

PRESS RELEASE



ENHANCING AND ENGAGING ALBANIAN DIASPORA

**START OF THE PROGRAMME ENGAGING THE DIASPORA
TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ALBANIA
COD - PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE - 2 MARCH 2018, TIRANA.**



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Engaging the Albanian Diaspora

With over 1.4 million Albanians living outside the country, principally in Italy and Greece, but present all over the world, the Albanian diaspora represents a huge and largely untapped opportunity for Albania. The challenge is to create an environment that encourages and supports diaspora engagement by sharing good practices, experiences and talents to develop their home country.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) - the UN Migration Agency - announced today the launch of a programme intended to do just that - enhancing the engagement of Albanian diaspora to the social and economic development of Albania.

The programme is funded by Italian Cooperation, with the political commitment of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and the operational involvement of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). It will be implemented by IOM alongside the State Ministry for Diaspora, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finances and Economy.

The three-year long programme will support Government of Albania to implement a comprehensive approach towards diaspora engagement. It will focus on the 500,000-plus Albanian diaspora in Italy. Speaking at the launch of the programme, the Italian Ambassador to Albania Alberto Cutillo emphasized the role that diasporas can play. "Migrants have know-how and talents. They are a fundamental asset for co-development. Both Albania and Italy, can benefit from their engagement."

His sentiments were echoed by Albanian Minister for Diaspora Pandeli Majko who referred to Albanians living abroad as a precious and an unexplored asset. "This is the reason why this project is so important; it will give us the chance to have a more effective approach towards the immense potential of our diaspora", he said.

Head of AICS Tirana, Nino Merola noted: "This is an innovative project. A great opportunity. It will become a model of social and economic development at all levels. It can have a clear and tangible impact on communities, from sustainable tourism to agri-food sector, to mention just two examples."

Head of IOM Tirana Ms Alma Jani noted that the programme will encourage the diaspora to transfer their know-how into country development. "The skills and knowledge of the diaspora will be mapped and then matched with the respective local needs, country strategies and action plans" she said. "A fellowship scheme targeting diaspora will be designed and implemented during the program".

The programme has been designed towards supporting investments as well as business start-ups by diaspora members. An investment-boosting platform named "Connect Albania" will be created along with a Start-up Fund for second-generation migrants in Italy who wish to start businesses in Albania.

For more information about this programme contact us at iomtiranadiaspora@iom.int