

**The impact of the emigration of Albanian migrants on their home  
region of Tetovo**

**A Qualitative Exploratory Research Study in the Region of Tetovo,  
Macedonia**

**Brief Summary of Final Report**

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## Acknowledgments

This study investigated the effects of the emigration of persons from the Albanian section of the population of Tetovo, Macedonia, on their place of origin. At the same time, it examined ways in which emigration changes the life prospects of individuals in the study sample. The effects of emigration were analyzed mainly in the areas of economics, knowledge, and know-how and included sociocultural aspects. Immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland transfer various forms of economic resources to their home region. A significant part flows into Tetovo as direct support to family members in the form of money transfers or material goods. But also information, knowledge, know-how, and education are transferred. In the place of origin, the money is used for consumer goods, house construction, health care, and family members' educations. In recent years, emigrants returning to Tetovo have established many small businesses. There is a great demand in Tetovo particularly for knowledge and know-how acquired in Switzerland in the skilled trades.

The remittances to Tetovo not only raise the buying power of the region but also maintain family ties despite geographical separation, giving rise to a transnational network of relationships.

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## Abstract

Immigrants from the former Yugoslavia form the second largest immigration group in Switzerland. Approximately 55,000 of these immigrants are members of the Albanian minority group in Macedonia. For Macedonia, and especially for the region of Tetovo, from which the majority of the emigrants are from originally, this section of the population is very important mainly from the point of view of their support of their home region.

This study conducted by Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Social Work (HSLU-SA) investigated the influence of Albanian immigrants living in Switzerland on their home region in Tetovo, Macedonia. To analyze and understand the interactions more precisely, we conducted 44 qualitative interviews in Tetovo, Macedonia, with family members of emigrants, with returning emigrants, and with key persons in the region. The research question was oriented towards the concepts of *transnationality* and *remittances*, which are relevant in migration research. Via various transnational fields emigrants transfer not only money but also further resources that are of importance economically and are potentially important for development–remittances – to their home region. These remittances can be subdivided into *economic resources*, *knowledge and vocational know-how*, and *sociocultural resources*. In line with this subdivision, this qualitative and exploratory study analyzed the inflow of resources to and the associated effects on the region of Tetovo at the following levels: the *economic level*, in the *area of knowledge and vocational know-how*, and at the *sociocultural level*.

Due to its exploratory nature, this research study discusses numerous different aspects of the effects of migration based on information gathered through the interviews conducted. At the economic level, migration has direct effects especially on households receiving money transfers and makes possible for these families a standard of living that is mostly above-average for the region. The regional economy profits rather selectively from the economic resources of emigrants. A lot of capital flows into the building sector and stimulates small and medium-sized business through the formation of new companies and businesses (construction materials suppliers/vendors). Shops and restaurants also profit to a certain extent, through consumer spending stimulated by financial remittances. All in all, emigrants invest only little, or in a one-sided way, in the regional economy in Tetovo. For many, building their own home is a far safer financial investment than riskier investment in a company of their own or a company belonging to others.

In the region of Tetovo the transfer of resources and associated effects in the area of knowledge and vocational know-how are rather small overall. The transfer of vocational know-how tends to take place only when emigrants returning to their home region start their own businesses or when they take jobs in regional companies. The region then profits from the highly recognized practical skills and also from the Swiss work mentality that the returnees acquired when they worked – mostly low skilled jobs – in companies in Switzerland. There is little return and transfer of more highly skilled specialized knowledge from Switzerland to Tetovo. The existing potential in the second generation (*Secondos*) of immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland can hardly

develop. For one, only few of these young people are motivated to return to Tetovo, and for another, there exist hardly any suitable transnational networks (cooperation between universities, Internet platforms, and so on) through which knowledge transfer – possibly also without people returning to the home region – could take place.

Migration processes clearly have effects at the sociocultural level, and this applies to both emigrants and their family members. It was found that in the wake of immigration experiences in Switzerland, there is a definite change in lifestyles, changed role behavior in families, and the development of new transnationally shaped outlooks on life.

## Introduction

Members of Macedonia's Albanian minority group have been living in Switzerland since the 1960s. The first immigrants came as seasonal workers. Today, there are now three generations living in Switzerland. A large group of Albanian immigrants from Tetovo, Macedonia, are settled in the region of Winterthur and in eastern Switzerland. Over a long period of time, social relationship networks have formed between the Tetovo emigrants living in Switzerland and their relatives in their home country. The emigrants exchange information and transfer money, knowledge, know-how, and education and in this way support their relatives. Even after long residence in Switzerland, they have strong emotional ties to their home region of Tetovo. Active commitment to Tetovo is very important to the emigrants. Mobility and the transnational dimension of migration play a large role.

### 1 The study: Context and research questions

This study investigated the effects of emigration of Albanian immigrants in Switzerland on their home region Tetovo, Macedonia. The focus was on the economic effects and on the effects of the transfer of knowledge and know-how to the region. But we were also interested in sociocultural consequences and changes in persons' attitudes and outlines of their lives that can be associated with the migration experience not only for the emigrants themselves but also for their relatives in Tetovo.

Transnational networks are seen today as resources that allow immigrants to organize themselves in the destination country but also to contribute transnational support through the transfer of goods and services (Bauer et al., 2000). These transnational networks prove to be important economic, cultural, and social resources also for relatives in the home country. There is practically unanimous agreement among researchers that migration networks are a form of social capital, and today network research is being increasingly applied to migration processes (Dahinden, 2005). In recent years, numerous studies examined the consequences of migration for the home country, transit country, and destination country. Current migration research is starting out more and more from the concept of migration as a circulatory process that is shaped by complex relationships and networks among several places and transcends national borders (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992). People can maintain a multitude of relationships and interactions at several places, through which transnational social fields and networks arise (Pries, 2008).

In the scientific discourses in the 1970s and 1980s migration was still viewed as hindering development in the home countries more than promoting development. However, since the 1990s there has been a change in a positive direction. In recent years, especially emigrants' transfers of money to the home country – called remittances – have been ascribed more positive effects on development processes in the home countries (see section 2.2).

In this study we use the term remittances broadly to include all types of resources transferred by emigrants to their home country. These remittances can be subdivided into economic resources (among others, financial remittances), knowledge and vocational know-how, and sociocultural resources (see here also Faist, 2008; de Haas, 2005; Levitt, 1998; Levitt & Nyberg-Sørensen, 2004). Accordingly, this study analyzed not only the economic effects of emigration for the home countries but also the effects of emigration in the sociocultural area and in the area of knowledge and vocational know-how. The focus was not on quantifying remittances but rather on capturing and describing in their complexity the various aspects of the effects of emigration on the home region.

The main research questions of the study were:

- What effects does the emigration of the Albanian section of the population of Tetovo, Macedonia, have on the home region in the areas of the economy, education, and sociocultural context, and also on the life prospects of individuals in the study sample?
- How, and via what routes, do resource transfers to the home region take place?

A broader question concerns future better utilization of the resources that flow back to the Tetovo region due to emigration. Here the research interest was not only in remittances from an economic point of view but also in 'soft' factors, such as the influence of migration processes on social relationships and the personal life goals of returning emigrants and relatives that remain in the home region.

- What does emigration mean for relatives that remain in the home country?
- What does emigration mean for returning emigrants?
- What are the overall effects and consequences of the emigration of a whole group of Albanians living in Switzerland on their home region in Tetovo?

To obtain an understanding of the meaning of emigration for the home region from the life context of individuals, we conducted 44 qualitative interviews in Tetovo, Macedonia. The interview participants were relatives of the emigrants now living in Switzerland, returnees to Tetovo, and responsible parties/key persons in the social and economic areas in the region.

With the research goal to obtain in-depth insights on various aspects of migrant remittances on the home region, this study aimed to contribute to the current discussion regarding the effects of migration on home countries. It examined a question that has seldom been investigated up to now and has never been studied in the case of immigrants from Tetovo. The study is thus an exemplary case study that is unique for Switzerland.

The study findings and the recommendations based on the findings are of high value both practically and scientifically for the institutions involved – the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Swiss Cooperation Office in Skopje, the MARRI Regional Center, the three universities involved (Institute of Sociological,

Political and Juridical Research at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, State University of Tetovo, and South Eastern European University in Tetovo), the Ministry of Economy in Skopje, the Office of Economy in Tetovo, and the Municipal Council of Tetovo – and also for the interested public. The researchers not only hope to contribute towards a better understanding of migration processes and to be able to support and monitor them adequately but also aim at optimization of policy and economic action in the problem field of development, migration, and integration.

## **2 Summary**

This study aimed to investigate the effects of emigration of persons from the Albanian section of the population on their home region of Tetovo, Macedonia, and to examine the life prospects of individuals in the study sample. The analyses focused on the areas of economy, knowledge and know-how, and sociocultural aspects. Upon this background the repercussions of emigration were captured and described in their complexity.

By means of interviews conducted with returning emigrants, relatives of emigrants, and regional experts in policy, economy, and social areas, the study investigated how and by what routes the flow of resources into and out of Tetovo occurs and what effects this transfer of resources has on individuals and the region.

### **2.1 The economic level**

#### **2.1.1. What resources flow into Tetovo?**

Immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland transfer various forms of economic resources to their home region. A significant part flows directly to their relatives in the form of the money transfers (remittances) or material support goods. Worldwide, remittances to Macedonia via bank channels equaled 267 million U.S. dollars in 2006. Estimates assume that the effective amount is at least 50% higher, as a large part of the moneys are transferred to Macedonia via informal channels (such as personal delivery). There are immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland who support their families in Tetovo financially, in most cases sending between 2,000 and 6,000 Swiss francs home per year. Relatives back home receive further support from Switzerland in the form of material goods of various kinds (among others, household appliances and branded products such as clothes and cosmetic products). However, there is reason to assume that in future the economic support from Switzerland will tend to decrease. Among other things, this is because after having their families joined in Switzerland; many immigrants have hardly any money left over for remittances to further relatives in Tetovo.

A lot of capital flows from Switzerland to Tetovo through emigrants purchasing or building houses and apartments in their home region. Further money reaches Tetovo when emigrants go home for a visit – for instance, through in part high expenditures in local restaurants and shops. Seldom discussed potential resources for the municipality

of Tetovo are the social security and pension rights of former emigrants to Switzerland. The actual amounts of the payments vary, however, depending on how much and how regularly the immigrants made social insurances contributions when in Switzerland. Another form of resources are emigrants' interest-free loans to family members or friends – for instance, for the purpose of starting their own businesses or building or renovating houses.

### **2.1.2 Via what routes do resources flow into Tetovo?**

Emigrants from Tetovo use various routes for transferring resources. Formal channels are banks, post office banks, and specialized money transfer operators. Informal channels are delivery in person or delivery through relatives and acquaintances, bus drivers, and others.

For international money transfers, emigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland appear to still make strong use of informal channels, among other things because they are less expensive and also more suitable for transfers to poorly accessible regions. Today there are more options for formal transfers than there were a few years ago, although the emigrants and the receiving households back home are in part not yet sufficiently informed about them. In addition, many people from Tetovo do not trust the banking system in Macedonia due to bad experiences in the past. There is more trust in foreign banks, such as ProCredit Bank or Raiffeisenbank. Since Macedonia became a candidate for accession to the European Union, skepticism toward Macedonia's (financial) institutions seems to have decreased, and this is reflected in an increase in remittances via official channels. In addition to banks, also specialized money transfer operators have become established. Despite high fees, this form of money transfer is very widely used, because it is easy and fast.

### **2.1.3 Use of resources**

The recipients of money transfers are for the most part the emigrants' own family members. Immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland send money to other persons, such as friends and acquaintances, more rarely and in smaller amounts, or they donate money to social and infrastructure projects.

Remittance recipient households use the money primarily for daily household expenses, such as for groceries and water, electricity, and telephone bills. It is also used for health care expenses and for luxury products such as cell phones, branded clothing, and so on. In addition, support money is used for educational purposes and to finance family celebrations. Another very common use of the economic resources of emigrants is to purchase land or build a house or apartment.

Some emigrants *invest* their economic capital in the economy of their home region. In the city of Tetovo and the nearby towns of Xhepcishte and Poroj numerous returning emigrants have started their own companies. Usually the new companies are oriented towards vocational areas in which the emigrants had worked in Switzerland. Very many of the companies formed are in the construction sector (such as production of building materials, workshops), in furniture manufacturing, and in the hotel and food service industries.

#### 2.1.4 Effects of remittances on the Tetovo region

At the level of individual *households* the remittances have direct and important consequences. For some of the recipient households the remittances are the only significant source of income, and they finance the cost of living. For some households the remittances make possible a standard of living that is higher than that of most families in Tetovo. A look at the financial situation of returning emigrants shows that in most cases, emigration had positive effects for them and their families. Some regional experts see as problematic the fact that in the region remittance recipient households in part become dependent on support payments. The experts reported that this can contribute towards some people in Tetovo not following their own goals in life sufficiently consistently.

The transfer of economic resources by emigrants also has effects on the *local and regional economy*, although not to the same extent as on the level of the private household. We found increased consumption and through it higher earnings for local business, higher flow of capital into the construction sector, and job creation through new companies started by returning emigrants.

The regional experts pointed out some critical points regarding the range and the sustainability of the transfer of resources. For one, it seems that the economic resources of emigrants have an economic effect not on the whole region but instead rather selectively on a few towns (Tetovo, Poroj, and Xhepçishte), whereas other towns are experiencing a massive rural exodus through migration to the cities. Inequalities also arise between families with emigrants and families without support from abroad. Also requiring critical examination is the aspect of the sustainability of resource use. Use of the money for building a house and for daily consumption stimulates the economy only as long as the emigrants continue to send money from Switzerland to the home region. This dependency is not unproblematic, for the flow of resources is expected to decrease in the future. The experts hope for sustainability from increased investments in the local economy, for example through emigrants starting businesses. But the new companies should be more strongly oriented towards export, so that already existing vocational and business relationships with Switzerland can be maintained or newly formed.

However, the capacity of emigrants should not be overestimated. Most of the immigrants living in Switzerland have neither a lot of capital to invest nor much knowledge or experience in building business relationships. In addition, it must be taken into consideration that in Macedonia and Tetovo the conditions for investors are generally difficult. It is still the case that lengthy bureaucratic processes and corruption as well as a lack of investment security keep also experienced foreign entrepreneurs from making sizeable investments.

## 2.2 Education and knowledge

### 2.2.1 Gain and loss of knowledge and know-how for Tetovo

Migrations are usually accompanied by transfers of knowledge and know-how that for the home region can mean both a gain (*brain gain*) and also a loss (*brain drain*) of resources. An analysis of the Tetovo/Switzerland context regarding the Tetovo home region revealed both *brain gain* and *brain drain* effects. But the size of both of the two phenomena is very small today.

It should be said in advance that the by far greatest part of the emigrant generation of “classical” migrant workers had a very low educational level. Back then, only a small percentage of highly qualified persons left the country. For this reason, one cannot speak of a *brain drain*. On the contrary, some emigrants have in the meanwhile returned to Tetovo and contributed to a *brain gain* for the Tetovo region by bringing with them practical vocational knowledge from Switzerland.

There are both brain drain and brain gain effects associated with the second generation of immigrants living in Switzerland from Tetovo (that is, the children of the first emigrant generation). Members of this generation often completed a part of or their entire education in Switzerland. Due to poor job prospects and the low wages in Tetovo, only few young people return to Tetovo, which is why only a small part of the knowledge resources acquired in Switzerland flows into the home region. Experts in Tetovo rate the emigration of young people as a social loss of knowledge potential.

Not least due to the more stringent asylum and labor market policies of Switzerland in the 1990s, emigration from Tetovo to Switzerland decreased in past years. This is also true of emigration from Tetovo to other Western European countries. But many mainly young people in Tetovo are in the difficult situation today that they have good school qualifications but hardly any job prospects. Accordingly, the intention to emigrate is widespread particularly among young people. For this reason, the consequences that can accompany increased free movement of workers in the wake of harmonization/alignment and possible integration in the European Union should not be underestimated. This could lead temporarily to increased emigration of well-qualified persons from Tetovo.

### 2.2.2 Mainly vocational know-how

But at this time, migration between Tetovo and Switzerland appears to result more in a *brain gain* for the home region, although it is small in extent. The brain gain takes place for the most part via vocational circles. There is transfer of mainly two forms of knowledge and know-how: vocational know-how and, connected with that, knowledge on work organization and work processes.

The vocational know-how consists in craftsmanship and technical skills as well as general occupational knowledge acquired by immigrants working in Switzerland, often for many years. These knowledge resources are transferred to the home country the most when returning emigrants start their own businesses, mostly small or medium-sized companies. Normally these new companies are in the field in which the returning emigrants worked when they were in Switzerland. New businesses are commonly in the

construction sector (among other things, production of building materials, diverse workshops), in furniture manufacturing, and in the hotel and food service industries. The returning emigrants also transmit knowledge about work organization and work processes and a certain work ethic.

All in all, however, the transfer of vocational knowledge and work organization knowledge should not be overestimated. For of this older generation with occupational experience, only few persons return to Tetovo, and only a small part of them start their own businesses. A return to Tetovo and especially investing in starting a company require also a lot of time and work and entail a number of risks.

There are also signs that there has been brain gain in the *education system* to a certain extent. Through emigrants, some knowledge of structures and processes of the Swiss school system flow into the education system of Tetovo. In addition, the *German language* has by now become more important and is very widespread.

Very little knowledge of the Swiss political system or the workings of the welfare state seem to flow back into the home region. Only few emigrants returning to Tetovo are politically or socially active and in this way try to bring their social and political experiences to bear.

Nevertheless, at the social political level there is a transfer of resources that should not be underestimated. For many emigrants, their experience in Switzerland apparently changes their view of state institutions insofar as they are more aware of the advantages of a functioning state under the rule of law and are more accepting of the accompanying rules and duties. This change in attitude is also transferred to relatives in the home country.

### **2.2.3 Few network structures for knowledge transfer**

Apart from individual transmission via the returnees to Tetovo, there are hardly any other channels or networks for the transfer of knowledge between immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland and the population in Tetovo. Networks of that kind could make it possible for the people of Tetovo to profit from the knowledge and know-how of highly qualified emigrants from Tetovo abroad even when they do not return home. Possible starting points are transnational cooperation projects between universities, student networks, and various forms of networks of experts.

In this connection, the experts interviewed pointed out the lack of institutional support for setting up and maintaining suitable structures. State agencies or offices or also NGOs could make an important contribution towards improving knowledge transfer via networks.

### **2.2.4 Rather marginal regional effects of knowledge transfer**

Due to the overall small extent of transfer of knowledge and know-how from Switzerland to Tetovo, the effects on the region are rather modest. Positive effects can be assumed mostly at the level of individual returnees and their companies and employees. The transferred vocational knowledge surely contributes in many companies to the innovation content and the quality of the products and thus to

economic success. It can also be assumed that there are certain learning effects in rival companies within the same line of business.

There are hardly any signs that emigration has an influence on Tetovo as a place of research. But the emigrants from Tetovo and the returnees to Tetovo can definitely be attributed with a positive influence on the general educational situation. But here it is not much the transferred knowledge and know-how as the economic support of emigrants for the education of their relatives that plays a role. Another positive effect on the educational situation comes from the general increase in the importance of education in society, to which emigrants and returnees have contributed. However, in the opinion of the experts the most important factors in the rise of educational levels are not emigrants but rather the now compulsory secondary school and the founding of the two universities.

### **2.3 Considerable sociocultural consequences via transnational networks**

In contrast to the rather modest effects in the area of education and knowledge transfer to Tetovo, emigration of members of the Albanian section of the Tetovo population has a considerable influence on the sociocultural context in their home region. Of great significance in the migration experience of the families are new channels of communication and transnational networks. They act as transmitters of sociocultural influences. When asked about the most conspicuous changes in the wake of migration, the interview participants named modernization of lifestyles and changes in role allocation in the traditional family. These changes affect both the relatives in Tetovo and returning emigrants. But it is mainly young people of the second generation that profit from these changes and from the transnationalization of relationships. Migration enriches and extends the life and future prospects of returning emigrants and their relatives.

Expanded travel possibilities and new forms of communication tend to remove spatial and temporal barriers between the home country and the migration destination country. Relatives of emigrants are a part of the transnational relationship network, and they effectively live in the simultaneity of two everyday worlds or realities. Ties to both countries are intensified as well. Despite stays in Switzerland for many years, emigrants maintain strong emotional ties to their home region Tetovo, but they develop at the same time an emotional connection to Switzerland. Fluctuating identities and a life in two worlds: These are aspects of a new character of social relationships in transnational networks that form important social and cultural resources of a life in and with migration, which the relatives of emigrants interviewed and returning emigrants utilize in various ways.

#### **2.3.1 Change in traditional family structures – Example: women**

In spite of the still high value of the traditional family structures and strong solidarity particularly in the face of the burdens, migration changes Albanian family structures especially in the urban milieu. This is shown especially in changes in the self-understanding of women, who as virtual single-parent mothers in the home country often take over an enormous workload and responsibility.

In connection with the economic improvement because of emigration, women also take over increased decision-making, carry responsibility for the family budget, and have a say in the children's upbringing and education. Some of the women interviewed emphasized that they feel more autonomous and can come and go in public more naturally. Contrary to handed-down notions, greater importance is attached to the education of daughters. Girls from migration families are therefore given more self-understood access to education and university studies than before. Relatives of emigrants are markedly aware of the importance of education and recognize the increasing equality of men and women.

As a substantial change in roles, the interview participants saw mainly women's gainful employment. Several women emphasized that the traditional housewife role is a thing of the past in Macedonia today and that "modernization" has arrived: Women are seen as equal partners, the role model has changed, and it does not have to be automatically patriarchal. For instance, some of the women interviewed were women who did not emigrate and who today are committed to following careers in Tetovo. However, this process is still underway, and it continues to be inconsistent. Some of the interview participants, for instance, were concerned about the decreasing birth rate in Tetovo. They reported that family planning had changed and was approaching the Western model of the nuclear family; the value of the family as a social institution was declining.

### **2.3.2 Extended life prospects for young people**

Young people who experienced emigration in their own families in part as a very painful process – such as when fathers are absent for years, for example – nonetheless develop new outlines of their lives in connection with emigration, such as when they commute between the two countries for their education and training. The key persons that we interviewed pointed out that young people are more open to influences from abroad and when they return they bring "*Western culture*" with them as a wind of change. Communication with emigrants leads to greater acceptance of things that are different and new and leads to a break with traditions.

### **2.3.3 Social remittances through identification with the destination country**

The interviews revealed that via the emigrants, social remittances flow from the destination country to the home country in the form of newly acquired norms, behaviors, identifications, and a change in lifestyles and life attitudes. Families in the home country in part identify with the values of their emigrant relatives. Punctuality, orderliness, efficiency, time as a valuable commodity, work discipline, the self-understanding of a functioning state under the rule of law, and the reliability of institutional processes are valued positively as typical Swiss characteristics and adopted.

### 2.3.4 Different types of dealing with emigration

Five very different case examples stand for different types of dealing with life in and with emigration. The cases point up the contradictions of migration processes and their hindering side, but they also point up the resources that reinforce the necessity of also structural and institutional support of actors in this process.

*University students Drini Shabani and Lule Kastrati* stand for young people who grow up in transnational migration processes and make use of educational options in Switzerland as well as in Tetovo and widen their future prospects through their transnationality. They know the cultures and mentalities in both “worlds” and make a conscious decision to live in their home country, Macedonia.

*Vesa Imeri and Ilir Gashi* are young people who remained in the home country and owing to painful separation experiences through emigration see their own futures mainly in Tetovo. But at the same time, through the emigration of their parents, they had a good starting position and can complete university in Tetovo or self – employment. In addition, they point out the modernization taking place also in Macedonia.

*Wife and daughter-in-law Fatmire Elshani*, because of also very painful separation and the burdens of bringing up the children alone, sees her family as her most important shelter. Despite some changes in her role behavior, she stands for women from a traditional, conservative, and uneducated milieu. It is true that her children can lead more modern lives, and her daughter was allowed to study at university. And she herself appreciates the improvement of the economic situation; she is prouder and more independent than women that have no migration background. However, she stresses that this is not a substitute for her husband. Today she hopes for a better future for her children in Tetovo, because it was for that that she and her husband had made the sacrifice of separation.

*Returning emigrant Blerim Ismaili* stands for the social advancement of an emigrant from Tetovo who after working for many years abroad returns to his home country and makes a career. He is proud of what he has achieved and sees emigration as the key to his social advancement. He utilizes his transnational knowledge and transmits it in his home country.

## 3 Suggestions and recommendations

The study showed that in the face of the sociocultural development trends described above, the existing resources of Albanian emigrants from Tetovo are not used optimally. Many emigrants that consider returning to Tetovo and starting their own businesses hesitate to do so, owing to the difficult prevailing conditions for investments. But there is also a need for optimization in connection with the transfer of knowledge and know-how. Without wanting to overestimate the potential of Albanians immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland, it is reasonable to assume that with suitable improvement and support measures, more resources would flow back to Tetovo and that this would achieve better effects on the region.

### 3.1 Macedonian emigration policy

At the policy level, there does not appear to exist a strategy (or no strategy seems to be in effect) outlining how to deal with emigration or returning emigrants. *It would be all the more important to actively include emigrants and returning emigrants in shaping Macedonian emigration policy. This would also require teamwork among the state, regional, and local levels.* Only better consideration of their specific concerns will make possible fuller use of the economic and social potential. In addition, stronger inclusion also increases the willingness of emigrants and returning emigrants to be engaged for their home region. In the framework of the migration partnership between Switzerland and Macedonia, Swiss government institutions such as the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) or the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) could take on important communication functions. A central role could also be played by the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI),<sup>1</sup> which is a well-established institute in the Western Balkans that deals with issues in regional and international migration management. Another important partner in this process would be also the Macedonian government Agency of Emigration.

In this connection, we would like to point out that there continue to be inter-ethnic tensions between the Macedonian and Albanian sections of the population. For this reason, efforts to counteract these tensions continue to be important.

### 3.2 The economic level

Especially in connection with investments made or planned by emigrants, it was clearly revealed that there is a great need for information and advisory services and for suitable structures for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

In some places, *meetings take place between local representatives und emigrants*, when the emigrants are in Tetovo on vacation. At the meetings emigrants can obtain early initial information about investment opportunities. However, these meetings are often arranged at the initiative of individuals, and they are held only sporadically.

It would make sense to make information available at all times through special drop-in centers, where specialist personnel provide emigrants and returnees with information on the legal/regulatory framework for investments, official processes, and investment and cooperation opportunities. As some of the towns do not have the human or financial resources to run an information center of this kind, it would make sense to create one center serving the whole municipality of Tetovo. It could be incorporated into an already existing administrative unit of the municipality of Tetovo. In the planning of the information center, the Swiss FOM and SDC and also MARRI and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) could provide support and assistance. It would also make sense to provide information and advice to immigrants living in Switzerland, as is already being done in the context of return assistance implemented by the FOM in conjunction with the SDC, IOM, and the competent cantonal agencies

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.marri-rc.org/>

and relief organizations. Possible partners on the Swiss side are also the Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets (SIFEM), which makes investments in Macedonia, and the SECO Start-up Fund of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

*Also suitable would be an Internet platform as a communication and information pool. Emigrants could look up up-to-date information also from Switzerland.* Also initial administrative steps via online forms are conceivable. At the same time, emigrants would be better protected from corruption for the first steps. The platform could be supplied with information from, as well as provide information to, mainly actors involved in investment projects (such as emigrants, returnees, entrepreneurs, national and local administrations, banks, NGOs, development organizations, and development funders). The platform could also include a discussion forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences and for networking for joint investment projects. The website could be incorporated into a local government (such as the municipality of Tetovo) or national government website (such as the Agency of Emigration). Assistance with the planning of the Internet platform, bringing the actors together, and technical implementation could again be provided by the FOM, SDC, and also MARRI.

Prior to creating information centers and an Internet platform, it would be appropriate to mark the beginning of the endeavors by *organizing and conducting a meeting or conference*, for the purpose of bringing together the relevant actors and discussing the various aspects and needs in connection with investments of emigrants.

Also important is information on money transfers in Switzerland and in Tetovo. Information aids such as the SECO brochure, "International money transfers from Switzerland: An information brochure for migrants," can help emigrants to inform themselves about inexpensive and secure ways to transfer money.

To achieve that emigrants also tackle larger investment projects, institutional support of pooled investments could be a suitable instrument. For example, in the Mexican government's program *Tres por uno* (Three For One), the federal, state, and municipal governments match one dollar (for a total of three dollars) for each dollar that Mexicans working abroad donate to approved development projects in the home country.

A lot is already being done in Macedonia to break down obstacles to investments (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and SECO programs). And yet it is still important to the researchers that conducted this study to point out once again that the interview participants view the lengthy bureaucratic processes and apparently widespread corruption as a central problem and a great barrier to development of the region. This means that there is still a need for action in this area.

Based on this study no clear trends can be identified as to the type of emigrants' investment projects. But it is certainly a good idea to promote investments in niche markets. Some of the interviews revealed that within the community of immigrants from Tetovo living in Switzerland there is some demand for native products from Tetovo.

### 3.3 Knowledge and know-how

Through emigration and remigration only little highly qualified knowledge flows into the home region. Transnational knowledge networks could increase the inflow of resources even without highly qualified emigrants returning to Tetovo. It therefore makes sense to promote structures of that kind, for example through cooperation projects between colleges and universities in Switzerland and Tetovo (conferences, seminars, building networks of contacts, cooperation between Albanian student organizations in Switzerland and student organizations in Tetovo) or through creating Internet platforms.

This study found that mainly practical vocational knowledge flows into the home region. This know-how often remains in the companies started by returning emigrants, however, and so the region as a whole does not profit from it enough. To make this know-how accessible also to wider circles, forms of cooperation should be discussed with these company owners. Conceivable ways to do this might be seminars, training programs, or internship placements in these companies.

There is also a need for action in connection with (temporarily) returning young emigrants who wish to improve their low educational qualifications from Switzerland in Tetovo. Young people who consider returning to Tetovo for this reason should be advised, early on, of their long-term options in Switzerland and Macedonia. After receiving the school-leaving qualification, it is possibly better to complete an apprenticeship in Switzerland than to return to Tetovo immediately after school to attend the upper secondary *Gymnasium* there and afterwards the university. There is a risk of not finding a job after completing the university and, in addition, the risk of Western European countries not recognizing the degree. In this connection, this issue should be raised with educational institutions in Switzerland.

A follow-up study to the present study could examine the educational and vocational prospects of young people from Tetovo living in Switzerland and in Tetovo and the potential of the transnational orientation. The aims of the further study would be, for one, to identify the specific problems and needs of young people from Tetovo living in Switzerland with regard to their educational and vocational prospects. Here it would be important to discover under what circumstances and with what motives young people from Tetovo consider a (temporary) return to Tetovo and what risks it entails. For another, the study should investigate the potentials of a transnational orientation of this kind. Possibly, the study could describe already existing forms of cooperation and transnational projects and identify best practice models.

Environmental education is already offered at some schools in Macedonia, with support also from the SDC, for instance. This study uncovered that due to their experience of the greater environmental awareness in Switzerland, emigrants are sometimes valuable bringers of knowledge and “ambassadors” in this area. It seems worthwhile to make this knowledge and experience accessible to wider circles in Tetovo.

With these study results, the researchers present a detailed analysis of migration processes of a larger group of Albanian immigrants from Tetovo living in the region of

Winterthur, Switzerland, and in eastern Switzerland. Over a long period of time, social relationship networks have developed between the emigrants in Switzerland and their relatives in their home country. Against this background, through a partner cities relationship, institutional relationships in various areas (social, cultural, educational, and more) could be established between Winterthur and Tetovo.

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