

Policies and practices on migration in Albania: a general overview



Albania on the move



Migration and Albania



a country of origin

a transit country

A destination country for economic immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees



Albania as a country of origin

The emigration data: as a photo of the moment

- The net migration rate in 2016 was 11.6 emigrants for 1000 inhabitants .
- The majority of Albanian emigrants are resident in Greece, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, France, USA and Canada. Around 800 thousand Albanian emigrants resided in Greece in 2014, compared to 503 thousand residing in Italy.
- According to the National Civil Register, the population of Albania during 2011 was approx. 4.2 million inhabitants. According to the 2011 Census, the resident population in Albania was 2,831,741 inhabitants. The difference between the figure of the National Civil Register and 2011 Census may be considered indirectly as the number of Albanian emigrants in 2011. **In Albania there were 1.4 -1.5 million foreign emigrants in 2011, or 33 percent of the country's population.**
- The visa liberalisation regime with EU member states (Schengen area) by the end of 2010 influenced the decrease of Albanian irregular emigration to EU member states because it encouraged free and regular movement in Schengen area states. However, emigration of Albanian citizens continued even after 2010. It is worth mentioning that while emigration flow of Albanian citizens has been at a moderate level, the flow of those Albanian citizens requesting asylum in EU member states increased during 2014.



The Albanian community abroad currently consists of five main groups:

- economic emigrants;
 - family members of economic emigrants;
 - students;
 - asylum-seekers and refugees;
 - unaccompanied children.
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- The biggest Diaspora groups consist of economic emigrants, family members of economic emigrants and students, even though there is no accurate legal definition of Diaspora.

Episodes of Albanian post-communist emigration (economic emigrants)

In mid-1990, nearly 5,000 Albanians entered several Western European embassies in the capital Tirana, and were granted refuge in those countries

In March and August 1991 when approximately 300.000 Albanians, mostly young men, crossed the Adriatic Sea to southern Italy in overcrowded boats. The Italian government also treated these arrivals as refugees.

The third migration peak occurred in 1997 with the collapse of a pyramid savings scheme. Due to the resulting economic hardships, unemployment, and poverty, around 70,000 Albanians chose emigration as the only route to economic survival.

The Kosovo refugee crisis marked the fourth episode in 1999. Unlike the earlier events of mass emigration, this episode saw more than 400,000 Albanian Kosovars cross the border into Albania between late March and June. Because of financial hardship, and lack of resources drove many Albanians to leave, largely to Northern Europe.

The hidden period (years 2000-2007)

The return migration (2008- 2014)

The asylum seekers period (2012...)

Albanian asylum applicants: the “Hot potatoes” issue

Number of all asylum applications grew by about half in 2014 and more than doubled in 2015

Citizenship of first-time asylum applicants in Europe

	2013	2014	2015
Syria	49,000	125,000	378,000
Afghanistan	23,000	39,000	193,000
Iraq	9,000	15,000	127,000
Kosovo	18,000	35,000	68,000
Albania	11,000	16,000	67,000
Pakistan	19,000	21,000	47,000
Eritrea	20,000	46,000	46,000
Nigeria	12,000	20,000	31,000
Iran	11,000	10,000	27,000
Somalia	18,000	16,000	21,000
Ukraine	1,000	14,000	21,000
Serbia	15,000	20,000	19,000
Russia	36,000	14,000	19,000
Bangladesh	7,000	10,000	18,000
Gambia	4,000	12,000	13,000
Other	151,000	182,000	230,000
TOTAL	405,000	596,000	1,325,000

Note: “Europe” consists of the EU-28, Norway and Switzerland. Only origin countries with 1% or more of total asylum applicants (unrounded) in 2015 shown. Numbers rounded to nearest thousand. Percentages calculated from unrounded numbers. Sorted by total number of asylum seekers in 2015.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Eurostat data, accessed June 22, 2016.

“Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015”

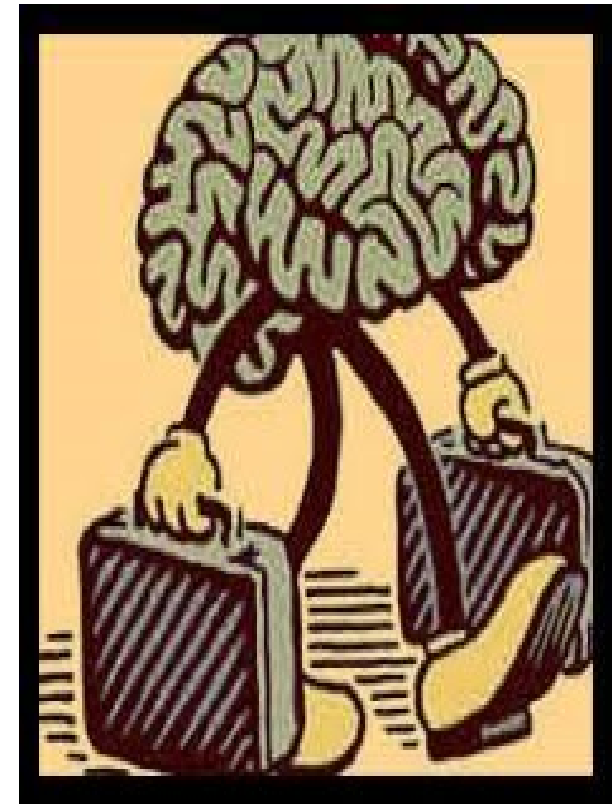
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Brain Drain, Brain waste, Brain gain

Brain Circulation, Brain exchange

- The specter of brain drain looms large over Albanian migration.
- In the period 1990-2003, approximately 45 percent of the professors and researchers at universities and institutions emigrated, as did more than 65 percent of the scholars who received PhDs in the West in the period 1980-1990.
- Thousands of university graduates left as well.
- The majority took along their family members. The reason for this migration is simple: a lack of employment opportunities at home. If the country's economic and social situation does not improve, Albania's brain drain will continue to be a concern, as Albanian legislation currently poses no obstacles to migration and pull factors look likely to continue to draw the educated.
- This development has social and economic costs for Albania. High-skilled emigrants to the U.S. and Canada are taking with them a considerable amount of money, which represents a net export of capital. It is also a drain of those who would otherwise likely become leaders and domestic investors, promoting Albania's stability and development.
- Moreover, studies show that once abroad, many highly educated emigrants do not work in their areas of specialization, including 74 percent in Greece, 67 percent in Italy, 58 percent in Austria, and 70 percent in the United States. While a few well-educated and high-skilled emigrants have succeeded in finding a job that matches their expertise, in general, Albania's "brain drain" is emerging as "brain waste."
- **Policies of Brain Gain from UNDP and Albanian Government – Emigration and Development nexus**



Albania as a transit country: Asylum- seekers in Albania

- The number of asylum-seekers in the Republic of Albania during 2012-2014 increased significantly: from **16 to 409**.
- This increase occurred mainly due to the coming of Iranian citizens of Ashraf camp coming based on the governmental agreement.
- 281 Iranian citizens moved to Albania during 2014.
- Refugees and asylum-seekers considered Albania as a transit country and the European Union Member States as their final destination.
- The law Nr. 121/2014 for the asylum in Republic of Albania.



Albania as a transit country

Albania as a transit country

Source: General Directorate for Border and Migration, Tirana 2015

State/Year	2012	2013	2014
Algeria	439	66	-
Syria	163	543	1941
Morocco	147	47	-
Afghanistan	127	138	35
Palestine	99	-	17
Tunisia	79	13	-
Pakistan	26	400	30
Congo	-	-	64
Guinea	-	11	19
Somalia	-	204	48
Sudan	-	82	44
Eritrea	-	274	324
Nigeria	-	38	-
India	-	13	-
Comoros	-	12	-
Other	102	132	96

A national example of solidarity

"Kopshti i mirësisë" in Durrës
The garden of goodness

During 1999, Albania received 465,000 refugees, mainly from Kosovo, almost all of whom returned before the end of the year.

The health and social needs of the refugees were met thanks to the coordinated efforts of UNHCR and numerous other bodies, including bilateral actors and initiatives, (Albanian government, local authorities, NGO-s, community) as well as the activities of NATO's Albania Force (AFOR).



National Centre of Asylum Seekers in Albania (in Babrru)

In the center (until the beginning of 2016)were 130 foreign nationals.

The reception center for asylum seekers has a maximum capacity of 170 persons.

The asylum seekers who are at the moment in the centre are from:

Afghanistan,
Syria,
Iraq,
Iran,
Congo,
Bosnia,
Turkey,
Bulgaria,
Armenia and
Kosovo.

There are refugees that have escaped from their countries of origin even for political and religious reasons.



Setting Down New Roots

National Centre of Asylum Seekers in Albania (in Babrru)

The center operates according to international parameters of reception for asylum seekers.

The services which are offered in this centre are:

- A preparation for being integrated into the life of Albania although an Albanian Language training course is not provided.
- Children of citizens who have sought asylum in Albania are enrolled in kindergartens or public schools, and some even have the opportunity of part-time employment.
- To facilitate communication with families is an established internet center and there is also a library.
- The reception center has a staff of 15 people with a psychologist, translator and social workers. In service for 24 hours are 1 doctor and 2 nurses and the guards.
- The daily cost for food for a person is 3\$.

The institution during this period has been monitored by internationally recognized organizations or local statutory systems, to deal with human rights and specifically the treatment of migrants, such as UNHCR and The People's Advocate.

The Centre does not provide any sort of information about what happens with the refugees after being out of the centre.

This leads us with question marks about whether there are any integration programs provided by the Albanian government such as housing, job opportunities, and basic needs.

Return migrants

- The intensification of the return of Albanian emigrants during the period 2012-2014 is closely linked, except for the crisis in the host countries, with the consistent increase of flow of irregular emigrants from Albania.
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- The typologies of returned Albanian emigrants during 2014 were:
 - i) voluntary return of economic emigrants;
 - ii) return of economic emigrants because of crisis in the main host countries, Greece and Italy;
 - iii) return of minors, accompanied or unaccompanied by their parents.
- Most of the economic emigrants have been returned from Greece and Italy.
- **Only some of the returned Albanian citizens have approached the Migration Counters (MC). These are structures established near the public offices for employment to assist returned Albanian citizens in order to facilitate their re-integration upon return in the country.**
- There are 36 MC are set up throughout the country and **during the last three years, 3,541 returned Albanian citizens have approached the MC.** As of 2012, the number of Albanian citizens approaching the Migration Counters has decreased.

Migrant Service Centers (Sportelet e Migracionit)

- "Migrant Service Centers" (MSCs)
- established within the Network of Regional Employment Offices / Offices.
- There are 36 information packages available for countries, translated into Albanian, available for migrants, as well as on the web site: www.migrant-servicecentres.org



Albania as a host country

Immigration to Albania: Albania as a host country

Table : Foreigners residing in Albania by citizenship, 2012, 2013, 2014

State	2012	2013	2014
Turkey	991	1112	1392
Italy	893	1082	1585
Kosovo	437	576	803
Greece	304	360	286
USA	461	315	262
Canada	206	191	253
China	169	142	200
Croatia	102	135	122
Macedonia	122	126	137
Germany	120	118	143
United Kingdom	111	103	142
Romania	96	94	97

Source: FER-TIMS System in the State Police Directorate, Tirana 2015

Albania as a host country

- As for the reason of stay, the highest number of foreigners constitutes those residents in Albania for employment purposes,
- for a period over 12 months,
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- mainly males,
- concentrated in the city of Tirana.

Migration Policies of Albania

- The emigration of Albanians is regulated by **the 2003 Labor Migration Act**, which amended **the 1995 Migration Act**. It legally defines the government's responsibilities with regard to migration and emigrants.
- In a wider sense, Albania's current migration policies are aimed at:
 - discouraging real and potential migration flows by creating employment opportunities.
 - One path to accomplishing this is creating new jobs in the country.
 - Another is extending channels of legal migration through signing seasonal employment agreements with neighboring countries, especially Greece (1996) and Italy (1997), and other EU states.
- Policies to discourage illegal immigration include informing and assisting potential emigrants with regard to legal migration opportunities, as well as encouraging decentralized co-operation between the local authorities of inter-border areas.
- Albanian authorities are also engaged in:
 - facilitating the entry,
 - installment into the labor market,
 - legal regulation,
 - social integration of Albanian emigrants in receiving countries.
 - They have made persistent efforts to negotiate with these receiving-country governments and ensure compliance with international conventions on labor and migration.
 - In terms of taking advantage of the Albanian diaspora, the government promotes the voluntary return of successful emigrants and tries to harness their financial, human, and social capital to boost the country's development.

National strategies

- In 2004, Albania adopted the "National Strategy" on as complete as possible migration management.
- It was the first document which incorporated the interests of Albanians of the Albania in the country and abroad.
- The first Albanian migration strategy of 2004 called for Albania to be considered a country capable of managing migration flows. It was prepared with EU funding and supported by IOM.

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON DIASPORA AND MIGRATION 2018 - 2024

- The National Strategy on Diaspora and Migration and the Action Plan 2018 - 2024 aim at organizing and administering the Albanian migration and diaspora.
- This process will strengthen the inter-institutional action within the country, the regional and international co-operation on this issue.
- It will seek to involve the civil society through an open and public discussion over this phenomenon.

Important actors dealing with migration in Albania

- IOM in Albania
- UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency)
- **MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS**
 - General Directorate of State Police
 - General directorate of Border and Migration
 - General Directorate of Anti-Trafficking and Asylum

Pope Francis quote

- “Let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves. In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities.
- .” Address of Pope Francis to a joint meeting of the United States Congress, September 24, 2015

Thank you!

