

Brain Gain



Engaging Diaspora
in Albania's Development



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I. Project Background

Substantial changes have occurred in Albania in the past 15 years as it recovers from nearly 50 years of a harsh and restrictive communist system. The country has overhauled its economy and political institutions as part of the transition to democracy and market economy and made enormous strides in recent years with improved economic performance and sustained growth. Though these rapid changes have brought about improvements, they have been accompanied by a severe impact upon Albanians themselves.

During the last decade of the 20th century, Albania had the highest rate of emigration in the world. According to Albanian census figures, one out of five Albanians emigrated between 1990 and 2001. In the period 1990-2003 severe "Brain Drain" affected Albania; approximately 45 percent of university professors and researchers emigrated, as did more than 65 percent of the PhD holders educated in the West during the 1980s. Thousands of university graduates left the country as well.

This intellectual capital can become a valuable asset to Albania as it moves towards greater integration with the European Union. In addition to contributing to Albania's human capital, Albanian expatriates also have the potential to support development through economic capital in terms of financial resources and remittances - as well as social capital through social networks that facilitate transfers of economic and human capital by stimulating business development and investment.

Migratory processes in Albania, just like in the rest of Southeast Europe represent a traditional phenomenon. Migratory waves of Albanians towards Western Europe and the USA started as early as 1900's. The Albanians of the second and third generations represent another source of intellectual capital that can be effectively used in the process of developing the country. Their experience and financial potential could provide a new source for sustaining development through engagement in the academic, administrative and business life of the country.

II. Government of Albania Commitment to the Programme

The Government of Albania has placed high priority on the issue of human capital. Directly related to this priority is the process of reversing the phenomenon of brain drain. The return of qualified migrants has been identified as a key policy in the government's Strategy for Migration to achieve an effective engagement of the Albanian Diaspora in development processes. Following a request of the Government, UNDP facilitated the preparation of a programme for greater engagement of the Diaspora in Albania's socio-economic development based partly on the lessons learned and experience of various organizations.

The Programme will be implemented by the Council of Ministers under UNDP regulations for nationally executed programmes. The main counterparts within the Government are the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Interior's Department of Public Administration, the Diaspora Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education. The Ministries have committed to provide substantial support and expertise to ensure the effectiveness of the Brain Gain Project. The Diaspora Institute will provide a key link to the Albanian Diaspora while the

Ministry of Education will work to link the Diaspora with University level teaching and research credentials with local Albanian Universities.

A steering committee will be formed under the leadership of the Council of Ministers with participation of the Ministry of Education, UNDP, OSI, IOM and other donors or organizations active in the area.

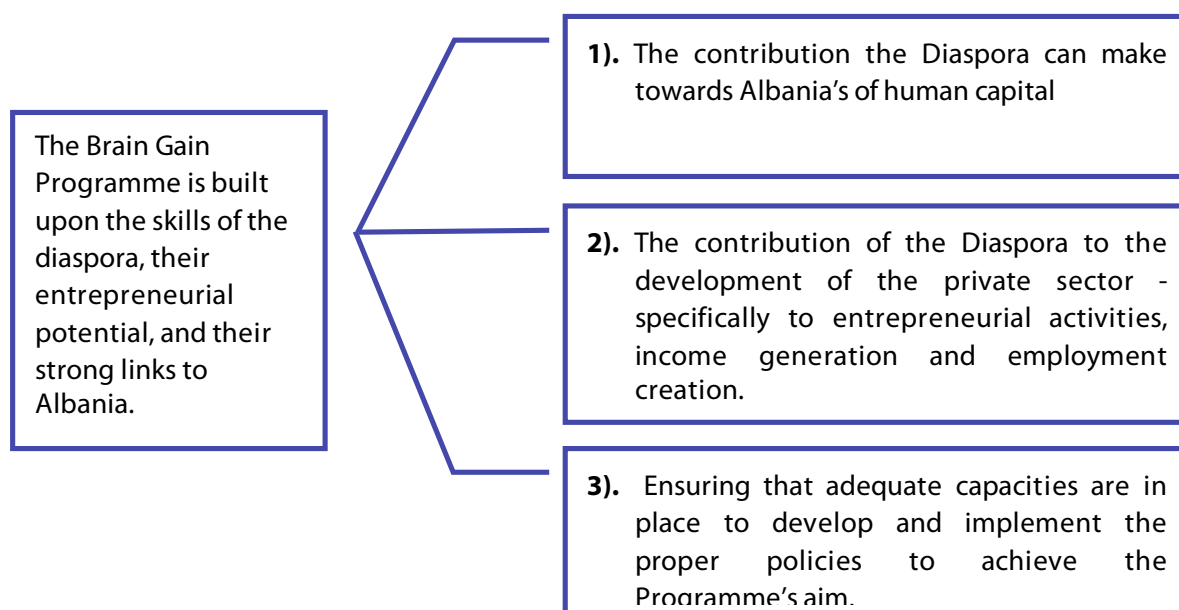
III. Objectives and Outputs of the Programme

The objective of the Project is to support the creation of the necessary incentives and national policy mechanisms to effectively engage the Albanian Diaspora in the scientific, administrative and economic development of the country. Over its two-year duration the project will seek to reverse Albania's "brain drain." The Project will support the Government in the preparation of a policy framework for the above processes. The project will also establish an online database to match the demand of Albania's academic institutions, public administration, and private sector with the expertise offered by the Albanian Diaspora.

The preparatory phase of the Programme is already underway with the formulation of a policy framework on the Diaspora's engagement with Albania's development. The finalized policy paper will be shared and discussed with the Government, civil society, Diaspora, donors and other stakeholders at the round table organized to introduce this Programme on September 25, 2006. A dedicated Diaspora database and a web portal will also serve to identify eligible individuals that will be part of the Brain Gain Programme and create a network that would link the Albanian Diaspora to Albania itself.

Programme Components

The Programme consists of three separate yet related components focusing on the following:



Programme Activities

The activities that will be undertaken by the Programme are as follows:

- identification of graduate students that are engaged in scientific activity abroad
- bringing together Albanian students abroad in conferences and workshops taking place in Albania
- facilitating the activity of the Diaspora Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania
- facilitating the creation of a fellowship scheme for CEOs with the most important public enterprises
- creating an enabling legal and regulatory environment for the inclusion of overseas graduates in the Albanian civil service,
- promotion of Diaspora entrepreneurship in Albania, and
- developing trade links, including capacity building of relevant institutions.

Programme Description

In cooperation with the Albanian Ministry of Education and Albanian Universities the Brain Gain initiative will bring Albanian lecturers from renowned and established western Universities to Albanian universities for a specific series of lectures, while exploring the possibility of using their academic and research expertise in the preparation of platforms and future strategies for Albanian higher education system.

The academic component of the Brain Gain Programme is being piloted in the newly established “Aleksandër Moisiu” University in Durrës. Through an incentive scheme the academic leadership (rector, vice-rector, deans) is being supported in their efforts to make this University a new reality of Albania’s higher education system with new concepts of management. Upon expected changes in the Law of Higher Education and in line with the Bologna Process of Higher Education, the role of the returning lecturers and scholars will be an important for the integration of Albanian Higher Education System in the most advanced European and North American networks.

In partnership with international partners and private sector, the programme will explore public sector employment incentives for highly qualified returning migrants. A permanent scheme of public sector internships will also be created.

The Brain Gain Programme will also explore job creation and the labor market situation in Albania in an effort to provide the Government with a sound long-term strategy for employment and job creation. The Programme will serve as an umbrella for the efforts of IOM, ETF, and OSFA undertaking specific survey research in employment demand, emigrant employment and job creation.



Universities will benefit from the scholars and lecturers from abroad



Industrial and agricultural sectors will also benefit from the diaspora’s business skills and investment

IV. UNDP's Input and Linkages to the Work of Other Organizations

The Programme will adopt a multi-partner approach that aims at bringing together government (central, regional and local), international development partners and national civil society organizations. Partnerships with academic institutions and the private sector will also play a crucial role in implementation and sustainability of the Programme.

UNDP has contributed US\$300,000 to start the project and provided staffing including a Programme Manager to support the Council of Ministers in implementing the Programme. The Government of Albania (specifically the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Education, and Institute of Diaspora in the Ministry of Affairs) will be the key partner for the Programme.

Other partners include those organizations that have previously worked in the area including

- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Open Society Foundation Albania Fellowship scheme that supported more than 150 fellows who returned to Albania
- "Mjaft!" (Enough!) Foundation
- Alb-Student
- Albanian Student Association Network.

Other partners will include institutions such as Fulbright, Chevening, DAAD, and the Central European University which have sponsored the creation of alumni organizations to increase awareness for returning individuals and provide support in the process of reallocation within the country. Lastly, the private sector businesses and chambers of commerce and business associations will be involved in the Programme and potentially be beneficiaries of it.

V. Results

The main result of the Programme will be to establish an enabling environment for highly skilled Albanian expatriates to contribute to Albania's progress and development. Albania's future success and competitiveness are closely linked with the establishment of an enabling environment within the country for skilled individuals to give their contribution. It is equally important to acknowledge the fact that the process of bringing back qualified Albanians cannot be achieved through short or medium term interventions. The involvement of the Diaspora requires a great vision and continuous effort that go beyond the scope of a single programme. Thus, this Programme represents the initial – yet crucial steps of a longer process.

VI. Estimated Programme Budget (in USD)

Budget Items	Amount
Project set up and public awareness	50,000
Expatriate Knowledge Transfer Initiative	700,000
Internship Scheme	100,000
Academic Scheme	100,000
Support to Diaspora Institute	50,000
Project Total	1,000,000
UNDP Contribution	300,000
DONOR FUNDING SOUGHT	700,000