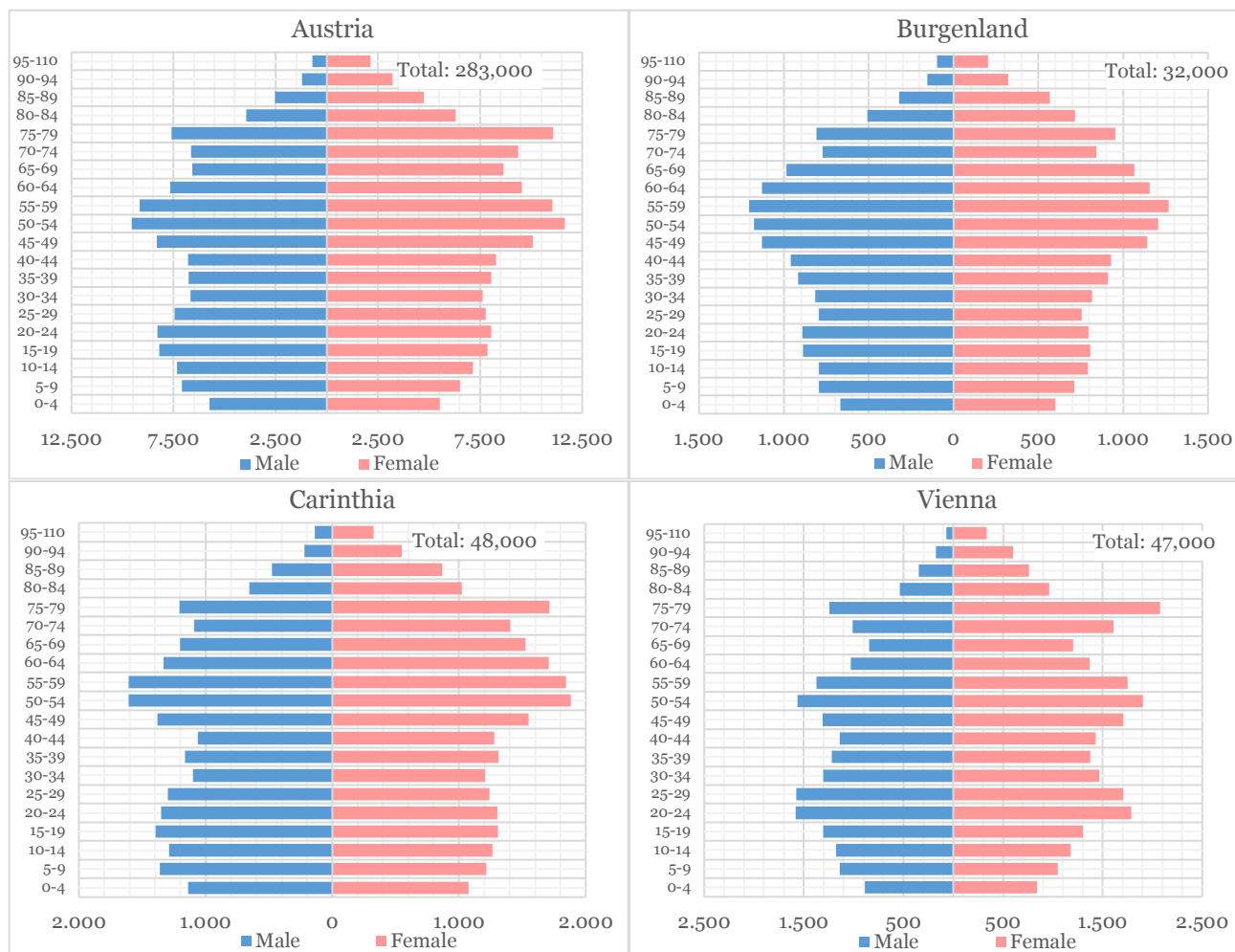
In order to project the future Protestant population in Austria, and in the three provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia and Vienna, we require two input types: 1) base-year data for the projection parameters that are fertility, mortality, in- and out-migration, and entrance and exit rates, and 2) scenarios about the possible evolution of those same parameters. The projection period is 2018-2048.

4.1. Base-Year Data

The Protestant Church's data bank covers detailed information on socio-demographic characteristics of members of the Protestant Church in Austria. More specifically, it includes data on a) members' information on age, sex, and municipality, b) death registrations of members by age, sex, and municipality, and c) membership size and movements by municipality including information about entrants, exits, baptisms, deaths and international migration. These data are collected annually by the Protestant Church, with the latest complete availability for the year 2018.

Figure 6 shows the 2018 A.B. Protestant base year population by age and sex for Austria and the provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia, and Vienna. While the total number of Protestants naturally varies with population size, the share of people affiliated to Protestantism among the total population is also significantly different for different regions within Austria. With an 11 percent Protestant population share, Burgenland's proportion is not only vastly above the national average, but also the province holds the highest share of Protestants among the three federal states analysed – followed by 8.5 percent in Carinthia, and only 2.5 percent in Vienna. In all regions, the Protestant church counts more women than men.

Figure 6. Protestant population (A.B. confession) by age and sex, 2018

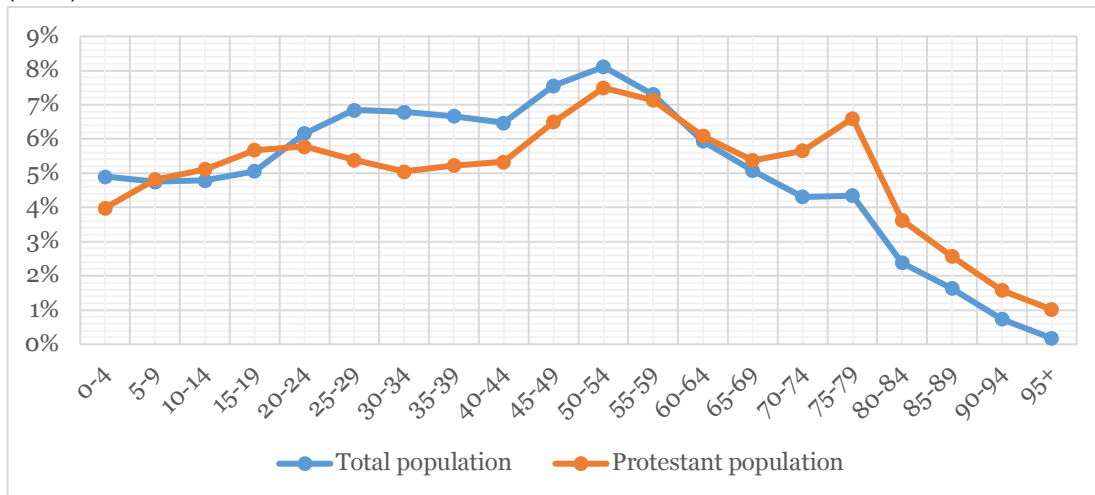


Source: Protestant Church Austria

Note: The deviation from the total number of people living in Austria affiliated to the A.B. Protestant church in 2018 shown in the graph (283 thousand) to the previously reported number (278 thousand) derives from different underlying data sources provided by the Protestant Church (Seelenstand vs. Personenabfrage).

Figure 7 compares the age structure of the Protestant population and the age structure of the total Austrian population (both genders combined). As can be seen on the graph, the Protestant population is disproportionately represented in the older age groups, whereas Protestants are underrepresented in 20-55-year-olds as compared to Austria as a whole. Consequently, Protestants are on average older than the population living in Austria.

Figure 7. Comparison of age structure between total population and Protestant population (A.B.), Austria, 2018



Sources: Statistics Austria for total population; Protestant Church Austria for Protestant population

Fertility is estimated based on assumptions derived from the ÖIF project Austria³ (Goujon et al. 2017). In line with the observed patterns, the total fertility rate of Protestant women in the first projection period (2018-2023) is assumed to be lower than that of the total population, resulting in a TFR of 1.37 children on average for Protestants in Austria (compared to 1.54 children overall according to the projections by Statistics Austria (Statistik Austria 2018)). The fertility of Protestants in the three provinces was proportionally adjusted so that it is 1.27 children in Burgenland (compared to 1.42), 1.35 children in Carinthia (compared to 1.52) and 1.3 children in Vienna (compared to 1.46). The lower fertility of Protestants could be explained by their higher levels of education. According to the 2001 census, the share of Protestants with a tertiary education was 14% compared to 10% for the total population. Conversely, 33% of Protestants had junior secondary education or below, compared to 39% of the general population.

³ According to these estimates (Goujon et al. 2017), the total fertility rate of Protestant women was 1.26 children in 2001-05, 1.28 in 2006-10, and 1.29 in 2011-2015 in Austria, compared to the respective overall fertility of women of 1.38, 1.41 and 1.45 children. For Vienna, Protestant women had on average 1.20 children in 2001-05, 1.22 in 2006-10, and 1.23 in 2011-15, while all women had on average 1.38, 1.41, and 1.44 children for the same periods.

Whereas the higher educational levels of the Protestant population could also result in lower mortality levels, we assumed that Protestants have the same mortality as the rest of the population for lack of detailed data to estimate survival ratios and life expectancies⁴. In 2018, life expectancies in Austria varied between provinces from 78.2 to 80.5 years for men and between 82.7 and 85 years for women. They are slightly lower in Vienna and slightly higher in Burgenland and Carinthia.

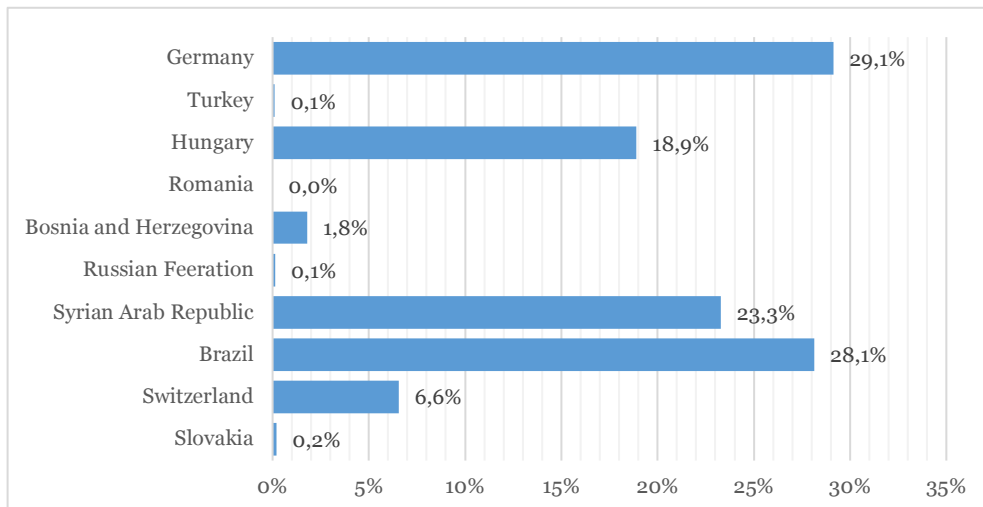
Migration numbers are estimated using data on within-Austria and international migration flows as provided by Statistics Austria both on the national and the federal state level by age, sex and country of birth. Since there is no information on the religious denomination of migrants, we assumed migrants to be randomly distributed across religious affiliations, using the same distribution as observed in their country of birth. For example, about 29 percent of the German population are Protestants; hence, 29 percent of all migrants coming to Austria with Germany as their country of birth are counted as Protestants. We decided to choose country of birth rather than citizenship as the decisive attribute, as citizenship can be acquired in the years following the arrival in the country. Furthermore, first generation immigrants who were socialized in the context of their home countries tend to have distinct demographic behaviours that citizenship data would conceal.

The random migrant assumption is likely to reflect reality unless migrants are selected in terms of their religion or other characteristics closely associated with religion (e.g. ethnicity). This could be particularly the case for asylum seekers, since political oppression, discrimination, human rights abuse, and violent conflicts are often associated with specific subpopulations, including religious minorities. However, since most of the Protestants migrating to Austria are coming from European countries and are thus unlikely to be refugees, the random migrant assumption is expected to produce realistic migration estimates.

The shares of population by religion in the respective countries were retrieved in two ways: for the most prominent countries sending migrants to Austria, the most recent data from national statistics (census 2011 rounds) were collected whenever these were available (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, and Switzerland). For all other countries, the shares rely on the data published by the Pew Research Centre (2011, 2012). As can be seen in Figure 8, the shares of Protestants within some of the most prominent countries of origin of migrants coming to Austria vary substantially.

⁴ Moreover, while some research has shown the existence of mortality differentials by education – Klotz and Doblhammer (2008) have shown a difference of 6.1 years in life expectancy at age 35 between the primary educated and the tertiary educated for men and 2.8 years for women – the difference observed in education levels between the Protestants and the rest of the population would not result in a substantial variation in longevity.

Figure 8. Share of Protestants within most prominent countries of origin of migrants coming to Austria



Source: Authors' calculations based on national statistics (2011) and PEW Research Center (2011, 2012)

Data on entrants to and exits from the Protestant Church are derived from the Protestant Church's data bank, which includes information on religious movements by municipality as described earlier.

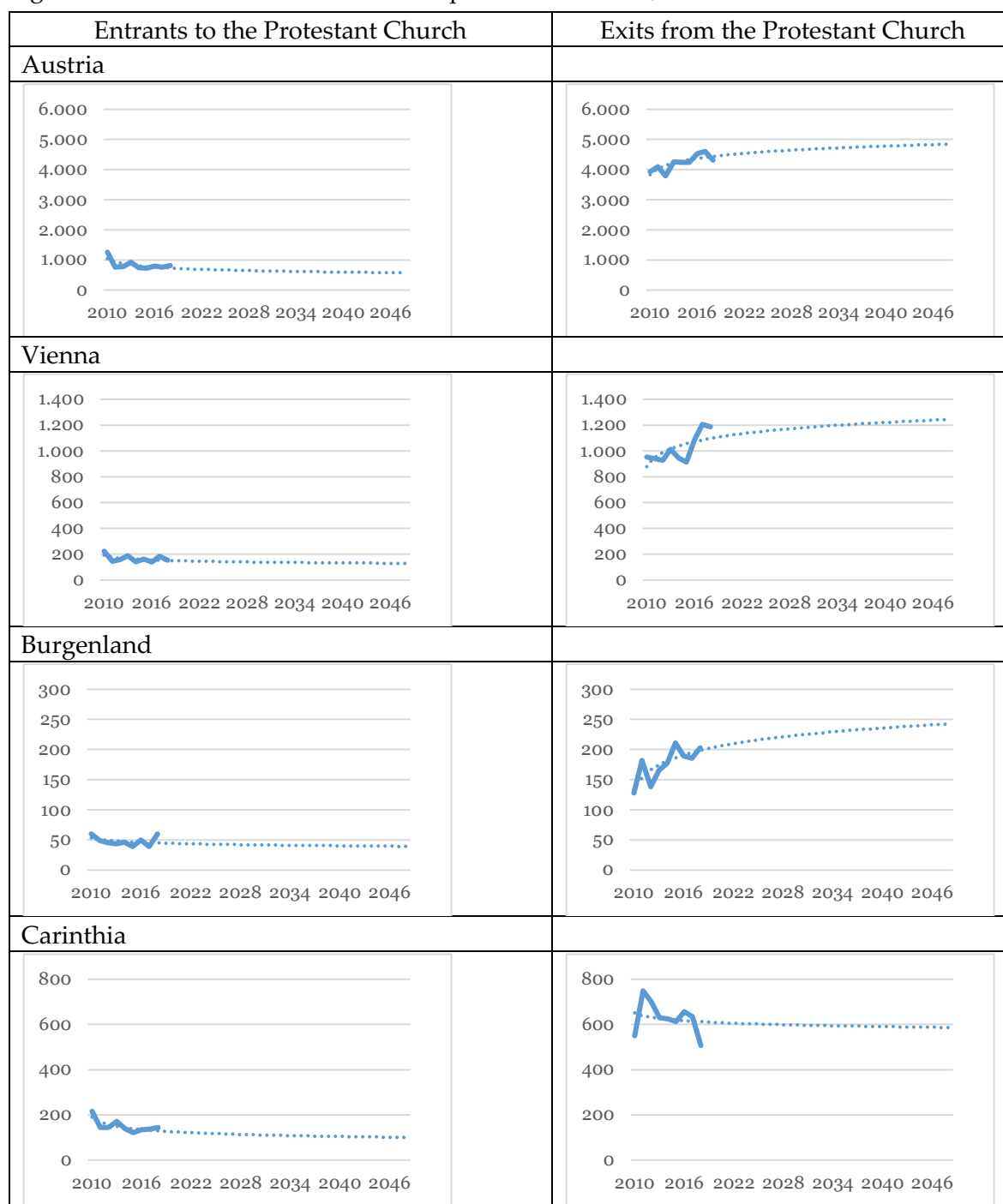
4.2. Scenarios

We calculated five scenarios, that play around the trends observed in recent years, while looking at modified narratives to show the sensitivity of membership to the Protestant Church to changes, particularly in secularisation trends and in the composition and membership patterns of migrants to Austria:

1. Trend membership & European mobility scenario (TREND EUROPE): We assume that the components of demographic change follow the trend scenario of the ÖIF report, which foresees a very small fertility increase to 1.58 by 2048 in Austria (1.52 in Vienna, 1.44 in Burgenland and 1.55 in Carinthia). As mentioned earlier and following the analysis by Goujon et al. (2017), the fertility is slightly lower for the Protestants than for the whole country, and not all children born to Protestant mothers are baptized in the Protestant Church. This is reflected in the fertility rates that are adjusted to match the number of Protestant children observed in recent years (2015-18). Life expectancy increases as shown in Table 2 following the medium variant of the projections conducted by Statistics Austria (2018). Migration follows also the medium variant of Statistics Austria. We assume the composition to be similar to that observed between 2006-2010, a period when the migration to Austria was dominated by migrants from Europe, therefore, the share of Protestants is quite substantial (10.6%). However, we assume that only 30% of all protestant migrants become members of the Austrian Protestant Church, and 60% of all net migrants to the provinces. According to the scenario, the net number of migrants would decline from 23

thousand in 2018-22 to 18 thousand in 2042-48. The respective numbers for the three provinces are shown in Table 2. For the entrants and exists, we prolonged the trend as shown on Figure 9. This would lead to a decline in people entering from 728 in 2018 to 585 in 2048, and an increase in people exiting from 4,468 to 4,822. The respective figures and numbers are shown in Figure 9 and Table 2.

Figure 9. Entrants to and exits from the protestant Church, 2010-2018 and trend line.



Source: Protestant Church (solid line) and authors' calculations (dotted line)

2. Trend membership & diversity scenario (TREND DIVERSITY): This scenario replicates almost exactly the TREND EUROPE scenario except that the composition of migration follows that of the period 2011-15 when it comes to nationality/country of birth/religious affiliation?, which was characterized by a stronger non-European component with countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Iran and Iraq being among the most prominent countries sending migrants to Austria.

3. Membership lift (LIFT): In this scenario, we modify the migration assumption of the TREND Europe scenario assuming that more migrants of Protestant belief join the Protestant Church. In the case of Austria, 60% of international migrants join and 80% of all migrants join for the three provinces (compared to respectively 30% of all protestant migrants becoming members of the Austrian Protestant Church, and 60% of all net migrants to the provinces in the TREND scenarios above mentioned). Exits are also cut by half (entries follow the TREND_EUROPE scenario). We furthermore assume that all children born to Protestant mothers are baptized as Protestants.

4. Halved exits & European mobility scenario (HALVED EXITS): This scenario looks at the sensitivity of the trend scenario to a decline in the secularization pattern. Hence, it mixes assumptions from the TREND EUROPE and LIFT scenarios. It copies the assumptions regarding fertility, migration and entries to the Protestant Church from the TREND EUROPE scenario. Furthermore, it assumes that exits are cut by half as in the LIFT scenario.

5. Trend membership & migrants becoming members (MIGRANT MEMBER): This scenario looks at the sensitivity of the trend scenario to an increase in membership of migrants. Hence, this scenario mixes assumptions from the TREND EUROPE and LIFT scenarios. It assumes the fertility, exists and entries to the Protestant Church from the TREND EUROPE scenario. However, it considers that more Protestant migrants to Austria join the Protestant Church than in the LIFT scenario.

Scenarios 4 and 5 are basically decomposing the effect of Scenario 3 (LIFT). The scenario assumptions are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Assumptions for all scenarios, Austria and three provinces, over 2018-2048 period

	Total fertility rate	Life expectancy at birth	Average yearly net number of migrants (A)	Average yearly entrants (B)	Average yearly Exits (C)	Average yearly net-mobility (A+B-C)
Austria						
TREND EUROPE	From 1.23 to 1.36 children	From 80.0 to 84.5 years for men and 84.8 to 88.4 years for women	From +1404 to +1108 migrants	From 728 to 585 entering	From 4468 to 4822 leaving	From -2336 to -3128 members
TREND DIVERSITY			From +571 to +304 migrants			From -3169 to -3933 members
LIFT	From 1.37 to 1.51 children		From +2809 to +2217 migrants		From 2234 to 2410 leaving	From +1303 to +391 members
HALVED EXITS	From 1.23 to 1.36 children		From +1404 to +1108 migrants		From -102 to -717 members	
MIGRANT MEMBER			From +2809 to +2217 migrants		From 4468 to 4822 leaving	From -931 to -2020 members
Vienna						
TREND EUROPE	From 1.17 to 1.31 children	From 78.9 to 83.7 years for men and 83.8 to 87.8 years for women	From +519 to +85 migrants	From 150 to 131 entering	From 1135 to 1236 leaving	From -466 to -1021 members
TREND DIVERSITY			From +156 to -273 migrants			From -829 to -1378 members
LIFT	From 1.30 to 1.45 children		From +692 to +113 migrants		From 567 to 618 leaving	From +274 to -374 members
HALVED EXITS	From 1.17 to 1.31 children		From +519 to +85 migrants		From +101 to -403 members	
MIGRANT MEMBER			From +692 to +113 migrants		From 1135 to 1236 leaving	From -293 to -992 members

	Total fertility rate	Life expectancy at birth	Average yearly net number of migrants (A)	Average yearly entrants (B)	Average yearly Exits (C)	Average yearly net-mobility (A+B-C)
Burgenland						
TREND EUROPE	From 1.14 to 1.24 children	From 80.1 to 84.3 years for men and 84.8 to 88.2 years for women	From +153 to +150 migrants	From 47 to 40 entering	From 205 to 240 leaving	From -5 to -51 members
TREND DIVERSITY			From +95 to +93 migrants			From -63 to -107 members
LIFT	From 1.26 to 1.38 children		From +204 to +199 migrants		From 103 to 120 leaving	From +149 to +119 members
HALVED EXITS	From 1.14 to 1.24 children		From +153 to +150 migrants		From 205 to 240 leaving	From +98 to +69 members
MIGRANT MEMBER			From +204 to +199 migrants		From +46 to -1 members	
Carinthia						
TREND EUROPE	From 1.22 to 1.34 children	From 80.1 to 84.6 years for men and 85.2 to 88.8 years for women	From +196 to +237 migrants	From 128 to 101 entering From 128 to 101 entering	From 588 to 589 leaving	From -264 to -251 members
TREND DIVERSITY			From +50 to +92 migrants			From -410 to -396 members
LIFT	From 1.35 to 1.48 children		From +261 to +316 migrants		From 294 to 295 leaving	From +95 to +123 members
HALVED EXITS	From 1.22 to 1.34 children		From +196 to +237 migrants		From 588 to 589 leaving	From +30 to +44 members
MIGRANT MEMBER			From +261 to +316 migrants		From -199 to -172 members	

Source: Authors' hypotheses partly based on Goujon et al. (2017).

5. Results

The results suggest major losses in membership for the Protestant Church in Austria and in all provinces. The only exception is the LIFT scenario (see Figures 10-13), which assumes that the Protestant Church would gain from the arrival of migrants joining the Church and from cutting exists in half. This would break the trend of large losses and would have

membership stabilize more or less at the level observed in 2018 for Austria as a whole: from 283 thousand in 2018 to 272 thousand in 2048. The outcome is similar for Burgenland and Carinthia whose Protestant members would decline slowly from 32 to 30 thousand (Burgenland) and from 47 to 43 thousand (Carinthia) respectively. Vienna is the only province under consideration where the Protestant population would increase slightly under the LIFT scenario, from 47.3 to 47.6 thousand between 2018 and 2048. According to this scenario, the share of Protestants in the total population as projected in the medium variant of Statistics Austria (2018) would decline from 3.2% in 2018 to 2.8% in 2048.

In order to better understand what drives these changes, we have decomposed the results, looking separately at the effects of an increase in membership due either to a decline in the exits (HALVED EXITS scenario) or an increase in the migrants affiliating with the Protestant Church (MIGRANT MEMBER scenario). Comparing the two, we observe that changing the exits has the strongest impact on membership: 272 thousand members with the HALVED EXITS scenario versus 218 thousand members according to the MIGRANT MEMBER scenario. Although this is highly dependent on the adjustment factor applied to both parameters, it could also reflect the actual potential of the Protestant Church to keep its members rather than attract new members that are less accessible.

However, these three scenarios assume a discontinuity in the trend that has been observed in the last decades. When we keep the trend, as shown in the other two scenarios, we see that the depletion of the Protestant Church of its members could be substantial.

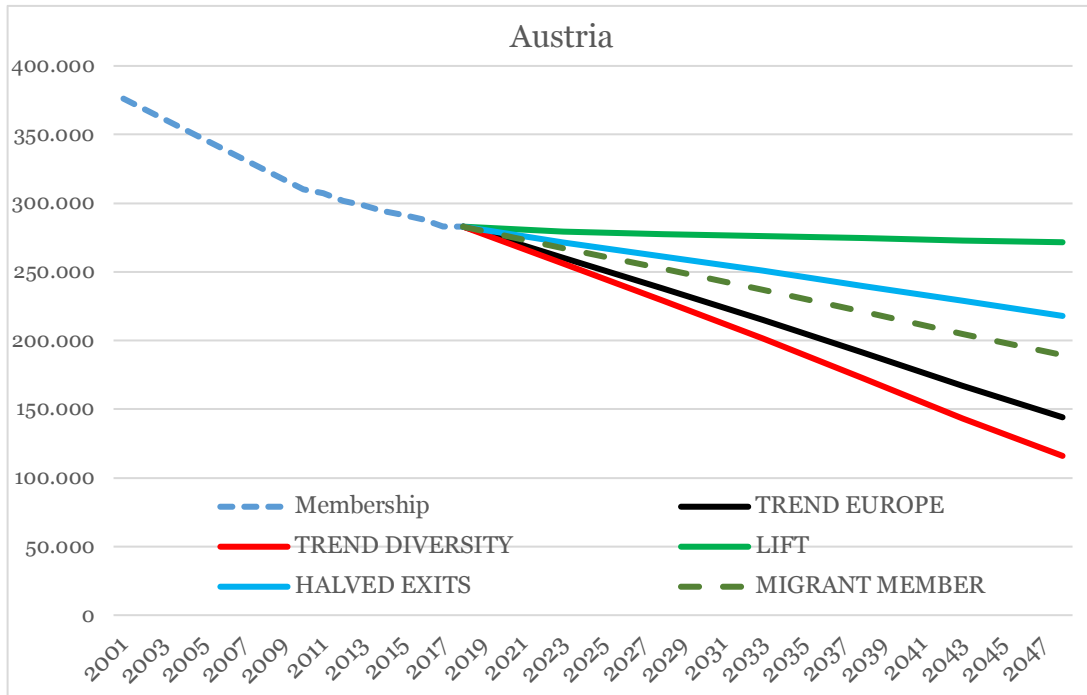
The TREND DIVERSITY scenario would mean a 60% loss of members for the Protestant Church by 2048 at the national level. The impact would be lesser in Burgenland (-32%) and Carinthia (-59%), and higher in Vienna (-65%). According to this scenario, the Protestant population in Austria would be a mere 116 thousand, corresponding to 1.2% of the total population. Numbers for all provinces are shown in Appendix Table 1.

In comparison, the TREND EUROPE scenario would mean a less rapid decline in the number of members, for the reason that more international migrants come from Europe under this scenario and that those are more likely to be Protestants, e.g. from Germany. The Protestant population in Austria would decline from 283 thousand in 2018 to 144 thousand in 2048 (-49%). At the level of the three provinces, the decline would be faster in Vienna, from 47 to 27 thousand (-42%) than in Burgenland (-26%, from 32 to 24 thousand) and Carinthia (-37%, from 48 to 30 thousand). According to this scenario, the Protestant population in Austria would correspond to 1.5% of the total population (1.3% in Vienna, 7.3% in Burgenland, and 5.4% in Carinthia).

While the scenarios are far from being exhaustive in looking at the extent of what the future might hold for the Protestant Church in Austria, they definitely show expectable trends given continuing or slightly modified developments of major demographic factors influencing the membership sizes in Austria and the provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia, and Vienna. Under the specified assumptions, no substantial reversal of the decreasing membership trend can be expected in the near future. However, unforeseen changes in any

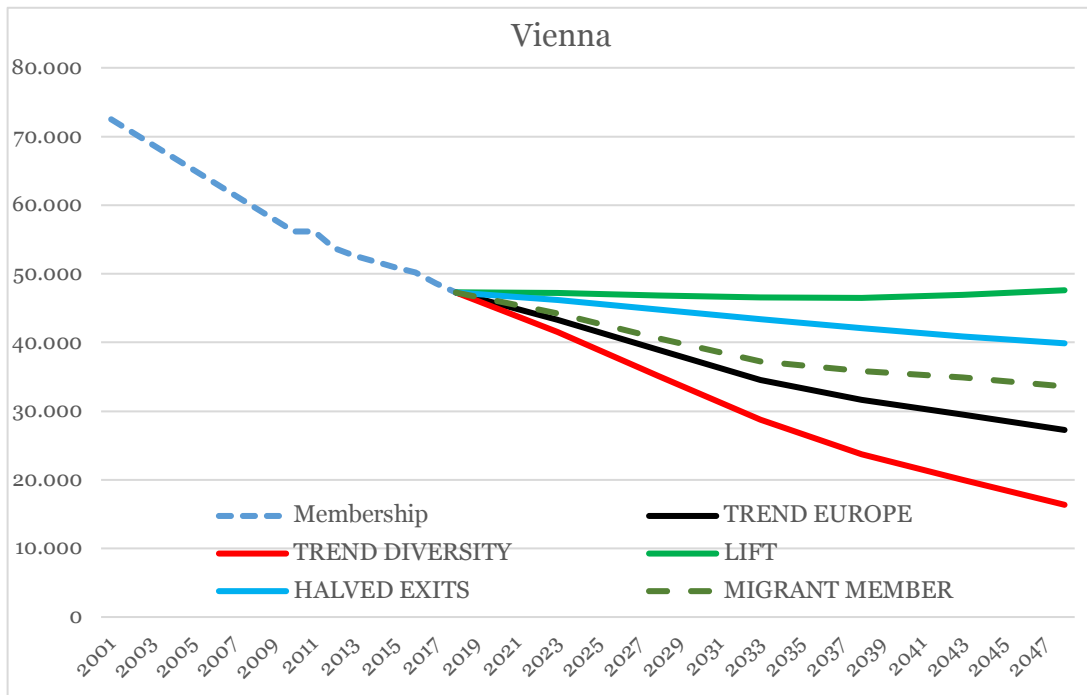
of the parameters could result in membership developments not considered in any of the scenarios presented within the scope of this report.

Figure 10. Estimated and projected number of Protestant members, 2001-2048, Austria, several scenarios



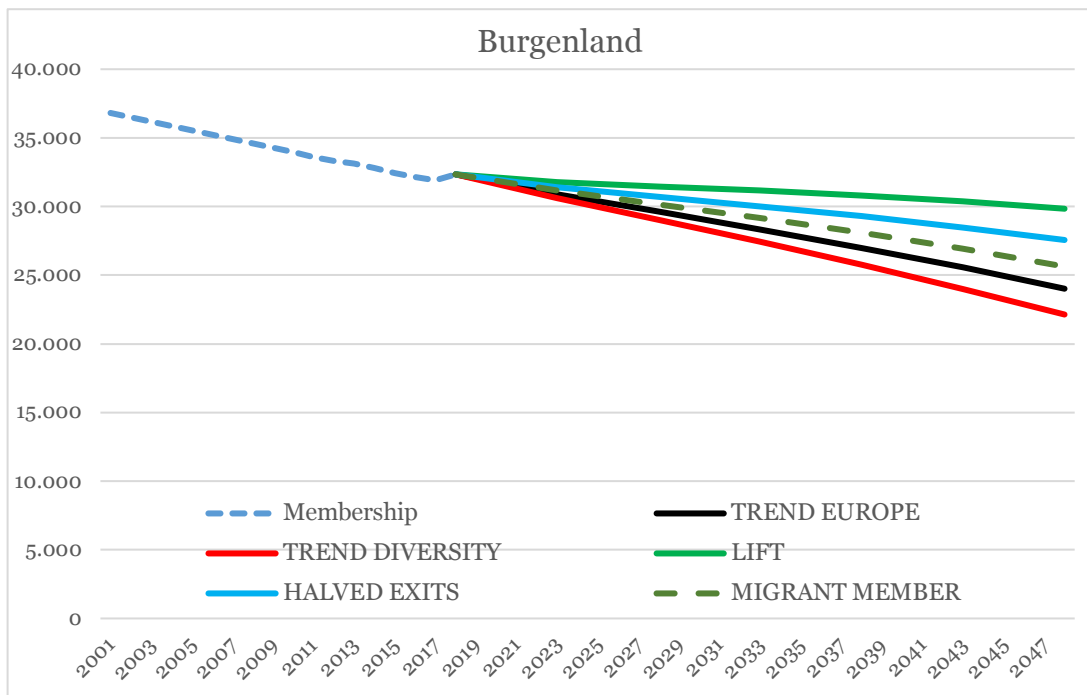
Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 11. Estimated and projected number of Protestant members, 2001-2048, Vienna, several scenarios



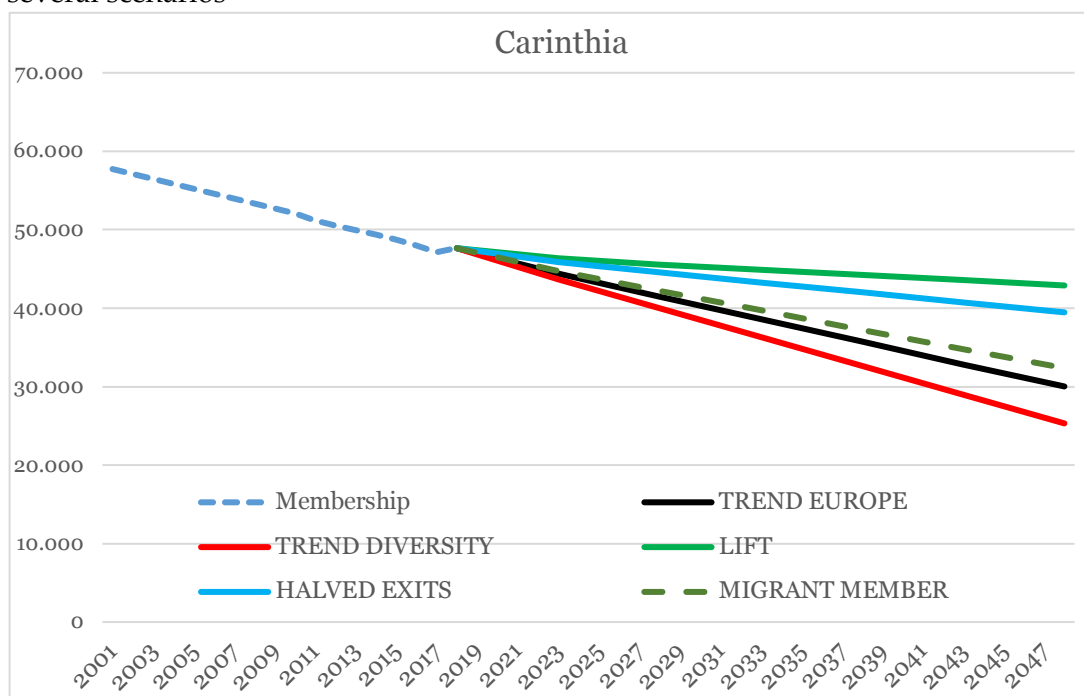
Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 12. Estimated and projected number of Protestant members, 2001-2048, Burgenland, several scenarios



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 13. Estimated and projected number of Protestant members, 2001-2048, Carinthia, several scenarios



Source: Authors' calculations

6. Conclusion

This report demonstrated some of the possible futures that the Protestant Church in Austria and the provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia, and Vienna could experience in the coming decades, considering the potential impact of demography and disaffiliation on future membership. Despite considerable dissimilarities between assumptions underlying the scenarios presented, almost all results show important loss for the Protestant Church in Austria as well as in all provinces under consideration, albeit to different extents.

Even though the scenarios are far from being exhaustive in terms of what the future might hold for the Protestant Church in Austria, some important conclusions can be drawn. First, there is not much variation in expected developments for Austria and the three provinces under consideration, although the pace and magnitude of changes vary between Burgenland, Carinthia and Vienna. While Vienna shows the largest variety between the scenarios, ranging from a minor membership gain in the LIFT scenario to a loss of two thirds of its members by 2048 in the TREND DIVERSITY scenario, scenario results tend to be more stable and less volatile for Burgenland and Carinthia. Second, none of the scenarios developed within this report project a true reversal of the downward membership trend experienced by the Protestant Church in the past. In order to move towards a period of sustainable membership growth, considerable changes in demographic parameters and/or (dis)affiliation behaviour of members is necessary. Finally, besides focusing on ongoing trends of increasing exits from and decreasing entrants to the Church, additional attention

needs to be payed toward the challenge of attracting a presumably large pool of Protestant migrants to join the Protestant Church in Austria.

Appendix Table 1. Projected Protestant members, 2018-2048, Austria and 3 provinces

	2018	2023	2028	2033	2038	2043	2048
Austria							
TREND EUROPE	282,945	260,168	237,816	214,812	191,091	167,163	144,100
TREND DIVERSITY	282,945	255,999	229,167	201,334	172,537	143,397	115,998
LIFT	282,945	279,431	277,515	276,041	274,522	272,891	271,588
HALVED EXITS	282,945	271,338	261,020	250,661	239,876	228,865	217,927
MIGRANT MEMBER	282,945	267187	252073	236,679	220868	204914	189,423
Vienna							
TREND EUROPE	47,265	43,312	38,949	34,568	31,650	29,470	27,250
TREND DIVERSITY	47,265	41,503	35,076	28,715	23,751	19,972	16,348
LIFT	47,265	47,219	46,852	46,557	46,485	46,890	47,600
HALVED EXITS	47,265	46,147	44,800	43,406	42,089	40,855	39,870
MIGRANT MEMBER	47,265	44,179	40543	37246	35826	34,853	33,592
Burgenland							
TREND EUROPE	32,343	30,902	29,633	28,347	26,996	25,561	24,015
TREND DIVERSITY	32,343	30,614	29,040	27,447	25,765	24,004	22,135
LIFT	32,343	31,776	31,442	31,153	30,806	30,368	29,840
HALVED EXITS	32,343	31,416	30,709	30,026	29,298	28,487	27,563
MIGRANT MEMBER	32,343	31160	30,164	29,157	28,074	26,906	25,630
Carinthia							
TREND EUROPE	47,647	44,437	41,482	38,613	35,725	32,855	30,026
TREND DIVERSITY	47,647	43,711	39,997	36,338	32,647	28,969	25,316
LIFT	47,647	46,405	45,579	44,909	44,236	43,561	42,896
HALVED EXITS	47,647	45,909	44,531	43,281	42,022	40,754	39,469
MIGRANT MEMBER	47,647	44,765	42,188	39,717	37,239	34,780	32,366

Source: Protestant Church and Authors' calculations.

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