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# NEW NORMAL: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Konferencë vjetore ndërkombëtare shkencore e UET / Annual International scientific conference of EUT

**DSSH VIII/2021** DITËT E STUDIMEVE SHQIPTARE  
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EDICIONI VIII

UET / 29-30 April 2021

Konferencë ndërkombëtare shkencore / International scientific conference

**NEW NORMAL:  
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

**PROCEEDINGS**



Tiranë, dhjetor 2021

Titulli i librit: **NEW NORMAL: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**  
**International Scientific Conference.**  
**Ditët e Studimeve Shqiptare VIII / 2021**  
**Albanian studies days / Journées d'études albanais.**

Autori: Universiteti Europian i Tiranës

Art grafik: Besnik **FRASHNI**

Libri është pjesë e kolanës **"ACTA SCIENTIARUM"**.

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Adresa: Rr. "Xhanfize Keko", Nd.56, Godina B, Tirana, Albania

uetpress@uet.edu.al

www.uet.edu.al/uetpress

Botimet UET Press certifikohen pranë Zyrës Shqiptare për Mbrojtjen e të Drejtave të Autorit.

International Standard Book Number (ISBN) 978-9928-320-75-9

Libri është kataloguar në datën e publikimit pranë Bibliotekës Kombëtare të Shqipërisë dhe Bibliotekës së Universitetit Europian të Tiranës.



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"UET Press" është pjesë e  
Universitetit Europian të Tiranës.

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PANEL I

# **THE NEW ECONOMIC MODEL**

# Challenges and Opportunities presented to the Albanian Economy and Labor Market during the Pandemic

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**Aurela BRAHOLLI, Dr.**  
European University of Tirana

## Abstract

*The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted many problems in the structure of the economy and hence in the employment sector, as a very delicate sector for the Albanian economy. This unpredictable factor that has affected the world economy is giving its blows every quarter to the Albanian economy. The unemployment rate has a downward trend making unemployment a major problem for the economy. The main purpose of this study is to argument and analyse the impact of the pandemic factor on the economy, and specifically the employment and unemployment rate in Albania during the economic year 2020. The period of the past year has shown how government subsidy has affected or not the reduction of unemployment as consequence of business closures. It is worth mentioning that in this paper we will try to create a comparison of two exhaustive analyses of the reports published by INSTAT and interpretations of the data of the financial year 2020. Based on these data we will create an overview of the unemployment situation and employment in general Albania, during the pandemic period. How much impact have the pandemic and the health crisis had on the economy, and what is the consequence of the pandemic in the labour market expected to continue? In conclusion, we will suggest the formulation of a group of political policies by engaging experts of various fields. These policies will not only be crucial to confront the imminent issues caused by Covid-19, but they will also be very important to overcome the general crisis created by it.*

**Keywords:** *Employment, Unemployment Rate, Pandemic, Economy*

## Introduction

The word “Economic Tsunami” is being largely used to describe the state of the economy and international financial markets by all analysts and experts of world economy, as a result of the coronavirus spread, also known as COVID-19. COVID-19 initially originates from the city of Wuhan, China, dating back at December 31, 2019, and it rapidly spread in 212 countries and territories all around the globe, meeting also its international transformations (University Johns Hopkins, 2020). With the aforementioned quick spread of coronavirus all over the world, World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic (OBSH, 2020a), asking all the countries to take necessary precautions because the next global concerns were those regarding the socio-economic impact of this situation, especially about the low income and vulnerable groups.

Coronavirus further pushed economies toward economic recession in a time when all economic parameters and tendencies were highly promising. Social distancing quickly came to be economic distancing. People faced restrictions from going to shops, theatres, cinema, museums, bars, restaurants and offices. To prevent further spread of the pandemic COVID-19, the world was forced to go into economic recession and very likely toward economic depression, in such a scale never faced before in modern economy.

Kenneth Rogoff, professor of Economy and Public Policies at Harvard University, in a paper published on “Project Syndicate” platform, underlines the fact that insecurity about actions and behavior of people and policy makers in the coming weeks and months, is as big as the scientific insecurity regarding Coronavirus. According to Rogoff, “until we can have a

better understanding about the 'when', 'where' and 'how' the COVID-19 related public health situation will be resolved, economists won't be able to start predicting the end of recession that is now happening. What is certain however, is that this economic recession will be far bigger and longer than the one that happened in 2008".

According to Ricardo Hausmann, Professor at John F. Kennedy School of Government in Harvard, "Macroeconomists initially thought that the COVID-19 would shake the aggregate demand and that this should be solved by policies aiming to increase consumption. Soon enough they came to understand that, differently from the 2008 global financial crisis that collapsed aggregate demand, COVID-19 pandemic firstly caused a high decrease of the aggregate offer". Therefore, even if people were eager to consume, go to theatres, go out in restaurants, travel, etc., this would be impossible because everything is either totally closed or under severe limitations which make the normal functioning of many businesses impossible. According to Hausmann, this current state is unaffordable, especially for developing countries, which economies heavily rely on imports, tourism, remittances.

According to Mike Konczal, researcher at Roosevelt Institute, there are five elements to slowing recession and limitation of possible negative effects:

- a) Direct help to citizens by offering them cash
- b) Assistance to workers making sure there is a sufficient attention for them
- c) Assistance to businesses and communes with fiscal and monetary policies provisions
- d) Prevention of business collapses through offering of liquid assets, including the possibility of the government being their end customer for a part of their product stock, under the condition that companies retain their employee.
- e) For the industries/sectors that risk bankruptcy, some stimulant mechanisms should be created in order to make their recovery possible, through a clear frame of corporate and financial governing, including the restriction of bonuses and dividends.

The early testimonials have shown that the health and economic effects were being proportionally bestowed upon poor people, increasing so the risk of inequality, exclusion, discrimination and global unemployment in long and mid-term (UN DESA, 2000). It is declared that the COVID-19 pandemic is redefining sensitive groups/categories depending on the political actions of each country (The Lancet, 2020a). In a pandemic, necessary medical knowledge and responsible public behaviour are highly important. Last observations during the COVID-19 situation have shown that weak health reading-writing in the middle of a population was being underestimated (Paakkari & Okan, 2020). Results suggest that bettering the knowledge of mass population regarding the COVID-19 has led to more positive and adequate stances to taking precautions regarding the virus. (Zhong, et al., 2020).

World Vision was globally concerned that millions of people living in poor countries were left defenceless and less prepared for the spread of a pandemic (WVI, 2020). These countries can show high levels of food uncertainty, resulting from high misfeeding and high mortality rates. Furthermore, fear and unsafety connected to pandemics, can help develop an environment more likely to be a subject of different forms of violence. Violence against women and children is widespread all around the globe, therefore the possibility of the pandemic increasing the weight and negatively affect the violence against women and children subject to prior violence (Peterman, et al., 2020).

UNESCO has concluded that many areas have put in use the scholar lockdown all around countries as a precaution against COVID-19, thus affecting 1,268,164,088 students globally (UNESCO, 2020). Consequently, the change of learning environment immediately requested time on adapting the new routines by students, teachers and parents. This global change came with new challenges but also new opportunities. In a last report concentrated on education quality during COVID-19 (Petrie, et al., 2020), possibilities were encountered on new built bridges between teachers and parents.

WHO has also expressed its concerns regarding mental health conditions during the pandemic and the psychosocial consequences of the whole population, declaring that quarantine has lead to increased anxiety, loneliness, depression, sleep-deprivation and self-harming or suicidal behaviour (WHO, 2020d). On the other hand, mental health professionals raised concerns that the pandemic would be followed with an increase cases of depression, suicides, additionally to the symptoms reported on a global level. Additional to the psychological reactions from fear, avoidance and fear of meeting other people, fear of death, fear of isolation, stigmatism, fear of failing to acquire fundamental object have dominated (Kumar & Navar, 2020).

What started as a response to COVID-19, showed again the deep crisis on the health system in Albania and turned to be a fatal blow to the economy and employment. The pandemic has shown and further worsen the structural problems of the employment world in Albania. Consequently, a full evaluation of the intensity of the coronavirus related crisis can not be performed independently from these problems. Hence, infections with coronavirus at work spaces, but also multiple accidents at work occurring during the pandemic period are directly related with the weaknesses of the defence system and health at work. The crisis has increased and will keep increasing unemployment, also at the same time increasing the number of workers on the informal economy.

The pandemic in Albania had a negative impact on multiple sectors of the economy which, with the closure of many businesses and industries, lead to the impact on unemployment being even higher. In this prism, unemployment reached its peak with the closure of customs and borders and the suspension of the largest part of producing activity, services and a free fall of the demand for luxury goods and services.

Hence, the main purpose of this study is to analyse the influence of the pandemic factor in economy, and specifically in the

rate of employment and unemployment in Albania during the 2020 economic year, therefore creating a better understanding of the situation in Albania during the pandemic, also compared to other countries in Western Balkans.

## METHODOLOGY

In adherence of the purpose of this paper, chosen methodology is that of investigation through a descriptive and qualitative analysis of the case. For the conception and development of this qualitative study, after a forehand selection, a limited number of information sources such as papers/surveys of local authors in the field or even from official pages of the relevant institutions, including those national and international.

Primary and secondary sources of information/data have been used, mainly referring to statistics from INSTAT for the 2019-2020 period, Labour Force Survey, and other surveys, summary of opinionists. Another limitation of this paper, beside that of limited sources, it is the time when this research was conducted, which coincides with the time of an economic crisis and pandemic in the country, which had its effect in every field. To reach the purpose defined earlier, this study aims to present an analysis of the influence of the pandemic factor in economy, more concretely in the employment and unemployment levels in Albania during the 2020 economic year.

## DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

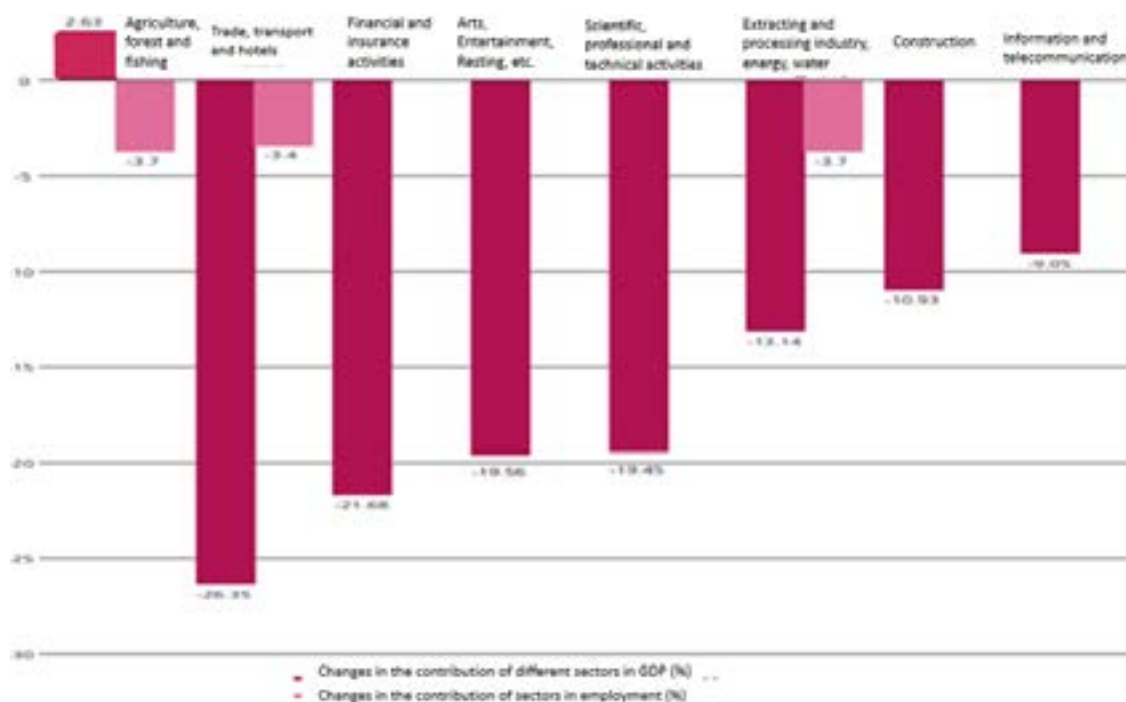
Three are the main indicators that help us better understand that the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic is much worse than what is being presented to us. *First indicator* is related Historical unemployment rate (graphs) registered in the last 4 years referring to INSTAT, regarding all ages, which has varied between 145.000-165.000 yearly. Starting from this number and the fact that the economy was facing collapse and many of its sectors and companies were either suspended or closed, which automatically resulted in unemployed workers, same in numbers as the variety of sectors and activities closed, making us conclude for a high unemployment.

*The second indicator* is related to the publication of vacant positions on “National Employment Service”, which in June 2020 there were only 272 vacant positions declared from 35.000-45.000 places declared each year. This figure informs us about the real authenticity of the job offering in the market from the private sector, which is the highest employer in the country, and limited spaces there are for unemployed job seekers in the employment market. This indicator also shows the difficult state of business in the private sector, contraction of which is reflected even in the absence of the necessity and the interest to be employed.

*The third indicator* is directly connected with the report of the World Bank regarding the economic consequences in our region, where the most affected country would be Albania, in which the unemployment is thought to have risen to 25%. The difficulty of measuring real unemployment is a phenomenon that is very common in Albania for a long time now, and it's mainly due to informality and undeclared self-employment. The report of WB<sup>1</sup> only reinforced the fact that in Albania there are many informal employees and self-employed, for which the quarantine brought total block for every working opportunity and the inability to retrieve “war wage” administered by the government. In this point of view, not only the number of unemployed people declared from official sources is higher but also the effect or support of the government for this “unofficial” category, which is therefore unrecognized.

As it can be seen in the picture below (Fig .1), the most affected sectors from the pandemic were services (commerce, transport, and tourism) with a decrease of 26.35% compared to the same period in last year; financial activities and insurance companies (21.68%); arts and entertainment (19.56%); scientific activities, professional and technical (19.45%); industries of extraction and refinement (13.14%); and building and real estate (10.93%). Meanwhile, total consumption, which also holds the main weight in the economy, was decreased by 7.57% compared with the same period of the previous year. Clearly, contraction of the contribute of different sectors in the economy has a direct effect in employment, although the situation here is more complex.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank. 2020b. *Fighting Covid-19 Europe and Central Asia Economic Update*.

**FIGURE 1:** The impact of the pandemic on the economy and employment

Source: World Bank

The analysis of the situation of the effect of COVID-19 in Employment and Unemployment has been made using data from Labour Force Survey<sup>2</sup>, which is conducted by INSTAT near the families. The subject of the Labour Force Survey were all individuals above the age of 15 of the family chosen to be interviewed. In this analysis the 2 indicators below have been taken into consideration:

- Level of Employment<sup>3</sup>
- Level of Unemployment<sup>4</sup>

**TABLE 1:** Unemployment Rate

Quarter	15-64 years		
	Total	Men	Female
Q.4.2016	14.5	15.0	13.9
Q.1.2017	14.6	16.1	12.5
Q.2.2017	14.3	15.4	12.8
Q.3.2017	14.0	14.8	12.8
Q.4.2017	13.6	14.1	13.0
Q.1.2018	13.0	13.2	12.7
Q.2.2018	12.9	13.5	12.2
Q.3.2018	12.7	13.1	12.1
Q.4.2018	12.7	13.0	12.3
Q.1.2019	12.6	12.8	12.3
Q.2.2019	12.0	12.1	11.8
Q.3.2019	11.8	11.9	11.8
Q.4.2019	11.6	11.8	11.4
Q.1.2020	11.9	11.5	12.4
Q.2.2020	12.5	12.6	12.4

Q.3.2020	12.1	11.9	12.3
Q.4.2020	12.3	12.2	12.5

Source: INSTAT

As it can be noticed in the Table nr.1 above, in the second quarter of 2020, the official rate of unemployment in Albania for the population of the age 15-64 years was 12,5%, increased by 0,6% compared to the first quarter of 2020. For male individuals, in the second quarter of 2020, the official rate of unemployment in Albania for the population between 15-64 years old was 12,6%, so this means that this rate is increased by 1.1%, while for the women in the second quarter of 2020, population age between 15-64 years old, official unemployment rate was 12.4%. Deriving from these data, compared with the first quarter of 2020, we can see that the official rate of unemployment has been changed due to COVID-19, especially for men, because that was the positions of works that were closed form Covid-19.

**TABLE 2:** Employment Rate

Quarter	15-64 years		
	Total	Men	Female
Q.4.2016	56.2	62.8	49.6
Q.1.2017	56.3	62.9	49.5
Q.2.2017	57.3	64.1	50.3
Q.3.2017	57.7	64.7	50.5
Q.4.2017	58.2	65.6	50.8
Q.1.2018	59.2	66.5	51.9
Q.2.2018	59.2	66.3	52.2
Q.3.2018	59.7	67.3	52.1
Q.4.2018	60.0	66.9	53.1
Q.1.2019	60.3	67.4	53.3
Q.2.2019	61.4	68.4	54.6
Q.3.2019	61.5	68.5	54.7
Q.4.2019	61.6	68.5	54.8
Q.1.2020	61.4	68.7	54.2
Q.2.2020	59.6	66.2	53.2
Q.3.2020	61.3	68.7	54.2
Q.4.2020	60.2	67.8	52.9

Source: INSTAT

In the second quarter of 2020 (Table no.2), employment rate for the population of age 15-64 years old was 59,6%. For the



male individuals during this quarter, employment rate for the population age 15-64 years old was 66,2 % while for the female individual's employment rate for the aged between 15-64 years old was 55,3%. During this quarter, compared to the first quarter of 2020, this indicator decreased by 1,0% for female and 2.5% for men.

Hence, deriving from these data, we can conclude that men were the ones more affected from COVID-19 regarding employment.

This harsh situation of poverty and inequality, which is further worsened by the pandemic, is a direct result of the deep crisis of developmental model of Albania. Clearly, a small economy, oriented toward consumption (78% of overall demand)<sup>5</sup> which is supported by remittance<sup>6</sup> dependent of tourism, dominated by the export of increased low value products and with a negative trade balance, is highly exposed and weak against global crisis. Differently from the crisis of Eurozone, the effects of these crisis were really severe, especially due to the strong contraction of the tourism sector and the decline of global demand for goods such as clothes/shoes and minerals (except gold) in global markets.

Not only Albania, but also Western Balkans economies, were sent to recession by COVID-19, causing disruption in decreasing poverty and increasing welfare which these countries were experiencing lately. Before COVID-19 crisis, in the beginning of 2020, much of the countries from the region have made considerable progress toward decreasing poverty and increasing family incomes. Before the COVID-19 crisis began, Western Balkans had high levels of employment<sup>7</sup>. Later, due to COVID-19 crisis, businesses in Western Balkans suffered considerable income losses. Restrictions on movement and social distancing harmed offer and demand of labour force, transportation and traveling in an unprecedented way. Whole sectors of national economies: hotels-restaurants, non-essential retail trade, tourism, transport, and a good amount of production closed. Despite the different aids by the government, businesses of all economies suffered losses, which risked operations and their paying abilities. Most affected were small and medium enterprises, as well as informal businesses. The effects on income-generating activities were especially severe to unprotected workers and the most vulnerable groups in the informal economy.

This crisis managed to erase to the ground some of the achievements created in Western Balkans Labour Market and had a total effect in employment. The employment rate decreased to all time low in Western Balkans. At least 50% of firms in each country of the region were forced to close their activity at least partially, while for those who remained open, business was minimal.

Micro and small firms were hit harder than the medium-large ones. Part of the micro firms in Bosnia-Herzegovina reported a significant decrease in incomes which was more than 12% higher than the average of the firms. 35% of micro firms in Serbia saw a decrease in incomes of over 80% compared to the 10% decrease of middle firms with the same expectancy.

Services sector and tourism had the harshest consequences compared to the rest of the economy. In Albania, the firms that reported decline in demand as their main problem were higher in numbers in the tourism sector compared to the other sectors, while in Serbia losses in the tourism sector were higher than in any other sector.

Reduction of market demand was seen as the main challenge in all these countries. The major part of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina and North Macedonia were significantly affected by the decline of demand, which caused loss of income not only as a result of the decrease in number of new orders, but also due to the cancelling of existing ones. These countries, comparing demand, offer, and among else job restrictions and raw materials, have been relatively smoother but had as well many limitations regarding liquidity.

Business operations in these countries are in critical conditions, but however there have not been a lot of job losses. According to the survey from the Secretariat of Investments Council<sup>8</sup>, COVID-19 related crisis has marked a significant decline of economic activity, where half of the firms included in the questionnaire declared to have completely interrupted activity. Despite this, up until now only a small part of the firms have seen dismissals from work, 28% of them have allowed employee to work from home, while 13% of the firm have used the annual leave.

The situation appears severe for the micro firms in Bosnia-Herzegovina which were the most affected from the pandemic crisis. According to the questionnaire of Foundation 787<sup>9</sup>, up until April 11, 72.7% of the firms' part of the questionnaire, had interrupted their activity, while 16,4% had chosen an alternate way of doing business with the sole purpose of remaining active. The largest part of the firms was forced to unregister employee thus worsening the already high levels of structural unemployment in the country, which, to be able to face the situation, delayed payments to liquidate debt against the government.

Even the state of business in Kosovo does not appear good. According to International Monetary Fund, Kosovo's economy saw a shrinkage of 5%. According to a questionnaire made by several business associations<sup>10</sup>, results that 39% of the firms have completely interrupted activity, 31% have worked with lower capacity, while 14% have continued operating with

<sup>5</sup> Instat 2020e

<sup>6</sup> IMF. 2020. IMF Staff Concludes a Remote Staff Visit to Albania. Accessed on October 13, on: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/07/01/pr20252-albania-imf-staff-concludes-a-remote-staffvisit>.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank and wiiw (2020): Tendencies of employment markets in Western Balkans

<sup>8</sup> Albanian Investment Council. 2020. Main findings of the "Covid-19 on businesses" Survey

<sup>9</sup> Foundation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

<sup>10</sup> This questionnaire was authorised and conducted by "Oda Ekonomike e Kosoves" (Economic Chamber of Kosovo) in collaboration with "Oda Ekonomike Amerikane ne Kosove" (American Economic Chamber in Kosovo), "Oden Ekonomike Gjermano-Kosovare" (Germano-Kosovo Economic Chamber), "Keshillin e Investitoreve Evropiane" (The Counsel of European Investors) and "Klubi I Prodhuesve te Kosoves" (Club of Manufacturers of Kosovo).

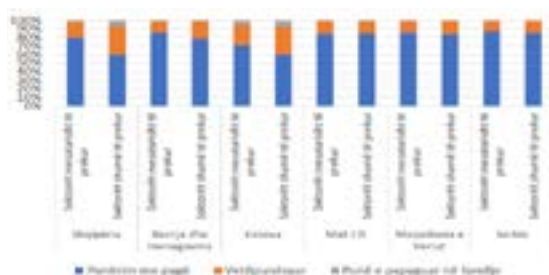
reduced hours. Firms that have totally interrupted activity appear to have been the smaller ones, the ones with less than 10 employees, as reported by 54.4% of the questioned companies in this category; 29.2% of all questioned companies reported to have reduced labour force, although 0.4% of them declared growth. Two main problems that affected Kosovo firms were financial loss, which affected the better part of firms in Kosovo, as well as the absence of liquidity. Also, pandemic affected in the decrease of 20% in the tourism sector, in Direct Foreign Investments and other financial entries.

Considering the importance of tourism in Montenegro, firms were hit the hardest by the pandemic crisis compared to the other countries of Western Balkans. Income from tourism, which make up around 21% of Montenegro's GDP, compared to the 7.2% of North Macedonia and 6.9% of Serbia were directly affected by the pandemic.

The effect of the crisis of COVID-19 in North Macedonia economy had implications not only in the services sector, but also on the production one, especially that regarding stable goods, clothes and textiles, which had the largest number of employees and the highest annual expenses on salary payments, compared to all other affected sectors. Also, retail trade of non-essential goods, with a high number of employees as to 70% of all employees in the stable goods production sector, faced consequences resulting from activity closure. The biggest part of businesses were forced to close their activity due to restrictions and faced considerable decrease in incomes. Ups and downs regarding demand were much more sensitive while on the offer side, such as job restrictions or lack of raw materials weren't a major setback for businesses.

Covid-19 crisis also affected Serbia's economy mainly on production where exports and stable goods are particularly important. Most of the employees in production for export were affected by the crisis. The decline of demand for export, accompanied with the problems in logistics, i.e. materials export, created a significant negative effect in the economy of this country. The demand for table goods suffered a significant decline during the crisis. Regarding services, the most affected sector where most of the employees' work was retail of non-essential goods. The fall of demand in Serbia was the main problem with which all Serbian companies were faced, but this problem was less disturbing for the industrial production sector. The most problematic period regarding the decline in offerings was mainly during the work-from-home time; while inability to import had moderate effects.

**GRAPHIC 1:** Distribution of employment according to different sectors, in the sectors highly or medium affected, in percentage



Source: Analysis by AMNJ<sup>11</sup> and ABF<sup>12</sup>

Employment reduction in Western Balkans is now obvious as it can be noticed in the graphic above. The data about market employment progress show that the highest annual increase in unemployed numbers up until now was in 2020 in Albania, an increase by 25% and in North Macedonia, with 11%. This partially reflects the inclusion in conformity of informal employees who are registered in order to benefit from health insurance and other social payments. Except Serbia and Kosovo, the administrative data on unemployment have begun to show an annual increase of unemployed people. After January there have been 63,000 people newly registered in the employment offices. Also, in the first quarter of 2020, data on vacant jobs in Montenegro show a decrease by 75% and in Serbia a decrease of 48%, which further shows the worsened situation in the employment market for the upcoming future.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Beside losses in life and impact on the health of infected people, Covid-19 now has a large effect on the country's economy, starting from the unemployment numbers, reduction in production and economic sectors the brought a high deficit in the budget and lower incomes in domestic economies. Considering the above results, mainly from INSTAT, we see that the pandemic crisis will keep increasing unemployment and will send more employees on the informal economy. The practice of lowering salaries reported during the pandemic is likely to continue more massively considering the tension caused from the rising levels of unemployment, but also the fact that most of the employees are not organised in real syndicates which would

<sup>11</sup> State Office of Statistics of North Macedonia. Survey Living Standards Measurement: Microdata file. Skopje, North Macedonia.

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Agency of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Institution of Statistics of the Srpska Republic and Institution of Statistics Bosnia and Herzegovina Federacy. Survey of Family Budgets: Microdata File.

be able to defend them.

Despite governmental programs that were trying to maintain the economic situation under control, the self-amplifier dynamics of a recession itself, had a versatile effect, therefore it is necessary the realisation of a comprehensive plan for economic recovery since the number of unemployed people can increase even more in the next months. Employment market may not be the same as it was before the pandemic, therefore the post-pandemic period can result to be a new beginning for many public policies, including those of social welfare.

The common threat we are facing should help us all to get together with some of the main powers that humanity possesses solidarity, courage, creativity, and freedom of thinking. Putting these powers in operation will prove to be essential in our way toward recovery and economic transformation. Crises are also good opportunities for change, adaptation, and usage of new energies for a comprehensive transformation.

An economic transformation should be done, which will include all the decision-making bodies in the country, private sector and financial sector. The main goal is defining the long-term, mid-term and short-term priorities for the economic development of the country, through policies, instruments and measures that put the private sector in its deserved place, a generator of economic growth. The essence of economic transformation should be a new developmental model, based in a strategy that enables a gradual distancing from the dependence on nonstable resources of economic growth, including public investments and remittances, the latter of which should be replaced by direct investments coming from diaspora. The new developmental program needs to focus on the sectors that have competitive advantages, with a high potential for export and integration regional and global supply chains.

Limitations of economic activities because of the Covid-19 pandemic, have increased the need of a digital transformation of businesses to new dimension. All industries need to exploit all opportunities offered by digitalisation to increase competitive advantages, also to overcome difficulties such as these encountered after the pandemic. Nevertheless, for a higher success, digitalisation needs to integrate both the government and public services, as well as education and healthcare.

Recovery and economic transformation after the pandemic will depend on a high number of factors, including the possibility of a new spread of the pandemic, pandemic duration and its effects in the confidence of consumers and businesses, but also the ability of businesses to adapt to the “new normal”. The government should be proactive on ensuring adequate support for citizens and businesses, but at the same time needs to be flexible to adapt to any circumstance that can emerge.

Facing this dramatic situation, Albania is in urgent need for effective policies to face the pandemic crisis, and mostly on the emerge from the crisis of the economic model of the last three decades: an economy dominated by consumption, which when in high volume, is afforded by remittances, exports with low added value, low foreign investments, negative market balance, destruction of strategic sectors and degradation of public services, unemployment and mostly informal employment and underemployment, poverty, inequality and corruption.

Beside the intensity of this multi-dimensional crisis, Covid-19 marks an historic opportunity to build a development model, the success of which can be measured by the capability of creating a society that takes care of the weakest, a society where the realization of the individual potential is not conditioned by the economic possibilities and where economic development is in harmony with the nature, not fighting it.

In a summarized way, below I will present some propositions that aim to identify some of the main areas where an essential change from the existing policies in the country should take place.

BUILDING A STRONG HEALTH SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The creations of policies that regard employees as the most important link of a strong health system able to afford crisis such as Covid-19.</li> <li>- Increase in wages and extra payment for high-risk jobs.</li> <li>- Put in their disposal the necessary tools for personal defence.</li> </ul>
STRENGTHENING OF THE THE PLAN FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROTECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic support for vulnerable and marginalised groups.</li> <li>- Plans for economic support should strengthen both in the coverage aspect, as well as the increase in the level of wages.</li> </ul>
INCREASE THE PROTECTION FOR EMPLOYEE/S AND THEIR RIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prohibition by law of wage reduction and reconsideration of minimal wage as soon as possible, for it to play the necessary role for decreasing poverty and inequality.</li> <li>- Strengthening the institution of collective contracting to ensure the positive development of wages.</li> </ul>
MEASUREMENT THA TARGET WOMEN IN PARTICULAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking measures in different levels, starting with higher salaries in women dominated sectors, such as education and health.</li> <li>- Application of more flexible work hours for both men and women for them to be able to establish a balance between job and family life.</li> <li>- Strengthening the infrastructure for childcare, elderly care and support for people with different abilities.</li> <li>- The social insurance system should recognise the contribution of women in the unpaid job of taking care of family members not only through financial payments, but also recognition of this job for the purpose of pension contributions.</li> <li>- More qualified measures are needed for violated women and their children, to address the reasons which keep them in gender violent relationships, such as unemployment and poverty.</li> </ul>

TRANSFORMATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Orientation of public investments and industrial policies toward sectors which improve life of people, increase dignified employment, enforce the resistance of the country against crisis and assure ecological transformation of the economy.</li> <li>- Orientation of investments toward strengthening public services and social infrastructure, such as schools, kindergartens, nursery, centres for elderly people care, etc.</li> </ul>
MOBILIZATION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE ECONOMY	<p>Creation of financial resources through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Radical changes in tax system</li> <li>- State banks as an important instrument for the ecological transformation of the economy</li> <li>- Developmental banks can emit Letters of Credit with long terms, which would allow these banks to perform long-term financing with low interests.</li> <li>- Application of a solidarity tax to assure that the burden of the crisis can be distributed accordingly to the possibilities of different individuals.</li> <li>- Creation of a progressive tax system which includes the interruption of indirect taxes such as VAT, which has the tendency to affect more the low-income people.</li> <li>- Increase of the level of direct taxation on the people with high income and the most profitable businesses.</li> </ul>

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# Is it worth to pay health insurance?

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**Arlinda YMERAJ, (Assoc. Prof. Dr.)**  
European University of Tirana

## Abstract

*This paper addresses the efficiency of health care system in Albania vis-à-vis citizens' social solidarity demonstrated through financial contributions to respond to the dilemma of Health Care reform in Albania, namely "financing the right mix of public-private provision of health care through more public funds, ensured either by the state or by the society-contribution". The evidence-based analysis of budgets allocated to health care system is used to formulate findings regarding "health care system efficiency" and draw conclusions vis-à-vis the relevance of social solidarity.*

*There is a belief that "social solidarity" should raise awareness about people's right and boost investments into health care services. However, evidence argues that such belief is not justified. The public health care services do not provide equality neither of utilization nor of access in a time when private provision does not offer a solution to the problem. Therefore, the burden is returned on Public Health Care policies which should make the effective use of "social solidarity" and guarantee that it pays off for the best of citizens.*

*The paper is composed of four sections. Section 1 provides rationale for discussion focused at "Social Solidarity" as the key argument. Section 2 explain methods of research. Section 3 provides an overview of health care system in Albania, addressing some critical concerns that deny the right to health care for certain groups of society. Section 4 advances arguments regarding the way in which "social solidarity" is misused in Albania, leading us to key findings, whilst the last section formulates some conclusions, responding to the addressed questions as well as tackling the role of civic and social education of citizens in addition to law enforcement to guarantee that social solidarity pays off.*

**Key words:** Public goods, social solidarity, equality of utilization, equality of access, efficiency, health insurance contributions, health care.

## Social Solidarity and the rationales for discussion

Social solidarity emphasizes the interdependence between individuals in a society, which allows individuals to feel that they can enhance the lives of others. It is a core principle of collective action and is founded on shared values and beliefs among different groups in society. (Douwes et al, 2018).

According to Irina Vladimirovna Naletova et al, upon considering the principal approaches to studying social solidarity it should be noted that this idea is one of the most developed ones in classical sociology. It ranks considerably high in the investigations of the foundations and preconditions of social order. Almost all classics of sociology (A. Comte, H. Spencer, K. Marx, G. Simmel, etc.) have considered the problem of solidarity in their works. The scientists aimed to identify the conditions, the bases, and the components of social solidarity.

However, for countries in transition from a centrally planned to a market economy, like Albania, the concept of Social Solidarity is not new. Communist countries system was supposed to be founded on Social Solidarity. There has been a tendency in Western literature to consider income distribution in communist countries an advantage of that system because

it brought about a levelling of the whole society, therefore it influenced a sort of “equal access to social welfare for all citizens on the basis of social solidarity”. *As a matter of fact, the society was far from being “solidary”, first and foremost due to the lack of freedom, participation and the deny of rights, which resulted not only on the poor economic development, but also on the rationing of social welfare services, including health care.*

It is generally accepted that low level of social development has a considerable impact on the development of social capital, which is used to understand and explain the social rules and relations intertwined into the social structures of the society. It is precisely the models of social relations that allow individuals to coordinate their actions to achieve the desired purposes (Putnam, 1993).

Recently, a young researcher, Dr. Ashiku, has tried to assess “social capital in Albania” by using two measures, namely interpersonal and institutional trust. She concludes that Albanian society is characterized by low levels of interpersonal and institutional trust, including lack of confidence in judiciary, police, political parties, government etc. “If social capital is understood as “an individual sacrifice made to promote cooperation with others”, one can easily conclude that Albanians are not willing to forsake personal interests because they understand this ‘sacrifice’ as in vain as there is a huge suspicion that they will not find reciprocity of this altruistic behaviour in the future” (Ashiku, 2014, p.475). She also confirms that social capital in Albania resides only in the family and is vitalized through family ties.

Hence, the abuse with “social solidarity” and its replacement with superficial morals based on unreal transitory concepts like Party and its connected institutions, brought about a vacuum in social capital because people lost trust. This gradually destroyed the natural collective sense of humanity, eroding civil culture and the historical memory of generations, which had and continues to have a considerable impact on the way in which people still perceive “Social Solidarity”.

Professor Tomes, in the late 1990s argued that the process of transformation of communism to capitalism, as a unique social experience couldn’t be compared to transformation processes occurring in the countries of Latin America, Asia or Africa exactly because in the latter countries, transformation was related to the restructuring of capitalist economies and did not involve a fundamental change of the whole economic and political system as in CEEC. “Although in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) the tools employed in the reform process may be similar, but the socio-economic environment shall always call for specific treatment, to be acceptable to the people” (Tomes, 1998).

This view does not contradict most analysis concerning political economy of capitalism, which considers ‘entrepreneurship, free initiative, net profit and competition’ as the engine to promote development, putting aside the concept of ‘social development’. It has been generally accepted that economic growth enables increased social welfare expenditure and welfare state expansion.

Scholarship on the welfare state development in the western European countries demonstrates that there are direct linkages between welfare, democracy and capitalism (Esping-Andersen, G. (1990).

But in CEEC, the welfare state came into being under the diametrically opposite conditions of extended one-party rule and a planned economy. In post-Communist CEEC, it is rather democracy and capitalism that have been developing within the framework of an established welfare state.

The right to health care is enshrined in international law and in the basic law of the Albanian state. The new Constitution of the Republic of Albania recognizes the right to health care for all its citizens, sanctioning the principles of universal coverage. More specifically, in Article 55 thereof it states: “Citizens enjoy in an equal manner the right to health care from the state. Everyone has the right to health insurance in accordance with the procedure provided by law” (OSCE, <https://www.osce.org>).

However, the issue of health care’s right fulfillment is not only a matter of legislation or institutional practices. It is a question of public policies, grounded on a solid base of social, civic, and institutional responsibilities.

“Healthcare are the services provided to persons or communities by health service providers aiming at promoting, maintaining, monitoring or restoring health.” (WHO, 2004). As such, Health care comprises a set of services that are provided to the citizens because they are required by him. If we imagine health care as a commodity, then there is a market, where this commodity is traded at a certain price that depends on the ratio of demand to supply. But on the other hand, health care is not an ordinary commodity. Health care is a “public good” (Barr, p. 182) because it is non - rivalrous and non - excludable.

If “health care “would be provided in the free market, than the issue of “quantity” and “price “would deem necessary to raise in this discussion. But, as long as “health care “is a public good, then it is the government, as the primary duty bearer, to ensure the realization of the “citizens ‘right to access and utilize health care services based on their needs, guaranteeing “efficiency” and “equality“, alike.

Yet, citizens themselves, as right holders play a crucial role. They exercise social responsibilities, relying on social solidarity, demonstrated through the payment of taxes and contributions, which makes them the most and foremost guarantees of the functioning of health care. Hence, the society has to respond to their needs, not because of generosity, but because of the responsibility to return the share of investment through equitable delivery of quality health care services.

Hitherto what was explained is neither new nor non-elaborated. What concerns us relates to the problems of health care system in Albania during transition, to discover the relevance of social solidarity as a social and financial instrument alike, to respond to the dilemma of financing the right mix of public-private provision of health care through more public funds, ensured either by the state or by the society-contribution.

Although the post-communist governments in Albania struggled to “allocate efficiently resources to boost growth and equitable delivery of public services, the vacuum in social capital intertwined with weak law enforcement, dissolves the role of “Social Solidarity”, whilst people continue to lose the confidence on the institutions.

This paper argues that without ignoring the role of financial resources allocated to health care sector, health care efficiency



plays the most significant role, while laying the foundation for equitable delivery of health care services, which in the end contributes that citizens enjoy the right to health care.

## Methodology

Based on the literature, Efficiency is doing things in the most economical way (Drucker PF, 1966, p.25). Although health care is defined as a “Public good”, still it is possible to measure “efficiency” comparing outputs delivered by the system with financial inputs. Theoretically, although the core idea of efficiency is easy to understand in principle, in practice it can be challenging to measure and interpret metrics, especially how can we understand and evaluate efficiency in health systems? (Cylus, Papanicolas&Smith, 2017, p.7)

Based on the model suggested by Cylus, Papanicolas & Smith in their Policy Brief 27 on “Health systems and policy analysis”, a similar analytic framework that seeks to facilitate the interpretation of health system efficiency measures, is suggested. To assess efficiency, the following aspects are considered:

- the entity to be assessed: Public Health Care Services.
- the outputs (or outcomes) under consideration: Equality in access (% of uncovered people either by insurance or by services); Equality in utilization (health contributions per capita versus health expenditure per capita) and some other key health indicators.
- the inputs under consideration: Health care resources such as staff and health care premises, Health expenditure by revenues and by financing schemes.
- the external influences on attainment: Informality of labour market.
- the links with the rest of the health system: Dual health insurance contribution in compulsory and private schemes.

Equality per se means whether individuals enjoy the same opportunities, though equality in health care is strongly connected to accessibility and utilization of appropriate and qualitative services, alike. Hence, relevant data are used to illustrate financial inputs of health care system and outputs of its management, which shed lights on the misuse of “Social solidarity”, demonstrated through payment of taxes and health insurance contributions.

To reach the purpose, a careful desk review analysis of legislation and budgets allocated to health sector is conducted. Using available data from secondary sources on public and private health care services, the analysis focuses on health expenditures from the viewpoint of “contributors”. The elaborated data help to formulate an evidence-based response regarding health care efficiency and its impact on “Equality”, assessed through indicators of “Access” and “Utilization”.

## Overview of health care system in Albania and its functioning

Republic of Albania, a small country in the Balkan peninsula, with an area of 28,748 square kilometers and a population of 2.845million (INSTAT, 2020), has been witness to almost three decades of rapid change and deep transformation since the collapse of the Berlin wall. These changes first, have influenced economic, social and political landscapes, and second, have unearthed a range of issues, which were previously hidden or suppressed by political regime. The transition period has also been marked by a series of upheavals and crises, from economic shocks and civil unrest to emigratory waves (the most significant in 1990,1991,1997-1998) due to which the country lost almost 20 percent of its population (INSTAT, 2013).

Albania characterized by the historically heterogeneous governance marked by striking disregard of the stages, spent 45 years, from 1945 until 1990, under the most oppressive, authoritarian political system in Europe, from which it has been slowly emerging for the past 30 years. Since the fall of the communist regime in 1991, the country has embarked on a new path aimed at establishing democratic regimes through the protection of human rights and at raising the standard of living.

Since then, Albania has made considerable progress, led by long-standing dream of European Integration. As such, on 24 June 2014, the European Commission granted EU-candidate status to Albania due to its demonstrated progress in legislative reform and political dialogue, and the latest decision guarantees the opening of negotiations for “Membership Status” soon.

The end of 45 years of communist rule and establishment of a multiparty democracy in the early 1990s have proven challenging. Despite reforms and its wealth of natural resources, Albania was and remains one of the poorest countries in Europe with high absolute and relative poverty rates. The number of people living in poverty increased from 12.4 percent in 2008 to 14.3percent in 2012, and extreme poverty rose from 1.2 percent in 2008 to 2 percent (INSTAT, 2013) for both urban and rural areas. Because of revisions in PPP exchange rates, poverty headcount ratio measured as the percentage of the population living on less than \$5.50 a day at 2011 international prices, cannot compare with the previous evidence. Data showed that poverty rate for 2017 was 33.80%, a 3.2% decline from 2014(World Bank, 2020).

Albania also remains one of the most corrupted countries of the world and the most corrupted in the Balkans, together with Kosovo, ranked 99 out of 180 countries (<http://www.transparency.org>, 2019). In general, the fragile growth rates as well as structural economic reform are not sufficient to ensure country’s strategic objectives. The failure to address chronic and extensive unemployment, disparities and social exclusion, poor levels of government investments in social and human

development as well as informality of the economy, are considered critical weaknesses vis-à-vis the sustainable development of the country.

A look at key health care performance data shows that health indicators in Albania are among the lowest within CEE countries. Although life expectancy in Albania has increased steadily in the past twenty years in both sexes (in males: from 67 years in 1990 to 76.3 years in 2019; in females: from 71 years in 1990 to 79.9 years in 2019 (WHO, 2019), child mortality, infant mortality and maternal mortality rates are high in comparison with average rates for EU countries (CCA, 2020).

In Albania, Primary Health Care (PHC) is organized through a public network of providers of health services. Each of the 61 municipalities has PHC centres with affiliated health post-ambulatories. On average, one PHC centre offers services to 8,000–20,000 inhabitants, varying for urban and rural areas, registering a doctor: patient ratio of 1:2500 and nurse: patient ratio of 1:400 (WHO, 2018).

The Albanian health care system, as most of former communist countries inherited the Soviet “Semashko” model, which would no longer respond to the needs of citizens due to the changes first and foremost, of economic relations, from centrally planned to a market economy.

There has been a tendency in Western literature to consider income distribution in communist countries an advantage of that system because it brought about a levelling of the whole society, therefore it influenced a sort of “equal access to social welfare for all citizens”. These countries, even the smaller ones like Albania, are included among modern societies when only physical and human capital are considered: the spread of literacy, urban population, modern communication and information, access to health care services, social protection of people in need, provision of contributory and non-contributory benefits, protection of cultural heritage and art as well as encouragement of research and development (Ymeraj, 2003, p.20).

It appeared there was no need for intervention in the health services, because it was considered by no means as the biggest advantageous of the socialist state. However, the critical point related to the quality the health care services were produced. Perhaps in terms of quantity “equal access” was achieved. Data on number of institutions and respective staff bring in sufficient evidence on the “supply side”, whilst equality vis-à-vis demand (beneficiaries), was not considered at all, especially in rural and remote areas.

The basic concept was rationing in the delivery of health care, while selectivity was the result. Imposed “egalitarianism” for the masses was achieved in conditions through uniform rewards (rations) with preferences for the “new class” based on political principles other than regular achievement in economic activities (Tomes, p.15). Therefore, the transformation of health care system was of utmost importance not only to respond to the citizens ‘needs but to guarantee the realization of health care rights, as well.

The reformation of health care system was challenged by critical decision making of the modes to finance health care services and guarantee a universal coverage, regardless the insufficiency of state revenues. Hence, the first public policy response was the delivery of services, funded by the state budget through general taxation, pushing the health care system towards the Beveridge model.

However, alongside the Beveridge model, experts suggested the building of pillars of Bismark system, based on the direct contributions of citizens, which proved to be difficult due to lack of structures to collect contributions. Despite impediments, the Institute of Health Care Insurance (since 2014, it was transformed into Compulsory Health Care Insurance Fund, CHCIF) was established in 1994, whilst the first law on Health Insurance was adopted on 13 October of the same year (Beci, Belishova, Kola, 2015, p.22).

As self-governing body, the fund has regulatory functions with respect to outpatient health services. The health insurance system is based on statutory insurance that is thus compulsory and regulated by law. CHCIF covers primary health care and some of the cost drugs in the reimbursement list and some of the costs of hospital care. Copayments on both were introduced in 2008. It is funded by a 3.4% charge on gross salaries.

The Law 10383 dated 24 February 2011, that took effect in 2013, specifies that membership in the CHCIF is mandatory for employees and other economically active persons, who must pay contributions to the tax authority to obtain benefits. The Government transfers funds to the CHCIF to cover economically inactive people, such as children aged under 18 years, students under 25 years, pensioners (the retirement age is 65 years for men and 60 years for women), people registered to receive social assistance or disability benefits, registered unemployed people, asylum seekers and a few other categories set out in special laws. CHCIF membership is voluntary for self-employed people, small family businesses and farmers. Uninsured people are entitled to free emergency care (since 2013), a free annual basic health check-up (since 2015), and free visits to GPs (since 2017) (CHIF 2013; 2016; 20017; 2018).

In 2008, private health insurance was also established by private insurance companies. Although the majority of health care services is provided by public sector (42 hospitals, 413 health care centers), (Health Care Strategy, 2016-2020), private sector is gaining space rapidly (10 private hospitals, 111 diagnostic medical centers and 229 diagnostic laboratories), (Uruçi&Scalera, 2014).

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is responsible for health policy and legislation. It plays a supervisory and facilitating role among the numerous actors involved in health care, with several functions being shared with, or delegated to, the 12 Regions, although the degree of decentralization is deeper only in Tirana, the capital. In 2018, reform on organizing the service provision established the institution of the Operator of the Health Services under the authority of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection as an intermediate level of governance between the central level and 36 directorates of public health in 61 municipalities.

CHCIF is the single buyer in the Albanian healthcare system. The money, pooled there from different resources: general government budget, social contributions, etc., are used to buy services from all public primary, secondary and tertiary health services and some private institutions that are contracted by the CHCIF.

In general, main characteristics of the Albanian health care system are:

- Mostly centralized, with tendencies to decentralize, although very few competencies are delegated to regional authorities and local government.
- Aims to provide universal coverage, though around 70% of population is covered, respectively 67% from general taxation and 33% through statutory insurance. (Table 2).
- Health expenditure is funded through public funds, collected from compulsory health insurance contributions and taxation, although out-of-pocket payments comprise almost 50%. Despite the establishment and development of Health Private Insurance, it is not complementary to Compulsory Health Insurance system. In the contrary, it duplicates the Compulsory Insurance system.
- Mixed service provision – public and private

During almost three decades of reforms, despite improvements, the legacy of the Semashko system still remain visible especially in the state ownership of public healthcare institutions, public provision of the services, as well as the funding from the general tax base. (Tomini, S. et al, 2015, p.1).

WHO data show that since 2013, the total health care expenditure for the country stacked at 5.3 to 5.4 of its GDP (WHO, Global Health Expenditure Database, 2018), much lower than the average 8.5% for the EU15 countries (Ibid). However, only about 48.4% of the total health care spending in Albania comes from the general state budget (Ibid), while the share of private expenditures and out-of-pocket expenditures is considerably high, 45% in 2018, although it was 60% in 2000 (Ibid).

Reasonably, the utilization of health insurance and of taxation, namely of Social Solidarity, attracts the attention on the effects on efficiency of the health care services, and beyond that, on the realization of the right to health care. Although a full analysis of the economic pattern is not possible, the general framework of relations and interactions in which transition develops has to be borne in mind. Undoubtedly, this influences the controversial opinions about the production of public services and the way they have to be provided to the citizens. And more importantly, what are the main policy implications for equitable delivery of health care services?

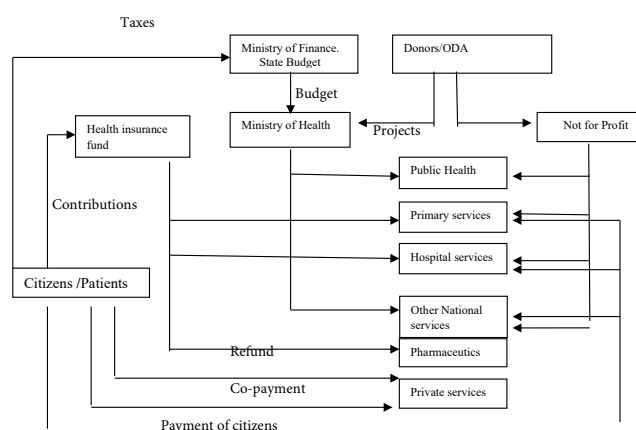
## Key findings

Organization, management and finance of health care in Albania is guided by objectives of the National Strategy for Development and Integration, 2014-2020 in which financial resources are translated into certain social objectives, notably: “Our Policies in the health sector seek to ensure equitable access to health services, better service delivery quality and improved financial efficiency of the health system” (NSDI, p.31).

To finance a health care system, money has to be transferred from the population or patient – the first party, to the service provider - the second party. Fund for Compulsory Health Care Insurance is the link between the first and the second, which has to pay or to ensure health expenses for beneficiaries for the times when they are patients. The aim is to share the costs for medical care between the sick and the -healthy and to adjust for different levels of ability to pay. This mechanism of solidarity reflects consensus in Albania that health care is a social responsibility.

The structure of financing the health sector is presented in the following scheme.

**FIGURE 1: Resource flow scheme**



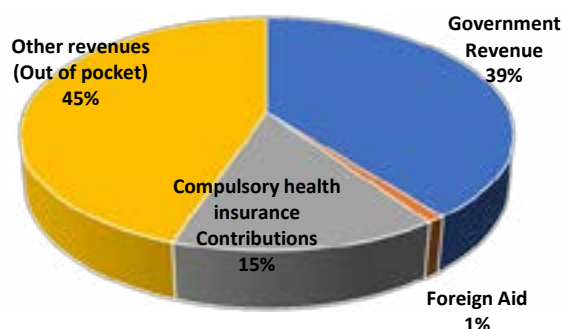
Source: Ministry of Finance, Budget Department.

Health care is funded by (see figure 2, year 2018):

- Transfers from government revenue.
- Social Insurance Contribution (portion from Health Insurance).
- Other revenue not classified (Out of pocket payments).
- Transfers distributed by government from foreign origin.
- Foreign aid

As figure 2 shows, “Other revenues, out-of-pocket payments” constitute for almost half of revenues of health expenditures, while transfers from government and health insurance contributions counts for 55% of total revenue. This evidence clearly challenges the issue of accessibility to health care, which seems to be conditioned by the availability of income.

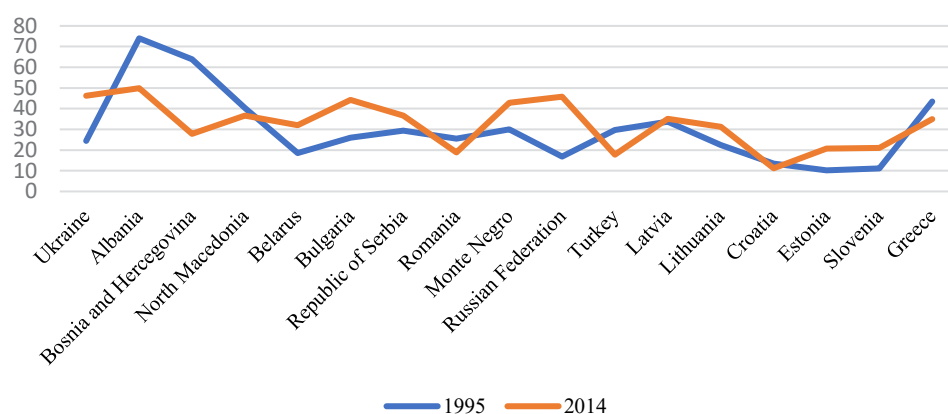
**FIGURE 2:** Health expenditures by revenues, year 2018



Source: Global Health Expenditure Data base, WHO.

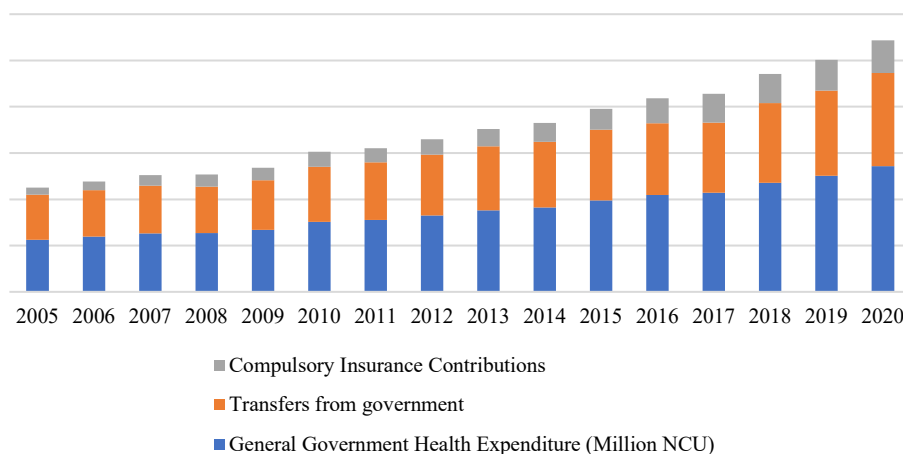
The above-described concern is confirmed by another data, that regard the weight of out-of-pocket money as a percentage of Health Expenditure in Albania from 1995 to 2014, compared to Balkan and East European countries (figure 3). As it is observed, although the proportion of out-of-pocket versus health expenditure in Albania has decreased from 70% to 50%, it still remains the highest.

**FIGURE 3:** Out of pocket as % of Total Health expenditure in Balkan and East European countries, 1995-2014



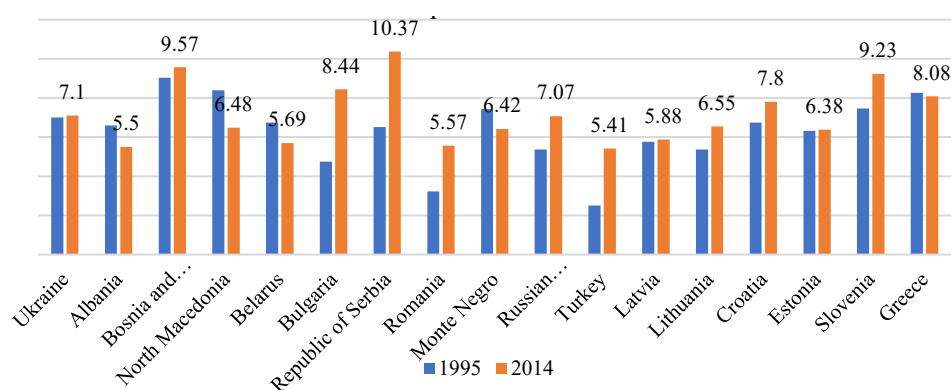
Source: Tomini, S et al, 2015

Since the establishment of Health Insurance scheme, the contributions have significantly increased, even compared to “Transfers from government” as figure 4 shows. However, they still compose only 27% of the total health expenditure.

**FIGURE 4:** General government health expenditure by years and by financing sources, 2005-2020

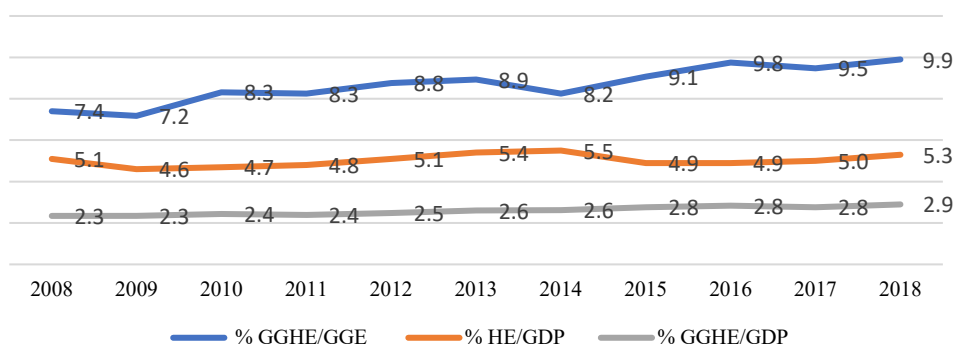
Source: Global Health Expenditure Data base, WHO; Ministry of Finance, <https://www.financa.gov.al/ligji-i-buxhetit>; and Beci, Belishova & Kola, 2015.

Total Health Expenditure (including out-of-pocket as a crucial source to finance health care) as percentage of GDP in Albania have remained the lowest among the Balkan and East European Countries (figure 5)

**FIGURE 5:** Total Health Expenditure as % of GDP in Balkan and East European Countries

Source: Tomini, S et al, 2015

On the other hand, despite the priority given to health sector during the last decade, the proportion of General Government Health Expenditure (GGHE) to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and General Government Expenditure (GGE) has slightly increased, while the percentage of Health Expenditure to GDP has almost remain the same, around 5 percent.

**FIGURE 5:** Comparative data on Health Expenditures, 2008-2018

Source: Global Health Expenditure Data base, WHO.

Not surprisingly, a careful look at the data of health expenditures demonstrates that more than 40% of employees are uncovered by health insurance, although since 2014 that proportion has declined by 10% (table 1).

**TABLE 1:** Uncovered employees by Compulsory Health Insurance Scheme

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Employees	925,000	973,000	1,043,000	1,096,000	1,138,000	1,147,000	1,133,000
2. Average monthly gross salary NCU	45,539	47,900	47,522	48,967	50,589	52,380	52,815
3. Annual contribution per person into CHI (3	18,580	19,543	19,389	19,979	20,640	21,371	21,549
4. Compulsory Health Contribution Fund (Mil	8,199	8,988	10,820	12,544	12,592	13,290	14,216
5. Insured people ( 4/3)	441,283	459,904	558,049	627,874	610,068	621,870	659,720
6. Uncovered people (1-5)	483,717	513,096	484,951	468,126	527,932	525,130	473,280
7. In percentage	52	53	46	43	46	46	42
8. In percentage to population	17	18	17	16	18	18	16

Source: Global Health Expenditure Data base, WHO; Albanian Ministry of Finance; INSTAT; Civici, A. (2017).

Using in depth analysis of health expenditures per capita, it is acknowledged that in addition to those who work informally, it results that proportion of uncovered people is higher, comprising almost 1/5 of population in 2018 (table 2).

**TABLE 2:** Uncovered people by Social Contributions (SS means Social Solidarity)

Population Inhabitants Thousands	2,896,305	2,890,513	2,886,438	2,884,169	2,882,740
Employees thousands	925,000	973,000	1,043,000	1,096,000	1,138,000
Insured people by Health Insurance	441,283	459,904	558,049	627,874	610,068
<b>Health Expenditures per capita in NCU</b>	<b>26,513</b>	<b>24,296</b>	<b>25,078</b>	<b>26,950</b>	<b>29,688</b>
From General Government Health Expenditure (GGHE-D)	12,495	13,553	14,303	14,382	16,030
From Private Health Expenditure (PVT-D) ( equals Out of po	13,827	10,517	10,475	12,013	13,258
From External Health Expenditure (EXT)	191	226	300	555	400
<b>Health contributions per capita (only contributors)</b>	<b>82,756</b>	<b>85,935</b>	<b>74,992</b>	<b>68,206</b>	<b>77,221</b>
Tax on salary	64,176	66,392	55,603	48,228	56,581
Compulsory Insurance Contributions	18,580	19,543	19,389	19,979	20,640
<b>Calculations</b>					
Coefficient of social solidarity	3.5	3.4	2.9	2.4	2.7
Number of people that can be covered by SS	1,524,208	1,562,399	1,600,351	1,515,646	1,672,397
Total number of covered people	1,965,491	2,022,303	2,158,400	2,143,520	2,282,465
Uncovered people	930,814	868,210	728,038	740,649	600,275
In Percentage	32	30	25	26	21

Source: Global Health Expenditure Data base, WHO;

Hence, it is hard to believe in the **achievement of equality in access**. Information from ADHS, 2017-18 confirms that poor people “find difficult to access certain types of health care services such as antenatal care, in which the prevalence of at least four visits was substantially higher in urban areas (82%) than in rural areas (57%). Similarly, it was considerably higher among higher-income individuals (91%) than those in the lower-income category (49%). Concerning under-five stunting, the prevalence was higher in among the worse-off individuals compared with their better-off counterparts (27% vs. 13%, respectively), while under-five mortality rate was considerably higher in rural areas (28 vs. 13).” (ADHS, 2017-18&Albania Health Report, 2014, p.130).

Finally, looking at other system inputs, such as human and physical capacities (table 3), it is sadly observed the very modest increase of the number of physicians during 15 years, while the number of nurses and midwives has slightly decreased.

**TABLE 3:** Health workforce per 100 thousand inhabitants

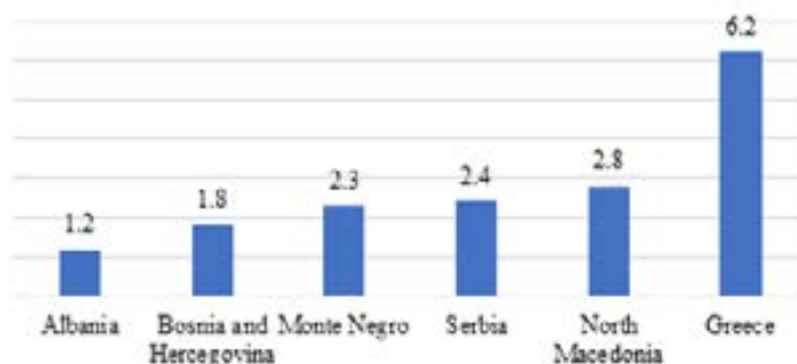
Years	2006-2013	2014-2020
Physicians	115	120
Nurses and midwives	399	375

Source: National Health report, 2014; Primary Health Care in Albania: Rapid assessment, 2018; Global Health Expenditure Data base, WHO.



Figure 6 confirms that number of GP per 1,000 inhabitants is the lowest in the region.

**FIGURE 6:** Number of GP per 1,000 inhabitants



Source: Global Health Observatory, 2019

To complement the consideration on “equality in access”, according to the data of Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the hospitals’ mean bed occupancy rate is as low as 50%, far below standard benchmark of 80–85%. The mean average length of stay is as high as 5.5 days and observed mean bed turnover was 21.27 patients/bed/year, portraying also high level of inefficiency in hospitals, which in turn impact on “inequality in access”.

Regarding equality in utilization, health expenditures per capita by financing schemes, including those occurred privately and in the form of “private prepaid insurance plan” are analyzed from another point of view, namely from the weight they have on household revenues and in comparison, with average consumption per capita on health (Table 4).

**TABLE 4:** Monthly consumption expenditure on health per capita vs GHE

Indicators	2019	2020
General Health Expenditures (GHE) (Millions NCU), by financing schemes	91,147	98,849
Government schemes (GT+CHC)	50,131	54,367
General Taxation (GT)	36,841	40,151
Compulsory Health Contributions (CHC)	13,290	14,216
Household Out-of-pocket payment (OOP)	41,016	44,482
Population Inhabitants	2,874,873	2,869,350
GHE per capita per month (calculated based on HE finances schemes) NCU	2,642	2,871
From GT per capita per month	1,068	1,579
From CC per capita per month	385	413
From Out-of-pocket per capita per month	1,189	1,292
Household Budget		
Monthly consumption expenditure (Price Index 2019=5.7%) NCU	82,235.0	86,922.4
Monthly consumption expenditure on health (4.3%, LSMS 2019) (CE)	3,536	3,738
Monthly consumption expenditure on health per capita (Av.Hous. 3.8)	931	984
GHE per capita per month (calculated based on HE financing schemes)	2,642	2,871
In percentage, CE per capita per month on GHE per capita per month	35	34

Source: INSTAT, Household Budget Survey, 2019; Global Health Expenditure Data base, WHO;

Data elaborated in table 4, brings into the attention another concerned issue: utilization of contributions. As far as the evidence is concerned, only 35% of contributions per capita is incurred to cover households’ health care needs, whilst the rest of contributions likely is used to invest in the health care system. However, considering that Out-of-pocket payments comprise 45% of General health expenditures, it clearly challenges the issue of Health system inefficiency.

In addition, there are almost 65,000 people (10% of employees) who are enrolled in “Private prepaid health insurance plans”, either on a voluntary basis or by their employers. While they are entitled to almost the same publicly provided health care systems, the burden on the household budget is critical.

Since the establishment in 2008, Private Health care sector has increased, although Private Health Insurance contributions

still comprise around 8% of Compulsory Health Insurance Contributions (figure 6). Based on the estimations of the Private Insurance Companies, the number of insured people is less than 65,000, while the minimum annual insurance price peaked at All 18,300 in 2020. Nevertheless, neither the number of insured people nor the price of insurance concerns us the most. Rather than being a complementary system, private health insurance is a parallel system to the public one.

**FIGURE 7: Private Contributions vis-à-vis Compulsory Contributions, 2008-2020**



Source: SIGAL, 2020

Hitherto, there are no public policy initiatives to address the issue of double contributions, which fuels inefficiencies. Insured patients do not have any incentive to look for public health care services, unless rare emergency situations. Low quality of services, long waiting times and bribery, demotivate people, despite coverage by insurance. By contrast, responsiveness, and quality of services, are the driving forces versus private health care services.

However, there should be a coordination of benefits, to share costs among public and private sectors and lays the foundation for more investments into public sector (Table 5).

**TABLE 5: People covered by dual Health Insurance Plans**

People with dual Health Insurance Plan	63,000	65,000
Average gross salary	52,380	52,815
Monthly Compulsory Health Insurance Fund (Million NCU)	112.2	116.7
Annual Compulsory Health Insurance Fund (Million NCU) (CHIC)	1,346	1,401
Annual Privat Health Insurance Fund (Million NCU) (PHIC)	1,153	1,190
CHIC vs PHIC in %	16.8	17.8

Source: Estimations SIGAL, AlbSig, 2020

As it is acknowledged by table 5, Annual Compulsory Health Insurance Fund is slightly higher (18%) than Annual Privat Health Insurance Fund. Should the systems be complementary to each other,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the current insured people by dual Health Insurance or 47,250 people more would get insured.

Besides the impact on system efficiency, double health insurance adds burden on household budget and on the labour costs. Social Solidarity tax (share of income tax that finances health expenditures) and Compulsory Health Insurance comprise 19% of Average Monthly Gross salary. Including Private Health Insurance, the burden on Monthly Average Gross Salary achieves at 22%.

Looking at Health Outcome, based on ADHS, 2011, it is confirmed that under-five mortality rate was significantly more concentrated among the worse-off (40.1 per 1,000 live births) than the better-off (12.9 per 1,000 live births) (concentration index: -0.19,  $P < 0.01$ ). Similarly, stunting showed a negative value (concentration index: -0.12) indicating that it was more concentrated among the poor ( $P < 0.01$ ). Underweight was also significantly more concentrated among the poor ( $P < 0.05$ ). Conversely, antenatal care was significantly more concentrated among the better-off individuals (concentration index: 0.14,  $P < 0.01$ ). Skilled birth attendance was also more concentrated among the better-off individuals, albeit less so (concentration index: 0.003,  $P < 0.01$ ). In addition, contraceptive prevalence was more concentrated among the higher income group (concentration index: 0.11,  $P < 0.01$ ). (Albania Health report, 2014, p.135).

Reasonably, a reader would be surprised by knowing the significant share of employer health contributions in the form of Tax on Social Solidarity, Individual Compulsory Health Contribution, Out-of-pocket payment or even Private Health Insurance, which unfortunately do not pay off neither the contributor nor the others.

This finding is backed by the relatively low level of monthly consumption expenditure on health per capita vis-à-vis General Health Expenditure per capita per month, high proportion of uncovered people by health services, extremely high proportion of out-of-pocket payments as well as the high rate of informality in the labour market.

The modest data elaborated here provides evidence to argue that Health Care system fails to provide efficiently health care services, which fuels inequality in access and utilization, alike. Rather than raising people's awareness on their rights and boosting investments into health care services, "Social Solidarity" does not seem relevant.

## Conclusions

Efficiency is doing things in the most economical way, unfortunately this is not the case of the Albanian Health care system. The shared analysis proves that while equality in access and in utilization are impeded, the Albanians' right to health care is far from being achieved.

Equality in access for low-income groups and rural people is denied since:

- 45% of Health expenditures by revenues is composed of Out-of-pocket payments;
- More than 40% of employees or 20% of population are uncovered by any health insurance;

Equality in utilization for middle and low-income groups, is also denied since:

- Consumption of Health Expenditures per capita per month comprise only 35% of General Health expenditures per capita per month.
- 10% of employees are covered by double contributions, while 1/5 of population is totally uncovered.
- Double contributions, if used properly may serve to extend health care coverage by 75%.

Albanian employees (those who work in formal labour market) contribute significantly to health care performance since Social Solidarity tax (share of income tax that finances health expenditures) and Compulsory Health Insurance comprise 19% of Average Monthly Gross salary, while together with Private Health Insurance, the burden on Monthly Average Gross Salary achieves at 22%. Nevertheless, while what they pay does not help the equitable delivery of health services, they themselves are not paid off either, because the services they get back are poor.

Perhaps shifting some services from public to private sector may sound logical. However, despite the lack of evidence here to support such conclusion, private provision of health care services does not seem a pertinent recommendation for Albania. The solution lies on the well management of the current resources as well as on the investment towards sustainable development.

There are two fundamental theorems in economy, which argue that "it is impossible to redistribute resources and make somebody better off without causing that another one is worse off" (First Pareto Efficiency theorem), which may be achieved if the one starts with the rights allocation of resources (Second Pareto Efficiency theorem). Thus, society needs "Solidarity" to collect resources through taxation. In the meantime, society must re-distribute resources taking care of the "right allocations" respecting "Equality". Hence, "Social solidarity is fundamental. Nonetheless, we admit that the question does not stand only on the "Social solidarity" per se.

Regardless of some grounds for optimism, there is a prevailing finding that health financing efficiency will have to be substantially improved. Albania can still rely for another decade on the demographic growth model, but in a changing context. Challenge of Informality is of utmost importance. Combined with cost-effective resource allocation policies, focused on the shared reformation of compulsory and private health insurance, the supply-side of society' ability to invest in health care, would increase. The demand-side, burdened by law enforcement, implies a continuous investment into civic and social education. Finally, Albania will be able to learn from the past mistakes and others historical experiences to shape more adaptive system responses in the future.

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# Developing a Strategy to facilitate Knowledge Transfer across Multi-Generation Workforce

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**Dr. Edlira MARGILAJ**  
European University of Tirana, Albania

## Abstract

*Demographic changes have influenced that the companies around of the world to have an increasingly diverse workforce. This is in terms of experience, culture, age groups (generations), level of knowledge etc. Differences between the generations of the workforce and the aging of the workforce, carry the risk of losing the knowledge, that experts or knowledge workers possess when they leave the organization (retirement or voluntary dismissals).*

*The transfer of knowledge from knowledge workers or experts to new or less experienced employees is an important issue for organizations, particularly with regard to the transfer of hidden knowledge. Despite the importance of the issue, few articles examine how to use knowledge management to transfer knowledge in today's multi-generational workforce. Recognizing the differences between the generations of the workforce will help the managers of the organizations to determine strategies and methods for transferring knowledge across these multi-generational workforce.*

*The purpose of the paper is to draw attention to the necessity of creation and maintenance of organization memory across transferring knowledge and to provide guidelines for organization management to transferring knowledge across multi-generational workforce.*

*To recognize the characteristics between the generations of the workforce, as one of the success factors for the transfer of knowledge, the field literature has been explored. Thereafter statistical data have served to support the imperative importance of transferring knowledge from older (holders) to younger (needy). Mentoring has been introduced as the most used method for incorporating knowledge within the organization.*

**Key words:** *transfer of knowledge, knowledge management, multi-generational workforce, strategy, organizational memory, Albania.*

## Introduction

The large demographic changes have significantly affected changes in the labor market. Significant changes also characterize the internal organizational environment, seen in terms of values, cultures, knowledge levels, age groups.

Employees progress over the years. They manage to provide a set of knowledge that they adapt to the operations, structure and culture of the organization. "The knowledge that employees posses holds the organization together" (Brown & Doguit, 1998). In this context, "it is important to create new knowledge, but it is equally important to use the hidden, old knowledge and make it effective. (Strommer, R.1999).

Referring to Lesser (2006), what is most important and assumes a particular value for companies is the fact that hidden knowledge is difficult to learn as employees age out of their positions. The emergence of a large number of Baby Boomers in retirement in the coming years as well as an increase in the number of Generation X employees necessitates the development of methods to transfer know-how from more experienced employees to younger or less experienced employees, especially in terms of hidden knowledge. It is necessary that this knowledge be documented and maintained for use by the youngest, to

enrich themselves and to learn quickly from the efforts of others.

Referring to Calo, (2008) companies need to develop strategies to transfer knowledge from senior employees to others in the organization, thereby creating the memory of the organization as a means of capturing competitive advantage. Studies show that the “impact of loss of memory on the organization” is large. According to Lahaie (2006) it is estimated that about 42% of the organization’s knowledge lives in the employees’ brains. Companies are therefore directly and strongly affected by the loss of knowledge of their senior executives or knowledge workers or experts.

Knowledge Management programs should strive to create strategies and methods for transferring and retaining knowledge of the organization with the aim of turning knowledge into an asset of the organization.

## **The added importance of managing hidden knowledge**

Knowledge can be defined as a combination of experience, values, contextual information and internal expertise, which helps in evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information (Gammelgaard & Ritter, 2000). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) have offered and argued that knowledge is of two kinds. It can be displayed and hidden/tacit. Recognizing the distinguishing features between the two types of knowledge enables the determination of the management of each of them, while at the same time enabling the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques for the effective management of the organization’s knowledge.

Explicit or displayed knowledge, being coded, is clearly possible to be touched, seen, heard, felt and manipulated such as in books, videos, reports, documents, allegories, etc. As such it is easy to acquire, share, store or distribute and can be easily stored in the memory of the organization.

Otherwise tacit or hidden knowledge, is that part of the individual’s knowledge which, is not articulated. “It is what we know but do not say or to know more than we can say”. Michael Polanyi (1966). The abstract and unstructured form it has makes it difficult to exclude or mediate. Categorized as personal, it is difficult to share it with others in the organization and to keep it in memory. The transfer of tacit knowledge from one individual to another is accomplished through direct human interaction throughout each face-to-face discussion.

It is important that organizations clearly understand that knowledge is not information and Knowledge Management is not Information Management. “If information is a message, usually in the form of a document or audio or visual communication, knowledge is acquired by thought and is a combination of information, experience, intuition or insight.” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Information becomes knowledge when it is situated in an operating context. “Knowledge is information possessed in the mind of the individual it is personalized information” (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Refer to Drucker (1997) Knowledge is “information that changes something” or “information in action”.

It is easy to pass information from one person to another, but it is difficult to pass on knowledge. In this context, the management of hidden knowledge as well as its transfer between different generations of members of the organization is one of the challenges of management in creating the intellectual levels of organizations.

## **Challenges of knowledge management in the face of Multi- Generational Workforce**

Companies are among the few social structures, where three generations have to work together for about forty hours a week. Managers are the ones who have to manage this multi-generational workforce, harmonizing the values, cultures, experiences and different levels of knowledge it carries.

### **The characteristics of generations of workforce**

Each generation brings unique habits, distinct values and different views in terms of authority, sense of loyalty, distance from power, etc. Dubbed the “forgotten generation”, Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) are known as the optimistically driven, group-oriented generation of personal pleasure (Weaterman & Yamamura, 2007). “Their main focus is work and they are valued for loyalty and commitment” (Cennamo & Gardner, 2009). “They are motivated by verbal or written recognition, rewards or public recognition” (Kyles, 2009).

Generata X (born between 1965-1979), were rated as more independent than their predecessors. “Living through technological growth and social, financial, and family change has made them more engaged in their personal careers than they are in the organization” (Cennamo & Gardner, 2009). They are rated as selfish, less loyal and not too cautious about corporate policies. “Having suffered from economic recession and corporate layoffs, Generation X members tend not to build relationships with senior managers but to create some form of humility or servility towards them” (Kyles 2009). They are more prone to career opportunities and autonomy - a requirement that makes them happy and productive in their work relationships.

**Millennials or the Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000) “are optimistic, technology dependent and have overconfidence”- says Dan Woodman. They have a unique technology experience, good childhood memories, and don’t worry about how much “likes” their posts on Facebook or Instagram will receive. In the twenties they were confronted**



**with the expansionist advancement of technology. Generation Y members link careers to a better world, where they want their contribution to be recognized and valued.**

Generation Z (born around 1995-2004) are also referred to as Generation 4C, (communication, collaboration, connection and creativity). The Z generation is very different from millennials in their job desires and professional life. For Generation Z members education is no longer just a college degree, but a very important bridge to a career. Most of them want to go beyond the bachelor's degree. corporate sustainability does not work and will not happen to them.

### Threatening the organization from loss of knowledge

Ageing workforce is being discussed extensively today. Employees around the age of 65 make up about 30% of the labor market in America. According to data from the European Commission, in the coming decades, all European countries will be characterized by an increase in the share of people over the age of 65 in the composition of the workforce. This means that a significant number of the Baby Boomer generation will leave the job market.

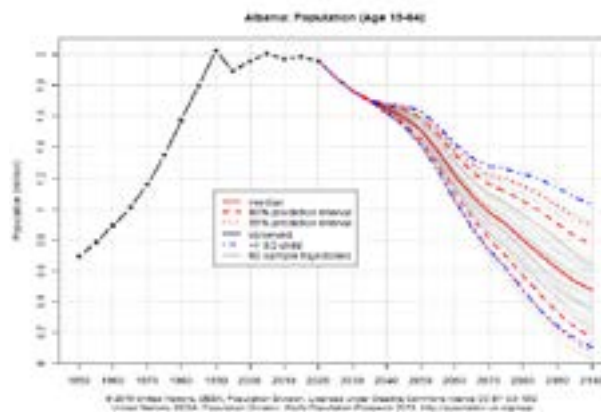
Studies show that by 2040, the Y and Z generations are projected to account for about 75% of the workforce. "Organizations need to make sure that when Baby Boomers retire, their knowledge and experience are gained by the leadership and others in the organization, to prevent them from leaving the door when they leave" (Glick, 2007: 11).

Another phenomenon that is gaining momentum today is what is known in the literature as the term "voluntary turnover of employees". First, this phenomenon is fueled by rapid demographic change, which significantly influences changes in the workforce of organizations. Secondly, more and more, the principle of long (eternal) career with a single company led to a joint fatigue between the employee and the company. Generation Y members are probably the most articulate in this regard. For them, a 10-year career in a company is increasingly coming to an end and 3-5 years of employment practices are more preferred. The digestion of knowledge, which comes from the voluntary turnover of employees remains high.

### Characteristics of the labor market in Albania

Albanian population profile has changed, indicating an aging population in recent decades. There is an increase in the number of 65-year-olds (from 136 thousand to 318 thousand). Forecasts from INSTAT and 2011 Census data represent significant changes over a relatively short period of time. The working age population will remain stable, but the internal balance is predicted to shift from the 15-29 age to the 30-64 age over the next two decades.

**FIGURE 1:** Graph of population composition referring to age groups



Source: CE 2019

In other words the job market will be dominated by generations Y and a large portion of Baby Boomer and X generation is expected to emerge from the labor market. In 2016, the labor force participation rate among young people drops to 36% while that of adults stands at 77%. Thus, while about 483 thousand people were of working age 20-29 years in 2020, this figure will be only 324 thousand - 33 percent less - in 2031.

**FIGURE 2:** Graph on the projection of age groups to the total population

Source: INSTAT 2019

In these conditions, organizations in Albania are threatened by the digestion of basic knowledge and the transfer of knowledge from Baby Boomer generations at X and Y becomes imperative.

## Transfer of knowledge across generations of the workforce

### The need for knowledge transfer

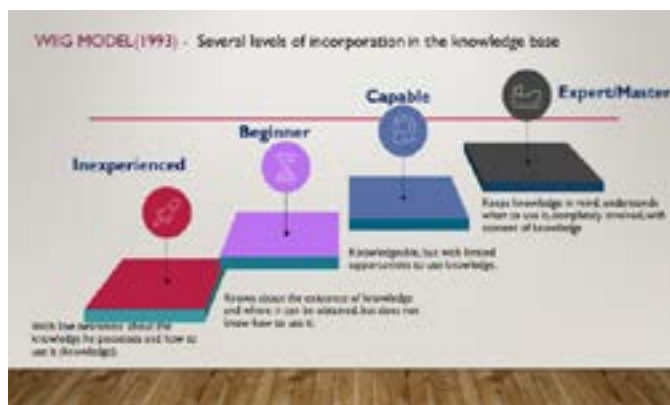
It often happens in organizations that someone who has knowledge does not use it, and someone else who needs that knowledge does not know where to find it. The transfer of knowledge is intended to link 'what' possesses knowledge with 'what' needs knowledge. It refers to the sharing / dissemination of knowledge between individuals or organizational groups and serves to create, capture or disseminate knowledge, ensuring the availability of basic knowledge of the organization to future users. "Given the need to preserve basic knowledge and create organizational memory, through the creation of "knowledge repositories", organizations should support the transfer of knowledge from the generation of workers approaching retirement to subsequent generations" (Newman, 2011, p. 137; Streb et al., 2008, p.2). "Identification, management or transfer of knowledge and best practices exercised by some companies, saved or gave the companies billion profits" (O'dell and Grayson (1998).

But often the sharing of knowledge in organizations creates difficulties and motivating employees to share knowledge is not an easy task. Employees tend to maintain their knowledge fanatically, thinking that sharing knowledge with others will diminish their importance and consequently make them feel endangered for the preservation of the workplace. From an organizational point of view, this strongly brings about the need for a deliberate, systematic approach, with a focus on cultivating and sharing the knowledge base among the members of the organization, populating the best ideas and best work practices.

### How can we transfer knowledge

Leonard and Swap (2004) warn that training and development programs as well as IT-based knowledge management systems are often designed to transfer explicit knowledge, but they are incapable of transferring hidden knowledge. For this reason, companies are building strategies and looking for methods to enable the transfer of hidden knowledge from older employees to younger ones.

Wiig Model (1993) defines several levels related to incorporation in the knowledge base, such as: inexperienced - with low awareness about the knowledge possesses and how to use it; beginner - knows about the existence of knowledge and where it can be obtained, but does not know how to use it; capable - knowledgeable, but with limited opportunities to use knowledge; expert - keeps knowledge in mind, understands when to use it, works with knowledge without the need for foreign interference; master - completely involved, with content of knowledge, a master has deep understanding about the events of his environment.

**Figure 3: Graphic representation of Wiig Model**

Source: By author of this paper

Therefore, emphasis on learning and education, establishment the right organization culture to share knowledge, a coaching leadership style, attention to motivation trust and recognition, are evaluated as part of the strategy developing for those companies that have realized the costs of losing knowledge and the benefits of transferring knowledge across generations of the workforce.

Mentoring is one of the most developed method for transferring knowledge, that organizations are using today. Mentoring method is intended to link 'what' possesses knowledge with 'what' needs knowledge. It serves to share / dissemination of knowledge, ensuring the availability of basic knowledge of the organization to future users. "Many organizations today are introducing formal mentoring opportunities and mentoring is a response to the challenges posed by an aging workforce" (Crawford et al., 2006). "Monitoring is a key approach and one of the best practices within strategies to transfer knowledge" (Krail, 2005, p. 35). The use of mentoring in knowledge transfer is not new. General Electrics used mentoring when e-commerce was in its infancy.

Mentoring process is organized in some stages. First, *identification of areas* of the product considered to be most at risk in the digestion of knowledge due to an aging workforce and which appear to pose a risk to knowledge transfer, is necessary. Secondly, *choosing the mentors*-holders of knowledge will be mentored. "Baby Boomer & X generation are valued as holders of key knowledge and skills, which the organization wants to promote" Sherman (2008). Assigning experienced staff to mentor new employees is the key approach to tacit knowledge transfer (IEA, 2004). This group of knowledge pins are invited to become coaches emphasizing the importance of their individual knowledge. Third, *onboarding* - the process through which new employees (generation Y & Z) acquire the skills, knowledge and behaviors to become effective contributors to organization. Forth phase, *creation of knowledge repositories* is need. Everything gained from the transfer of hidden knowledge across mentoring process will be stored in IT systems and will serve to create of organization memory.

**FIGURE 4: Four stages of mentoring process**

Source: By author of this paper

Further, since mentoring practices are a relatively new approach and the organizations may lack experienced mentors or mentoring models, mentoring training programs can be used to increase method efficiency. An organizational structure with a low degree of formalization and decentralization in decision-making is necessary to enable the sharing and continuity of knowledge. Furthermore, the partnership between older employees and younger ones, as well as the

formalization of the mentor-bearing relationship is an important element in the plan of transferring clear and tacit knowledge.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

The percentage of employees in the age 50 to 60 increased significantly the last ten years. Most organizations are not fully aware of the serious consequences that the loss of large source of labor can have. This specially when a large number of Baby Boomers are preparing to retire.

The companies must be prepared for this mass exodus and are working on how to effectively transfer the knowledge and skills that the boomers possess to the other members who will replace them.

An effective knowledge transfer program can help improve productivity, reduce employee frustration, maintain organizational knowledge. In this respect one of the most effective approaches being used today by companies around the world is mentoring. Identifying factors and mentoring techniques is one of the challenges of organizations which within their competitive strategies have valued knowledge as an inexhaustible asset. Emphasis on learning and education, establishment the right organization culture to share knowledge, a coaching leadership style, attention to motivation trust and recognition, are evaluated as part of the strategy developing for those companies that have realized the costs of losing knowledge and the benefits of transferring knowledge across generations of the workforce.

Creating an interactive learning environment, where individuals share and transfer between them what they know is necessary for organizations in the face of the challenges of generative changes in the workforce. Promoting an innovative culture, where individuals generate ideas, opinions, attitudes and alternative solutions to emerging problems is important in this regard.

Accumulating/storing the knowledge of individuals, as a database, or uncovering best practices, creating the memory of the organization and turning knowledge into long-term assets. In this context, planning dedicated budgets and building systems for storing the acquired knowledge are important for the success of mentoring projects.

Through a proactive knowledge management style, by creating organizational memory, by not losing knowledge, the organization will reduce costs and turn knowledge into a long-term asset.

This article's intention is to give guidelines on how to transferring knowledge along multi generations workforce. It is not extensively based on direct empirical findings. Further research is needed to verify and completely the conclusion and recommendations made in this article

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# The Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Inbound Tourism Development. Case of Shkodra Region

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**Elida BOSHNIJAKU**

European University of Tirana

## Abstract

*Since the COVID-19 spread, tourism has been hit particularly hard globally, also in Albania, in particular inbound tourism with a drastic drop in tourist arrivals out from the country because of travel restrictions, airport closures, nationwide lockdowns, health risks etc. There is evidence, that incoming tourism agencies in the tourism sector have registered lots of cancellations, decline in the visits and spending of tourists.*

*To give a deep and practical insight related to what abovementioned, this paper introduces a study on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic situation to the development of inbound tourism in Albania in general, and in specific in the region of Shkodra.*

*The focus of the research was to analyse the challenges faced and changes made in the activity of some incoming tourist agencies in Albania which organize tourist visits in Shkodra region. For this paper was raised the hypothesis "Covid-19 changed the way of offering tourism". The methodology used was primary research based on a survey completed by a sample of 25 incoming tourist agencies operating in Tirana and Shkodra city which organize tourist visits to Shkodra region, as well as the secondary research based on an analyse of books, journal articles, academic papers, web posts etc.*

*Based on the findings of the study it resulted that incoming tourist agencies, negatively impacted because of pandemic spread, were changing their tourist offer, rearranging their offer by taking measures to be safely adapted considering Covid-19 situation, by making new planning of tourist group size, types of adequate segments, destinations to visit, promotional and price strategies etc.*

*With the progression of vaccination of people, and improvement of the situation, the forecast for the future inbound tourism assume a start and gradual recovery albeit slow at first, during the summer and autumn 2021 with visits to friends and relatives; holiday visits, business trips.*

**Key words:** Covid -19 pandemic, inbound tourism, tourist agencies, offer, promotion destination etc.

## Brief introduction

Tourism is vital for promoting a country and supporting its economy as it boosts the revenue, creates thousands of jobs, develops the infrastructure and contributes to the cultural exchange between foreign visitors and residents of the destination.

Tourism is strongly connected to the agricultural sector, communication sector, health sector, and the educational sector. For such reason, many tourists travel to experience tourism, the culture and tradition of a destination. This is very profitable as it provides many opportunities to tourist businesses such as hotels, restaurants, bar, cafes, souvenir shops, shopping centers, and other stores. It encourages businesses to improve existing products and services and establish new ones. This is the beautiful aspect of tourism sector, but it occurs also to face problems or unpredicted situations as that of COVID-19.

Tourism one of the most important sectors in the world economy, significantly contributing to the GDP and million of jobs worldwide faced last year the global pandemic outbreak which put million jobs at risk, many tourist businesses to standstill period.

COVID-19 significantly damaged tourism globally by causing high losses in international tourist arrivals, revenues and jobs.

As in other countries, also in Albania tourism has been hit hard by the pandemic outbreak especially inbound tourism. Significant decline in tourist arrivals, expenditures of visitors, length of their stay were registered since March 2020 and ongoing. Travel restrictions, airport closures, nationwide lockdowns brought lots and drasstical losses to tourist businesses associated also with activity closure or suspend.

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to:

- Present the impact of Covid-19 to the inbound tourism in Albania in general dhe in specific to Shkodra region as a tourist destination case.
- Obtain a survey on incoming tourist agencies in Tirana and Shkodra city, in order to give an insight of challenges faced and changes made.
- Identify some potential solutions in a type of recommendations to respond to the effects.

## Methodology

Since the future of tourism in the COVID-19 period is uncertain, there is a critical need for research to identify the latest developments in tourism, track challenges, get updates and suggest the best solutions for reviving the tourism industry.

This paper, as mentioned at the very beginning, seeks to proove whether: "Covid-19 changed the way of offering tourism" by studying the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on inbound tourism development since March 2020 and ongoing. The material uses some quantitative data resourced on academic literature and information from relevant websites as well data resulted from the survey addressed to incoming agencies operating in Tirana and Shkodra city.

## Secondary research

For this paper, in the secondary research were analyzed several materials published such as books, scientific papers, business organization interviews, posts of tourism organizations et.c

First are given the definitions of tourism and inbound tourism from the two important organizations:

1. UNWTO: Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.
2. World Tourism Organization: Inbound tourism is the activities of the visitor travelling to a place outside his usual environment for not more than one consecutive year and not less than 24 hours. The travel is for leisure, business and not forperment work and gaining money.

For information about tourism development in Albania since the spread of Covid-19, important data were published in various important websites:

Thus, The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in the annual report for Albania during 2019 presented the following results:

- Tourism contributed 21.2% of the total economy in the country, with a total of 275.5 billion ALL (€ 2.2 billion), clearly showing the dependency of economy on tourism.
- People working in the tourism sector figured 22% of the total number of employment, at a total of 254,300 employees in 2019.
- Tourists from North Macedonia accounted the largest number of visitors (12%), followed by Greece (9%), Italy (8%), Montenegro (6%), and UK (3%). The rest came from a variety of countries across the world.

Related to year 2020 and ongoing, some important data were found on tourism situation as it follows:

- 75% of tourist agencies have closed down or suspended their business. The pandemic situation put agencies as in the same financial difficulties of the year 1997. The turnover in 2020 registered 10% of the year 2019.
- Arrival of foreign visitors in 2020 figured 2 657 818 visits (largest arrivals registered in January and February), less than year 2019 which reached 6 406 038 visits in total.
- While from Albanian citizens, visitors figured 761 599 in year 2020, less than the year 2019 which reached 5 697 729 visits in total (largest arrivals in January and February).

- Regarding the decline in % of foreign visitors during 2020, Albania registered:
  - o 90% less Spanish visitors
  - o 76% less German visitors
  - o 71% less Swiss visitors
  - o 50% less Macedonian visitors
  - o 36% less Kosovo visitors

As it can be seen from the percentages, Kosovo tourists have positively impacted and supported tourism in Albania by not stopping their tourism activity and representing so the lowest decrease in the number of visitors entering Albania. In the opposite, Spanish visitors resulted in the largest decrease of tourist arrivals.

- If taken into account the % of foreigners without Albanian immigrants visits, the decline it was 80-90%.
- Regarding the way of travelling, the majority of incoming visitors chose to reach Albania by land. Others arrived by air or sea.
- Main purpose of their visit was touring, or visit to friends and relatives.
- The length of their stay was shorter compared to a year ago.

## Primary research

To get a deeper and updated insight of COVID-19 impacts and estimates in tourism development, was also conducted a primary research.

### Survey instrument

A questionnaire designed with doc.google form was used as the survey tool to interview incoming tourism agencies. It was composed in Albanian language, with multiple choice including options categorized as 'other' and some open-ended question with the intention of getting as much details as possible.

The questionnaire was distributed via internet: by email, facebook and whatsapp.

Respondents were agency's representatives: owner or employee.

- 84% of them filled in the questionnaire using computer or mobile phone for which it took 7-10 minutes to complete. It is important to mention their availability to answer.
- 16% of agencies could not respond remotely online and after that they were contacted directly and asked to fill the survey. Also interviews face-to-face were conducted. During the face to face interview in depth conversations were made.

### Sample size

The sample reached for this survey was 25 incoming tourist agencies operating either as incoming agencies, or combined ones functioning as incoming and outgoing ones.

To reach the sample of 25 agencies were contacted 40 agencies. The agencies that did not participate in the survey, did not respond not as a refusal or lack of willingness to respond but because their business activity was not running any more as it was closed or suspended.

### Results and data analysis

Results of the survey reflect the perception of the respondents for the impact of Covid-19 till now and some of their future expectations and predictions they make, considering the uncertain situation since nobody knows how it will proceed and consequently the recovery. As it follows are given the results of the survey:

#### Characteristics of surveyed agencies

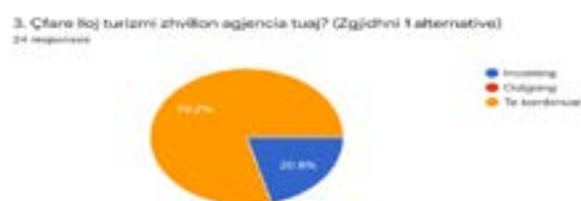
Out of 25 agencies interviewed, 15 agencies are located in Tirana and 10 agencies in Shkodra. These agencies are very well-known ones.

Regarding years of their operation:

- 12 agencies are at the age of 3-5 years
- 5 agencies are at the age of 5-10 years
- 5 agencies are at the age of 10-15 years
- 3 agencies are at the age of 20+ years

79.2% of agencies operate with incoming and outgoing tourist while 20.8% operate only with incoming (as it is shown in the graphic 1).

**GRAPHIC 1.**



Both types of agencies are experienced in providing incoming service.

The agencies having more than 10 or 20 years of experience are professional agencies which through years have successfully operated with foreign visitors. Numerous incoming tourists have relied and continue to ask for their expertise and service. These agencies collaborate with foreign agencies and always keep in mind that: traveling is more than just leaving and arriving.

Regarding agencies that offer incoming and outgoing tourism, incoming consists in a small percentage in the whole activity, mostly at 5% (as it is shown in the graphic 2).

While those operating with only incoming groups of tourists are just focused to foreign tourists and therefore they have been drastically affected in their activity.

**GRAPHIC 2.**



When serving incoming tourists (known also as inbound tourists), agencies provide various tourist activities to the visitors such as hiking, sea and sand holidays, cultural tours and combined ones.

As it can be seen from the graphic 3, 29.2% of agencies offer hiking experience to their visitors, 25% offer sea and sand experience, 58.3% cultural tours in important cultural sites of Shkodra region, and 83.3% offer combined tours.

**GRAPHIC 3.**



According to the level of percentage, agencies offer visits mostly in Theth (about 87.5% of agencies), Shkodra (about 62.5% of agencies), Lepusha (54.2% of agencies), Vermosh and Razma (same percentage 29.2% of agencies), Velipoja (about 20.8% of agencies).

As it follows are mentioned some important and beautiful places that are visited by tourists.



### **Theth**

Theth have a lot of attractions to see and enjoy such as:

Natural attractions highly preferred:

- Blue Eye Of Kaprrë
- Waterfall Of Thethi In Grunas
- Grunas Canyon
- Caves Speleology / Rocky Climbing
- The Stone Groves Of Nderlysa
- Glacial Lakes Of The Neck Of Pejë
- The Waterfall Of Gjeçaj
- Fauna In Theth

Cultural attractions, very interesting ones:

- Tower Of Nikoll Koçeku
- The Church Of Theth
- Ethnographic Museum
- Thethi Religious Feasts
- Customary Laws, Myths And Legends
- The History And Population In Theth

### **Shkodra city**

In Shkodra city are experienced fantastic tours to:

Natural attractions

- Shkodra lake
- Taraboshi mount
- Buna, Kiri and Drin River

When visiting Shkodra, tourist get lost in the old town and beautiful cultural places.

Cultural attractions

- Rozafa castle, a stunning and important historic place and its museum
- Promenades with vibrant cafe and restaurant scene
- Marubi National Photography Museum
- Oso Kuka House
- Mesi bridge
- Site of Witness & Memory museum etc.

Religious attractions

Shkodra city is known of a high number of religious monuments, testifying to the rare religious harmony of the region.

Some of the most visited religious monuments are:

- Piomb Mosque, Ebu Bekr Mosque, Parruca Mosque.
- Lady's Church, Big Chathedrale and The Orthodox Church

### **Lepusha**

Lepusha is described as Switzerland of Albania. Natural beauty surrounded by the mountains, pastures, and forests

- Lugu i Bjeshkëve, an annual festive event
- Lëpusha waterfall
- Vajusha peak, Trojan peak, Bjeshkët e Namuna, Berishdol peak, Gerben peak
- Walk inside the village.

### Vermoshi

Visitors when travelling Vermoshi experience turning roads and dramatic views.

- Vermoshi is well-known for its National Park referred also as the Gem of Albania, also called the Albanian miracle of Alps, is a part of the Bjeshkët e Nemuna.
- Gërçara Kanyons
- Highest biodiversity of the mountain mainland.

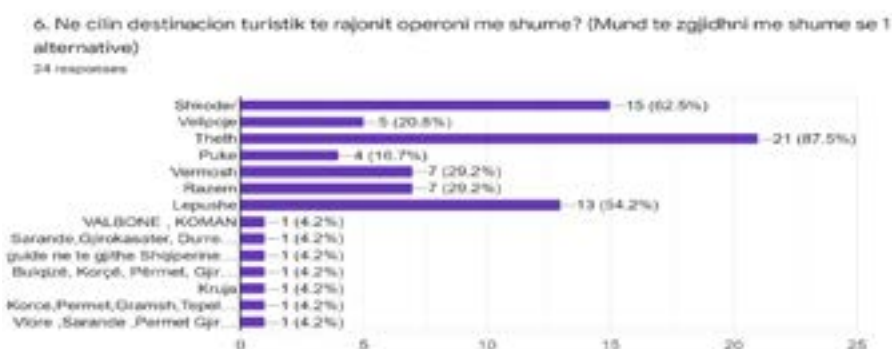
### Razma

Razma is another important place to offer beautiful natural attractions:

- Razma, Troshan and Black Field fields with beautiful karst caves.
- The mountain of Veleçik (1724 m) to the north of Razma
- The mountains of Kunora (1713 m) lying to the east
- The mountain of Zagora (1862 m)
- Pigeon's cave, Shtog cave, Cave of the Valleys
- The springs of the Valleys estuary with cold and clear ice water.

There are also other destinations preferred but being in the focus of less agencies are Valbona, Koman, Saranda, Gjirokastra, Durres, Bulqiza, Permet, Kruja, Korça, Gramsh and Tepelena (about 4.2% of agencies). , what means that there is most interest for these destinations to visit (as it is shown the graphic 4).

**GRAPHIC 4.**



## Characteristics of the visitors

### Country of origin of foreign tourists

The vast majority of tourists come from: Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Germany, Austria, England, France, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands. These countries are the main countries originating the tourist's traffic with a high percentage up to 55%.

The reason why they choose to visit Albania in general and in specific Shkodra region, it is because:

- There are lots of beauties, unexplored places in the region.
- The destinations have a clean and healthy climate
- There are opportunities to enjoy the beauties of each season (during summer the sea, during winter the mountains) etc.
- Places are full of rich history, evidenced by the castle, museums, bridges, monuments etc.
- Great hospitality characterized by the generosity and nice behavior of host community.
- Very competitive prices of services such as accommodation, restaurants, bar-cafes, entrance fees to tourist attractions, souvenirs etc.

### Way of travelling

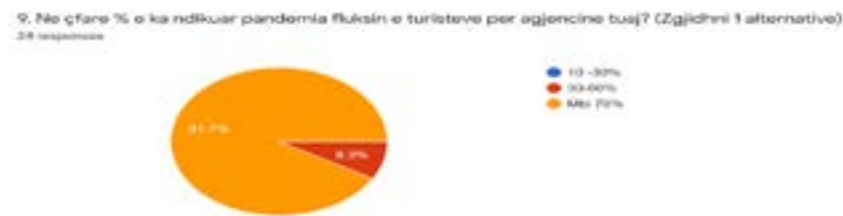
Most tourists come by land (by car, bus, motor, bicycle). Cars are particularly predominant. Lots of visitors prefer private or rented cars as the main means of transport.

Others choose to use air transport and waterways, and the pattern of course can vary from the individuals.

## Tourist traffic

22 agencies said that over 70% of tourist traffic has been reduced because of Covid-19 effects. Other 3 agencies said their target was impacted at the level of 8.3% (as it is shown in the graphic 5).

**GRAPHIC 5.**



## Revenues impact

Incoming agencies operate by selling tourist products to foreign visitors. In addition to tourist activities, they also provide accommodation and transportation services what means that their activity level affects also other businesses activity.

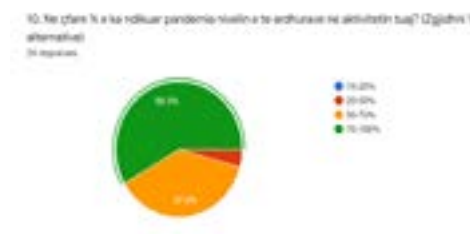
Travel agencies include both brick-and-mortar and online presence but despite this last one tourism receipts had an extreme decline and recovery is not expected soon.

All agencies asked, said their revenues related to the incoming visits, were very negatively impacted i.e highly reduced (as it shown in the graphic 6).

- 53% of agencies were impacted in revenues at the level of 70-100%.
- 3.5% of agencies were impacted in revenues at the level of 50-70%.
- 4% of agencies were impacted in revenues at the level of 20-50%.

Most of agencies faced huge difficulties to afford the unpredicted changes. Only a few of them had lower effects.

**GRAPHIC 7.**



## Staff impact

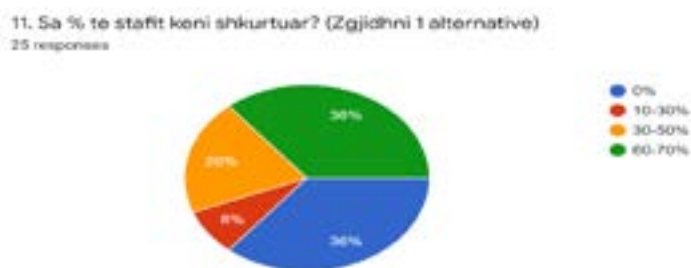
As above cited agencies are among the businesses hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic along with the accommodation sector, air travel white rates are down dramatically. Because of cancellations, businesses faced and continue to face serious financial difficulties.

Unless relief package from the government, it was not sufficient to completely afford the expenses which were the same ones as in normal situation. Some of the agencies were obliged to cut partly their qualified and experienced staff (as it shown in graphic 8).

According to the survey results:

- 36% of agencies have reduced their staff at the level 60-70%.
- 20% of agencies have reduced their staff at the level 30-50%
- 8% of agencies have reduced their staff at the level 10-30%.
- 36% of agencies made efforts not to cut staff but keep them.

Another effect of Covid-19 is that agencies can't make investments. They are trying to experiment with new business models in order to cut some labor costs.

**GRAPHIC 8.**

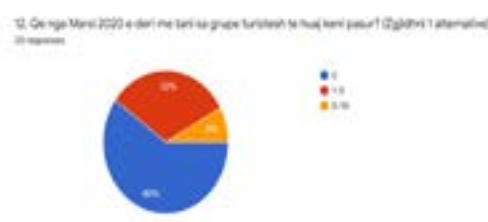
### Number of tourist groups

Regarding the number of tourist groups agencies have had since March 2020 and ongoing, it was found (as it shown in graphic 9) that:

- 32% of agencies have had 1-5 groups of tourists.
- 8% of agencies have had 5-10 groups of tourists.
- 60% of agencies haven't had any group.

Despite the decline, agencies continued to offer some tourist experiences.

Most of groups of tourists were 1-5 people, i.e small groups to keep safe. Only a few of them had groups up to 10 people. But must be also emphasized that most of agencies did not have any group.

**GRAPHIC 9.**

### Size of the Tourists Group

The tourist groups of incoming agencies, during the pandemic situation:

- Over 50% of agencies had groups with 4-7 persons to visit Albania.
- Over 20% of agencies had groups with 7-12 persons
- 20% of agencies had groups with over 25 persons.
- 10% of agencies had groups with 30-50 persons.

The vast majority of tourists came from: Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Germany, Austria, England, France, Poland, Israel etc.

Interest to visit Albania during this period, was shown also from Eastern European countries e.g Ukraine.

### Length of visitors stay

- Over 50% of tourists stayed 4-7 nights.
- Over 20% of tourists stayed 7-10 nights.
- At about 30% of tourists stayed 1-3 nights.

As it is listed above, most of tourist stayed 4-7 nights. The duration of staying is strongly related to the economic constraint caused by the pandemic situation. The length of stay is a determinant of destination and revenues generated as well.

The duration of staying is related also to:

- the socio-demographic profile of the tourist such as education, age, sex, profession etc.
- the psychographic characteristics such as beliefs, this one highly impacted by Covid-19, imposing fear and unsafe sense.

## Age of tourists

A form of segmenting tourists and keeping data is based on their age.

- 50 % of the tourists were 30-45 years old
- Over 25% of the tourists were 30-45 years old
- 35% of the tourists were 18-30 years old
- Less than 15% of the tourists were over 60 years old

The number of tourist aged 30 to 45 years old showed the biggest percentage of tourists, followed after by young tourists aged 23 to 30, with a percentage at 35%.

Over 25% of the tourist were 30-45 years old followed after by the lowest percentage of tourists of age over 60 years old.

## Expectations for the future

Agencies interviewed wish and hope to overcome Covid-19 situation soon. They expressed their future expectations, considering at the same time the uncertainty of situation follow up and the recovery.

Some of their expectations are listed below:

- Over 35% expect to have groups with 7-12 persons
- 16% expect to have groups with 12-18 persons
- 40% expect to have groups with over 25 persons
- 9% expect to have groups with over 50 persons

According to expectations of shifts for summer and autumn 2021, agencies are expecting visitors to come from the same countries that have come during the pandemic period and mostly by the age 45-60 years old and the age 30-45 years old and mostly in groups of over 25 persons and 7-12 persons.

For this reason, they are planning and promoting tours as it follows:

- close to visitors home travel trends and in small groups
- renewed travel concerns such as accepting incoming tours only for vaccinated people, wearing face mask if needed (according to health measures). advising for social distance, avoiding crowded places, spending time only with those usually met
- avoid confined spaces for long periods of time and organize outdoor activities. In case of indoor activities or crowded places take precautions
- inform visitors on the full range of symptoms of COVID-19 and keep up to date on the latest information from trusted sources
- ask visitor to self-isolate if having symptoms of COVID-19
- get tested
- in shops, sports facilities, swimming facilities to have clear signage of the maximum number of visitors allowed.

Future visitors are likely to avoid major crowded cities and explore remote places.

For some agencies there was an expectation to have a decline in queries for small places.

That's why, agencies are trying to adapt their product in respect to the demand of potential tourists and to the pandemic safety criteria. They are setting the criteria and are designing new ways of offering tourism. Some are thinking to be focused on religious, cultural and natural tourism and offer competitive prices. These thoughts are related to past experience, as most preferred and required destinations to visit till now remain the city center, the castle, the cultural sites, the lake, and the mountainous areas as it is the case of Shkodra region with its beauties of the city and the mountainous areas of Thethi, Valbona, Razma, Lepusha and Vermosh.

Considering all, agencies are trying to be very careful in their planning concerning the number of tourists to not reach overcrowding. Also to guarantee a healthy stay, was being reviewed the minimum and maximum length of stay restrictions as a way to keep all safe and healthy. For instance, when applied a minimum length of stay restriction of three-night stays, the offer won't be targeted to people interesting just for two-night stays. So it can be restricted also for maximum lengthstay. New travel arrangements were being considered such as making reservations, being more flexible in cases cancellation or re-booking. Regarding transport of tourists, focus was given to plan the right mean of transport and care about the space and environment to ensure social distancing.

Agencies are collaborating with the foreign agencies to match tourist offer and demand at best considering all.

At about 40-50% of agencies hope and expect for the remove of limitations movement.

During summer 2021 and autumn 2021, they hope and expect to have incoming visits for tourism purposes, visits to friends and relatives, leisure and pleasure (e.g: vacations at seaside), business reasons etc.)

Such predictions on touring reasons are hopes to lead the comeback in the tourism sector. Business visits as well represent an important source of revenue for hotels, restaurants, cafes, souvenir shops and airlines etc and are in the target of agencies. Trying to keep optimistic some agencies planning consist on:

- promotional offers discounts for existing customers as they will avoid expensive destinations, and for new originated customers.
- new tours design for small groups of tourists in order to keep safe, pay more attention to the protocols and adapt in respect to demands.

But, these can be just expectations and predictions for the future. About 35% of agencies are skeptical and fear the future.

## Conclusions

The tourism industry was severely impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19. Therefore, this paper aimed to present an overview of the impacts of pandemic situation to the inbound tourism development.

From research it resulted that Covid-19 pandemic gave a tremendous negative impact on whole tourism in Albania, including inbound tourism which was affected drastically in terms of tourist arrivals and expenditures. The challenges faced by incoming agencies were:

- very limited operations of travel agencies, closure or suspend of activity
- low interest of international tourists to visit the destinations
- fear to travel because of possible infection by virus etc.

The way of dealing with tourist groups, offering and providing tourism changed as an imposing need to adapt to the situation.

Travel agencies in general and in specific incoming agencies operating with tourists were negatively highly impacted. They were almost paralyzed with their activity. A small number of them, was doing small activity just trying to survive.

In such conditions, it was urgent to struggle efforts for recovery and restart again and reactivate tourism based on tourism potential. Agencies operating with incoming tourists tried to work hard and deal with the crisis.

The challenges and changes were bringing a “new normality” from hygiene measures and practices to new travel arrangements such as making reservations, being more flexible and offering exemptions for cancellation or re-booking considering the uncertain situation.

Also choose the right mean of transport and care about the space and environment to ensure social distancing e.g reorganizing the common areas by increasing the distance between people. Address the concept of overtourism, which generates extremely adverse effects for both human health and the environment.

Within the difficulties related to COVID-19, the challenges come across with opportunities for new developments. Some changes on organizing tours inside destinations such as shortening the overnightstay of tourist were being planned to promote sustainable development by fostering tourism, eliminating overcrowding the destination and as a result continuation of business activities while ensuring the community and visitors health.

## Recommendations

Some travel agencies representatives are skeptical for the ongoing situation and don't have any plan how to adapt or overcome this difficult period.

To withstand the impacts of COVID-19, it is important to create plans and get support to keep incoming agencies alive. As it follows are some recommendations.

- Establish a working group with representatives of travel agencies, tour operators, guides, hotels, guest-houses, tourist attractions representatives ect. to find solutions and design the survival and right strategies.
- Strengthen the coordination mechanisms among businesses and government to find best solutions for tourism
- Enhance coordination of associations of tourism
- Diversify and shift to more sustainable tourism models
- Combine different types of tourism, design innovatively and respect the necessary protocols to give the comfort, build confidence to visitors and employees.
- Ensure transparent and clear communication.
- Introduce classification of destinations based on minimum risk and maximum risk to ensure the safety of residents and tourists.
- Take specific measures which regulate the movement within the country, within and between destinations, and control and care the operation of tourist businesses.

- Optimize tourist routes and admit a maximum number of people in compliance to health prevention measures e.g tourist must have negative Covid-19 tests.
- Design a return scheme for qualified employees.
- Integrate more intensively digitally and make investments in digital technology
- Design branding and marketing unique strategies that target international tourists and to be launched once restrictions have been eased.
- Continuously promote tourist destinations and present the natural beauties.
- Promote as well virtually through professional images and videos.
- Enable digital and data transformation within the tourism industry
- Make market research and analyze customer behavior, identify needs, preferences etc.
- Set and monitor right standards of a qualitative service.
- Plan and create a tourism fund as a financial guarantee in case of other unpredicted crisis in the future.
- Make other future studies, future research to keep track of the situation progress and assess potential measures for continuous and more rapid improvement.
- Design projects for concrete interventions and support according to the needs identified.

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# The use of debt as a tax avoidance form in Albania

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## **Prof. Assoc. Dr. Elvin MEKA**

Dean of Faculty of Economy, Business and Development  
European University of Tirana, UET

## **Ilva ISA, PhD(c)**

St.Kliment's University, Sofia Bulgaria,  
Statutory Auditor  
Lecturer, European University of Tirana, UET

## **Krisela NGJELA**

Statutory Auditor  
Assistant Lecturer at Faculty of Economics University of Tirana, UT,  
Faculty of Economics, University of Tirana.

## **ABSTRACT**

Under the Albanian law, the entrepreneurship may be organized in any of the following forms: the sole entrepreneur, general partnerships, Limited Liability Companies (Shpk), Joint Stock Companies (SH.A).

Limited Liability Companies, otherwise known in Albanian law as “sh.p.k”, are companies founded by natural or legal persons whose liability for obligations undertaken by company are limited to their contribution and the share is divided in proportion of the contribution. The basic capital of a “sh.p.k” (or LLC) is fixed to ALL 100 and cannot offer its shares in public. Our research interest will be focused on Limited Liability Companies and their financing activities. These activities include financing in forms of debts or loans and owner's contribution.

Otherwise, the owner may grant funds to the business, the loan is formal with a contract including interest; interest on the loan is taxable to the owner personally when it is repaid. The repayment of the principal is not taxable, since one has already paid the taxes on it and this is the first reason why we often find “Owners Liabilities/loans” in the liability section of the balance sheet. As this item, found in the balance sheet can be included, funds are withdrawn by the owner for “an illegal” purpose, such as bribery.

Many companies face bribery and other non-declared transactions. There appears to be no unified definitions of bribery that specifically states what is considered bribery. However, it is globally recognized as giving a reward or ‘knockback’ to a person, in an attempt to sway opinions or behaviors for personal advantages.

In this paper, we look through a descriptive and comparative analysis at how companies use debt to avoid tax, actions and policies government is expected to take and what is the current approach to combating this form of tax avoidance, and what more needs to be done.

The focus of this paper is to consider debt as a deductible cost, but many of the same issues arise for other deductible costs, such as management fees, insurance contracts or intellectual property fees. The aim will be to have a look at how companies account for bribes paid to third parties in their financial statements and what should be done to detect and prevent this phenomenon?

**Keywords:** *Loan, tax evasion, IFRS, Fiscal policies.*



## Introduction

Financial statements are used by entities to accumulate and report financial information about the performance, financial position and cash flows of a business. Entities need information to manage the business, to invest or to lend money to it. They are aimed to systematically record transactions, sort and analyze them. Nevertheless, financial statements compiled under the full set of characteristics of qualitative information fall under the whirlpool of financial information manipulation. What is accounting manipulation in itself? What are the main traits and techniques? What is the niche allowed by the standards and what is the tendency of auditors to profit from it?

Accounting, in itself, is a subject based on social ethic much more than it is usually considered. The history of financial manipulation is older than it might be considered. Most of the auditors refer to the well-known examples of last World Crisis, such as: Enron, Lehman Brothers, but indeed accounting manipulation dates from area of Luca Pacioli. Almost 500 years ago he shaped the practices of creative accounting in his book "*De Arithmetica*".

Other authors, such as Copeland, invented the term to be referred to as "some ability to increase or decrease reported net income, at will".

The history of accounting in Albania is relatively young. The first plan of accounts was presented by Mr. Jani Vreto. After the declaration and establishment of Albania's independent state there was emerged the need to have and establish an accounting organization and regulation for registering the incomes. The next phase that marked a positive transition was the period where Albania started the implementation and convergence of International Accounting Standards, in 2008. After this period, financial statements had a better information quality and equal chances to be presented in broader markets, outside Albania.

However, despite all the measures taken, Albania faces a constant challenge in information asymmetry between all parties involved in economic relations.

In this paper, we look through a descriptive and comparative analysis at what practices are mostly used by companies to use debt to avoid tax, what actions and government policies are expected to take and what is the current approach to combating this form of tax avoidance, and what it needs to be done in this regard. We take into focus some of the motives for creative accounting. We look for the development presented in scientific databases in evaluations of debt as a deductible cost, as we face that the same issue arise for other deductible costs, such as: management fees, insurance contracts or intellectual property fees.

There appears to be no unified definitions of bribery that specifically states what is considered bribery. However, it is globally recognized as giving a reward or "kickback" to a person, in an attempt to sway opinions or behaviors for personal advantages.

## Literature Review

Previous publications are giving us an insight on the development of relation between tax and debt. These two factors cannot be studied as separate element, but they will be studied in samples with more variables, as it happens in the dynamic of the business.

Numerous studies from researchers such as (Desai. M.A., Dharmapala .DH, 2006), (2009); Ge.W (2006); They concluded in their research that there does exist a relationship that approves the agency perspective that emphasizes the relationship between corporate governance and proves that management tries to profit from tax shields in creating a diversion of rents when applied the tax avoidance activities.

Other researchers conducted studies where finding stated that the cost of debt of a firm is determined by the characteristics of the firm. These characteristics affect default risk, agency cost and the information asymmetry problem as presented by (Centindamar and Husoy, 2007)

The average effect of tax avoidance on firm value was with little significance on cost of debt. It is stated that in firms that are well governed entities have a positive effect on the cost of debt caused by the tax avoidance practices.

Practices, such as: tax avoidance, may cause agency conflicts between management and debtholders. Despite the efforts to create tools that can monitor managerial performance, still there can be created managerial rent diversions that induce information asymmetry.

Other studies conducted by Fernandez (2004) and Massari et al. (2008) give recommendations that tax shelters and tax avoidance are a substitute for the use of debt.

Fernandez (2004) states that it is important to give recommendations to managers, treasures and CFOs to re-evaluate their companies' debt policies. Firms should made careful calculations on the benefits obtained by increasing leverage. If the entity is in the position on using debt and the profits of its usage will be larger than not using it then it is recommended to increase leverage. If not, the firm should not consider at using debt.

Massari et al. (2008) examines whether participating in tax avoidance activities is negatively associated with the cost of debt (COD), and whether institutional investors, as shareholder activists, intensify the effect of tax avoidance on the COD. They have found a negative relationship between tax avoidance and the COD for a large sample of Korean firms, supporting the trade-off theory. Further tests reveal that the negative relationship becomes stronger when institutional investor ownership is high.

The above results of the searches indicate that firms use less debt when they engage in tax sheltering. Using the tax avoidance measure modified from Desai and Dharmapala (2006), Fernandez (2004) determines the existence of a substitution effect of tax avoidance for the use of debt for a large sample of Korean firms. These results were consistent with the results of Inselberg and Kaauford (2004). If tax avoidance is a substitute for the use of debt (Cooper and Nyborg (2008), Hoti (2014)), it could increase financial slack, reduce expected bankruptcy costs, enhance credit quality, lower default risk, and therefore reduce the cost of debt

## Method

### Evaluation of interest and debt from National Accounting Standards and Law on Tax Procedure

There is a divergence between the Albanian Tax legislation and the part of recognition of the real costs and expenses valued under IAS. Albanian tax legislation does not recognize as tax deductible a large part of costs. For example, there is a fixed rate of depreciation recognized as a deductible expense by tax authorities. In case when entities for different causes or circumstances have passed that rate they might evaluate the depreciation according to IAS for their internal managerial process in decision making, but never the less when compiling financial statements for tax purposes they need to make corrections on expenses recognition only at the approved level of tax authorities. They need to make it accordingly and correctly after their guidance to calculate the tax profit otherwise fiscal penalties get applied upon them.

Often the divergence encourages the entrepreneurs to make changes for decision making purposes, but sometimes they find the niche to use for incorrect behaviors. In cases when there is a need to take a loan entities are encouraged to submit a position/ financial performance financial statement to financial institutions to obtain the LOAN. As banks make the risk evaluation on financial statements information. Tax law makes even some more drastic open niches where bigger abuse finds place. Tax law predicts that when an entity is submitting no profit for three consecutive years, the entity might not be subject of control.

According to international accounting standards, loan interests are evaluated according to the specific of the case they are being treated as part of the performance financial statement or as part of the cost and exposed at the position financial statement. In Albania, all financial statements should be in full accordance with fiscal law nr 129/2016 "Income Tax", as changed. Specifically, the article 21: "Unrecognized Expenses"

For the purpose of determining taxable profit, expenses listed below are not recognized:

- Paid interest that exceeds the average 12-month interest rate on the banking market, according to the official publication of the Bank of Albania.
- Also, according to the normative act No. 5 dated 30.11.2019 it is determined that if during the tax period, the loan and the prepayment exceed on average four times the amount of its own capital, the interest paid for the exceeded amount is not recognized as a deductible expense.
- Except as provided in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Article, in cases of loans, borrowings of financing by related parties, the excess of the net interest expense exceeding 30 percent of the profit of the tax is not recognized as deductible expenses of the tax period.
- Property, plant and equipment IFRSs: Must be estimated by reporting entity: Revaluation; Amortization, depreciation and depletion;
- Useful life. Albanian tax rules: The rate of amortization, depreciation is determined by tax law. Assets
- Intangible assets. IFRSs: Must be estimated by reporting entity; Useful life; Amortization; Revaluation. According to Albanian tax rules: The rate of amortization is 15 %, based on straight- line method. Revaluation not permitted for tax.

### Ratio on liabilities/capital

Most of entities have a tendency to use a higher level of loan and debt, compared to the owner's equity. This derives only due to the favoring of the bankruptcy law in liquidation of the company. The debt-to-equity ratio, also known as risk or gearing ratio, is a solvency ratio that shows the relation between the portion of assets financed by creditors and shareholders. Using figures obtained through financial statements, the ratio is used to evaluate a company's financial leverage i.e. the percentage of financing that comes from creditors and investors. This report shows the extent to which the company is being financed with debt with its own capital. It serves to measure the firm's viability and ability and ability to pay its obligations.

The increase in this ratio is a signal that the company is being financed by creditors, rather than its own resources, which could be a risk signal. Lenders and investors usually prefer these debt-to-equity ratios, because their interests are more protected, their interests are more protected in the event of a potential in the event of a potential business failure. However, leverage is not always a "bad" indicator, as it can lead to an increased return on investment of shareholders. Also, very often there are benefits from taxes, associated with borrowing. In general, a high level of debt to equity indicates that

a company may not be able to generate enough money to pay its debts. However, the low level of debt/equity may indicate that a company is not taking advantage of the increased profits that may come from using leverage.

The optimal debt-to-equity ratio is considered to be 1, but this ratio depends on the specific industry, in which an entity operates, because it depends on the composition of current and non-current assets. The more non-current assets, such as capital-intensive industries, the more the capital is required to finance these long-term investments.

To test these theoretical and fiscal restrictions we have worked on the ratios of debt to equity on a group of the most influential of private entities on the sectors with the highest economic growth in Albanian economy. The variables taken into consideration when choosing the sample are the activity, liability and owner equity.

There are fourteen entities under the study. We have worked on the financial statements submitted to the Business National Database of Albania. Each one of the statements has been double checked by authors whether there are corrections, accounts arrangements, consolidated accounts or other corrections indicated according to fiscal law.

To test this correlation and behavior of entities in Albania we have worked on the reports as presented below on the table.

**TABLE 1.** Table of ratios of liability/owner equity

	ACTIVITY	LIABILITIES	OWNER EQUITY	RATIO LIABILITY/ OWNER EQUITY IN %	RAPORT TOTAL DET/KAP NE HERE
Gener 2	construction	4,005,192,386	3,885,759,963	103%	1.03
Alb-Building	construction	2,158,675,974	4,132,217,263	52%	0.52
Gjoka Construction	construction	6,471,361,229	5,967,527,576	108%	1.08
Fratari Construction 1990	construction	2,441,678,116	1,242,600,243	196%	1.96
Gjikuria	construction	2,611,309,518	542,776,198	481%	4.81
Gega Center GKG	Fuel	317,456,869	711,342,266	45%	0.45
Skenderi G	Fuel	1,088,217,734	294,504,933	370%	3.70
Adriatik Petroleum Albania	Fuel	411,406,724	- 270,279	-152216%	-1522.16
Eroil	Fuel	5,143,912,914	177,484,186	2898%	28.98
Europetrol Durres Albania	Fuel	4,735,605,231	1,924,224,463	246%	2.46
ADD	Distribution	1,282,202,181	2,534,855,992	51%	0.51
Interbrands	Distribution	144,305,232	242,135,999	60%	0.60
Agna	Distribution	5,724,187,306	8,672,065,870	66%	0.66
Marketing & Distribution SHpk	Distribution	2,403,838,162	3,564,358,851	67%	0.67

## Results

As stated by the table we have focused our study in three different fields in our industries.

Construction industry has had the biggest growth during these last 30 years in Albanian economy. Entities operating in this market have been numerous and few of them have stand the challenge of the market dynamics. Here we could state that there are entities that, even though are operating from the beginning, are taking part in biggest projects accomplished still they have a very high rate of liabilities compared to their equity. Interesting, is the fact that companies mostly present a very high level of liabilities compared to their equity. Surprising, to the fact that prices of residential and commercial dwellings is continuously increasing much more that the prices of raw materials and cost of labor has increased during the years.

Another question rises naturally.....*how is it possible in these circumstances there is no sufficient self liquidity...where is the profit going to???*

The next is fuel. Fuel has another characteristic compared to construction. Fuel industry is naturally characterized by a high level of liquidity. Also, the market of fuel is mainly centralized on the hands of few companies. Even these facts still companies operating in the market are submitting Financial Statements that show a high level of liability compared to their equity. Companies are having a rate higher than 1. Sometimes an absurd one such as a negative one, or higher than 1,2 or even 3.

Distribution is the last sector of economy taken into consideration In our study. As expected distribution sector Is characterized by a normal level of liability over owner equity. Distribution such as fuel industry is characterized by a high level of liquidity, a high turnover rate and is giving satisfactory ratios of profit. Here entities are showing that one of the forms of using the profit is reinvesting it on the company in the operational and managerial transactions. The ratios of liability/on owner equity are lower than 1.

## Conclusions

It would be unrealistic to think that it is possible to eliminate creative accounting or earnings management practices at all. However, it would be possible to minimize at least the negative effects of them by adopting the accounting standards, giving more importance to ethical considerations and decreasing the flexibility of the managers in deciding among different accounting methods.

Tax is a significant motivator. Imposition of tax levies are based on the income. Tax authorities should find ways to control fiscal evasion and corruption. The motivation for creative accounting is the gap between the actual performance and the firm expectation when there is a significant capital market transaction anticipated.

As previously stated, expenses according to international accounting standard will be recognized as deductible expenses and therefore will be a reduction in profit. As we have stated from our search in databases most of the entities have low capital investment which makes the interest of loan to be a deductible expense.

By placing online cash registers, with a stronger organization and control of the customs system, with new guidelines for controlled payments through banks and especially through the operation of the online declaration system of businesses, we can say that we have a reduction of this asymmetry of information. But a reduction not enough! This is because the administrators' economic units are always prone to corruption and tax evasion and seek to present financial situation totally different to tax authorities in comparison the real financial situation.

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# Venture Capital Funds in Albania – Is it the Right Time to Show Up?

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## **Dr. Eugen MUSTA**

Lecturer, Department of Economics & Finance  
European University of Tirana, UET

## **Prof.Asoc.Dr. Elvin MEKA**

Dean of Faculty of Economy, Business and Development  
European University of Tirana, UET

## **Abstract**

*In the age of innovation and technology there is a lot attention put into start-up business ideas. This is no surprise considering the great and unbelievable changes that happened in the last 50 years, because of companies like: Microsoft, Apple, Google, Amazon, Facebook (just to mention a few), all of which started as “garage” start-ups. What made it possible for these start-ups to make it though was not because they started small out of garages, but because they were able to find financing from Venture Capital and Private Equity funds.*

*Private Equity capital and specially Venture Capital funds are a crucial part of the start-up ecosystem as they specialise in providing financing to start-up companies and small businesses that are believed to have long-term growth potential and thus their presence in the economy promotes entrepreneurship, improves borrowing and also can strengthen the capital market.*

*Even though there have been some PE initiatives in Albania, for the time being, there are no established PE or VC funds. However, with recent years attempts to establish a functional capital market and with the prospective changes made to the legal framework, regarding the regulation and support for the innovative start-ups, etc. may be the time is right for us to witness the birth of Private Equity/Venture Capital Funds.*

**Keywords:** private equity fund, venture capital, innovative start-up, capital market.

## **Intro**

There is no doubt whatsoever that innovation has been the biggest drive of economic growth and progress throughout the mankind history and we are for sure living in an era marked by spectacular innovation. The big technological achievements of the last century and specially in the last 50 years have been unbelievable and the transformation that happened in the world is unprecedented. The big technological changes have disrupted almost every aspect of the way people interact with one-another and the economy is at the core of it. Today it's hard to imagine a world without internet, free video communication, and powerful smartphones in your pocket able to get you connected in an instant with everyone, everywhere in the world, be it for business, educational or entertainment purposes, but this wasn't so a few decades ago. This ongoing transformation is demanding new more efficient ways of doing business and thus opening all new opportunities for everyone. So, in this new reality, at the peak of the “Third Industrial Revolution” a.k.a the “Digital Revolution”, as OECD states “*the capability to innovate and to bring innovation successfully to market will be a crucial determinant of the global competitiveness of nations over the coming decades*” (OECD, 2007).

If innovation is what is needed than start-ups are where to find it. Even though we can't deny the crucial role of government programs which have financed some of the biggest R&D projects, it was actually the innovative genius and entrepreneurship of some random individuals which brought to light technologies or disruptive approaches which in turn transformed entire industries. These start-up businesses sometimes born in garages are accountable for non the less

but a real social and economic revolution. (Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Disney, Google, HP, Facebook... just to mention a few were all companies that started modestly in what is known as “garage” setup). There are several reasons why these start-ups brought more innovation than what big companies or governments which had resources to spare and large R&D departments, but what actually is more important to analyse is why and how did these start-ups made it. By doing so, by finding the reasons that helped bring these risky start-up ideas to life, we can then build a fertile environment which can spur innovation in the future.

A start-up per se is any new business, but in the sense intended when the label is usually used, among different definition “A start-up is a company or project undertaken by an entrepreneur to seek, develop, and validate a scalable economic model (Startup company, 2021).”

According to Forbes (2019), citing data from the 2019 Global Start-up Ecosystem Report (GSER), the start-up global economy generated somewhere around \$ 2.8 trillion in economic value over the last 2 years which was a 20% increase from the previous period. Although most of this growth is happening in already established top locations there is also tremendous growth taking place everywhere. The so-called start-up ecosystems are popping all around the world with various levels of success.

In literature there are different mixes to an ecosystem, but the main components we find in there are: Access to great ideas; Access to talent; Access to capital; Access to customers; etc. Even though all of them are important per se, one of the most important and crucial components is the access to capital. Without the proper funding a start-up can't make it and usually start-ups find difficulties in raising proper and adequate funding, especially from banks and capital market, this is mainly due to moral hazard and asymmetric information thus their options for financing are limited. Most of the time their options are in accordance to their respective stage of growth. In general, a start-up company at its early stages can benefit from pre-seed or seed funding (classification of stages and options is different in literature) and can go up to equity funding which happens usually in several funding rounds known as Series A, Series B and Series C, up to IPO. At every funding stage there are several types of investors of financing options and operators.

Seed capital – can be from own personal savings, credit cards, loans from friends and family, crowdfunding, etc.

Angel Investors – usually approach startups at early seeding stage and offer funding in exchange of equity. They are usually wealthy individuals who are using their own money.

Venture Capital Funds - focus on high-growth prospects and scalability. They, as well as business angels, are considered ‘value-added’ investors, who in addition to the supply of funding also contribute industry-specific knowledge and access to business networks (Carpenter and Petersen, 2002)

Mezzanine Financing - is a hybrid of debt and equity financing usually helps expansion toward new markets, merger & acquisitions, or preparing for an IPO

IPO - going public is an option which opens new ways to access to finance through direct access to capital markets making it easier to expand further, but it can also be an exit strategy for some of the equity investors which want to cash out.

The focus of this study is on start-up funding options in the Albanian market and specifically on the private equity / venture capital (VC) as an important part of the start-up ecosystem.

Thus, the objectives are to:

Assess the demand - Is there a need for Private Capital Funds and specially Venture Capital Financing in the Albanian market, especially from startups?

Review History - Have there been PE/VE funds or attempts to

Identify obstacles and challenges.

## Theoretical framework

In the classic quest to find the main drivers of economic growth and prosper, many researchers have identified innovation to be one of the main factors. Innovation itself is frequently associated with entrepreneurship since the early works of Schumpeter (1934). We find especially entrepreneurial start-ups to be strongly ambitious for growth and innovation by continuously spotting and exploiting opportunities, as opposed to rent-seeking small conservative businesses (Burns, 2016; Carland, 2015; Murphy et al., 2019; Sonfield & Moore, 1990).

By definition Startups are new innovation-driven entrepreneurial ventures seeking a scalable business model (Blank, 2013), that have been in business for less than 10 years, were created by individuals as a “stand-alone firm” (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018). Even though new ventures and small businesses share several characteristics and constraints, what differentiates start-ups is their entrepreneurial nature and their capacity to create, discover, and exploit opportunities to create new products, services, or business models (Alvarez & Barney, 2013; Burns, 2016; Foss & Klein, 2017; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Zahra et al., 2006). But startups and other innovative companies, which bring innovation in the market are not usually big and established firms, but instead they are mainly a produce of young entrepreneurs and small companies, which find difficulties in raising proper and adequate funding, especially from banks and capital market, duet to moral hazard and asymmetric information. Venture capital firms are experts at solving problems of moral hazard and asymmetric information and thereby earn their keep by bridging the gap between financiers and entrepreneurs (Lerner and Tag (2013).

Also, Lerner et.al (2012) stress that venture capital involves long-term investments in risky, young companies, often with unproven management teams addressing new technologies in uncertain markets. Yet, the innovation that occurs in these small companies is an important force in moving a country into the knowledge economy, which can balance a prior dependence on resources or extraction. In addition, it can attract talented nationals who were educated elsewhere and are eager to return to either start or invest in exciting companies in their home country.

According to Bottazzi (2009), venture capitalists are financial intermediaries who organize limited partnerships to finance their activity by raising funds from institutional investors, such as pension funds, insurance companies, or endowments that are passive limited partners.

Gompers et al. (2015) point that PE investors place a heavy emphasis on adding value to their portfolio companies, both before and after they invest. The sources of that added value, in order of importance, are increasing revenue, improving incentives and governance, facilitating a high value exit or sale, making additional acquisitions, replacing management and reducing costs. Consistent with adding operational value, the PE investors make meaningful investments in employees and advisors who provide advice and help in implementing operating improvements.

On the other hand, Lerner and Tag (2013) argue that an active venture capital market can boost economic growth. Economic growth is driven by innovation, spearheaded by young entrepreneurial firms, where financing of these firms can be difficult because of moral hazard and asymmetric information. Venture capitalists specialize at solving these problems, thereby connecting idea-rich entrepreneurs with cash-rich investors. Ensuring funding for innovative firms has positive externalities on the economy, so it makes sense for governments to promote an active venture capital market.

Innovation coming from start-up businesses is higher than that done by big corporations which spend considerably more funds on R&D. According to Gompers and Lerner (2001) a dollar of venture capital appears to be about three to four times more potent in stimulating patenting than a dollar of traditional corporate R&D.

Everywhere in the world, both developed and developing one, PE/VC are emerging as an important source of capital and those initiatives are not coming as stand-alone companies; even banks are getting involved in such endeavors.

On the other hand, for PE/VC to exist and develop in a certain financial system some preconditions must exist. Ribeiro et al. (2006) show that there are several factors which heavily impact the PE/VC industry, like: legal system, tax procedures, bureaucracy and corruption, infrastructure and stock market. The lack of proper stock market means high direct and indirect costs in raising capital from the market.

## Local start-ups ecosystem

During the 20th century, a significant part of innovation in the high-tech industry was carried out within medium and large organizations (Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke, and West 2008). While the development cycles, from idea conception to product commercialization, within large companies and traditional technology transfer mechanisms typically last from 5 to 10 years (Ries 2011) due to the inherent bureaucracy and lack of agility associated with large, structured organizations, in the Internet-age, innovative ideas can be developed, tested and adopted in 1 or 2 years and, in some extreme cases, in a matter of a few months (Benkler 2006; Goldman and Gabriel 2005).

A small start-up founded by two or three entrepreneurs with a handful of employees can produce and test the feasibility of tens of possibilities for a new business idea, producing a viable product in a matter of a few months (Kon et. al. 2014). This agility fosters the creation of thousands of startups around the world annually. Based on the largest start-up database (Crunchbase 2014), there has been more than 200,000 founded startups in the last 10 years.

According to Forbes (2019), citing data from the 2019 Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER), the start-up global economy generated somewhere around \$ 2.8 trillion in economic value over the last 2 years which was a 20% increase from the previous period. Even though most of this growth is happening in already established top locations there is also tremendous growth taking place everywhere. The so-called start-up ecosystems are popping all around the world with various levels of success.

Even though there are different mixes to an ecosystem the main components we find in there are:

- Access to ideas
- Access to talent
- Access to capital
- Access to customers

Also, in an optimal start-up ecosystem we find some key players operating in at least one of the components.

- Incubators – This category serves as ideas and talent discovery structure and it usually includes shared office spaces, accelerator programs, formal educational curriculum, etc.
- Entrepreneurs – Here you are looking for people dare to push ideas forward, building teams and running the start-up businesses. They must be equipped with skills in strategy, administration, marketing, technology, etc.
- Mentors – experienced leaders who can mentor first time entrepreneurs up the learning curve, trying to teach them not to make the same mistakes of their predecessors.

- Investors - Any type of them from family and friends, to business angels, VC, etc. the important is to have the money needed to get through different stages of business growth.
- Universities – with a focus on cultivating an entrepreneur mindset, universities can be a cradle where big business ideas are born. Active research and successful technology transfer process can produce ideas and monetize them.
- Corporations – Can find solution to their problem through local startups which can find and develop ways or innovative products by taking advantage of their flexibility and creativity not binded by corporate bureaucracy. Often corporations may serve also as exit strategies for startups that have become large in size.
- Associations/Events – within the ecosystem there are needed several activities and events to promote new startups to the potential investors or collaborators. Competition or pitching events are usually best practise for this.
- Government – The role of the government can be very important. By providing tax incentives, by having friendly laws for startups, financing directly or through VC funds, it can contribute for a better ecosystem.

When looking for these components in the Albanian start-up ecosystem we find that for the most part of the list we have a good presence for quite some time now. But there is one missing piece which happens to be a very important one which is the investors. As mentioned before due to moral hazard and asymmetric information usually start-ups find difficulties in raising adequate funding, especially from banks and capital market and thus their financing options are limited and the presence of PE/VC funds is crucial for the local startups ecosystem.

## Private equity funds presence in Albania

In the post-communist era, Albania and its respective financial system has not experienced any typical functioning of private equity funds, at least in the form known and applied in US, or anywhere in the world, in terms of the full value chain pursued, up to IPO in the capital market (Meka, 2021).

Although there have been several institutional-level initiatives introduced in the Albanian financial market. The Albanian Reconstruction Equity Fund (AREF) was set up by the EBRD and the Italian Government, with a total capital of US\$ 14 million to support the restructuring and expansion of private enterprises (OECD 2003).

Also, Albanian American Enterprise Fund (AAEF), incorporated as a not-for-profit organization, the AAEF is managed as a private investment fund, with the primary purpose to promote private sector development. Funded with a grant from US government program USAID, during its activity in Albania, the AAEF has invested in a wide array of private enterprises. In addition, AAEF provides its portfolio investments with training to establish best business practices that incorporate acceptable financial reporting standards, as well as guidance in enhancing management capabilities, recruiting skilled personnel and strategic planning (AAEF, web n.d.).

However, the most successful PE initiatives in Albania have been those of purchasing BKT, the establishment of the American Bank of Albania (now part of Intesa SanPaolo Bank - Albania) and the American Bank for investments.

In 2006 BKT became a portfolio company of Çalik-Seker Konsorsiyum Yatirim A.S, Turkey, which owns now 60% + 2 of BKT shares (BKT, web n.d.), along with IBRD and IFC, which own 20%, respectively. By 2015 BKT is the biggest bank in the Albanian banking systems, in terms of assets.

The American Bank of Albania was established in 1998, and according to AAEF itself, it grew to be the second largest financial institution in Albania and was a pioneer in offering corporate and individual customers innovative products. In June 2007, Intesa Sanpaolo and AAEF signed the majority participation of Intesa Sanpaolo into the ABA for \$156.9 million, a multiple of 3.7 times the net equity. In August 2009, the AAEF completed the exit from ABA, which now is Intesa Sanpaolo Bank Albania.

The American Bank of Investments, ABI, emerged within the Albanian banking system as the rebranded ex - Credit Agricole – Albania, which was sold in 2015 by the French banking group itself to “TRANZIT Finance”, an Albanian non-bank financial institution, and a portfolio company of NCH Capital Inc, where the latter is one of the largest American investors in Eastern Europe with over USD 3 billion under management (ABI, web n.d.). Since its founding in 1992, the firm has built a successful investment track record in Eastern Europe. NCH’s funds over the last 24 years have acquired, founded or co-founded numerous companies in Eastern Europe including Russia, Romania, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Latvia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Brazil, Greece and Albania. The firm has invested in several banks and non-bank financial institutions in Albania, Romania, Moldova and Latvia that have quickly and consistently grown their balance sheets and improved their performance (NCH, web n.d.). In 2007, NCH Capital started investing in the Western Balkans region and established a regional office in Tirana, Albania.

The purchase of a bank by a non-bank financial institution like “TRANZIT Finance”, part of an international portfolio investor, marked a new phenomenon for the Albanian financial market, which was accustomed to “natural” bank purchases by banks, themselves. Such atypical purchase could establish for the first time a new custom or practice in Albania, in terms of modeling the financial institutions’ activity in a developing market like Albania, which could aim the inter sectorial & institutional synergy. The presence of a private equity capital fund like “NCH Capital” with two institutions, a commercial bank and a non-bank institution, specialized in debt and bad loan collection, creates the first precedent of a strategic alliance of two activities of mutual cooperation and benefit. Typically, “TRANZIT Finance” intends to help the bank



toward easing its operational activity, with regard to problem loans and taking new risks in the market, by way of granting new loans. Meanwhile, the bank may assist “TRANZIT Finance” with a much larger clientele basis, through cross selling its products and services, thus increasing the operational efficiency, flexibility and profit margins.

## Obstacles and Challenges

The presence of PE/VC funds in Albania as we analysed before is not yet established because for PE/VC to exist and develop in a certain financial system some preconditions must exist. According to Ribeiro et al. (2006) there are several factors which heavily impact the PE/VC industry, like: legal system, tax procedures, bureaucracy and corruption, infrastructure and stock market.

### Stock markets

The lack of an established and functioning stock exchange in Albania could have been perceived as an obstacle of creating and operating such initiatives, within the financial market. Normally, the presence of PE/VC require a functioning capital market or stock exchange, as they are supposed to be the final destination of companies funded and supported by PE/VC, and in the same time, the market is the best evaluator of PE/VC's performance (Meka, 2021).

Additionally, as Gompers and Lerner (2000) point out, the presence of an organized stock market is a pre-requisite for PE/VC to enter the financial market, as well as to measure their respective success and contribution toward value-added within the national economy and financial market.

In this context although previous attempts to establish an operating stock market in Albania hasn't been able to achieve their objectives, the latest attempt by the Albanian Security Exchange (ALSE), a private capital enterprise licensed in 2017, has the potential to finally fill the lack of a functional market (stock exchange), where domestic businesses can raise capital as an alternative capital to the banking sector. In February 2018, ALSE started to officially trade Government securities (T-bills and T-bonds) (ALSE, web n.d.) and hopefully soon it will start trading corporate securities.

### Legal framework & taxation

The existing legal framework in Albania does not hinder investors and banks to establish any PE/VC, or otherwise impose any tight restrictions on their operation. Rather, the legal framework does not offer any precise coverage with proper and full-scale acts and regulations. Such lack of proper regulatory coverage of such institutional establishment within the financial system may be considered as a missing piece of the integral institutional framework mosaic, which could fill in the existing credit and funding powerhouse of the whole system for the national economy.

On the other hand, contract enforcement is not one of the strongest points, in terms of attracting foreign investors and this could be deemed as an obstacle for the private equity industry. This may call for substantial improvement, in order to lay strong foundations for the private equity industry to flourish and establish, accordingly.

In addition to these legal challenges, private equity/venture capital is quite underdeveloped, as there is no fiscal incentive for them to finance and they are not exempted from taxes, in order to be competitive. Taxation affects entrepreneurship in general and the private equity industry, in terms of stimulating or discouraging it. Taxation policy in Albania does not contain any tax holiday or special treatment, in terms of investments in capital market.

Furthermore, tax treatment for capital gains and interests from investment in securities, like corporate bonds, is the same as those on interest and corporate tax. Such treatment does not encourage venture capitalists, as their income from divestiture will be taxed in the same way as incomes generated in a passive way, like investments in government papers or bank deposits.

In this way, they are not rewarded for their success so such tax treatment hinders entrepreneurship in this regard.

The need for a dedicated law/legal basis, which regulates the innovative startups and their respective ecosystem, has been addressed for quite some time now by several organizations and initiatives and finally a new draft law on supporting and developing the innovative start-ups has recently (November 2020) been proposed.

The draft law aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- establishing fiscal incentives, programs and measures that support Innovative Startups, in the initial phase of business (incubation period) and the creation of a favorable ecosystem for them in Albania;
- establishing relevant government bodies and their relevant tasks & competencies, particularly the creation of “Startup Albania” - the National Agency for Start-ups;
- defining criteria, rules and procedures that apply to the certification, support, evaluation and monitoring of Innovative Startups.

In its entirety, the draft law is considered as a milestone in the road towards creating a supportive environment for private equity/venture capital entrepreneurship in Albania.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

There is an undisputed need for PE/VC funds in the Albanian market specially in regard to fill this important missing piece in the startup's ecosystem so important for funding new startup companies with innovative ideas, which are otherwise unfundable by established financial institutions. For this to happen the legal framework in Albania needs to be completed, in order to provide better and proper regulation, as well as supporting and monitoring the activity of private equity/venture capital entrepreneurship. Also, relevant changes must be considered in the Albanian tax legislation, which could allow tax breaks, or holidays for such specific industry, within the Albanian financial system.

The establishment and functioning of a capital market is also a prerequisite as it offer the final destination of the exit strategies which VC pursue through an IPO. The large rewards reaped in such cases are the very reason why VC accept such risks when invest in start-up companies.

The Albanian government can establish directly or through ministries and state agencies government founded PE/VC which will support and finance innovative startups, thus creating the "good example" for the rest of stakeholders to follow suit.

Investment funds and other stakeholders, either institutional or private individuals in Albania, may explore the opportunity to allocate limited funds to innovative startups, following the established international practice,

Banks need to consider and explore the opportunity of opening and starting to provide PE/VC services to their existing, or new clients, as a new way to expand their loan portfolio and ensure successful cross-selling and better-quality loans.

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# Comparisons of stakeholders' perception towards the developing of cheese tourism

## Case study – Gjirokastra region

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**Irina CANCO, PhD**

**Lecturer**

Faculty of Economics, Business and Development

University European of Tirana

**Prof.Dr. Drita KRUJA**

**Vice-Rector**

University European of Tirana

### Abstract

*The rapid development of tourism in recent years opens study perspectives of various dimensions. One of these dimensions is culinary tourism. This paper is an attempt to present, find and discuss from a theoretical and practical point of view some of the problems of culinary tourism, focused on treating the Cheese Road as a specific direction of culinary tourism. The paper offers new knowledge on the cheese road referred to a certain area, specifically in the district of Gjirokastra, which has outstanding tourist values. The analysis proved that cooking is a direction with significant priorities for the development of tourism. Empirical data collected from terrain through the questionnaire were processed using descriptive statistics. The analysis of the data evidenced the interest of the inhabitants of the area for the cheese road. The paper will also bring real obstacles to the development of the cheese route.*

*Zhvillimi i shpejtë i turizmit në vitet e fundit, hap perspektiva studimi të dimensioneve të ndryshme. Një nga këto dimensione është turizmi kulinar. Ky punim është një përpjekje për të prezantuar, gjetur dhe diskutuar nga pikëpamja teorike dhe praktike i disa problemeve të turizmit kulinar, të përqendruara në trajtimin e Rrugës së Djathit si një drejtim specifik i turizmit të kulinar. Punimi ofron njohuri të reja mbi rrugën e djathit referuar një zone të caktuar, konkretisht në rrethin e Gjirokastrës, i cili ka vlera të jashtëzakonshme turistike. Analiza provoi se gatimi është një drejtim me përparësi të konsiderueshme për zhvillimin e turizmit. Të dhënat empirike të mbledhura nga terreni përmes pyetësorit u përpunuan duke përdorur statistikën përshkruese. Analiza e të dhënave evidentoi interesin e banorëve të zonës për rrugën e djathit. Materiali gjithashtu do të sjellë edhe pengesa të vërteta për zhvillimin e rrugës së djathit.*

### Literature review

Tourism, an activity developed for several decades, is now presented in the gastronomic tourism. Approximation of tourism with the concepts of gastronomy stimulates the interest of studying and discovering its specifics such as cheese tourism.

Food or Culinary tourism has been under constant development and expansion over the previous decades, thus leading to the emergence of food tourism studies that tend to focus on food destination. According to these studies, gastronomic tourists are those tourists drawn into certain locations by their willingness to experience satisfaction in all senses but especially in terms of flavour. The gastronomy is an integral part of the cultural, social, environmental, and economic history in every area, it tends to reflect the local lifestyle in the various regions. In addition, it operates as a bridge between tradition and contemporary lifestyle and culture. The local and regional food often provide added value to destinations, particularly in the cases of regions or areas that effectively promote their culinary traditions a major attraction and as a major part of the local identity. The gastronomy and its relation to tourism can become a key aspect in the analysis of the Cross-Border region as a tourist destination, supplementing the already present cultural elements.

Development of this important sector for this region has increased demand for milk which is raw materials for processed products as: cheese, yellow cheese, yogurt, butter, etc. Cheese is a milk product that occupies a crucial place in

the diet of both healthy and sick people. Cheese has been used since prehistoric times, since when comes the knowledge of the beginning of its production. Archaeological discoveries are the basis, in the knowledge of the beginning of this process. The oldest pictorial letter for the beginning of the production of cheese, found in Mesopotamia, dates from the period between 3500-2800 BC. There are some examples of previous researches that elevate cheese from a food product, to the status of a tourist product.

There are some examples of previous researches that elevate cheese from a food product, to the status of a tourist product. In this sense, although cheese tourism as a specific type of tourism is still an emerging field of research, there is a growing trend where “cheese tourism creates new destinations and contributes to existing destination branding” (Ermolaev, Yashalova and Ruban, 2019). They stressed: “cheese tourism can be abbreviated as casetourism - ‘caseus’ is a Latin word meaning ‘cheese’”.

The nutritional value of cheese has attracted the attention of both domestic and foreign visitors, making it a tourist destination. Blanco-Murillo (2012) analyzed cheese tourism in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru and concluded that cheese tourism affects tourist preferences and local growth in food production and diversification. According to studies Ritter (1987) who has been a pioneer of cheese tourism studies it turns out that the Cheese Fair in Trujillo, Spain contributes to sustainability.

A very important factor in food tourism is not only the process of eating and tasting, but above all to be interested in the process of preparing meals and traditions related to them. Frequently so-called ‘culinary trophy’ are products that can be easily transported. Based on, Global Food Report (2012) ‘culinary trophy’ is organized in the different forms. So, 35 % of respondents bring cheese, 14 % of them brought food items connected with the local region, such as, honeys and different variants of fish (Global Food Report 2012, 10).

Local cheese in farmers’ markets affected to community and tourism development in Canterbury, New Zealand. Food tourism has been spreading during the recent decades, both in urban and rural zone. As far as cheese tourism involves visiting areas of cheese making and milk production (Fusté, 2015), where largely milk production means richness of the land.

The cheese making process in the Canterbury region is mainly carried out from cows’ milk, but some of the producers uses milk from goats and sheep. The Region of Canterbury has some cheese firms – among which Barrys Bay Traditional Cheese, Emilio’s Cheese, Karikaas Natural Dairy Products, Mt Grey Cheese or Talbot Forest Cheese. Can be highlighted and their presence in local markets is important to promote their brands and supply their pieces of cheese, especially for cheese producers such as Emilio’s Cheese and Mt Grey Cheese, who distribute only locally.

According to Naalyan (2014), visits to the markets themselves are an expression of the desire of tourists to experience authentic local products, nonetheless most of the visitors to New Zealand’s farmers’ markets are local people so far. “Food tourism creates wonderful opportunities for better integration of local communities in the tourism industry. Thus tourism acquire sustainable and socially responsible nature. Lizet (1998) explained that local cheese production in the Abundance region of the French Alps facilitates site marking and visitor perception.

Definitively, a Farmers’ Market is a food market where visitors can find food produced in local areas and where the sellers must be directly involved in the growing or production process of the food (New Zealand Farmers Market, 2015). Cheese tourism involves the visit to areas of cheese making and milk production, which means that this special interest tourism is primarily practiced in rural, mountain, and natural areas.

Fusté-Forné (2015) stressed: “There are some examples of previous researches that elevate cheese from a food product, to the status of a tourist product. In this sense, although cheese tourism as a specific type of tourism is still an emerging field of research, there is a growing trend where “cheese tourism creates new destinations and contributes to existing destination branding”. While, Blanco Murillo (2012) analyzed cheese tourism in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru concluded that cheese tourism affects local growth of food production and diversification.

Ikenga (2001) acknowledged that cheese production in a local agricultural cooperative and availability in local restaurants supports the management of alpine pastures and their importance for ecotourism in the Austrian Alps. Lenglet and Giannelloni (2016) found that its perceived authenticity is a significant factor in consumer interest. For, Quan and Wang (2004), over a third of tourists spend their holidays on food. This proves that local cuisine is an inseparable aspect of the holiday experience. While, Hall and Sharples (2013) prove that the trip includes various gastronomic visits, festivals, food fairs and food producers, cooking shows and demonstrations, all that you have a chance to try a quality food product. These activities are important. For this, Torri and Salini (2016), examined the client’s taste preferences in relation to the famous Parmigiano Reggiano cheese at a food exhibition. Some articles are about destination brand through cheese tourism.

As above, there are researchers who have also reserve about cheese tourism. Pachoud and Coy (2018) addressed a very specific problem related to the production of Serrano cheese in the Campos region de Cima da Serra of Brazil and its sale to local visitors. Surprisingly, this tourism is important craft activity faces sanitary reserves. Further they admitted this tourism is important, the craft activity faces sanitary restrictions and only the emergence of a local initiative representing the interests of cheese producers is it able to solve the problem? Bava et al (2018) have found that the increasing traditional production of the famous Grana Padano cheese produces quite a lot of environmental effects and contributes to the constant climate change.

In this context, Yonzon and Hunter (1991) found that the production of artisanal cheese (in response to visitor demand) in the Langtang National Park in the Nepal Himalayas leads to the point of overgrazing and landscape degradation. These

specialists went so far as to recommend limiting cheese production and increasing the price of cheese (they also noted that the price is too high for locals, while foreign visitors would not judge it to be too high).

## Methodology

The study purpose is to identify connection between primar sector, culinary tradition and tourism. It will study in Cross Border region opportunity to involve of Cheese Route in regional policies and strategies.

### *Geographical coverage:*

Geographical coverage is the region of Gjirokastra. This region was chosen for the following reasons:

1. a medieval town dating back to the 13th century;
2. for the typical buildings of Oriental architecture with native elements. For the uniqueness of its architecture and its rare medieval values.
3. Gjirokastra is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

### *Questionnaire study:*

The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore the local interest in the Cheese Route and the ways each interested party could be interested to participate or to support to the Cheese Route activities, in addition to their viewpoints on any potential problems that could be encountered. The questionnaire is structured in three sections: 1. General Information, 2. Production Information, 3. Link to Cheese Cult.

*Target groups:* The questionnaire study was based on information from tourism and cultural stakeholders, local enterprises, dairy producers, retailers, and local authorities.

## Analysis of result

Gjirokastra region has important tourist attractions, and this has led to an increase in the number of the tourists over the years. Based on available statistical data for the period 2017-2019, number of visitors in two important destination of this region show:

Description	2017	2018	2019
Gjirokastra castle	76.666	113.228	115.353
Protected area	26.344	34.091	52.305

Gjirokastra is a valuable regional tourist destination and many intentional. The purpose of the trips in Gjirokastra region for the year 2018 show:

<i>For business</i>	2.9 %
<i>Visit relatives and friends</i>	57.5%
<i>Holidays and leisure</i>	39.6 %
<i>Total district</i>	100 %

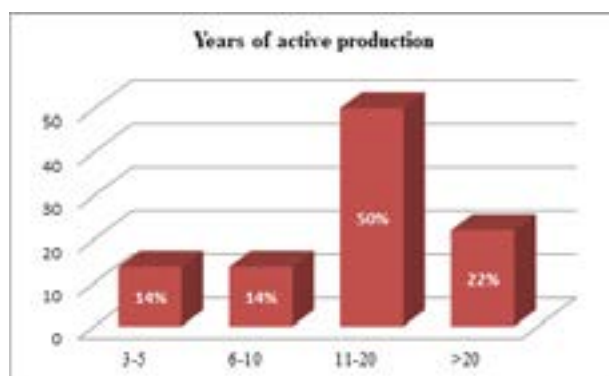
Tourism gives evidenced impact in socio-economic development of district. In this region, have developed also accommodation and food service enterprises. In year 2017, in this region had 582 active accommodation and food service enterprises and in year 2018 had 522 accommodation and food service enterprises.

Considering that the basic product from which cheese derived is milk, the milk processing activity was studied. This activity occupies an important place. From the interviewed producers, 75% of them deal the processing and treatment of milk and milk based products.



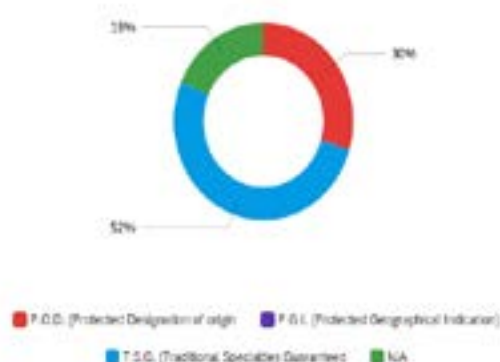
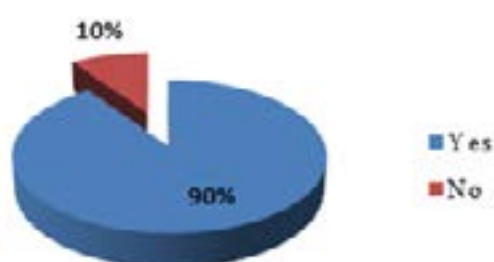
The milk processing for cheese production is one of the activities that engages a significant workforce with this region. Producers process sufficient quantities of milk and produce cheese both to meet the needs of the family and for trade. The study showed that tourists have demands not only for cheese for consumption during their stay in this area, but also for purchases for later consumption. This has led to different ways of trading cheese. The largest part of the interviewed producers, 61% of them sell their products through traders. The other 39% of them sell their products directly to the market.

The cheese trading is an activity practiced for a long time. For this the producers have different experiences both in the production and in the trade of cheese. The latter has to do with the active presence of cheese producers in the market. From the analysis it resulted that 50% of the interviewed businesses have around 11-20 years of active production in the market. Only 22% of these businesses have over 20 years of active production. On the other hand a low percentage of 14% respectively have only 3-5 and 6-10 years of active production in the market.



For a sustainable tourist activity, the quality of the products offered, in this case cheese, in restaurants or inns is a focal point for business performance. As the demand for cheese, as a very popular product for tourists, increased as well as to be successful in the market, a considerable number of producers have significantly improved the quality of the product and have certified it with various certificates. From the analysis of the questionnaires, it results that 90% of the interviewed producers have their production certified as organic and only 2 of the interviewees don't have their production certified as organic. It should be highlighted that the largest part of the interviewed producers have their production certified according to a defined certificate. 52% of the interviewed producers have their production certified as T.S.G (Traditional Specialties Guaranteed) and the other 30% of the producers have their production certified as P.O.D. (Protected Designation of origin). Only 19% of the interviewees have no certifications for their production.

### Is your production certified as organic?

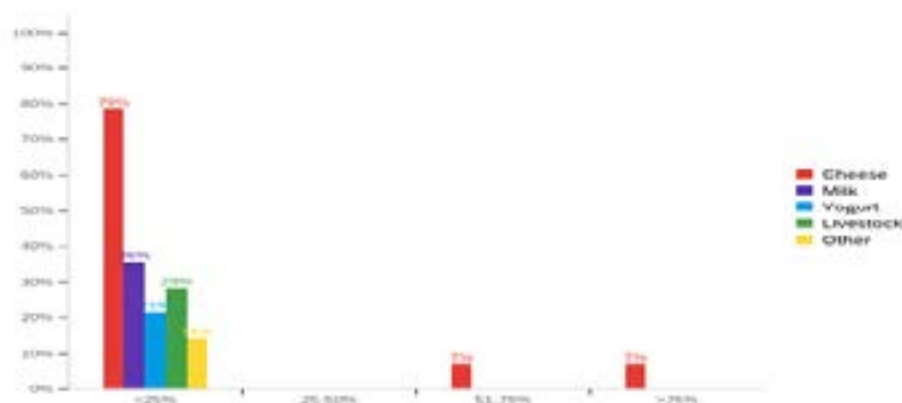


Product certification increases the degree of product safety and customer reliability. Certification opens up prospects for the product not only in the domestic market, but also for export. There are many manufacturers that export.

Only 50% of interviewed producers export their products. Export sizes are different. From the analysis it results that 79% of them export <25% of cheese, 8% export 51-75% of cheese and 7% of them export >75% of cheese production.

36% of them export <25% of the milk product, 21% of them export <25% of the yogurt, 29% of them export <25% of Livestock and 14% of them export <25% of other products. Thus, we can conclude that our producers sell their products not only in domestic market, but they export their products outside Albania.

As it can seen, milk processors in the Gjirokastra region, in addition to cheese, trade in the domestic market and export other dairy products such as milk, yogurt, etc. as shown in the following graph:



The increase of the range of products for export affects the improvement of the economic conditions of the inhabitants of the region. However, cheese accounts for most of the exported products.

Customer satisfaction puts the manufacturer in front of a series of problems that enable a guaranteed product. In this context, our study also identified a number of important problems. These problems are both the responsibility of local and state level.

According to the analysis of the questionnaires the most important technical problems encountered from the interviewed producers were the problem with vaccinating livestock during production, bad infrastructure, lack of tools for storing milk in stalls, problems with the trade of the products, problems with the sale and the prices of the products. Only a small number of the interviewees had no technical problems.

The most important quality problems encountered from the interviewed producers are the raw product, which is milk, as there are cases when the farmer abuses with the quality of the milk, this directly affects the quality of the cheese, even the equipment are not up to date, also problems with the veterinary care. It should be highlighted that a considerable amount of the interviewees had no problems regarding the quality of the raw products.

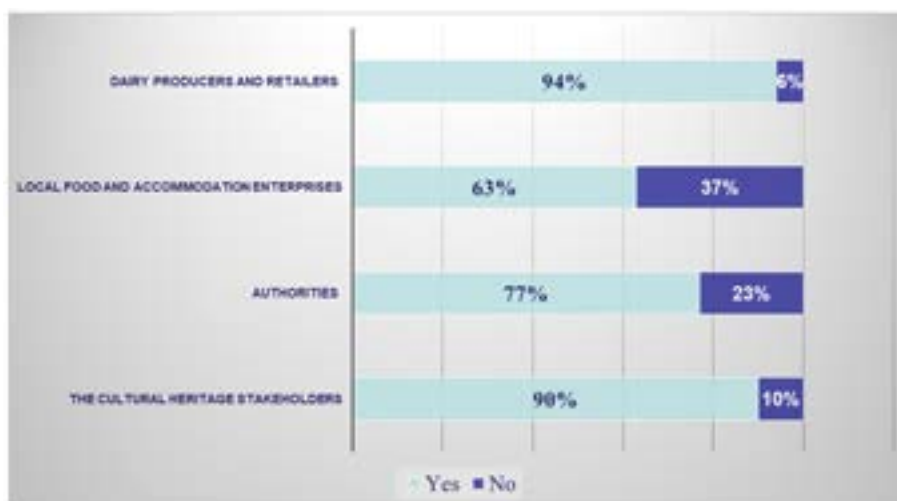
The most important financing problems encountered by the interviewed producers were no financial support and subsidies from the state, it is impossible to participate in Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (ARDA) schemes because there are difficulties in applying, making documents and securing the fund to make the investments in factories.

Regarding the trading problems, the interviewed producers encounter lack of market for the sale of products, the price of the product is decided by traders and not by producers, there are entities that deal with processing the production of cheese and abuse the quality, therefore reduce the price, this directly affects the small producers. Also, the unfair competition in the market causes many difficulties for the producers.

The main problem regarding the sales/pricing problems for the interviewed producers is that the selling price moves very often based on the excessive amount of production while the price of milk remains stagnant, the purchasing power has fallen, the lack of cooperatives to have a unique market price for the products.

Livestock development in the Gjirokastra region has provided strong support for cheese production. Increasing cheese production, continuous quality improvement and certification to a considerable extent of production enables the organization and development of activities at national and international level. In this context, we can also talk about the creation of Cheese CulT Cross Border Cheese, which has been the main problem of this study. For this study showed that for the activity Cheese CulT Cross Border Cheese are interested all structures both production and management of Gjirokastra region. About 77% of the interviewed authorities are interested to support the Cheese CulT Cross Border Cheese Route through: the organization of cooperation between stakeholders, cheese exhibition and promotion. Organizing of culinary exhibitions and specifically cheese exhibitions are important. The importance of cheese exhibitions is evidenced in the willingness of local producers and companies to get involved in these types of activities.



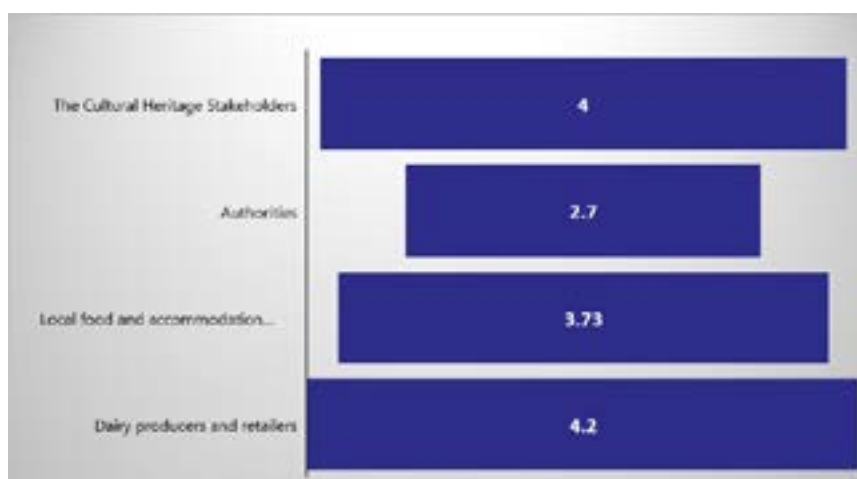


Most of the interviewed structures consider CheeseCulT Cross Border Cheese as an opportunity to benefit in their work as shown in the following graph:

Slide 13 according to Drites

It is understandable that the benefits from the creation of a Cross Border Cheese Route make xxxx manufacturers more interested. About 94% of them express a high degree of interest. Relatively less interested are the accommodation structures and xxx. Thus only 63% of them express interest. While 57% of local authorities and cultural heritage stakeholders claim to be interested in the benefits it brings to their work the creation of a Cross Border Cheese Route

The respondents were asked to rate the useful of creation of Cheese Route according to the LIKERT five level scale. Their answers are presented in graph below.



The highest rating for the useful of creation of Cheese Route have dairy producers and retailers with 4.2. While for the accommodation structures have evaluated with 3.73. Cultural heritage stakeholders have estimated with 4 point, which is understandable as the useful of creation of Cheese Route increases the number of visitors.



The interest to support Cheese Route is huge. According to the analysis, it turns out that the interest rate varies from 63% minimum that refers to local food and accommodation enterprises to 94% maximum that belongs to dairy producers and retailers, as shown in the following graph.

## Conclusions and recommendations

- Food tourism has been spreading during the recent decades, both in urban and in rural areas. Food is a key motivation for many trips.
- Local foods, supported by local agriculture can benefit local holistic development and the reason why more and more farmers are developing their business to include tourism and culinary experiences because they see the need to diversify and the consequent financial benefit.
- In the framework of the farmers' markets, everyone is part of the value creation process, from the cheese's artisans to the tourists, and the whole community that expresses its own sense of place by hosting the market. The experience can be even more positive when this cultural and natural landscape is enjoyed together with story-telling which allows in turn to diversify the tourism portfolio of a destination.
- The ancient tradition in dairy and cheese production; the natural / traditional way of production and the small-scale local production that still exists make so special the cheese in Gjirokastra region. Cheese lovers (almost all of us) are prompted to discover local cheeses, visit dairies and important cheese producers and production units.
- The creation and promotion of cheese routes is a good idea in order to attract tourists potentially visiting Gjirokastra region. Created cheese routes should be complex by focusing on each aspect of tourism that would give travellers a fully satisfying tourist experience. Festivals and regional food products can promote increasing interest, but it should be combined with the promotion, going beyond the region (e.g., nationwide or international). Besides that food tourists are eager to gain knowledge about the culture, architecture, history, handicrafts of the destination and that is the main reason why touristic offer should be complex, it needs to give a feeling of offering a full package that includes quality food samples and related to the destination's historical, cultural and natural attractions combined with interesting sites proposition.
- Gjirokastra regional government departments and agencies responsible for branding and encouraging the tourists to visit a particular place can benefit from global trends in food tourism forecasting growth of tourist interest in local specialties.
- The certified food items clearly stand to be more recognizable among tourists not only domestic but foreign as well and it creates a chance to preserve regional tradition and culture of production. Nowadays, more and more often, people focus not only on product itself but they appreciate the traditional way of production that gives them additional value to the travelling experience.

The present investigation of cheese tourism in Gjirokastra region permits giving several recommendations to potential stakeholders.

- Farmers involved in cheese production should better communicate with the agro-industrial business community in order to facilitate joint development of rural and industrial activities relevant to cheese tourism (e.g., excursions, festivals, etc.).
- Large producers of cheese need to consider opening their enterprise for excursions and receiving the support of cheese festivals to stimulate interest from potential tourists (such activities are also important to their branding).
- The central and local governments of the main cheese-producing regions should think about preparation and successful implementation of special programs/initiatives aimed at cheese tourism promotion (also, as a kind of regional branding) and minimizing their negative effects. In some cases, this can become an efficient tool for rural area development.
- The good idea is to train local chefs in order to give them suggestions how to serve local products in the most attractive way. Additionally food festivals, events accompanied with brochures and leaflets could be a good step to try.

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# Assessing the Technology and Innovation Used for Business Development by Albanian SME

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**Dr. Ismet VOKA**

European University of Tirana

Faculty of Economics Business and Development

**Prof. Assoc. Dr. Filip RUXHO**

Universum College, Kosovo

Faculty of Business and Management

## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to analyze the technology and innovation used for business development by Albanian SMEs. This paper investigates if Albanian companies use innovation or integrate technology components into their daily activities with the purpose of developing their business. The instrument used was a questionnaire of 50 items and the participants were Albanian organizations (N = 163) from different sectors of the economy. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. Findings show that the sales team of these companies uses computer systems on the ground to manage customer-related business activities such as sales, billing, at a rate of 25.5% at a time when 74.5% of them do not use it purpose. The trade sector uses these systems the most (45.8%) followed by the Manufacturing sector (40%). Other data show that 95.1% of businesses think they have improved their products / services satisfactorily over the past 12 months, while only 4.9% of them do not think so. As far as product design / services are concerned, 40.5% choose to apply international standards, 37.4% of them think and create their own, while 19% of them use a mix of both methods.*

**Keywords:** Innovation, information technology, Albanian SMEs, entrepreneurship

## Introduction

Information technology drives innovation and the latter is the way to business success. Innovation in business has the same impact steam has on the industrial revolution. In fact, it is difficult to imagine any business that has not benefited from the digital revolution. Agriculture also uses information technology and computers to carry out work. Farmers use computers for production data, financial planning, research on technical issues and procurement (FAO, 2017).

Nowadays the formula for business success is simple: *Encourage innovation with information technology*. So, startups of the first things in every industry are trying to understand how to make smart choices of IT. Without a pillar of information technology, a business will not go far. Technology in business is a growing necessity (Dodgson, Gann, & Salter, 2006; Lindgardt, Reeves, Stalk, & Deimler, 2009). Over the years, the business world is increasingly inclined towards it, making it virtually impossible to divide two of each other. Innovation nourishes the business and as technology paves the way for its further development, no business needs technology to be sustainable (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006; Huizingh, 2011).

Innovation, despite not being a recent phenomenon, is only receiving the attention it deserves from different scholars in recent years. This was mainly driven by the impact that innovation has had on the economic and social changes of recent years, but so far, there is no single discipline that deals with the study of specific aspects of innovation. Generally, innovation and its impact on the economy and beyond, are studied from various disciplines, mainly from those of social sciences. This is also noticed by the growing number of socio-scientific publications focused on innovation. As a result of these publications, innovation is taking the deserved importance also in schools, and as a result, there is seen some positive outcome of student knowledge about the innovation process, the economic and social aspects and impacts that they are bringing (Godin, Hatt, Iglesia-gomez, & Landabaso-alvarez, 2010).

Researchers (Adams, Tranfield, & Denyer, 2008; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Garcia & Calantone, 2002; Gassmann, Enkel, & Chesbrough, 2010; Hall, Matos, Silvestre, & Martin, 2011) studied the field of innovation in different perspectives, four of which are the most disseminated. Questions like: “What is new?”; “How new?”; “New for whom?”; “When and where does the innovation process starts and finishes?”; “When is an innovation good or bad?”; represent different perspectives/dimensions of innovations. Innovation involves the creation of new businesses, products / services or new operational processes within an organization (Thurik & Wennekers, 2004). The concept of innovation and its development embraces five basic functions: (i) introducing a new product that consumers are not familiar with or introducing a new quality of an existing product; (ii) introducing a new production method which has not yet been tested in practice, which is discovered by new scientific testing and there may be one form that is commercial; (iii) the opening of a new market which is a market in which a particular firm has not entered before, whether or not that market has existed or not; (iv) possession of a new source of material supply; and (v) successfully implementing a new organization in any industry.

Schumpeter (1934) considered entrepreneurship as a catalyst that creates a disruption, a continuous flow into the economy, and therefore starts and maintains the development process, so the entrepreneur activates the economy at a new level of development. This author introduced the concept of innovation as a key element in the venture by increasing risk taking and organizing factors of production. Schumpeter defines entrepreneurship as a “creative activity”. An innovator who brings products or services to the economy is given the status of an entrepreneur. He sees innovation as a means of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur is seen as a “growth engine”. This thought is supported also by recent authors, confirming that innovation and creativity are the fundamental tools that help entrepreneurs to transform opportunities into reality (Kilenthong, Hills, & Hultman, 2010).

Technology offers a wide range of tools that entrepreneurs can use to guide their new companies through start-up and growth phases (Ingram, 2011). Small business accounting, marketing, and communications have been revolutionized by advances in computer, network, and communications technology, and businesses across a range of industries are constantly adapting to take full advantage of technological developments (Hamidi & Safabakhsh, 2011).

Business technology has revolutionized how companies conduct business. Small businesses can implement business technology and level up the playing field with larger organizations. Small businesses use computers, servers, websites and personal digital products to develop competitive advantages in the economic market (Dodgson et al., 2006; Legris, Ingham, & Collette, 2003; Mckechnie, Winklhofer, & Ennew, 2006). Small business owners should consider implementing technology in their planning process. This allows owners to create operations using the best available technology. In Albania, the integration of technology into the extravagant activities is thought to be still in the early stages of implementation and use.

## Literature Review

According to Som et al. (2012) innovation remains very important for small and medium enterprises, as in most cases it directly or indirectly affects the business performance of enterprises. Innovation in business is accompanied by innovation and differentiation. In addition, innovation must bring economic impact in order to justify funding and further support. Innovation refers to a company's tendency to engage in creative processes, experimenting with new ideas that may provoke the creation of new ways of production or the introduction of new products or services for current or new markets (Hamel, 2006).

Orienting a company in an innovative way would be to promote creative change and behavior that push the active exchange of new ideas, expanding information flows and innovating in the development of new products (Conto, 2016). Entrepreneurial marketing entrepreneurs tend to be oriented towards innovation (driven by new ideas and intuitions), more than customer oriented (guided by market needs assessments) and tend to inform the informal networks instead of using systems search and intelligence (Morrish, 2011). Innovation-focused marketing activities allow companies to focus on new ideas that lead to new markets, products, or processes. The degree to which a successful organization underlines its activity in the market may range from the major market maker innovator to growing market builders. The market maker has to intervene with past solutions to offer a radically different value to the customer. The growing innovator builds relationships with existing customers. SMEs may choose to concentrate on innovative commercialization instruments as the company does not have the capacity and resources to intervene in the market with sector standards (Becherer, Haynes, & Helms, 2008).

Innovation is known for creating new knowledge that applies to practical problems (Melissa Schilling 2010), it is the most important driver of competitive success. Market demand results in shorter product life cycles and fast aging of products. Companies that are slow or inefficient to renew lose market share and ultimately move to the boundary of the competition field. Management has a decisive role that promotes innovation policies in a company. Management expert Peter Drucker (1985) said that if an established organization, which in this era that seeks innovation, is unable to renew, it faces decline and disappearance.

## The importance of innovation in Albania

The private sector plays an important role in the Albanian economy. The private sector contribution is estimated at about 80% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), while in employment it is over 70%. Referring to the structure of enterprises,

SMEs, represent over 99.6% of active enterprises in Albania. In addition to the government's efforts to improve the business climate, the performance of SMEs is still weak to cope with the global growth of competition. The free trade agreements in the region today, as well as the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU (the European Union) (2016), makes it imperative for the government to take concrete measures focusing on the most critical factors and areas of the NMP sectors, such as: (i) Entrepreneurship and business innovation; (ii) Implementation of European Union (EU) standards.

It is true that Albania has taken various measures to develop the spirit of innovation between enterprises, but innovation is not yet at the desired level. Indeed, various reports show that in the period 2013-2017 has remained on the spot by marking a regression in Albania's global ranking. In 2013, Albania was ranked 93rd with an index of the innovative strength of 30.9, and in 2017 it stood in the 93rd place but with a downhill index of 28.9 points. For innovation input index are important: 1) Institutions; 2) Human Capital and Scientific Research; 3) Infrastructure; 4) Market Sophistication and 5) Sophistication of Business. Whereas the innovation output index has to do with the results of the innovative activities of the national economy, there are two results that make up this index: 1) Knowledge and Technology and 2) Creativity. In the case of Albania. Calculation of these indices gives rise to the ultimate end result of innovation.

Internet services such as e-business and electronic signature, which are commonly used in the EU, in Albania, are simply a concept and are not widely used by Albanians. The main reason for this lack of use is that Albania does not have a properly developed infrastructure for online services. Another innovation-related problem is that Albanian enterprises do not focus so much on R&D. Usually, Albanian enterprises focus more on increasing their profit by ignoring that successful R&D ideas will help them generate more profits.

## Objectives of the Study

The main goal of this study is to analyze the technology and innovation used for business development by Albanian SMEs, Being mainly of investigative and explorative nature, this study is aimed at discovering the extent of what the targeted businesses implement technology and try to be innovative. More specifically, the study tries to:

- i. Assess if Albanian SMEs use innovation or integrate technology components into their daily activities with the purpose of developing their business, as well
- ii. Evidence industry sectors are using technology components to further improve the business activities, especially the salesforce, and
- iii. Analyze the specific design techniques used for the product / service design.

## Method

The target group selected for this study are the Albanian companies from different sectors of the economy, whereas, the sectors were selected based on the current percentage of their contribution to the GDP. Regarding sample selection, there was adopted a non-probabilistic approach, but there was also used an intentional selection, which is the most common technique of sample selection (Marshall, 1996). This might include the development of a variable model that can influence the individuals' contribution and may be based on the researchers' practical knowledge, available literature, and the study itself. The sample size (N=163) refers to 163 different SMEs distributed in different sectors (Civil construction industry -7%; Trade - 32%; Hospitality & Tourism - 34%; Manufacturing industry - 6%; Information and Technology -4%; and Services & others -17%). The questionnaire was designed based on the suggestions of the relevant literature. Later, the questionnaire was distributed to Albanian businesses operating mainly in Tirana, but also in other important cities such as Berat, Durres, Lezha, Fier, Elbasan, etc. In order to have a sample as more representative as possible, it was decided that the participation of businesses be fairly proportional to the distribution of sectors in accordance with their contribution to the Albanian Economy, which is actually: 43.4% Trade, Hotels and Restaurants-16.2%, Transport and Communication - 9.9%, Manufacturing - 9.6%, Civil construction - 4.3%, Agriculture and Fishing - 1.7%, while the Other services account for 14.9% (according to INSTAT, 2015).

The questionnaire used for this study included five questions aimed at evaluating the training and development level of Albanian SMEs. Anyway, since some questions consist of different alternatives, they were considered as different variables, therefore, the total of considered variables was 24. Technology and Innovation in the underlying instrument of this study were measured through questions related to having a company's website, using software or hardware specific to day-to-day activities, design techniques, and product or service improvement. The questionnaire was distributed by sectors referring to their contribution to the economy; the source for this information was INSTAT (2016).

## Data Analysis and Results

Participants in this study have responded to some general information in this field. First, 72.7% of respondents (N = 161) have websites. An interesting finding of this study is that the sales team of these companies uses computer systems on the ground to manage customer-related business activities such as sales, billing, at a rate of 25.5% at a time when 74.5% of them do not use it purpose. The sector that uses it the most seems to be the trade sector (45.8%) followed by the Production and Processing sector (40%).

**TABLE 1:** Salesforce using computer systems

Industries	Frequency (N)	Percentage
Civil construction industry	3	25%
Trade	22	45.8%
Hospitality & Tourism	1	1.8%
Services	4	30.8%
Manufacturing	4	40%
Information and Technology	1	14.3%
Others	6	40%

Source: Author

Other findings suggest that 95.1% of businesses think they have improved their products / services satisfactorily over the past 12 months, while 4.9% of them do not think so. Ways to measure this aspect are different: through sales (49.7% of them), by spending (9.4%), by means of re-duplication of purchases (2.7%) and 37.6% of them have used such as profit, customer satisfaction, performance, increased customer number, new purchases, and more.

An important element of technology and innovation is the product design, and the path chosen to do so has been taken into consideration in this section. As far as product design / services are concerned, 40.5% choose to apply international standards, 37.4% of them think and create their own, while 19% of them use a mix of both methods.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The data analysis showed that there is still room for improvement and for an increase in the usage of the technology and innovation by Albanian SMEs. To achieve this, the competitiveness of Albanian SMEs will need to be enhanced through the promotion of innovative SMEs as well as technology transfer. Referring to the EU SME Charter, business innovation in the Albanian market is far from other countries in the region. To improve this situation, there is a need for better policy instruments that will enable businesses in Albania to be closer to the pace of development of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology in the EU, better cooperation between the Direct Investment (IHD) and NVEs, investing more in human resource development.

Based on these results, the below recommendations would be helpful for the further development of this sector in Albania:

- i. Small and medium enterprises in Albania should consider innovation as a very important activity in their daily and long-term business. Investing and applying innovation in a variety of business, especially in improving their processes, can help small and medium enterprises to improve their business performance.
- ii. The Government should continue to support financing schemes for innovation as an appropriate tool to help foster the development and modernization of small and medium-sized businesses in Albania.

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# ©, the protector of the original intellectual works

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## **Prof. Assoc. Dr. Kreshnik BELLO**

Senior Lecturer

Faculty of Economics, Business and Development

European University of Tirana

## **MSc. Bledi SELAJ**

Assistant Lecturer

Faculty of Economics, Business and Development

European University of Tirana

## **Abstract**

*Imagination feeds progress in the arts as well as science. Music, painting, sculpture, architecture, novels and other works of art, are created by individuals who are not content with the old, and instead see and express ideas and emotions in new ways. Copyright protects original works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression. It protects literature (e.g. poetry, musical lyrics, writings, software, etc.), drama, music and choreographic works, pictorial, graphic and sculptural works (e.g. drawings, photos, blue prints, computer screen displays associated with software, buildings, etc.), and many other intellectual works.*

*Original works are protected upon fixation. Notice, e.g. „© Name, Year, All Rights Reserved“, is not required, but is recommended. It bars innocent infringement defenses and may deter some copying. The copyrighted work may also be registered at the Copyright Office. Registration is generally required for filing an infringement action and provides enhanced remedies. Copyright registration is therefore recommended for works having commercial significance.*

*Copyright management (protection) is seen as an important issue in the management of the firms and institutions, whose key products include written or audio and video materials. Those firms use copyright actively for protection. Under this general framework, it is important for us to understand (research) if the Copyright/s is/are important, for those entities.*

*The methodology used in this paper is unfolded with its own dimensions as: specification of the research subjects, tools used for the research, sampling, implementation plan, ethical issues and presentation of the research findings. The research is based on primary and secondary data collection and on the testing of the main Hypothesis. Some important conclusions are given at the end of the paper.*

**Key words:** *copyright, copyright management (protection), companies in Albania.*

## **Introduction**

The history of the human race is a history of the application of imagination, or innovation and creativity, to an existing base of knowledge in order to solve problems. In countless discoveries and innovations, it has been the imagination of the world's creators that has enabled humanity to advance to today's levels of technological progress.

From the earliest rituals, through the beginning of music and dance, burial rites, cave paintings, the written word, and theatrical representation, to the use of modern technologies such as the phonogram, celluloid film, wireless broadcast, software, and digital recording, humankind has identified and defined itself through cultural creativity and expressions in the form of artistic creations and performances. Much of this creativity survives and thrives today in folklore or other forms of traditional knowledge.

Today's music, films, books, art, and other forms of creations or expressions are indicators of social progress and the quality of life. As the private property of their original creators, they are prized by society for many reasons (including their economic, political and cultural role) but their particular value is that the legacies of human endeavor live in their expression.

Indeed, as the former Director General of WIPO, Arpad Bogsch, stated:

*„The search for new technological solutions and cultural creative activities deserves constant encouragement because, as the history of nations has shown, in addition to spiritual development, inventions and cultural creations are the main sources of social and economic development of mankind. Food, health, communications and other fundamental needs for the survival of the human race have improved, are improving and will continue to improve because of inventions and creations. „*

The continuum from imagination - to idea - to knowledge - to creation - to copyright protection continues to be a powerful driving force for social and economic development. And what is important here is the national and international protection of the works of mind.

Copyright may subsist in creative and artistic works (e.g. books, movies, music, paintings, photographs, and software) and give a copyright holder the exclusive right to control reproduction or adaptation of such works for a certain period of time.

As almost every nation has some form of copyright protection for authors and artists, international protection of copyright was first addressed in treaties beginning in the late 19th century. In the mid-1800s, renowned authors were finding their works illegally reproduced and for sale in countries other than their own, and from which they received no royalties. In order to eliminate this practice, the famed French author of *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Victor Hugo, organized a group of prominent authors into the International Literary Association, which later became known as the International Literary and Artistic Association, with the intention of establishing some basic form of international protection for their works.

In 1886, to provide the basis for mutual recognition of copyright between different states, a major international IP treaty was enacted, the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works. The crux of the convention was the principle of national treatment, that is, equal protection between nationals and foreigners.

Several important international treaties also deal with copyright law among nations. In 1994 most countries of the world signed another important treaty dealing with copyright law. This agreement, called the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), clarified several aspects of copyright law and strengthened copyright protections internationally.

Some nations of the world have weak copyright laws or few resources devoted to enforce those laws. These countries often have a large market for counterfeit goods made in violation of the copyright protections of authors. Unauthorized recordings of music on compact discs, computer software, and videocassettes of movies are often available at very low prices in these countries. This activity costs different copyright owners billions of dollars each year in sales and royalties.

To protect these copyright owners, for example, the United States attempts to persuade other countries to enforce copyright laws vigorously. This issue has been a source of particular tension between the United States and China. Although the Chinese government has signed agreements promising to combat copyright piracy, copyright violation continues to be a serious problem there. Certain provisions of the TRIPS agreement may help to persuade foreign governments to fight piracy more vigorously.

In the first one hundred years since the establishment of the Berne Convention, we have seen growth in the protection of copyrighted works at the international level. In these first hundred years, we have also seen the early development of cooperation among states in this field. What is important to note here however, is that the premise underlying copyright protection has always been the recognition that ownership of inventions and creative works stimulates their creation and with such creation, also stimulates economic development.

## Copyright as part of Intellectual Property

Copyright is part of Intellectual Property (IP). Intellectual property is the term that describes the ideas, inventions, technologies, artworks, music and literature, that are intangible when first created, but become valuable in tangible form as products. However, for purposes of this introduction, suffice it to say that IP is the commercial application of imaginative thought to solving a technical or artistic challenge. It is not the product itself, but the special idea behind it, the way the idea is expressed, and the distinctive way it is named and described.

The word „property“ is used to describe this value, because the term applies only to inventions, works and names for which a person or group of persons claims ownership. Ownership is important because experience has shown that potential economic gain provides a powerful incentive to innovate.

It is also important to note that IP results from innovation based on existing knowledge. It is the result of creative improvements on what has worked well in the past or of creative new expressions of old ideas and concepts.

The term „intellectual property“ has recently become topical and, at times, controversial. It is easy to find articles describing recent events related to IP. Some critics attack it as a negative force or as irrelevant to developing countries; some others in developing countries maintain that it stifles creativity. These beliefs have become popular myths and have acquired a cultural momentum.

We must acknowledge at the outset that for most people, IP is either an unknown, misunderstood, or mysterious term. Technology and creative arts pervade modern society, yet few actually realize that their daily lives are surrounded by IP creations' from which legal rights of all sorts, including their own, arise. Building public awareness of the role of IP is key

to fostering a broad understanding of, and respect for, it and the system that promotes and protects it. To truly convince the public, including civil society activist groups, it is essential to engage them in such a way that they all see themselves as stakeholders in a healthy and robust IP system. To do so they must be included in an ongoing dialogue and feel empowered by the system.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has proclaimed the universal value of IP,<sup>4</sup> and has shown that IP is native to all peoples, relevant in all times and cultures and that it has marked the world's evolution and historically contributed to the progress of societies. Intellectual property is the heritage of us all.

Intellectual property laws confer a bundle of exclusive rights in relation to the particular form or manner in which ideas or information are expressed or manifested, and not in relation to the ideas or concepts themselves. It is therefore important to note that the term „intellectual property“ denotes the specific legal rights which authors, inventors and other IP holders may hold and exercise, and not the intellectual work itself.

The shift in terminology towards „intellectual property“ has coincided with a more general shift away from thinking about things like copyright and patent law as specific legal instruments designed to promote the common good and towards a conception of ideas as inviolable property granted by natural law. This shift has led to the use of terms like piracy and theft to refer to violations of copyright laws and has underlain arguments in favor of the expansion of such laws.

The term *intellectual property* has been criticized on the grounds that the rights conferred by exclusive rights laws are in some ways more limited than the legal rights associated with property interests in physical goods - chattels or land - real property. The inclusion of the word *property* in the term can be seen as favoring the position of proponents of the expansion of exclusive rights in intellectual products. For example, most nations grant copyrights for only limited terms; all limit the terms of patents. Additionally, the term is sometimes misunderstood to imply ownership of the copies themselves, or even the information contained in those copies. By contrast, physical property laws rarely restrict the sale or modification of physical copies of a work (something that many copyright laws do restrict).

A common argument against the term *intellectual property* is that information is fundamentally different from physical property in that a „stolen“ idea or copy does not affect the original possession. Another, more specific objection to the term, is that the term is confusing and that the term implies a non-existent similarity between copyrights, patents, trademarks, and other forms of exclusive rights, which makes clear thinking and discussion about various forms difficult. For example, those that pertain to intellectual content (copyrights and patents) have limited terms, hence differ from conventional property, whereas trademarks, which have unlimited terms, are merely signs and lack intellectual content. Furthermore, most legal systems, including that of the United States, hold that exclusive rights are a government grant, rather than a fundamental right held by citizens.

Though it is convenient for direct incentive beneficiaries to regard exclusive rights as akin to „property“, items covered by exclusive rights are, by definition, not physical objects „ownable“ in the traditional sense. Others point out that the law itself treats these rights differently than those involving physical property. To give three examples from US law, copyright infringement is not punishable by laws against theft or trespass, but rather by an entirely different set of laws with different penalties.

Copyright protects original works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression. It protects literature (e.g. poetry, musical lyrics, writings, software, etc.), drama, music and choreographic works, pictorial, graphic and sculptural works (e.g. drawings, photos, blue prints, computer screen displays associated with software, buildings, etc.), and many other intellectual works.

A computer program (software) is also considered literary creation and is protected by copyright. The copyright protection afforded software is generally not very great, since software is inherently utilitarian, but exists nevertheless. In some cases, software inventions may be eligible for patent protection in addition to that of copyright, as discussed below.

Original works are protected upon fixation. Notice, e.g. „© Name, Year, All Rights Reserved“, is not required, but is recommended. It bars innocent infringement defenses and may deter some copying.

The copyright reserves to its owner the exclusive right to reproduce and distribute the work, or to use or display it publicly, although a limited number of reproductions of protected work, may be permitted by others, for honest purposes.

The copyrighted work may also be registered at the Copyright Office. Registration is generally required for filing an infringement action and provides enhanced remedies. Copyright registration is therefore recommended for works having commercial significance. In fact, many countries offer copyright protection without registration, while other countries offer little or no protection, especially for the work of foreign nationals.

Copyright subsists for a variety of lengths in different jurisdictions, with different categories of works and the length it subsists for also depends on whether a work is published or unpublished. In most of the world the default length of copyright for many works is either life of the author plus 50 years, or plus 70 years. Copyright in general always expires at the end of the year concerned, rather than on the exact date of the death of the author.

Like other elements comprising intellectual property, copyright can also be managed in the companies, whose key products include written or audio material, and copyright is actively used for protection. Intellectual property management is a key set of concepts, methods, and processes designed for aligning the intellectual properties of the firm with its business strategies and objectives. It represents one of the most fundamental approaches to maximizing the extraction of value from a firm's intellectual capital, that is, the sum total of all knowledge in an enterprise.

## Methodology for research

Copyright management (protection) is seen as an important issue in the management of the firms, whose key products include written or audio and video materials. Those firms use copyright actively for protection. Under this general framework, *it is important for us to understand (research) if the Copyrights are important assets, for the business organizations in Albania.*

The aim of this research is: *to investigate if the Copyrights are important assets, for the business organizations in Albania.*

The research is based on the testing of the Hypothesis, expressed as:

*H0: Copyrights are not important assets for the business organizations in Albania.*

*Ha: Copyrights are important assets for the business organizations in Albania*

The methodology used in this paper is unfolded with its own dimensions as: specification of the research subjects, tools used for the research, sampling, implementation plan, ethical issues and presentation of the research findings. The research is based on primary and secondary data collection and on the testing of the Hypothesis as indicated above.

## Specification of the research subjects

Many companies in Albania see copyrights as important assets, so the conduction of such a research adds value to their management strategies. So, after defining the hypothesis, we started out the work about specification of the subjects that could be compatible to the purpose of this research. After distinguishing a number of companies of interest (businesses in the Tirana region of Albania), we started to collect the required information from the managers of these companies.

## Tools used for the research

In order to collect the necessary information, analyze the data, and draw conclusions, a questionnaire composed of 10 basic questions were developed and delivered. The questionnaire was prepared to collect important data on different aspects of copyright management practice. The analyses of the collected information gave us the necessary level of understanding about the issue in discussion. Data were analysed using SPSS program.

## Sampling

Our original sampling consisted of 48 managers, in 48 companies, in the Tirana region of Albania. 46 questionnaires were delivered, and the questionnaires' return rate was 83%, or 38 collected questionnaires. The collected data could be considered as being representative.

## Implementation plan

The way we were organized helped us in reducing the time and costs required to perform the interviews. Data were collected during 2019-2020, comprising a period of five years (last five years). In order to prepare the findings and draw conclusions, collected data were processed. There were not present any difficulties in distributing and collecting the questionnaires.

## Ethical issues

The information collected from the respondents was very important to analyze and interpret the findings. The names of the respondents (companies' managers) due to ethical obligations were not disclosed in this paper.

## Presentation of the research findings

In this section research findings are presented.

### Copyrights as important assets

In order to test Hypothesis 0, Descriptive analysis is used.

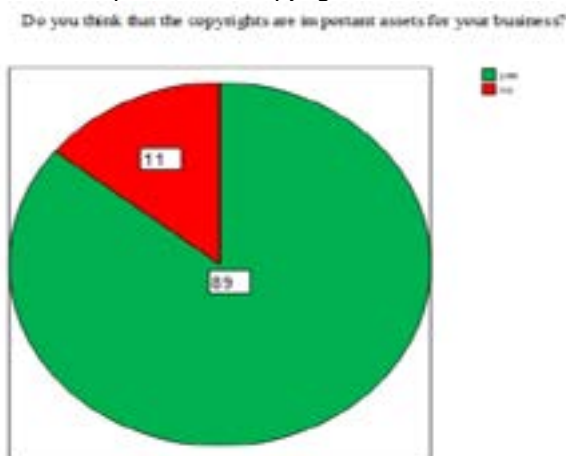
In regard with the importance of the copyrights as assets of the business, the results of the analysis are as following:

To the question "Are you aware of the concept of copyright?", 100% of respondents answered "yes", (0% of respondents answered "no", 0% of respondents answered "do not know"), clearly indicating that all companies are aware of the concept of copyright.

To the question “Do your institution owns copyrighted materials/products?”, 100% of respondents answered “yes”, (0% of respondents answered “no”, 0% of respondents answered “do not know”), indicating that all companies own copyrighted materials/products.

To the question “Do you think that the copyrights are important assets for your business?”, 89% of respondents answered “yes” (Graph 1), 11% of respondents answered “no”, and only 0% of respondents answered “do not know”, indicating that most of the companies are aware of the importance of their copyrights as business assets. However, there are companies (managers) thinking that their copyright/s are not important.

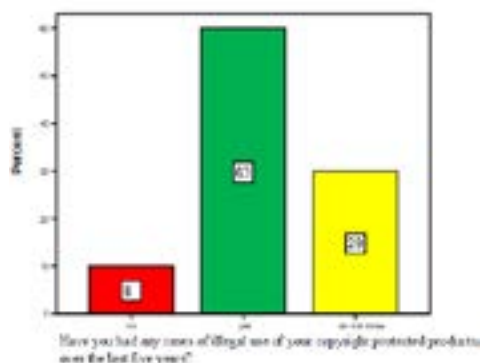
**GRAPH 1.** Importance of copyrights as business assets.



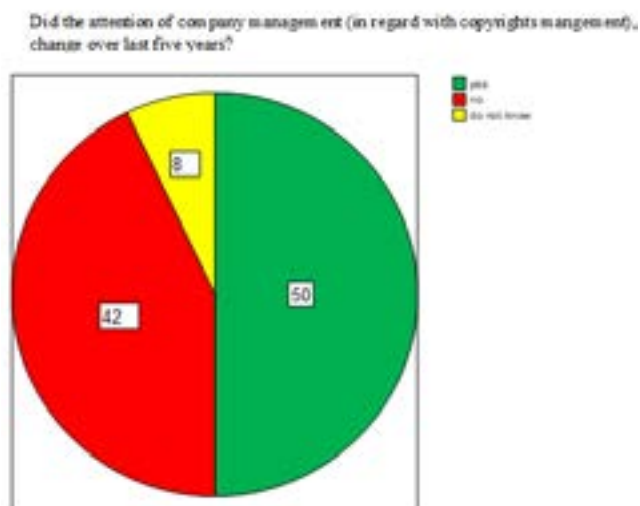
To the question “Do you know what piracy is?”, 100% of respondents answered “yes”, (0% of respondents answered “no”, 0% of respondents answered “do not know”), clearly indicating that all companies are aware of the concept of piracy.

To the question “Have you had any cases of illegal use of your copyright protected products, over the last five years?” (Graph 2), 63% of respondents answered “yes”, 8% of respondents answered “no”, 29% of respondents answered “do not know”, indicating that most of the companies are faced with the illegal use of their copyright protected products.

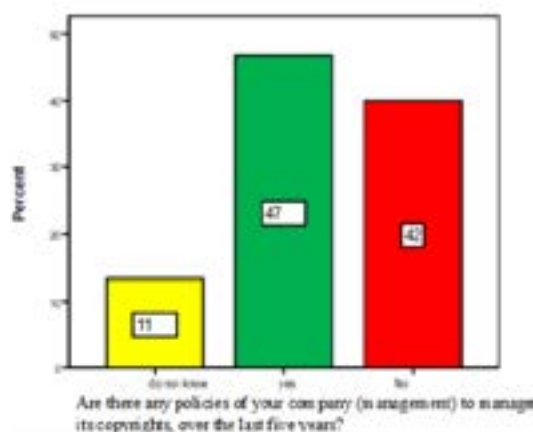
**GRAPH 2.** Cases of illegal use of copyright protected products.



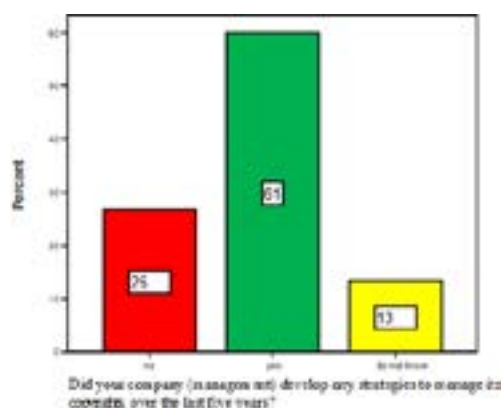
To the question “Did the attention of company management (in regard with copyrights mangement) change, over the last five years?” (Graph 3), 50% of respondents answered “yes”, 42% of respondents answered “no”, 8% of respondents answered “do not know”, indicating that in most companies management pays attention on the copyright/s mangement.

**GRAPH 3.** Change in attention of company management.

To the question “Are there any policies of your company (management) to manage its copyright/s, over the last five years?” (Graph 4), 47% of respondents answered “yes”, 42% of respondents answered “no”, 11% of respondents answered “do not know”, indicating that most of the companies own policies to manage their copyright/s.

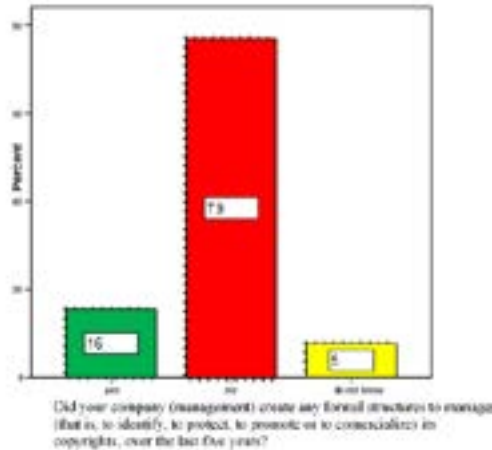
**GRAPH 4.** Existence of policies.

To the question “Did your company (management) develop any strategies to manage its copyright/s, over the last five years?” (Graph 5), 61% of respondents answered “yes”, 26% of respondents answered “no”, 13% of respondents answered “do not know”, indicating that in many companies copyright is becoming part of their business strategies.

**GRAPH 5.** Development of strategies.

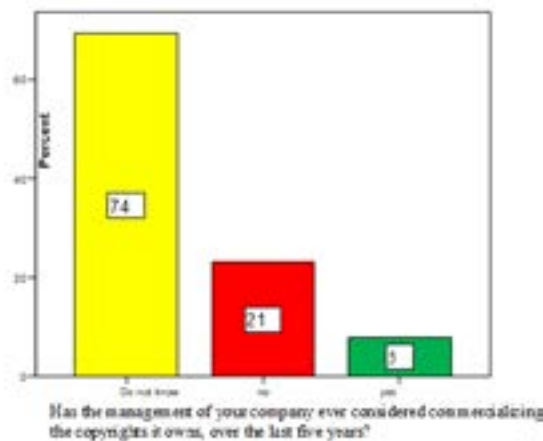
To the question “Did your company (management) create any (direct) formal structures to manage (that is, to identify, to protect, to promote or to commercialize) its copyrights, over the last five years?” (Graph 6), 16% of respondents answered “yes”, 79% of respondents answered “no”, 5% of respondents answered “do not know”, indicating that a few companies own direct formal structures involved in the management of their copyright/s.

**GRAPH 6.** Creation of (direct) formal structures.



To the question “Has the management of your company ever considered commercializing the copyrights it owns, over the last five years?” (Graph 7), 5% of respondents answered “yes”, 21% of respondents answered “no”, 74% of respondents answered “do not know”, indicating that a few companies have considered the commercialization of their copyright/s.

**GRAPH 7.** Commercialization of copyrights.



The percentages, as indicated by the answers of the respondents, clearly showing the importance of the copyright/s, and the importance of the activities pertaining to its management. So, the results of the analysis above indicate that hypothesis *H0*: Copyright/s are not important assets for the business organizations in Albania, is invalidated, that is, alternative hypothesis *Ha*: Copyright/s are important assets for the business organizations in Albania, is validated.

Some important conclusions are given below.

## Conclusions

Many companies in Albania are aware of the concept of copyright and they know how to make use of the protection it grants.

Many companies see their copyright/s as important assets for their businesses and in these companies management pays attention on the copyright/s management. However, there are some companies (managers) thinking that their copyright/s are not important.

Companies are aware of the concept of piracy and many of them are faced with the illegal use of their copyright protected products.

Many companies own policies to manage their copyright/s, but despite the fact that many of them see their copyright/s as important, yet there are companies that do not own any policies to manage their copyright/s.

Despite the fact that in many companies copyrights are becoming part of their business strategies, yet only a few of them own or have created formal structures involved in the management of their copyright/s.

As companies in Albania recognize the importance of copyright/s management, yet a few companies have considered the commercialization of their copyright/s.

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PANEL II

**LAW, INSTITUTIONS  
AND POLITICS**

# How pandemic has influenced the game between interest groups and politics.

## A theoretical Model

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Dr. Anjeza XHAJERAJ

### Abstract

*When parties and interest groups interact, they can do so in several ways which could be on an informal level, lobbying for a party candidate, or group representatives approach party leaders in the parliament to lobby them on an issue. There is a plethora of studies on the extent to which major political parties and major interests have related in the past and continue to relate or interact at the organizational level. Researchers have investigated to what extent parties and groups had formal organizational ties, cooperated in elections, or worked in concert on developing and implementing policies. Factors that for decades have determined the relationship between political parties and interest groups in liberal democracies are political system and subsystem development, political culture and political ideology, centralization of government and policymaking, nature of the party system, political party dependence on interest groups, encompassing characteristics of the interest group system, interest group development, ideology and leadership. However, the pandemic has influenced to a great extent the relationship between interest groups and politics. While Covid-19 crisis has consolidated power within governments, leaving opposition parties in a bind, on the other hand it has galvanized interest groups and businesses to mobilize. The pandemic has opened up the lobbying playing field to many new players. The paper aims to investigate to what extent the pandemic has influenced the relationship between political parties, government and interest groups and what strategies have these last ones used to get heard in a time when social distancing has reduced the opportunities for face-to-face lobbying.*

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected policy making process, the relationship between government and opposition, government and civil society and government and interest groups. It had a negative impact on the incomes of individuals and business. Government had to address the crises and interest groups “volunteered” to offer their expertise in a time when government was in need for that since there was a lack of knowledge and infrastructure to address the crises. Under the circumstances, government has consolidated its power, while opposition parties remained in shadow with little opportunity to engage in the policymaking process. Governments took special emergency measures and recovery funding measures thus expanding its power over society and economy.

Even though one could expect that social distancing rules would reduce the opportunities for interaction between interest groups and government, this did not happen, at least not in US and EU. Reports indicate that lobbying spending has increased under COVID-19. According to Open Secrets, Coronavirus stimulus spurred near-record first-quarter lobbying spending. The same report shows that in the first quarter of 2020, 3,200 clients lobbied on issues related to coronavirus and 1,500 lobbying clients attempted to influence the House version of the CARES Act (Recovery Bill on Coronavirus) and clients that had never lobbied before hired lobbyist to influence on policy making. The same situation is observed in EU. Lobbying activities have attempted to influence decisions on aid packages, ‘air bridges’, international travel and when and how to re-open different sectors of society. At the outset of the crises the interaction between government and interest groups was marked by emergency. Open hearings were either canceled or held with compressed deadline.

Closed consultations substituted open ones. The pandemic changed not only the framework of interest group-government cooperation, but also the way that interest groups choose to act and to what extent the level of their access to decision makers was changed (increased or decreased) (Rasmussen, 2020).

The pandemic has increased digital interest representation. In Albania, for the period 13 April 2020- 12 October 2020 the meetings of the committees and subcommittees are held online. In the framework of transparency of the work of MPs all the meetings of the committees and subcommittees conducted online are registered on webex. It resulted that there are held 177 online meetings. The distribution of meetings is as follows: 9 meetings of the CEM, 13 meetings of the CEI, 17 meetings of the CPATE, 2 meetings of the Commission of Inquiry to control the legality of actions performed by the President of the Republic, 34 meetings of the CEF, 11 meetings of the CLSAH, 45 meetings of the CLAPHR, 3 meetings of the CNS, 7 meetings of the FPC, 5 Joint meetings of the Council for Legislation and the CLAPHR, 3 Joint Meetings of the Council for Legislation and the CLA, 15 meetings of the CNS, 1 meeting of SGEPVW, 2 joint meetings of the SHR and SGEPV. The rest of the meetings are hearings and speeches.

There are 58 registered lobbyists or interest groups at the Parliament of Albania, which participate at the meetings of the committees and subcommittees of parliament. There are eight standing committees in the Albanian Parliament: Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights (CLAPHR), Committee on European Integration (CEI), Foreign Policy Committee (FPC), Committee on Economy and Finance (CEF), Commission for National Security (CNS), Commission for Production Activities, Trade and Environment (CPATE), Committee on Labor, Social Affairs and Health (CLSAH), Commission for Education and Media (CEM). There is also a Special Commission for Electoral Reform (SCER). In addition to the standing committees there are seven subcommittees: Subcommittee on Diaspora and Migration (SDM), Subcommittee on Local Government (SLG), Subcommittee on Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women (SGEPVW), Subcommittee on Human Rights (SHR), Subcommittee on Public Administration (SPA), Subcommittee on Supervision of Law Enforcement for Policy Vetting (SSLEPV), Subcommittee on Monitoring the Implementation of the State Budget and its Control (SMISBC).

According to the Statistical Bulletin 2017-2021, since the inception of the pandemic there are approved 225 laws aimed at addressing the pandemic, distributed as follows: 147 in 2020 and 78 for the first half of 2021. In addition to these there are approved 69 laws to address issues emerged because of the pandemic (even though it is hard to distinguish between the first and the second) distributed as follows: 32 laws in 2020 and 37 in the first half of 2021. For the same period, the parliament of Albania has approved 403 laws. Thus, laws approved to address issues related to the pandemic (294 in total) comprise 73% of the total laws approved during this period. This is indeed a very high percentage, and it is worth to investigate the procedures followed and the nature of the laws approved since the inception of the pandemic. It is equally important to investigate the interplay between interest groups and MPs in the process.

The aim of the paper is to design a theoretical model for analyzing the influence of the pandemic on the interaction between interest groups and government. The paper is organized in the following sections: I. Introduction; II. What are interest groups and the legal framework that regulate their activity in Albania; III. Current state of research on the relationship between interest groups and parties; IV. A Theoretical model to analyze the role that interest groups play in the policy process.

## What are interest groups and the legal framework that regulate their activity in Albania

There is a vast literature on interest groups and equally vast on their definition (Baumgartner and Leech 1998, 25–30). Some place more focus on concepts such ‘formal organization’, ‘influencing of public policy’ (Zeigler 1992, pp.377-380), ‘open membership associations’ (Walker 1991) and some others pay more attention to the ‘policy participant’ element (Jordan and Maloney 1992) who contend that interest groups are not necessarily membership organizations, but rather institutions such as universities, cities and corporations. In United States, some scholars define interest groups purely on legal grounds: those who are registered by law (Gray and Lowery 1996; Hunter, Wilson, and Brunk 1991; Schlozman and Tierney 1986 in Thomas 2001, p.7). The definition even though easy to understand, leave out of the focus the plethora of policy participants (major government entities that lobby), informal groups (*ad hoc* groups formed to deal with problems like crime, education, or environment (Thomas 2001, p.7). To avoid such problem, Thomas and Hrebenar (1995) use the following definition “An interest group is an association of individuals or organizations, usually formally organized, that attempts to influence public policy” (p.114). As Thomas (2001, p.7) points this is a catch all definition which allows all types of interest groups such as traditional interests of business, labor, agriculture, environment, education in addition to voluntary organizations mainly concerned with social welfare issues as well as governmental bodies at all levels to be included, thus leaving no one outside.

The number and role of interest groups has increased since their inception and is often considered as one of the factors that has caused the decline of the role and importance of political parties in the Western world. The reason behind this is that both political parties and interest group aim to represent society or different groups within society and in this context they fight for ‘clientele’ (Thomas 2001, p.12).

The entitlement to have interest groups, their role and functions are defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania (1998). The Constitution specifies that the economical system of the Republic of Albania is based on the private and public property, on the market economy and it ensures the freedom of economic activity (Article 11). The freedom of

the economic activities makes inevitable the birth of economic and social interests which could be even conflicting with each other. The Constitution foresees also that citizens have the right to get organized in collectivities in order to protect their lawful interests and it guarantees the liberties and political, social and economic rights of the citizens of Albania (Article 45-58).

Beqiri (2017) identifies the following interest groups:

- syndicates or labor unions (law.7516, dt.7.10.1991) which could get organized in line with their branches, professions and territorial distribution, in the private and public sector;
- Business groups: Trade Chambers are examples of business groups. They are present in all the cities of the country. Their role is to protect the economic interests of traders, entrepreneurs, and business community at large. Legislation such as fiscal packages that government enact every year and influence taxes and tariffs that business groups pay to government should be compiled in cooperation with them.

It is clear that in order to understand the role that interest groups have played during the pandemic we should know which are the members of the Chambers of Commerce and whether they have participated in the meetings held by the parliamentary committees and subcommittees after the outbreak of the pandemic.

## Current state of research on the relationship between interest groups and parties

There is a plethora of studies on the link that exist between political parties and interest groups. Scholars such as Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Michels (1917), Przeworski and Sprague (1986) contend that mainstream political parties focus on a small set of issue areas during their electoral campaign. New issues, whose electoral benefit is unknown, are left outside of the public discourse. The reason behind this is that political parties, being organizations, whose purpose is to win elections and form a government (alone or in coalition) choose strategies which will help them maximize their electoral support and thus they attempt to concentrate voter attention on issues they are in line with the electorate, and which contribute positively on their reputation.

Political parties and interest groups are the most important organizations that link citizens with their government (Thomas 2001, p.1). While scholars have analyzed them separately in numerous works their role in the political sphere, the number of studies that have investigated the relationship among them is not small either. Left wing parties have traditionally stronger links with labor organizations and trade unions, while right wing parties with business, even though the degree of such alliances exhibits different shades and strengths in the various countries of liberal democracies. In addition to the traditional links between party wings and interest groups, the ones made public, the general tendency for interest groups is not to establish formal relationships with political parties, but rather seek political influence through other channels (Thomas 2001, p.2).

Parties and groups interact in different ways, formal and informal. Informal relationship occurs when an interest group help individual party candidates during elections, when it approaches party leaders in the parliament or executive to lobby them on an issue or when it is the government itself, or rather the party in public office brings several groups together on an *ad hoc* basis to deal with issues pertaining to the interest groups summoned (Thomas 2001, p.3). Formal relations are easier to recognize. They are written in the statutes of parties and groups and formalized through regular meetings, financial contributions and public appearances. The formal relationship could manifest itself during elections and/or when parties and interest groups cooperate on developing and implementing policies.

Scholars of pluralist theory approach and of rational choice contend that the relations between interest groups and parties are important and influence power relationship, policy processes and outcomes, campaign funding, political recruitment and candidate selection and promotion in elections (in Thomas 2001, p.11-12).

While they 'cooperate' they also compete with each other. In the early years of scholars' studies, the general contention was that when parties were strong, interest groups were weak and the other way around (Schattschneider 1942). However, further studies and changes in the social and economic landscape proved that such relationship among parties and interest groups were not always true (Thomas and Hrebennar 1999, pp.121). Strong parties and strong interest-groups could co-exist and even precisely because interest groups are strong, parties strengthen themselves in order to not become overcome by them.

Research on political party – interest group relationship identifies nine factors that define such relationship. These factors are political system and subsystem development, political culture and political ideology, centralization/decentralization of government and policymaking, nature of party system, political party dependence on interest groups, encompassing characteristics of the interest group system, interest group development, present group goals and ideology and group leadership (Thomas and Hrebennar 1995 in Thomas 2001, pp. 15-18). The nature of the relationship develops in different ways. When party system has developed as the result of strong ideological cleavages in a society, interest groups are more likely to ally with certain parties (labor parties or capital parties). When the attitude toward government is sceptic, the relationship between parties (especially parties in public office) and interest groups is weak. Another relationship pattern is observed in unitary and federal systems. Unitary system tends to centralize interest groups, closing thus the

avenues to regional and local interest groups, which could flourish in federal systems. The nature of the party system influences the strength of party-interest group relationship as well. Strong party systems encourage strong ties between groups and political parties in line with political parties' ideological orientation in terms of left-right dimension and weak party systems encourage neutral and pragmatic interest groups. Financial regulations of party funding are important factors that influence party-group relationship. The extent to which interest groups are legally allowed to finance and actually finance political parties' campaign, provide technical information to parties and influence policy enactment define also how dependent are political parties on interest groups and thus to what degree interest groups can influence policy process.

The encapsulation of society in interest groups and the number of interest groups are factors that influence the relationship strength between parties and interest groups. The greater the number/percentage of people belonging to interest groups and the smaller the number of interest groups representing these people the stronger is the influence of interest groups on policy process. The reason behind this is that high percentage of population encapsulated within interest groups increases their leverage on policy making and the smaller the number of interest groups, the easier it is to coordinate among them and agree on desirable outcomes of policy making. The origin of the interest group is also important in defining the attitude of interest group toward political parties. Thus, labor groups have built close alliances with left wing parties (radical or socialist parties) and professional groups and trade associations not having ideological origins have neutral or pragmatic approaches towards parties. In line with the logic of interest group origin is also the present group goals and ideology factor. Following this, if the group's goals are strongly ideologically positioned than the interest group will very likely tend to cooperate with parties with which it shares its ideological stances. Lastly, group leadership influences the relationship between parties and interest groups drawing from personal networks and past experiences, which could result in building alliances with parties which not necessarily share the same ideological stances with those of the said interest group (Thomas and Hrebenar 1995).

Yishai (1995), Wilson (1990) and Thoms and Hrebenar (1995) have identified five specific forms of party-group relationship which are based on ideological affinity or adversity, organizational linkage or lack of them and similarities or differences in strategy. The five-model designed are integration/strong partisan model, cooperation/ideological model, separation/pragmatic involvement model, competition/rivalry model and conflict/confrontation model.

The integration/strong partisan model denotes a relationship model where the political party and the interest group are almost identical or very close organizationally. Such proximity could come because of the interest group is a spin-off the party and could have ideological affinity with it. The Cooperation/Ideological model happens when the connection between a political party and an interest group is strong because they share the same ideology, policy orientation and historical circumstances. This is the case when interest groups represent the interests of the business, professional groups, conservative parties, farmer's organizations, and rural parties. The third model is that of separation/pragmatic involvement model in which the interest group is independent of any party and due to the fact, that has no partisan attachment to any party it is willing to work with any party, being that an incumbent party or a party in opposition regardless of policy orientation and ideological positioning. In this model the cooperation occurs on an *ad hoc* basis and is characterized by pragmatism. Professional technical and nonideological groups (architects, airline pilots) and social issue and public interest groups (children's rights groups) fall into this category. The fourth model is the competition/rivalry model in which interest groups and political parties compete for members and funds. It occurs when parties and groups have similar ideology and policy goals like green parties and environmentalist or socialist parties and labor unions. The last model is that of conflict/confrontation. Differences in ideology and policy orientation are major drivers of conflict. Usually, parties and groups are positioned at opposite ends of the political spectrum, even though cases when a party and group have the same ideological bases but disagree over a policy or its implementation happen as well.

Policy orientation and ideological positioning in the political spectrum is one of the factors that condition the relationship between parties and interest groups. However, organizational capacity and willingness of political parties to perform political functions play an important role in this relationship. The activity of interest groups is constrained and limited when parties are strong and fully use their capacity. When parties are less willing to perform their political functions, interest groups have a wider spectrum of functions and are more active and present in the political domain (Thomas 2001, pp.22).

According to Farrer (2014) 'proportional representation electoral rules (PR) force policy-making to be more responsive to political competition, whereas corporatism and centralization lower this responsiveness of policy-making to political competition (pp.632). Jordan and Maloney (2001) contend that the trend toward the "catchall" party model has weakened the relationship between parties and interest groups, because parties tend to appeal to various segments of society often with conflicting interests with each other and interest groups on the other side try not to pursue a strategy which identifies them with one major party (pp.29). Following this line of reasoning since Albania has either had mix electoral system or proportional one, it is thought to be more responsive towards political competition among various interest groups, assuming such groups bring their competitiveness in the public arena.

## Theoretical model to analyze the role that interest groups play in the policy process- Affecting public policy

Literature identifies inside and outside lobbying as strategies pursued by interest groups to influence policymaking. Inside lobbying is the process of influencing policymakers through direct interactions such as advisory boards, consultation, or personal contacts (Beyers 2004, pp.213). Outside lobbying, as the term indicates, seeks to influence policymaking from outside, indirectly, by garnering public support (Kollman 1998, pp.3). Outside lobbying strategies of interest groups comprise tactics such as protesting, holding press conferences, making public speeches, and organizing petitions. By using these tactics interest groups aim to garner public support in their efforts to influence public policy making (Tresch & Fischer 2015, pp.356).

In order to address the pandemic the government sought to address a wide number of issues and problems such as preventing transmission, ensuring sufficient physical infrastructure and workforce capacity, providing health services effectively, paying for services and issues related to governance. Thus it dealt with health communication, physical distancing, isolation and quarantine, monitoring and surveillance, testing, physical infrastructure and workforce, planning health services, managing health cases, managing essential services in the health sector, health financing, entitlement and coverage, centralization or decentralization of government services, in and out of lockdowns, engagement or not of civil society, travel policies, strategies and approaches implemented within schools and the like (COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor).

Following this analysis, I propose a theoretical model which first defines which kind of interest groups are in Albania and what is their relationship with political parties. Being a new democracy with vague political cleavages, the expectation is that the separation/pragmatic involvement model in which the interest group is independent of any party and that the cooperation occurs on an *ad hoc* basis and is characterized by pragmatism. Another important element in the theoretical model is to disentangle the web of laws approved during and for the pandemic so that we could identify who are the interest groups that have benefited and or consulted during the pandemic. Comparison between the registered lobbyists and the actual interest groups that have benefited from the laws approved will indicate the real state of the relationship between interest groups and government.

Third, it is important to evaluate whether special interests have prevailed and conditioned policy making and whether specific groups have benefited more than the others and/or have been privileged. A fourth and a last element is the analyzes of the strategies that interest groups have used to affect policy in terms of inside lobbying or outside lobbying. Inside lobbying is more difficult to measure, unless meetings are recorded, but outside lobbying is easier to track by analyzing strategies that interest groups have pursued to make known their interests and to garner public support.

The literature on the role that the pandemic has played on the government-interest groups relationship is in its making. New avenues will come soon. However, this paper has set a new path in the analysis of the policy making and how it is influence by interest groups.

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# Vaccine nationalism in a G-Zero world

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**Blendi LAMI**

Department of Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Law, Political Science and International Relations  
European University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania

## Abstract

*Developed countries have secured billions of anti-Covid doses, while emerging economies are trying unsuccessfully to obtain even a small portion of vaccines supply. This phenomenon is a race with profound consequences such as slowing economic recovery and further impoverishing developing countries. Faced with this problem, the states tend to focus on their territorial boundaries, giving priority to their survival and ignoring the important fact that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world the collaboration between countries is imperative. It is a time when the notion of the state is supposed to have eroded. This paper will try to shed light on the debate between realists and globalists regarding the format of today's international system, where the simple solution in times of crisis would be the cooperation, but in fact we are witnessing constant fragmentation among the states.*

**Key words:** nationalism, globalism, sovereignty, race, G-Zero world, cooperation, fragmentation

## Vaccine nationalism

Wealthy countries have secured billions of doses of anti-Covid, while emerging economies are trying unsuccessfully to obtain even a small portion of the supply of vaccines. This phenomenon is a race with profound consequences. Most importantly: slowing economic recovery and further impoverishing developing countries.

Therefore states tend to focus on their territorial boundaries, giving priority to the concept of their survival, but also ignoring the important fact that we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where - many claim - the notion of the state has deeply eroded.

Here we are confronted with a long-rumored mentality, but more clearly illustrated in today's reality: the lack of international cooperation. States are isolated to defend themselves from the enemy, by not considering the existence of their neighbors, allies or countries in need. Basically, this situation is a wake-up call for the functioning of the neoliberal system.

In this respect, we come across a race between states that has received the realist designation "vaccine nationalism". Ever since the first human trials or regulatory approvals, richer countries such as Britain, France, Germany and the United States entered into pre-purchase agreements with Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers, a development that has become known as the "vaccine nationalism". There is a fear that such preliminary arrangements will make some initial vaccines unaffordable and inaccessible to all but the richest countries in a world of approximately 8 billion people. A country manages to provide vaccines to its citizens and prioritizes its own local markets before they become available in other countries. This is done through pre-purchase agreements between a government and a vaccine manufacturer. For example, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and the European Union have spent tens of billions of dollars on deals with vaccine runners such as Pfizer Inc, Johnson & Johnson, and AstraZeneca Plc even before their effectiveness was proven.

An alternative to this new nationalism is often referred to as the global vaccine alliance - Gavi - which aims for equal access to the vaccine through COVAX. According to Patton (2020), in his article "When It Comes to Covid Shots, Rich Nations Are First in Line" in "Bloomberg", the US, the European Union and Japan have secured 1.5 billion doses, and the rest of the world with 7.8 billion has no chance of getting the vaccine" and "... wealthy countries have already locked up more than a billion



doses of coronavirus vaccines, raising worries that the rest of the world will be at the back of the queue in the global effort to defeat the pathogen.”

Vaccine nationalism positions countries with fewer resources and bargaining power at a disadvantage. Thus, if countries with large numbers of cases receive the vaccines too late, the disease will continue to disrupt global supply chains and, as a result, economies around the world.

Beyond Gavi, the true alternative to arrest vaccine nationalism is global collaboration, which – as mentioned above - is being done through the WHO-backed COVAX Facility mechanism. So far, more than 170 countries have expressed interest: about 90 low- and middle-income countries and 80 fully self-financing countries. The countries who join the initiative are assured supply of vaccines whenever they become successful. Moreover, the countries will get assured supplies to protect at least 20 per cent of their populations.

Coordinated by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the WHO, COVAX will achieve this by acting as a platform that will support the research, development and manufacturing of a wide range of COVID-19 vaccine candidates, and negotiate their pricing. All participating countries, regardless of income levels, will have equal access to these vaccines once they are developed. The initial aim is to have 2 billion doses available by the end of 2021, which should be enough to protect high risk and vulnerable people, as well as frontline healthcare workers (Berkley, 2020).

That's the fear of global health agencies planning a scheme to bulk-buy and equitably distributes vaccines around the world. They are watching with dismay as some wealthier countries have decided to go it alone, striking deals with drug-makers to secure millions of doses of promising candidates for their citizens (Kelland, K & Steenhuysen, 2020).

Meanwhile, vaccine nationalism is not a new phenomenon. “The present race to hoard Covid-19 vaccines harks back to a similar situation that happened in 2009 during the H1N1 flu pandemic, Australia, the first country to come up with a vaccine, blocked exports while some of the wealthiest countries entered into pre-purchase agreements with several pharmaceutical companies. The US alone obtained the right to buy 600,000 doses. It was only when the H1N1 pandemic began to recede that developed countries offered to donate vaccine doses to poorer economies. However, it must be noted that H1N1 was a milder disease and its impact was far lesser than Covid-19, which has already infected more than 22 million worldwide and killed 777,000.” (De, 2020).

Moreover, at a grander scale, there are no international laws that prevent this kind of nationalism. Although vaccine nationalism runs counter to global public health principles, there are no provisions in international law that undermine the signing of these pre-purchase agreements.

## The international system

In this way, while defining the context of the pandemic, we face another paradox: the pandemic is not a national problem. It cannot be reduced or eliminated with partial supply (the virus originated in China, came a long way from China anywhere in the world and is killing more Europeans and Americans than Chinese people). The problem lies in the short-sighted vision of policymakers.

Western policymakers are aware of this phenomenon, but are more inclined to think of the electorate in the short term than to project the long-term future. It is a phenomenon similar to climate change. Such catastrophes cannot be managed from a single country, where the river, lake, ocean, atmosphere, etc., are not part of the territorial boundaries. This game of chess is played simultaneously all over the world. The director of the WHO warns that “the recovery of the world is achieved with the recovery of all.”

After decades of globalization, various forms of nationalism seem to flourish in times of crisis. And indeed, nationalist policies are significantly undermining international cooperation and the instability of the world order. This vaccine nationalism is not helping to tackle the crisis, but to exacerbate it - vigorously reviving the concept of the nation-state.

The role of the nation-state in today's world system is still crucial, despite the fact that proponents of globalization often declare that the days of the nation-state are over. The crises - the financial-economic crisis of 2008-2009 or this pandemic - reflect the state-centrist character of the system.

This situation could well be described under the optics of two well-known authors. George Friedman tries to explain this phenomenon referring to a system without the rules of today's world, while Ian Bremmer considers the current system as a world of regions, where each state fights for itself.

According to Friedman (2020), two concepts have been consistently used in discussions of late international relations. One is the liberal international order and the second is the rule-based system. The first concept describes an international system that is committed to human rights, free trade and similar principles. The second concept has to do with the idea that there is an agreed system of rules that governs relations between nations. Together, these notions are thought to create predictability and kindness in the way nations interact with each other.

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This picture was also observed during the distribution of vaccines where no common language was found between the states. Even earlier, this issue emerged during the administration of former President Donald Trump, who was accused of undermining these principles, for example, by imposing tariffs on China and questioning the value of NATO. The question is re-emerging because the Biden administration, after coming to power criticizing the policies of its predecessor, has made it clear that it intends to return to these principles.

The most important question is whether there was ever an international order based on rules or whether it was an illusion. There has long been a vision that the relationship between nations should not be a war of all against each other, but rather a harmonious cooperation between states. Friedman's idea is that, without the rule of law, liberalism was always impossible. So the international liberal order existed when it was convenient. In short, according to Friedman (2020), "the idea that we must return to a glorious age in which nations were ruled by laws and liberalism is a fantasy".

Ian Bremmer makes a diagnosis of today's international system and configures the five most likely scenarios for the future.

The G 2 — A U.S.- Chinese partnership  
 Concert—a G 20 that actually works  
 Cold War 2.0—or something worse  
 A world of regions—to each his own  
 Scenario x—the G-subzero

The term G-Zero world refers to a breakdown in global leadership brought about by a decline of Western influence and the inability of other nations to fill the void. It is a reference to a perceived shift away from the pre-eminence of the G 7 (Group of seven industrialized countries) and the expanded G 20 (which includes major emerging powers like China, India, Brazil, Turkey and others. In his book, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World*, Bremmer explains that, in the G-Zero, no country or group of countries has the political and economic leverage to drive an international agenda or provide global public goods.

In a previous essay, titled "A G-Zero World: The New Economic Club Will Produce Conflict, Not Cooperation", Roubini & Bremmer (2011) say that:

This is not a G-20 world. Over the past several months, the expanded group of leading economies has gone from a would-be concert of nations to a cacophony of competing voices as the urgency of the financial crisis has waned and the diversity of political and economic values within the group has asserted itself. Nor is there a viable G-2 -- a U.S.-Chinese solution for pressing transnational problems -- because Beijing has no interest in accepting the burdens that come with international leadership. Nor is there a G-3 alternative, a grouping of the United States, Europe, and Japan that might ride to the rescue. Today, the United States lacks the resources to continue as the primary provider of global public goods. Europe is fully occupied for the moment with saving the eurozone. Japan is likewise tied down with complex political and economic problems at home. None of these powers' governments has the time, resources, or domestic political capital needed for a new bout of international heavy lifting.

According to this graph, we have five distinct alternatives. If the United States and China are forced to come together as a result of the crises created by G-Zero, and if these are the two most powerful states in the world, we are likely to witness the emergence of an international system in which Washington and Beijing will benefit from the division of responsibilities. This scenario can be called the G 2 world. However, if the United States and China cooperate but share leadership with other strong states, we can witness a kind of concert of nations and a real cooperation within an organization similar to G 20. According to Bremmer (2015), these scenarios represent extremes . . . and "the future may offer a combination of at least two of these scenarios."

However, to Bremmer, the most likely is the "World of regions: to each his own". This scenario is a world without global leadership, in which many countries will be empowered, but will be able to manage only internal and regional challenges. The United States remains the sole global military power, and because of the economic strength and technological progress of emerging economies, this advantage is of limited importance. In this scenario, regional powers offer some public good within their respective spheres of influence, while increasingly ignoring key multinational institutions. This is currently the most likely scenario after the G-Zero format, because it does not require compromises between powerful states to solve global problems and because it seems to follow the path that the world is following today.

Another scenario - impossible according to Bremer, but to be considered - is Scenario x—the G-subzero. Given the various challenges that the G-Zero world will most likely create, this scenario is worth discussing. This is an anarchic scenario that threatens a very different kind of fragmentation of the international order. A generation ago, it was predicted that the increasingly free exchange of ideas, information, people, money, goods and services would undermine the power of national governments to the point of completely losing control of politics and the economy, making them countries almost negligible for world order. This did not happen, in part because some emerging market governments used state domination to manage much of social wealth, thereby strengthening power control mechanisms. For many countries, the financial crisis served as an incentive to pursue this strategy. It is very likely that the chaos created by the lack of international leadership during the G-Zero era will further strengthen the state-centrism.

Undoubtedly, this scenario has the lowest probability of being concretized among all the scenarios. At present, most countries are still able to maintain a healthy balance between central and local officials and between the state and its entities, in order to guarantee basic security and create opportunities for most citizens - although in some countries these opportunities

do not include the right to play an important and independent role in political decision-making. However, as G-Zero might last longer than expected, this scenario becomes more likely.

## The debate between realists and globalists

This debate has been going on for a long time: the pandemic is simply removing the dust so that we can see it more clearly.

Globalization has been reflected as a relationship between states and is widespread in the literature. There are authors who now consider globalization a post-IR era. This claim is refuted by those who question the degree of globalization and those who see globalization and IR as mutually exclusive. These attitudes lead to many debates (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2010).

What is the purpose of the debate on globalization? There is no universally accepted concept on globalization. Not a single definition over globalization in the literature today. The debate over globalization within IR theories is like a long marathon of disagreements between state-centric and non-state-centric theorists (Dunne, Kurki & Smith, 2007).

Realists and neo-realists have tried to be the biggest undoers of globalization. So show skepticism about globalization. Neo-realist worldview: policies through the lens of selfishness, self-restraint and the state as a sovereign actor. So realism is based on a state-centric approach. According to realists, the state is the dominant and the sole actor in IR. On the other hand, according to the globalist thesis, the days of the nation-state are over. This is where the debate begins: the confrontation between state-centrism and non-state-centrism.

Sovereignty is a key feature in a system that shows the qualities of independence, territorial position and self-determination of states. There are many conceptions of the nature and role of sovereignty in international political life. Realists tend to see sovereignty as an expression of the power and autonomy of states. Postpositivist theorists (like constructivists) seek to demonstrate the socially constructed nature of the assumption of sovereign states. Many theorists have also highlighted the erosion of state sovereignty in the context of globalization.

It is true that sovereignty has been weakened as conceptualization - as a result of the increase in cross-border flows beyond the jurisdiction of the state; it is true that crises that are global (such as pandemics, climate change, terrorism, etc.), cannot be managed at the state level, as nation-states do not have the capacity to deal with these issues; it is true that the development of transnational institutions of global governance has radically changed the character of world politics - in what is called the "age beyond the nation-state"; it is true that the nation-state is no longer the main actor in world politics, as we have a mosaic of many important actors; it is true that the process of economic globalization has increased the power of capital in relation to the state.

However, often these truths are translated differently into policy-making. An answer to this "system degradation" is given by Buzan, Held and McGrew in the article "Realism versus Cosmopolitanization" published in 1998. They acknowledge that globalization is a phenomenon that has transcended the thesis of closing territorial borders (a very worrying topic for realists), but, on the other hand, emphasize that an important part of international politics retains its realistic (state-centric) character.

Through this character in the ideology of states, the latter increasingly (in certain circumstances - especially in crises) refer to sovereignty, even when developing mechanisms of trans-national governance. Therefore, Buzan defines the state as "a basic political unit in the international system . . . and the international system is divided into states whose relations will be characterized by the power policies."

This leads us to the concept of power politics. According to Mearsheimer (2001), the distribution of power and national interests are fundamental causes of war and the stability of the world system. In this prism, states compete for the world's limited resources - currently for vaccines supply. Power politics prioritizes national self-interest over the interests of other nations or the international community, and thus may include threatening one another with military, economic or political aggression to protect one nation's own interest. Under these conditions, states are (conceptually) disfigured as they launch threats against counterparts (other states) through military, economic or political aggression - only to protect their own interests.

## Conclusion

The simplest solution, then, would be cooperation, although in today's format it seems impossible. As a conclusion, to illustrate these two dividing lines it is worth referring to Ian Bremmer in the book "Every Nation for Itself: What Happens When No One Leads the World", when he predicted in 2012, shortly after the financial crisis, that global leadership management needed to be reformed. Therefore, it is worth presenting his "prophecy" about the pandemic:

We cannot know whether the G-Zero will last five years or fifteen, but we know that while it exists, it is an incubator of catastrophe. Nor can we know what this catastrophe might look like . . . Or an influenza epidemic in Asia goes global because leaders of hot-zone countries rely on secrecy to cover their backs rather than the transparency needed to build an effective international response (Bremmer, 2013: 103).

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# The Influence of Serbia on Kosovo

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**Blerim BALOKU**

## Abstract

*Topic: “The influence of Serbia on Kosovo”, aims to elaborate the influence of the state of Serbia over the Republic of Kosovo, by breaching its national security. Elaborating on the influence of Serbia in the internal and external affairs of Kosovo is a broad topic, Treatment would require an in-depth and multidimensional study. Therefore, this paper’s focus is more on the post-1999 period, which marks the end of the war in Kosovo. Even though Kosovo is an independent and sovereign state, recognized by 117 states, Serbia makes use of the advantage granted by the constitutional regulation of the Republic of Kosovo (Kosovo being as a multi-ethnic state that offers positive discrimination through reserved seats for minority communities – particularly for the Serb community), in all the segments of the Kosovo state. The latter administrative segment had been approved by the Kosovo Parliament per recommendations of Martti Ahtisaari. Moreover, Serbia, to extend its influence, is using the advantage of its political and economic power, strategic position in the political segment, and strong ties with Russia and China, all of which have a major impact on Kosovo’s political and external affairs.*

*Since Kosovo declared its independence, many obstructions emanated throughout Kosovo state sectors, breeding destabilisation, however, Serbia’s main focus targets the influence on the political sector. The aforementioned grew stronger when the Serb List (Srpska Lista) of parliamentarians came in the political scene of the state of Kosovo. Moreover, they publicly declared that their goal is to protect the interests of the extended Serbian state in Kosovo and all of their actions are instructed by the Serbian state representatives, mainly through the so-called Office for Kosovo, which functions within the government of the Serbian state.*

*According to Buzan, security includes five security sectors: military security, political security, economical security, social security, and security in the environmental sector. For the sake of a clearer picture, the political security sector will be shed light upon since it is highly influenced by the state of Serbia.*

**Keywords:** Security sectors, political security, political influence, Serb List of parliamentarians, Constitutional Regulation, minority communities, etc.

## Introduction

“National Security” stands for the internal and external security of an independent sovereign country or state which provides security for its citizens from internal and external risks.

Endangering the national security of a state can be done through the impact that the aggressor states possess through their actions against a country, which is the object of aggression, to create instability and present insecurity in it whereby the aggressor would achieve its goals. In modern times, attacks of aggression aren’t considered only military actions but all hostile actions undertaken against a country in any of the above given five security sectors.

The state of Serbia has been openly claiming Kosovo's territory since the Ottoman Empire's days to the present day. In the past, Serbia has exercised its influence through military and police measures, while after the entry of NATO forces in Kosovo, it exerts its influence through other means (some open and some secret), in accordance to the nature of the intended action.

This paper uses the method of analysing printed and electronic media documents/public information that was subjected to the verification process in order to present a reliable overview of the real situation about the influence of the state of Serbia in endangering the national security of the state of Kosovo.

## Understanding National Security

Many regional and international authors have written about the notion of national security. According to Javorović, the internal and external security of the state is the security of the state from internal and external risks and threats; therefore, it's security that ensures the survival and normal functioning of the state with all the elements of independence, freedom, territorial integrity, and constitutional order. According to professor Anžić, A. national security is defined as a feature of an independent and sovereign state which takes responsibility for its own security, for the security of its own people, and for the global security. He claims that the basic components of national security are: security of the national environment, protection of human life, protection of personal and other interests, protection of rights and fundamental human freedoms, protection and establishment of national security, regulation of basic functions of the state, and environmental security. The well-known author, Grizold, A. says: it's the state's effort to provide security for all its population of being endangered from outside (attacks, occupations, interventions) and within (Alispahić, B. 2020).

A national security threat is the danger that threatens a sovereign state from external danger such as attacks, invasions, interference in the internal affairs of a state and internal danger such is the risk of organized crime, violation of public order, rebellions, etc. It's highly obvious that scholars and states pay very little attention to the nation's security with regards to the endangerment of the economic resources segment, as their main focus is on defence and military security. The interference of the state of Serbia in Kosovo's internal affairs is a violation of national security that can cause instability in the entire region. A "complex security" is a group of states whose primary security concerns are intertwined so that their national securities cannot realistically be considered fragmented (Buzan, 2003).

Traditionalists consider that security studies should not be extended to matters that aren't within the nature of the state or military. Those who support the expansion of security policy developed an almost all-inclusive concept of security (Abazović, D. M. et al, 2002).

## The Impact of the Serbian State on the State of Kosovo Throughout History

Since its foundation, Serbia had been claiming Kosovo's territory, even when Kosovo was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. In order to achieve it, Serbia initiated fabricated academics campaign (mainly through their churches) against Albanians by claiming that the Albanians are newcomers in the "cradle" of the Serbian state – Kosovo.

Even during the '80s, when Kosovo was an Autonomous Province, under the Republic of Serbia (which was a Republic of the Yugoslavian Federation), the influence was keen. By then, Kosovo had all the elements of citizenship and its own institution and soon after the death of Marshal Tito (The President of Yugoslavia), Serbia furiously intensified its campaign of influence over the Autonomous Province of Kosovo. Propagating that Serbs are oppressed and terrorised by Albanians in order to expel them out of Kosovo was a common topic of Serbian discourse.

Serb influence continued through staging plots that Serbs, churches included, are endangered and both would seize to exist in Kosovo if no action is undertaken. After the demonstrations of Albanians in March 1981, an annex of the Serb Patriarchate complex in Peja city was partially caught up on fire (15 March 1981), which boosted tensions in Belgrade. Although the building was located far from the Patriarchate and had no particular architectural value, public opinion in Serbia described the event as an act of Albanian irredentism, regardless that the findings of the investigation confirmed that the fire was caused by the electricity (Kryeziu, S. 2020). Staged scenarios of Albanians causing violence against Serbs were more and more being disseminated to the public. Worth mentioning is the case known as the M case where a male person, for his sexual pleasure, inserted a bottle of beer in his anus, causing himself serious injuries. This loudly echoed in the Serb newspaper Jedinstvo in Prishtinë and Politika in Belgrade. The article was written by Djekić, P. who said that a male person was attacked by two Albanians, while working in the field. They tied him up and inserted a broken bottle inside him. After the investigation, it was confirmed that the persons who allegedly attacked that man were serving their sentences in the Belgrade prison during that specific time. Later, the injured person admitted that he did it himself. Nevertheless, Serb authorities continued to propagate the case as unsolved. (Latifi, V. 2001). The Serb Academy also played a propagating role against Kosovo through its writing of the Memorandum of the "Academy of Sciences and Arts of Serbia" (SANU) of 1986, which impacted the reviving of the Serbian nationalist ideology to the detriment of Kosovo and other Republics. Well-known British journalist and publicist in the Balkans, Miša Glenny, writes: "There was indeed an exodus of Serbs in the early 1980s, but they were economic migrants"; "What was said about rapes, murders, and intimidation, was baseless." All the Serb government undertaking that caused bloodshed in Kosovo and other parts of Yugoslavia were blessed by the heads of the Serb Orthodox Church. The church gave

“spiritual legitimacy”, supplementary to the “scientific” one, given by the Serb Academy. This gave birth to genocide executed by Milosevic’s genocidal policy (Kryeziu, S. 2020).

Kosovo’s autonomy was illegally revoked and consequently contested based on (a) illegal adoption of constitutional changes during a state of emergency, (b) threatening, and (c) substantial procedural violations. The declaration of a state of emergency by the federal institutions paved the way for the intervention of the Serb police forces in Kosovo. They were under the authority of the Federal Police without locals’ consent. Serb police influenced through pressure on the Kosovo Assembly by surrounding it, leading to the annulment of the autonomy status in March 1989 (Kosovo Institute for Political Research and Development 2007). A large number of “guests”, both members of the state security and senior party officials from Serbia mingled with the delegates inside the building and, according to several testimonies, some of the Serbian officials took part in the Kosovo Assembly with their vote. Constitutional amendments were adopted in these terms and conditions, albeit without the two-thirds of the majority of normal votes, which were necessary for the change (Noel Malcolm 1998). The facility was strictly supervised by Yugoslav Forces, under siege by the army. Armed policemen mingled with deputies and deputies were forced to vote with their hands up, under the close supervision of the police authorities. They had later stated that their families were kept hostage. Them too being hostages of the multiple threatening conditions, the Deputies involuntarily voted for a solution (Dufour, P. 2010). Successively, through abuse of the media and of the aforementioned academy, Kosovo had been stripped out of all of its elements of statehood and autonomy, earlier bestowed within the Yugoslav Federation under the Constitution of 1974. Moreover, this circumstance paved the way for limitless control of military and police intervention.

## **Influence of the Serbian State in Kosovo After the Declaration of Independence**

Since the end of the war in Kosovo, Serbia strived to maintain the status quo in Kosovo, based upon the UN Security Council Resolution 1244. The Serbian state exerted its influence on post-war Kosovo through its own paramilitary structures, UNMIK<sup>1</sup>, the church (which had vastly changed its original creed into politics), and the Serb List. This paper also explains the influences of the state of Serbia in Buzan’s five sectors of national security, which affect the security of the state in addition to military:

- Military Sector;
- Economic Sector;
- Political Sector;
- Social Sector; and
- Environment sector.

Each of these five sectors is ought to undergo the security check independently of the other sectors, they all intertwine though. Derivatively, the security of one sector impacts at least one other sector (Abazović, D. M. et al. 2002).

### **Influence of the Serbian State on the State of Kosovo in the Military Sector**

Declaring Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state, by adopting the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, resulted in the termination of the Kosovo Protection Corps and the establishment of the Kosovo Security Force, as a national security force for the Republic of Kosovo. This force is eligible to send its members abroad in full compliance with the international responsibilities. Nonetheless, in concord with the “package” of the Special Envoy of the United Nations, Martti Ahtisaari, on which was foreseen the terms of [supervised] independence of Kosovo, it isn’t envisaged to be as same as a regular army. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, drafted by Ahtisaari package conditions, stipulates that constitutional changes must be voted by two-thirds (2/3) of all parliament deputies, including two-thirds (2/3) of all deputies occupying reserved seats, which are guaranteed for representatives of non-majority communities in Kosovo. Out of the total of 120 seats in the parliament, political parties, coalitions, civic initiatives, and independent candidates who declared to represent the Serb community, are granted a minimum of 10 seats to occupy in the open elections, in scenarios when the number of votes acquired results in fewer seats than 10. Other non-Albanian communities are granted another minimum of 10 seats distributed respectively. (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008, article 64).

After the expiration of the deadline for supervision of the independence of the Republic of Kosovo in 2012, many efforts have been made to establish the Army of the Republic of Kosovo. All of the votes were pending from the 2/3 of the votes of the minority nationalities that are granted reserved seats in the Assembly of Kosovo. Bearing in mind that the government of Serbia imposed their representation with 10 guaranteed seats in the Kosovo Parliament, which was adopted in the “Ahtisaari Package”, and all 10 representatives openly take orders directly from the Government of Serbia, not voting for the formation of the Army was a pure influence on hindering with State-building process in the Republic of Kosovo.

Unable to make constitutional changes, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo initiated three laws for the development of the Kosovo Security Force, giving additional powers to the Security Force, thus transforming it into an Armed Forces. The Kosovo Parliament with 106 votes in favour and an abstaining (out of 120 deputies in the assembly) approved three

<sup>1</sup> UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN KOSOVO



laws that changed the mandate of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) into the Kosovo Army, but without changing its name. Serb deputies of the Kosovo Parliament did not participate in the session. They opposed the formation of the Kosovo Army and indicated that this decision will be brought to the Constitutional Court (Deutsche Welle 2019). The Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo is multi-ethnic in composition. With the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Armed Forces, Serbia used its influence through the Serb List to destabilize the latter. On that matter, Dušan Janjić of the Forum for Ethnic Relations in Belgrade told to Radio Free Europe that the decision of Serbs to abandon the KSF was not on a voluntary basis but as an immense pressure coming from Belgrade. All this only to strengthen the position in the ongoing negotiations process – especially over the topic of the creation of the Association of Serb Municipalities. The long-term goal would be to destabilize Kosovo and at the same time to get the advantage of not being blamed for if the negotiations, taking place in Brussels, will fail. After passing the law on the Security Forces, Serbia threatened that all Serb community members in the Force would step out. Greg Delawie, through Twitter, expressed his deep concern about the occurring resignations of Serb members from the KSF (Balkan Policy research group 2019). “A confusing factor for regional security, and also a very worrying issue, is Serbia’s defence cooperation with Russia, which includes three components: The establishment of the Joint Serbo-Russian Centre for Emergency Response, which is one of its kind that Russia opened in Europe after the Cold War; Joint military manoeuvres, the first of which are scheduled to take place that Autumn; and Serbia’s Observer Status in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Russian-led Intergovernmental Military Alliance - Collective Security Treaty Organization” (Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development 2014).

### **The Influence of the State of Serbia on the State of Kosovo in the Political Sector**

Political security deals with the organizational stability of states, the system of power, and the ideology which as such gives legitimacy (Mirsad D Abazović et al. 2002). Since the proclamation of the Independence of the Republic of Kosovo Serbia has never accepted this legal and factual situation but has continuously insisted that Kosovo (Kosovo and Metohija, according to the Serb Government) is part of the state of Serbia. Moreover, their Constitution states that Kosovo is a part of Serbia. Furthermore, Serbia filed a lawsuit in the International Court of Justice questioning the right of Kosovo to declare independence, despite the fact that the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo is in full compliance with International Law. The judges of the aforementioned body considered that Resolution 1244 was temporary measure and it didn’t cause any obstacle in the resolution of Kosovo’s status. On the other hand, Serbia insists that the resolution 1244 prevents the declaration of independence of Kosovo and has undertaken actions to void its recognition by the states that have already recognized Kosovo as an independent state.

The influence of Serbia in the security sector of Kosovo is being conducted also through the Serb List. Their paramount goal is to sabotage Kosovo’s institutions rather than protect the rights of the Serb community living in Kosovo. They have the advantage of doing so since the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo states that there must be representatives of the Serb community as a part of the government of Kosovo “There will be at least one (1) Minister from the Serb community in the Government and one (1) Minister from any other from non-majority communities of Kosovo. If there are more than twelve Ministers, the Government will have a third Minister, who represents one of the non-majority communities in Kosovo; there will be at least two (2) Deputy Ministers from the Kosovo Serb community and two (2) Deputy Ministers from other non-majority communities in Kosovo. If there are more than twelve (12) ministers, the Government will have a third Deputy Minister, who represents the Serb community, and another (1) Deputy Minister, who represents one of the other non-majority communities in Kosovo” (Constitution of Republic of Kosovo). The Serb List, although it participates in the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo and holds ministerial positions, it keeps not recognizing the institutions of the state they represent, which in itself is a politically insincere act. Moreover, the representatives of the Serb List, through a memo dated 15.07.2020, reacted by declaring to have expressed their indignation with the continuation of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, since, according to them, “the resumption of the dialogue is against the interests of the state” (lajmi.net 2020). Likewise, the representatives of the Serb List supported the statement of the Serb President Aleksandar Vučić, dating 12.11.2020, declaring: “For me, it is important to tell you that the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh showed how a frozen conflict can escalate into a real catastrophe. We shouldn’t leave a frozen conflict to our children. Compromise does not mean that we will achieve it, it takes two sides. That is why Serbia will continue to strengthen economically and militarily” (Gazeta project 2020). The Director of the so-called Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia, dating 03.06.2020, stated through the Serb media that the Serb List will continue to hold grounds as a protector and a symbol of the Serbian presence in Kosovo.

In the general elections held in the Republic of Kosovo on 14.02.2021, Serbia tried to manipulate the election results, through the Serb List, to gain over the minority communities’ reserved seats. In the background, they established a Bosnian community party with the political entity “Ujedinjena Zajednica”, represented by Adriana Hodžić, and the political entity “Romani Inciativa” from the Roma community, both chaired by persons very close with the Serb List. Formed only two months before the elections, the political entity Ujedinjena Zajednica - Adriana Hodžić has managed to improve the Bosnian community’s outcome of the last elections, held in 2019, by an incredible 3205% in the municipalities inhabited by a majority of Serb community, subsequently increasing the Bosnian community votes by 49%. At a closer look at the 2019 results, the Serb List managed to get 53,861 votes or 6.402%, while in 2021 they got 44,407 votes or 5.094%. Consequently, some 10,000 votes were orchestrated by the Serb List to be divided into two newly established entities presided by persons close to the Serb List. This makes it possible to seize over the communities’ reserved seats, guaranteed



by the Kosovo constitution for minority communities, by these newly formed entities, who weren't voted by the actual Bosnian nor Roma communities respectively. The votes came from the municipalities inhabited by the Serb community and by Serb voters who instructively voted for Bosnian and Roma representatives. After the joint complaint was filed by the legitimate representatives of the Bosnian, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel annulled the votes in several municipalities. Some of the locations where Serb majority inhabitants voted as aforementioned are: in Partesh there were 183 votes and in Klllokot there were 248 votes. Still, according to the latest census in these municipalities, no Bosnian community member resides in this area. Similarly, we have Shtërpç municipality: out of 494 votes only 2 residents belong to the Bosnian community; in Ranillug out of 244 votes only 1 resident belongs to the Bosnian community.

The dialogue between the state of Serbia and the state of Kosovo started with the mediation of the European Union. One of the agreements reached between Kosovo and Serbia was ending the parallel structures of the state of Serbia who operate in about the entire territory of Kosovo, and their inclusion in Kosovo institutions. Yet, the Government of Serbia is doing the opposite: they are supporting them logistically and financially.

The assassination of the Leader of the Civic Initiative "Serbia, Democracy, Justice", Oliver Ivanović, who opposed the Serb List, was proclaimed by Serbia as an assassination committed by Albanians and that Serbs have no security in Kosovo. Additionally, the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, involved Tirana too in the scenario for the assassination of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. According to Vučić, the suspected perpetrator used the Rinas airport in Tirana to escape to Germany after the execution (abc news 2019). On the other hand, Oliver Ivanović had told the media "It is unfortunate that we have such a relationship from Serbian institutions, which unconstitutionally support only one party. This is illegal and inhumane and produces extreme consequences." Furthermore, the candidate for Mayor of North Mitrovica had asked KFOR and EULEX to prevent any possible incidents that might occur in support of the Serb List. "The public is creating an ungrounded perception of the Serb List, which focuses only on pressure and cunning" accused his compatriots Ivanović. "This is something we have not seen before. Serbs are more afraid of Serbs than of Albanians in 1999, 2004 and 2008" (Syri.net 2018).

When the investigation on the case was initiated by the Kosovo State Prosecutor's Office, four members of the Serb community, Dragiša Marković and Nedeljko Spasojević, both Kosovo Police Officers, Saša Djurić, and Marko Rosić, were arrested. A fifth person, Milan Radojčić was on the run. The last is also notoriously known as the leader of a criminal group in northern Kosovo. He is staying in Serbia and since Kosovo is a non-Interpol member, this makes his extradition to Kosovo impossible. Milan Radojčić at the time of the assassination of Oliver Ivanović, was officially the deputy head of the Serb List while de facto he was its leader (Klan Kosova 2018).

Jovica Stanišić, an official and a politician of the 90s, now an author of books and a political analyst, was the main defence witness in the trial of the head of the Serbian Secret Service (SDB) in The Hague. He said to a TV that "Albanian state can be easily destroyed; it is enough to have the will of the Serb services. In Kosovo, if there is a conflict between Thaçi and Haradinaj, you can easily start a fire whenever you want" (Gazeta Dita 2020). In post-war Kosovo, many political assassinations have not yet been salvaged. On the other hand, we have accusations and counteraccusations by Albanian politicians, which wouldn't be surprising if these murders turn out to be committed by Serb services. Dating 26.12.2014, the Kosovo police arrested a Serb near the Catholic Cathedral in Prishtina who had 13 kilograms of explosives in his car trunk, which he had planned to place in the Cathedral on the second night of Christmas and then blame it on Albanian Muslim extremists. This, subsequently, creates divisions among Albanians and depicts Kosovo as a Muslim extremist country in the world (Gazeta Tema 2014).

## **Influence of the State of Serbia on the State of Kosovo in The Economy and Environmental Security**

After the declaration of Kosovo's independence, many efforts have been made by Kosovo officials to have a prefix number and an independent power line, which had been vigorously fought against by Serbia. However, thanks to a great deal of work and support from the European Union and the United States, the state of Kosovo has obtained its telephone prefix in 2017 and its independent energy transmission in 2020. When Kosovo had been operating with a rented prefix from Slovenia and the prefix of Monaco, it had suffered a loss of nearly 200 million euros (pcworld.al 2017). The Minister of Economic Development in the Government of Kosovo, Valdrin Llluka, declared that Serbia was the main dispute reason of this line. If looked at from another angle, by doing so, Serbia had not adhered to the Energy Agreement, signed in Brussels in 2013, between representatives of Prishtina and Belgrade itself, which was facilitated by the European Union. Non-complying with this agreement caused Kosovo to lose some 12 million euros per year, because, according to Minister Llluka, the collection of transmission tariffs for energy traffic through Kosovo, was carried out by the state of Serbia on behalf of Kosovo ("Europa e Lire 2019). Serbia continues to hinder the state of Kosovo in the economic sector by not recognizing the documentation issued by the Kosovo authorities. Despite the signed agreements, it continues to prevent the export and transportation of goods documented by the state of Kosovo. The Trade Union of Pensioners and Disabled Workers of Kosovo, as of December 31, 1998, numbered a total of 91,635 contributors, who had deposited contributions for pension insurance. After gaining over the autonomy of Kosovo, these contributions amounting to 2 billion euros, by some laws of the Serb Government, were transferred to their Republic. By the end of '98, Serbia banned the provision of pensions to Kosovo Albanians (Research Institute for European Affairs and Development 2019). Even 21 years after the war, Serbia still refuses to reimburse the pension funds, and the non-Serb pensioners who have applied for the right of a pension are conditioned to apply for citizenship in the state of Serbia.

Extending the influence by claiming over the ownership and management of the artificial lake Ujmani (Gazivoda) in Kosovo is a direct Environmental Security breach by Serbia, that (depending on situations) cannot be viewed separately from Economic Security. This lake supplies drinking water and irrigation for some 1/3 of the inhabitants of Kosovo. Almost the entire economy and Kosovo as a whole depends upon it since its water is used for cooling the electricity power plant “Kosova B”, which produces electricity for almost the entire territory of Kosovo. Moreover, this water is also used for industry: “Feronikel”, “Trepça”, and for overall agriculture. With its capacity of 380 million cubic meters of water, two-thirds of the lake is located in the territory of Kosovo and one-third in Serbia. The stream of the water, however, comes from Serbia and Montenegro. “The head of the Ministry for ‘Kosovo and Metohija’, Marko Djuric, made a similar statement one day after he stressed out that Serbia’s ‘red line’ in terms of energy is at Trepçë, the Gazivodë hydropower plant, and the Valac substation” (Deutsche Welle 2018).

### **Influence of the State of Serbia on the State of Kosovo in The Social Sector**

The Serbian state has been and is still effortfully investing through falsified history documentation to claim every Christian historical monument, appropriate for their usage, by stating that the Serb population is autochthonous while the Albanians are newcomers after the battle of Kosovo against the Ottoman Empire. This assumption is distorted since Albanians were Christian many centuries before the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans and this is documented by the fact that Pope Clement IX was of Albanian descent from the Kelmendi tribe. This tribe extended from northern Albania to Kosovo and continue in the territory of Montenegro. In support of the latter, there are plenty of Albanian Christians still living in Kosovo.

The state of Serbia is openly campaigning against the State of Kosovo against its membership in UNESCO. Every year, in coordination with the Serbian Orthodox Church, it organizes rallies in Gazimestan to celebrate Vidovdan Day, alleging that Kosovo is the cradle of Serbia and that Albanians are newcomers. “Serbs gathered in Gazimestan chanted nationalist slogans ‘Kosovo is the heart of Serbia’”, waived Serb and Russian flags, and displayed portraits of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Among them were members of organizations with nationalist overtones, such as the organization “Obraz”. The director of the Office for Kosovo of the Government of Serbia, Marko Djurić, stayed in Kosovo during the celebration of St. Vid Day. During his stay in the monastery of Gračanica, he declared that Kosovo is not only the heart of Serbia but the soul and the face of the Serbs” (Free Europe 2017).

During the last war in Kosovo, Serbia tried to eradicate all Albanian traces. On the other hand, this continues through the Orthodox Church through assimilation of the Albanian cultural heritage. When Albanians converted to Islam, their churches were appropriated by Serbs who stepped in as occupiers. This matter is explicitly explained by the Serb scholar, Pero Slijepčević. He goes on to say in his writings that these churches are not the work of the respective rulers whose name they carry, because at those times Serbs didn’t have any traces of tradition in construction, nor painting. The main monuments of the Christian cult in Kosovo, now considered as Serbian Orthodox churches or monasteries, such as Deçan Monastery, Gračanica Monastery, the Church of Saints Michael and Gabriel and the Church of Our Lady of Prendë in Prizren, the Patriarchate of Peja, the Church of Stefan in Mitrovica, etc. are ancient for both autochthonous arbours and the invading Serbs in Kosovo. Up to nowadays, no serious scholar denies the fact that the churches and monasteries in question were built, rebuilt, or repaired, on the foundations of ancient monuments of the Roman period of Byzantium. Serb historian Stojan Novaković, who came to Peja in 1898, said: “The Albanians of Rugova chose from among themselves the superior who would take care of the security of the Patriarchate, who would be called the Voivode of the church. The chosen one would be presented to the Abbot of the Monastery of Peja, who would be apt to accept the chosen one”. Novaković even says that the people of Rugova have preserved this monastery for 300 years now (koha.net 2020).

### **Discussion**

Based upon the studies and investments made by many states, it’s clear that the main strengthening focus rests in the military security sector, which is quite normal for the fact that the greatest risk of any given country is assumed to comes from the aggressor from another country. Aggression is the unprovoked attack of one or more states on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another state, to occupy territory or forcibly change internal regulation, or to achieve other political goals and similar plans, with which the independence and sovereignty or territorial integrity of the attacked country is endangered (Abazović, D. M. et al. 2002).

Ever since Serbia was founded, it always had territorial claims over the country of Albania, which was administered by then by the Ottoman Empire, resulting in annexing of most of the territories inhabited by Albanians in the 19th century. Presently, almost no Albanian population lives in regions of Sandžak, Niš, Toplica, etc. Furthermore, the Russian Kingdom supported Serb influence throughout history in the Albanian inhabited territories. Moreover, after prevailing in the Russian-Ottoman war, it used its influence for the establishment and the expansion of Slavic states in the Balkans – particularly to the newly created Serbian kingdom.

During the Second World War, Bujan Conference took place. This conference was attended by 49 delegates, representing the people of Kosovo and the political forces lined up in the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Front of Kosovo. In this conference, it was decided that Kosovo, the province inhabited by the Albanian people, wants to join Albania and that they

would have the opportunity to decide about their fate. The aforementioned granted the right of self-determination and join with the mother country – Albania. The National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and the National Liberation Army of Albania guaranteed the above in agreement with the great allies: The Soviet Union, UK, and USA (Atlantic Charter, Moscow, and the Tehran Conference).

After the end of WWII, Serbia used its influence through its bigger population (as Yugoslavia) over Albania in the most unsuitable moment for the latter. By then, Albania was weak in the economy and military aspects and on top of that had disputes with Greece. Under martial law, Serbia convened the assembly in Prizren (10 July 1945) by which abolished the decisions of the Bujan Conference and decided to annex Kosovo to the Republic of Serbia. This annexation was legitimized by the Resolution of the Federal Assembly (23 July 1945) and the Resolution of the Serbian Assembly (1 September 1945) in Belgrade.

Even after withdrawal from the territory of Kosovo, Serbia continues to influence Kosovo through the Serb List and the Orthodox Church. They are relentless in exploiting the rights of minorities in Kosovo through the reserved seats for the Serb community within Kosovo's institutions – the seats conditioned by the “Ahtisaari package” for declaring Kosovo's independence.

Kosovo is a new and still unconsolidated state in the international arena. Given the constitutional regulation that guarantees reserved seats for members of the Serb community, as well as the political, economic, and military power of the state of Serbia, is seriously endangering its internal and external security in the process of Kosovo's accession to the United Nations (UN). Given the circumstance that Serbia is disabled to conduct military interventions (since Kosovo's territorial security is guaranteed by NATO forces), its focus is creation of internal instability in the Republic of Kosovo and damaging Kosovo's image in the international arena. When Kosovo applied administrative reciprocity measures to Serbia, Serb parallel structures in Kosovo, instructed by Serbia, organized protests and closed their shops allegedly they were unable to supply them with the stock. Their main goal was to propagate humanitarian catastrophe in northern Kosovo, claiming that their supply of food and medicine is cut off by Kosovo (Deutsche Welle 2019). However, Kosovo institutions had already made available stable supply lines for food and medications, thus demonstrating to the international community that their allegations are false and purely political assertion. COVID-19 pandemic is yet another instrument for usage to Serbia to influence on Kosovo. Their persistent speeches of leaving the northern part of Kosovo uncared institutionally befalls on the fact that no single instruction issued by Kosovo authorities has been obeyed by the population of the northern municipalities. Since the very early stages of COVID-19 fightback, this population were entirely ignoring Kosovo authorities by addressing their needs to Belgrade and implemented only what was instructed by Belgrade.

Serbia severely continues refusing to recognize Kosovo as an independent state. It openly, and covertly, lobbies against recognizing its independence and recognition of independence withdrawal from countries that already recognized Kosovo as an independent state. Having mentioned the afore, Serb authorities are directly breaching the agreement endorsed by them and Kosovo authorities, under the facilitation of the White House, whereby, amongst other topics, Serb authorities pledge to waive the right to campaign against the independence of Kosovo.

## Conclusion

After the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, based on the Kumanovo agreement signed between Serbian forces and NATO, Serb troops were to leave from the territory of Kosovo followed by the deployment of NATO and Russian forces, which took over the peacekeeping and territorial security of Kosovo.

Unable to use military force against Kosovo while under the administration of UNMIK and then after the declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo, Serbia's entire focus was the influence on Kosovo's internal and external affairs. Presently, it uses constitutionally regulated imposed right of the reserved seats (in particular the 10 reserved seats for the Serb community) that derived from “Ahtisaari package” alongside the openly declared campaign from the state of Serbia.

The influence of Serbia in damaging the state of Kosovo in foreign policy is made possible given the fact that the Republic of Kosovo is a young state with a weak economy, while Serbia is a state with a very long tradition of several centuries and has been establishing bilateral relations with many countries of the world, be them commercial, military, or diplomatic. Another of its forte is the support of Russia and China in “anti-Kosovo” campaigns – even in sports and the national security. In terms of military strength, Serbia and Croatia are the two dominant countries in the region. The military capabilities of other countries in the region are marginal when compared to those of the two, and the creation of the Kosovo Armed Forces will not have any significant impact on changing the regional balance of power. Therefore, contrasting the Kosovo force against Serbia isn't economically nor militarily rational. It is very likely that Serbia already has a contingency military plan against Kosovo, which can be assumed from its hostile security and defence policies against the Republic of Kosovo. Therefore, the Republic of Kosovo should focus on getting a seat in the European Union and NATO, which would assure security politically, economically, and in military terms. Subsequently, the afore said would prevent the further influence of the state of Serbia in the Republic of Kosovo.

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# A Retrospective Look at Huntington's *Third Wave* in Albania's Context

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Fatos TARIFA

European University of Tirana

## Abstract

*This paper seeks to provide a refreshing look at the first days of Albania's democratic transition in connection with Huntington's seminal work *The Third Wave*. It focuses on the role played by the United States in promoting democratic change in Albania by effectively using a variety of political, economic, and diplomatic means—more specifically statements by high officials endorsing democratization in general as well as advocacy of democracy by the U.S. Information Agency and diplomatic action, including promotion of democratization by a new activist breed of “freedom-pusher” U.S. ambassadors. Even though in the 340 pages of Huntington's book Albania is mentioned only four times, this paper provides a good intellectual exercise for assessing the importance of the U.S. government and Washington's public diplomacy as an agent for change with full instrumental rationality in every domain of economic, political, and social life. The paper revolves around the visit of the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker, in Tirana 30 years ago not simply because it was the first visit ever by a senior American official to Albania, but mostly because that historical visit and the messages conveyed by America's chief diplomat at that defining moment set the stage for what has been a difficult and protracted democratic transition in Albania.*

In the spring of 1991, Samuel Huntington, then Professor of the Science of Government and director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, published in *Journal of Democracy* a timely article titled “Democracy's Third Wave” (Huntington 1991a). His book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Huntington 1991b) appeared a few months later, the same year. It became almost immediately a seminal formulation of the democratic transition theory.

1991 was the year Albania held its first multi-party election embarking on a long, difficult, and painful process of transition. That year was also the year when Albania re-established diplomatic relations with the United States after a 52-year hiatus, as well as with the United Kingdom after 51 years of virtual nothingness between the two states.

I mentioned Huntington's *Third Wave* not merely as a concomitant episode of the initial stage of Albania's delayed democratic transition from an authoritarian political system to a more or less democratic one. In my own view, Huntington's work is essential to tracing some of the problems and the progress of democracy in Albania in the past three decades, especially with reference to the role of the international community—more specifically the United States—in this process.

In the “third wave” of global democratic expansion<sup>1</sup>—of which Albania was a part—and which Huntington defines as “a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time” (Huntington 1991b: 15), *the United States has been a very important agent for change with full instrumental rationality in every domain of economic, political and social life*. Huntington observed that in the “third wave” the U.S. administration used a variety of means—political, economic, and diplomatic—to *promote democratization*, several of which were applied to Albania as well. Among them, to use Huntington's language accurately, were, “statements by presidents, secretaries of state, and other officials endorsing democratization in general and in particular countries” as well as advocacy of democracy by the U.S. Information Agency, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty, and diplomatic action, including promotion

of democratization by a new activist breed of “freedom-pusher” U.S. ambassadors (ibid., p. 93).

Thirty years after the publication of *The Third Wave* and the beginning of the democratic transition in Albania it is worth taking another, refreshing look at Huntington’s text considering the role of the United States and its European allies in promoting democratic change in Albania, especially by effectively using the above two instruments. Even though in the 340 pages of Huntington’s book Albania is mentioned only four times, this is still a good intellectual exercise.

Most of these years I have been living, studying and working abroad, mainly in the U.S.; nevertheless, my memories, my scholarly work on democratic theory and democratic transition and my recent experience in Albania prompt me, on such an occasion, to share with you a few personal—and meaningful—observations.

## James A. Baker’s Visit to Tirana

The first—and most significant—move of the United States to approach Albania and to show the Albanian people Washington’s readiness to support democratic change in this country was the visit of then U.S. Secretary of State, James A. Baker III in Tirana, on June 22, 1991.

Much has been written about that visit and its significance in those days of democracy awakening for Albania. *The New York Times* covering the event wrote: “It was as though his visit had provided the first tangible proof that their [the Albanians’] long national nightmare was over” (New York Times 1991). Overwhelmed by the enthusiasm with which he was hailed by the people of Albania, Baker himself, in his memoirs published a few years later, wrote: “In fifteen years I had spent in national politics I had never seen anything like this” (Baker 1995: 485). William Ryerson (1991), who later that year became the first U.S. ambassador in post-World War II Albania, compared James Baker’s visit to Tirana with J. F. Kennedy’s visit to Berlin in 1963 (Ryerson 1991). Secretary Baker conveyed to the Albanian people and politicians a message, loud and clear: “On behalf of President Bush and the American people, I come here today to say to you: Freedom works. At last, you are free to think your own thoughts. At last you are free to speak your own mind. At last you are free to choose your own leaders” (quoted in Ryerson 1991).

Such a statement was exactly what Huntington considered U.S. “endorsement of democratization” in a particular country. America, through her chief diplomat, had spoken: “Welcome to the company of free men and women everywhere, the way our Creator intended us to be. You are with us and we are with you” (ibid).

Bearing a strong emotional force, this message was a catalyst for change in Albanian politics and society at a time when an already sclerotic and crumbling authoritarian rule was giving way to a new form of politics. Just ten days prior to Baker’s visit in Tirana, on June 12, 1991, the Socialist cabinet was replaced by an interim government in which half of its members were drawn from the newly formed opposition parties and half from the socialists. This caretaker government was vested with authority to run the country until full multi-party elections would be held in the spring of the following year.

The message Secretary Baker conveyed to the Albanian people stirred strong pro-American sentiments. The hundreds of thousands of those gathered at the Scanderbeg Square in the center of Tirana serenaded him by chanting: “Down with the Communist Party. Albania is ours. America is with us” (ibid). As Baker would tell foreign journalists on his way back to Washington, “That outpouring of genuine affection and support was because of the symbol that America represents to people like this, who have had nothing to hope for, for so very long” (Congo’s 1991).

The message was reiterated in the address of Mr. Baker to the Albanian parliament that same day. And that message was still clear as crystal: “I have a very simple message for the members of this chamber today and for the citizens of this country which now faces the difficult challenge of national reconstruction: On freedom’s road, we must always move forward. In this parliament, in this capital, and across this land, there can only be forward movement toward establishing full democracy, a market economy, and the rule of law. After so many years, Albania cannot afford delay” (Foreign Policy Bulletin 1991).

Secretary Baker went on to say: “I want to be very clear about something else: just as there is no turning back on the road to a new Albania, there is no place along that road for violence, no place for intimidation, no place for the use of force. The watchwords of the new Europe—the Europe Albania has just begun to rejoin with its membership in CSCE [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe]—are respect for human rights and the peaceful settlement of disputes. I know that I speak for every American when I say to every member of this chamber and every citizen of Albania: Let us see an end to all fear in Albania. This is a new Albania, and you are members of a new Europe” (ibid).

Mister Baker concluded his message to the Albanian lawmakers by saying: “Here, as in America, democracy must be not only an ideal—it must be a reality. In this endeavor, as long as you are true to these principles, we will stand with you as we stood with you early in this century, when President Woodrow Wilson championed your cause. I am proud that my President and my country stand with you now in the last decade of the 20th century, in support of a free and independent Albania. For every part of this continent, just as every citizen of this country, must be part of what President Bush calls ‘a Europe whole and free’...[it] is our hope from this day forward the American and Albanian people will share these ideals: open government, open media, an open economy, an open society. These are the safeguards of freedoms. And freedom works” (ibid).

William Ryerson (1991), the man in charge for the preparation of that visit, described it as “a catharsis”. What Secretary Baker’s visit challenged most in the imagination of the Albanians and what appealed most to their conscience was the belief that “America is with us”! These words had strong emotional bearing even for a famously unflappable James Baker, who, a few years later has admitted: “I have never felt more privileged to represent my country” (Baker 1995: 486).

I spoke at some length about James Baker’s visit in Tirana 30 years ago not simply because it was the first visit ever

by a senior American official to Albania, but mostly because that historical visit and the messages conveyed by America's chief diplomat at that defining moment set the stage for what can be called Albania's *internationally monitored* democratic transition. I say "internationally monitored" since the role of the international community during these 30 years has been crucial to the success of Albania's democratization, an issue to which I will return later in my remarks.

Four other U.S. secretaries of state—democrats and republicans—have visited Albania ever since: Madeleine Albright, in 1999; Colin Powell, in 2003; Hillary Clinton, in 2012; and John Kerry, in 2016). They all carried messages on behalf of the American president and the American people—and the key message has always been: "The people and the government of the United States are with you, with your government and the people of Albania in your efforts to strengthen democracy, implement the rule of law and built a prosperous future".

## U.S. Information Agency

Less than three months after James Baker's visit in Tirana, in September 1991, I was approached by Mary McIntosh, an American sociologist, then Chief of the USIA Office of Research at the U.S. Department of State. Huntington's *Third Wave* was just published but, needless to say, at that time there was no way for me to know about his book; I did not even have a clue of who Huntington was. I knew anything about USIA at that time. The acronym meant United States Information Agency; yet, that name didn't say much—certainly not what Huntington described as "advocacy of democracy by the U.S. Information Agency".

I learned latter that USIA was established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953 (Snyder 1995), at the onset of the Cold War, and it was vested with the mission of understanding, informing and influencing foreign publics in promotion of the American national interest, and of broadening the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad (USIA n.d.) With a \$2 billion annual budget—the largest full-service public relations organization in the world (ibid.)—USIA's stated goals were: "(a) To explain and advocate U.S. policies in terms that are credible and meaningful in foreign cultures; (b) To provide information about the official policies of the United States, and about the people, values and institutions which influence those policies; (c) To bring the benefits of international engagement to American citizens and institutions by helping them build strong long-term relationships with their counterparts overseas; (d) To advise the President and U.S. government policy-makers on the ways in which foreign attitudes will have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of U.S. policies" (ibid.).

Although these were long-term goals for USIA, at that time this agency had commissioned several surveys in Central and Eastern Europe on a wide range of topics covering everything—from foreign policy to domestic issues to personal values (McIntosh & Hinckley 1992). Obviously, the purpose was to test the political, economic and social situation in each individual country in order to inform specifically tailored U.S. government policies in the region.

I still don't know how my name came to Dr. McIntosh's attention when she chose me to lead the survey team for Albania. All I can say is that, in those days, embarking upon a task like that was, for a young Albanian scholar, academically very challenging and politically very important. As Dr. McIntosh wrote after that experience, "the quest for reliable east European survey data has often taken a path as byzantine as the region's pursuit of democratic politics and free markets" (ibid).

The research infrastructure of Albania in the early 1990s was a significant indicator of Albania's reality in all other areas. The shortage of paper made it impossible to print questionnaires. The questionnaires for the Albanian survey was printed in Washington, D.C. and were sent to Tirana by U.S. diplomatic pouch. Besides, in many rural areas, where there was no telephone system, to conduct interviews you had the choice of riding a mule or walking miles by foot.

That survey almost immediately introduced me to American politics and scholarship. In November of that year (1991), I was invited to visit Washington, D.C. to counsel Dr. McIntosh and her aides at the USIA Office of Research on the results of the survey. A few months later (in June 1992), I ended up at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as part of the first cohort of Fulbright scholars from Albania.

The data from almost all USIA-commissioned surveys in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s revealed that if "severe economic hardship" continued to plague east Europeans over the next several years, it was possible that many could be "tempted by promises of economic security at the price of some democratic freedoms" (ibid). And although it was unlikely that publics anywhere would want to re-establish the old order, many could opt "for a form of society closer to the state guarantee system than to an individual opportunity society" (ibid). Additionally, those surveys suggested that education is the best predictor of whether one supports state guarantees over individual opportunities, and that "the higher the level of educational attainment, the more likely one is to favor the later" (ibid).

Ever since, hundreds of Albanians have been using the excellent opportunities for educational and professional enrichment in the United States under the Fulbright, Hubert Humphrey, Ron Brown and JFDP fellowship programs previously run by the USIA educational and cultural exchange program, and currently by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in addition to several other undergraduate, youth, and cultural programs. Being an effective form of the U.S. public diplomacy, these programs have considerably supported the political, cultural, and economic development of post-communist Albania.

## U.S. Ambassadors



In December that year William Ryerson was appointed the first U.S. ambassador to Albania since 1939. Representing the strongest nation on Earth—and with the incredible might that comes with it—Ryerson became almost immediately “one of Albania’s most influential men” (Abrahams 2015: 103). Back then, none of us—certainly not the author of these lines—understood or even endorsed many of ambassador Ryerson’s public appearances and statements. Many thought his words and moves were his own and did not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. government. We were proven wrong and Huntington helps us to understand why.

Beginning from the mid-1980s under the Reagan administration, U.S. policy had entered “a new phase with the administration *moving actively to promote democratic change in both communist and non-communist dictatorships* symbolizing its commitment with the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy” (Huntington 1991b: 92-93; Hassan & Ralph 2011). President Reagan, like President Carter before him, followed a “moralistic” approach to promoting human rights and democracy abroad (Jacoby 1986), which remained unchanged during the presidency of George H. W. Bush, even though the latter seemed considerably more pragmatic. In April 1990, Secretary of State James Baker had declared that: “The time of sweeping away the old dictators is passing fast; the time of building up the new democracies has arrived. That is why President Bush has defined our new mission to be the promotion and consolidation of democracy” (quoted in Carothers 2007: 17).

By the time Ryerson was appointed to represent the U.S. Government in Albania, the ethos of the U.S. Department of State had changed in a “revolutionary” way, to use Huntington’s language (Huntington 1991b: 93), so that “rather than simply maintaining good relations” with the government of the country to which a U.S. ambassador was accredited, it was now upheld that “the responsibility of the American ambassador” in that country was “to promote democracy” (ibid.). Ryerson was the type of “freedom-pusher” U.S. ambassador in Albania, the prototype of which had been Frank Carlucci in Portugal in 1975, or Lawrence Pezzullo in Uruguay and Nicaragua, Mark Palmer in Hungary etc. (ibid., pp. 93-94).

Ryerson is not the only American ambassador to have played a direct and crucial role in the politics of Albania. Virtually all U.S. ambassadors have been “heavily” involved in promoting political stability, the rule of law, and democratic consolidation in this country. Carefully orchestrating their efforts with the EU representative, the OSCE or the ambassadors of other EU countries, they have pushed hard to promote agreement among opposition parties and the government. They have served as mediators among them and at times have delivered “hard warnings” to either side. Ambassador Marisa Lino did this in the late 1990s; Joseph Limprecht and James Jeffrey—the two U.S. ambassadors I had the honor and privilege to work with from 2001 to 2005, when I represented Albania in Washington, D.C.—also acted that way. So did ambassadors John L. Withers II, Alexander Arvizu, and Donald Lu after them. The current ambassador, Her Excellency Yuri Kim, is no different, because the U.S. policy toward Albania and towards the cause of democracy has not changed.

## Concluding Remarks

I often hear criticisms about American and, most generally, foreign “interference” in Albania’s domestic politics. Although evidence suggests that in some cases criticism may be justified, I believe that such “interference” has been *inevitable*, some time *necessary*—and almost always *beneficial*.

I would like to make myself clear on this, so, please, allow me to restate what I have written more than a decade ago: “President George W. Bush may have been right when he proclaimed that democracy is God’s gift to man, but somebody should have warned the Albanians that batteries are not included. Being the last people in Eastern Europe to throw off the yoke of communism in 1990, we warmly and noisily accepted the gift of democracy when it came along. We simply still cannot get it to work, however” (Tarifa & Lucas 2006: 32).

I would have wished that, after three decades, politics in Albania would have become *less conflictual* and *more democratic*, guided not by petty ideological, tribe-like mentality, but by *rational goals* and *modern democratic principles*. Albania may not be the only country where the huntingtonian benchmark of the “two turnover test” (Huntington 1991b: 266-267)—meaning that if a new democracy survives two turnovers of power, then it has consolidated satisfactorily—has been proven invalid. Other countries too have failed the tough test of two turnovers. Yet, this is my country, and I want it to succeed.

I believe that *had it not been for the strong encouragement and the heavy pressure from Washington, through its embassy in Tirana, and from the governing bodies of the European Union, many of the reforms undertaken in Albania so far would have been virtually impossible*. Just think only of the current judiciary reform; it would have been unimaginable without the tremendous U.S. and international pressure and assistance. It is possible also that, without international monitoring and assistance the transition process could have well moved backward in ways that could have been even more dramatic than the 1996-1998 period when Albania experienced a total breakup of its law and order after *the collapse of the pyramid schemes* and *an attempted coup d’état*, legitimizing Adam Przeworski’s fears that instead of going West, some East European countries could end up South (Przeworski 1991).

Overall, it appears that U.S. support and the support of the European Union have been—and remain—critical to Albania’s economic and political progress as are the U.S. ambassador and the ambassadors of the major EU powers important political actors. Even if some view their public appearances and actions as involvement in Albania’s domestic affairs, or as entailing an infringement of this country’s national sovereignty, *for as long as Albania’s political class does not prove its capability to run this country the way we all desire, they remain contributing factors to the democratic consolidation in Albania*.



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# Conundrums of Constitutional Order in the time of Covid-19. The Albanian Case

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Florian ÇULLHAJ

## Abstract

*Executive power is a concept born, developed, and affirmed during the Enlightenment; for instance, Montesquieu argued that Executive, legislative and judicial power should be well separated and not centralized in the hands of a single person. This principle is the cornerstone of liberal democracies. However, during the pandemic, a curious case has been out of scholars debate in Albania, namely, the amplified use of a tool such as the 'normative act having the force of law' (Article 101, Albanian Constitution) which, effectively deprived the role of Parliament as the custodian of the Executive and the locus of the discussion.*

*The power of regulating that the law entrusts to the Executive is closely linked to the existence of contingent conditions of 'urgency' and 'necessity'. These are extraordinary administrative acts intended to regulate specific situations, temporary by definition. Even if the current state of a global pandemic fulfills both conditions, what differentiates the administrative decrees from the law is, in theory, that the legislative norm has a general scope and contains the abstract regulation of an indeterminate series of situations. The law is always a provision aimed at regulating circumstances that will arise.*

*The Albanian Parliament has voted for these normative acts turning them into laws. Even if the choice is reasonable, the chosen instrument of 'normative acts' appears to be amiss because it creates a dangerous precedent in the country's constitutional practice and subverts the hierarchy of normative sources and the principle of the separation of powers.*

**Keywords:** Constitution, Albania, Covid-19, separation of powers, government.

## Theoretical background

Hans Kelsen offered one of the most influential analyses of the notion of the normative. Stephen P. Turner, in his article *Explaining Normativity*, points out that Kelsen's explanatory power derives from the use of the transcendental<sup>1</sup> concept. The argument about legal validity: describing the law as a real law rather than as something understood as a norm. In this case, a re-examination of the question of the 'real' law is necessary. Whether the law is a real law is itself a normative question defined by legal judgments that are also normative in themselves. For Kelsen, the circle closes like this: only law can evaluate the law, and therefore the evaluation of law requires a 'base norm', which is the guarantor of legal validity. The reasoning, in this case, is transcendental, in the sense that if you say that there is something called law, then you must accept the (normative) notion of legal validity. However, for there to be validity, there must be a validity-determining which is itself a norm. However, the chain of value determinants must close somewhere; this place where the chain of value determinants closes is the 'base norm'<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, the 'base norm' is the more general norm behind the final authority, to which all other separate norms are

<sup>2</sup> See S. P. TURNER, *Explaining Normativity*, «Philosophy of the Social Science» (2007), f. 59, SAGE Publisher, (the online version of this article can be found at this address: <http://pos.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/1/57>)

ascribed. That is the only norm that cannot cast doubt on or be evaluated in its quality. Based on this assertion, its validity is implicit in any legal activity. It is necessary to emphasize that, for example, it is not the current Constitution of Albania, the United States, Germany, or any other country that should be the empirical object of study for political science. However, as Kelsen calls it, the 'base norm' is a logical designation, understood as a binding formulation that the Constitution itself 'ought to obey'. Kelsen insists that the fundamental norm can only be an act of *thought* and, as such, we cannot refer to it as a norm of positive law<sup>3</sup>.

According to Turner, the weakness of this reasoning lies in the decoupling created between this argument and the causal fact about the existence of law - this idea consists in the fact that if people do not accept something as a law, then it is not a law. Kelsen insisted that what is considered a norm is also legal in society, which is, on the other hand, a normative issue for him. An example is the law of the French Revolution, denied as a valid law by many courts of different countries. According to these tribunals, if the revolutionary order was legitimate, there still is a normative question that ought to be founded on juridical foundations.

Kelsen also asks the question: 'What is the legal status of a revolutionary order?' If the revolutionaries were in charge and proclaimed something, they called law, and people obeyed this law, was this a law? According to this theory, the objective clarity of the so-called juridical order created by the revolutionaries was not sufficient. They did not include all the material in the complementary components of juridical validity that makes the law truly binding juridical persons. Consequently, the *legal order* of the revolutionaries was not a real law. However, Kelsen himself assessed a minimum of effectiveness for the law to be considered valid and, in this case, history as opposed to the courts that ruled that the French revolutionary order was not legal. Even the most fanatical courts recognized that the former monarch was finally gone. That brings up another question, whether the law is nothing more than a mere actual belief.

Kelsen, through this analysis, raises a controversy against Max Weber<sup>4</sup>, who gives a 'sociological' definition of the legal order by adding the element of the degree of credibility without expressing a normative judgment on the scale of trustworthiness in the legitimacy of the system. In short, Kelsen reacted to the treatment of law in sociological terms rather than normative judgments. Accepting this (naturalist) definition - according to Kelsen - means not only renouncing the philosophy of law but also renouncing the law itself. That is because, in the absence of legal validity, that is, in the absence of *obligation*, there is no more room to discuss the law, but only the real order set up by a gang of robbers. He also claims to abandon the sociology of 'law' because sociologists, according to Kelsen, have always used the normative conception of law. However, we remain stuck in the *Normativity of law*. Normativity becomes an inevitable task for Kelsen and constitutes the argument of standard regulatory. He focuses on the description problem because if the normative description is the only accurate description, then no naturalistic description can apply to the 'example' under consideration. However, there is also the problem of the alternative description, to which Weber, in his sociology, was careful in separating descriptive terms from juridical reasoning, which he called 'dogmatic'<sup>5</sup>. The question of whether the law of the French Revolution was law is dogmatic and paradigmatic. However, Kelsen did not believe that sociology had any reason to address these issues, and he clarified this idea by arguing as follows:

The state is that order of human behavior which we call the legal order, the order to which certain types of actions are oriented, the idea to which individuals adapt their behavior. If the behavior is oriented to this order, it constitutes the object of sociology, consequently, its object is not the state. There is no sociological concept of the state beyond the legal concept. This double concept of state is logically impossible because there cannot be more than one concept for the same object. There is only one legal concept for the state: the state as a centralized legal order. The sociological concept of current behavior, oriented to the legal order, is not a concept of state, it hypothesizes the concept of state, which is a juridical concept<sup>6</sup>.

Kelsen never abandoned the pretensions of the preceding paragraph - the transcendental argument of the normative - but

<sup>3</sup> See M. TEBBIT, *Philosophy...*, cit., pp. 38-39.

<sup>4</sup> Weber, M. (1954). Max Weber on law in economy and society. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. See also, Formal Justice and the Spirit of Capitalism: Max Weber's Sociology of Law. *Law & Society Review*, 21(3), 487-512. doi:10.2307/3053379

<sup>5</sup> The peculiarity of the sociological attitude towards law can be highlighted by the more detailed consideration of the differences with what Weber called dogmatic jurisprudence. Weber asks the question: what is the quality that gives juridical dogmatism its dogmatic character and what is the contrast that this attitude entails with the sociological attitude of law? In its ordinary sense, dogma is a belief or commitment upon which other beliefs are based, in which the dogma itself is not based or reduced to any other belief. In this case, we can say that dogma is the ground on which beliefs are built. Characterizing a person as dogmatic usually means a commitment that he cannot control, due to the fundamental role that dogma plays in the foundation of his beliefs. Thus, when Weber distinguishes dogmatic jurisprudence from the sociology of law, he points out that dogmatic jurisprudence resides in a kind of basic commitment that bears no resemblance to the sociological study of juridical phenomena. This idea can be explained oppositely: in contrast to all forms of legal dogmatism, the sociological attitude is typically neutral. Dogmatic scholars see legal norms as evaluative standards, as criteria for determining the adequacy or correctness of human behavior (for example, the correctness of a judge's decision in a given case). On the contrary, sociologists simply describe how the normative commitment of legal rules affects human behavior. Sociologists do not treat norms as dogmatic jurists do as evaluative standards for establishing the form of human behavior. In this way, the sociologist is detached or released from involvement with the object of study. The normative attitudes that sociologists assume are of interest to them, but their research focuses on the study of the causal influence exerted on behavior, without entering the latter, with the idea of adopting or internalizing these attitudes in old age. See A. T. KRONMAN, Max Weber, *Jurists: Profile in legal Theory*, Campus Juridico, 1983, p. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> S. P. TURNER, *Explaining...*, cit., f. 60.

later in life, he tried to reinterpret his idea of a base norm radically. The idea that *the normativity of the legal order derives from a Base Norm of what gives validity to the legal system, making it normative*. This idea is the culmination of this analysis; the element of validity of the fundamental rule is an added element that distinguishes between law and simple order that people consider lawful.

Nevertheless, Kelsen realized this could not work, not because the 'base norm' is useless to create the normative legal system, but because *Grundnorm* was an impossible object. Kelsen argued that legislation was necessarily a question of origin/ancestry, so the idea of the base rule, a self-existing [immanent] base rule, was inconsistent. Finally, one may be wondering, 'What do one value the base norm for?'. If the answer is a non-normative fact, such as the simple fact of accepting the fundamental norm, the chain of reasoning leads to naturalism. If not, then it is a regression, a setback, or in any case, a circle closed, in the sense that 'the base norm is that applied by legally recognized courts'<sup>7</sup>.

Kelsen concludes the analysis by arguing that the 'base norm' was a fiction, a fabrication necessary in the calculation of legal Normativity, but a fabrication. Kelsen realized a problem with the *explanans*, but he did not give up on the idea that the *explanandum* must be explained in normative terms. By turning the 'base norm' into fiction, Kelsen could preserve this argument: fiction or not, it is still normative, nonetheless.

Kelsen's theory has been criticized for its extreme emphasis on the formal definition given to the elements of law, thus excluding political, moral, and justice issues. At the same time, he was accused of using a 'logical exercise, not based on real-life and his theory was a useless mechanism in terms of the complexity of the law and legal systems. However, it is said that Kelsen's doctrine has some value. It helps us focus on the current dynamics of legal obligation and the fact that, ultimately, the officials decide how and in what way the extension of the law can affect the lives of ordinary people. Finally, we must clarify that detecting the *base norm* in any society is an exceedingly challenging task. If the 'base norm' has no specific content and if it is, in the first place, an assumption, its role in estimating the hierarchy of other norms can be fraught with ambiguity. Since *Grundnorm* plays a central role in evaluating other norms in the system, problems that may arise in identifying and explaining it can affect the consistency of the norm hierarchy on which it is based, thus causing the removal of the concept of a legal order from its foundations<sup>8</sup>.

Whereas, on the other hand, Lon L. Fuller<sup>9</sup>, in his widely discussed 1964 book, *The Morality of Law*, argues that all systems of law contain an 'internal morality' that imposes on individuals a presumptive obligation of obedience.

Fuller denied the core claim of legal positivism that there is no necessary connection between law and morality. According to Fuller, specific moral standards, which he calls 'principles of legality,' are built into the very concept of law. Therefore nothing counts as valid law that does not meet the criteria above. In virtue of these principles, there is an internal morality to the law that imposes a minimal morality of justice. Some laws, he admits, are so wicked or unjust that they should not be obeyed. However, even in these cases, he argues, the law's positive features impose a defensible moral duty to obey them.

According to Fuller, all legal rules must meet eight minimal conditions to count as moral laws. The rules must be (I) sufficiently general, (II) publicly promulgated, (III) perspective (i.e., applicable only to future behavior, not past), (IV) at least minimally clear and intelligible, (V) free of contradictions, (VI) relatively constant, so that they do not continuously change from day to day, (VII) possible to obey, and (VIII) administered in a way that does not wildly diverge from their obvious or apparent meaning. These are Fuller's 'principles of legality'. Together, he argues, they guarantee that all laws will embody specific moral standards of respect, fairness, and predictability that constitute essential features of the rule of law.

Fuller introduces these topics in *The Morality of Law* with an entertaining story about Rex as an imaginary king. The latter attempts to rule but finds he cannot do so in any meaningful way when these conditions are not met. Fuller contends that the purpose of the law is to subject 'human conduct to the governance of law'. If any of Fuller's principles is deliberately lacking in a system of governance, the system will not be a legal one. The more closely a system can adhere to them, the nearer it will be to the rule-of-law ideal. In reality, all systems must compromise and fall short of perfect ideals of clarity, consistency, stability.

However, Fuller's perspective is critical because legal positivism fails to consider the natural law, the natural need for justice of the people, what Fuller calls: the principle of common need (everyone needs justice, even if everyone understands justice in his way). For Fuller, the law cannot only be the expression of the authority that places it but must have a strong connection with rationality, common sense, with human justice. However, this criticism by Fuller of legal positivism does not make him a natural lawyer in the classical sense. Fuller tries to overcome the traditional distinction between natural law and positive law. Fuller engages in a theoretical dispute with H. L. A. Hart<sup>10</sup>, who defines its conception as analytical legal positivism precisely out of a need for formal clarity. What is the law, Hart asks? A set of primary and secondary rules, he answers. Then, Hart analyzes the different conceptions of law, the different evaluations of legal systems, and the relationship between law and morality. Hart has a relativistic conception of morals, and he thinks that ethical rules depend on the environment, customs, religious beliefs, different from one area of the world. Moreover, the differences between legal systems are affected by this ethical relativism, which is why Hart argues that law, in the end, must remain well separated from morality, must not be influenced by ethical relativism<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See: A. M. CHINHENGO, *Essential Jurisprudence*, 2ed. Cavendish Publishing Limited, 2000, pp. 43-44.

<sup>9</sup> Fuller, L. L. (1969). *The morality of law*. New Haven: Yale University Press. See also John E. Murray Jr., Introduction to the Morality of Law, 10 Vill. L. Rev. 624 (1965). Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/vlr/vol10/iss4/2>

<sup>10</sup> Hart, H. L. A. (1961). *The concept of law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>11</sup> Hart, H. L. A. (1958). "Positivism and the Separation of Law and Morals". *Harvard Law Review*. 71 (4): 593-629. doi:10.2307/1338225. See also, Fuller, Lon L. (1958). "Positivism and Fidelity to Law — A Reply to Professor Hart". *Harvard Law Review*. 71 (4): 630-672. doi:10.2307/1338226. JSTOR

Fuller instead argues with Hart, especially in the judgment against dictatorships. Nazism may be a legal order - says Fuller - but being highly immoral, it also ends up being highly unlawful. Therefore - concludes Fuller in controversy with Hart - the law cannot be separated from morality if it does not want to lose its compass. At the bottom of the law is morality and the sense of justice (external, extrinsic morality)<sup>12</sup>.

In *The Concept of Law*, Hart does not find it challenging to recognize Fuller's correct approach when he places the need for true justice in the law, so much so that Hart also recognizes a minimum content of 5 moral rules at the basis of the law: human weakness, equality, altruism, limited resources, and human limitations. Law takes human limitations into account. It does not attribute responsibility to children or mentally ill people, who are incapable of understanding and willing. The law aims to favor exchange and reciprocity, according to a principle of altruism or mutual solidarity. The law redistributes limited resources fairly. The law places everyone equally before the law (equality). These five principles for Hart are not legal but ethical<sup>13</sup>.

However, for Fuller, these five Hart's rules have nothing to do with true morality and do not allow us to determine when a law is unjust or not. Hart replies - in controversy with Fuller - that five principles constitute an internal morality of law. And must be distinguished from an external morality (that of living honestly, to be clear: *honeste vive, alterum non laedere suum unicuique tribuere*), which has nothing to do with the law<sup>14</sup>.

Fuller takes Hart's idea of internal morality seriously and somehow reworks it. Therefore, Fuller notes that there are eight ways to make the law fail: 1) inability to write standards; 2) do not publicize them enough; 3) use many retroactive rules; 4) write incomprehensible rules; 5) promulgate contradictory norms; 6) write rules that ask too much, more than what the citizen can give; 7) change the laws too often; 8) make rules that are different on paper from how they then apply. Obviously, in correspondence with the eight bankruptcy ways, eight rules serve to save and even make legal production perfect: 1) technical perfection in writing them; 2) adequate publicity and promulgation of laws; 3) rules that are not retroactive, especially if they provide for sanctions and penalties: *nulla poena sine lege*; 4) legible and understandable rules; 5) rules that are not contradictory but reasonable and logical; 6) norms based on the needs and limits of citizens, who must not ask for the impossible; 7) rules that last over time; 8) homogeneous norms that state and say what they want to do.

For Fuller, this is the true intrinsic morality of law, as he recounts in chapter II of his book, with the apologue of King Rex. Rex wanted to make the reforms but was not capable (in the apologue, Fuller repeats all the eight ways to make the law fail, illustrating them as Rex's mistakes)<sup>15</sup>. Fuller criticizes juridical positivism, but it saves the function of the form, which is juridical formalism. It does so with its eight rules. Form becomes substance. Fuller is an American thinker and cannot pretend to ignore thought pragmatic currents.

Fuller teaches economics and law. Hence, he is also an economist. He criticizes socialism but acknowledges that socialism has found a social need for greater distributive justice and equality. The theory of the two morals is a kind of revision of social doctrines, in a liberal-democratic key. Fuller sees two fundamental ethical approaches, that is, two morals: 1) the morality of those who live in seclusion without harming anyone and doing their duty (morality of duty); 2) the morality of those who must deal with the distribution of economic resources and, to do so, must take into account the principle of reciprocity and must pay attention to the objectives, acting intentionally in pursuit of them (morality of intention). The first is the morality of the common person. The second is the morality of politicians, economists, and jurists<sup>16</sup>.

Fuller tries to overcome the extremes of natural law and positivism precisely with the well-known distinction between social morality and the moral of intention. He borrows some arguments from Hart to say that there is a base morality, which serves to regulate good human and social relations (example: the ten commandments, which say what not to do), and a top moral, which assumes a higher model of humanity and society and requires not only not to do evil or to be honest but also to have a sense of duty and reciprocity. This second morality - which Fuller calls the morality of intention is mirrored in law because juridical duty in law is always based on reciprocity. Only this justifies the rewards and juridical sanctions.

## Lon Fuller - Focus on The Eight Rules (Or Principles) Of the Inherent Morality of Law

### 1 - Generality of The Law<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 660

<sup>13</sup> See also Singer, Hart's Concept of Law, 60 J. OF PHILOSOPHY 197, 210 (1963)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See also, Brian H. Bix, "Kelsen, Hart, and legal normativity", *Revus* [Online], 34 | 2018, Online since 15 November 2017, connection on 23 June 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/revus/3984>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/revus.3984>

<sup>15</sup> Fuller, L. L. (1969). *The morality of law*. New Haven: Yale University Press pp 33-38

<sup>16</sup> Tucsa, Emanuel Raul, 'Legal Ethics as a Moral Idea: A Theory of Philosophical Legal Ethics Based on the Work of Lon Fuller' (2014). LLM Theses. 6. <http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/llm/6>

<sup>17</sup> Fuller has an extended discussion of each criterion from pp. 46-90 Fuller. L., (1969). *Morality of Law*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 39. This outline of Fuller is based on *The Morality of Law* as well as on Jeremy Waldron "Why Law- Efficacy, Freedom or Fidelity?", *Law and Philosophy* 13 (1994): 259-284, David Luban, "Natural Law as Professional Ethics: A Reading of Fuller", *Social Philosophy and Policy* (2001), and Gerald J. Postema, "Implicit Law", *Law and Philosophy* 13 (1994): 361-387.

Fuller notes that the American Authorities (independent agencies) failed to transform their control and regulation of the economic market into regulatory activity. The rule of the concrete case cannot be transformed into a general rule. The case, in some way, is always the enemy of generality (this is one of the reasons for King Rex's failure in Fuller's apologue). However, even a simple command (for example, that of the owner to the dog) has the power of generalization. However, the legal system is not an exercise of political power and must distinguish between general and particular commands. Therefore, Austin asks two questions: 1) What is essential for the effectiveness of a system of legal norms? 2) what could we call law? Fuller notes that not all government acts in the form of law are valid laws. For there to be a law, the character of generality must exist<sup>18</sup>

## 2 - *Promulgation*

It is impossible to educate every citizen on the meaning of the law (it would be uneconomical), but one cannot help but publicize the law, to allow all citizens to know them. If the law is not advertised through the mechanism of promulgation (publication in the official gazette), it is not a real law. That does not mean that citizens should know all the laws or that such knowledge should be expected. In the criminal field, however, knowledge of the law must be presumed (and ignorance of the criminal law does not justify who commits a crime)<sup>19</sup>.

## 3 - *Retroactive Rules*

In the US Constitution, the third paragraph contains the principle of non-retroactivity: no bill concerning the loss of property or rights, nor any law can be approved *ex post facto* (after the fact). However, even if a constitutional provision did not expressly provide for the prohibition, the principle of retroactivity for Fuller would be a violation. It clashes with the principle of legality; the law must be respected when it is in force, so it cannot be enforced towards the past when it did not yet exist in the juridical world. Hitler and the Nazis often resorted to retroactive norms to target their political enemies. That is a severe anomaly. The rule is that the rules must be aimed at the future, not the past. This rule is particularly valid in the criminal field. The citizen cannot be expected to respect a criminal law that does not exist and be punished for a thing done when the criminal law did not yet prohibit it. However, the retroactivity of the rule in some cases can remedy an error of the legislator or solve an otherwise insoluble problem, such as guaranteeing equal treatment to citizens before and after a legislative reform (Fuller calls it curative retroactive law). Hence, Fuller admits an exceptional use of the retroactive rule. Finally, Fuller notes that it is not always clear when a rule is retroactive. It can be easy to understand that the criminal or fiscal law should not concern the past. However, sometimes the civil norms affect past situations even when they concern the present and future situations<sup>20</sup>.

## 4 - *The Clarity of The Rules*

Clarity of the laws means that the rules must be written. It must not contain smoky or indeterminate parts, as are - for example - general clauses or standards. Such as 'good faith', 'normal diligence', 'morality', public order, all clauses with indeterminate content leave the police and judges enormous power of interpretation and arbitrary application (sometimes even abusive and abusive) of the rule. The clearer the norm is in its content, the more it reflects the definition of the rule of conduct. The less clear it is, the more it becomes an exercise of power and command<sup>21</sup>.

## 5 - *Contradictions of The Rules*

Avoiding contradictions in the rules means applying logic to the writing of them. If A is equal to A (principles of identity), it cannot be B (principle of the excluded third). Logic can also serve to make incompatible provisions compatible with each other. So, the logic applies not only to the writing of the law but also to its interpretation. There are self-contradictory laws (i.e., rules that conflict with themselves), for which there is little to be done (if they cannot be explained with logic, they must be changed because they are unjust laws). Some laws conflict with other laws. Shared interpretative criteria can be used, and the subsequent law derogates from the previous law. Special law derogates from the general law, and the secondary source cannot derogate from the primary source of the law<sup>22</sup>.

## 6 - *Rules Asking the Impossible*

*Ad impossibilia nemo tenetur*, no one can be legally bound to do an impossible thing. A rule that calls for the impossible is unlimited illegal power. Responsibility or guilt cannot arise from not having done or foreseen something impossible to do or foresee. For example, no one can be condemned for not predicting an earthquake. In some cases, the law attributes responsibility to a person who had no fault or intention in doing what he did (it is called strict liability). However, these are exceptions that serve to rebalance situations of unfair financial damage. For example, suppose one's car causes an accident without her being at fault. In that case, the law requires that - in any case - someone pay the damages because it considers it unfair that the injured party only suffers the consequences of the damage. Fuller is well aware that there is a fine line between 'impossibility' and 'extreme difficulty'. However, this line depends very much on culture, religion, ethics, and therefore on

<sup>18</sup> Fuller, L. (1969). *Morality of Law*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66

extra-juridical elements, which influence the law<sup>23</sup>.

#### 7 - *The Constance of Law Over Time*

For Fuller, the rules should not be changed too frequently, creating uncertainty in who should apply or comply with them. Too frequent changes create damage very similar to that of retroactive rules. The inconstancy of the legislator is a bad attitude that destabilizes the juridical order, makes it precarious and weak<sup>24</sup>.

#### 8 - *Consistency Between Official Action and Declared Rule*

This idea is the most complex of all the requirements of the law. There must be no divergence between what the law states or declares and how it is usually applied. Much depends on the clarity it is written, but it also depends on how the judges interpret it. When there is divergence, the legal system loses its integrity and leaves room for the power and prevarication of individuals. American judges experimented with a four-question method to understand the meaning of a new law: 1) what was the common law principle before the legislative reform? 2) what inconvenience or defect was found in the common law before the new law? 3) what remedy did Parliament intend to remedy that inconvenience or defect? 4) what is the real reason for the remedy posed by the new law? By answering these questions, one can understand the true meaning of a reform law, what the legislator intended to give to it, or what can reasonably be given to it (to the so-called ratio legis or intention of the legislator), thus avoiding exploiting the norm towards a direction not wanted by the legislator<sup>25</sup>.

### **Fuller's Conclusion: Legality as A Practical Faculty**

For Fuller, eight rules of intrinsic morality are the manifestation of the principle of legality understood not in an abstract sense, but as a practical faculty, that is, as the capacity of the legislator to write the laws and as the capacity of the law to subject human conduct to the rules.

In his conclusions, Fuller distinguishes intrinsic juridical morality (that of the eight principles) from the juridical morality of the three functions. The juridical morality of the three functions has three specific functions: 1) define a minimum content of substantive natural law; 2) define the community to which the moral and juridical rules apply; 3) show the way to the legislator in institutional reforms).

In the last chapters of *The Morality of Law*, Fuller analyzes the concept of law in Hart's thought (chapter III). He distinguished between norms that impose duties and norms that confer juridical powers and separated the concept of positive law from juridical morality. In Chapter IV, Fuller deals with the substantive purposes of law and the legal philosophy of Holmes, an American lawyer. Legality is seen as a condition for the effectiveness of the law. However, for Fuller, legality must be linked to justice. He gives some examples of events of his time, racial discrimination in South Africa, citizenship of Jewish immigrants in Israel, to say that the only solution to some delicate issues is unfairness, understood as legal morality, not in legality. For Fuller, legal morality must also deal with the distribution of economic resources (in terms of distributive justice and equality), but Fuller does not share socialist ideas. He is a liberal, like Hart and Berlin. Legal morality allows: to define a minimum content of substantive natural law; it also helps define the concept of a moral community; it serves to design institutions (not only from an economic point of view but likewise from an ethical point of view). In chapter V, Fuller replies to his critics (Hart, Nagel, The Analytical Jurists, Dworkin, all legal positivists, or legal realists<sup>26</sup>

### **Use of Regulatory Acts With the force of Law in Albania in the Time of Covid-19, and its consequences.**

Albania is the Parliamentary Republic, which organizes its life and carries out its activities based on a series of principles and rules written in base texts. According to our legal system's hierarchy to these texts: article 1, section 2 of the Constitution, "The people exercise sovereignty through their representatives or directly. In connection with article 4, section 2 establishes that the Constitution is the highest law of the Republic of Albania<sup>27</sup>. Although even in a critical phase of the actual crisis we are experiencing, we must find our legitimate compass for orientation in society and institutions in reading these principles and rules.

Therefore, let us re-read these principles and rules, starting from those with a higher degree of abstraction, which is not by chance included in the principles of our Constitution. First of all, the political cornerstone of the Constitution is the preamble<sup>28</sup>. The political image of the people manifested in the Constitution. Article 3 recognizes the guarantee of inviolable human rights as a person and within a collectivity in which his personality develops. In ordinary periods the balance between

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 38

<sup>26</sup> Fuller, L. (1969). *Morality of Law*, rev. ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, see paragraphs 1, 2, and 4.

<sup>27</sup> Constitution of The Republic of Albania Translated Under the Auspices of Osce -Albania P 1

<sup>28</sup> Liav Orgad, The preamble in constitutional interpretation, *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, Volume 8, Issue 4, October 2010, Pages 714–738, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/mor010.f.738>

rights and duties is the key to understanding the constitutional balance. Considering that in extraordinary times, deriving from a health emergency crisis, the balance to be explicitly built has to do with personal and social laws. (art. 27 section d), The Constitution defines that a person's liberty may not be limited, except when a person is the carrier of a contagious disease and dangerous to society, forcing us to respect the individual and the collective aspect of the right to health. In our constitutional system, the annihilation of individual rights in favor of the community is not acceptable. However, not even the general interest can interfere in protecting personal freedoms<sup>29</sup> and rights.

In the name of the general interest, personal freedoms falling within the fundamental rights dimension may be restricted in exceptional situations, as referred to in Article 170, sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and Article 174, section 1 and 2, and in article 175, section 2 and 3<sup>30</sup>. However, according to constitutional jurisprudence, protection of human dignity defined by article 3 of the Constitution is not clear if the sphere of health is understood both in the individual and in the general dimension.

The 1998 Albanian Constitution, for reasons attributable to the history of our country, does not hold - unlike other Constitutions - provisions for the division of powers in an emergency phase. There are two distinct types of situations in the constitutional text that can shift the envisaged constitutional powers. The first situation is referred to in article 171, section 1. It deals with the State of War; if armed aggression against the Republic of Albania occurs, the President proclaims the State of War at the request of the Council of Ministers. On the other hand, the Parliament must declare by a majority of all members (Article 172, section 2) in the event of external threats or when the obligation of mutual protection derives from an international agreement.

Following the President's proposal, the Parliament declares the State of War and agrees on the state of general or partial mobilization and demobilization, giving the Parliament the necessary powers. The second situation concerns the normative act with the force of law that applies when 'necessity and urgency' conditions are met, which must be transformed into law within forty-five days<sup>31</sup>. In all cases provided by the Constitution for managing emergencies, the Constitution requires the maintenance of a relationship between Parliament as an expression of political representation. As the possessor of executive power, the Council of Ministers entrusts the role of the President as the Head of State. Representing the unity of the people according to the powers attributed to by article 86, section 1 of the Constitution.

Therefore, in the absence of explicit constitutional provisions, other emergency management structures are unconstitutional. As a result, the coronavirus emergency was classified as a natural disaster. Based on the principle of 'necessity and urgency', the Council of Ministers issued regulatory acts with the force of law. The instrument of the legislative act with the force of law is undoubtedly the fastest and most flexible instrument in a situation like this. However, there remains the risk of overcoming the power of the Executive by assuming the powers of the Parliament.

Using legislative acts with the force of law, the Executive created uncertainty in the choice of the instrument and raised doubts on juridical security. Referring to the content of the acts in question, as long as they remain within the limits of need and urgency, in compliance with the criteria of predictability, not abstraction and proportionality concerning the emergency we are going through, regulatory acts with the force of the law can be a constructive instrument. However, if, on the other hand, the content of these acts does not meet the above characteristics, but on the contrary has permanent effects, they have no proportionality or are not necessary. Thus, how to behave in an extraordinary situation like the one we are experiencing whose repetition cannot be excluded a priori. The solution remains the Constitutional Court which must review all the jurisprudence generated by the decision-making process in the period of the Coronavirus to verify its compatibility with the Constitution and avoid three fundamental problems deriving from the use of the legislative acts with the force of law.

Firstly, the legislative act cannot regulate areas of exclusive competence of the Parliament. The Constitutional Court, in its jurisprudence, deliberating Article 7 of the Constitution vis-à-vis the principle of separation of powers, stated this principle in democracy aims at eliminating the risk of concentration of power in individual hands or a group of people. Which in practice carries with it the risk of its improper use. The three central powers (legislative, executive, and judicial) must be exercised independently and balanced based on this principle. This procedure is achieved through constitutional solutions that guarantee mutual control and a proper balance between powers without compromising and interfering with each other's competences<sup>32</sup>. The purpose of this constitutional concept is to prevent any branch of government from exercising unlimited power. Among three branches of government, the Parliament, as the highest representative body, is undoubtedly the central and most important body of state power. The Parliament should be guided by the fundamental principles of the rule of law, one of which is to issue legal acts according to constitutional and legal procedures. Compliance with these procedures is a prerequisite for the legitimacy of these acts<sup>33</sup>. Although in the absolute impossibility of organizing ordinary meetings, the Parliament should think of alternative ways to organize plenary sessions based on EU best practices

Secondly, the regulatory act violates the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 17 of the Constitution establishes specific conditions that must be met, cumulatively, in the event of a restriction of human rights: I) the restriction should only be done by law; II) for a public interest or the defense of the rights of others; III) the restriction is proportional to the situation that dictated it (principle of proportionality); IV) not to violate the essence of the law; V) and not to exceed the limits set by the European Convention on Human Rights.

<sup>29</sup> Priel, Dan, "Lon Fuller's Political Jurisprudence of Freedom" (2013). Comparative Research in Law & Political Economy. Research Paper No. 55/2013. <http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/clpe/297>

<sup>30</sup> Constitution of The Republic of Albania Translated Under the Auspices of OSCE - Albania, Part Sixteen--Extraordinary Measures

<sup>31</sup> Constitution of The Republic of Albania. Translated under the auspices of OSCE - Albania (art. 101)

<sup>32</sup> See decisions no.24, 10.11.2006; no.19, 3.5.2007, Nr. 5, 5.2.2014 (paragraph 38), of the Constitutional Court (Accessed on, 21.06/2021)

<sup>33</sup> Shih vendimin nr. 29, datë 21.10.2009, të Gjykatës Kushtetuese (Decision no. 29, 21.10.2009, of the Constitutional Court) (Accessed on, 21.06/2021)



In principle, the restrictions on freedoms and human rights, by in the legislative act with the force of the law the Council of Ministers do not meet the first and fourth requirement. The restriction should be made only by law and not violate the essence of law; by the provisions of article 17 of the Albanian Constitution.

Thirdly, based on the principles of Kelzen and Fuller, respect for the hierarchy of legal norms is a commitment deriving from the principle of the rule of law and consistency in the legal order. The pyramid of regulatory acts, sanctioned by article 116 of the Constitution, defines the relationships between the legal norms based on their over/under relationship. This pyramid of regulatory acts has the Constitution at its apex, a source for other legal acts.

Fourthly, the provisions of the regulatory act 'On The Adoption Of Special Administrative Measures During The Period Of Infection Caused By Covid-19, fall below the provision of Article 81', section dh, the Albanian Law on Civil Protection<sup>34</sup>, which needs a qualified majority (with 3/5s) to approve the law. In its jurisprudence, the Constitutional Court stated that 'the transfer of legislative competence to the Council of Ministers, which, exceptionally, to adopt temporary measures in case of necessity and urgency, is subject first of all to constitutional restrictions. In this sense, the Parliament cannot delegate its legislative power but has the constitutional obligation to satisfy the procedural and substantive requirements for adopting laws qualified by articles 81 article 2 and 83 of the Constitution. Concerning articles 1, 2, 4, 7, and 116 of the Constitution, so much the less the Council of Ministers whose regulation, *expressis verbis*, is the exclusive responsibility of the Assembly'.

Furthermore, the Court concluded that 'under Article 116 of the Constitution, the hierarchy of sources of law is one of the essential elements that determine the form of government and protect the fundamental values of the condition of law, where the legislator has a primary role. In countries guided by the principle of division of powers, the power of the Parliament and the Government in extracting primary resources of law, the latter's approval belongs to the body to which the power is conferred directly by the people. Consequently, the Court finds that the approval by the Assembly of the legislative act exceeds procedural and substantive criteria provided for by the Constitution, constitutes a defect in proceeding of the law itself. Although the Assembly had an obligation to explicitly implement the competence envisaged from the constitutional order, it has suppressed the constitutional provisions, contrary to article 4, section 3, of the Constitution. In the end, the Court concludes that the enactment by the Council of Ministers of the normative act with the force of law, which regulates issues reserved to the Parliament, and non-compliance by the latter with the procedure provided by article 81, section 2, letter 'e' and article 83, section 3, of the Constitution contradicts the principle of separation and balance of powers, in the logic of article 7 of the Constitution, as one of the fundamental principles of the rule of law, where the law is the foundation and limits the State's activity<sup>35</sup>.

## Conclusions

In the light of the former considerations, it is very urgent to ask ourselves which road to take. The pandemic has revealed to us the fragility of our legal certainties and has put a strain on the relationship between citizens and institutions: in the face of a Prime Minister who through his acts has set himself up as the engine of emergency regulation, a Parliament is placed, formally open, but substantially weakened in its role, as if the anticipation of what could be the outcome of the reforms underway, but postponed due to the Coronavirus. The state of crisis cannot be a source that legitimizes everything. The Parliament is the highest expression of the people's sovereign (the government is not, as it is an expression of the parliamentary majority, therefore of a part of the whole). Furthermore, it is urgent to safeguard the centrality of the expressive organ of popular sovereignty against pressures exercised by the Council of Ministers, extraneous to our republican-parliamentary culture.

We citizens are doing our duty and fighting our 'war' by staying in our homes. However, keeping our guard up because it is precisely in moments of crisis that the risk of the invasion of one power over the other lurks. Freedom of movement and other freedoms can only be sacrificed in the face of supreme goods, such as public health, however, with the tools provided by the Constitution. Furthermore, if the government's encroachments on Parliament are not stopped, the pandemic will leave us a dying democracy. The risk of authoritarian involution is inherent in the dangerous addiction to the abandonment of constitutional forms. Moreover, we are not referring to formal involutions, to a hypothetical return of dictatorship.

The enhancement of such arguments stands for a return to our Republican Constitution. By revitalizing some constitutional provisions that have been anesthetized in their application. Therefore, it is necessary to go back to the Constitution, correcting that disconnect between what it says and what the interpreters make it say. For the sole purpose of legitimizing specific political options that in reality are placed outside the constitutionally traced groove, degrading prescriptiveness of the Constitution in mere descriptiveness freeing the action of politics from respect for constitutional principles in the name of practices. Even when the Constitution does not suggest them: therefore, the Constitution is configured as a limit of interpretation and not as its foundation and mere instrument of legitimization of reality, leaving aside a fundamental element, history, which has never again become the privileged lens through which to read current phenomena, different in forms and contexts but similar in terms of content. Furthermore, the need to return to the words of the Constitution must lead us to recover concepts internal to Fuller/Kelzen theories, which are not empty words but benchmarks for the quality of liberal democracy.

The way this crisis was dealt with brings with it many unknowns and the temptation to transform this extraordinary emergency management into 'abnormal normality', suspending again, and for an indefinite time, the constitutional guarantees

<sup>34</sup> LGJI Nr. 45/2019 PËR MBROJTJEN CIVILE (LAW no. 45/2019 ON CIVIL PROTECTION)

<sup>35</sup> VENDIM Nr. 5, datë 5.2.2014 <http://dap.gov.al/images/Legjislacionisc/VGJK.pdf> (DECISION No. 5, 5.2.2014) (Accessed on, 21.06/2021, translation mine)

in the name of management efficiency. We move on a perilous ridge, and even the meritorious aim of preserving the health of each of us from an unknown virus cannot justify the use of any legal or political means beyond and above the constitutional framework. However, on the contrary, the very circumstance that, unfortunately, our coexistence with the virus will have to last for an unspecified period. That is not yet quantifiable, making it necessary to have 'constitutional' management of this situation, now no longer classified as an emergency. It is good to remember that when they discuss our fundamental rights, the end does not justify every means.

In a moment of plain emergencies, such as the spread of the Coronavirus in Albania, questioning the constitutionality of measures adopted by the Executive may sound inconsequential. Nevertheless, these acts have placed a more profound restriction on fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Namely, freedom of movement, of assembly, the right to education, the right to work, and economic initiative; as well as, at least in part religious and personal freedoms, this approach to the problem is far from being inconsequential. Instinctively inevitable, bearing in mind the idea that the Constitution applies only to regular periods and not to extraordinary ones would be tantamount to putting the Constitution in quarantine.

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# Does the Communist Mentality Explain the Behaviour of Albanian Politicians During the Transition Period?

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Gerti SQAPI<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*During the three decades since Albania overthrew the communist dictatorial system and began its democratic changes, the existence of a line of thought in Albanian society has been noted, which tends to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians during the transition period based on the assumption of a “communist mentality” carried by them. This line of thought has often been dominant and has been reflected in the Albanian media and public space as a form of “main” explanation to show many of the failures that Albanian democracy has faced during these 30 years, the authoritarian behaviour of political elites, the “state capture” by political parties, the crisis of state institutions, etc. Applying the concept of “communist mentality” in the Albanian media and public space and explaining through it (almost) any kind of negative phenomenon, problem, or behaviour that contradicts the idea of democracy or prevents it from developing, is very problematic, therefore it has served as an impetus in undertaking this study. In this paper, a critical approach will be offered to this discourse that has often dominated the Albanian media and public space, questioning whether is this “communist mentality” the determining factor for the behaviour of Albanian politicians and the failures of Albanian democracy or there are other factors that may explain these phenomena.*

**Key Words:** Communist Mentality, Political Culture, Political Elites, Political Behaviour, Democracy, State Capture.

*“You do not know what it means to do six months in prison. Not them, but even if I had been there instead of them, not six, but even just two months in prison, I would have become a communist and surpassed the communist. “This means that they have now become hardened communists, and if they get out of there who knows what they will do?”<sup>2</sup>.*

## Introduction

The year 2021 is an important jubilee date for Albania, as it marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of its democratic changes after the overthrow of the communist regime. However, in these 30 years, Albania, unlike some other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, has not managed to institutionalize a well-functioning democracy in its environment and still faces today large deficits in its functioning, with authoritarian behaviour of its political elites, lack of political accountability, “state capture” by political parties, etc. In general, during these 30 years, to explain the difficult transition and the many problems faced by the defective functioning of democracy in Albania, one of the main reasons given is

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gerti Sqapi is a lecturer at the Department of Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Law, Political Sciences and International Relations at the European University of Tirana. He holds a doctoral degree in Political Sciences and his teaching is focused on subjects of Sociology and Political Science.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from the Albanian telecomedy “*The Prefect*”, which has as its main character Qazim Mulleti, a former prefect of Tirana region during the years of fascist occupation of Albania.

the legacy of the previous regime that materializes in the “communist mentality” of political elites in post-communism. Therefore, one explanation that has been given the most, and that has often been dominant in the Albanian public opinion, is that the “faults” of the defective functioning of the Albanian democracy belong to this “communist mentality” of the Albanian politicians. Thus, in essence, the problems of Albanian democracy stems from this communist mentality of our leaders. Likewise, there is a tendency that any kind of behaviour of Albanian politicians considered negative, which contradicts the ideal of democracy, tends to be equated or identified with the Bolshevik, Stalinist, Enverian methods of these politicians.

The introductory citation of this work belongs to a one-liner from a famous Albanian telecomedy that was played during the communist regime, but it has also circulated as a kind of metaphor in the Albanian public opinion, to show or explain what happened with Albanian political elites during the period of democratic transition. So, the fact that since these political leaders have spent a good part of their lives under the communist regime (where they were formed culturally, intellectually, and morally under that regime), still after their release from “prison”, they do not they could do nothing but reflect the same mentality and the same traits of behaviour as the communists. Of course, since they were now operating in a different political, social and economic context, as the “curtains” were already raised for the world, these politicians had to somehow moderate their behaviours and strategies. But, in essence, no matter how “democratic” they try to appear, they continue to remain communists or neo-communists in their mentality.

Applying this concept (communist mentality) or explaining through it (almost) any kind of phenomenon, problem, behaviour that contradicts the ideal of democracy and prevents it from developing, is problematic in itself. The aim of this paper is to highlight, through a systematic analysis, the shortcomings and weaknesses of the use of the concept of “communist mentality”, a concept so much used in Albanian public, political and journalistic life that it is taken for granted and not even questioned by anyone. This paper aims to undertake a critique of this existing line of thought, arguing that the concept of communist mentality is not valid to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians and the lack of their democratic culture in general.

## The Concept of “Communist Mentality” as a Culturalist Explanation

Regarding the concept of “communist mentality” it must be said that there is no precise and single definition of this concept, for which it is generally agreed by scholars what it means. Likewise, there is no agreement in the literature on any particular characteristic of what it means to be a communist, to have a communist mentality, etc. Therefore, this does not help us in our intention in this paper to analyse the application of this concept as something that generally explains the behaviour of Albanian politicians, and which is thought to be an obstacle to the democratization of Albania. In the absence of a precise and “scientific” definition, accepted as such by scholars, to which we could refer and compare it with the way the “communist mentality” is used in Albania, the main task/aim of this paper is to analyse in itself the use (or misuse) of this concept in the Albanian case.

The concept of “communist mentality” was developed in the Albanian public, media, and political discourse (but also in other former communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) to explain the idea that the long years lived under the communist system has produced a kind of inherited personality or mentality, with some values or norms of behaviour that are typical for the time of a totalitarian (communist) regime, but that continue to appear characteristically even in other regimes (in this case, in democratic systems. It should be noted that the “communist mentality” in itself does not constitute a specific academic analytical category but is a concept that is treated under the framework of political culture and the “communist legacy” of countries that have experienced this form of regime. So, we will treat the idea of the communist legacy as part of the culturalist paradigm, which views the development of democracy as linked to political culture. Thus, in this aspect, the concept of “communist mentality” must be seen and understood in the context of political culture.

The concept of political culture refers to the predisposing traits, the inner state of individuals, which predisposes them to react to certain stimuli in particular ways (Mayer et al., 2003: p. 14). In summary, the dimensions of the concept of political culture include *attitudes* (a psychological orientation towards political objects, which often incorporate normative conceptions of *how things should be*); *beliefs* (concepts of how things are, which may or may not be correct); *feelings*; *values*, etc. (Mayer et al., 2003: p. 16). In the cases of Eastern and Central European countries that had experienced decades under communist rule, it is assumed that a certain communist mentality manifested in certain attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs was rooted. Thus, it was argued that a pattern of attitudes and behaviours in the recently freed, post-communist countries is hypothesized as a post-communist syndrome [or mentality] ... The syndrome is viewed as a direct result of long-lasting, oppressive rule and suggests a host of individual and social disorders: learned helplessness, specific manifestations of immorality/incivility, lack of civic culture and civic virtues (Klipcerova & Feierabend & Hofstetter, 1997: p. 39). In the same way, Willemans expresses the idea that, “the communist doctrine succeeded in shaping a specific mentality amongst the people, to deform their thinking... This mentality has had and still has a lot of influence on economics and politics in the former socialist countries. Till today mistrust, unreliability, lack of confidence and looking for protective umbrella’s is to be traced in specific events” (Willemans, 2000) of the past that continue to influence the present.

Furthermore, in their famous comparative study of five different nations, Almond and Verba, in the model they offer

for *Civic Culture*, which basically according to them should essentially distinguish the cultures of “successful” democracies those that are less successful, they mention some important cultural components, such as - *the ways in which political elites make decisions, their norms and attitudes, as well as the norms and attitudes of the ordinary citizen, his relation to government and to his fellow citizens* (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 3). In general, the purpose of this comparative study of these culturalist authors is to address the attention and highlight the importance of these attitudes, norms, and subjective values, of the elites and the population as a whole, for the stabilization of democratic regimes and the participation in democratic model. After all, these authors tell us that to achieve this goal, - “it will require more than the formal institutions of democracy – universal suffrage, the political party, the elective legislature” (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 3). Preconditions or cultural qualities are also needed, which are necessary or, at least, supportive of the structures of political democracy. The structures sanctioned and defined in the constitution, after all, do not operate in a vacuum, but in a context of social and cultural factors, which influence how those political structures function (Mayer et al., 2003: p. 40).

Generally, in the case of the difficult Albanian transition during these three decades, these cultural factors (inherited from the previous communist regime) of the political elites are given as an explanation to show the failures of democracy in this country. The purpose of this paper is to make a theoretical and ideological analysis of this discourse that exists in the public debate on the “communist mentality” of Albanian politicians, aiming to show: what is meant by this communist mentality in the Albanian case by authors/analysts who are considered in the section below; what are the different dimensions/characteristics that they attach to this concept, etc. And a second regard here would be what aspects of Albanian democracy threaten or hinder this “communist mentality” of politicians, therefore what are its consequences?

## **A Review of the Dimensions of the “Communist Mentality” of Albanian Politicians and the Consequences It Produces for Democracy According to Analysts / Authors**

In general, the implicit or even explicit presupposition advocated by various authors is that there is a communist mentality or syndrome inherited from the previous totalitarian regime, which has influenced with all its distortions the “new” political elites who lead democratic changes in post-communist countries. Thus, “totalitarian societies produced a ‘totalitarian syndrome’, a specific pattern of cognitions, attitudes and behaviours developed in order to adapt to life under totalitarian circumstances” (Klipcerova & Feierabend & Hofstetter, 1997: p. 39). Regarding this political culture inherited from the previous regime, one author states: “Albania’s political culture was built over the course of 50 years through the use of propaganda, press, music, art, literature, cinematography and was preserved and cultivated through the organizations and unions that were the extension of the Communist Party. The existing political culture today has not changed obstructing the country’s democratization” (Pajo, 2017: p. 132). The influence from this totalitarian past, or this inherited communist mentality/syndrome, has been the main factor, according to the various authors/analysts we take in the analysis in this section, that has hindered the building of a well-functioning and institutionalized democracy in Albania. Meksi emphasizes this when he says that: “The survival of the people in politics and of the communist mentality, the nostalgia for that time is making a prolongation of the transition with all its negative aspects, making the Albanians to lose hope for a better life” (Meksi, 2009).

Fatos Lubonja, an Albanian analyst and opinionist, expresses this idea through a metaphor: “*whoever has lived in slavery [under the communist system] will inevitably have undergone such distortions which will not allow him to be fully worthy of another system*” (Lubonja, 2006, p. 16-17). Through this metaphor, Lubonja tries to explain what happened to the Albanian political elites in the period of democratic transition. He states: “*We built the worst democracy and the worst possible capitalism, precisely because the people who took it over had suffered such psychological, cultural and moral distortions that they display to this day, often in same ugly and evil forms*” (Lubonja, 2006, p. 16-17).

Concerning the different dimensions attributed to the communist mentality of Albanian politicians of the post-communist period and the various consequences it has produced, the authors (quoted below) list: *The rise of the cults of political leaders; the mindset that unites the party with the state; the desire for unlimited power and to suppress any dissenting voice (the authoritarianism of political leaders); the treatment of the political opponent as an enemy, the extreme polarization of the political life in the country; misuse of public funds and corruption, etc.*

Regarding what can be mentioned as the first dimension of the “communist mentality”, the authors state the creation or re-fabrication of new cults of the individual in the leaders of the main political parties. These cults characterize the main political leaders of the transition period in Albania, just as in the past they characterized figures like Enver Hoxha. And this is what Andrea Stefani means when he addresses the figures of Fatos Nano and Sali Berisha by saying: “*For leaders with a sculpted, iron, and ruthless cult as that of Enver Hoxha. People who show the same thirst and need for cheers of crowds as the dictatorship propaganda did yesterday*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 74). And with these cults of new leaders is emphasized the idea of their infallibility, the idea that they are irrefutable or that those who follow them must obey them. “*They [the cults] exert pressure for submission to the people who surround the “prominent” man ... by suffocating to the last cell if possible, all that spirit of opposition and freedom that is the soul of any democracy*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 138).

What is most often understood through these “cults” that the chief leaders of the dominant Albanian political parties have built around them, is the authoritarian behaviour they carry. Thus, their authoritarian tendencies, both in how they run their parties and the affairs of the state, are explained as a consequence of “*their sophisticated carrying of communist*

*mentalities, which makes them to strive not for freedom, but to rule*". (Stefani, 2005: p. 69). The profile of the leader in these 27 years of democracy is the same: the one of the authoritarian type (Pajo, 2017: p. 134). And the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians, in this case, a consequence of the communist mentality to rule everything and absolutely, according to the ideas of the authors has also caused the lack of real democracy in the internal life of Albanian political parties (lack of real competition inside the party); the fact they are run authoritatively by a single hand or a very small group of people around the leader (excluding party forums or their membership); that there is a tendency to exclude or "stifle" critical voices within the party; or that there is a spirit of submission and servility within these parties. Andrea Stefani expresses this idea when he talks about the organization of the two main parties in the country and says that: *"the two largest and dominant parties of life in Albania (SP and DP) remain invincible castles of Nano and Berisha. Leninist-type parties with new names, parties of monolithic unity around the leader, parties of subjugated majorities, and servant party forums have been the powerful weapon of the invincible survival of Nano and Berisha."* (Stefani, 2005: p. 22-23). It is assumed from these words of the author, his attempt to highlight that spirit of authoritarianism and submission that exists in the inner life of Albanian political parties, and the attempt to explain them through that communist mentality inherited from the past of Albanian politicians.

Another element of the concept of "communist mentality", from which Albanian politicians are presumed to suffer, is the mentality according to which it identifies or unites the party with the state. Hence, using the same methods or practices of the former (communist) state party. Fatos Lubonja describes this when he talks about the ruling Socialist Party: *"It is difficult to say that it [SP] is detached from the mentality that identifies the party with the state and from the practices of the state party. The shadow of the state party which controls everything, although not brutally and directly as Berisha did [in the years 1992 -1997] remains in Albania"* (Lubonja, 2000: p. 13). Another author, Mustafa Nano, adopts the concept of the former party-state to explain (in his way) the failures of Albanian democracy. *"The concept of the state party is the most visible part of the legacy that the Hoxha regime passed on to us nowadays. Infection with this political theory has spared almost no one. All politicians do not leave a chance without proving this. ...In the years of the Democratic Party rule, its devaluation and political degeneration, went in proportion to the attempts to turn it into a state party. There came a moment when this party was merged with the state to such an extent that the overthrow from the power of the DP could not but bring the fall of the state"*. (Nano, 2001: p. 15). Here, too, we note the elaboration of the idea by the author that the lack of division between party and state, viz, the fact that party militants are employed in the state administration, or that state institutions are dependent on or controlled by the party, is a consequence of the communist legacy. And this is part of the communist mentality of Albanian politicians. In Andrea Stefani, we also find explicitly this idea of the communist mentality of the state party. *"Historical" leaders have become an obstacle to the democratization of the country because they carry the communist mentality of the state party; they want to rule everything by giving power only to their followers. They implement where they can and as much as possible the practices of the state party by distributing their loyalists at the strategic points, all over the top of the state, to rule it "* (Stefani, 2005: p. 144). So, we can also see here the attempt to explain militancy in the state administration with the practices of the former (communist) state party.

Likewise, another element of the "communist mentality" inherited from the communist past, according to the authors, is the desire for power of politicians, or their tendencies to control or usurp all power they can. Andrea Stefani argues this when he says: *"At the beginning of pluralism when they felt the taste of power, the "democratic" leaders (without having any new philosophy or vision) began to copy what they overthrew: the Communist Party of Enver Hoxha. "This is a 'betrayal' to the principles of democracy, as the author calls it, as a consequence of their communist mentality"* (Stefani, 2005: p. 136, 148). This idea is also put forward by Miranda Vickers and James Petiffer when they try to explain the actions of Berisha in power during the years '92 -96. *"His tendencies to grab all power, relying only on a few loyalists, led him to savage measures against his political opponents, who many remembered the actions of Enver Hoxha. "Many saw in Berisha another one-party ruler"* (Vickers & Petiffer, 2007: p. 137-138). While Mustafa Nano comments on this argument: *"Sali Berisha [even after he came to power in 2005] has been, is and will remain an exalted, pathetic and incorrigible Bolshevik, a man who lustfully bleeds power, a paranoid dragged by wild passions, a dangerous prime minister, a machine that produces enemies one by one"* (Nano, 2006: p. 17). We can understand from these words of the author his idea about the communist mentality. So, first, it is a lust for power on the part of politicians, to control it. Second, he is also an aggressive lust that is ready to "bleed" to retain power. And third, the communist mentality, according to this author, also means political paranoia that produces endless enemies. So, there is a return to the mentality or the inquisition that frequently produces enemies.

And here we can come to another dimension of the "communist mentality" of politicians: the mentality according to which it sees the opponent, or treats him as an enemy, seeks him to disappear from the "face of the earth". And this is another important element that the authors elaborate on when talking about the communist mentality of Albanian politicians. Thus, e.g., Elez Biberaj, referring to the May 1996 parliamentary elections in Albania, said: *"Under the influence of the culture inherited from communism, the leaders of the government and the opposition showed that they did not understand the rules of representative democracy, seeing politics as a zero-sum game, in which the winner takes it all and the loser loses it all"* (Biberaj, 2001: p. 471). And with the same argument, the author, in his book "Albania in Transition", explains the events that occurred in the Albanian political scene during the period of social unrest in 1997. *"Inspired by the communist traditions of intolerance and fierce class struggle, they (politicians of the time) showed no respect for democratic procedures or discussions and saw politics only as a war arena. "The instincts of the former elites, their communist mentality, customs, and views had remained almost intact"* (Biberaj, 2001: p. 498). We can understand from these lines the argument of the author, who also tries to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians, the lack of respect for democratic procedures, the spirit of intolerance or lack of cooperation between them, in the context of their communist mentality.

Another significant outcome produced by the "communist mentality" of Albanian politicians, according to the authors,

is what we can call the polarization of political life in the country. A political polarization that goes to the limits of hostility between the parties, and which is not infrequently explained by these authors as *a direct inheritance of the communist mentality of class warfare* and the spirit of intolerance it produces. Andrea Stefani notes this idea when he says: “*One of the most disgusting features of today’s Albanian politics - a direct inheritance of the communist mentality of class warfare - is the accusation “enemy of the people” that party leaders make to each other*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 73). A primitive phase of political struggle, according to the author, that takes the form of class warfare with pronounced doses of nationalism. Similarly, Rexhep Qosja, another author perhaps more important because of his personality as an academic, does not hesitate to explain in the same way the behaviour of Albanian politicians in the Assembly (referring to the period in May 2010). “*There is no doubt that a Stalinist mentality prevails in the Albanian Parliament, both in the behaviour and in the discussions of the protagonists of this Assembly. What are those lynchings of political opponents in this assembly, other than the typical Stalinist lynchings of political opponents? The Albanian Parliament has not forgotten to behave like the Politburo of the USSR, that of communist Albania, and other former communist countries. When the communist leader decided to settle accounts with his main opponent, when he saw him as a competitor in the power struggle, he first buried him politically and morally in the Politburo. The hand of the law, the iron of the law, the iron of the will are how these “democrats” will settle accounts with the political opponents, declared enemies of Albania ... Typical Stalinist political linguistic cattle*” (Qosja, 2010: p. 19-20). We can see in these lines of these authors, their attempt to explain the behavior of Albanian politicians towards each other, the spirit of intolerance that exists between them, the mutual accusations they exchange, or even the language they use, as a consequence of the communist mentality that they “possess”.

Finally, another problem of the Albanian society during the period of its transition, which has to do with the endemic corruption spread at all levels and political institutions, also is often treated as a consequence of the “communist mentality” inherited from Albanian politicians. Misuse of public funds and corruption are also explained by the legacy of the communist mentality of Albanian politicians. Fatos Lubonja explicitly expresses this in one of his writings when he emphasizes that: “*What continues to be fed by the old feudal-communist trunk in this monster is the mentality of the ruler who does as he pleases with the public funds, the privileges he enjoys, even that of not being equal with other citizens in front of the law*” (Lubonja, 2004b: p. 11). So, the roots of the problem of abuse and the benefits associated with the public office continue to be “fed by the old feudal-communist trunk” according to Fatos Lubonja. After all, “Communism, with the privilege of a minority, with the disruption of equality in rights and opportunities, created the idea that some favors are allowed to some peoples and not to others” (Meksi, 2009).

## **A Critique to the Discourse on the “Communist Mentality” and Some Alternative Explanations for the Behaviour of Albanian Politicians**

So far, through the discourse analysis, we have made a summary of the main ideas and dimensions that different authors or analysts in the Albanian public discourse and media have made for the concept of “communist mentality”. It can be said that the argument of the “communist mentality” in the Albanian media and public space is so “alive” and dominant, that it has “extinguished” any other explanatory alternative for the behaviour of Albanian politicians and the lack of democratic culture in them. This section offers a critique of this dominant discourse in the Albanian public space, arguing that the concept of communist mentality is not very valuable in explaining the behaviour of Albanian politicians and their lack of democratic culture in general. This critique is based firstly on the conceptual plane, so it will be a critique “from within” of the argument that it is the communist mentality that explains all the other variables (consequences), highlighting the gaps, ambiguity, the incoherence of the argument, as well as the lack of clear evidence in this discourse which proves the cause-and-effect relationship (how do we know that it is precisely from the communist mentality that the behaviour of our politician’s stems?). This critique “from within” of the application of this concept of communist mentality will be followed by a second part, a critique in the empirical plan, which will try to argue through alternative explanations where do these negative effects attributed to the “communist mentality” come from (such as the behaviour of our politicians, their authoritarianism, the lack of a healthy democratic culture in them, etc.).

Conceptually, the “communist mentality” can be said to be an empty concept in itself, not clearly defined by those who use it in public or media debates. In most cases, we can understand or imply from the use of this concept simply *a mental predisposition, or behavior of Albanian politicians with authoritarian tendencies*, but nothing more than this. It is a tautological concept in itself: the communist mentality is defined as an authoritarian mentality (a predisposition of authoritarian behaviour of politicians) and then it is argued that the communist mentality produces authoritarianism. This is an empty argument in itself, a circular and tautological thought that at the end of the day gets to the conclusion that authoritarianism is produced by the authoritarian mentality of politicians. Here, actually, it is highlighted only the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians, or it is identified their authoritarian tendencies, but this does not mean that the “truth” of the communist mentality has been found.

Thus e.g. whether authors and analysts try often in their writings to explain the lack of internal democracy in the life of Albanian political parties (submission, exclusion of critical voices, or the lack of real competition in these parties) as a consequence of “*communist mentalities carried by their leaders*” [Nano, Berisha, Rama], or through “*the cults they have raised and their metastases*” (Stefani, 2005: pp. 69, 111), at the end of the day, the same authors, come to conclusions with phrases such as: “*Authoritarian control of Berisha and Nano are currently the spirit of PD and SP*” (Stefani, 2005: p. 262); or that “*with Berisha’s*

*personality we mean the phenomenon of authoritarianism in the form of concentration of power in the hands of one man*" (Lubonja, 2004a). Hence, we see in this public and media debate that exists in Albania, to equate the communist mentality with the authoritarian mentality of politicians, and then it is argued that the communist mentality produces authoritarianism, or even simpler, that the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians is produced by their authoritarian mentality. And exactly this makes it an empty argument, a circular reasoning, which does not help us much to understand and explain the reality of democracy that exists in Albania.

Also, another argument I would like to present here to show the invalidity of the concept of "communist mentality" as a factor to explain the behaviour of Albanian politicians, is the lack of evidence or proof that proves this cause-and-effect relationship. As evidenced from the references above in this paper, the argument that the communist mentality explains the behaviour of Albanian politicians, or that it produces the failure of democracy in Albania is taken for granted by the authors who raise this issue, but none of these authors (beyond simple rhetoric) does not give us a clear and evident proof to prove this cause-and-effect relationship, e.g. the fact that it is precisely the "communist mentality" of politicians that hinder the democratization of Albania, or the fact that Albanian politicians of the transition period have borrowed their behaviour from the previous communist period.

Often in the literature on the "communist mentality" by these authors, it is argued by making historical analogies between the behaviour of Albanian politicians of the transition period and those of the ruling communists from 1945 to 1991, that there are similarities in some behaviours between them. In this paper, it is not denied that there are some similarities between them, although in subtle forms. Here we can mention: the authoritarianism of the party leaders in the way they run their parties and the affairs of the state, the "suffocation" of critical voices within the party, lack of development of parliamentarism, the banishment from the party of those who do not "obey", the lack of a culture of tolerance in general instead of finding ways to compromise with the political opponent, attempts to set up personal dictatorships surrounded by their loyalists, thirst for power, attempts to usurp the independence of institutions and other uncontrolled powers, misuse of public funds, corruption and other negative phenomena in this regard. But, these similarities in these behavioural habits do not necessarily tell us that they are borrowed exactly from the former communists, that these behavioural characteristics have their source precisely in this communist legacy, and thus, also in the communist mentality. Similarity and borrowing are two different concepts, which do not necessarily coincide with each other.

Thus, to give some alternative explanations regarding the meaning of the features of the authoritarian behaviours of the politicians or the above-mentioned negative phenomena, we could begin by arguing that such behavioural traits of our politicians attributed to the communist mentality have existed even before, much earlier the communist period to which the authors refer. Thus e.g. *the Bolshevik lust and mentality of our politicians, the re-fabrication of individual cults by them, the state party concept* (as constituent elements of the inherited "communist mentality" of politicians) are not very valuable to explain to us phenomena such as authoritarianism, political monopoly of the rule by leaders, their attempts to set up personal dictatorships surrounded by their loyalists, usurpation of independent institutions, etc., as these phenomena existed even before the communist period in Albania.

Thus e.g., Ahmet Zogu, the former ruler of Albania before the communist period, was also a man who "created a personal dictatorship, in which he represented the only way to success for all who wanted to make a political career" (Fischer, 2004, p. 171). Likewise, we can see in Zogu's period that he showed the same authoritarian tendencies as "the concentration of power in his own hands and in the people he trusted, the centralization and strengthening of executive power" (Fischer, 2004, p. 89), or "the control he exercised entirely over the cabinet, appointing and dismissing all ministers at his discretion; he also controlled the Assembly, the Senate (appointing half of the latter members), as well as appointing all state officials, controlled the judiciary by appointing and dismissing judges at his will" (Fischer, 2004, p. 90). All these features authoritarian behaviour existed even before the communist period and miss their meaning when they try to be explained by the inherited communist mentality of Albanian politicians.

The lack of political culture or democratic values in the way politicians run their parties or the government cannot necessarily be associated with the "communist mentality" inherited by them. Thus, if there is a lack of democratic culture in our politicians (e.g., the fact that they behave in an authoritarian way, are intolerant to each other, create conflicts in the struggle for power, etc.) this does not necessarily tell us that it equates to their "communism". The opposite of this "lack" of democratic culture in Albanian politicians cannot be just their "communist mentality". Moreover, such features of authoritarian behaviour, submission, "obedience" to leaders can be seen even in the younger generations who enter politics and who have not experienced at all (or were too young) the period of communism in Albania.

Beyond this discourse on the "communist mentality", we could see the authoritarianism of Albanian politicians, or the tendencies they have to rule, deeper as a reflection of the patriarchal social structure of Albanian society. So, we could see them as a reflection of this patriarchal social structure of Albanian society, of its system of social relations and social institutions. Fatos Lubonja emphasizes this idea in one of his writings when he says that: *"Berishism and nanoism are simply a reflection of the structure of our institutions, starting from the family. In an anthropological or a cultural way of understanding, Berisha and Nano are none other than the patrons of the Albanian patriarchal clans that, according to custom, must rule until they die to hand over power to the eldest son. Of a culture, according to which, it is enough to be a member of the clan led by this godfather and you are a good man and protected no matter what you do. And this is not a feature of communism, but much earlier and, also, it is not just a feature of Nano and Berisha"* (Lubonja, 2004a). Therefore, we have the emphasis of the idea by the author that we should look in this patriarchal structure of Albanian society, in its system of social relations, where among other things we can



mention *clientelism* (if you are with me, you are protected; or if you vote for me, you will benefit!), the roots of the authoritarianism of Albanian leaders.

In the same way, it could be argued that the high conflict that exists between the main political actors during the transition period in Albania (extreme polarization of political life) has nothing to do with the “communist mentality” inherited from Albanian politicians rather than with other explanatory factors. Thus, the high conflict existing among Albanian politicians can be explained as a consequence of de-ideologization between political parties in Albania. Hence, the fact that Albanian political parties are so similar to each other, that they do not have any clear ideological differences between them, whether in their domestic or foreign policy, they consequently in a way “create” this conflict to distinguish from each other. This argument is best emphasized by Kajsia: “Unable to build a vision of society based on certain groups or social strata, or based on an ideological universe, Albanian political parties build the vision of society in relation to a threat, symbolized by the opposing party. It is in the face of this threat that they articulate and represent the “people”. The political opponent is the negativity that does not allow society to do as it imagines itself” (Kajsia, 2007, p. 18). Therefore, according to the author, we must find in this lack of difference in ideology between the parties, to the “need” they have to create this difference between them and in the articulation that they make to the “people” in relation to the threat or danger that is presented by the opponent, the reasons from where this high conflict in Albanian politics originates. Also, it is understood from this point of view why politics often degenerates into fierce and banal conflicts. Furthermore, the author continues this argument by saying: “This is where the high levels of polarization, conflict, and exclusion in Albanian politics lie, more than in the essence of an anti-democratic culture or the psychology of particular politicians” (Kajsia, 2007, p. 18).

## Conclusions

In this paper, I argued that the thesis proclaimed by various Albanian authors or analysts to explain the behavior of Albanian politicians of the transition period based on their “communist mentality” is not valid in itself. This thesis of the “communist mentality” of politicians that is presented in the Albanian media and public debate is not only misused in a good part of the cases by the authors or analysts (sometimes it even ends up explaining [almost] everything with the logic of “communist mentality”), but also shows enough ambiguity and shortcomings to explain the reality of politics and democratization in Albania. First, the concept of “communist mentality” is not clearly defined by those who present it in the media and public debate. In most cases, we can understand from the use of this concept simply a mental predisposition, or behaviour of politicians with authoritarian tendencies, but nothing more than that. Thus, the application of this concept highlights the authoritarian tendencies of Albanian politicians of the transition period, but this does not necessarily mean that the “truth” of their communist mentality is found. The lack of clear evidence to prove this cause-and-effect relationship, ie the fact that - it is precisely this communist mentality that determines their behavior, or that Albanian politicians of the transition period have borrowed their behavior from the period former communist - is another point that was emphasized in this paper. We saw in the case of the aforementioned authors that this cause-and-effect relationship was taken for granted, without showing us a clear proof of it. Likewise, in this paper, it was pointed out that many of the negative features or phenomena that are attributed to the “communist mentality” (ie seen as a consequence of it), existed even earlier in time, before that communism that the authors themselves refer to. And this tells us that these features of behavior can not necessarily be explained by the concept of “communist mentality”. It also tells us the invalidity of the use of this concept as a factor that can explain the behavior of Albanian politicians or the failures in various aspects of Albanian democracy.

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# Copyright protection in the digital era

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**Renata KAU, PhD.**

Faculty of Law, Political Science and International Relations  
European University of Tirana

## Abstract

*Copyright is a legal institute that protects the author and his works, guaranteeing him some rights of moral nature, such as the right to recognize and mention the authorship, the right to honor, personality and reputation, as well as some rights of economic character as the right of reproduction, distribution and remuneration for any authorized use of the work by third parties.*

*Currently, copyright is one of the most important and discussed topics internationally. The European Parliament has approved on 12 September 2018 the new European Directive on copyright, which aims to harmonize the legislation on copyright in the digital field in all EU member states. The law on copyright in the Republic of Albania is also expected to change, as the new draft law provides for certain additions and amendments to it.*

*In this historic period of emergency, are being developed innovative ideas which may bring new changes in the national and international legislation. During the pandemic many states have taken measures through taxation to protect the publisher sector, which offers their publications online. For this reason, the number of online subscriptions has increased and these have remained even after the end of the emergency. The goal is to fight piracy, such as downloading newspapers through online applications, and in this regard we can say that EU governments have intervened in the right way by preventing unfair competition and great economic damage to enterprises. In fact in some EU countries it is always more difficult to access newspapers or magazines online without a subscription.*

*Also, in response to Covid-19, many artists have spontaneously started broadcasting shows from home using digital platforms. But, are they receiving an appropriate remuneration?*

*Has the UE member states and the Albanian copyright legislation managed to integrate the innovations of the new copyright directives?*

**The research methodology:** *The methodology used is in line with the goals of this study. To realize this work are used critical and comparative analytical methods using primary and secondary sources.*

**Keywords:** *Copyright protection, digital era, European Directive on copyright, Albanian copyright legislation*

## The Digital Single Market Copyright Directive, or the 2019/790 directive.

For many years, social networks have benefited from a legal principle of technological neutrality and limitation of their liability which has allowed them to grow without having to worry about what their users would make available to the public.

An increasing number of artists decide to become partner of a social platform e.g YouTube, monetizing their copyrights on the basis of individual agreements that reserve more than half of the advertising revenues obtained thanks to a given content for the individual artist. But the fees paid to artists and the music industry by YouTube are estimated to be ten

times lower than fees paid by services like Spotify, Apple Music and Deezer (Giuseppe Mazziotti, L'evoluzione del diritto d'autore ai tempi della pandemia, il sole 24 ore, 22 February 2021).

Often the access to online portals is free of charge and authors do not receive adequate profits in connection with the published editions.

Therefore it was necessary to draft a new directive that would protect the rights of these authors who publish their works online, called the "The Digital Single Market Copyright Directive".

The DSM Copyright Directive, or Directive 2019/790, is an European Union directive which aims to harmonize the EU regulatory framework for copyright in digital technologies and in particular the Internet (European Commission, Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on copyright in the Digital Single Market, at [eur-lex.europa.eu](http://eur-lex.europa.eu), 14 s 2016). It was adopted on April 17, 2019 after many negotiations. However, European copyright reform will not have immediate consequences. As foreseen by the procedures for the adoption of EU laws, in fact now it is up to the member states which have 2 years time available (until June 7, 2021) to ratify the text approved by the Strasbourg Parliament and the European Council. Meanwhile the parliaments of the member states can modify or integrate the norms of the Directive. It is expected that by controlling online content this law will permanently change the free circulation of information on the Internet.

Before we start to analyze the main points of the new DSM (Digital Single Market Directive), it is important to explain what DSM means. According to the European Commission, the DSM "is one in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured and where individuals and businesses can seamlessly access and exercise online activities under conditions of fair competition, and a high level of consumer and personal data protection, irrespective of their nationality or place of residence".

In fact, The Digital Single Market will provide a better online access for consumers and businesses across Europe, facilitating the online activity, and the legal barriers due to different legislations of the member States. That's why is important to harmonize rules in order to encourage businesses and increase the consumer confidence.

Copyright supports the creativity in Europe and the digital content is one of the main drivers of the growth of the digital economy. Europeans use the internet for cultural purposes and the digital entertainment and media use has increased with the pandemic. Barriers to cross-border access to copyright-protected content services are common and consumers often can't access these contents from another Member State from their own country. Many of us may not have been able to access a video on youtube (let's say a video song) due to copyright protection the content has in an exclusive territory. So Europe needs a more harmonized legislation in order to reduce differences between national copyright law and to permit European users to have an ampler access to copyright protected online works. That will improve the cross-border use of content for different purposes such as entertainment, information, research, education, text and data mining.

If we were to make a brief overview of the European acts concerning copyright we cannot leave without mentioning Directive 2001/29/EC, known as "Infosoc Directive". It is a Directive of the European Union that was enacted to harmonize aspects of copyright law across Europe, such as copyright exceptions and to implement the Wipo Copyright Treaty (Council Decision of 16 March 2000 on the approval, on behalf of the European Community, of the WIPO Copyright Treaty and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (2000/278/EC), *OJ* no. L089 of 2000-04-11, pp.6-7). But the Infosoc Directive didn't introduce sufficient harmonization patterns on some aspects of copyright and related rights in the context of the digital information society. Some defense instruments are provided by the E-Commerce Directive or Directive 2000/31/EC, but a more complete and modern legislation was necessary to resolve the problems of interpretation for the Court of Justice of the European Union regarding all the particular situations not foreseen by the EU legislator.

Although, the CJEU's approach to reproduction and communication to the public has gradually evolved over the past years and its recent case law has planted the seeds for a harmonized system for accessory liability in copyright. That's why the new directive should correct the weaknesses of the old directives in relation to copyright infringements mostly in two main directions: in the first hand adopting a harmonized EU framework for accessory liability for copyright infringement and secondly introducing an alternative compensation system for content-sharing platforms.

According to the EU Council and Commission, copyright reform will guarantee more rights and a fairer reward for publishers, artists, authors and journalists over major online platforms such as Google, Facebook or Youtube. While some member states including Luxembourg have opposed the proposed text of the New Directive on Copyright and considering that he is "a setback for Digital Single Market rather than a step forward" (Council of the European Union, Joint statement by the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland, Italy and Finland, 15 April 2019, 7986/19 ADD 1 REV 2 (interinstitutional File: 2016/0280(COD))).

Defenders of absolute internet freedom were against the Directive, considering it a limit to freedom of expression and a favor to major publishing companies. But the web giants were particularly opposed, and now they have to pay for the exploitation of artistic, journalistic and cultural works. Authors and publishers, who have seen their revenues decline in recent years

(i.e intermediaries between creators and consumers) are in favor of the Directive (Per l'intermediazione culturale 2-0, Giulia Alonzo e Oliviero Ponte di Pino, Dioniso e la nuvola, FrancoAngeli, 2017).

Many members of European civil society complain that Article 17 of the European Copyright Directive, according to which digital platforms can no longer publish content that infringes copyright, violates fundamental rights.

At the level of law, two equally essential principles are opposed: on the one hand, that of the free circulation of ideas (and their maximum dissemination) and the free access to culture and information that are considered common good; on

the other hand, the right to reward for those who produce content, who should be rewarded for their creativity and work (La legge europea sul copyright, Doppiozero, 28 march 2019).

In fact the directive focuses in particular on two articles, Article 15 and Article 17 which constitute the contested versions of the former Articles 11 and 13.

The DSM Directive contains 86 recitals and 32 articles. Let us analyze two of the most important articles.

Article 15 (ex Article 11) entitled "Protection of journalistic publications in the event of online use" provides that Member States must ensure that authors of works included in a journalistic publication receive an adequate share of the revenue received from publishers for the use of their journalistic publications by information society service providers. This article extends the rights of reproduction and of communication to the public (Art 2 and 3 of the Infosoc Directive) to publishers of press publications established in a Member State. Those who benefit of this right provided in Article 15 are authors of works included in a journalistic publication, a category that finally should be rewarded properly.

Article 17 (ex Article 13) entitled "Use of content protected by service providers for the distribution of content on the Internet", regulates the use of content protected by specialized information platforms such as Google, Facebook or Pinterest which generate profits "copyright free" thanks to materials uploaded by their users. According to this article, the service provider for the distribution of content on the Internet performs an act of communication to the public when it allows the public access to works protected by copyright or other protected materials uploaded by its users by making those available. For this reason, an online content distribution service provider must obtain an authorization from the rights holders by entering into a license agreement in order to communicate with the public or make other works or materials publicly available. This article also obliges major Internet platforms to install control systems to block the sharing of protected content to which users have no rights. These are much more powerful filters than those currently in use, based on extremely complex and therefore extremely expensive algorithms, the cost of which logically cannot be supported by small or medium-sized enterprises. For this reason, start-ups that are less than 3 years old and have a billing of less than 10 million Euros are exempted from these obligations. In particular, this article requires that the content uploaded online within the EU should be checked in advance in order to prevent the uploading of copyrighted material (L'Unione Europea potrebbe rompere Internet, il Post, 23 June 2018).

This means that Google and other online platforms must sign license agreements with artists, musicians, journalists, news publishers to use their online work. Also distribution platforms like Youtube, Instagram, Facebook should install filters to prevent their users from uploading copyrighted material. However, content uploaded to online encyclopedias that have no commercial purpose, such as Wikipedia or the open source software distribution platform, is excluded from copyright protection.

According to the publishers, this topic is very important for them and for the survival of the publishing industry, since so far most of the content, including quality ones, has been blocked by search engines and social networks. According to Maurizio Molinari, director of the Italian newspaper Repubblica, the transposing of the directive is the beginning of a path and is vital for two reasons. Firstly because information is free only if it is financially supported and, secondly, the activities that are transferred to the digital network must be legally protected otherwise we give space to a Far West in the network, with the risks of piracy and cybernetics very dangerous and for our children. In fact, it will not be easy for these tech giants, who pay little tax in Europe and make a lot of money, to accept the new rules imposed by the directive (Martella: La direttiva Ue sul Copyright sarà legge entro l'anno, La Repubblica, 6 September 2020).

France became the first member state to implement the provisions of the directive on July 23, 2019. The new French law requires platforms to obtain authorization from a press agency or publisher before reproducing or communicating all or part of the press's publication in accord with the core change of Article 15 of the directive. Other sections of the law show that France's implementation of Article 15 goes beyond the requirements of the directive. The Directive's other provisions, however, have yet to be transposed (The EU Copyright Directive: Potential Copyright Liability and a "Best Efforts" Standard for Platforms, JDSUPRA, 27 January 2020)

The German government is on its third draft of a bill to transpose the DSM Copyright Directive into German law. Remarkably, Article 17 of the Directive is not envisaged to become an integral part of the German Copyright Act. According to the current draft, the service provider must pay the author an appropriate remuneration for any communication to the public of presumably permitted uses. This obligation goes beyond what the Directive asks for. Further, the German draft contains provisions on in-court and out-of-court proceedings, complaint procedures, measures against abuse, a right to information, a domestic agent for service and rules on related rights (A country by country analysis of EU copyright reform implementation, Pinset Mansons, 4 March 2021)

In Spain, the DSM Copyright Directive has yet to be transposed fully into law. There have been pointed out contradictions between the Directive and the existing Intellectual Property Law. The Covid-19 pandemic has reiterated the importance of an effective and swift implementation of the Directive into Irish law. The UK played an active role in discussions about the DSM Copyright Directive in the European Parliament and European Council, but is no longer a member of the EU so it will not implement the Directive (A country by country analysis of EU copyright reform implementation, Pinset Mansons, 4 March 2021).

No member state has formally adopted the provisions of Article 17 of the directive. In fact, in *Poland v Parliament and Council*, Poland has filed a legal challenge before the Court of Justice of the European Union, seeking to annul Article 17 in its entirety or at least the article's sections that require platforms to make their "best efforts" to remove and prevent the future upload of allegedly infringing copyrighted material. The plea alleges that the provisions of this section of the

directive infringe on the right to freedom of expression and information guaranteed by Article 11 of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union (The EU Copyright Directive: Potential Copyright Liability and a “Best Efforts” Standard for Platforms, JDSUPRA, 27 january 2020).

During the pandemic, the Italian government of Conte took measures through taxation to protect the publishing sector. For this reason the number of newspaper purchases at the newsstand has increased and there has been a real boom of website visits and online subscriptions, which have remained even after the end of the emergency. But governments must continue in this direction in establishing a legal framework. The goal is to fight piracy, such as downloading newspapers through online applications, and in this regard we can say that the Italian government has intervened in the right way by preventing unfair competition and great economic damage to enterprises. (Martella: La direttiva Ue sul Copyright sara' legge entro l'anno, La Repubblica, 6 september 2020)

Finally, Denmark is the first Member State to officially announce that most parts of the Directive will not be implemented before the deadline. In November the Ministry of Culture announced that it would only implement Articles 15 and 17 during this parliamentary year and implementation of the rest of the directive would only commence after the summer (European Digital Single Market Directive implementation update: more proposals to protect users rights, Infojustice, 10 January 2021).

## Copyright in Albania and its current problems

In Albania, copyright is regulated by law No. 15/2016 on copyright and related rights, which has been modified and integrated over the years in relation to the technological development, information development and of the international legislation. This law disciplines all the aspects related to copyright including moral and economic rights, typologies of protected rights, their duration, the transfer of property rights, the restriction on the exercise of copyright, administration of copyright etc.

Meanwhile, in order to solve the problems encountered in the practical field in the implementation of this law and its approximation with the EU directives, a draft law for some additions and changes in the law has been presented.

This draft law initially proposed to amend or clarify the provisions regarding the representation of rights administration by collective administration agencies, the avoidance of conflict of interest and the specification of the manner of allocation of fees and remuneration collected to collective administration agencies. In the public hearings with the authors regarding the proposals of this draft law, the regulatory authority of the Ministry of Culture stated that a lack of transparency was noticed by the agencies during the monitoring. According to them, violations have been committed by the Albautor agency regarding the amounts of rewards that the authors receive each year, since the documents stated amounts are different from those that the authors have effectively received. The authors raise the problem of not being paid for their work and this is the point to which they demand solution. The Ministry of Culture proposes that there should be only one counter for copyright collection such as Suada, but this point is opposed by the existing associations as they claim that this will bring concentration. Meanwhile, according to the Ministry, a single channel would be more transparent to users and easier for monitoring by the ministry. Various authors have disputed the amendments regarding the merger of collective administration agencies, considering it favorable for a certain interest group. The authors have also asked for a fairer redistribution of the remuneration received by the AAK (Agency of Collective Administration), which currently according to Article 138/3 of the copyright law is: 40 percent will go to the agency the author rights representative, 30 percent will go to the agency, the representative of the rights of performers, 30 percent will go to the agency the representative of the rights of producers, including publishers and producers of phonograms.

*If we refer to Article 138 of the current Copyright Law, it provides:*

Unique agency for performing the function of collecting rewards (Single counter)

1. At a written agreement, the AAKs agree and decide to which of them will be transferred the function of collecting tariffs for all categories of rights holders.
2. If they do not reach the above agreement, within 30 days from the entry into force of the remuneration fees, this decision is made by the National Copyright Council (hereinafter KKDA), for one of the licensed agencies, based on the following criteria: a) to have the administrative capacity to cover the territory; b) to strictly implement the provisions for the procedure of collecting rewards, according to this law; c) to have a duration of the activity of the subject over years; ç) to have mutual representation contracts with counterpart agencies and international recognition; d) to possess the most appropriate infrastructure, which guarantees the observance of transparency in the collection and distribution of income for its members; dh) to have the assets of the most appropriate and cost effective platform for the administration of rights.
3. The agreement provided in point 1 of this article, or the decision of KKDA, provided in point 2 of this article, must contain the manner and percentage of the fee and remuneration collected to AAK, as follows: a) 40 percent will go to the agency, the copyright representative; b) 30 percent will go to the agency, the representative of the rights of performers; c) 30 percent will go to the agency, the representative of the rights of the producers, including the publishers and producers of the phonograms.

*In the draft law article 138 is reworded:*

Unique counter for performing the function of collecting rewards.

1. To ensure an efficient and simplified service for user entities, is created a Unique counter which performs services for the function of collecting remuneration fees, for all categories of holders of rights in collective administration, protected by all licensed collective management agencies.
2. The Unique counter is compound by representatives of licensed collective management agencies in the Republic of Albania. Each of the AAK has (one) member representative in the highest decision-making body.
3. The appointment of the highest executive body is carried out through an agreement of the members of the highest decision-making body of the unique agency. The selection of the highest executive body is carried out taking into account the avoidance of any possible direct or indirect interest with the activity exercised by each AAK. The highest executive body does not derive from the ranks of licensed collective management agencies. The deadline for reaching an agreement is 15 days before the end of the validity of the decision for the selection of the highest executive body.
4. If no agreement is reached between the AAK for the selection of the highest executive body within the set deadline, this decision is made by the KKDA (National Council for Copyright).
5. The distribution of the collected rewards to AAK is done in a fair way and in support of the periodic monitoring reports of AAK on the current use of related works and rights.

From what we analyze with the new draft law we will have the creation of a unique Counter which will perform the services for the function of collecting reward fees, for all categories of rights holders in collective administration, protected by all licensed collective administration agencies. The unique counter will consist of representatives of licensed collective management agencies in the Republic of Albania. Each of the AAK will have (one) member representative in the highest decision-making body. We will also have the selection of the highest executive body which will be carried out through an agreement of the members of the highest decision-making body of the unique agency taking into account the avoidance of any possible direct or indirect interest with the activity exercised by each AAK. This authority does not derive from the ranks of the licensed collective management agencies. Regarding the distribution of rewards collected by the AAK, we have no longer the distribution of 40-30-30 but in point 8 of article 138 we talk about a fair distribution of rewards and in support of periodic monitoring reports of the AAK on the actual use of related works and rights.

In fact, if we make a comparison with the legislations of the EU countries, this change is in accordance with the standards of these legislations in theory, but in practice Albania still lacks the structures to make them a reality. Normally, with the creation of the unique Counter, it is expected to be created a new institution that will have its own organizational chart and to function properly relevant offices distributed in the country.

Also in the presented draft law some more important additions and changes belong to some regulations of works without author, the use of copyrighted works by blind persons, with impaired vision or otherwise with disabilities in reading printed materials.

Even with regard to the final adjustments in fact it was necessary to be made, as they have detailed important aspects that if adopted would facilitate the application of the law.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The new Copyright Directive aims to make a real reform in terms of copyright in the DSM. The procedures oblige Member states to integrate these provisions into national legislation by 7 June 2021.

Two are the crucial analyzed articles: Article 15 provides that Member States must ensure that authors of works included in a journalistic publication receive an adequate share of the revenue received from publishers for the use of their journalistic publications by information society service providers. Those who benefit of this right provided in Article 15 are authors of works included in a journalistic publication, a category that finally should be rewarded properly.

Article 17 regulates the use of content protected by specialized information platforms such as Google, Facebook or Pinterest which generate profits "copyright free" thanks to materials uploaded by their users. According to this article, the service provider for the distribution of content on the Internet performs an act of communication to the public when it allows the public access to works protected by copyright or other protected materials uploaded by its users by making those available. For this reason, an online content distribution service provider must obtain an authorization from the rights holders by entering into a license agreement in order to communicate with the public or make other works or materials publicly available.

From a practical point of view, the transposition of the Directive is not simple, as it often conflicts with domestic law, as in the case of Spain. Article 17, which has been challenged by Poland, is considered problematic. Some states claim that some concepts in the Directive are unclear, that complicates its implementation and interpretation. Another problem remains the practical implementation of the Directive, the technical difficulties arising from the obligations set out in Articles 15 and 17, especially for small and medium-sized providers. So in all likelihood this directive will strengthen the

dominant position of technology giants. However, some countries such as Italy have completed the integration of the directive in domestic legislation, while other states are in process of implementation. However, if this transposition is done properly, it will help to achieve a “fair balance” between the rights and interests of rights holders and users. According to lawyers, the implementation of the Directive will increase legal certainty for all stakeholders, enable the development of the information society and provide fair compensation to rights holders for the use of their work in the online environment.

From the above analysis, changes and integrations in the copyright law are foreseen in Albania as well. These changes do not belong to the new Copyright Directive, but to the current issues of the law in Albania related to the modalities of collection and distribution of authors’ remuneration. The new draft law envisages the creation of a Single Counter with representatives from all agencies of collective copyright administration in the country. If the draft law is approved, new support structures will have to be created for its implementation.

Currently in Albania there are major problems in the application of copyright law by not providing authors with the fair remuneration. Greater work is needed in securing the means for collecting royalties. For this reason, concrete measures must be taken for the application of the law by setting up efficient structures and using the appropriate mechanisms. In the world all this happens through a capillary network of offices located throughout the country, which issue authorizations, collect fees in order to protect domestic and foreign works, the latter through mutual representation agreements with companies of authors from the whole world. Also in different EU countries in terms of online unique collective management counters issue different types of licenses, to allow internet operators to have full rights for the distribution of works via Internet.

There are no signs of efforts to transpose the new directive into the Albanian legislation. It would be difficult the practical implementation of this directive not the normative one, because as experience shows the Albanian legislation in a large part of it has successfully adopted the EU legislations. Access to online portals is always free and authors do not receive the appropriate profits in connection with copyright protected works. The Albanian state must take urgent measures to protect the categories of authors who publish their works online by making the necessary adjustments that actually have their origin in this new EU directive.

The pandemic has made it even more necessary to protect the copyrighted works online, as the lack of an adequate legislation during the pandemic has more than ever penalized authors who have not received the deserved rewards for making their works available in internet.

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PANEL III

**ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL  
IN DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY**

# Comparative Representations of Albania in Time and the Economist Magazines<sup>1</sup>

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**Belina BUDINI**

European University of Tirana

## Abstract

*Albania depicted as the most mysterious, isolated, forgotten Balkan country on the part of the international news media, is by no means an exception. It is common today as it was almost 100 years ago for western media outlets to find not so flattering exceptionalities in the Albanian land, in its politics and its people. When it comes to this “tiny, little country”, journalistic codes of American and British media give a rather coherent subject in international terms, despite their respective editorial lines. The Economist and Time magazines are compared and contrasted here in accordance with the media functional equivalence approach, despite their different political or editorial alignments, in order to understand their coverage of a rather distant international subject such as that of Albania in the context of the Balkans.*

*The empirically measured media content on the subject of Albania is dispersed and sporadic through years, events and focus. However, the inconsistent coverage and stance given to the subject does translate into a rather constant view or representation through time. The research shows that this is almost a script 100 years old with few nuances, perpetuating therefore an abnormal image and reputation of Albania and the Balkans overall in international terms. The comparative media content analysis of Time magazine and The Economist show how the western media construction of the country as an “abnormal other” still prevails, despite an evolving historical context for Albania as well as other Balkan countries who are also reported in the same vein over time. To look at this more closely, the search and findings are first organized separately in terms of quantitative and qualitative data and then are compared and contrasted in terms of the extent, nature and frames of their coverage.*

**Key Words:** Media Representations, Albania in the Foreign Press, British Media, American Media, Time, The Economist, International Media Representations of the Balkans

## Methodology

This study is based on a combined methodological approach from within the empirical tradition of the media studies and research: the textual studies and the study of the agency. Both quantitative and qualitative instruments are used to collect and analyze the data. The content analyzed consists of the news about Albania featured in *Time* magazine and *The Economist*, in terms of their frequency, placement, topics and framings; as well as the language and the discourse used to depict the country, its people and its politics. The study of the agency builds mainly on media studies literature and a few interviews with the editors covering Albania.

Based on the above research, the main argument of this study is that the subject of Albania is approached and constructed in a repetitive constant way over time on the part of *Time* and *The Economist* magazines from their early days to nowadays. The hypothesis is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> This paper reflects a research project that the author has initiated with SEESOX, St Antony's College, University of Oxford 2019-2022.

"In evolving historical contexts, Albania as a Balkan country remains approached and reported in a constant repetitive fashion over time, perpetuating an abnormal image and reputation of the region in international terms".

Therefore, this article shall endeavor to support the thesis that, despite an evolutionaryhistorical context, the topic of Albania in the western press, exemplified by *Time* and *The Economist* magazines, is approached, and reported in a constant repetitive fashion, giving as a result a fixedimage of the country and its region. Its continuity and repetitiveness are imbedded first in the language used in terms of key words and phrases, taglines, epithets, comparisons and other stylistic means of journalistic expression such as parody and irony. An important part is therefore evidenced in the very headlines and subheadings of the newsmagazines, as well as in their captures. Secondly, the quantitative data analyses aims at mapping out to what extent the number of features published year after year, its classification in order of rubrics, topics, length, places, words and most mentioned personalities have contributed to a consistent view over time, from one period to another.

Thirdly, the relevant media studies literature and further interviews with *magazine* editors and their codes of practices allow for some introspection linked to the theories of the social production of news and particularly the social construction of the international news<sup>2</sup>. This is to say that the press practices at *Time* and *The Economist* specifically and their institutionalization in terms of the production of foreign news<sup>2</sup> as well as their countries international relations in general, fuel its contents or its approaches towards distant and foreign countries like Albania<sup>3</sup>.

First reason for the selection of the media is methodological based on their functional equivalence as international newsmagazines that enables a comparative approach. Also, the criteria of the presence of Albania as an international subject is present in both outlets significantly; the criteria of weekly periodicity and compact body of data and third the criteria of a long-term coverage (1923-2013 for the *Time*) and (1912-2020 for the *Economist*).

Second reason for this choice is the international scope and relevance of both media outlets, with *Time* fulfilling the criteria of a flagship media on the part of the American media spectrum and *The Economist* for the British media spectrum; the choice is also based on the criteria of the significant international audience and impact of *TIME* with 20 million as its total audience, whereas *The Economist* with its broad interest in global affairs has earned the reputation of the co-called "Bible of Global Affairs" by the *NYT*.

The study classifying criteria for the account of Albania as a study object has been first the name "Albania" mentioned in: Headlines, Subheadings and First Paragraphs; second the subject of Albania referred to as: Foreign state and country, geographical territory, population, government, foreign affairs and international relations, traditions and culture, economy and social life. Only Albanians mentioned as subjects of the state of Albania are included and not as subjects of other states such as Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro or diaspora that might constitute separate study subjects.

Overall, this study addresses a problem that has not been approached significantly in the context of Albania, as a way to understand how the subject of the country is reported and represented by the American and the British media and how it relates to its international relations and public diplomacy as well as in terms of international PR, country branding or image. It might also be valuable so as to its regional scope, applicability and comparativeness with other Balkan countries represented along similar lines.

The periodization of the study according to three different contexts of time for both magazines, was necessary for drawing comparisons between them. In the context of the first period 1912-1944, Albania accounts as independent state, after First World War and during the Second World War. In the second period, that of 1945-1989, Albania is put in the context of the communist dictatorship and in the context of the Cold War and its affiliation with the East Block. Third period covers the years after the fall of the communism, from 1990-today when

Albania accounts as an emerging democratic country in the context of post-communism, in terms of a transitional democracy and as Western Balkan country aspiring the European Union membership and integration.

The study is based on a comparative media content analysis, therefore it is an empirical study with elements of textual/discourse analysis and media agency analysis. The media coverage of Albania accounts also as a case study in the context of Balkan countries. Therefore, the focus is first on the content of the two international magazines on the subject of Albania in terms of: extensiveness of coverage (number and frequency of media contents), topics, framings, discourse, styles, narratives, language, sources and images that are elements of importance to the textual analysis both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The media agency analysis is also relevant to the study, because it helps to understand the impact of the editorial stance of the news media, its international coverage, politics, sources of international news, through relevant aspects of media ownership, management and circulation as well as map out the impact of foreign affairs, editorial boards, international correspondents and audience profile or impact.

The main data-collecting instruments that has been used are the digital archives of *Time* and the *Economist* magazines. For *Time* it is used [www.time.com](http://www.time.com) archive, whereas for *The*

*Economist* it is used Gale as a database for retracting articles with fully searchable complete facsimile editions of the *Economist* from 1843 to 2015. The selections of the most relevant articles is based on length, place, subjects and classification (about 250 items / each magazine), followed by evidencing of discourses, frames, styles, metaphors and images, epithets as well as most used contexts, most used terms and taglines, descriptions, names and protagonists, sources, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Berger Peter L. Luckmann Thomas, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Open Road Media, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Philo C. Wasburn, *The social construction of international news, We're talking about them, they're talking about us*, London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002.

The theoretical research consists of a literature review based on media studies, journalism and international news media, international relations, history and culture studies of the Balkans. Another complementary research instrument is the interview with journalists, correspondents, editors of *Time* and *The Economist*. The above data are organized equally in tables of quantitative and qualitative data and findings, combined with the evidencing from interviews as well as an overview of both media profiles complemented with their editorial and reporting practices.

For *Time* and the American media analysis are interviewed Massimo Calabresi, Actual Editor at *Time* Washington Bureau, former director of the Vienna Bureau from 1995-1999, who has covered the Kosovo War and the civil conflict of spring 1997 in Albania from Vlora; James Graff, editor of the Vienna Bureau and senior correspondent of *Time* from 1990 to 1995, who has also covered the first elections after the fall of dictatorship in Albania in 1991; Edward Barnes: War correspondent of *Time* and *Life* magazines from 1984 to 2001; Altin Raxhimi, Albanian journalist that has worked as a stringer/fixer for *Time* from Albania during the Kosovo War and as a freelancer until 2011; Angela Leuker, administrator and reporting support at the Vienna Office for South Eastern Europe and the region of the Balkans in the period from 1983 to 2006 and finally professor Robert Herzstein, historian of *Time* magazine and Biographer of the founder and first editor in chief of *Time* magazine, Henry Luce.

For the *Economist* and the British Media are set to be conducted interviews with Tim Judah of the *Economist*, Timothy Garton Ash of *The Guardian*, Gabriel Partos of the BBC, Mathew Parris of *The Times* and professor Noel Malcolm, renowned historian and author of a recent book on Albanians.

The most important research questions are:

- How it is approached the subject of Albania from *Time* and *The Economist*, historically?
- What are the sources and the techniques used to get informed about Albania?
- Is there a constant or different approach, a single discourse or various ways of representing Albania in different periods of time?
- What are the similarities and differences of coverage given to Albania from the American and the British media?
- What are the similarities and differences of representations between Albania and other Balkan countries?
- How the media discourses relate to other agents such as politics, public diplomacy and international relations between respective countries?

## Content analysis

The findings from the content analysis show that Albania is often seen on the worst of terms with every other factor, internal or external, as if nothing ever goes on with it. So do get represented its people, territory and politicians, as well as its international relations, politics and developments overall. No matter the specific subject under discussion, its context or how it is taken into account in the first place, the narrative doesn't change much as a way of seeing and unfolding the subject. The most common frames being used are those of insignificance as a "tiny", "minuscule", "forgotten", "lonely", "poor", "isolated", "obscure" country; but also frames of defiance and sympathy by contrast to the inferiority schemata. More similar than different, the magazines share frames of a "messy", "chaotic", "destabilized", "undemocratic" country against few positive features mainly related to its natural beauty, beaches and sympathized cultural traditions of honor and faithfulness of Albanians as reliable friends.

Sometimes, negative and positive stereotypes are intrinsically related, from the early days, such as in *The Economist* article, "Albania and The Adriatic" where Albanians are labelled "untameable mountaineers" whose [the Geghs's] sole interest and lifelong study is guerilla war, but after all, the article states that "the Geghs should be preserved from ruthless extermination. To see them quickens sympathy and gives substance to an abstract dislike for ravage and massacre."

Physically the finest race in Europe, in character the most abnormal, they are a possession European ill afford to lose in these days when civilization tends to eliminate all special characteristics and all peculiar distinction with them", going on further stating that "we can scarcely doubt it in the case of a race whose character is wholly composed of intolerance of domination, whose single want is a good fight now and then and who are quite content to be left to fight each other undisturbed"<sup>4</sup>.

Often the language or discourse is that of a perennial abnormality and not a flattering exceptionality exemplified in the extreme schemata related to the territory, to the climate, to the people, to the nation as it is referred to as the smallest of the smallest, the worst of the bad, or the least of the last. Extremities of the size are often associated with other exceptional characteristics such as in the phrase: "Pocked-size Albania has always been the most backward of the Iron Curtain countries." or that "Albania is the tiniest, the poorest and most backward of all communist satellites in Europe and the only one that has no common border with another state in the U.S.S.R's empire". Further on, the enmeshed extremities go hand in hand as in the phrase "The tiny nation that Russia and Red China are using to work off their ideological aggressions, is tucked away in a remote corner of the Balkans"<sup>5</sup>. In another report from *Time* magazine, the extreme of the extremes is depicted as follows: "Like Dante's *Inferno*, Communism has its different levels of horror and misery. At the bottom of the pit, by almost any measure, lies Albania..." During the communist period it is also referred by *Time* magazine as "the only satellite isolated from Moscow by unfriendly territory", "satellite Albania, Soviet

<sup>4</sup> "Albania and the Adriatic", *The Economist*, July 22, 1911, Vol.073, issue 3543.

<sup>5</sup> *Eagle's country: The Little Land they are fighting over*, *Time* magazine, 27 October 1961

*Communism only Mediterranean base*", "Albania: the black sheep", "the most wretched country in Europe", "the least accessible nation in the communist world today", "a minute, mountainous country... poor in living conditions, rich in anachronisms and completely alone in its bizarre comradeship with Red China...", "the little Balkan dictatorship", "puppet state of Albania" or "China's sole friend in Europe...", "It is Europe's poorest nation and one of the world's most closed societies"...

The exceptionality and abnormality is still present after the fall of communism, as Time writes that "Tiny Albania emerged from communist dictatorship in 1990 only to tumble into a rough world of gangsters, fraudulent financial machinations and incompetent governance, exacerbated by lawless capitalism and devil-may-care politics"<sup>6</sup>. The Economist also accounts for "Bad to worse", "Edge of the abyss" or "Bad gets worse in Albania" in its headlines after the fall of communism. The entry of the latest article goes like this: "In Tirana, Europe's poorest country, things are going even more horribly wrong"<sup>7</sup>. Occasionally, the exceptions are also positive as in an article by Tim Judah of 8<sup>th</sup> May 2011 that ends with the phrase: "Albanians, of all the people in the western Balkans, are by far the most optimistic. Let's hope today's battle of Stalingrad ends without casualties and breaks the country's political deadlock"<sup>8</sup>. However, the overall schemata of the article is still abnormality, related to the local elections that year, under the headline "Albania's Stalingrad" and the subheading: "A chance to end a two year political stalemate", further stating that "normal political life in Albania has been on hold for almost two years", and "ever since Albanian politics has rolled from crisis to crisis..."<sup>9</sup>.

## Agency analysis

The agency analysis tells that a constant negative approach of the western media towards the subject of Albania through time is based on a set of defining factors such as:

1. Organizational and Professional media practices towards distant foreign subjects; The Power structures and the political economy of the mass media play a pivotal role
2. The fact that there is no regular correspondence from Albania or close in the Balkans related to the centralized organizational structure of the media and the fact that the sources of information about Albania are scarce, indirect, unidentified or distant...

The lack of pro-active information on the part of Albania is considered as a primary limitation for the coverage it gets abroad. Referring to a 100 years old article of the Economist, "News from Albania is at all times untrustworthy – the Albanians themselves have no means of giving their own account of events"<sup>10</sup>. In another article titled "Albania and Tito" of 1949, a special correspondent writes that "The small Adriatic republic of Albania has become important. Information about the country is scarce and reliable information is unobtainable. Authentic western correspondents can seldom visit the country and its government has diplomatic relations with France but not with Britain or America. Attempts to estimate the situation can only be based on the speeches at the Albanian Communist (recently named – Workers) Party conference held in November and reported at length by Tirana radio, corrected by a study of the Yugoslav case put out by Belgrade propaganda."<sup>11</sup> But even today it can be argued that Albania doesn't convey much strategically in terms of international relations but also in terms of the country brand image. Negative perceptions and real problems have to be taken into account when addressing the question of international PR and strategic communication. Also it has to be emphasized that positive stances are often short lived even when they are projected and the negative images are the ones which are well-established and hard to change or transform.

"Letters to the editors"; reactions towards negative representations

However, the reactive approach has also to be taken into consideration, especially in the rubrics "Letters to the editor". Therefore, the most positive approaches to Albania can be found in the letters sent to the editors of the Economist and Time magazines. In an article that dates back to 1913, May 17, under the headline "The Sufferings and Needs of Albania", Telford Erickson, as director of the American Board Mission in Central Albania with headquarters in Elbasan, writes to the editor of The Economist, based on the information told by the leading Albanian men of Elbasan, Peqin, Kavaja and Durazzo, that "I am certain that no people in the Balkans are more in need of help and more deserving of sympathy at the hands of England at this moment than the Albanians. After all, they are the victims and not the victors, the spoils and not the spoiled".

Another article of the section "Opinion and editorial", published also as a letter to the editor, reads "It is no good considering Albania from a superior worldly point of view..." from JanCrew and Neil Taylor, Regent Holidays Ltd, "Albania", April 1, 1978<sup>12</sup>. The letter is a reaction against a correspondent of The Economist that had published an article about a holiday in Albania, on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1978. Having spent a holiday there too, the authors of the letter write that "the statement that children are apparently taught to abuse, and even stone foreigners is baseless... In a village we visited a crowd of peasants pressed round us, in the most friendly way. It is no good considering Albania from a superior point of view"<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Time, "The Trouble with Democracy: Albania's Worrisome Vote, 21 May 2011 (Time.com)

<sup>7</sup> "Bad gets worse in Albania", The Economist, Nr.13, 1993, 329, issue 7837, p.56.

<sup>8</sup> "Local elections in Albania/ Albania's Stalingrad?" Ex/communist Europe/Eastern Approaches, Tim Judah, The Economist May 8<sup>th</sup> 2011.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> "Albania and the Adriatic", The Economist, July 22, 1911, volume 073, issue 3543

<sup>11</sup> "Albania and Tito", The Economist, Jan. 1, 1949, vol. 156, issue nr 5497 under the section News

<sup>12</sup> "Albania", The Economist, April 1, 1978, vol.267, issue 7022.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

In another reaction letter to the editor dated Jan.22, 1949, R. Westgate writes that *“from enquiries I have made I am not alone in finding the Economist anti-Albania obsession one of the less comprehensible oddities of contemporary British journalism. ... I feel it no unreasonable to complain that the writer failed utterly to show just what is intolerable and just how Albania is a nuisance to him and The Economist in any sense that say the Soviet Union is not. With what authority can your correspondent speak of the murder of British sailors by Albania? The International Court at The Hague has not yet made any such finding and seems unlikely to do so as long as Britain's case lacks any stronger prop than the evidence of a short-sighted discredited Yugoslav emigre. Also is not your journal guilty of a grave moral shortcoming in anticipating a verdict and treating an international body with a contempt it would not dare show towards any court of law in this country? A similar lack of consideration for morals is evident in the means your correspondent advocates for ridding the world of the nuisance that is present-day Albania”*... To this letter the editor responds that *“Albania is not a greater nuisance to The Economist than is the Soviet Union, but is considerably more vulnerable. To concentrate on removing such nuisances as it seems practically possible to remove is a sound principle of power politics, which the Soviet Government has long pursued. An understanding with Yugoslavia has been advocated by The Economist only on condition that Yugoslavia where to cease intervening in Greece. That Albania has radically readjusted her economic plans as a result of the breach with Yugoslavia is clearly shown in the speeches made at the Congress of the Albanian Communist Party in November”*.

## Positive coverage and nuances

Occasionally Albania does get positive coverage in The Economist and Time magazines, such as in a recent article that appeared in the Europe section of the print edition of The Economist, under the headline “The Albanian all-stars”. The online version published on 3rd October 2020 starts with the question “What do Dua Lipa, Rita Ora and Ava Max have in common?” referring to popstars with Albanian roots that according to the magazine are conquering the world. The Economist states that *“Until recently the most famous ethnic Albanians were Mother Teresa (a nun who cared for orphans and lepers in India) and Enver Hoxha (a homicidal communist despot). Now to the saint and the sinner must be added the singers”*. *“The pop stars, along with a clutch of Albanian footballers in top teams across Europe, play an ‘incredibly important role’ in helping to change Albanians’ image from one of conflict”*, says Petrit Selimi, a former foreign minister of Kosovo to the Economist, whereas along the unusual lines of parody the magazine also states that *“Ava Max’s sexy single ‘Sweet but Psycho’ is universally considered more fun than Hoxha’s literary offering, ‘Albania Challenges Khrushchev Revisionism’*, whereas referring to Ms Lipa’s father, Dukagjin Lipa, it also states that *“throughout history, Albanians have been squashed, but the success of this generation of musicians shows that ‘given the chance, we excel.”* Even though they are labelled the stars of the Albanian diaspora, the story emphasizes the fact that they often perform back home, “wrapping themselves in Kosovar or Albanian flags, because they clearly feel a need to represent the nation and in return earn an outpouring of love. The magazine cites Ms Rexha saying on a visit to Albania that “My heart bleeds Albanian blood”, whereas mentions that Ms Lipa courted controversy by tweeting a map associated with extreme Albanian nationalists showing a vast Greater Albania, even though she later said her post had been “misinterpreted”. On the background of the article, it is stated that the parents of the stars who grew up abroad left the Balkans in the turbulent early 1990s, but theirs was not always a story of refugee rags to riches, because The Ora and Lipa families were part of Kosovo’s elite and both girls attended a top performing-arts school in London.

## Findings: comparing periods through quantitative and qualitative data

The quantitative data overall show a constant representation of Albania in terms of rubrics and topics of coverage over time. Frequency of coverage is sporadic in years but relatively constant in periods. The configuration and placement if not always constant. In qualitative terms, the discourse is rather constant, respectively a Discourse of Albanian abnormality and American superiority for Time magazine and in the same vein a discourse of Albanian abnormality and British superiority for The Economist. The most used taglines for the size of Albania are those of a “Tiny Albania”, “Pocket Size country”, “Little Albania”, “Miniscule Albania”, “The smallest country of the region”, “Sandwiched country between Greece, Italy and ex-Yugoslavia”, etc. The most frequent frames of the subject are those of “insignificance” as a “small, isolated, forgotten country” and of “political destabilization” as a “messy country” with “non-democratic tradition”. Sometimes dichotomy is also present as a way of framing the subject in terms of “Poverty/Sufferings” as well as in terms of “Inferiority/Defiance” or “Abnormality/Sympathy”.

The qualitative data show that the main discourse is that of abnormality and exceptionality with extreme schemata related to the territory, to the climate, to the people, to the nation, whereas the taglines for Albania are those of a small, tiny or little Albania and its variants such as the smallest country, the pocket-size country, the very little kingdom. Often the extreme is reinforced as in the example “the smallest nation in the Balkans” that relates to Albania as the smallest of the smallest, and elsewhere as the worst of the bad, or the least of the last. The analysis next focuses on the findings from Time magazine according to three periods of study, first in the context of free and independent Albania, to the dictatorship period under communism and the third period that explores the developments after the fall of communism to nowadays.

## First period: That independent but “small, little, tiny country of Albania” (1923-1944)

The first period (1923-1944) relates to the aftermaths of the First World War and the Second World War that produced battlefields to be covered in the Balkans in general and Albania in particular, as can be seen under the rubric of the magazine: “Balkan Theater”. The language of extremes for this period relates also to the climate, to the poverty as well as to the political developments and to the political leaders. Albania is called “Most primitive and out-of-the-way spot in Europe, most

Oriental than Western...” in a long report that dates 17 April 1939. Albanians are also portrayed as “filthy, wretched, impoverished, fly-bitten, famine starved and earthquake stricken” in a report

titled “Albania, President into King” that gives a contrast between the state of Albanian people and the King Ahmet Zogu. Often the extreme is reinforced as in the example “the smallest nation in the Balkans” that relates to Albania as the smallest of the smallest<sup>14</sup>. The language of extremes relates also to the climate, to the poverty as well as to the political developments and to the political leaders. In a report of the 11 January 1937, Tirana, the capital of Albania has been described as “the worst hole in Europe” in the phrase: “*Tirana, the mountainous little kingdom’s capital, is regarded among diplomats as the worst hole in Europe*”<sup>15</sup>. The Time report on Albania on the 21 of March 1927, depicts Tirana as “*that little, vile, ill-favored capital*”<sup>16</sup>. The extreme language goes on with other depictions such as in the phrase “*The almost rural silence of Tirana, the small capital perched in the mountains of the tiny Kingdom of Albania*”<sup>17</sup>. In other reports Time mentions the “*wild mountains behind Tirana*”<sup>18</sup>, or “*Through the jagged mountains of Albania*”<sup>19</sup> in a report referring to the extreme reliefs as well as in the phrase “*the mountains peaks and troughs of perpendicular little Albania*” in another report<sup>20</sup>. In a long report that dates 17 April 1939 Time depicts Albania as “*Most primitive and out-of-the-way spot in Europe, most Oriental than Western...*”<sup>21</sup>. Referring to its size again, in a report of the 1924, Time writes “*Albania (about the size of New Jersey plus Maryland)*”<sup>22</sup>. As to the Albanian people Time writes “*Albanians: filthy, wretched, impoverished, fly-bitten, famine starved and earthquake stricken*” in a report titled “Albania, President into King” that gives a contrast between the state of Albanian people and the King Ahmet Zogu<sup>23</sup>. Moreover he is referred to as the “Bachelor King”, “Little King Zog”, “His smart little majesty king Zog”, “Footlose Zog”, “Lonely King Zog”, “Hoarse-voiced King Zog”, etc.

The journalistic style of Time writing is famous for its colors, boldness and parody, especially during the years studied here. Albania gets it all as a subject, but most of all is characterized by parody. Headings such as “Albania: Footlose Zog”, or “Albania: Zog and Jerry” or “Albania: International Cough”, “Albania: Swiss Laws, Greek Patriarch” are parodies in themselves. The body of the reports offers other colorful parodies such as in the constructs referring to Albanians as “*fierce-faced... hoped on scrawny donkeys*”<sup>24</sup> or “baggy-trousered clansmen”<sup>25</sup>. In other expressions, Time refers to Albania as “That sharp spur-wheel, Albania: or as “ready to be prodded” (International: Scared, 28 March 1927). Ahmet Zogu himself is often the favorite subject of parody when it is called freely “bachelor king”, “footlose Zog”, “Italy’s puppet”, “His smart little majesty King Zog”, “hog-tied (with a crown), “lonely King Zog” or “hoarse-voiced King Zog”<sup>26</sup>.

In a longer version Time refers to him as follows: “*Though Albania may lack roads, she should never lack for royal palaces. Last week Italian workmen and engineers, sent by King Zog’s patron and protector, Dictator Mussolini, laid the foundations of a new royal palace, Zog’s fifth outside the grimy old capital city of Tirana...*” and below: “Albanians recalled that at the time of King Zog’s coronation last year, only one expresses intention of genuine Scanderbeg descendants to slit Zog’s royal gullet dissuaded the new King from adopting the title of Scanderbeg II”<sup>27</sup>.

## Second Period: Albania, “a glimpse behind the Iron Curtain” (1945-1989)

The second period (1945-1989) coincides with the Cold War and its significance both for America and Albania as “*a country behind the Iron Curtain*”. The textual data in terms of the language, the style and the way Albania is depicted reinforce the discourse of abnormality for the second period as well, that of the communist dictatorship when it gets more profound and gains continuity for the future decades to come. Abnormal characteristics are attributed to the people, the places and the

<sup>14</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: a noose for Benito”, 7 June 1943

<sup>15</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: Fatima or Else”, 11 January 1937

<sup>16</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: Agent Provocateur”, 21 March 1927

<sup>17</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: Birth and Death” of the date 17 April 1939

<sup>18</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: a noose for Benito”, 7 June 1943

<sup>19</sup> Time magazine, “Zog’s Choice”, 7 February 1938

<sup>20</sup> Time magazine, “Balkan Theatre: Children of Socrates” published on the 9 May 1938

<sup>21</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: Birth and Death”, 17 April 1939

<sup>22</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: Man Sized Revolt”, 23 June 1924

<sup>23</sup> Time magazine, “Albania, President into King”, 27 August 1928.

<sup>24</sup> Time magazine, “Zog and Jerry”, 9 May 1938.

<sup>25</sup> Time magazine, “Albania; a nose for Benito”, 7 June 1943

<sup>26</sup> Time magazine, Albania: International Caough, 8 July 1929; “Albania; Supreme Removal”, 21 March 1932; “Footlose Zog,” 19 June 1933; “Milestones”, 27 January 1936; “Albania: Fatima or Else”, 11 January 1937; or “Italy: Lost and Found, 3 October 1938.

<sup>27</sup> Time magazine, “Albania: Zog, not Skanderbeg”, 17 June 1929.

natural features of Albania as during the first period and for this period they are even more pronounced in the style of the communist regime and its representatives. What is more evident, the extreme schemata constitute the way of seeing Albania in almost every aspect and repetitively as *"the tiniest, the poorest, most backward country"*<sup>28</sup>. The taglines for Albania remain unchanged with its size mentioned in almost all the reports in the variants *"the tiny", "the little", "the small", "the pocked-sized"*. Extremities of the size are often associated with other extreme characteristics such as in the phrase: *"Pocked-size Albania has always been the most backward of the Iron Curtain countries"*<sup>29</sup>. In another report Time states that *"Albania is the tiniest, the poorest and most backward of all communist satellites in Europe and the only one that has no common border with another state in the U.S.S.R's empire"*<sup>30</sup>. Further on, the enmeshed extremities go hand in hand as in the phrase *"The tiny nation that Russia and Red China are using to work off their ideological aggressions, is tucked away in a remote corner of the Balkans"* (Eagle's country: The Little Land they are fighting over, 27 October 1961). In another report, the extreme of the extremes is depicted as follows: *"Like Dante's Inferno, Communism has its different levels of horror and misery. At the bottom of the pit, by almost any measure, lies Albania..."*<sup>31</sup>.

Similar depictions were also present in a report of the 1951 that declares: *"Albania is the most obscure, backward and isolated country behind the Iron Curtain"*<sup>32</sup>. In another report Time writes that *"Life in Albania can be brutish, nasty and short. 14 concentration camps and dozen jails are jammed with an estimated 30 000 prisoners – nearly 2% of the total population"*<sup>33</sup>. Such depictions are not exceptional and Albania is continuously referred to as a *"benighted nation"*<sup>34</sup>, *"rugged country"*<sup>35</sup>, *"rocky road"*<sup>36</sup>, *"The weakest Soviet satellite"*<sup>37</sup>, *"The only satellite isolated from Moscow by unfriendly territory"*<sup>38</sup>, *"satellite Albania, Soviet Communism only Mediterranean base"*<sup>39</sup>, *"Albania: the black sheep"*<sup>40</sup>, *"the most wretched country in Europe"*<sup>41</sup>, *"the least accessible nation in the communist world today"*<sup>42</sup>, *"a minute, mountainous country... poor in living conditions, rich in anachronisms and completely alone in its bizarre comradeship with Red China..."*<sup>43</sup>, *"the little Balkan dictatorship"*<sup>44</sup>, *"puppet state of Albania"*<sup>45</sup> or *"China's sole friend in Europe... and for the last decade it has been as angry and insulated as Peking itself"*<sup>46</sup>, *"It is Europe's poorest nation and one of the world's most closed societies"*<sup>47</sup>.

The list gets long, but the colorful exceptional depictions continue as in the phrase: *"It is a pedestrian heaven; Albania is quite possibly the most earless country anywhere. The people are suspicious, curious, unsmiling- testimony to the effectiveness of Party Boss Hoxha's moto: 'It is fear that guards the vineyard'"*<sup>48</sup>. In another report, years later, Albania is depicted as *"an isolated, mountainous country of 2,9 million people, is a place of bleak statistics. It is Europe's poorest nation and one of the world's most closed societies. Its harsh internal policies place it among the last bastions of Stalinism"*<sup>49</sup>. A report of the late years of the dictatorship, after Hoxha's death, cites: *"Known to his citizens as the 'land of the Eagle' Albania is notable in two dubious counts: it is Europe's poorest nation and a relic of the Stalinist era"* (Albania: The Eagle spreads its wings, 1 December 1986). In another report the exceptionality is depicted in a more lightweight style: *"Last week Communist Albania accomplished an astonishing record: almost perfect parliamentary elections. Every one of the country's 1, 830, 653 registered voters cast a ballot, and all candidates selected by the Albanian Labor Party won 100% of the votes counted. But alas, a single ballot was declared invalid by officials. Wait till next year"*<sup>50</sup>. The last report for this period marks again the exceptionality of the size in the phrase: *"A Maryland-size slice of the Balkans, The People's Socialist Republic of Albania has for more than three decades peeped warily at the world from behind a stiff veil of Marxist-Leninist rigidity"*<sup>51</sup>.

The depiction of Enver Hoxha is not without contrasts and contradictions when Time in early reports describes him smoothly as *"handsome Hoxha", "spunky fellow", "hulking, baby faced", "truculent as a small boy", "Albania's youngish (38) dictator", Enver Hoxha (rhymes with got- cha)",* whereas later on continues to describe him quite neutrally as *"Albania's party boss Enver Hoxha"*. Only after his death, Time calls him *"doctrinaire dictator Enver Hoxha"*. He once was even admired in a report by Time: *"So he [Enver Hoxha] permitted free and secret balloting, under a system rude but effective. It*

<sup>28</sup> Time magazine, "Communists: a swim in the Adriatic", 8 June 1959

<sup>29</sup> Time magazine, "Albania: Down goes Hoxha", 2 August 1954

<sup>30</sup> Time magazine, "Communists: a swim in the Adriatic", 8 June 1959

<sup>31</sup> Time magazine, "Albania, Over the Hill", 3 June 1957

<sup>32</sup> Time magazine, "Albania, By remote control", 14 May 1951

<sup>33</sup> Time magazine: "Albania: Death to the Muscovites", 28 April 1961

<sup>34</sup> Time magazine, "Albania: Over the Hill", 3 June 1957

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Time magazine, "Albania, the rocky road", 19 July 1954

<sup>37</sup> Time magazine, "Albania: a New Stooge", 17 April 1950

<sup>38</sup> Time magazine, "Albania, Down goes Hoxha", 2 August 1954

<sup>39</sup> Time magazine, "The Mediterranean: Out of the North", 29 July 1957

<sup>40</sup> Time magazine: "Albania: the black sheep", 23 June 1961

<sup>41</sup> Time magazine, "Albania, Benighted nation", 10 August 1962

<sup>42</sup> Time magazine: "Albania, Lock on the Dore", 26 May 1967

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Time magazine: "Albania: Emulating Mao", 23 February 1970

<sup>45</sup> Time magazine: "China: Don't fence Mao in", 26 May 1967

<sup>46</sup> Time magazine: "The World: Fear that guards the vineyard", 6 September 1971

<sup>47</sup> Time magazine: "Albania, Enver Hoxha: 1908-1985, Stalin Disciple", 22 April 1985

<sup>48</sup> Time magazine, "The World, Fear that guards the vineyard", 6 September 1971.

<sup>49</sup> Time magazine, "Albania, Enver Hoxha: 1908-1985, Stalin Disciple", 22 April 1985

<sup>50</sup> Time magazine, "Albania: what could be more perfect?", 16 February 1987

<sup>51</sup> Time magazine, "Albania: Borrowing from the past", 4 December 1989 (Time Europe)



functioned admirably". In another report he gains also a mostly favorable account from *Time*: "This same national touchiness is continually displayed by Red Boss Enver Hoxha, and represents much of his strength. Albanians have a Mediterranean fondness for florid and denunciatory speeches, and Hoxha is recognized even by his enemies as a master of this sort of oratory. Tall and handsome, with thick, pomaded hair now greying at the temples, Hoxha draws stormy applause for his insults to Khrushchev. Hoxha's picture is plastered on just about every wall in the land. His profile adorns Albania's monetary unit, the lek, and at meetings of the Communist Central Committee (most of whom are related to each other and to the boss by blood or marriage) Hoxha speaks from a podium decorated with a plaster bust of himself. Like his country, Hoxha is full of surprises. Instead of being a rough, tough mountain chieftain, he is a former schoolteacher and was the pampered son of a well-to-do Moslem merchant. Though he has the mentality of a brigand, his manners are those of a cultivated bourgeois and reflect his education at universities in France and Belgium"<sup>52</sup>.

### Third period: Repetitive Albania, after the fall of communism (1990-nowadays)

The last period, from the 1990-s to nowadays represents drastic changes with Albania free from isolation and toward democracy and the media internationally immersed in the digital revolution, while the USA as well as the rest of the world experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall. The reports on the events right after the fall of the communist regime in the '90's, as well as the episodes of the economic crises after the fall of the pyramid schemes in the year 1997 and the political events of protests like that of the 21 January 2011 constitute a large part not only of the occasions to write about Albania, but also to construct the subject as an exception, with the extreme depictions still dominant. For example in a report of the early days, *Time* writes: "Paranoid, reclusive Albania is beginning to reach out and touch someone. The nation opened telephone links with 54 Western countries..."<sup>53</sup>

Albania continues to be referred to as the poorest, the tiniest, the most isolated as a rudiment of the dictatorship years as shows this report of 1991: "Despite their landslide victory in Albania's first free elections last spring, the old communist rulers have had trouble holding on to power as the wave of reform sweeps over Europe's poorest and most isolated country"<sup>54</sup>

The serial of depictions as exceptionality continues as the below example shows: "Only one Communist government in Europe managed to withstand the political earthquake unscathed. Now, nearly six months later, the leadership of Tiny Albania is finally loosening its ultra-orthodox Stalinist grip"<sup>55</sup> Speaking of violence and crisis, here it goes in another report from the same year: "Though the communists won a commanding 162 of the 250 People's Assembly seats... their victory ignited some of the worst violence the country has seen in more than a year of escalating unrest"<sup>56</sup>

The repetitive features attract *Time* magazine coverage years later in the same fashion with more synonymies: "Foreigners flee as tiny Albania dissolved into Mad Max-Style Chaos"<sup>57</sup>

This dramatic depiction is described as following: "Europe looked to its southeast last week to find civilization vanishing down a sinkhole. Perennially underprivileged Albania suddenly was no longer an organized society but a state of chaos... [...] what had begun as spontaneous revolts in a few southern cities turned all of the country into a Mad Max movie: children brandishing grenades and automatic rifles; wholesale looting; and frenetic, random gunfire- an utter collapse of civil authority. Small, sun-washed Albania had become the state of Anarchia"<sup>58</sup>

Continually referred to as "tiny Albania" the tagline doesn't change for this period either as in the below citation from *Time.com* publication: "Tiny Albania emerged from communist dictatorship in 1990 only to tumble into a rough world of gangsters, fraudulent financial machinations and incompetent governance, exacerbated by lawless capitalism and devil-may-care politics"<sup>59</sup>

The other epithets are also retaken like "remote country" or "the poorest" as in the below fragment from a report on the visit of former American president in Tirana: "Bush will be the first sitting president to visit the remote Balkan country, the poorest in Europe, and Albanians have outdone themselves in preparations: tens of thousands have thronged to the run-down capital, Tirana, to get a glimpse of the American first couple"<sup>60</sup>

Again the protests and the political unrest come as primary subject in an article that states: "The scandal was enough to spark last week's protests, the most violent the country has seen in almost 15 years"<sup>61</sup>

Even the political figures are referred to in case they represent an exception as in the fragment below: "[Edi Rama] used his outsized personality (and physique) to transform his hometown and, with it, much of the country's politics."<sup>62</sup>

Another political protagonist, Leka Zogu is depicted in an exotic fashion like in the fragment below: "Bonus Royal Factoid: In the 1960s, the self-styled royal [Leka Zogu] struck up a friendship with Ronald Reagan. As a gift, he sent the future U.S. president a baby elephant named Gertie—a moniker deemed unrefined by Nancy Reagan, who rechristened the animal «GOP.»"<sup>63</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Time* magazine, "World: Albania: Stalin Heir", 22 December 1961

<sup>53</sup> *Time*, "Grapevine, 14 May 1990 (*Time* US)

<sup>54</sup> *Time*, "Albania: A setback for the Old Guard, 16 December 1991 (*Time* US)

<sup>55</sup> *Time*, "Albania and then there were none, 21 May 1990 (*TIME* US)

<sup>56</sup> *Time*, "Albania: It's not over by a long shot, 15 April 1991 (*Time* US)

<sup>57</sup> *Time*, No Law or Order in the Land, 24 March 1997 (*TIME* US)

<sup>58</sup> *Time*, No Law or Order in the Land, 24 March 1997 (*TIME* US)

<sup>59</sup> *Time*, "The Trouble with Democracy: Albania's Worrisome Vote, 21 May 2011 (*Time.com*)

<sup>60</sup> Albania: "Please Occupy Us!", 10 June 2007 (*Time.com*)

<sup>61</sup> Deadly Protests Don't End Albania's Power Play, 28 January 2011 (*Time.com*)

<sup>62</sup> A Mayoral Makeover, 2 October 2005 (*Time.com*)

<sup>63</sup> Life after the throne, 5 January 2008 (*Time.com*)

Overall, the period from the year 1990 nowadays is marked by relevant developments both for *Time* magazine and Albania. During this period the magazine itself diversifies and the reports appear in an online publication from the year 1997, namely *Time.com*, as well as in the alternative publications of *Time Europe*, *Middle East and Africa* or *Time Asia*, whereas the core of it all is of course *Time US*. Even though the periods do not compound equal number of years, the tendency is toward less coverage regarding Albania as well as international coverage in general at *Time* magazine during this period. The diversified media like *Time Europe* or *Time Asia* and the online media like *Time.com* do not add much either. Angela Leuker, former administrator at *Time* magazine, the Vienna Office, from 1983 until 2006, tells about a small bureau centered in Vienna that covered both Central Europe and the Balkans<sup>64</sup>. The chief of the office, James Graff (1990- 1995) tells that the events in the Balkans were important during these years and that he travelled to Albania by himself in the first year to cover the first free elections in the country. However, when it comes to the number of reports on Albania that indicates a limited coverage, Graff tells that *Time* and almost all other publications in USA have drastically shortened the staffs not only internationally but also in the country. "I have served as Chicago Bureau Chief in the mid till the end of the '90's and *Time* doesn't have an office there anymore either.... I have been to Octavo, Vienna, Brussels, Paris, London, but in two of these cities, in Octavo as well as in Brussels I have not been replaced by anyone. For more than a decade the office in Vienna doesn't operate anymore and there will be no more a *Time* office there..."<sup>65</sup>

There is also a tendency of a fall in the coverage of Albania in comparison to other countries of the region. For example Serbia gets 835 reports whereas Albania only 264 (both of them broadly mentioned, not as first subjects of content). Only compared to Montenegro and Macedonia, Albania still prevails. An Albanian freelancer and stringer at *Time* Magazine, Altin Raxhimi, tells that the first years of the '90's were the "flourishing" ones in coverage with Albania entering the subject of Kosovo events as well and the logistics that *Time* had in place in the region naming the most important members of the editorial offices in Europe like Massimo Calabresi, James Graff, but also the war correspondent Edward Barnes, as well as other senior correspondents like Sarah McLeary, without mentioning the supporting staff like drivers, fixers and stringers... Not anywhere close to CNN but still quite an army..."<sup>66</sup>.

Massimo Calabresi, the chief editor of the Vienna Office after Graff left office and Edward Barnes a senior war correspondent for both *Time* and *Life* magazines, tell that the interest in Albania was especially high during the war events and that the coverage at the time was very expensive<sup>67</sup>.

The topics were mainly internal politics, democratic changes, conflicts and turbulent events, international relations and less so Albanian phenomena or social stories.

## Conclusion

Based on the above research, the main argument of this study is that the subject of Albania is approached and constructed in a repetitive constant way over time on the part of *Time* and *The Economist* magazines comparatively. Therefore, this paper tried to support the thesis that, in an evolutionary historical context, the topic of Albania in the western press, exemplified here by two American and British magazines remains approached and reported in a constant repetitive fashion. Its continuity and repetitiveness are firstly evidenced in the language used in terms of key words and phrases, taglines, epithets, comparisons and other stylistic means of journalistic expression such as parody. Secondly, the quantitative data analyses showed that the number of features published year after year, its classification in order of rubrics, topics, length, places, words and most mentioned personalities, places and type of events didn't differ substantially for each period. Thirdly, the interviews with editors and their code of practices allowed for some introspection linked to the theories of the social production of news and the social construction of the international news as well. This is to say that the press practices in terms of the production of foreign news, as well as international relations in general influences its content or its approach towards distant and foreign countries like Albania. Borrowing from a *Time* magazine report on the Balkans, Albania together with other countries are described as follows: "*The crowded area known as the Balkans have exploded regularly in unspeakably cruel wars... in the process, the Balkans: Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and the European part of Turkey, became famous as a scene of intrigue and espionage*"<sup>68</sup>. It comes as a conclusion, in fashion with the title of the above report that the "old script" is not easily changed and so it doesn't in the case of Albania.

Additionally, the agency analysis tells that a constant negative approach of the western media towards the subject of Albania through time is based on a set of defining factors such as the organizational and professional media practices towards distant foreign subjects, whereas the power structures and the political economy of the mass media play a pivotal role. Secondly, the

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Angela Leuker, administrator and supporting reporter for the Vienna Bureau at *Time* Magazine from 1986 to 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with James Graff, former editor and Bureau Chief at Vienna Bureau, responsible for the coverage of the Central Europe and the Balkans during 1990-1995. Interviewed for this study the 3 February 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Altin Raxhimi, freelancer and former stringer and Albanian collaborator at *Time* magazine (1999-2011). to be very selective bearing in mind the fact that the publication is weekly and that the staff was much more limited than that of the dailies.

<sup>67</sup> Massimo Calabresi, the chief editor of the Vienna Office responsible for the coverage of the Central Europe and the Balkans during 1995-1999. Travelled to Albania and covered the 1997 events as well as the war on Kosovo.

<sup>68</sup> *Time* Magazine, "The Balkans: Changing the Old Script", 29 November 1971

fact that there is no regular correspondence from Albania or close in the Balkans related to the centralized organizational structure of the media and the fact that the sources of information about Albania are scarce, indirect, unidentified or distant. The lack of pro-active information on the part of Albania is considered as a primary limitation for the coverage it gets abroad, as well as the lack of direct public diplomacy with international media and its audiences.

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# Education and Technology: Adaptation, breakup, or an accelerating tendency toward what has already become normal

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**Blegina HASKO**

## **Abstract**

*The teacher must be able to communicate the power of technology, always remembering, from a neuro-scientific point of view, that young people do not think like adults. They just have not yet developed the necessary skills. The digital revolution has impacted lifestyles, communication, socialization and learning, creating new challenges for teachers. Due to limited resources, the interactive blackboard has become a digital space for the interactive engagement of students in each classroom. This paper stems from my study, undertaken in an attempt to understand what are the advantages and disadvantages of digital teaching methodology. As a teacher I have begun to reflect more rigorously on constructivism as a theory of learning. The findings of this study will highlight the impact of technology on almost every aspect of life nowadays, where education, of course, is no exception. Data were obtained from access, collaboration and coexistence with students, through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and digital learning. The observations highlighted a perceived gap in the field of visual arts as a promising space to generate reciprocal dialogue in the classroom in order to influence curriculum delivery and teaching. This paper argues the importance of technology in education and its role in the field of education. Essentially, digital learning makes possible forms of collaborative learning, which we know constitute one of the most fundamental aspects of direct and indirect teaching. Thus, there is a need to introduce teachers and train them in dialogue teaching methodologies and their potential impact on student engagement and learning.*

In recent years, technological development, the spread of internet whiteboards, mobile and fixed devices, the conception of the whole network, allows new structural forms of teaching and new environments in which each student and teacher interacts co-constitutively with tablet, netbook or smartphones and collaborative teaching, evoking applause from the environment or instrumentation of the device, overcoming the frontal imposition of the lecture, and favoring a more effective group.

A rational use of digital technologies in teaching should start from a simple assumption: It is not teaching that needs to adapt to technologies, but technologies need to adapt to make teaching more effective.

This presupposes clarity of educational goals, clarity of learning objectives, clarity of the most useful strategies / methodologies to achieve the objectives, and, finally, knowledge and assimilation of technologies that can serve to better achieve educational goals.

Over the last few years, I have used digital technology in various ways in my disciplines. I experimented with the Flipped class model, laboratory and collaborative teaching, and project teaching. I have experienced the didactic use of platforms, online applications, programs of various kinds and nature, and interdisciplinary and collaborative methods of working in my classrooms or together with other colleagues in the digital classroom project that started in the academic year (2019/2020) with high school education in the Jordan Misja Art School, in the higher education at the Department of Architecture in the University of Tirana and in the master program at the European University Tirana.

To begin, I would like to describe my way of using technologies in teaching. In general, I first think of an activity that my students should do to help them achieve certain goals (knowledge, skills, or competencies). Once the content and presentation methods are set up, we find the resources they need (online texts, videos or other) and set up the student work methods (group work, picture joining, etc.). I think which digital tools to use (from the LMS Teams Platform to prepare the project and share it with students; in a simple program to watch videos to develop the project with different stages, etc.). I then identify pages/sites, applications (or types of applications, as there may be several that make up the same thing) that my students can use to complete different tasks and arrive at the final product (class presentation, writing), an essay, authentic product, etc.).

Are you wondering how I can find applications that can help me perform a certain activity? Generally, I navigate on internet looking for suggestions from content curating sources (am thinking of commendable work) provided by dedicated sites. I note down some applications and possible use to achieve a certain purpose of competence and, when I think it might be useful to me, I go deeper, experiment, explain, and use.

In this approach, digital technology is just a tool to achieve educational goals that would otherwise be more complicated or impossible to achieve in other situations. The added value lies in the fact that in this way students develop digital skills, which are increasingly in demand even in real life and practice, work (knowing how to communicate, know how to work in a team with collaborative tools, know how to search, analyze, select, and use accurate information, etc.).

A further added value of using new technologies in teaching lies in the fact that students do not get bored, they are not passive, because they have questions / problems to answer (and not just give answers to questions that have never been asked) and must mobilize their skills, knowledge and competencies to respond. Everyone uses digital tools in their social life: to communicate, to pass information, to receive information, to have fun, etc.

It is clear that we are talking about a kind of teaching that is not narrative, but laboratory: about projects, about problems, about authentic and collaborative tasks.

It should be noted that the “bright” part, in which we work for the final product is the last part of the path, which comes after the assimilation of the content. In a more recent work that I did together with my high school and university students, the latter worked on content in browsing mode, alternating frontal lessons, reading and text analysis with lab work modes (collaborative learning, merging), figures and artwork), for more than one academic year. The work of this process ended with a traditional verification and production of illustrated presentations and argumentative texts. And finally they worked on designing their final products: creating small documentary videos on the particular product for a local exhibition network.

## Digital technologies in school “as is”

Now, we have to be clear on one point: the (old system?) “Transmitting” school is not that it would all be rejected. The transmitting school served and is serving to convey knowledge and explanations that would otherwise be inaccessible to most, and the children had to learn through memorization. Then, there were a number of things they should have been able to do (skills / competencies): translate a piece from or into Latin; knowing how to solve problems in mathematics, geometry or knowing how to do different types of mathematical calculations; ability to write in good Italian; to know how to do a translation into a foreign language. All of these things needed implementation, practice, and training.

Well, as long as a student’s training needs these things, the methods, techniques, strategies of the traditional school model, the result of centuries of practice, are still going well and it is not clear why they should be abandoned.

The problem is: can the new technologies in these schools and the teaching model be useful? My opinion. In the traditional model (still prevalent today in the Albanian school), classroom technologies can be used to speed up tasks and activities (video viewing, mapping, document sharing ...) or to access different types of resources available on the network (videos, images, texts ...). They can be used to make tasks that are otherwise boring for “digital natives” more appealing and fun.

However, a largely knowledge transmitting school / teaching, even with the introduction of new technologies, does not change. It was a transmitter and remains so: technologically always transmitter!

Now, that kind of training was adequate and (if it was) is it still appropriate for today’s kids, right? Today it is enough to move in the world of work, to be an independent person, with a critical sense, able to move in an increasingly fast and internet-connected world, in which most information is searched, found, and shared in and through the internet.

The answer, now shared by many researchers, is no!

This does not mean that we should abandon the old in pursuit of an impossible and unknown new that is advancing. As Father Vajola wrote in transparency:

“... there is room in the school for everything: for frontal learning, for collaborative learning, for problem-solving through internet research, and for what can only be achieved by leaving school and observing territory or entering in an archive, it houses blackboard and interactive whiteboards (LMS), tablet and pen and paper, book and ebook, web and encyclopedia.”

## Introducing digital technology in the classroom: laboratory teaching

This brings us to the heart of the matter. There is a different way to use digital technologies in the classroom, a use that goes very well with different forms of teaching: laboratory, collaborative, project-based, problem-solving. This is what we will defend in this post, without prejudice to what we said above, and it is that new technologies can be used less invasively, more coherently and appropriately for traditional teaching. Nothing stands in the way, and perhaps at first it is good to start with this less invasive way, gradually experimenting with more and more expert and innovative methods.

The world of ICT is constantly expanding. Every day, Internet offers a variety of applications, services and tools that are constantly updated. The bad news is that it is impossible to keep up with it without losing; the good news is that there are colleagues who do a great job of skimming for us and that there are user-friendly technologies, increasingly easy to use, even by those who, like me, have few technical and IT skills.

## Can ICT lead to a learning trivialization?

One of the accusations that often comes back from many angles is that the use of ICT in teaching leads to a trivialization of learning. I do not agree. Indeed, I believe that this way of working not only does not sacrifice content, but it allows finding and using methods that are often more adequate than in the past to deepen, to make learning more meaningful, to expand the quality and quantity of resources available.

Upstream, of course, there must be a lot of work to produce, process and organize the content that the teacher has to do and that can no longer be left to others (first and foremost, the manual).

## How do students react to these changes?

One point that needs to be clarified immediately is that students facing these ways of working that require a different study than usual and even more in-depth often find themselves displaced because they cannot use the traditional study strategies they have been used to; and why they cannot simply do a memorizing study for verification purposes.

It is clear that the path should be negotiated immediately with students, making them understand what is required, why it is required and how to verify and evaluate learning.

Once again: it is not certain that these modalities should immediately take over traditional teaching. There can be (and probably should be) exchanges and combinations. One possible compromise is the one offered by the methodology back in the classroom: the traditional way (at home through video lessons) + laboratory teaching (in the classroom); another is the presentation (at least initially) of some moments of laboratory teaching within the traditional one. This compromise can provide both teachers and students who are unclear with the new approach and find the traditional model more appropriate (front-line learning-study-verification).

## What are the skills for the digital teacher?

Unlike to what is believed and what has been proposed at the ministerial level in the recent years, the use of ICT in the classroom does not require who knows what technological skills and who knows what initial preparation or training. A minimum of familiarity with computers or mobile devices (tablets or smartphones); a minimum of familiarity with the online world; some right tips and you can get started. For a slightly more alert use, the internet is a rich area where you can find suggestions, examples, guides for learning how to use apps, and more. The last ingredient is time: time to dedicate to self-updating; time to search, to get information, to learn from others ... and all this, once again, online.

The real challenge for the “digital teacher” is not in knowing how to use ICT, but in the ability to innovate learning, turning it into an active, collaborative laboratory (pedagogical / didactic competence); lies in the ability to construct original teaching material using sources different from the traditional manual found online (disciplinary research competence); lies in the ability to teach students a productive and critical use of digital technologies and the Internet (i.e., that we also learn to make adequate use of them: digital skills). Finally, CREATIVITY and DESIGN: the teacher must be creative, imagine authentic tasks and activities for their students, visualize creative and productive uses of applications, know how to design and implement more or less complex didactic projects (design competence). And if the digital teacher also wants to be a content producer, then he/she must learn to be familiar not only with some basic digital technologies, but also with the methods of communication and transmission and exchange of information on the online world, which are no longer the traditional ones –mono or two channels– but more and more channels.

## Didactics and new technologies

Has it given a boost to distance learning in digital teaching?

Distance education has accelerated the hitherto slow process of opening the world of schools to the world in progress. Technology has invaded the professional world, the manufacturing world, and (albeit more slowly and in a more clumsy and cumbersome way) the public administration.

The school has experienced an uncommon (or perhaps not exactly strange) situation for years: teachers in their private lives have adapted to the technological world, using more or less all the resources that network, PCs, new Devices were made available. But not at school. At school we have been little victims of 'Frankenstein syndrome' for years: the fear that a student placed close to something technological can only distract from the main task of concentrating on doing what students have always done for generations. Technology is firstly seen as a living tool. The internet is seen as a place where you get lost, a place of flattery and opportunity, where you can find everything to free yourself from the fatigue and commitment of studying.

After a year of digital art and design, even the most backward or, worse, hostile had to do a 21st century brainwash: web conferencing, digital platforms, apps, tutorials, recordings, video recordings, podcasts, PowerPoint, email, tutorials synchronous, asynchronous, etc. – they entered into our daily lives and, as predicted, will never leave it again.

We have all discovered a 'world' of possibilities (all the resources of the online world) unknown to most so far; but also a world of new 'pitfalls' and 'dangers' for which you are unprepared (look, there is a lot of opportunities for students to cheat as well!).

However...

Those who, like us, assume 'innovators', have advocated and worked for years to open the school world to new technologies and Internet opportunities.

The question I ask is: are we doing it right?

This enthusiasm (and, why not, real 'enthusiasm') that has been seen by many teachers to 'update themselves' and 'train themselves' was and is commendable, but I think it should be accompanied by an awareness of added value that new technologies can give to teaching.

In short, it may not be enough to try to wrap the old broadcasting lesson in a new, more modern and up-to-date packaging, but it is a matter of using new technologies and the internet to transform the 'old' way of teaching and learning. And we, teachers, will do it, and will do it right.

Technology has begun to change the roles of teachers and students, in a traditional classroom, where the teacher is the main source of information and students receive it passively. This model of the teacher as a "transmitter of knowledge" has remained in education for a long time and is still evident in some institutions. However, due to access to information and educational opportunities provided by technology, the role of the teacher has been become "mediator" or "facilitator" as students take more responsibility for their own learning, using technology to gather relevant information.

Schools and universities across the country have begun to redesign learning spaces to enable this new model of education, to encourage greater interaction and to work in small groups. In this sense, the European University of Tirana has classrooms equipped for students and teachers to use technology in the classroom, including Internet services, which allows students to conduct efficient research and use the services in the practices and tasks required in the classroom, in addition to that have the latest labs, where they perform practices and simulations that allow them to prepare for a competitive, technology-immersed world. Technology is a powerful tool that can support and transform education in many ways, making it easier for teachers to create instructional materials while enabling new ways for people to learn and work together. With the global reach of the Internet and the ubiquity of smart devices that can be connected, new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), online learning, and educational software are not only changing the scope of student action, but are also reshaping the role of teachers, creating philosophical changes in teaching approaches and reshaping the classroom. With the influx of new learning models available, experts mention that traditional educational methods will evolve in the next decade.

New technology has overwhelmed the way we learn today, so teachers, administrators, authorities, and society at large need to be clear that the future has caught up with us and today's teachers need to have the skills to allow us to cope with the changes it requires of students at different educational levels. Efficient use of educational technology depends on lecturers, in this case the teachers, to fulfill its purpose to transform education. The Ministry of Education must periodically train its teachers in courses on virtual platform management, instructional design e-learning and use internet resources. In the last year, we have noticed how technology is incorporated daily into the classrooms as teachers and educational content developers create more products designed to improve education. The educational institution where I teach supports and is committed to society to train high-level human capital in its various educational programs, so that in each classroom technology is used as a tool for knowledge mediation. Teachers use virtual classrooms that allow them to manage their teaching materials, diversify the type of activities and choose study time. Currently, some postgraduate programs operate through blended learning, with face-to-face sessions, virtual classrooms, and video conferencing to provide advice and instruction to students.

We are in the digital age, and we need to take note of this. Even schools need to keep up with the time. For children and young people today, it is easy to use technological information and communication systems even prematurely, as schools and their way of learning have accelerated.



## Benefits of technology in school

The first benefit is undoubtedly the opportunity that the internet offers students to integrate textbooks and do research on multiple resources, using a variety of tools. Kids have access to a variety of information and can share it in real time. A second advantage is the preparation that the school provides in response to the world of work where digital skills are essential. Moreover, the possibility of integrating study with digital language, namely through images, audios, videos, and concept maps allows for the improvement and acceleration of learning of all students, presenting itself as a comprehensive resource even for students with disabilities and limited capabilities in learning. Teaching is transformed from “frontal and notional” to “interactive, social and shared”.

## Disadvantages

The disadvantage of a fast, practical, and dynamic training can teach kids/students with superficiality and lack of study and in-depth development of critical research sense.

The search becomes more and more immediate and easier, and this affects the exercise of memory. The knowledge gained does not remain embedded but only the time required for gain remains in the mind.

## What is the right balance?

The solution lies in the ability of teachers to use technology tools in the right ways and at the right time. The teacher should be a guide and should coordinate research activities, help students to understand which sources are reliable or more appropriate and to criticize and reflect on the usefulness and reliability of the results obtained.

The use of technological equipment should be stimulating and the objectives to be achieved should be well defined by the teacher.

Tools should not be used automatically, but it is necessary to teach kids to develop a critical sense. At the end of each lesson, it is important to spark a discussion among students to evaluate the results and make a constructive synthesis in order to assimilate the new concepts.

Do you think there could be a way out of technology? From the morning when we wake up until late in the evening, most of us use a technological tool: PC to browse the internet, Smartphone to send message on Whatsapp before going to bed. Technology is part of our lives. Even now that you are reading this article, you are using a technology tool.

In the last twenty years, our society has undergone a radical change. The transition from a “modern” society to a “post-modern” society has been rapid and disturbing. Today we talk about digital society, cyberspace, e-commerce, the Internet or a “fluid” society. So far, technology has become so much a part of our daily lives that it no longer matters, it is sometimes taken for granted. But if we were to think for a moment what life was like before the advent of technology and how we would have lived without it, then we can try to understand what the benefits of using technology have been for us, for our lives and for that all the people in the world and vice versa the negative aspects, also related to the abuse and misuse of the technologies available to us.

Thanks to the advancement of science and technology, mankind has experienced a great improvement in their living conditions, but progress has accelerated so much recently that it becomes almost uncontrollable and risks exceeding the real needs of mankind.

New technologies and the associated freedom of communication are changing the social relations among groups. It is true that the internet and new digital divisions (tablets and phones) allow us to read information, watch videos, movies, documentaries, in real time from all parts of the world; but being up to date or more precisely with thousands of daily news and events is certainly difficult and can sometimes cause a sense of disorientation, related to the amount of information that falls on us spectators. Information and communication technology has allowed us to break down every barrier and overcome every boundary. However, when virtual reality confuses us, bypassing the reality becomes dangerous.

Many of the psycho-sociological problems have to do with escaping from the reality and with the inability to distinguish feelings, emotions at different times, regardless of whether or not they are using virtual technology. Being a user of a Social Network convinces us that we are part of a community and this makes us believe that we are friends when it is a “virtual” community in which relationships are often false. Today we talk about new technophobia and stress from new technologies, for example constantly checking the cell phone for fear of not being accessible or viewing an email or a text message or a Whatsapp for fear of not reading a message important, always staying online, I’m an example. The desire to be part of a group, to feel useful in achieving a common goal, to have a strong identity within the community, pushes more and more “users” to escape from the real society in it which relationships are difficult to manage, and join a replacement company, online, where you can join a group or another, based on your interests, even current ones, with the simplicity of a single click.

Technology today, the relationship between technology and young people, the advantages and disadvantages of technology...

## The advancement of the world in which we live - reflection

Progress is sometimes good, but sometimes bad. This topic includes technology that analyzes all these aspects to be used as a starting point for the school.

When we talk about technology, we refer to the research sector (and its results) that uses a series of technical tools to solve practical problems and make decisions aimed at achieving certain objectives. In this sense it is possible to be involved in the notion of technology some of the first human inventions, such as wheels, press or internal combustion engine, but nowadays this term is mainly used to define everything that is hi-tech and that mechanically facilitates the life of the human beings through computer use and virtual reality.

Technology has different fields of application: that of science, which not only produces new technological tools but uses them, that of medicine, which increasingly uses new technologies to detect diseases or to treat them, that of entertainment, in which there is maximum expression with video games and with everything that predicts virtual reality and finally that of education (those are the cases of online are now frequent).

As in all cases in which new technical discoveries have made man more and more a spectator and less an agent in the first person, these new tools raise doubts and concerns. A first problem, already experienced in time of the industrial revolution, is precisely that of the employment of workers when a technological tool intervenes that manages to do what man does, halving time and costs. Even though humans are still needed to command and build these new mechanical “assistants”, the idea that humans can be pushed aside because a machine is perfectly capable of replacing them is a frightening and disturbing thought.

Another negative aspect of this “technology race” is related to the consumerist use of it: not only are objects and strategies useful to the human beings being produced, but also new unnecessary needs. An example of this phenomenon lies in the construction, advertising, and sale of new computers and telephones every year: these tools, though useful in their functions, have in fact become simple pretexts for gaining large multinationals that have created a need new to the population which has little to do with the function of these products and much to do with the status that comes from their possession. A third problem that arises from the use of technology even for “virtuous” purposes is that related to personal data. It is possible to store sensitive information of people on magnetic cards, databases, or clouds, so that it is possible to extract them and make a criminal use of this sensitive information and personal data. There are many cases in which hackers steal this data and use it for various illegal activities and the people who provided it (voluntarily or not) lose direct control over this when they decide to take it from others, others ranging from banks, to Facebook, to the national health service.

After all, technology represents, by definition, one-third between the individual and his purpose, and therefore it is necessary to consider every consequence, both for man and for the environment: the production of the components of the various technological machines of today requires massive interventions in nature and introduces large amounts of recyclable and poorly recycled waste into the environment.

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# Domestic Violence and its Economic Costs

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**Sabina BELSHAKU (PhD)**

Aleksander Xhuvani' University, Faculty of Education Sciences,  
Department of Social Sciences

**Dorina XHANI (PhD)**

European University of Tirana, Faculty of Human Sciences,  
Education and Liberal Arts Department of Psychology, Education and Sports

## Abstract

*Domestic violence is a growing concern for Albanian society. Gender-based violence-oriented studies have focused on physical, sexual, and psychological manifestations or their consequences. There is still no study to refer to the socio-economic cost of violence against women in Albania. Knowledge of the economic causes and consequences of the problem is important to enable society to deal with it constructively and correctly. It should be noted that the financial / economic costs that accompany the phenomenon of domestic violence, result as one of the factors that lead the family to deepen poverty and also limit women's opportunities for development. The purpose of this study is to describe the economic cost of violence against women. This study seeks to draw attention to the economic aspect of this phenomenon - the economic cost of violence experienced by women. Although the socio-economic cost of domestic violence requires a very complex and advanced study and especially an efficient statistical system (administrative resources), it is important to clarify that this study is an attempt to present how much it costs a family, violence against women in marital relationships. An important finding of this study is the fact that there is a cause-and-effect relationship in the relationship between domestic violence and the economic situation of the family. So in a family in which violence is present in many forms, its economic situation is significantly affected. In addition to the individual consequences of the psycho-social cost of pain and suffering, interpersonal violence has a number of economic effects at the population level, including reduced credibility in economic, legal and social structures.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, economic cost, abused woman

## Introduction

Domestic violence is a growing concern for Albanian society. The profound social and economic transformation after the 90s, brought significant changes not only in the structure of the economy, standard of living, but also in the change of gender balance in Albanian society. Gender balance within the family is severely damaged by the presence of violence in the couple's relationship. This relationship, severely damaged by violence, has health, social and economic consequences for the family. The country has come a long way in isolating itself until it has completed a framework with an Anti-Domestic Violence Law (which entered into force in June 2007), a National Strategy and an Action Plan to combat it (2007-2012), and also numerous programs and projects against violence which have been implemented and have partially combated many aspects of domestic violence.

According to the Albanian legislation "Domestic violence" is any action or inaction exercised between persons who are or have been in family relations, which results in violation of physical, moral, psychological, sexual, social, economic integrity. Domestic violence is a crime that is often hidden. In Albanian society it is seen as a private matter, with little or no attention to prevention, mainly by various non-governmental organizations.

However, studies show that domestic violence is widespread in Albanian society. Gender-based violence-oriented studies have focused on physical, sexual, and psychological manifestations or their consequences. There is still no study

to refer to the socio-economic cost of violence against women in Albania. Knowledge of the economic causes and consequences of the problem is important to enable society to deal with it constructively and correctly. It should be noted that the financial / economic costs that accompany the phenomenon of domestic violence, result as one of the factors that lead the family to deepen poverty and also limit women's opportunities for development.

The purpose of this study is to describe the economic cost of violence against women. This study seeks to draw attention to the economic aspect of this phenomenon - the economic cost of violence experienced by women. Although the socio-economic cost of domestic violence requires a very complex and advanced study and especially an efficient statistical system (administrative resources), it is important to clarify that this study is an attempt to present how much it costs a family, violence against women in marital relationships. The gaps that appear in statistical information, especially towards gender indicators, make it difficult to build a complete quantitative model from which specific costs of violence can be calculated.

Although many difficulties arise, the analysis can never be more than a careful statistical assessment, in which some calculations are still more uncertain than others and some aspects have not been possible to include. This does not mean that there is no possibility of making some cost assumptions.

#### **Research questions are:**

- How is the behavior of abused women towards the various services they can access?
- How do they perceive the right to have services, are there insecurities and do they tend to leave such concerns within the family.
- How can the economic impact of violence on their families be measured?

## **Literature review**

Domestic violence has consequences for both the victim and society. It consumes public and voluntary services as well as causes considerable pain and suffering to the individuals on whom it is exercised. While considerations based on the principles of respect for human rights provide a solid basis for public intervention in domestic violence, a better understanding of the full costs of domestic violence provides the basis for intervention with a policy-making aid system, that on the financial side. Adding a financial dimension to violence expands the range of ways in which strategic interventions can be articulated, measured and evaluated. In particular, the inclusion of the financial dimension can help address priorities in the policy-making structure.

Calculating the cost of violence is a useful strategy to increase policymakers' sensitivity to the importance and effectiveness of intervention. Understanding the economic dimensions of interpersonal violence is very necessary not only to assess the economic damage it brings to the family and society, the economy in general, but also to determine the complete platforms of intervention, support of this category at risk. Violence is often considered a phenomenon that should receive proper attention, as a phenomenon that has its roots in an individual psychological problem or psycho-social relationship that does not work. So it is also a structural and complex social phenomenon.

## **Violence costs and its types**

Cost, in a socio-economic analysis is divided into direct costs which result directly as related to the provision of health care and the costs of the judicial system, and indirect costs. The division of costs into direct and indirect is problematic. The impact of violence has short-term and long-term effects which are of a social and economic nature among individuals and communities. So far, many of these effects have been categorized together as indirect, a dark box which has rarely been opened and evaluated.

Direct costs represent the value of goods and services used in response to domestic violence. Direct costs are defined as "the value of goods and services used to treat and prevent domestic violence" (A. Morrison and M. Bihel). Another definition treats direct costs as "costs associated with interpersonal violence" (CDC 2003). Most direct cost studies have been addressed to various sectors including legal services, justice, health and social services. To determine the distribution of cost sharing through different agents of society some of the studies distinguish between services provided by society, the private sector and a combination of the two (Graves 1995). Some other studies have included individual costs.

Indirect costs are "total costs that are not incurred as a direct consequence of domestic violence. Indirect costs include salary losses and psychological costs (Hornick, Paetch and Bertrant, 2002) The calculation of psychological costs has been a normal practice in court cases which required the measurement of monetary values of the compensation of raped victims. The psychological costs were much greater than the direct economic losses that were inflicted on the victims (Miller, Cohen and Rossman 1993). Some studies have attempted to assess the negative effects of violence on housing costs, a cost to society. In the US, for example, a doubling of the suicide rate was accompanied by a 12.5% drop in real estate values (IADB, 2002).

So far, efforts to assess the human and emotional costs of fear, pain and suffering have been based on methodologies built from the application of costing methods in road accidents, crimes and health situations, and this remains a privilege

of developed countries which have established systems of stable information.

Indirect cost is very difficult to calculate and most studies are oriented towards the top of indirect costs such as loss of income from job loss and increase of job leave (Stanko, Crisp et al. 1998; Yodanis and Godenzi 1999; Walby 2004). However, losses in labor productivity also include non-monetary costs, becoming the basis for a multiplier effect that generates declining incomes, reduced labor participation, and a contraction in investment and savings. Women who worked while having violence in their relationships stated that “they were not able to share the trauma they had suffered in their personal lives with their daily work, thus causing low performance at work or loss of days of work” (KPMG 1994).

A useful typology which shows the indirect costs of violence is suggested by Buvinic et al. (1999). This typology presents a cost estimation scheme which shows the impact of violence. This structure allows the division between social and economic costs, monetary costs or those that have an imputable value, those non-monetary costs as well as those costs which it is not possible to present through a monetary value.

**TABLE 1.** A typology Socio-economic costs of violence<sup>1</sup>:

Type of cost	The impact
Direct costs: Value of goods and services used to treat and prevent violence	• Medical
Non-monetary costs: Pain and suffering	
• Criminal justice system	
Multiple social effects: Impact on interpersonal relationships and quality of life	Intergenerational transmission of violence Reducing the quality of life Erosion of social capital Reduction in participation in democratic processes

## Definitions that serve for measurement

Many studies in the literature try to determine the parameters of domestic violence even for those who experience violence perpetrated by the current or former spouse / partner, or by “someone known to the victim”.

The national definition defines that, “Domestic violence” is any act of violence, according to point 1 of this article, exercised between persons who are or have been in family relations.

In many developing countries this is the definition that applies as it refers to the type of relationship between the two sexes - engagement, cohabitation and marriage. For this analyze it is important to start with the definition (definition) of violence. One of the reasons for this is that the literature contains a range of concepts on violence, ranging from interpersonal violence, domestic violence, domestic violence or couple violence. The definition within each concept refers to the size of the population experiencing violence. These changes are significant as the prevalence rate often determines the basis of the methodological formula that will be used to make the cost estimate.

DHNP is multifaceted and includes sexual, psychological, physical and economic abuse. There is a broad consensus in the literature regarding the set of behaviors that refer to any form of violence.

Physical violence includes behaviors such as beating, pushing and burning

Psychological abuse includes: bullying, swearing, isolation and abandonment behavior.

Sexual violence includes sexual problems, refusal to use a condom, sexual harassment and rape.

While financial abuse includes deprivation of material goods, control of money and control of assets that the family has.

Studies related to cost surveys focus on physical, sexual and psychological abuse within an intimate / couple relationship. Of course, defining definitions on types of costs is of great importance for this study and they are presented in more detail when describing application methodologies.

## Costs of violence in developing countries

While existing studies emphasize the selection of costs to be observed and by what methods, few of them are applicable in most developing countries due to different social norms regarding the acceptability of violence, lack of a policy-making structure and information systems, as well as differences in the economic structure that subsequently affect the ways in which violence is assessed.

In many developing countries, domestic violence is perceived as a private matter and to be recognized as a social issue that requires a political and social response which reflects the high rate of acceptance of violence against women. Lack of will especially translates into minimal services from public structures at national, regional or local levels. Also, the use

of services by abused women is limited due to socio-cultural norms, the distraction of service providers and the fear of retaliation. Given this lack of response, assessing the costs of violence may remain a secondary priority for developing country governments. Seeking to measure violence means first getting to know it well. The methodology for conducting the study is limited by the lack of a coherent and reliable information system through which the prevalence of violence can be assessed, especially as long as law enforcement, shelter and other sectors do not perceive domestic violence as a problem. They do not record information or maintain an information system on the extent of use of services related to the mitigation and prevention of violence. All of these information gaps intertwined with the limited knowledge of the consequences of violence make it difficult to build a database from which average unit costs can be calculated.

As noted in the citations above, most cost studies refer to western industrialized countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Finland, and Australia, where the information and services system is highly developed. And yet few of them are really valid and applicable to the reality of countries that are still developing.

A study made in the year 1999 by the Inter-American Development Bank in Chile and Nicaragua (Morrison and Orlando 1999) examined the impact of DHP on a household's capacity to provide income. In Chile, all types of DHP reduce women's incomes by 1.56 billion (more than 2% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 1996). Abused women earn much less than those who are not subject to violence. Beyond the effects on income, the study in Nicaragua found that 63.1% of child victims and women have to repeat their school years and also tend to drop out of school on average four years earlier than other children. Of course, these children who are present or victims of abuse tend to imitate this behavior and repeat its cycle. In the context of public health there have been attempts to assess losses in terms of morbidity and mortality. A World Bank study showed that the annual rate of rape and domestic violence was equal to 9 million years of life with a physical disability, including years lost from premature death as well as time lost from disability caused or illness as a cause. of violence (World Bank 1993). Other studies of the cost of violence have estimated losses due to premature death (Pispa and Heiskanen 2001; CDC 2003).

## Conceiving a cost analysis

What has been emphasized above in this study is that domestic violence is a widespread and disturbing social phenomenon which is often treated by qualitative studies conducted in the country, or as a social and legal problem being a crime against a person. or as a health problem affecting women and their children. If we want to address the issue of economic tension that it causes for the family and society as a whole in the form of various socio-economic costs, the creation of a conceptual basis is what helps analysis. There are seven essential cost-focusing steps that are usually required to follow a study of the phenomenon of violence from an economic point of view:

1. Define clear objectives for practicing costing methods.
2. Identify the level of aggregation in accordance with these objectives.
3. Develop an operational definition of Couple Violence, which summarizes the experiences of most women.
4. Describe the behaviors of requesting assistance from women who are victims of violence to determine the appropriate services to be considered in the costing method.
5. Design the services that are available to victims of violence.
6. Determine which methods or combinations of methods are most appropriate.

## Factors to consider in measuring violence

In all studies on the economic cost of domestic violence, there are several key factors that are important against cost estimation as well as the methodologies used for these estimates. These factors are:

- a. definition of domestic violence,
- b. measurement of violence,
- c. conceptualization of opportunities / services to seek help in cases of experiencing violence.
- d. cost categorization,
- e. methodological challenges such as time frame or unit of analysis and
- f. data collection methods

Many studies in this field have shown that it is difficult to find a model that can be applied to all types of violence and its effects. The one most used by researchers is the "comprehensive" model which is based on the understanding of the interaction between individual, situational and socio-cultural factors. According to this model, there is not a single factor that causes violence but a number of converging factors. The process of estimating the costs of domestic violence requires an observation of the impact of domestic violence on both the victim and a range of social institutions. This requires knowledge of the degree of injury to people both physically and mentally as well as knowledge of the consequences and deteriorations

in the lives of injured and individuals related to them. These damages are addressed by a large number of social agencies and institutions that need to be identified. The literature on the cost of domestic violence shows that there is a higher diversity of responsible institutions than there is in the literature on costs in general. In a broader context, the areas where measurement should be oriented are the criminal justice system, the health care system, social housing and migration services, as well as legal and civil services. Within each area, there are a number of specific institutions that operate and provide these services.

## Source of Data and Methodology applied

The research methodology is based on different approaches. First of all, the reviewed literature that refers to the issues addressed in this study - emphasizes the great importance of not only the analysis of quantitative but also qualitative information presented through specific interviews. The main part of the statistical information used to conduct this analysis is a part of the data detached from the central set of data from the survey "Domestic Violence" conducted by INSTAT during 2007. The purpose of this analysis is to focus on the economic cost of domestic violence (against women) and to provide a measurement approach in the case of Albania.

One of the objectives of the survey itself was to identify some of the direct and indirect costs of domestic violence. Data for this national survey were collected from 2699 households and the target group are women aged 15-49 years. In each family selected through a probabilistic sampling process, only one woman in this age group was interviewed.

Among others, the questionnaire used in this survey has collected information on these variables (which are the ones that are of interest for this thesis):

- Women who have experienced violence and who have sought help from persons or services
- The reason that no medical, legal or social assistance was requested
- Categories of persons or services that may require assistance from abused women.
- Value in money paid for services
- Were women absent from work due to the violence, and for how many days?

Also, for the case studies, there were used other official data produced by other surveys of households conducted by INSTAT, related to the level of income.

The sampling is done according to the specifics of the costs of violence and the possibilities to measure it. One of them is the Household Cost Model. Within households, the main costs to be considered are personal expenses, income reduction, loss of family work and loss of productivity.

The cost estimate presented in this study refers mainly to the individual cost and the primary unit of analysis is the household and in each household a woman is interviewed. For this have served the data collected in the framework of the national survey mentioned above, and exactly a part of the data selected by it. The selected data refers to the variable that collects information on the cases of women who have experienced violence and who have sought help somewhere because of violence. There are 193 cases (women interviewed) that will be analyzed in this study, who answered "Yes" to the question if they asked for help somewhere due to the violence.

## Attempts to measure the cost of violence in Albania

The referencing situation in Albania remains a difficult task. Supportive literature is very scarce and studies on violence as a social phenomenon are very limited. Quantitative studies at the national level are also almost non-existent. In such an unexplored field, it is still difficult to analyze the aspect of economic cost in the Albanian context. In Albania, as in other countries, it is assumed that the family has the necessary support from the state and the law, to prevent and protect its members from ill-treatment and to maintain its stability. Although the state has made progress in this regard, again the relationship between the service seeker (the abused) and the service provider (public and private and health and legal services) is still fragile and unorganized and any damage it suffers tends to be fixed within "House walls". Individuals do not always seek specialized help, it is necessary to know how much potential service is used.

For the reasons mentioned above, the international literature was the only literature served to this paper. This literature really provides a lot of information in this regard but again the effort remains difficult. In developing countries which have similar characteristics to Albania, such studies are also very limited.

## Analysis of a case study: expenses in the family affected by the phenomenon of violence

Having explained theoretically and empirically what this phenomenon is and how the financial effect it has on the family can be measured, and after arguing some of the trends through literature review and study, it is important to go deeper into this issue through two case studies. The case studies are based on data collected from official sources but also from

a population selected for this purpose. It aims to confirm the main hypotheses of this study which aim to measure that domestic violence has a cost to the Albanian family which should not be ignored.

## The case studies presented are based on these two scenarios

The baseline scenario is oriented towards measuring direct costs, where costs are calculated based on the type and number of services required by abused women multiplied by the unit cost per service. And a revenue loss scenario, which imputes the cost of employment income that the family is supposed to lose due to the presence of Domestic Violence.

### A model of household expenditure estimation

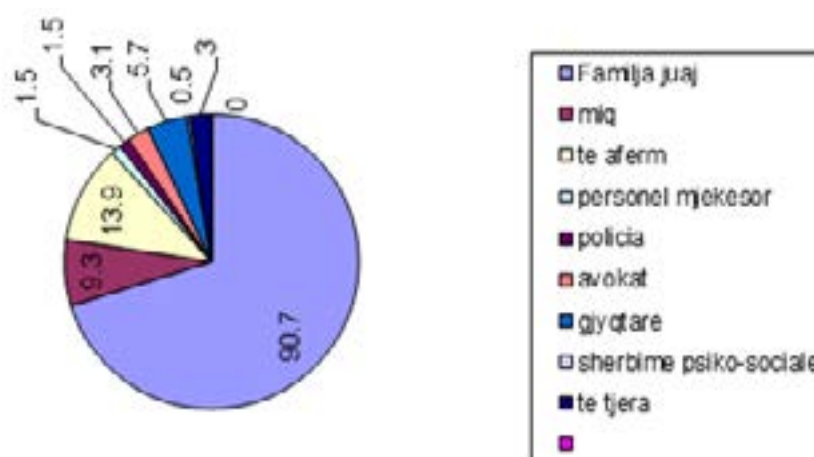
As mentioned above in the methodology section, the unit of analysis is the family and in each family a woman is interviewed. An abused woman may or may not seek specialized help to end the ongoing pain in her life. The directed question on which it was conducted and the selection of “my population for study” was:

“Have you ever tried to ask for help?” and Where did you seek help?

The basic (initial) scenario applied is based on the costs of households, in which women admit to having suffered some form of violence, as a result of which they have turned to legal services, police or medical services. According to this scenario, if this woman has received services / assistance five times at the medical services, then this request made five times during the last 12 months, multiplies the direct cost of the initial circumstance by 5 times for the given period. The income lost in this case is related not only to the type of services that women have requested but also their number, within a given period of time.

The data show (see graph) that the number of women seeking help in legal and specialized services is very limited, however we will try to concretize the model with this small number of cases.

**CHART 1.** Where do abused women seek help?



If we refer to the description given above where: Health service costs include (costs of emergency, medical visits, medications, surgeries, mental health care, dental), the analysis would be more complete if in addition to the percentages of service delivery to have all the amounts of money spent on each of these services.

Women have reported that they seek help to family, friends, medical staff, police etc. for services received but the reported value belongs to a large range and refers to a large grouping of services. For this reason we can set an approximate monetary value that refers to the formalized (approved) payment measure to make possible estimates.

**TABLE 2 .** Economic costs according to services for family

Type of service	Average number of times for each type of service Assumed value per unit of service Imputed cost	Average number of times for each type of service Assumed value per unit of service Imputed cost	Average number of times for each type of service Assumed value per unit of service Imputed cost
Medical staff	3	2,500 ALL	10,500 ALL
police	1	500	500
Lawyer	1	10.000 ALL	10,000 ALL



JUDGE	1	1.000 ALL	1,000 ALL
psycho-social	2	-	-
TOTAL			22,000 ALL

In our case study if in a family, it has to spend an amount of 10,500 ALL only for medical services this means that 2.5% of its annual income is lost for “unnecessary” expenses that are added to other expenses which the family needs to live. These expenses go only for health services but if we add to them the other costs of legal services such as police, lawyer, judge then 19.6% of the annual income of the family would go to the mentioned expenses. As it can be seen, the number of reports is very small and in this case we can not leave without mentioning that in our country, where culture is a strong limiting and orienting factor for women’s behavior, being closed to itself is inevitable. The woman tends to seek help within the family (around the circle of acquaintances, more than in specialized structures. This also affects the reports made during family surveys. This is clearly explained by the analysis we do of the reasons why women do not ask specialized help, where concern for the bad reputation of the family ranks third.

**CHART 3.** Distribution of reasons why women do not seek help



From this graph we understand that women do not seek specialized help because they either do not know where to seek it or because their trust in services is quite low.

**Case Study:** Regarding the income scenario that the family loses but is unavoidable, an estimated frequency for leaving / leaving work is applied and compared to the average monthly salary of the woman

Number of women who were not allowed to go to work as a result of the violence, according to the level of employment

The consequences did not allow you to go to work	YES	NO	Total
Cases	74	119	193
%	38	62	100

The data show that the percentage of women who had experienced one of the types of violence and who had sought legalized help or service somewhere, did not go to work as a result of the violence, during the last 12 months (about 38% out of 193 women). 48.5% of them lived in the countryside and 52% in the city. Almost all women (99%) have attended even one of the levels of education, which means that education is not an influential factor. To calculate how much the family loses, in this case we study the case with the highest frequency of occurrence. The data show (see table below) that women are most often reported to have been absent for 3 days from work and this is a direct financial loss for the family.

Percentage of women who did not go to work as a result of violence, according to the days of absence

No of days	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	10	14	15	TOT
Cases	6	14	20	10	6	5	7	3	1	2	74
Percentage (%)	8.10	18.9	27	13.5	8	6.8	9.5	4.1	1.4	2.4	100

Because she experiences frequent physical and sexual violence, she quits her job and has no chance of returning to

work, as in a market economy where unemployment is high, this chance is even more limited. If we assume that this woman belongs to the lower social strata, which tends to be affected and tolerate more violence as a phenomenon. Income from her work refers to a minimum monthly salary of 14,000 lek. With a simple calculation we can say that the family within a year will be missing 168,000 lek from its budget.

In an Albanian family where the average income turns out to be about 36,000 ALL per month and the average annual income can be estimated at a value of 432,000 ALL per year, we can say that the financial loss caused to the family is about 40% of income its annual. While it should not be forgotten without mention, the loss of productivity that represents the difference between what is produced and what could be produced if interpersonal violence, which in addition to temporary effects, can also have long-term effects.

Further, we assume that this unemployed woman will seek to be supported by the social scheme - unemployment benefit, which is given to the person for a period of 2 years when he declares that he is unemployed and can not find a job, in this case we have a double cost. The monthly unemployment payment has a measure of 5, 240 lek per month, for a year the cost of a person covered by this social scheme is 62,280 lek and this is a cost for the economy of a country.

In an analysis of real economic costs it would be good to include the contribution to the loss caused to society and the economy. This first contribution from the aspect of losing an active labor force (paid work) but also unpaid work.

The economic structure of our country becomes a challenge for estimating the costs of violence. As in many developing countries the formal labor market is less developed and informal activities are more dominant than in developed countries. According to the International Labor Organization in developing and transition economies, the informal labor sectors comprise half or three-quarters of employment outside the agricultural sector. Women perform a large amount of paid and unpaid work including reproductive work, subsistence work. The wide dimensions of informal and unpaid productivity in the family make it difficult to estimate the losses and reduced output that results from violence against women.

## Conclusions

In this study, I tried to explore as much as possible to make an economic cost estimate in Albania and what are the spaces to measure it in terms of increasing the level of expenditures and reducing the level of income. In order to show properly how this impact is measured, we referred to a set of data extracted from a nationally studied sample.

The conclusions and recommendations drawn from this simple and initial effort in this new field of exploration are as follows:

- Shortcomings in the field of study. Given the wide range of methodological changes and major shortcomings in the existing literature on the economic issues of interpersonal violence, the need for real research on the costs of violence is clear. Such research should follow strict methodological principles, including direct or indirect cost, and - most importantly - allow comparisons between different countries and models. In the context of calculating the consequences of violence, the biggest shortcoming observed is the lack of a standardized methodology. Such a methodology should specify parameters for categories and types of costs - indirect and direct - as well as provide an appropriate time to calculate costs from an individual and social perspective. The methodology will apply a consistent value to future depreciation costs and benefits. Also, there is a great lack of studies and analyzes which allow to draw causal conclusions regarding the links between interpersonal violence and economic inequality, the weakness of the security network (system), unemployment and poverty. It can be said with certainty that these factors contribute to the increase of interpersonal violence.
- Directions for future research. In addition to the individual consequences of the psycho-social cost of pain and suffering, interpersonal violence has a number of economic effects at the population level, including reduced credibility in economic, legal and social structures. The tool to compare the value of losses, caused by interpersonal violence in the country and the economy where the approach to human capital is particularly inefficient, is the need for standardized research referring to indirect costs. There are very few estimates of this kind, which, if quantified, are likely to be several times higher than the value of the direct cost of violence.
- The lack of population-based data limits our understanding of the further impact that violence has.
- Until recently, most searches were conducted by taking a non-representative sample, often women housed in women's shelters or in various centers that provide services to abused women. Indeed, these studies are important to understand the dynamics of abuse, they do not provide data on how many women are affected by this phenomenon, nor do they collect information on individuals who do not seek help. And according to estimates, the number of women who do not seek these services, significantly exceeds the number of women who seek help.
- Determining the most effective unit of study.
- A population-based search or services? This is a question that arises when you consider studying this aspect. The decision refers to the selection of the sample by the population (also called the population-based study) or by service providers, such as health centers, police posts, in an attempt to assess how many of the emergency room patients are victims of violence. In our country, based on the information deficiencies mentioned above, it is thought that the studies are oriented towards the selection of the sample by a certain population or community. A better point from

which to estimate the costs of violence is the family given the importance of this cell as a place of production and reproduction. Focusing on the losses created by the cost of labor at the family level, we will have a higher attention from the community and policy makers, because this will include other implications in poverty which is a matter of high interest for this economics.

## Recommendations

- It is necessary to create a clearer understanding of domestic violence.
- This attempt provided a context for understanding that this problem is significant and that it is a good reason for further work. A key area where more research can be focused is the area of labor force participation. We need to better understand how the existence of domestic violence affects work behavior. This may require further quantitative studies.
- Improving data collection - in the function of estimating the prevalence of domestic violence but also to better identify the use of services and costs incurred by the victim or family.
- Application of intervention programs using experimental models as an essential factor to perform a cost-effective or cost-benefit analysis
- Theoretical reservations for performing a complete analysis.
- Family surveys risk underestimating the true incidence of violence. It should be clear that economic analysis - or even an estimate for calculating DHNP, is a difficult task. The sources of information are really numerous and the problem of the information system is always present. On the other hand violence of the same character is not always experienced in the same way by all those who are exposed to it.
- In some cases it involves long-term and very serious abuse and in others the case is not so serious.

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# Student motivation and performance during online learning in the pandemic situation at European University of Tirana (case study)

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**Dr. Briseida ANDONI**

European University of Tirana

Faculty of Humanities, Education and Liberal Arts, Department of Psychology, Education and Sports

**PhD(c). Etleva HAXHIHYSENI**

European University of Tirana

Faculty of Humanities, Education and Liberal Arts, Department of Psychology, Education and Sports

## Abstract

*The study aims to identify the effectiveness of online learning during pandemic situation. The data sources used to achieve the objectives of the study include: research of basic theories on the learning process and the role of motivation; research studies on motivation; an analysis based on the students' opinion about impact of motivation on learning process during online environment. Mixed methods were used to achieve the goal of this study. The selection of the sample data was intentional and includes 145 students of two study cycle, bachelor and master, in European University of Tirana. Semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used as a measuring instrument. The interviews were conducted online in Google forms and focus group interviews on the Teams platform during the period February - April 2021. This created the possibility of collecting primary data, taking student's opinions, sharing opinions and feelings on motivation during online learning, also allowed the possibility of data comparison. Based on the quantitative analyses of the data, helped mostly by the description in the questionnaire, it seems that the general motivation of the students at European University of Tirana is influenced mainly by internal factors.*

**Key words:** Pandemic situation, effectiveness of online learning

## Introduction

Pandemic has strongly impacted learning mode in higher education. Many university students in Albania and all around the world in the last one year are through these conditions. As online learning has become the new normality, there are some challenges that students face in learning online. There is an immediate need for structuring a teaching space that would provide access to a variety of content, not only for enabling communication, but above all for enabling students and lecturers to understand each other. This highlighted the need to integrate different types of resources and tools that would enable both lecturers and students to interact in both synchronously – in real time – and non-synchronously, in the sense that communication does not depend on the time or geographical position to be enacted. (Adell, Bellver, & Bellver, 2010).

One of the challenges faced by those who work in education is motivating the students to learn. Educational situations reveal that uninterested or apathetic students, who make the minimum of effort in undertaking academic activities, who present little interest in deepening their level of knowledge or, further, show greater concern with grades and with obtaining certifications than with learning itself are not uncommon, and have been a focus for concern shared by teachers, psychologists and psychopedagogists (Bzuneck, 2001).

In this process the student needs to take greater responsibility, undertaking actions for the monitoring of regulation of her own learning (Filcher & Miller, 2000). Finding the motivation to attend classes and study outside the traditional auditorium environment is a daunting task.

In addition, being considered a powerful and essential component of education by itself, motivation is also associated with other major factors involved with learning. The process of internalization involves endorsing the value of extrinsically motivated behaviours (Ryan & Connell, 1992) and is critical for the self-initiation and maintenance of socially important,

yet non-intrinsically motivated, behaviours. Among these factors are selfregulation (Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014), metacognition (Zepeda, Hlutkowski, A, & Nokes-Malak, 2018) and persistence (Fowler, 2018). Social cognitive theory explains learning and behaviour as it occurs within the social context. Though there are a large number of researchers operating within the social cognitive theory framework, Albert Bandura is its primary proponent (Schunk & Usher, 2012).

Self-regulation refers to individuals' abilities to monitor and modify their current behaviors, as well as mental, physical, and emotional state. Bandura defined three elements of self-regulation: self-observation, self-judgment, and self-reaction (Bandura, 1986). Self-observation is the act of monitoring one's self. Outcome expectations are internal representations of the consequences of actions that are formed through personal and vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1986).

Goal orientation refers to the types of goals that motivate students in particular, the direction from which those goals originate. There are two general types of goals: intrinsic goals and extrinsic goals (Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010). Intrinsic goals are those that originate from within the individual. Goals that fall under this category include satisfaction, mastery, and the pleasure derived from simply being engaged in an activity. Intrinsic goals are often referred to as mastery goals. Extrinsic goals are those goals that originate from outside the individual. Examples of extrinsic goals include money, social recognition, grades, and avoidance of punishment. Extrinsic goals often take the form of rewards and are sometimes referred to as performance goals. Generally, it is believed that intrinsic goals are more productive than extrinsic goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

## Literature Review

University auditoriums, social academic environment even so the actor's that significantly influence the creation of a good climate for the effective realization of the educational process. We mention here factors as; the relationship between academic staff and students, between students themselves, attitudes, behaviors, strategies and techniques used during the teaching process affect student motivation.

Goal orientation is an essential component of motivation. To be motivated means to be motivated towards something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). That something is a goal. Goal orientation refers to the types of goals that motivate students in particular, the direction from which these goals come. There are two general types of goals: internal goals and external goals (Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010). Internal goals come out from the desire for the individual achievement. Those kinds of goals are found in the satisfaction of mastering knowledge and the satisfaction that comes from an enjoyable activity. They belong to achievement and self-realization closely related with the individual activity. On the other hand, external goals affect the form of the stimulus which originates outside the individual. Examples of external goals include money, social recognition, grades, and avoidance of punishment. External goals often take the form of rewards and are sometimes referred to as performance goals. In general, it is believed that internal goals are more productive than external goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

This refers to the internal or personal factors (specific to each student) that a student uses to determine his or her field of study, as well as how well they perform in that field. In other words, intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation that stems from individual students. Intrinsic motivators can answer questions about the reason "why" doing something. Therefore, they include personal reasons such as interest in the subject, sense of achievement associated with mastery, and ability. Due to the personal nature of internal motivation, it is often more stable than external motivation. Efforts to foster intrinsic motivation should focus on student learning (understanding and growth) rather than on performance alone. Connecting to the personal world of students is another way that teachers support their students' learning. Teachers connect learning to the personal world of their students by making learning tasks more relevant through relating instructions to students' experiences (Davion, 2017). In a way there are potential hurdles associated with this type of motivation. Fostering intrinsic motivation requires teachers to have a deeper understanding of the personal reasons that motivate students and learning this information can be a long process (during which you build and nurture the student-teacher relationship).

External motivators answer questions like "what?" closely related to its content and conceptualization. One of the advantages of external motivation is that it can be quick to result in improved student performance. For example, if a student fails in an assignment, this may motivate them to improve their performance before their next assignment. Therefore, external motivators are widely applicable and do not depend on existing student-teacher relationships. However, external motivators can become ineffective over time. Students may demand stronger rewards (or punishments) to keep them engaged throughout the study journey. Removal of rewards or penalties can result in demotivation (Davion, 2017).

## Methodology

The purpose of the study was to identify challenges related to student motivation during online learning. The data sources used to achieve the objectives of the study include: research of basic theories on the learning process and the role of motivation; research studies on motivation; an analysis based on the students' opinion about impact of motivation on learning process during online environment. Mixed methods were used to achieve the goal of this study.

In social sciences studies, mixed methods ask complex questions which require that the study subjects have to be engaged (Bazeley, 2017). Mixed methods research is "research in which the researcher collects and analyses data, integrates the

findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in a single study or program of inquiry". This approach has the potential to allow the researcher to collect two sets of data (Rutberg, 2018). Recently, mixed methods are being used in different fields of study (Poth, 2018). The main purpose is to collect data to provide a meaningful understanding of the phenomena in the study. The proper coding of the collected data is also of main importance (Saldaña, 2021).

The selection of the sample data was intentional and includes 145 students of two study cycles, bachelor and master, in European University of Tirana. Semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used as a measuring instrument. The interviews were conducted online in Google forms and focus group interviews on the Teams platform during the period February - April 2021. This created the possibility of collecting primary data, taking students' opinions, sharing opinions and feelings on motivation during online learning, also allowed the possibility of data comparison.

## Outcomes and Elaborations

Judging primarily from the descriptions of open questions in the instrument used by us, it seems that the overall motivation of students at the European University of Tirana is mostly affected by intrinsic motivation factors. This is consistent with the studies conducted by Artino (Artino, 2009), Keller (Keller, 2008), whereby it is argued that students who achieve good performances during online learning, have a stable personality in terms of the entirety of their learning activities. Given that online learning requires students' awareness, participation to online learning is the outcome of their determination, personal ambition, beliefs, and interest. All of these parameters are directly related to intrinsic motivation. As regards the quality of teaching, it is perceived and valued at the same level by students. They state that the increased understanding is attributed to the interactive techniques used by the respective lecturers. This has affected the enhancement of their goals, which also includes the satisfaction of mastering concepts and knowledge.

One of study's findings includes the comparison between concentration and motivation. This is closely related to self-regulation, meaning the individuals' ability to monitor and modify their behaviours. In his theory of social recognition, Bandura explains learning and behaviour the way it happens within a given context. Their ability to monitor and modify current behaviours, as well as their mental, physical, and emotional state, for improving their learning. The link between motivation and concentration is considered as a biunivocal behaviour; motivation increases concentration, and on the other hand, concentration nourishes and increases motivation.

The lack of punishment and the presence of rewards for absences from online classes, as well as the adequate learning equipment, were identified as external regulators that are mandatorily linked to the extrinsic motivation of students at the European University of Tirana. It is due to punishment that the students' goals in online learning are separated from the learning activities themselves (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In our case this linked to the removal of the 'NK= Not Qualified' status, but also to the tolerance/leeway reflected by most lecturers in their approach and evaluation due to the unusual nature of the situation and the difficult conditions they were facing. The students that passively participate to the online learning, as well as those that consider learning only as an obligation that needs to be fulfilled, are mostly affected by extrinsic motivation factors. However, all the facilities created during online learning, which includes the increased availability of lecturers, the physical comfort of not having to leave home, the various interactive forms of support-learning that were used, seem to have pushed students to create what we call **self-determination** of motivation. This situation is described by the authors as adapted/adaptive motivation. It refers to reaching a stage at which students feel determined to experience positive extrinsic motivation for getting involved in online learning (Lepper & al, 2005). The level of students' intrinsic motivation undoubtedly seems to be the main driver.

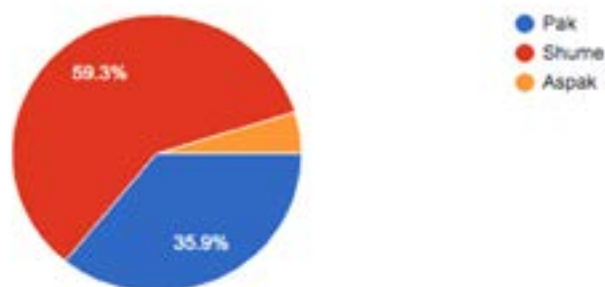
The Teams platform was initially seen as a technological innovation that has increased the interest and sense of self-efficiency during the online learning process, as noticed in previous studies. (Hara & Kling, 2003). This is also connected to extrinsic motivation.

The most demotivated students seem to be those that lack a goal related to online learning because of their individual external factors. Based on the conclusions of (Lepper & al, 2005), the state of coexistence with the actual conditions, and consequently the adaptation process, does not occur in this case because the poorness of the student's external factors (lack of technological means, internet, the necessity to seek alternative finances in a negatively compromised financial period), has affected the decrease in the level of belief and self-regulation. These students seem to feel incompetent and achieve a vague involvement and performance in online learning.

Concluding, at the European University of Tirana, the overall motivation of students enrolled in master programmes seems to be more positively influenced by extrinsic motivation factors, whereas the opposite applies to those enrolled in bachelor programmes. Students that are employed somewhere, or that have returned to their hometowns due to economic factors, have expressed high appreciation and readiness to involve in online learning.

## Pres me dëshirë orën e fillimit të mësimit

145 responses

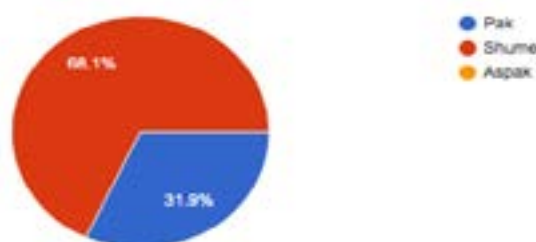


A considerable number of students have responded by saying that they eagerly look forward to starting class, even though it is online. This may be related to the fact that their activities during this period are generally limited. By spending a great part of the day at home, they see learning as a variation that involves consuming energy, and as a sense of missing self-efficiency.

However, the 35.9% figure of students that have responded by saying that they are not that eager, is considerable/cannot be disregarded, which may refer to a lack of enthusiasm overall or lack of enthusiasm when it comes to an activity that involves a greater dose of will and concentration in the conditions/circumstances in question.

## Ndjej që mirëkuptoj saktë dhe qartë gjatë mësimit online çdo tematikë të prekur nga pedagogu

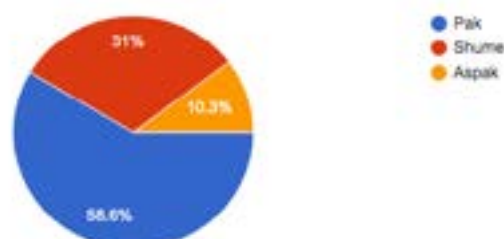
144 responses



The fact that 68% of respondents reply by saying that they understand correctly and clearly, remains questionable/suspicious and data that cannot be easily interpreted. The explanation and articulation through the Teams platform - regardless of the technological facility that this platform offers - has often encountered barriers such as faulty of internet lines, problems with audio, and other technical details.

## Gjykoj që cilësia e shpjegimit të mësimit online nuk ndryshon nga cilësia e shpjegimit në auditor

145 responses

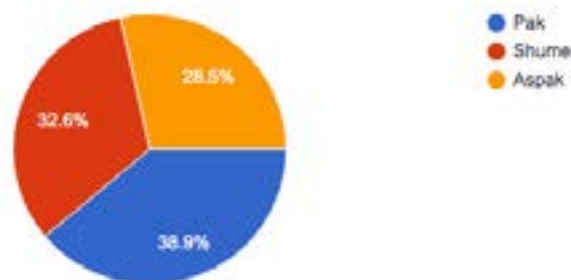


If we consider the performance of the lecturers related to their motivation (which would require a separate similar study) it is noticed that there are more frequent alterations compared to teaching in the auditoriums.

The questionnaire's statement is built in a denial form (i.e. the word "not"), which may mean that it has been misunderstood by a part of the students. This assumption starts from the fact that the answers contradict the answer to the above question, in which it is said that everything is understood very clearly by them.

Arrij të jem në të njëjtën përmasë i motivuar si në auditor

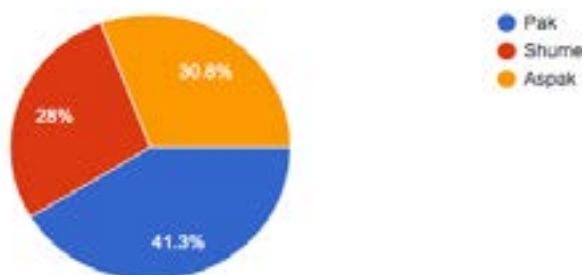
144 responses



This is where it turns out we're dealing with different perceptions about motivation. It is noticed that 28% manage to understand and accept that their motivation changes when it comes to lack of physical conditions.

Heqja e statusit NK si detyrim për provimin final më jep një lloj qetësie

143 responses

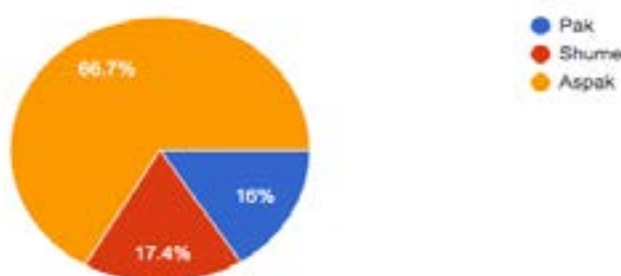


NK status (does not qualify) in the regulation of the European University of Tirana means that the student does not qualify if he/she misses a certain number of classes. In view of the human resources restrictions dictated by the pandemic, during the first semester of the 2020-2021 academic year, the UET Academic Council decided that this sanction should be removed. Judging from the principle that fear of penalization – which may be extended to prohibition for taking the final exam – is motivating in terms of attending the lectures, it was thought that removing this sanction would have positively affected the motivation of the students.

The results show that 28% claim to be greatly affected by the removal of this sanctions, while 41.3% feel slightly affected, meaning that it is a circumstance on which the majority of them takes an interest. However, in our research this circumstance would be hypothetically linked to the decline in the motivation to attend online learning, which is not easily identified in the answers to the other questions.

Nuk besoj se ka rëndësi pjesëmarrja dhe aktivizimi im gjatë seminareve online

144 responses

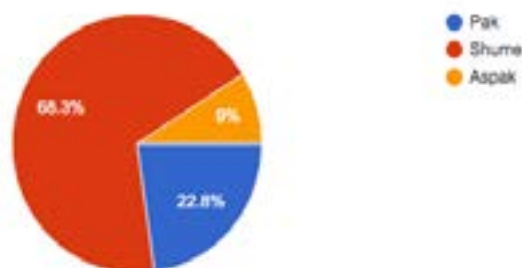


A large percentage of students have responded by saying that they think that actively participating during online classes, is important. From the impressions gathered before and during the application of the questionnaire, this seems to be related to the fact that most lecturers make constant calls for an active participation, promote debates, give practical tasks, and adopt “rewarding” attitudes towards active students.



Do preferoja që provimi final të zhvillohej online

145 responses



It is thought that if the exam takes place online, the chances of achieving higher results and recording a better performance are higher due to the possibility of looking at the texts, lectures or notes while taking the exam, given that they are not monitored like in the auditoriums. As a result, many educators find themselves in the midst of a paradigm which has them pressured on one side by the responsibility of providing quality of education and on the other hand by the technological expectations of both students and society.

## Conclusions

Students are eager to learn online as the only way to understand the subject and fulfil individual objectives.

The use of interactive techniques by the lecturer increases students' interest and interaction during online learning.

The involvement of students in initial scientific research, in the tasks of courses, increases their effectiveness and participation.

Students have low concentration as a result of external environmental incentives.

## Recommendation

1. Giving comments in the form of constructive debate, in a timely manner.
2. Creating facilities for accessing study materials.
3. Given the aggravated situation due to the consequences of Covid-19, it is advisable to maintain an optimistic situation.
4. Good planning and organization of time, use of audiovisual materials in order to maintain the level of interest in the topic.
5. Contextualize information using examples to show students why performance and understanding of content is valuable.
6. Giving regular comments. Reactions, both in a constructive form, will motivate students to improve their knowledge and skills.

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# Citizenship education, international competences and extended reality: Immerse yourself

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**Drs. Gerry H. STEGEMAN**

Research Group Resilient Democracy; Saxion University of Applied Sciences, NL

***Keywords:** citizenship education; extended reality; authentic learning environments; international competences; curriculum development*

## Introduction

Higher education supports students in acquiring competences; a mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Experience has shown that it is precisely attitude and skills that ensure a better connection to the labor market, in whatever sector in whatever country.

This article examines the developments and experiences in authentic learning environments in relation to international aspects of citizenship education. It discusses the possibilities and limitations of the use of extended reality in general and in this context.

The author links this to the educational and societal developments in Albania and her home country The Netherlands, during and after COVID-19, and shares her thoughts on the needs for continuing attention on new forms of citizenship education. The pandemic makes it necessary to re-consider past self-evident interpersonal relations and international relations.

After a short introduction on the concepts of citizenship education, internationalization, and extended reality, the article first digs into the relevance of competence based learning and authentic learning-environments, in order to highlight the importance of learning styles and learning environments.

The inventory of the possibilities and limitations of the use of extended reality in the context of citizenship education and internationalization, is followed by an overview of the current situation in Albanian and Dutch societies and higher education.

The focus is on the curriculum and class-room level in higher education, so on knowledge exchange at practitioners level, with an eye for the policy implications at other levels.

## Citizenship education

Citizenship education contains the personal development of reflective ability, moral compass, media literacy and international experience, as Willeke Slingerland of Saxion UAS stated during the Albanian Week of Integrity in 2020. She investigated the importance of higher education in the total system of integrity (Slingerland, 2016).

Opinions differ on which role the government should play in citizenship education and which role of educational institutions like universities should take. Integration, civil society, active citizenship are goals most people agree upon. Working on common values: that is already more difficult. One should realize that international integration, like the EU, not

only changes citizenship as such, but also the contents of national curricula, and the purpose and assumptions of citizenship education (Keating, 2009). The COE announced Competences for democratic culture during the Learning to live together conference about the future of citizenship and Human Right education in Europe (Council of Europe, 2019).

There are many theories on citizenship education and curriculum. Curtiss and Warren distinguished the following elements, already in 1973:



**FIGURE 1.** Citizenship education curriculum (Curtiss & Warren, 1973)

In the next section, the role of international competences are first addressed in general, and later more specifically on international citizenship education.

## Internationalization

Part of citizenship education is linked to internationalization. How is internationalization integrated in the curriculum of the university and in its organization? Preferably not as a goal as such but as a means to become a responsible, capable professional. With an open, flexible approach, ready for the world. This is what internationalization is about, and why it should have its role in the university curriculum and organization.

The European Association for International Education has a widely accepted view on internationalization. She defines internationalization as: “The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.” (EAIE, 2020)

It is good to realize that it is definitely more than ‘something with English’ or mobility. Nor are English or mobility necessary components of internationalization. Conducting a module in English, whether or not to students from abroad, does not make it internationalized. Conversely, a module or training can be internationalized without switching to English or building in mobility (Saxion UAS, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic it became apparent that international contacts are crucial, but traveling not always necessary let alone possible. There are many forms of internationalization, that are beyond the scope of the article. It is mainly to address the role of internationalization in competence development.

The main contributions of internationalization include:

- For higher education, it contributes to high quality education and research, addressing the needs of the employment market and addressing global challenges.
- For learners, it contributes to personal socialization, like working in an international classroom, online or offline. It contributes to personality development of the learner, the more general skills and awareness. It is needed for professional qualification of the learner, in the strict labor market sense.
- For society, it contributes to solving societal problems. Like contributing to more inclusive communities. Of course, it could also contribute to problems, like the environmental impact of traveling.

Internationalization in education also includes research of course. But that is not discussed in detail here, other than joint student-research activities, and the role of educators and the relevance of their professional development including research skills.

International elements used to be included in the curriculum as embedded mobility within a course, exchange mobility for individual students, networked mobility in networked curricula and courses with mobility windows and integrated mobility in joint curricula. More and more society realizes that mobility is not always necessary. How can online cooperation, virtual mobility and (Keating, 2009) obtain the same goals? On an organization level or national level, there are different programs to support international competence development for staff and students. In the European context there is national and European funding for international cooperation, with different goals and means. Next to various Erasmus programs, Horizon2020 and the new European University Networks are worth mentioning.

## Extended reality (XR)

Let's move on to the next important concept. Virtual reality can be used as a tool to learn in an authentic learning environment. In this article this concept includes augmented reality, virtual reality and more.

It includes also online learning, whereby different locations are linked, or making learning place and time independent.

Extended reality is new and not new, because creativity has always been there. Transferring information and experiences to other regions or other times was done via magic lanterns, and is done in museums. Also currently, augmented reality initiatives like Humanity House in The Hague, work on site. It let the visitor experience what it is like to be a refugee.

There are many forms of extended reality, below a short impression is given:

- The Building Information Model (BIM) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) were early examples, in construction and geography, of professional extended reality.
- Digital storytelling in marketing is widely used in companies around the globe (e.g. LEGO, Tony Chocolonely)
- Nintendo is the predecessor of the current serious gaming. Edu games and professional training games show professionals and learners how to deal with a certain situation, like a house on fire, or an animal with a behavior issue.
- Home automation is more and more common in healthcare, for instance to support elderly on a distance.
- VR/ AR devices, computers, motion capture solutions, robots, cameras, drones, are used in the link between industries, students and researchers. Google glasses is a well-known example.
- Welding simulators are getting daily practice in vocational education at various levels.

## Competences and authentic learning environments in the curriculum

Before going into more detail about the possible role of XR in international citizenship education, it is important to realize how learning works. A number of theories are used to share the notion of competences and the relevance of authentic learning environments in building and executing a curriculum.

**Competences** are defined as a mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Although knowledge is indispensable to a greater or lesser extent, experience shows that it is precisely attitude and skills that ensure a better connection between the young qualified professional in the labor market.

Some universities or university programs are more research-oriented, with an academic focus. Other courses, especially those offered by universities of applied sciences, are by definition labor market oriented. The point is that both are labor market oriented and both require a set of skills and attitude, but the content is different. So there is no real difference in approach, if we are aware of the different conditions on the general labor market and the specific labor market for scientists. In the cognitive domain, Bloom's taxonomy distinguished different levels of learning objectives. From knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis to evaluation (Bloom, 1956). There is a never-ending debate as to whether this is sequential or not, nevertheless, the theory is widely used for teaching philosophies and strategies.

Kratwohl designed a revised version, shown in the figure below, with a more general approach. Divide skills into high and lower order skills. Create (creativity) being the highest skill, and evaluating seen as the reflective skill. (Kratwohl, 2002)



**Figure 2:** The taxonomy of educational objectives (Kratwohl, 2002)

ot just knowledge but also skills, are also reflected in Miller's pyramid. The following levels are used in education to assess the level of competence: knows about, knows, knows how, shows how to do. This also reflects the importance of skills. From passively acquiring knowledge to actively showing how to do it (Miller, 1990).

Awareness is important. The theory of Curtis and Warren is useful for that. They distinguish four levels. The theory is mentioned here specifically, because it also links to citizenship skills, which require conscious behavior.

1. Unconscious incompetence. A student does not understand or does not know how to do something and does not necessarily recognize the deficit. This should be recognized before moving to the next phase.
2. Conscious incompetence. Though the student does not understand or know how to do something, they recognize the deficit
3. Conscious competence. The student understands or knows how to do something. But this requires attention and concentration.
4. Unconscious competence. The student has had so much practice with a skill that it has become a second nature and can be performed easily. The skill could be taught to someone else. (Curtiss & Warren, 1973)

Interdisciplinarity is another issue, that is not addressed here in detail, but relates to complexity of situations. Disciplines need each other to solve a professional problem or to investigate a question.

In the report 'Preparing 21st century students for a global society' of NEA, there is a focus on the 4 C's: creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration (National Education Association, 2012).

**Curriculum development** requires an eye for the composition of competences in a curriculum, for that cause the Zelcom model is useful. Zelcom stands for Zelfstandigheid (Dutch for self-reliance) and Complexiteit (Dutch for complexity). The model is used at universities of applied sciences in The Netherlands. Independence (or self-reliance) and complexity are two axes that together determine the competence level. Important for the qualification level of the study program, assessing assignments, determining assessment criteria and assessing student performance. A useful tool for curriculum development. In making training more relevant to the profession, and clearer also for partners in the professional field (Bulthuis, 2013). The model is also used as a quality control tool in (inter)national accreditations.

Self-reliance	C	D	E
	B	C	D
	A	B	C
	Complexity		

**FIGURE 3:** Zelcom-model (Bulthuis, 2013)

**Authentic learning environments** are key to competence based learning. In fact competence based learning requires authentic learning environments. An approach that allows students to explore, discuss and construct concepts and relationships in a context that involves a real world problem and projects that are relevant to the learner, and the professional field.

Wehlage defines five standards of authentic instruction. Higher order thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world, substantive conversation, social support for student achievement (Wehlage, 1993). The practical environments include: simulation, student created media, inquiry based learning, project based learning and peer based learning (Revington, 2018). Here the links to citizenship education are obvious.

These notions are not all new, by the way, but they form a useful overview.

Benefits of authentic learning environments include:

- a better preparation for the professional field
- learn to assimilate
- obtain problem solving skills
- learn to be flexible
- motivation for learners (and educators)

When looking at *how* students learn, Kolb distinguishes 4 different learning styles of participants in education or elsewhere (Kolb, 2005):

- Doer, is actively experimenting and gaining experience. His motto is: let's get to work. Guessing and missing is allowed in his approach.
- Dreamer, is experiencing concretely and observing reflectively. He looks in all directions and finds solutions.

- Thinker, likes reflective observation and conceptualization. He is able to reason well and likes to work independently.
- Decision maker, likes abstract conceptualizing and active experimentation. He is a problem solver.

It is important to note, that there are four moments when learning actually happens: by experiencing, by reflecting, by conceptualizing or by applying. Learners could go through the entire cycle, starting with experience.

Although many curricula at universities are very structured and well organized, they may not cover all these different learning styles. Whether one should apply the same, complete cycle every time, or one could select parts from it for certain learning units, is a question to take into account. Preferably, the overall curriculum attention should cover different learning styles, which could be included in the Zelcom model, for instance.

After the why of the learning experience, the authentic learning environments are chosen to show *how* are they learning? The curricular spider web developed as SLO is a widely used tool to decide about the learning environment elements, like grouping, location, resources, teacher role and so on. (SLO Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development, 2018).



**FIGURE 4:** Curricular Spider Web (SLO 2018)

Now that the educational setting elaborated, another look into citizenship education, XR in the international context is in place.

## International citizenship education and extended reality (XR)

Ahrari et al, use this model of citizenship education and curriculum (S. Ahrari, 2017).



**Figure 5:** Categories of democratic citizenship education curriculum (Ahrari, 2017)

One can distinguish direct links with knowledge, skills and attitude at different levels and the competence models and authentic learning models mentioned before. All these citizenship competences are applicable to the professional atmosphere.

Not only students in public management need to be educated or self-educated, although it is obvious in their curriculum. Also a technician or an architect must be aware of the ethical implications of professional activities and decisions and be able to act on them.

Professionals need to work meaning-oriented, which should be addressed in every curriculum. Of course one cannot do this in every assignment or module, therefore the overview like in Zelcom is useful in curriculum development.

When returning to extended reality in the curriculum, the following benefits of XR are mentioned by (Gils, 2020), (Häfner, 2020) (Papagiannis, 2020) and others:

- It ensures a variation in learning.
- Personalization is possible. Experiencing it yourself, making your own avatar, designing your own situations.
- It is more compelling, exciting than most forms of learning.
- Engaging, and leads to active learning
- Cooperation is key (possibly, depending on others) and engaging with others.
- Technical skills go hand in hand with knowledge (and preferably awareness).
- It offers the possibility to interact with data in a different way.

Except from scientific research proof comes from companies who share their experiences with XR and express how it affects their work, saves time and brings motivation. (ASML, Valmet websites). The labor market is of course the driving force behind the need for XR professionals and professionals with experience with XR. Companies also highlight that XR experiences also make learners realize it also influences their environment, not only vice versa.

There is a lot of experience with XR worldwide in companies and not-for-profit-organizations and in educational institutions, but in concrete terms, outside technology and healthcare home automation, little research seems to have been done into the effects in education, let alone in the international context.

Of course there are limitations to extended reality. Time and costs, -including expensive labs-, although depending on the form of XR. Technical issues are relevant, like the availability of a strong internet connection.

In education the following disadvantages or and risks one needs to be taken into account: (Dede, 2009) and (Häfner, 2020).

- Risk of limited acceptance of the technique or tool or way to use it (students feel discomfort for various reasons).
- Not always contributing to learning outcome because of overload of information and experiences.
- Safety issues and security issues of the data or of the student (for instance: harassment by anonymous avatars).
- Communication issues (distraction because of wearing glasses; cultural issues).

It is important to also look at the environment, of teacher, of institute and beyond.

Dede and Dunleavy also note the need for attention on teacher's competences: '...it is the teaching that explains most of the difference in student learning gains on studies that compare technology-based versus control curriculum, rather than the media by which instruction is delivered' (Dede, 2009).

When looking at authentic online learning environments, the model of Parker is quite informative, it combines relevant elements from some of the previously mentioned models. It looks at learner's needs from three perspectives: authentic learning environment, meaningful learning with technology and open educational resources (Parker, 2016).



**FIGURE 6:** Learner needs in online learning (Parker 2016)



Towards the link between citizenship and XR a few additional viewpoints are shared here.

Online learning requires knowledge, skills and awareness of the consequences, possibilities, threats. Like the council of Europe shows in her Digital Citizen Education Handbook (Council of Europe, 2019) with 3 dimensions:

- Being online: Access and inclusion; learning and creativity; media and information literacy.
- Well-being online: ethics and empathy; health and well-being; e-presence and communication
- Rights online: active participation; rights and responsibilities, privacy and responsibilities; consumer awareness

Fonseca et al researched informal interactions in 3D education in 'Citizenship participation and assessment of virtual urban proposals work'. The main result sees new technologies in education not as tools or delivery systems, but a set of resources and affordances that provide an opportunity to rethinking our educational aims, methods and institutions (David Fonseca, 2016).

Burbules states the following important finding about the use of IT and media: "The failure to engage this opportunity for rethinking is a constraint on the truly transformative potential these technologies possess. At the same time, this rethinking has to have a critical dimension: not only what these technologies do for us, but what they do to us" (Burbules N. , 2016).

Haupt concludes that IT are a fixed feature in current citizenship education. The author discusses some aspects with regard to citizenship education and new media in formal education. Digital media, for example, offer a variety of possibilities of enhancing interactivity and of voicing one's opinion. Additionally, citizenship education can make use of these tools by allowing for a testing and trying out of political action within the small scale. Still, digital media in citizenship education also bear some challenges that educators should take into account. For instance the expectation that all students (and teaching staff) are competent in using digital media, may lead to exclusions for groups of people that don't have access to or (yet) have the competencies of using these new tools. One major function of citizenship education therefore is to aim for the inclusion of all groups of people and to make use of all options to reach learners by the means of new media. (Haupt, 2017)

Investigation from a journalist perspective was done by Georgieva et al, who advise to definitely include ethical issues in the learning process and include learning new media (Georgieva, 2018).

Saxion UAS works with its XR Lab and also started experiments at the intersection of XR and citizenship because more experiences and research are needed, also for teachers. Sanchez states in his proposal for the use of XR in international competences acquirement: "Innovation gives new opportunities for education. The intended benefit for students is an enhanced interaction about and retention of specific international competences that go beyond the current use of digital platforms. With AR / VR, skills can be trained in real-life situations outside one's own physical location, in so-called Authentic Digital International Learning Environments" (Sanchez, 2021). Pilots will have to prove that:

- AR / VR will be meaningful for international distance learning, especially in stimulating students to complete their courses by strengthening retention of learning experiences and competences. A benefit that should not be underestimated for the student is the authentic (international) authentic learning experiences that stimulate the critical view of global issues (i.e. promotion of global citizenship). Innovation is the focus on the explicit connection with the responsibilities of the future international professional and the international competences in their profession.
- Relevant starting point is, how teachers can better embed authentic international learning environments in the curriculum. Students participate in the development of the AR / VR environment and indicate themselves which competencies they aspire to as professionals in a globalizing context.

The general conclusion of various studies is that AR / VR applications can improve the learning process, learning motivation and effectiveness. Researchers indicate that further study is needed to understand how this medium can best be used for new types of learning experiences.

Little research has been done within higher education into the added value of these emerging technologies for internationalization, international competences and the impact on graduation. Many initiatives are currently still in the embryonic or pilot phase and are nationally / regionally oriented.

## COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic shows us that in the new education (during or post COVID-19) attention must be paid to building up international an interdisciplinary competences, also at a distance, for at least two reasons. Firstly, because traveling and meeting each other in person is not always physically possible and the society still needs these competences. Secondly, because the current information bias threatens understanding between different groups in society and leads to possible misunderstanding and polarization, which are seen as a major risk for social stability. This applies to most societies around the globe, including the author's home country The Netherlands.

The pandemic made traveling less possible, sustainable development goals make that traveling is looked at critically for climate protection (United Nations, 2015).

The Dutch organization for international education (NUFFIC) foresees a change in economic gravity and perhaps an economic crisis worldwide and how these developments are changing European education. The education strategies of countries and regions must be geared to this (Nuffic, 2020).

- Digitalization of society is accelerating.
- Flexibilization of education was given a boost.
- More opportunities to collaborate and integrate technology into curricula through distance learning.
- Self-reliance is key.
- A greater focus on cooperation within the region and within Europe.
- Safety, security and uncertainty need to be addressed.

Although not post-COVID, the COIL concept gets rapid attention in international education in the past year. Coil stands for Collaborative Online International Learning:

Collaborative: Student to student learning by working together, to improve the team skills. Online Learning how to work in a remote team and manage virtual tools in a professional manner. International: Cross cultural learning by bringing the world into the classroom, offering all students an international experience in cultural, language and time management, cooperation skills and leadership skills. Learning: Practicing professional skills and learning from peers around the world (Coventry University, 2021)

Coventry University in the UK is an COIL expert, with projects with many European universities. Together with Saxion UAS a COIL Finance Lab and a COIL Security Lab are executed, with reflective portfolios as part of the professional products that are assessed.

It could have been mentioned earlier in this article, as COIL is a tool to design authentic learning environments without traveling. It is E-learning, but could be much more, with or without XR. The collaborative part is key here: real time or asynchronous, digital, and with insight. COIL could be a vehicle to give students the possibility of an international experience. More students can now gain the necessary international experience remotely, without traveling, as a replacement for or in preparation for physical international experience. COIL could be a tool to design authentic learning environments without traveling.

Yet, digital education is not equally accessible to everyone. Digitization is taking place at different speeds within society and society needs to be careful that everyone comes along (Garcia Estrada, 2021). Yet, online learning and XR cannot replace the real experience totally and everywhere. Whether it could, and when and how real meetings and real experiences are necessary needs to be researched. Sometimes a real experiences supports better learning later, sometimes online collaboration is a perfect start of the learning journey.

During the pandemic learners and educators got other experiences and notions, that need a follow up. Possibilities and learning needs are to be taken into account by educators and managing and policy staff at universities and beyond.

## Albanian higher education and society

Higher education in Albania is expanding, but how can it cater for the needs of the changing society and its young people? A few researches on the quality of higher education, the labor market development and the experiences with international citizenship education are mentioned below.

Intensified cooperation with EU and EU countries would certainly lead to expansion of economic sectors in Albania, especially in the main urban areas. Preparing the labor market for the future is important to deliver challenges to young professionals in Albania. In IT, agribusiness, tourism and other sectors. Whether or not one believes in Richard Florida's Rise of the Creative Class (Florida, 2002), it seems obvious that Albania needs creative professionals in the broad sense. These professionals are needed to link innovations to the various professional uses, and they are needed not only to design, but also to apply.

According to OECD, Albania has improved access to education and raised learning outcomes since the 2000s. The organization states that educational attainment and performance still are strongly influenced by students' background characteristics. This reflects systemic challenges of low funding, unstable governance and limited capacity. Placing student learning at the centre of Albania's evaluation and assessment processes can help to focus the system onto raising standards for all (OECD, 2020).

The European Commission investigated the impact of migration on higher education and the Albanian society. Albania has one of the highest rates of emigration in recent decades in the world, part of which includes a substantial scientific diaspora. The Albanian scientific diaspora is relatively young, mainly located in OECD countries yet highly mobile between them, diverse in terms of field of study, and mainly employed in universities and research institutes. Members of the diaspora maintain close links to Albania, yet only a small minority realistically foresee return, due to a combination of economic and political obstacles (GVG for European Commission, 2012).

Positive features in this respect are, compared to other countries, the increasing number of university students, the growth of the number of universities, the relatively freedom of curriculum design and the high percentage of female students.

Laze investigated social dimensions of universities in Albania. She defines the role of Albanian universities as threefold: Firstly, assist development of society; here is the link to citizenship; secondly, support economic development; here is the link to professional competences. Thirdly, fulfill aspiration of young people; here is the link to personal development. Universities should work on their teaching methods, content of teaching and management, is her advice (Laze, 2013).

This also reflects the results of the research 'Mentoring and teachers' professional development in Albania' by (Gardinier, 2018). Mentoring, reflecting and communicating helps, but also requires teachers to be up to date in technology.

The VALEU-X project of a number of EU and Albanian universities executed a needs assessment on virtual collective teaching and learning in Albania, delivered important conclusions and advices on how to proceed with collective online teaching (VALEU-X Project, 2020). Although part of the interviewed staff felt confident to work online even collaboratively. The advices include a need for more international exchange, for more capacity building of educators on skills and mindset. This in order to have XR as part of formal curricula and to enhance IT literacy of educators.

## Concluding remarks

This article discussed the scientific insights and societal developments around international citizenship competences in curricula at universities and how collaborate learning and extended reality can play a role in this.

First, the author likes to share the statement of Burbules: 'Education is a catalyst on the well-being of individuals and our joint future. If we are to end unsustainable thinking and practice, we will need a transformed system of education to guide us into a prosperous and sustainable future. Here we argue for a different orientation toward thinking about new technologies in education. Not just as tools or delivery systems but as a set of resources and affordances that provide an opportunity to rethink our educational aims, methods and institutions. What do these technologies for us and to us?' (Burbules N. , 2016)

Since COVID-19, citizenship education has gained additional relevance, because of the importance of being able to deal with digitization and technology, both in terms of technology and in terms of knowing what it can do for a learner and what it does to the learner and to society; to the personal responsibility as a professional, to media literacy and to civic involvement. This goes for Albania as well as for other European countries, like The Netherlands.

Distance learning is already possible and common to some extent, but collaborative online learning and use of extended reality is advised, in order to cater for the international citizenship competences. Experiencing and learning citizenship skills while working on personal professional development is key.

Pilots and experiments in various professional fields are needed to see what works and what doesn't. These are needed for, but especially, with students. With the support of enthusiastic educators, because they are the 'conductor'. With COIL as the basis and experiments with students; with active learning and reflection as an integral part of their learning process, in order to keep cohesion in society -not societies- and to be aware of equal opportunities.

There is an urge to work on continuous development of existing curricula and work on new curricula, for instance on XR design. The design technological curricula is relevant for the professional field, but especially the crossroads of technics and creativity are most promising. This also reflects the need of the Albanian society to trigger and keep creative young professionals. This fits in human capital agendas.

Depending on the specific study program, it could be more or less focused towards technology and more or less focused towards active citizenship roles. But it should all contain reflection on professional roles in the setting, with an eye for alternatives and consequences. All should be able to use and reflect on the media, on how it is used in their scope and beyond.

Albanian universities are part of Erasmus cooperation programs and other international projects. One would hit two birds with one strike, if these elements were in international projects. Since one may not have the opportunity to do everything separately and it works best integrated. At Saxion UAS the intention is to use e.g. the Erasmus-project on Resilient Democracy and European Identity for this exchange of experiences. For the benefit of the learning process of Albanian and Dutch students, the curricula at both sides and society.

On last word about the teachers, the educators. When using authentic learning environments, the ethical implications of actions or thoughts become more apparent. With a professional focus, students are likely to be interested and focused. But it is necessary to address these specifically when adopting XR in whatever forms. With XR there is possibility for more inclusiveness, but requires well trained professionals to support the learning process. If not, it might be just another 'drill', or one makes it too complicated; high tech is fine, but this is all about meaningful application.

Hopefully educators are critical, but mainly enthusiastic about all these new possibilities for students, institutions, society and themselves as educators. That they are able and willing to immerse themselves in new international experiences with their students.

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## Summary in Albanian (based on English summary below, please check)

Arsimi i lartë mbështet studentët në marrjen e kompetencave, një përzierje njohurish, aftësish dhe qëndrimesh. Përvoja ka treguar se janë pikërisht qëndrimi dhe aftësitë që sigurojnë një lidhje më të mirë me tregun e punës, në cilindo sektor në cilindo vend.

Artikulli shqyrton zhvillimet dhe përvojat në mjedise autentike të të mësuarit në lidhje me aspektet ndërkombëtare të edukimit të qytetarisë. Ai diskuton mundësitë dhe kufizimet e përdorimit të realitetit të zgjeruar në përgjithësi dhe në këtë kontekst. Fokusi është në kurrikulën dhe nivelin e dhomës së klasës në arsimin e lartë, pra në shkëmbimin e njohurive në nivelin e praktikuesve, me synimin për implikimet e politikave në nivelet e tjera.

Autori e lidh këtë me zhvillimet arsimore dhe shoqërore në Shqipëri dhe vendin e saj të lindjes Hollanda, gjatë dhe pas COVID-19, dhe ndan mendimet e saj mbi nevojat për vëmendje të vazhdueshme në format e reja të edukimit të qytetarisë.

Për shkak se pandemia e bën të domosdoshme rishikimin e marrëdhënieve ndërpersonale dhe përvojave ndërkombëtare të vetëkuptueshme të së kaluarës.

Në arsimin e orientuar profesional, mjediset autentike të të mësuarit janë të rëndësishme, sepse i bën nxënësit më të lehtë për vetësimin, marrjen e aftësive për zgjidhjen e problemeve dhe ata janë më të motivuar për të mësuar. Në varësi të stileve të tyre personale të të mësuarit, ata marrin kompetenca.

Kompetencat e shtetësisë janë të domosdoshme, pavarësisht nga fusha specifike profesionale e nxënësit, por përmbajtja dhe forma duhet të përshtaten me situatën. Përvojat ndërkombëtare janë pjesë e këtyre kompetencave. Pikërisht në këtë fushë ndodhën zhvillime të mëdha, për shkak të COVID-19 dhe në mënyrë të pavarur prej tyre.

Në një shoqëri ku udhëtimi nuk është i mundur për shkak të kufizimeve fizike ose financiare ose që nuk dëshirohen për shkak të konsideratave të qëndrueshmërisë, bashkëpunimi për të mësuar në internet ofron shanse. Sidomos arsimi me realitet të zgjeruar mund të shërbejë si përgatitje ose zëvendësim i përvojave ndërkombëtare në të vërtetë. Sigurisht që ka kufizime dhe kërkesa, por përparësitë janë të shumta, p.sh. mundësitë e personalizimit, është tërheqëse, përshtatja e aftësive teknike dhe nevoja për të bashkëpunuar.

Që nga COVID-19, edukimi për qytetarinë ka fituar një rëndësi shtesë, për shkak të rëndësisë së të qenit në gjendje të merren me dixhitalizimin dhe teknologjinë, si nga aspekti i teknologjisë, ashtu edhe nga aspekti i të diturit se çfarë mund të bëjë për një nxënës dhe çfarë i bën atij dhe shoqërisë; për përgjegjësinë personale si profesionist, për shkrim-leximin për media dhe përfshirjen qytetare. Kjo vlen për Shqipërinë, si dhe për vendet e tjera të Evropës, si Holanda.

Pilotët dhe eksperimentet në fusha të ndryshme profesionale janë të nevojshme për të parë se çfarë funksionon dhe çfarë jo, me mësimin ndërkombëtar bashkëpunues online si bazë. Reflektimi duhet të jetë një pjesë integrale e procesit të të mësuarit, në mënyrë që të ruhet kohezioni në shoqëri - jo shoqëritë - dhe të jemi të vetëdijshëm për mundësitë e barabarta.

Ekziston një dëshirë për të punuar në zhvillimin e vazhdueshëm të planprogrameve ekzistuese dhe punë në programe të reja, për shembull në hartimin e XR. Planprogramet teknologjike të dizajnit janë të rëndësishme për fushën profesionale, por veçanërisht udhëkryqi i teknikës dhe krijimtarisë janë më premtues. Kjo gjithashtu pasqyron nevojën e shoqërisë shqiptare për të nxitur dhe mbajtur profesionistë të rinj krijues. Universitetet shqiptare janë pjesë e programeve të bashkëpunimit Erasmus dhe projekteve të tjera ndërkombëtare. Njëri do të godiste dy zogj me një goditje, nëse këta elementë do të ishin në projekte ndërkombëtare. Kjo është po aq e rëndësishme në Hollandë.

Duke kombinuar edukimin për qytetarinë dhe XR ekziston mundësia për më shumë përfshirje, por kërkon profesionistë të trajnuar mirë për të mbështetur procesin e të mësuarit. Nëse jo, mund të jetë vetëm një 'stërviç' tjetër, ose dikush e bën atë shumë të komplikuar, pasi kjo ka të bëjë me një aplikim kuptimplotë. Shpresojmë që arsimtarët në Shqipëri dhe jashtë janë kritikë, por entuziastë për të gjitha këto mundësi të reja për studentët, institucionet, shoqërinë dhe vetë si arsimtarë. Se ata janë të aftë dhe të gatshëm të zhyten në përvoja të reja ndërkombëtare me studentët e tyre.

## English summary

Higher education supports students in acquiring competences, a mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Experience has shown that it is precisely attitude and skills that ensure a better connection to the labor market, in whatever sector in whatever country.

The article examines the developments and experiences in authentic learning environments in relation to international aspects of citizenship education. It discusses the possibilities and limitations of the use of extended reality in general and in this context. The focus is on the curriculum and class-room level in higher education, so on knowledge exchange at practitioners level, with an eye for the policy implications at other levels.

The author links this to the educational and societal developments in Albania and her home country The Netherlands, during and after COVID-19, and shares her thoughts on the needs for continuing attention on new forms of citizenship education. Because the pandemic makes it necessary to re-consider past self-evident interpersonal relations and international experiences.

In professional oriented education authentic learning environments are important, because it makes learners easier to assimilate, obtain problem solving skills and they are more motivated to learn. Depending on their personal learning styles, they obtain competences.

Citizenship competences are necessary, regardless of the specific professional domain of the learner, but the content and form should be adapted to the situation. International experiences are part of this competences. It is exactly in this field that large developments took place, because of COVID-19 and independently thereof.

In a society where travelling is not possible because of physical or financial restrictions or not wanted because of sustainability considerations, collaborate online learning offers chances. Especially education with extended reality may serve as preparing or replacing for real-live international experiences. There are certainly limitations and requirements, but the advantages are numerous, e.g. the personalization possibilities, it is engaging, the adaptation of technical skills and the need to cooperate.

Since COVID-19, citizenship education has gained additional relevance, because of the importance of being able to deal with digitization and technology, both in terms of technology and in terms of knowing what it can do for a learner and what it does to the learner and to society; to the personal responsibility as a professional, to media literacy and to civic involvement. This goes for Albania as well as for other European countries, like The Netherlands.

Pilots and experiments in various professional fields are needed to see what works and what doesn't, with collaborative online international learning as the basis. Reflection should be an integral part of the learning process, in order to keep cohesion in society -not societies- and to be aware of equal opportunities.

There is an urge to work on continuous development of existing curricula and work on new curricula, for instance on XR design. The design technological curricula is relevant for the professional field, but especially the crossroads of technics and creativity are most promising. This also reflects the need of the Albanian society to trigger and keep creative young professionals. Albanian universities are part of Erasmus cooperation programs and other international projects. One would hit two birds with one strike, if these elements were in international projects. This is equally important in The Netherlands.

By combining citizenship education and XR there is possibility for more inclusiveness, but requires well trained professionals to support the learning process. If not, it might be just another 'drill', or one makes it too complicated, since this is all about meaningful application. Hopefully educators in Albania and abroad are critical, but enthusiastic about all these new possibilities for students, institutions, society and themselves as educators. That they are able and willing to immerse themselves in new international experiences with their students.

# How to Conceptualise Power?

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**Klementin MILE, PhD<sup>1</sup>**  
European University of Tirana

## Abstract

*This article aims at clarifying the medial concept of power, by making use of the work of the eminent German sociologist and social theorist Niklas Luhmann. It will be argued that this medial concept of power has clear theoretical advantage over other attempts at conceptualising power. This is so in that the medial concept of power manages to overcome the challenges of philosophical critique, especially the charge of ontological burden and essentialist presuppositions. On the other hand, the medial concept of power manages to position itself in the interface between sociology and political science, proving useful for both disciplines, something that other concepts of power cannot do. The article starts with Luhmann's critique of the classical theories of power, by identifying eight problems. Then some consideration is given to the analysis of power as medium, where the main ideas of Luhmann and Foucault seem to converge. Next, in order to further clarify the medial concept of power, the article deals with the question of influence, which ought to be distinguished from power. After this, the article takes a sociological twist, by giving an account of the transformation of power in modern society.*

**Keywords:** power; Luhmann; medium; influence; violence

## Introduction

Niklas Luhmann's conception of power is formed by his methodological commitment towards constructivism. He argues that concepts, while being instruments that enable us to understand the world, at the same time necessarily blind us towards certain aspects of the world. Consequently, social theory cannot be based on actors' conceptual frameworks, but must construct new conceptual frameworks that enable the sociologist to observe how the actors observe and describe the world. This constructivist commitment towards second-order observation leads Luhmann when he develops the basic assumptions relating to the notion of power, in the critique he develops versus the classical concept of power, i.e., the capacity to act in accordance with individual will even against resistance from others. According to Luhmann, this classical concept of power, initially formulated by Max Weber, is supported by unsustainable ontological assumptions, but, nonetheless, is typically used by actors because of inherent limitations of their perspective on the world (first-order observation). This classical concept of power reproduces the illusion of actors that causality and intentions are true, while, in fact, as witnessed by second-order observation, they are contingent constructions that attribute effects to causes, identifying only two elements, a cause and an effect, in the chain of determinations that is potentially unlimited in both directions. Luhmann's power analysis begins with the critique against what he names "the classical theory of power", thus including a broad range of theories developed from different perspectives, but that have several features in common.

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<sup>1</sup> Klementin Mile has completed his doctoral studies in political science at the European University of Tirana, where he has taught several courses for the past eight years. He has conducted a research period at London School of Economics, UK and he obtained his MA in Contemporary European Studies at the University of Sussex, UK. Before engaging in academia, he has worked for the public administration and civil society organizations in Albania. He is currently mentor of 'Russell' philosophy club, which has been active for the past six years. His research interests include Political and Social Theory, Applied Philosophy and Political Sociology.

## Critique of classical theories of power

The first problematic feature that Luhmann notes in the classical theory is suppositions of *causality*. As a prominent example of the way of conceptualising power and causality in the classical theory of power, Luhmann mentions the claim of Herbert A. Simon, who holds that the statement “A has power over B” can very well be replaced by the statement “A’s behaviour causes B’s behaviour” (Luhmann 1969: 150). The main implication, not only Simon’s, but of the whole classical theory of power, is that power is conceptualised as a decisive event that makes the individual subjected to power act as he does *and* that this individual would have acted differently unless he were subjected to power. Luhmann is critical towards this causal framework. First, the examination of the causes of power does not tell us the origin of power (Luhmann 1969: 150). Second, every effect has an infinite number of causes and likewise every cause produces an infinite number of effects. (Luhmann 1970: 16). Thus, the determination of the causal relationship is a contingent enterprise, an attribution dependent on observation and, as such, one that might have been different.

The second problem of the classical theory concerns the *intentionality* of exercising power. Luhmann refuses searching for goals or specific motives, which are supposed to stand behind the exercise of power. He states that motivation is no “cause” for action, but only attribution that enables a socially intelligible experience of action (Luhmann 1979: 120).

A third problem refers to the question where one can actually imagine the exercising of power as *decisive* on the actions of the individual subjected to power. Is it causally possible to exclude the possibility that the person subjected to power might have acted differently in all circumstances or, at least, that there were no other reasons for his action except for the power exercise?

The fourth problem of classical theory relates to *conception of time*. Classical theory of power implies a time conception where the future is seen as a determined projection, objective and already fixed by the past, in any case a future poor in alternatives (Luhmann 1969: 151-2). This is particularly obvious in the case of individuals subjected to power, whose future actions are supposed as predetermined before any actual exercise of power. In other words, the causal thought of classical theory must be abandoned, since, as Whitehead says, actual entities in contemporary universe are causally independent from one another (Whitehead 1978: 123).

A fifth problem of classical theory is that it imagines power as a substance that might be *possessed* (Luhmann 1969: 158-9). The question is that a simple reference to power possession, where power is transferred from a person to another and from a situation to another, completely hides the systemic conditions of this modality of power. Also the image of power as possession implies that in order to study power one must look for persons that are believed to “hold” it at a specific moment. In other words, the perspective of possession opens the way for an individualistic explanation, where power is attributed to individuals.

The sixth problem is linked with the supposition that exercising of power is a *zero sum game* where, for example, the increase of bureaucratic power is claimed to happen only if there is a loss of parliamentary power. Luhmann questions this supposition and argues that an adequate theory of power must be able to take into account that power often increases in a place without bringing with it correspondingly loss of power in other places. In fact, as Luhmann himself shows, organisational power increases simultaneously both for superiors and for subordinates, when their internal relations are intensified (Luhmann 1969: 163; 1979: 179-82).

Luhmann notices a seventh problem of the classical theory of power in the explanations that depart from *anthropological suppositions*, wherein power is conceptualised as something that inhibits realisation of human dignified life. Such analyses for Luhmann are very broad to design specific and clear paths for empirical study and suffer from analytic limitations as long as they depart from existing suppositions about the character of the society analysed. One can also say that they are based on contested philosophical anthropologies, as is witnessed e.g. in the battles over the concept of “real interests.”

The eighth problem of classical theory is the explanation of power as *sovereignty* and the accentuation of the need for limiting its action, for example through constitutional formulae. Luhmann notices an inclination in the Western political tradition to refer to a “unified politico-legal system” (Luhmann 2004: 357). According to him, this conception of a unified system comes from the concept of the state, which is supposed to be simultaneously both legal and political. Luhmann emphasises that the conception of sovereignty and of sovereign power, wherein is based the state since its consolidation in early European modernity, has combined to different ideas of the political power: first, the idea of a *generalised* capacity for ensuring compliance to commands; second, the idea of legal force, which is reflected in the fact that power was presented and imposed in the form of law, i.e. in a form that had always already been *specified* in advance (Luhmann 2004: 359). Therefore, the concept of sovereignty combines law and politics in a single formulation.

## Power as medium

The non-causal departure of Luhmann is the double contingency problem, thus, of an interaction situation where both *alter* and *ego* have generalised potential to conceptualise the facts as selections that imply denial, potential to deny these denials, and to construct other possibilities (Luhmann 1976: 509). For Luhmann, several symbolically generalised communication media have emerged historically, such as truth, money, love, power, and each of them, in a functionally equivocal way, treat the principal problem of sociality, i.e. the problem of double contingency. Power, as one of these media,



offers a mechanism for coordinating the selections of alter and ego. Luhmann differentiates the symbolically generalised communication media according to the way they link the action or experience of ego to that of alter. In the case of power, of interest is the coordination of ego's *action* to that of alter's. Thus, the function of the medium of power is the increase of probability that ego uses alter's action as a premise for his own action, or, in other words, ego's motivation for conditioning his own action through alter's action (Luhmann&De Giorgi 2003: 120). This conception of power as a relation of action to action is equivalent with Foucault's conception of power (in the form of governmentality) as conduct of conduct, with the important distinction that Luhmann is explicitly interested in regulation of *selections*, of the selected action by a selected action (Luhmann 1976: 517).

But there are also other elements where Luhmann and Foucault converge. For example, the close relationship between power and freedom insisted by Foucault, in Luhmann is implied by the concept of selection. If ego *cannot* act in discordance with alter's demands, then there is no need for power. In contrast to this, power ends the moment ego is constrained to obey. Constraint means that there is no regulation of contingency, i.e. that the principal problem of sociality is not being addressed, or that there lacks the trust that this problem can be addressed through the medium of power. Consequently, constraint can only be exercised with a specific cost: the person who exercises constraint must take upon himself the burden of selection and of the decision at an equal measure with the constraint exercised, in that the responsibility for reducing complexity (the cardinal problem of social systems) is not distributed, but is rather transferred to the person who exercises constraint (Luhmann 1979: 112).

Another feature that unites Luhmann with Foucault is connected with the critique that the latter makes to the sovereignty discourse and to the claim that power can be possessed and transmitted as a substance. Foucault's attempt to get away from this conception of power is to focus on extremely relational character of power (Foucault 1990: 95). Also Luhmann distances himself from understanding power substantially and ontologically, and refers to the medial character of power. Understood as a medium, power is nothing else but code oriented communication (Luhmann 1979: 116), or, as Foucault says, nothing else but the name we give to this communication (Foucault 1990: 93).

However, although Luhmann was against the ontological definition of power, in his earlier work one finds ontological formulations. For example, in his monographic study on power in 1979, he writes that the function of communication medium is transmission of reduced complexity, and also in the case of power the main interest is the transmission of selection (Luhmann 1979: 113). Thus power is presented as a question of transmission of selection, as if these were tangible entities that might be posted. But later Luhmann changes his position, in that he realises the flaws of the "transmission" metaphor. In 1984, when he publishes his principal work on social systems, he gives the argument that the transmission metaphor is unusable, since it implies too much ontology. It suggests that the sender sends something that is then received by the receiver. This is not correct, for the sender does not send something in the sense that he does not have it anymore. The whole metaphor of possession, having, giving and taking, the whole 'thing metaphor' is inadequate for understanding communication (Luhmann 1995a: 139). Consequently, this metaphor is inadequate for understanding power.

Thus Luhmann reconstructs systems theory in such a way as to liberate its foundational concept, communication, from the idea of a sender and a receiver. Instead, he conceptualizes communication as a triple selection of information, utterance, and understanding. This displacement of conceptual perspective has consequences for the notion of power, too. Now power must be conceptualised without the ontological notion of transmission. Luhmann implements this by using the distinction between *medium* and *form*. The medium of power is described as loose coupling of objectives and sanctions of power, while the form of power is constituted by the distinction between obeying an order and its alternative, viz. the negative sanction. The limits of power are to be found there where ego begins to prefer the alternative of avoiding the sanctions, and also himself demonstrates power to force alter either to give up or to impose the sanctions. Thus, on one hand, there seems to be a loose coupling of elements which, being threats, are not consumed in usage but are rather renewed and, on the other hand, a temporary strong coupling; forms that combine instructions and compliance to them (Luhmann 2012: 212).

By conceptualising power as medium, Luhmann positions himself against the idea that power has the main role in society, or that power must be considered the main notion for constructing a theory of society. Actually, as mentioned above, Luhmann attributes this role to the concept of communication. Moreover, as a medium, thus as product of evolution, power is conceptualised in an evolutionary framework and not within a general and unhistorical theory of power. Power is observed as emergent solution to a specific evolutionary problem, which is linked to the fact that because of escalation of societal complexity, it becomes increasingly difficult to rely on situational convergence of interests in order to regulate and condition contingent selections. In this situation, the development of power as a way to regulate contingency, becomes unavoidable priority for further evolution (Luhmann 1979: 116).

## Forms of influence

According to Luhmann power can only emerge in uncertainty conditions, i.e. in conditions that are entirely determined, but also allow for realisation of alternative possibilities. These conditions come from functional differentiation of systems of modern society: autopoietic systems are uncertainty fields in that they produce themselves their own structure and are not dependent on external determinations. One of these uncertainties is linked to the fact that society members are

dependent on one another. Thus, uncertainty concerns how the others will react versus our actions. The ways of taking into consideration the actions of others give birth to *influence*, in other words, to the capacity to act effectively in relation to others.

Luhmann distinguishes three symbolic forms of influence. He names the first form *uncertainty absorption*. This form concerns the attribution that actors, if required, would be able to give reasons for their affirmations. But social power that results in this way remains diffused and can be challenged quite easily. Another and stronger form of influence is based on *positive sanctions*: exchange relations manage very well to structure actions. However, economic power that results from this is limited, since it comes to an end were positive sanctions not to be fulfilled or were they discovered to be illusory. The third symbolic form that influence has taken in modern society is based on *negative sanctions*. Political power that results from this form is stable enough to function as a symbolically generalised communication medium for the political system (Luhmann 2010: 99-100).

But in order for influence to serve as raw material for transformation into power, it needs to be generalised. More concretely, what needs to be generalised is the motivation of ego to accept alter's the selection of action. Acceptance of influence means, for ego, that he must select his own action (as a reaction towards alter's action) and, to do this, he needs to be motivated. These motivations can be generalised in the temporal, fact, and social dimensions.

Temporal generalisation neutralises differences in time: Ego accepts the influence since he has done it before, in that there is a history that tends to be repeated continuously. In the case of fact generalisation differences in content are neutralised: Ego accepts the influence since he has done so in other situations and because he transfers the positive experience towards a communicative content to the likewise positive judgement towards another communicative content. In the case of social generalisation social differences are neutralized: Ego accepts the influence because that is what others do, too. (Luhmann 2010: 80).

Luhmann names these types of influence generalisation in the dimensions of meaning respectively *authority* (influence generalised in time), *reputation* (influence generalised in relation to contents), and *leadership* (influence generalised at the social level). Thus authority, reputation, and leadership are generalisations of motivations to accept influence. Formation of authority is based on differentiation of *chances* supported by previous actions. When a communication that exercises influence has been successful, whatever its motive, expectations are consolidated that raise probability, facilitate acceptance of communication, and make it hard for rejection to occur. After a period characterised by acceptance without rejection, every rejection generates a surprise, disappointment, and unforeseeable consequences; and, that is why it requires specific reasons. Symetrically, until the contrary is proven, authority needs no justification, since it is based on tradition.

*Reputation* is based on the supposition that it is possible to be given other reasons in favour of the justice of influenced action. Generalisation on the level of contents moves in a direction which, more than other types of generalisation go close to cognitive mechanisms. For this reason the very theory of science could make use of the concept of reputation in order to replace the concept of truth. Thus generalisation of motives would be realised by the fact that a general expressive and argumentative capacity is accepted *in a relatively uncritical manner* and is transferred from cases where it has proven fruitful to other cases. Also in this case the basis of the relation is representation of *a possibility*: the possibility to carry out ultimate verifications and to express doubts, which, nevertheless, is not practised. This possibility contains an element of indeterminacy (or better: it is not necessary for it to be completely determined) that accepts generalisation. Therefore, the more evident and universally acceptable are the reasons given for making certain decisions, the lower is reputation.

*Leadership* is based on the reinforcement of availability to conform, because of the experience that others, too, do conform, i.e., at the bottom line, it is based on *imitation*. Thus the influence is accepted since others accept it as well; and symmetrically the latter accept the influence because that is what the former do. If it is possible to exercise influence on more persons, then the leader is authorised to select the person to influence. He augments his own alternatives, which, from their part become orientation factor for others. The leader becomes independent of the concrete conditions under which a subject might obey. The subject loses the possibility available to himself, thus being forced (but not necessarily) to mobilise the group against the leader. Likewise, the leader must try to preserve a group atmosphere, even if it fictitious, in order to keep the supposition that now and then the others would accept him as leader and in order to isolate the deviant subject (Luhmann 2010: 81-2).

However, for Luhmann these are analytical types, since in reality it is impossible to use only one of them in order to generalise influence. Thus, the leader cannot only rely on the social dimension of expectations based on imitation, but also ought to somehow refer to the validity of motives in time, as well as to reputation that comes from correct and effective decisions in given sectors. And since the validity of influence is relevant in relation to themes and persons, also temporal generalisation (authority) cannot be realised via excluding entirely the reputation and gets close to the social dimension once it begins to be communicated. The opinion of others and their predisposition to conform has special importance when a demand or an order is not followed by immediate and direct obedience (Luhmann 2010: 82-3).

## Transformation of power in modern society

Luhmann formulates three main theses in order to characterise the relations of power in modern society. The first concerns *the law of transformation of positive sanctions in negative sanctions* (Luhmann 1990: 158). This thesis is related to the sources

of power. According to Luhmann, the principal social source of power is always control over superior physical violence, whereupon the state is built. Without this control the state would be impossible. Even the law presupposes control over these sanctioning means. The prospect of maintaining an advantage with regard to use of physical violence has specific qualities that seem appropriate for building the foundation of power. This is because (1) physical violence is generalisable in very different contexts, independent of what is enforced through the threat of physical violence; (2) it presents itself as relatively reliable – independent of the type and intensity of motives for resisting it; and (3) it is capable of being organised well – can be transformed into decisions by others about the application of physical violence, and these decisions can be conditioned and programmed.

Luhmann regards these qualities of physical violence as the foundation of law and politics in modern society. However, when he turns to the contemporary welfare state, he says that this state cannot be characterised adequately by taking into account only the power based on physical violence. Actually, by searching for other foundations for politics, the welfare state enters a terrain of power that carries problematic aspects. This is characterised by inclinations to transform positive sanctions into negative sanctions. Luhmann is aware that it is difficult to make the distinction between these two kinds of sanctions and that this is a matter of interpretation, a matter of definition of the situation. Nonetheless, he offers a distinction criterion. If one clearly expects and relies on positive performances, then their withdrawal becomes a negative sanction. For example, when assistance is offered with certain regularity toward a target group that secures its living via it, the possibility of withdrawal of assistance appears as a threat and is thereby transformed into a negative sanction. The same thing may be said about the employees, which can be made to feel the threat of firing, or for partners that have been conducting business for a long time together etc. Thus, the more that one becomes accustomed to advantages, the more that potential power grows as a result of possibilities that have accrued to negative sanctions: the potential power of withdrawal. In this way social power is increased: as the power of helpers and caretakers; as the power of those who participate; as the power of those who grace an affair with their consent or their presence or who draw attention to this fact through their rejection of it; as the power of all those who can change things by saying “no!” to existing expectations.

Luhmann says that this kind of power is, in part, harmless, in part excluded, through the protection of claims as legal and political maxims. But the chances of transforming positive sanctions into negative ones continually arise through the ever increasing services provided by others. Thus, these become sources of power with politically dangerous properties. They are (1) not capable of being centralised (unless through the centralisation of all assistance) and remain distributed diffusely; (2) their use cannot be controlled; (3) they are suitable mainly for obstructing instead of promoting specific behaviour. The power of withdrawal becomes a political problem as the power to block (Luhmann 1990: 158-160).

Luhmann's second thesis is that *power in modern society is no longer exercised on the basis of social stratum but on the basis of formal organisation* (Luhmann 1990: 158). The relationships of power in the contemporary societal system cannot be understood if one begins from the concept of a ruling stratum, class or elite. Of course, there are persons who occupy positions of leadership and who have their contacts facilitated within such leadership groups. But leadership in such leadership groups does not manifest itself as family or social refinement but arises out of the perception of organisational positions. Unlike former societies, one cannot assume that a stratum of society creates solidarity among its members. And it is improbable that stratum-specific modes of behaviour direct the process of the exercise of power successfully. This would correspond to a type of society in which political power still resides essentially in the control of access to superior physical violence. For Luhmann, this is no longer the case. Today, any increase, material diversification and refining of power depends on formal organisation. This is notably true in the case of the development of longer and more permanent chains of power, for indirect forms of its use in directing the exercise of power by other and for its increasing effectiveness in the sense that with *one* decision a person can trigger *many* resulting decisions.

The organisation is a mechanism that differentiates and distributes power, but not as a pre-given commodity. The distribution, for its part, creates and changes whatever is distributed. Luhmann says that the bourgeois theory of society had wanted to introduce the mechanism of differentiation into the theory of the separation of power and the theory of economic competition in order to limit power and to reduce it to what is legally permissible or legally rational. But in implementing this programme one unavoidably discovered that the formation of organisations also multiplies power – even if not in centrally controllable forms. In this way the problem situation was gradually displaced. According to Luhmann, today the question is not so much that of the misuse of power as whether, through organisations, our society does not produce too much unusable power (Luhmann 1990: 161-2).

Also organisational power is nothing but a case of application of transformation of positive sanctions in negative sanctions. It relies on the fact that membership in organisations can be given as an *advantage*, whereas not giving of membership or its withdrawal can be determined as *negative sanction*. This is typical in the organisational reality of hiring and firing. But, nonetheless, power in organisations cannot rely only on this way, for it is too crude and is actually used only to take decisions in cases of serious conflicts. Thus the transformation of membership advantages in a negative sanction that follows from not giving or withdrawing it is only used in extreme situations and generates power only as long as the sanction is *not exercised*. According to Luhmann, one does not allow conflicts to arise that could threaten membership, unless one had already decided to leave the organisation and created a final heroic conflict to serve as a pretext for this (Luhmann 1990: 162). Moreover, power is also refined through control of personnel decisions, which is linked with members' carrier in the organisation. Thereby, how high one's position is in the organisational ladder becomes an instrument of power. And nonpromotion, indeed reorganisation itself accompanied with a redistribution of certain disadvantages, becomes an instrument of power to which one adjusts through anticipating one's superior.

Luhmann's third thesis is related to *the birth of significant differences between real power and attributed power, accompanied by inflationary or deflationary trends in power-communication* (Luhmann 1990: 158). As a consequence of the existence of complex organizational systems within society, organization power is assessed differently from outside the organization and from within. Viewed from outside, the homogeneity of the organization and the ability to implement organizational power is typically overestimated. Power is attributed to the top; while in truth complicated balances of power exist that vary with topics and situations. As a result, more power is attributed to the top than it actually has. This process of causal attribution does not remain without an effect on the actual relationships of power. Outwardly, the organization has to honour the attribution of power, for otherwise persons outside the organization would not be able to see and treat the organization as an order. But for outsiders, to deal with the organization, simplifications are necessary that permit commerce with the outside. For this reason, the prestige of the top's power has to be promoted and sustained. In this way the external attribution of power becomes a power-factor in internal conflicts. Top level persons can threaten to leave the organization or otherwise create situations that make apparent to the environment that the organization does not function like a decisional and implementational unity. This forms the basis of a kind of informal power of the formal top that rests merely on the fact that power is attributed to it and this attribution, as a symbolically generalizing process, is sensitive to information about facts. According to Luhmann, this applies to individual organizations in quite varying degrees; for political parties more than for universities, for organizations in the area of mass media more than for the postal service, for the military more than for banks (Luhmann 1990: 163-4).

By transferring the concepts of *inflation* and *deflation* from the theory of money to the theory of power (since these are both symbolically generalised communication media), Luhmann says that as with a money economy, there also seems to be a *limitedly meaningful overdraft of resources* in the domain of power that is comparable to credit. The holder of power makes more decisions and has more of his or her decisions complied with than he or she could effect in case of conflict. If the holder of power makes *too little* use of the power attributed to him and limits himself to the power that he "really has", he triggers a *deflationary* trend. He operates too close to his means of sanctioning. And the danger in this is that he does not escape the zone of threatening to exercise power into that of successfully exercising it. Conversely, if the holder of power relies *too strongly* on the power that is merely attributed to him, he triggers an *inflationary* trend. In this case he becomes dependent on visible successes that demonstrate that he has power. At the same time he is also made vulnerable by crises that show that he cannot cover his decisions with sanctions (Luhmann 1990: 164-5).

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# Issues of Moral Development and Education in Gifted and Talented Youth

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**Sevim MUSTAFA**

College AAB, Prishtina, Kosovo

**Naim FANAJ**

College of Medical Sciences Rezonanca, Prishtina, Kosovo

**Erika MELONASHI**

Wisdom University College, Tirana Albania

## Abstract

*Morality is a complex, multifaceted aspect of being human. Moral development and moral education are increasingly being discussed by educators, psychologists, counselors, and parents. This paper aims to provide a literature review (books, research paper and gray literature) regarding issues of Morality Development and Education in Gifted and Talented youths. The objective was understanding of moral development in gifted youth and teaching strategies which foster the educational needs in moral issues of gifted students. There is a dearth of empirical research regarding moral development of the gifted. It is known from earlier empirical research that intelligence tends to correlate with high levels of moral reasoning and that gifted individuals tend to grapple with moral issues at an earlier age and more often with more intensity than their peers. However, the relationship between intelligence and morality is a very complex one and needs more detailed study. The results of some studies reveal that there are qualitative differences in the moral reasoning of gifted youths. Hence, high intellectual ability does not predict mature moral judgment. Research regarding teaching strategies address the traditional approach involving teachers explicitly advocating virtues, separate classes on moral and ethical behavior or educational programs for social and moral abilities enhancement in selected groups of gifted adolescents. Furthermore, research indicates that we need to be able to recognize the moral concerns of children and provide appropriate guidance and feedback, nurturing moral growth. Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains. Recommendations include educational programs for social and moral abilities enhancement in selected groups of gifted youths.*

**Keywords:** moral issues, development, gifted, talented, education

## Introduction

Morality is a complex, multifaceted aspect of being human. Within the realm of morality itself, there are further differences. Moral development and moral education are increasingly being discussed by educators, psychologists, counselors, and parents. In this paper, we examined the origins of moral thought, theories about moral development and moral reasoning, and the imperfect link between moral thought and moral action. With respect to moral thought, we explored whether gifted children have qualitatively different ways of thinking about what is right and wrong.

There is a dearth of empirical research regarding moral development of the gifted. Mainly scholars of the field tried to answer those questions: Is a morally developed person one who feels strongly about moral issues...or understands moral issues...or acts ethically when dealing with other people? It is known from earlier empirical research that intelligence tends to correlate with high levels of moral reasoning. Gifted individuals tend to grapple with moral issues at an earlier age than their peers, more often and with greater intensity.

However, the relationship between intelligence and morality is a very complex one and needs more detailed study. The results of some studies reveal that there are qualitative differences in the moral reasoning of gifted adolescents. Hence, high intellectual ability does not predict mature moral judgment. Being gifted or creative imposes a special moral responsibility on

an individual. Those of extraordinary ability can use their gifts and talents for good or ill so exceptional intelligence, talents, and creativity represent opportunities for both improvement and corrosion of the human condition.

We need to be able to recognize the moral concerns of children and provide appropriate guidance and feedback. Teachers and educators should nurture the moral growth. Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains.

## Definitions of giftedness and talent

What do we mean when we say that a child or an adolescent is “gifted”? This term was once limited to people such as those in Terman’s longitudinal study with IQs of 140 or higher; others have defined “gifted” as those with an IQ of 130 or higher. However, recent definitions of giftedness have been broadened to include not only a high IQ, but also singular talents in particular areas such as music, art, literature, or science (Winner, 2000).

Definitions of gifted and talented have many problems. Consequently, there are perhaps 100 definitions of ‘giftedness’ (Freeman, 2008) but there is not yet a wide accepted definition. Winstanley (2006) concluded that because gifted students were a heterogeneous group, it is not possible to have only one comprehensive definition. Additionally, there are different concepts of giftedness across cultures (Phillipson & McCann, 2007).

A more widely used definition within the field of gifted education comes from the 1991 meeting of the Columbus Group, and highlights the unique needs of this population:

“Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modification in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.” (Columbus Group, 1991)

Sternberg and Zhang (1995) have proposed a “pentagonal implicit theory of giftedness”, including five different aspects. The first criterion is that gifted individuals are superior to their peers in some dimension or set of dimensions (excellence criterion). The second criterion is that they must show a high level of an attribute that is rare among their peers (rarity criterion). The third criterion is that the dimension(s) along which the individual is evaluated as superior must lead or potentially lead to productivity (productivity criterion). The fourth criterion is the demonstrability criterion which states that an individual’s superiority in the dimension or dimensions that determine giftedness must be demonstrable through one or more tests or valid assessments. The fifth criterion is the value criterion, i.e., the person must show superior performance on a dimension that is valued by his or her society.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996), has emphasized the importance of context in giftedness. He believes that giftedness is not a personal trait but rather an interaction between an individual and the environment.

Francois Gagne (2000, 2005) has proposed what he refers to as the DMGT model, standing for Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent. Gagne believes that those labeled as gifted have the potential for extraordinary work and that those who are subsequently identified as talented develop their inherent potential for contributions (Sternberg & Kaufman, 2011).

The No Child Left Behind definition states: “The term “gifted and talented,” when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, p. 544)

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) has proposed a new definition of giftedness: “Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. . . . As individuals mature through childhood to adolescence, however, achievement and high levels of motivation in the domain become the primary characteristics of their giftedness. . . . A person’s giftedness should not be confused with the means by which giftedness is observed or assessed. . . . a high IQ score [is] not giftedness; [it] may be a signal that giftedness exists.” (NAGC, 2011).

## Definition of morality

What is morality? Morality implies a set of internalized principles or ideals that help the individual to distinguish right from wrong and to act on this distinction (Shaffer, 1994). Scholars agree that morality implies a capacity to (1) distinguish right from wrong, (2) act on this distinction, and (3) experience pride in virtuous conduct and guilt or shame over acts that violate one’s standards (Quinn, Houts, & Graesser, 1994; Shaffer, 1994).

Theories of moral development ask why and how individuals come to pursue goals that promote the interests of other people. And those of society in general, rather than only acting in their own narrow self-interests. Most of the foundational work on children’s moral development emphasizes the cognitive component of moral thought and the child’s growing understanding of rules and principles for guiding moral reasoning.

**Jean Piaget’s stage theory of moral development:** Piaget argued that moral thought is not a separate cognitive domain with its own patterns of reasoning and developmental course. Instead, he believed that moral development shares the same

broad features that he attributed to other areas of cognitive development, including the notion of stages. Thus, according to Piaget, some patterns of moral reasoning are simply unavailable to children until they reach the relevant stage of moral development. Piaget proposed three stages of moral development, roughly corresponding to his stages of preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational thought.

Most of the studies in the area of moral development have been based on the cognitive-developmental theory of Lawrence Kohlberg (e.g., 1969).

**Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development & The Heinz Dilemma:** Lawrence Kohlberg, a student of Piaget's, attempted to extend Piaget's theory of cognition to explain the development of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984). To assess changes in moral reasoning, Kohlberg presented children, adolescents, and adults with a number of ethical dilemmas. Kohlberg believed that children construct morality by developing a system of beliefs about concepts like justice and individual rights. He thought that it takes a long time for children to develop accurate beliefs and reasoning patterns about morality and that early on, they confuse moral issues with other issues, such as power, coercion, and authority. This process of discovering which issues are truly moral formed the basis for Kohlberg's model.

One of the criticisms is that Kohlberg's assessment of moral development involves asking people what they think should be done in hypothetical moral dilemmas. What people say they will do and what people actually do when faced with a real dilemma are often two different things.

**Neo-Kohlbergian approach:** According to the neo-Kohlbergian approach of James Rest and his colleagues (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999), moral development and functioning are the result of a conglomeration of cognitive, behavioral, and affective forces that can be represented in four component processes: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character. Rather than thinking of moral development as a step-like procedure as in Kohlberg's theory, neo-Kohlbergians emphasize the more fluid overlapping of ways of thinking about moral issues that characterize individuals as they move from more primitive ways of thinking to more advanced. Finally, neo-Kohlbergians believe that morality is a social construction that reflects the community's experiences, particular institutional arrangements, deliberations, and aspirations that are supported by the community (Gibbs, 2013, based on McInerney & Putwain, 2017).

**Elliot Turiel's domain theory of moral development:** Within domain theory a distinction is drawn between the child's developing concepts of morality, and other domains of social knowledge, such as social convention. According to domain theory, the child's concepts of morality and social convention emerge out of the child's attempts to account for qualitatively differing forms of social experience associated with these two classes of social events. Although developing a sense of morals is a complex process, children appear to be able to have an understanding of morality by the age of five (Helwig & Turiel, 2002).

**Dabrowski Theory of Disintegration:** Yet another complex theory of moral and character development was explored by Kazimierz Dabrowski, and resulted in his philosophy of positive disintegration and asynchrony (Cash, 2009). Based on his studies of sensitive, highly intelligent and creative individuals, Dabrowski identified hypersensitivities in five areas: psychomotor, sensual, imaginal, intellectual, and emotional. He termed them overexcitabilities (OE), and concluded that the greater the intensity of the OE, the greater the individual's potential for ethical and compassionate behaviors as an adult (Cash, 2009).

**Other theories.** Some answers emphasize the importance of natural biological processes, others the role of learning and experience: some theoretical positions focus on cognitive growth, others on social and cultural influences.

Coles stated that children's moral character is greatly influenced by their social environment, upbringing, and examples from their parents (Sisk, 2009). He said that the moral character of a child is often developed in the early years, sometimes as young as one year of age. He stressed the internal struggle in the adolescent years as individuals are involved in testing and challenging the value system that they were brought up with, and the formation of their own personal moral system (Sisk, 2009).

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2003, 2012) believes that much of our morality is rooted in moral intuitions - "quick gut feelings, or affectively laden intuitions." In this intuitionist view, the mind makes moral judgments as it makes aesthetic judgments—quickly and automatically. Our moral thinking and feeling surely affect our moral talk. But sometimes talk is cheap and emotions are fleeting. Morality involves doing the right thing, and what we do also depends on social influences.

Bebeau (2002) stated that morality is built upon four basic components. These include moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character. The components of moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral character have been less studied than the component of moral judgment.

According to Muriel Bebeau (2002), *moral sensitivity* is about the awareness of how our actions affect other people. Thus, without possessing a moral sensitivity it would be difficult to see the kind of moral issues that are involved in life. However, to respond to a situation in *amoral way*, a person must be able to perceive and interpret vents in a way that leads to *ethical action*. A morally sensitive person notes various situational cues and is able to visualize several alternative actions in response to that situation. He or she draws on many aspects' skills, techniques, and components of interpersonal sensitivity. These include taking the perspective of others (role taking), cultivating empathy for others, and interpreting a situation based on imagining what might happen and who might be affected.

## Morality and giftedness

The research and writing of Kohlberg, which links moral and cognitive development, has had a considerable influence on psychologists and educators studying the psycho-social development of the intellectually gifted (Gross, 2004).

Many researchers involved in the field of character and moral development have focused on its link with highly able learners. There is a dearth of empirical research regarding moral development of the gifted. Andreani and Pagnin (1953) provided a comprehensive review of the then-current literature in their article. Gifted and talented students often display high levels of sensitivity, which they may direct to a strong sense of right and wrong and social justice. In the classroom they may have a preoccupation with social, moral, and ethical issues and will often act on their own convictions in these areas.

Overall, studies findings underscore the strong correlation between high levels of intellect and strong moral development, including emotional intensity and sensitivity, compassion for others, and a preoccupation with right and wrong (Cash, 2009). Researchers studying the highly and exceptionally gifted have noted that these children are frequently found to have unusually accelerated levels of moral development (Gross, 2004).

We know from earlier empirical research that intelligence tends to correlate with high levels of moral reasoning (Narvaez, 1993; Tirri & Pehkonen, 2002). According to these authors, the gifted are presumed to have a privileged position in the maturation of moral thinking because of their precocious intellectual growth. According to researchers, intellectually gifted children appear to reach a relatively high stage of moral reasoning earlier than their chronological peers. It is important to note at this time the general agreement among previous researchers studying the exceptionally and profoundly gifted (McElwee, 1934; Hollingworth, 1942; Zorbaugh et al., 1951) that these children develop, at an early age, a precocious interest in matters of morality and religion (Gross, 2004). Again Sisk (2009) show that gifted children and adults seem to have a unique perception of themselves and the world that includes heightened idealism and a sense of justice that appear at an early age.

Researchers such as Linda Silverman, Michael Piechowski, and Annemarie Roeper have noted that gifted individuals frequently express an interest in humanitarianism, global events, and altruism at an early age; they are in tune with their inner voice that helps them to dialogue and advocate for those in need (Cash, 2009). Gifted individuals tend to grapple with moral issues at an earlier age than their peers and more often and with more intensity. There are many personal accounts by parents, teachers, and researchers of precocious 5- and 6-year-old children who read newspapers and cry over articles depicting man's inhumanity to man, who are disturbed by radio accounts of war, or who become vegetarians as a reaction to killing animals (Cash, 2009). Intellectually gifted children appear to reach a relatively high stage of moral reasoning earlier than their chronological peers (Karnes & Brown, 1981). Using the DIT, Janos & Robinson (1985) also found significantly advanced moral judgement (compared with standards) in older gifted students (up to 18 years old) than their age peers as a group (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

However, the relationship between intelligence and morality is a very complex one and needs more detailed study (Tirri & Nokelainen, 2007; Tirri, Nokelainen & Mahkonen, 2009). The results of some studies reveal that there are qualitative differences in the moral reasoning of gifted adolescents. High intellectual ability does not predict mature moral judgment. More even, those of extraordinary ability can use their gifts and talents for good or ill (Tannenbaum, 2000) so exceptional intelligence, talents, and creativity represent opportunities for both improvement and corrosion of the human condition.

Terman's (1925) sample of gifted children showed superior maturity in moral development in choosing socially constructive activities and in rating misbehavior. Terman (1925) reported that, on tests of 'trustworthiness' and 'moral stability', the average child of 9 years of age in his gifted sample scored at levels more usually attained by children aged 14. Thorndike (1940), studying the moral judgement of 50 highly gifted children aged 9–12, found that the levels of moral development exhibited by these children correlated much more closely with their mental ages than with their chronological ages. Hollingworth (1942) noted, in her subjects of IQ 180, a passionate concern for ethical and moral issues, and a deep and unusually mature interest in questions of origin, destiny, and man's relationship with God (Gross, 2004). Janos and Robinson (1985) report on an earlier, unpublished study in which, using the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Rest, 1979) as a measure of moral judgement, they compared a group of 24 radically accelerated university students aged 11–18, and two groups of gifted high school students who had not been accelerated, with a group of typical university students. All three groups of intellectually gifted students exhibited significantly higher levels of moral judgement than did the typical undergraduates (Gross, 2004).

In the 1980s, Karnes and Brown (1981) made an initial investigation into the moral development of the gifted using Rest's DIT. Their sample included 233 gifted students (9–15 years in age) who were selected for a gifted program. The results of the DIT were compared to the students' performance on a test that measured their intellectual ability (WISC-R). The empirical results of the study showed a positive correlation between the two tests.

Gifted children have emotional intensity and advanced levels of moral judgment, and these two characteristics coupled with their advanced cognitive ability enables them to understand social and moral issues (Sisk, 2009). Several of the research studies on the highly gifted (Burks et al., 1930; Hollingworth, 1942; Zorbaugh et al., 1951) have noted that exceptionally gifted children display high standards of truth and morality, and can be overly judgmental towards other children or adults who do not appear to be measuring up to these standards (Gross, 2004).

Several studies (Arbuthnot, 1973; Grant et al., 1976; Maccoby, 1980) have found significant correlations between scores on individual or group tests of intelligence and high scores on measures of moral development. While the majority of adults do not progress beyond the second, or conventional, level of moral judgement, Boehm (1962) and Kohlberg (1964) found



that intellectually gifted children were able to make complex moral judgements much earlier than their age-peers, while some highly gifted elementary school children functioned at the 'principled', post-conventional level normally attained by fewer than 10 per cent of adults.

However, the data from studies with high-achieving adolescents has indicated that the relationship between apparent academic talent and moral judgment scores is more complex. According to Narvaez's study, high academic competence is necessary for an unusually high P-score, but it does not necessarily predict it. The high achievers can have average to high moral judgment scores, whereas low achievers cannot be high scorers in moral judgment.

Moral development includes other components besides moral judgment as measured by DIT scores. Real-life moral dilemmas also require moral sensitivity and moral motivation (Narvaez, 1993). Before an individual can make responsible moral judgments, he or she needs to identify real life moral dilemmas in different contexts. A broad conception of morality requires more than just skill in abstract reasoning. Affective and social factors play a vital role in moral conduct.

The few empirical studies available have contradictory results on the relationship between general intelligence, social competence, and altruism (Abroms, 1985). Earlier studies on deviant behavior and crime among the gifted have also shown that there is no necessary relationship between morality and intelligence (Brooks, 1985; Gath, Tennent, & Pidduck, 1970).

According to Andreani and Pagnin (1993), some gifted adolescents tend to neglect their immediate feelings of empathy and common moral inhibitions and focus on logical coherence in their moral judgments. The high level of ability and formal thinking of gifted students might favor intellectual egocentrism and abstraction from both real life and the concrete problems of people. Being gifted or creative imposes a special moral responsibility on an individual.

Characteristics of students gifted in Moral Intelligence based on literature found these elements:

1. Acute moral awareness.
2. Enjoy ethical debates.
3. Have a heightened understanding of moral issues.
4. Show asynchronous moral development.
5. Display moral values in action.
6. Display advanced moral judgment.
7. Have the ability to act on their morality.
8. Have an early sense of right and wrong.
9. Have deep moral systems.
10. Display moral character.

However, they lack the ability to cope with the issues emotionally, and they may feel frustration over not being able to address them. In addition, their advanced level of moral judgment makes them highly critical of injustice and the lack of integrity in individuals and society, which can cause them to become overwhelmed by their knowledge of societal issues and problems, and their inability because of their youth to address them in a meaningful manner (Sisk, 2009).

Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains (Andreani & Pagnini, 2000).

## Moral Education and Gifted Students

This section focuses on the contribution of education to the growth of moral creativity. The influence of formal education on moral judgment development has been the focus of much research in the last 20 years (Derryberry et al., 2005). Dabrowski emphasized the importance of the early identification of these gifted individuals because their asynchronous development (young age vs. advanced development) left them vulnerable; he saw the need for them to receive encouragement and nurturing for their successful development (Cash, 2009).

High cognitive ability and high education are the main contributors to high level of moral judgment: most researches find strongest relations between intelligence (or general cognitive ability) or educational achievement and measures of moral judgement (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

Many data were found supporting those assumptions. For instance, years in college are the strongest predictor of moral judgement (Finger, Borduin & Baumstark, 1992); intellectual perspective taking in academic settings accounts for more of the moral judgement variance than does any other factor (Mason & Gibbs, 1993); stages of logical and socio-moral judgement are strongly related to each other (Gibson, 1990). At least, above-average cognitive ability is necessary for higher scores in moral judgement, as higher cognitive achievement ability appears to provide a foundation for higher scores in moral judgment, even if it is not the only element needed (not every high achiever obtains a high score on moral judgement) (Narvaez, 1993); creative gifted give more original solutions to the dilemmas (Andreani & Pagnin, 1993).

Piaget argued that educators should provide students with opportunities to discover morals themselves, rather than simply being indoctrinated with norms. Piaget concluded from his work that schools should concentrate on cooperative decision making and problem solving to nurture moral development (Sisk, 2009).

Kohlberg argued that moral education also requires more than individual reflection, and should include students functioning within a community. The goal of moral education according to Kohlberg is to encourage individuals to move to

the next stage of moral development (Sisk,2009). Kohlberg demonstrated his concept of moral education in schools within-schools in which students participated as community members and sought consensual rather than majority rules. The role of teachers is crucial in the “just community” schools in that they promote rules and norms that reflect a concern for justice and rights in the community, and ultimately enforce the rules (Sisk,2009). This could be done by emphasizing cooperative decision-making and problem solving, in order to make it possible for them to work out for themselves ethics based on fairness, consideration for others, altruism, loyalty, and the like (Cropley,2011). The ‘infusion’ approach emphasizes that, rather than simply being an add-on, education offering such experiences should permeate the entire school experience. It is not a competitor with or an ancillary to the acquisition of academic knowledge and skills, but supports this process: responsibility, respect for others, self-control and diligence foster academic learning (Cropley,2011).

Implications to Education of gifted in moral issues (Tirri,2011) could be:

- Persons of good character have better developed skills in four areas: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral action
- Teachers should guide their students to discuss:
  - Better and worse interpretations of the moral issues discussed (moral sensitivity)
  - Better and worse justifications for actions (moral judgment)
  - Expectations for behavior in particular contexts, for example, “the good citizen” (moral identity)
  - Indicators to judge courage, persistence, and follow through (moral character)

The traditional approach involved teachers explicitly advocating virtues such as honesty, kindness, patience, or strength, for instance through direct communication of their belief in such virtues, by personal example, and by giving students opportunities of practicing these virtues and rewarding such expression (Cropley,2011). This process was frequently supported by separate classes on moral and ethical behavior, such as religious instruction or civics. A common teaching method for doing this was to present a moral dilemma to students and ask them to work out an appropriate moral course of action. Class discussion would then focus on deviations from justice, fairness, or other moral principles (Cropley,2011).

Coles stressed that children look to parents and teachers for clues on how to behave, as they go about their lives demonstrating in action their assumptions, desires, and values (Sisk,2009). Kidder (2001) said moral courage can be developed using his three principles: being committed to moral principles, being aware of the danger involved in supporting these principles, and being willing to endure the danger.

Sisk and Torrance (2001) advocated helping gifted students to develop a sense of responsibility and awareness of their gifts, and ways to give those gifts back to society to live at a level of moral development that includes a sense of purpose. Educating for moral development has within it the hope of developing the capacity of gifted students to discover what is essential in life; particularly, in their own lives, and in the words of E. Paul Torrance, “to nourish the world.”

Moral education assumes the same possibilities and limits of intellectual education: you can’t develop by simply memorizing norms or by repeating prescribed and positively reinforced actions, but is necessary to develop a broader comprehension of nature of rules, difference of perspectives, relations between different aspects, both through intellectual and social stimuli: this was done in the ‘just community’ approach by Kohlberg and other researchers (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

In the meanwhile, other theorists (especially social learning theorists) focused on moral behavior as influenced by reinforcement and modeling procedures (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

On the other hand, we note that findings regarding favorable social adjustment come from studies of moderate rather than extremely gifted children: the most talented are more vulnerable, as they are ‘out of synchrony’ with others (Janos & Robinson, 1985); as Freeman (1985, 1991) notes, highly gifted children are particularly sensitive and reactive to social stimuli they meet, and so are exposed both to most positive, highly intellectually and socially developed experiences, both to negative ones; and their development is inhibited--at any level--without adequate material and psychological conditions (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000). An educational program for social and moral abilities enhancement in selected groups of gifted adolescents was carried out by Pagnin and Zanetti (1997): it was based on exercises of dilemmas discussion, role-taking, social inferences, free expression of personal values, social behavior strategies discussion and dramatized simulation. The outcome of such intervention, analyzed by classic stage scores analysis and by an analysis of verbal expressions and meanings, showed the reaching of higher moral reasoning level (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

Pagnin & Andreani (2000) stated that the efficacy of interventions in enhancing levels of moral reasoning is pointed out by many studies (for instance Erikson et al., 1976; Whiteley, 1982; Willging & Dunn, 1982): a good review of them (comprehensive of unpublished dissertations) is in Rest & Thoma, 1986, that conclude the meta-analysis stating that “moral education programs emphasizing dilemma discussion and those emphasizing personality development both produce modest but definite effects.” (Rest & Thoma, 1986, p. 85).

## Conclusions

Educators, counselors, and mentors who work closely with today’s brightest young minds must be aware of the ethical dimensions of high ability because they should be nudging the development of impressive talent toward positive purposes (Ambrose & Cross, 2009).

Overall, research findings underscore the strong correlation between high levels of intellect and strong moral development, including emotional intensity and sensitivity, compassion for others, and a preoccupation with right and wrong, but high intellectual ability does not predict mature moral judgment. Often, they lack the ability to cope with the issues emotionally, and they may feel frustration over not being able to address them.

Therefore, we should help the gifted to reach moral excellence together with excellence in specific domains, through educational programs for improving social and moral abilities.

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# The Impact of Covid-19 on Severe Mentally ill Patients in One Mental Health Center in Kosovo

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**Naim FANAJ**

Mental Health Center Prizren

College of Medical Sciences Rezonanca, Prishtina, Kosovo

**Sevim MUSTAFA**

College AAB, Prishtina, Kosovo

**Erika MELONASHI**

Wisdom University College, Tirana Albania

## Abstract

*Immediately after the onset of the pandemic some scholars speculated that people with serious mental illnesses would be at uniquely high risk during this period. Recent studies show that people with serious mental illness are at increased risk of being infected by Covid-19 and have higher subsequent rates of hospitalization, morbidity, and mortality. There are studies that also show that stress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictive measures can precipitate and worsen psychotic symptoms.*

*Our aim was to understand the mental state of the mentally ill people at one Mental Health Center in Prizren, Kosovo as a result of the situation created by Covid-19.*

*It's a cross-sectional study. 91 patients diagnosed with severe mental illness (Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders) and 47 their primary caregivers were interviewed via phone calls or directly about their mental state.*

*Findings showed that 15.2% of the sample didn't use medication regularly while 27% didn't follow the pandemic rules / restrictions. The level of self-care was not present in about 24.6 % of the sample. Also participants reported the presence of somatic complaints (26.1%), aggression (23.2%), nervousness (21%), fear (20.3%) and suicidal thoughts (2.9%). Moreover, 13.8% of patients were not in a good mood and 12.3% did not sleep well. Our findings are in line with studies reporting that schizophrenic patients are unimpressed by Covid-19 situation.*

*A quarter to one fifth of patients with severe mental illness showed signs of deterioration. It is difficult to conclude on the extent of their suffering and further studies are needed. Further studies should determine the level and modes of impact of Covid-19 on this vulnerable category of the population.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Severe Mentally Ill Patients, Mental Health Center, Prizren, Kosovo

## Introduction

There is a widely accepted consensus by now that Covid-19 pandemic has heavily affected people's lives and communities. This is a mental health emergency, too, which presents substantial challenges for our patients, their families, our multi-disciplinary teams and our psychiatrist colleagues (Kelly, 2020). Global health authorities as the World Health Organization are concerned over the pandemic's mental health and psycho-social consequences (World Health Organization, 2020). The world was poorly prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic and this crisis has disrupted the delivery of psychiatric services worldwide (Kola et al, 2020). Even, the WHO general director Ghebreyesus noticed that COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions, while limiting access for those in need of services because in many countries, community mental health services have stopped functioning (Ghebreyesus, 2020). Druss (2020) in the same line with other scientific opinions, speculates that people with serious mental illnesses will be at uniquely high risk during this period; (e.g., see Shigemura et al., 2020; Montemurro, 2020; Kaufman et al, 2020; Lai et al, 2020 and Rohde et al, 2020).

But Hao et al (2020) in an article published online in April 2020 states that the psychological impact on people with mental disorders remains unknown because there is still little research on the psychological impact and mental health of psychiatric patients living in the community during the COVID- 19 pandemic. Yet in June (2020) Kahl and Corell stated that the number of inpatient and outpatient contacts with severe mental illness has largely reduced during the COVID-19 outbreak. Another important aspect refers to the great challenges for psychiatrists in managing psychiatric patients during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hao et al, 2020).

Two nationwide cohort studies in the US (Wang, et al 2020; Taquet, et al 2020) show that there is an increased incidence of COVID-19 among individuals with mental disorders. Increased risk of being infected by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and having higher subsequent rates of hospitalization, morbidity, and mortality is stated also by Wang, et al (2020) and Li et al (2020). Nemani et al (2021) in a cohort study of 7348 adults with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 in a New York health system found that the premorbid diagnosis of a schizophrenia spectrum disorder was significantly associated with mortality (odds ratio -2.67).

Individuals with psychiatric disorders might experience worsening symptoms (Gunnell et al, 2020; Sønderkov et al, 2020; Haider et al, 2020) and also may be at higher risk of relapse or new episodes due to the high stress levels associated with the COVID-19 outbreak (Yao et al., 2020; Fischer et al., 2020; Sommer et al, 2020) which might act as a trigger into the manifestation of psychotic symptoms in patients with pre-existing mental illnesses. Finally stress related to a pandemic may also precipitate, exacerbate or impact the content of the psychotic symptoms (Li, 2020; Fischer et al 2020).

However, findings of previous studies on the impact of a natural and manmade disaster on individuals with mental illness were inconclusive (Muruganandam et al, 2020). Muruganandam et al, (2020) reported levels of relapse as high as thirty percent during the lockdown period. A recent study in Italy (Isaevoli et al, 2020) found results indicating that patients with serious mental illness had higher levels of COVID-19-related perceived stress (four times), anxiety (two to three times), and depressive symptoms (two to three times) compared to non-psychiatric participants. Findings from Spain reveal a similar picture; González-Blanco et al (2020) reported that patients with severe mental disorders reacted to the pandemic and the lockdown restrictions with higher anxiety levels as compared to the general public. Liebrezn et al (2020) and Duan et al (2020) assert that prevention measures such as isolation and quarantine, produce fear, anxiety, and uncertainty to patients, causing exacerbation of pre-existing mental disorders. There are also studies indicating a differential effect of the global crisis for patients with affective and psychotic disorders (e.g., Hölzle et al, 2020) ;more specifically patients with affective disorders showed the strongest correlations of symptoms, while patients with schizophrenia are occupied with serious intrinsic issues and unperturbed by pandemic. Along the same line, a longitudinal study (Pinkham et al, 2020) of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of 148 individuals with pre-existing severe mental illnesses has shown that they have some degree of resilience in the face of the pandemic particularly during the early stages.

However, a major issue of concern has to do with adherence to pandemic protection measures and adherence to treatment. Shinn and Viron (2020) reported that severely mentally ill patients may have lower rates of adherence to treatment for medical conditions. In a rapid review (Brown et al, 2020) including three studies, authored concluded that psychotic patients' adherence with protective measures was revealed as markedly more problematic in people with psychosis. Sukut and Balik (2020) pointed out that patients receiving outpatient treatment due to serious mental illness have difficulty maintaining their treatment regimen.

As might be noted from the studies reviewed above, research from the Balkans on this specific topic is still missing, although the problematic might be the same if not worse than the data from other European countries.

The context of study: COVID-19 pandemic in Kosovo

As regards Kosovo, authors managed to find only one study addressing the mental health at the time of the pandemic in the general population in Kosovo. This study (Fanaj & Mustafa, 2021) has reported that 63% of online participants agreed that the situation had adversely affected their psychological state; 35.6% had a mild to severe form of depression and 18.7% had minimal symptoms. These figures show a high level of negative experience from the pandemic compared to other studies cited here (Fanaj & Mustafa, 2021). In this study significantly higher depression resulted for females (as compared to males) and the young age-group of 18 to 24 year olds .

The first case with COVID-19 in Kosovo was identified on 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 and three days later a Public Health Emergency was announced with strict lockdown restrictions put in place. The health system services in Kosovo as expected, were predominantly focused on prevention of infection and provision of treatment for those infected. In mid-March, the Ministry of Health declared a public health emergency due to COVID-19, but did not include any specific guidelines for mental health services. Few efforts were made through the provision of counseling lines for anxiety and stress were launched by the Ministry of Health and several other institutions. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that mental health workers in these services were mostly volunteer psychologists, graduate students and last year students, some without proper experience and without adequate training. Community Mental Health Centers despite growing challenges have continued to provide reduced psychiatric and psychological services through home visits, follow-up of people with serious mental illness, and telephone counseling. An example is the Mental Health Center in Prizren, which functions as a community service for a region that comprises approximately 300,000 inhabitants. The multidisciplinary team includes psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, nurses and social workers. Faced with the pandemic in Kosovo, the Mental Health Center in Prizren continued the provision of essential mental health services to the population in the form of home visits, emergency psychiatric visits, telephone lines of psychological assistance, etc.

There had been a substantial increase in the number of infected individuals and overall deaths in Kosovo's population in the period when data were collected for this study, i.e., 8<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2020; this marks a period after the phase of relief begins after very restrictive initial restrictions.

After the war, Kosovo, like many other post-war societies, has experienced many challenges, including economic stagnation, widespread poverty, high unemployment, the movement of population from rural to urban areas, and poor quality of life, according to many agency reports. CIA The World Factbook (2017) reported that Kosovo's citizens are the second poorest in Europe, after Moldova, with a per capita GDP (PPP) of \$9,600 in 2016; population below poverty line -30% (2013 estimated); an unemployment rate of 33%, and a youth unemployment rate near 60%, in a country where the average age of the population is 26 years old. Mental Health system based in community is considered as success story in Kosovo, despite many challenges of course and several things which need to be improved.

The aim of this study was to understand the mental state of mentally ill patients as a result of the situation created by COVID-19. To our knowledge this is the first study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on patients with severe mental illness in Kosovo.

## Materials and methods

The present study has a cross-sectional research design. Participants were patients diagnosed with severe mental illness (Schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders) or their primary caregivers. We were aware of fact that studies have proved high rating concordance between caregiver and persons with psychotic illness about the patient's functioning level, which supports that reliable information can be obtained from their primary caregivers (Chand et al., 2014; Dickerson et al., 1997). Participants gave consent that their participation was voluntary, confidential and unidentifiable. The authors assert that all procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of the relevant authorities on human studies and with the Helsinki Declaration. The questionnaire was delivered and filled by nurses via phone calls or directly during home visits/ MHC visits. The data were processed from the responses received in the time period of 14 days (08.05.-22.05.2020). Socio-demographic information was obtained regarding age, gender and place of residence. The questionnaire designed by the authors elicited issues like medication, sleep, appetite, nervousness, agresivity, anxiety, suicidal ideation, mood, self care, somatic pain, speaking about pandemics and following rules during restrictions phase. Scoring was based on a Likert type scale with range responses from 0-3; where 0 (no), 1 (somehow/sometimes) and 2 (yes). The highest score means presence of changes in items asked. Data processing was performed with SPSS 21.0 and Microsoft Excel 2007.

## Results

Participants were 138 respondents (91 patients, 47 caregivers). Mental health was assessed for 138 patients with psychotic disorder. The age of the evaluated patients was from 17 to 81 years old (Mage = 46.97, SD = 11.58). In terms of gender composition there were 100 men (72.5%) and 38 women (27.5%). As regards place of residence –the classification was: 81 individuals (58.7%) living in urban areas and 57 (41.3%) individuals living in rural areas. The assessment was conducted by direct meetings at Mental Health Center or home visits to 99 patients (71.7%) and by telephone to 39 patients (28.3%) (Tab. 1).

**TABLE 1** Demographic characteristics of the participants in the survey.

Participants(n=138)	N	%
Gender		
Male	100	72.5
Female	38	27.5
Residence		
Urban	81	58.7
Rural	57	41.3
Interview type		
Face-to-face	99	71.7
Phone call	39	28.3
Interviewee		
Patients	91	65.9
Caregivers	47	34.1

Results showed that 84.8% of participants had used medication regularly while 73% of them had followed the rules / restrictions during the pandemic closure period. The level of self-care was also present in about 75.4% of the sample. Regarding the presence of symptoms / signs that would be taken as aggravation of the existing psychiatric disorder, results showed that only about 1/4-1/5 of them have shown problems such as, somatic complaints (26.1%), aggression (23.2%), nervousness (21%), nutrition (21%), fear / anxiety (20.3%), mood (13.8%), sleep (12.3%). One positive finding was that self-harm thoughts were reported in very low rates (2.9%).

**TABLE 2** Percentages of questionnaire item responses and mean of the participants in the survey.

Item response	0 (No)	1 (somehow / sometimes)	2 (yes)	Mean
	%	%	%	
Medicaments take regularly	6.5	8.7	84.8	1.78
Has been in a good mood	13.8	34.1	52.2	1.38
Fear presence	63	16.7	20.3	.57
Has been more nervous than before	64.5	14.5	21	.56
Pain complaints	64.5	9.4	26.1	.61
Sleep well	12.3	15.9	71.7	.59
Has eaten as before	21	15.2	63.8	1.42
Saying that he would hurt himself	91.3	5.8	2.9	.11
Has there been aggressive behavior	67.4	9.4	23.2	.55
Self-care taken	8	16.7	75.4	1.67
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	35.5	12.3	52.2	1.16
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	14.6	12.4	73	.58

As regards gender specificity all patients showed more fear, nervousness, aggression and talk/ask for pandemic situation; while female patients showed more good mood, good sleep, good appetite, took medication regularly, adhered to the rules / restrictions but showed even more suicidal ideation and complaints of pain. Mann-Whitney test revealed significant gender differences only for item of self-care scores ( $Md_{females}=2$ ,  $N=38$ ;  $Md_{males}=2$ ,  $N=100$ ;  $Z=-2.374$ ,  $p<.01$ ); whereas females showed higher mean ranks scores than males (Tab. 3).

**TABLE 3** Mean scores and significance based on gender

Item response / Gender	Male		Female		p
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Medicaments take regularly	1.74	0.59	1.89	0.38	.14
Has been in a good mood	1.35	0.73	1.47	0.68	.37
Fear presence	0.61	0.81	0.47	0.79	.30
Has been more nervous than before	0.63	0.84	0.39	0.71	.13
Pain complaints	0.54	0.84	0.82	0.92	.09
Sleep well	1.62	0.67	1.53	0.76	.54
Has eaten as before	1.38	0.83	1.55	0.76	.26
Saying that he would hurt himself	0.11	0.39	0.13	0.41	.65
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.63	0.87	0.37	0.75	.09
Self-care taken	1.60	0.66	1.87	0.41	.02
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.17	0.93	1.16	0.91	.91
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.57	0.71	1.63	0.78	.31

As regards the urban-rural distinction, patients from urban areas reported more complaints of pain, and suicidal ideation. However they reported better sleeping and eating regimes and better care of themselves. Also they revealed increased interest and more talking about the pandemic situation and have respected the rules more. Patients from rural areas had higher levels



of fear, nervousness, and aggression. Despite these findings they have been in a good mood and have taken medication more regularly than patients in urban areas. Despite these specifics Mann-Whitney test revealed no significant differences for all items of questionnaires, based on the urban-rural distinction (Tab. 4).

**TABLE 4** Mean scores and significance based on residence

Item response / Residence	Urban		Rural		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Medicaments take regularly	1.77	0.55	1.81	0.54	.47
Has been in a good mood	1.36	0.73	1.42	0.70	.62
Fear presence	0.54	0.77	0.61	0.86	.77
Has been more nervous than before	0.48	0.74	0.68	0.90	.26
Pain complaints	0.65	0.88	0.56	0.86	.49
Sleep well	1.64	0.69	1.53	0.71	.20
Has eaten as before	1.49	0.77	1.33	0.87	.30
Saying that he would hurt himself	0.17	0.49	0.04	0.18	.07
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.52	0.83	0.61	0.86	.45
Self-care taken	1.73	0.59	1.60	0.65	.14
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.23	0.91	1.07	0.94	.31
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.65	0.67	1.48	0.80	.22

In terms of modality of data collection, i.e., face to face interview or phone call some specifics were also noted. Patients who were interviewed face-to-face admitted being more afraid, but also said that they slept well, ate well, had a good mood, took medication regularly, took better care for themselves and were also more compliant to rules / restrictions. Conversely, patients interviewed by telephone indicated that they had more nervousness, aggression, suicidal ideation and also talked / asked more about the pandemic situation. Mann-Whitney test revealed significant differences in responses only for two items based on the modality of data collection. The first difference was in self-care scores ( $Md_{direct}=2, N=99; Md_{phone}=2, N=39; Z=-2.751, p<.00$ ); and the second for compliance with the rules / restrictions during the pandemic closure period scores ( $Md_{direct}=2, N=98; Md_{phone}=2, N=39; Z=-2.221, p<.02$ ). Patients interviewed directly showed higher mean rank scores than those interviewed by phone in both cases (Tab. 5).

**TABLE 5** Mean scores and significance based on interview type

Item response / Interview type	Face-to-face		Phone call		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Medicaments take regularly	1.79	0.54	1.77	0.58	.95
Has been in a good mood	1.40	0.71	1.33	0.73	.60
Fear presence	0.58	0.80	0.56	0.82	.91
Has been more nervous than before	0.55	0.81	0.62	0.84	.65
Pain complaints	0.62	0.87	0.62	0.87	.98
Sleep well	1.62	0.68	1.54	0.75	.62
Has eaten as before	1.51	0.74	1.23	0.95	.17
Saying that he would hurt himself	0.10	0.36	0.15	0.48	.66
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.48	0.80	0.74	0.93	.13
Self-care taken	1.76	0.55	1.46	0.72	.01
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.10	0.95	1.33	0.83	.22
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.66	0.68	1.38	0.81	.03

As regards the data collection modality based on self versus caregiver report, results revealed higher mean scores in almost all items reported by the patients themselves as compared to those reported by Caregivers. Caregivers gave the highest average responses only to nervousness, pain complaints as well as suicidal tendencies. However, Mann-Whitney tests revealed significant differences based on whether the interview was done with patients or primary caregivers only for item of self-care scores ( $Md_{patients}=2, N=91; Md_{caregivers}=2, N=47; Z=-2.864, p<.00$ ); Patient is interviewed they showed higher mean ranks scores than when caregiver was interviewed (Tab. 6).

**TABLE 6** Mean scores and significance based on Interviewee

Item response / Interviewee	Patients		Caregivers		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Medicaments take regularly	1.84	0.50	1.68	0.62	.63
Has been in a good mood	1.46	0.65	1.23	0.81	.14
Fear presence	0.59	0.81	0.53	0.80	.64
Has been more nervous than before	0.52	0.78	0.66	0.89	.43
Pain complaints	0.55	0.87	0.74	0.87	.12
Sleep well	1.64	0.67	1.51	0.74	.29
Has eaten as before	1.48	0.78	1.32	0.88	.33
Saying that he would hurt himself	0.10	0.33	0.15	0.51	.97
Has there been aggressive behavior	0.59	0.89	0.49	0.74	.78
Self-care taken	1.79	0.48	1.45	0.77	.00
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	1.26	0.92	0.98	0.89	.07
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	1.66	0.68	1.43	0.80	.07

Finally, to assess any possible effect of age, on the results, Spearman's correlation analysis was also performed between the age variable and the respondents' answers to the questions. It turned out that none of the questions showed any significant relationship with the age variable (Tab. 7).

**TABLE 7** Spearman's correlation analysis between age and item responses

Spearman's rho / Items responses	Age
Medicaments take regularly	-.106
Has been in a good mood	-.016
Fear presence	-.084
Has been more nervous than before	-.093
Pain complaints	.097
Sleep well	-.068
Has eaten as before	-.041
Saying that he would hurt himself	.150
Has there been aggressive behavior	-.064
Self-care taken	-.077
Has he talked / asked about the situation - the virus - the pandemic	.127
Has complied with the rules and prohibitions during this period	.076

## Discussion

The present study aimed to understand how Covid-19 pandemic impacted patients with psychotic disorders in Prizren Mental Health Center. It is difficult to make comparisons and arrive at conclusions when we lack a basic previous assessment in similar settings and conditions.. However, findings indicating that 20%-25% of participants showed the presence of pronounced signs / symptoms, indicate that this group of patients was not severely affected. These results are in line with the

studies of Hölzle et al, (2020) and Pinkham et al, (2020) who did not report a deterioration of the patients' basic condition and at least not anymore than other categories of mental disorders. Nor can we find in this sample evidence of worsening or new episodes of underlying disease predicted by studies according to which stress from the Covid-19 pandemic may trigger the manifestation of psychotic symptoms in patients with previous mental illnesses or that stress related to a pandemic may precipitate, exacerbate or impact the content of the psychotic symptoms (Gunnell et al, 2020; Sonderskov et al, 2020; Haider et al, 2020, Yao et al., 2020; Fischer et al. al., 2020; Sommer et al, 2020) (Li, 2020; Fischer et al 2020). However it must be considered that the course of psychotic disorders is known for the stages of exacerbation which might occur. The finding that 84.8% of patients have taken medication regularly is very positive, particularly because non-adherence to prescription drug treatments is recognized as a worldwide problem and may be the most challenging aspect of treating patients with schizophrenia (WHO, 2003). For example, Dolder et al (2003) found that 12-month drug compliance ranged from 54 to 62%. This finding is also contrary to the emphasis of Sukut and Balik (2020) that patients with serious mental illness have difficulty maintaining their treatment. Results on the presence of fear and mood swings are also at low levels as compared to the results in the general population as reported in the literature. Nonetheless these findings should be carefully considered particularly as regards comparisons with studies from other countries (e.g., studies of Isaevoli et al, (2020) in Italy and González-Blanco et al (2020) in Spain) due to important differences the research design and the measuring instruments. Regarding the finding that 73% of the sample have adhered to protective anticovid measures, discrepancies are observed with other studies such as the review of Brown et al (2020) and Shinn and Viron (2020) reporting that patient adherence with protective measures was markedly more problematic in people with psychosis. Therefore it seems that present study reports a quite satisfactory level of compliance, which requires further understanding and investigation particularly as regards the understanding of positive reinforcers. Our findings by signs / symptoms can only be compared with a study found in 132 psychotic patients in India through telephone evaluation (Muruganandam et al, 2020). In almost all similar items our sample has lower results. So while in our study 6.5% did not take medication regularly in India it was 22%. Other similar measures compare between the two studies as follows: as aggression (23.2% vs 28%), intake food (21% vs 23%), fear / anxiety (20.3% vs 27%), sleep (12.3% vs 37.9%), self-care (8% vs 20%), thoughts of suicide (2.9% vs 14.4%).

That the pandemic did not greatly affect psychotic patients of this sample is also shown by the fact that only half of them (52.2%) discussed the situation with family members or other people around. This can be understood when we consider the limited level of awareness for the situation as a result of the disease from which they suffer. Maybe this is protective factor against Covid-9 pandemic stress. Moreover, the greater family support of patients, which characterizes the predominantly collective Kosovo society, might act as an additional protective factor to pandemic stress.

## Limitations

Limitations of the present study include a relatively small sample size, proxy (caregiver) report, lack of control groups, and lack of a structured systematic clinical assessment. These limitations though are quite common in research studies with clinical samples, or psychiatric patients (eg. see Muruganandam et al, 2020).

## Conclusions

The present study concluded that only 20%-25% of patients with severe mental illness of the Mental Health Center showed signs of deterioration. Authors speculate that the greater family support of patients, which characterizes the predominantly collective Kosovo society, might act as an additional protective factor to pandemic stress. Despite the apparently optimistic findings, particularly as compared to research from other countries, it is still difficult to conclude exactly on the extent of their suffering. Further studies are needed to determine the level and modes of impact of Covid-19 on this vulnerable category of the population. Continuing to provide mental health services to people with serious mental illness should be a priority of the health system in Kosovo and elsewhere.

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PANEL IV

**INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGICAL  
INNOVATIONS ON INDUSTRY  
AND SERVICES**

# Engineer Order - Necessity and Advantages of its Establishment

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**Dr. Maksim ÇIPI**

Departamenti i Inxhinierisë dhe Arkitekturës, Fakulteti i Inxhinierisë, Informatikës dhe Arkitekturës, UET  
Ordine degli Ingegneri della Provincia di Roma, RM - Itali

## Abstract

*The Order of Engineers, its establishment and full functioning in our country, for years has emerged as a necessity. Many specialists in the field have made continuous efforts to present the need and priorities of its action and it has been achieved to prepare many draft Laws on its Structuring and Legal Approval. Recently, with the full support and assistance of CNI - Italy, as well as KIVI - the Netherlands, a draft law has been prepared and submitted to the Legislature. But, for different reasons, but nevertheless unjustifiable, it has not yet been achieved, despite the efforts made, to achieve the long-awaited result of the establishment of this much-needed structure and its full and normal functioning. This article is intended to address the situation of Licensing and development of the activity of the category of Engineers, as well as to elaborate all the problems, new opportunities, content, advantages, etc. that the Establishment of the Order of Engineers in the country can give:*

- *in terms of continuous introduction or updating of contemporary technical norms;*
- *in terms of protection of the rights of professionals in the field;*
- *in terms of consumer protection of the product of each professional;*
- *in terms of quality assurance in the execution of works different;*
- *in terms of continuous training of professional engineers;*
- *etc.*

**Key words:** Engineer, Order of Engineers, Defense, Professional, Consumer, Formations, Safety, Legality, technical norms.

## Introduction

The Order of Engineers, its establishment and full functioning in our country, for years has emerged as a necessity. Many specialists in the field have made continuous efforts to present the need and priorities of its action and it has been achieved to prepare many draft Laws on its Structuring and Legal Approval.

Starting from 1993, in the Republic of Albania, the Order of Doctors, Pharmacists and Nurses have been created by special laws, where the grouping of professions, which they include, belongs to regulated professions, which are sanctioned by law in 2009, while, despite all the attempts and efforts so far, the creation of the Order of Engineers still seems quite distant.

Recently, with the full support and assistance of CNI - Italy, as well as KIVI - the Netherlands, a draft law has been prepared and submitted to the Legislature.

Collaborating with them or independently from them, Working Groups, Associations, Design Studios, Universities and Institutions of High School Education, including UET University etc. have tried to give their contribution in carrying out what necessary in this direction.

But, for different reasons, it has not yet been achieved, despite the efforts made, to achieve the long-awaited result of the establishment of this much-needed structure and its full and normal functioning.

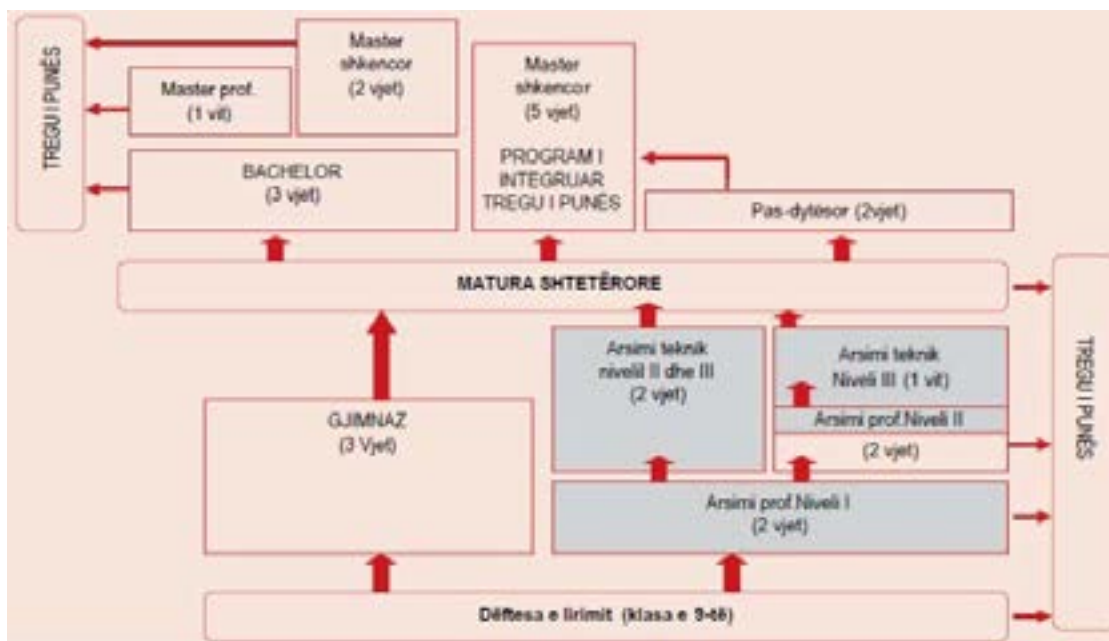
With the hope of being able to arrive as soon as possible at the foundation of this Order of Engineers also in Albania, after briefly describing the procedures for entering the labour market for graduated engineers, we present the main priorities that the Establishment of the Order of Engineers can give:

- in terms of continuous introduction or updating of contemporary technical norms;
- in terms of protection of the rights of professionals in the field;
- in terms of consumer protection of the product of each professional;
- in terms of quality assurance in the execution of works different;
- in terms of continuous training of professional engineers;
- etc.

## Institutional System and Entry into the Labour Market in Albania

In the current Institutional System and Entry System to the Labour Market in Albania, we can note that:

- You could enter at the time of work, without any qualifications, directly and without any examination or other control / verification of ability, already after finishing the 9th school year.
- Later, you could enter at the time of work, without any qualifications, directly and without any examination or other control / verification of ability, after having finished your secondary school studies.
- On the other hand, if you plan to follow your studies, it is necessary to have passed the Maturity Exam and only afterwards, in accordance with the results and points obtained, those during the studies and those of the Maturity Exam applies for enrolment at the University or Institutes of Higher Studies.
- By finishing these studies, you could enter the world of work, with the qualification obtained from the studies followed, directly and without any examination or other control / verification of ability.



**FIG. 01:** Current Institutional System and Entry System to the Labour Market in Albania

## Entry into the Labour Market in Albania – Engineer and Architects

### Professional License

After finishing university studies, in order to be able to practice as an engineer, you should be “provided / equipped” with a “Professional License”.

The Professional License is issued for:

- Individual;
- Society’

Each one of these types of License may be required to carry out the activity of:

- Study and design; and/or
- Site inspection, testing and execution of building works.

*Study and Design License, conditions:*

- Be graduated in the second level, Professional and/or Scientific Master Scientific, at institutions recognized and licensed by the rules and laws in force;
- If graduated from abroad, have recognized the equivalence of the original degree title according to the laws in force;
- Have more than 2 years of professional design work experience at public design institutions, study and design associations or higher education schools.

*Site Survey and Testing of construction works License, conditions:*

- Be graduated in the second level, Professional and/or Scientific Master, at institutions recognized and licensed by the rules and laws in force;
- If graduated from abroad, have recognized the equivalence of the original degree title according to the laws in force;
- Have more than 15 years of professional work experience in the design and / or execution of construction works, in their sector;
- Not to be a Technical Manager or Employee in the Construction Works Execution Company.

*Information and documents to be submitted with a written request:*

- Generality; Address; Categories of which you are applying for a license;
- Copy of Identity Card;
- Copy of the original Diploma, authenticated and translated into Albanian;
- Copy of the original License (and / or documentation which allows you to work in your profession in the country of origin), authenticated and translated into Albanian;
- CV of works and activities;
- Documents and / or materials proving what is in the CV;
- Certification according to Model 6/1;
- Two passport-size photos;
- Document of payment of the respective tariff (1 euro); etc ..

**VETDEKLARIM**

**6/1.**

*"Deklaroj në përgjegjësinë time, në njohje të plotë të pasojave që sjell një deklaram i pavërtetë se: Nuk kam asnjë çështje gjyqësore të hapur dhe nuk jam në ndjekje penale nga organet e prokurorisë në lidhje me profesionin ku kërkoj të licencohem (ose në rast se ka - të deklaroj: Kam çështje gjyqësore të hapur në gjykatën e rrethit \_\_\_\_\_ (shoqëruar me motivin e çështjes) apo/dhe jam në ndjekje penale nga organi i prokurorisë së rrethit \_\_\_\_\_ (shoqëruar me motivin e ndjekjes))."*

*"Deklaroj se njoh e do të zbatoj në veprimtarinë time si individ, Kushtet Teknike të Projektimit dhe të gjitha ligjet në fuqi në fushën e ndërtimit"*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Emër                      Mbiemër

\_\_\_\_\_  
nënshkrim

## Order of Engineers - Characteristics and priorities

As, for many years now, I have been member of one of Italian Engineer Orders, concretely of the Order of Engineers of the Province of Rome, one of the largest Orders in Europe, with over 26,000 members, and by the other hand taking in considerations that the Group of AACE Ass. for the draft of the Order of Engineers mentioned above until prepared the draft law submitted to the Legislature has collaborated with CNI and KIVI, I will take the Italian Order as a model.

Her I will also worth highlighting the fact that, in Italy, in addition to being enrolled in the Register and registered in one of the Regional Orders, the engineer also has the possibility of certifying his professional skills, similarly to what he would have done with entering to be part, for example, of KIWI in Holland.



## **Establishment and registration with the Order of Engineers**

In Italy, the Provincial Order was established for the first time with Law no. 1395/1923.

In order to practice the profession, the Engineer qualified with a university course of 3 or 5 years must compulsorily enrol, after having passed the State Exam, in Section “B” obtaining the title of Junior Engineer or, respectively, in Section “A” obtaining the title of Engineer.

Each Section was in turn divided into three sectors: Sector 1 - Civil and environmental / Sector 2

- Industrial / Sector 3 - Information.

## **Institutional tasks of the Order of Engineers**

Tasks institutionally attributed to the Order are:

- The formation, revision and publication of the Register of members;
- The protection of the title and professional practice;
- The definition of the annual contribution due by members, for the functioning of the Order and the CNI;
- The administration of income and expenses;
- The organization of continuous professional updating;
- The preparation of opinions, which were requested by the Public Administration, on matters relating to the profession.

## **Other competences of the Order of Engineers**

The Order, in addition to the institutional tasks attributed above, constitutes the reference for both the local industry and the institutions and the public. This translates into the assumption, according to established practice, of additional skills such as:

- constant information and training service for members;
- establishment of thematic commissions for sectors of particular interest;
- designation of the candidates for the carrying out of the state exams for the qualification to practice the profession.

Members are required to comply with the Code of Ethics which regulates the behaviour to be held towards colleagues and clients.

## **Activities for which registration in the Order is mandatory**

The main activities for which registration in the Order is mandatory are:

- Design and construction supervision of civil and industrial constructions for public or private works in general;
- Design and construction supervision of plants and structures;
- Construction testing (for static testing, a seniority registration of at least 10 years is required);
- Testing of plants;
- Technical Office Consultancy for the Court (C.T.U. register of the Professional Order).

## **“Advantages” obtained by registering with the Order**

- The appraisals and other assignments relating to the object of the profession of engineer and architect are conferred by the judicial authorities to those registered in the Register;
- Public administrations, when they have to make use of the work of engineers or architects practicing the profession, will entrust the tasks to those enrolled in the Register.
- The Order of Engineers will protect the rights of members and on the other hand, through the defence of professionalism, will protect the rights of the community;
- The Order of Engineers will repress the abuses and shortcomings of which members are guilty in the exercise of the profession.

## **If the Order of Engineers in Albania already existed...**

In the general context, we will finally have, also in Albania, the New Technical Standards, i.e. Euro codes and their National Annexes.

In the narrower context, that of its “normal functioning”, repeating and highlighting from what just has been said:

- Members are required to comply with the Code of Ethics which regulates the behaviour to be held towards colleagues and clients;
- The Order of Engineers will take on additional skills such as continuous information and training services for members;
- The Order of Engineers will repress the abuses and shortcomings of which members are guilty in the exercise of the profession.

## **Works and situations that one... could hope not to “dare to create anymore”:**

Afterwards we present different works and structures, which have never had to be built in this way and/or with structural elements badly executed or not functioning at all, taking into account their requirements of the Legal and Official Technical Standards, Recommendations etc., but also “relying” on “minimum” to knowledge and technical experience in the sector.

### **Structures, without respecting permits and town planning regulations**



**Constructions, not respecting standards and technical recommendations**





**Incomplete interventions and/or without the slightest constructive logic**



**Or, “abound” in “pretending” to respect the rules ...**



**In the meantime... mistakenly “savers” in the details and ways of doing...**



**Realizations without care and without respecting the Standards and Recommendations, that one can find easily not only in the buildings but also in many other interventions....**





**But... be careful !!!**

We all must follow the rules and keep the right balance... otherwise, surely, immediately...



or, in the long run,... we would not be forgiven !!!



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# Analysis Of 5 Floor Brick Masonry Building, Type 77/5

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Eng. / Petraq KOKA

## Abstract

*The study below presents the main results of numerical analyzes performed to assess the seismic response of an existing building, with brick masonry, type 77/5. This building is part of the group of 4-5 residential building projects, approved by the Ministry of Construction of that time and which have been used many times for identical buildings, built in the years 1975-1990, in Albania.*

*While these 5-story buildings cover a significant percentage of residential buildings, the fundamental question is: "Are these buildings safe under seismic action, while so many families are accommodated on them?"*

*This question stems from the following limitation: The 77/5 plan derives from regular forms, based on the recommendations of Eurocode 8 [6. [4.2.3.2], p. 48. and KTP.N.2-89 (Technical Design Conditions), published by the Academy of Sciences.*

## INTRODUCTION

Masonry structures represent one of the oldest building concepts available. Masonry construction is a traditional, widely used, extremely flexible and economical construction method, with considerable potential for future developments.

However, possibly due to the substantial empirical knowledge collected over several centuries of utilization a masonry as a structural material, the need for establishing a more modern basis, for the design of masonry structures, hasn't been appreciated in the same manner as for concrete structures. As a result, conventional masonry design practice is overly conservative, particularly in regard to the assessment of seismic resistance. Hence, the potential of masonry has not yet been fully exploited and there is a clear need for better utilization. For example, while current codes of practice severely limit the use of unreinforced masonry (URM) in construction, mainly, because of the requirement of over-conservative values, for the force-reduction factor ( $q$ -factor in Europe or  $R$ -factor in the US), recent studies show that, the performance of structurally-designed low-rise URM buildings, should be considered adequate for the category of ordinary buildings, even in regions with appreciable seismic hazard. Furthermore, these studies also show that unreinforced masonry is still a very competitive choice for two- or three-story residential buildings (Magenes et. al 2009, and Lourenco et al. 2009). [13]

This study includes analyzes based on 2 steps:

- Linear analysis, with the help of finite element model. (Etabs Program)
- Nonlinear analysis, performed with a simplified modeling procedure. (AM-Quake)

## Brief description of materials and the construction

Masonry is a heterogeneous material, due to its composition of:

- Complete or perforated blocks.
- Beds of continuous mortar.
- Nodes (joints) interrupted, or continuous.



However, we can call it a homogeneous anisotropic material in terms of resistance and deformation.

A masonry structure represents a behavior highly dependent on the reaction of the constituent elements: **BRICK AND MORTAR**.

- Brick is characterized by an elastic behavior both in tensile and compressive. As the baking time increases, the bricks become more resistant, but more fragile and brittle.

- Based on the above materials, bricks and mortar, Table 1 gives: *Masonry resistance  $f_k = 1.1$  N/mm<sup>2</sup>*

- **Tab.1  $f_k$  - Masonry compressive strength [5]**

Nr	Brick class	Mortar class (N/mm <sup>2</sup> )						
		10	7.5	5.0	2.5	1.5	0.4	0.0
1	15	2.2	2	1.8	1.5	1.35	1.2	0.8
2	10	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.1	0.9	0.6
3	7.5	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.5

- The elasticity modulus E of masonry, for service conditions, in EC6 is recommended **E = 1000  $f_k$  N/mm<sup>2</sup>**.

- The author Thomas Zimmermann, (Zimmermann, et al., 2012) [5], recommends the following equation:

$E = 300 f_k$  [N/mm<sup>2</sup>] =  $300 * 1.1 = 330$  N/mm<sup>2</sup> (in nonlinear analysis), as closest to the experimental values results:

### Loads

- After calculation, the slab dead load is = 2 kN/m<sup>2</sup>. Based on the EC, we accepted these loads:

- Live = 2 kN/m<sup>2</sup>;

- Additional dead load = 2 kN/m<sup>2</sup>

- The behavior of the mortar depends a lot on the binder used and its quantity.[3]

- In the case that we analyze, based on the data of the time and the personal experience in the implementation we have:

- Bricks - clay material, Class = 7.5 N / mm<sup>2</sup>

- Cement mortar - Class = 2.5 N / mm<sup>2</sup>

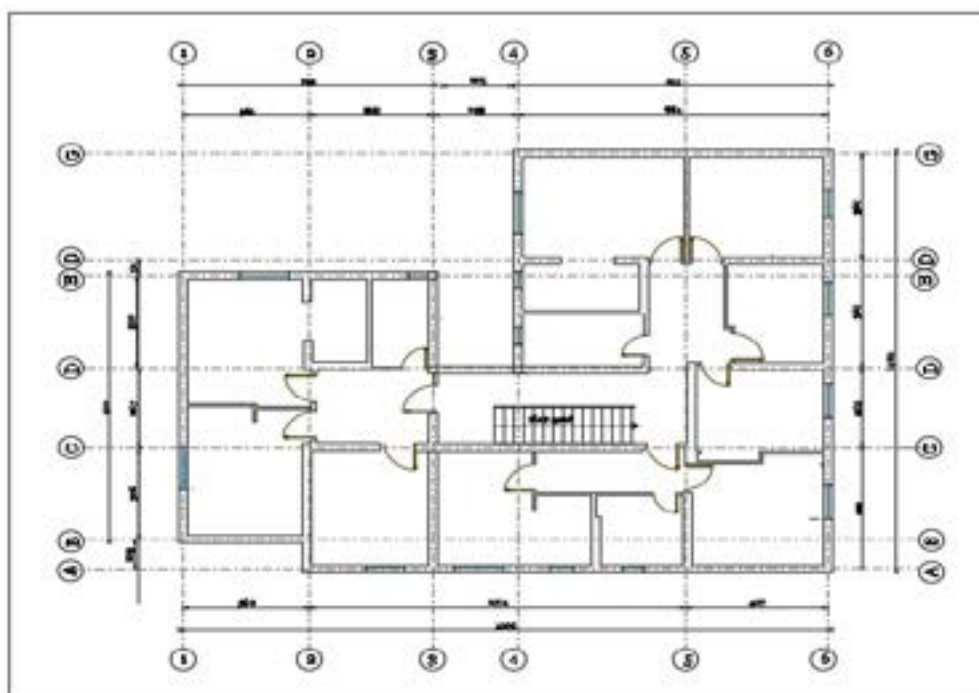


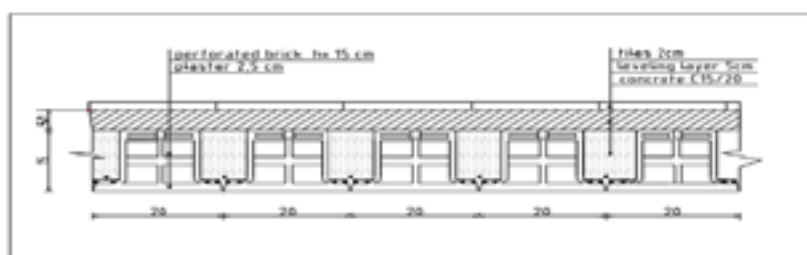
Fig. 1- Typical floor plan

- The building ground and first floor walls are **38 cm** thick.
- The second, up to the fourth floor walls, are **25 cm** thick.
- On top of the masonry, of each floor, there are concrete girdle (**38x15**) and (**25x15**)cm, depending on the wall thickness



Fig. 2- Wall sections :      a – 38 cm      b – 25 cm

**The slabs** are type Zoellner, the cross section is shown in **Fig.5**. They consist of 15cm high perforated bricks, with extension on the bottom, which creates a space (8x12)cm, filled with reinforced concrete, every 20 cm. The concrete compressive strength is accepted relatively low, **C15/20**, (due to out of standards compounds quality, at that time)



**Fig. 3-** Slab cross section

Since we want to analyze the most unfavorable case, we choose from the type of **elastic response spectra, the type "1"** of the earthquake, based on the E

### Seismic data

C recommendation [6], with magnitude **MS > 5.5**. So, we used spectrum type **1**, the masonry ductility factor  **$q = q_0 k_w \geq 1.5$** , and **3%** extinction.[6]

Also, based on the Department of Seismology, Institute of Geosciences data, for the case of Tirana land, is accepted :

- land type - **category C**
- acceleration **ag - 0.25g**
- **A- LINEAR ANALYSIS**

Poor tensile strength of masonry requires a **good knowledge** of its characteristics and the correct use of linear elastic models, to predict the reaction and damage of a building, subject to seismic actions. From this point of view, the use of a **finite element model** for the study of the stressed state under the action of static loads and the modal behavior of the building, in the **linear field**, is of interest. The use of **the ETABs program** serves this intention.

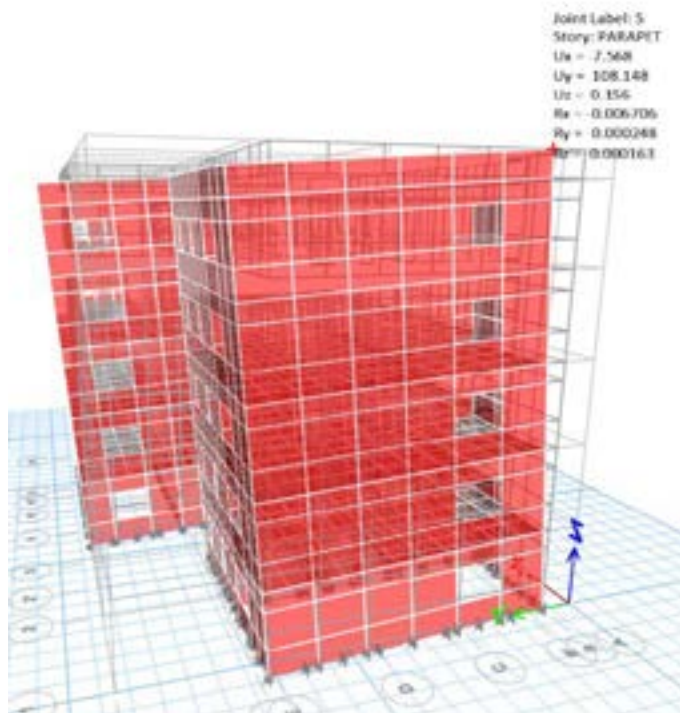
Linear analysis is not the purpose of this presentation

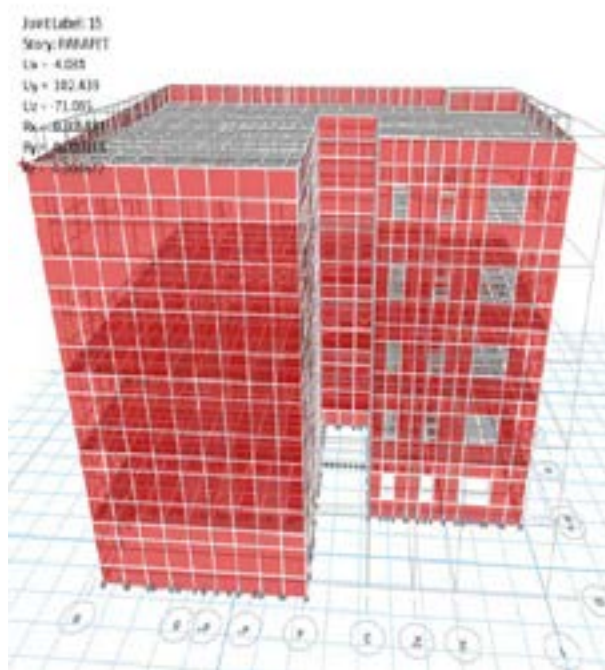
So, we will present below shortly the main results of this program

### Displacement

(with gray lines the deformed shape of the building is presented)

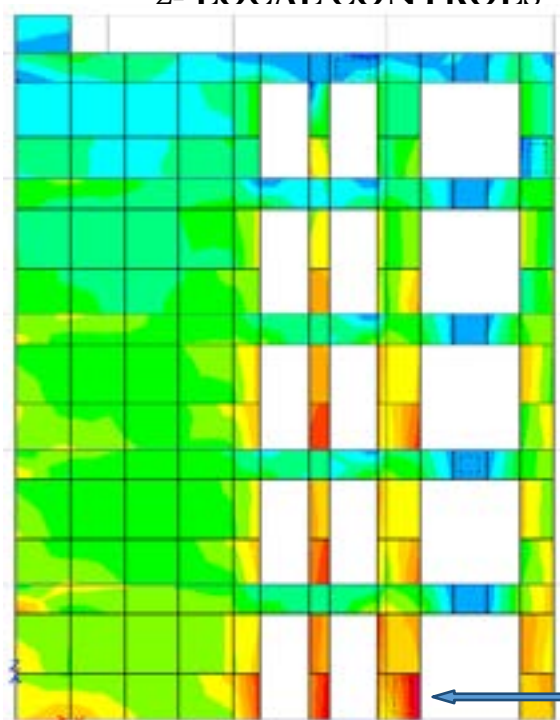
EQL= Equivalent lateral earthquake





**Fig. 4** - The displacements on the joint 5, and 15  
**Maximum** displacement of the building  $U_y = 10.81\text{cm} > 7.1\text{ cm}$  for the combination:  
**ELY:**  $D+0.3L+0.3EQLX+EQLY$

## 2- LOCAL CONTROLS



**Fig. 5-** Wall in the axis 2-2

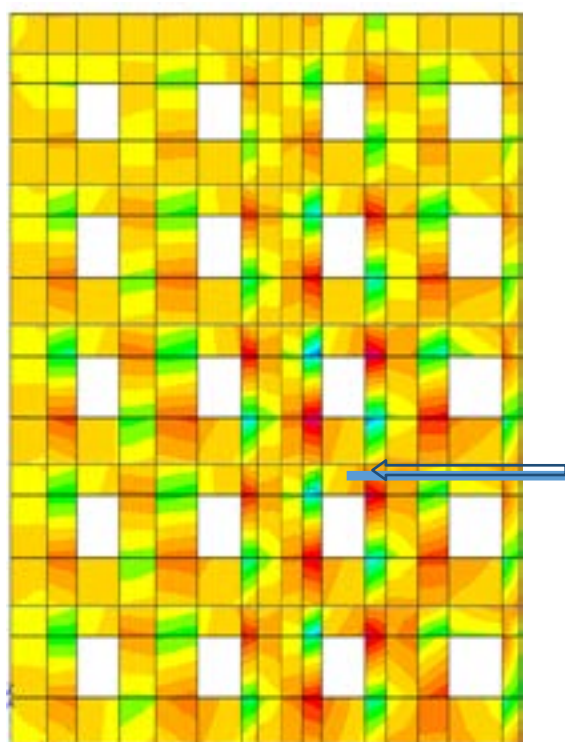


**Fig. 6-** Element W828,  
 detached from axis 2-2

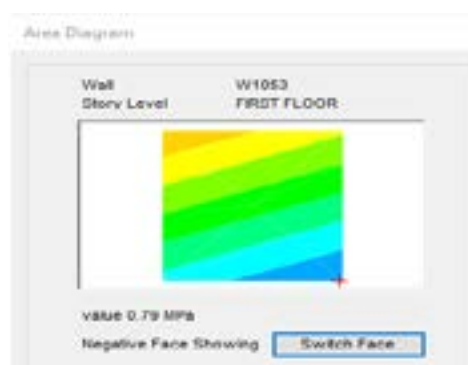
Arrow indicate the most stressed

The maximum value on this axis is the pressure **S2-2**, the value :

$$\mathbf{-1.46\ MPa > -1.1\ MPa}$$



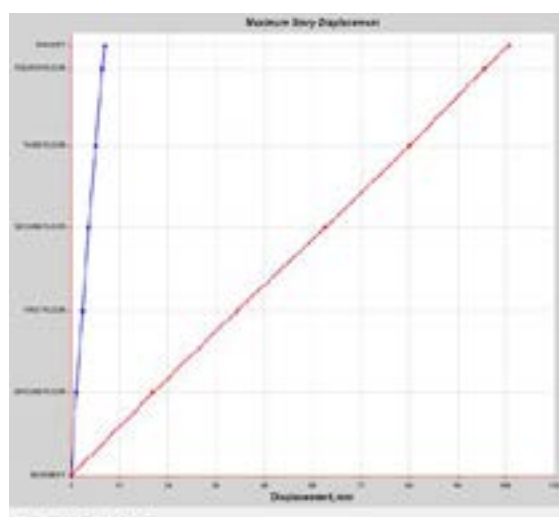
**Fig. 7-** Wall in the axis **6-6**



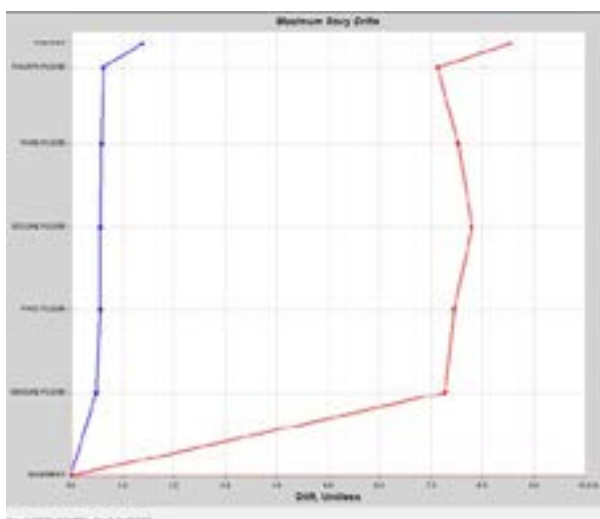
**Fig. 8-** W1053 element where  
 $s_{1-1} = 0.79\ \text{MPa}$

Arrow indicate the most stressed  
element W1053

The maximum stress value is in this axis **S1-1**, in tension, the value 0.79 MPa, while **[s]** in tension shouldn't be more than  $= 0.2\ \text{Mpa}$  **Fig. 9**



### Displacements according X and Y axis ( $Y=108 \text{ mm}$ ) (*EQLY combination*)



**Fig. 10- Drifts** according X and Y (*EQLY combination*)

*EQL*- Equivalent lateral earthquake load (lateral equivalent static load)

### NONLINEAR ANALYSIS.- (EQUIVALENT FRAME METHOD)

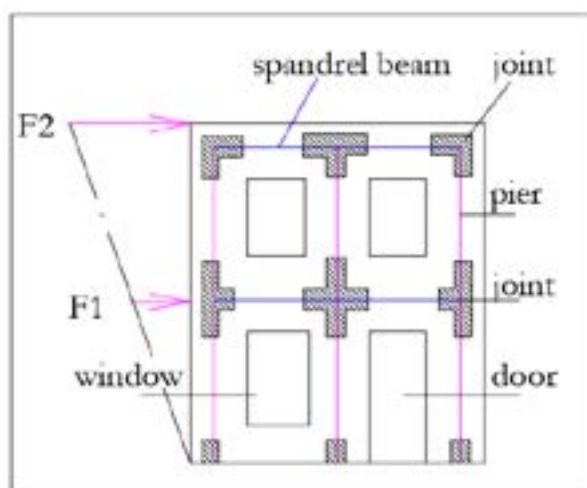
A significant influence on the way the masonry should be analyzed, especially in the **nonlinear field**, had the first edition of the author Tomazovich (Tomaževic, 1978, "POR Method").

The **POR** method is an equivalent static, simplified nonlinear assessment method, which converts the masonry building into equivalent frames. This method assumes that the failure occurs only in its piers, without any damage on the spandrels.

The method **conceives** a masonry buildings composed from "macro elements". All the structure is schematized from equivalent frames consisting of:

-[piers] - "the walls" part of the masonry located between the two windows, which work from floor to floor, in parallel.

[spandrel] - continuous bandage, located between the windows of each floor



**Fig. 11- The idealisation** of a wall  
façade in equivalent frames



Based on this method, several numerical programs have been developed, which analyze the model divided into macro-elements, pier and spandrel, according its recommendations and limitations. The adoption of performance-based earthquake engineering concepts has lead to the application of a number of non-linear static procedures in the seismic assessment of buildings

- the coefficient method (ASCE, 2000),
- the capacity spectrum method (ATC, 1996; Freeman, 1998),
- the N2 method (Fajfar, 1988)

which generally require the comparison of the seismic demand with the building capacity, in terms of displacements. This comparison can be achieved by substituting the actual building response with an equivalent single-degree-of-freedom (SDOF) oscillator (Shibata, 1976).

The definition of the **displacement capacity** can be achieved by means of a non-linear static analysis (pushover analysis), applying to the structure lateral loads, distributed, linearly increasing, describing the seismic forces. [14]

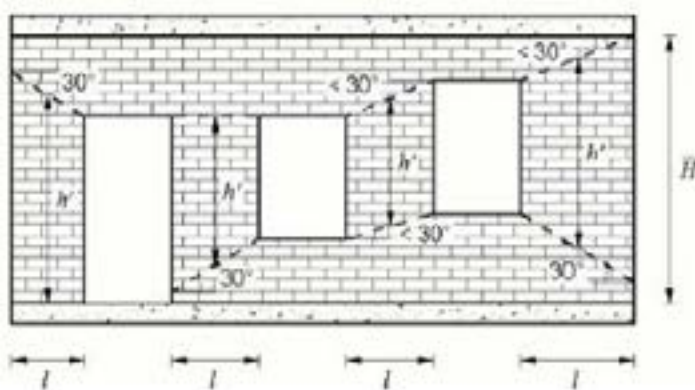
**As far as MASONRY STRUCTURES** are concerned, this can be achieved in several ways:

- A first approach is represented by the finite elements method: the masonry constitutive elements (units, mortar) are discretized into a certain number of finite elements; suitable constitutive non-linear laws are adopted and the model can thus be a very powerful analysis tool. At the same time its drawbacks are represented by the high computational effort, which can make its adoption unsustainable for professional practice, mainly, the potential mesh-dependency and the somehow difficult calibration of the input parameters.

- A second approach is based on the adoption of “equivalent frames”, a model very common to structural engineers. The structure is described by an assemblage of vertical and horizontal elements, (piers and spandrels) :

- Piers and spandrels are connected by means of **rigid offsets** and each element is modelled by proper constitutive laws, in order to take into account mechanical non-linearity. This approach introduces strong simplifications, and hence its accuracy clearly depends on the consistency between the adopted hypotheses and the actual structural problem. [14]

The schematization (the equivalent framework) is acceptable when the geometry of the walls and the distribution of the openings are characterized by a certain order, in particular, regarding the order of the openings.



$l$  – is the length of the panel  
 $H$  – is the net height of the story  
 $h$  – is a conventional height algorithm that is determined based on the case studies reported in the figure

**Fig. 12-** The height of the deformed part

The efficient height of the deformed part of the whole wall  $H_{eff}$  can be calculated on the basis of the following formula, proposed by **Dolce (1989)**:

$$H_{eff} = h' + l * \frac{(H - h')}{3h'} < H$$

### **CAPACITY CURVE**

In earthquake engineering the capacity of a building, to resist seismic action, is presented by a capacity curve, which is defined as the base shear acting on the building, as a function of the horizontal displacement at the top of the building, also often referred as a **pushover curve**. The shear capacity of the building refers to the maximum base shear the building can sustain, and the displacement capacity refers to the ultimate displacement at the top of the building.

In a more general way, it is possible to express the capacity of any structure (building) or structural element (wall, wall element) to resist seismic action by the shear force acting on it, as a function of the horizontal displacement at the top (capacity curve). Likewise, the shear capacity of any structure or structural element refers to the maximum shear force it can sustain, and the displacement capacity refers to its ultimate horizontal displacement. [10]

### **AmQuake = ATENA Masonry earthquake**

#### **Basic concepts regarding the use of the nonlinear analysis of building 77/5**

The program assists engineers to design **safe masonry buildings** in seismic regions of Europe. This development was initiated by the introduction of **Eurocodes 6 and 8** in Europe, starting in March 2010, and they apply strict rules to masonry buildings in seismic regions.

**AmQuake** is a software program for seismic assessment of masonry buildings which uses the **pushover analysis** and the **equivalent framework** method, based on macro-element discretization and its basic ideas of the “storey-mechanism” approach, to control the seismic safety of masonry buildings, maintaining concepts and idealizations that are familiar to the engineer.

In the **AM quake** program these slabs are considered as rigid horizontal structures that transmit lateral load (earthquake) to the retaining walls

The results of **AmQuake** are extended to a broader range of validity and can be compared with those of more sophisticated analysis

In addition the program supports also a **static analysis** of masonry building according to the Eurocode6.

**The load combination** for the pushover analysis is:

$$\gamma G_d G + \psi EL QL + \psi Es Qs$$

$$\text{where: } \psi EL = \phi L * \psi_{2,L} \quad \psi ES = \phi S * \psi_{2,S}$$

and the load combination for the static analysis is:



$$\gamma G * G + \gamma QL * QL + \gamma QS * \psi_{0,s} * QS$$

Multiplier  $\gamma_{G,p}$  - for permanent load G for pushover analysis.

- In most national standards this multiplier should be equal to 1.0.

Multiplier  $\gamma_{Gs}$  - for permanent load G for static analysis.

Multiplier  $\phi_L$  - for live load QL for pushover analysis.

Multiplier  $\psi_{2L}$  - for live load QL for pushover analysis.

Multiplier  $\gamma_{QL}$  - for live load QL for static analysis.

Multiplier  $\phi_S$  - for snow load QS for pushover analysis.

Multiplier  $\psi_{2s}$  - for snow load QS for pushover analysis.

Multiplier  $\gamma_{QS}$  - for snow load QS for static analysis.

Multiplier  $\psi_{Q,s}$  - for snow load QS for pushover analysis.

### Example of schematizing an Elementary Structure to input it in the AM quake program

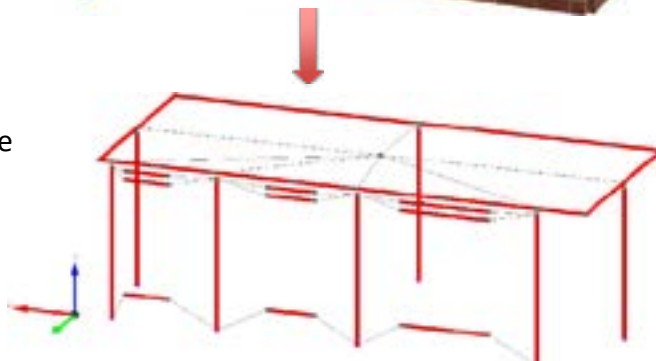
An important step in preparing the input data for analysis with **AmQuake** is the idealization of the structure which is based on the theory of **Equivalent Frames**

The process of connecting individual walls and windows is demonstrated using the sideways figure. Let us assume modelling and mutual connection of Wall1, Wall2 and Window. They are modeled by beam elements. Details of Wall 1,2 and Window 1 is shown in the next picture.

The red lines in it represent beam elements and gray lines indicate links between them. Bearing walls are modelled by vertical columns. Each wall with window is typically model by two beams, one for parapet and one for lintel part. Horizontal beams in the model are also used for RC rings at ceilings.



**Fig. 13- 3D model of a sample structure**



**Fig.14- Wire model of a structure**

THE SCHEMATIZATION OF BUILDING 77/5 IN EQUIVALENT FRAMES (**PIER AND SPANDREL**) IN **AM** QUAKE PROGRAM



Fig.14- *3D view of building 77/5*

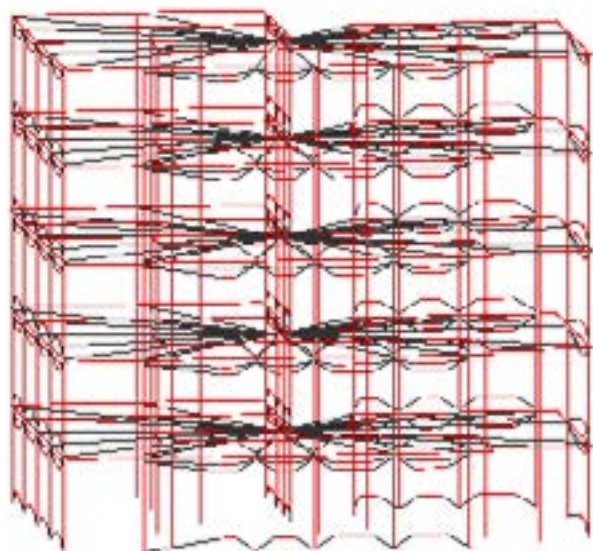


Fig.15- Front view schematization

**Abbreviated presentation** of the results of AM- quake

The combination (5) X -, exc, pos, uni -which the structure passes successfully

Step	Horizontal displ. [mm]	Horizontal react. [kN]	Vertical displ. [mm]	Vertical react. [kN]	Rotation	Max error [%]
1	-8.035	0.001	0.000	10221.572	0.000	0.424
2	-8.746	267.534	0.000	10221.565	0.000	1.573
3	-1.111	391.346	0.000	10221.571	0.000	0.492
4	-1.409	469.798	0.000	10221.573	0.000	0.230
5	-2.121	733.093	0.000	10221.574	0.000	0.485
6	-3.621	1244.900	0.000	10221.580	0.000	0.612
7	-4.487	1806.451	0.000	10221.465	0.000	0.703
8	-10.117	1856.630	0.000	10221.276	0.000	0.512
9	-13.787	1854.240	0.000	10221.193	0.000	0.526
10	-17.437	1817.782	0.000	10221.032	0.000	0.562

(S) X-, exc. pos, uni	
DLS target [mm]:	4.035
DLS capacity [mm]:	17.437
Damage limit state:	Pass
ULS target x 1.50 [mm]:	14.552
ULS capacity [mm]:	17.437
Ultimate limit state:	Pass

Fig.17- The **results** of AM-quake

- **DLS target** Top floor displacement, at which the inter-storey drifts for each floor are checked if they don't violate the damage limitation requirement. The inter-storey drift for each floor should be smaller than the Damage limit value.
- **DLS capacity** Top floor displacement when the inter-storey drift for a certain floor violates the damage limitation requirement. The inter-storey drift for each floor should be smaller than the Damage limit value.
- **ULS target** Top floor displacement that can be expected for the given structure and seismic demand. The structure needs to be able to sustain such top floor displacements without collapse.

### The Pushover analysis for combination (1) X +, exc, pos, uni

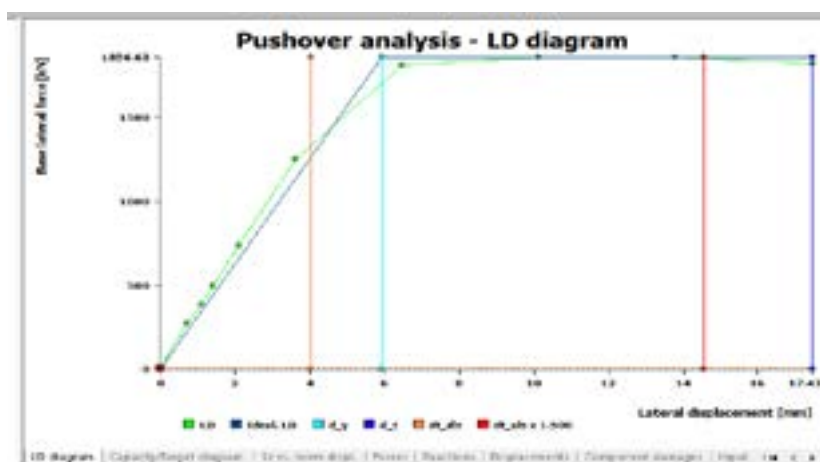


Fig.18 - Pushover diagram 1 in the format of AM-quake for combination (1)

Ld - diagram- lateral displacement diagram

dy – yield displacement

dt – target displacement

dt\_dls – target displacement for DLS

dt\_uls – target displacement for ULS

As can be seen, the push over diagram for this combination, ie the ideal capacity curve is very close to the real capacity curve in the elastic phase and in the plastic one

I.e., for the same displacement at the top, the building resists the same shear force as it on the ideal capacity curve.

In this combination the building successfully passes in the next step.

### ☐ The Pushover analysis for combination (9) Y +, exc, pos, uni

Step	Horizontal displ. [mm]	Horizontal react. [kN]	Vertical displ. [mm]	Vertical react. [kN]	Rotation	Max error [%]
8	13.857	-135.651	0.000	10221.575	0.008	8.207
9	14.085	-133.275	0.000	10221.572	0.008	8.232
10	14.405	-134.892	0.000	10221.575	0.008	8.140
11	14.942	-136.557	0.000	10221.577	0.008	8.195
12	15.227	-138.399	0.000	10221.540	0.008	7.414
13	15.430	-140.195	0.000	10221.573	0.008	8.274
14	15.527	-147.038	0.000	10221.572	0.008	8.122
15	15.595	-138.061	0.000	10221.572	0.008	8.327
16	16.263	-171.080	0.000	10221.573	0.008	6.421
17	16.547	-121.227	0.000	10221.595	0.008	1.033
18	16.775	-109.466	0.000	10221.557	0.008	7.182
19	16.908	-146.000	0.000	10221.574	0.008	8.120
20	17.288	-116.390	0.000	10221.576	0.008	8.161
21	17.488	-147.180	0.000	10221.575	0.008	8.172
22	17.579	-119.244	0.000	10221.578	0.008	8.594
23	17.606	-158.052	0.000	10221.575	0.008	8.120
24	17.924	-149.827	0.000	10221.572	0.008	8.263
25	18.042	-153.907	0.000	10221.571	0.008	8.336

[9] Y+, exc. pos, uni	
DLS target [mm]:	25.634
DLS capacity [mm]:	68.219
Damage limit state:	Pass
ULS target x 1.50 [mm]:	76.901
ULS capacity [mm]:	63.656
Ultimate limit state:	Fail

Fig.19 - The results of AM-quake for combination (9)

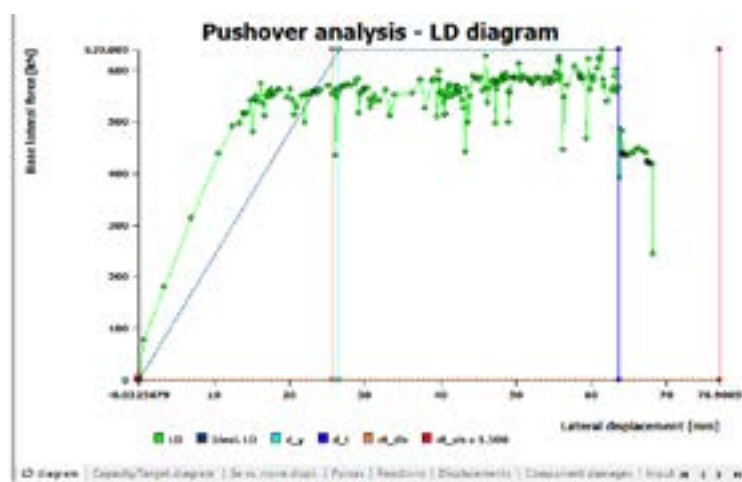


Fig.20 - Pushover diagram for combination (9)

In this combination, the push over diagram in the linear phase avoids ideal linearity, while in plastic phase approximates fluctuating the constant shape of the ideal pushover curve. Finally, the building fail to fulfil ULS capacity.

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# Optimizimi i numrit të operacioneve gjatë operimit me matrica të mëdha dhe të rralla (matricat e redukuara)

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**Dr.c. Rifat OSMANAJ**

Lecturer, AAB University, Prishtina

Email: rifat.osmanaj@hotmail.com

**Prof. Asoc. Dr. Hysen BINJAKU**

Lecturer, European University of Tirana, Tirana

Email: hysen.binjaku@uet.edu.al

## Abstract

Qëllimi është që nga matricat e mëdha dhe të rralla të ruhen vetëm elementet me vlerë jozero. Këto të dhëna ruhen në matrica të redukuara. Operimet kryhen vetëm me këto elemente me vlerë jozero në matricat e redukuara. Gjatë operimit me matrica të redukuara (mbledhja, zbritja, shumëzimi, gjetja e elementit të caktuar etj.) shihet efekti i minimizimit të numrit të operacioneve.

Rezultatet janë paraqitur në formë tabelare dhe grafike. Të gjitha operimet në fusha të mëdha dhe të rralla si dhe në matrica të redukuara realizohen përmes softuerit të realizuar në gjuhën programuese C++.

**Fjalët çelës:** memoria, operacione, matricë, matricë e rrallë, program, matricë e redukuar;

## Hyrje

Qëllimi është që nga matricat e mëdha dhe të rralla të ruhen vetëm elementet me vlerë jozero. Këto të dhëna ruhen në matrica të redukuara. Gjatë operimit me matrica të redukuara (mbledhja, zbritja, shumëzimi, gjetja e anëtarit të caktuar etj.) shihet efekti i minimizimit të numrit të operacioneve.

Në këtë punim do të bëhet krahasimi i numrit të operacioneve kur fushat me të dhëna janë të organizuara si matrica të plota, në njëren anë dhe si matrica të redukuara në anën tjetër. Rezultatet janë paraqitur në formë tabelare dhe grafike. Të gjitha operimet më fusha të mëdha dhe të rralla si dhe më matrica të redukuara realizohen përmes softuerit të realizuar në gjuhën programuese C++.

## 1 Matricat e mëdha dhe të rralla ( *matricat e plota* )

Matricat paraqesin llojin e fushave (dy dimensionale) që më së shumti përdoren në jetën e përditshme. Zakonisht zbatim të madh kanë në zgjidhjen e problemeve të ndryshme jetësore dhe shkencore, si në:

- Sistemet e ekuacioneve lineare
- Teoria e grafeve
- Ekuilibrimi i trupave të ngurt (fizikë)
- Teoria e lojrave
- Modelet ekonomike
- Menagjimi i pyjeve
- Grafika kompjuterike
- Gjenetika
- Kriptografia
- Rrjetat elektrike
- Qarqet elektrike
- Sistemet elektroenergjetike
- Rrjetat e kompjuterëve etj

Kemi raste kur dimensionet e fushës janë shumë të mëdha dhe shumica e anëtarëve janë zero. Këto fusha quhen fusha të mëdha dhe të rralla<sup>1</sup>[11]. Për shkak të dimensioneve të mëdha, për ta lehtësuar operimin me to, zakonisht ruhen si fajll (file) në disk.

### 1.1 Krijimi i fushës së madhe dhe të rrallë

Kur bëhet fjalë për fusha të mëdha, atëherë ato krijohen përmes programit. Në vijim ipet pjesa e programit përmes të cilit krijohet fusha e madhe dhe e rrallë me dimensione  $300 \times 300$ , me emrin *matricaA*, ku çdo i 50-ti anëtar jozero krijohet përmes funksionit për krijimin e numrave të rastit *rand()*.

---

<sup>1</sup> John R. Gilbert, Cleve Moler and Robert Schreiber  
Sparse matrices in MATLAB: Desing and Implementation

Kjo fushë (matricë) ruhet në disk.

Në këtë rast caktohet edhe numri i anëtarëve jozero të matricës A. Ky numër nevojitet për punë të mëvonshme (gjatë mbledhjes, zbritjes dhe shumëzimit të tyre).

```
// Prog. 1.

.. .. .. .. ..

ofstream fajlliA;
fajlliA.open ("matricaA.txt");
nr=0;anjz=0;
koha=clock();
for (i=0;i<m;i++)
{
    for (j=0;j<n;j++)
    {
        if (nr==49)
        {
            A[i][j]=rand()%100;
            nr=0;
        }
        else
        {
            A[i][j]=0;
            if (A[i][j]!=0)
                anjz=anjz+1;
            fajlliA << A[i][j];
            fajlliA << " ";
            nr=nr+1;
        }
        fajlliA << "\\n";
    }
    koha=clock();
    koha=koha/1000;
    fajlliA.close();

.. .. .. .. ..
```

Në program anëtarët jozero të matrices marrin vlera sipas funksionit

*rand()%100*

ndërsa pastaj përmes pjesës së programit :

```
fajlliA << A[i][j];
fajlliA << " ";
```

regjistrohen në matricen (fajllin) A e cila në disk ruhet me emrin *matricaA*.

Komanda `ofstream fajlliA;` mundëson regjistrimin e të dhënave në fajll, ndërsa `ifstream fajlliA;` mundëson leximin e të dhënave nga fajlli.

Komanda `fajlliA.open ("matricaA.txt");` bën hapjen e fajllit me emrin *matricaA* për regjistrim, ndërsa komanda `fajlliA.close();` bën mbylljen e fajllit të hapur më lartë.



Përmbajtja e matricës  $A$  do të jetë :

[illegible]

0	0	1	0	7	0	14	0	0	0
9	0	4	0	18	0	18	0	2	0
4	0	5	0	5	0	1	0	7	0
1	0	11	0	15	0	2	0	7	0
16	0	11	0	4	0	2	0	13	0
12	0	2	0	1	0	16	0	18	0
15	0	7	0	6	0	11	0	18	0
9	0	12	0	7	0	19	0	15	0
14	0	3	0	11	0	2	0	13	0
13	0	4	0	1	0	11	0	13	0

*matrica*  $A$

0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0

matrica  $B$

x1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	69	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	78	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Matrica e plotë diagonale  $A$*

[illegible]

*Matrica e plotë diagonale B*

## 2 Matricat e redukuara

Tek matrica A edhe anëtarëve zero u rezervohet hapësirë në memorie, sikurse anëtarëve jozero, kështu që zihet hapësirë e madhe e panevojshme. Gjithashtu kryhen operime të njëjta edhe më anëtarët zero të matricës, çka humbet shumë kohë.

Më qëllim të zvogëlimit të hapësirë së memories, kohës për operime më anëtarët e matricës (matricave) dhe numrit të operacioneve, është zhvilluar ideja e redukimit të matricës së plotë dhe krijimi i matricës së ashtuquajtur *e redukuar* e cila përmban vetëm anëtarët jozero të matricës<sup>2</sup> [11].

<sup>2</sup> John R. Gilbert, Cleve Moler and Robert Schreiber  
Sparse matrices in MATLAB: Desing and Implementation

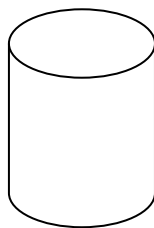
Nëse dimensionet e fushës (matricës ose shumëdimensionale) nuk janë të mëdha dhe nuk kanë numër të madh të anëtarëve që kanë vlerën zero, atëherë këto fusha nuk **redukojnë**.

## 2.1 Krijimi i matricës së redukuar

Në vazhdim po japim idenë e formimit të matricës së redukuar nga matrica e plotë ose nga fusha shumëdimensionale. Për lehtësim gjatë sqarimit nuk do të marrim matricë të madhe.

Po supozojmë së është dhënë matrica e rrallë  $A[5][5]$

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & 7 & 0 \\ 6 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 3 \\ 0 & 4 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 2 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$



matrica e plotë



matrica e redukuar

Anëtarët jozero të matricës  $A$  do të kenë indeksat (*rreshti dhe kolona*) dhe vlerat si më poshtë :

Indeksat	vlerat
(2,1)	6
(4,1)	2
(3,2)	4
(4,3)	1
(1,4)	7
(5,4)	2
(2,5)	3

Siç shihet nga vlerat e anëtarëve jozero, lëvizja nëpër matricë bëhet nëpër **kolona**, do të thotë së pari kolona e parë, e dytë e më radhë. Nëse indeksat e rreshtave i vendosim në një vektor (2,4,3,4,1,5,2), pastaj indeksat e kolonave në një vektor (1,1,2,3,4,4,5), dhe së fundi vlerat e anëtarëve jozero në një vektor (6,2,4,1,7,2,3), atëherë nga këta vektorë mund të krijojmë **matricën e redukuar  $Ar$**  e cila përmban tre rreshta – vektorë (vektorin e rreshtave, kolonave dhe vlerave)<sup>3</sup> [11], ndërsa numri i kolonave do të jetë aq sa është numri i anëtarëve jozero të matricës së plotë  $A$ , e që në rastin tonë është 7.

Nga krejt kjo rrjedh se matrica e redukuar  $Ar$  do të ketë 3 rreshta dhe 7 kolona, d.m.th.  $Ar[3][7]$ .

Në përgjithësi prej këtij shembulli shihet se nëse fusha është dy dimensionale, atëherë matrica e redukuar do të ketë tre rreshta, nëse është tredimensionale, do të ketë katër rreshta, e kështu me radhë, ndërsa numri i kolonave do të jetë aq sa është numri i anëtarëve

<sup>3</sup> John R. Gilbert, Cleve Moler and Robert Schreiber  
Sparse matrices in MATLAB: Design and Implementation

jozero të matricës së plotë  $A$ , d.m.th. për matrica dimensionet e matricës së redukuar do të jenë  $Ar[3][njz]$ .

Matrica e redukuar  $Ar$  do të duket si më poshtë:

$$Ar = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 5 & 2 \\ 1 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 4 & 5 \\ 6 & 2 & 4 & 1 & 7 & 2 & 3 \end{bmatrix} \begin{array}{l} \text{- indeksat e rreshtave } i \\ \text{- indeksat e kolonave } j \\ \text{- vlerat e anëtarëve jozero} \end{array}$$

## 2.2 Mbledhja e dy matricave të redukuara

Me matrica, qoftë të plota apo të redukuara, mund të kryejmë operacione të ndryshme. Në vijim ipet pjesa e programit përmes të cilit mblidhen matricat e redukuara  $Ar$  dhe  $Br$ <sup>4</sup> [3]. Algoritmi i mbledhjes së matricave të redukuara është i njëjtë si tek matricat *e zakonshme*, ashtu edhe tek matricat *diagonale*.

Rezultati ruhet në disk me emrin *matricaCredukuar*.

Problemi këtu është se para se të mblidhen matricat e redukuara  $Ar$  dhe  $Br$ , duhet të caktohet numri i kolonave të matricës së rezultatit  $Cr$ , e që është  $cnjz$ . Kur mblidhen dy matrica të redukuara, atëherë mblidhen anëtarët e matrices  $Ar$  dhe  $Br$ , nëse i kanë indeksat e njëjtë, përndryshe anëtarët e tjerë të dy matricave përcillen në matricen  $Cr$ . Për ta caktuar numrin e kolonave të matrices  $Cr$ , përveç  $anjz$  dhe  $bnjz$  na nevojitet edhe numri i anëtarëve me indeksa të njëjtë  $nanj$ . Vlerat  $anjz$  dhe  $bnjz$  caktohen gjatë krijimit të matricave  $A$  dhe  $B$ , ndërsa  $nanj$  caktohet përmes *prog.* nga matricat e redukuara  $Ar$  dhe  $Br$ .

```
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
0 1 0 0 0 0 1 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 8 8 8 8 8 8
4 1 16 12 15 9 14 11 1 4 5 11 11 2 7 12 3 4 7 18 5 15 4 1 6 7 11 1 14 18 1 2 2 16 11 19 2 11 2 7 7 13 18 18 15 13 13
```

Matrica e redukuar  $Ar$

```
1 2 3 4 5 6 8 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
7 2 7 3 9 6 8 8 4 7 9 1 8 5 2 6 2
```

Matrica e redukuar  $Br$

### Algoritmi formal

Nëse numri i kolonave të matricës  $Ar$  është më i madh se  $Br$

{

    Për të gjithë rreshtat e matricës  $Ar$

    {

        Për të gjithë rreshtat e matricës  $Br$

        {

<sup>4</sup> Agni Dika Algoritmet, njohuri themelore, me programe në C++

```

        Nëse numri i indeksave të Ar dhe Br i njëjtë
        {
            mblidhen vlerat e anëtarëve me indeksa të njëjtë;
            vazhdo1;
        }
        Nëse vlera e rreshtave të Ar është më e vogël se bnjz
        {
            Nëse vlera e anëtarit Ar më e madhe se Br
            {
                radhitet së pari vlera e anëtarit Br
                pastaj vlera e anëtarit Ar
            }
            Përndryshe
            {
                radhitet së pari vlera e anëtarit Ar
                pastaj vlera e anëtarit Br
            }
            Përndryshe
            {
                Përcjellet vlera e anëtarit Ar
            }
            Vazhdo1;;
        }
    }
}
Përndryshe

{
së pari fillohet me matricen Ar, e pastaj me Br

.....
.....
}

```

Nëse numri i kolonave të matricës Ar është më i madh se numri i kolonave të matricës Br, realizohet kjo pjesë e programit:

```

// Prog.

. . . . .

if (anjz>bnjz)
{
    for (i=0;i<anjz;i++)
    {
        for (j=0;j<bnjz;j++)
        {

```

Nëse numri i indeksave të Ar dhe Br është i njëjtë, atëherë mblidhen vlerat e anëtarëve me indeksa të njëjtë. Kjo realizohet me këtë pjesë të programit:

```

if ((Ar[0][i]==Br[0][j]) && (Ar[1][i]==Br[1][j]))
{
    Cr[0][z]=Ar[0][i];
    Cr[1][z]=Ar[1][i];
    Cr[2][z]=Ar[2][i]+Br[2][j];
    nm=nm+1;
    z=z+1;
    goto vazhdo1;
}

```

Në qoftë se vlera e rreshtave të Ar është më e vogël se gjatësia e matricës Br, do të thotë më e vogël se *bnjz*, atëherë anëtarët Ar dhe Br radhiten sipas vlerës dhe realizohet pjesa e programit në vijim:

```

if ( i < bnjz )
{
    if ( Ar[1][i] > Br[1][i] )
    {
        Cr[0][z]=Br[0][i];
        Cr[1][z]=Br[1][i];
        Cr[2][z]=Br[2][i];
        z=z+1;
        Cr[0][z]=Ar[0][i];
        Cr[1][z]=Ar[1][i];
        Cr[2][z]=Ar[2][i];
        z=z+1;
    }
    else
    {
        Cr[0][z]=Ar[0][i];
        Cr[1][z]=Ar[1][i];
        Cr[2][z]=Ar[2][i];
        z=z+1;
        Cr[0][z]=Br[0][i];
        Cr[1][z]=Br[1][i];
        Cr[2][z]=Br[2][i];
        z=z+1;
    }
}
else

```

Përndryshe anëtarët e Ar përcillen te matrica Cr. Këte e realizon kjo pjesë e programit:

```

{
    Cr[0][z]=Ar[0][i];
    Cr[1][z]=Ar[1][i];
    Cr[2][z]=Ar[2][i];
    z=z+1;
}
vazhdo1;;
}
}
else

```

përndryshe, nëse numri i kolonave të matricës Br është më i madh se numri i kolonave të matricës Ar, realizohet pjesa tjetër në vijim:

```

{
    for (i=0;i<bnjz;i++)
    {
        for (j=0;j<anjz;j++)
        {

```

Nëse numri i indeksave të Ar dhe Br është i njëjtë, atëherë mblidhen vlerat e anëtarëve me indeksa të njëjtë. Kjo realizohet përmes kësaj pjese të programit:

```

        if ((Ar[0][i]==Br[0][j])&&(Ar[1][i]==Br[1][j]))
        {
            Cr[0][z]=Br[0][i];
            Cr[1][z]=Br[1][i];
            Cr[2][z]=Br[2][i]+Ar[2][j];
            nm=nm+1;
            z=z+1;
            goto vazhdo2;
        }

```

Në qoftë se vlera e rreshtave të Br është më e vogël se gjatësia e matricës Ar, do të thotë më e vogël se *anjz*, atëherë anëtarët Ar dhe Br radhiten sipas vlerës dhe realizohet pjesa e programit në vijim:

```

        if ( i < anjz )
        {
            if ( Br[1][i] > Ar[1][i] )
            {
                Cr[0][z]=Ar[0][i];
                Cr[1][z]=Ar[1][i];
                Cr[2][z]=Ar[2][i];
                z=z+1;
                Cr[0][z]=Br[0][i];
                Cr[1][z]=Br[1][i];
                Cr[2][z]=Br[2][i];
                z=z+1;
            }
            else
            {
                Cr[0][z]=Br[0][i];
                Cr[1][z]=Br[1][i];
                Cr[2][z]=Br[2][i];
                z=z+1;
                Cr[0][z]=Ar[0][i];
                Cr[1][z]=Ar[1][i];
                Cr[2][z]=Ar[2][i];
                z=z+1;
            }
        }
        else

```

Përndryshe anëtarët e Br përcillen te matrica Cr. Këte e realizon kjo pjesë e programit:

```

        {
            Cr[0][z]=Br[0][i];
            Cr[1][z]=Br[1][i];
            Cr[2][z]=Br[2][i];
            z=z+1;
        }
        vazhdo2;;

```

```

    }
  }
}

```

Pas kësaj anëtarët e matricës Cr regjistrohen në fajll. Këte e realizon kjo pjesë e programit:

```

for (i=0;i<k;i++)
{
    for (j=0;j<cnjz;j++)
    {
        matricaCr << setw(2) << Cr[i][j] << " ";
    }
    matricaCr<<"\n";
}
.. .. .

```

Matrica e redukuar Cr do të duket si më poshtë :

```

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 8 9 1 0 2 1 3 2 4 3 5 4 6 5 7 6 8 7 9 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 6 6 6 6 6 6
16 6 8 19 21 21 9 8 22 13 4 1 7 4 9 5 1 11 8 11 5 2 2 7 6 12 2 3 4 7 18 5 15 4 1 6 7 11 1 14 18 1 2 2 16 11 19

```

*Matrica e redukuar Cr*

## 2.3 Shumëzimi i dy matricave të redukuara

Gjatë operimit me matrica, një prej operacioneve që shpesh përdoret është shumëzimi. Matricat që shumëzohen mund të jenë të zakonshme dhe diagonale.

### 2.3.1 Rasti kur matricat janë të zakonshme

Ngjajshëm sikurse të mbledhja e matricave, në vazhdim ipet pjesa e programit përmes të cilit shumëzohen matricat e redukuara Ar dhe Br. Algoritmi i shumëzimit të matricave të redukuara është i njëjtë si tek matricat e zakonshme, ashtu edhe tek matricat diagonale. Dallimi i vetëm është tek numri i kolonave të rezultatit Cr.

Rezultati ruhet në disk me emrin *matricaCredukuar*.

Së pari mirret vlera e kolonës së parë të matricës Br, `nrkol=Br[1][j1]` dhe pastaj derisa nuk ndërrohet vlera e kolonës së matricës Br, shumëzohet rreshti i matricës Ar me kolonat e matricës Br, duke i plotësuar kushtet siç janë:

```

if ((Br[1][j]==nrkol)&&(Ar[1][i]==Br[0][j]))

```

Nga formula shihet së anëtarët duhet të kenë kolonen e njëjtë paraprake nga Br dhe indeksat e njëjtë nga Ar dhe Br.

Përmes kushtit `if ( Ar[0][i] == 1 )` nga matrica Ar mirren (ndahen) vetëm indeksat e rreshtave, duke filluar nga rreshti i parë 0 dhe më radhë deri në *m*.

```

// Prog.

```

```

.. .. .. .. ..

nsh=0;nm=0;
j1=0;j2=0;nrkol=Br[1][j1];indkol=1;
for (j2=0;j2<bnjz;j2++)
{
    if (nrkol != Br[1][j2])
    {
        indkol=1;
        nrkol=Br[1][j2];
    }
    if ( indkol == 1 )
    {
        indkol=0;
        //Rreshtat e matricës Ar
        for (l=0;l<m;l++)
        {
            s=0;
            for (i=0;i<anjz;i++)
            {
                if ( Ar[0][i] == 1 )
                {
                    for (j=0;j<bnjz;j++)
                    {
                        if ((Br[1][j]==nrkol)&&(Ar[1][i]==Br[0][j]))
                        {
                            s=s+Ar[2][i]*Br[2][j];
                            nsh=nsh+1;
                            nm=nm+1;
                        }
                    }
                }
            }
            Cr[0][z]=1;
            Cr[1][z]=nrkol;
            Cr[2][z]=s;
            z=z+1;
        }
    }
}

.. .. .. .. ..

```

*Matrica e redukuar Cr do të duket si më poshtë*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
107	186	87	135	150	247	242	279	155	181	84	220	119	152	297	299	338	348	332	266

### 2.3.2 Rasti kur matricat janë diagonale

Siç e kemi cekur edhe më lartë, dallimi i vetëm gjatë shumëzimit të matricave të zakonshme dhe diagonale është tek numri i kolonave të rezultatit Cr. Numri i kolonave për matricen diagonale Cr, *cnjz* do të jetë i barabart me numrin e anëtarëve me indeksa të njëjtë *nanj*, që do të thotë:



cnjz = nanj;

Nëse i kemi për shumëzim dy matrica diagonale A dhe B, respektivisht matricat e redukuara Ar dhe Br të tyre, atëherë rezultati i shumëzimit do të paraqitet në vijim:

41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	69	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	78	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	64

Matrica e plotë diagonale A

5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6

Matrica e plotë diagonale B

Përmes programit për shumëzimin e matricave të plota A dhe B, fitohet matrica e plotë C, e cila është paraqitur më poshtë:

205	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	335	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	69	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	390	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	116	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	434	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	384

Matrica e plotë diagonale C

Matricat e redukuara Ar dhe Br janë paraqitur më poshtë:

0	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9
41	67	34	69	24	78	58	62	64

Matrica e redukuar Ar

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5	5	1	7	1	1	5	2	7	6

Matrica e redukuar Br

Përmes programit për caktimin e numrit të kolonave të matricës Cr, llogarisim numrin e anëtarëve me indeksa të njëjtë nga Ar dhe Br, e që në rastin tonë është  $nanj=9$ . Kjo do të thotë që numri i kolonave të matricës diagonale do të jetë  $cnjz=nanj=9$ . Nga matricat Ar dhe Br shihet se anëtari me indeksat (3,3) në Br nuk ndodhet në Ar sepse tek A ka vlerën zero. Për këtë arsye numri i anëtarëve me indeksa të njëjtë nga Ar dhe Br është 9.

Pas ekzekutimit të programit për shumëzimin e matricave të redukuara nga matricat diagonale, si rezultat fitohet matrica Cr, e cila është paraqitur më poshtë:

0	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9
205	335	34	69	24	390	116	434	384

Matrica e redukuar Cr

Nga kjo shihet se rezultati i shumëzimit është i njëjtë, si të matricat e plota, ashtu edhe të ato të redukuara, pra C dhe Cr.

### 3 Krahasimi i rezultateve

#### 3.1 Operacioni i mbledhjes

Në vijim do të ipen disa krahasime, në bazë të statistikave që janë realizuar për numrin e operacioneve të mbledhjes tek fushat e rralla dhe matricat e redukuara.

- *Rasti kur mbi 95% e anëtarëve të fushës janë zero-matricat diagonale:*

tabela 1

grafiku 1

Nga grafiku dhe tabela mund të konkludojmë se në këto raste ka lëvërdi të kalohet nga fushat e rralla në matrica te redukuara.

#### 3.2 Operacioni i shumëzimit

Në vijim do të ipen disa krahasime, në bazë të statistikave që janë realizuar për numrin e operacioneve të shumëzimit tek fushat e rralla dhe matricat e redukuara.

- *Rasti kur mbi 95% e anëtarëve të fushës janë zero-matricat diagonale:*

tabela 2

grafiku 2

Nga grafiku dhe tabela mund të konkludojmë se në këto raste ka lëvërdi të kalohet nga fushat e rralla në matricat e redukuara.

## 4 Konkluzionet

Në punim përfshihet ideja e ruajtjes së të dhënave të matricave të mëdha dhe të rralla si matrica të redukuara.

Ideja ishte që të shqyrtohet:

- minimizimi i numrit të operacioneve

Kjo do të thotë të shqyrtohet mundësia e operimit (*mbledhja, zbritja, shumëzimi, gjetja e anëtarit të caktuar, etj*) më matrica të redukuara. Qëllimi i punimit që të krahasohen: *numri i operacioneve* te matricat e rralla, në njëren anë, dhe tek matrica të redukuara, në anën tjetër, është përmbushur.

Nga statistikat e rezultateve dhe krahasimet e numrit të operacioneve, te fushat (matricat) e mëdha dhe të rralla dhe matrica të redukuara, mund të konkludohet se mundësia më e mirë për të kaluar nga fushat e rralla tek matrica të redukuara është atëherë kur numri i anëtarëve zero e kalon 95 %, në krahasim më numrin e përgjithshëm të fushës.

Rasti më i mirë duket të jetë tek matricat diagonale.

Rezultatet e punimit shpiejnë të përfundimi që në të gjitha rastet ku kemi operacione mes matricave, apo matricë me vektor dhe ku numri i anëtarëve zero e kalon 95% në krahasim më numrin e përgjithshëm të fushës, mund të kalohet nga matricat e plota në matrica të redukuara.

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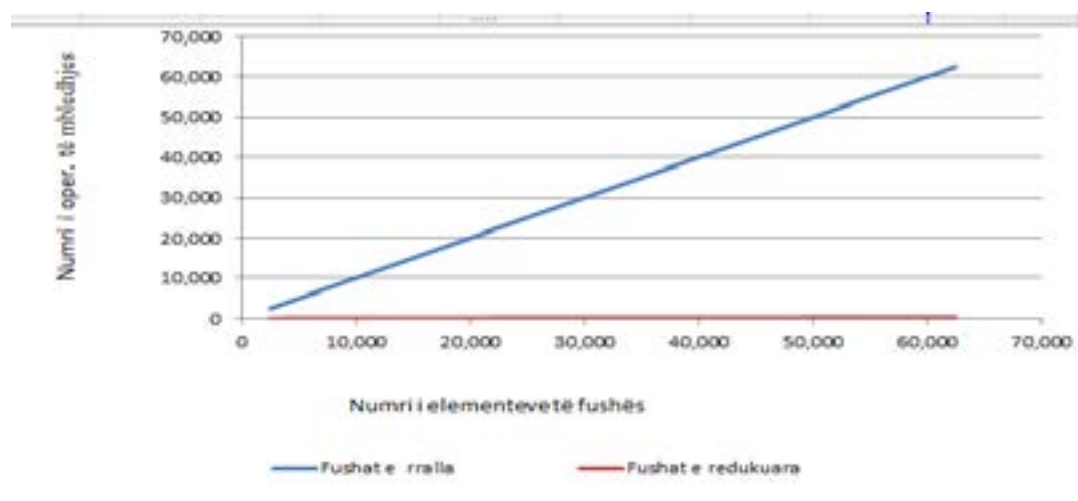
tabela 1

50*50	100*100	200*200	250*250	Dimensionet e fushave
2,500	10,000	40,000	62,500	Numri i elementeve të fushave
2,500	10,000	40,000	62,500	Num.oper. te mbledh. - fushat e medha
50	100	200	250	Num oper. te mbledh. - fushat e redukuara

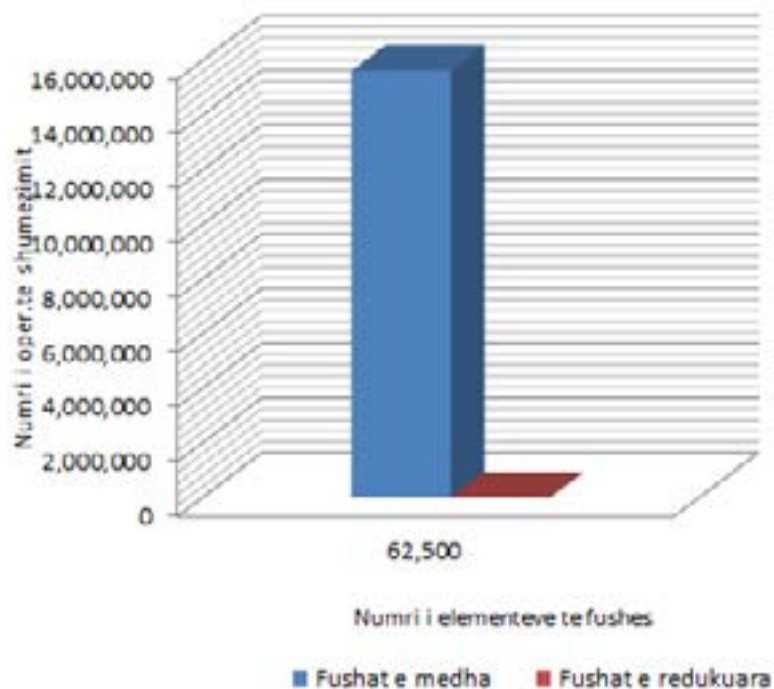
tabela 2

250*250	Dimensionet e fushave
62,500	Numri i elementeve të fushave
15,625,000	Num.oper. te shumez. - fushat e medha
6,250	Num oper. te shumez. - fushat e redukuara

grafiku 1



grafiku 2



# The permanent monitoring of civil infrastructure via IoT technology

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**Silvana SUKAJ**

European University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania

**Pierluigi ABIUSO**

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Rome, Italy

**Paola PATERNA**

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Rome, Italy

**Piera CAMMARANO**

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Rome, Italy

**Srey MOM VUTH**

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Rome, Italy

**Andrea MICHELETTI**

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Rome, Italy

**Alessandro TIERO**

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Rome, Italy

**Donato ABRUZZESE**

University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Rome, Italy

## Abstract

*The aging of bridges is becoming a key point for the safety assessment of roads infrastructures, since most of the existing structures have been built more than forty years ago. Reinforced concrete and steel structural elements, for different reasons, suffer from decay, mostly if exposed to natural events, as in bridges. Often collapses are unexpected and without many visible warnings. Then, the permanent monitoring of the full infrastructure, controlling several health parameters of the structure, can be a necessary and affordable way to guarantee the safety of the roads. Traditional monitoring systems cannot give the necessary flexibility to a monitoring program, do not have size compact enough to be installed on the structure without interfering with it, and it is quite difficult to transmit, store and manage the collected data. Existing technology related to the IoT (Internet of Things) platform offers very flexible, precise, compact and affordable devices, which can project the health structural assessment in the actual world, making the civil engineering field closer to other fields like mechanics and electronics. This paper describes a feasible monitoring project for bridges and other infrastructures. Some case studies are chosen among existing bridges in Albania, in order to simulate the design and the application of the above mentioned approach.*

**Keyword:** Infrastructures, structural health monitoring, IoT for structures, monitoring network

## Need for infrastructure monitoring: safety, durability, maintenance

Much of the damage to roadway infrastructures is due to earthquakes, but also to decay of materials and lack of maintenance. All this problems can be controlled and limited by establishing a permanent structural monitoring through the entire life of the infrastructure.

It is appropriate, necessary and advantageous, in a case of existing structures like bridges, to collect all the information in order to calibrate the measurements and the monitoring system, and to identify in advance the possible critical issue associated to the monitoring activities. The existing documents relating to the original design will be useful, and, where available, also any “as-built” available from the owner of the infrastructure or by the construction company. Information on materials could help in better planning maintenance programme and organize timely operation to protect people life and bridge life itself. When information on the existing construction material for the structure is only partly available, or not available at all, restoration company or the owner of the infrastructure should carry out appropriate and specific researches and investigations aimed at responding to preliminary doubts and improving the level of knowledge on structural members. Several parameter needs to be monitored and controlled. Static as well as dynamic physical values could help in controlling the behaviour of the bridge under traffic or natural loads, while the stress control of the concrete or the rebars will give us information on the resistance of the bridges, and its linear or non linear state.

**FIG.1** - Example of damage and decay in r.c. structural element - RAM Project, Road Asset Management– Main Inspection Handbook (Anas- Italian FS Group)

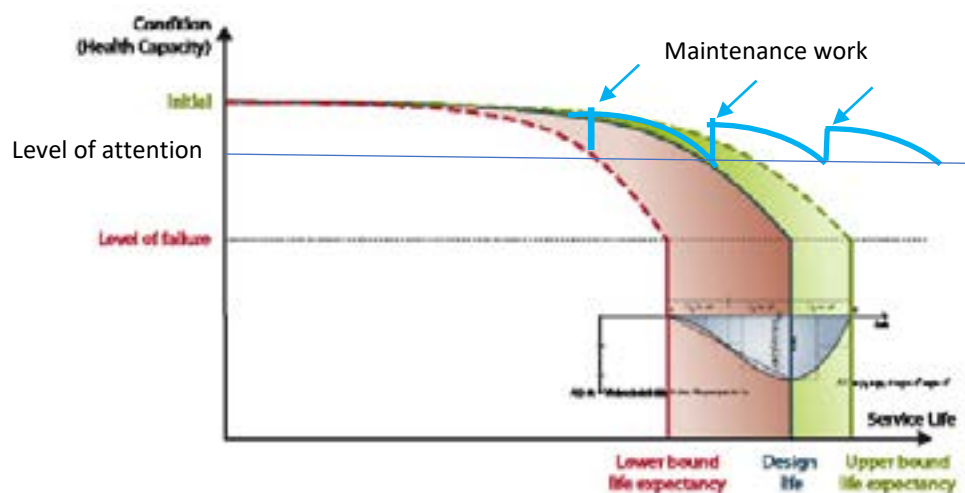


To have enough information on the bridge will save money for small or/and big repairs and will prolong the life of the structure, always keeping safety at a high level.

Of course, when the monitoring activity deals with a new infrastructure, it is easier to plan the sensors network, their position and the location of the hub, the Wi-Fi router, the protection for the whole system. However, in new realizations too a corresponding and similar “monitoring design activity” should be carried out to analyse the structure, in order to have a preliminary information on the expected static or dynamic behaviour.

## State-of-art of infrastructure monitoring

The Italian regulation about infrastructure monitoring is explained and detailed in the recent Guidelines for the Risk Classification and Management and Safety Assessment in the Existing Bridge Monitoring, issued by the High Council of Public Works from Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructures (M.I.T. 17 Aprile 2020). Several remarks are highlighted in that document, mostly referring to the importance to know the infrastructure in details, referring to existing design or construction documents, as well as to intense and permanent monitoring activity. A specific and well organized monitoring activity of the most important structural parameters will give confidence about the safety of the bridge, for instance, and also about that of traveling users. In that document, one of the most update among the European Guidelines, and in the framework of EuroCode, warning and alarm thresholds are foreseen, as part of the monitoring system, giving a final pragmatism to the guidelines, issued for new as well as old existing bridges (fig.2).

**FIG. 2** – Typical decay curve for reinforced concrete bridges (revised from UNI EN 16991:2018)

Also Albanian Authorities (Autoriteti Rrugor Shqiptar) published several reports warning about the aging of the albanian reinforced concrete bridges, foreseen the maintenance or even the reconstruction of some existing bridges in bad conditions (Fig.3, “Study Design of bridges of Lekli, Dragot, Vora Bridge, Tapiza, Droja Bridge, Zemblak”, 2019).

**FIG. 3** – Damage on the Lekli Bridge, Albania (Study Design of bridges of Lekli, Autoriteti Rrugor Shqiptar, Albanian Road Authority, 2019)

The structures monitoring, now called “structural health monitoring - SHM” has been an important field of the research, for academics, but also for technician in charge of “structure monitoring” and to guarantee the safety of the infrastructure. Mostly in the last decade, with the improvement of the mini-electronics, small devices appeared in the market, and also fairly efficient and affordable, when compared with previous generation of electronic sensors. The IoT (Internet of Things) method offers several interesting possibility in the monitoring system. The small devices, with size comparable to that one of a cigarette packet or a cellular phone, is very convenient when it should be installed and powered. Also the capacity to transmit via regular Wifi to the main router the collected information in real time is a fundamental advantage that this technique offers for the structure monitoring.

Several researchers are now applying the IoT method to the structure and namely to the infrastructure. Most of them take advantages of the technical progress of the small devices “Arduino-like”, to propose compact devices, affordable and easy to maintain. Also communication aspect is important, since great part of these solution refer to wireless solution, again based on microcontrollers equipped with Wifi capability. Shitong Hou and Gang Wu, from Nanjing, China (2019) on the specific field of the communication, are preferring and developing the communication between sensors via Narrow Band IoT (NB-IoT), since they found it more reliable in some environment densely connected for the quality of the signal, as well as for the small power requirement if dedicated to long-term monitoring (with battery). According to the Authors this choice, which today could seem a little bit outside of standard communication choice, is very promising and could be in the future the main one adopted for strategic monitoring of the built environment, such us bridges and other infrastructure.

Arohi et al. (2018), from India, went much ahead in designing the sensor network that they pushed in the direction of detection of the limit signal inducing the transmission of an alarm for the system. Indeed the aim of everyone is just to control the behaviour of the structure and, defining a trigger point for some measuring parameter, give a alert message, or, in the most advanced cases, take some decision in order to stop some activity, for instance to close the bridge if the



information are clearly suggesting that. Sonawane et al. (2018), from India, concentrate on the accelerometer, that in the MEMS version offer also information about tilting and orientation in the space, but the practical information (acceleration in the sense of structural information) is not as much considered.

Even Knud Lasse Lueth (2017) recognizes the importance of infrastructure monitoring with IoT devices and techniques, and he imagines that this kind of affordable, low cost devices, is the only choice we have for permanent monitoring of the thousand of bridges and infrastructure we have on the territory. He states also that a very diffused and capillary control of the mechanical, physical and geometric parameters of a bridge, for instance, could help the infrastructure manager to be more confident about the state of the structure and take the most reasonable decision in case of need.

**FIG. 4** – Available device and application on infrastructure on the IoT platform (IoT Bridge-AB, Sweden, P. Rosegren, 2017)



In the August 2020 the Västerbron bridge, a steel arch road bridge, one of the major bridges in center of Stockholm, opened in 1935, has been equipped with a wireless sensor system (fig.5), and a IoT platform has been used for that. Also a machine learning method has been adopted (A.I., Artificial Intelligence) in order to let the system learn itself the behaviour of the structure.

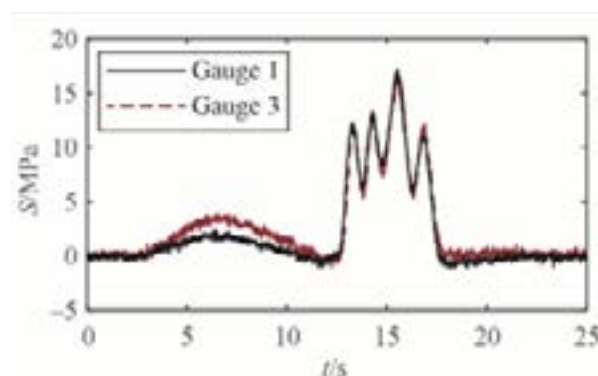
**FIG.5** – The Västerbron bridge, in Stockholm, built on 1935, equipped



The same Group responsible of that installation (fig.4, IoT Bridges-AB), with P. Rosengren, designed and arranged, for the Old Lidingö Bridge, a prototype of energy harvesting device (fig.6) in order to make the monitoring system autonomous from the energy supply. And this is another key point (the energy supply for the monitoring of bridges, sometimes isolated in the far countryside) much studied in order to complete all the picture of this ambitious engineering plan to control the infrastructure and get detailed information continuously during the service life of the structure.

**FIG.6** - An energy harvester prototype, installed on the Old Lidingö Bridge (Rosengren et al., 2017)



**FIG. 7** Stress history at the passage of a train on a bridge (Rosengren et al., 2017)

## Proposal for advanced and effective infrastructure monitoring system

Among several proposals and available systems and platforms, in our opinion not one specific approach can lead to the reliability of a infrastructure permanent structural health monitoring. We can imagine that in case of existing structure, it should be necessary a preliminary monitoring activity, carried out for a short period or for a few randomly distributed times, performed on the construction, in order to achieve some basic information on the range of the measurements. In particular, such measurements should include: the range of frequency vibration, the stress in structural element, and the temperature. Some of the installations that are set up in this preliminary phase may later be part of the permanent installation on the final monitoring. If a maintenance work also is foreseen for the infrastructure, it could be interesting also to perform, with the final sensors network, some measurement of the “existing” condition, useful and precious in order to compare the same measurement values with the final one, after completion of the maintenance work.

Once the sensors network is installed, even in-service, the behaviour of the structure will be controlled, obtaining two different results. One is to test, validate and calibrate the sensors network, the other one is to control potential abnormal behaviour of the structure during the works. One of most important part to make the monitoring system effective is the B.M.S., Bridge Management System, which consists in a software that can rapidly scan all the different and several (million of) values obtained from the measurements and give one quick preliminary “unattended” (without human control) assessment. This software today is implemented considering two or three subsequent phases for its use. The first phase is just as we already mentioned, a short test campaign for the first tuning, a second phase in order to let the system “learn” from the typical behaviour of the structure (Artificial Intelligence), collecting the “standard levels” of the monitored quantities in its database, and finally the third phase of permanent regular monitoring.

The specific software to be designed should first of all fulfil the local construction code, referring to stress, displacement and strain threshold which are well accepted in the Codes and in the current literature.

The structural monitoring can be divided into different levels:

- a) behaviour of the structure and its variations during its life, to be recorded for any “anamnesis” studies of the structure;
- b) level of control for the assessment of the physiological state of the structure (material, constraints, loads) and possible detection of situations that require ordinary maintenance operations, or revision of the surrounding conditions;
- c) alert level, for exceeding pre-defined thresholds of tension, deformation or load of parts of the structural elements.

Level a) Does not represent a level of attention, but the measurements connected with it provide valuable information that can be made available to appropriate statistics useful in combination with possible particular events or even just to produce reports on the life behavior of the structure.

Level b) Indicates the type of information that can be made available daily to the managing bodies of the structure to check its correct functioning. For example, according to a correct and regular use of the structure, the operating voltages should be contained within a statistically expected range. The same would apply to the constraints of the structure. On the other hand, the control on accidental loads the monitoring of traffic, evaluating its variations in density with sufficient detail.

Level c) represents the level that is considered most important, as it provides an alert signal upon reaching and exceeding pre-defined voltage thresholds in the structural elements. In reality, in the presence of the other two, previous monitoring levels, it is possible to limit the immediate achievement of the alarms contemplated in this monitoring level, as a regular monitoring activity can certainly follow the behaviour of the structure and anticipates the eventual attainment of risk thresholds.

The current trend, also for some infrastructure management authorities, often refer to permanent monitoring,

requesting to record measurement cycles very close to each other in time. The high number of points to be monitored, the different quantities to be monitored (displacements, stresses, deformations, vibrations, temperatures, humidity), often requires a high skill in reading and interpreting in real time, or in any case with a “human” response, the results of a monitoring. The data population, for example, even with reading every hour or half hour, at the end of the month or year is made up of thousands of numbers. Hence the need, certainly, to use threshold values, for the detection of certain values, in order to activate appropriate alerts, and also, in extreme cases, closure of structures and infrastructures. But here the doubt often arises that the sampling frequency could also be insufficient (for example, every hour), and then one could lean towards slightly more dense detections, but however dense they are they could hide the sampling jump “at risk” within the shaded area during the monitoring period. And therefore, in any case, one could opt for a detection at the technological limit, requiring, for example, 20 samples per second for static values, and 200 samples per second for vibrations measurements by accelerometers. Obviously, such dense surveys involve data archives filled with millions of information, with a certain difficulty for consultation, if the critical threshold indicated in the monitoring specifications is never reached.

Hence the need to have auxiliary but fundamental tools for managing the millions of data collected by sensors and devices on the structure.

Our point of view is to install in many points of the structure, and for the values that can thus be measurable, of double instruments, with different and collaborative functions. One of the instruments (for example a series of accelerometers) will be permanently active, but at a reduced sampling frequencies, in order to “monitor” the structure at a minimum level, together with another parallel group of instruments, with denser sampling. The permanent data recording would concern only the first group of low-sampling sensors, while when a threshold is exceeded (not the maximum alert one, but a different threshold relating, for example, to events just above the expected “average” statistical operation) a time window across the event with the highest sampling instruments would also be recorded. In this way it would be easier to examine, at a later time, only the records relating to “above threshold” events.

This type of approach, not completely standard today in structural monitoring measurements, offers the following advantages:

- keep the structure constantly monitored, at all times. For example, an accelerometer records permanently with reduced frequencies, compatible with the structure (20Hz), while the second accelerometer, for only 60 seconds, could use an acquisition frequency of 200 Hz, with better definition;
- drastically reduce the amount of data of modest significance (if not useless) to be recorded in the archives;
- the limited number of “permanent” registrations offers the possibility of being read more easily;
- the facilitated production of weekly or monthly summary reports, with a focus above all on the “events” recorded by the second group of sensors.

And in fact, in the production of data from the software proposed in this monitoring, we will have quarterly and annual reports. Without of course counting instant reports and alerts also via messaging on the most common digital channels for more important events. For example a road accident (see, for instance, accelerometers installed on guard rails) or excessive vibration caused by a commercial vehicle with abnormal overload.

## Typical devices to be installed on a bridge

In order to effectively monitor a bridge it could be useful not only to refer to the typical and traditional instrument of the structural engineer, widely diffused for such a kind of monitoring, i.e, the accelerometer, since this single device do not give a full and comprehensive view of the condition of the bridge. As several studies proved, the theoretical approach that considers the variation of the resistance of the structure during its life connected with the vibration frequency difference in the same observation time is not practically effective. To detect a variation of resistance connected with a stiffness variation (which is important when we calculate the vibration frequency) we need a very high damage, almost close to the collapse. It means that a small crack, an increasing of deformation due to the loads, a deformation of a bearing device cannot be detected only by the accelerometer, and the measurement of the “variation” of frequency of the structure cannot be an early warning for the damage in the structure. On the other side, a collaborative and cross-referencing measurement from different devices could lead to a more detailed structural health assessment, also applying the wider methodology of the Artificial Intelligence, which is related to a sort of neural and comparative analysis of all data available.

In this sense, the measurement devices that could be installed on a bridge include:

- a) inclinometers, to check the inclination of the pier, vertically and transversally;
- b) several accelerometers to detect via vibration the damage of important structural elements;
- c) accelerometers for the vibrations of the safety barriers (guard-rail) both for possible vehicle collisions (accident alert) and for possible damage to the bridge;
- d) strain gauge, or deformation devices, to assess the stress in the concrete and in the rebars in the main structural elements;

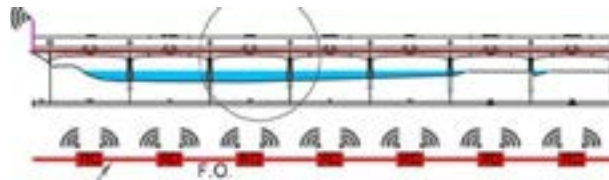
- e) beam laser system, probably under the bridge, in a protected area, in order to measure instant deformation of the horizontal bridge axis;
- f) humidity and temperature sensors;
- g) measurement of the corrosion risk of existing reinforced concrete, where experimental sensors are available. Currently such kind of sensors are under validation at the laboratory of the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" (Arduini et al., 2019). This installation, with at least 2 points of permanent monitoring, can provide assessment of the risk of carbonation of the concrete, and the tendency to corrosion for the reinforcing bars.
- h) measurement, at the beginning or at the end of the viaduct, of the dynamic weight of the vehicles, through the positioning of barrier-sensors based on deformable optical fibers, transversely under the asphalt.
- i) where the bridge is built above a river, or nearby, ultrasonic sensor could help to measure the groundwater level below the road deck.

The acquisition of measurements will take place with a frequency variable according to the different sensor, ranging between half an hour (groundwater level, stress in the material, inclination) up to several sample per seconds (20Hz for permanent accelerometer, 200Hz for instant accelerometer, 10Hz beam laser for axis deformation, 10Hz for dynamic measurement of the stress). The monitoring system should be equipped with a unit capable of locally recording the acquired data, and transmitting them on the optical fiber communication backbone. The measurements acquired in a defined time interval in agreement with the infrastructure authority will be periodically archived (back-up) in temporal cycles, ensuring to provide local systems with sufficient storage space for data collection. The whole installation will refer to a B.M.S, Bridge Monitoring System software, which will give a comprehensive and smart assessment of the situation, even suggesting, or directly acting (in some clear case) for a precautional interruption of the traffic on the structure.

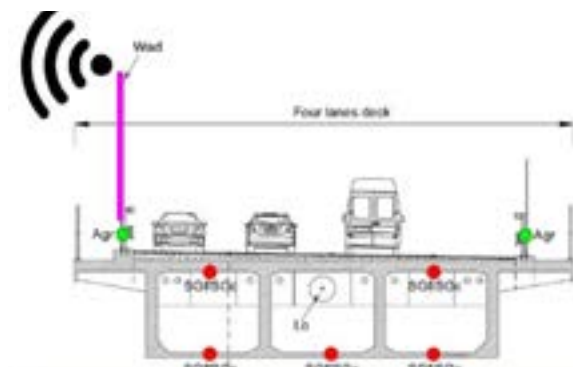
All the installation, as it is clearly understandable, could be remotely controlled, giving to the operator higher and fast control on the total length of the viaduct, which can be several hundred meters long., providing, in output, possibly in pre-calculated tables, the actions, in terms of stresses, caused on the structure.

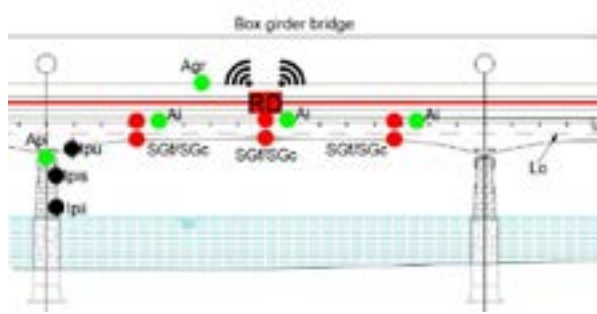
All the measurement data from the sensors (fig.10) will be collected by a Wifi router, which could cover the whole single span of the bridge. If the bridge is a viaduct, with several sections, then the infrastructure will host a backbone communication line, that is, an optical fiber (fig.8), able to easy transport a large number of data all along the viaduct, until the end of it, where a network connection will be available or a specific Wad (Wireless Access Device) connected on a Wan (Wide Area Network) through a directional parabola, for instance (fig.9). This will allow to have a broadband of about 1 Gbit/sec.

**FIG. 8 - Basic sensor diagram on the total viaduct**



**FIG. 9 - Detail of sensors on the deck section**



**FIG. 10** - Detail of sensors on a bridge section**DIAGRAM AND LIST OF PLANNED INSTALLATIONS**

- RD** Central span fiber optic splitter + 4/5G router
- SGf/SGc** Strain Gauge – measuring stress in the concrete and in the rebar
- Ipi/Ipii** : Upper/Lower Inclinometer on the abutment/pier
- Api**: Accelerometers on the head of the pier
- Ai**: Accelerometers inside the box girder
- Agr** : Accelerometer on the guard-rail- for impact
- Lo** : Optic laser beam to control the deformation through 6 target/span
- Wad** : Wide lan – 1 Gb

**Conclusions**

The original idea to apply IoT technology and platform only to domestic aspect has been overcome. The new generation of electronics carrying directly on-board the capacity to connect with other devices, and mostly to connect itself directly on the network, or even to the storage area in the cloud, opened a multi-faceted, promising and effective industrial era, supported from several researches on the subject. After the dramatic events of suddenly collapse of bridges of the past years at national as well as at international level, the strong request of more safety on the road and on the bridges leads clearly to implement higher technology on the infrastructures, aligning the level of control to that one of the industrial field (power plant, big electric engine, automotive field, energy consumption). IoT concept just started to suggest infinite uses of the miniaturization of WiFi electronics, fulfilling finally the dream of every structural engineer to know the real “instant” stress (fig.7) in the structural element he designed, and compare it with the one foreseen in the design.

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# COVID-19: new challenges tractfor architects

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**PhD. Silvana SUKAJ**

European University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania

## Abstract

*There are millions of victims and hundreds millions of infected people. The world is currently witnessing a dramatic disruption of everyday life owing to the rapid progression of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), which resulted in the emergence of many challenges to face this epidemic. In the context of the COVID-19, this paper reveals the capacities of architecture and urbanism in playing an active role in human health and security. The historical approach shows that the same space-controlled measures against pandemics were used for centuries to combat different epidemy: quarantine, isolation, and confinement. The paper investigates how the present pandemic confirms the last decades warnings and the previous concerns about the environment, nature and people. The article examines the linkages between levels of engagement in the built environment. The goal is to determine the place of architecture and urbanism in social resilience management during pandemics. Some of ideas of this paper concerned in solutions for health engaged architecture and urbanism are indicated at different scales: object scale—hygiene; people scale—distancing and isolation; interior spaces—air control by ventilation, filtering and humidifying; residential—intermediate housing, public spaces between buildings—the key for social interactions; working—telecommuting, size and dispersion; shopping—proximity and downscaling; transportation—walking etc. The question right now is : as an architectural researcher, how might this global crisis affect curriculum content, emphasis, and how we educate future architects and planners?*

**Keywords:** COVID-19 pandemic; housing; residential buildings; SARS-CoV-2; sustainability requirements

## Introduction

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus infectious disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic, rapid and severe lockdown measures have been adopted by the Albanian Government with school closures, border restrictions, quarantine of confirmed or suspected patients, and “stay-at-home” or confinement policies for all the residents. These procedures not only contradict the desire of individuals for social interaction, but also conflict with the way of (cities, parks, squares, subways, and shared spaces, city streets) are designed. For over two months of stay-at-home orders, houses became the only place where people slept, ate, worked, practiced sports, and socialized, accelerating the process of morphological changes of indoor ecosystems driven by technological evolution.

In recent decades, a growing number of studies have been conducted on the relationship between urban built environment and human health in both outdoor and indoor spaces. The transactional nature of the relationship between subjects and place have been explored by several environment-behavior research studies and public health policies reflecting human ecology theory and applications. Physical characteristics of the built environment, their affordances, and people’s individual characteristics are important to explore the association between built environment and health. Since the 1980s, socioecological theories have identified different built environment features as stress generators that may be

powerfully mitigated through environmental enhancements. The research dealt with the impact of the epidemic on the design of cities and urban areas historically, and the challenges faced by cities in the current crisis that were derived from the view of individuals' health. The research directs the viewpoint of designers and planners towards the relationship between urban design and health. The effectiveness of functional cities in managing the current crisis is discussed. It comes up with the most important strategies of these cities to help in redesigning cities when facing any coming crises.

## **A short story of Pandemics related to architecture**

However, while this is not the first time in the human history that pandemics affect cities, limited literature related to cities and pandemics existed before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Matthew and McDonald, 2006). When epidemics especially respiratory ones emerge, precautionary measures emphasize the necessity of isolation, and closure of public spaces. Also, it turns the image of cities and public spaces into empty environments, but mostly after the end of the crisis; it requires a change in the city's shape to integrate between community health practices and social thinking into urban design. From reviewing the history of pandemics in the past, beginning from the Athenian plague in 430 BC to the Black Death in Europe in the 14th century. We can notice more insights into the effects and consequences of changing the design of cities, the city's zoning laws, and the first concept of quarantine. For example; the Black Death crisis affected the urban design of European societies by calling for opening larger public spaces which provide a greater opportunity to connect with nature and reduce the feeling of isolation. Also, pandemics helped planners to improve the radical urban of the renaissance, expanded their cities to prevent overcrowding (Mahoney, E. and D. Nardo 2016).

In terms of improving the urban design field; the disease had a major impact on managing waste in the streets, supporting a strong feeling of wanting to have ventilation and daylight in open spaces through which people can move. On the other hand; the infrastructure design field had a great chance to manage cholera's crisis. When it was realized that infection resulted from a mixture between wastewater and drinking water in river Thames, Sir Joseph Bazalgette brought an end to the cholera outbreak; he constructed the Victoria embankment along river Thames in central London and implemented the main sewage system downriver to safely separate wastewater away from clean water supply.

Thinking carefully about the historical events in the 19th century; the second industrial revolution, or as it was known as the technological revolution which peaked between 1870-1914, was an important phase of unprecedented urbanization. During these days; cities became densely populated, full of tall residential buildings, railways transportation, and public spaces for entertainment and welfare. The 1918 pandemic influenza was a global health catastrophe, determining one of the highest mortality rates due to an infectious disease in history, which had a clear impact on slowing down in urban growth and limiting public life for a period in order to slow the spread of disease.

To reduce this risk, cities can introduce or maintain a raft of measures already implemented in cities that have seen outbreaks. This will make public transport to be replaced by walking in uncrowded streets. Until about 1908, the dual arrangement caused bacterial contamination of the drinking water supply and repeated outbreaks of typhoid fever and cholera that killed thousands of Philadelphians. The early preventive phase was to move homes and businesses away from the riverbank to be replaced by a massive Fairmount park. The project demonstrates the intertwined nature of urban design and disease management in the 19th century, a period when epidemics powerfully influenced the "physical fabric" of cities around the world.

COVID-19 has been added to a long list of rapidly spreading infectious diseases in the current century, such as tuberculosis in South Africa in 2006, and Ebola in West Africa in 2014, which represents a new challenge for cities to plan effectively and to turn into healthy cities. Previously, to minimize the risk of infectious diseases, people redesigned interior design, architecture, cities, and infrastructure. Considering historical events of the last two centuries, the architecture and urban story includes several developments.

## **Cities Density**

Cities are home to most of the world population and are centers of economic growth and innovation. However, the high concentration of people and activities in cities make them vulnerable to various stress or such as natural and man-made disasters. Understanding this, over the past few decades, a vast body of research has been published on the impacts of a wide range of disasters on cities, and necessary planning, re-recovery, and adaptation measures that need to be taken to deal with those disasters (Sharifi, 2020). City and urban design may need to be revised from a population density point of view, which is one of the most basic factors affecting the spread of an epidemic; In other words, the greater the population density, the greater the risk of infection (Gandy, M., 1999). So, cities need to review appropriate planning not only to achieve social justice but also to face epidemics in a sustained way.

As for density, which led to the necessity of taking many precautions to confront the global epidemic, it was necessary to refer to history and the benefits from lessons of the past in facing such a crisis (Rinde, M. 2020). It's noteworthy that the first attempts of urban planners historically to prevent the spread of cholera in Paris in 1850 were by reducing the high population density in some cities. As happened in poor cholera infected neighborhoods by Baron, the streets and parks were widened, and sewage systems were established (Harning, L.N 2020).



Regarding WHO' regulations that indicate avoiding crowding and closing places of assembly, as is the case in many countries, which closed cafes, restaurants, theatres, shopping malls, green spaces, and schools. In addition to the precautionary measures for the use of transport which are active places and points where the virus can spread. Although, closing public spaces was an effective action; basically state' orders to stop gathering, isolate, and quarantine, made a significant effect on cities that reacted early (Reyes, R., 2013), but especially in countries like Egypt; that can't fully lockdown for economic, social reasons.. etc., so decision-makers should find ways to push populations to less dense cities instead of living overcrowded in Nile valley and delta.

There was another urban planning suggestion by Anne Hidalgo; Paris mayor in her recent campaign who has proposed the city's decentralizing and deconstructing policy. That can reduce extreme density, and promote the concept of walkability in each neighborhood, in which containing homes, jobs, facilities, stores, etc. (Birch, E. and S. Wachter 2016). According to a study by Birch 2020; if neighborhoods are changed to be more walkable, and placed services and jobs in those communities; cities can be able to mitigate the intense congestion and crowding that you have in various systems such as public transit". Anthropologically, walking isn't only a kind of human movement, but also a culture and social practice that can promote physical activity and affect the residents' health besides increasing the value of urban spaces. For example, integrating walkability in neighbourhoods within Washington as an environmental feature; can increase demand and value of facilities like residential, offices, schools, etc. Numerous other research demonstrated the importance of incorporating the walkability index in the urban environment and its beneficial effects on health, economic, and other aspects (McAslan, D 2017) .

## Streets Design

A key part of the solution is street redesigning, which adds another lane like cyclists and pedestrians. It aims to create healthier and more social-sustainable cities that affect citizens' behavior in the time of pandemics. Implementing additional walking and cycling facilities could allow local authorities to gain rapid and long-term benefits such as reducing traffic congestion in urban areas to improve public health with fewer emissions and to achieve climate change goals (Crosby, A.W 2007). Therefore, local authorities would like to preserve the positive awareness on walking and cycling during the pandemic to meet their long-term targets. However, there have already been some barriers to the expansion of walking and cycling in society. For example, socio-demographic characteristics and road user's behavior and perception had a significant influence on cycling and walking in urban areas (Michigan, U.o 2020). Therefore, these barriers should be eliminated by decision-makers to meet the health and environment-related aims.

It is worth mentioning when referring to the point of redesigning streets during an epidemic; the new standards of using sidewalks should be considered. Such as social distancing while queuing that requires providing wider sidewalks and paths, and leaving a safe distance about 1.5 m. Adding more space to accommodate the queue at the entrances to public facilities, providing fixed seats for the elderly, and distinguish the individual's point with a sign on the ground .

Streets with greenery, plants, or other natural features can be prioritized for these initiatives, given the positive association between public green space and mental health. To increase access to parks and green spaces, streets surrounding or connecting them could be designated as Open or Slow Streets.

## Public Transport

With a highly contagious airborne disease such as COVID-19, the density of human bodies within enclosed, confined spaces becomes a—if not the—primary public health concern. This can make public transit rather problematic, as the physical and economic efficiency of trains and buses lies in their ability to move many people together at once, often in close physical proximity.

The health effects of social distancing is likely to limit public transport capacity for the aviation and motorized traffic and to restrict movement. Staggered work times and flexible working may alleviate some public transport crowding, but travel will still be necessary. Alternatives to increase transport capacity will be the frequent need of purification, proper cleaning and sanitizing hygiene of employees and passengers, and safety of operators, and this really happened in many cities. In large waiting areas; using methods such as drawing queues on floors, or using obstacles to maintain social distance, this can be a primary help in protecting the health of airport workers, travelers, and arrivals.

A lot of the risk depends on how crowded a bus or train is, and how much distance you can keep from other people. Scientists recognized early in the pandemic. Dr Julian Tang, a clinical virologist at the University of Leicester, says a key concern is sharing enclosed airspace, because studies have shown that coronavirus particles linger in the air. "If you're close enough to smell someone's garlic breath on public transport," he says, "then you're also potentially inhaling any virus that's carried with it."

## Public Spaces

Public spaces play a significant role in the lives of the citizens, as well as in the development of the society. They include theatres, museums, libraries, public sports facilities, etc. where people can gather and practice activities. Physical distancing

has been recommended, requiring people to maintain the distance between each other. Governments encouraged people to stay at home, abolished or postponed large public events, theatres and museums activities, libraries, sports facilities and closed schools, universities, factories, and markets, as well as restricting the presence in public squares (Chen, S., et al 2020). If the public space is not adapted to the needs of seniors, it becomes for them an environment full of obstacles and barriers.

This is especially significant now, as societies of the modern world are no longer dependent on town squares or piazzas for basic needs; therefore, well-designed urban spaces are required for the social and psychological health of modern communities (Harning, L.N 2015). Consequently, great interest is currently being paid in regard to making public spaces more accessible, safe, and comfortable to as many citizens as possible. Most of the studies related to this aspect have concentrated on the recognition of seniors' needs regarding outdoor public spaces, such as green areas, or they have focused on street furniture and outdoor urban spaces in general.

But public spaces have always been a destination for many individuals, and many were centers of religious and cultural celebrations (Polko, A., 2010). Therefore the attention of designers can be directed to rediscovering social and recreational uses and redesigning according to human needs and to be designed as pandemic-resilient and flexible spaces. After going through this pandemic, a need may emerge for new guidance for describing public spaces, and designing in terms of distances and densities, or the presence of public health risks.

### **Parks and Green Areas**

Earlier work indicates that green space provides health benefits and sustainability in cities. Green space is defined as natural vegetation such as grass, bush, plants or trees and the built green structures such as parks and unstructured vegetated areas. Access to outdoor parks and green areas is a human need that reduces stress and improves physical, psychological, mental health and a challenge in terms of control Covid-19 transmission in the outdoor environment.

Designers may need to create more spaces and practices for individual use in planning green areas such as expanding running tracks, paying attention to small neighborhood parks, As one of the new solutions that allow individuals to enjoy public parks doing what are called social distance circles. Parks and green areas may be one of the limited outdoor places where people seek to perform outdoor exercise during the COVID-19 crisis and maintain safety at the same time.

### **Housing Inequality and Building Design**

It is clear to everyone that after this crisis is over, we will not return as before, and one of the most optimistic expectations shows that we are waiting for a new beginning for our lives. It is the beginning of changing values, habits, and our homes. From social behavior view and after self-isolation; the theory of organizing many people in a multi-story building that looks like boxes isn't in line with the new uses that are practiced inside the house, and differs from the basic function. Also, from the public health view; living in houses is better rather than in apartments. These findings are as same as the results of many studies examined the increase of illness, mental health, and social wellbeing in flats as compared with houses (Ranson, R 2020). That's also compatible with a study by Sennett 2020 in his book "Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City"; who shows that in the near future there will be a new thought in building design and the trend towards broader neighbourhoods that enable people to socialize without having to fill them like sardines, taking into account the healthy foundations of building design (Ghaffarianhoseini, A 2018).

From the social behavior view; contemporary urban residents spend a large portion of their time indoors where they forced to work from home. Thus their health is directly affected by housing space, and this can negatively impact public health if the design is poor. House closures and isolation measures have shattered the traditional concept of house jobs, becoming a place to sleep, play children, and work. Perhaps in the future, we look to change and study the regulations that are more in line with the recommended "social distances", Also interior designs according to new functions that are practiced at home; should pay greater attention to spatial organization. For example; a workplace can be a completely organized private room with appropriate furniture. Hence, this idea should not include residential buildings only, but it should include public buildings of all kinds, schools, waiting rooms, etc. meaning that designers should be design flexible spaces.

As a result of household isolation, which leads to paying attention to the quality of homes design in order to improve the general performance of homes, designers should go back to nature in redesigning our homes, or by using biophilic design approach. The presence of natural elements may be a useful way to reduce isolation stress and other psychological effects (Kellert, S. and E. Calabrese 2018), which is compatible with a previous study that recommended to reconsider the untapped places and build rooftops. Also, the importance of maintaining veranda as an outdoor space has many benefits, such as connecting with nature, urban, and green view, and to offer a social connection between neighbors.

### **Conclusions**

This paper presents an overview in the impact of the Corona pandemic on cities and urban environment transformation of planners and designers. While urban life quickly returns back to the usual rhythms of work, leisure and other social

behaviors, our cities will never be the same, because of our newfound awareness that another health crisis might strike. Consequently, the ongoing crisis has become the starting point for designers and planners to find new solutions that achieve a safe and effective environment for individuals. In particular, urban mobility is going through a new kind of green revolution. There is a remarkable change in the understanding that our streets and public spaces are incredible assets that can be used to definitively change urban mobility. The epidemic can be seen as an opportunity to rethink the design of cities to better prepare for future crises. Cities must now take up the new challenge based on three main pillars, which consider the city to be smart, implementing sustainable, and comprehensive, taking into account the way we move through the city and the way we use urban spaces. Therefore, designers, planners, and public health officials should cooperate to build healthier cities during and after this crisis.

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# Albanian Airspace Modernization as a part of truly implementation of EUROPEAN SESAR 2020 + PROJECTS Single European Sky Air Traffic Management (ATM) Research

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Av. Dpl. Eng Stavri VESHO

## Abstract

*The European countries have today acted to speed up the reform of Europe's air traffic control system. It is looking to head off a capacity crunch as the number of flights is forecast to increase by 50% over the next 10-20 years. Inefficiencies in Europe's fragmented airspace bring extra costs of close to 5 billion Euros each year to airlines and their customers. They add 42 kilometers to the distance of an average flight forcing aircraft to burn more fuel, generate more emissions, pay more in costly user charges and suffer greater delays. The United States controls the same amount of airspace, with more traffic, at almost half the cost.*

### **SESAR**

*The technology required for the future Single Sky is provided through the air traffic management research program SESAR, which aims to modernize infrastructure and raise efficiency by optimizing capacity - and so enable the SES to become a reality. The EU is proposing to update the four regulations creating the Single European Sky (SES), and amend rules governing the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). Key elements of the proposals known as SES2+ include:*

#### **Better safety and oversight**

*Safety remains the first priority for aviation. EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) audits have shown great deficiencies in the oversight of air traffic control organisations in the Member States. In the future airlines will have a new role in signing off air traffic control organisations' investment plans to ensure they are better focused on meeting customer needs.*

#### **Better Air Traffic Management Performance**

*The reform of Europe's air traffic management system is driven by four key performance targets: **safety, cost-efficiency, capacity and environment**. These targets go to the heart of the reform process as they require air traffic control organizations to change and provide better services at lower cost.*

#### **New business opportunities in support services**

*Support services are currently the biggest cost driver in air traffic management and they can at the moment be procured from monopoly providers without proper assessment of costs and benefits. Conservative estimates indicate that 20% savings can be expected from the introduction of normal public procurement rules.*

**Keywords:** European Airspace, Albanian Airspace, Air Traffic Management, Safety,...

## European Air Transport Perspective

European Air Transport is a strategically important sector that makes a vital contribution to the EU's overall economy and employment, aviation supports close to 5 million jobs and contributes €300 billion, or 2.1% to European GDP. Despite the current economic crisis, global air transport over the long term is expected to grow by around 5% annually until 2030. As traffic increases so do concerns about safety. The common EU aviation policy aims at making Europe the safest air space in the world.

In order to fully exploit the economic potential of the sector, all European countries constantly work on several important aspects for European skies.

In December 2015 it was adopted an Aviation Strategy for Europe, a milestone initiative to boost Europe's economy, strengthen its industrial base and reinforce its global leadership position. A strong and outward-looking aviation sector will not only benefit businesses, but also European citizens by offering more connections to the rest of the world at lower prices.

The aviation market was gradually liberalized through three successive packages of measures adopted at EU level which covered air **carrier licensing**, **market access** and **fares**. So, decades of restrictions that had limited air transport markets in Europe and prevented cross-border investment by European airlines have been removed.

The gradual development of a more coordinated EU external aviation policy over the past decade has been the logical consequence of the creation of the EU internal market and associated common rules. This has generated significant economic benefits. But actually it comes the fresh ideas to move forward.

## Single European Sky: Key Facts and Figures

European skies and airports risk saturation. Already some 800 million passengers pass through Europe's more than 440 airports every year. Each day there are around 28,000 controlled flights – that means 9 million cross Europe's skies each year. 80% of these flights are operated within the EU. Today's situation is competently handled by the European air transport sector, but, under normal economic conditions, air traffic is expected to grow by up to 3% annually. The number of flights is expected to increase by 50% over the next 10-20 years. If it doesn't do something, chaos will reign. Europe would not only have to reject a large portion of potential demand, it would also be vulnerable to delays and flight cancellations on an unprecedented scale. If we continue with business as usual, congestion costs will increase around 50% by 2050. **The central problem is that Europe's air traffic management systems are fragmented and inefficient.** EU airspace remains fragmented into 27 national air traffic control systems, providing services from some 60 air traffic centers while the airspace is divided into more than 650 sectors. That means airspace is currently structured around national boundaries and so flights are often unable to take direct routes. On average, in Europe, aircraft fly 42 km longer than strictly necessary due to airspace fragmentation, causing longer flight time, delays, extra fuel burn and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In addition, current air traffic management technologies were designed in the 1950s. They are now archaic. The inefficiencies caused by Europe's fragmented airspace bring extra costs of around €5 billion a year. These costs get passed on to business and passengers. Air traffic control currently makes up 6-12% of the cost of a ticket. The US air traffic management system is twice as efficient as that of the EU; it manages double the number of flights for a similar cost from a third as many control centers. Faced with these challenges, in the late 1990s, proposals were formed to create a Single European Sky, removing national boundaries in the air, to create a single airspace:

- a) improving safety tenfold,
- b) tripling airspace capacity,
- c) reducing air traffic management costs by 50%,
- d) reducing the environmental impact by 10%.

Something needs to be done about the heavy airspace congestion causing lengthy delays on many European flights, and the strain on airport capacity due to the projected increase in traffic. This is the aim of the ambitious initiative for a Single European Sky (SES), launched in 2004. A second package of measures, known as SES II, followed in 2009 and had a greater emphasis on environment and cost efficiency. Actually it is looking at whether further measures are necessary

## Proposal for Single European Sky II: Towards more sustainable and better performing aviation – Citizens' Summary

The Air Traffic System ensures the safe and smooth organisation of air traffic in European airspace. In addition to the core air traffic control services, it consists of a range of other services, such as meteorological, communications, surveillance or aeronautical information services. The current European system handles some 28,000 daily commercial flights in addition to a wealth of other traffic.

### **What is the problem?**

- The European air traffic management (ATM) system is not performing as well as some of its counterparts elsewhere in the world. This costs an additional €2-3 billion every year.
- Every link in the aviation chain has to do its part for the environment. The contribution of air traffic management needs to be strengthened.
- The current excellent safety levels need to be maintained and even improved despite growing traffic and congestion.

### **What is the proposal?**

- To set binding performance targets for air navigation service providers
- To improve governance and ensure that tasks that can best be done at European network level are decided upon at European level.
- To update the original Single European Sky legislation of 2004 to take into account the lessons learned and evolution of the industry.
- To support a technological revolution of current air traffic management systems through the SESAR (Single European Sky ATM Research) program
- To broaden the competences of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) to air traffic management and airports, thus ensuring a total system approach to aviation safety.
- To integrate airports within overall capacity planning to ensure consistency.

### **What are the benefits?**

- Potential annual savings of €2 billion Euro compared to the current situation, with scope for more savings in the long run.
- Performance of Europe's air traffic management system on a par with the best in the world, despite the EU having a very congested and complex airspace.
- Cap on the growth of emissions per flight associated with air traffic management.
- All links in the aviation chain integrated within a single framework governing safety, capacity and performance.

### **Who will benefit?**

- All citizens will benefit from lower greenhouse gas emissions per each flight.
- All users – whether passengers, freight forwarders, military or private aviation – will benefit from better service at lower cost and higher safety levels.
- European manufacturing industry will benefit from being at the forefront of the technological revolution, enabling it to compete favourably in world markets
- Due to fewer delays and lower economic and environmental costs, the proposal will promote mobility and travel.
- New jobs will be created in the aviation industry overall by giving it a license to grow.

### **How much will it cost me?**

The new system will not cost the flying public anything directly, but will help to contain the cost of flying.

The industry, European Commission and the Eurocontrol organisation team up to invest 2.1 billion in the development phase of the SESAR programme, but the investment will pay back when the new technologies are implemented. Furthermore the industry is expected to invest over 20 billion during the deployment phase of the program, in order to secure the benefits derived from it.

### **How can the proposal help me change my behaviour?**

Due to less delays and lower economic and environmental cost the proposal will help mobility and allow people continue to travel.

New jobs are created in the overall aviation industry by securing a license to grow

Within the framework of the EU aviation strategy and Single European Sky (SES), the European Air Traffic Management (ATM) Master Plan is the main planning tool for ATM modernisation across Europe. It defines the development and deployment priorities needed to deliver the Single European Sky ATM Research (SESAR) vision. The Master Plan is regularly updated, through strong collaboration between all ATM stakeholders, in order to respond to the evolving aviation landscape.

## THE SESAR VISION

By 2040, an increasing number and variety of air vehicles will be taking to Europe's skies. The SESAR vision aims to deliver a resilient and fully scalable ATM system capable of handling growing air traffic made up of a diverse range of manned and unmanned air vehicles in all classes of airspace, in a safe, secure, sustainable manner.

The vision builds on the SESAR target concept and primarily on the notion of trajectory-based operations (TBO), which enable airspace users to fly their preferred flight trajectories, delivering passengers and goods on time to their destinations as cost-efficiently as possible. This will be enabled by a new architecture referred to as the 'digital European sky', in which resources (on the ground and in the air) are connected and optimized across the network and irrespective of altitude (up to and including super-high-altitude operations), class of airspace or aircraft performance (manned or unmanned), leveraging modern technology through a data-rich and cyber-secure connected digital ecosystem. In this environment, service providers will be able to collaborate and operate as if they were one organization with both airspace and service provision optimized according to traffic patterns. This architecture is also more compatible with the overall global vision for a more profound evolution of core ATM capabilities driven by new forms of traffic (drones and super-high-altitude operations). In order to manage future traffic growth safely while mitigating the environmental impact, the SESAR vision is to deliver a fully scalable traffic management system capable of handling growing air traffic, both manned and unmanned. The vision builds on the notion of trajectory-based operations, which enable airspace users to fly their preferred flight trajectories, delivering passengers and goods on time to their destinations as cost-efficiently as possible. This will be enabled by a digital transformation of the underlying infrastructure system, characterised by a significant increase in levels of automation and connectivity. The system infrastructure will become more modular and agile, allowing air traffic and data service providers, irrespective of national borders, to plug in their operations where needed, supported by a wider range of services. Airports will be fully integrated into the ATM network, which will facilitate and optimise airspace user operations. The vision will be realised across the entire European aviation network, rather than segmented portions of airspace, as is the case today. Combining airspace design and technological solutions delivering the vision will require changes in the way that technologies are developed and deployed, as well as in the way services are provided. This change in approach builds on the recommendations made in 'A proposal for the future architecture of the European airspace', developed by the SESAR Joint Undertaking with the support of the Network Manager and delivered to the European Commission in February 2019. Known as the Airspace Architecture Study, the proposal seeks to address the airspace capacity challenge in the medium to long term by combining airspace configuration and design with technologies to decouple service provision from local infrastructure and progressively increase the levels of collaboration and automation support. The findings and recommendations of the proposal are aligned with and integrated into the European ATM - Master Plan.

## Enabling industrial partnerships

Functional Airspace blocks (FABs) are intended to replace the current patchwork of 27 national air traffic blocks with a network of larger, regional blocks to gain efficiency, cut costs and reduce emissions. However, FABs have so far had rather inflexible constructions. The Commission is therefore proposing to ensure that the co-operation of service providers through the FABs can be set up in a more flexible way – to allow them to create industrial partnership and work with a wider range of partners to increase performance.

Integrating all aerial vehicles, manned and unmanned.

The realisation of the vision also depends on the integration of the wide variety of new aerial vehicles accessing the airspace alongside conventional manned aircraft. This is U-space, (Unmanned

–space) a framework designed to fast-track the development and deployment of a fully automated drone management system, in particular for but not limited to very low-level airspace. Scalable by design, U-space relies on high levels of autonomy and connectivity in combination with emerging technologies. Alongside U-space is the need to integrate large remotely piloted aircraft systems into manned traffic, with special provisions designed to compensate for the fact that the pilot is not on board the aircraft.

## Albanian Aviation Development and Modernization

The development and modernization of Albania's transport infrastructure, especially in the aviation sector has been and remains one of the top priorities of the Government of Albania. The aim has been :

- to create the preconditions for the development of other sectors of the economy,
- to increase the accessibility of freight and passengers in trade and service delivery, and
- To significantly contribute to overall economic growth and development of the economy.

The Civil Aviation Authority (ACAA) is a public and self-financed entity, under the Ministry of Infrastructures and Energy responsible for ATM safety regulation in Albania. The establishment of a self-financed and independent Authority has been guaranteed through Law Nr.10233 date 12.03.2010 as amended by Law No. 168/2014 date 10.12.2014 for the Civil Aviation Authority. The ACAA as a regulator is institutionally separated from the ANS service provider, Albcontrol sh.a, which is a joint stock company. Albania CAA and other aviation organizations in Albania are cooperating with EU in several Programs, which aim the full country integration into EU family including aviation community.

Albanian Air Navigational Services are provided by Albcontrol Sh.a. which is certified and designated as ATS, CNS, MET and AIS Provider by ACAA. Yet, Albcontrol holds a TO Certification based on EC Reg. 340/2015 as well.

**The main National Stakeholders** involved in ATM in Albania are - Ministry of Infrastructures and Energy;- Albanian Civil Aviation Authority;- Accident/Incident Investigation Body;- Ministry of Economic Development Trade and Enterprises;- Albcontrol Sh.a., Air Navigation Services Provider of Albania;- Ministry of Defense; - Air Force Command.- Tirana International Airport

## Geographical description of the Albanian FIR(s)

The geographical scope of this document addresses the Albanian FIR, Tirana FIR.

Tirana FIR is surrounded by FIRs of 4 States, namely Skopje FIR, Athens FIR, Brindisi FIR, and Belgrade FIR.



## ALBOCONTROL Sh.a, Air Navigation Service Provider

Albcontrol is a 100% state owned joint stock company, property of the Ministry of Economic & Finance. Albcontrol was established in 1992 as state-owned enterprise and it was transformed into a joint stock company under the name of National Air Traffic Agency on 03.02.1999. Since 2003 Albcontrol is a member of EUROCONTROL, joined CANSO (Civil Air Navigation Services Organization) in 2009 and starting from January 2016 it is a full member of CANSO Europe Region. On 3 May 2011, a new air traffic control facility was inaugurated in Albania as part of the National Airspace Modernization Project and was put on services on April 2012. It was implemented in partnership with US-based Lockheed Martin. It consisted in the improvement of Air Traffic Management (ATM) infrastructure and included new and upgrades of communications, navigation and surveillance systems. The Project also entailed installing an ILS (instrument landing system), a new air-ground and ground-ground communications system, and mono-pulse secondary surveillance radar. Naturally, operational and technical staffs were also trained in the new procedures.

Subsidiary	Joint Stock Company	Ownership	100%, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Enterprises
Services provided	Yes / Comments		
ATC en-route	Y Albcontrol is certified as ATIS Services Provider based on EC Reg. 1009/2002		
ATC approach	Y Albcontrol is certified as ATIS Services Provider based on EC Reg. 1009/2002		
ATC Aerodrome(s)	Y Albcontrol is certified as ATIS Services Provider based on EC Reg. 1009/2002		
AIS	Y Albcontrol is certified as ATIS Services Provider based on EC Reg. 1009/2002		
CNS	Y Albcontrol is certified as ATIS Services Provider based on EC Reg. 1009/2002		
MET	Y Albcontrol is certified as ATIS Services Provider based on EC Reg. 1009/2002		
ATC training	Y Albcontrol is certified as Training Organisation for initial and coordination Training on GPs for TAME, AFP and Bn route services.		
ATC training	N Albcontrol is not a training organisation. It is authorised to provide ATC training to foreign civil aviation organisations through tender procedures through the GUT that is provided afterwards. The latest ATC training and CANSO English Proficiency courses were performed in early 2019 at the National Air Traffic Control.		
Other	N/A		
Additional information:	Albcontrol is in process of converting its Certificates as per EC Reg. 1009/2002 within 2021.		
Provision of services in other States	N		
Annual Report published	Y		



## ATC Systems in use

Main ANSP part of any technology alliance <sup>4</sup>	N		
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### FOPS

Specify the manufacturer of the ATC system currently in use:	Lockheed Martin "Skyline" System
Upgrade <sup>5</sup> of the ATC system is performed or planned?	ATC system has been upgraded during 2018, consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Changes in MTCO functions</li><li>- Improvement in some controller tactical tools</li><li>- Implementation of FRA airspace in Tirana FIR.</li></ul>
Replacement of the ATC system by the new one is planned?	No plan.
ATC Unit	TWR, APP, ACC

### SOPS

Specify the manufacturer of the ATC system currently in use:	Lockheed Martin "Skyline" System
Upgrade of the ATC system is performed or planned?	The latest upgrade was performed in 2018
Replacement of the ATC system by the new one is planned?	N
ATC Unit	TWR, APP, ACC

## Albanian ATM Environment

Albania is a Member of the following international organisations in the field of ATM:

Organisation		Since
ECAC	✓	1988
EUROCONTROL	✓	2002
European Union	✓	N/A
FASA	✓	Management board Observer
ICAO	✓	1991
NATO	✓	2009
ITU	✓	1922

## Airspace Classification and OrganizationTypes of airspace

In Albania, the following types of airspace have been established:

- Uncontrolled airspace: All airspace of the Tirana FIR from GND to FL 115 and airspace outside airways/ATS routes from FL 115 up to FL 195. Uncontrolled Airspace is Class G Airspace;
- controlled airspace:
  - All airspace within Tirana TMA(C)/CTR (D), and the
  - ATS routes RNAV routes and airways below flight level 195 to flight level 115;
  - All airspace above flight level 195 Control Area (CTA/UTA) Tirana CTA consists of Tirana TMA, and all airspace within Tirana FIR from FL 115 inclusive to FL 660 inclusive. Tirana CTA is Class C Airspace.

*Note: Airspace outside airways from FL 115 up to FL 195 is Class G airspace.*

### **Terminal Control Area (TMA)**

TMA - type airspace has been established, published with a lower limit of 2 500 ft AMSL and an upper limit of FL 195. Tirana TMA is Class C Airspace.

### **Control Zone (CTR)**

CTR has been established around Tirana Rinas airport, as published GND up to altitude 2500 ft AMSL. Tirana CTR is class D airspace.

Airspace from FL195 and above is Free Route Airspace

## ATC Units

The ATC units in the Albanian airspace are ACC/APP and Tirana Aerodrome Control Tower. The ACC/APP unit provides ATC service to aircraft flying in the Albanian FIR, approaching and departing aircraft from Tirana International Airport. The services provided include ATS en- route, ATS approach and ATS aerodrome. There are 18 ATCOs and 2 assistant ATCOs working in the TWR unit and 41 ATCOs<sup>3</sup> working in the ACC/APP unit.

The ATS Directorate also includes the FMP and ASM sectors. The FMP sector consists of the head of the sector and two FMP officers. The ASM sector consists of the head of the sector and one ASM expert. The ATC units in the Albanian airspace, which are of concern to this LSSIP, are the following: ATC Unit Number of sectors Associated FIR(s) Remark

ATC Unit	Number of sectors		Associated FIR(s)	Remarks
	En-route	TMA		
Tirana ACC	3		Tirana FIR	Up to 3 ENR sectors could be opened if required, according to traffic levels and availability of controllers after QJT.
Tirana APP		1	Tirana TMA	1 TMA sector is co-located with the Tirana ACC

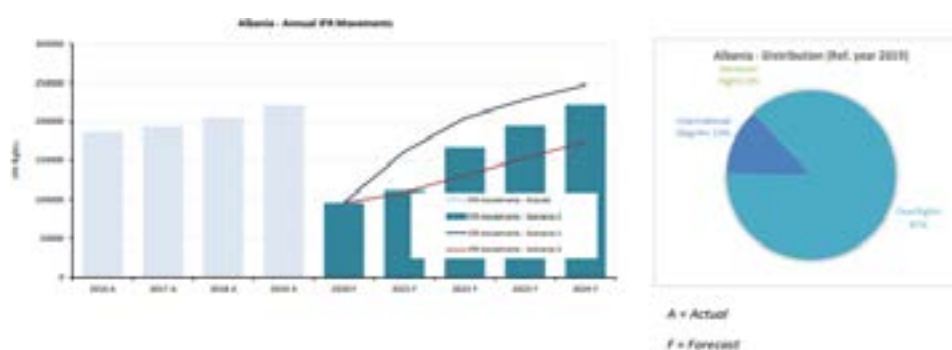
Albanian approach to SES :

- Membership in Eurocontrol since 2003
- Partnership in ECAA (European Common Aviation Area) in 2006. An organism of non EU countries undertaking to adopt the EU legislation in the field of aviation.
- Association agreement with EU
- Transposition of EU regulations into Albanian legislation since 2008 and on going
- Implementation of ATM Master Plan for ANS Albania finished by 2011.

ANSP Albania - Results due to SES Implementation :

- Increased capacity by more than 50% compared to 10 years ago
- Implementation of almost direct routings for airlines
- Traffic growth for 2019 + 8% compared to 2018
- Delays is zero minutes (no delays) vs European average 1.63 minutes per flight (gains in cost and environment)
- Horizontal en route flight efficiency 97% ( rate between the aircraft's shortest geographical trajectory and factual trajectory) (gains in cost and environment)

## Evolution of traffic in Albania



EUROCONTROL Five-Year Forecast 2020-2024								
FIR flights yearly growth		2017 A	2018 A	2019 A	2020 F	2021 F	2022 F	2023 F
Albania	Sc1				-56.5%	-66.1%	-26.9%	-11.5%
	Sc2	3.8%	6.1%	7.3%	-56.6%	-16.5%	-49.9%	-16.5%
	Sc3				-56.6%	-13.9%	-20.0%	-17.3%
ECAC	Sc1				-55.1%	-61.9%	-21.9%	-8.9%
	Sc2	4.0%	3.8%	0.8%	-56.4%	-16.6%	-41.9%	-14.1%
	Sc3				-56.6%	-14.5%	-17.5%	-14.8%

2020 Traffic in Albania decreased by 54% in 2020 compared to 2019.

## Summary of 2020 developments

The aviation sector in Europe, including in Albania, had to face severe difficulties during the year 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic is visible in a slower progress for some of the ongoing Objectives. The traffic returns close to the 2019 traffic volume (92%) are only expected by the year 2024. From an organizational point of view, significant changes are expected for the year 2021, due to the need to implement cost saving measures as a response to the dramatic decrease in air traffic and to cope with the pandemic situation.. The Objective Electronic Terrain and Obstacle Data has been implemented in 2020.

### Traffic and Capacity Summer Forecast (May to October inclusive):



### For Area Control Center (ACC):

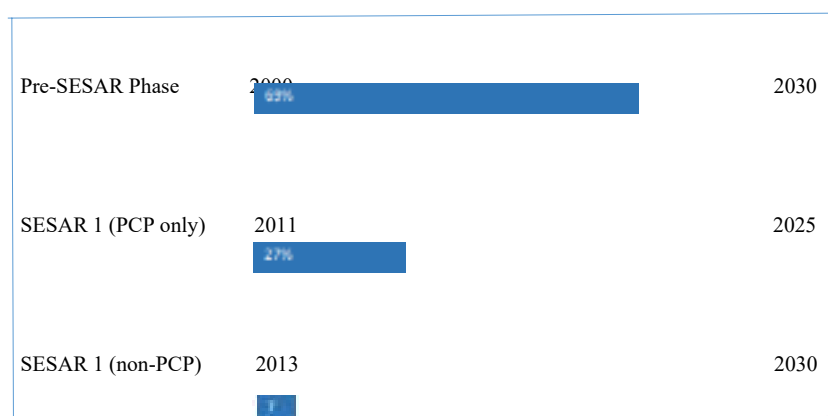


## Albanian Progress per SESAR Phase

The figure below shows the progress made so far in the implementation of the SESAR baseline (Pre-SESAR and SESAR1 non-PCP) and the PCP elements.

It shows the average implementation progress for all objectives grouped by SESAR Phases, excluding those for which the State is outside the applicability area as defined on a yearly basis in the European ATM Master Plan (Level 3) 2020, i.e. disregarding the declared "NOT APPLICABLE" LSSIP progress status.

The SESAR 1 (non-PCP) progress in the graphics below for this State is based on the following objectives: AOP14, AOP15, AOP16, AOP17, AOP18, ATC18, ATC19, ATC20, NAV12 and COM11.2

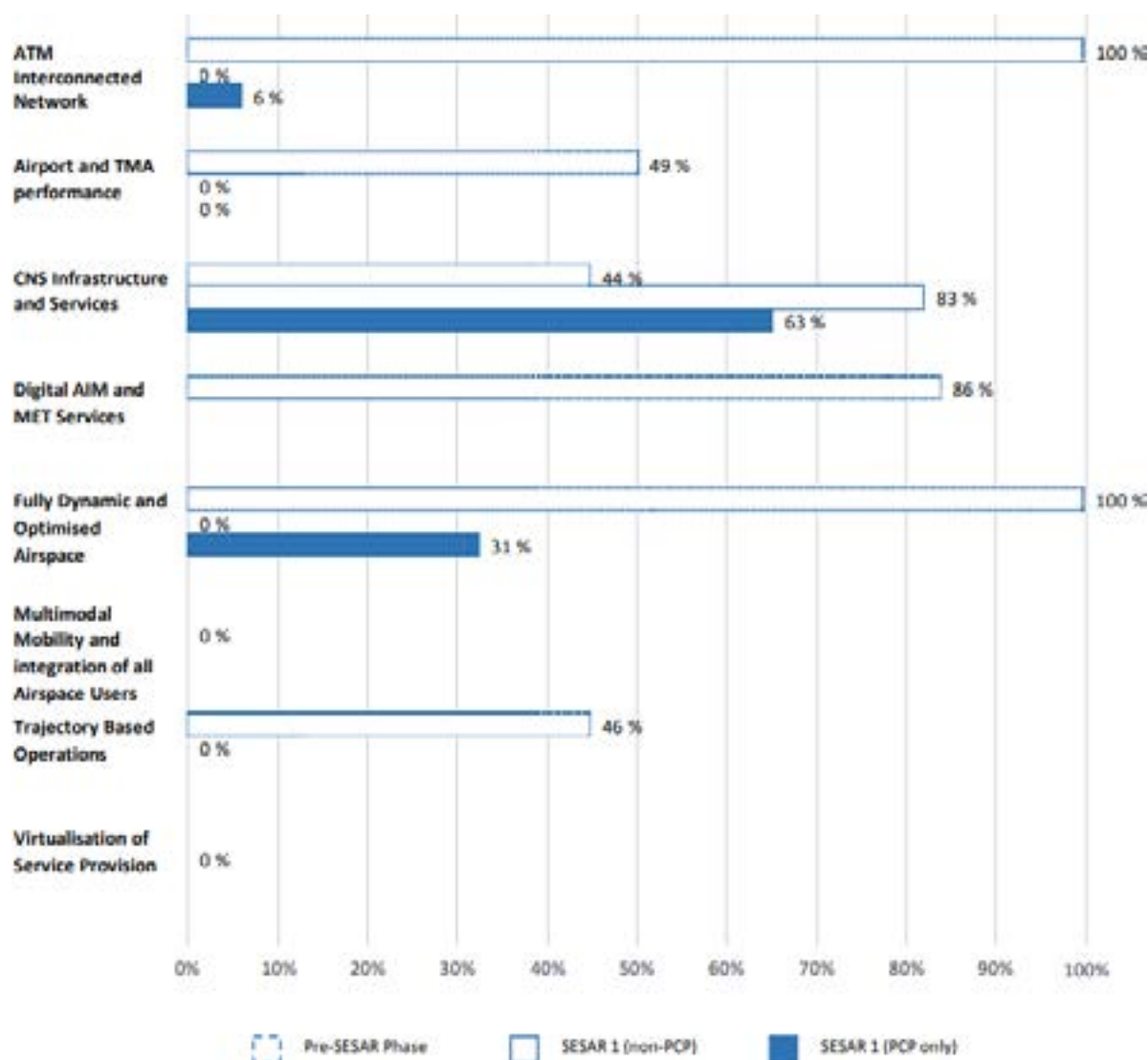


## Pilot Common Project

The **Pilot Common Project (PCP)** represented a first exercise for common projects in the deployment of the Single European Sky. The deployment framework of the PCP is overseen by the SESAR Deployment Manager (SDM) function, playing a key role in the monitoring, coordination and synchronization of the implementation projects involving a wide range of ATM stakeholders.

## Progress per SESAR Essential Operational Changes and Phase

The figure below shows the progress made so far, per SESAR Essential Operational Changes, in the implementation of the SESAR baseline and the PCP elements. The percentages are calculated as an average, per EOC, of the same objectives as in the previous paragraph.



## Cooperation activities FAB Co-ordination

The BLUE MED FAB is the European central/south-eastern FAB (Functional Airspace Block) initiative, whose partners are the States of Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and North Macedonia.

Today, the BLUE MED FAB is in its Implementation Phase, a coordinated deployment initiative in which operational and technical improvements are being delivered through a solid Implementation Program, which is at the same time a summary and a plan of all the activities deployed or to be undertaken by the BLUE MED working groups and task forces. This is bringing benefit to the Airspace Users in terms of enhanced efficiency, reduced delays and costs and lower environmental impact. Albania is an associate partner of the BLUE MED FAB Initiative and follows closely its developments.

## Multinational cooperation initiatives.JSPA Initiative

The Directors General of Civil Aviation Authorities as well as the Chief Executive Officers of the respective Air Navigation Service (ANS) providers of Albania, Kosovo, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Hungary, on 29 April 2013 signed a Letter of Intent on the Joint Service Provision Area Initiative (JSPA) in South East Europe, under the auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia took part in the Conference, strongly supporting the initiative, and expressing intention to join the signatory parties at a later stage, following internal procedure. The aim of JSPA initiative is to provide benefits for its participants and their

stakeholders through agreed projects whilst creating proactive relationships between regional CAAs and ANSPs. JSPA Initiative activities shall be based on real needs and possibilities, equality and utilization of existing resources, developed towards benefiting from common ideas and interests. JSPA aim is to further promote SES concept in the region. However, after 2017 its activities were limited.

### **Agreement for Co-operation between ACAA and EUROCONTROL**

The Albanian CAA and EUROCONTROL have signed a special agreement providing support to the development and improvement of the Albanian National Supervisory Authority resources and processes. This special agreement is in line with the objectives of the EU Single European Sky legislation.

### **Agreement for Co-operation between ALBCONTROL and ENAV**

ALBCONTROL, Albania ANSP and ENAV are collaborating for the electronic obstacle terrain data and the re-evaluation of the aeronautical charts. In this scope is also the revision of flight procedures and aeronautical charts included

### **Agreement for Harmonization and synchronization of FRALB with SECSIFRA**

The South East Common Sky Initiative Free Route Airspace (SECSI FRA) is a specified airspace within which airspace users may freely plan a route between a defined entry point and a defined exit point, with the possibility to route via intermediate (published or unpublished) waypoints, without reference to the ATS route network, subject to airspace availability. Within this airspace, flights remain subject to air traffic services. The main objective of SECSI FRA implementation is to offer opportunities for the users to improve efficiency of plannable direct routes/trajectories within enlarged cross-border free route airspace, as well as increased efficiency between SECSI FRA and neighboring airspaces. The overall scope of the South East Common Sky Initiative Concept of Operations is to provide an enabling framework for a harmonized implementation of Cross Border FRA within the AoRs of Austro Control, BHANSA, Croatia Control, Slovenia Control and SMATSA based on the agreed SECSI Roadmap. Albania is in the process of joining the SECSI-FRA on the AIRAC date of 02 December 2021. Approval for joining has been granted from all member states and we are in the process of preparing the Operational, Safety and Publication documents. Joining the SECSI-FRA will increase the efficiency as the main flow of traffic in Albania comes from the SECSI-FRA.

### **Airports**

Tirana International Airport is the only International Airport in Albania and is managed since 2005 by Tirana International Airport SHPK (TIA) that has taken the operational responsibility and the management from the Albanian state. Within the framework of a BOOT (BOOT: Build Own Operate Transfer) concession, It has set itself the goal of steadily optimizing operations at the new airport and making it into one of Albania's most up-to-date infrastructure facilities. Situated about 17 kilometers from the country's capital, Tirana, Tirana International Airport "Nënë Tereza" is Albania's most important air transport hub. It connects this south-eastern European country with Europe's major business centers and, among its many contributions, is supporting the development of tourism along Albania's nearly 450-kilometer-long Mediterranean coastline. Twelve years later, demonstrating significant growth, the Airport provides services to more than 2.6 million passengers annually and is now a modern gateway to the country, changing the image of Albania. On 1 April 2016, the Government of Albania and TIA signed an amendment to the Concession Agreement of TIA and took a major step towards the development of air transport and the liberalization of international flights in Albania. The Concession Period of TIA was immediately extended by two years, i.e. until April 2027, in exchange for the opening of Kukës Airport to international flights. In 2020, the airport handled 1,310,614 passengers, 15,150 Aircraft movements (departure and landing) and 1,797 tons Cargo.

### **Airport(s) covered by the LSSIP**

Referring to the List of Airports in the European ATM Master Plan Level 3 Implementation Plan Edition 2020 – Annex 2, it is up to the individual State to decide which additional airports will be reported through LSSIP for those Objectives.

The airport covered by the LSSIP document is Mother Teresa Airport (LATI), which is neither part of the 28 airports identified as potentially having an effect upon the network in terms of ATFCM delays nor part of the list of 57 Airports for which Airports and Environment Objectives are to be specifically monitored.

### **Objectives 2021**

- ASM Support Tools to Support Advanced FUA (AOM19.1),
- Voice over Internet Protocol in En-Route (COM11.1),

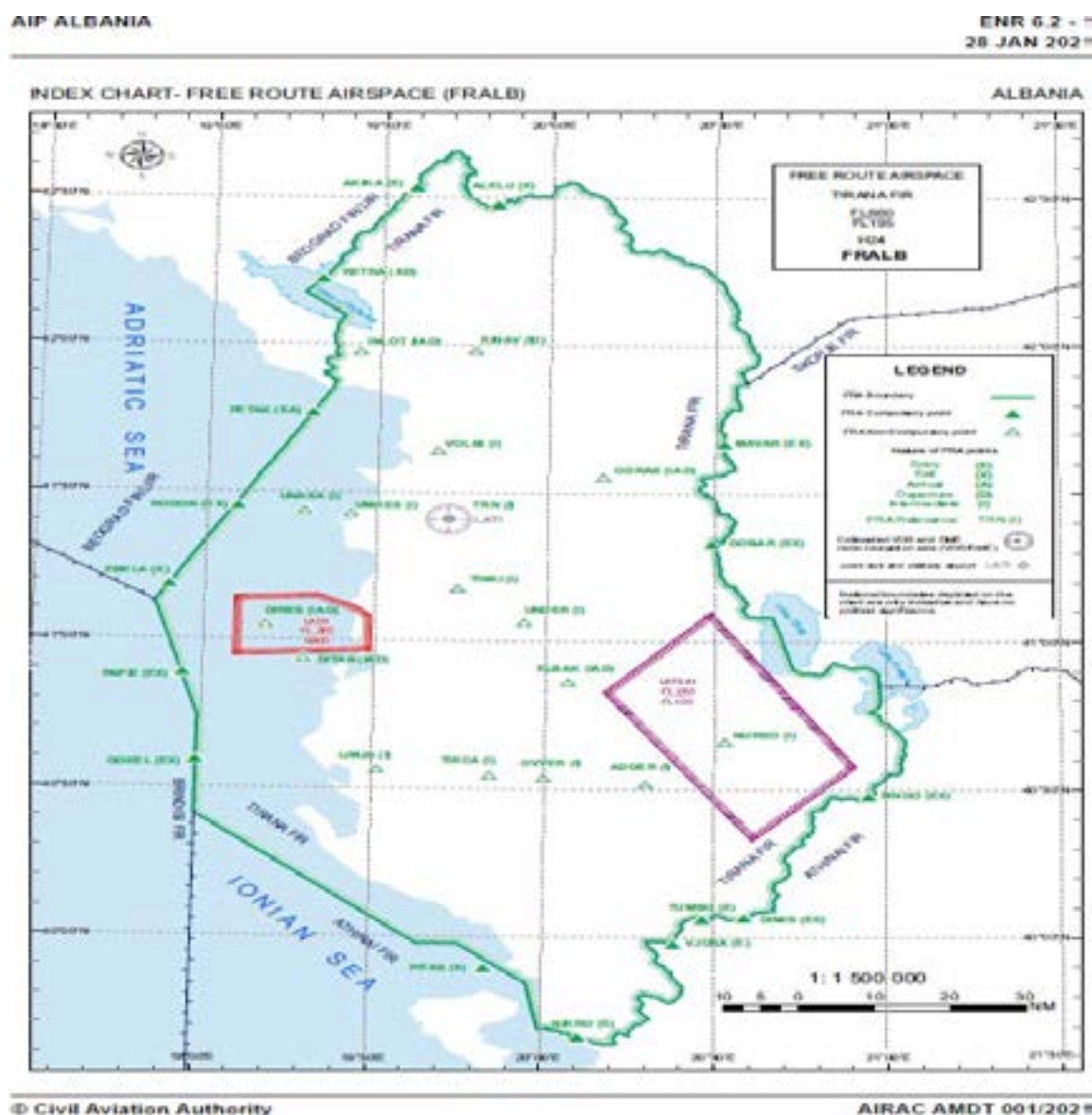


- Voice over Internet Protocol in Airport/Terminal (COM11.2),
- New Pan-European Network Service (NewPENS) (COM12),
- Aircraft Identification (ITY-ACID);
- Ensure Quality of Aeronautical Data and Aeronautical Information (ITY-ADQ),
- 8,33 kHz Air-Ground Voice Channel Spacing below FL195 (ITY-AGVCS2);
- Surveillance Performance and Interoperability (ITY-SPI).
- No capacity issues are foreseen for Tirana ACC in Summer 2021

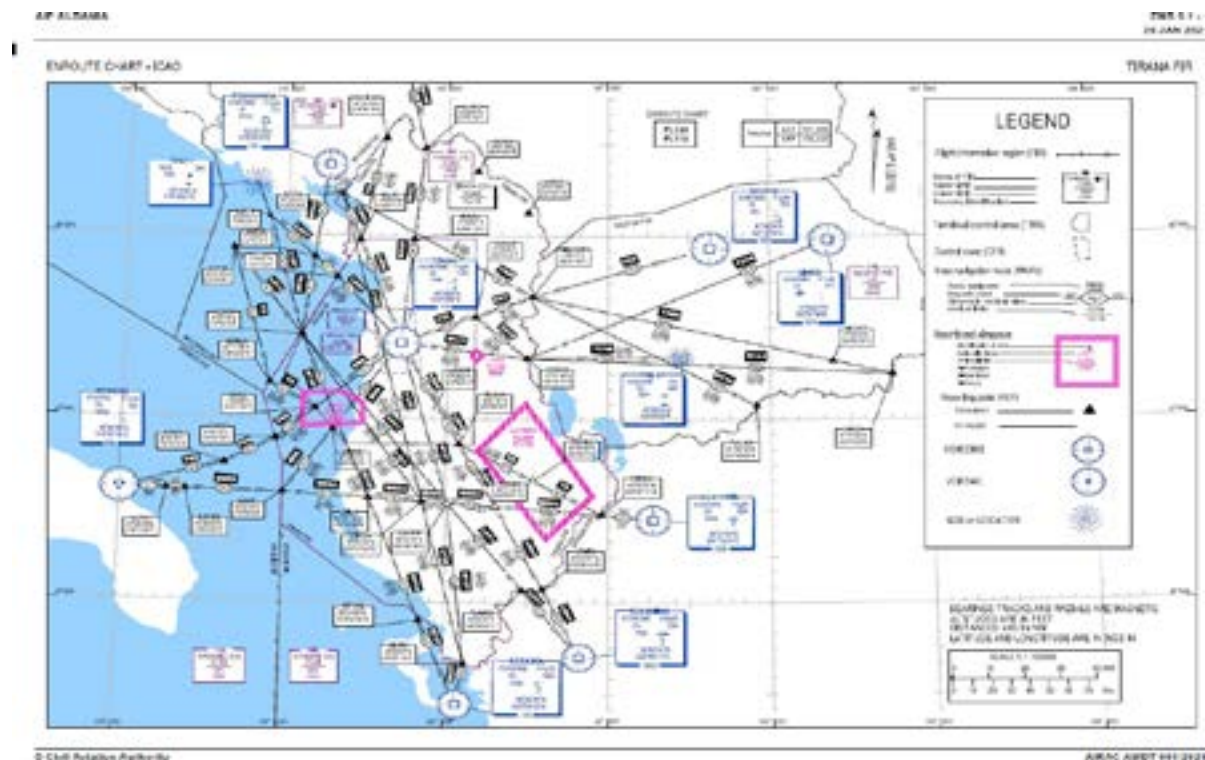
## Annexes

- INDEX CHART – FREE ROUTE AIRSPACE ALBANIA
- ENROUTE CHART-ICAO TIRANA-ALBANIA
- ANSP ALBANIA - ALBCONTROL – CENTER
- EUROPEAN FRAGMENTATION OF AIRSPACE
- INEFFICIENT ROUTES
- IMPROVEMENTS ARE POSSIBLE
- ANSP ALBANIA Progress per SESAR Key Feature and Phase

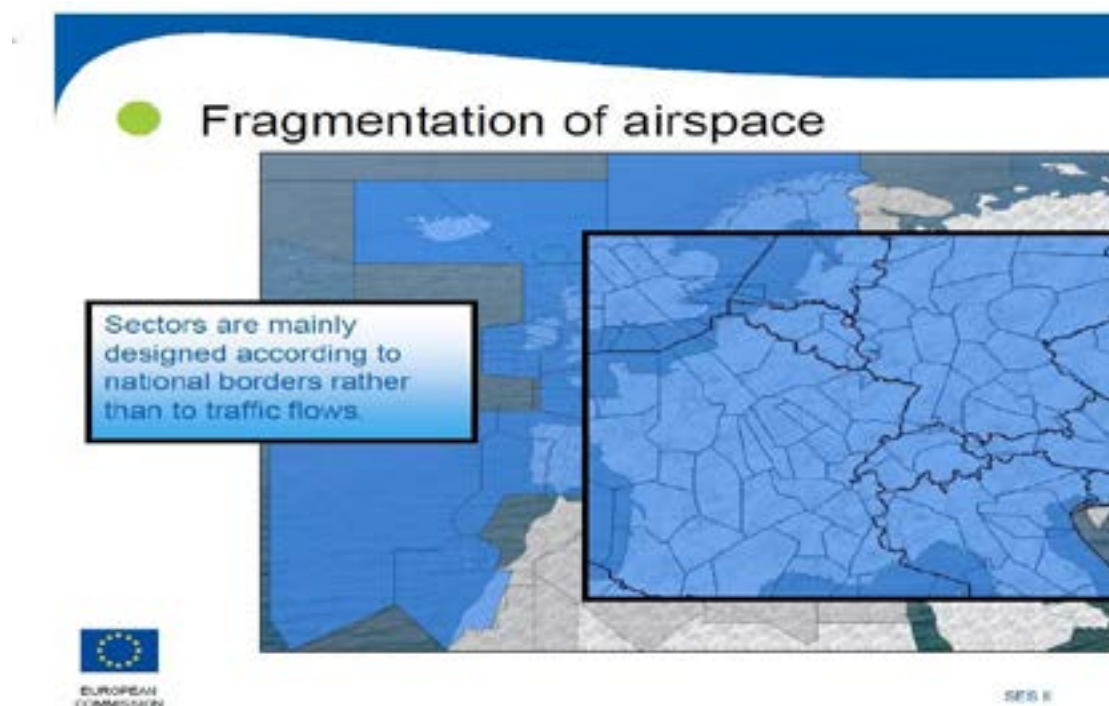
## INDEX CHART – FREE ROUTE AIRSPACE ALBANIA



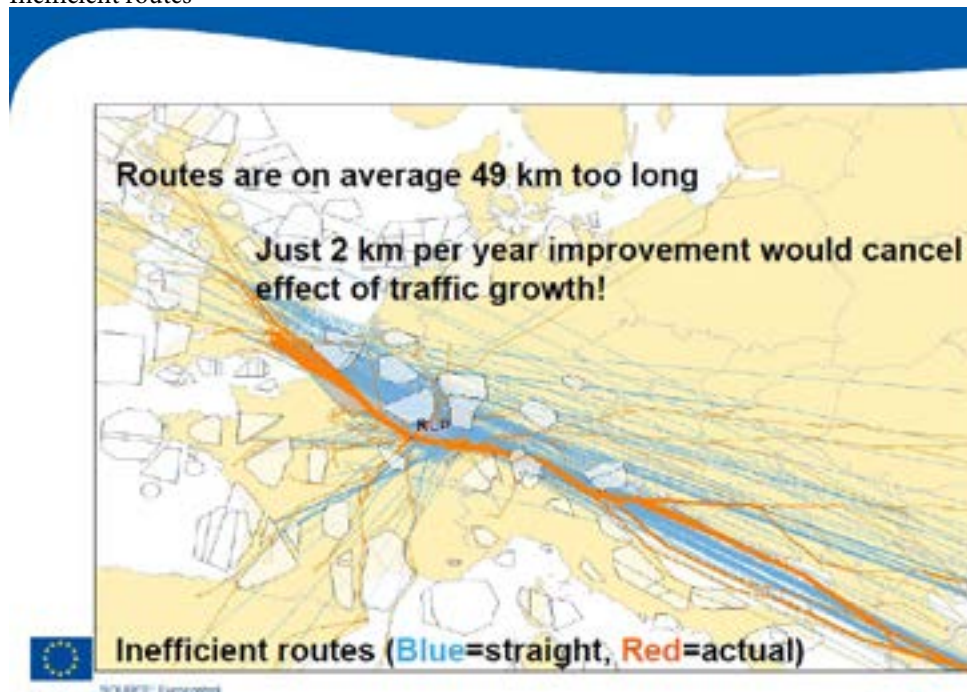
## ENROUTE CHART-ICAO TIRANA-ALBANIA



European Fragmentation of airspace



## Inefficient routes

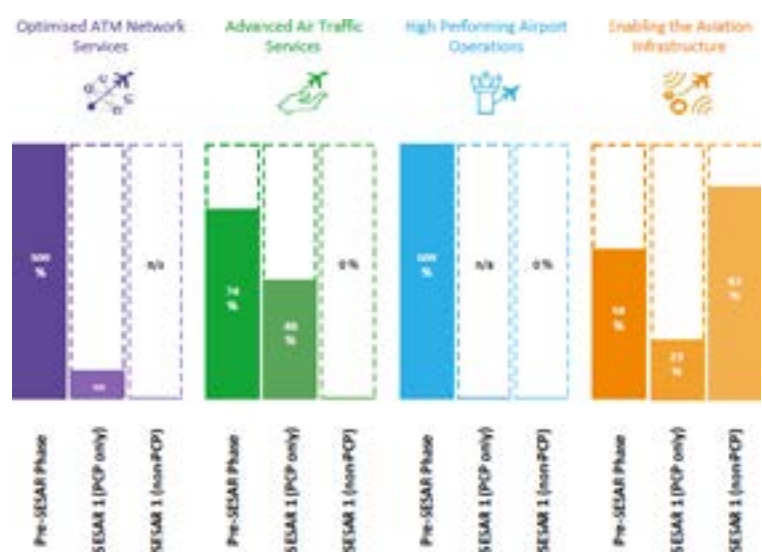


## Improvements are possible





ANSP ALBANIA Progress per SESAR Key Feature and Phase



ANSP ALBANIA - ALBCONTROL - CENTER

## References

European ATM Master Plan Level 3 ( ESSIP process) EUROCONTROL Local Single Sky Implementation ( LSSIP process)  
ICAO Aviation System Block Upgrades (ASBU) Implementation Monitoring Report in the ICAO EUR Region.  
Global Air Navigation Plan ( GANP)LSSIP 2020-ALBANIA  
ALBCONTROL Integrated Management System Manual ( IMSM) ALBCONTROL Safety Management System Manual ( SMSM)  
ALBCONTROL ATM Manual  
Council Regulation (EU) No 721/2014 SESAR - Joint Undertaking  
Aviation Index – 2020

PANEL V

# **THE CHALLENGES OF THE HEALTH SYSTEM REFORM**

# Contribution of Medical Anthropology in the Treatment of Health Care

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**Prof. Dr. Aleksandër DHIMA**

**Professor of Anthropology at the European University of Tirana, Albania**

## Scopes and Objectives

This paper deals with the achievements of *medical anthropology*, as one of the subdivisions of Anthropology, little or not known until now in Albania.

It relies, first of all, on the health culture of the peoples and their social construct in relation to health, which is dictated among others- by cultural norms and local decision-making institutions.

The second part of this paper is dedicated to the *Anthropology of COVID-19*. According to the worldwide opinions, this new *pandemic* has hit human populations- perhaps like never before- at least in terms of the extent shown by previous models and forecasts, changing their environmental balance. It brings the personal experiences of some medical anthropologists, who have researched specific aspects of this *pandemic* in different areas of the Globe.

## Current Agenda of Medical Anthropology

Today's research in the field of *Medical Anthropology* can be summarized in four basic directions:

- a) multiple development of medical knowledge and health care systems;
- b) further strengthening of social ties between the patient and the treating physician;
- c) inclusion/ integration in medical protocols of cultural peculiarities in different social environments;
- d) taking into account in the medical treatment the interaction of social, environmental and biological factors that affect the health and morbidity of both the individual and the relevant community as a whole.

## Anthropology of COVID-19

The *COVID-19 pandemic* has engulfed the global human population with a sudden "punch".

But today' anthropologists are of the opinion that the time has come for a new understanding of people in relation to their social, ecological and with each other words.

Each essay, recently written by prominent anthropologists around the world, reflects the common goal of providing real-time reflections on, so to speak, the evolving/ rapidly changing opinions from this *pandemic*.

Eben Kirksey has witnessed relationships between humans and other living species from his early field trips to West Papua. Providing the cultural and biological background of the natives, the author insists on a new focus on the show rather than the origin, thus avoiding a trunk search for solutions in favor of a *rhizomatic* exploration of multiple pathways (E. Kirksey, 2019).

Others encourage researchers to think about the impact of *COVID-19* on aging issues (A. Sadruddin & MC Inhorn, 2020: 17-23). Dealing with personal experience in the United States, Kenya, and Rwanda, they provide compelling comparative evidence.

Although some in the United States seem willing to dehumanize aging and call for it to be “sacrificed,” medical anthropologists oppose such thinking and instead claim that caring for the elderly is an important part of to be human.

Agustín Fuentes offers a bio-social perspective on both forms of *pandemic*, in terms of the meaning of “social/ physical distance”. He notes, for example, that “*not being sociable with people does not create opportunities to overcome the consequences of illness*” and that, when people are isolated, “*bad things happen*”. These *bad things*, according to the local mentality, include “*physical and psychological damage*” (A. Fuentes, 2002). In explaining the nature of the current *pandemic*, this perspective also emphasizes the role of primitive *Homo sapiens* in reshaping Earth’s ecosystems, and the need to understand *virus biology* as well as the *social context* of the *pandemic*.

Reporting from the Canadian capital, Jen Pylypa studies how the *pandemic* was beginning to affect food purchases (J. Pylypa, 2020: 33-38). She invited members of her focus-group to the *Health and Globalization Course*, just at the time the virus shut down her university. This essay constitutes an in-depth judgment by comparing *COVID-19* with other recent *disease epidemics*. According to her, this *pandemic* is important, because it is directly affecting the West to a greater degree, compared to previous *local epidemics*. On this occasion, she suggests to the Canadian public to gain more knowledge about the geographical specifics, while rightly emphasizing “panic shopping”.

Focusing on a contradictory cultural gesture, Bjarke Oxlund emphasizes the idea that “*biology and culture cannot be separated when considering COVID-19*” (B. Oxlund, 2020: 39-44). Like many other researchers, he studied the geographical distribution of *HIV/ AIDS* in Uganda and South Africa, where he found that there was an immune deficiency in children.

In this essay he is against the social mandate of physical distancing, as a frontal defense against *COVID-19*, noting that while the embodied practice of shaking hands can transport disease, it can also convey inappropriate meanings to the survival of interpersonal relationships.

Trâm Luong writes about life at the time of *COVID-19* in Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), where normally intense air pollution seemed to be declining after the *pandemic* and social media was playing a particularly important role in shaping the idea of limiting social relationships. On the one hand, the “flood” of messages in Vietnam’s largest city was creating hysteria about the spread of the disease, while the government, on the other hand, was also using mobile communication in an attempt to calm people’s fears and controlling behaviors such as “panic purchases”. This policy brought, according to her, the renewal of trust in the Vietnamese state (T. Luong, 2020: 45-49).

Erik Henry brings his experience to the Chinese communities living in Canada to focus on the question of whether the *pandemic* is reshaping this community with typical Chinese cultural “cuts.” Pointing to China’s long-standing efforts to actively cultivate “a collective identity imagined for its citizens”, he suggests that the *pandemic* represents an important episode in defining what it means to be Chinese. For Chinese communities in Canada, these developments have highlighted pre-existing cultural fragments, which are likely to have been exaggerated by the *pandemic* (ES Henry, 2020: 50-54).

Caroline Rouse, a prominent medical anthropologist, has focused her essay on the political and structural issues that planted “*the seed in a fertile ground for the spread of COVID-19 rather than the biological features of the virus itself*” (CM Rouse, 2020 ). Dealing with field research and her experience of scientific knowledge related to the *pandemics* of humanity’s past, she explains how ideology and selective policymaking have shifted the situation from a game of manipulation to a life-or-death struggle. long in the context of *structural inequality*.

Rijul Kochhar invites scientists to consider the “essential” steps recommended to avoid *COVID-19 infection*. Not all peoples and social strata within themselves are able to take “substantial measures” and- to date- little has been articulated to suggest achievable strategies in this regard; current opportunities (especially financial ones) to stay home are unappropriated, because they apparently do not have all the material resources for such an action. By taking the individual as the basis of choice, the joint response to the *pandemic* thus loses the chance to predict social responses rather than individual ones. Adequate responses to *COVID-19* require attention for all populations globally, as well as the coexistence of emergencies involving universal health care, climate change, and civil liberties (R. Kochhar, 2020).

David Troolin brings an important perspective as an anthropologist, teacher and longtime resident of Papua and New Guinea. News from this region about *COVID-19* is sparse and information on how Papua and New Guinea residents are interpreting and responding to the *pandemic* has been inaccessible to our readers. This essay provides contextualized knowledge about the “*ways of knowing the disease*” by locals, beliefs and practices formed in a complex social environment and, what is important, after era of colonialism. As elsewhere in remote Pacific areas, epidemiological advice about social distancing is seen as deeply at odds with community values, leading to disagreements between government directives and local understanding about vulnerability and protection against *pandemic* damage (DE Troolin, 2020: 84-90).

## Conclusion

The experiences of the medical anthropologists cited above have not felt more valuable and important than their involvement in the analysis of the facts to date on the spread of the *COVID-19 pandemic* and the socio-cultural response of different population groups.

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# The role of the Laboratory and Radiology Technician decisive and essential in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of patients with Covid

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**Flutura NELA**

Assistant lecturer of radiology UET, Diagnostic radiographer

**Sulejman HAXHI**

Assistant lecturer of radiology UET, Diagnostic radiographer

## Abstract

*Since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic, the challenges in providing health care have been coming to the fore and the increase of positive test cases with Covid 19 has increased the demand for radiological examinations mainly chest radiography or computed tomography. In our country in one year the pandemic has had a large number of victims during the last three months of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021.*

*From the daily hospital practices a very high demand for pulmonary examinations as a result of the pandemic has been noticed. Generally diagnostic radiology departments have worked under increased stress and staff shortages or reduced staff for a variety of factors, including cases of infections of the department staff themselves.*

*There was and still are many challenges that radiology technicians faced during these times, radiology technicians are professionals who work on the front line, in direct contact with patients affected by covid-19, performing first-instance examinations such as X-rays, computed tomography, but without forgetting Radiotherapy, Medicine Nuclear, Magnetic Resonance, Home X-ray.*

*The aim of this study is to evaluate the role of the radiologist in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of patients with Covid-19. Also to assess the growing demand for radiological examinations, especially chest CT.*

*To reinforce the study we have obtained comparative data from March 2019 to March 2020, comparing them with those of March 2020 to March 2021.*

*We have also received reports from the Ministry of Health, INSTAT and IPH, to make a correlation between them.*

**Key word:** literature review, data analysis, literature researching, writing a review.

## Introduction

**SARS-CoV-2:** emerged in November 2019 in Wuhan, a city in the Hubei province of China, The initial and still widely held theory is that the virus originated in the **Huanan seafood “wet” market in Wuhan, China**, which is known for the sale of wild animals and their meat, some of which may have been infected with the virus.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) that mainly affects the respiratory system but can also cause damage to other body systems (cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, renal, and central nervous systems).

The infection may present asymptotically, as a mild “flu-like” illness, or severely with shortness of breath and life-threatening complications. Individuals who are over 65 years of age, immunosuppressed, or have preexisting conditions have a much higher risk of developing severe symptoms and complications. Management is based on supportive care, antiviral, and immunomodulatory.

## Diagnostics

The RT-PCR test is currently the only test being used to confirm cases of acute COVID-19 infection. A positive test for SARS-CoV-2 generally confirms the diagnosis of COVID-19, regardless of the patient's clinical status. Reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction testing can be negative initially. If suspicion of COVID-19 remains, the patient should be retested every 2–3 days. In severe cases, swabs from the upper respiratory tract may be negative, while specimens from the lower respiratory tract are positive. These tests can also yield false negatives in 20%–30% of cases.<sup>1</sup>

## Diagnostic radiology

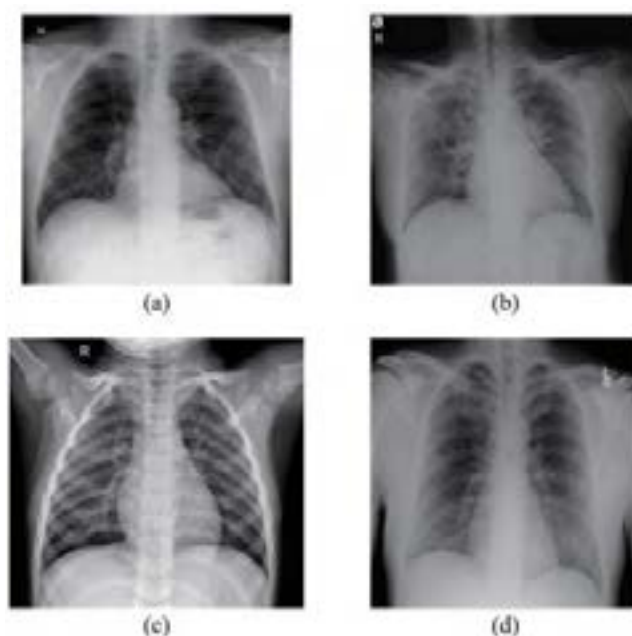
The main radiological methods for the examination of the lung are chest radiography and chest CT scan, both of these methods use ionisation radiation in their basis concepts and application. Chest X-ray is the most commonly-ordered radiological screening test for pulmonary disease. Chest radiography can be taken from convention radiography systems or equipment, computed radiology systems or digital radiology systems. Radiological findings associated with COVID-19 are not specific to the infection; they overlap with other respiratory illnesses including influenza, H1N1, SARS, and MERS.

Computed tomography (CT) systems use a series of X-ray images to create an image volume dataset with slices that can be manipulated on any plane using advanced visualization software. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic the Computed Tomography (CT) imaging in the diagnosis and evolution of COVID-19 has been a complementary diagnostic tool, sometimes superior to the technique of election e.g. RT-PCR, because of its high early number of false negatives produced.

The primary findings of COVID-19 on chest radiograph and CT are those of atypical pneumonia or organizing pneumonia. The ground-glass and/or consolidative opacities are usually bilateral, peripheral, and basal in distribution.<sup>2</sup>

A recent international survey conducted by the International Society of Radiology and the European Society of Radiology found important variations in imaging practices related to COVID-19<sup>3</sup>. Several countries requested advice from WHO on the role of chest imaging in the diagnostic work-up of patients with probable or who are suspected of having COVID-19 and in the clinical management of patients with confirmed COVID-19. As a consequence, WHO undertook the development of a rapid guide on the use of chest imaging in the diagnosis and management of COVID-19.

The coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic continues to spread, confronting healthcare professionals around the world with unprecedented clinical and operational challenges. As they struggle to deal with this extraordinary situation, at the same time they must also continue to care for other patients.



Almost every hospitalised Covid patient needs a CT scan, which uses computers and rotating X-ray machines to create cross-sectional images of the body, at some point to monitor the progression of the disease. CT chest is the most important imaging modality in detecting lung changes in COVID-19 infection.

The researchers have previously focused on detecting and classifying lung pathologies, such as fibrosis, emphysema and lung nodules, through medical imaging. Common symptoms presented by suspected COVID-19 infections include respiratory distress, cough and, in more aggressive cases, pneumonia - all visible via medical imaging such as computed tomography (CT) scans or X-rays.

The figures below give different radiological images of the lung radiographs (a) X-ray with PA view of a patient with COVID-19; (b) X-ray with AP view of a patient with COVID-19; (c) X-ray of a healthy patient from Dataset A; (d) X-ray



of a healthy patient

## Role of Chest CT in Diagnosis and Management

Many studies have been done on the role of computed tomography in diagnosing Covid 19 pneumonia.

Multiple studies done worldwide have shown that Chest CT has very high sensitivity (>95%) and relatively poor specificity for detection of Covid-19. These results suggest that a complementary approach combining the high sensitivity of chest CT with the high specificity of RT-PCR may be effective for early COVID-19 diagnosis. CT also has the advantage of obtaining faster results when compared to RT-PCR.

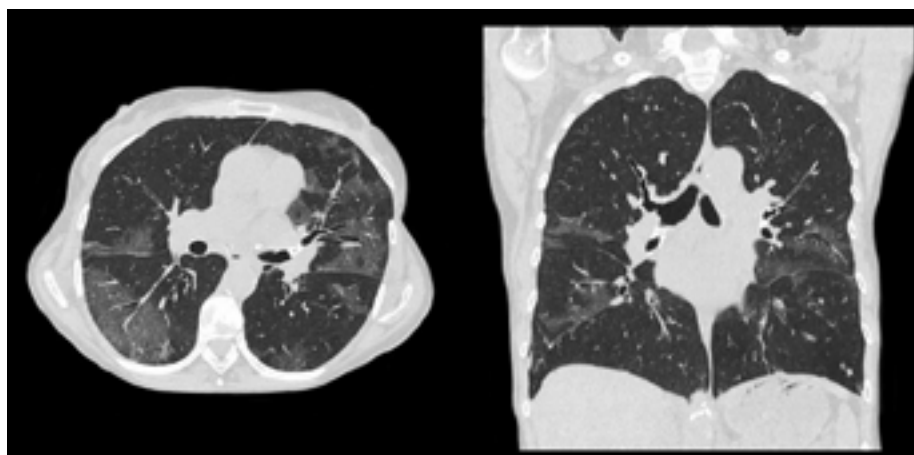
Chest CT has a low rate of missed diagnosis of COVID-19 (3.9%, 2/51) and may be useful as a standard method for the rapid diagnosis of COVID-19 to optimize the management of patients. However, CT is still limited for identifying specific viruses and distinguishing between viruses.<sup>4</sup>

In another study is seen that the sensitivity and specificity of chest CT for COVID-19 are reported to be 80%–90% and 60%–70%, respectively<sup>5</sup>. Thus, imaging is reserved for those cases where it will impact patient management and is clinically indicated or to evaluate for unrelated urgent and/or emergent indications. This typically occurs in cases where an alternative diagnosis is being ruled out or being considered for acute symptom worsening. In our current workflow and with the accuracy and rapidity of RT-PCR testing, there is no need for immediate CT imaging. In addition, if symptom worsening is thought to be secondary to COVID-19, imaging would not change management, as current treatment consists of oxygen and supportive care.

When possible, imaging is performed at sites with less foot traffic and with fewer critically ill patients in that area to avoid secondary patient and staff exposure. Considerations are also being made to implement containment zipper (a room isolation tarp barrier with a zipper for room access) to separate the control area from the CT scanner room.

Imaging is performed in the imaging center nearest to the patient and, if possible, at the ambulatory clinic. This approach limits the transit of contagious patients and potential exposure of others. When possible, portable imaging is performed (both portable radiography and portable CT in patient rooms) to limit equipment, room, and hallway decontamination requirements.

**FIGURE 1** CT scan of a patient with chest COVID-19 pneumonia. Axial and coronal view.



## Role of radiologic technologist on COVID 19 pandemic

Radiologic technologists are in the front lines to deliver care for COVID-19 patients, with some losing their lives during their daily work. It is critical for the radiology department to ensure the personal safety of radiologic technologists and avoid cross-infection from coronavirus.

Radiologic technologists responsible for CT scanning are at a high risk of direct or indirect exposure to pathogens. Even more, as in the early stage of infection of the SARS-COV-2 virus, an exposed individual is asymptomatic. Radiologic technologists are thus at risk of occupational exposure to the SARS-COV-2 virus, due to cross-infection. This endangers the personal safety of radiologic technologist. Therefore, it is of particular importance to describe how to avoid the cross-infection

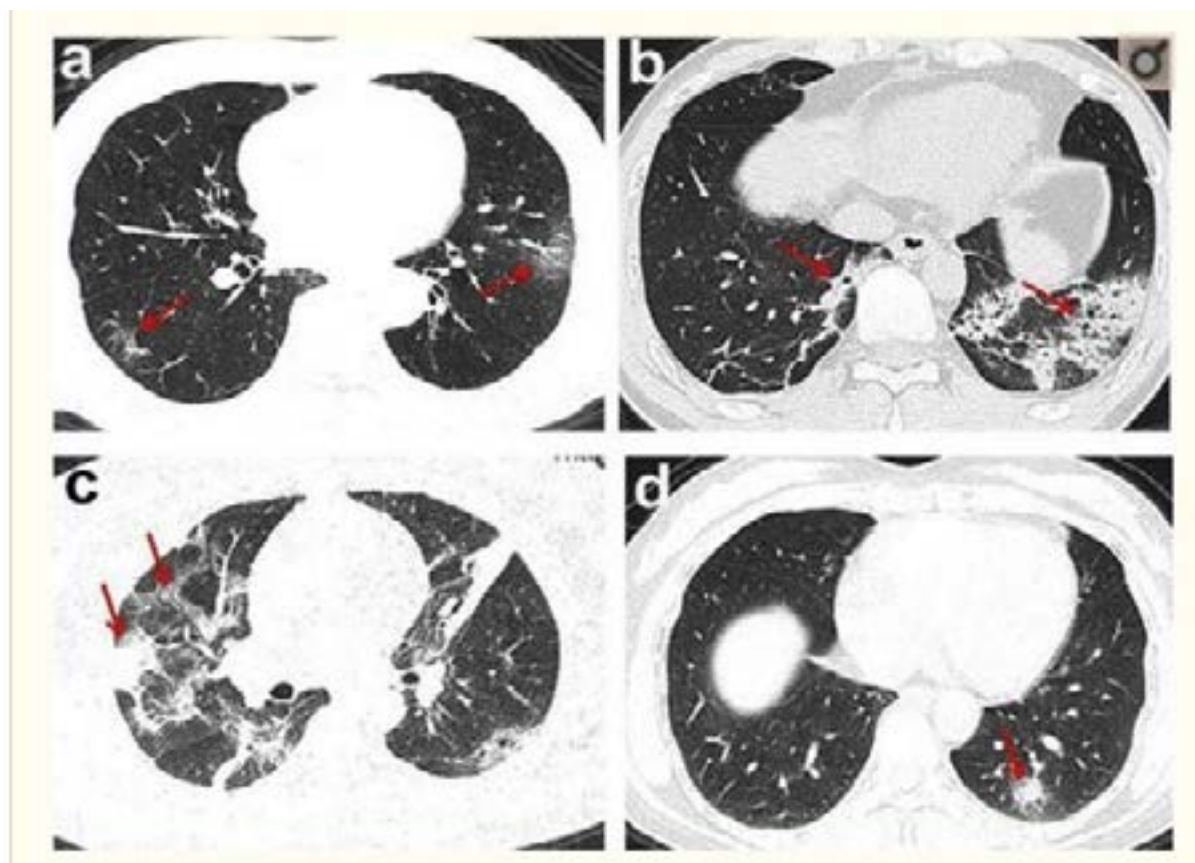
<sup>4</sup> Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Role of Chest CT in Diagnosis and Management : American Journal of Roentgenology : Vol. 214, No. 6 (AJR) (ajronline.org)

<sup>5</sup> Ai T, Yang Z, Hou H, et al. Correlation of Chest CT and RT-PCR Testing in Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in China: A Report of 1014 Cases. Radiology 2020 Feb 26;200642 [Epub ahead of print]. Bai HX, Hsieh B, Xiong Z, et al. Performance of radiologists in differentiating COVID-19 from viral pneumonia on chest CT. Radiology 2020 Mar 10;200823 [Epub ahead of print]

in the radiology department.<sup>6</sup>

As radiographers work on the frontline, they should be aware of the potential risks associated with Covid-19 and engage in optimal strategies to reduce these. Their role in vetting, conducting and often reporting the imaging examinations is vital, as well as their contribution in patient safety and care. Medical Imaging should be limited to critically ill patients, and where it may have an impact on the patient management plan.

**FIGURE 2** CT manifestations of Covid-19 disease. a. Ground-glass opacities, b. Consolidations, c. Consolidations with ground- glass opacities, d. Solid nodule.



During this scientific work we have studied data from some (four in total) private hospitals regarding the impact of the pandemic on daily work in radiology and also compared the increased demands for radiological examinations and the pandemic curve obtained from data on the number of cases with covid-19 (Worldometer) for the period of time from March 2020 - March 2021, to compare the rising curve of radiological examinations and confirmed active cases.

The tables below show how this trend of radiological demands has ground during the peak of pandemic and therefore radiology departments have been under high pressure management and ability to perform the huge demands of radiologic examinations correctly.

## Materials and methods

Considering the importance of radiological examinations, mainly chest CT scan and chest x ray, all this kind of examinations performed in 4 different private hospitals were taken under this study.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the role of the technician as well as radiological examinations in the early diagnosis of Covid-19. Another main objective of this study was to show the tendency unjustified recommendations of chest CT in the first symptoms of SARS- COV-2 infection, seriously increasing radiation in patients.

The number of chest CT scan examinations performed from March 2020 to February 2021 was studied. The same scheme was followed for the number of examinations performed in March 2019 - February 2020 in order to compare them. The number of examinations taken was selected regardless of gender, age or demographic distribution.

The devices used for the examination are digital radiography regardless CR or DR and computed tomography of different

<sup>6</sup> Radiology department strategies to protect radiologic technologists against COVID19: Experience from Wuhan (nih.gov)

year of manufacture and different configuration of detectors. Data were also obtained on the number of cases with COVID-19 (Worldometer) for the period from March 2020 - March 2021, to make a comparison between the rising curve of radiological demands and confirmed active cases.

## Results

Once the data were obtained, the relevant tables as well as graphs were constructed to assess the trend of the number of examinations curve and the number of confirmed cases infected with SARS-COV-2.

Table no.1 shows the number of examinations performed in the months (March 2020 - February 2021) comparing them with the months (March 2019 - February 2020). Also graphs No.1 and 2 show the comparison of examinations between 2 different years (2019-2020 vs 2020-2021).

The data obtained show a significant increase of performed examinations, especially in the second half of 2020. The curve starts and rises significantly over the months reaching a peak in November 2020 and then follows a slight decline over the months of December and January of the same year.

The total number of examinations performed during the period of 2020-2021 is about ten times higher than that of examinations performed during 2019-2020. This indicates the high sensitivity of the scanner for early diagnosis of COVID19, as well as for patient follow-up. Apart from the positive side, what was noticed was the clinically unjustified requests for scanning examinations, which lead to the increased radiation dose accumulated.

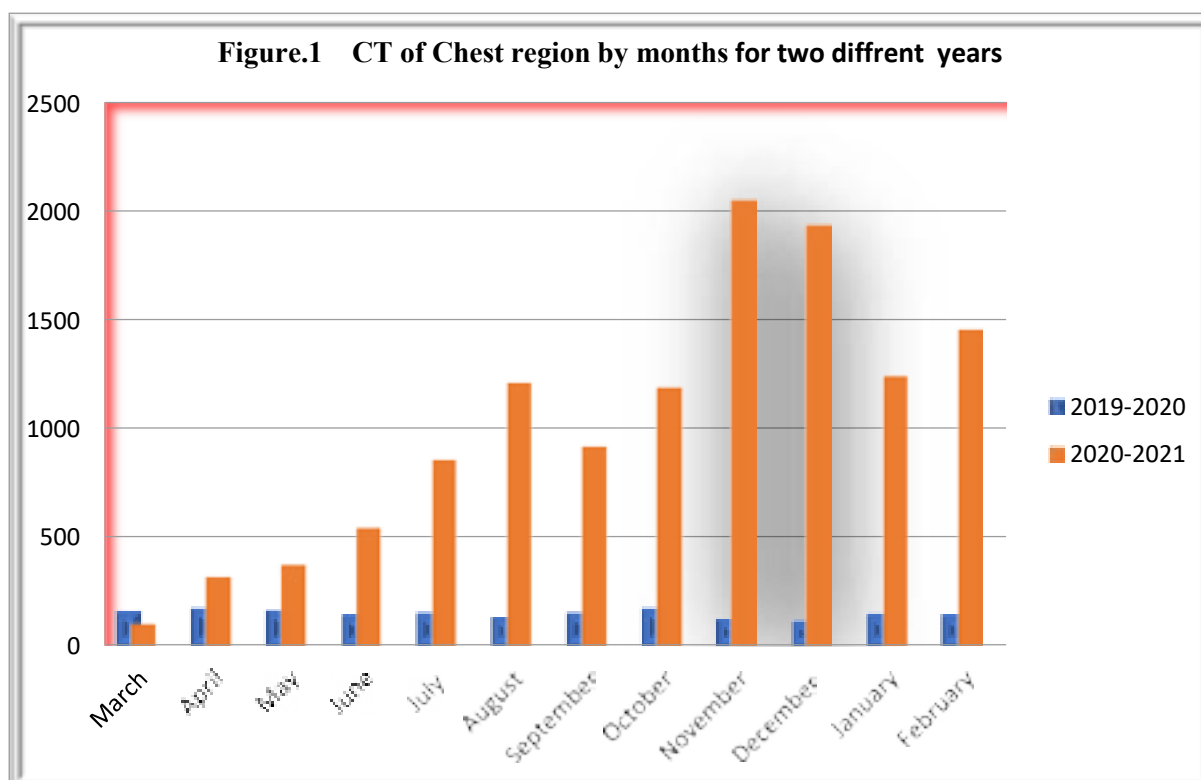
Table no. 2 and graph no. 2 and 3, show us the number of positive cases infected with COVID 19. Table 2 and graph No. 3 and 4, reveals a significant increase of positive cases with COVID 19, reaching a peak in November-December 2020, with a slight decline throughout January, and rising again with a maximum peak in February.

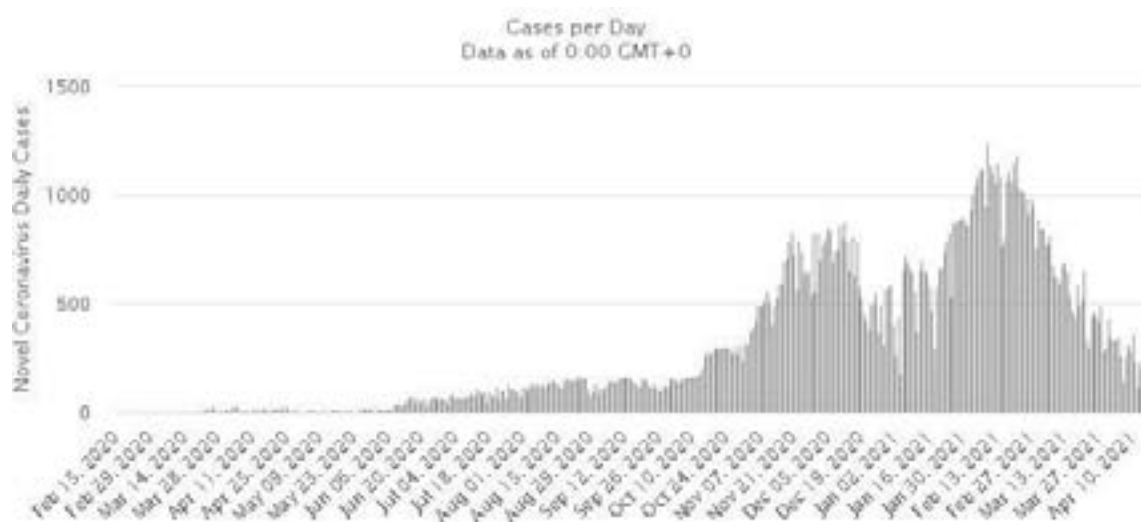
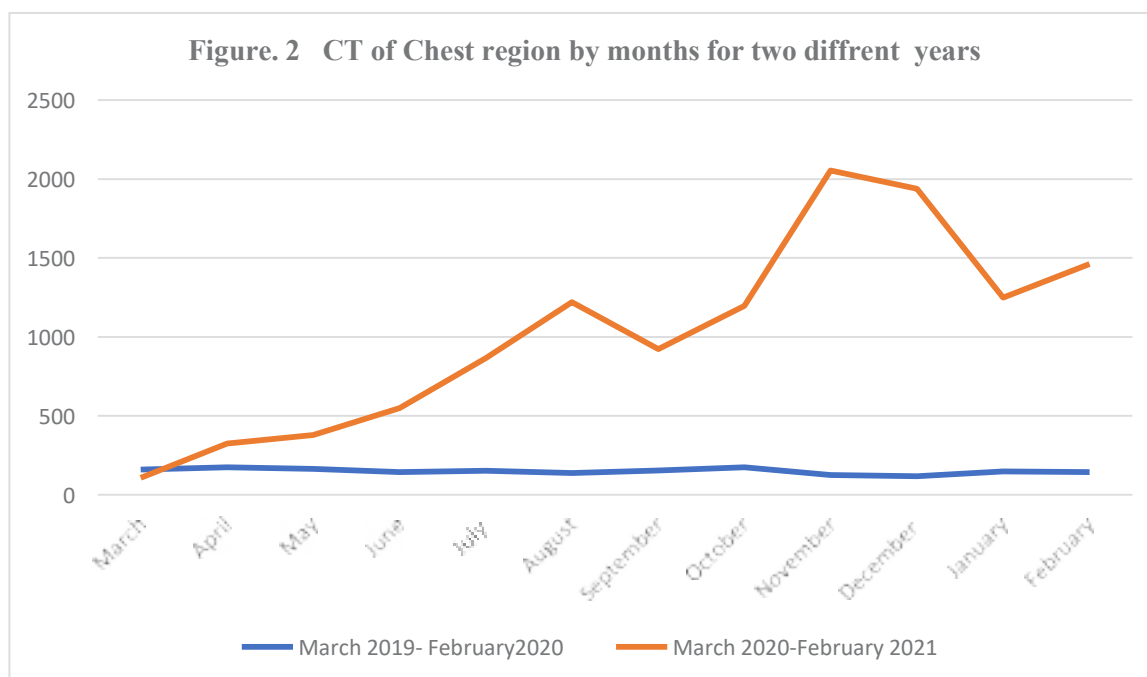
Comparing the data between the number of requests for radiological examinations and the number of positive cases over the months according to the data obtained from the tables, we conclude that we have a logical relationship between the two curves with a parallel increase according to the respective months.

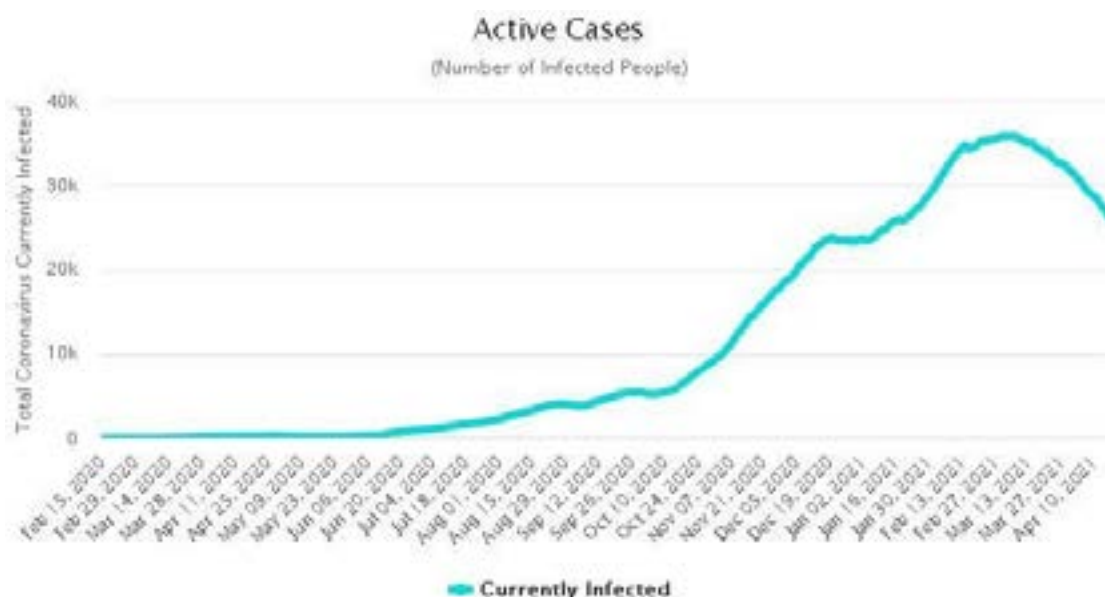
<b>Tab.1 Chest CT scan and chest CR / DR performed during two different years.</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>Year 2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>
<b>March</b>	160	107
<b>April</b>	174	324
<b>May</b>	164	380
<b>June</b>	143	550
<b>July</b>	152	866
<b>August</b>	137	1220
<b>September</b>	154	923
<b>October</b>	175	1197
<b>November</b>	125	2054
<b>December</b>	117	1939
<b>January</b>	148	1249
<b>February</b>	143	1461
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1792</b>	<b>12270</b>

The second table show confirmed cases with COVID 19 during the last year published from Worldometer publications and follow up of pandemic situation worldwide. Were obtained published data for our country as follow.

<b>Tab.2 Confirmed cases with Covid-19 during the last year andbeginning of 2021.</b>	
<b>Month</b>	<b>Viti 2020-2021</b>
March	243
April	539
May	355
June	1398
July	2861
August	3984
September	4269
October	7226
November	18139
December	19302
January	18935
February	30680
TOTAL	107931







## Conclusions

Medical imaging has a pivotal role in the Covid-19 pandemic, offering the advantage of supplementary diagnosis and follow-up of the critically ill patients. Radiographers, as frontline staff, should be familiar with the main challenges and controversies related to imaging patients with Covid-19 so they can fulfill their role in safeguarding patient safety, patient care, optimise image quality as a tool for more accurate diagnosis, but also to engage in their reporting roles. Most importantly, they should be aware of ways to keep themselves safe and well during this unprecedented situation by correctly using the right PPE and ensuring all their workspaces are adequately decontaminated to minimise the risk of further infection.

# Sfidat në trajtimin e komplikacioneve dhe sëmundjeve shoqëruese në pacientët e moshuar me Covid

**Prof. Asc. Dr. Kiri ZALLARI**  
Universiteti European i Tiranës

Geriatra është shkenca mjekësore, që merret me mjekimin e sëmundjeve të plakjes. Ka shumë rëndësi që në këtë përkufizim të dallojmë "procesin normal të plakjes" dhe kufirin midis "shëndetit të mirë" dhe sëmundjeve të të moshuarit, gjë që përbën lidhjen me gerontologjinë. Gerontologjia është shkenca mjekësore, që studion procesin e plakjes. Zakonisht, është vështirë të caktohet ku ndërpriten proceset e "plakjes normale" dhe ku fillojnë "patologjikat". Për të përcaktuar procesin e plakjes si dukuri e pashmangshme, mbahen parasysh edhe faktorët genetikë, ekologjikë, gjeografikë, metabolikë, psikikë. Disa nga problemet më të mëdha mjekësore të geriatrikës janë :

- KONFUZIONI
- INKONTINENCA
- RREZIMI
- IMOBILITETI
- DEKUBITUS

Varësia nga të tjerët për plotësimin e kërkesave shton mundësinë për abuzim ose abandonim. Një i moshuar, i varur nga familjarët e tij, mund të bjerë në stres dhe të ndihet i fshikulluar nëse konstaton se dashuria/miqësia nuk motivojnë veprimet ndaj tij. Për disa familje, dhuna përjetohet si reaksion normal ndaj stresit; për disa të tjera dhuna mund të shpërthejë ndaj kërkesave asistenciale të të moshuarit, që duken pa fund. Në terren të mungesave financiare, i moshuari mund të jetë "barrë ekonomike" dhe kjo mund të shtojë incidencën/prevalencën e abuzimeve. Mungesa e asistencës institucionale dhe sociale mund të shkaktojë preokupacion të tepruar, që mund të nxisë tek familjarët rrezikun e abuzimeve. Dalja e papritur e problemeve psikike, si pasojë e barrës së asistencës në një punonjës profesionist ose një familjar, mund të shkaktojë akte abuzimi. Faktorët institucionale, si rroga e pamjaftueshme, kushtet e këqija të punës ose turnet stresuese, kontribuojnë në qëndrime negative, që mund të shpien në abandonim të të moshuarve. Një nga patologjitë që haset shpesh në të moshuarit është :

## Osteoporoza

Densiteti kockor mineral, dukshëm nën nivelin normal të moshës dhe seksit të pacientit, ndeshet në 30 – 40% të të gjithë të rriturve mbi moshën 60 vjeç. Indi kockor është në ndërtim të vazhdueshëm. Në kushte normale ka një ekuilibër midis proceseve, që shkatërrojnë kockën dhe atyre, që e ndërtojnë atë. Humbja e masës kockore fillon si të burrit dhe të gruas pasi kanë kaluar 35 vjeç dhe theksohet në menopauzë dhe pas saj. Disa vjet pas menopauzës vihet re humbje e konsiderueshme e masës kockore, që ka të bëjë direkt me mungesën e estrogenëve. Në disa raste, humbja e masës kockore është aq e madhe sa çon në thyerje spontane të kockave. Gratë kanë një risk 8 herë më të lartë se burrat për të zhvilluar osteoporozë. Ekzistojnë disa faktorë rreziku, të cilët ndihmojnë në zhvillimin e osteoporozës.

- Moshë e fillimit të menopauzës. Sa më shpejt të fillojë menopauza, aq më i madh është rreziku i osteoporozës. Kur menopauza është kirurgjikale (menopauza quhet kirurgjikale kur pas ndërhyrjeve kirurgjikale është hequr mitra dhe bashkë me të edhe vezoret), rreziku është akoma më i lartë.

- Trashëgimia: Pasja në familje e personave me osteoporozë rrit rrezikun edhe për personat e tjerë;
- Mënyra e të ushqyerit: Një dietë jo e mirë mund të pengojë zhvillimin e rregullt të kockave qysh në fëmijëri, adoleshencë dhe ta theksojë procesin e humbjes kockore tek të moshuarit. Vegjetarianët kanë një densitet kockor më të madh në krahasim me ata, që ndjekin një diete të pasur me mish.
- Ushtrimet fizike: Bërja e ushtrimeve të përditshme është e nevojshme për zhvillimin dhe mbajtjen e shëndetshme të kockave dhe kjo vlen për të gjithë, si për fëmijët ashtu dhe për të moshuarit;
- Duhani: Gratë duhanpirëse kanë rrezik të hyjnë në menopauze rreth 5 vjet më parë se ato që nuk e pijnë, dhe kjo shpjegon lidhjen midis duhanpirjes dhe thyeshmërisë së kockave në to;
- Alkoholi: Ul thithjen e kalçiumit nga zorra, kështu që favorizon zhvillimin e osteoporozës;
- Barnat: Kortizonikët, antikonvulsantët, antiacidet e përdorur për një periudhë të gjatë çojnë në hollimin e kockës deri në osteoporozë;

Osteoporoza njihet dhe si „Semundja e heshtur”. Në fazën e fillimit ka pak ose aspak shënja ose simptoma si:

- Pakësimi i masës kockore;
- Zvogëlimi i gjatësisë së kockës;
- Dëmtime të lokalizuara;
- Shtypje në nivelin e vertebrave sidomos atyre të mesit;
- Dëmtime të kyçit të dorës, qafës së femurit ose vende të tjera pas një traume, qofte edhe të vogël;
- Dhimbje mund të shfaqen vetëm në rast të thyerjeve dhe të dëmtimit të vertebrave (dhimbjet artikulare pas periudhës së menopauzës, nuk janë të lidhura me osteoporozën).
- Rreth 25-30% e grave në menopauzë preken nga osteoporoza, kështu që për ta parandaluar atë është e rëndësishme që të individualizohen qysh më parë gratë që janë më të rrezikuara nga kjo sëmundje. Nevoja për kujdes të vazhdueshëm (humbja e pavarësisë) është komplikacion madhor i frakturave osteoporotike në të moshuarit.
- Test specifik është densimetria kockore – është vendimtare për përcaktimin e terapisë afat-gjatë;
- Radiologjia e thjeshtë e kolonës vertebrale ose e ekstremiteteve – mund të evidentohet pakësimi i densitetit kockor dhe fraktura të mundshme.

Për të parandaluar osteoporozën duhet që qysh në periudhën e fëmijërisë dhe adoleshencës të ndiqet një aktivitet fizik i përshtatshëm si ecje në këmbë, me bicikletë, bërja e ekskursioneve të përditshme ose të paktën tri herë në javë dhe ndjekja e një regjimi ushqimor korrekt, me pak mish dhe shumë fruta, perime, zarzavate, qumësht, etj. Gjithashtu duhet të ndërpritet ose të pakësohet përdorimi i duhanit dhe i alkolit. Një kujdes i veçantë duhet pasur nga rrëzimet sepse shtojnë rrezikun e thyerjeve të kockave. Masat e para, që i duhen rekomanduar një të moshuari janë:

- Aktiviteti i rregullt fizik;
- Ndalim i duhanpirjes;
- Marrje e kalçiumit, 1 gm në ditë dhe Vitaminës D 600 – 800 UI në ditë;
- Nëse trajtohet për HTA, mund të përdoret një diuretik (ruan Ca dhe mban TA në vlera të ulëta);
- Në gratë në menopauzë ose post-menopauzë, nëse nuk ka kundërvendime serioze, mund të fillohet terapia hormonale zëvendësuese.

## Rrezimet Në Të Moshuarit

Rrëzimet janë shkaku kryesor i vizitave në shërbimin e urgjencës si dhe shkaku i parë i vdekjeve aksidentale në pacientë mbi 65 vjeç. Të moshuarit e rrëzuar i nënshtrohen vlerësimit të plotë të gjendjes shëndetësore. Shumica e rrëzimeve nuk përfundojnë me vdekje, por në dëmtime fizike serioze. Ndikimi psikologjik i rrëzimeve shpesh rezulton në vetë-kufizim të aktivitetit nga i moshuari.

## Vlerësimi i të moshuarit të rrëzuar

Skrinimi. Rrëzimi mund të jetë një event i vetëm ose një gjendje e përsëritur (mbi 2 rrëzime në 6 muaj). Një vlerësim i menjëhershëm është i nevojshëm për të moshuarin e rrëzuar që ka dëmtime, sëmundje akute, humbje të ndërgjegjes, ethe apo ndryshime tëTA.

Historia. Marrja e anamnezës së plotë është e rëndësishme për të përcaktuar mekanizmin e rrëzimit, faktorët specifikë të riskut, çrregullimet, që kanë kontribuar në këtë dëmtim, dhe rrugën që duhet ndjekur për diagnozën dhe trajtimin.

Vlerësimi i faktorëve të riskut. Faktorët përgjegjës për një rrëzim mund të jenë intrinseke (psh, ndryshime fiziologjike të moshës, sëmundje ose barna) ose ekstrinseke (psh, rreziqe ambientale, barriera arkitektonike).

Ndërhyrjet parandaluese përfshijnë modifikimin e ambientit/rrëziqeve në të si dhe në vlerësimin dhe trajtimin e gjendjeve



shëndetësore si HTA, çrregullime të pamjes, çrregullime mendore, përfshirë edhe depresionin. Një vlerësim i pacientit bën të mundur që mjeku ose infermieri në kujdesin parësor të identifikojë faktorët e riskut shpejt dhe saktë.

## Ankthi dhe depresioni tek i moshuari

Është normale që një person, në çdo moshë, mund të ketë reaksione ankthi, trishtimi, pesimizmi, mosinteresi, që pasojnë trauma në planin psikik ose fizik. Tek të moshuarit, mund të shfaqen në mënyrë më të shpeshtë e më persistente, ankthi/depresioni sidomos nëse gjatë jetës temperamenti i tij ka qenë i predispozuar. Momente mjaft delikate për një të moshuar janë humbjet e personave të dashur, dalja në pension, humbja e kafshëve shtëpiake, etj.

Jo të gjitha format e ankthit/depresionit janë reaktive. I moshuari mund të ketë frikë të pamotivuar dhe jo në përputhje me realitetin, duke u paraqitur indiferent e i trishtuar, duke mos dashur të preokupohet si më parë, qan shpesh, imagjnon një të ardhme shumë negative për vete dhe familjarët, duke refuzuar komunikimin. I moshuari mund të qëndrojë pa lëvizur për shumë kohë. Kujtesa mund të reduktohet dhe shfaqen çrregullime të ndryshme fizike (lodhje, ndjenja e kokës bosh ose të rëndë, çrregullime gastro intestinale, pagjumesi etj). Asnjëherë nuk duhen nënvlerësuar këto çrregullime; familjarët duhet t'i drejtohen personelit shëndetësor për të përballuar situatën, duke kujtuar se një person me depresion nuk mund të quhet kurrë i parikuperuar, por ka nevojë për ndihmë të përshtatshme.

Barnat, që mjeku mund t'i këshillojë të moshuarit, në disa momente janë po aq të vlefshme sa dhe prania afektive rreth personit me depresion. Të moshuarit i përjetojnë në mënyrë dramatike ndarjet familjare dhe i konsiderojnë mungesë afeksioni vështirësitë objektive të fëmijëve/familjarëve të tyre.

## Dementia

Me demencë kuptohet një humbje e pakthyeshme e kapacitetit intelektual të fituar më parë, e shkaktuar nga një dëmtim cerebral dhe që interferon në aktivitetin social dhe profesional. Kësaj i bashkohet gjithmonë një çrregullim i kujtesës. Është e nevojshme të kontrollohen simptomat e t'i referohen mjekut. Shpesh keto çrregullime të kujtesës, sjelljes, aftësisë së gjykitimit/kritikës; mosnjohje e personave/objekteve janë te pa mjtueshme për të vënë diagnozën e demencës. Duhet nënvizuar që:

Fillimi i çrregullimeve mendore mund të kalojë pa u vënë re, aq sa më shumë vështirësi mund të përcaktohet fillimi i tyre;

Simptomat kanë një progresion të lehtë në kohë, por konstant;

I moshuari nuk përcakton saktë çrregullimin e kapacitetit të tij mendor;

Sjellja e të moshuarit është çrregulluar si dhe raporti me mjedisin familjar;

I moshuari nuk mund të riprodhojë saktë një përvojë të jetuar edhe pasi kanë kaluar pak minuta;

Kur mjedisi ku jeton i moshuari është pak tolerant, diagnostikohet me demencë një person, që është i turbulluar ose depresiv për shkak të situatës ambientale dhe të një jete me kushte jo të favorshme.

Dementia ndikon mbi cilësinë e jetës së të moshuarit dhe rrit shkallën e invaliditetit. Si sëmundje e moshës së tretë, ajo detyron personelin mjekësor të merret më shumë me geriatrinë. Dementia është në thelb një gjendje patologjike dhe jo pjesë e plakjes normale të njeriut.

Epidemiologjia e demencës. Është sëmundje e moshës së shkuar (5-8% e njerëzve mbi 65 vjeç kanë demencë të shkallëve të ndryshme). Prevalenca dyfishohet çdo 5 vjet mbi moshën 65 vjeç, dhe arrin 20% në moshën 80 vjeç. Rreth 50-70% e rasteve me demencë janë pasojë e sëmundjes Alzheimer, ndërsa sëmundje si hidrocefalia, tumoret beninje cerebrale etj, janë në bazë të 10-20% të rasteve.

## Sëmundja Alzheimer

Është bërë më e shpeshtë si pasojë e rritjes së jetëgjatësisë mesatare të njeriut. Trajtimi nënkupton më shumë mënyrën e jetesës sesa trajtimin medikamentoz. Mënyra e jetesës, që nuk mund të realizohet pa kujdes infermieror, përmbledh disa rregulla për pacientin/familjarët. Baza e trajtimit është krijimi i mjedisit të favorshëm për përmirësimin e cilësisë së jetës së të moshuarve të prekur.

Etiologjia. Etiologjia mbetet e paqartë. Në 20% të rasteve, sëmundja ka karakter familjar, ndërsa në 80% të tyre është sporadike. Faktorët kryesorë shkaktarë të sëmundjes së Alzheimer janë:

- Moshë;
- Predispozita familjare;
- Sindroma Down;
- Traumata madhore të kokës;
- Ekspozimi ndaj aluminit.
- Shenjat dhe simptomat. Paraqiten më të detajuara më poshtë:

- Dëmtimi i kujtesës: Është shenja kryesore e sëmundjes dhe e para që shfaqet.
- Dëmtimi i të folurit: vështirësi në gjetjen e fjalëve dhe kuptimin e tyre. Pacientët përsërisin shpesh të njëjtat biseda, sepse harrojnë që i kanë thënë një herë.
- Çrregullimet vizuospatiale dhe dëmtimi i kujtesës topografike: Tipar i shpeshtë i sëmundjes; pacientët humbasin rrugën kur lihen vetëm dhe kanë vështirësi në kryerjen e detyrave komplekse,
- Problemet psikiatrike: Janë të zakonshme. Pacientët mund të kenë çrregullime humori, ndryshime të personalitetit, halucinacione, konvulsione, inkontinencë në stadet e fundit.

## Sëmundja Parkinson

Parkinsoni është sëmundje neurologjike dhe shenja e dukshme të saj janë dridhjet, veçanërisht të gjymtyrëve; me përparimin e sëmundjes, simptomat shtohen. Vështirësitë, që shoqërojnë sëmundjen janë dridhjet, bllokimi i muskujve, ngadalësimi i lëvizjeve, vështirësitë për të ruajtur balancën në ecje, humbja e kujtesës në rreth 20% të pacientëve. Sëmundja fillon të shfaqet kryesisht në njerëz të moshës 60- 65 vjeç; barnat duket se bëjnë efekt në vitet e para të prekjes, por më vonë këto efekte dobësohen.

Simptomat përfshijnë:

- Dridhje e duarve;
- Dridhje edhe në gjendje qetësie;
- Muskujt e dorës dhe të krahut në përgjithësi janë të ngurtë;
- Vështirësi në ecje;
- Mosmbajtje e ekuilibrit;
- Në faza të rënuara të sëmundjes pacientët rrëzohen shpesh.

## Problemet e inkontinencës në të moshuarit

### Inkontinenca e urinës

I moshuari shpesh e ka të vështirë të referojë një çrregullim “delikat”, si mosmbajtja e urinës. Jo rrallë, ky çrregullim, gabimisht konsiderohet si një pasojë normale e pleqërisë. I sëmuri ka pasoja në nivelin psikologjik duke ndikuar dukshëm edhe në mënyrën e jetës. I sëmuri i moshuar fillon të ketë frikë të dalë, ka ndrojtje të largohet nga shtëpia, të frekuentojë lokale publike, të bëjë vizita në miq etj. Nga ana tjetër, për shkak të sëmundjes, shfaqen infeksione e dëmtime të lëkurës, që rëndojnë më shumë gjendjen shëndetësore e psikologjike të tij. Ky çrregullim ndeshet në 14-33 % të të moshurve, ndërsa në të sëmurë > 70 vjeç të shtruar nëpër spitale, ky çrregullim ndeshet në 45% të rasteve

### Shkaqet e inkontinencës së urinës

**Inkontinenca nga streset.** Në këto raste rrjedhja e urinës ndodh ose pas një kollitjeje, sforcimi të gjatë dhe shoqërohet me dobësim të muskujve pelvikë, ndryshime të raporteve anatomike ndërmjet vezikës urinare dhe uretrës, ose reduktim apo ulje të forcës së sfinkterit uretral. Kur presioni introabdominal e kalon presionin uretral kemi rrjedhje të pavullnetshme të urinës. Edhe deficitet e hormoneve estrogjene pasmenopauzale mund të kontribuojnë, gjithashtu, në zhvillimin e inkontinencës nga stresi.

**Inkontinenca nga tejmbushja e vezikës.** Inkontinenca nga tejmbushja e vezikës urinare ndodh kur rrjedhja e urinës bëhet nga një vezikë urinare e tendosur, e mbushur shumë si pasojë e obstrukcionit nga hipertrofia e prostatës dhe stenoza e uretrës.

Atonia së vezikës bën që vezika të mos arrijë të zbrazet plotësisht (në të sëmurët diabetikë me neuropati diabetike) etj. Inkontinenca nga dëmtime nervore Nga dëmtimet nervore, muskulatura e vezikës urinare kontrahohet përpara se ajo të mbushet. Kjo ndodh nga infeksionet/proceset inflamatorë në paretet e vezikës urinare, të cilat shtojnë infiltrimin e terminacioneve nervore sensitive. Gjithashtu, dëmtimet nervore ndodhin në demencën senile, dëmtimet e medullës spinale etj. Në këto raste të sëmurët paraqesin rrjedhje të paktë të urinës gjatë ditës, mungesë të shfaqjes së dëshirës për të urinuar, siç ndodh tek njerëzit normalë.

### Faktorët e rrezikut për inkontinencën e urinës

Me avancimin e moshës (zakonisht pas 70-75 vjeç) kemi shtim të shfaqjes së inkontinencës urinare. Kjo ndodh edhe për faktin se të moshuarit janë mbartës të disa sëmundjeve kronike. Në shfaqjen e inkontinencës ndikon edhe kufizimi i lëvizjeve në të moshuarit. Disa të moshuar lëvizin me vështirësi për të shkuar në banjë në kohë. Inkontinenca e urinës mund të jetë pasojë e infeksioneve të rrugëve urinare, defekteve higjienike etj. Sëmundjet neurologjike ndikojnë shumë në shfaqjen e inkontinencës së urinës. Demenca senile në të moshuarit ndikon shumë në këtë sëmundje.

Në vlerësimin e inkontinencës ka rëndësi mbledhja e të dhënave për fillimin, mënyrën e shfaqjes, barnat e përdorur, etj. Barnat antikolinergjike (antidepresivë treciklikë) mund të ndikojnë inervimin parasimpatik të vezikës dhe shkaktojnë inkontinencë urine. Përdorimi i diuretikëve/qetësuesve ndikon në shfaqjen e inkontinencës. Barnat, si kalciblokuesit mund të shkaktojnë retension urinar duke vepruar në muskulaturën e lëmuar të vezikës. Pacientet me shënja të inkontinencës duhen konsultuar nga urologu, neurologu etj. Duhet përjashtuar diabeti, infeksioni i rrugëve urinare etj.

### **Mjekimi i inkontinencës së urinës**

Mjekimi duhet bërë sipas faktoreve etiologjike, përfshirë këtu faktorët stresantë, infeksionet, barnat etj. Kujdes duhet bërë në përdorimin e kateterit, i cili rrit infeksionet si dhe për higjienën dhe anën psikologjike të të sëmurit të moshuar.

## **Postmenopauza**

### **Përkufizime të lidhura me menopauzën**

Menopauza – pika e ndalimit të plotë të aktivitetit menstrual;

Perimenopauza – periudha e rënies dhe pastabilitetit të fluksit estrogenik, që paraprin menopauzën;

Postmenopauza – periudha kohore nga ndalimi i aktivitetit menstrual e deri në fund të jetës.

### **Nderthurja e patologjive ekzistuese**

Shpesh here ndodh që përveç polipatologjisë dhe polimorfologjisë që ka i moshuari, të nderthuren negativisht patologjitë me njera-tjetren. Semundja e Alzheimer perben një patologji të trurit, me prirje të shtohet kohët e fundit. Kjo patologji specifike, të cilën e përmendëm më lart, prek sferën konjitive të trurit. Vecori e patologjisë është se ajo prek dhe cregullon kujtesën duke renduar situatën e të moshuarit në mënyrë progresive dhe të pakthyeshme. Për Semundjen Alzheimer, e cila prek kryesisht individin në moshë të avancuar, nuk njihet një terapi specifike efektive. Patologjia e përmendur kongradualisht në shuarjen e veprimtarisë së trurit. Në rrethanat që përmendëm, kur prekët sfera emocionale, mbivendosja e një patologjie tjetër, e cila dhe ajo ndikon negativisht në anën emocionale, do të rendonte gjendjen e organizmit, në teresi. Lidhur me efektin rendues të menopauzës mbi të sëmurin me Alzheimer, mendojmë që kjo bazohet në disa efekte që kryesisht do të vlerësonim: Menopauza shenon fenomenet që lidhen me rënien e veprimtarisë së vezoreve dhe ndalimin progresiv të cikleve menstruale. Këto lidhen me shtimin e gonadotropinave hipofizare dhe reduktimin e prodhimit të steroideve vezoriale. Normalisht ndalimi i menstruacioneve ndodh rreth moshës 45-50 vjeç, por dhe në mënyrë të parakoheshme rreth moshës 40 – 44 vjeçare. Në shumicën e rasteve shqetësohet me shqetësime të rëndësishme të sferës emocionale, si ankthi, pasiguria në vendime, pagjumësia, ndryshime patologjike të kujtesës, përqendrimit, gjumit etj. Në një grua me fillim të shfaqjeve të simptomave të Alzheimerit, këto fenomene do të përshpejtonin efektet negative të sëmundjes, kurse trajtimi efektiv i të dhënave patologjike të menopauzës do të ndikonte për një zhvillim gradual të sëmundjes Alzheimer. Rekomandohet trajtimi i gruas në këto rrethana, për të mos renduar më tej e në mënyrë më të vullshme problemet e Alzheimerit.

### **Terapia hormonale zëvendësuese**

Mjekimi me hormone. Terapia zëvendësuese hormonale rekomandohet për dy qëllime:

- Për lehtësim afatshkurtër nga shqetësimet e rënda të menopauzës;
- Për parandalimin afatgjatë të sëmundjeve, që mund të vijnë bashkë me plakjen.

Terapia hormonale është e dobishme kur:

- Vezoret hiqen përpara moshës 45 vjeç;
- Ka thyerje ose rrezik të lartë për thyerje të kockave;
- Ka shqetësimet serioze gjatë menopauzës;
- Ka tharje vaginale (veçanërisht në postmenopauzë).

Terapia hormonale nuk duhet përdorur nëse janë të pranishme gjendjet më poshtë:

- Tromboemboli sot ose në të kaluarën (krizë, tromboflebit, embol pulmonar/kardiak);
- Kancer i gjirit, sarkomë e mitrës ose ndonjë kancer tjetër, që stimulohet nga estrogenet;
- Sëmundje e rëndë e mëlçisë ose pengesë kronike e funksionimit të mëlçisë;
- Gjakrrjedhje e pashpjeguar vaginale;
- Histerektomi për shkak të kancerit endometrial;

- Sëmundje të vezikes biliare (marrja e hormoneve dyfishon riskun për operacion të kolecistes);
- Sarkomë jomitrale, fibroide të mitrës, hipertension, dhimbje koke nga migrena, asthma, sëmundje zemre ose sëmundje të veshkave, që shoqërohet me mbajtje të lëngjeve;
- Nëse pihen mbi dy gota piqe alkoolike në ditë (konsiderohet pakësimi i konsumit të alkoolit ose ndalimi/pakësimi i mjekimit me hormone).

Rreziqet e përdorimit të terapise hormonale. Pas përdorimit afatgjatë, rreziku i kancerit të gjirit rritet. Vetëm estrogenet rrisin rrezikun e kancerit të endometriumit. Disa gra kanë nauze, shtim në peshë, mastalgji, metrorragji, retension hidrik, depresion psikik. Duhet të rritet numri i vizitave mjekësore për të monitoruar efektet e mjekimit hormonal. Gratë me histerektomi duhet të marrin vetëm estrogen sepse progestina shpesh pakëson efektet e dobishme të estrogenit, mund të ketë efekte të tjera të pakëndshme, mund të sjellë rreziqe të reja.

Marrja e vendimit në lidhje me hormonet: nëse, kur, sa dhe për sa kohë? Për të lehtësuar shqetësimet, gratë mund të marrin hormone për një periudhë të shkurtër, duke peshuar dobritë ndaj rreziqeve, përfshirë edhe mundësinë e rikthimit të shqetësimeve kur ndërpriten hormonet. Gruaja e moshuar duhet të marrë pjesë aktivisht në përcaktimin e zgjedhjes së duhur, por pa harruar që zgjedhja për të filluar terapinë hormonale ose jo është vetëm një aspekt i ndryshimit të jetës së saj, para një pjesë normale të përvojës jetësore të gruas.

## Problematika asistenciale për të moshuarit

Plakja normale nuk nënkupton domosdoshmërisht një gjendje patologjike ose varësie nga sëmundjet kronike (80% e të moshuarve mbi 65 vjeç kanë shëndet të mirë dhe bëjnë jetë aktive, të pavarur, por 20% e tyre paraqesin polipatologji, që kufizon pavarësinë personale). Problemet asistenciale të të moshuarve nënkuptojnë rritje të sëmundshmërisë, mbizotërim të sëmundjeve kronike, invaliditet të rëndësishëm funksional. Duket se prevalenca e demencës ka rritje të shpejte me avancimin e moshës – pra, flitet për “epidemi të demences”. Faktorë, që evidentojnë një vlerësim të papërshtatshëm të problemeve të të moshuarve me risk janë:

- Institucionalizim i papërshtatshëm;
- Diagnozë jo e plotë;
- Mungesë e koordinimit të shërbimeve të mbështetjes komunitare;
- Dhënie e ekzagjeruar e barnave;
- Pamjaftueshmëri e përdorimit të mënyrave dhe teknikave të rehabilitimit.

Mjediset tradicionale të praktikës mjekësore janë ambulanca e spitali. Sot vendet e kurës geriatrike janë edhe spitalet ditore, mjediset shëndetësore asistenciale, shtëpitë e pacienteve. Shumë të moshuar në spital provojnë izolim, qëndrim negativ për plakjen, depersonalizim. Kështu shtohen ndërlikimet jatrogjene, efektet negative të barnave, infeksionet spitalore. Pas shumë vitesh të rënies konstante të vizitave në shtëpi, mjekët dhe administratorët vërejnë një interes të shtuar për asistencën në shtëpi, e cila për të moshuarin invalid dhe atë kronik mund të jetë shpesh po aq efikase dhe të sigurt sa dhe asistenca spitalore.

Kufizimet e asistencës për të moshuarit. Asistenca shëndetësore e të moshuarve merr parasysh rrezikun e diskriminimit (kufizimi i hyrjes në asistencë mbi bazën e moshës kronologjike). Ka shumë mjekë, që mbështetin reduktimin e kurave mjekësore për të moshuarit, duhet patur parasysh që:

- I moshuari ka të drejtë të mos miratojë asistencën mjekësore, të lodhshme në fund të jetës;
- Të moshuarit duhet të pranojnë vdekjen si një dukuri natyrore;
- Kurat mjekësore racionohen mbi bazën e moshës; me rritjen e viteve, dozat reduktohen.

Me shumë rëndësi është mbajtja parasysh e disa faktoreve të tjerë:

- Të moshuarit janë grup heterogjen; edhe paciente 80-85 vjeç me sëmundje të rënda, nëse kurohen mirë, mund të jenë një periudhë jete relativisht autonome; moshë kronologjike është kriter arbitrar/i papërshtatshëm për vendosjen e mënyrave të asistencës mjekësore.
- Vendimet për terapinë, përfshirë terapinë intensive, duhen përshtatur ekskluzivisht mbi bazën e gjykimit të mjekut kurues, bashkë me pacientin/familjen e tij, më shumë sesa mbi bazën e kriterëve burokratike të shpërndara për arsye ekonomike.
- Kriteri i fillimit të kurave mjekësore mbi bazën e moshës kronologjike nuk është etik, sepse diskriminon shumë popullatën e moshuar femërore, përgjithësisht me jetëgjatë.

## Parimet e asistencës geriatrike. Kujdesi prevenues në geriatri

Qëllimi kryesor është të minimizohet sëmundshmëria dhe maksimizohet cilësia e jetës. Në kujdesin parandalues përfshihen:

- Parandalimi parësor: Identifikon/pengon faktorët e riskut për zhvillimin e sëmundjeve në të moshuarit. Në këto ndërhyrje hyjnë imunizimi (pneumokoksi, influence, tetanoz, difteri), këshilla për aktivitet fizik, ndërprerja e duhanit, ushqyerja e rregullt, ndërprerja e alkoolit, etj.
- Parandalimi dytësor: Zbulon sëmundjet në fazë asimptomatike për përmirësim të rezultatit (kontroll për paciente kronikë dhe ndërhyrje për grupet me risk të lartë).
- Parandalimi tretësor: Zbulon simptomat e sëmundjes me qëllim parandalimin/ngadalësimin e saj dhe maksimizimin e funksionit; manaxhimi i simptomave, ndërhyrjet rutinë terapeutike dhe shërbimet reabilituese të specializuara bëjnë pjesë në këtë kategori.

Duhet bërë dallimi i gjendjes së sëmurë me mosfunksionimin e lidhur me procesin natyral të plakjes. Sa më e hershme ndërhyrja, aq më e madhe mundësia për mbrojtjen e funksionit të shëndetit. Në pleqëri, subjektet ndikohen nga shumë faktorë risku. Për këtë, profesionistët shëndetësorë duhet të praktikojnë ndërhyrjen për eliminimin e faktorëve të shumtë të riskut. Të rritet motivimi/bindja e pacientëve të moshuar, duke i përfshirë ata në vendim-marrjet, që i përkasin mjekësisë parandaluese. Shërbimet parandaluese përmirësojnë shëndetin e moshës së tretë duke bërë zbulimin e hershëm të kancerit dhe HTA, këshilluar ndërprerjen e duhanit si dhe kryer vaksinimin kundër influencës.

Tipet e ndërhyrjeve parandaluese. Tre tipet e ndërhyrjes janë ndërhyrja parësore, dytësore dhe terciare

### Ndërhyrja parësore

Identifikimi/ndalimi i faktorëve të riskut, që ndikojnë në zhvillimin e sëmundjes;

- Imunizimet
- Vaksina e influences;
- Vaksina e pneumokoksive;
- Vaksina e tetanozit dhe e difterisë.
- Këshillimet
- Ushtrimet fizike;
- Ndërprerja e duhanit;
- Ushqyerja e rregullt;
- Mospërdorimi i alkoolit;
- Elemente për rritjen e sigurisë së të moshuarit.

### Ndërhyrja dytësore

Zbulon sëmundjen gjatë fazës asimptomatike. Kjo arrihet me kontroll periodik të sëmundjeve bazë dhe duke vlerësuar:

- Shikimin;
- Dëgjimin;
- Demencën.

### Ndërhyrja terciare

Zbulon sëmundjet ose ngadalëson dekursin dhe maksimalizon funksionin

- Manaxhimi i simptomave të sëmundjes;
- Ndërhyrjet terapeutike rutinë;
- Shërbimet reabilituese;
- Insulti;
- Rehabilitimi kardiak.

Shumica e problemeve të zakonshme tek të moshuarit (difekte minore, depresion, demencë, rrëzime, konstipacion, etj) mund të kontrollohen me anë të masave të thjeshta, shpesh jo farmakologjike, të tilla si ushtrime të thjeshta, ushqyerje e mirë, aktivitete ditore dhe takimeve sociale me miqtë dhe familjen. Mjekimet janë një burim kryesor problemesh për të moshuarit dhe shpesh çojnë në komplikacione dhe rritje të sëmundshmërisë. Aq me tepër kur ketyre problematikave i shtohet COVID-19. Strategjitë duhet të përfshijnë:

- Përdorimi i dozave efikase më të ulëta të mjekimit;
- Mbajtja sa më e ulët e mjekimeve ditore;
- Minimizimi i përdorimit të mjekimeve që duhet të merren më shumë se një herë apo dy herë në ditë;
- Përdorimi i mjekimeve me efekte antikolinergjike vetëm kur është absolutisht e nevojshme dhe nën vëzhgim;
- Rivlerësimi i vazhdueshëm i nevojës për mjekim;
- Monitorimi i përdorimit të barnave herbale që jepen pa recetë;
- Rrëzimet tek të moshuarit janë shenja të rëndësishme të dobësimit dhe të nevojës për ndërhyrje;

Tek pacienti i moshuar me një patologji baze ose polipatologji thellohet semundja baze. I moshuari i hospitalizuar, me COVID-19 që ka hipertension arterial ose/dhe patologji të veshkave, duhet trajtuar me shumë kujdes, duke u fokusuar në simptomat dhe terapinë e semundjes baze. Pacientet e moshuar diabetike, të trajtuar me hipoglicemiantë orale dhe të hospitalizuar me COVID-19, zakonisht pesojnë një rritje të glicemise. Për këtë arsye është preferuar që të fillohet insulina, e cila administrohet në varesi të glicemise së pacientit të moshuar. Kuptohet që pacientet e moshuar me patologji kronike pulmonare, si Bronkiti kronik, Asthma bronkiale, Emfizema pulmonare etj., janë tepër delikate, për faktin që virusi Sars-Covid 2, preferon dhe le pasojë të rënda në sistemin respirator. Këtu agravohen shumë me shpejtë se të moshuarit e tjerë, për faktin që komplikacioni më i shpeshtë i COVID-19 është komplikacioni pulmonar. Duke qenë se COVID-19 ka krijuar shumë raste me tromboemboli, të të moshuarit është filluar mjekimi me antikoagulantë. Ky trajtim në disa raste ka dhënë mjaft komplikacione. Të moshuarit që vuajnë nga ulcera gastrike dhe duodenale dhe ato me patologji shoqëruese hematologjike, gjatë terapive me antikoagulantë kanë manifestuar exteriorizim gjaku. Komplikacionet, si melena dhe hematemeza, kanë qenë të pranishme në pacientet e moshuar me ulcere gastrike dhe duodenale. Më gjatë kujdesin e treguar me medikamentet e fraksioneve të Heparinës, janë shfaqur mikrohemorragji dhe hemorragji, gjë që ka bërë që personeli mjekësor të jetë mjaft i kujdesshëm në administrimin e tyre. Mjaft i kujdesshëm personeli mjekësor është treguar dhe në pacientet e moshuar, me patologji të sistemit gastro-intestinal, të hipertonicitetit dhe diabetikut. Administrimi i kortizonikeve të këtyre pacientëve ka dhënë shpesh herë komplikacione të pritshme, të cilat janë trajtuar me kujdes dhe në kohën e duhur.

Oksigjenoterapia e përdorur me kriter në Institucionet Shëndetësore dhe nga personeli mjekësor i kualifikuar ka dhënë rezultate shumë pozitive në pacientet e moshuar, me patologji shoqëruese pulmonare dhe të atë me komplikacione nga Sars-Cov 2. Oksigjenoterapia e përdorur në shtëpi, pa kritere shkencore dhe nga persona jo kompetentë, në raste të vecanta ka shkaktuar barotraume, e cila është me pasojë të rënda të personi i moshuar. Koncepti i “Home Care for Elderly People” - “Kujdes në shtëpi për të moshuarit”, është kthyer në aktualitet për të gjithë grup-moshat. Sot mund të quhet pa hezitim: “Home-Hospital” - “Shtëpi- Spital”. Kush e ka provuar e kupton shumë mirë “shtëpinë-spital”. Me këtë rast Shoqëria jonë, Familjet tona dhe Institucionet po kuptojnë sa deficitare janë ndaj “Kujdesit për të Moshuarit”. Mungesa e strukturave shëndetësore geriatrike dhe personelit të kualifikuar për këtë grup-moshë është një problem i madh, që duhet parë me shumë seriozitet. Ajo që jemi munduar të bëjmë, është futja në Kurrikulat e Fakulteteve tona Shëndetësore, të lëndës së Geriatrie dhe Gerontologjisë. Mos harrojmë dikë! I moshuari si dhe femija ka specifikat e veta të vecanta, në shumë raste me delikate të femijës. Kjo për faktin se i moshuari, mund të jetë i vetmuar, i braktisur, i abuzuar, i neglizhuar. Shpesh mungesa e asistencës adekuate mjekësore e bën subjektin e moshuar shumë të thyeshëm. Moshë mbi 65 vjeç quhet moshë e tretë, që nënkupton një grup-moshë shumë delikate. Grup – moshë mbi 75 vjeç është quajtur “frail elderly” (të moshuar të thyeshëm). I moshuari jeton me të kaluarën, i riu jeton me të ardhmen. Por, mos të harrojmë: Pleqëria është e ardhmja e të gjithëve, e ndertuar nga të gjithë.....Në të gjithë botën sot, ka filluar vaksinimi masiv i të gjithë popullsisë. Po kështu dhe në vendin tonë. Fillimisht vaksinohen grup-moshat dhe profesionet e përcaktuara nga O.B.SH. Është vënë re se pas aplikimit të vaksinës ka pasur përveç efekteve anësore dhe disa komplikacione më të mëdha. Të cilat janë duke u analizuar. Në vendet fqinje, pas aplikimit të vaksinës Astra – Zeneca pati disa raste me tromboemboli. Janë përshkruar dhe raste trombozash të venave të thella. Për këtë arsye vakcina Astra – Zeneca, aktualisht është bllokuar në disa vende Europiane, deri sa të sqarohen rastet e komplikacioneve të dhëna prej saj. Sot flitet për disa versione të virusit Sars-Cov 2, sic është versioni britanik, versioni brazilian, kohet e fundit perseri versioni brazilian P 1, i cili është mjaft virulent. Ky virus me transmetueshmeri dhe virulencë shumë të lartë, ka rritur shumë vdekshmërinë në Brazil. Shumë pacientë atje, të infektuar nga SARS-COV 2, kanë pësuar exitus letalis, pa arritur të shikohen nga personeli mjekësor. Vala e pandemisë në Brazil ishte totalisht jashtë kontrollit. Sipas ekspertëve epidemiologë versionet e fundit të COVID -19, kanë transmetueshmeri dhe simptomatologji të ndryshme nga versioni i parë.

# Public Health and Health Management in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic

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**Lumturi MERKURI**

European University of Tirana, Albania

**Indrit SEFERI**

European University of Tirana, Albania

## Abstract

**Background:** COVID-19 pandemic is a global public health emergency, with health, social and economic impact worldwide. This pandemic has significantly affected public health systems around the world and exposed the gaps in their health care systems. While does not yet have a specific treatment for this disease, there is a need to find and strengthen public health responses, to dominate its spread and impact in public health. WHO is working to coordinate global work under the International Health Regulations, to provide a international public health response to the spread of this pandemic.

**Aim:** In this review, we aimed to determine some public health systems responses to the COVID-19 epidemic.

**Method:** A lot of scientific articles and academic databases regarding public health strategies and responses of pandemic, were investigated to prepare this paper.

**Results:** The retrieved articles showed that WHO has been working continuously, to support states in preparedness and response to COVID-19. This response has been built on several decades of preparedness work and based on the legally International Health Regulations, 2005, reinforced by the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, 2016. In addition, the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework, and recent efforts to implement International Health Regulation, have contributed to this preparedness. According to the results of the Covid 19 epidemic management, quarantining, social isolation, testing, and flight suspensions-depending to the severity of COVID-19- would be the most successful strategies to confront Covid 19 pandemic.

**Conclusion:** WHO has provided information and proposed appropriate, effective and coordinated interventions to support states to control Covid 19 pandemic. Governments must take strict and timely measures to prevent the spread of pandemic and to reduce its deadly consequences. Public health and healthcare infrastructure can be better prepared by following WHO recommendations and lessons learned from the management of this pandemic. This pandemic is a reminder to invest in public health, to enhancing, strengthening, and managing the capacities of health system to respond quickly to new infections or pandemics that may challenge public health in the future.

**Keywords:** Covid 19, Public health, Health sistem, Pandemics, Public health responses

## Background

Public health is facing new threats which appear periodically with a major impact and challenge on public health. There has been an extensive progress in the prevention, control and even elimination of some emerging infectious diseases, but however, they remain a major public health concern, in view of the associated high morbidity and mortality<sup>1</sup>. Outbreak of emerging infectious diseases are a significant threat to global health security not only potentially cause many human deaths, but also have huge social and economic impact worldwide<sup>2</sup>. COVID-19 pandemic is one of the latest global public health emergencies, with health, social and economic impact worldwide.

World Health Organization/WHO first learned of this new virus on 31 December 2019, when the WHO China Country Office was informed of cases of pneumonia caused from novel coronavirus, detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The virus was named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), and the disease was called Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by the World Health Organization. The WHO declared this outbreak on 30 January 2020 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, and a pandemic, on 11 March 2020<sup>3</sup>. Since then, globally, (as of 18 April 2021), there have been 140,322,903 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 3,003,794 deaths, reported to WHO<sup>4</sup>.

This pandemic has significantly affected public health systems around the world and exposed the gaps in their health care systems. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization has been a central figure leading the response efforts. WHO is working to coordinate global work under the International Health Regulations, to provide a international public health response to dominate spread of this pandemic and impact in public health.

WHO published (four days after the declaration of a global public health emergency) a strategic preparedness and response plan (SPRP) to underline the importance of critical aspects of the public health response. The strategy is designed to achieve three simple goals: to control transmission of the virus, to save lives, and to protect the vulnerable.

To support countries during COVID-19, WHO has used several of the tools and platforms that have been developed and strengthened since 2016 to assess national health emergency preparedness and response capacities in line with the International Health Regulations<sup>5</sup>.

WHO is working with researchers and other experts to coordinate global work to provide advice and to support countries to prevent the spread of this current outbreak. Countries have shared information with WHO under the International Health Regulations -IHR 2005, to prevent, protect, control, and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease<sup>6</sup>. The SARS outbreak in 2002 led to the formation of new International Health Regulations-IHR 2005, with purpose and scope to prevent, protect against, control, and provide a public health response to the international spread of diseases<sup>7</sup>.

In the first days after the coronavirus outbreak became known, a lot of international scientific journals, publishers, funders, and scientific societies signed a joint statement that confirmed that all articles and resources relevant to the coronavirus are made immediately open access, or freely available for the duration of the outbreak. Scientists and medical professionals around the globe have been relying on freely available studies, resources, and datasets to quickly inform treatment strategies, public health initiatives, etc<sup>8</sup>.

WHO have designed the COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for 2021 (SPRP2021) and accompanying documents aimed the coordinated action at national, regional, and global levels in the response to COVID-19 pandemic. The Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan 2021 (SPRP2021) builds on achievements over the 2020, and focuses on the new challenges (for example, risks related to new variants, etc)<sup>9</sup>.

In the WHO European Region, the COVID-19 response has been built on several decades of preparedness work. This work has been undertaken based on the legally International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), reinforced by the creation of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) in 2016. In addition, the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework and recent accelerated efforts to implement IHR core capacities have contributed to this foundation of preparedness<sup>10</sup>.

The covid 19 response builds also on the five-year global strategic plan to improve public health preparedness and response, in the WHO European Region, 2018–2023. This action plan aims to strengthen national and regional capacities to effectively prevent, prepare for, detect, and respond to public health threats and emergencies and to provide support to affected countries, when necessary<sup>11</sup>.

The Albanian national response was based on experience in treating other infectious diseases, on the preparedness plan for influenza pandemics, as well as preparation for safety and health emergencies. However, due to the new nature of the virus, the plans have been periodically reviewed to reflect updated preventive measures.

From the moment WHO considered Covid 19 as a health emergency, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare drafted an action plan which is regularly updated, based on new available information.

National preparedness and response were based on scenarios developed by the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control / ECDC. The COVID-19 Committee of Experts was established, as a decision-making body, as well as the Task Force to manage the situations created by COVID-19, through inter-institutional cooperation. any information is updated in real time in accordance with WHO and ECDC recommendations.

The Institute of Public Health and other agencies have prepared manuals and guides, procedures and plans for the rapid identification and isolation of COVID-19 cases, which have been distributed throughout the country. Local Health Care Units and the Health Inspectorate are working with border crossings, ports, and flight operators to implement and strengthen control measures<sup>12</sup>.

**Aim:** The aim of this review is to determine and summarize some public health systems responses and control strategies on the COVID-19 epidemic.

**Method:** A lot of scientific articles and academic databases regarding public health strategies and responses of pandemic, were investigated to prepare this paper. After collecting the literature, selected those articles which were focused exactly on the global and national public health response level. In addition to this search, the official government websites (Ministry of Health and Social Protection and National Institute of Public Health websites) were also reviewed to acquire additional data about the recent international and national responses and control strategies.



**Results:** The literature review showed that immediately after the outbreak of COVID-19, all countries prepared the necessary response, based on the specifics of each country.

Almost all countries have demonstrated that COVID-19 transmission from one person to another can be slowed down or stopped. Every country has taken all necessary measures to slow the spread and avoid overloading their health systems.

According to the results, quarantining, social isolation, and flight suspensions, would be the successful techniques to confront the present pandemic COVID-19. In addition to those strategies, some countries have focused more on the case detection and screening approaches. All in all, governments have enacted laws and put in place strict measures to halt the disease spread and diminish its deadly consequences<sup>13</sup>.

Based on the literature review, mobilizing all sectors and communities to ensure that each sector of government and society takes ownership and participates in responding to and preventing cases through hand hygiene, use of masks and physical distancing, were very effective measures.

No single strategy can control the pandemic; rather, a multipronged approach using all available evidence-based strategies at the individual and community levels can break transmission chains and address high levels of community transmission; reduce related illnesses, long-term sequelae, and deaths; and mitigate the pandemic's public health impact.

According to the reviewed articles, the most public health strategies and responses which have been applied in many countries were: a) monitoring the whole of the community. b) public education about the virus and information on preventive measures or proper practices through diverse sorts of media or messaging services. c) diminish gatherings approaches included social distancing, quarantining, street traffic controlling, school and university closures, postponing events, and shutting down some businesses. d) health care facilities preparation - constructing or preparing suitable care settings, including major hospitals with the highest degree of facilities. The mentioned control measures could success strategies in coping with the current outbreak. However, other countries require to enact stricter laws or implement more practical policies<sup>13</sup>.

The retrieved articles showed that WHO has been working continuously, to support states in preparedness and response to COVID-19. This response has been built on several decades of preparedness work and based on the legally International Health Regulations, 2005, reinforced by the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, 2016. In addition, the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework, and recent efforts to implement International Health Regulation, have contributed to this preparedness. According to the results of the Covid 19 epidemic management, quarantining, social isolation, testing, and flight suspensions-depending to the severity of COVID-19- would be the most successful strategies to confront Covid 19 pandemic.

All countries have increased their level of preparedness, alert, and response to implement national plans, to managing cases and outbreaks of COVID-19. Each country has worked to assess its risk and rapidly implement the necessary measures at the appropriate scale to reduce both COVID-19 transmission and economic, public, and social impacts<sup>14</sup>.

**Conclusion:** Countries should continue to take all necessary measures to slow further spread, to avoid having their health systems overwhelmed and to prevent infections.

Governments must take strict and timely measures to prevent the spread of pandemic and to reduce its deadly consequences. WHO has provided information and proposed appropriate, effective, and coordinated interventions to support states to control Covid 19 pandemic. Public health and healthcare infrastructure can be better prepared by following WHO recommendations and lessons learned from the management of this pandemic.

This pandemic is a reminder to invest in public health, to enhancing, strengthening, and managing the capacities of health system to respond quickly to new infections or pandemics that may challenge public health in the future.

There is still much to understand about COVID-19 and its impact in different contexts including public health. Preparedness, readiness and response actions will continue to be driven by rapidly accumulating scientific and public health knowledge.

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# Covid-19 pandemic: an overview of the situation and problems that arise globally, regionally and in our Country

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## **Prof. Dr. Pirro PRIFTI**

Lecturer (Former Dean) of Faculty of Medical Technical Sciences,  
European University of Tirana

## **Msc. Eliana GJEDIKU**

Lecturer, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Architecture  
European University of Tirana

## **Abstract**

*According to the latest data obtained on March 30, 2021 the state of Pandemic worldwide is as follows. One year after the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, 128,262,723 people worldwide were infected, and 2,804,905 people died or 3% of cases were infected, but 103,479,926 people or 97% of cases were cured. infected with COVID-19.*

*Of these 21.88 million people are active cases, and 21.79 million are cases with mild COVID-19 infection or 99.6% of active cases while 89.49 million are declining patients accounting for 0.4% of active cases.*

*The spread of COVID-19 infection in Albania has started since December 2019 in the form of viral infections which were called influenza forms because the IPH does not have the ability to diagnose viral characters as they are done in EU laboratories, but in The moment when the WHO declared that we have a Pandemic from SARS-CoV-2 which was called the COVID-19 Pandemic, due to the immediate spread of the infection in our country, on March 8, 2020 a total quarantine was established in our country, which lasted until May.*

*Later only restrictive measures or so-called locks were imposed throughout the territory applying WHO rules: hand washing-keeping social distance (prohibition of activities) and personal 2m, personal hygiene. However, the infection figures in the Albanian population throughout the period over 1 year are presented as follows in the relevant table.*

*To date, according to data from the National Center for Medical Emergencies Tirana (QKUM), about 122 thousand people or 23% of the population have been infected, but asymptomatic cases have not been established because the tests were not complete due to difficulties in providing PCR tests. 2200 people have died.*

*Two pandemic waves have passed, one in March-April 2020, the other in January-February 2021, with significant fluctuations in the infection over the months.*

*Mass vaccinations, which began in February and continue into March and April, will help achieve "herd immunity" and end the pandemic. So far, about 70,000 vaccinations have been carried out by the end of March 2021 and it is thought that by the end of the first 6 months, they will reach 500,000 vaccinations.*

*In this way, Albania will be able to defeat the dangerous Pandemic which has taken the lives of people mainly of the elderly, but the new British variant that spread from the beginning of January to February, has taken the lives of young people and has infected all age group.*

**Key words:** *Pandemia COVID-19 (SARS CoV-2), Pfizer – BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine, BBIBP-CorV, Covaxin, CoronaVac, CoviVac, Sputnik V, Oxford – AstraZeneca vaccine, Convidicea, Johnson & Johnson vaccine, EpiVacorona and RBD-Dimer*

## **Overview on the spread of the latest Covid-19 pandemic**

It has been more than a year since the start of the Pandemic worldwide and the cases are every day more and more.

The peculiarity of this Pandemic is that it has kept records of the most accurate data on how once again and safely to

fight this wild virus, it has been spent by all the governments of the vast world of money, whether to finance scientific research or to keep the Pandemic under control within the respective states.

The Pandemic is known to have claimed the lives of many people and older children, with comorbidities such as Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, Obesity, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), smokers, drug addicts, and anyone with an compromised immune system, whether born or acquired, from various diseases such as HIV-AIDS.

One of the most sensitive complications of this disease is Syndrome I relieves from this disease, a syndrome which is associated with high mortality due to hyperinflammation and the release of inflammatory enzymes and the formation of microthrombi throughout the body, makes the lungs a favorite.

According to the latest data obtained since the beginning of the Pandemic according to the WHO which declares the Pandemic on March 8, 2020, the situation of the Pandemic worldwide is as follows. One year after the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, worldwide by April 2, 2021, 130,313,463 people were infected, and 2,842,051 people died or 3% of cases infected, but 104,996,315 people were cured. or 97% of cases infected with COVID-19.

Of these by April 2, 2021, it is observed 21.88 million people are active cases, and 21.79 million people are easily COVID-19 or 99.6% of active cases while 89.49 million people are in fallen condition which are 0.4% true active ([https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm\\_campaign=homeAdvegas1?](https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm_campaign=homeAdvegas1?)).

If we look at cases of infections by state up to me dt. April 2, 2021 we will see as follows:

It is noticed from the updated table of April 6 for the countries with higher infection and mortality. These are in order from the USA to Germany, in terms of countries with the highest GDP.

Table of the number of vaccinations in the world:

	State	Total Cases	New case s	Total death s	New deat hs	Total heale d	Ac tiv e cas es	Grave cases	Total cases / 1M people	Total deaths / 1M people	Total tests	Tests / 1M people	Population
	World	132,499,865	88,547	2,875,844	2,436	106,831,250	22,791,971	98,540	16,998	369			
1	USA	31,496,976		569,282		24,058,562	6,869,132	8,767	94,734	1,712	410,979,696	1,236,10	332,4
2	Brazil	13,023,189		333,153		11,436,189	1,253,847	8,318	60,939	1,559	28,600,000	133,827	213,70
3	India	12,686,049	1,572	165,577		11,732,279	788,193	8,944	9,125	119	250,231,260	179,983	1,390,3
4	France	4,833,263		96,875		300,064	4,436,324	5,433	73,922	1,482	67,392,400	1,030,72	65,38
5	Russia	4,597,868	8,328	101,106	389	4,220,035	276,727	2,300	31,496	693	122,100,000	836,404	145,9
6	UK	4,362,150		126,862		3,912,562	322,726	517	64,001	1,861	127,546,000	1,871,35	68,15
7	Italy	3,678,944		111,326		2,997,522	570,096	3,737	60,916	1,843	51,302,000	849,469	60,39
8	Turkey	3,529,601		32,456		3,130,977	366,168	2,407	41,511	382	39,811,505	468,217	85,02
9	Spain	3,311,325		75,783		3,077,296	158,246	1,925	70,802	1,620	43,458,015	929,233	46,76
10	Germa ny	2,903,036		77,630		2,597,100	228,306	3,680	34,565	924	50,399,177	600,076	83,9

It is known that there are only two ways to stop the Pandemic worldwide as well as in each country respectively:

-or natural virus infection I over 2/3 of the population to achieve 'Herd immunity'; so naturally we mean the infection of the population despite the protective measures taken by the respective state,

In the first case, mass infection with the virus would cause many deaths and morbidities and serious conditions in the population, which happened until the moment the vaccine was invented.

-or through mass vaccination of the population in order to 'Flock Immunity' to be achieved as soon as possible in an artificial way, after the vaccine is found. In this case mass vaccination stops the infection, reduces severe conditions and reduces deaths immediately.

Vaccination in the major countries of the world in the EU USA until April 2, 2021 is as follows:

% of population					
State	Administrated doses	% of people	Only first dose	Full vaccination	Administrated daily doses
<i>Global Total</i>	<i>608,297,050</i>	—	—	—	<i>15,586,835</i>
US.	153,631,404	23.6	30	16.9	2,903,730
China	118,210,000	4.2	—	—	4,621,471
EU	75,460,913	8.5	11.6	4.9	1,767,361
India	67,536,392	2.5	43	0.7	1,838,653
UK.	35,660,902	26.7	46.6	6.8	556,319
Brazil	23,679,963	5.6	8.8	2.5	751,630
Turkey	16,311,241	9.8	11.2	8.4	273,947
Germany	13,779,636	8.3	11.6	5	289,392
Indonesia	12,226,028	2.3	3.1	1.4	354,340
France	11,245,042	8.7	13.2	4.2	260,647
Russia	10,600,000	3.6	4.3	2.9	300,000
Italy	10,324,127	8.6	11.7	5.4	246,904

## Rate of infection spread

The rate of spread of the infection is fast and in order to assess how contagious (the rate of spread) është hanuhan's Corona virus is, its transmissibility must be looked at, ie the rate of spread which is measured by the sign  $R_0$  (reproductive number) which represents the average number of people with whom a single person will transmit the virus. The WHO estimates  $R_0$  between 1.4-2.5. Compared to the Influenza, the  $R_0$  in the common influenza is 1.3 and for SARS it is 2.0. According to the WHO, the transmission of the virus has 4 phases: 1. No cases were reported. 2. Sporadic Cases. 3. Collected Cases. 4. Commissioning.

## Virus Incubation Period

It is between 2 days to 14 days, during which the virus is contagious but the patient shows no symptoms.

Age and Sex in the spread of COVID-19.

According to early estimates by the NHC (China's National Health Commission), about 80% of patients who died were over the age of 60, and 75% had co-morbidities before infection. The most common diseases in these patients were cardiovascular disease and Diabetes Mellitus. In terms of sex 75% were male (1).

In New York Mortality under the age of 65 is 0.09%, while mortality over the age of 65 is 14.1%. According to WHO COVID-19:

- can infect all ages,
- Older people and people with concomitant diseases such as bronchial asthma, diabetes mellitus, heart disease, obesity, chronic lung disease, can be very vulnerable to the virus (2).

## How dangerous is the virus

There are three parameters by which we can understand and assess the risk of the virus:

- report of virus transmission- So- the number of people infected for the first time by a single person
- Report of Death Cases- percentage of cases that end in death. For COVID -19 according to WHO Mortality is 2%, while for SARS it was 10%, for MERS virus 34%, and for Common Influenza 1.3%
- Determination of whether the virus is transmitted by asymptomatic people (3).

## Mortality Cases from COVID-19

Mortality from COVID-19 is estimated at 2% according to the WHO. However, the specifics of mortality may also depend on mutations in the virus, according to epidemiologists. Compared to SARS virus mortality was 9.6%, whereas from MERS virus Pandemic mortality was 34% (3).

Virus mortality table

Virus	Death rates
Wuhan Novel Coronavirus (2019 nCoV)	2%
SARS	9.6%
MERS	34%
Swine Flu	0.02%

## Immunity of the `Herd`

Percentage Mortality values are not always realistic during an ongoing Pandemic.

In order for the `Herd's immunity to COVID-19 to occur in order for the Epidemic to be terminated it must be as much as 2/3 of the real population of a state (67%).

Therefore Mortality values in percentage can reach up to three times what they are until the Immunity of the `Herd` is achieved, so they can range from 1 death per 350 people to 1000 people per 100,000 people, and close to 300 deaths per 100,000 people per population under 65 years (0.3%) and 89% of these deaths (267 out of 300), are in persons with concomitant diseases including Obesity.

## Mortality among Hospitalized Patients

According to data from the American magazine JAMA February 7, 2020, it was found that 26% of hospitalized patients were admitted to Resuscitation and 4.3% of them died; while in a previous report 1 year ago, mortality was higher 32 percent of hospitalized patients were admitted to Resuscitation and 155 of them died. Perhaps this has to do with even the most improved Treatment Protocol after 1 year.

Days from the onset of the first symptoms until death. According to Wang et al, published in the journal JAMA on February 7, it was found that from the first symptom of Dyspnea until the death of the hospitalized patient it was 7 days while in patients who had ARDS Complication (Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome), death occurred on day However the range of death from the first onset of symptoms is for ages under 70 years from 10 41 days (4).

Days of hospital stay until discharge Healed. According to another study the average hospital stay is 10 days (4).

## Symptoms

The symptoms are well known, from the most common to the least common. They are listed in order of hope:

Fever, Cough, Dyspnea and shortness of breath, fever, in some cases fever with chills, Muscle aches, headaches, Sore throat, Loss of taste and smell, Fatigue. 7. Stages of COVID-19 Infection ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(20\)30165-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(20)30165-8/fulltext)).

Three immunogenomic stages of COVID-19 infection and their corresponding transcripts (ACE2, ANPEP, EGFR, IGF2R, IFN) are identified as potential biomarkers (5):

- Initial Phase - in which it is activated by increasing the effect of the gene family of the renin angiotensin system (ACE2, ANPEP), while some others reduce the activation (ACE2, ANPEP, EGFR, IGF2R, IFN). Treatment at this stage is with immunoglobulin i / v or with immune plasma.
- Propagation Phase - the same thing happens in the Propagation Phase as in the Initial phase. The treatment is done in the same way as in the initial stage.
- Complications phase - during this phase there is an increase in the expression of some key genes of the immune system, especially the genes of the IFN family. Treatment at this stage is done with Glucocorticoids, Monoclonal Antibodies, and other regimens lower immunity, because this stage of complications is exacerbated by the activation of macrophages and an exaggerated and disproportionate immune attack.

COVID-19 disease appears to go through three different clinical stages:

- early stage of infection,
- pulmonary phase
- hyper-inflammatory phase

The early stage appears to be due to the virus itself (5-7 days) while the later two stages are thought to be due to an inflammatory response (7-15 days from the onset of the disease) (6) ..Less common, skin sensitivity in different (8). Types of traditional viruses, new English, Brazilian, South African, etc.

SARS-CoV-2 appears to be able to convert rapidly, and there is a real concern that other variants will arise with resistance to rapidly rolled vaccines. Monitoring for new variants when they are introduced, measuring their characteristics and taking appropriate action should be a key part of the future public health response.

### **British variant of COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2)**

It is sometimes called the Kent variant after Kent, where the variant was found.

Earlier in February, UK health authorities said they had found several UK-type specimens that appeared to have independently acquired the E484K mutation.

A previous study, reported by Medical News Today, found that B.1.1.7 is associated with a 35% higher mortality rate among those who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the community. This equates to an increase in the number of deaths from 2.5 to 4.1 per 1,000 people who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the community (4).

The authors of the new study were able to conclude which patients acquired a B.1.1.7 infection thanks to an error in the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for the virus. The mutation prevents amplification of this gene in B.1.1.7, so the test detects only two of the three genes (6).

Mutations in SARS-CoV-2 are common: over 4,000 mutations have been detected in its spiky protein alone, according to the COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium (COG-UK).

VOC-202012/01 is defined by 23 mutations: 14 non-synonymous mutations, 3 deletions and 6 synonymous mutations [22] (i.e., there are 17 mutations that change proteins and six that do not change

E484K mutation. On 2 February 2021, Public Health England announced that they had discovered “[a] limited number of B.1.1.7 VOC-202012/01 genomes with E484K mutations”, which is also present in the South African variants and Brazil; this mutation may reduce the effectiveness of the vaccine (7).parts of the body, nausea or vomiting and diarrhea

One of the most significant changes in B.1.1.7 appears to be N501Y, [21] a change from asparagine (N) to tyrosine (Y) to the amino acid position 501. This is due to its position within the binding domain of spike protein receptor (RBD) - more precisely within the motif of receptor binding (RBM), [42] a part of RBD [43] - which binds to human ACE2.

### **South African variant of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)**

The South African variant, known as B.1.351 or 501.V2, has worried scientists because of its extremely large number of mutations, especially in the spike protein, which the virus uses to bind and infect cells. human. Spike protein is also part of the virus targeted by Covid-19 vaccines and antibody treatments.

The scientists noted that the variant is able to bind more easily to human cells due to three mutations in the receptor binding domain (RBD) in the virus spike glycoprotein: N501Y [6] [14] (a change from asparagine (N) to tyrosine (Y) at amino acid position 501), K417N and E484K. Two of these mutations, E484K and N501Y, are within the receptor binding motif (RBM) of the receptor binding domain (RBD).

Changes in the genetic code of the virus are called mutations. The new variant, called 501Y.V2, has gained 23 mutations, compared to the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. Importantly, 20 of the mutations cause amino acid changes and eight are located in the SARS-CoV-2 peak protein.

The concern is that 501Y.V2 can be spread much more efficiently among humans, compared to other variants of SARS-CoV-2.

This can result in larger amounts of the virus in an infected person, who can then infect other people more easily. The end result may be faster spread among humans (8, 9).

They found that the antibodies of these patients were less able to neutralize 501Y.V2 compared to previous COVID-19 variants in South Africa (<https://theconversation.com/south-african-scientists-ëho-discovered-new-covid-19-variant-share-what-they-know-153313>).

### Brazilian variants of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)

Line P.1, also known as 20J / 501Y.V3, Disturbance Variant 202101/02 (VOC-202101/02) or colloquially known as the Brazil (ian) variant, is one of the variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. [6] This variant of SARS-CoV-2 is called line P.1 and has 17 unique amino acid changes, ten of which are in its peak protein, including these three designated for a particular concern: N501Y, E484K and K417T. This variant of SARS-CoV-2 was first discovered by the National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID), Japan, on January 6, 2021 in four people who had arrived in Tokyo who had visited Amazonas, Brazil four days earlier. It was then stated that it would be in circulation in Brazil.

P.1 includes two distinct sub-variants 28-AM-1 and 28-AM-2, both of which carry the K417T, E484K, N501Y mutations, and both developed independently of each other within the same Amazonas region. Brazilian.

P.1 is significantly different from other Brazilian origin P.2 (also called 'B.1.1.28.2' or 'VUI-202101/01', which originates from Rio de Janeiro) (10).

In particular, P.2 carries only the E484K mutation and has none of the other two disturbing mutations, N501Y and K417T ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lineage\\_P.1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lineage_P.1)).

### COVID-19 virus . Some features

Etiology. CoVs have become the leading pathogens of emerging respiratory disease outbreaks. They are a large family of single-stranded RNA viruses (+ ssRNA) that can be isolated in different species of animals. [3] For reasons not yet explained, these viruses can overcome species barriers and can cause diseases in humans ranging from the common cold to more serious diseases such as MERS and SARS. Interestingly, these latter viruses probably originated from bats and then migrated to other mammalian hosts - the Himalayan palm civet for SARS-CoV and the dromedary camel for MERS-CoV - before being transmitted to humans. The dynamics of SARS-Cov-2 is currently unknown, but there is speculation that it also has an animal origin.

Orthocoronavirinae of the family Coronaviridae (order Nidovirales) are classified into four genera of CoV: Alphacoronavirus (alphaCoV), Betacoronavirus (betaCoV), Deltacoronavirus (deltaCoV) and Gammacoronavirus (gammaCoV). Furthermore, the genus betaCoV is divided into five sub-genres or genera. [6] Genomic characterization has indicated that bats and rodents may be the genetic sources of alphaCoVs and betaCoVs. In contrast, bird species appear to represent the gene sources of deltaCoVs and gammaCoVs (13).

The potential for these viruses to grow into pandemics worldwide poses a serious risk to public health. Regarding COVID-19, the WHO raised the threat of the CoV epidemic to a "very high" level on February 28, 2020. Overall, estimates suggest that 2% of the population are healthy carriers of a CoV and that these viruses are responsible for about 5% to 10% of acute respiratory infections (14).

CoVs are positive-stranded RNA viruses with a crown-like appearance under an electron microscope (coronamus is the Latin term for crown) due to the presence of spiky glycoproteins in the envelope. Subfamily

Common human CoCs: HCoV-OC43 and HCoV-HKU1 (line A betaCoV); HCoV-229E and HCoV-NL63 (alphaCoV). They can cause common colds and self-limiting upper respiratory infections in immunocompetent individuals. In immunocompromised and elderly subjects, lower respiratory tract infections may occur.

-Other human CoV: SARS-CoV, SARS-CoV-2 and MERS-CoV (betaCoV of line B and C, respectively). These cause epidemics of varying clinical severity exhibiting respiratory and extra-respiratory manifestations. Regarding SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, mortality rates are up to 10% and 35%, respectively.

Thus, SARS-CoV-2 belongs to the betaCoVs category. It has a round or elliptical shape and often pleomorphic, and a diameter of approximately 60–140 nm.

Its single-stranded RNA genome contains 29891 nucleotides, encoding 9860 amino acids. Although the origin of SARS-CoV-2 is not fully understood, genomic analyzes suggest that SARS-CoV-2 probably evolved from a strain found in the rod. Genomic comparison between the human SARS-CoV2 sequence and known animal coronaviruses revealed, in fact, high similarity (96%) between SARS-CoV2 and betaCoV RaTG13 (*Rhinolophus affinis*).

Transmission. Animal-to-human transmission was assumed to be the main mechanism. However, subsequent cases were not associated with this exposure mechanism. Therefore, it was concluded that the virus is transmitted from human to human and symptomatic humans are the most common source of the spread of COVID-19. Because of the possibility of transmission before symptoms, and thus individuals who remain asymptomatic can transmit the virus, isolation is the best way to contain this epidemic (11, 12).

As with other respiratory pathogens, including influenza and rhinovirus, transmission is believed to occur through respiratory points (particles > 5–10 µm in diameter) from coughing and sneezing. Aerosol transmission is also possible in case of prolonged exposure to elevated aerosol concentrations indoors. The spread, in fact, is mostly limited to family



members, healthcare professionals and other close contacts (6 meters, 1.8 meters). Regarding the duration of pollution in objects and surfaces, a study showed that SARS-CoV-2 can be found in plastics up to 2-3 days, stainless steel up to 2-3 days, cardboard up to 1 day, copper up to 4 hours (13, 14).

Epidemiology. The most up-to-date source for the epidemiology of this emerging pandemic can be found at the following sources:

WHO Novel Coronavirus Situation Board (COVID-19).

-The Johns Hopkins Center for System Science and Systems Engineering for Global Cases of Coronavirus COVID-19, which uses open public resources to track the spread of the epidemic (15).\_

## Path-physiology

In genetic terms, Chan et al. have proven that the new HCoV genome, isolated from a patient with atypical pneumonia groups after visiting Wuhan, had 89% nucleotide identity with SARS-like-CoVZXC21 and 82% with that of human SARS-CoV [8]. For this reason, the new virus was called SARS-CoV-2. Its single-stranded RNA genome contains 29891 nucleotides, encoding 9860 amino acids.

CoVs are enveloped, nucleocapsid-positive RNA viruses. To address the pathogenetic mechanisms of SARS-CoV-2, its viral structure and genome must be considered.

In CoV, the genomic structure is organized into a + ssRNA + approximately 30 kb in length - the largest known RNA viruses - and with a 5'-cap and 3'-poly-A tail structure. Starting from viral RNA, the synthesis of polyprotein 1a / 1ab (pp1a / pp1ab) is performed on the host. Among the structural elements of CoVs, there are spike glycoproteins composed of two subunits (S1 and S2). S protein homotrimers form spikes on the viral surface, guiding binding to host receptors. [15] Notably, in SARS-CoV-2, the S2 subunit - which contains a fusion peptide, a transmembrane domain, and a cytoplasmic domain - is highly conserved. Thus, it may be a target for antiviral compounds (anti-S2) or vaccines. In contrast, the spike receptor binding domain (RBD) represents only a 40% amino acid identity with other SARS-CoVs. RBD is a fundamental peptide domain in the pathogenesis of infection. It represents a binding site for the human Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme 2 (ACE2) receptor. For example, we need to understand why mortality and more severe forms of the disease are higher in men than in women. Perhaps, hormonal structure plays a major role in this change. In the prostate, for example, androgens induce the expression of the TMPRSS2 serine protein used by Sars-CoV-2 to supplement S proteins. Interestingly, pangolin (*Manis javanica*) Cows have an RBD domain identical to that of human SARS-CoV2 protein. The issue of viral mutations is essential to explaining possible recurrences of the disease.

## Mechanisms of Pneumonia caused by SARS-CoV-2

The data available so far seem to indicate that viral infection is capable of producing an excessive immune response in the host. In some cases, a reaction occurs which is entirely labeled as 'cytokine storm'. The effect is extensive tissue damage with dysfunctional clots. Just recently, the Italian researched introducing the term MicroCLOTS (COVID-19 microvascular syndrome of obstructive pulmonary inflammatory syndrome) for the underlying viral damage of the lung associated with inflammatory reaction and 16 microvascular pulmonary thrombosis (17).

While some cytokines such as tumor necrosis factor  $\alpha$  (TNF- $\alpha$ ), IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-8, IL-12, interferon-gamma-induced protein (IP10), macrophage inflammatory protein 1A (MIP1A) and monocyte chemo-protein traction 1 (MCP1) is implicated in the pathogenic cascade of the disease, the protagonist of this storm is interleukin 6 (IL-6). IL-6 is mainly produced by activated leukocytes and acts on a large number of cells and tissues.

It is able to promote B lymphocyte differentiation, stimulate the growth of some cell categories and inhibit the growth of others. Although the main role played by IL-6 is pro-inflammatory, it can also have anti-inflammatory effects. On the other hand, IL-6 increases during inflammatory diseases, infections, autoimmune disorders, cardiovascular diseases and some types of cancer. It is also implicated in the pathogenesis of cytokine release syndrome (CRS) which is an acute systemic inflammatory syndrome characterized by fever and multi-organ dysfunction. IL-6 is not the only protagonist on stage (18, 19).

## Histopathology

In summary, similar to SARS and MERS, severe COVID-19 lung damage was manifested in the direction of diffuse alveolar disease (DAD) with severe capillary congestion. Again, many findings were suggestive of vascular, lung, and other tissue dysfunction.

Cytokine release syndrome (CRS) is a form of systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) that can be caused by a variety of factors such as infections and some medications. It refers to cytokine storm syndromes (CSS) and occurs when a large number of white blood cells are activated and release inflammatory cytokines, which in turn activate even more white blood cells. CRS is also a negative effect of some monoclonal antibody drugs as well as T cell therapies When it occurs as a result of a drug, it is also known as an infusion reaction.

CRS occurs when a large number of white blood cells, including B cells, T cells, natural killer cells, macrophages, dendritic cells, and monocytes are activated and release inflammatory cytokines, which activate more white blood cells in a loop of positive reactions to pathogenic inflammation. Immune cells are activated by stressed or infected cells through receptor-ligand interactions.

Although severe coronavirus acute respiratory syndrome 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is sufficiently cleared of the early-stage acute viral response in most individuals, some progress to a hyperinflammatory condition, often with life-threatening pulmonary involvement. This systemic hyperinflammation results in inflammatory and monocyte lymphocytic infiltration into the lungs and heart, causing ARDS and heart failure. Patients with purified COVID-19 and ARDS have classic serum biomarkers of CRS including elevated CRP, LDH, IL-6, and ferritin.

Symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, muscle and joint pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, rapid breathing, rapid heartbeat, low blood pressure, seizures, headache, confusion, delirium, hallucinations, tremors and loss of coordination.

## Clinic

The authors of the Chinese CDC report divided the clinical manifestations of the disease by severity:

- Mild illness: non-pneumonia and mild pneumonia; this happened in 81% of cases.
- Severe illness: dyspnea, respiratory rate  $\geq 30$  / min, blood oxygen saturation ( $SpO_2$ )  $\leq 93\%$ ,  $PaO_2 / FiO_2$  or P / F ratio [ratio of oxygen to blood pressure (partial oxygen pressure,  $PaO_2$ ) and the percentage of oxygen supplied (inspired oxygen fraction,  $FiO_2$ )]  $<300$  and / or lung infiltrates  $> 50\%$  within 24 to 48 hours; this happened in 14% of cases.
- Critical illness: respiratory failure, septic shock and / or multiple organ dysfunction (MOD) or failure (MOF); this happened in 5% of cases.

## Diagnosing

In the laboratory, amplification of genetic material extracted from saliva or mucus samples is done through a polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), which involves the synthesis of a double-stranded DNA molecule from an RNA template.

Despite numerous antibody tests designed, to date serological diagnosis has limitations in both specificity and sensitivity. However, further studies are required to clarify some aspects of the issue. In particular:

- Whether IgG antibodies will provide immunity from future SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- In the protective antibody titer.
- For the duration of the protection.
- Increased winter D
- In critical patients, the D-dimer value increases, blood lymphocytes continuously decrease, and laboratory changes of multiorgan imbalance are found (high amylase, coagulation disorders, etc.).
- In the early stages of the disease, a normal or reduced white blood cell count (WBC) and a decreased lymphocyte count may be demonstrated. Interestingly, lymphopenia appears to be a negative prognostic factor.

Elevated levels of liver enzymes, lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), muscle enzymes and C-reactive proteins can be detected.

## Imaging

X-ray examination of the thorax. At this stage, it can be completely negative. In the more advanced stages of infection, X-ray examination of the chest generally shows multifocal alveolar septa, which tend to join up to the full lung septum. Pleural effusion may be associated.

Computed Tomography of the Thorax. Given the high sensitivity of the method, computed tomography of the chest (CT), in particular high-resolution CT (HRCT), is the method of choice in the study of COVID-19 pneumonia, even in the early stages. Some non-specific HRCT findings and models can be found. Most of these findings can also be seen in other lung infections, such as Influenza A (H1N1), CMV, SARS, MERS, Streptococcus and Chlamydia, Mycoplasma. The most common findings are multifocal bilateral "ground or ground glass" (GG) areas associated with fragmented, mostly peripheral / subpleural distribution consolidation areas with greater involvement of the posterior regions and lower lobes. The "crazy bedding" pattern can also be observed.

ECHO. In summary, during the course of the disease, it is possible to identify the first stage with focal areas of fixed B lines, a stage of numerical growth of B lines up to white lungs with small subpleural thickenings, and further progress until evidence of rear consolidations.

## Differential diagnosis

The symptoms of the early stages of the disease are nonspecific. Differential diagnosis should include the possibility of a wide range of common infectious and non-infectious respiratory disorders (e.g. vasculitis, dermatomyositis).

- Adenovirus
- Influenza
- Human metapneumovirus (HmPV)
- Parainfluenza
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)
- Rinovirus (common cold)

## Prognosis

Preliminary data suggest that the reported mortality rate varies from 1% to 2% depending on the study and country. Most fatalities have occurred in patients over 50 years of age. Young children appear to be easily infected, but may serve as a vector for additional transmission.

Complications. Long-term complications among SARS-CoV-2 infection survivors who have clinically significant COVID-19 disease are not yet available. The case mortality rate globally remains between 1% to 2%. Subsequent studies will clarify the extent of consequences on organ functions, such as respiratory, renal, cardiovascular, as well as psychological / psychiatric, and related to chronic pain problems (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554776/>).

## Vaccines

It is clear that there are only two ways to stop the Pandemic: first is to infect 1/3 of the population or 67.5% of it to achieve 'Flock Immunity', and the other option is vaccination.

Vaccinations are the only way to stop the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) Pandemic.

Within the first year of the Pandemic and practically 8 months after its onset the first Sputnik V vaccine was produced, and then other vaccines were produced. The two main vaccines produced in the US such as Pfizer & Biontech and Moderna were of a new vaccine variant while the other vaccines were of standard or classic products.

The following vaccines are practically produced:

- two mRNA vaccines (the Pfizer – BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine),
- four conventional inactivated vaccines (BBIBP-CorV, Covaxin, CoronaVac, CoviVac [ru]),
- four vaccines with viral vectors (Sputnik V, Oxford – AstraZeneca vaccine, Convidicea, Johnson & Johnson vaccine),
- two vaccines with protein subunits (EpiVaccorona and RBD-Dimer).

The effectiveness of vaccines remains so far:

- Pfizer & Biontech vaccine 95% second dose
- Developed by J & J's vaccines division, Janssen Pharmaceuticals 85%
- Astra & Zeneca vaccine 63.09% -82% second dose
- Moderna vaccine 52.4 -92.1 second dose
- Sinovac (Sinofarm) vaccine 50.4- 78% in moderate cases and 100% in the prevention of severe cases
- Sputnik V vaccine - up to 92%.

- The Pfizer vaccine - BioNTech COVID 19 (pINN: tozinameran), sold under the Comirnaty brand name, is a mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine. It is given by intramuscular injection. It is composed of nucleoside-modified mRNA (modRNA) that encodes a mutated form of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, which is encapsulated in lipid nanoparticles. BioNTech technology for the BNT162b2 vaccine is based on the use of nucleoside-modified mRNA (modRNA) which encodes a portion of the spike protein found on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (COVID 19), eliciting an immune response against protein infection. of the virus. [60]. Vaccination requires two doses given three weeks apart. It is one of two RNA vaccines deployed against COVID 19 in 2020. An intermediate analysis of the study data showed a potential efficacy of over 90% in preventing infection within seven days of a second dose. [20] [21] The most common side effects include mild to moderate pain at the injection site, fatigue, and headache. Reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very rare, [a] and no long-term complications have been reported. price of US \$ 10 per dose. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pfizer%E2%80%93BioNTech\\_COVID-19\\_vaccine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pfizer%E2%80%93BioNTech_COVID-19_vaccine)).

The vaccine should be stored at temperatures between  $-80$  and  $-60$  °C ( $-112$  and  $-76$  °F), up to five days before it can be stored at  $2$  to  $8$  °C ( $36$  to  $46$  °F) and until two hours at temperatures up to  $25$  °C ( $77$  °F) or  $30$  °C ( $86$  °F) (21, 22).

- The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, coded mRNA-1273, is a COVID-19 vaccine developed by the United States National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the Advanced Biomedical Research and Development Authority (BARDA), and Moderna. It is administered by two doses of  $0.5$  mL given by intramuscular injection given four weeks apart. It is a mRNA vaccine composed of mRNA (modRNA) modified from nucleoside that encodes a spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, which is encapsulated in lipid nanoparticles. It is one of two RNA vaccines developed and deployed in 2020 against COVID-19. Modern technology uses a modified NO nucleoside messenger (modRNA) compound called mRNA-1273. Once the compound is inside a human cell, the mRNA binds to the endoplasmic reticulum of the cell. Mild to moderate side effects such as fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches and pain at the injection site were observed in all dose groups but were common with increased dose. Modern demonstrating similar efficacy but requiring storage at the temperature of a standard medical refrigerator of  $2-8$  °C ( $36-46$  °F) for up to 30 days. \$ 50- \$ 60.

- BBIBP-CorV, also known as the Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine, is one of two inactivated COVID-19 virus vaccines developed by Sinopharm. internal analysis showed an efficiency of 79%. BBIBP-CorV can be transported and stored at normal cooling temperatures. BBIBP-CorV shares technologies similar to CoronaVac and BBV152, other inactivated virus vaccines for COVID-19.

- BBV152 (also known as Covaxin) is an inactivated vaccine based on the COVID-19 virus being developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Medical Research Council. Bharat Biotech has applied to the Inspector General of Medicines of India (DCGI), Government of India seeking an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). It was the third firm after the Serum Institute of India and Pfizer to apply for emergency use approval. It has an efficiency of 80.6 percent (23).

- The CoronaVac vaccine, also known as the Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine, is an inactivated COVID-19 virus vaccine developed by the Chinese company Sinovac Biotech. Has been in Phase III clinical trials in Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Turkey. 83.7% effective in preventing severe cases and 100% in mild cases.

- The CoviVac vaccine is a COVID-19-based inactivated vaccine developed by the Chumakov Center [ru], which is an institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. It was approved for use in Russia in February 2021, being the third COVID-19 vaccine to receive approval in Russia.

Has not yet passed a phase III clinical trial since the beginning of March 2021. normal refrigerator temperatures, from  $2$  to  $8$  degrees Celsius. vaccine to be effective 91.4% (24, 25).

- The Sputnik V vaccine (Russian: Спутник V) is a COVID-19 vaccine developed by the Gamaleya Institute of Epidemiology and Research Microbiology. Registered on August 11, 2020 by the Russian Ministry of Health as Gam-COVID-Vac (Russian: Гам-КОВИД-Вак, romanized: Gam-KOVID-Vak), Sputnik V is a vaccine for the viral adenovirus vector. - "V" in the name is the letter V, not the Roman numeral for five. Gam-COVID-Vac is a two-vector viral vaccine based on two human adenoviruses, a common cold virus - which contains the gene that encodes the SARS-CoV-2 long-tailed protein (S) to stimulate an immune response.

The Gam-COVID-Vac vaccine was developed by a team of government-supported cell microbiologists at the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology.

The group was led by associate member of the MD and RAS Denis Logunov, who also worked on vaccines for Ebolavirus and MERS-coronavirus. Recombinant adenovirus types 26 and 5 are both used as vectors in the vaccine. They were biotechnologically derived and contain the cDNA of the SARS-CoV-2 S protein. Both are administered to the deltoid muscle: the Ad26-based vaccine is used on the first day and the Ad5 vaccine is used on the 21st day to boost the immune response. According to the preliminary review by experts (27).

- The lyophilized formulation of Gam-COVID-Vac is similar to the smallpox vaccine, bypassing the need for continuous storage of the "coldest chain" or cold chain - as required for Pfizer - BioNTech and Modern Vaccines respectively - and permitting of transport to remote locations with reduced risk of vaccine breakdown. They had essentially the same efficiency (91.8%) as for all ages.

- Oxford Vaccine - AstraZeneca COVID-19, codenamed AZD1222, [7] is a COVID-19 vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca given by intramuscular injection, using the modified chimpanzee adenovirus ChAdOx1 as a vector. A dosing regimen showed 90% efficacy when half the dose was followed by a full dose after at least one month, based on mixed trials without any participants over 55 years of age. Another dosing regimen showed 62% efficacy when given as two full doses separated by at least one month at 90%.

The vaccine was developed by the Jenner Institute of the University of Oxford and the Oxford Vaccine Group in collaboration with Italian manufacturer Advent Srl based in Pomezia, which produced the first group of COVID-19 vaccine for clinical testing. [22The AZD1222 vaccine is deficient in replication adenovirus vector vector, containing the full-length coded sequence of SARS-CoV-2 spike proteins together with a leading sequence of tissue plasminogen activator (tPA).

What is of interest is the spike protein, an external protein that allows the SARS-type coronavirus to enter cells through the enzymatic domain of ACE2. Its production after vaccination will stimulate the immune system to attack the coronavirus through antibodies and T cells if it later infects the body. On January 29, 2021, the EMA recommended granting a conditional marketing authorization for AZD1222 to people 18 years of age and older. Rare side effects are serious neurological disease and thrombosis (26).

- The Convidicea vaccine (Ad5-n CoV) is the first new coronavirus vaccine for COVID-19 in China clinical trial. The vaccine candidate is built on the platform of CanSinoBIO adenovirus-based vector vaccine technology. The CanSino Biologics Convidicea vaccine is a vaccine candidate genetically engineered with adenovirus 5 damaged by replication as a vector to express SARS-CoV-2 spike proteins. Convidicea is a vector viral vaccine similar to the AstraZeneca AZD1222 vaccine. efficacy of 65.28% in the prevention of all symptomatic COVID-19 disease 28 days after single-dose vaccination, and 68.83% in the prevention of all symptomatic COVID-19 disease 14 days after single-dose vaccination.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a human adenovirus vaccine COVID-19 [12] developed by Janssen Vaccines in Leiden, the Netherlands, and its Belgian parent company Janssen Pharmaceuticals, a subsidiary of US company Johnson & Johnson (J&J). The vaccine is based on a human adenovirus that has been modified to contain the gene for the spike proteins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine requires only one dose and does not need to be stored frozen. The most common side effects were injection site pain, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, and nausea. Most of these side effects were mild to moderate in severity and lasted for a day or two.

- The EpiVacorona vaccine (Russian: ЭпиВакКорона, tr. EpiVakKorona) is a COVID-19 vaccine developed by the Vector Institute. The EpiVacorona vaccine contains fragments extracted from the virus' s synthetic peptide antigens. The antigen-based vaccine provokes an immune response against COVID-19 and promotes the further development of immunity. EpiVacorona is a vaccine based on peptide antigens. Thus, the vaccine does not contain live virus and forms immunity due to the use of artificially synthesized peptides. On October 14, 2020, President Vladimir Putin announced that the vaccine had been approved. The Vector Institute claims that it is possible to detect antibodies required only by their test system, but it keeps it secret.

- The RBD-Dimer ZF2001 vaccine, under the trade name RBD-Dimer, is a COVID-19 auxiliary protein subunit vaccine developed by Anhui Zhifei Longcom in collaboration with the Institute of Microbiology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. As of December 2020, the vaccine candidate was in Phase III trials with 29,000 participants in China, Ecuador, Malaysia, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. ZF2001 uses technologies similar to other protein-based vaccines in Phase III trials from Novavax, the Vector Institute, and Medicago. It is administered in 3 doses for a period of 2 months.

ZF2001 was initially approved for use in Uzbekistan and later China. Production capacity is expected to be one billion doses per year.

As described in Cell, the CoV spike receptor binding domain (RBD) is an attractive vaccine target for coronaviruses but is limited by limited immunogenicity, however a dimeric form of MERS-CoV RBD offers greater protection. Dimer RBD significantly increases neutralizing antibodies compared to a conventional monomeric form and mice protected against MERS-CoV infection. CoV RBD-dimer is manufactured with high yields in pilot scale production.

Instead of injecting an entire virus, subunit vaccines contain virus particles specially selected to stimulate an immune response. Because the fragments are unable to cause disease, subunit vaccines are considered very safe (28, 29).

## Vaccine Adverse Reactions

In this article we are evaluating only the vaccines that are being used so far in Albania.

The side effects of COVID-19 Vaccines are generally mild as:

Pain, Redness, Swelling, Fatigue, Headache, Muscle aches, Chills, Fever up to 38°C, Nausea or vomiting. For the Pfizer / BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, it was first approved by the FDA and EMA. more than 1 in 10 people can experience: tenderness, swelling or redness in your arm where you injected the vaccine (30). After the Pfizer / BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, more than 1 in 1,000 people can develop: itching where the vaccine was given, swelling of the lymph glands, insomnia More than 1 in 10,000 people can develop Bell's palsy.

**Serious side effects.** Serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction, are extremely rare.

Serious side effects after the Pfizer / BioNTech vaccine are seen in approximately 1 in 100,000 people.

Your vaccinator is trained to treat any serious allergic reaction.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/Pfizer-BioNTech.html>)

Vaccination with Astra & Zeneca. It is approved by the FDA and EMA. In addition to the common side effects that all vaccines have, there are also rare and dangerous side effects:

The vaccine may be associated with very rare cases of blood clots associated with thrombocytopenia, and low levels of blood platelets (elements in the blood that help it to clot) with or without bleeding, including rare cases of blood clots. vessels that drain blood from the brain (CVST).

These are rare cases - around 20 million people in the UK and EEA had been vaccinated since 16 March and the EMA had reviewed only 7 cases of blood clots in multiple blood vessels (diffuse intravascular coagulation, DIC) and 18 cases of CVST. A causal link with the vaccine is not proven, but it is possible and deserves further analysis (23, 24).

The vaccine is not recommended for people under the age of 60 because there is little experimental data.

(<https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/neës/covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca-benefits-still-outweigh-risks-despite-possible-link-rare-blood-clots>).

Sinovac vaccine (Chinese). It is approved by the Chinese Institute of Public Health, but not approved by the EMA and FDA. Normally, vaccines are very safe and deaths can only occur when the injection causes serious allergic reactions. But serious side effects would occur within 15 minutes after injection, and death in the following days is unlikely to be caused by injection.

The Department of Health is expected to issue new guidelines soon recommending that some people at high risk, including those with uncontrolled diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure, should delay getting vaccinated (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-11/hong-kong-s-vaccine-no-show-rate-rises-after-side-effect-reports>). Until today, the Sinovac vaccine was not recommended for people over 65, but the latest data allow the vaccine to be given to the elderly as well.

Sputnik V vaccine Approved by the Russian Institute of Public Health is expected to be approved by the EMA, while the FDA has approved it as a vaccine due to need. The most common side effects reported were flu-like symptoms, injection site pain, and fatigue. Serious side effects were rare in both groups and four deaths were reported in the study, although neither was considered to be the result of the vaccine. After receiving the vaccine, Russians receive information about side effects which may include pain at the injection site, increased blood flow, swelling, chills, increase in body temperature, mild cough, nasal congestion, arthralgia, muscle or joint pain, general malaise and a headache. "These symptoms should disappear within three to four days after vaccination," says the letter that comes with the vaccine (<https://www.euronees.com/2021/03/19/as-europe-mulls-russia-s-sputnik-v-jab-how-is-it-going-down-at-home>) (26, 27).

## Prevalence of Covid-19 infections in our country in absolute and relative figures per capita and by counties. Number of victims, cured in relation to infections by counties

The spread of COVID-19 infection in Albania has started since December 2019 in the form of viral infections which were called influenza forms because the IPH does not have the ability to diagnose viral characters as they are done in EU laboratories, but in The moment when the WHO declared that we have a Pandemic from SARS-CoV-2 which was called the COVID-19 Pandemic, due to the immediate spread of the infection in our country, on March 8, 2020 a total quarantine was established in our country, the quarantine of which lasted until May.

Later only restrictive measures or so-called lockdowns were imposed throughout the territory applying WHO rules: hand washing-keeping social distance (prohibition of activities) and personal 2m, personal hygiene.

However, the infection figures in the Albanian population throughout the period over 1 year are presented as follows in the relevant table (30).

To date, according to data from the National Center for Medical Emergencies Tirana (QKUM), about 122 thousand people or 23% of the population have been infected, but asymptomatic cases have not been established because the tests were not complete due to difficulties in providing PCR tests (28, 29).

In terms of testing, Albania holds the last place in the Balkan countries and leaves behind only Kosovo (see the table of Balkan countries) (31, 32).

Table for Albania in total

Total Tested Number 530241 (18.43% of the population)
Number of Infected 121544 (22.92% of the total cases tested)
Number of Deaths 2145
Number of Healed Patients 85846
Youngest infected 2 months; the oldest 96 years old
Total population 2 877 797 inhabitants
( <a href="http://open.data.al/covid-19/">http://open.data.al/covid-19/</a> )

In relation to sex, COVID-19 infection has affected 53% of women and 47% of men, while the average age of infected persons is 46 years, taking into account the extremes of age from 2 years of age with COVID-19 to 99 years. vitecc.

The most affected age group is the age group over 55 years and constitutes 26% of the sick cases. These data are according to the IPH (<http://www.ishp.gov.al/covid-19-ne-shqiperi/>).

However, the total number of tested is over 500,000 people, which is about 20% - 25% of the population. It is known that according to the WHO, the more PCR tests performed the more accurate diagnoses of the virus would be made and the more accurately the epidemiological sector would decide to quarantine cases at home, and the fewer infections would occur.

But the waves of infections in Albania have followed the waves of infections in Europe with a delay of 2 or 2 weeks.

The second wave of infections occurred from October to November with corresponding oscillations.

While re-infections with the new English variant of viruist occurred in January-February and were diagnosed in the laboratory by IPH in February 2021 (33, 34).

Region	Total cases	Healed	Deaths	Currently positive Covid-19				Total tests	
				Currently Positive	Hospitalized		Self isolation at home		
					Intensive therapy	Hospital therapy			
									%
Tirane	52898	29433	909	22556	5	123	22428	364546	43.25%
Fier	10588	7770	213	2605	4	36	2565	17582	8.66%
Durres	9652	8032	196	1424	4	55	1365	26476	7.89%
Vlore	8456	7031	116	1309	1	28	1280	15789	6.91%
Elbasan	7936	7289	221	426	0	30	396	17044	6.49%
Shkoder	6495	5149	113	1233	0	19	1214	18869	5.31%
Lezhe	5714	5059	86	569	1	6	562	14712	4.67%
Berat	5638	5434	88	116	3	23	90	11629	4.61%
Korçe	5603	4740	99	764	0	3	761	14521	4.58%
Gjirokaster	4287	2979	50	1258	0	13	1245	11791	351
Kukes	2615	2238	33	344	0	0	344	12044	2.14%
Diber	2413	2039	47	327	1	2	324	10036	1.97%
Total	122295	87193	2171	32931	19	338	32574	535039	
	22.86%	71.30%	1.78%	26.93%	5%	1.10%	98.90%		
	From	Total cases			0.06%				
				Active cases					

Data received from the National Center for Medical Emergencies Tirana 26..03.2021 (stat. K. Ramilli).

MISSION COVID							
Scene		QSUT	SUSHN	SUT	Regional Hospital	TOTAL	COVID ALBANIA
Tirana	8,558	2,238	1,302	48		12146	27002
Regions	5,917	922	536	0	7481	14856	
Total	14,475	3,160	1,838	48	7481		
%	53.6%	11.7%	6.8%	0.2%	27.7%		

Data received from the National Center for Medical Emergencies Tirana 26..03.2021 (stat. K. Ramilli).

However, as of April 6, today the figures vary and are in total:

Raste (total): 126,795

Tests (total): 572,719

Healed (total): 94,431

Deaths (total): 2,274

But the reports mentioned above have not changed. Also, the total data in relation to the Balkan countries presented in the table below for the Pandemic in the Balkan countries have not changed (35).

Number of PCR Tests. First in relation to the Balkan countries. The number of tests in Albania is about 20% of the population according to the table below. Compared to Serbia, Serbia has made up 50% of the population, Greece over 50% of the population, northern Macedonia 40% of the population, while Romania has the same ratio as Albania about 18% of the population (See the predicted table of 06 / 04/2021).

## Pandemic Chart in Balkan Countries

State	Total cases	New cases	Total deaths	New deaths	Total healed	Active cases	Grave condition	Total cases / 1M people	Total deaths / 1M people	Total PCR tests	Total tests / 1M people	Population
Albania	126795		2274		94431	30090	18	44096	791	568441	197691	2875401
North Macedonia	135167		3977		110388	20802	124	64881	1909	643004	308646	2083309
Montenegro	92740		1317		86029	5394	69	147645	2097	343810	547357	628127
Slovenia	220698	273	4089	7	203214	13395	133	106148	1967	1080896	519872	2079156
Greece	277277		8453		237025	31799	759	26702	814	6747854	649821	10384176
Croatia	280899	735	6113	30	263758	11028	155	68748	1496	1589987	389137	4085926
Bulgaria	356859		13786		273429	69644	734	51655	1996	2189411	316917	6908467
Serbia	621375		5497		526100	89778	282	71336	631	3497640	401543	8710504
Romania	977986		24190		875487	78309	1478	51097	1264	7473377	390466	19139634

In terms of Mortality, Albania in relation to some Balkan countries is relatively comparable in terms of population in terms of population and is better than Romania, and Northern Macedonia, despite the weekly fluctuations that may have had in the first months of 2021. Deaths in Albania are 1.78% in relation to the population, while Serbia has 4,778 deaths per 8.7 million inhabitants, ie 1%, Northern Macedonia has 3364 deaths per 2.1 million inhabitants, ie about 2.1%, while Greece has 7 thousand deaths per 10.3 million inhabitants or 0.9%, Romania 21 thousand deaths per 19.2 million inhabitants or 2.1% of the population (36).

Regarding Kosovo because it is not found in official international statistics I have referred to the official link (<https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/xk>) for data from Kosovo itself which until dt.06 / 04/2021 are as follows:

Population	1.873 000 habitants
Infections	93.612 cases
Deaths	1905 deaths
Vaccinations	0
( <a href="https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/xk">https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/xk</a> )	

So the mortality rate in Kosovo in relation to the population is 1.1%). For Kosovo there are no declared total test data (30). In Albania, the spread of infection can be better explained by the ratio of hospitalizations to those of morbidity than by PCR testing in terms of the spread of infection in the population. This is seen in the above two tables of QKUM, where it is seen that for each hospitalization belong 333 infected persons (122,295 infected persons with 338 hospitalizations). This ratio is relatively the same in the Balkan countries (see tables above) (37, 38).

In Albania, for every hospitalization it means that there are 333 infected people and for every 18 hospitalizations there is 1 hospitalized in Intensive Care (Resuscitation).

The table for the Balkan countries shows the ratio of serious cases to the population. Albania has a ratio of 46 serious cases per 1 million inhabitants, while Northern Macedonia has 124 serious cases, Montenegro has 69 cases, Serbia has 269 cases, Greece has 735 reported cases. In this presentation Albania has fewer serious cases per 1 million inhabitants (see table above).

## Vaccination process, lack of production on time and according to contracts with well-known western companies.

Should the possibility of concluding contracts with other countries be kept open?

When can vaccination end in our country.

Vaccinations worldwide have reached a total of 500 million people in 134 countries and 673 million doses have been applied, as of April 6, 2021. The following table shows the number of vaccinations in the Balkan countries:

% of populates					
State	Administrated doses	% of people	First dose	Full vaccination	Administrated daily doses
Albania	192,882	3 . 4	-	-	16 , 4 12



<b>Romania</b>	3 , 35 9 , 0 0 6	8 . 7	11	6 . 3	5 6 , 19 9
<b>Serbia</b>	2 , 6 0 0 , 0 0 0	18 . 7	2 1.7	15 . 6	5 3 , 57 1
<b>Greece</b>	1, 8 8 6 , 37 0	8 . 8	11.4	6 . 2	35 , 8 13
<b>Croatia</b>	52 4 , 37 1	6 . 4	10 . 5	2 . 4	11, 7 6 0
<b>Bulgaria</b>	5 0 3 , 57 0	3 . 6	5 . 8	1.5	9 , 57 6
<b>Slovenia</b>	4 0 3 , 8 12	9 . 8	13 . 8	5 . 7	8 , 5 6 7
<b>Montenegro</b>	34 , 335	2 . 8	4 . 8	0 . 8	1, 9 9 5
<b>North Mac- edonia</b>	10 , 8 6 0	0 . 3	0 . 4	0 . 1	4 0 6

Until dt. April 5, 2021 the number of vaccinated in Albania has reached 200,000 people.

Vaccinated people aged 80 and over, health personnel Nursing doctors throughout the country, Kosovo Health personnel are also being helped with vaccinations. The vaccines used so far are the Pfitzer & Bionteck and Astra & Zenca vaccines, and the Russian Sputnik V vaccine will be used very soon, and today the Albanian parliament has approved with a normative Act the use of the Chinese Sinovac vaccine. So in Albania four vaccines are being used and if their import will be accelerated very soon Albania will realize 250,000 vaccinations within April (39).

## When can vaccination in our country end and Immunity

The Albanian state has prepaid for 2 million doses of vaccine, but due to the difficulties that the EU has raised in the distribution of doses to poor countries and COVAX which is part of the WHO, the total doses of vaccines may come by the end of the year. For this reason, vaccination in Albania at this rate of vaccine arrivals is expected to be completed within 6 months of next year. However, in the best case, vaccination in Albania could be completed by the end of 2021, according to government data.

However with the advent of new vaccines it is thought that up to 500,000 people could be vaccinated by the end of May 2021.

The four types of vaccines that are being used in Albania: Pfitzer & Biontech, Astra & Zeneca, Sinovac, and Sputnik V, will enable the achievement of 'Flock Immunity' within the year.

Single dose vaccination will not have the high percentage of immunization which can reach according to the four types of vaccines being used in Albania from 38% - that has Sinovac to 50% that has Pfitzer & Biontech.

It is known that all vaccinations require two doses per person but it is also thought that if the person has passed the infectious disease COVID-19, then it is necessary to make only one dose of vaccine which will be as a second dose. Based on the latest scientific data, immunity from COVID-19 can last up to 8 months after infection, but can last even longer (27).

It is known that the components of immunity protection include:

- Antibodies, which are proteins that circulate in the blood and recognize foreign substances such as viruses, and neutralize them.
- Supporting T cells help identify pathogens.
- Killing T cells kill pathogens.
- B cells produce new antibodies when the body needs them.

According to other studies, the immunity of people after the disease can last for years. Interestingly, the immunity of persons after infection with SARS which is another variant of the coronavirus has lasted up to 17 years.

So it is thought that immunity may persist long after recovery from COVID-19. Vaccination can boost the memory of T and B lymphocytes and immunity can last from several months to several years. Problems remain virus mutations which are as common in viruses as in influenza viruses (28).

So in the future it will be necessary for vaccines to become two, three or more valences in order to include new mutations in the virus, which is why vaccination can be done every year in the same way as vaccination. against the flu (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/health/coronavirus-immunity.html>),

(<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/lasting-immunity-found-after-recovery-covid-19>).

Immunity after vaccination does not last forever. With the emergence of new mutations, new vaccines or a highly valent vaccine are required. It is known that after the first vaccination the antibodies come out within three weeks after vaccination and last up to 4 months.

So you definitely need a second dose of vaccination after 3-5 weeks to boost the immunity in the individual and keep this immunity for a long time in T and B cell memory (<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-vaccinated-people-covid-immunity-science.html>).

About 10% of the population do not want to be vaccinated anymore as a result of misinformation or conspiracy theories.

However, vaccination is the only way to stop the Pandemic, except in the case of 'herd immunity', which takes about 2-3 years to achieve but with high mortality so it is necessary to vaccinate the population as soon as possible to reduce mortality, as well as to reduce severe cases of infection (29).

## Some Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the international experience and WHO recommendations we can present some Recommendations and Suggestions.

### When you are not vaccinated

- The rules set by the WHO must be respected: personal distance 2m - wearing a mask - avoidance of gatherings or social distance, personal hygiene.
- When You Are Fully Vaccinated. How to protect yourself and others COVID-19 vaccines are effective in protecting you from the disease. Based on what we know about COVID-19 vaccines, people who have been fully vaccinated may start doing some things they had stopped doing because of the pandemic.
- We are still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19. Once you are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you should continue to take precautions - such as wearing a mask, standing 6 feet away from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated areas - in public places until we know more.
- These recommendations can help you make decisions about daily activities after you are fully vaccinated. They are not intended for healthcare facilities (31).

### People are considered fully vaccinated

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine
- If you do not meet these requirements, you are not fully vaccinated. Continue to take all precautions until you are fully vaccinated.
- You can gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask or standing 6 feet away.
- You can gather indoors with unvaccinated people of any age from another home (for example, visiting with relatives all living together) without masks or standing 6 feet away, unless any of those people or someone they live with has an increased risk of COVID-19 disease.
- If you travel to the United States, you do not need to be tested before or after the trip or post-trip self-quarantine (40).
- You need to pay close attention to the situation at your international destination before traveling outside the United States.
- You do not need to be tested before leaving the United States unless your destination requires it.
- You must still show a negative test result or COVID-19 recovery documentation before boarding a flight to the United States.
- You still have to be tested 3-5 days after the international trip.
- You do not need to self-quarantine once you have arrived in the United States.
- If you have been close to someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested if you have no symptoms.
- However, if you live in a group setting (such as a correctional facility or detention facility or group house) and you are close to someone who has COVID-19, you still need to stay away from others for 14 days and get tested, even if they do not have symptoms (41,42).
- What you need to keep doing
- For now, if you are fully vaccinated:
- You still need to take steps to protect yourself and others in many situations, e.g. wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet away from others, and avoid crowds and poorly ventilated areas. Take these precautions whenever you are:
- In public
- Meeting with unvaccinated people from more than one other family
- Visit with an unvaccinated person who is at increased risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19 or who lives with a person at increased risk
- You should still avoid medium or large gatherings.
- If you travel, you need to take steps to protect yourself and others. You will still be required to wear a mask on airplanes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation that travel within, inside, or outside the United States and at U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. Fully vaccinated international travelers arriving

- in the United States are still required to be tested within 3 days of their flight (or to show COVID-19 recovery documentation in the last 3 months) and must still be tested 3-5 days later their journey.
- You still need to watch out for the symptoms of COVID-19, especially if you have been near someone who is ill. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should be tested and stay at home and away from others.
  - You will still need to follow the instructions in your workplace.
  - illustration of people enjoying a party inside
  - What we know and what we are still learning (32, 33).
  - We know that COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing COVID-19 disease, especially serious illness and death (42).
  - We are still learning how effective vaccines are against variants of the virus that causes COVID-19. Early data show that vaccines may work against some variants, but may be less effective against others.
  - We know that other preventative steps are helping to stop the spread of COVID-19 and that these steps are still important, even though vaccines are being distributed.
  - We are still learning how well COVID-19 vaccines protect people from spreading the disease.
  - Early data show that vaccines may help keep people from spreading COVID-19, but we are learning more as more people get vaccinated.
  - We are still learning how long COVID-19 vaccines can protect people.
  - As we know more, the CDC will continue to update our recommendations for vaccinated and unvaccinated people (43).
  - Until we know more about those questions, everyone - even people who have been vaccinated - should continue to take steps to protect themselves and others when recommended.
  - At home you can stay without a mask with people who are fully vaccinated
  - Driving in a private institution or private home with people you do not know or are unvaccinated should be done with a mask
  - In-country trips are made without the need for PCR tests and without quarantine.
  - Travel abroad without doing PCR test depends on the destination
  - International travel can be done without quarantine
  - In-house visits can be done without a mask with people at high risk of COVID-19 infection.
  - Care should be taken in crowded gatherings (44).
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Universiteti European i Tiranës. – Tiranë : UET Press, 2021

312 f. ; 21 x 29.7 cm. - (Acta Scientiarum ; 32)

ISBN 978-9928-320-75-9

1.Shkenca shoqërore 2.Zhvillimi ekonomik 3.Zhvillimi shoqëror  
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