



On behalf of the  
European Commission  
DG Employment,  
Social Affairs and Inclusion

Gesellschaft für  
Versicherungswissenschaft  
und -gestaltung e.V.



# ***Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe***

## **Executive Summary**

**Kosovo<sup>\*</sup>**

April 2012

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<sup>\*</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Kosovo\* is the country with the lowest GDP per capita and has a projected growth rate of only 4.8% in 2012. It further has the highest poverty rates in Europe – the latest poverty estimate for 2009 reveals that 34% and 12% of the population lived below absolute or extreme poverty respectively. It has the youngest population in Europe and is also a country with one of the highest percentage of remittances to GDP (13% of GDP in 2009), due to huge number of Diaspora and high linkage of Diaspora with their families in Kosovo\*. Migration has been an important livelihood strategy for a significant share of Kosovo\*'s population and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Kosovo\* has one of the highest emigration rates in Eastern Europe. There has been massive emigration during the war and even though between 1999 and 2010, almost 200,000 Kosovars were returning to their home country, there are still a considerable amount of people living abroad. Nearly 63% of them are concentrated in Germany and Switzerland. In recent times, the high share of youngster and poor economic conditions are considered as factors that make many people wanting to migrate: 27% of total emigrants left between 2005 and 2009

While emigration and rural urban migration in Kosovo\* has contributed considerably in reducing poverty and have played a significant role on individual's and Kosovo\*'s development it had also social impact on communities left behind, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, elderly and children. Emigration is expected to be a feature in Kosovo\* at least for the near future, therefore the challenge is how to minimize its negative socio-economic impacts in Kosovo\* while supporting at the same time prospective migrants in their efforts to acquire knowledge of a potential host country's language and culture and equip them with needed skills that the EU market currently demands. Internal migration in Kosovo\* is mainly shaped by rural-urban migration with the Capital city of Prishtina being the main destination. Unemployment data are in absolute numbers only but put Prishtina at the lead table with the largest number of unemployed (64,374 registered unemployed persons in 2010). Further, there are severe regional disparities in terms of poverty with an absolute poverty rate that ranges from 18% to 54%.

Regulated circular migration is considered as a mechanism to reduce the high unemployment rate (according to LFS: 45.5%) and estimated low employment rate of only 26% in Kosovo\*, which will as well support skill development of Kosovars given that their employment would be encouraged to get out of low skilled jobs. Although promoting circular migration is included in government documents so far no country level agreements exist. Tougher immigration policies in the EU will affect the continuation and the size of remittances sent to Kosovo\*. Since migration remains, by far, one of the most effective mechanisms for reducing poverty in Kosovo\*, reducing migration will directly increase the incidence of poverty, especially in rural areas. So any efforts that lead to drastic reductions in the current migration patterns have the potential to worsen the well-being of the Kosovo\* population and widen the already emerging rural-urban disparities in well-being.

Kosovo\* authorities should work on identifying partner countries in different fields with whom agreements for circular migration should be signed. Additionally those contracts should be closely monitored in order to send good signals to other potential countries that circular migrants respect the contracts as agreed. Additionally, attempts should be done to avoid low skilled jobs but aim to ensure job placements especially in professions that Kosovo\* lacks skills. In order to ensure multiplying effects from remittances Kosovo\* institutions should work to provide incentives and offer an environment in order that remittances are used for investment purposes and not used only for consumption reasons. Furthermore, Kosovo\* should provide incentives for Diaspora to invest in Kosovo\*. This could be done through information sharing on investment potentials, face to face meetings through trade missions and also by providing tax incentives for Diaspora to invest in Kosovo\*. More work should be done in signing social security agreements with hosting countries of Kosovo\* Diaspora which would enable that Diaspora upon their return get their social and pension contributions. Readmission and Integration of returnees should be closely monitored to ensure that returnees get access to education, provided employment opportunities, live in proper shelter and are fully integrated in social life in Kosovo\*. The Reintegration fund should be better used and that also for purposes that ensure jobs for returnees. In order to support net

migration gain regions cope with high demands faced programs and projects should be developed, which could be supported by government and international institutions.

Parallel to introducing regular circular migration to its citizens Kosovo\* authorities are facing another big challenge in terms of admission and reintegration of returnees from many countries with which Kosovo\* authorities have signed readmission agreements. Besides government commitment and financial support provided (a readmission fund has been established) for returnees, still remains to be done in order to ensure that returnees have access to education, employment, shelter and their reintegration into society. Forced return has a particularly negative impact on children who have pursued education outside of Kosovo\* for many years, were integrated into different schooling systems and often face language barriers upon their return to Kosovo\*. Many of these children lack sufficient knowledge of the Albanian or Serbian language, and consequently face difficulties in following classes in the native languages as well as in adjusting to a different curriculum and school system. Furthermore, problems arise in the context of securing documents required for enrolment (e.g. birth certificates, recognition of diplomas or certificates issued in other countries). Among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE), 14.7% of children between 0 and 6 years are not registered. Accordingly they face the most difficult situation among returned youth. According to a recent UNICEF report, three out of four returned children no longer attend school in Kosovo\*. RAE generally are exposed to severe deprivation: 20% of RAE families have an average monthly income of up to EUR50 compared to an average monthly income in Kosovo\* of EUR262.

Most Human Rights agencies agree that EU and Western European governments should commit themselves to a moratorium on forced returnees to Kosovo\* pending an improvement of reception conditions. Any returns should be carried out in accordance with UNHCR guidelines. Kosovo\* government should implement successfully the Strategy of Returnees and Reintegration and should allocate necessary government funding to ensure the implementation of the Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan; establish an inter-ministerial co-ordination board to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Strategy.

Furthermore, sustainable return of war affected IDPs and refugees are an additional pressure and challenge for Kosovo\* institutions. In general IDPs and refugees who wish to return continue to face a number of risks, particularly lack of personal identity and property documentation, deplorable living conditions and lack of access to basic socio-economic rights. Attacks on returnees are rare. The main challenges are the continued and heightened socio-economic problems, education and property ownership issues, lack of funding, inter-ethnic tensions in some of the areas and lack of commitment on the part of the institutions.

A coherent response and political will from Kosovo\* government, coupled with the financial support and expertise of international organizations could be a win strategy in terms of housing, employment and welfare rights for returned IDPs and refugees.

The focus of EU funded Regional Development Agencies as well as Kosovo\* institutions should put more emphasis on net migration loss regions. This can be done from two sources: Kosovo\* budget and also by working closely with donors and informing them about needs of different regions so kind of priority list is prepared.