

# FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION OF YOUTH: A CASE STUDY OF KOSOVO

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## Abstract

*There is no unique definition of migration nor is a simple classification of migration possible either, because of the existence of multi-dimensional migration criteria such as cause, length, distance, direction, volume, velocity, migratory status etc.*

*The purpose of the paper is to develop significant data that will provide insightful conclusions for the factors that contribute to high migration of youth from Kosovo. The qualitative empirical research is meant to find out the extent to which youth were satisfied with the way of life in Kosovo, what the reasons were for that, and whether that would change their way of life.*

**Keywords:** Migration, Youth, Kosovo, Factors, Causes, Consequences

## Introduction

It is difficult, if not impossible, to give a single definition of migration which is universally accepted under all circumstances of human migration; therefore, there are different approaches for defining human migration. Migration can be defined as a process of moving, whether across an international border, or within

the borders of a state encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes.

Migration has an impact on the countries of origin and the countries of destination as well as on the migrants host and sending societies. Ratha, Mohapatra and Scheja claim that the effects of migration on the country of origin are most often positive as the increased incomes from remittances, the ability to access finance for starting a new business as well as the knowledge, resources and support provided by the migrant diaspora foster poverty alleviation in the country of origin (Ratha et al. 2011). The authors suggest that migration can have serious negative impacts for the domestic institutions and politics in the cases of emigration of capable people that may cause loss of governance capacity in countries which have weak institutions.

The key challenges for Kosovo's state builders today is to increase the society's capacity to hold its government to account through the use of formal and institutionalised checks and balances and also through lobbying and different forms of political mobilisation. With all its unique features, Kosovo continues to be a highly divided post conflict society where patron-client networks pervade political life and, even though Kosovo was administered by the international community for nearly a decade which continues to have a key role in the political life, it has not succeeded in building a well governed, multi-ethnic state that is able to deliver economic growth and adequate public services.

The purpose of the paper is to develop significant data that will provide insightful conclusions for the factors that contribute to high migration of youth from Kosovo. The qualitative empirical research is meant to find out the extent to which youth were satisfied with the way of living in Kosovo, what the reasons for that were, and whether that would change the current way of life in the country. In addition, the research study investigated the reasons for migration and future prospects of the country. The aim of the paper is to provide recommendations and meaningful conclusions for the youth which plan to migrate, and youth which are considering returning to the country and to enrich the academic literature scrutinizing in the field.

## Essential features of the migration process

### Definition and classification of migration

There is no clear-cut definition on migration nor classification of the phenomena, but there are some key features on which most authors seem to agree, and which are considered relevant for this paper. Human migration has been a part of human history since its very beginning. According to Graham and Poku, since the 1960s, the issue of migration has become a major topic in international politics for various reasons (Graham and Poku 2000). Firstly, the level of movement has greatly increased, in the 60s, mainly the traditional immigration nations in North America and Oceania were significantly affected by international migration, but by the 1990s more than 2 percent of the world's population was living outside of their country of birth and virtually every nation was influenced in some way by immigration or emigration of various kinds. Secondly, the diversity of the international population movement has been increased. In the past, the bulk of such movement involved permanent, or at least long-term, settlement at the destination, while in present times, migration is characterised not only by increased levels of permanent settlement in foreign countries but also by a myriad of temporary, circular migrations of varying duration with a range of purposes. Thirdly, governments in destination countries are actively trying to limit the numbers and characteristics of immigrants but, at the same time, the involvement of governments in destination countries encourage emigration of different kinds because of the benefits of remittances to national development.

There is no unique definition of migration nor is a simple classification of migration possible either, because of the existence of multi-dimensional migration criteria such as cause, length, distance, direction, volume, velocity, migratory status etc. According to Clarke (Clarke 1972), migration can be classified as internal, within the boundaries of a state or international and this approach has been introduced by many scholars because of the great significance of state political boundaries and the availability of information about migration at the state level According to the IOM Glossary on Migration, international migration is the “movement of persons who leave their country of origin, or the country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily in another country”.

Chandna classifies migration based on duration of stay as permanent, semi-permanent and temporary migration (Chandna 1998). Migration can also be forced, impelled, free and planned.

Forced migration is caused by wars, repressive regimes and droughts that generate a mass movement of refugees who suffer from ill health, persecution, malnutrition and poverty. Voluntary migrants or economic migrants include the category of migrants who decide to move as a result of their own desires and motivations (Clarke 1972, p. 130). People can migrate legally for the purposes of family reunification or employment as well as study and training, while those migrants who evade formal migration controls or the ones who have stayed legally but remain after the end of the permitted period are classified as illegal migrants.

## **Causes and consequences of migration**

Migration has always been an important component of population change on the local, regional, national and global scales. There are many reasons why people decide to migrate to another region or country. These can be push factors such as political instability, civil conflict, forced migration, a lack of job opportunities, famine, or pull factors such as stability in the new country, higher pay rates or better opportunities (Fernie and Pitkethly 1985, p. 17). Usually, migration is not caused by a single factor but by a set of interacting and synergistic effects caused by a multitude of social, demographic, economic, climatic and biological factors (Hansen and Randall 2003). Bogue lists twenty five migration-stimulating situations for people, fifteen factors in choosing a destination, and ten socio-economic conditions which can stimulate or restrict mobility among a population as shown below (Bogue 1959).

### *Migration-stimulating conditions and factors:*

Graduation; marriage; lack of marriage; employment offers; employment opportunities; migratory work; special skills; transfer of employment; sale of business; loss of farm; discharge from employment; low wages; retirement; death of relative; military service; medical care; imprisonment; political, racial or religious oppression; natural disasters; invasion or infiltration by outsiders; inheritance; maladjustment to community; wanderlust; social rejection; forced movement.

*Factors in choosing destination:*

Cost of moving; presence of relatives or friends; employment offer; physical attractiveness of community; physical environment; amenities; population composition; special employment; special assistance; subsidies; information; reputation; lack of alternative destinations.

*Socio-economic conditions affecting migration:*

Major capital investments; major business recessions; technological change; changes in economic organisation; provisions for social welfare; migration propaganda facilities; regulations affecting migration; moving conditions and levels; tolerance of minorities; migration policy.

## **Lee's migration Push and Pull Model**

According to Lee's Theory on Migration, every act of migration involves a place of origin, a place of destination and a set of intervening obstacles. Lee, recognises four categories of factors that influence the decision to migrate (Lee 1966, p. 50):

- Factors associated with the area of origin.
- Factors associated with the area of destination.
- Intervening obstacles.
- Personal factors.

There are both positive and negative factors associated with the place of origin as well as positive and negative factors associated with the place of destination. But different factors have various influences on different individuals in specific situations. For example a good schooling system may be counted as a positive factor for a parent and negative for a house owner with no children because of the high real-estate taxes, while an unmarried person without taxable property would be indifferent to the situation. However, there is a difference between factors related to the place of origin and the ones related to the place of destination. People are familiar with the place of origin and base their judgments according to their experience while they are not familiar with the place of destination, thus there is always ignorance regarding advantages and disadvantages in the place

of destination as one can only now find about them by living there. According to Lee's push and pull model, there are two sets of "push" and two sets of "pull" factors involved in the process of migration, meaning there are positive and negative factors related to the place of origin and the place of destination and they may be any type political, economic, social, environmental or cultural forces. For Lee, while migration may result from comparing factors at the place of origin and destination, a simple calculation of positive and negative factors does not decide the act of migration but rather the balance in favour of the decision to migrate must be enough to overcome the natural inertia which always exists. Besides these positive and negative factors in the place of origin and destination, there is a set of intervening obstacles and restrictions between the place of origin and destination and these obstacles include distance, costs of moving, loss of income, housing or legal regulations regarding immigration. However, these obstacles may have few consequences for some migrants while being great impediments for others. Furthermore, personal factors may also facilitate or restrict migration. Personal awareness of conditions elsewhere and intelligence influence the evaluation of the situation at the place of origin, while knowledge of the situation at the place of destination depends upon personal contacts or sources of information which are not universally available for everyone. Also, personalities play an important role because some are resistant to change of residence or any other change while others welcome change for the sake of change, for some there must be solid reasons for migration while for others a little provocation or promise is enough to make the decision. For Lee, migration is a balance of push-pull at origin, push-pull at destination, and the intervening obstacles. Alternatively, it may impact the subjective opinions or expectations of a potential migrant thinking whether he should move or stay put. Lee does not consider how the competing pushes and pulls are reconciled, but assumes that a choice is made by some rational process based on positive and negative conditions at the place of origin and destination. Today, Lee's model of migration push and pull factors apply to different migration contexts including the studied context in this thesis but what is also important to emphasise in the case of Kosovo is that international migration is highly restricted by Lee's intervening obstacles in the form of immigration laws regulating which people, from which countries and under which conditions may enter and stay in a certain country.

## Current challenges of Kosovo's statehood

### Current trends of migration

Much of Kosovo's history has been marked by inflows and outflows of its citizens, but information on these movements have become available in numbers only in recent decades. Up to 1960, there is no exact information or data on the migration flows but the official statistics from the census in 2011 confirm that approximately 700,000 people who were born in Kosovo currently live abroad and this number includes only those who have regular foreign documents, which suggests that the number could be higher due to others residing illegally (Dobruna and Hollaj 2015, p.7). A publication from the Institute of Development Policy on Kosovars most willing to migrate categorises four phases of migration from Kosovo since 1960 and provides specifics of the migration waves as given below:

- The first wave from 1960-1989 comprises Kosovars from rural areas who were either unskilled or had a poor education background and migrated seeking employment opportunities mainly in Germany and Switzerland. They possessed contracts as temporary workers and they were allowed to bring their families with them. Even though there were several programmes to encourage their return to their country of origin, most of them chose to stay abroad.
- The phase from 1989-1997 includes individuals who escaped from the obligatory army service in the Yugoslav National Army, especially during the wars in Former Yugoslavia. This group was composed of better educated individuals from urban and rural areas. Factors contributing to emigration during this period were the abolishment of Kosovo's autonomous status followed by a mass dismissal of Kosovars from their jobs. Skilled and educated man from urban and rural areas migrated to escape poverty and improve the quality of life for family members left behind through remittances.
- The third phase from 1998-1999 represents a period of forced migration and massive displacement as a result of the war in Kosovo. During this period, more than 800,000 people escaped from Kosovo as refugees mostly to Macedonia, Albania, Western Europe and the US and most of them returned after the war.

- From the year 2000 until today, people migrated from Kosovo due to three main reasons, family reunification, education and temporary work agreements and illegal immigration to Western European countries.

The latest Kosovar Migration Report published by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics states that the population in Kosovo by April 2011 amounted to 1,780,645 residents. Based on the 2011 population census data, over 35% of Kosovo's total population had emigrated to Germany, followed by Switzerland with around 23%, and Italy over 7%. Other countries, including Canada and Australia, comprised of over 10% of the Kosovar migrant population (Kosovo Agency of Statistic 2014). Recent years show that there is an increased trend of emigration from Kosovo, whereas for the four year period 2011-2014 the number of people who emigrated from Kosovo was 90,000. Kosovo is currently the only state in the Western Balkans that is still under a visa regime in the Schengen area. In January 2012, the EU launched a dialogue with Kosovo on visa free travel; however, this is unlikely to be achieved in the near future as the EU demands substantial improvements in the area of rule of law and border controls first. Moreover, several EU countries have complained about the growing number of asylum-seekers from the region since 2010 and the EU has considered suspending the whole programme if the problem of illegal migration remains unsolved. The fact that Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe with an average age of 29.5 years implies that migration from Kosovo may continue for some time to come. Despite the lack of exact figures, recent estimates suggest that the number of emigrants per year is around 12,000 to 13,000 (Kosovo Human Development Report 2014). Different factors, such as economic, social, educational and family reunion, contribute to emigration from Kosovo while based on reason of stay permit requests, the overall number of emigrants is divided as follows: family union (81,3%), paid activities (4,5%), education (2,6%), and other (11,6%) (Kosovo Agency of Statistic 2014). Loxha and Elshani argue that despite the fact that Kosovo has a tradition of large diaspora, the period of post conflict migration has been primarily affected by the poor socio-economic conditions but other than the economic factors, the willingness to emigrate to EU countries has been stimulated by the lack of trust towards the political processes, dissatisfaction with the socio-economic and political system, the lack of information regarding EU asylum policies and penalties resulting from illegal migration and the isolation of Kosovars given they are the only citizens in the Balkan countries that cannot travel within the Schengen Zone without a visa

(Loxha and Elshani 2015, p. 19). Ivelvs and King, conducted a survey of emigration intentions from Kosovo after independence where results showed that 30% of the Albanian respondents were taking concrete measures to move abroad for longer periods of time in Germany, Switzerland and the US, while ethnic Serbs showed willingness to move to Serbia (Ivelvs and King 2015, p. 5). According to the survey results, the majority of Albanian males, those aged around 30, the single, the better educated, the students, those with higher incomes, those with family connections abroad and the second-generation migrants were most likely to emigrate since they are more efficient in overcoming the administrative, linguistic and job search costs associated with the migratory move. Also, besides the singles, respondents with children below the age of six were shown to be potential movers because they fail to see a good future for their children in Kosovo. Although illegal migration from the Western Balkan countries to the EU is not a recent phenomenon, in the last months of 2014 and in the first two months of 2015, the EU experienced a rise in the number of illegal immigrants fleeing from Kosovo. According to some, approximately 50.000 individuals left Kosovo during this period and this wave of immigration was labelled as an exodus considering the ratio of immigrants to the total number of Kosovo's inhabitants (Ivelvs and King, *ibid.*).

From November 2014 to April 2015, Kosovars topped the list of asylum seekers in Europe with roughly 48,000 applications, followed by Syrians with 29.000 and Afghans with 12,900.

A long time passed after the huge wave of migration before The Kosovo Assembly responded by passing a special resolution to stop the illegal migration, but the document is drafted in broad terms, it does not provide concrete measures or recommendations on how to deal with the phenomenon, thus it is not expected to lead to any positive results.

## **Effects of migration for Kosovo**

The nature of the diaspora's organisation and role changed significantly after the end of the civil war. During the 1990s, the Kosovar diaspora was organised around branches of political parties and humanitarian organisations that supported the functioning of the parallel institutions in Kosovo as well as social and political

activism in Kosovo and abroad. The entire Kosovo Government was in exile throughout the 1990s, and was financed in part by a 3 percent income tax. Since the Kosovan Diaspora at the time had higher income levels than those at home, they played a significant role in financing the Kosovo Government in exile and, in many cases, their contributions greatly surpassed the 3 percent income tax levy. However, after 1999, the collective action of the 1990s was slowly replaced by individualism and a focus on family life. The associations that supported the liberation of Kosovo and humanitarian actions lost their "*reason of being*". Migration and links with the diaspora are still pervasive in Kosovo as about 40 percent of Kosovo inhabitants have family members abroad while one in four families receives remittances (Loxha and Elshani 2015, p.16). The diaspora has a huge importance in stimulating economic development and reducing macroeconomic misbalance and it continues to be one of the main contributors to the overall development of Kosovo. Data for 2014 shows that diaspora remittances were higher compared to previous years. Emigrants' remittances affect mitigation of poverty, daily welfare in education and to some extent economic development. Looking into data from the past five years, there is a growing trend of remittances from abroad. In 2010, remittances were 584 million and 300 thousand Euros. In 2011, they were 584 million and 800 thousand Euros. In 2012, remittances were 605 million and 600 thousand Euros. In 2013, remittances were 620 million and 800 thousand Euros. In 2014, they were 693 million and 700 thousand Euros. According to the World Bank Migration and Remittances Fact book (2016), Kosovo is listed among the top ten remittance recipient countries in 2014 and 2015 (Kosovo Human Development Report 2014, p. 68). Diaspora-related financial transactions include remittances, travel expenditure when visiting Kosovo and international investment conducted or facilitated by Diaspora members. Given the size of the Diaspora population compared to the resident population in Kosovo (approximately 700,000 / 1.8 million), the economic impact of these transactions is large in relation to Kosovo's domestic output and very prominent in Kosovo's international reserve inflows (Kosovo Human Development Report, 2014: 30). Today, work-related emigration is perceived as an important factor in reducing the unemployment rate which affects 45% of the work force in Kosovo. Kosovar youth lack work opportunities at home but also working abroad is extremely difficult due to strict visa and restricted work permit policies. And while emigration from a long term perspective can be considered as a negative phenomenon for the domestic labour

market, in the short term perspective bearing in mind the current high rates of unemployment, it effects a decrease in the rate of unemployment among the active population. On the other hand, the existing diaspora helps the new immigrants to find out about the respective countries immigration policies and work or study opportunities thus facilitating emigration to the destination countries. In many countries where Albanians live, there are active cultural associations that serve as contact points and sources of information for the newcomers. Kosovar Diaspora is an important factor of economic development in Kosovo but this potential remains somewhat untapped and not channelled into notably productive activities that would have a chain economic effect. The main barriers to diaspora investment are generic: corruption, inefficient administration, political instability etc. While the Kosovo Government has established a Ministry for Relations with the Diaspora and has made some initiatives to strengthen ties with the Diaspora and to facilitate investments that are potentially valuable, their full benefits can only be reaped when the generic barriers to investment are addressed. Kosovo has exhibited fast-changing migration dynamics in the last decades but throughout this period, poor economic conditions, limited progress towards structural change, employment creation and political maturity remain great challenges for Kosovo and the countries of the Western Balkan region. The country has experienced stimulus for change from outside in the form of financial and social remittances but it is important to emphasise that economies who remain too dependent upon remittances from abroad may enter into a state of permanent dependency on external support. In order to tap into the potential of the diaspora and channel remittances that are used for consumption towards investment and development, the Kosovar Ministry of Diaspora has begun to implement several projects that aim to bring diaspora and Kosovar business together through the creation of a Business union and the Kosovo Diaspora Investment Fund which aims to attract potential diaspora investments in Kosovo. Moreover the Ministry has drafted a National Strategy on Diaspora and Migration that among other measures for promotion and advancement of political and social rights of the diaspora, foresees measures on how to include diaspora in the socio-economic development of Kosovo.

## **Qualitative empirical research: the case of Kosovo**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of the paper is to develop material that will provide insightful conclusions for the reasons and factors of the migration process of the youth of Kosovo. The research study was meant to find out the extent to which young people are leaving the country to find better living conditions, and what factors affect it. In addition, the research study investigated the motives that would contribute to keeping the country's youth. The aim of the study was to provide recommendations and meaningful conclusions for the topic and to enrich the academic literature scrutinizing in the field. The dissertation thesis was created as such to investigate the degree to which youth intentions for leaving the country are based and to provide academic literature with the allied outcomes.

### **Data collection**

Qualitative data was collected through a process of interviewing of the target group. Real insight of the factors influencing the decisions of the youth of the Republic of Kosovo to migrate from this country abroad, as well as the ongoing process and challenges this country faces at present, are essential to improve further relations regarding the impact and action. In carrying out the qualitative research that was done for the purpose of this scientific work, I started using scientific and empirical elaboration of the problem and also the object of the research. From the available techniques and methodological tools for collecting and further interpretation of the data, a semi-structured open interview was employed. The sample that was included in the survey is a representative sample of 12 residents of the Republic of Kosovo, Albanians, who emigrated from the country. Migrants from Kosovo that are included as respondents in this research migrated to Austria, Germany and Norway. This sample is conditional on the adequacy of the assessment of relevant subjects for the study. That is, the research sample that was covered by the interview was intended for obtaining data from persons who in the period of analysis, the subject of my research, migrated from the state. Moreover, they were

part of the continued observation and analysis of the appropriate issues. A total of 12 interviews were conducted.

Fieldwork data collection took place in the period between 15.01 2017 and 01.02. 2017. The questionnaire with twelve questions prepared, was identical for each respondents data collection was conducted freely, and the data processed qualitatively. –The content analysis method was used for collating data. The analysis was applied by preserving the authenticity of the data and its essence.

The focus of the research was aimed at summarising the views and opinions determining the main factors that lead to migration of the youth of the Republic of Kosovo as well as giving an insight into the real challenges facing the country, aimed at determining the future prospects of the youth.

A statistical analysis of the respondents:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	7
<b>Female</b>	5

**Table 1. Gender**

<b>Age limit (From--To)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
From 25-30 years	6	3	3
From 35-40 years	6	4	2

**Table 2. Age limit**

<b>Countries of emigration</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Austria</b>	3	2	1
<b>Germany</b>	7	4	3
<b>Norway</b>	2	1	1

**Table 3. Countries of emigration**

## Analysis and interpretation of the data

The survey had the following results:

1. With regard to the question: *“Can you please tell me when, why and how you came here?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- Regarding the timeframe of leaving Kosovo and arrival in a foreign destination as a result of migration, the respondents replied that it happened in the last one to six years.

Actual experience of respondents:

*“I arrived in Oberhausen two years ago, this part is easy.” – Interviewed 1*

- *“I registered a MA Degree Programme in Political Science in the University of Bremen last year and I am currently in my third semester...” – Interviewed 2*
  - *“I came here with my wife and daughter one year ago to seek asylum...” – Interviewed 7*
  - *“Four years ago I got a job in the Stadtlohn Maria-Hilf hospital where I also specialized in nephrology for three years.” - Interviewed 10*
  - *“I came to Vienna six years ago to study business administration and now I am also doing a master’s degree, I work as a waitress in a restaurant and babysit too...” – Interviewed 11*
- The attitude of the respondents prevails that they have left Kosovo because of: family economic crisis; inability to obtain quality education (mostly master’s studies); because of nepotism in state institutions; because of the failing economic and political situation in Kosovo, especially due to the existence of corrupt government officials; by failing to find a well-qualified position - too much competition - insufficient appropriate choice; to enjoy better family life in future; insufficient options for professional development of young people; and depression due to inadequate private life.

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“After a year the project was over and so was my contract and I started to look for another job. My wife, it was difficult for her to adopt in Kosovo, the*

*uncertainty stressed her very much, she suggested that we go to Oslo and continue our lives in a more stable environment.” – Interviewed 5*

- *“You see, I was a good student, I studied hard but my family could not afford to finance my studies in Pristina...” – Interviewed 1*
  - *“Germany seemed a good option because it is famous for its good educational system and education is cheap so I basically started to google for possibilities” – Interviewed 2*
  - *“... I began to notice how low qualified people become heads of departments and have leading positions because of their party affiliations and it made me feel so angry and frustrated that I was working so hard and I was not being promoted, instead my reward was doing extra work for people who didn't know how to work. – Interviewed 3*
  - *“I decided to leave Kosovo and come to Germany where I can achieve my full potential as a doctor and an individual...” – Interviewed 9*
- Regarding the manner of exercising the right to migrate, the most common reasons among respondents are the following: financial assistance from close relatives; obtained a scholarship to study abroad; husband-wife already live abroad or have close family there; obtained a working position; selling your own property to buy a ticket to provide initial costs;

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“My father and mother are teachers in an elementary school and their wages are terribly low” - Interviewed 2*
  - *“It was easier for me, as I was born in Italy and I have dual citizenship.” – Interviewed 2*
  - *“A colleague sent me this email for the possibility of gaining scholarship for an MA Degree Programme in Labour Policies and Globalisation and I applied for the programme, got admitted and won a scholarship...” – Interviewed 3*
  - *“I was engaged to an Albanian girl, she was born in Norway...” – Interviewed 5*
  - *“I spent 5000 euros to come here, I sold three cows, my car and borrowed money from my cousin...” – Interviewed 7*
  - *“I have an aunt there, she worked as a carer for 10 years now” – Interviewed 9*
2. With regard to the question: *“Can you describe your decision-making process? Was it difficult to make a decision to migrate?”* on the basis of summarising

the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- In the process of deciding to migrate from Kosovo, respondents mostly cited the following reasons: the process took place under the influence of family, friends, co-workers; it was the habit of the lifestyle in Kosovo; statements of acquaintances who have already emigrated and arranged their life acted very powerfully.

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“It was very difficult because I didn’t want to disappoint my father...” - Interviewed 4*
  - *“First I refused to move out, I was used to the environment in Kosovo, nothing is certain, it’s how things are, you just accept them...” - Interviewed 5*
  - *“Everyone was talking about possibilities in the West...” - Interviewed 7*
  - *“It was the only option for me...” - Interviewed 9*
- Regarding the manner of the decision making process (easy or difficult), the respondents replied that: they had no option but to change their way of life; it was not very difficult to take a decision; furthermore, some of them believe that they had pressure from family not to leave the country; some of them were acting very spontaneously in their choice; a small majority of respondents believe that there is little chance of success because of the amount of emigration from other countries.

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“I didn’t think very much, I just decided I better go and try my luck somewhere else instead of going back to Ferizaj, staying miserable and disappointed and most probably unemployed (smile).” – Interviewed 1*
- *“Well I can’t say it was difficult, I was born, raised and educated in Italy...” – Interviewed 2*
- *“I know many people who left Kosovo to go to Canada, Europe, US and they have succeeded..” - Interviewed 3*
- *“Nothing changes” - Interviewed 4*
- *“It’s not easy though because if it was I am sure 50% of the unemployed youth would migrate without thinking twice.” - Interviewed 6*

3. With regard to the question: *“What expectations did you have before coming to this country? From your current perspective, are your expectations met?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- In terms of expectations before arrival in the foreign country: the large financial benefit; good and positive relationship with the environment; obtaining a positive life experience; well-paid employment; a higher level of well-being, standard and safety; arranged documents for a better life; independence of personality.

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“I expected better employment opportunities, stability and security, welfare provisions, better working conditions and higher quality of life” - Interviewed 5*
  - *“There is a general opinion in Kosovo that everything is easier outside of Kosovo and it really is if you are say for example an Austrian citizen or Romanian or Bulgarian, you are a part of the EU and you can choose to live and work in most developed countries of the EU...” - Interviewed 6*
- In terms of achieving initial expectations among respondents, the following attitudes prevailed: a very good lifestyle - more financial daily expenses than expected; good earnings and good communication with the surroundings; in order to succeed you have much work to do; financial costs in particular far exceed the financial benefit - hard to find well-paid work; independence of the person; manipulated in relation to documentation for asylum.

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“I have saved money and I plan to save more. Also, I expected people to be nicer here and they really are.” - Interviewed 1*
- *“Here it’s so different, you have to work really hard and study...” - Interviewed 2*
- *“I said I expected to have better prospects relating to my career and have a better paid job but I can’t say my expectations have been met as I didn’t find a job yet.” - Interviewed 3*
- *“We were told that we will get papers, jobs, Germany needs workers but now I realise we the asylum seekers from Kosovo will have no jobs, no care, no papers, just this small room and food everyday...we were deceived.” - Interviewed 7*

- *“...I will be independent and earn money, be able to travel the world which is what I always dreamed of doing.” - Interviewed 11*

4. With regard to the question: *“Would you say that you feel at home in this country?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- In terms of whether respondents feel the foreign country is their home, the following attitude prevailed: they still feel Kosovo is their only home; some of the respondents believe that they feel comfortable in the foreign country but consider themselves as foreigners;

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“It’s nice but its new to me, home is Kosovo where I know everything..” - Interviewed 1*
- *“Home is always Kosovo” - Interviewed 2*
- *“I don’t feel bad but I feel like a stranger here” - Interviewed 5*
- *“I love this country, it has provided me with the opportunities I didn’t have in Kosovo... If I had the same opportunities that I have here I would never leave Kosovo... never ...” - Interviewed 10*

5. With regard to the question: *“Can you tell me what your life in Kosovo was like?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- The following attitude prevailed: good neighbourly relations; financial crisis; low level of security for the citizens; corruption and manipulation of the state by the ruling government; little opportunity for advancement after completing education;

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“It was nice, I had a good life but one thing I always lacked was money... money gives you comfort .I never had comfort in Kosovo.” - Interviewed 1*
- *“It is a place where people suffered a lot..” - Interviewed 2*
- *“..even in private conversations between colleagues you have to be careful to avoid topics that criticise the current government actions and the corruption scandals that media reports..” - Interviewed 3*

- *“Here it’s so formal, people are nice but also very cold, people in Kosovo are very friendly and talkative... I miss them very much ...” - Interviewed 5*
  - *“...when you reach a point when you finish high school, you go to university and you face the reality that there are few options for you after you graduate especially if you don’t live in the capital.” - Interviewed 8*
  - *“Kosovo is the poorest country in Europe. State assets were privatised in the most brutal manner, the politicians reduced the value of the assets so they might be expropriated and sold to their international friends.” – Interviewed 10*
6. With regard to the question: *“How would you describe the situation in Kosovo from your current perspective?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:
- Respondents mostly highlight the following facts in describing the situation in Kosovo from their current perspective: high unemployment; insufficient level of investment; poor infrastructure; insufficient investment in improving the standard of the employees; underdeveloped foreign trade; high level of corruption in the government;

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“I can’t get where all the money that the international community say they invested to rebuild Kosovo went??” - Interviewed 1*
- *“Kosovo has serious economic, social and institutional challenges ahead and they are related to the quality of government, fiscal problems, trade deficits, unemployment and the rule of law.” - Interviewed 1*
- *“We dreamed of Kosovo as a free country but freedom includes laws and institutions and people who are equal before the law” - Interviewed 3*
- *“...it’s tough, when you live here, it’s another world, institutions function, a beautiful infrastructure surrounds you, you don’t get to hear about corruption scandals every day or businessmen complaining about extortion from criminals who are protected by politicians ... it’s another world” - Interviewed 4*
- *“This is what Kosovo needs, strong institutions not strong people and rules which apply equally to everyone.” - Interviewed 9*

7. With regard to the question: *“If there is anything you would like to change in Kosovo, what would it be?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- Regarding the possibility of the respondents changing anything in the way of life in Kosovo, to a greater extent the respondents believe that it would be: a radical change in political life and the decision-making process; implementing ethical values, a merit system and merit-based employment in the public sector; creating a good climate for investment; and engagement on the road to achieving visa-free travel for Kosovo;

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“...I would like to see a radical change in the political scene.” - Interviewed 9*
- *“...instilling a work ethic based on meritocracy rather than political affiliations, and professionalism rather than nepotism in all public institutions in Kosovo.” - Interviewed 3*
- *“..the diaspora can help the economic development in Kosovo by investing but of course in order to do that we need to overcome administrative barriers, institutions and the international organisations present need to engage to create a safe environment for us to invest.” - Interviewed 5*
- *“I would like for Kosovars to be able to travel without needing a visa to enter European states.” - Interviewed 6*

8. With regard to the question: *“In your opinion, can you or your generation contribute to that change?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- Most of the respondents believe that they can contribute to positive change in the social and political life of Kosovo. Moreover, they consider that the Kosovars must mobilize to fight for their rights. Some of the respondents consider they would invest in Kosovo, which will make a major contribution to the development of this country. There is also a view that Kosovo should be encouraged towards European integration or to find another alternative to further integration. On the other hand, respondents protested about privatisation in the country, the

decision-making and corruption. A small majority of respondents felt that they had no power to change anything.

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“I think that Kosovars should protest more about social and economic issues, we should coerce our government to listen to us and our needs.” - Interviewed 1*
- *“I plan to invest in Kosovo in the future, as for now I think I am contributing to change by sending money regularly to pay for my sisters education and I also regularly support one of the opposition political parties financially.” - Interviewed 5*
- *“Kosovo has three options, join the EU, a process that requires young energy and mentality, become a part of Serbia again which we would never ever accept or cease to be a state and join Albania, which is a candidate member for the EU and, therefore, take a short cut.” - Interviewed 6*
- *“We don’t have power to change anything, we can’t find jobs and provide for our families.” - Interviewed 7*

9. With regard to the question: *“Are you planning to stay here, or go back to Kosovo?”* on the basis of summarising the views, based on the common attitudes expressed by the respondents, the following comments were made:

- Regarding the possibility of returning to Kosovo, respondents mostly mentioned these matters. In fact, they believe they would return to Kosovo if the living conditions improved - social, economic and political. Also, the majority of respondents want to return to Kosovo to be part of the changes that would occur in the name of future generations. However, among the respondents, there is disappointing prevailing attitude that there is no or here is little opportunity to improve the real situation in Kosovo. A smaller proportion of respondents want to stay in the foreign country to build their career, considering that there are opportunities to visit Kosovo at any time.

Actual experience of respondents:

- *“You know my uncle, after decades living in Germany he still plans to go back to Kosovo,” when conditions improve”-he says.” - Interviewed 1*

- *“I plan to go back, I don’t know when but in the medium-term I want to go back. It’s a great challenge for me to be part of the project to change Kosovo.” - Interviewed 2*
  - *“..under this circumstances I would not go back to Kosovo willingly at any price.” - Interviewed 3*
  - *“Obviously there is no will to make Kosovo function and this disappoints me so much.” - Interviewed 4*
  - *“I want to stay and have a career here but frankly I don’t know I will have options to stay after my student visa expires“ - Interviewed 6*
10. To the question: *“Is there anything else you want to share with me?”* (Tenth question in the questionnaire) and the question *“Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me. Do you have any questions for me?”* (Eleventh question of the questionnaire) the researcher received no concrete answers relevant to proving the thesis.

## Discussion

The main research questions within this empirical qualitative research, in the frame of the adapted questionnaire and interviewing the target group, are as follows:

1. *What factors influenced the decision of young Kosovars to migrate from Kosovo?*
2. *How do they as migrants experience the processes and challenges their country is facing today in relation to their future prospects?*

According to data obtained from the respondents, also migrants from Kosovo aged 25 to 35 years, the analysis and the interpretation thereof is made to set proper categorisation of the final conclusions regarding the substantiated explanation of the research questions.

Based on theoretical and practical research within this master’s thesis, it is clear that the Republic of Kosovo is in a particularly difficult economic, political and social situation. There is corruption in the system of state institutions within

the administration, jobs are obtained on the basis of political affiliation rather than by a merit-based system. Furthermore, the infrastructure is very weak which prevents foreign trade at full capacity and also the level of investment is particularly weak. The international institutions have great importance for this country, but their work is superficial and not directly into long-term recovery of the system. It will need a complete political change in order to give opportunity to younger generations to come to the fore.

The youth of Kosovo that emigrated from the country believes that there are not enough good reasons for going back home. These are the major reasons for emigration: security instability in the country; higher level of corruption in the government; high unemployment; instability on the political scene.

Of particular importance to Kosovo is to find its way to European integration in order to allow citizens to have a better life, a visa-free regime and prosperity.

Based on the above, according to the first research question “What factors influenced the decision of young Kosovars to migrate from Kosovo?” the following factors were important:

- economic family crisis;
- inability to obtain quality education;
- nepotism in state institutions;
- disorderly economic and political situation;
- corrupt government officials;
- high rate of unemployment;
- lack of skilled jobs;
- insufficient options for professional development of the young people;
- low investment;
- insufficient orientation towards Euro-integration processes.

According to the essence of the second research question, *„How do they as migrants experience the processes and challenges their country is facing today in relation to their future prospects?”* We can conclude that:

- There is a need to introduce radical changes in the political life in Kosovo;
- There is a need for radical changes to decision-making process these in society;
- Ethical values among the population need to be improved;

- It is necessary to intensify work towards the introduction of a visa-free regime for the benefit of the entire population;
- It is necessary to mobilise the population in order to vigorously fight for their rights;
- Reforms in the educational system, economy and judiciary are needed;
- It is necessary to disclose the situation regarding the privatisation of the country in order to be able to intervene in the system and to make key decisions for efficient and effective changes.

Based on the above, we may conclude that the youth of Kosovo are most likely would return to their own country if there is an improvement in the social, economic and political conditions of life. In this regard, there is a high level of willingness among young people to participate directly in the process of making these changes.

## Conclusions

The main research questions within this paper in the frame of the adapted questionnaire and interviewing the target group were the following: “What factors influenced the decision of young Kosovars to migrate from Kosovo?” And “How do they as migrants experience the processes and challenges their country is facing today in relation to their future prospects?”

In the frame of the qualitative empirical research, data was analysed through content and context analysis. The conclusions of the interviews are as stated below:

- 1) Goals of the process of migration of youth in Kosovo are:
  - Securing a more comfortable life for themselves and loved ones;
  - Professional development and career advancement;
  - Living in conditions of security and prosperity.
- 2) Strategic approach of the state of Kosovo which will allow:
  - Promoting awareness about the interests and needs of the youth of Kosovo
  - Increasing job opportunities for efficient and effective government that will be directed towards the real values in a society.

- 3) Providing short-term and long-term goals for the youth through the survey results and the general public in Kosovo, so taking appropriate steps to improve the real situation in future.

The survey was conducted using a relevant target group; nevertheless, there is a certain limitation in the implementation process. Qualitative empirical research in this paper is intended as a case study of the Republic of Kosovo, which allowed the obtained additional data to be analysed and interpreted. However, the weakness and limitation of this research highlights the fact that only one ethnic type, Albanians as citizens of Kosovo, is covered, which may, to a certain extent, make the data obtained seem biased. However, it can also be used as a pointer towards expanding the research and coverage in future of different ethnic communities of youth that emigrated from Kosovo to other countries. Thus, the obtained data can be used to prepare a long-term strategy for improving the lives of young people in Kosovo.

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