



# THE CONTRIBUTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT TO MIGRATION POLICY IN ALBANIA

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# Foreword

In 2006 the European Training Foundation (ETF) launched a pilot study on the links between migration, education and training systems and labour markets. Since knowledge of the overall consequences of migration in relation to education/skills and labour markets is limited, the ETF approach included desk research, fact-finding missions and field surveys in the four countries selected, namely Albania, Egypt, Moldova and Tunisia, some of these being new sources of migration to the EU and some being traditional sources.



For the Albanian part of the study, a local organisation, the Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), was contracted to carry out the field survey and first level of data analysis.

The fact-finding mission to Albania took place on 23–28 July 2006 and involved an ETF team of experts assisted by an international expert, Professor Richard Black from the University of Sussex, UK. Key national stakeholders in the Albanian context were visited during the mission, including the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the Adviser to the Prime Minister on HRD, the Ministry of Education and Science, INSTAT (National Institute of Statistics), the Academy of Science, the Hope for the Future Association, 'La Speranza' Private Employment Agency and local offices of international organisations

such as the EC Delegation in Albania, the ILO, the World Bank, the International Organization for Migration, UNDP and the Soros Foundation.

The ETF is extremely grateful to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, in particular H.E. Koço Barka, the Minister of Labour, and Kosta Barjaba, the Chief of the Minister's Staff, for their indispensable support.

Based upon the datasets produced on potential and returning migrants, data were analysed and the ETF Team of experts, consisting of Natalia Popova, Ummuhan Bardak, Francesco Panzica and Jesús Alquézar, drafted a preliminary report, which was sent to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities for comments and endorsement.

The findings and preliminary conclusions from the study were presented to the relevant national stakeholders at a validation workshop held in Tirana on 21 November 2007. The results of the debate were incorporated into the final draft of the report with a view to their publication and presentation to a wider public.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2006 the European Training Foundation<sup>1</sup> (ETF) launched a pilot study on the links between migration, education and training systems, and labour markets. In the case of Albania, a sample of 2,029 people was identified (1,027 potential and 1,002 returning migrants). The results were collected in a database, and have been further analysed by the ETF and local and international experts.

The first chapter of this report summarizes the results of the literature review on the different dimensions of the migration phenomenon in Albania. It aims to provide background information on:

- Albanian migration history (including migration stocks and flows, determinants, socio-demographic characteristics and skill composition);
- Labour market trends;
- The Albanian education and training system;
- National migration policies and institutions.

The second chapter explains the survey methodology used throughout the project. A particular focus is given to the selection of the sample and the implementation of the field survey. Two target groups were identified for face-to-face interviews: potential migrants and returning migrants. A total sample of 2,000 respondents was interviewed in six districts, namely Shkodra, Kukës, Tirana, Elbasan, Korça and Vlora, to acquire a representative sample. The results of the survey were collected in a database and analysed.

The third chapter focuses on the findings of the potential migrants' survey. Following the collapse of the communist system, it is estimated that more than 25% of the Albanian population live abroad, although there are no precise figures since the migration flows have been chaotic, clandestine and poorly recorded. Greece and Italy have been, and still remain, the preferred migration destinations for Albanians, with the UK featuring to a lesser extent.

The survey data presented in this report suggest that migration will continue to play a role in Albania in the short term, with 44.2% of 18–40-year-olds interviewed saying they were thinking of leaving to live and work abroad. However, if the actual ability to go abroad is taken into account (likelihood of migrating within six months or two years; ability to finance the move; knowledge of most likely destination (MLD) language; information about the MLD; possession of at least four of the six necessary documents and no difficulty of getting the remaining ones), this percentage considerably diminishes to 17.8%.

According to the survey, males were more prone (46.9%) to migrate than females (40.9%), though the difference was not statistically significant. As expected, younger people were more likely to migrate. Single people were more likely to migrate than married ones or those with children.

There is a link between educational level and the desire to migrate, as almost 50% of people with primary education wanted to migrate, compared with 40.1% of those with a university degree. The tendency to migrate was higher for people who had studied education, agriculture, engineering, health and welfare. People who spoke Italian and Greek were more likely to migrate.

Regarding employment status, the intention to migrate was higher among unemployed respondents. Almost 53% of those who did not work wished to migrate (the remaining 47% did not have a job and did not want to migrate).

Indeed, almost 40% of the respondents who had a job in the country still wanted to go abroad (against 60% who had a job and preferred to remain in Albania). Thus, having employment was not always sufficient to prevent migration.

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<sup>1</sup> Established in 1990, the European Training Foundation (ETF) assists its 30 partner countries in developing high-quality systems for human resources development. Its role is to share expertise and advice on policies in education and training across regions and cultures. Working on behalf of the European Union, the ETF helps its partner countries to develop people's skills and knowledge to promote better living conditions, active citizenship and democratic societies that respect human rights and cultural diversity.



According to the survey, two-third of Albanians wanted to go abroad for economic reasons, such as 'to improve living standards' (36.7%), 'to find a job' (19.7%) and 'because the nature of the current work is unsatisfactory' (9.3%). These were the three most important reasons for migration.

The choice of the destination country was strongly affected by educational level. Migrants with primary education preferred Greece, while those with secondary general and vocational education preferred the UK and Italy. Potential migrants with university education preferred North America.

Most potential migrants said they would like to work as salaried employees (86.7%). There were no significant differences between levels of education, despite the fact that 11.9% of migrants with a university degree would like to be self-employed, which may indicate a more positive attitude towards risk and entrepreneurship.

Half of the respondents intended to stay abroad for between one and five years and only 16.1% wanted to leave the country permanently. The desired period of stay abroad for potential migrants varied according to educational level and employment status. Almost two-thirds of potential migrants with primary education wished to stay in the destination country for three to ten years. A third of those with secondary education (both general and vocational) wished to stay from three to five years. On the other hand, a third of the people with university education stated that they wanted to stay abroad permanently.

Some 79.6% of potential migrants said they would send remittances to their families. These potential migrants' expectations were higher than the actual level of remittances sent to Albania.

In terms of future expectations, 73.5% of potential migrants thought that migration would lead to better work opportunities on their return. The lower the level of education of potential migrants, the higher their expectations of finding a good job at home.

The fourth chapter focuses on returning migrants. Return migration is a recent phenomenon in Albania. Three-quarters of returning migrants came back to Albania after 2001, when the socioeconomic and political situation started to improve. The survey shows that the return of migrants is a dynamic and increasing process.

In contrast to the potential migrants' sample, 89.0% of the returning migrants interviewed were male. This deviation from the basic criterion of having and preserving a gender-balanced sample is explained by the difficulty of finding and interviewing female returning migrants. The average age of the respondents was around 34 years, and 54.0% of them belonged to the 18–34 age group.

Most returning migrants had medium levels of education. More than half of them had completed secondary education (35.7% secondary general and 20.4% secondary vocational). The educational level of females was higher than that of males. The levels of education of returning migrants from Italy, the UK and Germany were higher than those from Greece, a trend which is also confirmed by the literature.

It is important to note that Albanian migrants predominantly worked in low-skill jobs, regardless of their educational level. The ETF survey did not cover these issues in detail, and there is a need to conduct a sector skill-needs analysis, both in Albania and in the EU, in order to create conditions for regulated migration in response to labour market needs.

Destinations were overwhelmingly in the EU, mirroring the pattern for potential migrants. The four most popular first destination countries for returning migrants were:

- Greece: 68.1%;
- Italy: 19.3%;
- UK: 5.5%;
- Germany: 4.1%.

These figures are different from the desired destinations expressed by the potential migrants, which were:

- Italy: 31.2%;
- Greece: 26.5%;

- UK: 14.7%.

The most important reasons for migration were economic<sup>2</sup>: 'improvement of living standards', 'had no job/could not find a job' and 'nature of work unsatisfactory'. The survey indicates that these economic push factors were visibly more powerful for potential migrants than for returning migrants. Just 2.3% of the sample population mentioned 'to get an education' as a reason for migrating.

The survey shows that most of the male returning migrants worked for the longest period of time in the migration country in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality and catering. Women worked in domestic help, hospitality and catering. Some 94.0% of the migrants worked for the longest period of time as salaried workers, the majority of them as unskilled workers. In many cases this resulted in a lowering of their skills. Only 10.2% of the returning migrants increased their skill level.

Only 3.5% of the respondents (35 persons) stated that they received appropriate pre-departure training; this mainly consisted of foreign language and, for a very few, professional courses. On average, 16.5% of returning migrants had studied or been trained in the migration country.

Returning migrants were asked about their reasons for returning to Albania. Based on the answers, the returning migrants were classified into four groups.

The prime reason was forced return by the authorities of the migration country, since they were found not to have official documentation or because their permit had expired.

Another reason for return is the failure to integrate into the labour market of the host country. This includes those who 'could not find work', 'had low income' or were 'laid off by employer/end of contract'. Others cited poor health or integration and discrimination problems.

Other migrants returned for family or psychological reasons, such as 'to join the family', 'parent/spouse wanted me to return', 'to get married' and 'to spend the rest of my life in my home country'.

Lastly there are successful migrants (7.7% of the sample) who returned after realising their original plans for starting a business or who had saved sufficient money.

Reasons for return varied according to level of education and employment status. Those with a low level of education came back mostly because they were forced, or for family reasons. People with university education, besides family reasons, were more likely to come back because they wanted to start a business (11.3%). Very few returning migrants (1.6%) were aware of any government support programmes intended to facilitate return.

Some 89.0% of returning migrants reported that they had brought back savings. The survey shows that such funds were mainly used for living expenses, business investment, furniture/households goods, and savings. There appear to be significant variations among respondents regarding the use of savings in relation to their educational level: more people with secondary or university education tended to invest in a business. There were no statistically significant differences between the use of savings in terms of the destination countries and the type of employment abroad.

On their return to Albania, 74.3% of respondents found a job after an average search period of 3.4 months. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between returned migration and self-employment. The survey shows that 51.5% of returning migrants became self-employed or an employer. The remaining migrants found salaried employment.

The survey indicates that 42.9% of returning migrants wished to remigrate from Albania. The main reasons for re-migrating include: 'have no job/cannot find job', 'to improve standard of living' and 'nature of work unsatisfactory'. These reasons changed according to educational level.

The fifth chapter focuses on conclusions and policy recommendations. Progress has been made in Albania in terms of improving migration management, though this process is still ongoing. International organisations, civil society and the government should coordinate their efforts to create an environment for 'constructive' migration and sustainable reintegration. New issues have arisen with regard to migration management: migrants' human, social and financial capital should be used in a way that will benefit both receiving and sending countries. Albania should work towards revising, together with EU countries, the existing bilateral migration agreement as well as trying to conclude

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<sup>2</sup> Barjaba, K., 'Albanian State Emigration Policy', paper presented at the International Conference on Albanian Migration and New Transnationalism, Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, 6–7 September 2002.

new ones. This could facilitate legal labour migration, matching demand and supply, by identifying the skill needs of the host labour markets and adequately preparing migrants to respond to these requirements. In this case, pre-departure training can play an important role.

The relationship between migration and development is not straightforward. The findings of the ETF survey suggest that return migration is a potential gain that has so far not been fully utilised in Albania. Work experience abroad, even for comparatively short spells, facilitates the accumulation of financial capital and useful skills on a scale not otherwise possible. However, reaping the benefits of return migration is not something that happens automatically. Albania needs to offer effective reintegration programmes for potential returning migrants, including better reception and advice for investment opportunities and access to business support and credits for entrepreneurship. However, there is a lack of funds for such measures.

# 1. MIGRATION FLOWS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

International migration has been at the core of the economic and social changes that have occurred in Albania since 1990: it is estimated that more than 25% of Albanians live abroad. No other Central or East European country has been affected so heavily by migration over such a short period of time; Russell King refers to Albania as 'a kind of laboratory for studying new migratory processes'<sup>3</sup>.

Existing data suggest that since 1990 between 710,000 and 1,000,000 Albanians have moved abroad on a temporary or permanent basis<sup>4</sup>. In a country of little more than three million inhabitants, these are substantial figures, and therefore it comes as no surprise that the Albanian exodus has started to receive considerable attention both from policy circles and in research. Since the migration flows have been chaotic, clandestine and poorly recorded, there are no precise figures on the exact number of Albanian migrants.

## 1.1 Direction of migration

According to estimates provided by the Albanian government, Albanians have migrated to approximately 20 countries, including EU Member States, USA, Canada and Australia. Recent migration flows are also oriented towards Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand and South Africa. However, Greece and Italy have been, and still remain, the preferred migration destinations for Albanians, with the UK featured to a lesser extent. Migration to Greece and Italy accounts for approximately 85% of the total number of migrants. This is confirmed by the literature, which indicates that the main factor for deciding where to migrate is geographical proximity. People migrate to Greece primarily from the south and south-eastern areas of Albania. Italy is the most preferred destination for Albanians from the central and western areas, where Italian TV channels are most popular. Information and support from networks of family and friends also influence the decision to migrate.

### Migration to Greece

Data on migration from Albania to Greece vary according to the source. The 2001 Greek Census indicated that Albanians constituted the largest immigrant group, with 57.5% of the total immigrants<sup>5</sup>. The first waves of migration started in 1990. In that year, large groups of Albanians, mainly ethnic Greeks, went to Greece and were granted Greek nationality.

Subsequent migration to Greece has been predominantly illegal and has resulted in a large number of repatriations: in 1993, for example, 220,665 Albanian citizens were returned home.

In January 1998 the Greek government granted amnesty to an estimated 450,000 illegal migrants. A further amnesty was implemented in June 2001.

The 2001 Greek Census indicated that Albanian migrants were concentrate in:

- Large urban areas, such as Athens and Thessaloniki;
- Rural areas with predominantly intensive agriculture;
- Tourist islands.

They were employed mainly in labour-intensive sectors. Female Albanian migrants were employed mainly in domestic work and elderly care (52%), but also in tourism (19%), agriculture (15%) and

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<sup>3</sup> King, R., 'Across the sea and over the mountains: documenting Albanian Migration', School of European Studies, University of Sussex, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Barjaba, K., 'Albania: Looking beyond borders', mimeo, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Kasimis, C., 'Recent migration flows to Greece: Evidence from the 2001 Greek Census', paper presented at the International Conference on New Perspectives on Albanian Migration and Development, Albania, 16–17 September 2004.

industry (9%). Male Albanian migrants worked in construction (42%), agriculture (23%), industry (12%) and tourism (12%)<sup>6</sup>.

## Migration to Italy

Italy is the second most preferred destination for Albanian migrants. At the end of 2005 there were 348,813 Albanians legally residing in Italy<sup>7</sup>, of whom 196,744 were males and 152,069 were females. Table 1 gives details of the regional distribution of immigrants. In 2000 and 2001 Italy established quotas according to professional profiles for immigrants and this has resulted in a reduction in illegal immigration.

**Table 1. Regional distribution of Albanian immigrants in Italy**

| Region     | Male   | Female | Total   |
|------------|--------|--------|---------|
| North-west | 66,151 | 51,043 | 117,194 |
| North-east | 51,719 | 40,202 | 91,921  |
| Central    | 52,791 | 40,880 | 93,671  |
| South      | 22,588 | 17,535 | 40,123  |
| Islands    | 3,495  | 2,409  | 5,904   |

Source: ISTAT, 31 December 2005

Male Albanian migrants were mainly engaged in construction (43%), industry (19%) and services (16%), and females in housekeeping (56%). The percentage of those who were self-employed was higher in Italy than in Greece (8% compared to 5%)<sup>8</sup>.

## Migration to the UK

The UK is a relatively new destination, having been chosen by Albanians following the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997. Data from the Government of Albania<sup>9</sup> indicates that there are 50,000 Albanians living in the UK. They are mainly from northern regions such as Kukës, Shkoder and Mat. Most Albanian migrants have entered the UK as asylum seekers.

## 1.2 Characteristics of migrants

The migration phenomenon has affected a considerable portion of the economically active population. In 1995, the number of migrants represented 26.0% of the working-age population 15–64 years.

In 1998 the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) calculated that 83.0% of Albanian migrants were males, 71.0% of whom were aged between 20 and 34 years. These figures were confirmed by the 2001 Census.

The largest flows of migrants originate in rural areas, where the economic situation is considerably worse than that in urban areas. Employment opportunities are scarce in rural areas and agriculture is not considered a profitable activity, especially in the more remote areas, where agricultural land is in short supply. Moving to urban areas in Albania is also difficult because of the lack of housing and the limited availability of jobs. Hence migration seems to be the easiest option for many people.

<sup>6</sup> Germenji, E., 'Does human capital matter? Integration of Albanian immigrants in the Greek labour market', paper presented at the Marie Curie conference on Multi-Level Governance of Immigration Flows, Athens, Greece, 30 March–3 April, 2005; De Zwager, N., Gedeshi, I., Germenji, E. and Nikas, Ch., *Competing for remittances*, IOM, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> ISTAT, <http://demo.istat.it/str2005/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> De Zwager, N., Gedeshi, I., Germenji, E., and Nikas, Ch., *Competing for remittances*, IOM, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Government of Albania, National Strategy on Migration and the National Action Plan on Migration, Tirana, July 2005.

In terms of education, the bulk of migrants have completed at least primary schooling. The likelihood of migration is higher for those who have secondary education<sup>10</sup>.

### 1.3 Labour market trends

Albania is mainly an agrarian subsistence economy, characterised by a large percentage (94.0%) of micro and small enterprises and high degree of informality. Increasing employment and improving living standards closer to the levels of even low-income EU-25 countries will require sustained and rapid economic growth for many years to come. Sustained growth will depend in part on exploiting opportunities for development in sectors such as agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. This will call for the preparation and implementation of sector policies for these parts of the economy in order to identify and address the barriers to development.

The activity rate of the population in Albania is low (around 50%<sup>11</sup>) compared with the EU-27 level (64.4% in 2006)<sup>12</sup>. In the cities the female employment rate is particularly low because of the limited employment opportunities. Moreover, women who migrate from rural areas do not have the appropriate level of skills for the limited number of formal jobs. The gender gap in terms of participation is extremely pronounced (74.0% for men as opposed to 52.0% for women) across all age groups, and this has persisted through time. Young people looking for their first job are particularly affected by unemployment and see migration as a possible solution.

In 2006 the unemployment rate in Albania was 13.8% (compared to 6.9% in the EU-27 in June 2007). The northern part of Albania has a higher level of unemployment because of the very limited development of the private sector and the predominantly mountainous terrain (which also limits agricultural activities). Moreover, this was an area of heavy concentration of industry, which ceased following the end of the communist period.

The lack of demand for labour has forced people to start their own income-generation activities, which are often low skilled, low value added and low paid. Demand for labour in the formal sector is very limited and is mainly restricted to the public sector and selected private business activities, such as banking and to a certain extent tourism and construction. The development of most productive sectors is also hampered by weaknesses in the transport, communications and utilities infrastructure. In addition to the physical difficulties, bureaucratic procedures, an inefficient judicial system and a difficult business climate (in terms of such factors as the taxation structure and inadequate property registration) present challenges for attracting investment (both local and foreign) and promoting enterprise growth. Thus, poor labour market conditions and a difficult economic situation have created strong pressures for international migration.

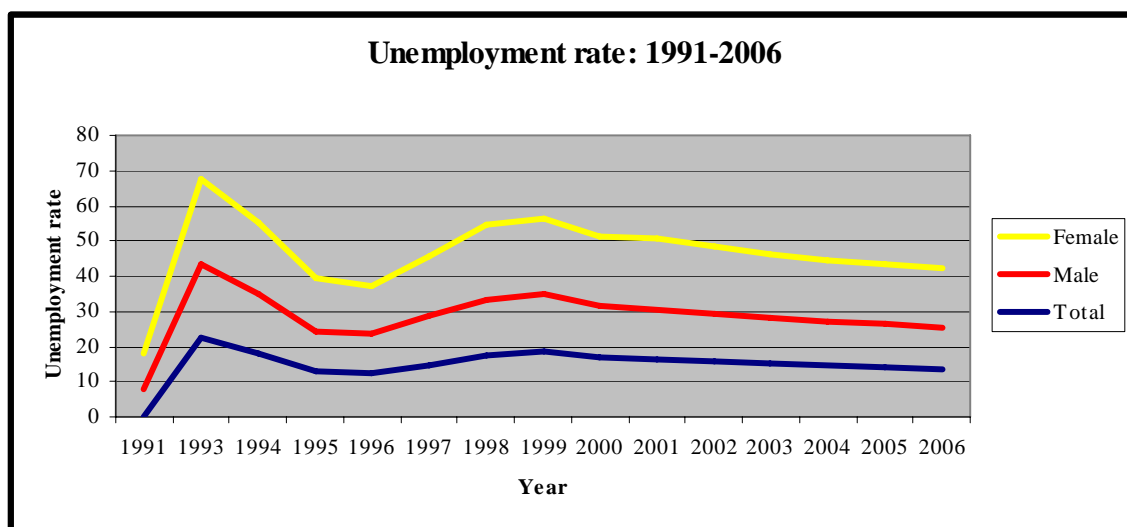
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<sup>10</sup> Gedeshi, I. and Sabates-Wheeler, R., 'Poverty, Vulnerability and Migration during transition in Albania', working paper, University of Sussex, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> INSTAT, [www.instat.gov.al](http://www.instat.gov.al), Social indicators/Employment.

<sup>12</sup> EUROSTAT, *Labour Force Survey*, 2006,

**Figure 1: Unemployment rate in Albania, 1991 – 2006 (%)**



Source: INSTAT, 2007

## 1.4 Education

The educational profile of Albania's working-age population (aged 25–64) indicates low levels of skill, with almost two-thirds of the population having only primary education or less. Significant reforms will be necessary in order to address this issue, including:

- the development of a quality assurance system;
- the extension of primary education from eight to nine years;
- the development of a national curriculum framework based on learning outcomes;
- the development of a teaching system that includes performance appraisal and merit-based incentives schemes;
- new textbook development modalities, examinations and student monitoring.

All these reforms require substantial policy dialogue and new financing mechanisms to ensure efficiency in the use of resources. Currently the proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to education is set to rise from 3.7% to 5.0%. Furthermore, the Albanian government has adopted a National Strategy on Pre-university Education for the period 2004 – 2015, focusing on five main pillars:

- governance;
- quality of teaching and learning;
- financing of pre-university education;
- capacity building and HRD;
- development of vocational education and training (VET) in the context of overall pre-university education.

In 2005 there were 467,000 pupils enrolled in basic education, 56,000 less than in 2001. This is a result of the falling birth rate and the high migration outflow. Of the total number of students enrolled in upper secondary, 82.9% are in general secondary schools, which in recent years have developed two

main areas of specialisation: natural and social sciences<sup>13</sup>. Interest VET has increased in the past few years. The target for secondary VET is to increase participation from 17.0% to 40.0% of total enrolment.

A VET strategy is currently being elaborated under the new CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) project. VET legislation was adopted in 2002, and a National VET Council with tripartite representation was established, with the aim of improving policies and reform management in the VET sector. The National VET Agency was created in order to maintain the inter-sectoral functions not covered by other VET institutions or the ministry's departments.

There is an increasing demand for higher education in Albania. It is offered in 10 state and 15 private universities. The most recently established university is the University of Durrës, which opened in September 2006 and which was set up with the purpose of attracting professors from the Albanian diaspora. The gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education (ISCED levels 5 and 6)<sup>14</sup> in 2005 was 24.7%<sup>15</sup>.

In September 2003 the country officially joined the Bologna process, though many issues remain to be addressed. Apart from the desire to obtain higher levels of qualifications, many individuals have postponed their entrance to the labour market and enrolled at university because of the particularly high rate of unemployment among young people. This increased demand has not resulted in increased resources (financial, teaching and infrastructure), which in some cases has led to a serious deterioration in quality. In order to address these issues, university governance needs to be improved.

One of the priorities of the government is to attract back highly qualified Albanians ('brain gain' programmes). A brain gain strategy should be carefully developed, reflecting the current socioeconomic realities of the country. One possible solution, in the short and medium term, would be to try to achieve a temporary return of highly skilled individuals to work, for example, as advisers and lecturers.

In this context, a reform of the Albanian Academy of Science is planned, which should integrate higher education and research more effectively. In general, research activities in Albania have been limited. Research and development (R&D) should be linked to the sectors of the economy that are considered of interest to the country in terms of strategic development, since resources are limited. Around 94% of enterprises in Albania are small, and consequently it is very difficult to involve them in R&D. The government has put forward a proposal to establish a Foundation of Sciences to promote research, in particular in information technology, biotechnology, applied natural sciences, energy, the environment and water. Moreover, the Council of Ministers recently approved a Fund for Excellence (EUR 1 million) to enable students to pursue studies abroad and then return to Albania. This is the first year of the fund.

## 1.5 Legislative framework

The legal basis for migration of Albanian citizens is Law No. 9,034 'On emigration of Albanian citizens for employment purposes', approved on 20 March 2003. A new law on emigration of Albanian citizens for employment purposes was approved in December 2006 (Law No. 9,668, 18 December 2006).

In order to address unemployment in Albania and the need for greater labour emigration, various employment agreements have been signed between Albania and other countries, including Greece, Germany and Italy. Furthermore, the government has encouraged the opening of private employment agencies, adopting the Decision of Council of Ministers 708 of 16 December 2003 'On the Licensing and Functioning of Private Employment Agencies'.

In order to provide Albania with a more comprehensive policy on migration that does not deal only with border control issues, a Strategy and an Action Plan were prepared, in cooperation with IOM and

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<sup>13</sup> INSTAT, [www.instat.gov.al](http://www.instat.gov.al), Social indicators/Education.

<sup>14</sup> The total enrolment in tertiary education (regardless of age) as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. See [www.instat.gov.al](http://www.instat.gov.al)

<sup>15</sup> 'Brief summary of Tempus impact study in Albania', September 2005. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/countries/albania\\_en.html#3](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/countries/albania_en.html#3)



financed by EU, and endorsed by the government in 2004 – 2005. The areas covered by the Strategy include:

- protection of the rights of Albanian emigrants abroad;
- building up and linking Albanian communities abroad;
- encouraging the use of remittances for business investment;
- putting in place an adequate policy for labour migration;
- facilitating travel for Albanian citizens;
- development of an adequate legal and institutional framework.

In addition, legislation on the education of migrant children and the education of Albanians living abroad has been drafted. There are also several programmes to facilitate access to resources (for example, textbooks) for Albanians living and educating their children abroad. For returning families there are programmes for the reintegration of children who have been schooled abroad.

## 1.6 Institutional framework

There are various governmental actors.

- The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Migration, founded in 2003 within the framework of government measures for the formulation and application of the National Strategy for Migration Management, is an advisory body to the Council of Ministers on migration-related issues.
- There is a special team on brain drain, appointed by the prime minister.
- The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has a leading role in the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan on Migration. It actively participated in the drafting of a National Action Plan on Remittances, which was elaborated by an Inter-Institutional Working Group comprising 24 government and non-government institutions within the framework of the project 'Enhancing the impact of migrant remittances in Albania: Creating an integrated migrant remittance system', which was funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by the IOM and ILO. The Migration Policies Directorate has only one emigration specialist, and the Immigration Sector is composed of two staff members. The resources dedicated to migration are thus very limited, and the monitoring and implementation of migration policy documents is difficult. In some of the 12 regional public employment offices that are under the ministry there are specialists who cover migration, among other issues, but their role is very restricted. There are 16 private employment agencies that are authorised by the ministry, but very few of them are active in offering employment abroad.
- The Institute for Diaspora was originally created under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate migration policies. A government decision in 2006 included in the mission of this institution the drafting of migratory policies and migration management. This change has introduced a degree of vagueness regarding the roles, responsibilities and missions of the various institutions involved in migration.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of consular services. It is also a key participant in the process for signing treaties ratified by Albania, such as readmission agreements.
- The Ministry of Public Order is in charge of border control.
- The National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) deals with data collection and analysis. Data on migration have not been collected; instead, estimates have been made based on census data. There is no information on migration at regional or local level. The Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) for 2005 was the first to have a migration module.

## 1.7 Bilateral and international cooperation on migration

Albania has signed three labour agreements, with the following countries.

- Germany (1991). The aim was to offer guest workers vocational training, language skills and work experience. Some 500 to 1,000 workers per annum could benefit from this agreement. The agreement is not currently operational.
- Italy (1996). There is an annual quota for labour migration under the Italian Bossi–Fini Law. Italian regions can conclude agreements for seasonal labour migration.
- Greece (1997). There is no quantitative information on the implementation of the agreement, and no specific quotas for migrant labourers have been envisaged.



## 2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The project was implemented in the following stages, using both qualitative and quantitative methods:

- preliminary desk research;
- fact-finding mission;
- field survey of potential and returning migrants;
- drafting of the country migration profile.

### Phase 1: Preliminary desk research

The desk research aimed to provide background information for the country migration profile and to review the existing literature on the subject, including statistical data, legislative materials and bilateral agreements.

### Phase 2: Fact-finding mission

Meetings were held with the main national stakeholders involved in migration issues.

### Phase 3: Field survey of potential and returning migrants

The survey consisted of face-to-face interviews with 1,001 potential migrants and 1,002 returning migrants, based on two structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were developed by the ETF and an international expert, Professor Richard Black, Director of the Sussex Centre for Migration Research (UK), and finalised with the contribution of the local contractor, CESS. The survey was carried out in November and December 2006.

A two-stage cluster sample was selected. In the first-stage clusters the following regions of Albania were chosen to represent the geographical diversity of the country.

**Shkodra:** Shkodra district is situated in the north-west of the country and has around 257,000 inhabitants in an area of 3,562 km<sup>2</sup>. Most of the population is ethnic Albanian, with Montenegrins, Roma and Egyptian minorities. The main religious groups are Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Agriculture/forestry, fishing and industry are the main economic activities of the district. During the transition period, as a consequence of internal and external migration, the population of Shkodra decreased by 10.1%.

**Kukës:** This district, located in the north-eastern Albania, has an area of 2,374 km<sup>2</sup> and around 112,000 inhabitants. Small-scale agriculture remains the main economic sector following the closure of nearly all of the district's mining and mineral-processing plants. During the transition period, as a consequence of internal and external migration, the population of Kukës decreased by 23.7%.

**Tirana:** Albania's geographic centre has around 602,000 residents on 1,652 km<sup>2</sup> of land. Tirana has relatively well-developed agriculture, forestry and industry sectors. During the transition period, as a consequence of internal and external migration, the population of Tirana increased by 33.1%.

**Elbasan:** Elbasan district encompass 3,199 km<sup>2</sup> of land in the centre of Albania and has around 366,000 inhabitants. Most of the population is ethnic Albanian, with a significant number of Roma and Egyptian people. The district has relatively well-developed industry and agriculture sectors. During the transition period, as a consequence of internal and external migration, the population of Elbasan increased by 1.5%.

**Korça:** Korça district in south-eastern Albania has an area of 3,711 km<sup>2</sup> and around 266,000 inhabitants. Most of the population is ethnic Albanian, with a significant number of minorities. The district has relatively well-developed industry, services and agriculture sectors. During the transition period, as a consequence of internal and external migration, the population of Korça decreased by 14.9%.

**Vlora:** This district is located on the southern coast. It has around 193,000 inhabitants and an area of 2,706 km<sup>2</sup>. Industry, agriculture, fishing, trade and tourism are the main economic sectors. During the transition period, as a consequence of internal and external migration, the population of Vlora decreased by 27.0%.

The second-stage clusters included villages, communes or municipalities chosen to represent the geographical diversity of the selected regions. The details of this cluster selection were agreed with the local service provider, such that at both stages (selection of regions, and selection of villages, communes or municipalities), areas with high and low levels of development, areas of high and low levels of international migration, and both rural and urban areas were included.

For each survey, the number of questionnaires in each district was proportional to the size of the population in the selected district as detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Distribution of the questionnaires in the capital city and other urban and rural areas**

| Nr | District | % of total population | Total sample | Capital city | Other urban | Rural |
|----|----------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| 1  | Shkodra  | 14.3                  | 142          | 46           | 7           | 89    |
| 2  | Kukës    | 6.2                   | 62           | 10           | 6           | 46    |
| 3  | Tirana   | 33.5                  | 335          | 191          | 22          | 122   |
| 4  | Elbasan  | 20.4                  | 206          | 49           | 22          | 135   |
| 5  | Korça    | 14.8                  | 148          | 31           | 23          | 94    |
| 6  | Vlora    | 10.8                  | 108          | 43           | 15          | 50    |
|    | Total    | 100.0                 | 1,001        | 370          | 95          | 536   |

The procedure for selecting individual interviewees varied for potential migration and return migration.

The questionnaires were implemented in a way that would include people who would usually be out at work; for example, interviews were carried out outside regular working hours.

### **(a) Potential migrants' survey**

A first step was to calculate the number of households to be contacted in each cluster locality in a way that reflected the proportion of the population living in different regions and areas. Thus, if 15% of the country's population lived in the capital city, 15% of interviews would be conducted in the capital city. Similarly, if 50% of the country's population was rural, 50% of the interviews should be in rural areas. This method was intended to give an approximation of a nationally representative sample.

Based on this selection, interviewers were given a total number of households that needed to be contacted for the potential migration survey in each locality. This number of households was selected using a process that was either random, or was performed in a systematic way that eliminated any potential bias. For example, a series of 'routes' for interviewers were selected at random, along which interviewers systematically selected households<sup>16</sup> (e.g. every fifth household).

Selected households were first asked screening questions, to identify the presence of potential and returning migrants. For the purpose of this survey, returning migrants were defined as anyone who had left the survey country aged 18 or over, had lived and worked abroad continuously for at least six months, had come back at least three months previously and within the past ten years, and was present and available for interview. Those who had returned within the past three months or more than ten years ago were not asked about their experiences abroad.

<sup>16</sup> The definition of a household for the purposes of this study is: 'those who live together and have communal arrangements concerning subsistence and other necessities of life, plus those who currently live elsewhere, but whose principal commitments are to the household, and who expect to rejoin (or be joined by) the household in the future'. Thus, children or siblings who have moved away from the household can be considered part of the household, but only if, on return, they can confidently be expected to live within the original household again – sending remittances is not a sufficient condition for an individual to be considered part of the household.

If no returning migrants were present, the potential migration survey was administered to one individual in the household aged 18–40. Respondents were selected on the following basis.

- If only one person aged 18–40 was present (i.e. available for interview), that person was interviewed.
- If more than one person aged 18–40 was present (i.e. available for interview), one of them was selected: the person whose month of birth fell next after the completion of the interview.
- If birth months were not known, individuals were chosen by the drawing of lots.
- If nobody aged 18–40 was present or available for interview, the interviewer moved on to the next household, starting again with the screening questions in order to find a respondent aged 18–40.

It was important to eliminate any source of bias in choosing an individual for interview; in other words, it was not always the oldest person, or the most educated, or a man, who was interviewed. In theory, once the 1,000 interviews were completed across the country, the proportion of men and women interviewed, and the proportion with different levels of education, should accurately reflect proportions in the country as a whole for the 18–40 age group.

## **(b) Returning migrants' survey**

If the screening question (1) revealed that a returning migrant was present, then both the potential migrants' and the returning migrants' surveys were used, i.e. two individuals in the household were interviewed.

Only one returning migrant was interviewed per household. If there was more than one returning migrant present, one person was selected as per 4(b) or 4(c) above.

If there was only one eligible interviewee in the household, who was both a returnee and aged 18–40, the returning migrants' survey was used, and this interview was counted towards the quota of 1,000 interviews for both the potential and returning migrants' surveys.

If no returning migrant was present in the screened household, an additional interview was sought with another returning migrant within the locality in order to meet the quota of return migration interviews.

## **General**

The aim was that the potential migrants' survey had to be broadly representative of the young adult population (aged 18–40) as a whole. This was in order to ensure that in interviewing potential migrants, there was a control sample of those in the same age group who were not actively seeking to migrate.

## **Margin of error**

Assuming a simple random sampling, for a confidence level equal to 95% and  $p=q=0.5$ , Table 3 shows the margin of error for different numbers of answers<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> The results of a survey include a statistical margin of error caused by the sampling process. This margin varies according to three factors:

- (i) the sample size: the greater the number of respondents to a question, the smaller will be the margin of error;
- (ii) the result itself: the closer the result approaches 50%, the wider the statistical margin will be. This is what is expressed by ' $p=q=0.5$ ': it represents the higher margin of error, or its upper limit for the answer to a question;
- (iii) the degree of confidence: in social sciences, the degree of confidence most often used is 95%.

**Table 3. Margin of error**

|                 |       |      |      |      |      |      |       |
|-----------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| N               | 1,000 | 750  | 500  | 250  | 125  | 100  | 50    |
| Margin of error | 3.1%  | 3.6% | 4.4% | 6.2% | 8.8% | 9.8% | 13.9% |

- Returning migrants must have been aged over 18 at the time of their most recent migration in order to be included in the interviews.
- The contractor was asked to keep a record of the number of men and women interviewed in each category, and to outline the process of ensuring adequate representation of women (and men) in each sample.

**Phase 4: Analysis of the survey data and validation**

The ETF team of experts, with the assistance of Professor Richard Black and CESS, drafted a report based on the results of the survey. The findings were presented at a validation conference on 21 November 2007 in Tirana, under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

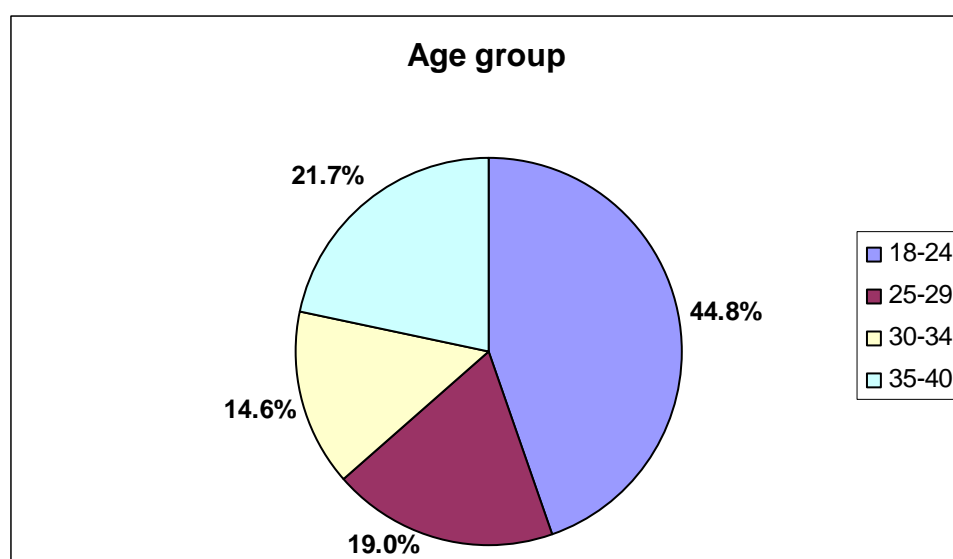
### 3. POTENTIAL MIGRANTS

#### 3.1 Socio-demographic and educational characteristics

##### Age and gender

Data showed that the sample was almost equally divided between males (54.0%) and females (46.0%). The average age of the sample was 27.3 years (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Age distribution of sample population**



N=1,001 respondents

##### Civil status and family composition

Some 55.0% of the surveyed population were sons or daughters of heads of households, which reflects the age range of the survey (18–40 years old). The majority of respondents (51.8%) were single and 47.0% were married, while 1.2% were widowed or divorced; 42.1% of respondents had children.

##### Language and ethnic group

Almost all respondents (98.0%) were ethnic Albanians, while 2.0% belonged to other ethnic groups<sup>18</sup>. According to the survey, most of the ethnic minorities live in the regions of Korça and Kukës.

One-third of respondents spoke Italian and/or English. There was a close relationship between educational level and knowledge of a foreign language. The higher the potential migrant's educational level, the higher the probability that he/she knew more than one foreign language. A large percentage of respondents with primary education knew Greek and Italian. This is a result of the influence of TV channels (mainly Italian ones) as well as temporary migration to these countries.

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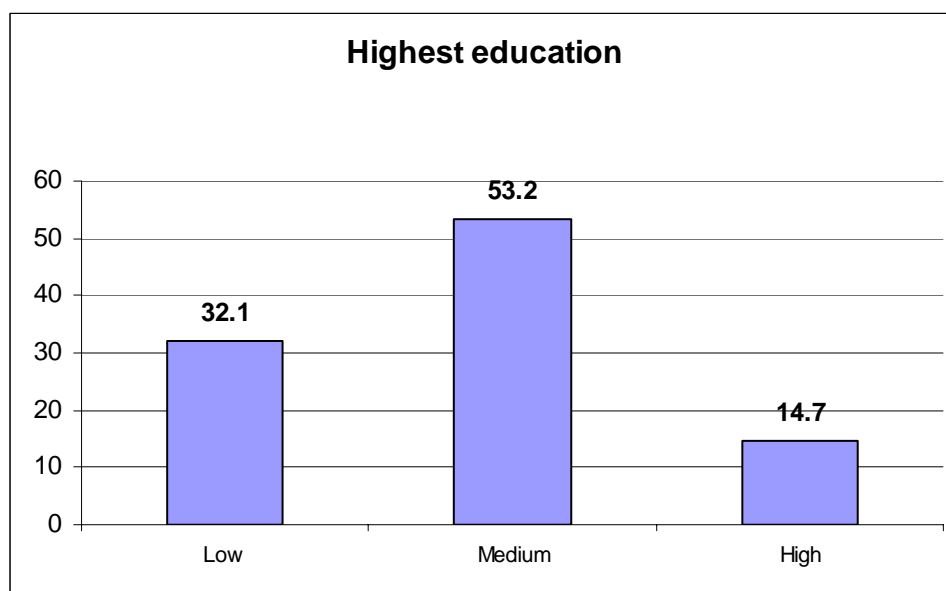
<sup>18</sup> In Albania there are several minorities: Vlachs/Aromenians, Greeks, Roma, Macedonians and Montenegrins. According to the 1989 Census, these groups represent around 2% of the total population (INSTAT, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1989).



## Level of education

The majority of the sample had medium or low levels of education (see Figure 3). Of those who attended secondary education, 37.9% went to secondary general and 15.4% to vocational schools.

**Figure 3: Highest level of education of sample population (%)**

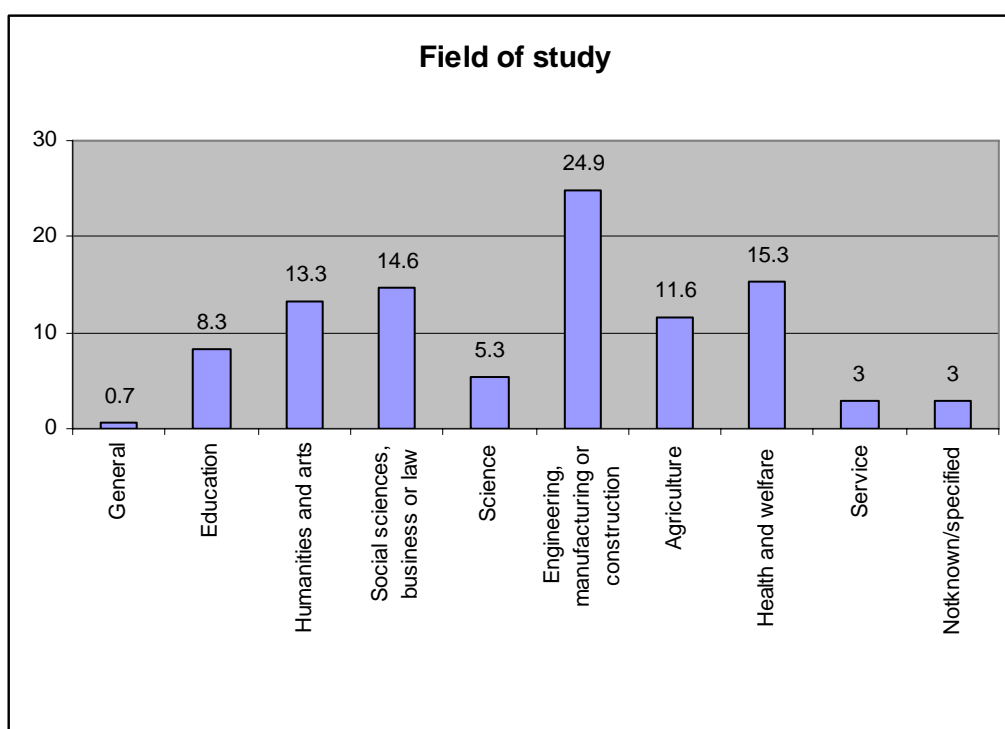


N=1,001 respondents

With regard to the field of study, engineering, manufacturing and construction predominated for those who had completed vocational secondary or higher education, followed by health and welfare and social sciences (Figure 3). There was a significant correlation between gender and the chosen field of study: men tended to follow studies in engineering, manufacturing and construction, while women were more oriented towards health and welfare. The main reasons for selecting a field of study were personal interest and the possibility of getting a job, rather than factors relating to migration. Indeed, only 1.0% reported that they chose their field of study because of migration considerations.

Although 95.0% of respondents considered that education improves living conditions, only 36.9% intended to pursue further education or training (mainly in social sciences or humanities).

**Figure 4: Fields of education of sample population (%)**

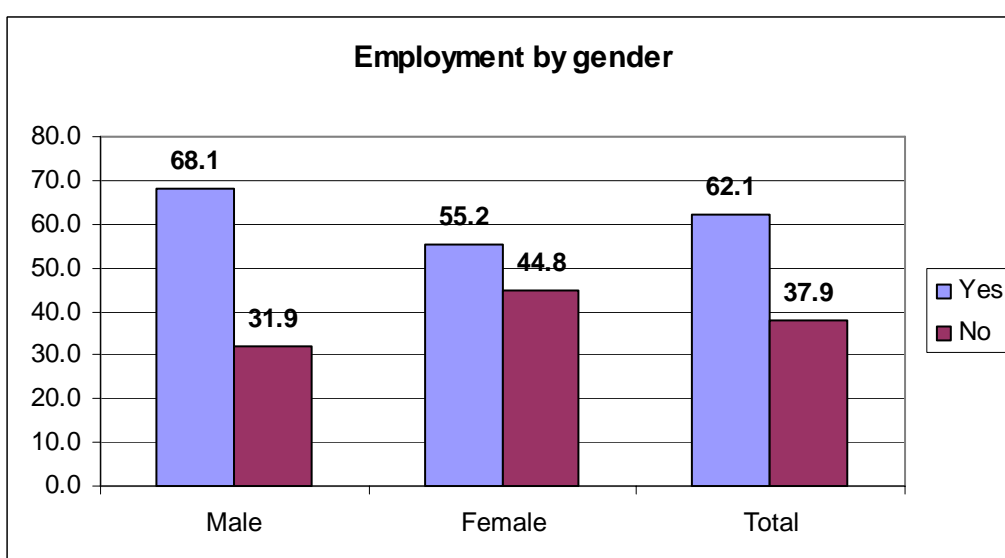


N=301 respondents with secondary vocational or university studies

## 3.2 Employment

A total of 62.1% of respondents said that they were working. Employment rates were considerably higher among males (68.1%) than females (55.2%) (Figure 5).

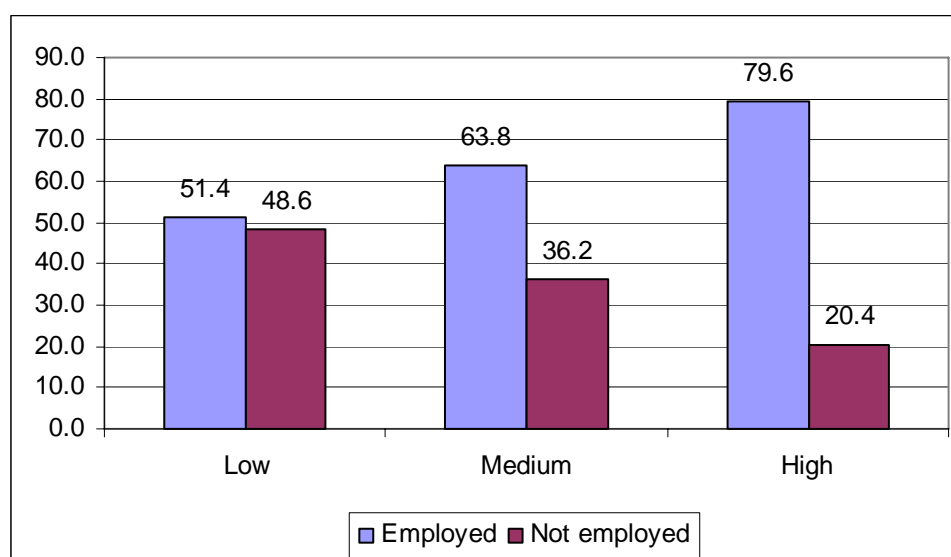
**Figure 5: Employment and unemployment by gender (%)**



N=1,001 respondents

The employment rate was closely related to educational levels. The higher the level of education and qualifications, the higher the likelihood that respondents were employed (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Employment status by educational level (%)**



N=1,001 respondents

Unemployment increased the probability of migration by 14.7%. Almost half of those who were unemployed said they could not find a job; half of them were young people looking for their first job. In terms of their educational level, most unemployed people had completed primary and secondary general education.

The economic structure of employment shows that respondents worked in petty trade, hotels and restaurants, public administration, construction, agriculture and manufacturing. Among those who were working, it was more common for the males than for females to have a second job.

Half of the sample worked more than 48 hours per week and earned less than ALL 22,000 per month (around EUR 178<sup>19</sup>). According to the survey, educational level seems to have an influence on wages, as around 60% of university graduates earned more than the average salary (around ALL 29,300, or EUR 239, per month), while this percentage declined with lower educational levels.

### 3.3 Intentions to move abroad

Some 44.2% of respondents said they were seriously thinking of migrating. In order to understand better the real likelihood of migration, a composite index called 'propensity to migrate' was created, based on the following variables from the survey:

- likelihood of migrating within the next six months or two years;
- ability to finance the move abroad;
- knowledge of the language of the most likely destination (MLD) country;
- information on the MLD country;
- possession of at least four of the six documents necessary (such as passport, visa, health certificate, work contract), with no difficulties in obtaining the remaining ones.

Those who met at least four of these conditions were considered to be 'prone to migrate'. In the case of Albania, 17.8% of the surveyed population had the resources to undertake migration, according to this indicator.

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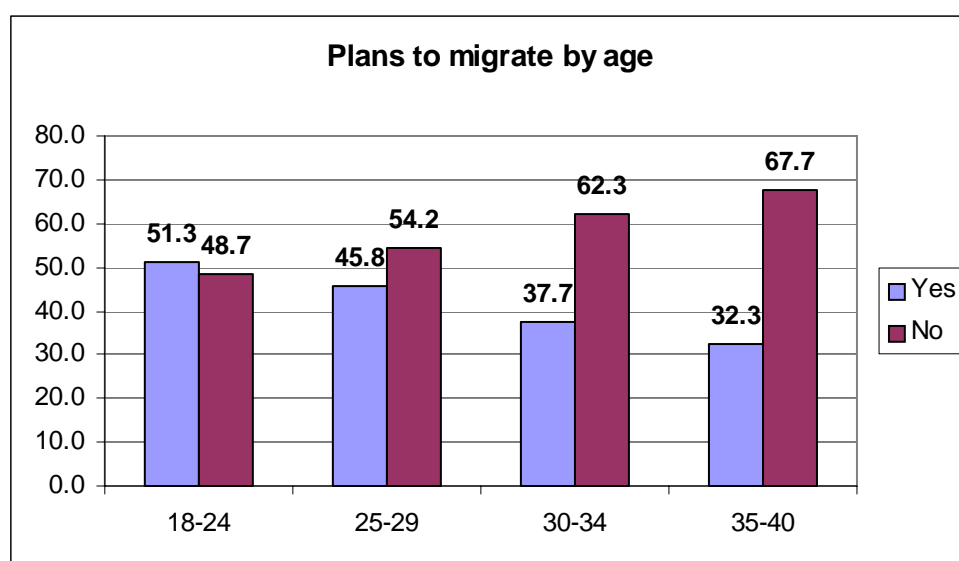
<sup>19</sup> €1 = ALL 122.65 (exchange rate on 26 October 2007).

According to Papapanagos et al.<sup>20</sup>, migration from Albania slowed down noticeably after 2000. This declining trend was a result of the improvement of economic conditions in the country, as evidenced by the GDP growth rate. Between 1998 and 2006 the real GDP growth rate averaged almost 7% annually. Another factor is that migration laws in both Greece and Italy, the two main destination countries for Albanian migrants, have considerably reduced the opportunities for migration during recent years.

## Who wants to migrate from Albania?

According to the survey, males were more prone (46.9%) to migrate than females (40.9%), though the difference is not statistically significant. As expected, younger people were more likely to migrate (Figure 7). Single people were more likely to migrate than married ones or those with children (see Appendix 1).

**Figure 7. Plans to migrate by age (%)**



N=1,001 respondents

There was a link between educational level and the desire to migrate, as almost 50% of people with primary education wished to migrate, compared with 40.1% of those with a university degree. The tendency to migrate was higher for people who had studied education, agriculture, engineering, and health and welfare. People who knew Italian and Greek were more likely to migrate (see Appendix 1).

Regarding employment status, the intention to migrate was higher among unemployed respondents. Almost 53% of those who did not work wished to migrate (the remaining 47% did not have a job and did not want to migrate).

Indeed, almost 40% of the respondents who had a job in the country still wanted to go abroad (against the 60% who had a job and preferred to remain in Albania). Thus, having employment was not always sufficient to prevent migration.

Potential migration was also higher among larger households. Survey data showed that an increase in household size raised the desire to migrate from 41.7% (1–3 members) to 51.6% (7 members or more). This trend is supported by the link between the size of the household and the level of poverty<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Papapanagos H. and P. Sanfey. 2001. "Intention to Emigrate in Transition Countries: the Case of Albania," *Journal of Population Economics*. 14: 491-504. The study estimates that 76.4% of the surveyed males and 73.3% of the females wanted to migrate from Albania in 1998.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, *Albania: Urban Growth, Rural Stagnation and Migration. A Poverty Assessment*, July 2007. According to the 2005 LSMS, 17.0% of all poor people lived in large households.

Land ownership also affected the decision to migrate, since Albanian agriculture is subsistence oriented and only 28.0% of farmers produce goods for the market. Land plots are small and fragmented, technology is obsolete and agricultural institutions are inadequate. This explains why 48.3% of respondents who owned land still wished to migrate.

Perception of well-being was another important variable. The likelihood of migrating decreased by 20.0% for respondents who declared their financial situation to be sufficient. The lack of ownership of such household appliances as a washing machine, a refrigerator or a TV was not significantly related to an increase in the intention to migrate. Only those who owned a car were more reluctant to leave the country.

Regarding geographical distribution, potential migration was higher in poor regions (Kukës, Shkodra) and border regions (Korça). Within a region, potential migration was higher (63.0%) in small towns. During the socialist period the economy was based on a few large industries, which closed down in the early transition period. Consequently, the unemployment level is high and the labour market does not offer many alternatives.

Potential migration is conditioned by the financial, human and social capital possessed by migrants (and their families), and the ETF survey confirms this finding. In a study on poverty in Albania, De Soto et al. (2001) stated that individuals from very poor families do not have the opportunity to migrate<sup>22</sup>.

## Reasons for not wishing to migrate from Albania

Respondents who did not wish to migrate were asked for their reasons. The most important of these were family and psychological issues ('this is my country/I belong here' was mentioned as one of the three most important reasons by 26.7% of the respondents who did not intend to migrate).

Individuals who did not wish to migrate were also asked about the usefulness of migration. Some 42.0% of them answered that migration leads to better work opportunities on return, while 25.6% thought the opposite. The remaining individuals did not express an opinion.

The perception of the usefulness of migration varied according to the educational level of the respondents. Individuals with a low level of education had a more positive perception of migration than those with secondary or university education. This may be explained by the fact that returns from migration are expected to be higher for low-skilled individuals.

According to the survey, 64.7% of the respondents who did not want to migrate stated that returning migrants were better off or much better off than those who did not intend to migrate. This is an interesting conclusion, showing that even among those who preferred to remain in Albania, migration was still seen as an opportunity to improve living standards.

## 3.4 Potential migrants' expectations

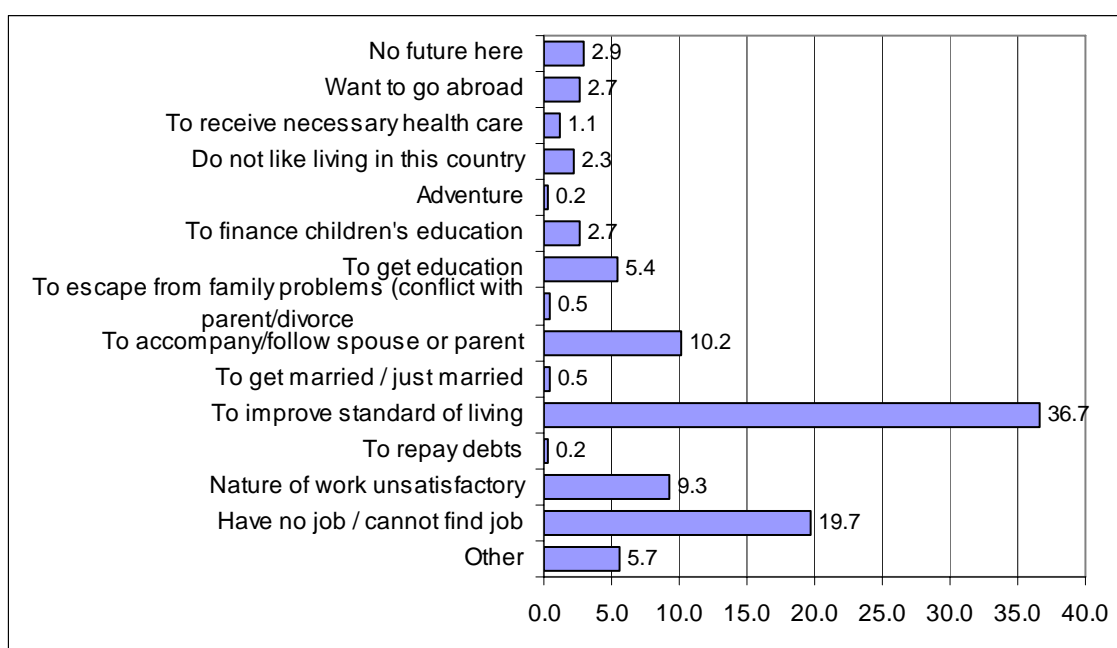
According to the survey, two-third of Albanians wanted to go abroad for economic reasons, such as 'improving living standards' (36.7%), 'finding a job' (19.7%) and because 'nature of current work is unsatisfactory' (9.3%)<sup>23</sup> (see Figure 8).

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<sup>22</sup> De Soto, H., Gordon, P., Gedeshi I. and Sinoimeri, Z., *Poverty in Albania. A Qualitative Assessment*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> The incidence of poverty in Albania has been comparable with other countries in the Western Balkans. The unemployment rate has remained in double digits since the beginning of transition. Significant wage differences between Albania and its EU neighbours make migration very attractive. In 2005, for example, Italy's GDP per capita was 12 times higher than that of Albania, while Greece's was 8 times greater.

**Figure 8. Main reason for migrating**



N=559 respondents who intended to migrate

Although economic push factors are very important, other push factors can also be identified. One of these is personal freedom, especially for young people. Young women, for example, saw student migration as a way to advance their education and professional careers and, at the same time, to escape from a paternalistic, convention-bound society.

Another push factor is the collapse of social support mechanisms in the post-1990 period. Collective services such as kindergartens, canteens and rural medical centres, which provided a platform of basic social welfare for the population, were closed down.

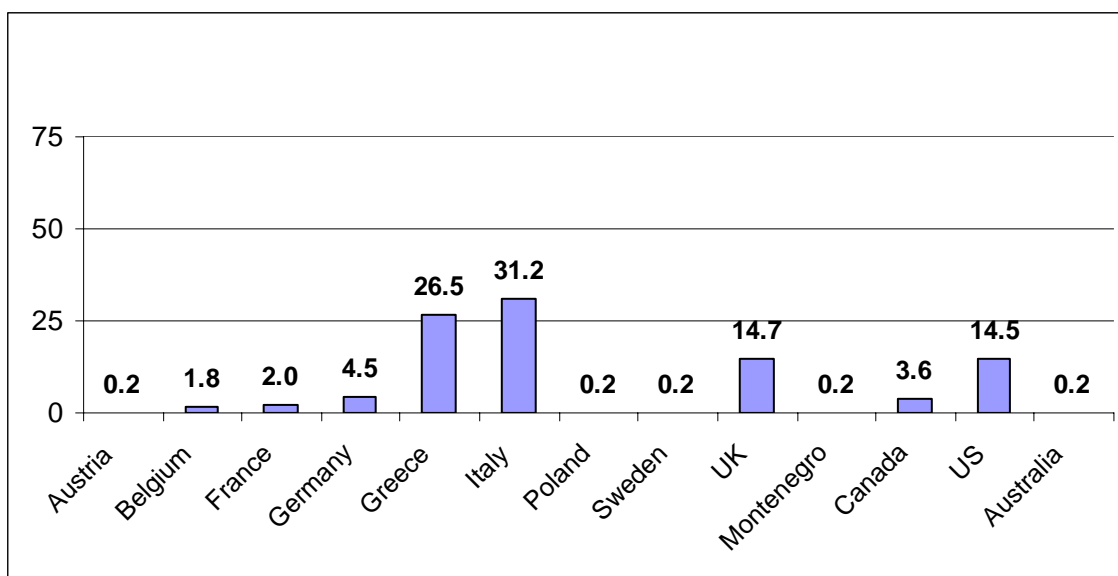
Gender issues have an important role to play, since in Albanian society the decision to migrate is usually taken by males. The survey shows that 74.3% of males took the decision to migrate by themselves, while 80.4% of females said the decision was made jointly with others, or entirely by others.

With regard to expectations about the role of migration in improving the financial situation, potential migrants with primary and general secondary education were more optimistic than those with secondary vocational and university education. This can be explained by the fact that most of the jobs offered in EU countries (the main destination of Albanian migrants) constitute low- and medium-skilled employment in agriculture, construction and domestic work.

## Most likely destination

The preferred migration destinations were EU countries such as Italy, Greece, the UK and Germany. Around 18% expressed a preference to migrate to the USA or Canada (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Most likely destination country (%)**



N=442 respondents who intended to migrate

The survey shows a strong correlation between the place of residence of potential migrants and their preferred destination country. Potential migrants from Western Albania (Tirana, Vlora) mainly preferred Italy, while those from the north and north-east (Kukës, Shkodra) mainly preferred the UK, because these places were close to conflict areas and there was the possibility of being granted political asylum. Migrants from the south-east and central Albania (Korça, Elbasan) mostly preferred Greece.

The choice of the most preferred destination country was strongly related to educational level. Migrants with primary education preferred Greece, while those with secondary general and vocational education preferred the UK and Italy. Potential migrants with university education preferred North America.

Migration networks played an essential role in the selection of the destination country. By providing information regarding migration methods and job opportunities, as well as direct assistance in the form of food or shelter in the destination regions, family networks contributed towards lowering the entry costs and reducing uncertainties associated with migration<sup>24</sup>. The data showed that Italy and Greece were particularly preferred because potential migrants had friends or relatives there. Carletto et al.<sup>25</sup>, analysing data from LSMS, found that 55.0% of Albanian households currently residing in the country had direct experience of family members living abroad. Cavounidis<sup>26</sup> found that 60.0% of Albanians in Greece had a relative there prior to their arrival, and 15.0% had no family, but did have an acquaintance or a friend there. Other literature has indicated that migration networks are more extensive among rural households. Networks in Greece are more common in the central and mountain regions, while those in Italy are more prevalent in coastal areas<sup>27</sup>.

A small number of potential migrants were aware of government programmes (12.4%) and private employment agencies (6.1%) to assist with working abroad. The remaining 81.5% were unaware of such services. The majority of the group who were familiar with government or private schemes had completed either secondary or university education. The more educated potential migrants were, the more aware they were of such opportunities. However, the number of respondents in this case was very small.

<sup>24</sup> Germenji, E. and Swinnen J., 'Human Capital, Market Imperfections Poverty and Migration: Evidence from Albania', LICOS Working Paper, No. 5, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Carletto, G., Davis, B., Stampini, M. and Zezza A., 'A Country on the Move: International Migration in the Post-Communist Albania', *IMR*, Volume 40/4, 2006, pp. 767–85.

<sup>26</sup> Cavounidis, J., 'Migration to Greece from the Balkans', *South-Eastern Europe Journal of Economics*, 2, 2004, pp. 35–59.

<sup>27</sup> Carletto, G., Davis, B., Stampini, M. and Zezza, A., 'A Country on the Move: International Migration in the Post-Communist Albania', *IMR*, Volume 40/4, 2006, pp. 767–85.

## Employment in the host country

Most of the potential migrants would like to work as salaried workers (86.7%). There were no significant differences between levels of education, although 11.9% of migrants who had a university degree said they would like to be self-employed, which may indicate a more positive attitude towards risk and entrepreneurship.

There was a strong correlation between gender and preferred sector of activity abroad. Men would like to work in construction, hotels/restaurants, agriculture, manufacturing and transport. Women would prefer to work in domestic jobs, hotels/restaurants, public administration, petty trade, manufacturing and agriculture. These are mostly low-qualified jobs.

Knowing the language of the destination country helps migrants to integrate into the labour market and facilitates their social life. Some 29.2% of respondents spoke the language of the destination country 'fluently' or 'fairly well'<sup>28</sup>.

Potential migrants used various sources to obtain information about the destination country. The two most relevant sources are family and friends and previous direct knowledge.

Half of potential migrants (49.5%) wished to take part in training to prepare them to live and work abroad. They said they would like to have training on language skills and professional education.

Half of the respondents intended to stay abroad for between one and five years, while only 16.1% wanted to leave the country permanently. The desired period of stay abroad for potential migrants varied according to educational level and employment status. Almost two-thirds of potential migrants who had primary education wished to stay in the destination country for three to ten years. A third of those with secondary education (both general and vocational) wished to stay for three to five years. On the other hand, a third of those with university education stated that they wanted to stay abroad permanently.

## Remittances

A total of 79.6% of potential migrants said they would send remittances to their families. These expectations are higher than the actual rates of remittance repatriation in Albania. The 2005 IOM study showed that 68.0% of migrants sent remittances to their families<sup>29</sup>. This was also confirmed by the 2005 LSMS<sup>30</sup>.

Most potential migrants thought that remittances would be used for living expenses, for business activities, for savings, to buy furniture or households goods and to buy property. Very few potential migrants (1.4%) said remittances would be spent on education.

According to the survey, 73.5% of potential migrants thought that migration would lead to better work opportunities on their return to Albania. The lower the level of education of potential migrants, the higher the expectations of finding a good job in the home country. This varied from 78.0% for migrants with a low level of education who hoped to find better jobs at home, to 54.2% for migrants with a high level of education. Overall, these figures indicate a high level of confidence in their own country on the part of potential migrants, which can be linked to improved socioeconomic conditions in Albania in recent years.

## 3.5 Potential migrants' economic and living conditions

According to the survey, a fifth of the families have one or two members abroad, mainly in EU countries (see Table 4).

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<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, the percentage is higher (59.3%) for people with a university degree, compared with 35.2% for people with secondary education and 9.9% for people with primary education.

<sup>29</sup> De Zwager, N., Gedeshi, I., Germenji, E. and Nikas, Ch., *Competing for Remittances*, IOM, 2005,

<sup>30</sup> World Bank, *Albania: Urban Growth, Rural Stagnation and Migration. A Poverty Assessment*, World Bank, July 2007.



**Table 4. Members abroad by destination country (absolute numbers)**

| Households    | EU  | Other EU countries | North America | Australia | Total number |
|---------------|-----|--------------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| One member    | 131 |                    | 5             | 1         | 137          |
| Two members   | 39  | 1                  | 2             |           | 42           |
| Three members | 5   | 1                  |               |           | 6            |
| Four members  | 2   |                    |               |           | 2            |
| Total         | 177 | 2                  | 7             | 1         | 187          |

The average household size for the sample was 4.6 persons<sup>31</sup>. The majority of respondents owned their house, which was either built by them or bought through privatisation in the early 1990s.

Ownership of consumer durables was widespread. Most of the households owned televisions, refrigerators, cookers, radios and washing machines. Most had piped water, an inside toilet and hot water.

The surveyed households received most of their income from four main sources:

- salaried employment;
- agricultural production;
- pension and/or government economic assistance
- remittances from migration.

Remittances from migration were an important income source for Albanian households. One in four families received an average of EUR 1,800 per year in remittances<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> According to INSTAT, the average size of the Albanian family was 4.2 persons (INSTAT, *Albanian population in 2001*, Tirana, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> This figure varies enormously: for 25.0% of the sample population, remittances represented less than EUR 400 per year, while for another quarter, they were EUR 2,000 or more. This means that situations are completely different and that it is not possible to generalise this information.

## 4. RETURNING MIGRANTS

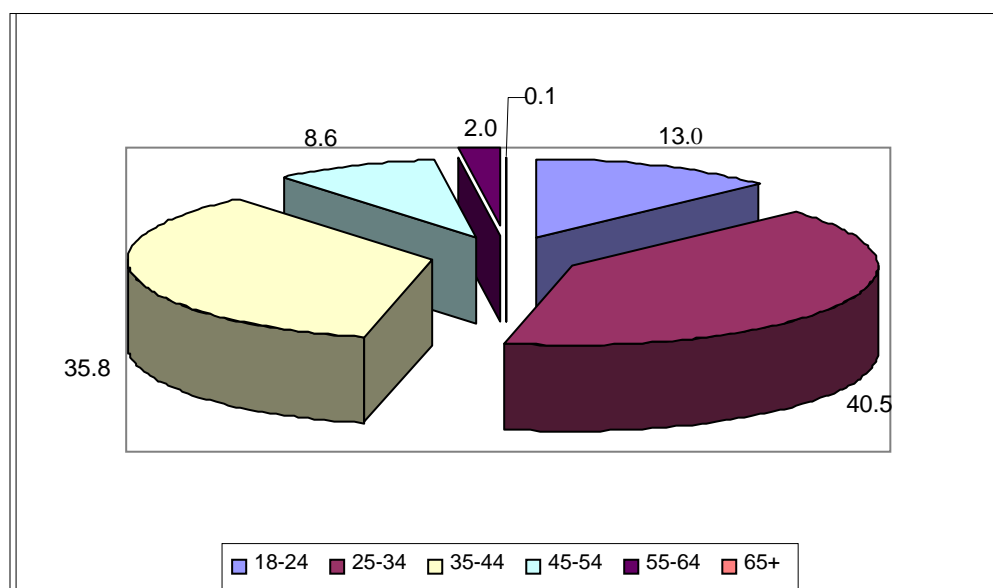
### 4.1 Socio-demographic and educational characteristics

#### Age and gender

In contrast to the potential migrants' sample, 89.0% of the returning migrants interviewed were male. This deviation from the basic criterion of having and preserving a gender-balanced sample is explained by the difficulty of finding and interviewing sufficient female returning migrants.

The average age of the respondents was 34 years (for details see the below graph).

**Figure 10. Age distribution of returning migrants (%)**



N=1,000 respondents

#### Civil status and family composition

A total of 67.0% of the respondents were married and 61.8% of them had children.

#### Language and ethnic group

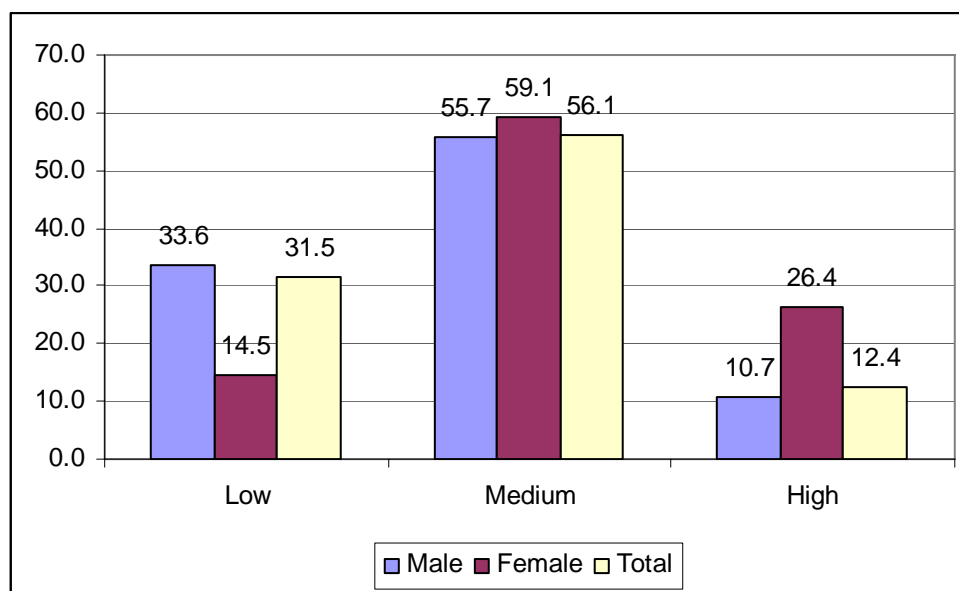
An overwhelming majority (97.0%) of the respondents were ethnic Albanians, while 3.0% belonged to other ethnic groups: Aromenians/Vlachs, Gorans and Macedonians. The members of these groups live mainly in the regions of Korça and Kukës.

Some 95.2% of the sample knew at least one foreign language, 29.0% knew two and 7.2% knew three. The most popular foreign language was Greek, which indicates that most of the returning migrants gained their migration experience in that country.

## Level of education

Most returning migrants had a medium level of education. More than half of them had completed secondary education (35.7% secondary general and 20.4% secondary vocational). The educational level of women was higher than that of men (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Highest education level by gender (%)**



N=1,000 respondents

The level of education of returning migrants from Italy, the UK and Germany was higher than those from Greece, and this trend is also confirmed by the literature<sup>33</sup>.

Returning migrants who had completed secondary vocational education studied engineering, manufacturing, construction and agriculture. Those who had completed university mostly studied social sciences, business or law, arts and humanities, engineering, manufacture and construction, education and sciences. Most of the respondents considered that education improves living conditions and that it is important to invest in education.

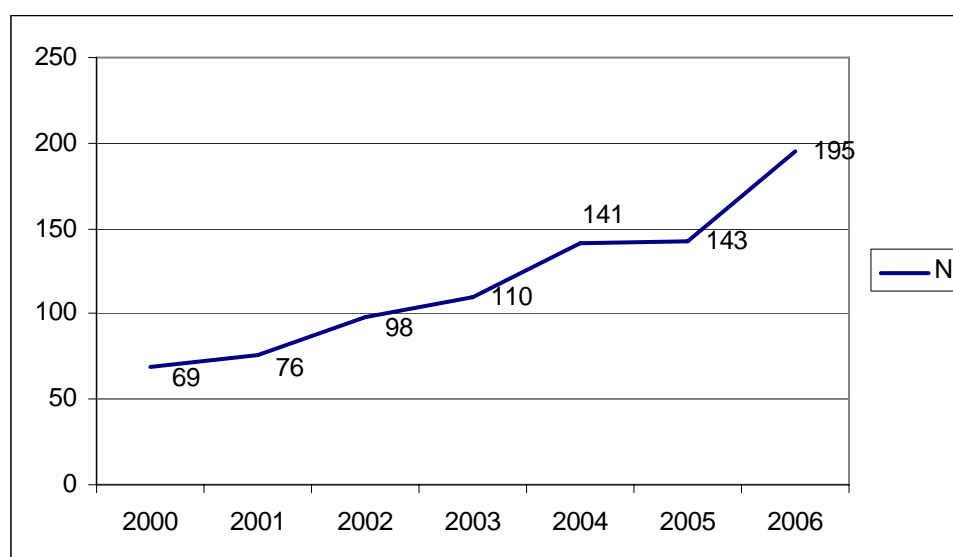
It is important to note that Albanian migrants worked predominantly in low-skill jobs, regardless of their education level. The ETF survey did not cover these issues in detail, and sector skill-needs analysis needs to be conducted, both in Albania and in the EU, in order to create conditions for regulated migration in response to labour market needs.

## 4.2 Migration history

Return migration is a recent phenomenon in Albania. Three-quarters of returning migrants came back to Albania after 2001, when the socioeconomic and political situation started to improve. The survey shows that the return of the migrants is a dynamic and increasing process (Figure 12).

<sup>33</sup> Lambrianidis, L. and Hatziprokopiou P., 'Albanian return migration: migrants tend to return to their country of origin after all', in R. King, N. Mai and S. Schwandner-Sievers (eds.), *The New Albanian Migration*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton-Portland, 2005, pp. 93–117.

**Figure 12. Number of returnees during the period 2000 – 2006**



N=832 returnees since 2000

The returning migrants had been abroad for an average of 5.7 years.

Married returning migrants were asked whether they had migrated with their husband or wife: 37% of them had done so, while 63% preferred their spouse to remain in Albania.

Preferred destinations were overwhelmingly in the EU, mirroring the pattern for potential migrants. The four most popular 'first destination countries' for returning migrants were:

- Greece: 68.1%;
- Italy: 19.3%;
- UK: 5.5%;
- Germany: 4.1%.

These data are different from the desired destinations expressed by potential migrants:

- Italy: 31.2%;
- Greece: 26.5%;
- UK: 14.7%.

The survey shows that some of the returning migrants (20.4%) had re-migrated from their first destination country to countries with higher income opportunities and better living conditions<sup>34</sup>, following a certain trajectory in the migration cycle<sup>35</sup> (see Figure 13). According to Labrianidis and Lyberaki<sup>36</sup> and Russell King<sup>37</sup>, Greece is seen as a country of transit and destination. The topography of the Greek–Albanian border – predominantly a mountain region – presents difficulties in terms of border control.

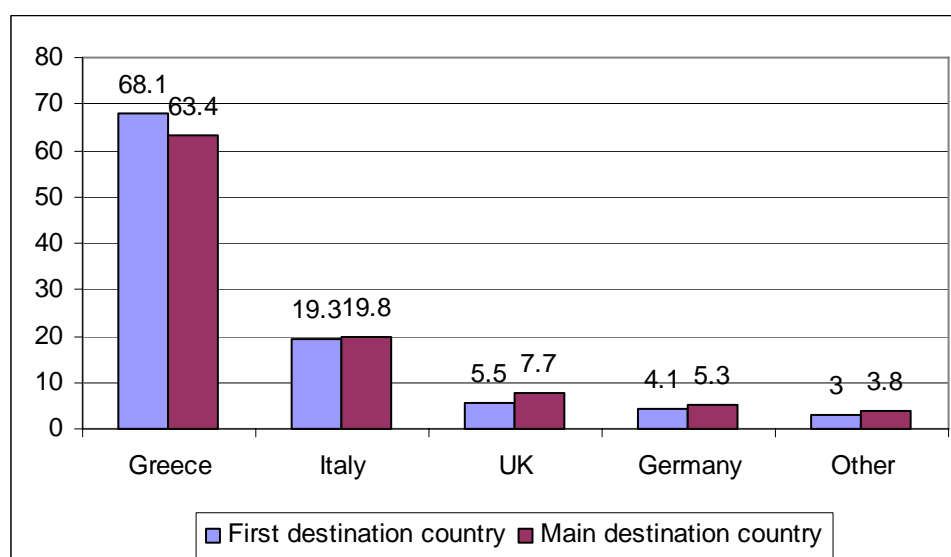
<sup>34</sup> During the fieldwork, most of those interviewed stated that they preferred the UK to Greece because they were assured of greater income and better living conditions there, and because they would encounter no racism against Albanians.

<sup>35</sup> Many scholars think that a cycle exists in Albanian migration. Albanians from rural or remote areas of the country migrate first to the richer coastal regions or to Tirana. These areas then act as a platform both for a better life for the family as a whole, and for the migration of some of its younger members after they have accumulated sufficient capital ( King and Vullnetari, *The World Bank*, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Labrianidis, L. and Lyberaki, A., *Albanian immigrants in Thessaloniki: paths of prosperity and oversights of their public image*, Paratiritis, Thessaloniki, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> King, R., 'Albania as a laboratory for the study of migration and development', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 7, No 2, August 2005.

**Figure 13. First and main destination countries (%)**



N=1,000 respondents

The most important reasons for migration were economic<sup>38</sup>: 'improvement of living standards', 'had no job/could not find a job' and 'nature of work unsatisfactory'. These economic push factors were visibly more powerful for potential migrants than for returning migrants. The macroeconomic situation of Albania in the 1990s, when the returning migrants' sample went abroad, was very different from the situation in 2006. The large migration peak in 1990, the crisis created by the collapse of the pyramid schemes<sup>39</sup> and the civil unrest in 1997 made people feel insecure, and migration was seen as a way of escaping problems. According to the survey, 2.8% of returning migrants indicated reasons such as 'fear of unrest' as the main reason for moving abroad.

Just 2.3% of the sample population mentioned 'to get an education' as a reason for migrating. Almost half of them studied at a university abroad, with around 70% completing their studies. Almost all migrants who left for educational reasons remained in the host country after studying. Most usually worked initially as salaried unskilled workers. Some of them managed to improve their professional situation in the course of their longest job abroad, becoming a skilled worker, a professional worker or a middle manager. Italy was the first destination country of almost half of the migrants who went abroad to study<sup>40</sup>. Among other factors, this is linked to the scholarship opportunities offered by the Italian government for Albanian students – almost 4,000 in 2007<sup>41</sup>. According to the OECD, around 6,000 Albanians studied abroad in 2001<sup>42</sup>. Other sources estimate much higher figures<sup>43</sup>.

The survey shows that most of the male returning migrants had worked for the longest period of time in the destination country in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and hospitality and catering. Women worked in domestic help, hospitality and catering. Some 94.0% of the migrants worked for the longest period of time in salaried employment, the majority of them as unskilled workers. In many

<sup>38</sup> Barjaba, K., 'Albanian State Emigration Policy', paper presented at the International Conference on Albanian Migration and New Transnationalism, Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, 6–7 September 2002.

<sup>39</sup> At the beginning of the transition period, Albania had a very underdeveloped financial sector, and demand for private credit could not be satisfied by the existing lending structure. As a result, informal lending and deposit-taking companies were created, based on family ties and financed by remittances. These were not sustainable and led to the pyramid schemes. For more details, see Jarvis, C., 'The Rise and Fall of Albania's Pyramid Schemes', *Finance and Development Magazine*, IMF, Vol. 37, no.1 March 2000. Available at [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2000/03/jarvis.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2000/03/jarvis.htm)

<sup>40</sup> This information is based on only a few cases (23). Thus, its margin of error is very high and definitive conclusions cannot be taken from the data.

<sup>41</sup> See [www.ansa.it/balcani/albania/20071019182134471376.html](http://www.ansa.it/balcani/albania/20071019182134471376.html)

<sup>42</sup> INSTAT, *Becoming an Adult. Challenges and Potentials of Youth in Albania*, Tirana, 2005, p.25.

<sup>43</sup> UNDP, *From Brain Drain to Brain Gain: Mobilising Albania's Skilled Diaspora*, Tirana, April 2006, p. 8. This study, using different references, suggests that between 2,000 and 4,000 Albanians leave the country every year to undertake university studies abroad. In Italian universities alone there are some 12,000 Albanian students. These data do not take into account children of households who have migrated and remain abroad.

cases this resulted in a lowering of their skills. The survey shows that 60.0% of returning migrants with secondary professional or university education worked as unskilled workers.

Only 10.2% of returning migrants increased their skill levels. The level of education did not significantly influence mobility in terms of skills. Greece had a stronger demand for unskilled labour in construction, agriculture and services, compared with Italy, Germany and the UK (see Table 5). Labrianidis and Lyberaki<sup>44</sup>, analysing returning migrants from Italy and Greece, noted that the rates of entrepreneurship were higher in Italy<sup>45</sup>.

**Table 5. Employment of returning migrants by destination countries and gender (%)**

|                             | Greece |        | Germany |        | Italy |        | UK   |        |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|-------|--------|------|--------|
|                             | Male   | Female | Male    | Female | Male  | Female | Male | Female |
| Agriculture                 | 35.3   | 7.5    | 0       | 0      | 12.6  | 5.3    | 13.6 | 0      |
| Manufacturing               | 9.6    | 4.5    | 12.1    | 0      | 12.1  | 10.5   | 13.6 | 0      |
| Construction                | 34.8   | 1.5    | 27.3    | 0      | 35.1  | 0      | 34.1 | 0      |
| Commerce                    | 0.6    | 1.5    | 6.1     | 12.5   | 2.9   | 0      | 0    | 0      |
| Petty trade                 | 2.3    | 4.5    | 0       | 0      | 3.4   | 5.3    | 2.3  | 0      |
| Hotels and restaurants      | 5.4    | 11.9   | 33.3    | 37.5   | 13.2  | 15.8   | 25.0 | 27.3   |
| Domestic                    | 0.2    | 49.3   | 0       | 12.5   | 0     | 36.8   | 0    | 63.6   |
| Public utilities            | 4.2    | 0      | 6.1     | 0      | 2.9   | 0      | 0    | 0      |
| Public admin.               | 0      | 3      | 0       | 12.5   | 0     | 0      | 0    | 9      |
| Transport                   | 3.3    | 0      | 0       | 0      | 3.4   | 0      | 0    | 0      |
| Repairs                     | 3.7    | 14.9   | 6.1     | 25.0   | 10.3  | 21.0   | 11.4 | 0      |
| Other                       | 0.5    | 0      | 3.0     | 0      | 2.9   | 5.3    | 0    | 0      |
| No answer                   | 0      | 1.5    | 6.1     | 0      | 1.1   | 0      | 0    | 0      |
| Total                       | 100    | 100    | 100     | 100    | 100   | 100    | 100  | 100    |
| Total number of respondents | 567    | 67     | 46      | 7      | 178   | 20     | 66   | 11     |

Only 3.5% of the respondents (35 individuals) stated that they received appropriate pre-departure training. Where such training did take place, it consisted mainly of foreign language skills and, for the very few, professional courses.

On average, 16.5% of returning migrants had studied or undergone training in the destination country. This percentage was more than twice as high in the UK, Germany and Italy than in Greece. The figure was higher for migrants with university studies. Those with low education levels received on-the-job training.

The survey shows that 48.4% of returning migrants had periods when they were unable to find a job in the destination country. The average duration of such periods was around five months.

<sup>44</sup> Labrianidis, L. and Lyberaki, A., 'Back and forth and in-between: Albanian return-migrants from Greece and Italy', *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Labrianidis, L. and Hatziprokopiou, P., 'Albanian return migration: migrants tend to return to their country of origin after all', in R. King, N. Mai and S. Schwandner-Sievers (eds.), *The New Albanian Migration*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton-Portland, 2005 pp. 93–117.

Unemployment rates were higher for migrants with primary education and secondary general compared to those with secondary vocational and university education.

## Remittances

According to the survey, 73.3% of the returnees regularly sent remittances to their households. More skilled workers sent remittances than unskilled workers. More returning migrants from the UK, Germany and Italy sent remittances than those from Greece, though the differences were not very significant. This may reflect the higher earning potential of skilled workers in countries such as the UK and Italy, compared with Greece<sup>46</sup>.

Remittances were mainly for the following, in order of priority:

- living expenses;
- furniture/households goods;
- savings;
- business investments.

Data on the use of remittances show that they were mostly used for consumption and non-productive investment (such as housing), reflecting the fact that Albanian migration is a survival strategy. Consequently, remittances have improved the living conditions of many families, but have had a limited role in sustainable job creation. This is why, according to De Zwager et al.<sup>47</sup>, 'migration creates pressure for more migration'.

## 4.3 Returning migrants' experiences

### Reasons for returning

Return migration to Albania has been both voluntary and forced. Up until the mid 1990s the most common form was forced return, mainly from Greece and Italy. According to Rayneri (2001)<sup>48</sup>, over 1.4 million Albanians were deported in the period 1990 – 1998<sup>49</sup>. Organised voluntary return has been most common from the UK, Belgium and Germany.

Individual voluntary return began during the mid 1990s. People who had migrated during 1991 – 1992 to Greece and Italy began to return to Albania. The collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997 and the economic and political crisis that followed interrupted this trend<sup>50</sup>.

In the survey, returning migrants were asked about their reasons for returning to Albania. Based on what they considered to be their main reasons, the migrants were classified into four groups.

The prime reason was forced return by the authorities of the destination country, after migrants were found not to have correct documentation, or with expired permits.

Another reason for return was the failure to integrate into the labour market of the host country. This included those who could not find work, had low income or were laid off by an employer or had their contract come to an end. Others cited poor health and integration and discrimination problems.

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<sup>46</sup> King, R., Dalipaj, M. and Mai, N., 'Gendering Migration and Remittances: Evidence from London and Northern Albania', *InterScience*, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> De Zwager, N., Gedeshi, I., Germenji, E. and Nikas, Ch., *Competing for Remittances*, IOM, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Reyneri, E., 'Migrants' Involvement in Irregular Employment in the Mediterranean Countries of the European Union', International Paper Series, ILO, Geneva, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> This figure must be interpreted carefully, as many Albanians returned to Greece even on the same day, and therefore the same person may have been deported several times.

<sup>50</sup> King, R., Mai, N. and Dalipaj M., 'Exploding the migration myths. Analysis and recommendations for the European Union, the UK and Albania', The Fabian Society and Oxfam, London, 2003.

Other migrants returned for family or psychological reasons, for example to join their family, because their parents or spouse wished them to return, to get married, or to spend the rest of their life in their home country.

Finally, there were successful migrants (7.7% of the sample) who returned after they had realised their initial plans for starting a business, or had saved enough money.

Reasons for return varied according to levels of education and employment status. Most of those with a low level of education came back because they were forced to do so, or for family reasons. People with a university education, as well as citing family reasons, were more likely to come back because they wanted to start a business (11.3%).

Very few returning migrants (1.6%) were aware of any government support programmes facilitating return. In 1996 the Albanian government, in collaboration with the Italian authorities, initiated a project to encourage Albanian migrants to return. However, interest on the part of the Albanian community in Italy was minimal. In 1998 there was another effort from the Albanian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to initiate a project that would provide financial support for the return of successful migrants, but this never started as a result of lack of financial resources<sup>51</sup>.

## Return and development

Return migration should be seen as a resource for the socioeconomic development of the country through financial capital (savings), human capital (skills and experience acquired abroad) and social capital.

In the survey, 89.0% of the returning migrants reported that they had brought back savings. Literature suggests that Albanians have higher saving rates than migrants from other countries. Korovilas (1999) estimates that each Albanian migrant in Greece could have saved at least USD 2,340 annually<sup>52</sup>. Conti et al. (2003)<sup>53</sup> estimate that Albanian migrants in Italy save on average 55.2% of their earnings. Gedeshi et al. (2003)<sup>54</sup> estimate the average household savings for Albanian migrants to be EUR 5,056. This figure is confirmed by the IOM study (2005)<sup>55</sup>.

The present survey shows that savings were mainly used for:

- living expenses;
- business investment;
- furniture/households goods;
- savings.

There appears to be a significant difference among respondents regarding the use of savings, depending on their educational level: more people with secondary or university education tended to invest in businesses. There were no statistically significant differences between the use of savings and the destination countries and type of employment abroad.

On their return to Albania, 74.3% of respondents found a job, with an average search period of 3.4 months. The figure for those who found work on return is much higher for migrants with medium and high levels of education (see Figure 14).

There exists a positive relationship between return migration and self-employment. The survey shows that 51.5% of returning migrants became either self-employed or an employer. The remaining migrants found salaried employment.

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<sup>51</sup> Barjaba, K., 'Albanian State Emigration Policy', paper presented at the International Conference on Albanian Migration and New Transnationalism, Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, 6–7 September 2002.

<sup>52</sup> Korovilas, J., 'The Albanian economy in transition: the role of remittances and pyramid investment scheme', *Post-Communist Economies*, 11 (3), 1999.

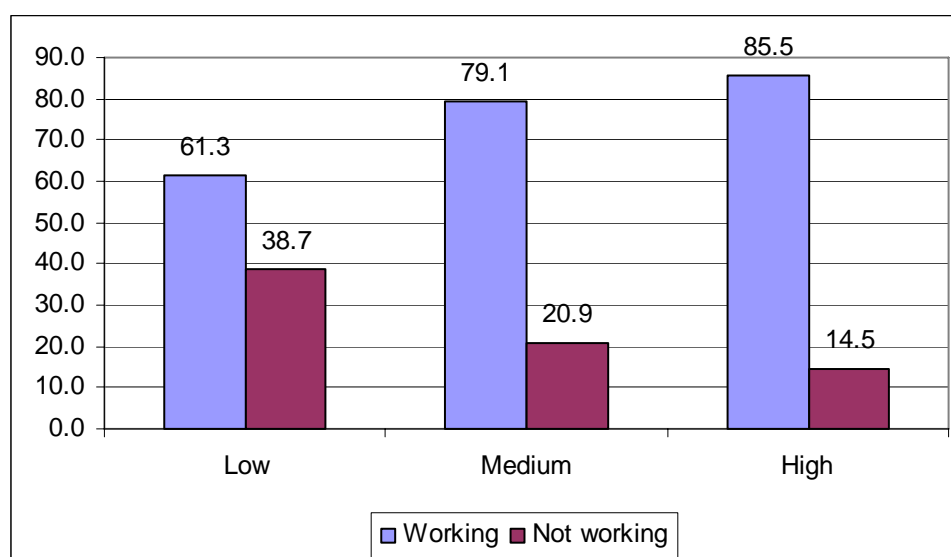
<sup>53</sup> Conti, C., Natale, M. and Strozza, S., 'Le rimesse degli immigrati: determinanti, modalita di invio e aspettative di impiego', In N. Acocella e E. Sonnino (a cura di), *Movimenti di persone e movimenti di capitali in Europa*, Roma, 2003.

<sup>54</sup> Gedeshi, I. and Mara, H., *The encouragement of social-economic development in relation to the growth of the role of the remittances*, UNDP, Tirana, 2003.

<sup>55</sup> De Zwager, N., Gedeshi, I., Germenji, E. and Nikas, Ch., *Competing for Remittances*, IOM, Tirana, 2005.



**Figure 14. Work status by educational level on return (%)**



N=1,000 respondents

Migrants' businesses were mostly in the service sector, in such areas as petty trade, hotels or restaurants, maintenance, commerce and transport. In many cases they were small businesses with low productivity, often in the informal sector<sup>56</sup>.

The survey indicates that the opportunities for self-employment increased according to the duration of the migration period. The literature suggests that the likelihood of starting a business is higher among migrants returning from countries other than Greece<sup>57</sup>, but this finding is not confirmed by the current survey, as there were no significant differences between the destination countries.

There was a correlation between work experience in the destination country and the businesses established at home. Labrianidis et al. (2005) and Kilic et al. (2007) argue that Albanian migrants 'replicate businesses in which they work abroad'. The current survey partially confirms this thesis. Only a portion of returning migrants replicated their work experience in the businesses they have established in Albania. A high level of mobility was observed among returning migrants. They had a lower level of participation in agriculture, manufacturing and construction than their migration experience would have suggested. Some 63.0% of returning migrants said that the experiences they had gained abroad helped them to find better job opportunities in Albania.

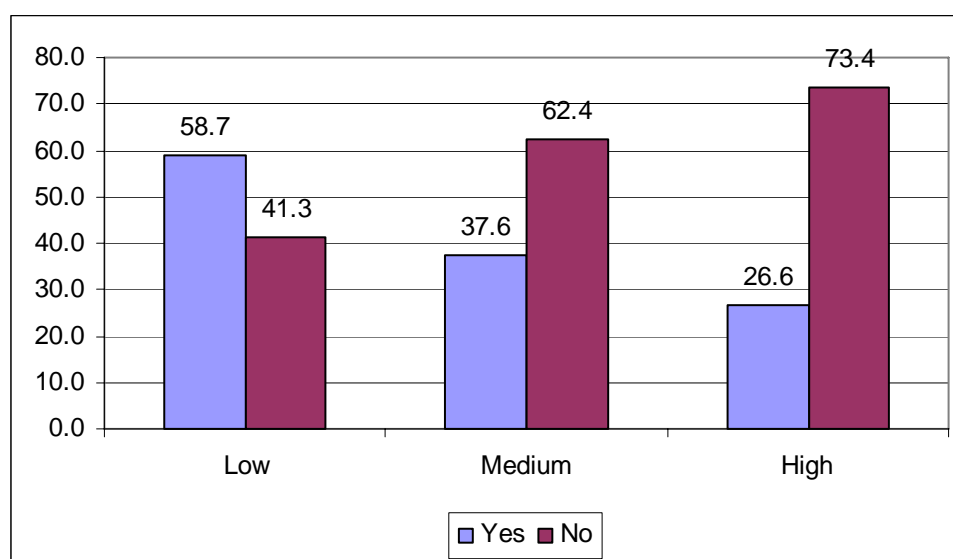
## 4.4 Future intentions

The survey indicates that 42.9% of returning migrants wished to remigrate from Albania. Kilic et al. (2007) noted that many returning migrants had yet to complete their 'migration cycles', nor had they attained a target level of savings and skills in order to engage in self-employment activities on return. The higher the education level, the lower the intentions to migrate again (see Figure 15).

<sup>56</sup> World Bank., *Albania, Labor Market Assessment*, Report No. 34597-Al, May 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Kilic, T., Carletto, G., Davis, B. and Zezza, A., 'Investing Back Home: Return Migration and Business Ownership in Albania', FAO ESA Working Paper, 07-08, 2007; The World Bank., *Albania: Urban Growth, Rural Stagnation and Migration. A Poverty Assessment*, Tirana, 24 July 2007.

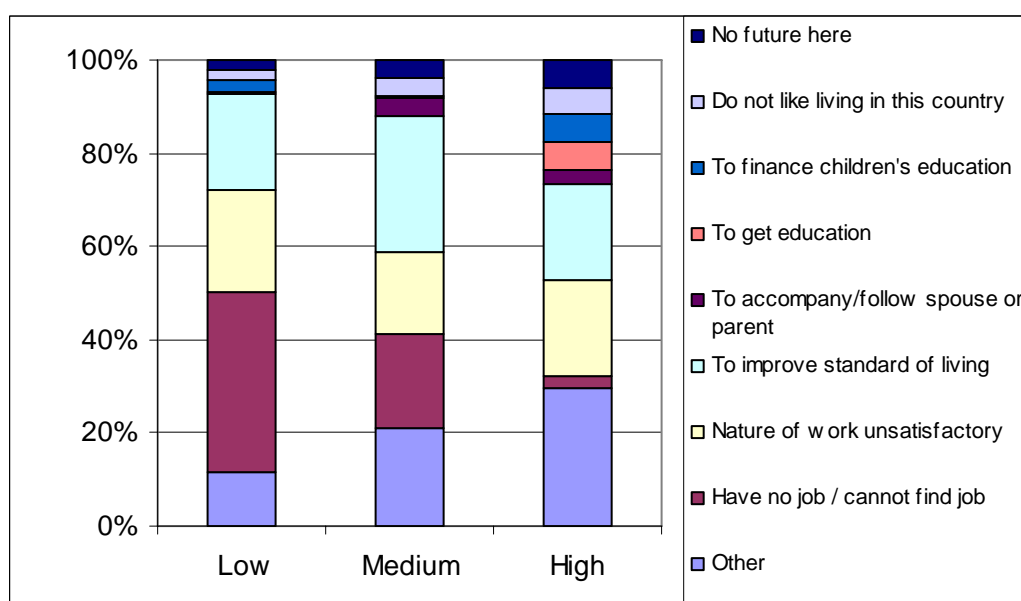
**Figure 15. Intention to migrate again by educational level (%)**



N=1,000 respondents

The main reasons for remigrating include: 'have no job/cannot find a job', 'to improve standard of living' and 'nature of work is unsatisfactory'. These reasons vary according to the educational level (see Figure 16).

**Figure 16. Reasons for remigration by educational level (%)**



N=429 respondents who intended to migrate again

Most returning migrants would like to migrate again to their previous main destination country. Thus, the most likely destinations were Greece, Italy, the UK and Germany. Around 10% of returning migrants who intended to remigrate wanted to go to the USA or Australia.

More than half of those who worked as professionals, high or middle managers, or skilled workers in Albania hoped to work at the same level in the destination country. According to the survey, educational level was closely connected with expected work level in the migration destination.

## 4.5 Returning migrants' economic and living conditions

The average household size of returning migrants was 4.5 individuals. Most of the respondents owned their own houses or flats, which they had either built themselves or bought through the privatisation process at the beginning of the 1990s.

Ownership of certain consumer durable items was widespread. Most of the households had televisions, refrigerators, cookers, radios and washing machines; 43.0% owned a car. According to the survey, 50.0% of respondents owned land.

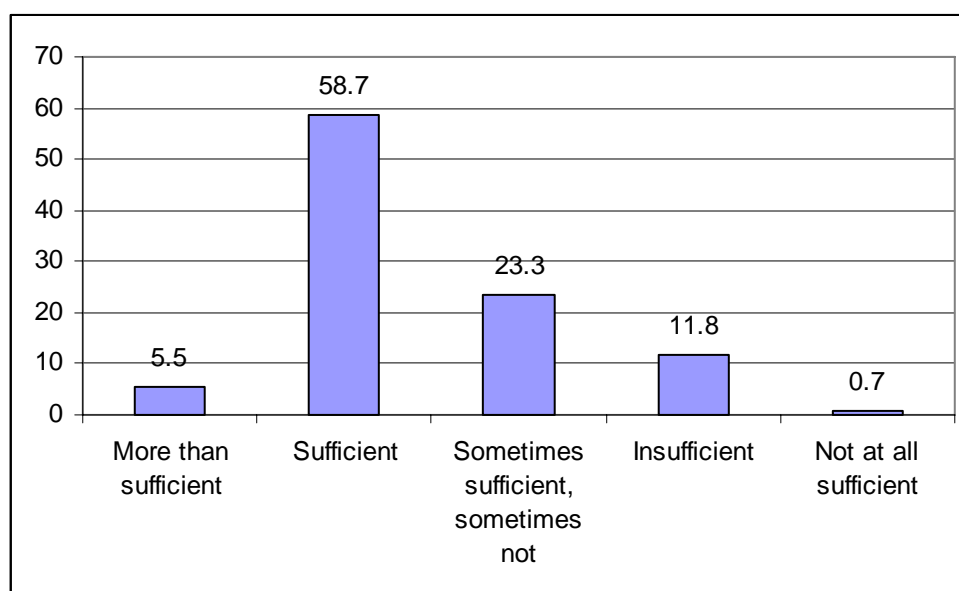
Households received most of their income from four sources:

- salaried work;
- agricultural production;
- pension and/or government economic assistance;
- remittances.

Remittances from international migrants represented an important source of income: according to the survey, one in five households received an average of € 2,000 a year in remittances. It is important to note that only 3.6% of returning migrants received pensions or social benefits from abroad. The majority of people did not receive a pension because they did not contribute to a pension scheme while abroad.

Returning migrants were asked whether their financial situation was sufficient to meet their basic needs. Most of them stated that it was sufficient or more than sufficient (see Figure 17); 68.0% stated that their economic and living conditions were visibly better than they were in the pre-migration period.

**Figure 17. Perceived financial situation of households (%)**



N=1,000 respondents

Economic and living conditions of the families of returning migrants varied according to the migration country and the time spent abroad. Most returning migrants from Italy were in a better economic situation than those returning from Greece.

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF THE SURVEY FINDINGS

### 5.1 Migration profile and factors determining migration

Unemployment and poverty remain the main push factors for Albanian migration. Albanians view migration as an investment in both their own future and that of their children. The survey data presented in this report suggest that migration will continue to play a role in Albania in the short term, with 44.2% of 18–40 year olds interviewed saying they were thinking of leaving Albania to live and work abroad. However, if the actual ability to go abroad is taken into account (likelihood of migrating within six months or two years; ability to finance the move; knowledge of most likely destination (MLD) language; information about the MLD; possession of at least four of the six documents necessary and with no problem getting the remaining ones), this percentage considerably diminishes to 17.8%. According to the survey, 42.9% of returning migrants planned to emigrate again.

Among the reasons for migration, education was also mentioned, with 5.4% of respondents indicating such an intention. These were mainly younger people (under 30 years of age). Many Albanian students pursue their studies abroad and prefer to remain there upon graduation, given the limited employment opportunities in their own country.

With regard to the intended destination country of those thinking of migrating, 81.4% of respondents said that their preferred migration destinations were EU countries such as Italy, Greece, the UK and Germany. Around 18% would like to migrate to the USA or Canada.

The majority of Albanian potential migrants had medium or low education levels. Migration per se was not an incentive to pursue a particular type of training or field of education. The main reasons for going abroad were to improve one's standard of living. Some 62.1% of potential migrants had a job, which suggests that having a job does not prevent migration. What is necessary is a decent job, with good working conditions and fair pay.

Although the EU is the main migration destination, European skill needs are currently not taken into account systematically in the decision to migrate. Furthermore, the learning benefits of working and living in an EU country are not captured systematically, i.e., the experience is largely haphazard. There are few programmes for EU-oriented migration, and where they do exist, they are not being used. Little or no training is available for migrants prior to their departure to the EU, but where it is used, VET and language training are rated as most useful. However, it is worth noting that vocational training is not intended to prepare or encourage individuals to migrate. A strong VET programme will initially benefit the employment situation in Albania.

Skill shortages and oversupply as a result of migration are difficult to quantify in Albania, and the current survey does not cover this area. For this reason, sector skill-needs analysis should be undertaken in order to study these issues better within the framework of potential managed migration frameworks.

### 5.2 Benefits and impacts of migration

The main benefit of migration is to improve individual migrants' socio-economic status, and, through remittances, to improve the living conditions of family members remaining in Albania. The overwhelming majority of potential migrants interviewed in this study expected to send remittances home, and the vast majority of returning migrants confirmed this tendency.

However, while the immediate living expenses of relatives at home was almost always the first-mentioned use of remittances, many potential migrants, and especially returning migrants, also had an aspiration to use, or had experience of using, remittances for other purposes, including the purchase of property and household items, and investment in a business. Indeed, the majority of returning migrants interviewed appeared to have invested some of their savings or remittances in a business activity, and had benefited from this in terms of employment on their return. An aspiration to invest in business activities was less prevalent among potential migrants (21.6%). It is also worth noting that it is difficult to assess the quality or significance of businesses in which returning migrants have invested, given the size of the informal sector in Albania.

In contrast to the situation with remittances, few return migrants or potential migrants interviewed in this study either had gained, or expected to gain, significant training or educational benefits from migration, either before they left or during their spell abroad.

Migration has had an impact on the pool of highly skilled Albanians, though the phenomenon of brain drain is difficult to quantify. Some literature refers to fact that in the period 1990 – 2003, approximately 45% of university professors and researchers emigrated<sup>58</sup>. Unfortunately, many highly educated migrants do not work in their areas of specialisation, thus transforming Albania's brain drain into a 'brain waste'.

## 5.3 Migration management policies

A great deal of literature already exists on the migration phenomenon in Albania. The ETF survey results can contribute to an increased awareness of the skills and educational levels of migrants, which could potentially allow a move away from restrictive immigration policies and towards win-win situations for both Albania and receiving countries. Knowledge of the education and skills dimension of migration is key to managed labour migration, if the EU wishes to join the global hunt for talent and stay competitive, and if sending countries wish to 'gain' and not 'waste' brains.

The ETF findings demonstrate that there is no one typical migrant profile. However, the role of migrants as important actors in the development of their home countries, not only in terms of their remittances, is confirmed. The issue is that the potential of returning migrants to promote development is not adequately supported by specific schemes or measures, and Albania is no exception in this regard.

Albania is now seeing the start of return migration, and reintegration is becoming a priority. In reality, the lack of reintegration has led to a pattern of circular migration. Migrants often remigrate following their return because their return to Albania was forced, because they have failed to achieve their financial goals, or because they continue to be unable to find adequate employment. The relationship between migration and development is not straightforward. The findings of the ETF survey suggest that return migration is a potential gain that has not so far been fully utilised in Albania. Work experience abroad, even for comparatively short spells, facilitates the accumulation of financial capital and useful skills on a scale not otherwise possible. However, reaping the benefits of return migration is not something that happens automatically. Albania needs to offer effective reintegration programmes for potential returning migrants, including better reception and advice on investment opportunities, and access to business support and credit for entrepreneurship. However there is a lack of sufficient funds for such initiatives.

Migrants' return, even if it is temporary or virtual, can play a useful role in fostering the transfer of skills, together with other forms of 'brain circulation'. One interesting project in this direction is the three-year 'brain gain' programme, which will support the Albanian government in the preparation of a policy framework on engaging the diaspora with the country's development<sup>59</sup>.

On a related issue, in order to fully exploit the potential of returning migrants to enhance local development, policy makers in Albania should establish a system for recognising qualifications and validating non-formal and informal learning. As the ETF survey demonstrates, on-the-job training was the most common type of training undertaken, and such a system of recognition is required in order for its benefits to be realised. Albania is a member of the Bologna process and is already working on the establishment of a National Qualification Framework (NQF). The country is also following the developments of the EU Copenhagen processes, and these initiatives together may provide a basis for improving quality, transparency and recognition of qualifications for the Albanian secondary and higher education systems.

One solution for the short to medium term could be the establishment of information centres to evaluate qualifications and provide advice and information on recognition issues. These centres would not certify credentials or qualifications, but instead would provide information services that draw on knowledge that is available within a sector or region and from other countries. The aim would be to disseminate information and guidance on the recognition of skills and qualifications in particular

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<sup>58</sup> Barjaba, K., 'Albania: Looking beyond borders', mimeo, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> [www.migrationdrc.org/publications/other\\_publications/Brain\\_Gain\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_english\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/other_publications/Brain_Gain_Policy_Paper_english_FINAL.pdf)

countries and the possible ways of achieving recognition, as well to outline methods by which individuals could document their skills and knowledge in order to make them recognisable. The advice would relate to academic and professional qualifications, and to ways of documenting informal learning to ensure its recognition within national qualification structures. These centres could also act as more specialised resources to provide advice and information on the requirements for the right to practise particular professions in both specific countries and the home country. Such centres could be the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and/or the National Employment Service.

The ETF study confirms a general tendency towards a mismatch between the level of education and skills held by migrants and the work they carried out in the destination countries. This is mainly a result of two factors.

- *Labour demand in destination countries.* This aspect can be managed through bilateral labour agreements between Albania and destination countries, identifying the skill needs of the host labour markets and adequately preparing migrants to respond to these requirements. Pre-departure training can play an important role. Albania has an agreement with Italy, based on an annual skill-based quota system, but there are issues linked to its implementation.
- *Illegality.* Illegal migrants are in a weaker position in the host labour markets and are often forced to accept low-qualified and low-paid jobs. Many of the returning migrants who were interviewed reported severe cases of exploitation, with an average working week of up to 55 hours. An increase in legal opportunities should be coupled with information campaigns on the risks of illegal migration.

Developments in Albanian migration reflect changes in the destination countries. In several of these countries there has been an improvement of the migration legislation. There has been a new emphasis on liberalising migration flux in both Italy and Greece. This is also a reflection of increasingly coherent policies, stemming from a consensus on the part of the various sections of the political spectrum.

In Albania, progress has been made in improving migration management, though this remains an ongoing process. International organisations, civil society and the government need to coordinate their efforts in order to create an environment for 'constructive' migration and sustainable reintegration. New issues have arisen with regard to migration management: migrants' human, social and financial capital should be used in a way that will benefit both destination countries and Albania itself. In this context, the government has carefully reviewed migration legislation in the countries that receive the highest number of Albanian migrants, in an attempt to better understand and coordinate its policies with them.

Migration as a result of poor basic conditions must be dealt with first by increasing the political and economic stability of Albania, and second by facilitating legal migration. In recent years the Albanian migration flux has been moderated by increased economic, political and social stability. As the political and economic stability of the country increases, a decrease in migratory pressures and fluctuations can be expected. In fact, Albanian migration has reached a controllable level. It is also predicted that internal migration will decline because the Albanian community has become increasingly consolidated.

Coordination with destination countries remains a priority. Albanian migrants are no longer seen as a burden to host countries. In the past they failed to integrate into the market of their receiving country and did not have the capacity to manage their financial resources efficiently. This is no longer the case. Albanian migrants are seen as productive and valued members of the labour force. Furthermore, cultural integration has been facilitated as a result of changing views towards Albanian migrants. Increased integration mitigates negative effects and changes negative images.

Albania must work towards revising, together with EU countries, the existing bi-lateral migration agreement as well as trying to conclude new ones. This could facilitate legal labour migration, responding to both demand and supply and focusing on temporary migration schemes. In order to ensure that such arrangements really are temporary, the right incentives should be put in place; for example, unemployment and pension benefits should be portable.

Data collection on migration in Albania improved with the introduction of a migration module in the last LSMS. Capacity building of the National Institute of Statistics in relation to migration is essential, and especially cooperation projects between the Albanian statistical office and receiving countries on

aligning data collection methodologies and knowledge sharing. Here, it is important to gather data on the level of education (ISCED), gender and, where possible, professional profile (ISCO) of migrants. Data should also be collected on skill oversupplies and shortages in the Albanian labour market, which can then be taken into consideration in the design of measures concerning managed/circular migration, the prevention of brain drain, and negotiations of new bilateral labour agreements. In terms of indicators, employment and unemployment rates by occupation in both Albania and receiving countries should be compared with the composition of the migration flows.

Albania already has a National Strategy and Action Plan on Migration, and implementation has become a priority. The ministry should focus on further strengthening the Migration Policies Department, which has a leading role to play. Activities that the ministry should focus on include the following.

- The necessary infrastructure must be created to actively disseminate information on regular migration channels, work opportunities and the risks associated with illegal practices. The ministry has been involved in various IOM projects relating to these issues since 2005. It is now important to translate the project experiences to the systemic level, thus ensuring sustainability.
- A vocational training component should be included in the newly negotiated labour agreements, aimed at improving the qualification levels of migrants; this could lead to knowledge transfer back to the home country.
- A skill component must be included in national migration policies, aimed at raising the skill levels of the work force and addressing the needs of migrants with different skill levels.
- There is a need to build up the infrastructure/network of private and public training institutions in Albania to provide language and cultural adaptation training, as required.
- Measures and incentives must be developed, jointly with the private sector, to attract highly skilled migrants back home on a permanent or temporary basis.
- It is necessary to create training modules for communities heavily affected by migration, covering the optimisation of the use of remittances and the strengthening of the overall development effects.
- EU best practice in the field of labour migration management should be disseminated.

The National Employment Service needs to focus on the following activities.

- The 12 regional employment offices should work on migration issues, and relevant capacity building should be provided. The function of the local migration specialists should be strengthened and extended to all offices.
- Education and training measures must be introduced for returning migrants, and returnees must be encouraged to participate in existing VET measures.
- There is a need to develop specific adaptation schemes for returning migrants for business start-ups in order to utilise and valorise experience gained abroad. Often migrants are not familiar with local regulations for starting a business, nor with issues relating to local labour market and business practices.
- An electronic register should be created for potential migrants, including details of skill profiles. This could be used in managed migration schemes, through which European employers request specific professional profiles and the National Employment Service manages the recruitment on their behalf. This has already been undertaken on project basis. However, it needs to be scaled up to become a routine practice, through initiatives including training some of the staff of the employment offices on European-style recruitment techniques and HRD management. In this way, the overall capacity of the employment service in relation to job mediation would also be improved.

## ANNEX 1. COMPARISON BETWEEN POTENTIAL MIGRANTS PLANNING/NOT PLANNING TO MIGRATE

| Variables                  | Categories                                  | Plans to migrate (%) |      |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------|------|
|                            |   | Yes                  | No   |
| Gender                     | Male  | 46.9                 | 53.1 |
|                            | Female                                      | 40.9                 | 59.1 |
| Marital status             | Never married                               | 49.8                 | 50.2 |
|                            | Engaged                                     | 54.5                 | 45.5 |
|                            | Married                                     | 37.0                 | 63.0 |
| Have children              | Yes   | 34.9                 | 65.1 |
|                            | No  | 50.9                 | 49.1 |
| Highest level of education | Primary                                     | 50.0                 | 50.0 |
|                            | Secondary general                           | 40.9                 | 59.1 |
|                            | Secondary vocational                        | 44.8                 | 55.2 |
|                            | University                                  | 40.1                 | 59.9 |
| Field of Study             | General                                     | 41.6                 | 58.4 |
|                            | Education                                   | 66.7                 | 33.3 |
|                            | Humanities and arts                         | 38.1                 | 61.9 |
|                            | Social sciences, business and law           | 31.1                 | 68.9 |
|                            | Science                                     | 18.8                 | 81.3 |
|                            | Engineering, manufacturing and construction | 43.4                 | 56.6 |
|                            | Agriculture                                 | 50.0                 | 50.0 |
|                            | Health and welfare                          | 43.5                 | 56.5 |
|                            | Services                                    | 36.4                 | 63.6 |
| Other languages            | Other                                       | 45.5                 | 54.5 |
|                            | None  | 40.8                 | 59.2 |
|                            | English                                     | 37.0                 | 63.0 |
|                            | French                                      | 51.2                 | 48.8 |
|                            | Italian                                     | 51.5                 | 48.5 |
|                            | Greek                                       | 77.6                 | 22.4 |
| Work type                  | Employer                                    | 0.0                  | 100  |
|                            | Self-employed                               | 34.1                 | 65.9 |
|                            | Salaried worker                             | 47.8                 | 52.2 |
|                            | Casual worker                               | 78.9                 | 21.1 |
|                            | Unpaid family worker                        | 66.7                 | 33.3 |
| Work level                 | Professional                                | 35.6                 | 64.4 |
|                            | High management                             | 53.3                 | 46.7 |
|                            | Middle management                           | 5.3                  | 94.7 |
|                            | Skilled worker                              | 44.0                 | 56.0 |
|                            | Unskilled worker                            | 47.1                 | 52.9 |





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