

Prototype of Emigration and Integration in the Balkans: A Case Study on the Albanian Emigrants in Turkey

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Abstract:

The emigration phenomenon is one of the most debated topics in today's world. Europe has been faced with different waves of refugees and emigrants from different countries. One of these countries is Albania. For more than 25 years, the Albanian emigration phenomenon has been part of these debates, which have focused on the integration of Albanian emigrants in host societies. These debates have always been done by representatives of the hosting countries, and rarely by Albanian representatives. However, in recent years, several experts have been focusing on research on the Albanian emigration phenomenon from different perspectives. This article aims to analyse the level of social integration of Albanian emigrants (especially after 1990) in host societies such as Turkey. Based on the statement of this study, Albanian emigrants have a high level of integration in Turkish society. The data for this study was collected quantitatively and analysed using SPSS. The results of Albanian emigrants' social integration appear to be quite balanced, indicating a high level of emigrant integration into Turkish society.

Key words: Emigration in the Balkans, Social integration, Albanian emigrants, Turkish societies.

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Introduction

Each emigration is an oasis of challenges for individuals, the societies they host, and even the societies they leave. The phenomenon of Albanian emigration reflects different aspects of mobilisation practices, such as social, cultural, economic, and political, which often have complex forms and applications. Emigration as a phenomenon also reflects a social problem in Albanian society. The so-called social problem is recognised as a situation that exacerbates the lives of a considerable number of individuals, bringing undesirable consequences for the whole society.¹

The phenomenon of emigration in Albanian society appeared quite different from migration practices in other countries regarding the Albanian hermeneutic form of lifestyle, full control on personal and social life of actors and the communist dictatorial regimes' prohibition of free movement of people in and outside the countries (just a few numbers of people in charge were able to move by permission). The communist regime in Albania which continued from 1945 to 1990 affected the perception and the reflexes of the population regarding their mobility in and outside of the home country. After the fall of the communist regime, people enjoyed the right of movement, freedom of speech and beliefs. This change, besides, distinguishing unique forms, also affected encouraging and appealing factors behind Albanian emigration. Selecting a destination from individuals to emigrate is closely related to "attractive" (pull) and "stimulating" (push) factors that evolve from the actuality of the society where they live. Some of these factors relate to lack of work in the country of origin, good salaries in other countries, facilities of finding work in the country where they migrate, advertising of the country by individuals who have emigrated before, etc. These factors provide new opportunities for individuals and form challenges for host and origin societies. This is because the emigration of individuals forms a "space" (gap) between different age groups, which appears as a lack of work force. This space (absence) forms the social disequilibria of the structure of the society of origin.

By the collapse of the communist regime in the 1990s, despite being an unknown phenomenon until then, Albanian emigration changed

¹ Merita Xhumari (VASO), *Procesi dhe Institucionet e Politikës Sociale* (Tiranë: Botimet Pegi, 2014), 78-79.

drastically. Inciting or appealing (pull and push) factors of this phenomenon cannot be analysed as being the same as the phenomenon of emigration in other societies. This is because the social, economic, political conditions of Albania have been very different from other countries (even from communist countries in the Balkans or in the other parts of the world).

Hermetical unmatched political regime used very strict closed border policies that emigration was totally forbidden. After the fall of the communist regime, many political changes resulted in new social circumstances that Albanian society had not faced before. The Albanians in front of these changes were totally alienated and unprepared. As for the years 1993-1996, Albanians regarded emigration as an opportunity to escape from the economic crisis. Albanian emigration was the driving force behind another economic crisis caused by pyramid schemes. From the year 2000 to the present day, the phenomenon of Albanian emigration has taken different forms due to the stimulating factors, as well as the great changes that our society has experienced and still experiences. The hosting countries of these Albanian emigration waves were mostly different European countries such as Greece and Italy. In this study, another target group is going to be analysed, namely Albanian emigrants in Turkey. They are very few in number (compared to the Albanian emigrants in Greece, Italy or other European countries), but they have a different course of social integration. Albanian emigrants from Albania and Kosovo represent the smallest number of emigrants in Turkey.²

The research statement of this article is to figure out the high level of Albanian emigrants' integration in Turkish society. The object of this investigation are those Albanians who emigrated between 1990 (by the fall of communist regime) and 2015. Our research shows that the main factor for Albanian migrants to decide to migrate to Turkey is the facilities for getting a residence permit. Our study is based on 500 Albanian emigrants in Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir (until 2015). The research deals with the Albanian emigration as a unique case including the aspect of social integration level (elaborated in our earlier publication).³ In the paper, first the terminology of emigration and social integration as a process will be discussed, and then an analysis of Albanian emigration to Turkey between social integration and segregation will be given.

² TÜİK, *Genel Nüfus Sayımı 2005: Göç İstatistikleri* (Ankara: TÜİK, 2009), 45

³ Matilda Likaj, *Emigration and Social Integration* (Albania: Botimet Luis Print, 2018).

Emigration and Social Integration

Over the last decades, discussions about emigrants' integration have enabled the formation of a significant number of different theoretical perspectives. These perspectives form a connection between sequencing, participation in social life and adaptation of emigrants to the host society. Relatively from various perspectives, a significant number of concepts about integration have emerged in the literature of social sciences. Generally, these concepts are oriented to inclusion, assimilation, accommodation, acculturation, adaptation, and integration.

As the concepts, "integration" and "social integration" are much debated in social sciences. In sociology of education both concepts contain a very broad meaning and are used differently according to social situations. The concept of "integration" is used in different context, regarding the situations.⁴

The concept is used for social research in migration field to refer to the degree of involvement of migrants, and their families, in the social, cultural political and economic life of the host country. In everyday language sometimes the word 'integration' is confused by assimilation. But integration does not mean assimilation. Nor does it imply that integration requires adjustment only on the side of migrants. The term "integration" and not "assimilation" emphasizes respect for and incorporation of differences and the need for mutual adaptation. "Integration" also reflects an appreciation of diversity instead of the homogeneity that "assimilation" has come to connote.⁵ Despite some reservations about the word integration, due to its wide international use, the debate is about the role of quality services in ensuring both social inclusion and successful migration management. From one point of view, integration as a term, in everyday meaning is variable and highly indeterminate. It is important to stress that its meaning differ according to the pervasiveness in policy in public discourse and meanings that are given from research scholars.

⁴ Joao Sardinha, *Immigrant Associations, Integration and Identity, Angolan, Brazilian and Eastern European Communities in Portugal* (Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 39.

⁵ M. Fix, W. Zimmerman & J. Passel, *The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2001), 91-92.

At the same time, integration does not mean that emigrants must sever ties to their countries of birth nor abandon their cultures, traditions, values, and identities. For most newcomers, the initial focus upon arrival will be on adoption to the host society social life. Sometimes, it is facing the social and economic realities formidable barriers to integration of many migrants. According to E. Durkheim this is called as the process of integration. Process of integration of migrant is related with social solidarity and social cohesion of hosted societies. Hence, integration is a process that takes time and it is not always successful for both migrants and host societies. But does this occur same to the migrant to the European societies? Here is important to focus on the Albanian migrants in Greece, where most of them had to change even their Muslim names into Orthodox ones.

Integration may be defined as a two-way process where new migrants and members of the host society have responsibility for wellbeing and social cohesion of society. These proceeds require change on both migrants and receiving community, because integration is a dynamic giving and taking process that takes place over time. In responding to migrants' needs, host societies are unlikely to be able to provide the ideal level of support, constrained by different factors. These factors can be listed as limited economical resources, community need, integration policies, education policies, willing to be integrated into the hosted societies etc. The migrants have to deal with a set of existing values and norms, must accept learning a different language, cultural values, traditions and norms, and must accept people with different cultural and ethnic background. On the other side, members of host countries need to accept diversity of migrants for helping social solidarity and cohesion of society. Because the migrant must bear the integration to the society, and this will help social solidarity of host society. The process of migrants' integration depends on the shift in the host societies' attitudes towards them. Consequently, to this situation it transforms the social cohesion by creating a new one from both newcomers and receivers. Migration integration process is not simple and most of the time is accompanied with different social anomies and identity problems. Therefore, migrant integration is a complex concept that is fundamentally tied with debates about the migrants' role in the sender and host societies.

The process of emigrants' integration shows its impact on many social structures in a society. Each of the structures is affected by forms of integration, confronted with problems of culture, language, identity, customs, attitudes, behaviour, etc. These are considered "continuity of

integration" because they take a long time during the migration process. Often, the definitions of "social integration" of emigrants are based on the idea of "inclusion of individuals in a social system, the formation of relations between emigrants and domestic social actors, and the way of behaving in the host society". Social integration is seen as a process that, if successful, enables emigrants to become a normal part of society. Completion of this process implies the equal inclusion of emigrants and locals in the host country's economic, political, social, and cultural fields.⁶

However, emigrants are in the process of enduring change throughout the integration process. This is because they become active social actors in the social and cultural life of the host society. Emigrants, as part of this process, reflect the changes in behaviour and thinking at the end. Particularly in some of the sociological studies focused on integrating and empowering emigrants, new emigrants respond to or exhibit attitudes towards the "mentality" of the social environment and the new life they begin. Sometimes they form attitudes with negative notions about the social life of the country of origin. It is important to note that many of the stimulating and appealing factors reflect these attitudes. Various sociological studies have focused on analysing immigrant attitudes in the host country and their countries of origin during the integration process. Exactly focusing on this point, it is very important to express that there is a huge "gap" in the integration of Albanian emigrants in Turkey and Greece. By the "gap" it meant the extreme line of integration of Albanians in Greece and the growing line of integration of Albanians in Turkey (see the following explanation).

Recently theories of emigration focus on the development of the process of integration. This process sometimes is known as post emigration situation in the host society. But in sociological terminology, this process is acknowledged as integration. The term "integration" is used by social research in migration studies for referring the degree of involvement of migrants in host society as the other social actors⁷. The term "integration" is to emphasize respect for and incorporation of differences and the need for mutual adaptation. According to Fix and Passel "integration" reflects

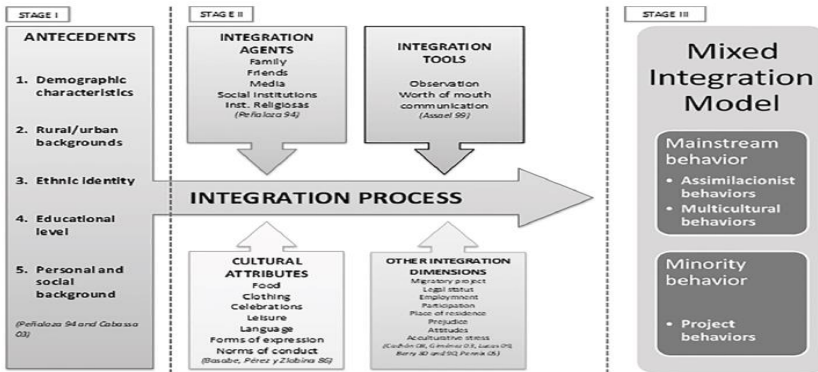
⁶ Vladimir Ganta, "Measuring the Integration of Labour Migrants Abroad: The Case of Moldova," in *CARIM-East Research Report* (Moldova: Robert Schuman Center for Advance studies and European University Institute, 2013), 11.

⁷ Matilda Likaj, "Education as an Important Factor on Migrants Integration: Albanian Migration Case," *Beder Journal of Education Science*, no. 7 (2014), 43.

an appreciation of diversity instead of the homogeneity that “assimilation” has come to connote⁸.

As Ares emphasizes, emigration as a process takes time and results in a mixed integration model influenced by different stages (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: MIM (Mixed Integration Model)⁹



The first stage is based on the emigrants’ personal characteristics, termed "antecedents," that are primary factors influencing the integration process. The antecedents listed by Ares focus on the demographic, rural/urban backgrounds of emigrants, ethnic identity, education level, and personal and social background. These factors are the first initiators of the integration process. During the process, integration agents (family, friends, media, social institutions, etc.), integration tools (such as observation, word-of-mouth communication, etc.), cultural attributes (food, clothing, celebrations, leisure, language, forms of expression, norms of conduct, etc.), and other integration dimensions (migratory projects, legal status, employment, participation, place of residency, attitudes, prejudices, etc.) influence directly and indirectly the process of integration of emigrants. All these factors oriented the emigrants toward a model of emigration, termed the mixed integration model (MIM). MIM measures the behaviour of emigrants to identify if the process of integration includes mainstream behaviour or is more behavior-oriented for minorities. This new approach to integration, such as MIM, is very useful to understand the

⁸ M. Fix, W. Zimmerman, & J. Passel, *The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2001), 89.

⁹ A. Ares, & M. Fernandez, “Toward a Mixed Integration Model Based on Migrants’ Self-perception,” *Studi Emigrazione*, LV, no. 212 (2018), 23.

emigrants' recent movements, but it is uneasy to explain the integration of emigrants' behaviours (especially for Albanian emigrants, based on Albanian historical background) several years before. In the following pages of this article, the integration of Albanian emigrants in Turkey will be analysed.

Albanian Emigration to Turkey: Integration or Regression

Following the fall of the communist regime in the 1990s, Albanians fled in various directions, with Turkey being one of them. During this period, the number of Albanian emigrants in Turkish society increased. The emigration of Albanians to Turkey has come about as a result of incentive factors such as the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions of Albania, as well as political asylum. There are a wide range of factors attracting Albanians to emigrate to Turkey. It is very important to point out that between Albania and Turkey, visa-free movement of people did not exist until 2003. In the following chapter, the reasons for choosing Turkey as a host country will be discussed. Although in Turkish society there is a significant number of Albanian emigrants, both before and after the 1990s, there are still no proper studies of this phenomenon.

Every society that accepts emigrants and enables the formation of the emigration phenomenon begins to formulate political strategies to preserve the stability of society and provide employment opportunities in order to accommodate the socio-cultural structure of emigrants themselves. Emigrants have been influenced and affected the social and cultural structure of the Turkish society into which they have emigrated. Therefore, a common social capital has been formed that has enabled emigrants to adopt the everyday practises of locals, and locals have formed a relationship (one of giving and taking) with emigrants.¹⁰ This practice easily facilitates the integration of emigrants into Turkish society.

Emigrants, who work legally in Turkey, have some problems with the recognition of social security rights in their country of origin, which was a part of the former eastern bloc of communist states like Romania, Albania, Poland, and the former Soviet republics. "Emigrants from these countries prefer to be employed illegally to earn higher incomes. Usually, migrants prefer to work in the fields of textiles, construction, tourism, cleaning, or various services in the family, etc. The salaries that emigrant workers receive are higher than salaries paid legally but are still low for

¹⁰ Suat Kolukırık, "Bulgaristan'dan Göç Eden Türk Göçmenlerin Dayanışma ve Örgütlenme Biçimleri: İzmir Örneği," *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, vol. 30, no: 1 (2006): 7.

coping with a normal lifestyle".¹¹ As a follow-up to this study, it appears that Albanian immigrants are provided with a residence permit and a work permit. The work they do is legal. Unlike Keser's findings, this study shows that Albanian emigrants are legally employed and can work in the various aforementioned professions.

Albanian emigration to Turkish society has come about because of various incentive factors, such as the departure from Albania's weak political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Immigration acceptance policies have been attractive factors in Albanian emigration to Turkish society. Turkey, through its diversity acceptance policies, has enabled Albanian emigrants to take advantage of political asylum and provide regular employment and residence documentation. According to the findings of this study, Albanian migrants chose to migrate to this country because of the benefits associated with residency documentation. Regarding these research findings (done due to 2015's 500 Albanian emigrants in Turkey, located in Istanbul, Bursa, and Izmir, in the following pages, you will find some data interpretation based on a reflection on the analysis of this topic).

There are also some other attractive factors for Albanian emigrants in Turkish society. Recognition or follow-up with relatives or acquaintances (103 Albanian emigrants, or 23.1%) have been appealing factors in Albanian emigration to Turkish society. The economic development of Turkey (80 Albanian emigrants, or 17.9%) was another motivating factor to leave Albania but also an incentive to emigrate to Turkey. Other appealing factors for migration to this country include Albania's close proximity and cultural similarities with Turkey (22 Albanian emigrants, or 4.9%). One of the most important incentives and appealing factors to emigrate is the ease of obtaining residence and work documents (17 Albanian emigrants, or 3.8%).

The analysis of the reasons for the continuity of the immigration stay of Albanians is another important issue of this study. Albanian emigrants migrated and continue to migrate to Turkish society due to the provision of regular residence documentation (420 Albanian emigrants, or 94.2%, are currently provided with documents or residence permits). It is thus

¹¹ Hakan Keser, "Yabancıların Çalışma İzinleri Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı Işığında Türkiye'de Yabancıların Çalışma Hakkı ve Yabancı Kaçak İşçilik," *Kamu-İş*, vol. 7 (2003), 42.

appreciated that Albanian emigrants in Turkish society, unlike Albanian emigrants in other countries, have access to documentation equipment.

The age group sample in this study is from 19 years of age to over 60. The age group 51-60 has the largest number of emigrants 114 or 25.6% of all Albanian emigrants surveyed. While the age group over 60 is the lowest number of emigrants, which is 15 or 3.4% of all emigrants surveyed. Most of these emigrants left Albania in 1991 (53 Albanian emigrants or 11.9%), in 1990 (52 Albanian emigrants or 11.7%) as well as in 1998 (43 Albanian emigrants or 4%). These are the time periods that have posed extreme problems in economy, politics, but also in socio-cultural conditions of Albania. Albanian migrants in Turkish society have emigrated from Albania's various cities or areas. The largest number of Albanian emigrants in Turkish society has their origins in Berat and its surroundings area.

In this study, the largest number of Albanian emigrants (358, or 80.3%) who have migrated to Turkish society are married and have a family. The largest number of Albanian emigrants in Turkish society (220 Albanian emigrants, or 49.3%) have a "high school" education degree. While the largest number of Albanian emigrants in Turkish society have a secondary education level, they do not have specific professions (177 Albanian emigrants, or 39.7%). Some of the professions that Albanian emigrants have in Turkish society are: entrepreneurs, workers (agriculture, livestock, technician, electrician, toaster, mechanic, welder, miner, shoemaker, plumber), engineer (construction, computer), (economist, lawyer, attorney, veterinarian, journalist, architect, physician, pharmacist, lecturer, etc.), as well as a lawyer, pharmacist, chemist, teachers (psychology, physical education, elementary, kindergarten, etc.), diplomats, military (naval, terrestrial officer), Albanian migrants are dynamic on the labour market in Turkish society. Employment or self-employment in this country is among the main factors behind the continuity of their immigration (161 Albanian emigrants, or 36.1%). 121 Albanian emigrants, or 27.1%, have been assessed as the main factors in the continuity of the future immigration of the family and children. Albanian emigrants in Turkish society, as the main reason for the continuity of their emigration, assess the work and future of families. With the formation of a correlation between the continuity of emigration and the desire to return to live forever in Albania, it is noticed that the majority of Albanian emigrants (315, or 70.6%) in Turkish society do not think to return forever to Albania. The main reasons that they do not think to return forever to Albania are that they feel good in Turkish society; they have jobs or earn a

high income in this society, whereas in Albania they have no safe future for their family and children and are not optimistic about the future of Albania.

Briefly, the profile of Albanian emigrants in Turkish society presents different age groups, different occupations, different reasons for emigration, and different reasons for staying in emigration. Interestingly, most of these emigrants feel good in Turkish society but at the same time they are closely related to the culture of Albania. Through the data of this study, apart from analysing the phenomenon of emigration, we have also studied the phenomenon of social integration and the social capital of Albanian emigrants in Turkish society. Through the study data, some features of the two phenomena are distinguished. These features are the main indicators of the unity of the Albanian emigration phenomenon in Turkish society from 1990 to 2015.

Discussion about the Social Integration of Albanian Emigrants in Turkish Society

Social integration is a very necessary element during the migratory experiences of individuals. Through the study of social integration, it was possible to measure the level of adaptation of Albanian emigrants to Turkish society. In the final part of this study, a discussion on the level of adaptation of Albanian emigrants to the social life of Turkish society as well as the social problems with which they continue to face is given.

The presentation of the discussions on the conclusion of the social integration of Albanian emigrants in Turkish society is grouped in the problems that Albanian migrants have faced and continue to face while staying in Turkish society: the importance they give to socio-cultural elements to adapt to Turkish way of life, how they feel in Turkish society, the rights they enjoy in Turkish society, and their acceptance by Turkish social actors.

Current Status of Albanian Emigrant Integration in Turkish Society

Albanians who have emigrated to Turkey since 1990 have faced various problems during the migration process and adapting to social life in Turkish society. Some of these problems were finding suitable accommodation, employment problems, a change in the culture (customs and traditions), a change in the language, and a change in the way of life. As a conclusion of this study, less than half of Albanian emigrants in

Turkish society at the beginning of their emigration have faced housing problems (175 Albanian emigrants, or 39.2%) and employment problems. The aforementioned problems did not prevent Albanian emigrants from adapting to Turkish society. This is distinguished from the current housing they have (and feel comfortable with the current housing) and the high number of emigrants who are employed or self-employed in Turkish society.

As far as social integration is concerned, language is a very important factor because it enables migrants to communicate easily in terms of the thinking, behaviour, mentality, values, traditions, lifestyle, etc. of the host society's social actors. Despite the cultural differences that Albanian and Turkish society have, less than a third of Albanian emigrants (140 Albanian emigrants, or 31.4%) have faced problems caused by cultural changes (customs and traditions) when emigrating for the first time. These problems occur when individuals do not know the language of the country from which they migrated. In Albanian society during communism, Albanians were forbidden to learn foreign languages (except for foreign languages that were included in the curriculum). The fact that Albanians did not know Turkish when they first immigrated to this country did not affect their understanding of the way of life, but it did affect their ability to cope with the changes in culture. A part of the Albanian emigrants in Turkish society stated that they have faced problems that have arisen from changing the way of life in this society. The lack of the Turkish language has affected Albanian emigrants who faced difficulties adapting to this society when they first migrated.

Currently, a small number of Albanian emigrants still face various problems in Turkish society. These problems pose difficulties in integrating the social life of this society. Some of the difficulties that Albanian emigrants continue to face are the same as those they faced when they first migrated. It is therefore important to show that the level of dealing with these problems is very low. As an example, only 27 Albanian emigrants, or 6.1%, and 39 Albanian emigrants, or 6.7%, are facing little or very little problems while getting residence documents.

Another issue that Albanian emigrants (108 of them, or 24.2%) are currently facing is employment. Problems that Albanian emigrants currently face with employment may be due to different reasons, such as the level of education, migrants' expectations, satisfaction with work, etc. Low-level representation of this problem suggests the difficulties of social integration or the adaptation of Albanian emigrants to Turkish society. The

correlation formed between these factors is independent. Because of these problems, it is difficult to adapt Albanian emigrants to Turkish society, but according to the data of this study, it is noticed that Albanian emigrants feel good in this society and have no difficulties adapting to the culture (traditions and customs) of Turkish society.

An important element of the social integration of Albanian emigrants is their way of life and their adaptation to the way of life in Turkish society. According to the findings of this study, only 91 of the 215 Albanian emigrants, or 20.4%, are having difficulty adjusting to their new lifestyle. The indicator represents the current state of Albanian migrants who have adapted to the culture and way of life in Turkish society. In the end, after many years of emigration to Turkish society, Albanian emigrants continue to face very few problems in employment, and do not face any problems regarding the culture (customs, traditions, language, lifestyle, etc.) in Turkish society. Employment problems do not affect the social integration of Albanians into the Turkish society where they have emigrated.

Conclusion

Unlike many Western European countries, Turkey is a country that is still not facing the problem of an ageing population. Because of the large number of young people, there is a high birth rate. Based on this fact, it is far too normal that emigration policies in this country are not designed to attract migrants from different countries. Turkish politics favour emigrants who are entrepreneurs or highly skilled personnel.

The Albanian emigration of the early 1990s attracted individuals of all professions. This situation is also distinguished by the Albanians emigrating to Turkish society, where most of them had different professions such as technician, electrician, mechanic, welder, miner, shoemaker, plumber, etc. It has been observed that the profile of Albanians who emigrated to Turkey has changed since the year 2000. These retired Albanians belong to a high level of professionalism.

According to the findings of this study, Albanians who migrated after the year 2000 work as economists, lawyers, veterinarians, journalists, architects, physicians, pharmacists, pedagogues, engineers, teachers, etc.. The contribution of the Albanian emigrants to Turkish society is not only in the labour market and in the economic prospect but also in the exchange of cultural elements between Turkish and Albanian societies.

During the analysis of the social integration of Albanian emigrants into Turkish society it was noticed that the emigration model in this society is not similar to the emigration patterns of Albanians in other societies, such as Greek, Italian, or other Western countries where Albanians have emigrated. This is evident in their way of life, which Albanian migrants have integrated between Albanian and Turkish culture, as well as in the sense of being good in Turkish society, social actors in Turkey, social life, social settings, neighbourhoods, at work, at school, in religious cults, etc.

Albanian emigrants in Turkish society are not confronted with the phenomena of xenophobia, racial discrimination, or social exclusion. They do not experience assimilation pressure to comply with the obligations in this society. The data from this study show that Albanian migrants claim to feel happy and fortunate to have migrated to this country.

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