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ALBANIAN EMIGRATION 1989-2001

Submitted by INSTAT, Albania *

1. The 1990s are often referred to as years of large-scale international migration. In this decade migration has become a global phenomenon accompanied by many new challenges for various national governments and international organizations. As the result of many political, economic and social factors at the end of 1990, indications appear to show that migration is exploding among Albanian citizens. In July 1990 nearly 5000 persons entered the embassies in Tirana of countries such as Italy, Germany, France and asked to leave the country. The major part of these people were able to find political asylum in the respective countries of Western Europe with the help of international organizations.
2. Like most other Eastern European countries, Albania has witnessed large migratory movements since the collapse of communism. The political, economic and social changes that have occurred since then have been accompanied by large-scale emigration of Albanians to more prosperous European countries. This is true, of course, of other Eastern European countries as well. But what is significant in the Albanian case is the magnitude of this phenomenon of emigration which is remarkable in light of two considerations: 1) This migration only started in

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1991, and 2) This migration has largely affected the younger population, which over the long term will affect not just the demography of the country but also social and economic developments there as well.

3. Albania's political transition proved to be long and more difficult than anticipated, which made for a very tense political situation in the country. This resulted in the tragic events of 1997. The whole country was caught up in a general state of civil unrest, which claimed hundreds of lives. This volatile political situation was also accompanied by large migratory flows of Albanians who were willing to risk their lives jumping onto boats to cross the sea to Italy.

4. One can easily see that it was not just political changes after the collapse of the communist regime that initiated the large migratory movements in Albania but also the long and difficult political transition that was to follow. A permanent state of tension and insecurity resulted in a continuous flow of emigrants from Albania.

5. The political transition from dictatorship to democracy was accompanied by an economic transition from a centralised, command-type economy to a market-orientated economy and by various institutional and other changes. At the same time, Albanian society was transformed from a rural to a more urban society. The rapid change in the ratio of rural to urban population led to uncontrolled migratory movements both inside and outside the country. This is a further sign of the shift from an isolated to an open society.

6. It was not just the political transition in Albania that was long and difficult. The economic changes were slow and disoriented as well. The massive closure of state-run industries brought about high unemployment. It was not merely a question of the government's inability to create jobs. It also lacked funds to cover the social needs of the ever-increasing numbers of unemployed. (By 1993 employment had reached 27% (INSTAT, 2001).) For obvious reasons many of these people tried to find ways – legal or illegal – of seeking employment outside of Albania.

Demographic changes during the transition, 1990-2001

7. The demographic regime in Albania cannot be analysed outside of the context of political, economic and social developments. It is clear that the transition of Albanian society has been accompanied by changes in the demographic structure of the country. These changes have affected all demographic components, i.e. fertility, mortality and migration.

8. The relationship between socio-economic and demographic developments is one of mutual dependence. It is impossible to understand and analyse the transition of Albanian society in the 1990s if one does not take into account the concurrent demographic changes. The effects of massive migration and of the redistribution of the population in this period brought about changes in the structure of the labour force – changes that resulted in high unemployment. At the same time internal migration led to re-urbanisation, or as some might call it, to an overpopulation of some areas of the country. These developments were accompanied by dramatic social and economic changes in these areas. On the other hand, political, economic and social changes during the transition brought about new developments in the demographic regime. The opening of Albanian society in the early 1990s - a political and economic shift, can clearly explain the beginning of a new demographic development for Albania - the massive emigration.

9. The overall demographic regime cannot be understood if its parts are not analysed in relation to each other. We therefore turn our attention in this section to all the various parts of the demographic equation: mortality, fertility, and migration.

10. In 1990 Albania had a population of 3.186 million, with an annual growth rate of 2.01% for the period 1980-1990. The high growth rate of the Albanian population was due to very high fertility, with a total fertility rate of 3.02 children per woman and very low mortality. Life expectancy at birth in Albania in 1990 was 72.2 years. Furthermore, Albania had one of the lowest mortality rates in Eastern Europe and one of the lowest adult mortality rates in the world.

11. Migration as a component of the demographic regime was totally negligible. This was due to the isolationist policy of the communist regime in the last 20 years of its rule. Like the other demographic components, migration was significantly affected by the political, social and economic changes in the country after the fall of communism.

Estimating migration since the 1990s

12. People who have left the country since the 1990s have not been enumerated reliably in any Albanian source. One must use indirect estimates or data from abroad. It has been estimated that about 15.6% of the Albanian population have left the country since 1990 in search of a better life elsewhere in Europe (UNDP, 1998, p. 37). This figure is extremely high in light of the following fact that the population of Albania in 1989 was a mere 3.2 million (Central Directory of Statistics, 1991);

13. Indirect estimates can be built on the basis of the comparison of census results twelve years apart, in 1989 and 2001: the difference between the total population at these two dates is due to births and deaths, which can be numbered rather easily, and to migration, which can be estimated as a residual. Data from abroad can be found in recent population censuses (or registers) in the countries that have welcomed the Albanians during the last decade.

Indirect estimates, based on the 1989 and 2001 Albanian censuses

14. In this paragraph, two alternative estimates of the number of international emigrants living abroad at the date of the last population census will be proposed.

15. Estimate 1:

If we add births and subtract deaths that occurred after the 1st of April 1989 to the population enumerated at that date, we “update” the population total under the assumption that no migration took place. In such conditions there would have been some 1,900,000 men and 1,800,000 women on the 1st of April 2001. Comparison with the reality (1,500,000 for each sex) gives an estimate of males and females emigrated in the intercensal period: some 400,000 men and 300,000 women. (see details in table 1) Births and deaths have been estimated as $\frac{3}{4}$ of their full-year value in 1989 and $\frac{1}{4}$ of their full-year value in 2001. Restricting population to persons who declared they were in Albania twelve years before would reduce the total by 1,000 for each sex

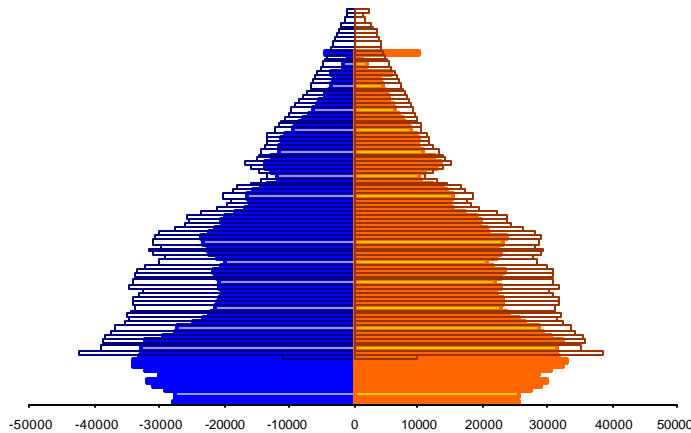
Table 1. Estimation of emigration between the 1989 and the 2001 censuses

Sex	Enumerated population 01/04/1989	Births - Deaths 1989 - 2001	Expected population 01/04/2001	Enumerated population 01/04/2001	Estimated number of emigrants at 01/04/2001	Percentage of estimates emigrant over the expected population
Males	1,638,074	303,521	1,941,595	1,529,682	411,913	21.2
Females	1,544,342	300,853	1,845,195	1,538,018	307,177	16.6
Total	3,182,416	604,374	3,786,790	3,067,700	719,090	19.0

16. The reliability of the estimates depends on a few assumptions, mostly on the quality of the basic data. Ideally, enumeration of population by censuses and births and deaths by vital statistics should be perfect for the result to be fully accurate. The reality is of course not so idyllic. There are uncertainties surrounding any population statistics, and every piece of data should be scrutinised. But the various figures in the present calculation are very unequal in size, so that a 1% mistake on total population could be much more damaging than the same percentage on births or deaths. In fact, the most serious bias could come from a variation in the quality of the census from 1989 to 2001: a deterioration along with time would unduly inflate the number of emigrants and an improvement would go in the other direction. Analysis of the census material has not detected such a defect up to now: the operation was probably easier to conduct under the communist regime but there have been signs of continuous improvement in declarations by the individuals for decades, e.g. on age, which have been confirmed in 2001.

17. Estimate 2:

Some concern exists in Albanian population statistics regarding their capacity to properly register deaths. The figures are probably underestimated, in particular at young ages where infant mortality appears to be too low compared to other sources and international standards. As a result, a few thousands could overestimate the number of emigrants, which is marginal. We have taken consideration of this factor to make a more detailed estimate of emigration flows, which incorporates age at the same time as sex. Deaths have been subtracted from the population enumerated in 1989 age by age in each birth cohort, in order to measure the number of persons expected to have survived till the next census. Births have been added through the constitution of new cohorts assembled in 1989, 1990, etc. Deaths have also been subtracted from these birth cohorts, along with their progressive ageing. Age-specific populations have been calculated up to 2001, as if only deaths and births had occurred since 1989. They have been compared to reality evidenced by the census. Discrepancies between expectations and reality are an estimate of intercensal emigration.



18. In the absence of annual death statistics detailed by age, we have relied on estimates extracted from the life tables Arjan Gjonca built around 1989 and had adjusted for defects in death and census data. Moreover, the data do not consider the possible decline in mortality likely to have happened between 1989 and 2001.

19. The order of magnitude for the estimated numbers of emigrants is the same as previously, although slightly minored since mortality has been assumed higher: some 390,000 male emigrants (instead of 410,000) and 290,000 females (instead of 310,000). The results are detailed by age groups. Emigration was maximum among young adults aged 20-29 in 2001. It rapidly declined at higher ages till unlikely positive values (immigrants) above 70 or 80 years, which could be due to enumeration improvement at very old ages (see the pyramid of population on 1989 and 2001).

20. Measures of age-specific variations are just the result of calculations, not observations, but the contrasts are so strong and so good-looking that the indication can be taken as a relevant one.

Table 2. Estimation of emigration by age between the 1989 and 2001 censuses *)

Population by age in 2001		Population by age in 1989		Estimated emigrants in 1989-2001
Age	Males	Age	Males	
0-9	295357	births	347571	- 33719
10-11	67998	births	83355	- 10098
12-19	242450	0-7	305898	- 58975
20-29	212719	8 - 17	342281	- 126482
30-39	212679	18-27	315186	- 98849
40-49	196183	28-37	251004	- 50304
50-59	135445	38-47	161947	- 18302
60-69	102947	48-57	128900	- 5991
70-79	48476	58-67	78599	+ 779
80 +	14203	68 +	54259	+ 9403
All ages	1528457		1638074	- 392539
Age	Females	Age	Females	
0-9	277955	births	315445	- 21514
10-11	65213	births	77632	- 7813
12-19	244242	0-7	280077	- 32197
20-29	231624	8-17	315218	- 81936
30-39	222119	18-27	294161	- 69730
40-49	189551	28-37	234637	- 42112
50-59	127974	38-47	147514	- 15690
60-69	97702	48-57	115836	- 9753
70-79	56004	58-67	82703	- 8290
80 +	24662	68 +	74196	+ 3061
All ages	1537046		1544342	- 285972

*Estimated from Gjonca, Arjan.- Communism, health and lifestyle: the paradox of mortality transition in Albania: 1950-1990.- Westport (Conn.): Greenwood Press, 2001.- 227 p.

Estimates, from censuses abroad (or other sources) around 2001

21. After a lot of tentative ness now only two countries have given a detailed account of Albanians at their most recent census: Italy and Greece (table 3). They are the ones who have welcomed the most massive flows of emigrants since the 1990s. From the other countries, one gets only totals, from various sources.

- The number of Albanian citizens is 438,000 in Greece, and 173,000 in Italy.
- In the United States, we rely on the 1989-2000 admissions of immigrants born in Albania. In the US census, there were 44,913 persons of Albanian "ancestry", foreign-born and entered from 1990 to March 2000. But these numbers include "Albanians" coming from other countries, in particular Kosovo and some 10% of the "Albanians" quoted in the note above had been naturalised.

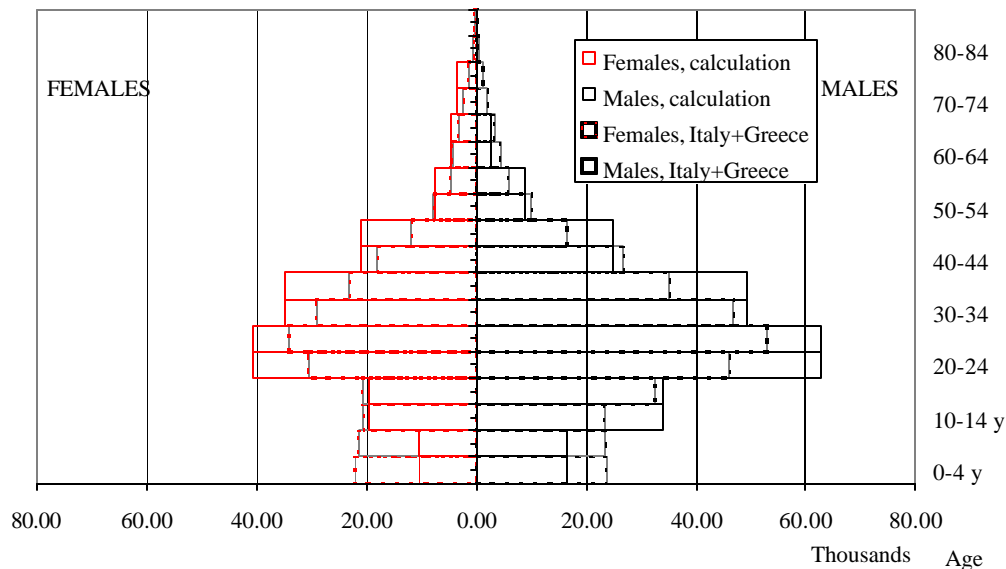
- In Canada, the number of immigrants and non-permanent residents from Albania was 6,000 according to the census.
- In registers, there were 12,000 Albanians in Germany; 1,000 in Switzerland.
- In all the other countries we know of, the numbers are too small for the Albanians to be singled out in the list of foreigners or immigrants.

Table 3. Number of Albanians abroad, by sex and age, according to different sources in 2001

Group Age	Foreigners of Albanian citizenship						Missing emigrants	
	Italy		Greece		Italy+Greece		Calculations, Albania	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0- 4	8707	8266	14924	13809	23631	22075		
5- 9	6835	6384	16694	15154	23529	21538	33719	20934
10-14	5767	5203	17538	15391	23305	20594		
15-19	7590	5096	24898	15718	32488	20814	68240	39534
20-24	9961	9374	36107	21168	46068	30542		
25-29	14098	11087	38817	23030	52915	34117	125779	81687
30-34	14724	8832	32080	20294	46804	29126		
35-39	10894	6488	24216	16605	35110	23093	98164	69417
40-44	7296	4387	19535	13595	26831	17982		
45-49	4042	2871	12447	9001	16489	11872	49796	41816
50-54	2276	2172	7774	5579	10050	7751		
55-59	1514	1664	4259	3119	5773	4783	17796	15470
60-64	1405	1565	3040	2735	4445	4300		
65-69	1082	1049	2203	2160	3285	3209	5474	9369
70-74	657	663	1384	1697	2041	2360		
75-79			642	954			-590	7181
80-84			334	534				
85+	550	565	257	344	1783	2397	-3176	-1459
All ages	97398	75666	257149	180887	354547	256553	394231	283951

22. Age pyramids on figure 1, though restricted to the Greek and Italian data for the information collected abroad; confirm the consistency between the sources, with a clear over-representation of men over women .

Figure 1. Age pyramid of the emigrated population in 2001



23. The Italian and Greek censuses enumerate more very young Albanians than estimated, due to births from Albanian parents abroad. The reverse is true among people aged 20-39, to be explained by the restriction to Italy and Greece, by changes in citizenship and possibly by an under-enumeration of illegal immigrants.

24. The censuses have also enumerated the Albanians who have migrated recently, so it gives an estimate of flows in the early 2000s after the situation in the country has been normalised. We also can obtain data from (legal) immigration statistics.

- ◆ Italy and Greece. According to censuses, 16,500 of the Albanian citizens in Italy had immigrated in 2000 and 13,000 in 2001 (before census date, i.e. 21 October, so that the number should be inflated by some 20% and brought up to 15,600); 9,300 of the Albanians in Greece had moved in during the year preceding census date, 18 March 2001. Flows to Italy are more important than those to Greece, which contrasts with what occurred in the 1990s. The combination of the two countries makes an annual total about 25,000.
- ◆ In the US, the number of Albanian-born immigrants has decreased continuously, from 4,800 in 2000 to 3,400 in 2003.
- ◆ In Germany, there were 1,700 immigrants in 2002 (2,100 in 1999); in Switzerland, 100.

25. The rounded total is about 30,000. It is probably slowly declining. These flows are partly balanced by those of Albanians returning home. In the 1st of April 2001 census, 10,800 persons have been enumerated in Albania who stayed abroad twelve months before. Annual net emigration is about 19,000.

26. Still more than in the settled populations evidenced on figure 1, there is a clear dominance of young adults among flows of migrants. In recent movements to Greece, four emigrants out of ten are aged 15-24. There is the same proportion at 20-29 years in returns to Albania. It is a logical fact that people who move out are a few years younger than those who (later) come back.

27. There is a majority of men among the returnees (7/10) still more than among who still stay abroad (6/10 in Greece and Italy). The picture is less clear among the new emigrants: there are more males than females moving to Greece, but more females than males in the flows to Italy.

Emigration impact on economy

28. Emigration has had an essential impact on a country's economy because of remittances. The remittances are one of the main pillars of the economy by ensuring a continuing entrance of foreign currencies and also by consolidating savings and investments. According to the official data the remittances contribution is estimated at around 15% of GDP for a ten years period. This contribution is estimated at around 58.8% of the trade balance for the same period.

Emigration impact on the labour market

29. Emigration has a strong impact on the professional development of the Albanian citizens. The employment of Albanian emigrants on the developed economies of the hosting countries has enriched them with a general culture of labour management, ethic on work, knowledge for the new sectors of economy and new technologies. From this point of view, their return home will be accompanied by the transfer of the above-mentioned knowledge.

30. The other point is that many emigrants do not work in positions corresponding to their qualifications or graduation. That is why one of the main concerns is the recognition of the Albanian diplomas and certificates abroad.

31. The opportunity to emigrate helps to reduce the level of unemployment and smoothen difficult socio-economic conditions.

Conclusions:

- The comparison between data from host countries and the estimated number of emigrants is very encouraging: the estimates are very close and the possibility to have reliable and analytical data on emigrants from the host country is a possibility to pursue. It would be very useful for us to have real data and not estimates.
- In order to track Albanian emigrants and their descendants, it will be more and more important to have information not only on citizenship, but also on country of birth and country of birth of parents (to take into account naturalizations and births from Albanian parents)
- Qualitative information on date of migration, activity status, education, family composition (etc.) would be very important for us to know in order to have information on Albanian diaspora, its size and composition.
- Information on returning emigrants is also important for a country like Albania. Identifying the group of returning migrants would be a first issue: this could be based on the existence of a long-term residence abroad, of one year or more. Personal information on employment and education would also be very important.
- Additional information would be important on issues like remittances but this information is to get from host countries. In this respect specific sample surveys could be envisaged.