OVERVIEW

Established in 1951, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – the UN Migration Agency, is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefits of all and does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

The International Organization for Migration has been operationally present in Albania since 1992, while Albania became an IOM member state in 1993. Since then, IOM has become one of the main international partners of the Government of Albania (GoA), supporting its continuous progress and efforts in migration governance in line with Albania’s priorities of European Union integration. IOM is a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Albania since 2007. IOM actively contributes to the implementation of the GoA-UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021, a framework that guides the work of the GoA and the UNCT and their partnerships and aligns the support, funds and programmes of 17 UN agencies including IOM, to Albania’s development priorities. On 19 September 2016 IOM joined the UN during the summit for Refugees and Migrants, as the “UN migration agency”.

MIGRATION POLICY, RESEARCH AND LEGISLATION

MIGRATION POLICY

IOM works with migrants and governments to respond to contemporary migration challenges. Having more than 60 years of worldwide operational experience, IOM is uniquely positioned to build on its grassroots experience and provide guidance on migration policy. IOM provides information, advice and support to further stakeholders’ efforts to develop effective national, regional and global migration management policies and strategies.

In pursuit of its commitment to support the Government of Albania efforts to develop and implement new migration governance policies, IOM supported the development of the National Strategy on Migration Governance 2019-2022, in line with the Migration Governance Framework (MiGoF). In 2010, in fulfilment of the country’s aspirations to attain visa liberalization, support has been extended to the Government of Albania to formulate the National Strategy on the Reintegration of the Returned Albanian Citizens and its Action Plan (2010-2015). Before that IOM supported the Albanian Government to develop and implement the first National Strategy on Migration and its Action Plan (2005 – 2010), through financial and technical support of the European Union. In line with the National Action Plan on Migration, assistance was provided in 2007 to develop and implement the National Action Plan on Remittances.

One of IOM’s strategic priorities in the area of migration policy is to contribute to increased dialogue between migration stakeholders at bilateral, regional and global levels.
MIGRATION RESEARCH

IOM conducts research designed to guide and inform migration policy and practice. The organization provides a unique space for consultation between researchers and policy makers. Research results are disseminated through numerous publications worldwide.

IOM’s research activities encompass several migration management topics, including migration trends and data, international migration law, migration and development, health and migration, counter-trafficking, labour migration, remittances, irregular migration, migrant smuggling, integration, and return migration.

GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is the first, inter-governmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Albania accepted without any reservation the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

MIGRATION LAW

Dissemination and understanding both within IOM and amongst IOM counterparts of the international legal standards that govern migration and provide protection of the rights of individuals involved in migration are key objectives of the organization. Recognition of the rights of migrants and the need for promotion and protection of these rights in the exercise of state sovereignty has been present in IOM’s constituent documents since the Organization’s foundation. IOM in Albania continuously supports the improvement of national legislation on migration in several areas. The recent support for the revision of the Law “On aliens” and the Law “On Emigration of Albanian Citizens for Employment Purposes” are examples of such support.

In order to create a common understanding of migration terms, IOM has prepared a “Glossary on Migration, designed for all those dealing with migration issues at international level.

MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

IOM strongly supports migration management in Albania through actions in several areas, as well as promotes the link between migration and development of Albania.

ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

IOM Albania implements Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes for Albanian nationals returning from the West European countries mainly such as the UK, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Hungary, Finland and Switzerland. IOM Tirana provides reception and reintegration assistance for the returnees in compliance with the above programmes’ procedural requirements. In the last four years (2015-2018), IOM has assisted over 3000 returnees.

CANADA VISA APPLICATION CENTRE

Under a public-private sector partnership, the new Canada Visa Application Centre (CVAC) for Residents of Albania opened and operated by the Mission in Tirana, since June 2013. VFS Global manages the CVAC in Albania operated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Tirana, Albania. CVAC is the exclusive service provider for the Government of Canada, authorized to accept applications in all temporary resident categories (visitor visas, study and work permits) and travel document applications from Canada’s permanent residents in Albania.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

facebook.com/Iamamigrant

iamamigrant.org
Migration and the 2030 Agenda

COUNTER HUMAN TRAFFICKING

IOM promotes concerted efforts among government, civil society and other actors to build an effective integrated system of prevention of trafficking in persons, protection assistance and reintegration of victims of trafficking (VoTs) and unaccompanied minors in Albania. Direct assistance and transfer of know-how are key elements of IOM’s contribution to the country’s counter-trafficking efforts. IOM is committed to supporting the implementation of the National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, the National Referral Mechanism, the achievement of international standards and further improvement of national standards of assistance to VoTs and their protection. Capacity building aims to strengthen local service delivery to VoTs, as well as establish local protection mechanisms for vulnerable categories of migrants, such as unaccompanied children.

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

Technical support is continuously provided to the Albanian border authorities for the implementation of the Integrated Border Management (IBM) strategy as well as for the contingency planning and strengthening capacities on the management of mixed migration flows. IOM promotes cooperation with the neighboring countries in preventing and fighting irregular migration of Albanian citizens and third country nationals in line with the existing bilateral agreements and regional initiatives, in particular, in the areas of information processing and exchange, assisted voluntary return, Advance Passenger Information systems, country of origin analysis, readmission agreements, reception facilities for irregular third-country nationals, interpretation and language analysis.

LABOUR AND MIGRATION

The Organization supports the government’s efforts to manage labour mobility through technical assistance for the implementation of labour agreements, as well as assessing and advising on the role of labour market actors, with a view on enhancing recruitment standards and migrants’ rights protection.

In partnership with the relevant institutions, IOM facilitates the provision of advice, information and referral services to prospective migrants, immigrants and returnees on regular migration for labour and study purposes, on reintegration opportunities in Albania, as well as immigration issues. A national network of Migration Counters (Sporele Migracioni) has been established and strengthened with IOM support since 2005, to increase access to regular migration information, modalities and opportunities.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Migration is increasingly recognized as a significant factor for sustainable development. As the UN Migration Agency, IOM helps governments and the international community to harness the development potential of migration for both migrants and societies. The objective of IOM’s migration and development programmes is to contribute to a better understanding of the links between international migration and development and to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The diaspora entails great potential for Albania’s development and the challenge for the stakeholders is to create an environment that encourages and supports diaspora engagement to the development of the home country. IOM programmes in this area aim to contribute to enhancing the engagement of Albanian diaspora to the development of Albania. Relevant actions include technical assistance and capacity building to diaspora institutions, facilitating the engagement of the Albanian diaspora through know-how and skills transfer as well as through investment.

IOM also supports policy development on diaspora engagement in Albania. The “Policy Document on Engaging with Albanian Communities Abroad” was developed by the GoA with IOM support in 2016. The document paved the way for concrete actions on facilitating and boosting Diaspora engagement to the development of Albania.
OPERATIONS AND EMERGENCIES

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
IOM uses its extensive expertise and experience in this area both to provide support to States as well as the individuals and communities affected by crisis, and to actively contribute to the efforts to effectively address related challenges.

Albania has not been affected by the massive mix migration movements as its neighbor countries in the Western Balkans region. However, it remains an alternative route with very high potential to be used by migrants trying to transit through the Western Balkans countries to reach the European Union.

IOM supported the Government of Albania for the development of a contingency plan on massive influx of migrants in 2015, when the Balkans Route through Greece and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was activated. As regards the response, the relevant structures are supported with infrastructure to improve processing of mixed migration flows as well as trainings on migration crisis management, in line with the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF), a tool developed by IOM in 2012, with the aim to enhance the understanding of complex mobility patterns related to crises, increase the level of preparedness and enable a more effective operational response to crises. A Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centre for irregular migrants was established in Gerhot, Gjirokastër, in 2017, with the capacity of 60 people.

RESETTLEMENT AND MOVEMENT
IOM facilitates movement operations and pre-departure services, in liaison with concerned authorities in resettlement countries. IOM carries out “fitness to travel” health assessments, when requested; facilitates and provides logistical support for visa processing; offers transportation services as well as other services related to refugee resettlement, in compliance with the agreements signed with immigration services in the respective resettlement countries. In specific cases, IOM is responsible for Pre-departure orientation (PDO) sessions prior to the movement. Additionally, IOM mission in Albania assists with voluntary returns of third country nationals to their countries of origin. The process entails an initial pre-screening interview and, in case of eligibility, flight arrangements for the irregularly stranded migrants in the territory of the Republic of Albania. In case of lack of travel documents, IOM helps the returning migrants with the facilitation of their issuance in coordination with diplomatic missions of their respective countries of origin.

IOM DEVELOPMENT FUND
Since 2001, the IOM Development Fund has provided a unique global resource aimed at supporting developing Member States in their efforts to strengthen their migration management capacity. With over 600 projects implemented in more than 115 countries worldwide, the Fund has successfully addressed the capacity building needs of eligible Member States by providing essential "seed funding" for innovative projects.

Projects supported through the Fund in Albania include the areas of counter-trafficking, enhancement of inter-governmental dialogue and cooperation, migration and development, policy and legal framework development, research and assessment and training activities. Key policy documents were developed in Albania through the support from IDF, such as the “Policy Document on Engaging with Albanian Communities Abroad” and the “National Strategy on Migration Governance (2019-2022) and its Action Plan.

PVE/CVE
IOM contributes to the efforts of civil society, central and local authorities in the Western Balkans (WB) to prevent radicalization, recruitment and inspiration of individuals to violent extremist ideologies and groups in coordination with relevant ministries and national coordinators for PVE/CVE), to reinforce and support the implementation of the broader strategies for PVE/CVE and to complement existing and planned actions in the WBs.
IOM remarkable achievements in Albania

- IOM supports the GoA for development of the National Strategy on Migration Governance (2019-2022) and its Action Plan. **December 2018**

- Migration Governance Snapshot for the Republic of Albania is published. **September 2018**

- Migration Governance Indicators assessment is carried out in Albania. **April-August 2018**

- IOM supports the Government for the establishment of the Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centre for irregular migrants, located in Gërëhët, Gjirokastër. **June 2017**


- IOM joins the UN during the summit for Refugees and Migrants, as the “UN migration agency.” **19 September 2016**

- 2016 IOM supports GoA in drafting of the “Policy Document on Engaging with Albanian Communities Abroad.” **2016**

- IOM undertakes an in-depth assessment of the protection system for minors in Albania. **July 2014 – September 2015**

- IOM provides technical support to the GoA for elaborating the Contingency Plan on Migration and Refugee Crisis. **September 2015**

- IOM enhances capacities of the Albanian public institutions to collect and analyze data on migration. **May 2015**

- IOM, in collaboration with INSTAT, launches the 1st National Report on Return and Reintegration in Albania. **October 2014**

- Under a public-private sector partnership, the new Canada Visa Application Centre for Residents of Albania (CVAC) is opened and operated by the IOM Mission in Tirana. **June 2013**

- IOM signs the new Cooperation Agreement for the Functioning of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking in Persons. **June 2012**


- IOM supports the implementation of the bilateral labour agreement with Italy. **2011**

- IOM supports the elaboration of the National Strategy for the Reintegration of Returned Albanian Citizens. **2010**
IOM supports the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator to establish Standard Operating Procedures for Identification and Referral of Victims of Trafficking and Potential Victims of Trafficking.  
2009-2011

IOM consolidates the approach established earlier to facilitate potential Albanian migrants’ access to informed migration within a national network of Migration Counters (Sporte Migracioni).  
2008

IOM supports the elaboration and implementation of the National Action Plan on Remittances.  
June 2007 - July 2009

IOM supports the implementation of the National Action Plan on Migration.  
February 2007 - July 2009

IOM, in close co-operation with the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and UNODC, establishes the first toll-free National Helpline offering services on safe migration and counter-trafficking.  
November 2006

IOM signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the Albanian Government and stakeholders on the Handover of Pre-screening System of Irregular Foreigners and Asylum Seekers in Albania.  
March 2006

The Albanian government approves the Cooperation Agreement on the National Referral Mechanism for Enhancing Identification of, and rendering assistance to, Victims of Trafficking initiated by IOM  
July 2005

May 2005

IOM provides support at policy level with drafting National Strategies to Combat Trafficking of Human Beings and its action plans.  
2001-2013

1999-2004

IOM supports the opening of Reception and Reintegration Centres for Albanian VoTs, irregular migrants stranded in Albania and third-country national VoTs.  

Albania becomes a Member State of the International Organization for Migration.  
1993

1992

IOM opens its Mission in Albania.