

MAPPING OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY CHALLENGE AND BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Deliverable Number: D 2.1

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline with rocky cliffs and clear turquoise water. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is overlaid on the right side of the image. In the center, a white circle contains the text 'CIRCULAR ALBANIA TOURISM'.

CIRCULAR
ALBANIA
TOURISM



Co-funded by the
European Union

EDITORIAL



Lead Beneficiary: EURAKOM

Authors: AULEDA – Local Economic Development Agency

Contributors: `

Feedback and input provided by: EURAKOM, DomSpain, ITKAM, Elbasan VET School, Antoni Athanas VET School, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tirana, AULEDA, QFFP Vlore

Date of publication: [05/2025]

EURAKOM, 2025

Reproduction for non-commercial use is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

This document © **2025 by Circular Tourism Albania** is licensed under [Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Limitations of the study
- 1.3 Specific Objectives of the Study

2. Methodology

3. Circular Economy - Literature Review

- 3.1 Circular economy overview
- 3.2 SWOT Analysis of Albania's Tourism Development and Image Improvement
- 3.3 Key Circular Economy Challenges in Albania's Tourism Sector
- 3.4 Assessment of Barriers
- 3.5 Opportunities for Circular Economy in Tourism

4. Findings from Questionnaires

- 4.1 Overview
- 4.2 Information Collected from Questionnaire for Teachers of VET Schools
- 4.3 Information Collected from General Questionnaire

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

6. References

7. Annex

8. Partners





.1.

INTRODUCTION



Co-funded by the
European Union

INTRODUCTION



Today, Albania is facing challenges of climate change like any other European country and is trying to address all related problems in a fair and proactive manner, especially regarding sustainable waste management, reuse and recycling of materials, changing consumer culture and behaviour by orienting it towards repair and reuse, etc. These initiatives have a significant impact on meeting the standards for Albania's integration into the European Union.

The strategy for business development foresees technical and financial support for changing the business model by orienting it towards the circular economy, not only aiming to reduce costs but especially by making it competitive in a wider market. Albanian financial incentives for ecological businesses, effective from the energy point of view, effective from the organisational and procedural point of view are now the main words of the programmes offered by financial institutions at the national level. Enhancing competitiveness, promoting fair and equitable growth, decarbonising the economy, and safeguarding the environment are at the forefront of Albania's national policies.

In the National Development and Integration Strategy 2022-2030, Albania's commitment to sustainable development depends on the transition from a traditional and developed system of business and the private sector to a new business model based on the principles of the circular economy in full coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Development Organization SDG 2020-2030. Notably, Albania's path to sustainable development and EU integration requires an integrated approach to waste management, which is a crucial focus of its National Plan for



Integrated Waste Management (2020-2035), to gradually transition from a linear waste model to a circular approach promoting reuse and recycling.

While Albania has yet to establish a comprehensive framework for environmental protection which extends beyond climate change mitigation, the National Strategy for Climate Change (2020-2030) concentrates on strengthening institutional capacity to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, aligning with the EU climate framework and the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Attention to the environment and the orientation towards the circular economy have been taken into consideration in an analytical way in the government's policies for the development of the industry. In the National Business Development Strategy 2021-2027, special focus is given to the promotion of green investments in respect of the environment, changes in the supply chain of raw materials, orienting it more towards circulating products and services and the strengthening of eco-innovation in key sectors of economic development. Key institutions in Albania have acknowledged the significance of a circular transition in achieving national and regional development objectives.

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment has institutionalised its approach to the circular economy through the creation of the Directorate for Circular Economy. The cross-cutting nature of the circular transition requires whole-of-government involvement in the formulation and implementation of circular economy policies.

1.1 BACKGROUND



The CIRCULAR TOURISM project aims to promote sustainable practices and progress towards a circular economy within the hospitality and tourism sectors in Albania. The main aim of this methodology is to identify and map the main opportunities, challenges and barriers in implementing circular economy principles across the country's tourism ecosystem. This will serve as a first step in aligning VET (Vocational Education and Training) curricula, tourism business operations and regional policies with sustainable, green and circular tourism practices.

For Mapping Circular Economy Challenges and Barriers to Implementation within the framework of the CIRCULAR TOURISM project, a structured methodology can help identify the main barriers, challenges and opportunities within the hospitality and tourism sector in Albania, as we move towards a circular economy.

The key aim of this method is to help the orderly gathering and study of data that will give a full and simple grasp of the problems and hurdles to setting up a circular economy in the tourism field in Albania. This method is set out in:

Identification of stakeholders: To understand the approach of key stakeholders such as tourism SMEs, VET educators, tourism professionals and policy makers.

1.1 BACKGROUND



Analysing existing barriers: To identify the main economic, educational, technical, cultural and policy-related barriers that hinder the transition to a circular economy.

Providing a basis for future interventions: To inform the design of targeted actions, training and capacity-building initiatives that will bridge the gap between existing knowledge and the necessary sustainable and circular practices in the tourism sector.

Supporting long-term objectives: Creating a roadmap for the continuous integration of circular economy principles in Albania's tourism sector, with the aim of supporting future sustainability goals and increasing Albania's attractiveness as a green tourism destination.

By mapping these barriers, the project will ensure that interventions are aligned with the specific challenges faced by stakeholders and can provide tangible solutions that drive long-term and sustainable change.



1.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limited nature of reliable and up-to-date data on the functioning of the circular economy in the tourism sector in Albania is one of the main challenges. The predominance of available information is either anecdotal or fragmented, which hinders full comparative and trend analyses.

Another limitation is the relatively low awareness or understanding of circular economy principles among key stakeholder groups, such as SMEs, educators and local authorities. Stakeholder engagement levels varied across groups, sometimes being limited due to reluctance and time to participate. Furthermore, there are no existing local studies or pilot projects related to circular tourism, which limits the potential to show comparisons or validation of findings.

Finally, the nature of the Albanian regulator and policy is ongoing and dynamic and some of the recommendations, or barriers identified, may change or evolve, requiring further review and adaptation beyond the focus of this initial study.

1.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY



Obj.1. Assessing awareness and familiarity of stakeholders with circular economy principles

The aim is to examine the extent to which stakeholders are aware of and perceive circular economy principles in tourism and the tourism ecosystem. Stakeholders mainly include VET school educators, students, managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), tourism industry professionals and local authorities, among others. Assessing stakeholder readiness is essential for developing training programs and interventions that are appropriately targeted according to the understanding of current skills and learning needs.

Obj 2. Analysing challenges and barriers to circular economy principles in tourism

The aim is to identify the main challenges that prevent or limit circular practices in tourism in Albania. Challenges may include lack of regulatory incentives, lack of financial capabilities, lack of access to sustainable technologies, low levels of digitalization capability, lack of skills or cultural resistance to change. Being aware of the challenges or barriers will help develop better solutions through policy and practice.



1.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY



Obj 3. Assessing the alignment of VET curricula with circular economy competencies

One of the main gaps in the existing system is the disconnect between tourism education and the real needs of the labour market regarding sustainability and green skills. This objective is to assess VET curricula for their inclusion of relevant content on circular economy principles, sustainable tourism management and environmentally responsible business practices.

Obj 4: Assessing education-business collaboration and capacity gaps

The successful transition to circular tourism depends heavily on collaboration between educational institutions and the private sector. The aim of this objective is to assess the extent to which collaboration can take place between VET colleges and SMEs, such as through placements, staff exchanges, project partnerships and industry-representative input into the curriculum. It also seeks to explore capacity gaps on both sides, e.g., teacher training, mentoring for SMEs and supporting start-ups for sustainability.

Obj 5: Opportunities for Circular Economy in Tourism

This objective is about engaging to show tangible opportunities for a circular economy transition within Albania's tourism and hospitality sector. The study discusses challenges and barriers; however, it also seeks to identify places where positive change can occur. This means finding out how the tourism and hospitality sectors can shift from linear to some circular economic models through innovation, collaboration, and investment.



.2.

METHODOLOGY



Co-funded by the
European Union

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN



The study methodology was designed keeping in mind the main purpose of the study, to understand the current situation, challenges and future needs of vocational education schools as well as tourism sector businesses and their contribution to the development of the circular economy.

To explore the challenges and opportunities of applying circular economy (CE) principles in the Albanian tourism sector, this study utilises a mixed-methods research design. Through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, a more comprehensive understanding of current practices, stakeholder awareness, and systemic gaps is established. An exploratory and descriptive research approach is employed to analyse the current infrastructure and behavioural practices of tourism stakeholders. The research includes multiple geographic regions including coastal (e.g., Vlorë), rural (e.g., Shkodër) and cultural heritage (e.g., Gjirokastër) areas to capture a wide range of environmental challenges pertinent to tourism.



2.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection phase of this study was aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the barriers and opportunities for implementing circular economy (CE) practices in Albanian tourism, specifically in relation to vocational education and training (VET). To accomplish this, the research incorporated a qualitative, multi-source methodology that consisted of a literature review, desk research, and semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders.

2.2.1. Literature Review

The literature review laid the groundwork for outlining theoretical frameworks, best practices, and policy recommendations related to the implementation of circular economies in tourism. Academic articles, policy reports, and institutional reports from institutions such as the European Commission, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and OECD were reviewed to:

- Examine both global and regional models of circular tourism,
- Understand how CE is integrated into local or regional education and training systems, and
- Identify sustainability challenges associated with emerging tourism destinations.

The literature review informed the generation of interview questions and the overall analytical framework.



2.2.2 Desk Research

Desk research was conducted to collect secondary sources, which were publicly available, from national strategies, local government documentation, NGO reports, and tourism development plans. The goal of this desk research was to provide a context for Albania's current state of sustainability and circular economy practices in tourism covering particularly the:

- National waste management strategies and circular economy related legislation Tourism statistics and trends in Albania (seasonality, regional pressures).
- Existing VET curricula and educational efforts around the environment.
- Pilot projects or funded projects around circular economy and tourism.

This investigation provides an evidence-based perspective on the policy and institutional context by illustrating existing actions and gaps where needed behaviors are not modeled.

2.2.3 Questionnaires

To develop in-depth knowledge from practitioners involved in sustainable education and tourism, questionnaires were conducted with:

Teachers and coordinators from VET schools engaged in tourism and environmental education

Local stakeholders and project partners.



This included representatives of NGOs, tourism practitioners and municipal officials facilitating or supporting the Circular Tourism project.

The interviews sought to explore: What does learning about sustainability and the circular economy look like? Understanding local environmental issues related to tourism. remain relevant to the purpose of the project. The questionnaires were conducted virtually, depending on availability, and documented through reports.



2.3 DATA ANALYSES



The processing of the collected data was based on the descriptive analysis of the data, their simple statistical processing through the identification of variables, their processing, the drawing of graphs and their interpretation. Statistical processing of quantitative data was combined with thematic processing of collected qualitative data combining content analyses with narrative ones.

Qualitative and quantitative data were integrated in the study for a comprehensive understanding.

Complementary analyses using the qualitative insights to explain and contextualise quantitative findings were used when the qualitative data were not enough to give a clear view of the need or challenge.

A clear reporting and dissemination component was a key part of this study's methodology that establishes the baseline findings coming from the data analysis into a usable and user-friendly format. The report contains graphics such as charts, graphs, and infographics, and recommendations to assist the development of circular economy practices in tourism through training, technology, and policy.



.3.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

*LITERATURE
REVIEW*



Co-funded by the
European Union

3.1 CIRCULAR ECONOMY OVERVIEW



3.1.1. Circular Economy (CE): what is it, what are its priorities and goals^[1]

Circular economy (CE) is an economic model that aims to minimise waste and maximise the use of resources; materials are kept within the economy, allowing for productive use that further increases their value.

This system regenerates and reuses materials and products, counteracting the traditional linear economy approach based on 'take, make, dispose'. It therefore promotes the closure of the life cycle of products through recycling, repair, reuse and remanufacturing.

It is a production and consumption model that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible, thus extending the life cycle of products.

In contrast to the traditional, linear economic model, circular economy promotes waste reduction, reuse and recycling of products and materials, supporting a closed-loop regenerative system. It is based on key principles such as reducing waste throughout the product life cycle, recovering materials from waste streams and prolonging product life.

The main objectives and principles of the circular economy can be summed up and listed as follows:

[1] 2024_OECD_A Roadmap towards Circular Economy of Albania OECD /2023_European Parliament Circular economy definition, importance and benefits

Waste reduction: Reduce the amount of waste produced by optimising the use of resources throughout the product life cycle, including minimizing waste during production and consumption.

Protection of natural resources: Use recycled materials and reduce the extraction of new resources because when a product reaches the end of its life cycle, its components are recovered and fed back into the economic cycle as secondary raw materials



Figure 1- Infographic explaining the circular economy model



Emission reduction: Promote sustainable technologies and practices to reduce environmental impact, such as using renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preserving ecosystems.

Creation of new economic opportunities: Generation of jobs in the recycling, repair and renewable energy sectors, while promoting consumption patterns based on sharing, leasing, renting and selling services rather than products, thus reducing the need to produce new goods.

Resilience of value chains: Ensure greater security of resources and raw materials through efficient use and recycling because products are designed to last longer, be repairable and easily disassembled, facilitating reuse, repair and recycling. In order to put the principles and theory governing the circular economy into action and make them feasible, three mechanisms are involved:

Closing resource cycles: recycling materials to replace virgin materials. It includes the recycling of secondary materials and the use of second-hand, repaired or remanufactured products.

Slowing down resource cycles: Products are designed to have a longer life. This may include designing durability and frequent upgrades or repairs.

Shrinking resource flows: Efficiency in the use of natural resources, materials and products is improved. This includes the adoption of advanced production technologies, the intensive use of existing assets and changes in consumption behavior.



Implementing a circular economy requires a collaborative, multilevel approach, involving governments, businesses, citizens and international organisations. Policies and regulations must incentivise sustainable practices, support innovation and promote environmental awareness and education. Finding ways by which this can be accomplished highlights the benefits that this type of economy provides:

Environmental protection: Reusing and recycling products delays the use of natural resources, reduces the alteration of landscapes and habitats, and helps limit the loss of biodiversity. Additionally, they create more efficient and sustainable products right from the start, reducing energy and resource consumption, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

Reducing dependence on raw materials: Global population growth increases the demand for raw materials, but the supply of many resources is limited. Recycling can mitigate the risks associated with supply, such as price volatility and dependence on imports, which are crucial for the production of technologies needed to achieve climate goals.

Job creation and savings for consumers: Shifting to a more circular economy could increase competitiveness, stimulate innovation, foster economic growth and create jobs. Consumers would benefit from more durable and innovative products, improving quality of life and reducing long-term costs.



3.1.2 CE in Europe

Albania is one of the nine countries currently recognised as candidates for EU membership. The decision to join the EU is due to the desire to improve and increase opportunities for economic growth, strengthen political stability, and at the same time promote social progress in order to align with European values.

The accession process is long and tortuous, in the case of Albania it started in 2003, and since then the Albanian government has implemented various policies in order to move this process forward. This also includes the importance of making its economic system more circular in order to bring it in line with EU standards and demands.

The European Commission has approved several action plans to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, meaning that also Albania would have to follow such measures, which include the improvement of product design, increase recycling, reduce the use of plastics, and promote the repair of goods, demonstrating how the circular economy is an integrated approach that seeks to create a more sustainable and less environmentally damaging economic system, through the valorisation of waste and the reduction of the use of non-renewable resources.



In March 2020, the European Commission presented its Circular Economy Action Plan, with the aim of promoting more sustainable product design, reducing waste and empowering consumers. This plan focuses on key sectors such as batteries, vehicles, electronics, textiles, construction and packaging.

In February 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution to achieve a zero-carbon, sustainable and fully circular economy by 2050, with stricter recycling rules and binding targets for material use and consumption by 2030. The Commission's proposals include strengthening sustainable products, revising the legislation on construction products and creating a strategy on sustainable textiles.

In November 2022, the Commission proposed new packaging regulations to reduce packaging waste and improve packaging design by promoting the use of bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics.



3.1.3 CE in Albania

The country's commitment to sustainable development is reflected in its National Strategy for Development and Integration (2022-2030), which aims at a circular economy in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although Albania has not yet established a comprehensive framework for environmental protection that goes beyond climate change mitigation, its National Climate Change Strategy (2020-2030) focuses on strengthening institutional capacity to reduce GHG emissions.

This effort is aligned with the EU climate framework and the goals of the Paris Agreement. Environmental considerations are becoming increasingly integrated into relevant industrial policies. For example, the Strategy for Investment and Business Development (2021-2027) places a strong emphasis on promoting green investments, supply chain changes for more circular products and services, and eco-innovation in key economic sectors. Leading Albanian institutions have recognised the importance of the transition to a circular economy for the achievement of national and regional development goals.

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment is leading this change, especially through the new Directorate for Circular Economy. However, the circular transition requires the involvement of the entire government in the formulation and implementation of relevant policies.



Therefore, other institutions, such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy and the National Environment Agency, are also contributing to this transformation effort. Despite these initiatives, concrete progress towards the circular economy in Albania has so far been limited. The main challenges include low awareness of circular economy concepts among citizens and businesses, lack of adequate infrastructure and limited financing options for businesses. Current efforts are often fragmented and lack a unified and coordinated approach. This lack of concerted action is a key obstacle to the transition to a circular economy in Albania, highlighting the need to develop a clear roadmap^[2].

Driven by the desire to enter the EU, Albania is facing major challenges regarding waste management and the circular economy. In order to start satisfying the required standards, a number of initiatives and measures have been put in place to align Albanian standards with European ones and to promote sustainability in several areas, so as to generate more job opportunities and generally improve public welfare.

Initiatives already in place include the strengthening of public and private sector capacities to adopt circular economy practices, so that various economic incentives related to producer responsibility and waste reduction are made accessible.

[2] 2024_OECD_A Roadmap towards Circular Economy of Albania OECD {p.16-17}

In addition, regarding waste management, the country is working to improve recycling, composting and increasing the energy efficiency of waste management facilities, including those that process wastewater. The many efforts Albania is making are aimed at improving services by improving their sustainability, while maintaining a focus on the needs and requirements of citizens.^[3]



Figure 2- Proposed short-list of priority areas for Albania

As illustrated in Fig. 2, in 2024 the OECD^[4] (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) identified priority areas where Albania should focus its efforts in order to improve its economic model, turning it into a more circular one.

[3] 2023_GIZ_Leading the transition towards circular economy and sustainable urban development

[4] 2024_OECD_A Roadmap towards Circular Economy of Albania OECD /2023_OECD_Circular-economy-prioritisation-Albania-presentation



The OECD also carried out an assessment by consulting the various stakeholders, identifying the main actions on which first action is required, as they would have a more significant impact on the country:

1. Use of economic instruments to promote sustainable consumption and production, fostering sustainability in consumption and production.
2. Promoting circular business models among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), fostering the transition of SMEs from traditional linear to circular business models.
3. Address the problem of plastics along the value chain with a focus on marine litter, managing the life cycle of plastics to keep materials in the economic system and prevent their accumulation in marine ecosystems.

3.1.4. Stakeholders

For the CIRCULAR TOURISM project in Albania, stakeholders play crucial roles in advancing circular economy practices within the tourism sector. Key stakeholders include tourism SMEs such as hotels, tour operators, restaurants, and transportation providers, who will be directly involved in adopting sustainable practices, reducing waste, and improving resource efficiency. Additionally, local tourism shops and artisans can contribute by offering sustainable goods and services.



Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions and educators are essential for aligning curricula with circular economy principles. They will equip future professionals in the tourism sector with the necessary skills to promote sustainability. Trainers and curriculum developers from these institutions will be key to implementing the required training programs.

Government bodies, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, as well as local authorities, will be critical in shaping policies that support sustainable tourism practices. Regulatory agencies and environmental organisations will play a role in enforcing regulations and encouraging circular economy models within the sector.

Tourism associations, sustainable tourism experts, and consultants will provide guidance, raise awareness, and promote best practices. Furthermore, international organizations like the EU delegation, sustainability-focused NGOs, and global tourism bodies will offer expertise and funding opportunities to foster circular tourism.

Tourists and local residents are also vital, as their behaviors and preferences will influence the demand for sustainable practices. Academia and research institutions will provide essential research and data to support the adoption of circular economy principles.



Financial institutions and investors will help fund green initiatives within the sector, while media outlets and social influencers will assist in spreading awareness and promoting sustainable tourism.

Finally, technology providers and green tech startups can support the transition by offering innovative solutions for waste management, energy efficiency, and resource optimisation in the tourism industry.

By engaging with these diverse stakeholders, the project will be better equipped to identify challenges, opportunities, and barriers, ultimately guiding the development of effective strategies for implementing circular economy practices in Albania's tourism ecosystem

3.1.5. An economic model with sustainability as its purpose

Circular Economy (CE) can be defined as a purposefully designed "socio-economic system inspired by natural systems, regenerative of human and natural capital that works long term for all stakeholders"



As such, adopting CE practices can be seen as a necessary prerequisite for sustainable development for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ultimately a fully sustainable society, where an equitable and prosperous socio-economic system can be sustained within the planet's carrying capacity, for present and future generations. The CE approach offers an essential toolbox to implement, measure, adjust and deliver sustainable production and consumption patterns and to drive innovation and competitiveness at the same time.

The most widely publicised illustration of the CE framework is the Butterfly diagram. It depicts the resource flows in an economic system driven by solar energy (renewables), where linear flows of products and materials are replaced by circular flows in two distinct cycles - a biological cycle and a technical cycle, and where value is generated through 'circular business models'.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation created this visualisation as arguably the most iconic depiction of the CE model. It demonstrates two different cycles of value:



1. Biological Cycle

- Facilitates the cycle of organic materials.
- Involves systems like composting, anaerobic digestion, and cascades (e.g., taking cotton clothing and using the fiber for insulation after use).
- Ends in a safe return of nutrients to nature.
- Energised through regeneration, or design principles of natural systems.

2. Technical Cycle

- Involves the cycle of finite materials (e.g. metals, plastics, electronics).
- Involves preventative maintenance, reuse, remanufacture and recycle.
- To bring the product back to its original integrity and quality of materials.
- Facilitates resource productivity and innovation.

Each of these cycles support a circular business model, creating value not just through selling more goods, but also through services, improving durability, and improving overall efficiency and experience for the customer.

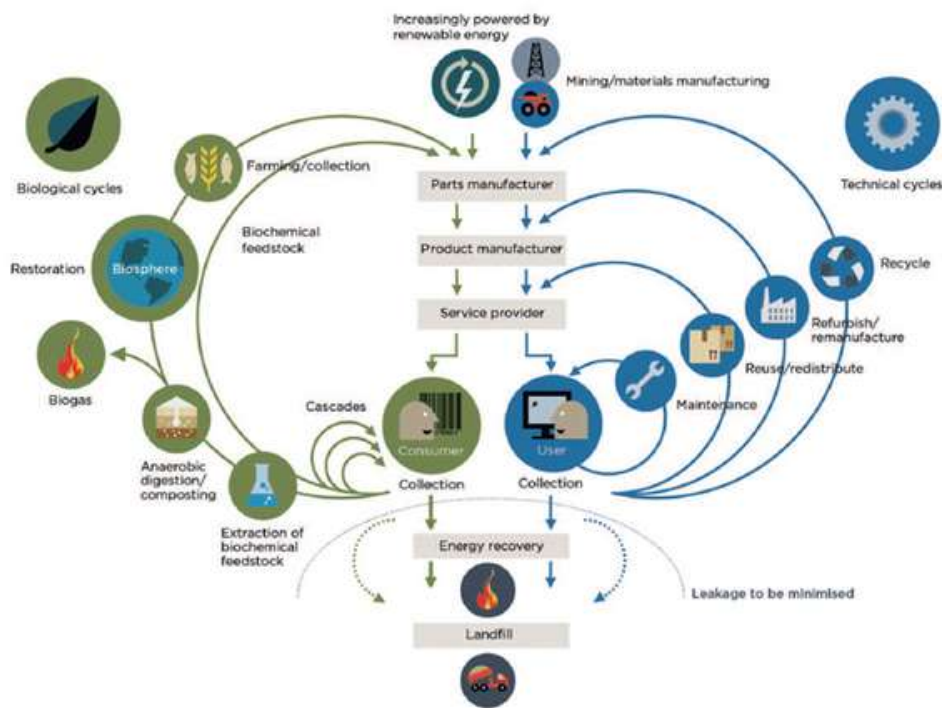


Figure.3 Resource flows in a CE - the EMF Butterfly diagram

Source: Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013). *Towards the circular economy, vol. 1: Economic and business rationale for a circular economy.*

Applying the Butterfly Diagram to Albanian Tourism

Biological Cycle : Regenerating Nature

Focus: Tourism activities that contribute to the production of biodegradable waste or that incorporate natural inputs

Key Actions:

- Composting organic waste from hotels/restaurants to get nutrients back into soil.
- Eco-agritourism that promotes regenerative farming/traditional food production.
- Using more natural, biodegradable materials for lodging (bamboo, hemp textiles)
- Encouraging lower-impact tourism (i.e. hiking, birding, experience farming locally)

Technical Cycle : Extending Product Life

Focus: Oversight of infrastructure, electronics, furnishings, and other manufactured products used in the tourism sector

Key Actions:

Promote the repair, refurbishment, and reuse of furnishings and equipment in hotels Encourage rental and sharing models for bicycles, kayaks, and e-scooters

Leverage digital platforms to improve bookings (hotels, transport, activities) and reduce overcapacity.

Implement energy-efficient systems, smart water usage, and retrofits Albania Opportunity:

Refurbishing traditional homes into guesthouses (e.g. Gjirokastër, Theth)

-Encouraging circular interior design in hotels using recycled or upcycled materials Shared mobility services in Tirana or the Riviera

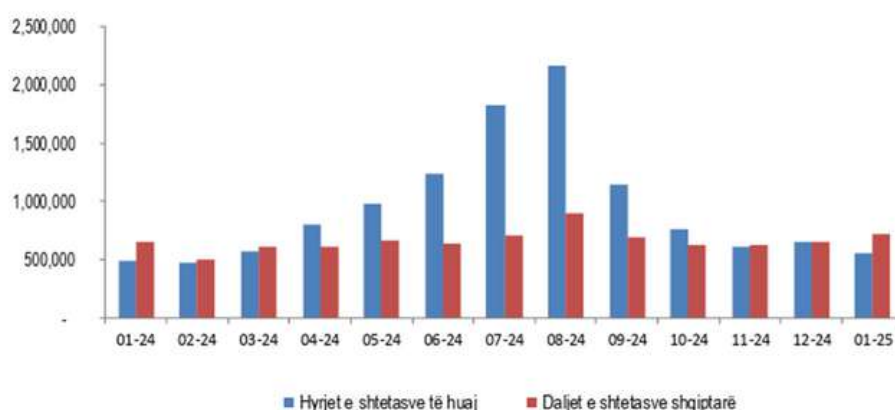


Fig.4 Movements of citizens in Albania, January 2024- January 2025



Tourism in Albania

During the month of January 2025, 1,158,204 Albanian and foreign citizens entered the territory of the Republic of Albania. This indicator has increased by 12.4% compared to January 2024.

1,360,299 Albanian and foreign citizens have left the territory of the Republic of Albania, marking an increase of 11.7%, compared to the same period a year ago.

Citizens' entries

In January 2025, the number of Albanian citizens who entered the Albanian territory was 597,808, an increase of 10.6% compared to January 2024.

The number of foreign citizens who entered Albanian territory is 560,396. This number has increased by 14.5%, compared to the same period in 2024 (fig.4).





3.2 SWOT ANALYSIS OF ALBANIA'S TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

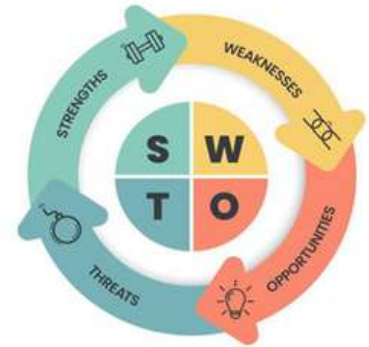


Figure 5: SWOT Analysis

1.Strengths

1.1-Natural Beauty & Diverse Landscapes:

Albania boasts stunning beaches along the Ionian and Adriatic seas, the picturesque Albanian Riviera, and diverse mountains, which make it an attractive destination for nature lovers, hikers, and beachgoers.

1.2-Rich Cultural Heritage:

Albania has a wealth of cultural and historical attractions, including UNESCO World Heritage sites like Gjirokastër and Butrint, medieval castles, and ancient ruins. The country's history offers significant appeal for cultural tourism.

2.Weaknesses

2.1-Limited Awareness and Perception Issues:

Albania is not yet a well-known tourist destination in many international markets. Some travelers still perceive the country as underdeveloped or unsafe, which can hinder tourism growth.

2.2- Underdeveloped Tourism Services:

While infrastructure is improving, some areas still lack sufficient tourist facilities, such as high-quality hotels, guided tours, and local services to cater to international standards.



1.3- Affordable Destination:

Albania remains a relatively low-cost travel destination compared to many European countries, making it appealing to budget travelers and tourists seeking affordable experiences.

2.3- Seasonality:

Albania's tourism is highly seasonal, with a large influx of visitors during the summer months, leading to overcrowded beaches and limited tourism activity during the off-season.

1.4- Growing Infrastructure:

Albania has been improving its transport and tourism infrastructure, including upgrading airports (e.g., Tirana International Airport) and expanding road networks, making the country more accessible for international tourists.

2.4- Limited Marketing and Branding:

The country's tourism marketing efforts are still in their early stages. Albania lacks the established brand recognition that other European destinations like Greece, Italy, or Croatia enjoy.

1.5- Untapped Potential:

Compared to established European tourist destinations, Albania remains underdeveloped in terms of mass tourism, which means there's room for sustainable growth and less overcrowding.

2.5- Environmental Concerns:

Rapid growth in tourism could lead to environmental degradation if not managed sustainably, especially on the coastline and in natural parks.



3.Opportunities:

3.1-Eco-Tourism and Sustainable Development:

There is a growing global demand for eco-tourism and sustainable travel options. Albania's rich natural landscapes, rural areas, and commitment to sustainable practices could attract eco-conscious travelers.

3.2-Cultural and Heritage Tourism:

Albania's cultural offerings, including ancient ruins, religious sites, and traditional experiences, can be further promoted to attract cultural tourists and niche markets like archaeological tourism.

3.3- Improved Marketing and International Promotion:

By developing targeted marketing strategies and participating in international tourism fairs, Albania can raise awareness of its unique offerings and strengthen its image as an emerging destination.

4.Threats:

4.1-Competition from Other Destinations:

Albania faces intense competition from more established European tourism destinations, especially from neighbouring countries like Greece, Croatia, and Montenegro, which are already recognised global tourism hotspots.

4.2-Political and Economic Instability:

Albania's political environment and economy can pose risks for tourism development. Any instability or economic downturns could negatively impact foreign investment and tourism growth.

4.3- Environmental Risks:

Over-tourism in popular areas, especially along the coast, could damage the environment, leading to a loss of appeal for eco-conscious tourists. Pollution and waste management also remain significant concerns.





3.4- Development of Winter Tourism:

The Albanian Alps offer potential for developing winter tourism, including skiing and adventure sports, which can help mitigate the issue of seasonality.

4.4 Lack of Skilled Workforce:

Albania still faces challenges in developing a skilled workforce in tourism management, hospitality, and language skills, which could hinder its ability to serve international tourists effectively.

3.5- Investment in Luxury and Niche Markets:

There is an opportunity to attract higher-end tourists through investment in luxury resorts, boutique hotels, and niche markets such as wellness tourism, gastronomic tours, and adventure travel.

4.5- Geopolitical Risks:

Regional instability in the Balkans or negative political relations with neighbouring countries could deter tourists from visiting Albania



3.3 KEY CIRCULAR ECONOMY CHALLENGES IN ALBANIA'S TOURISM SECTOR



3.3.1. Waste Management and Disposal

Challenge: *Tourism often leads to an increase in waste generation, especially in coastal areas, mountains, and remote regions that are not equipped with proper waste management infrastructure.*

Albanian tourism, specifically in coastal and peripheral areas, adds to waste generation and exerts significant pressure on communities with inadequate waste management systems. In spite of minimal greenhouse gases and a hydroelectric energy sector, Albania is vulnerable to environmental threats related to natural disasters and especially, seasonal periods of energy shortages.

Waste management continues to be problematic, with a disregard for proper waste infrastructure, limited to no recycling, and in some cases, waste-to-energy that is often controversial and, in some situations, criminally investigated.

Waste collection services are only provided to 77% of the population, particularly residents in rural areas (INSTAT,2023). While some recycling occurs through informal means, the need for improved institutional and public education on waste management is clear.



There are landfills funded by international funders and also new approaches within the EU prepared to establish these at least in Vlorë, Gjirokastër and Kukës, with the intention of providing appropriate waste management, incorporating environmentally friendly waste management, and addressing processes in compliance with EU objectives. Also ongoing are environmental disasters and mismanaged waste, such as the landfill fire that burned into the late summer in Vlora and pollution in natural areas of Lake Ohrid, which is an incredibly important natural feature and tourist destination.

The implications here for both tourism and waste have resulted in a clear need for a circular approach to prevention, reuse, and recycling concepts, along with an integrated development policy to promote environmental sustainability, supported by and intended to advance economic development.

3.3.2 Resource Use and Energy Consumption

Challenge: *High energy consumption, especially in tourist accommodations (hotels, resorts), transport (tour buses, private vehicles), and attractions, contributes to environmental degradation.*

Albania's tourism sector has experienced significant growth, which has led to increased energy consumption, especially in tourist accommodations, transportation, and attractions.



The demand for energy, particularly during the peak tourist season, has placed considerable pressure on the country's energy resources and infrastructure. Hotels and resorts rely heavily on electricity for heating, cooling, lighting, and other services, contributing to high energy use and environmental degradation. Similarly, the transportation sector, which includes tour buses and private vehicles, also consumes large amounts of fuel, contributing to carbon emissions and air pollution.

While Albania is rich in natural resources for energy production, particularly hydropower, the country faces challenges in transitioning to renewable energy sources and adopting energy-efficient practices in the tourism industry. Many accommodations and transport systems still rely on fossil fuels, and there is limited investment in cleaner energy alternatives. Additionally, the tourism industry's waste management practices contribute to resource depletion and environmental harm, as much of the waste is not adequately recycled or reused.

The concept of a circular economy, which focuses on reducing waste and promoting resource efficiency, has yet to be widely implemented in Albania's tourism sector. There is still a lack of comprehensive strategies to integrate renewable energy solutions and energy-efficient technologies, which results in a high carbon footprint and continued resource depletion.



To address these challenges, Albania needs to prioritise the adoption of renewable energy, energy-efficient infrastructure, and sustainable practices across the tourism industry. This includes investing in solar, wind, and geothermal energy, improving transport systems to include electric vehicles, and implementing better waste management and recycling practices to promote a more sustainable tourism sector.

3.3.3 Sustainable Product and Service Design

Challenge: *The tourism sector in Albania often relies on traditional models that focus on linear consumption take, make, dispose without integrating sustainable product or service design.*

The tourism industry in Albania is heavily challenged by sustainability as it operates on traditional linear consumption models that rely on short-term use and disposal. Unsurprisingly, this has generated considerable waste, particularly in single-use plastics, souvenirs deemed unsuitable for sustainable practices, and packaging materials. The principles of a circular economy that support active reuse, recycling, and sustainable design, nevertheless, are still rarely used within the tourism industry and contribute to ongoing environmental degradation and inefficient resource use.



Despite these challenges, there is an opportunity for the sector to shift towards more sustainable product and service design. By focusing on creating souvenirs made from sustainable or recycled materials, adopting eco-friendly packaging, and reducing waste through more sustainable food service practices, Albania's tourism industry could significantly reduce its environmental impact. Promoting sustainable practices, such as waste reduction, the use of biodegradable materials, and eco-friendly services, can create a more sustainable tourism model that benefits both the environment and local communities. Additionally, government policies that incentivise sustainable tourism practices could help further drive the adoption of circular economy principles in the sector.

3.3.4 Over-Tourism and Its Environmental Impacts

Challenge: Popular tourist destinations in Albania, like coastal regions (e.g., Vlora, Dhermi) and historical sites (e.g., Gjirokastër, Berat), face challenges related to over-tourism, which leads to environmental degradation, waste accumulation, and loss of biodiversity.

Over-tourism in Albania has resulted in negative currents in place-based natural and social systems in destinations, especially in coastal destinations, such as Vlora and Dhermi, and historic destinations, such as Gjirokastër and Berat.



Specifically, these trends have led to environmental degradation and exhaustion of systems and resources, and accumulation of waste. The surge of tourists places significant strain on ecosystems and contributes to the degradation of cultural heritage sites, while local waste systems are taxed to their limits, especially during peak seasons. The adverse effects of tourism are experienced in the coastal areas through pollution and less access to freshwater, and crowded infrastructure in the historical towns leads to erosion of both the physical environment and cultural identity. Pressures from increased numbers of tourists makes it difficult to implement circular economy principles, such as prevention, reduction, reuse, and recycling, when local systems and resources are stretched.

Albania needs to develop sustainable management strategies to mitigate the impacts of tourism, including promoting eco-tourism, development of green infrastructure, improving waste management systems, and educating visitors on responsible tourism behaviour. Strategies must balance visitor volume with environmental protection and ensure tourism growth results in long-term sustainability for the environments and communities in which they are situated.



3.3.5 Infrastructure and Circular Economy Integration

Challenge: *Albania's infrastructure is still developing in terms of sustainable and circular economy practices. Many rural or coastal areas lack adequate infrastructure for recycling, sustainable water management, and waste disposal.*

Albania has serious obstacles to building sustainable infrastructure, particularly in rural and coastal regions, that restrict the advancement of circular economy (CE) practices. Many regions have little to no waste management or recycling systems, and inadequate water conservation systems, creating pollution and inefficient resource use. The tourism sector, which is critical to the economy, is especially impacted because businesses are unable to transition to using CE practices without a supporting infrastructure.

Weak enforcement of laws, limited financial resources, and low levels of public awareness are also substantial barriers. Nevertheless, there remains strong potential for improvement with green infrastructure investment, educational programmes, and government incentives. With proper support, the tourism sector in Albania can begin to implement sustainable practices, attract environmentally conscious visitors, and lead to new green jobs all towards a more circular economy that is resilient.



3.3.6 Local Community Engagement and Capacity Building

Challenge: *There is often a gap in knowledge and understanding of circular economy principles among local communities, tourism businesses, and stakeholders.*

A key obstacle to the implementation of circular economy (CE) practices in Albania is awareness and knowledge by local communities, tourism businesses, and stakeholders. Many are not aware of important CE notions (for example, waste reduction, resource efficiency, or sustainable consumption) – especially in rural and coastal locations.

This lack of awareness potentially prevents them from engaging with practices such as recycling, composting, or using sustainable resources. In the tourism industry, businesses tend to overlook the economic and environmental benefits of adopting circular practices (like energy savings and local sourcing). Without education, training, or incentives, it is less likely they will consider changes toward a sustainable model. In addition, without community engagement, there is a risk of seeing local communities feel alienated from overall sustainable initiatives.

In order to tackle this challenge, it is important for Albania to invest in education, training, and awareness campaigns that focus on practical applications of the CE.



Additionally, (government and private) business incentives can also support businesses making the shift to more sustainable practices. Ultimately, investing in local capacity and engagement through education, will help Albania achieve a quicker transition to a circular economy and sustainable tourism.

3.3.7 Tourism Seasonality

Challenge: *Albania experiences a highly seasonal tourism industry, with a peak during summer months and a significant drop in the off-season. This can lead to inefficient resource use and waste during off-peak periods.*

Tourism in Albania is characterised by seasonal peaks and troughs, resulting in an excessive incidence of use during the summer months, with significant underuse in the off peak being a challenge for tourism development. This pattern has given rise to overuse of natural, human and economic resources during the peak and significantly underused during the off-peak, and this situation presents a challenge in terms of high levels of waste and inefficiency, as well as environmental degradation.

On the other hand, from a circular economy perspective, seasonality is both a challenge and an opportunity. Overuse can create waste, while underuse signifies a lack of economic potential.



Creating opportunities for tourism that attract clientele in the off-peak season, such as cultural tourism, agricultural tourism, or gastronomic tourism, practicing resource exchanging among non-competing businesses engaging in tourism, and promoting use of sustainable, renewable resources, renewables, as much as possible will lead to circular economy principles addressing tourism seasonality.

Facilitation of local sharing of waste management in tourism, as well circular supply chains, can benefit the local economy and lessen environmental impact. Moving towards a circular tourism economy as an environmental step will create an economy that is sustainable and resilient, and is more attractive to environmentally minded travelers visiting Albania.



3.4 ASSESSMENT OF BARRIERS

3.4.1 Institutional barriers

Although Albania is making progress with sustainable practices, there are still some major gaps when it comes to clear and consistent policies that support the circular economy in tourism. For now, the regulations in place do not really push businesses to adopt circular models and they are not flexible enough to allow for the introduction of new, innovative ideas.

Furthermore, the policies that do exist are often poorly implemented and inconsistent. This weak implementation makes it difficult for laws designed to promote sustainability to have a real impact. Without strong guidelines or regulations, many tourism businesses are hesitant to adopt practices such as reducing waste, improving energy efficiency or sourcing responsibly.

Another issue is the lack of coordination between local governments, national authorities and the tourism sector. For circular economy initiatives to work, there needs to be better collaboration between policymakers, businesses, schools and local communities. Without everyone on the same page, progress slows down and creates chaos where people don't work together towards a common goal.



3.4.2 Cultural/Behavioral Barriers

Cultural and behavioural barriers derive from the beliefs, customs, and values associated with how stakeholders, encompassing businesses, employees, and consumers think and behave regarding sustainability and circular economy concepts. Many tourism businesses, and especially small and medium-sized tourism businesses, rather resist change due to their reliance on long-standing linear business models.

Circular practices may seem too complicated, expensive, or unnecessary, because it slows the mindset toward sustainability. On the consumer side, tourists may also not prioritise sustainability when considering which hotels, activities, and services to use. Therefore, because of a lack of demand among their customers, businesses are skeptical of the value of implementing circular economy practices.

Moreover, the business owner and employees may not have a good awareness of what a circular economy actually is. Hence, they are less likely to think about and adopt longer-term advantages associated with a circular economy, such as lower costs, reduced environmental impacts, or improved brand reputation, leaving some hesitant to incorporate these practices.



3.4.3 Financial Barriers

Financial challenges refer to the barriers and costs associated with adopting circular economy models and practices, which create additional burdens for SMEs in tourism. One major financial challenge is the upfront expense involved in the technology or infrastructure associated with sustainable practices.

For example, there can be significant upfront expense in installing energy-efficient systems, creating waste management systems, or switching to renewable energy. When looking at the potential costs associated with these practices, SMEs in Albania's tourism sector may be unable to prioritise this type of investment with limited financial resources. An added difficulty is linked to the lack of financial options. Governments often do not offer enough subsidies, grants, or loans toward green or circular initiative. The lack of subsidies and access to low-cost capital gives many businesses the additional financial risk associated with a transition to sustainability.

A heavy reliance on short-term profitability is another challenge; many SMEs have a greater emphasis on short-term profit, which makes it even more difficult to find funding for investments that may not yield profits for 3-4 years. However, as is known, the circular economy can provide some long-term benefits (e.g., through cost savings by reducing waste, limited energy consumption, or limited air travel).





3.4.4 Technological Barriers

Technological barriers denote the limitations or lack of availability of the tools and technologies to effectively implement circular economy practices. In countries like Albania, various businesses, particularly those situated in rural or less developed areas, are limited in their access to advanced technologies supporting circular economy initiatives such as waste recycling systems, smart energy solutions, or sustainable transportation options.

This experience of technological limitations can tremendously hamper progress in terms of waste reduction, resource efficiency, and environmental stewardship. Further, a lack of adequate infrastructure presents another significant obstacle. The absence of critical facilities such as recycling centers, composting systems, or renewable energy facilities inhibits businesses from fully implementing circular economy strategies. Without such fundamental principles in place, businesses face significant obstacles to adopting sustainable practices, such as waste reduction, or switching to eco-friendly materials.

Finally, the tourism sector in Albania is often seen to be grappling with a low level of digitalisation. Circular economy approaches often rely on digital tools as part of monitoring consumption of resources, or coordinating effective waste solutions, and engaging customers in socially responsible choices. When businesses are faced with low digital capacity or low digital skills use this would serve as another significant barrier to implement circular models meaningfully.



3.4.5 Skills and Knowledge Gaps

Knowledge and skills gaps are the shortfalls in knowledge, education, and experience that prevent circular economy practices from being fully adopted in the tourism industry. Among the most significant challenges in achieving a worker base that is skilled in and knowledgeable about a circular economy is the above-mentioned gaps that exist between what vocational education and training (VET) institutions/practices offer to students, and what the tourism industry actually requires.

This is compounded by the fact that many VET programmes are dependent on legacy curriculum development and maintain outdated programs that do not adequately address sustainable practices in development. Ultimately, graduates emerge with little or no preparation to help implement the circular economy. Thus, there is a significant need to develop more succinct and focused training programmes with an emphasis on green skills and circular business models.

In addition to the noted VET fit, many tourism SMEs in Albania lack sufficient and immediate knowledge of circular economy concepts. Owners and/or managers often lack strong knowledge of sustainability operations, energy efficiency approaches, or waste management systems which greatly gets in the way of adoption.



Employees also lack even the basic awareness and training in sustainability. This leads to a major barrier because if a tourism business doesn't have a trained workforce that understands how to implement sustainable practices, such as waste reduction or responsible-tourism activities, meaningful implementation progress will be difficult. Further, there are limited opportunities available for continuous professional development in the area of green and circular tourism curriculum and programming. This in itself contributes to employees' and industry practitioners' inability to stay current with newly developed products or new policy changes.



3.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN TOURISM



- *Eco-Friendly Accommodations*

The market for small and medium-sized hotels, guesthouses and family accommodation in Albania has expanded rapidly in recent years, mainly in coastal and mountain destinations. This is a perfect time to transition these practitioners into circular practices through the adaptation of the renovation/new build policy. Many of these businesses have limited access to knowledge or input on sustainable construction and operational practices.

The project could support vocational colleges to equip practitioners and professional trainers with training in energy efficient designs, water saving technologies and renewable energy systems (especially solar which is great in Albania's sunny climate).

Added value can also be seen with circular practices, such as using more environmentally friendly chemicals in cleaning products, sourcing used or locally produced furniture, and offering reusable amenity items instead of various single-use items that will reduce the environmental footprint and make Albania more attractive as a destination for eco-travelers.



- *Circular Food and Beverage Practices*

Albania's visitor economy and tourism sector relies heavily on its exceptional food heritage and local food culture, particularly in places like Berat, Gjirokastër and the Albanian Riviera. However, there are no structured processes to help manage food waste and source food ingredients sustainably.

Circular food and beverage (F&B) models can be encouraged by training VET students and SME staff about local sourcing, seasonal menu planning and reducing food waste through composting or linking up with local farmers for alternatives (e.g. animal feed or bio-fertilizers). With a strong agricultural economy, Albania is well-positioned to develop short food supply chains to the benefit of the tourism economy and farming communities.

There may also be opportunities for "farm-to-table" food tourism experiences as part of the eco-tourism offer. Future training programmes could also explore how to reuse waste food or incorporate circular packaging alternatives to help waste disposal service organisations divert waste volumes from landfill and promote circular food loops.



- **Sustainable Transportation Solutions**

Tourism development in Albania especially in popular tourist destinations like Vlora, Saranda, Theth, and Ksamil has resulted in increased traffic and significant environmental stress.

Often the infrastructure in tourism sectors is undeveloped, especially in rural and nature-based contexts. This is an opportunity for circular economy concepts to support shared, low-emission, local mobility options.

SMEs could benefit from bringing electric shuttle services, bike rentals, and incentives to promote carpooling or public transport into their mix of services through your project.

VET institutions can introduce content related to sustainable tourism logistics and green mobility options, thus helping to develop future professionals that focus on creating minimal impacts of services in natural areas. There are also opportunities to develop digital platforms for coordinating shared transport options, a place where building relationships with EU partners through mobilities could be useful in bringing knowledge and inspiration.



• *Eco-Tourism Development*

Albania's rich biodiversity, UNESCO sites and undeveloped land and coastline will provide an environment for ecotourism, an ideal space in which to embed economic thinking from the outset. However, many of the ecotourism activities in Albania are either untapped, unstructured or underdeveloped, offering opportunities to build capacity, developing authentic low-impact tourism experiences that do not endanger ecosystems, while benefiting local communities by training and engaging vocational education and training (VET) students and tourism professionals.

Examples could be guided walks using "leave no trace" principles, stays in local family-run accommodations using circular practices or nature holidays made using local materials and renewable resources. Mentoring programmes and cross-border trips could provide Albanian stakeholders with exposure to successful ecotourism business models from EU member states. Engagement in collaborative events and workshops will initiate the co-creation of projects, shaped practices and signature sustainable tourism products that complement Albania's cultures and landscapes and its geographical context.

The information, and recommendations included in this section was derived from comprehensive desk-based research, including literature, strategies, reports, and good practices in Albania and other countries.



.4.

FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTION NAIRES



Co-funded by the
European Union



4.1 OVERVIEW

As part of the exercise to promote sustainable development and find ways of developing the circular economy into tourism and hospitality in Albania, two questionnaires were developed for different target groups. The overall aim of this was to collect and analyse data so that a better understanding of the existing practices, challenges and needs related to the circular economy could be made, before exploring what opportunities exist for developing and/or potential interventions.

The first questionnaire was aimed at teachers in Vocational Education and Training (VET) - vocational schools with a focus on tourism and hospitality education - to understand their levels of awareness of, their teaching practice and challenges in teaching sustainability and circular economy concepts into their courses and teaching methods.

The second questionnaire was a generic survey aimed at industry and other stakeholders in the tourism sector. It explored the level of awareness around the circular economy, and the challenges and opportunities for enabling circular practices into daily practice in tourism in Albania.

The collected data from both online surveys provide a good snapshot of the current landscape and form a basis for thinking through sustainable recommendations to help with the application of circular economy principles into both practice and education. This report contains a summary of the information provided in responses, along with tangible recommendations for next steps.

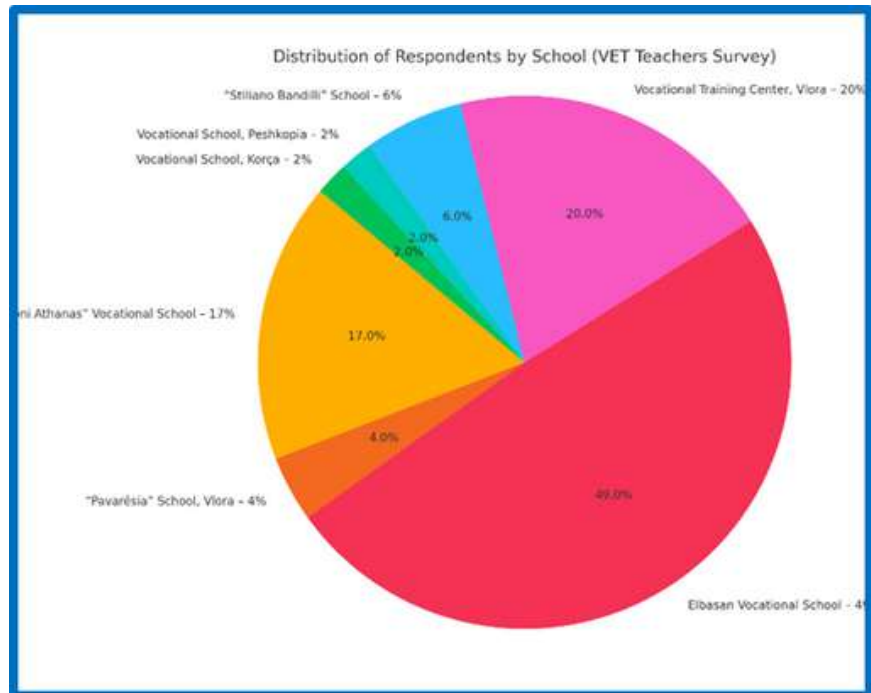


4.2 INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF VET SCHOOLS

This section will examine and analyse the data gathered through a questionnaire administered to teachers in Vocational Education and Training (VET) to gain better insight into educational practices and needs that relate to sustainability and the circular economy for the tourism and hospitality sector.

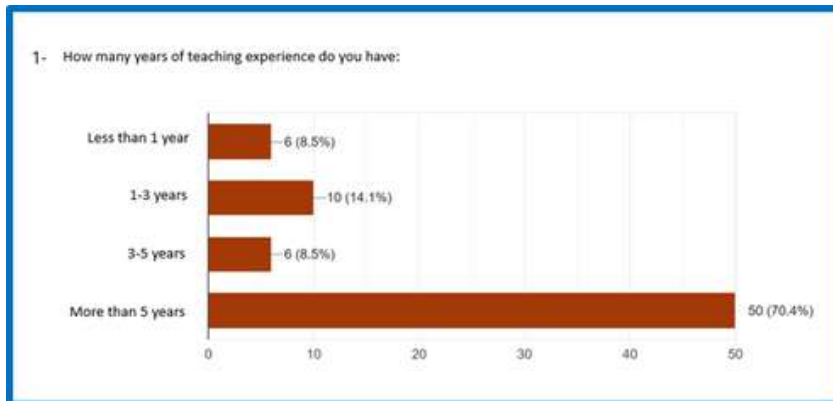
The questionnaire was intended to establish VET teachers' current level of knowledge, experience in practice, in each teaching situation (including challenges), and interest in further training in these areas. To the extent that it achieved this, it lends insight into the professional development needs of VET teachers in this dynamic and developing sector.

We collected a total of 74 completed questionnaires; therefore, we have sufficient data to make evidence-based conclusions and recommendations. The responses are varied, and many perspectives were gained from vocational institutions in various Albanian cities. The distribution of responses by institution is:



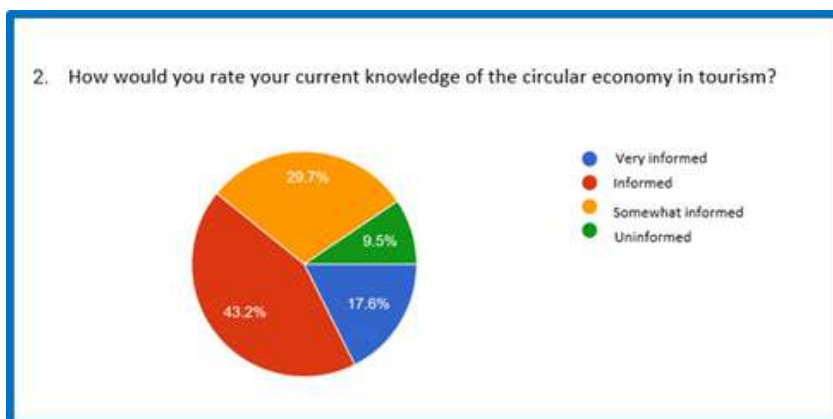
- “Antoni Athanas” Vocational School – 17%
- “Pavarësia” School, Vlora – 4%
- Elbasan Vocational School – 49%
- Vocational Training Center, Vlora – 20%
- “Stiliano Bandilli” School – 6%
- Vocational School, Peshkopia – 2%
- Vocational School, Korça – 2%

The broad geographical and institutional representation, allows for a holistic view of the current landscape of vocational schools engaged with the tourism and hospitality sector. The analysis will identify gaps in curriculum content, identifying potential areas for strengthening teacher capacity. In turn, these outcomes will contribute towards the development of targeted training and support initiatives to develop quality and relevance of vocational education in the context of sustainable development and circular economy.



1. In terms of experience, 70.4% of the participants have more than five years of experience in their profession, only 6

respondents are completely new to the profession (less than one year of experience). This suggests that the responses were given by experienced education professionals, which means that they are more accustomed to experiencing real-life problems in the VET system. This is a particular benefit in terms of validity, as their comments are given based on the informed responses of people who understand the structure and realities of vocational education.



2. Despite the general experience of the participants, the data reveal a significant gap in teacher preparation when it comes to

addressing the topic of the circular economy in the context of tourism. Only 17.6% of the teachers surveyed reported that they feel adequately or very well informed to address this topic in the



classroom, while the majority of them, 43.2%, feel informed but not in the most adequate way possible.

In contrast, 29.7% of the respondents (22 teachers) stated that they feel unprepared or only partially prepared, as well as 7 teachers who reported that they feel completely uninformed.

These findings highlight a clear knowledge gap among VET teachers regarding the concept of the circular economy in tourism. While some respondents may have a certain level of knowledge of the topic, there is a clear lack of depth and preparation for its practical application in teaching.

This result demonstrates an urgent need for:

- Dedicated semblance of training programmes that give specific focus to circular economy in tourism;
- A clear inclusion of this topic in VET curriculum; and
- The development and provision of practical guidance resources to help support teachers in using this in practice in the classroom.

Overall, the data supports the need for capacity-building interventions that support teachers capacity by giving them a theoretical knowledge base with the tools and confidence to deliver to their students in actual educational situations.



3. A significant 82.4% of teachers have not received any prior training, indicating a critical gap in professional development.

The low percentage of trained individuals (17.6%) suggests that most teachers are not formally equipped to integrate sustainability and circular economy concepts into their teaching.

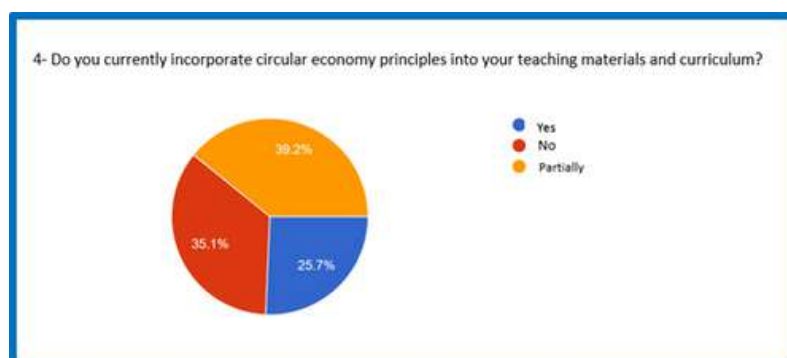
Among the teachers who reported having received training, various experiences were mentioned, including:

- Participation in projects related to sustainable tourism, such as student-led initiatives promoting local products or hands-on practice in didactic farms.
- Training sessions delivered by international and partner organisations, including: OEAD, GIZ, Centre for Competitive Skills, INTERVET, Albanian Skills, S4J, ALBVET project.
- Thematic areas covered in this training include: Green and sustainable tourism, green skills for green jobs, sustainable development in hospitality and tourist guiding, waste management, recycling, and organic food practices.



A portion of teachers is exposed to key concepts such as “green tourism,” “circular economy,” “recycling,” “local products,” and “didactic farms.” However, there is no standardised or systemic approach to this training. Most existing engagements are project-based, short-term, and dependent on international partners rather than integrated into national structures.

There is an urgent need for standardised institutional training, translated into practical and applicable knowledge. Sustainable training initiatives should be embedded in the official VET policy framework. Development of long-term training modules in partnership with the tourism industry and development agencies is essential. The existing experience of some teachers could serve as the basis for establishing a peer-to-peer trainer network, supporting the internal dissemination of best practices across schools.



4. Only 25.7% of teachers fully integrate circular economy principles into their courses, indicating that comprehensive inclusion is limited to a small minority.

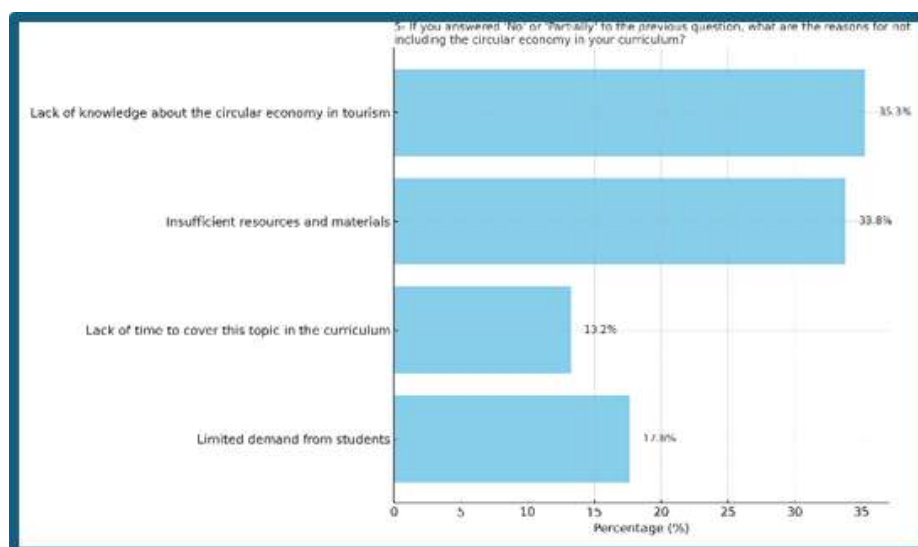


The majority either partially integrate them (39.2%) or do not integrate them at all (35.1%), indicating systemic gaps.

This partial or absent integration reflects:

- Lack of sufficient teaching resources;
- Lack of thematic coverage in the official curriculum;
- Limited institutional guidance or strategic direction.

These findings highlight the need for curricular reform to more clearly incorporate circular economy concepts into tourism-related vocational courses.



5. Qualitative analysis from open-ended responses:

Some teachers teach general culture subjects, not directly related to tourism or economics, so they do not see it as reasonable to include circular economy concepts.

The lack of inclusion of these topics in official curricula approved by the VET is another obstacle mentioned.



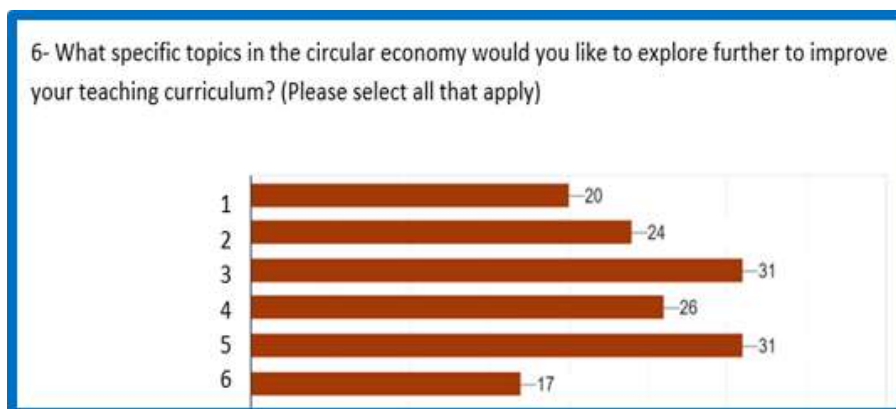
Some teachers state that they use their knowledge of these topics spontaneously or when related to the topics they develop, even if this does not happen regularly.

The main reasons for non-integration are threefold: personal, structural and institutional.

Lack of materials and personal competencies are the most prominent obstacles. The use of sustainability as a secondary priority by institutions indicates a deep gap in school policies.

There is a need for intervention in:

- staff training,
- development of resources in the Albanian language,
- and review of the structure of teaching planning.



- 1.Principles of the circular economy 13.5%
- 2.Waste management in tourism 16.2%
- 3.Sustainable tourism practices 20.5%
- 4.Green certifications and standards 17.7%
- 5.Ecotourism business models 20.5%
- 6.Stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism 11.5%

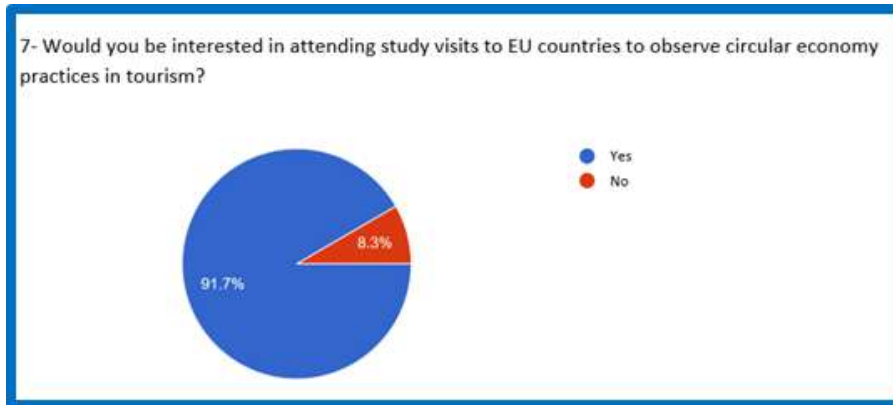


6. The most sought-after areas of focus are eco-tourism business models (20.5%) and sustainable tourism practices (20.5%), reflecting a strong demand for fundamental knowledge as well as applied strategies.

Topics such as waste management and green certifications and standards also rank highly, indicating teachers' interest in the practical application of circular economy concepts within the tourism sector. In addition, the significant interest in circular economy principles, standards and stakeholder engagement indicates an awareness of the role that regulatory frameworks and cross-sectoral cooperation play in fostering sustainability.

There was great need for a more organised and comprehensive way to learn about circular economy education. Teachers expressed a commitment to learn and update their knowledge indicating a readiness to modify their teaching around changing industry standards and practices.

We recommend any training opportunity to include thematic workshops, specialised modules, and practical recommendations focusing on these topics.



7. The clear demand (91.7%) for international encounters also demonstrates demand among teachers to observe the real-world implementation of constructs they are learning or teaching.

This notion emphasises:

- Embedding mobility aspects in VET related ventures;
- Developing partnerships with EU bodies to facilitate a transfer of knowledge;
- Creating an incentive-based programme which combines training with international exposure and experiential practice.

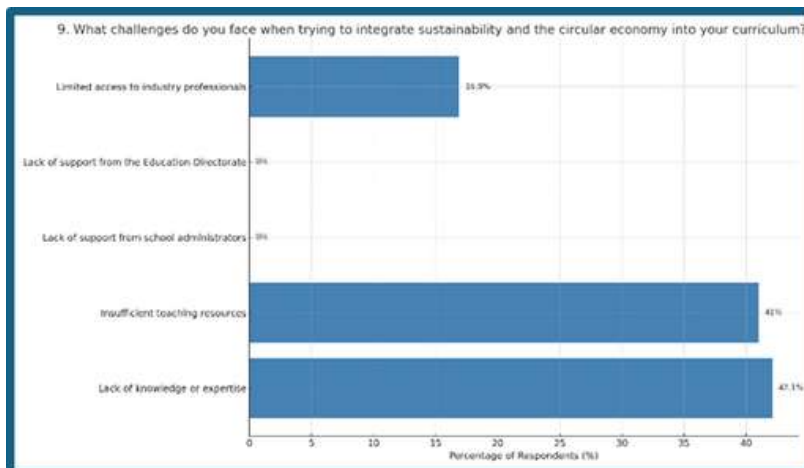
These initiatives will both build teacher capacity and advance Albania's VET system towards alignment with EU practices and new innovations relating to circular economy and sustainable tourism.



1. Online training webinar 19.6%
2. Practical seminars or study visits 32.6%
3. Mentoring from tourism SMEs 10%
4. Curriculum development resources 8%
5. Cooperation with international VET schools 29.8%

8. The results show a clear preference for flexible and practice-oriented approaches to learning. Teachers prefer local practical workshops more, reflecting the need for experiential and context-related training. Online webinars (19.6%) also rank highly, highlighting the importance of accessible digital formats for continuous development. Mentoring by SMEs (10%) shows that direct engagement with the private sector is considered valuable for gaining real-world knowledge.

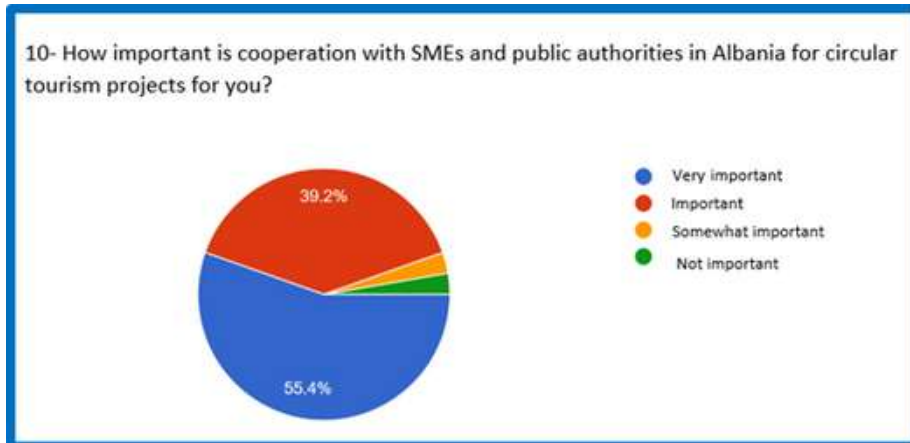
Furthermore, 29.8% expressed interest in international school exchanges, confirming that exposure to best practices abroad is seen as an important complement to local training efforts. These findings suggest the need for hybrid training models that combine online and in-person learning, greater involvement of industry partners through mentoring, and the creation of institutional collaboration networks to support continuous professional development tailored to the needs of VET teachers.



- 1- Lack of knowledge or expertise on the subject 42.1%
- 2- Insufficient teaching resources or materials 41%
- 3- Lack of support from school administrators 0%
- 4- Lack of support from the Education Directorate 0%
- 5- Limited access to industry professionals or mentors 16.9%

9. The common obstacles referenced are all related to structural and institutional weaknesses in the education system. Almost half of the participants (41%) identified the absence of teaching resources in the Albanian language as a key barrier, this then enables very little meaningful teaching on sustainability. Also, 42.1% of teachers identified their own lacking experience, which requires capacity building.

There is a need for institutional support to modify teaching plans that would allow for a more explicit focus on sustainability in the curriculum, translation and creation of localised learning materials, and developing capacity together for school leaders and educators to facilitate a coherent and integrated approach to sustainability education in the vocational curriculum.



10. The responses indicate a strong consensus on the critical role of cross-sector collaboration in advancing sustainable tourism practices. A combined 94.6% of participants rated collaboration with SMEs and public authorities as either “very important” or “important,” highlighting a shared understanding that meaningful partnerships are key to implementing circular economy principles in the tourism sector. Teachers particularly emphasise the value of working with local businesses and municipal bodies on concrete projects, as well as embedding sustainability efforts within the local community.

This insight suggests the need for structured institutional mechanisms to facilitate and strengthen cooperation between vocational schools, the private sector, and local government actors ultimately enabling more integrated, real-world learning opportunities for students.



11- What do you think would be the most significant benefit of integrating circular economy principles into the VET curriculum?



11. A large proportion of respondents (approximately 27%) identified the improvement in student employability benefits as the most important benefit,

indicating a good alignment for circular economy education and preparation for the labour market. In addition, 36.5% responded with international collaboration, and demonstrated they recognised the gradual impact on better standards for industry practice over the long-term. Interestingly, a smaller group of teachers (24.3% and 12.2% respectively) highlighted business competitiveness and the benefit of better sustainability practices in the tourism industry, indicated that these were valued, but secondary to student outcomes. The responses in the "Other" category were limited and did not appear to represent a dominant alternate view.

It appears that the development of the circular economy is seen as a mechanism for enhancing practical skills and students' employability as a strategy, confirming the primary relationship between VET, and the education sector, responding to labour market needs.

Therefore, this informs the promotion of curricular reforms around clear commitments from the private sector in regards to sustainable, and work ready competencies for the immediate and longer-term sustainability of student employability.

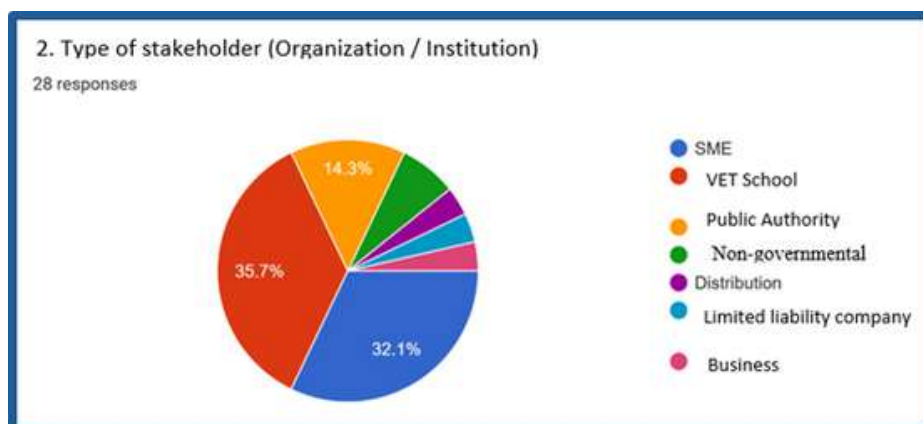
4.3. INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE



The general questionnaire aimed to create a clearer picture of the framework leading to the identification of challenges, opportunities and barriers for a circular economy in Albania in relation to hospitality and tourism enterprises.

The structured questionnaire was distributed to tourism stakeholders, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), public authorities, education providers and other tourism stakeholders. In total, 28 completed questionnaires were collected, providing valuable qualitative insights into the currently observed awareness, capacity and perceived needs for circular tourism practices.

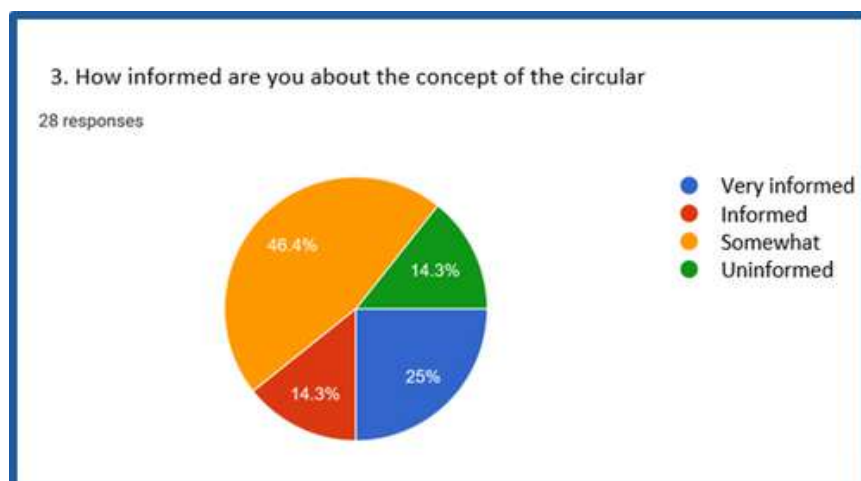
The aim of this report is to present a detailed analysis at the question level and report the main findings, state the conclusions and provide recommendations on how to adopt and embed CE in practice. It aims to be a starting point for future actions in vocational education and training (VET), policy development and the development of the tourism industry in sustainable tourism.



2. The data collected shows that the participants in this questionnaire represent a significant mix of institutions and organisations, with the largest number being Vocational Education and Training schools (35.7%) and SMEs operating in the tourism and hospitality sector (32.1%). This is followed by public authorities with 14.3% and other actors such as NGOs, commercial companies and individual businesses.

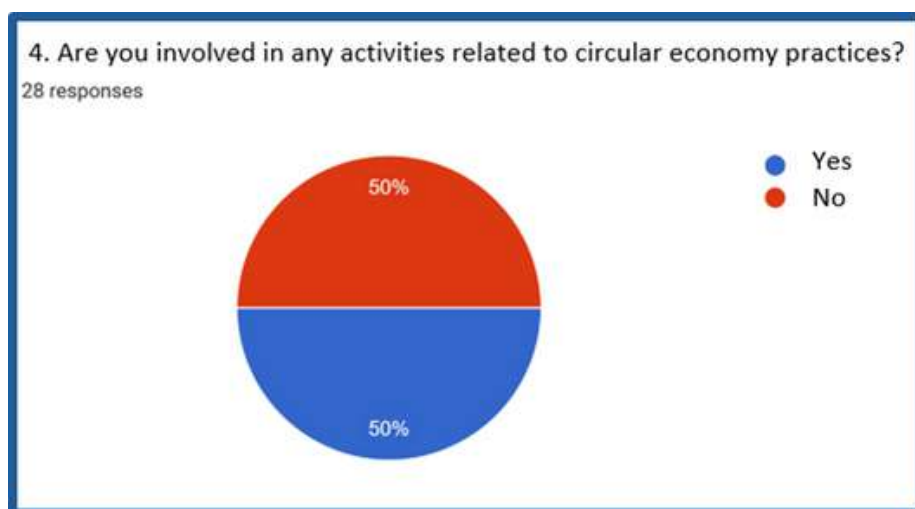
This composition shows that the responses received are reflective of a diverse and comprehensive panorama, including key actors that help build and manage the tourism sector. The presence of vocational education institutions is particularly important in this context, as it indicates the readiness of the education system to play an active role in education for the circular economy.

Through this report, the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation as a prerequisite for the effective implementation of circular economy practices in tourism is highlighted.



3. The answers to the questions posed in this section suggest a minimal awareness of the circular economy concept. Only 25% of respondents classify themselves as very informed, while the greatest portion (46.4%) classify themselves as "somewhat informed." Another sizable percentage (14.3%) classify themselves as uninformed.

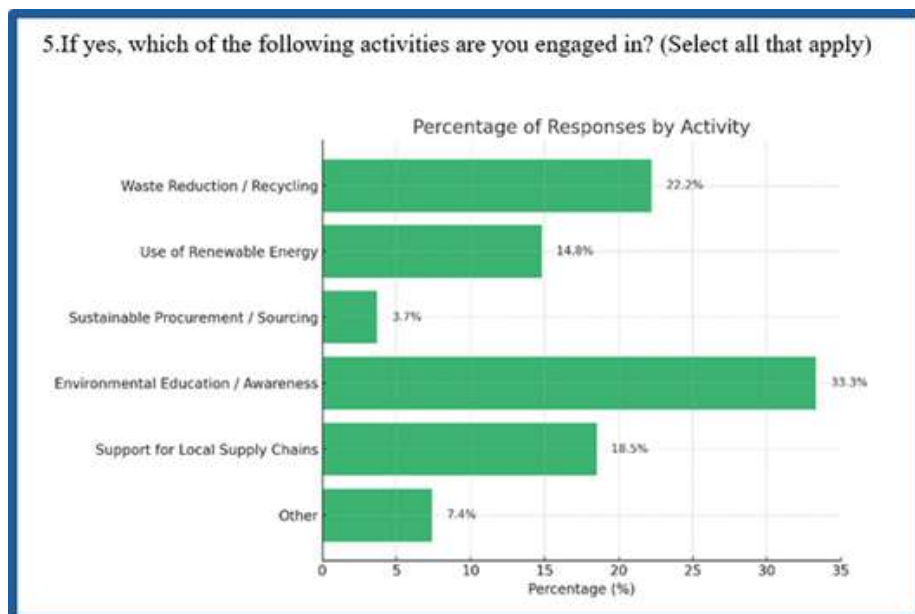
These results incite significant concern regarding the ability of the sector to shift towards circular economy models at the present time. If actors do not possess a clear, full understanding of the circular economy concept, it will not be possible for them to take sustainable, intentional steps towards moving to greener operations. This state of affairs implies that communication and education strategies around circular economy should be made clear to actors at different levels, from business leaders, to public administrations and VET teachers.



4. The answers range split evenly: 50 percent of the respondents are involved in a circular economy practice right now, while the other 50 percent are not involved in any way.

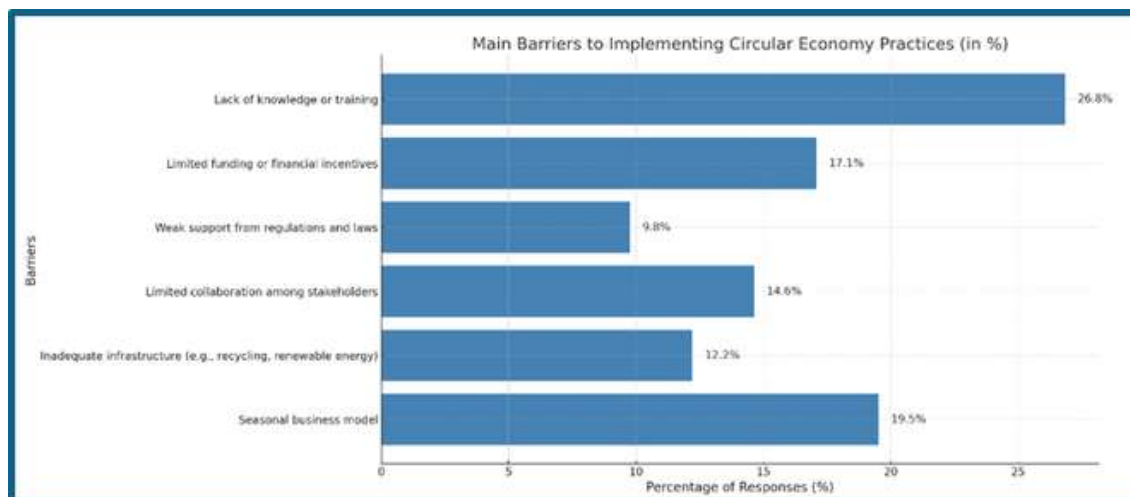
The split reflects a transitional state, as 50 percent of the actors have either begun to implement sustainable practices and the other half has not. The involvement of half of the actors could be a result of lack of knowledge, lack of financial support, or lack of clarity about regulations and the tangible benefits of these practices.

Going forward, it is clear that further involvement needs to occur via a systematic intervention via incentive mechanisms, and the gradual involvement of the actors who may be slower to adapt.



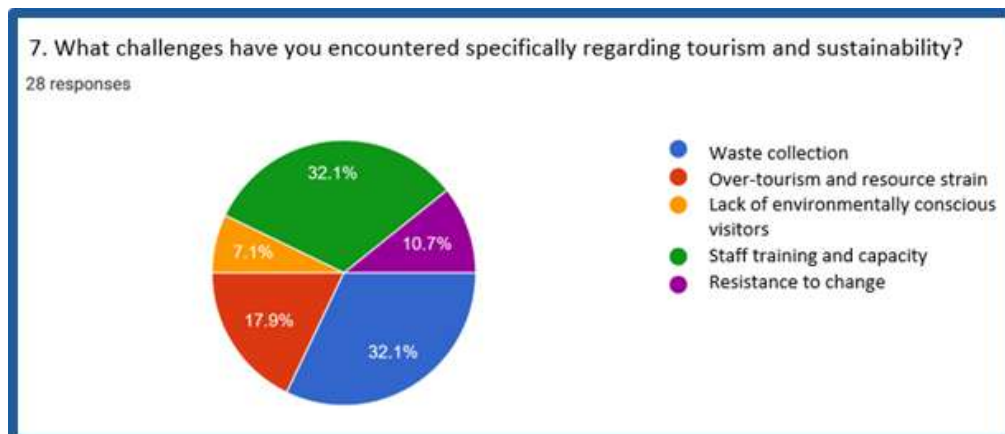
5. Among those engaged in circular economy activities, most often, these are in the form of environmental education and awareness (9), attempts at answers from primary recycling down (6), agreement for local water chains (5) and renewable energy technology (4). Just a cursory mention of the sources of his studies.

This indicates that awareness and education are both the most accessible and less costly forms of practice, while technology and life-practices (e.g. renewable energy or sustainable procurement) are less practiced due to institutional costs and salaries.



6. The responses indicate a more expanded view by respondents of the circular economy, volunteering a variety of directions that the circular economy allows for a positive impact. The most cited benefit is environmental protection (12 responses), next is changing the destination and organisation image (7 responses) and changing resource use efficiency (6 responses). Some respondents also indicate that the circular economy also allows for long-term economic and social benefits.

The data suggests that there is emerging awareness of the multiple nature of benefits from the circular economy, beyond the environmental aspect. However, the fact that only a subset of respondents reference economic benefits is a sign that linkages have not yet been explicitly made between sustainable practice and tangible business financial benefit, which is a necessary condition to catalyse wider private sector uptake.



7. The findings indicate a number of challenges encountered by the actors connected to the tourism sector when trying to implement the circular economy.

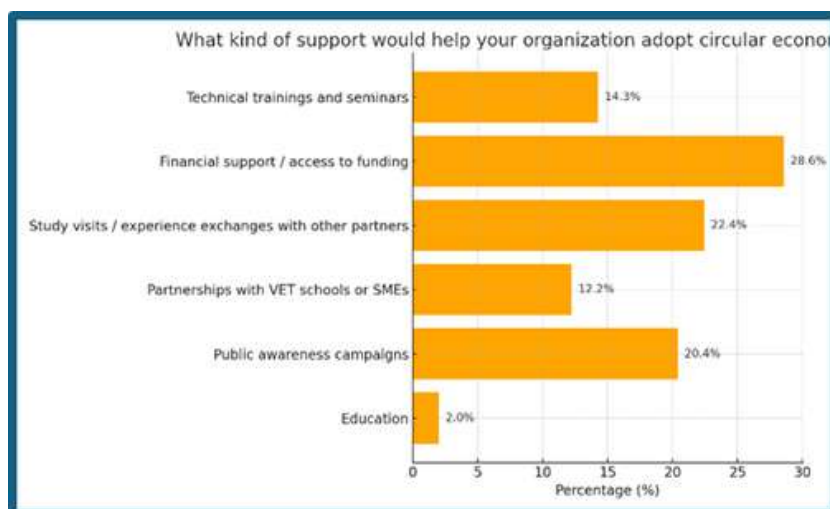
The inability to access funding to make green investments is one of the most exposed challenges as well as the absence of the regulatory, legal and technical framework.

The participants further identified the absence of knowledge and capacity as another challenge.

This shows that the issue is a multilevel matter and requires coordinated intervention on several levels:

- strengthen public policies that contribute to the implementation of sustainability practices;
- develop financial support mechanisms for SMEs;
- and strengthen capacities through targeted training.

The indicated challenges correspond to international experiences where moving towards a circular economy requires a clear structural pathway for support and not just awareness.



8. This question revealed important insights into the practical needs and expectations of tourism stakeholders in Albania as they seek to make the move to a circular economy. Their support needs were expressed in different ways, but typically included suggesting financial support, potential study visits or peer experience sharing opportunities, and public awareness. This suggests that tourism stakeholders understand the importance of circularity and identify barriers to implementation that are often resource-based or systemic.

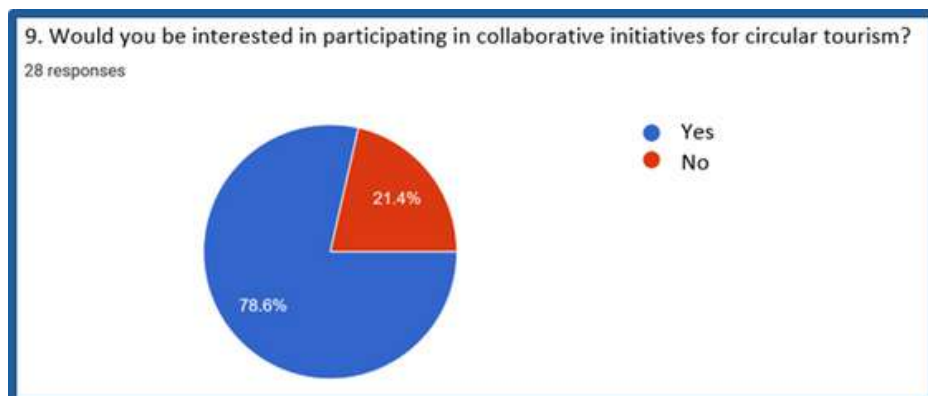
The most commonly selected solution was "Financial support / access to funding", which was reported by nearly all respondents consequently. This supports the idea that many organisations would like to change, but do not have the ability to do so. Sustainable or circular transformations often require some level of investment in infrastructure, equipment, or training where external funding or support would clearly help. If transformation leads to extra or unforeseen costs, it is easy to



understand how SMEs, the dominant types of business in the Albanian tourism sector, simply see the investment as too much and either do nothing or remain in previous operational practices.

The demand for study visits and the sharing of experiences is also quite significant, indicating the stage of implementation most respondents are at. Instead of working in isolation, businesses and institutions are looking to thematise learning which is based on actual examples preferably from comparable contexts or neighbouring countries. This request indicates a strong learning orientation, which suggests that stakeholders are aware of what they do not know and motivated to rectify the knowledge-shortened gap through exposure and peer dialogue.

The findings collectively indicate a need for a multidimensional support approach for the sector: a combination of funding instruments, knowledge exchanges, educational activities, and public engagement tools. Those needs are not unique; they are related and necessary to be satisfied through integrated programmes that can put in place the root conditions for circular tourism to flourish in a sustainable and integrated manner.



9. These answers indicate that tourism-related stakeholders in Albania have a positive willingness to join collaborative activities around circular tourism, nearly 79% expressed a willingness to participate. This is an important finding as a critical aspect of integrating circular economy principles calls for partnerships between businesses, education, local authorities, and civil society.

A collaborative approach is vital, especially as the tourism sector is characterised by complex supply chains and interdependent relationships in which joint approaches are needed for effective waste management, coordinated transport, and to develop environmentally friendly tourism services. There is also a parallel with the earlier finding that stakeholders were interested in knowledge exchange and joint learning as part of the sustainable transformation.

The 21% of respondents who preferred to engage less collaboratively show the potential challenges explaining lack of resource availability, doubt about the effectiveness of collective efforts, or lack of institutional support.



Targeting the barriers to collaboration will be a critical approach for building collaboration that is both inclusive and effective, such that all actors feel heard and valued.

In general, this question reveals signs of optimism for group initiatives, and a collaborative network ready to co-create to resilient and sustainable tourism developments.

10. In your opinion, what is the biggest action to accelerate circular economy practices in tourism in Albania?

10. The open responses to this question reveal several important areas for advancement of circular tourism in Albania. Financial support was a dominant concern, however, many responses from very small and small and medium-sized enterprises expressed that subsidies, tax breaks and preferential loans needed to be considered to reduce the economic risks of transitioning to circular business practices. Without action and mechanisms put into place to support businesses financially, they will feel disinclined and unable to take a chance on figuring out new technologies and moving forward with a sustainable business model.

In addition, there was an obvious mandate for capacity building and public sense-making. Stakeholders pointed out that both service providers and consumers often don't know basic principles of circularity, for example reduce waste, reuse materials and implement renewable energy.



This indicates that more training and public engagement is warranted and may be paramount if a wider cultural transition in support of sustainability is to occur.

Infrastructure remains a significant barrier. When public wastewater systems are inadequate such as lacking waste separation or composting the tourism industry faces practical barriers in tourism destinations. These issues are often tied to larger governance issues; thus, we need better coordination between local authorities and local businesses.

There was also overwhelming support for a stronger regulatory framework as some respondents mentioned that they thought it was not enough simply voluntary efforts - they seek legislation that imposes a certain baseline for sustainable action. Legislation will provide clear expectations, a baseline to progress from, and then encourage innovation while providing the ability to measure progress.

Finally, many respondents indicated a need for platforms for collective action for businesses, educational institutions, municipalities, and NGOs to design and scale circular action collaboratively - without this approach the ambiguous, interdependent issues associated with circular tourism will be difficult to resolve.

Overall, responses capture a strategic view of the multi-faceted effort needed to build sustainable tourism in Albania, underscoring the importance of collaboration, funding, education, and continued governance.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Co-funded by the
European Union



5.1 CONCLUSIONS BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Limited knowledge and technical abilities

- Vocational school teachers (around 60%) have limited or no knowledge of circular economy (CE) concepts.
- Tourism businesses are not sufficiently informed about the benefits or practicalities of CE.

This is a double challenge for both the education and practical implementation of circular economy concepts.

The circular economy is not featured in vocational curricula

- Vocational schools don't have prescribed modules on sustainability and circular economy.
- Relevant topics are picked up randomly from various resources and are not systematically included as part of the curriculum!

This prevents the development of green skills in students preparing to enter the tourism sector.



Lack of functional cooperation between schools and the private sector

- There is little or no long-term cooperation with sustainable tourism businesses.
- Internships and joint projects are infrequent and not systematic.

This limits the possibility for knowledge transfer and impactful professional training for sustainability.

Economic barriers for companies

- The costs associated with the initial implementation of circular practices and green technologies are prohibitively high.
- There are no subsidies or financial support to encourage sustainable investments.

This provides no incentive for companies to move towards a circular model.





Absence of an effective policy and strategic framework

- There is no national strategy that links vocational education with sustainable tourism objectives.
- CE-related initiatives are siloed and have no institutional support.

Ultimately, this limits coordination across stakeholders leading to isolated and unsustainable actions.

A lack of implementation and monitoring mechanisms locally

- Both schools and businesses have no access to mentoring and advisory structures to introduce CE practices.
- Local government actors are often not engaged with actively encouraging CE at the regional level.

As a result, poor implementation with limited follow-up to sustainability is occurring at the grassroots level.



5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS



Strengthen Circular Economy Knowledge and Capacities

- Integrate CE in teacher professional development programs.

Teachers need structured and ongoing professional development that provides both theoretical knowledge as well as the practical 'tools' to teach CE.

- Include CE as a transversal theme throughout vocational curriculums.

CE needs to be integrated and built into subjects / courses that are directly related to tourism, environment/ sustainability, agriculture, and entrepreneurship, to help build green competences in students.

This means that both teachers and learners can engage with CE principles at a fundamental level.

Encourage School-Business Collaboration for CE Initiatives

- Establish formal partnerships between vocational schools and green business actors.

Encourage long-term commitments for internships, dual training, sustainability projects, and co-designing curriculum.



- Engage businesses in curriculum planning and feedback loops.

Set up advisory boards or local working groups where businesses can articulate the role education can play in responding to real market needs in terms of sustainable tourism.

This deepens the practical learning experience and makes sure education outcomes align with the ongoing evolvement of the green labor market needs.

Facilitate Access to Circular Economy Information for Businesses

- Establish a digital or physical CE resource hub
Hubs should contain the best of practice examples, technical guidelines, training modules and success cases geared for the tourism business.
- Initiate awareness campaigns to showcase the benefits of CE.

There are many businesses that are unaware of how CE can improve efficiencies, save costs and increase competitiveness.

This addresses the knowledge gap and encourages businesses to seek engagement in CE transformational opportunities.



Financial Support for Transition to Circular Business Models

- Set up public financing schemes (whether through grants, tax incentives or soft loans).

The aim is for financial mechanisms to reduce the initial burden of investing in eco-innovation, renewable energy, and circular materials.

- Focus on financing mechanisms that prioritise green and circular criteria in tourism financing programs.

Convert publicly and donor-supported projects by making CE a priority eligibility or evaluation criterion.

This can make circular investments more feasible and attractive for small tourism businesses.

Align Policies Across Education, Environment and Tourism

- Create a comprehensive national strategy linking VET, CE, and sustainable tourism

A cross-sectoral strategy will provide direction, resources and legitimacy to circular economy initiatives.





- Mainstream CE in vocational education policies.

CE should be included in all national qualifications, regulations and standards for both teachers and trainers.

This will ensure that later systemic change can be informed by support at the policy level, and not just isolated initiatives.

Establish Local Implementation and Mentoring Structures

- Create CE mentor positions at the regional/municipal level

These mentors can help schools and businesses with hands-on support, project implementation, and sharing of successful practices.

- Continuously monitor and evaluate CE efforts locally

Develop indicators, and feedback mechanisms to track progress, uncover barriers early, and change strategies.

This provides constructive learning and adaptation of circular practices at the local level.



REFERENCES



Reference 1

2024_OECD_A Roadmap towards Circular Economy of Albania OECD
{pp 11 + 16-17 + 40 + 61-64}

Reference 2

2023_OECD_Circular-economy-prioritisation-Albania-presentation

Reference 3

2023_European Parliament Circular economy definition, importance and benefits

Reference 4

Circular economy action plan - European Commission

Reference 5

2023_GIZ_Leading the transition towards circular economy and sustainable urban development

Reference 6

INSTAT - <https://www.instat.gov.al/>

ANNEX 1

Questionnaire for vocational school teachers



Section 1: General Information

Institution name (optional): _____

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have:

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

Section 2: Current knowledge and experience in the circular economy

2. How would you rate your current knowledge of the circular economy in tourism?

- Very informed
- Informed
- Somewhat informed
- Uninformed

3. Have you received any previous training on sustainable or circular economy practices in tourism?

- yes
- no
- If yes, please provide details: _____

4. Do you currently incorporate circular economy principles into your teaching materials and curriculum?

- yes
- no
- partially

ANNEX 1



5. If you answered "No" or "Partially" to the previous question, what are the reasons for not including the circular economy in your curriculum? (Please select all that apply)

- Lack of knowledge about the circular economy in tourism
- Insufficient resources and materials
- Lack of time to cover this topic in the curriculum
- Limited demand from students

6. What specific topics in the circular economy would you like to explore further to improve your teaching curriculum? (Please select all that apply)

- Principles of the circular economy
- Waste management in tourism
- Sustainable tourism practices
- Green certifications and standards
- Ecotourism business models
- Stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism
- Other (please specify): _____

Section 3: Training and support needs

7. Would you be interested in attending study visits to EU countries to observe circular economy practices in tourism?

- yes
- no

8. What kind of support or training do you think would help you improve your teaching in circular tourism? (Please select all that apply)

- Online training webinar
- Practical seminars or study visits
- Mentoring from tourism SMEs
- Curriculum development resources
- Cooperation with international VET schools

ANNEX 1



9. What challenges do you face when trying to integrate sustainability and the circular economy into your curriculum? (Please select all that apply)

- Lack of knowledge or expertise on the subject
- Insufficient teaching resources or materials
- Lack of support from school administrators
- Lack of support from the Education Directorate
- Limited access to industry professionals or mentors

Section 4: Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement

10. How important is cooperation with SMEs and public authorities in Albania for circular tourism projects for you?

- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

11. What do you think would be the most significant benefit of integrating circular economy principles into the VET curriculum?

- Improving work readiness for students
- Increasing the competitiveness of tourism businesses
- Enhanced sustainability practices in tourism
- Increasing international cooperation and knowledge exchange
- Other (please specify): _____

ANNEX 2



General Questionnaire: Understanding Circular Economy Challenges in Tourism

Section 1: General Information

1. Name of Organization / Institution (optional) : _____

2. Type of Stakeholder:

- SME (Tourism/Hospitality)
- VET School
- Public Authority
- NGO / Network
- Other (please specify): _____

Section 2: Awareness and Implementation of Circular Economy

3. How familiar are you with the concept of circular economy?

- Very Familiar
- Somewhat Familiar
- Heard of it, but not sure
- Not Familiar

4. Are you currently involved in any activities related to circular economy practices?

- Yes
- No

5. If yes, which of the following are you engaged in? (Select all that apply)

1. Waste reduction / Recycling
2. Use of renewable energy
3. Sustainable procurement or sourcing
4. Environmental education / awareness
5. Supporting local supply chains
6. Other: _____

ANNEX 2



Section 3: Challenges and Barriers

6. What are the biggest barriers to implementing circular economy practices in your work? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of knowledge or training
- Limited funding or financial incentives
- Weak regulatory support
- Limited collaboration between stakeholders
- Inadequate infrastructure (e.g., recycling, renewable energy)
- Seasonal business model
- Other (please specify): _____

7. What challenges have you encountered specifically related to tourism and sustainability?

- Waste accumulation
- Over-tourism and strain on resources
- Lack of eco-conscious visitors
- Staff training and capacity
- Resistance to change
- Other: _____

Section 4: Capacity Building and Support Needs

8. What kind of support would most help your organization adopt circular economy practices? (Select all that apply)

- Technical training and workshops
- Financial support / funding access
- Policy guidance and incentives
- Study visits / exchange with EU partners
- Partnerships with VET schools or SMEs
- Public awareness campaigns
- Other: _____

9. Would you be interested in participating in collaborative initiatives for circular tourism?

- Yes
- No

10. In your opinion, what is the most important action to accelerate circular economy practices in tourism in Albania?



Project Partners



**Dhoma e Tregtisë
& Industrisë Tiranë**
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tirana

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Project N°101182855





CIRCULAR
ALBANIA
TOURISM

Project N°101182855



Co-funded by the
European Union