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BOOKLET OF ABSTRACTS

Reshaping Eco-Social Paradigm towards Innovation and Sustainability

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FACING SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC, LABOR MARKET CHANGES AND GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES

Mapping immigrant entrepreneurship in Europe: A bibliometric analysis of research trends and insights.

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Abstract

Immigrant entrepreneurs and their activity has received constantly increasing attention of academics and policymakers. While as activity, immigrant entrepreneurship is not new, with the globalization and development of technology this field is in a different level, becoming one of most popular avenues in entrepreneurship literature and plays a significant role in economy, especially in developed context like Europe. However, among huge research attention, this field is becoming more diverse, complex and confusing. Thus, literature reviews in this field are becoming critical to overview the field.

In our study we aim to provide an overview of academic research on Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Europe. To complete this, an extensive bibliometric analysis was conducted, including bibliometric performance and graphic mapping of academic contribution in this field. The focus of our analysis is in authors, papers, journals, and countries that lead this academic field in Europe. Data was collected from Scopus database, until 2022 to analyze the advances in the field. A performance analysis was conducted to identify the most important authors, papers, journals, and countries. Furthermore, we use VOSviewer and R Biblioshiny software to graphically map the field. We do this by applying co-citation analysis. Our research contributes on immigrant entrepreneurship literature by providing a better understanding of the phenomena in Europe, and based on the outcomes direct the future research in the field.

Keywords: *Immigrant entrepreneurship, Bibliometric analysis, Science Mapping, Europe*

JEL classification: *(J15, L26, M13)*

An empirical study of potential factors impacting student satisfaction – A study of University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Shkoder, Albania

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Abstract

Students' satisfaction can be defined as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students' educational experience, services and facilities. (Chatzoglou, 2022.) This study explores potential factors influencing student satisfaction, referring to the students of University of Shkodra. Albanian universities are facing with a big problem, the number of students in Albania has been decreased during the last years and the emigration is a big problem. During the last year, 46 460 Albanians had left the country. (INSTAT, 2023). According to the latest published statistics, 121 352 students currently follow higher education, 2.0% less than the year before. (INSTAT, 2023). This study's purpose is three-fold. First, this study seeks to examine the potential factors impacting student satisfaction; secondly, it explores whether or not there are any significant differences in student satisfaction based on demographic variables, such as age, gender and education, etc.; third, it examines the relationship between the student satisfaction and the potential factors. Data was collected through questionnaires, distributed to the students of University of Shkodra, focused on the actual student, during 2023.

To find out the factors that impact student satisfaction, the factor and reliability analysis were used. The results revealed that some demographic variables have a significant impact on student satisfaction. We also performed the multiple regression analysis, using the 'student satisfaction' as the dependent variable and factors as: 'reputation'; 'cost of study', 'course', 'employability' and 'service' as independent variables. We found several factors with a significant impact on student satisfaction.

Keywords: *student satisfaction, University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, service quality dimensions, factor analysis*

Professional education and human resources in the tourism industry in Albania

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Abstract

The tourism industry is a growing industry with a great economic impact in the country. From year to year, Albania is experiencing an increase in demand, investments, and tourism structures. These investments include not only the coastal area, but also rural areas.

Despite the increase in demand in the tourism industry, the tourism sector in Albania is increasingly recognizing the need for employees due to the high rates of young people emigrating, but also challenges with staff qualification. Vocational education, although it has been evaluated as a priority by the Albanian government, is seeing a decrease in the number of students year after year. According to official data, in the academic year 2023 in Albania, about 2,200 students were enrolled in vocational education, less than two years ago. Employees in tourism are a major concern for all businesses, small and medium, that have activity in the tourism sector. Tourism is more sensitive than other sectors regarding employees because it is a service sector, and the part of technology development and equipment use is more limited than in other enterprises. Professional education and preparation of human capacities are a strong link in the chain that keeps tourism successful. Given that, along with others, every tourist enterprise aims to maximize income, normally human capacity has a decisive role in sealing their success or failure. Vocational education is offered in Albania in 35 vocational schools, but also in 10 vocational training centers that provide qualification courses.

The main purpose of this study is to highlight the level of adaptation of these vocational schools for tourism to the conditions offered by the job market in the tourism sector in Albania and how well the students' expectations are met from these schools.

To accomplish this study, secondary and primary data were used. Secondary data results from a review of extensive and generally current literature related to the research topic. Primary data is obtained using qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative data were obtained through a focus group instrument held with teachers and tourism businesses in Albania. Quantitative data was obtained using a questionnaire instrument, with students attending professional education in hospitality and tourism.

The results of this study provide interesting evidence of the problems and challenges of professional education for tourism and its connection with tourism businesses. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed, emphasizing what still needs to be done to further improve professional education in tourism in Albania.

Keywords: Professional education, Tourism, Curriculum, Professional practice, Human resources.

JEL classification: L83. J15. J50

The psychological effects of online learning on teachers, students and the role of family

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Abstract

This paper reflects the distance learning method as a new approach to learning. This is done through communication technology, to educate people located in different places.

In the past, reading and writing on paper was considered the basic element of education, but in today's world, computer-based informational education is becoming more relevant day by day, offering an alternative way to absorb knowledge and to provide the student's basic skills. Technology offers countless services and opportunities to improve knowledge in various areas of life. It became the only way to enable the exchange and testing of knowledge between students and teachers and the transfer of basic skills effectively and in distance. This paper aims to research the attitudes of teachers and students in the use of information technology in primary schools. The compatibility of these attitudes with new educational plans and programs, the practice of teaching using technology, as well as the development of communication skills. By means of this, to highlight the drawbacks that can be noticed by the teachers by neglecting the contemporary techniques, which then reflect on the students in their learning.

In this paper, the quantitative method was used in data processing. The population of this paper were the teachers of four schools:

- *United High School "Izot Luçjan Avgostini" Vau-Dejës*
- *United High School Mjede*
- *9-grade school "Kolec Mekshaj" Tale*
- *9-grade school "Gjergj Kastrioti" Lezha*

The sample of the paper consists of 55 Primary Education teachers from schools selected on the basis of personal judgment and the purpose of the study. A structured questionnaire for teachers was used as an instrument for this paper.

The key to success is the cooperation of the trinomial cooperation teacher-student-family and strong support in educational policies

Keywords : *Education, online teaching, motivation, technology.*

JEL Codes : *Health, education and welfare.*

Bridging the human gap: integrating social engineering education in high schools and universities for enhanced online privacy

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Abstract

In the prevailing digitized society, the significance of cybersecurity is exponentially growing. While technical countermeasures continue to evolve, the human element often remains the weakest link in the security chain. This study underscores the necessity of integrating social engineering education within the curricula of high schools and universities to address this human-centric vulnerability. An extensive literature review, coupled with a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews among educational stakeholders, identifies a substantial gap in current educational practices concerning social engineering awareness and defense mechanisms. Through a comparative analysis of different educational models, this research proposes a modular, adaptable framework for introducing social engineering topics within various educational settings. The proposed framework emphasizes experiential learning, fostering not only theoretical understanding but also practical skills in recognizing and mitigating social engineering attacks. The pilot implementation of this framework within select educational institutions yielded a notable improvement in students' ability to identify and thwart social engineering attempts, thereby underlining the potential impact of this educational initiative on bolstering cybersecurity. Through fostering a more informed and vigilant future populace, this integration is envisaged to significantly contribute to the broader eco-social paradigm shift towards a safer digital society. The findings accentuate that fortifying the human aspect of cybersecurity is integral to nurturing a culture of cybersecurity awareness, ultimately fostering a resilient digital infrastructure. This research constitutes a vital step towards acknowledging and addressing the human factor in cybersecurity through educational empowerment, marking a significant stride towards a holistic cybersecurity education.

Keywords: *Cybersecurity Education, Human-Centric Security, Social Engineering Awareness, Experiential Learning, Educational Framework*

JEL Codes: *I23, I28, O33*

The progress of integration processes of Albania in the EU, the challenges and opportunities arising from such a process

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Abstract

Albania's integration into the European Union is one of the biggest challenges in the last 25 years. Albania must meet the criteria established by the European Council of Copenhagen in June 1993 for all candidate countries for membership in the European Union in order to become a member of the EU. These criteria have a political and economic character that foresee: justice, freedom and security, guaranteeing democracy, the rule of respect for human and minority rights. To meet these criteria, Albania will have to cooperate with the European Union. Integration is a vital strategy for dealing with the effects of political instability and human conflict that can affect a region. The various options available for economic integration will help Albania. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the challenges and advantages derived from the integration of Albania in the European Union and how they can be used in the economic development of the country. In this research, Secondary data was gathered from numerous scholarly journals and articles on the issue of Albania's integration into the European Union as well as challenges and economic opportunities that come from this integration. The primary data was obtained through the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews with the academic staff and academic assistants at Luigj Gurakuqi University. All countries seeking economic integration have access to a wide variety of goods and services to choose from. Albania's entry into economic integration will help in obtaining goods and services at a very low cost, lower tariffs and lower prices for distributors and consumers, which will bring opportunities for improved economic development. Economic integration is extremely beneficial for financial markets as it will help the Albanian government to obtain low-interest financial loans, trade liberalization and encouragement. This will create higher employment opportunities for people from all over the world, moving from one country to another in search of work.

Key words: *European Union, Integration, Economic integration, Challenge*

Codes JEL: *E20, F50, P20*

Covid-19 and its effect on the students' lifestyle

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a global crisis. Most world leaders called for self-isolation with stay-at-home orders for their citizens. These stay-at-home orders made most of the schools close, those of higher education level, as well. University students, both undergraduate and graduate, who expected to take and complete their courses in auditorium, conducted their courses remotely.

This situation motivated us to engage at a study for evaluating the real impact the pandemic had on students' lifestyle and their economic activity. The study was part of an international project between three universities. The data were collected through a online survey, on Google platform, where the questionnaires were designed in two languages, Albanian and English. Each questionnaire contains 15 questions about gender, nationality, field of study, level of program study, consumption for leisure activities and basic needs, etc.

The period under consideration for the Albanian data, contains results and reactions by 70 students in 4 months time horizon, which are going to be presented at this conference. The data were analysed using SPSS and the obtained results emphasize the important changes that pandemic made on students' lifestyle and the economic welfare.

The study concludes with some recommendations that are needed to be considered by the policy makers and responsible authorities.

Keywords: COVID-19, consumption behaviours, lifestyle, students

JEL Codes: D14, E21, G51

In depth analysis of the legal framework for tourism-related land usage in AlbaniaProf.Asoc.Adrian LEKA¹,Msc. Eraldi NDOJ²Luigj Gurakuqi University, Faculty of Law, Shkodër, Albania, adrian.leka@unishk.edu.al
University of Tirana, Faculty of Law, Albania eraldindojo@gmail.com**Abstract**

In recent years, Albania has witnessed a remarkable surge in tourism, driven by its diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and strategic location in the Balkan region. This growing industry, however, brings to the forefront legal complexities and challenges that demand rigorous research. This article embarks on a comprehensive exploration of some of the legal underpinnings that shape the tourism sector in Albania, analyzing the complex body of statutes, regulations, and policies that govern this aspect of the industry.

The focal points of this research lies in the area of land use planning and zoning regulations, which play an important role in shaping the physical landscape of tourist destinations. This research analyzes the mechanisms through which Albanian authorities balance the demands of tourism development with environmental conservation and sustainable land use practices. Furthermore, it examines the legal provisions that safeguard culturally significant sites, including archaeological treasures and historical landmarks, from the potential impacts of tourism-related activities.

This comprehensive analysis offers a multifaceted examination of the legal framework that regulate land usage as it pertains to tourism in Albania. By unraveling the complexities and nuances of the regulatory landscape, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry. Moreover, it serves as a vital resource for stakeholders seeking to plan a sustainable, ethical, and legally sound trajectory for Albania's tourism sector in the years ahead.

Narrative economics and policy recommendations in Albania

PhD. Mario ÇURÇIJA

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The purpose of this article is to investigate the role that "narrative economics" have on policy choices and economic reforms in Albania. The article explores the role that the recommendations of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have had on the structural reforms and economic choices made in Albania from 1990 until 2015. In this article we explore how the narrative about the causes of economic growth has changed over time, that is, to explore what the keywords within the reports that connect economic growth with the determining factors. In order to do so, we proceeded to carry out a qualitative analysis on the choice of keywords found in the periodic financial reports of the International Monetary Fund on the economic and financial situation of Albania during the period 1990-2015. We have found greater attention in recent years on topics which concern innovation, knowledge transfer, ease of doing business, property rights.

Keywords: Narrative economics, Albania, transition economy, economic growth, structural reforms

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY INNOVATIONS AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE**Circular economy and consumption behavior: a case study of Albania, Poland and Portugal**

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Abstract

The Circular Economy (CE) a recent popular concept is a response to the problems caused by dwindling resources and the growing amount of waste. CE is described primarily in terms of innovative changes in production, new business models and their benefits. Much less attention is paid to how CE affects consumption patterns and consumers, introducing new solutions such as borrowing or exchanging products. This paper focuses on the second-hand goods consumption by different generations from 3 countries: Albania, Poland and Portugal. The purpose of the analysis was (1) to identify the respondents' indications regarding the knowledge of the definition of a circular economy, (2) to identify the respondents' indications regarding the places of purchase of used products declared by the respondents, and (3) to identify the respondents' indications regarding the type of products purchased used by the respondents. All analyzes were conducted taking into account the nationality and represented generation (X, Y, Z) of the respondents. The analysis was conducted among 495 respondents from Albania, Poland and Portugal. The research was conducted using the survey method (CAPI). The survey questionnaire contained 19 questions that concerned (1) knowledge about the circular economy, (2) preferred shopping locations, and (3) factors determining the respondents' purchasing behavior. Correspondence analysis was used to analyze the data. The differences on knowledge (or lack of it) about CE and the nationality and age of the respondents (generation) were verified, where statistically significant differences were shown between respondents from Albania, Poland and Portugal. It was also found that respondents' preferences regarding the place of purchase of second-hand goods are differentiated (at a statistically significant level) by nationality and year of birth. Consumers from Poland (born: 1965 – 2012) prefer OLX and Vinted as a place to buy second-hand items, and consumers from Albania (all generations) most often indicated the answer option: Other. Also, the type of products purchased varied both by nationality and generation. The obtained results indicate significant national and generational differences, opening up an opportunity to continue further research aimed at identifying different behaviors among these consumer groups. The presented work, both in its cognitive and application part, can be a source of knowledge and popularization of research, and can be a source of inspiration for in-depth reflections and scientific discussion. The analysis presented in the publication may be a supplement to existing studies in the field of circular economy. Extending the study to other EU countries may contribute to defining a strategy for policy makers, manufacturers and retailers, allowing for a wider use of solutions based on the circular economy, while maintaining the profitability of their activities.

Keywords: Circular Economy; Consumer Behavior; Households, Correspondence Analysis

JEL Codes: Q01, Q56, R22

Bridging the divide: regional development and cohesion in Albania

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Abstract

Albania, with its diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage, stands at a critical juncture in its quest for balanced regional development and cohesion. This article delves into the multifaceted issue of regional development and cohesion, offering a comprehensive exploration of the challenges, strategies, and opportunities within the context of this dynamic nation.

The context and purpose of this article are rooted in the imperative need to address regional imbalances. Albania, while making substantial strides since its transition to a market economy, still wrestles with significant disparities among its regions. The central purpose of this research is to scrutinize the challenges and opportunities in regional development, offering a comprehensive overview of Albania's current status and its potential path toward fostering regional cohesion. Key findings underscore the pronounced challenges confronting underdeveloped regions, ranging from insufficient infrastructure and access to quality education and healthcare to the ongoing trend of labor migration.. The profile of regions in size, demographics in view of statistical classification as well as special distribution of regional economic activities are brought at the center of attention. The current state of art in policy framework is analyzed. However, amidst these challenges, a promising landscape unfolds.

Albania's journey towards European Union integration has presented a window of opportunity. This research highlights the significance of targeted investments in vital sectors, including tourism and agriculture, as a catalyst for fostering development while tackling sustainable growth and environmental issues. Focus is on regional development planning and policy. Initiatives encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, combined with a commitment to bolster local governance structures, signify the potential for bridging these disparities. Case studies of regions that have successfully improved their development status further exemplify that progress is achievable with the right strategies and vision.

The importance of this research extends beyond the confines of academia. It serves as a guidebook for policymakers, offering evidence-based insights to formulate effective strategies that promote regional cohesion. It also stands as a valuable resource for investors and international organizations seeking to support Albania's growth. By offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in regional development, this research advocates for positive change and a brighter future for Albania, emphasizing the need for unity and equity among its diverse regions.

Keywords: regional imbalances, statistical classification, local governance structures

JEL Codes: R11, R12, R58.

Strategic directions of the development of local environments and the position of private entrepreneurship in them

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Abstract

The local community in Tešanj, a town with about 45,000 inhabitants in the central part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, represents in a certain way an "economic miracle" in a wider regional context. Namely, the small town that makes up about 1.5% of the population of the state of BiH in economic terms provides about 10% of the GDP of BiH with an emphasis on economy and trade. How to plan strategic development in such conditions and how to behave in that context as a private company that has existed for only ten years (InterProcess with the production of premium class furniture and interiors)? Can everything be strategically planned and, after all, how local strategies are even possible and usable in today's conditions of global trends. It is clear that development strategies at the local, regional or national levels do not take into account private businesses to a large extent. But it is also clear that neither private businesses can develop in the long term outside the proclaimed context of local and regional community development. Also, even local/regional communities cannot be strategically planned if they do not monitor the state and development of the business private sector. Some of these doubts and questions are tried to be answered by this work and the research that was carried out for its writing, while following in parallel one of the development companies that best reflects the aspirations of the planned development of the local community.

The vertical logarithmic wind profile model a helpful tool for wind energy potential evaluation for NW part of Albania

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Abstract

The vertical logarithmic wind profile (VLWP) is considered a good approach in evaluating the wind speed at different levels above the land surface based on meteorological data observed at 10 meters high. Also the frequency of wind measurements each 10 minutes has been an important element to get a final god shape on data outputs for wind power potential estimations and as well for extreme weather events. The model created for VLWP was helpful also for risk evaluation not only for the wind speeds over 25 m/sec threshold, but also for categorizing the wind speeds in different groups making easy for wind power potential estimations. The analyses if focused specially in a case study of 23 February 2019, when a storm and high wind observed on NW part of Albania produced a lot of damage including loose of people life. The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the importance of having correct meteorological data about wind and how to get better evaluation about wind power energy on that area.

Keywords: wind power estimation; extreme wind speed; meteorology; data processing; climate.

Intellectual property: an important capital for the business

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In this working paper, the author analyzes the concepts, definitions and importance of intellectual property for an economy oriented towards innovation.

First, the author reviews the literature defining the intellectual property and its classification. Second, the author emphasizes the necessity of creating a reliable and functional system for the protection of the legal rights of intellectual property. Third, the author present a spectrum of mechanisms to protect innovative creativity and to stimulate work and further investments for a more competitive economy. Fourth and finally, the author examines the existing approaches of the economy, especially the developing economy towards innovation and the protection of intellectual property and its commercialization and emphasizes the urgent need for awareness and maturity of businesses for the protection and enforcement of property rights in national and international markets.

Keywords: Innovation, Intellectual Property, Industrial Property, Registration of IP, Commercialization of IP

JEL Codes: K11, O34, O38

Evidence of relationship between CSR disclosure and banks' characteristics

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Abstract

CSR disclosure, which stands for Corporate Social Responsibility disclosure, refers to a company's transparency in sharing its social and environmental practices with the public. When it comes to banks, CSR disclosure plays a crucial role in shaping their overall performance and reputation. First, CSR disclosure helps banks to build trust and enhance their reputation among stakeholders. Second, help banks mitigate risks associated with unethical practices.

This study investigates the nature and extent to which banks in Albania report the social and environmental engagement followed by the identification of how banks' characteristics are link to CRS disclosure.

The sample consist of seven banks that operate in Albania from 2007-2020. The related data are collected from banks' annual reports from 2007-2020, and from 2015 on the annual reports on CSR of Albanian Association of Banks as well. We used content analysis to estimate CSR index, while the relationship between CSR index and banks' characteristics are investigated with multiple regression analysis.

This paper contributes to the literature trying to understand how much and how Albanian banks engage in social responsibility determining the key indicators that contribute to CSR disclosure as well. The results may show interest in future research relating to how CSR disclosure changed pre and post COVID-19 Pandemic.

Keywords: CSR Index, ROA, Risk, Corporate Governance

JEL CODES: G3, G21, G28, Q5

Challenges faced by expatriates during the pandemic, lessons learned for future effective crises' impact management (the case of Albania)

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on various aspects of people's lives, representing a complex crisis that has affected societies, governments, institutions, businesses, and individuals. Recovery from this crisis is an ongoing process, and many authors, drawing from Lerbinger's (2012) definition, characterize a crisis as an unpleasant and unpredictable event with unknown causes and uncertain solutions.

Expatriates, individuals living in a foreign country and regularly contending with challenges related to adjustment, are particularly vulnerable to crises, as observed by McNulty (2019). The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception in this regard. While much of the existing literature on expatriates' exposure to crises has focused on human-made crises, COVID-19 stands out as a natural disaster that had a global reach, affecting not only specific countries or regions but the entire world, as demonstrated in the works of Tripathi & Singh (2021), Koveshnikov et al. (2023), and Vegh et al. (2023). Given the unique and widespread nature of this global crisis, many scholars in the field of International Human Resource Management (IHRM) have turned their attention to studying COVID-19 and its impact on expatriates.

The primary objective of this research is to investigate how expatriates managed and adapted to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic necessitated a shift in corporate policies and practices, highlighting the need for more flexible expatriate management strategies to ensure their future success and effectiveness (Bebenroth, 2021; Bebenroth, 2022).

To achieve this goal, our research follows a two-fold approach. Firstly, it conducts an extensive review of the latest research literature to gain an understanding of the Covid-19 global impact and of the specific challenges that expatriates encountered during the pandemic, together with the proposed solutions for addressing these challenges in the future.

Secondly, it conducts semi-structured interviews with expatriates who resided and worked in Albania during the pandemic. By doing so, we aim to discern whether the challenges they faced and the underlying factors differed from those documented in existing literature. The insights gathered from these interviews will serve as a foundational basis for developing concrete policies and practices that foreign companies operating in Albania can implement to support their expatriate managers during times of crisis.

In summary, this research project seeks to comprehensively examine the experiences of expatriates during the pandemic, using a combination of literature review and primary data collection. The ultimate objective is to provide practical recommendations for companies in Albania to enhance their support for expatriate employees, particularly in times of unforeseen challenges.

Keywords: expatriate managers, challenges, Covid-19, pandemic, multinational companies, foreign companies, company policies, working practices

JEL classification: F23, M12, I18

Calculation of the ecological footprint in the urban ecosystem of Shkodra city for the years 2020-2022

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Abstract

The ecological footprint is well known among green economists and represents human influence on Earth and its natural resources. The ecological footprint is a quantitative instrument that uses matter and energy flows to assess the biophysical load of the ecosystem. To calculate the ecological footprint, analysis of statistical data is used which translates into biological quantities of the countries' production, as well as in the areas needed for waste elimination, on an annual basis. This research paper gives data on the ecological footprint in the urban ecosystem of the city of Shkodra for a period of 3 years (2020-2022). The calculation of the ecological footprint is mathematically realized and helps us reflect on the impact of human behavior on the environment. The calculation of the ecological footprint is done by compiling a matrix, to which the surface is attached to each category of consumption; Then the entire surface of the earth is collected and dissected by the number of populations by giving the result in hectare per person. 300 citizens were interviewed about their behavior towards the consumption of goods, in relation to food, housing, transport, and consumption of goods and services. The analysis of data on the ecological footprint is added to the identification of the actual state of the ecosystem, the description of the ecological conditions and the attitude of people to the main environmental and social factors. Based on the values of the ecological footprint, a list of recommendations was compiled not only for the community members and the modification of their behavior towards the ecosystem, but also for decision-makers. Shkodra should continue to be a sustainable ecosystem.

Key words: *the ecological footprint, urban ecosystem, category of consumption, ecological conditions, decision-maker.*

Technological innovation in tourism enterprises in northern Albania

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Abstract

The tourism industry for Albania, as a developing country, is considered very important in creating economic benefits, which is also seen as connected to the agricultural sector. The integration of agricultural and tourism enterprises brings economic development mainly in rural areas. The relationship between agriculture and the tourism sector in the rural area stimulates local production, maintains tourism profits. The problem of integrating the two sectors is related to the seasonal nature of tourism, the low quality of local products, the dependence of the tourism industry on imported supplies and the lack of a direct link between agricultural enterprises and the tourism industry.

Digitization of agriculture is considered very important for the progress of agriculture. Various interested actors assume that the adoption of new agricultural technology affects the performance and will also ensure an increase in the precision of the production produced to meet the need of the tourism business in the region.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the perception and attitude of farmers and tourism enterprises regarding agricultural technology. Also, this paper shows the importance of digitizing the supply chain of agricultural products to support the tourism market. Finding optimal ways to improve the relationship between agricultural and tourism enterprises is very necessary to create synergy in the market and improve the image of the tourist destination. The main source of which is the agricultural development and potentials in the development of tourism, in the form of touristic programs and facilities. Two hypotheses were raised: digitalization improves the production process of agricultural products, and digitalization of the supply chain supports the relationship between agricultural and tourism enterprises to create market synergies.

The methodology of this paper is based on secondary data analysis and primary data processing. The secondary data is the result of a review of a wide and contemporary literature, domestic and foreign, related to the research topic. In formal statistical management systems, data are used to investigate the characteristics and importance of agricultural and tourism companies using agricultural technology. Primary data was obtained using quantitative research, with a questionnaire instrument. The questionnaires contain open-ended and structured questions and are self-administered by the respondent. Two questionnaires were distributed one to hostels that operate specifically in the area of Theth, Razma, Boga, Tamara, Lepusha, Vermoshi. A second questionnaire is distributed to farmers operating in the same area.

The data show that there is generally a positive approach of farmers and tourism business in the north of Albania towards the adoption of new technology, especially that in the distribution channel. There are several obstacles to the adaptation of technology by the business of these two sectors.

Keyword: Innovative, Technology, Supply Chain, Agriculture, Tourism.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, GLOBALIZATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**Organizing dual education in higher education in the countries of the Southeast Europe Region – Need Or Fashion?**

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Abstract

The dual model of education in higher education has become one of the top topics in the last decade. Employers' dissatisfaction with the knowledge, competences and skills of graduates was attributed to the burden of higher education institutions, which, in addition to numerous internal problems, also had numerous objective reasons why this was so. Higher education institutions (HEI) in their defense will say: HEI graduates know as much as their colleagues in the West, and we work in much more difficult conditions, and this is confirmed by the fact that many continue their studies at foreign universities or get jobs in foreign companies without any problems. On the other hand, employers repeat they know the theory very well, but for practical work and application of that knowledge and skills, we spend as much time as their formal education at the university. On such conflicting views, study departments that will have a greater connection with the business sector and provide more appropriate knowledge base and competences for a quick and full entry into the labor market have been discussed for years. And while such a study has become a "standard" in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and increasingly in other EU member states, the process in the countries of Southeast Europe (SEE) is unfortunately extremely slow. The justification for the slowness is the complexity of the organization, the lack of a business environment, the lack of legal legislation, financing problems, etc. But the fact is that this does not justify the key actors for this kind of slowness in implementation. First of all, it is a lack of vision and much more work, effort and sacrifice to organize and develop this type of study. After all, it is much simpler to continue working ex-cathedra or online (an even better model because you don't even have to physically visit amphitheaters or classrooms), which is a well-established system that has lasted for decades. In the work and research that preceded it, recommendations are made for an objective assessment of the possibilities and needs for dual studies programs through the preparation of adequate studies of the feasibility of applying this model, and it emphasizes the importance of the transformation of HEIs in the countries of the SEE region. We especially want to emphasize the importance of real business prerequisites and cooperation that is needed for a high-quality study of this kind, and not a study that will be a farce of the dual model.

Keywords: Business systems, dual study, feasibility study, higher education, labor market

JEL CODES: I21, I24, J24

Harnessing digital platforms for sustainable tourism development in north Albania

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Abstract

North Albania, a region abundant with untapped natural and cultural resources, stands at a critical juncture in its tourism development trajectory. This study is anchored in the growing necessity to integrate digital innovations with sustainable practices, fostering a tourism model that contributes to economic prosperity, social inclusivity, and environmental protection. Despite the global tourism industry's rapid digital transformation, there is a conspicuous absence of extensive research focusing on North Albania's unique context, particularly the intersection between digital platforms and sustainable tourism. Moreover, existing literature overlooks the nuanced limitations hindering the region, including infrastructural deficits, digital literacy gaps, and the sustainable management of tourism in culturally and environmentally sensitive areas. This paper aims to bridge these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of the current landscape, challenges, and potential pathways forward, emphasizing the role of digital platforms in enhancing sustainable tourism practices. The research employs a mixed-methods approach. Firstly, a survey targeting local stakeholders, including tourism businesses, government authorities, community representatives, and tourists, was conducted to gauge the current utilization of digital platforms and perspectives on their potential. Secondly, in-depth case studies of successful digital platform implementations in comparable regions globally were analyzed to extract relevant strategies applicable to North Albania. Lastly, this study performed a SWOT analysis to identify internal and external factors affecting the integration of digital platforms in North Albania's tourism sector. The study revealed a palpable enthusiasm among stakeholders towards digital platforms, seen as catalysts for reaching wider audiences and enhancing service quality. However, stark challenges persist, particularly relating to insufficient digital infrastructure and a skills gap. Intriguingly, comparative case studies indicated strategic digital interventions tailored to local needs can spur significant sustainable development gains. Furthermore, findings emphasize the necessity for a robust policy framework, stakeholder collaboration, and capacity building initiatives to underpin successful digitalization efforts.

This study is instrumental for a multitude of stakeholders. For local entrepreneurs and tourism operators, it offers a valuable insight into leveraging digital platforms to access broader markets, enhance tourist engagement, and promote sustainable practices. For policymakers and investors, it provides a nuanced understanding of the existing challenges and proposes strategic investments and policy frameworks conducive to digital adoption.

Keywords: North Albania, sustainable tourism, digital platforms, regional development, cultural preservation
JEL CODES: M10, Z32, Q29

“Vaken Process” as an innovative human-centered problem-solving approachAigars ANDERSONS¹, Jozef BUSHATI², Maija KUKAINE³, Gjulio ZEFI⁴

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Abstract

An integration of the design thinking methodology into regular business processes and product development procedures gives business companies and organizations a sustainable competitive advantage, since the main goal of any “human-centered” approach is to create the added value that customers really need. Moreover, all participants of the design thinking process are able to discover and further develop their personal soft skills crucial in the business environment.

This paper includes analysis of VAKEN process (<http://www.vaken.org>), innovative design thinking approach, its practical application in business process innovation, developed by 16 facilitators from 7 partner Universities across the Nordic and Baltic region with assistance of experts in the Western Balkan area and Germany.

Research as a case study analysis is carried out, assessing the approbation events of VAKEN process design thinking approach as well as the analysis and outcomes provided from VAKEN process use cases in Denmark, Lithuania and Iceland. Also, it had been analyzed from project participants’ assessment questionnaires about the soft skills acquired during the product design process and involved expert interviews.

The results of the study show that VAKEN process methodology is effective in helping bridge the gap between stakeholders and developers, as well as in creating an environment of collaboration and problem-solving. Additionally, the findings show that VAKEN process methodology can be used to create solutions that take into account the needs of all stakeholders, rather than focusing solely on the needs of a single group. Finally, the study revealed that VAKEN process methodology can be used to create solutions that are tailored to the specific needs of each situation, rather than simply relying on a generic solution.

Keywords: Design thinking, Innovation, Soft skills

JEL CODES: I210, M110, O310

Science and technology for development, reflections for AlbaniaAdriana GALVANI¹, Gjulio ZEFI², Jozef BUSHATI³¹Unipomediterranea – Nola & Bologna Italy, adriana.galvani@live.com²University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Albania, giuliozefi@yahoo.it³University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Albania, jozefbushati@gmail.com**Abstract**

This paper reflects thinking of authors that have to do with the basis of experience, their work, literature research, (which is also the basis of its methodology), opinions and reflections at different levels to fulfill its purpose. Also the methodology draws on official sources proposed by international bodies, such as the EU and the UN, which offer feasible and positive suggestions. Technological-social development must necessarily be linked to an elevation of educational and professional training, bearing in mind that the advancement of technology derives from highly specialized personnel, politically motivated and inserted in research institutions of the highest level. The Balkans will be an integral part of a unified Europe. The ongoing enlargement and the signature of the Treaty of Athens in April 2003 should inspire and encourage the countries of the Western Balkans to follow the same successful road of reforms and to increase their efforts in that direction. The history of Albania is increasingly turned towards the Mediterranean which give it the right to enter the EU. Proximity is an imperative element for EU with the central role of the Mediterranean Region. Proximity will generate converging interests in working together to address common challenges, such as liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, where concerns are uniting common challenges”. In order to become an EU member state everyone must comply with the EU’s high standards of "acquis" in a number of areas - a strict but a fair way of doing. It is an opportunity to internationally scale up, forging innovation from research, underpinning breakthrough technologies, to meet real world needs. Recommendations and conclusions are another important element of it and they are generally given in each part of the paper's issues and hoped that the results can be read later in time. The paper also deals with the problems and challenges of STD in Albania, how can improve the governance of science and technology system, problematic. How does Albania compare to other countries in science and technology, with the aim that STD, to influence, to take steps forward for Albania towards the European Union.

Keywords: Social responsibility, Education, International Organization, EU, UN.

JEL classification: 2 C, 13 C, 24 P, 30P

The impact on entropy of improving the learning management systems

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Abstract

The education system needs more and more modernization of learning management systems especially after COVID - 19. Consequently, in the perspective of labor market demands regarding the design of information systems, there is an increase in the number of employees who develop such systems. One of the solutions offered in order to overcome this gap is the compilation of a research model on the improvement of learning management systems taking into account the entropy of learning management systems as part of the domain of information systems. In this regard, this study proposes a research model based on the impact it has on the entropy of an information system when models of learning management system improvement are presented. Also, for the study of entropy, Fisher information is taken into consideration to study the impact of modification / improvement of the computer parameters of a learning management system. To test the research model, empirical data will be collected through a hardcopy questionnaire to professors and students at an Albanian university. Data analysis will be implemented using statistical models and the impact on the Fisher information explorer model will further be considered if the information system is usable and sustainable. This study contributes to the literature of information systems theories through the development of a model and instrument through which perceived usability and sustainability are measured in the context of LMS. From a social point of view, the findings obtained will provide answers as to whether and how these improved LMS systems are expected to be used in distance education.

Keywords: education, questionnaire, Fisher information, distance learning, impact

JEL classification: I21, I23, D83

The contribution of non-formal education competencies in traditional education for stem learning: case of Albania

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Abstract

Non-formal education is an effective way of enhancing formal education in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Educational activities such as internships, workshops, mentoring programs, and online courses can give students a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the skills necessary to succeed in these fields. STEM education focuses on developing students' problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills, as well as their understanding of scientific principles and their ability to apply them to real-world contexts. This study investigates the potential synergies between non-formal education competencies and traditional educational approaches in the context of STEM learning. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews with educators and quantitative assessments of student performance across a diverse sample of educational institutions in Albania. Furthermore, this study explores the potential challenges and barriers that may arise when implementing non-formal education competencies in traditional educational settings. In conclusion, this research aims to recommend methodologies for incorporating non-formal education as a complement to formal education in these fields based on research data results and literature review. The research results show that incorporating non-formal education in the formal context positively impacts engaging and motivating students to learn these fields and grow professional skills in this area. Furthermore, the research indicates the importance of aligning pedagogical strategies, adjusting curriculum frameworks, and providing professional development opportunities for educators. The study highlights the need for ongoing evaluation and refinement of this integrated approach to ensure its continued efficacy. The integration of non-formal education competencies not only enriches students' cognitive and socio-emotional development but also augments their proficiency in critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. These findings advocate for a paradigm shift in educational practices, promoting a holistic approach that combines the strengths of both formal and non-formal education to optimize STEM learning outcomes. Future research endeavors should focus on refining implementation strategies and exploring the long-term impacts of this integrated educational model.

Keywords: Engineering education, Educational technologies, Learning approaches, Science and technology education, 21st-century skills

JEL classification: I20, I21, I23, D83

Financial navigation in the freelance digital age: experiences, tools, and pathways to resilience

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Abstract

As digital transformation immerses global economies, freelancing is a rapidly growing career avenue. However, its flexibility and autonomy come with challenges, especially concerning risk management, financial planning, and sustainable decision-making.

This paper aims to share the experiences of freelancers in this domain, examining the tools they leverage, the obstacles they encounter, and the strategies they adopt for future financial security while offering advice for newcomers in the freelance arena.

An important task in the freelancer's experience is the act of financial decision-making. In the absence of a predictable monthly salary and employer benefits, freelancers often struggle with unpredictable project-based earnings. This necessitates the development of risk management strategies to handle the flow of income, mitigate the dangers of market variations, and respond proactively to the rapid technological shifts that define the digital age. Freelancers must also account for the fluctuations and potential losses in money exchange rates, especially when dealing with international clients or platforms. The paper elaborates on the experiences of freelancers as they traverse these challenges, especially for those working across borders, to determine investments that align with their unpredictable income streams.

For those newly venturing into freelancing, the landscape might appear intimidating. The paper concludes with a comprehensive set of advice for such entrants. It highlights the imperative to diversify income streams; the significance of monitoring global exchange rates, the advantage of utilizing digital financial tools, and the benefits of active participation in freelancer communities.

In essence, the journey of a freelancer in the digital age, while rich in opportunities, is also full of financial challenges. By examining the decision-making processes, shared experiences, and the advice they lean on, this paper offers valuable insights for both current and aspiring freelancers, equipping them with the tools to navigate the complex financial waters of the freelance world.

Keywords: *Freelance, Financial Planning, Digital Tools, Decision Making, Financial Advice*

JEL classification: *D81, O33, G11*

Vulnerable youth and start-up experiences: challenges and opportunities-Bujane TOPALLI¹, Arian GJURA²¹Department of Psychology – Social Work, University of Shkoder “Luigj Gurakuqi”^{1, 2}
bujane.topalli@unishk.edu.al;²Department of Tourism, University of Shkoder “Luigj Gurakuqi” arian.gjura@unishk.edu.al**Abstract**

The global COVID-19 crisis has had a major impact on shrinking the employment market worldwide, especially for young people. This situation has led to an increase in the number of unemployed young individuals who are outside the education system. Statistics show that globally, 1 in 5 young people currently have NEET status. According to statistical data on youth employment in the Western Balkans, there is an increase in the number of young people who are neither attending school nor engaged in employment or training NEET. The data show that Albania, among all the countries in the region, has the highest rate of NEET youth with basic education, and the most vulnerable to social exclusion are precisely the so-called vulnerable youth coming from socio-economically disadvantaged contexts such as impoverished families, minorities, etc. Regarding this target group, it is evident that the major efforts of social policy makers have focused on developing life skills and enhancing their employability. Employment is considered the only opportunity for these young people to live independently and with dignity. To help improve this situation, the creation and implementation of youth employment programs are expected to be implemented. Based on the Albanian National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020, social organizations play a significant role in identifying, informing, and facilitating youth self-employment. In this context of developments, social policies in the employment sector in our country will focus on a gradual transition from passive to active policies, with particular attention given to the labour integration of specific groups at risk of social exclusion. The intervention methodologies proposed by researchers supporting/ promoting the expand of youth employment opportunities include public and private sector partnership or collaboration with the NGOs, working together/networking (link) knowledge sharing (learn), and self-employment (leverage). In recent years, many local NGOs operating in the Municipality of Shkoder, based on social policy developments that prioritize youth programs, have been engaged in providing social programs to promote the employability of vulnerable youth. These programs include courses to develop soft skills and practical knowledge about professions or crafts, as well as supporting the development of business ideas and the creation of social enterprises. Especially, to know more about achievement and challenges of vulnerable youth in their first start-up experiences we have based our study on qualitative approach and on analysis of 1 focus groups (with professional/project implementers), also in 10 interviews with young people beneficiaries of star-up grant. The aim of this research is to learn more about the self-employment experience of vulnerable youth. The research questions are related to the difficulties that vulnerable young faced to implement their business idea and to survive in the labor market. In conclusion, vulnerable youth category represents a challenge for integration into the labor market, especially regards of lack to soft skills or internship experiences. In the meantime, the employers should develop working models, as offering mentoring service for youth benefits of start-up grants, especially during the first year of the business implementation.

Key words: self-employability, vulnerable youth, challenges, achievements.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**Development of the circular economy model as a model of rounded economic flow in one of the regions in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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Abstract

Municipal waste from households, as well as other waste that by its nature or composition is similar to waste from households, is generated in households and generally does not contain hazardous types (categories) of waste from other producers (generators) of waste. Annually, about 29,000 tons of municipal waste are disposed of from the area of the city of Zenica to the Regional Landfill "Moščanica". Observing the area of organized municipal waste collection and the number of inhabitants, it can be estimated that more than 85% of the generated municipal waste is collected. According to current knowledge and estimates of population growth, demographic structure and economic trends, a slight increase in the amount of municipal waste can be predicted. In order to treat municipal waste the construction of a new sorting plant is planned. The planned capacity of the sorting plant is 40,000 tons/year and it can be increased to 80,000 tons/year. For the purpose of preparing the Feasibility Study of the Center for Waste Management at the Moščanica Regional Landfill, work indicators were processed according to the given framework. The considered plant is technologically intended for sorting (sorting) collected waste mechanically into inorganic (dry) and organic (wet) fractions. Accordingly, a phased construction is planned in order to process the obtained fractions into alternative fuel obtained from waste (RDF) - Phase I and construction of the facility for biological processing of the separated organic fraction through its stabilization - Phase II. It is necessary to point out that a necessary condition for the realization of these phases is the commitment and legal permission, and then the obligation to take over alternative waste obtained from municipal waste by the production plants that can use it (cement plants, that is, thermal power plants and other energy plants). Currently, both cement plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina import alternative fuel obtained from municipal waste from Italy, Slovenia and other countries. In order to sustain the processing of caloric fractions of municipal waste, a system of co-financing by the sociopolitical community or end users is necessary. In accordance with the Waste Management Law of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Waste Directive recommendations, it is important to respect the principles of waste management. The financial indicators were processed based on data and experience and reflect the situation with the third quarter of 2021. With the construction and realization of sustainable work of the Center for Solid Municipal Waste Management at the Moščanica Regional Landfill it is possible to reduce the amount of disposed waste by more than 50%. Treatment and processing of waste (recycling) are processes that bring multiple advantages (benefits) and cannot be observed, nor maintained when they are observed only in part of the market category (economy). Environmental and social advantages are difficult to measure in economic parameters and therefore it is necessary, as in developed countries, to find a system of co-financing that will ensure the sustainability of the waste handling and recycling process.

Keywords: Alternative fuel, municipal waste, recycling, sustainable economy, waste management

JEL classification: Q50, Q56, Q42, Q48

A preliminary assessment of the importance and vulnerability of key indicators for sustainable development in Shkodra region

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Abstract

Nowadays the sustainable development in some emerging countries and in Albania too, is being in the center of economic development. The economy of these countries is usually based on traditional rural activities and their nature is reasonable well-conserved. Despite that, experiences in similar economies in the past show the devastated consequences the accelerated and non-sustainable growth could have on environment and particularly, biodiversity. For this reason, is urgent to promote some initiatives oriented to identify the most relevant elements of the natural richness to focus the conservation strategies on them.

In North Albania, mainly in Shkodra Region there are good potentials for rural tourism and eco-tourism development. A lot of biodiversity, several plants, medical and economic interest, the beautiful landscape. Farming and livestock are the main economic sectors and are good premises for the sustainable use of natural resources. The integration of tradition, environmental management, and culture in the tourism field, the use of products from a sustainable farming in the restaurants and accommodation structures are some key points to ensure the sustainability of touristic activities. For this reason, touristic development should be addressed since an integrated approach.

In this framework, the protection of natural heritage is critical to ensure the sustainable tourism and, consequently, biodiversity protection, landscape management, sustainable use of water and energy and clean and safety food should be on the focus. Involving the stakeholder groups in the decision-making processes makes stronger the engagement of people, researchers, civil society organizations and public authorities to the sustainable development goals.

The objective of this study is presenting an overview of some crucial elements for the sustainable development in Shkodra region and about their actual status since a participatory approach. A questionnaire was sent it to the main stakeholder groups involved in Shkodra region. The questionnaire was collected online and trough presential interviews and it was structured in 3 sections to assess of the importance and vulnerability of 18 key sustainable indicators grouped in three dimensions: economic, ecological, social, and institutional as well. To aggregate the individual assessment was applied a Borda account.

The preliminary results show the most relevant topics about employment and agriculture in the economic dimension, the absence of corruption and education in the social dimension and sustainable use of the biodiversity in the ecological dimension.

The main limitations of this study are related with the collection of a representative sample for all the stakeholder groups.

This work is relevant because establishes the base for a more-in-depth study oriented to provide some recommendations to stress the right actions to preserve sustainability in the North of Albania.

Keywords: Local development, Shkodra region, Sustainability indicators, Tourism of nature

JEL classification: Q01, Q26, Q57

The role of state regulations in the flow of Foreign Direct Investments for the countries of the Western Balkans

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Abstract

This study seeks to shed light on the state factors that play a role in the absorption of Foreign Direct Investments and consequently in the decision-making of multinational companies to invest or not in a foreign state. Regulatory variables are distinguished based for the most part on the life cycle of a firm.

World Bank databases are used to examine which host country regulatory factors affect FDI for six countries in the Western Balkans region. During the analysis, it is revealed that countries with a lower level of taxes on income and profits, as well as corruption, manage to attract more FDI. The integral view of the life cycle teaches us that MNEs make decisions starting from the ease of entry procedures, and then continuing with commercial operations, targeting markets that are as liberal as possible and based on rules and laws that create a climate of suitable business and investment. These results create important implications for the political reforms of the respective governments.

A fundamental question in the world of international business is "Why do some countries attract more FDI than others?"

Past studies in the field of determinants of FDIs mainly used macroeconomic variables (p.sh., Asiedu, 2006; Billington, 1999) to explain the variations between countries in the amounts of inflows of FDIs they receive. But regulatory changes should also matter. As a general trend, UNCTAD (2016) and World Bank (2016) data show that the number of changes to the regulations of FDIs that liberalize or favor incoming FDIs have outpaced changes that are restrictive.

Research done shows how a combination of market structure and numerous regulations affect the attractiveness of FDIs, while previous research on this topic has often examined the effects of a single regulatory variable on FDI entries (Khoury & Peng, 2011). This paper requires an enrichment of understanding how a combination of regulations affects the FDIs inflows.

Keywords: Political reforms, life cycle, business climate, multinational companies

JEL classification: E32, F23, M16

Analysis of the impact of the legalization process on real estate prices

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This paper will determine the impact of the process of the legalization of informal buildings on the real estate market prices. The lack of control on the territory has created massive problems due to illegal construction, which has in turn affected the real estate market.

The methodology used in this paper is based on primary data. A statistical model has been designed to analyze the data and the respective hypothesis has been tested through the descriptive and quantitative method. Public authorities (Policymakers) can use the obtained data to improve the legal framework in force on real estate property. The main findings of this paper will allow public authorities (ose policymakers) to improve the real estate market and avoid the creation of negative effects in the market that stem from informal buildings.

Keywords: Financial evaluation, property rights, real estate prices, compensation fund,

JEL classification: G; E; H; C.

Gender Budgeting – a fundamental tool in achieving gender equality in Albania Achievements and challenges

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Abstract

Gender equality has been an important issue in Albania for many years, and gender budgeting has been identified as a key tool for promoting gender equality. Gender budgeting is an approach that aims to ensure that national budgets are gender responsive. The aim of gender budgeting is to identify and address gender inequalities in the allocation of resources, both in terms of expenditures and revenue. It seeks to ensure that public funds are allocated fairly and equitably, considering the different needs and experiences of women and men.

Albania has made efforts to integrate gender budgeting into its policymaking and budgeting processes, but progress has been slow. This research paper aims to explore the status of gender budgeting in Albania and its potential as a tool for achieving gender equality. The findings reveal that although Albania has made some progress in adopting gender budgeting, there are still significant challenges in achieving it in public finance management.

The paper recommends further investment in capacity building and the development of appropriate tools and methodologies to strengthen the gender-responsive approach in public finance management. It also provides an overview of gender budgeting in Albania, with a specific focus on its framework, evidence, achievements, and challenges. It also offers recommendations for future improvements in the gender budgeting process.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, gender responsive budgeting, challenges, achievements, equitably*

The role of remittances in rural area of Albania

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Abstract

The migration of a significant number of young people heading toward EU and other developed countries is a scourge of our society. Remittances are a positive consequence of this phenomenon in our country's economy, which should be evaluated and used properly in order to increase its multiplier effect. Recognizing, analyzing and understanding remittances is a very important aspect in everyone's daily life, because we are all directly or indirectly affected by these flows. The concerning issue remains the high transferring cost through banks, which leads to informal transferring channels.

The role that remittances have in alleviating poverty, especially in rural areas, is undisputedly important. Families living in rural areas would financially fluctuate without the help that their families bring from abroad.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact that remittances have on a developing economy as Albania, in macro and micro aspects. Moreover this study focuses in analyzing the role of remittances in a rural area.

This study uses primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through a questionnaire conducted in a rural area (Juban). There were 54 families interviewed during May-June 2023. Secondary data are used to analyze the effect of remittances in Albanian economy and are retrieved from World Bank, Albanian Central Bank, INSTAT, etc.

The study concludes that Italy and Germany are the main sources of remittances for the families living in Juban. Families included in this study have been receiving remittances from many years. The remittances account on average 31-40% of their total income and are used mainly for daily consumption or health care. Remittances are also invested in hospitality industry, agriculture and real estate.

Keywords: *Developing countries, Poverty, Investments, Remittances, Rural areas*

JEL classification: *F24, F63, O18*

**Management of human resources in public institutions.
Case study Municipality of Vau Dejës.**

Marçela MARKU

Abstract

The public sector has changed over time, adapting to local development and progress. The organizational structure and methods are oriented towards global development and this is observed in every public institution. In recent years, special importance has been given to the management of human resources, considering them as an added value for the institution.

HRM constitutes one of the most important management functions in an organization. Human resources are a flexible and dynamic force. So the effective management of human resources is a key element in achieving efficiency and good performance of the public institution.

The purpose of study: The aim of the paper is to identify the way of human resources management in the public institution of the Municipality of Vau Deja. It also explains the line of the employee recruitment process up to their training for job/career growth. Through the questionnaire, the paper expresses the efficiency achieved in the selection of human resources to achieve the objectives of the institution of the Municipality.

Research question: How efficient is the human resource recruitment process? Is every step of the process followed closely? What are the influencing factors?

The hypothesis will be supported by answering the research questions that will be posed in the paragraphs of the following chapters using a qualitative research method that is based on the observation of the phenomenon/fact that occurred in relation to many other factors and based specifically on the case study of Vau Deja Municipality. The conclusion that we will reach as a result of this paper is related to the evidence of influencing factors in the effective management of human resources and positive results in the overall performance of the public institution.

Keywords: *managment, institution, human, resources, recruitment, etc.*

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**Evidence of dental tourism in Shkoder**

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Abstract

Dental tourism is an important segment of the growing health tourism industry. Patients generate relevant tourism revenue for the destination country beyond the dental clinics' direct income. The aim of this study is to evidence the situation of these phenomena last year in Shkoder. Methodology: This is a qualitative and descriptive study. The populations of study are: dentists, patients and travel agency workers. The time of this study was January - March 2023. The study was conducted using interviews. We interviewed dentists in different locations of the city, three workers from different travel agencies and the correspondent patients who have traveled to Shkoder for dental care. All these interviews are done face to face, anonymously and voluntarily. The data is calculated and analyzed in Microsoft Office Excel 2010. Results: The majority of patients who came to Shkodra for dental care were born in Shkoder and lives abroad. The main reasons that they prefer Shkoder are the low costs and the relationship with their families and friends. The busiest dental tourism period is the holiday season like Christmas, New Year, and Easter and summer vacation. Travel agencies admit having clients, who come for dental tourism but they still do not have a strategy to provide these services. Conclusions: The city itself can benefit much more from the dental business with greater involvement of tourism offices. While today the primary motivation is medical treatment, in the future it would be the tourist experience with dental treatment as a by-product. A combination with dental tourism can develop Shkoder into a medical destination, where returning immigrants come to see their relatives and foreign tourists come to get healthier and relax. Hence, dental tourism in Shkoder could be a sustainable future tourism form.

Keywords: dental, patients, tourism, Shkoder

The development of the creative tourism model in the city of Shkodra as an opportunity to preserve the cultural heritage. An overview of the activities that are suitable for this tourism model.

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Abstract

Cultural tourists have become more frequent visitors to Shkodra in recent years, demonstrating a particular interest in learning more about the city's heritage, culture and history.

The market for cultural tourism is expanding, which presents both opportunities and challenges in terms of the exploitation and mass commercialization of cultural artefacts.

The quality and liveability of cultural attractions are being negatively impacted by an increasing number of visitors, particularly in historic city centres. It is vital to protect cultural heritage values from deterioration, damage and commercialization of local culture in an environment where demand for cultural tourism is steadily rising.

The aim of this research is to emphasise the value of creative tourism development as a cutting-edge approach to the creation of tourism products, where the development process focuses on culture rather than culture as an object.

The creation of unique cultural products in relation to the competition based on gastronomy, artefacts, design, spoken language, spirituality, and a number of assets of the importance to the nations intangible cultural heritage is the main benefit of the development of creative tourism in the tourist destination city of Shkodra.

Objectives of this study:

- the development of a creative tourism model for the city of Shkodra*
- the search for activities that are suitable for the development of creative tourism*

This study uses qualitative and quantitative methods of information gathering.

The results of the study present important implications for the tourism sector in the city of Shkodra.

Keywords: *creative tourism, cultural tourism, tourist destination, culture as a process*

Code JEL: *Z3, Z1, R5*

Albanian tourism statistics compared with the other countries of the region.Emirjeta BEJLERI¹, Gentian MEMAJ²¹University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi", Albania, emirjeta.bejleri@unishk.edu.al²University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi", Albania, gentian.memaj@unishk.edu.al**Abstract**

In the last years, Albanian tourism has developed at a high rate, and especially 2023, which has not yet closed, is considered the year of Albanian tourism. Statistics from official sources show a significant increase in foreign tourist arrivals in Albanian territory. Nevertheless, these statistics see a discrepancy between this increase in the number of visitors and their overnights spent in Albania, which would turn into more income, employment and tax revenue. UNWTO, noting the importance of statistics, stresses, "Official statistics provide an essential element for the information system of a democratic society by providing government institutions, the economy and the public with data on economic, demographic, social and environmental situations". The purpose of this paper is to prove that in the case of Albania we are dealing with an "anomaly", when comparisons between the arrival of foreign tourists and their overnight stays in different countries of the region are made. Comparing the overnight stays per tourist in each of the countries, based on publications from statistical institutions of all five countries, we are faced with an unrealistic result. The paper also attempts to answer the question about the cause of this discrepancy, but it would be quite difficult because of the inability to have reliable figures and data. Different institutions provide different statistics from INSTAT based on different sources of information. The paper cannot assess the extent of the impact of each of these causes, which would be subject to more extensive research and also due to lack of consistent data.

Keywords: Anomaly, INSTAT, Discrepancy, Overnight stay, Tourists.

**Alternative tourism for innovation and sustainability:
Using literature to enhance tourism and heritage**

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Abstract

Even though we have heard a lot about the boom of tourism in Albania lately, sadly, it tends to be quite limited. It typically revolves around the 3 Ss – sea, sun, sand – and visiting the mountains. There is some interest in culture as well, but that is mainly focused on history. How about encouraging alternative forms of tourism? By using a qualitative approach and employing literature review and observation as methodology, this paper claims that supporting the development of new forms of tourism such as literary tourism would not only diversify the cultural offer, but it would also promote the local economy, help preserve the literary heritage, as well as contribute to sustainability by encouraging responsible and mindful travel practices. The paper contributes to the research on tourism studies with a focus on Albania by suggesting the development of alternative tourism types as the potential of literature in tourism is both under-researched and underexploited.

Key words: *alternative tourism, literary tourism, culture, local economy, heritage, sustainability*

JEL classification: *Y, Z*

Some elements of strategic planning for the tourist development of the protected areas of Korrab-Koritnik and the Albanian Alps

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Abstract

The region of Dibra is being visited more in recent years with an ever-increasing number of foreign and local tourists, where this region stands out for its natural diversity, agricultural economic development, tourist potential in rural areas, agro-tourism and cultural heritage, as well as the tourist areas of the National Park of the Alps are characterized by special features of economic development, natural resources, mining, historical and cultural values with really importance in the development of tourism.

The purpose of this study is to provide an analysis of the tourism potential and socio-economic development of protected areas and national parks in the area of Korrab-Koritnik (Peshkopi, Kukës) and the Albanian Alps (Shkodra, Bajram Curri), as well as the analysis of cross-border context regarding existing and new tourist areas and services.

The methodology of this research is based on the collection of secondary data from the study conducted during the period February-April 2023 in the municipalities of Shkodër, Dibër, Kukës and Tropoja regarding the current situation of economic development with a focus on the tourism sector. From the contacts with the representatives of the tourism directorates in these municipalities, the documents of the strategic plans were obtained, as well as the previous studies carried out by the government, municipalities or local and international associations were collected. While for the collection of primary data, about 30 tourism businesses in Dibër Municipality, 25 tourism businesses in Kukës Municipality were surveyed through questionnaires, as well as 10 focus groups (with 5-6 participants) and interviews with representatives of hotels/hostels, bars, restaurants, campsites in Dibër, Kukës, Theth, Valbona Valley. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of municipalities, museums, specialists in the tourism sector, agriculture and medicinal plants, as well as owners of hostels, campsites and bar-restaurants in the areas of the two national parks.

From the results of the surveys, we can see that there are some shortcomings, such as the lack of promotion of tourist destinations that are mainly related to mountain tourism and nature tourism; lack of nature tourism attractions related to recreation, entertainment and sports; lack of an unbroken chain of tourism supply where tourists can be offered transport, accommodation, food, entertainment by local businesses; lack of domestic and foreign investments due to the lack of a favorable climate for these businesses, such as the lack of legality of land ownership in the national park areas and other legal facilities that tourism businesses must have, which leads to the inability to benefit from any international subsidy and donation; need to improve the infrastructure of the tourist trails (signs, maps and maintenance); lack of proper waste management.

In conclusion, we can say that the potential of the areas of the National Natural Parks of Korab Koritnik and the Alps present great potential for the development of nature tourism, where in the short term it is suggested to adjust and maintain the tourist trails in terms of signage and waste management as and financial support of hostels that provide accommodation for tourists in terms of improving the quality of service and tourism offer in general.

Keywords: analysis, offer, potential, services, tourism.

JEL classification: Z31, Z32, R10, Q0, L91

Development of backpacking tourism in the region of ShkodraIgli OKAJ¹, Rudin BEKA²,¹Shkodra University 'Luigj Gurakuqi', Albania, igli_okaj@unishk.edu.al²Municipality of Shkodra, Albania, rudinbeka@bashkiashkoder.gov.al**Abstract**

This research is based on the need to extend the government's attention to backpacking tourism, as a new type of alternative tourism to mass tourism, as well as the lack of studies on backpacking tourists in our country. Their presence should be taken into account in policies for the sustainable development of our country. As with tourists visiting Albania, backpackers also need services such as transportation, food and drink, accommodation, entertainment and unique tourist attractions. Their existence has an impact on the development of the areas they visit. Also, the lack of research on the presence of backpacking tourists in our country makes this research important. This study aims to evaluate the development of backpacking tourism in the region of Shkodra. In the service of this goal, this study seeks to provide and analyze the profile of backpackers in Shkodra, to understand the characteristics of their trip, to determine the sources of information used in planning their trip and stay in Shkodra, to understand their consumption pattern, evaluate Shkodra's potential for suitable accommodation structures for backpackers, identify and analyze the impact of backpacking tourism on local development in Shkodra, and finally give some recommendations for sustainable development of backpacking tourism. To achieve these objectives and shed light on the research hypotheses of this study, exploratory research and surveillance are used as a research method, with a structured questionnaire research instrument distributed face to face to backpackers in the region of Shkodra. Data processing was done using descriptive statistics and graphic illustration. The research findings can serve as a basis in the segmentation of the tourist market in Albania and can serve as a basis to consider during the planning and management for sustainable development of Shkodra.

Keywords: Backpacking tourism, sustainable development, Shkodra region

JEL classification: O, R, Z

Urban development in the region of Shkodra and its impact on the growth of tourismViljona KOTRRI¹, Mirjam DIBRA²¹*Shkodra University 'Luigj Gurakuqi', Albania, viljona_kotri@unishk.edu.al*²*Shkodra University 'Luigj Gurakuqi', Albania, mirjam.dibra@unishk.edu.al***Abstract**

Over the years, Shkodra has gone through an urbanization process that has created a chaotic atmosphere. . The political changes of the 90s influenced such a situation.. On the other hand, it has a rich natural, historical-cultural heritage and a favorable strategic position that connects it with international tourist markets. The main purpose of this paper is to review and analyze the urban development in the region of Shkodra and evaluate whether this urban development affects the growth of tourism. The research question that is posed is: Do urban developments in the region of Shkodra affect the growth of tourism in this region?

The realization of this study was supported by the review of a wide foreign and domestic literatures, as well as taking into account the plans and projects made by the Municipality of Shkodër for urban development. In order to shed light on the research question, primary data were provided by surveys of employees of some tourist businesses operating in the region of Shkodra, who at the same time are also part of the community of the region of Shkodra.

Based on the analysis and research findings, some strategic recommendations are given regarding the urban development of Shkodra Region so that urban development planning can be done for the sustainable development of tourism in this region.

Keywords: *urban development, sustainable tourism, Shkodra Region,*

JEL classification: *O, R, Z*

Politics for Tourism Development in Albania

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Abstract

The relationship between politics and tourism is complex and multifaceted, receiving a higher priority in the research literature. Changing politics and tourism is normal. The relationship between politics and tourism has been a small subfield of the social science of tourism, although there are many examples of how political change has influenced the patterns, processes and directions of tourism development. In developing the connections between political change and change in tourism, some of the elements of politics and public policy that are determining or at least impact on tourism are described, as well as the connections between them.

This article examines the politics of tourism in Albania, from where tourism is created by internal and external political forces, also becoming a highly visible and contested political issue for the development of Albania. The political background and its effect on Albania's tourism are explained and discussed from the positions of the main groups involved, paying special attention to that of the government and its policies. Different parties are seen to interpret and use tourism as a political tool in contrasting ways that reflect their interests and agendas rather than as a single one.

Finally, some general conclusions are presented regarding the connections between the central concepts under consideration and the need to consider tourism within the framework of prevailing national and international political systems in order to fully appreciate its importance.

Keyword: Politics, Tourism, Planning, Development

JEL classification: L83. J15. J50

ONLINE SESSION**Digital perspectives in the Romanian university level economic education**

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The current study stems from our continuous direct contact with the Romanian university economic education and formation system. Having witnessed inherent changes and struggle to adapt to social, political, economic, demographic and pandemic conditions, both our own and those of our region, education in Romania has found a way to deal with some of these issues, yet it is constantly interested in adopting new solutions; the aim of this study is to focus on digital means as the key to improving economic education.

The method of choice for our study is based on surveys and questionnaires that both students and teachers from the university economic field were kindly asked to answer to. They were strongly encouraged to be sincere and transparent, even if some of the questions were presumably sensitive (i.e. financial related issues, prejudice or maybe political / religious background). The accuracy of the data was paramount, but the choice of not answering certain questions was offered.

The general background of the respondents had to be taken into account since there is a good amount of misconceptions, conservatism, reluctance and personal financial limitations that we were already aware of.

Some of the important points of the survey were related to the type, volume and quality of the information provided during courses, the way these were delivered, alternate sources of content, the type of evaluations, whether or not information received covered the needs etc.

Regulations and policies of the national and local bodies had to be carefully considered, as sometimes these function as guiding lines while in other cases they can be a limiting factor.

The digital means of education have many obvious advantages if they are used as a complementary educational tool. They offer multilevel experiences and variety, they answer to the globalizations trend and connect students reliably, easing up the fast transfer of knowledge, they are attractive and user friendly; many of the respondents proved to be already familiar with some of these, at least as a source of entertainment. Virtual open courses are already leveling the differences between full time and distance learning.

As the results of the study showed, there is a lot of room for improvement when it comes to the use of intelligent technologies in today's economic education system. Despite certain implementation hindrances, inherent to the current field realities, students and teachers are very open, even welcoming towards the extensive use of digital means of education.

Keywords: *changes, improvements, technologies, tools, experiences*

JEL classification: *A12, A13, A22, A23, I23, I25*

Funding: *This work was supported by a grant of the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești, project number GO-GICS-11063/08.06.2023, within the Internal Grant for Scientific Research.*

Flexography: past, present, and future trends

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Abstract

Flexography as a printing technique has undergone severe improvements and innovations since its first introduction on the printing market as aniline printing, a simple form of rotary letterpress printing. Today, flexography, a direct printing technique, is well recognizable by its exceptional ability to deliver high-quality imprints, with clearly printed image and sharp color quality, on a wide range of different printing substrates. It is a high-speed printing process that uses relief plates with raised image areas and low contact pressure to transfer printing ink onto the printing substrate. The ink transfer concept in flexography is considered relatively simple. Still, it has a wide range of variable parameters that directly influence ink transfer and the quality of the final printed result.

The printing substrates that can be utilized in flexography are mainly used in the packaging industry, primarily because of flexography's ability to print on non-absorbent materials. Flexo printing is also exceptional in printing on coated and uncoated paper board, metalized foils, textile, paper foils, and plastic films. This ability makes it useful for printing, for example, plastic bags, labels, publishing packaging, wallpaper, calendars, books, laminated tetra packs, and similar products. It also provides crucial benefits for customers by allowing the usage of spot colors, different types of inks (water-based, oil-based, or UV-curable inks), and finishing processes (cold foiling, perforating, embossing, and laminating).

This versatility and product-oriented production allow flexography to continue as one of the fastest-growing print processes. According to Smithers (2022), the flexographic printing market is estimated to be worth \$185 billion at current prices in 2021 and can expect a growth rate of 2.1% from 2021 to 2027, with the market totaling \$205 billion by 2027.

Today's challenges that flexography and other industrial printing techniques face are closely linked to the rising tendencies in the global print market towards more versatile printing and lower run lengths. Fast, quality, and cost-saving printing within the small, often customized print runs are consumer, retailer, and client demands in the future. The competitiveness of digital printing, which is reflected in its rising ability to deliver quality imprints on different substrates in small and medium-sized run lengths, should not be overseen as well.

As Smithers Pira outlined in their report "The Future of Flexographic Printing Markets to 2023", the challenge that are flexo print suppliers coping with is the implementation of the advances in flexographic technology, which will improve efficiency and allow them to meet the expectations within the volatile marketplace. In the report, the authors pointed out six trends changing the shape of the flexographic printing industry: automation, staff development and retention, consumer dynamics, market volatility, regional growth, and digital impact.

In this paper, we have given an overview of the flexographic printing process through its development stages with an emphasis on the current developments and predicted trends in the future.

Keywords: Inks, Packaging, Printing industry, Printing substrates, Versatile printing

JEL classification: O, Z, L

Strengths and weaknesses of digitization in Romania

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Abstract

Digitization in any field has been a desideratum at european level since 2000. Within the various strategies, objectives have been set out to make the european economy sustainable, competitive and digital, an economy for social inclusion. This paper presents the advantages brought by the digitization process over the two pillars of sustainable development: economic and social. Viewed from a social point of view, digitization contributes to increasing the quality of life (access to education, medical information, e-government). Viewed from an economic point of view, digitization means sustainable economic development, increasing labor productivity. Within both pillars, there must be efforts on the part of the individual, state institutions and the business environment. A person without digital skills cannot integrate into a digital society. Therefore, education is the foundation on which digitalization is based. An untrained person, a “digitally uneducated” person cannot access the benefits of digital society services (e-government, e-learning, e-commerce). A digitally untrained person faces difficulties in the labor market. The qualified human resource uses its knowledge to improve economic results. Sustainable human development is achieved by increasing the duration of enrolment in education cycles, by ensuring health, by lifelong training. All these things involve investments in human resources.

To help the digitalisation process, clear objectives have been set at european level to achieve by 2030: skills, infrastructures, business, government.

I analyzed the results obtained by Romania on the social and economic side. The purpose of the article is to highlight the weaknesses and strengths of economic and social digitization. I noticed that the strength of digitization is represented by fixed very high capacity network coverage. Romania ranks first in the digital infrastructure category: fixed very high capacity network coverage (% households) was 96%, compared to the EU average of 73%. Digital skills indicator, artificial intelligence indicator represents weaknesses of digitization in Romania. Only 28% of romanians have basic digital skills compared to the EU average of 54%.

Keywords: digital economy, e-government, internet skills, welfare

JEL classification: A10, I20, A12, B31, Q58

Macroeconomic benchmarking on base erosion and profit shifting: A systematic literature review

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Ph.D Candidate, Department of Economic Studies, International Hellenic University, Terma Magnisias, GR
621 24, Serres, Greece**Abstract**

A macroeconomic review of the determinants of Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) is the main purpose of this study. This has been achieved by a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) that was conducted using five databases (ABI-ProQuest, EBSCO, Google Scholar, Scopus and Web of Science) published between 2003 and 2022. This review is based on 30 studies out of 16.700 (the larger number from Google Scholar) that were identified. The chosen 30 articles were retrieved as triple listed journals on Scopus, The Chartered Association of Business Schools (ABS) and Web of Science (WoS). Our approach identifies the serious macroeconomic issues that Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) causes, such as severe acute international tax avoidance that has a destructive impact on the Global and European economies.

Keywords:

BEPS; macroeconomy; multinationals; systematic literature review; tax avoidance

JEL: F21, F23, H25, H26, H87

A Conjoint Analysis of Cooperative Savings Product Preferences Among Generation Z College Students in Davao City, Philippines

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Abstract

Insufficient awareness and restricted marketing endeavors contribute to a lack of understanding among persons regarding the benefits associated with cooperative membership (Septiani, Rahayu, Elburdah, 2020). To appeal to Generation Z students as potential cooperative members, it is imperative for cooperatives to position themselves as proficient, reliable, and anticipatory providers of diverse savings alternatives (Anderl et al., 2015). The objective of this study is to ascertain the preferred savings product among Generation Z students within the context of cooperatives. The research encompassed a total of 665 individuals, with a minimum of 200 participants selected from three established Higher Education Institutions located in Davao City, Philippines. The findings of the conjoint analysis revealed that promotional techniques play a crucial role in the decision-making process of Generation Z when it comes to choosing cooperative saving items. These strategies were shown to have a significant relative relevance value of 52.886%. In contrast, convenience was found to be the feature with the lowest level of significance, as shown by a relative relevance value of 5.866%. In brief, students belonging to Generation Z demonstrate a notable inclination towards cooperative savings products that utilize social media platforms for efficient promotional activities, project an attractive cooperative identity within a pleasant setting, provide competitive interest rates, and are conveniently situated in close proximity to public areas. This research further explores the intricate individual preferences exhibited among the Generation Z demographic.

Keywords: Generation Z; College students; Credit unions; Marketing strategies; Cooperatives

POSTER SESSION**Budget deficit and public debt in Albania**

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Abstract

The sustainability of public finances is a very important issue that affects many economic discussions. For many countries in the world, keeping the public debt under control is an economic and political challenge.

For our country, a high short-term debt means a high risk of fiscal financing, and in the medium term this increase can reduce private sector lending and economic growth itself. A sustainable economic growth is quite important for any economy. This certainly also applies to Albania, which, as a developing country, aims to take steps forward to achieve membership in the European Union.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which followed the strong earthquake that hit Albania in November 2019, the country has suffered a major economic contraction on the one hand and an expansion of the deficit and borrowing, on the other hand, reversing the downward trend of debt in recent years and increasing public debt for 2020.

This paper aims to present an overview of the state budget, the budget deficit in our country, the possibilities and resources that the government can use to cover this deficit.

The main purpose of this paper is to present a complete overview of the public debt in Albania, the comparison between years as well as a comparison with other countries in the Balkan region.

Keywords: Expenditure, Revenues, Internal Debt, External Debt, Economic Growth.

JEL classification: (H61, H62, H63)

Exports and economic development: Evidence from Balkan Countries.

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Abstract

Exports play a crucial role in the economic development of countries, including those in the Balkans. The Balkan region has undergone significant economic and political changes over the past few decades, and exports have been a key driver of growth and development. In this study it is provided with some insights into the relationship between exports and economic development in Balkan countries. The investigation focuses on the evaluation of relationship between exports performance and economic development in Balkan countries, such as Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The study covers the period between 2006 and 2021. Econometric techniques are employed in order to explore the relationship between the variables. The correlation analysis has discovered strong and positive relationships between exports and development in all of the countries under consideration. The Granger causality test has shown evidence of a bidirectional link between exports performance and economic development in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, a causal link from exports to development in Kosovo, and no causal links between the variables for Montenegro. The insights could be helpful in implementing economic policy in Balkan countries that promote sustainable development.

Keywords: exports, economic development, GDP per capita, Balkan countries.

JEL Classification: C10, F10, F43, O10

An Insight on How Corruption Affects Firm Performance: The Western Balkan Case

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Abstract

In the following paper, we examine the extent of small- and medium-sized businesses' (SMEs) corruption and how it affects the Western Balkan nations' economies. We utilize survey data from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), and the World Bank Group (WBG) from 2019. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia have been chosen. The questions in the dataset enable us to understand what firms encounter in the private sector. The information gathered is based on the experiences of businesses and how they view their operating environment. In our study, we evaluate how well an organization is doing in terms of growth in sales, headcount, and fixed assets.

Enterprise factors including age, size, ownership structure, legal status, availability of formal banking services, ownership by gender, and other constructed variables are included in the vector of independent variables. Additionally, we will concentrate on the following ES questions in order to determine how much perceived corruption there is among businesses: Is it common to have to pay some irregular additional payment or gifts to get things done with regard to customs, taxes, licenses, regulations, services”, and the “corruption payment” is defined in the form of a dummy equal to one if the enterprise replies “frequently”, “usually” or “always”. Results from preliminary empirical research offer insight on the degree and impact of corruption on the performance of enterprises. The selected countries' magnitudes and statistical significance, however, varied from one another. Both in terms of employment productivity and sales growth, we find a positive but not statistically significant effect for Albania. While we observe negative and statistically significant results for employment productivity in the other western Balkan nations.

On the one hand, businesses might have to “grease the wheels” of the bureaucracy, deal with a variety of bottlenecks, and use bribery to their advantage while installing new capital equipment. On the other hand, corruption has a significant adverse effect on the productivity of the labor force.

Keywords: Firm Performance, Entrepreneurship, Corruption.

JEL classification: L25, L26, D73

Green Finance and its impementation in Albania

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Abstract

Drastic climate change, global warming, loss of habitats, species in danger of extinction and many other equally negative phenomena have prevailed in recent years as humanity's main challenge. Green Finance was created as a response to this challenge. Green Finance is the initiative related to the promotion of environmental investments, as well as the promotion of sustainable development. Green Finance encourages any investment that brings a positive impact on the environment. Some of the most common projects are: renewable energy, pollution control, biodiversity conservation, waste management, etc.

This research aims to study Green Finance in Albanian, government and bank policies related to it, as well as its current implementation.

The methodology of this study is based on the collection of primary data through two types of questionnaires conducted during the period May-June 2023. Representatives of the second level banks operating in the territory of Shkodra were interviewed in order to evidence the involvement of the banks in Green Finance. Also, 50 questionnaires addressed to businesses were carried out, to find out their recognition and involvement in Green Finance projects.

The analysis of the questionnaires shows that the banks have already started implementing and supporting businesses towards Green Finance by offering green products or services. There are numerous challenges and the follow-up of the implementation of these projects by businesses remains a concerning issue. On the other hand, businesses in Albania are generally aware of the Green Finance, but very few have taken the initiative to invest in green projects.

Keywords: *Green Finance, Banks, Businesses, Investments*

JEL classification: *O44, G21, Q5*

Bankruptcy and closure of commercial enterprises in Shkodra District

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University of Shkoda “Luigi Gurakuqi”, elidiana.bashi@unishk.edu.al**Abstract**

This study focuses on the phenomenon of bankruptcy and the prediction of this phenomenon, as the most important trend in business bankruptcy.

The performance of businesses is related to the economic well-being of a country, it also affects unemployment and many phenomena very important to society.

During this study, we will do multiple discriminant analysis to see the relationship between the dependent variable, the phenomenon of bankruptcy, and the independent variables, which are financial ratios.

The limitation of this research is the fact that many businesses prefer to simply close the business rather than start the bankruptcy procedures that are too long, below we will also see the bankruptcy law in Republic of Albania. Also, another quite essential and key limitation of this study is the authenticity of the financial statements. The implication of this study to see if financial reports are predictive of bankruptcy is extremely important for business both for their leaders and managers, as well as for suppliers, clients and employees. This study is new for the Albanian market because very few businesses can do financial analysis, since financial reports are not required by the Albanian state to be submitted, many businesses do not even do such an analysis.

Keywords: *bankruptcy, economic entity, financial reports, Falimentim, njësi ekonomike, raporte financiare, multiple discriminant analysis*

Jel Classification : *G33, G1, G17, G3*

Waste management in construction companies

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Abstract

This study aims to explore and draw attention to the issue of sustainability, with an emphasis on Waste Management, the possibility of applying Environmental Management Accounting (EMA) and its impact on Financial and Environmental performance, through examinations in a business, in the industry of construction in Albania. Environmental Accounting techniques vary in conception, perception and development, from one business to another, from sector to sector, in order to accurately identify environmental costs and provide the appropriate decision-making orientation for the economic entity. Meanwhile, the construction industry, especially in the last decade, inevitably connected with the environment, has great importance for the economy of our country.

Accounting is a key element in financial and managerial planning, therefore, as such, it must be reorganized and updated to include the effect of environmental considerations in relation to company performance. Accountants must work in relation to raw material, its treatment, capital, financial indicators and at the same time they must observe, recognize, measure, receive, control and report emissions and losses from traditional business activity. Environmental Accounting, which consists of the financial reporting of environmental costs in quantitative parameters, is closely related to Environmental Management Accounting, as well as to Financial and Cost Accounting and is referred to in various manuals and directives, depending on local and global policies, such as manuals of the European Commission, the United Nations or the European Union.

The research work in this paper, focused on the International Federation of Accountants approach and financial/accounting standards, is carried out through primary sources, which consists of a case study, undertaken in a business operating in the construction industry, in a building under reconstruction. Information is selected through the triangulation method. It includes financial information from construction estimates/construction assessment and periodic reports of work situations, management information obtained through site inspections and interviews with the facility engineer and CFO respectively. The evaluation is done with a focus on the Deposition of Construction and Demolition Waste, in processes such as:

- *Complete demolition of the non-load-bearing exterior cladding.*
- *Complete demolition of the internal non-load-bearing partition walls.*
- *Complete demolition of internal stairs and lift shafts.*
- *Demolition of a part of the roof because of the construction of a new roof structure.*
- *Reduction of the wooden roof truss overlap around the perimeter of the building.*

Concluding, it could be said that the concept of Environmental Accounting is not known and adopted by construction local businesses. For the case study, applying an EA method, recycling and waste management can be less expensive than landfilling, even though the landfill was closer than the recycling facility. Anyway, as the methodology is a case study, the result cannot be generalized. While in general, Environmental Management Accounting can lead the business through the operations that avoid the high costs of production. It can influence the decision-making process related to investments linked to the improvement of the production

The results of the study show that adapting the Environmental Management Accounting system can increase business reliability, financial information quality and management efficiency. Moreover, it can influence the decision-making process regarding investments related to the improvement of the production process. It can be a starting point for the complex total value chain should be re-organized in Albanian businesses.

Keywords: *Environmental Accounting, Environmental Management Accounting, Environmental Impact, Construction and demolition waste.*

The resolution fund in the Albanian banking sector

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Abstract

In this paper, the problems related to the extraordinary intervention fund in the Albanian banking sector will be examined, assessing the efficiency of the fund and the regulations of the central bank.

The methodology used in this paper is based on primary data. A statistical model has been designed to analyze the data and the respective hypothesis has been tested through the descriptive method.

The main findings of this paper may allow the central bank to further improve the regulatory framework in order to avoid delays in intervention in the case of problems in the banking sector, avoiding the effect of banking panic.

Keywords: Risk management, financial stability, regulation of banking sector.

JEL classification: G; E; H; C.

New foreign and Albanian language concepts

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Abstract:

Different linguistic and psychological trends have achieved well-known results, in Institutes and Scientific Research Centers, directed by specialists in the field. We have distinguished among these authors those who are known today for dealing with such topics, dividing them into 2 groups: (i) Psychologists and linguists, who have made language acquisition of children the object of their work, and (ii) Researchers, psychologists and pedagogues, who have also dealt with evolutionary disorders during the language acquisition process at these ages.

The method used in this article is an analytical-descriptive one. An analysis of Albanian and foreign authors has been made, as far as the language acquisition of children in infancy and childhood is concerned, but also with homogeneous groups and classes, divided on the basis of evolutionary development, social and cultural conditions, origin and according to age groups of children.

The following treatment gives a brief summary on how babies learn to speak naturally, how language comes to humans, and how many stages the individual must go through in order to learn to speak. Even linguists and writers in this field have long highlighted these issues in the first textbooks, such as the primers of different languages.

In closing this presentation of ideas, opinions and practical achievements of researchers during experiments, tests, and short-term and long-term observations with individuals or groups of people, in the field of studies on the acquisition of the first language, it is and will continue to be a dynamic field with many open issues that grab you and attract you to new research. Which theory (or combination of theories) is in such a position that it seeks to give the most correct ways of language development in children? How many cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variants exist within language acquisition? How can more complete answers to such questions help to understand the human mind? These questions are pretty far to get an answer, but close searches can bring us closer to solving the puzzle.

Keywords: *language acquisition, vocabulary, childhood, linguistic*

Rrok Gera, a European-level financier

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Abstract

Rrok Gera (1901-1969), a Shkodra native with the distinctive virtues of his contemporaries, shaped his personality in Shkodra in the early years of the 20th century and continued his education at the Faculty of International Economic Relations at the University of Vienna. He would become one of the most important figures in the reforms undertaken in Albania in the 1930s to consolidate the Albanian state, holding high-level state positions such as minister, economist, financier, jurist, diplomat, etc., for more than 10 years, "... Rrok Gera, a ministry official, half Viennese, cultured to his fingertips..."(Friedrich Wallisch).

With the establishment of the communist regime, Rrok Gera's ordeal of trials and punishments would begin, where, like most of the intellectuals educated abroad, this regime would consider him as "enemies of the people." The accusation against him, in the second trial (1952), was "...he assisted in the occupation of Albania by fascist Italy and undermined the resistance of the Albanian people." However, he may also be one of the few high-profile personalities sentenced in the early years of the communist regime, to whom innocence was granted regarding the charges made against him.

PHD STUDENT SESSION**Sustainable Development Economics, expectations from SASB application**Irsida KOPLIKU¹¹University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Albania, irsida.kopliku@unishk.edu.al**Abstract**

Reporting on sustainable economy is defined as the process of collecting and reflecting on the non-financial aspects of a company, including environmental, social, employee, and ethical issues, and determining measures, indicators, and goals for sustainable growth based on the company's strategy. Participants in capital markets and users of financial information are showing a keen interest in non-financial information with the aim of increasing transparency and improving decision-making in a sustainable economy. It is also considered as an element for a competitive advantage. As a result, hypotheses have been raised for the quantification of this non-financial information, as well as the standardization and ranking of companies based on it. Certainly, this is a significant challenge and requires the right steps and time to make this information complete, relevant, and comparable.

In the project proposal for the research work, the aim is to identify transparency instruments for comprehensive non-financial information that can regulate and stimulate sustainable economic growth in various fields, particularly in tourism. This is supported by the adoption of Sustainability Accounting Standards (SASB) by the International Sustainability Standards Board. The research will be based on several methodologies. Regarding the identification of the link between non-financial reporting and other economic variables and mutual influences, survey research methods will be used. Secondary data processed statistically based on econometric models suggested by the literature or constructed with metrics suggested by SASB will be employed. Another utilized methodology will be meta-analysis.

The primary objective is to analyze how and to what extent these sustainability standards, whose metrics are based on specific industries, can be cost-effective and assist in decision-making. Non-financial reporting as a tool to ensure sustainable economic growth is an international novelty and is also an unexplored area for Albania. Nevertheless, the aim is to contribute to academic literature and provide recommendations for its application possibilities in various sectors, considering their specificities and meeting certain criteria.

Keywords: Sustainability, Sustainability Accounting Standards, Cost-effectiveness, Effective Decision-making

JEL classification: Q 01, F 63, L 21, M 14, Y2

The development of digital tourism in Albania

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Abstract

Innovations in tourism provide significant benefits for the development of the digital infrastructure in Albania. Through a systematic approach to studying and analyzing the current state of digital technology in the field of information and communication, it is possible to evaluate the actual impact of digitalization in the tourism industry and to analyze the level of digitalization in business performance related to tourism.

Albania needs more focus on improving its tourism infrastructure to better provide the requirements of the various tourist market segments and ensure tourism development's sustainability. Digitalization plays a significant role in this improvement.

The revolution in digital technology is ongoing. Albania is committed to improving its tourism infrastructure to attract more visitors. It includes implementing digital technologies, as outlined in the "Digital Agenda for Albania 2022-2026", which aims to increase investment in the advanced technology sector and improve digital skills, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and other digital competencies to support the development of digital tourism.

The challenges and problems of the tourism sector are primarily attributed to the advancement of digital technology in the tourism industry. It leads to a significant increase in the demand for digital services for tourists. The provision of digital services for tourists is essential for their convenience. To address the demand of modern tourists, it is necessary to develop a program for the transition to a smarter tourism industry that caters to their preferences.

This study aims to implement alternative mechanisms for the promotion and marketing of tourism, utilizing the technology of information and its potential as a means of promoting destinations and informing visitors. It addresses the issue of the implementation of technology in the tourism sector and its impact on the promotion and marketing of destinations, as well as the development of a draft that addresses the issues above. The responsible use of digital technology in tourism can lead to a more sustainable and prosperous future for Albania.

Keywords: Digital Infrastructure, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Industry

JEL classification: L83, Z32, O33, L86, Q01, O32, L88

Integration of agricultural products through the supply chain for tourism enterprises in the rural areas of Northern Albania

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Abstract

Developing countries see tourism as a powerful tool to overcome poverty, as an industry that brings great benefits to the entire region and supports poor communities (Scheyvens, 2007; Torres and Momsen, 2011). The potential contribution of tourism is also in the agricultural sector for rural areas (Telfer and Wall, 1996). The link between the agriculture and tourism sectors in rural areas stimulates local production, maintaining tourism profits in the country and improving the distribution of the economic benefits of tourism (Torres, 2003).

The problem of integrating the two sectors is related to the seasonal nature of tourism, the low quality of local products, the dependence of the tourism industry on imported supplies and the lack of a direct link between agricultural enterprises and the tourism industry (Lacher and Nepal, 2010).

Linking tourism with agriculture is essential to maximize the contribution of local economic development and tourism, in many developing destinations are not well connected. Policy efforts in Albania are driven by the desire to reach European standards.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate competitive ways in which agricultural products can be integrated through the model known as the supply chain of the tourism supply market based on the cooperation of agricultural enterprises, tourism and stakeholders from the surrounding business environment. Two hypotheses were raised: The integration of agricultural products from agricultural enterprises in tourism, in the hospitality sector in rural areas in the north of Albania and their return to agri-food tourism. The rural areas in the north of Albania have a potential agricultural market in the service of the supply of tourist areas, their connection with the destination.

The methodology of this paper is based on secondary data analysis and primary data processing. The secondary data is the result of a review of a wide and contemporary literature, domestic and foreign, related to the research topic. In formal statistical management systems, data are used to investigate the characteristics and importance of agricultural and tourism companies using agricultural technology. Primary data was obtained using quantitative research, with a questionnaire instrument. The questionnaires contain open-ended and structured questions and are self-administered by the respondent.

Two questionnaires were distributed one to hostels that operate specifically in the area of Theth, Razma, Boga, Tamara, Lepusha, Vermoshi. A second questionnaire is distributed to farmers operating in the same area.

The data show that there is generally a positive approach of farmers and tourism business in the north of Albania towards the adoption of the food supply chain, especially that in the distribution channel. There are several obstacles to the adaptation of the chain by these businesses of these two sectors.

Keywords: Innovative, Supply Chain, Agriculture, Tourism. Agro-Tourism

Assessing sustainable tourism development

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Abstract

The tourism industry is valued as an economic engine, but it must be evaluated in terms of sustainability at local, national and international level. Sustainable tourism has been stirring up a lot of debate lately. Despite the complexity, the terminologies sustainable development and sustainable tourism are being used significantly in policies and strategies in the Western Balkans countries. The purpose of the study is to examine microeconomic aspects of sustainable tourism and to analyze macroeconomic effects of sustainable development in function of tourism. This paper reviews the development of the term sustainable tourism and explains the difference between sustainable tourism and tourism development in regards to sustainable development. The evidence suggests that sustainable tourism is questionable until fundamental economic, social, technological and policy issues are addressed, along with greater emphasis given to the tourism system's demand side. Several studies highlight the economic factors as the most important element in sustainable tourism development to which other factors are linked.

While tourism studies are multidisciplinary, the integration of economics with other social disciplines will contribute to a more accurate understanding and knowledge about sustainability and sustainable development in the context of tourism. Since only few studies in the field of economics have been carried out in the Western Balkans about sustainable tourism, this study will contribute to the existing literature and help policy makers. Except for the connection between sustainable development and sustainable tourism, this paper aims to analyze the role of the government in promoting sustainable tourism, the economic impact of sustainable tourism, the role that technology plays in the development of sustainability and sustainable tourism, the role of cross-border cooperation and policies in sustainable development, the impact of EU Funds on the development of sustainable tourism and the role of human capital in stimulating sustainable development and sustainable tourism. Future research guidelines are set based on the analysis performed.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Tourism demand, Tourism development, Western Balkans

JEL classification: Q56, L83, O13

**Statistical study on employment in the tourism industries.
(The case of Albania)**

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Abstract

In recent years, tourism has grown rapidly creating jobs. The image of tourism as a driver of economic growth and job creator has been reinforced. Tourism is considered a key sector for economic recovery, and many countries rely on its expansion as a source of income and as one of their main catalysts of economic development. Only for 2021, the contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP of our country was 7.5%, while if the sectors that indirectly contribute to tourism are also counted, this contribution goes up to 17.5% of the GDP. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economy, only for the period June-August 2022, there was an increase in the turnover of the sector by 30% and an increase in employment by 4% compared to the previous year, which indicates a positive trend, an increase in the number of businesses, the number of nights of stays, increases in capacities and utilization of touristic capacities.

Keywords: *tourism, economic growth, employment, labour force, econometric methodology.*

Cultural heritage and the literature as a tourism perspective

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Abstract

In recent years, the issue of cultural tourism has aroused great interest as it is considered a growing market based on the latest data from the Ministry of Tourism in which Albania and especially our city Shkodra is one of the preferred destinations by foreign visitors.

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism which defines the movement of people towards cultural attractions with the aim of learning about their culture, art, architecture, tradition and cultural heritage, as well.

Our city needs the exposure of this type of tourism compared to other European countries thanks to its natural beauties and its archaeological, ethnographic and cultural values.

Literature, like other arts, unites the past of a country with its contemporary reality within culture in a universal way thus becoming a reflection of its own for nations and culture.

In the broad field of culture, literature carries its own discourse of multidimensional meaning becoming a bearer of truths and collective conscience as well as an embodiment towards the future emphasizing cultural tourism as the best form of its absorption.

Literature is an entity which reflects culture, memory and experience in different linguistic, political, social, economic and cultural contexts.

The purpose of this paper is research on the image of our city and its cultural heritage since the early years reflected in the writings of various foreign and local personalities who describe Shkodra as an attractive cultural and ethnographic destination.

It is also intended not only to promote the tourism of our city such as mountain, coastal, natural, cultural, historical, literary and thematic tourism drawing parallels with cultural tourism in Western countries, but also to reach the proper structuring for an attractive image of the city which will influence the further growth of tourism in our city.

Keywords: *cultural heritage, cultural and thematic tourism, ethnographic values, literature, promotion*

JEL classification: *R, Y, Z*

Recovery and revitalization of monuments in function of the development of sustainable tourism

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Albania has a very rich cultural heritage, both immovable and spiritual. This paper focuses on immovable cultural heritage, which includes the architectural one, where buildings, monuments, and historical centers are part. Today, the meaning given to cultural heritage is dynamic, inclusive and constantly evolving. The attention that has been paid to cultural heritage nowadays has raised many questions about issues related to its recognition as such, thus indirectly implying protection, without forgetting strategies for revitalization. Precisely for the protection and development of these architectural heritages, and their role in the development of tourism, policies that promote financial support through grants have begun to be applied. This study seeks to prove the impact that cultural heritage has on the development of sustainable tourism. The political changes of the 90's had a negative impact on cultural heritage - specifically on buildings with cultural monument status as well as on the construction of museum centers. Illegal interventions, additions, alienation of characteristic elements, whether decorative or with a static function, have put these heritages at risk. The questions that newly arise are, are there still authentic real estates? Should the need to revive these legacies be assessed? What are the driving or hindering factors in their revival? What will be the impact of this revitalization on the development of sustainable tourism? The field of study is that of the immovable cultural heritage of the northern region that includes Shkodër District, Lezhë District and Kukës District. The objective of this paper is the study and treatment of architectural heritage as a key factor in the development of sustainable tourism without forgetting the fact that it is necessary to preserve the identity of the building even after the revitalization intervention. The paper seeks to build a complete picture of the new economic opportunities in the region that the reassessment of the cultural heritage will bring. This topic is important both academically dealing with the heritage of the northern area combined with possible revitalization programs for them. The methodology used consists of literature review as well as a combination of secondary sources using Albanian and foreign literature, scientific publications, laws, architectural dictionaries, doctorates as well as primary sources such as field research, interviews, questionnaires. Another primary source is the ethnographic method, offering specific and in-depth case studies, by analyzing some successful examples. The work will be illustrated with graphic materials, such as historical maps, archival materials such as facades, photographs. The study will serve as an incentive for the owners to revitalize their property seeing the increased number of foreign tourists, as well as encourage the local and central government to support these investments. This study is original, as it will deal with things on a larger scale than the local one, so it will have a regional scope. The historical, social and aesthetic values will be accompanied by the economic analysis that justifies the revitalization and recovery.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Sustainable tourism, Architecture, Revitalization, Recovery

JEL classification: O, R, Z

Preliminary data of Shkodra Lake and Buna river water quality assessment and its impact on the sustainable tourism development

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Abstract

*The development of sustainable tourism basically depends on the protection and standards maintenance of water resources quality, which is also crucial for the conservation of ecosystems balance, the fulfillment of consumption needs for food production and human life necessities. The connotation of eco-friendly and sequential effectiveness of touristic, fishery, agricultural, and industrial activities in the water basin areas of Shkodra Lake and Buna River sets as a mandatory task the spatio-temporal monitoring of their water quality, such was the aim of the present study, due to unavoidable climatic changes and pollution events by enhanced anthropogenic discharge of solid, liquid, and gaseous wastes which potentially contain various chemical and microbial pollutants. A double surface water sampling (April and September 2023) was conducted from 6 shore stations, respectively: Syri i Sheganit, Stërbeq, Zogaj, Shirokë, Ura e vjetër e Bunës and Zues. Meanwhile the combined biomonitoring (by using the *Allium cepa* L. test) and physicochemical assessment was done applying the following parameters: water temperature, pH and dissolved Oxygen, root length, mitotic index, index of abnormal chromosome frequencies in mitotic cells and types in meristems of rooting onion bulbs, grown under the same samples' treatments. The data showed significant differences of water quality from control and seasonal/stations sampling. Additionally, a sloping water quality decline during early autumnal period and in descendent order alongside the locations of Ura e vjetër e Bunës, Zues, Shirokë, Zogaj, and Stërbeq was confirmed by the compatibility of physicochemical indices, obvious morphological and cytological root growth reduction and evident genotoxic effects induced on a confident assay as *A. cepa*. The abundant observation of typical chromosome aberrations as stickiness, breaks, fragments and c-Mitosis revealed the toxigenic and even turbagenic effect of a wide spectrum of effluents present in some of water samples (particularly Ura e vjetër e Bunës and Shirokë) during the most frequented season on a common food crop as onion, with high risk of side effects with long persistence to a sensitive target group of consumers as tourists. Due to the potential interaction with fluctuating temperatures and precipitations regime such hazards can induce the fast changeset of Lake and River trophy status and negatively impact on water living organisms, the health of surrounding shores inhabitants and tourists using such water sources. These preliminary results should serve as a serious alert to the in-charge authorities, scientists, and media for the strict implementation of local, national, and international legislation, frameworks and guidelines, proper remediation techniques and appropriate educational strategies according to the water control and preservation quality of Shkodra Lake and Buna River as fundamental resources of further recreation and regional economic and tourism growth potentials.*

Keywords: *Allium cepa* test, physicochemical water monitoring, population health, Shkodra Lake, Buna River

JEL classification: *tourism, economic growth, recreation*

Management of Sustainable Tourism in the Shkodra Region

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Abstract

Context and Purpose: The Shkodra region is a unique destination attracting a growing number of tourists due to its diverse natural landscapes, historical sites, and cultural attractions. According to the Ministry of Tourism, the number of tourists that have visited natural and historical sites has grown respectively by 20% and 24%, compared with the same period of 2022. However, unmanaged tourism growth also puts pressure on public services such as water and sanitation, electricity, waste, transportation. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the natural tourism offer of the region of Shkodra, focusing on the analysis of various problems related to the existing infrastructure that supports the development of tourism and the proposal of recommendations for the parties involved at the local and national level, that support sustainable development for the Shkodra region, guaranteeing good management and preventing negative consequences to natural resources, which are the foundation of the natural tourist offer.

Methodology: The research is based on the combination of data from primary sources, obtained through questionnaires designed separately for local and foreign visitors, for tourist guides, as well as for communities where tourist activities take place, with data from secondary sources official publications of various institutions, as well as online sources of scientific articles and works.

Key Findings: The study revealed several critical findings. Firstly, the current tourism management framework in the Shkodra region has been reactive rather than proactive, resulting in negative impacts on the environment and communities. Secondly, the lack of coordination among key stakeholders and limited resources have hindered the development of sustainable tourism initiatives. Thirdly, tourists expressed a growing interest in eco-friendly and cultural experiences, which could be harnessed for sustainable tourism.

Significance: This research underscores the significance of adopting a proactive approach to tourism management in the Shkodra region. The investments made in the area of Theth indicate the synergistic relationship created in the growth of private investments, especially in accommodation structures. The findings highlight the importance of involving local communities, businesses, and government authorities in the development of a sustainable tourism strategy. The results can serve as a basis for policy recommendations, to promote sustainable tourism that benefits both the environment and the well-being of the local communities.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature on sustainable tourism management by shedding light on the specific challenges and opportunities in the Shkodra region. The research findings serve as a foundation for more effective, sustainable tourism policies and practices in the area.

Keywords: development, environment, growth, infrastructure, synergy

JEL classification: L83, O13, Q56

Tourism and Conflict Management in Destinations in Protected Areas

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Abstract

Tourism is an integral part of modern life, providing people with opportunities to explore the world's beauty, culture, and nature. Many of these attractions are found in protected areas, where the delicate balance between conservation and tourism is a constant challenge. Conflict management plays a fundamental role in ensuring that tourism thrives while preserving these valuable ecosystems.

In recent years, protected areas have witnessed a surge in tourism. Travelers seeking pristine landscapes and unique experiences drove to these regions. While this influx of tourists brings economic benefits, it also raises questions about preserving the environment and maintaining harmony with local communities.

To explore the complex dynamics of conflict management in protected areas, our research will adopt a comprehensive mixed-method approach. This will include qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups with stakeholders, including local communities, park management officials, and political decision-makers. We will also conduct surveys among tourists and industry representatives to gather quantitative data.

Primary sources will encompass first-hand data collected through interviews, surveys, and observations. Secondary sources will involve a review of existing literature on the topic, including academic papers, reports from conservation organizations, and government policies related to tourism in protected areas.

The findings of this research hold significant potential benefits for various stakeholders. Local communities can gain insights into how to maximize the positive impacts of tourism while minimizing the negative ones, leading to sustainable development. Park management bodies and government officials can utilize the results to refine policies and practices that support conservation efforts. The tourism and hospitality industries can adopt best practices for environmentally responsible and community-friendly operations. Conservation organizations will find valuable data to guide their efforts in protecting these unique ecosystems. Finally, travelers and tourists will gain a deeper understanding of their role in preserving these natural wonders, enabling more responsible and rewarding experiences.

In conclusion, tourism in protected areas presents both opportunities and challenges. Conflict management is the key to ensuring that these areas remain pristine and that the benefits of tourism are sustainable. By recognizing the interests and perspectives of stakeholders and industries, we can strike a balance that allows nature and tourism to coexist harmoniously. The potential beneficiaries of this research are diverse and varied, all standing to gain from a more harmonious relationship between tourism and conservation in protected areas.

Keywords: *Tourism, Conflict Management, Protected areas, Sustainability, Stakeholders*

JEL classification: *Q26, O13, D74*