



# Labour Migration in Kosovo\*

## How to make the most of it?<sup>1</sup>

### Meeting summary



**29 September 2022**

Swiss Diamond Hotel

Bvd. Mother Teresa n.n., 10000

Pristina , Kosovo

## CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING

The Western Balkan Six (WB6) economies all have a long history of emigration. In 2020, more than one in five citizens born in the region lived abroad, mainly in a handful of OECD countries. This trend is set to continue, as more than one-third of WB6 citizens surveyed in 2021 considered emigrating. High levels of labour emigration can pose a severe development challenge for the Western Balkans. However, the region's large and growing diaspora also provides opportunities, which remain largely untapped.

The [High-Level Conference on South East Europe: Human Capital Flight – Shaping The Future Together](#) was organised on 17 May 2022, bringing together more than 250 participants, including high-level representatives of SEE economies. It provided the occasion to discuss how the SEE governments can manage labour migration and offer better prospects for their citizens and businesses. The high-level stakeholders reflected on current challenges and shared insights and best practices on reversing the human capital flight and overcoming technological challenges in SEE through talent transformation.

The new OECD report [Labour Migration in The Western Balkans: Mapping Patterns, Addressing Challenges and Reaping Benefits](#), prepared between spring 2021 and January 2022, was launched at the High-Level Conference. The report provides analytical insights on WB6 economies' labour migration, with economy-specific policy recommendations to address its root causes and reap benefits of migration and the diaspora. This report, conducted under the auspices of the OECD South East Europe Regional Programme, was prepared in co-operation with the OECD International Migration Division and co-funded by Austria (ADA) and Switzerland (SDC).

A series of roundtable meetings in the Western Balkan Six economies is opening up the chance for deepening the discussions that took place during the High-Level Conference and explore ways to continue and strengthen the work on labour migration and skills. In particular, this meeting aimed to provide the opportunity to discuss key findings of the report and pathways to support Kosovo in better capitalising on its diaspora for its own development.

## MEETING MINUTES

### Opening remarks

The event was opened by **Mr. Karim Dahou**, Deputy Director, OECD Global Relations and Cooperation, **Ms. Rozeta Hajdari**, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, Kosovo, **Ms. Pauline Menthonnex Gacafferri**, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland in Kosovo, and **Mr. Martin Schaller**, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Austria in Kosovo. They reflected on current challenges and opportunities with regards to labour migration in Kosovo.

- **Mr. Karim Dahou** stated that the OECD has long accompanied Members and partners through a rapidly evolving migration landscape, offering reliable data and evidence-based policy recommendations, and will continue to do so. He underscored that the OECD's report is part of these efforts, providing insights into the labour migration trends and policies of the Western Balkan economies. It also offers policy recommendations on how to deal with the factors that incentivise emigration while maximising the benefits from emigration. Based on its findings, he highlighted three key ways for Kosovo to leverage migration and its diaspora

for its economic development: (1) Creating an enabling environment for remittance transfers; (2) developing an economy-wide programme to promote diaspora investment, and (3) enhancing the positive outcomes of co-operation with destination countries. He concluded by expressing his gratitude to migration policy makers and non-governmental stakeholders from Kosovo who provided their inputs to the report, to the Austrian Development Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, as well as to the Swiss embassy for the generous support in organising the meeting.

- **Ms. Rozeta Hajdari** thanked the OECD representatives and experts for bringing valuable insights and targeted recommendations to address labour migration from Kosovo. She also expressed her gratitude to the OECD for its previous studies on Kosovo, which helped to inform policy-making across areas of industry, innovation, entrepreneurship, and good governance. She underscored the key role of the diaspora in the development of Kosovo and its importance as part of the Government's plan for sustainable development. She further stated that the Government is fully committed to creating the necessary preconditions for the diaspora to perceive Kosovo as an attractive investment destination, to utilise their full potential and to become successful development agents for the economy. She concluded that Kosovo is always open to strategic alliances and regional cooperation in areas of mutual benefit, working together with a concrete plan in line with the Berlin Process, to advance with EU integration.
- **Ms. Pauline Menthonnex Gacaferri** highlighted worrying trends in the emigration of both high- and low-skilled members of Kosovo's labour force. She noted that Switzerland has been active in Kosovo through different programmes with a strong focus on economic development. She highlighted the efforts to promote job creation and youth employment by providing education and career mediation support. She pointed out that, given the complexity of the issue, a holistic approach is needed in the discussion to address migration and retain essential talents and labour force in Kosovo. She added that, since 2010, Switzerland has also worked together with the competent authorities of Kosovo to help put in place a migration management system. Finally, she welcomed recent developments in the strategic diaspora framework led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora and highlighted the need to jointly discuss the recommendations of the OECD report and the way forward.
- **Mr. Martin Schaller** stated that the roundtable's topic is very relevant for Austria as it is among the top OECD destination countries for migrants from Kosovo. He highlighted the importance of the OECD report, which provides a firm base to develop and build on well-researched and evidence-based policies. As one of the important findings of the report, he pointed out the high share of employers unable to fill their vacancies due to departure of the workforce, which is an issue that the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) aims to address through two different projects. In this regard, he noted it is encouraging to hear that the Government is identifying this issue as an area that needs further intervention. Finally, he underlined that it is in Austria's strong interest to promote a stable and prosperous Western Balkans region, which can follow its EU integration path. He closed by highlighting that the OECD's report is part of these efforts.

## Presentation of the OECD report *Labour Migration in the Western Balkans: Mapping Patterns, Addressing Challenges and Reaping Benefits*

Following the opening remarks, **Mr. Martin Kohtze**, Policy Analyst and Project Manager at the OECD South East Europe Division, and **Ms. Lisa Andersson**, Labour Market Economist/Policy Analyst at the OECD International Migration Division, presented the key findings of the OECD report for Kosovo, as well as policy approaches for maximising the benefits from migration while mitigating its negative consequences.

- **Mr. Martin Kohtze** and **Ms. Lisa Andersson** highlighted that, over the last decade alone, migration from Kosovo to Europe has tripled, and that about 22% of Kosovo's population now lives in OECD countries. Continued high levels of emigration can pose severe development challenges to Kosovo. However, a large diaspora can also provide opportunities. Remittances sent by the diaspora were estimated to the equivalent of 16% of Kosovo's GDP in 2019, making it one of the top 20 remittance-receiving economies in relation to GDP worldwide. Kosovo's Strategy on Migration (2021-2025) provides a framework for migration management. However, the existing framework can be reinforced by developing the strategic and institutional framework to better support diaspora investment and knowledge transfers, and by creating an enabling environment for more formal remittance transfers and investment.

### Panel discussion – Maximising the benefits from migration for Kosovo

The presentation was followed by a panel discussion on *Maximising the benefits from migration for Kosovo*. The panellists were: **Mr. Zef Dedaj**, Acting General Director, Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA), **Mr. Fadil O. Osmani**, Head of Division for Employment Services, Department of Labour Market, Kosovo Employment Agency, **Mr. Lirim Krasniqi**, Co-Executive Director, Germin, and **Ms. Venera Fusha**, Coordinator, Programme Migration & Diaspora, GIZ Kosovo. The panel was moderated by **Mr. Anton Gojani**, Coordinator for Quality Assurance and Higher Education, ADA.

- **Mr. Zef Dedaj** stated that KIESA aims to promote and support investments, exports, tourism, SMEs, and special economic zones in Kosovo. KIESA also organises information sessions abroad, seeking to bring together diaspora businesses to inform them about the business and investment climate in Kosovo. At the same time, these sessions allow them to learn more about the issues of diaspora businesses which are then used to inform future policies. KIESA is also working together with Germin to create a database of diaspora companies which would facilitate engagement and cooperation with the diaspora. Finally, while previous OECD reports such as the SME Policy Index show how Kosovo has improved its business environment over the years, the recommendations in this OECD report on labour migration will be addressed by the relevant institutions to further advance the socio-economic development of Kosovo moving forward.
- **Mr. Fadil O. Osmani** thanked the OECD for organising the event and for the comprehensive report on migration in the Western Balkans, which has been an important issue for Kosovo especially in recent years. Mr. Osmani listed the main activities of the Labour Employment Agency, namely to implement employment and vocational training policies. He stressed in

particular that the Agency supports citizens through its employment offices and vocational training centres. In this regard, he underscored that the Agency also has a division for migration services and carries out activities to strengthen the cooperation with migrants, and support their return and reintegration.

- **Mr. Lirim Krasniqi** listed some of Germin's main planned initiatives to facilitate diaspora's contribution to Kosovo. One of the initiatives is the engagement of diaspora professionals in sharing their know-how with public institutions and private businesses. To do so, Germin has planned a series of conferences and a programme for the temporary return (1-6 months) of diaspora professionals to institutions, organisations or businesses in Kosovo. In addition, Germin also aims to facilitate trade and business connections with the diaspora through activities such as diaspora business forums, conferences and through the creation of platforms identifying diaspora businesses and associations. Mr. Krasniqi noted that migration is a global phenomenon, and rather than stopping it, Kosovo should try to maintain a connection with those who leave. Finally, he underlined that in recent years, the significance of pull factors for Kosovo has increased greatly compared to push factors and should be given more importance in the future.
- **Ms. Venera Fusha** explained that GIZ cooperates with organisations in Kosovo through projects on skills partnerships with German universities and companies. They also work on diaspora engagement, providing information on remittances and the reintegration of return migrants. GIZ also collaborates with Germin in the "DiasporaFlet" conferences to inform diaspora members in Germany about opportunities for investing in Kosovo. She highlighted that recent graduates account for a large share of the diaspora in Germany and it is very important to also engage them in socio-economic development issues in Kosovo. One of the ways to do it is through activities of organisations such as Germin. She concluded that GIZ and different international organisations are supporting public institutions to increase their capacities, and to implement certain measures, while also helping to face regular migration and migrant integration, and to make use of the know-how from the diaspora that studied abroad.

## Conclusion

Panellists and meeting participants agreed that addressing the challenges of emigration and maximising the benefits from migration should be part of Kosovo's policy priorities. Participants highlighted the need to improve the conditions for living, working and investing in Kosovo as a way to reduce push factors for emigration. In addition, reinforcing migration management, and using better designed skills mobility partnerships to support migrants' employment outcomes abroad were also identified as priorities.

On the other hand, to maximise the development benefits of the diaspora it is important to create an enabling environment for investments to make the most of the large inflows of remittances to Kosovo. Participants stressed the need for a holistic programme for diaspora engagement to support diaspora investment, knowledge transfers and to transform the diaspora into successful development agents for the economy.

Moving ahead, the OECD, together with Austria, Switzerland, and stakeholders in Kosovo looks forward to supporting Kosovo in addressing the challenges and reaping the benefits from labour migration, guided by the policy recommendations provided in the OECD report and the roundtable meeting discussions.