

PRO 2 Municipal Development in South West Serbia

Briefing Paper for Migration in South West Serbia

1 Introduction

This report has been written by the PRO project in preparation for the SDC-organised workshop in Kopaonik on 16-17 June 2008 on the subject of migration in south west Serbia. Its purpose is to provide a briefing to workshop participants covering the latest information available, and an analysis of some of the issues. It also provides some tentative ideas or recommendations for consideration at the workshop.

PRO is the Project for the Development of Municipalities in South West Serbia, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC and the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR).

The June workshop is expected to be part of a process leading to an SDC programme dealing with some of the issues highlighted in this briefing.

The territory of the former Yugoslavia (mainly the former Yugoslav republics of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia) has seen some of the largest population movements in Europe since the Second World War. People moved in great numbers as a result initially of the Croatian and Bosnian wars of 1991-1995, and then subsequently as a result of the conflict in Kosovo in 1998-1999.

The Sandžak area of south west Serbia borders both Bosnia and Kosovo, and has a large minority Muslim population, known as Bošniaks. Its proximity to both these conflicts, and the presence within Serbia of a large and potentially disruptive minority, led to violence and intimidation by security forces in this area during the wars of the 1990s¹. Forced or intimidated into leaving, many (perhaps up to 80,000) fled to Bosnia, Turkey, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. After the end of hostilities in 1999, many returned to their homes. Others, however, did not, and remained as guest workers, refugees, asylum seekers or illegal migrants in the countries of Western Europe.

Now, in 2008, people are continuing to return from Western Europe to south west Serbia because they are reaching the end of the legal processes for asylum, because their temporary visas are running out, because they have been deported as illegal immigrants, or simply because they want to return home.

Returnees, particularly those who did not voluntarily return, face many problems of reintegration into their former homeland. Children, who may have spent up to 12 or 14 years away and do not remember or have never seen their parents' place of origin, are often most profoundly affected.

2 South West Serbia

This briefing covers all eight of the municipalities in which the PRO project is working: Ivanjica, Nova Varoš, Novi Pazar, Priboj, Prijepolje, Raška, Sjenica, and Tutin.

These municipalities are remote from the centre of the life of Serbia, and include some of the poorest in the country. National income is well below the average for Serbia, and unemployment is significantly higher. The ethnically mixed population reflects its location tight against borders with Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo. Some 300,000 people live in these eight municipalities, nearly half of whom identify themselves as Bošniak or Muslim, according to the 2002 census. The chart below shows ethnic distribution across

¹ For a thorough description of the history of the region and its experiences in the 1990s see International Crisis Group, 2005

the region. The same census recorded only 374 Roma people, which is almost certainly a serious under-estimate.

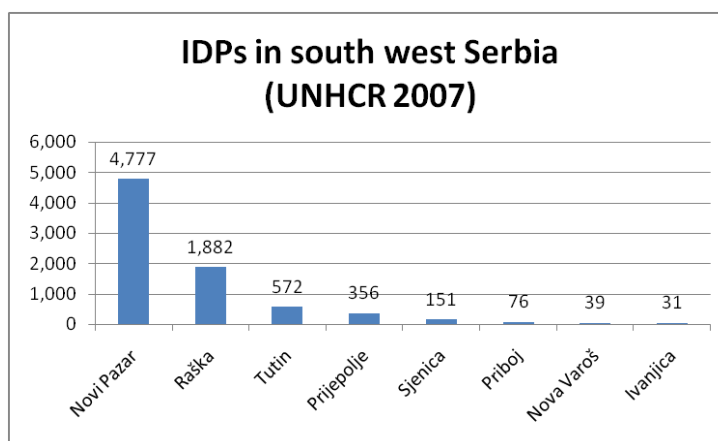
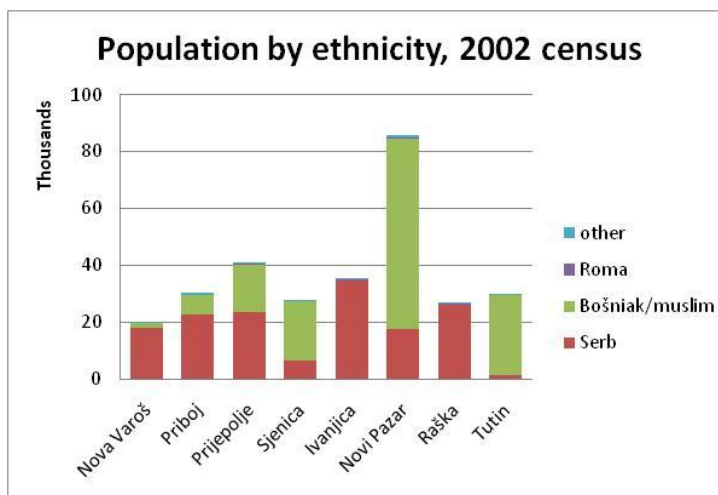
3 Migration patterns

After the second world war, the region has experienced four main waves of migration. In 1969 Germany and Yugoslavia signed an agreement on 'Guest Workers' which saw, at its peak, some 471,000 citizens of Yugoslavia living and working in Germany. This number has fluctuated in the years since, and stood at 304,000 workers in 2001². Switzerland and Austria also operated guest worker schemes which attracted workers from Yugoslavia.

The wars of the 1990s gave rise to the second big migration flow. Refugees from Bosnia and Croatia left to seek safety primarily in neighbouring countries, but many went to join relatives who were already living further afield, as a result of the guest worker programmes.

The Sandžak was the only part of Serbia (apart from Kosovo) to experience some of the violence and intimidation seen in BiH and Croatia. In 1992/93 military activity in the Sandžak region, intimidation, kidnapping and murder forced some 50,000 people to flee. Many went to western Europe, others to Bosnia and Turkey. The Sandžak did not receive many of the 500,000 refugees from Croatia and BiH that had arrived elsewhere in Serbia.

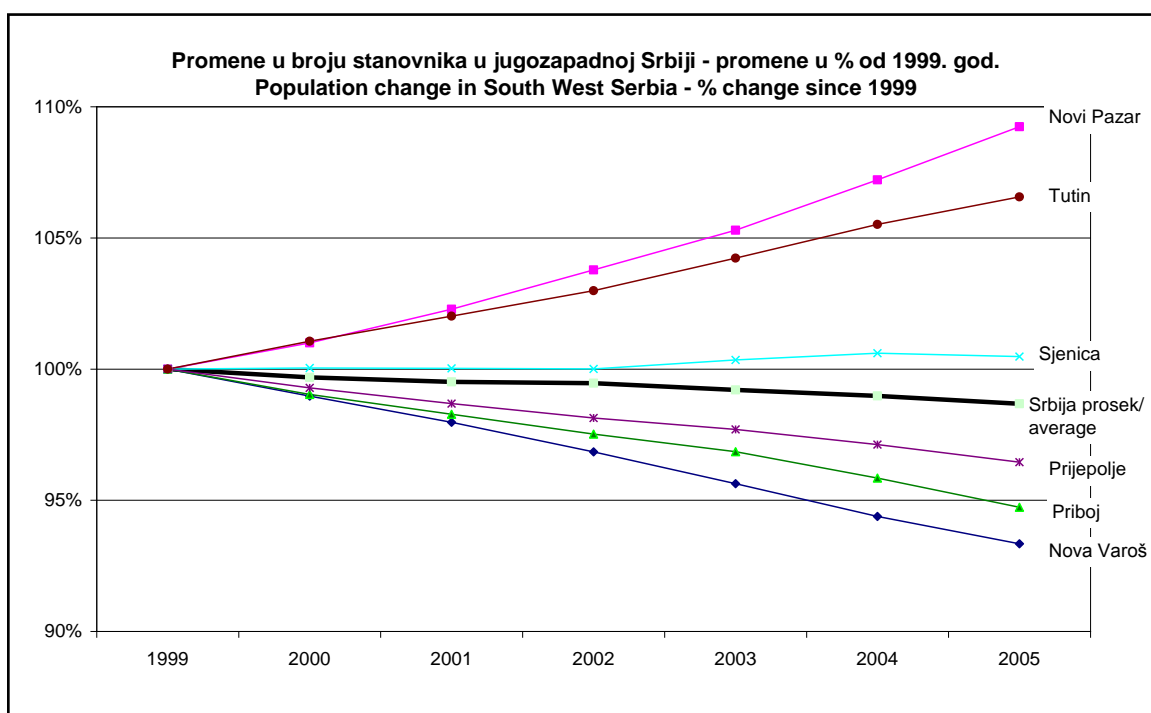
The Kosovo conflict of 1999 saw two waves of population movement. The first was an exodus from Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica as a result of perceived intimidation. Again, an estimated 50,000 people left for Bosnia, Turkey and other countries, but many returned soon after the end of hostilities. At almost the same time, many non-Albanians from Kosovo were forced to leave their homes after the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from the province. Ethnic Serbs tended to seek safety in the bigger central Serbian cities of Kraljevo, Kragujevac and Belgrade. Ethnic Bošniaks and other Muslim minorities sought refuge in the Sandžak. The chart right shows estimated numbers of internally displaced persons from the Kosovo conflict currently living in south west Serbia.



² (World Bank Working Paper No. 80, 2006)

Finally, south west Serbia—as are other parts of rural Serbia—is experiencing a dramatic outflow of people as a result of economic migration to the bigger cities. The municipalities of Nova Varoš, Priboj and Prijepolje are shrinking, and the average age of population is increasing as young people leave to study and find work elsewhere. Unemployment and relative poverty are key drivers of this population outflow.

Novi Pazar and Tutin on the other hand are rapidly growing municipalities, mainly due to a



significantly higher birth rate³ and the inflow of IDPs from Kosovo.

4 Outside Serbia

4.1 Where are they, and what are they doing?

Of the people who left Yugoslavia and Serbia, the majority are living in other countries as workers and economic migrants, rather than as asylum seekers or refugees.

| Country | Total Yugoslav citizens resident ⁴ | | Serbian refugees and asylum seekers (2006) ⁵ |
|---------------|---|-------------|---|
| | Year of data | individuals | Individuals |
| Germany | 2002 | 591,492 | 75,211 |
| Switzerland | Estimate 2007 | 200,000 | 9,827 |
| United States | 2006 | 154,000 | 19,116 |
| Austria | 2001 | 132,975 | 5,485 |
| Italy | 2003 | 40,237 | <5,000 |
| Sweden | 2001 | 20,741 | 12,000 |
| Norway | 2002 | 6,497 | <5,000 |
| Netherlands | 2003 | 6,425 | <5,000 |

³ Novi Pazar 19.5 births per 1000 population, and Tutin, 21 births per 1000 population; Serbia average: 9.6 births per 1000 (Government of Serbia Statistical Office, 2008)

⁴ Source: (Migration Policy Institute downloaded 5 June 2008, 2008)

⁵ Source: (UNHCR, 2007)

Of these, it is not known how many are from south west Serbia, because data before 2005 mostly refer to Serbia and Montenegro, and before that, to Yugoslavia. Data on municipality of origin and ethnicity is not available.

It is assumed that the majority of refugees and asylum seekers are from Kosovo: the numbers of asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia increased dramatically in 1999 in many western European countries (chart for UK, right, is an example). Some would have been from the Sandžak area, but without more detailed statistics, it is hard to know exactly how many.

4.2 Remittances

One way of estimating the origin and numbers of Serbian citizens living abroad is to look at the scale and destination of remittances. Serbia attracts the largest amount of remittances in Europe per person, and the total value of remittances is nearly 2.5 billion US dollars, or 17.3% of the country's GDP⁶.

Using data on remittances, Novi Pazar is one of the most frequent recipients of remittances from Germany in Serbia (sixth largest number of transfers, behind Kruševac (pop 129,000), but ahead of Niš (pop. 254,000) and Pančevo (pop. 126,000)). This very approximate calculation could suggest that the municipality, considering its size (pop. 92,000), might have more significant remittance inflows, and possibly a larger migrant population relative to its size.

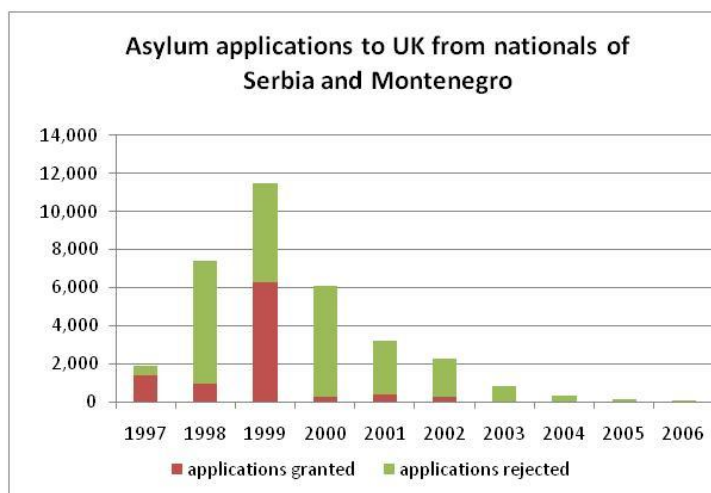
As well as its macro-economic impact, remittances have a profound effect on the living standards in Serbia. The 2008 Living Standards Measurement Survey suggested that households in Serbia that have migrant family members tend to be better off than those that do not (Government of Serbia Statistical Office, 2008).

4.3 Are they likely to return?

A major policy question facing both the government of Serbia and the governments of western European host countries is the extent to which people are free to move around the continent.

Mass waves of migration from the new EU members have created a public opinion backlash against the 'Polish plumber' in the UK and violent responses to Roma in Italy. Is it likely that the hundreds of thousands of Yugoslav expatriates will return?

As an indication of their status, the following chart shows the situation for citizens of Serbia living in Germany.

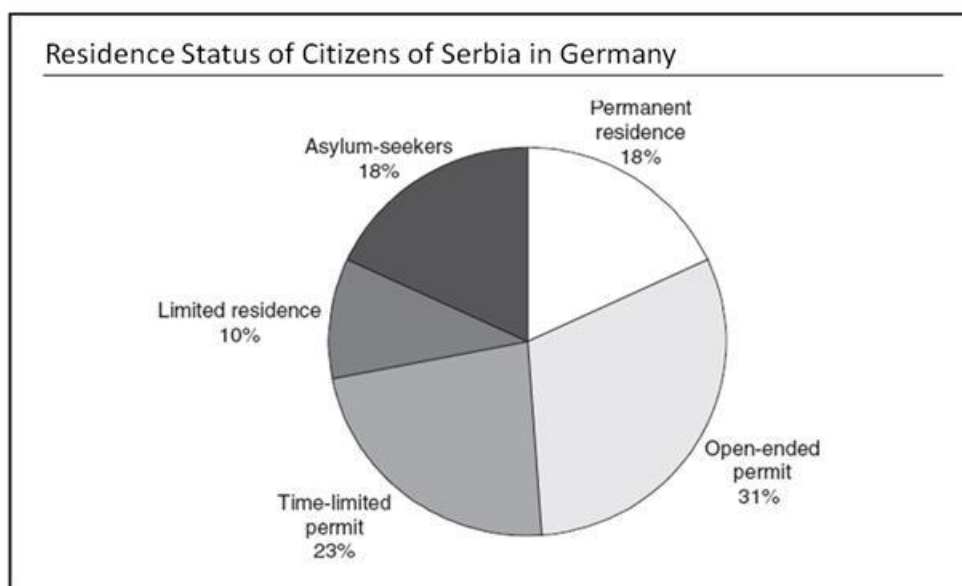


Payment of Money Transfers into Serbia by Western Union in 2004*

| Cities | Percentage | Population |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Beograd | 15.31 | 1,602,861 |
| Novi Sad | 4.75 | 314,192 |
| Kragujevac | 3.45 | 174,920 |
| Zrenjanin | 3.22 | 128,527 |
| Kruševac | 3.21 | 129,370 |
| Novi Pazar | 2.89 | 92,471 |
| Nis | 2.22 | 254,164 |
| Pančevo | 2.01 | 126,388 |
| Pozarevac | 1.92 | 75,118 |
| Smederevo | 1.92 | 109,379 |
| Sabac | 1.50 | 120,626 |
| Other cities | 57.60 | |

*based on the number of transactions originated in Germany. Source Western Union (2005). Population figures (Government of Serbia Statistical Office, 2008)

⁶ See (Sanfey, 2007) and (World Bank Working Paper No. 80, 2006)



Source: Bundesamat für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2004).

Assuming that there are approximately 400,000 Serbian citizens in Germany, we can estimate that 49% with permanent residence and open-ended permits will probably not return. This leaves the potential number of returns at around 200,000, but coming in a slow trickle rather than a big wave as asylum processes end, and visas expire. Once again, we don't know their origins – whether Serbia proper or Kosovo, still less whether they come from south west Serbia.

5 Return to south west Serbia

5.1 Numbers of returnees

Data on return is just as hard to find as data on migration. Central government (Agency for Minority and Human Rights, and Ministry for Internal Affairs) keep data on forced and mandatory, but not voluntary, returns. Around 15,560 people were forcibly returned to Serbia between March 2004 to October 2007⁷, and current levels of arrivals are estimated at around 40-50 per week. It is estimated that 60-75% of these returns are Roma.

Once returns arrive in Belgrade, they are free to travel to any part of the country they wish, and subsequently register in a municipality only as a citizen of Serbia – there is no category of 'returnee'. Hence data on distribution of returnees is hard to find.

As an attempt to identify the numbers of returnees in south west Serbia, the PRO project quickly surveyed all schools in the area (May/June 2008) to identify the numbers of children who were likely to be returnees. The table below shows the results of this survey.

⁷ (UNDP and Agency for Human and Minority Rights, 2008)

| Municipality | Number of returnee children | | | | % of total number of students |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------------------------------|
| | Bošniak | Roma | Other | Total | |
| Novi Pazar | 139 | 20 | 1 | 160 | 1.02% |
| Priboj | 9 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0.26% |
| Prijepolje | 97 | 2 | 7 | 106 | 2.76% |
| Sjenica | 57 | 5 | 1 | 63 | 1.53% |
| Tutin | 65 | 0 | 0 | 65 | 1.38% |
| Totals | 367 | 27 | 9 | 403 | |

The Centre for Social Work in Novi Pazar estimates that returnees constitute around 400 new cases every year⁸.

Based on these figures, and assuming that current trends continue, we can guess, therefore, that the annual caseload of returnees who will need some form of assistance will be in the order of 1,000 per year in Novi Pazar, plus a similar number for the rest of the region together.

In terms of trends, we can only guess what will happen. Asylum applications are likely to be finalised in the next 3-4 years, so forced and mandatory return of asylum applicants will diminish. An increasingly hostile public opinion in the EU may make work visas harder to obtain and harder to extend, forcing many to return.

5.2 Needs of Returnees

Very broadly, needs of returnees can be categorised into those of the immediate arrival period, the period of establishing a new life, and the period of longer term building a livelihood.

Immediate Needs

These will generally depend on whether returnees are forced or voluntary. Forced returns will have the greatest needs, especially if they didn't have time to collect their original documents or belongings before deportation⁹. Other factors will include: whether returnees have money and savings; whether they have family still in the place of origin; and whether they drive back with some possessions, or have to fly back.

On the whole, needs immediately on return will include:

- Accommodation/shelter for first few nights
- Transport to place of origin
- Food and basic human needs

Short Term Needs

Then, between 1 – 6 weeks after arrival, the priorities for returnees are likely to include:

- Obtaining necessary identity documents (lična karta, radna knjižica, etc)
- Enrolling children in school
- Finding transitional or permanent accommodation
- Accessing social security and unemployment benefits
- Registering for/accessing health care

⁸ Interview – centre for social work 28 May 2008 – estimate 5% of caseload increase every year is due to returnees, total caseload is around 8,500

⁹ See (Grupa 484, 2005) for documented testimony of forced and voluntary returnees

Longer Term Needs

Finally, longer term needs will include:

- Employment and maintaining livelihoods
- Permanent place of residence
- Psychological assistance in cases of trauma and problems of reintegration/integration
- Supplementary education for children to learn the language and Cyrillic script, and for older children to catch up with unfamiliar curricula (e.g. in History, Geography, Serbian Literature).
- Access to pensions, and documentation to prove pension entitlements.

Returnees, particularly those who did not voluntarily return, face many problems of reintegration into their former homeland. Children, who may have spent up to 12 or 14 years away and do not remember or have never seen their parents' place of origin, are often most profoundly affected.

5.3 Roma Returnees

Many of the Roma in south west Serbia, like those elsewhere in Serbia, are 'serially displaced'; originally from Kosovo, many have sought asylum and then been returned to Serbia, though are unable to return to Kosovo. Estimates of the numbers of Roma people in the area vary widely. It is suggested that there are around 160 Roma returnee families in Novi Pazar¹⁰, or around 1,000 individuals, and another 70 individuals in Tutin, and a further group in Prijepolje.

Roma returnees face particular difficulties integrating into society. They face high levels of discrimination, poor education levels, and low levels of access to public services. Language difficulties exacerbate discrimination.

5.4 Responses to date

Returnees are entitled to state support in the same way as for other citizens, with a few exceptions. Forced returnees are entitled to a one-off payment of up to €500, although the amount is discretionary, and financed by the municipality. Other forms of financial support are the same as for other citizens.

Health care can only be accessed after 3 months of paying health insurance (at around 1,000 din per month), which effectively excludes all returnees on arrival, and many of the very poor.

Returnee children are entitled to education, but they often lose 1-2 years of schooling. They may not have a proficient grasp of the Serbian language, and documentation from their previous schools can be hard to obtain in the Serbian language. Any additional education requirements are only offered on an ad hoc basis, provided by schools or NGOs, and are not an entitlement.

While entitlements exist, accessing entitlements can be very difficult. Many entitlements depend on having an identity document, and the identity document in turn depends on having an address. This can be a particular problem for Roma returnees.

5.5 Organisations working with Returnees

Reintegracia

Reintegracia is the leading NGO specialising in returnees in south west Serbia, financed mainly by a small German NGO. It has provided legal and information advice to returnees to assist them in accessing their entitlements to state services and benefits. It also provides supplementary education to children in schools to assist with improving the Serbian

¹⁰ Information from Reintegracia, interview, May 2008

language, and maintaining their language skills from their country of exile (typically German).

Luxembourg Red Cross

From 2002 to 2006 the Luxembourg Red Cross had a programme of assistance for returnees from Luxembourg, financed by the Luxembourg government. The assistance focused on provision of micro-credit loans to assist people in setting up their own businesses. In the end, 188 loans were issued, of which four were for returnees from Luxembourg. The remainder were given to the local population, because of the low level of take-up from returnees.

Centres for Social Work

Centres for Social Work take on returnees as part of their normal caseload, and they are treated in the same way as other citizens, based on needs and entitlements. There are no special services or provisions specifically for returnees.

Schools

Schools naturally identify returnee children because of their weaker Serbian language skills, and sometimes because of their withdrawal from their peers. Schools provide additional support only as far as their resources (teachers, classroom space, time, and money) allow.

5.6 Responsibilities and Interests

The Government of Serbia has signed some 15 Readmission Agreements with countries of the EU, Switzerland and Norway, as well as with the European Union itself. These treaties establish the responsibilities of the signatories in terms of the process and treatment of migrants being returned to their country of origin, or a third country.

The Government of Serbia has primary responsibility for returnees. In the most part, as long as they have the appropriate documentation, they are entitled to the same state provisions as other citizens of Serbia, such as education, health care, social welfare benefits, and unemployment benefits.

Within the Government of Serbia, the Agency for Human and Minority Rights has a unit for reintegration, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has established a Council for Readmission on the initiative of the UNHCR. At local government level, the entitlements of returnees are served by the same bodies as for other citizens. The table below sets out the various provisions and responsibilities.

| Service | Provided by | Supervised by | Funded by |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Social welfare benefit payments | Centre for Social Work | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |
| Social welfare support services | Centre for Social Work | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | Municipality (plus other ad hoc – e.g. SIF) |
| Education | Schools | Ministry of Education | Ministry of Education and Municipalities |
| Unemployment Benefits | National Employment Service – local offices | National Employment Service | Ministry of Employment and Regional Development |
| Unemployment support services | National Employment Service – local offices | National Employment Service | Ministry of Employment and Regional Development |
| Child benefits | Municipalities | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |
| Health care | Primary Health Care | Ministry of Health | Ministry of Health and |

| Service | Provided by | Supervised by | Funded by |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| | centres, Hospitals | | Municipalities |
| Supplementary support for returnees | IOM, NGOs | - | Ad hoc |

6 Conclusions

Migration has a profound effect on the economic and social situation in south west Serbia. Migration as a result of war will diminish in scale and importance in the coming few years, but economic migration will continue. Guest worker programmes laid the foundations for large scale population movement between Serbia and Switzerland, Austria and Germany. The high levels of remittances generated by Serbian workers in western Europe contribute significantly to the Serbian economy and reduction of poverty.

Returnees – forced and voluntary – face many practical and psychological difficulties when they return. Children are especially affected. Returning citizens are not recognised as such, and are not entitled to any specific or additional support from the state.

The experience of returnees could be improved if:

- They have support to assist in accessing entitlements to financial support, and public services
- There is assistance in finding appropriate housing
- Children are given additional support to learn the Serbian language
- Children have some form of psychological support to assist in coping with the transition
- Returnees have access to economic opportunities – through training,
- There is a significant reduction in the discrimination faced by Roma people

Possible actions

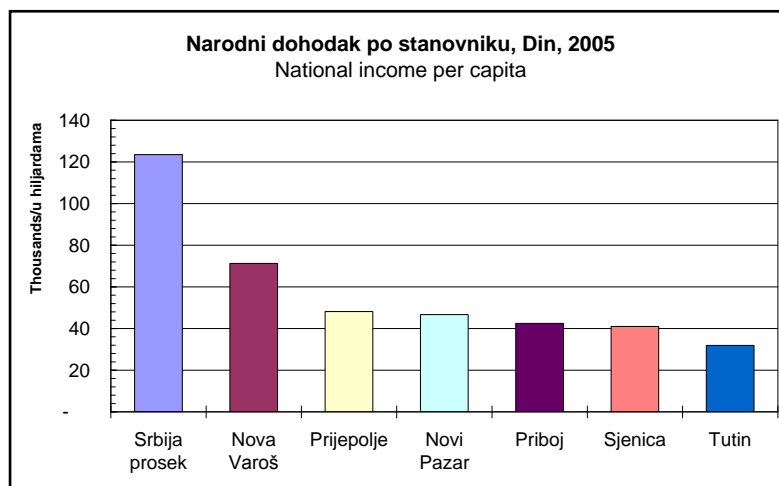
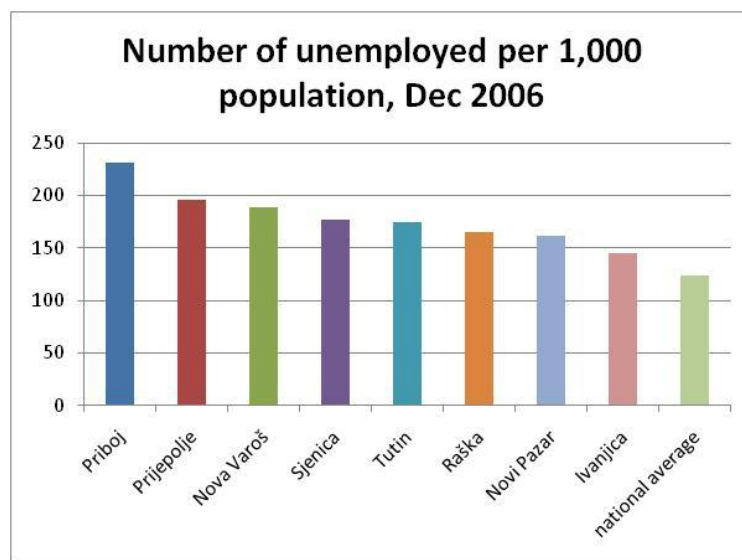
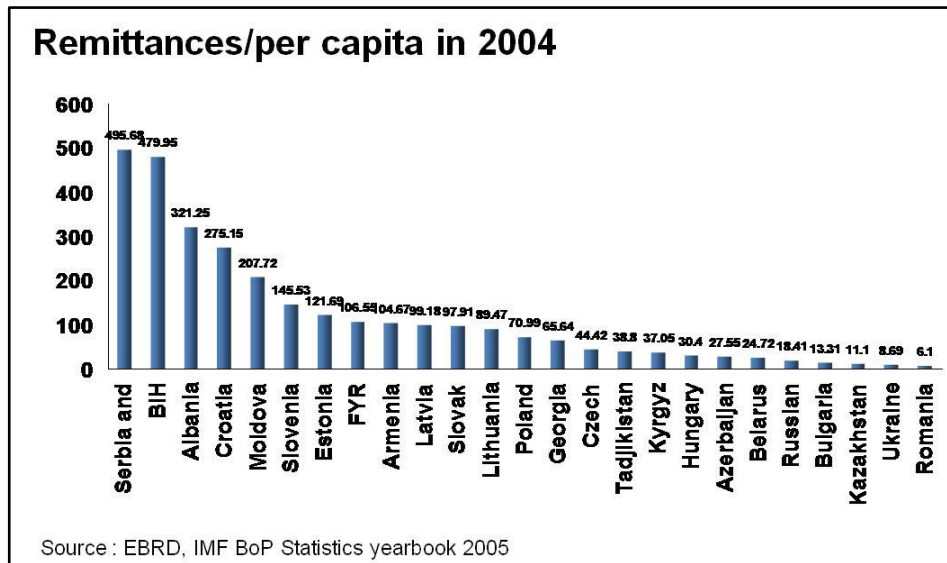
The following are some ideas for how integration of returnees can be more effective:

- Establishing citizens' advice centres to provide assistance to all citizens in how to access entitlements, including legal assistance.
- Additional support to schools to provide language teaching and psychological support for children: returnees and IDPs who may not speak the Serbian language well;
- Support to schools for increasing capacity/space to be able to provide additional lessons
- Monitoring returnees' access to entitlements, use data to advocate for improvements to public services
- Vocational training, including adaptation of skills learned abroad to local market conditions
- Subsidised job placements, for learning skills and developing contacts
- Monitor and enforce anti-discrimination legislation at local level in access to public services and employment.
- Support to establishing businesses, e.g. by providing complementary funding for returnee savings and providing free technical advice

For more investigation

Explore issues about the return and repatriation of savings and pension entitlements. Are there any tax or other disincentives for potential returnees which may reduce willingness to return and their ability to invest in their future on arrival?

7 Additional Data



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9 Background Articles

The Sandzak region

To the baths

Jun 5th 2008 | NOVI PAZAR

From The Economist print edition

At least one possible Balkan flashpoint is no longer a huge concern

PEER through the steam of the Turkish bath in Novi Pazar and you can make out groups of sweaty men whispering about the latest news. It has been like this almost ever since the baths were built in 1594, when Novi Pazar was a bustling market town on the road from Constantinople to Sarajevo and Dubrovnik. Over the years the nature of local politicking seems to have changed little.

Today Novi Pazar is the main town of the Serbian Sandzak region, and most of its citizens are Muslim Bosniaks. The historic Sandzak straddles the border of Serbia and Montenegro. Much of it is strikingly beautiful and unspoilt. When Yugoslavia broke up, Sandzak, like Kosovo, seemed to many to be a potential flashpoint. Many Muslims rallied to a Bosniak nationalist party that dreamed of a Greater Bosnia. Yet except for the flags and symbols left from that era, such dreams have been long forgotten.

The population of the Serbian Sandzak is some 236,000, of whom just over half are Bosniaks. One of Serbia's poorest regions, it is hemmed in by Kosovo, Bosnia and Montenegro (see map). Serbian politicians court Sandzak's Bosniak leaders but Serbs do not really trust them. Yet there is little Muslim solidarity with Kosovo's Albanians, and even Bosnians tend to look askance at their Sandzak cousins, whom they see as aggressive peasants. In the past decade links with Bosniaks in the Montenegrin Sandzak have also weakened, as they are now comfortable in Montenegro. "We feel like orphans," laments Selma, an English teacher.

In the 1990s relations between Sandzak's Serbs and Bosniaks were tense and lots of people emigrated. Paradoxically, many Sandzak Bosniaks did well during the wars. They made money from sanctions-busting, and Novi Pazar was home to factories churning out fake designer-label jeans. Much of that has gone. Many local businessmen, eager to break into European Union markets, are horrified by the prospect of Serbia retreating into isolation if its government is led by nationalists.

Politics in Sandzak is dominated by two parties that emerged from the wartime nationalist movement. Whichever is in power has the key to patronage in jobs and money. And any party that joins the new Serbian government will also gain influence over the police and judiciary in Sandzak. Serbia's Muslims are split, as well: one lot says their spiritual centre should be Sarajevo, the other that it should be Belgrade. On May 26th shots were fired at one of the two group's headquarters.

In Sandzak the influence over the media by local politicians is "alarming", says Dragana Nikolic-Solomon of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. An honourable exception is Radio 100 Plus, headed by Ishak Slezovic. "People have had it up to here with these idiots," he says of local leaders bargaining with politicians in Belgrade who want the backing of Bosniak parties. Mr Slezovic says corruption is rampant and that politics and organised crime overlap. Does he investigate it? He laughs. Do that and "you would lose your head in five minutes."

