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NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD MIGRATION SURVEY IN ALBANIA

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Republic of Albania
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This publication is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, in the framework of the Global Programme "Migration for Development".

The First Part of the Report was prepared from The Albanian Institute of Statistics.
The second part of the report was prepared from The Centre for Economic and Social Studies - CESS Albania.

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This publication was issued without formal editing by IOM.
This publication was issued without IOM Publications Unit (PUB) approval.
This publication was issued without official translation by TRS Unit.
Unofficial translation of the original version in Albanian.

PART I

National Household Migration Survey

Preface and acknowledgement

The Institute of Statistics, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, have conducted for the first time the national Albanian household migration survey for the period 2011-2019.

INSTAT works continuously to improve the quality of population data. While there is already a broad range of conducted surveys, collected data and statistics produced as part of the statistical calendar, a migration specific survey is not regularly conducted. However, measuring migration is critical for Albania, due to the high population mobility, important migration waves and the significant impact these movements produce on growth and the development potential of the migrant population, therefore there is need for more robust statistics in this regard.

The Household Migration Survey will contribute to the collection of reliable data regarding the determinants and impact of migration in Albania and will help INSTAT to develop know-how on broadening the scope of indicators that measure this phenomenon.

This survey looks at the main migration movements of the Albanian population. The first of its kind in Albania, it boasts a sample of more than 20,000 households and adopts some very innovative techniques and approaches. Further, it tries to provide a more comprehensive picture of migration movements in the country, with a view of offering better information for the development of effective policies.

We believe that the results of the survey will be a valuable source for policymakers, central and local administrative entities, as well as for the academia and researchers. It will also give valuable inputs to the implementation of the National Strategy on Migration (2019–2022) and its Action Plan, with the latter foreseeing improvement of data collection, analysis and sharing as one of its specific goals.

The survey was made possible thanks to the support of the German Government through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Global Programme "Migration for Development", as well as through the cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. The information collected gives useful insight into migration dynamics and helps policymakers, civil society, international organizations, and the local and national entities to better understand issues and offer services that target both potential migrants and returnees in Albania.

Special thanks and appreciations go to all those who with dedication contributed to this study, the international expert, Magdalena Mojsiewicz, INSTAT staff members, Majlinda Nesturi and Olta Caca as well as the IOM Tirana Office for their support.

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Director General of INSTAT

Alma Jani
IOM Albania Head of Office

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CAPI	Computer-assisted Personal Interviewing
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
HH	Household
HMS	Household Migration Survey
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INSTAT	Albanian Institute of Statistics
KII	Key Informant Interview
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
RSE	Relative Standard Errors
UN	United Nations

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Executive summary

INSTAT designed a household survey whose main objective was to provide information on net migration rates between 2011 and 2019 and the characteristics of the involved population. The survey is conducted in the framework of the Global Programme "Migration for Development", funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration.

In addition to the insight into net migration flows between 2011 and 2019, this survey produced for the first time statistics on the households' change of residence, hence it should be considered as an experimental study. One of the most important tasks of official statistics is to ensure population estimates not only in census years, but also

during intercensal periods. In most European statistical systems, all necessary measurements, including those concerning migration flows, are closely linked to official registers. With its present system of demographic statistics, Albania is one of the countries that faces issues in producing adequate migration statistics. The measurement of migration flows in Albania is still based on surveys on a representative sample of households.

Social surveys are diverse in design and aim. Some designs permit the use of larger samples and are especially suitable for use in countries where the population is highly mobile. For that purpose, INSTAT in cooperation with IOM prepared an extended households migration survey, whose findings intend to show the changes that have taken place in the Albanian society over the recent years. A similar dedicated migration-exclusive survey is an important development aimed at enhancing statistics in general and demographic and migration data, in particular.

Being only conducted once, the HMS has *ad hoc* character. The methodology used for the survey was CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing). The questionnaire was prepared by INSTAT and consulted with an international expert recruited by IOM in the framework of the project to offer support to the institute in relation to migration statistics. Additional support for the questionnaire design was provided by the IOM Regional Office in Vienna and IOM Headquarters in Geneva as well.

The field work was carried out between 17 April and 15 July 2019. The assumption for HMS 2019 was that questions would be answered by the head of household. HMS 2019 was based in the free will of the households members to take part in the survey. In most countries, this type of survey, especially when covering private households, results in a 30 per cent response rate. Albania is an exceptional case, with an almost 80 per cent response rate in HMS 2019. Refusal to take part in the survey and lack of contact with the randomly selected households, which constituted slightly more than 20 per cent, occurred relatively rarely. The favourable attitude of respondents is sufficient to justify the use of representative samples in social surveys in Albania.

Exceptionally, this HMS study, contrary to the previous INSTAT practices, allowed people who were immediate neighbours of the families to answer where all household members were absent. The main advantage of this solution was to curb the failure of covering the population. The achieved sample size (number of observed sampling units for households and individuals with an accepted interview) equals 19,821 for households and 71,538 for individuals. The results of the survey are focused on the main demographic characteristics of households and population who have changed their place of residence in comparison to 2011 (last Population and Housing Census of Albania). The most important and innovative breakdown of estimated values introduced in the presented survey was the distinction of household migration profiles. The following number of migrant households and persons was estimated by types of migration profile, as below:

- no one from the household has migrated (zero migration),
- at least one, but not all members of the household, has migrated, and
- the entire household has migrated

The key characteristics of Albanian households by migration profiles obtained through HMS are as follows:

- Number of households with no migrants, both internally and out of the country, since 2011 was 493,841 in 2019. The population of these households was 1,872,974 persons
- In terms of outflow: 171,482 households fall under the partial migration profile (at least 1 member of the household has migrated since 2011 abroad or elsewhere in Albania)
- In terms of inflow: 64,740 households fall under the partial immigration profile (at least 1 member of the household has returned or immigrated since 2011)
- The number of whole migrant households, both internally and outside the country, was 84,434 in 2019, with 311,194 people.

This is an innovative study and should not be compared with other regular official statistics in Albania, like the Labour Force Survey. In the regular surveys, INSTAT describes the population of household members with a partial migration profile.

In the period 2011–2019, the whole migrant households represented 6.6 per cent (47,669 households) of the Albanian households covered by the last Census in 2011, which consist of 6.5 per cent of the overall Albanian population (183,428 persons).

Over the same period, 6.4 per cent of the Albanian population (180,606) migrated, leaving 15.5 per cent of households (111,950). These were households falling under the partial migration profile.

The main demographic features of migrants obtained by the survey typically take as reference the members of Albanian partially migrant households. For the population of the entire migration profile, the collected information allowed only estimates of the number of migrant-sending households and the size of the migrant population from these households.

In definition and scope, these features remain the most methodology-consistent with the current INSTAT migration surveys. However, the results of these surveys are still partially comparable due to the observation of net migration flows 2011-2019 in HMS.

The migrants' age and gender analysis shows gender-related differences in the main three groups where the characteristics of socio-demographic variables may be analysed. The distinguished groups are emigrants, immigrants and internally displaced individuals.

There are two main conclusions stemming from this analysis.

The first concerns the predominance of men over women among emigrants and immigrants. For emigrants, up to 200 per cent more men than women were recorded in the age groups between 30 and 56; for immigrants in the same age groups, men exceeded women with 400 per cent. In addition, a significant surplus of women over men aged 15 and over has been recorded for individuals who move internally.

In the group of people aged 15 and over, data on the level of education and labour status was collected. People with higher education level among emigrants and immigrants were 13.97 and 11.97 per cent, [1] respectively.

The labour status analysis indicates that migration flows are mostly composed of economically active population. However, it is worth noting that there is a high number of inactive, in retirement or early retirements people among immigrants.[2]

Nearly 9,000 immigrants in this group indicate a certain tendency for people leaving the labour market to return.

Collected data also enabled the estimation of migrant distribution based on the reason for the change of residence.

Persons who emigrated for financial reasons and for better working and living prospects were about 65 per cent. The same percentage was recorded among returnees to Albania who indicated family reasons as a motive for return. For internally migrating people, family reasons were the most common drivers (52 %).

The measurement of migration flows in Albania needs continuous improvement. As an innovative survey, the HMS, including also the collection of the information for families whose all members left the country, in migration flows, provided a completely new information on their composition. Further, this led to the identification and measurement of household types based on migration profiles.

1 However, direct balancing for emigrants and immigrants should not be conducted, due to the different retrospections used for both flows. In future editions of the survey, a definition correction is recommended.

2 This group also includes the category who has given up their business.

The present study is of experimental nature. The upcoming population and housing census may confirm or question the quality of the current statistics. Periodic HMS surveys should be conducted in Albania. A 5-year periodicity between rounds of future household migration surveys could be considered, including a 10-year period as a reference, i.e. HMS 2024 for the period between 2015 and 2024 and then 2029 for the period between 2019 and 2029. Some adjustments in the definition layer should also be taken into account, especially concerning immigration flows to exclude persons who returned earlier than in the last 10 years.

Introduction

In order to manage migration effectively, both policymakers and those in charge of its implementation need to have access to reliable and timely data. INSTAT Albania has for many years been working to improve the quality of demographic data in general and migration data, in particular. The Strategy on Migration approved in 2019 has identified the challenges faced in this area, such as lack of standardized administrative data collection and insufficient research studies.

The current Household Migration Survey aims at filling this gap by contributing to the collection of reliable data on the determinants and impact of migration in Albania, as well as building INSTAT knowledge and know-how to ensure regular HMS application.

Migration statistics are important to:

(i) ensure reliable and accurate population estimates,
(ii) create migration profiles to design tailored services for the reintegration of returnees,
(iii) estimate the accurate number of inhabitants and labour force on regional and local levels.

The survey data will contribute to improve significantly the ways in which a range of social issues are managed and addressed by policymakers, central and local administrative entities, and serve as a valuable source of information for researchers and the academia.

1. Household migration survey 2019 characteristics and organization

1.1 Purpose of the survey

The Institute of Statistics of Albania prepares annual estimates of the population, taking into account life events (natural increase of the population) and migration flows. The best-quality population figures are obtained from censuses; the last Population and Housing Census of Albania was conducted in 2011. Outside the census years, estimates shall be made according to the information needs of the country. Therefore, each year measurements of flows recording population changes resulting from natural processes such as births and deaths and from migration movements are carried out. The biggest challenge for annual population estimates is the measurement of international migration flows.

Since 2014, in line with the Eurostat recommendations, the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) has decided to incorporate a new module on migration into the Labour Force Survey (LFS) questionnaire. The obtained data have been used to estimate the population on the 1st of January of each year. Migration and natural increase are the two components of population growth, and the logical connections between these aspects of demographic change are represented in the balancing equation. The balancing equation used in current population estimates expresses in a simple way how any population changes over time. It may be expressed as follows:

$$P_{t_2} = P_{t_1} + B_{t_2/t_1} - D_{t_2/t_1} + I_{t_2/t_1} + E_{t_2/t_1},$$

where P_1 and P_2 represent the population at two different dates, t_1, t_2 and *B, D, I,* and stand for, respectively, births, deaths, immigrants (or in-migrants in regional statistics) and emigrants (or out-migrants) between the two dates. This can be re-expressed in terms of natural increase, $NI_{t_2/t_1} = B_{t_2/t_1} - D_{t_2/t_1}$, and net migration, $NM_{t_2/t_1} + I_{t_2/t_1} - E_{t_2/t_1}$. Estimates of net migration may be made directly from comparison of gross flows into and out of an area or indirectly by comparing a population at two points. For the clarity of further consideration, the following concepts should be distinguished:[3]

net migration – the difference between the number of people/residents moving into a specified area and the number of those who leave. On the other hand, net migration refers to the balance NM_{t_2/t_1} of moves (flows) into or out of a given territory between two dates t_1, t_2;

gross migration flow – the total number of migration movements into or out of a given territory between two dates t_1, t_2. Unless t_1 and t_2 represent the beginning of consecutive years, gross flow may include multiple departures and returns of the same person;

net migration flow – the effective number of migration movements to or from a given territory between two dates t_1, t_2. Particularly, in measuring t_1 and t_2 when they are not the beginning of consecutive years, net flow is obtained as a comparison of population states at moments t_1 and t_2 and does not include multiple departures and returns of the same person.

The data from the Albanian LFS is used for net migration NI_{t_2/t_1} estimates. An auxiliary estimation is provided by determining the migration flows between t_1 and t_2 as the beginnings of consecutive years. On an annual basis and, in order to define the population through the concept of residents, these migration flows measured by the LFS are

3 It should be stressed at this point that we are discussing the case of Albania, which defines the population through the 'usually resident population'. Any changes to the national definition or to the international recommendations on the definition of the period of stay of a resident will result in changes to these distinctions. The population definitions used in European countries are more broadly described in Demographic statistics: a review of definitions and methods of collection in 44 European countries, Eurostat 2015, (DOI): 10.2785/717072.

treated as a measure of net flows.[4] However, the sum of the flows obtained over several years (between t_1 and t_n) will not be equal to the net flows over that period, but to the gross flows.

These surveys may be replicated when re-interviewing similar respondents, to produce indications of trends over time. In every round of the LFS survey, all interviews are only a fraction of the total population for which data are sought.[5] The task of connecting survey findings to the larger population is a complex one and carries the risk of error in the random selection of units. The error rate is minimized under given conditions. Although the quality of the collected data has been constantly improved and the scope has been extended, the consequences related to the sample size of the LFS survey were unavoidable.

Demographic surveys are also diverse in both design and aims. Most often, a different type of survey is used, namely a single-round survey which involves only one interview with the respondents. This design permits the use of larger samples and is especially suitable for use in countries where the population is highly mobile. As a result, INSTAT, in cooperation with IOM, prepared an extended households migration survey, whose findings may show the changes taking place in the Albanian society in recent years. Such a migration-exclusive survey is an important development to enhancing Albania's public statistics in general, as well as population and migration statistics, in particular.

Therefore the "Household Migration Survey 2019" is dedicated to collecting much needed migration data in the Albanian society. The results of the survey are focused on the main demographic features of households and population that changed the place of residence in comparison to 2011 when the last Population and Housing Census of Albania was conducted.[6]

The HMS 2019 was a new survey not planned in the National Programme of Official Statistics 2017-2021.[7]

The survey is conducted in the framework of the Global Programme "Migration for Development", funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration.

The objective of the project was to contribute to the improvement of migration data in Albania that can be used for policy development and implementation based on data and evidence. By achieving this, the project contributed to filling this serious gap in data availability on international migration and mobility within the country. Various ministries and governmental organizations, development partners, regional and international organizations, and countries of destination for Albanian migrants will have an essential tool for formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating migration related policies and programs, as well as looking into the reintegration schemes for those returned migrants under the various operational modalities.

In highlighting this aspect of the study, the distinctiveness of the results obtained should be clearly identified. The estimates obtained illustrate the population flows between 2011 and 2019. By definition, therefore, annual migration flows t_1/t_2 originating from the LFS could be distinguished from the sum created for several years t_n/t_1 from annual flows on the basis of time series from the LFS, which are gross flows, and from net migration flows for t_n/t_1 originating from HMS. A given level of net migration can result from a great variety of combinations of moves into or out of a territory; hence no simple relation exists between the two.

Consequently, in view of all the foregoing considerations it is important to note that with this survey for the first time:

- analysis of net migration flows between 2011 and 2019
- statistics on the change of residence of households

have been produced. Hence this is to be considered an experimental study that will need to be refined and improved in the following years.

The survey was designed to record the size of people movement on the one hand, and to carry out a more detailed characterization of the three main types of migration on the other hand. This was done on the basis of extended interviews which were conducted by using a consolidated questionnaire designed to collect information on:

4 In the case of the annual time series and the annual (12-month) condition used in the definition of resident, net and gross flows may be identical. However, the LFS methodology, according to which quarterly averages are taken into account, introduces blurred boundaries in the definition layer.

5 LFS research is conducted in most European countries. In all cases they are prepared on a representative random sample.

6 www.instat.gov.al/media/3058/main_results__population_and_housing_census_2011.pdf.

7 www.instat.gov.al/media/3594/psz-2017-2021.pdf for the full National Program 2017-2021.

1. emigrants – the Albanian citizens who left the country;
2. return migrants (returnees) – the Albanian citizens who returned to Albania;
3. internal migrants – persons who moved within the country. [8]

1.2 Scope of survey

The population frame for the HMS 2019 survey was composed by the households that were identified in the 2011 census.

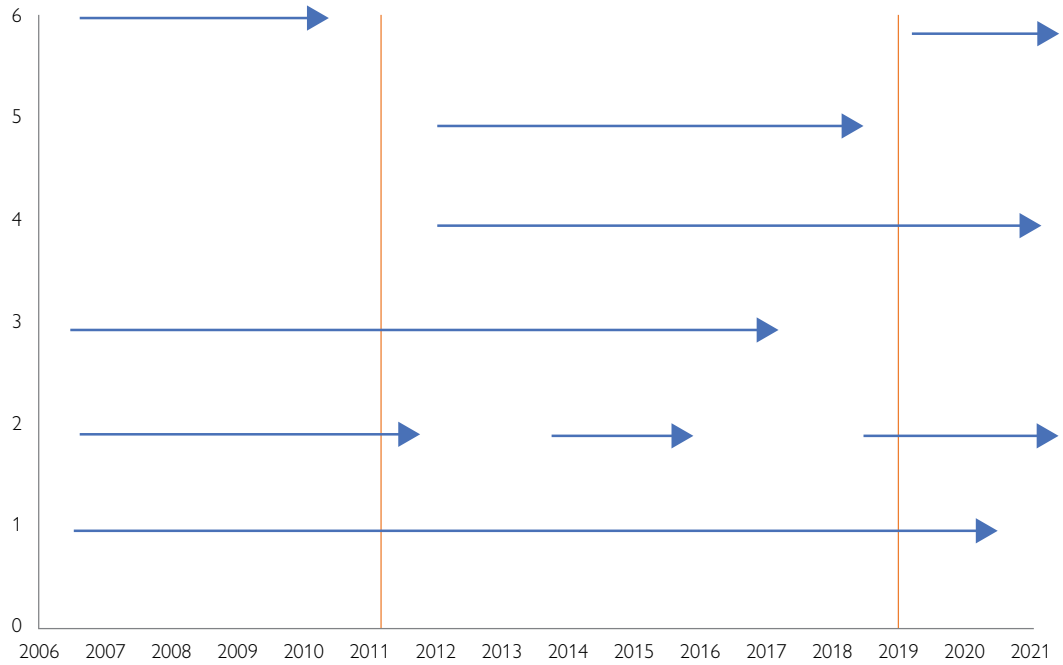
In migration statistical studies, aspects of population dynamics are often neglected. It turns out that the time dimension is extremely important when defining a population frame. Assuming that two time points are important in the survey, the moment of the census in 2011 and the moment of the interview in 2019 can be distinguished in the population:

a) stable elements,
b) leavers,
c) entrants,
d) mixed elements.

This distinction also becomes valid because the test item is a complex object (household).

Let's consider the population of household members presented in the diagram below. The comparison of the list of household members in 2011 and 2019, combined with a detailed interview on the possible causes of a person's absence, may be a basis for concluding on the migration flows of individuals or families.

Figure 1: **Household members emigration profile 2011-2019**



Case 1 and 2: household members present in the 2011 census and HMS 2019 (*stable elements*)

The comparison of the list of household members in 2011 and 2019, may be a basis for concluding on the lack of migration movements. It should be noted that we do not know their migration history. We are not sure if any member of the household left after 2011 and then returned before 2019.

From the point of view of **net migration flow 2011-2019** this is a negligible factor.

8 See The *IOM Glossary on Migration* for a more detailed definition of the terms https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf.

Case 3: household members present in the 2011 census and not present at HMS 2019 (*leavers*)

Depending on the migration destination, this will be a registered case of emigration or internal migration (flows out of an area/municipality). In the INSTAT studies conducted so far, it has been problematic to include entire households that have left their place of residence.

The absence of all household members may mean that the household as a whole is migrating or is disappearing (after all members have died). A properly prepared HMS 2019 questionnaire allowed for an innovative introduction of such objects into the population frame. It was possible to obtain information about the reason for the absence of household members through interviews conducted in the immediate vicinity of the respective household which had been selected randomly.

Case 4: household members not-present at the 2011 census and present at HMS 2019 (*entrants*)

Depending on the migration destination, this will be a registered case of immigration or internal migration (flows into of an area/municipality).

Due to the low level of long-term immigration to Albania (non-Albanians coming to Albania for more than 12 months), the research tool (questionnaire) includes an extensive module dedicated exclusively to Albanians returning to the country as these returnees should be counted outside the main immigration flow. For the purpose of this survey, immigration in the broader sense refers to the sum of the inflows of non-Albanian and returnees.[9]

Consideration should be given to the cases where all household members were not present at the 2011 census and present at HMS 2019. This was the case of household members who have moved from abroad or from another place within the country.

When moving from abroad, the households cannot be covered by the population frame. Thus, the information for this case could not be provided by HMS.

The same may apply to internal migration of whole households that were not included in the sampling frame. This may apply to newly created households separated from existing ones.

Due to the adopted definition of a person absent in 2011 and present in 2019, it should be noted that the actual immigration may have occurred before 2011. Therefore, the presented immigration inflow is not an inflow registered in the annual current statistics 2011-2019.

Case 5: household members, not present in Albania in 2011, who were born/settled after 2011 and emigrated again before 2019, absent at HMS 2019 (*mixed elements*).

This is a possible situation for registration in case of a household survey. However, in the 2011-2019 net migration survey it seems that such persons would not have been registered.

Conversely, cases where the whole household was not present in 2011 and that were consequently not included in the census frame, could not be recorded. These cases remained outside the scope of HMS 2019.

Case 6: household members absent in 2011 (emigrants) who returned after the moment of HMS 2019 (*mixed elements*) similarly as in the case of 5.

In so far as the head of the household lived at the address in 2011, it may have been possible to register changes in the composition and number of its members. It was nevertheless possible for such a member of the household to have been listed by the head of the household in a direct interview. Conversely, in cases where the whole household was not present in 2011 they have not been recorded.

Concluding the case analysis, the target population for HMS 2019 were all persons belonging to households for which the head of the household was present in the country in 2011, as usual resident. The main objective of the HMS was a multi-faceted measurement of net migration flow 2011-2019; migration movements were recorded when households represented by their heads were present in 2011.

9 The administrative data available in the Electronic Register of Foreigners, which is part of the Total Information Management System at the disposal of the Albanian State Police, are a certain alternative to measuring immigrants. Appropriate preparation of this database in the future could generate both net and gross flows in periods.

Due to the structure of the sample frame, only events starting at an address randomly chosen were recorded. Data on population flowing into territorial units of whole households may be used to a limited extent. In table 1 a summary of considerations concerning the scope of HMS has been presented.

Table 1. **Migration dynamics surveyed within HMS 2019**

Item registered	Members of households whose head was		
	present at 2011 Census, as a usual resident, at the indicated address		absent from 2011 Census present at the indicated address in 2019
	surveyed events concerned only a part of the household	surveyed events concerned all the members of the household (present in 2011)	
Inflow from abroad	Immigrating persons interviewed members of stable HHs		Immigrating HHs not registered
Outflow abroad	Emigrating persons interviewed members of stable HHs	Emigrating HHs registered	
Inflow from another municipality inside Albania	Persons moving within the country in the place of residence according to the address as of 2019 interviewed members of stable HHs		Incoming/moving within the country HHs registered but as a mirror statistic
Outflow to another municipality inside Albania	Persons moving within the country from the place of residence according to the address as of 2011 interviewed members of stable HHs	Outgoing/moving within the country HHs registered	

Note: Present at the 2011 Census implies that the address of residence was the same on 30 September 2011 and 15 July 2019. Absent from the 2011 Census implies incompatibility of these addresses.

1.3 Content of the survey

The survey aims to estimate all entries beyond municipalities, by registering the current and former place of usual residence of all household members. To this purpose, the following were registered separately:

> ***internal migration*** - The movement of people within a State involving the establishment of a new temporary or permanent residence;
> ***international migration*** - The movement of people away from their place of usual residence and across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals.

Regarding international migration flows:

> ***outflows*** composed of emigrants who changed their place of residence for the duration of at least 12 months (or with the intention of staying for at least 12 months).

The results were prepared on the basis of 2 datasets: a set of data on households that *left Albania in their entirety* and a set of individual data of household members *of whom some remained in the country* and *some went abroad;*

> ***inflows*** composed of returnees (Albanian citizen returning to their country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country) and immigrants (non-Albanian).

Both returnees and immigrants *strico sensu* were observed in the survey, but the share of the latter was negligible. The results for this section are based on only one dataset, namely the individual dataset of the household members who joined the existing households in 2011.

HMS 2019 as a non-standard and innovative study showed some shortcomings. The design of the population frame and the assumption of a usual resident head of household tracking did not allow the registration of whole families

settling in Albania in newly established households. This has been more comprehensively explained in Table 1 and in Section 1.2 containing the description of the population covered.

Therefore, it was not possible to compare households leaving and arriving in Albania. As explained in the description of the scope of the survey, the result of the estimates is the evaluation of net migration flow; however, it differs from the commonly used concept of net migration. The difference between the number of persons moving into a specified area and the number leaving is known as net migration; when international movements are being studied it is the difference between immigration and emigration. We have to stress clearly that the lack of coverage of some of the cases in the survey results in the inability to produce net migration statistics.

1.4 Organization of the survey

HMS 2019 was a voluntary survey. In most cases, this type of survey, especially among private households, results in a 30 per cent response rate. Albania is in an exceptional situation; the response rate in HMS 2019 was 79 per cent.[10]

The HMS was conducted once and on *ad hoc* basis. No further editions are planned at the moment. The HMS has been conducted using the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) method. The questionnaire was prepared by INSTAT and consulted by the international expert who supported INSTAT on migration statistics, engaged by IOM in the framework of the project. Additional support for the review of the questionnaire was provided by the IOM Regional Office in Vienna and IOM headquarters in Geneva.

The questionnaire was composed of three main parts:

1. General information
2. Household information
3. Migration questions
   a) Demographic characteristics of HH members
   b) Internal migration
   c) Returnees
   d) Emigration

The field work was carried out from 17 of April till 15 of July 2019. In the HMS 2019 it was assumed that questions should be answered directly by the head of household. However, it was allowed to accept the possibility for another member of the household, who was familiar with the situation concerning the members of the household, to answer in the absence of the head of household.

Exceptionally, in the HMS study, the possibility of reduced answers given by persons from the immediate vicinity of households in the absence of all their members was allowed. On one hand, such solution allows to counteract a decrease in the survey response rate, but on the other hand, it may have a negative impact on the quality of responses in the case of some variables (such persons were usually oriented towards the location of absent persons, but had incomplete knowledge in the case of more detailed questions, e.g. had difficulties in answering questions concerning occupation in main activity). The main advantage of this solution is the reduction of a failure to cover the population.

The collected data was constantly checked by survey coordinators, including whether the information was accurate, entered in the data collection tool and complete. The analysis of calculated control tables was also performed on the basis of non-generalized data. Thanks to the control tables, a logical and accounting control was carried out. The achieved sample size (number of observed sampling units for households and individuals who accepted an interview) is 19,821 for households and 71,538 for individuals.

The weights necessary to generalize HMS results for the general population were developed. Calibration with the use of administrative data was not possible due to the lack of full coverage as discussed in Sect. 1.1.

10 This is comparable to the level achieved in some European countries in mandatory business surveys. Of course, the response rate distribution is significantly different in individual prefectures; in Tirana with the largest share of single-person HHs, the situation is the least convenient (67 %). But in selected prefectures more than 90 per cent of the responses were reported in the selected apartments.

2. Methodology of the Household migration survey (HMS)

2.1 Sampling plan

The HMS 2019 survey was conducted by sampling and households were used as sampling units. 2,000 enumeration areas were randomly selected from the sampling frame, with an implicit stratification (urban/rural zone). The selection of the sample was done in two stage, followed by a next step where 10 addresses from each enumeration area were drawn. In each enumeration area, additional 6 addresses were secured for the reserve. The sample was planned for 20,000 households (the actual sample size, made of the selected sampling units). The sample size was defined to ensure sufficient precision for the results at both the national and prefecture level (NUTS 3).

The HMS was conducted using a representative method on a random sample that made it possible to generalize the results of the survey for the general population. The reference time adopted in the HMS was the entire period from 2011 (from the moment of the census) to 2019. The 9-year reference period concerns most of the variables acquired in the context of migration, while some of the variables relate to the current situation, such as citizenship, level of education, labour status, etc.

Sampling frame

The sample frame was based on the list of enumeration areas on building level (inhabited dwellings), constructed on the "Population and Housing Census 2011" results, updated in subsequent years on the basis of current surveys of official statistics. A stratified two-stage sample design was used for selecting the households for the survey. The primary sampling units (PSUs) selected at the first stage are the enumeration areas that were small operational areas defined on maps for the 2011 Census enumeration. Albania had a total of 11,698 enumeration areas in the final frame list.

The second selection stage concerns the households listed from the enumeration areas selected. 10 households per PSU are selected, including 6 additional reserve households. The procedure used is a systematic selection of the first 16 households and then 6 within 16 again. So, the target responses by PSU were 10. The reserve is to be used by order.

Stratification of sampling frame for HMS

The municipality strata were not domains of estimation, but only sampling strata to improve the effectiveness of the sample design. For that reason, the sample strata were 61 municipalities. The only requirement was that a minimum of five PSUs should be selected within each stratum.

Since the sample enumeration areas were selected systematically (with probability proportional to size) at the first sampling stage, it will have implicit geographic stratification (urban/rural first) that are also going reflect some of the socioeconomic distributions among the population. The enumeration areas in the sampling frame within each explicit stratum were arranged in geographic order, so that they would ensure implicit stratification.

Sample Selection Procedures for HMS

The HMS 2019 sample selection procedures were based on a stratified two-stage sample design. At the first stage, the sample PSUs enumeration areas are selected systematically with PPS within each stratum (municipality). Prior to the first sampling stage, the enumeration areas sampling frame within each stratum was arranged geographically, in order to provide implicit stratification and obtain a sample that is representative within each prefecture.

At the first sampling stage, the following procedures can be used for selecting the sample enumeration areas within each stratum (prefecture, urban/rural) systematically with PPS:

1. Cumulate the measures of size (number of households) down the ordered list of PSUs within the stratum. The final cumulative measure of size is the total number of households in the frame for the stratum (M_h).
2. To obtain the sampling interval for stratum h (I_h), divide M_h by the total number of PSUs to be selected in stratum h (n_h) specified:

$$I_h = \frac{M_h}{n_h}$$

3. Select a random number (R_h) between 0 and I_h. The sample PSUs in the stratum h will be identified by the following selection numbers:

$$S_{hi} = R_h = [I_h \cdot (i - 1)],$$

rounded up, where $i = 1, 2, ..., n_h$. The i-th selected PSU is the one with a cumulated measure of size closest to S_{hi} that is greater than or equal to S_{hi}.

SAS statistical software suite was used to select the sample enumeration areas systematically with PPS within each stratum at the first sampling stage. This program generates an output file that includes the first stage probability of selection for each sample PSU.

The list of enumerated households in the census for each sample enumeration area was used as the frame to select 16 households in each sample enumeration area, using random systematic sampling with equal probability. At the same time, an additional random sample of 6 households was selected within each 16 households as potential replacements of sample households not possible to interview.

However, although all members of the households (prelisted from census 2011) were planned to be included in the final database, as well as all the new household members, some further correction needed to be done during the validation of micro data. Partial data gaps have been eliminated through logical and accounting control. In cases where missing data needed to be completed, imputation was recommended. The most appropriate technique in this case was to replicate randomly selected cases from among known records in the same stratum.

2.2 Datasets

The HMS 2019 results consist of two databases containing:

1. information on households;
2. information on individual persons, which consists of demographic and social data from the questionnaire.

The structure of both databases consists mainly of questions/changes contained in the various forms. In addition, these databases contain some technical variables, identifiers that allow linking information collected about a given person within these two forms and additional information or variables derived from them that are used to process the resulting information (e.g. weights assigned to individual persons).

2.3 Generalization of results

The estimation method used in HMS used the calculation of appropriate generalization factors (weights) and was conducted in in three stages.

At the first stage, the primary (initial) weights were calculated, which are the reversals of the probability of selection for the sample of individual household (and at this very moment the disproportionate construction of the sample is compensated).

Then the so-called response coefficients (*R*-factors) are calculated.

They are calculated according to the formula $I_h = \frac{M_h}{n_h}$, where *K* is the estimation (according to the original weights) of the number of households qualifying for the survey, and *N* is the estimation of the number of households qualifying for the survey, but not allowing to be surveyed for whatever reasons. Response coefficients are determined for each of the 61 municipalities in two groups distinguished by urban area/rural zone. In the second step, secondary weights are calculated by dividing the primary weights by *R,* with the *R*-factor depending on the municipality and the weight in which the dwelling is located (rural or urban).

In the third step, the final weights for the individual data are usually calculated. These calculations are carried out in such a way as to adapt the survey results to current demographic estimates. This is done by calibration, which is applied to defined strata, sex and age groups. The final weights are obtained by multiplying the secondary weights by the appropriate calibration factors. Final weights for household generalizations are calculated as average values of final weights assigned to household members. The innovative approach of HMS 2019 with indirect interviews in the immediate vicinity precludes such a correction.

In the case of HMS data after the stage of their generalization it is recommended to check their precision and calculate for them relative standard errors - *RSE* (also known as *CV*s), and then on their basis to determine the so-called confidence intervals (*CI*), due to the fact that not all results may be suitable for further analysis. In a situation where the result consisted of few observations (few respondents found themselves in the analysed category), the results may be burdened with a large random error of the sample, so their precision may be low, so conclusions about the distribution of a given feature in the population should not be drawn on their basis. This is often the case when estimating the results for lower territorial divisions or for groups of people defined by using multiple characteristics.

3. Household statistics - families with changed place of residence since 2011

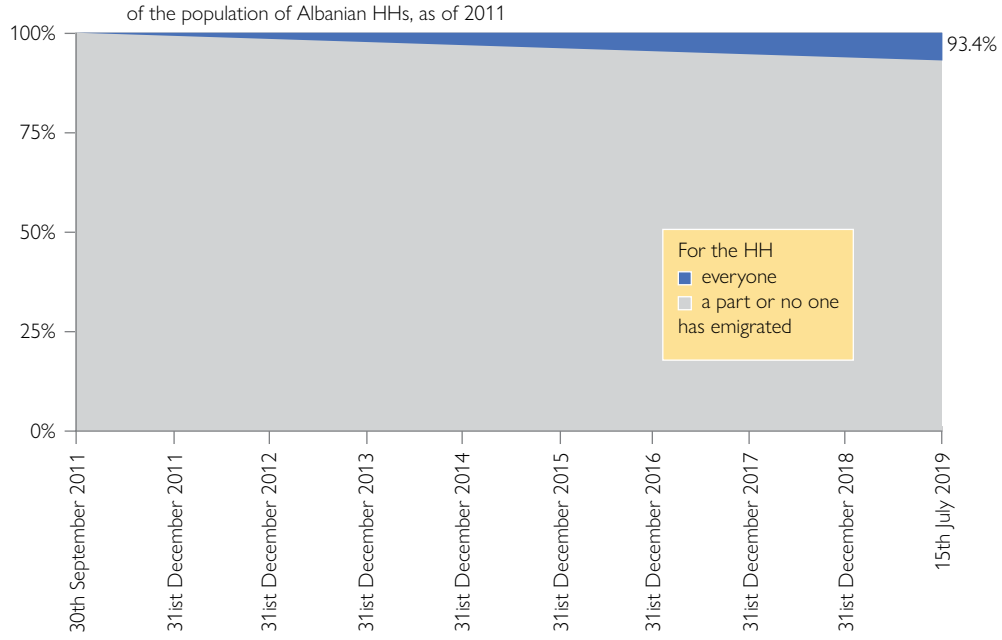
3.1 Emigration

According to reports of the 2011 National Census of Population and Housing,[11] more than 85.4 per cent had not changed their place of residence since 1 April 2001, when the previous census took place. As of 1 April 2001, nearly 4 per cent of the Albanian residents stayed abroad for more than 12 months between 2001 and 2011. Therefore, the hypothesis of the occurrence of significant migration outflow rates among whole households was developed by the research team. To verify the hypothesis a Household Migration Survey (HMS) was undertaken in 2019. The estimates of the number of households, where the number of members has decreased by at least one as a result of emigration or internal migration, were obtained. In light of the results of this representative survey conducted from April to June 2019 in Albania, an overview of changes in the population of households defined as residents in 2011 has been prepared.

From all households identified in the 2011 Census 77.9 per cent or 583,811 households have no members that have emigrated during the 2011-2019 time.

One of the terms used throughout the analysis is "emigration profile". The Household Migration Survey enabled the identification of all households with part or all members abroad. From all households of Albanian residents identified in 2011 Census, in 2019, at least 22.1 per cent (165,946) had at least one member abroad. Of these, 29.8 per cent were whole emigrant households, while the remaining 70.2 per cent were partial emigrant households, with at least one (but not all) household member emigrating.

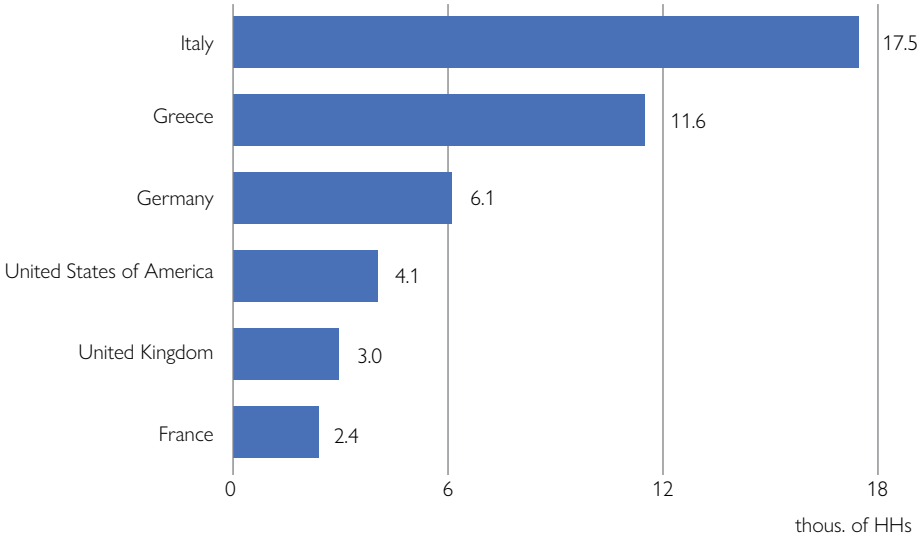
Figure 2: Whole migrant households from the 2011 population



11 www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/censuses/census-of-population-and-housing/publikimet/2011/publications-of-population-and-housing-census-2011/.

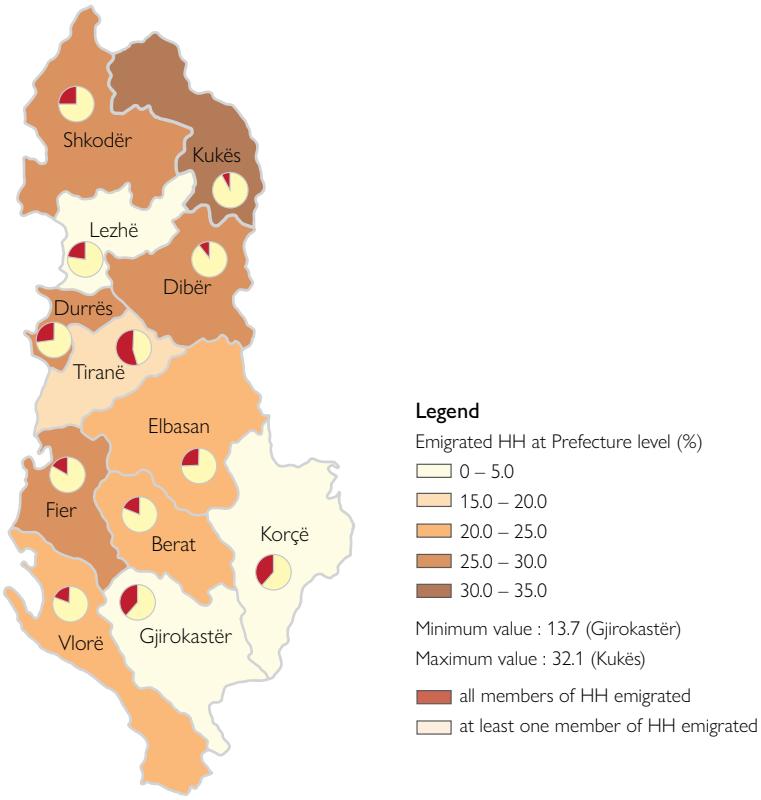
The movement of the households as a whole from the 2011 population has been a continuous process. At the time of the HMS 2019, the total share of whole emigrant households was about 6.6 per cent of the 2011 households. This process is represented in Figure 2. Of these 6.6 per cent of households, the majority has moved to Italy or Greece (see Figure 3). The emigration of whole households to both countries is an ongoing process. Throughout the observation period, this stream included more than 50 per cent of the total outflow of households abroad.

Figure 3: Whole emigrant households since 2011 by destination



The spatial distribution of the share of households with migration history since 2011 is shown in Map 1 and Table 2.

Map 1: 2011 households with members who reside abroad in 2019, by prefecture



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Note: Partially emigrant HH means HH from which at least one, but not all members have migrated from Albania.

Table 2: Albanian household structure as of 15 July 2019 by emigration profile and prefecture

Prefecture of household residence in 2011	Households 2011	Households as of 2019			
		no emigrating member	with members residing abroad		
			total	all	Some members
	in %				
PREFECTURE=100					
Total Albania	100.0	77.9	22.1	6.6	15.5
Berat	100.0	75.5	24.5	4.6	19.9
Dibër	100.0	74.1	25.9	2.7	23.2
Durrës	100.0	73.7	26.3	7.2	19.0
Elbasan	100.0	77.4	22.6	5.6	16.9
Fier	100.0	71.5	28.5	5.1	23.4
Gjirokastër	100.0	86.3	13.7	5.4	8.3
Korçë	100.0	85.7	14.3	5.7	8.6
Kukës	100.0	67.9	32.1	2.3	29.8
Lezhë	100.0	85.7	14.3	3.3	11.0
Shkodër	100.0	71.2	28.8	7.0	21.8
Tiranë	100.0	80.9	19.1	10.3	8.8
Vlorë	100.0	79.2	20.8	4.0	16.8
EMIGRATION PROFILE=100					
Total Albania	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Berat	5.3	5.2	5.9	3.7	6.8
Dibër	4.1	3.9	4.8	1.6	6.1
Durrës	9.2	8.7	10.9	10.1	11.3
Elbasan	10.1	10.1	10.3	8.6	11.0
Fier	11.4	10.4	14.7	8.8	17.2
Gjirokastër	2.9	3.3	1.8	2.4	1.6
Korçë	8.3	9.2	5.4	7.2	4.6
Kukës	2.4	2.1	3.4	0.8	4.5
Lezhë	4.5	4.9	2.9	2.2	3.2
Shkodër	7.5	6.9	9.8	7.9	10.6
Tiranë	27.2	28.2	23.4	42.3	15.4
Vlorë	7.1	7.2	6.6	4.3	7.6

Note: 'Residing abroad' means staying abroad at least 12 months. Those household members whose representative (head) was present in the 2011 census were considered, so that only emigration since 2011 is shown.

The share of households with no member residing outside Albania in 2019 exceeded 80.0 per cent in four prefectures, namely, Korca, Lezha, Gjirokastra and Tirana.

For the prefectures mentioned above, the share of partially emigrating households was 60.4 per cent in Gjirokastra, 60.0 per cent in Korca, and 77.1 per cent in Lezha. Tirana did not follow the main trend of negative correlation; the share of partial emigrant households only amounted to 46.2 per cent.

It has been assumed that in certain prefectures the migration of whole households is higher. This was initially related to the fact that smaller, including single, households were more frequent. Assessment of households by size enabled the verification of this observation. Household structures by number of members as well as the emigration profile are summarized in Table 3. Conversely, the assumption should be called into question. The highest per centage of non-emigrant households was estimated among one and two-person households, with about 90 per cent in both cases.

Table 3: Albanian household structure as of 15 July 2019 by emigration profile and household size

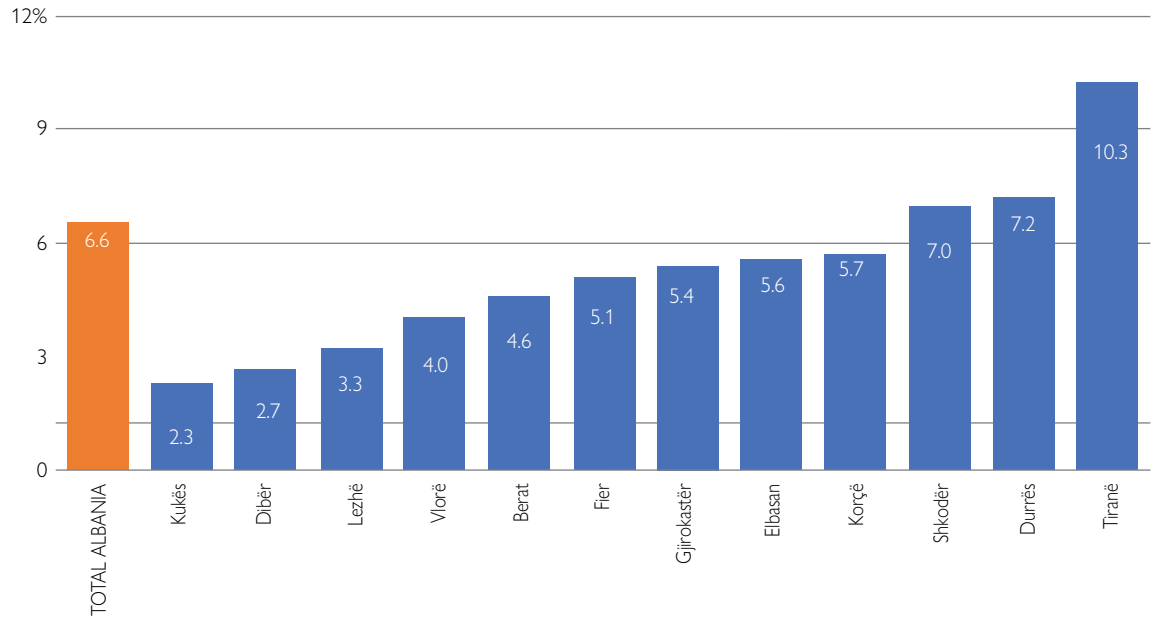
Household size in 2019	Households 2011	Households as of 2019			
		No migrant	with members residing abroad		
			total	all[a]	Some members
	in %				
SIZE CLASS=100					
Total	100.0	77.9	22.1	6.6	15.5
1 person	100.0	89.3	10.7	9.1	1.6
2	100.0	91.9	8.1	4.9	3.2
3	100.0	78.1	21.9	7.4	14.5
4	100.0	73.3	26.7	9.5	17.2
5	100.0	72.9	27.1	6.8	20.3
6 and more persons	100.0	72.7	27.3	2.5	24.9

[a]Household size at the time of leaving Albania.

Note: 'Residing abroad' means staying abroad at least 12 months. HH members whose representative (head) was present in the 2011 census were considered, so that only emigration since 2011 is shown. When considering the loss of some members by single HHs, it should be remembered that these are those HH that in 2019 consisted of a single member; in the previous years, more people could live together.

An important aspect of emigration of whole families is that it may reduce the probability of returning to the country in the future. Tirana prefecture was dominated by whole household emigration compared to partial emigration of household more than the other prefectures (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Whole emigrating households since 2011 by prefecture



3.2 Households with returning members – migration inflow

The measure of the inflow considers the number of persons moving to a country other than that of their previous usual residence and establishing their usual residence in the new country. If we were to consider as an additional feature the nationality of immigrants, we would obtain a division of this flow into returnees (nationals) and persons of other

nationalities, which can be defined as immigrants *stricto sensu*. The focus of the further analysis will be on both groups.

Table 4 presents the structure of households with or without incoming members. On a country scale, 8.6 per cent of households have hosted people returning or coming from abroad since 2011. In two prefectures, estimates were obtained which were mostly outliers, namely Dibra with 18.4 and Berat with 17.5 per cent of households from 2011. While statistics for Tirana and Shkodra on the share of households receiving immigrants appear to be below average.

Table 4: Albanian household structure as of 15 July 2019 by number of members who stayed abroad for longer than 12 months and by prefecture

Prefecture of household residence	Households 2011	Households, as of 2019	
		no immigrating member	with former members residing abroad
	in %		
PREFECTURE=100			
Total Albania	100.0	91.4	8.6
Berat	100.0	82.5	17.5
Dibër	100.0	81.6	18.4
Durrës	100.0	90.8	9.2
Elbasan	100.0	89.6	10.4
Fier	100.0	91.3	8.7
Gjirokastër	100.0	90.5	9.5
Korçë	100.0	92.1	7.9
Kukës	100.0	92.1	7.9
Lezhë	100.0	90.3	9.7
Shkodër	100.0	95.5	4.5
Tiranë	100.0	94.2	5.8
Vlorë	100.0	91.7	8.3
EMIGRATION PROFILE=100			
Total Albania	100.0	100.0	100.0
Berat	5.3	4.8	10.8
Dibër	4.1	3.7	8.7
Durrës	9.2	9.2	9.8
Elbasan	10.1	9.9	12.2
Fier	11.4	11.4	11.5
Gjirokastër	2.9	2.9	3.2
Korçë	8.3	8.4	7.6
Kukës	2.4	2.4	2.2
Lezhë	4.5	4.4	5.0
Shkodër	7.5	7.9	4.0
Tiranë	27.2	28.0	18.2
Vlorë	7.1	7.1	6.8

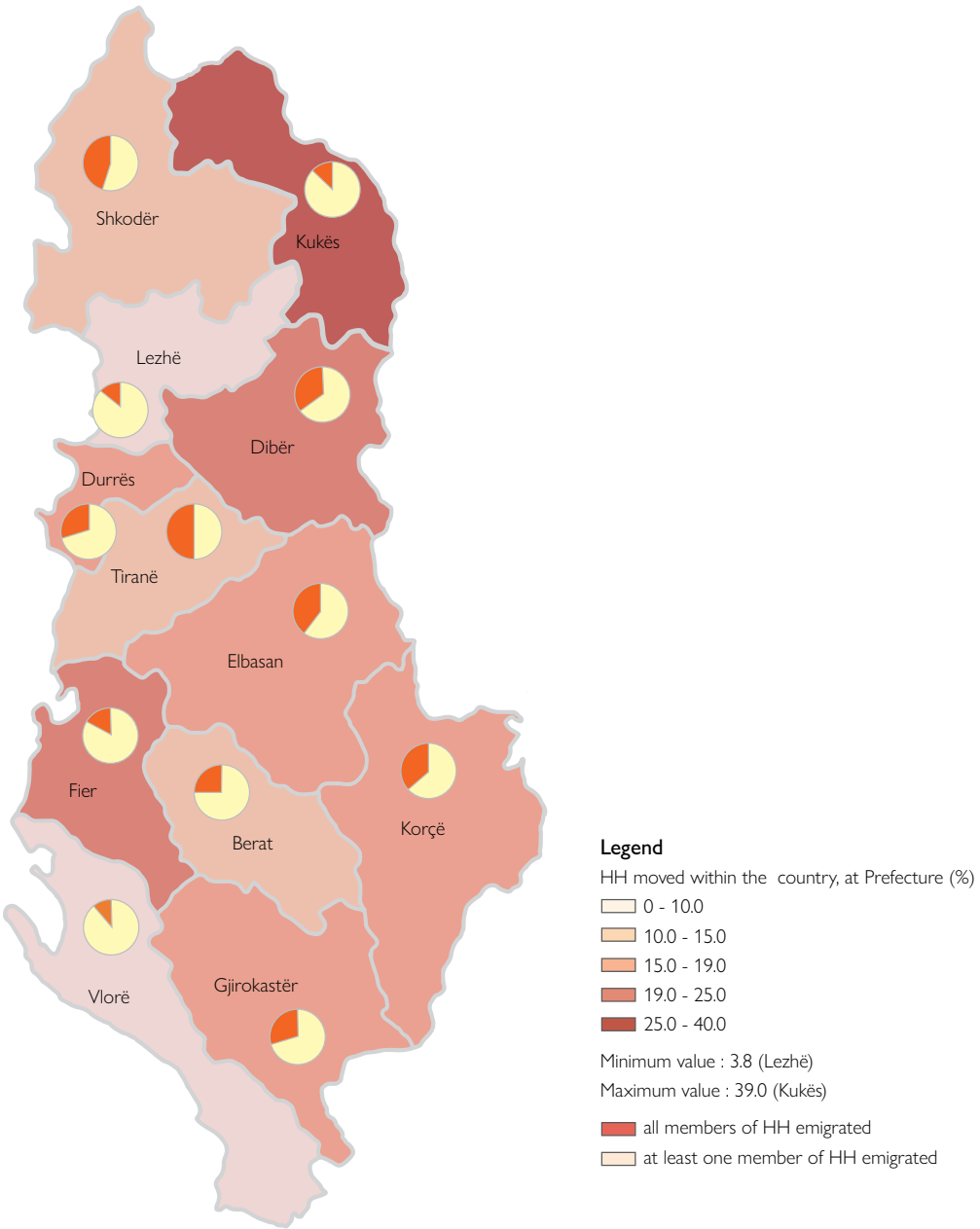
Note: Members of the HH formerly residing abroad imply two types of incoming persons, the returnees and Immigrants stricto sensu. The sampling frame design allowed only to measure the immigration inflow to existing HH in 2011. New HHs created as a result of immigration flows were not included. Comparing to emigration profiles, variants were obtained of 'no one' or 'a part of the HH' settled in Albania. No registration of the variant 'an entire HH' settling in Albania after a former stay abroad was made.

3.3 Internal migration

Over the census years between 2001 and 2011, the population movement within the country had reached over 200,000 people. No similar statistics on households were calculated at that time. From the population of all households whose heads were Albanian residents during the 2011 Census, 644,484 did not record any decrease in the number of members as a result of internal migration; they comprised 86.0 per cent of all those households.

Spatial distribution of households by internal outflow profile since 2011 is presented on Map 2 and Table 5. The share of households with no member residing elsewhere in Albania in 2019 exceeded 90.0 per cent for two prefectures Lezha and Vlora. Concomitantly, in these prefectures, the share of whole households changing their place of residence did not exceed 1 per cent.

Map 2: Households who have part of their members relocated in the country as a result of internal migration between 2011 and 2019, by prefecture



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Note: partial immigrant HH means HH from which at least one, but not all, former member migrated internally.

Table 5: Albanian household structure as of 15 July 2019, by internal migration profile and prefecture

Prefecture of household residence in 2011	Households 2011	Households, as of 2019			
		no person migrating	with members residing elsewhere in Albania		
			total	all	not all
	in %				
PREFECTURE=100					
Total Albania	100.0	86.0	14.0	4.7	9.4
Berat	100.0	87.7	12.3	3.2	9.1
Dibër	100.0	79.6	20.4	7.2	13.2
Durrës	100.0	82.3	17.7	5.2	12.5
Elbasan	100.0	84.4	15.6	6.2	9.4
Fier	100.0	80.7	19.3	3.6	15.7
Gjirokastër	100.0	82.9	17.1	5.2	11.9
Korçë	100.0	83.3	16.7	6.2	10.5
Kukës	100.0	61.0	39.0	5.0	33.9
Lezhë	100.0	96.2	3.8	0.5	3.2
Shkodër	100.0	89.8	10.2	4.6	5.6
Tiranë	100.0	89.7	10.3	5.3	5.0
Vlorë	100.0	91.7	8.3	0.9	7.4
MIGRATION PROFILE=100					
Total Albania	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Berat	5.3	5.4	4.7	3.6	5.2
Dibër	4.1	3.8	6.0	6.3	5.8
Durrës	9.2	8.8	11.6	10.3	12.3
Elbasan	10.1	9.9	11.2	13.5	10.1
Fier	11.4	10.7	15.6	8.8	19.0
Gjirokastër	2.9	2.8	3.6	3.3	3.7
Korçë	8.3	8.1	9.9	11.1	9.4
Kukës	2.4	1.7	6.6	2.6	8.6
Lezhë	4.5	5.0	1.2	0.5	1.5
Shkodër	7.5	7.9	5.5	7.4	4.5
Tiranë	27.2	28.3	19.9	31.2	14.4
Vlorë	7.1	7.5	4.2	1.4	5.5

Note: 'Residing elsewhere in Albania' means relocated to another place in Albania for at least 12 months. HH members whose representative (head) was present in the 2011 census were considered, so that only internal flow since 2011 is shown.

Among households whose members resided elsewhere in the country in 2019, 33.2 per cent have moved entirely. Similarly, 66.8 per cent of them have partly migrated, with at least one member relocated elsewhere in Albania. The overall migration within the country was outstandingly high in Tirana, from where 51.9 per cent of households with an internal migration flow changed their residence as whole families. In addition to Tirana, these statistics above the national average were estimated for Shkodra, Korca, Elbasan and Dibra. In these prefectures, internal migration affected a higher number of whole families.

Significant outflow of population to other places in the country was observed in Kukes, Fier, and Dibra. In all the prefectures indicated, the per centage of households where an individual member has migrated (partial migration of the household) within the country was high.

As in the case of foreign migration, the distribution of households broken down by the number of members was analysed. Structures for migration profiles are presented in Table 6. The movement of migrants to other areas across Albania was characterized by different levels of concentration, depending on whether it was a whole or part household migration.

Table 6: Albanian household structure as of 15 July 2019, by internal migration profile and household size

Household size in 2019	Households 2011	Households, as of 2019			
		no migrant	with members residing elsewhere in Albania		
			total	all[a]	some
	in %				
SIZE CLASS=100					
Total	100.0	86.0	14.0	4.7	9.4
1 person	100.0	91.7	8.3	7.3	1.0
2	100.0	94.7	5.3	3.7	1.5
3	100.0	86.8	13.2	5.2	8.0
4	100.0	84.0	16.0	6.2	9.8
5	100.0	82.7	17.3	4.8	12.6
6 and more persons	100.0	81.4	18.6	2.0	16.6

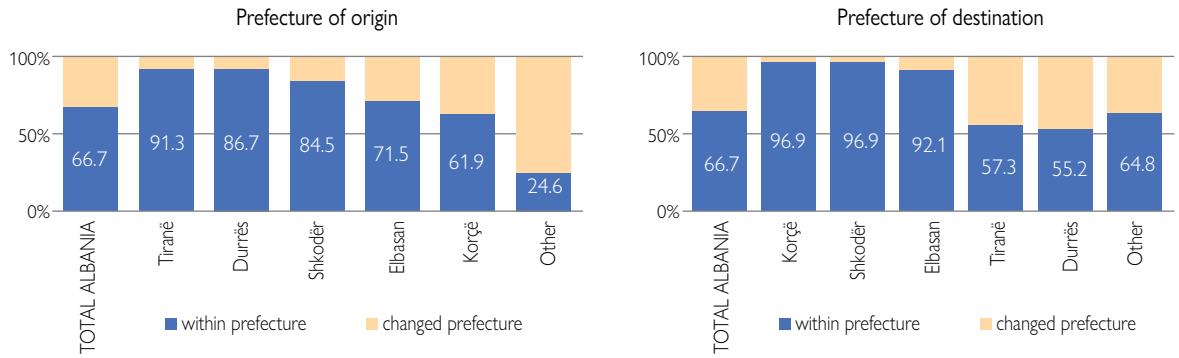
[a]HH size at the time of leaving the former place of residence.

Note: 'Residing elsewhere in Albania' means staying in another municipality for at least 12 months. HH members whose representative (head) was present in the 2011 census were considered, so that only migration since 2011 is shown. When considering the loss of some members by single HHs, it should be remembered that these are those HHs that in 2019 consisted of a single member; in the previous years, more people could live together.

Figure 5 shown an attempt to compare the share of whole migrant households within the same prefecture. About 33.3 per cent of internal migration in Albania between 2011 and 2019 concerned a change of residence within the same prefecture. In the territorial distribution, we can compile data on the direction of the household inflow in a given prefecture and data on the outflow direction. The former shows the prefectures of residence of whole households by place of residence in 2011 (left diagram), whereas the latter shows the prefecture of residence in 2019 of whole immigrant households (right diagram).

Tirana's situation, on the other hand, is peculiar, with the majority of whole internally relocating households remaining in the same prefecture (over 90 %). The same is true for Durres, where this share exceeds 85 per cent. At the same time, both these prefectures seem to be attractive as relocation destinations. Thus, statistics report that the share of whole households moving in from other prefectures exceeds 30 per cent.

Figure 5: Internal movement of whole migrant households since 2011 by destination and prefecture of origin



Note: 100 per cent means the population of Albanian households as of 2011.

4. Household statistics - persons which have changed the place of residence since 2011

4.1 Emigrants

Section 4 reports that in 2019, 22.1 per cent of households whose representative (head) resided in Albania in 2011 were affected by one of the two types of migration - either the whole household or a part of it resides abroad in 2019. The analysis carried out as a next step involves to the size of the migrant population including the members of surveyed households. Section 4.1 presents the outflow of Albanian population, while section 4.2 presents its inflow. However, net migration characteristic will not be discussed.[12]

A total of 360,699 people left the Albanian households as of 2019, while figures indicate that this population reached 12.9 per cent of the overall country's population in 2011. Again, the emigration flow should be determined by using particular caution. Section 3 contains justified conclusions concerning the share of households for which migration outflows were recorded. While it addresses the findings on the population of households, the section provides a somewhat simplified explanation of the emigration flow.[13] Nevertheless, we will consider it as less important.

Table 7 provides more detailed statistics concerning the number of members of Albanian households, as of 30 September 2011, reduced as a consequence of emigration flow since 2011 by prefecture. Considering the observation on the variability in household composition between 2011 and 2019 as negligible, one can estimate the number of household members who have emigrated at a level almost evenly distributed between those who have left with their families and those who have left with part of their family remaining in Albania.

Table 7: **The number of household emigrant members since 2011, as of 30 September 2019, by prefecture**

Prefecture of household residence in 2011	Total resident population 2011	Emigrant household members as of 2019	
		Total	of which with the whole HH
	Persons		
Total Albania	2,800,138	360,699	183,352
Berat	141,944	17,318	6,474*
Dibër	137,047	13,873	3,514*
Durrës	262,785	37,173	18,001
Elbasan	295,827	37,080	15,319
Fier	310,331	48,069	16,389
Gjirokastër	72,176	6,610	4,204*
Korçë	220,357	21,134	12,636

12 Section 1.2, which addresses limitations of this survey, the lack of whole households' relocation in Albania from 2011 up to now in the sampling frame. The resulting information gap has to some extent been filled by the case studies presented in sections 7-10. Nevertheless, it is necessary to raise awareness of the data recipients to the specificity of the prepared estimators of outward and inward migration flows, which should not be easily compared with each other.

13 This is due to the fact that the composition of households whose representative resided in Albania in 2011 changed and we are not convinced that the total outflow of population concerns the population present in 2011. In terms of the households, only the head was a stable element, as highlighted in section 1.2. Between 2011 and 2019, new members would join the household as a result of birth or migration.

Prefecture of household residence in 2011	Total resident population 2011	Emigrant household members as of 2019	
		Total	of which with the whole HH
	Persons		
Kukës	85,292	10,541	1,985*
Lezhë	134,027	9,338	4,398*
Shkodër	215,347	35,884	15,705
Tiranë	749,365	102,632	77,701
Vlorë	175,640	21,047	7,025
%			
Total Albania	100.0	12.9	6.5
Berat	100.0	12.2	4.6*
Dibër	100.0	10.1	2.6*
Durrës	100.0	14.1	6.9
Elbasan	100.0	12.5	5.2
Fier	100.0	15.5	5.3
Gjirokastër	100.0	9.2	5.8*
Korçë	100.0	9.6	5.7
Kukës	100.0	12.4	2.3*
Lezhë	100.0	7.0	3.3*
Shkodër	100.0	16.7	7.3
Tiranë	100.0	13.7	10.4
Vlorë	100.0	12.0	4.0

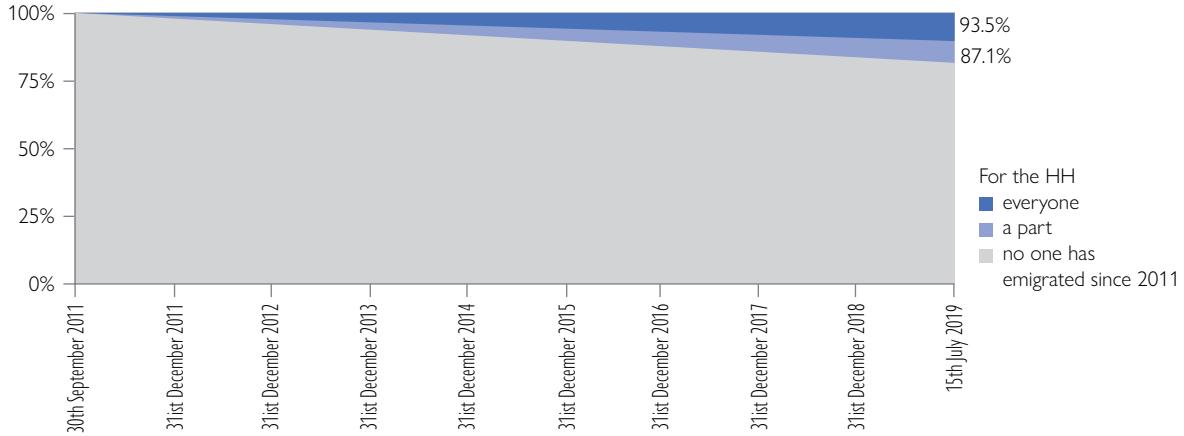
* Estimates with reduced precision.

Note: The estimates provided describe net migration flows, see methodology, section 1. They cannot be compared with the sum of annual migration outflows in 2011-2019.

It was obviously evident that emigration flow was mostly predominant among whole emigrant households. Hence, 6.6 per cent of households emigrating as a whole constituted 6.5 per cent of the population. For the second group with partial migration, 15.5 per cent of households recorded an outflow of 6.4 per cent of the population. Some differences can be observed in spatial analysis. Tirana is a particular case, where of 10.3 per cent of all whole emigrant households, or 10.4 per cent of the population, left the prefecture. At the same time, the share of emigrants from partial emigrant households was over three times lower.

The outflow of population from emigrant households was a continuous process with a constant dynamic (see Fig. 6), the same as with the observation made for the group of households.

Figure 6: Emigration flow of households from the 2011 population



Note: 100 per cent means the population of Albania in 2011.

The cumulative number of emigrants shown in Figure 7 indicates the total number of people who left. Calculations

were based on net outflow; therefore, it would not be justified to show differences between subsequent amounts as annual flows. More precisely, the cumulative number of persons should rather be considered as the number of outgoing persons in the cumulative period since year *t*.[14] In this case, the cumulative duration of the observation is extended backwards from the moment of the survey. A total of 67,535 emigrants since 2018 constitute the total outflow between 1 January 2018 and 15 July 2019. Further, 360,699 people emigrating since 2011 make for the total of net emigrants in the period from 2011 to 2019.

In terms of the annual outflow rate, the destination countries Greece and Italy and other countries were compared. The largest observed flows were towards Greece and Italy. For all destinations, the migration outflow was evenly distributed over the whole period among whole or partly emigrating families. This outflow was diversified with respect to the level and structure

- 120,754 people left for Italy and had not returned until 2019, of which 110 persons left together with the whole household for every 100 persons migrating from households with partial migration profile,
- Greece received 92,159 emigrants. For every 100 people migrating from partially migrant households, 88 left together with the whole household, and
- 40,468 left for Germany. For every 100 leaving members of partly emigrant households 138 left Albania with the whole household.

Figure 7: Cumulative number of household members who have emigrated since 2011

Note: Due to the specificity of the survey, the differences between the cumulative values of the time since ' year t' and ' year t-1' should not be directly compared with the annual published statistics on emigrants. The current figures reflect the so-called net migration flow. See explanations on methodology in Sect. 1.2.

14 For example, the number of people who were absent in 2019 and had left between 1 January 2018 and 15 July 2019 was 30,427+37,108=67,535. The number of people absent on 15 July 2019 who had left between 1 January 2011 and 15 July 2019 was 177,347+183,353=360,882. A similar construction was used for Figures 9 and 10.

4.2 Returnees and immigrants – migrant inflow

Considering 96,755 persons who have left their country of habitual residence, after spending at least one year in another country, and those arrived in Albania by 2019, the number of returnees was estimated at 95,064, whereas the number of immigrants (non-nationals) was estimated at 1,691(*) persons. The last estimate should be analysed with caution due to reduced precision. However, the order of magnitude of this figure itself is so important in its informational layer that the structure of immigrants is shown specifically in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Structure of immigrants entering Albania by 2019 at the latest

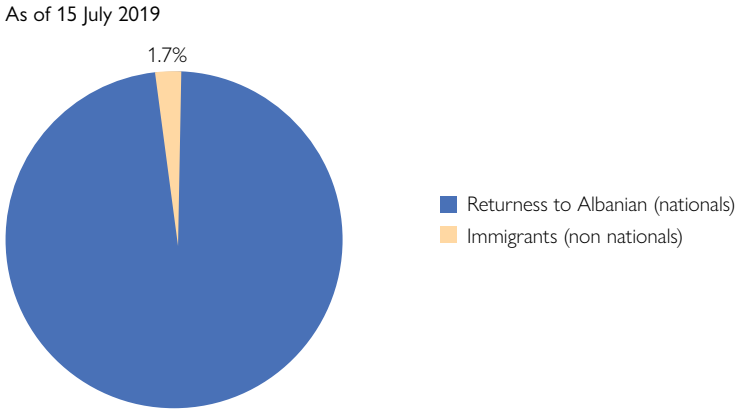


Table 8 shows the spatial distribution of incoming individuals (immigrants in the broader sense) and the intensity of this inflow as a share of the population at the time of 2011 census. Of these immigrants, 18.1 per cent are settled Tirana region, followed by Elbasan with 13.5 per cent. At the same time, the intensity of the phenomenon was among the lowest for Tirana prefecture, while for Elbasan, it was as high as 44.2 immigrants per 1000 of inhabitants.

Table 8: Household members residing abroad for longer than 12 months by prefecture

As of 15 July 2019

Prefecture of household residence	Immigrants incl. returnees and immigrants stricto sensu	
	persons	persons per 1000 population 2011
Total Albania	96,755	34.6
Berat	8,661	61.0
Dibër	7,779	56.8
Durrës	9,212	35.1
Elbasan	13,080	44.2
Fier	9,403	30.3
Gjirokastër	3,754	52.0
Korçë	7,177	32.6
Kukës	2,508	29.4
Lezhë	6,015	44.9
Shkodër	4,304	20.0
Tiranë	17,477	23.3
Vlorë	7,385	42.0

Note: No registration of the variant 'an entire household' settling in Albania after a former stay abroad was made.

Of a total of 96,755 immigrants, 34,128 people arrived in Albania before 2011. The cumulative number of immigrants

is shown in Figure 9. As in Figure 7, the cumulative duration of the analysis extends back from the moment of the survey. Regarding immigration, the issue becomes even more complicated in terms of interpretation. The beginning of the 'cohort' is theoretically the 2011 census. It should be noted that the time used and territorial division determines the group of households whose composition was observed. Such composition was surveyed as of 15 July 2019, hence the possibility of events occurring earlier than 30 September 2011.

Slightly more than 85 per cent of immigrants were previously resident in three countries, also the most popular emigrant destinations, namely Greece, Italy and Germany. Since the majority of immigrants in Albania are returnees, an analysis of their latest destination along with an observation of previous emigration countries should be carried out. That would enable conclusions on the desired destination for future research, namely by analysing the history of migration events in the cohort.

In Figure 9, facts about the recent emigration history from Albania turn out to be important. The popularity of emigration toward Greece before 2011 probably results in a high flow of returnees. Contrary to that, returns from Germany are not so numerous. The question of whether these are returns or immigration of other nationals should be the subject to further research.

Figure 9: Cumulative number of household members entering Albania by 2019 at the latest

As of 15 July 2019

Note: Due to the specificity of the survey, the differences between the cumulative values of the time since ' year t' and ' year t-1' should not be directly compared with the annual published statistics on emigrants. The sampling frame only enabled measuring of the immigration flow to existing HHs in 2011. New HHs created as a result of immigration flows were not included. Comparting that to emigration flows has led to two variables - 'none' or 'part of the HH' settled in Albania.

4.3 Internal migrants

Of the group of Albanian households whose head was resident in the country in 2011, 4.7 per cent changed their place of residence as a whole, whereas 9.4 per cent did so only partially. It is estimated that out of a total 14 per cent of households, 8 per cent of the population changed their former place of residence while remaining in the country.

Detailed data is shown in Table 9. Possible analysis of internal migration concentration in the subgroup of whole migrant household may be conducted in relation to the results presented in Table 5. Kukës seems to be the prefecture with the highest per centage of the population moving residence within the country, with 16.1 per cent of the total resident population in 2011. At the same time, in terms of household structure, this prefecture had the highest per centage of internal migrant households with partial migration, with 33.9 per cent. On the other hand, the share of whole households moving within the country and of the total internal migrant population is high in Dibra, Durres, Fier, Gjirokastra, Elbasan and Korca.

Table 9: **Individuals who leave their household due to internal migration as of 30 September 2011 by prefecture**

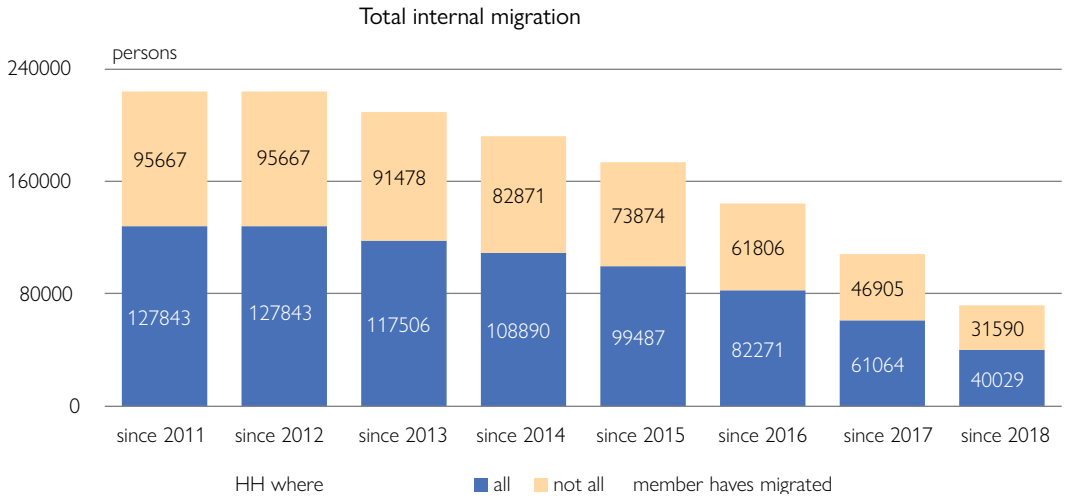
Region of Household residence in 2011	Total resident population 2011	Migrant household members as of 2019	
		Total	whole HH
	Individuals		
Total	2,800,138	223,509	127,843
Berat	141,944	9,262	4,351
Dibër	137,047	13,643	7,992
Durrës	262,785	24,181	13,316
Elbasan	295,827	29,043	18,084
Fier	310,331	28,776	10,517
Gjirokastër	72,176	7,462	3,873
Korçë	220,357	22,406	14,332
Kukës	85,292	13,693	4,138
Lezhë	134,027	2,175	784
Shkodër	215,347	14,153	9,830
Tiranë	749,365	52,273	39,251
Vlorë	175,640	6,443	1,374
	%		
Total Albania	**100.0**	8.0	4.6
Berat	100.0	6.5	3.1
Dibër	100.0	10.0	5.8
Durrës	100.0	9.2	5.1
Elbasan	100.0	9.8	6.1
Fier	100.0	9.3	3.4
Gjirokastër	100.0	10.3	5.4
Korçë	100.0	10.2	6.5
Kukës	100.0	16.1	4.9
Lezhë	100.0	1.6	0.6
Shkodër	100.0	6.6	4.6
Tiranë	100.0	7.0	5.2
Vlorë	100.0	3.7	0.8

Note: The estimates provided describe net migration flows, see methodology, section 1. They cannot be compared with the sum of annual migration outflows in 2011-2019.

The cumulative number of internal migrants is shown in Figure 10. The total of 223,509 Albanians migrating within the country since 2011 is equal to the total of all internal migrants between 2011 and 2019. In this short time series, we can see two different dynamics of internal migration flow - one in the period between 2011 and 2013 and the other from 2014, where the annual internal migration flow seems to be even twice as high for individuals.

Figure 10: Cumulative number of household members changing residence within Albania

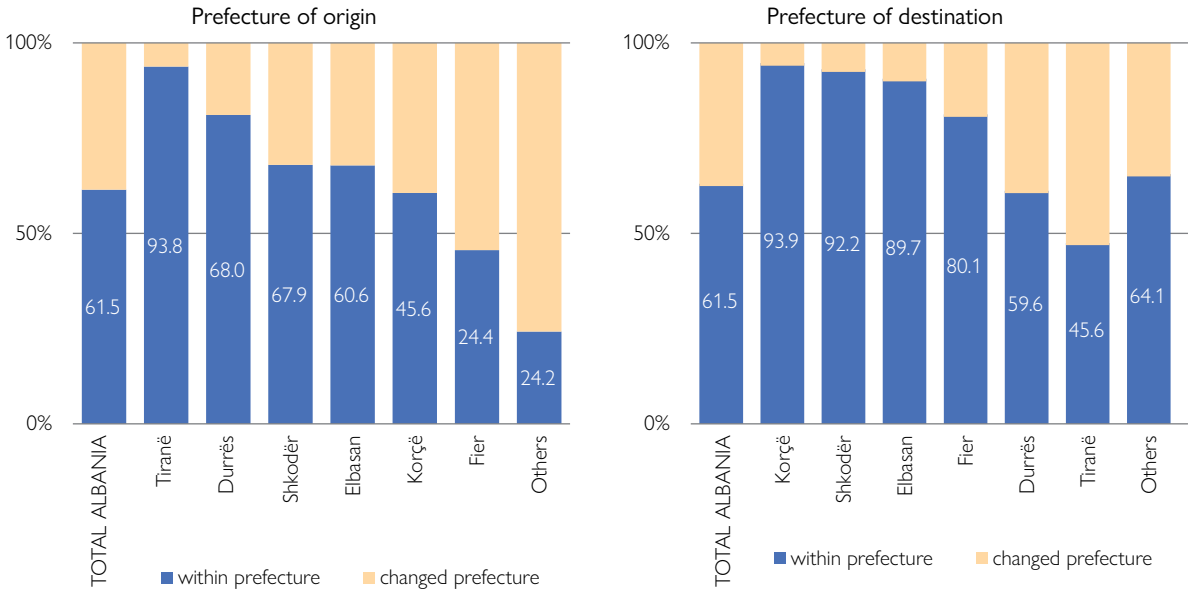
As of 15 July 2019



Note: Due to the specificity of the survey, the differences between the cumulated values since 'year t' and 'year t-1' should not be directly compared with the yearly published statistics on internal migrants.

So far, considerations have focused on the place of residence from where migrants departed. Estimates by prefecture of origin were obtained for the assumed level of disaggregation of data (see Figure 11). At the same time, it is possible to conduct a similar analysis from the perspective of the new residence (prefecture of destination). The population who changed their place of residence within the country, but not the prefecture, constituted 61.6 per cent of all internal migrants.[15] The vast majority of persons moving from Tirana (93.8 %) remain in the same prefecture. This specific 'inflow' is seen as a difference between those who change their residence within the prefecture and into another prefecture. At the same time, more than half of the people settling in Tirana prefecture come from other prefectures (54.4 %).

Figure 11: Internal movement of whole migrant household since 2011 by destination and prefecture of origin



Note: 100 per cent means the population of Albania as of 2011.

15 This may mean that they have changed their place of residence both by staying in the same municipality and by changing the municipality within the prefecture.

5. Sociodemographic profile of people who have changed residence since 2011

5.1 Age and gender

This HMS study is an attempt to inform policymakers on the extent and structure of migration. In particular, this type of analysis is expected to describe the profile of migrants. In the case of HMS, this standard expectation cannot be fully met due to the measurement methods used. We hope, however, that despite the limitations described below, the identified characteristics of migrants can be used in policy development and the possible assessment of migration impact on the active labour force.

Migrants described in section 4 are considered in three main groups - emigrants, immigrants, and internal migrants. During the analysis, particular focus was placed on ensuring accurate identification of the respondents under one of the following subsets:

- individuals who emigrate with whole household,
- emigrants who leave members of household back in the country,
- immigrants who join previous household,
- internal migrants who move with whole household, and
- internal migrants who leave members of former household and join other existing households.

This notion will be relevant in the process of identifying the age, gender and other migrant characteristics. Table 10 presents the frequency resulting from the distribution of emigrants, immigrants and internal migrants by age. It appears that these structures are comparable, although there are inaccuracies, as listed below:

- the total number of persons immigrating joining previously existing households cannot be compared with any other value. For this action, no information was collected on entire households resettling to Albania from abroad; the number of immigrants (96,755) is incomplete;
- the total numbers of persons emigrating and moving within the country include the number of people who have left with their families. For these people there is no information about their age or any other socio-demographic attribute. An additional category of 'unknown age' has been included for this purpose.

Table 10: **The number of members of the Albanian households, as of 15 July 2019, involving in migration flows by age group**

Age group	Emigrants since 2011	Immigrants from HHs whose head was present in 2011	Internal migrants since 2011
Total	360,699	96,755	223,509
Under 15	11,991	6,552	3,083
15-64	160,876	81,646	89,945
65 and over	4,480	8,557	2,638
Unknown	183,352	.	127,843

. - no data available

Note: Age in this table only applies to those case where it was possible to determine. This is the actual age measured at the time of the survey.

Only members from partially migrant households were selected to further characterize. Even then the immigrant population does not fully correspond to the time period assumed for other migrants' flows. Age and gender distributions were prepared for this group (see Table 11).

Table 11: **Migrating members of partially migrant households as of 15 July 2019 by age and gender**

Gender	Age	Emigrants since 2011	Immigrants from HHs whose head was present in 2011	Internal migrants since 2011
Total	Total	177,347	96,755	95,666
	Under 10	5,960	3,140	1,389(*)
	10–14	6,031	3,412	1,694(*)
	15–19	11,327	3,406	5,627
	20–24	31,124	6,805	24,952
	25–29	41,220	9,792	25,772
	30–34	30,117	10,171	16,653
	35–39	19,129	10,312	8,340
	40–44	10,188	9,649	3,225
	45–49	7,870	9,234	2,277
	50–54	4,832	8,922	1,196(*)
	55–59	2,926	7,545	(*)
	60–64	2,143	5,810	(*)
	65 and more	4,480	8,557	2,638
Male	Total	110,748	71,246	32,131
	Under 10	3,216	1,510(*)	(*)
	10–14	3,445	1,858	(*)
	15–19	7,461	2,001	1,726(*)
	20–24	17,509	4,254	6,679
	25–29	24,862	7,417	6,248
	30–34	19,640	7,863	6,220
	35–39	12,867	8,168	4,071
	40–44	7,658	7,772	1,963
	45–49	5,675	7,174	1,089(*)
	50–54	3,119	7,506	(*)
	55–59	1,981	5,992	(*)
	60–64	1,092(*)	4,235	(*)
	65 and over	2,223	5,496	1,334(*)
Female	Total	66,608	25,513	63,535
	Under 10	2,746	1,629(*)	(*)
	10–14	2,587	1,551(*)	(*)
	15–19	3,865	1,406(*)	3,899
	20–24	13,618	2,551	18,272
	25–29	16,358	2,376	19,526
	30–34	10,477	2,309	10,433
	35–39	6,262	2,144	4,269
	40–44	2,530	1,878	1,262(*)
	45–49	2,194	2,061	1,187(*)
	50–54	1,715(*)	1,415(*)	(*)
	55–59	945(*)	1,552(*)	(*)
	60–64	1,051(*)	1,575(*)	(*)
	65 and over	2,260	3,066	1,306(*)

x(*) – x is the result of an estimation with reduced precision
(*) - value hidden due to a very large estimation error or hidden secondary

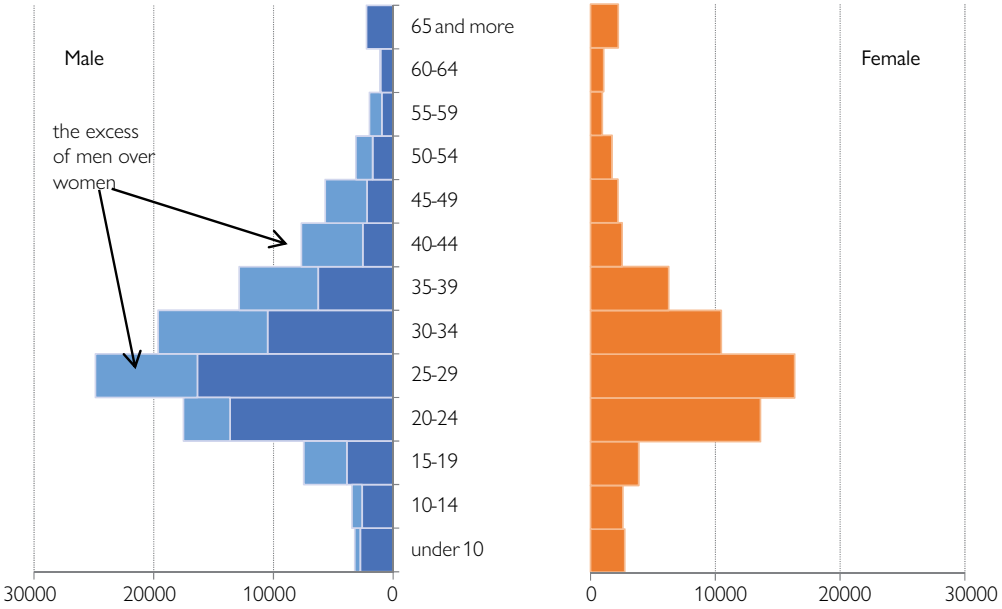
Note: Members who left previous residence with their whole household are not considered. Actual age was measured at the time of the survey.

Figures 12-14 present age pyramids, indicating at the same time gender differences in the main three groups where the characteristics of sociodemographic variables can be identified. The main conclusions drawn from the graphics include

- a notable predominance of men over women in working age groups for both emigrants and immigrants. Emigrating men were predominant with 8 to 200 per cent more in the age groups between 30 and 56. In terms of immigrants, such predominance in the same age groups reached 400 per cent, and
- a notable predominance of women over men aged 15 and over among internal migrants, except for the 40-44 age group.

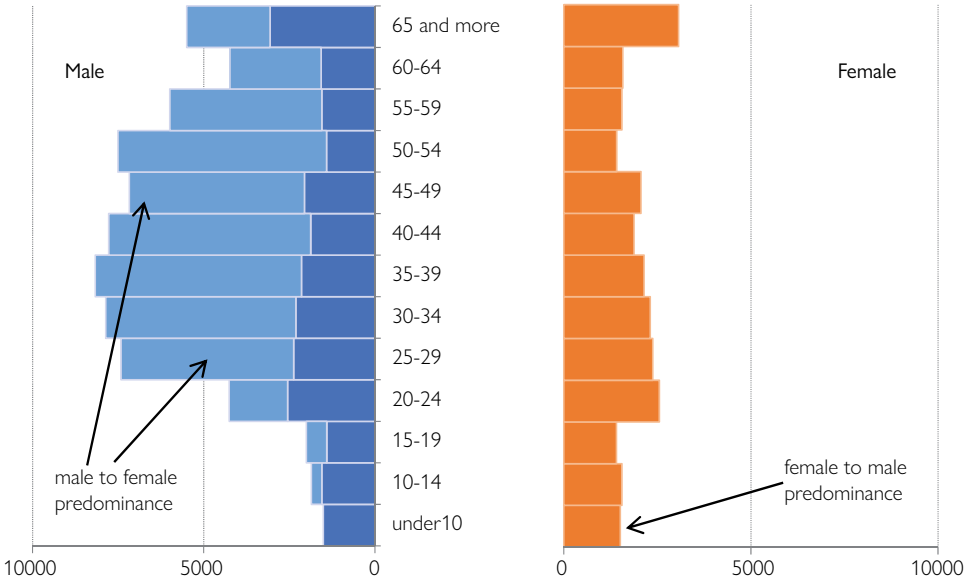
The following graph shows the predominance in all age groups accordingly. In figures 12-14, data on less frequent age groups may be insignificant or may be associated with a sizeable estimation error that is clearly indicated in Table 11 above.

Figure 12: Emigrating members of partial migrant households as of 15 July 2019, by age and gender



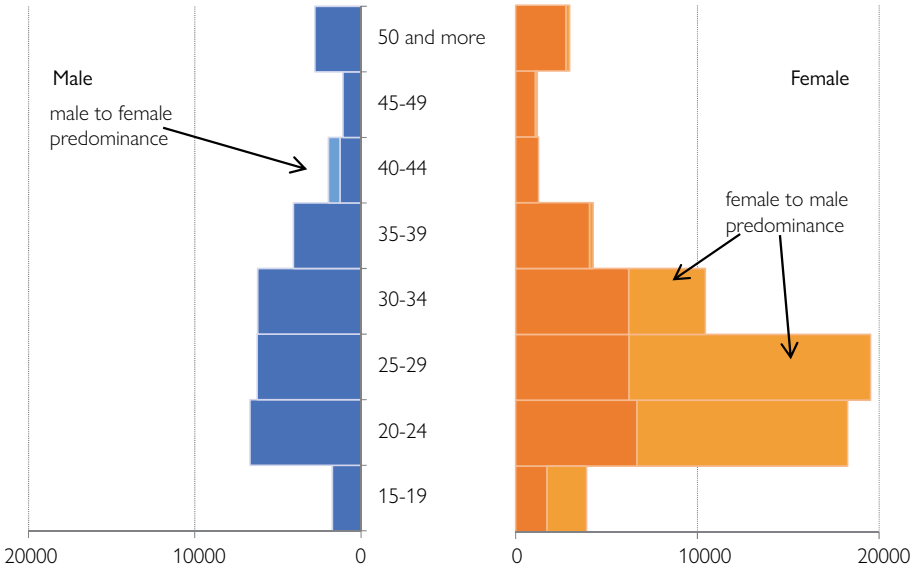
Note: Net emigrants since 2011. People who left their previous residence as a whole HH are not considered.

Figure 13: Immigrant who reunited with previous households as of 15 July 2019, by age and gender



Note: Including individuals who joined HHs in the target population before 2011.

Figure 14: Internal migrants of partially migrant households as of 15 July 2019



Note: Net emigrants since 2011. Members of HHs who left previous residence with their whole household are not considered. Because of the unacceptable standard error level for younger age groups, only for people aged 15 and over.

5.2 Education

Like in Sect. 3.1, only individuals from households with partial migration were selected when looking at education. The size of the sample allowed for proper estimates of the attained education level in the main groups, based on the UN International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). As shown in Figure 15 and Table 12, the distribution of moving people by education level was similar for international flows. Both in the table and figure, figures include the level of education of emigrants before departure.

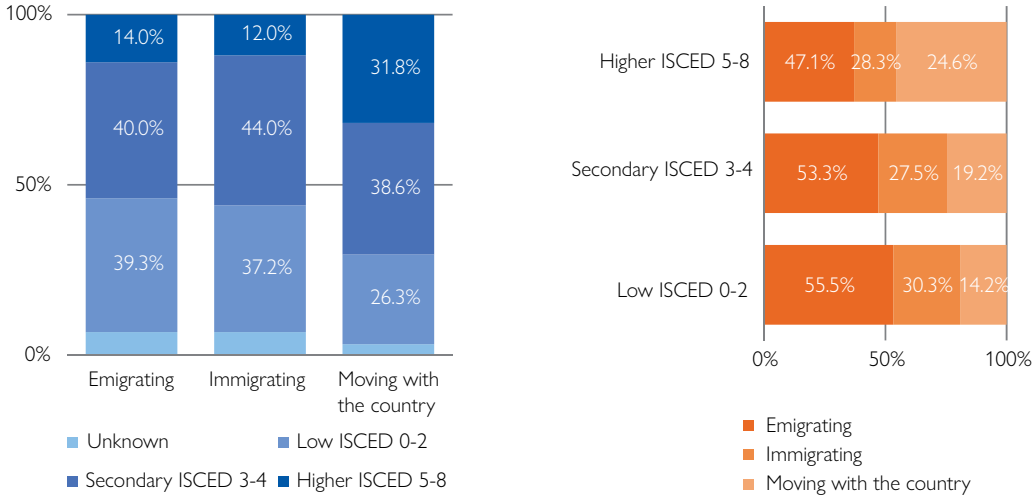
The 'unknown' category does not correspond to the group of whole migrant household members. As mentioned above, the respective data was collected from direct interviews with the head of partially migrant households.

Table 12: Migrating members of partially migrant households as of 15 July 2019 by level of attained education

Level of education			Emigrants since 2011	Immigrants From HHs whose head was present in 2011	Internal migrants since 2011
			individuals aged 15 and over		
Total			177,347	96,755	95,666
Low education ISCED 0-2	no education		69,690	36,009	25,164
	primary school				
	lower secondary (7/8/9 years)				
Secondary education ISCED 3-4	upper secondary	Vocational school	70,896	42,616	36,968
		Gymnasium (Secondary school)			
	post-secondary non tertiary				
Higher education ISCED 5-8	tertiary	Bachelor	24,769	11,581	30,453
		Master			
		Doctorate			
Unknown			11,992	6,549	3,081

Note: Net emigrants and internal migrants since 2011. HH members who left their previous residence as a whole household are not considered. Immigrants including individuals who joined HHs in the target population before 2011.

Figure 15: Structure of partially migrant household members aged 15 and over as of 15 July 2019, by level of education



Note: see Table 12.

5.3 Employment status

To test the compatibility of the basic labour market parameters analysed, members aged 15 and over of partially migrant households were considered separately from the whole population. The hypothesis on the similarity of activity[16] and unemployment rates among emigrants and immigrants should not be formulated in the strict sense, because of the discrepancies in the definition of the temporal dimension of settling in the country after entering from abroad (Sect. 4.2).

Therefore, Table 13 presents a set of indicators avoiding references to pure terms used in analyses related to the results of the Labour Force Survey. Obviously, when analysing emigration, it is worth noting that over 80 per cent of people who take part in migration flows are active.

Table 13: Members of partially migrant households aged 15 and over as of 15 July 2019 by employment status

Employment status		Emigrants since 2011	Immigrants from HHs whose head was present in 2011	Internal migrants since 2011
		persons aged 15 years and more		
Total		177,347	96,755	95,666
Active	Total	134,589	73,571	63,337
	of which			
	employed (full/part time)	59,289	38,852	34,769
	Unemployed	75,300	34,719	28,568
Inactive	Total	30,766	16,635	29,248
	of which			
	pupil, student, further training, unpaid work experience	14,370	4,254	15,347
	in retirement or early retirement or has given up business	3,062	8,860	2,054
	engaged in domestic tasks	9,338	2,365	10,175
Unknown		11,992	6,549	3,081
		per 100 persons in total (exl. unknown)		
Active		81,39	81,56	68,41
Inactive		18,61	18,44	31,59

16 The term "active" refers to both employed and the unemployed.

Employment status	Emigrants since 2011	Immigrants from HHs whose head was present in 2011	Internal migrants since 2011
	persons aged 15 years and more		
Total	177,347	96,755	95,666
	per 100 persons active		
Unemployed	55,95	47,19	45,10
	per 100 persons inactive		
Pupil, student, further training, unpaid work experience	46,71	25,57	52,47
In retirement or early retirement or has given up business	9,95	53,26	7,02
Engaged in domestic tasks	30,35	14,22	34,79

Note: see Table 12. By current employment status.

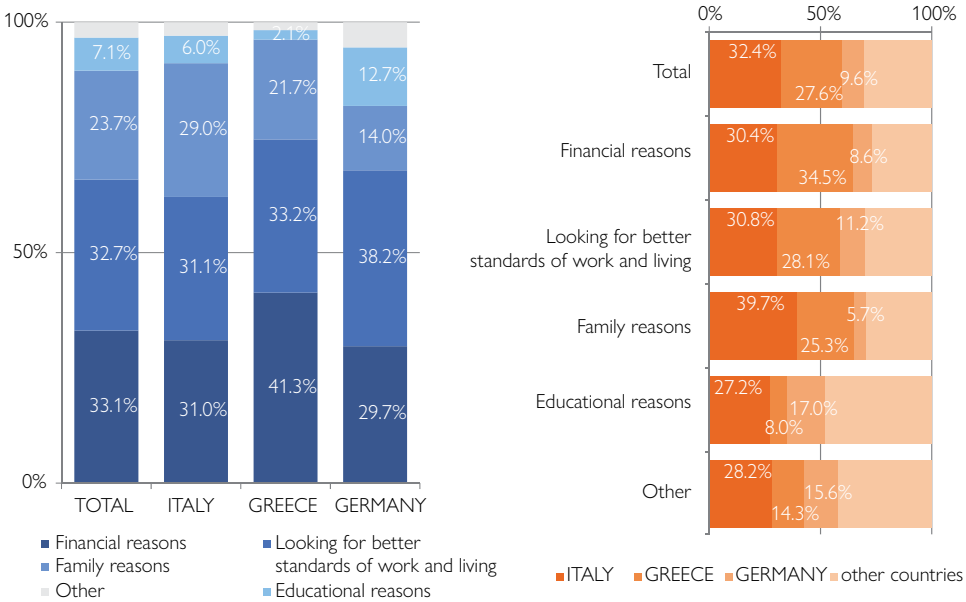
5.4 Reasons for leaving place of residence – migrants' future plans

For the three groups migrants - emigrants, returnees and internal migrants – an assessment was prepared on the motives behind their movement. In all cases, estimators were determined for subgroups of partially migrant households. Of all compiled statistics for the representative HMS 2019 study were selected those that proved to maintain an acceptable level of standard error and precision.

Figures 16 and 17 show the reasons why members of households with a partial migration profile left or returned to the country. It is still important to underline that the findings concerned households present at the time of the 2011 census, i.e. households with a head residing in Albania in 2011 (cf. methodological notes in Sect. 1.2.). The key conclusion is that the main reasons for leaving abroad were financial issues and living conditions, and family reasons for the returns. Unfortunately, HMS did not provide information on the motives of whole household mobility or on their future plans.

Emigrants

Figure 16: Structure of partially migrant households by emigration motive



Note: Net emigrants since 2011. HH members who changed their previous residence collectively were not taken into consideration.

Perception on the return to the country of origin should be linked to the analysis of motives correlated to that on future plans. Tables 14-15 contain estimates of the emigrants planning to return and the share of returnees planning to re-emigrate. Questions about the plans of the emigrants for a possible return to Albania were included in the interview of the heads of households present in the country, as it is usual for this type of social survey.

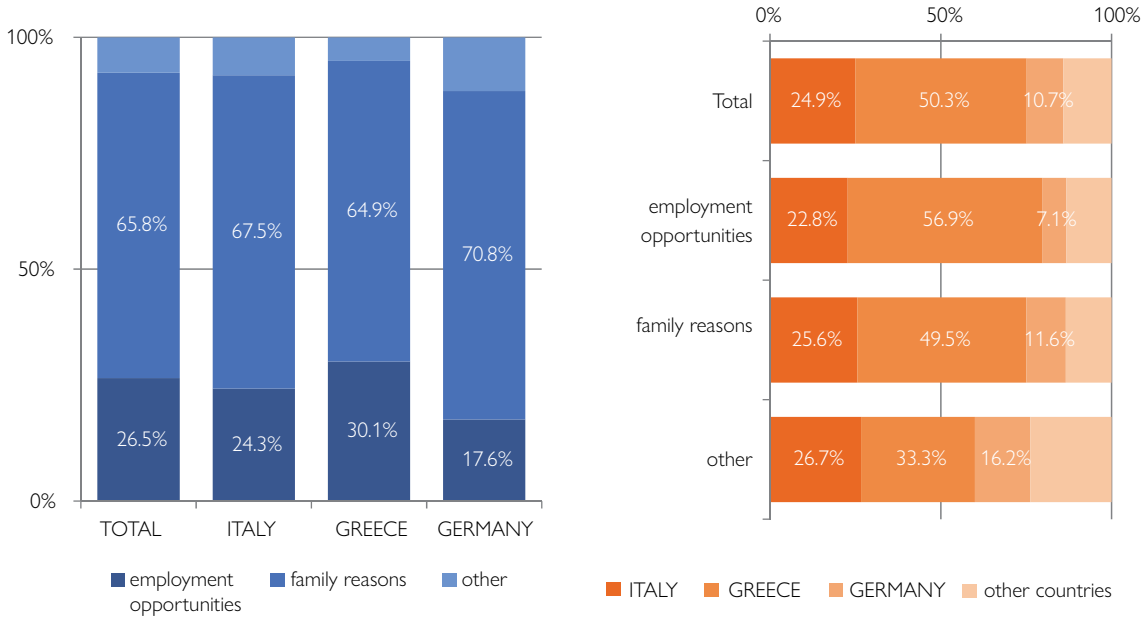
Table 14: Emigrating members of partially migrant households by the future plan

Future plan	Total	Total by country of emigration		
		Italy	Greece	Germany
	Individuals			
Total	177,347	57,483	49,023	17,003
Plan to return to Albania	19,490	3,699	8,243	2,124
No plans to return to Albania	86,213	30,777	19,773	6,656
Unknown	71,644	23,007	21,008	8,223
	%			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Plan to return to Albania	11.0	6.4	16.8	12.5
No plans to return to Albania	48.6	53.5	40.3	39.1
Unknown	40.4	40.0	42.9	48.4

Note: Net emigrants since 2011. HH members who left previous residence collectively are not considered.

Returnees

Figure 17: Returnees reunited with previous households by motive of return and previous country of residence



Note: Including persons who joined HHs in the target population before 2011.

Table 15: Returnees reunited with their families by future plan and previous country of residence

Future plan	Total	Total by country of previous residence		
		Italy	Greece	Germany
	Individuals			
Total	96,755	48,623	24,093	10,387
Re-emigration	33,705	13,755	9,578	5,218
No re-emigration	37,145	22,977	7,823	2,798
Unknown	25,906	11,891	6,693	2,372
	%			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Re-emigration	34.8	28.3	39.8	50.2
No re-emigration	38.4	47.3	32.5	26.9
Unknown	26.8	24.5	27.8	22.8

Note: Including persons who joined HHs in the target population before 2011.

Internal migrants

Motives behind internal migration are also important to note. In that respect, focus has been placed on households with a partial migration profile. Considering the analysis of Table 16 in conjunction with the analysis of the distribution of individuals who move internally by gender and age (see Figure 14), it can be assumed that the largest stream of internal migration is caused by the establishment of new households. Unfortunately, HMS did not provide information on the motives of movement for whole migrant households, the same as with emigration. Information on the migration of whole households was not obtained from interviews, but rather from registration on the basis of simplified information from neighbours (see Table 1).

Table 16: Internal migration of partially migrant households by reason for leaving residence

Reason of leaving the place of residence	Persons	%
Total	95667	100,0
Employment opportunities	19712	20,6
Study opportunities	17624	18,4
Family reasons	49889	52,1
Other	8442	8,8

Note: Persons moving within the country since 2011. HH members who left their previous place of residence collectively are not considered.

6. Household migration survey conclusions

6.1 Main findings of the households migration survey 2019

INSTAT in cooperation with IOM conducted an extended household migration survey whose findings indicate the changes that have taken place in the Albanian society in recent years. Exclusively dedicated to migration issues, this survey is an important development intended to improve Albania's public statistics in general, and population and migration statistics, in particular. The results of the survey are focused on the main demographic characteristics of households and population that have changed their residence since 2011 (last Population and Housing Census of Albania).

The results obtained highlight the novelty of this study and, as such, they must be clearly identified. Survey estimates illustrate population flows between 2011 and 2019. By definition, annual migration flows originating from the LFS could be distinguished from the total multiannual flows on the basis of time series from the LFS, which are gross flows, and the net migration flows for the period between 2011 and 2019 originating from HMS. Consequently, the definition may distinguish between annual gross migration flows originating from LFS and net migration flows originating from HMS.

In view of all the considerations, it is important to note that this survey produced for the first time:

- an analysis of net migration flows between 2011 and 2019
- statistics on the household change of residence.

The main characteristics of the Albanian population were presented in Table 17. The most important and innovative value introduced by the present survey was the distinction household migration profile, used to estimate the number of migrant households and individuals under the three following groups:

- no household member has migrated (zero migration),
- at least one but not all members of the household have migrated, and
- the whole household has migrated.

In the period between 2011 and 2019 the whole migrant households represented 6.6 per cent of the household population present in the last 2011 Census, or 6.5 per cent of the entire Albanian population.

Over the same period, 6.4 per cent of the Albanian population has left 15.5 per cent of households. These were so-called partially migrant households.

Table 17: **Main characteristics of HMS 2019 findings**

Household migration profile	Number of households	Total number of moving household members
WHOLE HOUSEHOLD MIGRATION (WHOLE MIGRATION) all members of the household have changed their place of residence since 2011	84,434	311,194
moving abroad	49,500	183,352
moving elsewhere in Albania	34,934	127,843

Household migration profile	Number of households	Total number of moving household members
MIGRATION OF A PART OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (PARTIAL MIGRATION) at least 1 household member has migrated since 2011		
moving abroad or elsewhere in Albania	171,482	.
Abroad	116,446	177,347
elsewhere in Albania	70,339	95,667
at least 1 moving abroad and at least 1 moving elsewhere in Albania	15,304	.
Returnees	64,740	96,755
ZERO MIGRATION no family member has migrated since 2011	493,841	1,872,974[a]

a HH members not moving.

6.2 Conclusions on migration surveys system in Albania

An innovative household migration survey (HMS) has provided completely new information on the composition of migration flows, and the share of household members therein. That further led to the identification and measurement of household types by migration profiles. A detailed summary of the introduced distinctions is presented in Table 17. The first novelty of the survey was the distinction of households in the above-mentioned categories. A second novelty was estimation of the number of households whose members either participate or not in the migration movement. Third, the estimation of household members participating in migration has been regularly conducted by INSTAT, but it did not include the group of outgoing or incoming households as a whole. This is the third novelty, namely the estimation of the number of people who have changed residence with their whole household.

It is important to stress that the innovative measurements introduced did not cover the whole household when it comes to immigrants and returnees. In a way, this information gap is filled in by another part of the research work presented in the Report in Section 7-9.

In earlier INSTAT migration studies, the analysis of how comprehensive they were and of the structure of refusals to respond indicated the possibility of actions to measure future migration outflow of whole households. That has allowed us to develop the methodology and research tool underpinning the experimental HMS 2019. Introducing this procedure in the future would require in-depth reshuffling of the population statistical system, which must be addressed with great caution. Certainly, the exercise carried out by experts has been useful not only in acquiring experience, but also in noticing some shortcomings and inaccuracies. We believe continued research in the area is important, since the migration flow (both internal and external) includes about half of the household members leaving with the whole household. That is the conclusion drawn from the uniform distribution of flows between whole and partial migrant households for the whole 2011-2019 period.

Inaccuracies observed in the HMS development process mainly concern the ways in which households who left the country as a whole were surveyed. First, it was impossible to observe households settling in Albania as a whole. Second, it would be advisable in the future to define the immigrating population in a given period, i.e. to exclude those who settled in the time span of the study. Such redefinition will enable the preparation of a specific migration balance in a longer period. It is likely that the 2021 census will show similar results. The population statistics experts who will be working on the results of the census may take into account the concept of the new classification of migration flows developed in HMS.

The last methodological conclusion stems from the reduced quality of statistics obtained from the measurement of internal migration flows. The assumption made at the initial stage of the research work concerning the possibility of using results of the representative research conducted on an extended sample to prepare population estimates by using a balancing equation at the municipality level could not be implemented. In the longer term, it seems appropriate to consider a review of legal arrangements on national population definitions, in order to make more efficient use of administrative databases.

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PART II

Albanian returned asylum seekers: Reintegration or re-emigration?

Ilir Gëdeshi and Russell King

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Acknowledgments

Our sincere thanks go to the many individuals who helped us carry out this study. First and foremost, special thanks to the hundreds of returned asylum seekers who afforded their time and commitment during the survey and interview processes. We hope that this study will contribute to solutions that will help both to improve their lives and enhance the economic and social development of Albania.

This research report is made possible with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). We would also like to show our gratitude to Alma Jani, Genci Pjetri and Ermal Nazifi (IOM), and to Florenc Qosja and Luan Dervishaj (GIZ), for their extensive support and insightful comments during various phases of the study.

In addition, we are grateful to the team who worked together with the Centre for Economic and Social Studies for their assistance in this study: Ardiana Paca, Artan Gjollesha, Denisa Bogdani, Andia Haxhi, Eriona Bezatlliu, Elisabeta Shatri, Vasilika Kura, Olsi Sherifi and many others. They collected the quantitative and qualitative data without which this study would not have been possible. A special contribution was made by Stela Suloti, who worked tirelessly with the fieldwork team. The survey databases and transcripts of interviews were made possible through the assistance of Ramadan Sopoti, Nadire Xhaxho and Rejhana Mucaj. We would also like to thank Mr. Gentjan Suli for providing the translation of the study into English and for useful suggestions. Our thanks also go to Jenny Money for editorial and formatting input and checking the references used in this study.

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Abbreviations

CESS	Centre for Economic and Social Studies
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EU	European Union
EVS	European Values Study
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
INSTAT	Albanian Institute of Statistics
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Executive summary

Since the early 1990s, international migration and its economic, political and social impact remains a fundamental issue in Albania. Albania is among the top countries in the world for the scale and intensity of international migration. Meanwhile, asylum seeking is a relatively new phenomenon for the country and has been reported in European statistics from the start of the visa-free travel in the Schengen area. Between 2010 and September 2019, around 193,000 Albanian citizens were recorded as first-time asylum seekers in EU countries. The phenomenon peaked in 2015, when around 67,000 Albanian citizens applied for asylum, but later went down as a result of expedited asylum procedures, stricter migration regulations and lower acceptance rates.

The report that has primarily made use of qualitative techniques (focus group discussions and key informant interviews) covering all the regions of Albania attempts to offer a better understanding of return and reintegration dynamics that migrants face upon return and during reintegration in terms of health, education, housing, employment and other services. It analyses the profile of Albanian asylum seekers, drivers, history and experience of migration, return and reintegration, and provides some policy recommendations.

The study shows that this segment of the migration population is among the poorest in Albania, ranked at the bottom of the household income ladder, but in contrast to some other Western Balkan countries, it is not prominently a characteristic of the Roma minority.[1] The socio-demographic structure of this group shows clearly that its members are mainly youth, unemployed, with a lower education and professional level than the general population, in search for better prospects for themselves and particularly for their children.

This study indicates that the economic conditions – including poverty, unemployment and underemployment, low income from formal and informal sectors, difficult living conditions, limited social protection and debts – are the main push factors for Albanian asylum seekers. In addition to these underlying factors, another driver is the future of their children. Besides, there are other factors such as shortage and poor quality of healthcare services, housing, conflicts and physical security that generate constant psychological stress, including the low quality of education (to mention just a few). For certain subgroups (e.g. Roma and Egyptians), discrimination is an additional factor.

The return of Albanian asylum seekers - in terms of size and intensity over certain years (2015-2017), Albania was topping the list of countries for the number of returnees from EU States,[2] - has led to their reintegration in terms of employment, health, housing, education and social services. The report indicates that, for many households and individuals, such reintegration has not been sustainable, especially in the social and economic aspect, and their situation did not change (on the contrary, in some cases it has deteriorated) compared the pre-migration period. As a result, faced with the lack of sustainable reintegration assistance, many returnees see re-emigration or second emigration to EU countries, primarily Germany, as the only available alternative.

The study shows that most returnees look for regular migration through a work contract and visa. Only a small share affirm they will reapply for asylum. In this case, local authorities and various NGOs providing services, in addition to increasing their support for reintegration, should work to raise awareness that reapplying for asylum is not the solution to their problems and that all it does is deteriorate their economic conditions.

Improvement of services in education, healthcare, social protection, housing, security, etc. would require time, more investments and at least a doubling of their share in the country's GDP. This objective, which would diminish some push

1 World Bank Group (2019) *Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans*. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

2 World Bank Group (2019) *Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans*. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank; Morrica, V. and Stavrou, S. (2018) PowerPoint presentation at the Inception Workshop 'Supporting the Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees in the Western Balkans.' Vienna, 15 January.

factors for the Albanian migration, may be achieved only in the long term. Subsequently, the study presents only a few short and medium-term recommendations as follows.

First, registration of returning asylum seekers and data collection. In order to do that, a management information system can be established, which collects electronic data, connects returnees to the relevant institutions that provide services and follows up on their reintegration progress. This system that should transmit electronic data simultaneously at the central and local level will enable the monitoring and measuring of the effectiveness of reintegration policies and programmes.

Strengthening local capacities to provide services, especially in the municipalities with a high number of returnees, is another aspect. This can be achieved through continued staff training for local service providers, development of local reintegration plans and allocation of funds in the respective budgets, and improved top-bottom coordination (with the central government) and horizontal coordination (with international organizations and NGOs working with returnees). In some cases (especially in municipalities with a high number of returnees), cross-cutting teams may be set up with people from employment offices, economic aid, social care, education offices, police, local and international NGOs, social workers and psychologists to help with the reintegration of returnees.

From the economic perspective, reintegration in Albania would require improvement and expansion of the employment structure and small business opportunities, in order to provide employment for the returnees in the formal sector and higher income. Creating cooperatives or social enterprises for returnees (for other citizens, as well) would be an effective way to create new jobs mainly in manufacturing and processing. Another opportunity for employment and higher income would be the assistance to start up and expand small and medium-sized enterprises (through training on management, securing financial resources, professional training, etc.).

Returning children should receive assistance for reintegration into the school system. This includes, first and foremost, their immediate enrolment, to prevent from being disqualified for that school year. Simplified procedures should be applied to minimise expenses for returning families on translation and notarization of school documents for children. In those cases when returning children do not possess any school documents, they should be assisted with supplementary classes by experienced teachers prior to their assessment/placement test, in order for these children to avoid losing a school year. Children who do not have an adequate mastery of the Albanian language should be assisted by experienced teachers after normal classes, either at school or on other premises. School psychologist and head teachers should pay additional attention to child returnees in relation to potential concerns they may have. Regular contact with their parents, either at school or at home, should be a common practice. Many returned children who have attended language courses or school for one or two years in host countries (Germany, France) speak fluent German or French. It is important for them to retain and further develop the acquired language skills through additional courses at school or elsewhere. Local and international NGOs may have a role to play in this regard.

In the area of healthcare, returnees who received treatment in the host country or have health issues should be able to continue their medication in specialised public or private hospitals. Financial aid in this case should be provided by public health institutions or NGOs that provide services to returnees. In some municipalities, where there is a shortage of healthcare staff, specialised teams of doctors from Tirana may be deployed for specific cases. Special assistance should be provided for the mental health of returnees (especially women, children, people with disabilities, discriminated groups), who may have experienced constant psychological stress, anxiety and trauma during their stay in the host country and upon return.

In terms of housing, returnees could be helped financially for a certain period of time by the municipality or NGOs working on reintegration issues to cover the rent or repair their houses. In other cases, returnees who are homeless or live in difficult conditions should be assisted to prepare the relevant documents to qualify for social housing.

1. Introduction

This study is based on the analysis of interviews and focus group discussions conducted with Albanian asylum seekers returned from EU countries who live in the 12 regions across Albania, and on key informant interviews in the regions of Shkodra, Kukës and Elbasan, these being the regions that, according to IOM, have the highest number of asylum-seeking returnees.

In the ever-growing Albanian migration literature, asylum is a relatively new phenomenon that has not been extensively studied. Reported in European statistics since when Albanians started to travel visa-free in the Schengen area,[3] the phenomenon became more evident in 2012, reaching its peak in 2015, with nearly 67,000 Albanian nationals applying for asylum, mainly in Germany. The trend went down later, as a result of expedited application procedures, stricter migration rules and lower acceptance rates.[4] Despite fluctuations between 2010 and September 2019, a total of 193,000 Albanian citizens[5] applied for asylum for the first time in EU countries. In 2015, Albania was among the top countries (fourth after Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan and Iraq) as regards the number of asylum seekers.[6] However, EU statistics show that, in 2018, only 2.1 per cent of asylum applications from Albanian nationals were accepted by the host countries. The rest have either returned or presumably will return to Albania in the near future.[7] For three years, 2015–2017, Albania was at the top of the list of countries for the number of returnees from EU States.[8] Some Albanian asylum seekers, reapplied two or three times for asylum in various EU countries upon return to their home country (mainly Roma and the group of so-called Egyptians), becoming, therefore, a group that is neither reintegrated in the home country, nor accepted in the host country.

Some of the Albanian asylum seekers are from the Roma and Egyptian communities. It is difficult to have accurate figures for them and their share in the total number of Albanian asylum seekers as data on the ethnicity of returnees is not collected at the border crossing points and upon arrival.[9] Germany, the only EU country providing data on the ethnicity of asylum seekers, reported in 2011 that around 11 per cent of Albanian asylum seekers were Roma and Egyptians, and 84 per cent were from the Albanian majority population.[10] In a previous publication, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) estimated that Roma represented 6–10 per cent of asylum seeker flows into Germany, which shows that the dimensions and intensity of migration of Roma and Egyptians from Albania had increased and were over represented in the population of migrants from Albania.[11] The per centage of Roma and Egyptian asylum seeker flows from Albania is clearly higher than their share of the total population of the country (less than 2 %).[12] This

3 Since the end of December 2008, Albanian citizens must hold a biometric passport to be able to travel visa-free in the Schengen area. Moreover, under the visa-free regime, a citizen may stay in the Schengen area for 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.

4 Schuring, E., Pearson, C., Castro, A., Mathebula, B., Kronenberg, V., Becker, M. and Horneber, J. (2017) *Social Protection as an Alternative to Migration? An Assessment of the Role of Social Protection in Reducing Push Factors for Migration in Different Country Contexts*. Berlin: Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -Gestaltung e.v.

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11 EASO (2013) *Asylum Applicants from the Western Balkans. Comparative Analysis of Trends, Push-Pull Factors and Responses.* Brussels, European Asylum Support Office.

12 There are no accurate data on the number of Roma and Egyptians in Albania. In October 2011, the census in Albania included for the first time a question on ethnicity. Data from the 2011 census show that the Roma population in Albania was 8,301 people or 0.3 per cent of the majority population, and the Egyptian population was 3,368 people or 0.12 per cent of the majority population (INSTAT (2012a) *Albania. Preliminary Results of the Census of Population and Housing 2011*, Tirana. INSTAT (2015a) Roma and Egyptians in Albania: A Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile based on the 2011 Census, Tirana.
Roma and Egyptian associations and some experts argued that such data are unreliable. A UNICEF project (2011) implemented almost simultaneously with the census showed that about 14,564 Roma (0.5 per cent of the majority population) lived in Albania, in 3,139 households across 108 settlements (for more information, see: Gëdeshi, I. and Jorgoni, E (2012) *Mapping Roma Children in Albania.* New York: UNICEF). In 2014, a study of the Open Society Foundation Albania

shows stronger push factors regarding their migration, which will be elaborated on in the following sections. However, in spite of the high share of the Roma and Egyptian population in the total number of asylum seekers from Albania, these flows do not have a marked Roma/Egyptian nature like in other Western Balkan countries (Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), where they represent over 50 per cent of the asylum seekers.[13] Table 1 presents the share of Roma among the asylum seekers from the Western Balkans in Germany in 2015 and 2016 that were peak years.

Numerous questions surround the Albanian asylum-seeking phenomenon, which we will try to answer in the following sections of the study. Some of these questions are: Why do Albanians seek asylum instead of regular migration in EU countries? What is the profile of Albanian asylum seekers and how do they differ from regular migrants? What are the causes and history of migration and return? Does reintegration work and (in its absence) what is the alternative the returnees choose? Answers to these questions should underpin efficient policies in order for the reintegration of returnees to be sustainable.

Table 1. **Number of Asylum Seekers and Share of Roma (Germany), 2015–2016**

Countries	Year	All Asylum Seekers	Roma Asylum Seekers	
			Number	Per centage
Albania	2015	54,762	3,118	5.7
	2016	17,236	1,116	6.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2015	7,473	3,979	53.2
	2016	3,190	1,827	57.3
Kosovo[14]	2015	37,095	4,758	12.8
	2016	6,490	1,744	26.9
North Macedonia	2015	14,131	8,284	58.6
	2016	7,015	4,334	61.8
Montenegro	2015	3,635	735	20.2
	2016	1,630	431	26.4
Serbia	2015	26,945	23,338	86.6
	2016	10,273	8,484	82.6

Source: World Bank Group (2019). Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

The study is organised in sections and subsections. There are three preliminary sections. After this introduction (Section 1) and a general overview of the Albanian migration background that underlies asylum flows (Section 2), we explain the research methodology and the qualitative techniques we have used (Section 3). Section 4 provides a social-economic and demographic profiling of Albanian asylum seekers. In Section 5, we focus especially on the push factors, causes, history and ways of arriving in the host country. Section 6 addresses the experience in the host country. In Section 7, the main focus is on the return and reintegration of returnees in Albania, tackling employment/unemployment, vocational training, education, health care, accommodation, social protection, official documents, etc. Section 8 deals with the key dilemma of returnees, on the fence between reintegration and re-emigration. Section 9 presents the main findings and conclusions, and some recommendations for policymakers.

assessed that approximately 18,276 Roma lived in Albania (for more information see, Open Society Foundation for Albania (2014) *Census of Roma Housing and Population in Albania*. Tirana: Open Society Foundation for Albania). In spite of the differing data, the Roma and Egyptian population in Albania is no larger than 2 per cent of the majority population.

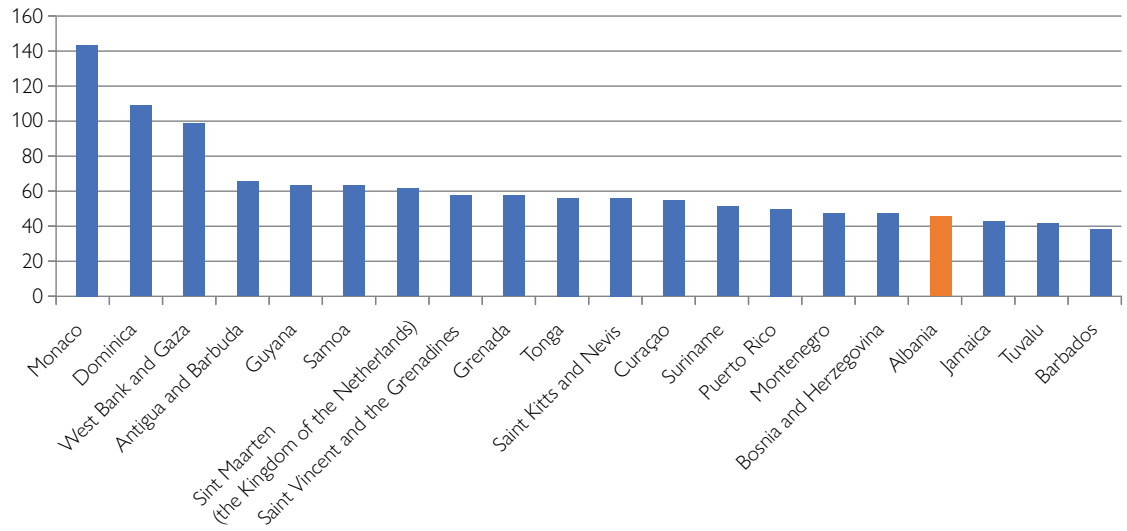
13 The ethnic composition of asylum seekers from Serbia and, to a lesser extent, from North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina show that they are mainly from the Roma community (for more information see: World Bank Group (2019) ***Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans***. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank; EASO (2013) Asylum Applicants from the Western Balkans. Comparative Analysis of Trends, Push-Pull Factors and Responses. Brussels: European Asylum Support Office, pp. 21–25).

14 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

2. The Albanian migration background

Nearly three decades after the beginning of the post-socialist transition, international migration, and its economic, political and social consequences, remain a fundamental issue in Albania. Presently, more than 1.5 million Albanian citizens, equivalent to more than half the current population of the country, have emigrated, mostly to Italy and Greece and, to a lesser extent, to the United States, United Kingdom and Germany.[15] These figures rank Albania among the top countries in the world for the scale (as a per centage of the current population) and intensity of international migration. In its periodic publication *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, the World Bank places Albania among the top 20 countries in the world (9th place in 2011[16] and 17th place in 2016[17]).[18]

Figure 1: **Top emigration countries (per centage of the resident population)**



Source: World Bank (2016a) Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Each of the three decades of the Albanian migration has had a specific intensity and distinct characteristics. In the first decade, the Albanian migration was highly intensive, spontaneous, and irregular. It consisted mainly of young males in search of a job and trying to escape the consequences of drastic transition reforms and the political and social chaos during these years in Albania. At the turn of this decade, regularization schemes, first in Italy and later in Greece, allowed many migrants to formalize their situation and bring their family members to the host country. At the end of the 1990s, around 800,000 Albanians were estimated to be living and working abroad, mainly in neighbouring Greece and Italy.[19]

The second decade of the Albanian migration was characterized by a maturation of the migration cycle. The process of the legalization of Albanian immigrants in the main host countries, which started at the end of the 1990s, was followed by family unification, integration and improvement of the immigrants' economic and social status. The flows continued, but, as a result of greater economic stability in Albania and due to the large scale of the already departed in the 1990s,

15 Republic of Albania, Council of Ministers (2018) *National Strategy on Diaspora and Migration 2018–2024 and Action Plan*, Tirana, Council of Ministers.

16 World Bank (2011) *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, Washington DC, The World Bank.

17 World Bank (2016a) *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016*, Washington DC, The World Bank.

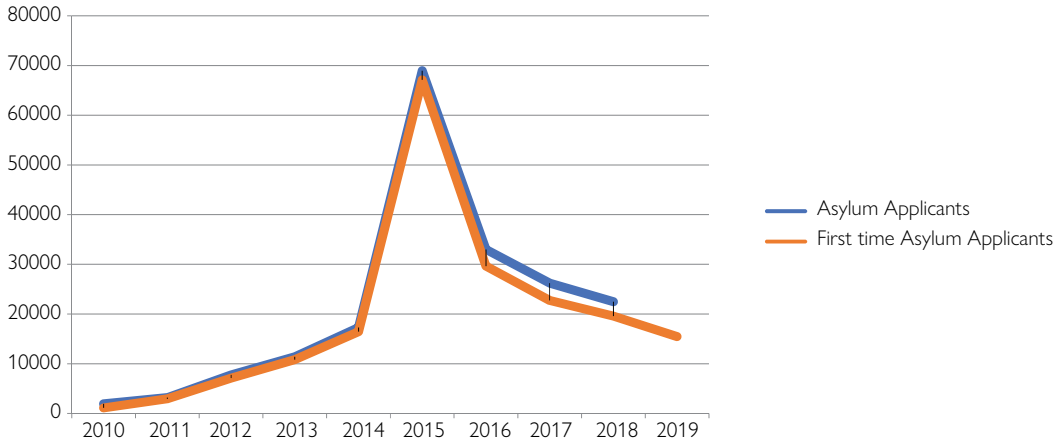
18 A closer look at these rankings shows that most of the countries ranking above Albania in the 2016 World Bank publication (Monaco, Dominica, Antigua-Barbuda, Guyana, Samoa, Sint Maarten, St Vincent and Grenadines, Grenada, Tonga, St Kitts-Nevis, Curacao, Suriname), except for two places (West Bank and Gaza, 4 million and Puerto Rico, 3.2 million), had a smaller population size (less than 1 million) and a long-standing history of migration. While two countries of the Western Balkans – Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro – rank above Albania because, for those countries, part of the international migration may be also considered as internal migration within the former Yugoslavia.

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

at a lower intensity, without extreme episodes, and were mainly legal. While Greece and Italy remained the two main host countries for Albanian migrants, the destination geography also diversified, to include other European countries and North America.[20]

The third emigration decade was characterized by a renewed intensity and diversification of the international migration flows, which took on new features and new destinations. These flows peaked in 2015 when around 67,000 Albanians were recorded as seeking asylum in EU countries (primarily in Germany), to decrease later with fewer applications accepted (Figure 2).[21] The return of Albanian migrants, whose return curve peaked twice in 2010–2013 (the Greek crisis) and in 2016–2017 (rejected applications from Germany), was another characteristic of this decade. In the meantime, some degree of refugee flows has also been noted (Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, etc.), trying to use Albania as a transit route toward EU countries.[22] Hence, the third decade of the Albanian migration is characterized by a combination of these three flows (emigration, return, immigration).

Figure 2: **Curve of first-time asylum seekers and general trend (2010–2019)**



Source: EASO (2019).

Note: The figure shows that the number of Albanian asylums seekers, especially after 2016, is slightly higher than that of first-time asylum seekers, suggesting that some of them have applied two or three times.

Such renewed migration flows are an expression of the high migration potential of the Albanian population that has increased in recent years. In 2018, a study on potential migration revealed that 52 per cent of Albanians aged 18–40 years wished to emigrate from Albania. Compared to an earlier similar survey conducted by the European Training Foundation (ETF) in 2007,[23] the 2018 study showed that the desire to migrate among the Albanian population has increased by 8 per centage points in 11 years and that its characteristics have changed completely. In 2007, the majority of those who wished to migrate were unemployed, unskilled and had little education and low income.[24] By contrast, those who wish to migrate now have a job, are skilled, educated and have, by Albanian standards, middle and higher income.

In addition to these characteristics, the geography of desired destinations has also changed. While in 2007 Albanians were mostly inclined to emigrate to neighbouring Italy and Greece, now they wish to emigrate to Germany and the US. Economy continued to dominate push factors in 2018 (56 %), although to a lesser degree than in 2007 (65 %). In addition, new factors have emerged such as a 'desire to educate children' (12 %) and there being 'no future' in Albania (11 %).[25] These data is also confirmed by the Gallup World Poll which estimated potential migration from Albania at 56 per cent for the 2013–2016 period. Moreover, looking at the two periods (2013–2016 versus 2010–2012)

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

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

22 Republic of Albania, Council of Ministers (2018) *National Strategy on Diaspora and Migration 2018–2024 and Action Plan*. Tirana: Council of Ministers.

23 European Training Foundation (2017) *The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania*. Turin: ETF.

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

25 Gëdeshi, I. and King R. (2018) *New Trends in Potential Migration from Albania*. Tirana: F. Ebert Foundation; King, R. and Gëdeshi, I. (2019) New trends in potential migration from Albania: the migration transition postponed? *Migration and Development*. Retrieved January 2020 from www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21632324.2019.1608099?journalCode=rmad20.

and compared to the other top 20 countries globally, Albania has seen the highest increase potential migration (+20 points).[26]

Such quantitative and qualitative shifts of real and potential migration from Albania over the last decade raise important questions about the underlying causes of resurgence of this phenomenon. They may be explained mainly by external factors (Greek economic crisis, labour force demand from Germany), but a thorough analysis of domestic factors is also required. To that end, we present some overarching economic trends that may support at the macro level the enhanced migration flows. In our study, we also show other causes that push Albanians to migrate.

In the set of domestic factors, economic conditions have been certainly the main ones over the three decades of the Albanian migration. The global economic crisis that started in the second half of 2008 had both a direct and an indirect impact on the Albanian economy.[27] The first consequence was a slowdown of economic growth and increased unemployment. According to World Bank data, the average annual GDP growth of Albania fell to 2.6 per cent during the period 2009–2017 from 5.7 % in 2000–2008.[28] Meanwhile, the official unemployment rate rose to 17.5 per cent in 2014 (32.5 per cent for those of age 15–29 years)[29] from 13 per cent in 2008, and fell again to 12.3 per cent in 2018 (28.3 % for the segment 15–24 years old).[30]

In addition, the global economic crisis reduced by more than one-third the remittances sent home by Albanian emigrants; these had been one of the main contributors to mitigating the situation of poverty in many Albanian households. Whereas in 2007, remittances peaked at Euro 952 million, accounting for 12.3 per cent of GDP, in 2015 they fell to Euro 597 million, or 5.8 per cent of GDP.[31] This, in turn, contributed to an increase in the incidence of poverty among Albanian households, a phenomenon that had been almost halved in the period 2000–2008.[32]

In the meantime, the seasonal and long-term international emigration, primarily to Greece and Italy, that had been a key mechanism enabling Albanian households to cope with poverty in the first two decades, could no longer play such a role. The high levels of unemployment among Albanian emigrants in these two main host countries (24.7 % in Greece and 12.1 % in Italy in 2010) slowed down new migration flows.[33] Therefore, a new paradoxical situation arose. On the one hand, the Albanian emigration drivers increased, while on the other, the traditional channels of the 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, went 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 desire of the people to migrate from Albania. The EVS survey[34] data for Albania show that people in general, and potential migrants, are dissatisfied with the education system, social security, healthcare, civil service, justice system and political parties (to name but a few).

26 Esipova, N., Ray, J. and Pugliese, A. (2017) Number of potential migrants worldwide tops 700 million, *Gallup News*, 8 June.

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

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

29 INSTAT (2015b) *Labour Market 2014*. Tirana: INSTAT.

30 INSTAT (2018) *Tregu i Punës 2018*. Retrieved January 2020 from www.instat.gov.al/media/5576/tregu-i-punes-2018-njoftim-per-media.pdf.

31 Data from the Bank of Albania.

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

33 Arslan, C., Dumont, J.-C., Kone, Z., Moulan, Y., Ozden, C., Parsons, Ch. and 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.

34 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.

3. Objective and methodology

The key objective of this research is to better understand return and reintegration dynamics, including not only the challenges that individual migrants face upon return and during reintegration in terms of health, education, housing, employment and other services but also the challenges which receiving communities face when a large number of returning migrants need access to the labour market, financial support, education, health and social services.

The research for this study included primary and secondary data analysis. It consists of a desktop review of the relevant literature on returnees who had sought asylum, as well as qualitative methods (interviews and focus group discussions).

The qualitative methods included: a) 12 focus group discussions with returnees (one in each prefecture of the country); b) 30 semi-structured Key informant interviews (mainly in Shkodra, Kukes and Elbasan) with representatives of education, health, labour, social assistance organizations, migration counters, vocational training schemes and local government institutions and experts; and c) 45 semi structured interviews with returned asylum seekers (mainly from Germany, France and the Netherlands).

In some prefectures, focus groups were realized in regional capitals (Gjirokastra, Vlora, Fier, Berat, Shkodra, Kukës, Peshkopi) while in others a smaller town was selected (Kamza in Tirana, Belsh in Elbasan, Maliq in Korça, Fushe-Kruja in Durres, and Laç in Lezha). Each focus group was composed of 7–12 participants of different ages, gender and socio-economic levels. Two focus groups in Fushë-Kruja (Durrës Region) and Berat were organized with representatives from Roma and Egyptian communities. No single family or individual participated in more than one research method. All focus group discussions and interviews were recorded, and a verbatim transcription was prepared. The names cited in the reported interviews and focus groups have been changed, and standard procedures were applied to help preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Returnee households and individuals were identified from the information obtained through visits/meetings in schools, healthcare centres, offices of economic aid, various NGOs working with returnees, as well as persons encountered randomly (in bars, shops, etc.). Many senior officials and employees of these institutions or other random persons helped with initial information on returnees and their addresses, who were then contacted by the survey team and were interviewed. We also used the so-called 'snowball sampling' technique, whereby the initially selected individuals recommended relatives, friends, and neighbours who had applied for asylum in EU countries and had returned to Albania.

In general, the returning asylum seekers were willing to be interviewed and participate in the focus groups. From the interviews and focus group sessions we collected and analysed qualitative information relating to the causes and history of migration, returnees' experiences in the host country, and to their return and reintegration into Albania and future plans.

Meanwhile, representatives of the main local institutions concerned with reintegration were interviewed as key stakeholders and experts. In general, those who had a long-standing experience in the respective institution were selected and interviewed. Key informant interviews were designed to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the main issues, constraints and opportunities to improve the reintegration of asylum-seeking returnees. Based on these interviews, information was collected and then analysed.

4. Profile of returnees participating in focus groups

During the interviews and focus groups organized in the framework of this study, we met and talked to many returnees who had previously sought asylum, representing various ethnic groups (including a large number of Roma and Egyptians) who, by responding to a variety of semi-structured and open questions, provided information and stated their opinions on issues that concern their daily lives.

But what are the main characteristics of this group? Notwithstanding some internal differences, the group shares some common characteristics that distinguish it from the general profile of Albanian society.

Above all, this is the poorest segment of Albanian society, ranked at the bottom of the household income ladder.[35]

Almost 24 per cent of households say they receive 'economic aid' and 61 per cent say that they purchase 'by list'[36] in one or more grocery stores. Almost 65 per cent of them say that the financial situation of the household is 'insufficient' or 'very insufficient' to meet the needs of daily life.[37] The two main sources of living for returnee households are the work of family members, and social assistance – economic aid, pensions and disability payments.[38] There are also some households whose only source of income is 'economic aid' or their parents' pension. This is the case reported by Endrit from a village in Peshkopia:

> We are five members in our family and we live only on our father's pension that is 16,000 Albanian *lek* per month. My wife and I are unemployed (...).

Since returning from the host country where they had applied for asylum, the financial situation for most asylum-seeking households 'has not changed' or 'has worsened'.[39]

The main factor explaining this situation is the high unemployment rate, underemployment and low income from any work done in the formal and informal sectors. Almost 36 per cent of the population in this group are often long-term unemployed. Unemployment is higher among youth and markedly higher than the official unemployment rate in Albania.[40] Of those working, 34 per cent carry out unskilled work in the informal sector, which is not only low-paid, casual and precarious but also generates emotional stress and uncertainties about the future.

The education level of returnees is notably lower than the average of the general population. While some members belonging to this group have high school or university education, the majority have completed only the compulsory nine-year education. Their professional skill are also poor. Almost 53 per cent of them do not have a profession and carry out unqualified jobs. Some of the returnees have had some previous migration experience, mainly in Greece.

35 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.

36 The 'list' is an interest-free credit system kept by store owners, usually grocers, that allows customers to 'buy now, but pay later'.

37 Respondents were asked: In general, is the financial situation of your household sufficient to cover main needs? Each respondent could choose one of the following alternatives: more than sufficient; sufficient; sometimes sufficient, sometimes not; insufficient; very insufficient.

38 Respondents were asked: Do you have any income or profit generated through the following sources: rented property, agriculture, interest earned on bank savings, social assistance/pension, work of family members in Albania, remittances, and other. Each of them could choose one or more options from these alternatives.

39 Respondents were asked: Compared to the period prior to applying for asylum, after the return, would you consider the situation of your household as better or worse? The alternatives were: much better than before asylum; better than before asylum; the same; worse than before asylum; much worse than before asylum.

40 In 2019 Q2, the official unemployment rate in Albania for the population aged 15 years and older was 11.5 per cent, but it was 20.9 per cent for the group age 15-29 (for more information see: INSTAT (2019) *Quarterly Labour Force Survey*. Tirana: INSTAT).

The returned asylum-seeker group is characterized by a younger age, on average, than the general population, because young families with young children or young males have primarily sought asylum in Germany or other EU countries.[41] Many of them have left elderly parents in the home country because these older people could not cope with the travel and harsh living conditions in camps. Most of them are married; only a few were unmarried and migrated alone and unaccompanied. There are also cases when the nuclear family has split –mainly owing to the lack of financial means for the trip – so that men went first to the host country, leaving their wives and children in Albania or vice versa. In many cases, such family separation causes strong emotional stress, especially among children and women.

From the ethnic point of view, the majority belong to the ethnic Albanian group, with a considerable number of Roma and Egyptians as well. In a very few cases (in Shishtavec, Kukës) there are also families or individuals from other ethnicities.

41 Some partial data published by Pew Research Centre shows the demographic characteristics of Albanian asylum seekers that entered EU countries in 2015. Almost half (46 per cent) were aged 18–34 years old, and about 34 per cent were children under 18. Males dominated (61 %) and were mostly young (almost half of them were 18–34 years old). For more information see: Connor, P. (2016) *Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015*. Washington DC: Pew Research Centre.

5. Findings from focus groups and interviews

5.1 Migration from Albania

For many Albanian households, over almost three decades, international migration has been a gateway to a better life through employment abroad, a higher income, a better future for the children and better career opportunities. Even in cases when a part of the household (mainly older parents and, in fewer cases, the wife and children) stayed back in Albania, they benefited from remittances to improve the quality of their material life or to invest in small family-run businesses.

5.2 Why asylum?

International migration has been and remains the main coping mechanism against poverty and social exclusion in Albania. When unemployment goes up, and income from the informal sector drops, international migration flows surge. The question then arises as to why Albanians are seeking asylum in EU countries. The answer from the interviews and focus group discussions is clear. During the first two decades after the beginning of the post-socialist transition, migration flows from Albania were mainly focused on two neighbouring countries –Greece and Italy. The existence of quickly formed social networks, in the early years, propelled mass-scale migration and reduced migration costs and risks. New arrivals were often given food and accommodation and help to find a job. The informal sector, especially in Greece, required unskilled workers (in construction, services, and agriculture) who were disposed to work for low pay. Thus, a large number of migrants managed to find work. Since the financial and economic crisis in 2008, the unemployment of migrants in both countries has been high and many Albanians began to return to Albania.[42]

Consequently, Albanians tend to target other countries where employment opportunities and income-earning potential are higher. In addition, when applying for asylum, the Albanian asylum seekers expect that they will find accommodation, food, professional training, work contracts and residence permits in the host country. Ndriçim, who lives in Kukes, explains:

> …because we are not entitled to work in Germany, and the rules to be employed in Germany are very strict. Moreover, the chances to work informally are almost zero. (...) You would be penalized if you were caught working when you were not entitled to (...) Greece, on the other hand, was more liberal; we had the possibility to work 'in black' [i.e. informally]. I know from my experience, when I worked there. In Germany, this is impossible.

42 A joint study undertaken by INSTAT and IOM showed that, during the period 2009–2013, 133,544 Albanian emigrants aged 18 years and above returned to Albania, driven mainly by the loss of their jobs in Greece and Italy (for more information see: INSTAT and IOM (2014) *Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania.* Tirana: INSTAT/IOM).

Arjan, a former asylum seeker from Peshkopi, shares a similar opinion:

> In Greece, hiring is very easy. The country is also closer and the trip is less costly. In Germany, one cannot find a job without proper documents. Germany has its own laws. It is easier for us to integrate in Greece.

These asylum-seeker flows which, like those from other Western Balkan countries, peaked in 2015, joining the massive asylum-seeker flows from the Middle East, were encouraged and facilitated by a combination of factors. The first factor was that, since the end of December 2008, Albanians could travel without visas to EU countries. This enabled low travel costs (a saving of some hundreds of euros per person) and facilitated travelling to the host country. The second factor was the rumours that were spread by personal social networks regarding the chances for employment in Germany or in other EU countries.[43] In addition, individual success stories transmitted by communication channels often served as a catalyst for the process. The lengthy procedural timeline, material and financial gains and better social services (e.g. healthcare, education for children) offered in the host country also had a strong impact.

5.3 Reasons for migration

Diverse factors encourage Albanians to apply for asylum in EU countries. Among others, we may mention factors such as the dire economic situation, health, education, family, accommodation, social protection, security and the pessimistic perception of their own and their children's future in the home country. Let us explore each of these in more detail.

Economic conditions – including poverty, unemployment and underemployment, low income from the formal and informal sectors, difficult living conditions, limited social protection and debts – are the main push factors for Albanian asylum seekers. In addition to these underlying factors, the future of their children is another driver. Many participants in interviews and focus groups see this prospect in the light of the quality of education and employment opportunities. Genc, an unemployed father from Kamza, says:

> The main reason why we went to Germany was the economic condition. Both my wife and I are unemployed. We also went there for a better future for our children. A man thinks about what is best for the children. (...) All these drives you. Unemployment and a better future. When you see that the prospects here are zero, you want to do what is best. We tried for better.

Mimoza, a mother from Kukes, says:

> There are no jobs, you cannot find a job. Even if you hold a university diploma, you cannot find a job. For example, in my family, three persons have a university diploma and none of them have a job.

Others state that wages in both the formal and the informal sectors are low, do not motivate people to seek work and do not ensure minimum daily living needs. Enrieta, a woman from Belsh, says:

> A new factory has opened in town and you could say that is an employment opportunity. But you have to consider the wage. There [in the factory] people work 8–9 hours a day and they are only paid half of the proper rate. Working all day for 400–500 Albanian *lek* [around 3–4 euros] is not having a job, it is not worth it.

43 Barjaba, K. and Barjaba, J. (2015) *Embracing Emigration: The Migration-Development Nexus in Albania*. Brussels and New York: Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved November 2019 from www.migrationpolicy.org/article/embracing-emigration-migration- development-nexus-albania.

The lack of social infrastructure and difficult working conditions are further reasons that demotivate people to work. Majlinda, an employee at the Municipality of Cërrik, says:

> In our town, there are no jobs for women. There are some opportunities in [nearby] Elbasan. But it is difficult for the women to go there, because we have no nurseries and kindergartens do not offer full-day care in Cërrik. In addition, they are often obliged to work overtime and spend a lot of time travelling. Who, then, will take care of the children?

Limited social protection is another push factor encouraging poor families to apply for asylum in EU countries. What is called in Albania 'economic aid' does not cover all members of the poor population and its amount is very little. Hence, it cannot significantly reduce poverty, inequality, and other migration drivers. Mira, a divorced woman from Puka living with her two daughters, recounts her experience:

> Before going to Germany, I used to get 5,000 Albanian *lek* in economic aid. Now it has been cut to 2,500 Albanian *lek*. What can I do with 2,500 Albanian *lek*?! I have two daughters, one in high school and the other in the nine-year school. I don't know what we are going to do.

Other individuals in discussions and interviews emphasize that debts or long 'lists' in grocery stores and outstanding obligations for electrical energy have pushed them to seek asylum in EU countries. Entela, a woman from Maliq, describes her case:

> I owed 50,000 Albanian *lek* for the electricity bill and they cut the electricity. Without electricity, debts for the electricity bill, a long list of debts in the grocery stores (...). This is a reason to leave.

In all the interviews and group discussions, the returnee asylum seekers pointed out that, if they had a stable job in the formal sector and adequate income, none of them would want to leave the country. Fatmir from Kamza, a returnee from Germany, says:

> Only economic conditions pushed me to seek asylum. Nothing else. (...) I am unemployed (...) all the family is unemployed. My children are young; they go to school. We will have to leave again, to emigrate. We have no other way out. This is my first and last reason. I have no other reasons. Our country is very beautiful, and we like to live in Albania, with our people (...) But, in this economic situation, we have no other option, no other way out.

Another participant in a focus group discussion, Luan from Laç, says:

> We do not expect Germany's standards in Albania. Albanians want the minimum living conditions. At least, each household should have one person employed, to ensure minimum living. (...) We are asking for employment. If each Albanian citizen is given the possibility to find a job here, I do not think people would want to leave. But here there is no hope at all for employment. (...) We are in miserable conditions. Hope is lost.

Other returnee asylum seekers revealed that health problems and the lack of proper healthcare in Albania constituted a push factor. Ervehe, a mother from Kukes, says:

> I have an autistic child, with mental disabilities and epilepsy. I had the child treated here for eight years and saw no changes; instead his situation became increasingly worse. For this reason, I left Albania. I had no financial means to afford leaving with the documents and visa. I saw everyone else was leaving, so I left too. There [in Germany] I declared I came only for my child, and upon having done all examinations, I would return to Albania.[44]

A significant number of households participating in the focus groups and interviews, especially in the north of Albania, point to the lack of specialized doctors and the poor quality of the healthcare services. Avni, a 50-year-old man from Kukes, described his particular case:

> I had a child suffering from a form of cancer, and I was, therefore, obliged, due to my inability to get adequate medication in Albania, to leave and go to Germany. There, I was able to obtain all the necessary medicines.

Often, to fund the trip for sick individuals to host countries for medical care, the whole family and social network is engaged. There are also cases when the trip for sick asylum seekers is not only expensive, but also difficult. Naim, a father from Kamza with two sick children, confirms the above:

> I have two paralysed children, paraplegic and tetraplegic. One is 29 years old, the other is 20 years old. They are both bedridden. I borrowed money, I left Albania for Greece, from Greece to Germany. The trip cost Euro 1,600. I had to fly my children there, because they would not be able to endure a trip by bus or by car.

Some returnees, mainly Roma and Egyptians, cited the problem of housing or of the demolition of their homes.[45] This was the case for Seit, a Roma from the settlement known as "Pallati me Shigjeta" in Tirana, whose house was demolished for a road that would be constructed there.[46] He said: 'We had many reasons to seek asylum in Germany. But, the greatest push factor for migration was the house issue.'

Other Roma and Egyptians said that they live in overcrowded homes, which has pushed many of them to leave Albania and migrate. Mimoza, a young Roma mother from Tirana, said:

> The housing conditions are very difficult, and I live in a large family. Because of the poor conditions, we argue a lot. I have been married for several years and I am very stressed out (...). If I had my own house, perhaps I would not have gone to Germany.

Lack of physical safety for family members, and the constant psychological stress that arises from this dangerous situation, is another factor pushing some Albanians to seek asylum in EU countries.

44 The lack of treatment for autistic children, according to interviews and focus group discussions, is a cause for parents to try to find a solution by seeking asylum in Germany.

45 According to a UNDP study, over 38 per cent of Roma and 45 per cent of Egyptian families live in old decrepit dwellings and a further 21 per cent of Roma and 11 per cent of Egyptian families live in shacks (for more information see: Gëdeshi, I. and Miluka, J. (2013) *Needs Assessment Study*. New York: UNDP).

46 According to interviews, for the construction of this road, the dwellings of 53 Roma and Egyptians had to be demolished. Many of them applied for asylum in Germany or France.

Lindita, a mother from the Tirana suburbs, shared her dramatic story:

> I applied for asylum in Germany due to the blood feud. My husband is in prison, sentenced for murder. I have two kids; my son is 14 years old. Sooner or later, my son will leave the country to escape the blood feud. I ask for protection for my son. (...) My husband is sentenced for murder, but the victim's family has not forgiven us. I am forced to emigrate, sooner or later. To the end of the world, if not in Germany or Europe, I will leave, to the end of the world. I live in a rented home, I have no income, nothing. I work part-time, three hours here, three hours there, as a cleaning lady. I have completed high school, but I can't find a job.

The difficult living conditions, unemployment, extreme poverty and increasing segregation in suburban neighbourhoods undoubtedly produce conflicts (intrafamily, interfamily, divorce, failure to repay debts, etc.). These conditions, combined, are a strong migration push factor for some families.

In the meantime, Roma and Egyptians in Albania, the poorest of the poor, characterized by significantly lower socio-economic indicators than the majority population,[47] underline another push factor: discrimination. Skënder, a Roma from Korca region, said:

> It is not only economic reasons that made me leave the country. There is also discrimination. Nobody hears the voice of us Roma.

Arjan, an Egyptian returnee from Shkodra, who had sought asylum in Germany, confirmed a similar situation:

> I went to Germany and the Netherlands to build a better life, because here there is discrimination. When we face security problems, the police do not intervene; when we have health emergencies, the ambulance does not come.

5.4 Who migrates?

Despite the high rate and intensity of migration in Albania, not all those who wish to migrate are able to do so. Focus group discussions and interviews show that only families and individuals who have sufficient human, financial and social capital for such an initiative are able to migrate. Families and individuals who do not have such capital (or only partially) find it difficult to migrate. Thus, the Roma households that we surveyed in Shkodra find it very difficult to migrate, given their very high level of poverty and limited human and social capital. Myrvete, a poor Roma woman from the northern city, said:

> We need money to leave Albania. But we do not have even enough money to buy our passports. Four passports cost 24,000 *lek* (about Euro 190) plus travel expenses. (...) But I do not have enough money to eat. We buy by list at the shops.

Given the importance of the different types of capital to enable migration to take place, we will address them individually below, starting with financial capital.

47 Robayo-Abril, M. and Millán, N. (2019) *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

5.4.1 Households with disposable income

The initial migration costs are high for many Albanian households, with only a few of them able to afford them. Money must be found to obtain a biometric travel passport, to pay for travel to the destination country and to cover incidental costs. In her interview, Mariola explained:

> We sold the car, not for the travel expenses, because we had them already, but for some extra money, on the side. Dad said that, in addition to the travel expenses, we needed some extra money, just in case; you never know what happens and he did not want us to be left without money in the middle of nowhere.

Some Albanian households accumulated funds to pay for their trip from previous savings or the earlier work of family members in emigration (mainly in Greece). This is the case of Agron, the head of a family from Peshkopi, who said:

> I worked in Greece and had a well-paid job. In addition, until just before I left for Germany, I was working. Therefore, I had enough money for the trip.

Many other households compensate for their own lack of money by relying on kinship solidarity. They borrow money from their relatives, as well as from migrant family members in Greece and Italy. Short of financial resources, many households rely on the extensive family networks to obtain the necessary money. Luan, a returnee in Kukës, borrowed the required amount of money from his brother. Many others borrow money from their in-laws, and this phenomenon is observed both in the south and north of the country. Other households rely on the relationships and trust which they have previously established. Often this is a business relationship. Thus, some households borrowed money but at interest rates of up to 10 per cent per month. Sanija, a mother from Korça, says:

> We borrowed the money for my son's travel from an acquaintance. Interest on the debt was as much as 10 per cent per month. (...) My son then sent me money from Germany and I paid both the debt and the interest.

In many cases, borrowing at high interest rates causes stress for the borrower regarding repayment on time. In addition, not all may benefit from this type of business relationship. Skënder, a Roma from Fushë-Kruja, explains:

> Some people who had a good friend among the 'white' borrowed for an interest rate and left. Then from Germany in two–three months sent the money they borrowed. (...) We had to send the money, otherwise, the interest would go up. Roma people do not lend money at interest, therefore, we borrowed only from the 'white'.

Other households have taken loans from commercial banks under the guise that they need it to fund their small business. Arben, a Roma from Korça region, explained:

> Many asylum seekers took loans from banks (...) No one lends you Euro 1,000 knowing that you will migrate for asylum purposes and there is no certainty whether you will come back to repay the debt. Many people sent the money via money transfer agencies from Germany to clear the bank loans, otherwise the bank would take their houses.

In the absence of savings, to cover their travel to the destination country, some households sold part of their arable land, cattle, household appliances, work tools, or their spot in the second-hand clothes open market. This is what Luan, from a village in Malesia e Madhe, did:

> The trip to Germany cost me Euro 1,500 but I did not borrow money. I had some goats and I sold them to make the money. Another man from our village, who came with me to Germany, sold his cattle.

In some cases, to raise the money some people even sold their houses. This was the case for Shpresa, a Roma mother from Tirana, who returned from France:

> Our family needed Euro 3,000 to go to France. For this amount, we sold all we had and even borrowed some money (...) Now that we are back, we are living at my mother-in-law's home. We are living ten persons in one room.

A few families in Tirana used the rent reimbursement for the demolition of their homes by the municipality to fund their trip to Germany.[48] Astrit, a Roma from the 'Pallati me Shigjeta' settlement, explained:

> In the first year, the government gave us 240,000*lek* [around Euro 1,800] for the rent. But, seeing no hope, we decided together with my son to use the money to emigrate. We paid for the passports of the children, paid for the tickets and left. We used the 240,000 Albanian *lek* that the government gave us for the trip to Germany.

5.4.2 Households with human capital

Households whose members have a certain level of education find it easier to discover the route to emigration and stay in the host country. Some of them have had previous migration experience, mainly in Greece, which helps them to adapt more easily to the new destination. Genci, a returnee in Gjirokastra, said:

> I worked as a truck driver transporting goods from Albania to EU countries. I worked in Greece for several years. It was, therefore, very easy for me to adapt in Germany.

Migration to an EU country is also perceived by most of them as a chance to obtain training and learn a new profession. Agron, a villager from Rrëshen a former asylum seeker in Germany, shared his aspirations:

> I did not go there for asylum, in Germany. I went there in the hope that it would be somewhat better, that I would be able to benefit from some entitlements, learn a profession, work and live there.

The young age and good health of family members are preconditions for migration, except for those cases noted earlier where the treatment of sick children was a key motivation. Not everyone can cope with the difficult travel and asylum camp conditions. Many asylum seekers left behind their elderly and sick parents in the home country, as well as someone from the family to take care of them.

48 This refers to the Roma settlement destroyed to make way for a new highway; see Note 41 above. The municipality paid the occupants rent in three instalments for a certain period of time. Some households used the first instalment to finance their trip to Germany.

This is the case for Ermira from Tirana, who said:

> I live with my parents and my brother. Both my sisters are married, and they were with their families in Germany. (...) But we could not go because my parents were sick and my brother suffers from depression.

5.4.3 Households with social capital

Having a network of friends and relatives helps in a number of ways, from covering the cost of travel, to providing necessary information with regard to migration conditions, procedures and prospects. Social capital is important throughout all stages of international migration, from departure, through living and working abroad and sending money home, to returning home.

First, potential asylum seekers rely on social capital to obtain relevant information on the cost of travel, the best route to the destination, the institutions they need to address and the asylum reception camp to choose based on conditions (e.g. overcrowding, food, the possibility for accommodation in separate dwellings, amount of allowances paid and the chances for long-term stay). Arben, who lives in Pogradec, explained:

> In Germany, there were also camps where conditions were bad, such as for instance people could not wash, there was only a sandwich to eat (...). There were also camps with good conditions such as those near Berlin, near Frankfurt and Hanover (...). We received this information since we communicated with our friends in different camps.

Such social capital is necessary to help them during the trip and when they arrive in the destination country. These social networks reduce risks and lower migration-related material and psychological costs. In many cases, sending remittances home to repay debts or help the family is done based on social capital.

Drini from Gjirokastra says:

> 'I sent the money home with a friend of mine from Elbasan, who transported goods with a truck from Germany to Albania.'

There are also cases when asylum seekers do not have social capital and are completely lost. This is the case of Alma, a young mother from Belsh who travelled alone with her children. She said:

> I left with my four kids and had no place where to go, or where to stay (...). Some Albanians on the same bus were going to Frankfurt. That is where I also stayed then.

Many asylum seekers rely on contributions from their extended family to provide for elderly parents or other family members in the home country while they are in the asylum country. Elderly family members who remain at home often rely on the trust of local businesses to allow them to purchase goods and have their debts recorded on the shop's list while the youngest family members are abroad.

Households that do not have such social capital are less likely to migrate or return soon from the host country, without waiting to receive the application outcome. Myrvete, a mother from Kukes who had migrated to Germany to have her sick son cured, says: 'We returned because we had nobody to help my husband, who was home alone'.

5.5 Household decisions

The decision to apply for asylum in an EU country is usually the result of a long and in-depth family discussion, with finances being the most difficult and argued aspect. Sonila, a Roma girl from Tirana who applied, together with her family, for asylum in Luxembourg, said:

> 'We discussed it with our family (...) Discussed for about two months and then we decided to go'.

In general, the initiative to apply for asylum in an EU country is taken by the men, but they discuss it with their wives and other family members. The trip and living conditions in the host country may be tough and full of surprises, therefore a broad family consensus is needed. Edi, head of a family from Puka, says:

I discussed the issue first with my wife alone, without the children. We talked to the children later. We told them about the difficult conditions, the limited chances we had [in Albania] to finance their education (...) and so we decided together and departed.

Family consensus is also needed for young people who migrate alone. Fatmir, a young man who lives with his parents in Kukes, says:

> When I decided to emigrate, I discussed it first with my family. They simply said they did not see a better alternative in Albania and gave their consent. 'Try whatever you like', they said.

There are also cases when women are the ones to take the initiative. Majlinda, a girl from Tirana, says:

> The idea to apply for asylum in Germany came from my aunt. She talked to my mum and dad. (...) The son of my uncle, encouraged by us going, joined us and came with us.

In other cases, the decision is also a long-term strategy of the extended family for its members to be able to migrate taking turns, one after the other, joining the rest of the family in the host country. Ervehe, a mother from Maliq, says:

> First, my older son, whose family has five members, left. We had some money and borrowed some more at interest from an acquaintance. We did not have enough money for all to go at once. In Germany, the older son began to receive some money and sent it to us. In this way, all the other children left one after the other.

Petrit from Dibra relates a similar story:

> We are five members in our family, but we left our 77-year-old father in Albania, because he could not withstand the long car drive and the difficult camp conditions. I went there with the idea to settle myself first and then bring our father.

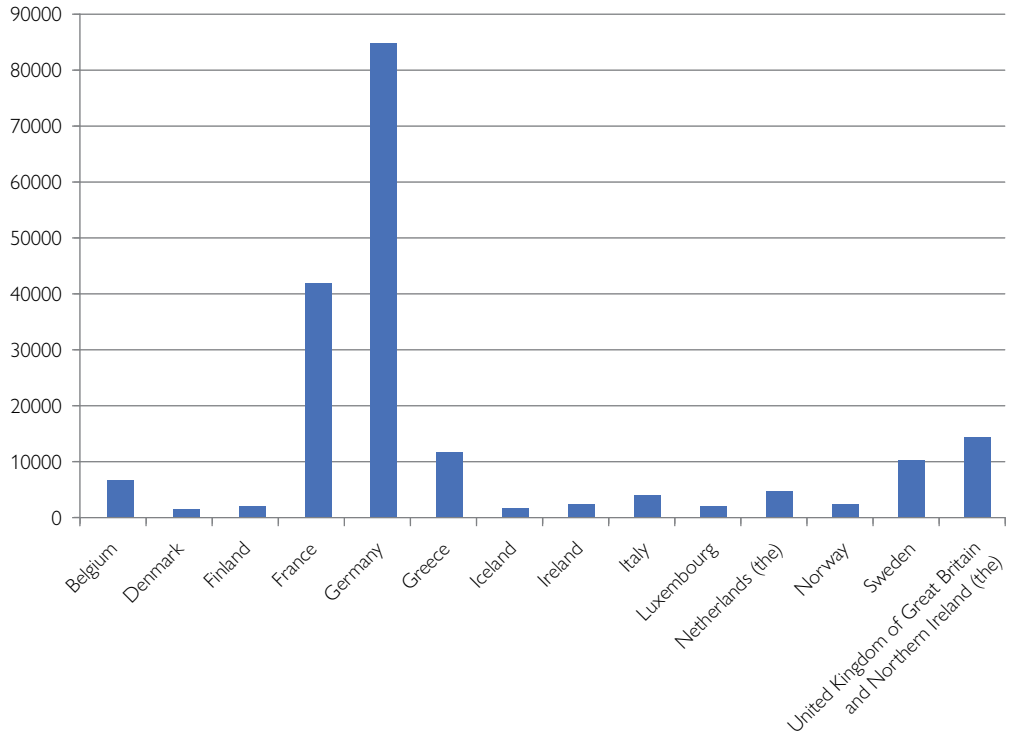
Many families jointly organize the travel, share the costs, exchange information and stay together in the asylum country, enhancing security and support for themselves. Anila, who lives in Tirana, described it as follows:

> We discussed it widely with our family and then decided to go. (...) We left with the family of my uncle's son. My aunt and my uncle's sons' families were composed of four members each. There were 12 of us in a minivan.

5.6 Host countries

According to OECD data, most Albanian asylum seekers have gone to Germany and France; fewer to the United Kingdom, Greece, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Norway, Luxembourg, Austria and other EU countries.[49] Although scattered throughout more than 15 EU countries, almost 70 per cent during the period 2010–2018 were in Germany (47 %) and France (23 %). According to the respondents, Germany and France were favourite destinations, for their better accommodation and services (healthcare, schooling for children, language training, professional training, etc.), higher allowances per capita each month, and lengthy application processes.

Figure 3: **Distribution of Albanian asylum seekers by destination countries, 2008–2018**



Source: OECD (2019) International Migration Outlook 2019. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Depending on the conditions, the preference of asylum seekers for Germany or France would change. Luan, a Roma from Fushe-Kruja, explained:

> Roma families from Fushe-Kruja migrated at the beginning of 2014 to France. (...) Initially, the monthly allowance was Euro 350 per person, but later it was halved. Meanwhile, 4 or 5 Roma families who went to Germany in May 2014 told us they were paid Euro 310–330 per person monthly and the children were paid around Euro 200 a month. Moreover, the housing and living conditions were better (...). Then most of the people left for Germany.

Also, after returning from one country, some asylum seekers (mainly Roma and Egyptian) migrate to another. Artan, a Roma from Berat, after returning from Germany went to France to seek asylum. He said:

> Many families in our town have returned from Germany and then left for France. Or vice versa, returned from France and then left for Germany. Here [in Albania] there is nothing they can do.

49 OECD (2019) *International Migration Outlook 2019*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

5.7 Routes

Asylum-seeker households have taken different routes to reach Germany or France based on where they live in Albania, the information they obtain from social networking and the cost of travel. Those from Tirana, Durres, Fieri, Vlora and, to a lesser extent, from Berat (all in western Albania) took the ferry to Italy (Bari, Brindisi or Trieste) and then continued by bus or train to Milan and then onto Germany.

Dhurata, a mother of three from Tirana, says:

> We were five persons. We left from Vlora. We took the ferry to Bari, Italy, and then a bus to Germany. (...) The cost of the trip was about Euro 1,600, which we had borrowed.

Households from Shkodra and, to a lesser extent, from Lezha in the north have generally taken a taxi or minibus through Montenegro, Croatia and Hungary to Germany. In many cases, the journey is tough and the cost is high, especially when small children are involved. This was the case for Shpresa, a young mother from a village in the hinterland of Shkodra, who says:

> The trip to Germany took us three days. We took a taxi from Shkodra. It cost Euro 2,000. We had our three children with us and the younger one was less than one year old. On the way we had to stop often, every two–three hours, because the little one was crying and hungry. (...) We had taken food with us and spent the night in the car. We arrived in Berlin on the third day, late at night, and then we went to the police station.

Most asylum-seeking families from Korca, in the southeast of Albania, and some from Berat and Elbasan, travelled by bus to Thessaloniki in Greece and from there flied to Germany – mainly to Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Hanover and Dortmund. Meanwhile, asylum seekers from Gjirokastra, in the southwest, took a plane via Athens. Flights are cheaper from Thessaloniki and Athens, but it requires spending a night there. Having rich social capital (relatives or acquaintances who have migrated to Greece) meant that they would be housed for one or two days in their homes. Ermira, a young mother from Elbasan, confirmed:

> We spent one night at my brother's home, an emigrant in Thessaloniki. Then we took the plane from Thessaloniki to Berlin, where we went to the police and applied for asylum.

Many asylum seekers from Kukes and Dibra, in north-east Albania, have travelled via Kosovo[50] to North Macedonia and Serbia and then on to Hungary. This trip was longer and more expensive, reflecting the remoteness of this mountainous region. This was what Pranvera, a young mother from Peshkopi, said:

> The trip in total for our family cost around Euro 1,400. We went by bus, but purchased a return ticket, otherwise they would not let us through. We travelled from Kosovo to Macedonia and Serbia and then to Hungary. (...) We had to pay 'some money' at the customs.

Artur, a 25-year-old university graduate from Kukes, followed the same route:

> At the border crossing in Hungary we paid Euro 50 each. Otherwise, none of us on the bus would be allowed to cross. If you want to proceed, pay the money, or else you stay. So, we had to pay the money.

50 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Some families were able to fly directly from Tirana. Travel by air means fewer surprises, but the cost from Tirana airport is higher and often a return ticket must be purchased. Petrit, who travelled with his family, tells a similar story:

> 'We travelled by air from Tirana, but we had to purchase a return ticket. Otherwise, they would not let us pass'.

In other cases, some Roma and Egyptians have been required to show that they had a certain amount of money with them, otherwise they would face difficulties at border crossing points. This is the story of Fatmir, a Roma leader from Korça:

> A family (...) was returned at Tirana airport, because the authorities requested them to show Euro 600 as proof for his wife and himself. He had a guarantee paper that had been sent to him and the return tickets. But their departure must have raised some suspicions at Rinas [airport] and –Roma are easy to recognize, given th eir darker complexion –they were returned. Of the 30–40 persons waiting at the control line, none but the Roma couple were returned.

Other asylum seekers fly from Pristina or Skopje, where the prices are cheaper.

Overall, the average cost of travel was about Euro 1,050 per family, depending on the number of household members, the itinerary, the destination country and the means of transport.[51]

51 Respondents were asked: How much did the travel cost, in approximate figures, from your residence to the host country?

6. Experience in the host country

According to the interviews and focus group discussions, many of the returnees felt satisfied with their experience in EU countries (mainly in Germany, but also in France) in terms of accommodation, fulfilment of material needs, healthcare and education for their children. Their time in these countries contributed to enriching their lives with new values and changing their way of thinking.

6.1 Accommodation

Albanian asylum seekers can be divided into two large groups regarding their experience in the main hosting countries. The first group includes those who migrated mainly during the period January 2014 to October 2015.[52] After staying in camps for a few days or weeks, they were then transferred to homes, hotels, schools and other public facilities adapted for the purpose. All dwellings had the necessary household appliances. The electricity, water and heating bills were paid by the German government. Luljeta, a young mother from Tirana, said:

> We stayed in the camp for ten days and were then transferred to a home that was fabulous to me. (...) Everything was brand new, the TV set, the fridge, the washing machine, the beds... I opened the boxes myself. Brand new. The children were happy.

The second group consists of households that migrated to Germany after October 2015. Respondents said they stayed mainly in camps and for a shorter period of time.

Such accommodation conditions were often different from those in France. Isuf, a Roma from Fushe-Kruja, said: 'Living standards in Germany were much higher but in France they left you in a tent'. Fatmir, an Egyptian from Berat, shared a similar story:

> When I went to France, I stayed in the open for three months. I was not the only one, others as well. We stayed in an empty apartment. Then, after three months they gave us a home.

6.2 Income

Many Albanian asylum seekers in Germany were paid an allowance for their daily expenses. The allowance varied depending on the location and the period of application for asylum. Overall, the monthly allowance ranged from Euro 300–400 per person for adults (18 years old and above); less for children. The income was adequate to satisfy daily needs (food, clothes, transport and medication). Those who lived in camps received less but food was provided for free. Thus, Endri, who stayed in the camp, was paid much less. He said:

> At the camp, they gave us food and a small allowance in cash, Euro 3–4 euros daily, enough to buy cigarettes. Nothing else.

52 In 2015, the EU categorized Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro as 'safe countries of origin'. The asylum laws passed by the German government in October 2015 and February 2016 reduced the benefits that Albanian migrants were receiving and shortened the duration of the procedure for asylum. References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Whether or not a household benefited in terms of money from the asylum-seeking venture was determined by whether they stayed in a camp or were transferred to a home, and by the duration of their stay in the host country.

Income increased when family members worked in the formal or informal sectors. Some asylum seekers have worked on contracts in Germany but there were only a few of them. Others worked in the informal sector (collecting second-hand clothes, recycling, construction, loading and unloading, cleaning, assorted jobs on farms) and earned supplementary income. This was the case for Besim, who was an asylum seeker in Marseille, France. He related:

> I worked on the black market, in waste containers. I collected used clothes. I would take something and sell it. I made around 700 euros per month plus the 510-euro allowance for the family from the French government. The economic situation of the family improved.

In these circumstances, a portion of the income was used for daily expenses, such as food, clothing, medication and transport. The rest was saved and sent to Albania.

6.3 Savings

The majority of the respondents said that they saved money in the host country. Saving is one of the migration goals for asylum-seeking households, enabling them to repay the debts and solve some problems upon return to Albania. Linda, a woman from Tirana, says:

> In Germany, I wanted to save because we had a debt to repay in Albania. Therefore, we ate mostly in places where asylum seekers ate, because food was expensive. We could buy food, but in this way, we would be able to save only a small amount of money. In Albania, I had a debt to repay. I thought that someday I would return and had to repay a large amount of debt here.

Savings took up a significant share of the daily discussions among asylum seekers. Kujtim, a Roma from Fushe-Kruja, recalled:

> 'We talked every day with our relatives in other camps in Germany and told them to save because one day they would return'.

Saving is also an essential element that distinguishes the families that have and have not benefited from asylum seeking in the host country. This is the case of Anila, a woman from Durres, who said:

> In Germany, we stayed for three months in a camp and were then sent back. I do not know why, but we were sent back hastily. We had no opportunity to save. We were unlucky.

The amount of savings depends on migrants' income, number of family members, period of stay in the host country, possibility for finding a job in the formal or informal sectors, saving behaviour and whether their return was forced or voluntary. Arben, a returnee from Germany, says:

> In Germany, we received Euro 300 a month per person and a family of five received Euro 1 200–1 300 a month. The family would spend monthly Euro 400–500 and the rest was saved to be sent back home to Albania.

Most of the migrant respondents mentioned that they saved around half of their total income. However, some of the savings were sent back to Albania as remittances to repay their debts or were used to pay a lawyer in Germany.

In general, Albanian households saved on average about Euro 2,000 if they stayed one year in Germany. Savings increased the longer the stay and from knowing the host country and its system better. Skënder, a returnee from Germany, explained:

> Some Roma and Egyptian households also benefited from charity institutions. Those who stayed three years in Germany knew where these charity institutions were, such as Caritas or the Red Cross, and received food. Therefore, they have saved more money. Those who stayed for a year could not possibly know.

There are, however, exceptions. The family of Mimoza, an asylum seeker from Maliq, was able to save around Euro 10,000 during her stay in Germany. She said:

> My husband worked in a car repair service and earned Euro 60 a day. As asylum seekers, we were not entitled to employment, but he worked informally. During the 11 months we stayed in Germany, he worked (...). In addition, we received Euro 600 monthly as economic assistance.

This saving behaviour was very high among the Roma and Egyptian asylum seekers. Artan, a young Roma man from Tirana, said:

> Germany was a great country and had many cultural and sports events and many party celebrations I could spend money on. But, aware of the poverty of the family, we saved and sent the money back to Albania.

The consumption of cigarettes, coffee, and alcohol was thus an additional determinant of the savings amount of a household. Artan continued his story:

> 'Those who smoked saved less because cigarettes were expensive in Germany'. Others, to save more, prepared their coffee at home or baked their own bread.

6.4 Remittances

Remittances are one of the most widely researched aspects of post-1990 migration in Albania. Based on estimates provided by the Bank of Albania, remittances from Albanian migrants saw a rapid growth in the period 1991–2007 and then decreased, starting from 2008, as a result of the effects of the global economic crisis and the maturation of the remittances cycle.[53] Since 2014, the remittance flows from Albanian migrants have edged up again slightly and remittances from asylum seekers have certainly played a role in this increase, according to data from the Bank of Albania. However, what are considered as asylum seeker remittances are, in most cases, repayments of debt and bank loans that the migrants took out in Albania to finance their trip to the host country.

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

Donika, a woman from Belsh, says:

> The money we were given was meant to be used only for consumption, only in the host country. We were not supposed to send it elsewhere. But we sent money to Albania, we had to, we had debts to repay. We sent small amounts every now and then to repay debts and save something because we knew that we would come back to Albania.

Failure to repay the debt, especially to banks or acquaintances, was a constant source of stress and concern for individuals and their families. Edvin, an Egyptian from Shkodra, said:

> After I returned from Germany, I went to Pristina to collect cans. I had to earn the money to repay the debt. I could not return to Albania because I was indebted. I stayed in Pristina for six months, until I made the money.

There are also cases of Albanian households being unable to repay their debts. Gent, a father from Kamza, says:

> 'I have a 1,000-euro debt to repay in Albania. If and when I will be able to repay it, I do not know.'

Another reason for sending remittances was to help family members (mainly elderly or sick people) back home. Besim, a young man from Tirana who had been an asylum seeker in Germany together with his parents, says:

> My brother was in Albania, as he could not come with us, he was sick. We helped my brother. We sent the money via MoneyGram.

Others sent their savings in small amounts, fearing losses in the case of police searches. Monika, a young mother from Belsh, says:

> They [other asylum seekers] said that, if the police came for a control in our house and found a certain amount of money, they could take it. So, we sent the money in small amounts to Albania.

Remittances were sent mainly through formal channels (banks and money transfer agencies) but also sometimes through informal ones. Through formal channels, remittances were transferred via third persons who had fully legal identification documents. Merita, a woman from Belsh, related her experience:

> We sent the money with an intermediary, in most cases Kosovars. We did this to prevent having any trouble. In Germany we lived on social assistance and, if the authorities found out that we sent money, they could think that the money we had was 'more than enough', since we sent some to Albania.

The remittance intermediaries offered these services for free or for a small fee. Edlira, a woman from Tirana, says:

> We sent the money through some Kosovars who had proper documents. They sent the money via banks but wanted a gratuity for that. (...) We sent the money to my father-in-law, who then gave it to the person we had borrowed it from.

Sometimes the money was sent via informal channels, such as with asylum seekers who returned voluntarily to Albania, people who went as visitors to see their relatives, or bus drivers. Arben, a father from Permet, sent his money to Albania through a friend who was a truck driver. He says:

> 'I had a friend from Berat, who purchased construction materials and transported them to Albania. I sent the money with him'.

Ervin, from Gjirokastra, relates a rather different tactic:

> I sent the money through the postal service. Once in a while, I sent home a small package with clothes for my daughter. Inside the clothes, I would slip in Euro 200–300.

Others brought the money with them upon voluntarily returning to Albania. There are also households that lost their savings when they were forced to return by the police. This was the case for Altin, a returnee from Tirana:

> We were sent back by the police (...). We had saved Euro 1,000, but I do not know why they took our savings. They searched us and found the money.

6.5 Employment

To find employment in the host country is the main objective of Albanian asylum seekers. Artur, head of a family in Kamza, confirms it:

> 'We applied for asylum (...) in the hope that we could… work and live there'.

During their stay in the host country, some Albanian asylum seekers worked, either in the formal or informal sectors, or did some social work. In addition to income, they also gained new work experience, social capital and a new mindset. The new social and human capital they gained, as we will see, has helped many of them obtain work contracts and potentially migrate legally in the future.

Very few of the Albanian returned asylum seekers worked in the formal sector in the host country.[54] Those who did had regular work contracts and worked in the construction industry and in services. Flamur, head of a household from Kukes, said:

> In Germany, I worked in construction and earned Euro 1,800 a month. I paid taxes, insurance, school for my children and rent.

In many cases, people found joy in working because they were able to earn their own living. This is the case of Ervin, an Egyptian from Berat, who says:

> I got the work permit late and worked for six months in a factory that produced beverages (...) I packaged the beverages and was paid Euro 1,400 a month. But I was happy because I worked and sustained my living there.

54 Hackaj and Shehaj (2017) point out that, although the 'German federal government has created 100,000 new low-skilled mini-jobs in the public sector for asylum seekers', none of the Albanians whom they interviewed 'were aware of this opportunity' (for more information, see: Hackaj, A. and Shehaj, A. (2017) *Disconnected: Return from Germany and Reintegration Challenges of Albanian Asylum Seekers*. Tirana: Cooperation and Development Institute, Working Paper 'Berlin Process Series').

In other cases, their jobs related to the profession and education they had received in Albania, to which they added new experience by working abroad. Gëzim, a young man from Pogradec, described his work in Germany:

> I worked for almost a year in the profession that I studied for, a car mechanic. I worked part-time. My wife was also working as an assistant cook in a restaurant, because this was her training, too.

Some others did social work in the camps or in public institutions, such as cleaning common areas and maintaining the gardens. Donika, a young mother from Belsh, described her work:

> I worked at the kindergarten. A German neighbour helped me (...). He took me to a kindergarten, and I worked there as a volunteer. I worked there about two hours in the afternoons to clean the kindergarten.

In many cases, these jobs were for very little pay, often 1 euro per hour, yet still adding something to family income and savings. Elvira, another woman from Belsh, shares her experience:

> 'I worked as a helper in an elderly home in Germany and received around Euro 200 a month'.

Others worked in the informal sector (e.g. in construction, loading and unloading in warehouses, recycling, gardening, agriculture, services) but the risks were high if they were caught by the authorities. Luan, a resident of a municipality in Tirana, said:

> I worked every now and then; for example, I washed glasses and was paid Euro 40 a day. I worked in construction and got paid well. When available, I also worked in gardening.

Others performed random jobs, such as recycling plastic bottles. Petrit, a middle-aged man from Gjirokastra, said:

> Whenever there was a party celebration, we collected plastic bottles, all of us, whoever could. They cost 25 cents each so four of them made 1 euro. It is not insignificant. A full load would earn us around Euro 100. (...) Germans drank and threw the bottles away (...). However, it was mostly the Roma who collected the bottles.

Other asylum seekers, mainly youngsters, worked in construction, painting walls or in bars and restaurants. Artur, a young man from Vlora, says about his acquaintances:

> Close to my place there were some Greek bars and restaurants and an Italian one. Each had hired Albanian asylum seekers to wash the dishes. They paid them Euro 1,000 per month. The owner benefited and they benefited. They worked in black, irregularly.

Some asylum-seekers revealed that they had attended vocational training courses and did some internships in the host country. Artan from Korça said:

> My wife attended a language course. She learned some German. It was like a vocational training school, they offered courses for cooking, hairdressing and so on.

Emin, a Roma from Tirana, went twice a week to learn about working in a restaurant in France:

'I was an apprentice in a restaurant. I worked twice a week, morning until noon and it was free'.

6.6 Health care

Healthcare was the main push factor for some Albanian asylum seekers. Many of them benefited from healthcare services offered in the host country. In interviews and focus group discussions, almost all returnees spoke about the quality and efficiency of and free healthcare services in Germany and France. Majlinda, a dedicated mother from Kukës, tells us about her son:

> I had my son treated in Albania for eight years, and we saw no change. He became worse. We had no financial means to have him treated abroad. For that reason, we applied for asylum. (...) In Germany, he was treated, operated on and sent to a school for children with disabilities. (...) There he made notable progress, made a development leap and learned German. (...) After a year and a half, when we returned to Albania, people could not recognize him. He had changed so much.

Persons who migrated to Germany for health reasons were admitted to and treated in hospitals. Some of them continue their treatment and are allowed to stay in the host country even after the return of their families to Albania. Florent, a father from a village in Kukes, shares his story:

> When we went to Germany, we immediately contacted the family doctor and received all the necessary services for our son, for a period of around three years. Now he is better and continues to receive medication. We have returned but he remains in Germany (...) and goes to school. Now he is attending the first year in a higher education college, studying information technology.

Others who became seriously ill during their stay in Germany were also treated in hospitals. This was the case for Agron, from Fushe-Kruja:

> Unfortunately, I got sick in Germany. But I was hospitalized and underwent surgery. The first time I stayed in the hospital for 18 days and the second time for 21 days. The doctors gave me all the papers and told me to see the specialist doctor in Albania every six months.

In other cases, German doctors recommended hospitals in Albania where they could continue therapy.

To a large extent, Albanian asylum seekers were young and some of them became parents while in Germany. Vjollca, a 26-year-old Roma mother, shared her experience:

> When I gave birth to my daughter, I stayed for two days in the hospital. The doctors and nurses showed maximum care. (...) In addition, at home, I was visited by Caritas and they brought clothes for the baby and myself.

Interviewees were particularly impressed with the healthcare for their children. Many of them emphasized that their children were vaccinated in Germany and provided with the relevant documentation.

6.7 Education

Education and a better future perspective for the children is another push factor for many Albanian households that have applied for asylum or wish to migrate to EU countries. According to interviews and the group discussions, almost all the children of Albanian asylum seekers children were immediately enrolled in schools or on language courses in Germany and France. Schoolbooks, materials and transport were free.

The younger children started school immediately, without having to study the foreign language first. However, the German teachers helped them more during class. Avni, a father from Berat, spoke about his children:

> My three daughters started school immediately, according to their age. The older one started in Grade 4, the middle one in Grade 2 and the youngest one in Grade 1. The oldest daughter did not attend a German language course but picked up the language very quickly. The teachers were very kind to the children and taught them well. They kept the children for two additional hours in class and helped them out. As the children made progress, they stayed less after class. (...) The children stayed for 17 months in school. They speak and write well in German.

The care of the German teachers impressed many asylum-seeking parents, who sent their small children to kindergarten, where they learned 'together with the German kids'.

Students attending higher grades of public education were first enrolled in language classes and then continued to attend regular classes. Agron, a young Roma from Tirana, told of his experience:

> School was free for me. Transportation to school was also free. I did not start school immediately, because I had to start German language courses first (...). I learned the language well and started in Grade 10. In Albania, I had completed Grade 9 and there I continued Grade 10, after learning German for one year.

Learning a foreign language (German, French) was highly appreciated by the parents, the young people and the children themselves. Some of the youngsters attended vocational training schools where, in addition to lessons, they learned a trade. Mondi said:

> It was a vocational training school, but first I had to learn the language and then attend school. The trade I would learn was car painting.

6.8 New social capital

Like all migrants, mobile Albanians have the potential to benefit from their social capital, which they can utilize in all stages of migration. In the host country, they gained new social capital. In the camps and apartments where they stayed, on language or vocational training courses, in the places where they worked or in the various institutions where they received services, they made friends with other Albanians and migrants from Kosovo[55] and other countries, as well as with people from the host country. Ermiona, a woman from Belsh, says: 'When transferred from a camp to an apartment, sometimes the neighbours were Germans. We were in daily contact with them'. According to interviews and focus group data, these new connections established during the stay in the host country are maintained and nourished through social networks (Facebook, Skype, e-mail).

55 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Afërdita, a kindergarten teacher from Elbasan, relates a similar experience:

> When I was in Germany, I made friends with my daughter's teacher and a kindergarten teacher, where I worked as an assistant. I have been back [in Albania] for a number of years now but I still keep in touch with them. We speak often on Skype.

The question that arises eventually is, 'how is this new social capital useful?' Certainly, for many Albanian returnees, the main interest is employment in the host country. Agim from Peshkopi used this social capital to land a work contract in Germany. He says:

> I have got many German friends. I was in Germany and came back only two days ago. I went there as a tourist, to visit my friends. I was also able to obtain a work contract and have now applied for a work visa.

Arben, a Roma from Tirana, shares a similar experience:

> After I returned, I went again to Germany and worked in the black market, in the warehouse of a Turkish man. I was offered the job by the Turkish man and I loaded and unloaded stuff. I met him when I went to Germany the first time. (...) Besides him, I also know other Germans, Turks and Albanians and communicate with them via social media.

Others consider using these connections in the future, after learning a trade in Albania. Subsequently, information on the labour market, employment opportunities and obtaining a work contract in Germany are necessary for potential migrants. Arshi, a Roma from a village in Fier district, hopes to emigrate using these new connections:

> I want to migrate again to Germany but not seek asylum this time. I have some friends from Kosovo[56] who have lived and worked in Germany for years. (...) They tell me to just go and they will provide a work contract for me. I established the connections in Germany. I communicate with them through social media networks.

Other returnees use the connections created in Germany to carry out small-scale retail trade. Petrit, who is head of a Roma organization in Tirana, explained:

> 'Some Roma have made connections with some individuals in Germany and they send the items to be sold with the busses.'

In interviews and focus groups, the returnees say that they have also used their social contacts to obtain important documents from Germany (school reports, etc.) or to find medicines that are not available in Albania.

56 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

7. Return and reintegration in the country of origin

The chances for an asylum seeker from Albania to be given a positive response to his or her application are very small. In 2015 and 2016 only one out of 50 asylum seekers from Albania were given a positive response.[57] This is explained by the fact that both Albania and other Western Balkan countries, as of the end of 2015, were considered by the EU as 'safe countries of origin', which made it even more difficult to be granted asylum.[58]

7.1 Reasons for returning

Albanian asylum seekers can be divided into two groups regarding their return to Albania. The first group consists of those households or individuals who returned independently to Albania without notifying or getting instruction from the host country authorities. This is a small group (less than 10 %) and they give various reasons for their return. Some of them could not cope with the difficult living conditions and food in the camps and family members wanted to return. Ermira, a student who applied for asylum together with her family in Luxembourg, told her story:

> We stayed in a tent and we did not like the food at the camp. This made us return. We could not bear living in such conditions.

Others returned to Albania because of family misfortunes (e.g. the loss of a family member, sickness). Drita from Korça shared her experience:

> We returned in April 2016, because my dad got sick. We had not been given feedback yet [on our asylum application]. We paid for the trip ourselves with the allowance for that month.

There were also cases where the departure of some of family members created uncertainty and concern about staying longer. Shpresa, a single mother from Korça, described her particular situation:

> I was in Germany with my daughter and the family of my sister. We lived in the same house. I had one bedroom and one kitchen; my sister the same. My sister's family was given the decision to leave; they let me stay because I needed treatment... I asked to leave Germany voluntarily. After my sister and the other Albanians who lived in the same house left, I was told they would bring in Syrians and I was scared. (...) I returned because I was scared.

The second group (more than 90 %) consists of those households or individuals who returned to Albania after receiving a negative decision from the host country authorities. Some of them challenged the decision and hired a lawyer but the

57 World Bank Group (2019) *Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans*. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

58 The European Commission considers a country to be safe if it is a democracy and if there is no general or consistent persecution, torture, inhuman treatment or punishment, threat of violence or armed conflict.

result remained the same. The only benefit was prolonging the stay, but the lawyer's fees were not insignificant given their budget. Gjergj, a returned asylum seeker from Tirana, said of his experience:

> 'After the negative feedback on the asylum application, we kept fighting. We had heard that we had to hire a lawyer and we had to pay. (...) The lawyer was hopeful and said that, because we were from the Roma community, we had a good chance of winning. He asked for 400 euros. We used all the money we had saved to pay him. We were hoping the lawyer would help the case, but he did not succeed either. After two months, we received a letter and the lawyer said there was nothing he could do because the laws were like that.'

Within this group are two subgroups. The first subgroup consists of those households or individuals who returned voluntarily after the refusal of their application. They were aware that they could no longer stay legally in the host country and did not want to be subject to penalties (for fear that their passport would be taken away). Artan, a father who lives in the suburb of Peshkopia, says:

> I tried everything to stay in Germany; I did not want to return. I went there for the future of my children (...). However, I came to understand that my plans could not be realized. I returned voluntarily. I came back to Albania.

Some of the families who returned voluntarily also received material and financial aid upon their departure. Such aid was aimed to incentivize voluntary return, promote a sustainable return for asylum seekers and prevent re-emigration.[59] EU countries provide such aid either on their own or in cooperation with international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Meanwhile, many NGOs that operate in these countries provide return assistance. A number of participants in focus group discussions and interviews reported such return assistance, the effectiveness of which is yet to be evaluated. Marjeta, a young mother from Kamza, says:

> In Germany, before we left, we were given new clothes for all family members. We were also given Euro 300–400 to my husband, Euro 300–400 to me and Euro 200 to the children.

Others say that they have received around 250 euro, plus the fare back to Albania. In some particular cases, the family may have benefited after return to Albania, receiving financial aid for a few more months. Nazmi, from Kamza, who has two paralysed children, says:

> After we returned to Albania, I was given financial aid for four more months. One month, they sent Euro 250, another month 300, the next month 150 and one month 100 Euro. I got the money while in Albania and sent an e-mail to confirm receipt.

The second group, which is certainly a smaller one, consists of those whose return was enforced by the police. In this case, the authorities of EU countries may undertake some sanctions or disincentivising measures, such as banning a person from entry into the EU for a certain period of time, not granting the return assistance, etc. Many families and individuals in this group were hoping to the very end to be able to prolong their stay in the host country. Bledar from Gjirokastra, who knows many families who were forced to return, says: 'We were hoping to the very end (...). Perhaps to earn some more money or obtain a work contract'. Others were hoping that the lawyer they had hired could manage to have the decision revised or extend the stay in the host country but usually without success, as we saw with the case of Gjergji, above.

59 The amount of aid differs across countries and in accordance with the definition they assign to vulnerable groups. In general, these groups include unaccompanied minors, victims of human trafficking, female heads of households, etc. Germany and France, for example, cover travel costs and provide an allowance. In particular cases, an amount of financial aid is also provided.

Experiences of forced return by the police are varied. Rajmonda, a mother from a village in Belsh, tells of her experience:

> The police came at six in the morning and told us to get ready. They waited until we got ready and then we left for the airport. The kids were a bit scared but there was no violence by the police.

However, some interviewees had traumatic experiences, especially for the children, from forced return to Albania. Drita, a teacher from Durres who works in a social centre, relates her experience:

> 'In the case of forced returns, children have experienced a traumatic situation and they have found it difficult to recover because they were very scared. They were scared when they saw police officers at 4 a.m. at their door, the way they have been taken out of their home....'

7.2 Return to home country

The return to the home country for Albanian asylum seekers – who may have spent months or even years in the host country – is accompanied by strong emotional stress.

The first contact for migrants returned forcibly is with the border police at the country's points of entry (the airport or the land border-crossing points). Participants said that their interactions with the border police were all quite appropriate. Avni, a head of household from Berat, described it in simple words:

> When I came to the airport, the [Albanian] police had taken our passports. They called my name and I got my passport and with it returned to Berat with my family.

Others highlighted that they had not been given any assistance. Valbona, an old woman from Korça, shared her experience:

> When I came to Tirana, I had no money. I told the police that, in Germany, they returned us with only our clothes on and we have nothing with us. I even left my ID card and money back in Germany. All they gave us were the passports and nothing else. To return to Korça, I went to a relative in Tirana and borrowed some money to pay the driver.

Meanwhile, those migrants who returned voluntarily entered as normal citizens.

Most respondents have returned to their previous dwellings, where they were generally welcomed by relatives, neighbours and the community. According to the focus group participants, social relations were quickly re-established and many of the community members showed an interest in the experience of the returnees in the host country. Andra, a young woman from Belsh, describes her return experience:

> Relations with the neighbours when we arrived were even better. Having returned from abroad, they were curious and wanted to know more. (...) They asked whether we were able to make or save any money (...). But we came back just as we had left.

Such good relations also exist among the Roma and Egyptian communities. Elona, an informal leader in a Roma settlement in Tirana, described it as:

> You see them together over a coffee or visiting each other (...). Many of the community residents are interested in hearing about their experience abroad.

The rapid reintegration of the returnee households in the community may be explained both by the short stay in the host country and because they maintained communication and friendly relations with community members back home. In some cases, however, jealousy resurfaces (due to financial savings) or a resurgence of old conflicts can be observed.

The solidarity and assistance given by community members to returnee families in need is notable. Fuat from Fushe-Kruja, who had surgery in Germany and who, due to his illness, is unable to work, receives financial support from other community members. In another case, Enver from Tirana, whose house was demolished to make space for the construction of a road, said that, for several weeks after returning from Germany, his family was accommodated by his relatives. However, this social capital is exhaustible, and the eventual intervention of institutions is required in order for such problems to be resolved in a sustainable manner.

7.3 Reintegration

Albanians have a multidimensional understanding of reintegration into the home country. They agreed that their reintegration is related to employment in the formal sector and market opportunities, the provision of social protection, education for their children, effective healthcare, housing, the improvement of living conditions and infrastructure, safety and security, the absence of discrimination and participation in social life. They emphasize that the local and central government, international organizations and civil society should all engage in the constant campaign to improve their living conditions.

For many returnees, the concept of reintegration is dynamic and enriched (i.e. made more demanding) after their return from the asylum country. They compare various elements of the economic and social life of the two countries and seek essential changes. Ismail, a Roma from Korça, put this into simple words:

> 'In the first place, we want to have a job, a more cultured life. Let us take what the Germans do and apply it here. This is integration for me.'

7.4 Employment

Unemployment and a lack of income are the key challenges faced by most returned Albanian asylum seekers. More than half of them are unemployed, while many others find only occasional and unskilled jobs in the informal sector. Mimoza, an experienced employee of the employment office in Kukes, said:

> When they return, they come to the employment office and register themselves as unemployed. They re-inscribe themselves into economic aid schemes. First, they request employment, but we do not have a lot of employment opportunities to offer (...) The unemployment rate in our town is very high.

Such impressions are confirmed by official data showing that, in spite of minor improvements in recent years, youth unemployment (aged 15–24 years old) in Albania is 27.3 per cent.[60]

60 World Bank (2019) *Western Balkans Labour Market Trends 2019*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Amid such high unemployment rate, many returnees have registered with employment offices to find a job, but results have been discouraging, due to the lack of job openings. For those jobs that are available, the wage rates are discouragingly low. Ndriçim, head of a household from Berat, described his experience at the employment office:

> The first problem I faced upon my return was finding a job. I have no prospect of employment. I went to the employment office but there are no jobs. My wife and I went there together, and we were told that, for the moment, there were no jobs, but they would call us. It has been seven months now but no phone call so far. When I asked about economic assistance, they told me I was a young man and had to work. (...) What kind of reasoning is this?! There are no jobs and they do not give you economic assistance.

Gent, who had been an asylum seeker in Germany, related to a similar experience:

> After I returned, I went to the employment office and they told me they would call me. I went there five more times but no call so far. They do not give me economic assistance because they say I can work. However, I have four children to feed. The only source of income for me is occasional work in the informal sector. If I find work, I bring bread home; if I don't find work, I have nothing to bring home.

Many returnees from asylum are unhappy with the inefficiency and poor behaviour of the civil-service bureaucracy, notably in employment offices. They cite examples from similar institutions in Germany, comparing the two. Edlira, a mother from Kukes, says indignantly:

> Why should I go to the employment office? My name is already registered in their system as an unemployed person. They invite me to register again as an unemployed person. I have to go there every month. In Germany it was different. For example, when you are unemployed, in Germany, the system generates the data. (...) When you register with the unemployment office, within a week they call you and you start a job. (...) Here, the employment office is like a theatre.

Disillusioned by formal employment institutions, many returned asylum seekers turn to social networks (family members and acquaintances) to find a job. These networks are more efficient, although often the outcome is the same. Reshit, head of a family from Berat, described his experience:

> It has been a month and a half since I returned from Germany and I cannot find a job. I ask people around, but they offer me only very low-paid jobs. They say they can pay me no more than 15,000 *lek* a month [Euro about 120]. It is worse than before. Even my wife is unemployed.

Other returnees try to find employment through advertisements or direct visits to potential employers, usually with limited success.

Self-employed returnees also face significant difficulties. Many of them have lost their spot in the market, their clients and their suppliers and have difficulty adapting to new market conditions. Entela, a young girl from Tirana, told her story:

> When we returned to Albania, we were in a very difficult economic situation. My parents, who used to sell clothes in the market, had lost all their connections. It took time to re-establish them.

Meanwhile, other returnees, depending also on the country and duration of migration, want to set up small businesses, mainly in services and agriculture. Having no adequate funds to start up their business, funding through bank credit or international donors would be a welcome development.

This situation is much more difficult for Roma and Egyptians – the poorest of the poor[61] – because of their generally low educational and professional levels, limited social capital with the majority population and discrimination. Artur, a young Roma from Tirana, asserts:

> 'When we returned from Germany, my family stayed jobless for eight months, until dad found a job'.

Of total returnees, unemployment among Roma and Egyptians is notably higher and they are more vulnerable than the majority population.[62]

The reasons why returned asylum seekers are unable to find a job vary. First, there is an overall shortage of job opportunities in Albania and this is confirmed by most returnees. Edlira, a mother from Kukes, states:

> It is impossible to find a job here (…). Even if you have a university diploma, you can't find a job. For example, three people in my family hold a university diploma, and none of them have ever had a job.

In the meantime, others emphasize that they find it difficult to adapt to the demands of the labour market in Albania because they lack many of the required educational and vocational qualifications and expertise. An additional factor is that low salaries and difficult working conditions (long hours, distance from home, hard work, etc.) demotivate many people and keep them from working in the dominant textile and footwear re-exporting industry or in services. Avni, who lives in Belsh, says:

> In our town, you have only two opportunities for a job: either work in one of these factories or as a waiter in a bar or restaurant. But they only pay you 500 Albanian *lek* a day (approximately Euro 4). What can you buy with that?!

A lack of social infrastructure (nurseries, kindergartens, etc.) is another factor that prevents many women and young mothers from participating in production processes. Merita, an official in the small town of Cerrik, says:

> In the territory under our municipality it is difficult to find a job. Many women and young mothers may go to neighbouring Elbasan city, where some factories are asking for new workers. (...) But there are no nurseries or kindergartens in town. As a result, there is no one to care for the little ones while their mothers are off at work.

Finding themselves jobless, many young Albanians migrate to EU countries for short periods, making use of Schengen visas and work in the informal sector. These visas, as it was pointed out before, allow passport holders from Albania to move within the Schengen area for 90 days in any 180-day period. In some cases, this is a cyclical migration (migrate for 90 days, return to Albania, migrate again), which may turn into long-term migration in the future (see Section 8). There are cases where such cyclical migrations are well organized and coordinated.

61 De Soto, H., Gordon, P., Gëdeshi, I. and Sinoimeri, Z. (2002) *Poverty in Albania: A Qualitative Assessment*. Washington DC: World Bank Technical Paper No. 520; De Soto, H., Beddies, S. and Gëdeshi, I. (2005) *Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

62 A World Bank study showed that unemployment among the Roma and Egyptian populations (aged 15–64 years old) in 2017 was 56 per cent, against 38 per cent for the surrounding majority population. Compared to 2011, unemployment for these minority groups was 34 per centage points higher. For further information, see: Robayo-Abril, M. and Millán, N. (2019) *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Altin, a local government employee in a city in the north of Albania, says:

> In our city, some women work as babysitters in Kosovar families in an EU country. They came to know these families during the period in which they were applying for asylum. At the end of the 90-day period, one returns and another one goes to this family. They alternate.

Other returnees (mainly Egyptians) go to Istanbul, where they work under hard conditions (long hours, no social insurance, etc.) in the manufacturing industry (textiles, footwear, bag and suitcase production, etc.) as well as in construction, services, etc.[63] Yet, they get paid more than in Albania and their wages satisfy minimum living conditions. In many cases, children aged 8–15 years old work long hours along with their parents, which obviously keeps them away from school. Fatmira, a divorced Egyptian woman from Korça, who lives with her daughter at her parents' home, described it as follows:

> When I returned from Germany, I could not find a job. (…) I stayed for a while in Albania and then migrated to Turkey. (…) I had to work for 12 hours (…). My daughter worked together with me. (…) I went to Turkey only with my daughter and wanted to work.

There are also more positive experiences. For young returnees who attended school and vocational training courses, participated in internships, learned a new language and changed their mentality in the country of migration, it is easier to find a job in the formal sector. Fatos, a young man from Tirana, said:

> When I returned, I went to the employment office to seek a job. (...) But I found it myself, through Facebook. (...) I work in a call centre in German.

These new skills are noted among those young people who have spent long periods of time abroad and who were able to benefit from training and learning opportunities in the EU.

Professional training and assistance from international organizations have also enabled some returnees to find jobs in the formal sector. This was the case with Altin, who described his experience:

> An international organization supported me to find a job. I first sought vocational training, which is free of charge for us. When I finished the course, the international organization helped me to find a job within two weeks. I work in a restaurant.

Many respondents said that they wanted to attend vocational training courses in Albania. They think this could help them to find a job in their country of origin or abroad. However, it should be noted that vocational training courses often do not match labour market needs. Shpresa, a local official from north Albania, said:

> In our city, two vocational courses are offered, tailoring and plumbing. However, even if you complete the course, there is no chance of employment. Here there are no tailoring enterprises.

63 Gëdeshi, I., Mykerezi, P. and Danaj, E. (2016) *Mapping of Skills, Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities of Roma and Egyptians in the Project Sites of Tirana, Durres, Berat and Shkodra.* Tirana: UNDP.

7.5 Housing

The socio-economic situation is even harder for returnee families who sold their houses and other assets to finance their trip to the destination country. Upon return, they have been accommodated by their relatives, but their situation is dire, nonetheless. This is the case for Zana, a Roma woman from Tirana, who returned from France:

> Our family expenses to go to France were €3,000. In order to secure this amount of money, we sold everything we had and also borrowed money. (...) After return, we live in the house of my mother-in-law. We live 10 people in a room.

The situation is also difficult for Roma households who live in the area known as 'Pallati me Shigjeta' in Tirana, whose houses have been demolished. Avni, a Roma head of family who has returned from Germany, said:

> When we were in Germany, our home was demolished, together with the furniture. My brother was in the city and could not save anything except a TV set. All the other furniture was destroyed together with the house. (...) When we returned to Albania, we had no place to stay. In the first three months, we suffered; we moved from one place to another, our relatives helped, we stayed in each place for some time. Our son was accommodated somewhere else, as we could not stay seven people together in one place. This went on until we got the second instalment for the rent. Then, we rented a place. (...) So far, the state has paid the rent. However, [soon], they will no longer pay the rent and we do not know what will happen to us. The situation is getting worse.

Some other families have found their homes in ruins or heavily damaged upon return and they do not have enough financial resources for the necessary reconstruction work. A few of them, especially those returning after a long stay in the EU, have used their savings to renovate their homes. Ermira, a single mother from Rrëshen, tells us about her experience:

> When we got back to Albania, the house was a disaster. Every item we had was ruined. We tried to somehow fix the situation, using up around Euro 2,000 we had saved.

Having no home at all, or a deteriorated one, may serve as a push factor for some families to re-emigrate. This is the case of Hamdi, a returnee who lives in the municipality of Kamza, who states:

> I do not receive any social aid, my home is destroyed, almost uninhabitable. I am left with no option. What can we do here?

Other returnee families have been faced with electricity or water bills for the time they had been in the host country. In the absence of financial resources, these families live under considerable stress. Hasani, head of a household in Kamza, describes his situation:

> When I got back to Albania, the electricity had been cut off. I had been mistakenly billed 30,000 Albanian *lek* (...). That had been an error. I had to go from one office to another to solve the problem.

Fiqiri, another resident in Kamza, told a similar story:

> When I came back to Albania, I found out my water bill was 40,000 Albanian *lek*. I had paid my bills before leaving. However, I was billed 40,000 *lek*, although I had not consumed a single drop of water. I went several times to the city, but the bill is yet to be paid. I went again, I found the money, I paid my bill and, because it was overdue, I had to pay higher fees.

Housing is particularly an issue for many Roma and Egyptian returnees in Albania. Many of them live in huts or dilapidated and overcrowded houses in segregated peri-urban or rural areas with inadequate infrastructure (lack of water supply, sanitation and roads).[64] Sonila, a young Roma mother from Tirana, lamented: 'We live like we used to, 10 people in one home. But the children are now grown up and it is very difficult for us...'.

There are also cases where the returnees, with the money saved during their stay in the host country, have renovated or built a house or purchased a small apartment. In the Roma settlement of Fushë-Kruja, some families are building homes with the money saved in Germany. Emin, an informal community leader from Fushë-Kruja, says:

> The savings in Germany were so good (...) that we managed to build a home. Our families stayed three years, and some even four years (...). When they started to return, the economy recovered, because they are making construction works.

7.6 Social Protection

The state's social security fund comprises four components: (i) state economic assistance; (ii) retirement benefits; (iii) unemployment assistance; and (iv) disability payments. Due to a new evaluation system implemented since the beginning of 2018, some returnee households have been excluded from the state economic assistance scheme. Moreover, many of the returned asylum seekers stated that the state economic assistance which their families receive is too little to cover daily living expenses. Valbona, an older woman from Korça, stated:

> With the money I get from state economic assistance I buy flour and make bread myself. But I am sick and I also need some fruit. In Germany I had proper food; here I don't.

In the absence of adequate economic assistance, many returnees do occasional jobs in the informal sector (construction, scrap-metal collection, etc.). Some of them (mainly Roma and Egyptians) have tricycle pickup trucks and old cars for transporting scrap iron. However, that is often used as a justification to exclude them from state economic assistance. Sonja from Korça spoke of her experience:

> My family does not benefit from economic assistance. When we got back from Germany, we bought an old car with some money we had saved there, with which my husband collects scrap iron in the villages. The car is old but, in the registration papers, it is a car, which therefore excludes us from economic assistance entitlement. But they should come and see the situation we live in first and then cut off the economic assistance.

Some other returnee families do not receive state economic assistance because the law stipulates that households that are not registered in the municipality are ineligible to receive it.

64 Robayo-Abril, M. and Millán, N. (2019) *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Many returnee families said that they have faced bureaucratic obstacles to receiving state economic assistance. Sokol, a Roma association leader in Tirana, said:

> In relation to economic assistance there is a lot of bureaucracy regarding the documentation. Some associations have helped the Roma with documentation. (...) But, even when they go to the civil status offices, they send them away, saying: 'Go away, you are not eligible!' Some Roma did not even go to apply.

Fatmir, an Egyptian from Shkodra, also stated:

> When we go to the economic assistance office, they tell us to: 'Go get a job!' But where do we find a job? They only send us from one office to another.

7.7 Healthcare and psychosocial assistance

According to the interviews and focus group discussions, many returned asylum seekers benefited from free healthcare in the migration country (mainly in Germany). In the meantime, returnees from asylum are faced with two main challenges.

The first one is access to and the quality of healthcare services. Some of the returnees who are unemployed or work in the informal sector do not have health cards or are not entitled to free healthcare services. According to Albanian legislation, children under 18 years old, pregnant women, people with disabilities, pensioners, employees in the formal sector and unemployed people registered in employment offices are all entitled to health cards. All other groups have to pay for them. Skënder, a returnee from Berat, said:

> They do not give you a health card, because you have to work. Neither my wife nor me have a health card. The problem is, if one gets sick, where are we supposed to go? We need the health card.

For unemployed people and those working on low incomes in the informal sector, medical treatment can be unaffordable, and this is certainly the case for most returned asylum seekers, who are one of the poorest groups in Albania. Arben, a returnee in Berat, related his experience:

> My daughter should see a doctor every three months. But I have to pay here; in Germany, visits were free. (...) When you go to the doctor, you have to pay out of your pocket, but I have no money because I am unemployed.

The quality of healthcare services is often low and there are cases when the doctors are unable to determine the diagnosis and respective treatment. This pushes many poor families to seek a solution in EU countries by applying for asylum. This is what Majlinda, a young mother from Korça, said:

> My sister emigrated to Germany because of the unemployment here. But she must go there again, because of her sick son (...) and doctors here cannot establish his diagnosis. She wants to go back to Germany only to have her son treated but she has no money for the trip. We are very much in difficulty here.

Some other returnees who had been treated in EU countries would have to continue their medical treatment, according to the doctors' recommendation, in private hospitals. However, the impossibility of receiving specialized healthcare in private hospitals, because of the high costs, continues to be of great concern for some returned asylum-seeking families. Elvira, a returned asylum seeker, said:

> Me and my son were sick and were cured in the hospital in Germany. Now we have to go every month for a check-up at the American Hospital in Tirana. But I cannot take my boy there. The economic assistance that we receive is insufficient to cover even the travelling expenses.

The second challenge is about the psychological stress experienced by returnees, especially those who live under inadequate conditions or have been returned by police.[65] Such psychological stress, according to interviews and focus group discussions, is more notable among women and children. There are a number of reasons for such a psychosocial situation, some of which are listed below.

The living conditions and education in the host country are in deep contrast with the poverty and difficult circumstances which they find back in the home country, producing a negative impact on the social and economic conditions for many returnee children. According to interviews with schoolteachers and psychologists, those children who live in the worst conditions generally have the worst emotional experience upon return to the home country. This is what Mimoza, a social worker in Fushë-Kruja, witnesses:

> I believe that what affects the children the most is the difference in the economic conditions. They were used to having everything available there: a safe home, food, welfare benefits that parents received each month. When they come here, none of these are available. This is a kind of shock both to the parents and to the children. (...) It particularly affects the emotional situation of the children, who find it difficult to adjust. As a result, they are no longer so open, do not say much and do not immediately socialize with friends at school.

The lack of social, cultural or sports events and activities is another factor that deepens the contrast between the host and home countries. Entela, a psychologist in a school in Durres, says:

> There is a very great contrast because they talk about the many activities they had there, both at school and outside school. For example, in addition to school, they had many activities they could do in the afternoons. Here they don't even have a playground, let alone amusement parks.

For this reason, in all interviews and focus groups, the children emphasize that they hope to migrate again with their families.

However, there are also cases when the difficulties and some negative aspects of daily life in the host country, especially among those households that had to stay throughout the entire asylum procedure in reception facilities, have traumatized the children. Staying in a camp for a long time or frequently changing the domicile often causes more stress and fewer integration opportunities, especially for younger children. Teuta, a teacher from Durres, said:

> Even some of the children that I asked did not like the life there [in camps]. They had to share the kitchen, the toilets (...).

65 For an overview of this problem, see Vathi, Z. and King, R., eds. (2017) *Return Migration and Psychosocial Wellbeing: Discourses, Policymaking and Outcomes for Migrants and their Families*. London: Routledge.

They live in an insecure environment and have established fewer social relations. Elvira, a social worker in Durres, describes her experience with a Roma student:

> Mimoza, a 10-year-old Roma student who comes to our centre, is often scared (...). While living in a camp in Germany, her mother would accompany her wherever she went, even to the toilet. At the camp, there had been cases of violence against children by adults. Her parents were afraid that something bad could happen to Mimoza.

Children who have lived for a long time under inadequate conditions in the host country are more likely to develop mental health problems. Therefore, many of the children who have lived in camps or in inadequate conditions do not wish to re-migrate.

In other cases, children have been detached from one parent or have experienced the divorce of their parents, causing inevitable stress and anxiety. Fatmir, a parent of two from Korça, reported his case:

> When people started to migrate to Germany, we thought we could migrate as well. But we did not have the money for the trip. So, initially my wife and my 10-year-old son left first, and I stayed in Albania with the younger boy. But the younger son was worried and constantly wanting his mother. (...) So we borrowed some money and left together with the 8-year-old son. (...) But in Germany I was not put in the same place where my wife was. I stayed for over a month, unable to join my wife and the other son. The younger son was constantly crying, I was also crying (...). Only after a month was I able to join my wife.

In the meantime, the parents 'divorce in the host country may cause even more problematic situations for the children. Rovena, a teacher from Durres who works in a social centre, says:

> The parents of another child who attends our centre are divorced and that happened during their stay in the host country. The father returned with the son, whereas the mother has a daughter with another man and lives in Germany. The child experienced the divorce very badly and has not yet overcome the trauma. He holds it inside, is closed in on himself.

Some children have had traumatic experiences from their family's forced return to Albania. Traumatized behaviours of children returned by force from the host country are noted in different regions. Drita, a teacher from Durres, shares her experience:

> When they came to our centre, the children shared their stories of how their mum and dad had been taken by force; they left home with no belongings, just what they had on (...). They felt very bad; they had experienced it as psychological violence. Upon return here, they have been helped a lot by their teachers to overcome that experience. We have also worked closely with them, we have talked to them, we have been like a psychologist to them.

In many cases, poorly educated parents are unable to understand the psychological stress of their children and the relevant interventions.

7.8 Education

The sustainable reintegration of returnee children in Albania is a complex process that involves a number of elements, such as the improvement of economic conditions for their households (parents' employment and income), housing, healthcare, access to education and social protection. Difficulties in reintegration may cause social and emotional as well as psychological problems for children, which may lead them to drop out of school. This again may serve as a push factor for parents to emigrate. In this subsection, we will focus only on the reintegration of children in schools, addressing their knowledge of the Albanian language, enrolment in schools, segregation and bullying by peers, etc.

There are several problems related to the integration of returnee children in schools. The first is the enrolment and certification of diplomas or degrees. Some returnee children do not have any school documents (transcripts, certificates, etc.) from the destination country and have, therefore, been enrolled in lower grades upon return. The lack of school documents is the most evident in the case of children from families subject to forced return by host country authorities. In this case, they lack all the necessary school documents.

In those cases where returnee children *do* have school certificates that indicate their level of education, they are in the language of the EU host country. They need, therefore, to be translated and notarized, which is an additional cost for many returnee families. Edvin, a parent from Dibra, states:

> I registered my children in school through many difficulties. (...) They asked for the German documents to be translated, school records translated, but all that was costly (...). And yet, they still wanted to register them in a lower-level class.

Other children have returned mid-year and could lose a school year.

According to our data, around 20 per cent of returned children have lost one or more school years and this is perceived negatively by many parents. Ervin, a father from Kamza, complains about the school enrolment of his children:

> We went to Germany without documents (...). Still, three teams came to us, for my three children. 'Your child is this age and we will take him/her to such and such a school'. Immediately, they took the younger child, who was of school age, to school by car, until we got these tickets (...). They were organized, for 15 days arrangements were made for my children to be able to attend school in Germany. (...) When I got back, I was faced with a thousand problems, to the point that I had a heated argument with those at the education office. My kids lost one school year.

The registration of children in lower grades often generates stress and isolates them *vis-à-vis* their previous classmates. In many cases, this is an underlying factor behind dropouts. This is what Anila, a psychologist in a school in Durres, points out:

> There are children, for example, who are 12 years old, and they still attend the second grade. They feel bad because they are older than the rest of the pupils. They find it difficult to adapt: the teacher is new, the other pupils are younger, it depends on how the class receives them (...) This may be a push factor for dropping out.

Some children who have spent a long time abroad, including those who have completed several years of schooling in the host country, have problems with the Albanian language. Dritan, a father from Rrëshen, explained:

> My daughter started her first grade in Germany, and when we returned, she had finished the third grade. When we came to Albania, she had problems because she did not know the letters of the alphabet, she mixed them up. But she could speak the Albanian language fluently.

Shpëtim, a young parent from Berat, voiced a similar concern:

> My daughter left in the middle of her first class in Germany, and here she started from the beginning. But she has difficulties with the Albanian language.

Some problems were also noted with science-related subjects, as the curriculum in Albania differs notably from that in the host country. Elvira, a school principal in Fieri, stated:

> The curriculum of maths and some other science-related subjects is different from the one in Germany. Subsequently, some returnee students are facing difficulties. Together with a group of teachers, we have been working hard with the returnee students.

Bullying is another factor that negatively affects the children. Miranda, a youth activist from Kamza, says:

> There are cases when returned children are subject to bullying by their classmates. They are told that those who seek asylum in EU countries are 'stony broke'. This causes isolation for the returned children and generates emotional stress.

However, the general picture gleaned from the interview and focus group material is that many children have benefited from staying and studying in an EU country, thus enhancing their human and social capital. They have a changed mentality, speak a foreign language, use new technologies, are more active in class and enjoy free discussions. This is what Denisa, an experienced school principal in Fieri, affirms:

> The returned children have faced no difficulties at all. They are integrated. They participate actively in school activities (...), they are familiar with the new technologies, they speak up very freely, because they have been educated in such a way.

Certain donors and international organizations – such as Terre des Hommes, Save the Children, World Vision, etc.– have provided significant assistance for the reintegration of returnee children. They have assisted with the applicable documentation, after-school classes, homework and the organization of various activities.

8. Intentions for the future

The returnees' desire and planning to migrate again in future is an indicator of the sustainability of the reintegration process in Albania. In the absence of mechanisms to support the reintegration of returnees, many of them may find themselves even worse off than prior to migration. As a result, re-emigration may be an alternative for many returned asylum seekers. A study on potential migration, realized in 2018, showed that those migrants aged 18–40 returning due to the global economic crisis (mainly returning from Italy and Greece) had a higher inclination to migrate (71 %) than those who had never migrated before (48 %).[66] Among the underlying factors for this phenomenon is their failure to reintegrate in the home country. So, what happens with the group of returned asylum seekers in Albania?

In the focus group discussions and interviews, we asked returnees whether they planned to emigrate from Albania again in the future. Most of them responded that they plan to migrate 'within the year', 'in the next two years' or 'at a later stage'.[67] Some interlocutors said that they had obtained a work contract and were waiting on the visa to be issued by the embassy of the respective country. Altin, a returnee who now lives in Gjirokastra, says:

> I am going to work in Dresden, Germany. I will work in construction, for an Albanian entrepreneur who owns his company in Germany. (...) I will go alone first, and my family will join me later.

Other returnees have benefited from visa-free travel in the Schengen area. They work for three months in the informal sector in Germany, mainly in construction, services and agriculture. They learn a trade, they have work experience, they have social networks in the host country, they know the language and are waiting on a long-term employment contract. In general, such short-term individual migration precedes and prepares the ground for a longer-term family migration. This is what Ismail, an unemployed man from Peshkopi, says:

> I returned only two days ago from Germany, where I obtained a work contract with a firm that sells construction materials. (...) When I eventually get the visa, I will leave, together with my family, for Germany.

The desire to migrate is related to how the returnees imagine their future, especially the future of their children. This perception of the future is related to many of the elements of the quality of life analysed earlier, namely employment, wages, social protection, the quality of education and healthcare, housing, security, infrastructure, environment, etc.

66 Gëdeshi, I. and King, R. (2018) *New Trends in Potential Migration from Albania*. Tirana: F. Ebert Foundation; King, R. and Gëdeshi, I. (2019) New trends in potential migration from Albania: the migration transition postponed? *Migration and Development*. Retrieved January 2020 from www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21632324.2019.1608099?journalCode=rmad20.

67 This is emphasized by other studies conducted with the returnees in Albania. See: Hackaj, A. and Shehaj, A. (2017) ***Disconnected: Return from Germany and Reintegration Challenges of Albanian Asylum Seekers***. Tirana: Cooperation and Development Institute, Working Paper 'Berlin Process Series'; Gëdeshi, I. and Xhaferaj, E. (2016) *Social and Economic Profile of the Return Migrants in Albania.* Tirana: IOM; INSTAT and IOM (2014) *Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania.* Tirana: INSTAT/IOM.

Nermin, a mother from Kamza, says:

> The future here is very gloomy. It is difficult. Our family is composed of seven members. I am the only one who has a job. I have five children and a daughter-in-law. For at least two more years, my daughter-in-law will not be able to go to work, because the baby is only two months old. The other children go to school (...) and we need to invest in them. Regardless of how much I work, I earn only 35,000–40,000 *lek* per month. Seven persons living on 40,000 *lek* per month, having to pay the bills, let alone hospital expenses (...). I am thinking to emigrate. If an opportunity arises, I will emigrate.

As also shown from this interview, economic factors prevail. However, the reality and the outlook are even gloomier for those returnees who have remained unemployed for a long time. Having no jobs in the formal sector, many households say they try to survive and live on 'economic aid', the tiny retirement pension of their parent(s), remittances from relatives, disability payments or earnings from occasional work in the informal sector. In the meantime, the amount of 'economic aid' and of the other mentioned sources is small –insufficient to take returned families out of poverty – and does not narrow the inequality gap. Mira, a woman from Kukes, explains:

> We live on 'economic aid' from the state. (...) But is 5000 lek of economic aid enough? (...) We are not asking for money without working, we do not want 'economic aid' at all. We want a job, we want to work, a job for my husband.

As a result, unemployment/underemployment and, to a lesser extent, low wages and the need for the improvement of living conditions are the main factors driving returnees to re-emigrate to EU countries.

This finding of the study may also be viewed (and reinforced) from another perspective. Statistics show that, in 2018, the average GDP per capita in Albania amounted to 31 per cent of the EU's average. Compared to countries like the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, France, etc., this indicator was much lower.[68] The question to ask is then: Do Albanian returnees or the poorest segment of the population migrate to these countries due to their much higher economic and social level, or is their potential migration a reflection of the inability to fulfil basic needs in the home country? Although push and pull factors interact and may not be separated, in almost all focus group discussions and interviews, the participants point out that they migrate because of difficult economic conditions in Albania. In the words of Burim, an unemployed returnee from Kukes:

> We want employment. If Albanians have a chance to work, even one person per family, in Albania, I do not think people would want to migrate. We do not claim to be Germany, or Switzerland or France. We want minimum living conditions. (...) But here there is no prospect of employment, at all.

Faced with unemployment, some of the returned families live on the savings they accumulated during their stay in the host country as an asylum seeker. However, their savings are limited and will soon come to an end, which creates stress and insecurity about the future of their families. Fatmir, a returned asylum seeker from Korça, said: 'We live on savings from Germany. But until when?!'

The comparison of push factors before and after the application for asylum reveals that the reintegration process, at least for some of its essential components (such as employment, social protection, healthcare and security) has not been as expected. Many asylum seekers who have returned to Albania stress that the situation of their families, compared to the period before they applied for asylum 'has not changed' or is 'worse' or 'much worse'.[69] As a result,

68 Eurostat (2019) GDP per capita, consumption per capita and price level indices. Retrieved December 2019 from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/GDP_per_capita,_consumption_per_capita_and_price_level_indices#Relative_volumes_of_GDP_per_capita.

69 Respondents were asked: Compared to the period prior to applying for asylum, after the return, would you consider the situation of your household as better or worse?

migration remains the main coping mechanism enabling them to take the family out of poverty or a difficult economic situation such as recurring debt. Most returnees say that, under the current circumstances, emigration to an EU country would greatly improve the financial situation of their families and provide a clear future perspective for their children. This desire for a better future for the children is stated in almost all group discussions and interviews. It is perceived as better education and more opportunities for prospective employment in the formal sector. Ermira, a mother of two from Elbasan, says:

> We think about the children's future. As for us, even if we stay here, we will survive. But we think about the future of our children, for a better life for them.

Despite their desire to migrate, not all returnees have the resources to do so. Some face financial obstacles and do not have the money for their trip to the host country. Krenar, the head of a family from Kukes, says:

> We do not have the means to emigrate. We are unemployed and live on 'economic aid'. (...) Once we were able to borrow money, perhaps twice. But, no one lends to you three times.

Others face difficulties with regard to passports, which keeps them from travelling abroad. This is the case for Afrim, a young man from Has in the region of Kukes:

> I have a work contract to work as an electrician in Germany. (...) But, I cannot obtain a visa, due to the ban. One year is over now and I have to wait for another 18 months.

Meanwhile, some others do not have the necessary human capital (having no profession or being seen as 'too old', etc.) to emigrate. Ahmet, a returnee who now lives in Gjirokastra, says:

> I am a driver by trade, I have worked for many years as a truck driver in various EU countries. (...) A foreign company wanted to hire drivers, but when they learned about my age – I am now in my 50s – they turned me down. They wanted to hire young men, around 35 (...). So, I cannot emigrate, they would not hire me because of my age. This is my destiny.

8.1 Forms of emigration

We asked our interlocutors about their desired form of emigration – i.e. whether they wanted to migrate following a regular procedure or apply again for asylum in an EU country. Most returnees plan to emigrate following the regular procedure, obtaining a work contract and visa. Mira, a young mother from Belsh, a returnee who had previously applied for asylum in Germany, says:

> We want to find a work contract and emigrate in a regular form. We do not want to seek asylum; we are not incapacitated for the German government to take care of us. We want to work.

In the meantime, many returnees clearly understand that, nowadays, migration through seeking asylum has become more difficult and hence is unproductive. The change in procedures (the short processing time, reduction in monetary benefits, staying in camps) in Germany has resulted in less time to stay; consequently, the cost of travel is much higher than the savings they can make in the migration country.

Mentor, a Roma informal leader from Levan, reasons:

> We are constantly in contact with our people in Germany. A friend of mine who went there recently will return in a few days. So, for 20 days what can one do in Germany!? Only waste money? How can one repay the debt?

The desire to migrate regularly from Albania motivates potential migrants, especially young ones, to enhance their education level, to learn a foreign language and to acquire a profession so as to be able to obtain a work contract. Interviewees were specifically asked about the training or profession they would like to learn or follow. More than two-thirds of our respondents want to attend training, mainly to learn a profession that matches the labour market demand in the desired host country (mechanic, plumber, electrician, barber/hairdresser, construction worker, assistant cook, etc.). This is what Bujar, a young Roma from Tirana, hopes to do:

> It would be nice to migrate again, but not to seek asylum. If I could get a work permit, I would migrate. You need education and a profession to go and work in the migration destination country.

Others wish to migrate to learn or improve their knowledge of the language of the host country, which would facilitate obtaining a work contract and integration in that country. This desire and interest in improving the education level and vocational training for this segment of the population should be supported, as it enhances the human capital of the country and of the potential migrant.

Only a small portion of the interviewees (mainly Roma and Egyptians) declared that they will try to seek asylum again, as soon as they have the chance (getting a passport, funding the trip, etc.). This is the case for Lulzim, an unemployed Roma from Korça, who said:

> I want to migrate again (…). I would apply for asylum again since I do not have anyone who can help me there…

Petrit, a former asylum seeker and now a returnee living in Kamza, has no other hope but applying for asylum:

> I see nothing in the horizon. No future at all. (...) I am obliged to find a job. I went to the employment office, but there are no jobs. I am 63 years old, and my wife is 50 years old. She is unemployed, too. We are all unemployed. Where are we to find a way out? We must find a solution and will eventually find some place at the end of the world.

This small group needs to be made aware of the negative implications that derive from applying for asylum. For most of them, it would only deepen their poverty level. Moreover, many returned asylums seekers are not aware that they cannot move within the Schengen area for at least 10 months, in cases where they have returned voluntarily, and at least 30 months when they have been deported.

8.2 Where to?

Many returned asylum seekers believe that they and their families have better prospects in EU countries and especially in Germany. This is related to the image that Albanian asylum seekers have about Germany as a socially progressive country (education, healthcare, social protection) that offers plenty of employment opportunities (also for low-skilled persons) and high wages. Interviews show that almost all returned asylum seekers say they wish to emigrate to

Germany.[70] Other preferred countries are Italy, France and the United Kingdom.

This preference of potential future Albanian migration flows mainly toward Germany will introduce new qualitative and quantitative changes, notably in relation to income, savings, remittances and the human and social capital of Albanian migrants.

Irrespective of the desire of most returned asylum seekers to re-migrate, two questions to ask are: What is the difference between these two flows? What is the difference between asylum-seeker flows and the potential migration of returnees over a span of several years? According to the group discussions and interviews, the main difference is in the form of migration and in what might term the 'quality' of migration flows. Most returned asylum seekers desire to migrate regularly, with a work contract and visa, and only a small share opt to re-apply for asylum in an EU country. On the other hand, the quality of these flows is either different or is changing. Potential migrants have acquired or are in the process of learning a profession, speak or are in the process of learning a foreign language, have more information and have social networks in the host country, have changed their mentality and see the future for their families from a different perspective.

These new trends in potential migration amongst the returnees, such as education and vocational training, learning a foreign language and regular migration instead of applying for asylum, need to be promoted and supported.

70 A study carried out in 2018 revealed that Germany is the most favourite country for potential migrants from Albania. For more information, see: Gëdeshi, I. and King, R. (2018) *New Trends in Potential Migration from Albania*. Tirana: F. Ebert Foundation.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

Over the last three decades, Albania has experienced one of the largest processes in the world as regards the size (per centage to the current population) and intensity of international migration.[71] In almost the middle of the third decade of this process, a new migration wave took place out of Albania, which unlike previous ones, was in the form of asylum seeking in EU countries (mainly in Germany and France). While this phenomenon was present throughout the third decade, it peaked in 2015, when around 67.000 Albanian citizens applied for asylum, only to diminish later due to restrictive measures taken by host countries.[72] This segment of the migrant population is among the poorest of the Albanian society, ranked at the bottom of the household income ladder, but in contrast to some other Western Balkan countries, it does not have a prominent Roma character.[73]

The social-demographic structure of this group shows clearly that its members are mainly young people, with a lower education and professional level than the general population, in search for a better future for themselves, especially for their children. The main underlying drivers for this phenomenon are economic conditions (poverty, long-term unemployment, occasional unskilled and low-paid jobs in the informal sector, low wages, insignificant social assistance, and debt). In addition, it has been driven by other factors such as unavailability and poor quality of healthcare services, housing, conflicts and physical uncertainties, which generate constant psychological stress, and low quality of education (to mention a few). For certain subgroups (Roma and Egyptians), discrimination is an additional factor.

The return of Albanian asylum seekers - in terms of size and intensity, in certain years (2015-2017) Albania was at the top of the list of countries for the number of returnees from EU countries,[74] - has given rise to their reintegration in terms of employment, health, housing, education and social services. Many returnees, depending on the duration of stay and the experience acquired in the host country, have built up new human and social capital, have their mentality changed and have adopted a new and broader understanding of reintegration. While based on mainly qualitative techniques, the report documents that for many families and individuals such reintegration has not been sustainable, especially in the social-economic aspect, and that the situation of their families has not changed (on the contrary, in some cases it has worsened)[75] vis-a-vis the pre-migration period. As a result, in the absence of assistance for a sustainable reintegration, many returnees see re-emigration or second emigration in EU-countries, primarily Germany, as the only available alternative. In what form could such emigration be?

The study shows that most returnees that wish to re-emigrate are actually much more aware, compared to several years ago, that applying for asylum in an EU country is not the solution to their problems. They wish to emigrate under regular terms, obtaining a work contract and a work visa. On the one hand, the cost-benefit ratio, as a result of restrictive measures (acceleration of asylum procedures, difficult accommodation conditions in camps, no daily allowance, etc.) in EU host countries has changed. This means that costs (travel expenses, etc.) for the individual/family is higher than potential benefits in the host country, hence jeopardising their ability to repay debt that they will have to take to fund their trip. On the other hand, they relate regular migration to employment and integration in the host country (and not to a passive stay as asylum seekers in camps).

Only a small share of returnees, mainly Roma and Egyptians, say that they will reapply for asylum. In this case, local authorities and various NGOs that operate in the field of services, in addition to increasing their support for reintegration,

71 World Bank (2016a) *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

72 Schuring, E., Pearson, C., Castro, A., Mathebula, B., Kronenberg, V., Becker, M. and Horneber, J. (2017) *Social Protection as an Alternative to Migration? An Assessment of the Role of Social Protection in Reducing Push Factors for Migration in Different Country Contexts*. Berlin: Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -Gestaltung e.v.

73 World Bank Group (2019) ***Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans***. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

74 World Bank Group (2019) ***Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans***. Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, Morrica, V. and Stavrou, S. (2018) PowerPoint presentation at the Inception Workshop 'Supporting the Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees in the Western Balkans'. Vienna, 15 January.

75 According to focus group discussions and interviews, families that have borrowed money to fund their trip and return after a short stay abroad, have not been able to benefit enough financially to be able to pay back their debts, and are therefore worse off than they were before leaving the country.

should work for raising their awareness that re-applying for asylum is not the solution to their problems and that all this does is deepen their poverty.

The question to ask in this case is what we should do in order for the reintegration of returnees to be a dynamic and sustainable process. In this case, their re-emigration would assume a different nature. It is clear to everyone that improvement of services in education, healthcare, social protection, housing, security, etc. would require time, more investments and at least a doubling of their share in the country's GDP. This objective, which would diminish some push factors for the Albanian migration, may be achieved only in the long term. Subsequently, we will present only a few short and medium-term recommendations.

First, registration of returnees (spontaneous, voluntary, or forced) in all entry points or at least at Rinas airport[76] and collection of data. This may be realized through a structured interview with returnees related to migration causes, experience and their needs. On this basis, a management information system may be set up, which collects electronic data, connects returnees to the relevant institutions that provide services and follows up on the reintegration progress. This system, which should send electronic data simultaneously at the central and local level, would allow for controlling and measuring the effectiveness of reintegration policies and programmes. It may help stakeholders (service providers, donors, international organizations and NGO-s) to prevent overlapping and better coordinate efforts to deliver services to returnees. In addition, the system may exchange information with host country institutions on specific issues (e.g. birth certificates for babies born there, school documents, medical certificates).

Strengthening local capacities in the area of services, especially in those municipalities with high numbers of returnees is another aspect. This can be achieved through continued staff training for local service providers, drafting local reintegration plans and envisaging funds in the respective budgets, and enhancing vertical coordination (with the central government) and horizontal coordination (with international organizations and NGOs that work with returnees). Staff training would enhance their efficiency in their efforts for the reintegration of returnees. Moreover, it would enhance the trust of returnees in public institutions (migration counters, employment offices, economic aid offices, etc.).[77] In some cases (especially in those municipalities with a high number of returnees), cross-sectoral teams may be set up with employees from employment offices, economic aid, social care, education offices, police, local and international NGOs, social workers and psychologists to help in the reintegration of returnees.

From the economic perspective, reintegration in Albania would require improving and expanding the employment structure and small business opportunities, in order to provide employment for returnees in the formal sector and higher income. This would not only help in their economic reintegration but would also contribute to less people feeling pessimistic about their future in Albania and less people seeing migration as 'the only way out'. Creating cooperatives or social enterprises for returnees (for any other citizen as well) would be an effective way for creating new jobs mainly in productive and processing sectors. Depending also on their age, education, country and time of stay, returnees have brought in new human and social capital (skills, trainings, internships abroad, work experience in the formal and informal sector, new mentality), which they can use to both their own and society's benefit. Another possibility for employment and higher income would be assistance for starting up and expanding small and medium-sized enterprises (through training on management, securing financial resources, professional training, etc.).

Returning children should be assisted for their reintegration into the school system. This includes, first and foremost, their immediate enrolment in schools, in order not to be disqualified for that school year.[78] Many families that have been deported by the police, do not have any school documents for their children. In such case, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MoESY) or any other institution in charge of education must explore opportunities for cooperation with counterpart institutions in the host country for education-related documents (diplomas, certificates, etc.) of returning children. Also, simplified procedures should be applied to minimize expenses for returning families pertaining to translation and notarization of school documents for the children. In those cases when returning children do not possess any school documents, they should be assisted with supplementary classes by experienced teachers prior to their assessment/placement test, in order for these children to miss a school year. International and local NGOs that are active in the field of reintegration, should train directors of education departments and school principals, especially in those Municipalities with a high number of returning children, concerning the implementation of instructions/decisions by the MoESY, assistance for returnees and sharing success stories.

76 If returnees are not registered at the entry border crossing points, they should have the opportunity to register with local institutions, such as 'migration counters' or 'employment offices' in the city of their residence.

77 The negligible number of returnees registered with migration counters shows, among others, their low level of trust.

78 According to focus group discussions and interviews, children returnees that are not immediately registered in schools risk to miss the school year and eventually drop out.

The children who do not have an adequate mastery of the Albanian language should be assisted by experienced teachers after normal classes, either at school or on other premises. This practice should also be applied to other specific subjects (e.g. math and other science-related subjects) that child returnees find more difficult because of the differences in the curricula between the host country and Albania. Schools that have children returnees should organize more social, cultural and sports activities to encourage their involvement and socialization. The school psychologist and head teachers should pay additional attention to child returnees, in relation to potential concerns they may have. Regular contact with their parents, either at school or at home, should be a common practice. Many children returnees who have attended language courses or school for one or two years in the host countries (Germany, France) speak fluent German or French. It is important for them to retain and further develop the acquired language skills through additional courses at school or elsewhere. Local and international NGOs may have a role to play in this regard.

In the area of healthcare, returnees who have been treated in the host country or have health problems should be able to continue their medication treatment in specialized public or private hospitals. Financial aid in this case should be provided by public health institutions or NGOs that provide services to returnees. In some municipalities, where there is a shortage of healthcare staff, specialized teams of doctors from Tirana may be used for specific cases. Special assistance should be provided for the mental health of returnees (especially women, children, people with disabilities, discriminated groups), who may have experienced, during their stay in the host country and upon return, constant psychological stress, anxiety and traumatic situations. In other municipalities, the possibility to provide specialized personnel for the treatment of autistic children should be also considered.

In the area of housing, returnees could be helped financially for a certain period of time, by the Municipality or NGOs working on reintegration issues, for paying the rent or repairing the house. In other cases, homeless returnees or those living in difficult conditions should be assisted to prepare the relevant documents to qualify for social housing. In some Roma and Egyptian settlements, more investments should be made to improve the infrastructure (roads, water supply, sewerage, etc.)

If reintegration is sustainable, the nature of migration for returnees' changes. As we have pointed out in other studies[79], the desire to re-emigrate out of Albania is an undesired syndrome, but also a reality we need to admit. As a result, efforts should be made for this process to be managed in such a way as to minimize negative consequences (irregular migration, exploitation, etc.) and maximize positive effects (productive use of remittances, connection to the home country, return from emigration, etc.).

The study showed that the Albanian returnees are more aware than a few years earlier of the need for professional training, language acquisition and culture of the host country, in order to be able to adapt easier to the labour market demand. Helping them in this regard would increase human capital for the country and facilitate their integration in the host country. In addition, formal channels and employment agencies may play a key role in regular migration. They may facilitate the transitory period until they find a job in the formal sector in accordance with the migrant's education and skills. Hence, human resources would not be wasted, and we would have a win-win situation.

79 Gëdeshi, I. and King R. (2018) *New Trends in Potential Migration from Albania*. Tirana: F. Ebert Foundation; King, R. and Gëdeshi, I. (2019) New trends in potential migration from Albania: the migration transition postponed? *Migration and Development*.

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