

WHERE DO KOSOVARS GO ?

Lumir
Abdixhiku

Alban
Hashani

Gent
Beqiri



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Authors:

Lumir Abdixhiku, Alban Hashani, and Gent Beqiri

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For more information contact:

info@kfos.org
www.kfos.org

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study financed and supported by Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) aims to analyze and scan previous and potential emigrants from Kosovo.

In line with recent developments in the country, interlinked with the high flux of leaving Kosovo, KFOS considered as reasonable the need to interview and analyze data provided by current emigrants. Such an analysis would enable to find a common denominator of Kosovar emigrants, which is mainly related to reasons for leaving, financing and forms of leaving, staying in emigration, returning and perspective after return.

To this end, the research team of this report has compiled a questionnaire, which was disseminated among 100 respondents – all of whom were repatriated in Kosovo. Respondents were identified in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo (MIA). The questionnaire was compiled with the aim to gather relevant information on the characteristics of emigrants – such as age, location, sex, education level, economic status – by finding personal monthly incomes of emigrant's family; issues related to sources of financing the departure; emigrants' destinations – by finding primary location and (if different) emigrant's final country; finding potential advantages that the chosen countries had in

emigrants' decisions; employment during departure, remittances during the stay and potential recipients of these means; as well as return to Kosovo – voluntary or otherwise – together with the perspective to escape after all undergone experience.

A special objective of the study is to find the profile of a potential emigrant from Kosovo; a finding that would derive from data gathered from respondents, which in essence give an overall average with a generalizing potential towards a wider population. By finding a potential profile – or the most possible one – the study and the actors may draw conclusions on possible expectations for the future.

Also, the information derived from this study will contribute to the drafting of national policies to address emigration problems.

This study is divided in five sections. After introduction in section one, in section two we will provide general information based upon data of Kosovo state institutions that were recently collected. In section three we will provide general information about survey process, sampling and processing of survey data. Other additional information related to survey process could be provided by authors and KFOS to any interested party. Section four interprets survey results separated in three stages: profile of an emigrant, leaving

and staying abroad, and return as well as perspective after the return of emigrants. Last section draws conclusions.

II. GENERAL DATA

Kosovo has a long tradition of mobility of the population. Emigration from Kosovo followed a particular trajectory that reflects its historical background. Emigration of citizens from Kosovo in different parts of the world can be traced down from very early stages; however, starting from the second half of the last century, this emigration can be classified in three general stages: firstly, the period from early 60ies to late 80ies; secondly, the period during 90ies which culminated during war period; and lastly, the postwar period and on. This study aims to focus only on profiling emigrants of the last period, though it is important to establish some crucial differences.

The characteristics of emigrants along different emigration waves have significantly changed. People who left Kosovo during the first period were primarily young people, mainly low-skilled males from either rural or poorer urban areas. However, in the second period, as a result of political circumstances in the country, especially after the abolishment of autonomy and use of violent measures characterized by massive expulsion of professionals from their work and paralysis of education system and, lastly, by war consequences, the participation of emigrants with higher professional skills has significantly increased. As a result, the profile of Kosovo emigrants after this period became more heterogeneous. During

the postwar period, both groups continued to emigrate from Kosovo. Emigrants with lower professional skills mainly used illegal channels of emigration, while students and people with higher professional skills left largely in order to study abroad or with the aim to get employment in a regular way. However, the latter group is excluded from the focus of this analysis.

Since Kosovo is now considered a safe place by the European Union, the possibility to migrate to those countries is minimal. As a result, legal channels of emigration are few and they are mainly limited to emigration for purposes of family reunion¹. Found in such situations, potential emigrants are forced to consider the possibility of leaving Kosovo through illegal channels². Due to their illegal status, the majority of these emigrants do not manage to integrate in respective host countries. Moreover, a significant part of them is captured and afterwards repatriated in Kosovo according to obligations deriving from bilateral and regional agreements signed between the government of the country and the host countries. Repatriation and

¹ For individuals with higher professional background or skills there are other channels as well; however, as stated above, this group is excluded from the focus of this analysis. Nonetheless, even within this contingent, there is a prediction for an increase of number of potential emigrants due to better perspective in the labor market of host countries.

² When it comes to potential emigrants, different studies in Kosovo have reported that a high percentage of Kosovo citizens plan to leave the country. The same thing is confirmed also in this analysis as illustrated by the data in forthcoming sections.

reintegration of returned emigrants presents a big challenge for Kosovo institutions. While the government is committed to create conditions for sustainable reintegration of repatriated persons, the situation in the field (confirmed also by data presented in forthcoming sections) proves to be different. The repatriated people remain one of the most sensitive categories, and repatriation largely became a transitory phase during which these persons seek other channels in order to leave the country once again.

For the purpose of this research, MIA provided the data of repatriated persons, which are illustrative in order to profile emigrants. These data show that out of overall contingent of repatriated persons, over 95% left the country after 2000s. Moreover, around 75% of repatriated persons migrated during 2011-2013, while the vast majority of them were repatriated against their will.

When it comes to the profile of repatriated persons, data show that the vast majority of them are male, and only 6% are female. Only about 1% of repatriated persons have higher education (university or post-university studies); half of them completed secondary school, while the other part completed primary school or did not even complete primary school. Such a ratio of education level of repatriated persons is three times lower than the ratio on country level. Persons with such educational and professional level have great difficulty in finding jobs even in countries of destination despite the higher

potential of labor market in these countries.

The same source of data shows that countries that are high up the list of places from which Kosovo citizens were repatriated, are: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Belgium and France. Besides Hungary, which was mainly used for transit purposes, other countries are places of destination where emigrants go with the aim of family reunion or in order to get a job because these countries have a bigger possibility to absorb labor force. However, it should be noted that there's misinformation regarding these countries, that supposedly they have legal space for getting a residence permit.

The majority of repatriated persons are of working age whereas a small part of them are minors or in the period of retirement. In circumstances when economy performs under its potential and does not manage to accommodate labor force, emigration of the latter turns into the only option, even though chances to find a job abroad through legal channels are almost null while chances to be caught on the way have significantly increased.

Another important thing to be mentioned is ethnic background of repatriated people. While there are emigrants from all ethnic groups, two groups in particular make about 95% of repatriated persons: Albanians with about 68% and Roma/Ashkali/Egyptian communities with over 25%, out of which 19% are Roma. Members of other

communities are significantly less in this group.

When it comes to the period of emigration, data shows that there is no noted season although during winter there's a decrease of level of emigration. In terms of region of origin of repatriated persons, there is similar distribution in the whole of Kosovo, although a higher tendency for emigration can be noted in areas with weaker economic situation.

III. METODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The main part of the analysis presented in this document is related to conducting a survey with individuals who emigrated for a certain period of time and returned to Kosovo for different reasons. The survey aimed to identify the reasons and causes of emigration as well as to identify other relevant factors of emigration.

Survey units are repatriated persons from different countries of Europe. The research included about 100 respondents from all regions of Kosovo, who were selected randomly out of a population of 3700 repatriated persons. This database was provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

Data was collected by phone interviews. Survey questionnaire served as survey instrument, which was drafted by project implementation team. A team of independent researchers for carrying out the research was selected by the project team and KFOS.

A two-day training was organized with researchers for the implementation of research, with the aim to inform them about the importance of research, content of questionnaire, ways of contacting respondents, data collection, and technical realization of the research. After data collection, a logical check of each questionnaire was carried out. On the other

hand, data was transferred and processed with software programs, Excel and SPSS.

The sample was selected with double stratification: according to regions and according to ways of return of repatriated persons. The basis for sample dissemination according to stratification was the database provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MPB). Also, the percentage of these persons according to municipalities and regions in this register served as basis to determine the sample.

IV. SURVEY RESULTS

General profile

Economic situation caused by high level of unemployment, insufficient income and difficult life conditions within a family, were given as a main reason behind emigration of Kosovars by the very respondents. Around 70% of respondents declared that it is precisely their difficult economic situation and that of their family, which made them emigrate. A rather considerably smaller part of emigrants, around 13% saw political and personal insecurity as reason for leaving, while about 13% of respondents left Kosovo due to health and personal reasons. A quite smaller number, about 4% of respondents mentioned family reunion as the main reason. From these kinds of assessments it becomes clear that it is mainly economic and welfare reasons that make Kosovars leave the country.

Fig. 1 Reasons for emigration



The finding becomes less surprising when analyzing employment and monthly income parameters per family and/or per members of emigrant's family. In fact, the majority of emigrants, around 77%, were unemployed during the time they lived in

Kosovo. Moreover, out of this percentage of unemployed, around 61% declared not to have any family member employed. This group of unemployed people and characterized by families with all their members as unemployed, presents at the same time the most dominant group of Kosovar emigrants. In fact, in no better position is the situation of the employed, i.e. the remaining 23%. Around 72% of them did not have any other employed family member. In other words, the group of current emigrants is chiefly made of individuals who were unemployed or – in a better case – were the only employed ones in family; showing in this way their own and their family's difficult situation before leaving.

As a result of such a relation, around 60% of respondents (out of the overall number) declared that average monthly incomes of their families were up to 100 euros; while 24% declared monthly incomes per family from 101 to 250 euros.

According to data of Kosovo Statistics Agency (ASK), generated from 2011's census, in Kosovo, an average family has around 5.85 members³. Overall monthly

³ According to survey results, the average number of members in families of respondents turns out to be 5.45; thus, approximately similar to the average number derived from census data. Such confirmations, along with all survey results, give more power to the interpretation of data and at the same time provide more confidence in their generalization for a wider population.

income of 100 euros per average Kosovar family of 5.85 members gives a low proportion of income per family member. More precisely, the bigger part of emigrants, i.e. around 60% are part of the group of Kosovars who live with around 0.60 euros per day, or the group of Kosovars who – according to standard parameters of social categorizations – live in extreme poverty.

The second group of migrants, around 24% live with monthly income of up to 250 euros per family or with 1.42 euros a day per family member. They belong to the group of Kosovars who live close to the poverty line. According to ASK, around 34.5% of population in Kosovo lives in poverty, whereas 12.1% live in extreme poverty. The survey data shows that about 84% of Kosovar emigrants come from these two categories. Such a relation differently presents the reason for leaving – i.e. poverty. Kosovars, in brief, mainly leave due to poverty⁴. In line with this discussions, it should be emphasized that according to UNDP, average monthly income per family in Kosovo is around 450 euros; consequently, an average Kosovar today lives with 2.56 euros a day which is four times more than the bigger part of emigrants who live in extreme poverty (60%), and almost twice as much as emigrants who live in poverty line (24%).

Another common characteristics of emigrants, i.e. beyond the income level of their families – was also the level of education they had. Around 91% of them had no higher education; precisely, around 43% of respondents had only completed primary education whereas 48% had completed secondary education. Again, compared to ASK census data of 2011, the level of education of emigrants is rather similar to the level of overall average education in the country. In Kosovo, out of 1.2 million inhabitants that are over 15 years old, around 6% have no education; 50% have completed primary education; around 34% have completed secondary education; while the remaining 13% have higher education.

In line with other characteristics, the majority of emigrants were male, around 86%. The most common age of emigrants was between 25-35 years old (over 75% of respondents were part of this category). Moreover, in line with general characteristics of population, 58% of them were Albanians, 24% belonged to RAE communities (Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians), 7.6% Serbs, and 3.8% Turks and Gorani each; around 2.5% were Bosnians. The match between sample characteristics and population characteristics produces a higher security of representation and generalization of results of other emigrant groups.

According to abovementioned data, we can also construct an approximate profile of a Kosovo emigrant, the one who left

⁴ The remaining part of 16%, i.e. the ones who had monthly family income of over 250 euros, and who consequently lived above poverty threshold, were mainly employed (over 95% of them), and moreover, in the scale of listing reasons for leaving they also list nonfinancial reasons, such as security, possibility of marriage, family problems and also health problems. www.bqk-kos.org/repository/docs/Final-english.pdf

Kosovo so far, and the one who might leave in near future. The profile has following characteristics:

Fig. 2 Profile of a potential emigrant



Age: 25-35 years old

Sex: Male

Nationality: Albanian and RAE

Education level: < Secondary school

Employment status: Unemployed

Monthly family income: < 250 €

Life standard: Poverty/Extreme poverty

So, in other words, the potential emigrant is mainly a young Kosovar who is unemployed and moreover, with his education level, has few chances in current economic environment to find a job to provide for the family or to take himself and other family members out of poverty level where they currently are; as a consequence, he chooses emigration.

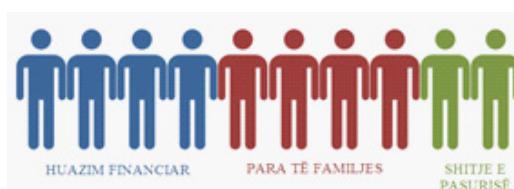
At the beginning of this section, it was emphasized that according to ASK around 34.5% of population in Kosovo live in poverty and 12.1% live in extreme poverty. Translated into numbers, it means that out

of 1.7 million citizens, around 580.000 Kosovars live in poverty and other 200.000 live in extreme poverty. Based upon the profile built according to conducted survey, we may also calculate the average number of Kosovars that belong to this profile, and who have higher chances to leave Kosovo. According to ASK data, the male-female ratio in Kosovo is 51-49 in favor of the latter. Out of the overall number of 780.000 Kosovo, it turns out that 390.000 are male. According to ASK again, around 29% of inhabitants in Kosovo belong to the age group of 25-35 years old; consequently, out of 390.000 males who live in poverty or in extreme poverty, around 110.000 belong to the age group of the profile of a potential emigrant. Lastly, also according to ASK, around 90% of inhabitants do not have higher education; reducing the final number of potential emigrants to 100.000 Kosovars.

Leaving and staying

Loans and family money present the most common form of financing Kosovars who leave the country. Around 43% of respondents said to have managed to borrow money in order to generate necessary financial means for a new life. Almost to that extent, around 42% of them were self-financed or assisted with family money. This second group of emigrants mainly presents cases where leaving is supported or even initiated by the entire family; always aiming that after leaving, the one who left would financially support the family. Third group, around 15%, is made of individuals that decided to sell their real estate and other valuable property to financially support the departure. This group potentially presents the most determined group in relation to leaving and at the same time the most burdened one after return; by selling property and valuable possessions they confirm their aim of not coming back and at the same time – after the return – with a new situation without real estate or possessions, they find themselves in a more troublesome economic and social situation than they used to be before leaving.

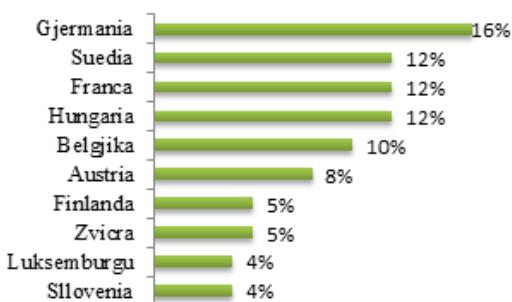
Fig. 5 Financing emigration



Germany (16%), Hungary (12%), France (12%), Sweden (12%) and Belgium (10%)

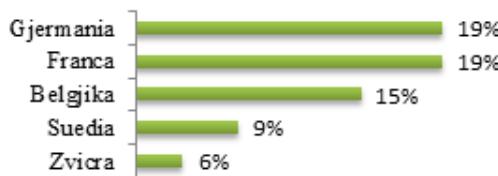
present the first five places – chosen by Kosovars as their first destination after leaving (see fig. 3). Followed by Austria (8%), Switzerland (5%), Finland (5%), Slovenia (4%) and Luxemburg (4%) – these are the most common ten countries targeted by potential emigrants as a first place of stay.

Fig. 3. First destination



These countries have the tendency to remain the most preferred countries for either permanent residence or at least residence until the return of Kosovars (voluntary or otherwise). Indeed, the majority of emigrants, or around 68% of them, has lived in one and the same country; the remaining 32% have moved to other countries, changing in this way the ratios of individuals in these countries. In this way, considering the last country from which Kosovars returned, it turns out that (Fig. 4) Germany (19%) and France (19%) present the two most common countries for a longer stay, followed by Belgium (15.2%), Sweden (9%) and Switzerland (6%).

Fig. 4. Last destination



It is precisely these countries that are characterized by a high presence – in fact, the highest one – of Albanian diaspora. According to Riinvest survey⁵, the biggest part of Albanian diaspora lives in Germany, Switzerland, and in Scandinavian countries. Kosovars, in longer periods, try to end up in environments that are closer to them, such as regions of cities with more Albanians. A higher potential to find a job in such environments, as well as the proximity to other family members or other close social groups, may be among the reasons behind such approaches. On the other hand, high presence in France, a country with less Albanian diaspora compared to other countries, may be justified with the presence of more liberal laws that deal with emigration.

In order to confirm this assumption, respondents were asked about reasons for choosing their final destination (from where they returned to Kosovo). The answers were open, while the research team grouped them in three categories. First category is related to the presence of emigrants' relatives in these countries. Around 26% of respondents are part of this category. So, every fourth

emigrant chooses the final destination because of the presence of emigrant's family or relatives there.

Second category, with 40% of respondents – i.e. the biggest part of emigrants – relates to the ease of obtaining residence documents; so, due to the presence of more liberal laws regarding residence – as perceived by respondents. A very interesting insight comes up from cross-tabulating this category with the country of final destination of emigrants. It brings forth France as the country of choice, with around 30% of choices from this category. So, every third respondent who declared to have chosen the final country destination because of the ease to obtain residence documents ended up in France.

Lastly, third category, with 34% of respondents, relates to the possibility of work and financial gain, including health and welfare of emigrants in such countries. So, every third emigrant prefers to settle in countries that have better life standards and better possibilities for work.

Fig. 6 Reasons of destination



After settling, employment would be the main concern of emigrants. In line with this, the research team asked respondents about the possibility of finding a job there. Results

⁵ www.riinvestinstitute.org/publikimet/pdf/50.pdf

show that every second emigrant managed to find a job in countries where they were settled. Compared to the norm of unemployed – as declared before leaving – such a relation, however, shows better life opportunities despite illegal emigration. Moreover, around 48% of Kosovars who were unemployed in Kosovo managed to illegally find jobs after emigration; while around 65% of employed persons in Kosovo were also employed in emigration. Obviously, such numbers show that also half of emigrants did not manage to find a job during their stay abroad. Most common professions that Kosovo emigrants employed during their illegal stay were mainly crafts, usually categorized as:

- Construction and physical work
- Catering and gastronomy
- Mechanics and car mechanics
- Agriculture and gardening

These kinds of professions, among others, present profiles that do not require any special skills for added value industry.

The ratio of those who found jobs also corresponds with the ratio of those who sent money back to Kosovo; respectively, around 58% of emigrants sent money to their families during the time of their stay abroad. The majority of those who sent money come from Germany (22%), Belgium (20%), Austria (15%) and Switzerland (12%). The intensity of remittances, on the other hand, shows that around 38% of emigrants regularly and on monthly basis send money

to Kosovo. Average value of remittances is around 350 euros per month. The rest of around 50%, on the other hand, declared they sent money to Kosovo at least once a year, while the remaining part of 12% declared to have sent money less than once a year.

Remittances were usually sent to parents (64%) and much less to wife-husband (5%), to children (8%) or brother/sister (8%); the rest makes up 15%. It should be mentioned that recipients used around 80% of remittances for everyday consumption; 3% were used for education and 17% were not categorized by respondents.

The majority of Kosovar emigrants, around 38% of respondents, stayed abroad for a period of 1 to 3 years. Around 25% of respondents stayed for a longer period of time, for 3 to 6 years; only 7.2% for less than 1 year; while the remaining part of 28% left for more than 6 years. At least when it comes to waiting, there should be a positive correlation between duration of their stay and living conditions after return; always in favor of individuals who managed to stay longer. So, those who stayed for a shorter period of time are expected to have more difficult living conditions compared to the period before leaving, especially those who borrowed money or sold their property.

It is worth mentioning that every second emigrant (respondent) ended up in detention camps. The majority of those who stayed in camps, around 72%, did such a thing in

last twelve months – so as to give a signal that the detention in camps is a relatively new experience for Kosovars. Results also show a positive link between voluntary vs. involuntary return and stay in camps. For example, out of total number of emigrants, every second emigrant declared to have returned voluntarily in the country. However, the focus of voluntarism or the lack of it among those who stayed in camps shows that two out of three Kosovars who stayed in camps returned to Kosovo against their will. In other words, the stay in camps increases the possibility of involuntary return among individuals in Kosovo – as would seem to be expected.

Perspective after return

The majority of repatriated persons in Kosovo admit not to have the tendency to leave Kosovo in the next 6 months (66%) – although there is a decreasing trend when asked about the upcoming 2 years (56%). Moreover, around 20% of respondents believe they will leave when the first opportunity shows up in 6 months to come. This ratio is increased to 31% when respondents are asked for 2 years in the future. So, in other words, every third repatriated person believes that he will leave Kosovo⁶ in a near future – in up to two upcoming years.

Fig. 7 Potential leaving for 2 upcoming years



A more detailed analysis of those who plan to leave Kosovo produces almost identical results to the profile of a Kosovar who emigrated so far. So, a potential emigrant has same characteristics with the profile presented at the beginning of this interpretation – which is the profile of an average emigrant so far. In order to avoid repetition, such characteristics will not be presented in this section.

The reasons behind repeated leaving remain the same. For the sake of comparison, we have once again grouped open answers in four equal categories as the ones presented at the beginning of this interpretation. A significantly bigger part of those who plan to leave Kosovo, around 82%, declare that it is their and their families' difficult conditions that force them to consider leaving. Around 9% of potential emigrants see health and personal reasons as motives for leaving, while 5% and 4% of the remaining see family reunion, respectively political and personal insecurity as motives for leaving⁷.

⁶ Around 14% of respondents have no stand towards leaving or not leaving Kosovo in the upcoming 6 months, while around 13% have no stand for the upcoming two years.

⁷ The data so far do not offer us much security in finding additional elements of the profile of a potential emigrant. For example, among other things, every second potential emigrant had a job during his previous stay outside Kosovo. This ratio however is not different from the overall average of emigrants up to now, including also the ones who do not plan to leave.

Certainly, it should be noted that only 14% of potential emigrants are able to finance their departure abroad; the rest of 63% are not able, while 23% declared not to be able to know that at the moment.

The most preferred countries for second departure, i.e. of those who consider leaving as a real possibility in two upcoming years, are mainly the same countries where emigrants had already been. Germany (16%), Belgium (11%), France (9%), Sweden (9%) and Austria (8%) present Top 5 destinations of potential emigrants. A considerable number of interviewees, around 15%, declared not to have thought yet about the potential country of their departure.

In the end, out of the remaining part of repatriated persons who declared not to ever want to leave the country again, around 17% declared that they have been discouraged to do so due to inability to find a job abroad. Moreover, for other 7%, low income abroad has proved as insufficient therefore they have not motive for leaving again. Other 50% present the fact that Kosovo is their country (26%), and that their family lives in Kosovo (24%), as reasons for not wanting to leave again. Answers such as these two should be taken with a lot of reserve, especially taking into account that those were as much present – at least during waiting – before the first departure too. Around 14% of respondents declared that discrimination (7%) and solitude (7%) are discouraging factors for leaving again.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on previous elaborations presented in this document, we continue in this section with summarizing the main findings of the study, certainly without giving recommendations or piece of advice to address the problems. That should be part of a more complex and comprehensive elaboration of public institutions, civil society and other relevant actors that would treat migration problem as consequence of a comprehensive social and political problem in the country.

According to data summarized in this study, the main findings are as following:

- The majority of Kosovar emigrants left Kosovo due to socio-economic motives; for 70% of Kosovar emigrants, high unemployment level, insufficient income, and living conditions within the family are reason to leave.
- Previous emigrants were mainly unemployed individuals or, in the best case, the only employed persons in the family. The majority of them live with 0.60 to 1.40 euros per day, respectively in poverty or in extreme poverty.
- Based on collected data of previous emigrants, the profile of a potential emigrant has further characteristics: between 25 and 32 years old, male, Albanian nationality (and RAE communities), with no higher education and mainly with completed primary
- school, unemployed and with monthly income below 250 euros per family. Today, Kosovo has around 100.000 individuals that correspond to such a profile.
- Main sources of financing departure have been loans and money provided by family members. These two sources together make up around 90% of forms of financing.
- Germany, Hungary, France, Sweden and Belgium are the most common countries for emigration, chosen as first destination. Those countries more or less – including Switzerland – are final destinations of migrants. The presence of Albanian diaspora there, as well as liberalism vis-à-vis emigrants, influences the preferences of Kosovo emigrants.
- Only half of Kosovo emigrants managed to find a job after their stay abroad. A significantly bigger part of them worked in profiles that do not require any high professional skills - or industry with much added value. Also, around 38% of emigrants regularly and on monthly basis sent money to their families, with an average sum of 350 euros.
- Around 31% of repatriated persons seriously consider leaving again in the upcoming two years, while their preferred countries remain the same as the ones from which they returned.
- The motives for leaving again are of

socio-economic nature, meaning they are the same ones that motivated them to leave in the first place.

The authors also want to re-emphasize that the match between individual characteristics of respondents and a wider population provided by data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) gives more confidence and more trustworthiness to the interpretation and generalization of data for the country, and as such, it presents an initial contribution to address the problem of Kosovar emigration.

**This survey has been funded and initiated
by the Kosovo Foundation for Open
Society (KFOS) with the purpose to
generate evidence on the reasons and
factors that drive illegal migration from
Kosovo.**

