

## Albanian : a Snapshot

*Luljeta Nuzi, Founder and Director of the Shpresa Programme (Shpresa means 'hope' in Albanian)*

### Albanian language and culture

Albanian is an Indo-European language but unusual in that it is not closely related to major European language groups such as Romance, Germanic, Slavic, Celtic and Hellenic. It is spoken in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro as well as by minorities in Serbia, Italy and Greece. It uses Roman script.

The Albanian for Albanian is 'Shqipe' and for Albania is 'Shqipëria'

In the UK there are roughly 100,000 Albanian speakers with the main communities located in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Oxford and smaller numbers living in Wales and Scotland. A festival that brings together all Albanians is 'Independence Day of Albania', 28<sup>th</sup> November. The Shpresa website explains what this day means to Albanians and how celebrations are organised across its schools in different areas of London.

<https://shpresaprogramme.org/independence-day-of-albania/>

In 2020 Shpresa students performed 'Legend of Rozafës Castle' at the Museum of London\*



### Albanian education

There are a number of Albanian supplementary schools in the UK. The London-based 'Shpresa Programme' provides weekly classes in Albanian language and culture (including dance, sport, and other activities) for over 450 children in eight boroughs in and around London. It has done ground-breaking work in building partnerships with mainstream schools and has created a practical toolkit, 'Shpresa Programme's Supplementary School Toolkit' to advise others wishing to establish such partnerships:

<https://www.all-languages.org.uk/research-practice/language-zones/home-heritage-community-languages/>  
Shpresa has run training for schools and parents on how to set up successful partnership. The involvement of parents/carers is seen as a crucial aspect of this.

It has also played a key role in supporting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to adapt to life in the UK. The 'Breaking the Chains' project is an example of this work:

<https://shpresaprogramme.org/projects/breaking-the-chains>

To address challenges related to the pandemic the Shpresa Programme and the Covid-19 Emergency Response Project' was set up in 2020. This includes strategies for combatting isolation including a storytelling project where volunteers read a story virtually to children and parents,

<https://www.the-sse.org/news/shpresa-covid19-emergency-response-project/>

### Examinations

In 2006 older students at Shpresa, concerned at there being no GCSE or A Level available to recognise achievements in Albanian language, initiated a campaign for their introduction. In spite of their efforts and support from London Citizens, thus far this has not happened.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzHSsYOBrd8DSaoxydyc6iQ>

### Supporting Albanian speakers in your school

For advice on this, including opportunities for training for teachers and parents contact Shpresa:

<https://shpresaprogramme.org/>



\*With thanks to Shpresa and Orly Orbach for permission to use images on this page which show sketches made during rehearsals and performance of 'Legend of Rozafës Castle' at the Museum of London and a photo of children drawing Albanian dancing.