



## **NEW TRENDS IN POTENTIAL MIGRATION FROM ALBANIA**

Ilir Gëdeshi and Russell King

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## Abbreviations

BoA	Bank of Albania
CESS	Center for Economic and Social Studies
ETF	European Training Foundation
EVS	European Value Study
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INSTAT	Albanian National Institute of Statistics
IOM	International Organization for Migration
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UK	The United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States of America
WB	The World Bank



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*The Authors*

## 1. Introduction

From the point of view of migration scholars, Albania is a wonderful laboratory for the study of migration in its various forms – international, internal, return migration etc.<sup>1</sup> It is also a country which exemplifies well the ambiguous relationship between migration and development. On the one hand, it is clear that emigration has been a major element in Albania's transition to a more 'modern' economy and society. At the macro scale, remittances have contributed an essential plank in the structure of the country's GDP since the early 1990s; whilst at the micro level they have given significant support to the survival and progress of hundreds of thousands of Albanian households.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the scale of the migration has been such as to unbalance the population of Albania, leaving the country divided between the chaotically urbanised pole of the Tirana region and the depopulating rural uplands of the north, south and interior.

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1. This point is argued by several authors, e.g. **Barjaba K., King R.** (2005) Introducing and theorising migration, in: **King R., Mai N., Schwandner-Sievers S.** (eds) *The New Albanian Migration*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1–28; **King R.** (2005) Albania as a laboratory for the study of migration and development, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 7(2): 133–155; **Carletto G., Davis B., Stampini M., Zezza A.** (2006) A country on the move: international migration in post-communist Albania, *International Migration Review*, 40(4): 767–785.

2. See **De Soto H., Gordon P., Gëdeshi I., Sinoimeri Z.** (2002) *Poverty in Albania: A Qualitative Assessment*. Washington DC: World Bank Technical Paper No. 520; **de Zwager N., Gëdeshi I., Germenji E., Nikas C.** (2005) *Competing for Remittances*. Tirana: International Organization for Migration; **Vullnetari J., King R.** (2011) *Remittances, Gender and Development: Albania's Society and Economy in Transition*. London: I.B. Tauris.

The multiple interactions of several population and migration variables cause an overall concern for the demographic and economic future of Albania. First, the scale of post-1990 emigration, proportionate to the Albanian population, has been the highest in Europe and one of the highest in the world. According to World Bank figures, within just two decades, hence by 2010, the country had produced a ‘stock’ of 1,438,300 emigrants, equivalent to 45.4% of the population residing in Albania.<sup>3</sup> Second, the flow of returning migrants has been limited, boosted only by the economic crisis in Greece and (less so) in Italy, the two main destination countries of Albanian migrants. Third, the scale and demographic selectivity of the outflow (mainly younger persons have departed) has taken away part of the reproductively active age-group, whose fertility is transferred abroad, where their children are born. Coupled with the decline in the total fertility rate (the average number of children born to each Albanian woman over her reproductive life) to below the population replacement level of 2.1, this implies an absolute reduction in the Albanian population, threatening the country’s long-term demographic future.

And fourthly, potential migration, the specific focus of this report, remains high, meaning that a significant share of the Albanian population living inside the country would like to, or intends to, emigrate in the future. Hence, what we observe in Albania, as in many other countries in post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe, is a toxic demographic cocktail of high emigration, low return, high future migration potential, and low and falling birth-rate. At an aggregate level, Albania shows few signs, after nearly three decades of large-scale emigration, of making the migration transition from a country of net emigration to one of net

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3. **World Bank** (2011) *Migration and Remittances Factbook*. Washington DC: World Bank, p. 54.

immigration.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, within Albania, due to the interacting dynamics of international and internal migration, we can also observe a kind of population implosion, with an emptying out of the peripheral rural upland areas, which cover the majority of this predominantly hilly and mountainous country.

### *1.1 What is potential migration and how can it be measured?*

The notion of potential migration is not well embedded or widely discussed in the migration literature.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it is sporadically referred to in the journal literature and in recent debates on migration trends and policy.<sup>6</sup> According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), potential migration is ‘the absolute number of adults planning or preparing to migrate ... relative to the size of the population in the respective country’.<sup>7</sup> Scoping the scattered extant literature on potential migration, we find that it can be conceptualised, calculated or predicted in two main ways: statistically, based on the ‘macrologics’ of economic and demographic parameters (where the

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4. Hence Albania is yet to follow the example of several other Southern European countries, such as Italy, Greece and Spain, which experienced a ‘migration turnaround’ during the 1970s and 1980s from mass emigration before to mass immigration after. See **King R., Fielding A. J., Black R.** (1997) The international migration turnaround in Southern Europe, in: **King R., Black R.** (eds) *Southern Europe and the New Immigrations*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1–25.

5. Most standard textbooks on migration do not discuss potential migration, and it is not a chapter title, subheading or index entry.

6. See, for instance, **Elitok S.P.** (2010) **Estimating the Potential Migration from Turkey to the European Union: A Literature Survey**. Hamburg: Hamburg Institute for International Economics Policy Paper, 3–11; **Lovo S.** (2014) Potential migration and subjective well-being in Europe, *IZA Journal of Migration*, 3(1): 24.

7. **Lazcko F., Tjaden J., Auer D.** (2017) *Measuring Global Migration Potential, 2010–2015*. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, Data Briefing Series 9, p. 1.

phrase is often reversed – ‘migration potential’); or by surveys which ask respondents about their future migration intentions, desires, plans and preparations.

In the first case, potential migration is often predicted via gravity-type models based on macro-economic variables such as income/wage differentials and gradients: the greater the difference or the steeper the gradient across space, the higher the volume of migration expected, flowing from low wage and high unemployment regions or countries to high wage, low unemployment destinations.<sup>8</sup> A similar neoclassical framework can be applied to demographic differentiation, looking at population density, population increase and, more specifically, the growth of active-age labour force growth (or decline) rates. A country or region with a forecast decline in working-age population cohorts can be said to have high immigration potential, whereas one with a predicted rapid increase in working-age people can be said to have high emigration potential. These geographically differentiated surpluses and deficits in labour force supply and demand can further be classified with respect to specific education/skill levels and professional sectors – ranging for instance from medical professionals (in short supply in many wealthy countries) to seasonal agricultural workers (often not catered for within an advanced country’s domestic labour supply).

Still arguing at the level of macro-logics, potential migration can also be seen within the frame of more time-dependent structural variables, such as economic downturns, political instability or environmental fragility. Hence, an economic crisis, such as that which affected Greece from 2008 until the early-mid 2010s (and which is still to some extent ongoing), would have several

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8. **Boyle P., Halfacree K., Robinson V.** (1998) *Exploring Contemporary Migration*. London: Longman, 46–50.

effects in terms of potential migration trends: a new increase in the emigration of Greek nationals, a decrease in the inflow of immigrants (e.g. from Albania), and an increase in the return migration of immigrants (e.g. from Greece to Albania). Other flows might also be foreseen: a decrease in return migration of Greeks from abroad, and the relatively under-researched flow of onward migration, whereby (for example) crisis-affected Albanian migrants in Greece, instead of returning to Albania, which may not be an attractive proposition for them, onward-migrate to another country where they can find better economic prospects, such as Germany or the United Kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

Moving now to the second way of grasping and operationalising the concept of potential migration, by asking people about their intentions via direct surveys (questionnaires, interviews etc.), here we take inspiration from recent Gallup and IOM research,<sup>10</sup> and frame our own survey in that light. Especially for questionnaire surveys with pre-defined and standard questions, there are two critical decisions that need to be made in regard to question formulation; these decisions are particularly important if comparative research is planned, cross-nationally or through time. The first, and most important, is how the key question is phrased, e.g. with reference to desire, intention, plans or preparations. There are clear, if nuanced, differences in meaning attached to the following examples of how the question is posed:

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9. **Karamoschou C.** (2018) *The Albanian Second Migration: Albanians Fleeing the Greek Crisis and Onward Migrating to the UK*. Brighton: University of Sussex, Sussex Centre for Migration Research Working Paper No. 93.

10. **Lazcko F., Tjaden J., Auer D.** (2017) *Measuring Global Migration Potential, 2010–2015*. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, Data Briefing Series No. 9, p. 1.; see also **Esipova N., Ray J., Srinivasan R.** (2011) *The World's Potential Migrants: Who Are They, Where They Want to Go, and Why it Matters*. Washington DC: Gallup.

- Would you like to migrate in the future?
- Do you intend to migrate?
- Have you made plans to migrate?

These differences, relatively clear in English, may become compromised if the survey questions are translated into other languages in a comparative study.

The second aspect is the time-frame over which the desires, intentions or plans for migration are specified – within the next year or, say, 5 or 10 years. Different time horizons can be factored into the same question.

Taking the example of the IOM/Gallup surveys on potential migration, these asked three main questions, respectively about migration desires, plans and preparations. These are worded as follows:<sup>11</sup>

- Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move permanently to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in this country?

For those who expressed a desire to emigrate,

- Are you planning to move permanently to another country, or not?

Again, for those who answered affirmatively to the above question:

- Have you made preparations for this move?

‘Preparation’ implies applying for a visa, saving money for the

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11. **Lazcko F., Tjaden J., Auer D.** (2017) *Measuring Global Migration Potential, 2010–2015*. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, Data Briefing Series No. 9, p.7.

journey and (where relevant) learning the language of the target country.

Whilst potential migration surveys can provide some indication of future actual migration flows, the link may be quite tenuous because of the substantive difference between the desire or aspiration to migrate and the ability to do so.<sup>12</sup> Results from the IOM/Gallup survey data for 160 countries for the period 2010–2015 clearly demonstrate this statistical disjuncture. Whilst more than 700 million people around the world express a general desire to migrate to another country, less than 10% of them (66 million) are actually planning to migrate within the next 12 months, and of these, only about one in three (23 million) say that they are taking active preparatory steps to realise their plan – this represents just 0.4% of the world’s adult population.<sup>13</sup> Globally, those planning and preparing to migrate are more likely to be male, young, single, living in urban areas, and in possession of at least secondary education.<sup>14</sup>

Other studies from more geographically specific parts of the world nuance these global findings presented above. Still using the Gallup World Poll dataset, but just for Europe, Lovo<sup>15</sup> demonstrates that, rather than per capita income or (un)employment, potential migration is more closely linked to respondents’ subjective wellbeing. Those with a lower level of subjective wellbeing are more likely to want to migrate, and the desired destination

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12. See **Carling J.** (2002) Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28(1): 5–42.

13. **Lazcko F., Tjaden J., Auer D.** (2017) *Measuring Global Migration Potential, 2010–2015*. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, Data Briefing Series No. 9, p.1.

14. *Ibid.*

15. **Lovo S.** (2014) Potential migration and subjective well-being in Europe, *IZA Journal of Migration*, 3(1): 24.

country is chosen with reference to its perceived quality of life. In a Latin American study, potential migrants were likely to be ‘frustrated achievers’ – i.e. survey respondents with high objective success, but with low satisfaction with their lives.<sup>16</sup> Elitok’s study of potential migration from Turkey to Europe likewise argued for a shift in emphasis away from purely quantitative economic predictors to more qualitative aspects of migration planning.<sup>17</sup>

## ***1.2 Overview of the report***

The remainder of this study is organised as follows. Sections 2, 3 and 4 are further contributions to setting the background context. Respectively they present further details on the changing dynamics of Albanian migration, hypotheses on the links between migration and development in the Albanian context, and the methodology of the main survey which constitutes the empirical backbone of this report – a questionnaire administered face-to-face to 1,421 households distributed across the diverse regions of the country during 2018. Section 5, the longest in the study, presents the results of the questionnaire survey, which includes a comparison with the findings of a similar survey carried out a decade earlier. In setting out the results of the study, the following key questions are addressed in successive subsections:

- How big is potential migration in Albania, and is it increasing or decreasing over time? (subsection 5.1)
- What are the characteristics of those who are the most likely to want or intend to migrate? (5.2)

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16. **Graham C., Markowitz J.** (2011) Aspiration and happiness of potential Latin American migrants, *Journal of Social Research and Policy*, 2(2): 9–25.

17. **Elitok S.P.** (2010) *Estimating the Potential Migration from Turkey to the European Union: A Literature Survey*. Hamburg: Hamburg Institute for International Economics Policy Paper, 3–11.

- Which countries do they plan to migrate to? (5.3)
- What are the main reasons for wanting to migrate? (5.4)

In subsection 5.5 we pay specific attention to a subsample of returned migrants who answered the questionnaire, asking them where they were abroad, for how long, when they returned, why they returned, and their desire and reasons for re-emigration. Section 6 presents the main conclusions in terms of ‘take-home’ findings, and provides a set of recommendations of interest to policy-makers.

## 2. The Albanian migration background

As was pointed out in the introduction, Albania has experienced an intense period of emigration since 1990, such that, by 2010, it ranked first in Europe and ninth in the world for the scale of its emigrant stock indexed against the resident population in Albania.<sup>18</sup>

Although there is an earlier history of relatively small-scale emigration dating to before the communist era, the modern story of emigration starts only in 1990–91 with the fall of the communist regime and the opening of the previously closed borders. The exodus was particularly intense during the first emigration decade, and by 2000 an estimated 800,000 Albanians were living and working abroad, mostly in Greece and Italy.<sup>19</sup> Much of this migration was

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18. Of the eight countries ranked above Albania (West Bank/Gaza, Samoa, Grenada, St Kitts-Nevis, Guyana, Monaco, Antigua-Barbuda, Tonga), all but one (West Bank/Gaza, 4 million) had much smaller populations than Albania’s 3 million, and most also had longer histories of migration. See **World Bank** (2011) *Migration and Remittances Factbook*. Washington DC: World Bank.

19. **Barjaba K.** (2000) Contemporary patterns in Albanian migration, *South-East Europe Review*, 3(2): 57–64.

spontaneous, irregular and consisted of young males seeking work and escape from the post-transition political and economic chaos that the country was going through during those years. Towards the end of the decade, regularisation schemes, first in Italy, and then in Greece, enabled many of the migrants to normalise their condition and to bring in family members. Nevertheless, in Greece especially, much of the migration remained temporary or of a to-and-fro nature, whilst many migrants who had initially migrated short-term to Greece subsequently moved to Italy, seen as a more desirable destination from the point of view of work, incomes and social integration.<sup>20</sup>

The second emigration decade, the 2000s, saw the Albanian outflow continue, but at a less frenetic pace. This slackening of emigration was due to the large scale of the already-departed in the 1990s, so that the reservoir of potential migrants had for a time been partially drained, and also due to the better economic performance of the country after the chaotic years of the 1990s. During the second decade most of the emigration continued to be directed towards Albania's two close-by EU neighbours, Greece and Italy, where family and social networks channelled new migrants to these by-now-established destinations, but the destination geography also diversified to include other European countries, notably the United Kingdom, as well as North America.<sup>21</sup> By the end of the decade, estimates of the number of Albanians abroad exceeded 1 million, with the World Bank, as already noted, offering the figure of 1.4 million.<sup>22</sup>

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20. **King R., Mai N.** (2008) *Out of Albania: From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy*. New York: Berghahn.

21. **King R.** (2003) Across the sea and over the mountains: documenting Albanian migration, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 119(3): 283–309.

22. Estimates of the scale of Albanian emigration naturally vary according to the method and sources used. The World Bank figure of 1.44 million for 2010 rests on various countries' estimates of their 'stock' of Albanian migrants as

The third emigration decade, which is now coming to an end, has been characterised by a renewed intensity, new features, and new destinations. These latest flows peaked at mid-decade when around 66,000 Albanians were recorded as seeking asylum in various EU countries, primarily in Germany.<sup>23</sup> Such renewed high emigration flows reflect the continuing elevated migration potential of the Albanian population. According to the Gallup World Poll data for the period 2010–2015, Albania ranks sixth in the world in terms of the percentage of adults ‘planning to migrate’. In fact, it is the only European country in the top 20, most of which are African countries.<sup>24</sup> The Albanian figure of 9.1% is only preceded by Togo (13.1%), Liberia (12.6%), Comoros (11.2%), Guinea (10.5%) and Sierra Leone (10.2%). Those countries which come just behind Albania, with figures ranging between 8–9%, are also states whose populations are afflicted by widespread poverty and/or civil strife (Djibouti, Sudan, DR Congo, Haiti, Libya).

If the key question is broadened to ‘desire to migrate’, then the Gallup World Poll potential migration figures for Albania become

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well as on Albanian official sources. Based on the intercensal residual method, the Albanian national statistics agency, INSTAT, calculated a net emigration of 600,000 for the period 1990–2001, and 481,000 for the decade 2001–2011; therefore a total net emigration of 1.08 million for the two decades. The difference between the two figures (1.44 million and 1.08 million) can probably be accounted for by births to Albanian emigrants living abroad, which boost the stock figure but are excluded by the intercensal residual method. See **World Bank** (2011) *Migration and Remittances Factbook*. Washington DC: World Bank; **INSTAT** (2004) *Migration in Albania. Population and housing Census 2001*. Tirana: Institute of Statistics; **INSTAT** (2012) *Population and Housing Census 2011*. Tirana: Institute of Statistics.

23. **Eurostat Newsrelease** (2016) Asylum in the EU member states: record number of over 1.2 million first-time asylum seekers registered in 2015, *Eurostat Newsrelease* 44, 4 March.

24. **Lazcko F., Tjaden J., Auer D.** (2017) *Measuring Global Migration Potential, 2010–2015*. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, Data Briefing Series No. 9.

even more dramatic, and potentially disturbing. On this criterion, potential migration from Albania is 56% according to the survey data for 2013–16, equal to the figure for Haiti and exceeded only by Sierra Leone (62%). Moreover the 20 percentage point increase over the Albanian figure for 2010–12 is the biggest of any country in the global top-20 list.<sup>25</sup>

The evident increase in both real and potential migration in Albania's third migration decade – further confirmed by the survey data presented later in this report – raises important questions over the causes of this migratory resurgence. Once again, our more focused analysis based on questionnaire responses will provide some more detailed answers. For now, we sketch in some general economic trends which, at the macro level, can be argued to underpin the increased migration trends.<sup>26</sup>

First, the global economic crisis which started in late 2008 had both direct and indirect effects on the Albanian economy. According to World Bank data, Albanian GDP growth fell from an annual average of 5.7% during 2000–2008 to 2.6% during 2009–2017, whilst unemployment rose from 13% in 2008 to 17.5% in 2014 (and 32.5% for those aged 15–29), to then drop back down to 13.8% in 2017 (25.9% for age group 15–29).<sup>27</sup> Remittances, a major factor

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25. **Esipova N., Ray J., Pugliese A.** (2017) Number of potential migrants worldwide tops 700 million, *Gallup News*, 8 June. Another, more specific, indicator of potential migration is the rising number of Albanian citizens applying for the US diversity visa lottery: 87,000 in 2011 rising to 199,000 in 2015. These trends are also presented and discussed in our earlier paper: **Gëdeshi I., King R.** (2018) *Research Study into Brain Gain: Reversing Brain Drain with the Albanian Scientific Diaspora*. Tirana: United Nations Development Programme, 11–13.

26. See **Gëdeshi I., de Zwager N.** (2012) Effects of the global crisis on migration and remittances in Albania, in: **Sirkeci I., Cohen J.H., Ratha D.** (eds) *Migration and Remittances during the Global Financial Crisis and Beyond*. Washington DC: World Bank, 237–254.

27. **World Bank** (2018) *Higher but Fragile Growth: Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No. 14*. Washington DC: World Bank.

in reducing poverty and in helping Albanian households to survive, fell sharply from 957 million euros (12.3% of GDP) in 2007, to 597 million euros (5.8% of GDP) in 2015.<sup>28</sup> This was due in particular to the knock-on effects of the severe financial crisis in Greece and (somewhat less severely) in Italy, the two main host countries of Albanian migrants, who suffered reduced incomes and rising unemployment as a result. In these countries, the unemployment rate amongst Albanian immigrants rose to 24.7% in Greece and 12.1% in Italy, thereby slowing down new immigration flows and hastening return migration.<sup>29</sup>

A joint study carried out by INSTAT and IOM reported that, during the period 2009–2013, 133,544 Albanian emigrants aged 18+ returned to Albania, driven above all by the loss of their jobs in Greece and Italy.<sup>30</sup> Given the lack of good economic prospects in Albania, the same study revealed that one-third of the returnees wanted to re-emigrate. Perhaps the only surprise was that this share was not higher. In our own survey, we found that returnees had a higher intention to migrate compared to the similar-age respondents with no migration history. Return migration is also a crucial component of the so-called migration–development nexus, reviewed briefly in the next section.

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28. Data from the Bank of Albania.

29. **Arslan C., Dumont J.-C., Kone Z., Moulan Y., Ozden C., Parsons C., Xenogiani, T.** (2014) *A New Profile of Migrants in the Aftermath of the Recent Economic Crisis*. Paris: OECD, Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper No. 160.

30. **INSTAT, IOM** (2014) *Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania*. Tirana: Institute of Statistics/International Organization for Migration.

### 3. Migration, development and underdevelopment: theoretical linkages

Given the scale and intensity of emigration from Albania over the last three decades, Albania is an appropriate illustration of the multiple but often ambiguous links between migration, development and underdevelopment – indicative again of its ‘laboratory’ status for students of both development and migration.<sup>31</sup>

There is now a wide-ranging literature on the relationship between migration and development – on what has come to be called the ‘migration–development nexus’.<sup>32</sup> In most cases this debate is oriented towards understanding how international migration can contribute to the development of the home country. Not to be ignored are other linkages in the system, including migration’s impact on the receiving country and the influence of development on migration: for instance, does development lead to more, or less, migration? Also relevant, especially in the context of the present study, are possible future migration trends, in the form of potential migration.

Looking at the migration–development set of interrelationships in the round, and generalising rather grandly, the literature identifies two competing theoretical stances, one optimistic (a kind of ‘virtuous circle’) and the other pessimistic (a ‘vicious circle’). Over time – for instance since the onset of the boom in labour migration in Europe in the early postwar era – the preference for one theoretical position

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31. **King R.** (2005) Albania as a laboratory for the study of migration and development, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 7(2): 133–155.

32. **Van Hear N., Sørensen N.N.** eds. (2003) *The Migration–Development Nexus*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. For a more theoretically informed discussion of the migration–development relationship, see **de Haas H.** (2010) Migration and development: a theoretical perspective, *International Migration Review*, 44(1): 227–264.

over the other has oscillated like a swinging pendulum.<sup>33</sup>

In the optimistic scenario, migration has the potential to achieve a so-called triple-win outcome – beneficial for the sending country, for the receiving country, and for the migrants themselves.<sup>34</sup> The sending country is able to ‘export’ its surplus and unemployed labour force, receiving in return compensating inflows of remittances to support households and communities left behind and to stimulate investment and development. At a later stage, migrants may return, bringing with them financial capital in the form of savings, human capital in the form of qualifications, training and work experience, and ‘social remittances’ in the form of more ‘modern’ ideas and attitudes to social reform.<sup>35</sup>

For the destination country, several economic benefits can be argued. Through migration it receives an extra supply of ‘ready-made’ labour (whose costs of upbringing and education it has not been required to bear) to feed into its economy in various labour-market sectors where, often, locally sourced labour is in short supply. These sectors include labour shortages at the upper end of the skills spectrum (e.g. doctors, engineers, IT specialists) and, on a larger scale, in lower-skilled ‘3D’ jobs which are typically ‘dirty, dangerous and demeaning’. Here, typical examples include seasonal agricultural work, construction labour, domestic cleaning, and personal/bodily

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33. The optimistic scenario was predominant in the 1950s and 1960s (‘neoclassic’ interpretation) and in the 1990s and 2000s (‘neoliberal’ interpretation), whilst the pessimistic scenario was more vocally articulated during the 1970s and 1980s (‘neomarxist’ interpretation), and (according to some) in the current decade of the 2010s. See **de Haas H.** (2012) The migration and development pendulum: a critical review of research and policy, *International Migration*, 50(3): 8–25.

34. **King R., Vullnetari J.** (2009) Remittances, return, diaspora: framing the debate in the context of Albania and Kosovo, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 9(4): 385–406.

35. See **King R.** (2018) Is migration a form of development aid given by poor to rich countries? *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 39(2): 114–128.

care work in homes and care institutions.

Thirdly, for the migrants themselves, emigration functions as a route out of poverty and a pathway towards a better life through access to higher incomes, more employment security, enhanced career prospects, and better futures for their families and children. These benefits can either be enjoyed abroad if the whole family unit migrates or, if part of the family remains in the home country, the material quality of life is improved by the receipt of remittances (which can be invested in housing improvements and in the health and education of children) or by investment projects developed by the migrant upon return.

So far, so good; but there is another side to the migration and development story, which is the negative or pessimistic scenario. In this framework, we substitute the word ‘underdevelopment’ for ‘development’. Migration is seen initially as a response to the condition of underdevelopment in the home country (as in the ‘virtuous circle’ model), but then this outmigration leads to the further impoverishment, not the development, of the country of origin. This is due to a series of ‘vicious circle’ mechanisms, including excessive population loss, brain drain, depopulation of peripheral regions (leading to the closure of shops, schools, rural health centres, transport links etc.), structural and psychological dependency on remittances, exploitation of migrant workers in low-paid and insecure jobs abroad, the painful separation of family members and abandonment of the elderly. It is not hard to see how many of these negative syndromes resonate with the experience of Albania and its migrants.

That being said, it is extraordinarily difficult to draw up a balance-sheet of the pros and cons of migration for Albania and its people. One way of approaching this question would be to pose another: what would Albania be like if emigration had not taken place?

This, too, is almost unimaginable except in terms of a landscape of poverty, hunger, and both rural and urban overcrowding; and, possibly instead, even more massive rural-urban migration than actually occurred in the decades following 1990.<sup>36</sup> So, undoubtedly, migration has been part of the salvation of the country in the wake of the chaos of the economic and political transition; as affirmed earlier, it has shored up the country's balance of payments and enabled a large share of Albanian households and families to survive through difficult times. Albanian migrants abroad have both suffered and prospered. They have been exploited – overworked, underpaid, cheated – especially in their early years of working abroad, but over time have surmounted these obstacles and those of a widespread discrimination and stigmatisation, to achieve stable settlement and remarkably rapid integration.<sup>37</sup>

The biggest unknown concerns how migration will impact on Albania's (under)development in the future. Recent trends suggest that the 'migration transition' from net emigration to net immigration is still some way off. As the impact of the Greek crisis showed, Albania is still cast in a dependent and vulnerable position with regard to negative economic trends in key host countries. An established channel for emigration has been partially closed off by Greek economic retrenchment, and a quasi-forced return migration has taken place of those who became unemployed. These involuntary returnees are likely to have less development impact than the return of successful skilled migrants – but these are the

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36. One probable impact of zero or low emigration would have been greatly increased internal migration to major cities and the coast. But these rural-urban migrations have already taken place on a fairly massive scale, especially to the Tirana–Durrës conurbation. For a detailed analysis of the complex relationships between internal and international migration see **Vullnetari J.** (2012) *Albania on the Move: Links between Internal and International Migration*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

37. **King R., Mai N.** (2008) *Out of Albania: From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy*. New York: Berghahn.

migrants who, on the whole, are the least likely to return, since they are unwilling to sacrifice their success abroad for uncertainty and lack of opportunities at home. Moreover, the Gallup World Poll survey data on potential future migration indicate that, at least in terms of aspiration, large shares of the Albanian population see no future in staying in their country and would like to leave.

In the rest of this study report, we present our own original survey data on potential migration, cross-referencing the responses with several economic, social and demographic variables to have a more precise indication of the character and likely destinations of future migration.

#### 4. Methodology

The research for this study is based on primary and secondary data analysis. It consists of a literature review on potential migration, as well as qualitative and mainly quantitative methods. The latter consist of a household survey questionnaire of 23 questions administered to 1,421 households, and semi-structured interviews with potential migrants, officials and experts from various districts of Albania. No single family or individual participated in more than one research method.

A three-stage cluster sample was deployed. In the first stage, the sample was broken down by Albania's 12 prefectures, using the proportional distribution by population 18 years old and above, based on data from the 2011 Census.<sup>38</sup> The surveys were distributed proportionally for each prefecture. In each prefecture, Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were then selected and, in each of them, in the third sampling stage, 14 households were subject to the survey.

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38. INSTAT (2012) *Population and Housing Census 2011*. Tirana: Institute of Statistics.

In each PSU, the households were selected randomly. The random selection was conducted by experts of the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). The research team was provided with cards specifying the households and families to be surveyed. According to the methodology, the surveyor would visit the designated family up to four times, on different days and at different times of the day.

The research team achieved 1,421 door-to-door surveys across all districts of the country. The survey on potential migration was part of a broader survey conducted with households in the framework of the European Value Study (EVS).<sup>39</sup> The potential migration module consisted of 23 questions on potential migration, including five questions which were specific to returned migrants. In addition, from the EVS questionnaire, all the social-demographic data of the respondents were abstracted. These data provided information on age, gender, civil status, family composition, ethnicity, highest educational achievement, employment status, qualification level, household income, place of residence (city, village), trust (confidence) in institutions, attitude toward immigrants, etc. The team conducted face-to-face interviews, through a printed questionnaire, with one person per household, aged 18 years old or above. Those respondents who had previous migratory experience answered the five questions on the return. In this case, a returnee was considered a person who had lived and worked for at least one year abroad and had returned to Albania at least three months before the survey. The potential migration survey required around 12 minutes to complete.

Potential migration survey data were compared with data from a similar survey on potential migration and on returning migrants

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39. The European Values Study is conducted once in ten years in all European countries. The EVS is a large-scale, cross-national, longitudinal survey research programme on basic human values like life, family, work, religion, politics and society. It provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values and opinions of citizens all over Europe.

carried out by CESS at the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007, in the framework of a project funded by the European Training Foundation (ETF).<sup>40</sup> The comparison of the data, over an eleven-year horizon, revealed new trends regarding potential migration in Albania. Also, for this study, we used other surveys and interviews realised by CESS in the last decade.<sup>41</sup>

In the survey process, some pitfalls emerged. The first one pertained to the fact that a large number of respondents were over 40 years old. This is explained by the fact that, in many families, the persons who were at home at the moment of the survey and were willing to be interviewed were over this age. Also, in some villages, many young people were absent due to the high level of international migration. As a result, the total number of respondents aged 18–40 was 575, or 40.5% of the total survey. Much of our ensuing analysis is based on this age-group. Another problem that was identified was the slightly higher number of women respondents than men, which does not represent the real gender ratio of the Albanian population. Lastly, in some large cities such as Tirana, Durrës, Vlora and Shkodra the incidence of refusing to fill the survey, mainly due to a lack of time, was higher.

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40. **European Training Foundation** (2007) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF.

41. This study also uses some data from two other large surveys realised in the framework of two projects: ‘Global Crisis and Migration: Monitoring a Key Transmission Channel for the Albanian Economy’ (UNDP, WB, IOM, 2010); and ‘Strengthening the link between migration and development through developing and testing replicable migration-related products and services for migrants and their communities’ (IFAD, 2008–2010).

## 5. Results of the survey: 2018 compared to 2007

The following findings are based on our analysis of the potential migration survey results relating to the intention to migrate, reasons for migration and relevant push factors, directions of potential flows, return of migrants and the correlation between return and potential migration. In addition, comparison with the 2007 survey data enables us to show clearly some new features and trends of potential migration in Albania as well as to formulate some policy recommendations.

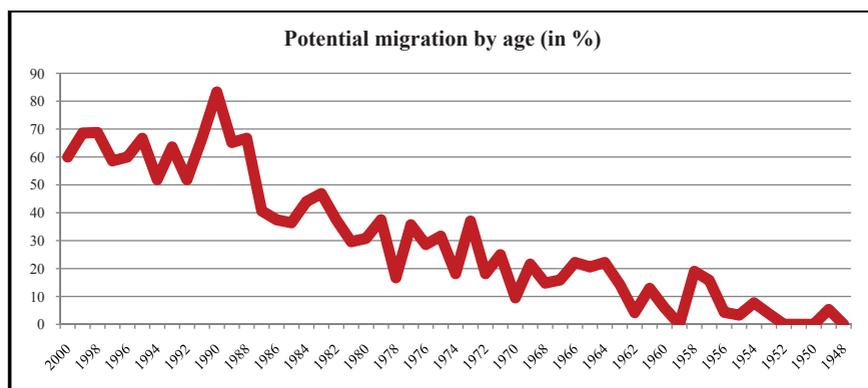
Note that the phrasing of the key question in the surveys was about *intention* to migrate (the literal translation of the question from Albanian is ‘Do you think to migrate...?’). It should be pointed out that there is a subtle difference between intention and desire to migrate. Desire may not automatically imply intention (people may *want* to migrate but have little intention of doing so because of the perceived and actual barriers to migration); and conversely intention may not necessarily reflect desire (migration may be seen as ‘inevitable’ or the ‘only option’, yet there may be no actual desire to leave).

### 5.1. *How big is potential migration?*

Figure 1 shows that potential migration affects almost all those aged 18 years old and older. However, from now on, the findings of our study are based mainly on the population aged 18–40 years, which is selected for two main reasons. First, this is the most active segment of the Albanian population and apparently shows the highest concentration in the trend of potential migration. After this age, the trend, as noted in Figure 1, declines notably. The second reason is related to the comparison we want to draw *vis-à-*

vis another survey on potential migration conducted by CESS and funded by the European Training Foundation (ETF) in late 2006 and early 2007, based on the 18–40 age segment.<sup>42</sup> The comparison of the data from these two surveys, for the same age group, helps to see more clearly the new trends in potential migration from Albania over an eleven-year horizon.

**Figure 1. Potential migration by age (in %)**



Source: CESS Potential migration survey, 2018.

According to the survey data, 52% of the Albanian population aged 18–40 years old intend to migrate from Albania. Compared to the 2007 survey, when potential migration was at 44.2%, the push to migrate is now around 8 percentage points higher.<sup>43</sup> The increase can be explained by social and economic factors, which we will elaborate on in the following paragraphs.

42. **European Training Foundation** (2007) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF.

43. **European Training Foundation** (2007) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF; **Sabadie J. A., Avato J., Bardak U., Panzica F., Popova N.** (2010) *Migration and Skills. The Experience of Migrant Workers from Albania, Egypt, Moldova, and Tunisia*. Washington DC: World Bank.

The intention to migrate (on such a large scale) is related to the projections people have for their own future, especially for the future of their children. On the one hand, it is a reflection of the real economic, social and political situation in the home country; on the other hand, it reflects the potential opportunities in the host country.

This perception of the people about their future is related first of all to economic factors. The global economic crisis that started in the second half of 2008 took its toll on the Albanian economy, as was noted in Section 2. Annual GDP growth halved and unemployment increased sharply.<sup>44</sup> Another important economic variable, remittances, also declined sharply. This, in turn, contributed to an increase in the incidence of poverty in Albanian households, a phenomenon that had been almost halved in the period 2000–2008.<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, the seasonal and long-term international emigration, primarily to Greece and Italy, that had been a key mechanism for Albanian households to cope with poverty in the first two decades, could no longer play such a role. Therefore, a new paradoxical situation arose. While, on the one hand, the Albanian emigration drivers increased, on the other, the traditional channels of emigration decreased. Subsequently, the migration potential of the Albanian population, under the effect of the global economic crisis, in the absence of internal solutions, and given the people's perception of their future, was upward.

Economic factors and the large income gap with advanced economies in the EU and North America are not the only factors that explain the

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44. **World Bank** (2018) *Higher But Fragile Growth: Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No.14*. Washington DC: World Bank.

45. According to World Bank data from 2002–2008, poverty in Albania was halved to 12.4 per cent but, in 2012, rose again to 14.3 per cent. See: **World Bank** (2016a) *South-East Europe Regular Economic Report, Resilient Growth and Rising Risks*, 10.

desire of the people to migrate from Albania. The EVS survey data show that people in general, and potential migrants in particular, are dissatisfied with the education system, social security, healthcare, civil service, justice system and political parties (to mention a few).<sup>46</sup> Table 1 shows that more than half of the general Albanian population are dissatisfied and, in the case of potential migrants, the level of dissatisfaction is several percentage points higher.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 1. The level of trust of the population and potential migrants in ... (in %)**

Nr		Total population (18-40 years)				Potential migrants (18-40 years)			
		A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all
1	The education system	13.8	33.7	38.2	14.3	11.8	29.2	42.8	16.2
2	The social security system	7.4	34.7	37.5	20.4	4.8	34.0	37.1	24.1
3	The healthcare system	10.6	32.0	35.7	21.7	9.4	31.1	32.4	27.1
4	The civil service	4.7	32.7	42.4	20.2	4.7	30.1	42.9	22.3
5	The justice system	6.5	19.1	35.1	39.3	6.0	16.8	32.6	44.6
6	Political parties	0.7	4.0	23.6	71.7	0.3	4.4	19.9	75.4

Source: EVS Survey, 2018.

We saw from the Introduction that potential migration surveys, such as those carried out by Gallup and the IOM,<sup>48</sup> produce figures which are much higher than the ensuing figures of real migration. In order for potential migration to become real migration, people

46. Respondents were asked: Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?

47. Answers ‘not very much’ and ‘none at all’.

48. **Laczko F., Tjaden J., Auer D.** (2017) *Measuring Global Migration Potential, 2010–2015*. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, Data Briefing Series No. 9.

need to have proper documentation (passports, visas, etc.), enough money to fund their trip and expenditure during their sojourn in the host country until they earn income from employment, learn and acquire the language and have adequate information about the host country, have a circle of friends or relatives who will provide accommodation and help them in finding a job, or have obtained a work contract in advance, etc. If potential migrants do not have all or at least most of the above, it will be difficult for them to migrate or for their migration project to be a success.

In order to be as close as possible to this reality, based on some survey questions we built two indicators. The first indicator, which we call ‘planning to migrate’, is related to the planning to migrate within the current year or in the next three years.<sup>49</sup> Survey data show that 17.2% of Albanians aged 18–40 years old, or 33.1% of those stating their intention to migrate, think to migrate within the current year. Meanwhile, 16.7% of Albanians of the same age group or 32.1% of those who state that they intend to migrate, think to migrate within the next three years. The remaining potential migrants say they intend to migrate within a ten-year horizon (16%) or more than ten years (0.7%). Those who have not decided yet represent 18.1% of potential migrants (Table 2). In addition, there are persons who state an intention to migrate, but are not yet clear as to the country they wish to migrate to. Due to the long time period in which the desire to migrate may weaken or change, depending on social and economic conditions, and their indecisiveness regarding the country of destination, we excluded these groups from the calculation of this indicator.

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49. The respondents who had affirmed their desire to migrate, were asked: Do you intend to emigrate a) within the current year; b) in the next three years; c) in the next ten years; d) more than ten years; e) don’t know.

**Table 2. Potential migrants by the period they intend to migrate (in %)**

Nr	Period	Against potential migrants	Against 18–40 year-old population
1	Within the current year	33.1	17.2
2	In the next three years	32.1	16.7
3	In the next ten years	16.0	8.3
4	More than ten years	0.7	0.3
5	Don't know	18.1	9.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>52.0</b>

Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

The second indicator, which we call ‘likely to migrate’, in addition to including the first one, is related to the possibility to fund the trip, the existence of social networks in the destination country, the knowledge of the host-country language at a certain level and the necessary information about this country. In this indicator, we did not include the possession of travel documents (passport, visa, etc.) since, as of December 2008, Albanians may travel visa-free in the Schengen area.<sup>50</sup> The calculations of the second indicator on ‘likely to migrate’ show that only around 7% of potential migrants, or 3.6% of the population aged 18–40 years old, may actually migrate. This indicator is notably lower than the desire to migrate and is undoubtedly closer to the reality.

50. Albanians must hold a biometric passport in order to travel without visas to the EU (Schengen area). Moreover, the visa-free regime concerns stays of up to 90 days within a 180-day period, imposing limitations and pressure on migrants who would prefer to stay longer in the host country. For more information see ‘Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Albania on the facilitation of the issuance of visas’ at [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:22007A1219\(05\)&qid=1395933714988](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:22007A1219(05)&qid=1395933714988).

According to the Population Census of 2011, the group aged 18–40 years old represented around 34% of the population, or around 948,000 persons.<sup>51</sup> During more recent years, the population of Albania has shrunk and its age structure has certainly changed.<sup>52</sup> Yet, assuming that the population of Albania and its age structure have remained unchanged, we may estimate that around 34,100 persons aged 18–40 years old may migrate within the year.

However, this indicator must be interpreted prudently. Most of the potential migrants do not have a contract to work in the desired destination country and rely mostly on social networks to find a job in the formal or informal sectors. Therefore, most of them, despite their desire, will depend on the labour demand in the host country.

## ***5.2. Who are the most likely to potentially migrate?***

In this section, we will see some demographic, social and economic characteristics of potential migrants, comparing them to those of the general population. In addition, we will show new trends in potential migration by comparing results from the 2018 survey with those from the 2007 survey.

### *Demographic characteristics*

The survey results show that, in general, the intention to migrate is more notable among the younger generation and that, after the

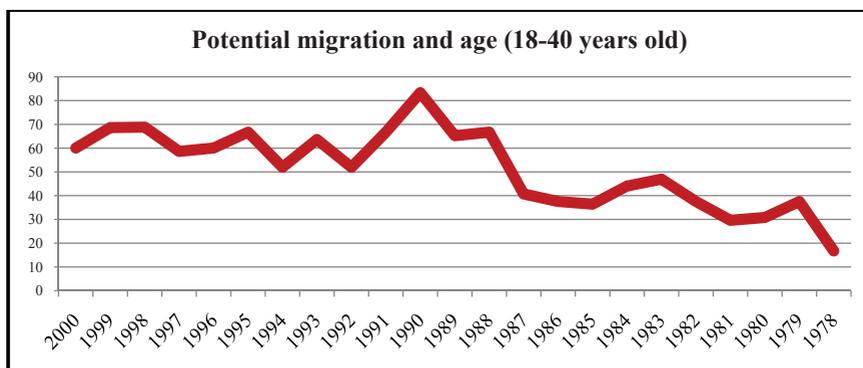
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51. INSTAT (2012) *Population and Housing Census 2011*. Tirana: Institute of Statistics.

52. According to projections, in 2018 the population segment aged 18–40 years old will be around 939,000 persons. In this case, around 33,800 persons may be expected, according to our survey predictions, to migrate within the year.

40s, this desire reduces notably (see Figure 1). Most of those who think to migrate after their 60s wish to unite with their emigrant children, mainly in Greece, Italy and the US. A more fine-grained analysis of the segment aged 18–40 years old, the most active age group and the main object of this study, shows that the intention to migrate peaks for the 27–30 age cohort (Figure 2). The average of potential migration for this segment of the Albanian population reaches 71.2%.

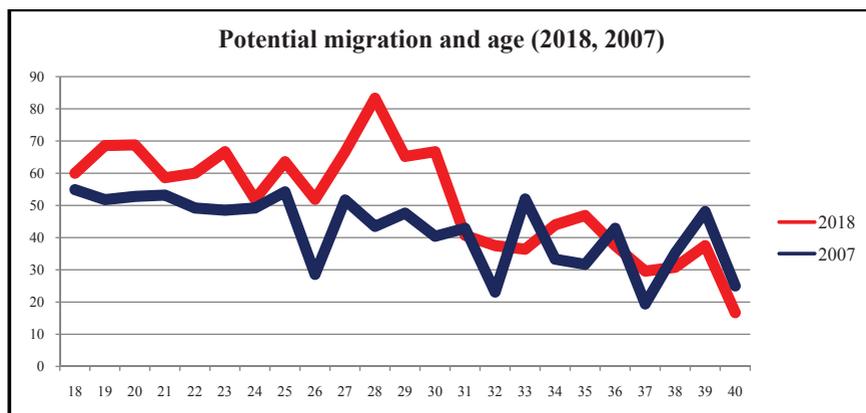
**Figure 2. Potential migration and age**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

In the meantime, the comparison of both surveys reveals that, while in 2007 the migratory potential peaked for the 18–25-year-old segment, in 2018 it peaks for 27–30-year-olds (Figure 3). As we will see below, there are a number of reasons that explain this shift in the peak age-groups in potential migration in Albania over 11 years.

**Figure 3. Potential migration for the segment aged 18–40 years old in 2007 and 2018**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

Potential migration is higher among men (61.8%) than women (48.3%), which is related to the cultural norms present in Albania and to their civil status. In general, the Albanian migration has been led by men whereas women followed at a later stage, through family reunification or marriage. A little more than half (51.7%) of those who intend to migrate are married and 47.6% are single (Table 3).

**Table 3. Civil status of potential migrants by gender (in %)**

Nr	Civil status of potential migrants	Married	Never married	Divorced/separated, widowed
1	Men	35.4	64.6	0.0
2	Women	59.5	39.5	1.0
3	All potential migrants	51.7	47.6	0.7

Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

There is an interesting gender asymmetry in these figures. Thus, the desire to migrate is higher among the unmarried men (64.6%) than among the married ones (35.4%). This is explained by the fact that unmarried men are more independent and free to migrate, whereas married men should take into account their families (wife and children) for whom they are responsible. The opposite holds true for women. Potential migration is lower among unmarried women and higher among married ones. This is explained by the fact that unmarried women have limited agency to migrate independently, since they are 'controlled' by their families (high-educated women, students, graduates etc. are an exception), whereas married women mirror the intentions of their husbands (to some extent), or they may favour emigration to a more 'progressive' society.

### *Education*

There is a strong correlation between education and the desire to migrate. Our survey data show that potential migration is higher among persons with professional, secondary and tertiary education (Table 4). This fact is explained, on the one hand, by the higher employment chances of educated and highly skilled persons in the more advanced EU countries (especially Germany) and in North America. Hence, under conditions of global competition, new labour markets in Germany seek to lure highly qualified migrants, who will contribute positively to the long-term competitiveness of the country. On the other hand, this shows that qualified and educated people are dissatisfied with their employment chances and work conditions in Albania.

The comparison with the 2007 survey shows a reversal of the above-described trend (Table 4). Data from the 2007 survey show that the

lower the level of education, the higher the desire to migrate.<sup>53</sup> This is explained by the fact that less-educated and unskilled people were either unemployed or had difficulties in finding a job in Albania and desired to migrate (mainly to Italy and Greece). Whereas those who had a profession or were highly educated found it easier to integrate in the labour market in Albania. There is also another reason that explains this trend. The survey with returnees in 2007 showed that 34% of returnees with tertiary education had worked in Greece as unqualified workers, often in the informal sector, which did not encourage others, in turn, to migrate.

**Table 4. Potential migration and highest level of education completed, 2018 and 2007 (in %)**

Nr	Highest level of education	2018	2007
1	Did not attend school	0.0	<b>75.0</b>
2	Less than primary	0.0	<b>46.2</b>
3	Primary (9 years school)	47.3	<b>50.0</b>
4	Secondary general	<b>57.6</b>	40.9
5	Secondary vocational	<b>58.8</b>	44.7
6	University (Bachelor, Master, PhD)	<b>52.3</b>	40.3
7	Potential migration (population 18–40 years old)	<b>52.0</b>	<b>44.0</b>

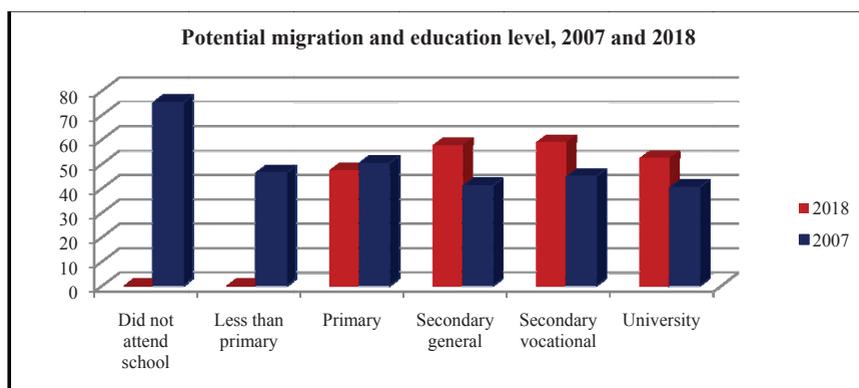
Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

Data from the above table must be interpreted with care, because the boundaries between groups (secondary general, university) are often non-static and it may happen that some people who responded a certain educational level attained at the time of the survey, may have subsequently moved on to another higher level. In the survey, the question that was asked to divide respondents

53. **European Training Foundation** (2007) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF.

into groups was about the highest level of education attained, as verified by a diploma or certificate earned.<sup>54</sup> Many individuals who currently attend university reported (rightly so) that their highest attained level was secondary education while, in practice, they have moved on to tertiary education. In the meantime, survey data show that 65.1% of current university students intend to migrate. This figure is higher than the potential migration average, but they are included in the group of persons having attained secondary education.

**Figure 4. Correlation between potential migration and education in 2007 and 2018**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

54. The respondents were asked: What is the highest educational level that you have attained? The alternatives of choice were: no education at all, primary education (4–5 years of schooling), 8/9 years school, general secondary, vocational secondary (2-year vocational training), vocational secondary (more than 2 years of vocational training), higher non-university education, university diploma, professional Master’s, post-university school, scientific Master’s, PhD.

This correlation between education and migration is expressed not only in the intention to migrate but also in the selection of the destination country. In 2018, we find that more educated and high-skilled persons intend to migrate mostly to Germany, North America and other advanced economies in Western Europe. Less-educated and low-skilled persons intend to migrate mostly to the established (since the 1990s) destinations of Greece and Italy, where they can find unqualified jobs, even in the informal sector, using their social networks.

The correlation between potential migration and education has another aspect that may be utilised by policymakers in the future. The desire to migrate to Germany and other advanced economies in Western Europe may serve as an incentive for potential migrants to advance their education, improve their professional skills and qualifications, and learn a foreign language. According to an interview with the Goethe Institute in Tirana, the number of young people studying and obtaining certification of the German language was three times higher in 2017 than in 2013.<sup>55</sup> In the meantime, in many interviews conducted with returned asylum seekers from Germany, CESS noted an interest to attend vocational training/courses to adapt to the labour market in this country in the anticipation of future migration.<sup>56</sup>

Potential migrants' growing interest in vocational education and training is also corroborated by survey data. Almost 85% of potential migrants want to participate in a training course in Albania in an effort to prepare for living and working abroad (Table 5). Potential migrants who want to attend such courses show greater interest in learning the language (72.3%), vocational training (39.1%),

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55. Interview with Ms Alketa Kuka, Head of the Language Department, Goethe Institute, Tirana.

56. **Gëdeshi I., Xhaferaj E.** (2016) *Social and Economic Profile of the Return Migrants in Albania*. Tirana: International Organization for Migration.

cultural orientation (22.9%) and university studies (17%).<sup>57</sup> Interest in preparing for working and living in the destination country has grown notably compared to the 2007 survey when only 48.7% of potential migrants stated such a desire.<sup>58</sup> This desire should be supported because it increases the human capital for both the country and the potential migrant.

**Table 5. Desire for training and type of training in 2018 and 2007 (in %)**

Nr		Desire training	Language learning	Cultural orientation	Vocational training	University studies	Other	Don't know
1	2018 Survey	85.0	72.3	22.9	39.1	17.0	–	–
2	2007 Survey	48.7	85.1	9.3	19.4	7.4	0.9	1.4

**Source:** CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

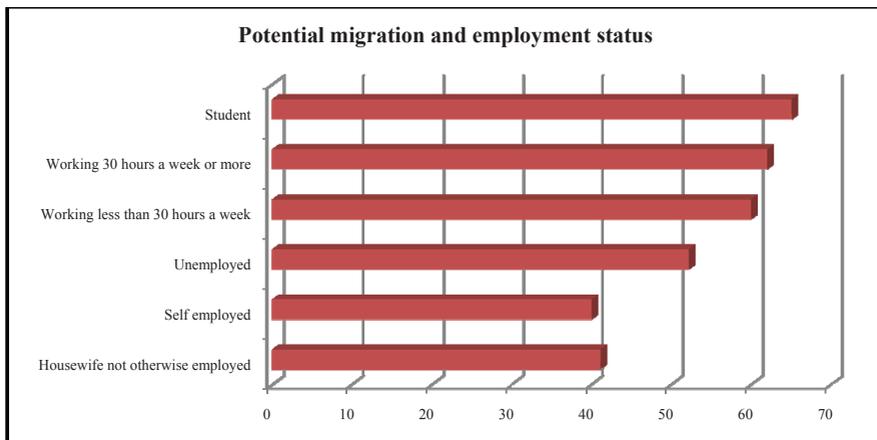
### *Labour-market status*

Survey data show that students and employed persons have a higher propensity to migrate compared to the unemployed, self-employed and homemakers (Figure 5). This fact shows that employment, per se, does not prevent migration, nor is unemployment a particular factor which disproportionately encourages thoughts of migration. Work conditions, low wages, and lack of prospects are some of the push factors driving people to migrate. Survey data show that people working in some sectors of the economy and certain professions – in call centres, healthcare, construction, sales etc. – are more inclined to migrate (Table 6).

57. Potential migrants were asked: What training would you like to attend? The respondent could choose one or more options, such as language learning, cultural orientation, vocational training, university studies, other (specify).

58. **European Training Foundation** (2007) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF.

**Figure 5. Employment status and intention to migrate**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

**Table 6. Potential migration by economic sector and profession (in %)**

Nr	Sectors/profession	Move	Stay
1	Working in a call centre	85	15
2	Nurses	83	17
3	Construction	56	44
4	Clothing	53	47
5	Footwear	38	62
6	Salesperson	67	33
7	Shopkeeper	42	58
8	Teachers	27	73

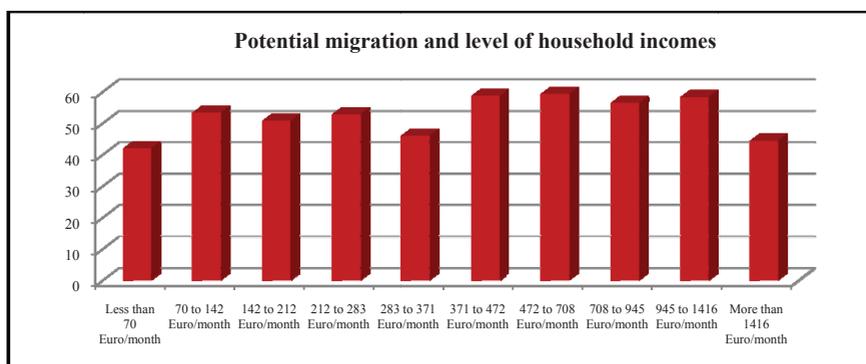
Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

**Note:** These data must be interpreted with caution, as in some cases the sample of persons is small and the result may not be convincing.

*Income*

Intention to migrate is noted among all social groups; it is no longer a characteristic exclusive to poor groups within Albanian society. To corroborate arguments for this hypothesis, we divided the respondents (according to their answers) in 10 large groups based on their household income.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 6. Correlation between potential migration and household income (in %)**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

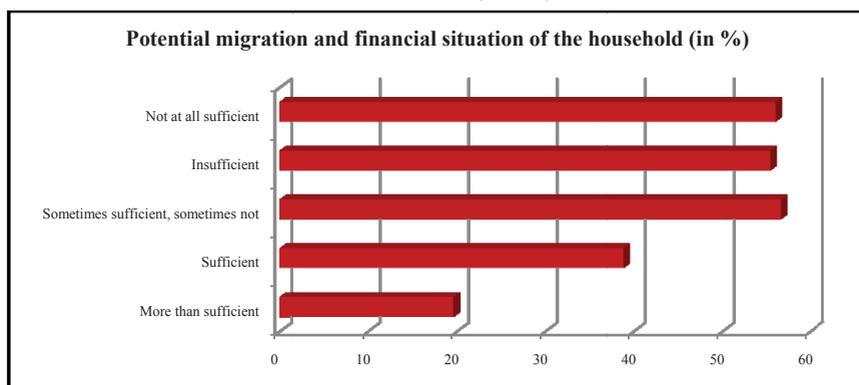
The group that is at the lowest segment of the ladder of income has less than 70 Euros household income per month; at the top is the group that has 1,416 Euros or higher household income per month.<sup>60</sup> Both extreme groups have the lowest level of potential migration for totally different reasons. For the very poor families, it is very difficult to envisage migration because they do not have

59. Respondents were asked: Here is a list of incomes and we would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other income that comes in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, after taxes and other deductions.

60. To calculate household income in Euros, we used 1 Euro = 130 Albanian *lek* as the conversion exchange rate.

adequate financial, human and social resources for the migration process. In the case of the rich families, they often do not need to. It is interesting to note that the intention to migrate is slightly higher among the groups whose income is above the average against those with lower income (Figure 6).

**Figure 7. Potential migration and financial situation of the household (2007)**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2007.

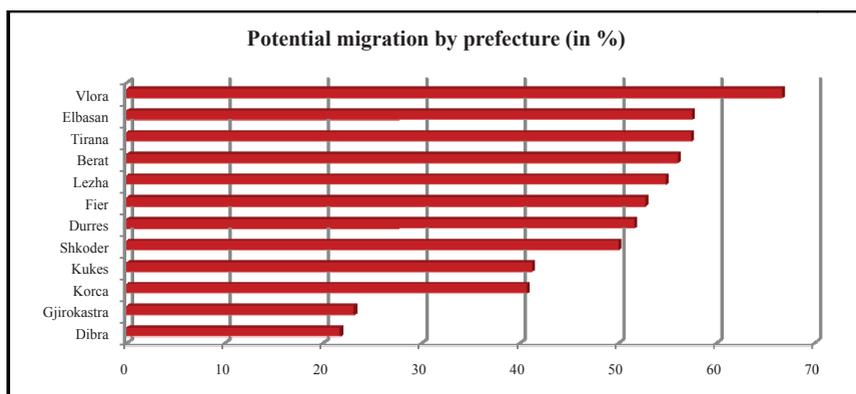
This pattern marks a notable change from the 2007 survey. In this survey, the households were not divided based on their monthly income but on their self-assessment of the financial situation of the household to afford their basic needs.<sup>61</sup> Responses showed that potential migration was higher among households that described their financial situation as ‘not at all sufficient’, ‘insufficient’, and ‘sometimes sufficient, sometimes not’ (Figure 7).

61. Respondents were asked: Overall, is the financial situation of the household sufficient to cover all your basic needs? Their answers were: More than sufficient; Sufficient; Sometimes sufficient, sometimes not; Insufficient; Not at all sufficient.

### *Regional propensities*

All these new features of potential migration are also reflected in their geographic distribution. The 2007 survey showed that unqualified and less-educated young people, mainly from the northern poor (Kukës) and southern frontier (Korça, Gjirokastra) regions showed a higher propensity to migrate. This trend is no longer noted in the 2018 survey. Potential migration is higher in the regions of Vlora, Elbasan, Tirana, Berat, etc. and lower in the poor regions (Kukës, Dibër) and border regions (Korça, Gjirokastra), see Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Potential migration by prefecture in Albania.**



**Source:** CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

### *Family decision*

The decision to migrate is often the result of a lengthy discussion in the family and seen as a long-term strategy. International migration is viewed as a mechanism that would improve the financial situation of the household. This view is stated by almost 97% of potential migrants.

Generally, men say that the decision to migrate is taken jointly by them and other family members (48.5%) or ‘entirely by them’ (48.5%). Among women, the percentage of those who say ‘both myself and others’ (84.1%), certainly due to cultural norms, is notably higher. Only a rather small percentage of them, 11.9%, mostly unmarried women or those in urban areas, say that they may decide for themselves (Table 7). Respondents, however, say that those ‘others’ who have an impact on this decision are mainly the husband/wife (47.5%) and the parents (39.5%).

**Table 7. Decision to migrate (in %)**

Nr		Total	Men	Women
1	Entirely by you	23.7	48.5	11.9
2	Entirely by others	3.3	2.0	4.0
3	By both	72.7	48.5	84.1
4	Don’t know	0.3	1.0	0.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

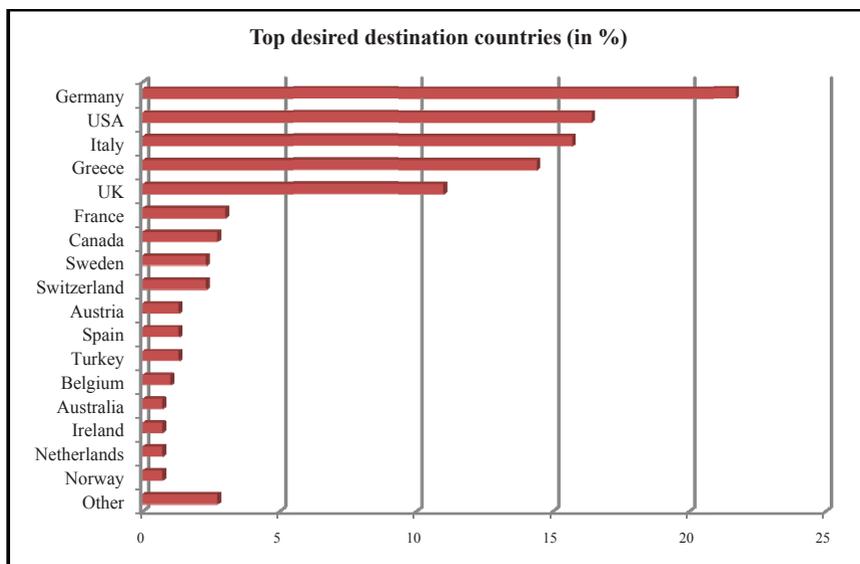
Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

### 5.3. *Where to?*

The top ten destination countries to where Albanians intend to migrate are Germany (21.7%), USA (16.4%), Italy (15.7%), Greece (14.4%), United Kingdom (11%), France (3%), Canada (2.7%), Switzerland (2.3%), Sweden (2.3%) and Austria (1.3%). Figure 9 shows clearly that the Albanian potential migration is concentrated in EU countries (74.6%) and in North America (19.1%). Other countries, outside these areas, include Turkey (1.3%) and Australia (0.7%).<sup>62</sup>

62. In recent years, some marginalised groups of the Albanian population, such

**Figure 9. Top desired destination countries**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

Compared to the 2007 survey, the potential migration flows have been redirected, as explained by the deeper changes that have taken place due to the impact from two crises: the global economic crisis and the refugee crisis. Thus, Germany is now the most preferred country of Albanian potential migrants – around 22% of them wish to migrate to this country. In 2018, it has the highest increase by 17 percentage points against 2007, compared to other countries (Table 8). The image formed by Albanian asylum seekers about Germany as a country with good social-security services (education, health, social protection), great employment opportunities and high incomes has

as the Roma and (so-called) Egyptians, are increasingly migrating to Turkey to work mainly in manufacturing. For more information see **Gëdeshi I., Mykerezi P., Danaj E.** (2017) *Mapping of Skills, Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities of Roma and Egyptians in the Project Sites of Tirana, Durrës, Berat and Shkodra*. Tirana: UNDP.

been transmitted to the rest of the population once they returned to Albania. Almost all interviews with Albanian asylum-seeker returnees reveal that they desire to re-emigrate to Germany.<sup>63</sup> Another survey conducted in 2017–2018 with 520 Albanian students who study in EU countries showed that around 23% of them desire to migrate to Germany upon completing their studies.<sup>64</sup>

**Table 8. Top desired destination countries in 2018 compared with 2007 (in %)**

Nr	Countries	Survey 2018	Survey 2007	Change
1	<b>Germany</b>	<b>21.7</b>	4.5	<b>+ 17.2</b>
2	<b>USA</b>	<b>16.4</b>	14.5	<b>+ 1.9</b>
3	Italy	15.7	31.2	- 15.5
4	Greece	14.4	26.5	- 12.1
5	UK	11.0	14.7	- 3.7
6	France	3.0	2.0	+1.0
7	Canada	2.7	3.6	- 0.9
8	Sweden	2.3	0.2	+ 2.1
9	Switzerland	2.3	0.0	+ 2.3
10	Austria	1.3	0.2	+ 1.1
11	Spain	1.3	<b>0.0</b>	+ 1.3
12	Turkey	1.3	0.0	+ 1.3
13	Belgium	1.0	1.8	- 0.8
14	Other	2.7	0.8	+1.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

63. **Gëdeshi I., Xhaferaj E.** (2016) *Social and Economic Profile of the Return Migrants in Albania*. Tirana: International Organization for Migration.

64. For preliminary results of this survey, see: **Gëdeshi I., King R.** (2018) *Research Study on Brain Gain, Reversing Brain Drain with Albanian Scientific Diaspora*. Tirana: UNDP; **King R., Gëdeshi I.** (2017) *Albanian Students Abroad: The Future Scientific Diaspora? Presentation to the Conference ‘Migration, Diaspora and Development in Albania and the Western Balkans’*, Tirana, 27–28 October.

Table 8 shows that Italy and Greece, once traditional destinations for Albanian migration, are losing their lure for Albanian migrants, due to the high and prolonged unemployment in the wake of the global economic crisis. In earlier years, these two host countries were also notable for the high levels of cultural racism and stigmatisation that Albanian migrants had to endure. The comparison of the two surveys shows that Italy and Greece have lost 15.5 and 12.1 percentage points, respectively, in the 11 years.

New trends show that Albanian migrants will increasingly concentrate in the more advanced economies of Western Europe. Thus, Karoline Novinscak Kölker points out in a study that, at the end of 2015, there were around 59,000 legal migrants in Germany.<sup>65</sup> Certainly, when the number of migrants and social networks that connect them reaches a critical mass, this migration has the potential to become self-perpetuating. Through social networks, it is easier for potential migrants to obtain information, find accommodation and a job, arrange documents, marriages, etc.

The re-direction of migration flows mainly toward Germany and some other Western European countries (United Kingdom, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Belgium, etc.) will eventually lead in the future to other quantitative and qualitative changes in relation to income, savings, remittances, investments, and the human and social capital of Albanian migrants. The 2007 survey with returnees showed that the percentage of those who had been trained in the host country was twice as high in Germany and the UK than in Greece.<sup>66</sup> Two other large surveys conducted in the early years of the global economic crisis (2008 and 2009) show that the level of income, savings and remittances from

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65. **Novinscak Kölker K.** (2017) PowerPoint presentation of the study: *'Migration Networks between Germany and the Countries of Origin: Republic of Albania and Republic of Kosovo'*. Tirana, 9 March 2017.

66. **European Training Foundation** (2007) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF.

Albanian migrant households in North-West Europe was higher than in Greece and Italy (Table 9).<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the impact of new migration flows on Albania’s economy – through financial and social remittances, and investments and human capital in the case of return – will be greater.

**Table 9. Income, savings and remittances of Albanian migrant households (Euros)**

Nr		IFAD/2008			IOM/WB/UNDP 2009		
		Other EU countries	Italy	Greece	Other EU countries	Italy	Greece
1	Individual average monthly income	2,279	1,412	1,283	2,226	1,344	1,125
2	Household monthly income	3,065	2,380	2,120	3,260	2,518	1,897
3	Household monthly expenditure	2,157	1,439	1,362	1,972	1,610	1,309
4	Household monthly savings	908	941	757	1,287	908	587
5	Remittances (annual)	2,573	1,545	1,650	2,893	984	1,527
6	Percentage of remittance-sending households	72.1	76.8	79.1	62.6	57.5	72.9

**Source:** **Gëdeshi I.** (2010) *Global Crisis and Migration: Monitoring a Key Transmission Channel for the Albanian Economy*. Tirana: International Organization for Migration and United Nations Development Programme with the support of the World Bank; **de Zwager N., Gressmann W., Gëdeshi I.** (2010) *Market Analysis: Albania—Maximising the Development-Impact of Migration-Related Financial Flows and Investment to Albania*. Vienna, IASCI, [http://cessalbania.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Albania\\_Market\\_Analasis.pdf](http://cessalbania.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Albania_Market_Analasis.pdf) (last accessed 29 September 2018).

67. **Gëdeshi I.** (2010) *Global Crisis and Migration: Monitoring a Key Transmission Channel for the Albanian Economy*. Tirana: International Organization for Migration and United Nations Development Programme with the support of the World Bank; **de Zwager N., Gressmann W., Gëdeshi I.** (2010) *Market Analysis: Albania—Maximising the Development-Impact of Migration-Related Financial Flows and Investment to Albania*. Vienna, IASCI, [http://cessalbania.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Albania\\_Market\\_Analasis.pdf](http://cessalbania.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Albania_Market_Analasis.pdf) (last accessed 29 September 2018).

On the other hand, this process will be accompanied by brain drain and diminishing human resources in Albania. The number of engineers, IT specialists, medical doctors and nurses who migrate to Germany has been on the rise.<sup>68</sup> One of our survey interviewees, Dorina, who has a PhD in medicine, shared her concern:

The brain drain from Albania will continue. In the Netherlands, it is difficult to be accepted as a doctor, because you have to sit exams from the beginning. Germany, however, has relaxed the doctor-recognition procedures. They accept medical staff from all Balkan countries, though they first have to work in a rural area and undergo training. Almost 30% of students that completed studies in the same year as me have gone to Germany. Each year, around 180 doctors graduate, and in the last 3–4 years around 30% have emigrated to Germany. This is, regrettably, a very high percentage, because there has been a six-year investment for these doctors, and they are the best ones. I say the best because they are able to learn the language, i.e. German, faster and do the job better.

It is, therefore, the duty of policymakers to maximise, through effective policies, the positive aspects and minimise the negative ones arising from these new Albanian migration flows.

Potential migrants were asked about the possibility of selecting another country, in addition to the first choice, as a destination of migration.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, even in this case, Germany is the most desired country selected by 23.7% of potential migrants. Many potential migrants who opted for Greece or Italy as their first choice of migration, selected Germany as their second option. Meanwhile, the ranking of the other countries has not changed.

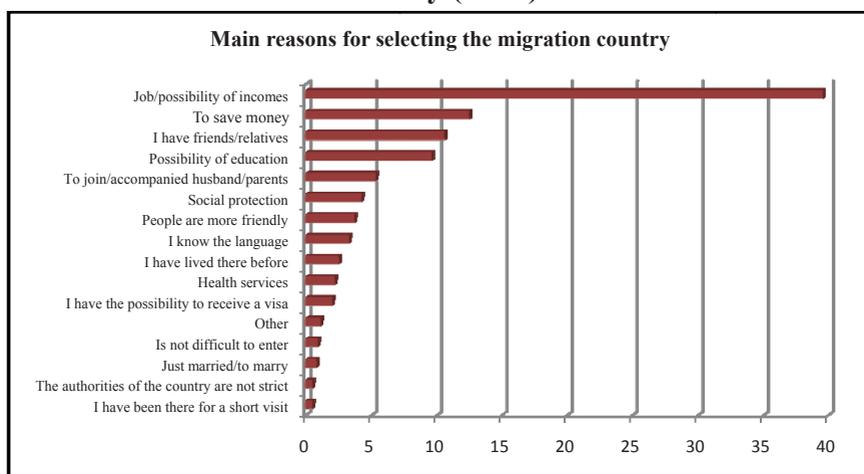
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68. **Gjypi A.**, (2018) *Largimi i mjekëve nga Shqipëria*. Tirana: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; **Tollkuci E., Collaku M.** (2017) Challenges of social indicators affecting the skilled migration of Albanian physicians. Paper presented at the Conference ‘Migration, Diaspora and Development in Albania and the Western Balkans’, Tirana, 27–28 October.

69. Potential migrants were asked: Are there any other countries you might consider to emigrate to? Write it down.

We also asked potential migrants about some of the factors which determine their selection of the desired destination country.<sup>70</sup> The answers (Figure 10) show that the selection of these countries is mainly determined by a range of social and economic factors, such as employment opportunities and high income (39.6%), possibility to save money (12.5%), existence of social networks (10.6%), possibility of education (9.6%), family reunification (5.3%) and social security system (4.2%).

**Figure 10. Top reasons for selecting the destination country (in %)**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

Selection determinants are different for different countries (Table 10). So, potential migrants who desire to migrate to Germany and the US put more value on employment and income, the possibility to save, the education of their children, the social security system and healthcare services. The table shows that the percentage of

70. Potential migrants were asked: Why would you migrate to this country? Each potential migrant could choose up to three options from the available alternatives.

potential migrants who select Germany and the US for these reasons is higher than the average.

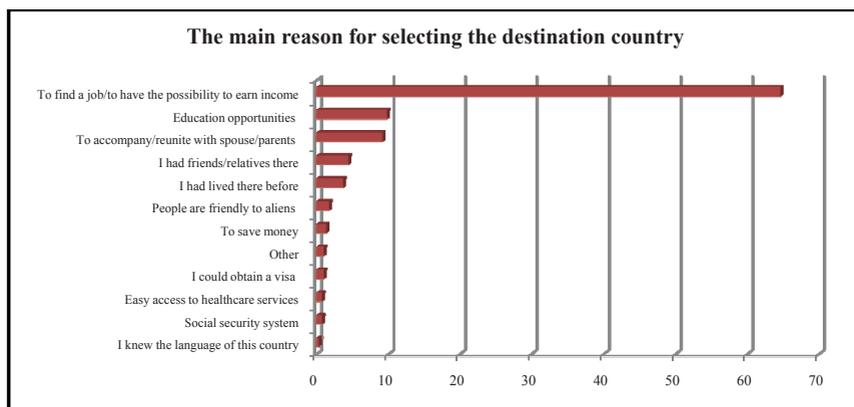
**Table 10. Potential migrants' reasons for selecting the destination country (in %)**

Options	Total	Germany	USA	Italy	Greece	UK
Employment/chances for income	39.6	<b>45.2</b>	<b>39.8</b>	36.7	<b>44.4</b>	<b>41.7</b>
To save money	12.5	<b>20.0</b>	<b>14.3</b>	11.9	<b>13.3</b>	<b>6.9</b>
The social security system	4.2	<b>4.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	2.8	3.3	1.4
To marry/Just married	0.8	0.0	0.0	<b>1.8</b>	0.0	2.8
To accompany/union with the spouse/parents	5.3	4.4	1.0	<b>7.3</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Had friends/relatives there	10.6	5.2	<b>11.2</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>19.4</b>
People are friendly towards aliens	3.7	0.7	2.0	3.7	2.2	5.6
Opportunities for education	9.6	8.9	<b>14.3</b>	<b>10.1</b>	1.1	12.5
I knew the language of this country	3.3	1.5	3.1	1.8	3.3	1.4
Easy access to healthcare services	2.2	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>	0.0	1.1	1.4
Had no difficulties to enter this country	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.9	2.2	
The authorities of this country are not strict	0.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
It was not difficult to enter illegally	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
I had lived there before	2.5	0.7	2.0	2.8	3.3	
I had been there on a short visit	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.9		
I could obtain a visa	2	1.5	2.0	1.8		1.4
Other	1.1	1.5	0.0	0.0		
Don't know	0.6	0.0	0.0			
No answer/Non applicable	0.1	0.0	1.0			
Total	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

The existence of social networks plays an important role in selecting the desired country of migration. Having relatives and friends, or a previous migration experience in a country increases the attraction of potential migrants toward it. These social networks reduce risks and lower migration-related material and psychological costs. This explains why Italy and Greece, regardless of the notable drop in the preference shown in the 2018 survey *vis-à-vis* the 2007 survey, remain towards the top of the list of preferred destination countries (third and fourth place, respectively) for Albanian potential migrants. Table 10 also shows that the percentage of potential migrants who select Italy and Greece (as well as the US) due to the presence of social networks is higher than the average. Family reunification is another important factor for these two ‘traditional’ immigration countries with a high concentration of the Albanian migration.

**Figure 11. Top reason for selecting the potential migration country**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

People can have multiple reasons for selecting a destination country to which they want to migrate. To deepen our analysis, we also asked potential migrants about the main determining factor for the selection of the destination country of migration<sup>71</sup>. The answers show that employment and income (65.2%), possibility of education for their children (9.8%), family reunification (9.4%), presence of social networks (4.5%) and previous experience in that country (3.1%) are the main driving factors of potential migration (Figure 11). Subsequently, if we group the main factors that inspire people to migrate, we may divide them into material, human (education), and social capital factors.

#### ***5.4. Reasons for wanting to migrate***

There exist various causes for potential migration: among others, economic, educational, family, and health factors as well as the perception of the respondents of their prospects in the home country.<sup>72</sup>

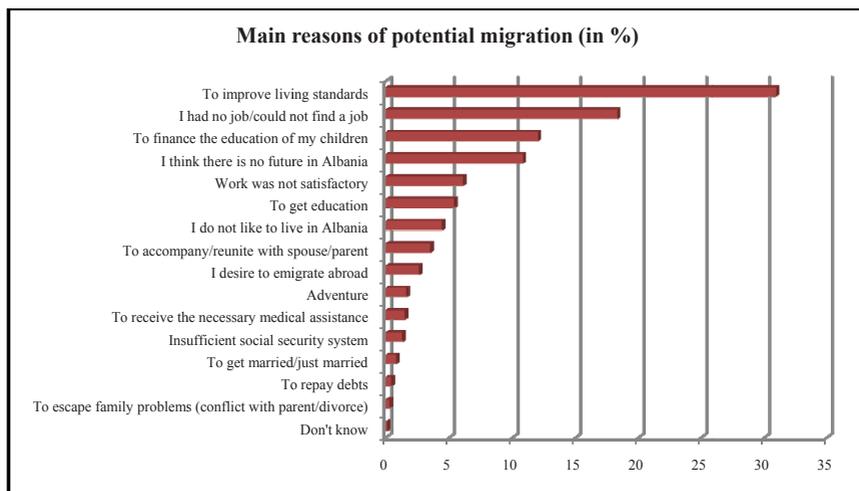
Yet, economic factors, which include the improvement of living standards, unemployment, low wages and labour conditions, social security schemes and debt, remain the main drivers for the Albanian migration. According to the 2018 survey, these factors represent 57% of the causes of migration or more than half of all factors. This shows that Albanian migration, even in its third decade, continues to be driven by economic factors, although to a lesser extent (Figure 12).

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71. Potential migrants were asked: What is the main reason?

72. Respondents were asked to provide three main migration reasons and then to determine the most important one.

**Figure 12. Causes of potential migration**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

In addition to economic factors, a smaller group of persons (19.4%), but the second most important one, cite factors related mainly to the lack of economic, social and political perspectives in Albania. These include statements by potential migrants such as ‘There is no future in Albania’, ‘I do not like living in Albania’, ‘I want to migrate abroad’, and perhaps ‘Adventure’, which we have grouped under the label ‘Other reasons’ (Table 11).

The above affirmations do not show a lack of love for the home country; on the contrary, the Albanians love and feel proud of their country. EVS survey data also show that almost 95% of respondents say that they are ‘very proud’ or ‘proud’ of being Albanians.<sup>73</sup> Rather,

73. In the EVS survey, respondents were asked: How proud do you feel of being an Albanian? The possible answers were: very proud, proud, not so proud, not at all proud.

the desire to leave Albania is related to the pessimism created by the current state of affairs (unemployment, low income, poor services, etc.), and international migration is considered as a possible way out.

Education (17.4%) is the third-ranked among the factors. Some potential migrants underline that they ‘desire to be educated’ in the host country (5.4%) and to ‘finance the education of their children’ (12%). This is explained by the push factor of the low quality of education in Albania. Our prior research has shown that, as a result of the poor quality of education in Albania, the number of young people who go to study in EU universities is the highest among the Western Balkan countries although, in terms of income per capita, Albania is the penultimate country and in terms of population it is the third among these countries.<sup>74</sup>

Family-related factors, such as ‘to marry/just married’, ‘reunification with the spouse or parents’ and ‘to escape family problems’, which were a notable feature of the second decade of Albanian migration, now represent only 4.6% of responses. In addition, some respondents underline health-related factors as migration drivers (1.5%).

If we compare the current push factors for potential migration with those from the 2007 survey, we note that, while still dominant, the impact of economic factors has diminished. In addition, family-related factors also have a lesser impact. Conversely, the number of people who highlight education, lack of future prospects in Albania, and, to a lesser extent, health care, has increased (Table 11).

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74. **Gëdeshi I., King R.** (2018) *Research Study on Brain Gain, Reversing Brain Drain with Albanian Scientific Diaspora*. Tirana: UNDP.

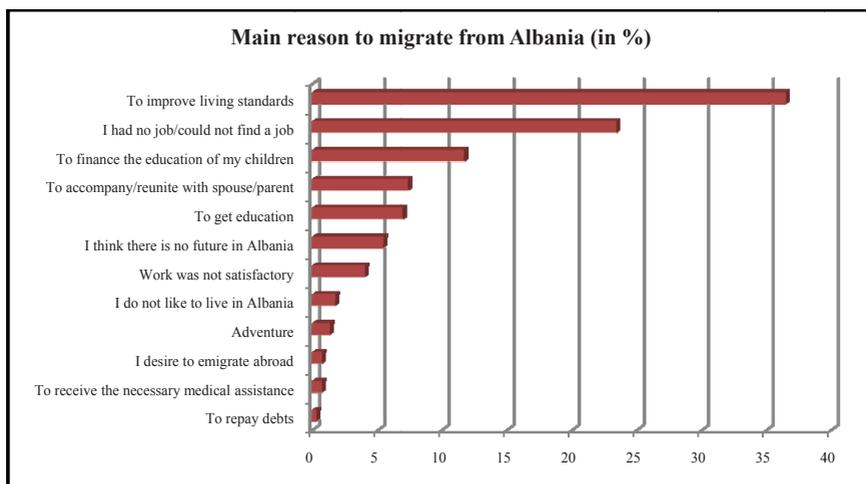
**Table 11. Main reasons for leaving Albania**

Nr	Reasons for leaving	2018	ETF Survey/ 2007	Change
<b>I</b>	<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>57.0</b>	<b>65.8</b>	<b>-8.8</b>
1	To improve standard of living	30.9	35.7	-4.8
2	Have no job/cannot find a job	18.3	19.7	-1.4
3	Nature of work unsatisfactory	6.1	9.3	-3.2
4	Inadequate social security system	1.3	0.0	+ 1.3
5	To repay debts	0.4	0.2	+ 0.2
<b>II</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>+ 9.3</b>
1	To obtain education	5.4	5.4	0.0
2	To finance children's education	12.0	2.7	+ 9.3
<b>III</b>	<b>Family reasons</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>- 6.6</b>
1	To accompany/follow spouse/parent	3.5	10.2	- 6.7
2	To get married/just married	0.8	0.5	0.3
3	To escape from family problems	0.3	0.5	- 0.2
<b>IV</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>+ 0.4</b>
1	To receive necessary health care	1.5	1.1	+0.4
<b>V</b>	<b>Other reasons</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>+ 5.6</b>
1	No future here in Albania	10.8	2.9	+ 7.9
2	Want to go abroad	2.6	2.7	- 0.1
3	Do not like living in Albania			
4	Adventure			
5	Other			

Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

To deepen our analysis, potential migrants were asked to single out from the set of selected factors the main push factor for their intention of emigrating from Albania.<sup>75</sup> According to the responses from potential migrants, the main reason for 36.5% was for improving living standards (Figure 13).

**Figure 13. Main factor for emigrating out of Albania**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

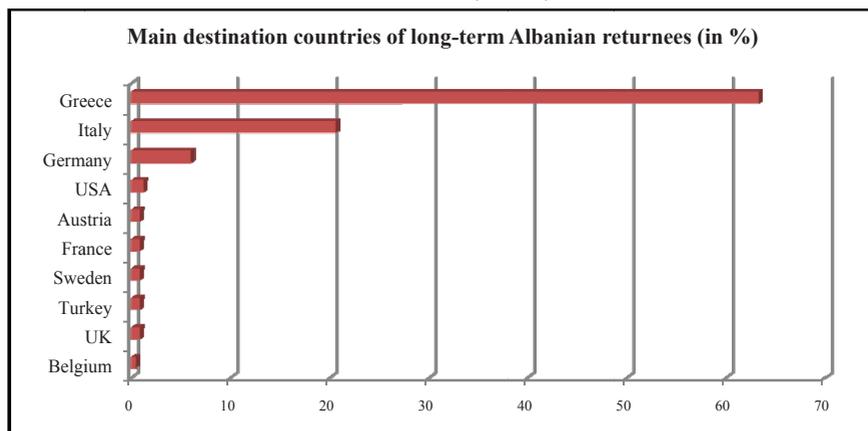
### 5.5. Return migrant subsample

The international migration of Albanians, especially starting from the late 1990s, goes hand-in-hand with their return.

Survey data show that 17.5% of the respondents aged 18 years and older, have migrated for at least one year, mainly to Greece (63.3%), Italy (20.6%), Germany (6%), and to a much lesser extent to the US, Austria, France, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, etc. (Figure 14).

75. Respondents were asked to choose the most important one among a set of key factors.

**Figure 14. Main destination countries of long-term Albanian returnees (in %)**



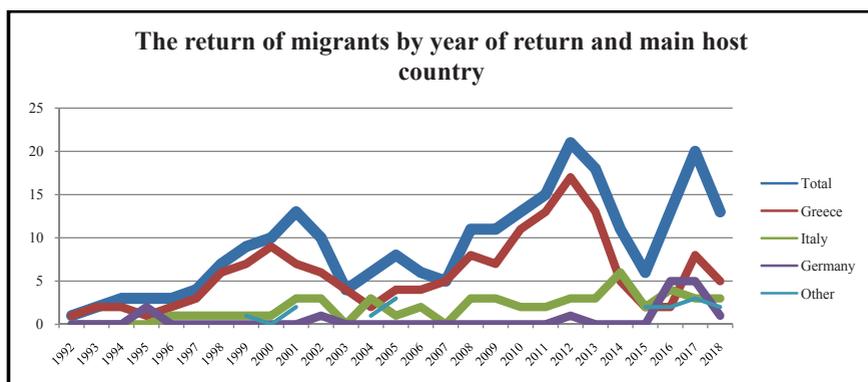
Source: CESS. Potential migration survey, 2018.

Figure 15, which is based on the year of return for the respondent migrant, shows that the return has been a dynamic process, peaking twice in the last decade: in 2009–2013, when 31.7% of the total number of return Albanian migrants who were surveyed returned; and in 2016–2018 when 18.7% returned. The return of Albanian migrants in 2009–2013 is related to the global economic crisis and the resultant high unemployment levels in Greece and Italy. At the end of 2013, according to Eurostat data,<sup>76</sup> the unemployment rate was 27.8% in Greece and 12.6% in Italy, but this rate was even higher among the migrants. According to a joint study by INSTAT and IOM, during this period, around 134,000 migrants returned to

76. **EUROSTAT** (2015) Euro area unemployment rate at 11.4%, December 2014. 20/2015–30 January 2015. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6581668/3-30012015-AP-EN.pdf/9d4fbadd-d7ae-48f8-b071-672f3c4767dd>

Albania.<sup>77</sup> In the meantime, the return bulge during 2016–2018 is related mainly to the return of asylum seekers in Germany and some other EU countries. According to data from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), in the period 2013–2017, around 147,000 Albanian citizens sought asylum in EU countries (primarily in Germany, France, etc.), and most of them returned in the following years.<sup>78</sup> In 2015–2016, according to available data, Albania was the top country in the world for the number of its citizens returned from EU countries.<sup>79</sup>

**Figure 15. The return of migrants by year of return and main host country**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

77. **INSTAT, IOM** (2014) *Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania*. Tirana: Institute of Statistics/International Organization for Migration.

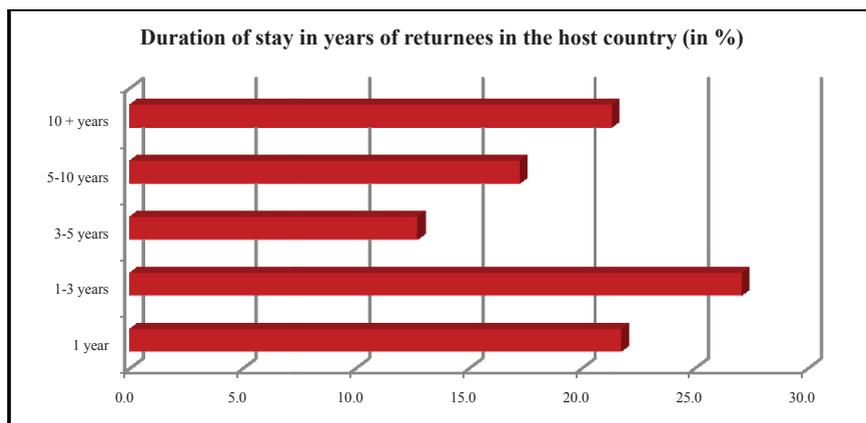
78. According to EASO data, 11,075 persons from Albania applied for asylum in 2013, 16,805 in 2014, and 65,900 in 2015. Since 2016, the trend has been downward. Thus, 31,553 persons applied for asylum in 2016 and 22,075 in 2017;

79. **Morrice V., Stavrou S.** (2018) PowerPoint presentation at the Inception Workshop ‘Supporting the Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees in the Western Balkans’, Vienna, 15 January.

The return of migrants is a potentially very important process for the economic and social development of Albania. Returnees bring financial capital (savings), human capital (skills and know-how, new mentality and ideas, work habits, etc.) and social capital. However, this depends, on the one hand, on the duration of stay in the host country and the reasons for returning. Potential benefits for the home country are maximised when the returnees have stayed long enough in the destination country to achieve their objectives with regard to saving, education or professional qualifications, or when they are still relatively young and wish to invest human and financial capital in their home country. On the other hand, it depends on the creation of premises in the home country to effectively utilise the human, financial and social capital of returnees.

If we analyse the duration of stay in the destination country, we note that the average duration of stay for returnees is 6.1 years. Meanwhile, a more detailed segmentation of the data shows that 23.7% of returnees has stayed 1 year in the destination country and 24.9% from 1 to 3 years (Figure 16). Most of these migrants belong to two groups, the first of asylum seekers who have been refused their application and have therefore returned, and the second group, of migrants forcibly returned by host-country authorities or migrants who have lost their jobs due to the economic crisis in the neighbouring countries, according to the well-known principle of ‘last hired, first fired’. As a result, they have been unable to achieve their migration goals. The rest of the migrants have stayed 3–10 years (30.1%) and more than 10 years (21.3%). The last group has generally had sufficient time to achieve their migration goals.

**Figure 16. Duration of stay in years of returnees in the host country (in %)**



Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

In the survey, returnees were asked about the reasons of return to Albania, dividing the responses according to the groups ‘very important’, ‘somewhat important’, and ‘not important’. Table 12 shows their responses.

**Table 12. Main reasons for returning to Albania**

Nr	Reasons	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
1	Study programme completed	1.2	0.4	98.4
2	I achieved the target for the savings I needed	<b>7.3</b>	11.7	8.0
3	I was offered a better job in Albania	4.8	2.4	92.7
4	I had to return to take care of the family	<b>49.3</b>	8.5	42.1
5	I wanted my children to receive an education in Albania	8.5	5.3	86.2
6	Homesick for Albania	11.7	18.6	69.6
7	Forced return	<b>15.8</b>	0.4	83.8
8	Lost my job or had low income	<b>22.7</b>	4.9	72.4
9	Divorce or discontinued cohabitation	1.6	0.8	97.6
10	Pension	1.2	1.2	97.6
11	I wanted to establish a business in Albania	<b>8.1</b>	4.5	87.4

**Source:** CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

On the basis of their responses, we grouped the returnees in four main groups, as shown in Table 13.

**Table 13. Groups of returnees by main reasons**

Nr	Groups of returnees	Size of the group (in %)
1	Returnees forced by host-country authorities;	11.9
2	Migrants returning due to losing their job or having low income;	17.0
3	Migrants returning to care for their family or for nostalgia/psychological reasons;	54.7
4	Migrants who have achieved their migration goals and desire to establish a business in Albania.	16.2

**Source:** CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

Note: This table should be interpreted carefully as it shows the approximate size of each group based on the responses from the returnees.

The first group consists of migrants who were forced to return by host-country authorities. This group consists of returned asylum seekers, mainly from Germany, and irregular migrants who had no proper documents or migrants whose residence permit had expired (generally in Greece). The forced return of irregular migrants, especially from Greece, was a characteristic feature of the first decade of Albanian migration. According to Reyneri, around 1.4 million Albanian migrants were deported during the period 1990–1998.<sup>80</sup> According to our survey data, around 15% of returnees fall in this group. These migrants, as a result of the early return, were unable to achieve their migration goals, and most of them wish to migrate again.

80. **Reyneri E.** (2001) *Migrants' Involvement in Irregular Employment in the Mediterranean Countries of the European Union*. Geneva: International Labour Organization. This figure must be interpreted carefully, as many Albanians returned to Greece even on the same day, and therefore the same person may have been deported several times.

The second group comprises migrants who return due to having lost their job or to reduced income from employment in precarious jobs in the host country. The global economic crisis and the massive unemployment that accompanied it had negative effects on a large share of Ibanian migrants, especially in Greece and Italy.<sup>81</sup> Around 17% of returnees fall in this group.

The third group consists of migrants who return to ‘take care of the family’ or for nostalgia/psychological reasons. This also includes those who say they returned because they were ‘homesick for the home country’ or for ‘divorce/discontinued cohabitation reasons’, went into retirement or want their children to receive an education in Albania. This rather mixed set of returnee reasons is the largest group and accounts for 54.7% of returnees.

The fourth group includes migrants who say that they have achieved their migration goals (savings, studies), want to establish a business in Albania or have been offered a better job in the home country. While this group of returnees accounts for a relatively small share, around 16%, it has a significant impact on the economic development of the home country, given their financial, human and social capital. Nonetheless, the degree of their potential migration (re-migration) is very high.

The question, in this case, is the relation between returnees and potential migration. According to the survey data, 70.7% of returnees aged 18–40 years old wish to migrate from Albania, most of them within the next year (54.7%) while others (18.7%) within the next 3 years. The percentage is notably higher than for those who have not migrated previously (47.8%). Meanwhile, the comparison with

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81. **Gëdeshi I., de Zwager N.** (2012) Effects of the global crisis on migration and remittances in Albania, in: **Sirkeci I., Cohen J.H., Ratha D.** (eds) *Migration and Remittances during the Global Financial Crisis and Beyond*. Washington DC: The World Bank, 237–254.

the 2007 survey with returnees<sup>82</sup> shows that the actual trend of this group in 2018 is notably higher (Table 14).

**Table 14. Desire to migrate of returnees and of those who have not migrated previously (in %)**

Nr		2018	ETF 2007
1	Have not been in migration for a period of at least 1 year	47.8	na
2	Have been in migration for a period of at least 1 year	70.7	44.0

Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018

This phenomenon is explained by many factors. First, returnees have a migration experience and self-confidence for undertaking such an initiative again. Most of them, as shown by Table 13, have not achieved their migration goals and intend to realise them by re-migrating. In addition, they have social networks in the host country that may help them with information, temporary accommodation and finding a job. The survey shows that 54% of returnees from Italy and around 40% of returnees from Greece intend to migrate to the previous migration country. The rest of the returnees prefer other destination countries such as Germany, the US, the UK, etc. Potential migrants who have not migrated before wish to migrate mostly to Germany, North America and other advanced economies of the EU.

If these trends continue –i.e. the return of migrants from Greece, their re-emigration to other countries and new migrant flows that target Germany –Greece will lose its relative significance (also from

82. **European Training Foundation** (2007) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF.

a quantitative perspective) for Albanian migration. Meanwhile, other data show that Albanian migrants from Greece re-emigrate (actually, onward-migrate) to Germany, the UK, North America and other EU countries without returning and staying temporarily in Albania.

Based on such information, further questions arise. Besides the previous migratory experience and social networks that returnees have in the host country, what are the other domestic push factors? Why do returnees wish to a much higher extent (+26 percentage points) to emigrate compared to those who have no migration experience? To answer these questions, we focused our analysis on two aspects. First, we analysed the migration motives of this group and compared them with those who have no previous migration experience. The comparison of motives for both groups shows that returnees emphasise a little more factors related to the economy (unemployment and unsatisfactory work), education (financing the education of their children), and healthcare. Some of them say that they ‘do not like to live in Albania’ (Table 15).

**Table 15. Main reasons for leaving Albania**

Nr	Reasons for leaving	Returnees 2018	Have not been in migration 2018
<b>I</b>	<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>55.9</b>
1	To improve standard of living	30.7	30.9
2	Have no job/cannot find a job	<b>20.5</b>	17.6
3	Nature of work unsatisfactory	<b>7.3</b>	5.7
4	Inadequate social security system	1.5	1.2
5	To repay debts	0.0	0.5
<b>II</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>18.5</b>
1	To obtain an education	1.5	6.8
2	To finance children's education	<b>13.2</b>	11.7
<b>III</b>	<b>Family reasons</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.9</b>
1	To accompany/follow spouse/parent	2.4	3.9
2	To get married/just married	1.0	0.7
3	To escape from family problems	0.0	0.3
<b>IV</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>
1	To receive necessary health care	<b>2.4</b>	1.2
<b>V</b>	<b>Other reasons</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>19.6</b>
1	No future here	8.8	11.5
2	Want to go abroad	<b>2.9</b>	2.5
3	Do not like living in Albania	<b>5.9</b>	3.9
4	Adventure	1.5	1.7
5	Other	0.5	

**Source:** CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

Second, we assessed whether these differences in motives have a real basis or arise from the perception of the returnees about the

reality in Albania. We therefore analysed the status of returnees in the labour market and their desire to migrate (Table 16). This status reveals that, while unemployment is high (28.2%), some of the returnees work full-time (27.6%) and part-time (6.6%) or are self-employed (13.3%, but almost twice as many than those who have not migrated previously). Yet, the very high desire to migrate among the employed and self-employed returnees shows that the level of income and work conditions are not satisfying enough for staying in Albania.

**Table 16. Comparison of returnees with those that have not migrated previously, by status in the labour market and desire to migrate (18–40 years old)**

Nr		Returnees		Never migrated	
		%	Desire to migrate	%	Desire to migrate
1	Unemployed	28.2	64.5	27.4	49.2
2	Employed 30 hours or more	27.6	78.6	19.9	56.9
3	Self-employed	13.3	84.6	6.8	21.9
4	Homemakers	17.1	55.0	25.9	38.8
5	Employed less than 30 hours	6.6	100	1.9	33.3
6	Disabled	1.7	0.0	0.6	0.0
7	Student	5.5	100.0	17.3	62.9
8	Total	100.0		100.0	

Source: CESS, Potential migration survey, 2018.

The prevalence of economic factors and dissatisfaction with the poor quality of services (healthcare, education) in Albania are not uncommon and are also underlined by other studies. Thus, a joint

INSTAT and IOM study showed that, at the time of the survey, in 2014, almost 46% of returnees were unemployed. The study also showed that only 7% of returnees had invested their financial capital, mainly in the services sector and agriculture. More than half of returnees emphasised the lack of acceptable-quality services and an inadequate healthcare system. It also indicated that, as a result of unemployment, insufficient income and lack of proper services, almost one-third of the returnees wished to migrate again from Albania.<sup>83</sup>

The high levels of unemployment and the lack of investments by the migrants, in the absence of appropriate socio-economic conditions, resulted in their capital not being used for the development of their home country. We have pointed out in another study<sup>84</sup> that failure to effectively use the capital of the returnees for local social and economic development has negative consequences, including discouraging future return migration, increasing the desire to migrate, and hence delaying the onset of the migratory transition of Albania.

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83. **INSTAT, IOM** (2014) *Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania*. Tirana: Institute of Statistics/International Organization for Migration.

84. **Gëdeshi I., King R.** (2018) *Research Study on Brain Gain, Reversing Brain Drain with Albanian Scientific Diaspora*. Tirana: UNDP.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

Since the start of the post-socialist transition, Albania has seen unfold one of the largest modern-day migratory processes in the world in terms of the scale (as a percentage of the current population) and intensity of international migration. Albanian migration continues and is likely to do so in the future. This conclusion is supported by the limited statistics on ongoing flows, and by our potential migration surveys, which show migration intentions increasing from 44% of the surveyed population in 2007 to 52% in 2018. Therefore, at the end of its third decade of international migration, Albania is far from the end of its long, ongoing phase of large-scale emigration, and equally far from a situation of migratory balance which might mark the start of a transition to a country with significant immigration.<sup>85</sup>

Although it does not fully match our figures, Gallup International, which has measured potential migration in 160 countries of the world since 2005, ranks Albania among the top countries in the world along with some African countries. Moreover, when comparing the period 2013–2016 with that of 2010–2012, the potential for emigration from Albania *vis-à-vis* other countries showed the greatest increase (20 percentage points): potential migration from 2013–2016 is

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85. Typically, the ‘migration transition’ from a situation of net emigration to net immigration involves the shifting interplay of several inflows and outflows. At an early stage of transition, emigration tails off, to be outweighed by return migration. Subsequently, immigration brings new inflows from other countries. This has been the recent historical experience of countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece, although in the latter two of these especially, the economic crisis unleashed a new phase of migration dynamics: renewed emigration of Spanish and Greek nationals, reduced return migration of Greek and Spanish nationals living abroad, reduced inflows of new immigrants, and finally return migration of immigrants living in these countries (such as Albanians returning from Greece or onward migrating elsewhere).

estimated at 56%, compared with 36% from 2010–2012.<sup>86</sup>

The comparison of the 2018 and 2007 surveys outlined in this paper has shown that significant qualitative and quantitative changes have taken place as regards the nature of Albanian migration, which should be taken into account by policymakers. Economic factors driving potential migration and, to a lesser extent, family-related factors prevail, but their contribution has diminished since the 2007 survey. New factors have become more significant, such as ‘education of children’ and ‘lack of prospects in Albania’. While neighbouring Greece and Italy remain the top destination countries for Albanian migration, their relative share in the future is likely to be downward. Germany and the US are currently the most foreseen destination countries for future Albanian migration.

These changes in the push factors and in the geography of the international migration are also reflected in the social and demographic structure and quality of its flows. The desire to migrate is higher among the following categories: young people in their late 20s, the better educated and most qualified, those who were employed and persons earning medium-high incomes. Meanwhile, about a decade earlier, the desire to migrate was higher among young people in their early 20s, less educated and less qualified, unemployed and persons earning a low income. Subsequently, Albania will be hit even harder by brain and skill drain, which will definitely have negative consequences.

Also, returnees – whose curve of return peaked in 2010–2013 (Greek crisis) and 2016–2017 (refused asylumseekers from Germany) – have a higher desire to migrate than those who have not migrated

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86. **Esipova N., Ray J., Pugliese A.** (2017) Number of potential migrants worldwide tops 700 million, 8 June, *Gallup News*, 8 June, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/211883/number-potential-migrants-worldwide-tops-700-million.aspx> (last accessed 11 December 2018).

previously. On the one hand, this shows that their re-integration has not been a success. On the other, it shows that the home country has not been able to utilise properly their financial, human and social capital to the benefit of economic development.

It is clear that the desire/intent of half of the population aged 18–40 years old to migrate from Albania is an unwanted syndrome as much as it is a reality that should be accepted. If migration is to continue, efforts should be made to manage it in such a way that the negative effects of migration (disorderly departure, brain drain, exploitation) are minimised, and the positive impacts (productive use of financial remittances, modernising impact of social remittances, links to the homeland, return migration, brain gain etc.) are maximised.

Given the rising educational profile of potential migrants, avenues can be explored for inter-country agreements on managed skilled migration, always bearing in mind the dangers of brain and skills drain. This policy suggestion is made in the brief that skilled migrants (through higher savings and remittances, investments and higher human and social capital) contribute more, upon return, for themselves, the home country and the host country (a triple-win situation). Therefore, the preliminary education and training of potential migrants (taking into account the labour market demand in EU countries) may be an option, which may be achieved in close cooperation with the host country. This study has demonstrated that Albanian potential migrants are more aware than a decade earlier of the need for professional training, language acquisition and learning about the culture of the host country, in order to be able to adapt more easily to the labour market demand. In this case, the host country may invest in Albania –in the framework of bilateral agreements –in vocational training and education, provided that the trained human resources are larger than those who desire to leave. Recognition of education and training by host countries is another measure that would facilitate employment and ensure a higher

income for Albanian migrants.

Formal channels and employment agencies may play a significant role in this aspect. They may facilitate and minimise the transition period until a job is found in the formal sector in line with the education and qualification level of the migrant.<sup>87</sup> In this case, we would not have a *brain waste*, but a *win-win-win* situation.

These formal channels may also be used for the return of migrants and their employment in Albania, taking into consideration their qualifications and experience earned in the host country. In addition to employment, some returnees want to invest their capital in the economy and need support and a favourable business climate. Business consulting agencies may play an important role in channelling their capital in the local economy.

Efforts should also be made to improve and broaden the structure of employment and business opportunities in Albania so that fewer people are pessimistic about their future in Albania and hence see migration as the 'only way out'. On the other hand, this would contribute to the effective utilisation of remittances and the financial, human and social capital of the migrants for the development of the domestic economy.

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87. The 2007 survey showed that the Albanian migrants spent on average 2–3 years until they found a job that would fit their education and qualifications. This transitory period is characterised by high mobility and periods of unemployment. The minimisation of this period would undoubtedly boost the earnings and hence increase remittances from Albanian migrants.

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