FROM ALBANIA TO ITALY

Formation and basic features of a binational migration system

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1. Albanian emigration

1.1 Migratory stages

Albania has been experiencing emigration throughout all its history and it is currently one of the countries in the world with the highest migratory rate. Among the reasons of such a deeply rooted emigration propensity are different political events, economic and social issues, regional conflicts and wars that accompanied the country during its history.

The first massive migratory wave was during the 15-18th centuries as a result of the Ottoman occupation of the country. In 1468 Skanderbeg - the hero of the Albanian resistance against the Ottoman invasion - died and, after a few years, the Turks gained full control of the country. It was calculated that between 1468 and 1506 about 200,000 Albanians (1/4 of total population) emigrated mainly to Dalmatia and Italy. Around 100,000 migrants from the central and Southern Albanian regions arrived in the South of Italy and in particular in Sicily and Calabria. Descendents of this group are still present in the South regions of Italy and are known with the name of Arberesh. ¹

Emigration continued during the 19th and the 20th century principally due to the lack of economic and social development. In the first decades of the 20th century it reached a peak. The most affected area was the south of the country, in particular the coastal region, some of the main cities such as Gjirokastra, Korca, Kolonia, Skrapari, Vlora, Dürres, and the mountainous areas. A large part of the flows were directed to other European countries (Greece, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria) but the longer routes towards North Africa, USA, South America and Australia became increasingly important.

From 1912 to 1923 entire families left their country escaping a condition of misery made worse by the consequences of the First World War. Agriculture and industry were destroyed and the lack of modern technology prevented an adequate exploitation of natural resources. Between 1921 and 1923 about 21.000 people left the country².

Between 1923 and 1944 emigration continued at a fast pace: about 150,000 people (13% of the entire population in 1945) left their country³. At this stage political insecurity, besides economic backwardness, played an important role. In 1924 riots occurred in Vlore, after four years of political instability, during which the Democratic Party seized power. During the same year the former king Zogu, supported by the Yugoslavian gentry, stepped back in power and conserved it until 1939, when Vittorio Emanuele III, King of Italy, was proclaimed also King of Albania. In 1935 Fier uprising constituted another tragic moment at the origin of massive emigration.

From 1940 to 1945 the II World War and the arrival of the communist dictatorship pushed about 19.000 people out of the country borders. Many of these emigrants were political opponents to the new regime⁴.

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¹ Akademia e Shkencave te RSH, Historia e popullit Shqqiptar, Tirana, Shtepia botuese e librit shkollor, 1994 in K. Barjaba, *L'Emigrazione albanese: spazi, tempi e cause*. Studi Emigrazione XXIX, 107, 1992, p.523.

² UNDP, Albanian Human Development, Report 2000, p.35.

³ UNDP, 2000, p.35.

⁴ UNDP, 2000, p.35.

After the rise of Enver Hoxha a policy of increasing social and economic isolation was pursued. Emigration was forbidden and the families of those who emigrated illegally suffered dire consequences. In this period the only distinct migratory flow concerned Albanians living in different areas of Yugoslavia; it started already from the 1960s and was directed mainly towards Germany and Switzerland.

When communism fell emigration resorted. By the end of 1990, in anticipation of radical political change, Albanians rebelled against the restrictive legislation on expatriation imposed by the regime. Thousands people applied to the foreign embassies in Tirana in order to leave and a large share of the expatriates received political asylum in Western Europe countries. Before March 1991, around 25,000 had abandoned their country⁵.

This is the premise of a massive migratory process that in ten years affected 500,000-600,000 persons (about 15% of the population, 40 % of which in the age of 19-40) and nearly each family⁶.

It is possible to point out four distinct waves that characterize the migratory out-flow during the transition period.

1991-1992

The first migratory wave took place during the spring 1991 in a situation of political instability, social unrest and economic poverty. Unemployment affected 40% of the labour force, wages were around 20\$ a month, inflation increased at a rate 260% a month and the effects of industrial and agricultural economic breakdown were made worst by a three years drought⁷. At this stage migration went out of control and reached a strong intensity in a short time. It was calculated that from March 1991 to October 1992 about 300,000 people left their country⁸.

Since the beginning, Italy and Greece stood out as privileged destinations, but the areas of origin for emigration to either countries were different: whereas emigration towards Italy came mostly from the central region of the country, emigration towards Greece had its main source in the Southern border region, inhabited by a significant minority of Orthodox Greeks.

In March 1991 Italy accepted a first group of 23,000 Albanian migrants; in August another group of 20,000 people was treated in the opposite way and repatriated without exceptions⁹. In the same period around 30,000 migrants arrived to Greece¹⁰.

The uncontrolled character of migration and the unpreparedness of Italian authorities to receive and host such a huge exodus generated political tensions between Italy and Albania. Analogue difficulties rose in the relations between Albania and Greece.

Late 1992-1996

This period was characterised by outward social–economic progress and political stabilisation. From 1993 to 1996 GDP grew of 9% per year 11. The system of farming changed from collectivism to smallholdings and increased its output. By 1995 industrial output and services were expanded as well. Remittances, which between 1993 and 1995 amounted approximately to 25% of GDP, enhanced people living standards. Under the guide of the IMF and the WB Albania was becoming a model in the post–communist transition.

⁶ Council of the European Union, High Level working group on Asylum and Migration, *Draft action plan for Albania* and the neighboring region, June 2000, p.12.

⁵ UNDP, 2000, p.36.

⁷ M. Vickers, J. Pettifer, *Albania*. *Dall'anarchia a un'identità balcanica*, Asterios Editore, 1997, p.101.

⁸ Van der Pol, *Analysis of Migrations*, Raport Studimi, Tiranë 1992 in Ilir Gedeshi, *Role of Remittances from Albanian Migrants and Their Influence in the Country's Economy*, p. 11.

⁹ F. Pastore, Conflicts and migration. A case study on Albania, CeSPI Occasional Papers, March 1998, p. 12.

¹⁰ ICMPD, Report from the evaluation mission to Albania 2-5 July 2000, undertaken in the framework of the Budapest process, to examine the Albanian-Italian co-operation to stem illegal migration, 2000, p. 4.

¹¹ Economist Intelligence Unit, Country profile 2001, p. 22.

This process, joined to the strengthening of border controls by some of the most important countries of destination, affected migratory rates that showed a relative decrease. At the end of 1996, according to UNDP¹² estimates, the Albanians citizens steadily residing abroad were about 350,000. With reference to the end of 1993, the rise is relatively moderate (around 50,000 units).

At this stage migratory outflows present a "controlled" and "rational" feature. For a vast majority of the Albanian population the attitude towards migration became more mature and pragmatic. Whereas, in the first stage, emigration was often perceived as a "leap in the dark", without concrete return prospects, in this phase such choice was submitted to stricter requirements and conceived more as a specifically targeted experience. Between 1993 and 1996, a large number of Albanians applied and got permits for short stays (aimed for example at seasonal works, visiting relatives, doing some kind of business) and for family regroupments. In Italy, for example, by 1995 the Albanians became the second largest foreign national group for family regroupments, with a total of 2,600 applications and 1,562 permits finally granted 13.

The process of rationalization concerned also illegal migration. Whereas the unauthorized migratory flows of 1991-1992 were the result of extraordinary individual or collective initiatives, in the following years "professional" organizations offering transport services for clandestine migration were set up. The formation of such specialised criminal organization gave centrality to Vlore on Dürres as the main starting point of migratory movements. Moreover, clandestine migration became an economic cost itself and could regard only a more restricted group of people.

December 1996-April 1997

The third wave was again dramatic and took place at the beginning of 1997 as a consequence of the pyramid schemes breakdown. The schemes, which were unregulated, had emerged as alternatives to the underdeveloped banking sector. They grew rapidly in 1996 by offering 15-100% interest on three months deposits¹⁴. Many people invested all their savings in schemes and also sold their homes to raise further cash to invest. When the system collapsed, riots and general unrest exploded. The consequences of the crisis affected at least one third of Albanian population. Migratory outflows were renewed, but this time they had a feature of "constraint" and it is possible to speak of "forced migration". Between December 1996 and April 1997 some 30.000 migrants landed in Italy and some 40.000 in Greece, but the majority of them were repatriated¹⁵.

This stage can be further subdivided into two different phases: a) during the first half of March 1997, the departures concerned mostly middle-class families from Vlore and the surrounding area, who organised the trip by themselves, on crafts bought on the occasion, in order to escape violence; b) during the second half of March the flow gradually changed: urban middle-class was replaced by an atomised mass of individuals, most of them youth coming from rural areas or having recently moved to town. A forceful control on large-scale movements was established by criminal organizations that turned the emergency situation into a highly profitable business.

However, at this stage the policy of containment led by the international Community played a central role in reducing the spontaneous out-flows from Albania. In particular the presence of a multinational protection force led by Italy, allowed to patrol both international and Albanian territorial waters, and by the end of March, new flows were strongly restrained. In the middle of 1997, when the worst days of the crisis were over, 16,798 Albanian citizens had entered Italy¹⁶.

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¹² UNDP, Albanian Human Development Report 1996 p. 3.

¹³ F. Pastore, 1998, p. 13.

¹⁴ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Albania Country Profile*, 2001, p. 7.

¹⁵ Council of the European Union, June 2000, p. 13.

¹⁶Estimate by the Italian Ministry of Interior, in F.Pastore 1998, p.13.

1998-2002

Following the civil and economic collapse of 1997, Fatos Nano's government implemented a programme of stabilisation and reform, again under the tutelage of the multilateral agencies. Economy recorded a fair recovery, with GDP growing at an average of 7.4% between 1998 and 2001. Consumer price inflation slowed down from the levels reached in 1997 and in 2000 it was nil. From 1997 to 2000 state deficit moved from 12.7% to 9.2% of GDP ¹⁷.

Despite this growth, income per head is still low, unemployment remains high and lack of security in people lives persists.

At this stage migration continues at an average of around 5,000 departures per month¹⁸; outflows are directed mainly towards Italy, Greece, Switzerland and Germany (via Italy), but also other countries as USA, Australia and Canada become important destinations.

Albanians seem to have a more realistic image of Europe, no longer so attractive and alluring as it appeared before. This new image is probably due to the reception some countries have given to immigrants. The restrictive policies adopted by the main host countries, the stigmatisation undertaken by media particularly against Albanian migrants, the serious accidents in which hundreds of clandestine migrants lost their lives, strongly contributed to this tendency¹⁹.

Another characteristic trend at this stage is the decrease of irregular presence in the receiving countries. UNDP estimates that between 1990- 1997 most of Albanian emigrants were illegal. By the end of 1997, there were estimated to be 150,000 emigrants in Italy of which only around 82,000 were registered. During 1998-1999 for the first time in the last decade of Albanian emigration, the ratio of legal to illegal emigration began to equalize. Out of approximately 200,000 Albanians living in Italy, around 130,000 were legal by the end of 1999. Among them 30,000 were registered by the 1999 regularization programme²⁰.

The same process is visible in Greece. In this country by 1997 only 10,000 immigrants upon approximately 400,000 were legal. Between 1997 and 1999 Greek government adopted a regularisation scheme; In 1999, 60% of the 360,000 emigrants waiting for the Green Card were Albanians²¹.

During this period, two key events strongly influenced migratory processes: The Kosovo crisis in 1999 and the Macedonia conflict in 2001. After NATO intervention in March 1999 more than 450,000 Kosovars – a figure equal to approximately 15% of the total Albanian population – fled to Albania; the solidarity of the local population and the extraordinary amount of aid sent from the international community limited the catastrophe, but the already weak Albanian infrastructure was put under pressure²². By 1999 37,000 Albanians migrated towards Italy: three times more than in 1998²³.

Two years after the crisis in Kosovo, as a consequence of Macedonian conflict, Albania was again receiving ethnic Albanian refugees from a foreign conflict: about 3,000 in March 2001, although many of them were apparently passing through Albania on their way to Kosovo. However this phenomenon doesn't seem to have affected the outflows towards Western countries in a significant way²⁴.

1.2 Social economic outlook

Different migration typologies developed in Albania during the transition period: the movement of people from Albania towards EU countries, USA, Canada and Australia is undoubtedly the main,

¹⁷ Economist Intelligence Unit, Albania Country Report, April 2001, p.2.

¹⁸ Council of the European Union, June 2000, p. 13.

¹⁹ the number of people drowned or lost in the Otranto channel in 1999 totalled more than 340, UNDP, 2000, p. 37.

²⁰ UNDP, 2000, p.40-41.

²¹ UNDP, 2000, p.41.

²² UNDP, 2000, p. 57.

²³ OECD, Trends in international Migration, SOPEMI, 2001, p. 72.

²⁴ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Albania Country Report*, April 2001, p.9.

but not the only one. After the 1992 Yugoslav war Albania became increasingly important as a centre of migrants smuggling and a fundamental transit point for thousands of migrants with different nationalities. Albania also became a land of immigration from the neighbouring region, in particular during the key moments of its recent history, as the 1999 Kosovo crisis and the 2001 Macedonia conflict. Moreover, internal movement of migrants from the mountains to the urban centres and from small cities to bigger ones took place as a consequence of the economic and social turmoil followed to the collapse of communist regime.

External migration progressively assumed a structural character related to the economic backwardness and social insecurity that kept affecting the country. In spite of early economic recovery, by 1999 people living in poverty still represented the 19.6% of the population; the GNP per capita was twelve times lower than in Italy (1,650 US\$ versus 21,400 US\$) and the third lowest among the 30 countries with significant emigration flows towards Italy²⁵. A recent survey reported by UNDP points out that only one in five families estimates to dispose of enough resources for a decent life (corresponding to a basic income of Lek 31,000/month²⁶, whereas the declared average income stands at Lek 17,000/month).

It is important to consider the unbalance between the available labour force and the unemployment rate. Because of the high fertility rate during the communist period a relatively high proportion of the population is in its working age. The ratio was of 64.5% in 2000, and it is expected to be still around 62.5% by 2050. This phenomenon dramatically coincides with the loss of job during the 1990s. The collapse of the autarkic industrial base and the decline of the state sector, vastly exceeded the new openings created by an open market economy. New job opportunities in the agricultural and in the private sector didn't stop the growth of unemployment rate, which rose from 13.1% in 1995 to 18.0% in 1999.²⁷

Social insecurity also is a strong push-factor. In 1999 Albania ranked 85 in the Human Development Indicator country table²⁸. Public health in Albania faces both inherited and new problems: the most serious have to do whit the decaying of health infrastructure (currently, 30% of existing health centres are not working for different reasons²⁹), the lack of pharmaceutical and medical supplies and the poor financial incentives for health professionals. Budgetary spending on health is one of the lowest among CEE countries and since 1990 it has fallen significantly in real terms (2.1% of GDP in 1999³⁰). Albania compares unfavourably with other countries in the region with respect to infant and maternal mortality (22.5 per 1,000 births in 1997 upon an average of 8.0 in CEE³¹) and both male and female life expectancy seems to have dropped from 1991³². The above factors contribute to the tendency for people to travel abroad for treatments.

Education also faces problems related to the poor maintenance of school buildings and equipment, the emigration of teachers and the pressure on the two-thirds of school-aged children who live in rural areas to work on the private holdings. Those difficulties are shown by the decrease in school enrolments: between 1990 and 2000 enrolment rate fell from 93% to 80% of 6-18 age cohort ³³.

²⁷Economist Intelligence Unite, Country Profile 2001. From 1990 to 2000 domestic employment fell from 1,434,000 to 1,066,000; employment in state sector decreased from 905,000 to 198,000; there was an increase in non agricultural private sector (from zero to 107,000) and in agriculture (from 529,000 to 761,000).

²⁵ Caritas di Roma, *Immigrazione. Dossier Statistico*, 2001,p.121. Elaboration of data from World Bank, Central Intelligence Agency, United Nation Development Program.

²⁶ UNDP, 2000, p.5.

²⁸ Caritas di Roma, 2001, p.121.

²⁹ World Bank, *Albania*. *Interim poverty reduction strategy paper*, May 2000, p.3.

³⁰ World Bank, May 2000, p.3.

³¹ World Bank, May 2000, p.22.

³² World Bank, May 2000, p.22. Between 1990 and 1995 life expectancy at birth has fallen from 69.3 years to 68.5 for males and from 75.4 years to 74.3 for females.

³³ Economist Intelligence Unit, Albania country profile, 2001, p.17.

The high rate of underage Albanians outflow probably is also a reflection of the social and educative structures inadequacy. By the end of 2000, the 69,1% of unaccompanied minor immigrated to Italy was represented by Albanians (5,743 out of a total of 8,307)³⁴.

Economic and social constraints are indicated by emigrants as the main reasons for leaving as emerged from a survey of Albanian emigrants in Greece and Italy: most of the interviewees had left to get higher wages (29%) and to help their family left in Albania (28.4%), others to find better working conditions (16.4%), better living standards (17.2%), better educational possibilities for themselves or their family members (6%) and because of political reasons (3%) 35.

In the last ten years, Albanians have emigrated to about twenty European countries, but routes to USA, Canada and Australia have become increasingly important, in particular as far as legal migration is concerned. In 1999, 12,000 Albanians were estimated to live in USA and 5,000 in Canada³⁶. The main settlements are in Greece and Italy. Geographical proximity and cultural affinity whit receiving countries strongly influenced the choice of a destination. The knowledge of the language and the influence of media broadcasts must be considered as other relevant pull-factors.

External emigration appears mostly characterised by individuals or families that have gone abroad never to come back or to return only after years of work. Temporary emigration is found more on the border of Southern Albania. Many of the inhabitants of these villages work in Greece near the border and return home to Albania in the evening or for the week-end.

Albanian emigrants are mostly young and male. In 1998 UNFPA calculated that 83% of emigrants were males, 71% were aged between 20-34 years, 75% had between middle and high education and 24% were intellectuals³⁷.

Generally they leave without their families. According to a 1998 survey in Greece and Italy, only 31% of the interviewees had emigrated with one or more members of their family³⁸, whereas most highly educated emigrants (67%) tend to leave with their families. This demonstrates that they plan their departure carefully, have clear goals and aim to create stable, well-integrated lives in the host country³⁹.

Another important migratory flow occurs as Albania in recent years has become an important transit country for international clandestine migration. Large flows of emigrants of Kurdish, Indian, Pakistani, Philippino and Chinese nationality reached Italy trough Albania. The great majority of those immigrants have their travel organized by rings of traffickers, mainly transiting trough the region of Vlora, which is considered the center for the illegal smuggling of immigrants. Trafficking operations for third country nationals grew since the War in Bosnia – Herzegovina in 1992, which caused the use of the classical land route to western Europe via Turkey/Bulgaria/Romania/Yugoslavia to be restrained. Experts from ICMPD estimated that, based on Italian apprehensions statistics, since 1993 between 150,000 and 200,000 non Albanian citizens have arrived to Italy and to the EU area passing through Albania⁴⁰.

During the last ten years Albania has also become an important stage in the trafficking circuit. In the Balkans this kind of business has been favoured by a number of factors such as the high fragmentariness of the region, the corruption among the police and the security forces, the large diffusion of criminal networks, and the proximity to the main prostitution markets. In this context

³⁴ IOM, *L'inserimento lavorativo e l'integrazione sociale degli albanesi in Italia*, bozza provvisoria,2001, p.18.

³⁵ UNDP, 2000, p.38.

³⁶Albanian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in UNDP, 2000, p.39.

³⁷ UNFPA, *Program Review and Strategy Development Report*, Tirana, Albdesign, 1998, in N. Sokoli, S. Axhemi, *Emigration in the period of transition in Albania*, Studi di Emigrazione, XXXVII, n.139, 2000.

³⁸ UNDP, 2000, p. 44.

³⁹ UNDP, 2000, p. 41.

⁴⁰ ICMPD, 2000, p. 5. According to ICMPD experts "Currently about 5-10 speed-boats with an average of 30 persons on board are estimated to leave Albania each night. This would theoretically imply a transport of 150-300 persons per night, of whom 70% are non-Albanians".

Albanian gangs assumed a position of large centrality, becoming more and more professional and expanding their activity beyond the traditional Albania-Italy route. Albanian organizations have been recruiting women and girls from East European countries, such as Moldavia, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Bulgaria and also from the poorest North-Eastern Albanian countries as Mat, Diber, Peshkopi, in order to sell them in the European countries. In Italy⁴¹, Germany, Belgium, Holland, but also in Eastern European countries, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, the Albanian smugglers have got the control of consistent shares of clandestine market. From a recent research it results that at present the Albanians sold as prostitutes are about 40,000, among which 5,000 underage. It is a an extraordinarily high figure, considering that the overall Albanian population is composed by 3,000,000 people, 600,000 of which living abroad⁴².

Albanian migratory flows are also characterized by massive internal displacements strongly affecting Albanian demographic structure. A significant trend of movement is from small towns towards big cities. When the communist regime and the system of economic autarky collapsed, towns that had developed around single industrial units entered a stage of economic crisis that forced a large number of suddenly unemployed people to emigrate towards bigger cities.

At the same time large groups of people started moving from rural areas to urban centres. Free movements of citizens, in particular from the countryside to the towns, had been prohibited in 1961, in correspondence with the diplomatic crisis between Albania and the Soviet Union. This had drastically reduced urban growth and the capacity of the main cities to absorb new labour force coming from the country.

When the communist regime fell and restrictions were lifted, many villages encountered an artificially high population and suffered from a deep economic and social backwardness: massive migration, in particular from remote mountainous areas, could not then be avoided.

Moreover, an inappropriate land re-allocation process had left a lot of families without adequate cropping surfaces. The lack of mechanisation, irrigation and chemical fertilisers and the isolation from schools and health centres constituted further push-factors. The above phenomena are still a problem and, according to UNDP evaluations, it is likely that migration from rural areas will continue, although at a reduced level.

Shifting from small centres and rural areas determined an impressive population growth in the Tirana-Dürres region. About one-third of the country's population is actually concentrated in this area and the trend suggests an even faster growth pace in the future⁴³. As a result of such a situation, cities are facing new social and economic problems as increase in poverty, widespread black market labour, housing difficulties and further degradation of the infrastructure. Public services as water and electricity supplies, transport and communication structures, school and health centres are resulting insufficient and furthermore jeopardized.

These tendencies, along with the increase of illegal traffics and with the drain on the professional skill and manpower, are some of the worst consequences of Albanian migrations. At the same time it must be considered that emigration plays an important role in the alleviation of the economic and social problems. In particular it influences the reduction of the unemployment rate. As a matter of fact, a great share of the labour force moving abroad results in a reduced pressure on the local labour market. Moreover, remittances, which represent approximately one fifth of the GDP, play an important function in improving many Albanian families' standard of living. Recent surveys show that 60% of new apartments have been constructed with remittances and that they have also backed the recovery of the banking sector, after the 1997 crisis, trough increased savings. Another study

⁴¹ In Italy Albanians control the largest share of the prostitution circuit. In 2000 Albanians represented 54% of the total number of foreigners reported for crimes related with prostitution exploitation, aiding and abetting. Ministry of Interior, *Rapporto sullo stato della sicurezza in Italia*, Roma, 2001, p. 310.

⁴² P. Monzini, *La tratta di donne nella regione balcanica*, in CeSPI-Centro per l'Europa centro-orientale e balcanica, Guida ai paesi dell'Europa centrale orientale e balcanica. Annuario politico-economico 2001, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2002, forthcoming.

⁴³ UNDP, 2000, p. 48.

conducted on the start-up capital for small and medium size private business, show that 39% of the funding comes from family members in Albania or abroad, of which 17.5% are remittances⁴⁴. Those data seem to indicate that financial resources sent back by emigrants are positively impacting not just on households but also on the economic and social stabilisation of the country.

2 Albanian immigration in Italy

2.1 Albanian presence in Italy between 1990 and 2000

By the end of 2000 Albanians regularly present in Italy, according to the Italian Ministry of the Interior sources, were 142,066 and constituted the second biggest foreign group after Moroccans (159,599). The annual growth of the Albanian presence between 1999 and 2000 (22.7%) has been extraordinary if compared with the growth rate concerning the Moroccan community (8.9%) and the overall foreign population (9,8%).

The Albanian presence in Italy is characterised by its relatively homogeneous distribution over the whole national territory. As a result of their constant increase, Albanians have become the first foreign group in seven regions (Toscana, Marche, Umbria, Abruzzo, Molise, Basilicata, Puglia), and the second one in other six regions (Piemonte, Lombardia, Trentino Alto Adige, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, Calabria). The share of Albanians (out of the total number of immigrants) is particularly high in the South (18.5%) and in some Central regions, whereas it is close to the national average (10.6%) in the North and in some Central regions, and lower in the islands (6.0%). As the table below shows, the percentage presence upon the total immigrants' community is particularly high in the band of regions included between Puglia/Basilicata (more than a third of the total) and Marche /Toscana (one sixth of the total). It is however important to notice that the ranking by share does not match the ranking by numerical consistence in absolute terms (due to the overwhelmingly higher overall presence of immigrants in some regions, such as Lombardia).

Albanian numerical presence and Albanians percentage out of the total of immigrants 45

Albanian numerical presence		% of Albanians out of the total of immigrants		
Regions	No. of Albanians	Regioni	% Total immigrants	
Lombardia	22,373	Puglia	39.4	
Toscana	19,132	Basilicata	30.6	
Puglia	14,007	Molise	28.4	
Emilia Romagna	12,740	Abruzzo	22.1	
Lazio	12,465	Umbria	17.8	
Veneto	12,398	Toscana	16.6	
Piemonte	10,137	Marche	16.3	
Marche	5,821	Piemonte	12.1	
Campania	4,817	Liguria	11.8	
Umbria	4,639	Calabria	11.8	
Liguria	4,567	Emilia Romagna	11.3	
Abruzzo	4,179	Trentino Alto A.	10.5	
Friuli Venezia G.	4,031	Friuli Venezia G.	9.3	
Sicilia	3,418	Veneto	8.9	
Trentino Alto A.	3,338	Val d'Aosta	8.9	
Calabria	1,802	Lombardia	7.3	
Basilicata	1,138	Campania	7.1	
Molise	579	Sicilia	6.9	
Sardegna	262	Lazio	5.1	
Val d'Aosta	223	Sardegna	2.3	

⁴⁴UNDP, 2000, p.43.

⁴⁵ IOM, 2001, p.7.

During the last year the Albanian population has grown by 29.7% (more than twice the national average) in the Centre and by 23.8% in the North (eight points above the average). In the South, where the average foreign presence declined (-0,5%), the Albanian settlement remained quite stationary (with the exception of Abruzzo and Campania where Albanian immigrants rose respectively by 13.8% and 18-20%)⁴⁶.

At the national level, looking at the historical sequence, a sharp acceleration can be noticed in the growth pattern of the Albanian presence in Italy since the end of 1996. Such phenomenon is certainly related with the regularization campaigns undertaken by the Italian government in 1990, 1995/1996 and 1998. The impact of regularizations is clearly visible in the following years, with the registration of many of the stay permits that had been issued.

Albanian regular presence from 1990 to 2000

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. of Albanians	2,034	26,381	28,628	30,847	31,926	34,706	63,967	83,807	91,537	115,755	142,066
% total immigrants	0.3	3.1	3.1	3.1	35	35	5.8	6.8	7.3	9.2	10.6
Total Immigrants	781,138	859,571	925,172	987,407	922,706	991,419	1,095,622	1,240,721	1,250,214	1,251,994	1,338,153

(Source: Caritas Elaborations on Ministry of the Interior data)

In 1996 for the first time the totality of stay permits exceeded the one million threshold (1,095,622). The regularization had concerned particularly the nearest countries: applications from the whole of Eastern-European countries represented a quarter of the total, Albania alone making up the 12.7%. The Albanian community, the second for number of applications (32,432⁴⁷), grew of 29,270 units – 5,026 more than Moroccans – and moved from the seventh to the second place in the foreign communities size ranking in Italy. The growth of 84.3% between 1995 and 1996 (upon an average growth of the foreign community of 10.51%) is extraordinary if compared to the 8.7% increase of the previous year⁴⁸.

The ratio between previous stay permits and new regularizations in 1996 (93.44%) brings to evidence the high percentage of Albanian clandestine presence (almost equivalent to the number of Albanians regularly staying before the amnesty), confirmed by the 1998 regularization campaign.

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⁴⁶ IOM, 2001, p.9.

⁴⁷ Caritas di Roma, *Immigrazione*. *Dossier statistico*, 1998, p. 142-7.

⁴⁸Caritas di Roma, *Immigrazione*. *Dossier statistico*, 1996, p. 63.

Irregular presence in Italy as evidenced by applications for regularization in 1998 (first eight

regularly staying foreign communities)

1	Regular stay permits at 1-1-1998 (ISTAT)	Applications for regularization in 1998 (Ministry of the of Interior)	Applications for regularization (as % of	Applications for regularization (as % of the total number of applications presented)
Могоссо	122,230	29,037	23.8	11.6
Albania	72,551	48,446	66.8	19.3
Philippine	57,312	4,652	8.1	1.9
Tunisia	41,439	7,753	18.7	3.1
China	35,310	19,296	54.6	7.7
Senegal	32,037	12,450	38.9	5.0
Yugoslavia	31,673	3,021	9.5	1.2
Romania	28,796	26,719	92.8	10.6
Tot. foreigners staying in Italy	1,022,896	250,966	24.5	100.0

(Source: ISTAT and Ministry of Interior).

As shown in the table, when the 1998 regularization measures were approved, applications by Albanians far exceeded those by other foreign communities. Albanian emigrants applying for regularization were 48,446 against 72,551 regular residents, and the overall share of their applications reached the 19.3% ⁴⁹. From these data it is possible to gather that by 1998 at least the 40% of Albanian emigrants was irregular. Such percentage is a little lower if compared to the 1996 figure, but it is still one of the first ranking among the foreign communities.

Albanian irregular migration continued at a high rate until 1999 when, as suggested in the table below, it started to decline.

Apprehensions of undocumented migrants along some Italian coasts (1998-2001)⁵⁰

1 ippi chensio	iis of anaocumente	a migrants along some	Italiali Coasts (1770	2 001)	
	1998	1999	1999	2001	
Apulia	28,458	46,481	18,990	8,546	
		(of which 7,156	(of which 5782		
		Albanians)	Albanians)		
Calabria	873	1,545	5,045	6,093	
Sicily	8,828	1,973	2,782	5,045	

(source: Caritas, Ministry of Interior)

Rejections of undocumented aliens at the border or in the proximity of the border (1998-2001)

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	45,157	48,437	42,221	41,058
Albanians	10,392	18,657	16,402	Not available

(Source: Ministry of the Interior)

This phenomenon has probably been determined by a combination of factors, including the above discussed trend towards regularization, the conclusion of the Kosovo emergency, and a stricter migratory policy enforced by the Italian government.

⁴⁹ R. Balfour, F. Pastore, L. Einaudi, L. Rizzotti, *L'impatto dell'allargamento sui movimenti della popolazione*, in Dipartimento Affari Economici della Presidenza del consiglio (ed.), *Allargamento a est dell'Unione Europea: sfide e opportunità per l'Italia*, Febbraio 2001, p.134.

⁵⁰ Caritas di Roma, *Immigrazione*. *Dossier Statistico* 2001, p 97. Elaboration on Interior Ministry data.

⁵¹ Ministero dell'Interno, *Rapporto sullo stato della sicurezza in Italia*, Roma, febbraio, 2001, pp. 284-5.

During these years Albanians emigrated illegally to Italy by different means. In many cases they remained in the country after the expiry of short time visas. As a matter of fact the lack of a recording procedure concerning immigrants' outflows from Italy, makes it quite difficult to monitor the effective migrants return rate.

The Italian consulate in Tirana issues a high number of visas per day. In 1998, 26,401 short time visas were issued, of which: 4,081 for business; 303 for sport competitions; 1,278 for invitation to visit; 1,594 for family reasons; 8,914 for family reunion; 1,324 for study; 4,200 for tourism⁵². Since that year the number of short-time visas granted to Albanians emigrants constantly increased arriving to the figure of 35,889 by 2000 ⁵³. In this respect it must be stressed that this figure, however consistent in absolute terms, corresponds to the 6% of the total short term visas amount and therefore it is not so high if compared with the incidence of Albanian immigrants upon the total foreign community (10.6%).

Other common means have been illegal crossings of state land and sea borders. If illegal sea - border crossing, mainly towards Apulia coasts, has been the method favoured by those who could afford the relatively high fees involved, land crossing has been the most commonly adopted option for many low income citizens coming from remote areas. As showed in the table above, as of 1999 Albanian illegal migratory pressure seemingly started to decline.

2.2 The process of stabilization and integration of the Albanian community in Italy

After almost a decade, the Albanian community appears to be steadily rooted into the Italian social and economic context. There has been a gradual ageing of the first generation of emigrants and no relevant flows of emigrants returning to Albania. Many Albanians achieved a deeper inclusion in the Italian labour market and settled in the host country with their families.

Between 1995 and 2000 permits for labour insertion and family reunion grew by five percentage points reaching the overall share of 86.6%⁵⁴. As shown in the table, in comparison to the average, Albanians feature a higher percentage of permits issued for labour and family reunion reasons.

Type of stay permit for the Albanians regularly staying in Italy (2000)

Reasons for the stay	% of immigrants	% of Albanian immigrants
Dependent labour	54.2	59.6
Self employment	6.3	3.2
Family	25.6	30.2
Study	2.6	2.6
Adoptions	0.3	1.7
Other reasons	11.0	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Absolute values	1,388,153	142,066

(Source: International Organization for Migration)

Albanians' tendency to re-create family groups and to permanently settle down in the host country is confirmed by the high number of married people (79,003, or the 55.6% of the Albanian community, against an average of 48.6%). Unmarried persons are only the 39.9%: two out of five.

Albanians stand out among the immigrant communities also for having a particularly high percentage of people with children: 29,290, or 20.6% upon an average of 14.2% ⁵⁵.

The gradual stabilization in the host countries and the correspondent weakening of the relations with the country of origin could also be confirmed by the shrinkage of the remittances flows. Data

⁵² F. Pastore, P. Romani, G. Sciortino, L'Italia nel sistema internazionale del traffico di persone, Commissione per l'integrazione, working paper n. 5, 2000 pp. 90-98.

⁵³ Ministero degli affari esteri, *Il ministero degli esteri in cifre. Annuario statistico*, 2001, p.78.

⁵⁴ Caritas di Roma, 2001, p.112.

⁵⁵ IOM, 2001, p. 14.

supplied by the Italian Exchange Bureau confirm that the remittances flows decreased from 452,000,000 of lire in 1998 to 357,000,000 in 1999⁵⁶.

It should be however noticed, and somehow accounted for, that the Italian Exchange Bureau, as much as any survey institute, can obviously only register official transactions, and is consequently bound to neglect the big amount of money sent home by informal means. Remittances should therefore be treated as an incomplete and potentially misleading indicator, although useful to roughly point out some general migratory flows trends. It has been surveyed that commonly at the beginnings of the migratory experience, the economic precariousness of people and the related difficulties in saving money largely reduce remittances flows. At a second stage migrants, progressively more integrated into the labour market, are able to send home a bigger portion of their earnings. At a third stage migrants, often joined by their families, are trying to stabilize and upgrade their standard of living and are therefore likely to reduce their inclination to send remittances home. This sociological pattern, pointed out for the first time by Emilio Reyneri in 1979⁵⁷, has been used by different experts in order to underline Albanians' tendency towards stabilization. Anyway it should be stressed that as the Albanian case is concerned this model could result inadequate. Actually, in this country the crisis of the pyramid schemed joined to the traditional Albanians' mistrust in the banking system, could have strengthened the immigrants' reticence in using official channels making remittances even weaker an indicator.

Another indicator that should be considered is the extraordinarily high rate of school enrolment. Between 1995-1996 and 2000-2001, Albanians' enrolment rate grew at a double pace (+ 600%) than the overall immigrants' average. Albanian pupils increased by an average 5,000 units per-year, outstripping Moroccan pupils whose enrolment rate had risen by the 301% during the considered period (a little more than the national average)⁵⁸.

Albanians' school enrolment between 1995 and 2001

Academic year	Albanians	Index number	
95/96	4,131	100	
96/97	5,761	139	
97/98	8,312	201	
98/99	13,551	328	
99/00	20,859	505	
00/01	25,050	606	

(Source: Caritas elaboration on Minister of the Public Instruction informative system data)

The tendency towards stabilization as emerging from these figures is not necessarily related to a deeper level of integration in the recipient country.

On the one hand, there are some elements that should be considered as a good premise to Albanians' assimilation in the Italian society. An important factor is, for example, Albanians' good knowledge of the Italian language. The share of Albanians who don't speak Italian (37%)⁵⁹ is ten percentage points lower than the average (according to a survey reported by UNDP, approximately 47% of emigrants do not speak the language of the host country, 36% speak it partially and just 17% speak it well). This is a particularly relevant figure because the fluency in the local language is a key determinant for a successful integration, both economically and socially. Another interesting element is the high rate of nationality acquisitions. In 1999 746 Albanians got the Italian nationality (upon a total of 11,291 acquisitions of nationality). It is a high figure which makes Albanians the third group in Italy for number of naturalizations.

Other factors, on the other hand, reveal how the pattern within which the stabilization trend is taking place does not seem to be accompanied by a proper integration process. According to UNDP

⁵⁶ Caritas di Roma, *Il risparmio degli immigrati e i paesi di origine: il caso italiano*, Roma, febbraio 2002, p. 74.

⁵⁷ E. Reyneri, *La catena migratoria*, 1979.

⁵⁸ IOM, 2001, p. 18.

⁵⁹ UNDP, 2000, p.44.

experts, the Albanian community in Italy is not properly integrated in the economic social and cultural life of the country:

The process of integration in the host countries becomes difficult due to the following factors: a difficult labour market, extremist political and religious attitudes and negative stereotyping by the press and mass media which has turned the presence of Albanian emigrants into a political issue. [...]. Albanian emigrants have almost no social or community life in the host countries. This is due to a number of reasons including the marginal and poor nature of employment, the high number of illegal immigrants, the involvement of some emigrants in the black market and other illegal activities and the lack of priority given by host governments to emigrants' integration ⁶⁰.

We mentioned the sharp increase in stay permits issued for employment and family reunion reasons as a sign of the progressive stabilization of the Albanian presence in Italy.

Family reunion, however, should be considered as an ambivalent stage in the immigrants' integration process. On the one hand it is a fundamental step in the way of stable incorporation in the host country but; on the other hand, it can strengthen community relations, re-establish values and traditions of the birth place and favour a process of isolation from the new social context⁶¹.

Moreover, the gender unbalance in the stay permits motivations could interfere with the integration process. Since 1996 there has been a relative decrease in the number of women coming for work and an increase in the number of women coming for family reunion. As it can be inferred from the gender-disaggregated table below, women received the largest amount of permits for family reunion (66.7%) and just a small share of permits for work (25%). Considering the relevance of labour in the process of social inclusion, this phenomenon could be valued as the sign of an unbalanced inclusion of Albanian families in the new social and economic reality.

Type of stay permit for the Albanians regularly staying in Italy (2000) ⁶²

Reasons of the stay	males	Females
Wage labour and Self employment	83.9	25.1
Wage labour	79.4	24.2
Self employment	4.5	0.9
Family	9.8	66.7
Study	2.0	4.4
Adoptions	2.3	0.5
Other reasons	2.0	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Absolute values	91,144	50,922

(Source: International Organization for Migration)

As far as employment permits are concerned, the table shows how Albanian males come to Italy almost exclusively for wage labour: their propensity to self-employment is lower than the average (4.5% over 6.3%). This figure could be interpreted as a further indicator of an incomplete integration pattern. Actually self-employment presupposes a fair knowledge of the local labour market and a good familiarity with administrative regulations, policies, incentives, etc.. The disposition to proactively take-up autonomous economic initiatives can be therefore associated to a higher social mobility in the recipient country and, in general, to a more successful migratory process⁶³.

However inappropriate it would be talking of a marginalization of the Albanians in the Italian labour market (the 10.8% unemployment rate of the Albanian community corresponds more or less to the national average) it can be affirmed that labour is not perceived by Albanians as a means of

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⁶⁰ UNDP, 2000, p. 40

⁶¹ A. Golini, S. Strozza, F. Amato, *Un sistema di indicatori di integrazione. Primo tentativo di costruzione*, in G. Zincone (ed.), *Secondo rapporto sull'integrazione degli immigrati in Italia*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2001, p.112. ⁶² IOM, 2001, p. 11.

⁶³ A. Golini, S. Strozza, F. Amato, op. cit. p. 126.

assimilation to the host country society. Male Albanian emigrants in Italy mainly engage in construction or agriculture, whereas women are mainly employed in domestic services. According to UNDP experts: "the fact that so many Albanian emigrants are employed in difficult manual labour has reduced their chances of improving their professional qualifications and familiarising themselves with modern skills and technologies. Employment in poorly paid sectors is a way of survival – it is not a means of integration, or emancipation"⁶⁴.

2.3 Deviance and media stigmatization

During the last years "foreigners' criminality" become a central issue in the political debate. A research dealing with criminality in Italy, carried out by the Ministry of Interior, brought to evidence a sharp increase, between 1998 and 2000, in the foreigners' share upon the total of the people reported for all types of crimes. At the same time irregular immigrants resulted the big majority of the reported foreigners (78.3%), in particular in relation with economically related crimes (as theft, robbery, smuggling). The higher percentage of reported foreigners is concentrated in the North of Italy (65.3%) while in the South and in the Islands such percentage is far lower (13%)⁶⁵. The versatility and the richness of the Northern productive system both at a formal and informal level, joined to the higher density of the foreign presence are probably some of the essential factors affecting this trend.

By 2000, the Albanians represented the 17,1% out of the total of foreigners reported. This percentage is the second higher - after Moroccans' - in the size ranking of the foreigners reported and, in absolute terms, more than proportional to the Albanian presence in Italy $(10.6\%)^{66}$. The 71.1% of Albanians reported are irregular and this is quite correspondent to the national average.

The Ministry of the Interior' research shows a certain decrease, since 1996, in the number of Albanians reported for "petty" crimes (in 2000 the Albanians were the 9% out of the total of foreigners reported for theft). At the same time Albanians appear over-represented in the estimates concerning prostitution exploitation. By 2000 Albanians constituted the 54,4% of the foreigner reported for this crime, being followed by Nigerians (7%) and former Yugoslavs (5%).

Such situation is the background of a dangerous interplay between deviance and social marginalization. A reverse relation between social and economic integration and deviance has been pointed out by several researches. According to those hypothesis the more are immigrants socially and economically integrated, the less their propensity towards deviant behaviours⁶⁷. At the same time criminal acts committed by Albanians, widely emphasized as they are by the mass media, largely contribute to deepen Albanians' social exclusion.

During the last ten years, and in particular after 1991 and 1997 migratory waves, Albanians have received large coverage in the representation of the Italian media and their image has largely been associated with criminality and moral decay. It is interesting to reconstruct rapidly how the stigmatisation of Albanians gradually developed.

By July 1990, when the first opponents to the communist regime started to leave Albania, the press stressed the hospitality offered by some Italian mayors, evoking the ancient links between Italians and Albanians⁶⁸. This situation changed since march 1991 when the flow of Albanians emigrants started to intensify. As of that period the Albanians started to be portrayed as criminals, and the refugees to be equalized to clandestine migrants; Albanians' landings were described as an emergency, an invasion, finally as a threatening exodus.

According to Jessika ter Wal:

Not only in the news about protests and remonstrations, but also in the information about immigrants' arrival the press has often resorted to a military language. Immigrants 'invade', they rarely simply arrive alone; they make-up armies and

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⁶⁴ UNDP, 2000, p. 40.

⁶⁵ Caritas di Roma, 2001, p. 198.

⁶⁶ IOM, 2001, p. 20.

⁶⁷ A. Golini, S. Strozza, F. Amato, op. cit., p. 135.

⁶⁸ A. Dal Lago, Non persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1999, p. 182.

hordes with vague barbarian connotations. The case of Albanian refugees constitute a perfect example of panic artificially created by the media on the arrival of 'illegal immigrants'. ⁶⁹

The atmosphere of widespread panic generated in 1991 was recreated in 1997 when, after the fall of the 'pyramid' schemes, a new migratory wave took place. Once again Albanians were described as criminals and "invaders". A. Dal Lago, in his book "Non persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale", reports some newspaper titles concerning Albanians' landings before the sinking of the Albanian boat Kater I Rades on 19th of March 1997. It is interesting to notice how differently politically oriented newspapers reported the events by the same alarmist rhetoric:

"It is a civil war. Hight from Albania, Italian coasts are stormed" (l'Unità, 14-5), "Apulian mafia enlists the refugees" (ll Giornale, 15-5); Italy is invaded by a fleeing people" (La Repubblica, 15-5); "refugees emergency. Now it is an exodus. Also a boat full of children arrives. Thousands are landing" (La Repubblica, 16-5); "Vigna: greatest attention against the risk of a criminal invasion" (Corriere della Sera, 18-5); "A stream of refugees. Quota 9000 reached. It is emergency" ('Unità, 18-5); "Refugees and criminal bands" (ll Messaggero, 19-5); "Refugees, criminality alarm" (La Stampa, 19-5); "Albanian criminals alarm" (l Gazzettino di Venezia, 19-5); "Vigna to Del Turco: yes, criminality infiltrated" (Corriere della Sera, 24-5); "Naval block in order to stop Albanians. Strong response is being pursued. They must be rejected because they are clandestine immigrants" (La Repubblica, 25-5); "A boat with Albanians overturns. The boat was dragged by the Italian navy towards the Apulian coasts" (l'Unità, 29-5).

The media campaign evidently portrayed Albanians as a "criminal horde", a threat for the Italian society, deriving this image from a pre-set cultural prejudice and at the same time strengthening it.

Actually it must be noticed that the association between immigrants and "criminals" is a more general cultural paradigm proposed by the Italian media. Several studies carried out during the last years have shown how the press has focused on immigrants mainly when they were involved in crimes, both as victims and – more frequently - as aggressors⁷¹. A research carried out in 1999 by Vittorio Cotesta underlined that between 1991 and 1997 nearly half the articles dealing with the presence of immigrants in Italy concerned conflictive episodes and only about a third was devoted to some in-depth analysis of their living conditions⁷². In this respect it is interesting to consider the point made by Alessandro Dal Lago in his book. According to Dal Lago, since the beginning of the Nineties migration has been almost exclusively talked about in terms of "illegality", "degrade", "emergency". Moreover, the ethnic, racial and national identity of the groups or individuals involved has been constantly referred to when migrants' arrests or accusations were mentioned⁷³. By this biased and single-focused approach, the media not only channelled the equation between migration and crime but, most of all, stereotyped specific foreign communities – usually those more frequently reported on – as intrinsically deviant.

Albanians –also due to the wide coverage they received by the media – resulted among the foreign groups more strongly stereotyped and stigmatised. The quantitative surveying of the recurrent language in the newspaper titles and articles reveals that "Albanian", "immigrant", "arrested", "public force", "clandestine", "extracomunitari", "drugs", "Moroccan", "refugee" and "away", are the ten most frequent words used to describe migration-related events⁷⁴. By this time, those dynamics have favoured the diffusion of a 'common sense' perception that has made many people easily inclined to identify Albanians as criminals, sometimes for episodes that they've eventually

⁶⁹J. ter Wal, Minacce territoriali, socio-economiche e di sicurezza. L'immagine degli immigrati nella stampa quotidiana, Incontri, n. 16, 2001, p.69.

⁷⁰ A. Dal Lago, 1999, pp.189-190.

⁷¹ J. ter Wal, 2001, p. 72.

⁷² V. Cotesta (ed.), Mass media, ethnic conflicts and migration. A research on Italian newspapers in the nineties, Studi Emigrazione, XXXVI, n.135, pp. 387-499, in Nicola Mai, Myths and moral panics: Italian identità and the media representation of Albanian immigration, in R.D. Grillo and J. Pratt (ed.), The Politics of Recognizing Difference: Multiculturalism Italian Style, Aldershot: Astigate, 2002, p. 85.

⁷³ Alessandro dal Lago, 1999, p. 72.

Nicola Mai, 2002, pp. 84-85. The analysis reported is referred to a research carried out in S. Stoppiello, *Nomi e immagini dell'altro. Un'analisi multidimensionale della stampa*, Studi Emigrazione, XXXVI, n. 135, pp. 417-443.

resulted having being erroneously accused for (still recently a murder committed near Genoa - largely published by the press - has been surreptitiously imputed to "the Albanians", on the generic base of a cultural prejudice). Such a deep-rooted and lasting negative image is undoubtedly a major obstacle to the social integration of Albanians.

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