

# *Demographic dynamics and characteristics of urbanization in Albania in the third decade of transition: the determining steps in shaping the demographic-territorial model of transition*

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## **Abstract**

*The third phase of urbanization of Albania in transition was shaped by: (i) external migration; (ii) decline in natural population growth; and (iii) internal migration. In the period 2014-2022, 178,094 more inhabitants left Albania than returned. This number has increased a lot in the last two years, which also shows the future trend of the phenomenon. Another contributor to this basic national phenomenon remains the level of natural population growth. During the years 2014-2022, Albania: (i) grew by 42,054 new inhabitants, as a result of natural growth (birth-death difference); and, this growth has generally come in a downward trend, where it is worth differentiating the year 2021 where the natural growth is negative. The phenomenon of population aging accompanied this transition decade. Internal migration led to large-scale urbanization of some areas and drastic depopulation of others. The internal migration scheme contributed to the further deepening of the demographic difference between the three main regions of the country: Greater Region Tirana-Durres; The Middle Region Fier-Vlora and the Abandoned Region that includes the other eight districts of the country. Internal migratory movements are also clearly visible at the*

*inter-county level. For the period 2014-2016, the districts of Tirana, Fier, Durrës and Vlora experienced growth and hold the main weight of the total population, which is expressed by about 58%. Internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of demographic differences between the three regions of the country, even in the 2017-2019 period. Large districts will continue to remain so and grow further, while small districts will continue to shrink. Even in the following three years, 2020-2022, internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of demographic differences between the three regions of the country. These demographic dynamics established the demographic-territorial model of the country and the dominance of the District of Tirana over the other 11 districts of the country.*

**Keywords:** *demography, external migration, internal migration, natural population growth, population aging, level of urbanization, demographic-territorial model, population concentration, population abandonment*

## **Presentation**

This paper aims to present and analyze the demographic dynamics, the level of urbanization and the demographic-territorial model of Albania in the third decade of transition. It tries to put together all the information collected by other researchers regarding demography, external and internal migration, population distribution and inhabited centers throughout the National territory. The paper aims to analyze these data, to understand and present the level of urbanization of the country and the characteristics of the urban-spatial structure, in the period studied.

In the absence of a general census of the population and housing, for this decade we have referred to INSTAT studies published in the annual periodical report *'Population of Albania'*. Unlike the first two periods of urbanization, when the population level refers to empirical measurements on the ground through the General Population and Housing Censuses, this figure should be taken with suspicion because INSTAT does not measure it empirically but calculates this indicator (INSTAT, 2020: 8).

This fact has affected two dimensions: (i) the paper has limitations in the accuracy of its analysis and findings, because the INSTAT data are not measured empirically; and, (ii) the structure of the paper is adapted to the way the data that INSTAT presents in the periodic annual reports are collected and produced.

The paper starts with an overview of the population level in the country (2022). What stands out is that the third phase of transitioning Albania's urbanization was shaped by the same demographic dynamics as the first two decades of transition. They expressed the same forms, including: (i) external migration; (ii) the decline in

natural population growth; and (iii) internal migration (Vulnetari, 2012; INSTAT, 2014-2022; RM, 2015, 2018).

It is followed by an overview of external migration (2011-2021), which is one of the two formative components of the level of demography in the country (INSTAT, 2014, 2015-2023; RM, 2017). In total, it can be said that in the period 2014-2023, 178,094 more residents left Albania than returned. What stands out, too, is that this number has increased greatly in the last two years, which also indicates the future trend of the phenomenon.

Another contributor to this basic national phenomenon remains the level of natural population growth (INSTAT, 2004, 2014, 2015-2022; RM, 2015-2022), therefore the paper continues with an overview of it (2011-2021). In general, natural growth is expressed in the difference between births and deaths. Its main factor is the Fertility Index, which in 2018 set a historical record in the average number of children born to a woman. The fertility index was only 1.37 children per woman from 1.48 children in 2017 and from 1.73 children per woman which was this index in 2014 (RM, 2020).

What stands out from demographic figures is the fact that during the years 2014-2022, Albania: (i) grew by 42,054 new inhabitants, as a result of natural growth (birth-death difference); and, this growth has generally come in a downward trend, where it is worth differentiating the year 2021 where the natural growth is negative. Another very negative demographic phenomenon that accompanied this decade was the aging of the population (INSTAT, 2015-2021; RM, 2016-2022).

These figures and demographic analysis show that in this decade the population has suffered a significant decrease as a result of external migration, but also due to the level of natural population growth.

Further in this paper we will present and analyze the distribution of this demographic level in the national territory, in order to understand the level of urbanization and its characteristics as a shaper of the demographic-territorial model of the country. We will do this by presenting and analyzing the internal movements of the population (internal migration), as the only shaper of these urban indicators, starting from a quick look at the internal migration in the post-Census moment (2010-2011) and the perspective of following general.

Internal migratory movements in the time period 2011-2021 (INSTAT, 2014, 2016-2020; RM, 2015-2022) follow the trends of two previous periods, 1991-2001 and 2001-2011 (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998; Misja and Misja, 2004; Faja, 2008; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al, 2008). Internal migration brought a large-scale urbanization of some areas and a drastic depopulation of some others (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

The internal migration scheme relies on the four main lines of population displacement (INSTAT, 2014: 53; Vullnetari 2007, 2012), which contributed to the further deepening of the demographic difference between the three main regions of the country: Greater Region Tirana-Durres; The Middle Region Fier-Vlora

and the Abandoned Region that includes the other eight regions of the country (INSTAT, 2014, 2015-2022). Internal migratory movements and their results in relation to the level of population and urbanization are clearly visible even at the inter-county level (INSTAT, 2014).

The paper then continues with a detailed look at internal migration and the demographic-territorial model for the years 2014-2016. For this period it can be said that, excluding Elbasan, which remains large for historical reasons (Kaprata, 2022; Kaprata and Lubonja, 2022), the districts of Tirana, Fier, Durres and Vlora, experienced growth and hold the main weight of the population in general, which is expressed by about 58% of the national population. This means that the two 'concentrated' regions of the territorial model of the concentration-abandonment of the territory by the population have densified, while the districts of the Abandoned Region have lost population (INSTAT, 2015-2017, RM, 2015-2017).

A detailed view of internal migration and the demographic-territorial model for the period 2017-2019, I will outline in the paper. Internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of demographic differences between the three regions of the country, even in the following three years. Large districts will continue to remain so and grow further, while small districts will continue to shrink further.

The panorama of the weight ratio between the two 'concentrating' regions of the territorial model is further clarified, with a clear dominance of the Tirana-Durres Region with an increase about 40 times higher than that of the Fier-Vlora Region (INSTAT, 2018).

The paper continues with a detailed look at internal migration and the demographic-territorial model for the period 2020-2022. Even in the following three years, internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of demographic differences between the three regions of the country.

This demographic dynamic will further differentiate the population level ratios between the constitutive districts of the same region, especially between the districts of the two regions that are experiencing population concentration. This difference establishes the demographic-territorial model of the country and the dominance of the District of Tirana over the other 11 districts of the country.

The paper closes with some modest findings and conclusions.

## **The purpose and methodology of the work**

The first aim of this paper is to collect data regarding the population level (demography), internal demographic movements during the period 2011-2022, and the level of urbanization (the third decade of transition). In this sense, the

study aims to contribute first to the expansion of knowledge on these demographic and urban/territorial aspects, which is also its first contribution.

The purpose of the paper is to analyze these data to understand the development of the country, throughout the period under study, in the aspects of: (i) external migratory movements; (ii) natural population growth, and other demographic characteristics; (iii) internal migratory movements; (iv) of the urban-spatial structure of the country and its characteristics; (v) the demographic-territorial model of the country. The conclusions of this analysis, within the scope of this paper, will contribute to a wider understanding of the urban phenomena of the period under study and the contextual reasons of the subsequent urban-territorial development.

The methodology of this work is based on the analytical one, which is foreseen as the most suitable in this work, as it explains in a systematic and detailed way the phenomenon taken in the study, throughout the time that the study includes.

The methods used in this paper are qualitative. This paper theoretically evaluates demography, the level of urbanization, the urban-spatial structure, the characteristics of the urban-spatial structure of the country, and the characteristics of the Albanian city in the period studied. This is done using secondary sources of authors who spoke on these topics and Albanian institutions that have produced empirical measurements and theoretical analyzes on demographic and migration issues.

## Overview of the population level in the country (2022)

The third phase of urbanization of Albania in transition was shaped by the same demographic dynamics as the first two decades of transition. They expressed the same forms, including: (i) external migration; (ii) internal migration; and (iii) the decline in natural population growth (Vulnetari, 2012; INSTAT, 2014-2022; RM, 2015, 2018).

External migration was one of the main reasons for the decrease in the number of the population. In the same direction, the decrease in the level of natural population growth, which is measured by the difference between the number of births and the number of deaths, contributed (INSTAT, 2014-2022; RM, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022).

The population of Albania, according to the report '*Population of Albania*', on January 1, 2022 is 2,793,592 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 1.3%, compared to January 1, 2021 (INSTAT, 2022: 1). While in 2011, the population of Albania was 2,831,741 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2014: 15), the measurements of 2022 show that the population has decreased by 38,149 inhabitants in these years.

Unlike the first two periods of urbanization, when the population level refers to empirical measurements on the ground through the ‘*General Population and Housing Censuses*’, this figure should be taken with suspicion because INSTAT does not measure empirically but calculates this indicator. For its calculation, INSTAT is based “on the generation component method”, which according to it is a standard demographic method that “uses a variety of data sources for the basic components of population change” (INSTAT, 2020: 8).

If we refer to INSTAT, these sources also include data predicted by the authors of the study themselves, such as the “coefficients of population projections 2011-2031”. This means that INSTAT, using the 2011 census data, has made its own predictions of how the population dynamics will be presented in the next 20 years (INSTAT, 2014), and then uses these predictions to calculate the number of the population of the corresponding year (INSTAT, 2020).

The problem of the inaccuracy of INSTAT data has been presented by many authors, such as Vullnetari, Fuga, the World Bank, but also the author of this paper (Vullnetari, 2007, 2012; Fuga 2012, 2019; BB, 2007; Kaprata, 2021). However, INSTAT itself acknowledges the problem when it underlines that “Given that resident Albanians are not systematically registered when they leave the country and, since there are few incentives for them to register their departure with the local authorities, there is no reliable measurement of the number of individuals who have left Albania.” (INSTAT, 2014: 31).

The inaccuracies of INSTAT data are more apparent when it comes to matters more complicated than demographics. While presenting an analysis regarding employment, in the 2014 ‘Economic Characteristics’ Report, INSTAT would admit that “The main conclusion from this analysis is that there are large differences between employment data from the population census and those from the census of agriculture and labor force survey of 2011 (third quarter)” (INSTAT, 2014: 47).

However, according to INSTAT, the population of the country compared to a year ago: (i) on January 1, 2015, it reached 2,893,005 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 2,942 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2015: 1); on January 1, 2016, it was 2,886,026 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 6,276 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2016: 1); on January 1, 2017, 2,876,591 inhabitants are estimated, suffering a decrease of 9,435 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2017: 1).

The population of Albania continued to decline progressively in the following years. Expressed as a percentage compared to the previous year, it resulted: on January 1, 2018, 2,870,324 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 0.2% (INSTAT, 2018: 1); on January 1, 2019, 2,862,427 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 0.3% (INSTAT, 2019: 1); on January 1, 2020, 2,845,955 inhabitants suffering a decrease of 0.6% (INSTAT, 2020: 1); on January 1, 2021, 2,829,741 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 0.6% (INSTAT, 2021: 1); on January 1, 2022, 2,793,592 inhabitants, suffering



a decrease of 1.3% (INSTAT, 2022: 1); on January 1, 2023, 2,761,785 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 1.1% (INSTAT, 2023: 1).

As can be clearly seen from these figures, beyond the real impossibility of INSTAT to collect accurate empirical data on the number of residents in the country, referring to its annual calculations, we can say that Albania has not only lost population in the third decade of transition (2011-2022), but this loss has been annual and in an increasing progression from year to year.

According to the Monitor Magazine, referring to the new projections of the Department of Population at the United Nations Organization, the century in which we live will end with fatal results for the country's population. Taking into consideration the progress of the population only in gross birth rates (fertility rate) according to all scenarios, Albania will have a decrease in its population. But "Even according to national data (INSTAT), the country's population is shrinking faster than the population projections 2011 - 2031. On January 1, 2018, the population was 18 thousand people less than the official INSTAT projection (RM, 2019).

## **Overview of external migration (2011-2021)**

One of the two components forming the level of demography in the country is net external migration, which is expressed in the difference between: (i) emigration (outbound migration); and, (ii) immigration (incoming external migration) (INSTAT, 2004, 2013, 2014, 2015-2022; RM, 2015, 2016, 2017).

The population of Albania has been decreasing since 2001, and if we refer to the Monitor Magazine "In this decrease in the population, net migration has a significant impact and less natural increase of the population. While the first component continues to remain negative, the second, although positive, has declined during the period in question" (RM, 2017).

In 2014, it was estimated that 46,413 people left the country, while in the same year the number of immigrants in Albania was estimated to be 28,367 people. Referring to these INSTAT figures, it can be said that "the net external migration during 2014 was in the amount of 18,046 individuals" (INSTAT, 2015: 1). For this reason, "Since 2014, the trend of emigration abroad has deepened" (RM, 2015). This figure does not match the decrease of the country's resident population, of 2,942 people, for the reason that the natural increase of the population of 15,104 people has a positive effect here (INSTAT, 2015: 1).

During 2014, net migration in Albania compared to 2013 decreased by 245 people (INSTAT, 2015: 1). Although the indicator is down from a year ago, if we refer to the Monitor Magazine we can say that "With this progress, Albania ranks second in Europe after Moldova for the high level of immigration. Both countries are ranked first for the level of addiction in Europe" (RM, 2015).

Similarly, in 2015, it was estimated that 42,922 people left the country, while the number of immigrants (returnees) in Albania was estimated to be 25,846 people (INSTAT, 2016: 1). If we compare it with a year ago, we can say that “During 2015, net migration in Albania, compared to 2014, decreased by about 1000 people” (RM, 2016).

While, during 2015-2016, net migration (the difference between immigrants and emigrants), suffered a contraction as a result of the decrease in the number of immigrants from about 41 thousand to about 33 thousand and the increase in the number of immigrants from about 21 thousand to about 23 thousand (INSTAT, 2017: 3). However, Monitor Magazine thinks that this data is not real, according to it “Albania’s population recorded a minimal increase of 0.03 percent during 2016, for the first time since 2001, ..., but this increase came as a result of changing the methodology with which INSTAT measures migratory flows in the country” (RM, 2017).

The country’s population shrank faster than expected, as a result of the drop in birth rate, but also the return of the emigration cycle. At the beginning of 2017, there were 8 thousand people less than the population projections of the medium variant that INSTAT issued for the period 2011-2031 (RM, 2017). Net migration in 2017 was 14,902 inhabitants, and results as the difference between the number of immigrants (outgoing) of 39,905 people and the number of immigrants (incoming) of 25,003 people (INSTAT, 2018: 1, 3).

This figure of net external migration, a year later will mark a decrease of 0.9%, because it will be only 15,030 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2019: 1). In this year, the number of immigrants (outgoing) was 38,703 people, suffering a decrease of 3.0%, compared to the previous year, while the number of immigrants (incoming) was 23,673 people, suffering a decrease of 5.3 %, compared to a year ago (INSTAT, 2019: 3).

In 2019, the number of immigrants (outgoing) was 43,835 people, experiencing an increase of 13.3%, compared to 2018; whereas the number of immigrants (incoming) would be 20,753 people, suffering a decrease of 12.3%, compared to 2018, which would bring a net migration to the indicator of 23,082 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2020: 3). Referred to Monitor Magazine “Albania is experiencing a new increase in the phenomenon of immigration. Asylum applications alone, in the last five years, have reached about 200 thousand, according to official data from Eurostat, while there are many others who run away with work contracts, or who simply leave and never return” (RM, 2020) .

Even in 2020, Albanians showed the highest percentage of the desire to live and work abroad, compared to other countries in the Region, according to the Survey of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in the Balkan Barometer 2021 (RM, 2021 ). This is also distinguished from the indicators published by INSTAT.



In 2020, the number of immigrants (outgoing) was 23,854 people, in 2020; while the number of immigrants (incoming) was 7,170 people. Net migration, the difference between immigrants and emigrants, suffered a contraction, compared to the previous year: from 23,082 residents lost in 2019; in 16,684 lost inhabitants in 2020. (INSTAT, 2021: 1, 3).

During 2021, a significant increase in emigration was observed, while the number of returnees remains low (RM, 2022). The number of immigrants in 2021 was 9,195 people and the number of immigrants was 42,048 people. Net migration experienced an increase in absolute value, compared to the previous year: from 16,684 people lost in 2020; in 32,853 lost inhabitants in 2021 (INSTAT, 2022: 1).

These figures and demographic analysis from INSTAT and Monitor Magazine show that in this decade the population has suffered a significant decline, especially as a result of external migration. Another contributor to this basic national phenomenon remains the level of natural population growth (INSTAT, 2004, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015-2022; RM, 2015-2022), which we will address below.

## Overview of the level of natural growth (2011-2021)

Monitor magazine in the article *‘INSTAT: 2012-2017 Albania decreased by 26 thousand inhabitants’*, underlines that “Changes in the population [demographic decline] come as a result of two components: the natural addition of the population and net migration” (RM, 2017). The natural increase of the population is expressed in the difference between births and deaths, and has been declining year after year.

Referring to the article *‘The UN revises the projections of the Albanian population with a 30-40% decrease; In the pessimistic scenario, we remain only 512 thousand people in the year 2100’*, from the Monitor Magazine “The latest INSTAT data showed that women living in Albania year after year are giving up motherhood, drastically reducing the number of babies born in life” (RM, 2020). According to her, “In 2018, this phenomenon was emphasized even more when the average number of children born to a woman set a historical record. The fertility index was only 1.37 children per woman from 1.48 children in 2017 and from 1.73 children per woman which was this index in 2014” (RM, 2020).

INSTAT statistics show us that during 2014 only 10 more births and 214 deaths were registered than in 2013. Albania has increased with 35,760 new inhabitants during this year (INSTAT, 2015: 1). This demographic indicator will decline in the coming years. According to Monitor Magazine “The number of children will continue to decline by a quarter and the number of elderly will increase by four fifths by 2031. This will lead to an advanced aging of the population, with more dependence on elderly compared to children” (RM, 2015).

The forecast of the Monitor Magazine will be confirmed every year by the statistics brought by INSTAT in its annual publication “Population in Albania”, starting from 2015, in which the number of births in Albania was 33,221, and 22,422 deaths occurred, resulted in a natural increase in 10,799 people (INSTAT, 2016: 1).

During 2016, about 32 thousand babies were born, while about 21 thousand people died. The natural addition of the population was positive with about 11 thousand people. Referred to INSTAT “For the first time since 2001, the natural increase exceeded the net migration, resulting in a slight increase in the number of the resident population on January 1, 2017” (INSTAT, 2017: 1). But, if we refer to the Monitor Magazine, in a comparison between these actual figures and INSTAT forecasts for the period 2011-2031, we can say that “The country’s population is shrinking at a faster rate than the forecasts” and “The number of births was 8% below expectations” (RM, 2017).

A decrease of 16.5% compared to the previous year would occur during 2017, the natural increase of the population (birth-death), which was 8,637 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2018: 1). During this year, 30,869 babies were born, while the number of deaths was 22,232 people (INSTAT, 2018: 2). Similarly, if we refer to the article “The scary forecast of the UN: The Albanian population risks reaching 860 thousand inhabitants by the year 2100”, from the Monitor Magazine, we can underline that “Albania is one of the few countries in Europe that will experience a sad population transition” (RM, 2018).

Even during 2018, the natural increase of the population will suffer a further decrease, of 17.4%, compared to the previous year (INSTAT, 2019: 1). During this year, 28,934 babies were born, suffering a decrease of 6.3%, while the number of deaths was 21,804 people, suffering a decrease of 1.9% (INSTAT, 2019: 2).

The natural increase in 2019 was only 6624 people, a year ago, the natural increase was 7130 people, while in 1990 it was 64 thousand people per year, or almost 12 times higher than in 2019 (RM, 2020). In percentage, this comparative statistic is provided by INSTAT, according to which this annual decrease is 7.1% compared to the previous year (INSTAT, 2020: 1). According to INSTAT, during 2019, 28,561 babies were born, and 21,937 people died (INSTAT, 2020: 2).

During 2020, the natural increase of the population was 470 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 92.9%, compared to the previous year (INSTAT, 2021: 1). This addition is expressed in the difference between 28,075 babies born and 27,605 lives lost (INSTAT, 2021: 3). Even the Monitor Magazine would notice that “... fertility rates (expressing the number of children a woman can have during her lifetime) are falling rapidly year after year, signaling irreversible population decline. The fertility rate has dropped to about 1.3 births per woman (below the replacement rate)” (RM, 2022) dropping significantly from 6 in the 1960s (King

and Vullnetari, 2003; Vullnetari 2007, 2012; Hoxha, 2017) and over 2 in the early 90s (WB, 2007; INSTAT, 2004, 2014).

During 2021, 27,284 babies were born, suffering a decrease of 2.8%, compared to the previous year. The number of deaths in 2021 was 30,580 people, having an increase of 10.8%, compared to the previous year (INSTAT, 2022: 3). The same phenomenon is also distinguished by the Monitor Magazine, according to which “During 2021, the natural increase of the population (birth-death) was -3,296 inhabitants, marking for the first time a negative natural increase” (RM, 2022).

Another very negative demographic phenomenon that accompanied this decade was the aging of the population (INSTAT, 2015-2021; RM, 2016-2022). The median age indicator increased from 34 years in 2015: to 35 years in 2016 (INSTAT, 2017: 2); to 35.0 years old in 2017 (INSTAT, 2018: 2); at 35.4 years old in 2018 (INSTAT, 2019: 2); to 36.7 in 2019 (INSTAT, 2020); to 37.2 years old in 2020 (INSTAT, 2020: 2); to 37.6 years in 2021 (INSTAT, 2021: 2); to 38.2 years in 2022 (INSTAT, 2022: 2); and to 38.8 years in 2023 (INSTAT, 2023: 2).

These figures and demographic analysis from INSTAT and Monitor Magazine show that in this decade the population has suffered a significant decrease as a result of external migration, but also due to the level of natural population growth. The statistics of INSTAT and the analyzes of Reviste Monitor talk about a progressive aging of the population which affects many sectors of the social, political and economic development of the country, but especially in the natural growth of the population (INSTAT, 2004, 2014, 2015-2022; RM , 2015-2022).

Both indicators: (i) net external migration; and, (ii) the reduction of natural population growth will determine the level of population (demographic) of the country. Further in this paper we will present and analyze the distribution of this demographic level in the national territory, in order to understand the level of urbanization of the country and its characteristics as a shaper of the demographic-territorial model of the country. We will achieve this by presenting and analyzing the internal movements of the population (internal migration), as the only shaper of these urban indicators.

## **Quick view of internal migration in the post-Census moment (2010-2011) and the general perspective going forward**

External migration together with natural population growth shape the resident population of the country, which, observed in the way it is distributed across the national territory, produces the level of urbanization and the demographic-territorial model of the country. This is the first reason why we presented and analyzed: (i) external migration; and, (ii) natural population growth. But also

because “As in other countries in transition, in Albania both phenomena [internal and international migration] are closely related” (INSTAT, 2014: 12). This phenomenon would be more clearly distinguished by Vullnetari in 2012, in the paper *Albanian on the Move: Links between Internal and International Migration* (Vullnetari, 2012).

Internal migratory movements in the time period 2011-2021 (INSTAT, 2014, 2016-2020; RM, 2015-2022) follow the trends of two previous periods, 1991-2001 and 2001-2011 (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998; Misja and Misja, 2004; Faja, 2008; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al, 2008). What is clearly distinguished in INSTAT’s annual *Population of Albania* reports, but also in Monitor Magazine’s analysis, is the fact that internal migratory movements are presented in very high values even in this third decade of transition (INSTAT, 2014, 2016 -2020; RM, 2015-2022).

A clear argument of this dynamic is the fact that even the statistics of internal migration change rapidly in just one year, which requires updating the data on this social phenomenon even for this short period. Referring to INSTAT, it can be said that “In particular, internal migration brought a large-scale urbanization of some areas and a drastic depopulation of some others.” (INSTAT, 2014: 12).

All counties of Albania experience internal migration from other counties, but the most favored counties remain those of the central region. This phenomenon can be observed in detail in table 5 *Residential population that has changed the usual place of residence, 2010-2011* of the *Migration in Albania* report of INSTAT. In this table, it is clear that all counties have been affected by internal migration throughout this year (INSTAT, 2014: 53).

If we analyze the figures presented in this table in more detail, we will notice that internal movements shape an inter-regional migration scheme. This scheme is based on the four main lines of population displacement, where the first three are destined for the Tirana-Durrës Region, while the fourth line is for the Fier-Vlorë Region (INSTAT, 2014: 53; Vullnetari 2012). What further emphasizes the two main characteristics of the territorial transition model, the ‘concentration’ of the population in the central region of the country and the ‘abandonment’ of the northern and southern regions by the population.

The first three lines attract migrants who come: (i) from the north-east of the country and are generally from Kukës and Dibër districts (INSTAT, 2004: 25); (ii) from the internal regions of the country and include the districts of Berat, Korçë, Elbasan, Gjirokastrë and Shkodër (INSTAT, 2004: 24; Vullnetari, 2012); and from the secondary centers located on the coast that include the districts of Vlorë, Fier and Lezhë (INSTAT, 2004: 24; Vullnetari 2012). While the fourth line of population displacement consists of migrants who come “from the interior areas [Berat, Korçë, Elbasan, Gjirokastrë and Shkodër counties] who head to the secondary centers of the country’s coast [Fier-Vlorë]” (INSTAT, 2004 : 24).

These four lines remained the same throughout the years 2014-2021, as we will see below, and contributed to the further deepening of the demographic difference between the three main regions of the country: Greater Tirana-Durres Region; The Middle Fier-Vlora Region and the Abandoned Region that includes the other eight regions of the country (INSTAT, 2014, 2015-2022).

To be emphasized is the Tirana region, which, as INSTAT would say, “Even though internal movements are multidimensional, it is obvious that the vast majority of internal migration flows are concentrated towards Tirana.” (INSTAT, 2014: 12). For the opposite reason, the district of Gjirokastra is also to be distinguished. Referring to the article *‘Population of Albania 120 thousand people less until 2031’* of the Monitor Magazine “The district which records the highest population decline during the years 2010-2014 is that of Gjirokastra with a decrease of 2.7 percent or 2 thousand residents every year” (RM, 2015).

Internal migratory movements and their results in relation to the level of population and urbanization are clearly visible even at the inter-districts level (INSTAT, 2014). In this dimension we will focus more, referring to each year, for two main reasons.

First, there are no statistics for the decade as a whole because the census of this time period has not been developed, so we will refer to the annual estimates of INSTAT *‘Population of Albania’*, and the analyzes of the Monitor Magazine, where we found the information of necessary. And secondly, what is more important, for this phase of urbanization we are more focused on understanding what happened to the dynamics of internal population movements and urbanization at the level of the forming districts of the three components of the territorial model.

## **Detailed view of internal migration and demographic-territorial model (2014-2016)**

We will start the observation of internal migration and its products at the level of urbanization with the year 2014, given that many statistics from the years 2012-2013 are not organized together in a dedicated INSTAT report (as for the years 2014-2022 ). Moreover, part of the demographic measurements of this period were used in INSTAT thematic studies in 2014 (INSTAT, 2014).

In this year (2014), internal migration continued emphasizing the fact that the district with the highest population in Albania is Tirana. It includes 800,986 inhabitants, followed by Fieri with 315,012 inhabitants and Elbasan with 301,397 inhabitants. Whereas the districts with the lowest population in the country for 2015 are Gjirokastra with 72,202 inhabitants, Kukësi with 85,461 inhabitants and Dibra with 136,476 inhabitants, which shows that the growth of other districts comes as a result of their decline (INSTAT, 2015; RM, 2015).

The fact that the district of Elbasan is presented with a high level of population is not a result of its mechanical growth in this year or in previous years, but as a result of the fact that it includes the city of Elbasan, which has historically been a large city (Misja and Misja, 2004; Faja, 2008). We can also understand this fact from the Monitor Magazine, which does not mention Elbasan as a city or as a county that has grown in this year. According to her, “Of all the counties, only Tirana, Durres and Vlora have seen an increase in population, while the others have suffered a decrease in the tax population” (RM, 2015).

As in the first and second phase of urbanization (1991-2001 and 2001-2011), this year too, the internal dynamics of the components of the territorial model will be identified. Thus, in the Tirana-Durrësi Region, the district of Tirana “with an increase of 1.61%” is the district that grew the most this year (INSTAT, 2015; RM, 2015), creating a further difference from the district of Durrës.

While the district with the highest decrease in population “is Gjirokastra with an annual decrease of 1.84%” (INSTAT, 2015). It contributed to the further growth of Tirana because “internal migration from Gjirokastra is oriented towards the central districts [Tirana and Durrës]” (INSTAT, 2014: 19). The same dynamic can be seen in the Fier-Vlora Region, where the district of Vlora dominates in growth as it is presented as the district that has experienced the highest growth after the regions of Tirana and Durrës (INSTAT, 2015; RM, 2015).

These dynamics continued for 2015, as the district with the highest population in Albania, in relation to the total number of the national population, remains Tirana with 811,649 inhabitants or 28.1%, followed by Fieri with 312,488 inhabitants or 10.8% and Elbasan with 298,913 inhabitants or 10.4% (INSTAT, 2016; RM, 2016).

As can be seen, almost half of the country’s population is concentrated in these three counties, two of which (Tirana and Fier) are the main counties of the concentrated regions according to the territorial model of transition, while the third (Elbasan) remains historically populated, although is experiencing population loss. The phenomenon of differentiation between the three constituent regions of the country’s territorial structure can also be distinguished if we observe the districts of the Abandoned Region. The counties with the lowest population remain Gjirokastra with 70,331 inhabitants, Kukësi with 84,035 inhabitants and Dibra with 134,153 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2016).

We can also observe the dynamics of strengthening inequality between regions in relation to the annual growth of their constituent districts. If we refer to INSTAT, we can say that “The district with the largest annual increase remains Tirana with an increase of 1.36% per year, while the district with the largest decrease remains Gjirokastra with an annual decrease of 2.57%” (INSTAT, 2016; RM, 2016).

This statistic shows that the country’s largest district (Tirana), not only continued to be overpopulated, but its annual growth is greater than that of any other district.



Apart from Tirana, the biggest increase this year benefited from Durrës and Vlora. In fact, the indicators measured by INSTAT and the analyzes presented by Monitor Magazine show that in 2015 only these three counties received internal migration, while other counties of the country lost population (INSTAT, 2016; RM, 2016).

Demographic Albania continues to accumulate massively in the Tirana-Durres Region, and less so in the Fier-Vlora Region. But it can also be distinguished that Tirana was the district that experienced the highest growth, and Vlora, apart from Tirana and Durrës, was the only district that experienced growth (INSTAT, 2016; RM, 2016). This means that the internal dynamics in the two regions that represent the ‘concentration’ characteristic of the territorial model have continued to reinforce the main tears of each of them (Tirana and Vlora).

Tirana included about 30% of the population, continuing to be the most populated county in the country, followed by Fieri with 11%, Durrës and Elbasani with 10% and Vlora with 7% of the total national population, in 2016 (INSTAT, 2017; RM, 2017). These figures show that the counties of Tirana, Fier, Durrës and Vlora remain this year to hold the main weight of the general population, which is expressed by about 58% of the national population. This means that the two “concentrated” regions of the territorial model of the concentration-abandonment of the territory by the population have been further densified throughout the year 2016.

The strengthening of imbalances in the territorial model is also noticeable in its ‘abandonment’ characteristic, because other counties, such as Gjirokastra, Kukësi, Dibra, Lezha and Berati, include something around 2% - 5% of the population, while Shkodra and Korça occupy 7 % of the population each (INSTAT, 2017: 4).

As Elbasan, Shkodra and Korça keep this relatively high weight of the population because they have historically dominated the hierarchical structure of Albanian cities (Konica, 1993; Kolevica, 2004; Faja, 2008; Kaprata, 2019, 2021, 2022). The fact found by INSTAT that “only in three districts of the country there was an increase in the population compared to the previous year, while nine of them recorded a decrease” (INSTAT, 2017: 4), proves the further emphasis of the main characteristics of the territorial model of concentration-abandonment. This dynamic is also supported by the fact that the region of Gjirokastra experienced the largest decrease in population with 30.6 per 1000 inhabitants, Dibre with 26.9 per 1000 inhabitants, Berat with 25.8 per 1000 inhabitants and Kukës with 21.3 for 1000 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2017: 4).

The phenomenon of population densification is distinguished this year as well, through the dynamics between the two regions with “concentrated” population of the model, because if the Greater Region (Tirana-Durres) grew by 39.5 new inhabitants per 1000 inhabitants, the Medium Region (Vlorë-Fier) increases by only 4.15 per 1000 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2017: 4).

The internal dynamics in these two regions did not escape this phenomenon either, because while “The biggest increase was observed in Tirana with 23.0 per 1000 inhabitants”, Durrës grew with only “16.5 per 1000 inhabitants”, and while Durrës continues to include about 10% of the national population, Tirana has increased from 28.2% to 30% this year. The same situation is presented in the Middle Region (Fier-Vlorë), while “Vlora [has grown] by 4.15 per 1000 inhabitants” Fieri did not present an increase this year (INSTAT, 2017: 5).

## **Detailed view of internal migration and demographic-territorial model (2017-2019)**

Internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of demographic differences between the three regions of the country, even in the following three years. Large counties will continue to remain so and grow further, while small counties will continue to decrease further, as a result of internal emigration.

In 2017, “it turns out that only three districts of the country experienced an increase in population compared to the previous year, while nine of them recorded a decrease” (INSTAT, 2018: 3). The biggest increase, as for many years in a row, was observed in Tirana with 25.1 per 1000 inhabitants, followed by Durrës with 16.9 per 1000 inhabitants and Vlora with 2.15 per 1000 inhabitants. The largest decrease in population, as in the following years, was experienced by the district of Gjirokastra with 45.3 per 1000 inhabitants, followed by Dibra with 36.3 per 1000 inhabitants and Berat with 34.2 per 1000 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2018 : 3-4).

As can be easily identified, even in 2017, the emphasis on the Tirana-Durrës Region and the Fier-Vlora Region continues, where three of the four districts of these two regions continue to have population growth, while the district of Fier, although not there is growth for historical reasons (INSTAT, 2001, 2004, 2011, 2014) it remains a county with a high population including about 10% of the country’s population (RM, 2018). The panorama of the weight ratio between the two ‘concentrating’ regions of the territorial model is further clarified, with a clear dominance of the Tirana-Durra Region with an increase of 42 per 1000 inhabitants, which is about 40 times higher than that of the Region Fier-Vlora, for this year (INSTAT, 2018).

While the differences are also highlighted within the Greater Region, where while Durrës continues to include about 10% of the national population, Tirana surpasses itself from a year ago with an additional 1%, reaching the level of 31% of the national population. Referring to the data presented in figure 5 ‘Population of Albania by regions, January 1, 2018’ but also to the data of figure 6 ‘Total change

of population and regions, January 1, 2017- January 1, 2018' of the assessment 'Population of Albania' in 2018, the other eight counties that are included in the territories that are being abandoned, lost their tax population for this year as well (INSTAT, 2018: 4).

Even during 2018, Tirana, Fieri and Durrës have the highest weight in the total national population (INSTAT, 2019: 4). The dynamics of the growth of these counties also determined the internal dynamics of each component of the territorial model characterized by the "concentration" of the population, and in relation to each other. Expressed as a percentage, Tirana ranks first in the country with 31.3% with an increase of 1.3% compared to a year ago, followed by Fieri with 10.3% with an increase of 0.3% with a year ago and Durrës 10.2% with an increase of 0.2% from a year ago (INSTAT, 2019: 4).

The Great Region of Tirana-Durrës deepened the difference to the Middle Region of Fier-Vlora with 1.4% of the total national population, likewise the region of Tirana emphasized its dominance in the Great Region, while the region of Fier in the Middle Region. Referring to figure 5 'The proportion of the population of each district in the total population, January 1, 2019' of the 'Population of Albania' assessment in 2019, this year brings the decline of Elbasan from 10% to 9.6% of the total population (INSTAT, 2019) .

As for the other counties, with slight fluctuations, they present a slight decrease in weight in the general population, where five of them include 2-4.4% each (INSTAT, 2019: 4). As in all previous years, this year too, the population increased in three districts of the country, while the other nine districts suffered a decline. Tirana continued to have the biggest increase with 12.6 per 1000 inhabitants, followed by Durrës with 1.7 per 100 inhabitants and Vlora with 0.2 per 1000 inhabitants. In contrast, the largest population decrease was recorded by Gjirokastra with 24.3 per 1000 inhabitants, Berat with 17.8 per 1000 inhabitants and Dibra with 16.8 per 100 inhabitants (INSTAT, 2019).

2019 is the time when only the Greater Region of the concentration-abandonment territorial pattern continues to experience growth, which further emphasizes the difference between the Greater Region and the Middle Region. Referring to INSTAT "The biggest increase [in the period January 1, 2019-January 1, 2020] was recorded in Tirana with 1.2%, followed by Durrës with 0.2%" (INSTAT, 2020: 4), which means that the difference between them deepened to the extent of 1.4% of the national population.

These statistics show that the difference between the two counties of the Greater Region has deepened to the extent of 1% of the total population. Figure 5 'The proportion of the population of each district in the total population, January 1, 2020' of the 'Population of Albania' assessment in 2020 shows that Tirana occupies about 31.8% of the total population, continuing to be the most populated district of

country, and three times as big as the counties of Durrës and Fier, which follow in terms of size, each of which includes 10.2% of the total population each (INSTAT, 2020: 3-4).

As for the other districts, five of them account for 2% to 4.3% of the total population (INSTAT, 2020), suffering continuous loss of tax population. Although they include a higher percentage of the country's population, the districts of Elbasan, Korça and Shkodra also suffered further losses, while the largest decreases in population were recorded in the districts of: Gjirokastrë with 3.3%, Dibër with 2.6 % and Berat with 2.5% (INSTAT, 2020: 3-4).

### **Detailed view of internal migration and the demographic-territorial model (2020-2022)**

Even in the following three years, the internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of the demographic differences between the three regions of the country: the Greater Tirana-Durres Region; Middle Fier-Vlora Region; and the Abandoned Region. This demographic dynamic will further differentiate the population level ratios between the constitutive counties of the same region, especially between the counties of the two regions that are experiencing population concentration.

As in previous years, also in 2020 "Tirana, Durres and Fieri have the highest weight in the total population" (INSTAT, 2021: 3). Expressed as a percentage of the total number of residents, Tirana occupies about 32.2%, continuing to be the most populated region of the country, followed by Durrës and Fieri with respectively 10.3% and 10.1% (INSTAT, 2021).

In contrast, the other eight districts of the country belonging to the Abandoned Region continue to lose population, with five of them each accounting for 2% to 5% of the total population (INSTAT, 2021). This dynamic can be distinguished more clearly if we refer to figure 5 'The share of the population of each district in the total population on January 1, 2021' of the periodic report of INSTAT for the year 2020 (INSTAT, 2021: 4).

The difference between this year and the other years included in the study is the fact that, if in previous years the counties that experienced demographic growth as a result of internal migration were three; in this year the population increased only in two regions of the country. If we refer to figure 6 'Annual rate of population change by district, January 1, 2021 vs January 1, 2020' of this year's INSTAT report, we can say that the biggest increase was recorded in Tirana with 0.7%, followed by from Durres with 0.5% (INSTAT, 2021: 5).

This statistic testifies to a further deepening of the demographic gap: (i) between the two counties of Tirana and Durrës of the Greater Region, where Tirana dominates with an annual growth of 0.2% more than Durrës; (ii) between the Great Region of Tirana-Durres to the Medium Region of Fier-Vlora, where the Great Region experienced an increase of 12% while the Medium Region suffered a decline. Referring to INSTAT “The population estimates on January 1, 2021 show that only two regions of the country recorded an increase in population, compared to the previous year, while the other ten regions recorded a decrease in population.” (INSTAT, 2012: 5).

Demographic differences as a result of internal immigration further damaged the homogeneity of population distribution across the national territory, which was a legacy of socialist urbanism 1945-1989 (Misja and Misja, 2004; Kotmilo and Kotmilo, 2017; Faja, 2008, Imami, et al, 2008). This can also be distinguished in terms of the demographic ratio between the shaping components of the model (‘concentrated’ vs. ‘abandoned’). Referring to INSTAT, not only did the districts of Tirana and Durrës of the Greater Region increase, but at the same time the largest decreases in population were recorded in the districts of the Abandoned Region, such as Gjirokastër with -2.3%, Berat with -2, 1% and Dibër with - 1.9% (INSTAT 2021: 5).

Referring to figure 5 ‘The share of the population of each district in the total population on January 1, 2022’ of the annual periodical report ‘Population of Albania’ of 2022, it can be said that Tirana, Durrës and Fieri have the highest weight in the total population ( INSTAT, 2022: 4), following the deepening of the demographic gap between the two formative components of the demographic-territorial model, even for this year. According to this Report “On January 1, 2022, Tirana occupies about 32.9% of the total population, continuing to be one of the most populated counties in the country, followed by Durrës and Fieri with 10.4% and 10.0% respectively” (INSTAT 2022).

This dynamic is further deepened, but we refer to the demographic statistics of the districts of the Abandoned Region, in both parameters. Both in terms of the resident population of these districts, where five of them occupy respectively from 2% to 5% of the total population, also in terms of annual growth, where the largest decreases in the population were recorded in the districts of Gjirokastër with - 4.7 %, Berat with - 3.7% and Dibër with - 3.6%. This is easily recognizable even if we refer to figure 6 ‘Annual rate of population change by district, January 1, 2022 vs January 1, 2021’ of the same Annual Report (INSTAT, 2022: 5).

The forming structure of the demographic-territorial model was further unbalanced due to the fact that “The population estimates on January 1, 2022 show that only one region of the country recorded an increase in population, compared to the previous year, while the other eleven regions recorded a decrease in

population population” (INSTAT, 2022: 5). If for many years during the transition there were three regions that experienced growth (INSTAT, 2001, 2004, 2011, 2014, 2015-2020; RM, 2016-2022; Kaprata, 2021, 2022) and in 2020 there were only two regions that experienced growth, the year 2021 is the first year where only the region of Tirana experiences growth (INSTAT, 2022: 5).

The phenomenon of the growth of only one district (Tirana) continues in 2022, but in this year another dynamic within the same phenomenon begins and stabilizes. The annual growth of the district of Tirana over the years has undergone a downward trend from: an increase of 1.61% in 2014 (INSTAT, 2015; RM, 2015), to an increase of 1.36% in 2015 (INSTAT, 2016; RM, 2016), in an increase of 1.2% in the year (INSTAT, 2020), in an increase of 0.7% in 2020 (INSTAT, 2021: 5), to be covered in an increase of 0.6% in this year (INSTAT, 2023). In short, the growth rate of the only county that benefits from internal inward migration falls.

Referring to figure 5 ‘The share of the population of each district in the total population on January 1, 2023’ of this year’s INSTAT Report “Tirana occupies about 33.5% of the total population, continuing to be one of the most populated districts of the country, followed by Durrës and Fieri with 10.5% and 9.8% respectively”, while “As for the other districts, five of them occupy respectively from 1.9% to 4.1% of the total population” (INSTAT, 2023: 4), which further deepens the demographic differences, both between regions and between districts.

This difference establishes the demographic-territorial model of the country with two main characteristics: (i) the dominance of the Greater Tirana-Durra Region over the Middle Fier-Vlora Region and especially over the Abandoned Region; and the dominance of the district of Tirana over the other 11 districts of the country. This is distinguished not only by the demographic level that each district has, but also in relation to the annual growth level of each of them, which is easily identified if we refer to figure 6 ‘Annual rate of population change by district, January 1, 2023 vs January 1 2022’ of the aforementioned Report (INSTAT, 2023: 5).

As we presented, internal migration has continued with high growth even in this third decade of transition, which constitutes the third phase of urbanism in Albania. This has emphasized the distinctive characteristics of the territorial model of concentration-abandonment of the territory by the population, whose forms began to be sketched in the first phase, and to be carved in the second phase of the country’s urbanization along the transition.

## Findings and conclusions

The third phase of urbanization of Albania in transition was shaped by the same demographic dynamics as the first two decades of transition. They expressed the



same forms, including: (i) external migration; (ii) the decline in natural population growth; and (iii) internal migration.

External migration (2011-2021) is one of the two components forming the level of demography in the country. Expressed in numbers, external migration resulted in: 18,046 individuals in 2014; about 17 thousand in 2015; about 8 thousand in 2016; 14,902 in 2017; 15,030 inhabitants in 2018; 23,082 in 2019; 16,684 in 2020; 32,853 in 2021; and, 32,497 in 2022.

In total, referring to the figures and demographic analysis from INSTAT and Monitor Magazine, we can say that in the period 2014-2023, 178,094 more inhabitants left Albania than returned. What stands out, too, is that this number has increased greatly in the last two years, which also indicates the future trend of the phenomenon.

Another contributor to this basic national phenomenon remains the level of natural population growth, which is expressed in the difference between births and deaths. Its main factor is the Fertility Index, which in 2018 the average number of children born to a woman set a historical record, with only 1.37 children per woman from 1.48 children in 2017 and from 1.73 children per woman that was this index in 2014.

In quantitative terms, the natural growth of Albania's population was: 35,760 in 2014; 10,799 in 2015; about 11 thousand in 2016; 8,637 in 2017; 7,130 in 2018; 6,624 in 2019; 470 inhabitants in 2020; -3.296 in 2021 where for the first time natural growth was negative; and 690 in 2022.

What stands out from these demographic figures is the fact that during the years 2014-2022, Albania: (i) grew by 42,054 new inhabitants, as a result of natural growth (birth-death difference); and, this growth has generally come in a downward trend, where it is worth differentiating the year 2021 where the natural growth is negative.

Another very negative demographic phenomenon that accompanied this decade was the aging of the population. The median age indicator increased from 34 years in 2015: to 35 years in 2016; to 35.0 years in 2017; to 35.4 years in 2018; to 36.7 in 2019; to 37.2 years in 2020; to 37.6 years in 2021; to 38.2 years in 2022. These figures and demographic analysis show that in this decade the population has suffered a significant decrease as a result of external migration, but also due to the decrease in the level of natural population growth.

Internal migratory movements in the time period 2011-2021 follow the trends of the two previous periods, 1991-2001 and 2001-2011. Internal migration led to large-scale urbanization of some areas and drastic depopulation of others.

The internal migration scheme is based on the four main lines of population displacement, which contributed to the further deepening of the demographic difference between the three main regions of the country: Greater Tirana-Durres

Region; The Middle Fier-Vlora Region and the Abandoned Region that includes the other eight districts of the country. Internal migratory movements and their result in relation to the level of population and urbanization are clearly visible even at the inter-county level.

For the period 2014-2016 it can be said that, excluding Elbasan, the districts of Tirana, Fier, Durrës and Vlora, experienced growth and hold the main weight of the total population, which is expressed by about 58% of the national population. This means that the two “concentrated” regions of the territorial model of concentration-abandonment of the territory by the population have densified, while the districts of the Abandoned Region have lost population.

Expressed as a percentage, at the end of this period: Tirana included about 30% of the population, continuing to be the most populated district in the country, followed by Fieri with 11%, Durrës and Elbasani with 10% and Vlora with 7% of the general national people. On the other hand: Gjirokastra included 2% of the population, continuing to be the district with the lowest population level, followed by Kukësi with 3%, Dibra and Lezha with 4%, and Berat with 5% of the total national population.

Internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of demographic differences between the three regions of the country, even in the 2017-2019 period. Large districts will continue to remain so and grow further, while small districts will continue to shrink.

The panorama of the weight ratio between the two ‘concentrating’ regions of the territorial model is further clarified, with a clear dominance of the Tirana-Durra Region with an increase about 40 times higher than that of the Fier-Vlora Region, only in 2018. Expressed as a percentage, for this three-year period: Tirana increased from 30% to 31.8%, Durrës from 10% to 10.2%, Fieri from 11% fell to 10.2%, Vlora from 7% fell to 6.5%, Elbasan fell from 10% to 9.5%. As for the other counties, five of them occupy 2% to 4.3% of the total population, where: Berat falls from 5% to 4.3% and Kukësi from 3% to 2.7%.

Even in the following three years, 2020-2022, internal demographic movements continued to contribute to the deepening of demographic differences between the three regions of the country. Expressed as a percentage; Tirana increased from 31.8% to about 33.5%, Durres from 10.2% to 10.5%, Fieri from 10.2% fell to 9.85%, Elbasan fell from 9.5% to 9.2%. As for other districts, five of them lost population from 2% to 4.3% to 1.9% to 4.1% of the total population.

This demographic dynamic will further differentiate the population level ratios between the constitutive districts of the same region, especially between the districts of the two regions that are experiencing population concentration. As can be seen, Tirana has grown by 1.7% while Durrës by only 0.3%; Vlora has grown by 0.1% while Fieri has fallen by 0.35%. The most evident dynamic was the fact that

if in the previous periods, three main districts grew, during this period: in 2020, only two districts grew (Tirana and Durrës); whereas, in 2022, only one district (Tirana) has increased. This difference establishes the demographic-territorial model of the country and the dominance of the District of Tirana over the other 11 districts of the country.

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