

# EVALUATION REPORT

FINAL INTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

**“ENGAGE THE ALBANIAN DIASPORA TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT OF ALBANIA”**

March 2022



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

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This full report is also complemented by a **two-page “Evaluation Brief”** that presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

#### Programme Information:

Programme title	Engage the Albanian diaspora to the social and economic development of Albania
Programme dates	17 Oct 2017 – 31 Dec 2021
IOM project code	CE.0377
IOM Managing Mission	IOM Tirana, Albania
IOM Programme Manager	Manoela Lussi, Programme Manager, IOM Mission in Albania (until 31 December 2021)
IOM Programme Oversight	Alma Jani, Head of Office, IOM Mission in Albania
Donor	The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

#### Evaluation information:

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## Contents

<b>Contents</b> .....	3
<b>List of acronyms</b> .....	4
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	5
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	11
<b>2 Context and purpose of the evaluation</b> .....	11
2.1 Context/Programme background .....	11
2.2 Evaluation purpose and scope .....	13
2.2.1 Evaluation purpose .....	13
2.2.2 Evaluation scope .....	13
2.3 Approach and methodology .....	14
2.3.1 Evaluation criteria .....	14
2.3.2 Cross-cutting themes .....	14
2.3.3 Methodology.....	14
2.3.4 Evaluation norms and standards .....	16
2.3.5 Limitations.....	16
<b>3 Evaluation findings per criteria</b> .....	17
3.1.1 Relevance .....	17
3.1.2 Coherence .....	21
3.1.3 Efficiency .....	37
3.1.4 Impact .....	39
3.1.5 Sustainability.....	41
3.1.6 Cross cutting themes.....	43
<b>4 Conclusions and recommendations</b> .....	48
4.1.1 Conclusions .....	48
4.1.2 Lessons learned and good practices .....	51
4.1.3 Recommendations .....	52
<b>5 Annexes</b> .....	54

## List of acronyms

ADBC	Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber
AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
ASPA	Albanian School of Public Administration
B.F.E	Agriculture Federation Elbasan
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	Civil society organizations
CVE	Countering of Violent Extremism
GIZ	The German Agency for International Cooperation
GoA	Government of Albania
HQ	Headquarters
IDF	IOM Development Fund
IOM	International organization for migration
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEFA	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania
MSC	Most Significant Change
NGO	Non governmental organization
OECD-DAC	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
RO	Regional office
SC	Steering Committee
SMD	State Minister for Diaspora
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of reference
ToT	Training of trainers
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
USA	United States of America

## Executive summary

This report presents the results of an independent internal final evaluation of a four-year-programme, *“Engage the Albanian diaspora to the social and economic development of Albania”* funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (IOM project code CE.0377). The programme started on 17 October 2017 and was concluded on 31 December 2021. This final evaluation covered the entire implementation period. The evaluation was conducted as an internal evaluation by Shiraz Jerbi, internal evaluator based at the IOM country office in Rome, Italy with coaching and guidance provided by Sarah Harris, the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for IOM’s Regional Office in Vienna covering South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The evaluation assessed questions across six criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability), as well as cross-cutting questions related to gender, environment and communication. The purpose of the evaluation was to respond to the needs of three main evaluation users: (a) IOM senior management, to assess performance and gather lessons learned; (b) IOM Tirana team, to be able to build on lessons learned and improve ongoing and future projects; and (c) Potential donors and partners, to mobilize funds for follow-up initiatives and to inform the design and implementation of other similar projects.

Methods used for the data collection included document review, participation to a final programme workshop, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Purposeful sampling was used, prioritizing a diverse range of stakeholders that included IOM staff, consultants and implementing partners; national government officials; diaspora members and beneficiaries. Data analysis relied mainly on qualitative analysis of documents and transcripts, as well as the extraction from donor reports, compilation and analysis of quantitative data.

The key challenges were related to the timeline of data collection (end of the year holidays period implying that several stakeholders were not available during that time for the interviews, which extended the data collection period, reducing the time for data analysis including for verifying data monitoring processes), to the remote data collection due to COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions, and to the dissolution of the State Minister for Diaspora (SMD), which was one of the main counterparts of the programme. However, the programme involved several other governmental stakeholders and this enabled the evaluator to gather a wide variety of perspectives also regarding the impact of the dissolution of such institution.

The evaluation started in December 2021 with document review and the inception phase, the data collection was completed by mid-February 2022, and the report was finalized by end of March 2022.

## Conclusions:

**Relevance:** The programme was very relevant to national efforts, to donors' priorities and to IOM's global strategies. The programme was well-designed with a clear and a strong description of activities and results. The logical approach was evidence-based and coherent and the assumptions were fairly sound. The inception phase and the reformulations were necessary and reflected the need to adapt the programme to a changing context. The programme proposed a pilot and concrete response to materialize the engagement of the Albanian Government towards diaspora, articulated around a tridimensional approach: 1. stronger institutions, 2. social capital transfer and 3. financial capital transfer. Through support on both technical and policy levels, the programme responded to the national priorities and also aligned with national, regional and international frameworks. The programme was timely, as it addressed the EU integration process, a topic of major concern for the Albanian Government, and the inclusion of highly skilled diaspora in this process was a great opportunity to mainstream migration into development policies.

**Coherence:** This programme is internally coherent with IOM's other diaspora projects at global and regional level, as well as with other initiatives lead by other organizations, and the programme proved to be both the most important (significant outreach and 4 years timeframe) and most comprehensive initiative (diversity of activities and diversity of target beneficiaries and stakeholders involved) on diaspora in Albania and in the region. Other organizations such as GIZ or the EU Delegation worked on the topic but with more limited activities and it seems that this programme was unique in the nature and the dimension of the activities put in place. IOM Albania is perceived as the government's most trusted, credible and knowledgeable organization on the topic of migration and should therefore, according to several governmental stakeholders, keep the lead on the topic of migration and diaspora. Several stakeholders mentioned that the cooperation with IOM is fruitful, not only on this specific programme but on other migration-related projects implemented in the country.

**Effectiveness:** Overall, the programme responded to the needs of all relevant stakeholders, good coordination mechanisms were put in place, and the programme was quite effective despite a couple of indicators referring to the third outcome (the Government of Albania facilitates the engagement of diaspora into country development through investment) were not fully achieved. In general, the programme was described by the stakeholders as courageous, innovative, ambitious and concrete. The programme achieved effectively the expected results under the first outcome (GoA implements a comprehensive approach toward Diaspora engagement for Development in line with the overall policy framework) and the second outcome (GoA facilitates the engagement of Diaspora into institutional strengthening and territorial development through skills and know-how transfer). The programme contributed to institutional capacities strengthening through the finalization of the National Diaspora Strategy and its Action Plan (2021-2025) as well as the Communication Strategy, the capacity building, the deployment of experts, the exchanges on best practices, the technical support to the State Minister for Diaspora structures. Engagement of diaspora through transfer of skills and know-how was achieved through the mapping and profiling exercise as well as through the fellowship schemes. The last outcome was achieved by establishing "Connect Albania", an online investment-boosting mechanism with limited

results mainly due to limited time of implementation and to COVID-19 pandemic not allowing for a good business climate for investments.

Different elements posed some challenges during the implementation of the programme including: 1) the time needed to adjust to the changes of the government and consequently to the changes of priorities; 2) the time needed for all stakeholders to understand priorities, roles and perspectives among each other to be able to work together; 3) the capacity to establish a good communication flow between diaspora and national authorities, balancing institutional requirements with individual motivations; 4) the need to fit in specific administrative frameworks including those related to the typologies of agreements used for consultants or programme partners; 5) the time needed for institutional coordination and approvals; 6) COVID-19 pandemic mobility and gathering restrictions; and finally, 7) the specificities of the Albanian diaspora and its relationship with the country of origin, including if diaspora is part of the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, if it's part of the "Arbresh" community, if it kept links with the home country returning often for family and work reasons or if it did not keep social and professional ties after leaving the country. Overall, strong coordination mechanisms were established at different levels allowing for IOM to mitigate most of the challenges.

**Efficiency: The programme is overall quite efficient in its financial management and spending, as well as its staffing structure and dynamics.** The burn rate was low in the first reporting periods, reflecting the time needed for adjustments and reformulations. The programme appears to have made efficient and quite good effective use of implementing partners and consultants, and there was a clear organization of the IOM team with good leadership as well as a good team spirit. The programme staffing structure was fairly sufficient but could have benefitted from reinforcement considering the workload involved. There was an overall feeling of pride, passion and satisfaction about this programme. Financial monitoring was regular and well-coordinated among the IOM team. Activity and results monitoring were carried out by IOM and by the extended team involved including the diaspora focal points, consultants and implementing partners. This could have been improved by more data collection being ensured on a more regular basis including the gathering of qualitative information such as level of satisfaction, involvement, knowledge or change of perception.

**Impact: Several interventions implemented through this programme brought a significant change,** including the mapping and profiling of diaspora, the partnerships with the university of Florence, the secondments and the fellowship schemes as well as the "Connect Albania" mechanism. Indeed, the availability of a database of highly skilled diaspora, the existence of models 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, there were several elements that were highlighted, which were not directly intended by programme objectives, including multidimensional networking and enhanced partnerships among diaspora and different actors, plus changes in the level of awareness and shifts in mindsets of both diaspora and institutions, the change of narrative on diaspora, and the human impact, including the extent to which such programme involved an emotional part stimulating the senses of identity, motivation and willingness for change, at least from the diaspora side.

**Sustainability:** The programme has promoted sustainability from its design through the promotion of institutionalization and government ownership and had a high degree of coordination and involvement of stakeholders during design and implementation. However, sustainability is challenged by the dissolution of the State Minister for Diaspora and the time taken by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania (MEFA) to guarantee a continuity, as well as by the availability of fundings and donors to build on the successful mechanisms and develop them further. The programme has created different instruments to promote dialogue with and among stakeholders including institutions and diaspora. The National Diaspora Strategy is certainly an element of sustainability at a policy level which the Albanian Government should continue to apply and coordinate. Moreover, several tangible results mentioned earlier such as the networking, the fellowships schemes, the mapping and profiling of diaspora and the knowledge shared through capacity building and empowerment gained, create a concrete basis for continuity, beyond programme closure and at any time needed or desired.

Although such activities could continue without the support of IOM, the involvement of IOM, in synergy with other organizations, could be crucial as it has been described by most of the stakeholders as a neutral, knowledgeable and credible organization in the field of migration able to connect all the stakeholders and provide support as needed. This experience developed in Albania could also be expanded to other countries in the region building on those successful results.

**Gender:** the programme shows evidence of good attention to gender balance and to gender mainstreaming. There is specific reference to gender sensitivity in the programme documents and the efforts were focused mainly on ensuring an equal participation to the programme with majority of female staff, consultants and programme beneficiaries. Gender analysis was also included in the communication strategy and in the training material. The programme indicators gathered gender disaggregated data when addressing programme targets, though there is space for improvement here as there could have been more qualitative feedback gathered analyzing the impact of such activities on the roles and dynamics of men and women involved in the programme.

**Environment:** The programme shows strong evidence of integration of environmental and ecological sustainability concepts in programme design and implementation. The programme not only supported the inclusion of good practices such as the promotion of rural territories, preserving archeological heritage, the development of sustainable tourism, the promotion of small producers and of local products and the promotion of innovative biological technology but also improved the capacities of the stakeholders and their level of awareness in doing so.

**Communication:** As regards to communication, the programme had a very strong and high quality strategy and served both the programme purposes and governmental needs. Communication was not only about giving visibility to the programme activities and results but was also about promoting the programme general objective thus enhancing the role and the added-value of each stakeholder involved in the programme. The communication and visibility actions have been implemented in an appropriate



manner, through the diversification of material produced and the diversification of dissemination channels.

Lessons learned and good practices were also identified. The below provides a summary, with more details for each of them included in the Conclusion section of this report.

#### **Good practices:**

- ✓ The inclusion of an inception phase at the beginning of the programme ensuring that the programme design was adjusted to any changes in the context or in the priorities.
- ✓ The establishment of a diaspora focal points network is one of the most significant good practices that was identified by the evaluator.
- ✓ The involvement of university institutions in countries of destination, ideally partnering with local universities in country of origin.
- ✓ The creation of a platform involving diaspora as development agents.
- ✓ The alignment to national priorities, beyond the topic of migration, such as the EU integration process or the sectorial economic development in this case, was key to engage the diaspora.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- ✓ Design of indicators and monitoring of outputs and outcomes: A large number of indicators have been included in the results matrix, mainly quantitative indicators. The reformulations of the programme would have been good moments to improve this reducing the indicators to a more manageable number and introducing more qualitative indicators to reflect better the quality of performance. Outcomes indicators could have been improved as some were formulated more like result statements not reflecting the change intended and targets were more related to outputs or to activities.
- ✓ Even when working with a specific key counterpart taking the leadership of the programme, it is important to involve actively other counterparts. Diversifying counterparts would ensure more ownership and give more sustainability to the programme.

#### **Recommendations:**

Based on findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are provided for consideration by IOM in the implementation of ongoing and future projects. IOM Country Office in Albania is recommended to:

1. Share the evaluation report and the translated version of the evaluation brief with all relevant stakeholders. *(priority: high, timeframe: next 1-2 months)*
2. Consider conducting a meeting with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs to propose and build a strategy together on how to take over the responsibilities previously taken by the former State Minister for Diaspora, including the implementation of the National Diaspora Strategy, its Action Plan (2021-2025) and the Communication Strategy, assessing any needs and requests for institutional strengthening support. A follow-up meeting could also be proposed with other governmental counterparts to expand the discussion with other Ministries and institutions

including on the EU integration process and other global priorities and on the next steps that might require IOM support and would give continuity to the EU Fellowship scheme. *(priority: high, timeframe: next 1-2 months)*

3. Carry out project development and fundraising to enable IOM to continue supporting diaspora engagement initiatives building on the successful experiences and the knowledge that has been consolidated within the programme. *(priority: high, timeframe: next 1-3 months)*
  - a. Consider conducting a learning session with potential donors and other international organizations to present and discuss findings of this evaluation and other lessons learned and assess possible interest in further developing specific components such as the Mapping and Profiling of diaspora, “Connect Albania”, the Fellowship schemes or twinning programmes between universities and labour/vocational training institutions in Albania and in countries of destination. Assess interest of donors in funding a research on the change of narrative regarding migration and diaspora in Albania.
  - b. Develop and share with donors specific concept notes based on the successful achievements of this programme.
  - c. Organize a meeting with colleagues at IOM regional offices to request support in the promotion of programme results and discuss possible synergies or joint future initiatives with other projects on diaspora in the region.
4. Follow-up closely with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber and the National Diaspora Agency regarding the “Connect Albania” mechanism and identify, with the support of the consultant hired following the closure of the programme, areas of support needed assessing eventually IOMs role and possible contribution. *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*
5. Consider conducting a meeting with the network of focal points diaspora and EU fellows as to be able to create continuity, to collect their proposals and involve them in possible future projects. *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*
6. Conduct field visits, together with the diaspora associations, to programme beneficiaries in Albania to assess the impact of the programme and possible areas of future support. *(priority: low, timeframe: next 6-12 months)*
7. Explore follow-up initiatives with Albanian diaspora associations such as more learning experiences for Albanians living in Albania, in countries of destination (study visits for local small producers, internships, participations to fairs, etc.) *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*
8. Consider continuing the dissemination of the visibility products covering programme achievements through digital and traditional media, involving journalists and media professionals, to keep the spotlight on the topic of diaspora and continue the engagement process. *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*

# 1 Introduction

This report presents results of an independent internal final evaluation of a four-year-programme, “Engage the Albanian diaspora to the social and economic development of Albania” funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (IOM project code CE.0377). The programme started on 17 October 2017 and was concluded on 31 December 2021. This final evaluation covered the entire implementation period.

The evaluation was conducted as an internal evaluation by Shiraz Jerbi, internal evaluator based at the IOM country office in Rome, Italy with coaching and guidance provided by Sarah Harris, the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for IOM’s Regional Office in Vienna covering South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

It was an independent evaluation, since the evaluator had not been previously involved in the design or implementation of the programme. Contents of this evaluation report: Section 2: presents context, purpose, scope, evaluation criteria and methodology including data sources, data collection and sampling methods, and data analysis approaches; Section 3: details all of the findings organized by evaluation criteria and questions established in the Terms of Reference (ToR) (*Annex 2*). Conclusions and recommendations as well as lessons learned are summarized in Section 4.

## 2 Context and purpose of the evaluation

### 2.1 Context/Programme background

Albania, located on the Balkan Peninsula in South and Southeast Europe, is an upper middle-income country of about 2.9 million people with high human development<sup>1</sup>. The country is a member of NATO and on a path toward accession with the European Union (EU). Despite improvements in living standards, Albania’s working age population continues to decrease as people emigrate in search of better economic opportunities. Nearly 1.7 million Albanians live outside the country, mostly in Europe, but also with significant presence in North America (USA and Canada) as well as other regions.

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 of European Union integration. IOM is also a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) since 2007. IOM actively contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026, a framework that guides the work of the GoA and the UNCT and their partnerships and aligns the support, funds and programmes of 19 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.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-investment-climate-statements/albania/>

As part of Migration Management, IOM Albania has been involved since 2015 on diaspora engagement programming. 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.

The objective of the programme "Engage the Albanian Diaspora to the Social and Economic Development of Albania" (Oct 2017 – Dec 2021), funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is to contribute to enhancing the engagement of the Albanian diaspora in the development of the country, and includes three outcomes with related outputs:

**Outcome 1:** Government of Albania (GoA) implements a comprehensive approach toward Diaspora engagement for development in line with the overall policy framework.

**Output 1.1:** Officials from relevant GoA authorities, disaggregated by sex, have the structures, knowledge, resources, tools and information to implement Diaspora engagement activities.

**Outcome 2:** GoA facilitates the engagement of Diaspora into institutional strengthening and territorial development through skills and know-how transfer.

**Output 2.1:** A repository of available skills and knowledge of Diaspora in Italy (five selected regions), France and Belgium, disaggregated by sex, is available to be used as a basis for orienting policy development and implementation.

**Output 2.2:** Fellowship schemes are implemented, bearing in mind gender issues, in order to directly contribute to strengthening institutional capacities on Diaspora engagement, in Albania and Italy, to support territorial development in Albania .

**Outcome 3:** GoA facilitates the engagement of Diaspora into country development through investments.

**Output 3.1:** The Diaspora has the means to engage as development agents for investment and employment generation in local communities, taking into account gender.

As mentioned previously, the programme was implemented in a challenging economic context, put even more under pressure by the 2019 earthquake and the global COVID-19 pandemic. The political context in Albania shifted considerably between the programme's inception period (Mid-October 2017 and January 2018) and the implementation. Indeed, the Albanian parliamentary elections took place in June 2017 and the State Minister for Diaspora was appointed on 13 September 2017 as a ministerial post of the Albanian Government responsible for communicating and dealing with issues that affected the Albanian diaspora. Different structures were created including the: 1) Coordinative Council of Diaspora; 2) National Diaspora Agency; 3) Diaspora Publication Center; 4) Diaspora Development Fund; and 5) Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber.<sup>2</sup> The SMD was however dissolved in September 2021, after the last parliamentary elections. The key programme stakeholders involved other governmental partners such as the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and Economy, as well as some other counterparts for specific components. The programme therefore needed to adjust

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<sup>22</sup> <https://diaspora.gov.al/en/>

to the political changes and priorities since its design and all through its implementation. A mid-term Programme Performance Review was carried out by IOM's Regional Office in Vienna covering the period from October 2017 to November 2019 (report finalized on 30 November 2019).

## 2.2 Evaluation purpose and scope

### 2.2.1 Evaluation purpose

As per the evaluation ToR (see *Annex 2*), the IOM country office in Albania commissioned the evaluation 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. Additionally, the evaluation aims at assessing the design of the intervention in terms of logical coherence and alignment to IOM strategies, as well as the coherence to other projects implemented by IOM.

The evaluation should gather good practices and lessons learned that may be applicable to other similar projects and should also address cross-cutting issues of gender and environment.

IOM will share the evaluation and the recommendations with the following main audiences:

- ✓ The donor, as to be able to assess the achievements of the programme they funded;
- ✓ IOM Tirana team, as to be able to build on lessons learned and improve ongoing and future projects;
- ✓ Potential donors and partners to mobilize funds for follow-up initiatives and to inform the design and implementation of other similar projects.

The evaluation will also be posted to the Evaluation Repository on IOM's website, to be available to other IOM missions as well as external partners. The Regional Office of Vienna will also share the findings and the good practices with other missions in the region to consolidate the regional approach on migration and development initiatives.

### 2.2.2 Evaluation scope

This evaluation covered the following programme duration: 17 October 2017 – 31 December 2021 and assessed all components of the programme. The evaluator met with the most relevant stakeholders located in Tirana; in the south of Albania: Permet (Leuse, Benje and Kosine), Gjirokastra, Vlora; in the north of Albania: Shkodra (Razem, Malesi e Madhe and Zadrima) as well as with a selection of relevant diaspora groups located in Italy, UK, Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Considering the global COVID-19 pandemic situation and related mobility restrictions, as well as the end of the year holidays period, all meetings took place remotely using online tools.

## 2.3 Approach and methodology

### 2.3.1 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation covers all six criteria promoted by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC): relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. It also covers cross-cutting topics related to gender, environment and communication as explained further in the report. A full list of the related evaluation questions for each of the criteria can be found in the ToR (*Annex 2*) as well as in the Evaluation Matrix (*Annex 3*).

1. **Relevance:** extent to which the programme objective or outcomes remain valid and pertinent either as originally planned or as subsequently modified
2. **Coherence:** the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.
3. **Effectiveness:** extent to which the programme achieves its objectives or produces its desired results
4. **Efficiency:** how well the resources (funds, expertise, and time) are used to undertake activities, and how well these resources are converted into outputs
5. **Impact:** positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by the programme, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally
6. **Sustainability:** the durability of the programme's results, or the continuation of the programme's benefits once external support ceases

### 2.3.2 Cross-cutting themes

The evaluation took into consideration several cross-cutting themes including them as criteria, such as:

- ✓ Gender: Have practical gender needs, strategic gender interests and other gender-related issues been adequately considered in the programme design and implementation?
- ✓ Environment: Is the programme respecting/addressing environmental needs/problems?
- ✓ Communication: Have the communication and visibility actions been implemented in an appropriate manner?

Considering that the programme is focused on the diaspora and its relation with the country of origin, the evaluation looked also at how the programme responded to human and emotional needs.

### 2.3.3 Methodology

#### Data sources and collection

Building on the questions and proposed methodology in the ToR (*Annex 2*) and based on an initial review of project documents and an initial discussion with the Programme Manager, an evaluation matrix (*Annex 3*) was developed to plan for data collection: For each evaluation question in the ToR, the

evaluator established sub-questions, indicators and related data sources and collection methods. An inception report was drafted and shared with the programme manager and the evaluation manager, including the evaluation matrix, a list of documents gathered, a list of stakeholders to prioritize for the interviews and the interview guides.

The data collection was based on the following qualitative methods:

- ✓ **Desk review:** The evaluator was provided with extensive documents and monitoring data that provided solid foundational evidence for responding to the evaluation questions. (*For documentation reviewed, see Annex 5*)
- ✓ **Observation at the final event workshop:** The evaluator observed the final event workshop organized on 14 December 2021 that brought together the donor, the national government officials, the implementing partners, consultants, diaspora focal points, EU fellows, programme beneficiaries, development partners and IOM staff that worked on the programme, to reflect on results, lessons learned, unfulfilled needs and how to build on the results of the programme.
- ✓ **Key informant interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with national government officials, donor, implementing partners, EU fellows, programme beneficiaries, and IOM staff. (*For institutions interviewed or consulted, see Annex 6*).
- ✓ **Focus group discussions:** Focus group discussions with diaspora focal points as well as indirect beneficiaries. (*For institutions interviewed or consulted, see Annex 6*).

### Sampling

Purposeful sampling was used, prioritizing a diverse range of stakeholders that included IOM staff, consultants and implementing partners; national government officials; diaspora members and beneficiaries. The selection was based on a close coordination and several exchanges with the Programme Manager to assess the stakeholder list and the specificities such as role, level of involvement, languages spoken, cultural sensitivities and gender balance.

Overall, 37 individuals (22 women and 15 men) were interviewed as explained below:

- ✓ 28 key informant interviews (semi-structured) including 9 IOM staff, 5 EU fellows, 7 key partners (Diaspora associations and Italian NGOs/institutions), 6 governmental counterparts and the donor. Semi-structured interviews allowed in-depth analysis based on detailed data from key informants, to support project assessment according to the OECD-DAC criteria.
- ✓ 2 focus group discussions were organized with a group of 6 diaspora focal points in Italy as well as 3 indirect programme beneficiaries. In both cases, dialogue and discussions among participants were encouraged.

### Data analysis

The data analysis was mostly focused on qualitative analysis of documentation and of notes taken by the Evaluator during interviews and focus group discussions. During the inception phase, a first review of documents received was conducted as to be able to inform the design of the evaluation matrix and a scheme of the results matrix was developed to better understand the expected results, the assumptions and the roles of the different actors involved in the programme.

A thematic analysis approach was followed for documents and notes, using coding scheme based on the evaluation criteria and sub-questions in the evaluation matrix. The evaluator also identified key recurrent topics or key words which reflected the strengths or shortcomings of the programme.

Findings were triangulated through cross analysis of interview and focus groups notes, findings from documentation review and notes from the final event workshop.

#### 2.3.4 Evaluation norms and standards

The evaluator made sure that assessments are objective and balanced, affirmations accurate and verifiable, and recommendations realistic, and followed IOM Data Protection Principles, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards, and relevant ethical guidelines.

#### 2.3.5 Limitations

There are several limitations to the data collection and analysis, as explained below:

**Timeline:** The data collection took place between 15 December 2021 and 16 February 2022. This period was quite challenging as it coincided with the end of the year holiday period and the beginning of a new working year, which implied difficulties in getting the availability of the interviewees. Moreover, the evaluation report is needed by the mission during the month of March 2022 as to be able to submit it to the donor together with the final narrative and financial reports which has made the timeline quite challenging for the analysis and the finalization of this exercise.

**In person vs. Remote data collection:** The collection of data happened remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related mobility restrictions. Remote data collection could have some effects on the establishment of a good level of relationship with the interviewees compared to in-person interviews; however, most of stakeholders showed availability and willingness. Although this modality was challenging with the local indirect beneficiaries (on a group of 6 individuals invited for the focus group discussion, only 3 were present), it was probably the most effective way to group different beneficiaries from different geographic areas.

**Governmental counterparts:** The State Minister for Diaspora was one of the principal focal points with whom the programme had to engage. The SMD, as an institution, was however dissolved in September 2021 following the last parliamentary elections. Counterparts from SMD were therefore not part of the interviews (the staff did not appear to be reachable and/or willing to participate). This had an impact on the ability of the evaluator to gather information from the main key partner under this programme; however, the programme involved several other governmental stakeholders as listed previously, and this enabled the evaluator to gather a wide variety of perspectives also regarding the impact of the dissolution of such institution.

There were also some minor challenges related to the languages used for the interviews. Indeed, several stakeholders were not able to respond to the questions in English. The evaluator mitigated this through the carrying out of interviews and focus group discussions both in English and in Italian, according to the interviewees' preferences.



### 3 Evaluation findings per criteria

This section is organized according to the evaluation criteria established in the evaluation ToR (*Annex 2*).

#### 3.1.1 Relevance

Relevance is about the extent to which the programme objective or outcomes remain valid and pertinent either as originally planned or as subsequently modified. Specifically, this section addresses the following evaluation questions:

-Is the intervention well-designed (Results Matrix, Theory of Change, and risk analysis in particular) to address the needs and priorities identified in the programme document?

-Has the programme been implemented taking into account the IOM Migration Governance Framework and IOM twelve-point strategy, the IOM Strategic Vision for 2019-2023 as well as the regional and country strategic priorities related to diaspora engagement?

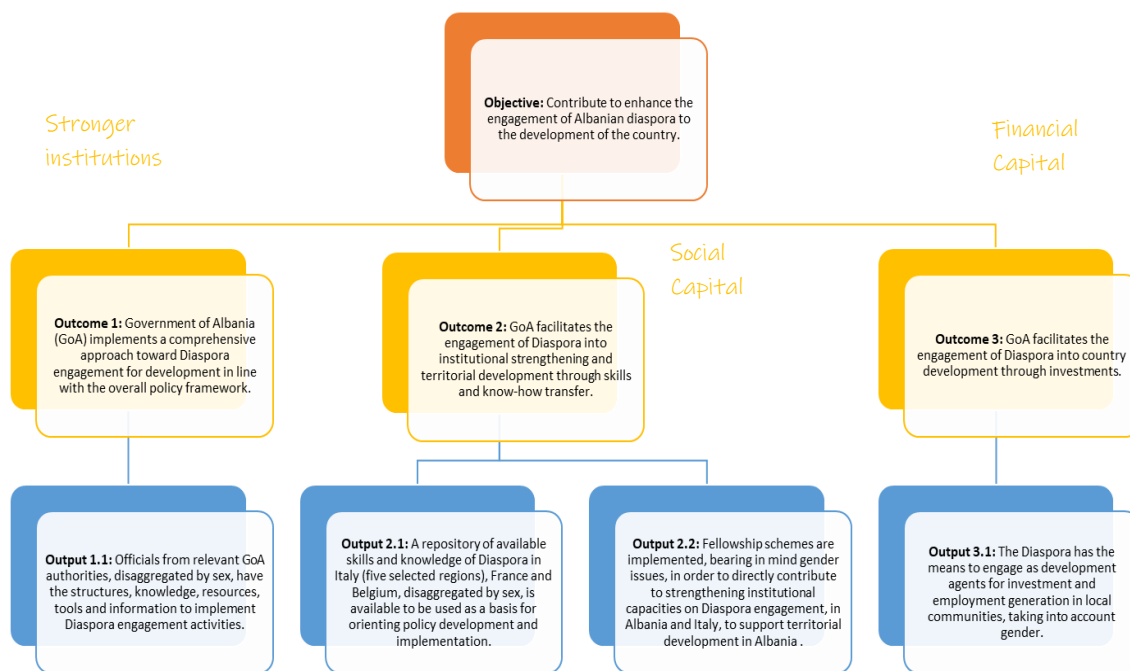
#### Programme design and theory of change:

**The proposal was well-designed with a clear, concise and a strong description of activities and results. The logical approach was evidence-based and coherent, and the assumptions were also sound. The inception phase and the reformulations were necessary in this programme and reflected the need to adapt the programme to the context. These reformulations were needed to ensure the buy-in of the governmental counterparts, to adapt to the political changes and to cope with COVID-19 global pandemic challenges.**

The programme built on and cascaded from a series of smaller previous initiatives implemented by IOM and other organizations including “Migration for Development in the Western Balkans” (MIDWEB) IOM project implemented during 2011-2014, where several temporary or virtual returns of skilled migrants were piloted; the “ Brain Gain” UNDP Programme implemented during 2012-2013 and, most notably, the “Harnessing the Positive Impact of Albanian Migration for the Development of Albania” IOM project, implemented during 2015-2016, funded by the IOM Development Fund (IDF) which set the baseline for diaspora engagement through the development of a Policy Document on Engaging with the Albanian Communities Abroad. That project raised the attention of government stakeholders and development stakeholders and paved the way to the programme. **In addition, the programme logic was well aligned to and appropriate for the context.** During the interviews, stakeholders overall felt that the activities were appropriate for achieving the intended results of the programme and the programme was cited as timely and critical, mainly to support the EU integration process.

The programme document does not include a Theory of Change (ToC) as this was not requested as part of the programme development, neither from the donor nor from IOM. This said, the IOM team developing the programme had all the elements of a ToC in mind while designing this programme which was responding to the following main question: **How to materialize the engagement of the Albanian government towards Diaspora?** The design was therefore focused on a pilot, exploratory and comprehensive initiative articulated around a three-dimensional approach: 1. stronger institutions, 2. social capital and 3. financial capital.

Graphic 1. Results matrix for the programme



The results matrix has also been well elaborated and most of all well revised during the three reformulations which took place. Assumptions were generally sound although it would have been beneficial to clearly outline that, additionally to the interest of diaspora members, a favorable business climate was needed for the achievement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> outcome related to the “Connect Albania” mechanism. As this is detailed later in the report, this condition was not fulfilled due to the COVID-19 pandemic economic impact. A risk assessment plan has however also been elaborated taking into consideration the point above-mentioned in addition to risks related to governments commitment: ownership, capacities, resources and changes.

A large number of indicators have also been included in the results matrix, mainly quantitative indicators. This gives definitely a good understanding of the outreach. In this respect, during the reformulations of the programme, there could have been here space for improvement: reducing to a more manageable number of indicators and introducing more qualitative indicators to reflect better the quality of performance.

**Alignment with country, regional and IOM frameworks and strategies:**

The programme aligned fully with national, regional and international frameworks as explained below:

IOM Migration Governance	The programme is in line with Principle 2 “Formulating policy using evidence and a “whole-of government” approach”. Indeed, the review of the National
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Framework	Diaspora Strategy and Action Plan supported the “whole-of government approach. Through the mapping and profiling of the Albanian diaspora component, the programme promoted the need to collect data and understand trends to reflect them in policies. The programme, through the multiple partnerships created with NGOs, University institutions and private sector as well as the involvement of national institutions, is also in line with Principle 3 “. Engagement with partners to address migration and related issues.”
IOM Global Strategic Vision	The programme is aligned with the IOM global Strategic Vision for 2019-2023 <sup>3</sup> focused on three strategic priorities: Resilience, Mobility and Governance. This is reflected in the efforts to mainstream migration into development planning through the support to the revision of the National Diaspora Strategy and its action plan as well as the communication strategy and the promotion of temporary return or circular migration. The programme also contributed to the economic support of local fragile realities through capacity building and promotion of ecologically sustainable initiatives.
IOM South-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Regional Strategy 2020-2024	The regional strategy <sup>4</sup> highlights the need to “enhance migrants’ contributions to sustainable development processes through skills partnerships and diaspora mapping and engagement, as well as efforts in integration and social cohesion” and “to empower migrants and diaspora communities to contribute to development.” Both of these objectives are reflected in this programme.
IOM Migration and the 2030 Agenda and IOM institutional strategy on migration and sustainable development	<p>The programme supported several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) mainly SDG 5 for gender equality (empowerment of women and girl), SDG 8 for decent work and economic growth, SDG 9 for industry, innovation and infrastructure (migrants transfer knowledge and skills to the country of origin through support to development, research and innovation), SDG 10.7 to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies and SDG 17 for partnerships for the goals (timely, reliable and comparable data on migration can help policy makers devise evidence-based policies and plans to address the migration aspects of the SDGs).</p> <p>Furthermore, the IOM institutional strategy on migration and sustainable development<sup>5</sup> focuses on migrants as development actors and on the fact that a “successful migration governance depends directly on political, socioeconomic, developmental and migration governance structures in place at the international, national and subnational level, as well as the stability and</p>

<sup>3</sup> <https://publications.iom.int/books/strategic-vision-setting-course-iom>

<sup>4</sup> <https://publications.iom.int/books/south-eastern-europe-eastern-europe-and-central-asia-regional-strategy-2020-2024>

<sup>5</sup> <https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-institutional-strategy-migration-and-sustainable-development>

	security situation in countries. This approach is also clearly reflected in the programme.
Italian Cooperation Development Agency (AICS) three years programming documents for both 2017-2019 and 2019-2021	The donor's strategic documents emphasized the need to support migration and development mentioning that "the movements of people should not be addressed only as an emergency, but managed with a long term view, transforming the migratory phenomenon into an opportunity for economic growth and social development for the countries of origin and for Europe. The programme is totally in line with donor's strategy.
The National Diaspora Strategy (2021-2025)	The Albanian National Diaspora Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025) promotes the development of state policies for the inclusion and contribution of Albanian communities abroad in the socio-economic and political development of the country of origin. The focus is to strengthen and facilitate Albania's relations with the host countries of the Albanian Diaspora. The programme is not only inline but contributed to the revision of the strategy and the elaboration of an action plan as well as a communication strategy.
Albanian National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) (2014-2020)	The NSDI is an integral component of Albania's Integrated Planning System (IPS) which was established in 2006. The IPS combined policy, planning and budgeting processes in Albania and incorporated different components including 1) the national and sectoral strategies process providing guidance to high level policy making and 2) the European Integration process to which the programme contributed through the first and second outcomes.

As mentioned above, the programme is fully aligned with national priorities. Indeed, the IOM Diaspora programme supported the revision of the Albanian National Diaspora Strategy and the elaboration of the Action Plan (2021-2025). The programme provided full support to the newly created State Minister for Diaspora and its substructures providing capacity building, support in infrastructure and equipment and support in human resources through the secondment schemes. This was an essential step for the programme to ensure the engagement of the main counterpart and build a trustful relationship. The programme also supported the EU integration process through the establishment and the facilitation of the EU fellowship scheme involving highly skilled diaspora professionals in most of the Ministries. In addition, the programme responded to the economic priorities as it enhanced the role of diaspora as an economic and social force for the country. Some stakeholders felt that the priority is the diaspora, considering the number of Albanian diaspora living abroad; some other stakeholders felt that the priority is the EU integration and the preparation for the upcoming negotiations. Some fellows mentioned the fact that Albania is also a non-permanent member to the UN Security Council for a two-year term (1 Jan 2022- 31 Dec 2023), its first time in this role since Albania joined the UN in 1955, and

this means that there is need of expertise not only for EU integration process but also for other global challenges and commitments.

The programme is also aligned with donor's priorities. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) are very interested in the topic of diaspora, specifically Albanian diaspora who are very much present and integrated in Italy. The priority described in the above-mentioned three-year strategy emphasizes the importance of such projects in the large area of the Mediterranean where Albania is a priority and Italy is one of the main actors, to intervene not only in response to migration crisis and emergency but also to support the role of diaspora in the socioeconomic development of the country of origin, which could also promote the return of the human capital.

Finally, and regarding the alignment of the programme with IOMs strategies listed previously, the programme responded in different ways to two main priorities: Mobility and Governance. Although the programme was not intended to address mainstreaming migration into development as such, this priority was achieved indirectly through the capacity building for governmental counterparts to enable them to engage diaspora, rather than IOM being the one engaging the diaspora directly. This was achieved through working on the communication between institutions and diaspora, the mapping of the diaspora mainly in Italy, France and Belgium and working on improving the capacity of diaspora as development agents. The programme focused on how to engage the diaspora and how to encourage ownership of these initiatives. The "Connect Albania" mechanism was also an initiative that was aligned with the type of work IOM promotes, encouraging diaspora not only to invest but to bring investors in the country of origin and this has not been done a lot so far. The programme worked also on changing the narrative on Albanian migration, which is also one of IOM's priorities.

### 3.1.2 Coherence

Coherence concerns the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in the country, sector or institution. Specifically, this section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- Do synergies exist with other interventions carried out by IOM as well as partners?
- Have the activities of this programme positively or negatively affected the achievement of the desired outcomes of another project?

**This programme seems to be one of the most important programmes on diaspora in Albania and in the region.** The programme built on several previous smaller initiatives including "Migration for Development of in the Western Balkans" (MIDWEB) IOM project implemented during 2011-2014, funded by the European Commission and managed by IOM in partnership with the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany and the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW); the "Brain Gain" UNDP Programme implemented during 2012-2013, and the "Harnessing the Positive Impact of Albanian Migration for the Development of Albania" IOM project, implemented during 2015-2016, funded by the IOM Development Fund (IDF), bringing a comprehensive and concrete pilot initiative. The IOM mission did not have other similar projects ongoing during the same period of implementation.

Other organizations such as GIZ worked on the topic of diaspora but with very limited activities. There was also another initiative funded by the EU Delegation in Albania, on the topic of EU fellowships, but it was not focusing on Diaspora and was implemented with one Ministry. While the IOM mission in Albania worked on creating synergies and sharing information with other organizations, this programme could be described as the unique concrete and comprehensive programme in the country for the engagement of diaspora.

IOM Italy and IOM Ireland were directly involved in some activities, while there was consistency with other IOM projects in other countries such as Ukraine and Georgia.

Indeed, in Ukraine, IOM supports the Government in harnessing the development potential of migration, particularly by: 1) promoting migrant entrepreneurship and boosting employment opportunities; 2) fostering diaspora engagement as development actors and remittances investment; and 3) offering evidence-based policy advice to enhance labour migration management.

IOM Georgia implemented several projects. The EU-funded project “Sustaining Border Management and Migration Governance in Georgia (SBMMG)” which was broadened in the direction of Migration and Development (M&D). In 2019, IOM Georgia started the implementation of the joint initiative “EU Innovative Action for Private Sector Competitiveness in Georgia.” The joint programme enhanced entrepreneurship and business sophistication by strengthening the government and local entities’ capacities to develop and operate clusters and support companies directly with strategic investments and thus connecting better to diaspora groups. Also, in February 2021, with EU support, IOM Georgia organized the Diaspora Economic Forum. IOM Georgia also supports short-term assignments of Georgian diaspora professionals in different fields.

**IOM Albania is perceived as the government’s main trusted, credible and knowledgeable organization on the topic of migration and should therefore keep the lead on the topic of migration and diaspora as stated below.**

#### Quotes from relevant stakeholders:

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*“We are very thankful to IOM Albania who was of a very high level”*

*“It is good that IOM pushes the cooperation with the diaspora”*

*“Communication with IOM was good, it’s a serious partner and has an important scope”*

*“The programme ended in December 2021 and I think that the cooperation will continue with IOM, not only in this programme but in overall fields related to diaspora”*

*“IOM should continue with this kind of programmes, with one brick, you build a building, one contribution from diaspora and we get to economic development. Leaving the country would be a life choice and not the only option to escape from lack of development and opportunities”*

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## Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the extent to which a programme achieves its objectives or produces its desired results. Specifically, this section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- Did the programme effectively reach its planned results (outputs and outcomes)?
- Did the programme respond to the needs of the target groups?
- Did the programme work effectively with all relevant stakeholders, beneficiaries?
- Were there any barriers which constrained and delayed achievement of planned outputs? What were the external and internal factors/constraints? Were there any unexpected external developments that affected the implementation, and if so, how were these mitigated?

The programme seems to have achieved almost all the expected results, specifically for Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. Outcome 3 was more challenging considering most of all the difficulties to establish and implement the “Connect Albania” component due to limited time of implementation and to the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted the business development plans of many investors.

Overall stakeholders felt that the objectives were fairly reached or on the right track and that several mechanisms were put in place successfully. The programme seems to have responded to the needs of all relevant stakeholders. According to the data collected during the interviews, diaspora needed to feel more engaged with the country of origin, and, in order to be more recognized as an economic, cultural and social capital, they needed to keep the contact with their country. Governmental counterparts needed support and expertise for the EU integration process, Albanian associations needed to be more involved in local initiatives and the local producers needed to improve knowledge and expertise in their area of work. Agriculture schools needed to develop the topic of cooperatives, and civil servants from public institutions needed to receive support and capacity building. Somehow, the programme through its complexity, managed to respond to all of those needs.

**In general, the programme was described by the stakeholders as courageous, innovative, ambitious and concrete. Most of the stakeholders from government officials and diaspora organizations were aware that the programme was the first major comprehensive initiative on the theme of Diaspora as stated below.**

### Quotes from relevant stakeholders:

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*“I think that the programme had a big advantage: the courage of proposing such innovative programme on diaspora. It worked quite well, involved a lot of groups of diaspora and stimulated them to participate actively.”*

*“Seems like the first initiative bringing concrete support to the involvement of diaspora in these last 3 years. The collaboration was innovative and It’s certainly something that should be reinforced and explored further in the future.*

*“The programme was very interesting for us, because it was a practical and concrete experience.”*

*“It was the first time we had concrete activities with diaspora”*

*“The programme arrived in the right moment, it was the first serious programme, not only limited to the organization of outreach events but mostly focused on concrete activities”*

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The programme overall worked well with all stakeholders. According to the documentation and to some data collected through interviews, there were some difficulties with some counterparts such as AIDA (Albanian Investment Development Agency) who may have seen some of the components of the programme conflicting with their own work, especially the investment part. There was however a good relation established with the Ministry of Finance and Economy which facilitated the programme implementation later.

Stakeholders felt that the beginning of the programme as well as the beginning of certain components were complicated as there was need for more time than expected to understand the different priorities and perspectives. Indeed, one of the challenges during the launch period were the changes in the government with the newly created State Minister for Diaspora. This was mitigated by close coordination with relevant stakeholders, discussions took place and adjustments were decided to include the priorities of the SMD. This was necessary to build a good relationship with one of the main key partners.

**Also, some stakeholders felt that one aspect of the programmers' complexity that posed particular challenges resided in building an effective dialogue between diaspora and the national authorities, which they felt was not only depending on establishing institutional frameworks but also on individual motivations as stated below.**

#### Quotes from relevant stakeholders:

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*"I think that institutions work if individuals are competent, professional and willing to work together."*

*"If you don't have individual motivations, you can't move forward"*

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To be able to create an effective dialogue among all stakeholders, Coordination mechanisms were put in place by IOM including the creation of a Steering Committee with permanent members (including AICS, SMD and IOM) and with observers, frequent meetings to capture any inputs from all stakeholders as well as the establishment of 5 Technical Advisory Members. The donor was actively involved in the programme as AICS was actively engaged in all activities during the entire programme implementation including field visits and outreach events. Coordination mechanisms also included the establishment of a group of a diaspora focal points in Italy which was fundamental to expand the network, outreach significantly to diaspora members and to promote the programme outside Albania. Activities took therefore some time but proceeded fairly smoothly once they started.

The progress against indicators outlined below is extracted from the final narrative report (Progress Achieved Compared to Indicators in the Results Matrix) provided at time of finalizing the drafting of the report covering the last period of the programme (1 April 2021- 31 December 2021) and indicating the overall cumulative progress until 31 December 2021. Considering the limited time dedicated to the analysis of data, the evaluator focused on the better formulated and the most relevant indicators for the evaluation. The evaluator ensured to build the analysis both on data indicated in the reports and on the information received during the interviews. The complete table could be accessed in the final narrative report if needed.



**Outcome 1: Stronger institutions (GoA implements a comprehensive approach toward Diaspora engagement for development in line with the overall policy framework)**

**Outcome 1 was focused on strengthening the institutional approach. The capacity development support to the government was very effective and contributed to significant changes both on policy and technical levels.**

At an outcome level, the programme allowed the government to revise and finalize the National Diaspora Strategy (2019-2024) and its Action Plan as well as the Communication Strategy, which are now approved and being implemented. The SMD Communication Strategy developed with well-defined objectives, work planes, tools and channels to promote Diaspora Engagement and reach out to the targeted beneficiaries.

The National Diaspora Strategy revised and finalized with the support of the IOM programme reflects the comprehensive approach promoted under this outcome. Indeed, the strategy refers to the involvement of diaspora through different sectors and in different manners. The strategy and its action plan now need to be implemented and monitored by the relevant authorities, which should be now under the responsibility of the Albanian Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEFA).

*Graphic 2 and 3. Main pillars of the strategy and summary of respective activities (NSDII 2021-2025)*

The National Diaspora Strategy 2021 - 2025 is founded on five main strategic goals, which aim at achieving the following objectives:

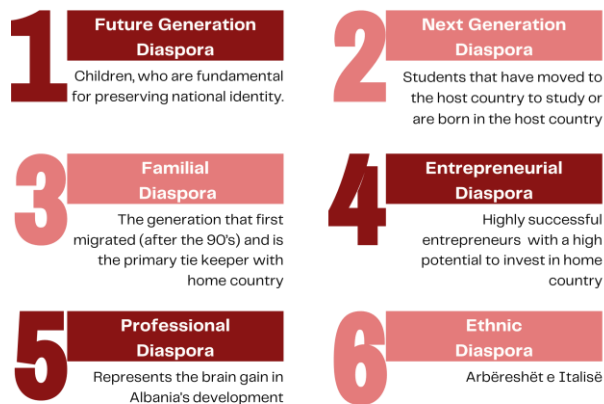
1. Knowledge governance and management
2. Developing the Diaspora political and social rights program
3. Program for Diaspora capital and their links to preserve national culture
4. Engaging Diaspora in the country's social-economic development program.
5. Monitoring and Evaluation Each strategic goal sets out activities for its implementation.



The National Communication Strategy reflects also this comprehensive approach as it looks at adapting the message to each specific target in the Albanian diaspora and at involving a diverse range of

stakeholders such as media, political class representatives, highly skilled persons and fresh graduates and international audience.

Graphic 4. Target of the national communication strategy-Communications Strategy and Plan 2021 – 2025



The support was successful thanks to the capacity development component and improvement of civil servants knowledge and skills (including the development of a curricula on Fundraising and Project Cycle Management endorsed the Albanian School of Public Administration and utilized to train the public officials), to the deployment of experts, to the study visit, to the support in equipment and infrastructure for the newly created structures as well as to the outreach events mobilizing diaspora and giving good visibility through social media and a website created.

Assessing the achievement of outcome 1 is mainly based on the information collected and not on the data monitoring table as the indicators, targets and achievements were not very well formulated and don't give evidence of the government implementing a comprehensive approach toward diaspora engagement.

**The related outputs were overall achieved according to the established indicators.** Nearly every target was met, and most were surpassed - involving more partners, training more officials and involving more diaspora than what was initially planned. Social media outreach was also higher than the initial target involving the creation of new platforms and an increase of the number of users and followers.

The following output-level monitoring data gathered by the programme based on the Results Matrix help to demonstrate progress and achievements. As mentioned previously, some indicators were not well-formulated and were therefore excluded from the analysis for this evaluation. Only relevant information for the evaluation has been considered and if needed, the complete table could be accessed in the final narrative report. The evaluator did not have the required time to access all the documents related to each indicator to fully verify the monitoring process.

Result	Indicators	Target	Achieved
<b>Output 1.1:</b> <i>Officials from relevant GoA authorities,</i>	Programme launched in kick-off event with high level institutional participation	Yes	Yes

<i>disaggregated by sex, have the structures, knowledge, resources, tools and information to implement Diaspora engagement activities.</i>	# of institutional partners at kick-off event, disaggregated by sex	<b>30</b> institutional partners	<b>84</b> institutional partners
	# of equipment purchased based on needs assessment	19 comp. sets, 2 printers, 2 photocopiers/printers, 3 toners, 4 laptops, 1 video projector, 1 camera, 15 office desks, 15 chairs, 15 drawers, 1 meeting table with 12 chairs and 5 office closets	Upon the establishment of the National Agency for Diaspora, all of the equipment were purchased and handed over exactly as planned
	# of experts seconded to the partner institutions	<b>5</b> (1 Expert, 1 Assistant, and 1 Technical/administrative assistant to SMD office; 1 Legal Expert and 1 Finance Expert to support the NDA)	<b>21</b> Experts seconded in partner institutions in Albania and Italy including the 5 profiles targeted
	Premises renovated for the National Fund for Diaspora	Renovations completed and premises being used by SMD	New premises for Albanian Diaspora Development (ADDF) provided and being used
	# of experts deployed to support the revision of the Strategy and Action Plan	<b>1</b> international and <b>2</b> local experts	<b>1</b> international and <b>2</b> local experts
	National Strategy for Diaspora and Action Plan documents developed and delivered to government for endorsement	The National Diaspora Strategy and AP (2018-2024) is designed with a financial cost of its Action Plan	The New revised National Diaspora Strategy and its Action Plan (2021-2025) is finalized and approved
	Number of meetings held with different stakeholders to revise National Diaspora Strategy (2018-2021)	<b>5</b> meetings	<b>8</b> meetings. In addition, 2 workshops and other 25 meetings in Italy and Albania were organised by Diaspora Engagement Institutions.
	Study visit organized in Italy with GoA participants and other relevant stakeholders # of GoA officials participated Follow-up reports highlighting best practices and recommendations for follow-up actions	<b>1</b> study visit organized, with <b>10</b> officials including GoA members, gender disaggregated 1 follow-up report	<b>1</b> study visit was carried out with <b>10</b> Albanian government representatives. (30%men and 70% women). <b>1</b> follow-up report
	White paper on organization of next Albanian Diaspora Summit	<b>1</b> White paper	<b>1</b> White paper
	# of Diaspora associations engaged with the outreach activities	<b>4</b> associations	<b>4</b> selected diaspora associations including which have collaborated with other <b>4</b> associations/NGOs and <b>1</b> Education institutions in Italy.
	# of outreach activities with Diaspora in Italy organized with GoA participants and # of GoA officials participated	<b>5</b> outreach activities with at least <b>200</b> diaspora members participating overall, gender disaggregated	<b>1</b> outreach activities in each of the <b>5</b> selected regions in Italy, with about <b>200</b> diaspora members (56% men, and 44% women)
	Training curricula developed taking gender under consideration, with the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA), on fundraising, and project development and implementation; and curriculum endorsed by ASPA	Yes	Yes

	# Online ToT trainings on fundraising, and project development and implementation held and # of participants	2 trainings and 20 participants, disaggregated by sex.	2 (project Cycle Management and Fundraising) trainings and 30 participants. 17 participants were certified, out of the 23. 5 were men and 76.5% were women).
	% of trained trainer officials, by sex, who score 80 per cent or higher on a post-training test.	70% of those trained, score 80 per cent or higher on a post-training test disaggregated by sex.	70 percent of people trained on Fundraising and Project Cycle Management score higher than 80 percent on the post training tests. Out of 17 participants who were certified 23. 5 were men and 76.5% were women).
	# of experts deployed for the mentoring during on the job training (Fundraising and Project Cycle Management)	4 experts	4 experts (two local and two international consultants)
	One gender-sensitive visibility strategy document developed and revised by the Programme.	Yes	Yes
	# of promotional items and equipment procured.	100 sets of branded promotional items (pins and badges, notebooks, clocks) / 1 DSRL camera with 35/50mm lens / 1 wireless microphone / 1 portable speaker set / 1 streaming device	75 sets of branded promotional items (Umbrellas, Backpack, hooded sweatshirt, card holder, usb) / 1 Nikon D780 DSLR Camera was donated for Colours of Albania organized by MEFA / 0 wireless microphone / 0 portable speaker set / 0 streaming device) with a total of 5000 Promotional items.
	# of Diaspora summit organized during programme lifetime; participants disaggregated by sex	1 Diaspora summit	1 diaspora summit with over 1,000 participants (52% women)
	Web page for the National Fund for Diaspora	A Web page for National Fund for Diaspora has been designed and launched	The web page handed over to National Fund for Diaspora
	# of visitors, disaggregated by sex	1,000 visitors	Over 6,100 visitors (since its launch on 1 March 2019) – 46% women, 54% men
	Technical expertise provided to the National Fund for Diaspora for creating and maintaining the web page for diaspora engagement	Yes	Yes
	Online interactive network of Albanian Diaspora entrepreneurs and Development Agents through the creation of a mobile application, incorporating gender sensitive aspects	An interactive mobile application for ADBC, which will include “Connect Albania” in place to facilitate the network of Albanian entrepreneurs and Development Agents	Yes The ToRs have been developed, published. A Service Provider has been engaged (Fastech) and the Mobile App has been developed and published in iOS and Android systems.
	# of downloads disaggregated by sex and interactions with authorities in the application	500 downloads	50 downloads. No information on gender disaggregation. This is due some technical issues.

	A SMD Communication Strategy to promote National Diaspora Strategy and diaspora best practices developed and delivered to government for endorsement	At least 2 on-line meetings with stakeholders and final on-line event to present the Communication Strategy	The Communications Strategy and its Action Plan 2021 – 2025 is finalized and shared with SMD. Three online consultation meetings with the Diaspora engagement institutions representatives, Albanian Diaspora members and media and two final presentations meetings with the Diaspora engagement institutions and Albanian Diaspora members.
	# of photo, articles, video stories and articles highlighting Programme activities are developed and published/disseminated in targeted (online and printed) newspapers, magazines, social media, TV, Radio	10	36
	# of thematic media events and media briefing	5 thematic media events and media briefings	8 thematic media events and media briefings
	# of external diaspora engagement related events where Programme is featured/presented	5 events	16 events
	Promotional Programme Folder and other promotional items	2,000 Programme Folders and other promotional items	2, 300 themed materials printed
	Fully active diaspora related content in IOM website	1 dedicated diaspora engagement subpage at the official IOM website	1 dedicated diaspora engagement subpage at the official IOM website
	% increase of social media followers to the programme online presence (IOM social media)	At least 100% increase to the number of social media followers to the Programme online presence (IOM social media)	598 % increase in FB and 980 % increase in Twitter.

*Challenges to achieving results under Outcome 1:*

Results under Outcomes 1 have been mostly achieved except the one related to the use of the mobile application relative to the Online interactive network of Albanian Diaspora entrepreneurs and Development Agents as the number of downloads were lower than the target initially fixed.

**Outcome 2: Diaspora as social capital (GoA facilitates the engagement of Diaspora into institutional strengthening and territorial development through skills and know-how transfer)**

Outcome 2 is articulated around the engagement of Diaspora through transfer of skills and know-how, through two main components: mapping and profiling of the diaspora in Italy, France and Belgium, and the establishment of different fellowship schemes. The fellowship schemes include the support of institutions in Albania for the EU Integration process, for the support in the implementation of the National Strategy for Diaspora and its Actions Plan, for the development of territorial socioeconomic and

capacity building programmes through the university of Florence in Italy as well as through diaspora associations.

**Both components (mapping and profile, and fellowship schemes) are being actively used to facilitate engagement of diaspora into institutional strengthening and territorial development.**

**Mapping and profiling** research was completed for Italy, France and Belgium. The mapping exercise was innovative and crucial to assess the profile of diaspora and better understand how they could contribute to the development of their country. The exercise was carried out in a more detailed way in Italy and was less comprehensive in France and Belgium. Stakeholders expressed great satisfaction regarding this component and recognized the need of such exercise to better work with the diaspora community.

The mapping and profiling research generated a database of highly skilled diaspora profiles and competencies which could be used as a basis for orienting policy development and its implementation.

The **fellowship schemes** were also very much appreciated, with 38 Albanian highly skilled diaspora professionals who offered expertise in the preparatory process of Albania as an EU candidate country through support to 7 government institutions. 7 local experts were also engaged in 6 institutions for the implementation of the National Diaspora Strategy and its Action Plan (2021 – 2025).

Moreover, the support of five Diaspora Focal Points (FP) in the five selected regions in Italy (Lazio, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont, Lombardy) and one for the Arbëresh community contributed to the outreach and exchange of information on programme activities. The involvement of Governmental stakeholders made them more aware of the added value of highly skilled diaspora and diaspora felt more engaged towards the development of their country of origin. The engagement of Diaspora into territorial development was ensured with the participation of four diaspora associations.

**Stakeholders felt that this outcome was very relevant and successful and communication products developed to cover the activities implemented were highly appreciated. Overall the communication and the visibility given to those two components was considered as an integral part of the programme.**

**The related outputs were all achieved according to the established indicators.** The following output-level monitoring data gathered by the programme based on the Results Matrix help to demonstrate progress and achievements.

Result	Indicators	Target	Achieved
<b>Output 2.1</b> <i>A repository of available skills and knowledge of Diaspora in Italy (five selected regions), France and Belgium, disaggregated by sex, is available to be used as a basis for orienting policy development and</i>	Mapping and profiling exercise carried out and report produced	Yes	Yes
	# of local consultants engaged for Mapping exercise visibility	1 local consultant	1 local consultant
	# of photo and video and successful stories providing comprehensive information about mapping exercise and published/disseminated in	1 five-minute video on the process and findings video interviews, stories, or articles about mapping exercise	2 videos are finalized, 1 for online dissemination and 1 for documentation. In addition, 5 publications of the mapping and Profile online on IOM website and

<i>implementation.</i>	targeted (online and printed) newspapers, magazines, social media		social media, as well as in the programme partners media
<b>Output 2.2.</b> <i>Fellowship schemes are implemented, bearing in mind gender issues, in order to directly contribute to strengthening institutional capacities on Diaspora engagement, in Albania and Italy, to support territorial development in Albania .</i>	1 service provider engaged for developing, implementing, and following a fellowship program for highly skilled diaspora members for the territorial development in Albania	Yes	Yes – University of Florence, Department of Architecture was selected
	# of prospective fellows who respond to the call for proposals and # of those who participated in the fellowship program disaggregated by sex;	<b>100</b> prospective fellows respond to the VN of the fellowship program and 40 participate in the fellowship program	<b>103</b> applications received; 38 fellow experts being engaged; 6 fellows from the University of Florence.
	# of service providers that sent their proposals to be engaged for developing, implementing and following a fellowship program for highly skilled diaspora members for the agricultural development in Albania	<b>3</b> service providers sent their proposals	<b>4</b> service providers sent their applications.
	# of successful Call for Proposal ADAI Awards designed and launched	<b>2</b> projects from Albanian Diaspora Associations in Italy	<b>2</b> Associations were contracted
	# of service providers that presented their offers for visibility actions for Fellowship schemes and Capacity Building	<b>3</b> offers	<b>7</b> offers
	# of high - quality video resources to be developed by the service provider	1 short 15- minutes documentary, 30 seconds of narrative spot and 60 seconds of infographic video will be produced by the service provider	Yes <b>30 second spot</b> completed and promoted as foreseen in the media plan. In agreement with the donors, <b>6 short videos</b> (which have replaced the 15 – minutes documentary) and <b>a 60 seconds of infographic video</b> has been completed and published
	# of books documenting the programmes successes will be prepared and published	1 book with about 100 pages	1 book with 100 pages developed and published online
	# pictures and articles and stories of the programme activities/ beneficiaries and stakeholder, donor and staff collected and published	<b>50</b> pictures and <b>50</b> articles and stories	Over <b>100</b> pictures and over <b>50</b> articles and stories
	# of people reached through the Promotional Campaign of Fellowship and Capacity Building	<b>1 million</b> people	Over <b>1 million</b> people reached through the promotional campaign of 30 second spot.
	# of success stories, articles, pictures, and videos for Fellowship Scheme published/disseminated in targeted Italian media (online and printed) newspapers,	<b>10</b> stories, articles, pictures and videos	<b>39</b> success stories published in social media

	magazines, social media		
	# of online thematic media events to promote the fellowship schemes and Mapping and Profile	3 events	4 events

### *Challenges to achieving results under Outcome 2:*

Although nearly all targets were reached as planned in the project document, there were some challenges that affected the implementation of the programme and therefore space for improvement in the future:

#### **Administrative frameworks**

- ✓ Among the coordination mechanisms put in place, there was the establishment of the diaspora focal points in Italy which was a very good and effective practice. This could have been improved even more if the focal points were given a stronger institutional role, being directly assigned to IOM or to an institution would have given them more credibility vis a vis the contacts they were establishing and also a sense of ownership and more active involvement in the programme.
- ✓ During the interviews, some partners/beneficiaries expressed the difficulties they faced initially in aligning with the administrative procedures specifically to respond to the Request for Proposals and to align with IOMs standards in terms of reporting. There was need for time to understand the rules and to adjust to the procedures specific to different partners of the programme. This might have been impacted by some changes in the programme staff although IOM staff mitigated this, through providing continuous guidance and explanations during all the implementation period. This was indeed beneficial as it provided capacity building and empowerment for the NGOs.

#### **Institutional timeline**

- ✓ During the interviews, some EU Fellows felt that the work was not completed for them, as they have not received an official feedback from the government staff regarding their final work. They actually expressed their desire to be involved in the entire process. This was a very positive feedback as it proved the level of engagement and interest. Most of the Governmental stakeholders agreed and explained some internal challenges including the following: 1) Intense workload and not enough resources; 2) Long time needed for internal coordination among ministries and units and 3) the EU integration process is very complex and will be still ongoing in the upcoming months. The governmental stakeholders felt that the support will still be needed as negotiations will be starting soon and the timeline was not enough to address all the topics.

#### **COVID-19 pandemic**

- ✓ COVID-19 was perceived as a challenge for some governmental stakeholders who would have preferred more in-person meetings with the experts. The pandemic limited also some activities implemented on the field. Some other stakeholders felt that COVID-19 was an opportunity as it



proved that a lot of activities could be implemented by distance if there is a good will from all partners.

**Outcome 3: Diaspora as financial capital (GoA facilitates the engagement of Diaspora into country development through investments)**

Outcome 3 is focused on the engagement of Diaspora through boosting innovative investments. This was achieved by establishing “Connect Albania”, an online investment-boosting mechanism. Through this mechanism, the Albanian diaspora has the means to engage as development agents by referring businesses from abroad to Albania for investments, supporting employment creation in Albania. This mechanism was inspired from the existing “Connect Ireland” mechanism, adjusted in the context of Albania.

**A lot of work and efforts have been put into this component including the upload of relevant legal, sectorial and financial information on the web application, submission of applications as well as certification of development agents, outreach events and publication of regular communication.** Overall, most of the target indicators of Outcomes 3 were achieved despite a couple of indicators as detailed in the table below. For instance, only one successful case was so far referred using “Connect Albania” compared with the target of 10 successful referrals. Also, only five new job places were created, compared to the target of 100. This was due to limited time of implementation and to the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted the business development plans of many investors. Still, as planned, information on development needs and socio-economically beneficial investment opportunities is now available at sectorial and local level in Albania, which can enable the GoA going forward to orient initiatives related to FDI and Diaspora investment, contributing also to the fine-tuning of the “Connect Albania” platform bearing in mind gender issues.

**The related outputs were all achieved according to the established indicators despite a couple of indicators.** The following output-level monitoring data gathered by the programme based on the Results Matrix help to demonstrate progress and achievements. Some indicators were not well-formulated and were therefore excluded from the analysis for this evaluation. Only relevant information for the evaluation has been considered and if needed, the complete table could be accessed in the final narrative report. The evaluator did not have the required time to access all the documents related to each indicator to fully verify the monitoring process.

<i>Result</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
<b>Output 3.1:</b> <i>The Diaspora has the means to engage as development agents for investment and employment generation in local communities, taking into account gender</i>	# of equipment purchased based on needs assessment.	8 items (2 computer sets, 2 printers, 2 toners, 2 laptops)	8 items (2 computer sets, 2 printers, 2 toners, 2 laptops)
	# of experts seconded to the partner institutions.	2 experts (1 expert to AIDA, and 1 expert to MEFA)	2 experts (1 expert to AIDA, and 1 expert to MEFA)
	# of study visits to Ireland organized with GoA participants and relevant stakeholders and # of participants, gender disaggregated.	1 study visit organized with focus on “Connect Albania” and investment boosting, and 5 GoA members participate	1 study visit organized with focus on “Connect Albania” and investment boosting, and 5 GoA members participate. (40% men and 60% women)

Follow-up report highlighting best practices and recommendations for follow-up actions	1 report	1 report
Assessment successfully carried out and assessment report produced, indicating updated information on development needs and socio-economically beneficial investment opportunities at sectorial and local level in Albania, in order to enable the GoA to orient initiative related to FDI and Diaspora investment, contributing also to the fine-tuning of the “Connect Albania” platform nearing in mind gender issues	Yes	Yes
# of online mechanism developed and fully functional	1 online mechanism	1 Local IT company engaged to build “Connect Albania” hyperlinked web application
One “Connect Albania” unit will be established and hosted under Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber	Yes	Yes
Local Legal and economist experts for reviewing legislation on FDI and priority sectors of Albanian economy and serve as front desk for “Connect Albania” mechanism selected and hired	At least 15 laws by laws revised related to FDI and priority sectors	3 local experts with legal background and one with economic background are working at CA Program Office which is hosted under ADBC
Toolkit for development agents developed (it will be deleted with the next NCE and no-cost budget revision)	One toolkit created	0 toolkits created*  <i>*12 Priority and other sector legislation, fiscal legislative framework and inventory has been prepared, approved by donor and SMD and uploaded in the CA webpage “Connect Albania” hyperlinked web application contains all the relevant accessible information so no need for a Toolkit</i>
# of rewards given to development agents for successful referrals	5 rewards	1 reward
# of outreach activities implemented	3 online activities	3 online events organized for Italy (December 2020, February 2021, and March 2021), as well as 10 online events organized by Focal Points in Italy for 70 Albanian members to promote “Connect Albania” and assist them to become Development Agents. In addition, 10 online events were organized by Focal Points in Italy

# of people reached by each online event, disaggregated by sex	50 people	Over 330 people. No information on gender disaggregation
Evaluation carried out and report endorsed by the program SC, materials disseminated through online communication channels	Yes	Yes
# of participants in the national final event disaggregated by sex	50 participants	110 participants (50 in person and more than 60 online)
# of service provider that presented their offers	3 service providers	5 service providers
# service provider company engaged for the logo-visual identity, video, and promotional Campaign of “Connect Albania” Mechanism	1 service provider	1 service provider (McCann Tirana)
Logo-visual identity prepared	Yes	Yes
Stationary Package of “Connect Albania”, such as roll up banners, fact sheets, website/twitter/Facebook are designed and printed at least one roll-up banner and 1,000 copies of information items produced (fact sheets)	Yes	Yes. In addition, other visual products prepared by service provider for the online events.
# of videos and success stories/articles for “Connect Albania” Mechanism published/disseminated in targeted on the online newspapers, magazines, social media, websites	1 high quality promotional Video and 5 articles/stories	1 high-quality promotional video (3-minute) published in website and social media. <b>Over 40</b> articles (35 in Italian media, and 5 in Albanian media). In addition, 13 newsletters on “Connect Albania” (in Albanian and English) published in “Connect Albania” website and social media, and shared via e-mail with Albanian Diaspora.
# of VIP and well-known entrepreneurs engaged in promotion of “Connect Albania”	3 VIP and well-known entrepreneurs	9 VIP/well-known Albanian Diaspora and Italian entrepreneurs. Engagement of other well-known entrepreneurs is in process.
# of people reached through the promotional campaign of “Connect Albania” disaggregated by sex	60% of Albanian Diaspora living in Italy	The campaign has reached 300,000 Albanian Diaspora living in Italy (75%)
# of thematic online media events on “Connect Albania” Mechanism	2 thematic online media events	3 thematic online media events

### *Challenges to achieving results under Outcome 3:*

Most of the stakeholders felt that this was a successful mechanism and should be the main focus of the Albanian Government. The limited results are due, according to some stakeholders to the limited time and the need to have a longer period for testing and for putting on track. Some thought that COVID-19 was a big challenge as it did not give space for a favorable business climate allowing

investments. Others felt that the “Connect Ireland” model could not be copied and replicated in Albania, as the context is completely different and the strategy should have been thought better.

*Additional challenges for all outcomes:*

**Overall, and looking globally at the results achieved through the three outcomes, and additionally to the challenges detailed previously, the topic of the “engagement of Albanian Diaspora” has been thoroughly discussed during the interviews and the following challenges reported are worth to be highlighted, as points of reflections to build upon in future similar initiatives:**

✓ **First generation vs. second generation:**

According to different stakeholders, there are major differences between the first and the second Albanian generations, and this is reflected in their level of engagement. Indeed, on the one hand, the first generation, showed more resistance in trusting and engaging with the government of Albania doubting in the willingness of the current system to change. On the other hand, the second generation proved to be more motivated and willing to connect with the country of origin. This is probably related to a different historical linkages and personal experiences.

✓ **Albanian diaspora vs. Arbëreshë (or Arbresh):**

The programme included the Arbresh community in Italy. It’s an ethnic and linguistic Albanian minority community living in southern Italy, especially the regions of Apulia, Basilicata, Molise, Calabria and Sicily. They are the descendants of the Albanian refugees who fled Albania between the 15th and 18th centuries as a result of the Ottoman empire's invasion of the Balkans.<sup>6</sup> The Arbresh community could therefore not be considered as the Albanian diaspora. This said, the strong links with their values, traditions and cultures, makes the Arbresh community very motivated and engaged in contributing to the development of Albania.

✓ **Diaspora groups vs. Diaspora community:**

According to the interviews and also to comments shared during the final event, the Albanian diaspora is quite different from Asian or African Diaspora. Indeed, several felt that this programme contributed **to change the Albanian Diaspora from a “group of individuals” to a “cohesive community”**. A community is driven by the need to build networking and to weave a social and a cultural fabric also enhancing solidarity among the members, as stated below by some stakeholders. The question of trustful connections is raised among the Albanian diaspora itself and there are therefore some efforts needed to work on the mentalities, the common thread being the culture and the identity.

**Quotes from relevant stakeholders:**

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*“The Albanian diaspora had issues to be a “community”, it did not have a culture of networking which is related to 30 years of isolation. In Italy, there is diaspora of different generations, the 1st generation is difficult as it’s the one who suffered most in the 90s. The 2nd generation has a different mentality, more modern and willing to understand such programme”*

*“The Albanian Diaspora is different from others. They don’t act in a community. They don’t want to be recognized as foreigners, they could be very individualist. Through the programme, we created this possibility among them and to feel part of a community”*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://albanianstudies.weebly.com/arberesh.html>

### 3.1.3 Efficiency

Efficiency is about how well the resources (funds, expertise and time) are used to undertake activities and how well these resources are converted into outputs:

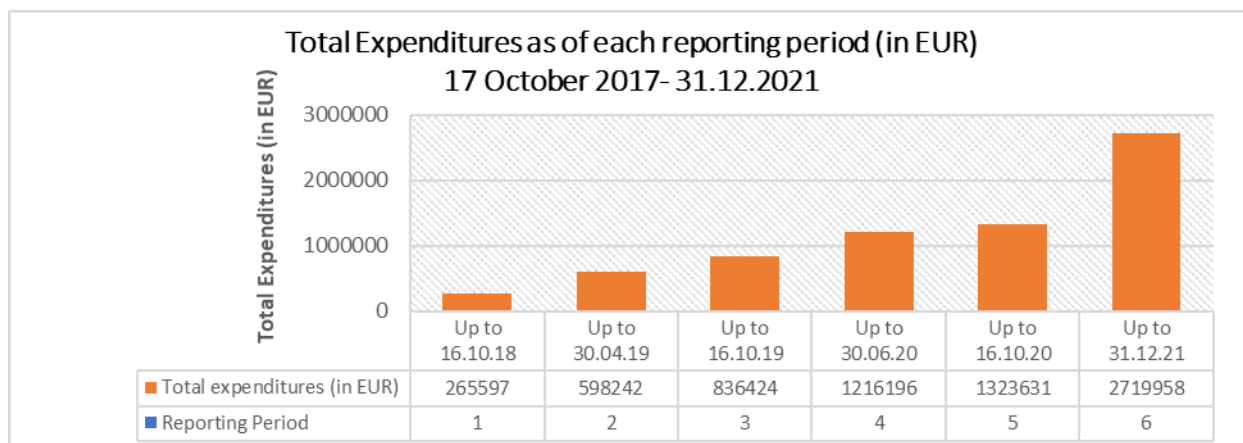
-How well is the availability/usage of means/inputs managed?

-Could the activities have been implemented with fewer resources without reducing the quality and quantity of the results?

-How well is the partner(s) contribution/involvement working and how did this cooperation impact programme objectives?

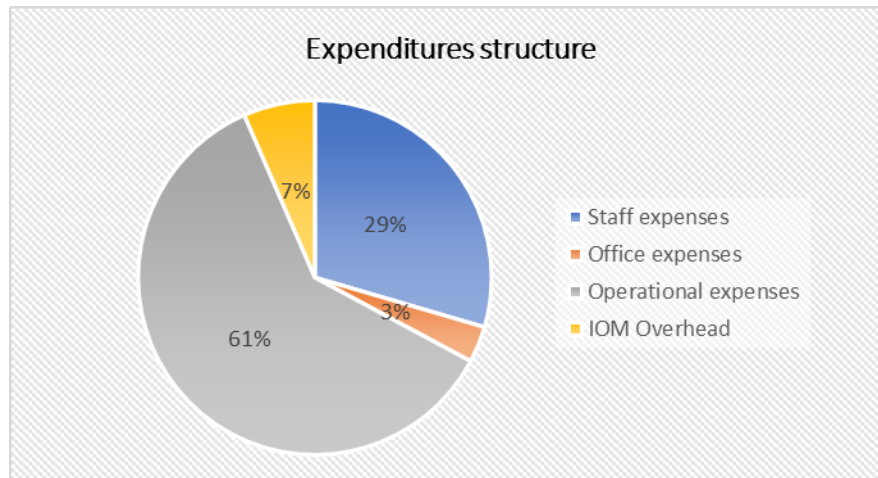
-Are the programme expenditures in line with the agreed upon budget, and the cost incurred consistent with the strategy of the programmes?

**As of 31 December 2021, the programme achieved a burn rate of 95% on a total budget of 2,876,500 EUR with balance mainly remaining from outcome 2 and 3, as not all activities were implemented.**



Regarding the expenditures, the low burn rates at the first period of the programme reflect the time needed for the reformulations as explained previously as well as for hiring staff. The trend of the burn rate is also apparently related to the nature of the activities. Indeed, the fellowship schemes including consultancies with experts and agreements with implementing partners and service providers were mostly implemented in the last year of the programme. Also, related to COVID-19, some activities were delayed, in particular the work of the diaspora associations and the Italian NGOs in Albania who asked for no-cost extensions.

Analysis indicates that expenditures and activity implementation was overall timely. IOM team put a lot of efforts in the monitoring of the programme, including the programmatic, financial and risks analysis. Efforts at the launch of the programme involved a lot of consultation with stakeholders and donor and the reformulations allowed to adjust resources and means each time.



IOM staff were overall perceived by all stakeholders to be very professional, dedicated, competent and responsive. Coordination mechanisms were very positively perceived by all stakeholders. There was a clear organization of the team and roles, a good leadership and a good team spirit, which was also noted by the stakeholders. The programme staffing structure was fairly sufficient but could have benefitted of reinforcement considering the workload involved. The variety of components to be implemented and the important number of implementing partners, experts and consultants to support and to coordinate meant an important workload for IOM programme and administration team (finance, procurement and human resources). The programme also involved a lot of communication and media work as it was a fundamental part of this programme.

The programme appears to have made efficient and effective use of implementing partners and consultants. Highly qualified consultants and experts were used, and the team strived to maximize the efficiency and utility of each consultant.

Overall, and despite the important amount of work put in place by IOM staff, diaspora focal points, consultants including experts deployed in Albania and abroad, there was an overall feeling of pride, passion and satisfaction about this programme. The programme staffing structure was fairly sufficient but could have benefitted of reinforcement considering the workload involved. Indeed, exclusively dedicated staff to the programme especially for transversal topics could have smoothen programme implementation.

In terms of monitoring, the programme financial monitoring was quite smooth. The Resource Management staff managed programme-related financial procedures, ensuring compliance with IOM/donor financial requirements and timely financial reporting. This included the sharing of a monthly budget consumption with the programme manager tracking burn rate per budget line. Those monthly reports ensured regular financial monitoring by the Mission, and also facilitated donor reporting. All contractual and procurement procedures were supported by programme and administration team.

Activity and results monitoring were carried out by IOM and by the extended team involved including the diaspora focal points, consultants and implementing partners. This could have been improved as more data collection could have been ensured on a more regular basis including the gathering of qualitative information such as level of satisfaction, involvement, knowledge or change of perception.

The evaluator is not aware of the existence of a Results Monitoring Framework or of a Monitoring and Evaluation plan. Results were however captured in each donor report.

For risks monitoring, challenges to implementation were discussed during the coordination meetings as well as during the Steering Committee meetings with the donor and the counterparts.

### 3.1.4 Impact

Impact concerns positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by the programme, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally:

To what extent has progress been made towards enhancing the engagement of the Albanian diaspora in the development of the country? What are the most significant changes, intended and unintended impact.

Stakeholders and IOM staff agreed that the most important achievements are related to:

1. **The mapping and profiling of diaspora in Italy as well as in France and Belgium** aimed to conduct research, create an overview and a repository of Albanian diaspora skills and knowledge. Indeed, the work carried out, left a database of highly skilled diaspora profiles and competencies as a practical tool to understand how to include them in the development of their own country. Several stakeholders reiterated the need to replicate this in other countries and to take a step further of analysis to match supply and demand.
2. **The partnership with the University of Florence** was recognized as successful achievement. The programme, through the sustainable cultural and patrimonial revalorization of five villages, had an impact on the promotion of the local economy. Furthermore, this activity involved students and researchers from the Albanian diaspora, both in a research component from Architecture and from Sociology universities and in a thematic seminar, which allowed the diaspora to share their knowledge but also to feel closer to their country of origin. Finally, this activity, could have benefitted from the twinning with a university in Albania, for more sustainability. According to different stakeholders, getting institutions in countries of destination to be formally involved in a temporary return to countries of origin could have a strong impact and interuniversity cooperation could be a way forward.

#### Quotes from relevant stakeholders:

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*“The work with the university of Florence really links with concerns we have in terms of sustainability. Getting institutions in countries of destination to be formally involved in temporarily return to countries of origin creates greater institutional links”*

*“The most important impact is the exchange between universities. I think it’s very interesting”*

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3. **The secondments as well as the fellowship schemes, in particular the EU fellowship scheme,** were assessed as the most impactful activities by the governmental stakeholders as they

responded to the need to have support on the EU integration process. Indeed, government officials recognized the added-value of the diaspora as experts in EU legislations and frameworks as well as with expertise and knowledge of the Albanian legislative framework therefore acting as a bridge in this process. They also felt that the national experts were needed to support them in implementing their activities as they had limited resources.

#### Quotes from relevant stakeholders:

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*There has been a positive impact because we now have an improved knowledge of EU regulations and its positive to have another critical eye on things”*

*“We discovered a different practice. Such kind of cooperation allows to see how other countries deal with the EU legislation, including the methods they use. What is important is support on the implementation of the legislation”*

*“Diaspora experts provided their experience on EU law and the collaboration with our national experts was fruitful.”*

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4. **The “Connect Albania” mechanism has been considered by most of the stakeholders as an important initiative although recognizing some uncertainties on the way forward.** Although the results were limited, some felt that this mechanism should be “one of the main objectives of the Albanian Government” as it’s the first time that a programme is considering diaspora as development agents. Some stakeholders reported that there was need for diaspora to bring investors to invest within Albania.

In addition to the direct impact perceived by the stakeholders, there were several changes that the programme produced, according to the stakeholders, which were beyond the initial objectives of the programme.

#### **1- Multidimensional networking and enhanced partnerships.**

The networking was one of the major achievements of this programme, mainly regarding diaspora networking thanks to the establishment of the Diaspora focal points in Italy on one hand and the setting-up of the EU fellowship mechanism on the other hand. Indeed, the network expanded and created stronger ties among the Albanian Diaspora. This was also reinforced through the outreach events organized and the involvement of Albanian Diaspora Associations. There was a new awareness that the Albanian diaspora could develop closer relationships among themselves, work together and learn from each other. This derived also from a personal individual willingness and motivation as diaspora felt the need to explore further their network. The networking was however not only limited to diaspora. Indeed, the programme managed to put together a spectrum of diverse and rich partnerships, including different actors from private sector, institutional public organizations and non-governmental organizations and this resulted in a wide engagement.

#### **2- Change of perceptions and awareness both at the level of Diaspora and the level of the institutions.**



Some government stakeholders felt that working with diaspora members in the framework of the EU Fellowship scheme allowed them to address some topics from a different perspective which made them aware of the added-value of the diaspora. Diaspora communities, from their side realized that they had a potential that they could put in the service of their own institutions. Some had past experiences with the institutions when they used to live in Albania, but felt that this time, something new had been created. This point is key, as recognizing reciprocally that the value of the other is the first step towards a trustful relationship, which is a fundamental base for such projects on the engagement of diaspora.

#### Quotes from relevant stakeholders:

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*“The fellows realized that institutions can be committed when they see that they can achieve a joint result. This was hard to imagine for them at the beginning. Diaspora was feeling left out by the Albanian Government in general, and there is a renewed interest and a commitment. We’ve seen that commitment in the institutions.”*

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### 3- Change of narrative

According to stakeholders and IOM staff, this programme contributed to the change of narrative from “migration” to “diaspora.” The narrative was more negative in Albania and it looked at migration from a crisis perspective.<sup>7</sup> This programme brought therefore a positive change which was also felt by the Albanian diaspora. The change of narrative has not been measured as such and this could be an opportunity in the future, while continuing working with media professionals on this topic.

### 4- A human impact

Several stakeholders felt that this programme had a considerable impact on the human level. This programme, through its different components, allowed diaspora to create ties again with the country of origin. There was an involvement at the emotional level, and this stimulated the senses of identity, motivation and willingness for change, at least from the diaspora side.

#### 3.1.5 Sustainability

Sustainability is related to the durability of the programme’s results, or the continuation of the programme’s benefits once external support ceases

-What elements were included in the design and implementation to promote sustainability?

-What is the current situation, now that the programme has ended? What should be done in order to guarantee the sustainability, if necessary?

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-021-00981-w#Sec7>

**In this programme, IOM has promoted sustainability by engaging and promoting dialogue among partners and main governmental stakeholders, by addressing and supporting strategic and policy frameworks, by including in the programme technical elements of sustainability and by ensuring a wide communication and visibility on the programme.**

#### **Engagement and dialogue among partners and main governmental stakeholders**

- ✓ Thanks to the programme, several structures initially created under the SMD were reinforced and capacitated. Several structures remained following the dissolution of the SMD and will be able to maintain the priority given to Diaspora. There were also different coordination interinstitutional mechanisms that were put in place with the support of this programme and this would be able to continue in the future. Finally, the networking established among the diaspora and also between diaspora members and institutions would remain as valid instrument to guarantee sustainability and maybe create new opportunities. The diaspora focal points established in Italy had a major role in this networking component and the institutions could benefit from their support to continue the work started and also to replicate it in other countries such as UK, Germany, US etc.

#### **Quotes from relevant stakeholders:**

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*“I was surprised of the wide engagement. I think that the networking is something that could be sustained.”*

*“The programme, even in its complexity, brought a rich networking of different profiles and created collaborations which could continue after the programme.”*

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#### **Supporting strategic and policy frameworks**

- ✓ The National Diaspora Strategy (2021-2025), its Action Plan and the Communication Strategy are elements of sustainability that should push institutions to continue and take over the work done so far.

#### **Elements of sustainability in the design**

- ✓ The results of the fellowships are tangible and the model could be taken over by the institutions themselves without the support of IOM. The government stakeholders felt that the support with EU fellows should not stop, as the EU integration negotiations are only starting now and there is still a lot of expertise and support still needed. The model exists thanks to the programme and could be repeated at any time when desired.
- ✓ The mapping and profiling is also a tangible result that could not only be used but also replicated and expanded to other countries. The mapping and profiling could also be a base for further analysis to match more governmental needs with diaspora competencies.
- ✓ Training modules created with the administrative school of public administration or with the agriculture schools are elements of sustainability as they will be used beyond the programme.

Trainings were ensured and the capital is available within the institutions to train other civil servants and officials.

- ✓ The knowledge given to local producers and artisans, including the improved capacities in digital marketing and innovative sustainable solutions is also a capital that could be sustained.

### **Communication and visibility**

- ✓ As mentioned, different times during the report, the communication and visibility was not only of high quality but was also an integral part of the programme. Through wide and pertinent dissemination in Albania and in other countries, the programme contributed to change positively the narrative on this theme. This is something that institutions and media could continue to build upon and keep alive to give more support to future actions.

There are already some concrete examples on short and medium benefits gained from this programme. Indeed, it is interesting to see that the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation is funding two other small projects with the University of Florence, following the same methodology designed in this programme. One of the Albanian Ministries also expressed interest in repeating the “5 villages programme” in other villages. The “Connect Albania” has been handed over to the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber and its development, though uncertain, has a concrete possibility. Upon completion of the programme, IOM is supporting ADBC by providing a consultant for Connect Albania, for a smoothly transition and to ensure training of ADBC staff.

The SMD was dissolved in September 2021. This has been felt negatively by some stakeholders as it was a sign, according to them, of a lack of institutional engagement regarding diaspora as a priority. In February 2022, the Council of Ministers approved the decision for transferring Diaspora’s responsibilities to the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and this should therefore guarantee a continuity.

According to some stakeholders, some activities could be sustained, however the involvement of IOM is important, as a neutral international organization connecting all the actors and supporting the government when needed.

Following the implementation of this comprehensive pilot programme, IOM Albania is already working on mobilizing funds to give continuity to some of the successful components and to create synergies with other organizations such as GIZ in Albania.

Some stakeholders felt that this programme could gain more importance and would have more impact if it was exported at the regional level including Albania as a country, building on its best practices.

### **3.1.6 Cross cutting themes**

**Gender:** Have practical gender needs, strategic gender interests and other gender-related issues been adequately considered in the programme design and implementation?

As far as gender is concerned, the programme shows evidence of good attention to gender balance and to gender mainstreaming though there is room for improvement. When asked about gender balance, all stakeholders interviewed agreed that gender was not an issue, nor in Albanian mentalities nor in the programme itself. There is indeed a high level of representation of women in the public administration.

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Gender questions</b>	<b>Programme response</b>
Relevance	To what extent has gender been integrated in programme design (i.e., gender analysis or gender sensitive needs assessment), planning, implementation and results to be achieved?	During the design of the programme, the focus was not specifically on gender equality as a direct objective of the programme. Gender was however integrated and mainstreamed in the design, in particular in the different components of the programme with a focus on gender balance and on gender empowerment. Gender was included in the results and the indicators.
Effectiveness	What were the gender equality results and objectives achieved ? Were gender mainstreaming principles adhered to by the programme?	The participation of women was promoted and encouraged in the capacity building activities, outreach activities, research and workshops. Gender related aspects were also covered by the mapping and profiling of the diaspora and gender-balanced participation was promoted in the fellowships (over 75% women), in the diaspora focal points network (over 50% women) as well as in the study visits (over 70% women in Italy and over 60% women in Ireland). The program also promoted women's entrepreneurship through the engagement of men and women members of Albanian communities; the priorities and needs of men and women community members were studied and reflected. Several women producers were provided with managerial skills and marketing trainings. Moreover, the National Diaspora Strategy, its Action Plan and the Communication Strategy were also gender-sensitive including analysis of sex-disaggregated data.
Efficiency	How is gender reflected in budget reporting and the implementation of activities?	Gender was not specifically reflected in the budget reporting but was an integral part of the implementation. Several targets are gender disaggregated,
Impact	To what extent did the gender-sensitive approach lead to an improved impact of the programme?	The gender-sensitive approach proved that women and men had equal roles and competencies, and this is particularly valid for the highly skilled diaspora and for the local producers in Albania. The reinforcement of women's

		capacities in managerial skills and marketing was an added value and this was reported clearly during the interviews. The capacity building provided for the civil servants reinforced also the equality between men and women in the public administration.
Sustainability	What is the likelihood of increased gender equality beyond programme end?	The programme supported gender equality but it is also true that the environment was already favorable in Albania. The increased knowledge and empowered roles of both men and women in this programme are key for continuity beyond the programme closure.

On a final note, it seems interesting to report a reflection that came out during the interviews when discussing EU integration process and how gender has been integrated in the work of the EU fellowships. Although the question of gender balance was not really a concern, the question of diverse gender identities was raised and was recommended to be included in the upcoming reforms.

**Environment:** Is the programme respecting/addressing environmental needs/problems?

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Gender questions</b>	<b>Programme response</b>
Relevance	To what extent have environmental and ecological sustainability concepts been integrated in programme design, planning, implementation and results to be achieved? Have environment indicators been selected with which to measure the results of this programme?	The programme objective was not focused on addressing environmental and ecological sustainability issues, there was not therefore a prior environmental examination, or an environmental impact assessment conducted before the programme was designed and no specific indicators were included. The programme was however looking at the most important economic sectors for Albania, which included tourism and agriculture and this was a great opportunity as the programme put significant efforts in the promotion of rural territories, preserving archeological heritage, the development of sustainable tourism, the promotion of small producers and of local products and the promotion of innovative biological technologies.
Effectiveness	What were the sustainable	Environmental and ecological sustainability issues

	environmental results and objectives achieved ?	were promoted and encouraged through the 4 projects implemented by Albanian and Italian NGOs as well as the research and the 5 villages component carried out by the university of Florence, creating therefore an opportunity to build capacity around environment mainstreaming within the network of partners created. The EU fellowships scheme also addressed the topic of air quality with the Ministry of Tourism. The topic of air quality is indeed horizontal and would provide a base for further improvements on a policy level to address climate change for example.
Efficiency	How is the environmental sustainability reflected in budget reporting and the implementation of activities?	Environmental sustainability was not specifically reflected in the budget reporting but was an integral part of the implementation.
Impact	Didi the programme have a direct or indirect impact on the environment?	Through improved know-how, programme activities included fighting pests and including non-chemical preparations in the agriculture sector. The programme also created new itineraries for tourism and trekking tours. Local producers working on oil or natural cosmetic products were also supported.
Sustainability	What is the likeliness of increased environmental and ecological sustainability beyond programme end?	The programme has helped develop the capacity of partners/beneficiaries to integrate environmental sustainability concerns. There are however some bureaucratic challenges remaining including some gaps in applying norms and standards, to obtain the right certifications. More support should be given to those aspects in the future especially to the small producers.

**Communication:** Have the communication and visibility actions been implemented in an appropriate manner?

Communication is included here as a cross-cutting topic, but it was actually an integrated part of the programme and several elements were already detailed in the report.

There were two levels of interventions:

- ✓ **Developing and implementing a Communication Strategy for the government in its approach to engage diaspora:** One of the main recommendations following the mid-term performance review conducted by IOM regional office in Vienna was to support the government to improve their own communication with the diaspora. Through this programme, a Communication Strategy was developed together and with the institutions involving not only the SMD but also the MEFA. This was challenging at the beginning due to the difficulty to collect the right data but with the secondment scheme, more support was given to the institutions during this process and this has been successfully achieved. Stakeholders felt very positive about this and reported that this was the first time they developed a communication strategy.
  
- ✓ **Developing and implementing a Communication Strategy for the programme, to give visibility, maximize outreach and engage more partners:** The IOM team developed a communication strategy, and revised it for each reformulation of the programme. The strategy had a multidimensional package of communication with different high-quality products targeting different audiences. Different partnerships were also established with media professionals and journalists in Albania and abroad, including radios, TV and webpages. Social media was also a crucial tool for dissemination. All the components had been fully covered by the communication strategy. Outreach events were also organized and gave a good visibility on the programme. Besides the work done by IOM staff, different partners promoted the visibility of the components on which they were actively involved, and several articles were for instance published by European institutions such as EUNIWELL or UNIFI<sup>8</sup>. Such communication strategy supported the work on change of narrative and perceptions.

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<sup>8</sup> [EUniWell: The diaspora as a resource for knowledge, preservation and enhancement of the lesser known cultural sites in Albania](#) / [Development Cooperation: a bridge between Italy and Albania](#) | News | Università degli Studi di Firenze | UniFI

## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1.1 Conclusions

Overall, the programme performance was strong. Indeed, this comprehensive pilot initiative managed to explore different concrete mechanisms supporting the government in its approach to engage the diaspora and therefore achieved most of the intended results on time and with the available budget. There was a strong commitment from all the actors involved despite the challenging operating context posed by COVID-19 pandemic and the changes in the government. The programme was highly appreciated by most of the stakeholders. The following provides a summary of the key conclusions that can be drawn, based on the detailed findings presented in the previous section:

**Relevance: The programme was very relevant to national efforts, to donor’s priorities and to IOM’s global strategies.** The programme was well-designed with a clear and a strong description of activities and results. The logical approach was evidence based and coherent and the assumptions were fairly sound. The inception phase and the reformulations were necessary and reflected the need to adapt the programme to a changing context. The programme proposed a pilot and concrete response to materialize the engagement of the Albanian government towards diaspora articulated around a three-dimensional approach: 1. stronger institutions, 2. social capital and 3. financial capital. Through support on both technical and policy levels, the programme responded to the national priorities and also aligned with national, regional and international frameworks. The programme was timely, as it addressed a topic of major concern for the Albanian Government which is the EU integration process, and the inclusion of highly skilled diaspora in this process was a great opportunity to mainstream migration into development policies.

**Coherence: This programme is internally coherent with IOM’s other diaspora projects at global and regional level, as well as with other initiatives lead by other organizations although the programme proved to be one of the most important comprehensive initiative on diaspora in Albania and in the region.** Other organizations such as GIZ or EU Delegation worked on the topic but with very limited activities and it seems that this programme was unique in the nature and the dimension of the activities put in place. IOM Albania is perceived as the government’s main trusted, credible and knowledgeable organization on the topic of migration and should therefore keep the lead on the topic of migration and diaspora. Several stakeholders mentioned that the cooperation with IOM was fruitful, not only on this specific programme but on other migration related projects implemented in the country.

**Effectiveness: Overall the programme responded to the needs of all relevant stakeholders, good coordination mechanisms were put in place, and the programme was quite effective despite not being able to meet all the targets related to the third outcome (GoA facilitates the engagement of Diaspora into country development through investment). In general, the programme was described by the stakeholders as courageous, innovative, ambitious and concrete.** The programme achieved effectively



the expected results under the First Outcome (GoA implements a comprehensive approach toward Diaspora engagement for Development in line with the overall policy framework) and the Second Outcome (GoA facilitates the engagement of diaspora into institutional strengthening and territorial development through skills and know-how transfer). The programme allowed institutional capacities strengthening through the finalization of the National Diaspora Strategy and its Action Plan (2021-2025) as well as the Communication Strategy, the capacity building, the deployment of experts, the exchanges on best practices, the technical support to the SDM structures. Engagement of diaspora through transfer of skills and know-how was achieved through the mapping and profiling exercise as well as through the fellowship schemes. The last outcome was achieved by establishing “Connect Albania”, an online investment-boosting mechanism with limited results mainly due to limited time of implementation and to COVID-19 pandemic not allowing for a good business climate for investments.

Different elements posed some challenges during the implementation of the programme including : 1) the time needed to adjust to the changes of the government and consequently to the changes of priorities; 2) the time needed for all stakeholders to understand priorities, roles and perspectives among each other to be able to work together; 3) the capacity to establish a good communication flow between diaspora and national authorities balancing institutional requirements with individual motivations; 4) the need to fit in specific administrative frameworks including those related to the typologies of agreements used for consultants or programme partners; 5) The time needed for institutional coordination and approvals; 6) COVID-19 Pandemic mobility and gathering restrictions and finally 7) the specificities of the Albanian diaspora and its relationship with the country of origin. Overall, strong coordination mechanisms were established at different levels allowing for IOM to mitigate most of the challenges.

**Efficiency: The programme was overall quite efficient in its financial management and spending, as well as its staffing structure and dynamics.** The burn rate was low in the first reporting periods, reflecting the time needed for adjustments and reformulations. The programme appears to have made efficient and quite good effective use of implementing partners and consultants and there was a clear organization of the IOM team with good leadership as well as a good team spirit. The programme staffing structure was fairly sufficient but could have benefitted of reinforcement considering the workload involved. There was an overall feeling of pride, passion and satisfaction about this programme. Financial monitoring was regular and coordinated among the IOM team. Activity and results monitoring were carried out by IOM and by the extended team involved including the diaspora focal points, consultants and implementing partners. This could have been improved as more data collection could have been ensured on a more regular basis including the gathering of qualitative information such as level of satisfaction, involvement, knowledge or change of perception.

**Impact: Several interventions implemented through this programme brought a significant change,** including the mapping and profiling of diaspora, the partnerships with the university of Florence, the secondments and the fellowship schemes as well as the “Connect Albania” mechanism. Indeed, the availability of a database of highly skilled diaspora, the existence of models ready to be replicated and expanded, and the strengthened capacities of stakeholders are immediate positive changes. In terms of

mid term and long term impact, there are several elements that were highlighted, which were not directly intended by programme objectives, including multidimensional networking and enhanced partnerships among diaspora and different actors, changes in the level of awareness and shifting in mindsets of both diaspora and institutions, the change of narrative on diaspora and the human impact and the extent to which such programme involved an emotional part stimulating the senses of identity, motivation and willingness for change, at least from the diaspora side.

**Sustainability: The programme has promoted sustainability from its design through the promotion of institutionalization and government ownership, and high degree of coordination and involvement of stakeholders during design and implementation. However, sustainability was challenged by the dissolution of the SMD and the time taken by the MEFA to guarantee a continuity as well as by the availability of fundings and donors to build on the successful mechanisms and develop them further.** The programme has created different instruments to promote dialogue with and among stakeholders including institutions and diaspora. The National Diaspora Strategy and its Action Plan (2021-2025) is certainly an element of sustainability at a policy level which the Albanian Government should continue to apply and coordinate. Moreover, several tangible results mentioned earlier such as the networking, the fellowships schemes, the mapping and profiling of diaspora or the knowledge shared through capacity building and empowerment gained, create a concrete basis for continuity, beyond programme closure and at any time needed or desired.

Although such activities could continue without the support of IOM, the involvement of IOM, in synergy with other organizations, could be crucial as it has been described by most of the stakeholders as a neutral, knowledgeable and credible organization in the field of migration able to connect all the stakeholders and provide support as needed. This experience developed in Albania could also be expanded to other countries in the region building on the most successful results.

**Gender: the programme showed evidence of good attention to gender balance and to gender mainstreaming.** There was specific reference to gender sensitivity in the programme documents and the efforts were focused mainly on ensuring an equal participation to the programme with majority of female staff, consultants and beneficiaries. Gender analysis was also included in the communication strategy and in the training material. The programme indicators gathered disaggregated data on sex when addressing programme targets but there is still space for improvement here as there could have been more qualitative feedback gathered analyzing the impact of such activities on the roles and dynamics of men and women involved in the programme.

**Environment: The programme showed strong evidence of integration of environmental and ecological sustainability concepts in programme design and implementation.** The programme not only supported the inclusion of good practices in the programme such as the promotion of rural territories, preserving archeological patrimonial, the development of sustainable tourism, the promotion of small producers and of local products and the promotion of innovative biological technologies but also improved the capacities of the stakeholders and their level of awareness in doing so.

**Communication: As regards to communication, the programme had a very strong and high-quality strategy and served both the programme purposes and governmental needs.** Communication, when not considered as cross-cutting issue but as an integral part of the programme, is more effective. Indicators regarding communication could have been improved in the programme document and more qualitative and analytical research on the change of narrative could bring a significant change in the future.

#### 4.1.2 Lessons learned and good practices

Several lessons learned and good practices were identified by the evaluator:

##### **Good practices:**

- ✓ The inclusion of an inception phase at the beginning of the programme ensuring that the programme designed was adjusted to any changes in the context or in the priorities. This revealed to be a very effective tool, especially in a context where there is an important turnover at the political level.
- ✓ The establishment of a diaspora focal points network is one of the most significant good practice that was identified by the evaluator. This is an innovative practice which could be improved, if institutionalized for more credibility and legitimacy towards other actors. This could be expanded and applied in other projects on Diaspora.
- ✓ The involvement of university institutions in countries of destination, ideally partnering with local universities in the country of origin is a great practice ensuring sustainability in projects involving diaspora engagement through transfer of know-how. This could be even expanded to other institutions which could be involved in temporary return or circular migration.
- ✓ The creation of a platform involving diaspora as development agents represents another good practice. There was a lot that has been done in previous projects on engaging diaspora as a social and cultural capital and the “Connect Albania” mechanism is a good example that could be further analyzed and tested to be replicated in other countries.
- ✓ The alignment to national priorities, beyond the topic of migration, such as the EU integration process or the sectorial economic development in this case, was key to engage the diaspora. This was a win-win situation, where both institutions and diaspora have seen a benefit in such collaboration.

##### **Lessons learned:**

- ✓ **Design of indicators and monitoring of outputs and outcomes:** As mentioned previously, a large number of indicators have been included in the results matrix, mainly quantitative indicators. The reformulations of the programme could have been good opportunities to improve this reducing the indicators to a more manageable number and introducing more qualitative indicators to reflect better the quality of performance. While the design of the programme was overall very strong and clear, there are some areas for improvement in the formulation of some outcome indicators and space for reinforcing coherence between wording

in the result statements, indicators, and targets. Outcomes indicators could have been improved as they were formulated more like results statements not reflecting the change intended and targets were more related to outputs or to activities. Qualitative indicators assessing the levels of satisfaction or of increase of knowledge and know-how could have been useful both for outcomes and outputs. These could have been informed through the administration of surveys or through group discussions with governmental partners, diaspora groups, implementing partners, or indirect beneficiaries. This also applies for communication related activities, where outreach has been measured but not the perception of change of narrative.

- ✓ **Even when working with a specific key counterpart taking the leadership of the programme, it is important to involve actively other counterparts.** Diversifying counterparts could ensure more ownership and give more sustainability to the programme.

#### 4.1.3 Recommendations

1. Share the evaluation report and the translated version of the evaluation brief with all relevant stakeholders. *(priority: high, timeframe: next 1-2 months)*
2. Consider conducting a meeting with the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs to propose and build a strategy together on how to take over the responsibilities previously taken by the former State Minister for Diaspora, including the implementation of the National Diaspora Strategy, its action plan and the communication strategy, and also assess any needs and requests for institutional strengthening support. A follow-up meeting could also be proposed with other governmental counterparts to expand the discussion with other ministries and institutions including on the EU integration process and other global priorities and on the next steps that might require IOM support and would give continuity to the EU Fellowship scheme. *(priority: high, timeframe: next 1-2 months)*
3. Carry out project development and fundraising to enable IOM to continue supporting diaspora engagement initiatives building on the successful experiences and the knowledge that has been consolidated within the programme. *(priority: high, timeframe: next 1-3 months)*
  - a. Consider conducting a learning session with potential donors and other international organizations to present and discuss findings of this evaluation and other lessons learned and assess possible interest in further developing specific components such as the mapping and profiling of diaspora, “Connect Albania”, the Fellowship schemes or twinning programmes between universities and labour/vocational training institutions in Albania and in countries of destination. Assess interest of donors in funding a research on the change of narrative regarding migration and diaspora in Albania.
  - b. Develop and share with donors specific concept notes based on the successful achievements of this programme.
  - c. Organize a meeting with colleagues at IOM regional offices to request support in the promotion of programme results and discuss possible synergies or joint future initiatives with other projects on diaspora in the region.

4. Follow-up closely with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber and the National Diaspora Agency regarding the “Connect Albania” mechanism and identify, with the support of the consultant hired following the closure of the programme, areas of support needed assessing eventually IOMs role and possible contribution. *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*
5. Consider conducting a meeting with the network of focal points diaspora and EU fellows as to be able to create continuity, to collect their proposals and involve them in possible future projects. *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*
6. Conduct field visits, together with the diaspora associations, to programme beneficiaries in Albania to assess the impact of the programme and possible areas of future support. *(priority: low, timeframe: next 6-12 months)*
7. Explore follow-up initiatives with Albanian diaspora associations such as more learning experiences for Albanians living in Albania, in countries of destination (study visits for local small producers, internships, participations to fairs, etc.) *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*
8. Consider continuing the dissemination of the visibility products covering programme achievements through digital and traditional media, involving journalists and media professionals, to keep the spotlight on the topic of diaspora and continue the engagement process. *(priority: medium, timeframe: next 3-6 months)*

## 5 Annexes

1. Evaluation Brief – Two-page summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendations.
  2. Evaluation Terms of Reference
  3. Evaluation Matrix
  4. Inception Report
  5. Documentation reviewed
  6. Institutions interviewed or consulted
  7. Interviews and focus group discussions guides
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