

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development



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Dear partner,

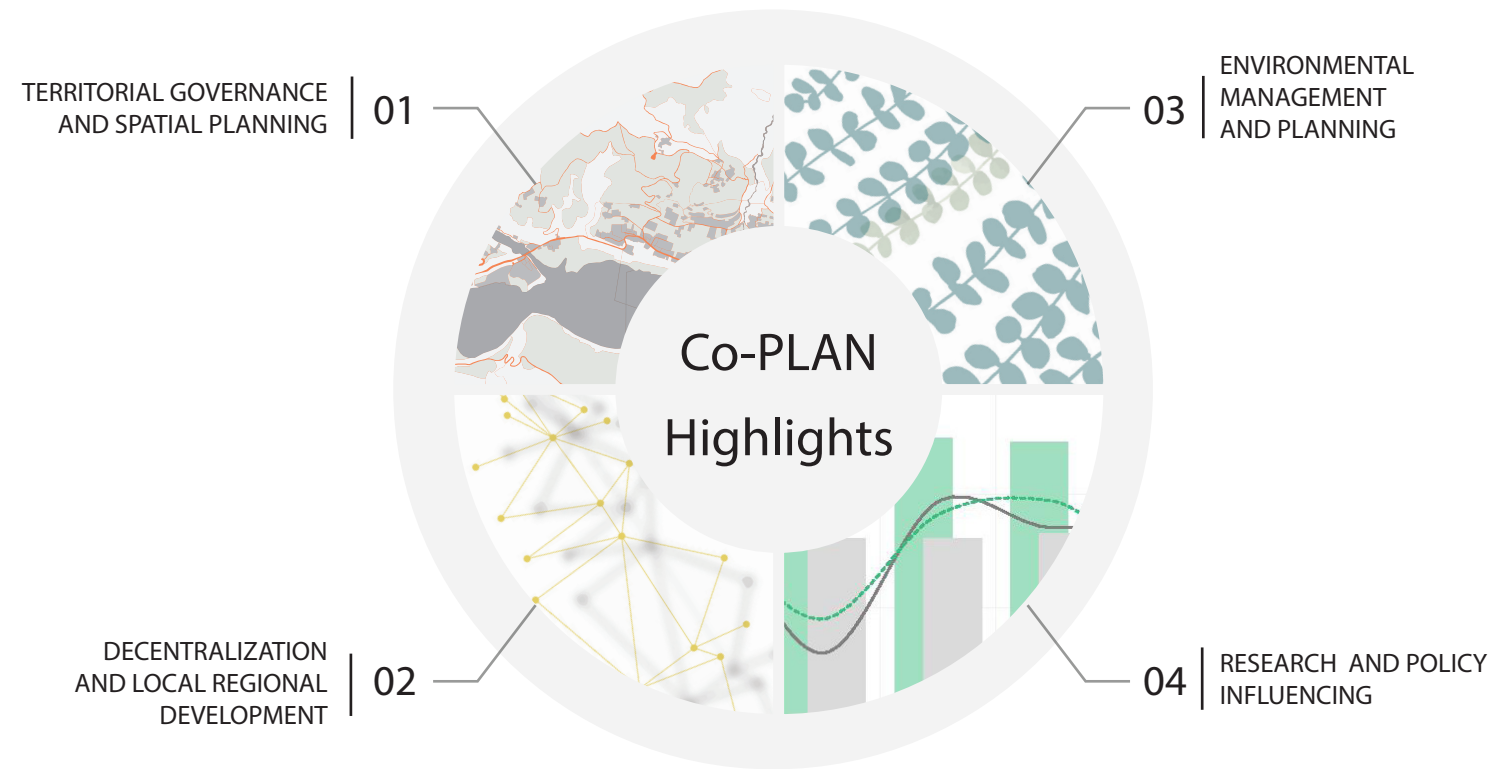
Throughout a period of profound social and economic reform in the region, our organisation has been steadfast in our dedication to contribute to sustainable development, tackle environmental issues, influence policies and promote citizen and community participation. We have further consolidated our expertise in the area of territorial planning through continuous collaboration with USAID/PLGP, training municipalities in Albania and supporting them in strengthening the staffing capacities to cope with the Territorial Administrative Reform. Through our efforts to expand the territorial governance debate, Co-PLAN invited expert organisations to join the Western Balkan Network on Territorial Governance (TG-WeB) to develop and support for better territorial governance in the region in line with its European Union ambitions.

2018 also marked the kick off for few great initiatives for Co-PLAN. Our Environmental Unit launched two new projects. Env.net factoring the environmental portfolio for WB and Turkey in the EU Policy Agenda, as a regional project with now 9 partner organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey, aims at improving evidence-based policy-making and policy-influencing on climate change and environmental legislation in each of the ENV.net partner countries. At a national level we started to implement “Green Lungs for our cities” aimed at developing and piloting an alternative platform for monitoring and advocating policy-influencing on air quality, noise pollution, and urban greenery at local level.

We have continued to enrich with data, analyses and frequent status reports our database of public finances on [www.financatvendore.al](http://www.financatvendore.al) to enabled and provide a number of interest groups, media, scholars, CSOs, and LGUs to become acquainted with Municipal financial statements for monitoring, analyses, studies, etc. In terms of the organization's maturity cycle, we continued working on the capacity building and public engagement of young organizations and activists though different programs and platforms.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and reinforce our commitment to foster tangible social transformation and positive change by inducing change-driving knowledge in our society. We have an highly qualified team leading this mission, a group of dedicated experts with state-of-the-art capabilities, character and experience, the work of whom we invite you to discover through the pages of this annual report.

Dritan Shutina  
Executive Director



Floreta Pirushi [Head of the Board]

Ms. Floreta Pirushi is one of the first generations of idealistic young experts who joined the founding group of Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development in the challenge of consolidating a qualitative, professional civil society organisation. She is a lawyer by profession, and has conducted her postgraduate studies in the field of urban social matters and human resources in the Netherlands. She is qualified also in matters of institutional administration. Her professional experience includes: working for Co-PLAN particularly in community development, and later POLIS University, as well as experience with UNCHR and INSTAT projects. Since several years, she is part of the POLIS University Press team and part of the coordinating group for Tirana Architecture Week and Tirana Design Week.



Tom Passero, Ph.D. [Board Member]

Mr. Tom Passero is a Professor of Marketing and Supply Chain at Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio, USA. He is also an adjunct instructor of marketing strategy for the Bowling Green State University Masters of Business Administration Program. Prior to a career in academia, Tom spent the first 15 years of his professional career as a supply chain manager for Mead, Newell-Rubbermaid, Huffy, and Ernst & Young, LLP. During his second 15 years Tom has provided customer service, leadership, teaming, and organizational development consulting services for a list of global clients that include Coca-Cola, Lockheed-Martin, and Calphalon, and more locally, Wood County Health Services, Northwest Ohio Tax Commission Association, WSOS, the City of Oregon, and the Owens Leadership Academy. He is a qualified practitioner of several assessment tools, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and TRACOM Social Styles.



Ester Caco [Board Member]

Ms. Ester Caco is a lawyer by qualification and experience. She was born in Tirana, where she completed her higher education, specializing in Law (1995), and worked for the Ministry of Local Government, and later for VNG International as a project manager. In 2001, Mrs. Caco and her family migrated to the United States, where she started working for the only Albanian Law Firm in New York City "Law office of Isejn Marku, PC" and later "Marku, Beno & Tsamblakos, PLLC", where she currently works as an Office Manager primarily specialised in migration related matters.

# Co-PLAN

Institute for Habitat Development

## HIGHLIGHTS

Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development is a non-profit organization that has contributed to sustainable development by enabling good urban and regional governance, tackling key environmental issues, developing civil society, impacting policies, and promoting community participation knowledge-making since 1995. At the core of Co-PLAN's activity is the work with people and institutions, to foster tangible social transformation and positive change on the ground by inducing change-driving knowledge in our society for smart management of our habitat. Co-PLAN fulfills this mission through means of pilot activities and advisory services financed by national and international institutions and direct involvement with communities, local government units and other non-governmental organizations in the field of urban and regional management, environmental management, and municipal finance. We are based in Tirana, Albania, and have developed a solid-project-outreach-network at a national, regional, and international level, including many of the Local Government Units in Albania, numerous organizations in the Western Balkans region, Europe, and beyond.

## WESTERN BALKAN NETWORK ON TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE

In order to define itself as a distinguished contributor vis-à-vis EU territorial governance policies and in line with the Western Balkan Enlargement Strategy, Co-PLAN proposed the establishment of a regional network. Western Balkan Network on Territorial Governance (TG-WeB) serves as a platform aimed at bringing forward the research on territorial governance in the Western Balkan countries bringing together research and policy-influencing forces from the region. In more specific terms, the network will work on undertaking pioneering research and policy advocacy across the region, to enhance the domestic territorial governance and impact in a 'unique voice' the EU integration of the Western Balkans from a TG perspective. In so doing, the network aims to strengthen the Western Balkans-EU partnerships at the level of academia, researchers' community, and civic society for dealing with territorial development in the region in a combined EU-domestic bottom-up fashion. The establishment of a regional network on Territorial Governance comes at a timely moment: all countries of the Western Balkans region – Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Kosovo – share, despite their diversity and idiosyncrasies, a common aspiration for a future within the EU. As a region, we share similarities with respect to our development and integration agendas, as we do face the imperfections of our planning systems and Territorial Governance practices.



WESTERN BALKAN NETWORK  
ON TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE



## Initiating Workshop – May 17-19, 2018

Prospective partners, from the Western Balkans and EU member countries, gathered in Tirana for a network initiating workshop organized and hosted by Co-PLAN and POLIS University, on May 17-18. The network benefits from the voluntary membership of organizations and individuals from all Western Balkan countries, and organizations from the wider Balkans region and the EU.



## Position Paper on Territorial Governance for Western Balkans

The workshop participants shared knowledge and challenges on territorial development and governance in their countries and in relation to EU and developed published online and disseminated a joint 'Position Paper on Territorial Governance for Western Balkans'. TG-WeB set forth this position paper as the EU reconfirmed its enlargement vision for the region, making for a timely introduction of territorial governance in the enlargement agenda. The network adopted a macro-regional perspective in identifying and proposing a number of recommendations as to how territorial governance can play a role in the Western Balkans





National Activism Day 2018

Co-PLAN organized for the first time in Albania, the National Activism Day #NAD, on the 22nd of October 2018. This event was a culmination of a two-year effort to strengthen, help and mentor civil society organizations in their attempts to bring forward a cause or social problem in their community. NAD brought together more than 50 organizations of different backgrounds advocating for social justice, protection of human rights, social development, gender equality etc. The event incorporated different components within itself with a nationwide coverage. The day started with a ceremonial event where 5 inspirational individuals presented their initiative as some of the best examples of change. The aim was to demonstrate that through commitment and hard work both organizations and individuals can bring about the change we want to see in the society. These representatives of the civil society in Albania were chosen carefully after several consultations with the donor community and the American Embassy and also taking in consideration their work and the impact they might have in the society. Another component of NAD was the Activism Fair organized in the main square of the capital city Tirana, where over 35 organization demonstrated through interactive ways and on the spot campaign activities their ongoing initiatives. Well-established organizations as well as newly established ones brought together groups of volunteers, partners and representatives of communities to showcase their efforts in their field of work. At the same time more than 15 local organizations organized activities with their communities in the framework of NAD.



Civil Society Organizers were invited to participate in an interactive workshop to share their activism experiences at the workshop following National Day of Activism. Participants had the opportunity to learn the best practices and be inspired by a highly experienced community activist and organizer in America, Dave Beckwith.



In the framework of NAD 2018, an open discussion was organized with members from the US Embassy Youth Council. Dave Beckwith gave an impressive presentation about the human rights movement in US and how communities need to organize for social change.



# Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning

Since 1995, Co-PLAN has worked with communities and government institutions to address urban development issues. Though we have expanded our area of expertise to include all aspects of territorial governance and sustainable spatial development, urban and regional planning and development remain at the core of Co-PLAN's agenda. Urban and regional planning and development are core objectives of Co-PLAN since its foundation, and over time this orientation has matured. Co-PLAN now undertakes activities at multiple scales (i.e., the neighborhood, city, regional, inter-regional, and national levels) and with a spectrum of actors such as communities, local and central government, businesses, donors, and civil society organizations.

# 01

TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE AND SPATIAL PLANNING

## Planning and Local Governance Program

USAID's Planning and Local Governance Project works both at the national policy level and at the local level to gain full acceptance for the principles of decentralized governance and to disseminate and institutionalize practical and effective methods and techniques for municipal management. PLGP works with thirteen "partner" local government units including six model municipalities: Tirana, Durres, Fier, Lushnja, Berat, Kuçova, Patos, Vlore, Saranda, Elbasan, Korça, Vora, and Kamza. In the framework of Planning and Local Governance Program (PLGP), Government of Albania and selected local governments, was provided technical assistance in developing skills and knowledge to draft territorial plans in accordance with the Law on Territorial Planning. At central level technical assistance was provided to the National Territorial Planning Agency (NTPA) via trainings and coaching how to implement the general local territorial plans; Citizens, civil society groups, businesses, NGOs, and other groups are provided with opportunities to monitor and participate in the process of territorial planning.

PLGP also provided technical assistance for five GLTP (General Local Territorial Plans) for the Municipalities of Fier, Lushnje, Berat, Kuçovë, Elbasan. The GLTPs are conceptualized as comprehensive and integrated documents and blueprints, so that local authorities and citizens can better plan for social, economic, physical, political, aesthetic and any other issues that help municipalities to achieve their overall development goal. Co-PLAN has worked intensively with all five model municipalities to draft the GLTPs, with all their integral documents and approve them on local and central levels. The trainings, as to NTPA, were also provided to the municipal

staff and members of local municipal councils, as essential actors in territorial planning process.

With the support of PLGP, experts of Co-PLAN have also worked with the 5 municipalities to assess their public finance management performance through the PEFA methodology. Moreover, several PPP schemes have been drafted and supported in implementation, in the public lighting sector. Currently Co-PLAN is supporting the second phase of the PLGP project for the period 2017-2019.

*PLGP encompasses four main areas of endeavour:*

- *Support the Government of Albania with Implementation of Effective Decentralization Policies and Legislation; Improve Local Governance;*
- *Improve Management of Local Services;*
- *Assist the GoA and Local Governments to Plan and Manage Urban and Regional Growth.*



## Round-table on the Implementation of GLTPs

On the 15th of November a round-table on LDPs and Feasibility studies was organized in cooperation with the NTPA. Representatives from 61 municipalities (around 80 urban planners) took part in the event. The event was composed in two parts, initially presentation by PLGP experts on the experiences with our partner municipalities of Lushnje, Kuçove, Elbasan, Fier and Tirane and afterwards through a Q&A session on different issues that the municipalities raised regarding the process of preparing LDPs, applying FILDs and implementing GLTPs. The roundtable was received positively by the participants who actively took part in the discussion and served as a basis for sharing experiences and discussing common challenges.



## Training of Municipal Staff

Co-PLAN experts trained the representatives from the Municipalities of Fier, Lushnja, Kuçova, Berat, Tirana, Divjaka and Elbasan regarding the implementation of their General Local Plans. The workshop focused on two main issues such as the drafting of the Detailed Local Plan and the clarification and implementation of the General Local Plan. The discussion impacts directly the municipality work in the process of implementation of the GLP's.



# Social Cohesion and Sustainable Tourism Development in Gramsh Municipality

Co-PLAN assisted the Municipality of Gramsh to implement the IADSA-supported project on social cohesion and sustainable tourism development. The main priorities identified for the overall development of the municipality, was drafting of comprehensive strategic documents that would guide social, economic and territorial development. In more specific terms, the project aims to boost social development in the Municipality of Gramsh through

a guiding social development plan and catalytic interventions in the city center and specific infrastructure interventions in the city center. Further it helped to develop sustainable tourism in the Municipality of Gramsh through a midterm municipal development strategy and aligned catalytic and promotional interventions. Throughout the lifetime of the project specific results were identified through different means of intervention.



*This project aims to:*

- *Boost social development through a guiding social development plan and catalytic interventions in the city center;*
- *Stimulate sustainable tourism through a midterm municipal development strategy and aligned catalytic and promotional interventions;*



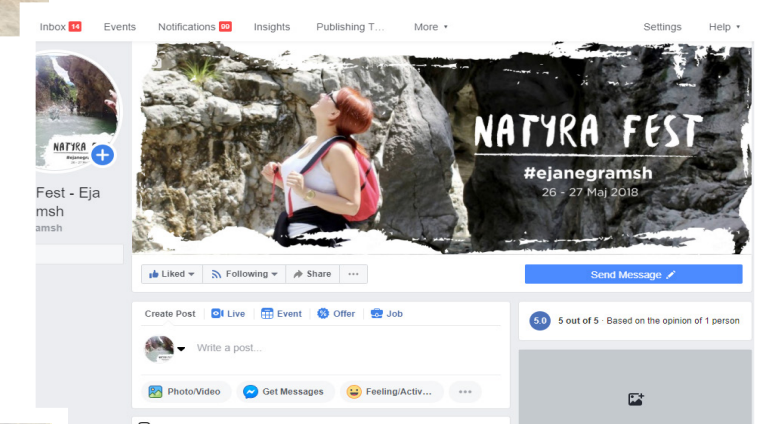
## Promotion of touristic destinations in online platforms

Domestic and regional demand for ecotourism, adventurous and natural tourism was promoted through different portals and connections. Information on destinations, their history, nearby accommodation and restaurants, details on how to get there, was shared in online portals such as TripAdvisor, Facebook and Instagram



## Rehabilitation of the Outdoor Sports Center

The change in the cityscape through the construction of the waterfront area, increased the social interaction and integration of the citizens of Gramsh.



## Natyra Fest 2018

Territorial development thought tourism was aligned by developing a Tourism Strategy with an inclusive vision and a Social Development Plan concluded with specific policy recommendations, objectives and actions for the future.





On 26-27th of May, an annual tradition, in Gramsh was organised Natyra Fest, an event covering all the territory of the municipality and promoting different aspect of tourism. The working group planned in advance all the promotional material, got in contact with all relevant institutions and interested parties and conducted an extensive promotional campaign for all the different activities included in the two-day event. There were cultural activities thought the day combined with sports and hiking activities dispersed in the main itineraries available by different tour operators. The response generated was not only

widely noticeable during the days of the event but it echoed throughout the months to come as the group tours choosing Gramsh as their destination increased and the social media coverage of the different destinations increased considerably. Natyra Fest 2018 also offered another successful evening event at the main square of the city where two very well-known singers, Venera Lumani and Lindi Islami performed for the citizens of Gramsh and all the tourists visiting the city during that weekend for more than 2 hours.

# Decentralization and Local Regional Development

For many years Co-PLAN has supported local governments, NGOs, and business communities in addressing urban development issues through the preparation of territorial development strategies, urban regulatory plans, detailed local plans, and other guiding documents. The advancement of the decentralization process and the increasing number of responsibilities delegated to local government have made imperative clear policies on the financing and implementation of local economic development strategies. To this end, Co-PLAN supports and advises local governments to improve municipal finances management practices and adoption of new instruments in the pursuit of their development strategies. In recent years, Co-PLAN has supported many municipalities to improve financial performance through the preparation of the capital investment programs, annual budgets generated through participatory practices, and the improved levying of taxes.

# 02



# Regional Development Programme

Regional Development Programme Albania - Phase 3 – started on 1st April 2017 based on an approved bi-lateral agreement between the Government of Albania and Government of the Confederation of Switzerland, respectively represented by the Ministry of Urban Development (and further by the deputy Prime Minister office) and Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) Tirana Office. The project is being implemented by ECORYS Netherland in partnership with Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development.

The reform on regional development needs support on different levels to finalise the elaboration of a vision for regional development as well as to make its implementation successful. Capacities for implementing the reform were not in place and newly established institutions not yet functioning.

The first part of the programme tackled the national as well as the regional level. On the national level the support to the reform on regional development continued based on the results of the bridging phase (policy and legal framework), such as the development of bylaws (legal framework), the follow-up on the new financial framework (new modality of Regional Development Fund), support in (vertical and horizontal) coordination and other areas, following the demand by the central government.

In the second part the support primarily addressed the (former) newly created structures – mainly the National Agency for Regional Development and the four Regional Development Agencies; support was also directed to other institutions involved in RD, such as regional and local stakeholders. Support included strengthening the emerging institutional system of RD agencies (capacity-development, institution-building, participative approaches) and

the elaboration of Policy and Programme for RD and Cohesion and Operational Programmes in a participatory way.

The third part of the programme focused on the preparation of a grant fund mechanism, including criteria for project selection, piloting of regional development projects to establish and test the new grants mechanism anchored at the Regional Development Agencies (now ADF) by end of this project and implemented through the mechanism thereafter.

*The core processes initiated and undertaken were:*

- *Setting up the legal framework and system for Regional Development;*
- *Programming process at regional and national level mainly focusing on drafting and finalising the four Regional Development Programmes (RDPs) and Policy and Programme for Regional Development and Cohesion (PPRDC);*
- *Capacity building for regional and local institutions (RDAs and Municipalities);*
- *Implementing the Regional Development Pilot Grant Scheme through financing of 16 municipal projects;*
- *Capacity building at regional and central level on grant management, project selection and evaluation, monitoring and reporting in accordance with EU standards and requirements.*



## Policy and Legal Framework for Regional Development in Albania

It was mainly anchored to the formulation, harmonization and amelioration of policy and legal framework of Regional Development in Albania. As such, good progress was made in providing a final set of relevant documents (technical papers, policy briefs, guidelines) concerning Regional Development policy, Policy and Programme for Regional Development and Cohesion (PPRDC), Vision and Principles of RD, Policy Implementation system and Institutional set-up system for RD.







The draft Law on Regional Development and Cohesion provides a good structure and covers almost every detail needed to establish an appropriate legal framework enabling the functioning of the Regional Development system.

In addition, 3 draft by-laws were prepared to ensure the proper implementation of the Law on Regional Development and Cohesion, specifically:

- Draft bylaw on structure, methodology of making and ways of alignment of development programming documents for regional development;
- Draft bylaw on founding, structure, organisation and tasks of the National Regional Development Committee;
- Draft bylaw on founding structure, organisation and tasks of the Regional Monitoring Boards.



## Regional Pilot Grant Scheme and capacity building

During the implementation of the programme, RDPA successfully concluded the preparation of the institutional mechanism and a set of documents needed for the set-up of the Regional Pilot Grant Scheme which was successfully implemented in compliance with EU criteria and standards. After a long process of consultations with the DDGG and the four former RDAs, the Regional Pilot Grant Scheme was approved by all parties and launched on 11th April 2018.



This pilot grant scheme was at first considered an indispensable exercise for the former RDAs as intermediate bodies, and for the Municipalities as final beneficiaries, as it established a new regional institutional trajectory and provided the basis for a better absorption of funds. Out of 47 applications which were delivered under the published call, 16 municipal projects were selected and financed by RDPA with a total amount of 817.000 euro. The awarded projects which aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the local communities by tackling small-scale local investments in education, tourism, sports, culture and community infrastructure, were equally distributed in the four regions of Albania.







The implementation of the Pilot Grant Scheme was closely accompanied by a series of trainings for the staff of the former RDAs, in order to further consolidate and institutionalize their role as intermediate bodies at regional level and strengthen their capacities in order to ensure sustainability in funds absorption. In the follow-up of the structural changes caused by DCM No.348\_18/07/2019, the staff of all four RDAs was absorbed by Albanian Development Fund, therefore, the remaining trainings were prepared and adapted to the new institutional context having as target staff from the four Regional Development Units and ADF as the new Managing Authority.

The 16 development projects financed under the Pilot Regional Grant Scheme were successfully implemented and finalized by the beneficiaries, thus absorbing 92% of available funds.

The implementation of the Grant Scheme was accompanied by capacity building activities which aimed not only to strengthen capacities of RDAs and Municipalities' staff but also introduce changes in the system in regards to projects' evaluation, implementation and monitoring. To this regard, 203 people were trained under outcome 3, out of which 119 were women.



## Preparation of the Policy and Programme for Regional Development and Cohesion and Regional Development Plans; Capacity building of the institutions dealing with RD in Albania

The RDPA programme supported the strengthening of the institutional system of RD, the preparation of the PPRDC and the preparation of RDP in a participatory way ensuring a partnership approach by integrating local government into RD programming.

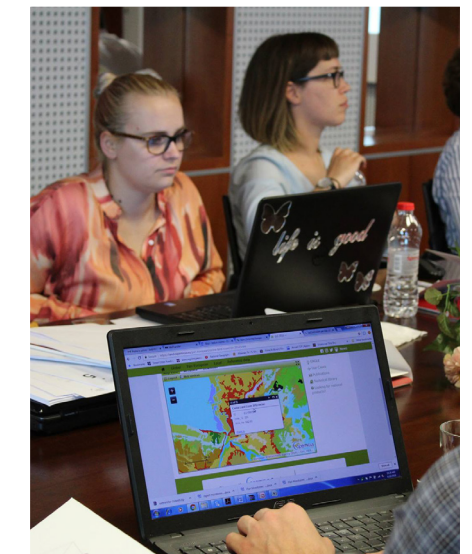
RDPA's regional experts in collaboration with the former RDAs significantly progressed the programming process at regional level, including also Municipalities from the four regions, which were highly interested in the programming exercise.



as Regional Development Programmes (RDP), Policy and Programme for Regional Development and Cohesion (PPRDC). All partners which were involved in the process, at regional and national level, understood the relevance of the process, the role of the documents and the ambitious timeframe in which the documents needed to be prepared in order to comply with the government's plans to advance with the Regional Development Policy implementation for the period 2020 – 2027.



This process was duly accompanied by several trainings and workshops based on a Training Needs Assessment and training map designed ex-ante, in order to provide tailor-made capacity building activities for the beneficiaries of the Programme. During this phase, 229 persons participated in trainings and workshops, out of which 95 were women. At central level, significant progress was made in terms of discussing with the DDGG at the PMO's Office and with ADF for approving the structures and the timeline for the preparation/finalisation of the programming documents such





# Urban Partnership Program III

The World Bank-Austria Urban Partnership Program III (UPP) is a regional program which aims to strengthen the capacity of local governments in South-East Europe (SEE), and to equip local elected officials, city administrators and technical staff with practical tools for decision-making to effectively manage urban development for inclusive and sustainable growth. The Program is targeted at the Western Balkans, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. During 2018, Co-PLAN was engaged in two of the components of the program:

- *Urban Audit*

*The main focus was to address the main challenges faced during the implementation of the Urban Audit framework in the referenced municipalities (Fier, Lushnje, Berat, Elbasan and Kucovë in Albania and a few others in Macedonia). Upon finalization, it proved to be a successful tool for all participant municipalities because it fostered an efficient use of resources and a better link of planning objectives with the financial abilities. It served as an exercise of good governance, by creating a transparent process, with participatory project selection, and a general environment of trust for the proposed projects. Moreover, it helped raise the capacities of local governments in data collection and processing, by also providing an accurate database available to be used for further purposes.*

- *Municipal Finance Self-assessment*

*Municipal Finance Self - Assessment (MFSA) component aims at enabling municipalities to assess city's local public finances management, identify specific actions to improve mobilization of local resources, expenditure allocation and investment programing, local asset management and access to external financing. The MFSA tool was used in 10 municipalities: Elbasan, Berat, Lushnjë, Fier, Kuçovë, Vlorë, Himarë, Sarandë, Gjirokastër, Përmet*

## Participation to the Mayors Symposium in Vienna

Co-PLAN Experts participated on a two-day Mayors Symposium in Vienna launching the third phase of the Urban Partnership Program (UPP III) with an underlying theme on Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Development in South-East Europe – Cities for the People. The Urban Partnership Program is a unique initiative of the Austrian Government and the World Bank aiming at strengthening local government capacity and enhancing cooperation among municipalities in seven South-East European countries: Albania, North Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.

To this purpose, Co-PLAN assisted local elected officials, city administrators and technical staff with some practical diagnostic tools facilitating decision making processes, effective and efficient financial management toward sustainable development. As part of the program, Municipal Finance Self - Assessment (MFSA) component aimed at enabling municipalities to assess city's local public finances management, identify specific actions to improve mobilization of local resources, expenditure allocation and investment programing, local asset management and access to external financing. Co-PLAN experts used the MFSA tool in 10 municipalities: Elbasan, Berat, Lushnjë, Fier, Kuçovë, Vlorë, Himarë, Sarandë, Gjirokastër, Përmet.







### Technical Workshop on Urban Audit and Municipal Self-Assessment

Officials from 14 municipalities from Albania and Macedonia gathered in Vlora, to discuss local finances, investment projects and citizen engagement. This technical workshop was developed within the framework of the 'World Bank's Partnership Program' and the Austrian Government, with the cooperation of Vlora Municipality. The focus of the discussion was the implementation

of the Urban Audit and the Municipal Finance Self-Assessment as two instruments that promote efficiency in local government. Co-PLAN experts, shared their experience in implementing these instruments, together with representatives of the Municipalities of Vlora, Fier, Elbasan, Berat, Kucova, Përmet, Lushnje.

## LEVIZ ALBANIA Local Democracy Promotion Project



Co-PLAN in cooperation with Open Society Foundation for Albania and Partners Albania, is implementing the Project LëvizAlbania (LA) with the main objective to strengthen the local democracy through the engagement of CSO's and individuals. This project which started in 2014, is in the last year of its first phase and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Local concerns are addressed through mechanisms such as: Inclusive decision-making; Supervision of local government; Transparency; Responsibility; Accountability; Monitoring the quality of public services. During 2018 the 5th Call for Applications was launched, amounting to 36 winning projects, from which 9 ideas were presented by individuals and 27 were from Civil Society Organisations.

In May 2018, Local Democracy Week was organised, bringing together expert organisations into a series of debates, forums, workshops and activities which highlighted the main achievements of the projects supported by LA. During this week, Co-PLAN presented the Status Report of the Public Local Finances for the year 2017 which comprised an elaborate analyses of the performance, trends and the financial situation of 61 municipalities in Albania.

*More specifically, the project aims:*

- *To establish and strengthen platforms which enable various drivers of change to increase their interaction and engagement with their representatives and demand accountability from them;*
- *To mobilize and engage civil society.*

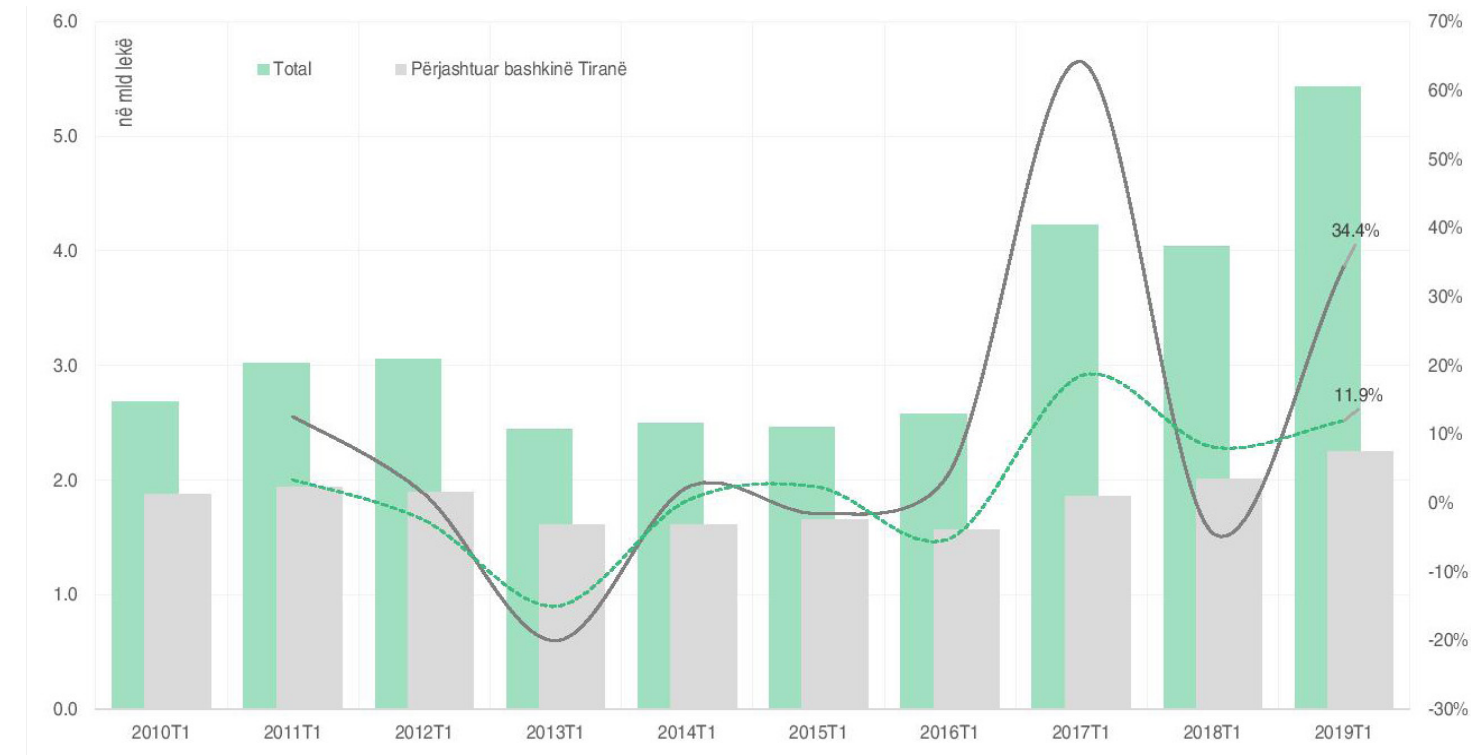


# The Municipal Financial Data Portal

## www.financatvendore.al

Co-PLAN has launched a digital platform containing financial data (www.financatvendore.al) of 61 Municipalities in Albania through the support of LëvizAlbania. The local finances platform has been conceived as a Strategic Enabling Instrument, a useful and essential tool in monitoring the financial performance of municipalities in Albania and advocating for informed policies over a period of 3 years. Since its establishment, a continuous work is being carried out in the enrichment, update, automation and population of

the platform. This instrument enables different categories of users to access reliable, timely and real data on revenues sources of municipalities and on how they are allocating and spending the available financial resources. This allows for an independent monitoring the financial performance of municipalities, making for increased transparency and accountability, improving consequently positive pressure for effective and efficient public service delivery.



### Improving the Understanding of Local Finances

The online platform [www.financatvendore.al](http://www.financatvendore.al) was introduced to students at the University "Fan Noli", in Korça and University "Aleksandër Xhuvani", in Elbasan. Students were encouraged to make use of the platform as an innovative tool for research and different economic analysis.

### Periodic Overview of the Status of Local Finances

In the framework of #JavaDemokracisëVendore2018 of LëvizAlbania, Co-PLAN presented the Status Report of the Public Local Finances for the year 2017 which comprised an elaborate analyses of the performance, trends and the financial situation of 61 municipalities in Albania.



### Conduction of info-sessions with Municipalities

The Status Report of the Public Local Finances was introduced also to representatives from the Qark of Korça. Co-PLAN expert on local finances elaborated on the financial situation and the data analysed with a special focus in the Municipality of Korça.

### Conduction of info-sessions with User Groups

Civil Society Organizations and active citizens were familiarized with the local finances platform during a special info-session of LevizAlbania with the aim to assist them in their work and provide them data and financial analysis on a local level.





# Environmental Management and Planning

The Environmental Management and Planning Unit built on Co-PLAN's sensitivity towards the irreversible impact of rapid urban development on the environment. Constant contribution and works within the habitat development framework, conducted by Co-PLAN, have always taken under consideration crucial elements in regard to sustainable development of the ecosystem. We consider Environmental Management and Planning as a criss-cross dimension for each of the projects we commit and deliver. Upgrading services delivery standards and capacity building for a better comprehension of environment at an institutional level, were listed as first contributes from Co-PLAN on the field of environmental protection. During the last 15 years these themes expanded towards strategic environmental pacification, environmental impact assessment, ecosystem services evaluation, governing natural resources, energy, etc.

03

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

## ENV.net Factoring the Environmental Portfolio for WB and Turkey in the EU Policy Agenda

ENV.net, an active regional network and advocacy actor, has started working on the "ENV.net factoring the environmental portfolio for WB and Turkey in the EU Policy Agenda". This action aims to work on improving evidence-based policy-making and policy- influencing on climate change and environmental legislation in each of the ENV.net partner countries. The project is funded by the European Commission and is comprised of 9 partners:



The network aims to generate region-representative evidence-supported input to contribute to EU discussions on matters of climate change and environment, and to explore and introduce to the region new inter-related aspects such as circular economy. In the process, the network foresees to also technically and financially support civil society organizations and media in each of the network partner countries, to better understand and work on these issues.

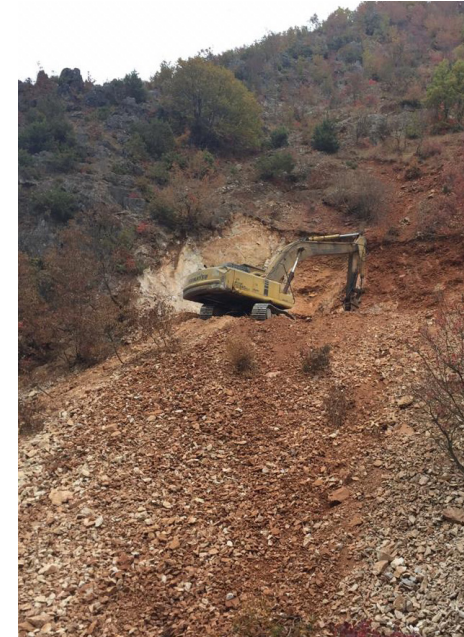
The project specifically works on the strengthening of the network as a leading pan-regional actor in the WB and Turkey in orienting and influencing environmental and circular economy policy discussions at an EU level. It will also support local CSOs and media in the process of improving their skills and work related to environmental issues.

The Western Balkan and Turkey region faces a number of challenges impeding progress, such as: limited local buy-in of the reforms, conflicting legislation, lack of a critical mass that can monitor developments and exert pressure on policy-makers, weak dialogue with institutions, poor understanding and coverage of climate change and environmental news, and very sparse resonance with current EU environment-related discussions such as circular economy aspects.



## #SaveDIVJAKA

Co-PLAN within the framework of the ENV-net project, in cooperation with Polis University, organized a study visit to the Divjaka Karavasta National Park. Students from Environmental Studies were introduced with practical assessment of ecosystem services, the importance of maintaining the balance in protected habitats, as well as knowledge of management practices of the park by the relevant authorities.



## Site Visit to Seta River

Co-PLAN Experts in cooperation with North Green Association, joined the National Activism Day 2018 on a site visit to the Seta river in Dibër, monitoring the negative impact of the hydropower plant constructed on the basin of this river.







### Earth Week 2018

Co-PLAN, as lead partner of ENV-net, supported a number of activities during Earth Week that aim to raise awareness of environmental protection, plastic reduction, river pollution from urban waste, the importance of protected areas and sustainability.



### Conference on Circular Economy in Western Balkans and Turkey

ENV-net organized the First Regional Conference on Circular Economy, in Belgrade, to introduce country specific assessments of the circular economy in all 7 Western Balkan countries and Turkey and discuss on improvements that can be proposed to key stakeholders including institutions.





# Green Lungs for Our Cities

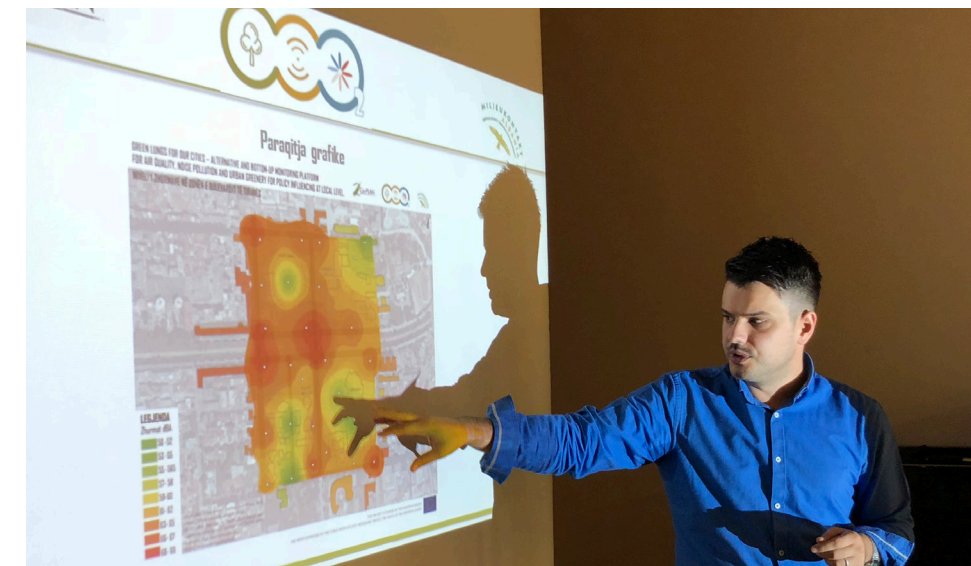
Co-PLAN is implementing a project funded by the European Delegation in Albania, Green Lungs for our cities – alternative and bottom-up monitoring platform for air quality, noise pollution and urban greenery for policy influencing at local level. The project's overall objective is to strengthen local environmental Civil Society Organizations to impact environmental policies and performance at local level in line with the EU accession requirements, through enabling them to carry out evidence-based advocacy and policy influencing in the environmental protection realm. In the first year of its implementation, it was drafted an alternative monitoring methodology in collaboration with environmental experts from NGOs, local and state institutions, and citizens. This methodology can be easily applied by both local environmental organizations

and activists. Monitoring data/findings that can be easily understand by citizens will be produced. The proposed alternative methodology provides a number of additional components within the air-noise pollution and urban greenery spectrum that are not covered by the current official data. It than was piloted in the Municipality of Tirana. The findings from the monitoring process will be used into local, regional and national scale discussion aimed at policy-influencing. During 2018, it was released a sub-grantees open call for CSOs in order to build their capacities and increasing their legitimacy in their local constituencies for the three components of the project.

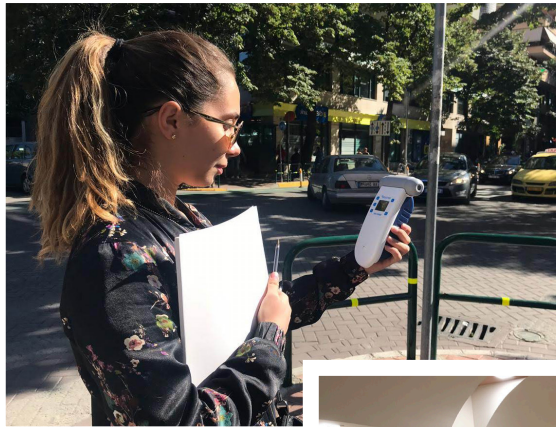


## United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 24

Co-PLAN participated to the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 24 Katowice 2018, together with Env.Net partner organisations from the region. The Polish Presidency focused on three key themes: Technology - development of climate-friendly modern solutions, such as electromobility; Man - solidary and just transition of industrial regions; Nature – supporting achieving climate neutrality by absorbing CO2 by forests and land, or by water management.







### Pilot Zone Monitoring Process

After the identification of the pilot zone in Tirana, experts and the group of volunteers initiated the monitoring process of three components as specified by the methodology. The pilot zone was chosen because of its composition, population and the different social and economic activities found within it.



### Consultations on Monitoring Methodology

Throughout October, Co-PLAN and Milieukontakt Albania organized 2 rounds of consultations in regards to the monitoring methodology with experts, academics and representatives of CSO's, local and national institutions, students and active citizens. During these consultations the Sub-granting scheme was introduced for the interested environmental organizations, to incorporate to the project three more municipalities.



### Participation to NAD 2018

Co-PLAN dhe Milieukontakt Albania joined the Activism Fair organized in the Framework of NAD 2018. The experts and young volunteers showcased to the interested public the preliminary monitoring data that was collected on the pilot zone in the city of Tirana, regarding all three of the components. They also made on the spot monitoring in the area around the Fair. (Pik 25)

# Research and Policy Influencing

By working closely with stakeholders and generating knowledge useful to public institutions and communities, Co-PLAN has developed and adopted a number of governance tools. Such instruments have been rigorously developed by assembling knowledge of local contexts and on this basis modifying good governance methodologies for operationalization in the Albanian context. Apart from genuine participatory and bottom-up approaches to problem solving, Co-PLAN has dedicated substantial efforts to research that generates the necessary know-how for the proper implementation of development initiatives. Initially, Co-PLAN's research initiatives aimed at assessing needs and designing planning instruments and projects informed by local concerns. In a second stage, complementary research activities were undertaken in order to produce more comprehensive knowledge of local urban settings and inform important municipal decision-making processes.

# KINDLE Advocacy

KINDLE Advocacy was implemented by Co-PLAN with the support of the US Embassy in Tirana. The project tackled the need for the young CSO's and newly emerging activists to articulate evidence-based responses in influencing policymaking in pressing issues related to city-making, democracy and environment. The project aimed to strengthen internal capacities of local CSO-s and young activists to monitor, analyze, and undertake concrete steps/actions through a dual/integral approach, providing the target groups with both, capacity development and advocating experience. A tailored capacity development program was envisioned in the form of structured workshops and coaching components, covering five core themes under the overarching multilevel governance, such as elections, communication for impact, urban activisms, environmental resources and a free topic. In the process the participants improved their knowledge of how to engage in policy processes (monitoring, analyzing, influencing), how to establish dialogue platforms with the local/regional/ and national authorities, how to raise particular pressing issues within the sector, and how to initiate lobbying and advocacy actions in view of influencing policy-making.

*Some of the most active Kindle participants throughout 2018 were:*

- *Revival of Local Museums,*
- *#SiCucateDibres,*
- *The Independent Cultural Scene,*
- *Pollution of Rivers - A case by North Green Association,*
- *Raise Awareness and Stimulate Active Citizenship in their Local Communities- A case by Center for Development of Gramsh,*
- *Activism at an early age – A case by Jolin Matraku,*
- *National Union of Students in Albania – a case initially developed by Arilda Nivokazi, later joined by Klea Çekiçi, and Hejli Haxhia*



## #SiCucateDibres

Over a one year period, the cause conducted significant research on the causes and consequences of the phenomenon, identifying key values and traditions of the area, mainly focused on the women figure. A number of Focus Groups (with teachers, parents and students/pupils) were held in order to get the full perspective of the causes and conditioning factors. The focus groups were followed by a dedicated cultural event in the form of a fair, where they exhibited their work and products, showcasing their skills and local handmade products, as well as offering the opportunity to discuss with the young girls on a

closer level on their aspirations and their future plans, what they envisioned for themselves and potentially explore on what they considered skills they would like to develop/acquire. A final event in the form of an inspiring talk by a Dibra-born successful role model, the no.2 figure in the Armed Forces of Albania, General Manushaqe Shehu, who encouraged both parents and the girls to view and pursue education as the driving force leading to both personal and community development.





## Revival of Local Museums

As part of the activity plan jointly developed with the team, Kevin undertook a preliminary research, a survey and a proactive social media campaign to introduce and raise awareness on local museum issues. The social media profiles of the cause triggered interest among public authorities who have regularly followed them. Based on the findings of the research, Kevin drafted a policy brief with recommendations to the relevant institutions, which was later presented and discussed in a dedicated forum. The survey done and the policy brief produced was presented and

discussed among some of the prominent figures and experts in the museum management sector. In an open panel representatives of the Ministry of Culture, academics, researchers, experts of the field and students discussed over the current situation of local museums and commented on the policy brief delivered to the relevant institution by Mr. Jasini. The event turned into a successful constructive discussion on what needs to be improved and what type of cooperation and initiatives need to be supported.



## Professional Fellows Program

Co-PLAN coordinates the Professional Fellows Program for Albania, financed by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and is organized by the WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc. – Great Lakes Consortium for International Training and Development (GLC). This program is a two-way exchange involving 38 professionals from five selected European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia) and 19 mentor organization from the United States who will effect positive change in their communities. The overall goal of the program is to provide a professional development opportunity for mid-level emerging leaders and build a global network of professionals able to work effectively in an interconnected environment. The fellowship program was opened to professionals who are actively involved in programs related to citizen participation and advocacy (NGO/civil society development), civic education organizations, citizen advocacy groups, community activists and/or community organizers who work with marginalized or rural communities.







### Open-forum with the first Professional Fellows

Co-PLAN in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy-Tirana, organized an open-forum where the first group of Professional Fellows returning after a six week exchange program in the United States, shared their impressions, experiences and reflections with student, activists and CSO's.



### Open Call for Applications

During 2018, in the framework of Professional Fellows Program, there were 2 open calls launched, to select five representatives from the CSO's engaged in community development. The selection process includes several steps concluding with a workshop and group interviews, giving each participant the opportunity to express their interest in the program and share their experience in relation to community organizing.



### Participation to the Fellow Alumni Reunion

Co-PLAN, as Albania's Country Director coordinating the Professional Fellows Program, took part at the Fellows Reunion in Sinaia, Romania organised by Cere, Resource Center for Public participation with the support of the U.S. Department of State through GLC\_Teach Democracy. The reunion brought together more than 70 community organizers from European and U.S. organisations sharing their experiences, concerns and plans for the future.

## Europeanisation Beyond Process

Co-PLAN has taken upon itself an initiative supported also by OSIFE through its program "Europeanisation Beyond Process", to expand its vision towards Albania's Europeanisation with focus on territorial governance policies in various levels on purpose factoring in policies and EU debates. This initiative which is co-financed by Co-PLAN is aimed at building human infrastructure and strengthening the organization in the upcoming challenges of integration. To this extent, Co-PLAN utilises different tools to play a role in the integration process:

- *Contribution in debates between Albania, West Balkan and EU, represented as part of academic networks.*
- *Contribution on discussion about Albania Europeanisation emphasizing the importance of European policies and the interconnections between Albania and Europe. Focusing on regional and territorial perspective, it expands the perspective from "Is EU interested in West Balkan", to "Albania plays a constructive role for the future of EU and has a lot to acquire through its collaboration with EU".*
- *Presentation of research findings in Albania and EU regarding territorial governance based on liason territorial features and resources with the development of multi – actors networks capacities and needs that leads towards a solid base towards democratization and open governance.*





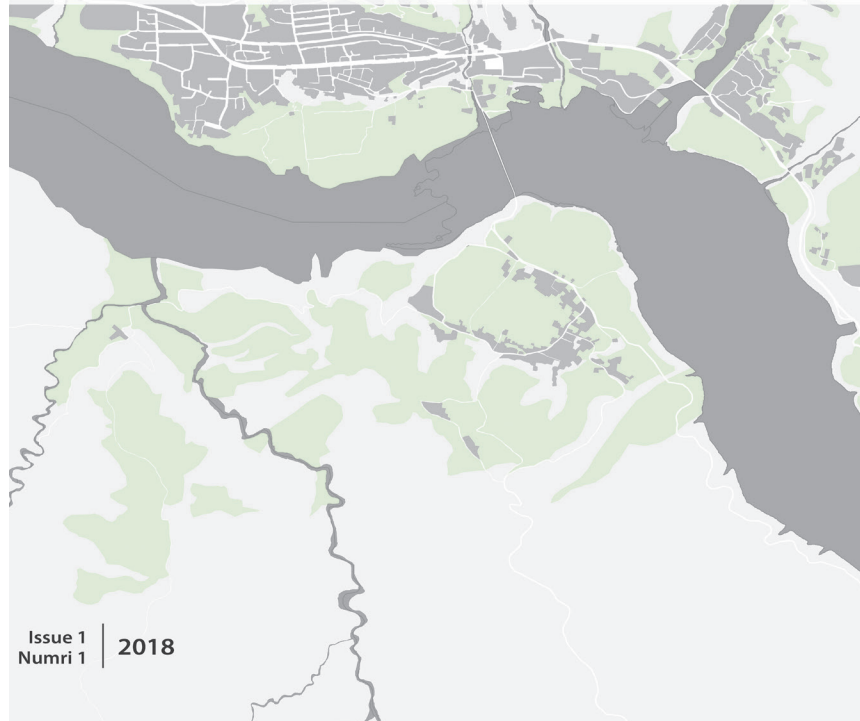
## First issue of the 'Annual Review of Territorial Governance in Albania'

In view of current socio-political ambitions and regional dynamics in Albania as part of the Western Balkans, Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development and POLIS University, introduce the first issue of the 'Annual Review of Territorial Governance in Albania'. This is a platform aimed at furthering the research on territorial governance on a domestic and regional level, bringing together research and policy-influencing actors from the Western Balkan countries. This annual publication is dedicated to the territory, given its intrinsic relation to resources, development, and consequently governance. The articles focus mostly on territorial or place-sensitive governance in Albania, but provide analyses and insights on the connections between national territorial frameworks and policies, and those in the European Union and in the Western Balkans, to enhance the domestic territorial governance and impact in a 'unique voice' the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries. The articles, deal with a number of sectors and their interrelation to the territory, and the various multi-level, polycentric forms of governance. Each article is a policy brief that makes use of research, information, and analysis carried out by the authors, and provides policy recommendations mostly to domestic institutions, while also contributing to reducing the information gap on Albania at an international scale.

# Annual review of TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE IN ALBANIA

## QEVERISJA TERRITORIALE NË SHQIPËRI

Regional Development: policy and financing mechanism  
Spatial Planning and Land Development  
European Spatial Integration of Western Balkans  
Decentralization: local finances and the post territorial reform  
Sustainability: Climate, Energy, Tourism  
Cohesion Policy and Urban Dimension



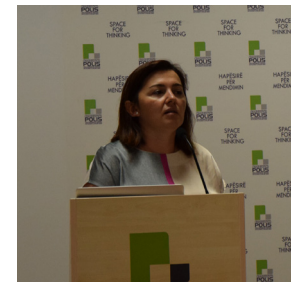
## 13th AESOP Lecture Series

New Frontiers for Spatial Planning in Times of Uncertainty: Dealing with Climate Change and Environmental Risks. On November 1st took place the 13th AESOP Lecture Series organized by POLIS University and Co-PLAN: Institute for Habitat Development, with Prof. Simin Davoudi (Newcastle University / GURU), which included also presentations from Prof. Dr. Besnik Aliaj (Rector of POLIS University) and Dr. Rudina Toto.



## Planning Symposium: "Planning Innovations - The New Frontier"

Co-PLAN and Universiteti Polis research community celebrated World Town Planning day through a Planning Symposium where experts, academics and researchers presented different research studies related to innovative methods and idea on planning.



## Participation to ESPON Seminar

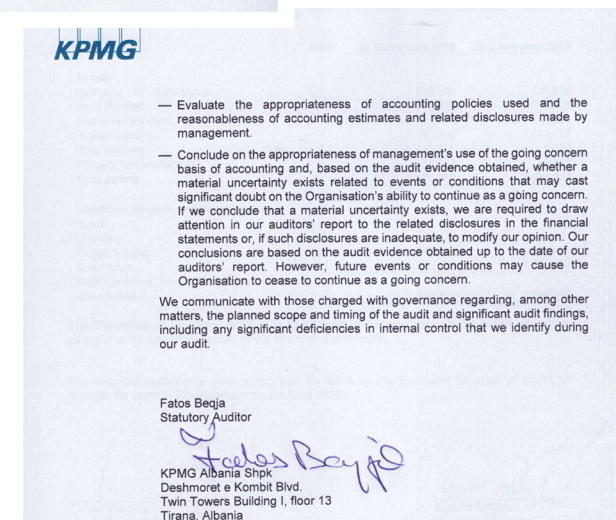
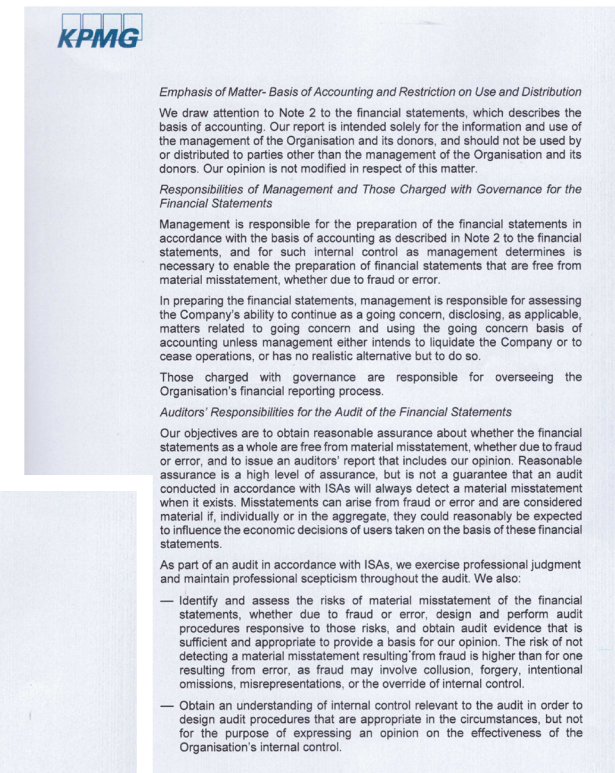
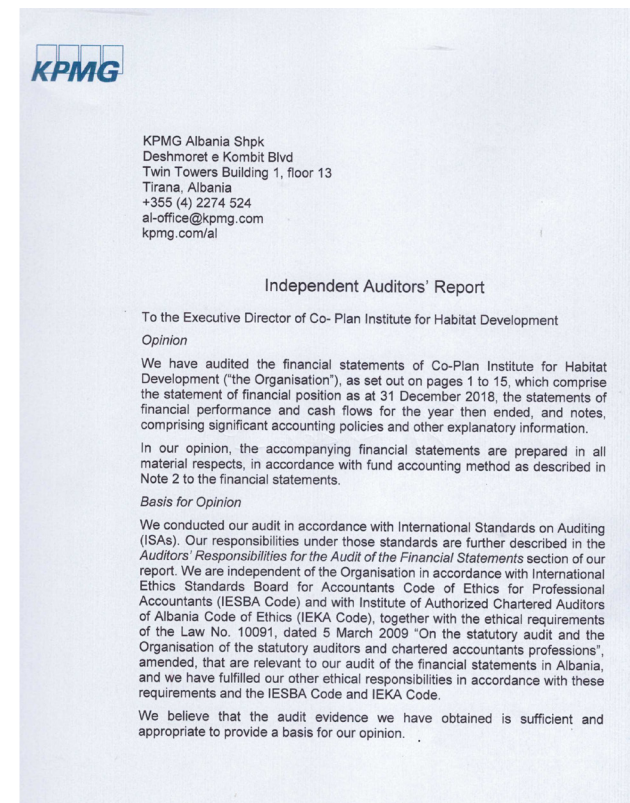
Co-PLAN experts participated in an ESPON seminar "New Narratives for Territorial Development" organised in cooperation with the Austrian Presidency of the EU Council, which aims at supporting policy development for promoting territorial cohesion and harmonious development.





# TRANSPARENCY

Transparency and accountability are key values for Co-PLAN, and closely related to the consolidation and success of the organization. Co-PLAN's financial transparency is based on strong financial management. Each year, Co-PLAN is audited by an authorized international auditing company. The auditing reports are made available to all the interested parties upon request.





[www.co-plan.org](http://www.co-plan.org)

