



**DISCONNECTED:**  
Return from Germany  
and Reintegration Challenges  
of Albanian Asylum Seekers

BERLIN PROCESS SERIES

WORKING PAPER: MIGRATION / 3 / 2017

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## **Return from Germany and Reintegration Challenges of Albanian Asylum Seekers**

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Cooperation and Development Institute



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Return from Germany and Reintegration Challenges of Albanian Asylum Seekers

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Authors:

Ardian Hackaj, Ardita Shehaj

with the contribution of Marsela Sako, Neshat Zeneli and Mandrit Kamolli

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## **Preface**

Migration is still a Western Balkans phenomenon. Obviously the poverty-migration wave from the Balkan region to Germany, among else from Albania, had nothing to do with threads received in the homeland or with the need for physical protection, but was purely connected with hopes for a better future perspective and the intended improvement of standard of living in Germany. Moreover the Albanian migration to Germany during 2014 and 2016 with massive influx of asylum-requests was derived from some completely misunderstanding and misperception according to chances of remaining to stay in Germany through and after the asylum procedures.

European Union, enforced by Germany, has categorized in 2015 the Balkan countries Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro as “safe countries of origin”, as they did already in November 2014 referring to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia.

The consequences of that have been decisive and remarkable: Only 2.6 percent of asylum applications from Albanian migrants, predominantly young people in the age between 18 and 35, were accepted as “justified” by German immigration institutions.

However, even nowadays, at the begin of the year 2018, more than 56 percent of Albanians still don't see a future perspective in their country according to the last survey by Gallup International, a figure, that has almost doubled from the previous survey in 2012. Especially the young population of Albania left in the last five years the country, shrinking that special age-group from 25 percent in 2010 to 20 percent of the whole Albanian population in 2017. The unemployment-rate of especially young people, even with best education, remains to be dramatically high. Main reasons for mostly young Albanian citizens to leave their country are beside of tremendous unemployment also income deficiencies according to salary, which in many cases is lower than the social benefits in Germany, and additionally the lack of trust in state institutions, which are perceived to be corrupt and inefficient.

The challenge of “poverty migration” from the Balkan region to Western Europe and Germany has been therefore an important issue of the “Berlin-process”, was strongly debated in the summits of Vienna 2015, Paris 2016 and Trieste 2017 and will be again some “hot topic” of “shared challenges” in the London summit 2018, where security will be some keyword.

The following study “Disconnected: Return from Germany and Reintegration Challenges of Albanian Asylum Seekers”, elaborated by a high professional scientist team of the “Albanian Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI)/ ShtetiWeb” and supported by the Tirana-office of the Hanns-Seidel-Foundation (HSF), is already the 3rd Working Paper analysing the matter of Albanian migration.

It is primarily focused on the topic of return and reintegration of Albanian migrants, depicting, describing and analysing the path from asylum seeker requests in Germany in the period of 2014 to 2016 with all relevant expectations, challenges and constraints until the subsequent resettlement into Albania with all combined problems, difficulties and disappointments, which became evident when back in the homeland.

The study is characterized by methodology of scientific approach and is enriched by many case-examples and interviews, drawing a vivid picture of the past and present situation. It is insofar a profound continuation and completion of the previous CDI-HSF study "Comprehending Albanian Migration to Germany", published in Tirana in December 2016.

The following study investigates in a paramount and comprehensive level the external pull factors and internal push-factors of the Albanian case of emigration wave to Germany and elaborates "lesson-learnt" in order to achieve some improvement of understanding and solving the migration phenomenon.

The contents of the following study as part of the CDI-HSF "Berlin process-series-working papers" concretely provide some scientific documented illumination and analysis of the Albanian generally migrant-profile, describe the Albanian migrant experiences in the destiny-country Germany and give also some analysis of the perspectives of Albanian migrants after their return and reintegration into the society of the origin-country after having been rejected their asylum application.

The study finally adds some institutional and legal framework context on the reintegration topic, for example according to activities of Border Management Units, Public Service, Local Government or Non-State-Actors, and is completed by special conclusions and policy recommendations.

The elaboration of this study fully corresponds to the approach, intention and function of the project activities of the Hanns-Seidel-Office in Tirana, which has been established in 1992. The Tirana-office could celebrate therefore in October 2017 its 25th project-anniversary.

Among some wide range of multi-sectoral seminars, workshops and conferences according to current socio-political matters and topics of the central, regional and local administration and apart from adult education by senior experts in the sector of "Justice and Home Affairs", HSF-office in Tirana from the very beginning was intending to react on the current and special European challenge of Albanian migration.

This HSF-approach has been conducted not only by dealing with the migration-consequences, operationalized by seminars with German expertise for the Albanian border police units, but also conducted by coping with the migration-causes.

Beside of border police activities HSF in cooperation with local NGO and local scientific "think-tanks" like CDI/ShtetiWeb contributed to joint efforts to create living conditions which

should make the remaining stay or reintegration into Albania more attractive and bearable, particularly referring to the young generation.

Pointing out future prospects in order to avoid a further exodus must be combined by providing specific educational measures with the aim of increasing professional and social competences. It must be additionally fostered by some realistic design of employment possibilities and perspectives on the labour market. Special attention in this respect is hereby paid to the professionalizing of the Albanian youth – the “future-generation”.

The change of attitude and mind-set according to this challenging matter will be a long-term process which needs patience, strength and transposition-capacity, to which HSF-Office in Tirana was and will be committed by continuing project activities in Albania and in the whole region of the Western Balkans.

**Dr. Klaus Fiesinger**

*Regional Director for South Eastern Europe*

*Hanns-Seidel-Foundation Offices Tirana, Belgrade, Sofia and Zagreb*



## The Berlin Process and Migration

Migration entered into the areas covered by Berlin process in the Vienna Summit in 2015. It has been in the agenda of the following Western Balkans summits ever since.

In 2015 - in the height of the Syrian war - it became apparent that the Western Balkans Refugee Route could be managed only with the full cooperation and commitment of the Western Balkans countries. Hence the Vienna Summit declaration underlined the role of Balkan countries in the fields of "... migration, asylum and border management with a view to their European perspective". Practically Western Balkans countries were put in charge of protecting the southern flank of the European Union borders.

The Paris Summit in 2016 reflected the evolving migration situation in the EU: the focus now was on return & reintegration. Issues such as information exchange, joint operations to fight smugglers' networks & organized crime, enhanced cooperation between border police forces, etc became part of Berlin Process agenda. The Paris Summit support to the new approach for migration endorsed by the European Council on 28 June 2016<sup>1</sup>, mentions the economic migrants, and includes a "new framework of cooperation" that refers to "investment in partner countries" and to an "External Investment Plan".

In the Trieste Summit in 2017, the focus remains in preventing the irregular migration. No mention is made to the follow up of Paris summit regarding the "...support to the initiative of the European Investment Bank (EIB) in the Western Balkans to help foster investment, in line with new approach on migrations endorsed by the EC on June 28-29th".

In London in 2018, UK representatives continue to see migration through the lenses of "shared challenges", where security is the keyword.

Together with connectivity and youth, migration is the only policy area that has been present in the agenda of Western Balkans summits, once introduced in Vienna. However, its focus has changed from the initial border control to return & reintegration, security and prevention of potential terrorists from entering EU. This shifting of the agenda reflects the priority of member state partner countries vs. the WB6 ones. As we will explain further, Balkan countries are more concerned by migrant fluxes originating from the Balkans, more than the ones traversing the region.

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<sup>1</sup> The Council of the EU noted with regard to the Western Balkan countries that a majority of national lists of safe countries of origin include these countries. This suggests that the Western Balkan countries could be considered as safe countries of origin by all EU Member States.

## **The Berlin Process Series: a contribution of civil society in regional integration**

This is the 3rd CDI Working Paper analyzing Migration. It focuses on the return and reintegration of Albanian migrants logging an asylum seeker request in Germany in the period 2014-2016, and subsequently returned to Albania.

The Berlin Process Series started in November 2015 in Tirana as an initiative of the Cooperation and Development Institute/Shtetiweb supported by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Hanns Seidel Stiftung, and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (see: <http://cdinstitute.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ANGLISHT.pdf>).

It is conceived as a part of a wider contribution of WB6 Civil Society in the Berlin Process.

A complete library on the Berlin Process and selected themes of WB6 regional cooperation, can be consulted at the Observatory of Regional Integration (ORI), at <http://cdinstitute.eu/web/studime-dhe-analiza/?lang=en>

This Working Paper is supported by Hanns Seidel Stiftung.

## Methodology

### *i) The Migration Unit*

As we noticed, the 2014-2016 migration wave to Germany was characterized by the “family” feature. Albanians moved with their family members. Before, Albanian migrants were young men that - eventually - much latter either brought their family or went back home to marry and bring their bride. This time, even when they left alone, it was considered as a first step to set up the base in the destination country and then bring the family with very shortly. The family migration feature is different from former waves.

This “family” feature can be explained because of:

- the dangerousness of the migration venture was much lower this time - the no-VISA agreements and free- movement within the Schengen space stroke off the most dangerous and costly component of illegal migration i.e. illegal border crossing; and because:
- more than for a job, this time Albanians were looking for a future for them and their family.

As a result, in this part of the research we consider the “family unit” as a unitary migration unit. In this optic, the migration endeavor is the result of pull and push factors applied to all its components (attraction & pressure exerted to husband and / or wife and / or children, and / or other family members). To proceed with our research we hence introduce the “Migration Unit” (MU). A MU is composed either by a single person (quite rare) or by the close family members i.e. husband, wife, children (as applicable).

### *ii) Purposive sampling*

The consultation of the returnees followed the “*purposive sampling*” methodology. Purposive sampling is defined as a non-random selection of participants on purpose, in our case the MU. The variables to which the sample is drawn up are linked to the research question. The identification of interviewees was done through “*snowball sampling*” technique, defined as the case when existing participants propose future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball.

It should be mentioned that the limitations of such a method consist in the potential for possible biases, e.g. participants with many friends are more likely to be selected; the researcher bias as it involves deliberate choices etc. which were reflected in over-representation of the urban areas and superior education; and the difficulty of obtaining anonymity between participants, as illustrated by the refusal to participate.

This technique was used because of the impossibility of obtaining the complete list of the target population. There are no clear data on the returnees in Albania. In any case the opinions gathered serve only for illustration and not as a statistical representation of the German returnees population.

In this study have been included interviews with families, returned from Germany, the majority of which live in cities. In most cases, the interviews have been conducted with the head of the family, whose average age is between 28-35 years. The interviewees live in Tirana, Kamza, Sauk, Shkodra, Korça and Vlora.

We interviewed 21 MU out of which: 20 were families and 1 was individual, 16 families had children and the children were between the ages 9 months to 14 years old.

A team of researchers managed by CDI conducted interviews. The questions were pre-prepared and were read to the interviewees. The interviewers took notes of the responses and later on transcribed them. In case of discrepancies or when further clarifications were needed, phone calls were done to interviewees.

To get a better understanding of the target population, we constituted a control group of six MU. The members of the 2nd group were interviewed by another CDI team.

### ***iii) Comparing with migration waves of 1991 and 1997***

For a better understanding and grasp the particularities of the German Migration Wave of 2014-2017, we have used wherever possible, comparisons with the previous migratory waves of Albanian mostly in Italy and Greece. Here we have used former statistical data and research mostly produced by INSTAT.

## I. MIGRATION AND THE CONNECTIVITY NEXUS

While analyzing Albanian migration to Germany - and to the European Union countries - one should keep in mind that: (i) for centuries Albania has been an emigration country, (ii) Albanians are European – Tirana is geographically much closer to Berlin or Paris than Athens or Sofia (Albania appears far away from Europe due to its recent history and especially the last 45 years of self-inflicted communist isolation), and (iii) that currently, 38% of Albanians born in Albania live abroad - out of a population of three million, there are circa one million Albanian nationals living abroad, predominantly in Europe. So moving abroad and returning to Albania, is a defining historical trait of Albanians.

The phenomenon of Albanian migration to Germany during 2014 – 2016, is characterized by parameters that are new and/or unobserved before. The main conclusion of our first study<sup>2</sup> was that Albanian emigrants completely misunderstood and misevaluated their chances of staying in Germany through the asylum procedure. Notwithstanding the 53,805 asylum applications in 2017 and 34,000 up to October 2016, only 65 requests received a positive reply from German authorities. Not one single work permission got delivered.

These data point out an irregular-migrant wave and not a flight from persecution, as claimed by Albanian migrants. We concluded that the main factors explaining the magnitude of the numbers were the wrong information on the: (i) work opportunities that Germany was supposed to offer, and on the (ii) probability for Albanians to obtain a work permit through the procedure of asylum request.

This misinformation found a favorable environment in the midst of the home-grown push factors. The financial crisis of 2008 marks the starting point of this new process of decision-making based on the individual desire to act to “*improve one’s future*”. The primary triggering factor of emigration is the perception of no eventual improvement in the foreseeable future for the would-be migrant situation in Albania. This new push factor was combined with a historically low travel risk to Germany; affordable travel costs; and with abundant information referring to “comfortable” state benefits, and very good living conditions during the proceeding of the asylum request.

The easiness and intensity of communication of potential migrants received from Albanians already in Germany was the next factor. Internet-based communication is instantaneous, low- or no-cost, and one-to-one. As such it magnified the impact of the message to the

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<sup>2</sup> “Comprehending Albanian Migration to Germany: 2014-2016”, CDI Publications, Tirana 2016. Also available at: <http://cdiinstitute.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ANGLISHT.pdf>

would-be-migrant. Overall biased-and-partial information played a huge role in reinforcing the motivation and the amplitude of the migratory flux.

Amongst the pull factors, the most visible were the relatively sizeable state benefits, - including housing, German-quality health care, and education-supporting measures. Nothing could go wrong for the would-be migrant! In the worst- scenario after a long waiting period, the false asylum seeker would be returned to Albania.

The present research focuses on the return of Albania migrants and on their reintegration journey. In this study we have observed a couple of interconnected push and pull factors that affected the Albanian migration wave to Germany, their return and the complexities embedded in the process of reintegration.

In the current study we note the strong presence of a phenomenon impacting the migrant profile and the intensity of the migrant flux to Germany in 2014-2016 – we have named it the “connectivity factor”. It can be described as the situation where the would-be migrant is convinced that neither the market, nor the state does in the home country offer the opportunity to prove his / her worth, or to reach his / her life goals. For example, while one may think of being qualified and able to have a successful career in Albania, he/she is convinced to not have the opportunity to prove it. In this case, the citizens feel “disconnected” to the system.

Feeling disconnected is a result of non-functioning local markets or non-performing public-administration services. In such a situation citizens are forced to use non-market and / or non-state mechanisms such as connections to either kin/family or to political affiliation. In a larger context connectivity factor is explained not only as getting close to the opportunity to find a better job or to escape poverty but also to increase the chances of maintaining good health, of getting good education for children, or finding a rewarding job. A just society based on meritocracy offers to every of its citizen its chance.

In the migration nexus, connectivity is defined by the: (i) perceived ability to achieve one's (including close family) life goals being them economic, social or simply personal development; and the, (ii) subsequent decision on the most adapted appropriate location where those life goals can be achieved: either in the home country or by migrating abroad. We came to the conclusion that Albanian migrants believed to be easier to connect to their desired future in Germany rather than in their home country.

Would-be Albanian migrants perceived the “connectivity factor” based on their judgment regarding:

- the size of inequality gap (mainly in income and wealth) as expressed in the difference in income and non-income components when living in Albania vs. Germany. In this context, the highest the perceived difference amongst current income or

- health care prospects in Albania with the expected ones in Germany, the stronger the incitement to migrate; and,
- the feasibility of closing this inequality gap through migration, in the form of improved access to economic opportunities as well as to better education (including for their children), health, and social care. This last factor defines the connectivity nexus of migration and explains the size, depth, and duration in time of the current migration phenomenon.

We observed the persistence and prevalence of the “connectivity” factor on their return to Albania. Returnees told us that in Albania connectivity defines local labour market functioning; affects the efficiency of public services (employment services, migration counters, health services, education services, etc); depends in a large extent by geography (distance from economic or political power centers); and is powered by the social networks (family / clan).

We noticed that individuals most disassociated from the economic centers (always correlated with urban centers) constituted the bulk of migrants. To the geographically disconnected, we identified a second group: we called it “socially disconnected”. All by living in the cities, these individuals are unable to connect with the social and economic opportunities to advance in their careers. Both sub-groups - geographically and socially disconnected - left Albania because they felt powerless to reach and benefit from the opportunities that the country offered to them.

One of the biggest added value elements the Albanian migrants gained during their stay in Germany was their face-to-face experience with the German public services (municipal services, health, education, etc.). This living experience provided them with the benchmark to which they hold accountable the Albanian public service quality now that they are back. We found out that the difference between German and Albanian public services to be now one of their main causes of deception<sup>3</sup> upon their return in their home country.

During our interviews we met returnees whose departure from Germany and return in Albania was lived as a very bad experience. In many occasions the very moment of departure was perceived as so violent that it really marked them (and through them also their close network of migration-minded candidates). So also due to this fact there is a low probability that such a migration wave to Germany will be repeated in the near future.

The returnees were not happy with the public services found in Albanian and the mechanisms set up by state as recipient structures. In the worst case the returnees simply ignored their existence, as was the case of Migration Counters part of the government strategy of return and reintegration. We were often told that after the return they felt like immigrants in their own country. During their stay in Germany some of them did lose the work they had back

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<sup>3</sup> The question about what are they going to do: i.e. contribute to the change in Albania or abandon it and try to return to Germany (or other EU country) is not covered by this study.

home, children did miss schooling, neighbors have moved as well, economic and political centers of gravity have shifted. As a result some returnees found themselves less connected than before emigration.

The 2014-2016 migration wave had also a significant financial cost. For the circa 100,000 Albanians that left their country, if one counts (very conservatively) an average of EUR 500/person, we get a total of EUR 50 million only for the travel expenses. At EUR 2,000 for a family of four, it gives a fair comparative idea of the power of “financial incentives” that the receiving countries allocate to incentivize the irregular migrants to go back to their country of origin<sup>4</sup>. In the connectivity nexus, it also provides an interesting angle to the needed seed money an Albanian is ready to invest to “get connected”.

The 2014-2016 migration wave to Germany had nothing to do with threats received in Albania and the need for physical protection. Albanian migrants were conscientious about this and that explains why they did not protest, neither resist their return to Albania. In the end migrants understood that getting a better future in Germany through asylum- request was not the right way to improve their life.

Our argument is that notwithstanding their initial motive and method, after their stay in Germany there are thousands of Albanian citizens that were exposed to and know what an EU member state can do for them and their family<sup>5</sup>. This is what we call “migration added value”. Now tens of thousands Albanian returnees have achieved good understanding of how democratic institutions should work, how the rule of law is applied, why corruption is not an inevitable way of life, why is important to hold local politicians accountable, and so on. No civic-education project, no awareness raising or any institution-building donor-funded program implemented in Albania during the last 20 years has achieved such an impact on the ground.

Regarding the future, given the persistence of the push factors and of low “connectivity” context, the migration flux is expected continue albeit in a different form. The asylum-seeking method is being replaced, adapting to the targeted host country legal context. Two recent permutations are the unaccompanied children migration and the work-related migration through the legal channels.

Progressively Albanians are following the legal way to leave their country. This type of migration will cause the home country to lose its most skilled work force. But the most damaging is the emigration of the middle class and the intellectuals. Them - having the best profiles to go find a job abroad and to go through the migration administrative procedures - are quitting Albania, leaving behind the unconnected poor and the politically-connected rich to decide about the future of the country.

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<sup>4</sup> It also helps to put into perspective the amount spent in international aid in Albania during the last two decades.

<sup>5</sup> Migrating with the family has arguably impacted the absence - at least in the German public media - of Albanian petty criminality.



Lastly, migration is a Western Balkans phenomenon. The region is getting depleted from its youngsters, intellectuals, professionals and its middle class in general. This phenomenon impacts the capacity of the WB6 countries to develop in a healthy and sustainable way and converge with EU. However until now it has been dealt with as something to be corrected and dealt with at the flux-control level, not at its roots. The regional initiatives that cover migration see it mostly from the point of view of managing borders, preventing illegal migration, adapting visa policies, consular cooperation and return (i.e. MARRI<sup>6</sup>) or more generally on the level of inter-governmental cooperation at exchange of information (Prague Process)<sup>7</sup>.

We believe that the movement of persons from Western Balkans to EU will continue in the future if only to balance the exchanges between two regions, especially the dis-balance in trade of goods and services and the relative weakness of FDI. After all, taking into account incoming financial flows from Albanian migrants<sup>8</sup>, country's manpower is still its best export product.

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<sup>6</sup> The Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive view of regional cooperation initiatives involving Western Balkans countries, see ORI - Observatory of Regional Cooperation Initiatives database at: <http://cdinstitute.eu/web/db-iniciativa/?lang=en>

<sup>8</sup> Remittances as a share of GDP in the Western Balkans averaged around 9 percent in 2014, with the highest levels in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Remittances as a share of household income vary by WB6 country, with the highest levels in Kosovo, followed by Albania at around 10% of GDP. At: *"The Western Balkans - Rewing Up the Engines of Growth and Prosperity"*, World Bank Group, 2017

## II. THE “CAPITAL” THAT ALBANIAN MIGRANTS ACQUIRED WHILE IN GERMANY

The total first-time applications for asylum in Germany logged by Albanian nationals decreased by 72,4% in 2016 as compared to 2015. From 53,805 requests it came down to 14,853.<sup>9</sup> The number of Albanian asylum seekers has continued to trickle down exponentially: for the 1st semester 2017, it stopped at 2,187.<sup>10</sup>

The immediate reasons behind the German Migrant Wave of 2014-2016 (GMW) are mixed. Poor families (most being rural and / or belonging to minorities such as Roma) put the accent on income-related reasons such as jobs or higher salaries. Individuals coming from lower middle-class families and up, went to Germany to look for a better life for them and for their children. Often they had a job in Albania but believed that in Germany they'd find that *je ne sais quoi* that they were missing in Albania. Because of misinformation, they all opted to use the asylum request procedure!

All our interviewees returned in the period from February 2016 to April 2017. They can be divided into two groups according to the time they spent in Germany:

- MU that migrated in 2014-2015 in Germany and stayed for a period spanning between 15 to 28 months. This group lived shortly in camps before being accommodated in apartments/houses provided by the German government;
- MU that migrated in early-2016. Those migrants have stayed almost exclusively in camps for periods between 3 to 5 months.

We noticed that the date of their arrival in Germany conditions the duration, the conditions of their stay, and finally the impressions they got from the host country<sup>11</sup>. The group that did lodge an asylum request before October 2015, stayed for a longer period and in relatively better conditions. They also came back with much better impressions about Germany and of their German hosts.

The asylum laws passed by the German government in October 2015 and February 2016 drastically diminished the benefits that Albanian migrants were receiving while their asylum

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<sup>9</sup> Migration, Integration, Asylum - Political Developments in Germany 2016. Annual Policy Report by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network, Federal Office for Migration & Refugees, 2017, pp. 36.

<sup>10</sup> [www.bamf.de](http://www.bamf.de)

<sup>11</sup> Albanian emigrants continue to log asylum requests well after the passing of new legislation, among other recognising Albania as safe country. This shortened sensibly the duration of the procedure as well as the treatment of false asylum seekers from Albania.

request was being proceeded. The inclusion of Albania in the list of safe countries shortened the processing time of their asylum requests. It differentiated them from Syrians and other nationalities whose chances of getting asylum in Germany were much higher. Albanians felt it very badly as they couldn't understand why non-Europeans could be treated better than them.<sup>12</sup> Also, with the arrival of Syrian refugees, our interviewees reported a distinct increase in the perceived "hostility" of Germans hosts towards Albanians "asylum seekers"<sup>13</sup>.

It is in this context that the distinction amongst two groups - as defined by their arrival date in Germany before or after October 2015 - becomes quite pronounced. Having initiated their asylum application before the change in the migration laws, the earlier batch had more and better possibilities to connect with German context. Even if they did not report any relevant local immersion experience - being work or schooling, they had much more contacts with their hosts.

The 2nd batch reports a very different picture. The Albanians that arrived in Germany from January 2016 spent much of their time in camps (not in individual housing units); they were moved more often from one camp to the other; they were placed in isolated locations; and they state that they received fewer public services than the first batch in the form of language courses, or schooling for their children<sup>14</sup>.

Those two experiences condition their impressions and the added value they got from their stay in the host country. The general conclusion is that the longer they were allowed to remain, the better they liked their stay in Germany. What those groups share though is their impression of how the state and the public services should work. Notwithstanding, the perceived harsh living conditions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> group, the interviewees were unanimous in their perception of the power, the efficiency and the fairness of the state *vis-à-vis* the individual. With some small variations in the level of acquisition of language skills (mostly for children) and in the degree of networking with locals, the main added value of their stay is the sensibilization and first-hand knowledge of how a "fair and efficient state authority" should function, and on its relationship with the citizen.

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<sup>12</sup> This is another illustration of the monumental mix-up Albanian migrants did when trying to justify their stay in Germany. It also shed light on the failure of communication of official channels when informing them on their chances to succeed. It was only when their staying conditions in the camps became tougher and especially when deportations started in large scale that the message got through.

<sup>13</sup> Explained by the fact that Albanians not being genuine asylum seekers were perceived by German population to put an unjustified burden on the German asylum system.

<sup>14</sup> The verification of the differentiation in the provision of services was not in the scope of the current research.

### III. DEPARTURE FROM GERMANY

#### III.1. Departing from Germany

While we know the exact number of migrants that returned involuntarily (forcibly by German authorities<sup>15</sup>), the number of “*voluntary but unavoidable*” (failed asylum application) or “*real voluntary returns*” (the ones that returned before receiving the decision on their logged asylum request) are practically impossible to evidence. Even when one identifies them – by the word of mouth and snowball questioning technique – in their answers they prefer to remain hazy about the conditions of their departure. In many occasions, they are themselves unclear about the status of their return. In one case the MU did not know what the stamp that German authorities put in their passport meant, or for how long they were forbidden to get into the Schengen area.

Amongst our interviewees, only a small portion was returned by force from the German authorities (only two MU out of 21), while the rest returned voluntarily after they received negative feedback from the respective institutions. In all cases, they declare that their return expenses have been fully covered by the German government.

Here the most interesting information comes from those that returned voluntarily, before receiving the negative response. All of those that had returned voluntarily couldn't stand the camp conditions any longer. Being unable to plan a future in Germany, being placed in camps and isolated from German society, or having no work possibilities, they preferred to return to Albania.

In 2015 - 2015 German authorities were put under pressure to show that their migration measures were giving results. For this they needed to demonstrate satisfactory returnee numbers and the respective statistics to the German public. From this moment, the individual approach to each false asylum seeker case gives the perception to have been slowly morphed into a rational and efficiency-driven system. Individual cases of false asylum seekers but with a high degree of human problems that made their return highly problematic (where the most important were the issues of health and of children's education), were not treated differently.

Notwithstanding the individual human cost of such approach, one of its biggest contributions was to clarify for Albanian migrants (and would-be ones) of the difference between a migrant

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<sup>15</sup> From January to June 2017 there were 1,625 forced returns from Germany. Source: German Embassy in Tirana, communication of 24 July 2017.

and a refugee. Even if they may not accept that there is a big difference in motivation<sup>16</sup>, now they can see and feel the legal difference it makes. The fact that Albanians lived in camps with refugees from easily identified war and suffering zones, helped.

### **Box 1: Reasons for Leaving & Returning to Albania**

The main reasons for leaving Albania prior to the German Migration Wave 2013 - 2016 (GMW), appear to be: (i) lack of employment at home 71,8%; (ii) better job opportunities abroad - 67,7%; (iii) prospects of better income abroad - 64,7%<sup>17</sup>.

This finding is corroborated by the very high number of returning single men obviously going abroad for a better income. While there is no data on the gender distribution of migrants prior to GMW, from 2009 to 2013 circa 73,3% of returnees are men (or 98.414 individuals)<sup>18</sup>. The kind of jobs they got were "manly": mainly agriculture and construction also fitting with the profile of the country they migrated to.

Their reasons for return were mostly related to the economic dimension: loss of the job in the host country is the highest one with 63,2% of responses. Melancholy and health issues also range high. Only 7,6% mention the administrative and legal constraints from the host country that have obliged them to return.

The reasons for return from Germany of the GMW had nothing to do with what Albanians had experienced before. German authorities were quick, clear and efficient.

## **III.2. Landing in Albania**

When not forcibly returned, the Albanian migrants arranged everything themselves: travel back home, housing once in Albania and everything that followed their return. It is to be mentioned the role of German associative and religious NGOs in accompanying the migrants, mostly for the travel and also in many cases making sure that they would have somebody to wait for them once landing in Albania<sup>19</sup>.

No preparation was done while in Germany to soften the consequences of their return. The basic assumption was that life will restart almost exactly at the same point as when they left Albania. Once in Albania single MU went back to their parents and started looking for jobs.

<sup>15</sup> In their perception, one's life can be in danger from war as well as from hunger.

<sup>17</sup> Table 9- Reasons for emigration (multi-tick)\*, (%), "Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania 2013", INSTAT, pp. 36

<sup>18</sup> Table 20: Reasons of return for those who decided to do so voluntarily (multi-tick), "Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania 2013", INSTAT pp. 49.

<sup>19</sup> We received many testimonies about the role of German charities and church in the facilitation of Albanian returnees. Our impression is that this effort was fueled by human passion to help, more than by the appropriate financial and logistic resources at their disposal. In many cases we have had reports of German citizens helping the returnees with their own money.

Regarding family MU, the biggest disruption they faced regarded the reintegration of their children.

Some of the basic concerns were the missing certificates for children regarding their schooling in Germany. In many cases, parents reported having not taken them before they left Germany. So when their children enrolled in schools back in Albania, they were faced with missing documents and certificates. Other very serious immediate problems concerned the health care protocols initiated in Germany and stopped once in Albania.

Most of the returnees that we interviewed, went back at the same houses they used to live before the migration, so this softened somehow their landing back.

## IV. ANCHORING IN OWN COUNTRY

The malaise felt during the reintegration or disconnection with the socio-economic context back home, is their strongest feeling while back in Albania. One 17-old returnee stated that she “..felt like an immigrant in her own country”. While every member experienced his or her own touchdown experience, they all had in common this increased distance between the aspirations they had when they left, and what was on offer in their home country when they returned. This brought in them the feeling of powerlessness. The distance between them and their aspirations had increased for the ones that were disconnected before. However, in few cases, and especially for those involved in private entrepreneurship prior to leaving Albania, German migration experience provided a certain stimulus for their economic activity when they returned.

Returnees first hurdle was to overcome the psychological stress of the return. Their emotional state varied from being relieved to be back home in the extended family, to the depression-like state when realizing that they were back to what they fled from before. In practical terms with few exceptions, they went back to their house or apartment. We had heard / read about people selling their belongings before leaving to Germany, but we did not run into any of those cases. In this register, when for different reasons the lodging was a problem, they moved in with extended family members.

The second biggest urgent problem was the absence of income because of unemployment. They've lost their jobs - for those that had one before leaving - and now they had to look to be re-hired. What remains problematic here is the almost total absence of contacts with Migration Counter specialists (more on that latter).

The third challenge was the reintegration of the children. The obstacles here varied from the problematic knowledge of Albanian language (for children having been a long time abroad) to the certification of the educational advancement made while enrolled in German school system. Hence the children who had stayed longer in Germany have had a more difficult settling back. To get a measure of the amplitude of this phenomenon we can mention the case of high school Jordan Misja in Shkodër. During the years 2010-2015, up to 10% of the registered pupils did leave, predominantly to Germany<sup>20</sup>.

While in a quite low number, the health cases were heavily emotionally charged. In our interviewees' target group were two families that had children with serious health problems. The greatest problem which these families were faced daily after their return, was the

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Ardiana Ndreu, Director of High School “Jordan Misja”, Shkodër, July 2016.

interruption of German health care protocol for their children. Having left for Germany to look for better care for their children, they saw their children's health improve significantly because of proper health care, physical activity, and treatment offered by hospitals and health centers. Once back in Albania, this opportunity was not available. While the children remitted, for the parents, this set back has been extremely hard felt psychologically.

The majority of the interviewed returnees stressed that they are in a worse situation than they used to be before the migration. They had to start from scratch, from finding a new job to securing the kindergarten for their children or even schooling. Those who state that are in a better position now, explain this situation as exclusively due to the help of their family members and relatives.

**Box 2: Main and urgent problems encountered on return**

In the previous waves, when asked about the most relevant difficulty they faced upon return, 72,1% of returnees coming back to Albania before 2013, mentioned "insufficient income<sup>21</sup>". Non-income components figured quite high as well such as "lack of adequate services" with 60,3%; "inadequate health system" with 56,2%, or "paperwork / bureaucracy" with 47,9%. Socio-economic reintegration scores last with only 15,0% of responses.

The difference with 2014-2017 German Return Wave is stark.

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<sup>21</sup> Table 24. Problems encountered after return in Albania (multi-tick), "Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania 2013", INSTAT pp. 51



## V. RE-GROWING ROOTS BACK HOME

After the shock of the first contact with the home country, the German returnees had to get back to daily life in Albania.

### V.1. “People on the move” is the new normal

For a relevant part of interviewed MU, the migration to Germany was simply one step more in the continuous migration movement of Albanians since 1991. For many of them, internal migration had happened before their move to Germany. In our sample, seven interviewees were internal migrants having joined the city from rural areas prior to leaving for Germany. The rural exodus continues unabated: from 2006 to 2016 rural population in Albania diminished by 20%.<sup>22</sup>

A second migrant circuit concerns those that having migrated in Italy or Greece, returned to Albania after the crisis of 2008. Being unable to generate appropriate incomes in their home country, they decided to move out again, this time to Germany.

Up to 2013, the majority of Albanian returnees (60.3 percent<sup>23</sup>) went to their place of residence before migration. This means that the rest has re-located inside Albania. Hence the previous return migration was associated with a sub-sequent internal migration of the population, too. The trend seems to be that returnees settle in the prefectures with a high socio-economic development degree where they believe they can fulfill their life plans. Tirana is the most preferred region for re-location, followed by Vlorë, Elbasan, Fier and Korçë (in the case of returnees from Greece), and Shkodër, Lezhë, Durrës and Dibër (for those returned from Italy)<sup>24</sup>.

This form of internal migration through a pit stop abroad, has continued with the returnees from Germany, albeit on a much smaller scale. Three cases of internal migration and / or resettlement from rural to urban areas, after the return from Germany were observed in our sample.

Another interesting phenomenon is the impact that socio-economic developments in host countries have on the internal migration and returns. As in the communicating vases

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<sup>22</sup> “In the last 10 years, the “rural exodus” has diminished by 20% the rural population, in: <http://www.monitor.al/ne-10-vite-e-fundit-eksodi-rural-pakesoi-me-20-per-qind-popullsine-rurale/>, last consulted on 24 Nov. 2017.

<sup>23</sup> “Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania 2013”, INSTAT pp. 10

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

principle, developments abroad have almost the same impact in the internal movement of the population as the internal developments: a bank crisis in Italy or an economic slowdown in Greece, directly impacts the pace of resettlements in Albanian big cities. This migration connectivity blurs the national borders.

A relevant factor impacting the 2014-2016 German migration flux, is the seasonal migration, mainly to Greece (and much less in Italy). This phenomenon has been prevalent in rural border areas of Albania and correlates with agriculture and tourism peak works in the neighboring countries. It has helped to generate additional income for the families left behind and at the same time has contributed to softening the internal migration of those families towards big cities<sup>25</sup>.

But with time, this individual continuous quest for a better income has morphed into a wider and more “comprehensive” search for a place to live. Today more than searching for jobs Albanian migrants look for a country where they and their family will grow roots. This is the main reason why today they transmigrate with their families, and not as a single man.

To conclude, in 2012, in circa 15% of Albanian households lived somebody that has returned from emigration (including from seasonal migration and also from countries other than Germany)<sup>26</sup>, for a total of 172,000 individuals. After the German wave this number has sensibly increased. These data give a fair impression of the place and importance that migration has for the Albanian society.

## **V.2. The children problem**

The most urgent and serious needs of returning families were the reintegration of children and the health care. All of them say that the problems faced with before migration are similar to those faced after their return, such as unemployment, health care system, and education. The interviewees who have children say that they were faced with problems registering their children in kindergartens and schools but also with the quality of education offered by those institutions.

The situation at the moment of return is described as more problematic when compared to the period before departure to Germany. The interviewees kept underlining as their main concern, the normalization of the situation for their children and the lack of institutional assistance in overcoming these problems. The children of the interviewees were in their majority girls aged 6-14, and boys 7-14. Almost all of them resulted in having better scores before their departure than after their return from Germany.

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<sup>25</sup> In the Greek island of Corfu, on its northern part, there are seasonal Albanian emigrants in almost every tourist outlet that we knocked on during August 2017 (nine establishments ranging from 5-star hotels to simple tavernas). They all came from Dibra region (North East of Albania); were staying in Greece on tourist visa and would return back home when the tourist season was over.

<sup>26</sup> “Youth in Albania: challenges in Changing Times”, INSTAT 2015, pp. 24.

Here it is what in her interview one of the people interviewed has underlined.

*During our stay for 4 ½ months in Germany, we were sent to two camps. In the first camp, it was very nice, while in the second camp the situation was bad. The second camp was situated between mountains, it was scary to leave the children alone and moreover, there was no school to send them to. Thus they were forced to stay all day in the camp. Often they quarreled with each other. There were children of all nationalities who would start a fight for simple and tiny reasons, where adults would be then involved. This way of living influenced my children. They became nervous, they would get angry at the slightest thing, and just to put it simply they got really tough. This issue actually got heavier after the return from Germany. They did not want to go to school and were very aggressive. No one assisted me, apart from a teacher who after hours came to our place and assisted in a voluntary way, my children. Gradually I can say that they changed for good as a result of the assistance and closeness that the community has shown. No institution has been close to us in the difficult days I had after the return.*

### **V.3. Public services and reintegration**

By chronological order, it should be the general Direction of Border and Migration, the Migration Counters and the Health Departments and Employment offices that are put in contact with the returnees. It was not always the case.

The majority of the interviewees, apart from contacting the education authorities because of the registration of children in schools (and the occasional health follow up), indicated that they had no other contacts with any authority, be it at local or at the national level. Specifically those who had stayed for a longer period appear to be more active in their reinsertion efforts. Many of them indicate that the institution which they have been in contact with upon their return is the German Embassy. They did go there to deliver their paperwork, principally with the aim to examine the chances and push of a possible return to Germany. Also, some of them indicate that they have tried to engage with the labor offices in Albania but were not happy with the service they did receive.

Some of the interviewees have presented themselves at DIMAK<sup>27</sup> looking for assistance related to their registration at the local labor office. They have been offered the possibility to follow a language and professional courses. Only one of the interviewees indicates that he has spoken with municipality representatives and has received all the necessary information<sup>28</sup>.

During our interviews we have discovered that none of the 21 interviewees are aware that the Migration Counters exist. This situation is corroborated by official data as well. Between

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<sup>27</sup> German Information Points for Migration, Vocational Training and Careers Advice.

<sup>28</sup> More on the involvement of municipalities later.

2009 and 2013 there were 135,144 Albanians over 18-year old that returned in the country<sup>29</sup>. However, the number of returnees going to the Migration counters does not reflect this dynamic.

**Table 1.** Albanian returnees registered in Migration Counters

<b>Year</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017 (1st Trimester)</b>
The number of Returnees	896	1,536	1,171	834	520	289	89

Source: Monitoring Report of the Action Plan implementing the Strategy on Reintegration of Returned Albanian Citizens 2010 – 2015. Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY). National Employment Service, data from NES, and own calculations

The table above gives us an indication of the perception of the utility of Migration Counters for returnees. Also, this situation makes it very difficult for the authorities and other returnees' stakeholders to reliably track the returnees.

Given that 75,000 Albanian asylum applicants were waiting to know their status in Europe at the end of 2016<sup>30</sup>, the improvement of reintegration services becomes a strategic factor. It will take time but those 75,000 citizens will eventually be returned in Albania. The public services need to be ready when that happens.

As observed by the previous CDI study on Albanian migration to Germany<sup>31</sup>, the returnees had almost no contact with authorities neither before, nor after their return. Nevertheless, they had to get in touch with the schools for children, the occasional employment service, social aid and health institutions. They were not impressed by any of them. Basically, and the number registered with migration counters proves it, they found the reintegration public service institutions, useless.

The government has acknowledged the returning problematic. Medical institutions and schools have been instructed to provide adequate services to the returnees but those instructions have not been backed by additional respective human and / or financial resources<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> "Social and Economic Profile of the Return Migrants in Albania", pp. 18, IOM, December 2016.

<sup>30</sup> "Still in Limbo: about a Million Asylum Seekers wait word on whether they can call Europe home", by Philip Connor, Pew Research Centre, at <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/09/20/a-million-asylum-seekers-await-word-on-whether-they-can-call-europe-home/>, last accessed on 21 Sept. 2017.

<sup>31</sup> "Understanding Albanian Migration to Germany 2014-2016", CDI 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Results of the Workshop "Emigration in modern times...Challenges and Cmigrimi ne kohet moderne... Sfidat dhe Pasojat", organised by NGO "Cdo gje per Brezin e Ri" and Friedrich Ebert Foundation, in Shkodra, 30 November - 1 December, 2016. See also "What happens with Albanian Returnee Families and Children?", Observatory for Children's Rights, May 2017.

The majority of the interviewees declare that only their family members have supported and assisted them upon return. They also indicate that they did not ask for assistance or registered in the labour offices. Here we notice again the kinship connectivity factor coming to the rescue.

#### **V.4. Filling the void: the connecting role of religious communities**

When back, the poorest returnees are more disconnected than before they left. In our sample, the heads of the interviewed families have all had a job before they decided to migrate, while their wives were mostly based at home. After returning, over half of them have found a job, while the rest is still looking for one. Their wives are mostly jobless and some of them have started language courses and professional courses.

Apart from an interviewed case, where the person managed to receive a symbolic financial aid of 50.000 Lek from an NGO<sup>33</sup>, none of the other 4 interviewees were assisted by any organisation or network. However, we noticed that the largest amount of help had been provided by grassroots organisations.

Many returnee cases have been dealt with and helped by religious-based communities and organizations operating in Albania. We have identified tangible and meaningful support to the returnees provided by both Christian and Muslim communities. Those religious communities have put to good use their statements "to help the poorest and those in desperate situations". Different Mosques have helped them modestly at the limit of their own funds<sup>34</sup>. We were presented many cases returnees in Vlora, Elbasan, Shkodër, Tirana, and Korça - all of them in extreme poverty before going to Germany, and - even worse once returned.

The same observation can be made for Christian contribution<sup>35</sup>: they also work with extreme poverty and destitute cases. Caritas provided many cases of being contacted by Caritas Germany or other Christian organization to ensure smooth returns. Without any extra budget, Caritas Albania reported to have helped circa 300 families for a total beneficiary number of circa 1,500. What is relevant even more than the high numbers is:

- the geographical coverage, covering mostly rural and dis-advantaged Rrëshen, Ulzë, Burrel, Laç-Vau i Dejës, Shkodër and village, Gjirokastër, Berat, Fier, Tiranë, Lezhë and Laç);
- the scope of help provided, including lodging, medical help, food, seeking for a job, support in the education of children and general help for the preparation of administrative documents.

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<sup>33</sup> By NGO Terres des Homes under the condition to open a small business.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Gazmend Aga, Deputy-Head of Albanian Muslim Community, 25 July 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Ariela Mitri, Responsible for Migration and Anti-Trafficking Sectors, Caritas Albania, 2 August 2017.

## **VI. RE-CONNECTING, BUT IN A DIFFERENT WAY**

Once settled or while in the process of settling (home, health, schooling, job), the returnees did start to re-connect. Apart from the above-mentioned case of symbolic assistance granted to a returned family, it must be strongly stressed that none of the other interviewees, have heard of policies or institutions which assist the returnees, nor did they ask for assistance at any institution. During most of the time, they felt abandoned by the public services.

Upon return, the interviewees say that they took the information on work possibilities from families and social networks. The “who you know” is much more valuable than “what you know”. Only a few of the interviewees say that they have known persons which successfully returned and integrated well, while the majority says that in most cases the returnees are still jobless and cannot integrate (especially those who stayed away for a longer period).

Their reintegration success is correlated with their activity statute before they left. So if they were wage earners before, the emigration episode did not hugely contribute to their chances of getting a better job when they returned, if any. However, for entrepreneur like-minded, the stay in Germany was very important to clarify their ideas and give the necessary impetus to start something new in Albania.

This observation is corroborated by the findings during the 2008-2013 return wave: while permanent employment ratio remains stable after return (from 11,7% to 11%), the self-employment rate triples (from 7,5% to 21,6%)<sup>36</sup>.

It is interesting to note that up to 2014, we observe a steady increase in enrollments in VET and languages courses<sup>37</sup>. But those enrollment numbers jolt up during the 2014 - 2017 period. This is an indication of the sensibilization and of aspiration of the migrants that aim Germany. The message brought home by returnees was that without language and skills they stand no chance to stay. This is an indication of their understanding of the clear rules set by Germany and finally comprehended by the would-be-migrants. It also shows a shift of job profile available to Albanian migrants: from simple agriculture and construction jobs in Greece and Italy to more evolved, industrial positions in Germany.

In relation to their plans for next year, the majority of MU stated that they wish to return to Germany through a work contract and not anymore through asylum procedure. The

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<sup>36</sup> Table 10. Evolvement of the occupational situation during the migration cycle, (%), pp 38, at “Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania 2013”, INSTAT.

<sup>37</sup> “Youth in Albania: challenges in Changing Times”, INSTAT 2015, pp. 27

interviewees have plans to start looking for a better job but the actions undertaken by them are scarce and not sufficient. They look for information in social networks, have started language courses and send CV-s out. One of the interviewees stated that during the last 6 months preceding his interview he sent five CV-s.

Regarding the concerns of the returnees, it is interesting to read also some data provided by DIMAK. From October 2016 to June 2017, it did receive and instructed 135 returnees<sup>38</sup>. The main questions that the returnees have asked to the German supported project were: (i) What criteria should I fulfil to go back to Germany; (ii) Am I allowed to do so? Does any restriction apply to my movement? (iii) How can I look for vocational training in Germany? What are the criteria? (iv) How can I get a job in Germany? (v) How can I join my family in Germany? (vi) What should I do to certify my Albanian qualifications?

When one assesses the unemployment, low income, health problems, and other daily concerns that they mention as causes to leave Albania, what can be noticed is their common denominator: the perceived absence of powerlessness to change one's life. At the moment of departure for Germany, our interviewees considered as very difficult in Albania to get a job, to get a higher salary, to get a better job, to get proper healthcare, etc.

Most importantly they were unable to design and / or implement a proper course of action that would have - eventually - allowed them to achieve those goals. The underlying cause of this perceived inability to plan one's career, and or the absence of resources to implement it lays at the absence of connections and networking.

It is also worthy to note than when asked about successful cases of reintegration, none of the interviewees were aware of any success story of people who had returned from Germany. They couldn't name anyone that made it upon return.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Florenc Qosja, director of DIMAK Albania, 21 July 2017.

## **VII. USING THE “CAPITAL” ACQUIRED IN GERMANY**

When talking about their migration experience, we observed that the words “law, order, state and calm” came very often in the conversation with our interviewees. Basically, in Germany, they felt taken care of by the system.

### **VII.1. The local utility of their “German capital”**

The added value of their stay is positively correlated with the duration of their stay in Germany. The longer they remained in Germany, the more contact they had with a liberal democratic system and with the German citizen. And the fact that impressed them the most was the way the German public administration works and how it serves the citizen. This was their German revelation: human dignity and basic human rights and freedoms for all citizen, notwithstanding to whom you are connected.

All of them mentioned – without exception - that they had the chance to see a real democratic system of organization of citizen’s life, quoting the education, health care, social services, public transportation, etc. But the underlying comprehension was not the fact that they were getting a public service. What stroke them was that they were being served like anybody else, exactly the same way as the native Germans were served. They were not asked to pay extra money or to be connected to someone powerful who would recommend them.

The interviewees declared that they were offered the opportunity to learn the German language and clearly considered it as an added value of their stay as asylum seekers. Upon their return, they are using their language skills to stay in touch with their German friends and to look for a regular job in Germany. To increase their chances they are enrolled in German language courses in Albania.

The Albanian interviewees of Muslim religion said that they did not feel at any stage any religious discrimination, regardless the visual manifestation of their religion such as the fact that their wives were wearing the headscarf.

Only one of the interviewees said that he managed to save money during the time of stay in Germany because he was allowed to work. This person further explained that with the money he saved, he is managing the costs of living back in Albania because since they returned they have been jobless as a family. The majority of the interviewed people stated that they keep in touch with friends in Germany, mainly with social workers, church representatives and commune workers where they were based. They mention that communication with their friends is made through social networks and respect is the only reason they maintain such contacts.



Some of them declare that thanks to friendships created during this time, they learned how to be more open-minded, without prejudice and to see life in a less parochial optic. In Germany, they connected with their local hosts as individuals, equal to others. The satisfaction they derived from this previously unknown connectivity filled their fundamental desire for individual recognition. They realized that did not need to be connected to some family, group, clan, political party or to pay money to be visible and / or to benefit from top-quality public services.

This fact contributed to them opening up their mind. An interesting illustration is their conception of the “volunteer work” provided by the German citizen. While unthinkable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Albania, for Albanian asylum seekers in Germany it made sense to contribute to the German society and local communities as a form of reciprocity, not based on narrow mercantile self-interest. The non-paid contribution of German citizen to the society in general and to local community, the voluntary work such as cleaning of the common spaces, or the organization of community parties, charity work, and other festivities, impressed deeply on Albanian migrants. This phenomenon challenged their perception of the “all-powerful market-based relations”, and made them feel useful to their host country. Some of them did become involved in voluntary work by offering their assistance in cleaning the neighborhood they lived in, as well as and working with local German charities.

An additional benefit of their involvement in non-market behavior is the intense human contact with voluntary-sector people in any detail of their public life, from language learning to child care, health, etc. Discovering non-market and cooperative relationships and a deep feeling of community commitment in a successful capitalist country such as Germany, was a revelation for them<sup>39</sup>.

Being disconnected from the opportunities that Germany could offer to them was the main factor triggering bad feelings and pushing them towards the “voluntary return”. The second batch migrants were moved often from one camp to another, that there was not the time to establish human relations with locals. In cases when they were placed in remote and mountainous areas, they didn't have the possibility to mix with other people. There they hated the isolation, especially during the wintertime as it undermined their autonomy and dignity.

## **VII.2. People's connectivity**

The immersion in the German context and contact with German people was one of the most valuable assets the Albanian migrants got during their stay. Beyond the contact with the (i) German public services, and with the, (ii) community spirit and the common good, the (iii) human relations/networking is the other achievement Albanians acquired during this

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<sup>39</sup> After the fall of communism in Albania, any reference to community work was virtually banned. The maximisation of individual satisfaction through market mechanisms was promoted in every aspect of life. This change of development model corresponded with the apogee of the neoliberal ideology, and has since been pervasive in all levels of socio-economic development of Albania, public policies included.

migration wave. This relationship implies mutual knowledge, understanding and trust on both sides. When multiplied by the number of cases it has happened, we believe this is a huge achievement that has gone largely unnoticed. We call it “peoples’ connectivity”.

Almost all returnees reported having kept and maintained contact with the German friends they met while in Germany. Those contacts and human relations are most useful to them for obtaining information about the job opportunities in Germany; to obtain documents delivered in Germany and needed for their reintegration back home such as schooling documents for children; to obtain medical attention and medicaments that are missing in Albania; to help to get advice about career developments and / or about VET courses to enroll, and similar. In certain cases, those contacts have ended in mixed marriages when Albanians have met their husband / wife while in Germany.

The isolation in remote areas and the denial of the right to work has frustrated the Albanian migrants and at worst it has increased their sense of alienation, diminished the added value of their stay in Germany and has left them unable to improve and to build social and financial capital. Their geographical isolation succeeded in passing the message that their approach of securing a stay in Germany was wrong, by putting them in the exact same situation that they were in Albania: disconnected. It is no wonder that many of them decided to come back. In a broader picture, we argue that it makes more sense financially for the German taxpayer to help the Albanian asylum seekers during their time in Germany (while the asylum seeking procedure goes on) than to go through the standard international development aid and help them rebuild their lives once in Albania. A discussion must be opened on how to find innovative ways to profit from their “migrant invested capital” (i.e. amount of money and time that they personally invested to reach to reach the best example of a democratic and developed EU Member State country), instead of spending German taxpayers money to keep them locked in, passive (and frustrated). Returned migrants can be converted into potential agents of local development once back in Albania.

**Box 3. Cost of travel**

During the interviews, the chosen target group was asked also for their travel expenses. They declared that the travel expenses vary between 200-1,700 euros where is included the plane fare, bus, train, and in most cases a payment for a middleman, who organized all the travel and took over the responsibility to get them through airport checks. Only few, of the interviewees said that is wasn't worthy to pay all this money to get to Germany while the majority says they would do it again this kind of payment just because they learned the language and saw a differed kind of lifestyle.

The travel expenses per capita vary also based on the size of the migrant group.

When back in Albania, it is the migrants that stayed longer in Germany that had the most contacts with the German context and also those that were self-employed previous to migrate to Germany that amassed the higher added value from their migratory journey and used it more efficiently when back in Albania.

### **VII.3. Business connectivity and its contribution to macroeconomic stability**

Migrants are amongst the most entrepreneur sub-group. They constitute a potential that remains to be tapped both by the emigration and the immigration country.

Many international studies have found a strong correlation between bilateral investment flow and migrant destination<sup>40</sup>. From a macroeconomic point of view, a potential benefit of the GMW is an expected eventual increase of the German investment flow to Albania. The portfolio investment of Germany to Albania as a share of total inward portfolio investment in the period 2001-2012 is 2,3% (while it stands for 22,6% for Italy and 24,0% for Greece, both countries of massive Albanian emigration in the early 90s). It will be interesting to note the evolution of this FDI ratio from Germany in the coming years to see any correlation with the migration nexus.

The role of migration management as a powerful tool of institution building in Albania (and in other WB6 countries) through education, VET, and contribution into the everyday workings of a democratic system should be better used. From this optic, migration management policies can actively contribute to policy objectives outside the traditional realm of migration control and border management. Stability, reforms, democracy and economic developments in their country of origin are areas where migrants can provide a significant contribution in a connected world.

Finally, Albanian emigrants in Germany, even if in a much smaller measure than those in Italy or Greece, contribute directly to soften the significant trade imbalance of the country through their remittances<sup>41</sup>. According to the Bank of Albania, remittances flowing into Albania increased by 8.6% from 2013 to 2014, reaching the amount of EUR 592 million. This is the equivalent of 5.6% of Albania's GDP. In 2016 they amounted to 615 million euros, an increase of 17 million euros, or 2.8%, as compared with 2015<sup>42</sup>. Through remittances, Albanian emigrants constitute the biggest export of Albania and the major source of foreign exchange, thus helping to secure the macroeconomic stability of the Balkan country.

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<sup>40</sup> "Late to the game? Capital flows to the Western Balkans", by Z. Koczan, IMF Working Paper, WP/17/92, 2017

<sup>41</sup> In 2016, Germany exported to Albania EUR 310,5 million while imported EUR 81.4 Million, for a trade balance surplus of EUR 229,1 million, at "Foreign trade Ranking of Germany's trading partners in foreign trade", DESTATIS Oct. 2017.

<sup>42</sup> "Analysis of Development in the External Sector of the Economy, 2017" Q1, Bank of Albania, 2017.

## VII.4. Testimonies of people's connectivity

The interviewees, point out as a worrying problem during their stay in Germany, the conditions they lived in the camps, (camps positioned not only far away from inhabited urban centres, but in some circumstances were quite remote in the mountains), and the ways they were treated compared to asylum seekers from other countries.

One of the interviewees, a 17-year-old, declares as follows:

*"When we were in Germany we were displaced several times until they appointed us to a camp in a village of Dortmund. There were very good conditions at the camp and the children started to learn German from some people who would visit the camp. But still, we were kind of kept on the side-lines. Even if the conditions were really good, I still wanted to come back to Albania. While, when we returned, we were faced with other difficulties, which made it seem to us, although we were now back in our country as if we were still leaving in another foreign country. Economic difficulties we had a lot, my father struggled to get a job in the construction field, even that was temporary, but the more difficult situation was at school. No one would care about our situation".*

In these conditions, five returnees now do not want to leave Albania again, because of the negative experiences they faced in the German camps. While two of them were thinking of finding a way to get abroad again, but if that would happen it had to be legal.

German federal government has created 100,000 new low-skilled mini-jobs in the public sector for asylum seekers,<sup>43</sup> however, none of the Albanians we interviewed were aware of this opportunity. Because of the short stay and almost isolated life they had in the camps, most of the interviewees, accept the fact that apart from the financial aid they received, they would consider as the greatest achievement their own living experience.

It is worthy to distinguish a statement of one interviewee in this regard:

- 1) Even though I did not manage to work, or be trained in any aspect, that place filled me with positive energy. The clean air and the environment, the cleanness of the public spaces, the good attitude of Germans, everything was different, for good certainly.*
- 2) There (in Germany), everything was well-organised and sorted out. But, the whole thing, which I mean, us, two youngsters in a camp, where we did not see any perspective, where we were given no chance, in few words, there was no light at the end of the tunnel, going to Germany cleared out our thoughts. We were convinced we had to go back to Albania. We filed the request to leave, and to pay ourselves the costs of travel back. Our journey to Germany increased the desire to work in my own country. It can be perhaps difficult to believe, but the bitter experience which we went through as asylum seekers made us change the way how we see our own country.*

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<sup>43</sup>"The New Reality: Germany Adapts to Its Role as a Major Migrant Magnet", V. Rietig & Co.

Part of them has had limited contacts with Germans, mainly with teachers of their children and charity workers. After the return, the situation inside their families changed for worse, not only of the economic situation but also because of the relations with their own children.

To illustrate this personal added value acquired during their stay in Germany and how it impacts their reintegration back in Albania, we can refer to the following statement:

*"When I returned from Germany, in fact, I was very optimistic even compared to the moment before going there. In Germany, despite the fact I was not given the opportunity to work, also because of the short stay time, I had the chance to go out and see what was going on in the places where we stayed. To be honest, that place filled me with optimism, and although I did not find something proper to do for myself in the camps where they had appointed me, I started thinking that in Albania I could do something. I returned with the desire and passion to do what possible to increase the modest business, which I managed with my brother before I left. I thought of bringing in new machinery, thinking that increasing the quality, the work would increase. But having no financial support from Albanian institutions, and reflecting that Albania is not Germany, all of the above remains a dream waiting to happen. If I would be able to succeed in the business I have, I would not even think to leave Albania".*

## **VIII. RE-CONNECTING THROUGH RE-EMIGRATION**

Today 38,8% of Albanians born in Albania live abroad<sup>44</sup>. The question is how much more Albanian can leave the country? A Western Balkans regional survey shows that the number of Albanians considering to leave the country and work abroad is increasing each year.<sup>45</sup> Albania has the highest increase in the region of the persons who responded positively to the question if they consider to leave the home country and work abroad: from 38% in 2015 to 50% in 2017. Together with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania is the only country in the region where half of the interviewed considered leaving and working abroad.

This massive desire to go abroad creates many problems for the country. Whole areas, especially rural ones, are inhabited. Direct consequences of such a migration wave are brain drain, high divorce rate and family problems, school closures in remote areas, desertification of public services due to a low number of inhabitants, and hollow up of the middle class. All those changes impact the sustainable socio-economic development of the countries in question, and more important, the performance of the democratic system.

### **VIII.1. Who wants to emigrate?**

The majority of our interviewees wish to re-immigrate. Some of them declare that are ready to re-immigrate right away. When asked where they would like to re-immigrate, most of them reply "only in Germany", because rules and tranquility have made them feel better. They describe their stay in Albania as important because of the presence of their family (parents, sisters, and brothers), but see no chance to improve their life prospects.

All of them underline the fact that if they would re-immigrate, they would do it with all of their family, but with a major difference as compared to the previous time: this time they would be better informed and prepared before departure. Those that plan to return to Germany have been enrolling in language courses and some of them are following professional VET courses.

The Schengen area has reduced the difference between: (i) internal migration mainly from rural to urban areas of Albania; (ii) cross-border and seasonal migration (from Albania to Greece and Italy), and (iii) long-term, family migration to Germany (and other EU countries).

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<sup>44</sup> <https://jakubmarian.com/emigration-in-europe-destination-countries-and-percentages-of-emigrants/> accessed on 27 July 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Regional and Cooperation Council, 2015, 2016 and 2017 Balkan Emigration Barometer: <http://www.rcc.int/seeds/results/2/balkan-opinion-barometer>.

Under the nexus of connectivity the motivations remain similar between the three migration profiles as above. Currently we are observing also a convergence in the respective costs: in the long term they tend towards equalization.

Today's would-be-migrants from Albania can be classified as below:

- Lowly-educated, poor, from minorities (mostly Roma), rural, peri-urban that move everywhere - to the nearest city, to Tirana, to cross-border areas, or to Germany (or EU) - for a better income and material-life conditions (food, lodging). For this group the financial aid they received in Germany, coupled with in-kind help was crucial in triggering the decision to go there;
- Educated, lower-middle-class and up citizen, mostly from urban areas, very often employed while in Albania, left for Germany for better life prospects. While the first group wanted to get something, the second group wanted to get better. Non-income components such as schooling for children, health, public services and the like were determinants of their move, much more than a simple higher salary<sup>46</sup>.

Also we notice a significant shift in the motivations from *"want to emigrate to work abroad"*, towards *"to be able to work abroad"*. In 1991 and in 1997 everybody was able to work in agriculture in Greece or in very simple menial works in Italy. There are no such jobs in Germany today. This raises the stakes for the Albanian would-be-migrants of today.

## VIII.2. Where to emigrate?

From 1st of January 2016 until 30 June 2017 there were 5,945 requests for an Employment VISA logged to the German Consulate in Tirana (out of which 373 were for student VISA)<sup>47</sup>. This is in line with the reputation of Germany as a magnet for young professionals around the world<sup>48</sup>. However, the unequivocal and very strong signal given by German authorities to whoever considered the irregular migration has had an undeniable effect – Albanian illegal outgoing migration fluxes to Germany have been drastically reduced and the little that has been subsiding, is being reoriented.

A country that appears high nowadays in the destination migrant wish list is France. According to French authorities, in 2016 France received 7,432 asylum requests from Albanian nationals and it counted for 75% of the asylum requests that Albanians logged in the EU

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<sup>46</sup> In discussions with stakeholders we have noticed that some migrants brought the result of the elections of 2013, and the subsequent change of Government as also a contributing element.

<sup>47</sup> German Embassy communication of 27 July 2017.

<sup>48</sup> According to Global Future Survey 1/2017, *"... after US with 73%, circa 60% of the respondents believe Germany is the most attractive destination for young professional around the world. This percentage goes up to 80% for European youngsters"*, GFS 1/2017 Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in cooperation with Fraunhofer ISI, Berlin 2017.

members states<sup>49</sup>. The economic motivation remains prevalent: when in France they automatically receive EUR 370/month while waiting for the result of their asylum request. In Albania the average salary is EUR 344, while the minimum salary is the equivalent of EUR 164 / month.

This situation has been acknowledged by the Albanian government. Irregular migration has been the main subject of the meeting between French Minister of Interior Mr. Collomb and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Bushati during its visit in France on 20-21 July 2017. A high level Albanian delegation composed by three deputy-Ministers of Interior and a large accompanying staff has been in France on 13 and 14 of November as well.

### **VIII.3. Why re-emigrating, and how?**

Now Albanians that want to leave the country are preparing not how to cross the borders, but how to get integrated which means getting legally settled down. This is one of the biggest added value of the GMW for Albanians and Albania: making the migration experience a normal endeavor of their life (not a life-threatening adventure that involves crossing seas or going over mountains!) and bringing it into the legal realm. The family unit remains the preferred migration unit. A relevant number of individuals will migrate by joining their family members in Germany. Others plan to move only with the rest of the family.

To be welcomed in Germany, they need to “upgrade their connective ability” so as to fit the rules and procedures of the host country. Once in the EU, family, kin, clan or party connection are not relevant anymore. Albanian would-be migrants have understood that German labour market needs certified skilled workers able to satisfactorily speak the countries’ language. As a result they are adapting and the novelty of the returning phase in Albania is the soaring demand for VET (vocational education training) and German language courses.

Even if we cannot put it exclusively to their desire and plan to migrate, from 2010 to 2016 the number of the registered Albanian to VET courses has increased by 70% (the total of those certified has doubled and that shows their commitment to succeed). In a very large measure, this reflects the VET policies implemented in Albania aiming the improvement of the Albanian labour market, as well as the commitment of strategic partners.

Nevertheless, what is clear is the exponential increase of people that enroll in German language courses. From zero students in 2011 and in 2012, the number of people certified in the German language has gone up to 325 in 2016 (while the number of those following English or Italian has decreased by almost 1/3<sup>rd</sup>).

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<sup>49</sup> “*Les Albanais, champions des demandes d’asile*”, Le Figaro 14 July 2017.



**Table 2.** Vocational Training Courses, registered and certified 2000-2016, with specific focus on foreign language courses and German language: Country Level all Albania<sup>50</sup>

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total registered</b>	<b>10,799</b>	<b>10,450</b>	<b>8,703</b>	<b>9,254</b>	<b>13,893</b>	<b>19,483</b>	<b>18,321</b>
Total certified	8485	8531	8357	8884	13102	17524	16860
Foreign language	773	1003	3510	3494	3345	3201	2114
English	621	785	2803	2633	2247	2075	1637
Italian	125	184	684	779	999	1009	752
Certified in German Language	11	0	0	42	57	117	325

**Source:** NES data and authors calculation

This has brought as un-intended result, a rapprochement of Albanian citizens with the state administration, through the intermediary of the German public administration. By facing German procedures and having to deal with them, Albanian citizens have been obliged to acknowledge the administrative procedures, get the required information through the legal channels, follow the official instructions, and prepare to get penalized when doing illegal and irregular activities.

Albanian migrants while in Germany got the taste of a working administration at the service of the citizen. Upon their return they expect their own administration to behave in a similar way. This is an invaluable contribution to the institution building efforts of Germany to Albania on its road to EU opening of accession negotiations and membership.

#### VIII.4. Inclusive growth and migration: policy-making considerations

It is interesting to note that the motivation of today's migrants to leave their home country is correlated with the components of inclusive growth<sup>51</sup> observed in the said country. They impact directly the "perceived inequality gap" as one of the triggers of the decision to migrate. Those two components are mentioned below as:

- Income dimension, adjusted for inequalities: it impacts the overall poverty rate and has a direct connection with the absolute number of people feeling the brunt of poverty; and
- Non-income dimension (health, schooling, public services, etc.) that is related to the perception of well-being: acting on it causes a reduction in the inequality.

<sup>50</sup> In Albania there are functioning 10 Public Vocational Training Centers as follow: Tirana No. 1, and Tirana No. 4, Durrës, Fier, Vlora, Gjirokastra, Elbasan, Korça, Shkodra and Mobile Vocational Training Center for North East of Albania which cover with courses Dibër, Kukës region and respective districts as Bulqiza, Mat, Has.

<sup>51</sup> For the definition of inclusive growth, we refer to OECD, at <http://www.oecd.org/inclusive-growth> accessed on 22 June 2017.

Those two inclusive growth components define perfectly the background where the two Albanian migrant groups that went to Germany, came from: i.e. the increased inequality<sup>52</sup>. The increasing economic inequality and the convergence of costs between internal and cross-border migration, are two deciding components of the connectivity. So what those groups have in common is the connectivity factor, defined as the perceived difficulty to change one's position in life through the market, state or family/kin.

At this point of reasoning, any public policy aiming to affect migration has to take into account this analysis. In this prism, to understand migration push factors so as to be able to design comprehensive policies, there is need for a better understanding of: (i) per capita income growth rates; (ii) primary income growth rates for disadvantaged groups; (iii) non-income improvements in schooling, health, nutrition, transport, etc.

Regular monitoring of would-be migrant push factors should include variables such as: (i) impact on absolute income poverty (USD 2/day); (ii) impact on increasing employment; (iii) impact on moving structural barriers to connectivity of the disadvantaged groups intra-country, in WB6, before the next step which is Albania and Germany; and (iv) impact on benefits on non-income factors.

### **VIII.5. The vicious circle of inequality, exclusion, disconnection, migration**

The non-inclusive growth that Albania is experiencing keeps intact and occasionally amplifies the local push factors. The pressure put on individuals to succeed by themselves, as well as to take the blame when they fail, and the inability of the public administration to provide the required services to the individuals, make them decide to take their destiny in their own hand.

The preparation for a successful future for an Albanian citizen is becoming more expensive: while an average EU family spends 1,2% of its income in education<sup>53</sup>, an Albanian family spends 4,4 %<sup>54</sup>. Costly education is one of the reasons explaining why Albania is experiencing a negative five-year trend in inclusion (-6,18%)<sup>55</sup>. Concretely that means country's economic growth has profited a smaller group of people than in previous years. This has increased the overall inequality in the country and diminished the hopes of the poorest or the least connected to advance in their life plans.

While migration wave to Germany was able to "plug this hole" for a short moment, it is almost certain that in the near future we will continue to witness population movement originating from Albania. The big difference is that this kind of migration will be positive for

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<sup>52</sup> Regarding the average consumption expenditure, the inequality indicator has gone from 2.2 in 2015 to 2.5 in 2016 as regards the decile ratio 10%/90%, Household Budget Survey, INSTAT October 2016.

<sup>53</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Household\\_consumption\\_by\\_purpose](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Household_consumption_by_purpose)  
<sup>54</sup> <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/3490/anketa-e-buxhetiti-te-familjeve-2016.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> The Inclusive Growth and Development Report 2017, World Economic Forum 2017

Germany as the vetting of the candidates and the selection of the suitable ones will be done in Albania. Only those that “fit the German needs” will be allowed to come.

However, in the long term, this movement will certainly deplete Albania from its most progressive forces, decimate its middle class and reduce its comparative advantages in the global supply chain. This part of the population will find it more cost-effective to leave the country than to change it by staying and fighting through democratic means and through participation in the democratic mechanisms of Albania institutions<sup>56</sup>. All those factors will further amplify the inequality growth dynamics that the country is experiencing: Albanian democracy will be hollowed up in the middle. One of the possible results will be internal instability.

In this optic, German migration policies for WB6 countries should evolve from the strict migration and border control to include elements of EU enlargement policies. While strong elements of international development in the country of origin are becoming stronger in return and reintegration measures, German migration policies should be designed to support the engaged reforms in the country of origin. They should be based on a comprehensive view of the WB6 country geopolitical stability<sup>57</sup>, of its foreign policy, and of the long-term regional development and cooperation. The inclusion of free movement of people within the WB6 as according to the multi annual regional cooperation plan presented and adopted in the Western Balkans summit of Trieste (beyond simple trade facilitation barriers), is an encouraging sign of the people-oriented shift taking place now in WB6.

These developments can also be an opportunity for the EU Member States to unify their migration and refugee policies, and to send a unified message to would be migrants (not only from Albania) and other stakeholders. Looked also as an opportunity - not exclusively as a problem-, this shift of migratory routes can be used in the same way as architects and landscape designers do when planning new public spaces. Very often, intentionally, they do not trace pedestrian paths but let the public find the easiest way to connect the dots. Only then they invest in building the solid path. The same logic can be used to understand the migration routes, identify push and pull factors and build the adapted policies.

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<sup>56</sup> A clear indication of the detachment of citizen from the democratic system is the unusually high rate of non-participation in the last legislative elections. In the general elections of 2017, only 46.8% of the electorate voted.

<sup>57</sup> Many WB6 researchers and think tanks posit that in the last two decades Western policy in the Balkans has sacrificed liberal democracy for the sake of political stability, as stated by Srda Pavlovic in „West is best: How 'stabilitocracy' undermines democracy building in the Balkans“, at LSE blogs at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2017/05/05/west-is-best-how-stabilitocracy-undermines-democracy-building-in-the-balkans/>; or BIEPAG in “What is Stabilitocracy“, at <http://www.biepag.eu/2017/05/05/what-is-a-stabilitocracy/>.

## **IX. “WIR SCHAFFEN DAS<sup>58?</sup>”**

Worldwide, Germany is expected to play an important role in the coordination of international migration policy. In Europe, the desire for a coordinating role of Germany in migration and immigration issues is stronger with 52% (goes down to 41% when asked worldwide)<sup>59</sup>.

In our first study, we argued that Germany may want to consider the migrant policy from the labour market point of view<sup>60</sup>. But while at home, the German return and reintegration policies underline the component of migration control, in the emigration countries the sustainable reintegration component is becoming more and more visible as the other component of German migration policy. Moreover, we posit that migrant management can also be an efficient instrument of its foreign policy, of external security (not only internal), and in the case of Albania as an asset for the EU enlargement policy towards the Balkans.

In a schematic way, migration pull and push factors taken independently as well as in interaction amongst them, have conditioned their dynamic as below:

- Push factors are long-term and related to the socio-economic development in Albania. They are explained mostly by the perception of the migrants on to what extent their personal achievements (and that of their close family members) linked to income and non-income dimension of desired well-being relate to circumstances beyond their control. A better job, higher income, better health care, better study conditions, etc. seemed more achievable through emigration to Germany. To achieve the same level of well-being in Albania, they needed to be “connected”: i.e. become members of the non-state and non-market structures in charge of the “allocation” of the above. Or in Albania they estimated to not have this opportunity. This situation has not changed after their return;
- The pull factors related to society, political and legal context in Germany. The dramatic decrease of the Albanian migrants right after the change of the German legal context, is the best indicator of the weight of the German-based pull factors where compared with Albania push factors;
- The interaction between push and pull factors was the third component that conditions that size and intensity of the flux. This includes factors such as: (i) popular, capillary, bottom up, permanent and costless communication, mostly

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<sup>58</sup> “We can do it”, was Angela Merkel’s expression on the migration wave that hit Germany from the Middle East.

<sup>59</sup> Global Future Survey 1/2017, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in cooperation with Fraunhofer ISI, Berlin 2017.

<sup>60</sup> Factsheet “Comprehending Albanian Migration to Germany 2014-2016”, at <http://cdinstitute.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Factsheet-1.pdf>

through the social media. In this optic, both Albanian and German institutions were late in understanding the size of that migration vague and drafting the proper message. Moreover, their centralized, official and structured information campaign went completely unnoticed, or was shadowed by cheap but efficient people-to-people communication. The internet-based applications were the main factor in creating the “appeal”. The next factor was: (ii) the ability to cross- border freely, without needing to justify the reason of stay in Germany complemented with the low cost of transport.

The combination of the above created the perfect situation of a low risk high reward endeavor. The disappearance of the reward and the increase of the penalties after the change of laws in Germany, caused this migration model to crumble.

However, the migration pressures persist, as the push factors continue to exist and even be reinforced. In our analysis, it is the inequality of opportunities, caused by the geographical and social disconnection completed with the inability to overcome it in the home country that converts Albanian citizen into would-be migrants.

While subdued from the moment, the migrant flux is adapting to the new context. Albanians have mentally shifted their regard of migration experience from clandestine passing of borders into finding a place into the host society (being it through a job, studying, joining the family, etc.). The increasing number of work permits delivered by German consulate in Tirana is an indicator of this change, and a positive one. The most important feature here is the renewed contact of Albanians with the legal procedures and the public administration. The irony is that it is through German public administration that Albanian citizens are rebuilding their confidence to the state mechanisms.

The elimination of distortive pull factors in the German migratory policy, has caused two main new developments: (i) Albanian would-be migrants are preparing much better before moving to Germany (language and VET courses; finding a job before leaving, etc.); and, (ii) has reoriented a part of the migrant flux towards other countries. Now it is France that has received 75% of the asylum requests coming from Albanian nationals logged in EU<sup>61</sup>. This fact while it alleviates the social problems in short-term in Albania, by allowing the most entrepreneurs to leave the country becomes one of the roots of the brain drain or the depletion of the most important local economic development factor.

After our second research on Albanian migration to Germany, we can state confidently that the migration control strategy is yielding results. The numbers are down, and more importantly, Albanian would-be-migrants to Germany have got the message clear and square: unless you have your papers in order, Germany is off limits. This message is now part of the migration narrative in Albania.

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<sup>61</sup> The numbers are much lower than the German Migration Wave though.

Albanian would-be-migrants' expectations from German authorities now regard only the administrative part of the migration procedures. This can be considered as a success. It is worthy to note that the interviewees said that they do not expect anything from the German authorities at this stage. They only want the opportunity to try and believe they can succeed in fitting in the German society.

In conclusion, the 2014-2016 GMW and the subsequent return and reintegration in Albania must be placed in a globalized context. At the macro level, these phenomenon are part of the continuum of the historical development of Albania in particular, and of the Western Balkans in general, and of their current economic convergence efforts with European Union. Those migratory moves reflect deeper societal phenomena that are shared by both member states and candidate countries<sup>62</sup>.

At the individual level, they are defined by the perception of the life & career prospects of the citizen in question. Simply stated, staying in Albania or moving to Germany will all depend on the perception the concerned citizen has on the chances to succeed in his / her life goals and the to the related cost of such an endeavor.

Did the German and Albanian governments succeed in managing the 2014-2016 migratory wave? At what cost? Can policy-makers in Germany and Albania use the bilateral migratory flux to further the policy cooperation agenda between two countries? What is the role of migrants in the enlargement policy of the European Union? How can migrants contribute to the engaged reforms in Albania, and in the rest of the Western Balkans 6?

Through our study, we hope to have provided some new and context-related lines of thought for this major phenomenon determining policy developments in Western Balkans and in the EU countries.

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<sup>62</sup> Branko Milanovic considers the rising of inequalities as linked to migration (in poor countries) and to populism (in rich countries), in "Globalisation, Migration, Rising Inequality, Populism...", in "Social Europe", at <https://www.socialeurope.eu/globalisation-migration-rising-inequality-populism> , last accessed on 2 Dec. 2017

## **ANNEX 1. RETURN AND REINTEGRATION INSTITUTIONAL, POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT**

The aim of this section is to analyze of the actual system of reintegration in Albania with special focus on:

- The policy and institutional framework (legal framework - laws, sub laws and ministerial orders, application / implementation status, design of strategies, implementation and evaluation of outputs/outcomes and impacts;
- Role of international organizations, Non-Governmental Organization and specific country involved in this process, as Germany for example.

Reintegration of returned<sup>63</sup> migrants is a new phenomenon in Albania that has become increasingly important in the last decade with special focus on the years from 2000 - 2017. In Albania the Ministry responsible for migration issue is the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. In order to provide an overview of the reintegration services in Albania we will analyze the following:

- The legal framework (laws, sub laws and ministerial orders) and application/ implementation status.
- Design of the Strategies, implementation and evaluation of outputs/ outcomes and impacts. Problems and challenges identified.
- Role of international organizations, Non-Governmental Organization and specific country involved, in this case the example of Germany.

### **I. A modern legal framework**

In Albania the reintegration process is regulated by the Law no. 10389, date 3.03.2011, that amended the Law no. 9668, date 18.12.2006 "For emigration of Albanian citizens for employment motifs/reasons".<sup>64</sup> There are a couple of articles in the law that cover explicitly the issue of reintegration. Article 8 emphasizes the right of citizens including those returned from migration to benefit from state services. Article 8/1 defines that in all respective employment offices there must be established and function the migration counters (*Sportele Migracioni*) which provide information service both for the Albanians citizens who want to migrate and support for the reintegration of the returned migrants.

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<sup>63</sup> Return emigrant is the Albanian migrant returned in the Republic of Albania, for leaving Albania once again or not, after that has passed at least one year in the host country and has been in Albania at least for one year.

<sup>64</sup> Law no. 10389, as amended in 2011 [http://www.pp.gov.al/web/ligj\\_per\\_emigrimin\\_36.pdf](http://www.pp.gov.al/web/ligj_per_emigrimin_36.pdf).

Secondly, Article 12 of the law states that every Albanian citizen who seeks to emigrate for employment reasons, as well as the returnees shall be registered in the “Migrant register” in the Migrant Counters in the respective employment offices. Moreover, provision 3 of the Article stipulates that Albanian citizens returned and registered in the Migration register benefit information and referral services in state authorities responsible for providing reintegration services.

Finally, Article 28 defines the “Tasks and responsibilities of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth” as following. The Ministry designs and approves active and passive employment programs, vocational training programs in the country of origin for returned emigrants, which are registered as jobseekers in the employment offices. It coordinates the information process with the respective state competent authorities, according the respective fields, and informs for the issues related to the ministry, the Albanian citizens who want to emigrate in a regular way, and those who return and want to be reintegrated and stay in Albania. Lastly, the ministry is responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the reintegration policies for returned emigrants.

Furthermore, the form and the content of the register for migrants and procedures of registration are regulated by Order No.84, date 26.06.2011. This order has designed an agreed form for the registration in three levels:

- Form no. 1 - is filled by Albanian citizens who want to emigrate for employment reason, but do not have any documents for emigration on the wished country where they want to emigrate,
- Form no. 2 - is filled by Albanian citizens who have started the process to obtain the required documents as per procedure and are waiting to leave Albania towards the host country,
- Form no. 3 - is filled by Albanian citizens who are returning from the emigration.

The data collected by each migration counter in the local and regional employment offices is reported every three months at the National Employment Service, which reports every three months at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth.

## **II. The challenge of implementation and sustainability**

As usual, in Albania a Strategy has been designed and approved entitled “Strategy for re-integration of Albanian returned citizens, 2010-2015”, and an action plan which has been approved by a Decision of Council of Minister No. 461 date 9.06/2010. However, regardless of the existence of the strategy and the action plan the most important element to be checked and assessed is the application of the strategy and results achieved. Also, the role of public institutions and ownership in the process.



Regarding the migration and reintegration issue, the European Commission in the 2016 Progress Report<sup>65</sup> in the heading on Legal and Irregular Migration has identified and concluded as follow:

- “The absence since 2000 of a cross-sector national strategy on migration remains an issue of concern. Measures to mainstream migrations issues in several national sector strategies, including:
- Social protection and inclusion, employment, business and development, integrated border management and the fight against human trafficking, produced limited results.”
- “The strategy on the reintegration of returned Albanian citizens came to end in 2015. Work on a new strategy has not started yet.”
- “A specific section is included instead in the 2015-2020 national strategy on development and integration approved in May 2016.”

Further efforts are needed to ensure that the policy framework on emigration for employment purposes is coherent and the implementation is not weakened by contradictory legal provisions

### **III. Institutions responsible for the reintegration of returned Albanian citizens**

In terms of institutional framework return and reintegration of Albanian citizens is managed by a couple of ministries and other institutions which are responsible for different tasks. The Ministry of Interior is the first actor that works in front office in the process of retuning. It runs the database of border-crossing entries of returned Albanian citizens through the General Directorate of Border and Migration (European Commission, 2016) part of the State Police of the Republic of Albania. Inside this Directorate, the key Department is the Department of Migration. Its duties and responsibilities are defined in article 30 of the law no.9668, date 18.12.2016, “On the emigration of Albanian citizens for reasons of employment”.

**III.1. Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY)**<sup>66</sup> is responsible for the reintegration of returned people in terms of social and employment policies. The main department responsible inside the MSWY is the Directorate for Employment Policy and Migration. Its duties and responsibilities are defined in article 28 of the law no.9668, date 18.12.2016, “On the emigration of Albanian citizens for reasons of employment”.

**III.2. National Employment Service (NES)** covers the returnees through its directorate responsible for migration issue, the Directorate for Employment Service and Migration. At regional and local level of National Employment Service, one official is in charge, responsible

<sup>65</sup> European Commission 2016 Progress Report on Albania (Brussels, 9.11.2016)

[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_albania.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Following the parliamentary elections of June 2017 and the establishment of Rama 2 Government, the competences of this Ministry have been distributed to different dicasters.

for Migration Counter - a focal point at local level that: (i) collects detailed information on returned Albanian citizens, (ii) assesses their needs, provides them with respective information and addresses them to the institutions offering relevant services, such as to health, education, employment, and so forth.

**III.3. Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEFA)**, its duties and responsibilities are defined in article 29 of the law no. 9668, date 18.12.2016: "On the emigration of Albanian citizens for reasons of employment". Furthermore, a couple of other ministries are involved in the process as Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance and Economy are also involved each for issues falling within their scope.

**III.4. Migration Counters** as implementing unit at regional and local level (legal framework, functions and tasks). The key roles/ functions of the staff responsible for the emigrants is to offer support the reintegration of returned Albanian citizens and provide information services for Albanian citizens that want to emigrate for employment reasons. Migration Counters are also supposed to be provided with staff responsible for carrying out the duties and services defined in the law and order.

In principle there are 36 persons/staff that work at regional and local level with the reintegration of the returned emigrants. Nevertheless, the officials working in the above Migration Counters deal with others tasks in both regional and local offices. Another problem is the fact that the staff for Migration Counters is not regulated in the official structure approved by the government. Beside Tirana's regional employment office that has a specific sector called "sector for coordination, work relation and migration", the other 11 regional employment offices do not have dedicated staff in the structures of the office.

The offices are organized in two ways. The director of regional employment office and Sector of Services and Programs with a staff composed of 6-11 persons called specialists. Out of the specialist the respective director appoints one official to be in charge and work with the tasks and functions of the Migration Counters. The same situation can be found in the local offices where the structure is very simple: The director of employment office and staff called specialist. The director of the local employment office appoints one person of the staff to work in the Migration Counter.

This form of organization renders the creation of standards in terms of quality of human resources and service delivery difficult. The training process is not standardized and often counts on the contribution of international consultants. This creates a problem of Albanian institutional ownership. Also, it affects the sustainability of the development of human resources and the qualification level as they are quite different from one office to another.

The functioning of Migration Counters is weak and limited because of two main reasons. First, there is a lack of allocated staff. Currently, the staff is appointed by the regional and

local directors, however, there is a need of recruitment based on EU standards. Second, the absence of comprehensive reintegration analysis where to base its work. In order to prepare a better reintegration of the returned Albanian citizens in 2017-2020, it is very important to do a complete and deep analysis of the last decade, 2010-2017, and prepare concrete and realistic action plan for implementation for 2017-2020. In order to have a better understanding of the actual situation, one in deep analysis will be provided as follow in a continuity process starting from 2010- ongoing.

The main problem identified in the former Strategy 2010-2015 on Migration Counters was:

**Box 4.** Problem analysis as per Strategy on Reintegration of Albanian citizens 2010-2015, approved by the Council of Minister Decision no. 461, date 9.06.2010

Point 1.4 page 12- Nevertheless, the Migration Counters need to be strengthen through training and technical support in order to improve the quality of services. Despite promotion activities (TV, leaflets, etc.) it is noted a low level of awareness about the services offered by the Migration Counters and the Regional and Local Employment offices and particularly the reintegration services provided to returned Albanian citizens. Due to this, the migration register is short of data compared to the total number of returnees.

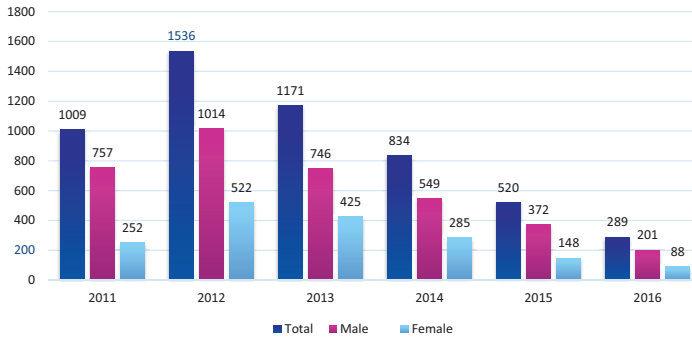
#### IV. Challenges regarding return and reintegration

The migration phenomenon continues to suffer from missing data regarding the number of returnees. From 1,009 registered returned emigrants in 2010 has reached the lowest figure in 2016 with 289 registered emigrants.

A number of different factors contributed to the above numbers, however we assess that two are the most important ones. First, there is a lack of trust in the services provided by public institutions. Second, there is a lack of concrete measures and programs to support and help in concrete terms the returned citizens not only limited in giving information.

For more details on the registered returned emigrants from 2011-2016, please see the graph below:

**Graph 1.** Number of registered returned emigrants in the Migration Counters 2011-2016



Source NES

The registered data of returnees is completed also in the table no. 3 - below with returnees from the main countries.

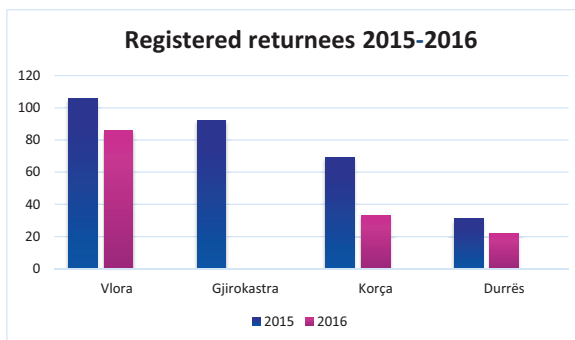
**Table 3.** Albanian returnees by year and main countries as registered in Migration Counters

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Registered in MC	1,536	1,171	834	520	289
From Greece	1,321 or 86%	963 or 82%	679 or 81%	383 or 73%	131 or 45%
From Italy	188 or 12.2%	131 or 11%	121 or 14%	113 or 21%	64 or 22%
From EU countries	17 or 1.1%	64 or 5.4%	21 or 2.5%	15 or 2.5%	88 or 30%
From others countries	10 or 1%	13 or 1%	12 or 2%	9 or 1.7%	6 or 2%

Source NES and CDI own calculations

Another characteristic of registered emigrants is the registration in 5-6 big cities and in the rest of the country they are not registered. The top 5 Regional Employment Offices in 2015-2016, where more than 80% of the registration is concentrated, are defined in the following charter:

**Graph 2.** Registered returnees



Source. NES data and CDI own calculations

The limited number of registered can be compared with two main figures:

- The first one is based on the study conducted by INSTAT and IOM<sup>67</sup> in 2013, which states that 135,144 Albanian citizens have returned between 2009-2013, aged over 18 years old.
- The second one is based on another source of information on Albanian citizens returned, that is the General Directorate of Board and Migration. In the table no. 4-below you can find the figures on Albanian citizens returned based on age group from 2012-2015.

**Table 4.** Albanian citizens returned during 2012-2015 as per age group under 18 and over 18 years

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015
Albanian returnee citizens	14,762	20,751	20,376	25,134
Male returned	14,097 or 95%	20,461 or 98%	19,354 or 95%	23,592 or 94%
Female returned	665 or 5%	290 or 2%	1,022 or 5%	1,542 or 6%
Total under 18 years old total	541	591	475	297
Female under 18 years old	46	56	78	37

Source: General Directorate of Border and Migration, Ministry of Interior & CDI own calculations

#### IV.1 Logistic, space, equipment

In terms of logistics, space and equipment the main problem is the lack of a dedicated area in all the employment offices. The dedicated area in the regional level (12 regional employment offices) must be established based on the EU-EURES standards.

#### IV.2. Communication and Visibility

For the moment, regarding the reintegration process there is not a specific campaign or visibility process. More visibility has been given to the information for legal migration than the reintegration process.

#### IV.3 Planning, Monitoring and Reporting

The reporting process is just an administrative reporting every three months and annually from local/ regional to the headquarter of the National Employment Service, and from the National Employment Service to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. The reporting is regulated according the registration process based on the form of the interview that has to be conducted in the Migration Counter.

<sup>67</sup> "Social and Economic Profile of the Return Migrants in Albania", IOM, December 2016.

The interview is in a paper-based form and no IT solution has been provided. The form and interview collect the following information: personnel data; the reasons of return; type of emigration, (family, personal); duration (from 0-6 month, 12-24 and over 24 months); the place of emigration; the education level; the work experience; the preferred job or vocational training; type of return (individual, family, temporary, a long term, forever); support for reintegration.

The support for reintegration is defined for “.. *employment, for vocational training, for education, for health, for social insurance, for health insurance, for starting up a business, for investing in the country, for social economic aid support, support for small and medium enterprises and others.*”

The data of 2016 on the service delivery shows that out of a total of 289 registered people:

- 1) For 153 advice for employment has been provided;
- 2) For 91 orientation for vocational training has been provided;
- 3) For 38 information on starting up a business has been provided;
- 4) For 45 information social benefit support has been provided; and
- 5) For 65 information on free health service entitlement has been provided.

## **ANNEX 2. RETURN AND REINTEGRATION: MAIN NON-STATE ACTORS**

To fill the gap in public services, other actors have been involved. For the reintegration process beside the public sector institutions a key role must and has to be played by civil society and the international organizations that operate in this field, as:

- In 2017 **DIMAK**, a German government financed program, has counseled 370 would-be migrants for the first six months of 2017 - a much higher number than the Migration Counters.
- **International Organization of Migration (IOM) Tirana.** IOM during 2016 has not provided any specific program support for the categories of returned Albanian citizens. IOM has supported in 2017 through a two days training program for all the 36 advisers/specialist that work in the Migration Counters.
- **Caritas Albania.** Since 2014, without any earmarked budget, Caritas Albania has received around 300 returnees from Germany and helped them on basic needs: lodging, food, health and education. Caritas Albania during for the 2016-2017 period does not have any program for the reintegration of returned Albanian citizens. They are open to discuss and see possible cooperation with public institutions.
- **Terre des Homes.** Terre des Homes has supported the returned migrants through training in professional courses in different regions. For example, in Fier region through partnership agreement with private providers has trained in 2016, 16 people in courses as cooker, hairdresser, electrician repair, and plumber.
- **Intergovernmental** coordination for reintegration: involves the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Authorities. The coordination and intergovernmental coordination is one of the weak points of the reintegration process of returned Albanian citizens. The law defines a multitude of actors and there is a need to create a structure or working groups at operational level. Meetings amongst different government structures are to be organized every three month.

### ANNEX 3. RETURN AND REINTEGRATION: ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In order to have a full picture of the migration phenomenon in the country, CDI submitted a request for information to the 61 Albanian municipalities on:

- Number of returned migrants in their municipality and the problems they presented.
- Did the municipalities have a department or a person who assists the returnees?
- Do they have a budget for the reintegration of the migrants?
- What do the municipalities need to handle the challenges presented by the returnees from Germany?

Out of 61 municipalities, only 3 provided statistics on the number of returnees as shown on the table below:

**Table 5.** *Returnees by Municipality*

MUNICIPALITY	No. of returnees
Elbasan	230
Lezhë	200
Mat	73

*Source.* Municipality's response and CDI own calculations

The other 58 municipalities replied that they do not have statistics on the number of returned persons. The Municipality of Korça does not have data, because the local Labor Office (under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth) has a dedicated booth for returned migrants, while the Municipality of Tirana declares that the information is handled by the National Employment Service.

Almost all municipalities, declare to not have a department or a person, who is assigned to assist the returnees. Nevertheless, they provide information to returnees if asked on work or education opportunities.

The Municipality of Lezha stated that it supports the returned returnees through orientation towards the local labor market. The Municipality of Patos supports the returnees mainly by including them in the economic support measures. Also, the Municipality of Patos, has established policies to smoothen their local integration by applying convenient tax rules.

The Municipality of Shkodra has set up 5 centers in the urban area to assist returned families by orienting them to labor offices of civil society organizations. This municipality has an



agreement with the NGO Terres des Hommes organization to focus on the reintegration of youth and returned families.

All municipalities declare that they don't have a dedicated budget neither a business plan for their reintegration. The Municipality of Elbasan does not have a specific plan because the migrants are not considered as a social risk. The Municipality of Elbasan is working on a project supported by GIZ for the identification of returnees and of their needs for services.

The Municipality of Gjirokastra has not implemented any specific programs neither managed a dedicated budget, but it states that this target group may be included in municipal programs that support the set up of new businesses, or the artisanal ones.

Some municipalities justify the absence of any plan for returnees with the fact that in the time of the study they were still drafting the Local Development Plan.

In relation to the question addressed to the municipalities on the necessity to handle the possible challenges of the returnees, the Municipality of Korça declared that they need better funded employment policies, as well as financial support in order to expand the array of services that are actually provided.

Some municipalities, such as Lezha, Patos, Korça, Kamza, etc., express that the collaboration between central and local government and NGO's would make possible the identification of the real issues that this target group is facing and would enable the undertaking of respective measures for the solution of these problems.

## **ANNEX 4. MIGRATION AND BORDER MANAGEMENT: SITUATION IN OCTOBER 2017**

Albanian Government through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and in cooperation with other institutions has adopted a couple of measures in 2017 in order to tackle the issue of migration of Albanian citizens in the EU countries, particularly in Germany.

To monitor the process of visa liberalisation an Inter-Institutional Working Group has been established. In the meeting organized in June 2017, the working group has adopted an Action Plan for "Preventing the asylum-seeking phenomena of Albanian citizens in the Schengen area" and concrete actions by involved institutions.

To decrease the migration flux, detailed verification and questioning procedure is taking place at all border passing points. The Border Police ask flagged individuals on issues related to:

- Accurate accommodation address in the destination country;
- Invitation which includes the details of the host in the place of destination;
- Booked returning ticket; and
- Financial means to cover the expenses during the period of stay.

Moreover, individuals who have received an asylum request refusal, have been deported from Schengen Area, or constitute a threat to the public security have been denied to exit Albania. As a result during the period of August-September 2017, 4,271 citizens have been prevented to leave Albania and 38 cases of document forgery have been identified.

Furthermore, measures have been taken to prevent the migration of unaccompanied minors, mainly through the scrutiny of notary declarations. They have been followed up by activating alerting feature in TIMS, initiating penal proceeding for the abandoning parents, etc. As a result of those measures, during the period August-September 2017, circa 497 minors have been prevented to leave Albania and another 19 cases of "minor abandonment" have been identified and referred to justice.

In this regard awareness-raising campaign have been organized in order to inform citizens about the rules regarding traveling and stay in the Schengen area. This process was supported by IOM, foreign embassies and local civil society organizations through organizing information meetings and distributing leaflets.

Based on Integrated Border Management Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2020, the government has adopted the Law no. 71/2016 "On the Management of the Border" and a couple

of sub-laws and Council of Ministers' decisions that will ensure for the full application of the law by the relevant institutions. Currently, the Department of Border and Migration uses different applications and modules to process the necessary information for the police and other Agencies responsible for the law implementation. Cross-border cooperation with Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia has been intensified for co-policing the green border. A Centre of Police Cooperation has been established with Macedonia and Kosovo, while the government is looking forward to establishing similar centre with Greece and establish a three-party cooperation with neighbouring countries.