



Transition in Kosovo: Perspective of migrant families

THE TOBP CASE STUDY RESEARCH PAPER

Authors Anyla Pula & Arben Hysenaj, HC

Version 2.0

Date 10 December 2020 (first version delivered 4 September 2019)

Reviewers Birgit Jentsch, DJI (first version), Regina Klein, formerly of CUAS (first version), Filippo Bignami, SUPSI & Kateřina Sidiropulu Janků, CUAS

Editor Kateřina Sidiropulu Janků, CUAS

Without language proofreading

Based on TOBP original application, concept and design, created by Regina Klein

Please, refer to the document accordingly: Pula, Anyla & Arben Hysenaj. 2020. Transition in Kosovo: Perspective of migrant families. The TOBP Case study research paper. Heimerer College, CUAS.

1. Executive Summary

In Kosovo have been conducted five interviews between 03/2019=05/2019 with return migrant families. The interviewed families mostly came from Germany and Austria composed from father, mother, and children. The methods adopted to select the sample were the connection of migrant families and service providers when they came back, service providers in the migrated country, migrant families, and support of citizens in migration country. The information collected was on a base of questionnaire that we conducted mainly with the following points:

- Experience of family life in Kosovo and migrating country
- Social acceptance in Kosovo and in the host country
- Experiences with social and health services
- Skills and instructions for jobs

Interviewed families were families who had arrived in the country over a period of two up to five years and had experiences in the camp and also private accommodation in a small town, but they were rejected from employee and given only a small amount of financial support every month



for food. During this case study you will have the chance on reading different findings from the perspective of migrant families and their journey from homeland to hostland.

2. Background/Context

During the past years, the number of migrating families in Kosovo has increased significantly, a lot of families saw migration as an opportunity for a better life for their children. Migration took place in separate waves motivated mostly by economic reasons because of the Kosovo War. Migration and the resulting remittances have been a safety value for many of those left in Kosovo, ensuring their livelihood in a country that has the highest unemployment and poverty rate in Europe (World Bank Group- Republic of Kosovo Systematic Country Diagnostic) Remittances are the largest source of external financing for Kosovo. Despite the significant role of migration in Kosovo's economic, political, and social landscape, policies to maximize its contribution to economic development are minimal at best. Having the youngest population in Europe, where 70% of our population in Kosovo is under 35 years old (Politico). Many families suddenly had to leave their homes in search of shelter and security because of war and famine. Most of the families that return to Kosovo it is because their residence permit has expired and they refuse to stay illegal in another state, but we also have families that return after they fail to integrate in society. Quoted from the interview:

"We went to Germany because we thought that the state there would take care of us and find us a job, but instead we were left at the camp with nothing but 300 euros per month, I couldn't work since I do not have a college degree. I would stay for my children since I want a better future for them, but I couldn't provide enough money for my family, here in Kosovo I have my friends and family they help with what they can. We will get it somehow, but in Germany no one cared about us".

- The aim of this study was to conduct information about the experiences of migrant families in Kosovo.
- The interviews were conducted in Kosovo, municipality of Pristina between 03/2019-05/2019. The total number of families interviewed was five in total 7 persons.

The interviews covered: background, experience, skills, financial and health difficulties through the transition that migrant families faced. Interviews lasted approximately 30-40 minutes and were recorded and then transcribed.

We applied semi-structured questionnaire, in all five cases. All interviews were recorded, and the persons authorized the recording. For the migrant family, the method adopted to choose is basically: arrival in the host country for more than one year; the transition phase, residence in the area, health and social help from the service providers and the return phase.

3. Findings/Results

At the finding and results we focused more on the questionnaire that we did for the returned migrants. From the analysis of the interviews, we conclude that the biggest problems arise from cultural differences, cultural integration, dynamics of the new society, and this affects more than middle-aged and older returnees. This may be because the cultural and social values of the society



where they are growing are crystallized in the personality of each migrant, and when confronted with new values that may even be against existing values and this can create confusion on the identity and culture of migrants. Also, longer-term as migrants, and multiple migration cases, have caused longer exposure to new social cultures and rules. These have contributed to creating even greater confusion and this has resulted in confrontation and frustration of migrants.

3.1 Cultural values and assumptions- Confronting/irritating aspects and areas of tension

Regarding social admittance, it is noted that this is significantly better in Kosovo after the war, for the fact that Kosovo has invested a long time in shaping the social circle, work, relatives and that according to the interview are emphasized the same cultural values and social issues are driving in the lightest social acceptance.. It is also emphasized that the society of the other state may have a tradition of inadmissibility, and even the interviewees share different experiences of discrimination and social inadmissibility.

"Of course, the social acceptance it is different in Kosovo where I was born and created a life, it is different when you live with people that have the same culture as you do and it is different in Germany where people are raised not to treat everyone equal. I saw how they were looking at us, like we don't belong there. My kids were playing with some German kids' football, and the German kids didn't know we were immigrants, the second they found out they never played with my children again."

"While I was in Germany, they treated us very bad and I saw that they didn't wanted us there, but since I was sick with dialysis, they couldn't send us back immediately."

It also appears that migrants have had greater expectations in terms of positive social inclusion from the host country and society.

"I thought they would treat us better and give us help by including us in the society."

Migrants conclude that it is not good to migrate to another country if you do not have enough knowledge and the information for that specific country and it is very hard to integrate there. Preliminary information seems to be crucial to a successful migrant integration.

"Do not go to foreign country without learning for that country first (all the legal procedures, language, opportunities)."

One of the other important values that is distinguished from interviews, related to educating and informing migrants, is their preparation to face the various challenges that may arise during their journey. Presentation of problems, challenges as migrants (their challenges or problems of adults, or of younger generations, social, education, employment, economic, health, etc.) would be preventive of the various problems that emerge over time as a migrant.

"To tell you the truth I expected these things for better or worse."



3.2 Transition event/phases

It is worth mentioning that the respondents feel that the level of security is higher in the country where they migrate, in this case in Germany. It is worth also mentioning comparisons of certain stages of life as a migrant in different countries of the world. Migrants point out that staying in Austria as an asylum seeker has been significantly better, and that the reception of the Austrian authorities has been much better than the German authorities and the German state's treatment.

"In the first 4-5 months while we were in Austria, the hospitality was great, first we stayed at the camp and after they transferred us at a house and we had very good living conditions, but in Germany our stay was very difficult they placed us in big containers"

3.3 Issues/Problems/Challenges

The biggest challenges for migrants are the problems they face with their economic situation, which remains a major challenge for them and one of the important factors in their migration.

"My family life in Kosovo had been very poor" "Kosovar state doesn't give you any financial help" "When I got back from France to Germany someone stole my son's carriage, and I had difficulties in asking or buying a new one."

The results of the interviews show the reasons for the migration of some migrants, blaming systems and institutions that in fact cannot offer much to citizens, especially children.

"Yes, I want my children to get educated and have equal rights just like other citizens I really hope these hopes will come true."

Migrants also stress the problem of lack of access to employment, and to provide economic income for the family as a migrant, they stress as a challenge for them, as the social support is insufficient for them to providing the finances needed for the family and the migrants themselves in Kosovo.

"I didn't have the right to work, but since I had to provide food to my family, I was working easy jobs."

It also points out the lack of knowledge of the host country language, and that it has been the most important asset that someone who knows the language to assist in this regard.

"I had a friend from Skopje that also was waiting for his asylum response and he helped us a lot in that time, other than that nothing much from them."

One of the major challenges for migrant or even returnees to Kosovo from different European countries is their adaptation to the social system. According to migrant, adaptation to society is very challenging and problematic (both German and Kosovo). This is because the migrant is getting used to certain types of behavior and attitudes in an adequate social culture, and this is making it difficult to adapt new behaviors and attitudes to the new society and culture.



“All those families that have been there will find it very difficult to adapt here because they have received another culture, pay checks, and respect for people, and this is very difficult for them to adapt to when you become familiar with a system of a country like Germany.”

3.4 Finance

One of the major problems is the lack of financial support for migrants and their families once they go abroad. Interviewees emphasize the need for greater social support, especially in financial terms. Such needs, according to the interviewees, were most likely to cover through relatives and relatives who were in better economic shape. Interviews show that the financial situation remains a serious difficulty for migrants and a difficult experience to afford.

“Nuremberg organization supported us a little bit financially but that was it. I must pay five children every month 12 euros for transportation to go to school and that is a big burden for me. There was one time I remember that we didn't had food to eat, but my friends helped in.”

“Our families helped us also here by financially supporting us, but during the time we were in Germany it happened that we needed help with money, so they were very supportive.”

Interviewees cite various experiences but emphasize the importance of financial support in order to lead a normal life and to face their difficulties and challenges.

“Of course, my daughter's therapy costs 40-50 euros and I don't have any support from the social institutions. The institution said that my daughter has to be paralyzed so they can support me financially, I don't this is logical, just because my daughter wants to continue school that doesn't mean I have no need of financial support.”

3.5 Logistics

Traveling to migrant countries remains one of the most difficult experiences for migrants.

“The road to arriving in Germany has been difficult. We went from here to Belgrade, from Belgrade to Subotica and then from Subotica some of the people we paid helped us cross the border until we arrived in Hungary and from there the police took us, after 4 hours we were set free, and we have gone to Germany.”

3.6 Health service and education-ELFC

Health services in Germany are of a very high standard and basic services, compared to the services or even the health system in Kosovo.

“The health system in Germany was great.”

3.7 Supporting practices, policies, programs, actions

Migrants concluded that increasing social support, as well as shaping institutions that are not corrupt, are of primary importance. As well as the efficiency in the services provided, migrants emphasize a high efficiency of the services of institutions in Germany, but which is opposite to the efficiency of services in Kosovo.



4. Discussion

4.1 First steps of Migration

Many families seek refuge in neighboring countries and often must reside in refugee camps until they are relocated in countries where they are granted asylum to permanent living conditions. Unfortunately, one of these cases happened to be Kosovo. "Kosovar emigration took place throughout the XX century. In the first half of the XX century, Kosovar emigration was component part of the agenda of the Yugoslav and Turkish state (Gallopini, 2016)." People that migrated in this time migrated to ensure a better family welfare as these countries were rich and needed work force. But "During the 90s, Kosovar emigrations were increased because of deterioration of political and socio-economic situation. The 90s will be remembered for a long time in the collective Kosovar memory and beyond as Kosovo emigration years." (Gallopini, 2016). This time was a period of anxiety and fear of political circumstances and difficulties in economic situation as such most of Kosovo workers under the occupation of Serbian regime were fired, pupils and students were expelled from school, banks, hospitals were closed, and this was stated as a paralyse social life of the Kosovar society. After 14 years there happened another last wave of emigration from Kosovo "according to estimations of the respective institutions, for around 6 months, approximately 100,000 Kosovar citizens left Kosovo, emigrating to European countries and wider" (Gallopini, 2016). But this time the last wave- 3rd wave of migration happened to different reasons including economic, political situation, corruption and social. Many Kosovar citizens saw Germany and Switzerland as the land of opportunities and better conditions for their future.

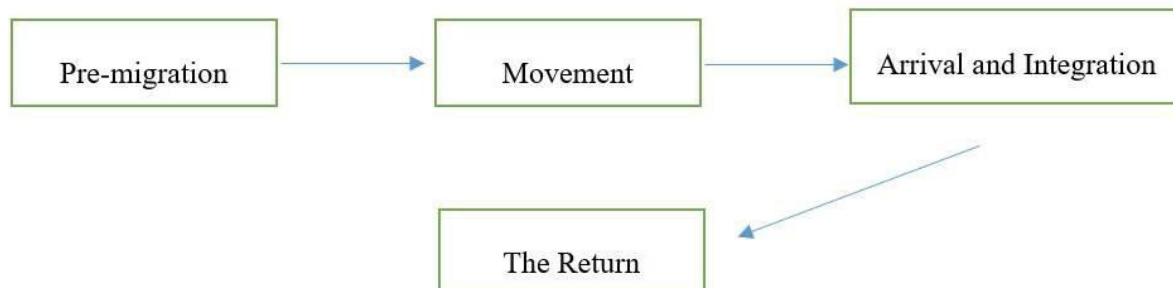
4.2 Health and Migration

Migration can generate government health problems and possibilities for studies to examine phenomena linked to the motion of the population. Adapting a wellness view in the development of migration studies reflects a significant enhancement over traditional methods relying on differences between different kinds of population motion. This is because a health view sees demographic mobility as a vibrant mechanism through which people due to their involvement in social networks are linked to places.

The stage of pre-migration that involves trauma, torture, infringement of human rights that all result in psychological change that directly affects mental health. Continuing the motion phase, the length and condition of the trip, the lack of fundamental health needs to arrive and inclusion phase in which you do not understand the legal status and migration policies, language and cultural adaptation to instances where your family / partner is separated, and the final stage of the return stage; length of absence, community facilities, health improvements, remaining comfortable. All of these variables have a major health effect that you are gradually observing.



Figure 1. Stages of transition of migrant families in Kosovo



We can see the transition in a migrant family in Kosovo, the pre-migration part it is the most difficult one since it is very hard for a family to take the step to migrate in another country and leave their homeland, at the movement part we have cases from the interview that state that this is the easiest one since there are a lot of ways of transportation. Arrival and Integration, it is the part where most families fail to pass the integration and they return.

Taken from an interview:

“It is not that easy as it sounds, when you arrive there, they don’t wait for you with flowers and opportunities, me and my family got disappointed a lot and the disappointment feeling it is the worst, if I feared the disappointment before migrating to Germany probably, I would pass the arrival and integration step.”

4.3 The impact of migration in childhood and adolescence

Childhood and adolescence are important stages of life for the person that involve major changes. Together with family circumstances, social and cultural environments are some of the factors that influence the development of children. In addition, migration is also an important factor affecting children and families. It might also involve learning a fresh language and new social norms to adapt to new social and cultural environments. For these and many other factors, such as schooling, ethnicity, social class, trauma, age and sexuality, migration can be a difficult experience for kids. The outcome of child migration depends on a variety of issues, including the reasons for their family's decision to migrate, the experiences of family settlement and the availability of informal and formal support. There are large gaps in the early childhood development as it is very difficult for children to change environment and then adapt to a new one especially in education sector.

4.4 Parentless to Parenthood

One of the hardest transitions for a woman in migration is of course the transition from parentless to parenthood. The care that an unborn child and a new mother needs it is very difficult to find as an asylum seeker. Mother does not get instructions on how to raise a child after birth or how to take care of herself before giving birth and after giving birth especially if you are in another country.



5. Conclusion

While the main reasons of emigration were the high level of unemployment, poverty, corruption and organized crime, the loss of hope for a developing perspective of the country, reunion with the family and relatives and other reasons. Emigration had a adverse impact on altering structures of the population. The number of births, delay marriages, growing divorces, leaving the workforce, low college achievement for kids without one parent, separation from other family members and others is boosted by up to 7 per cent.

Getting back to our research analysis and the action competences that are needed we can conclude that one service provider needs to finish a course prior to working with immigrants. The course (badge) should have a cultural, health and social aspect that will help the Transition Mentor to approach the migrant in the right way. By doing so the migrant will feel more welcome and will understand the instructions. As many refugees and migrants lack access to health care services, there should be a legal status in health systems that provides to migrants at least basic conditions and knowledge.

References

- Galopeni, B. (2016). Kosovar Emigration: Causes, Losses and Benefits: Prishtina: University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini".
- Bank, W. (2017). Republic of Kosovo Systematic Country Diagnostic. Retrieved 4 February 2021, from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/26573/Kosovo-SCD-FINAL-May-5-C-05052017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Sassi, L. (2018). Kosovo: A young country, being shaped by its youth. Retrieved 4 February 2021, from <https://www.politico.eu/interactive/in-pictures-kosovo-10th-anniversary-future-being-shaped-by-its-youth/>



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

*The TOBP project was supported by Erasmus+ higher education program in years
2018-2021 with the **Grant Agreement nr. 2018-1-AT01-KA203-039332***