

## Instruments for the regional sustainable development in Albania - Instruments for supporting the implementation of regional development policy

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### Abstract

Regional development is a cross-cutting issue. The current approach to regional development in Europe is place-based, in which multidimensional analyses are carried out and strategies and policies developed in relation to territorially defined socio-economic and environmental factors. In our study we have largely followed this approach, looking at long-term changes in a wide set of development indicators across Albania. As a result several regional typologies are presented as well as broad recommendations for regional development policy formulation. Albania has two levels of governance: national, county (qarks) and local (municipalities). Directly elected bodies exist at central and local levels. Qark councils consist of delegated representatives from local units. Albania's territory is organized into 12 counties and 61 local government units. There are neither administrative nor self-governing regions in Albania corresponding to NUTS 21 level classification. Qarks are the equivalent of NUTS 3 level. Currently in Albania there is no clear definition of a development region. In general it is perceived that qarks can be considered an appropriate level at which regional development is analyzed, promoted and monitored. Although we have followed this concept, both due to data available and no better practical alternative, there are clearly other possibilities which could surface in the medium-term perspective, for example:

NUTS 2 delineation for Albania could lead to a situation when development issues will become also relevant at the macro level – practically the number of NUTS 2 regions in Albania could vary between 2 and 3 unless the country is allowed to stay one region;

Territorial and administrative reforms could lead to a much smaller number of LGUs both at the basic municipality level and the qark level, especially that from a general RD perspective some of the qarks represent very small units, both in terms of population and size of the regional economy.

As Albania is in its early stages of integration into the European Union, there is clearly a need to develop a domestic socio-economic cohesion (regional development) policy. This can only be done through detailed studies of the current situation, the prevailing development trends and patterns, and consequently a wide discussion on how to best stimulate regional development actions.

**Keywords:** regional, development, Albania, instruments.

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