

Albania: Mobilizing Highly Skilled Diaspora

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Albanian Migration

- In the last 17 years, the phenomenon of emigration has been at the core of economic and social changes occurred in Albania.
- By the end of 2007, more than 25 percent of Albanian citizens were estimated to be living abroad.
- 35 percent of the Albanian labour force

Migration issues in Albania:

Remittances

- In 2007, remittances sent by Albanian emigrants were estimated at 947 million Euro.
- 12 percent of GDP
- 3 times higher than net foreign direct investment
- Twice the official development aid received by Albania
- 50 percent of the trade deficit.
- A significant role in poverty reduction but insufficient to increase domestic production.
- Mainly used for the import of consumption goods.
- Remittances of Albanian emigration are believed to have reached a new phase of maturity, and are likely to undergo a gradual decline in the short term (De Zwager et al., 2005; Maroukis, 2005; Gedeshi et al., 2003).

Returning emigrants

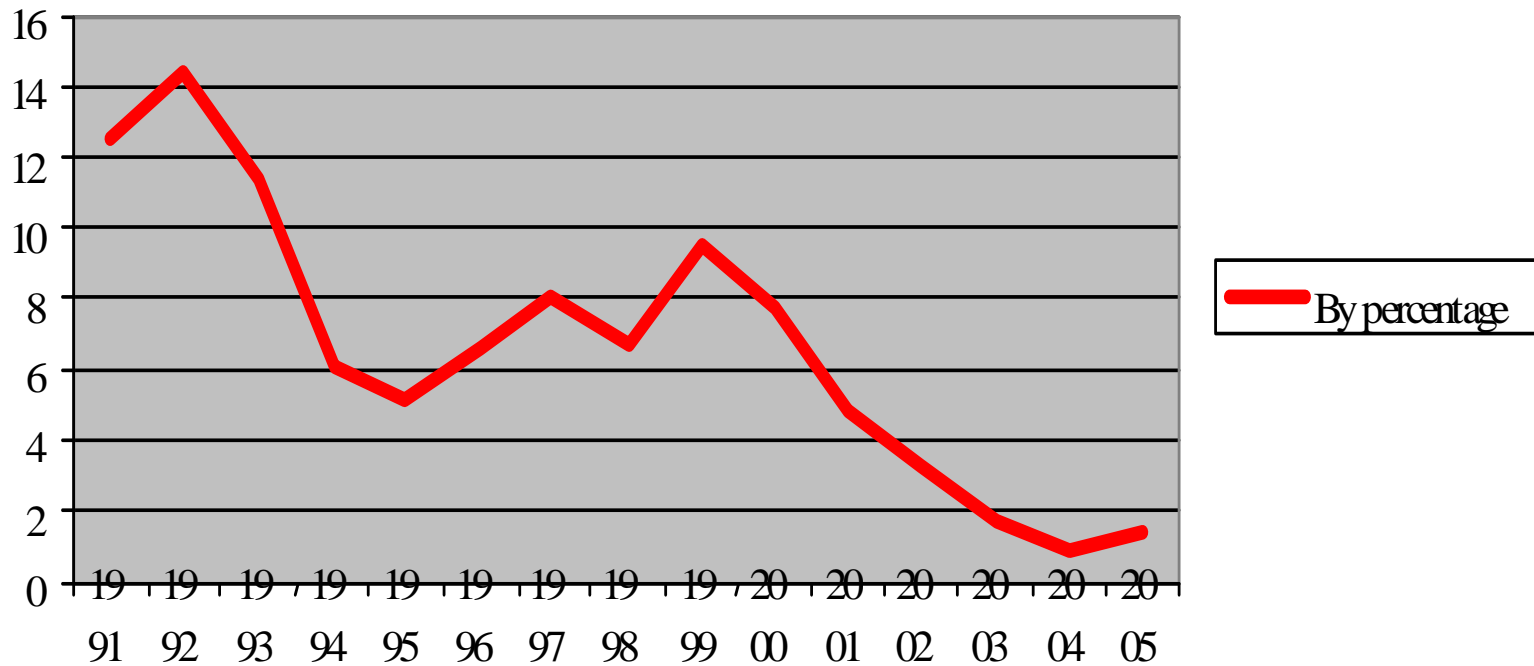
- The return of emigrants is potentially important for the economic growth of Albania, as they may bring back capital, foreign work experience and new ideas.
- A study by IOM, De Zwager et al. (2005) estimated that long-term emigrants have accumulated in the country of emigration a total pool of retained savings of between 10 and 15 billion Euros.

Brain drain

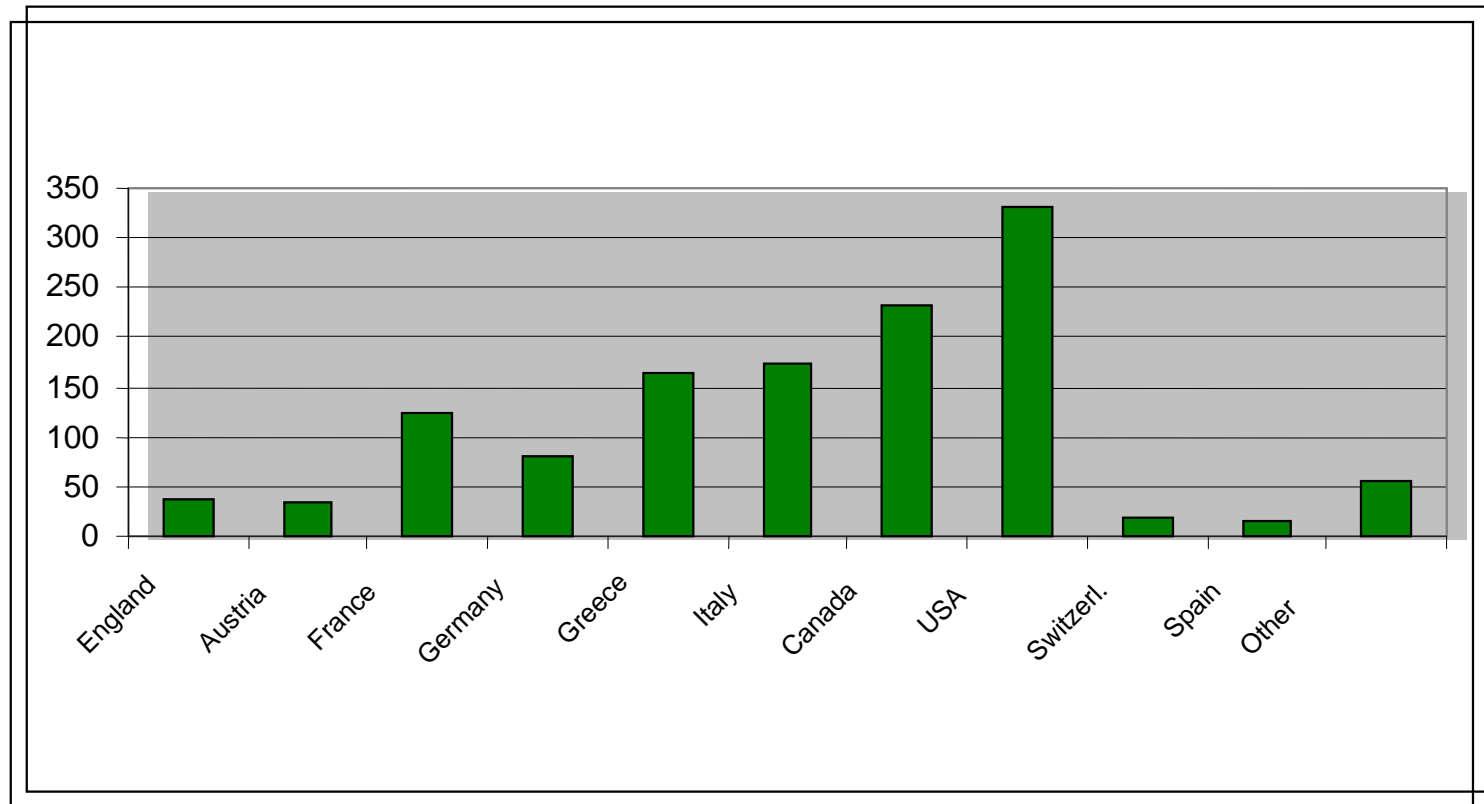
- Work by the DRC on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty (2008) suggests that about 50 percent of all lecturers, research people and intellectuals in the country, most of them young and trained in part in Europe, have left Albania since 1990.
- Nearly 66 percent of those Albanians known to have carried out a PhD in Western Europe or the US since 1990 have either emigrated from Albania, or never returned after their graduation.
- This emigration continues even nowadays, with a significant group of talented and successful students remaining abroad after finishing the university or post-graduate studies there.

Brain Drain in Transition

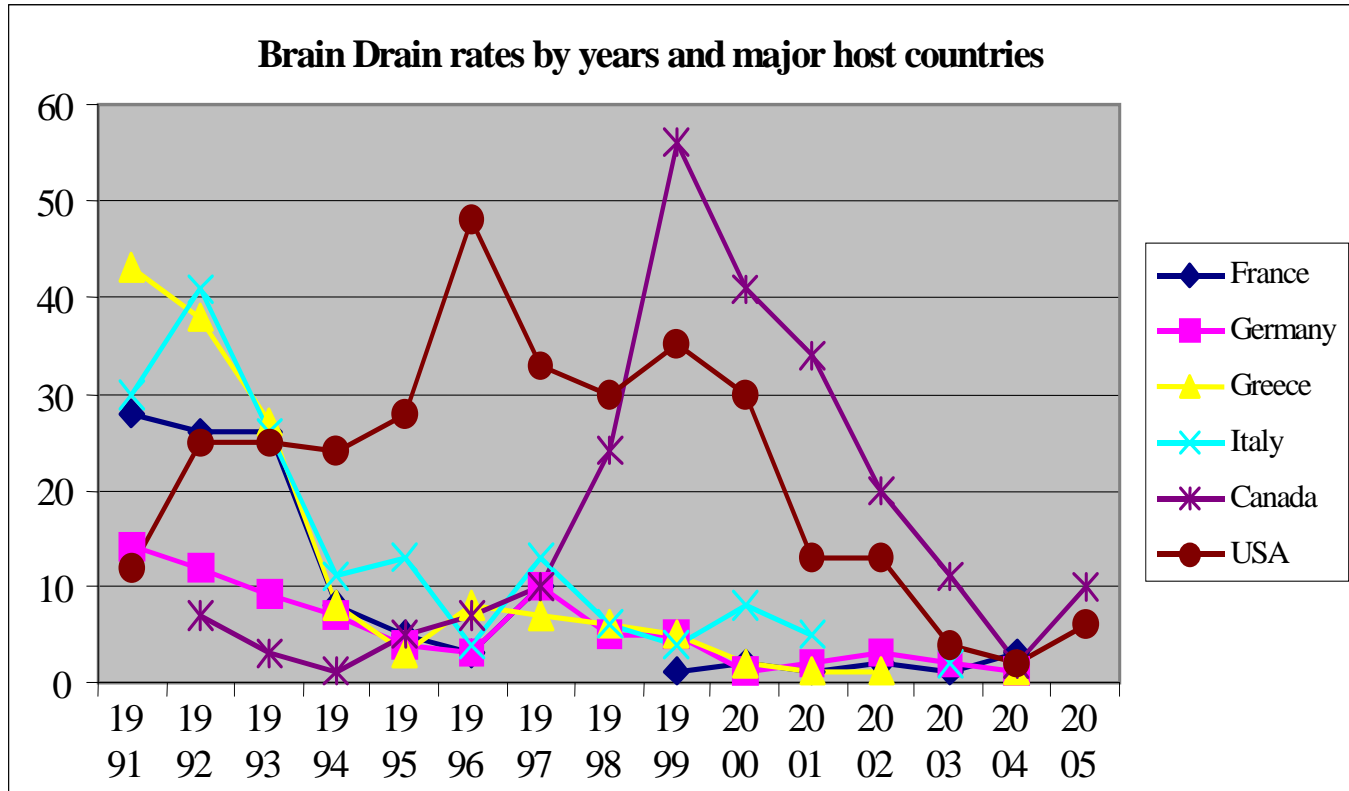
Brain drain curve during transition



Brain drain according to host countries



Annual rates of brain drain



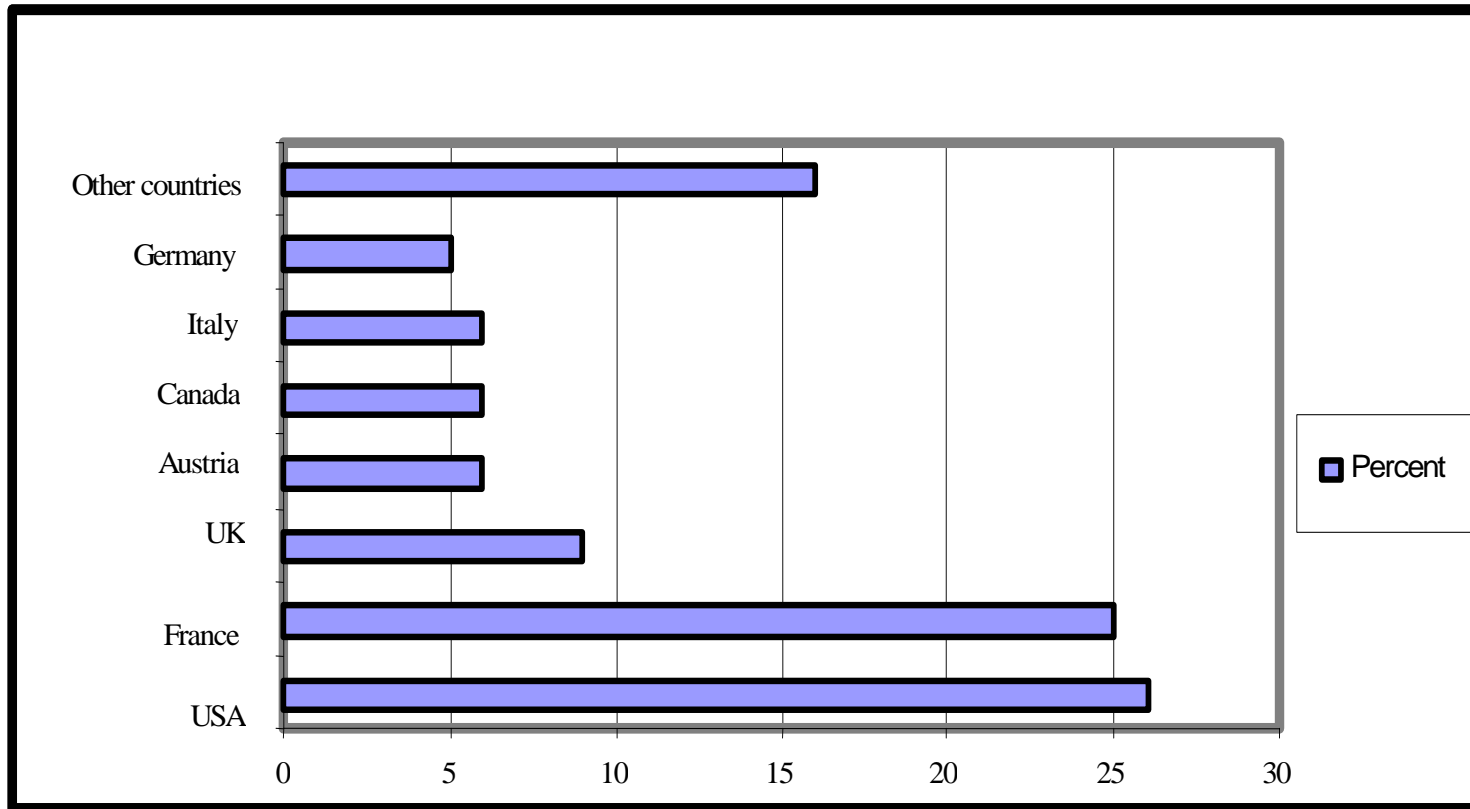
Impact of Brain Drain

- 1991-2005, due to the emigration of lecturers and research workers, the universities and research institutions of Albania lost at least 4,500 months of training courses to institutions abroad
- Albanian universities and research institutions are suffering a decline of competition capacity and a weakened work quality

Scientific Diaspora

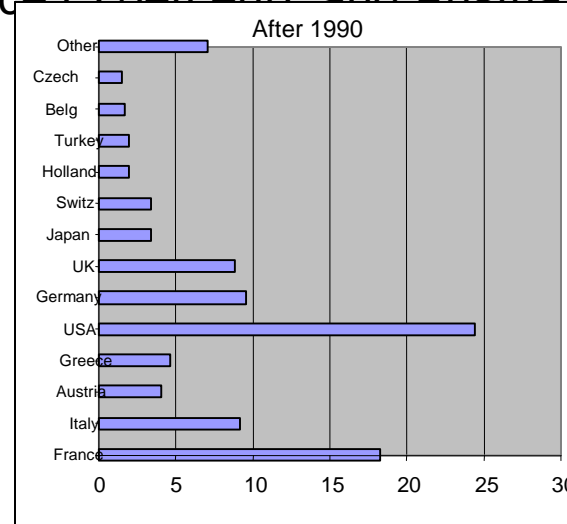
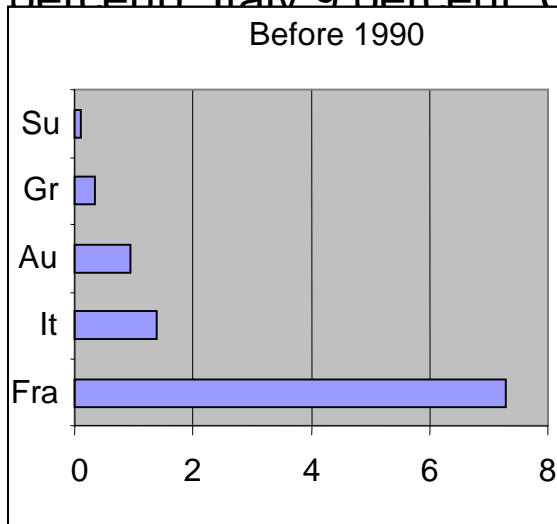
- Up to 250 researchers and lecturers
- Up to 10 percent of the scientific potential of the country
- Increasing trend – students and Albanian PhDs

Albanian academics and researchers working abroad by country (%)

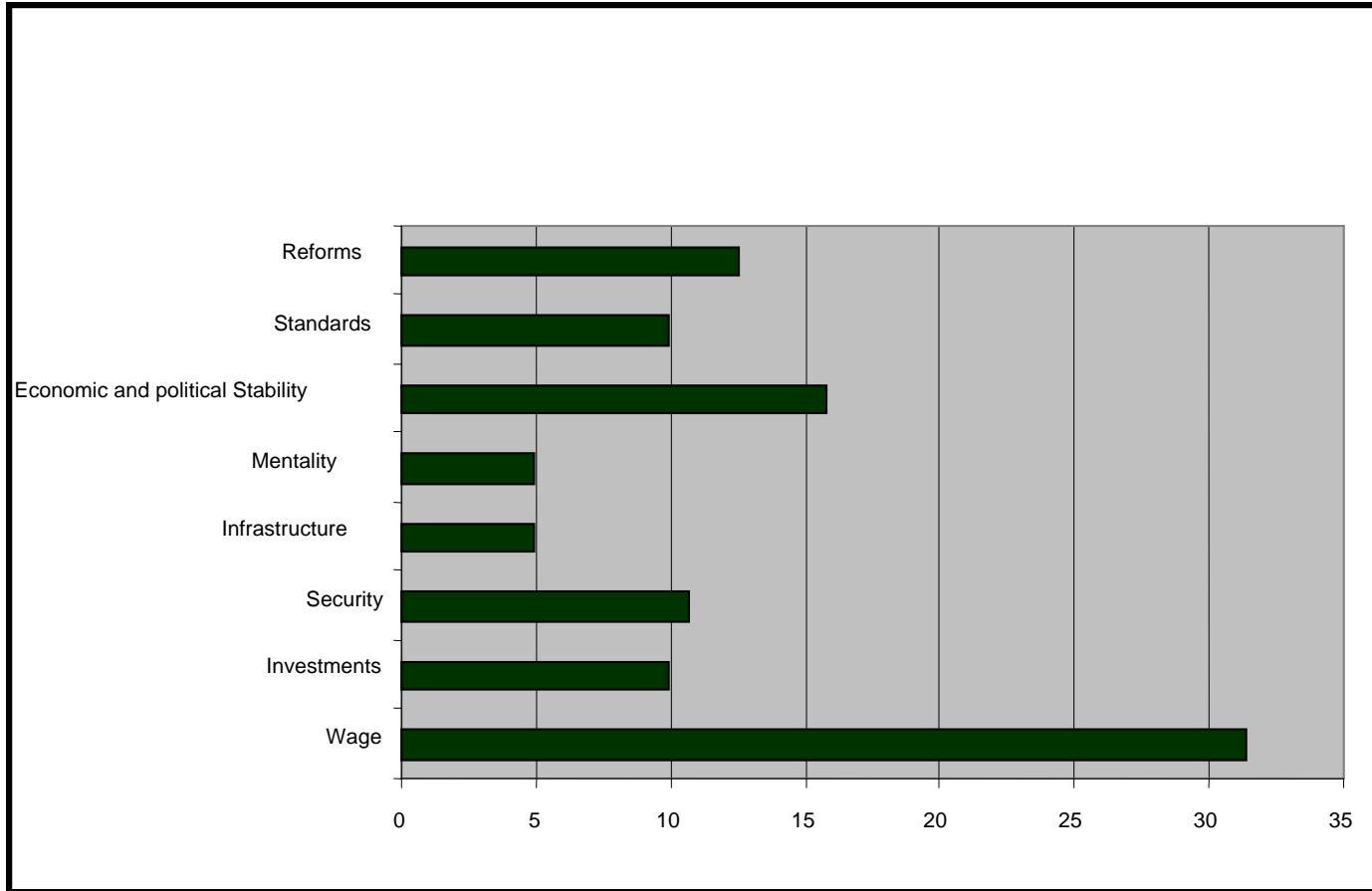


PhDs – before and after 1990

Until the late 1980s, the majority of Albanian students tended to study in France (72 percent), followed by Italy (13 percent), Austria (9 percent), and Greece (3 percent). However, during the 1990s, the largest destination of those who had completed or were in the process of doing a PhD, was the US (24 percent), followed by France (18 percent), the UK (9 percent), Germany (9 percent), Italy 9 percent, Greece (5 percent), and Austria (4



The conditions for the return of academics and researchers



From brain drain to brain gain

- Given the fact that gaps in economic and social development between Albania and the EU or the US are likely to persist into the coming decade (Albania is the second poorest country in Europe), the migration of highly skilled individuals to destinations outside Albania will continue.
- The emerging priority for Albania is then not to stop migration, but to see how the benefits of migration might be optimized, tapping into the educated and skilled both at home and abroad.

Recommendations

- Invite Albanian academics and researchers working in the universities, laboratories and research institutions of industrialized countries to deliver a few weeks' or months' cycle of lectures in Albanian universities.
- In the long run, lectures by “video-conference” (Tafaj M, 2005). In this way, emigrant Albanian academics and researchers could become part of the university and research staff in Albania without having to return.
- Joint supervision with Albanian colleagues of Masters and PhD students abroad;
- Training and consultancy, especially for the government;
- Invitation to Albanian academics abroad to act as peer reviewers for research works published in scientific journals in Albania.

Current efforts

- Brain Gain project
- Support to academic component – university of Durrës
- Liberalisation of the higher education system New private universities absorbing the need for education
- A series of government decisions
- Increase of salaries in academic sector
- Salary incentives in the public sector
- Soft loans
- New positions in public universities (up to 400)
- Laws and policies encouraging and facilitating employment in public administration

Way forward: (1) education system

- Reforming the existing education system in the country (underway). Since strengthening educational institutions is likely to have a beneficial long-term impact, it would be beneficial for Albania to offer a more attractive education system for potential students as well as professors and researchers who might want to return.

(2) Migration and Labour Market Analysis

- Design and implementation of permanent return migration programs.
- An examination of current labor market developments in Albania would be an area particularly worthy of further analysis. The analysis should aim to identify whether there have been labor shortages in skilled categories, and how this is changing the relative wage levels for different skill classes in Albania.

(3) Brain gain and brain retain

- Not only promotion of the return of qualified migrants but offering an opportunity to the current employees of academic and public sectors to be trained and qualified abroad
- Academic Excellence Fund (1 million USD)

(4) The capacity development angle

- Capacities for EU integration
- Matching the needs of EU integration with appropriate qualified skills
- Low absorption capacities and deficiencies in policy writing
- Strengthening of institutions to ensure better and sustainable utilisation of qualified people

Thank you
