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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

### **Conference of European Statisticians**

#### **Work Session on Migration Statistics**

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

#### **Measurement of “hard-to-count” migrant groups**

## **Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania**

**Note by the INSTAT, Albania\***

### *Abstract*

Two decades after massive migration of its citizens to Western European countries<sup>1</sup> migration flows from Albania have decreased due to increasing stability and economic progress in the country. Yet, given its circular nature, migration from Albania continues to take place, including return migration as part of the cycle. The world financial crisis has in particular reduced the possibilities for migrants to work in Greece, the main destination country to Albanian migrants, leading towards their return to Albania. Therefore, strong national capacities are required in preparing for future challenges of labor mobility that relate to return and reintegration of migrants. The public institutions in Albania do not yet possess sufficient capacities and resources to efficiently respond to challenges of return migration.

### **I. Return migration in Albania – Census 2011**

Population and Housing census in Albania was an important source for return migration in Albania. It collected information for residents ever resided abroad (at least 12 months), for the country of emigration as well as the year of return. According to the 2011 Census of Population, 4,9 % of

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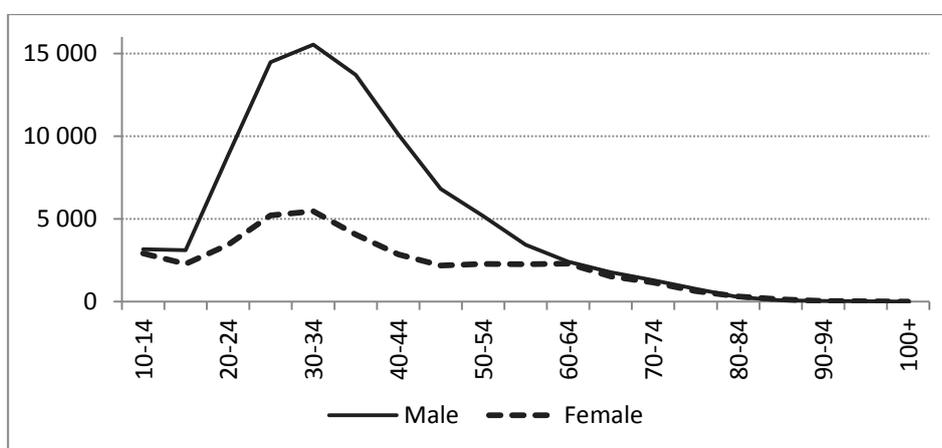
<sup>1</sup> Greece and Italy are the main destination countries. According to Eurostat, Albanians are the largest community in Greece (577,504 residents in 2008), while according to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (2011 data), 483,219 Albanians are residents in Italy.

\*Prepared by Majlinda Nesturi, Institute of Statistics, Albania and IOM.

Albanian population, corresponding to 139,827 that was ever-residing abroad returned after 2001 (INSTAT, 2012). From whom 96,012 were men and 43,815 women. As shown in Figure 1, there were twice as many men coming back than there were women coming back to Albania. The age distribution for men and women is similar. Given that more generally men are more likely to move for employment reasons, it is unsurprising the high proportion of returnees in the age group 25 to 45. By contrast, the distribution for women is somewhat flatter, given that women are more likely to move for family reasons (Figure 2). Despite the somewhat different reasons to migrate, the peak for women is also at about the same age as for men.

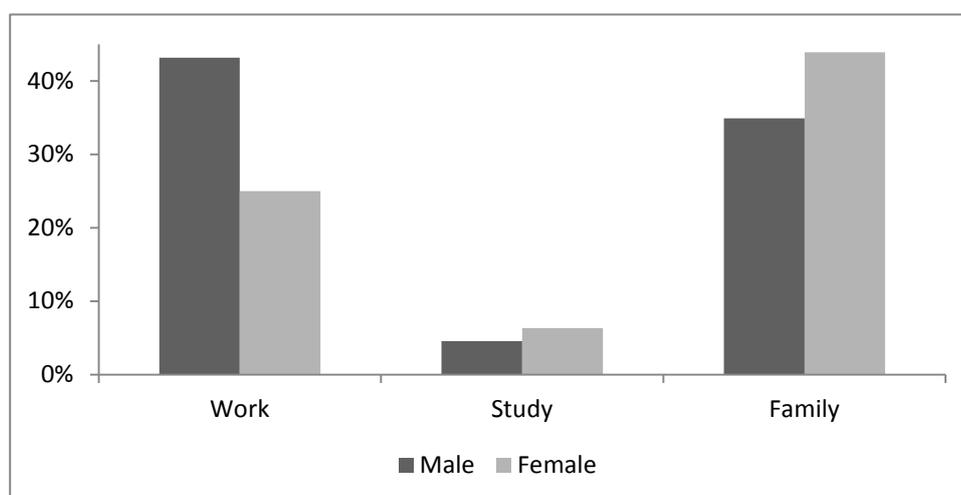
Figure 1.

**Return migration by age group and sex**



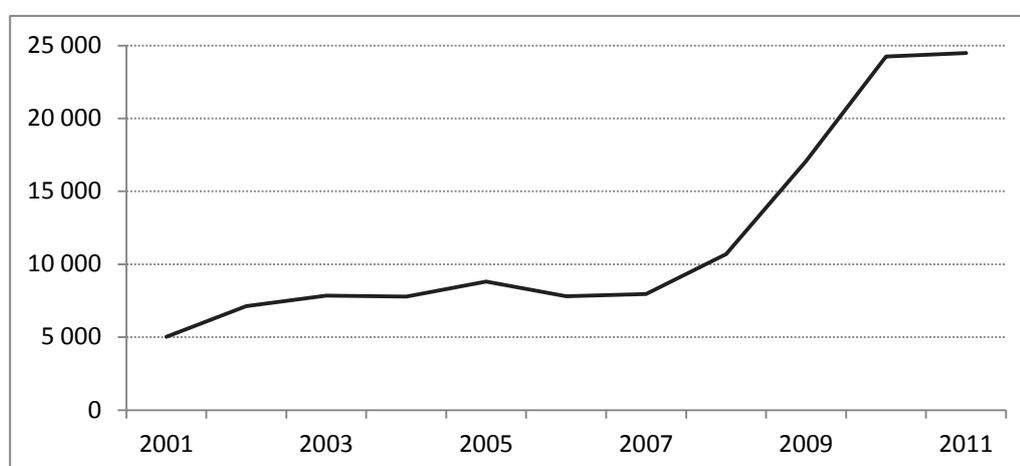
The reasons to come back to Albania are explored in Figure 2. In numerical terms, work and family reasons dominate overall. It is important to underline that this applies to both men and women. Study reasons play a much smaller role, although they only affect a relatively restricted age group. For men, the dominant reason to return to Albania is work, while for women family reasons are slightly more important. Because returnees are predominantly men, the actual number of men returning for family reasons is actually higher than the number of women returning for family reasons. (INSTAT, 2014)

Figure 2.

**Reasons of return**

The number of Albanians returning has increased sharply between 2008 and 2010 (Figure 3). In 2011 it remained at a higher level than for the years before 2008.

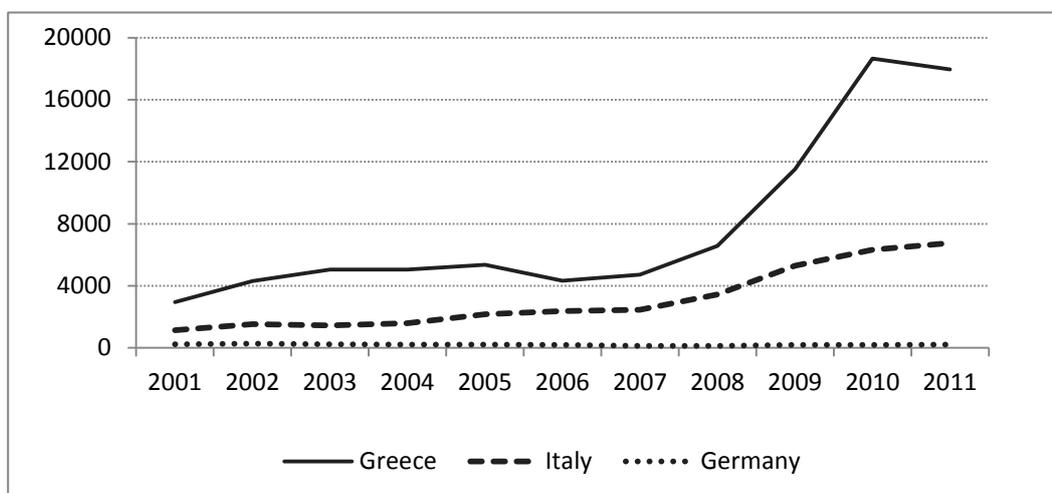
Figure 3.

**Number of returning migrants, 2001 – 2011**

Considering the number of returnees by country, it becomes apparent that the increase of return migration overall is largely caused by Albanians coming back from Greece. The increase of Albanians coming back from Italy is also clearly visible, but not as pronounced as that for Albanians coming back from Greece. To corroborate that the economic situation is the reason for returning, Figure 4 also includes return migration from Germany, a country much less affected by the economic crisis than Greece and Italy. Indeed, the number of Albanians returning from Germany has remained stable over time.

Figure 4.

### Return migration from Greece, Italy and Germany by year of return



## II. General background of survey

Considering the Census findings on return migration, facing the fact that returns to Albania have been on the rise after 2008, the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) joined efforts for undertaking for the first time a national survey to better size return migration to Albania after the financial turmoil of 2009 affecting most of the destination countries for Albanian migrants, and to guide reintegration service provision for returnees.

The survey aimed to shed light on the various factors shaping returnees' patterns of reintegration in Albania. It intended to highlight the heterogeneity characterizing the categories of returnees while analyzing their respective needs in Albania.

### II-a Objectives of the survey

The specific objectives of the survey were:

- To profile return migration to Albania, push and pull factors, characteristics of returning migrants;
- To collect information on migrants' experiences and perceptions of reintegration in Albania;
- To formulate recommendations for Albanian authorities on how to best tailor reintegration services to returning migrants in Albania according to their needs as to guarantee a sustainable return.

## II-b The main definitions used

➤ the definition of the **return migration**:

*The movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country. This return may or may not be voluntary. Return migration includes voluntary repatriation. Any person returning to his/her country of origin, in the course of the last five years, after having been an international migrant (whether short-term or long-term) in another country. Return may be permanent or temporary. It may be independently decided by the migrant or forced by unfavorable circumstances.*<sup>2</sup>

➤ the definition of the **returnee**:

*Any person returning to his/her country of origin, after having been an international migrant (for a minimum of one year) in another country. Return may be permanent or temporary. It may be independently decided by the migrant or forced by unexpected circumstances.*

➤ The definition of **reintegration**

*Re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of his or her country of origin or habitual residence.*<sup>3</sup>

## II-c A three-stage questionnaire

The survey was realized through a structured questionnaire. In line with the objectives of the survey, the questionnaire content was oriented to collect the amount of necessary information on the following issues:

- Socio-economic conditions and socio-demographic characteristics of returnees prior to departure from Albania, during migration and upon return;
- Reasons for leaving the country and for returning to Albania;
- Experiences of integration in the last country of emigration and their influence on the decision to return to Albania;
- Process of return to Albania and prospect of stay; Links with the last country of emigration;
- Reintegration support and returnee reintegration experiences in Albania.

The questionnaire extensively applied the Cassarino' model, consisting in a three stage approach to migration, developed and applied by Robert Schuman Center<sup>4</sup>. The model was adjusted to optimize its efficacy in its application in the field in Albania, as well as to facilitate the electronic data entry and verification. Additional questions were also introduced by INSTAT and IOM to collect more

<sup>2</sup> IOM:2011, Glossary on Migration, second edition, pg 86

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Source: RDP, MIREM © EUI, <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/>

specific information on the process of reintegration of returnees in Albania. The questionnaire comprised of close-ended questions as well as the open-ended questions, particularly regarding the occupations and field of economic activity. The modality “other” was also introduced for some of the questions to gather additional information as necessary.

The questionnaire was structured along three main migratory stages:

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Situation before leaving the country of origin</b>	<b>Experience of migration lived in the main country of immigration</b>	<b>Return to the country of origin – Post-return conditions</b>
Demographic and social characteristics; Reasons for leaving Albania; Social and financial conditions before leaving Albania; Composition of the household before leaving (if any); Education and skills before leaving; Professional situation.	Experience of migration; Reasons for having lived in the country(ies) of immigration; Duration of the experience lived abroad; Social and financial conditions in the immigration country(ies); Composition of the household (if any); Education and skills acquired abroad; Professional and financial situation; Relationships with the local institutions abroad and the receiving society; Links/contacts with Albania.	Return journey; Reasons and factors motivating return; Expected duration of the return; Social and financial conditions after return; Composition of the household after return; Education and skills acquired after return; Professional and financial status after return; Relationships with the local institutions and the society in Albania after return; Links with the former immigration country(ies); Post-return projects and sustainability of return.

## **II-d Data collection**

Data collection was conducted from 16 September – 14 October 2013 using a nationally representative sample of almost 2000 individuals. The survey was based on the face to face method of interviewing and was conducted through CAPI technology (computer assisted personal interviewing). Using CAPI dramatically reduces the time lag between data collection and data analysis, because manual coding of the responses recorded with pen and paper is no longer necessary and data validation is done at the time of data collection. The standard program for data collection was developed in CSProX and data processing using SPSS 17. After all data processing steps were completed, the survey results were tabulated using SPSS 17 package. The tabulations were then thoroughly checked for consistency of data, titles, inputs, concepts, as well as the figures there in.

## **II-e Methodology and sample size**

The sample size for a particular survey is determined by the accuracy required for the survey estimates for each domain, as well as by the resource and operational constraints. The accuracy of the survey results depends on both the sampling error, which can be measured through variance estimation, and the non-sampling error from all other sources, such as response and other measurement errors, coding and data entry errors. Given that, calculations suggested that a sample size of 2000 individuals would give sufficient power to meet the study objectives. When multi-stage sampling is used, the design effect mostly measures the impact of the level of clustering on the sampling efficiency. The design effect depends on the number of sample individuals selected in each stratum. The sample size for a particular prefecture urban and rural was allocated proportionally to the number of migrants in each prefecture.

When developing the sample selection criteria, special attention was paid to define the study population and its characteristics. Based upon pre-established criteria an individual was considered eligible to be surveyed if he/she was:

- An Albanian citizen, who had migrated abroad and returned to Albania either voluntary or involuntary;
- 18 years old and above.

### III. Some main findings

- A total of 133,544 Albanian migrants have returned to Albania in the period 2009-2013, of whom 98, 414 males and 35, 130 females. The majority of returns took place from Greece, 70.8 per cent, followed by returns from Italy 23.7 per cent, from the United Kingdom 1.6 per cent, from Germany 1.1 per cent and from other countries at the level of 2.2 per cent. The majority of Albanian returnees (61%), belong to the age segment 18-40 years old.
- The average age of the segment at the time of emigration was 30.7 years old and 38.3 years old at the time of survey. They lived abroad for an average period of 6 years.
- Greece has been the last destination country for the majority of returns (70,8%) followed by Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany, while returns from other countries were at low levels and were grouped under the ‘Other’ category of 2.4 per cent.
- The returns have been on the raise as of 2011.
- Regarding the migrant’s mobility, the survey revealed that 64% of the total respondents left Albania only once to live abroad, 26% twice, while about 10% emigrated at least 3 times.
- The three main push factor for emigration were: Lack of employment (71.8%), followed by better job opportunities 67.7% and better income prospects with and 64.7% respectively.
- The majority of migrants 58.8 per cent were unemployed before undertaking the migration project; 11.7 per cent of them had a permanent employment, 7.4 per cent were self-employed and 11.8 per cent were students.
- Among the employed returnees, the vast majority found job for less than three months in both cases, in last country of emigration and in origin country, 64.2% and 57.9% respectively. While concerning the unemployed returnees, they were more likely to search for a job abroad (64.9%) than in origin country (47.9%).
- Almost half of returnees (49.1%) had completed the secondary education before leaving abroad; an increasing trend in the percentage of those who obtained a university/master or PhD degree in the last country of emigration (5.4%).
- The vast majority of Albanian migrants before emigrating (72%) declared that their financial situation was wither not good or very bad. The financial situation improved significantly in the destination country with 83% of the respondents stating that they had either a good, or very good financial situation when living in the last country of emigration. The financial situation of the returnees compared with abroad at the time of the survey changed significantly. The majority of the returnees see their financial situation unchanged (41.3 %). 38,8 % has worsened its financial situation upon return, while only 20% feels his/her financial situation has improved.
- The main reasons for return is the lost of the job in the country of emigration for 63,2 %

of the returnees.

- The most relevant difficulty returnees faced upon return were insufficient incomes.
- 32,6 % of returnees intend to re-emigrate.
- 67.3 % of the returnees want to re-emigrate in the immigration country they know better and 56.5% of them declared that they want to re-emigrate for better job opportunities.

#### **IV. References**

**INSTAT**, Albanian Institute of Statistics, (2014) *Migration in Albania*

**INSTAT**, Albanian Institute of Statistics, *Return migration and reintegration survey in Albania 2013*, INSTAT, IOM