

SHARE.MedWATER – Albania Factsheet

Project Title: Strategic Harmonization and Resource Enhancement in the Mediterranean - Advancing Water Management through Non-Conventional Resources

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SHARE.MedWATER is an Interreg Euro-MED project addressing increasing water scarcity in the Mediterranean region by promoting the use of non-conventional water resources, such as rainwater and greywater, through innovative, community-based and district-level water management models.

The project is implemented by a transnational partnership from seven Mediterranean countries: Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Albania, Greece, France and Malta. It brings together public authorities, research institutions and civil society organisations to jointly develop, test and upscale sustainable water reuse solutions adapted to local contexts.

ROLE OF ALBANIA IN SHARE.MedWATER

In Albania, SHARE.MedWATER is implemented by the Urban Research Institute (URI), in close cooperation with the Municipality of Gjirokaštër. Activities focus on heritage-based rainwater reuse, community engagement and capacity building, responding to local water stress challenges while preserving cultural identity.

WHY GJIROKAŠTËR?

Gjirokaštër is characterised by a historic urban fabric and traditional rainwater harvesting systems, locally known as “sterë”. These systems represent an important, yet underused, resource for climate resilience. Seasonal droughts and increasing water demand highlight the need for innovative, locally adapted water management solutions.

URI-led activities aim to revitalise these traditional systems and demonstrate how heritage-based solutions can contribute to modern, sustainable water management. Furthermore, the intervention intends to increase the fire protection system in historical area in Gjirokaštër

KEY ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY URI IN ALBANIA

1. Heritage-Based Rainwater Reuse Pilot

URI in close collaboration with the municipality of Gjirokaštër leads the implementation of a community-scale in Albania pilot focused on restoring and reactivating traditional rainwater harvesting systems in Gjirokaštër.

Main actions include:

- Identification of houses that accept to be part of the project for the rehabilitation of the “sterë”
- Identification and technical assessment of selected “sterë”
- Restoration and functional upgrading of rainwater collection systems
- Testing rainwater reuse for non-potable uses, such as household needs and public services
- Monitoring water savings, system performance and seasonal resilience

This pilot aims to demonstrate a low-cost, replicable solution for historic cities facing water scarcity. But also, to promote the historical and touristic values of the antic architectural structures.

2. Community Water Management Model

URI, in collaboration with the municipality, supports the creation of a SHARE.MedWATER community model in Gjirokastër, inspired by community-based resource management approaches.

Key elements:

- Engagement of households, local institutions and municipal actors
- Definition of governance and sharing arrangements for collected rainwater
- Assessment of social acceptance and community participation

The model promotes shared responsibility and local ownership of water resources.

3. Regulatory and Technical Support

URI contributes Albanian expertise to the project’s analytical and policy-related work by:

- Reviewing the national regulatory framework relevant to rainwater harvesting and water reuse
- Supporting interviews and assessments on the acceptability of treated and reused water
- Aligning pilot outcomes with national and EU water policy developments

4. Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer

To ensure sustainability and replication, URI will:

- Organize local capacity-building events and study visits in countries that are implementing the same interventions.
- Share pilot results with municipalities, professionals and policymakers
- Support replication of the model at municipal and district level

EXPECTED BENEFITS FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF GJIROKASTËR

- Increased resilience to seasonal water shortages and droughts
- Increased resilience and response to fire risk in historical area
- Practical demonstration of climate-adaptive, heritage-based solutions
- Evidence-based input for municipal planning and investment
- Enhanced visibility of Gjirokastër as a Mediterranean good practice in sustainable water management