

URBAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Annual Report 2025



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A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear colleagues, partners and friends,

In 2025, URI stood by what matters most: **work that can make an impact.**

From climate governance to municipal service delivery and regional cooperation, our focus in 2025 was to translate our commitments into actionable steps. We strengthened the technical pillar of climate policy through MRV work and greenhouse gas inventories, helped municipalities move from planning to delivery, and expanded learning through networks that connect Albania with the wider region.

This year brought other important moments. We contributed to strengthening climate governance through technical work on MRV and the completion of the national greenhouse gas inventory reporting. In doing so, we helped link policies and measures to measurable progress. In Elbasan, we supported climate-neutral mobility through capacity building, strategic outreach, and public engagement, including key steps within the Climate City Contract process, as well as the continued implementation of GreenELB and the public positioning of eCIM.

In Berat and Durrës, our projects on waste and the circular economy combined local coordination with practical education tools and youth engagement. At the regional level, we partnered, aligned methodologies and helped to deliver a joint awareness campaign in ten cities, demonstrating how collaboration can produce sustainable messages and locally adapted actions. We also strengthened partnerships through the launch of new projects focused on water sustainability and cultural access.

I am grateful to our team and to the partners who trusted URI throughout the year. The direction for 2026 is clear: strong coordination and solutions that improve the way cities and communities function.

With gratitude and determination,

Zana Vokopola

Executive Director, Urban Research Institute

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INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

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1.1 ABOUT URI

The Urban Research Institute (URI) was founded in 1999 and is an independent research institute that investigates the social and economic issues faced by the country, as well as the central and local government policies developed to address them. URI's areas of work encompass a wide range of expertise, including Environmental and Tourism, Governance Reforms, Infrastructure and Public Services, and Social Initiatives.

We conduct research and analysis, propose solutions, and collaborate with institutions and partners to transition from diagnosis to delivery. This includes implementing long-term programs and multi-stakeholder processes in the Western Balkans and beyond.

The year 2025 was a year that produced many results. URI prioritised outputs that institutions and municipalities can use immediately, data systems, guidance, and procurement-ready packages, paired with on-the-ground delivery and regional cooperation.



Visit our website: <https://uri.org.al/>



1.2 OUR MISSION

URI's mission is to drive sustainable development and strengthen community resilience in Albania and the region. We achieve this through rigorous research, strategic interventions, and inclusive policy and delivery support.

As an independent institute, we address social, economic and environmental challenges by:

- Scrutinising policies and programmes and supporting their improvement through evidence.
- Building capacities and developing practical tools that enable implementation.
- Strengthening coordination between institutions, municipalities, civil society and communities.
- Ensuring that equity, inclusion and citizen engagement are integrated into design and delivery.

Our commitment extends beyond research. We support partners in translating analysis into action through technical assistance, learning products, facilitation, and on-the-ground implementation support.

1.3 URI



URI'S HISTORY:

Founded in 1999 as an independent institute providing research and technical support for public policy and local development.

Built credibility through long-term, field-based work with municipalities, national institutions and development partners.

In recent years, evolved into a climate and environment delivery partner capable of coordinating multi-actor processes and producing implementation tools.

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WHAT WE UNDERSTAND:

Evidence is only valuable when it is usable: turned into decisions, budgets, services and measurable outcomes.

Delivery is political and technical: you need governance, capabilities, and citizen trust at the same time.

Implementation is the real test: commitments only matter when institutions can translate them into rules, budgets, procurement, services, and outcomes that can be measured.

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WHAT WE OFFER:

Technical assistance: frameworks, methodologies, templates, pilots, training packages and operational guidance.

Coordination and facilitation of complex processes involving institutions, municipalities, civil society, academia and private sector actors.

Learning formats that transfer practical know-how: workshops, peer exchange, pilots, campaigns and guidance products.



WHAT WE SUPPORT

Climate governance, institutional set-ups, procedures, and multi-level coordination that survives beyond a single project cycle.

MRV, inventories, and M&E systems that connect policies, measures, and results, including national MRV for GHG emissions and mitigation actions with NEA and MoE, built to improve decision making and “unlock” climate finance.

Climate-neutral city transformation, combining buildings and mobility work in Elbasan under the NetZeroCities pathway.

Buildings decarbonisation and retrofit readiness, neighbourhood diagnosis, digital assessment tools, retrofit packages and guidebooks, business models, behavioural research, and regulatory sandboxing for energy efficiency.

Sustainable mobility delivery, data-driven policy sandboxing, green procurement guidance, capacity building, and citizen engagement, paired with pilot street interventions designed to scale citywide.

E mobility investment and deployment for sustainable tourism, from national steering and policy frameworks to infrastructure rollout and capacity building in target municipalities (Berat, Belsh, Elbasan).

Waste and circular economy systems that are measurable and replicable, source separation models linked to service quality and markets (“Berati Riciklon”), plus WMZ level circular economy support (EU4CE REWAM in Gjirokastër–Vlora South).

Land use, forests, and climate mitigation in FOLU, policy and investment planning aligned with Albania’s NDC, stronger coordination, monitoring systems, and financing mechanisms.

Biodiversity and protected area management, practical planning and sustainable financing approaches, including valorisation work for the Albanian Alps National Park.

Regional and national platform building, common methods, toolkits, and replication pathways, including work linked to national platform models for climate-neutral urban development.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES AND STRUCTURE 02



2.1 HOW WE WORK

URI's approach is built around a simple logic: evidence should lead to decisions and decisions should lead to delivery.

We start with an analysis: what the data says, what institutions can absorb, what budgets can carry, and what communities will accept. We then translate evidence into tools that make implementation possible, templates, methodologies, pilots, training packages, operational guides and coordination processes.

URI's work typically moves through five linked steps:

1. Diagnose and map the delivery gap: identify where policy intent breaks down in practice.
2. Co design solutions with delivery actors: institutions, municipalities, service providers and community stakeholders.
3. Build capability: training, mentoring, practical working sessions and iterative feedback.
4. Support implementation: piloting, operational support, citizen engagement, and documentation.
5. Scale and replicate: shared methodology, peer learning, networks, and guidance products that allow other cities or institutions to adopt the practice.

This approach is what allowed URI in 2025 to contribute both to national climate backbone systems and to practical local delivery in municipalities.

2.2 OUR VALUES, PEOPLE AND PLACE

2.2.1 OUR VALUES

URI is dedicated to transformative public policies and actions toward sustainable development, using evidence-based, cost-efficient and bottom-up approaches. We recognise the importance of dialogue, common understanding and cooperation at all governmental and institutional levels.

Integrity and zero tolerance

URI upholds zero tolerance for fraud, financial mismanagement and malpractice involving employees, management bodies, contracted providers, partners or funding organisations. We aim to maintain transparent, accountable and responsible operations across all projects and partnerships.

2.2.2 OUR PEOPLE

URI's strength lies in its people, a small, multidisciplinary team supported by a wider network of national and international experts.

In 2025, we continued strengthening the employee experience through:

- Flexible, family-friendly working practices that support work-life balance.
- A focus on health and safety, including insurance coverage and stress-reduction measures.
- Learning and skills development in emerging areas such as climate measurement, circular economy and inclusive engagement.
- Strong internal communication and collaboration across thematic teams.
- Safe channels for concerns, ensuring issues are handled fairly and confidentially.

2.2.3 OUR PLACE

From its base in Tirana, URI manages activities that extend across Albania and neighbouring countries. The office functions as a hub for coordination, learning, and communication, a space where ideas and evidence are gathered before being translated into policies and field actions.

In 2025 we continued improving sustainability in everyday operations by encouraging public transport and cycling, reducing single-use plastics through reusable alternatives, and minimising waste from food and packaging. Office improvements focused on energy efficiency and water saving through better fixtures and lighting.

2.3 SCOPE OF WORK



Policy research and planning

Conducting analytical studies and supporting evidence-based strategies, plans and legal alignment in sectors including environment, climate, energy, water, waste management, decentralisation and governance.



Capacity building

Designing and delivering training programmes for national and local institutions and civil society actors on governance, monitoring and evaluation, project delivery, public communication and technical themes.



Programme and project management

End-to-end management support for multi-year programmes funded by bilateral and multilateral partners, including technical oversight, financial management, procurement support, stakeholder coordination and reporting



Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Developing results frameworks, baselines, indicators and learning formats that track progress, document practice and improve delivery.



Stakeholder engagement

Consistent use of consultations and participatory formats, ensuring that solutions reflect local realities and increase ownership and feasibility.



2.4 AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Environmental and tourism. URI works at the intersection of environmental protection, climate action, and local economic development, helping institutions and municipalities turn sustainability goals into practical programmes and investments. We support the design and implementation of evidence-based policies, planning tools, and pilot actions that improve air, water, waste and energy outcomes while strengthening nature-based and tourism assets in a way that is responsible, measurable, and beneficial for communities.

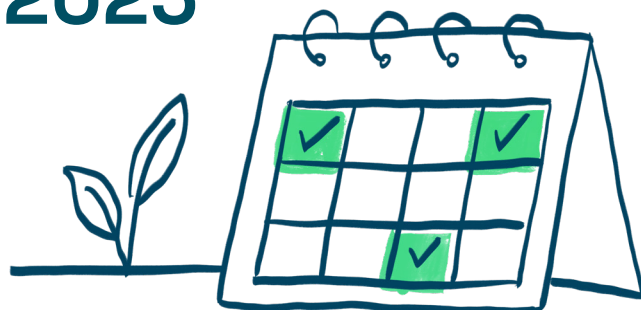
Governance reform. URI supports better public decision-making by analysing how institutions work in practice and helping improve the rules, processes, and coordination that shape delivery. We provide policy advice, regulatory and organisational review, and practical implementation support so reforms are not only well written but also workable, understood by stakeholders, and aligned with real capacities at the national and local level.

Infrastructure and public services. URI helps public and private actors plan and deliver infrastructure and services that are reliable, efficient, and fit for purpose. Our support ranges from diagnostics and investment preparation to implementation tools and monitoring approaches, with a focus on the everyday systems that affect quality of life, such as mobility, energy efficiency, waste services, water management, and local service delivery.

Social initiatives. URI designs and supports initiatives that strengthen social well-being, participation, and opportunity, especially where policy decisions meet lived realities. We work with communities, civil society, and public institutions to integrate equity and inclusion into programmes, improve citizen engagement and trust, and ensure interventions respond to real needs, with clear learning and measurable outcomes.

OUR WORK IN 2025

03



3.1 OUR 2025, IN FIGURES

9

Core team

45+

External experts engaged

22

Active projects

12

Donors and
development partners

20+

Project partners

14+

Countries and global
engagements

15+

Municipalities impacted

1

Regional networks
coordinated

These figures reflect a year where URI combined institutional work (systems, strategies, guidance) with municipal delivery (implementation support) and regional scaling (shared methodologies and campaigns).



FRANCE
SHARE.MedWATER



SPAIN
SHARE.MedWATER



ITALY
Art4All + SHARE.
MedWATER

SLOVENIA Climate
Bridges network
coverage



AUSTRIA
Climate Bridges – Network
in Action project country



CROATIA
Climate
Bridges



BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA
Climate Bridges +
BOOST



MONTENEGRO
(Climate Bridges +
BOOST + Art4All)



SERBIA
BOOST + Climate
Bridges network
coverage



KOSOVO BOOST
Climate Bridges



NORTH MACEDONIA
Climate Bridges +
BOOST + network
coverage



GREECE
SHARE.MedWATER



MALTA
SHARE.MedWATER

3.3 WHAT MADE US PROUD

In 2025, we focused on outcomes you can point to: measurable service results, coordination that actually reduced fragmentation, and delivery tools that make climate action implementable, not just discussable.

- **Climate finance moved from “fund-finding” to coordination.** The National Climate Finance Conference in Tirana (15 December 2025), co-convened with the Ministry of Environment and the UNESCO Office in Venice, helped push the conversation toward aligned priorities, bankable pipelines, and practical coordination mechanisms (including the idea of a National Climate Finance Platform).
- **Berat proved recycling works when it’s built as a service with a market link.** In Berat, the source-separation model delivered real, tradable outputs, 140+ tones of cardboard recovered and 8.5+ tones of plastic sold (cumulative results reported to date), demonstrating that separated materials can move through a functioning value chain, not disappear inside the system.
- **Climate Bridges became a real regional operating network.** We launched the next phase with a two-day consortium strategic meeting (30–31 January 2025), then hosted a national exchange (29 May 2025) with 30+ Albanian stakeholders, while the network scaled to 60+ organisations across 8 countries.
- **Breathe Clean showed what “regional coordination” looks like in practice.** In late September 2025, coordinated activities ran across 10 Western Balkan cities, expanding to 14+ civil society organisations through the Climate Bridges Network in Action methodology, anchored by a flagship convening format in Tirana.
- **We strengthened the transparency backbone, including MRV and evidence for delivery.** Through the NDC implementation work launched in June 2025, we supported the shift toward systems that can prove progress (capacity, evidence, and reporting readiness), linking climate priorities to realistic implementation and finance mobilisation.
- **Elbasan’s climate-neutral mobility work became concrete and testable.** The eCIM initiative (April 2025) advanced a practical package, a bicycle and pedestrian network plan, pop-up cycling infrastructure, smart monitoring tools (e.g., counting and crossings), and data-driven improvement loops that can be scaled citywide.

PORTFOLIOS AND PROJECTS

04



4.1 PART 1 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & CLIMATE CHANGE

URI's environmental and climate portfolio represents the organisation's most established line of work, accounting for a major share of its programmes through 2027. As Albania's accredited Delivery Partner of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) since 2019, URI helps national institutions translate global climate commitments into practical national systems.

Climate MRV System Readiness

The Climate MRV System Readiness project established Albania's first national system for Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) of greenhouse gases. Activities included drafting sub-legal acts, developing emission factors and methodologies, and piloting reporting with municipalities and private actors. Achievements include improved transparency in climate reporting and stronger readiness to access international climate finance mechanisms.

NDC Implementation Plan Readiness

The NDC Implementation Plan Readiness project supports Albania in translating its climate commitments into actionable steps. It prepares a comprehensive NDC Implementation Plan covering governance, mitigation, adaptation, finance, and transparency. Methods include updating land use data, standardizing cost assessments, and preparing a finance strategy for public and private investment. Its achievements are expected to include a clear roadmap for meeting Albania's climate targets and stronger mobilization of climate finance.

Policy and Investment Planning in FOLU in Albania

This Green Climate Fund project positions URI at the core of Albania's land-use and climate policy architecture. It supports the Government of Albania in realising the mitigation and sustainable development potential of the Food, Land and Urban Systems (FOLU) sector. Through integrated policy planning, data management and capacity development, the project builds a comprehensive investment framework for forestry and land use that directly advances Albania's Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement. Its outputs will help shape national climate finance readiness and sustainable rural development pathways.

Climate Bridges Network in Action

The Climate Bridges Network in Action project, implemented across the Western Balkans, aimed to strengthen regional collaboration on the EU Green Agenda. Its methods included public campaigns, stakeholder training, and the development of Local Green Agendas. Achievements include nine campaigns in five countries, the collection of good practices, and the formation of a regional network of more than 75 organizations, all committed to sustainable and inclusive climate action.

Breathe Clean: A Regional Call for Climate Awareness Across the Western Balkans

Implemented under the Climate Bridges Network in Action project, this regional campaign promoted climate awareness through locally adapted public engagement activities across ten cities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Croatia, aligned with World Lung Day 2025. Coordinated by the Urban Research Institute as project lead, the campaign combined a shared communication methodology with decentralised implementation by civil society and academic partners, using open discussions, climate action fairs, school activities, repair workshops, cycling actions, public storytelling, real-time air quality demonstrations and other interactive formats to connect climate issues with health, mobility, pollution and daily behaviour. Its main achievement was the successful mobilisation of a broad regional network of more than fourteen organisations around a consistent and replicable awareness model, showing that climate communication can be made more accessible, participatory and locally relevant through informal learning, familiar public spaces and cross-border coordination.

Developing Local Adaptation Action Plans for Divjakë, Kavajë and Rrogozhinë Municipalities

Implemented under the ALBAdapt – Programme for Climate Resilient Urban Development in Albania, this project supports three municipalities in preparing tailored Local Adaptation Action Plans to strengthen resilience to floods, droughts, heatwaves, erosion and other climate-related risks. It combines climate vulnerability assessment, GIS-based hazard mapping, participatory risk analysis, prioritisation and costing of adaptation measures, and the preparation of implementation and financing roadmaps aligned with Albania's National Adaptation Plan, National Climate Change Strategy and local development planning. The project also includes capacity building for municipal authorities and the integration of gender-responsive and inclusive approaches throughout the planning process. Its expected achievement is the delivery of three locally endorsed and operational adaptation plans that can guide municipal investment, territorial planning and access to future climate finance for resilient urban development.

Climate Finance Conference Albania

Convened by the Ministry of Environment, the Urban Research Institute and the UNESCO Office in Venice, this initiative created a national platform for dialogue on how Albania can translate climate policy commitments into practical, sustainable and measurable financing. The conference brought together state institutions, financial authorities, development partners, experts, academia and the private sector to address the full climate finance chain, from project identification and design to implementation, monitoring and impact reporting. Through technical facilitation and policy dialogue, the process focused on the need for bankable project pipelines, stronger institutional coordination, integration of climate finance into fiscal and financial risk frameworks, and the possible operationalisation of a National Climate Finance Platform aligned with Albania's national priorities, EU integration process and international climate commitments. Its main achievement was to elevate climate finance from a narrow environmental issue to a strategic economic and institutional agenda, helping build momentum for a more structured national approach to climate investment planning, financial governance and resource mobilization.



4.2 PART 2

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste management remains one of Albania's most pressing environmental issues, and URI has positioned itself as a national leader in this field. Its projects combine technical planning with community participation, turning the linear flow of waste into a circular loop of value.

Durrës Integrated Waste Management

The project “Protection of Environment through Integrated Waste Management in Durrës Municipality” aims to strengthen the municipality's capacity to deliver sustainable waste management services. In its first phase, the project mapped waste collection points across the municipality's territory, engaged local stakeholders in planning processes, and built partnerships with Aleksandër Moisiu University to involve students through Eco-Club initiatives and a Summer School focused on circular economy principles and sustainable urban development. Key achievements include baseline analyses, enhanced community and stakeholder engagement leading to improved waste management planning and delivery, increased public awareness, and greater alignment of Durrës with EU standards on waste reduction and resource efficiency.

Separate collection of waste in Berat Municipality

The Berat City Green initiative introduced a new source-separated waste collection system in the city. For this system, there are distributed around 460 containers (1100 lt) in the city centre, and more than 1200 (240 lt bins) in the surrounding areas such

as the historical area, Uznove and Gorice neighbourhood. Apart from the separate collection of waste through 1100-lit containers in the residential area, the project introduced door-to-door collection of recyclable waste in historic neighbourhoods. The initiative achieved its goal through the establishment of a Sorting Center for the separately collected waste and preparing the recyclable waste for the recycling sector. Furthermore, the project carried out awareness campaigns through boards, city lights, and digital tools. Training for staff and outreach to local businesses ensured smooth operations. Throughout the implementation, the project successfully included the engagement of citizens in recycling practices.

Solid Waste Management Zone – Gjirokastër & Vlora South

The Solid Waste Management Zone (vendos emrin e gjate te projektit) project is an ongoing initiative for the modernization of waste management service at the regional level in the Gjirokaster - Vlora South waste zone. The main goal of the project is. The development of detailed design for the construction of new transfer stations in Gjirokaster and Tepelene Municipalities, expansion of the Bajkaj sanitary landfill in Delvine Municipality, including the construction of recovery and composting facilities and also the closing of non-compliant dumpsites. The project entails the review of the feasibility studies, development of environmental impact assessments, and their financial planning. The project at the end will deliver a comprehensive, EU-aligned regional waste management model that reduces environmental risks and promotes resource recovery.

Integrated Waste Management and Marine Litter Prevention in the Western Balkans

Implemented with regional partners and supported by GlZ, this project addresses plastic leakages and marine litter prevention in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro through a coordinated regional waste management approach. It combines institutional support, technical training on the Waste Framework Directive tool, the development of national guidelines and implementation formats, country-level assessments of plastic leakages, and measures to strengthen reporting and compliance under the Barcelona Convention. The project also promotes cooperation among municipalities and environmental authorities to improve data quality, reporting systems, and integrated waste management practices across the region. Its expected achievement is the establishment of stronger institutional and technical capacities for plastic leakage assessment and prevention, supported by harmonised guidance, improved reporting mechanisms, and more effective regional cooperation on marine litter reduction.



4.3 PART 3

TOURISM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

URI approaches tourism not as a commercial venture but as a meeting place between culture, environment, and community identity. Its projects in this field reveal how protecting heritage can also generate sustainable livelihoods.

Art4All – Improving Cultural Accessibility Across Borders

Implemented under the Interreg VI-A IPA South Adriatic Programme, this project addresses barriers that limit equal access to culture for persons with disabilities across Italy, Albania and Montenegro. It aims to improve cultural accessibility and social inclusion by tackling physical, sensory and cognitive obstacles within cultural institutions and services. The project combines cross-border cooperation among museums, cultural operators, disability organisations and local stakeholders with training programmes on inclusive practices, the development of accessible cultural resources and tools, and the preparation of a joint strategy for accessibility management. A central feature of the project is its co-creation approach, which actively involves persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of activities to ensure that their needs and perspectives are directly reflected. Its expected achievement is the establishment of a more inclusive cultural environment across the programme area, supported by trained professionals, shared accessibility tools and a jointly developed strategic framework that can be taken up by participating organisations.



4.4 PART 4

WATER AND SANITATION

Clean water is a right, not a resource to be taken for granted. URI's work in this sector integrates environmental protection with institutional reform.

Durrës Sanitation and Stormwater Drainage Master Plan

This project supports the preparation of an integrated master plan for sanitation and stormwater drainage services across the Durrës Water and Sewerage Regional Utility service area, including Durrës, Kavajë, Krujë and Rrogozhinë. It combines institutional assessment, infrastructure diagnostics, GIS-based mapping, field investigations, hydraulic analysis, wastewater and stormwater scenario development, and climate-resilient planning. Particular emphasis is placed on reducing untreated discharges, improving bathing water quality, addressing infiltration and inflow in sewerage networks, strengthening flood resilience, and identifying investment priorities up to 2050. Its expected achievement is the delivery of a strategic and technically grounded roadmap for phased investments and service improvements, aligned with national sector strategies and relevant EU wastewater and environmental standards.

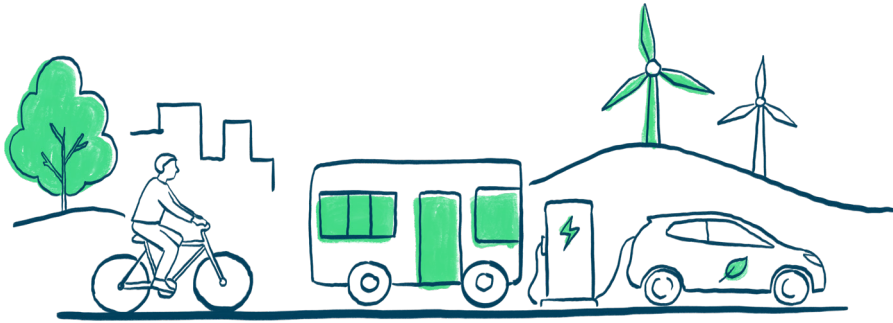
Durrës Sanitation Improvement and Priority Investment Preparation

This project component builds the technical and analytical basis for priority sanitation investments in the Durrës region, with a particular focus on wastewater treatment performance, network rehabilitation, pumping stations, outfalls, sludge management, and the assessment of future infrastructure needs. Through operational diagnostics, measurement campaigns on flow and water quality, bathing water pollution modelling,

scenario comparison, and CAPEX/OPEX analysis, it translates existing sector challenges into feasible investment options. The methodology also integrates environmental, climate, and social considerations, including adaptation to flooding, sea-level rise, and seasonal tourism pressures. Its expected achievement is the identification and prioritisation of bankable and operationally sound investment measures that can improve wastewater collection and treatment performance, protect coastal waters, and support long-term, climate-resilient urban service delivery in Durrës.

SHARE.MedWATER

Implemented under the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, this project addresses growing water scarcity in the Mediterranean by promoting the use of non-conventional water resources through innovative, community-based water management models. In Albania, URI implements the project in partnership with the Municipality of Gjirokastrë, with a focus on heritage-based rainwater reuse through the restoration and reactivation of traditional “sterë” systems in the historic urban area. The project combines technical assessment and rehabilitation of rainwater harvesting structures, testing of non-potable reuse, community-based governance arrangements, regulatory and policy review, and capacity building to support replication and long-term sustainability. Its expected achievement is the demonstration of a low-cost, climate-adaptive and replicable water management model that strengthens resilience to seasonal water shortages and fire risk, while preserving cultural heritage and supporting evidence-based municipal planning.



4.5 PART 5

ENERGY AND MOBILITY

Sustainable energy and mobility are at the centre of Albania's green transition, and URI's work in Elbasan serves as a national pilot for innovation.

GreenElb

The GreenElb project focused on reducing emissions in Elbasan's building sector by preparing for near-zero emission retrofits. Energy audits of residential buildings provided the foundation for a technical and financial roadmap, while behavioural studies and a policy sandbox tested new solutions. Training programs built local expertise in energy auditing and renovation planning. The project's main achievement is establishing a pathway for scaling sustainable energy solutions in Albania's housing stock.

Elbasan Climate-Neutral Innovation in Mobility (eCIM)

The eCIM project advances Elbasan's transition toward climate-neutral mobility by piloting cycling corridors, smart infrastructure and data-driven transport planning. Implemented under the Climate-KIC network, it combines technical research and citizen engagement to reduce urban emissions and improve connectivity. The initiative demonstrates URI's capacity to adapt European innovation models to Albanian urban contexts.

E-Mobility for Sustainable Tourism in Albania

Implemented with UNIDO and the Ministry of Environment, this project introduces electric mobility solutions in tourist destinations such as Berat, Belsh and Elbasan. It pilots charging infrastructure and e-vehicle fleets, develops regulatory frameworks and raises awareness on low-carbon travel. The initiative accelerates Albania's transition to climate-smart tourism and strengthens institutional capacity for sustainable destination planning.



4.6 PART 6

BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Biodiversity is the living foundation of sustainable development. URI's work protects ecosystems while promoting economic opportunities that depend on their health.

Albanian Alps National Park Valorisation Study

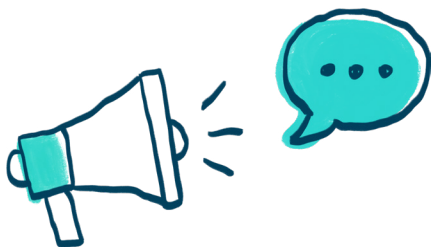
The Albanian Alps National Park Valorisation Study was designed to strengthen biodiversity conservation and climate resilience in northern Albania. Ecological surveys mapped habitats using Natura 2000 methodology and identified rare species, while socio-economic studies and consultations updated zoning and management plans. A business plan for eco-tourism and green entrepreneurship was also prepared. The study's achievements lie in providing a strategic framework that balances conservation priorities with sustainable local development.

Environment Support Programme Albania

This programme supports Albania in aligning its environmental policies and institutions with EU acquis requirements. URI contributes through technical assistance, capacity building and policy analysis focused on biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation and natural resource management. The initiative enhances national environmental governance and strengthens institutional frameworks for sustainable development. Adapting the IUCN Green List Standard to the Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (GreenList4MMPAs)

Implemented under the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, this project aims to improve the effectiveness of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas through the adaptation of the IUCN Green List Standard to the Mediterranean marine context and the establishment of a Mediterranean Expert Assessment Group for the Green List. Its methodology combines the review of existing national and international standards

for assessing MPA effectiveness, the development and testing of Mediterranean-tailored guidance notes and indicators, stakeholder questionnaires, and national focus group meetings with MPA managers, experts and public institutions to refine the applicability of the framework in country contexts, including Albania. In Albania, the process focused in particular on the Karaburun–Sazan Marine National Park and Porto Palermo Natural Park, bringing together national actors to review selected indicators, assess means of verification, and strengthen the practical relevance of the standard for marine governance and management. Its expected achievement is the delivery of a Mediterranean-adapted Green List framework, supported by expert governance mechanisms and stakeholder-validated guidance, that can improve the quality, equity and effectiveness of marine protected area management across the region.



4.7 PART 7

CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

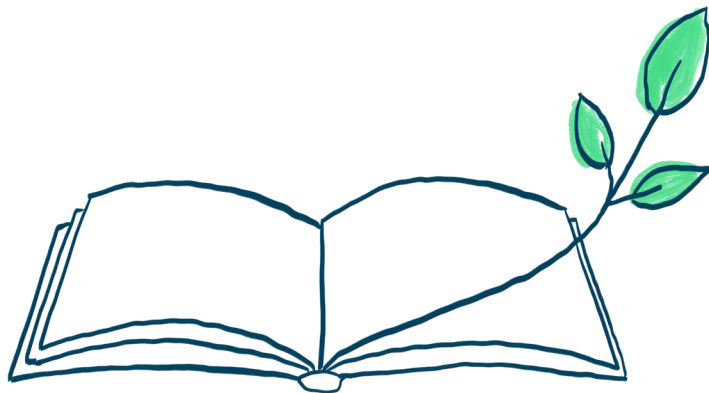
Strong governance and an active civil society form the institutional backbone of sustainable transformation. URI's programmes in this domain strengthen the relationship between citizens and institutions.

BOOST – Balkans for Optimising Opportunities, Sustainability and Transformation of Civil Society

Balkans for Optimising Opportunities, Sustainability and Transformation of Civil Society – BOOST (2024 -2027) is a regional project coordinated by ALDA and its consortium of partners, with Urban Research Institute (URI) as the implementing partner in Albania. Funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), which implements France's international development and solidarity policy, BOOST aims to foster democratic, economic, and social development in the Western Balkans in the context of EU enlargement. The project strengthens civil society organizations across key areas such as youth empowerment and entrepreneurship, environmental protection, rural development, cultural heritage preservation, and community advancement, with a strong focus on active citizenship, gender inclusion, and participatory governance.

PUBLICATIONS AND LEARNING PRODUCTS 2025

05



URI produced and shared practical knowledge products designed for use by schools, municipalities and the private sector. These outputs translated complex topics into accessible guidance and supported implementation-ready action.

Key publications and learning outputs

- Teacher guidance package on waste management (schools and educators).
- Practical guide on WFD and EPR for Western Balkan businesses (producers, importers, distributors).
- Breathe Clean awareness communication campaign
- Summer school with students: circular economy and waste management (Durrës).
- Twinning learning and peer exchange formats in Elbasan.
- Participation in European learning and networking formats supporting climate delivery.

OUR EVENTFUL YEAR 2025 TIMELINE

06

JANUARY

- Monitoring visit to Berat Municipality (waste implementation coordination).
- Technical work on Albania's climate MRV: emissions and mitigation measures.
- Climate Bridges – Network in Action kick-off (Tirana).



FEBRUARY

- Workshop on strengthening planning and tracking systems for GHG reduction policies (with national institutions and partners).
- First Strategic Framework for Electric Mobility in Elbasan.



MARCH

- Finalisation of GHG inventory reports.
- GreenELB milestones and Climate City Contract process steps in Elbasan.
- Teacher guidance package on waste management published.



APRIL

- Public launch / communication of eCIM initiative.
- Working sessions and citizen engagement planning.

MAY-JULY

- Climate Bridges National Exchange (Tirana).
- Working meeting (Vienna) for partner alignment.
- Practical guide on WFD and EPR for Western Balkan businesses published.



OCTOBER

- Walk21 network engagement and mobility learning.
- Waste innovation and youth formats (Durrës) and Berat project closure.



DECEMBER

- ShareMedWater kick-off meeting (Larnaca).
- National Climate Finance Conference (Tirana).
- Art4All kick-off meeting (Polignano a Mare).



SEPTEMBER

- The Breathe Clean Regional Campaign was delivered across ten cities (World Lung Day).



NOVEMBER

- Publication of the Breathe Clean Regional Campaign report.



OUR PARTNERS

07

URI's partnerships span public institutions, local authorities, international organisations, and development networks. Together they form a living ecosystem of collaboration that supports sustainable development in Albania and the Western Balkans.

NATIONAL PARTNERS

Ministry of Environment
Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
National Environmental Agency
National Agency for Protected Areas
National Agency of Water Supply and Sewage
Municipality of Berat
Municipality of Durrës
Municipality of Elbasan
Municipality of Belsh
Municipality of Gjirokastrë
Municipality of Tepelene
Municipality of Permet
Municipality of Kelcyre
Municipality of Memaliaj
Municipality of Libohovë
Municipality of Dropull
Municipality of Saranda
Municipality of Finiq
Municipality of Konispol
Municipality of Delvine
Municipality of Shkoder
Municipality of Kukes
Municipality of Divjaka
Municipality of Kavajë
Municipality of Rrogozhinë

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

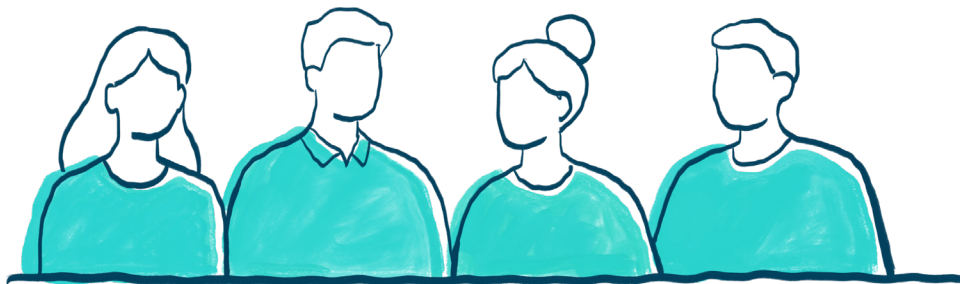
European Union (EU)
Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)
Green Climate Fund (GCF)
UNESCO
UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)
Agence Française de Développement (AFD)
GIZ
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
World Bank
Climate-KIC International Foundation
European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
IADSA
IUCN

NETWORKS & ALLIANCES

Central and Eastern European Network (CEEN)
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
Climate Bridges Network

OUR STAFF

08



8.1 Meet the Core Team

Zana Vokopola,
Executive Director

Edlir Vokopola,
Director,
Planning and Development Department

Dritan Gorica,
Environmental Engineer,
Planning and Development Department

Entela Kallamata,
Finance and Economics Expert,
Research Department

Ina Janushi,
Human Resources and Finance Expert,
Administrative Office

Drini Nushi,
Legal Expert,
Research Department

Marinela Spahiu,
Public Administration Expert,
Research Department

Erni Kocani,
Environmental Engineer,
Planning and Development Department

Fabio Çani,
Communication Expert,
Assistant Project Manager

Learn more about our staff:
[//uri.org.al/about-us/](http://uri.org.al/about-us/)



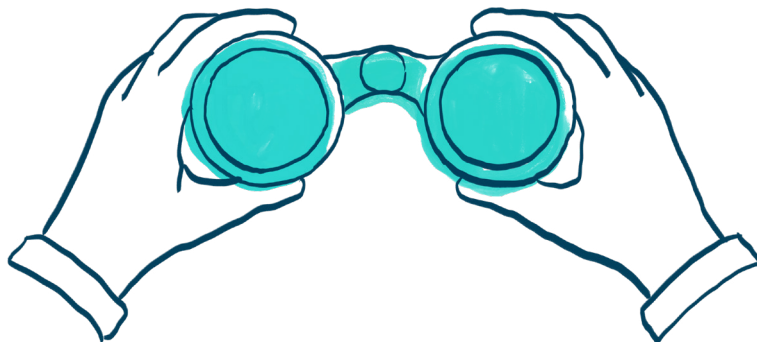
8.2 Testimonials

Coming from five years as a copywriter in advertising, joining the Urban Research Institute as Communications Officer was a deliberate shift in direction and a formative one. URI operates as more than a typical NGO: it conducts socioeconomic research, develops policy recommendations, and works directly with government institutions at both central and local levels. Being the person responsible for communicating that work to the public meant clarity and precision wasn't optional. They were the job.

My advertising background gave me a strong starting point, but URI's environment pushed my writing to a different level. Translating dense policy research and action plans into accessible, compelling content for diverse audiences is a craft of its own, and one I developed considerably during my time there.

Working at URI taught me that good communication isn't just about reaching people. It's about making complex, important ideas impossible to ignore...

Fabio Çani,
Communication Officer,
Assistant Project Manager



In 2026, URI will continue prioritising implementation-ready work that partners can use. Building on strengthened technical foundations, we will keep linking policies and measures to measurable outcomes, supporting coordination across institutions and municipalities, and translating evidence into practical steps on the ground.

We will deepen local delivery in priority municipalities by strengthening engagement formats and supporting clear implementation pathways for key measures, especially in mobility and the circular economy. At the regional level, we will build on shared methodologies and exchange formats that enable learning, replication and locally adapted action. We will also advance partnerships on water sustainability, nature and inclusion, ensuring that international cooperation results in concrete, locally relevant outputs.

Furthermore, we will expand our team to support the growing scope of projects, ensuring increased capacity and expertise to effectively manage the rising demand for services and ensure sustained quality across all initiatives.

ANNEX A

ACTIVITY LOG 2025

- 08 JAN 2025** **Monitoring visit to Berat Municipality**
URI conducted a working visit to monitor implementation of waste management measures and coordinate next steps with the municipality and local stakeholders.
- 15 JAN 2025** **Albania's climate MRV: emissions and mitigation measures**
URI provided technical input to strengthen MRV, focusing on emissions data and mitigation measures.
- 22 JAN 2025** **ECT Boot Camp (Berlin) with NetZeroCities for eCIM**
URI participated to advance Elbasan's pathway to climate neutrality in mobility and build capacity for the Climate City Contract.
- 30–31 JAN 2025** **Climate Bridges – Network in Action: kick-off meeting (Tirana)**
URI coordinated the two-day consortium kick-off launching the new project phase.
- 13 FEB 2025** **Meeting on integrated waste management**
URI contributed to institutional discussions on integrated approaches and implementable local solutions.
- 25 FEB 2025** **Technical workshop on planning and tracking systems for GHG reduction policies**
URI organised/contributed with AKM, the Ministry of Environment and CITEPA on tools linking policies, measures and measurable results.
- 27 FEB 2025** **First Strategic Framework for Electric Mobility in Elbasan**
URI supported Elbasan Municipality in drafting the initial strategic framework to guide measures, pilots and investments.
- 12 MAR 2025** **EU–Albania–Horizon Europe coordination on the Climate City Contract**
URI supported coordination with partners and relevant programmes to advance the Climate City Contract process.
- 17 MAR 2025** **Finalisation of GHG inventory reports**
URI contributed to finalising inventory reports as a basis for planning and prioritising measures.
- 19 MAR 2025** **Teacher guidance package on waste management**
URI produced a practical guide for schools on source separation, recycling and circular economy.
- 19 MAR 2025** **GreenELB kick-off and Climate City Contract signing (Elbasan, NetZeroCities)**
URI supported launch coordination and the signing process with partners.

24 MAR 2025	Workshop: “Transformation in Progress...” (Climate City Contract) URI facilitated dialogue on priorities and on-the-ground implementation with institutions, community and local actors.
26 MAR 2025	BOOST Balkans: Steering Committee meeting URI contributed to coordination on workplan delivery, results and next steps.
28 MAR 2025	Workshop on household source separation (Berat Municipality) URI supported a workshop on service logic, operational roles and citizen communication.
10 APR 2025	Social Forum: Strengthening Passenger Rights in the Western Balkans URI participated in the forum organised by the Transport Community on passenger rights.
15 APR 2025	Public launch/communication of the eCIM initiative URI presented eCIM as a package of interventions to reduce transport emissions, improve public health and increase liveability.
FEB–JUN 2025	Community and vulnerable-group consultations for GreenELB URI delivered field consultations to identify needs, barriers and implementable solutions.
29 MAY 2025	Climate Bridges National Exchange (Tirana) URI organised a national exchange with representatives from institutions, CSOs and experts on climate governance and cooperation.
03–05 JUN 2025	EUKI Academy study tour (Brussels) URI participated to strengthen knowledge on climate instruments and European cooperation.
03 JUN 2025	Twinning Learning Programme (TLP) field visit in Elbasan URI hosted peer exchange on progress and lessons learned.
23 JUN 2025	Summer school with students: circular economy and waste management (Durrës) URI experts delivered practical sessions connecting the circular economy to local waste management realities.
02–04 JUL 2025	Climate Bridges working meeting (Vienna) URI contributed to partner alignment and planning.
29 JUL 2025	Practical guide on WFD & EPR for Western Balkan businesses URI published guidance for producers, importers and distributors on EU-linked requirements.
25 SEP 2025	Climate Bridges: “Breathe Clean” regional campaign (10 cities) URI coordinated campaign delivery using a shared methodology with locally adapted implementation.
03 OCT 2025	Innovation Challenge on waste management and circular economy (Durrës) URI organised a youth-focused event to generate innovative circular solutions.

- 07 OCT 2025** **Walk21 network activities (Tirana)**
URI engaged in mobility learning and networking.
- 07 OCT 2025** **Closure of “Source Separation of Waste in Berat Municipality”**
URI concluded the project through an institutional closing meeting and presentation of results and roadmap.
- 09–15 OCT 2025** **IUCN World Conservation Congress (Abu Dhabi)**
URI participated to follow developments on conservation, nature finance and biodiversity policy.
- 24 OCT 2025** **Conference participation: “Albania’s Vision for Climate 2030”**
URI contributed to discussions on 2030 objectives and implementation roles.
- 26 NOV 2025** **Publication of the “Breathe Clean” campaign report/summary**
URI published an overview of methodology and delivery.
- 10–11 DEC 2025** **Kick-off Meeting “SHARE.MedWater” (Larnaca)**
URI participated as the Albania partner in the project launch on water sustainability.
- 15–16 DEC 2025** **National Climate Finance Conference (Tirana)**
URI organised/contributed to a convening linking institutional, financial and international actors.
- 16 DEC 2025** **Kick-off Meeting “Art4All – Improving Cultural Accessibility Across Borders” (Polignano a Mare)**
URI participated as the Albania partner in the cross-border project on cultural accessibility.

ANNEX B

KEY SOURCES (FOR REFERENCE)

This report draws on the URI project and publication pages, partner programme pages and publicly available project fact sheets and reports. Key sources include:

- URI project pages: Climate MRV; GreenELB; eCIM; Climate Bridges – Network in Action; Art4All; ongoing projects list.
- Climate Bridges network pages and EUKI pages for campaign and network information.
- NetZeroCities pages for contextual information on eCIM and Elbasan-related engagement.
- ShareMedWater project site and partner communications for objectives and kick-off information.
- Interreg IPA South Adriatic programme communication for Art4All kick-off information.
- Albania's first Biennial Transparency Report (UNFCCC) for contextual reference on climate reporting.

CONTACT

Urban Research Institute (URI)

Tirana, Albania

Website: www.uri.org.al

Email: info@uri.org.al

LinkedIn: Urban Research Institute

Instagram: @urbanresearchinstitute

URBAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Annual Report 2025

