

Influence of diaspora on bosnia and hercegovina



- By: Matea Safhauzer

In order for us to understand and elaborate on the concept of diaspora, firstly we need to define it. The term diaspora is assigned to groups of people with an ethnic belonging which were forced to leave their original and traditional home country under certain pressures. The people that left their home towns later settled down all around the world in smaller geographic areas. In an attempt to define diaspora, William Safran gives 6 main characteristics of this phenomenon: “ 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original ‘ centre’ to two or more ‘ peripheral,” or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be — fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return –when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. The status of diaspora can also be related with a minority, for example a religious minority. In later years, scholars made differences between the types of diaspora and they vary from causes such as trade or labour migrations, imperialism, politics and economy. In this

essay, I will focus only on the political, economic and social ties that Bosnian diaspora has on its country and the contribution that it receives.

The number of Bosnians that live outside of the country is estimated to be 38 percent of the whole Bosnian population or in other words, 1.4 million Bosnians. The number one reason of the fled of population is the tragic war that occurred in these areas. Around 800000 people left the country in just two years, from 1993-1994. (Kupiszewski 2009: 437). Even after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, migration of people out of the country continued. There is a great number and maybe even a majority of young diaspora that is very talented and educated. One of the speculations about this trend of outward migration is closely linked to the unstable economy and political growth. Although the socio-economic situation is improving and becoming closer to the European countries, it still faces many problems and one of them is the lack of job opportunities. In 2010 Bosnian and Hercegovina had an unemployment rate of 27, 2% according to the Agency for Statistics. This rate was the largest amongst people who were between the age of 15-24, it was at a rate of 57, 5%. These tragic statistics force young generations out of the country in search for a job and better economic opportunities. The average amount of money that comes into Bosnia from the diaspora in one year is estimated to be around 3.1 billion Convertible Marks. The remittances from diaspora are 6 times larger than foreign direct investments and 3 times larger than the help that the international community gives to Bosnia and Hercegovina. When talking in economic and business terms, there has been a conclusion that people in Bosnia that receive help from diaspora are more likely to open and start a business of

their own than the people living in the rural parts of the country receiving no help from anybody on the outside. Therefore, remittances surely have a positive effect on employment in this case. As it is visible, a lot of households depend on diaspora for their survival. One of the strategic documents that have been implemented is the strategy of development of science in Bosnia and Hercegovina 2010-2015. This strategy suggests that a big number of diaspora is willing to engage in the fields of scientific research. Two activities under this strategy were more visible than others where one of them is the creation of laws that allow unbothered transfer of knowledge and technologies and the engagement of foreign scientists in domestic scientific research, as well as engaging Bosnian researchers that live outside of the country. The second activity is related to enabling institutions in BiH that scientists from the Diaspora awarded the status of an associate scientific advisor . There exists another strategy that deals with development in Bosnia and Hercegovina and under its principles there is a suggestion of creating favourable conditions for attracting investments, savings and remittance measures from diaspora. In order for our country to prosper, a great deal of help is needed from our diaspora. The option of using diaspora and potential diaspora can be a strong force in economic development and in the creation of new jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities, new technologies, sciences and in the development of the whole society in general. A big role in the creation and implementation of policies in the field of migration play government institutions. They deal with some of the questions that diaspora poses both at the level of entities and Brcko Distrikt. The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Hercegovina has the direct jurisdiction when it comes to <https://assignbuster.com/influence-of-diaspora-on-bosnia-and-hercegovina/>

diaspora. These ministries deal with the issues of protecting human rights and the rights of the refugees both in their home country and in the host country as well as questions that are closely related to migration. The sector for migration has the key role of appointing and determining the politics and its translation towards diaspora. In this sector there are only 10 people who deal with a wide spectre of questions dealing with how to make cooperation with diaspora organizations possible. They coordinate activities in the field of agriculture, culture, sports, science and educational cooperation. These organizations also give information and possibility of expert help to the diaspora in realizing their abilities in protecting their rights in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Organizations offer and give professional help to many incentives and they are familiar with European policies in the fields of migration and they have a clearer picture of its activities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has greater power towards the diaspora whose job is also to encourage, develop and coordinate cooperation with diaspora from BiH. Other ministries and government organizations need to work together in realizing strategies for the further development of cooperation between host countries and with the home countries of the diaspora. It is necessary to strengthen actions in the fields of common interest. Besides governmental organizations, there are many non-governmental organizations which act together in conducting and creating politics in the spheres of migration. These organizations are more focused on the sustainable return and the protection of refugees as well as illegal migrations, trafficking of people, the questions of asylum, and dealing with the issues of borders. The main focus here is therefore the politics of migration and its development. The cooperation between the Sector for Diaspora works well with non-

governmental sectors and international organizations which will in the future result in a larger amount of programs that will contribute to the promotion and development of migration politics. Under the Ministry of Human Right an analysis has been done to identify positive and negative factors that affect the possibilities of BH diaspora in participating in the development of their country. There are many factors that are involved here, both external and internal factors. Some of the strengths are highly professional, motivated staff, a well-defined internal structure of sectors, good knowledge about European and world politics in the spheres of migration and development, and professional guiding of the sectors as well as a clear vision of functioning. The possibilities here are to create heterogeneity of diaspora with the levels of qualification which make possible the creation of a wide spectre of incentives. There is also the possibility of the return of qualified people, and the interest of diaspora to help in the development of their home country is existent. Another factor that contributes to the development is a good cooperation between international organizations in BiH that deal with migration. The weakness of Bosnian diaspora in helping its country are a small number of staff in the sector, the absence of strategical documentation that would define the priority fields of action towards diaspora, stressing its potential of development. The threats that are present are the divisions of diaspora according to national and ethnic belonging. Also, there is not enough awareness of the potential that diaspora can bring to their home lands in terms of development. A lot of Bosnian population started feeling this sentiment towards their home lands and wish to return. Within them resides a nostalgic feeling. It is a fact that it is more difficult to live with other foreign nationalities and to be part of a culture that you do not belong to,

<https://assignbuster.com/influence-of-diaspora-on-bosnia-and-hercegovina/>

therefore, people that left Bosnia and Hercegovina wish to return to their home cities and be surrounded by friends and family, be a part of their own culture and speak their own language. The only obstacle here is the underdevelopment of BiH and people are aware of that. They do not want to return to a land where they have opportunities to prosper and grow. In order for this to change, internal changes need to be made first starting from the political issues facing this country and then moving on to its economy.

Finally to conclude, we can surely say that Bosnian diaspora plays a big role in helping Bosnia and Hercegovina growth, both economically and politically. Diaspora opens a new window of opportunity for businesses to grow and for research sectors to prosper with highly educated intellectuals and individuals. The remittances from diaspora cannot be compared with other investments coming from certain organizations and institutions. Because many households depend on this help from outside, relations between host countries and home lands need to be fostered.

References:

- Anon, (2014).(Blog)Available at: <http://amardeepnotes.blogspot.com/2010/06/william-safran-on-diasporas.html>(Accessed 15 May. 2014)
- Cigler, B. (2013) *Dijaspora-posve neiskoristena sansa*. (online) Al Jazeera Balkans. Available at: <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/dijaspora-posve-neiskoristena-sansa>(Accessed 15 May. 2014)
- Mhrr. gov. ba.(2014).(online)Available at: <http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/iseljenistvo/istrazivanja/default.aspx?id=1810&Tag=bs-BA>(Accessed 15 May. 2014)
- <https://assignbuster.com/influence-of-diaspora-on-bosnia-and-hercegovina/>

Perco, A. (2014) *Pomoc dijaspore kao razvojna sansa BiH* (online)

Novovrijeme. ba Available at: [http://novovrijeme. ba/pomoc-dijas-pore-kao-razvojna-sansa-bih/](http://novovrijeme.ba/pomoc-dijas-pore-kao-razvojna-sansa-bih/)(Accessed 15 May. 2014)

Valenta, M and Ramet, S. (2011). *The Bosnian Diaspora*. 1st ed. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate