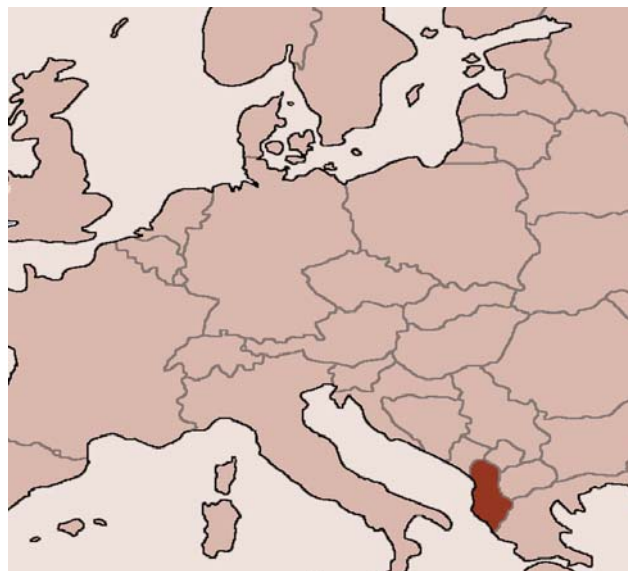


# Albania

## Introduction

Contemporary Albanian migration is considered to be unique by virtue of its intensity over a short period of time. By 2010 nearly half of Albania's resident population had emigrated and was living abroad, while many others had moved internally. Starting from a kind of 'tabula rasa' in the 1990s after nearly half a century of communist rule during which emigration was banned, contemporary flows have been intensive. In more recent years some immigration and transit migration has taken place, but the numbers are insignificant and confirm that Albania will remain a country of emigration for some years to come.



## Background Information

Capital: Tirana

Official language: Albanian

Area: 28,748 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2011 census): 2,821,977

Population density (2011 census): 97 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>

Population growth (2012 est.): 0.28%<sup>1</sup>

Foreign citizens as percentage of total population (2010): 2.8%<sup>2</sup>

Labor force participation rate: 62.2%<sup>3</sup>

Unemployment rate (2010): 14.2%<sup>4</sup>  
(22.5% amongst the 19-29 years old)

Religions (2011 census): 58.79% Muslims (including 2.09% Bektashis), 16.99% Christians (10.03% Catholics, 6.75% Orthodox, 0.14% Protestants and 0.07% other), 2.50% atheists, 5.51% other<sup>5</sup>

## Historical Developments of Migration

### Migration under Ottoman rule

The earliest mass migration in the collective memory of Albanians took place in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, following the death of Albania's national hero, Scanderbeg, in 1467 and the beginning of the Ottoman conquest. Five centuries under Ottoman rule were accompanied by further emigration. Many Albanian men fled to escape blood feuds, local lords or the Ottoman persecution; yet others simply emigrated to escape poverty or to work in various trades and professions.<sup>6</sup> This emigration is known in the Albanian history and collective memory as *kurbet*, referring to the act of going away and being distant in a foreign land, usually for work.<sup>7</sup>

### Transatlantic migrations

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Albanians became (a very small) part of the transatlantic migrations from Southern Europe. Some of them were refugees who fled the bloodshed that resulted from the Balkan Wars and the two World Wars. Others sought to improve their life by emigrating for work in the rapidly expanding in-

dustrial cities of North America and the agricultural industries of Australia. Labor migrants were in the majority men and after the 1930s some women followed. Most of them originated from south and south-east Albania. As a result of these historical migrations, significant communities of Albanians formed in Greece, Italy, Romania, Egypt, Turkey and the US.<sup>8</sup> Of particular significance are the Arbëresh communities in the South of Italy and Sicily who have preserved their language and customs after more than five centuries.<sup>9</sup>

### The communist years (1945-1990)

Albania emerged from World War II an economically devastated country. At the end of November 1944 a communist regime came to power in Albania. During nearly half a century of communist rule emigration abroad without authorization was banned and severely punished. Only a trickle of people managed to escape during those years, settling mainly in the USA.

Movements within the country were, likewise, tightly controlled and sanctioned only as part of the planned economy. As far as immigration was concerned, it was also almost non-existent during those years since all aliens, especially those from the UK and the USA, were viewed with suspicion. Only certain categories of visitors were allowed to settle for a fixed period of time, such as selected lecturers teaching at Tirana's university, members of the sister

Marxist-Leninist parties, or students from friendly countries and those of Albanian origin (such as from Kosovo).

### Emigration since 1990

Albania emerged from 45 years of communism with a third of its population under 15 years of age, suffering high unemployment and in dire poverty. The latter two problems would escalate in the early 1990s as the closure of industries and rural cooperatives led to mass unemployment, while 'shock therapy' of economic reform meant that prices and inflation shot upwards almost overnight. Desperate Albanians rushed towards the coastal cities of Durrës and Vlorë in the hope of boarding one of the ships leaving for Italy, while many more walked in droves over the mountains to Greece.<sup>10</sup> The scale of this exodus is not easily quantifiable as most migrants were irregular and there was much to-and-fro, especially with Greece. Table 1 provides a snapshot of numbers and destination countries compiled from data made available by the Albanian Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO) and the Ministry of Interior (Moi), at three key moments of the past two decades. Table 2 draws on data from key host countries themselves.

Although the number of emigrants presented in Table 1 seems relatively small, their significance becomes clear when we put them in a comparative perspective. World Bank data ranks Albania ninth in the list of top-10 countries

**Table 1: Estimates of Albanians living abroad: 1999, 2005 and 2010**

Country	1999	%	2005	%	2010	%
Greece	500,000	67.3	600,000	54.9	750,000	44.0
Italy	200,000	27.0	250,000	22.9	450,000	26.4
USA	12,000	1.6	150,000	13.7	400,000	23.5
United Kingdom	5,000	0.7	50,000	4.6	50,000	2.9
Germany	12,000	1.6	15,000	1.4	15,000	0.9
Canada	5,000	0.7	11,500	1.0	15,500	0.9
Belgium	2,500	<0.3	5,000	0.5	5,000	0.3
Turkey	2,000	>0.3	5,000	0.5	5,000	0.3
France	2,000	>0.3	2,000	0.2	10,000	0.6
Australia	2,000	>0.3	2,000	0.2	2,500	0.2
Switzerland	1,000	<0.1	1,500	<0.1	1,500	<0.1
Netherlands	n.a.	n.a.	1,000	<0.1	1,000	<0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>743,500</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,093,000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,705,500</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: 1999: Barjaba (2000); 2005: GoA (2005, p. 36); 2010: NID (2010, pp. 7-8)

**Table 2: Estimates of Albanians living in key host countries, 1998-2010**

Country	Number	Female (%)	Year	Source
Greece	368,269	40.0	2010	Valid residence permits, March
	185,000	n.a.	2008	Ethnic Greek Albanian citizens with long-term residence permits (not included above)
	32,892	45.8	2010	Stock of naturalized Albanian citizens (1998-2010)
Italy	483,219	45.6	2011	Valid residence permits, 1 January
	24,028	48.5	2010	Stock of naturalized Albanian citizens (1998-2010)
USA	113,661	n.a.	2000	Stock of Albanians by ethnicity, US Census
	201,000	n.a.	2008	Stock of Albanians by ancestry, 2008 American Community Survey
	80,360	n.a.	2011	Stock of Albanians with legal permanent resident status by country of birth (1990-2011)
United Kingdom	13,477	n.a.	2011	Stock of Albanians by ethnicity, UK Census (England & Wales only)
	32,425	n.a.	2011	Stock of Albanians by language, UK Census (England & Wales only)
	7,236	18.2	2010	Stock of naturalized Albanian citizens (1998-2010)
Canada	25,000	n.a.	2011	Stock of Albanians by language, Canadian Census

Sources: GR: Data of the Greek Ministry of the Interior in Maroukis and Gemi (2010: 13, 15, 16); IT: ISTAT database available online at [http://demo.istat.it/altridati/noncomunitari/index\\_e.html](http://demo.istat.it/altridati/noncomunitari/index_e.html), retrieved 31 January 2013; USA: US Census Bureau, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov); UK: 2011 Census data tables 'QS211EW ethnic group' and 'QS204EW main language' available online at: [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk), retrieved: 31 January 2013; Canada: 2011 Canadian Census online at: <http://www12.statcan.ca>, last updated: 09 January 2013, retrieved 31 January 2013; data on naturalizations in Greece, Italy and the UK: Eurostat statistics 'Acquisition of citizenship by former citizenship' available online at: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/database>, last updated: 22 August 2012, extracted: 31 January 2013.

of emigration in the world, in terms of relative scale of emigration, i.e. as a percentage of the population living in the source country; by 2010 more than 1.4 million Albanians had emigrated and lived abroad, equivalent to almost half (45.4 percent) of the country's resident population.<sup>11</sup>

### Key Stages in Albanian Emigration

There were three key stages on which this Albanian 'drama' of mass exodus was played: the very first post-communist years of extreme poverty, political and physical insecurity and general chaos (1990-1993); the break-down of law and order nearing civil war which followed the collapse of corrupt pyramid 'savings' schemes in 1997;<sup>12</sup> and the destabilization of the country following the Kosovo war in 1999 and the resulting inflow of nearly half a million Albanian refugees fleeing Milosevic's terror.<sup>13</sup> The 2000s have generally been a peaceful decade as far as the political scene is concerned, and, combined with the inflow of migrant remittances, the country's economic situation has significantly improved. Migration has continued, albeit not at the scale and with the same features of the previous decade.

### Characteristics of Current Migration Flows

*First*, there are fewer irregular migrants than in the 1990s, primarily as a consequence of the regularization schemes in Greece (1998, 2001, 2005 and 2007) and Italy (1995, 1997 and 2002), where a considerable number of Albanians participated successfully. Family reunification followed on a large scale. *Secondly*, the migration destinations have diversified; although Greece and Italy remain the top countries in terms of *stocks*, *flows* to the UK and the USA have been increasing (Table 1). *Thirdly*, the typology of individual migrants has transformed from one where young males dominated, to one where families are the norm rather than the exception. As Albanian migration has reached the phase of settlement on orientation towards integration,<sup>14</sup> the second-generation group has consolidated itself.<sup>15</sup> *Fourthly*, a substantial intellectual loss has occurred: during the 1990s half of all the country's academics and scientists emigrated, while it is not sure if and how many Albanian students at universities abroad will ever return.<sup>16</sup> *Finally*, although most migrants have settled in their countries of destination, there is parallel temporary seasonal and return migration, especially to Greece.

## Irregular Emigration

Albanian migration was overwhelmingly irregular throughout the 1990s. Although flows stabilized during the 2000s, some irregular migration continued as legal migration channels remained limited while at the same time socio-economic inequalities in Albania increased. The implementation of Readmission Agreements (RAs) and the strict border controls carried out by the Albanian border police, have resulted in continued repatriation of irregular migrants, especially from Greece. Tables 3 and 4 present numbers of Albanians forcibly returned from the EU during 2006-10, and the top five countries of return for 2009-10, respectively. As Table 4 shows, the overwhelming majority of them are returned from Greece. Most of returnees are male – nearly 96 percent in 2010.<sup>17</sup>

## Albanian Refugees and Asylum Seekers

During the communist years almost all emigrants who managed to escape Albania were granted refugee status in the countries they settled. Yet, after the multi-party elections of March 1991, which saw the opposition Democratic Party as the clear winner, host governments' attitudes changed rapidly and Albanians were increasingly considered as economic migrants. For example, Italy accepted as political refugees the 25,000 Albanians who landed in Apulia in the March 1991 boat exodus, but refused the 20,000 or so who reached its shores in August of the same year considering them as economic migrants on the grounds that Albania was now a 'democratic country'.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout the last two post-communist decades legal migration channels to the EU and other industrialized countries remained closed for the vast majority of ordinary Albanians. As such, seeking asylum was one of the few options available for those wanting to escape life in Albania. Many had clear reasons for doing so ranging from escaping blood feuds, human traffickers, homophobia, gender-based violence, to ethnically-based persecution (Romani) or politically-motivated elimination. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates just under 180,000 Albanians (179,805) were recognized as refugees between 1990 and 2010.<sup>19</sup>

The visa-free travel to the Schengen area for holders of Albanian biometric passports, which came into effect in December 2010, has given rise to another wave of asylum

**Table 3: Number of persons returned to Albania from EU countries by year**

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number	61,884	73,679	66,009	65,484	52,917

Source: Mol in Dedja (2012b: 102)

**Table 4: Top host countries of forced Albanian returnees, 2009-10**

Country/Year	2009	%	2010	%
Greece	62,639	93	50,735	93
Italy	1,444	2	1,150	2
Macedonia	1,234	2	1,004	2
United Kingdom	524	0.8	340	0.6
Switzerland	347	0.5	229	0.4
Germany	223	0.3	185	0.4
France	222	0.3	153	0.3
Other	938	0.1	792	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,571</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54,588</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Mol data in GoA (2010: 83-84)

claims in these countries. In 2012 alone, the number of asylum applications from Albanian citizens stood at more than 5,000.<sup>20</sup> However, the vast majority of these have been refused as unfounded and Albania's Chief of Police has vowed to penalize all those 'abusing' the visa-free and asylum system, declaring that the police has files on all returnees.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 5: Albanian refugees by host country, 1996-2005, top five asylum destinations**

Country	Number	%
USA	34,394	42
Germany	8,642	11
France	8,221	10
Canada	8,109	10
United Kingdom	4,962	6
Other	17,239	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,567</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: UNHCR (2005)

## Immigration in Albania since 1990

Although inflows of migrants are almost negligible they are becoming the focus of attention for some government agencies under pressure from the EU. Adequate data are lacking for most years, and what exists is patchy and at times contradictory. For example, the World Bank reports total stocks of around 90,000 by 2010, the equivalent of 2.8 percent of Albania's resident population. More than half of these are women with top source countries being Greece, Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Israel, Italy, and Russia.<sup>22</sup> The picture is more nuanced when we look at data derived from MoI databases.<sup>23</sup> Table 6 gives a snapshot of selected figures of permits given to foreign residents by citizenship during 2006-10, while table 7 gives a break-down of these permits by main types.

The tables show the following. First, the issuance of residence permits has been generally – although slightly – increasing over the years. Second, the vast majority of these permits are issued for employment reasons, peaking in 2009. Family reunification has remained constant throughout these years at around 10 percent, only to jump to over 17 percent in 2010. Asylum permits have remained low.

The third feature is the geographical spread of origin countries. The data clearly show Turkey's dominance, with the Chinese and Italians competing for second

place, followed closely by US citizens. The fourth feature is their geographical location within Albania, namely a concentration in the Durrës-Tirana conurbation with an average of around 84 percent of migrants with a residence permit registered as living there.<sup>24</sup> Equally, more than half of work permits issued in 2010 were for applicants based in the capital.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the vast majority of immigrants are men – with women constituting on average a quarter of total immigrants during 2006-10 – most of whom are in the working-age bracket.<sup>26</sup>

When combining types of permits issued with country of origin, age and gender the following picture emerges: there is a dominance of Turkish men in the working-age bracket with residence permits. This is related to two factors: first, the visa-free regime between Albania and Turkey, which started in 1992, facilitates in-migration and secondly the awarding of large-scale contracts in the country's infrastructure to Turkish companies, which in turn employ Turkish citizens, such as in the construction of the Durrës-Kukës motorway.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese, on the other hand, are mainly self-employed in their own shops and employed in those owned by their co-ethnics, primarily trading in Tirana. Interesting to note is the presence of Filipinas who are employed as domestic workers by foreign professionals or consular staff stationed in Albania and by Albanian affluent families who consider them as a status symbol.

**Table 6: Foreign residents in Albania by country of citizenship, 2006-10**

Country	Year									
	2006	%	2007	%	2008	%	2009	%	2010	%
<b>Europe</b>	<b>1,749</b>		<b>2,894</b>		<b>4,298</b>		<b>5,007</b>		<b>4,114</b>	
Italy	483	16	608	15	656	11	709	10	827	15
Greece	89	3	117	3	131	2	145	2	171	3
Other EU	272		368		410		487		592	
Kosovo	100	3	129	3	158	3	220	3	354	6
Turkey	477	15	1,396	34	2,573	44	2,947	43	1,649	29
Rest of Europe	328		276		370		439		521	
<b>Asia &amp; Middle East</b>	<b>751</b>		<b>498</b>		<b>820</b>		<b>1,047</b>		<b>733</b>	
China	551	18	276	7	588	10	786	12	381	7
<b>Americas</b>	<b>491</b>		<b>547</b>		<b>557</b>		<b>579</b>		<b>621</b>	
USA	411	13	451	11	448	8	447	7	463	8
<b>Africa &amp; Oceania</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,086</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,812</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,793</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,657</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: MoI data in GoA (2010: 30-31)

Note: Numbers of Rumanians and Bulgarians are counted in the EU totals only from 2007.

**Table 7: Types of permits given to foreign residents in Albania, 2006-10**

Purpose	Year									
	2006	%	2007	%	2008	%	2009	%	2010	%
Employment	1,531	49	2,177	53	3,707	64	4,398	65	2,601	46
Humanitarian/Religious	1,235	40	1,355	33	1,464	25	1,565	23	1,547	27
Family reunification	288	9	494	12	555	10	622	9.2	977	17.3
Study	23	0.7	28	0.7	55	1	90	1.3	183	3.2
Asylum seekers	34	0.1	32	0.8	31	0.5	35	0.5	42	0.8
Other	0		0				83	1.2	313	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,086</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,812</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,793</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,663</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Mol data in GoA (2010: 29-32)

## Irregular Immigrants

A very small number of migrants enter Albania clandestinely – often via Greece – aiming to transit to Italy. Others overstay their visa or – as in the case of Turkish citizens – their 90-days period of free-visa stay. In 2001 the ‘pre-screening procedure’ was introduced, according to which a team of representatives from UNHCR, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), the IOM (International Organization for Migration), and Mol’s Directorate for Asylum and Refugees would provide an indication as to whether an individual apprehended by the Albanian authorities might be a refugee, economic migrant, or victim of trafficking. They were then referred to relevant authorities so that they could apply for asylum, receive assistance as victims of trafficking or return voluntarily with IOM’s support as might be the case. There were no specific provisions for those who fell outside of these categories. In 2008 two pieces of legislation were passed to this effect: first, the Mol’s Instruction ‘On the Procedure to Be Implemented by the State Police for Selection of Irregular Foreigners at the Border’ and second, the law ‘On Foreigners’. As a result, irregular migrants apprehended in Albania who fall outside of the aforementioned categories are issued with an order of expulsion, implying their voluntary departure, followed by an expulsion order through coercion if they fail to leave within the set time limit. In such cases, irregular migrants are detained in a closed centre until the expulsion order is enforced, which can last up to six months, extended for another six on justified grounds.<sup>28</sup> A Centre for Administrative Detention of Illegal Foreigners with a maximum capacity of 200 persons was constructed in 2008 with EU financial assistance. The centre became operational in 2010 but has since received harsh criticism from the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights because of its remote and inaccessible location, inadequate legal safeguards in law and practice and the treatment of migrants in prison-

like facilities.<sup>29</sup> By the end of 2008, transit reception centers were also established at ten border crossing points.<sup>30</sup>

Most transit migrants are South Asians, especially Afghans, but also include some Chinese, Kurds and Africans.<sup>31</sup> Some of those who manage to transit successfully may still be returned to Albania if apprehended by EU authorities under the RA that Albania has signed with the EU. The entry into force of the RA’s clause for Third Country Nationals (TCNs), combined with the lack of capacity of Albanian authorities to follow-up on TCNs’ removal from Albania, have raised fears that the country may become a ‘revolving door’ for these migrants, who will insist on trying to reach the EU. For example, in the period September 2010 – April 2011, some 207 Leaving Orders had been issued.<sup>32</sup> However, the number of actual removals is very small, as Table 8 shows.

**Table 8: Number of removals of irregular Third Country Nationals to their countries of origin, 2006-10**

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number	9	36	93	42	29

Source: Mol in Dedja (2012b: 102)

## Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Albania is party to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In compliance with these international legal instruments, the government approved Law 8432 ‘On Asylum in the Republic of Albania’, passed at the end of 1998, prompted by the inflow of Albanian refugees from neighboring Kosovo. In 2001, a multi-agency Task Force on Asylum was established, followed by the approval in 2003 of three by-laws on education,

health care and employment.<sup>33</sup> In 2003 the Office for Refugees (OfR) operational in the Ministry of Local Government since 2001 was renamed as the Directorate for Refugees and transferred to the Ministry of Public Order (now Mol). It was only in 2006 that UNHCR passed the management of asylum applications over to the Albanian government. Asylum seekers are sent to the national reception centre near Tirana, operational since 2003 and run by the Mol's Directorate for Refugees. The lack of experience and resources has meant that progress is very slow in the field of asylum. For example, the EU commission evaluations showed that Albania could not be considered a safe third country as recently as 2007 because 'no coherent single asylum strategy [was] yet in place', while its 'protection regime for those granted asylum [remained] weak'.<sup>34</sup> As for statistics, they remain insignificant. According to UNHCR data, the stock of recognized refugees in Albania between 1990 and 2010 is 46,246 persons, nearly half of which were recognized in 1998 alone.<sup>35</sup> In fact, numbers in the 1990s were at a constant of around 3,000 persons with the exception of 1997 which had only 30 refugees. Throughout the 2000s, however, numbers are mostly in double digits, with an average of 65 from 2004 onwards.

## Development of Migration-Related Policies

Migration internally and abroad was officially declared a human right only in 1993; article 22 of Law 7692 guaranteed the right of every Albanian citizen to choose his/her own place of residence and to move freely within the country, as well as to freely leave the country and return.<sup>36</sup> These rights were further re-instated in the current Constitution of the Republic of Albania which was approved by parliament and voted for in a referendum in 1998.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the 1990s policy measures were generally of an ad-hoc nature. Emigration was primarily treated as a means to export unemployment and import wealth through remittances. Albania was soon labeled as problematic for the EU as it was considered to be a source country for all kinds of illegal activities and products: human trafficking, narcotics, human smuggling and 'illegal migrants' to name but a few. Collective expulsions as were carried out by Greece, and other measures aimed at stopping irregular migrants seemed to have little effect. Thus, the EU governing bodies negotiated several agreements with the Albanian governments to stave off the flows.<sup>38</sup>

The EU offered Albania the prospect of accession in 2000 and subsequently started negotiations for the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) – an important stage in the process that leads to accession – in 2003. The SAA was signed in 2006 and was followed by an Action Plan (AP) where issues of migration and asylum took central stage. Thus, the entire migration policy and institutional framework in Albania is framed by the EU needs and demands, reflected in these key policy documents.

With the financial and technical support of the EU and IOM, a National Strategy on Migration (NSM) was prepared. Together with its accompanying National Action Plans on migration and remittances, it aims at improving the man-

agement of migration flows, e.g. through expanding the legal channels for emigration in form of seasonal work programs that allow for temporary and circular migration.<sup>39</sup> Albania has also signed an RA with the EU that establishes Albania's obligation to readmit Albanian citizens as well as TCNs and stateless persons apprehended on the EU member states' territories having entered via Albania. Signing the RA was a prerequisite for the SAA (Article 81). The RA was negotiated in 2003, ratified by the EU Parliament in 2005 and the Albanian Parliament in 2006, and entered in force in May 2006 for Albanian nationals and in 2008 for TCNs.<sup>40</sup>

In 2008, a Visa Facilitation Agreement with the EU entered into force. It facilitated the visa application and entry into the EU territory of certain categories of Albanian citizens such as pensioners, students, journalists and professionals. Since December 2010 Albanian citizens who possess an Albanian biometric passport have been allowed to travel without a visa to the Schengen area and reside there for up to three months for tourist purposes.

Other policies that have been designed to address issues such as the reintegration of returned Albanian citizens, the trafficking in human beings as well as refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>41</sup>

## Citizenship

### The beginnings

As part of the Ottoman Empire, Albanians were ruled by the Ottoman legislation until the proclamation of the independent state of Albania in 1912. The first document to legislate Albanian citizenship was the country's first constitution, adopted in 1914.<sup>42</sup> Citizenship was determined by a combination of birth and residence, dual citizenship being prohibited. The next piece of legislation was the law of 1929 passed as a chapter of the Civil Code of the Kingdom of Albania. Dual citizenship was once again prohibited and citizenship was acquired by birth – but only through the male lineage, by naturalization following a period of residence, and by royal decree.

### The communist years

A new citizenship law was passed by the communist government in 1946 whereby citizenship was acquired by descent, by birth in Albania, by naturalization and by international treaties. Certain provisions facilitated its acquisition by individuals of Albanian ethno-cultural origin. Through a number of stipulations regarding the loss of citizenship, the law was used as a weapon against the government's enemies. Thus, Albanian citizenship could be removed from Albanian citizens living abroad who were considered to cause damage to the national and state interests of the People's Republic of Albania (PRA) or had done so during WWII. The follow-up decree of 1954 gave enhanced powers to the Presidium of the People's Assembly in relation to the acquisition, release and removal of citizenship.<sup>43</sup>

### The early 1990s

Dual citizenship was introduced for the first time in a short presidential decree of 1992 which was later turned into a law in the same year. It was aimed at facilitating acquisition of Albanian citizenship by 'aliens of Albanian nationality and origin'. Three main groups benefited from it:

- Albanians of the former Yugoslavia who wanted to acquire Albanian citizenship without losing their former one;
- Albanians – especially those opposed to the communist regime – who had lost their Albanian citizenship during communism;
- and the post-1990s diaspora.

In addition, the Charter on Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms adopted in 1993 stipulated that the citizenship could not be revoked without the consent of the individual.

### The law on citizenship of 1998

In 1998 a new constitution – the first proper post-communist one - and a new law on citizenship were passed. Thus, automatic acquisition of Albanian citizenship from a child born to at least one Albanian parent became a constitutional right and citizenship is not lost without the citizen's consent.<sup>44</sup> The law on citizenship in particular addresses a number of concerns related to migrants abroad.<sup>45</sup> First, it allows dual citizenship (article 3). Second, the law makes provisions for reducing statelessness by enabling individuals who have lost Albanian citizenship to re-acquire it. Third, migrants' children born abroad are able to acquire Albanian citizenship automatically through birth if at least one parent is an Albanian citizen. Finally, foreign spouses of Albanian migrants who wish to gain Albanian citizenship may do so through acquisition by facilitated naturalization, subject to meeting relevant requirements, two of which are a marriage of at least three years and continuous legal stay in Albania of at least one year. Certain requirements for naturalization are waived in cases of stateless persons or individuals of a scientific, economic, cultural or national interest. Table 9 provides cumulative figures on the acquisition and loss of Albanian citizenship from 1992 until 8 February 2013. The law is considered to be in harmony with EU regulations – an important step in Albania's aspiration to eventually join the EU as a full member.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless,

in practice implementation has been problematic and civil society actors have raised concerns that marginalized communities such as the Roma may be lacking access to basic citizenship rights due to relatively considerable levels of statelessness, resulting from failure to register newborn children with the relevant authorities.<sup>4</sup>

## Current Developments

The key debates around migration have centered on the impacts related to remittances, population, and diaspora.

### Remittances

Remittances have been the country's lifeline throughout the two post-communist decades. They increased year-on-year from a baseline of \$150 million in 1992 reaching their peak at \$1.3 billion in 2007, but started declining from then on. In the early 1990s remittances covered almost the entire trade deficit and constituted as much as 22 percent of the country's GDP. By 2009, these figures had fallen but were still significant at 33 percent and 9 percent respectively. At a micro-level, remittances have been key to ensure the survival of many families, as well as help pay for them to access better education and healthcare, invest in agriculture and small family-run businesses.<sup>48</sup> Much of the large-scale migration within Albania was financed by remittances sent from family members working abroad.<sup>49</sup> In more recent years Albanian migration has been maturing with rapid family reunification abroad, which, combined with the ongoing economic crisis badly affecting host countries, especially Greece, has meant that the inflow of remittances towards Albania has been on the decline.

### Population changes

The interaction between migration and population in Albania has had three main outcomes: population loss, redistribution, and ageing. Figures from the two post-communist population censuses confirm this. The 2001 census enumerated a population loss due to migration of around 700,000 compared to 1989; by 2011 the loss of another 8 percent of the 2001 population was also attributed mainly to emigration.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, internal migration too has been large-scale and the combination of the two movements has created sustainability challenges resulting from unequal population redistribution in the country. For example, while

**Table 9: Selected data on acquisition and loss of Albanian citizenship, 1992-2013**

Year	1992	1992-1997	1991-2007	1992-2007	2002	2012	2013 (Jan/ Feb)
Acquisition	1,107	2,530	3,184	n.a.	n.a.	367	35
Loss	n.a.	668	n.a.	4,949	1,105	128	90

Sources: Office of the President of Albania data in Sorraj (2007: 36-38, 41) cited in Krasniqi (2012: 9-13); also www.president.al, last visited 8 February 2013.



the population of the Leskovik municipality (mountainous south-east) has been depleted beyond sustainability – density at just below 2 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, Tirana municipality's sustainability issues stem from overpopulation – density of around 10,500 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, the country's average being around 100.<sup>51</sup> Dominance of young ages amongst emigrants, combined with a decrease of fertility levels in the country have resulted in rapid ageing of the resident population, especially in rural areas. By 2011 average age of population in Albania was just above 35 years, whereas in 1989 nearly a third of the population was younger than 15 years.

### Diaspora

Albania's diaspora is rather large relative to the country's resident population, especially when taking into account the historical communities abroad. Often, all Albanians abroad are considered as part of this diaspora, including those originating from Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. In turn, these migrants too consider Albania as the true heart of an encompassing Albanian motherland. Such a symbiotic relationship – even if usually only symbolic – has opened up investment opportunities in Albania for affluent Albanians from the US or Swiss diaspora. In recent years attention has turned to the highly educated and professional segments who are considered by the Albanian government and international development partners as particularly important intermediaries in Albania's development through the transmission of their know-how, technological knowledge and networks.

## Future Challenges

There are again three key challenges Albania faces in the near future as regards migration:

### 1) Decline of remittances

In the short term the effects of declining remittances may be softened by two factors, both of which are related to the migrant population in Greece, which is also the most numerous and used to send the larger sums. First, as the state of Greece's economy worsens, there is a steady return of Albanian migrants to Albania, bringing with them their savings too. Second, fearing a collapse of the Greek banks many migrants who decide to stay in Greece have moved their savings to Albanian banks. In macro-economic terms there is thus perhaps a neutralization of the lack of remittances effect. In micro-terms, however, both returnees and those staying on have reduced expenditure to the minimum so long as both Greece and Albania are not yet out of the recession.

### 2) Return migration

Although most host countries were affected by the global economic crisis, it is return from Greece which is gaining momentum. Most returnees are those who have been hit the hardest by losing their jobs and not being able

to make ends meet; they come back to poor households in rural areas where future prospects are very grim. This brings challenges of increased unemployment and perhaps even social unrest, especially as Albania has been a remittance-dependent economy for years with a very narrow production and export base. This may be softened somewhat by re-migration. Indeed, returnees from Greece and even Albanians still residing in Greece are joining the Greek waves of emigration towards more prosperous northern European countries such as Germany and the UK. The latter is especially attractive because of its non-euro membership and the relatively robust labor market, made more accessible to Albanians by the existence of a sizeable Albanian migrant community.

### 3) Immigration

Existing figures suggest that Albania continues to be a country of emigration and it has a long way to go before becoming one of immigration. Considering Albania as a country of transit migration or immigration remains – at least for the moment – an EU-inspired political rhetoric not based on hard facts, as existing figures on both types of movements clearly show. On the other hand, it is fruitful to plan for such developments in advance.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> CIA The World Factbook, updated 29 January 2013, retrieved 31 January 2013 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2011), p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> INSTAT (2010), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> INSTAT (2010), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> With a non-response rate of 13.79%. Data for questions on religion (and cultural-ethnic affiliation) are self-declared and voluntary. The results have been strongly contested and in some cases not recognized by some religious communities and non-ethnic Albanian groups.

<sup>6</sup> Tirta (1999).

<sup>7</sup> King/Vullnetari (2003).

<sup>8</sup> Tirta (1999).

<sup>9</sup> For more information see Bartl (2011).

<sup>10</sup> King/Vullnetari (2003).

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (2011), p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> Also known as Ponzi schemes, these are non-sustainable investment models that promise participants extraordinarily high returns, resulting primarily from enrolling other people into the scheme. In Albania they flourished during 1995-96, helped by an informal credit market, a rudimentary official banking sector and a flow of migrants' remittances from Greece and Italy. By the end of 1996, the interest paid by some of the schemes reached almost 50 percent a month, which of course could not be sustained (Jarvis 2000, p. 10). Nearly half of all Albanians had invested in these schemes, some even selling their houses and livestock in a rush to become rich quickly. In 1997 the schemes collapsed,

causing the fall of the then Democratic-party-led government which was regarded as implicitly involved, thus plunging the country into chaos and near civil war. The World Bank estimated the lost savings at \$1.2 billion, equal to half the country's GDP in 1996 (Olsen 2000, p. 24).

<sup>13</sup> King (2003).

<sup>14</sup> See especially King et al. (2011).

<sup>15</sup> Vathi (2011).

<sup>16</sup> According to Gedeshi et al. (1999).

<sup>17</sup> GoA (2010), p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> King (2003).

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR data in World Bank (2012).

<sup>20</sup> ESI (2012), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> 'Belgium returns 66 Albanian asylum seekers', published in the Albanian daily *Panorama* on 24 October 2012, [www.panorama.com.al/2012/10/24/belgjika-kthen-66-shqiptare-kerkuan-azil-politik](http://www.panorama.com.al/2012/10/24/belgjika-kthen-66-shqiptare-kerkuan-azil-politik).

<sup>22</sup> World Bank (2011), p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> GoA (2010). This is the most recent document providing statistics from the Albanian government on immigration, including asylum and refugees. A note of caution: there is a discrepancy in the data provided within the same document, and at times even within the same table. Years 2009 and 2010 in Tables 3 and 4 earlier, and year 2010 in Tables 6 and 7 are illustrative. Moreover, this data can differ significantly from those provided by international organizations, such as UNHCR (for refugees and asylum seekers) or the World Bank.

<sup>24</sup> GoA (2010), p. 29-30, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> GoA (2010), p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> GoA (2010), p. 29-30.

<sup>27</sup> GoA (2010), p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Dedja (2012a).

<sup>29</sup> Crépeau (2012), p. 17-18.

<sup>30</sup> Dedja (2012a), p. 126.

<sup>31</sup> GoA (2010).

<sup>32</sup> Dedja (2012b), p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> Peshkopia (2005).

<sup>34</sup> Dedja (2012b), p. 111.

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR data (2005) and in World Bank (2012). In the absence of more detailed data, we can only presume that the 1998 refugees were from Kosovo.

<sup>36</sup> Kuvendi Popullor i RSH, 3-31-1993.

<sup>37</sup> Kuvendi i RSH (1998).

<sup>38</sup> Dedja (2012a).

<sup>39</sup> GoA (2005); see also Geiger (2007).

<sup>40</sup> Dedja (2012a).

<sup>41</sup> For more details on the institutional and policy framework see IOM (2008) and GoA (2010).

<sup>42</sup> This section draws on Krasniqi (2012) unless otherwise referenced.

<sup>43</sup> Decree No. 1874 of 7 June 1954.

<sup>44</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Albania, articles 19 and 92(c).

<sup>45</sup> Law No. 8389 'On Albanian citizenship', Date 5 August 1998. Official Journal: Year 1998, No. 21, p. 845; Date of publication: 8-20-1998.

<sup>46</sup> For a detailed analysis see Krasniqi (2012).

<sup>47</sup> Krasniqi (2012).

<sup>48</sup> King et al. (2011).

<sup>49</sup> Vullnetari (2012).

<sup>50</sup> INSTAT (2012).

<sup>51</sup> INSTAT (2011), p. 21.

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### Online resources

The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO)  
[www.mpcs.gov.al/migracioni](http://www.mpcs.gov.al/migracioni)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)  
[www.mfa.gov.al](http://www.mfa.gov.al)

The Ministry of Interior (Moi)  
[www.moi.gov.al](http://www.moi.gov.al)  
[http://asp.gov.al/departamente/dep\\_kufiri&migracioni\\_anglisht.htm](http://asp.gov.al/departamente/dep_kufiri&migracioni_anglisht.htm)

The Albanian National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)  
[www.instat.gov.al/](http://www.instat.gov.al/)

The Office of the President of Albania  
[www.president.al](http://www.president.al)

Brain Gain Programm  
[www.braingain.gov.al](http://www.braingain.gov.al)

EUDO Observatory on Citizenship  
<http://eudo-citizenship.eu/country-profiles/?country=Albania>

World Bank Open Knowledge Repository, Open Data Bank  
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org> and  
<http://data.worldbank.org>

Eurostat  
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/database>

US Census Bureau  
[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

Statistics Canada  
[www12.statcan.ca](http://www12.statcan.ca)

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