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UDC: 331.556.46-057.86(497.115)

MIGRIMI DHE “BAIN DRAIN” NË KOSOVË

МИГРАЦИЈА И „BAIN DRAIN” ВО КОСОВО

MIGRATION AND BRAIN DRAIN IN KOSOVO

Abstract

This article will analyze the present situation regarding migration and Kosovo's position on this problem with a focus on the so-called 'brain drain' and its influence on the economic development of the country. Migration as a complex process has shown instability in the Western Balkan countries after the end of the wars and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the same happened with Kosovo after the end of the war in 1999. Kosovo is a country in transition and the course of integration processes takes place in the analysis of the impact of factors such as migration and brain drain in terms of economic stability and the economic stability of the country through remittances. Brain drain in Kosovo is becoming a discussed topic in the society at different levels of institutions considering the increasing trend of educated and skillful migration in Kosovo and its influence in the county. Remittances inflow in Kosovo's budget has had a positive uptrend mainly related to the increased number of migrants in the last decade and played a key role in the economic development of the country. This analysis will serve as a link between these factors and the form of internal influences created by such situations. Offering implications and opportunities from migration and the brain drain debate not only will enable us to present the current developments of the phenomenon in Kosovo but also enable

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future researchers to develop it from other perspectives and policymakers to take action in improving the situation.

Keywords: *Migration, Brain drain, Remittances, Kosovo*

Introduction

The focus on concerns related to migration has grown in recent years among academia, businesses, the international community, and individual governments. Massive population movements brought about by armed conflict and natural disasters frequently receive extensive media coverage, but in recent years, it has been the more consistent and significant migration flows motivated by the possibility of better economic, political, and social conditions that have attracted the most concerted attention and, with it, new paradigms for understanding the phenomenon (Ezzarqui, 2012).

Since every country experiences its impacts, migration is a challenging topic. Almost all nations serve both a migrant's country of origin and final destination. Migration can be recurrent in a person's life, which adds to its complexity. Due to the regrettable lack of information on the migration of immigrants, it is also complicated. The majority of developing nations are unable to conduct statistically-based policy-relevant analysis. According to (Muenz, 2004), numerous categories of migrants exist migrants without papers, refugees, students, migrant laborers, and those admitted for family reunification purposes.

Under the heading of "brain drain," this setting examines the knowledge and qualified human capital that are transferred by migration. Some issues in this procedure need to be clarified, like who migrates? It should be investigated why people move if a sizable percentage of highly skilled individuals intend to leave the country. Therefore, it is important to look at the personal and spatial variables that cause most of these movements over the centuries. Then we can find the effects that are directly related to these movements and that in one form or another aim to improve the opportunities for human economic capital (Karaduman & Çoban 2019).

The nations of the Western Balkan region have historically been places of migration mainly due to political and economic reasons. The region has a high percentage of young population and is considered a valuable asset for the socio-economic development of the countries but

in recent years the situation has started to change. Net emigration levels vary by nation, with Bosnia and Herzegovina leading the list with the highest migration rate, followed by Kosovo and Albania, and Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, and Serbia have the lowest levels in this regard (Global Relation Policy Insights, 2022). Several important factors contribute to these negligible net emigration flows, including widespread poverty in Kosovo, extensive diaspora networks, a high unemployment rate, and the possibility of higher and better payments. Additionally, an opportunity for employment abroad, or specific policies that facilitate migration, such as Germany's regulation for the Western Balkans, gives these countries more room for integration (Leitner, 2021). Given the current situation in Kosovo, it is important to analyze the current situation both in terms of migration and brain drain. To have a full perspective of the situation, the focus was on so-called pull and push factors that can translate into reasons and consequences that have created this situation. This will be analyzed and discussed in the following.

Conceptualization of Migration

Migration as a theory and phenomenon is presented as a permanent and semi-permanent residential movement of the peoples of the world. There are no restrictions on the distance traveled the voluntary or involuntary character of the act, or the distinction between external and interior migration (De Haas, 2021).

Every act of migration, no matter how short or long, easy or difficult, has an origin, a destination, and a series of impediments in between. Global environmental change's effects, such as coastal flooding, lower rainfall in drylands, and water scarcity, would virtually probably alter human migratory patterns. Traditionally, these displacements have been portrayed as negative, with many millions of people having to relocate and tension and violence as a result (Black et al., 2011). Population influx conflict situations, security economic and political conditions of countries and wars can be some reasons to lead to migration.

There are often both push and pull factors in the context of migration, with push factors being reasons for people to want to leave their home country and pull factors being reasons for individuals to want to migrate to a new country. Economic, environmental, social, and political variables can all serve as push and pull forces in migration. The following are a few of them: Migrants' lives might be affected both positively and negatively by migration (Justice for Immigrants, 2017).

Positive Effects

Unemployment is lower, and people have more job options. People's quality of life improves as a result of migration. People's social lives are improved as they learn about different cultures, customs, and languages, which promotes brotherhood among them. The migration of talented employees boosts the region's economic prosperity. Higher education opportunities for children are improved. The birth rate falls as the population density drops (Justice for Immigrants, 2017).

Negative Effects

The loss of a person in rural areas has an impact on the output and growth of the area. The migration of workers into cities creates competition for jobs, housing, and school facilities, among other things. A huge population places an excessive amount of strain on natural resources, amenities, and services. Villagers find it difficult to survive in metropolitan regions since there is no natural environment or clean air and they are responsible for everything. Because migration alters the population of a location, for instance, India's population distribution is uneven. Many migrants are illiterate and uneducated, making them unsuitable for most employment as well as lacking fundamental education and life skills (Ilssco, 2021).

The beginning point for most migration conversations is usually numbers. Understanding scale shifts, developing patterns, and shifting demographics associated with global social and economic transitions, such as migration, aid us in making sense of the world we live in and planning for the future. According to current estimates, there will be roughly 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, accounting for 3.6% of the global population (IOM, 2020).

Over the last five decades, the expected number of international migrants has grown. In 2020, there were an anticipated 281 million people residing in nations other than their native countries, up 128 million from 1990 and more than three times the estimated amount in 1970 (United Nations Migration, 2022).

Individuals that are young, well-educated, and healthy are more inclined to move, particularly in pursuit of greater education and economic advancement. It has been established that there is a distinction between 'push' and 'pull' factors. Continuing differences in working conditions between wealthy and poorer countries create a stronger 'pull' towards more developed nations.

The role of governments and recruitment agencies in encouraging health professionals to migrate systematically increases the draw. Migrant health professionals encounter a mix of economic, social, and psychological pressures, as well as family decisions, reflecting the 'push-pull' character of the decisions that constitute these 'journeys of hope.' Demotivating working circumstances, along with poor pay, are weighed against the prospect of prosperity for themselves and their families, as well as the potential to work in well-equipped hospitals and advance their careers (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005).

According to a report released by the European Policy Institute of Kosovo, a total of 203,330 Kosovo nationals fled the country and applied for asylum in the EU between 2008 and 2018. Furthermore, 141,330 Kosovo residents were discovered living unlawfully in the EU (Begisholli, 2019). Kosovo's history has had a considerable impact on migration, altering the country's socio-political development and transition both before and after independence. Approximately 703,978 Kosovars emigrated between 1969 and 2011, with net migration estimated at 833,739 in 2017. As global development progresses, the factors that drive migration change. (Hajdari & Krasniqi, 2021). Both formal and irregular forms of emigration from Kosovo have increased, according to research, particularly for purposes of work, education, or family reunion (Hajdari & Krasniqi, 2021).

The debate on migration

Today, most development research and policymaking are focused on the potential benefits of international migration for developing nations, particularly the resources that migrants send home to their families or communities. Migration-related revenue boosts economic activity both directly and indirectly, resulting in higher levels of employment, investment, and income.

Migrants are being re-defined as "development heroes" in their home countries, such as India. Finally, it's worth noting that even little sums of remittances can be critical for poor people's survival, particularly food security. origins in the community (Ameena, 2018).

(Thieme, 2006) claims that migration has become an important livelihood strategy for Nepali migrants in Delhi, citing "a historical history with well-oiled networks" connecting villages in Nepal and locations in India in her paper.

Migrant networks play a crucial role in credit facilitation and critical support infrastructure. International migration expands until network connections, or social capital, become widespread enough that anyone who wants to move to that country can do so without difficulty (Thieme, 2006).

Brain drain as a phenomenon

The term “brain drain” refers to waves of large-scale migration of highly educated people from one country to another. Brain drain is generally defined as the transfer of human capital from developing to developed countries, but it can also refer to the migration of highly trained individuals (such as engineers, physicians, and other professionals) between developed countries (Güngör, 2004).

The British Royal Society popularized the phrase “brain drain” to describe the outflow of scientists and technicians from the UK to the US and Canada in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was more common in Canada (Cervantes & Guellec, 2002). It is now more commonly used to refer to a country's most highly trained individuals emigrating typically used to allude to a country's most highly skilled individuals emigrating. Poor employment chances for highly educated individuals are also linked to brain drain.

The following are some of the most common causes of brain drain (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005):

- Differences in working conditions, remuneration, or professional advancement opportunities between the source and destination nations;
- Poverty and a lack of economic growth are seen to be the primary causes;
- Discrimination, political repression, and a lack of freedom are all issues that need to be addressed;
- Military or civil conflicts;
- Environmental disasters and the consequences of climate change.

Over the past forty years, there has been a significant advancement in research on the issue of brain gain and brain loss. Along with new understandings of this social phenomenon's nature have come new issues with the construct's definition, study methodologies, and potential solutions.

Currently, several factors have been confirmed: it is a multifaceted problem that requires a multidisciplinary approach; its defining factors range from the macro level (international and national economy

and political dynamics) to the micro level (individual motivation and other psychological factors); solutions and policies tackling the issue are far from being simply effective; and finally, action in this domain requires the participation of numerous stakeholders from outside the country (Nikolić et al., 2010).

A recent theoretical suggestion by (Daniel Logue, 2009) seeks to alter the fundamental lens through which the entire problem domain should be viewed, having an impact on the issue of practical brain drain remedies. Logue makes the case for redefining brain drain as a “wicked problem”—circular and ambiguous with varying and occasionally contradicting definitions.

(Louise (2009) makes the case that using this idea from cultural studies should help both research and policy measures advance by giving stakeholders “space for innovative (and conflicting) policy-making, space to enable stakeholders to collectively “agree to disagree,” and explicitly acknowledge the fundamental and opposing perspectives inherent in this social problem that cannot be resolved. (Beine et al., 2001) state that “brain drain” describes the international flow of relatively highly educated individuals from poor countries to rich countries.

Other academics have also noted that brain drain is primarily a problem for developing countries, and the volume of highly qualified movements must be sufficient to pose a threat to future chances for national growth to be classified as a brain drain (Kapur & McHale, 2006).

Thus, while brain gain is considered to contain concrete efforts from connected stakeholders, brain drain is seen as a more or less spontaneous process. Meanwhile, in-depth studies on general migration and the problem of brain drain distinguished variables affecting the dynamics of highly skilled people's mobility. The so-called “push” variables related to the sending nation have to do with that nation's socioeconomic and political environment. The high rate of migration in the SEE countries has also been attributed to political unrest, high unemployment rates, and in some cases, armed conflict. Similarly to this, the dynamics of migration were also influenced by human rights violations, a lack of academic freedom, and poor governance (Cholewinski & Taran, 2009).

However, “pull” considerations, such as the potential for highly qualified migrants are thought to be attracted by the potential for higher pay, jobs, an opportunity for professional advancement, and a favorable socioeconomic environment (Logue, 2009).

There is an excess of graduates in many disciplines of study, which makes it difficult for them to obtain employment. Or there is a discrepancy between the university-trained talents and the skills required by the job market.

Therefore, higher education policies need to be more in line with and focused on the needs of the labor market.

Examples include stronger collaboration between higher education institutions and employers or targeted scholarship programs that direct students toward priority subjects (Leitner, 2021).

Kosovo Case

Migration and Brain drain

Migration in Kosovo has gained the interest of many authors in the last few years due to the increased number and the implications created for different sectors in the country. Among the key factors to migrate from Kosovo based on different studies are highlighted high unemployment rate, low employment opportunities in the market, corruption and nepotism, high poverty level, inadequate education system, etc.

Migration has not slowed down even though visa liberalization remains a problem for Kosovo's people, who must get a Schengen visa to access the European Union. Kosovo's population is predicted to have decreased by 15.4 percent, based on Eurostat data on population decline for Eastern European nations between 2007 and 2018 (Gherasim, 2022). From all of the Eastern European countries, this is considered to be the biggest decline. According to Eurostat, the number of Kosovars seeking refuge in the EU peaked at about 42,000 people at the beginning of 2015, while more than 21,000 Kosovars sought asylum in 2016 (Rolandi & Elia, 2019).

According to Kosovo State Agency Statistics, more than 170,000 persons, or 10% of Kosovo's total population of 1.7 million, emigrated from Kosovo to Western Europe between 2015 and 2019, with Germany being the main destination country by far (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2019). Kosovo Albanians have long moved and established sizable populations in countries including Europe, the United States of America, Canada, and Australia. After a new anti-establishment party that is heavily supported by Kosovo's diaspora won the recent snap elections, recent political events in Kosovo have generated optimism that the flood of young people leaving can be stemmed (Fazliu, 2021).

Kosovo had to contend with a crisis of irregular migration from 2012 to 2015, during which time more than 135,000 of its citizens applied for asylum in EU nations (Halili, 2017). More than 75% of these Kosovo asylum applicants are in the 0-34 age bracket, which makes up the majority of the population and labor force in the Republic of Kosovo (Sirkeci, 2021).

According to a 2019 report by the European Policy Institute of Kosovo, some 203,330 Kosovar nationals fled their country and asked for asylum in various EU member states (European Policy Institute of Kosovo, 2020). Based on Eurostat, the countries where the most Kosovar nationals have settled include Germany (47 percent), Italy (12 percent), France, Austria, and Slovenia (9 percent each) (Eurostat, 2019).

The top European country selected by migrants from Kosovo as indicated remains Germany mainly related to the changes in the German legislation which enables and facilitates the migration from Western Balkan countries.

Over 433,000 Kosovo residents are reported to have lived in Germany as of 2017, and more than 66 percent of them are in relationships at work (GAP Institute, 2020). Over 67,272 persons, or 3.78 percent of the Kosovo population, have sought jobs in Germany only between 2016 and 2018 (GAP Institute, 2020). This indicates that one in five Kosovars are looking to leave Kosovo by any means, with employment prospects being the main motivation.

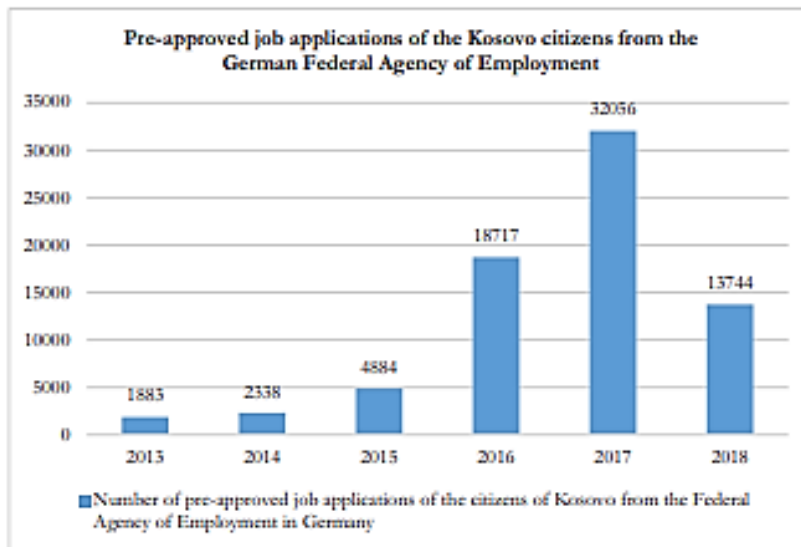


Figure 1: Number of pre-approved job applications of Kosovo citizens
 Source: (GAP Institute, 2020, p. 23)

Given that Kosovo has a 31.4 percent unemployment rate and that more than half of young people are unemployed, many people look for new chances abroad to find employment and better working circumstances so they can support their families and themselves financially (Temaj & Krasniqi, 2020). The authors also indicated that around 854,198 Kosovo residents were living abroad as of the end of 2018, with the majority of them in Germany and Switzerland (Hajdari & Krasniqi, 2021).

Every year since 2011, when the first temporary residency permits for Kosovo residents were issued, more have been issued. The majority of such permits are for employment and family gatherings (Balkans Policy Research Group, 2020).

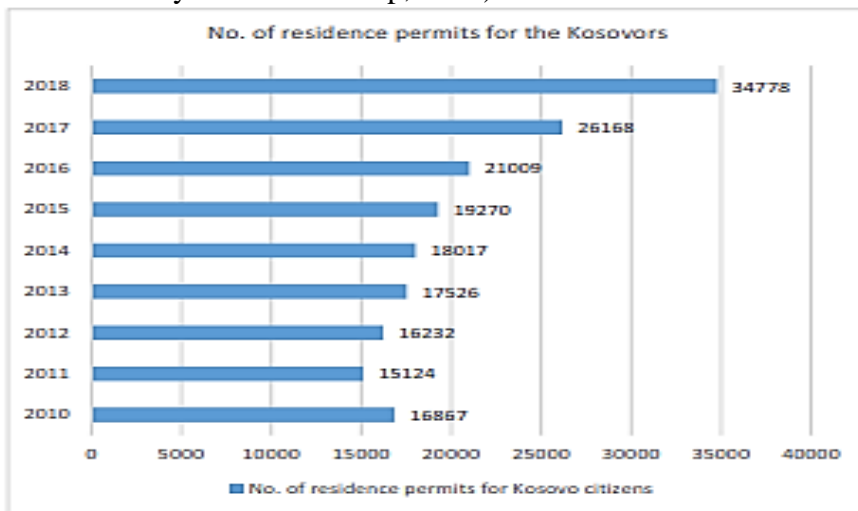


Figure 2: Number of residence permits for the Kosovars
Source: (Balkans Policy Research Group, 2020, p. 19)

Approximately 184,991 Kosovo residents received temporary residence permits in EU nations between 2010 and 2018. Different factors are considered the key drivers for the high motive of Kosovars to migrate abroad. The Balkans Policy Research Group 2020 concluded that the main driving forces behind migration from Kosovo are corruption, nepotism, youth unemployment, bad health, and a failing educational system (Balkans Policy Research Group, 2020).

Globalization and the future integration of the Western Balkan countries into the European Union influence not only migration tendencies but also brain drain. Leitner (2021) the brain drain is notably significant among young to middle-aged people in Albania and Kosovo,

indicating that the majority leave just a few years after completing postsecondary education.

Different factors are the driving force of educated people in Kosovo to migrate to developed countries and increase the hendeck of brain drain in the country. According to (Hajdari & Krasniqi, 2021), the lack of work possibilities at home and political and economic instability are some of the key driving forces behind emigration among highly educated and competent people.

When it comes to the industries in Kosovo mostly influenced by the migration of the skillful population service providing sectors dominate in the list. The IT industry, construction, hotels, and tourism are the Kosovo industries most impacted by migration (Balkans Policy Research Group, 2020). Kosovo's health sector has unquestionably suffered the most from brain drain (Ahmetxhekaj, Shkumbin, 2019).

Germany is the most frequently chosen destination, and the industries in Kosovo that have suffered the most from the brain drain are those related to health, IT, construction, social work, and crafts (Sirkeci, 2021).

The structure of the migration of the population from Kosovo is diverse (with formal and non-formal education) which has made the issue of brain drain a concerning issue. The majority of these migrants are young, well-educated people, who make up the majority of Kosovo's population and labor force. This structure is an active force that could possibly contribute to the social and economic development of the country.

Remittances

Migration and particularly Brain drain as indicated have a wide range of influence on the different sectors of a country. However, the young and educated workforce integrated into developed countries has increased opportunities to obtain better working positions and financial support for their families and as a result, remittances are present.

Remittances as the funds or goods transferred to the home countries are among the key contributors to economic growth, especially in labor-exporting countries. Remittances remain the key elements of Kosovo's budget and over the years this indicator has shown an increasing trend.

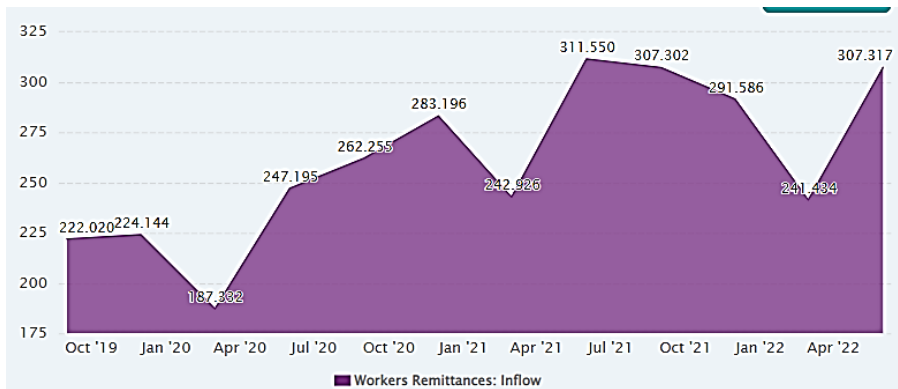


Figure 3: Workers' Remittances in Kosovo September 2019 - June 2022

Source: Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo & CEIC

Remittances data was reported at 314.108 EUR mn in June 2022. This record is an increase from the previous number of 241.434 EUR mn for March 2022.

A positive trend of remittances is presently based on the data in figure 3 which indicates a strong support of diaspora for the home country, especially during challenging periods for instance COVID-19.

The Albanian Diaspora considered one of the largest in the world has contributed widely during the different phases and continues to be an active member in different sectors. (Barjaba, 2019) the diaspora has made a significant contribution to Albania's economic and social development, as well as to the preservation of language and culture, national interests, and individual and social rights. According to (Merovci & Sekiraqa, 2021) Kosovo's remittances besides cash are also in the format of goods such as clothing, home appliances, cars, etc.

In a study by (Loxha, 2019) which analyzed the relationship of remittances in Kosovo with poverty is found that the impact of remittances on households' consumption indicates that remittances increase the consumption of recipient households and the poverty rate would be higher for a considerable proportion of households in the case of no remittances.

Different studies have analyzed the factors and motives affecting the home country remittances. According to (Mahapatro, 2017) monthly per capita expenditure, distance from the origin, and duration of stay at the destination are important factors that determine the remittance behavior of migrants. While the authors (Chantha & Pheang,

2017) indicate that the factors affecting the flow of migrant workers' remittances include the macroeconomic status of the home countries, the number of migrants, the official exchange rate of the home nations, and the political stability index.

In the Kosovo case, the main determinants influencing remittances include the income of the migrants, gender, inheritance aspirations in the home country, the business environment in the home country, close relatives' presence in the home country, and the living zone in the home country (Havolli, 2009). The importance and influence of remittances in Kosovo are also considered from a cultural perspective indicating the dedication to the family prosperity, maintaining connections, and the moral obligation to contribute to the country's development.

Despite the high level of remittances from the Diaspora which have played a key role in economic growth and improvement of the welfare of citizens, the level of direct investments remains low. Among the factors for low investments are related to the business environment, lack of incentives from the government, rule of law, and other factors important for doing business. As the result, most remittances are allocated to daily consumptions and different item purchasing. Additionally, the developments in Ukraine and the inflation rate increase have affected the performance of worker remittances in Kosovo which is reflected based on data recently published. Remittances in Kosovo decreased to 114.20 EUR Million in September from 131.60 EUR Million in August of 2022 (Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo, 2022).

Conclusion

Migration as a process is quite sensitive in every aspect, the mass movement of people has created new spaces for radical change for the need to remove housing and integration for humanity. The factors that cause and promote this phenomenon are many and day by day they are coming and growing, which is made even more difficult by the policies of countries around the world regarding the prevention and fight against illegal migration on the one hand. On the other hand, the factors of mass departure for reasons that in a form are considered "legitimate" such as education and profession are bringing new currents in the movement of people. They are often considered favorable but at the same time unfavorable for many reasons which were also mentioned above.

To ensure that young people can live respectable lives in their home countries governments in the region need to step up their efforts to lower the region's youth unemployment rate, which is the highest in the European Union. They also need to create quality, fair-paying jobs for young people, many of whom are currently working temporary jobs, frequently in the informal economy.

There are several important pushes and pull elements that may be considered, but the unfavorable political and economic conditions can be recognized as the primary causes of this population drop. The youth believe that one of the major problems with living in Kosovo is corruption. As a result, the main causes of Kosovo's brain drain are corruption, followed by youth unemployment, a lack of visa liberalization, a deficient healthcare system, and an inadequate educational system. However, the migration of young people from Kosovo has contributed to the economic development of the country mainly related to the remittances indicator which has shown positive progress during the last years. Remittances are mainly distributed for personal consumption and contribute to poverty decrease in Kosovo but governmental institutions need to create an environment in which the remittances would be reallocated to create investments and business developments which would create a spill-over effect in different sectors of the economy.

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