SOPRONI EGYETEM
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Conference Proceedings

Nemzetközi tudományos konferencia a Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe alkalmából

International Scientific Conference on the Occasion of the Hungarian Science Festival

Sopron, 2022. november 3.

3 November 2022, Sopron

TÁRSADALOM – GAZDASÁG – TERMÉSZET: SZINERGIÁK A FENNTARTHATÓ FEJLŐDÉSBEN

SOCIETY – ECONOMY – NATURE: SYNERGIES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Szerkesztők / Editors:
OBÁDOVICS Csilla, RESPERGER Richárd, SZÉLES Zsuzsanna, TÓTH Balázs István

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LEKTORÁLT TANULMÁNYOK / PEER-REVIEWED STUDIES

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Developing countries and Sustainability

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Abstract
Countries all over the world aim for stability and better quality of life. They deal every day with issues like income inequality, uneven distribution of wealth, irresponsible production and consumption, or draining of natural resources. Many of them are embracing sustainable development, aiming to meet their citizen's needs, without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs. Meanwhile, in a developing country, with a lower GDP, not well-balanced economic sectors, difficult access to quality healthcare and education, and a lack of technology and infrastructure, the above-mentioned issues are intensified. These countries don't seem to be in the most favorable position to grow sustainably. However, a safe society and economy for all generations are equally important in both developed and developing countries. Primary and secondary research used in this study aims to highlight the situation in Albania and how the country approaches the goals of sustainable development. Environmental, economic, and social issues are analyzed, in order to understand Albania's possibilities to achieve sustainable development. The study aims to point out the urgent necessity of a common framework addressing the principles of a green economy and offer recommendations on how to design one.

Keywords: developing countries, sustainability, possibilities, Albania
JEL Codes: G18, O44, Q01, Q2

1. Introduction

There are a lot of issues citizens encounter every day around the globe. Income inequality and uneven distribution of wealth, poverty, irresponsible production and consumption, and draining of natural resources are just a few to mention. While trying to solve these issues we aim for stability and better quality of life from a global point of view. According to the WCED (1987), Sustainable Development (SD) is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Referring to this statement, it is comprehensible that sustainable development is a better option for development in the long-term. This approach will take care not only of our generation but aims to guarantee a safe society and economy for the generations to come.

Another issue to be taken seriously: Are developed and developing countries at the same pace of growing sustainably? It is not always easy to define a developed and a developing country. There are several metrics that may measure it and most of the world's countries are very complex to be clearly categorized. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is one of the best-

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known values for evaluating economic growth. However, even countries that meet the GDP criteria for being healthy may still be developing. According to the UN, countries are classified as developed or developing economies based on “basic economic conditions”. Other categories like the living standard, technology, infrastructure, and industrialization level, count among the main ones. The International Monetary Fund points out, these three main categories for world countries and their state of economic development, taking more than one factor into account to determine the economic status: advanced economies, emerging economies (upper-middle income and lower-middle income), and low-income economies.

Referring to the above classifications and rankings from world organizations, Albania is considered an emerging economy. The World Bank describes Albania as a transformation from one of Europe’s poorest countries to a middle-income country. Despite the advantages to grow, there are still many issues on the way. Through an analysis of available data and stakeholders’ opinions, the research paper aims to sort out information and understand if the level of engagement in sustainable development in Albania is lacking due to economic issues or if there are other negligence factors that intensify the situation. Is the level of economic issues really high or are there other hidden matters that hinder development? The objective is to sort out the steps of a development path and highlight real difficulties while trying to minimize artificial ones.

2. Literature review

2.1. Developed and developing countries

Developed nations are those where citizens have easy access to quality healthcare and education, advanced technology, and infrastructure. These countries have diverse and well-balanced economic sectors, such as industrial, service, and agriculture, and a relatively high gross domestic product (GDP) and GDP per capita (Cooper & John, 2012). According to the UN (2022), 36 countries were considered "developed." They were all located in either North America, Europe, or "Developed Asia and the Pacific. Stable birth and death rates a higher percentage of working women (ILO, 1995), and more access to technologies, are other common characteristics that developed countries share.

If the above economic, as well as social criteria, are not met, a country is categorized as a developing country, otherwise called a less developed country. Its GDP level is lower than that of developed countries. These are low-income countries with high reliance on natural resources, a weak industrial base, poor infrastructural facilities, a lack of an enabling environment for businesses and a low human capital index, including weak governmental institutions (Raimi & Kal, 2022) According to the UN (2022), 126 countries were considered "developing." All developing countries were located in either Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Caribbean. On the other hand, since the GDP is relatively low, their rate of growth is higher compared to advanced economies.

The Western Balkan country of Albania

According to World Bank (2022) a robust recovery took place in Albania in 2021 thanks to policy stimulus and a resurgence of travel, construction, and extractive activity. However, private investment, consumption, and public spending drove growth, while public debt remained high. Further data from World Bank explain that Albania’s GDP grew by 6 percent during the first quarter of the current year 2022. There was an increase in investments, private consumption, and exports. Despite the higher prices, consumer confidence, as well as business confidence, is considered strong. Net foreign demand contributed positively to GDP growth as exports increased by 25.3 percent year-on-year, while imports rose by 17.6 percent.

On the economic criteria, Albania made good progress and is moderately prepared for developing a functioning market economy. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, the budget deficit and the public debt ratio were lower than expected, but Russia's war against Ukraine caused price increases and lower trade. Fiscal space remains limited. Revenue related reforms progressed, but investment expenditure remains weak Energy and transport infrastructure, digitalization and education improved, but entrepreneurial and technological know-how remain low, with unmet investment needs in human and physical capital, skills and education gaps, and low R&D spending (EC, 2022)

The geopolitical world situation may further influence inflation and negatively affect supply chains and economic markets all around the world and hinder Albania's development. Furthermore, if the employment rate may not drop and if purchasing power may decrease this may directly influence and hinder the progress in poverty reduction. There is still a lot of instability in the country. The living standard, technology, infrastructure, and industrialization level, social and environmental issues are very present and challenging.

2.2. The all-encompassing nature of sustainable development

The concept is strongly related to three main pillars of development: environmental, social, and economic. According to conclusions from the UN Summit in 2015 a new future of the world (UN, 2015), the aim for future sustainable development comprises the following goals.

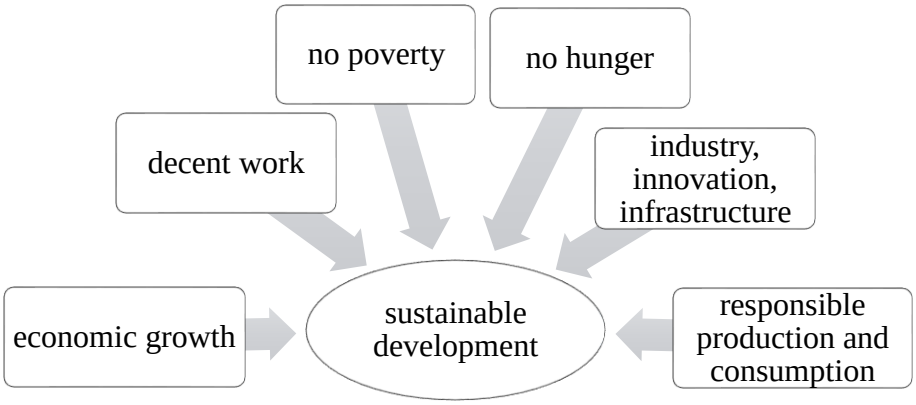

Figure 1: Economic Goals of SD
Source: UN (2015)

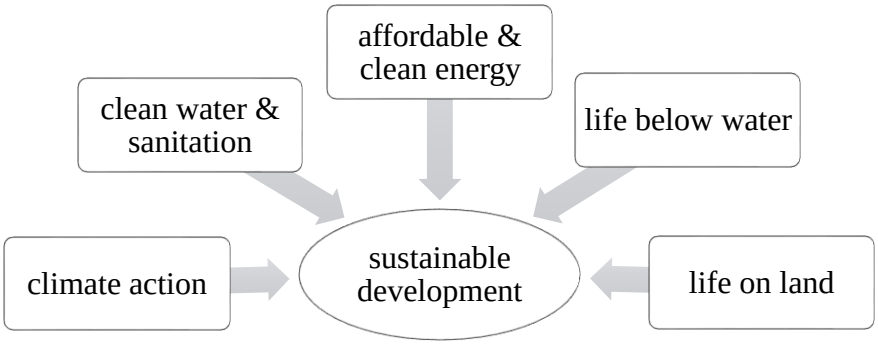

Figure 2: Environmental Goals of SD
Source: UN (2015)

"The closer we get to ending extreme poverty, the harder it is going to be to do it." - writes Jonathan Tanner (2014) for the Guardian, in his article of 2014, "Ending world poverty is an unrealistic goal".

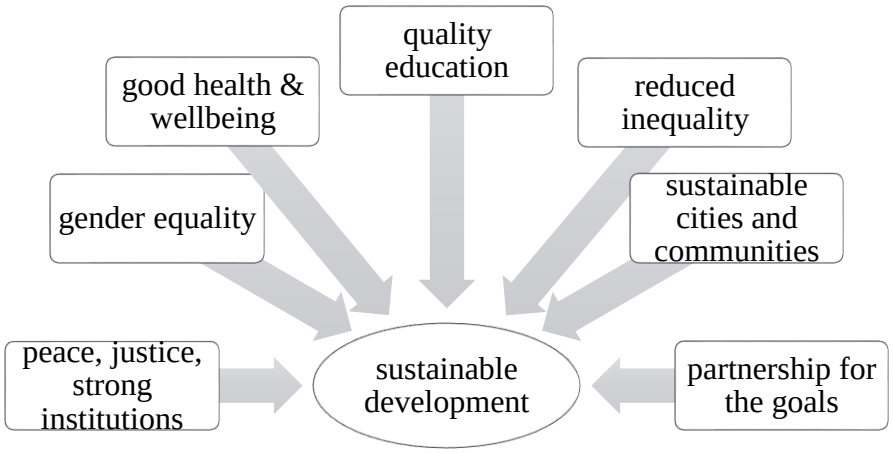

Figure 3: Social Goals of SD
Source: UN (2015)

Looking carefully at the figures above looks like we have designed the perfect world. If all of the above were to be reached, we would be living in an idealistic world. But, as the world population keeps growing, more resources will be needed. Some of these are not renewable. Main world industries do rely on technology today, therefore in order for technologies to develop, a lot more engagement and adaptations may be necessary. Earth materials that become scarce may be a threat to development. Prices may rise and cause inflation, and political moves may occur and hinder development. The increased global demand for food is another related issue. "In developed countries, consumers and retailers throw away between 30% to 40% of all food purchased. The world has lost a third of its arable land due to erosion or pollution in the past 40 years, with potentially disastrous consequences as global demand for food soars, scientists have warned." (Lyons, 2015). While new research has calculated that nearly 33% of the world's adequate or high-quality food-producing land has been lost at a rate that far outstrips the pace of natural processes to replace diminished soil (Milman, 2018).

Sustainable development is not easy considering economic unpredictability, due to global uncontrollable occurrences, including a Pandemic wave that we just left behind. It is not easy while having to face global political instability like the Ukraine war. Furthermore, in many countries, governance engagement toward sustainability is low and implementation of policies may lack due to the absence of collaboration or financial and human resources. However, despite difficulties, the global point of view must be stable development and engagement in new alternatives.

Sustainable development in developing countries

A developing country does not seem to be in the most favourable position to grow sustainably. Achievement of sustainable development in a developed country may differ a lot from that of a developing country, but one thing is sure: Sustainable Development is equally important and worth it in both developed and developing countries. On the other hand, there are developed countries that may not have widely embraced sustainable development yet and have social and

environmental-oriented goals to accomplish. Referring to the above goals of sustainable development, there are three main groups of issues to be dealt with in our society. These may be grouped into environmental, economic, and social issues.

2.3. Current challenges in Albania

Environmental challenges

The country of Albania has a particular geographical location. It is positioned in the middle of East and West Europe, a very favourable geographical extent. Although the development phase has become real after the communist dictatorship, only after the 1990s, the country is actually in a good position for further development. Projects and funding from international governments are taking place and Albania is recently experiencing an accelerated development but unfortunately, the lack of data, poverty levels, inequality, the lack of information and awareness about environmental issues, to mention a few, have led to inefficient use of many abundant resources of the country, making the situation worse.

There are three main levels of environmental pollution: land, air, and water. Air pollution is a major environmental problem in major cities in Albania. Transport is considered the main source of air pollution. Nevertheless, construction in a developing country, at the expense of green spaces, or different enterprises' economic activities are other factors that contribute to pollution (EEA, 2020). In 2022, among 118 world countries, Albania is ranked number 73 regarding air pollution (IQAir, 2022). The country is part of the Western Balkan countries, where more than three and a half years after the deadline to bring their emissions in line with EU pollution limits under the Energy Community Treaty, the region is still polluting over six times more than allowed. The Western Balkans have just 18 coal plants compared to 221 in Europe, but those emit two and a half times as much polluting Sulphur dioxide (SO2) as the entire EU fleet (Taylor, 2021).

Unlike in many countries, in Albania occurred a reduction in the volume of forest from 83.295 million m3 in 2000 to 75,726 million m3 in 2009 (UNECE, 2018). The above-mentioned sources of pollution, produce a variety of solid wastes, which account for premature deaths on a global scale. Millions of premature deaths are caused each year because of pollution. The Lancet Commission (2022) on pollution and health, which used data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study, found that pollution was responsible for an estimated 9 million deaths (16% of all deaths globally) and for economic losses totalling US$ 4.6 trillion (6·2% of global economic output) in 2015. The Commission noted pollution's deep inequity: 92% of pollution-related deaths, and the greatest burden of pollution's economic losses, occur in low-income and middle-income countries.

In recent times, it is observed in the Western Balkans some small-scale green investments and the establishment of a more environmental-friendly institutional framework. Although these trends should not be overstated, they could mark the beginning of a process of energy transition, with the EU guidance and support. Western Balkan countries have some potential to take advantage of renewable energy sources (Tzifakis et al., 2022) One of the most important goals to sustainable development is to decrease the number of deaths or sicknesses from dangerous waste found in the air, water, or soil. Having below-average healthcare systems makes the situation complicated. Certain age groups, especially vulnerable ones not only do not have access to better health care but also are not sufficiently informed about air quality levels of pollution, its effect on health, and measurements for health protection.

The absence of multimodal transportation facilities in Albania is another factor that hinders the potential use of public transport and the possibility to provide more sustainable modes of transport. Until now there are few engagements and investments in rail transport, which has kept decreasing during the last decades. Its share in the transport sector is insignificant. Meanwhile, recordings of water pollution in Albania, show different levels; moderately polluted,

organically polluted, and industrially polluted for rivers, lakes, and sea areas (Rekacewicz, 2006). Most groundwater bodies appear to be still of good quality, although there are insufficient monitoring data to assess their possible pollution with pesticides or heavy metals (UNECE, 2018). The new River Basin Management Plan outlines the new approach that Albania will take to protect all waters over the 6-year RBM cycle to 2021 / 2027 / 2033 / 2039 / 2045 and beyond (EEAS, 2018). Plans related to river basin-based water management are being developed.

More urban wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) are under construction, but low financial capacities and limited technical skills cause unclear long-term operational arrangements. On the other hand, non-revenue water is a serious challenge: on average, 67 percent of drinking water produced is non-revenue water. Non-revenue water causes significant commercial losses that translate into budgetary imbalances and financial sustainability problems for water service providers (UNECE, 2018) Albania has a rich hydrographic net (groundwater streams, rivers springs lakes, wetlands). This net includes over 200 big natural resources of groundwater. The degradation of the water quality of many rivers is significant. At the same time water from some rivers is used for drinking water supply (Flogi et al., 2015).

In addition to the above, Albania is also vulnerable to the impacts of natural phenomena. Very often, floods, heat and cold waves, fires inside forests, erosion, and other phenomena may become very dangerous. Implementing policies that build and strengthen resilience to climate-related and anthropogenic dangerous phenomena is a crucial step toward Albania's achieving goals.

The infrastructure for waste management is very poor. It is true that there are high costs related to it, but there remain still unresolved issues regarding cost and tariff system. This means that there is a lack of organization in the first place. Waste thrown in landfills was a common action, without thinking about the necessary infrastructure to reduce rubbish in waste sites. Large businesses and organizations continue working without "paying principle". There was only one capital investment for a period of five years in this direction. This happened during 2011-2016 (UNECE, 2018).

The lack of data hampers the establishment of sound management of hazardous waste. Albania is not able to measure progress against indicators (hazardous waste generated per capita and proportion of hazardous waste treated, by type of treatment) to allow the tracking of progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets. Although the country has adopted new and modern environmental legislation, especially after the year 2014, when it was granted the candidate status of an EU member, some subsidiary acts due to be adopted are still lacking and the implementation of legislation lags behind. Sometimes the legislation is too advanced vis-à-vis the administrative, institutional and financial capacities in place. Until now, tax rates in Albania related to the environment, have not been set with the right calculation of externalities. The impacts of discharges on the environment, humans, or businesses have not been taken seriously. Furthermore, there is still no appointed unit, as part of the whole structure of the central government, responsible for taxes related to the environment. No specific financial resources have been established yet for environmental purposes and protection (UNECE, 2018).

The legal framework for biodiversity and forestry monitoring has already been established. But the phase of implementation looks difficult, due to different financial reasons or the inability to monitor the situation and have it under control. A real long-term strategy and a policy framework for environmental protection are missing for Albania. Some 8.2 percent of all national forests are identified as high-nature-value forests. However, the country still lacks a specific legal framework for the protection of these forests. With territorial reform, administrative and financial decentralization is expected to happen. Municipalities should implement besides new functions, other environment-related functions. Only a few of them may have

adopted local plans related to the environment, although the legal requirements are to do so. Despite certain improvements and plans, the annual national environmental monitoring program is significantly underfunded: The National Environment Agency receives only 3 percent of the budget needed to implement the program and is required to prioritize activities. There are no accredited laboratories for analyzing air quality. The Government does not implement systematic measures to improve education and awareness-raising on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning, as advocated by target 13.3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNECE, 2018).

Economic Challenges in Albania

As time passes all world countries establish their own path of economic development. Although some of them may follow similar reforms and paths, they still have their own, particular way of development and shorter or longer times of transition. The case of Albania is unique referring to factors like its location or its economic development. Due to history and politics, the country remained under Ottoman occupation for 500 years. During the industrial revolution, the economy didn't grow significantly. It was an agricultural country and remained so for a long time. After the Second World War, it became part of the East communist alliance, carrying on an extreme dictatorship, accompanied by a self-isolated policy. Only after 1990, the country entered the real path of a market economy, accompanied by many obstacles. Reforms and engagements have been taken; however, it is not sure if everything was done in the right way (Muco, 1997).

From the development stages, today we have very little data, the best part of which come from foreign researchers. Many economic issues remain unsolved due to internal and external factors, but the country's commitment to becoming part of the European Union remains very high.

During the transition phase, years 1997 to 1998, the economy decreased very fast, again due to political instability. Right after, it continued to grow. In the first year of the 2000s, the GDP growth rate was around 5% per year. However, in 2008 a financial crisis spread around the world and affected the Albanian economy too. This was caused by a decrease in exports and Albanian migrants who had less money to send to their families or spend in Albania. The economic growth contracted by 3.48 % in 2020, due to the COVID - 19 pandemic (INSTAT, 2020).

The country has a total land area of 28,750 square kilometres, of which 24% is agricultural, 36% forest, and 15% pasture or another type of land. The most important branches of the economy are agriculture, which counts for about 20%, and trade and transport, accommodation, and food services cover around 16.17 percent. The Albanian government has lately identified tourism as a key economic sector, touting its potential to spur the development of the entire country (ITA, 2021).

Based on the balance of payments report of the Bank of Albania, the statistical data for the item travel and tourism, during the period January - September 2022, results that the net income from travel/tourism are 842.9 million Euros, this value increased by 25.3%, compared to the same period of the previous year (Ministria e Turizmit, 2022)

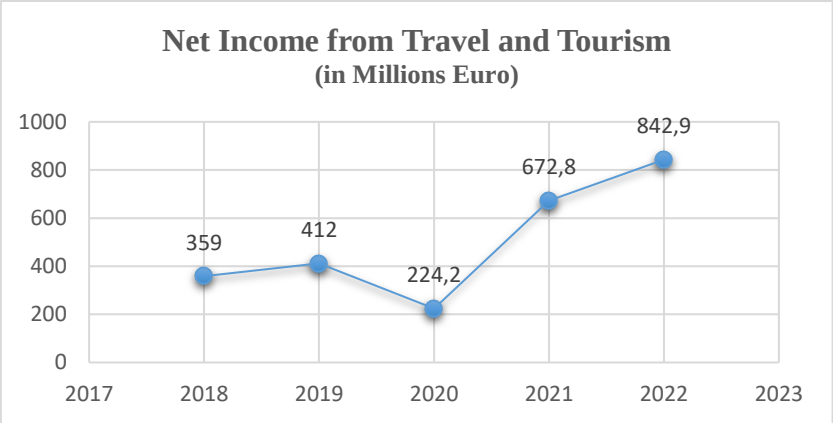

Figure 4: Net Income from travel and tourism, months 01-10, years 2018 – 2022
Source: Ministria e Turizmit dhe Mjedisit (2022)

While the data on income, experienced a moderate decrease of 8.3% compared to the previous year.

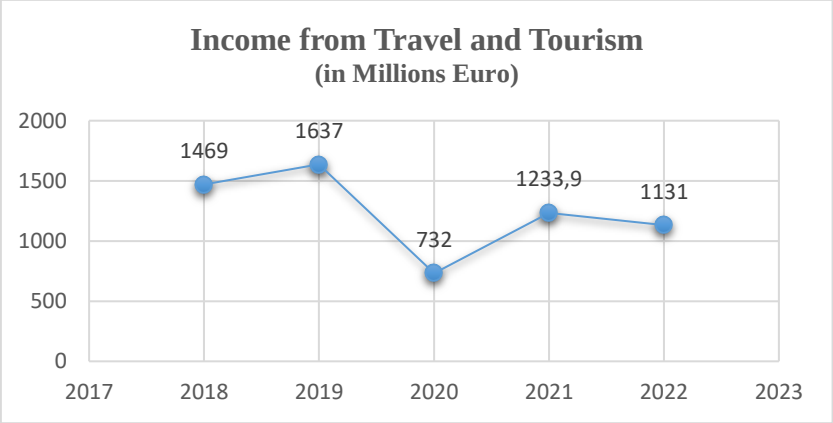

Figure 5: Income from travel and tourism, months 01-10, years 2018 – 2022
Source: Ministria e Turizmit dhe Mjedisit (2022)

Albania has seen a record-breaking tourist season in 2022, despite the initial insecurities stemming from the war in Ukraine and inflation. UNWTO ranked it as the country with the best post-pandemic recovery in the world among countries with more than 5 million annual tourists. Albania is seeing a notable increase in visitors from many European countries, especially high-income ones, such as Spain (+57%), Belgium (+23%) and the Netherlands (+36%). These markets are more oriented towards cultural and adventurous tourism (Lena & UNDP, 2022)

According to World Bank (2022) data, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Albania was worth 18.26 billion US dollars in 2021. The GDP value of Albania represents 0.01 percent of the world economy. While during Covid-19, from 2019- 2020 the GDP growth declined, the growth rate was 8.5 percent from the year 2020 to 2021.Referring to Western Balkan countries, where Albania belongs, the employment rate increased in all countries and now averages 46 percent, a 3-percentage point increase over mid-2021. Poverty has continued to decline in 2022, but sharply higher inflation poses risks to poverty reduction going forward.

It is obvious, the economy of Albania, although growing, it still remains very fragile. It is a challenge for the country to create sufficient financial resources to carry out and plan sus-

tainable development. It requires more than a normal plan and usual expenses to develop sustainably. New technologies should be adopted and this translates into added costs. Natural occurrences like earthquakes can become a threat to sustainability because they can destroy the infrastructure.

Another issue in developing countries is that the government may have difficulties deciding between immediate profit and investment in sustainable technologies. Additionally, at a municipal level, it is noticed a low engagement toward sustainable approaches or sustainability goals. The level of corruption is another factor. Funds are offered from foreign countries to support sustainable development, but as a result of corruption or bureaucracy, processes slow down. There are no incentives to attract investment to the industrial sector, in particular for those willing to invest in new technology as a direct contribution to improving environmental protection.

No specific unit within the central ministries (finance, economy, and environment) is vested with direct responsibility for the environmental tax system (UNECE, 2018).

There is no relevant evidence that financial resources are set aside for investments toward environmental protection. This is in the government's hands because all budgetary arrangements of all ministries depend on the decisions taken by the Ministry of Finance. There are no favourable conditions known for expanding public and private environmental investments. The actual decentralization reform may offer the possibility to create an attractive environment for companies and environmental local taxation collection may be an easier step that should later be integrated into an overall strategy. This may incite investment in more local projects. These expenditures are supposed to improve the quality of services, where waste management or water management are included.

Social challenges in Albania

The social dimension of sustainability recently attained acceptance as an elemental component of sustainable development. It is like starting from the outside shell and gradually after exfoliating the skin, reaching the core dimensions of human behaviour. Today, even more, concepts of happiness, social connections and interactions, social maturity, social diversity and equity, corporate sustainability, integrated governance, and social quality of life and similar concepts are added to the dimension of social sustainability (Talan et al., 2020).

The economist who developed the Human Development Index in 1990, Mahbub ul Haq explains that this index helps to measure various countries' levels of social and economic development. It is composed of four principal areas of interest: mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, life expectancy at birth, and gross national income (GNI) per capita Albania's HDI is relatively low (Chappelow, 2020). This is related to economic as well as social factors. A new phenomenon that is becoming evident lately is not the percentage of educated people but the quality of education they are attaining. A further social phenomenon that is taking place is the immigration of middle-class citizens. It has increased notably during the last 20 years. Due to unemployment and economic factors, many Albanians have immigrated during the last decade. But not only; part of this exode became citizens and families, who couldn't agree to the latest developments in the social, economic, and political environment. Gender inequality remains another hindering factor. Female force may have a significant influence on sustainable development, but its voice is still not as strong.

3. Methodology

Referring to the above-gathered data and information a summary of the main economic, social and environmental challenges in Albania is presented in the following table. While having a better view of the whole situation it will be easier to design a new strategy for further reaction.

The table does not include all possible issues; however, it represents a general view of some important ones. The data presented in the table relate to the year 2021. Since then, there have been a few improvements regarding unemployment, poverty rate, and average monthly income. However, many of the above challenges remain unsolved and require a lot of attention.

Table 1: Current challenges for Albania in year 2021

ECONOMIC	ENVIRONMENTAL	SOCIAL	Further Economic/ Investment/ Other
GDP 18.26 billion USD	Place 79/118 on Air pollution	Place 110/180 for the Corruption index	Earthquake / Pandemic
22 % Poverty rate	Deforestation - Nr 01 in the region	4879/1000 - Net migration rate	Below-average healthcare system
11.8 % Unemployment rate	Poor waste management	Quality of Education	Poor management of environmental taxation
Av. monthly earnings of 490 USD	Hydropower projects that may become a threat to ecosystems	Very low political participation	Poor public transportation

Source: INSTAT, World Bank (2021a, 2021b)

This research is based on secondary as well as primary data. A questionnaire made of 32 questions, Likert scale, single choice, open questions as well as demographic questions, has been distributed and conducted in Albania and 220 responses have been gathered. My target group comprises individuals with a higher level of education, considering them as the future of the country. The main research question in the survey refers to the will and ability of Albanians to develop sustainably. It is aimed to understand if, in a developing country, where there are a lot of other economic issues, people are ready or not to embrace a development that focuses both on economic improvement but also environmental protection and human well-being. Many of the respondents are University Lecturers and Master's students. I have distributed my questionnaire in three of the main cities of Albania, Tirana, Durres, and Elbasan. This survey is part of a bigger project, a broader study referring to sustainable tourism development in the country of Albania. That is in the process of gathering data from different groups of Albanian society.

4. Findings

4.1. Thinking sustainably before acting sustainably

The first phase of everything is knowing and gathering information. Citizens seem to know very little about the gravity of a polluted environment. Understanding the importance of sustainability in our lives incites everyone to engage better and collaborate better. Knowledge should be scattered in all groups of actors. Among central government authorities, knowledge is insufficient. Awareness of the SDGs among local government authorities, civil society, academia, and the private sector also remains very low. 79% of the survey respondents believe that investing in education and technology is a great initiative, to overcome transition and move toward a sustainable future.

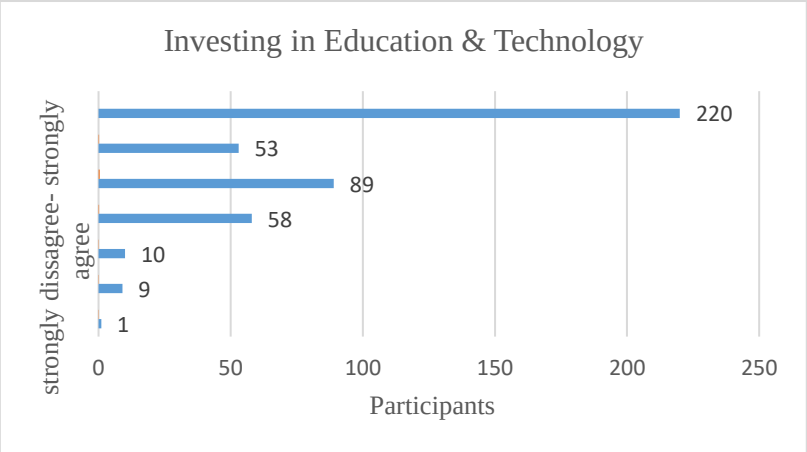

Figure 7: Agreement to investments in education & technology
Source: Own research (2022)

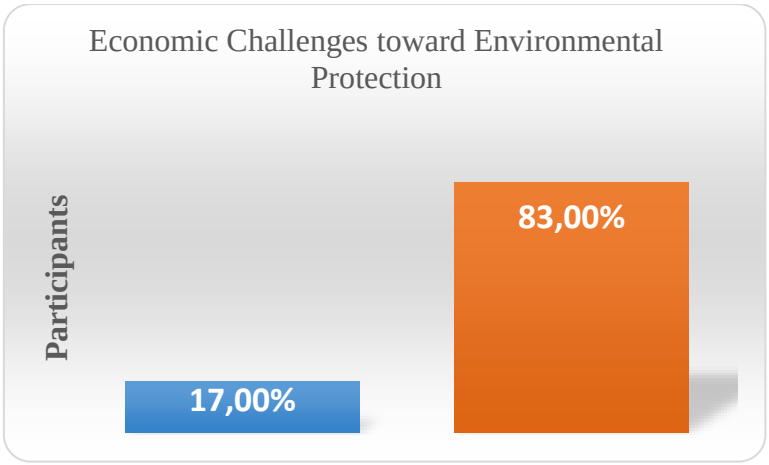

Figure 8: Environment protection is as important as other current challenges
Source: Own research 2022

The costs of raising awareness and spreading information are not high. It requires more engagement and good collaboration rather than financial resources. However, there is another important revelation from the survey conducted. The participants agree that protecting the environment is a matter equally important as other economic challenges in the country. Participants understand the connection between the environment and human well-being. This category of citizens, most of them with a high level of education, understand this and believe all other social groups should be well-informed about it.

This will serve as a first step, in order to set a stronger background on the road to sustainability.

4.2. Simple steps lead toward greater goals

The concerning lack of data should improve in phase two. Regular assessments and studies must fill the gap in information. For this purpose, research should be encouraged and financed by the government. There are many researchers who are willing to work toward this, but the funds and facilities in this direction are poor. Investing in this direction requires not so many financial resources and the contribution is crucial. By having a large database, we may make

calculations and focus on things we need to improve, knowing better and understanding priorities.

As presented in Figure 9, the next possible step is organization. Good organization means half of the work is done.

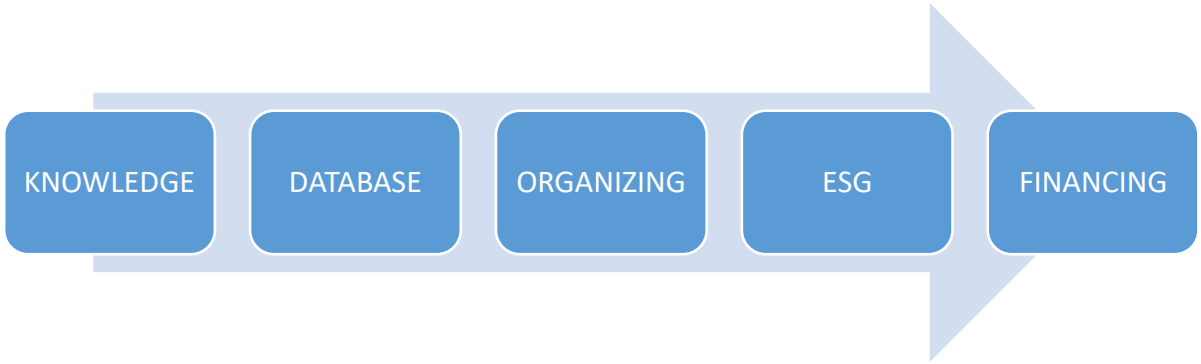

Figure 9: Steps toward sustainable development
Source: Own analysis (2022)

Laws must be in harmony with management. Environmental taxation and fiscal instruments must be subject to harmonized regulation or management at the central level and a specific unit within the central government should be vested with direct responsibility for the environmental tax system. It is a real challenge to be faced as soon as possible to strengthen the transparency of inspectors' work. Parallelly to improve coordination among inspectors at the local level would connect the links of a chain. The collaboration between the government, international community, and citizens of Albania is the "holy trinity" that will shape the future.

Strengthening the ESG, Environmental, Social, and Governance, a non-financial tool, is a very important step. A lot of investors are focusing on ESG, which will probably become a great future strategic tool and approach for a developing country.

Establishing financial resources for environmental protection, a national environmental fund, or a state budget line for an environment-related purpose is a must in order to follow a common global path. The annual national environmental monitoring program, which is significantly underfunded should come in the focus of attention. The same importance should gain the transition to renewable energy sources, turning to solar and wind resources for energy. This would save money and increase the fund for the environment.

Private companies must pay environmental taxes for the impact that their emissions cause on the environment and citizens. This would increase financial resources to spend for environmental purposes. Investments in public transportation and other services for citizens may decrease costs in the long term and contribute to air quality improvement at the same time.

5. Summary

Approaches to green growth remain not well-known in Albania. There are some governmental strategies that include a few policies and some initiatives, on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and tourism, but there does not exist a common framework that includes the principles of a green economy. The measures look spontaneous and not integrated into a real strategy of a green economy and there is not a specific policy document considering green growth as a vision. Regarding environmental economic instruments, they are not grounded on evaluations of environmental damage or externalities. Nevertheless, consumers and producers are somehow motivated to behave in an environmentally friendly manner.

Sustainable development is about investing in different directions and requires financial resources, but it is as well very much about a will to develop sustainably, a will to better organize. Growing sustainably will attract more investments. Sustainability and ESG are strategic tools to invest in emerging countries. They will both help to better understand contexts. According to this, it will be easier to adapt managerial practices.

The policy document regarding education for sustainable development must not be only a written paper but requires financial and human resources to become a reality and achieve a successful implementation. Until now, these initiatives are being carried out mostly by international organizations. Integration in the educational system in Albania is a crucial step toward sustainable development.

The country has recently made many investments and adopted policies in the tourism sector, a main branch of economic development. However, success is lacking in organization, data gathering, and the development of a real strategy for sustainable tourism, where improved infrastructure, services standardization, and waste management must be the main goals.

Public utilities require real attention and investment. Public transport supply is very low, rail services remain in very poor conditions, while citizens use and need better non-car ways of transport. While public transport is very limited it is hindering the use of sustainable modes of transport. Better public transportation, better water, and waste management will contribute to the overall strategy.

Since Albania is an agricultural country there is great potential to increase organic farming. This would contribute to the production of healthy organic food and at the same time would enhance air quality and contribute to other aspects of the environment. This needs better incitement and better promotion in the strategy for sustainable development.

Investment in environmental infrastructure and services is a must in order to develop sustainably. The adoption of an international classification of environmental expenditures would make it possible to have a database of national statistics and so international comparability would be easier.

The government should invest firstly in a common framework addressing the principles of a green economy and gradually in green energies and health systems.

If all parts will be determined sustainable growth can be achievable. A well-designed strategy, coordination, and collaboration are necessary for this. For every country in the world, there is a future in store. Its citizens in collaboration with the international community will decide how it will be.

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