



# **OECD SOUTH EAST EUROPE REGIONAL PROGRAMME**

High-level Conference;  
Findings of the Labour Migration Report

**FRIENDS OF SOUTH EAST EUROPE MEETING**  
**20 April 2022**



# High Level Conference on South East Europe 2022



## “Human Capital Flight – Shaping the Future Together”

17 May 2022

OECD Conference Centre, CC 9  
Paris



### High-level Confirmations

**Mr Mathias Cormann**, Secretary-General, **OECD**

**Mr Olivér Várhelyi**, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, **European Commission**

**Mr Fatmir Bytyqi**, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic affairs, **North Macedonia**

**Ms Delina Ibrahimaj**, Minister of Finance and Economy, **Albania**

**Mr Staša Košarac**, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Ms Rozeta Hajdari**, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, **Kosovo\***

**Mr Jakov Milatovic**, Minister of Economic Development, **Montenegro**

**Ms Velislava Petrova**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Bulgaria**

**Mr. Zdenko Lucić**, State Secretary, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, **Croatia**

**Dr Stanislav Raščan**, Acting Minister for Development Cooperation, **Slovenia**

**Ms Patricia Danzi**, Secretary of State, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, **Switzerland**

**Ms Desirée Schweitzer**, Director General, Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, **Austria**

*Confirmations for Serbia, Romania and for other OECD member states are still pending.*

*\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ on Kosovo's declaration of independence.*

# High Level Conference on South East Europe 2022

## Agenda

17 May, OECD Conference Centre, CC 9



09:00 – 10:00 Registration and Welcome Coffee  
10:00 – 10:05 Welcome  
10:05 – 10:45 **Opening Session**



10:45 – 11:15 **Launch of the OECD Report:** “Labour Migration in the Western Balkans: Mapping Patterns, Addressing Challenges, and Reaping Benefits”



11:15 – 12:30 **First Ministerial Panel:** “Human Capital Flight: How to Reverse the Tendency in South East Europe”  
12:30 – 12:45 **Family Photo**  
12:45 – 14:00 Lunch Break  
14:00 – 15:15 **Second Ministerial Panel:** “Talent Transformation in South East Europe: Develop Today’s Human for Today’s Capital”



15:15 – 15:30 **Closing Remarks**  
15:30 – 17:30 Reception



# High Level Conference on South East Europe 2022

## HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH EAST EUROPE

### *HUMAN CAPITAL FLIGHT - SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER*



 17 May 2022  Paris, France

How can governments manage labour migration and create a promising future for its citizens and businesses? Take part in the *Human Capital Flight – Shaping the Future Together* conference, joining leaders, policy makers and researchers in discussions around how strengthening domestic labour markets and talent transformation can drive socio-economic development in South East Europe.

This high-level event will examine the different ways that the region can draw on its human capital – the skills, experience and talents of its citizens – to make the region prosperous and competitive. Sessions will draw on the OECD's analytical insights and policy recommendations, including *Labour Migration in the Western Balkans (2022)* and the *South East Europe Competitiveness Outlook 2021*, and will offer participants the opportunity to discuss challenges and exchange good practices.

The conference will bring together Ministers in charge of economic affairs and development, and high-level representatives from South East Europe and from OECD and EU member countries, the European Commission, international partner organisations and non-governmental organisations, as well as other regional stakeholders.

#### **[REGISTER NOW](#)**

For **in-person registration** (by invitation only), please contact: [SEE.Conference@oecd.org](mailto:SEE.Conference@oecd.org)

**Visit the website for the High-level Conference here:**

<https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/programme/up-coming.htm>



# Labour Migration in the Western Balkans



This report analyses **labour migration patterns** of the **WB6 economies**, investigates their **root causes** as well as potential **consequences**, and examines the WB6 economies' current **migration and diaspora policies**.

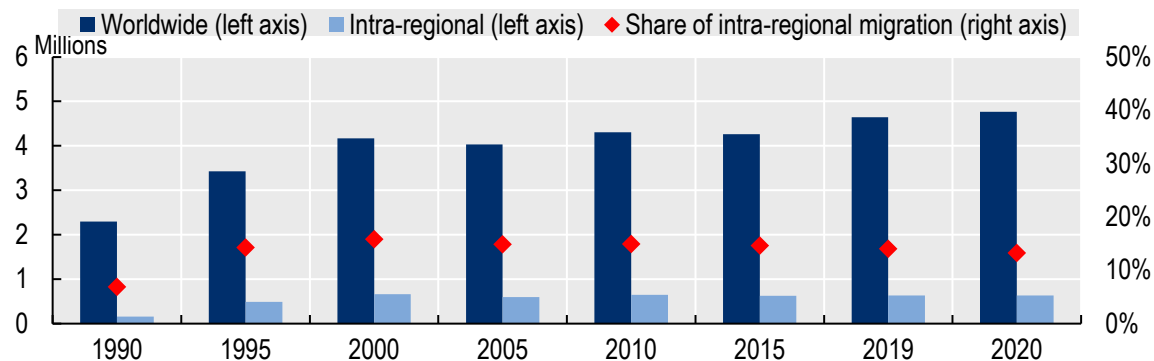
It builds on results from an **original survey of emigrants** from the WB6 region in addition to a wide range of **OECD and international migration data** sources as well as regional **stakeholder consultations**.

It provides WB6 policy-makers with targeted **policy recommendations** on how to **address the structural challenges** that incentivise emigration and how to **maximise the benefits from emigration** for the WB6 economies' own socio-economic development.



# Labour Migration in the Western Balkans – Key Findings

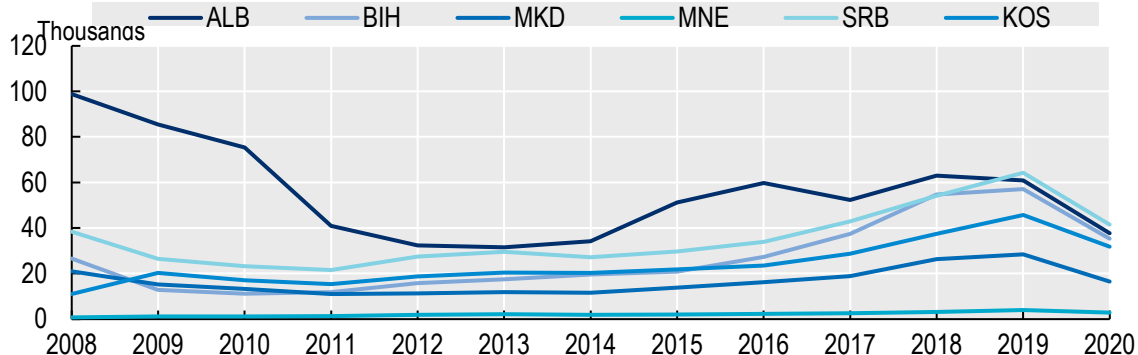
Number of WB6 migrants worldwide



Labour emigration waves from the WB6 economies over the past decades have led to **significant international diasporas**:

In 2020, 4.8 million people born in the region, i.e. about **one-fifth of the WB6 population**, live abroad.

First residence permits attained in EEA countries and Switzerland



WB6 migration to the European Economic Area and Switzerland saw an important **increase from 2011 to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic**.

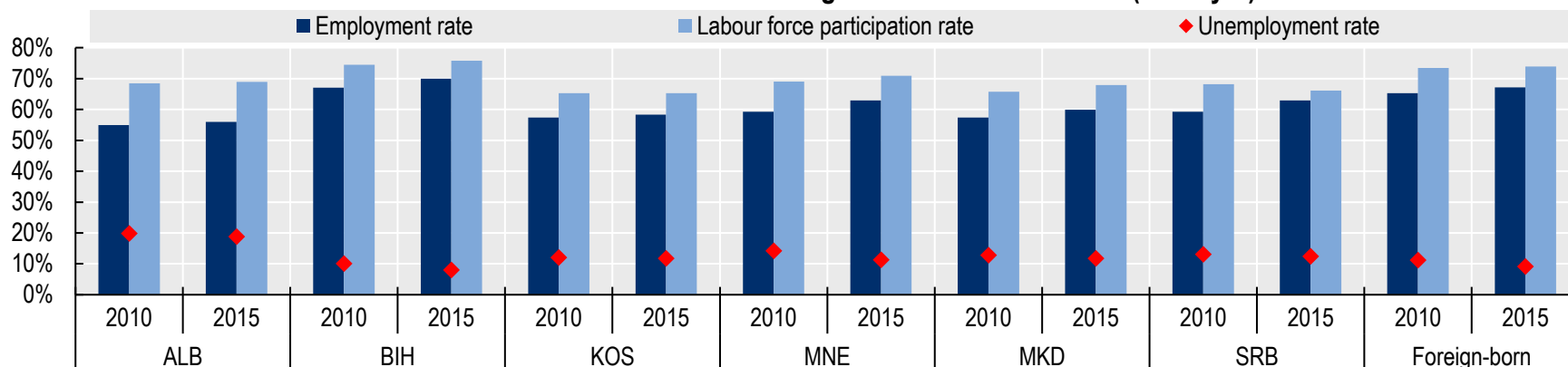
WB6 migrants are predominantly living in **Germany, Italy, Greece, the United States, Austria and Switzerland** but emigration to **Croatia and Slovenia** has been increasing since 2015.



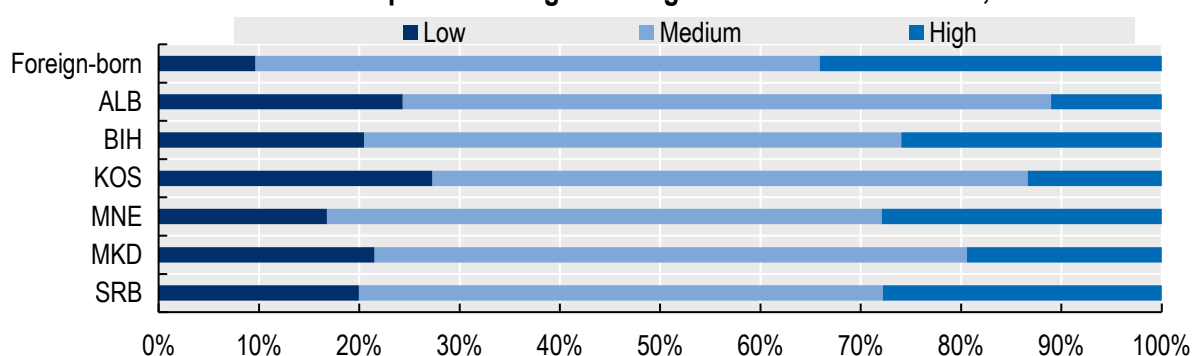
# Labour Migration in the Western Balkans – Key Findings

Labour market outcomes of WB6 migrants in OECD countries have **marginally improved**, but WB6 emigrants are **less integrated** in the labour markets **than the average foreign-born population**.

Labour market outcomes of WB6 migrants in OECD countries (15-64 yrs)



Skill level of occupation among WB6 migrants in OECD countries, 2015/2016



Most WB6 migrants in OECD countries are employed in **mid-skilled occupations**.

Among **WB6 migrants with a tertiary education degree most are overqualified** for the job they do in OECD countries.



# Labour Migration in the Western Balkans – Key Findings

If you have migrated, what was the main reason to move to another country? (%)

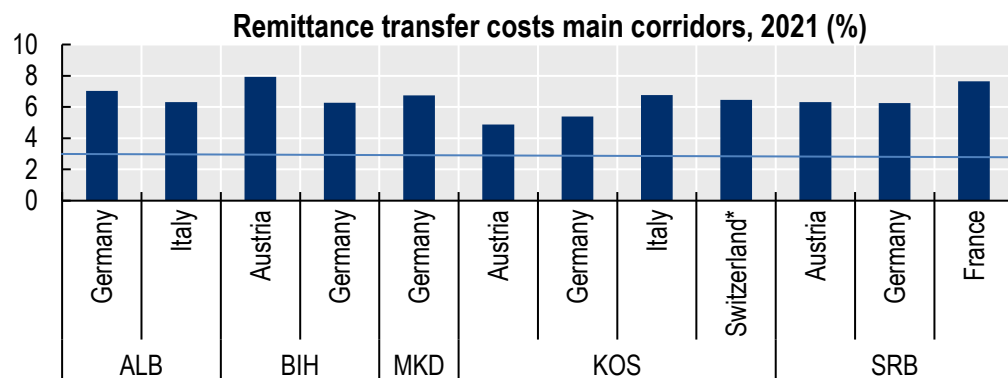
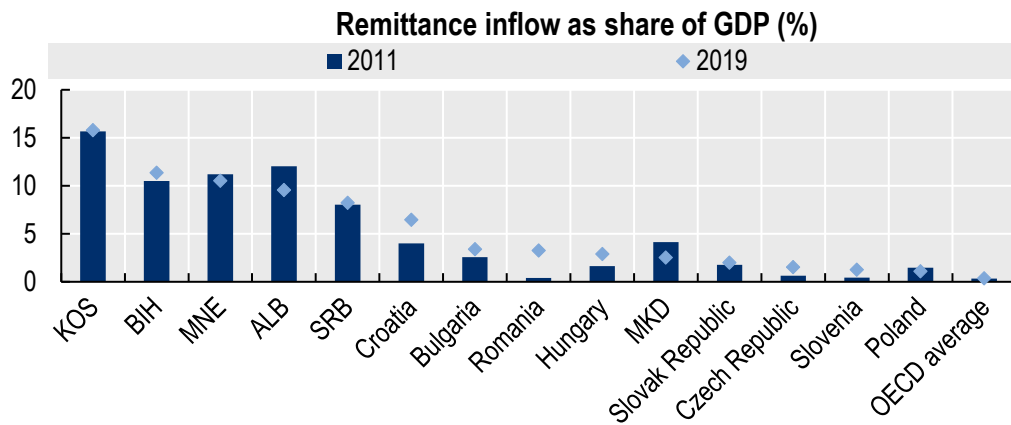


A mix of **push and pull factors** contribute to emigration from the six Western Balkan economies.





# Labour Migration in the Western Balkans – Key Findings



On average, the WB6 economies received an estimated equivalent of **10% of their GDP in remittances** in 2019, ranging from 16% of GDP in Kosovo\* to 2.5% in North Macedonia.

The costs for transferring remittances in most of the WB6 economies' main remittance corridors are still **more than twice as high as the 3% target set in Sustainable Development Goal 10**.

About one-third of men and two-fifths of women in the Western Balkans on average **did not have access to a bank account** in 2017.

All governments of the WB6 have developed **migration strategies and policies**, with various focus and scope. **Diaspora investment and knowledge transfers** offer development potential, but dedicated policies and support mechanisms are yet to be developed in most WB6 economies. The knowledge about **return migrants** is limited due to data gaps, while policies to actively attract back return migrants are lacking.



# Labour Migration in the Western Balkans – Policy Recommendations

*Strengthen the management of labour migration flows and improve the outcomes of labour migrants in destination countries:*

- Reinforce **migration management** by improving institutional co-ordination and boosting migration data collection.
- Support WB6 migrants in improving their **employment outcomes abroad** by strengthening and harmonising curricula and skills recognition systems, and using partnerships with destination countries.

*Maximise the development benefits from emigration:*

- Build trust and strengthen the **engagement with the diaspora** by capitalising on the many and active diaspora associations that already exist in the region.
- Make the most of the **diaspora's skills and financial resources** by encouraging diaspora knowledge transfers, formalising remittances and attracting diaspora investments more strategically.
- Facilitate **emigrants' return and reintegration** into the labour market by providing incentives and simplifying administrative procedures.

*Alleviate the strength of push factors for emigration:*

- Ameliorate the **conditions for living, working and investing** in the Western Balkans by pursuing economic and social reforms.
- Improve **citizens' education and labour market outcomes** by strengthening skills policies and improving employment conditions.



**Thank you for your attention!**

**For further information, please consult our website:**

**[www.oecd.org/south-east-europe](http://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe)**

**and contact:**

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