

**Marek Mikuš's Presentation: "Indebtedness as a driver of emigration from Croatia: initial analysis and possible solutions"**

In recent decades, high rates of long-term or permanent emigration from Croatia, which have additionally increased in the period after the Global Financial Crisis of 2007–2008, are recognized as a significant social, economic and political issue. The range of drivers of this phenomenon discussed by existing scholarship and public discourse includes also the set of issues around personal indebtedness, debt collection and debt enforcement, but so far the relationship has not been explored more closely. Based on secondary data and an ongoing anthropological research on household debt in Croatia since 2016, this talk will present an initial qualitative analysis of debt-related drivers and motivational mechanisms that likely contributed to the recent wave of emigration. It will distinguish personal and collective dimension of the problem and point to a number of concrete relevant processes in the past two decades, such as an increase and market-based transformation of household lending, the increased incidence of predatory lending leading to inflated repayment and expropriation of debtors, and the establishment of a debt collection and enforcement systems that privileges the interests of creditors and the collection industry and offers very limited pathways out of overindebtedness. The talk will further discuss the relevant reforms in the regulation of household lending and debt enforcement as well as the remaining problems and possibilities for progress. Among models and solutions adopted in other countries, the talk will draw especially on a more recent research on the same set of issues in the comparable context of Slovakia to explore more in-depth the relevant reforms there, such as the liberalization of personal bankruptcy and the introduction of a system of debt advice.