



## Albania, Potential for the Development of the Blue Economy

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to help advance the vision of Albania in the Blue Economy, in the framework of the country's aim to join the EU. I will highlight the gaps in knowledge, the risks and deficiencies that our country has in the development of the economy in this field and the measures that the government should take to solve these problems. The most important sectors in the Blue Economy are: fishing, tourism, maritime transport and plastic pollution. The fishing, tourism and transport industries are the three most powerful industries that provide the highest return on investment, as part of the blue economy. These sectors have an important socio-economic and cultural role for coastal communities. A worrying issue facing these coastal areas is the challenges of marine plastic pollution, which require immediate solutions. I will reflect the specific circumstances of Albania and the opportunities arising from the integrated economic development of the maritime sectors. The main objective is to develop a future for "Blue Albania" and build a long-term innovative plan in these sectors. At the end of the study, I will draw up a clear picture of the economic activities that need to be undertaken to accelerate the development of the blue economy in our country*

**Keywords:** Blue Economy; Fishing; Maritime Transport; Marine Tourism; Circular Economy; Plastic Waste; Recycling; Circular Economy

### 1. Introduction

Major socio-economic changes have occurred in Albania in recent years.

Marine and coastal resources are important assets for the Albanian economy, helping in the socio-economic transition in the country. The blue economy as a concept is the best way for the efficient use of resources while preventing environmental degradation and ecological imbalance of these resources. The Blue Economy offers new opportunities in the sustainable use of marine resources, for economic growth, improving living conditions, increasing employment, and the health of the marine ecosystem.

Today, we understand that our country has potential in the development of the blue economy, but at the same time we must face ongoing challenges, which present opportunities for positive change and the acceleration of necessary reforms. In this way, investments in the blue economy sectors, the design and implementation of supportive policies for communities in maritime areas are important.

The Adriatic-Ionian Coast plays a vital role in Albania's national economy, as businesses established in these sectors generate the highest income and the largest number of jobs. Recognizing the importance of coastal and marine resources in the country, the government is seeking to develop an integrated and sustainable plan to increase the economic contribution of these resources and exploit the potential of the blue economy.

### 1.1 *The institutional and political context of the blue economy in Albania*

Albania has drafted a legal framework aligned with EU legislation. The drafting of policies and spatial organization in Albania has been done by taking an example from international best practices. The only problem is the implementation of these policies in order to have a multi-sectoral and sustainable economic development. This can be achieved through the delegation of tasks and responsibilities from central institutions to agencies operating in the coastal and maritime space. These policies need to be coordinated and based on sound scientific research.

The main impetus for the development of the blue economy is the bilateral interaction between innovative plans and established maritime sectors and new ones.

Albania is one of the countries covered by the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). It is a macro-regional strategy approved by the European Commission and approved by the European Council in 2014. The strategy aims to create synergies and promote coordination between all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

The vision of the Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries (SBZHRP 2021 – 2027) approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) will enable an efficient, innovative and sustainable agri-food and fisheries sector in Albania, which can better withstand the pressures of national and international market and respond to the challenges of climate change and sustainable management of natural resources. Addressing the main economic, environmental and social challenges as well as those of international markets will improve the opportunities for the development of agriculture, fishing and business in rural areas, paying special attention to gender equality and attracting young farmers and entrepreneurs, to meet the sector's policy priorities and the ambitions of the EU approximation process. This strategy is in line with the general priorities of national policies in this sector and with the ambitions of the EU accession process.

Policy 2 of this strategy is precisely: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF FISHERIES AND BLUE ECONOMY (SBZHRP 2021 – 2027) which contains a general objective such as the promotion of sustainable marine and inland water development. Strengthening competitive and sustainable aquaculture and markets, and coastal communities with successful economies, including the sustainable blue economy, as well as promoting sustainable fisheries and conserving biological resources.

The new Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries (SBZHRP 2021-2027) includes the specific situation and achievements of Albania and is guided by the objectives of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) for the period after 2020, to ensure coherence with the EU approximation process, as defined in the National Plan for European Integration (PKIE 2021-2023).

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region after 2020 (SBERAJ) includes objectives on transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity and diversified tourism offer as part of the policy objective for rural development, an objective that is reflected in the SBZHRP, while the policy objective of fisheries in the SBZHRP is consistent with the promotion of sustainability, diversification and competitiveness in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Key points of SBERAJ 2021-2027 include actions to improve skills and expertise levels for the workforce in the maritime sector and the blue economy.

### 1.2 *Blue economy sectors and developing priorities*

The established economic sectors of Albania with a maritime base are fishing, tourism and maritime transport. These sectors are the main contributors to the socio-economic development of Albania. The coastal economy of Albania is centered around the coastal cities, of which Durres, Vlora, Fieri stand out with an important contribution to the GDP.

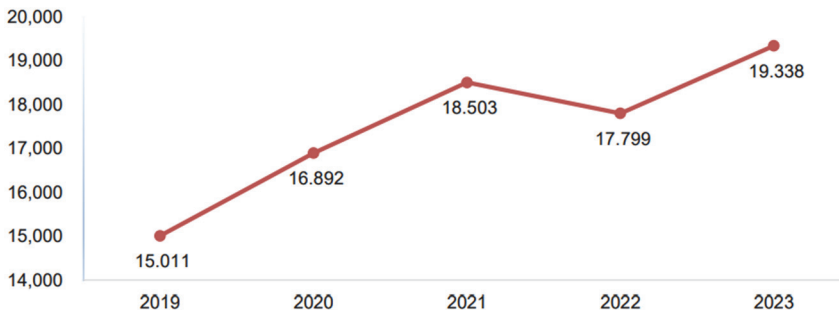
#### 1.2.1 *Fishing, aquaculture and seafood*

The fish and seafood industry is a relatively small part of the national economy with significant growth potential. The total economic contribution of fish and seafood is more than double the value of its primary production. According to the study's conservative estimates, its total contribution was \$111 million in 2017, representing 0.9% of Albania's GDP. The contribution is projected to increase by more than 40% by 2030 reaching \$158 million (Maryam Salim, November 2020). This estimate includes only a part of the contribution to the entire economy, as it is based on an incomplete set. The contribution of fish and seafood products as a value to the total merchandise trade in Albania has been increasing in absolute terms, but remains stable as share of total trade.

Average seafood consumption is expected to increase as living standards and GDP per capita are projected to

increase. Currently, the official average consumption of seafood is 5.3 kg per capita, which is much lower than Albania's Mediterranean neighbors (Maryam Salim, November 2020). However, real fish consumption is likely to be higher due to informal and unreported sales of seafood. Driven by rising per capita incomes, the growth potential of the fish feed market is much greater in the domestic market (growing from \$96 million to \$158 million in 2030) than in the export market (growing increased from \$61 million to \$70 million in 2030) (Maryam Salim, November 2020).

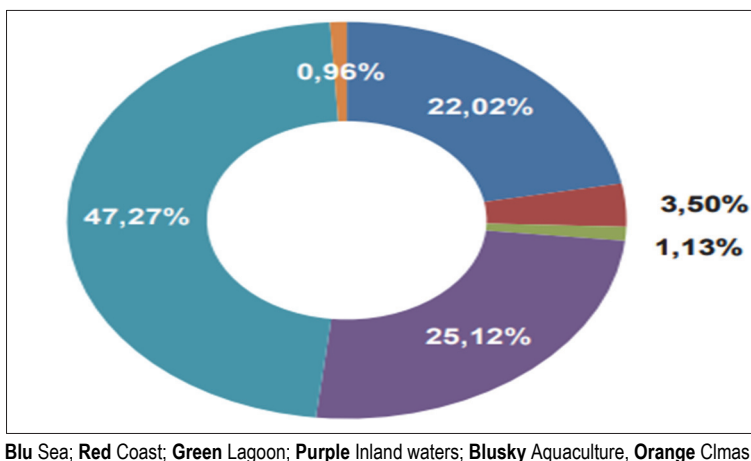
Total primary production from fisheries has increased significantly in recent years. According to INSTAT in 2023, the catch of fish from all water categories was 19,338 tons from 17,799 tons in 2022, marking an increase of 8.65% (INSTAT June 2024).



**Figure 1:** Fishing earnings, total (tons)

**Source:** Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, INSTAT calculation

Structure of occupations according to water categories: The water categories of fishing are: sea, coast, lagoon, inland waters, aquaculture and molluscs. The main categories that occupy the highest percentage of fishing are, "Aquaculture" with 47.27% and "Inland waters" with 25.12%, followed by "Marine" fishing with 22.02%, to the total production (INSTAT June 2024).



**Figure 2:** Structure of occupations from fishing according to water categories, 2023 (%)

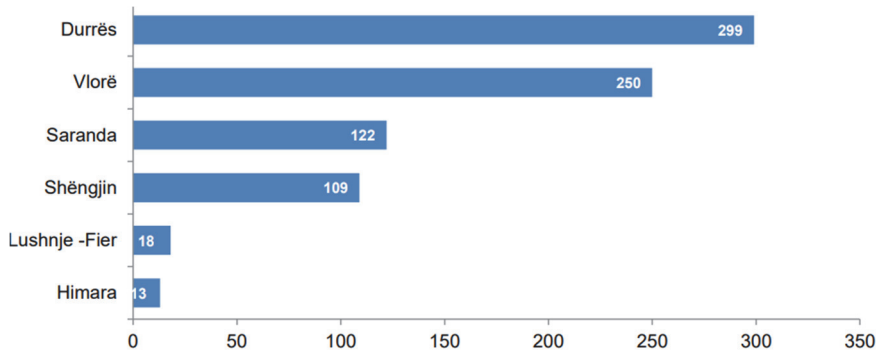
**Source:** Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, INSTAT calculation

Artisanal fishing is an important economic factor for coastal communities, but a large part of their catch remains unrecorded.

Full-time employment in fisheries and aquaculture is estimated at 9,550 people with a significant number of women

employed in the processing industry and ancillary services (all in 2019).

At the end of 2023, the value of exports of fish products went to 144 million euros compared to 137 million that was a year ago (RTSH Lajme 24, 04/09/2024). According to INSTAT data, the Marine Fleet consists of 811 entities licensed to carry out fishing activities. The fleet operates almost entirely in Geographical Sub-Area (SGA) 18 (South Adriatic). During 2023, 27 subjects were registered more than a year ago. The port with the largest number of licensed ships is the port of Durrës with 36.87% of the total fleet, the port of Vlora has 30.83% of the total number of the fleet, followed by the port of Saranda with 15.04%. The fishing ports with the smallest percentages of entities licensed for fishing are those of Lushnje-Fier with 2.22%, Himara with 1.60%(INSTAT June 2024).



**Figure 3:** Distribution of the marine fleet by fishing ports 2023 (number of vessels)

**Source:** Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, INSTAT calculation

The Albanian naval fleet, based on the purpose of the vessel, is divided into six different types of fishing vessels. The majority of our fleet is composed of fishing vessels with 71.64% and trawlers (bottom and pelagic) with 24.54%, which are mainly used to fish demersal fish. The rest are multipurpose vessels and vessels for other purposes.

The government has approved a loan of 25 million euros, for the development of the blue economy, for putting into operation 9 artisanal fish processing ports and 2 brands in Shkodër and Saranda that are attached to the Vlora brand (RTSH Lajme 24; 04.09.2024).

Another essential aspect is the automatic identification of fishing vessels, which will be implemented in 2025. The installation of this system on fishing vessels will also help in the fight against informality (RTSH Lajme 24; 04.09.2024).

Albania, like other countries in the region, is facing problems such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, fleet overcapacity and overexploitation of poorly managed stocks. An immediate solution is needed to reduce the level of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in order to strengthen marine fisheries resources.

Overexploitation of fish stocks forces the sector to find other innovative ways to catch and more valuable uses for the product. It would be quite effective to impose limits on the days when fishing is allowed so that the industry pays attention to higher value products and extracts more value from the by-products.

Albania does not have modern markets for the wholesale sale of fish, as countries in the region have. This is a problem where the government needs to intervene to increase the marketing power of the fishing sector's output and build fish markets to compete on a par with neighboring countries.

Albania has the potential for the development of aquaculture, which has recently become quite widespread throughout the world. Modern fish processing industries should be built, which will increase employment in this sector and at the same time increase the economic income of these business groups.

Public policies for the development of aquaculture and fishing should adequately consider the contribution of the entire fish and seafood value chain, which includes processing, marketing and catering services. It is also important to build a national brand for aquaculture products in Albania, so that these products can compete in foreign markets.

### 1.2.2 Coastal and Maritime Tourism

Albania is rich in cultural traditions and an unspoiled nature which are potential in the development of coastal and marine tourism. The Albanian coast is a unique, diverse and clean destination. Beach tourism is the most important industry in

the marine and coastal tourism sector. While beach tourism and other coastal activities have developed over time, there are other areas still untapped such as marine tourism, boating, yachting, diving, recreational fishing and other sports.

During the last two decades, the contribution of the tourism and travel sector to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased and reached more than 8%, creating jobs and generating 38% of total exports.

Looking back, 2019 was Albania's best year for tourism with 6.4 million foreign visitors and \$2.3 billion in revenue generated (Magazine Shqiptarja.com October 26, 2024). But unfortunately, when COVID-19 swept the world, the number of visitors from around the world dropped by 60% and the sector's revenue fell to \$1.1 billion, where in the second quarter of 2020 alone, the accommodation sub-sector fell by 75%. While 10% of Albanian businesses reported closing, 60% of them generated less than 10% of 2019 revenue, and more than half of the employees in the sector were laid off (Magazine Shqiptarja.com October 26, 2024).

Fortunately, as travel restrictions were eased and economies began recovery efforts, the tourism sector boomed again in the summer of 2021 with 5.7 million foreign visitors arriving and tourism revenues reaching pre-pandemic levels (Magazine Shqiptarja .com October 26, 2024).

While the recovery was rapid and remarkable, COVID-19 exposed the inability of the tourism sector to protect itself against external shocks, highlighting the need for a more diverse, resilient and sustainable tourism sector. Below is the number of foreign tourists who entered the country during the years 2022-2023 and the income that comes from them (Konica Magazine 02.01.2024).

Spending by tourists at the peak of the season

July-September 2022 were 1061 million euros

July-September 2023 were 1661 million euros

Increase +645 million euros

The number of foreign tourists in the country

July-September 2022 was 3,635,422 foreigners

July-September 2023 was 4,624,857 foreigners

Increase +989,435 foreigners

The average expenditure of a tourist

July-September 2022 was 291 euros

July-September 2023 was 359 euros

Increase +68 euros

Average nights of stay

July-September 2022 was 3.1 nights

July-September 2023 was 3.1 nights

Expenditures of tourists in Albania

January-September 2022 were 2.192 million euros

January-September 2023 were 3.215 million euros

Increase +1.023 million euros

Number of visitors

January-September 2022 was 6,043,915 foreigners

January-September 2023 was 7,791,228 foreigners

Difference +1,747,313 foreigners

Our country has great potential to expand its berthing capacity for yachts, small and large ships, to offer lower prices and at the same time compete in the regional market. Today, Albania occupies only 0.5% of the total berthing capacity in the Adriatic Sea, although it enjoys the same maritime conditions as the countries of the region (Maryam Salim, November 2020).

In recent years, there has been a positive growth in beach tourism and other coastal activities, but there is still a long way to go in maritime tourism. The yachting industry, especially the income coming from ship rentals, would position Albania quite well in the Adriatic Sea.

One of the main objectives of the government in this sector is the construction of yachting infrastructure. While working to develop yachting infrastructure, Albania should improve maritime tourism segments by linking these offers with domestic tourism. This way, our country will be ready to accommodate further growth once the infrastructure is ready.

A very important problem in the marine tourism industry is that our country does not offer enough sailors, yachtsmen and other marine tourists. Even if we had a developed yachting infrastructure, we would lose visitors, since we do not have a variety of activities in the marine sector.

### 1.2.3 Maritime Transport

In Albania, there are four main ports where maritime transport is carried out, The Durrës Port Authority, the Vlova Sea Port, the Shengjin Sea Port, the Saranda Sea Port, as well as the Romano-Port fuel ports, the Petrolifera Port.

Our country has a coastline of 440 km, enjoys favorable natural conditions and the necessary resources for the development of all activities, transport, tourism, fishing with countries in the region and beyond (Institute of Transport).

In the economic development of the country and especially in the tourism industry, maritime transport and ports play a key role. In this regard, on the basis of the National Transport Plan and the Port Development Master Plans, concrete steps have been taken in the following directions (Transport Institute):

- The rehabilitation and expansion of the port infrastructure and superstructure of the ports of Durrës, Vlova, Shengjin and Saranda has been assessed as a necessary process, to increase the docking and processing capacities and the effectiveness of the service, for ferries with passengers and goods, creating access also for the development of maritime tourism.
- Commercialization, privatization of services, concessionary introduction of modern technologies. An important priority at present is the construction of tourist ports with a concession in accordance with Law No. 7910, Date 10.04.2007 "On Tourist Ports". This law, according to international standards, gives a special impetus to Tourism, for the construction of tourist ports, marinas for the accommodation of yachts and other vessels with the necessary infrastructure, superstructure and facilities, for the processing of small tourist vehicles and up to large cruiser ships.

The sea ports where passenger transport is carried out in the country are: Port of Durres, Vlova, Saranda and the port of Shengjin. The movement of passengers in the second quarter of 2024 was carried out from the port of Durrës, Vlova and the port of Saranda (INASTAT July 30, 2024)

**Table 1.** Sea transport of passengers; Quarter of the year (QT)

Passenger	QT I 2023	QT II 2023	QT III 2023	QT IV 2023	QT I 2024	QT II 2024
<b>Total port</b>	<b>138.242</b>	<b>280.914</b>	<b>988.241</b>	<b>197.377</b>	<b>135.680</b>	<b>298.175</b>
<b>Durres Port</b>	<b>109.961</b>	<b>129.218</b>	<b>461.070</b>	<b>127.603</b>	<b>109.722</b>	<b>117.200</b>
Entrance	41.615	69.780	221.357	77.087	43.203	62.561
Exit	68.346	59.438	239.713	50.516	66.519	54.639
<b>Vlova Port</b>	<b>21.638</b>	<b>23.370</b>	<b>147.570</b>	<b>20.581</b>	<b>15.765</b>	<b>25.355</b>
Entrance	9.241	12.944	70.412	12.303	6.600	13.444
Exit	12.397	10.426	77.158	8.278	9.165	11.911
<b>Saranda Port</b>	<b>6.643</b>	<b>128.326</b>	<b>379.601</b>	<b>49.193</b>	<b>10.193</b>	<b>155.620</b>
Entrance	3.299	65.277	186.302	24.440	4.875	77.741
Exit	3.344	63.049	193.299	24.753	5.318	77.879
<b>Shengjin Port</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Entrance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Exit	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Source:** Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, INSTAT calculations

The number of passengers who traveled through sea ports in the country is 298,175 people. The port of Saranda is the port from which 52.2% of passengers traveled, followed by the port of Durrës with 39.3% and then the port of Vlova with 8.5% (INASTAT July 30, 2024).

There are four seaports operating in Albania which serve for the transport of goods: the Port of Durres, Vlova, Shengjin and the port of Limjon (Saranda). The Port of Durrës is the main port in the country from which, during the second quarter of 2024, 94.9% of the volume of goods transported by sea, or 2,034 thousand tons of goods, were transported. The total volume of goods transported from the port of Durrës has increased by 26.5%, compared to the same period a year ago (INSTAT July 2024).

**Table 2.** Volume of goods by sea ports, 000/ton; Quarter of the year (QT)

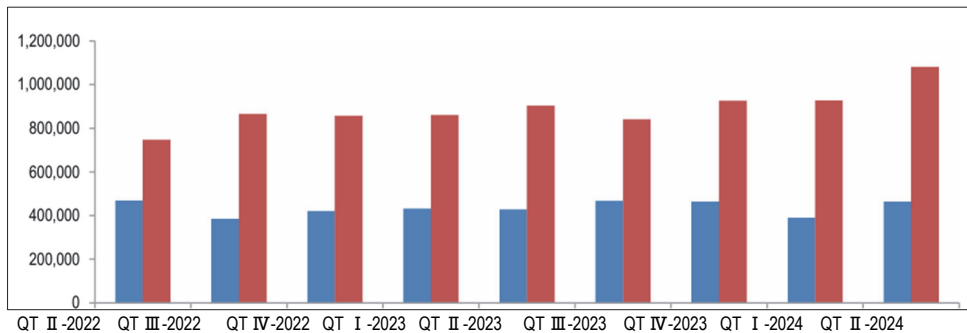
Merchandise 000/ton	QT I 2023	QT II 2023	QT III 2023	QT IV 2023	QT I 2024	QT II 2024
<b>Ports</b>	<b>1.619</b>	<b>1.713</b>	<b>1.688</b>	<b>1.739</b>	<b>1.673</b>	<b>2.142</b>
<b>Durrës</b>	<b>1.553</b>	<b>1.608</b>	<b>1.618</b>	<b>1.641</b>	<b>1.606</b>	<b>2.034</b>
Import	1.237	1.257	1.303	1.254	1.280	1.634
Export	316	351	315	387	326	400
<b>Vlore</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>44</b>
Import	10	20	25	33	31	34
Export	9	10	12	11	7	10
<b>Sarandë</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Import	8	12	4	10	9	10
Export	5	19	0	0	0	0
<b>Shengjin</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>54</b>
Import	23	36	17	32	13	35
Export	10	8	12	12	7	19

\*The data of the Port of Durrës also includes the volume of goods transported from the concessionary Port of Porto Romano

**Source:** Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, INSTAT calculations

The number of ships entering and leaving the ports in the country is 251 ships, of these 218 ships are foreign and 33 domestic ships. The number of ships entering and leaving the ports has increased by 79.3%, where the number of foreign ships has increased by 2 times, compared to the second quarter of 2023.

In the second quarter of 2024, the volume of goods traded by sea (export and import) is 1,546.3 thousand tons. Compared to the same period of 2023, this indicator has increased by 16.1%. The volume of goods exported by sea in the second quarter of 2024 accounts for 40.6% of the total volume of exported goods. The volume of goods imported by sea in the second quarter of 2024 accounts for 64.9% of the total volume of imported goods (INSTAT July 2024).



**Figure 4:** Export/import of goods by sea, tons; Quarter of the year (QT)

**Source:** General Directorate of Customs. INSTAT calculations

### 1.2.4 Marine Pollution and Plastics

Albania, like other Mediterranean countries, has problems in waste management, especially plastic waste, which is one of the main problems of coastal pollution. Local solid waste such as packaging, plastic waste is dumped in old landfills and often ends up in estuaries or lakes.

A group of scientists from New Castle University in 2018 conducted research to show the level of plastic waste for each state, as well as for sea coasts. According to this study, Albania has over 5 tons of plastic waste per square mile on its surrounding coasts. As for the land, there is a high level of pollution. It is about more than 10 thousand tons per year of unmanaged plastic waste (Lapsi.al 07/02/18).

In 2023, around 844,157 tons of urban waste were managed, while in 2022 this amount was 820,322 tons, marking

an increase of 0.03% (INSTAT September 2024).

In 2023, the amount of non-urban waste managed together with urban waste is 10.30% of the total amount, from 11.62% in 2022, marking a decrease of 1.32%.

If we were to refer to the main categories of managed urban waste, organic waste continues to dominate urban waste management. This category accounts for the largest share of managed urban waste, with a share that has remained relatively stable, 57-58%, in the last three years (INSTAT September 2024).

**Table 3:** Categories of managed urban waste 2021-2023 (%)

YEARS	Organic waste	Wood	Cardboard paper	Glass	Plastic	Textiles	Metal	non-hospital hazardous waste	Elek, PC	Inert	Hospital waste	Etc
2021	58,57	3,67	8,49	4,62	8,74	4,03	2,16	0,21	0,44	6,33	0,14	2,61
2022	58,11	3,56	8,95	4,94	9,15	4,52	2,21	0,42	0,30	5,93	0,08	1,83
2023	57,81	3,56	9,00	5,01	9,27	4,48	2,28	0,46	0,31	5,91	0,06	1,85

**Source:** Municipalities / INSTAT processing

The categories Plastic, Glass and Paper, Cardboard make up the group of waste, the weight of which has been increasing in the overall structure of managed urban waste.

Albania has a low rate of plastic waste recycling, during 2023 18.81% of the total amount of waste was recycled, while last year this indicator was 18.89%. All this points to the need for more effective management of marine debris.

Landfill and waste fields, approved as temporary deposits by the respective municipalities, continue to be the most used method for waste management, although with a slight decrease from 76.58% in 2022 to 76.49% in 2023 (INSTAT September 2024).

Approximately 60% of the population in our country lives in coastal areas and the consequences of numerous constructions, the development of coastal tourism, and the mismanagement of waste streams result in pollution of the coastal and marine environment.

While the coastal economy is developing, an immediate solution must be found to reduce plastic pollution.

Coastal pollution negatively affects the performance of marine tourism and fishing, and can also cause the loss of valuable resources.

The plastic supply chain offers many untapped opportunities that can reduce plastic waste streams and promote a circular economy. In Albania, the actors involved in the plastic value chain are polymer producers and importers, plastic converters, waste suppliers, waste management companies, and plastic recyclers.

Our country should design such policies to encourage using less, reusing more, and recycling the rest. There are many ways to implement this policy: (1) by changing the behavior of consumers and producers and the materials they use; (2) by finding ways to make recycling more economically attractive.

The latter can be achieved by focusing on the entire value chain in order to have high-quality recycling and to preserve the value of the plastic during recycling.

To improve plastic recycling, there must be transformation in the entire value chain from raw material production, product design, collection, end-of-life treatment, and recycling in the secondary materials market.

Measures that the government can take to promote circulation can be: imposing taxes and fees to discourage the use of certain products; to establish a refund scheme for deposits; to impose financial responsibility on producers for the treatment of packaging waste; to impose high fines and fees for waste disposal. These measures would bring about changes in the behaviors that cause plastic leakage into the environment.

## 2. Methodology

This paper is based on the analysis of the main indicators that will give us information on how the "Blue Economy" is being promoted in Albania. Referring to this concept, we will have to be able to answer the question raised: "What are the main factors and challenges for the initiatives of the "Blue Economy" in Albania?" The sources from which I received important information are the existing literature, studies and local and foreign scientific publications on the "Blue Vision" initiatives in Albania and in the EU countries. I used academic articles, reports, policy documents and other sources to identify those financial instruments and mechanisms for the development of each sector within the "Blue Economy" in Albania.



I have also identified the factors that contribute to successful initiatives such as: regulatory frameworks, financial incentives, engagement of interested parties, the design of a successful strategy based on the best examples in the Balkan region and the importance of implementation correctness of these measures taken, which will lead to the utilization of all the potential that our country has in the development of each sector of the "Blue Economy".

This paper focuses on identifying and deepening this concept in our country as well as addressing the challenges to promote the success of initiatives towards a "Blue Vision" in Albania. Following this methodology, the study can provide knowledge on the factors that contribute to the success or failure of "Blue Economy" initiatives in Albania and give recommendations on how to overcome those challenges and problems that hinder the development of each sector within this economy.

### **3. Results**

Referring to reading the literature, statistical data on the progress of the development of the blue economy in Albania, I managed to understand that our country is facing a series of challenges and problems in each sector.

The general situation with fishing in our country is facing issues such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Also, the overcapacity of the fleet and the overutilization of stocks are not adequately addressed.

Albania is one of the few countries in the Mediterranean that lacks modern wholesale fish markets.

As far as the development of coastal and maritime tourism is concerned, one of the main problems is that Albania does not have a modern yacht mooring infrastructure, even though it has similar maritime conditions to its Balkan neighbors. Providing yachting infrastructure is a challenge that needs to be addressed in both the short and long term to meet the government's objectives in this sector. Besides the lack of modern infrastructure is the fact that the country does not have enough to offer sailors, yachts and other marine tourists.

Another very worrying problem for the development of tourism in the country is the pollution of the coast from plastic waste. Albania still lacks effective waste management systems. Waste infrastructure is insufficient to cover the entire country. In addition to these shortcomings, there is no separation of waste at source and the implementation of extended producer responsibility or deposit refund schemes established by law has been delayed.

There are many untapped opportunities in the plastics supply chain that can reduce plastic waste streams and promote a circular economy.

### **4. Conclusions and Discussions**

At the end of this study, I can say that Albania has potential in the development of the Blue Economy. Compared to the countries of the region, we are behind in the modernization of technology and infrastructure, but there is also a positive side as we can learn from the successful practices of our neighbors and not repeat those failed cases.

As I mentioned above, illegal and unregistered fishing is a problem that must be solved in the short and long term. For this issue, I would suggest the automatic identification of fishing vessels that will help in the fight against informality.

Overexploitation of fish stocks forces the sector to find other innovative ways to catch and more valuable uses for the product. It would be quite effective to impose limits on the days when fishing is allowed so that the industry pays attention to higher value products and extracts more value from the by-products.

Albania does not have modern markets for the wholesale sale of fish, as countries in the region have. This is a problem where the government needs to intervene to increase the marketing power of the fishing sector's output and build fish markets to compete on a par with neighboring countries.

Building a national brand for blue aquaculture in Albania is also essential for blue aquaculture products produced in Albania to compete in foreign markets.

There are interesting opportunities in recreational fishing and fishing tourism. Such a strategy should be built to restructure the fishing business, which will then serve as a powerful instrument for the sustainable management of resources as well as for local economic development. If developed, these opportunities could bring in more income than artisanal fishing currently does.

Coastal and maritime tourism is facing an influx of foreign tourists, especially at the peak of the season. The lack of infrastructure and professionals found our country unprepared to face this tourist boom. In addition to the construction of marine infrastructure and road assets, qualified workers are needed to provide the best services in the maritime tourism sector. For this reason, more schools and professional study programs should be opened in order not to have a shortage of professionals in the services of this sector.

Albania also needs to grow through the improvement of the marine-based tourism segments and the connection of these offers with domestic tourism. This would help generate demand so that before a growth ceiling is reached, the infrastructure is ready to accommodate further growth.

Albania needs to strengthen its connection within the Balkans and the main transport corridors of the EU. Conditions must be created for the development of maritime and transport infrastructure, which will be an essential part of economic development and integration with global value chains.

The pollution of the coast from plastic waste is a big concern. Albania must develop effective and efficient instruments to use less, reuse more and recycle the rest. This can be handled in many ways, first of all, measures should be taken to change the behavior of consumers and producers, the materials they use, and to make recycling more economically attractive.

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