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## Rural tourism effects on youth employment

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*Abstract: In the phase of transitioning from a centralized economy to a market economy system, Albania has been facing a great number of social and economic problems including high rates of external and internal migration; massive emigration of the skilled workforce; an increase in population average age; huge movement of the population from rural towards urban areas. Such movement was geared mainly from the willingness to search for better education, jobs, and betterment of living conditions. The phenomenon of emigration is still present nowadays, especially among young generation who often seek opportunities to study, work and live in another developed country. This article aims to make an analysis of the labour market perspective for youth in Albania and explore tourism and especially rural tourism development as a potential for employment. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the Albanian economy and the number of foreign tourists has been steadily growing in the past years, not considering the Covid-19 pandemics period. Rural tourism is a sector which has started to receive attention in the last years, and research shows that it can play an important role regarding youth employment.*

*Keywords: youth employment; labour market; tourism; rural tourism.*

### 1 Introduction

The future of a country is shaped by the capacities and qualities of its youth. Throughout the past thirty years, transitioning from a totalitarian communist regime, towards building a democracy and an open market economy, Albania has been facing a great number of social, economic and political problems. Such difficult years of political unrest, high unemployment, poor health care conditions and struggling for survival, forced many Albanians to emigrate, therefore the labour market faced massive loss of skilled workforce, the so called 'brain drain' phenomena, and huge migration from rural towards urban areas, mainly towards the capital of the country.

Although Albania is holding the status of candidate to the EU from 2014, the country is still experiencing the reminiscences of past problems at the current stage.



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The phenomenon of emigration is still present nowadays, especially among young generation who often seek opportunities to study, work and live in a developed country, either in a country member of EU, USA, Canada or elsewhere.

Although the analysis of societal, economic and political phenomena are interlinked and affect each-other, the purpose of this paper is to focus on the analysis of the labour market dynamics for youth and to explore tourism and especially rural tourism as an engine for employment generation. Albania is a country with a great perspective for tourism development. Its geographic location, the amazing landscape and hospitality of its people are a great attraction for both national and international tourists.

## **2 Labour market dynamics**

The labour market analysis aims to raise a discussion around some important dynamics affecting youth, such as employment, unemployment, education, and business spirit, ability to employ and retain talent, alongside some demographic analysis in order to understand the problem rationale. The focus is placed on youth which as classified by the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) belong to the age group of 15-29 years old.

### **2.1 Demographic movements**

The population of Albania, as of 1st of January 2021, records a number of 2.83 million inhabitants, showing a decline of 0.6% compared to the previous year. A great contributor to such decrease in the population number is the net migration, which in 2020 reached the annual value of 16,700 individuals. According to INSTAT (2021) during the last decade, an average of 42,000 Albanians have emigrated annually causing a considerable decrease in the population number and at the young age mainly. As of IOM (2020) about 30% of the Albanian population is living abroad. Such effects on the population strata are illustrated by the population pyramid (figure 1) where the age groups are ranked from 0 to 84 years, bottom up. Figure 1 also makes a visual comparison of the population data in 2011 (shown as border line) and 2021 (shown as solid color).

The graph presented in figure 2, developed by INSTAT (2021) shows the population trend and annual growth rate (all in negative %) in the past twenty years which clearly shows a decline in the Albanian population due to emigration.

As illustrated in figure 2, (source: INSTAT, 2021) from the population annual growth trend line, the rates show an improvement in the years 2008-2011 which is followed by an unstable situation which has deteriorated again in 2020 and 2021. Such population movements reflect the political and economic situation in the

country. At times of progress the emigration has slowed down, while at other difficult times, emigration number has risen again.

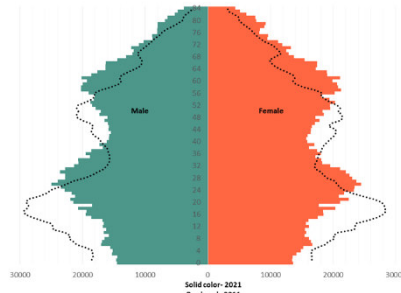


Figure 1. Population pyramid 2011-2021.  
Source: INSTAT

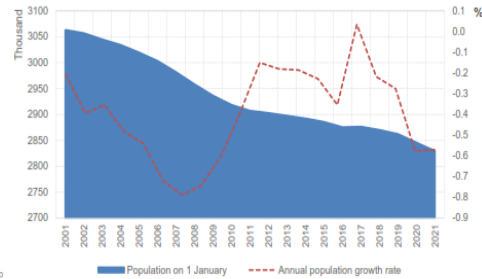


Figure 2  
Population and annual growth rate 2001-2021  
Source: INSTAT

Another problematic phenomenon in the Albanian society has to do with high rates of internal migration, from rural areas or smaller cities towards the main cities and especially Tirana, the capital, where about 32% of the Albanian population is located. Referring to figure 3, as developed by INSTAT (2021) all districts report a decreasing annual percentage of the population in 2020-2021, while Tirana and Durres report respectively an increase of 0.7% and 0.5%, while on country level a decrease of 0.6% is reported. Since statistical data record a bigger number of new-born compared to the number of deaths, it is due to emigration that the overall population shows a decline.

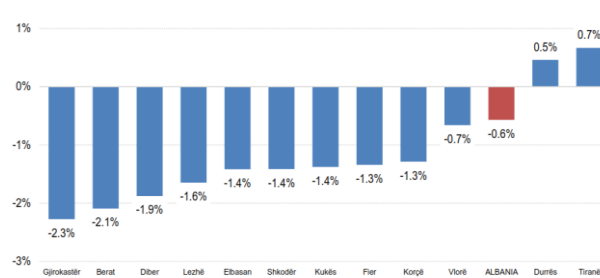


Figure 3. Annual change ratio in population per district 2020-2021  
Source: INSTAT

High scale of internal migration towards the capital and the main cities result in unequal distribution of population density, economic, social and infrastructure problems, as well as shifting unemployment from the rural areas towards the urban areas. Such movements of population are geared mainly from the willingness to search for better living conditions, better education, better health care, and job opportunities. The main employment opportunities in rural areas are related to agriculture, which accounts for about 36.1% of employment in Albania, as of the second quarter of 2020, however recording a 6.6% decline from 2020 to 2021 (INSTAT, 2021).



## 2.2 Employment overview

Although in 2019, the labour market overall, showed some improvement and employment grew by 42,000 (WIIW, WBG, 2020), the labour market in 2020 faced an increase of unemployment of 0.2% compared to the previous year, reaching the rate of 12.2%. The unemployment of men has decreased while the unemployment of women has increased compared to 2019. The sectors which benefited from more job creation were mainly the service sector and the industry, while the employment in agriculture has decreased by 6.6% in the last year (Instat, 2021). The largest share in employment increase was due to rise in informal employment, which in 2019 reached 56.7% of total employment in Albania. It is the agriculture sector which contributes the most at informal employment (63.9%), followed by wholesale and retail trade (12.6%), construction (7.6%) and accommodation and food (4.2%) (ILO, 2021).

At country level, the service sector and agriculture cover the highest rate of employment respectively 43,4 % and 36,1 % in 2020, while 20.5% of employment is at the industry (INSTAT, 2020). Employment in agriculture has decreased by 6.6% from 2020 to 2021, while the employment in the service sector has increased by 3.1%, while 10.8% is the increase in the industry sector. About 46.1% are employed with a salary, while 33.3% are self-employed and 20.6%, mainly women, are working without a payment at their family business. In the Albanian labour market, men are more active (67.8%) compared to women (53.6%).

The overall rate of unemployment in 2020 has been 12.2%, while for youth category 26.5% with a higher rate for men (27%) compared to women (25.9%). As of INSTAT (2021) the unemployment for youth has decreased by 0.7% (0.8% for men and 0.4% for women) reaching the level of 26.5% in 2020. However, youth unemployment rate has been consistently above the overall unemployment rate, about twice as high in the past 10 years (figure 4).

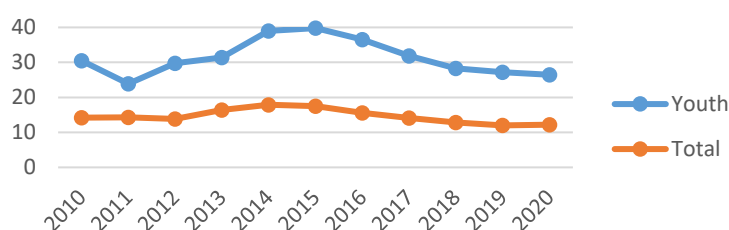


Figure 4 Unemployment rate in %  
Source: INSTAT

At this age group, about 27.9% in 2020, are either not employed, nor attending any school or university or professional vocational education (INSTAT, 2021). Out of this group, 35.1 % are classified as unemployed while the rest are not considered as part of the labour market.



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## 2.3 Business spirit

One important element affecting the labour market is the business spirit in terms of talent attraction and talent retention. Such discussion is made based on the data published from the World Economic Forum in its 'Global Competitiveness Report' for 2015 and 2017. The latest report covering 2017-2018 ranks Albania in the 75<sup>th</sup> position in the Global Competitive Index among 137 countries, an improved position from the 93<sup>rd</sup> in 2015-2016.

Out of three stages of development and two of transition, the Albanian economy is ranked in stage two of development "Efficiency-driven", alongside other 30 countries, including Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, etc. The focus at this stage of development is put at developing more efficient production processes, increasing of product quality due to higher wages and more fixed prices.

One of the pillars which affect the competitiveness index according to this report is 'Labour market efficiency' (the 7<sup>th</sup> pillar) score has remained the same at score level 4 (where 7 is the maximum, showing the most desirable level). In terms of ranking in the list of countries part of the study, Albania has improved its position from 97<sup>th</sup> to 91<sup>st</sup> (out of 137 countries) in 2017-2018. Out of the 10 factors considered for this pillar, two of them have worsened from 2015-2016 report to 2017-2018:

- the country *capacity to retain talent* has lowered its rank from the 109<sup>th</sup> to the 116<sup>th</sup> position;
- while the country *capacity to attract talent* has also improved from 123<sup>rd</sup> to 121<sup>st</sup>.

These reports tackle the 'inadequately educated workforce' as one out of 14 problematic factors for doing business in Albania. The factor score has increased from 3.3 in 2015-2016 to 6.9 which shows a poorer result for 2017-2018. (based on WEF reports, 2015 and 2017).

Often inadequate skills are present in the form of over-qualified or under-qualified youth. 'Over qualification' means that often young people work in jobs which do not fit their field of study, or which requires less skills or education. 'Under qualification' is referred to the fact of employing people without adequate skills, as a consequence of shortage of properly skilled people. This is to a large extent a consequence of a mismatch between skills that businesses need and the choice of graduates' fields of study. In Albania, there is a lack of graduates with technical skills at both secondary and tertiary levels, while tertiary education is dominated by humanities and business and finance.



## 2.4 Youth education and ‘brain drain’

The majority of youth in Albania attend and graduate from the secondary education. As reported by INSTAT (2020 and 2019), in the academic year 2020-2021 the participation of youth in secondary education level is 93.5% compared to 90.7% in the previous academic year. The number of students attending vocational education in 2020 is 11.2% of total number of students following secondary education, and faces a 0.7% decrease compared to the previous year (INSTAT 2020).

The participation of youth in the tertiary education level (higher education) in 2020-2021 has been 59.2% compared to 59.5% in the previous year.

In 2020 a number of 32,889 students have graduated (65.3% are female), compared to 34,891 in 2019. The most favorite field of study for higher education is Business related fields and Law 27.8% in 2019 and 28.7% in 2020, followed by Engineering and construction 20% (preferred mainly by male students) and Medicine and healthcare 16.3% (preferred more by female students).

According to INSTAT statistics for registration in higher education (2021), during the academic year 2020-2021 there were a number of 123,797 students in the entire higher education level (tertiary) which records a decrease of 17% compared to five years earlier and a decrease of 5% compared to the previous academic year.

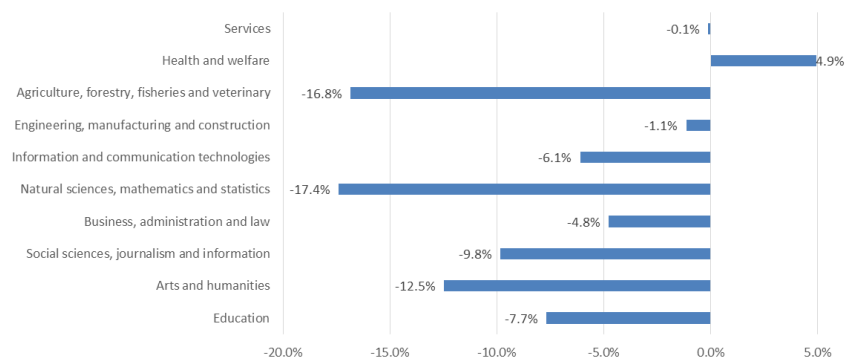


Figure 5  
Changes in the number of registered students per academic degree  
for the academic year 2020-2021 compared to 2019-2020  
Source: INSTAT

Based on INSTAT (2021) as illustrated in figure 5, every academic degree has been facing a decline in the number of students registered: such as agriculture field with 16.8%, natural sciences 17.4%, arts and humanities 12.5%. The only academic field which has continued to be steady, even showing an increase in the number of students registered is health and welfare degrees. Such increase might be related to the need for doctors and nurses within the country but also due to the international demand.



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In the recent years, Albania has been facing a big number of experienced as well as recent graduates doctors and nurses, emigrating to Germany with a labour contract. Such phenomenon has created a gap in the labour market for these professions, resulting in an overall decline in human capacity in the Albanian labour market. According to The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (2021) a number of 737 Albanian doctors result to have emigrated to Germany and working there in 2019, while in 2018 a number of 1,008 Albanian nurses have emigrated and are working in Italy while 549 in Germany. Other professions suffering from a loss of human capital are mainly IT specialists, engineers, university lecturers and researchers.

As of World Bank (2016) Albania has suffered from strong emigration and ‘brain drain’ which hurt the country’s productive potential. Besides depriving the country of the productive workforce in general, with important implications for economic growth, emigration is especially worrisome with regard to the migration of highly educated persons and professionals (the so called “brain drain”), being among the top 15 countries in the world by emigration of tertiary educated. Another group are students studying abroad, which in 2016 were 25,000 with a minority of them (up to 5%) intending to return after completing their studies.

Therefore, Albania is facing the risk of losing its human capital and especially the younger age which affects not only currently the development potential of the country but also its future, both socially and economically.

It is up to the policy making entities not only to develop policies but to gear the efforts towards providing employment opportunities for the youth in the country. One of the sectors with a huge economic potential for Albania is the tourism sector which is one of the fastest growing in the Albanian economy and especially rural tourism which has started to receive attention in the last years, based on research it can play an important role regarding youth employment.

### **3 Tourism potential**

Tourism is considered an economic engine, since its positive results affect not only tourism providers but also other businesses interlinked in its value chain. Based on the statistical analysis made by UNWTO (2019), the Southern Mediterranean destinations, where Albania is part of, have continued to lead growth in regard to tourism, with the Balkan destinations showing upbeat results. The analysis is based in the period before the Covid-19 pandemics which has slowed down tourism in general.



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### 3.1 Tourism potential for employment

ILO defines tourism as a major contributor to employment creation. Tourism is extremely labour intensive and a significant source of employment. It is among the world's top creators of jobs requiring varying degrees of skills and allows for quick entry into the workforce for youth, women and migrant workers (ILO, 2010). According to WTTC, in 2015 tourism worldwide directly created over 107 million jobs or 3.6% of total employment and supported directly and indirectly a total of 284 million jobs, equivalent to 1 out of 11 jobs. By 2026, this ratio is expected to grow to 1 out of 9 jobs worldwide. The sector generates new opportunities not only in cities and developed countries, but also in local communities and across many emerging economies, spreading economic and employment benefits to rural areas.

Tourism supply chain is a network of tourism organizations engaged in various activities, from offering different components of tourism products/services such as flights and accommodation to the distribution and marketing of the final tourism product at a specific tourism destination, and involves a wide range of participants in both the private and public sectors (Zhang et al., 2009)

Heerschap (2018) defines tourism industry as a collection of industries, which serve visitors when they travel outside their usual environment. These industries include travel agencies, transportation and accommodation services, food and beverage services, retail trade and information services. Tourism can generate direct and indirect employment. Direct employment is generated from the consumption or spending of visitors.

Tourism and hospitality also supports indirect employment in activities like restaurant suppliers, construction companies that build and maintain tourist facilities, as well as necessary infrastructure, aircraft manufacturers, various handicrafts producers, marketing agencies, accounting services, which are more or less dependent on the companies providing direct employment for their revenues (UNWTO, 2011).

Indirect employment serves to generate inputs for the tourism products/services and often is not easy to be determined, therefore a tourism multiplier is used to express the number of indirect employed for each of direct employed person. As defined by ILO (2013) tourism value chain and its significant connections to other sectors such as agriculture, construction, utilities and transport can contribute to poverty reduction. With regard to the supply chain in tourism, one job in the core tourism industry indirectly generates 1.5 additional jobs in the related economy.

Tourism creates employment opportunities mainly for the young people. Examples from different countries illustrate this. Aguilar and Vargas (2016) research about the Spain tourism sector, pointed out that 'in contrast to other industries, employment in hotel, catering and tourism tends to be oriented towards people



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under 35 years of age. In Spain 43.4% of workers in the sector belong to the age group 25 to 34.

Based on a research conducted by WTTC (2019) studying seven G20 countries (Canada, USA, UK, Turkey, Germany, France and Italy) and three European countries, with relatively high youth and overall unemployment rates (Greece, Spain and Portugal) resulted that not only travel and tourism employ a higher share of youth workers than the overall economy of these countries, but it also employs more young people than any other economic sector. The share of youth employment in travel and tourism is highest in Canada where young people account for 32.4% of the sector's employment, followed by USA and UK, where youth account for 29.4% and 27.8% of employment respectively. Italy and Spain have the lowest share of youth employment in this sectors at 10.2% and 9.4%.

A study made by Heerschap (2018) in the period 2010-2017 the Dutch economy grew with 405,000 jobs while tourism industry created 120,000 more jobs. Since 2010 the number of people employed in the tourism industry grew with 18.9%. It is expected that this growth rate will sustain for the coming years, because the current development of international tourism even will outgrow the forecast of the UNWTO, that is an average growth of 3.3 percent per year until 2030. The workforce in tourism industries in the Netherlands is relatively young where about 51% of the youth aged 15-24 years work in the tourism related industries including accommodation services, and travel agencies.

### **3.1.1 Rural tourism and employment**

UNWTO has emphasized, since quite a long time, the necessity to develop policies to support rural tourism as a potential for an inclusive, sustainable and resilient rural development. UNWTO (2020) considers that such development will ensure the fair distribution of tourism's benefits, enhance job creation, protect natural resources and cultural heritage, promote social inclusion and empower local communities and traditionally disadvantaged groups, particularly women, youth and indigenous people. Tourism has proven to be a tool for economic diversification and a major employment engine with a multiplier effect on other sectors that contribute to rural development.

According to Perales (2002), rural areas have been started to be used for tourism activities in developing countries that have been economically and socially depressed since the 1970s. However, discussions have started from OECD since 1991, and many authors have contributed to such discussion over time, by broadening the definition and incorporating different activities under the rural tourism concept.

Different research has pointed out that there is not a unique definition regarding rural tourism, however some of them listed below pinpoint the key elements of rural tourism. As defined by OECD rural tourism is a form of tourism that takes place in



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rural areas and contains elements of an authentic rural setting on a tourist farm or in a rural hotel.

As defined by Kulcsar (2009) rural tourism interests people who like nature holidays, that it also includes special services such as accommodation, events, festivities, gastronomy, outdoor recreation, production and the sale of handicrafts.

As Clemenson and Lane (1997) have stated, rural tourism is a complex, multifaceted activity. It may have its roots in the farm based or agritourism, but it is much more diverse and continues to diversify. It is a series of niche activities within a larger niche activity.

As defined by Irshad (2010) rural tourism ***makes a valuable contribution to*** rural economies and society, such as job retention, job creation, new business opportunities, opportunities for youth, service retention, community diversification, community pride, preservation of rural culture and heritage, increasing arts and crafts sales, landscape conservation, and environmental improvements.

Rural youth are one of the most vulnerable groups due to the lack of gainful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture and related rural economic activities (FAO, 2016). At the same time, they are also the most crucial when addressing rural development (FAO, 2020).

Some researchers have studied the dynamics of rural tourism and some of the findings are briefly presented. The opportunities provided by tourism are crucial for youth retention in rural areas. A research made by Möller (2016) in Sälén, a rural area in Sweden, supported previous research on economic impacts that tourism can provide livelihoods in rural areas with weak labor markets by improving employment and business opportunities. He demonstrated that young adults' entrance into the labour market is facilitated by tourism, which enables them to start working early and be delegated responsibility early in their working lives. Tourism in rural communities substantially affects young adult inhabitants. He also concluded that in rural areas, tourism is found to contribute with social and economic dynamism that is otherwise associated with urban areas. This relates to the claim that Sälén is perceived as a city, which has raised the question of how tourism affects places' images as rural or urban.

As stated in the research by Janković and Jovanović (2020): "annual expenditures in rural tourism amount to around 12 billion euro, and taking into account the added value and multiplier effects, revenues reach a figure of around 26 billion euro. In addition, it is estimated that rural tourism creates about 500,000 jobs. Italy records a growth of over 1 million annual arrivals on agro-tourism farms. Estimates indicate that more than 10% of English farms are involved in some area of ecotourism, while in some regions this share is growing up to 23%, and about 10,000 farms offer bed and breakfast accommodation. The percentage of rural households offering some type of tourist accommodation in Austria is about 10%, which is about 300,000



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accommodation units. Also, 8% of farms in Germany and 4% in the Netherlands and France provide tourist services. According to available data from 2017, the largest number of overnight stays in rural areas was registered in France, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain and Italy. Also, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania record a significant number of visits to rural areas.”

### 3.1.2 Rural tourism in Albania

Rural tourism is a new phenomenon in Albania. Although it is a common practice in the western culture, in Albania it has started few years ago with sporadic individual initiatives, mainly based on culinary services, followed by accommodation services at local guesthouses. The research about rural tourism is very limited in Albania, especially regarding its effect and impact on rural employment. However, different research on rural tourism emphasize the positive effects it can have on rural development in terms of economic, employment and social development. Since tourism sector is mainly attractive for the youth as an employment opportunity, stimulating rural tourism can positively affect the youth retention in rural areas.

Albania has become attractive in terms of tourism services. According to INSTAT (2020), in 2019 foreign tourists in Albania numbered 6.4 million individuals. Such number is about 8.1% more than in 2018 and shows an increase of about twice the number in 2014. About 90.1% of the tourists arrived from European countries, and 47.1% declared to be visiting Albania for vacations. According to WTTC (2019) the tourism sector employs 8.03% of the total labour force in Albania, while it is estimated that by 2029 such figure will rise at 8.9%. The investment in this sector accounted from 7.5% of all investments, while in 2028 it will become 8.2%.

In 2019 the exporting of touristic services *has positively impacted employment in Albania*. About 64,000 new hires were made in businesses offering tourism related services, counting for one job opening for a number of 101 foreign tourists arriving in Albania.

Most tourism activities in Albania are located in the coastal areas, offering activities related to the summer season and closely related to the sea, combined with some organized tours in archaeological sites. All these activities happen to be highly seasonal and often result to be overcrowded.

The tourism potential in Albania is not only related to the current touristic areas located to the coast, but also in the rural areas which offer vast opportunities for local and international tourists. Albania has a high potential to develop some niche tourism in the mountainous areas, adventure tourism and promoting the culture and history of the country. Albania has a lot to offer in terms of activities related to nature, hiking, climbing and other sport tourism. However, the touristic operators organize their touristic packages around established attractions therefore losing



from the potential to tackle a niche touristic potential in the rural areas of the country.

Rural tourism has started to sporadically develop mainly related to accommodation and culinary services, attracting mainly national tourists who prefer to visit and spend their weekend away from urban chaos and close to nature. As of UNWTO (2020) domestic tourism in most large destinations results to be over six times larger than international tourism.

Travelers who are intellectually curious, risk takers, confident explorers and want to explore new and different experiences, have increased (Lane, 2009). Although nationals are the major part of the clients for rural tourism, the potential is to attract also international tourists, especially from the countries in the region but also for other parts of Europe. In the recent years, a growing number of tourists arriving from Poland, Czech Republic and Germany prefer to visit Albania, via land roads and therefore explore most of the country.

As defined by Nulty (2004), rural tourism can bring three main benefits:

- *Economic*: opportunities for job creation; opportunities to sustain existing businesses; benefits to local governments through taxes and rates.
- *Social*: Support for local services; new facilities to local community (museums, restaurants, etc.); cultural exchange; revitalization of traditions, customs and crafts;
- *Environmental*: preserving natural resources.

Therefore, rural tourism has a great potential for economic and social development of rural areas, positively affect the labour market and help to alleviate the social phenomenon of emigration and migration, especially for the youth.

Promoting and supporting rural sustainable tourism development can incentivize niche tourism activities and develop new destinations that generate employment in small businesses that provide accommodation, culinary services and local guides, promoting as such especially the young and women. Innovation in rural tourism is needed in order to promote this sector and increase attractiveness in the region.

Rural tourism in countries like Albania is mainly dominated by small family-owned businesses, resulting in guesthouses, restaurants and local guides (quite a new profession in Albania). Few initiatives related to adventure tourism are also privately developed and attached to rural tourism products. Although the employment of family members in such businesses is informal, it can provide quality employment for the youth, offering them a salary, profit-share and a stake in the business, as it is the young who will inherit the business. Rural tourism is an attractive employment opportunity for the youth. Their inclusion in the business can bring an added value which is linked to the capacity and skills of the youth in terms of technology use, internet, promotion of the business in social platforms, making the business accessible in booking platforms, as well as knowledge of foreign



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languages to facilitate communication with foreign tourists. The possibility to interact with foreigners and the possibility to grow and inherit the business can contribute to making such employment opportunity a favorite for the youth. Few initiatives are undertaken in the country to promote rural tourism through development projects, however well-established policies must be undertaken to support rural tourism into a sustainable rural tourism.

An innovative initiative for promoting rural tourism in Albania entering a niche market is undertaken by Risi Albania, with a pilot project to introduce the Italian concept of 'Alberghi Difussi', a concept implemented in Italy since twenty years. The purpose is to generate sustainable tourism development and youth employment in the rural areas. Such model aims to transform abandoned villages in authentic touristic centers, where the tourist can experience the culture, history, nature and local lifestyle. Such model aims to refurbish abandoned or vacant buildings into tourist accommodation units in order to revitalize the villages, stimulate economic activities and halt the depopulation of rural areas.

*The added value of rural tourism is to attract tourists throughout the year, who stay longer in the touristic locations by travelling to the off-beaten trails, spend more and therefore generate revenue for smaller businesses at rural communities.* Such form of tourism not only contributes to the preservation of nature and environment, cultural heritage, but also generate social and economic benefits for the local communities, mainly through employment.

## 4 Conclusions

Due to continuous emigration in the past thirty years, Albania has 'lost' about one third of its population which is living abroad, and as such has experienced an intensive 'brain drain' phenomena and loss of human capital. The youth is one of the categories which has been mainly exposed to emigration, in search for education, in search for a job and establishment at a developed country, either EU member, Great Britain, USA, Canada, etc. Alongside emigration, high rates of internal migration have also been present in the country, with movements from the rural towards the urban areas, or from smaller urban areas mainly towards the capital and the surroundings. This phenomenon stimulates social, infrastructural and economic problems and transfer unemployment towards urban areas.

In order to alleviate such problems it is crucial to support especially the young with employment opportunities and to offer alternative options for rural communities to generate revenue through business development.

Tourism sector offers great employment opportunities especially for the youth, however seasonal tourism closely related to the coastal areas offers seasonal



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employment is not very attractive for the youth as a career path. Rural tourism indeed can offer touristic services throughout the year and the employment can be more stable, therefore offering higher job security and income for both small businesses providing accommodation and meals for tourists as well as tour guides, and developing new businesses closely related to offering adventure tourism activities. Promotion of rural tourism can provide benefits for the entire community both in terms of social, economic and environmental benefits. Several authors have supported the importance of rural tourism for development. Tourism is considered a development engine for the economy since it provides growth and development opportunities for all businesses linked in its value chain. Supporting rural tourism through identification of niche markets, developing and promoting adventure tourism, nature sports, tour guides and touristic packages related to nature and what the country has to offer, can promote tourists to stay longer in the country, attract tourists throughout the year, spend more, generate revenue for smaller businesses at rural communities, and therefore generate attractive job opportunities for the youth.

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