



# IOM STRATEGY FOR ALBANIA (2022-2025)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Publisher: International Organization for Migration  
17 route des Morillons  
P.O. Box 17  
1211 Geneva 19  
Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 22 717 9111  
Fax: +41 22 798 6150  
Email: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int)  
Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)

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**IOM STRATEGY FOR  
ALBANIA**  
(2022–2025)

# FOREWORD

We are delighted to present the strategy of the IOM Office in Albania to you. This strategy is a key tool in clearly articulating trends and challenges and how IOM will work with governments, migrant communities and our many partners to achieve a positive impact over the course of the next five years. The strategy affirms IOM's mandate and core priorities as laid out in its Strategic Vision and related governance documents.

This strategy is anchored in IOM's Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which further refines the global priorities and tailors them to the regional context. It lays out IOM's commitment to empower migrants and communities and to address drivers of migration. IOM is advancing positive, sustainable, and innovative development outcomes that are responsive to regional migration trends. In addition, IOM strengthens cooperative development and implementation of evidence-based and inclusive migration governance.

This strategy highlights the current and future migration trends in Albania and sets out the context in which IOM carries out its activities. It outlines the challenges and opportunities relating to migration in the country and identifies the strategic priorities to address them in an effort to strive towards fostering safe, orderly and regular migration.

We are very grateful to IOM staff – particularly at the regional and country level – for their diligent and insightful work in developing this strategy and in their commitment to its successful implementation. The strategy is particularly timely given the operational needs on the ground, with a particular emphasis on response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic and our collective commitment to *build back better*.

This strategy affirms IOM's commitment to support governments and stakeholders in upholding migrants' rights, regardless of their migration status and across all stages of the migration cycle. With this strategy, and in establishment of an UN Country Network on Migration, IOM in its capacity as Network Coordinator and Secretariat, will continue to foster effective collaboration in support of support of government's implementation follow-up and review of the GCM cooperation with our numerous and diverse partners, we will continue to respond to the needs and aspirations of migrants, building societies fit for a modern, mobile and interconnected world. IOM looks forward to strengthening its partnerships in Albania and joining efforts in fostering migration for the benefit of all.

Alma Jani  
Head of Office  
IOM Albania

Renate Held  
IOM Regional Director

# ACRONYMS

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AP	Action Plan
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CTDC	Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
DTM	the Displacement Tracking Matrix
EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	Statistical office of the European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FER	Foreign Electronic Registry
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMDAC	Global Migration Data Analysis Centre
GoA	Government of Albania
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IBM	Immigration and Border Management
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
INSTAT	National Institute of Statistics
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual
MCOF	Migration Crisis Operational Framework
MEFA	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
MFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
MiGOF	Migration Governance Framework
MoESY	Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth
MoHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Mol	The Ministry of Interior
NSM	National Strategy on Migration
PEAs	Private Employment Agencies
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
RCMS	readmission case management system
R/FTFs	Returning/Foreign Terrorist Fighters
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SH	Sexual Harassment
SoP	Standard Operating
TIMS	Total Information Management System
UK	United Kingdom
UMC	Unaccompanied Migrant Children
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan
USA	United States of America
VoT	Victim of Trafficking
WHO	World Health Organization

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. ABOUT IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the UN's leading agency on migration and the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, working closely with its key stakeholders - migrants and Member States - to promote humane, safe, and orderly migration. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants from an integral and holistic perspective, including links to development, in order to maximize the benefits and opportunities of migration and reduce its challenges. Established in 1951, IOM now has more than 170 Member States, offices in over 400 field locations and more than 14,000 staff - 90 per cent of IOM's staff being deployed in the field. In the South-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, IOM has 19 missions. In Albania, IOM has one country office and 26 staff.

As recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human mobility is indivisible from sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and the commitment to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind – will not be achieved without due consideration of migration. Additionally, the Global Compact for Migration is grounded in the 2030 Agenda and promotes the principles of having a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address this intrinsic link. This Strategy will support the Member States to achieve this, ultimately leveraging the potential of migration through a whole-of-government approach to achieve sustainable development outcomes for all. It is a direct contribution to the Decade of Action to fast track progress for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. It brings greater coherence and development impact to IOM's activities and allows for a joined-up approach to the way the Organization designs and delivers its operations, as called for in IOM's Strategic Vision.

IOM's Strategic Vision, presented to IOM Member States in 2019, spans the period of 2019 to 2023. The Vision articulates how IOM plans to meet its new and emerging responsibilities, including IOM's mandated role as Network Coordinator. It sets out the 'direction of travel' for IOM, is forward looking and encourages 'joined up thinking'. This Strategy is aligned with the Vision, its corresponding Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the IOM Strategic Results Framework, which are anchored in the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration.

## 1.2. IOM IN ALBANIA

IOM 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, especially in relation to European Union integration.<sup>1</sup> IOM has been a member of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Albania since 2007. IOM actively contributes to the implementation of the GoA-United Nations Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021, a framework that guides the work of the UNCT and their partnership with GoA. In addition, the programme aligns the support, funds, and programmes of 17 UN agencies, including IOM, to Albania's development priorities. Albania voted in favour of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2018. The UN Network on Migration was established in Albania in April 2021, with the participation of UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, FAO, ILO, UN Women, WHO. The Network is co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM.

IOM Albania has continuously supported the GoA efforts in the governance of migration dynamics. IOM works in close cooperation with line ministries and institutions. Based on this support the country now has a comprehensive policy on migration governance,<sup>2</sup> legislation better aligned to the *EU acquis*,<sup>3</sup> and stronger support services for migrants in vulnerable situations. In addition, IOM projects increased support for the integration of returned migrants,<sup>4</sup> institutional and operational capacities to deal with migration related dynamics, and humanitarian border management. All this is combined with a much more consolidated approach towards the development impact of migration and stronger engagement with the diaspora for the social and economic development of the country.<sup>5</sup>

IOM continued to provide its support during the more recent developments related to mixed migration flows on Albania's territory, strengthening the country's preparedness and response for increased migration flows, including through contingency planning,<sup>6</sup> as well as strengthening available capacities.<sup>7</sup> From 2015 to date, IOM Albania has significantly strengthened relations with the government and other stakeholders and has increased its field presence.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the work of IOM in Albania see 'IOM Albania info sheet' available at <https://albania.iom.int/sites/albania/files/documents/IOM%20Albania%2026.02.2021.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Strategy on Migration and Action Plan (2019-2022), developed with IOM technical and financial support through the IOM Development Fund (IDF).

<sup>3</sup> Support was provided by IOM for the review of the old law and the drafting of the new law no. 79/2021 "On aliens".

<sup>4</sup> Albania is one of the Top 10 Beneficiary Countries of Assisted voluntarily return and integration programs (AVRR). See World Migration Report 2020 page 38-39.

<sup>5</sup> Through the Programme "Engage the Albanian Diaspora to the Social and Economic Development of Albania", funded by the Italian Government.

<sup>6</sup> The "Contingency Plan for a possible massive influx of migrants and asylum seekers in the Albanian border" was initially developed with IOM support in 2015. The plan was recently updated in the first quarter of 2021 and a costed operation plan was developed as well. IOM has also supported capacity building for its implementation.

<sup>7</sup> IOM Albania has been involved in several capacity building activities for Albanian Government Officials in charge of the implementation of Migration related tasks, including Border Police officials, as well as several representatives of institutions that are in charge for the implementation of the National Strategy of Migration and its action plan such as Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Agency of Employment and Skills, Agency of diaspora, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Field presence consists in data and information collection on mixed migration flows as well as provision of AVRR counselling.



### 1.3. VISION STATEMENT

IOM aims to support the GoA in ensuring well governed migration. IOM will support the development and implementation of an effective migration governance system by advancing the implementation of migration policies aligned to the GCM as well as boosting the development impact of migration. In addition, in cooperation with strengthened institutions, IOM will aim to promote regular migration and to increase the sustainability of return and ensuring protection of migrants' rights, with a particular focus on those exposed to vulnerabilities.

## 2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

### 2.1. POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Albania's political and governance context is shaped by two broad trends: the strengthening and development of democratic institutions, and the pathway to becoming a member of the European Union. Albania is an upper middle-income country,<sup>9</sup> on the path to EU accession. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a positive trend of growth increase in 2021, however, poverty in Albania, is the highest in the region of Western Balkans where about one-third of its population lives on less than US\$5.5 per day (in 2011 PPP).<sup>10</sup> People can be displaced because of the loss of their place of residence due to natural hazards. In November 2019, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck Albania causing 51 casualties and the displacement of 17,000 people, as well as further economic and social consequences. Migrants in vulnerable situations are also exposed to the adverse impacts of environmental change, including those associated with climate change. When enabling conditions are present, internal and international migration can also support climate change adaptation. A transition to a low-carbon economy as envisaged in the European Commission's Green Agenda for the Western Balkans<sup>11</sup> will create new livelihood opportunities associated with clean energy, sustainable mobility, sustainable renovation, sustainable food systems and circular economy. Without enabling conditions (e.g., awareness, incentives, inclusive planning, supportive policies, communication, capacity development, etc.), migrants and their families are not likely to contribute to or benefit from this.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions in place since March 2020 put additional strain on the economic and social welfare of the country.

In the period 2018-2020 (third quarter of 2020), remittances counted for 9.3 per cent of GDP, mainly comprised of individual transfers.<sup>12</sup> Recent data from the World Bank show that after a fall of 8.6 per cent in 2020, remittance flows to Europe and Central Asia are projected to have grown 5.3 per cent in 2021 and will further continue to grow by 3.8 per cent in 2022 remaining one the largest sources of external financing.<sup>13</sup>

Albania has undertaken a considerable amount of work in adjusting its national legislation to the adopted international commitments. Legislative harmonization is ongoing and is in great part sustained by Albania's commitment to the EU accession process.

<sup>9</sup> The World Bank has classified Albania as an upper middle-income country. See <https://data.worldbank.org/income-level/upper-middle-income>

<sup>10</sup> See Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No.20 | Fall 2021, available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/36402/Greening-the-Recovery.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> page 17.

<sup>11</sup> See European Commission's Green Agenda for the Western Balkans at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-10/green\\_agenda\\_for\\_the\\_western\\_balkans\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-10/green_agenda_for_the_western_balkans_en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Bank of Albania, Pandemia dhe Remitancat, available at <https://online.fliphtml5.com/wpfxe/bbph/#p=10>.

<sup>13</sup> See World Bank, Press Release Nov. 17, 2021, Remittance Flows Register Robust 7.3 Percent Growth in 2021, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/11/17/remittance-flows-register-robust-7-3-percent-growth-in-2021>.

## 2.2. MIGRATION CONTEXT

Albania remains predominantly a country of emigration, with one third of the country's population living outside of its territory. The majority of the migrant communities are present in neighbouring countries, like Italy and Greece, which accounted for almost 75% of total emigrants in 2019,<sup>14</sup> although there is a growing trend of Albanians residing in other European countries as well as in North America. Emigration from Albania is primarily driven by economic reasons. Albanian citizens abroad include also persons whose asylum claims were rejected or who otherwise reside irregularly in EU countries. The Household Migration Survey conducted by INSTAT and IOM (2020) estimated that the net migration out of Albania was 364,034 persons in the period between 2011 and 2019. As of 2020, INSTAT (2020b) estimated the Albanian emigration stock living abroad at 1.68 million people, equivalent to 59% of the current resident population of the country. According to EUROSTAT, in the period January 2008 – July 2021, there were around 234,000 asylum claims by Albanian citizens to an EU country (including the UK), with Germany and France having the highest number of requests.<sup>15</sup> This phenomenon experienced its peak in 2015 with more than 68,000 claims. The country with the fastest increase in the number of Albanian emigrants in recent years is Germany, which saw a three-fold increase during the period 2015–2019 (rising to 4% of Albanian emigrants in 2019). The USA followed this increase of Albanian emigrants, hosting around 8% of Albanian emigrants in 2019.<sup>16</sup>

Albania is also increasingly becoming a country of destination for foreigners. This includes migrants in search of employment, students, asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>17</sup> According to UNDESA data total number of international migrants at mid-year 2020 present in Albania is 48,800 comprising 1.7 % of the total population.<sup>18</sup> While the numbers remain relatively small, the government has recognized the importance of migrants' rights and their integration and has dedicated a chapter in the National Strategy on Migration 2019-2022 and its Action Plan for the first time.<sup>19</sup>

Like other Western Balkan countries, Albania has also been affected by mixed migration flows transiting through the country and the region, with drivers for these flows being a mix of socioeconomic reasons and various conflicts and hazards taking place around the world. The categories of foreigners arriving in the country include, inter alia, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated minors, and stateless persons. The flows have been steadily increasing since 2017 as shown in the graph below:

<sup>14</sup> See European Training Foundation, 2021, How Migration, Human Capital and the Labour Market Interact in Albania, available at [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-09/migration\\_albania.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-09/migration_albania.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> See Eurostat, Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data (rounded) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR\\_ASYAPPCTZA\\_custom\\_1551044/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA_custom_1551044/default/table?lang=en).

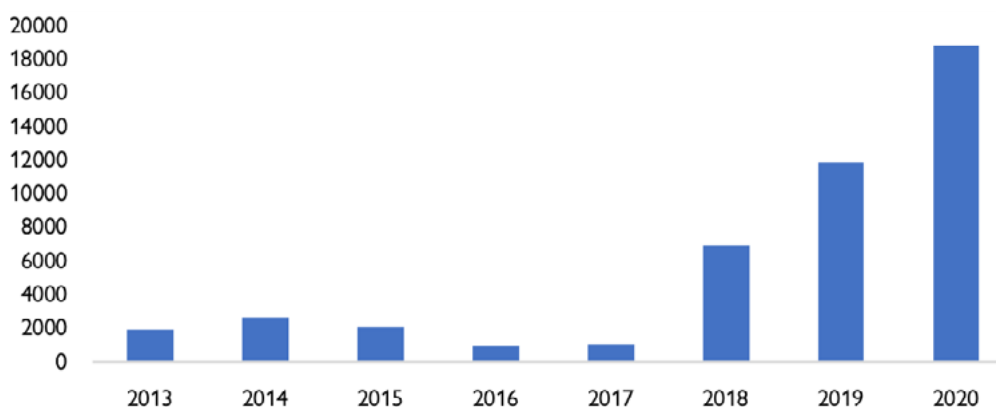
<sup>16</sup> See European Training Foundation, 2021, How Migration, Human Capital and the Labour Market Interact in Albania, available at [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-09/migration\\_albania.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-09/migration_albania.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Government of Albania, Extended Migration Profile (2015–2018), March 2020 available at <https://mb.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/vendim-2020-03-12-222.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Dynamics World Population Prospects, migration data available at <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Migration/>.

<sup>19</sup> See Albania's National Strategy on Migration and its Action Plan; available at <https://albania.iom.int/sites/albania/files/publication/THE%20NATIONAL%20STRATEGY.pdf> pg. 27-33.

Mixed migration flows in Albania  
Number of apprehensions of irregular migrants (2013-2020)



Source: Department of Border and Migration, Albanian State Police

### Policy, legislation, and data

The main priorities on migration governance for the GoA are stated in its National Strategy on Migration 2019-2022 (NSM) and the corresponding Action Plan (AP). The documents were developed with IOM support through the IOM Development Fund in 2018 and approved in June 2019 by the Government of Albania.

The goal of the policy is to effectively govern migration in Albania to address challenges resulting from migratory movements and to enhance the development impact of migration to the benefit of migrants and the Albanian society. The strategy addresses the specific objectives defined by the GoA in the National Strategy for Development and Integration (2015-2020). It also supports the efforts of the GoA to achieve the SDG Target 10.7 to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

The NSM and its AP define a wide range of actions across four main domains:

1. Ensure strategic governance of migration in Albania
2. Ensure safe and orderly migration from, through and to Albania
3. Develop an effective labour migration policy while enhancing the positive impact of migration in the national/local socioeconomic development
4. Promote and protect migrants' rights and their integration

In addition to the above, mainstreaming migration into local development strategies/plans is essential to making sure migration benefits development and vice versa. Support for the development of the new migration policy will need to be provided, following the completion of the current NSM and AP in 2022.

New relevant legislation was approved in 2021 such as the law 79/2021 "On Aliens" (developed in 2020-2021 with IOM support) and Law No. 10/2021 "On asylum in the Republic of Albania", further approximated with the EU acquis and EU directives, that regulate the procedure for pre-screening and processing of foreigners. Its aim being to differentiate among persons on the move, such as asylum seekers, unaccompanied and separated minors, victims or potential victims of trafficking and undocumented migrants, in order to provide the appropriate assistance to them. In addition to the legal basis focused on asylum and migration, two legal acts, namely the Law on the Rights and Protection

of Children No. 18/2017 and Law No. 121/2016 on Social Services provide for specific protective measures for children and persons in need of protection and/or who are part of vulnerable categories, including migrants in the territory of Albania. However, continuous support for the approximation of legislation with the EU acquis and EU directives, as well as with other international standards, is needed, especially with regard to their implementation and the development of secondary legislation.

Adequate migration data collection, analysis, and sharing are at the core of designing and monitoring effective policies on migration. There are various challenges in this regard, including lack of data as well as the quality of data available, stemming from lack of standardization of administrative data collection. Lessons learned from implementation of previous and current migration related strategies emphasize the need for the improvement of data collection and extending the scope of data collected.

## 2.3. MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

Migration management priorities are mainly defined under the domains 2 and 3 of the NSM and the corresponding measures in the AP.<sup>20</sup>

### Immigration and Border Management

Over the last decade major achievements have been reached in this area due to constant improvements in border infrastructure and the enhancement of border guard capacities to manage migration flows, including by detecting and apprehending traffickers and smugglers, facilitating entry of regular migrants, as well as identifying, screening and referring migrants with protection needs, whilst referring them to adequate services. Albania's border management information system, known as the Total Information Management System (TIMS) and the Foreign Electronic Registry (FER), make it possible for the authorities to monitor entry and exit movements as well as overstayers. IOM supported the increase of institutional and operational capacities to deal with migration related dynamics and humanitarian border management.

Further improvements are still needed regarding the border infrastructure and pre-screening of irregular migrants, capacity building and training, implementation of SoPs on AVRR from Albania, as well as return and readmission. On return and readmission there is a particular need in regard to the Readmission Protocol with Greece, considering that irregular migrants trying to transit the territory of Albania come mostly from Greece, but also with other priority countries of origin such as Morocco and Egypt. In addition, the establishment of the electronic readmission case management system (RCMS) within the TIMS is necessary.

### Prevention of irregular migration

The Government of Albania continues the efforts to meet the visa liberalization benchmarks since 2010 when the country was granted a visa-free regime with the EU's Schengen Area. These efforts have helped lowering the number of unfounded asylum applications lodged by Albanian citizens in EU Member States and Schengen-associated countries. Still, this phenomenon remains of concern and additional efforts are needed to tackle unfounded asylum applications and address its root causes.

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<sup>20</sup> See [ibid.](#) page 15 – 27.

## Management of mixed migration flows

In 2015, Albania developed the first Contingency Plan on a potential mass influx of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees at the Albanian border. The plan was updated and provided with a costed operational plan in 2021 with IOM and UNHCR support. The plan should be updated regularly and adapted to the number of arrivals/interceptions of migrants, also taking into account the presence of Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMCs) and other vulnerable groups as well as gender dimensions. Additional capacities are needed in the legal and operational aspects of the plan in order to process, identify, and refer the increasing flows, in full respect of human rights of migrants, with specific attention to UMCs.

## Labour Migration

Labour migration management for Albanian citizens has relied mainly on the implementation of bilateral labour migration agreements. Albania has bilateral labour agreements with Germany, Greece, and Italy. The “Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Finance and Economy of the Republic of Albania and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Kosovo for mobility at work”,<sup>21</sup> aims to strengthen relations between employment policy agencies and vocational training, as well as the exchange of best practices in the field of employment, vocational training and migration, and to enable the employment of workers from Albania in Kosovo,<sup>22</sup> and vice versa. The progress so far has shown limitations while the effectiveness of bilateral agreements has depended on changes in the immigration rules of the destination countries (Greece and Italy, in particular). There is a need to extend the geographical scope of bilateral labour mobility agreements with other countries of destination of Albanian migrants, in parallel with reviewing the scope of the existing ones.

Legal changes aiming to regulate the activity of Private Employment Agencies (PEAs) and bringing them closer to ethical recruitment standards were undertaken in 2018, including the obligation of the PEAs to periodically report to the responsible government authority for employment. However, national standards on the ethical recruitment of migrant workers have yet to be established. Once in place, they will need to be enforced by private operators and their activities monitored periodically. The National Strategy on Migration (NSM) foresees concrete actions on improving ethical recruitment standards.

The NSM also foresees several measures on improving labour migration management, which still remain largely unimplemented due to lack of capacities and coordination. IOM is supporting with capacity building,<sup>23</sup> for relevant government institutions to collect and analyse data on labour migration whilst making use of migration forecasts to develop labour migration policies. A study of the impact of migration on the available labour resources and the volume and structure of the national labour force including labour market needs in sectors experiencing highest outflow of professionals and need for labour force training will be carried out. In addition, significant efforts are in place for the introduction of the ethical recruitment principles for migrant workers, including the drafting of guidelines on ethical recruitment and awareness campaigns for interested stakeholders and migrant workers. Provision of information on current opportunities for regular labour migration is foreseen in the GoA strategic documents which remains relevant and important to be implemented and to ensure that, the formalization of Migration Counters in employment offices is a priority.

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<sup>21</sup> Signed on October 2, 2020

<sup>22</sup> All references to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>23</sup> Support is being provided through IOM Albania within the framework of the Project “Strengthening labour migration framework in Albania” funded by the IOM Development Fund.

The legal provisions of law 9668/2006 “On emigration of Albanian citizens for employment reasons” are not implemented,<sup>24</sup> GoA is planning to draft a new law on emigration.

### Reintegration of Albanian returnees

Currently, reintegration assistance is only provided through programs implemented by international organizations or civil society actors. IOM strongly advises to set-up a governmental reintegration mechanism. Returning migrants bring a valuable set of formal and non-formal capacities, skills and competencies obtained whilst abroad. It is important, therefore, that there is a mechanism in place to ensure that these can be applied in the local labour market. Removing barriers to the recognition of degrees and qualifications as much as skills gained/earned abroad is a crucial factor for the success of return and reintegration to Albania. This in addition to it contributing to addressing skills shortages in the national labour market.

The National Strategy on Migration 2019-2022 foresees an in-depth review of the functioning of the reintegration mechanism for Albanian citizens and partnerships with civil society and other actors and recommends actions that improve institutional coordination regarding reintegration.

### Diaspora engagement

The inclusion of the Albanian Diaspora in the economic development of the country is highly elaborated in the National Diaspora Strategy 2021 – 2025,<sup>25</sup> which aims to strengthen the role of the Albanian Diaspora in the economic development of the country, as well as the importance of preserving the national identity.

The Albanian Diaspora has accumulated a considerable human, social and cultural capital that can be tapped into, be it through temporary return to Albania or remote engagement, among other ways.

The establishment of the Diaspora Networks, as foreseen in the Strategy, would also create an additional engagement channel and is considered a central purpose of the Action Plan of the Strategy. These include the development of functional business networks, information networks, media networks, next generation networks, professional networks and women networks. The aims of the strategy will need to encourage a mentality shift at certain points to deliver its aims. These networks are designed as critical portals through which the Government of Albania and the Albanian Diaspora can collaborate on the design of progressive change.

However, the work for engaging diaspora to the development of the country should continue, as the diaspora potential remains not fully untapped considering that about 37 per cent of the Albanian population lives abroad.<sup>26</sup> The significant propensity and willingness to engage was also confirmed in a Mapping and Profiling of Diaspora in Italy (5 selected regions), France, and Belgium.

The aim is to encourage Diaspora to continuously engage in the process of know how transfer, through fellowships and twinning programs; in investing through the establishment

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<sup>24</sup> IOM assessment of the Law 9668/2006 “On emigration of Albanian citizens for employment reasons”, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> See the National Strategy of Diaspora and Action Plan, 2021–2025 Review of Strategy and Action Plan for the Government of Albania, available at <http://diaspora.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Rishikimi-strategjise-Englisht.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> See Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), Diaspora në shifra, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7848/diaspora-ne-shifra-2020.pdf>



of small and medium sized enterprises in several areas including agriculture, the food industry and the development of rural areas; in the process of scientific, cultural, social, economic, and political growth of the home country. In addition, the contribution of the diaspora to EU integration efforts should continue, through the continuous implementation of fellowship schemes, which proved to be a tangible support to the EU integration efforts of the Albanian institutions. Through such scheme, implemented by IOM in the framework of the programme “Engage the Albanian Diaspora to the Social and Economic Development of Albania” in the period October 2017 – December 2021, 38 Diaspora members/fellows, mainly residents in Europe, majority in Italy, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland, but also few fellows residing in UK and the United States, have been engaged to contribute in three different categories: liaison, research and benchmarking. Support was provided to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

The reform of the legal framework on local government,<sup>27</sup> have brought improvements in terms of the role and functions of municipalities also in the field of diaspora and migration. This act provides for the creation of a special structure for diaspora and migration for the administration of services at the local level as an administrative part of local self-government units. These structures will help provide quality information and services to migrants and the diaspora, in all local government units.

### Countering Human Trafficking

Albania is a country of origin, transit, and destination for trafficked adults and children. Trafficking is reported to take place both inside the country, within the region and towards other states. Identification remains a challenge, especially within the refugee and migrant population. Identified victims are trafficked for a wide range of purposes, including sexual and labour exploitation, domestic servitude, slavery, forced marriage, forced begging, and forced criminality.

Albania has taken concrete actions in enhancing coordination at national and local levels and strengthening the prevention and protection mechanisms in place. The National Action Plan against trafficking in Person 2021-2023 is based on four main pillars, prevention, protection, coordination, and penal prosecution. It includes responsible stakeholders and partners involved in the implementation of the activities. The preparation of the plan was a participatory process involving stakeholders, CSOs and grassroots organizations working directly with VoTs. The Organized Crime and Serious Crimes Strategy 2021-2025 provides the overall framework and following it the National Action Plans are prepared with measurable indicators for quality performance monitoring.

### Prevention of Violent Extremism

In 2015 the GoA adopted a comprehensive national Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Strategy outlining a series of measures and actions to be taken by a wide range of government and public sector stakeholders working in education, law enforcement, and social welfare. It focuses on three priority areas:

- I) Community outreach and engagement
- II) Countering extremist propaganda by promoting democratic values and
- III) Draft long-term comprehensive CVE policies.

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<sup>27</sup> See law 38/2019 “On some additions and amendments to law no. 139/2015 “On local self-government”.



Following the adoption of the national CVE Strategy, the associated National Action Plan foresees a direct engagement and activities to be undertaken with government stakeholders at the local level as part of the efforts to tackle the phenomenon of radicalization and threats of violent extremism and provide examples of effective PVE engagement.

Since 2019, by DCM no. 148, dated 5 November 2019, the process for reintegration of foreign fighters (FTFs) and their families was initiated in Albania. All line ministries that have institutional responsibilities in accordance with the National Strategy have detailed cross-sectoral plans for their long-term repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of these citizens into the community life. In this approach, the first re-integration process that is concretely undergoing since May 2020, through a vetted Reintegration Working Group Team created in May 2020, is supporting nine family units, divided into men, women/girls and children that are receiving mental health and psychosocial support and health care. IOM has provided reintegration support to five of these families.

On the 27 October 2020, the first five Albanian citizens (4 children and 1 woman) were repatriated from the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. IOM supported with humanitarian packages.

On 1 August 2021, Albania repatriated 19 people from the Al-Hol camp in Syria, 14 of whom were children and five women. IOM supported with humanitarian packages and IT equipment to facilitate the multidisciplinary team case management at the reception centre.

The CVE Center is the leading institution that is closely monitoring the day to day progress of these citizens in terms of their full rehabilitation and reintegration in order for their full re-socialisation in their respective communities. With EU funds IOM is working to support CVE Center with establishment of a functioning of the initiated filing case management system (initially physically and later on digitally when possible) for the registration and follow-up of all the respective individual reintegration plans to be prepared from the inter-institutional groups established *ad-hoc*, for their resocialization in the community (at schools, etc.). CVE Centre has prioritized the case management as the reintegration *ad-hoc* multidisciplinary groups, are preparing the beneficiaries and their families reintegration case management plans in a whole-society and inter-institutional approach.

According to the information available an approximative number of 30 Albanian citizens including women and children are expected to be returned in near future.

IOM is participating regularly in an inter-disciplinary coordination group responsible for providing an organized reception, return, rehabilitation and reintegration to RFTF returnees in Albania.

### 3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities for Albania focus on addressing national migration trends and challenges and are in line with broader regional and international development priorities. They are based on the IOM Strategic Vision,<sup>28</sup> IOM Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia,<sup>29</sup> and related IOM governance documents, such as the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF),<sup>30</sup> and the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF)<sup>31</sup>.

This strategy draws on international instruments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) Target 10.7 to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).<sup>32</sup> Reference documents include the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, as well as a number of national strategic and policy documents detailed in Annex 1.

IOM in Albania will work toward achieving the following **three key strategic priorities** in the country, in line with the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and Strategic objectives of the regional strategy, as detailed in the below Table:

<b>Resilience</b>	<b>Strategic Priority 1:</b> Individuals and communities are empowered and resilient
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>Strategic Priority 2:</b> Migrants and societies benefit from safe, orderly and regular human mobility
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Strategic Priority 3:</b> Migration benefits from a whole of government and whole of society approach

The IOM Albania strategy is intended for a four-year period (2022–2025) and is flexible and subject to periodic reviews, allowing for adjustments to new realities and emerging issues/situations. IOM will strive to implement the strategy in close cooperation and partnership with governments, donors, migrants, civil society, the private sector, and all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries.

<sup>28</sup> IOM, IOM Strategic Vision 2019–2023: Setting a Course for IOM (Geneva, 2019). Available at <https://governingbodies.iom.int/system/files/en/council/110/C-110-INF-1%20-%20IOM%20Strategic%20Vision.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> IOM Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2021

<sup>30</sup> See IOM, “Migration Governance Framework”, brochure (Geneva, n.d.), available at [www.iom.int/sites/default/files/about-iom/migof\\_brochure\\_a4\\_en.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/about-iom/migof_brochure_a4_en.pdf) as well as IOM Council resolution 1310 on the Migration Governance Framework (C/106/RES/1310) of 4 December 2015, available at <https://governingbodies.iom.int/system/files/en/council/106/C-106-RES-1310%20MIGOF.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> See IOM, MCOF info-sheet, available at [https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/migrated\\_files/What-We-Do/docs/IOM-MCOF-Infosheet-10March2013-page2.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/migrated_files/What-We-Do/docs/IOM-MCOF-Infosheet-10March2013-page2.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Although the NSM has been approved prior to the GCM approval it was taken in account during the NSM development and will be further mainstreamed during the midterm revision of the strategy.

### 3.1. RESILIENCE:

#### ***STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Individuals and communities are empowered and resilient***

IOM in Albania provides protection assistance for those identified as being vulnerable to violence, exploitation, or abuse, including trafficking, within a migration context as per the determinants of migrant vulnerability model.<sup>33</sup> This includes facilitating their access to services and supporting the capacities of relevant institutions.

IOM in Albania will continue to support the government in the development of gender- and child-sensitive policies for protection and assistance of those marginalized and/or vulnerable. Also, IOM will continue to build the capacities of the institutional stakeholders to improve knowledge, skills, and resources to protect the rights of migrants in vulnerable situations, including migrant children and actual and potential victims of trafficking, and to equip them to apply a survivor-centred, gender-sensitive, human-rights based approach. This includes building capacities in protection-sensitive and humanitarian border management, preparedness for migration crisis as well as migration crisis management, including maintenance of adequate conditions and availability of protection services in the transit reception centres, as well as provision of assisted voluntary return and reintegration support to migrants who are not in need of international protection. The sustainable reintegration of VOTs in local communities and long-term monitoring of the assistance will be supported.

IOM will continue supporting the coordination and capacities of the stakeholders including on referral pathways for the identification and protection of migrants in vulnerable situations, access to protection assistance and services. Special emphasis will be placed on child protection, especially UMCs, in line with IOM's role in protecting migrant children,<sup>34</sup> and respond to their needs on the ground. In particular, IOM will work with institutions to further mainstream migrant children into national child protection system.

IOM will continue to work closely with partners and national stakeholders, promoting a whole-of-government and whole of society approach to return and reintegration, aiming at strengthening their operational capacities to provide essential services to returnees. Return migrants will be supported by mechanisms in place to assure sustainable livelihood and their social, economic and cultural reintegration into the communities that they choose, in a sustainable manner and in response to their needs.

In Albania, support will continue in coordination with the CVE Center in the Prevention of Violent Extremism, aimed at providing populations at-risk of engaging with violent groups with social, educational, political and economic alternatives to address incentives for individuals to participate in violence. With reference to RFTF, Government of Albania/CVE Center will be supported to enhance community-based capacities to reintegrate former associates of sanctioned violent extremist groups and their families.

Respect for migrant workers' rights will be promoted with the public and private sector entities, actively engaging in efforts to prevent exploitation and trafficking through the development and enforcement of national ethical recruitment standards. State authorities and civil society organisations will be empowered to hold responsible actors accountable for the violation of migrant worker rights and provide support to migrants in case of violence, exploitation or abuse.

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<sup>33</sup> For more information on the model see: <https://www.iom.int/iom-handbook-migrant-protection-and-assistance>.

<sup>34</sup> For more information on IOMs work on the protection of children in migration please visit <https://eea.iom.int/protection-children-migration>

IOM designs and implements evidence-based and human-centred programs aiming at the sustainable sociocultural and economic development of the country and policies on resilience building involving also the diaspora communities. Diaspora engagement to the economic development of the country will be supported, for boosting the establishment of small and medium sized enterprises, including agriculture, food industry and development in rural areas, also by enhancing the network of diaspora successful entrepreneurs and soliciting their willingness to invest in Albania. Virtual and temporary return options such as fellowship and mentorship schemes will be supported, as well as twinning programs, enabling know-how transfer from Diaspora members to support the sociocultural and economic development of Albania.

IOM will seek to address the assistance and protection needs of migrants and displaced persons, as well as address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters due to natural hazards. IOM will support efforts that aim to avert migration out of necessity, including displacement, and address the needs of trapped and immobile populations. IOM will engage in partnerships to develop and implement joint approaches that analyse and address environmental drivers that compel people to move, accelerate climate action, reduce risk, build resilience, and enhance adaptive capacities.

### 3.2. MOBILITY:

#### ***STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Migrants and societies benefit from safe, orderly and regular human mobility***

Supporting the GoA in taking actions for a comprehensive and efficient governance of migration in a way to maximize its development impact will be one of the main areas of work of IOM. It will also be supporting policy makers and stakeholders to have access to, and use, high-quality labour market research and evidence to effectively respond to anticipated skills needs and changing labour market trends.

AVRR assistance to migrants who are not in need of international protection and who wish to return to their countries of origin, voluntarily, safely and in a dignified manner, will continue to be provided by IOM, based on their informed decision and conforming with relevant evidence-based legal frameworks. IOM will further provide support to the government in strengthening capacities for effective and protection-sensitive readmission and return management, including through supporting efforts aimed at improving bilateral and regional readmission cooperation with countries of origin and transit.

IOM will continue to work towards assuring that Albanian labour migrants of all genders, ages, abilities, and other diversities benefit from appropriate and gender-sensitive pre-decision, pre-departure, post-arrival or return assistance and counselling through the formalized and strengthened Migration Counters and the Local Network on Migration. Also, the GoA will be supported in informing potential migrants on the regular pathways of migration and the risks of irregular migration. In addition, strengthening of the inter-state collaboration on labour migration as well as developing or maintaining well-functioning skills recognition systems will be perused.

Support will be provided to the GoA to develop innovative, flexible policies for students and labour migrants, in particular bilateral and regional mobility agreements and protocols. IOM will also continuously support the expansion of the geographical scope of agreements, including the review of the scope of the existing ones.

IOM will be working to strengthen cooperation and dialogue in the area of combating trafficking in persons through regional exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices between governments, the international community and civil society. Support will be provided to the national referral mechanism in the area of identification and protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking, as well as to the law enforcement authorities in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. IOM will be striving to support the institutional capacities in the area of further alignment with the EU and international standards in the area of trafficking in human beings. The institutional stakeholders will be supported through availability of assessments on the traffickers modus operandi and profile of the victims of trafficking contributing to the prevention and investigation efforts. The prevention activities will be supported through raising awareness on the risks of trafficking in human beings and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable categories.

Institutional stakeholders will be supported in addressing of transnational organized crime, such as migrant smuggling, and the protection of the rights of migrants across the entire mobility continuum. IOM will strengthen cooperation and dialogue through building of national interagency capacities and regional exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices between governments, the international community and civil society, and will continue to support investigation and prosecution efforts.

IOM will also work with the Government in the development and implementation of integrated, non-discriminatory border management policies, strategies and systems that ensure the human rights, dignity and safety and security of all those on the move, including children and vulnerable migrants.

Border management officials and frontline workers will be supported by IOM in increasing their knowledge and skills to apply protection measures, facilitate and support persons with protection concerns, such as victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants, unaccompanied and separated migrant children, and survivors of Gender-Based Violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, in line with revised legislation and the good practices of the European standards.

IOM Albania will promote approaches that facilitate orderly, safe, responsible, and regular migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters due to natural hazards. IOM Albania will highlight the benefits of well-managed migration in supporting climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction. IOM Albania will support the development and implementation of innovative migration policies and practices. IOM Albania will seek to develop solutions that leverage the potential of migration for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Finally, IOM in partnership with Government institutions, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations will continue to inform and sensitize the public and the local communities about the positive development potential of regular migration in an effort to address misconceptions.

### 3.3. GOVERNANCE:

#### ***STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Migration benefits from a whole of government and whole of society approach***

IOM is a key strategic partner of the national authorities in the development and implementation of the policies and strategies in various areas, including comprehensive migration governance policy, as well as sectoral policies such as combatting human trafficking,

diaspora engagement, integrated border management and other migration related areas. IOM will support whole-of-government coordination and whole of society mechanisms that will help government institutions and key stakeholders at the local and national level to have relevant skills, knowledge, resources, tools and evidence to develop migration policies and frameworks contributing to good migration governance.

IOM is also contributing to strengthening the national capacities and systems for effective and comprehensive migration data collection, exchange and analysis of migration statistics. In this context, IOM will continue to provide technical assistance and capacity building to Government institutions and relevant stakeholders to responsibly collect, analyse, share and disseminate quality, timely, disaggregated and comparable migration data in line with their needs, priorities and global commitments and in full respect of data protection and privacy.

IOM will continue to provide guidelines to the national stakeholders on the usage of the findings from data analysis and how to transform recommendations into concrete evidence-based actions. It will also assist in improving access to relevant resources, including data standards, best practices, research methods and survey instruments.

IOM will continue to build capacities of the Government in the area of policy development and implementation that supports good migration governance in line with international standards. It will provide support for the implementation of the National Strategy on Migration (2019-2022) and Action Plan, as well as the development of the new migration governance policy for 2022 onwards, in line with the GCM objectives. IOM will also support the implementation of the Diaspora policy, including through strengthening inter-institutional cooperation, providing capacity building and sharing of know-how. The continuous approximation of legislation with the EU acquis and other international standards in fields relevant to migration will be supported as well.

IOM will work with the Government and relevant UN entities, including the UN Network on Migration and the UN Development System, providing effective, coordinated, and whole-of-system support to develop and implement migration policies and mainstream migration into related public policy domains, including migration, environment and climate change nexus as relevant, in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the GCM, the 2030 Agenda and other relevant frameworks in humanitarian, environment, and related fields.

IOM Albania will raise awareness and support the relevant sectoral ministries to mainstream migration in climate change policies and programming as well as to contribute to the human mobility work plan of the Task Force on Displacement of the Warsaw International Mechanism of Loss and Damage under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. IOM Albania will support the Government of Albania to further enhance its policies and programming to avert, minimise and address disaster displacement in the context of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. IOM will support the Government of Albania to mainstream climate change and environmental considerations into their GCM implementation plan and to report on migration, environment and climate change nexus as part of the GCM review process.

IOM will continue to develop and implement activities ensuring that the public narrative of migration is well-informed and balanced, and the human rights of migrants and their contribution to local and national development are recognized.

### 3.4. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

The overall socioeconomic and political context, the specific conditions within which migration and displacement take place, and the design of policy frameworks conceived to respond to current migration challenges, imply the cross-cutting nature of this complex phenomena. IOM Albania, in all its interventions will consider the incorporation of such issues like gender, youth, health and disability, environment, etc.

IOM in Albania follows a people-centred approach that is gender- and child-sensitive and disability inclusive. The Organization is committed to supporting governments and partners in upholding the human rights of migrants, regardless of their migration status and across all stages of the migration cycle. Persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups, particularly in migration and forced displacements contexts. As a key contributor to the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, IOM is working to ensure that disability inclusion is integrated in all areas under its mandate, including in IOM's interventions, programming, and consultation processes.

IOM reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that gender is mainstreamed throughout all of its projects, policies and activities and it in all stages of its work, particularly considering the migrants in vulnerable situations such as: victims of gender-based violence, victims of trafficking in human beings, pregnant women, children, and persons identifying as LGBTQIA+, who are mostly susceptible to being discriminated, stigmatized, ostracized, marginalized. It is recognized that a person's gender strongly influences the migration experience which can manifest itself in reasons to migrate, country of destination, network they used; and opportunities, vulnerabilities and risks that migrant are exposed to along the way and in country of destination. IOM's commitments towards gender equality, which provide the basis to support counterparts in advancing gender mainstreaming initiatives, are grounded in the following instruments, but not limited to: IOM Migration Governance Framework; IOM Gender Equality Policy (2015); IOM Gender Marker; UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2012); UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP).

IOM recognizes that sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) by IOM personnel are not only serious misconduct but violations of human rights and forms of sexual violence driven by gender inequality and imbalances of power. IOM also recognizes that incidents of SH in the workplace can serve as indicators of SEA against beneficiaries, and vice versa, and takes a mutually reinforcing approach to tackle both forms of sexual misconduct. IOM Albania is committed to addressing SEA and SH through effective prevention, risk mitigation, and response measures at all stages of programming across all types of interventions, through safe and accessible feedback and complaint mechanisms for receiving sensitive complaints of SEA and referral pathways to assistance. Regular trainings will be conducted on IOM's standards of conduct and PSEAH and PSEAH key messages/information, communication and education materials will be continuously shared with IOM personnel, beneficiaries and communities.



### 3.5. PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

For the achievement of the strategic objectives, IOM will build up and expand partnerships with the following stakeholders, engaged in migration governance in Albania:

**The Ministry of Interior (MoI)** is the entity in charge of the development and implementation of the migration governance policy in Albania. Through its structures such as the Directorate of Anti-Trafficking and Migration, State Police (Department of Border and Migration), Directorate of Citizenship and Refugees, etc., is the institution in charge of preventing and combating irregular migration, integrated border management; implementation of Readmission Agreements with other countries; regional and wider cooperation in the area of statistical data exchange on irregular migration and early warning; identifying and treating potential victims / victims of trafficking pursuant to the National Referral Mechanism and Standard Operating Procedures for identifying, referring and assisting potential victims / victims of trafficking, including UMCs, in the fight against human trafficking and smuggling, asylum and citizenship etc.

The Department of Border and Migration in the Albanian State Police is the main partner in the sectors of IBM and readmission and beneficiary of substantial interventions in these sectors.

The **Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE)** through its directorates and the National Employment Service, exercises its activity in accordance with the relevant legislation in the field of developing state policies on immigration and labour immigration and related matters: employment, vocational education and training, international bilateral agreements on social protection, labour relations, etc.

The **Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEFA)** is responsible for drafting and implementing visa policy and negotiating the necessary acts of international cooperation in the field of migration; supporting Albanian emigrants abroad and protecting their rights, engaging with the Albanian Diaspora, coordinating actions with the Ministry of Interior structures for the readmission of Albanian citizens, etc. A number of MEFA structures fulfil their obligations and responsibilities in the field of migration. The Directorate of Consular Affairs is the responsible structure for dealing with foreigners, drafting their entry and stay policies in the Republic of Albania.

The **Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP)** is responsible for contributing to ensuring access to health care, protection, social inclusion, social care and equal opportunities, in accordance with the legislation in force. It supports the integration of returning migrants and internal migrants into the health system, health insurance and social protection. The structure of the MoHSP, which fulfils the obligations and responsibilities of this institution in the field of migration, is the General Directorate of Health and Social Protection Policy and Development.

The **State Agency for the Rights and Protection of Children** is the main partner in issues of Albanian and third country UMCs; beneficiary of expertise capacity building of their field personnel.

The **Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY)** is responsible for contributing to the integration of foreign nationals in Albania in the field of education, culture and science, as well as for the creation of conditions for the education of Albanian emigrants in their countries of residence, in their mother tongue.

The **Coordination Centre for Countering Violent Extremism** in Albania is a hub for coordination and capacity development of local stakeholders and frontline practitioners



involved in efforts to counter violent extremism in Albania and the region by sharing best practices and developing effective evidence-based responses to counter the threat of violent extremism. The Centre is regularly engaging with communities, policymakers, and practitioners in Albania, the region and internationally to better inform policies and activities in support of preventing and countering violent extremism.

In addition, partnerships will be strengthened with human rights institutions such as the People's Advocate (Ombudsperson) and the Commissioner Against discrimination.

Considering the importance of the diaspora engagement for the development of the country, in addition to the MEFA, partnerships will be established and strengthened with institutions both at central and local level which are responsible for diaspora engagement.

Development partners (UN Agencies, IFI, EU, bilateral donors, etc.), civil society organisations, business community and academia should be considered as major partners. Partnerships within the UN system will continue to be maintained and further developed as relevant in the context of the UN Country Team as well as the UN Network on Migration.

## 4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As the UN Agency on Migration, IOM will be working to strengthen its evidence base on migration by improving and investing in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of accurate, reliable, and comparable data, ensuring that this data guides coherent and evidence-based policymaking, as well as monitoring of the migration related initiatives. In 2018, IOM has implemented Migration Governance Indicators in Albania which is a framework to support the country in the assessment of the comprehensiveness of its migration policy, as well as in the identification of areas that could be strengthened.

IOM will be investing in the capacities of its staff to provide support to these process in most effective manner, aligning its activities with priorities set in the IOM Migration Data Strategy. Additionally, IOM will ensure that the migration management authorities will benefit from the available data and reports produced by the IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) when designing and implementing policy measures.

To ensure effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, impact and sustainability of its programming, IOM Albania will continue investing in improving the staff knowledge in line with IOM policies and guidance as well as norms and standards and ethical guidelines for monitoring and evaluation. Capacity building trainings will be implemented in close cooperation with the Regional Office.

IOM will be developing and implementing a multi-sectoral programming portfolio, addressing Policy, Legislation and Data; Migration Protection and Assistance; Labour Migration; Migration and Development; Immigration and Border Management; and Migration, Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda. The program staff will continue strengthening their thematic knowledge through the trainings and thematic sessions organized by the Regional Office and Staff Development Unit ensuring up to date programming and transfer of best practices in Albania. Special focus will be given to investments in capacities and implementation of innovative programs.

## 5. THE WAY FORWARD

Through its strategy, IOM in Albania will be supporting the country in ensuring effective, efficient, and responsible migration governance, maximizing the development impact of migration. By 2025, IOM will strive to support the country in the achievement of the following priorities:

- Strong institutional capacities in the area of protection of vulnerable migrants and combating of cross border crime, with focus on trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants;
- Strengthened resilience and socio-economic stabilization of those compelled to migrate due to poverty, exploitation, lack of opportunities and environmental challenges;
- Enhanced development impact of migration through the Diaspora engagement, support intra-state collaboration on labour migration and sustainable reintegration of returnees and advancement towards the 2030 Agenda;
- Enhanced institutional capacities in migration-data collection, analysis, and dissemination, as well as in the development and implementation of the policies in the area of migration management in the national planning and reporting processes.

IOM will strongly cooperate with the governmental partners, UN partners, other international organizations, civil society organizations, Diaspora organizations, private sector, academia and others to achieve the above outlined strategical priorities that are aligned with the country's priorities. The support by donors is a key element for implementation of the strategy. Coordination and liaison with the partners from the donor community, governmental partners, CSOs, migrants, UN and other international organizations will be maintained for the implementation, adjustment and monitoring of the progress towards the strategic priorities.



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

17 route des Morillons, P.O. Box 17, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 717 9111 • Fax: +41 22 798 6150 • Email: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int) • Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)

Rr. Brigada VIII, P. LID, Kati III, Ap. 303, Tirana, Albania  
Tel: (+335) 4 2257836-7 • Fax: (+335) 4 2257835 • E-mail: [infotirana@iom.int](mailto:infotirana@iom.int)  
Website: <http://www.albania.iom.int>