

Macedonian Emigration: History, Trends and Current Profile

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Abstract

Although Macedonia has a rather long history of emigration, relatively little is known about the number of emigrants, their experiences abroad, and the impact of their absence on the families and communities they leave behind. It is also unclear how return migration affects development in Macedonia. The aim of this article is to fill some of these gaps in the evidence base. The findings include a review of the most relevant existing literature on this subject, but are drawn primarily from new primary research carried out in 2008 and 2009, including interviews with key stakeholders and data derived from a new and nationally representative household survey.

Keywords:

Emigration; Republic of Macedonia;

1. Introduction

This paper has emerged as part of an international research project entitled: “Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimising the Economic and Social Impacts of Migration”. It was a joint project of the Global Development Network (GDN), an international organisation headquartered in Delhi, India and the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) from London, UK. The project encompassed an analysis and policy recommendations concerning migratory trends of six countries in the world. For further details please visit: www.gdnet.com.

For the case of the Republic of Macedonia, the project was implemented by EDUCON Research, a think tank from the Republic Macedonia. The author of this article acted as a Lead researcher in preparation of the Macedonian country report. The idea of publishing the Report’s findings in the Iustinianus Primus Law Review is for the purpose of making the findings available to a broader audience.

The methodology for the Macedonian case study was devised in accordance with the guidelines of the overall DotM project (using the

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same definitions of migration as used in the rest of the project). However, it did also take into account the specific characteristics of migration in Macedonia. The outcomes of the research are drawn from a range of methodological tools, including examination of existing literature and data, stakeholder interviews, as well as a large, nationally representative, in-depth household survey (in the text furtheron the results of this survey are referred to as “GDN Survey”).

This paper is organized in the following way: apart from the introduction, the first part contains a brief history of Macedonian emigration, while the second part presents the present emigration profile of Macedonia (its size, destination countries and length of stay of Macedonian emigration, demographic, ethnic and other characteristics of Macedonian emigrants, the educational characteristics of Macedonian emigrants, the employment status of Macedonian emigrants and the reasons for emigration of Macedonian emigrants). The paper ends with the relevant conclusions.

2. History of Macedonian emigration

The beginning of Macedonian emigration era is traced to the second half of the 19th century², when poor living conditions often strained young unskilled men at working age to go abroad to earn additional income³. That type of “traditional” labour migration was locally known as “pechalbarstvo” – “pechalbari” were almost exclusively male, while female members of families remained at home to take care of children and households⁴.

At the turn of the 20th century, emigration flows from Macedonia have been additionally boosted by coupling of harsh socio-economic circumstances with political turmoils. In the midst of the politically conflicting situation on the Balkan in 1903 the “Ilinden uprising” occurred, whereas its suppression by the Ottoman authorities has led to a number of civilian casualties and rising emigration. Huge wave of

² Although there are traces of evidence about significant emigration flows from Macedonia prior to that [for instance, that the first emigration occurred at the end of the 17th century after the futile “Karpos uprising”, when many people (an accurate number does not exist) fled to Serbia (the part of Vojvodina). Source: N. Gaber and A. Jovevska, “*Macedonian Census Results – Controversy or Reality?*”, South-East Europe Review, I/2004, pp. 99], but most often the period of the second half of the 19th century is considered as a starting point.

³ Poor living conditions have existed in Macedonia for centuries, however, the late period of the Ottoman Empire was characterized by increased tax burdens, rising violence and decreased agricultural output of households (itself a result of the traditional custom/norm of dividing land parcels to male successors over successive generations of families), which has made the imperative of labour migration still greater.

⁴ In direct translation into English “pechalbar” means “money-earner”; the context is of a person who is departed abroad with the sole purpose to earn money and to remit for supporting his family back at home, as well as save some money for living after his eventual return. The notion of “pechalbarstvo” from that time became very deeply intertwined in the traditions, mentality and cultural specificity of the local population, a kind of a specific “life style”; to an extent it is considered as such even today.

emigrations from Macedonia occurred – some estimations point that 30,000 people fled abroad, mostly to Sofia (Bulgaria), although some people went as far as the USA, Canada and Australia.^{5;6}

Afterwards, the Balkan Wars and the separation of Macedonia between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria with the Bucharest Treaty of 1913 also resulted with forced emigrations of thousands of people. The Bulgarian government at that time estimated that 111,560 refugees fled to Bulgaria, about 50,000 of which coming from Macedonia⁷. Another source states that the number of Macedonian, Turks, Bulgarian and Greek migrants was 1,150,000 people⁸.

Next, after World War I the authorities of the (than existing) Balkan states initiated policies of so-called “voluntary exchange of people”, which has brought to a huge new wave of migrations⁹. In the period between World War I and II the Macedonian population perpetuated the “pechalbarstvo-experience”, while much of the Turkish population, voluntarily or through forced exiles, migrated to Turkey. There was also migration going in the opposite direction, i.e. settlement of Serbs in the province of Vardar Banovina¹⁰.

The end of World War II and the establishment of the (then Socialist) Republic of Macedonia as one of the six federal members (republics) of the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia with a socialist (communist) type of political and socio-economic regime, brought to a temporary change of the socio-economic reasons for migration. This is not to say that the living conditions of the population had suddenly radically improved, but as the policy stance shifted towards redistribution of wealth for social equity and the problem of unemployment ceased to

⁵ N. Gaber and A. Jovevska, “*Macedonian Census Results - Controversy or Reality?*”, South-East Europe Review, I/2004, pp. 100.

⁶ To most ethnic Macedonians who headed to North America in the late 19th and early 20th century the United States and Canada were apparently indistinguishable. They went where work was available or to the places where they already had family members or networks. In Canada, early 20th century immigration from broader Macedonia is characterized as mainly political, as it followed the unsuccessful 1903 Ilinden uprising against the Ottoman Empire. Many Macedonian migrants found industrial work in Toronto (particularly in the metal industries), from which they progressed to ownership of restaurants, grocery stores, and butcher shops. Source: J. van Selms, “*Macedonia: At a Quiet Crossroads*”, June 2007.

⁷ International Commission on the Balkans, *Unfinished Peace: Report of the International Commission on the Balkans*, Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996, p.151-154 (cited from: CPRM (2007): *Strengthening Cross-Border Cooperation in the Western Balkan Regarding Migration Management – Macedonia*, Occasional Paper No. 12, pp. 2).

⁸ Max Score: “*Les Migrations des Peuples*”, Flammarion: Orleans, 1955, pp. 36 (cited from: N. Gaber and A. Jovevska, “*Macedonian Census Results - Controversy or Reality?*”, South-East Europe Review, I/2004, pp. 100).

⁹ In 1919 Greece and Bulgaria signed a convention for ‘exchange of people’ and around 60,000 (Slavic) Macedonians “voluntarily” left Greece and settled in Bulgaria. Following the 1923 exchange of population between Greece and Turkey 354,647 Muslims left Greece and 339,094 Greeks from Anatolia arrived in Aegean Macedonia. Source: CPRM (2007): *Strengthening Cross-Border Cooperation in the Western Balkan Regarding Migration Management – Macedonia*, Occasional Paper No. 12, pp. 3).

¹⁰ This was the name for the Macedonian territory concurred by Serbia after 1913 until WWII.

exist¹¹, the drive for emigration due to socio-economic reasons had retracted. Such situation existed during the first two decades after the war. However, migratory trends had not halted completely – many of the Macedonians expelled from Greece during the 1947-1949 Civil War in Greece found refuge in the Republic of Macedonia, and in the late 1940s and early 1950s they (not voluntarily) migrated to Vojvodina (lowland part of northern Serbia); half to one decade later most of those people have returned to Macedonia, as did a number of Macedonians expelled during the Civil War from Greece who were deported to other (than) socialist countries; apart from that, between 1948 and 1959 once again a great number of Turks from Macedonia and some Albanians migrated to Turkey.

Two decades after the establishment of Socialist Republic of Macedonia, the socio-economic conditions pertaining to emigration have again changed. The economic system was reformed towards a peculiar (Yugoslav) “quasi-market” type of economic system, which was a unique blend of a socialist and a market type of economy. Among other things, those reforms eventually brought to less employment than needed for absorption of the entire supply of labour force. Hence, as of the mid 1960s, rising unemployment started again to be a distinctive characteristic of Macedonian economy, and this started to boost emigration flows.^{12;13} In that period Australia, USA and Canada were famous emigration destination for Macedonians, but that trend was somewhat waned during the 1970s. One distinctive feature is that emigrants to Canada and Australia and their descendants tend to be citizens of those countries (estimates suggest that 92% of the people with Macedonian origin in Australia are Australian citizens)¹⁴. Apart from that, emigration from Macedonia to European countries (mostly Germany, Switzerland, Sweden) also increased during late 1960s and in early 1970’s, whereas due to the imposition of more restrictive emigration policies in European countries, that emigration flow had slowed down around the mid 1970s and during the 1980’s. Not unlike the emigration to Australia and Canada, Macedonians who have emigrated within Europe do not tend to be citizens of the respective host countries (only 4% of the people with Macedonian origin who reside in Switzerland are Swiss citizens). The initial emigration from Macedonia to European countries followed the demand for cheap labour in Western European economies; hence, until mid 1970s the average qualifications of the emigrants were relatively low. Afterwards the qualification profile of the emigrants gradually changed to more qualified and highly-educated persons.^{15;16}

¹¹ Due to practising administrative state-planned employment of all people capable to work.

¹² A part of the mid 1960s emigration from Macedonia is also attributed to the disastrous earthquake in Skopje (the capital of Macedonia) in 1963.

¹³ Among the 6 republics of former Yugoslavia Macedonia had highest rate of migration (5.2%), whereas the Yugoslav average was 3.9%; source: N. Gaber and A. Jovevska, “*Macedonian Census Results - Controversy or Reality?*”, South-East Europe Review, I/2004, pp. 100.

¹⁴ Source: J. van Selm, “*Macedonia: At a Quiet Crossroads*”, June 2007.

¹⁵ Source: N. Gaber and A. Jovevska, “*Macedonian Census Results - Controversy or Reality?*”, South-East Europe Review, I/2004, pp. 101.

By the same token, although it was not strictly restricted to some parts of the population, the emigration from Macedonia in the period between late 1940s to late 1980s used to be “typical” for the southeast region of the country, where emigration amounted to more than 30% of the total number of people and was considered as an extremely high rate of exodus¹⁷. The second area of huge emigration abroad is the western part of Macedonia, which was (and is also today) mostly populated by Albanians¹⁸.

In 1991 Republic of Macedonia became an independent sovereign country and started the process of change of the political and economic systems. Having in mind the country’s EU integration as the ultimate goal, all reform processes initiated and implemented in the last two decades have gradually shaped the political and economic systems of Macedonia as they are today. However, the emigration flows even in this period have not halted, on the contrary – they have amplified, though with slightly changed characteristics.

3. Present emigration profile of Macedonia

3.1. Size of Macedonian emigration

Relatively little is known, and even less is written about the exact number of current emigrants from Macedonia. This is so due to several reasons: (i) the long-lasting history of emigration from Macedonia, in some families perpetuated for several generations, causes absence of reliable data about how much of the “old” emigrants and/or of their descendants have returned home or are still abroad; (ii) the number of citizens which report their residence abroad officially is insignificant; and (iii) it is not possible to collect and calculate an exact number of Macedonian emigrants from the host countries’ statistics, because they do not always report such data accurately and also their evidence is often missing data about Macedonian emigrants without legally established stay. As a consequence, the existing estimations of the total number of emigrants from Macedonia are highly diverging.

The official numbers collected by the State Statistical Office of reported Macedonian emigrants and immigrants show that in the period 1998 to 2005 Macedonia had 3,318 emigrants and 11,980

¹⁶ Similarly to the notion of “pechalbari”, a particular name for all Balkan emigrants to Germany in that period was “gast-arbaiter” (“guest-worker”). Another more officially used term for those emigrants in former Yugoslavia was “people on a temporary stay abroad”.

¹⁷ E. Dimitrieva and V. Janevska: “*Characteristics of Migration Movements from SR Macedonia Abroad*”, pp. 337-353.

¹⁸ Albanian population was, and to an extent still is, characterized by a very high birth rate, which has the consequence of creating an “employment strain” (need for securing new jobs as huge parts of the population became at working age); this makes additional boost to perpetuated migration throughout generations in families.

immigrants. However, those figures rely on data collected under a legal obligation of every Macedonian citizen who intends to reside abroad for a period over 3 months to report in the Ministry of Interior (but this is obeyed by very small number of people), as well as under the obligation of every immigrant to Macedonia to be officially reported (this obligation is nevertheless obeyed more copiously). Hence, it is certain that the numbers are completely unrealistic.

According to IMF data, the number of Macedonians who live abroad as of 2006, was about 20 to 25 percent of the entire Macedonian population living in the country¹⁹ – which makes a figure of around 400,000 to 500,000 people. While according to World Bank data, in 2005 Macedonia had 370,826 emigrants²⁰. But the situation gets additionally confusing when the scale of current Macedonian emigration is assessed by official government institutions. Namely, in order to allow for under representation of ethnic Macedonians born in geographic locations beyond the borders of the present-day territory of the Republic of Macedonia, officials dealing with diaspora relations suggest a number of Macedonian emigrants from 350,000 to 700,000²¹. By the same token, Macedonian representative groups which are active out of the country, also suspecting under representation in census data, promote numbers of Macedonian emigrants which are extremely high²².

In assessing the size of Macedonian emigration the authors of the CPRM's Report²³ consider data from two sources: the 2002 Macedonian Census data and the voters' lists prepared for the Parliamentary elections in 2006. According to the 2002 Census data around 22,000 were people who stayed abroad up to one year, while another 12,128 were staying longer. Corrected with the data from the voters' list, the authors come out with estimation that the number of Macedonian emigrants in 2006 was around 60,000 people.

¹⁹ S. Hadzimustafa: "Some aspects of the private transfers (remittances) and their impact upon Macedonian economy", www.gg.org.mk.

²⁰ World Bank Development Prospects Group [2005]: *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1181678518183/Macedonia.pdf>; this estimation is used as a relevant source of information in the IOM's paper on the Macedonian Migration profile: IOM: "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Migration Profile", September 2007.

²¹ J. van Selm: "Macedonia: At a Quiet Crossroads", June 2007.

²² In an interview for a daily newspaper Mr. Kjosovski, a representative of the Macedonian Embassy in Australia states that, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, on the 2006 census 83,978 people have declared being of Macedonian origin, while 67,833 besides english also speak the Macedonian language; however, he also states that, since people with Macedonian origin have emigrated to Australia for many generations, as well as those who are in "mixed marriages", the number of Macedonians in Australia is around 200,000 people. Source: "Utrinski vesnik", July 10 2009.

²³ CPRM (2007): *Strengthening Cross-Border Cooperation in the Western Balkan Regarding Migration Management – Macedonia*, Occasional Paper No. 12, pp. 14-15.

Referring to estimations of Macedonian emigration stock Markiewicz²⁴ corrects the 2002 census figure with data from other sources, namely the OECD database on people born in Macedonia living in OECD countries based on last available population census, which reveals a number of 193,940 persons. But since this data is missing statistics on emigrants in Germany the number is further corrected with data from its Federal Statistical Office, which states that the number of Macedonian emigrants in Germany is above 50,000. The number is further extended with Macedonians living in former Yugoslav countries (Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia but without data for Kosovo) plus Bulgaria and Albania, and the estimation ends up with a number of about 300,000 emigrants from Macedonia in 2006, or around 15 percent of the population and 34 percent of the labour force.

In contrast to those estimations, when weighted for all characteristics of the surveyed people in comparison to the characteristics of the entire population, the data from the GDN household survey gives a rough estimation of around 163,000 people currently emigrated from Macedonia, which is around 8 percent of the population living in the country. This is not a slight difference in comparison to the previous estimations, but the reasons for that can be traced to the facts that: (i) the survey captures only the emigrants who left in the last ten years; yet (as the previous part on the history of Macedonian migration shows), relatively huge number of Macedonian emigrants have been out of the country for longer than 10 years; and (ii) the survey captures only emigrants where someone from the household they departed from is still living in Macedonia; where whole households have departed the survey is entirely missing this data.

An attempt for a reassessment of the estimates on the number of emigrants from Macedonia should compare the data from three sources: (i) the OECD database on people born in Macedonia and living in OECD countries; (ii) data on Macedonian emigrants from official records of different host countries (census data where available); and (iii) data from the official web-site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Republic of Macedonia, which incorporates newest available records on Macedonian emigrants from official records of different host countries, plus the own estimations of the MFA. An obvious thing is that the data from the OECD database is relatively outdated, while the estimations of the Macedonian MFA are speculation. Having that in mind, such estimation tends to set the size of the current Macedonian emigration in the magnitude of above 400,000 and even up to 500,000 people; or, 20 up to 25 percent of the population living in Macedonia. Although slightly higher than the World Bank estimation for 2006, this magnitude is in the range of the IMF estimations. The further analysis reveals its distinctive characteristics.

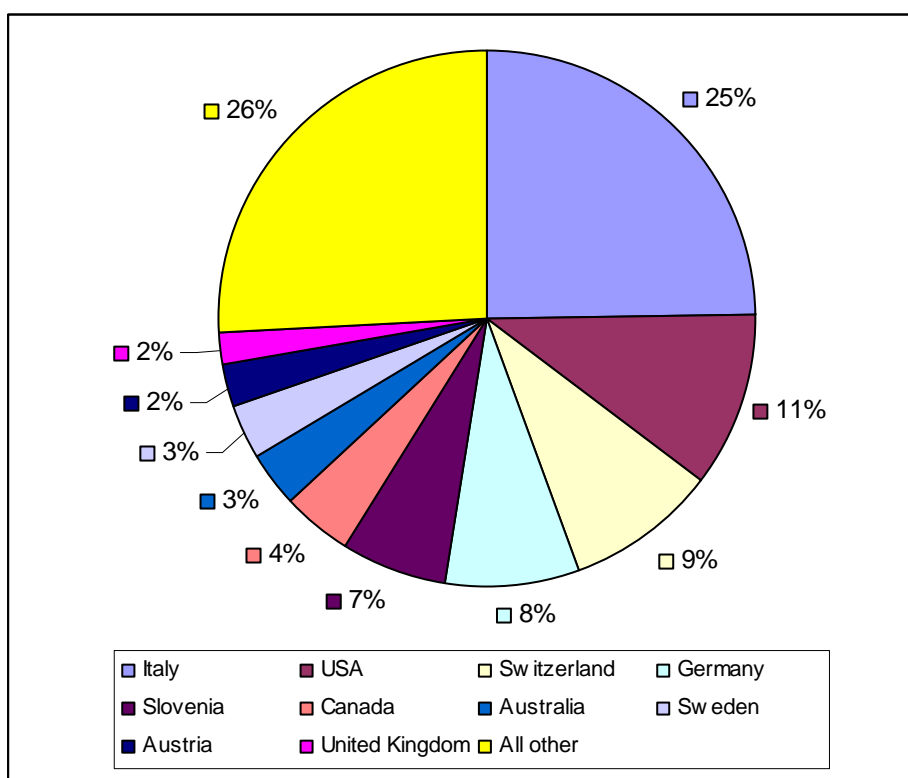
²⁴ M. Markiewicz: "Migration and Remittances in Macedonia", CEA, October 2006, pp.5.

3.2. Destination countries and length of stay of Macedonian emigration

Macedonian emigrants are scattered in 35 countries around the world, which suggests that they reside in any country where there are some prospects. But, although residing in many countries Macedonian emigration is highly unevenly concentrated, since the 10 most attractive destinations, i.e. all countries which host over 2 percent of the emigration, account for almost 80 percent of the entire emigration (Chart 1). Furthermore, the four most desirable destinations (Italy, USA, Switzerland and Germany), each of which accounts for over 8 percent of the emigrants, host 51 percent of the entire emigration. Finally, the two most advantageous destinations – Italy and the USA – account for over one third of the current Macedonian emigration.

Chart 1. Ten most attractive destinations of Macedonian emigration

(Percent of people residing in each country of the total emigration)



On the other hand, there is a clear tendency of Macedonian emigrants to remain abroad longer (as revealed in Table 1 below). The share of all absent migrants with a length of staying abroad over 5 years is 76.5 percent, while within the group of absent migrants in Italy, Germany, Switzerland and the USA – 87, 80, 94 and 70 percent of them respectively have stayed in the respective countries for over 5 years. The situation is not any different with the group of returned migrants:

the share of all returned migrants with a length of staying abroad over 5 years is 90 percent, while of the migrants returned from Italy, Germany, Switzerland and the USA – 83, 96, 95 and 70 percent respectively have previously stayed in those countries for over 5 years. This tendency of long-term staying abroad seems even more striking when observed that 48 percent of all returned migrants have stayed abroad for over 10 years, while only 1 percent have stayed abroad less than 6 months, only 2 percent have stayed abroad less than one year and 8 percent have stayed abroad less than two years.

Table 1 also reveals further interesting results. Namely, the fact that the shares of both absent and returned emigrants who have stayed in Germany and Switzerland for over 10 years are much higher than the respective shares of migrants who have stayed in Italy and the USA, shows that Germany and Switzerland are “traditional” emigration destinations, while Italy and the USA (both being countries hosting largest portions of Macedonian emigration nowadays) are more “modern” Macedonian emigration destinations²⁵.

Table 1. Duration of stay of absent and returned emigrants
(Percentages)

	Absent Emigrants In					
	Italy	Germany	Switzerland	USA	Elsewhere	Overall
< 6 months	1.4	11.5	4.2	19.5	10.0	8.4
< 1 year	1.1	5.3	0	3.0	7.0	4.3
< 2 years	10.6	3.2	1.6	7.9	14.6	10.8
< 5 years	39.6	12.0	32.0	16.3	22.4	26.2
< 10 years	42.3	30.8	13.5	36.6	33.1	33.8
> 10 years	5.0	37.2	48.7	16.7	12.9	16.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Returned Emigrants From					
	Italy	Germany	Switzerland	USA	Elsewhere	Overall
< 6 months	2.3	1.0	0	3.9	0.5	1.0
< 1 year	3.6	0	0	2.5	2.8	1.9
< 2 years	11.2	2.8	5.3	23.0	8.0	7.9
< 5 years	27.7	14.3	16.9	30.0	17.5	18.3
< 10 years	25.4	20.1	17.1	21.3	24.5	22.7
> 10 years	29.8	61.8	60.7	19.3	46.7	48.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

²⁵ Given that some Macedonian emigrants have chosen the USA as an emigration destination since over a century ago, this stipulation might seem contradicting. One explanation is the fact that the GDN survey captures only migrants where someone from a household they departed from is still living in Macedonia. It is very likely that many Macedonian emigrants who have departed to the USA since very long time ago have long since relocated their entire families and/or have become citizens of the USA. Hence, there are now few households left to tell that they have done so. On the other hand, recently there are “new” Macedonian emigrants who prefer the USA as their emigration destination.

3.3. Demographic, ethnic and other characteristics of Macedonian emigrants

Most Macedonian emigrants leave as young adults at working age: 34 percent of returned and almost 37 percent of the absent emigrants left aged 17 to 25, plus 34.7 percent of the returned and 34.5 percent of the absent emigrants left aged 26 to 40 years; only 15.4 and 22 percent of the non-migrant population respectively fall within those two age groups. The fact that relatively small number of emigrants leave at ages below 17 – only 6.5 percent of the returned and 17 percent of the absent emigrants, this at the same time being the second largest (with a share of almost 30 percent) age group within the non-migrant population – reveals a pattern that the average Macedonian emigrant completes his education at home before leaving the country. The average education level of emigrants can reveal whether this results with a brain-drain effect of migration. Furthermore, considering the previously exposed fact that most Macedonian returned emigrants tend to stay abroad longer, reveals that they usually spend most of their most productive life-time in other countries and return back at an age closer to their retirement.

On the other hand, almost 70 percent of the returned and 64 percent of absent emigrants from Macedonia are male, while within the non-migrant Macedonian population the share of the male population is much lower (48.7 percent by our survey). This indicates that the traditional Macedonian habit of male individuals going abroad to earn (additional) income, while female individuals stay at home and take care of the household and children, is still present. And this is also confirmed when the gender structure of Macedonian emigrants is compared with their marital status: 80 percent of the returned migrants are married, while of the absent migrants the same is true for 57 percent. In this context, returned emigrants are more often young and married male individuals who depart from their families (households) temporarily to earn money abroad and eventually do return back, while the absent emigrants more often young and unmarried male individuals who go abroad and (presumably) get married there (this can be one explanation why some of the absent emigrants remain absent).

The last two issues of concern here are the urban/rural status of emigrants and their ethnic affiliation. As for the urban/rural status it is a fact that: (i) there is a very slight rural bias in the group of absent emigrants – slightly more people from Macedonian rural areas tend to go abroad and remain there (which is expected, having in mind that poverty in Macedonia has more rural than urban character); and (ii) after returning, emigrants tend to settle in dwellings of the same type where they used to live (urban or rural). On the other hand, the ethnic affiliation of emigration often is a highly disputed topic in Macedonia, in the context that some ethnic groups are considerably more affected with emigration than others. However, data from the GDN household survey reveals that this is not the case, since all ethnic groups experience emigration, and there is a very slight bias in the cases of Albanian, Roma and Turkish ethnic groups. This may well be an

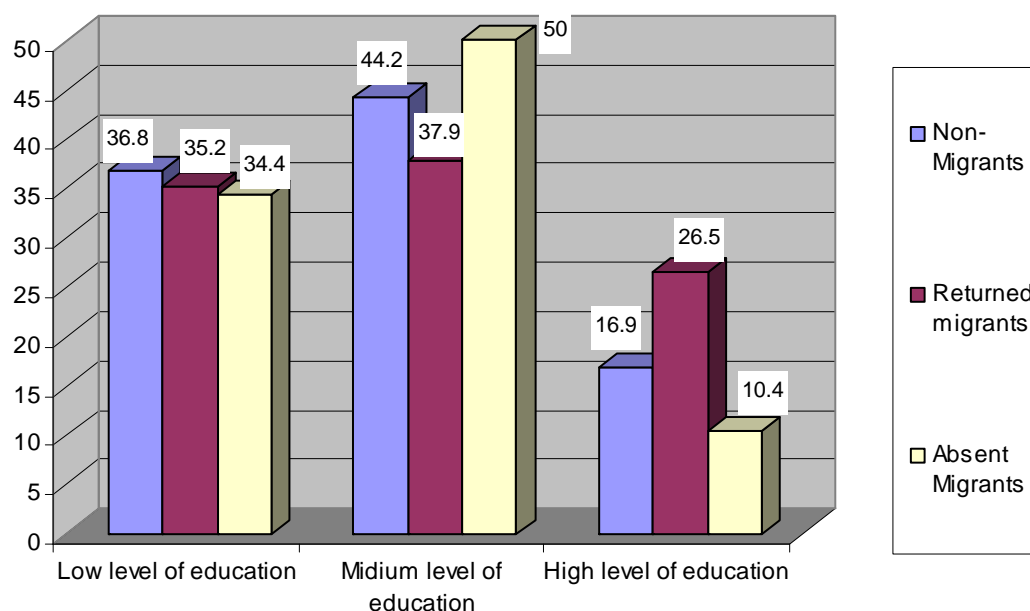
effect from the poverty which is also slightly unfavourably biased in those ethnic groups (as is, on average, lower level of education as well).

3.4. Educational characteristics of Macedonian emigrants

Similarly to the ethnic issue, education levels of Macedonian emigrants is also often a highly debated topic in Macedonia, at the same time full of conviction (but often without enough certified facts) that many of them are well educated, which would pertain to a blunt brain-drain effect. The GDN household survey data (presented on Chart 2.) casts some more evidence on the issue. In this context, the figures show that there is no huge mismatch in the education levels' frequencies among the migrants and the non-migrant population (as it would have been expected had the brain-drain hypothesis hold true), yet some differences do exist. The first important finding is that the majority of both absent and returned Macedonian emigrants have either medium or low levels of education at the time of their departure, while a smaller proportion are highly educated²⁶. Furthermore, among the cohort of highly educated emigrants much bigger share (72 percent of that group, or 26.5 percent of the entire migrated population) pertains to returned emigrants, while 10 percent of the entire emigrated population are highly educated absent emigrants. This poses that most of the highly educated emigrants from Macedonia tend to stay abroad for a period of time, but eventually return back home. On the other hand, having in mind the fact that Macedonian emigrants, on average, tend to stay abroad longer, it is fair to deduce that the portion of 1/3 highly educated Macedonian emigrants is likely to wield a brain-drain type of effect upon the domestic economy. It is also necessary to add that the share of very high (above university level) educated individuals among the emigrants is much higher than the corresponding share of individuals among the non-emigrants – over 4.5 times in the case of returned and 1.6 times in the case of absent emigrants.

²⁶ The groups of low, medium and highly educated emigrants are defined in the following way: no education, incomplete primary education, primary education and incomplete secondary education is considered as low level of education; 3 or 4 years of secondary education is considered as medium level of education; and higher education, university level education and post degree qualification (MSc/PhD) is considered as high level of education.

Chart 2. Educational levels: Non-Migrants, Returned and Absent Migrants
(Percentages within each group)



The biggest share of Macedonian emigrants have medium level of education, this being even more so for the group of absent emigrants. Brought in context with the age distribution of the emigrants (where the share of the age group below 17 is relatively low), it appears that the “average” Macedonian emigrant is educated at home²⁷ and then eventually decides to emigrate abroad. However, since they are mostly people with technical skills migrating because are unable to secure jobs with decent earnings in the country’s industrial or service sectors, especially in the transition phase during the last two decades, it would be inappropriate to consider this group of emigrants as contributing to a brain-drain emigration effect. And the second largest share of Macedonian emigrants (35 percent of the returned and 34.4 percent of the absent) have low level or no education. This group mostly pertains to emigration due to unemployment (at least in the formal sector of the economy), which is very often also associated with poverty.

An interesting analysis is observed with making cross-tabulation between the education levels of emigrants and their ethnic background. Both Roma and Turkish absent and/or returned emigrants mostly have low education; very few have secondary level of education; and they are not at all present within the cohort of highly educated emigrants. Most of the Albanian absent and returned emigrants also have low education; they are present somewhat more than the Roma and Turks in the group of medium educated emigrants; while among the highly educated emigrants their representation is low. The Macedonians follow the education pattern described above.

²⁷ In Macedonia adolescents usually graduate 3 or 4 year secondary education at the age of 18.

And another kind of cross-tabulation is between the education levels of emigrants and their gender. In this context, the female absent and returned emigrants tend to have lower education levels.

Another interesting aspect to take a look at are emigrants' education and qualifications gained while they are (or were) abroad. From the GDN household survey data it appears that 52 percent of the absent emigrants did not obtain any additional qualifications or education while abroad, and within them for 65 percent it was a job-related qualification²⁸, for 8 percent of both it was either primary or secondary education level and only for 13 percent (which is only 5 percent of the total absent emigrants population) it was an university degree. In general, a rather similar situation is present in the case of returned emigrants, since a great number of them did not obtain any additional qualifications or education while abroad. However, the returned emigrants who did obtain additional qualifications while abroad are more ambitious, since for 55 percent it was a job-related qualification, for only 1 percent it was a primary level education, for 7.4 percent it was a secondary education level, but for entire 30 percent (which is 8 percent of the total returned emigrants population) it was an university degree. There is a threefold interpretation of this findings: (i) that the domestically gained qualifications of Macedonian emigrants are acceptable on foreign markets, especially combined with certain job-related experience; (ii) that most Macedonian emigrants, keen to become active soon to earn income, are rather less ready to obtain higher qualifications; and (iii) that a considerable portion of the returned emigrants in fact migrate temporarily to obtain higher education abroad.

3.5. Employment status of Macedonian emigrants

This segment explores the employment status and/or occupational activities of emigrants before they depart, in the case of returned emigrants also after their returning as well as during their stay abroad, and in comparison to the employment status and/or occupational activities of the non-migrant population. The data from our household survey is presented on Table 2. and points to the following findings: 60 percent of the non-migrant population have income from employment or occupational activities, only 33 percent of the absent emigrants had income from employment or occupational activities before migration, 45 percent of the returned emigrants had income from employment or occupational activities before emigration and almost 65 percent of the returned emigrants have income from employment or occupational activities after their returning. By the same token, since income from employment or from other occupational activities decisively determines the welfare of most of

²⁸ This is apparently a qualification supplementary to the technical qualifications gained at home which are typical for half of the absent migrants.

the households²⁹, the figures indicate that the average welfare of absent emigrants' households prior to their departure abroad is lower than the average welfare of returned emigrants' households, and even more so than the average welfare of non-migrants' households, while the average welfare of the returned emigrants is most well-off.

Another important and interesting aspect in this context is the quality of the jobs performed by the different population segments, which determines the levels of income from those jobs. Namely, apart from being a group with the least share of employment, 31 percent of the absent emigrants had jobs which required elementary education/qualifications, 22 percent had simple jobs of operating machinery and plant processes and 7.5 percent had administrative and/or secretarial occupation. Only 12 percent of the absent emigrants had jobs in trading and 1 percent had managerial or senior employment positions. On the other hand, around 17 percent of the returned emigrants had jobs which required elementary education/qualifications, 20 percent had simple jobs of operating certain machinery and plant processes and 3.7 percent had administrative and/or secretarial occupations; but, 23 percent of the returned emigrants had jobs in trading, over 5 percent had managerial or senior employment positions.

Table 2. Employment/activity status: Non-Migrants, Absent and Returned Migrants
(Percentages)

Employment status (age 21 to 60)	Household Residents			Absent Migrants (status before leaving)
	Non-Migrants (current status)	Returned migrants (status before leaving)	Returned migrants (current status)	
Attending school or other education or training	5.1	14.7	2.7	8.0
Doing paid work for an employer	44.8	31.5	37.3	26.1
Working for themselves	11.1	12.8	21.5	6.6
Unemployed and trying to find work	16.3	23.0	15.2	37.6
Unemployed and not looking for paid work	5.9	4.0	5.6	3.4
Doing unpaid work for the family or household	11.2	10.8	10.4	16.9
Retired/no longer able to work	3.9	0.7	5.8	0.2

²⁹ In the case of Macedonia this holds true, since very few people/households can afford to depend solely on income from renting property or from savings and financial capital.

Other	1.8	2.6	1.5	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The final issue in the migrants' employment context is the situation whilst they are abroad. While 67 percent of the absent emigrants did not have fixed job before they left, once abroad the situation is different – 42 percent manage to find jobs, while over 37 percent abstain from answering, but this is very likely so because the absent emigrants have jobs which are not officially registered. The situation with securing paid employment of returned emigrants while abroad is not very different, since 55 percent of them did have jobs while abroad. Also 82 percent of the returned emigrants claim that there were no periods for them while abroad when they wanted paid jobs but they were not able find them. Biggest number of returned emigrants found their jobs through help of friends who had already been in the same country, and much less through help from employment agencies, advertisements, government programmes etc.

3.6. Reasons for emigration of Macedonian emigrants

By far the most important reason for the emigration of absent emigrants is improving their welfare, followed by personal reasons, few have desire for acquiring additional education and skills, while political and/or security reasons as most unimportant; for the returned emigrants the desire for acquiring additional education and skills and improving their welfare are equally highly important, followed by the political and/or security reasons, leaving the personal reasons as most unimportant. (Table 3.)

Table 3. Reasons for emigration: Absent and Returned Migrants (Percentages)

Reasons for emigration	Socio-economic reasons ("to earn more money")	Personal reasons (to get married, to live with members of the family...)	Additional education and skills	Political and/or security reasons ("to have more freedom", "felt discriminated against"...))
Absent emigrants	58	22	16	2.5
Returned emigrants	40	4	41	10

It is possible to deduce that these findings are in conjunction with previously obtained characteristics of Macedonian emigrants. Absent emigrants before departure are, on average, a worst-off group in terms of living conditions, hence they emigrate as younger adults primarily in order to secure jobs abroad; and when they eventually succeed (as most do), allegedly considering that the chances to do the same back home are thin, they remain abroad constantly; if they have families they often emigrate together with them, if not, they get married in the host countries; the prime intention to secure jobs makes their attitude towards additional education and qualifications not enthusiastic. As

about the returned emigrants, on average their situation in terms of welfare before departure is not as unfavourable as in the case of absent emigrants, hence apart from securing jobs abroad, at least an equal part of young adults emigrates temporarily in order to attain additional education/ qualifications (in many cases this being higher education); since emigrating temporarily their families do not often emigrate together with them.

Since almost 60 percent of the absent and 40 percent of the returned emigrants state that they went abroad out of unsatisfactory living conditions at home, it is also interesting to observe whether they do succeed in improving their position through emigration. Interestingly, 47 percent of the families of absent emigrants state that the individual in question is much wealthier after emigration, 38 percent are slightly wealthier, 7 percent have about the same standard of living, while only 1 percent are worse-off. The situation is not quite the same with the returned emigrants, since 28 percent are much wealthier, 42 percent are slightly wealthier, 23.5 percent have about the same standard of living, while 2 percent are actually worse-off after migration.

4. Conclusions

For concluding the presentation of the present emigration profile of Macedonia, Table 4. offers a summary of all characteristics pertaining to the “average” Macedonian emigrant.

Table 4. Main Characteristics of Macedonian Migrants

The average Macedonian migrant is a person who		
Characteristics	Absent migrants	Returned migrants
Migration destination	Is ready to depart to many countries; most attractive destinations are: Italy (25%), USA (10.5%), Germany (8%) and Switzerland (9%)	Is ready to depart to many countries; most attractive destinations are: Italy (25%), USA (10.5%), Germany (8%) and Switzerland (9%)
Average length of stay	Prefers longer stay abroad (over 5 or over 10 years)	Prefers longer stay abroad (over 5 or over 10 years)
Average age at departure	Departs as young working age adult (17 to 40 years)	Departs as young working age adult (17 to 40 years)
Gender	Is male	Is male
Marital status	Is married (and spouses live in the host country)	Is married (and in many cases the spouses are left back at home)
Urbal/rural background	In slightly more cases comes from rural areas	In slightly more cases comes from rural areas
Ethnic affiliation	Comes from any ethnic group in the country	Comes from any ethnic group in the country
Education profile before departure	Is most likely to have medium education level (50%); than low education (34%); least have high education (10%)	Is most likely to have medium education level (38%); than low education (34%); least but significant part have high education (26.5%)
Education after departure (while abroad)	Is not very keen to educate or qualify additionally while abroad	About half are not keen to educate or qualify additionally while abroad; if yes, than there is bias towards high education
Employment/occupational activity before departure	Is most likely to be unemployed or inactive	In almost half of the cases has employment or paid occupational activity
Job quality before departure	If employed is likely to have lower paid job	If employed in half of the cases is likely to have better paid job
Employment/activity while abroad	Is likely to be employed	In more than half of the cases has employment
Employment upon returning		Is likely to be employed or has paid occupational activity
Reasons for living the country	Mostly socio-economic, than personal reasons	Mostly educational, than socio-economic reasons

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