

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME “ENGAGE THE ALBANIAN DIASPORA TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ALBANIA”

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as identified by the evaluator for use by key stakeholders, including internally by IOM staff and externally by project partners. More details can be found in the full evaluation report.

Evaluation type:	Internal independent final evaluation
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Evaluation dates:	December 2021 – March 2022
Final report date:	28 March 2022
Commissioned by:	IOM Mission in Albania

Evaluation managed by: Genci Pjetri, Programme Coordinator

Programme managed by: Manoela Lussi, Programme Manager until 31 December 2021

Evaluation purpose: The general objective of this final evaluation was to analyze how effectively and efficiently intended results were achieved and if so, how impactful and sustainable these achievements were in engaging diaspora in the development of the country, and which were the main obstacles in achieving these objectives and lessons learned for future potential similar projects.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, Coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and cross-cutting issues

Evaluation methodology: Document review as well as 28 semi-structured interviews and 2 focus group discussions with IOM staff and key stakeholders, conducted remotely due to COVID-19 pandemic.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The “Engage the Albanian Diaspora to the Social and Economic Development of Albania” programme was funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and implemented by the International Organization for Migration in Albania.

The overall objective was to contribute to enhancing the engagement of the Albanian diaspora in the development of the country.

In pursuit of this objective, the program implementation was channeled through three parallel processes:

The first process aimed at supporting the Government of Albania to implement a comprehensive approach towards Diaspora engagement for development in line with the overall policy framework. This included capacity building activities to allow relevant officials to gain the knowledge, resources and tools to implement Diaspora engagement activities.

The second process looked at facilitating the engagement of Diaspora into country development and know-how transfer through the implementation of fellowship schemes as well as the carrying out of a mapping and profiling of Diaspora with the aim of contributing to the creation of a repository of diaspora skills and knowledge.

Project information:

Geographical coverage:	Albania
Project type:	Community and Economic Development
Project code:	CE.0377
Period:	17 Oct 2017 – 31 Dec 2021
Donor:	The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Budget:	EUR 2,876,500

The third process looked at facilitating the engagement of Diaspora in economic development by facilitating diaspora investment. This included the development of “Connect Albania”, an investment-boosting platform to engage Diaspora as development agents.

The programme was implemented in close coordination with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in Albania and in close cooperation with the former State Minister for Diaspora and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

The programme also engaged most of the national governmental stakeholders, the Albanian Diaspora, Civil Society Organizations as well as the private sector.

KEY FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance: The programme, through support provided on both technical and policy levels, was very relevant to national efforts, donor priorities and IOM's strategies. It was well-designed with a clear and a strong description of activities and results. The programme proposed pilot and concrete responses to materialize the engagement of the Albanian Government with the diaspora

Coherence: This programme is coherent with other IOM diaspora global and regional projects, as well as with other initiatives led by other organizations in Albania. It is perceived to be the most important and comprehensive initiative on diaspora in Albania and the region.

Effectiveness: Overall, the programme responded to the needs of all relevant stakeholders, good coordination mechanisms were put in place, and it was effective as most of the intended outputs were achieved. In general, the programme was described by the stakeholders as courageous, innovative, ambitious and concrete. It contributed to institutional capacities strengthening and diaspora engagement through transfer of know-how and financial investment, although not achieving all the expected results for "Connect Albania". Challenges impacting effectiveness are due to few internal factors related to administrative processes while external factors included changes in the government and national priorities as well as COVID-19. Time was needed to establish good communication flow among actors and grasp the specificities of the Albanian diaspora and its relationship with Albania.

Efficiency: The programme was overall quite efficient in its financial management and achieved a burn rate of 95%. Implementing partners and consultants were effectively engaged, and there was a clear organization of the IOM team with good leadership and good team spirit.

Impact: Several interventions implemented brought a significant change at national and local levels. The availability of a database of highly skilled diaspora, the existence of fellowship schemes ready to be replicated and expanded and the strengthened capacities of stakeholders were immediate positive changes. In terms of mid-term and long-term impact, several elements were highlighted, including 1) multidimensional networking and enhanced partnerships among diaspora and different actors, 2) awareness changes and mindset shifts of both diaspora and institutions, 3) contribution to the change of narrative on diaspora, and 4) the extent to which it involved emotions stimulating the senses of identity, motivation and willingness for change.

Sustainability: Specific skills and instruments created represent concrete basis for continuity. These include the

National Diaspora Strategy, the networking, the fellowships schemes, the mapping and profiling of diaspora and the knowledge shared through capacity building. Those initiatives are scalable and can be reactivated, as long as institutional continuity is ensured by the Albanian Government.

Cross-cutting issues: The evaluation found strong attention to gender, environment and communication.

GOOD PRACTICES

Good practices identified by the evaluator could be further elaborated and replicated in other Diaspora projects and in other countries. These include the: 1) inception phase at the beginning of the programme to better adjust it to the priorities; 2) establishment of a diaspora focal points network; 3) partnerships with university institutions in countries of destination and of origin ensuring institutional sustainability; 4) creation of a platform involving diaspora as development agents and 5) alignment to national priorities, beyond the topic of migration, such as the EU integration process or the sectorial economic development.

LESSONS LEARNED

Diversifying governmental counterparts for more institutional ownership and sustainability; Improving the formulation of some outcome indicators and reinforcing coherence between wording in the result statements, indicators, and targets.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Share the evaluation report and the translated version of the evaluation brief with all relevant stakeholders.
2. Consider a meeting with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs to build a strategy on how to take over the responsibilities of the former State Minister for Diaspora.
3. Carry out project development and fundraising to enable IOM continue supporting diaspora engagement initiatives.
4. Follow-up closely with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber and National Diaspora Agency on the "Connect Albania" mechanism.
5. Consider conducting a meeting with the network of focal points and EU fellows, to create continuity, collect their proposals and involve them in possible future projects.
6. Conduct field visits, together with the diaspora associations, to programme beneficiaries in Albania to assess the programme impact and possible areas of future support.
7. Explore follow-up initiatives with Albanian diaspora associations in countries of destination, such as more learning experiences for Albanians living in Albania.
8. Consider continuing the dissemination of the visibility products covering projects achievements through digital and traditional media.