

# Albania *Country Profile*



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# 1. Introduction

Quick Facts		
	Population	2,862,427 <sup>1</sup>
	GDP per capita	14,495.1 <sup>2</sup>
	10-year average annual GDP growth	2.9% <sup>3</sup>
	CO2 emissions per capita	2.0 <sup>4</sup>
	Renewable energy consumption share	34.9% <sup>5</sup>
	Unemployment rate	12.33% <sup>6</sup>
	Global Gender Gap Index 0-1 (gender parity)	0.604 <sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Statistics, 'Population of Albania', 2019. <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/demography-and-social-indicators/population/publication/2019/population-in-albania-1-january-2019/> accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, 'GDP Per Capita Albania', 2019. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=AL> Accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>3</sup> CEIC Data, 'Albania Real GDP Growth', 2020. <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/albania/real-gdp-growth> accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Worldbank, 'CO2 Emissions Albania', 2014. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?locations=AL>

<sup>5</sup> National Agency of National Resources, 'Renewable Energy Deployment', 2019. [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/energy/se/pp/gere/GERE.6\\_Oct.2019/2\\_RE\\_Auctions/1\\_Bylyku\\_Leshkoviku-Albania\\_6th.GERE.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/energy/se/pp/gere/GERE.6_Oct.2019/2_RE_Auctions/1_Bylyku_Leshkoviku-Albania_6th.GERE.pdf) accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Statista, 'Albania Unemployment Rate from 1999 to 2019', 2019. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/444445/unemployment-rate-in-albania/> accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 'Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania 2020', 2020. [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender\\_equality\\_index\\_for\\_the\\_republic\\_of\\_albania\\_2020.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf) accessed 1 August 2020.



## 2. Policy and Regulatory Framework

Several strategic and regulatory frameworks have been developed that address the stimulation of green businesses. One major incentive for this development is the integration of the European Union's environmental legislation laws.<sup>9</sup> A complete screening and transposition assessment upon the Directives and Regulations of Chapter 27 – Environment, is conducted and therefore orienting the national environmental framework towards a full transposition of the *acquis*. The negotiations on this chapter started in June 2019.<sup>8</sup> Policy and regulatory frameworks are available in Albania, but there is room for improvement in enforcement as a sub-legal infrastructure is lacking and there is a low number of environmental inspectors per region. Tools and information on environmental issues in the business domain, therefore, remain rather scarce, and businesses remain largely unaware of standards and environmental management systems.<sup>9</sup> Businesses often operate without an environmental permit, or even when a permit is obtained, regulations regarding the environment are frequently disrespected.<sup>9</sup> The “polluter pays principle” is addressed as a principle by law but not functional in practice.<sup>11</sup> Based on reports and conversations with local experts, we found that environmental tax policies are poorly integrated.<sup>10</sup>

The Business Development Strategy (BIDS 2014 -2020) includes environmental policies targeting the business sector, focusing mainly on resource efficiency, cleaner production, and eco-innovation.<sup>9</sup> The BIDS has a concrete measure on awareness-raising targeting the development of eco-products and services, eco-labelling, recycling, and environmental certification, however, progress on these topics has been absent or rather slow. Based upon European directives, a decision has been made by the government of Albania on the integration of environmental management systems (EMS) and eco-labelling in the last couple of months. Until now, no accredited entity is in place to integrate these policies, which leaves it based upon voluntary participation. There has not been a business or entity that has requested participation yet. The law on environmental protection and the law on environmental permits both mention the green economy, but progress on these laws is not monitored.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Regional Circular Economy Country Specific Report, the concept of circular economy (CE) is still at an early stage in Albania.<sup>12</sup> CE related to business activities has been only integrated into the Strategy of Integrated Waste Management (2018 – 2023) developed under the principle of “zero waste” that has been approved this June by the Albanian Council of Ministers. The strategy addresses the importance of waste management according to waste hierarchy principles (prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery, and disposal). In general, international reports indicate that the situation of waste management in the country appears to be problematic.<sup>12</sup> Through conversations with local experts we found a discrepancy regarding this situation; on one hand the government promotes clean activities related to CE principles at the basic public service level through its local authorities, but on the other hand waste management

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<sup>8</sup> European Union, *Albania 2019 Report*, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> OECD, *SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey 2019: Assessing the Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe*, SME Policy Index, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Fosse J, Petrick K. et al., 2016. *Towards a Green Economy in the Mediterranean - Assessment of National Green Economy and Sustainable Development Strategies in Mediterranean Countries*. eco-union, MIO-ECSDE, GEC. Athens

<sup>11</sup> Personal Interview with Valbona Mazreku (Executive Director MilieuKontakt). 1 July 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, *Regional Circular Economy Country Specific Report*, 2020.

is intentionally being pushed toward direct incineration of all waste streams without no prior reduce-reuse and recycle practice taking place.<sup>13</sup> A digital ecosystem has been created to map and collectively match solid waste sources and flows in Albania under the “INTERREG Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” program, nevertheless, no recent activity has been taken place and it is no longer possible to participate on the platform.<sup>14</sup> Legislative acts on extended producer responsibility are in place but are not enforced.<sup>13</sup>

In the field of energy consumption, there are several regulations in place that could potentially stimulate the transition to green business, such as the law on heat saving, the law on conservation of thermal heat in buildings, the law on energy efficiency, the law on information of the consumption of energy and other resources by energy-related products. Nevertheless, although there is an Energy Efficiency Agency that has been established, secondary legislation or sub-legal frameworks are not widely available due to the unavailability of allocated funds.<sup>15</sup> To date there are around 500 hydropower plants in Albania that are either operative, under construction, or planned. Of these, 105 are located in protected areas. By relying on this energy source, the energy sector remains vulnerable, dependent on yearly precipitation and the hydrographic regime of rivers. During the last decade, Albania has been a net importer of energy, especially during the summertime, indicating that hydro-dependence is not sustainable.<sup>16</sup>

NGO’s are rarely involved in decision-making processes related to environmental agreements and are rarely involved in the preparation of national reports on the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.<sup>17</sup> Different institutions report climate-related data without coordinating and without carrying out the data verification process.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Personal Interview with Rodion Gjoka (Head of Environment Unit at Co-PLAN), 20 July 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Interreg, Balkan Mediterranean S.W.A.N (2014-2020). *Brief Description*. <https://www.swan-interreg.com/brief-description/>. Accessed on 8 August 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Energy Community, *State of Compliance*, 2019. <https://energy-community.org/implementation/Albania/EE.html>. Accessed on 8 August 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Rodion G. Energy Sector Towards the Renewable Potential in the Albanian Context. *Annual Review of Territorial Governance in Albania*, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, *Environmental Performance Reviews Albania*, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Bashmili, Kristi, Rodion Gjoka and Xhesika Hoxha, *Governance for Climate Change Resolution*, 2018.

### 3. Market Demand

Although the integration of Green Public Procurement Policies has been on the agenda for quite some time, no implementation has taken place so far.<sup>11</sup> Albania is still working on the implementation of the provisions of the 2014 EU public procurement directives, which included the Europe 2020 Strategy that emphasizes smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.<sup>9</sup> Limited data is available on levels of consumer awareness in Albania. A study from 2015 conducted by researchers from the University of Tirana shows that only a third of the participants of the surveys are willing to pay more for products that are sustainably produced (participants were randomly selected).<sup>19</sup> Local experts see this as an area of improvement and consider current levels of consumer awareness as “low”.<sup>13</sup> After the fall of communism in Albania, a consuming culture arose that lacks awareness regarding environmental conscious consumption patterns and many experts seem to think that it is affecting Albanian society till today.<sup>20</sup> Awareness campaigns have mainly taken place in the field of recycling and waste reduction. One example is the project in the Municipality of Tirana, where waste segregation was introduced by the use of separate waste bins. Unfortunately the waste was merged during collection.<sup>13</sup> Experts have shared that most small-scale businesses that are currently using CE principles in their production practices are largely unaware of this and are therefore not aware of the opportunity to accelerate these activities.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gumeni, Anita & Shalari, Ornela & Mulla, Pranvera, *Towards sustainable consumption in Albania*, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Personal Interview with Mirela Koci (Executive Director at Auleda), 16 July 2020.

## 4. Startup and Investment Climate

The economy in Albania is led by the services sector, however, agriculture and industry play an important role as well. The agricultural industry employs 40,3 % of the population, which is far larger than the contribution to the local economy (only 19% of the GDP).<sup>9</sup> According to a study by researchers of the University of Tirana, there are no financial instruments in place to directly support business models to shift from linear to CE in Albania. The research explains this absence through the lack of knowledge among research institutions, business representatives, and businesses that can be the leading example in this case.<sup>21</sup> The Investment Climate in Albania tends to have a conservative character. Through conversations with entrepreneurs in the field of green and CE businesses, we found that most of them fund their business through bank lending or financial support from their network.<sup>22</sup>

Other forms of investment are coming from foreign bodies, such as the GIZ, UNDP, US Embassy, and the COSME program.<sup>22</sup> More recently, the European Investment Fund (EIF) and Raiffeisen Bank established a guarantee agreement to support SME's in Albania by providing credit coverage on a EUR 17 million portfolio of SME loans with attractive conditions over the next two years.<sup>23</sup> Albania is also part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Program (CIP), Horizon 2020, and the EU-EBRD funded program supporting small businesses.

There is a limited amount of incubator and accelerator programs that stimulate (green) innovation. One example is the Innovation Hub Tirana that is being developed by the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration (MIAP) together with other partners and offers mentoring, coaching, advice, networking, and funding. Yunus Sustainable Business Balkans is a social business development project that started in Albania and is now operating in several other countries in the Balkans. Yunus supports entrepreneurship and development of inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship in the region. To accomplish this, Yunus designs and implements social and impact entrepreneurship inspiration and awareness campaigns, runs several incubators and acceleration programs and investment readiness programs, provides coaching and mentoring, and provides access to financing. The available programs tend to have a broader scope of development than solely the integration of green or CE concepts. The only program that specifically focuses on green businesses is the Green Ideas Competition of Partners Albania, which aims to stimulate and encourage innovation for green business ideas at the local level and explores the role of philanthropy in engaging local communities to generate green business ideas that utilize local resources and revitalize disappearing traditional production chains and community-based markets.

Other incubators and accelerator programs that are focusing on general innovation are TechSpace, Protik, and InnoSpace, which are to be found in the appendix. Several local experts that we interviewed addressed the lack of clarity in the fiscal system in Albania as a barrier to accelerate. An example of this is unclarity on the situation under the legal framework of the law of social enterprises.<sup>13</sup>

In June 2020, the YES Foundation (Macedonia) in partnership with the Albanian Socio Economic Think Tank (ASET Albania) and Foundation for innovation and technology development (Bosnia

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<sup>21</sup>Memaj, Fatmir and Brunilda Kosta, *Business Models For the Circular Economy – Case of Albania*, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Personal Interview with Greion Treska (Yunus), 15 July 2020.

<sup>23</sup> FEI Europe, *EUR 17m for SMEs in Albania under the Western Balkans Enterprise and Innovation Facility*, 2017. [http://www.fei.europa.eu/what\\_we\\_do/equity/news/2017/wbedif\\_raiffeisen\\_albania.htm](http://www.fei.europa.eu/what_we_do/equity/news/2017/wbedif_raiffeisen_albania.htm) accessed on 7 July 2020.

and Herzegovina) started with the implementation of the project “Partnership for circular economy – sustainable SME growth and regional development”, co-financed by the Western Balkans Fund. The main target group for this project are SME’s, civil society organizations, and public institutions. The program will include activities such as a capacity building training program, a short online course on CE, a regional conference on CE, and an informative brochure that introduces the concept of CE into businesses. ASET has already created a guide last year on CE and the benefits of including CE principles together with best practices with financial support of Co-PLAN.<sup>27</sup>

## 5. Socio-Cultural Context

The level of entrepreneurship in Albania is generally considered to be low. A stable job working for somebody else, such as the government, banks, and large enterprises, is preferred by Albanians over owning an enterprise. Fear of failure and lack of entrepreneurial knowledge are motives for Albanians to choose for a stable job rather than starting an enterprise.<sup>24</sup> To promote entrepreneurship in educational curricula, the government of Albania has introduced a module on the “Basics of Entrepreneurship”, to encourage students to establish their own businesses. The National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014–2020 aims to enhance employment by creating quality jobs and by fostering skills of the labor force.<sup>24</sup> Self-employment, especially of the young population, is encouraged. Particular attention has been paid to supporting female entrepreneurship. Projects addressing disadvantaged people have also been launched. The introduction of a dual educational system is envisaged, combining vocational courses and apprenticeships in companies during the vocational education period.<sup>25</sup> In international comparison, Albania scores below average in female Entrepreneurship.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>European Investment Bank, *Assessment of financing needs of SME’s in Albania*, August 2016.

[https://www.eib.org/attachments/efs/assessment\\_of\\_financing\\_needs\\_of\\_smes\\_albania\\_en.pdf](https://www.eib.org/attachments/efs/assessment_of_financing_needs_of_smes_albania_en.pdf)

<sup>25</sup>European Commission, *2015 SBA Fact Sheet*, 2016.

<https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/16344/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/pdf>



## 6. Opportunities and Obstacles

	Opportunities	Obstacles
<b>General economic context and investment climate</b>	More clarity in the fiscal system could be an opportunity to accelerate.	General lack of funding opportunities. There are no financial instruments in place to directly support business models to shift from linear to circular economy present. <sup>21</sup>
<b>General political context</b>		
<b>Policy and regulatory (both national and regional/local)</b>	Although strategies and action plans are well-formulated. Increasing levels of enforcement and monitoring are opportunities.	Low level of environmental policy and enforcement and a lack of transparency in the regulatory framework. Businesses often operate without an environmental permit, or even when a permit is obtained, regulations regarding the environment are frequently disrespected. The “polluters pays principle” is addressed as a principle by law but not functional in practice. The environmental permitting system is based on self-monitoring for larger companies, with a lack of power to control or enforce regulations. Besides that, permits are not enforced for SME's. Lack of number of staff working on regulation enforcement and monitoring. Sub-legal frameworks are mostly unavailable.
<b>Subsidies and fiscal benefits</b>		No financial incentives are in place.
<b>Public procurement</b>	The integration of Green Public Procurement policies has been on the agenda for quite some time, but there are no policies in place at this point.	
<b>General knowledge and awareness about CE</b>	Several businesses might be using CE principles without being aware of it (especially in rural areas), awareness-raising/inspiration sessions could accelerate these activities. The Institute for Environmental Policy has started with addressing these communities this July. <sup>26</sup>	Tools and information on environmental issues in the business domain, therefore, remain rather scarce, and businesses remain largely unaware of standards and environmental management systems.
<b>Consumer demand (linked to previous point)</b>		Consumer awareness is seen as low.
<b>Public-private partnerships</b>	There are several small initiatives such as programs to address waste and an innovation Hub.	

<sup>26</sup> Personal Interview with Endri Haxhiraj (Institute for Environmental Policy), 15 July 2020.

<b>Support programs or platforms for green and circular businesses</b>		Programs that that focus on green/CE business development are limited.
<b>Professional training and education on CE / Skilled labour</b>	The definition of circular economy remains unclear for many business owners and governmental officials. <sup>27</sup> Introducing stakeholders to the CE principles could be an opportunity to accelerate activities in this domain.	High number of businesses and workforce that are leaving the country.
<b>Specific economic sectors</b>	Foreign Trade: export of local goods could form an incentive for businesses to integrate CE principles (e.g. in packaging), since foreign consumers have higher levels of demand for sustainable consumer goods. The agri-tourism sector has recently gone through some positive developments (e.g. green labor processes) and could potentially be a starting point to accelerate change. <sup>17</sup> The amount of GHGs emitted from agriculture decreased from 1,403.08 Gg of CO2 eq. in 2005 to 1,130.86 Gg of CO2 eq. in 2009. This was due to a reduction in the total number of livestock during this period. <sup>17</sup> Since the cement industry is relatively large in Albania, introducing sustainable practices in this industry could be an opportunity. New type of cement that is 30% less carbon intensive such as the one co-financed by Denmark's Innovation Fund <sup>28</sup> or solutions from Solidia <sup>29</sup> have the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of buildings and improve the environmental performance of this sector in Albania.	The only sector that is currently introduced to CE principles is the waste sector. Energy consumption is predominately relying on hydro-power plants, which are environmentally damaging, generate bad international publicity, and do not guarantee constant production.
<b>Other socio-cultural factors (incl. gender issues)</b>	Albania scores below average in female Entrepreneurship, however, programs have been started to increase this.	
<b>Other commercial or legal challenges</b>		
<b>Available technologies and infrastructure</b>	Refurbishment of electronic waste and vehicles that currently already find their way to Albania but are used in harmful ways (e.g. polluting second-hand cars). <sup>13</sup>	The scarcity of information and tools for businesses on environmental issues makes it difficult to adopt environmentally friendly practices.

<sup>27</sup> Personal Interview with Fatmir Memaj (ASET), 16 July 2020.

<sup>28</sup> State of Green. <https://stateofgreen.com/en/partners/state-of-green/news/green-cement-can-reduce-the-carbon-footprint-of-buildings/> accessed on 30 July 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Solidia, <https://www.solidiatech.com/> accessed 8 august 2020.

## 7. Impact Indicators and Other Data

Topic	Numbers	Source
<b>Business Composition on Pollution</b>	Almost 95% of Albanian businesses are microenterprises and 76% of them operate in the services, trade and tourism sectors which have the lowest level of resource consumption. While small businesses' environmental footprint may be individually low, their aggregate impact can sometimes exceed that of large businesses. Medium and large companies in the following sectors are the biggest polluters in Albania: fuel extraction, oil production, extraction of other minerals, leather manufacturing, and cement production. These polluting enterprises comprise 5% of the total number of businesses in Albania.	<a href="http://www.erenet.org/country/SMEs%20and%20Green%20Economy.pdf">http://www.erenet.org/country/SMEs%20and%20Green%20Economy.pdf</a>
<b>Energy</b>	Energy activities are the main source of GHG emissions in Albania, accounting for 39 percent to 51 percent of overall direct GHG emissions in the period 2000–2009. <sup>17</sup> Energy production is based mainly on hydropower, fuelwood, and domestic and imported fuels used for electricity production, heat production, and transport.	<a href="https://www.unece.org/enviromental-policy/environmental-performance-reviews/enveprpublications/environmental-performance-reviews/2018/3rd-environmental-performance-review-of-albania/docs.html">https://www.unece.org/enviromental-policy/environmental-performance-reviews/enveprpublications/environmental-performance-reviews/2018/3rd-environmental-performance-review-of-albania/docs.html</a>
<b>GHG</b>	The amount of GHGs emitted from industry increased from 1,118.00 Gg of CO <sub>2</sub> eq. in 2005 to 1,701.12 Gg of CO <sub>2</sub> eq. in 2009. The main source of emissions was the cement industry, followed by metal production. <sup>17</sup>	<a href="https://www.unece.org/enviromental-policy/environmental-performance-reviews/enveprpublications/environmental-performance-reviews/2018/3rd-environmental-performance-review-of-albania/docs.html">https://www.unece.org/enviromental-policy/environmental-performance-reviews/enveprpublications/environmental-performance-reviews/2018/3rd-environmental-performance-review-of-albania/docs.html</a>
<b>Resource Efficiency Priority Areas</b>	The housing sector has been identified as the as a priority for material resource efficiency: around 47 % use of the electricity, 42 % fuel wood and about 10 % oil by-products.	<a href="https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/more-from-less">https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/more-from-less</a>
<b>Domestic Material Consumption</b>	8 tons per capita	<a href="http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/environment-and-energy/environmental-accounts/#tab2">http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/environment-and-energy/environmental-accounts/#tab2</a>

# 8. Appendix

## 8.1 List of Interviewees

Name	Role and Organization	Date of Interview
Ahmethi, Genta	CE entrepreneur Life on a Boat	16.07.2020
Gordani, Lorenc	Energy law & business academic	15.07.2020
Gjoka, Rodion	Head of Environment Unit at Co-PLAN	20.07.2020
Haxhiraj, Endri	Director of the Institute for Circular Policy	15.07.2020
Kruja, Samel	Project Coordinator at EcoAlbania	07.07.2020
Memaj, Fatmir	Executive Director of ASET	16.07.2020
Mazreku, Valbona	Milieukontakt	01.07.2020
Koci, Mirela	Executive Director at Auleda	16.07.2020
Treska, Gerion	Mentor at Yunus and green entrepreneur	15.07.2020

## 8.2 Hubs, Accelerators, and Trainings Programs

Name	Link
Tirana Innovation Hub	<a href="http://incubator.al/">http://incubator.al/</a>
Yunus	<a href="https://www.balkanimpact.com/about-us">https://www.balkanimpact.com/about-us</a>
TechSpace	<a href="https://techspace.al/home">https://techspace.al/home</a> <a href="http://www.protik.org/">http://www.protik.org/</a>
InnoSpace	<a href="https://www.innospacetirana.com/">https://www.innospacetirana.com/</a>
ASET	<a href="http://aset-al.com/dokumente/wbfund.pdf">http://aset-al.com/dokumente/wbfund.pdf</a>



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Fosse J., Roniotes A., Greenfield O., Gros P. *Towards a Green Economy in the Mediterranean - Assessment of National Green Economy and Sustainable Development Strategies in Mediterranean Countries*. Athens: eco-union, 2016. <https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/resource/towards-green-economy-mediterranean-assessment-national-green-economy-and-sustainable>

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National Agency of National Resources, Renewable Energy Deployment, 2019. [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/energy/se/pp/gere/GERE.6\\_Oct.2019/2\\_RE\\_Auctions/1\\_Bylyku\\_Leskoviku-Albania\\_6th.GERE.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/energy/se/pp/gere/GERE.6_Oct.2019/2_RE_Auctions/1_Bylyku_Leskoviku-Albania_6th.GERE.pdf) accessed 1 August 2020.

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