

# Policy Brief

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## Action plan on Economic Migration 2021-2023

what has been achieved and what lies ahead?

### Introduction

It is often said that Serbia is facing a serious emigration problem that needs to be solved strategically. These views are supported by the data that the Global Competitiveness Index 2018–2019 ranked Serbia 134th out of 137 countries in the context of its ability to retain talent or prevent a “brain drain”, as well as the impression that many sectors in Serbia are affected by the trend of increased emigration of qualified workers such as nurses, bus and truck drivers, and highly educated experts of various profiles, primarily doctors and engineers. It is concluded that better working conditions and prospects for career development offered in developed countries, especially in the EU, are the strongest motivating factors for emigration.

On the other hand, although less often, opinions can be heard that a large part of the migration diagnosis that is dealt with in the public sphere is not quite well interpreted. It is argued that the distorted parts of information from the very complicated migration statistics are inadequately translated into “general knowledge” and the widespread view that one of the most urgent problems facing Serbian society and the economy is mass emigration from Serbia, and especially the exodus of the “best and brightest”. This attitude significantly influenced the Government’s migration policy, so in 2019 the first version of the Strategy on Economic Migration was almost entirely focused on ways to prevent brain drain and measures to stimulate return. A significantly more balanced version of this document was adopted as the final **Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2027**<sup>1</sup>.

### Context and methodology

The general objective of the Strategy is to create an economic and social environment for slowing down the departure of the working-age population, strengthening ties with the diaspora, encouraging return and circular migration, as well as attracting foreigners with different educational profiles, while the following are highlighted as specific objectives:

Building and strengthening institutional capacities for monitoring and improving the quality of data on economic migration.

1. Improvement of living and working conditions in the economic and social sectors.
2. Harmonisation of the education system with the needs of the economy, with an emphasis on monitoring the innovations, brought about by the fourth industrial revolution, especially in the sphere of developing new occupations and professional profiles and creating conditions for attracting foreign students.
3. Improving cooperation between the diaspora and the home county and encouraging transnational entrepreneurship.
4. Creating conditions for monitoring, encouraging, and supporting circular and return migrations.
5. Creating conditions for more efficient management of internal migration flows.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA) has established a Working Group for the preparation of the Action Plan Proposal for the implementation of the Strategy. The working group formulated, and the Government adopted, the Action Plan for the period 2021-2023<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021 – 2027. (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 21/20). Hereinafter referred to as Strategy.

<sup>2</sup> Action plan for the period 2021-2023. for the implementation of the Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2027. (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 89 of September 15, 2021). Hereinafter referred to as Action Plan.

Since January 2022, the Foundation for the Advancement of Economics - FREN and the European Policy Centre - CEP have been implementing the project "Circular migration before depopulation! Innovative solutions to spark circular migration as a pillar of the enhanced competitiveness and economic development", supported by the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia. One of the key goals of the Project is to demonstrate how CSOs can participate in a constructive dialogue on public policy reform through the transformation of local/regional CSOs into Regional Centres of Excellence for Circular migration (ReCeEx) and develop a set of evidence-based recommendations which would directly assist the government in fulfilling related political goals and tasks. The Assessment of the Action Plan this brief refers to is one in a series of documents and project activities (Comparative analysis of several European countries, Gap analysis and reports from round tables and meetings, to name a few). The project will result in a single document that will include evidence-based recommendations.

The Assessment of the AP was prepared halfway through the implementation cycle of the first Action Plan and was written in the Serbian language so that its findings could be used during the preparation of the new Action Plan. The aim of the Assessment is to systematically analyse the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy on Economic Migration and based on that analysis, to objectively evaluate and inform public policymakers and decision-makers about the results achieved so far in the implementation of the Strategy, as well as to offer recommendations for possible corrective measures for the future. The assessment is based on desk and field data collection. During the desk research, data was collected based on the existing documentation and the research was repeated when the *Report on the implementation of the Action Plan*<sup>3</sup> was published in early June 2022. The Report contains very important data on the implementation of the AP for 2021. Data collection was supplemented by group and individual interviews.

## Key findings

**EFFECTIVENESS** The general assessment is that the goals are well set, followed by elaborate measures and activities serving as consistent and comparable indicators. However, evaluating the qualitative and quantitative effects of the general objective and specific objectives of the Strategy, as well as of the Action Plan during the evaluation was aggravated to a certain extent due to the short implementation period and the lack of data.

<sup>3</sup> Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the period 2021 – 2023. for the implementation of the Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021 – 2027. Available at: [Акциони план за период 2021–2023. године за спровођење Стратегије о економским миграцијама Републике Србије за период 2021–2027. године | Министарство за рад, запошљавање, борачка и социјална питања \(minrzs.gov.rs\)](#)

**EFFICIENCY** Due to the short period of implementation of the activities during the evaluation, only a fragmented picture of the efficiency of the implementation of the Action Plan measures is available. On the basis of the available evidence on the results and directions of the implementation of measures and activities through the specific objectives of the Action Plan, it can be concluded that the required funds and incurred costs contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan activities and the objectives of the Strategy.

**RELEVANCE** The Strategy and the Action Plan are undoubtedly very relevant and adopted in accordance with the objective needs of the Republic of Serbia in the context of migration. Priorities and strategic goals have been adequately selected and defined so that they correspond to the current needs and problems of economic migration in Serbia.

**CONNECTEDNESS** There is a distinct interconnection of indicators, measures, and stakeholders. Coordination is the key word for the successful implementation of the Strategy of Economic Migration. It is necessary to analyse the position of the topic of economic migration from the aspect of the development policies of Serbia and that should consistently be communicated to all the relevant parties.

## Key findings and recommendations for specific objectives

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1** is dedicated to building and strengthening institutional capacities for monitoring and improving the quality of data on economic migration and is operationalised through four measures: (1) strengthening the capacity of institutions responsible for monitoring migration trends, (2) upgrading or reforming the existing institutional framework in accordance with needs for more efficient management of economic migrations, (3) establishing a higher degree of coordination to support the inclusion of the concept of economic migrations in development policies and (4) establishing a regular, updated, synchronised statistical base for monitoring migration flows in the Republic of Serbia.

*Assessment:* Some progress has been made in the realisation of this special objective of the Strategy: a Working Group was formed with the aim of implementing and monitoring the Strategy on Economic Migration and the Action Plan for the period 2021-2023. for the implementation of the Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2027. Numerous training sessions were held in the field. The National Employment Service (NZS) started the implementation of the measure of developing the internal procedure of the NZS for the work of Counsellors in Migration Service Centres. Although there is a highly developed awareness of the necessity of precise statistical monitoring of economic migration, by the time of reporting for 2021, the Working Group for Migration Statistics had not been formed.

## Recommendations:

- **Strengthening the Coordinating Body** so that the scope of work, human resources, and decision-making authority could through 2021-2027 implement and monitor the activities foreseen by the Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023, as well as the future Action plans that should be adopted. The coordinating body should have a consistent capacity for monitoring and improving the complete process of economic migration management. This implies, not only coordination essentially representing the integration of the activities of individual holders, but also the overall process of planning, organising, leading, and controlling actors, activities and information flows related to economic migrations. Such institutional centralisation supports the constructive harmonization of procedures and activities implemented under the supervision of different stakeholders. It contributes to the targeted strengthening of competencies for managing economic migration within the state administration, the consistent application of the described public policies that have implications for the process of economic migration, effective communication with all interested parties, both to state bodies and other external entities, as well as comprehensive reporting on the complex and complicated subject of economic migration.
- **Forming a Working Group for Migration Statistics.** Measuring the migration balance and migration movements is an extremely complicated task, and the complex numbers of migration flows are often inadequately interpreted, thus harming the understanding of the phenomenon of migration in general, and economic migration as a subcategory. There is no easy solution to all practical problems in recording emigrants and migration movements, therefore strengthening the capacities of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (RZS), and developing a high-quality methodology based on understanding the need to include and combine various sources and information. Their intersection would enable comprehensive monitoring of migration flows, which is an absolute priority to get a reliable idea of the volume and trends of emigration from Serbia and immigration to Serbia.
- **Strengthening Migration Service Centres** in the domain of the scope of their work, the expertise of engaged human resources, the development of consistent and coordinated procedures of their work, technical equipment, and information-communication capacities, in proportion to their role in informing potential and existing migrants. The formation of new positions such as the position of Counsellor in Migration Centres has the potential to qualitatively improve the process of economic migration management.
- **Focusing on further education** in such a way as to be more specialised towards economic migrations, understanding their specifics, and learning about the mechanisms that can ensure their better management and monitoring.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2** refers to the improvement of living and working conditions in the economic and social sectors and is operationalised through six measures: (1) continuation of the implementation of structural reforms and raising the efficiency of the public sector, (2) strengthening the institutional capacities for creating incentives to attract direct investments, (3) development of a program to retain human capacities from the category of deficit occupations, (4) improvement of the capacities of the market economy in accordance with the strategic recommendations of the European Union, (5) development of a program for attracting and including foreigners of various educational profiles to the labour market of the Republic of Serbia and (6) strengthening the fight for the rule of law, against corruption and nepotism.

## Recommendations:

- **Persistence in the strategic commitment to the development of a functional market economy**, macroeconomic and overall social stability ensured by stable state policies related to business and the adaptability of the legal framework to ensure the continuous rule of law with simultaneous adaptability to develop new business models.
- It is suggested to consider the adequacy of the bearer of measure 2.2 according to the operationalisation of the measure and a **possible change of bearer to better align the scope of work of the bearer and the content of the measure.** The proposal is to make it the Ministry of Economy instead of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD). It is necessary to develop new activities, which will have a greater potential to contribute to the achievement of the goal compared to the planned ones. Recommendation: greater horizontal connection of measures and activities, not duplication.
- In the field of development of the program for retaining human capacities from the category of deficit occupations, **it is necessary to develop new activities, which will have a greater potential to contribute to the achievement of the goal compared to the foreseen ones.**
- **A greater horizontal connection of measures and activities, rather than duplication, is also recommended.** The recommendation is towards better coordination of the economic market and the labour market, social and migration policy, and the development of activities that will especially treat the low-skilled and medium-skilled workforce, poor workers, people in rural areas and declining areas, as well as other groups that can be characterized as vulnerable. and non-privileged groups who tend to jobs from the category of deficit occupations.

- **Provide support to professional associations and organisations that gather workers from the category of deficit occupations** to open channels of communication and establish a connection that would enable the circularity of workers from these categories according to the needs of the Republic of Serbia. These activities correspond to the scope of activities covered by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (PKS).
- The operationalisation of this measure needs to be further developed so that it is not reduced only to concessions.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3** refers to the harmonisation of the education system with the needs of the labour market and innovation and is operationalised through measures: (1) harmonisation of the enrolment policy system with the needs of the labour market, (2) building mechanisms for cooperation between science and economy, through the introduction of incentive measures for funding research and development, as well as increasing the number of researchers in the economy, the number of patents and technical solutions, (3) creating special programs and projects for the return of highly educated workforce, (4) enabling appropriate professional training and professional development of young people and creating conditions for their return, and (5) encouraging the mobility of students and researchers and strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions to attract foreign students and researchers.

*Assessment:* Progress has been made in the realisation of this special objective. Activity bearers and partners in the implementation of activities have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as complementary competencies to successfully implement these activities. It is evident that 4 out of 6 indicators - Number of profiles for which there is a labour shortage, Number of required workers per profile in relation to the number of existing ones, Number of highly educated returnees and experts, and Effective transfer of knowledge through projects in scientific research organisations and science parks - do not have established target values of the indicators in 2022. and 2023. These are very complex indicators, and it is clear why their value could not be decided upon without the coordinated work of all actors. Once this coordination is made, it is necessary to determine the real values and finally realise them.

*Recommendations:*

- Regarding the harmonisation of the enrolment policy system with the needs of the labour market, the recommendation is the **coordination of the activities of all actors who can influence the further harmonisation of the education system with the needs of the economy.**
- Regarding the construction of mechanisms for the cooperation of science and the economy, through the introduction of incentive measures for greater allocation of the economy for research and de-

velopment, as well as an increase in the number of researchers in the economy, the number of patents and technical solutions, it is recommended to **connect the activities of different institutions that have an impact on the implementation of this measure and its activities - in the area of education, science and economy** (MoESTD, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, PKS, MoLEVSA, Innovation Fund of the Republic of Serbia, Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia). This recommendation also stands for the measure of creating special programs and projects for the return of a highly educated workforce.

- The recommendation is to **support the activities and further development of career centres** within higher education institutions, and universities and connect the activities of various institutions that have an impact on the implementation of this measure and its activities.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4** refers to the improvement of cooperation between the diaspora and the home country and the encouragement of transnational entrepreneurship and is operationalised through measures: (1) improvement of mechanisms for online information of the diaspora on all relevant information, (2) encouragement of tangible and intangible investments of the diaspora and continuation of the development of investment guides, (3) creating conditions for optimising the potential of the diaspora through formal flows of foreign exchange remittances, increasing the impact of foreign exchange remittances on the development and greater engagement of the diaspora at the local level and (4) strengthening transnational entrepreneurship with returnees, as well as members of the diaspora who maintain business ties with the Republic of Serbia.

*Assessment:* The achievement of this objective is on the established trajectory. The improvement of the cooperation between the diaspora and the home country is based on the greater involvement of the diaspora in the development projects in Serbia through synchronous activities at the national, regional, and local levels and the strengthening and maintenance of the diaspora's trust in the stability of the economic and social environment in the home country through the strengthening of emotional (feeling of unity with the home country, satisfaction with mutual relations, etc.), economic, scientific, technological and other ties between the homeland and the diaspora.

*Recommendations:*

- **Creating and supporting organisations that aim to support returnees who plan to return to Serbia, a business venture, or a scientific and professional career.** *Returning point* represents a good modus operandi to establish a bridge of trust between the diaspora and Serbia through networking and programs. *Returning Point* provides information on all ways of getting in touch with Serbia, helps in achieving cooperation with local talents and extraordinary initiatives, and provides a framework for

better communication of Serbian society in the country and abroad. Such organisations are also found in comparative analysis (Ireland, for example - The return of business), and in Serbia, they can help the development of a knowledge society based on the exchange of knowledge and experience.

- The abundance of measures and activities that are already being implemented in the domain of encouraging material and non-material investments of the diaspora and the continuation of the development of investment guides and the creation of conditions for optimising the potential of the diaspora through formal flows of foreign exchange remittances, increasing the impact of foreign exchange remittances on development and greater engagement of the diaspora at the local level, should coordinate and integrate in a targeted manner.
- Circular migration enables the **emergence of transnational social networks** that can provide potential migrants with information about job vacancies in the country of migration, and on the other hand provide information about human resources in the sending country. The construction of such networks has significant benefits for employers, for whom it can represent a safe platform for the recruitment of a known and reliable group of workers, who belong to a related social network according to criteria that may be important for employers.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 5 refers to the creation of conditions for monitoring, encouraging, and supporting the return and circular migration and is operationalised through measures (1) establishment and institutionalisation of return and circular migration programs and their better/stronger social affirmation, (combined by type: institutional-management and incentive ) and (2) development of mechanisms for regular monitoring of return and circular migrations, (combined by type: institutional-management and incentive).**

In the focus of measure 1.5.1. is the establishment and institutionalisation of return and circular migration programs and their greater social affirmation, and it was developed through 8 activities: creating conditions for supporting returnees and circular migrants through the programs of the Innovation Fund, encouraging the return of members of the diaspora and their work engagement, cooperation with the representatives of economic chambers, institutes and other institutions of foreign countries, promotion and regular evaluation of the measures of the *Guide to support measures for the development of an innovative economy*, carrying out evaluation of the Science Fund's cooperation program of Serbian science with the diaspora, with recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program, concluding bilateral agreements in the field of employment, drawing up a detailed analysis of the possibilities of engaging foreign labour in the Republic of Serbia and improvement of cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) on various types of mobility in the region.

*Assessment:*

- There is no MoESTD report regarding the creation of conditions for support for returnees and circular migrants through the programs of the Innovation Fund. MoESTD has a number of other activities that can be indirectly connected and that can have effects on the realisation of these activities as well, but it is necessary to introduce additional focusing and explicit targeting of circular migrants through the support program of the Innovation Fund.
- MoLEVSA started realising the goals of encouraging the return of members of the diaspora and their work engagement through support for the long-term return of a total of 16 qualified experts, members of the diaspora from Germany to Serbia; the short-term engagement of 11 qualified experts, members of the diaspora from Germany in Serbia; the engagement of 3 organisations from the diaspora in Germany for the implementation of projects in Serbia and 10 founders through a public call for business ideas for development. **It is obvious that in these activities the absolute emphasis is on returnees and not on circular migrants, and the recommendation follows the direction of stronger affirmation supporting the work inclusion of circular migrants.**
- There are no reports from the MoLEVSA regarding cooperation with representatives of Chambers of commerce, institutes, and other institutions of foreign countries.
- The activity of promoting and regularly evaluating the measures of the *Guide to support measures for the development of an innovative economy* is in a very dynamic implementation, which includes the *Returning Point* program and the entire Cabinet of the Prime Minister. On March 1, 2022, additional incentive measures for research and development came into force. To promote concrete measures to support the employment of returnees to Serbia, the *Returning Point* program regularly communicates through its channels the benefits provided through the aforementioned measures, while a workshop intended for the human resources services of large companies was also held. Also, direct support is actively provided to all potential returnees who need support to use incentives. In the following period, the implementation of additional training is planned to raise awareness and familiarize employers, entrepreneurs, and potential returnees with the possibilities provided by the measures presented in the *Guide*. **Here, as with other activities, there is not enough emphasis on recognising the potential of circular migration and developing specific measures, activities, and indicators related to that category of migrants.**

- **The Science fund has significant potential for the affirmation of circular migrations through programs of scientific cooperation between Serbian science and the diaspora.** Through the Fund's programs, significant progress can be made in the area of knowledge transfer between scientific and research organizations from Serbia and the diaspora, which can be of particular importance for mitigating the negative consequences of the "brain drain", as well as building relations between the home country and the diaspora through information flows and knowledge from the diaspora to the home county and creating favourable impacts on the labour market through new opportunities for scientific cooperation.
- There are no reports from the MoLEVSA regarding the conclusion of bilateral agreements in the field of employment.
- In connection with the preparation of a detailed analysis of the possibilities of engaging foreign labour in the Republic of Serbia, expert support was provided for the identification of the most suitable models for identifying deficit occupations on the labour market as a basis for the development of strategies for engaging foreign workforce and by-laws that enable their implementation.
- There is no report from MoLEVSA regarding the improvement of cooperation with the RCC on different types of mobility in the region.

The focus of measure 5.2 is the development of mechanisms for regular monitoring of return and circular migration through the establishment of a methodology for quantitative and qualitative regular monitoring of return and circular migration, reporting on return and circular migration included in the Migration Profile of Serbia, defining and introducing adequate indicators for monitoring circular and return migration u Migration profile of Serbia and implementation of initial research and preparation and implementation of a three-year plan for research on circular and return migration. For now, there are no implementation reports on any of these activities.

#### *Recommendations:*

- It would be of great importance for the Strategy and the Action Plan to have **a clear definition of the concept of circular migration**. Since this definition is not included, in different periods, at different levels, and from different parties, it can be expected to approach the concept of circular migration, its understanding, operationalisation, and application in different ways.
- **The Republic of Serbia should improve and strengthen its data collection and analysis in migration statistics.** However, the Assessment emphasises that this is not about the lack of expertise or weakness in the organization of the RZS, but rather about specialisation and devoting special resources to this topic. It should be considered that labour migration statistics does not only refer to who enters and leaves

the national territory and who stays there and for how long, but that it represents a reservoir of information related to employment, occupations, wages, and other important information that is related to work and which may have the potential to explain and provide insight into the complicated subject of economic migration. In the following periods for which the Action Plan will be adopted, it should be carefully assessed whether there are capacities for generating quality data on economic migrations and what technical assistance and resources can be used to empower the RZS to be able to meet these requirements.

- Circular migration today is based on a continuous, long-term, and fluid relationship between countries that occupy what is now increasingly recognised as a single economic space. In the new environment, revolutionary developments in transport and communications lead to the globalisation of investment, while production and consumption, longer and more flexible employment contracts, re-entry options, and flexible rights of residence reduce the likelihood of permanent emigration. **That is why today's mobility is not only physical but also a virtual phenomenon.** Participating in many activities for pleasure and work can be performed on virtual platforms.
- In many activities and measures, the emphasis is on returnees and not on circular migrants, **so the recommendation indicates the direction of stronger affirmation of support for the work inclusion of circular migrants.**

Measures that correspond to Special Objective 5 and are not covered by it:

- Measure 3.3: Development of special programs and projects for the return of a highly educated workforce. The bearer of the measure is MoESTD and it refers to the inclusion of newly arrived doctoral students and returnees in the domestic scientific system. This is a measure that is suitable as an indicator of the realisation of Special Objective 5 and as such should be monitored in the context of Special Objective 5.
- Measure 3.4: Facilitating appropriate professional training and professional development of young people and creating conditions for their return by increasing the number of places in doctoral studies financed from the budget for students in areas of special importance for the development of Serbia, strengthening support for entering and remaining in higher education for the underrepresented categories in higher education, the establishment of an exchange of professional practices for students of all levels of study and scholarships for tuition and residence of the best students from Serbia in priority areas for doctoral and postdoctoral studies at prestigious world uni-

versities in those areas, with the obligation to return to the Republic of Serbia should be followed in the context of Special Objective 5.

- Measure 3.5: Encouraging the mobility of students and researchers and strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions to attract foreign students and researchers. The bearer of the measure is MoESTD and it refers to the increased mobility of students, the involvement of prestigious foreign scientists in domestic scientific institutions, the increased participation of foreign exchange students in the student population, the number of study programs for studying in English, the number of students enrolled in study programs in English and increased international recognition of higher education in Serbia; all of these should be monitored in the context of Special Objective 5.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 6 refers to the creation of conditions for more efficient management of internal migration flows and is operationalised through measures (1) improving the skills and competencies of the workforce in rural areas, to raise entrepreneurial potential, (2) creating incentive employment policies to transform these areas in immigration, primarily for young people, and (3) strengthening the capacity of local actors in planning and implementing migration and development projects.**

The realisation of this sub-goal is on a fixed trajectory.

*Recommendations:*

- Conduct workshops to support novice entrepreneurs;
- Form an advisory online platform to support novice entrepreneurs in rural areas;
- Analyse the demographic and development characteristics of the geographic area to cluster areas with similar characteristics.

**Based on the analysis, the Evaluation assesses that the following qualities have been achieved so far in the area of economic migration management:**

- ✓ *Establishing a structure for the management of economic migration. A Coordinating Body was formed to monitor flows in the field of economic migration.* In addition, it is planned to form a **Working Group for Migration Statistics**, which at the time of reporting was not formed, but the Working Group for International Migration Statistics is appearing as a substitute within the RZS. The formation of this working group is also considered to be the beginning of the implementation of the measure to expand the scope of work and the **establishment of new Migration Service Centres** within the National Employment Service. The measure of strengthening the capacity of the institutions responsible for monitoring migration trends is

most developed in the area of education of members of working groups and other officials who deal with the management and monitoring of economic migrations. Permanent training of employees is crucial for the successful implementation of the measures of the Strategy and the Action Plan and should be further strengthened, especially through specialised training and training in the field of monitoring, encouraging, and supporting the return and circular migration.

- ✓ *Coordination is imperative.* Now, there is a significant effort by various bodies that undertake activities that strengthen the capacity to manage the return and circular migration and that, in essence, undertake compatible, similar, and sometimes parallel activities and contacts with relevant actors. Any activity that has many stakeholders involved, even though all or primarily all of them are government bodies, introduces complexity and presents a challenge in coordinating and harmonising activities. Coordination is the key word for including the concept of economic migration in development policies. Economic migration is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon and the expertise that can be found in different organisations should be used so that the best knowledge is always used.
- ✓ *Return of a highly educated workforce and experts from abroad.* Developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation is an integral element of the Strategy, as well as of Special Objective 2. The activity of the *Science Fund* can make very significant progress in attracting highly educated people.
- ✓ *Awareness of the importance of the development of transnational entrepreneurship.* Circular migration enables the emergence of transnational social networks that can provide potential migrants with information about job vacancies in the country of immigration, and, on the other hand, provide information about human resources in the country of emigration. The construction of such networks has significant benefits for employers. For them, it can represent a safe platform for the recruitment of a familiar and reliable group of workers belonging to a related social network according to the criteria that may be important for employers.
- ✓ *Formation and continuous improvement of the knowledge base on economic migration in the Republic of Serbia.* There is a strong need for a detailed/focused and systematic approach to the formation and sharing of the knowledge base on circular and return migration that would be a treasure of valid and valuable lessons learned and best practices. The basis for this is certainly the establishment of a regular, updated, synchronised statistical database for monitoring migration flows in the Republic of Serbia.

**Areas that need to be focused on to achieve further progress are:**

- ✓ *Building a systemic approach to economic migration and long-term commitment of state authorities to include this topic in development policies.* It is necessary to look at the position of the topic of economic migration from the aspect of the development policy of Serbia and this should be communicated to all relevant parties. Strongly related to this and supported by findings from comparative practices, temporary migration can achieve sustainable results only when it is consistently and harmoniously incorporated into a comprehensive migration policy.
- ✓ *Insufficient human and material capacities.* There is justified fear that insufficient human and material capacities are one of the weaknesses of the economic migration management system. An inadequate number of staff due to the employment ban, as well as the lack of migration experts, are particular obstacles.
- ✓ *Insufficient and irregular statistical records.* The Republic of Serbia needs to improve and strengthen its data collection and analysis in the field of migration statistics. However, the Evaluation emphasises that this is not about the lack of expertise or weakness in the organisation of the RZS, but simply about exploiting additional resources.

**The key factors that affect the achievement of the specific objectives of the Action Plan are** (1) the existence of the Coordinating Body for monitoring economic migration flows in the Republic of Serbia with the task of integrating and harmonising activities, (2) raising awareness of the importance of the problem among the majority of stakeholders involved in the system and willingness to further strengthen and develop the system through the formation of a networked structure of working groups; (3) the existence of the basic infrastructure necessary for the implementation of activities, complemented by the establishment of an appropriate national legal framework for the functioning of the system, the definition and implementation of national strategies aimed at improving socio-economic development and creating more favourable economic and social conditions in the country, (4) commitment to more even regional development that would reduce emigration and encourage the return of young people to their places of birth and (5) increasing awareness of the importance of economic migration at the national, regional and local level, of the importance of directed and active management of return and circular migration.

**The key factors that hindered the achievement of the objectives are** (1) a short implementation period, (2) the lack of funds, (3) inconsistent definitions, (4) insufficient and irregular statistical records, and (5) insufficient human and material capacities.

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