

Ethnicity and employability: Comparing the outcomes of Albanian and Italian graduates from Italian universities

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Abstract

Higher education is seen by many young people as an important pillar of developing their knowledge and successfully entering the labour market. Not all graduates have equal chances of acquiring a ‘good’ graduate job. Graduate outcomes can vary by ethnic groups. In Italy, the proportion of Albanian graduates has been the most numerous among foreign graduates, 12.6% in 2018, there are questions about whether their employment outcomes differ from their Italian peers. This study looks at recent graduates’ employment outcomes, focusing on Albanian citizens graduates in Italy, using AlmaLaurea dataset. The 21st AlmaLaurea survey on Graduates’ Employment Status (Report 2019) has involved a population of 630,000 graduates in Italian universities, interviewed at 1, 3 and 5 years from graduation. We will compare outcomes such as type of work, activity sector, earnings, and so on. Albanians employment rate (second-level graduates) at one year from graduation is 74.0% (73.8% for Italian graduates); at five years from graduation, the employment rate improves at 77.0% for Albanians and at 85.7% for Italian graduates; the unemployment rate for Albanians decreases during the time and goes from 17.7% at one year from graduation to 7.5% at five years from graduation (in line with Italian second-level degree graduates). At 5 years from graduation, Albanian graduates who remain and work in Italy are 79.8%; they have less advantages in terms of earnings 1.353€ net per month (compare to 1.464€ of Italian graduates), but they have a permanent employment contract more than their colleagues: 62.7% compare to 57.1%.

Key words: higher education, graduates, transition to labour market

Introduction

Recent societal changes, including high waves of migration (internal from rural to urban areas and international flows), globalisation, digitalisation and structural reforms following the last economic and financial crisis have brought about new types of risks and fragilities, social fragmentation and an increase in level of inequalities. These changes have significantly affected young people's chances of attaining vocational training and higher education as well as their transition into the labour market. It is not only that youth increasingly experience initial difficulties with the labour market entry and key demographic transitions in many countries, but concerns are also voiced that these challenges might have detrimental effects on long-term employment prospects. In many European countries, experiences with young people who are not in education, employment or training raise questions about risks of social disintegration, with various consequences at both the individual and the societal level.

Research initiatives on graduates transitions have been important in recent decades, and it was highlighted youth labour market situation and school-to-work transitions as well as the main factors influencing these phenomena. At the micro-level, research no longer focuses only on human capital emphasizing the role of education but also on the role of soft and hard skills, social contacts, cultural capital, personality, etc. The school-to-work transition should represent a straight-line, unidirectional path towards analysing the initiatives and actions within the education systems, vocational training and labour markets. Additional research is needed to better understand the effects of school-to-work transitions on time use, living conditions, poverty, health, and well-being. At the macro-level, the major focus should be on the role of education (and higher education) supply in order to better reach the job market needs.

Following the increase trend at global level of supply of tertiary-educated labour, we face new problems that are present in public debates as “the supply of graduates outstripping the number of “graduate jobs” with negative consequences for skills utilisation, pay, and career opportunities” (Green and Henseke 2016).

In this context, a particular attention can be paid to the mechanisms underlying effects of individual and institutional characteristics on a variety of youth transitions and the role of economic and structural changes, such as globalisation, digitalisation, and robotisation. Additionally, attention should be as well on effectiveness of youth policies and related institutions for youth transitions, including graduates, labour market outcomes and overall well-being and short-term and long-lasting effects of youth transitions on various outcomes, e.g., labour market, demographic domains, living conditions.

It is well known that the youth employability situation in Europe becomes an important challenge for each member state and for local, national and European policy makers. The demographic changes that we face with in Europe will have impacts at social, economic and political levels. The present crisis have shown that youth are part of the vulnerable workers; the present economic situation added to the globalization process, climate change, new energy policies and other challenges that we face with, should

represent a baseline for new issues in order to re-design the social and economic policies (Galeazzi & Manitiu, 2017).

The European Employment Strategy is concerned with creating more and better jobs, and now constitutes part of the Europe 2020 growth strategy. Increasing labour market participation, reducing structural unemployment, promoting social inclusion and job quality are important objectives. Within these broad aims, youth represent a vulnerable labour market group and are singled out as targets for intervention. The EU's social vision emphasized very often that youth are a priority and the current crisis compounds the need to nurture young human capital (European Commission, 2008). Setting out a new strategy for the future of policies for youth becomes a necessity in Europe. The strategy should represent new favourable conditions for young people, in order to develop new skills and more jobs on the actual rapid-change Global Scene. The EU underlines that *“young people are not a burdensome responsibility but a critical resource to society which can be mobilised to achieve higher social goals”* (EU, 2009, p. 2).

1. Young people, higher education and labour market

The renewed EU Youth Strategy proposed by European Commission for 2019-2027 is based on three main areas of action: ENGAGE (fostering young people's participation in civic and democratic life), CONNECT (connecting young people across the European Union and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding) and EMPOWER (supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work) and close connected with strategies regarding the tertiary education. Education and culture are essential to develop a more inclusive, cohesive and competitive Europe. At the *Gothenburg Social Summit*, the European Commission laid out its vision for 2025 of a European Education Area: *“A continent where spending time in another Member State – to study, to learn or to work – has become the standard and where, in addition to one's mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm. A continent in which people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity.”* (European Commission, 2017). To take forward this work, the EU is acting on three key priorities: 1) Network of European Universities, 2) Automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and 3) European Student Card. The link between HE sector and research and innovation represent a key point in *“individual and societal development and in providing the highly skilled human capital and the engaged citizens that Europe needs to create jobs, economic growth, and prosperity”* (European Commission, 2017).

In the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU has maintained its objective of devoting 3% of its GDP to R&D without specifying the relative efforts of the public and private sectors to reach this objective. A look of European countries expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) shows us different percentage of that kind of investments around Europe in 2011; the Scandinavian countries lead the list with expenditure as a share of GDP, 8.8% in Denmark, 7.4% in Sweden, 7.1% in Finland, Belgium 6.6% (OECD, 2013). Italy spent in

2011, 3.4% of GDP on public expenditure on education. Regarding the gross domestic expenditure on R&D (% share of GDP), the Scandinavian countries lead the list again with Denmark 3.1%, Finland 3.9% and Sweden 3.4%, while Italy stopped at 1.3% of GDP (under the EU-27 average 2.0% of GDP and Euro area, 2.1%). Italy is trying to do its best in this field as well. The crises affected Italy more than other developed European countries. The crises marked the public expenditure and the government had to cut funds not only for the education sector, but for others as well (health, public investments, etc.). On this context the Inter-University Consortium AlmaLaurea, seeing its vocational objectives, operates for youth (graduates and not only) in order to face their problems on the labour market in a country, as Italy, that shows a peculiar situation with respect to other OECD countries. As a matter of fact, the percentage of 25-34 year-olds who have attained tertiary education in 2011 (OECD, 2013) in percentage by age-group, in UK was near to 50% while in Italy stopped around 20% (less than the OECD countries average that is around 40%). Unemployment rates are nearly three times higher among individuals who do not have an upper secondary education (13% on average across OECD countries) than among those who have a tertiary education (5%). The probability of working full time increases with the level of education. 64% of people with below upper secondary education work full time, while 71% of people with an upper secondary education and 75% of people with a tertiary education work full time. Yet, at global level, between 2007 and 2010 we faced a rapid increase in youth unemployment rate; after that period the rate settled at 13.0% for the period 2012 to 2014¹ (ILO, 2015). The Global Employment Trends for Youth (ILO, 2013a) set the premise that “*it is not easy to be young in the labour market today*” in the context of a rigid job crisis, long job queues and increasing scarcity of stable employment, but as it was underlined above, the probability of working increases with the level of education. For these reasons, policy makers at each country and region levels, keep a special attention on education, which is the way to connect the dots between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Employability plays a central role in the Europe 2020 strategy as well as in the Education and Training 2020 ('ET 2020') and higher education modernisation strategies (European Commission, 2011), employability play a crucial role (European Commission, 2016). Within the ET 2020 strategy, the Council of the European Union adopted a benchmark on graduate employability in 2012. The benchmark specify that, by 2020, the share of employed graduates (20-34 year-olds) having left education and training no more than three years before the reference year should be at least 82 % (Council conclusions, 2012). Furthermore, the monitoring of graduates' career development by HEIs has also been identified as crucial in increasing the relevance of programmes (European Commission, 2011). The employability of graduates is also an important issue in the European Commission's New Skills Agenda for Europe (European Commission,

¹ The global and regional estimates in this report apply the age definition of 15–24 for youth. Differences continue to exist in the way national statistics programmes define and measure youth and there is a growing momentum to increase the upper age limit to better reflect increasing educational attainment and postponement of labour market entry beyond the age of 24.

2016), which proposes various actions to improve the skills of graduates to meet labour market needs. At a time where the economic crisis has had a very significant impact on youth unemployment, there are many opportunities and action, which can support young people in finding employment. One of these tools is the Graduates tracking surveys, that give a better picture of young and especially of graduates employment, seeking to track the employment destinations and early careers of higher education graduates (Schomburg, 2003). The aim of surveys is not only to measure the employability of graduates but do give a deeper picture of their jobs in terms of the quality of jobs, the time it took to find a job, graduates' job satisfaction, and the match between graduates' skills and job requirements (Teichler, 2011, European Commission EACEA, 2016).

Graduate tracking is also an action in the European Commission's New Skills Agenda, which proposes an initiative on tertiary graduate tracking in 2017 to support Member States in improving information on how graduates progress on the labour market (European Commission, 2016).

In this context, the present working paper based on AlmaLaurea's two main surveys run in Italy (Graduates Profile and Graduates Tracking), will analyse the main characteristics of Italian and Albanian citizens graduates in Italian Universities, in a comparative way².

2. Ethnicity and employability: Italian and Albanian graduates in Italy

In all countries, the increasing number of graduates is resulting in massive challenges, with implications for their academic preparation. For those who can afford or get the opportunity to do so, studying in another country is perceived as a mechanism to improve their skills (linguistic, personal and culture development, etc.) and employability opportunities. While student mobility has received much attention as one dimension of internationalisation, studies related to the link between internationalisation and employability, particularly on the perceptions and expectations of international students, remain quite poor at international level. (Wondwosen. & Damtew, 2018; Kehm & Teichler, 2007).

This article reports the findings of a larger study conducted on students in Italy, to gauge their employment status, with a particular focus on Albanian citizens, analysing the link between study abroad and employability by examining such factors as motivations for studying abroad and employability attributes, in a comparative way with their colleagues (Italians who graduates in Italy).

Employment stands out as an overriding motivation for studying abroad, strongly suggesting a possible link between training and perceived future outcome. Students believed that their studies abroad would give them a competitive advantage by exposing them to a rich variety of skills and opportunities, as demonstrated by their choice of universities and study programmes.

² This type of analysis is due to two main factors: first one related to the status of Albania as candidate country to European Union and second, the implementation (2017-2020) in Albania of the Erasmus+ Project (funded by European Commission) "Graduates Advancement and Development of University capacities in Albania (GRADUA)". The project aims at set up in Albania an innovative IT based platform for graduates tracking and employability, based on AlmaLaurea model.

AlmaLaurea documentation is a useful tool for analysing more in detail the situation of graduates in Italy. AlmaLaurea is an Inter-university non-profit Consortium set up in Italy in 1994. Actually, it involves 75 Universities and approximately 90% of Italian graduates. The Consortium is supported by universities taking part in it, by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and by all companies and institutions using its selection and recruitment services. AlmaLaurea is an innovative service providing online graduates' curricula. AlmaLaurea, as a Consortium of Italian universities, is aimed at being a reference point for everyone who deals, at different levels, with issues like academic studies, employment and youth conditions.

The main activities of AlmaLaurea are represented on one hand, by research studies (surveys, reports, etc.), while, on the other hand, is represented by the creation of a bridge between demand and supply of labour through the online graduates CV databank. Two are the main surveys that AlmaLaurea leads every year with established experience in Italy:

I. Graduates' Profile Survey, a report that gives the picture of the main features of human capital coming from Italian universities. It is a reference point for all people interested in every single aspect of Italian university system. The most recent survey is about 280,000 graduates who have concluded their studies in 2018. In particular, 160,000 graduates have obtained a first-level degree (kind of degree deriving from the University reform; it is an academic path of three years), whereas 82,000 have obtained a second-level degree (an academic path of two years after the first-level degree) and 37,000 have obtained a single-cycle second-level degree (an academic path of four, five or six years). The aspects analysed in Graduates' Profile Survey are various, from the family background, high school diploma, up to the academic performances (in terms of degree mark and average time to get the title). Information about experiences during the academic course (study abroad, internships, work experiences) and the assessments about the whole academic path, about teachers and also about classrooms and laboratories. Finally prospects for the future (further studies or expectations for work);

II. Employment Status Survey of graduates in Italian universities at one, three and five years after the degree. This report is the result of the monitoring of graduates' access to the labour market within five years after graduation. It is a very important tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the academic system and for assessing the attitude of the labour market towards graduates. Among other things, this survey shows time needed by graduates for accessing the labour market, type of contract, earnings and effectiveness of the degree for finding a job. Therefore, AlmaLaurea's surveys are important for making comparisons between different groups of graduates in Italian context. In this paper we will build an identikit of Albanian graduates in Italian universities during the academic path and also after the academic period, following a procedure in two steps:

i) first step, through Graduates' Profile Survey we could take a detailed photograph of 2018 Albanian graduates in Italian universities comparing their academic experience with the experience lived by other

2018 graduates in Italian universities. Among other aspects, information about academic performance, study conditions, but also some evaluations about academic experience (course of study, teachers, infrastructures, etc.);

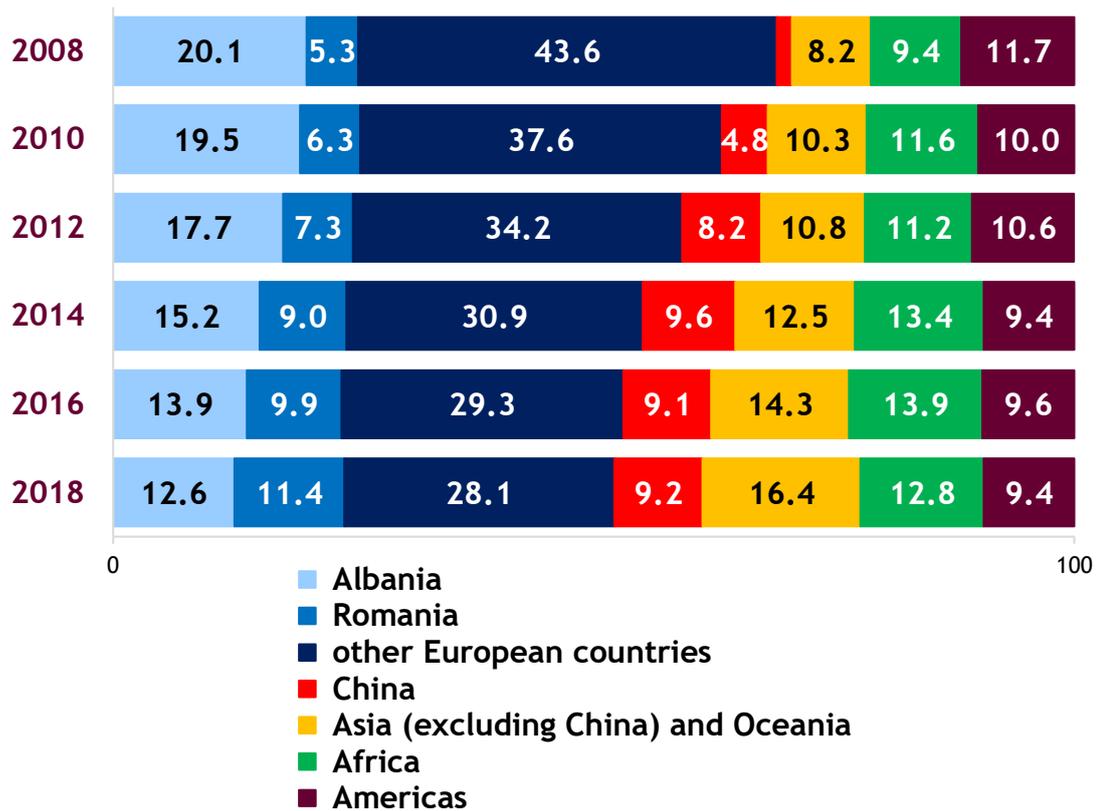
ii) second step, the survey about Employment Status of graduates at 1, 3, 5 years after the degree is useful for monitoring the employment status of graduates, paying particular attention on graduates with Albanian citizenship, always compared to the other graduates in the same reference year.

According to the documentation of the Italian National Register of Students (ANS), in Italy the number of graduates with foreign citizenship in Italian universities has increased over the last years: if in the academic year 2004/05 there were almost 3,000 (1.8%), in 2016/17 there were more than 12,000, coming to representing 3.8% of all graduates. Data coming from AlmaLaurea surveys confirm the trends detected by the National Register of Students (ANS), for this reason we could use AlmaLaurea's data as representative of Italian situation.

In 2018, in the universities involved Report on 2018 Graduates' Profile, graduates with foreign citizenship are 9,890 (excluding graduates from the Republic of San Marino). The percentage of foreign graduates tends to increase: in 2008, it was 2.6%, in 2018 it reaches 3.5%. As first step, it is necessary to study, in detail, the composition by country of foreign graduates in Italian universities during the years, analysing trend of the phenomenon of mobility for educational reasons.

In recent years, the percentage of graduates with Albanian citizenship has decreased considerably: from 20.1% in 2008, to 12.6% in 2018. Albania is still the first country of citizenship of foreign graduates in Italian universities, even if other nationalities (Romania and China) have increased their presence in Italian universities (Figure 1). The percentage of graduates from the Americas decreases over time (from 11.7% in 2008, to 9.4% in 2018), as well the number of graduates from Asia and from Africa increases (respectively from 8.2% to 16.4% and 9.4 to 12.8%).

Figure 1: Graduates 2008-2018 of foreign citizenship: geographical area of origin (%)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey Reports, 2009-2019

3. 2018 Profile of Albanian graduates in Italy

XXI Graduates' Profile Survey from AlmaLaurea gives the possibility to analyse 1,249 graduates of Albanian citizenship who have graduated themselves in Italian universities in 2018. Data coming from AlmaLaurea survey allows to compare Albanian graduates in 2018 with Italian graduates in the same year (270,340).

The number of Albanian graduates in Italy represents the first nation of incoming students: in 2018 Albanian graduates in Italy are 12.6%, a higher percentage than that recorded for graduates coming from Romania and China (the second and the third nationalities present in Italian universities).

3.1. University and type of degree programme

In 2018, 51.8% Albanian graduates have completed the academic title mainly in 9 universities that are involved in AlmaLaurea surveys: Roma Sapienza (8.4%), Firenze (7.8%), Bologna (7.0%), Genova (6.3%), Torino (5.6%), Milano Statale (4.7%), Padova (4.2%), Milano Bicocca (4.1%) and Pisa (3.7%). More than half of Albanian graduates (58.5%) has studied in first-level degree programmes (bachelor), 26.3% in second-level degree programmes and 15.0% has attended and finished single-cycle second-level degree programmes. For the Italian graduates in 2018 the percentages are respectively 57.3% for first-level

degree programmes, 28.8% for second-level degree programmes and 13.2% single-cycle second-level degree programmes.

The most favourite degree subjects of Albanian graduates are economics and statistics (26.5% against 13.9% of Italian graduates), politics and social sciences (12.1% against 9.9%), medicine/health care professions (9.9% against 7.7%) and engineering (9.4% against 12.8%). These differences in terms of type of degree programme and disciplinary group must be taken into account in the analysis of the results and in comparison with the national data.

3.2. Family background, scholarships and previous studies

2018 Albanian graduates are mainly women 70.1% in comparison with 58.6% of women between all the Italian graduates.

It is important to analyze also familiar background of 2018 graduates. AlmaLaurea explores both the level of education and the social class of 2018 graduates' parents. These information are useful for having a description of educational and economical support that families could give to their children during the academic path. Family information are also useful for policy makers to decide on a better allocation of different financial resources between universities, of scholarships to students coming from families in need of financial support and so on. AlmaLaurea survey highlights that Albanian graduates come from families with a higher level of education less than Italian ones: 24.4% of Albanian graduates have at least one parent graduated (it is 29.5% for Italian graduates). They also come from contexts favoured from an economic point of view less than Italians: 9.0% of Albanian graduates come from families where parents are entrepreneurs, professionals or managers (it is 22.5% for Italian graduates in 2018). Moreover the percentage of Albanian students who have benefited of the scholarship service offered by institution for the right to study is definitely higher than the percentage recorded for the Italian graduates (69.8% against 22.2%). So the most Albanian students who have decided to study in Italian universities are students that can count on the financial support deriving from a scholarship offered by university. And what about secondary education? One third of Albanian graduates in 2018 have taken the high school diploma abroad, arriving in Italy for university enrolment; while two-thirds of Albanian graduates have also carried out in Italy the studies previous university enrolment.

3.3. Academic performance and study conditions

The academic performance is measured with two indicators: degree completion time and average degree mark. 45.0% of Albanian graduates complete the degree programme within prescribed degree completion time, it is a value lower than that recorded for Italian graduates (53.7%). The average degree mark of 2018 Albanian graduates is of 97.8 out of 110 (Italian graduation mark scale), while it is 103.1 out of 110 for the Italians. During the academic path, Albanian graduates attend academic lessons (68.9%), it

is a value in line with the percentage of attending lessons of Italian graduates (69.3%); they have done a little less study stays abroad, than Italian graduates (11.7% against 12.8%). They have also worked during their studies, a higher percentage compared to the percentage recorded for all the Italian graduates (79.0% for Albanian, 65.2% for the others) and they had continuous full-time work for at least half the duration of their studies both during the academic classes and during breaks: 8.4% for Albanian, 6.1% for the Italians.

Table 2: 2018 Graduates' Profile Survey: academic performance and study conditions

Academic performance and conditions of study	2018 Albanian graduates	2018 Italian graduates
Graduation mark (average, out of 110)	97.8	103.1
Degree completion time (%)		
Within prescribed degree completion time	45.0	53.7
1 year beyond prescribed degree completion time	25.2	23.1
2 years beyond prescribed degree completion time	9.7	9.6
3 years beyond prescribed degree completion time	6.6	4.8
4 years beyond prescribed degree completion time	3.8	2.8
5 or more years beyond prescribed degree completion time	9.8	6.0
Attended classes on a regular basis (%)		
More than 75% of prescribed classes	68.9	69.3
50 to 75%	20.3	19.0
25 to 50%	7.3	6.8
Less than 25%	3.2	4.6
Took advantage of scholarships (%)	69.8	22.2
Studied abroad while at the university (%)	11.7	12.8
Studied abroad Erasmus or other European Union programme	8.4	8.8
Other experience accredited by degree programme	2.0	2.3
Personal initiative	0.8	1.4
No study abroad	88.1	87.0
1 or more exams taken abroad have been accredited (% of those with recognised studies abroad)	80.6	80.3
Prepared a significant part of thesis abroad (% of those with recognised studies abroad)	34.7	27.1
Participated in internships/training recognised by degree programme (%)	58.0	59.4
Internships organised by the degree programme and conducted at the university	8.7	11.3
Internships organised by the degree programme and conducted outside the university	39.8	38.7
Work subsequently recognised by the degree programme	8.2	8.4
No internship or work recognised by the degree programme	41.7	40.3
Had work experience (%)	79.0	65.2
Studying workers	8.4	6.1
Other full-time work on an ongoing basis	6.1	3.6
Part-time work	30.2	18.7
Occasional, irregular or seasonal work	34.3	36.8
No work experience	20.8	34.6
Work relevant to studies (% of those who worked)	17.0	24.1

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey, Report 2019

3.4. Assessment of university experience

AlmaLaurea Graduates' Profile Survey also describes different aspects of evaluation about academic experience. The overall evaluation of academic experience shows a general satisfaction between all graduates. Overall satisfaction with degree programme expressed by Albanian graduates is in line with that expressed by 2018 Italian graduates: 89.5% of Albanian graduates are satisfied, 88.9% for Italians. What about the evaluation about teachers? In this case, Albanian graduates are more satisfied than the Italian ones (90.5% of satisfaction for the first ones, 86.3% for the second ones).

The evaluation of infrastructures made available by the university (classrooms, computer stations, libraries) is positive and higher for Albanian graduates than the average of Italian graduates: classrooms (79.6% for Albanian graduates, against 73.2% for Italians), computer stations (55.5% against 51.3%) and libraries (94.9% against 91.5%). One of the most important question about evaluation of the academic experience refers to the opinion expressed by 2018 graduates about the possibility, if they could come back in time, of changing something of their academic path (degree programme, university or both of them). It is an important indicator because it underlines if their academic experience has been positive and if they are willing to repeat again the same experience. 68.7% of Albanian graduates would enrol again in the same degree programme of study of the same university (in line with the value for Italian graduates, 70.1%), but, if they could change something in their academic past, they would choose another programme of study of the same university (13.2% against 9.1% for Italian graduates).

Table 3: 2018 Graduates' Profile Survey: assessment of university experience

Assessment of university experience	2018 Albanian graduates	2018 Italian graduates
Expressed overall satisfaction with degree programme (%)		
Definitely yes	39.9	38.2
More yes than no	49.7	50.7
More no than yes	8.7	9.5
Definitely no	1.6	1.3
Expressed overall satisfaction with relationships with teachers (%)		
Definitely yes	31.3	22.8
More yes than no	59.2	63.6
More no than yes	8.0	12.2
Definitely no	0.8	1.1
Used the classrooms (%)	98.7	98.9
Assessment of classrooms (% of users)		
Always or almost always adequate	30.3	24.7
Often adequate	49.3	48.5
Rarely adequate	17.9	23.5
Inadequate	2.5	3.3
Used the computer workstations (%)	81.2	72.3
Assessment of computer workstations (% of users)		
Sufficient number available	55.5	51.3
Insufficient number available	44.5	48.7
Workload proportional to the duration of the degree programme (%)		
Definitely yes	32.7	30.7
More yes than no	49.6	51.6
More no than yes	14.7	14.6
Definitely no	2.5	2.8
Would enrol again at university? (%)		
Yes, in the same degree programme of this university	68.7	70.1
Yes, but in another degree programme of this university	13.2	9.1
Yes, in the same degree programme but at another university	9.5	12.1
Yes, but in a different degree programme and at another university	6.5	6.0
No, I would not enrol again at any university	1.8	2.4

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey, Report 2019

4. Employment Status of Albanian graduates

XXI Employment Status survey 2018 has involved 1,234 Albanian graduates interviewed in 2017 one year after graduation and 593 Albanian graduates interviewed in 2013 five years after graduation. Albanian graduates interviewed one year after graduation are graduates of first-level degree and of second-level degree programmes: 717 have achieved a first-level degree title, 333 have achieved a second-level degree title and 184 have concluded a single-cycle second-level degree programme.

Albanian graduates interviewed five years after graduation are 593. They have achieved a second-level degree title or a single-cycle second level degree: 387 a second-level degree and 206 a single-cycle second-level title.

Since the modest population size of Albanian graduates interviewed five years after the degree, we will focus our attention only on Albanian graduates (first-level degree, second-level degree and single-cycle second level degree) interviewed one year after graduation.

4.1. Employment Status of Albanian graduates, one year after graduation

The percentage of first-level degree graduates who intends to continue the studies with the second-level degree programme, postponing entry into the labour market, involves more than half of the total. In fact, one year after graduation, 51.4% of Albanian graduates in a first-level degree path declares to be enrolled in a second-level degree programme. This percentage is lower than the one observed for Italian first-level graduates (61.3%), however it is high. 75.3% of Albanian graduates have enrolled in the same university where they have obtained the first-level degree programme, while 24.7% have enrolled in another Italian university. The proportion of Albanian graduates who has enrolled in a university abroad is negligible.

One year after graduation, first-level degree graduates of Albanian citizenship have a very high employment rate than that found among Italian colleagues 48.3% against 40.8%. It is not surprisingly that the employment rate is like this, because, as we have mentioned before, a high proportion of first-level degree graduates continues the study programme with the second-level degree, therefore, in the following chapters, we will focus our attention separately on the employment status of second-level degree graduates and single-cycle second-level degree graduates. They are different populations both from the point of view of the characteristics at the entrance of the university and from the point of view of performance in the labour market.

Employment Status of Albanian second-level degree graduates, one year after graduation

As we have mentioned before, the Albanian second-level graduates are 333, that is 27.0% of all Albanian graduates interviewed one year after graduation. In this chapter we will describe the main features of Albanian graduates in second-level degree paths, in comparison with the employment status of Italian second-level degree graduates in Italian universities interviewed one year after graduation.

The participation in post-graduate training activities for Albanian graduates is lower than that recorded for Italians (respectively 50.9% and 58.8%). In particular, for what concerns the carrying out of internships in companies (29.9% against 28.3%) and traineeships (10.9% against 12.2%).

Albanian graduates who attend Ph.D are 3.5% against 5.7% of Italian graduates and Masters 9.8% against 12.5%, probably because of the greater offer in these sectors of courses in English.

Among the second-level graduates of Albanian citizenship, the employment rate (calculated according to the definition adopted by Italian National statistics Office – ISTAT - in the Labour Force Survey, which includes also those involved in paid training activities) is definitely high and equal to 74.0%,

value in line with that registered for Italian second-level graduates (73.8%). On the other hand, the unemployment rate that is slightly higher in comparison with the rate of Italian second-level degree graduates: 17.7% compared to 15.5%.

In evaluating the features of the work carried out, such as, for example, the type of work activity, remuneration and the correspondence between university studies and work carried out, it should be noted that part of them entered in the labour market during the second-level degree, or before. Among the Albanian citizens graduated in Italian Universities, who are working at one year after second level degree, 50.4% of them has entered into the labour market at the end of the second-level degree, 9.5 percentage points lower than what happens among Italian second-level degree graduates. 28.2% of Albanian citizens continue the activity undertaken during the second-level degree or before. A further 21.4% said they had changed their job after the conclusion of their studies, a value higher than that detected for the Italians, equal to 14.9%.

One year after graduation, the types of work most widespread among Albanian graduates in 2018 are permanent contracts (including the contract with increasing protections), non-standard contracts, predominantly temporary contract and training contracts: they represent respectively 37.5% (against 26.9% of Italian graduates), 27.7% (against 35.2% for Italians) and 22.0% (against 17.7% for Italians).

On the other hand, the self-employment work (freelancers, self-employed workers, entrepreneurs, etc.) concerns only 6.9% of Albanian people employed, slightly lower than that detected for Italian second-level degree graduates (7.4%). The remaining contractual forms are residual (para-subordinate work, other self-employment) as well as activities not regulated by a regular employment contract. Regardless of the type of work carried out, 15.9% of graduates with Albanian citizenship are employed in part-time activities (it is 21.2% for Italian second-level graduates).

Table 4: 2017 Graduates' Employment Status: second-level degree graduates interviewed one year after graduation

Characteristics of the current job	2017 Albanian second-level degree graduates	2017 Italian second-level degree graduates
Type of work activity (%)		
Self employed	6.9	7.4
Permanent contract	37.5	26.9
Training contracts	22.0	17.7
Non-standard contracts	27.7	35.2
Collaboration/Consultancy	1.8	3.2
Other kinds of self-employed jobs	2.5	5.1
Without contract	1.6	4.1
Part-time incidence (%)	15.9	21.2

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Employment Status Survey, Report 2019

Most Albanian graduates are employed in the private sector (89.7%; +8.7 percentage points than Italian second-level graduates); only 3.2% is employed in the public sector and the remaining 7.1% in the non-profit sector.

A large part of Albanian graduates declares to carry out their activities within the services field: the percentage one year after graduation is equal to 75.4% (+3.2 percentage points than the Italians). Activities are mainly in the branch of consulting (20.0%), commerce (17.8%), information technology (10.8%), but also in the field of credit and insurance (9.9%). On the other hand, the industry sector absorbs 24.0% of Albanian graduates employed: this percentage is slightly lower than the percentage of Italian second-level degree graduates (25.5%). This value is mainly due to those involved in manufacturing industry (7.7%) and engineering industries and precision engineering industries (7.6%). Only 0.5% of employed graduates have found employment in the agricultural sector, a lower value than that observed for Italian second-level degree graduates.

Albanian graduates claim to receive a remuneration slightly higher than Italian graduates: one year from graduation the net monthly earning is, in fact, equal to 1,282 € for Albanian graduates, while it is 1,219 € for Italian second-level degree graduates. However, must be highlight that the diffusion of part-time work strongly affects these results (it characterizes 21.2% of the Italian second-level degree graduates and 15.9% of Albanian graduates), as well as the percentage of those working abroad, which generally correspond to higher average wages than those received in Italy.

A large part of Albanian graduates employed works in the North of Italy (63.2% among Albanian graduates and 56.7% of Italian second-level graduates) or in the Centre of Italy (25.7% against 20.8% of all the other graduates), while they are fewer in the South of Italy or in the Islands (3.0% against 16.6%). The distribution of the employed in the various territorial areas reflects not only the different employment opportunities offered by the country, but also the different presence of Albanian students in the various Italian universities. It is not surprising that the percentage of graduates working abroad is definitely higher among Albanian graduates: if among the Italian second-level degree graduates involves 5.6% of the employed, among Albanian graduates rises to 8.1%. They are graduates who have achieved the second-level degree in Italy and then they have decided to change place for work.

Table 5: 2017 Graduates' Employment Status: second-level degree graduates interviewed one year after graduation

Characteristics of the company	2017 Albanian second-level degree graduates	2017 Italian second-level degree graduates
Sector of activity (%)		
Public	3.2	13.6
Private	89.7	81.0
Not-for-profit	7.1	5.2
Branch of activity (%)		
Agriculture	0.5	1.2
Engineering industries and precision engineering industries	7.6	8.2
Building industry	5.1	5.4
Chemistry/Energy	3.7	5.3
Manufacturing industry	7.7	6.7
Total for industry	24.0	25.5
Commerce	17.8	9.1
Credit and insurance	9.9	5.4
Transport, advertising and communications	2.8	5.6
Consulting	20.0	13.7
Computer science	10.8	6.1
Other services for companies	2.0	2.8
Public administration, armed forces	0.5	2.6
Education and research	2.7	11.9
Public health	1.4	4.4
Other services	7.5	10.8
Total for services	75.4	72.3
Average monthly net earnings (in euro)		
Male	1,260	1,358
Women	1,296	1,098
Total	1,282	1,219
Work geographic area (%)		
North-West of Italy	40.9	35.1
North-East of Italy	22.3	21.6
Center of Italy	25.7	20.8
South of Italy	2.5	11.9
Isles of Italy	0.5	4.7
Abroad	8.1	5.6

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Employment Status Survey, Report 2019

To assess the correspondence between studies completed and profession carried out, an indicator of effectiveness of the degree was built. It combines formal request of the title for the exercise of their work and the use, in the work done, of the skills acquired during the university path.

One year after graduation, the second-level degree is considered “effective” or “very effective” for more than half of Albanian workers (54.2%, almost in line with the percentage of Italian graduates – 53.7%). It is interesting to analyse, separately, the two components of the effectiveness index: the use of

skills acquired at university and the formal and substantial request of the title. With regard to the first element, it should be noted that, one year after graduation, 47.2% of Albanian graduates workers use the skills acquired during their studies at a high level, while 33.4% declare a limited use of the skills acquired. 19.4% think they do not value at all the knowledge acquired during the degree programme. Regarding the second component of the effectiveness index, 24.5% of employed Albanian graduates declares the degree is required by law for the exercise their profession; another 27.5% of graduates considers the title not required by law, but necessary to carry out the current work activity. For 29.4% of Albanian employed graduates, the academic title, although not formally required, is considered useful for carrying out the current work, while for the remaining 18.6% it is not useful in any sense.

Employment Status of Albanian single-cycle second-level degree graduates, one year after graduation

The Albanian single-cycle second-level graduates are 184 and they represent 14.9% of all Albanian graduates interviewed one year after graduation. Unlike what happens for second-level degree graduates, for the single-cycle second-level the participation in post-graduate training activities is more spread, but always on lower level compared to the level observed for the Italian single-cycle second-level graduates interviewed one year after graduation (63.1% against 77.6%). They mainly continue their post-graduation studies with internships (40.2%, it is 49.9% for Italians). All the other post-graduation activities are less relevant for Albanian single-cycle second-level graduates. These results certainly affects the employment rate of Albanian graduates one year after graduation: in fact, their employment rate is equal to 65.1% (it is 59.7% for Italian single-cycle graduates), a percentage that is much lower than the employment rate of Albanian second-level graduates (74.0%).

The main features of Albanian single-cycle second-level degree graduates could be described as follows: 65.5% have started to work after graduation; 29.3% work as self-employed and 25.2% with permanent contracts, percentages higher than the ones observed for Italian graduates in the same degree type. Part-time incidence is equal to 38.6% for the Albanians, more than 30.2% for Italian single-cycle second-level graduates. Probably the greater presence of women in the collective of Albanians leads to a greater incidence of part-time job.

Table 6: 2017 Graduates' Employment Status: single-cycle second-level degree graduates interviewed one year after graduation

Characteristics of the current job	2017 Albanian single-cycle second-level degree graduates	2017 Italian single-cycle second-level degree graduates
Type of work activity (%)		
Self employed	29.3	23.5
Permanent contract	25.2	14.2
Training contracts	17.5	9.0
Non-standard contracts	21.7	37.0
Collaboration/Consultancy	-	2.1
Other kinds of self-employed jobs	1.1	7.7
Without contract	5.2	6.0
Part-time incidence (%)	38.6	30.2

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Employment Status Survey, Report 2019

88.5% of Albanian single-cycle graduates work in private sector and most of them in the branch of commerce (42.2%, higher than 20.7% of all Italian graduates). Most of Albanian graduates works in Italy, but there is also 13.5% that works abroad (the value is 3.6% for Italian single-cycle second-level). About remuneration, Albanian graduates receive a lower remuneration compared to the Italians' one: one year after graduation the net monthly earning is, in fact, equal to 1,191 € for Albanian graduates, while it is 1,255 € for the Italian single-cycle second-level degree graduates. But it is interesting that the remuneration of Albanian women is better than men one, and it is better also of the remuneration earned by Italian women graduates of the same degree type.

Table 7: 2017 Graduates' Employment Status: single-cycle second-level degree graduates interviewed one year after graduation

Characteristics of the company	2017 Albanian single-cycle second-level degree graduates	2017 Italian single-cycle second-level degree graduates
Sector of activity (%)		
Public	11.5	23.1
Private	88.5	74.8
Not-for-profit	-	1.9
Branch of activity (%)		
Agriculture	-	0.7
Engineering industries and precision engineering industries	-	0.6
Building industry	5.3	7.3
Chemistry/Energy	5.6	5.4
Manufacturing industry	-	1.6
Total for industry	10.8	14.9
Commerce	42.2	20.7
Credit and insurance	2.7	4.0
Transport, advertising and communications	-	2.0
Consulting	8.1	13.3
Computer science	-	0.6
Other services for companies	-	1.8
Public administration, armed forces	-	2.7
Education and research	0.7	10.0
Public health	32.8	23.9
Other services	2.7	4.6
Total for services	89.2	83.5
Average monthly net earnings (in euro)		
Male	1,074	1,367
Women	1,244	1,190
Total	1,191	1,255
Work geographic area (%)		
North-West of Italy	35.6	28.5
North-East of Italy	18.2	20.5
Center of Italy	29.5	22.8
South of Italy	2.0	16.1
Isles of Italy	1.3	8.1
Abroad	13.5	3.6

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Employment Status Survey, Report 2019

One year after graduation, the single-cycle second-level degree is considered “effective” or “very effective” from 79.3% of Albanian graduates (slightly more than the Italians, 76.9%). 66.0% of Albanian graduates workers use the skills acquired during their studies at a high level (in line with the value of the Italians, 65.3%). Regarding the other component of the effectiveness index, 78.8% of employed Albanian single-cycle second-level graduates declare the degree is required by law for the exercise of profession (it is 66.2% for the Italian single-cycle second-level graduates).

Conclusions

From the analysis of the last surveys results run by AlmaLaurea and a review of main international literature, we would like to underline few results and policies suggested by International organizations.

Regarding AlmaLaurea surveys, it is also interesting to analyse the differences between the employment situation of Albanian graduates at one year and at five years after graduation. At five years from graduation the employment situation of Albanian graduates gets better both for second-level degree graduates and for single-cycle second-level degree graduates. In fact, the employment rate improves over time for Albanian graduates: it is 74.0% at one year from graduation and it arrives to 77,0% at five years from graduation for second-level degree graduates; for single-cycle second-level degree graduates the increase is even greater (from 65.1% at one year, to 81.7% at five years). There are differences also at level of type of work activity. Permanent contracts increases over the years both for second-level degree graduates and for single-cycle second-level degree graduates. For the first ones, the increases is +25.2 percentage points from one year to five years from graduation. For single-cycle second-level graduates, the increases is more limited, but still high: +15.6 percentage points from one to five years from graduation. There is also an increase in terms of remuneration: for second-level degree graduates the remuneration goes from 1,282 € at one year to 1,353 € at five years from graduation. For single- cycle second-level, the remuneration reaches 1,577 € at five years from graduation (at one year it was 1,191 €). The percentage of employees who work abroad five years after graduation grows a lot among second-level degree graduates: they are 19.1% at five years (only 8.1% at one year from graduation). While for single-cycle second-level degree graduates the percentage decreases from 13.5% (at one year) to 10.9% (at five years after graduation).

Regarding the International view, the International Labour Office report (2013) highlights how the crisis is increasingly raising unemployment rates. Despite macroeconomic policies like low interest rates in many advanced economies, investment and employment have not shown tangible signs of recovery. The ILO report argues that policy-makers need to tackle uncertainty to increase investment and job creation and providing better coordination of different policy instruments. Policies should promote employment-centred and inclusive growth. These elements are vital if young people are to be given a fair chance at a decent job. At European level, an “*Evidence-based Policy-Making*” is in implementation phase. Current tools (e.g. €tat data, national reports, European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP), EU Research Framework Programme) are a first step, as well as the triennial report on Youth in Europe. There is an equal need to share research results and for networking of researchers throughout Europe. For these objectives, the EU proposes to consolidate EKCYP by completing the country profiles, review existing trends for the priorities through Eurydice, design a dashboard of existing indicators and benchmarks concerning youth in education, employment, inclusion and health, set up a Working Group to discuss possible “*descriptors*” (light indicators) for the priorities of participation, volunteering, creativity and youth in the world, as well as for

NEETs (youngsters Not in Education, Employment or Training). In the meantime launch studies on: (1) "*Baby Bonds*" - the use of funds held in trust to support youth autonomy later in life (2010); (2) social and Economic Impact of Youth Work (2011); (3) youth e-participation and Information Society (2012); (4) launch regular youth Euro-barometers; (5) promote use of the EU Research Framework Programme for youth research and follow-up. Other steps at European level are represented by Simplified Reporting, mobilisation of EU Programmes and Funds (cross-border mobility, etc.) and cooperation with other EU Institutions and International Organizations.

New and innovative approach aims to create concrete synergies between University and labour market is requested. New forms of collaboration and comparative analysis could have advantages in a triangulation view: for graduates (democratic access to labour market; gain new experiences and expertise; exploit innovative services oriented both to placement and to post graduate opportunities; exploit the international exchange experiences); for Universities (having more detailed statistical data useful for improving educational programmes; increase the internationalization of HEIs) and for society at large (improve the international cooperation and also benefits young people outside academia; enhance networks between Universities, Economy and Society overcoming fragmentation; promote safe and regulated channels for labour migration of the skilled workers). In order to achieve such objectives, the interaction between innovation, institutional change and new forms of collaboration between Higher Education Institutions characterizing the economic and institutional evolution which took place during the last quarter of a century should continue in an intensive and strategic approaches, because it can shape the new values, skills and knowledge we need for the century ahead.

In this framework, we would like to end underling the fact that a stronger economic growth will not be sufficient to solve a number of long-term difficulties that young generations face in making a smooth transition from school to work. Following a path that include higher education level in an international context (international mobility and other international experiences) will give to young generation more opportunities on global labour market, obtaining access to quality jobs that inhibit precarious paths and eventually social exclusion, increasing their quality of life.

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