

Youth labour market overview

With a mean age of 30ⁱ and 25 per cent of the population in the 15-29 age groupⁱⁱ, Albania is one of Europe's youngest countries. However, due to declining mortality and fertility rates over the past decades, Albania's population is expected to age significantly over the coming years.

The Albanian labour market faces problems that are common to most transition economies. The loss of jobs in the industrial sector in the 1990s was not counterbalanced by the weak expansion of the service sector, while agriculture and informal employment act as outlets to relieve labour market pressures.

High unemployment rates along with low labour force participation and low employment rates characterize the Albanian youth labour market. The employment rate of young Albanians (15 – 29 years old) stood at 42.8 per cent in 2011 as compared to 68.1 per cent for the 30-64 age group, while their unemployment rate of 21.5 per cent is double that of the adult population (Table 1). Youth labour market outcomes also differ by gender: unemployment rates are 2.9 points higher for women and their employment rate is 10.7 points lower.

The labour force participation rate also shows a high discrepancy between adult and youth groups: the youth participation rate stands at 54.5 per cent only, as compared to the 76.3 per cent for the 30 – 64 years old individuals. A great part of the difference in participation rates can be attributed to school attendance as well as to the lower labour force participation rate of young women - 46.5 per cent, as compared to 62.1 per cent for young men.

Only 50 per cent of youth aged 15 to 29 have completed secondary education, while education levels often play a role in determining employment status. The highest incidence of unemployment is among Albanian youth with low levels of education. A geographical divide in youth labour market outcomes can also be drawn: rural youth are more likely to be unemployed than urban youth, to work under precarious conditions and to suffer from poverty.

Table 1. Key labour market indicators by age and sex, 2011 (percentage)

Age groups	Participation rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate
All			
15 - 64	68.2	13.9	58.7
15 - 29	54.5	21.5	42.8
30 - 64	76.3	10.7	68.1
Men			
15 - 64	76.1	13.8	65.6
15 - 29	62.1	22.7	48.0
30 - 64	84.8	9.7	76.6
Women			
15 - 64	60.3	14.1	51.8
15 - 29	46.5	19.8	37.3
30 - 64	68.2	11.9	60.0

Source: Albania Labour Force Survey 2011

Main features of youth migration

Two young Albanians out of three nurture hopes of migration

In a series of surveys of young Albanians, 43 per cent of interviewees expressed "strong" intentions to migrate, and another 24 per cent "some" intention to migrate. More than two young Albanians out of three thus nurture hopes of migration, with young men being slightly more tempted by migration than young womenⁱⁱⁱ.

Employment, economic status and education levels are the three main factors that influence migration intentions of Albanian youth. Young people with only primary level education are more eager to migrate (55 per cent) than youth with university degrees (34 per cent). The unemployed are also more inclined to migrate than those in employment.

Overall, economic issues constitute the predominant reasons behind the migration intentions of young Albanians. An improved standard of living in the destination country, better employment opportunities and the chance to start a business are the three main economic-related reasons provided.

The opportunity for a better education is the chief motivation to migrate for 16 per cent of all young Albanians. A much greater share of women hope to migrate for education purposes: 23.7 per cent versus 9 per cent among male respondents. It is also individuals from richer economic backgrounds that are more likely to migrate to pursue their education.

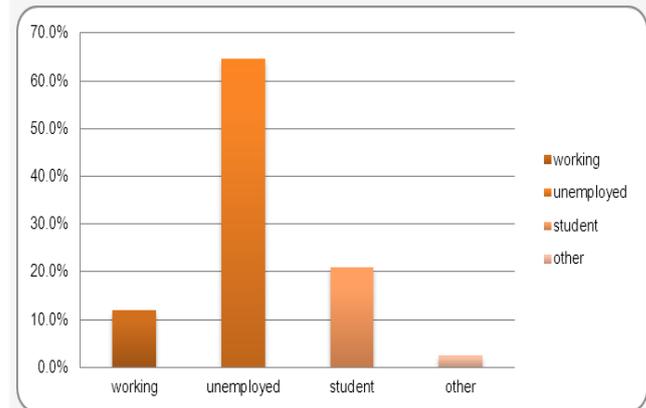
Italy is the favourite choice of destination for 23 per cent of those surveyed, for both economic and education purposes, and because of cultural and social ties. The United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US) come second, followed by Germany. As a consequence of the economic crisis, Greece has fallen out of the game: whereas it was the second favourite destination for Albanians in 2007, only 5.1 per cent of respondents wished to leave Albania for Greece in 2011.

Two young migrants out of three have an employment abroad

Whereas almost two young migrants out of three were unemployed prior to migrating, the same proportion declares that they are “currently working” abroad. Only 11.9 per cent of young migrants were employed prior to migrating, and 21 per cent were engaged in studies (Figure 2). According to the latest Albanian Living Standard Measurement Survey, 65 per cent of these young migrants are men.



Figure 2. Activity prior to migration



Source: Data from Albania Living Standards Measurement Survey (2008)

Although more than half of young Albanian migrants have not gone further than primary education, brain drain is an issue of concern for Albania given the number of migrants who go abroad for academic purposes and do not return: several studies suggest that over 66 per cent of Albanian students completing PhDs in the EU or US since 1990 have not returned to Albania^{iv}. Another problem for those that have reached higher education is related to deskilling, as migrants often work in low-skilled positions for which they are overqualified.

Italy hosts nearly half of all young Albanian migrants (48.1 per cent) and 39.5 per cent of the overall Albanian migrant population, while Greece hosts 41.8 per cent of young migrants and 46.2 per cent of all Albanian migrants. The greater proportion of young migrants in Italy can be credited to the fact that Italy attracts young Albanians who want to pursue higher education. Albanians constituted more than 20 per cent of the total foreign student population in Italy for the academic year 2009-2010.

Irregular migration is high

The trend in countries of the European Union and Canada is towards more selective labour immigration policies favouring high-skilled immigrants, which puts Albanian youth at a disadvantage given their lower educational background. Restrictive migration policies also prevent migrants to search for work based on a regular job offer, and therefore contribute to irregular migration and actual labour demand being met by migrants without legal documents.

The geographical proximity of Greece and Italy and their significant share of informal economy attract a considerable number of undocumented immigrants from Albania, who often arrive on short-term visas or through clandestine channels. By contrast, the incidence of irregular Albanian migration in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada is considered as low.

Programmes, policies and institutional framework



In the context of the EU accession process, Albania has, in recent years, improved its legislative and policy framework for migration. However, the effective implementation of these new requirements is limited, mainly due to a lack of financial and human resources.

The strategic priorities of Albania in terms of migration are outlined in the “*National Strategy on Migration and National Action Plan on Migration*”, adopted in 2005 by the Albanian government. This comprehensive migration policy for Albania sets a number of priorities: combating irregular migration, encouraging the return and reintegration of migrants, promoting the link between migration and national development, protecting the rights of Albanian immigrants in destination countries, and improving the legislative and institutional framework for migration.

Albania’s main regulatory framework for labour migration is the *law on Migration of Albanian Citizens for Employment Purposes (2006)*. The law seeks to regulate areas of migration for employment and vocational training purposes, and outlines basic principles in this respect, but does not plan for implementation mechanisms.

The *National Action Plan on Youth Employment 2010-2013 (NAP)* also addresses youth migration issues. First and foremost, the

NAP includes a series of policies intended to boost the employment of youth in Albania as a substitute for migration. Also, the NAP also seeks to create opportunities for young returning migrants and mainstreams this specific target group into the strategies developed to improve the labour market prospects of youth at risk of social exclusion (Box 2).

The development and implementation of the NAP has received the support of the United Nations Joint Programme “Youth Employment and Migration” (YEM), funded by the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F). In addition, the Joint Programme also carried out an information campaign on the risks of irregular migration, and has introduced work training programmes which managed to place hundreds of young workers in enterprises.

Box 1. Main ministries in charge of migration and their areas of responsibility

- The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities leads the formulation of the labour migration policy formulation.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supervises several agencies relevant to migration, including the National Institute of Diaspora, which is responsible for the monitoring and protection of the rights of Albanian communities abroad.
- The Ministry of Interior manages administrative procedures related to entry, stay, transit and exit from Albania.
- The Department of Border and Migration within the State Police guarantees the enforcement of readmission agreements and covers the issues of trafficking and smuggling victims or potential victims, including providing humanitarian assistance.
- The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports plays a major role as regards student migration.
- The Social Insurance Institute (supervised by the Ministry of Finance), provides schemes enabling voluntary pension insurance of Albanian emigrants.

Box 2. Examples of migration-related indicators and outputs in the National Action Plan on Youth Employment 2010-2013

- *Indicator related to outcome 1.2, Reform of National Employment Services mainstreamed in all local employment offices:* Number of young returning migrants receiving individualized employment services leading to employment;
- *Output 1.2.1:* Access to basic employment services (labour market information, employment counselling and guidance and job placement) is guaranteed to all jobseekers and specific services are designed to target the needs of specific groups (ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, returning migrants);
- *Output 2.3.2:* A system for recognition of prior learning developed and used to assess the competencies acquired by young people either in Albania or abroad;
- *Output 3.2.3:* Information on investment and enterprise development opportunities available to individuals returning to Albania regularly collected and made available through a variety of means (Albanian diplomatic missions abroad; chambers of commerce, National Employment Services, regional development agencies);
- *Output 4.1.2:* New employment promotion programmes – including self-employment measures – designed, targeted and sequenced to address the needs of young people at risk of labour market exclusion, including young workers in the informal economy, contributing family workers, young people on social assistance and young returning migrants.

ⁱThe United Nations World Population Prospects, 2010.

ⁱⁱBased on data from the National Institut of Statistics Albania, 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱThe surveys mainly refer to a survey commissioned by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation among 1200 young Albanians aged 16 to 27 in view of the publication: Cela, Alba et al.: *“Albanian Youth 2011: Between Present Hopes and Future Insecurities!”* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, IDRA, 2013). Two complementary sources are the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) of 2008 (target group 15-24) and the European Training Foundation (pilot study on the links between migration, education and training systems, and labour markets).

^{iv}Gjermeni, E. & Dervishi, I. 2008. *“Highly skilled migration from Albania: An assessment of current trends and the ways ahead”*, Working paper T-25, Development Research Center on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty.



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