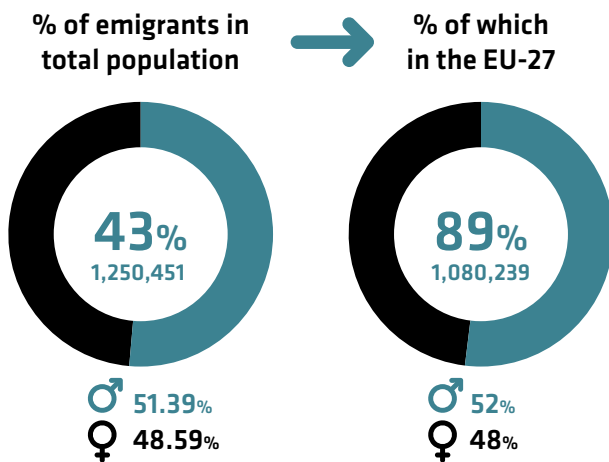


Diaspora engagement mapping

ALBANIA

Facts & figures

Emigration¹



Top countries of destination²

Italy	486,187
Greece	446,614
USA	97,252
Germany	61,063
Canada	16,544

Political rights

Dual nationality³	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / <input type="checkbox"/>
Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad⁴	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Albanian National Diaspora Strategy 2021-2025

The Albanian National Diaspora Strategy 2021-2025 is the first strategy that focuses specifically on the Albanian diaspora and reflects diaspora policies being a priority for the Albanian government at the time of adoption. The Strategy envisages the engagement of the Albanian diaspora, keeping in mind both the interests of the country's economic development and the importance of preserving the national identity. The mission of the Strategy is to strengthen the role of the Albanian diaspora in the economic development of the country and contribute with professional expertise. The fundamental value of the document is the development of a reliable partnership between the diaspora and the state institutions of Albania.

¹ UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020 (Destination and Origin). World Bank, Annual Remittances Data (Inflows), November 2022.

² UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020 (Destination and Origin).

³ Art 3 of the Law on Albanian Citizenship, from September 6, 1998.

⁴ Amendments to the Electoral Code (Law No. 101/2020, dated 23 July 2020 allowed the possibility for voting from abroad. However, no decision in this regard was formally taken by the Central Election Committee (CEC). Thus, out-of-country voting was not implemented during Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 2021. Central Election Committee is still in the process of drafting detailed rules to enable the voting of compatriots in diaspora.



Overview of the policy and legislative framework

- 2018** ● **Law on the Albanian Diaspora** aims to define the rules for: a) the competencies of the state authorities responsible for relations with the diaspora; b) the method of maintaining, strengthening and realising diaspora links with the country of origin; c) the establishment of the Diaspora Coordination Council; d) the award of national prizes in the field of relations between the country of origin and the diaspora; e) the preservation and cultivation of national, linguistic, cultural and educational identity of diaspora members and their linkage with the state institutions in their country of origin.
- 2019** ● **Decision of the Council of Ministers “Determining the Criteria for Creating the State Register of Albanian Language and Albanian Culture Teachers and Issuing Certificates for Students in the Diaspora”.** The Ministry which is responsible for education creates the state register of Albanian culture and language teachers in the diaspora. The register contains the list of teachers who have the right to teach Albanian language and culture programmes abroad.
- 2019** ● **Decision of the Council of Ministers for the appointment of coordination officers for the affairs of the Albanian diaspora in the Albanian consulates in Italy and Greece.** The coordinating officers will exercise their function in the following areas: a) development of relations with the Albanian communities in a host country in cooperation with the National Agency of the Diaspora; b) identification of educational needs and communication with teachers of Albanian language and culture in cooperation with the Diaspora Publishing Centre; c) promotion and organization of Albanian businesses in the host country in cooperation with the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber.
- 2020**
∨
2021 ● **Agreements between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and: the Government of Montenegro; and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on Cooperation in the Field of the Diaspora.** According to the two separate agreements, the parties will encourage the exchange of experience and programmes in the field of diaspora; encourage direct cooperation between the institutions responsible for diaspora; support cooperation between their institutions according to the principles of the European Union, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and IOM.

» Trends

Engaging Albanians abroad remains a new policy discussion in Albania. The government recognises the potential of Albanians abroad and aims to encourage Albanians abroad to return temporarily or permanently and support the socio-economic development of the country, with an emphasis on attracting qualified and skilled Albanians.

The Albanian National Diaspora Strategy 2021-2025 represents a concrete first step on formalising relationships with the diaspora. There are a number of Albanian diaspora organisations that can be connected to the country of origin through networks. At the state level, dedicated institutions were created to support the mobilisation of Albanians abroad by providing communication channels and building trust between the diaspora and the government.

✦ Achievements

Networking: Participation of Albanian diaspora in Albania's programmes on social, political, scientific, educational and cultural affairs are a priority for Albania. Since 2018, the state of Albania has held various online and in person forums/events/summits.

Mapping the diaspora: The government has created institutional mechanisms for identifying qualified and skilled diaspora members, with the aim of these members being able to potentially share/transfer their skills in the future.

Social and consular protection schemes: The government has concluded agreements with governments hosting significant numbers of Albanians abroad, including agreements on pensions with Greece, Italy and Canada, as well as the appointment of coordinating officers in the Albanian consulates in Italy and Greece.⁵

Investment and entrepreneurship: Positive achievements have been made in promoting investment and entrepreneurship of citizens residing abroad through the establishment of, for example, the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber and the Connect Albania Platform.

Obstacles



- **Institutional change:** Albania recently created an enabling environment through establishing specific departments for dealing with diaspora engagement matters. However, some of these departments no longer exist and others are undergoing restructuring. Research with the diaspora suggested that frequent restructuring lowers diasporas' confidence in the institutional environment.
- **Gaps in communication:** Structured and regular communication between diaspora organisations and the origin country institutions is reportedly still at a nascent stage, with more sustained dialogue and development of concrete partnerships still desired.
- **Political factors:** Perceived corruption was mentioned by Albanian diaspora members in the research as an obstacle to further engaging with their country of origin. Concerns of political instability that may impact on the investment environment are also expressed by potential investors from the Albanian diaspora.
- **Lack of data:** The lack of comprehensive and up-to-date data on the diaspora is an important obstacle to further diaspora engagement because it is the very tool that enables the formulation of appropriate and evidence-based policies. The government has tried to engage in data collection of qualified diaspora members to create diaspora skills databases, but there are limited insights into the effectiveness of these initiatives.

⁵ Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 780 for the appointment of coordination officers for the affairs of the Albanian diaspora in the Albanian consulates in Italy and Greece. Appointment of coordinating officers for issues of the Albanian diaspora at the consular structures of the Republic of Albania in Italy and Greece. The coordinating officers will exercise their function in the following areas: a) Development of relations with the Albanian communities in the host country in cooperation with the National Agency of the Diaspora; b) Identification of educational needs and communication with teachers of complementary programs of Albanian language and culture in cooperation with the Diaspora Publishing Center; c) Promotion and organization of Albanian businesses in the host country in cooperation with the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber.

SPOTLIGHT: Practices



DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

Connect Albania 2017-ongoing

The Connect Albania platform aims to engage Albanian diaspora members as potential development agents, who can intermediate and facilitate foreign direct investments to Albania. It is the first online platform and programme that is directly aimed at promoting potential investments through members of the Albanian diaspora. The initiative is implemented by IOM Albania, with funding from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and in cooperation with the Albanian government.

YOUTH + EDUCATION + TRAINING

Code for Albania 2019-ongoing

Code for Albania is a three-year programme for high school students in Albania, offering professional training by Albanian diaspora professionals, for Albanian programmers, in collaboration with a CodeX NGO from Stanford University. It has already engaged more than 1,000 Albania students. The programme envisions young people as actors of change in Albanian society with the potential to enable the growth of future leaders in the field of technology, entrepreneurship and research in the origin country.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Albanian Diaspora Contributing to the Agriculture of the Home Country 2021

The programme aims to support the socio-economic growth of the rural areas of Albania by improving the capacities of agricultural SMEs in cooperation with the Albanian diaspora in Italy, through online training and field demonstrations. The project aimed to ensure the concrete involvement of the diaspora in the promotion of agricultural services as well as products in Albania by supporting farmers to become proactive and market-oriented by learning to identify trends and opportunities for local value-added products. The project is under a wider IOM Albania programme with funding from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in cooperation with the Albanian government, and is implemented by the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber in partnership with the Italian Association of Producers (IAP).

Written by: **Joniada Barjaba**

Edited by: **ICMPD**

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