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## Migration and Poverty Reduction in Kosovo

ZANA VATHI<sup>1</sup> AND RICHARD BLACK<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Free University of Brussels

<sup>2</sup>Sussex Centre for Migration Research

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Development Research Centre on  
Migration, Globalisation and Poverty  
Arts C226, University of Sussex  
Falmer, Brighton BN1 9SJ

Website: <http://www.migrationdrc.org>

Email: [migration@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:migration@sussex.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)1273 873394

Fax: +44(0)1273 873158

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## ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of migration and poverty in Kosovo, as part of a review conducted by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research on migration and poverty in three regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2006. The research included a review of available literature, and field-level discussions with policy-makers in Pristina in September 2006. The paper explores the context of poverty and development and general migration trends, before focusing on policies orientated towards migration management, and the broader impact of migration on poverty. It concludes with a number of policy recommendations.

### 1. Poverty and Development in Kosovo

Once the poorest province of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo today is one of the poorest areas in the Balkans and among the least developed societies in Europe (UNDP 2005a). Within the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo experienced only superficial development, as a primary producer of minerals and farm products (Govori 1997; ESI 2006). The crisis in former Yugoslavia during the 1980s aggravated the economic situation in the province, with a fall in domestic output, increasing unemployment and neglect, and exclusion and persecution of the Albanian community during the Milosevic 'era' (Clark 2000; Mertus 1999). Armed conflict followed in 1998, leading to economic destruction, and massive population displacements and loss of life (UNFPA 2000; World Bank 2005).

The post-war period under the UNMIK administration has been characterised by a distinct economic recovery. After the initial stage of reconstruction, GDP has grown by 1.7 per cent per annum since 2003, and is expected to reach 3 per cent in 2006 (IMF 2006). However, this GDP growth has been heavily influenced by the inflow of international aid and private transfers from the Kosovan diaspora. Post war growth has taken place mainly in the retail sector, the public administration, and especially in construction, and there has been no significant improvement in the productivity of Kosovan enterprises (ESPIG 2004). Exports remain less than 4 per cent of imports, while imports continue to increase, mainly in the form of consumer goods, further increasing the trade deficit which currently stands at 40 per cent of GDP (IMF 2006; Korovilas 2006a; Tyrbedari 2006). Due to its undefined political status, Kosovo has been unattractive for FDI (ESPIG 2004; Reinvest 2004). Problems also exist in infrastructure, employment and education, and there are significant

disparities between regions, different age and ethnic groups, and especially between men and women (UNDP 2005a; Shabani 2005; Sida 2005a).<sup>1</sup>

With the youngest population in Europe and a high population growth rate, unemployment is perhaps the biggest problem faced by Kosovo.<sup>2</sup> Estimates of the unemployment rate range from 30 per cent (IMF 2004) to approximately 50 per cent (Reinvest 2003), while the number of job seekers continues to rise by 1,000 each month, reaching 319,721 in December 2005 (UNDP 2005b). Youth unemployment is almost twice as high as adult unemployment; the unemployment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE) is estimated at 58 per cent; while a recent workforce survey (ILO 2006) suggests female participation in the workforce is only 20 percent. The current predicted growth in formal employment from 2007-13 is not expected to lead to a significant decrease in the unemployment rate (UNMIK/PISG 2006a).

Another major problem in Kosovo, expected to have long-term negative consequences, is the crisis in education and vocational training.<sup>3</sup> Although schools destroyed during the conflict in 1999 have been rebuilt, schools in Pristina have to work on shifts and children get only 2.5 hours of lessons per day on average, partly as a result of the arrival of children from rural areas. Meanwhile, in rural areas, many children still have to walk long distances to attend secondary schools. Furthermore, the vocational training programme of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has the capacity to train only around 3,000 people each year, equivalent to less than 1 per cent of all registered job seekers.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1 Poverty in Kosovo

At the end of the conflict in 1999-2000, Kosovo faced serious social problems, with IOM (2000) estimating that over 70 per cent of the population were 'supported persons', compared to just 14 per cent relying on income from work and 4 per cent receiving a pension or social income. In 2004, 44 per cent of the population still lived in poverty, with 14 per cent in extreme poverty (SOK 2005). There are significant disparities between levels of human development in different regions, with extreme poverty more widespread in secondary cities such as

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, the 'gender gap' has been the focus of different measures undertaken by the PISG. For example, the Office of Gender Equality was recently fully established within the Office of Prime Minister; women hold 29 per cent of decision-making positions in central institutions and 10 per cent of decision-making posts in the Municipalities. Women's participation in rule of law institutions is comparable to other countries of the region. However, out of 413 registered advocates, only 27 are women (*UNMIK Report on Technical Assessment of Progress in Implementation of the Standards for Kosovo – April 2006*). Redressing gender inequalities is one of the main goals of the EAR Action Programme for 2006 (*EAR 2006*).

<sup>2</sup> Under the column 'Countryside Realities', *Koha Ditore* (14 September 2006), a daily newspaper, notes the case of Karaça where most of the population relies on social benefits and only 5 people are employed (3 policemen and 2 workers).

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with UNMIK officials and KOSVET project manager in Pristina, September 2006.

<sup>4</sup> A recent positive development is allowing the returnees to gain qualifications or acknowledging the skills they had or gained while they were abroad. This enables them to gain access to the labour market, which are still post-communist, in being inflexible and degree-based. Interview with KOSVET manager (15 September 2006, Pristina),

Ferizaj, Mitrovica and Peja than either in rural areas or the capital (Sida 2005b; SOK 2004a). These disparities are mainly due to differences in income levels, although age, gender and ethnicity are also highly correlated with poverty (Sida 2005b). According to the World Bank (2005), the poorest groups are the elderly, female-headed households, families with children, the disabled, the unemployed and to a lesser extent, IDPs. Non-Serb ethnic minorities, mainly the RAE, are particularly disadvantaged, with over three quarters living on under US\$2 a day (UNDP 2005a).

A newly established social assistance scheme has been described by the World Bank (2005) as moderately effective, though with large numbers of people excluded as a result of cash limits. The existing welfare system includes pensions, a social assistance programme, a war invalids benefits scheme and a disability pension (IMF 2004). However, the main contribution comes from the pension scheme, as social assistance is limited to families with no working members and at least one child under five years (IMF 2004; World Bank 2005). Efforts to design more effective policies are hampered by lack of reliable data: for example, the last population census was conducted in 1981 (SOK, 2003; Shabani 2005).

## **2. Migration in Kosovo**

### *2.1 General Trends*

It is not easy to identify the historical and current patterns of migration in contemporary Kosovo. Although the large waves of forced migration in 1999, and subsequent returns, are the most widely cited (ESI 2006; IOM 2005; UNFPA 2003), economic migration has been a common livelihood strategy for decades for Kosovans (Blaku 1996; Koser 2000). Internal and regional movements have also been part of the province's migratory profile, but are not well recorded (see Table 1) (ESI 2006; UNFPA 2000).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Kosovo Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) of 2000 includes questions on displacement during the Kosovo conflict, but does not have a full module on migration.

**Table 1: Lifetime Migrants and Recent Migrants (1998-2003) by Region in Thousands**

Region of birth	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants	Migrated in last 5 years	Migrated out last 5 years	Net migrants 1998-2003	Total net migrants
Gjakove	4.9	14.3	-9.4	0.5	2.6	-2.1	-11.5
Gjilan	4.7	14.1	-9.4	1	0.7	0.3	-9.1
Mitrovica	9.6	16.3	-6.7	0.9	7.1	-6.2	-12.9
Peja	16	8.2	7.8	3.7	0.4	3.3	11.1
Prizren	6.4	11.8	-5.4	2	1.5	0.5	-4.9
Pristine	36.6	14.1	22.5	8.1	1.1	7	29.5
Ferizaj	10.6	10	0.6	1	3.8	-2.8	-2.2

Source: SOK (2004)

## 2.2 Internal and Regional Migration

Internal migration is not a recent phenomenon in Kosovo. Under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, internal movement of people was broadly allowed (Hoti 2003a), although detailed data on the direction or intensity of movements are missing. UNFPA (2000) report that in the period up to 1998, internal movements were dominated by rural-urban migration, although the number of those moving between rural areas was also high. The subsequent conflict also had a considerable impact on internal movements, with around 30 per cent of those displaced by the war moving within Kosovo, mainly towards urban areas (IOM 2000).

Internal migration appears to have increased further during the post-conflict period. Indeed, several major international organisations working in Kosovo have spoken about the high pace of 'brain-drain' from rural to urban centres and overcrowding in the education system in urban areas (ILO and IPEC 2005; UNDP 2005b). This trend of rural-urban migration could be seen as desirable in order to facilitate structural modernisation (ESPIG 2004).<sup>6</sup> Yet, to the extent that this internal migration involves high levels of movement into the capital Pristina, it is not widely welcomed. Meanwhile, the number of migrants between districts (*komuna*) is twice as high as the number of those that move between regions, suggesting that internal migration within regions is also high (UNFPA 2003) (see Table 2). The regions with the highest out-migration rates are Mitrovica, Ferizaj and Gjakova (SOK 2004a).

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<sup>6</sup> Kosovo has traditionally been a rural society. By the end of World War II, 80 per cent of its population was located in rural areas. According to LSMS data, in 2000 the rural population in Kosovo was still over 60 per cent (SOK 2003).

**Table 2. Number of In-migrants from Other Regions and Districts 1998-2003**

Regions	In-migrants from other regions	In-migrants from other districts
Gjakova	500	600
Gjilan	1000	1600
Mitrovica	900	4700
Peja	3700	4900
Prizren	2000	4400
Pristina	8100	17000
Ferizaj	1000	4400
Total	17200	37600

Source: UNFPA (2003).

Regional migration (i.e. from Kosovo to neighbouring countries) mainly involved displacement during the conflict, when people moved to Albania (45 per cent), Macedonia (30 per cent) and Montenegro (15 per cent). Most of the displaced were from rural areas, and the permanent settlement abroad of some of them is said to have led to a serious reduction in agricultural production (IOM 2005). However, the legacy of the ethnic conflict and the tightening of border controls have made inaccessible even those few seasonal job opportunities that were previously available within the region for the low skilled (KIPRED, EMinS and Freedom House 2005; Shabani 2005).

The situation is slightly different for the highly skilled. First, the post-conflict concentration of international organisations in Pristina led to a temporary labour migration flow into Kosovo, mainly of highly skilled people from Albania and other Western Balkans countries. Meanwhile, middle and low skilled Kosovans have also subsequently migrated to well-off parts of the region (such as Montenegro) (Petreski 2005).

### *2.3 Labour Migration*

Producing accurate estimates of the scale of emigration is especially difficult in the case of Kosovo. As a province, first of Yugoslavia, then of Serbia and Montenegro, almost no data were gathered separately for Kosovo for several decades, either within the province, or in host countries (IOM 2004; ESI 2006; Korovilas 2006b). Nonetheless, it is clear that emigration has been part of Kosovo's history and tradition (Blaku 1996). Kosovan settlement in Western Europe dates back to the late 1940s (Blumi 2003), and more significant movements have occurred since the 1960s, in three major phases (ESI 2006; Hoti 2003b). The first wave of migrants left Kosovo in the 1960s to work as 'temporary' guest workers in the West, a pattern that diminished during the 1970s. Second, the abolition of autonomous status in 1989, followed by the dismissal of tens of thousands of Albanians from their jobs, and compulsory military service for Serbs during the Milosevic era further increased emigration pressures (Bajic 2006; Dahinden 2005). Third, the outbreak of war in Kosovo in



1998 led to a new wave of emigration, mainly as asylum seekers, but also as clandestine migrants reaching Western Europe through social networks of Kosovan communities already settled there (Koser 2000; Kostovicova and Petreshi 2003).

The main source of data on the emigration of Kosovan Albanians in the 1990s comes from the Central Commission of Kosovo for the Registration of Albanians Abroad, which estimated in 1992 that 217,132 Albanians were living abroad, mainly in Germany (82,348), Switzerland (72,448) and Sweden (15,562) (Blaku 1996). By 2005, as many as 50,000 Kosovans were estimated to be in the UK, making Britain the third largest destination in Europe (Korovilas 2006b, citing ESI and IKS estimates). However, with mass return after the end of the conflict, the number of Kosovan Albanians abroad may have decreased; according to UNFPA (2003), the number of those reported as being usually absent from Kosovo has decreased from 225,000 in 1999 to 168,900 in 2003, although the IMF (2004) estimates that 220,000 Kosovo Albanians alone continue to live abroad, along with a further 250,000 Kosovans from other ethnic/national groups (Table 3).

**Table 3: Estimates of Kosovans Living Abroad (in thousands)**

Population	1981	2003
Albanians resident in Kosovo	1,220	1,700
Albanians living abroad	20	217
Sub-total Albanians	1,241	1,918
Other ethnic/national groups resident in Kosovo	364	232
Other ethnic/national groups from Kosovo living abroad	6	250
Sub-total other ethnic/national groups	371	482
Total Kosovan population	1,611	2,400

*Source:* IMF (2004) staff estimates, based on Population Census for 1981, and an assumed population growth rate of 2 per cent for ethnic Albanians and 1.2 percent for other groups to 2003

Migrants' characteristics have changed between the three waves noted above. Those who left Kosovo in the 1960s were mostly low-skilled young men, recruited from rural areas or the least developed urban regions. However, with the sharp economic decline in the 1980s, and the targeting of professionals and students by the repressive policies of the Milosevic regime, the proportion of skilled migrants rose over time (Dahinden 2005; Govori 1997; Kostovicova and Petreshi 2003). Both groups have continued to migrate in the post conflict period, as low or semi-skilled workers have left illegally (Korovilas 2006b), whilst students and the highly-skilled have used study abroad or work in international organisations as routes out of the province (Slinn 2003).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Prof Sejdi Osmani, 13 September 2006, Pristina.

Consequently, the Kosovo emigrant population is dominated by men of working age (over half are aged 20-40 years), mostly from rural areas (about 70 per cent) (UNFPA 2003). The average age of an emigrant is 26 years, lower than the average for the labour force in Kosovo, while twice as many men migrate as do women. In terms of education, the majority of emigrants (62 per cent) have completed secondary education, again more than in the labour force as a whole (Hoti 2003a).

Even though Kosovo has not enjoyed an economic recovery as some of its neighbouring countries, there is an expectation amongst policy-makers that it will soon experience the end of its mass-migration era. For example, European governments now consider Kosovo a 'safe country' and have imposed rigid entry conditions for migrants from the province (Tütsch 2005). As a result, the main legal emigration route is family reunification. However, the lack of other legal migration possibilities appears likely to contribute to an increase in illegal migration (Korovilas 2006b; Slinn 2003), given that at the end of 2005, one third of Kosovans reported that they intend to migrate (Table 4). Moreover, Hoti (2003a) warns that there will be a significant increase in emigration of the highly-skilled, as they face lower emigration costs and better employment prospects abroad.

**Table 4: Respondents' Intentions to Migrate Aggregated by Age Groups and Regions (%) 2005.**

Ethnicity	Response	18-25	26-35	36-45	> 46	Pristina	Mitrovica	Prizren	Peja	Ferizaj	Gjakova	Gjilan
Albanian	Yes	44.1	38.6	33.3	22.4	25.8	35.0	41.2	34.6	37.6	44.4	35.2
	No	53.4	56.5	63.5	73.8	70.7	61.8	55.3	63.6	57.6	55.6	59.1
	No answer	2.4	4.8	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.3	3.5	1.9	4.8	0.0	5.7
Serb	Yes	12.8	7.3	3.3	3.9	8.0	7.3	-	33.3	0.0	-	0.0
	No	87.2	90.9	93.3	96.1	92.2	91.2	-	66.7	100.0	-	100.0
	No answer	0.0	1.8	3.3	0.0	0.0	1.5	-	-	0.0	-	0.0
Other	Yes	50.0	31.7	44.7	25.8	23.8	37.5	35.8	50.0	100.0	42.9	-
	No	46.9	53.7	47.4	71.0	71.4	58.3	49.1	50.0	0.0	52.4	-
	No answer	3.1	14.6	7.9	3.2	4.8	4.2	15.1	0.0	0.0	4.8	-

Source: UNDP (2005b)

There are concerns also about the marginalized situation of the Kosovo migrant population in host societies and its impact on migrants' connections and contributions to the Kosovo economy. According to Dahinden (2005), the 'Albanian community' in Switzerland (of which Kosovans form a significant part) is not integrated into Swiss society, and faces serious marginalisation and pauperisation. She argues that insecure residence rights in Switzerland, coupled with the unfavourable situation at home, represent major impediments to Kosovan immigrants in Switzerland establishing transnational ties.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Sherrell and Hyndman (2006) observe that although Kosovan migrants in British Columbia show strong feelings of belonging to home, intentions to return and transnational ties are actually fading over time. Although most of the migrants

<sup>8</sup> According to IOM (2004), the majority of the Kosovo immigrants in Germany, UK, Italy and Belgium are working illegally, being overwhelmingly asylum seekers or refused asylum seekers, with only 36 per cent having a work permit.

expressed their willingness to help their families back home and to vote in the coming elections, plans for return and investments are obstructed by the ongoing political uncertainty in Kosovo that blocks a rapid solution to its economic crisis.

#### 2.4 *Human Trafficking*

Human trafficking is a multifaceted phenomenon in Kosovo. Although accurate statistical data is lacking, both adult and child trafficking mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but also for labour and begging, is said to have increased significantly since the end of the conflict in 1999 (Surtees 2005). The available literature suggests that Kosovo was first a transit route for traffickers, but after 1999 also became an important destination for victims of trafficking (Limanowska 2002). This reflects the inflated post-conflict economy, political insecurity, organised crime and problematic border control. As a result, internal trafficking is also said to have risen (Roopnaraine 2002).

Data provided by IOM and the Trafficking for Prostitution Investigation Unit (TPIU) show that the largest number of victims of trafficking in 2002 came from Moldova (Roopnaraine 2002). The same pattern is shown by the IOM data in 2005, where Moldova (45 per cent) followed by Romania (19 per cent) and Ukraine (12 per cent) are listed as the three major sending countries. Compared to the survey results in 2002, the data also show an increase in Kosovan victims of trafficking receiving assistance -- from 3 per cent in 2002 to 11 per cent in 2005. The border points with Serbia and Macedonia are the main trafficking routes into Kosovo, while Albania, Greece, Turkey, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France and the UK are all destination countries, both for those in transit, and for Kosovan women and girls (Roopnaraine 2002).

The increase in human trafficking has led to a number of anti-trafficking measures. As in other SEE countries, the main policy framework in Kosovo to combat human trafficking is the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, which focuses both on victim protection from a human rights perspective and on law enforcement (ibid.). Under this framework, UNMIK (2001a) promulgated Regulation 2001/4 which, unlike previous legislation, defines trafficking as a crime<sup>9</sup>, but also provides protection for the human rights of those trafficked. Along with the gradual transfer of powers to the PISG, in 2004 the Provisional Criminal Code of Kosovo came into force, which defines trafficking as a crime along with the Palermo Protocol. In May 2005, the Ministerial Council of Kosovo approved the Kosovo Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, which coordinates the efforts of central and local government, UNMIK and other organisations (IOM 2006). However, despite these measures, a number of recent reports have raised concerns that the number of

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<sup>9</sup> The regulation states that 'any person who engages or attempts to engage in trafficking in persons commits a criminal act and shall be liable upon conviction to a penalty of two to twelve years imprisonment'.

trafficking victims originating in Kosovo is rising (c.f. UNICEF 2004; Sida 2005a). Like other countries from which people are trafficked, Kosovo is characterised by poverty, social and cultural disintegration, a lack of capacity for prevention and poor education (Roopnaraine 2002).

## *2.5 Return and Repatriation*

Return and repatriation have been the main migratory movements of the post-conflict 'era' in Kosovo, although this has ranged from voluntary return, based on fully-informed free choice, to 'forced' return, or the removal or deportation of those who have been denied refugee and permanent legal status in a third country (UNMIK 2006b). In addition to returning refugees, a number of Kosovans who had been living abroad before 1998 returned voluntarily to Kosovo following the end of the conflict. Indeed, although the return of Kosovans after the conflict has been considered a good example of how refugees can voluntarily return to rebuild their country (Slinn 2003), their numbers remain relatively small.

According to the UNFPA (2003), the number of those who have returned to Kosovo reached 39,000 in the period 2000-03, with the majority coming from Germany (47 per cent), Switzerland (18 per cent) and Sweden (8 per cent). Amongst this group, the majority were Kosovan Albanians, with refugees of Serb and RAE origin tending to remain abroad (ECMI 2003b). More recent statistics from UNHCR show that by the end of 2005, some 13,000 Serb and other minority refugees had returned to the province (UNDPb 2005). In addition, just over 4,000 people were removed to Kosovo in 2004, 3,745 in 2005, and 1,545 in the first five months of 2006.<sup>10</sup>

However, it is estimated that over 100,000 Kosovans remain abroad under threat of deportation, some 53,000 of whom are in Germany, and 38,000 of whom belong to the RAE minority groups.<sup>11</sup> Repatriation of these individuals is expected to happen in a 'phased manner' in order to facilitate the reintegration of the returnees. UNMIK (2001b) is the main institution managing repatriation, as part of its reserved powers in foreign affairs and border control, defined in UNMIK Regulation 2001/9. The transfer of these powers to the PISG will not be complete until a formal decision is made on the future status of Kosovo. In managing repatriation, UNMIK's policy is based on human rights standards and the recommendations of the UNHCR. Consequently, UNMIK is not opposed to any person originating from Kosovo seeking voluntary repatriation, but at present will not accept the repatriation of Kosovo Serbs or Roma, Kosovo Albanians originating from areas where they constitute a minority, persons in ethnically mixed marriages or of mixed ethnicity, persons perceived to have

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<sup>10</sup> Interviews with UNMIK/OCMR officials in Pristina, 15 September 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Interviews with UNMIK/OCMR officials in Pristina, 15 September 2006.

been associated with Serbian authorities during the 1990s, victims of trafficking, or unaccompanied or separated children whose return is not considered to be in their best interest (UNMIK 2006b).

Return and repatriation are highly politicised issues in Kosovo (ECMI 2003b). On the one hand, host countries under domestic pressure to enforce deportation are pushing UNMIK towards renegotiating readmission agreements, but these will only be finalised with the PISG once the province's status is defined.<sup>12</sup> Yet, at the same time, the process of return is bound up with the status issue. Thus political forces in Belgrade are pushing return within the status negotiations framework, whereas the international community see sustainable return and reintegration of minorities and Serb refugees as a 'test' that political actors and civil society in Kosovo should successfully pass first (Boano et al. 2003; ECMI 2003b).

Perhaps partly as a result of this, at the end 2005, UNDP reported that the process of return was stagnating. Other factors that are thought to affect the return process are the slow resolution of judicial disputes over property rights raised by Kosovo Serbs, as well as a lack of financial resources to assist the return of refugees (UNDP 2005b). Furthermore, there are differences between the international community and the PISG on how to proceed and a need for further clarification of the division of responsibilities between the UNMIK Office for Community, Return and Minorities and the Ministry of Community and Return (EAR 2006b).

Although UNMIK's 'Manual for Sustainable Return' sets out the right of returnees to enjoy security and freedom of movement, access to public services and shelter, and equal access to employment opportunities, the sustainability of return is far from being a reality. Despite the high attention that returnees have received in the post-conflict period, minorities, IDPs and returnees, especially from the RAE group, remain among Kosovo's most vulnerable groups, facing weak participation in civil society, a lack of freedom of movement, and a lack of accurate information about the situation outside the enclaves in which they often find themselves (Shabani 2005). As a result, UNDP (2005b) reports that as late as the end of 2005, more Serbs were leaving Kosovo than were returning permanently. Furthermore, unemployment and bleak life prospects have greatly impacted the sustainable integration of returnees, with return being rather a transient state followed by economic migration (Boano et al. 2003; EAR 2006b).

### **3. Policies**

From a political point of view, Kosovo is a unique entity. After the end of the conflict in 1999, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (UNSCR 1244/99) placed Kosovo under temporary UN administration through

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<sup>12</sup> Interviews with UNMIK/OCMR officials in Pristina, 15 September 2006.

UNMIK, while *de jure* Kosovo remains a province of Serbia. As important for the development of Kosovo, the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government promulgated in May 2001 predicts a co-administration of Kosovo, now shared between UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). UNMIK retains reserved powers in the field of justice and foreign affairs, while other competencies have increasingly been transferred to the PISG, with the process expected to be completed within 2006. However, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) retains the authority to safeguard the implementation of the Constitutional Framework in respect of UNSCR 1244/99.

Kosovo's undefined status has had a very significant impact on the province's development, 'freezing' political debate and keeping Kosovans focused on broad problems such as independence while diminishing action on serious economic and social issues in the province (ICG 2006; UNDP 2005a). Moreover, the widely shared belief that the withdrawal of UNMIK and the decision on the final status will ultimately resolve the crisis in Kosovo (ICG 2005a), is probably rather naive given increasing polarisation of opinion between the major ethnic groups in Kosovo on the form of final status (UNDP 2005b). Thus, policy-making is characterised by a 'pending climate', which further exacerbates the lack of coherence and coordination between UNMIK and the PISG, as well as between ministries and between central and local government. While Kosovo has the advantage of having a very sound legal framework, prepared from scratch under the supervision of international legal experts, it lacks experience in governance, with many of the main institutions being less than six years old.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, the search for a comprehensive policy framework that addresses migration issues within a development agenda is probably unrealistic. Although a few of Kosovo's central governance institutions are concerned with migration issues (e.g. Ministry of Communities and Returns, Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Non-Residential Affairs, the newly created Ministry of Interior, Office of the Prime Minister), there is little coordination between them, and initiatives are brought up on an *ad hoc* basis.<sup>14</sup> A recent initiative of UNMIK to promote seasonal labour migration from Kosovo highlighted not only the low awareness among Kosovo

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<sup>13</sup> Interviews with UNMIK officials and REINVEST Director, 13-15 September 2006, Pristina.

<sup>14</sup> An interesting initiative that aims primarily to improve the capacities of Kosovo institutions has also enhanced the connections with diaspora. The Capacity Building Project started in 2004 as a joint initiative between PISG and UNDP in Kosovo and has so far involved 5 specialists from the distant diaspora (4 from the US and 1 from Germany) and 12 from Albania that work as mentors in different Kosovo institutions on six-monthly contracts. Specialists working on the project speak about a high interest of specialists from the diaspora to work in Kosovo, which is shown in their high participation in the Register of Specialists leading on to placements in any of the institutions according to their expertise. However, the initiative is not part of any 'brain-gain' policy, and the specialists explain that it continuously suffers from lack of funding which has diminished the interest of those involved (Interview with Eleonora Kelmendi, 15 September 2006, Pristina).

institutions, where the bulk of work is concentrated on return process, border management and asylum policy, but also the high reluctance of the EU Member States to cooperate.<sup>15</sup>

### *3.1 Policies on Development*

The 'Standards for Kosovo' was the first commonly accepted development agenda for Kosovo (SIDA 2005a). The document was launched by the special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations (SRSG) in December 2003 and comprises the standards that Kosovo must reach in compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Constitutional framework of 2001 (<http://www.unmikonline.org/standards/index.html>). The 'Standards' are organised into eight chapters: functioning democratic institutions; rule of law; freedom of movement; sustainable return and the rights of the communities and their members; economy; property rights; dialogue and Kosovo Protection Corps. In March 2004, UNMIK and PISG jointly agreed on a Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan (KSIP), which contains 506 actions that elaborate on the Standards in order to help the Government to implement the framework (UNMIK/PISG 2004).

The Standards and the KSIP have been criticised by some international experts for being a very broad framework, with insufficient depth to address serious economic and social issues (ICG 2006). Moreover, with their heavy emphasis on return, freedom of movement within Kosovo and ethnic reconciliation, the Standards might be seen less as a development agenda, and more as a 'road map' that the Government can follow, and against which it can measure progress in the justice and security sectors (UNDP 2005a).

In contrast, the Kosovo Development Strategy and Plan (KDSP)<sup>16</sup>, which started in mid 2005 and aims to provide the Government with a vision of development to 2020, and a medium term expenditure framework (MTEF), does seek to respond to the need of Kosovo institutions and donors for an informed and coherent development strategy. The strategy is based on three pillars: input from civil society; macroeconomic framework; and 22 sectoral working groups, composed of ministry staff and recognised experts. The macroeconomic framework represents the main pillar of the broad national strategy and also the main framework on which the preparation of specific policies will be based in the future.

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<sup>15</sup> Out of all the EU Member States, only Greece showed interest to include some low skilled immigrants from Kosovo in the quota of 50,000 immigrants that it receives from different developing countries in the region. This contribution is small, bearing in mind the unemployment rate in Kosovo. (Interviews with Patricia Warring, Rusty McClelland, 14 September 2006, and Anton Hookes, 3 October 2006, Pristina).

<sup>16</sup> KDSP is not yet formally adopted by the PISG. Apart from other dispositions, it will also incorporate the principles of PRS (SIDA 2005a).

Though one of the main goals of the strategy is to build strong local ownership of the process, a serious challenge to the government is to ensure that the KDSP process does not become overly complicated and remains coherent with other policy frameworks such as MTEF, the Public Investment Programme and the European Partnership (EAR 2006a). It is interesting to note that the KDSP macroeconomic framework suggests that labour migration from Kosovo is one of the few strategies available as a response to high levels of unemployment which will persist in the near future. It further states that 'accommodating continued access of Kosovans to their labour markets will be the most important contribution the international community can make to the alleviation of Kosovan poverty in the medium term' (UNMIK/PISG 2006b). However, the KDSP is not yet adopted by the PISG; the final document is to be presented to the PISG by the end of 2006, while its successful implementation is closely related to a donors' conference expected in early 2007.<sup>17</sup>

### *3.2 European Partnership – the Kosovo Action Plan (EPAP)*

The EU is a major source of investment in Kosovo, and through the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) is also the largest donor in Kosovo (Reinvest 2004; SIDA 2005a). Since the start of the conflict, the EU has provided €378 million as emergency humanitarian aid; it has contributed over €1 billion to the reconstruction of Kosovo and to longer-term projects through the EAR; and it has financed a part of the Kosovo Consolidated Budget (€65 million). The EU has also played an important role in the administration of Kosovo through the UNMIK Pillar IV, by investing over €100 million for its administration (European Commission 2005). The EU will be the main international actor in Kosovo after the departure of UNMIK.

In order to ensure the participation of Kosovo in the SAP, the EU has developed the Stabilisation and Association Tracking Mechanism (STM), which is a unique framework for Kosovo. The STM is a parallel track with the SAP, and allows Kosovo to fully participate in the process, independently from Serbia's pace towards a potential EU membership. The main objective behind the STM is to provide the PISG with EU expertise by serving as a forum at which political and technical discussions take place between UNMIK, the PISG and the European Commission. The framework is jointly managed by the Agency for European Integration linked to the Office of Prime Minister and the UNMIK Office for European Integration (OEI) (UNMIK 2006a).

In August 2006, the PISG adopted the new European Partnership and Action Plan (EPAP), bringing together the previous European Partnership for Kosovo adopted in June 2004 by the EU Council and the KSIP, thus ultimately embedding the values and principles of the Standards into Kosovo's European integration work (EAR 2006a). Furthermore, the strategy emphasises the alignment of the EPAP with other major policy

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Arianit Blakaj, 15 September 2006, Pristina.



frameworks such as KDSP, highlighting the common priorities, main areas of work and the Government's aim in the medium term, in order to fully harmonize the KDSP with the requirements compatible with the EU integration agenda. The Action Plan is divided into short-term priorities and medium term priorities, each structured around political requirements, economic requirements, and European standards. However, in the short term, the EU focus in Kosovo will remain on the improvement of ethnic relations and ensuring a climate conducive to sustainable return and the establishment of an Anti-Corruption Agency, and does not include plans for a comprehensive migration policy (EPAP 2006).

### 3.3 *The Visa Regime*

The visa regime in the case of Kosovo is *de jure* very similar to the one in place for other Western Balkans countries. However, the current political and economic situation in the province has further worsened visa procedures for Kosovo applicants (ECMI 2003a). The situation is particularly difficult in the case of Kosovan Albanians. As holders of UNMIK travel documents, they have to renew their travel documents every two years, even though these were not recognised by the majority of states during the first three years after the war and are still not recognised by Serbia. Applying for a Yugoslav/Serbian passport is extremely difficult, as Serbian parallel administrative institutions in Serbia and Kosovo are not easily accessible for Kosovan Albanians, and are widely seen as corrupt. Some 12 EU countries do not have embassies in Kosovo and some of the representative offices of EU member states in Pristina do not process visa applications, requiring Kosovo applicants to travel or courier their documents to embassies in Tirana, Skopje, or Belgrade (ICG 2005b). Consequently, survey data show that at least half of those wishing to travel to an EU country are unable to do so, as a result of both cost, and the strict criteria applied by destination states (KIPRED, EMinS and Freedom House 2005). According to the ICG (2005b), countries that host a large Kosovan diaspora apply an even tighter regime in the case of applicants from Kosovo than they do for those from Serbia.

Travelling to Serbia and to other countries in the region (except Albania and Macedonia) is also problematic for the holders of UNMIK travel documents. Although other SEE states recognise UNMIK documents, they also require their holders to apply for a visa. The whole regime marks a regressive development, considering that unlike the other former communist countries, citizens of ex-Yugoslavia used to enjoy considerable freedom of movement. Consequently, survey data show that although 90 per cent of respondents from Kosovo perceive the links with people from other countries as very important for future development, contacts within the region are decreasing and regional integration has slowed. Not surprisingly, opinion polls and focus groups in Kosovo and Serbia show that prejudice about neighbours has increased and a large number of respondents see regional identity and especially European identity as an external abstract idea (KIPRED, EMinS and Freedom House 2005). These survey results are particularly striking considering that the EU has explicitly

committed itself to 'bringing Europe closer to the people of Kosovo ... to ensure that its people are an integral part of the European family' as 'Kosovo needs to be taken out of its enclave... and ... its youth is its main asset' (European Commission 2005: 9).

#### 4. Impact of Migration on Development

Being rooted in Kosovo's history and tradition, migration has been both praised for its contribution to development, and blamed for its role in underdevelopment. Migration has certainly been an outcome of the province's economic backwardness; and it is also part of Kosovans' stoic attitude towards marginality, persecution and poverty. Thus, while grief is masked under the cliché '*Duhet m'u pajtu*' (We must accept it), Kosovan men have traditionally 'chosen' to migrate as the only hope to provide for their families and to escape poverty (Reineck 1993; ESI 2006, citing Reineck 1991).

There have been a number of impacts of migration on the current economic and demographic situation in Kosovo. Thus migration has been an alternative to long-term unemployment, and this has arguably buffered the potential for political pressure in the province (Shatri 2005). Furthermore, migrant remittances have created private employment and have, to a certain, extent filled the gap in the social benefits system (IMF 2004). High migration rates amongst young men are also reported to have caused a distinct slow-down in demographic growth rates (Hoti 2003a; IMF 2004; Shatri 2005; SOK 2004b).

There is a widely shared belief in Kosovo that the 'diaspora' has a huge potential to contribute to the province's economy (ESI 2006; Reinvest 2004). This is partly supported by research that shows that the substantial Kosovo diaspora has a high tendency to remit (Korovilas 2006b; Sherrell and Hyndman 2006). For example, IOM (2004) found that among immigrants from Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo in Belgium, Italy, Germany and United Kingdom, Kosovan immigrants had the highest tendency to remit (63 per cent, compared to 52 per cent on average amongst all groups of immigrants, 47 per cent amongst Albanians and 32 per cent amongst Macedonians). In turn, several sources show that remittances constitute one of the biggest sources of income in Kosovo, though the estimates of their exact amount differ substantially, varying between €375 million (IMF 2006) and €540 million (Korovilas 2006b). This is due to inaccurate data on population, migration rates and also money transfer in Kosovo (IMF 2004). Remittances nevertheless consist of a substantial part of the GDP (approximately 16 per cent of GDP), with the level is expected to remain relatively stable in the near future (UNMIK/PISG 2006a).

Indeed, remittances have made some very distinct contributions during Kosovo's most crucial periods. It was the diaspora that paid for the parallel education and health structures during the 1990s, responding to a call

from the 'government in exile' when a large number of Albanian intellectuals were dismissed from their jobs and education in Albania was banned (ESI 2006). Later on, the diaspora is said to have sponsored the Kosovo Liberation Army and made a very important contribution to the reconstruction of Kosovo after the conflict (Clark 2000; SIDA 2005a). Though undocumented empirically, the money sent from abroad is also helping some young Kosovans today to pursue education at the most prestigious universities in Pristina (Slinn 2003).

Are remittances bringing about development and eradicating poverty in the post-construction era? Evidence shows that remittances represent an important source of income for Kosovo, both in micro and macroeconomic terms. However, in line with the experience of other developing countries, remittances in Kosovo are mainly used for consumption, financing over 40 per cent of total imports in consumer goods (Tyrbedari 2006). Though remittances financed the reconstruction of Kosovo, the revival of the retail and construction sectors in urban areas and of subsistence farms in rural areas, it has not changed the structure of the economy, or generated more substantial development, partly due to the limited skills that returnees were able to transfer to the local economy (ESI 2006; ESPIG 2004). Predictions for the near future (2005-2009) show that only 30 per cent of remittances will be used for investment, even assuming that they grow in line with European price levels (UNMIK/PISG 2006b).

Regarding the impact of remittances on the household economy, survey data show that they represent an important component of families' incomes, exceeding the total income earned by those working in Kosovo (ESPIG 2004). However, based on the 2002/03 Household Budget Survey (HBS) data, IMF (2004) estimate that only 16.5 per cent of households received remittances that year. More importantly, the HBS 2003/04 shows that the main recipients of remittances are non-poor households, receiving more than double the sum received by poor households (SOK 2005). The former were also much more prone to spend on imported goods such as clothing and footwear. Considering that the main difference between poor and non-poor families is the lower salaries among the poor, the data show that remittances are contributing to sharpening income inequality among Kosovo households (Table 5 and 6).

**Table 5: Selected Data on Average Monthly Income Itemized by Poverty Status 2003/04**

Indicators	All households	Extreme poverty 0.94 Euro/day/adult		Absolute poverty 1.43 Euro/day/adult	
		Non poor	Poor	Non poor	Poor
Household size	6.46	6.35	7.23	6.14	6.92
No. of income earners	2.08	2.11	1.86	2.16	1.9
Total incomes of households	274.32	292.71	143.71	344.41	173.50
Net wages and salaries	151.49	165.49	54.82	200.35	81.20
Social welfare benefits	7.11	5.21	20.64	2.80	13.32
Pensions	18.78	19.35	14.73	19.04	18.40
Cash remittances from Kosovo Para	2.42	2.21	3.88	1.88	3.20
Net income from self owned business	24.22	26.80	5.88	33.39	11.02
Cash sent from abroad pensions, wages, remittances etc	36.44	39.37	15.65	48.05	19.74
Gifts sent from abroad	1.11	1.23	0.31	1.50	0.56

Source: SOK (2005).

**Table 6: Selected Data on Average Monthly Expenditure Itemized by Poverty Status 2003/04**

Indicators	All households	Extreme poverty 0.94 Euro/day/adult		Absolute poverty 1.43 Euro/day/adult	
		Non poor	Poor	Non poor	Poor
Household size	6.46	6.35	7.23	6.14	6.92
Total expenditure of household	281.00	302.47	128.48	359.13	168.61
Food expenditures	167.37	176.35	103.52	198.12	123.12
Expenditures on clothing and footwear	21.76	24.49	2.34	31.14	8.26
Expenditure on health services	7.71	8.41	2.74	10.18	4.16
Expenditures on transport and communication	24.44	27.36	3.73	35.32	8.79
Expenditure on education	7.86	8.82	1.05	11.74	2.28
Expenditure on housing and related services	38.84	42.55	12.48	53.55	17.67

Source: SOK (2005).

Yet remittances remain an important source of revenue in macro-economic terms, and have filled an important part of the huge balance of payments deficit (Tyrbedari 2006). Furthermore, Korovilas (2006b) observes that since private reserves stand at only €266 million, they would be unable to cover the annual balance of payments deficit by themselves, estimated to have reached €932 million in 2003. As a result, any decline in remittances would have serious economic consequences since the value of exports continues to fall and is unlikely to increase sufficiently in the near future (Korovilas 2006b; UNDP 2005a). Worryingly, available data suggests that the amount of remittances has indeed started to decline as a result of the closure of emigration routes, a fall in the number of Kosovans abroad, and a projected decline in migrants' tendency to remit (ESI 2006; ESPIG 2004).

More controversy characterises writings about the role of migration on social structures. According to ESI (2006), although migration has been a link with the outside world for Kosovans, its effects have been far from those of an agent of modernisation. For example, especially in rural areas, it is said to have reinforced the

patriarchal family and traditional 'gender roles'. Reineck (1993) observes that the household heads (i.e. the men) who migrated internally and regionally were more open towards accepting new ideas and educating their daughters. However, while migrating abroad '... the men believe that ageing parents and other family members will be secure as long as strict traditional behaviour is upheld in their absence. They also find comfort abroad in knowing that each time they return home they will find the same lifestyle they left months, years and decades ago. The only changes they hope to find upon return are in the family's material conditions' (Reineck 1993: 6).

Taking account of the poor economic conditions of rural areas, ESI (2006) points out that contrary to what scholars predicted in the 1960s and 1970s, the traditional family – *zadruga* – is still the norm in rural Kosovo, perhaps because it provides economic security that is missing elsewhere. Yet, ESI (2006) warns that in the complete absence of a welfare state, the solidarity mechanism of the extended household should not be taken for granted. Moreover, Dahinden (2005) observes that returnees who have not contributed to the household economy while abroad find they have only limited rights to reciprocal solidarity once they are back in Kosovo, making them more vulnerable to poor economic conditions and lack of resources.

Concerning 'gender roles', Dahinden (2005) observes that women who have returned have enlarged their cultural resources, redefining their roles by picking from the repertoire of global cultural symbols. However, the bleak prospects in rural areas have reinforced women's dependence on traditional value frameworks (ESI 2006). This is illustrated by a growing tendency not to value education, especially in the face of an opportunity to marry someone 'with papers' (i.e. settled abroad), further emphasizing women's lack of life alternatives. Similarly, Reineck (1993) maintains that the money and the facilities provided by migrants have the effect of reinforcing the status quo, by appeasing those who remain behind and making them, especially women, passive about the way they live.

## 5. Conclusions

Evidence from Kosovo shows that the province has a stagnating economy, high unemployment rates, a large young population that lacks access to employment opportunities and participation in decision-making, marginalised vulnerable groups, high gender inequality and widespread poverty. History reveals that Kosovans have stood up to exclusionary politics and policies that left them marginalised from mainstream institutions and political engagement and have looked to migration as a means of improving their livelihoods.

While current negative signals from economic experts are thought to warn about a long and difficult period of transition, European policy makers expect Kosovo to experience 'zero migration'. Thus despite discussions

about a 'European' future, European countries are reluctant to welcome any initiatives for legal economic migration from the province. Rather, the province's fragile institutions are being 'tested' against demanding standards for ethnic relations and freedom of movement within the province, and are being asked to accommodate a large number of failed asylum seekers who have yet to return.

Overall, Kosovo has an unusual development and migration profile, but limited evidence available shows that migration and remittances have been an important resource for Kosovo. Diaspora contributions have been crucial for Kosovans at major points in the province's history, and continue to be as vital today for its economy, even if remittances are seen to be exacerbating income inequalities and there are concerns about the presumed relationship between migration and social backwardness in rural areas.

As a result, the pressure to facilitate the repatriation of failed Kosovan asylum seekers and the lack of legal migration routes are expected to have a detrimental effect on development and further aggravate poverty in the province. In part, this reflects the high dependence of Kosovo's economy on remittances, and the serious economic and social problems currently being felt in the province, neither of which are desirable. Nonetheless, given the reluctance of European policy makers, and the failure of Kosovo institutions to effectively address its problems, Kosovo arguably needs migration, at least for some time to come.

## **6. Policy Recommendations**

- As in other policy areas, the development of a migration policy in Kosovo is heavily dependent on final status issues for the province.
- Nevertheless, efforts could be made to liberalise freedom of movement, including the enhancement of youth programmes that might allow for more exchange and mobility, especially within the region. Such a policy needs to address the current difficulties faced by all Kosovo residents that result from lack of access to a formal passport.
- Beyond this, a comprehensive migration policy needs to be formulated, taking into account the experience of other countries of mass-migration, effectively addressing labour migration and maintaining ties with a substantial diaspora. A diaspora policy in particular needs to take into account the diversified nature of the Kosovan diaspora.
- Given the apparently negative consequences of migration for gender relations, there is a need to keep a strong focus on gender inequality and women's education within Kosovo.
- Finally, there is a need to carefully monitor migration and build more accurate statistics. This could include the addition of a migration module to any future Living Standards Measurement Survey or other household surveys being conducted in the province.

## 7. Research Gaps

Generally speaking, Kosovo has been widely 'monitored' rather than studied. Kosovo has a rich but somewhat unusual migratory profile and is underrepresented in migration and development literature. Post-conflict returns, internal movements, and illegal emigration are three obvious areas that need further research. There is also value in pursuing further qualitative research on gender aspects, and the gendered consequences of migration.

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## ANNEX 1. LIST OF SPECIALISTS CONSULTED

Name	Organisation	Position
Patricia Warring	UNMIK Pristina Region	Head of Civil Administration
R McClelland	UNMIK Pristina Region	Principal Governance Officer
James Korovilas	University of West Anglia	Senior Lecturer
Prof Sejdi Osmani	REINVEST	Executive Director
Sarah Rattray	UNDP	GAR Project Coordinator
Sandra Mitchell	UNMIK - OCMR	Director Returns and Minority Affairs
Helga Spadina	UNMIK - OCMR	Repatriation Officer, Returns and Minority Affairs
Arianit Blakaj	KDSP-Secretariat	Economist / Planner
Eleonora Kelmendi	UNDP/PISG/CBF	CBF Project Officer
Bali Muharremaj	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Director for Borders, Asylum and Refugees
Valli Carbonese	ILO Kosovo	ILO Coordinator
Anton Hookes	UNMIK Pristina Region	Civil Affairs Officer
Jeffrey Tudor	DfID Kosovo	Head of the Regional Office
Lirim Osmani	DfID Kosovo	Programme Officer
Gregory Thwaites	UNMIK – EU Pillar	Fiscal Economist
David Handley	KOSVET Programme	International Team Leader
Visare Nimani	UNFPA	Project Officer
Ann Guthmiller	IOM	Donor Relations/Special Projects
Bekim Ajdini	IOM	Kosip Project Coordinator