
AUF WIEDERSEHEN: GERMAN SCHOOLS PROFIT FROM BOSNIA'S EMIGRATION FEVER

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Danijela and Nedim will soon become part of Bosnia's bleak emigration statistics. Soon to be married, he has been working hard to learn German for some time. The couple has no exact plan of when to go, or what to do there – but they know Germany is their destination.

We are leaving, like most young people from around here, 35-year-old Nedim from Tuzla told BIRN.

This country with its political line-ups from the [1992-5] war to this day has no prospects. I have never worked in my own field of defectology [the study of children with mental and physical problems]. All my jobs were seasonal – waiter, assistant chef – but nothing permanent.

Danijela, now 30, doesn't need to get down to the complexities of German grammar. She spent time in Bavaria as a child during the Bosnian war of the 1990s. Her family returned from Munich to Tuzla after the war. She has a Croatian passport, so has no trouble going to EU countries, and her German is fluent already.

Today, she works in a local betting shop in Tuzla. In hindsight, she regrets that her parents came back to their Bosnian homeland. I believe that if they'd known in the mid-1990s that they would be worse off today, they wouldn't have done it, she says.

They came back because they love their home town – their people. I do, too, but unfortunately, I want to go where I will have a better life.

She adds: It's not just about the work or the low income * It is unbearable, listening to the nationalistic stories in this region, the false promises, the threats of war and separation. That is all our politicians know, and that is how they get rich, while young people leave.

Exodus without end in sight:

Danijela and Nedim are just two of thousands of people in Bosnia learning German and planning to leave Bosnia soon.

With a desperate lack of opportunities in their own country, many other talented young people have emigrated, or plan to do so. The booming industry in foreign language courses bears that out.

About 186,000 people have left Bosnia since 2013. Over these six years, the country has lost a population equivalent to the number of people who live in the major northwestern city of Banja Luka, according to the Union for Sustainable Return and Integrations of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2019 alone, from January to September, about 30,000 people left Bosnia and Herzegovina, data from the same organisation show.

Data from UNICEF surveys in Bosnia are just as concerning, as they suggest that many youngsters intend to take the same path as soon as they grow old enough.

According to a UN survey conducted this summer, using the online platform U-Report, nearly 60 per cent of young people want to leave the country, especially those between 25 and 30 years of age.

Of the nearly 4,000 young people who took part in the survey, 57 percent answered Yes to the question about whether they wanted to leave Bosnia.

The results showed also that the desire among young people to leave tends to be well formed by the time they are around 15. This is because many young people in the 15-19 group want to leave, and that percentage only grows as they age. It only stalls among those aged 35 or older.

In the age group 25 to 30, according to the survey □ people at the peak of their working and reproductive abilities □ as many as 65 per cent are thinking about leaving, as are 62 per cent of those aged 31 to 34.

Men are somewhat less willing to leave than women. Those taking part in such surveys list umpteen reasons for leaving, but most list the high unemployment rate, modest future income prospects and general feelings of insecurity, among other issues, as key motives.

Foreign language schools in Bosnia licensed to issue language certificates have multiplied over the last few years, as the number of students interested in taking exams □ in German especially □ grows.

Among them is the Big Ben Language Centre, which opened in Tuzla in 2011 and has offered German to children, teens and adults since 2014.

Skenderovic Bukvic, Study Coordinator at the Big Ben Centre, says whole families are studying foreign languages with a view to leaving. Often entire families come to take a course; each member of the family learns with their own level and age group, she explains.

The trend towards attaining A1 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, is noticeable, since this is the level necessary for uniting families and for certain types of jobs, she adds.

We have worked with companies from Germany and in such cases the company has paid for the language course for its future employees, she says.

Going abroad, usually to Germany, is no longer reserved for craftsmen and tradesman, either. Highly educated employees are leaving more and more, she notes.

Weve noticed a large number of doctors, pharmacists, and medical personnel who cannot find

work in Bosnia attending our courses □ and many leave Bosnia within three to six months after completing the course.

Skenderovic Bukvic says they dont grill their clients about why they are learning foreign languages, or want to emigrate, but, in our informal talks with parents, we have learned that most of them want their children to have better living standard in some other country after completing school.

Bosnia is fast emptying out:

Outward migration is having an effect on the demographics of almost all countries in Eastern and central Europe.

But the large scale of migration from Bosnia is having an especially dramatic impact on the population of this troubled Balkan country.

In the last pre-war census conducted in Bosnia, in 1991, the then Yugoslav republic had a population of 4.37 million.

The 2013 census, conducted long after the 1992-5 war, put the population at nearly 3.8 million people.

Some 3,500,000 people live currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, according to UN data, by 2050, the number will be down to around 3 million. Bosnia will lose about half percent of its population each year.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2019/10/31/auf-wiedersehen-german-schools-profit-from-bosnias-emigration-fever/>

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