

Local democratic governance in Shkodra Region

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ACRONOMYS

CDC	COUNTY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
COE	COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CSR D	CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGY FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DLDP	DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
DOL	DIVISION OF LABOUR
DSDC	DEPARTMENT FOR STRATEGY AND DONOR COORDINATION
DTS	DONOR TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT
EAMIS	EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM
EC	EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
FTI	FAST TRACK INITIATIVE
GER	GENERAL ENROLMENT RATE
GTS	GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT
HH	HOUSEHOLD
IC	INTER COOPERATION
ILO	INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
IPA	INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE
IPS	INTEGRATED PLANNING SYSTEM
IPSIS	INTEGRATED PLANNING SYSTEM INFORMATION SYSTEM
LEDA	LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES
LG	LOCAL GOVERNMENT
LGU	LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT
MIPD	MULTI ANNUAL INDICATIVE PLANNING DOCUMENTS
NSDI	NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION
MoI	MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
MoF	MINISTRY OF FINANCE
MTBP	MIDTERM BUDGETARY PROGRAMME
NSDI	NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION
SECO	STATE SECRETARIAT FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
SDC	SWISS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION
SWAP	SECTOR WIDE APPROACH
SWG	SECTOR WORKING GROUP
UN	UNITED NATIONS
UNDP	UNITED NATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
WB	WORLD BANK

1. LOCAL COUNTRY CONTEXT

Albania is a small country with a population of 3.1 millions inhabitants. After almost half a century of an extremely centralized government, Albania undertook a path of political decentralisation, with the first local democratic elections held in 1992. Despite the significance of this initial political move towards increased democratic representation, local administrative and fiscal autonomy remained very weak. However, the decentralisation process received a second boost in the late 1990s; between 1998 and 2000 the country formally ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government, incorporated its key principles into the new Constitution, and passed legal reforms for local self-governments.

The provision of public services in Albania is in a transitional phase, from a highly centralized, hierarchically de-concentrated system, to a decentralised decision-making structure formalized by the 2000 legal reform. This legal reform represented a turning point in intergovernmental fiscal relations, which, *inter alia*, broadly assigned responsibilities to local governments.

Albania is implementing the national strategy of decentralisation and local autonomy, making significant progress in decentralisation while aiming to achieve consistency with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe (CoE). Key challenges of the decentralisation process, identified in the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), include: improvement of the legal and regulatory framework in order to increase authority and autonomy of local government; fiscal decentralisation; strengthening capacities of local government staff and of regional councils; transfer public utilities and public property to local government.

MAIN FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES. RESPECTIVE AUTONOMY OF LG

The basic principle leading the division of responsibilities between the central and local government and among the levels of local government, is “securing the highest level of public service at a government level as close to the public as possible”; this is also defined as the principle of subsidiarity. This implies maximal effectiveness and efficiency in exercising functions and providing services and accountability to the public.

Social development functions: This field includes functions such as education, public health, traditions and culture, social development, minorities, civil society development, human rights, information dissemination to population as well as among stakeholders. In areas such as traditions and culture, local government units have complete promotion responsibility through the support of local initiatives and activities, local cultural groups, etc. Local government units play an important role, sharing responsibilities with the central government, within the national policies defined by law; they have administrative, service and investment authority, and partial regulatory authority, within well-defined national policies and with minimal standards of inputs and outputs.

As far as *primary health care and public health protection* are concerned, local government bodies have complete responsibility and authority on specific sectors of vital importance for the protection and improvement of the population’s health, such as: supplying the population with hygienically clean water; providing for an appropriate environment (waste collection and removal, etc.); removal and treatment of wastewaters; food security for consumer protection; cleaning and greening.

In addition, *in local finances and budgeting*, in order to independently regulate and administer the local issues under their jurisdiction, local governments have the right to collect and spend revenues under their authority and discretion. The revenues of the local government comprise: i) local revenues and ii) revenues generated from the share of national revenues.

There are several fiscal policy measures which allow to carry out a number of important public services by the LGU directly or on behalf of the central government, and which contribute to increased convergence of LGUs total incomes; they fall into the following categories:

Unconditional transfer (based on population and an equalization formula) to the LGUs to support their own incomes and provide necessary services

Conditional transfer to cover costs of functions delegated from the central government and called shared functions

Competitive grants are from the state budget. They fund projects covering sectors of local government, and are distributed and monitored in collaboration with the local government representatives.

The competitive grant is composed of state budget funds, allocated to ministries or institutions, for capital expenditures related to the functions of local government units. In the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 the criteria formulated for the allocation of competitive grants seemed to be very broad, “flexible” and vague, with not sufficient specification; they mainly related to level of impact on social and economic development, level of accordance with regional and local priorities, impact on poverty reduction or increase of the access to basic services, number of inhabitants benefiting directly or indirectly from the project, ongoing projects and the quality of the projects. It is the MoI, the MoF and representatives from the association of LGUs that are responsible for defining the indicators for each criteria. Lack of strong and detailed definition of criteria and lack of quantification might be a reason why there are cases that show no relevant relation between poverty and the amount of grant allocated to a LGU, which means that poor LGUs receive less financial support than it was expected.

2. THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Although Albania is a small country, its territory is formally divided into 374 first-level local self-government units (65 municipalities and 309 communes). This entails a situation in which 48 percent of these self-governing units, representing 17 percent of the country’s population, are made up of communities of less than 5,000 inhabitants – or 54 percent and 30 percent, respectively, in the case of the communes (Fig. 1). As with many other European countries in transition, this fragmentation raises concerns that go beyond economic efficiency matters (e.g., economies of scale and externality spillovers) to include considerations of political and administrative nature.

So far, development programmes have been designed by the government and implemented by line ministries with a low level of participation by local people and communities; these have not been able to express their needs and tailor specific programmes allowing them to get away from a low degree of development. Due to the decentralisation process, some competencies are delegated to local government and new roles have been defined for them.

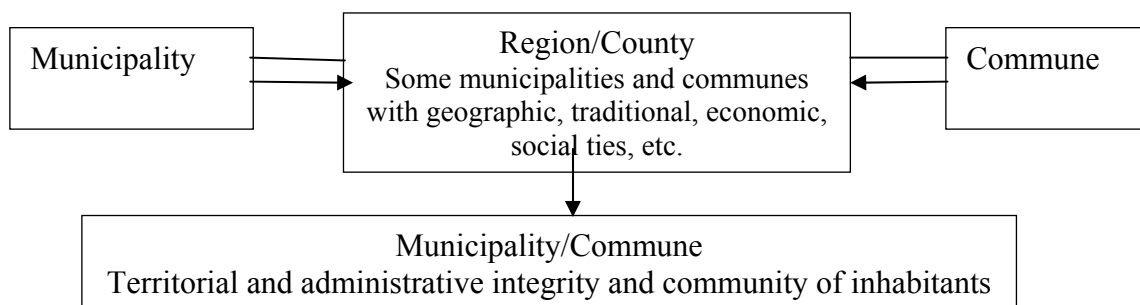
The discontinuation of the old districts and their replacement by a second level of local self-government (i.e., the Regional Councils) constituted an innovative facet of the 2000 territorial-administrative reform. According to the new law, there are three administrative local levels in Albania on which the flow of information and responsibilities is spread. These three levels have been defined as follows:

Commune: represents a territorial and administrative unit located in rural areas and specified urban areas. It is subdivided in villages and in some special cases in towns. The size, name and centre of the commune are determined by law.

Municipality: represents a territorial and administrative unit in an urban area or in specific cases in rural areas. It is subdivided in quarters which must have more than 15000 inhabitants. Rural subdivisions of a municipality are called villages and are populated by more than 200 inhabitants.

Region (Qark): represents a territorial and administrative unit which is composed of communes and municipalities with traditional, geographic, social and economic ties. This is a coordination body in charge of development at the regional level. The region/county is responsible to develop, implement regional policies and harmonize them with national policies at the regional level. The regional council, as a community representative body at this level is established for the administration of resources; it is based on representation and comprises the mayors of the communes and municipalities, and members of the respective councils, in proportion to the number of inhabitants of each LG unit.

Figure 1 - The organizational structure of local government



Albania has initiated a decentralisation process, by which administrative, political and fiscal tasks, competences and resources are transferred to municipalities and communes. Local government units are challenged by this process, as their resources, capacities and competences are still limited; although considerable efforts have been made in this direction and some progress has been observed in the years following the reforms, there is still a long way to go to bring the reforms into satisfactory practical implementation. Improving implementation capacity, especially at the local level, is a necessary condition for proceeding successfully with decentralisation.

In 2002, the central government transferred the authority and competence in the area of public services and infrastructure, in social, cultural and sports services, in the area of local economic development, and in the public order and civil protection area to local government. Besides, the 2002 State Budget approved and applied for the first time the concept of giving the unconditioned transfers for the local government, according to a formula. This formula balanced the need to take into consideration objective criteria regarding the local services' costs and of providing for a level of equality to support the poorest local government units. For the first time, local transfers from the state budget became transparent and predictable, which constituted a very big improvement in assisting budget management by the local officials. Thus if we take as an example the Shkodra region in the table below, we see an increase in budget management of the central level and local level incomes.

Source of income	2008 (Lek)	2009 (Lek)	Increase
Central level grant	318,454,000	346,361,000	8.8%
Own income	355,229,000	418,600,000	17.8%
Total	673,683,000	764,961,000	13.5%

3. CONTEXT OF SELECTED TERRITORY

The population of the region is located in 3 districts, which include 5 municipalities, 6 towns, 29 communes and 269 villages (see table 1). Approximately 2/3 of the population lives in the district of Shkodra. Most of the population lives in the villages, approximately 62.3% compared to approximately 58% for the country level. Approximately 53.7% of the population lives in the villages of Shkodra district, while in the two other districts there is a prevailing rural population. In the districts of Malesia e Madhe and Puka approximately 89% and 82% of the population live in the villages. According to the percentage of the rural population, the district of Malesia e Madhe ranks first at the country level, while the district of Puka is ranked the fifth.

Table 1 - Administrative and territorial division of the region

Districts	No. of Municipalities	No. of Communes	No. of Villages	No. of towns
Shkodra	2	16	138	2
Malesia e Madhe	1	5	56	2
Puka	2	8	75	2
Region	5	29	269	6

4. DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

The region of Shkodra is ranked the fifth as regards population numbers, and the second as regards its surface. The average density of the Shkodra region is approximately 71.8 persons per square kilometer, which is below the country's average. The region of Shkodra has the highest density with 94 inhabitants per square kilometer. The following figures show the age group composition of Shkodra region population and its composition in comparison with other regions of Albania.

Figure 2 - Shkodra region population pyramid for the year 2008 (estimated population)

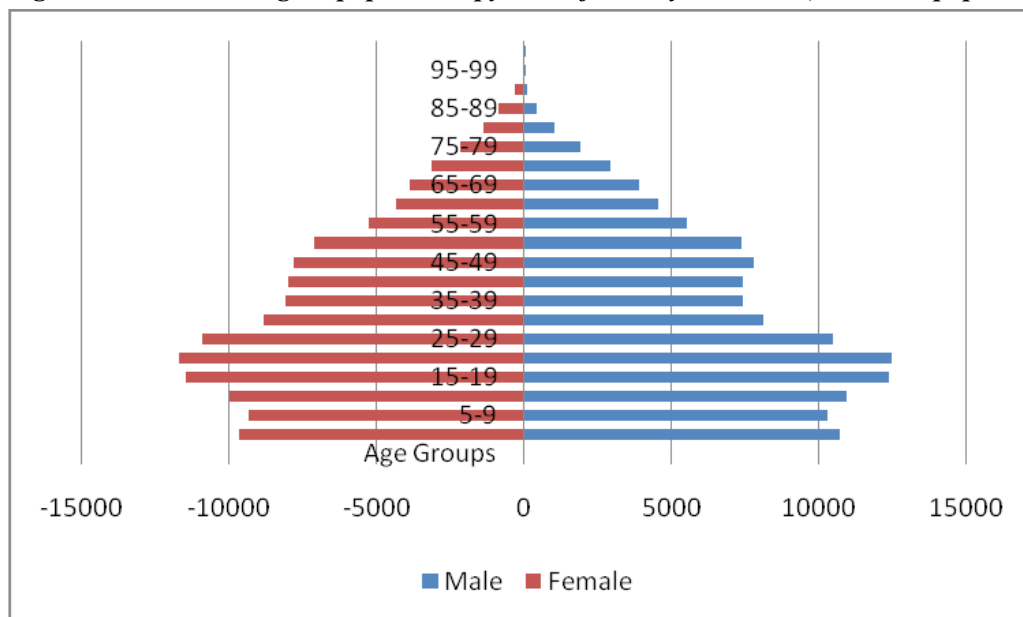
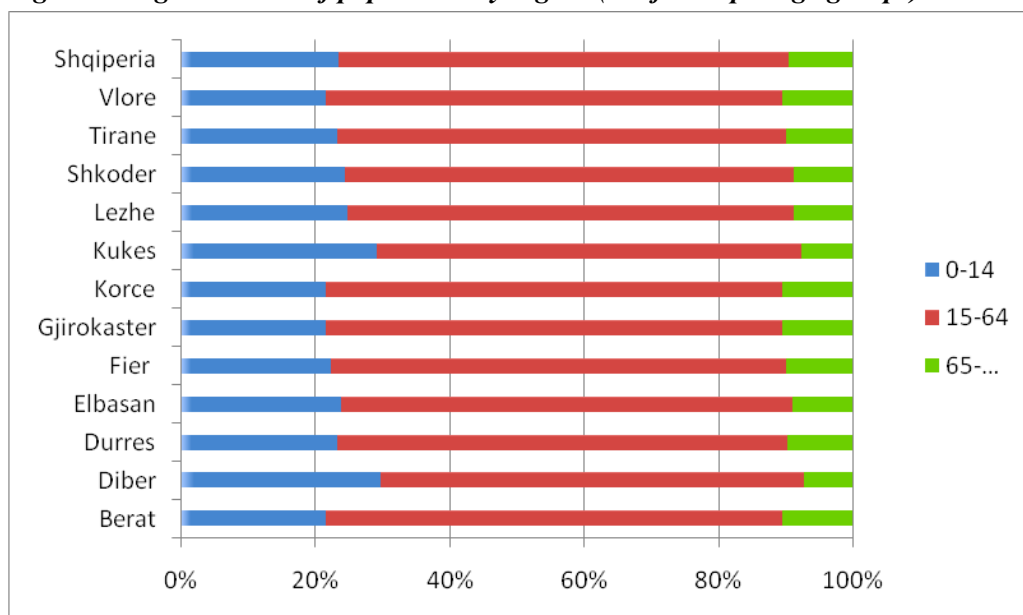


Figure 3 - Age structure of population by region (% of total per age groups)



Source: INSTAT

The figure below (Figure 4) shows Shkodra region's LGUs grouped by their populations. We can see Shkodra where 39.4% of LGUs have 2000-5000 inhabitants, while 46.5% have between 5000 and 10000 inhabitants. This region has also 3 LGUs with more than 30000 inhabitants.

Figure 4 - Shkodra region map

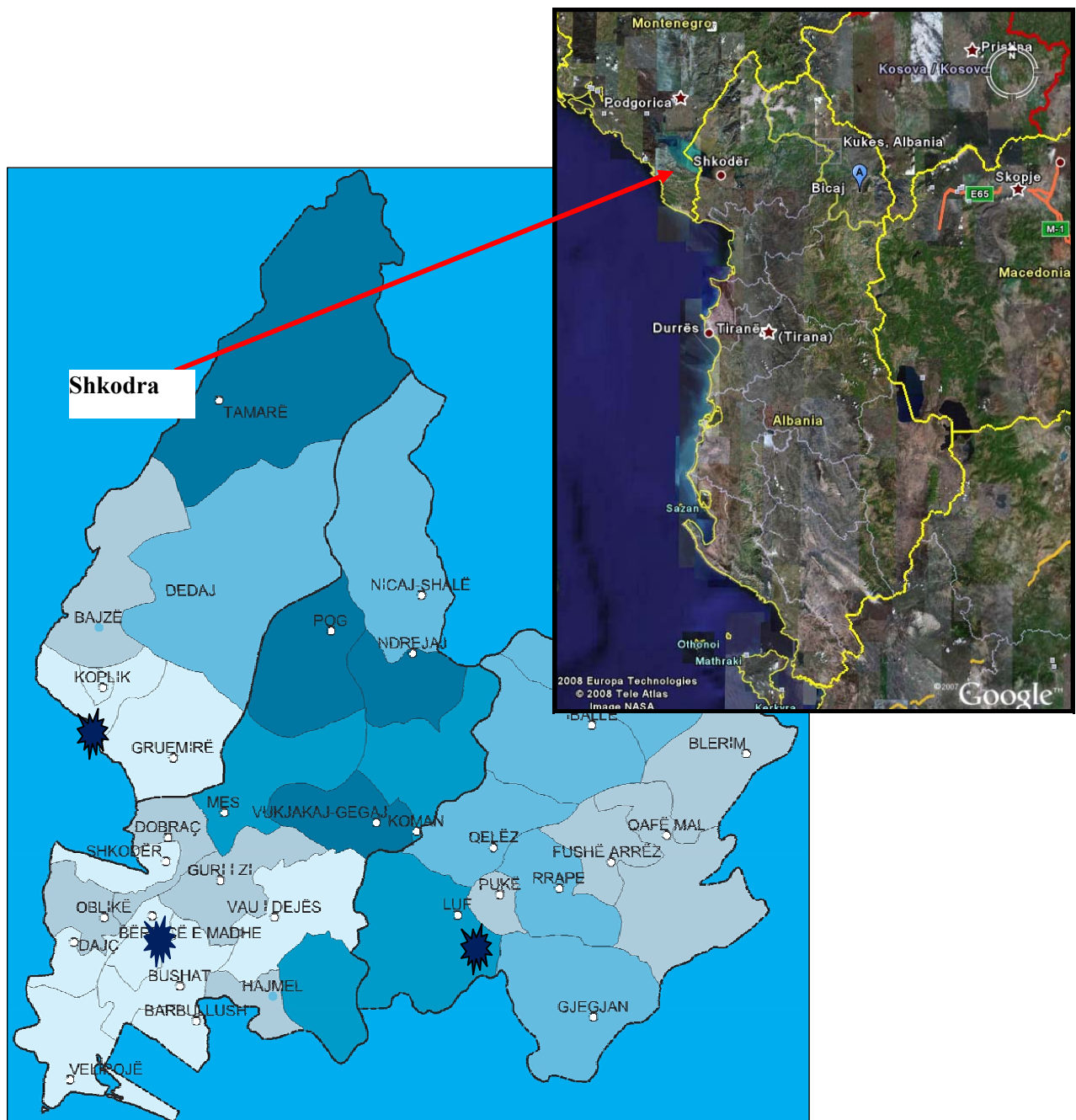
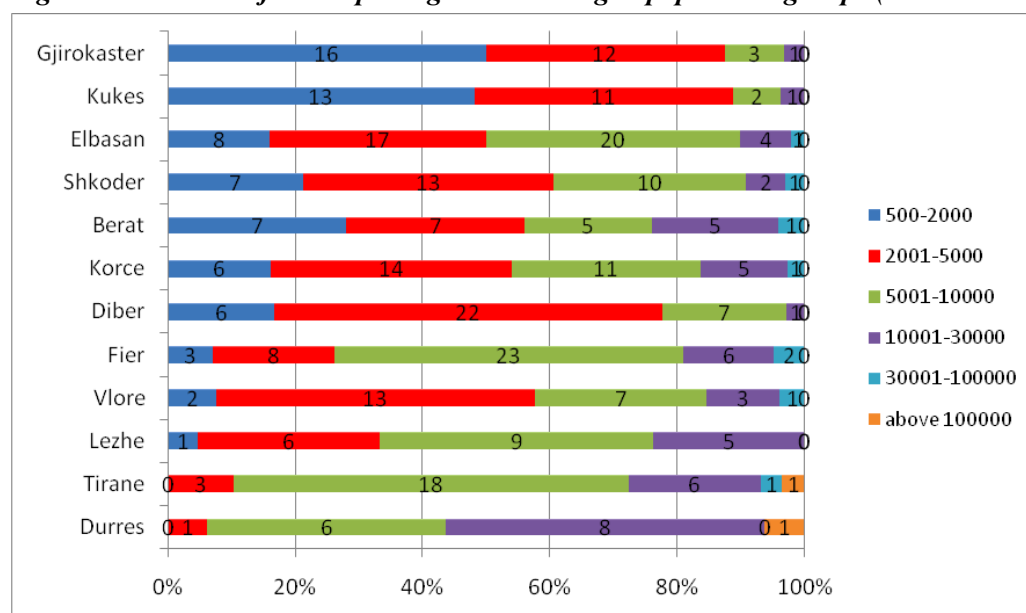


Figure 5 - Number of LGUs per region according to population groups (count and %)



5. THE LABOUR MARKET

The active population of the Shkodra region currently accounts for approximately 41% of the total population of the region, compared to 57% in 1989. The decline in the active population is due to international migration and internal migration of the working age population and it is true both for the urban and for the rural areas. The decrease in the active labour force is greater in the district of Puka.

A large share of the labour force of the region is engaged in the private agricultural sector. This represents approximately 47% of the active population, and approximately 65% of the total employment. In the districts of Malësia e Madhe and Puka, this is also the prevailing employment sector, which accounts for respectively 90% and 81% of the employed. In the district of Shkodra, in the last ten years, the population in the villages has declined by approximately 18%, while there is an increase of the population numbers in the urban areas by approximately 8.7%, which indicates that the movement of the population from the villages to the urban areas within the region has in fact been more evident compared to the movement from the cities itself.

The active labour force employed in the non-agriculture sector in the urban areas represents approximately 38% of the total employment. Approximately 2/3 of the employed work in the public sector, mainly in education and health sectors, while 1/3 are engaged in the private sector.

The table and figure below show the change in the employment by sector of Shkodra region while looking also to the trend of increase of active enterprise through the years 2001-2008.

Table 2 - Employment of Shkodra region by sector, % to total

	2001			2008		
	Public sector	Private, non-agriculture sector	Private, agriculture sector	Public sector	Private, non-agriculture sector	Private, agriculture sector
Albania	20.5	22.3	57.2	18.1	37.8	44.2
Shkodra	21.7	9.3	69.1	15.7	38	46.4

Figure 6 - Labour force participation by gender in %, 2008

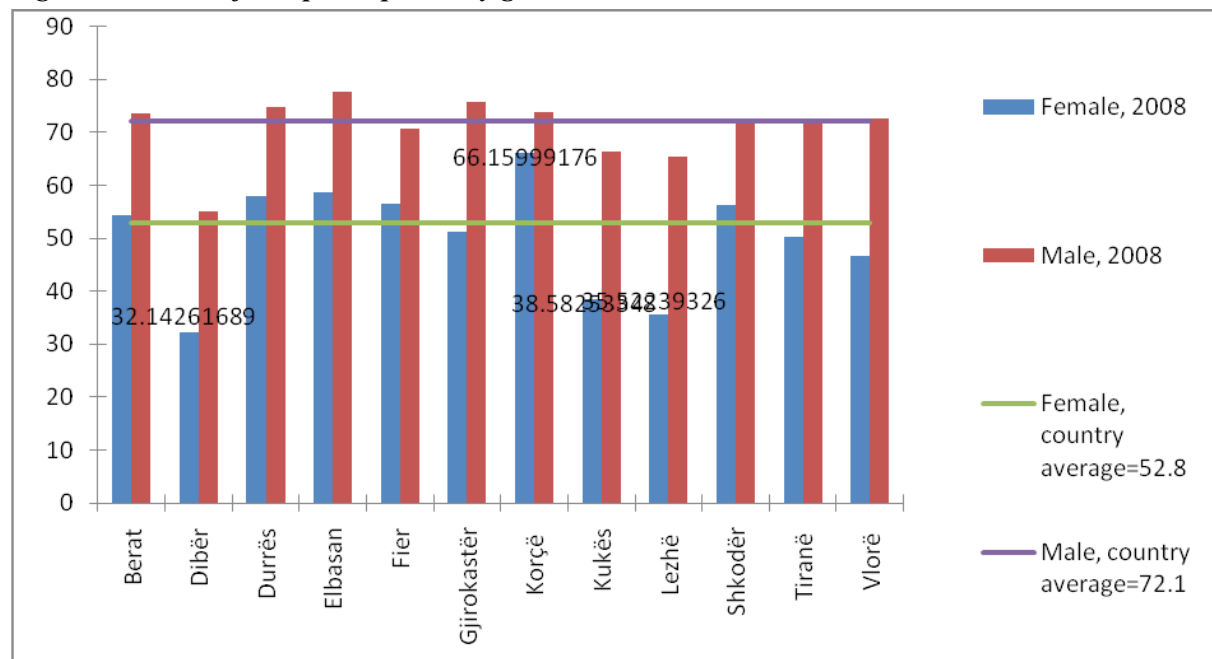
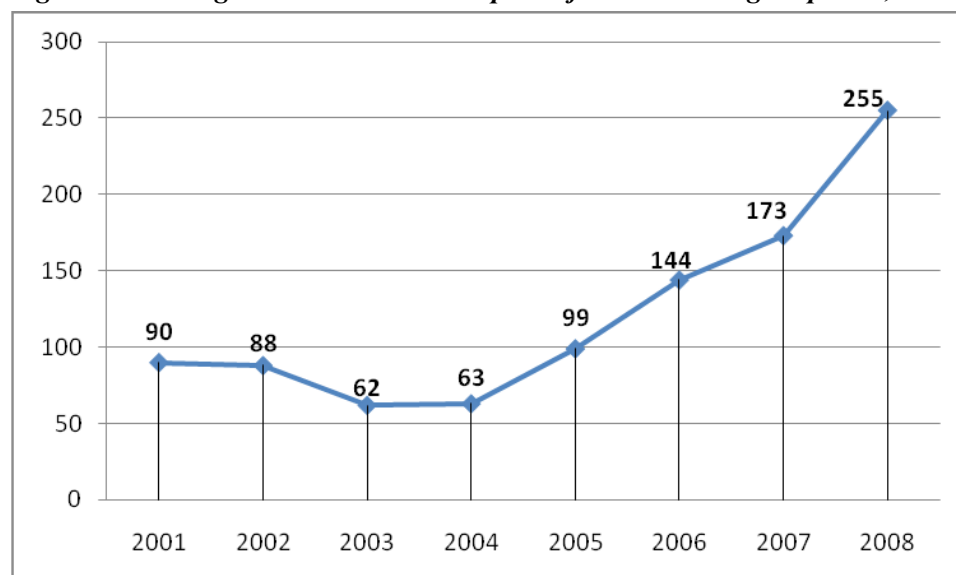


Figure 7 - Non-agricultural active enterprises for Shkodra region per 10,000 inhabitants, 2001-2008



6. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Social Assistance Scheme started to function in 1993 and is a national economic programme providing **cash benefit** for poor families with insufficient income. The benefit is distributed every month. It may be partial or full depending on the level of the family incomes. Economic aid is given to all families in urban and rural areas without or with insufficient income. The amount of partial assistance is calculated as a difference between the full amount of social assistance and the real family incomes. The following table shows the position of Shkodra District in the light of the headcount poverty indicator, as well as a picture of families that get social assistance in this region. From Table 3 Shkodra shows a moderate inequality of consumption, leaving behind even some southern regions such as Vlora and Gjirokastra, with much lower poverty level. Besides, the decrease in the number of families getting assistance from the year 2001 to 2008 reflects the reduction of the poverty level during this period.

Table 3 - Headcount poverty and degree of consumption inequality by region

	Qark	Head count Count	Consumption	Gini
1	Diber	42.77	6125	28.3
2	Kukes	39.98	6282	27.5
3	Lezhe	36.68	6898	30.7
4	Shkodra	32.77	7025	28.6
5	Elbasan	31.84	6852	26.6
6	Fier	29.71	7365	28.8
7	Korce	26.95	7405	27
8	Berat	26.42	7233	25.6
9	Durres	24.77	8412	31.2
10	Tirane	23.44	8201	29.5
11	Gjirokaster	19.38	8393	27.4
12	Vlore	18.26	9817	33.5

Table 4 - Number of families getting social assistance by type – full/partial assistance for the year 2001-2008

2001			
Partial Assistance		Full Assistance	
City	Commune	City	Commune
1190	14,105	8,354	140
2008			
Partial Assistance		Full Assistance	
City	Commune	City	Commune
827	9,665	5,463	0

Source: INSTAT 2004

The central government provides each local government unit with a budget that is managed by the local government for a series of services including the payment of social assistance benefits for poor families. Approximately 30% of the households in the urban area of the region of Shkodra benefit from social assistance (*ndihme ekonomike*), which in average is approximately Lek 3,425 per month or 24.86 euro.

Table 5 - Selected indicators for Shkodra region

YEARS	2001- 2002	2002- 2003	2003- 2004	2004- 2005	2005- 2006	2006- 2007	2007- 2008	2008- 2009
Education								
Primary (9-yrs)								
General Enrolment Rate (GER)	84.36							95.67
Enrolled students	45132	43299	41763	42026	40179	38141	36241	38768
Graduated	4649	4746	4773	4762	4729	4789	4,504	NA
Teachers/10 000 inhabitant	96.7	94.3	93.4	91.1	92.1	98.2	95.3	99.7
Students per teacher	18	NA	17	17	17	16	15	16
High school								
GER	36.74							62.07
Enrolled students	8740	9590	10382	11688	12177	14011	14777	10550
Graduated	1381	NA	1851	1837	2383	2168	2535	NA
Teachers/10 000 inhabitant	21.66	21.81	21.86	23.09	25.03	25.59	25.79	24.46
Students per teacher	17		19	17	20	24	17	13
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total expenditure of state budget for Ministry of Education and Science - Expenditure (MLN LEK)								
	1546	1475	1170	1802	2,108	1,515	2.343	2,908
Health								
Beds per 10 000 inhabitants	31	31	29	28	29	29	29	29
Circulatory system death rates/10 000								
	15.09	23.52	NA	33.75	NA	27.08	19.37	20.51
Total expenditure of state budget for Ministry of Health - Expenditure (MLN LEK)								
	939	5504	611	904	921	778	918	957
Access to water system	73.1%							76.4%
Social								
Families getting social assistance per 10 000 persons								
	917	877	836	804	759	718	655	649
Average of social assistance per household								
	30253	31531	32691	35096	30918	31219	24923	28300
% of urban population	37.55	37.94	38.16	38.28	38.89	39.18	38.84	38.61
Population change as result of population movement	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2001/2008
	-1.21%	-0.26%	-2.08%	-1.36%	0.18%	0.78%	-1.46%	-5.30%

Source: INSTAT publication

The above table gives a picture in terms of data in regard of health and education trends in the Shkodra Region, showing the contextual framework where this analysis take place. The above data show that in relative terms enrolment at primary and secondary education (8-9 years) is slightly increasing, since from 2001 to 2008 it results to have risen from 84.36% to 95.67%, while the GER in high schools (>8/9 years) reveals much greater dynamics.

In regard to health, the indicators selected, the number of beds for 10000 inhabitants particularly, do not show significant change, which reflects a non-flexible health care policy, and a reform in the tertiary level which in turn might not be able to follow the dynamics and the significant redistribution of population in the region.

The quality of the water supply system and of access to the system is linked to the water reform initiated in Albania after the year 2000, when water supply was decentralised and allocated to local government units as an exclusive service. The real transfer of water systems has in fact taken place around 2007 and it is not yet totally completed. The LGUs are not able to cover capital investments and most of the funds go for operation and maintenance of old and inefficient water systems. Apart from the large need for investment in improving the water systems, a difficulty for private operators to enter a subsidised market is also observed (WB PSIA 2004). Another reason for low access to water supply is urbanization and the highly dynamic demographic changes: infrastructures and service supply have not followed the demographic dynamics. Moreover, the informal settlements established at the cities outskirts have normally no access to services and add up to the total number of families that do not have access to water.

7. COOPERATION SCENARIO

Bilateral and multilateral donors began to discuss the problem of donor fragmentation, duplication of efforts and lack of absorption of donor assistance in early 2003. The European Commission, UNDP, OECD and the World Bank were given stewardship of the coordination process by the donor community in-country, supported by efforts of a number of bilateral donors and international organizations. The Government thereafter responded with similar action.

- The main features of the Albanian coordination system are:
- Donor Architecture of 2003: an agreement of the donor community to allow four multilaterals donors (UNDP, EC, WB, OECD) to lead the process, reporting to all donors on a regular basis, with assistance from a large number of sector working groups;
- The twin steering and logistical functions since 2004: mirrored donor community and government bodies that are able to operationalise the will of both to improve aid effectiveness;
- New government planning and budgeting mechanism IPS: a state-of-the-art internal coordination system to transform vision and policy into multi-annual budgeting, programming, implementation and monitoring/evaluation¹.

The “donor architecture” of Albania is led by regular Quarterly Donor-Government Roundtables chaired by the Deputy prime minister. These quarterly roundtables of government and donor heads of mission address strategic issues of coordination, monitors the main progresses in improved aid effectiveness and provide a forum for government-donor dialogue on critical issues. At the roundtable there are reports on coordination efforts in the sectors. To prepare and coordinate the donor community prior to the ambassador-level roundtables, Development Counsellor Meetings are convened by the Donor Technical Secretariat (DTS)².

¹ http://dsdc.gov.al/dsdc/pub/external_assistance_orientation_document_10_1.pdf

² <http://www.aidharmonisation.org.al/?fq=mesi&gj=en&kid=161>

The DTS was formed by the four lead multilaterals to manage the coordination process, and the EC as the largest donor became its permanent Head. Initially the DTS was a working committee of high-level official representatives of the four lead multilaterals. In January 2005, the Government matched the DTS with the Government Technical Secretariat (GTS). This committee consisted of representatives of the core ministries – Finance, Economy, European Integration, Interior and Council of Ministers under the leadership of the Prime Minister’s Office.

As of December 2005, the Department for Strategy and Donor Coordination (DSDC) was established within the PM’s office with responsibility for the NSDI (National Strategy for Development and Integration), the Integrated Planning System (IPS), and aid coordination. Since its creation, this Department has been the counterpart for the DTS. The DSDC was created to:

- Co-ordinate the implementation of the Integrated Planning System (IPS), which will ensure that the government's priorities, including the requirements for EU and NATO integration, are fully reflected in the core government policy and financial planning processes;
- Co-ordinate the formulation and monitoring of the National Strategy for Development and Integration in which the government's priorities will be articulated;
- Ensure that external assistance effectively supports implementation of the government's priorities.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE BY TYPE

During the period 2000-2007, 48% of total external assistance was in the form of bilateral grants, followed by multilateral loans (22%), multilateral grants (19%), non-concessional loans (19%) and bilateral loans (11%). Bilateral grants have been variable, but have been lower in the last four years. The decline in bilateral grants has been roughly offset by an increase in bilateral concessional loans, resulting in relatively stable overall support from bilateral partners. Multilateral grants and concessional loans have been variable, but are currently below earlier levels. These have been offset by the growth in non-concessional loans, which come mainly from multilateral sources.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Based on the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007-2013 as well as on the external assistance orientation document, one of the priority sectors where continuity of the external assistance is needed, as a major theme in reaching European standards, is Territorial development (including regional, rural and local economic and agricultural). EC and other donors with relevant experience, have ensured TA and logistical support to help build implementation capacity. Priorities for donor support include: modernization of agriculture farm, agri-environment and rural markets; and implementation of the National Strategy for Regional Development. The key challenges of this regional development crosscutting strategy are:

- a single policy framework for the socio-economic development of counties (‘National Programme for the Development of Counties’), a single socio-economic development programming document for the county (‘County Development Strategy’), and a single local agency to coordinate its implementation;
- a government plan for the development of the Disadvantaged Areas and the allocation of a special budget line in order to operate special support schemes for both disadvantaged regions and disadvantaged communes and municipalities. This will build on a new partnership between national, county, municipal and commune stakeholders, and the County Partnership Council.

- Future donor support key challenges over the period 2007-2013 remain³:
- a single policy framework for the socio-economic development of counties ('National Programme for the Development of Counties'), a single socio-economic development programming document for the run ('County Development Strategy'), and a single local agency to coordinate its implementation;
- a government plan for the development of the Disadvantaged Areas and the allocation of a special budget line in order to implement special support schemes for the disadvantaged groups.

Table 6 - Needs and orientation for external assistance, by sector⁴

Sector	Needs	Gaps in donor programming
Democratization and rule of law	Will continue to require a significant share of public investment, with a critical role for external assistance	The strong emphasis on public administration is welcome, but justice and public order should feature more strongly in donor programming.
Economic development	Urgent need to establish the institutions and mechanisms, to be followed by large funding for private sector development, including rural and regional development	Gets the highest emphasis of all sectors in donor programmes, suggesting that donors are preparing for increased support, in line with NSDI priorities.
Transport	Continued top priority for the next four years at least, after which focus will shift from major to minor roads and to road safety	Good support in donor programmes. Needs to be sustained for several more years, although domestic finance will dominate.
Social development	Immediate focus on reforms and institutions, to be followed by investment	The interest in donor programming documents is wider than the current support, suggesting that the support of more donors for the social sector may be attained.
Territorial development	Expanding support for local, rural and regional development will be a very significant feature of EU integration	Regional and rural development, agriculture and urban planning do not feature strongly in donor programming documents and need to be given more emphasis.

8. RELATIONSHIPS WITH ITALY

The bilateral cooperation between Italy and Albania, that aimed to guarantee assistance to the Albanian population after the fall of the regime, saw a first important moment with the large Joint Commission, gathered in Rome in November 1992. Hereinafter, Italy and Albania worked together at the drafting of a Country Plan (the first for the Italian Development Cooperation), necessary for the next cooperation agreement and at the origin of a Declaration of Intent, through which the Parties agreed on the planning of interventions completely in line with the General Action Directories for the rehabilitation and the economic and social development in Albania, identified by the Albanian Government in accordance with the main bilateral and multilateral donors. The long-standing Italian Development Cooperation commitment for Albania reflects the deep friendship between the two countries. The Italian Cooperation is acting in a number of areas, aligning its interventions to the national and sectoral

³ Council of Ministers, External Assistance Orientation Document, April 2008.

⁴ Ibid.

strategies adopted by the Albanian Government and designing them in coordination with the other donors.

The Italian Development Cooperation supports the ongoing processes of institutional strengthening and socio-economic growth and assists Albania in its path to European Union membership. As stated in the new Development Cooperation Protocol, the resources of the Italian Development Cooperation in Albania for the period 2010-2012 totalled 51 million euros, of which 28 million euros as aid credit; 3 million in grants, 20 million euros in the form of debt conversion. The programme to support social development policies – 20 million euros (conversion debt) will be oriented to social development, in particular to the educational, health and labour policies), the Protocol establishes the basis for the first debt-for-development SWAp agreement.

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

In order to facilitate a well structured Albanian development, since 2002 international aid – including Italian-funded initiatives – has been referring to the so-called Public Investment Plan (PIP), which envisages:

- the continuation of the urban and rural development plan;
- investment in the water supply and energy sector, together with a restructuring programme;
- the development of private businesses;
- the reform of the education and health sectors in a way to better assist the poorest and the most disadvantaged groups;
- the progressive adjustment of the Albanian administration to EU democratic and institutional standards.

Afterwards, PIP was replaced by the Integrated Planning System IPS (2006-2008) which is the current strategic document integrating the NSDI guidelines with the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement.

Partnerships between Albanian and Italian stakeholders have been continuously promoted, through implementation of various programmes and specific cooperation agreements. Joint activities were consolidated and implemented with the Regions of Marche, Molise, Puglia, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sardinia and Emilia Romagna with local government authorities in Albania (Vlore, Shkoder, Elbasan, etc.).

Specific agreements were also reached with the University of Perugia and the Universities of Ancona and Trieste for the organization of several intensive courses on democratic governance, decentralisation, territorial development planning and management, etc., with the University of Tirana.

International cooperation was reinforced with several UN Agencies such as the UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and ILO, as well as with international cooperation agencies such as the GTZ, SIDA, SNV and the Italian and Swiss Cooperation.

Some of the main programmes implemented through the Italian cooperation agreements are:

- The “Fast Track Initiative on Division of Labour” (FTI/DoL), which aims at promoting progressive implementation of the EU “Code of Conduct on Division of Labour” among EU Donors, is a means for achieving greater aid effectiveness. Albania was selected as a pilot

Country for FTI/DoL where Italy acts as “facilitator”. The local EC Delegation has invited EU and non-EU donors to provide their comments on the final draft version of IPA “Multi-annual Indicative Planning Documents” (MIPDs) 2009-2011. The aim was to start using MIPDs as a basis for future DoL, following recommendations of the “Conference on Donor Coordination in Western Balkans and Turkey” (Brussels, Oct. 2008)

- The Art Gold, first phase closed (September 2006 – March 2008) and second phase ongoing, has as its general goal that of promoting national co-operation framework activities for governance and local development. The initiative promotes the sharing of international best practices and innovations for local development and direct partnership with local communities, in particular through the strengthening of the capacities of regions, municipalities and other local institutions. The expected results of the programme are strengthening the capacities of regional institutions in Shkodra and Vlore to design and implement regional development strategic plans, supporting regional councils and local economic development agencies (Teuleda in Shkodra and Auleda in Vlore); strengthening the capacities of the central government, with regard to decentralised processes particularly, through the dissemination of good practices and the use of the ART international thematic network (IDEASS, UNIVERSITAS, UNDP LDA).

10. DECENTRALISATION AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

There are several donors and programmes operating especially at the qark and local level, synergizing the intervention relevant to regional development. At present most of the donor programmes are focused in the region of Shkodra, while the UNDP currently works in Kukes and SNV implements a programme funded by the Dutch government in Diber. Some support is also provided at the centre to government and non-government institutions.

The Regional Work Group created is headed by the President of the Regional Council and by the Prefect. It brings together representatives of local public administrations and of the private sector: the mayors of the priority municipalities, two associations, and TEULEDA (Local Economic Development Agency). A technical unit for decentralisation and planning supports the Regional Work Group, in accordance with the national strategy for decentralisation.

AGA, a programme framed within the UN ONE overall strategy, aims at enhancing development results and impact by working coherently and cost effectively as ONE, in collaboration with the government and other partners for the development, progress, rights and prosperity of all people in Albania. The AGA Programme is implementing 10 projects in the region, in the following action fields:

GOVERNANCE

- Production of a territorial marketing document and of a regional plan for international cooperation.
- Support to the regional technical unit in running costs and human resources for territorial data collection and systematization within a functional module of regional development, with Ministry of the Interior and TEULEDA.

- Training for regional technicians on territorial planning and regional development planning, with Ministry of the Interior and TEULEDA.
- Support for the design of Albanian decentralisation structures was provided through meetings, workshops and the Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDAs), fully operational in Shkodra.
- Constant international technical assistance was provided to TEULEDA and AULEDA so that by the end of 2010 they become Regional Agencies of Integrated Development.

11. SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ON LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Implementation of the IDEASS project Compagnia dei Parchi (The Park Company), with Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Transport and the participation of UNDP GEF Small Grant Project, World Bank Albania, GTZ (German Cooperation), SNV (Dutch Cooperation), the local authorities of Shkoder, TEULEDA.
- Support to TEULEDA to: implement capacity building activities for local authorities on LED in 2 communes; support local authorities in developing LED plans in 2 communes; carry out a survey on the potential for territorial economic development in the region of Shkoder; develop and disseminate territorial marketing documents; provide services to UNDP projects in the Shkoder region.
- Project Construction of nets for the integrated development of rural areas, with the Molise Region, funded by Italian Law 84 and implemented by TEULEDA, for pilot interventions in tourism and food safety and for starting to build a complex networks of relations between the two regions.
- TEULEDA is involved as a partner in nine INTERREG III A Adriatic cross-border projects.
- TEULEDA was continuously supported and strengthened to provide technical assistance on fundraising and finance management to local socio-economic development stakeholders.
- Technical assistance was provided to the TEULEDA for the implementation of a joint project between the Molise and Shkodra Regions, for: the establishment of a laboratory for the analysis of milk, olive oil and wine production, according to European standards; the creation of a tourism information and promotion centre for the Shkodra lake; elaboration of a tourist guidebook of the area.
- International technical assistance was also provided to both LEDAs for their participation in 11 cross-border cooperation projects in the Adriatic area funded by Interreg IIIA Italy-Albania, for the design and implementation of two Regional Strategic Plans and for the elaboration of preliminary studies and research on priority development projects and local production value chains.
- The Project did aim (2000-2006) to take into consideration the diverse development of the coastal area that consists of the provinces of Bari and Lecce and the corresponding areas of Albanian coast situated around Durres, Vlora, down to Saranda. The project's objective was to promote the development of these areas through the study and the offer of implements of

analysis of competitive advantages, of the potentials and perspectives of improvement in the context of current globalization processes, with a constant rely on the concepts of territory and sustainability.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

- Start up of the Mother Kangaroo Method in the Shkodra Hospital and support to regional territorial health centres, with the Ministry of Health and WHO, in partnership with the Tuscany Region and the A.Meyer University Children's Hospital of Florence
- Support to the Albanian Ministry of Health for the creation of “protected houses” for ex psychiatric hospital patients in the framework of the national mental health care reform.

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

- Establishing a computer lab in a high school in the Shkodra Region, with the Ministry of Education and Science, and the UNDP's e-Schools Project.
- In the framework of the Nei suoni dei luoghi project, ART GOLD provides the “Progetto Musica” association of Friuli Venezia Giulia Region with logistic and promotional support to implement the activity in the region.

Table 7 - Total assistance of Italy by sectors (2000-2010)

Sector	Total Committed (2000-2010)	Total Disbursements (2000-2009)
Agriculture	12,190,265.00	8,600,795.00
Culture	1,072,303.00	1,023,516.00
Economy	29,256,300.00	5,829,254.00
Education	11,242,564.00	4,968,577.00
Employment	736,682.00	467,735.00
Energy	94,332,502.00	26,545,664.00
Environment	15,240,154.00	9,581,229.00
Gender equality and prevention of domestic violence	2,365,318.00	1,356,301.00
Health	41,272,867.00	17,902,337.00
Justice	230,340.00	203,340.00
Migration	1,773,340.00	1,023,722.00
Police, organised crime, terrorism and trafficking	753,410.00	616,728.00
Public administration	1,392,161.00	1,136,901.00
Public finance	725,281.00	725,281.00
Regional development	1,696,260.00	830,708.00
Rural development	3,496,544.00	1,543,075.00
Social inclusion	3,466,643.00	1,285,538.00
Social protection	123,243.00	109,483.00
Spatial planning	7,212,844.00	5,434,618.00
Tourism	1,835,497.00	270,194.00
Transport	62,210,400.00	22,053,353.00
Water supply and sanitation	29,097,546.00	13,804,268.00
Total (euro)	321,722,464.00	125,312,617.00

Source: <http://dsdc.gov.al/dsdc/pub/>

12. MAP OF OTHER RELEVANT COOPERATION STAKEHOLDERS - SHKODRA REGION

Regional development is horizontal by nature, since it intersects with many other sectors. Thus, an effective implementation of the CSRD would require very close cooperation and synchrony of actions taken in the framework of other sector and cross-sector strategies which have a say in local development. In addition, beyond management at the central level, regional development obviously occurs in the regions and is being implemented by the different levels of local government. In this context, a major influence (not necessarily negative) resides in the progress and course of the decentralisation reforms – especially with respect to administrative and territorial reform and the scope of regional government.

The effectiveness of external assistance management has been a concern of the Government and donors operating in Albania for many years and attempts to address this have gone through cycles of institutional architecture and process improvements. Government has been increasing ownership and its role in coordination of external assistance since the establishment in 2005 of the Department of Strategy and Donor Co-ordination (DSDC). DSDC central coordination role is to ensure organic links between the external assistance main policy and the financial processes of the government.

By coordinating the external assistance in Albania, DSDC provides a government contact point and orientation for donors with respect to strategic matters as defined in the National Strategy for Development and Integration, thus strengthening government leadership in this process. This orientation affects both the balance of assistance across sectors and the approach taken by external assistance within sectors, and assists donors in programming their assistance and in defining and managing projects by ensuring that domestic investment and external assistance are coordinated.

DSDC develops familiarity with different donor programmes and expertise with various external assistance instruments (e.g. grant vs. credit arrangements, pooled funding approaches) with a view to optimizing the match between government external assistance priorities and multi/bilateral donor programmes/aid instruments.

Donor Technical Secretariat was established with the purpose of facilitating a structured donor-to-donor and donor-government dialogue. The DTS, initially composed of four multi-lateral donors (EC, OECD, UNDP, World Bank), is expanded since 2008 with two bi-lateral donors (Germany and the Netherlands), whose membership will be rotated annually. DTS and DSDC work closely in organizing joint events.

The DSDC is leading the design and development of two information systems in support of its multi-faceted mandate for strategic planning, policy analysis, monitoring, evaluation and donor coordination: the Integrated Planning System Information System (IPSIS) and the External Assistance Management Information System (EAMIS) linked with the MTBP and Treasury systems.

UNDP

European and Euro-Atlantic integration, along with rapid and sustainable growth, remain overarching goals for Albania. In response, UNDP has launched programmes contributing to improved governance and institutional strengthening in Albania.

The *Integrated Planning System* (IPS) represents a broad planning and monitoring platform that aims to ensure that core policy and financial processes developed by the Government of Albania function in an integrated manner. These core processes include the National Strategy on Development and Integration (NSDI) and the Mid-Term Budgetary Programme. UNDP and other donor partners in the country are working together with the Government while offering expertise in the establishment of the Department

of Strategy and Donor Coordination (DSDC) under the Council of Ministers as the first step towards a successful functioning of the IPS.

Under the Integrated Support for Decentralization (ISD), during the period October 2008 – December 2012, an ongoing programme is contributing to the harmonization of national efforts and building of capacities and institutions for regional development in compliance with the national Cross-cutting Strategy for Regional Development and the EU regional development and cohesion policies and instruments. The action will contribute to fulfilling the above objective by specifically seeking to:

- Create and strengthen the necessary institutional, legal and administrative framework conducive to the implementation of local, national and EU development policy;
- Improve sub-national policymaking processes and capacities in development planning, implementation and monitoring in order to meet forthcoming challenges and opportunities for sustainable regional development;
- Improve local public infrastructure related to transport, environment and economic development by means of co-financing priorities identified through formal local planning process.

SWISS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (SDC)

Support to decentralisation is the most important contribution to the improvement of governance in Albania. Expanding services and increasing quality of local and central government offices, through strengthening their effectiveness and efficiency, and thus contributing to social and economic development.

Activities of the SDC contribute to greater transparency and information with regard to the work of the administration and help to improve the relationships between the various actors.

Swiss cooperation contributes to the enforcement of democratic principles, with particular attention to improved services and a greater participation of civil society:

- Local government guidance and furthering of local authorities;
- Access to information (archives, statistics);
- Building up the capacities of local actors;
- Support for the migration dialogue.

The *Decentralisation and Local Development Programme in the Shkodra and Lezha Region* (DLDP II), of SDC, aims to contribute to the development of Northern Albania and to the decentralisation reform at the national level. The immediate objective is to strengthen capacities of municipalities and communes in Shkodra and Lezhë and enable these local government units to make efficient use of resources for improving the lives of the communities. At the local level, the Swiss Cooperation Office expects municipalities and communes in Shkodra and Lezhë to improve their governance structures and procedures, enhance their capacities and improve selected public services. The following outputs have been defined at the local level:

- Improved capacity of municipalities and communes in strategic planning and budgeting; selected units apply strategic planning instruments and methods, linked to annual and mid-term budget;
- Strengthened capacity of municipalities and communes to conduct financial and fiscal management, including mid-term budgeting;

- Improved local public services such as waste management, sharing of information, and one-stop-shops; equal access is made possible for all citizens, including women, poor and marginalized groups;
- Enhanced transparency and easier access to quality information and services through use of innovative communication and information mechanisms;
- More effective cooperation between communes and municipalities as well as between these units and the qark.

Intercooperation (IC) is a leading Swiss non-profit organization engaged in development and international cooperation. It undertakes mandates and manage projects⁵ on behalf of the Swiss Government, mainly SDC and SECO, as well as of many other government and private, Swiss and international funding partners. From 1st January 2006, IC started a new Decentralization and Local Development Programme (DLDP) in Northern Albania, funded by SDC (phase 1: July 2006-February 2010, phase 2: March 2010-February 2013, functioning through a programme support office in Shkodra).

The DLDP – phase II aims to support a group of 8 partner municipalities and communes in the Shkodra region – in close cooperation with citizens and civil society organizations – to successfully plan, implement and monitor a comprehensive and balanced process of decentralisation and local development. The following five working domains have been agreed with the partners:

1. Strategic planning (including monitoring and quality management);
2. Public services provision, management and administration;
3. Financial management (incl. local tax collection and participatory budgeting);
4. Participation of the civil society (including communication with the citizens);
5. Inter-municipal exchange and cooperation, as well as contributing to the national policy dialogue (horizontal and vertical integration).

Local partners are Co-plan Tirana, FLAG Tirana, ANTTARC Tirana, while international partners are Urbaplan Lausanne, Competence Centre for Public Management University of Bern and CreaConsult Biel.

USAID: LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME IN ALBANIA

USAID's Local Governance Programme in Albania (LGPA) works with ten municipalities throughout Albania to foster local economic growth, improve local governance, and strengthen civic and private sector engagement in local development. LGPA's partner municipalities are Elbasan, Fier, Fushë-Krujë, Gramsh, Korça, Kukës, Lezha, Librazhd, Pogradec, and Shkodra.

Whereas the primary objective of the economic growth component of the LGPA is to help target municipalities to increase own-source revenues, the objective of the local governance component is to aid them to use existing revenues more effectively. LGPA provides technical assistance and on-the-job training to staff in the ten target municipalities on a variety of issues including tax collection, budgeting, borrowing, procurement, asset management, energy efficiency, and public services provision. This component both capitalizes on and enhances efforts undertaken in the Local Economic Growth component. Through better asset management practices, the municipality can identify assets that can be leased or disposed of to private investors for improvement. Improved tax collection allows the municipality to capture increased taxes from greater economic growth. Increased revenues from

⁵ <http://www.intercooperation.ch/projects/>

better asset management and tax collection allows target municipalities to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to citizens and businesses.

GTZ

The German Cooperation (GTZ) is active in supporting regional development in the regions of Shkodra & Lezha with regards to: (i) planning processes – preliminary development plans and moderation of planning processes among stakeholders, (ii) concrete measures – pilot projects of assistance to Thethi tourism and producer groups in the rural area, and to the industrial zone, handicrafts market and Shkodra Lake in the urban area, (iii) networking – through establishment of one local action group (LAG) for regional/rural development and training measures on regional development. GTZ is following closely developments on the area of regional development and stands ready to provide support in coordination among various levels. In different donor coordination meetings on decentralisation and regional development GTZ has stated its readiness to support negotiation processes with line ministries for the adoption and operationalization of the CSRD, support institutional setting for regional development at the qark level, which are all strong points to exploit during the implementation of the current Project

THE AUSTRIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION is engaged in a programme supporting regional development in the Qark of Shkodra, through stimulating socio-economic development and economic growth by attracting more public and private investments. The programme consists in a series of outcomes related to (i) capacity improvement within the qark administration, (ii) establishment of a Basket Fund for investments in infrastructure and environmental projects, and (ii) other support for implementing the qark strategy. This programme will last until 2011.

13. FINDINGS

The findings of this phase come mainly from the interviews with key actors. Taking into consideration that this is the first progress report, the actors involved were identified in the context of the interviews, by adding up new field actors from each interviewee's suggestions. As such,, the upcoming report will reflect and have a more complete picture from other voices.

PARTICIPATION

There is a very good opinion of the SeeNet programme, considered as a very dynamic initiative, with an important role in the process of strengthening local government in Shkodra Region. This appreciation comes very significantly from the structure of the Municipality of Shkodra, which is necessarily aware of the whole SeeNet regional programme, activities and structural framework, as well as of the scope of its work and objectives.

- Even though the local government does regulate and coordinate the participation and role of the various stakeholders, on the basis of the local strategic plan, it still needs more assistance in this respect.

- While NGOs and civil society representatives seem to be active, there are open issues about the involvement of the business community actors in the process of regional development through common interests. More should be done to increase the participation of the private sector as a development actor and to involve it in the initiatives presented in the region.
- The local government is looking for more innovative ideas in the upcoming future to improve the business community's participation in the regional development process, and to make them hear the community voice and needs through collaboration and partnerships. Some proposals are already being discussed with the purpose of helping Albanian and Italian business organizations to share experiences and ideas.

EQUITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

- Even though there are attempts to have a more inclusive approach for the community through implementation and intervention, there are still limitations in hearing the community voice and contributing to make its voice heard by its respective authorities.
- Local government does recognize that only a limited number (i.e LGPA 2008 City Survey) of programmes or implementers carry out an assessment of community programme satisfaction or community expectations.
- Most programmes are run with the central coordination of SWG or donor meetings, which results to be working well, though they should be more local-community oriented (that is, tailored on Shkodra population).
- In projects related with social services, the local government seems to be focused on improving life standards and access to public services of vulnerable groups; but this process should work by integration in society, as opposed to leaving them apart from the rest of the community.
- There were cases where the LGU was critic about the project design for vulnerable groups (Save the Children was a case mentioned).

TRANSPARENCY

- Nearly all stakeholders seem very active in information dissemination, the objective being to reach the communities with information about the respective project.
- Facing the decentralisation challenge, exchanging experience from region to region seems an effective too for the LGU, that is holding greater responsibilities and wants to share its challenge with other experiences on the country, exploring lessons learned and successes relating to the particular processes it is undergoing.
- The LGU appreciates the assistance of donors in being patient when experiencing concerns or barriers in dealing with public financial resources, as in the case of the time-line which sometimes is not compatible with the project implementation time-line, of following regulations and procedures, etc.
- From other implementers there was attention to the local civil society involvement in relation with their institution capability. Sometimes they are just “one person NGOs”, which makes it hard to reach results.

EFFICIENCY

Even though the local government tries to do its best, the dynamics of recent development and of the presence of donors make it sometimes unable to make the best use of its financial resources.

- One of the main problematic issues facing the Municipality of Shkodra is how to increase efficiency through using public financial resources based on the legal framework, as well as using and combining donor resources in compliance with its objectives and public-spending rules.
 - The assistance of the programme of Emilia Romagna Region, which has helped the local government of Shkodra to better employ the procurement mechanisms for the use of public spending in the social services, has been frequently labelled as a “success story”. The local government of Shkodra has been actually able to better assist the social structures, and make suggestions to the central government that changed the procurement rules for the projects related with social services.

Moving towards being merit-based and objective-oriented procurement procedures’ quality criteria are now weighted 80% and financial criteria are weighted 20%.

- Overlapping seems a very critical aspect, particularly for stakeholders – almost all stakeholders do articulate it very clearly. Local actors are driven from the central cooperation framework (DSDC, MoI, SWG) but the need is to have a better monitoring and reviewing system of the intervention plans, so as to be in compliance with updated development and community needs.
 - The overlapping of activities has been a focus of local government, which is seeking more interactive cooperation between actors on these issues. Not any leadership is recognized by any actor in this respect.
- The Province of Trento is significantly recognized as a highly efficient and result-oriented actor. As mentioned by the Deputy Major, its objectives are evidence-based and translated into results; its activity has now turned to be greater in action-oriented than in classical assistance activities such as training (70% to 30%). A reversed proportion is usually observed.
- Increasing the efficiency of LGU structures (municipality and communes management structure), articulating their need for more training in the accountability and management of public resources and analysis of all financial plans.
- The Municipality also recognizes the need for assistance to use the bottom-up approach for bringing the needs from local to central level, as its power of analysis is not yet as strong as it is assumed to be.

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ANNEX: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

	Name	Institution	Position
1	Ridvan Troshani	Shkodra Municipality	Deputy Mayor
2	Valerio Cendali Pignatelli	Cooperazione Italiana allo Sviluppo Ministero Affari Esteri	United Nation Fellow
3	Valbona Kuko	Department of strategy and donor coordination, Council of Ministers	DSDC Director
4	Klodjan Seferaj	Department of strategy and donor coordination, Council of Ministers	Donor Coordination
5	Elda Bagaviki	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC	National Programme Officer
6	Genta Bektashih	Ministry of Interior	Donor Project Coordinator
7	Erjeta Ashiku	Professional Development System Albania-Human Resource in Health Sector	Programme Officer – PH Specialist
8	Daniela Zampini	Joint UN Programme on Youth Employment and Migration	Chief Technical Advisor
9	Altina Peshkatari	USAID Project	Communication Specialist
10	Sokol Rraka	General Police Directory - Shkodra	Juvenile Section
11	Erjon Ndroqi	Major Adviser	Municipality
12	Rovena Kurtulaj	High School “Koplik” Shkodra	Deputy Director
13	Erida Saraci	For a Society without Smoking	Project Development
14	Leonat Luli	Social Welfare Society	Project officer
15	Odetta Nishani	Tourism Development Office – Ministry of Tourism	Director – Tourism Development
16	Brunela Trebicka	Joy - Company	Executive Director
17	Arti Cicolli	Environmental Protection NGO	Executive Director
18	Mirela Gjokaj	Women Health Center	Physician
19	Anja Idem	Ministry of Interior	Decentralization Department
20	Anita Gusho	Ministry of Justice	Social Service Project Directory
21	Two Focus Groups with Health Centers Managers	Commune of Bushat. Dajc, Velipoje, Shllak, Gruemire, Kastrat	Health Centers Managers