



# “Home” for now or “Home” for life. Migration memories of Kosovo Albanian “Gastarbeiter’s” in western European countries

Mimoza Dushi 

Accepted: 2 September 2024

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature B.V. 2024

**Abstract** This article explores the integration experiences of first-generation Kosovo Albanian migrants in European countries, referred to as Gastarbeiter, whose migration initially meant at temporary employment. Despite this initial intention for temporary work, many of these migrants ultimately became long-term or permanent residents, revealing the shortcomings of the original migration policy. Drawing on 23 biographical interviews conducted between 2014 and 2016 with migrants in Germany and Switzerland, the research question guiding this exploration is: To what extent has the integration of first-generation Kosovo Albanian “Gastarbeiter” in Europe been impacted by the challenges they faced in raising concerns, integrating into the labor market, and assimilating into the host society? The aim is to provide nuanced insights into migration processes and inform strategies for effective integration policies. The article highlights challenges faced by Kosovo Albanian Gastarbeiter, including limited opportunities to voice concerns, integrate into the labor market, and assimilate into the host society. Despite these obstacles, many chose to settle in their host countries, often bringing family members along. The transition from individual to family migration, coupled with the acquisition of language skills and understanding of

host society norms, traditions, and regulations, significantly contributed to improved living conditions and integration outcomes in host countries.

**Keywords** Kosovo Albanian Gastarbeiter’s · Migration processes · Temporary migration · Integration · Biographical interviews

## Introduction

Following World War II, resulting demographic and economic challenges prompted a significant rise in international migration across Europe and globally. The slow increase in fertility rates, coupled with widespread poverty and the need for economic revival, fueled the search for better opportunities abroad. From 1947 to 1960, Northwest European countries grappling with workforce shortages in mining and heavy industry (Messina, 2007) became attractive destinations for immigrant labor, while Southern European countries faced rising unemployment (Van Mol & de Halk, 2016). This economic imbalance led to robust recruitment efforts. In the 1960s (1961–1973), as industrial development surged, the demand for affordable unskilled labor in Northwest Europe outpaced the available supply. Migration during this period was perceived as a direct response to labor shortages, opening and closing like a tap based on workforce demand (Matriniello, 2008).

---

M. Dushi (✉)  
University of Prishtina, Faculty of Mathematics  
and Natural Sciences, 10000 Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo  
e-mail: mimoza.dushi@uni-pr.edu

Between 1945 and 1973–74, Western and Northern European countries actively recruited seasonal workers from Southern Europe, the Balkans, North Africa, and Turkey, as outlined in the migration scenarios described by Martiniello (2008).<sup>1</sup> These movements were regulated through bilateral agreements for seasonal labor migrants. Over time, the host countries came to rely on migrant labor, fostering a cycle where seasonal workers had the opportunity to repeat the migration process. Consequently, many seasonal workers became circular migrants, engaging in temporary and repetitive movements between their origin and host countries primarily for employment purposes.

One of the main motives for circular migrants is quick financial gain, with the intention to return to their home countries to invest in business opportunities, real estate, or their children's education. This mindset often justifies their resistance to integrating into the societal and cultural norms of the host country (Caro et al., 2015). However, temporary migrations may transform into permanent settlements if individuals decide to stay longer or indefinitely (Khoo et al., 2008). Successful migrants in the labor market or second-generation immigrants may transition to permanency, leading to integration in terms of language proficiency, adherence to social norms, cultural-historical knowledge, family reunification, permanent employment, and more (Fleischmann & Dronkers, 2010; Jutvik & Robinson, 2020).

This paper examines the transition of temporary labor migrants, commonly referred to as “Gastarbeiter’s” or “guest workers,” into permanent migrants, focusing on migrants from Kosovo to European countries, especially Germany and Switzerland, where a significant number of Kosovo Albanian migrants

reside (KAS, 2014). The research question guiding this exploration is: To what extent has the integration of first-generation Kosovo Albanian “Gastarbeiter” in Europe been impacted by the challenges they faced in raising concerns, integrating into the labor market, and assimilating into the host society? Originating from bilateral agreements on guest workers between former Yugoslavia and Western countries, particularly Germany and Switzerland, these migrants initially worked on temporary contracts lasting nine months, with a mandatory return to their home country for the remaining three months each year. The possibility of return depended on the needs of the employing company. After completing four circular migrations, the guest worker gained the right to long-term residence (Schmid, 1983), facilitating family reunification (Schmid, 1983) and the establishment of roots in Western countries (Goldon et al., 2011).

By examining these transitions, this paper aims to provide nuanced insights into the migration processes and inform strategies for effective integration policies, shedding light on the complex dynamics that still influence the lives of Kosovo Albanian migrants in Europe.

### **Evolution of Gastarbeiter: shifting from temporary labor to indefinite stay and integration policies in Europe**

The Gastarbeiter program, one of Europe's largest and most sophisticated initiatives for guest workers, refers to foreign or migrant workers, particularly those who moved to Western countries seeking work as part of a formal guest-worker program (Goldon et al., 2011). This category of workers emerged in response to fast-growing economies and increasing labor demand in Western countries (Iseni, 2013; Castles, 2006; Martiniello, 2008). To meet their economic needs with a workforce, Western countries signed bilateral recruitment agreements for foreign temporary workers, or “guest workers” (Schmitter, 1979).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the most industrialized countries in Europe—West Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Austria, and the United Kingdom—signed agreements with less developed countries in Southern Europe and North Africa: Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Turkey, and

<sup>1</sup> Martiniello describes five migration scenarios within the years 1945 and 1973–74. In the first, northern European countries invited manual workers from southern Europe, Balkan, North Africa and Turkey. In the second, colonial powers such as France and Great Britain encouraged immigration from their colonies and later from their ex-colonies. In the third, the decolonisation process led to the return of ex-colonials to their mother countries. In the fourth, Europe faced the arrival of political asylum seekers mainly from the Communist Block, later from Latin America. Finally, there was considerable movement of highly qualified elites thanks to industrial transnationalizations and the development of European and non-European international organizations.

former Yugoslavia (Schmid, 1983; Schmitter, 1979). The bilateral agreement with former Yugoslavia was signed in 1968 (Shonick, 2009), recruiting Gastarbeiters for jobs that required little qualification, mainly into the industrial sector (Castles, 2006; Iseni, 2013). The initial idea was that they would stay only temporarily (Martiniello, 2008). The program functioned according to the rotation principle: bring them in when labor was needed and transfer them back to the home country in case of decreased economic growth or a general downturn of the economy (Schmitter, 1979), or even as soon as they became superfluous, preserving their national and cultural identity to facilitate remigration (Oepen, 1984).

Additionally, the restrictions of the guest-worker system included limitations on their rights and minimized family reunifications (Castels, 2006; Meardi et al., 2012). Migrants were expected to accept relatively low wages, make few demands on social infrastructure, and not get involved in labor struggles (Martiniello, 2008). Their connection with host society usually lasted for the short duration of their job tenure, while their accommodations were often in remote areas, limiting contact with the host society and impeding integration (Caro et al., 2015). According to Castles (2006), Germany and other Western European countries as well, “were trying to import labor but not people”. Therefore, their position in host labor markets and societies is characterized by socio-spatial segregation and strong home country orientation, impacting their working and private lives abroad (Çaro et al., 2015). Over time, however, the realization that migration was not as “temporary” as initially expected became apparent (Schmitter, 1979). The presence of foreign workers became an economic necessity for the host countries (Schmid, 1983; Schmitter, 1979). In fact, some companies were becoming dependent on migrant labor (Castels, 2006; Schmid, 1983). Moreover, employers tended to prefer to keep migrants already on the job rather than replace them with new ones (Schmitter, 1979). This situation was particularly clear for the situation in Germany, where the employer had to pay a recruitment fee for each worker recruited (Schmitter, 1979). Consequently, they had the right to extend the resident permits, which initially were nine months for seasonal permits, and one year for annual permits. With a few differences between Germany and Switzerland, as a non-European Union member, residence

permits could be extended in many ways for seasonal workers who have accumulated 36 months of employment during four construction seasons (Schmid, 1983). Upon securing long stay residence permits, workers gained multi-entry opportunities.

In the early 1970s, when the labor market became saturated because of the recession after the oil crisis (Iseni, 2013; Martin, 2009; Oepen, 1984), many migrants had already obtained long-term residence permits, improving their rights in terms of residence status and family reunification (Goldon et al., 2011; Schmid, 1983). Nonetheless, to reunite families, in most cases, the husband or wife was brought at the request of the employer, while the children were often treated as “visitors” (Castels, 2006). The limitation was in the children’s age: only those under 18 years of age were eligible for immigration (Schmid, 1983), as the goal of admission governments was to reduce the migrant population. The previous restrictions were related to the regulation of residence and work permits. For those who managed to fulfill these rules and stay in the host countries, they were given the “chance” to adapt to the host-country values, as well as learn norms and behaviors that allow them to integrate (Caro et al., 2015; Oepen, 1984). It was a policy framework for the assimilation of the remaining immigrants (Menz, 2008; Oepen, 1984). According to German authorities, the idea behind this policy was that once the Gastarbeiter became invisible in this assimilation process, their problem would disappear in its own (Oepen, 1984).

Over time, as host countries’ dependence on the labor of migrant workers became clearer, making the need for them indefinite, policy shifted towards encouraging greater integration (Schmid, 1983). As a result, workers were allowed to stay (Martin, 1981; Meardi et al., 2012) and reunite families. As workers became less mobile, the policy of circular migration ended. Countries began to think about the cost of employment, housing, education, and other social needs, taking steps for integration previously unforeseen in the “guest worker” concept (Goldon et al., 2011). However, even though many of the former “guest workers” have become German or Swiss citizens, the term *Ausländer* or “foreigner” (Dinç, 2011; Von Kappenfels & Höhne, 2017) is still colloquially used for them, as well as for their naturalized children and grandchildren, among native populations. Recently, the term “naturalized immigrants” (Diehl

& Blohm, 2003) or “immigrants with a German passport” (Georgi, 2016) has been used, which was thought to be politically correct because it includes both immigrants and naturalized citizens.

The evolution of the Gastarbeiter program from a temporary labor solution to a system facilitating long-term residence and integration highlights the complex dynamics of migration policies in Europe. Initially designed to meet short-term labor needs, the program inadvertently set the stage for significant socio-economic changes as temporary migrants transitioned to permanent residents. This shift necessitated new approaches to integration, as both migrants and host countries adapted to the realities of prolonged and indefinite stays.

### Migration from Kosovo: the journey of Gastarbeiter

As of the mid-1960s, known as the phase of contemporary migrations in Kosovo (Islami, 2008), four emigration waves towards European countries have occurred (Möllers, et al., 2017), encompassing regular, irregular, and forced migrations. Regular migrations occurred mainly because of economic reasons and represent the first external migrants towards European countries. In contrast, irregular migrations relate to political reasons and include emigrants escaping political pressure and young men who refused to participate in former Yugoslav military service. Forced migration pertains to war refugees, involving the deportation of Albanian people from their origin countries due to ethnic cleansing during the years 1998–99.

The first wave is “Guest worker migration” from former Yugoslav republics directed to Western European countries (Sauer, et al., 2019). It started in the mid-1960s (Kosinski, 1978; Canefe, 1998; Iseni, 2013) when the former Yugoslav government officially opened the borders for temporary labor through bilateral agreements between sending and receiving governments (Kosinski, 1978; Canefe, 1998). This decision by the former Yugoslavian government was influenced by increasing unemployment linked to the new economic reform introduced in 1965, which increased labor efficiency and reduced demand (Kosinski, 1978). Meanwhile, for West European countries, imported labor, especially for low-skilled

jobs, was imperative for fast-growing industrial economies (Castles, 2006; Iseni, 2013).

As a response to the increasing labor demand and subsequently creation of conditions for family reunification, people from Kosovo, as part of former Yugoslavia, sought employment opportunities abroad, mainly in Germany, Switzerland (Iseni, 2013; Schmid, 1983), as well as Austria, and France (Kosinski, 1978). Officially, such migrants were considered only temporary (or seasonal workers) and subsequently were not included in the statistics on foreign migrants (Kosinski, 1978). However, the number of these temporary workers was regulated by agreements between former Yugoslavia and other governments. In the case of Kosovo, it is difficult to find a precise figure for the actual number of Albanian-speaking immigrants in these countries (Kosinski, 1978; Iseni, 2013). Among other reasons until the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, Kosovo Albanians were registered within host statistics together with other national and ethnic groups of the former Yugoslav as Yugoslav citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding this, from the existing sending country statistics, it is derived that, from the total number of Yugoslav ethnic groups employed in 1971, 860,000, or 18.2% worked abroad within predetermined conditions of bilateral agreements. This proportion varied considerably between the republics, from about 10% in Montenegro, Slovenia, and Serbia proper to over 25% in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. From Kosovo, there were around 25,000, or 20% of the total employed, who worked abroad (Kosinski, 1978, 325:326). The number of temporary workers abroad increased until 1971 (Kosinski, 1978). However, because of subsequent economic difficulties in the receiving countries and the oil-crisis-induced slump in the European economies (Iseni, 2013; Martin, 2009; Oepen, 1984), the organized recruitment of workers stopped in 1973 (Canefe, 1998). Nevertheless, the flow did not stop completely. In several

<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a considerable number of Kosovar Albanians retained their former Yugoslav/Serbian citizenship until 1999, primarily for practical reasons such as the convenience of traveling outside the country. Additionally, changes in their current status have occurred through the naturalization process, and a significant second generation born abroad has emerged. Ultimately, estimating the number of individuals with irregular status residing there is challenging (Iseni, 2013).

countries, official recruitment systems had broken down, allowing unregulated entry and increased family reunification (Castels, 2006). Undocumented entry also increased, with authorities sometimes tacitly regularizing migrants once they had jobs. Individual labor migration and family reunification continued well into the 1980s (Kosinski, 1978; KAS, 2014).

Migrants were mainly low-skilled laborers with little education (Iseni, 2013), healthy young men from rural areas who could be immediately productive (Martiniello, 2008; UNDP, 2014). They were recruited to work mainly in industrial facilities, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing (Martiniello, 2008; Iseni, 2013). For Kosovo Albanians, this was a considerable shift from agricultural to non-agricultural activities, as 57% of migrants were engaged in farming prior to their move (Kosinski, 1978). Initially, they received seasonal status, which was considered temporary. Under this regime, after renewing their status as guest workers many times and spending several years in certain European countries, migrants were able to apply for family reunification (Iseni, 2013).

### Emigration from Kosovo: phases and chronology

The economic stagnation in former Yugoslavia during the 1980s (Yarashevich & Karnaeyeva, 2013) caused a second wave of migration from Kosovo. This wave was once again characterized by the movement of low-skilled men, who continued to be recruited into the same sectors (Möllers, et al., 2017). Most women emigrated later, along with their children, to join their husbands who had been working for years.

The third wave of Kosovo Albanian immigration took place during the 1990s, leading to an increase in the immigrant community in Western Europe, primarily due to two key reasons. Firstly, an intensive process of family reunification took place, made possible by the transformation of seasonal status into residency permits for those migrant men who had been working in European countries for many years (Iseni, 2013). Secondly, thousands of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing the political and socio-economic situation prevailing in Kosovo arrived at that time (Iseni, 2013; UNDP, 2014).

After the abolishment of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, Kosovo Albanian workers were dismissed

from public service and socially owned enterprises (UNDP, 2014). Skilled and educated young men from both rural and urban areas migrated to Western European countries to seek employment opportunities and escape from the former Yugoslav regime and mandatory military service (UNDP, 2014). This wave later included refugees from the 1998–99 war (Schwander-Sievers, 2005) when more than 800,000 people fled as refugees (KAS, 2014; UNDP, 2014).

The fourth wave started in the year 2000, incorporating migrants who searched for lucrative work and sought a Western lifestyle, often as irregular migrants. Many migrants claimed asylum, but for most of them, the determining factors were a lack of employment, rather than fear of prosecution or violence (Meyer, et al., 2012). During this period, the main forms of migration were for family reunification purposes and irregular migration of unskilled and undereducated youth, as well as legal (temporary) migration of highly skilled and highly educated individuals through study or work arrangements (UNDP, 2014). Additionally, in 2014–15, Kosovo experienced a peak in irregular migration, specifically by irregular migrants. The severe economic situation and misinformation on social media that Germany was accepting seasonal workers from Kosovo were the main push factors driving Kosovars to emigrate. However, because of Kosovo's classification as a "safe country" to live in by many Western European countries (IOM, n.d., EU, 2018) and the "zero" chances of getting asylum in any European Member States (EU, 2018), most of these migrants were returned by force or voluntary by host countries authorities (MIA, 2019; EU, 2018).

### Transition from temporary to permanent residents

The majority of the Kosovo Albanian diaspora until the early 1990s consisted of male migrants whose point of reference was their home country, where their families lived and relied on them for economic support. This support was an important factor in reducing poverty rates and improving living standards (Asis, 2005; Iseni, 2013; Markov, 2013; UNDP, 2014). These individuals were part of the migrant population that had invested significantly in their country of origin because their status as migrant



workers was not planned for a long-term stay in Western European countries (Schmid, 1983; Iseni, 2013; Caro et al., 2015). Additionally, their mobilization for the political issue of Kosovo kept them in a difficult situation—neither returning to Kosovo nor integrating into the host societies, hindering the integration process. In general, the political situation in the home country seems to have had a direct impact on the transnational activities of the Albanian-speaking diaspora.

Although family reunification had been ongoing since the late 1980s (Meardi et al., 2012), migrants continued to support the idea of returning to their country of origin until the late 1990s. Their aspiration was to return to their country after the end of the war (in 1999) and, through economic investments, influence the development of the country. Moreover, they raised their children with the idea of returning to their country of origin after the resolution of national issues there. However, the unpleasant political situation and unencouraging economic development created after the year 2000 mark the beginning of a new stage for the Albanian diaspora, which is the process of settling in the countries of Western Europe (Castels, 2006; Iseni, 2013). Most of the temporary migrants decided to continue living in foreign countries. Following this, more and more women migrated in the next phase for the purposes of family formation (marriage migration) and family reunification (bring spouses and children from the homeland or diasporic place) (Kofman, 2004). Additionally, the most recent group of refugees and asylum seekers who left the country around the time of the 1998–99 conflict was more gender-balanced, often including entire families moving abroad. In recent years, greater women's migration has been occurred, because of family issues, marriage, or education, and the male migration has primarily been for economic reasons, mainly employment.

## Research methodology

The research presented in this article is part of the RRPP (Regional Research Promotion Program)—funded project titled “Industrial Citizenship and Migration from Western Balkans: Case studies of Albania and Kosovo migration to Germany, Switzerland, and Greece.” The project aimed to identify

Kosovo Albanian labor migrants in Germany and Switzerland and was conducted between 2014 and 2016. The study's objective was to understand the motives and strategies of migrants, as well as benefits they experiences from migration. A total of 23 biographical interviews were used for this paper and conducted with the first generation of Kosovo migrants in Germany and Switzerland, as well as their children who migrated when reuniting with family. The focus on these two countries was based on the data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, indicating that 58.1% of total Kosovo Albanian migrants reside in Germany and Switzerland (KAS, 2014).

A biographical approach, as outlined by Isofides & Sporton (2009), involves collecting and analyzing detailed accounts of participants' life stories. This method is particularly useful for studying transnational migration because it enables the empirical documentation and reconstruction of the diverse, complex, and transformative aspects of the migration experience.

At the start of the interviews, participants were encouraged to share their life narratives, offering a comprehensive overview of their experiences and highlighting the elements they deemed most significant. To thoroughly understand each migrant's journey, the interviewer (author) inquired about their initial migration to the host countries; the influence of kinship and family networks; education; and work experiences, emphasizing their duties and responsibilities. We also examined their interactions with society, comparing the labor markets and social environments of their home and host countries. Finally, targeted questions were asked to explore crucial issues such as the impact of immigration status, welfare, gender, and labor systems on their aspirations and intentions to contribute to their home country.

Fieldwork was carried out in three locations: the home country during migrants' visits for winter and/or summer vacations (Pichler, 2009), and in the respective host country in cities where the Kosovo Albanian community is located, such as Munich in Germany and Zurich in Switzerland. The face-to-face interviews, conducted by the researcher (author), began after a brief discussion to establish trust with the participants (Patton, 2015). Interviews were conducted in Albanian, allowing informants to express themselves comfortably in their mother language. Participants were identified using the snowballing

technique (Mack et al., 2005; Erdal & Ezzati, 2015), and interviews were scheduled in psychologically safe environments, usually proposed by the participants.

All interviews, ranging from 1 to 3 h, were transcribed, preserving the original language, and subsequently coded using the qualitative program MAXQDA (Gizzi & Rädiker, 2021), initially 14 version, and then continued in version 24. The coding process, guided by the grounded theory approach (Briks & Mills, 2022), unfolded in three cycles: descriptive coding to identify general themes, a review using initial coding to refine themes, and a third cycle of coding for in-depth analysis (Jacques, 2021).

The study's analysis is grounded in 23 interviews with migrants, a sample size considered adequate for qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Among the interviewees (Table 1), 12 were Gastarbeiter (guest workers), and 11 were their children, either born in the country of origin and migrated before the

age of twelve (Rumbaut, 2004), or born in the migration country (King & Christou, 2010). In terms of education, 13% held an associate degree, 57% completed higher education, 21% had primary education, and 9% did not complete primary education. Regarding employment, as professions are grouped, 17% were already retired, 39% worked in the service sector and administration, 13% in manufacturing, 22% in construction, and 9% in agriculture. The majority of interviewees were men (69%), primarily serving as initiators of labor migration from Kosovo, while women (31%) predominantly migrated for family reunification.

## Results

This section explores the experiences of Kosovo Albanian temporary workers, from their selection

**Table 1** Research participants with migration background

No	Name	Place	Year of migration/ father's migration	Gender	Age	Education	Profession
1	Astrije	Germany	1985/1978	F	33	Associate degree	Nurse
2	Ymer	Germany	1962	M	69	Primary school (not completed)	Retired (construction)
3	Fehmi	Switzerland	1974	M	59	High school	Gardener
4	Valbona	Germany	1979/1971	F	42	High school	Domestic worker
5	Ymer	Switzerland	1974	M	63	High school	Manufacture/ wood factory
6	Fatmir	Switzerland	1968	M	65	Primary school	Driver
7	Bejtush	Switzerland	1971	M	67	Primary school	Retired (manufacture)
8	Bedri	Germany	1974	M	59	High school	Manufacture/wood factory
9	Milaim	Switzerland	1983	M	56	High school	Construction
10	Xhemshir	Switzerland	1981/1971	M	54	High school	Construction
11	Laura	Germany	1975/1968	F	40	Associate degree	Auxiliary lawyer
12	Hamdi	Germany	1965	M	68	Primary school (not completed)	Retired (agriculture)
13	Gylten	Germany	1983/1973	F	38	High school	Trade
14	Bajram	Switzerland	1983	M	55	High school	Driver
15	Myrvete	Switzerland	1993/1974	F	40	Associate degree	Nurse
16	Mustafe	Germany	1968	M	66	Primary school	Retired (gardener)
17	Ardiana	Germany	1979/1965	F	44	High school	Sales Clerk
18	Adem	Switzerland	1994/1960	M	47	High school	Construction
19	Asan*	Switzerland	1971	M	65	Primary school	Gardener
20	Agon	Germany	1982/1969	M	48	High school	Moliere
21	Resa	Germany	1983/1974	F	45	High school	Domestic worker
22	Basri	Switzerland	1986/1975	M	38	High school	Construction
23	Rasim	Germany	1974	M	62	Primary school	Manufacture/wood factory

\*The interviewee initially migrated to Germany in the manufacturing sector, and after three years, returned to their home country. For the second time, he migrated to Switzerland in the agriculture sector, where he reunites his family

process for migration to their integration into the host country, and their reasons for becoming permanent residents.

#### The economic motivations and aspects of the bilateral agreement

Our empirical data show that temporary workers who migrated from Kosovo to Western European countries through the Gastarbeiter program did so primarily for economic reasons. The program targeted individuals with low social status and limited skills, aiming to address labor shortages in less desirable sectors. This presented a valuable opportunity for people from less developed countries to improve their families' economic conditions. Reflecting on his migration experience, Rasim, a 62-year-old worker in the manufacturing sector in Germany, explained:

*They needed workers, and we were all young and available for work. The economic conditions in my family did not allow me to continue my education, but for the job I did in Germany, it was not a problem.*

Considering that the host countries' demands were for temporary workers in fields that required manpower such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, men, as heads of households and responsible for other family members, were the primary participants in this type of migration. Consequently, the perception that they were leaving their families only temporarily made the migration process seem less daunting. From the late 1960s onward, this became a highly desirable experience. Fatmir, a 65-year-old driver in Switzerland, recalled the enthusiasm among the youth in Kosovo to participate in this program:

*I was initiator to go in Switzerland. All youths were going in that time (1968). I also thought to join them. Man without a job becomes monotonous.*

Their travel was managed by recruitment offices in the sending countries, established by receiving countries (Goldon, 2011). Travel was arranged in groups (Daniel, 2007), which was advantageous for many Albanians and other nations from the former Yugoslavia who were experiencing challenging economic conditions and saw this as their first opportunity to go

abroad. Ymer, a 63-year-old worker in a Swiss wood factory, reminisced about his first trip to France:

*In 1972, I initially traveled to France with a one-year employment contract. The former Yugoslavia had a bilateral agreement with France since 1968 to host labor migrants. My group consisted of 12 people. (Ymer, 63, manufacturing, Switzerland)*

Another migrant, Asan, a 65-year-old gardener in Switzerland who initially migrated to Germany and worked in manufacturing, spoke about the crucial roles of these recruitment offices. He explained that these offices not only organized travel arrangements but also played a vital role in the selection process. They tested the potential migrant's work skills, provided pre-training for the assigned jobs, conducted medical examinations, and checked police records as prerequisites for travel:

*In Germany, we could only migrate through the recruitment office. The recruitment office in Gjilan (residence in eastern Kosovo) helped us complete the mechanics course and sent us to a Ford car factory. The entire trip was planned and organized. Before departure, we had to undergo medical examinations by doctors who came from Germany. Many were denied, but I was deemed healthy.*

Upon arrival, they faced the selection process based on their assigned tasks in the receiving countries. Ymer, a 69-year-old retired person in Germany at the time of the interview, recalled:

*When we arrived in Munich, they ushered us directly into a large basement of the building. Then, we were assigned to other cities around Germany, depending on our work. They called us by name, created a group, and gave us the train ticket, addresses, and the locations of certain companies where we had to start work.*

These narratives illustrate the migration through bilateral agreements was driven by the economic needs of all parties involved. Receiving countries needed additional labor to fuel their economic growth, sending countries aimed to reduce unemployment and provide workers with valuable skills, and migrants sought financial stability for their families. These agreements primarily benefitted low-status



and low-skilled workers, making migration legal and organized through recruitment offices. Travel was arranged in groups, which suited many Albanians and others from former Yugoslavia living under difficult economic conditions. Men, as heads of households, were the primary participants, and the perception of temporary migration softened the experience. This organized approach to migration became desirable from the late 1960s. Migrants recall the structured and regulated process, and the crucial role of recruitment offices in facilitating their migration journey.

#### Accommodation and integration challenges

According to the Gastarbeiter program, employers were responsible for providing accommodation for workers. The narratives of our migrants reveal that these accommodations were often in separate facilities, near workplaces, or in company dormitories, where physical and social conditions were often challenging. For example, Xhemshir, a 54-year-old man who joined his father after 10 years through the family reunification process, shared a two-and-a-half-room apartment with ten other cousins in 1981. He recalls that the apartment was very basic and served only as a place to sleep. Despite this, they were more satisfied compared to 1971, when his father lived in bungalows, which were located slightly away from living residential areas to avoid disturbing residents. This separation occurred because their stay was temporary and solely for work purposes; thus, there was no perceived necessity for them to integrate into the host society, nor for the local population to disrupt their peace (Adamopoulou, 2024).

Additionally, the migrants' focus was primarily on working hard and earning as much as possible, without paying much attention to living conditions in the host country. Their goal was to take advantage of the higher wages available and support family members left behind in their home country. As a result, many migrants worked multiple jobs simultaneously to meet their objectives. Bedri, a 59-year-old who went to Germany to work in manufacturing while also taking a job in a restaurant, described his intense work schedule:

*I worked 7-20 hours without stopping. I worked in a restaurant in the evening and during the day at the company. Meanwhile, I worked in*

*different companies. In the restaurant, I worked evenings or on Saturdays and Sundays. There was no rest for me; on holidays, I was always at work. (Bedri, 59, manufacturing, Germany)*

This separation of migrants largely ensured peaceful coexistence but also entrenched inequalities. Living separate lives meant there were very few opportunities to develop trust, respect, and understanding between communities. The separate residences and long working hours led to spatial and social segregation, hindering integration efforts. Language skills, though an immediate need for integration, were often not required because, within the workplace, it was sufficient of a team member to speak the common workplace language of the job. Work teams were frequently organized based on nationality (Caro et al., 2015). Adem, age 47, working in the construction sector in Germany, recalled that translations were provided during the trip organization, typically in Slovenian or Croatian for migrants from former Yugoslavia. As a result, many migrants did not manage to learn the host language even today, as Rasim from Germany noted in his interview. This issue largely stemmed from the Gastarbeiter's program's initial lack of consideration for their integration into the host society and its subsequent failure to address the linguistic needs of migrant workers and their families:

*I have not attended any language course. Have learned only with colleagues, without any school where you can learn from A... it is hard to learn. I know only simple things, how to ask for bread, water and some others. German language is very difficult. (Rasim, 62, manufacturing, Germany)*

Limited language ability reduced migrants' opportunities to connect with locals, making communication challenging and hindering their ability to form meaningful relationships. Initially, their social networks and support systems were primarily formed through work colleagues. Consequently, their social ties were mostly with co-nationals within the working and living areas, while maintaining a strong orientation toward their home country. Bejtush, a 67-year-old manufacturing worker in Switzerland, reflected on his social interactions with colleagues, highlighting the difficulty migrants faced in forming deep connections beyond casual greetings. He said:

*For 34 years, I worked with a German colleague named Kurt at a railway construction company. We had great respect for each other but never became friends. He was a good workmate, but our relationship ended when the workday was over.*

Despite these challenges, some migrants expressed satisfaction with their reception from employers, the nature of their work, income levels, and living conditions. For instance, Asan, a 65-year-old in Switzerland, did not view these conditions as segregation. This perspective may be attributed to their origins in the poorest regions of their home countries, where they lacked prospects. Their educational background suited them for low-paying jobs, and thus, transitioning from their familiar environment to the developed world gave them a sense of achievement and gratitude for the opportunities afforded to them.

*It was a wonderful time, unforgettable. It felt like heaven, enjoying the benefits. God bless the Western countries—Germany, Switzerland, and France. God bless their cultured people. (Asan 65, gardener, Switzerland)*

From the narratives of the Gastarbeiter, the complexities of integration in host countries become clear. While living in separate facilities ensured a degree of peaceful coexistence, it also reinforced social segregation. Despite such various challenges, many migrants were content with their work conditions and valued the economic opportunities available in Western Europe. Their resilience in navigating integration challenges, albeit largely within their own communities, reflects their journey from impoverished backgrounds to new lives abroad. These narratives illustrate both the hardships and the gratitude of Gastarbeiters, shaping their perspectives on migration and settlement in Western countries.

#### Balancing economic gains and social integration

As evident from the previous quotes, the initial goal of temporary migrants was to earn money quickly, save it, send remittances home, and return soon. Consequently, they did not show sufficient interest in integrating or taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the host countries, such as education or better employment prospects. This lack of interest

is well illustrated by Milaim, a 56-year-old construction worker in Switzerland, who claimed that he was offered the opportunity to continue his education in masonry through company training in order to get a promotion. However, he turned it down, believing his stay would be short. Similarly, Ymer, a 69-year-old in Germany, explained the missed opportunity for higher income, as he declined the offer fearing it would limit his ability to visit his family. He said:

*I once had the opportunity to go from construction to production in a car factory. But I refused, even though the salary was much higher and there were many other benefits. The problem was that they only offered me leave once a year, while I had to visit my family in Kosovo more often. (Ymer, 69, retired—construction, Germany)*

This attitude was undoubtedly reinforced by the Gastarbeiter program itself, which convinced migrant workers that they were only temporary residents who would stay in the host countries as long as they were needed. They would be recruited, used, and returned as required by employers (Goldon et al., 2011). Only after a few years abroad, after acquiring the right to residency and family reunification, did they begin to benefit from welfare and integration programs. The aim of these programs was to help migrants in overcome barriers to integration and help them fully participate in their new communities and contribute to the societies and economies of the host countries.

However, balancing the economic benefits of working long hours and saving money with the long-term advantages of integrating into the host society was delicate. Migrants often prioritized short-term benefits over the long-term benefits of integration, as they did not believe they would spend their whole lives in Western countries. This is exemplified by Hamdi, a 66-year-old retired migrant in Germany who worked as a gardener. He postponed his return to his home country year after year, without realizing that he would stay until retirement. Therefore, he never showed any interest to use available opportunities for further education. Although the temporary workers program ended, they still considered themselves as temporary residents in Western European countries.

These experiences were not gender-specific, as similar trends were observed in women after family

reunification. Women often had similar ambitions regarding employment, advancement, and integration into host societies. Resa, a 45-year-old domestic worker in Germany, felt forced to sacrifice her well-paid manufacturing job because she was required to work in shifts, sometimes late into the night. She decided to work in a more physically demanding and less well-paid job as a domestic worker in order to be with her children in the evenings. In the narratives of our working mothers, the theme of sacrifice for children was quite evident, although the mothers were constantly influenced by the ideology that they were only temporarily abroad.

From these narratives, the temporary nature of the Gastarbeiter program and the migrants' focus on short-term economic gains significantly influenced their approach to integration. While many migrants eventually benefited from integration programs, their initial lack of interest in long-term integration opportunities reflected their belief in the temporary nature of their stay. This perspective, shared by both men and women, often led to sacrifices in education and career advancement, with lasting impacts on their ability to fully integrate into their host societies. Balancing the immediate financial benefits of migration with the long-term advantages of integration posed a challenge, as the migrants' initial priorities often hindered their full participation in the economic and social life of their host countries. Despite these challenges, the resilience and adaptability of these migrants highlight their complex journey of seeking better opportunities while navigating the delicate balance between economic gain and social integration.

#### From temporary migrants to permanent residents

Over time, despite the numerous challenges faced by Kosovo Albanian migrants in Western countries, many slowly but surely settled down to become permanent residents. This gradual transition was deeply intertwined with their personal life cycles. As they grew older and started families or reunited with their existing ones, their initial plans evolved. Faced with the deteriorating economic and political situation in Kosovo, which worsened by the late 1980s (Sörensen, 2006), many men, as heads of households, decided to bring their families to host countries, where living conditions were more favorable. For instance, Hamdi, a 68-year-old retired migrant

in Germany who had worked in agriculture, chose to reunite his family only when the political situation in Kosovo became precarious and economic development stalled. He explained:

*In 1981, I decided to bring my family here after more than 15 years of living apart. The political situation in Kosovo was grave and uncertain. It is understandable that the economic conditions of life were better here and easier. Therefore, I decided to establish them permanently.*

This change allowed them to feel more settled in their host country and to look for long-term advantages. Bejtush, a 67-year-old retired manufacturing worker in Switzerland, recalled his request to his employers after he reunited with his family:

*After family reunification, I made a request to my employer to change my position at work, to move from fieldwork to work within the factory*

During this period, wives and children often found themselves in more passive roles, adapting to decisions made by the heads of households. Laura, a 40-year-old resident of Germany, recalled that her family reunion was without preparation for her and her siblings, which required considerable emotional and psychological adjustment. She remembers:

*My father decided on reunification. I could not imagine it at the beginning. Initially he told us it was only a vacation... but then, after three months, when they enrolled us in school, we understood what was going on.*

Fathers played a pivotal role in their children's integration into the host societies, helping them adapt to new social norms and services. They sought to avoid repeating the limitations they faced initially and used their knowledge of host society norms, traditions, and regulations to fulfill their responsibilities towards their family members. As Astrije, a 29-year-old nurse in Germany, shared, her father acted as a bridge between the old and new worlds, ensuring that their children could navigate the complexities of the new culture:

*Dad worked hard with us. He pushed us to learn the language by buying different dictionaries, sending us to buy something on our own*

*to learn orientation, and inviting Swiss neighbors' children to play in our garden to make friends.*

This approach was instrumental in helping the younger generation adapt and thrive in their new environment, even though many continued to live with the hope of returning to their country of origin. However, especially after the year 2000, when the war in Kosovo ended and the third generation arrived, many Kosovo Albanian migrants from this wave of migration made the decision to become permanent residents. This significant shift in their status and intentions marks an important transition in their migration journey, reflecting their deeper integration and long-term commitment to their host countries. Bajram, a 55-year-old driver in Switzerland, summed up this sentiment by noting, that he and his loved ones felt more at ease there, because their work and their lives are there.

As these accounts show, the transition from temporary to permanent settlement among Kosovo Albanian migrants highlights the complexities of migration and integration. Initially driven by short-term economic goals and the intention to return home, many migrants found themselves establishing long-term roots in their host countries because of evolving personal circumstances and external factors. This shift necessitated adjustments from both the migrants and the host societies, emphasizing the need for policies that consider the long-term integration of migrant populations.

## Conclusion

This paper advances our understanding of the integration experiences of the labour migrants, named Gastarbeiter, shedding light on the unintended consequences of temporary migration policies. Data show that the Gastarbeiter policy, initially created as a necessity for rapid economic development in Western Europe, offered a nine-month contract within a year, adding a unique layer to their migration experiences. In this article, we have shown that many migrants, who migrated within this bilateral agreement and who could repeat this four times or accumulate 36 months of work during four constructive seasons, gained the right to long-term residence (Schmid, 1983). This

article makes a novel theoretical and empirical combination by highlighting the challenges Kosovo Albanians faced raising concerns, integrating into the labor market, and assimilating into the host society.

Gastarbeiter migrants moved primarily for economic reasons. According to the program's requirements, they filled labor shortages in host countries, particularly in less-favored sectors, such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. This demand was predominantly directed towards male workers, who were often less skilled or from lower social strata. We found that these requirements aligned with the characteristics of the Kosovo Albanian population in former Yugoslavia in the 1960s, resulting in a significant number of men being included in the program.

This article demonstrates that the program was highly organized and had specific rules. Migrants were selected in their home countries, assigned to specific jobs in the host countries, and sometimes even received pre-employment training to be immediately productive and meet the expectations of their tasks. Their travel, accommodation, and other needs during their stay were provided by the host countries, respectively host companies (Yamamoto, 1980). However, opportunities for integration were not offered. They were not given the chance to learn the host country's language, a crucial element for successful integration, which subsequently hindered their social integration.

Our study confirms the assumption that participating in a temporary migration program challenged migrants' integration into host societies. Initially, these migrants believed they were only temporarily in the host countries, lacking the assurance of long-term contracts. Additionally, their primary goal was to earn money as quickly as possible, save, and send remittances to their families left behind (Rudolph, 1996). Our findings show that this perspective diminished their intention to establish permanent residency. Personal stories reveal that, in many cases, migrants have not mastered the language of the host country even today and have declined opportunities for further education or professional training, driven by the belief that their stay was only temporary. This perspective, shared by both men and women, with lasting impacts on their ability to fully integrate into their host societies. Balancing the immediate financial benefits of migration with the long-term advantages



of integration posed a challenge, as migrants' initial priorities often hindered their full participation in the economic and social lives of their host countries. Despite these challenges, the resilience and adaptability of these migrants highlight their complex journey of seeking better opportunities between economic gain and social integration.

In many cases, considering the unpleasant and unsupportive political and economic situation in Kosovo, migrants decided to reunite their families in the host countries. To secure their family members and improve their lives in the West, they decided to bring their families. Consequently, the opportunities for integration into host societies they initially missed, combined with their work experience, economic stability, and knowledge of the host country's culture and society, helped them create new strategies and support their children's integration into the host countries.

The experiences of Kosovo Albanian migrants underscore the need for comprehensive and flexible integration policies that address the long-term presence of migrant communities and support their full participation in host societies. Our study has broadened our understanding of how temporary migrant workers transitioned to permanent settlement. Undoubtedly, a significant factor influencing this entire process was that host countries and companies became increasingly dependent on migrant labor. This dependency compelled them to offer greater benefits to migrants and protect their rights, ensuring long-term residence and enabling family reunification status (Castles, 2006). Initially, these host societies did not anticipate that these migrants would stay for an extended period. This change was unplanned and unexpected. Consequently, the "foreigner issue" became a concern for host societies, necessitating the search for viable solutions. This recognition led to the development of policies and programs aimed at supporting migrants in their new environments, helping them better adapt and contribute to their host countries.

Finally, the study contributes to the limited research on the first wave of Kosovo Albanian migrants to Western European countries and their decisions to become permanent residents, thereby overcoming the challenges of integration and the chain changes that one role can bring to other aspects of life. Thus, changes in one's status, such as from

temporary to permanent migrant or from short-term to long-term employment status, provided better job opportunities for parents, triggering changes in other life domains, such as improved work and integration strategies.

**Funding** This paper is supported by the Regional Research Promotion Programme (RRPP). The RRPP is coordinated and operated by the Interfaculty Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (IICEE) at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). The programme is fully funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

**Data availability** The qualitative data obtained from this research is not accessible to third parties.

#### Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The author declares no competing interests.

#### References

- Adamopoulou, M. (2024). *The Greek Gastarbeiter in the Federal Republic of Germany (1960–1974)*. De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111202303>
- Asis, M. (2005). International Migration and Prospects for Gender Equality. In: International Migration and the Millennium Development Goals, UNFPA, 113–124. Retrieved February 19, 2012, from [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/migration\\_report\\_2005.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/migration_report_2005.pdf)
- Birks, M., Mills, J. (2022). Grounded theory: A practical guide
- Canefe, N. (1998). Citizens versus permanent guests: cultural memory and citizenship laws in a reunified Germany. *Citizenship Studies*, 2(3), 519–544. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621029808420696>
- Caro, E., Berntsen, L., Lillie, N., & Wagner, I. (2015). Posted migration and segregation in the European construction sector. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(10), 1600–1620. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1015406>
- Castles, S. (2006). Guestworkers in Europe: A resurrection? *International Migration Review*, 40(4), 741–766. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2006.00042.x>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. California: Sage publications.
- Daniel, O. (2007). *Gastarbajteri: rethinking Yugoslav economic migrations towards the European north-west through transnationalism and popular culture* (pp. 277–302). Contesting Identities: Imagining Frontiers.
- Diehl, C., & Blohm, M. (2003). Rights or identity? Naturalization processes among "labor migrants" in Germany. *International Migration Review*, 37(1), 133–162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2003.tb00132.x>



- Dinç, C. (2011). From Gastarbeiter to people with migration background: a critical overview of German migration sociology. *Sosyoloji Dergisi*, 3(22), 253–280.
- Erdal, M. B., & Ezzati, R. (2015). ‘Where are you from’ or ‘when did you come’? Temporal dimensions in migrants’ reflections about settlement and return. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(7), 1202–1217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.971041>
- Fleischmann, F., & Dronkers, J. (2010). *The Socioeconomic Integration of Immigrants in the EU* (p. 258). Growing Gaps: Educational Inequality Around the World.
- Georgi, V. B. (2016). Self-efficacy of teachers with migrant background in Germany: Handling linguistic and cultural diversity in school. In: Diversifying the teaching force in transnational contexts, Brill 59–72
- Gizzi, C. M., & Rädiker, S. (2021). The practice of qualitative data. *Analysis Research Examples Using MAXQDA* (pp. 1–184). Berlin: MAXQDA Press.
- Goldon, I., Cameron, G., & Balarajan, M. (2011). *Exceptional People*. Princeton University Press.
- IOM. (n.d.). Coordinated Response Needed to Address Irregular Migration Flows. Retrieved on February 26, 2021 from: <https://kosovo.iom.int/coordinated-response-needed-address-irregular-migration-flows>
- Iosifides, T., & Sporton, D. (2009). Biographical methods in migration research. *Migration Letters*, 6(2), 101.
- Iseni, B. (2013). Albanian-speaking transnational populations in Switzerland: continuities and shifts. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 13(2), 227–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2013.802174>
- Islami, H. (2008). *Studime demografike (100 vjet të zhvillimit demografik të Kosovës)*. Prishtinë: ASHAK.
- Jacques, D. N. (2021). Using MAXQDA in ethnographic research: an example with coding, analyzing, and writing. *The practice of qualitative data analysis: research examples using MAXQDA* (pp. 17–33). Berlin: MAXQDA Press.
- Jutvik, K., & Robinson, D. (2020). Permanent or temporary settlement? A study on the short-term effects of residence status on refugees’ labour market participation. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 8, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00203-3>
- KAS. (2014). *Kosovan migration*. Kosovo Agency for Statistics, Prishtina
- Khoo, S. E., Hugo, G., & McDonald, P. (2008). Which skilled temporary migrants become permanent residents and why? *International Migration Review*, 42(1), 193–226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00118.x>
- King, R., & Christou, A. (2010). Diaspora, migration and transnationalism: Insights from the study of second-generation ‘returnees.’ *Diaspora and transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* (pp. 167–183). Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.
- Kofman, E. (2004). Family-related migration: a critical review of European studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(2), 243–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183042000200687>
- Kosiński, L. A. (1978). Yugoslavia and international migration. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 20(3), 314–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.1978.11091531>
- Mack, N. Woodsong, C. Macqueen, K.M. Guest, G. and Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: a data collector’s field guide*, Family Health International (FHI), USA
- Markov, I. (2013). Migration, remittances and socio-cultural dynamics: the case of Albanians from the Republic of Macedonia. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 13(2), 245–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2013.802176>
- Martin, P. L. (1981). Germany’s Guestworkers. *Challenge*, 24(3), 34–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/05775132.1981.11470699>
- Martin, P. (2009). Recession and migration: a new era for labor migration? *International Migration Review*, 34(3), 671–691. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00781.x>
- Martiniello, M. (2009). The new migratory Europe: Towards a proactive immigration policy? In C. A. Parsons & T. M. Smeeding (Eds.), *Immigration and the Transformation of Europe* (pp. 298–326). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511493577.012>
- Meardi, G., Artilles, A. M., Remo, O. M., van den Berg, A. (2012). Migration and labour market uncertainty in the light of the crisis. Segregation and social sustainability in three European countries and two sectors. In: 16th World Congress of the International Labour and Employment Relations Association, Philadelphia, USA
- Menz, G. (2008) “Useful” Gastarbeiter, burdensome asylum seekers, and second wave of welfare retrenchment: Exploring the nexus between migration and the welfare state, 393–418
- Messina, A. M. (2007). *The logics and politics of post-WWII migration to Western Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, W., Möllers, J., & Buchenrieder, G. (2012). Who remits more? Who remits less? Evidence from Kosovar migrants in Germany and their households of origin. *Oxford Development Studies*, 40(4), 443–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2012.729816>
- MIA. (2019). *Profili i lehtë i migrimit 2018, Kosovë*: Autoriteti Qeveritar për Migrim, Ministria e Punëve të Brendshme. Retrieved February 15, 2021, from: <https://mpb.rksgov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/AL/36/PROFILI%20I%20LEHTE%20I%20MIGRIMIT%202018%20SPL.pdf>
- Van Mol, C., De Valk, H. (2016). Migration and immigrants in Europe: A historical and demographic perspective. In: Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors, 31–55. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4_3)
- Möllers, J., Arapi-Gjini, A., Herzfeld, T., & Xhema, S. (2017). Exit or voice? The recent drivers of Kosovar out-migration. *International Migration*, 55(3), 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12336>
- Oepen, M. (1984). Media, migrants and marginalization: the situation in the federal Republic of Germany. *International Migration Review*, 18(1), 111–121. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2546006>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (4th ed.). California: Sage publications.
- Pichler, R. (2009). Migration, ritual and ethnic conflict. A study of wedding ceremonies of Albanian transmigrants

- from the Republic of Macedonia. *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 13, 211–229.
- Rudolph, H. (1996). The new Gastarbeiter system in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 22(2), 287–300. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1996.9976539>
- Rumbaut, R. G. (2004). Ages, life stages, and generational cohorts: decomposing the immigrant first and second generations in the United States 1. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1160–1205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00232.x>
- Sauer, J., Gorton, M., & Davidova, S. (2019). What drives rural out-migration? Insights from Kosovo. *Post-Communist Economies*, 31(2), 200–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631377.2018.1506623>
- Schmid, C. (1983). Gastarbeiter in West Germany and Switzerland: an assessment of host society-immigrant relations. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 2, 233–252.
- Schmitter, B. E. (1979). Immigration and Citizenship in West Germany and Switzerland. The University of Chicago
- Schwander-Sievers, S. (2005). Albanian migration and diasporas. In: Project on the National Strategy on Migration, financed under the CARDS 2001 Programme of the European Commission, 48
- Shonick, K. (2009). Politics, culture, and economics: reassessing the West German guest worker agreement with Yugoslavia. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44(4), 719–736. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009409340648>
- Sörensen, J. S. (2006). The shadow economy, war and state building: social transformation and re-stratification in an illiberal economy (Serbia and Kosovo). *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 14(3), 317–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782800601095621>
- The European Union's IPA Programme for Balkans Region. (2018). Maximising the development impact of labour migration in the Western Balkan. Retrieved May 12, 2024, from: [http://wb-mignet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final-report\\_Maximising-development-impact-of-labour-migration-in-WB\\_0412018-1.pdf](http://wb-mignet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final-report_Maximising-development-impact-of-labour-migration-in-WB_0412018-1.pdf)
- UNDP. (2014). Kosovo Human Development Report 2014 (Migration as Force for Development), UNDP, Kosovo. Retrieved February 19, 2024, from [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ks/human\\_dev\\_rep\\_english.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ks/human_dev_rep_english.pdf)
- Von Koppenfels, A. K., & Höhne, J. (2017). Gastarbeiter migration revisited: Consolidating Germany's position as an immigration country. *South-North Migration of EU Citizens in times of Crisis*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39763-4\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39763-4_9)
- Yamamoto, K. (1980). Spatial segregation of the "Gastarbeiter population" in Munich. *Japanese Journal of Human Geography*, 32(3), 214–237. <https://doi.org/10.4200/jjhgl948.32.214>
- Yarashevich, V., & Karneyeva, Y. (2013). Economic reasons for the break-up of Yugoslavia. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 46(2), 263–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2013.03.002>

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor (e.g. a society or other partner) holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.

## Terms and Conditions

Springer Nature journal content, brought to you courtesy of Springer Nature Customer Service Center GmbH (“Springer Nature”). Springer Nature supports a reasonable amount of sharing of research papers by authors, subscribers and authorised users (“Users”), for small-scale personal, non-commercial use provided that all copyright, trade and service marks and other proprietary notices are maintained. By accessing, sharing, receiving or otherwise using the Springer Nature journal content you agree to these terms of use (“Terms”). For these purposes, Springer Nature considers academic use (by researchers and students) to be non-commercial.

These Terms are supplementary and will apply in addition to any applicable website terms and conditions, a relevant site licence or a personal subscription. These Terms will prevail over any conflict or ambiguity with regards to the relevant terms, a site licence or a personal subscription (to the extent of the conflict or ambiguity only). For Creative Commons-licensed articles, the terms of the Creative Commons license used will apply.

We collect and use personal data to provide access to the Springer Nature journal content. We may also use these personal data internally within ResearchGate and Springer Nature and as agreed share it, in an anonymised way, for purposes of tracking, analysis and reporting. We will not otherwise disclose your personal data outside the ResearchGate or the Springer Nature group of companies unless we have your permission as detailed in the Privacy Policy.

While Users may use the Springer Nature journal content for small scale, personal non-commercial use, it is important to note that Users may not:

1. use such content for the purpose of providing other users with access on a regular or large scale basis or as a means to circumvent access control;
2. use such content where to do so would be considered a criminal or statutory offence in any jurisdiction, or gives rise to civil liability, or is otherwise unlawful;
3. falsely or misleadingly imply or suggest endorsement, approval, sponsorship, or association unless explicitly agreed to by Springer Nature in writing;
4. use bots or other automated methods to access the content or redirect messages
5. override any security feature or exclusionary protocol; or
6. share the content in order to create substitute for Springer Nature products or services or a systematic database of Springer Nature journal content.

In line with the restriction against commercial use, Springer Nature does not permit the creation of a product or service that creates revenue, royalties, rent or income from our content or its inclusion as part of a paid for service or for other commercial gain. Springer Nature journal content cannot be used for inter-library loans and librarians may not upload Springer Nature journal content on a large scale into their, or any other, institutional repository.

These terms of use are reviewed regularly and may be amended at any time. Springer Nature is not obligated to publish any information or content on this website and may remove it or features or functionality at our sole discretion, at any time with or without notice. Springer Nature may revoke this licence to you at any time and remove access to any copies of the Springer Nature journal content which have been saved.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, Springer Nature makes no warranties, representations or guarantees to Users, either express or implied with respect to the Springer nature journal content and all parties disclaim and waive any implied warranties or warranties imposed by law, including merchantability or fitness for any particular purpose.

Please note that these rights do not automatically extend to content, data or other material published by Springer Nature that may be licensed from third parties.

If you would like to use or distribute our Springer Nature journal content to a wider audience or on a regular basis or in any other manner not expressly permitted by these Terms, please contact Springer Nature at

[onlineservice@springernature.com](mailto:onlineservice@springernature.com)