Migration of Kosovans to Germany

A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

September 2023
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Contents

Executive Summary ......................................................... 3
Introduction ................................................................. 4
Emigration of Kosovans to Germany ................................. 5
Conclusion .................................................................. 16
Annex ..................................................................... 17
Executive Summary

The Western Balkan countries have historically been characterized by high emigration rates (departure from the country of origin). Even in recent years, mainly due to slow economic development and the inability to catch up with the standards of developed countries, the citizens of these countries are seeking better opportunities and conditions outside the region. In the last decade, the rate of emigration from the Western Balkans increased by 10%, while today, about 20% of the region’s population lives outside their countries of origin.

Emigration is an overly complex and challenging factor, even for Kosovo, where trends continue to play a remarkable role in economic and political developments in the country. Historically, Kosovo has faced the departure of its citizens toward developed Western Countries, the main destinations being Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Despite the fact that most of the Kosovan diaspora lives in Germany, the migration reforms preponderantly driven by the labor shortage in Germany continue to attract Kosovans, influencing the emigration trend to press on to a large extent. To assess the economic, political, and social impact of emigrants from Kosovo in countries like Germany, it is important to have accurate data on their demographics. As a result, detailed knowledge of the characteristics of emigrants allows the design of appropriate policies that address the opportunities and challenges associated with migration.

In this report, GAP Institute has examined the emigration data of Kosovans in Germany, using the results of the censuses/micro-censuses from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany for 2010–2022. Key findings of our research include the following:

- According to the 2022 estimations, 542 thousand people with a migration background from Kosovo live in Germany, of which 330 thousand were born in Kosovo.
- In the 12-year period, 2010–2022, there was an increase of 251 thousand or 86% more people with a migration background from Kosovo to Germany.
- German labor market data show that out of 264 thousand active people with a migration background from Kosovo, 251 thousand are employed (160 thousand men and 91 thousand women), while 13 thousand are unemployed (eight thousand men and five thousand women).
- Data from general education show that the number of people who hold a high school diploma is greater than those who do not have such a degree. The same does not apply to professional qualifications, where the number of people who do not have professional qualifications is significantly greater than those who have such qualifications.
- Data from 2017 to 2022 show that the main reasons for emigration to Germany for all persons born in Kosovo are primarily family reunification and asylum-seeking. In 2022, 110 thousand people declared that family reunification was the main reason for their emigration; 85 thousand people claimed that the main reason was escape, asylum-seeking, and international protection; 64 thousand people claimed employment as a reason, and another 41 thousand emigrated to start a family.
- In 2021, 21,487 people from Kosovo entered Germany, and 4,323 people of Kosovo origin left Germany, with net migration this year being 17,164 people.
Introduction

Reasons why people migrate are constantly changing, but the economic, political, and social impact of population mobility, commonly from less developed countries to developed ones, is becoming increasingly important.1 The Western Balkan countries are characterized by high emigration rates, among which Kosovo ranks third with about a third of the population living abroad.2

Kosovo has a long history of citizens leaving their homeland – a history that has gone through different stages.3

The first stage of emigration began in the 1960s, when Kosovo was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The liberal economic reforms of 1965 resulted in the opening of the SFRY borders, wherein citizens emigrated mainly to Western European countries (West Germany, Switzerland, and Austria) which were open to the recruitment of temporary workforce.4 These migrants, the so-called Gastarbeiter meaning ‘guest workers’,5 were mostly unskilled men from rural areas of Kosovo, and as such, had no intention of integrating into the countries where they emigrated.6 Economic factors such as high unemployment and low industrial development characterized the first stage of emigration from Kosovo to Germany.7

The second stage of emigration contained more political imprints, although severe economic conditions continued to play an important role in emigration from Kosovo.8 In 1981–89, political developments in the SFRY, resulting in the abolishment of Kosovo’s autonomy, dramatically changed the political climate in the country. Driven by the loss of jobs and the avoidance of conscripted military service, Kosovo natives began to leave in droves. Unlike the first stage, this mass departure also included qualified individuals from all areas of Kosovo.9

The third stage of emigration, which also represents the most dramatic stage of mass population displacement, occurred in 1998–99, during the war in Kosovo. Although most of the displaced people returned to Kosovo – about 600 thousand people, out of a total of 850 thousand displaced – a considerable number of them chose to stay in the countries where they took refuge.10 While political factors caused the largest exodus of Kosovo, the economic sustainability of migrants in the host countries led to their discouragement to return and face the process of rebuilding the state of Kosovo.11

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2 OECD, Labour Migration in the Western Balkans: Mapping Patterns, Addressing Challenges and Reaping Benefits, p.16, 2022.
5 Temporary workers in Germany worked mainly in manufacturing and construction where lack of labor was most notable. Martin, Philip L., “Germany’s Guestworkers,” JSTOR, 1981.
6 In the 1960s and 1970s, it was mostly rural residents who could not produce enough food for their traditional households, which led them to seek temporary employment opportunities in Germany. Möllers, Judith, et.al. “Study on Rural Migration and Return Migration in Kosovo”, p.13, 2017.
The fourth stage of emigration covers the post-war years up to 2015, when Kosovo citizens emigrated to Western Countries for economic and social reasons.

All these stages of emigration were motivated in great measure by political reasons, but later, the changing economic circumstances discouraged the return of these migrants to Kosovo, influencing the large size of Kosovo’s diaspora today.

Germany has historically been the main destination of emigrants from Kosovo, leading to its status as the country hosting the largest Kosovo diaspora. The shortage of workforce in Germany and the opening of the labor market to the six Western Balkans countries in recent years played a role in the further increase of emigration to Germany. In 2022, the German state faced the largest workforce shortage ever recorded, with 1.74 million available job vacancies. Consequently, Germany is constantly adopting policies that facilitate immigration. But how many people with a migration background from Kosovo are currently living in Germany?

In this report, GAP Institute aims to provide detailed data on the number of Kosovans living in Germany based on the results of censuses/micro-censuses conducted by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany. These data cover the period 2010 – 2022. In addition to the total number by migration background, this report provides specific data broken down by gender, age group, household structure, general education, professional qualifications, household structure, labor force participation, monthly net income, employment by economic sectors, reasons for migration, spoken languages, as well as population mobility.

Emigration of Kosovans to Germany

According to the latest statistics of 2022, 542 thousand people with a migration background from Kosovo live in Germany. The micro-census report, in the ‘migration background’ category, includes all persons “who themselves... or at least one of their parents did not acquire German citizenship by birth.” This category includes the following: 1) foreign immigrants and non-immigrants; 2) naturalized immigrants and non-immigrants; 3) resettles; 4) persons who acquire German citizenship through adoption by a German parent; and 5) children born with German citizenship in the four aforementioned groups.

By comparing 2022 data with those of 2010, it is ascertained that the number of citizens of Kosovo origin living in Germany has almost doubled. Consequently, in a 12-year period, an increase from 291 thousand to 542 thousand is marked, resulting in 251 thousand or 86% more people with a migration background from Kosovo.

Disaggregated by gender, the data show that out of 542 thousand people, 289 thousand (53%) are men, while 254 thousand (47%) are women. In every year from 2010 to 2022, men dominate with a higher share of the population compared to women.
Out of 542 thousand people with a migration background from Kosovo, 330 thousand were born in Kosovo. Since 2010, this number has increased from 189 thousand to 330 thousand. The highest increase is observed from 2021 to 2022, with 44 thousand (15%) more people. Disaggregated by gender, the data show that out of 330 thousand people, 177 thousand (54%) are men, while 153 thousand (46%) are women.

According to 2022 data, 176 thousand people (32.5%) of Kosovo origin belong to the age group of 25 to 45 years, followed by 147 thousand under 15 years (27.1%); 106 thousand between the ages of 45 and 65 (19.5%); 95 thousand between the ages of 15 and 25 (17.5%); and 18 thousand over the age of 65 (Table 1 in the Annex).
Data from 2022 show that out of a total of 330 thousand people born in Kosovo, the average age at the time they emigrated to Germany was 22 years old.

Of the total 16 federal states of which Germany consists, the majority of people originating from Kosovo live in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Nordrhein-Westfalen, and Bavaria (Table 2 in the Annex).\(^\text{15}\)

The most recent data on general education show that the number of people who hold a high school diploma is 281 thousand, compared to 87 thousand who do not have such a degree. The remaining 174 thousand include people who are still in school or have not yet reached school age. Every year, during 2010-2022, the share of people with a high school diploma has been higher than those who do not have such a degree, or those who are still in school.

\(^{15}\) Data on the population of Kosovo origin living in Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Saarland, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia missing/not presented in the micro-census statistics.
The most recent data show that 160 thousand men hold a high school diploma, compared to 121 thousand women who hold such degrees. The number of women without a high school diploma (48 thousand) is higher than the number of men without such a high school degree (38 thousand). While, 89 thousand men and boys, and 85 thousand women and girls, are not yet of school age or have not yet finished school.

As for professional qualifications, every year, the number of people without professional qualifications has been higher than those with such qualifications. The most recent data show that 113 thousand people possess professional qualifications, compared to 222 thousand who do not have any professional qualification. While 208 thousand are still in training and/or school.
The number of men who possess professional qualifications (67 thousand) is higher than that of women who possess such qualifications (46 thousand). Unlike general education, where the number of women without a high school degree was higher than that of men, in the case of professional qualifications, the number of women without any professional qualification (107 thousand) is lower than the number of men without such qualifications (115 thousand). While 107 thousand men and 101 thousand women are still in training or have not yet reached the required age for training.

The professional qualifications category includes those who have academic and non-academic degrees. Academic degrees include university degrees, while non-academic degrees include degrees from internships, technical colleges, and similar. Based on the most recent data, the number of people who hold academic degrees is 22 thousand, compared to 91 thousand who hold non-academic degrees.
In terms of the household structure of persons of Kosovo origin living in Germany, it turns out that most of them live in households with three or more members. Data from 2022 show that 29 thousand people live alone, 37 thousand households consist of two members, and the rest account for 123 thousand households consisting of three or more members.

Of the total number of people with a migration background from Kosovo, data from 2022 show 264 thousand people active in the labor force, of which 251 thousand are employed, while 13 thousand are unemployed. In 2017, an increase in participation in the workforce was noted. This increase is reflected in both genders, to a great extent due to eased migration policies by the German government to source labor from other countries.
The number of employed men is significantly higher than that of women. Of the total of 251 thousand employees, the most recent data show that 160 thousand (63.7%) are men, compared to 91 thousand (36.3%) women.

With the exception of those employed, others live by receiving unemployment benefits, support from relatives, pensions, and other government support (Figure 13). Support from relatives turns out to be higher among people who do not participate in the labor market, mainly because most of them are still not of the legal minimum age for employment.

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16 Other government support includes social assistance benefits, asylum-seeker benefits, parental allowances, educational allowances, and the like.
Most of the Kosovan diaspora in Germany belongs to the group of monthly net income of EUR 2,000–2,500 per person. The number decreases as the net income increases over EUR 2,500.\(^{17}\)

According to 2022 data, 26 thousand women receive monthly net income of EUR 500–1,000 compared to only 14 thousand men who receive such income. The difference in monthly net income of EUR 1,000–1,500 is lower, with 14 thousand women and 19 thousand men receiving such monthly amounts. However, in net income over 1,500 men dominate significantly compared to women. The number of men who receive a monthly net income of EUR 1,500–2,000 is 35 thousand compared to 12 thousand women. Whereas, for larger amounts, specifically involving net income of EUR 2,000–2,500, men dominate with 47 thousand compared to only 8 thousand women who receive higher net income.\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\) Data on monthly net income over EUR 3,500 is not available.

\(^{18}\) Data on disaggregation by gender of figures on monthly net income in both the below EUR 500 and the over EUR 2,500 categories, is missing/not presented in the micro-census statistics.
Data from 2017 to 2022 show that the main reasons for emigration to Germany for all persons born in Kosovo are primarily family reunification and asylum-seeking. In 2022, 110 thousand people claimed that family reunification is the main reason for their emigration; 85 thousand people claimed that the main reason is escape; asylum-seeking; and international protection; 64 thousand people claimed employment as a reason, while another 41 thousand emigrated to start a family.¹⁹

Employment is the main reason for emigration among men, compared to women, who mostly emigrated for family reunification. According to the 2022 data, the number of men who stated that employment was the main reason for their emigration to Germany is 55 thousand, followed by 52 thousand who declared escape, asylum-seeking, and international protection as the main reasons for their emigration, 42 thousand emigrated for family reunification and 13 thousand to start a family. The reasons for emigration among women vary, ¹⁹ Other reasons include studies, training, freedom of movement in the EU and others – whose data is not available.
with 68 thousand stating that family reunification is the main reason for migration to Germany, followed by 33 thousand who declared escape, asylum-seeking, and international protection as the main reasons for their emigration, 29 thousand said that plans to start a family in Germany were crucial in their emigration decision, compared to only 10 thousand who emigrated for employment reasons.

Figure 17. Reasons for migration of the Kosovan diaspora to Germany by gender, 2010-2022

Based on 2022 data, 107 thousand people with a migration background from Kosovo speak only German, 76 thousand speak mostly German, and 359 thousand speak non-German languages, including Albanian, Serbian, European languages, and other languages. In this category, the Albanian language which is spoken by 306 thousand people, dominates.

Figure 18. Kosovan diaspora by languages spoken in the household, 2022

According to the most recent data, 95 thousand people work in the manufacturing sector; 65 thousand people work in the trade, hospitality, and transport sectors; and 87 thousand people work in other services.20

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20 Data on employees in the economic sectors of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and public administration is missing/not presented in the micro-census statistics. The same applies to gender-disaggregated data by economic sector.
The most recent data on the migration of people originating from Kosovo is available only for the years 2011 – 2021. In 2021, 21,468 people from Kosovo entered Germany, while 4,323 people of Kosovo origin left Germany.

During 2011–2021, the highest number of people entering Germany from Kosovo was recorded in 2015, with a total of 44,081 immigrants. This year also represents the highest number of departures from Germany, accounting to 21,858 emigrants. 2015 also represents the highest net migration in 11 years, resulting in 22,223 people, while the most recent changes in net migration in 2021 are equivalent to 17,164 people.
Conclusion

In this statistical analysis, GAP Institute presented detailed data on the number of Kosovans living in Germany, based on the results of censuses/micro-censuses conducted by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany for the period 2010 – 2022.

The main results show 542 thousand people with a migration background from Kosovo living in Germany (289 thousand men and 254 thousand women). Of the total 542 thousand people, 330 thousand were born in Kosovo. Most of the people of Kosovo origin live in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Nordrhein-Westfalen, and Bavaria. The age group that dominates among people with a migration background from Kosovo is 25 to 45 years old.

The number of persons from Kosovo who are active in the labor market in Germany is 264 thousand (251 thousand are employed while 13 thousand are unemployed). Men dominate with higher participation in the labor market. Data from general education show that the number of people who hold a high school diploma is greater than those who do not have such a degree. While in terms of professional qualifications, the number of people who do not have professional qualifications is significantly greater than those who have such qualifications.

The reasons for migration among men and women vary. Employment is the main reason of emigration among men, compared to women who mostly emigrated for family reunification. Germany has historically been the main destination of emigrants from Kosovo. With the adoption of policies that facilitate immigration, Germany continues to attract Kosovan emigrants, and this is reflected in their departure trends.
### Table 1. Kosovan diaspora in Germany by age groups, 2010 – 2022

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Table 2. Main settlements of the Kosovan diaspora in Germany, 2010 – 2022

Values in thousands (,000)

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GAP Institute is a Think Tank established in October 2007 in Kosovo. GAP's main goal is to attract professionals to create an environment of professional development and research, as seen in similar institutions in Western countries. This also provides Kosovars with opportunities to research, develop and implement projects in order to advance the Kosovo society. Priority for this Institute is the mobilization of professionals to address the country's economic, political and social challenges. GAP's main goals are to fill the gaps between government and citizens, and between problems and solutions.

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