



Mediterranean  
Action Plan  
Barcelona  
Convention



# **Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) of National Strategies for Sustainable Development**

## **Second 2018-2019 exercise**

**Albania National report**

**December 2019**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SIMPEER methodology was developed by Wafa Essahli, Spyros Kouvelis and Julien Le Tellier, with the support of Christian Averous and Aldo Ravazzi, both Vice-presidents of Plan Bleu.

The preparation and edition of this report received the support of the national correspondents and SIMPEER key contacts in Albania, Klodiana Marika.

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For bibliographical ends, quote this present document as follows: Plan Bleu (2019) Simplified Peer Review Mechanism of Sustainable Development Strategies in Mediterranean Countries. 2018-2019 exercise: Albania national report. Plan Bleu, technical report

## PREFACE

Albania expressed its interest and willingness to take part in the second exercise of the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) of National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD) developed in the framework in the Barcelona Convention – Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) System, and Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (SMDD).

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania appointed Ms. Klodiana Marika, Director, Department of Development Programmes on Environment, as National Correspondent for the SIMPEER process.

Ms. Klodiana Marika is MAP National Focal Point. She provided support and guidance in collecting relevant national documents for preparing their analysis and synthesis, and completing the SIMPEER questionnaire, reviewing the country fact-sheet and, finally, preparing and organising the mission of the project team (three independent experts) in Albania.

Ms. Klodiana Marika is hereby gratefully acknowledged for her cooperation, determination, availability and support in acting as an interface with the SIMPEER project team, in 2019.

The preliminary results of the national documents were presented to national policymakers and stakeholders during the mission carried out by the project team in Tirana, Albania, on October, 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. During this mission, the project team accompanied by Ms. Klodiana Marika met several decision-makers and other stakeholders and held a plenary meeting which brought together various minister representatives, local authorities, universities, as well as representatives from the private sector, the banking sector, the health sector, civil society, etc. and qualified experts. Discussions with national decision-makers and stakeholders during the three-day mission focused on lessons learned, best practices and success stories, as well as the challenges encountered both during the sustainable development policies elaboration process and implementation phase.

All the results of these activities are summarized in the present national report, which was submitted to the peer countries as a working and discussion document for facilitating the Peer Review Meeting held in Marseille, France, in November 2019. The document in hand constitutes therefore the final version of the national report integrating recommendations and inputs of the peer countries.

Plan Bleu would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania and, in particular, the Department for Development Programmes on Environment, for their availability and valuable contribution to performing the SIMPEER activity, along with all the Albanian and international stakeholders met during the country mission.

## FOREWORD

The Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) was decided by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean during their 19th Ordinary Meeting (Barcelona Convention, COP19, Athens, Greece, February 2016).

SIMPEER is based on the voluntary and equal participation of the Parties, and seeks to use an agreed methodology for sharing experiences, policies and best practices for the implementation of sustainable development at national level. This peer review mechanism is also an important incentive for reviewing sustainable development structures and processes at the national level, in particular the National Strategy of Sustainable Development (NSSD) when the country has adopted one.

This review is conducted using the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2015 (MSSD 2016-2025) as a reference framework and a regional definition of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SIMPEER methodology draws on the provisions of the COP19 Decision IG.22/17 and analysis of existing peer review mechanisms, to include the following three main phases:

1. **A preparatory phase** with an analysis and synthesis of the relevant documents provided by the Voluntary Contracting Parties. The main results of this phase are a table of analysis of the country's sustainable development reference documents. This analysis is intended to identify the issues to be discussed with stakeholders during a mission in the country.
2. **A consultation phase**, during which the project team carries out a mission in the voluntary country to meet national decision-makers and other stakeholders (public sector, private sector, civil society, local authorities, academia, media) involved in the implementation of the NSSD. From interviews and plenary meetings, this phase will lead to the preparation of the draft national report to be submitted to peer countries for consideration at their meeting.
3. **A review phase** at the heart of the process: the national reports produced during the previous phase are shared among the countries involved. These reports are the background documents for the Peer Review Meeting. This phase must lead to the finalisation of the national reports, including the recommendations of the Peer Review Meeting, with a view to preparing a final report of the SIMPEER pilot test.

The three phases presented above are followed by an outputs dissemination phase, both at national and regional levels, so that all Contracting Parties, national stakeholders and other partners can benefit from the results and lessons learned.

The SIMPEER was tested during a pilot exercise where three volunteer countries got involved, namely France, Montenegro and Morocco. The pilot exercise took place during the 2016-2017 intersessional period and the results were submitted to the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development and the Conference of Parties of the Barcelona Convention. The country Parties reaffirmed their interest in this mutual learning exercise and recommended that the process be maintained while:

- Strengthening stakeholder participation in participating countries in the review.
- Improving the links between the SIMPEER and the voluntary national review of the SDGs presented to the UN High Level Political Forum.
- Involve the participating countries in the first exercise to strengthen exchanges between the Mediterranean countries and ensure the continuity of the SIMPEER.

The Plan Bleu was responsible for facilitating the SIMPEER exercise.

Albania, Egypt and Tunisia have voluntarily committed to participate.

This report presents the results of the review of the Albanian sustainable development process. It covers the five key dimensions presented in the methodological report: (i) leadership and ownership; (ii) integration and links between the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental); (iii) governance and stakeholder participation; (iv) resources and means for implementation, and; (v) monitoring and assessment.

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# I. General presentation of Albania

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Albania, a country in southern Europe, is located in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula on the strait of Otranto, the southern entrance of the Adriatic Sea. The country lies between latitudes 42° and 39° North and longitudes 21 and 19° East. It shares land borders with Montenegro (Northwest), Kosovo (Northeast), North Macedonia (East), Greece (South) and maritime borders with Greece, Montenegro and Italy, on the Adriatic and Ionian Sea.

Albania is rugged and mountainous, except for the fertile Adriatic coast. Mont Korabit (2763m), on the Macedonian-Albanian border, is the highest point in the country. The coastal climate is typically Mediterranean. The mountainous interior, especially in the north, has severe winters and mild summers. More than one third of Albania's land is covered by forests and swamps, about one third is pasture, and only about one fifth is cultivated.

Albania is a unitary state defined in a total area of 28,748 square kilometres. It is divided into 12 prefectures, each with its own council and administration. The prefectures are further subdivided into 61 municipalities. A decentralisation process is on-going since 2016 giving much more responsibilities to municipalities on natural resource and waste management as well as geographical, economic, social and cultural purposes inside the counties.

Albania was identified as a potential candidate for EU membership during the Thessaloniki European Council Summit in June 2003. In 2009, Albania submitted its formal application for membership. In October 2012, European Commission recommended that Albania be granted EU candidate status, subject to completion of key measures in the areas of judicial and public administration reform and revision of parliamentary rules of procedures. Five areas have been identified as priority conditions for the accession negotiations for membership in EU:

- public administration reform, stable institutions and a modern, professional and depoliticized civil service;
- strengthening the independence, efficiency and accountability of judicial institutions;
- increasing the fight against corruption;
- increasing the fight against organized crime;
- ensuring the protection of human rights (including property rights).

Accession to the European Union (EU) is an over-arching development priority supported by all major political parties in Albania; EU integration processes have been key development drivers. There are many complementarities EU accession, the global sustainable development Agenda 2030, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Albania has made remarkable economic progress during the past three decades. Due to strong growth performance, Albania grew from one of the poorest nations in Europe to a middle-income country, with poverty declining by half during that period.

The reform of administration took 15 years of action. Fighting against corruption and organized crime were prioritized to achieve governance transformation.

After expanding by 4.1 percent in 2018, annual GDP growth for 2019 is projected to slow to 2.9 percent, as a drastic decline in rainfall cut hydroelectric power production. An expanding domestic demand led GDP growth in 2019. A decline in net exports reduced GDP growth, as stagnant growth among trade partners limited traditional exports.<sup>1</sup>

Related to GDP structure by economic activities, the Albanian economy has shifted further to the services sector, followed by agriculture and industry. Services further increased their share in GDP from 45.8% in 2014 to 48%, in 2018 led by trade and tourism related services and an increasing share of services in education and health. Agriculture as well as industry have lost some ground between 2014 and 2018 with shares decreasing from 23% to 18.4% and 14.8% to 12.2 respectively. The number of foreign enterprises in tourism, information and communication technology (ICT) and agriculture increased by almost 12% from 2016 to 2017.

Most investment and formal employment depend on a very small number of enterprises. 89% of all enterprises in Albania had less than 5 employees in 2016 ('micro-enterprises') and only 5% of all enterprises had over 10 employees. The latter account for 75% of formal employment and 86% of investment in the economy. The slow change in this structure in recent years signals persistent obstacles for enterprise growth. Many micro-enterprises cannot access microfinance due to their lack of know-how or because they operate in the informal economy, whereas many SMEs (with more than 5 employees) are too large for microfinance institutions, but also face problems

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/overview>

accessing bank financing. The low level of public support to SMEs and farmers poses a challenge for businesses aspiring to grow or to export.<sup>2</sup>

Remittances, equivalent to around 6.9% of GDP in 2012, have helped to sustain domestic demand and have also helped to alleviate poverty in Albania. Inflows of remittances steadily declined by approximately 30% from EUR 952 million in 2007 to EUR 665 million in 2011, before rebounding to an estimated EUR 657 million in 2012.

The main sector to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been industry (43.3% of the total) followed by the financial sector (19.7% of the total) and telecommunication (11.2 % of the total). The electricity sub-sector started to attract substantial FDI in 2009 with the unfolding of concessions for hydropower plants and wind farms, accounting for 10% of total FDI over the period 2007 to 2011.

Overall, Albania has undergone and experienced significant social change during the past decade. Albania has halved poverty over recent years (2007-2012) from 25% to 12% with extreme poverty and unemployment falling consistently. The census of 2011 presents a population of 2.8 million, representing a decline of 8% over the figure in the 2001 census. Over this period, the Albanian population has become substantially more urban (54%) in comparison to the decidedly more rural society (53%) population presented in the Census of 2011.<sup>3</sup>

#### General index and data

|   |  |
|---|--|
| HDI   | 0,785 – Rank 68 <sup>4</sup>   |
| GDP per capita  | 13,039 Billion \$US (2017) <sup>5</sup>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>▪ Industry, including construction</li> <li>▪ Exports of goods and services</li> <li>▪ Imports of goods and services</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 19%</li> <li>▪ 21%</li> <li>▪ 32%</li> <li>▪ 47%</li> </ul> |
| Annual GDP growth   | 3.8% (2017) – 4 (2028) <sup>2</sup>  |
| Global competitiveness index  | 4.18 – Rank 80 <sup>6</sup>  |
| Environmental performance index   | 65.46 - Rank 40 <sup>7</sup>   |
| Total ecological footprint  | 2.14 per capita <sup>8</sup>   |
| SDG Index (2018)  | 62 (of 156) <sup>9</sup>   |

#### Environment<sup>10</sup>

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Forest area                                 | 7,700 Km <sup>2</sup> - 28.2%           |
| Terrestrial and marine protected area       | 13.5 %                                  |
| Annual freshwater withdrawals               | 4.3% of total renewable water resources |
| Urban population growth                     | 1.5% (2017)                             |
| Energy use (kg oil equivalent per capita)   | 808 (2017)                              |
| Renewable energy consumption                | 38.6% of total final energy consumption |
| CO2 emission (metric tons per capita)       | 1.98 (2017)                             |
| Electric power consumption (kwh per capita) | 2,309 (2017)                            |

<sup>2</sup> Albania 2019 Report, Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy;- Brussels, 29.5.2019 SWD(2019) 215 final;- <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-albania-report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020 – Draft version – June 2013

<sup>4</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ALB>

<sup>5</sup> [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ALB](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ALB)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2017-2018/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2017-2018.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu/epi-country-report/ALB>

<sup>8</sup> <https://data.footprintnetwork.org/#/sustainableDevelopment?cn=all&yr=2014&type=BCpc.FFCpc>

<sup>9</sup> <http://sdgindex.org/assets/files/2018/02%20SDGS%20Country%20profiles%20edition%20WEB%20V3%20180718.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ALB](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ALB)

**Population**<sup>11</sup>

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| Population                                       | 2,873,457 inhab. (2017)      |
| Human capital index                              | 0.62 (scale 0-1)             |
| Population density                               | 104.9 inhab./km <sup>2</sup> |
| Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line | 14.3% (2010)                 |

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<sup>11</sup> ibid.



## II. Sustainable development context

|  | <b>Strengths</b>   | <b>Weaknesses</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>I<br/>N<br/>T<br/>E<br/>R<br/>N<br/>A<br/>L</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two National Strategies for Development and Integration (NSDI, I and II) for the periods 2007-2013 and 2016-2020, which are explicitly aligned with SDGs</li> <li>▪ Strong leadership and coordination under the Prime Minister office</li> <li>▪ Every sectoral or cross cutting national strategy feeds into the NSDI and is in line with NSDI priorities</li> <li>▪ National strategic documents for various environmental components</li> <li>▪ Explicit identification of existing funding and funding needs associated with strategic documents</li> <li>▪ Established links between the SDGs and the EU integration goals including reference to the Albania national plan for European integration (NPEI) 2014-2020</li> <li>▪ Country UN programme priorities includes “environment and climate change” axis</li> <li>▪ New and modern environmental legislation</li> <li>▪ Planned review process of NSDI and definition/ adoption of a national vision until 2030</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New environmental cross-cutting strategy 2015-2020 not adopted</li> <li>▪ Limited awareness of the SDGs within the Ministry of Environment (MofEnv) and the line ministries</li> <li>▪ Limited awareness of SDGs and Sustainable Development (SD) challenges among civil society, academia and private sector</li> <li>▪ Limited institutional capacities especially at the level of local government, civil society, academia, and private sector</li> <li>▪ Trade-offs in the field of renewable energy with hydro development (in particular of small-scale structures) potentially impacting local ecosystems, and some communities at risk</li> <li>▪ Some legislation anticipates administrative, institutional and financial capacities, leading to a lack in implementation</li> <li>▪ Need to adopt a national vision until 2030</li> <li>▪ Participation of stakeholders, other than public sector, very limited</li> <li>▪ Lack of financial resources and capacities to sustainably manage natural resources, in particular in local governments</li> <li>▪ Limited adoption of economic instruments for sustainable development (fiscal reform)</li> <li>▪ Large informal economy, and continued effort to eradicate some illegal activities, with environmental risks or impacts.</li> </ul> |
|  | <b>Opportunities</b>   | <b>Threats</b>  |
| <b>E<br/>X<br/>T<br/>E<br/>R<br/>N<br/>A<br/>L</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ EU candidate status from 2013 and European acquis</li> <li>▪ United Nations (UN) support to SD mainstreaming into socio-economic development strategies</li> <li>▪ Bilateral and multilateral agreements on environmental issues and transboundary resource management</li> <li>▪ UN Agenda 2030 and Paris Agreement present a strong platform for progress</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Global financial crisis and weak euro area growth</li> <li>▪ Climate change</li> <li>▪ External factors causing delays in the implementation of decentralization and integration strategies</li> </ul>   |

### III. Sustainable development context in Albania

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Albania committed in September 2015 to the implementation of Transforming Our World-The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Albania considers the SDG framework as an important vision for 2030. The Agenda 2030 in Albania follows the successful implementation of Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015 especially those related to poverty reduction, improvement of social inclusion, enhancement of education system, and empowerment of women.

Albania was one of the six pilot countries who tested SDGs before their adoption by the International Community, in 2015. Albania was then elaborating its second National Strategy for Development and Integration, and gained this opportunity to harmonize and align the two frameworks. There are many complementarities between EU accession, the global sustainable development Agenda 2030, and its monitoring framework, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>12</sup>

The NSDI-II 2015-2020 was adopted by the Government of Albania in May 2016, as a key component of the Integrated Planning System, a strategic document reflecting the vision, priorities, objectives and means for social and economic development and the aspirations for European Integration of the country up to the year 2020.

The NSDI-II, for the period 2015-2020, is the key policy document defining the development vision for Albania. It is considered to be de facto the instrument of planning for sustainable development, coordinating the objectives of development and those for integration into the European Union.

The NSDI-II 2015-2020 is organized around EU integration with thirteen cross-cutting foundations on good governance, democracy and rule of law and four main sectoral pillars (Figure 1):

- Pillar 1: Ensuring economic growth through macro-economic and fiscal ability
- Pillar 2: Ensuring growth through increased competitiveness and innovation
- Pillar 3: Investing in human capital and social cohesion
- Pillar 4: Ensuring growth through connectivity, the sustainable use of resources and territorial development.

The overarching goal of national policy is the country's full membership into the European Union (EU), which is intended to be pursued through the collective achievement of goals under each pillar. It is an overarching development priority supported by all major political parties in Albania. EU integration processes have thus been key development drivers.

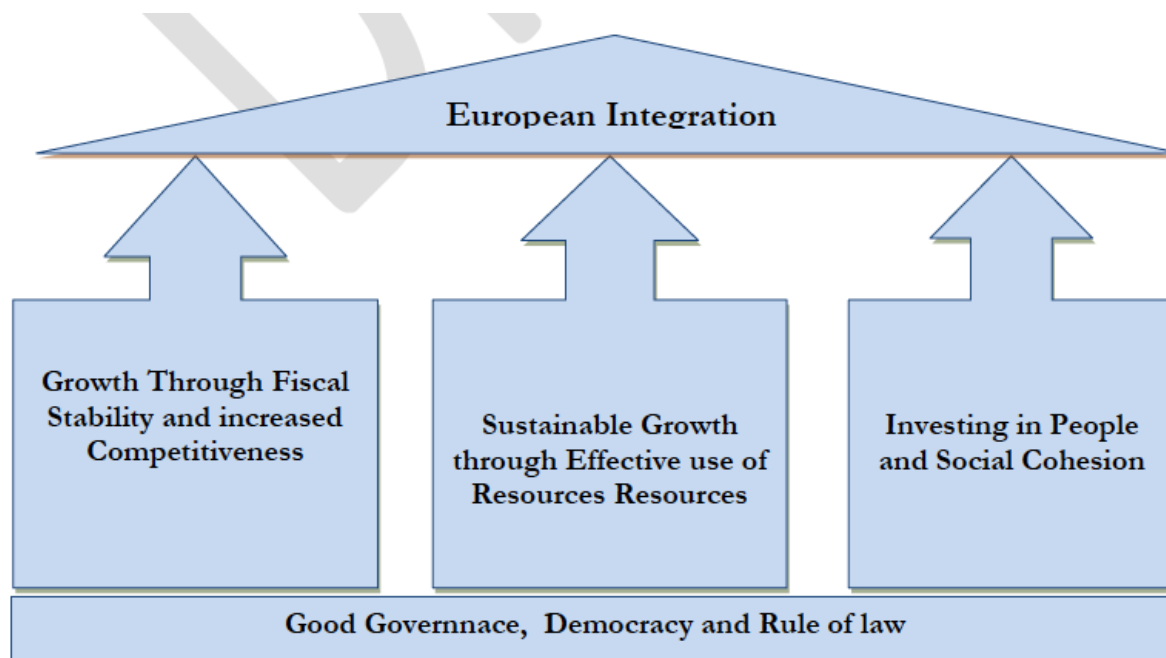
Key government priorities as defined in NSDI-II 2015-2020 are:

- Innovative and citizen-centred public services (governance)
- Recovery and financial consolidation of the energy sector
- Fostering innovation and competitiveness (foreign direct investments and domestic investment)
- Integrated water management
- Integrated land management
- Financial structure reform

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<sup>12</sup> Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for achieving the sustainable development goals in Albania, MAPS Report, 2018

Figure 1. The NSDI 2014-2020 main pillars



The next NSDI is planned to be elaborated in 2020. It is expected to cover a period longer than 7 years.

Box 1. Agenda 2030 in Albania

- October 2017: As part of the engagement of all stakeholders in the process, 25 public and private universities and faculties signed an agreement committing to play an active role in advancing the Agenda 2030;
- December 2017: The Albanian Parliament approved a resolution confirming the country's commitment to Agenda 2030;
- January 2018: The Inter-Ministerial Committee on the SDGs, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania approved the document "Albania, Report on the Harmonization of Sustainable Development Objectives with existing Sectoral Policies";
- June 2018: The National Council on Civil Society has engaged in approving a public statement on supporting Agenda 2030 for the country;
- June 2018: The development partners/international agencies were invited in a workshop for discussing and supporting Agenda 2030;
- July 2018: The Voluntary National Report (VNR) for presentation to the UN High Level Political Forum on sustainable development;
- June 2018: Budget Analysis of SDG Related Spending in Albania: 2015 - 2017 (National Budget / Donors fund);
- September 2018: Assessment of SDG data and statistical annex prepared by INSTAT, the national institute of statistics, contained 30 indicators monitoring Albania's progress towards the SDGs, as part of the first attempt to gain an overall SDG picture for the country.

## IV. Leadership and appropriation

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The full leadership of the sustainable development process is included in the national agenda, and there is strong ownership by the high political level of the Prime Ministry and the Parliament.

In November 2016, a board on European Integration, composed by the Ministers in charge of the five key priorities as defined in NSDI-II 2015-2020, mentioned above, was established to upgrade coordination in view of accession negotiations. Policy coordination improved with the establishment of integrated policy management groups in pilot sectors. The management groups include technical secretariats and the Department of Development, Financing and Foreign Aid, which is the main coordinating body.<sup>13</sup>

In June 2017, based on the order of the Prime Minister, the SDG coordination structures at national level are established. The Department of Development and Good Governance – under the Prime Minister's Office - is in charge of the Secretariat of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for SDGs implementation which is chaired by the Prime Minister. The Committee is at a high decision-making level. It is seconded by technical working groups which mobilize all ministries and INSTAT (National Institute of Statistics) as well as private sector and civil society representatives. The Committee meets to launch processes and validate outputs. It led the preparation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR), in 2018. Technical working groups meet as often as needed to provide advisory opinion.

In December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Albanian Parliament approved a resolution committing to the promotion, implementation, and monitoring of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, through inclusive and broad-based development processes, in line with Albania's development priorities and EU integration which are outlined in the NSDI-II 2015-2020.

The NSDI-II is comprehensive of the country's commitments to the implementation of the SDGs; however, the NSDI-II does not specifically refer to SDGs nor does it refer to the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSDD 2016-2025).

At the local level, the appropriation of the NSDI-II and SDGs implementation processes is supported by the continuous territorial reform, although financial and administrative consolidation of the newly created municipalities is slow. The decentralisation process is supported by the establishment of an inter-institutional coordination group under the integrated policy management group for good governance. The decentralisation strategy's medium-term financial sustainability has yet to be ensured.

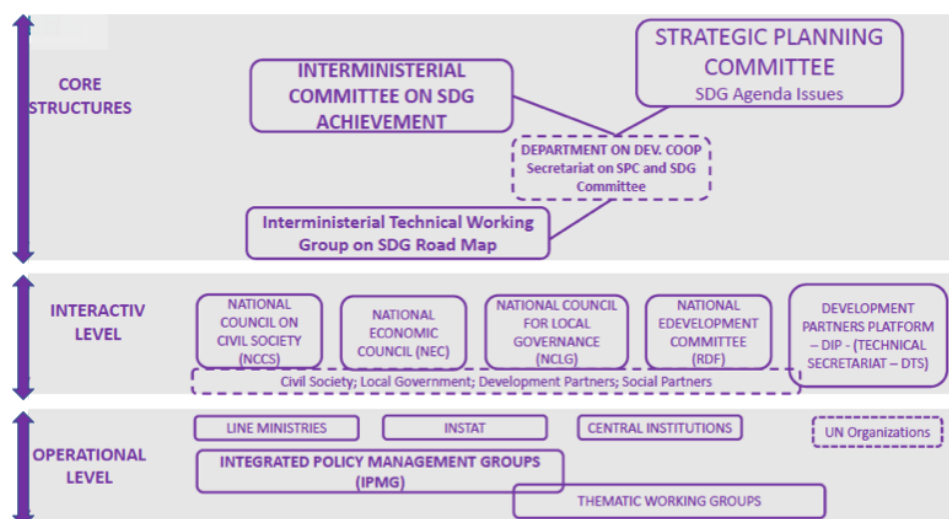
The new law on the organisation and functioning of local governance entered into force in January 2019. The law decentralises a high number of new competences to municipalities. The establishment of a consultative council between the central and local governments is pending. One-stop-shops for public services were piloted in five municipalities.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Albania 2019 Report, Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy ; - Brussels, 29.5.2019 SWD(2019) 215 final- <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-albania-report.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Albania 2019 Report ; - <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-albania-report.pdf>

Figure 2. Institutional structure for SDGs achievement



Source: Klodiana Marika, 2017

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- The example of France having put in place Senior Officials for Sustainable Development in each relevant ministry, ensuring Sustainable Development integration in sectoral policies and programmes, and the example of Morocco with the Sustainable Development Committee of Focal Points could inspire mechanisms to ensure better integration and penetration of sustainable development and SDGs in sectoral administrations, beyond the initial circle that was established to initiate to the process.
- The process is firmly established under and led by the Office of the Prime Minister, however the structures needed to involve the entire structures of line ministries as well as those of decentralized administration require significant efforts in dissemination of information and very importantly, training, especially of those that are *not* directly involved with this process.
- The process of the NSDI review and that of the EU accession are connected through their overview under the PMs Office; it is however important that specific strategic prioritization in terms of incorporation of the *Acquis Communautaire*, and work modalities are established so that the underlying principles become common for the two processes and no “silos” may exist between them.
- To combine 2030 Vision with the next NSDI while making challenging attempt to set priorities in the SDG implementation process could be inspired by France’s experience. The approach started from SDGs in silos, but the final product insists on priorities that are country specific and largely transversal across SDGs. The vision can be inspired by SDGs and consider all of them without necessarily having a structure identical to the 2030 Agenda. However, monitoring and reporting on Agenda 2030 is easier when linkages between objectives in the National 2030 Vision and SDGs are explicit.
- To improve capacity of regional and local levels on management of natural resources and SDI-II implementation, Tunisia referred to the relevance and revival of Agenda 21 approaches. France had developed a full fledge methodology to support local government in the preparation and assessment of Agenda 21, with a national recognition mechanism <sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> See for example: [http://www.territoires-durables-paca.org/environnement/referentiel-national-pour-l-evaluation-des-projets-territoriaux-de-developpement-durable\\_i2745.htm](http://www.territoires-durables-paca.org/environnement/referentiel-national-pour-l-evaluation-des-projets-territoriaux-de-developpement-durable_i2745.htm)

## V. Completeness and integration

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The NSDI is an umbrella strategy of sectoral strategies, whose general goals and specific objectives aim at facilitating an integrated sectorial fulfilment of its pillars. It aims to ensure the standardization of more than fifty sectorial and cross-cutting strategies in terms of format and monitoring. There are nonetheless several sectorial or particular strategies that are not related to NSDI II either because their lifespan does not fit the NSDI II duration or because they are formulated after NSDI II approval.

The NSDI-II's "sustained growth through efficient use of resources" pillar translates the strategic goals of the Strategy in terms of economic development, taking into consideration the vision of the European Union to ensure the development of a competitive European economy based on a balanced and sustainable use of resources.

Particular attention is paid in the strategy to the protection of nature, national resources and balanced and sustainable use of the environment. In terms of efficient use of resources, the NSDI-II pillars address several sectors: Energy sector; Transport infrastructure (road, railway, air, marine, etc.); Agriculture and rural development; Tourism development and Environmental protection.

Challenges for environmental protection issue include: Adopting and implementing EU standards for urban air quality and air emissions; Reducing substances with impact on climate change and building up awareness; Preventing industrial pollution and risk and ensuring effective management of chemicals in line with EU regulations; Expanding protected areas and ensure development through effective management plans; Ensuring efficient management of the forest and pastures fund in order to expand their area and productivity; Ensuring integrated management of water resources through the adoption of a monitoring and control framework to reduce surface and underground water pollution; Further developing the fisheries sector; Water supply and sewerage; Integrated waste management. The chapter related to environment protection is the most difficult to document and achieve as it needs detailed monitoring, benchmarking, as well as the definition and adoption of a large set of standards, norms, procedures, etc.

Sectoral efforts to align policies and programs with European standards are largely financially and technically supported by the European Union as part of the pre-accession process. However, the absorptive capacity of line ministries, partners, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs, including farmers) is limited and many programs are slow to implement.

Because of the importance of hydroelectricity and irrigated agriculture, water lies at the heart of the country's energy and rural development challenges. Climate change and a lack of coordination in water management are aggravating disaster risks, and could threaten Albania's development prospects in the water sector as well as other sectors (e.g. tourism). The climate change challenges also underscore the importance of more rapid progress in integrated water resources management. Likewise, efforts to strengthen or clarify land tenure status, conditions to access land for development and land protection in particular on the coast, land ownership and property rights are needed to promote sustainable land management, integrated coastal zone management, and raise agricultural and rural productivity and income levels.

The level of integration of SDGs into NSDI-II pillar was assessed through the UN Rapid integrated assessment tool, in 2017; with the following conclusions:

- 140 SDG targets (83%) are directly tied to specific components of the NSDI II 2015 – 2020 pillars;
- 134 SDG targets (79%) are also linked to the specific objectives of the national strategic policy framework;
- Strongest alignment of the national policy with the SDGs is observed in Goals 3, 7, 8 and 9.

The Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for Achieving the SDGs (MAPS) study performed in 2018, by the MofEnv. with UN agencies, identifies three broad policy and programming platforms for accelerating progress towards EU accession and achieving the SDGs: (i) governance reform, human rights, and the rule of law; (ii) the inclusive green economy; and (iii) investment in social and human capital. These accelerator platforms reflect Albania's development and partnership priorities, as articulated in the EU accession process and the Government of Albania-UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development. However, some of the identified potential opportunities are difficult to reach. For example, while some rural tourism has developed, other sectors in the green economy remain limited; and actual potential for green economy development remains unclear.

The duration of the NSDI-II (until 2020) and the current planning documents in the country (2020 or 2025) is significantly shorter than the scope of the SDGs which extends to 2030.

### Box 3. Challenges in sectoral sustainable development programmes

#### Agriculture and Rural Development

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Several challenges are still hindering the sustainability of agriculture. Those challenges are mainly related to land ownership, land tenure fragmentation, adaptation of production to regional characteristics, archaic methods of exploitation, lack of modernization, lack of farmer organizations to ensure greater efficiency of investments (equipment / mechanization / new technologies, reduction of production costs, access to the market / adaptation of production to demand, definition and adoption of standards, etc.), exposure to natural risk with insufficient management measures in place (flood, drought). Tourism demand opens new niche markets for traditional products, but those are limited in volume and require further organization / promotion.

The fishing sector is a priority and the development of aquaculture is expanding with the following progresses: a new law adopted, a participatory approach for the planning of aquaculture areas, support from FAO and GIZ, regional cooperation in Adriatic ICZM, etc. The Guaranty Fund implemented to encourage agribusiness investments includes the aquaculture sector. Fish products represent 40% of agricultural product exports, mostly from the open sea. In Albania, there is only one exporter of agro products while they are six fish exporters.

#### Waste management

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The Ministry of Infrastructure develops policies related to infrastructure for waste management, and plans training and support to strengthen capacities. The strategy is based on 3-R EU principles of waste management (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). Efforts are oriented to reduce the volume of incinerated waste and minimize waste volume as much as possible.

Ten regional waste management centres and transfer stations are planned to be implemented to allow municipalities collecting and transferring local waste. The identification of implementing areas for regional centres was done through feasibility studies, based on several criteria related to environmental, social and economic considerations, to facilitate acceptability from local populations

The cost of building infrastructure is supported by the national budget whereas the cost of collection and transport is supported by municipalities.

Main remaining challenges are related to the operational functioning of the scheme, financial resource mobilization, engagement of municipalities to estimate costs, define and collect tax at local level to cover recurrent costs.

#### Protected areas management

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The strategy for protected areas has to be revised to put more emphasis on some related SDGs. Projects are funded by donors, this imposes to be aware of the risks of overlapping and duplication of efforts.

#### Sustainable forest management

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The decentralisation process raises the problem of capacities (human and financial) at the local level to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources including forest areas. Many municipalities do not currently have all capacities required to renew and sustainably implement management plans; alternatives have to be identified to combine vertical and horizontal approaches. Greater efforts have to be considered in order to improve coordination and streamline local governance.

#### Water resources management

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The sectoral strategy for water resources management is streamlining SDG-6 (water and sanitation). SDG 14 is less taken into account. Its implementation is more challenging. The bottlenecks and weakness that hinder implementation process include, among other, the decentralisation of resource management at the municipality level, the long-term process to elaborate strategy in the frame of the project funded by World



Bank, the cross-cutting aspects of water management, the difficulties to conciliate different demands and uses, the lack of action plan to decline strategic documents into operational projects and programmes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- The SDGs can be a way to reconcile the long term of sustainable development with the short horizon of political agendas. While SDGs are not legally binding, they represent an obligation for countries that have committed to achieve them. The translation of the Agenda 2030 into a 2030 National Vision, the prioritization of its 17 SDGs and the integration of regional instruments such as the MSSD and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements can be the way for implementing the SDGs in the national development Agenda.
- It is at the local level that the links between the different dimensions of sustainable development and the different SDGs are most evident. The role of local and regional authorities is no longer just a role in the implementation of policies and plans developed by the central level. Local and regional authorities have a development planning role themselves, where sustainability principles can be more easily integrated in practical terms because of territorial cohesion and the anchoring of territorial wealth. The systemic approach is more easily implemented in small areas and in a bottom-up approach. In the current decentralization context, the central administration plays an important role in supporting local authorities taking charge of these new responsibilities through capacity building actions, policy orientation, provision of planning tools, participation, consultation and adapted follow-up.
- The Adriatic is a first level of cooperation in the Mediterranean that has gained importance and operability, strengthening this level of cooperation and scaling-up to the entire Mediterranean region the national perspectives that result could be a way to boost the MSSD's support to SDGs implementation at national level. The SDG 14 is an important entry point under the Barcelona Convention – MAP system, but countries' demand for cooperation under the MSSD framework are not limited to this SDG. The MSSD is a relevant scope to share the common issues (species, transport including shipping, waste including but not exclusively marine litter - blue economy...) for harmonized approaches and coherent and common actions.
- Addressing the SDGs in coordination (as opposed to one at a time) is an important aspect to be taken into account. By allowing the sectoral policies to further reinforce the development of “silos” while also addressing issues through sectoral or thematic approaches, the potential synergies and cumulative benefits are weakened. Multiple-layer analysis, and collaborative structures where the views and concerns of seemingly unrelated sectors and stakeholders are allowed to be examined together, is a very effective way of addressing this problem.



## VI. Governance and inclusion

The Prime Minister is leading the overall SDG process in Albania; a matrix was elaborated (Figure 3). The chart visualizes the institutional responsibilities for the implementation of SDGs by indicating institutions in charge of leading the efforts to implement every SDG, by also reflecting the degree of the responsibility for every SDG.<sup>16</sup> The highest percentage is for the Prime Minister. Inter-ministerial coordination is quite smooth, however the coordination inside ministries remains challenging.

The report on mainstreaming the SDGs in Albania through the NSDI-II 2015 – 2020 sheds light on the institutional responsibilities for every SDG target, including the role of the Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMGs), part of the Integrated Planning System in the country, as key instruments to the integrated sectoral approach, as well as the role of the UN agencies acting as custodians for the related SDG targets.

Figure 3 : Institutional responsibility for SDG implementation in Albania

| Government Institution                                 | SDG institutional responsibility, by targets |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | Number of SDG targets per institution |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------------------------------------|
|  | 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |                                       |
| Ministry of Health and Social Protection               | ■  | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 38                                    |
| Ministry of Finance and Economy                        | ■  | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 43                                    |
| Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy                  |  |   |   |   |   | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 23                                    |
| Ministry of Tourism and Environment                    |  |   | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 30                                    |
| Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development          |  | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 11                                    |
| Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth                |  |   |   | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 11                                    |
| Ministry of Interior                                   |  |   | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 8                                     |
| Ministry of Justice                                    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    | ■  | ■  | 3                                     |
| Civil Emergencies Department (Ministry of Defense)     | ■  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | ■  | 2                                     |
| Bank of Albania  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 5                                     |
| Technical Secretariat, National Committee of Water     |  |   |   |   |   | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 5                                     |
| e-Authority  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 2                                     |
| INSTAT   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | ■  | 2                                     |
| Ministry of Culture                                    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 1                                     |
| Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs                |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    | ■  | ■  | 1                                     |
| Civil Society Support Agency                           |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | ■  | 1                                     |
| National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ■ | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■  | 4                                     |
| Public Procurement Agency                              |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | ■  | 1                                     |

To address municipal fragmentation and accelerate fiscal decentralization, Albania's 373 municipalities/ local government units were consolidated into 61 larger bodies in 2015. The territorial administration reform introduced large changes in the governance landscapes in Albania, providing broader competencies for local economic development, service provision, territorial planning, environmental management, land management, transportation, welfare, social care, and civil protection, local procurement, and local information management, among others. At the same time, this reform has raised citizen expectations while local governments are struggling to embrace, and adapt

<sup>16</sup> Albania, Report on the Harmonization of Sustainable Development Objectives with existing Sectoral Policies;- Ilir Ciko;- January 30, 2018

to their new responsibilities. As the frontline institutions for local development, local government units in Albania need to be adequately staffed, their human capacities supported, structured, and financed.<sup>17</sup>

Some progress was made on policy coordination and at local government level, with the adoption of the new law on the organisation and functioning of local governments. However, substantial efforts are needed to increase the administrative capacity of local government units to carry out their expanded competencies and provide them with the necessary financial resources.<sup>18</sup>

As for horizontal coordination, in November 2016, the Parliament enacted the law on the establishment and functioning of the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS), with the aim of institutionalising cooperation between the government and civil society. Chaired by the Minister of Social Welfare and Youth, the Council is composed of 13 government and 13 civil society representatives, with the Agency for Support to civil society acting as a technical secretariat.

There are several other mechanisms which involve civil society in the sustainable development process, as for example the National Gender Council. The civil society representatives participate in all meetings of the National Council of European Integration, but their role remained overall passive. Effective implementation of the laws on the right to information and public consultations remained a challenge, especially at local level.<sup>19</sup>

A Road Map for Drafting Policy and Measures for Enabling Environment for Civil Society was approved in 2015 but wasn't implemented. The Prime Minister Office with the assistance of the EU Delegation in Albania started, in 2018, the update of the Roadmap, and the elaboration of a detailed Plan of Actions for the period 2018 - 2022, followed by a monitoring framework with measurement indicators and budget required for its implementation. Nevertheless, one year after this process, the Roadmap is not yet approved by the Government

Moreover, the consultation of civil society is mandatory for strategies to be approved by the Inter-Ministerial Committee which is the mechanism to ensure cross-cutting consultation. It is also a mandatory phase in the NSDI progress report's elaboration. An electronic register for notification and public consultation is created, and made available on-line. The process was implemented but not monitored to assess its efficiency.

The involvement of private and banking sectors is ensured through the National Economic Committee which is chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Economy, which constitutes the interface with industry representatives. The involvement of the private sector in funding sustainable production is still limited to some areas: Investment in sustainable tourism facilities (B&B) which were largely supported by donor partners in the North of Albania; labelling products to improve their marketing and encourage investments; etc.

#### Box 4. NGOs' contributions to SDGs implementation

Compared with ten years ago, the civil society in Albania has grown significantly. New NGOs have been created. Some are active in the field of the environment. The main issues addressed by the civil society are gender and women's rights, governance and social rights, democracy, etc.

In the field of the environment, civil society is mainly active in information, awareness raising and protection. Some topics are not yet well covered such as water, land, waste and the contribution to the development of policy support documents on more technical topics such as climate change, biodiversity, etc.

NGOs have an active role in information and awareness raising on SDGs implementation context. However, there is still some confusion about the SDGs and their interlinkages. Some civil society initiatives of civil society are helping to clarify the SDGs framework and to raise awareness on the links among development goals: including the Environmental day calendar to link world days with corresponding SDGs. Best practices to be shared with country peers could be: learning standards on SDGs developed by NGO and adopted by Ministry of Education, Albania is the only Balkan country to have adopted such tools to integrate SD in curricula. Educational programs were also developed that emphasize linkages among SDGs (where trainees are required to consider one SDG as target and another as interacting with it).

<sup>17</sup> Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for achieving the sustainable development goals in Albania, MAPS Report, 2018

<sup>18</sup> Albania 2019 Report, Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy ;- Brussels, 29.5.2019 SWD(2019) 215 final;- [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529\\_albania-report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529_albania-report.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Albania 2016 Report, Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy;- Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final;-[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_albania.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf)

## Good practice on developing Education Tools on Sustainable Development

REC Albania has contributed to consolidate the Education for Sustainable Development in the school curricula in Albania through developing the education tools “Green Pack” (2006) and “Junior Green Pack” (2018).

The Junior Green Pack and the Green Pack are multimedia environmental education kits adapted to teaching children aged between 6 and 15 years old on environmental protection and sustainable development. They include a variety of educational materials such as a teacher’s handbook with lesson plans and fact sheets for students, a film collection with animated clips and educational films, an interactive web site with extensive information on various environmental topics and a dilemma game.

These educational tools are developed by an international team of experts, working closely with Albanian teachers of the elementary and secondary school levels and competent experts of educational and academic institutions in Albania. The “Green Packs” help to develop new values among students and establish new behaviour models aiming at making our children the ambassadors of a society’s sustainability by conveying their new acquaintances and habits to friends and family.

REC Albania supported the education system by developing the policy document of “Learning Standards for Sustainable Development Education”, which was approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports on November 1, 2018. This document is a step closer to implementing the Agenda 2030 and meeting the SDG 4 Objective for a Qualitative Education.

Links: <http://albania.rec.org/publication-eng.php?id=637>  
<http://education.rec.org/>

## Good practice on Grow Green Enterprises Led by Women in Albania

The objective of the GEA project, developed by Resource Environmental Center Albania is to support the expansion of existing nature-based women-led enterprises for exponential impact in Albania, supported by the Small Grant Programme of GEF.

Through the support of 8 green enterprises led by women in Albania, the GEA empowers women to participate equally in the national economy. REC Albania is aware that up-scaling women-led green businesses not only offers better socioeconomic opportunities for women, but also tends to grow faster and more equitably with gains in poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, consumer choice, innovation and decision-making on a wider set of issues. Some of GEA’s project activities are related with business management training, green product development and design, as well as promotion of green products and e-marketing.

The results of the project worth mentioning are:

Natural-based or low-carbon footprint products: three product packages (eco-foods from local biodiversity products; eco-products which reduce the pressure on nature or biodiversity; up-scale eco-products which reduce the pressure on natural resources through recycling, reuse, redevelopment)

At least 8 product lines, with business plans that promote employment, sustainable local development with a focus on women

About 45-50 women business leaders or women involved in social businesses and organizations are qualified to develop a business plan for their businesses, are better informed about marketing practices or methods to promote their business more effectively and have more information on the key principles of the green economy and the development of green ideas.

Sources: Meetings with stakeholders during the SIMPEER country mission in Tirana, October 2019; Mihallaq Qirjo, Peer review meeting, 19-20 November 2019

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- Developing the green and blue economy can be considered as necessary, efficient and feasible ways to respond to both short and long-term concerns about growth, sustainable development, employment and poverty reduction, as well as food and energy security concerns. The recommendations of the Regional Conference “Towards a green economy in the Mediterranean Region”<sup>20</sup> could be proposed at the national, regional and local levels in Albania, at the appropriate opportunities.
- The silo approach of SD, SDGs and strategies is needed for in-depth work in the sectors in addition to a more transversal approach. An integrated approach to sustainable development should not reduce sectoral specialization. However, there is a need for a mechanism to ensure the overall coherence of the whole towards sustainable development, e.g. a national 2030 Agenda / Vision that identifies country-specific development challenges, defines priorities, strategic goals and lines of action is needed. Such Vision can highlight the links between the different SDGs and between the different dimensions of sustainable development.
- Involving stakeholders, especially civil society and the private sector, in the efforts to implement sustainable development and the SDGs is an exercise in participatory democracy. Tools exist, and are becoming more and more efficient. Those require specific skills in moderation and mobilization of actors and expertise in the use of different methods (surveys, etc.). Online trainings are available, including many free training programmes.
- Raising awareness and developing knowledge and skills for the SDGs and their implementation will not happen by itself. There needs to be a strategy and action plan at national level that will reach also the regional and local level of administration, but will also include stakeholders, including both civil society and the private sector, to provide a structured and sufficiently long-term and inclusive process for engaging especially those not directly related to the NSDI/SDGs process in awareness and training activities, with the support of international organizations and development assistance partners.
- The decentralization process in which the country has engaged is a long and demanding one. To this end, the above-mentioned need for training and awareness on the SDGs and the ways to address them by involving stakeholders (civil society/private) is even more pressing, and a properly designed strategy and programme needs to be put in place to provide this, with support by donor institutions and appropriate use of pre-accession funding by the EU.

<sup>20</sup> Marseille, France, October, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 [https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/upload/files/Green\\_economy\\_recommandationsEN.pdf](https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/upload/files/Green_economy_recommandationsEN.pdf)

## VII. Resources and means of implementation

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As NSDI-II is fully aligned with SDGs, it is considered that the budget for sustainable development is included in NSDI-II.<sup>21</sup>

The mobilisation of the private sector is ensured through the National Economic Council; however, investment on sustainable development is still weak. It is limited to an Energy Fund which is implemented by private and bank sectors.

Initiatives of the private sector are limited to awareness campaigns in the framework of their social and environmental corporate engagements (CSR), such as the reduction of plastic in water bottles, printing of SDGs on commercial boxes and bottles for awareness raising, etc.

The law on philanthropy and voluntary works was adopted to provide an enabling legal and regulatory framework for a meaningful engagement of CSOs in the delivery of different services through state contracts, and to improve the legal acts for the implementation of the Law on Social Enterprises.<sup>22</sup>

### Box 5. SDGs budget analysis

A recent analysis of the state budget by sector was conducted by the UN in collaboration with the World Bank in order to identify expenditures per SDG. It focused on public spending in the Republic of Albania between 2015 and 2017 in relation with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Based on the assumption that the national development strategy is the key document that guides budget and spending policy; the NSDI pillars/objectives and baseline mapping of SDGs to NSDI have served as a reference point for the budget mapping. The contribution of each NSDI objective to each SDG has been weighted. The budget programmes match to one institution and to one NSDI objective for sectoral strategies. Because SDGs overlap across strategies, they don't usually match one-to-one with budget programmes.

This data and analysis provides a baseline of actual spending by SDGs, and NSDI further to the typical budget classification system. As a result, the spending for SDGs in total and for each SDG individually is easily traceable. It is further possible to complement this data with budget information in the medium term, to obtain a longer time series for purposes of analysis; as well as estimate financing needs and claims on domestic resources and external donors' support financing.

The Government of Albania and UN Albania may use this preliminary analysis to discuss the validity of the baseline mapping and SDG reference in financial terms, including possibly the reconsideration of the EU integration pillar of the NSDI to be acknowledged as SDG relevant.

Once SDG policy discussions become more tangible and the government is closer to setting medium- and long-term targets, this body of data could prove useful in terms of estimating costs of achieving SDG outcomes at given scenarios of financing levels. In that case, it would be necessary to integrate *output/outcome level financial information from the Medium Terms Budget Programme to enable monitoring of results (value for money)*.

Several SDG areas warrant a more thorough analysis of the cost driver and determinants in each sector. Targeting of the acceleration fund could benefit from such analysis, which would enable linkage with performance indicators and simulation of expected results.

Source: Budget analysis of SDGs related spending in Albania: 2015-2017;- Antonia Braho, Sabina Ymeri;- June 2018;- [http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Final%20Report\\_SDG\\_Budget%20Analysis\\_1.pdf](http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Final%20Report_SDG_Budget%20Analysis_1.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Budget analysis of SDGs related spending in Albania: 2015-2017;- Antonia Braho, Sabina Ymeri;- June 2018;- [http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Final%20Report\\_SDG\\_Budget%20Analysis\\_1.pdf](http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Final%20Report_SDG_Budget%20Analysis_1.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Monitoring Matrix on enabling environment for civil society development. Country report for Albania ; - Partners Albania for Change and Development ; - 2018

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- The budget allocated through the NSDI-II is a good starting point but of course cannot be considered sufficient for the implementation of the SDGs at national and regional /local level. A thorough process identifying the priorities for the implementation of the SDGs and the processes to be followed coupled to the cost and expected sources of funding for them is needed.
- Combining multiple goals and targets under each development plan and priority of the NSDI is also important: it is often the case that with little additional effort and cost, multiple objectives may be addressed by combining, for example environmental, social, and economic objectives, while at the same time securing longer-term effects and better inclusiveness of stakeholders.
- The importance of mobilizing the private sector in participating and investing in the implementation of the SDGs in line with the NSDI is crucial, since public sector financing and support by donor institutions is hardly sufficient to reach the goals. In order to achieve this, a set of appropriate incentives and policy guidance needs to be developed along with the NSDI and put in place by the appropriate development ministries (and include the line ministries) to mobilise private investment, also including (crucially) the banking sector.

## VIII. Monitoring and evaluation

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The NSDI-II is organized around the EU integration as its overarching goal; 13 cross-cutting foundations on good governance, democracy and rule of law; and four main sectoral pillars. The implementation of the NSDI-II is assessed and monitored through three sets of national monitoring indicators:

- Specific to EU integration as agreed between Government and EU;
- Covering the 40 sectors, sub-sectors and major programmes included in NSDI-II;
- Macro-economic indicators

An assessment of the NSDI-II indicators vs. the SDGs indicators framework indicates that only 12, out of the 50 indicators of the NSDI-II, are also part of the SDGs indicators framework (four other indicators are closely related to other SDGs indicators). Consequently, although the NSDI-II indicators framework provides a sound basis for the purpose of monitoring the progress with strategy implementation, unfortunately it has very limited capacity to be used as an instrument for monitoring the SDGs implementation in Albania. Thus, additional work even for the shared indicators, is required to define the targets for the year 2030.

While the number of the NSDI-II indicators might be optimal to track down the progress in the priority areas identified by the Albanian Government, the SDGs framework is significantly broader and far more complex, in terms of the number of indicators comprised and particularly, the relationships, synergies and trade-offs involved.<sup>23</sup>

A positive trend of monitoring sectoral strategies with passport<sup>24</sup> indicators has started under the guidance and supervision of the Department for Development and Good Governance at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), responsible for strategic planning. Further work remains to be done to clarify the link between the lower levels of indicators (measuring activities or outputs) and meta-indicators in order to inform decision makers. The monitoring reports for the period 2015-2017 has found a clear progress since 2015 based on a methodology for various dimensions of these strategies. Yet, other sectors have to start developing these passports of indicators or have encountered challenges to develop them.<sup>25</sup>

The need of developing monitoring indicators and proper measurement guidelines especially for meta indicators based on international guidelines is closely linked with the capacity of INSTAT to guide, support and manage the process, as the responsible authority for official national statistics. In addition, other government entities have still to strengthen the process of generation and reporting of such data in line with INSTAT guidelines.

NSDI-II progress reports would be prepared and published on an annual basis by the Department for Development Financing and Foreign Aid with the aim of assessing the implementation progress, benchmarking progress against other countries and identifying critical issues relevant to the strategy objectives and goals and policy orientation. INSTAT, the Albanian Institute of Statistics, coordinates the national statistical system composed by INSTAT, the Bank of Albania and the Ministry of Finance and Economy.

To monitor NSDI-II implementation, the National monitoring platform is on-going, it comprises a set of indicators grouped into the four main themes: social cohesion and quality of life / integrated spatial development / sustainable management of environmental resources / economic competitiveness.

The monitoring and evaluation system should provide accessible information for the public. With regard to notification and public consultation, in compliance with the Law 146/ 2014 on Notification and Public Consultation allows consultation for draft laws and draft strategies, based on the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 828, date 07.10.2015 on "Approval of Rules on Creation and Administration of Electronic Register for Notification and Public Consultation", the electronic register for notification and public consultation is created.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> SDG mainstreaming through the National Strategy for Integration and Development 2015-2020 (NSDI II); - Final Report

<sup>24</sup> The purpose of Passport Indicators is to provide the detailed methodological description of measurement for all Output-level indicators that are included into the Public Finance Management Strategy of Albania. It provides transparency regarding how the Government provides information on achievements within the objectives.

<sup>25</sup> Budget analysis of SDGs related spending in Albania: 2015-2017 [http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Final%20Report\\_SDG\\_Budget%20Analysis\\_1.pdf](http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Final%20Report_SDG_Budget%20Analysis_1.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development; - Country Report for Albania May 2018-May 2019; - Partners Albania for Change and Development; - 2019.



## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- The establishment of a national dashboard that takes over UN indicators, alternative indicators (definition close to UN definition), and additional indicators relevant for Albania, could unify the different reporting frameworks and give greater visibility to the role and contribution of different stakeholders in the collection, processing and dissemination of data and indicators. The MSSD dashboard, that takes into account SDG indicators, while specifically adapting to the Mediterranean context and information availability can be used as a reference. In addition, specific experience sharing among Balkan and Mediterranean countries can help progress faster on SDG monitoring, as bottlenecks and solutions are often of similar nature. Finally, work undertaken by the European Environmental Agency is a useful support on environmental indicators.
- The role of the media is important in disseminating legible and digestible information to the public, it requires training of its specific bodies, including mainstream media, on SD and SDGs.
- Reinforcing the role of social (e.g. civil society) and economic (private sector) stakeholders in providing information and data for monitoring the process is important. By establishing a reference base for NGOs carrying out environmental or social work on the field and collecting data from these activities, and by asking the private sector to start reporting on (some) ESG indicators a significant database for monitoring can be developed at a national and regional level.
- Proper design of the national reporting and monitoring framework, in line with the existing UN and related guidelines, needs to be at the centre of this process, so that compatibility and usability of all data is secured to the maximum level.
- Publication of information and indexes in relation to the implementation of the SDGs is a very important tool, allowing administration, citizens and the private sector to become informed and involved with the process.

### Box 6. Alignment of NSDI-II set of indicators with SDGs targets and indicators

A Rapid integrated assessment (RIA) was drafted in Albania in 2016<sup>27</sup>. It analysed the NSDI II plus 50 other national, sectoral, or cross-cutting strategies and policy documents and national plans that had been adopted (or seemed likely to be adopted soon) at mid-year. These included:

- 20 national, sectoral, or cross-cutting strategies, part of the NSDI-II and adopted as of June 2016;
- two policy paper documents, part of the NSDI-II, adopted as of June 2016;
- 11 national, sectoral, or cross-cutting strategies, not part of the NSDI-II and adopted as of June 2016;
- 20 policy paper documents, national plans, etc. not part of the NSDI-II, adopted as of June 2016; and
- Other draft strategies and policy documents, available online for discussions but not yet adopted as of June 2016.

The RIA noted that the NSDI-II contains three sets of national monitoring indicators (some 50 in total) focusing on: (i) EU integration (as agreed between the Government of Albania and the European Union); (ii) some 40 sectoral development programmes included in/aligned with the NSDI II; and (iii) macroeconomic indicators.

The RIA pointed out that, while they are certainly important, only 12 of these 50 indicators also belonged to the global or EU SDG indicator sets. The RIA therefore concluded that “although the NSDI II indicators framework provides a sound basis for the purpose of monitoring the progress with strategy implementation, unfortunately it has very limited capacity to be used as an instrument for monitoring the SDGs implementation in Albania.” The Assessment found that “the duration of the NSDI II (until 2020) is significantly shorter than the scope of the SDGs which extends to 2030. Thus, additional work even for the shared indicators, is required to define the targets for the year 2030.”

Source: MAPS Report, 2018

<sup>27</sup> SDG mainstreaming through the NSDI 2015-2020.



# Conclusion

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The SIMPEER analysis of the sustainable development process in Albania highlights the country's unwavering commitment to adhere to the 2030 Agenda and to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

The strategic framework for the implementation of the SDGs is the NSDI-II 2015-2020 which constitutes the strategic document reflecting the vision, the objectives, the priorities and the means to ensure the socio-economic development of the country and its aspiration for European integration.

Many studies undertaken as part of the elaboration of the National Voluntary Review on SDG implementation, presented to the UN High-Level Political Forum in June 2018, show the alignment of the NSDI pillars with the SDGs and most of their targets. The NSDI-II, however, does not explicitly refer to the SDGs, since its development was concomitant with the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. Neither does the document refer to or align with the objectives and strategic directions of the MSDD, also established in 2015.

The leadership of the NSDI and the SDGs is provided by the Prime Ministry, which has set up an inter-ministerial committee in charge of coordination. Two inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks also exist: the first on the coordination of the EU accession, with a secretariat provided by the Directorate for Development, Financing and External Assistance, and the second related to the coordination of the SDGs process with a secretariat is provided by the Development and Good Governance Directorate. Both committees are at a level of ministerial representativeness, and both are complemented by technical inter-sectoral working groups.

Ownership of the SDG implementation process was recognized by a decision of the Albanian Parliament which adopted, in 2017, a resolution committing to the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and ODD, through inclusive and broad-based development processes.

The integration of sustainable development into line ministry strategies is ensured through the NSDI-II's "sustained growth through efficient use of resources" pillar which translates the strategic goals of the Strategy in terms of economic development, taking into account the need of a balanced and sustainable use of resources.

The degree of responsibility of each sectoral ministry has been defined in a matrix to delineate its role in implementation within its area of competence. The links between SDGs are highlighted, although efforts still need to be made to ensure full interconnection and ownership both at the departmental level, between ministries and between ministries and other stakeholders.

The contribution of civil society is also a challenge that still arises despite the dynamism that characterizes this category of actors over the past ten years. Many new NGOs have emerged, their privileged areas being human rights, gender issues and integration of minorities. Many of them work on information, awareness and promotion of SDGs and in particular SDGs related to environmental issues. The role of civil society is expected to grow complementing public sector action, in particular in a context of decentralisation, and reinforce its interventions by their added value of proximity and expertise. However, NGO action cannot be expected to replace public intervention.

The private sector remains very little engaged in implementing the SDGs and investing in sustainable initiatives. Among the sectors for accelerating SDG implementation that have been identified by the Mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support for achieving the sustainable development goals in Albania (MAPS), the green economy is among the three leading sectors, however its full potential has yet to be realized. Improving the enabling environment is expected to mobilize more the private sector as much as civil society.

There is no specific budget allocated to the implementation of the SDGs, it was however possible to estimate the investments of the state through an exercise of evaluation of the expenses in the Medium-Term Budget Program 2015-2017 which is the country's fiscal planning framework for a period of three years.

In addition to these main conclusions of the analysis, the report sets out for each of the five dimensions of the SIMPEER analysis the issues that were discussed with Peer countries as well as recommendations issued from their meeting in Marseille, on 19 & 20 November 2019.

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# Annex

Figure 4. Key policy area relations between NSDI-II 2015-2020, SDGs and MSSD frameworks

| NSDI II 2015 - 2020   |   | SDG |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Priority  | Policy Area   | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| EU Integration (Five priorities)  | Public administration reform, stable institutions                           |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Strengthening the judiciary system  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Fight against corruption  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Fight against organized crime   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Human rights  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Foundation: Consolidating good governance, democracy and the rule of law          | Justice System Reform   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Strengthening legislative and electoral processes                           |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Integrated Border Management  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Fight against organized crime, terrorism, and trafficking                   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Strengthening public order and preparedness for cases of civil emergencies  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Strengthening human rights  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Creating an enabling environment for the civil society, and its development |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Public administration reform and civil service reform                       |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Transparency and the fight against corruption                               |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Decentralization and local governance reform                                |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Empowering Albanian statistics  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Growing importance of foreign policy  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Consolidated defense  |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| PILLAR 1: GROWTH THROUGH MACRO-ECONOMIC AND FISCAL STABILITY                      | Strengthening financial system and monetary policy                          |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Strengthening public finances and fiscal stability                          |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| PILLAR 2: ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH ENHANCED COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION         | Assuring and protecting property rights                                     |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Promotion of business and Foreign Direct Investments                        |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Expanding scientific research and innovation                                |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Investing in Information Communication Technology                           |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Ensuring consumer protection and market surveillance                        |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| PILLAR 3: INVESTING IN HUMAN CAPITAL AND SOCIAL COHESION                          | Protecting competition and ensuring control of state aid                    |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | More opportunities and more quality in education                            |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | A stronger and more accessible health care system                           |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Increased employment opportunities  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Strengthening social insurance  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Managing migration  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Consolidating social protection   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Building a more inclusive society   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Ensuring gender equality  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Youth empowerment   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | More attention to arts and culture  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Strengthening the role of sports  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| PILLAR 4: GROWTH THROUGH SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT | Connectivity agenda   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Efficient public services   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Sustainable environmental and economic development                          |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Very good alignment   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Good alignment  |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Partial alignment   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Limited alignment   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |