

Sustainable Tourism as A Smart Alternative to Boost Economic Development in Shkodra Region

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Abstract

Tourism today is one of the economic sectors with the highest positive growth rate and considerable share to the national GDP of many countries in the world. Lately as confirmed by various academic studies the tourism sector is recognized as a driver of sustainable economic development. Sustainable tourism defined by UNWTO as: "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" is considered as the best alternative for economic development especially at the region level for the developing countries, due to its positive impacts on the improvement of wellbeing of the community and the society. Regional development including also tourism activity is one of the key of EU policies, as mentioned in EU Progress Reports on Albania. Tourism sector, in the country, contribute at about (2-4) percent of the national GDP. Natural resources and better public services in the long term, are key elements to ensure fast development of tourism in the Shkoder region. To encourage the implementation of an efficient model in developing a sustainable tourism at Shkoder region it requires adoption of integrated and balanced socio-economic-environmental policies. This paper consists in the analysis of the recent demo-economic development in this area as well as the description of impacts that current developments and futures one will have on the region environment. Analyzes will be carry out based on data, collected from various data sources both from statistics and administrative ones, which will help to propose a set-of recommendations aiming the setting up of an efficient model on sustainable tourism at Shkoder region.

KEYWORDS: sustainable tourism, economy, environment, Shkoder region, statistics

INTRODUCTION

Shkodra is one of the largest region situated in the north of Albania. The borderline length is 304 km, of which 149 km belong to Montenegro. Approximately 80% of the area are mountains and the highest peak is Jezerca Mountain (2694 m). The region is known to be rich in hydro resources such as Drini, Buna, Shala, Kiri, Cemi, streams and other water sources. In the west of the city is Lake Shkodra, the largest lake in the Balkans, with 368 km² of which 169 km² belong to the Albanian territory. Shkodra is 99 km from the capital Tirana, 37 km from the border crossing Hani Hoti (Montenegro) and 16 km from the border crossing Muriqan (Montenegro). Its geographical position and climate conditions offers a lot of advantages not only for agriculture and other economic activities, but also for the expansion of all kinds of tourism.

Tourism is an important sector for the local economy especially if we consider its impact in creating jobs, growing of income for households but also for local government

through taxes, and finally in the improvement of the community's welfare. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2001; UNEP & UNWTO, 2005) the "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems". Schorner (2011), Samy and El-Barmelgy (2005), Thierstein & Walser (2000), Schleicher-Tappeser *et al.*, (1998) state that the principles of sustainable tourism development are composed of economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects (Table 1).

Table 1. Principles of sustainable tourism development

Pillars	Principles	Concept
<i>Economic Sustainability</i>	1- Maintaining Diversity	Maintaining and promoting natural, social, and cultural diversity is essential for long-term sustainable tourism and creates a resilient base for the
	2- Supporting Local Economies	Tourism that supports a wide range of local economic activities and which takes environmental costs and values into account both protects those economies and avoids environmental damage.
	3- Marketing Tourism Responsibly	Marketing that provides tourists with full and responsible information increases respect for the natural, social and cultural environments of destination areas and enhances customer satisfaction.
<i>Ecological Sustainability</i>	4- Using Resources Sustainably	The conservation and sustainable use of resources - natural, social, and cultural is crucial and makes long-term business sense.
	5- Reducing Over-Consumption and Waste	Reduction of over-consumption and waste avoids the costs of restoring long-term damage and contributes to the quality of tourism. Adequacy relates to the capacity of the existing infrastructure to handle the waste generated and the right method of treatment.
<i>Cultural Sustainability</i>	6- Training Staff	Staff training, which integrates sustainable tourism into work practices along with recruitment of local personnel at all levels, improves the quality of the tourism product.
	7- Undertaking Research	On-going research and monitoring by the industry using effective data collection and analysis is essential to help solve problems and to bring benefits to destinations, the industry, and consumers.
<i>Local Communities' Sustainability</i>	8- Integrating Tourism Into Planning	Tourism development, which is integrated into a national and local strategic planning framework, undertakes environmental impact assessments, and increases the long-term viability of tourism. Integrated planning is also about good coordination and liaison between the various agencies involved in making decisions that affect the area.
	9- Involving Local Communities	The full involvement of local communities in the tourism sector not only benefits them and the environment in general but also improves the quality of the tourism experience.
	10- Consulting Stakeholders and the Public	Consultation between the tourism industry and local communities, organizations, and institutions is essential if they are to work alongside each other and resolve potential conflicts of interest.

In order to be successful in the long-term, a sustainable balance must be established between these three dimensions. This leads the management of all resources in such a

way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, important ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems

Current demographic and economic situation of Shkoder’ region

Resident population of Shkoder region, at the beginning of January 2016, was about 218 thousand people or 1.5% less than the previous year. The region’s population has declined from year to year, following the same path as the population at the national level. In 2016 compare to 2001, the population of Shkoder has declined 16%, with a long-term average annual decline $\approx 1\%$. The causes of the demographic changes at the regional level are the same as those that causes the demographic changes at the national level: high immigration rate, low fertility and mortality (INSTAT, 2016).

Table 2. Resident population, on first January

Year	2001	2005	2010	2015	2016
Albania	3,063,320	3,019,634	2,918,674	2,893,005	2,886,026
Shkodër	255,898	245,800	229,140	218,523	215,483
<i>Index of annual change, year base 2001</i>					
Albania	-0.20%	-1.40%	-4.70%	-5.60%	-5.80%
Shkodër	-1.30%	-3.90%	-10.50%	-14.60%	-16%

Source: INSTAT (2016) and authors calculations

Demographic population structure, based on distribution *urban/rural population*, present a different picture compare to the same indicator at the national level, while the national indicator is in favor of the urban population in the region, the opposite occurs at region level where the ratio shows the dominance of rural to urban population. Albania, after 2008, has a ratio of population urban/rural, in favor of the urban population (52-58%), while in the region, the rural population continues to remain dominant (53-57%). Although during the period 2001-2016, the difference between rural and urban population for Shkoder region has been narrowing, again at the end of 2015, the population ratio of urban / rural shows that the urban population of the region is 11% point lower than the national average. The dominance of rural population explain why the prior economic activity of the region is the agriculture one. Like in other countries, internal migration in Albania is mostly synonymous with the phenomenon of urbanization. Analysis of the migratory movements of the region’s population, showing clearly the negative net balance emphasizing that outgoing people is almost twice higher than the incoming population. The negative impact of this factor ("internal migration") in the size of the population is estimated to be about 23% for the period 2001-2015 (Aliaj *et al.*, 2016).

Another important demographic indicator is the *structure of the population by group-age*. The group-age structure of region population looks different compared with the age structure of the total population. In this comparative analysis, however is worth pointing out the differences for about 3 points of the age group (15-65) years and 1 point for the age-group of (+65). Both indicators show a region demographic structure in disfavor of the economically active population and this should serve as a signal for policy makers in the designing process of regional development strategies. Further more in reference to the time series analyses, due to reduction of the young population and increase of age (+ 65),

the population of the region like the whole Albanian population has enter to the path of its “aging” (Table 3).

Table 3. Age-structure of population in Albania and Shkoder region

Population by group-age	2016			
	Total	(0-14) age	(15-64) age	(65+) age
Shkoder region	215,483	46,548	142,110	26,825
Structure in %				
Albania	100	18%	69%	13%
Shkoder region	100	22%	66%	12%

Source: INSTAT (2016), authors calculations

Data on population by group-age serves to calculate other demographic indicators such as total dependency ratios [the ratio of the age group (0-14) + (+65) to the working age population / (15-65)] indicator the youth dependency ratio (0-14) / (15-65) and old-age dependency ratio [the age group (+65) / (15-65)]. Analysis of these indicators are very useful because provide important information to assess potential human resources that could be included in the labor market and consequently influence the economic performance of the region. According to the results for the period 1979-2011, both Albania and the region, in 2011 have reached the lowest level of the total dependence ratio, which means that every 100 people at working age “have in charged” 47/52 individuals at non-working age. The total dependency indicator shows that the country and the region are in the episode so-called "*demographic dividend*" due to high number of potentially economically active population (15-65) versus a low number of age (0-14) and (+65).

Table 4. Dependency indicators

Dependency indicators (2011)	Albania	Shkoder
Total dependency ratio $\{(0-14) + (+65)\} / (15-65)$	47	52
Youth dependency ratio $(0-14) / (15-65)$	30	33
Old dependency ratio $(+65) / (15-65)$	17	19

Source: INSTAT (2016), authors calculations

If the region will benefit from this "demographic dividend" that depends on the effectiveness of socio-economic policies to be taken by policy makers. While the total dependency ratio, speaks of the existence of the "demographic dividend", the analysis of other indicators show a significant increase in the number of elderly persons+65 (from 9% to 17%) and a decline in younger population (from 60% to 30%), showing clearly for the "beginning" of the "aging" demographic phase. ***Therefore, systematic and regular demographic analysis of the population have to be undertaken in order to capture in due time the substantial changes in this area, followed by the proper policies in socio-***

economic-environmental aspects in order to anticipate those changes in proper time (Aliaj *et al.*, 2016).

Another aspect of demography is *projection's population* for at least 2 decades as an important basis for regional long-term development strategy. According to population projections (medium growth rate scenario), the region population will face a negative growth rate (1%) (Table 5) and still the major factor expected to affect the size of the stock of the resident population in the next coming years (2016-2031), will be migration.

Table 5. Projection of population, 2015-2031

Projections of Population	2011	2015	2016	2021	2026	2031
<i>Albania</i>	2,902,190	2,893,005	2,886,026	2,863,311	2,827,569	2,782,310
<i>Shkoder region</i>	222,494	218,523	215,483	204,898	196,915	188,816

Source: INSTAT (2013)

As conclusions regarding demographic situation:

- *High rate of migration, after 90' has contributed in the drastic demographic changes of region population.*
- *Actual population classified by group-age is composed by,66% as active economic population, 21% as young population and12% as aged population, showing that still the region has high potential human capacities which can contribute to the improvement of socio-economic situation of the region.*
- *According to the population projections, the region will face a decrease in the number of population with a negative annual growth rate estimated for about (-1%)*
- *To benefit from current so called demographic dividend, requires integrated policies both in local and central level, aiming improvement of economy and the wellbeing of the community.*

Economic situation

Businesses/enterprises are the engine for economic development, so their analysis is the primary contribution to judge the economic performance of the region. According to recent data, the region contributes for about 5% of the total businesses at national level. At the end of 2014 the region has recorded a stock of 5,400 active enterprise or less than 13% compared to 2010, and a decline \approx 8% compared to the previous year (2013) (Table 6).

Table 6. Number of enterprises by years

Region /Albania	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Albania	103,038	109,039	106,837	111,083	112,537
Shkoder	6,258	6,607	6,543	5,945	5,446
<i>Share of region enterprises over total businesses</i>	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%
<i>Annual rate of change of region's businesses</i>		6%	-1%	-9%	-8%

Source: INSTAT, regional statistics and authors calculations

Number of enterprises in the region does not follow the same trend as the number of enterprises at the national level. The current trend of active enterprises in the region is a strong argument and the very first factor to evaluate the region's economic performance in recent years. The decline in the number of businesses over the years is the basic factor that has led to the decline of local GDP. Business environment and lack of foreign direct investments still constitute major obstacles to the future development of region. Another important aspect of business analyzes is and their analysis by size class and economic activity. From this analysis, about 90% of the total is represented by micro enterprises with (1-4) employees, while large enterprises (+50) employees, represent only 1% of the total non-agricultural economic enterprises of the region. Meanwhile analyzes by economic activity, show that local economy appears is service oriented because more than 80% of the businesses conduct trade and service activities, the rest of the companies are working in production activities such as industry and construction (Table 7).

Table 7. Enterprise structure by economic activities (in %)

Country/region	Total number	Structure of enterprises by economic activities, 2014 (in %)								
		Production	Agriculture	Industry	construction	Services	trade	cafe, Restaurant	transport communication	Other services
Albania	112,537	1=(2+3+4)	2	3	4	5=(6+7+8+9)	6	7	8	9
		15.8	1.7	9.9	4.2	84.2	44.6	15.5	10.2	13.9
Shkodër	5,446	16.3	3.3	9.8	3.2	83.7	45.3	17.7	9.8	10.9

Source: INSTAT (2014), regional statistics and authors calculations

Shkoder's share to national GDP is about 5.5%. By ranking the regions according to their contribution to the national GDP, Shkoder is in the 7th place and the GDP per capita for about 2.4 thousand or 27% lower than the national average. Regarding the regional contribution to the real growth rate of the national economy, as showed by the official data is a negative contribution (-0.19%). Also the contribution of the region is lowest one compared to other regions of the country. Furthermore, the negative growth rate in the region is present for a 5 years period demonstrating thereby worsening of economic situation of the region.

Table 8. Total GDP, GDP per capita and real annual growth rate of GDP in 2013

GDP (2013)	GDP by current price, 2013			Share to total GDP	Contribution to annual growth rate of GDP	GDP per capita		
	in mln ALL	mln €	mln\$			in 000 ALL	in €	in \$
Albania	1,350,555	9,629	12,781	100	1,11	466	3,323	4,411
Shkoder	74,707	533	707	5,5	-0,19	338	2,406	3,194
Real annual GDP growth rate by years				2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
				4,3	6,8	-0,003	-2,4	-3,3

Source: INSTAT (2014)

But what economic sectors have contributed to a negative growth rate of the local GDP? A detailed analysis of the economic performance of the region taking into account changes in the nominal value of economic sectors and their weights to the value added, shows clearly that despite the positive growth of the agriculture and industry sectors, respectively by 2.2% and 2.1%, the biggest decline in the trade (-4%) and construction sector (-1%) have contributed negatively to the real growth of regional economy.

Table 9. Impact of economic sectors to annual growth rate of regional GDP

GDP by sector	Annual change of GDP	Weights of economic sector	Real Impact of sectors to the annual growth of GDP
Agriculture	6.40%	35%	2.20%
Industry	14.70%	14%	2.10%
construction	-9.70%	10%	-1.00%
Trade, transport, Hotels	-28.20%	14%	-3.90%
Oother services	-46.10%	29%	0.30%
Total GDP	-2.60%	1	-2.60%

Source: INSTAT (2016) and author calculations

If we look at the structure of regional GDP (gross value added) by sectors, we note that the agricultural sector in 2013 covers the largest part of the regional GDP for about 35%. Moreover, this conclusion is reinforced if we analyze the economic structure of local GDP in longer period where agriculture sector keeps almost a constant weight estimated in average for about 30% regarding the contribution to the local GDP. The agricultural sector is followed by trade sector which in the past has been increased considerably, although the decline by about 4 points in 2013 compared with 2012. Other important sectors of the local economy are construction and industry who have as long-term contribution in average respectively about 13% and 14%. The economic performance of the region from the prospective of employment data looks also weak as mentioned from analyzes of regional GDP. At the end of 2014, the region has recorded about 64.5 thousand employees or a decrease of 1% compare to 2013 and an increase of $\approx +3\%$ compare to 2010. Changes in the total employment are mostly caused by the changes in private sectors: agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Employment data broken-down by sectors show that 19% of the employees work at public administration and the rest 81% is covered by private sector. It is important to point out that the role of employment in the public sector during the (2010-2014) has currently declined by 2% points from 21% share in 2010. Based on these basic data, synthetic indicators of employment can be calculated related to the labor force, employment and unemployment rates (Table 10).

The analysis of employment based on those synthetic figures demonstrate again worsening of the economic situation of the region. The region is facing the reduction of the population, the decline in the number of employees by about (1%) and the number of jobseeker (13%) and as the result the labor force is decreased by about (4%) in 2014, compare to 2013. Change in the labor force is associated with the changes in unemployment and employment rates, respectively decreasing and increasing by 2 points. Despite of a slight improvement in the unemployment rate (20% from 22%) the

continued decline of regional GDP and the decline in the number of businesses are sufficient arguments to argue that the number of job seekers recorded by administrative records suffers from lack of information. In better defining the economic profile of the region, is worth to analyze also the employment structure by economic activity and from this analysis again as in the case of enterprises, it can be seen that about 70% of employees work in the service sector (trade and other services). Putting altogether, business, employment and GDP to better define the economic profile of the region, important messages comes out.

Table 10. Employment indicators, Shkoder region

Employment indicators		2013	2014
1	Total Population	222,494	218,523
2	Population at working age	146,733	144,115
3	Rate of working population over the total population (2/1*100)	66%	66%
4	Labor force	84,371	80,964
5	Rate of active working population (4/2*100)	57%	55%
6	Rate of population(employment /4*100)	78%	80%
7	Rate of unemployment (unemployment/4*100)	22%	20%

Source: INSTAT (2014) and authors calculations

For example, although the number of business in construction sector is the lowest one, as regards to the contribution to local GDP, construction sector contributes with about 10%. So, to determine the economic profile of the local economy we must rely on the contribution of sectors to the real economy and their share to the local GDP and based on this, prior sector with the highest contribution to the local economy is estimated to be agriculture by about 34%, followed by other services which all together contribute to the local GDP for ≈26% (Table 11).

Table 11. Economic structure of the region by GDP, enterprises and employment

Economic structure of the region by economic sectors	Enterprises in %	GDP in %	Employment in %
Agriculture	11	34.5	1.5 ³
Industry	12	14	19.6
Construction	3.2	10.1	8.4
Trade	63	13.7	22
Other services	21	27.6	49
Total*	100	100	100

Source: INSTAT (2014), and author calculations (*the total, does not include the number of agriculture households)

As conclusions regarding current economic situation of the region:

- *The region is facing a continues decline in GDP for the several years and the decline in product gross domestic product is accompanied with a negative growth in real GDP (GDP at constant prices) and the highest negative value is recorded in 2013 with (-3%).*
- *Sectors that have positively impacted the local GDP, are agriculture and industry, while their positive growth is "swamped" by the large negative growth of trade services sectors.*
- *Current employment at the regional level has been decreased as compared to last year. Unemployment rate is also high for about 20% and compared with average rates of unemployment in the national level, is 3 points higher. Unregistered unemployment is growing and this is due to the decline in the number of businesses and the fall of the gross domestic product for the region.*
- *Detailed analysis by sector of the economy (agriculture, business, tourism...) again supports the conclusion why the region is currently performing a negative growth rate of GDP, although the area has great natural and human potentials sufficient to improve the economic performance of the region.*

Tourism is an economic activity that fosters job creation and local development: it is based on promoting and valorizing natural, historical, cultural and social resources. For many areas, it is one of the platforms, sometimes the only available one, allowing people to “live and work in one’s own region”. Analyses of the national data related to direct tourism activity, such as number of visitors, number of hotels, average nights per stay, total income, show a huge increase in all the above mentioned indicators. The number of visitors in 2015 was about ≈4.2 million or +12% compare to 2013, and about 90% were visitors from European countries and the overall average overnights spend in the hotels was ≈2.4 nights. Income from export of tourism (travel services) at the end of June 2016 is estimated to be about 360 million € or 26% more than the previous quarter. At the same period, the residents have spend for travel services out of Albania about 290 million €, so, ≈70 million € is the net balance of travel service activity, or 9% more than the previous quarter as contribution to the economic growth (Bank of Albania, 2016). In reference to the data from the Ministry of Culture (2013), regarding specifically the number of visitors and the revenues generated by the visits to museum and cultural objects, we can create a clearer idea what is the contribution of the region in this aspect.

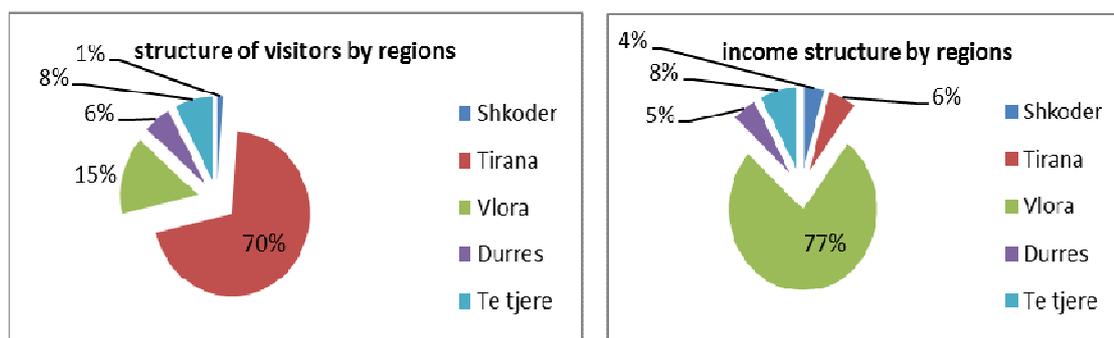


Figure 1. Visitors and income structure by regions (Ministry of Culture, 2013)

As shown from the data (Figure 1), in terms of number of visitors only 1% of them have visited the region, while in terms of revenues about 8% of them are generated from

visiting historical and cultural objects of the region. Based on these data, easily can be concluded that the region is not among the area preferred by foreign and domestic tourists, so to say not considered as a major tourist destination. More efforts needs to be done by the municipality to promote the historical and cultural values of the area and integrate tourism development objectives in the overall development objectives of the region. Another indicator to evaluate how competitive is the region in terms of coastal tourism, compared to other municipalities in the Albanian coast, is the number of companies conducting hotels, bars and restaurants activities. Comparative analyzes showed that Shkoder region offers less hotel services, demonstrating again that the region is not yet among the prior tourism destinations in Albania. In the region are located 7% of the total services companies related to accommodation and food services, while in Durres and Vlora there are respectively about 13% and 9% of the total at the national level. Nevertheless, after the year 2005, the region is facing an increase in the number of accommodation units including here farmhouses/guesthouses in the rural areas up the luxury hotels especially in Shkoder city (Table 12).

Table 12. Number of companies by regions and main economic activity

Region	Total number	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Trade	Hotels, cafe, Restaurants	Transport and communications	Other services
Albania	97,436	1,627	9,686	4,095	43,425	15,108	9,952	13,543
<i>Structure in , %</i>								
<i>Durrës</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>9%</i>
<i>Shkodër</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>5%</i>
<i>Vlorë</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>7%</i>

Source: INSTAT (2014) and authors calculations

As per employment data in this sector, we lack the detailed information but also in regional level this sector is often characterized by high fluctuation, short duration. People working in tourism are also often confronted with long and irregular working hours. Seasonality in tourism causes higher unemployment rates during off seasons and only a small number of employees in tourism have a permanent job (Urbanc and Pipan, 2011). Shkoder region is very rich in natural beauties and one of the major places with a lot of historical, archeological and culture objects (Figure 2). Keeping in mind all these types of valuable assets, we might say that the region can develop the tourism in following dimensions:

1. Natural tourism, based on natural resources
2. Costal tourism, although this part is relatively small compared to other regions located in south of the country.
3. Cultural tourism mostly because of the tradition and richness of handicraft activities
4. Rural tourism, not only because the agriculture is the major activity of the region but also for the existence of quite e great range of the local agro-food products.

Related to these tourism dimensions we can “produce” a set of tourist products that can be explored in the future:

Main tourist products			Secondary tourist products
Coast - Beach (sand and sea) - Mixed beach - Rural beach	Nature, Eco, Rural - Adventure - Ecotourism - Rural environment - Agro-tourism - Rural heritage - Cultural activities - Rural residential environments	Cultural, Heritage - museums - festivals - folklore - hand crafts - history - architecture	Other types - health tourism - winter sports - camping
Products with special interests			
Package to visit urban centers, conference, expositions, fishing, hunting, birds observation, diving etc.			

In reference of natural and beauty resources, current economic-demographic situation of the region, naturally this question arise: what types of tourism can be recommended for the Shkoder region? Except the coastal tourism, which is already developed and is characterized as massive tourism although there are several environmental impacts, based on successful experiences in other countries, we recommend the following tourism types for the region, especially for highland areas (AC, 2013), the specific case of Switzerland (Schorner, 2011), UNEP (2007).

- “*Agro-tourism*” or *agricultural tourism* which is a type of tourism closely connected to agriculture, farms and countryside. It brings tourists closer to nature and involves them in the activities connected with nature conservation and landscape management. Tourists participate in the activities and lifestyles of local people and can get acquainted with animals, plants cultivation and food production. Tourists bring direct income to farmers and allow them to diversify their economic activities. Another positive effect is that farm tourism builds on existing tourism infrastructures and helps to distribute tourism more evenly in rural areas.
- “*Eco-tourism*” or “*green tourism*” is tourism in a natural environment, and includes environmental and resource conservation elements, education elements and local socio-economic benefits (used mainly in the context of tourism in the developing countries).
- “*Fair tourism*”, like the label “fair trade”, provides a redistribution of part of the tourism revenues to the local communities – it is mainly “green tourism”, but it can also be rural or urban. It attempts to reconcile tourism interests with respect for the local population (their cultures and life styles).
- “*Geo-tourism*”, which promotes environmental and resource conservation based on geological specificities, but it also comprises a whole concept of space, like history, culture, landscape, cuisine, arts, local flora and fauna, all characteristics that contribute to a “sense of place”.

Each tourism destination has its own strengths and weaknesses, but the concept of sustainability must be considered within an integrated view of tourism across the three

dimensions of sustainability such as: (a) the ecological dimension of tourism: (b) profitability and long term economic aspects, and (c) the aspects of ethical and social fairness as well as cultural adaptation.

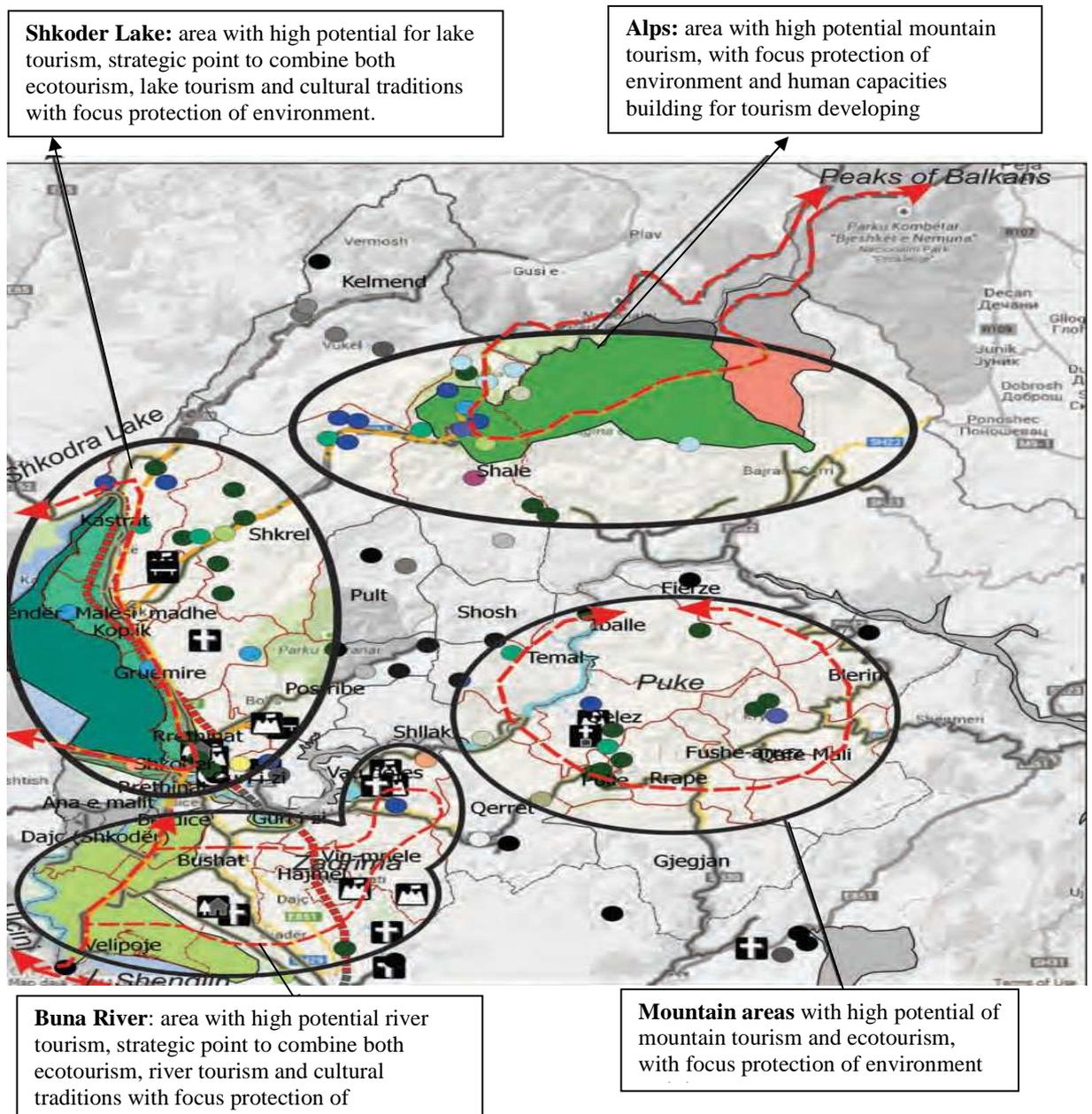


Figure 2. Shkoder region by potential tourism areas (Co-Plan, 2015)

CONCLUSIONS

- Sustainable tourism development goals should be integrated with the objectives of region’s strategy of economic development.
- Analyses conducted so far have demonstrated that the region revealed/posses quite a

- great potential as a natural tourism destination, so “rural-tourism” “eco-tourism” or “adventure-tourism” might be taken into consideration to be further developed.
- Improvement of the role of agriculture together with variety of traditional agro-food products, handcrafts and artistic products which can be also significant for tourist attractors, but the success of rural tourism depends on the quality both of products and environment.
 - The sea side tourism in region is consolidated, but so far it attracts only the domestic tourists, nevertheless this kind of tourism has already created environmental problems and that’s because of uncontrolled urbanization and coastal settlements, so further development of this kind of tourism should be carefully improved.
 - The mountain areas have a greater tourism potential than coastal areas, representing quite a high interest both from domestic and international tourist.
 - Simultaneously development of all types of tourism as an integrated process will results in a more diversified and efficient activity which will bring a great positive impact in the economic performance of the region.

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