

Albanian Migration to Greece

(Destination Countries)

- **Beginning and evolution of Albanian immigration to Greece**

Up to the Second World War, Albanians were forced by misery, unemployment and poverty to emigrate to the Balkan countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania), France, Italy, Egypt, United States and Argentina. It is estimated that approximately 150,000 Albanians left their country between 1923 and 1944, equivalent to 13% of their population in 1945. This migratory flow was made up by young men with a low educational level and poor labour qualification, originating mainly from urban and rural areas of South Albania. Many of these migrants settled down in the destination countries, constituting a diaspora whose remittances have contributed to alleviating poverty and allowing for the construction of infrastructure in the country of origin. During the Communist regime (established after the Second World War) migration flows decreased because emigration was prohibited. At the beginning of the 90's, Albania faced a grave economic, political and social crisis. In 1992, the profound economic reform caused the fall of the agricultural and industrial production, and increased unemployment, thus provoking a migratory wave. In addition to this crisis, the massive migration is explained in part by the demographic evolution occurred during the socialist period when the population went from 1.1 millions in 1945 to 3.2 millions in 1985; this represented a young population with a higher level of education. Another migratory wave took place at the end of 1996 and beginning of 1997 as a result of deteriorating macro economic indicators and the political and social chaos that turned into a revolt. In the year 2000, 5,000 Albanians obtained the status of political migrants in Italy, France and Germany.

According to Marie-Noelle Duquenne and Stamatina Kaklamani[1], the National Statistics Bureau in Greece registered 20,556 Albanians in their 1991 census, representing at that time 12.4% of the registered foreign population with the Albanian community ranking first among foreign communities. In the 2001 census, this number rose to 443,550 Albanians, that is, the Albanian population multiplied more than 21 times during the 10-year period between 1991 and 2001.

- **Number of Albanians residing in Greece**

According to the Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS)[2] which refers to the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry of Greece, since no formal data is available, it is believed that legal or illegal Albanians residing in Greece were approximately 507,000 in 2001. According to the 2001 census, the Albanian, Romanian and Bulgarian populations represented two thirds of the foreign population in Greece, with Albania in first rank. According to the 2001 census, the Albanian community represented 55.7% of the foreign population.

- **Feminization of the Albanian migration to Greece.**

According to Charalambos Kasimis and Chryssa Kassimi, June 2004[3], 59% of Albanians living in Greece are men, which is similar to the total percentages of the immigration population.

The Albanian population is the largest foreign population that gives family reunion as a motive for migrating. According to Marko Hajdinjak (2005)[4], in the regularization held between July 2003 and October 2004, 80% of Albanians declared employment as justification and the others declared family reunion, studies, business and marriage to an European national. Albanians represented 80% of the persons who declared marriage as justification for requesting their legal status.

- **Distribution by age**

According to the estimates of Maria Carella and Anna Paterno and Eros Moretti[5] (2005), which are based on the data of the National Statistical Bureau of Greece, the Albanian population in Greece is quite young: 21.3% is 14 years old, 36.5% is between 15 and 29 years old, and 28.8% is between 30 and 44 years old. When these percentages are compared to the masculinity ratio, it is observed that it is essentially a labour migration of young single men but also of couples with children.

Therefore, Albanians compose the youngest population in Greece in comparison to other foreign communities and to the Greek population which in recent years has drastically lowered its level of reproduction. In this regard, the Albanian community has a positive effect in sustaining the social and pension system.

- **Level of education**

In the Human Development Report of Albania for the year 2000[6] mention is made of the brain drain phenomenon. Several surveys show that between 1990 and 1999, approximately 40% of professors and scientists from universities and academic institutions had emigrated from the country. This exodus keeps growing and the number of qualified people who want to emigrate persists. For example, 63% of people interviewed in universities and scientific institutions wished to emigrate for a long time or permanently. The migrants include a highly qualified and educated population, particularly those who studied between 1980 and 1990 who received education in universities of Eastern Europe or the United States. Sixty-seven percent are men and 51% is less than 40 years old. Sixty-seven percent has emigrated with their families, which shows that it was a planned exodus, having clear objectives and the wish to settle permanently. Most of the qualified migrants live in cities that have universities. Most of the qualified migrants originate from countries where there are universities. Eighty-three percent are from Tirana, 7% from Fier and 20% from Elbasan. This population that has studied overseas has created (networks, connections), particularly in France, Austria, Great Britain and in a lesser extent in Italy and the United States. This migration started after the first wave of massive migration (in 1990), initially towards Greece, Italy, France and Germany, and after 1994 to the United States and Canada. A 1998 survey showed that a high percentage of these qualified migrants has not related in labour terms to their area of specialization in Greece (74%), Italy (67%), Germany (47%) and France (19%).

According to the same source, in 1989, almost 93% of the total Albanian population was educated while 100% were of working age. Therefore, education was a favorable factor for the integration of the migrant population in destination countries. Surveys show that migrants'

unemployment at basic or medium range level was 50% greater than for those who had a higher level. Consequently, education is also a factor that influences positively the level of migrants' income.

According to Marko Hajdinjak (2005)[7], studies have shown that 74% of immigrants in Greece do not work in sectors or positions that correspond to their level of education. A large number of educated Albanians or having high qualifications, work in manual activities in the construction sector and in agriculture.

- **Labour Insertion**

According to Charalambos Kasimis and Chryssa Kassimi, June 2004[8], Albanians stand out in all sectors of activity where the foreign population is employed. Thirty-two percent of the Albanian population works in construction, 21% in agriculture, and a 15% in other services. According to Marko Hajdinjak (2005)[9], Albanians represent 27% of the population employed in construction and 75% of foreign employees who work in this sector. Concerning women immigrants who represent 41% of the Albanian community, the great majority has declared being employed under a "different category", which it supposedly corresponds to domestic work. They are also employed in the agriculture and tourist sectors, most likely as clearing agents in hotels and restaurants.

- **Income**

According to Charalambos Kasimis and Chryssa Kassimi, June 2004[10], a great number of Albanians work informally in the agriculture sector and in small businesses in other words, they do not benefit from their rights as employees. Working for salaries lower than those offered by the market allows these sectors to compete and to remain competitive. At the same time this precarious situation does not allow informal Albanian employees to join existing syndicates, though they may try as a community to defend their labour rights. Some Albanians prefer not to accept low qualification work and as a result they use the strategy of studying until they find a job corresponding to their academic level. The CESS study (2003)[11] shows that the average medium salary of Albanians in Greece is of 1,119 Euros.

- **Sending and utilization of remittances**

According to the CESS report (August 2003)[12], referring to a January 2003 survey on the total number of migrants –all destination countries included- 82.2% of Albanian migrants send remittances to their country, averaging 2,705 Euros in 2002. A 71.3% of migrants send remittances to their parents, 21.1% to the wife or children and 13.3% to their brothers and sisters.

The Albanian home is characterized by its strong traditional ties between parents and children, as well as between brothers and sisters. Traditionally, it is the children, or the males who are responsible for their parents. In this sense, if a migrant woman marries in the destination country, the remittances will be sent with priority to the husband's family, and it is the husband who will decide the amount of the remittance. Also, if a man migrates without his family, he leaves his wife with his parents. In this connection, remittances are controlled by me at the two extremes of

the migration chain. When they are single, migrant women send remittances to their parents or to her brothers and sisters.

Most of the remittances arrive through informal channels, especially from Greece (96%) and Italy (83%). The survey results show that of the total of migrants 76.5% are taken personally and 25.5% are sent through friends. However, transfers through banks are growing, which is a result of the regularization of migrants' situation and their better knowledge of the banking system.

According to the Albanian Human Development Report 2000[13], several surveys have shown that 60% of new apartments have been built with remittances. The remittances that have been deposited in banks and have been converted into savings have strengthened the banking system and have permitted their recuperation after the crisis. Albanians want to invest 2/3 of their savings in Albania and one third in the destination country. The priority issue is the purchase of land and the construction of a new house in their countries of origin. To have savings in the destination country is also a priority. As a complement, remittances are also used to finance entrepreneurial activities; in the case of small and medium-sized businesses, 39% of the capital originated from family members in or outside Albania, 17.5% of which were remittances, while financing from governmental programmes and from banks was only 9%.

According to the report from CESS (August 2003)[14] based on a January 2003 survey on the total of migrants –including all destination countries - 9.4% of migrants send remittances for investments, from which 40% is invested on a house, 26.6% in a small business, bar or restaurant and 10.6% in agriculture. Remittances do not allow for the creation of new employment but they contribute to alleviate poverty in the homes, bringing as a consequence an increase in the reliance on remittances and migrants.

[1] Noelle Duquenne et Stamatina Kaklamani, Dimensions et caractéristiques dominantes de l'immigration économique en Grèce, en Colloques de l'Association des Démographes de Langue Française, Budapest, 15/06/2005.

[2] Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), The encouragement of social-economic development in relation to the growth of the role of the remittances, Final draft, Research Report commissioned by UNDP and Soros Foundation, August 2003

[3] Charalambos Kasimis and Chryssa Kassimi, Greece: A History of Migration, en Country Profiles, Migration Information Source, Junio del 2004

[4] Marko Hajdinjak, Don't want to live with them, can't afford to live without them: Albanian labor migration in Greece, Paper presented at the international conference Migrations, integration security and quality of life in Mediterranean cities, September 30th – October 1st, 2005, University of Lugano, Switzerland

[5] Maria CARELLA et Anna PATERNO et Eros MORETTI, Les migrations dans les perspectives démographiques : science ou divination ? en Colloques de l'Association des Démographes de Langue Française, Budapest, 15/06/2005.

[6] UNDP Tirana, Albania Human Development Report 2000

[7] Marko Hajdinjak, Don't want to live with them, can't afford to live without them: Albanian labor migration in Greece, Paper presented at the international conference Migrations, integration security and quality of life in Mediterranean cities, September 30th – October 1st, 2005, University of Lugano, Switzerland

[8] Charalambos Kasimis and Chryssa Kassimi, Greece: A History of Migration, en Country Profiles, Migration Information Source, Junio del 2004

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[13] UNDP Tirana, Albania Human Development Report 2000, 2000

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