



Bringing Western Balkan Countries closer to the Innovation Union

-An example of EURAXESS regional collaboration-

WP4 - Reaching out to the Scientific Diaspora

National Report on survey for scientific diaspora and its linkage to home
country

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General Information on Scientific Diaspora

Introduction – History

Emigration of the countries of the South-East Europe is determined to a large extent by common “push factors’ such as troubled economies, political instability, severe unemployment, and lack of respect of human rights, including the rights to work.

All these are especially true for post-communist societies where Albania is included too, which are faced with the challenge of including the educated elite in the transition reforms that must take place to intensify bonds with the European Union.

The fact that different Western European countries continuously suffer from brain drain of science and technology experts stands to prove that it is not simply a matter of guaranteeing good basic conditions, but also a competitive and visionary environment.

Migration of high skilled workers it has accompanied Albania during the transition period and it still goes on. After the fall of the communist regime, the country faced a massive migration wave of the population to Western Europe countries, but also to the United States, Canada and other developed countries.

From a point of view of duration, degree and impact on the development of the country, Albania constitutes the most striking example of brain drain in South East Europe. Indeed, Albania has one of the highest emigration rates in the world: during the 1990s almost 40% of lecturers and researchers left the country.

Among these, 66% hold a PHD title. There are many examples of experts and students who study in Italy, Greece, Canada and Germany, and it is estimated that only 5% of them will return.

Several reasons may explain the massive migration of high skilled workers from Albania. So far, migration of the people has occurred both legally and illegally. The first massive migration of 1990-1993 occurred mainly for economic reasons; while the second surge of 1997-1999 occurred mainly due to political instability of the country.

Besides periods of clear political and order instability, other circumstances served as push factors. Among these, we could mention high unemployment resulting from the dismantling of the socialist model of economy. Attempts to replace it with a market economy resulted in a poor market, with few employment alternatives, which had an immediate effect on skilled workers. To this, we must add the misbalanced financial treatment in the country, if compared to countries of the region or western countries. Furthermore, the perspective of professional growth of many individuals used to be (and in many ways still remains) closely dependant on political links, which exposes it to continuous risks due to changes of the governing party every 4 years.

Some external factors have also played a role in the decision of many skilled persons to immigrate to western countries. Albania is the country in the Western Balkans with the highest percentage of family members living abroad (32%).

Finally, while for many of Albanian high skilled emigrants, migration was a matter of survival, for others it was the answer to the need for a better acknowledgment of their scientific and academic work, especially if we bear in mind the budget cut for research in Albania, as well as

weak private sector which lacks the capacity or willingness to finance scientific research or even employ highly-qualified managers.

The dynamics of scientific emigration from universities and research institutions in Albania marked a decline after year 2000. This was due to the improvement of the economic and social situation in Albania, structural changes in universities and research institutions of the country introduced to accommodate young experts and the increasing difficulty to immigrate to Western Europe. However, each year, around 2000 students leave the country to study abroad. There is still a potential of permanent migration, unless good incentives are provided for them to return to Albania after their studies. After the visa-free regime with EU, having the opportunity to visit countries and specific institutions personally increases the chances of establishing links and planning a future abroad. This could be especially the case of highly educated people, often speakers of several languages who suffer less problems of being integrated in international environments.

Just as the causes, the consequences of this emigration can be summarized in several key areas. Firstly, as a result of emigration of skilled people, especially of academics and researchers, education received in Albania constitutes an investment with no return for the country. Secondly, it also has a negative impact on the accumulation of human capital, producing gaps in the generation of academics able to provide for the education of younger ones. From most perspectives, scientific emigration has negative impact on the sustainable development of the country. It makes the democratization process slower and even more problematic and diminishes the hope for a better future of the country in the public opinion.

Policy background

Main policy priority of the measure is to promote mobility of researchers with an emphasis on returning Albanian qualified professionals living abroad to invest their knowledge and experience in Albanian public administration, education and research institutions, and stimulate private entrepreneurship.

Main Policy Priorities: Recruitment of researchers (e.g. fiscal incentives)

Other Policy Priorities: Recruitment of researchers (e.g. fiscal incentives)

Career development (e.g. long-term contracts for university researchers)

Mobility of researchers (e.g. brain-gain, transferability of rights)

Past national initiatives/policies

➤ Since 2005, the Government of Albania saw the issue of human capital as a high priority. 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 created in the development processes. Following a request of the Government, the UNDP facilitated the preparation of a programme for greater engagement of the Diaspora in Albania's socio-

economic development, partly based on the lessons learned and experience of other countries.

The Brain Gain Program was designed to integrate highly educated Albanians in the public administration and in the political economic development of the country. It was a result of an agreement signed between the government of Albania and UNDP in 2006. The Programme had two main purposes: firstly, to establish a welcoming atmosphere for those who have returned in Albania in order to encourage them to contribute to the social, political and economic development of the country; secondly, to create the legal framework for the full integration of these persons in the public administration. According to the Programme different laws and Council of Ministers decisions were amended.

Brain Gain Programme 2006 – 2012

138 beneficiaries incentives till 2011

Budget > USD 1.45 M (GoA contribution 250.000)

Legal + regulatory adaptations

Private sector engagement limited

Project focus = REVERSE Brain Drain by return of qualified migrants

Project successful, but limited in size and scope

- In the period 1998–2004, the Soros Foundation funded a Fellowship Program, the main aim of which was to attract to Albania those Albanian students who had graduated from universities abroad. This program financed 150 persons, who were employed in the public administration and played an active role in the drafting of policies and implementation of reforms in the sector they were working for a period of 2-3 years. The program awarded these persons 1 - 4 supplementary wages, at an average payment of 350 USD on monthly basis.

In the same spirit, in 2004, the government approved a Strategy for “Encouraging the employment of the students that have studied abroad in public administration”

- The reform on civil service, reflected in the Civil Servant Law was drafted with the intention to create a career system and to provide more possibilities for those who have studied abroad ranging from the recruitment procedures to better financial treatment policies. The 2004 strategy was welcomed as a step in the right direction towards providing an accommodating environment in certain spheres of the society. The strategy equated the seniority criteria applying for a position in public administration with the master degree. However, these innovative changes were applicable only for the low levels of the public administration and the government at that time did not transform these strategic ideas into legal provisions. As made clear by a study of Marita Flagler and Zhani Shapo of 2006, these initiatives looked like an “isolated island” and they were not combined with other interrelated policies.
- Albanian emigrants have also created some networks such as Alb- Shkenca Forum, Albstudent (International Network of the Students’ Associations), the Albanian Forum, etc. One of the biggest networks is Alb-Shkenca Forum with 850 members, most of them scholars from Diaspora.

A leader of this forum states:

“Over the whole three-year period from the creation of Albshkenca, we have tried all the means and ways to enable first of all the establishment of links within the Diaspora of scientists and scholars, actually living and working in the Albanian areas of the Balkans. As a matter of fact, this has been the primary goal of creating Alb-Shkenca. To a certain extent, our efforts have resulted fruitful”(Alb-Shkenca Bulletin, February 2006).

The members of Alb-Shkenca discuss among themselves many of the current problems in their country and many of them express their commitment “in offering a volunteer contribution” for the progress of science and technology in Albania (Alb-Shkenca Bulletin, February 2006).

Survey

Introduction

This survey was carried out during the period June - September 2014 and it aimed to identify the motive of Albanian researchers abroad to leave their country and develop their careers abroad, as well as to identify the opportunities to return or establishment of a collaboration of Albanian scientific community.

The contacts for the survey were collected during the development of the Albanian Diaspora Database. The database contains detailed information of 36 Albanian researchers, of which 29 are located in USA, 4 are located in Canada, 2 are located in Japan and 1 is located in Russia.

There was a low rate of the response, only 14% (5 responses) response the survey.

Findings

Demographics

In this survey have participated in total 5 persons, 3 females (60 %) and 2 males (40 %) and they are located in USA. The age of researchers who response the survey is 45 – 55 years old, as in Figure 1. The majority of the researchers have the position of “Leading Researchers” (R4 in EU classification). Also due to the number of the response the researchers come from 5 different research fields. Majority of the researchers are working at universities or other educational institutions (80%), and only one (20%) in other sectors, medical laboratory. No one of the researchers is member of any Diaspora Association.

Please indicate your age range

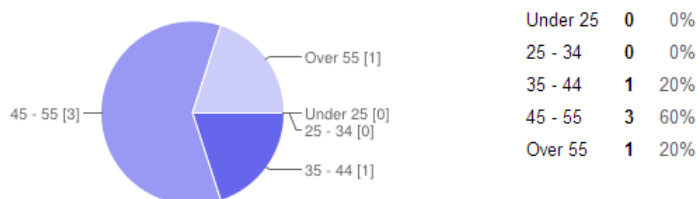


Figure 1: Age range of the researchers

Please state your Research profile

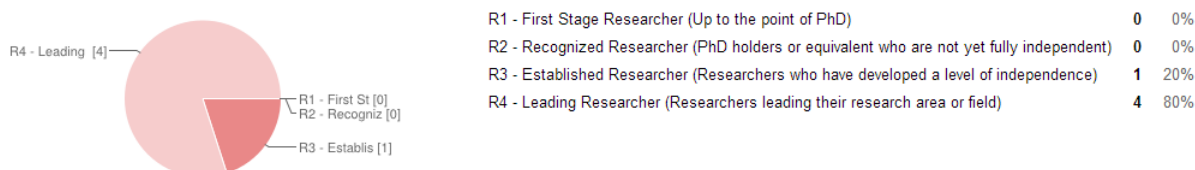


Figure 2: Research profile

Main findings

EURAXESS

No one of the researchers was aware about EURAXESS network.

Push vs Pull reasons of immigration

This part of the survey investigates the factors that lead the researchers to leave Albania and why they selected their actual residence country for immigration. There are four main reasons for leaving Albania: the underdeveloped education and science system, poor income, lack of opportunities for carrying out research and interdisciplinary research career.

The results are indicated on Figure 3.



Figure 3: The reasons of leaving home country (Albania)

Related to the reasons to select the host country the researchers choose the same reasons. The most relevant of these reasons are: working environment respecting researcher's profession, high income, an opportunity to gain international work experience and an improved lifestyle. The Figure 4 indicates the results:

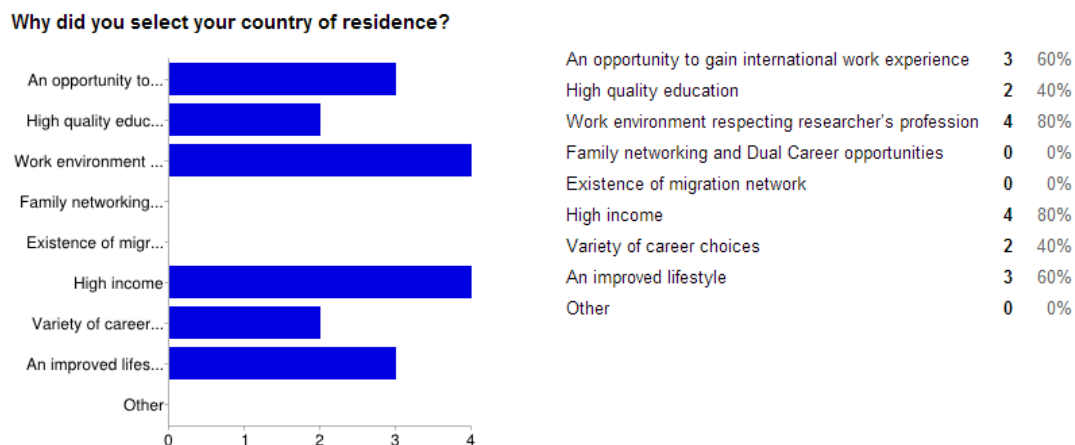


Figure 4: The reasons for selecting the residence country

In Figure 5 are indicated the result of the question of how many years do the researchers expect to stay in their country of residence. 80% of the researchers don't know how many years they will stay in their country of residence and only one of the researcher responses that he will stay permanently.

How many years do you expect to stay in your country of residence?

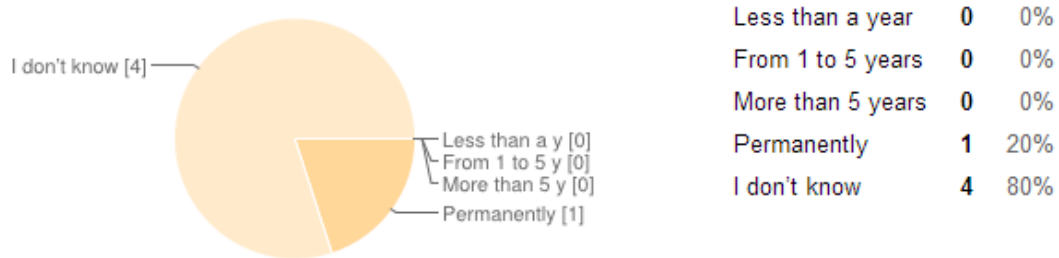


Figure 5: The estimated duration to stay in resident country

The researchers are not decided if they will return in EU or Associated Country. Only one of them indicated that he will return to England or Albania. The percent of the results are indicated in the Figure 6.

Are you planning to return/move to any (other) EU or Associated country?

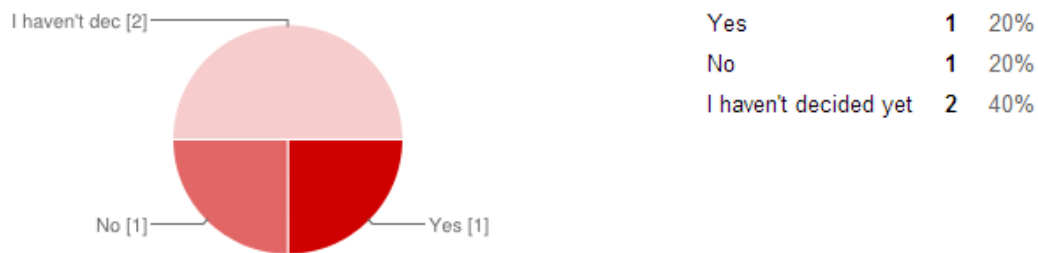


Figure 6: Return to any EU or Associated country

Reasons to leave county of residence

The most important reasons for leaving the country of residence are show in Figure 7. 40% of them will leave their country of residence for a new career opportunity in another country, 60% of the responses have choose other reasons as: none; I am interested in the collaboration and giving my experience in Albania without abandoning personal and professional life that I have created in the USA; more challenges. From the response we understand that they are not interested to leave their residence country but staying there and collaborate with their home country.

What reasons would, probably, make you leave your country of residence

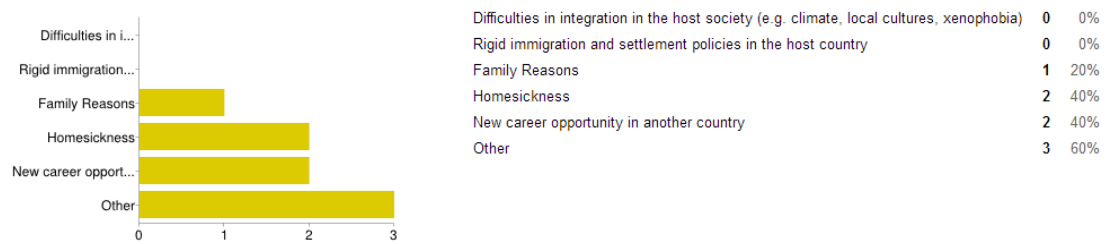


Figure 7: The reasons to leave the county of residence

Repatriation

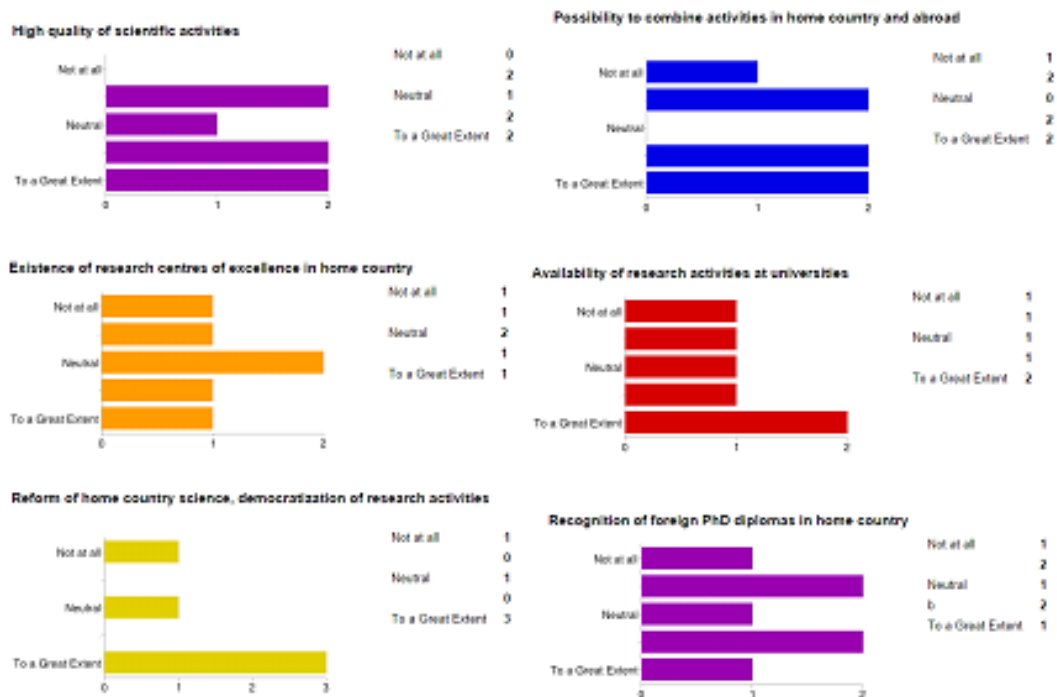
As demonstrated in Figure 8, 80% of the researchers haven't decided yet if they will return in their home country only 20% have decided not to return in their home country.

Are you planning to return to your home country



Figure 8: The repatriation

After this question they are asked how important are a list of reasons to encourage them to return in their home country. The answers are illustrated in Figure 9.



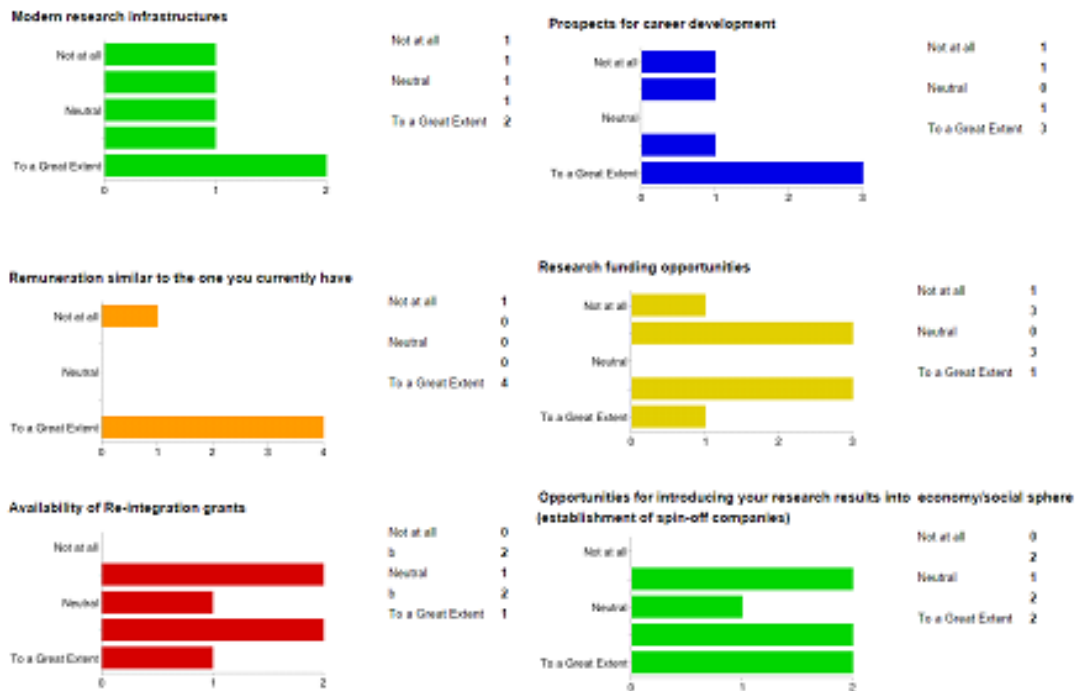


Figure 9: The list of reasons to encourage the researchers to return in their home country

Collaboration with Albanian

80% of the researchers have collaboration with Albanian scientific community, and all of them want to collaborate and maintain it. The most used form of collaboration is joint publications. The results below:

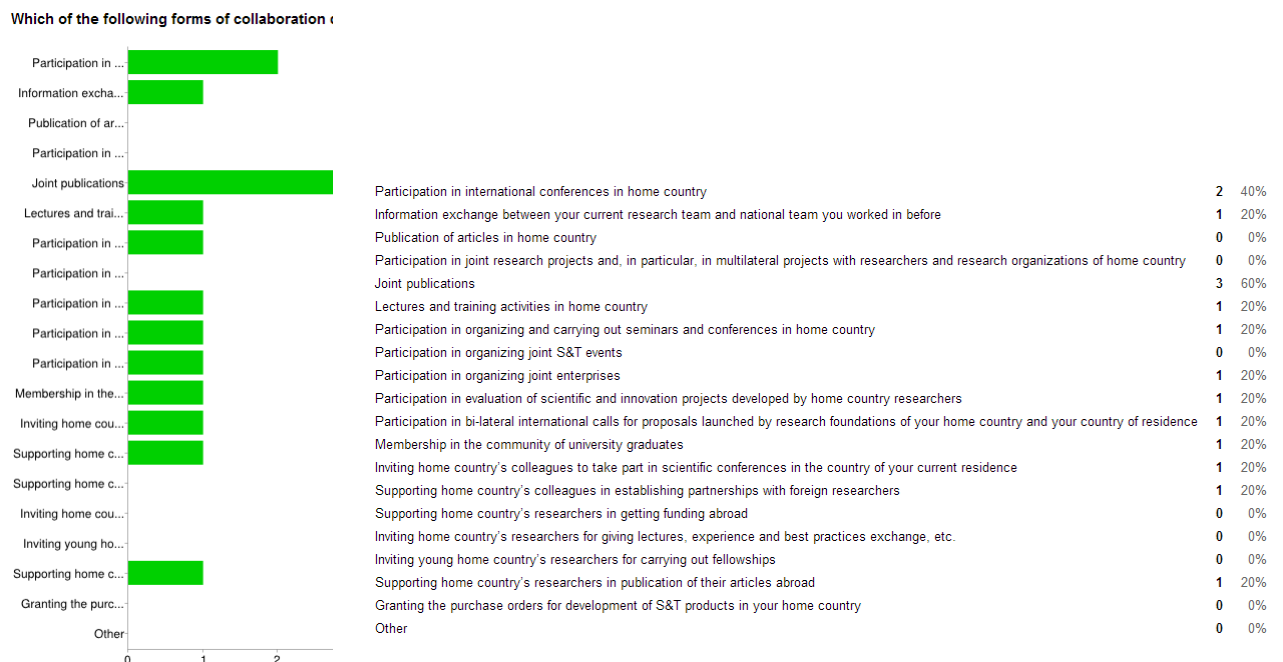
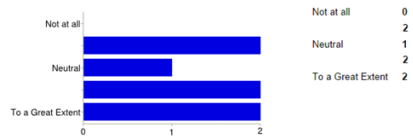


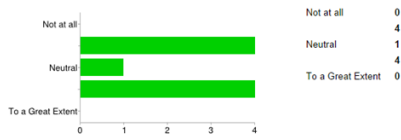
Figure 10: The forms of collaborations with Albanian scientific community

Figure 11 shows the result of how relevant or what impacts have different possible forms of collaboration with Albanian scientific community for them.

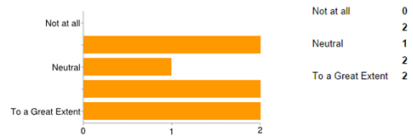
Participation in international conferences in home country



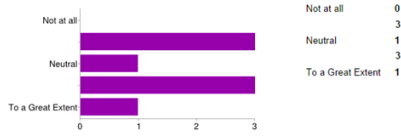
Inviting young home country's researchers for carrying out fellowships



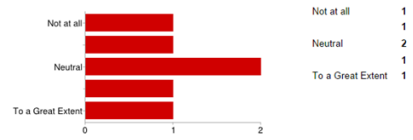
Information exchange between your current research team and national team you worked in before



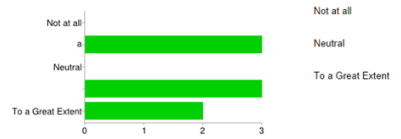
Supporting home country's researchers in publication of their articles abroad



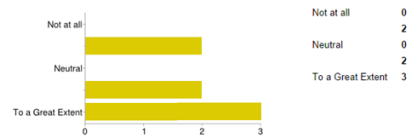
Publication of articles in home country



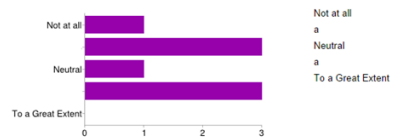
Participation in bi-lateral international calls for proposals launched by research foundations of your home country and your country of residence



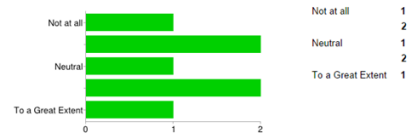
Participation in joint research projects and, in particular, in multilateral projects with researchers and research organizations of home country



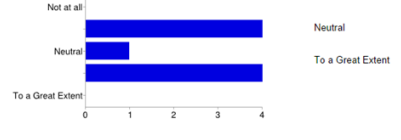
Membership in the community of university graduates



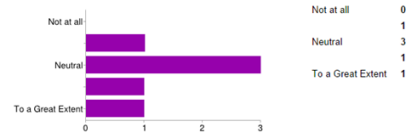
Joint publications



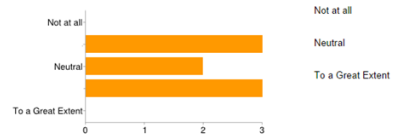
Inviting home country's colleagues to take part in scientific conferences in the country of your current residence



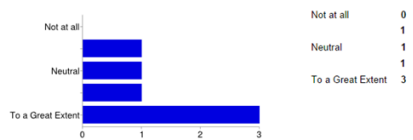
Promoting short-term return to engage in specific projects (e.g TOKTEN, MIDA)



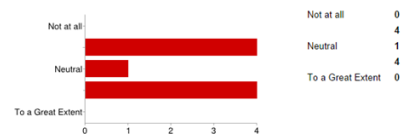
Supporting home country's colleagues in establishing partnerships with foreign researchers



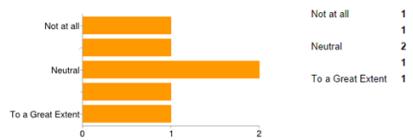
Lectures and training activities in home country



Supporting home country's researchers in getting funding abroad



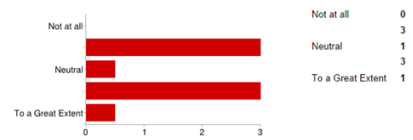
Participation in organizing and carrying out of seminars and conferences in home country



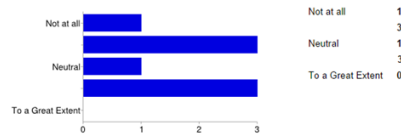
Inviting home country's researchers for giving lectures, experience and best practices exchange, etc.



Participation in organizing of joint S&T events



Public funds supporting emigrants' associations



Participation in evaluation of scientific and innovation projects developed by home country researchers



Figure 11: The impact of different possible forms of collaboration with Albanian scientific community

The researchers were asked how useful are Maria Sklodowska-Curie Action, Erasmus Mundus – Scholarships and Academic Cooperation and INCO programmes in enhancing their collaboration with home country (Albania). 80% of the responders are not aware of all this three programmes.

In the end of the survey they are asked to select the three most important reasons that would prevent them from collaboration with Albanian research community. As you can see in Figure 12 two of most important reasons are cultural issues and bureaucracy.

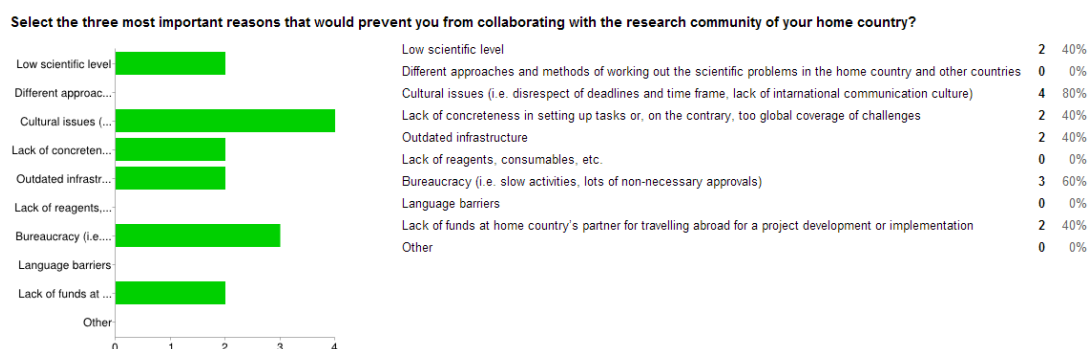


Figure 12: The three most important reasons that would prevent the collaboration with Albanian research community

Conclusions

Based on the survey results we concluded:

- The number of the response is low and not sufficient to obtain relevant datas. Only 14% of the contacts fill the survey.
-
- The main reasons to leave Albania are the underdevelopment education and science system, the lack of opportunities for carrying out research and poor incomes.
- All the researchers are located in USA and they have choose this country for the opportunity that it offer in a working environment that respect their research profession, high income, an international work experience and improved life styles.
- 40% of them will leave their country of residence for a new opportunity in their professional life.
- Most of the researcher are not decided if they will return in their home country, but they want to increase the level of cooperation with Albanian scientific community.
- The main influencing factors of returning are: high quality of scientific activities; possibility to combine activities in home country and abroad; availability of research activities at universities; reform of home country science, democratization of research activities; prospects for career development; remuneration similar to the one you currently have and Stability of political life.

- 80% of the researchers have collaboration with Albanian scientific community in joint publication.
- The most relevant and high impact form of collaboration with Albanian scientific community are: participation in joint research projects and, in particular, in multilateral projects with researchers and research organizations of home country; lectures and training activities in home country; Participation in evaluation of scientific and innovation projects developed by home country researchers and Participation in international conferences in home country.
- The three most important reasons that would prevent them to collaborate with Albanian scientific community are cultural issues, bureaucracy and low scientific and infrastructure level.
- Albanian Diaspora research community is not informed about EU funding programs (MSCA, INCO and ERASMUS) as an useful instrument for strengthening collaboration with Albanian research community.
- None of the researchers have information about EURAXESS and EURAXESS services. So we need to promote it at Albanian Diaspora research community.

Recommendations

The return of Albanian Diaspora researchers will be possible through economic and social development of Albania, an efficacious national research system and removal of bureaucratic barriers.

Based on the survey results some of the forms of cooperation could be:

- Invite Albanian Diaspora researchers working in the universities, laboratories and research institutions to deliver a few weeks' or months' cycle of lectures in Albanian universities or organize lectures by video conference.
- Joint supervision with Albanian researcher community of Masters and PhD students.
- To have a high level of research in Albania invite Albanian Diaspora researchers to act as peer reviewers for research works published in scientific journals.
- To use the Albanian Diaspora researchers skilled expertise in establishment of new academic and research institution.
- Invite the Albanian Diaspora researchers to participate in new research projects and in existing research projects that are implemented in Albania and require international expertise.

It needed to develop and implement a strategy to promote EURAXESS Services to Albanian Diaspora researchers.