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## **Addressing Multiple Marriage Relationship and Community Challenges through Bapedi Music Genres Using Indigenous Bapedi Wedding Musical Arts**

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### **Abstract**

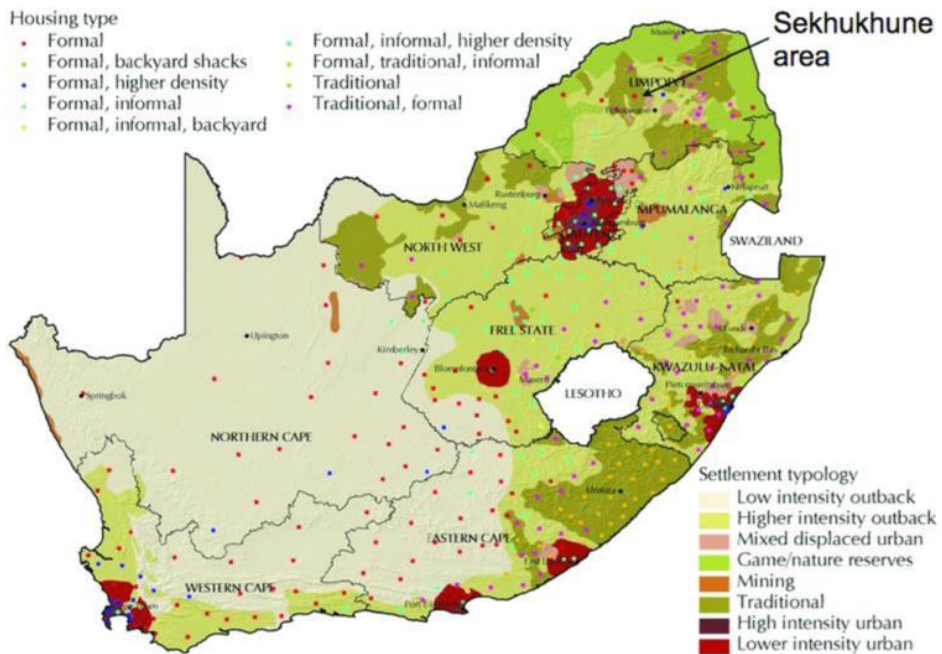
The present study looks at indigenous Bapedi wedding musical arts as one of the music genres found in the Bapedi society. The focus will be on the relevance of this music genre within Bapedi people's cultural context. The research examines how indigenous Bapedi wedding songs provide opportunities for the singers to express their interpretations of the society and seeks to interpret the efficacy and entertainment provided by these songs. The following primary research question therefore guided this study: What is the cultural significance of indigenous Bapedi wedding music within Bapedi people's cultural context? The study employed a contextual approach, and data was collected through observations, face-to-face interviews and video recordings of rehearsals and performances during lobola and wedding ceremonies. Secondary sources included published books and Journal articles. The investigation has revealed that within Bapedi people's cultural context, indigenous Bapedi wedding musical arts is used to reinforce old values and symbols and acknowledge new realities. During the study, it was also established that in the context of communal music-making, the singers participate in communion to celebrate the continuity of the community over time, affirm its vitality, and the integration and wholeness of life. It was concluded that in the Bapedi culture, the context of the performance is a natural way of combining enjoyment with education.

**Keywords:** Bapedi culture, indigenous, Bapedi wedding songs, community challenges, cultural relevance.

### **Introduction**

Bapedi local knowledge system is believed to have been practiced by Bapedi forebears who handed it down from one generation to another. It is a system founded on traditional religious and cultural practices, and inextricably interwoven with the

culture of the people, expressed in beliefs and practices, pithy sayings and names, proverbs, rituals, liturgies, songs and dances, folktales and myths. In Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality (see figure 1), and elsewhere within Limpopo province, Sepedi language is crucial for communication across diverse tribes and cultures.



**Figure 1: Geographical Location Map of South Africa showing Limpopo Province & Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality.**

[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-human-settlements-in-South-Africa-showing-Sekhukhune-area-in-Limpopo-province-with\\_fig1\\_228092563](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-human-settlements-in-South-Africa-showing-Sekhukhune-area-in-Limpopo-province-with_fig1_228092563) [accessed 20 August 2024].

The objective of this study, therefore, is to critically assess how Bapedi people adapt indigenous music to spread their culture that has wisdom in the local knowledge system, as well as their philosophical teachings and values that sublime and obedient to the norms, socio-cultural values resulting from the decisions of their cultural heritage and identity. Ceremonies and rituals in the Bapedi society become less strange and more a part of everyday life. Social life in the village generally takes place in the open. The inhabitants meet to enjoy music and dancing in the village square. The objectivity of this study was enhanced by the author's familiarity with the culture he was investigating and his fluency in the language. My purpose in this study, then, is to outline a way in which we can understand at least some of the meanings ascribed

to music<sup>1</sup> as at the same time irreducibly cultural and intimately related to its structural properties. I shall suggest that engaging in this way with issues of meaning forms the basis of a theoretical project that does not reject or ignore the “New” musicological challenge to its disciplinary identity, but instead builds upon it. The purpose of this study is to examine how indigenous songs provide opportunities for the singers to express their interpretations of the society and seeks to interpret the efficacy and entertainment provided by these songs. The study employed a contextual approach and data was collected through observations, face-to-face interviews and video recordings of rehearsals and performances during social ceremonies. Secondary sources included published books and Journal articles. Direct observations, video recordings and informal interviews were employed to collect data. The following primary research question therefore guided this study: What is the cultural significance of indigenous music within Bapedi people’s cultural context?

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The present study is based on the theory of aesthetic functionalism as proposed by Akuno (2005:160), which views the meaning of music as being rooted in the role music plays in the life of those who make it. Like in this study, functionalists attribute the meaning and value of a work of art, to its relationship with the activities of society. My interpretation of this model in relation to the Bapedi context is that music belongs to the people and carries information about them and their ways of life. The primary function of music is to promote cohesion in the society, to help a human being relate with himself, his neighbors and his environment. African music involves activities and has socio-cultural roles and functions that it fulfils. Its meaning therefore is derived from these roles and functions. For example, the context in the performance of African music is always taken into consideration. Initiation song is usually performed during the process of initiation school and not in any other ceremony or ritual. On the other hand, the functions of music in promoting cohesion in a society are recreational and ritualistic (Akuno 2005). The theory is applicable to this study because the meaning and process of transmission in context is derived from various ceremonial and ritual activities in the Bapedi culture. The creation of music and performance also play both recreational and ritualistic functions. In this study the theory was used for reference while investigating the modes of transmission in the teaching and learning process of indigenous Bapedi music. The theory also assisted in determining how the Musical

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<sup>1</sup> Music is an innocent luxury, unnecessary, indeed, to our existence, but a great improvement and gratification of the sense of hearing. This “definition” given some two hundred years ago may be said to be lingering on although with a slight modification as contained in the following contemporary view: as an abstraction, music is entirely unnecessary in daily life; one cannot eat it, wear it, smoke it, or use it in place of anything substantial. Yet a world without music is unthinkable, for music is in a higher sense “useful” as a mental discipline, an intellectual activity and a spiritual value. It is this latter view which accounts for the existence and practice of music in all societies. Music, however, is a poor orphan whose father and mother no one can name. But, perhaps, it is precisely this mystery of her origin which accounts for the charm of her beauty.



Arts have an impact on cultural identity, morals and value systems within the Bapedi community.

If aesthetic functionalism is applied to the value of Bapedi music as a form of Musical Arts, this means that it should be judged in terms of its involvement in and contribution towards the very existence of Bapedi society. In other words, not only do the Musical Arts of the Pedi people serve as a means of cultural assimilation, conservation and transmission, but also as a means for expressing and communicating cultural activities and norms. Thus, in line with the theory of aesthetic functionalism, which attributes the value of a work to its relationship within society, the Bapedi Musical Arts are integral to the self-conceptualization of the Bapedi people.

### **Previous Related Studies**

Several articles have been published on aspects of traditional music education in Africa (Mans, 2000b; Nzewi, 1997a, 1998, 1999, 2003; Oehrle, 1991a, 1993; Okafor, 1988, 1991, 2000; Omibiyi-Obidike, 1987). Although music in African traditions implicates communion with others, it is inferable that the musician could undertake individual music making in response to personal or spiritual needs. The community regulates the public performance occasions and judged to be generally poor and uninspiring. The study posits that tertiary music education in South Africa needs a fundamental improvement.

One of music's strongest attributes is that it brings people together for a common purpose. In order to obtain this feeling of unity, some common ideas, goals, visions, dreams, beliefs must be shared. Members of the Bapedi tribe are often bonded together by common religious beliefs and these are frequently expressed through music. Music is one of the most effective mnemonic devices. It enables preliterate societies to retain information, not just facts but the feelings that accompany the facts, as well. Poems, songs, and dances are vehicles for the transmission of a heritage.

Vocal music in the Bapedi society is as relevant as instrumental music to the narrative effort. Songs play numerous roles in African storytelling. Singing provides much of the liveliness of the atmosphere, especially because in most cases where the narrator is operating within his own community he can count on the audience, many of whom know the tales and the accompanying songs anyway, to share the delight that the performance gives him. But even here there is something more than a replay of familiar tunes, for much of the effectiveness of the performance depends on the skill with which the narrator exploits the rapport of the audience so that they help him realize the dramatic essence of the relevant scenes. In the Bapedi tradition, songs do in fact play a more technical role in the composition of the tale itself. In many cases they help to mark off one episode from another, because characters and events are introduced into the narration by tunes peculiar to them alone. Much of the lyrical force of the narrative also comes from repetition.

Among the Bapedi people marriage has the wider aspect of an alliance between groups of kin. It is a matter of interest not only to the parents of both parties but also to a wider circle of relatives, particularly the members of the lineage of each (Mair 1964:4). Marriages are usually arranged, not by the young couple themselves, but by their parents and other close relatives (Schapera and Van der Merwe 1950:162). Fortes (1972:3), suggests that in African culture, marriage can be treated as a transaction between two parties. In modern times it has become a burden for young people, because of the high amount to be paid in the form of bride price and for the ceremony (Mashau 2005:59). Bapedi marriage is a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects which often overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated from one another. For Bapedi people, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Bapedi marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Therefore, Bapedi marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Preparation for marriage is a long process, the key moments of which may be marked with rituals. Beer is the symbol of friendship, communion, one-ness and acceptability; and it is used by Bapedi people in ceremonies, festivals and covenant-making.



**Photo 1: Makgakgasa Music Ensemble (Ga-Phaahla Mmakadikwe village, 16.12.2007), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka)**

## Results

The investigation has revealed that within Bapedi people's cultural context, makgakgasa music is used to reinforce old values and symbols and acknowledge new realities. During the study, it was also established that in the context of music-making, the singers participate in communion to celebrate the continuity of the community over time, affirm its vitality, and the integration and wholeness of life. The results of this study have shown that makgakgasa musicians in the Bapedi society (see photo 1) get the practical experience transmitted to them from parents to daughters, or from older relations to younger ones. A child of about 10 years old should be able to play moropa (drum) or any of the other secondary instruments of makgakgasa music ensemble. In the Bapedi culture for example, musicians are often judged on their ability to stimulate through texts. The audience response is demonstrated either by dancing to the music or by acknowledging the creative ability of the musicians by clapping hands or giving them gifts. Closer investigation has also revealed that through indigenous music, knowledge is imparted in youth and is stored in culture and religious beliefs, taboos, folklore or myths as much as in the individuals' practical experience.

### **Bapedi marriage as a complex affair**

Indications from the investigation has revealed that there are various kinds of feasts in the Bapedi culture. Marriage celebration (lenyalo) is one of them. Marriage (lenyalo) comprises of two phases, namely lobola (bride-price) and wedding (monyanya) ceremonies (see photo 2). The lobola ceremony is a pre-marital ceremony. This ceremony is comprised of the submission of cattle, goats as well as money to the bride's family. The transfer of the animals gives the husband control over the reproductive powers of his wife and his unmarried daughters (Kuckertz 1990:163). But this is a family matter. Among the Bapedi, progeny is 'owned' primarily by the bogadi (bride wealth) delivered by the family. The biological father can be substituted (Van Wyk 1973:414). At this time the immediate families of both bride and groom come together to discuss the lobola.



**Photo 2: Wedding celebration (monyanya) of the author; Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka (Ga-Phaahla Mmakadikwe village, 07.01.1984), Photographer: Moletje Frank Paledi.**

Lobola is the price for the bride paid by the groom to the bride's parents. The Bapedi people are not selling their daughters. Lobola is not a business. It rather symbolizes a token of appreciation by the groom's family to the bride's family for bearing and rearing the child who is now their son's wife and who will take care of their son, bear them grandchildren and thus preserve their family name. The lobola<sup>1</sup> payment seals the marital negotiation (Matlala 2000:310) and demonstrates to a woman that she is valued. Lobola makes her feel wanted, cherished and welcomed in her new family. A responsible husband-to-be will take care of his future wife (Khumalo 1995:85). The emphasis on lobola by the groom leads to an improved understanding of the marriage contract. It is worthwhile to mention here that in Africa, the payment of the bride-wealth remains a necessary, ritualistic, token payment to guarantee the stability of the marriage (Bascom 1970:191). At the same time, it binds the new husband to his obligations.

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<sup>1</sup> The word *lobola* is derived from the Zulu word *ilobolo*, which means to give precious presents (Voster & De Beer 1988:182). In South Africa various indigenous groups make use of this concept, for example *ikhazi* (Xhosa), *lobolo* (South Ndebele), *thakha* (Venda), *lovolo* (Tsonga), *bogadi*, *bohali*, *magadi* (North Sotho, South Sotho and Tswana).

## Text and translation

### Lobola Song: Ngwana Malome Nnyale

Sepedi	English
1. Ngwana malome nnyale,	1. My uncle's child marry me,
2. Ngwana malome ntsee,	2. Cousin, marry me,
3. Ngwana malome motswala,	3. My uncle's child, cousin,
4. kgomo di boele sakeng.	4. So that the cattle should go back to the same kraal.
5. O di bone di goroga, (2x)	5. See them arriving, (2x)
6. Di tswa ko Mmakadikwe,	6. Arriving from Mmakadikwe village,
7. Kgomo di boele sakeng.	7. Cattle should go back to the same kraal.

The song was recorded by the author at a lobola ceremony held at Ga-Phaahla Mmakadikwe village, Nebo area-Limpopo Province in March 2005; (Lebaka 2008:199).

#### Table 1: Pedi lobola song 'Ngwana malome nnyale' (Please marry me, my uncle's child).

Stayt (1968:144) adds further insight to the understanding of lobola<sup>1</sup>. A great deal of bargaining generally takes place between the contracting parties. Sometimes a man will give his daughter to a friend with the promise that lobola will be paid at a future date. Marriages take place with the payment of cattle or sometimes without them, but it depends on the wishes of the parents of the girl. Generally, marriages take place with the payment of cattle (Duncan 1960:25). A Bapedi wedding song, 'Ngwana malome nnyale' (Please marry me, my uncle's child) is sung at a lobola ceremony (see table 1). The request refers to the custom of lobola or the preference for bride-wealth, which is part of the African culture and does not refer only to the transfer of cattle (or money). The song begs a cousin to marry the niece. It is one of the favourite songs for the elderly people in every family (parents and grandparents) of the Bapedi tribe, because a large percentage of elderly people prefer and recommend intermarriage. Intermarriage implies marriage within the same clan.

The lobola ceremony is a joyous occasion and the mood of the occasion resembles that by the choices of songs that are sung and the accompaniments of ululations. Traditional lobola songs have certain specific functions in the Bapedi society. They are mostly associated with companionship and intermarriage. The primary function of the song, 'Ngwana malome nnyale' (Please marry me, my uncle's child) is to promote intermarriage in the Bapedi tribe. A secondary function is for entertainment or enjoyment by the singers (whoever attend the lobola ceremony and is participating in the dancing and singing). It is noticeable that dance in Africa has several human or social purposes but takes on a myriad of forms depending on purpose, context, history

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a man betroths a child, or even an unborn baby, to a man from whom he has borrowed cattle (Stayt 1968:144). Stayt points out that in cases where the whole *lobola* has not been handed over, a check on the numbers received is kept by both parties.

and contact with others (Bakare and Mans 2003:217)<sup>1</sup>. In addition, music making in Africa has several dimensions (Addo, Miya and Potgieter 2003:237). These scholars claim that music is social, philosophical and artistic.

The song 'Ngwana malome nnyale' (Please marry me, my uncle's child) is sung during lobola ceremonies not only for the bride and groom, but also to advice whoever is intending to marry, to think of intermarriage. This promotes the survival and future of the Bapedi tribe's marriages. The song establishes mutual relationship among the Bapedi people as well as cementing friendship. The song is enjoyed by both the attendees and the participants of the lobola ceremonies in the Bapedi tribe. The central significance of the song 'Ngwana malome nnyale' (Please marry me, my uncle's child) is that lobola should be kept within the same clan.

From the observations and interviews, it was established that philosophical teachings and values that have wisdom in the local knowledge system are passed from one generation to another by learning through various modes which include language, music, dance, oral tradition, proverbs, myths, stories, culture, religion and elders. It was also established that makgakgasa music ensemble exists in performance, and makgakgasa songs provide opportunities for the singers to express their interpretations of the society. The impression created during interviews and observations was that in the Bapedi culture, makgakgasa songs are sung to advice, and interpret the society. In most cases makgakgasa musicians in the Bapedi tribe appear to sing makgakgasa songs to build moral values in the society. It is worthwhile to mention here that the context of performance is a natural way of combining enjoyment with education within Bapedi people's cultural context.

It was further observed that wedding songs have two main functions, namely, reinforcing traditional values and providing entertainment. Songs that reinforce traditional values include those that accompany rituals necessary for legitimizing the marriage and others that are randomly sung during the ceremony. Noteworthy is the fact that the traditional values reinforced are the importance of family and community solidarity, respect for the value of marriage as a sacred union, the importance of perseverance in marriage, as well as the roles of each spouse in married life. All participants interviewed agreed that in all its varied forms, Bapedi wedding songs still play a vital part in rural traditional life. They reflect the values of the tribe within which they exist (i.e. Bapedi). The songs also establish mutual relationship among the Bapedi people as well as cementing friendship. They play a prominent role in relieving stress. For example, post-traumatic stress disorder and childhood depression. Wedding ceremonies are enjoyed by those who attend them by singing these songs.

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<sup>1</sup> Bakare and Mans (2003:217) further mention that dance provides an important social framework through which people interrelate. The performance of social dances may facilitate communication and create social cohesion while revealing much of the structure of a society, the relationships between age, class, lineage and gender structures.

The most common opinion among the interviewed persons is that Bapedi wedding songs give expression and contribute to cultural experience within this specific cultural group. Based on the foregoing, it is clear that ethnicity in various cultures can be supported by genres and structures like wedding songs. Such indigenous music fulfills functions to support culture and social life. These songs do not only seek to identify the people's culture, but they also further uphold and check the socio-moral values that identify the society and the people. The themes centre on issues of socio-cultural practices and events that manifest around them. In addition to songs of personal, topical, and historical nature, one should take note of those that deal in a general way with philosophical and religious themes, or with specific problems of man's existence in the universe. Included in this group are songs that reflect on the social order in general, as opposed to the conflicts and stresses that it generates. Songs which draw on the kind of themes discussed above serve as depositories of information on African societies and their way of life, as records of their histories, beliefs, and values. In some African societies, deliberate attempts are made to use songs for educating the youth at initiation camps, for example, or for transmitting information. However, the functional use of song in social life or its value as source material should not make us overlook the importance of the musical content of songs. It is true, of course, that some songs give equal or greater weight to the words than the music, while others give more attention to the structure and form of the music than the words. Nevertheless, it must be noted that it is the music that often gives some kind of unity or coherence to the songs of the given repertoire, for a fairly uniform style, regardless of the variations in their verbal themes or allusions, while the song texts provide the significant changes in thought, mood, or feeling, it may be the music that defines or expresses the general character of the occasion or the spirit of the performance. Effective response to music may be shown outwardly in verbal or physical behavior. Bapedi wedding songs have five main functions, namely; 1) reinforcing the roles of each spouse in married life; 2) reinforcing the importance of family and community solidarity; 3) reinforcing the value of marriage as a sacred union; 4) reinforcing the importance of perseverance in marriage; and 5) for entertainment purposes.

### **Songs that reinforce the roles of each spouse in married life**

According to the Bapedi culture, there are certain activities meant to be done only by men or women. During the wedding ceremony, musical arts are used to inform the bride and groom about the type of activities they are expected to carry out in married life. The songs sung during this ritual serve as a form of counselling. Therefore, this ritual may be viewed as an extension of the go laya ritual.

### Song text and translation: 'Fiela ngwanyana'

Sepedi	English
Fiela, fiela, fiela ngwanayana	Sweep, clean, sweep, clean young girl
Fiela ngwanyana, o se jele matlakaleng	Sweep, clean, sweep, clean, young girl, do not eat at the dirty place.
Mmatswale ke tshobolo	Mother-in-law is impatient, strict and uncompromising.
Tshobolo ya mosadi	A woman who is impatient
Fiela ngwanyana, o se jele matlakaleng	Sweep, clean, sweep, clean, young girl, do not eat at the dirty place.
Seithati sa mosadi	A woman who is always neat
Fiela ngwanyana o se jele matlakaleng	Sweep, clean, sweep, clean, young girl, do not eat at the dirty place.

**Table 2: Fiela, fiela, fiela ngwanayana (Sweep, clean, sweep, clean young girl).**

### Explanation of the symbolism

This song highlights the fact that the bride is expected to maintain a clean, orderly household. Reference is made to the mother-in-law because most Bapedi newlyweds do not immediately move into their own houses, but first live with the groom's parents. The bride is then expected to perform household chores. She is initiated by her mother-in-law, who is usually strict and uncompromising.

### Songs that reinforce the importance of family and community solidarity

The Bapedi people do not view marriage as a union of two individuals, the bride and groom, but one of two families, and in some instances, two communities. This is reflected in the following songs:

Song text and translation: 'Ba Ga-Lebaka le ba Mokgethwa ba nyalelane ke bakgotse'.

Sepedi	English
Ba Ga-Mokgethwa, le ba Lebaka,	Mokgethwa and Lebaka families
Ba nyalelane, ke bakgotse (repeat)	Are now married, they have become friends <sup>1</sup>
Šalalalala – Šalalalala - Šalalalala – Šalalalala	Melody
Ke bakgotse	They are friends

**Table 3: Ba Ga-Lebaka le ba Mokgethwa ba nyalelane ke bakgotse (Mokgethwa and Lebaka families are now married, they are friends).**

<sup>1</sup>A direct translation is not possible here, due to the lack of an English equivalent for *bakgotse* (singular: *mokgotse*), which refers to the parents of one's daughter- or son-in-law.



## Explanation of the symbolism

### Message

The tune is, frankly, a harmonic melody of no great antiquity, and some of its phrases are not unfamiliar. The concluding strain, however, strikes me as a very beautiful one. When I heard the song at Jane Furse, it was sung in the Community Recreation Hall full of men and women who joined very heartily in the chorus, and with admirable effect. A chorus response can be interrupted by a cantor where the song lends itself to the use of this technique. The cantor chooses a convenient point before the end of a response phrase and introduces a new lead phrase; the chorus stops singing as soon as they hear him, picking up the response again when he gives them a cue, which is implied in the way he ends his phrase (This differs from the standard overlapping call-and-response technique). To remind the chorus of the correct response or to draw their attention to the song that has been started, a cantor may begin with the response phrase and then go on to his lead section. Not all African societies organize their choral singing along the lines described above, some have more elaborate forms.

### Songs that reinforce the value of marriage as a sacred union

Song text and translation: Se nkgatele mosadi! (Do not meddle with my wife!)

Sepedi	English
Se nkgatele mosadi,	Do not meddle with my wife.
Ke mosadi wa dikgomo.	She has been paid for with cattle.
Se nkgatele mosadi	Do not meddle with my wife
Ke mosadi wa dikgomo	She hs been paid for with cattle
O wa rekwa, o wa ithekelwa	A wife must be bought
O rekwa ka dikgomo	She must be bought with cattle
O rekwa ka dikgomo	She must be bought with cattle

**Table 4: Se nkgatele mosadi (Do not meddle with my wife)**

### Explanation of the symbolism

This song is viewed as a statement made on behalf of the groom: The latter warns other men not to meddle with his wife, as he has now entered a sacred union with her. The mentions of a wife being paid for with cattle refer to the bridal price. Despite its important message, it should be noted that parts of this song are culturally misinformed and therefore misleading: As mentioned before, the bridal price is not viewed as a way of ‘buying’ a wife, but rather as a symbol of gratitude to the bride’s family.

## Songs that reinforce the importance of perseverance in marriage.

### Song text and translation: ‘Tiny o mamele molao’

Sepedi	English
Tiny wee,	Hi, Tiny. .
O mamele molao	Be loyal, respectful and obedient, and persevere.
Le ge ba loya	In case your in-laws are sorcerers, persevere.
Le ge ba hlaka	In cae your in-laws are impoverished, persevere.
O mamele molao	Be loyal, respectful, obedient and persevere.

**Table 5: Tiny wee, o mamele molao (Hi, Tiny. Be loyal, respectful and obedient, and persevere)**

### Explanation of the symbolism

This song is directed to the bride. The singers are pleading with the bride to exercise her patience and persevere, especially when problems seem particularly difficult to surmount. Mention is made with reference to poverty and witchcraft or sorcery. The central message of the song is that, in case the in-laws are impoverished and/or are sorcerers, she must just persevere. In the Bapedi culture, the groom’s home, is the new home for the bride. She is expected and compelled to be buried there in case of death, she is not supposed and expected to come back to her original home of birth.

### Songs sung for Entertainment Purposes

During wedding ceremonies, there are also songs sung purely for entertainment purposes. These songs are sometimes sung by community members to accompany tasks such as food preparation. They are also sung to accompany the merrymaking that takes place once all rituals have been performed. Note that although they are meant for entertainment purposes, the texts of these songs are not without relevance to the ceremony and issue of marriage. Songs intended to be sung by choruses are generally designed for a lead singer, or for a group of lead singers and a chorus. The simplest form is the one in which the lead singer sings an entire verse through, repeated immediately by the chorus. Other songs are organized into a clear section for a lead singer and a chorus. In the simplest type, each section consists of a single phrase, sung by the lead singer and answered by the chorus with a set response. This response phrase may be similar to the lead phrase, or it may be a continuation of it. However, there are songs in which the response section remains virtually the same while the call phrases change, giving rise to the form A-B-C-B.

### Song text and translation: 'Re kgopela nama'

Sepedi	English
Re kgopela nama,	We are asking for meat.
Le makako a mane	As well as porridge.
Le tšhele sopho	Add soup.
Ya dinaletsana	Decorated by stars.

**Table 6: Re kgopela nama (We are asking for meat)**

#### Explanation of the symbolism

Re kgopela nama forms part of the Bapedi oral tradition. In this tradition, as in other African cultures, choral music is responsorial in nature. There are no gaps in the melodic line, and the solo and choir contributions overlap. The caller varies the call freely in improvisatory style in response to the environment. The refrain however remains constant. As melodic contour has developed largely in line with speech tone patterns, the caller selects words that keep the melodic contour relatively constant. Melodies normally have four or five notes. The music is mostly pentatonic without changes in tonality within a tune. The meaning of the song is hidden in every second line of the text, with the lines in between containing nonsense text used chiefly for a rhyming effect. The translation provided is deliberately direct and literal, rather than freely poetic.

#### Methods of teaching and learning Bapedi wedding songs

##### Singing and dancing.

**Table 7: Teaching and learning plan for Bapedi wedding music and dance**

Communal Music-Making	The creative music-making takes place during a process of interaction between the participants' musical experience and competence, their cultural practice and their instructions. Altogether this forms the affordances in the creative situation. The talent for composition is based on musicality, together with certain influences that have been of importance in the development of the necessary motivation and mental attitudes such as the inspiration of composer-performers. The art of composing requires a reliable musical memory.
Repertoire	With musical creativity and rhythmic direction, participants build a repertoire which is characterized by cultural blend, polyrhythm, improvisation and interlocking rhythms which compel the participants to dance to the music.
Participation	Although active participation in music making is encouraged, participation differs with respect to performing roles, and the skills and knowledge that individuals are playing a given role bring to bear on a performance. Moreover, the performing roles that individuals can assume in any given situation are limited. When they perform in public, only those who are members can participate fully in their activities. The rest of the community is naturally

	attracted to them, but they come as spectators and audiences with limited opportunities for active participation. The formation of musical organizations encourages creativity and innovation. Such associations may add new songs to the repertoire of an existing musical type or evolve an individual style and build up a special repertoire.
Repetition	Repetition is the established style of performing traditional Bapedi music. Variety is possible only by way of different stanzas or verses and since not every member of a chorus can remember all the verses that may make up a song in its entirety, there is a need for someone with a retentive memory who can remember all the verses. This is necessary in a tradition which has no writing such as the Bapedi tradition. This then is the role of the soloist in Bapedi wedding music. He calls out the next stanza and recites a few words of each line which serve as a cue for the others.
Call-and-response	Most Bapedi wedding songs employ the call-and-response pattern, and this pattern allows for spontaneity and self-expression. These songs are organized into clear sections for a lead singer and a chorus. In the simplest type, each section consists of a single phrase, sung by the lead singer and answered by the chorus with a set response. This response phrase may be like the lead phrase. However, there are songs in which the response section remains virtually the same while the call phrases change.
Musical Creativity	Music making involves learning the why and how of musical creativity. Musical creativity revolves around 'making musical sense and making musical meanings. It involves learning to generate, select and make original musical utterances in relation to the inherited tradition and the on-going musical contexts. Musical creativity involves knowing why, when and how to shape the on-going music performance in ways that are contextually, situationally, artistically, socially and personally significant.

The results in Table 7 focus on singing and dancing. Observations made on the transmission of singing and dancing skills are listed and discussed below.

### **Communal Composing**

Among the Bapedi people, practice is a known and accepted fact of the musical practitioners' life, and all music practitioners say they practice, if not every day, then at least once a week. It is difficult to determine the duration of such practicing sessions, as they differ from one group to the other, but in theory, at least, it is substantial, amounting to two or three hours a week at the minimum, according to the music practitioners. The learning process of Bapedi wedding songs reflects communal composing whereby groups of music practitioners belonging to a particular traditional dance group meet to assemble communally new compositions for specified occasions. Learning music is part of the socialisation process and imitation forms an important part in the transmission process. Individuals contribute ideas about song texts, polyphonic organization, melody and overall form.

The choice of language usage in wedding songs is encouraged by the fact that wedding songs are meant for communal music-making. The resulting composition is therefore their song, not a named individual. A new composition does not come from 'outside', no matter how much individual music practitioners borrow ideas and strategies from

others. The compositional voice always and ultimately emanates from within. Some songs emerge as some are abandoned. After assembling the composition, the group selects the soloist/leader.

### **Structures**

Most Bapedi wedding songs are cyclical in structure, with occasional, spontaneous text, melodic and harmonic modifications. The duration of a song is determined by the performers' moods or preferences and the performance context: If, for example, a song is popular with the majority of singers, it can go on for up to 10 minutes. An unpopular song, on the other, will only be sung for a matter of few minutes, before another, more appealing one is spontaneously 'announced' and 'answered'.

The song texts are usually short, on average not exceeding ten lines. Most songs employ the call-and-response pattern, typical of many traditional African vocal music types (Onyeji 2004:89). This pattern allows for spontaneity and self-expression: through the call, any member of the community can announce the song he wishes to sing, and the community then supports him in his celebration. This is reflective of Bapedi philosophy, according to which the community always assists an individual member in any commendable endeavour. The 'answer' completes the word, phrase or sentence begun by the caller. Both soloist and chorus are important for giving the song coherence.

### **Choreographed dance**

Two types of dances can be found in Bapedi wedding music. The first type is that in which each individual performer makes his/her own spontaneous movements. None of the dancers imitates the other. Sometimes, individual dancers may make movements that depict certain words, phrases or sentences in the text. For example, when singing the words 'ke yo o etla' ('There she is'), some of the dancers stretch their arms and point forward. Later, when singing 'bowa re sepele' ('Turn around, so that we go'), some of the performers turn around as they dance.

The second dance type is that which consists mainly of stepping forward and backward, while swinging one's arms in a circular or semi-circular motion. This dance type is referred to as setepe, a word supposedly derived from either the English 'step' or Afrikaans stap (step). Sometimes, this dance is modified to create uniquely choreographed movements for a particular couple's ceremony. In such cases, the bridal couple and its escorts have special rehearsals prior to the wedding ceremony for the accurate setepe (step). During the ceremony, interested community members dance along with the bridal train, learning the new dance as they go along.

Each bridal train strives to make a good impression with their newly choreographed dance, so that those who attended the ceremony will continue to speak about it for months and years afterwards. A newly choreographed setepe is referred to using either the name of either the bride or groom, for example setepe sa Edward ('the step of Edward and others'). The basic movements used in traditional dances may be

either simple or somewhat intricate in conception. Music for the dance thus performs two major functions: it must create the right atmosphere or mood or stimulate and maintain the initial urge for expressive movements; and it must provide the rhythmic basis to be articulated in movement or regulate the scope, quality, speed and dynamics of movement through its choice of sounds, internal structural changes, or details of design.

**Figure 8 below shows a proposed diagram of learning progression in the Bapedi wedding songs.**

### Communal Composing

Participation	Repertoire	Repetition
Participation differs with respect to performing roles.	Wedding songs are tied to social ideas and practices	An endless repetition of a phrase sung by men while women sing more interesting melody tells us how the ostinato style came into being.



### Imitation

Call-and-response	Coordination	Gestures and Actions
This pattern allows for spontaneity and self-expression.	Singers on their own, drawing upon their creative intelligence, use improvisation, re-creation, variation and gestures to make their performances impressive.	Different movements are choreographed into a complete performance of singing and dance.



### Choreographed Dance

Creativity	Repetition	Creative Product
Spontaneous movements. None of the dancers imitates the other.	After the singers have mastered the songs, they can start dancing. The dance is repeated innumerable times until all participants have mastered every detail.	Stepping forward and backward, while swinging one's arms in a circular or semi-circular motion.

**Figure 8: Proposed diagram of learning progression in the Bapedi wedding songs.**

## Discussion of results

The results yielded thus far have shown that songs that reinforce traditional values include those that accompany rituals necessary for legitimizing the marriage and others that are randomly sung during the ceremony. Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that traditional values reinforced are the importance of family and community solidarity, respect for the value of marriage as a sacred union, the importance of perseverance in marriage, as well as the roles of each spouse in married life.

This study focused on music not only as a constellation of sound but also as a form of human behavior. From this study, consequential human-music thinking<sup>1</sup> informs the African relativity theory and determines the sonic orientations as well as humanistic bases of African musical thinking, creativity and presentation. The development of specialized cultural products has always characterized African cultural history and creativity. Thus, the Bapedi wedding music which has a purely abstract musical concept, has accrued contemporary features, acquiring a vocal dimension as well as the more recent advancement of written music<sup>2</sup> without altering either the relative standardization principle or the sonic nature. It has been established in the present study that several factors have influenced the indigenization process of the traditional folk music in the Bapedi culture. This has in-turn contributed immensely to an emergence of the new overall role and functions as well as the occasion for performance, which have been brought into fore in this discourse.

This study investigated the value and methods of teaching and learning indigenous Bapedi wedding music, but also discussed its usefulness as a medium of enlightenment and an instrument for preserving Bapedi cultural heritage. The results have shown that in the Bapedi society, it is not difficult for people to come together for a particular event and to take part in the music of the occasion as required by custom. Messages are passed on from one person to another by word of mouth or by means of instrumental speech-surrogates such as drums, horns, etc. Based on research findings, it is evident that the creative music-making takes place during a process of interaction between participants' musical experience and competence, their cultural practice and their instructions. Music making involves learning the why and how of musical creativity. Musical creativity revolves around making musical sense and making musical meanings.

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<sup>1</sup> Human music is a unique African music philosophy. It informs a creative aim to make the active performance of music normally within the capability of any member of society. Traditional Africans rarely ever philosophized or conceived public music as an art that would recruit only specially gifted or trained performers.

<sup>2</sup> The modern creative continuum of Bapedi Music, which has adopted a written compositional method and a modern concert orientation, was advanced in the Lesocu development Project.

## **Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations**

This study provided an overview on how Bapedi people adapt indigenous music to spread their culture that has wisdom in the knowledge system, but also highlighted makgakgasa music ensemble as one of the music genres found in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality. The focus was on the relevance of this music genre within Bapedi people's cultural context. The research also examined how makgakgasa songs provide opportunities for the singers to express their interpretations of the society and seeks to interpret the efficacy and entertainment provided by these songs.

In this study, the knowledge of Bapedi cultural value systems provides us the understanding to interpret indigenous Bapedi musicians as having very good memory of their songs. During my field investigation in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, for instance, at the time to revalidate my data, during the wedding ceremony (monyanya), the leader of the mantshegele music ensemble, could just easily pick-up the poems and fix the words line by line without singing the songs repeatedly nor humming them. Although she is not literate, there was evidence that she had all the poems in her memory as well as the background information to the songs. It was concluded that in the Bapedi culture, the context of the performance is a natural way of combining enjoyment with education.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the over-riding recommendations of the study are that all aspects of music education in South Africa should be indigenous music research-based, indigenous culture-sourced and continuously evaluated to ensure that music education programmes in South Africa are as effective as possible in the context of South African experiences and aspirations as with South African students and other shareholders. It further recommends that music educators must adapt both music curricula and methods to the cultural backgrounds and needs of a changing South Africa's student population.

The socio-dramatic nature of Bapedi wedding music may, therefore, be summed up as follows: every additional sound is permissible so long as it heightens the drama involved. There is neither concord nor discord but a "socio-cord". It must not be forgotten that Bapedi wedding music is recreational and free from professional or religious norms. The greater freedom allowed this type of music organization, as compared with other musical types, accounts for its polyphonic nature.

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## Performance Management in Albanian Public Administration

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### Abstract

Performance management has attracted much debate in the recent past. It is a systematic effort to improve performance through a continuous process of establishing desired outcomes, setting performance standards to improve performance and productivity, and aims to improve the quality of public service delivery. The political changes after the 90s were accompanied by major economic changes, transforming from a centralized to a decentralized economy. During the last two decades, the public sector in Albania has experienced a dramatic change, mainly in terms of structure. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the performance of the public sector. Recognizing good performance, performance management systems in local public institutions have not been able to achieve the expected level of performance that will improve productivity. No system moves without motivation and no organization can achieve its objectives without motivating human capital.

**Keywords:** performance management, public institution, administration, factors, productivity.

### Introduction

Performance management is gaining ground in the public sector. It is a strategy for the management of public resources and for the search for effectiveness in the provision of public services. This has not become a measure of legal performance for both sectors in a dynamic and diverse public environment. . It has become an evolving phenomenon, as each nation develops its own pattern and model. In-service management has become ubiquitous over the past three decades and has been a central focus of elected officials, public administrators and for decades. Performance management has been one of the main drivers in public sector reform in recent years and one of the central pillars of the "reinvention of action" movement. The reforms have all the improvements in the services performed in the public services, the new new services of the public private sector enterprises, and new types of regulation and accountability. Conversely, these public management reforms have, in some ways, been transferred to the various state systems of developing and transition economies.

Thus, there has been a common growth in performance management systems in the public sector. The overall goal of performance management is to create a high-performance culture in which individuals and teams take responsibility for the continuous improvement of business processes and for their skills and contributions within a framework provided by effective leadership. So, the objective of performance management is to develop the capacity of employees so that the performance of each individual can be improved. In fact, the purpose of the results performance system is not limited to the measurement of results and outcomes. It serves as a mechanism to guide the direction of policy implementation and ensure that we are doing what matters most.

### **Purpose**

The main purpose of this study is the analysis and description of performance and its management in function of increasing the service and quality of work of public institutions.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the paper are in function and support of the main purpose of the topic and as such they are focused on issues that reflect the importance of performance and its effective management in public institutions. More specifically, through its objectives, we aim to:

1. To determine the level of performance in public institutions
2. To analyze the importance of performance and its management in the productivity of the public institution
3. To identify the factors that influence the increase in performance

### **Hypothesis of the Paper**

Research hypothesis: Performance is an indicator of the quality of the public institution.

### **Research Questions**

The identification of research questions is one of the essential parts of a paper, since depending on their establishment, the presentation of the topic in general depends on identifying the main issues and sub-issues of the chapters. In this paper, the research questions are focused on:

How important is performance management in a public institution?

What are the factors that influence performance growth?

How important is motivating employees to increase their performance and productivity at work?

What are the challenges and difficulties faced by public institutions in managing the performance of their employees?

### **Literature Review**

Human resource management (HRM), as a key player in creating and developing a highly productive workforce, is at the center of the debate on business competitiveness. Practices that promote employee motivation and effort, knowledge, skills, abilities and opportunities for employee contribution create favorable conditions for resource development and capabilities that create value for organizations, contributing to their performance and the emergence of sustainable competitive advantages. This set of practices has been called, among other names, high performance work systems. For an organization or institution to realize its goals, it must have the resources it needs and use them effectively. The resources available to a manager are human, financial, physical and informational. Human resource departments typically include individuals with a variety of knowledge, skills, and abilities who are expected to perform work activities to contribute to the achievement of the organization's objectives. Human resource management is resource-focused, focusing primarily on the needs of management to secure and develop human resources. The process of planning personnel needs, organization, training, development and advancement of personnel is called human resource management. According to Howard Schultz, employees can make or break the company. If a customer has a positive interaction with an employee, the customer will return<sup>1</sup>. If a meeting is negative, the customer is probably gone forever. Attracting talented employees involves recruiting qualified candidates and selecting those who best fit the organization's needs. Development includes both the orientation of new employees and the training and development of current employees. Retaining good employees means motivating them to excel, evaluating their performance, compensating them appropriately, and doing what is possible to keep them.

### **Evolution and development of human resources management**

Human resource management, as a practice, occurs wherever there is more than one person. Managing people in an organizational setting is well documented throughout human history. Organizational structures were developed, leadership emerged or formed, roles and responsibilities were assigned to people, accountability systems were established, and rewards and punishments were also given. In this regard, the division of labor, specialization and accountability were systematically organized to achieve a specific goal. The origin of HRM as a school of thought is sought in the early 1970s and the developments of "Human Capital Theory". According to this theory, it was argued that it is more appropriate to view human resources as an asset (as a

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<sup>1</sup> Burgess, S., & Ratto, M. (2003). Roli i Stimujve në Sektorin Publik: Çështjet dhe Evidencat, CMPO (Universiteti i Bristolit), Dokumenti i Punës Nr. 03/071.

resource) as the opposite of a cost. This view remained in the literature throughout the 1970s, but gained more support in the early 1980s

### **Concept of Performance Management**

The public sector contributes positively to economic development through the provision of public goods and services, the promotion and encouragement of the private sector, and the efficient use of public resources. In the last two decades there has been an almost continuous parallel effort to limit the scope of state functions in order to increase the institutional power and the quality of the provision of public goods. From this point of view, the evaluation of the performance of the services provided by the public sector remains of crucial importance. In most developing countries, public expenditures represent a significant part of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) <sup>1</sup>. An effective and efficient public sector plays an important role in economic growth, social development and poverty alleviation. According to various studies, the public sector contributes to the provision of public goods and services to citizens through a stable tax system, efficient use of natural resources, revenue collection and expenditure management. The results and performance of this sector focuses on the nature of financial management, public investments and the quality of services provided.

Measuring and evaluating the performance of the public sector in terms of service delivery is an important instrument for governments and public policy makers. A well-functioning public sector that provides quality public services and promotes economic growth through the management of fiscal resources is considered critical to alleviating poverty and increasing the well-being of citizens. The numerous attempts to use service contracts, concessions or public-private partnerships are not always accompanied by the results anticipated by this process<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the fiscal burden created by this approach has been contested by many experts, mainly supporters of a broad-based public sector. Public administration is a state mechanism to regulate and enable business by creating favorable fiscal and economic policies and providing administrative services that facilitate their operation. Nowadays, it is recognized that public administrations must work efficiently and effectively and that their services must be designed to meet the needs of citizens and businesses. The performance of public institutions is related to the determination of priorities in the distribution of public resources, planning to achieve policy objectives, public investment management, efficiency and integrity and improving the quality of governance in the provision of services. Armstrong and Barron also observe that performance management can also be seen as a strategic and integrated approach to deliver sustainable success to organizations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and developing the capabilities of teams and individual

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<sup>1</sup> Burgess, S., & Ratto, M. (2003). Roli i Stimujve në Sektorin Publik: Çështjet dhe Evidencat, CMPO (Universiteti i Bristolit), Dokumenti i Punës Nr. 03/071.

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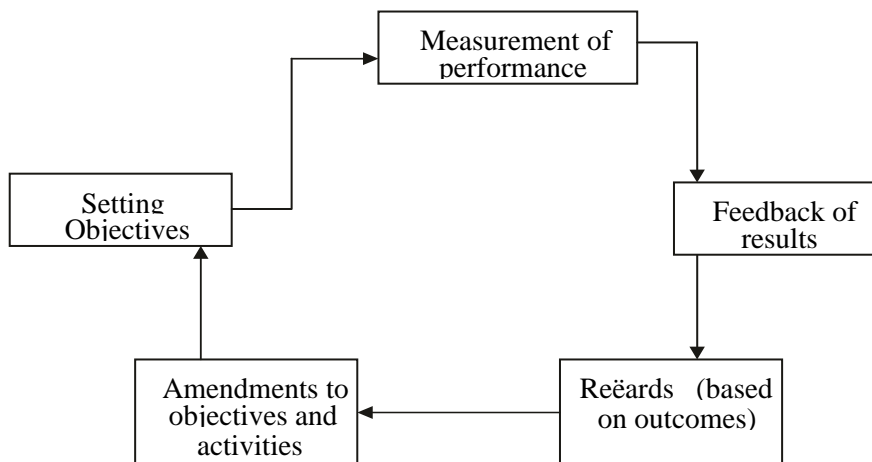
contributors. Performance management is a broad set of activities aimed at improving employee performance. The process involves aligning human resource management practices with organizational goals to ensure that employee performance and development are improved. The goal is to maximize organizational performance through a process of continuous improvement, which involves conducting performance reviews that focus on the future rather than the past.

### Characteristics of performance management

The main characteristics of a successful performance management system according to Fryer; Antony and Ogden include:

- Alignment of the performance management system and the existing systems and strategies of the organization.
- Leadership commitment<sup>1</sup>.
- A culture in which it is seen as a way to improve and identify good performance rather than a burden used to punish poor performers.
- Involvement of interested parties;
- Continuous monitoring, feedback, dissemination and learning from results.

Figure 1: Performance Management Cycle



Data source: Mabey, Salaman and Storey, 1999:93

From the above, the five elements of the performance management system cycle include:

<sup>1</sup> Curristine, T., Lonti, Z., & Joumard, I. (2007). Përmirësimi i Efikasitetit të Sektorit Publik: Sfidat dhe Mundësitë.

- Determination of objectives.
- Performance measurement.
- Performance results comments.
- Reward system based on performance results
- And changes in objectives and activities.

Research on SHRM considers human resource systems as a whole and their impact on the organization, in contrast to the traditional perspective, which evaluates HR practices separately and considers their impact on individual performance<sup>1</sup>. This move towards a macro or systemic view was due to greater clarity about the impact of the HR function on organizational outcomes. Such an approach also reflects the understanding that, to be more effective, HR policies and practices must be congruent with each other (horizontal alignment) and aimed at achieving the organization's strategic goals. Strategic Human Resource Management Research increasingly focuses on the performance effects of human resource (HR) systems rather than individual HR practices. Researchers tend to agree that the focus should be on systems because employees are simultaneously exposed to a set of interrelated HR practices rather than single practices one at a time, and the effects of HR practices are likely to depend on the practices of others within the system.

### **Study Methodology**

To carry out this work, the quantitative research method was followed, combining primary and secondary sources. The main source is the instrument used for the research (questionnaire). Secondary data are the literature used in the function of studies, conclusions and theories of motivation. The information used mainly contains the impact that motivation has on productivity. Literature review and quantitative method of data collection, analysis and interpretation were part of the study. The reason for the selection lies in the fact that they were the most appropriate methods in relation to the purpose of the study. The population of this study is the people employed in the public administration of the Municipality of Patos and the Subordinate unit. A sample of 50 employees was selected from this population. For the selection of people who would participate in the study, we used the accidental sampling method. It only took the respondents 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and during its completion we were present in case of ambiguity.

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<sup>1</sup> Afonso, A., Schuknecht, L., & Tanzi, V. (2005). Efikasiteti i sektorit publik: Një krahasim ndërkombëtar. *Zgjedhja publike*, 123 (3-4), 321-347



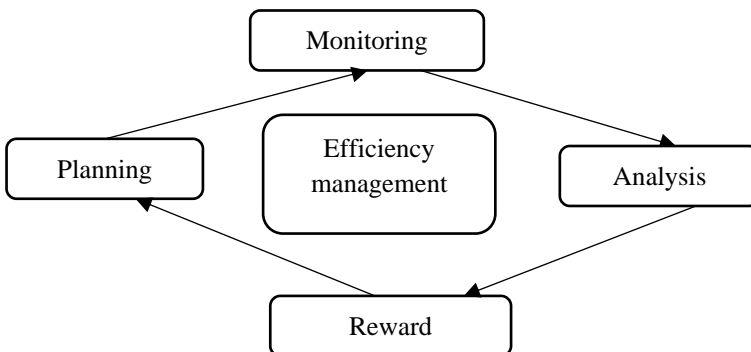
### Selection criteria Some of the criteria we set were:

- People of legal age for work.
- Being employed.
- Be willing to participate in this study voluntarily.

### Results

During the last decades (with the development of innovative technologies and the Internet), governments faced various challenges, including rising citizen expectations, the need to cope with budgetary constraints and the requirement for increased transparency and accountability. In response to these challenges, many countries have begun to develop and implement public sector performance management strategies. Their basic principles include strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of results, risk management, transparency, and citizen participation in decision-making. Achieving efficiency also requires the introduction of innovative methods and the use of technology that help improve services and simplify interaction with citizens. In the future, such a planning system must evolve and adapt to a progressively changing environment. This includes improving management systems, applying analytical tools for informed decision-making, and actively using data for continuous process improvement.

Performance management is defined as a wide range of policies, strategies and methods aimed at guiding leaders, managers, and employees towards achieving results and improving the organisation's effectiveness in delivering results (Wakula, 2021). The development of such strategies can take place at different scales, from the regional to the national level. Nevertheless, its essence remains the same. A common model for performance management is shown in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1. Efficiency management model**

Source: compiled by the author

As can be seen from Figure 1, performance management is a cyclical process consisting of four stages that flow into each other. During planning, key objectives are set and metrics are defined to measure the actual performance of the processes. The next stage is monitoring, which regularly assesses progress and possible obstacles that may arise during the implementation of certain actions. The review phase assesses the finished result, from which conclusions are drawn as to how effective the project has been. The last step is the provision of remuneration to the participants in the process, which may vary depending on how well the project was implemented (work done, plan implemented, etc.) There may be no remuneration at all if the implementation has failed or is not as effective as originally planned in the planning stage. However, it is worth noting that in the public sector, there are a significant number of specific features relating to performance management. For example, the large number of objectives and interests to be achieved by the public sector, the complexity of the political and organisational structures, certain particularities in performance measurement and others. This makes the process of performance management more difficult for government agencies, because of which it requires special skills and abilities.

The Albanian state authorities have been trying for years to establish an administration that can carry out its mandate effectively. However, short-term gains and corruption on the part of government officials made public administration rather weak, with limited capacity and a lack of transparency. The reasons for this level of governance in the country may lie in its past: given the pre-1990s planned system (which had proved to be largely ineffective in terms of governance), Albania needed a transition to new principles of government. This process has been difficult for the country, with a variety of difficulties, both social and economic. High unemployment, still at a relatively high level of 11.82%, has been a major problem (Macrotrends 2023). Due to the existing difficulties in the transition to the new system of government organisation, the country has failed to achieve impressive results in terms of the efficiency of the public sector. Another important challenge in terms of performance management is the process of appointing responsible managers to their positions. This is because it is often politically motivated. This practice was widespread in the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics (USSR) and was inherited by most of its member states, including Albania, which was one of its Eastern European satellite states. Although the situation is now beginning to improve gradually, it is too early to talk about significant progress in this area.

One important ingredient for ensuring improved quality in performance management is the use of state-of-the-art technology. This determines several advantages. For example, process automation and optimisation enable routine tasks to be automated, speeding up and optimising the work of public services: e-document management systems can reduce the time it takes to process and transmit information. All of this improves the accessibility and usability of public services, improves the transparency

of data and internal processes at public institutions, enhances cyber security and reduces costs in general. In other words, digitalization in the public sector contributes to an efficient and open governance system that meets the needs of citizens, improves the quality of services provided and contributes to economic development. Given all the above-mentioned effects of digitalization on public sector processes, it can be understood that its application will also be effective in countering corruption. Transparency in public sector processes makes it much more difficult for any activity to exceed the authority of any given public official. Therefore, the use of the latest technology in management is very relevant in Albania at the present stage, including in its regions.

While the country does have difficulties in building an effective state apparatus of governance (which harms both living standards and the business climate, level of infrastructure development, etc.), it still has room for improvement. For this to happen, the political establishment in Albania must make a real commitment and take bold decisions to work together honestly and with integrity to establish and adhere to strict standards of professionalism to build an effective and accountable public administration. Unless there is a full political commitment among the authorities to implement reforms to improve strategic planning; monitor and evaluate the performance of public servants; and ensure transparency and accountability of the authorities, achieving such a goal may not be possible at all. Nevertheless, given Albania's economic growth rate and the country's tendency to adopt the latest technology, positive conclusions can be drawn about future trends in its public administration.

Considering the characteristics of the Vlere region, it is worth noting that it is located in southwestern Albania and consists of three districts: Vlere, Saranda and Delvina. The municipality of Vlere consists of five administrative units (Vlere, Oriku, Kender, Novosele and Shushitse) with a total population of 202,000 inhabitants, including the Greek, Roma, and Egyptian minorities. It is the main port of the country, which is also very old. Because of its convenient geographical location, its districts are a very important natural factor for the development of transport infrastructure, and the creation of transit centres or points of trade turnover. Its geographic position also has a positive influence on the development of industries, such as agriculture (olive groves and fruit tree plantations) and tourism, due to the abundance of running water, represented by a dense network of rivers, creeks, underground water, springs, artificial sites, etc. This also contributes to the spread of urban life and the construction of megacities here. Oil, natural gas, bitumen, and salt are also produced in the region. The textile industry as well as the construction industry is developed in the city. However, the most important economic activity of the area is tourism. Many hotels, recreation centres and extensive beaches have been built here. The main attraction that attracts tourists to visit the city is its natural diversity: mountains, rivers and beaches are the main reasons to visit the city. The region also has a

generally well-developed housing infrastructure. The city offers many residential areas, ranging from the coast to the hinterland.

Thus, it can be concluded that the last few years have seen positive trends in Vlore in terms of the development of its main industries, particularly tourism. The state authorities have probably also played a major role in this, as they have been able to create the conditions for the development of the region in which all this has been possible. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess what role performance management has played in this. It is also worth noting that the development of the country and the Vlora region has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, which has caused major problems in the country's tourism sector. Due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, many countries closed their borders and introduced social distancing measures, which led to a significant decrease in the flow of tourists. During the crisis, many hotels, restaurants, shops, and other tourist businesses closed or operated with limited capacity. International tourist travel has been severely curtailed due to restrictions on entry and exit as well as flight cancellations. Domestic tourism has also declined due to travel restrictions and fear of the virus spreading. The economic impact on the tourism industry in the Vlore region was therefore significant. Many businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, faced financial difficulties and loss of income. Unemployment in the tourism sector has increased and the contribution of tourism to the local economy has decreased. Nevertheless, the region has recovered rather quickly, including through the authorities' efforts to attract tourists and ensure their safety; marketing campaigns and proposed subsidies and incentives for tourism enterprises have also helped. In addition, domestic tourism, which has become more popular since the start of the pandemic and has partially improved the situation for the country's businesses, has also helped the recovery. It can be concluded that the activities of the authorities, both general and regional, during the COVID-19 pandemic were timely and significantly reduced the negative effects on the tourism sector, enabling Vlores to continue to develop without significant losses.

The following approaches can be taken to address the existing challenges in public sector governance. First, it is important to create a clear strategy on which public authorities will shape their subsequent actions when intervening in economic or social processes. This will improve the focus of efforts and avoid fragmented and unconnected initiatives. Second, the performance evaluation system should be improved, considering not only the quantitative but also the qualitative performance of civil servants. Third, opportunities for professional development and transformation must be provided so that civil servants can apply the latest techniques in their work (which will substantially increase efficiency). Public servants must be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and perform their duties effectively. Fourth, all bureaucratic procedures should be simplified as much as possible and, where possible, automated, thus

reducing the time expenditures of such workers. The introduction of the latest technology in the system will also significantly increase the transparency of all internal processes, make the work of the authorities more understandable for citizens, and make it easier to check whether there are elements of fraud or corruption.

Thus, at this point, the hypothesis cannot be considered confirmed. This is due both to insufficient data available to form such conclusions and their ambivalence. On the one hand, state representatives are making steps towards rapprochement with the European Union countries and the economic situation in the country is improving, in the Vlora region. On the other hand, there are still problems in Albania related to the effective functioning of state structures. They are manifested, among other things, by corruption, which is still widespread. Therefore, this hypothesis requires further research and opinions from other scholars.

## Conclusions

An organization can only be as good as the performance of its employees, because employee performance is the most important determinant of organizational success. In other words, leading and improving individual performance will also increase organizational performance. The way to get employees to have meaning in their work is through creating a work environment and building a system that aims to continuously improve performance. The most important task at this point undoubtedly belongs to human resource managers. The purpose of HRM practices is to provide qualified employees to organizations in order to increase organizational performance and effectiveness. Public institutions can adapt to changes and fulfill their social functions; a company can be found in the mission field staffing as a whole that contributes to the overall objectives and personnel at the desired level of performance is subject to continuous improvement evaluated. Human resource management (HRM) is a key function for an effective and efficient organization.

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## Speed and Agility among 18-19 Years old University Students

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the skill level of students at the first year in the Faculty of Physical Activity and Recreation in Albania. One of the main components of the evaluation is the skill which affects the progress of the students. Methodology: The research group consists of a total of 180 students in UST who were studying at the Faculty of Physical Activity and Recreation. The students are in the first year of the academic season 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. They were evaluated in; age, body height, body weight, BMI, Agility t-test in the Shuttle Run 10x5m test. Photo finish equipment found in UST laboratories was used. Results: The obtained data were processed in Excel and comparisons were made between the years of study as well. Statistically significant and positive correlations were found between and speed values between students. Conclusion: The results of the study showed the high practical importance of testing agility characteristics of students and show prospects for the practical use of the test system for these components at the student level, to achieve high fitness of sports commands and successful games. The practical benefit of these results obtained lies in the ability to use them in the teaching process to develop the agility abilities of students, which has prospects for higher results.

**Key words:** age, students, agility, speed, ability

### Introduction

Students at the Sports University of Tirana (UST) in Albania are accepted on the basis of physical testing, i.e., general sports performance. Speed and agility are the main components of the tests for admission to the university. The comparison between years of students in the performance of speed and agility would be a necessary assessment to determine the skill levels of these students. Faculty of Physical Activity and Recreation (FPAR) is one of the most developed faculties in these years. A successful performance depends on the tests used with the technology and their measurement results. With technology developments, sports scientists have created

much different training equipment to push the highest level that athletes can reach and increase the athlete's physical performance (Nalbant et al, 2018). It is known that the basic motor feature, which is a requirement of a practiced sport, is the most important factor that brings success in that sport (Filiz, 2003). The basic motor skills include both some of the organism and genetic traits, as well as all the skills acquired in the development and maturation of the organism. Basic motor skills are mentioned under five headings such as strength, endurance, speed, mobility (flexibility) and coordination. Although these basic motor skills are genetic, both are known and can be developed. Bompá (2001) defines speed as the ability of a person to move him from one place to another maximum speed or the ability to apply movement as quickly as possible. Speed in sports, on the other hand, means that a person applies basic motor movements in the shortest time and most intensively. Dexterity, on the other hand, is another contingent feature realized with more than one motor feature, which also involves changing direction. Some definitions made by researchers are as follows: Dexterity is the ability to change the direction of the body moving from one point to another as quickly and fluidly, simple and controlled, while maintaining balance without lack of speed (Özkan et al . 2009; Turner et al. 2011). According to Levy et al, (2021), agility is the ability of the whole body to move quickly and accurately in response to a perceived stimulus. In another definition, agility is defined as the activity of controlling body position and maintaining movement, while the athlete can change direction quickly throughout the series of movements (Asadi, 2012). Verstegen and Marcello (2001) stated that agility is perceived as a locomotor ability that makes the athlete change direction. Furthermore, according to Katis and Kellis (2009) agility is a combination of several basic motor traits and depends on speed, muscle strength and balance ability. It is noted that the agility feature includes the speed, flexibility and coordination of the whole body or only the lower limbs to change direction and position (Zanini et al. 2020). Dexterity is influenced by factors such as speed; overall strength and muscle strength that help determine the quality of the muscles in the legs. Dexterity includes components of biomechanics, motor learning and strength (Shepard and Young, 2006). The remarkable aspect of dexterity is that many motor characteristics are coordinated and integrated in a short time. Dexterity must be developed to bring control of body position and balance to a better level throughout the movement (Miller et al., 2006). Based on these definitions, we can state that agility is a rapid change of direction of the whole body in response to an effect in immediate development. Measuring agility is very important in planning the stages of athlete development. A number of agility tests have been developed that can be easily applied by both coaches and athletes. In terms of test examples, the most commonly used in field sports are: T-Test, Illinois Test, 505 Agility Test, Pro-Agility Test and Repeated Agility Test. The fields of application of the specified tests may vary depending on the sport, the branches and the equipment and field conditions. Agility studies in the literature show that the T-Test, Illinois Test, and 505 Agility Test are the most commonly used tests. Considering that agility is a feature in many sports, it



is also important to know the agility levels of athletes. At this point, in the studies made by coaches or sports scientists, the question of the selection of the agility test according to the motor characteristics of the sports branches is not clear in the literature. This research was designed to reveal the relationship between the most preferred readiness tests, and to give an idea to researchers or trainers about test choices.

## **Methodology**

### **Objective**

The research aims the study was to compare the ability of speed and agility among students as a basic criterion to continue the university.

### **Subjects**

The research group consists of a total of 180 students in UST who were studying at the Faculty of Physical Activity and Recreation. The students are in the first year of the academic season 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. They were evaluated in; age, body height, body weight, BMI, Agility t-test in the Shuttle Run 10x5m test. Photo finish equipment found in UST laboratories was used.

### **Research model**

Students are introduced to the study process in advance. They were evaluated in; age, body height, body weight, BMI, Agility t-test and in the Shuttle Run 10x5m test. The students conducted a general warm-up of 10 minutes before the beginning of the tests. Each participant had two tests, with intervals of 5 minutes, and in the end the best time achieved was taken.

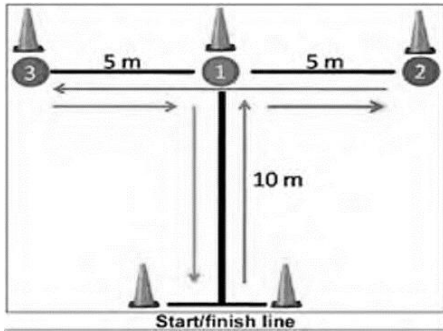
### **Test protocol**

#### **T-Test (sec)**

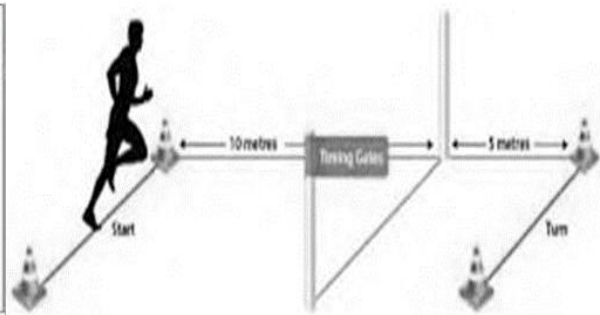
The t-test was reliable in measuring leg strength, speed, and leg agility (Figure 1). The general purpose of the T-test is to ensure balance, maintain continuity in speed, and test the ability to make rapid, sudden and sustained changes in a given running direction. The athlete moves from the starting point with the voice command and goes straight to the first funnel. After touching the first funnel with his right hand, he goes to the second funnel with a sliding step and touches it again with his right hand. Then, with a sliding step to the left, he again touches the first funnel, and goes to the third funnel with a sliding step and touching it with his left hand. Finally, he returns to the first funnel with a sliding step and is directed back to the areas where he started and finishes the test.

**Shuttle Run 10 x 5 m (sec):** This test is performed by covering a distance of 5 meters round trip after a run with an acceleration of 10 meters (Figure 2). After determining the distances that will be run, the two starting and stopping time gates that define the

system are placed on the 5 m line. After the participants are informed about the test, they are allowed to do some exercises at a slow pace. To avoid any injury at the beginning of the test, participants are given 10 min of warm-up and flexibility exercises before the test. The test was repeated twice with an interval of 5 minutes of rest, and the best rate is recorded in seconds.

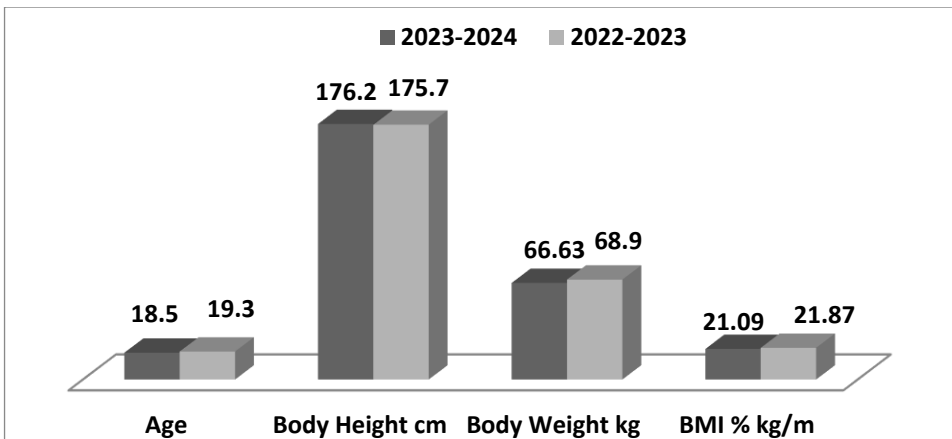


(Figure 1) T-Test



(Figure 2) Shuttle Run 10 x 5m

**Graph 1, Average anthropometric data of 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 students**



**Statistical analysis**

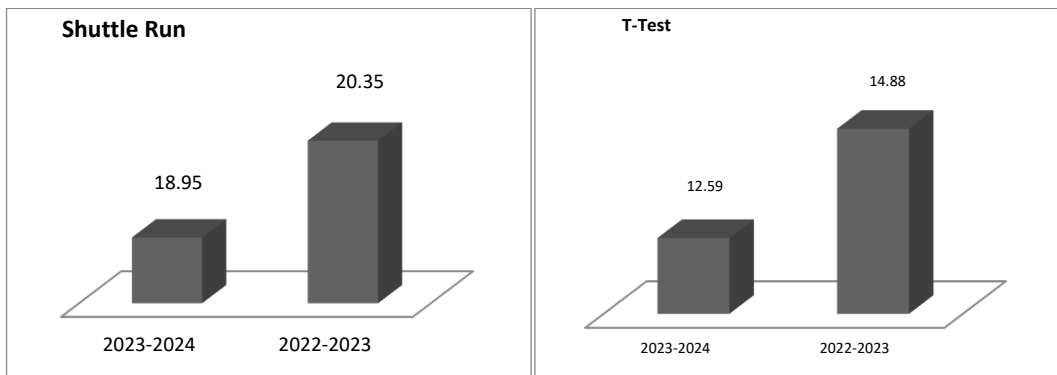
The obtained data were processed in Excel and comparisons were made between the years of study as well as between the two faculties. Statistically significant and positive correlations were found between and speed values between students and faculties. The significance level was determined as 0.05 in the interpretation of statistical procedures.

## Results

Graph 1 shows that average age (year) of students at 2023-2024 is  $18.5 \pm 1.05$ , body height (cm) is  $176.2 \pm 5.73$ , body weight (kg) is  $66.63 \pm 2.57$  and body mass index (kg / m<sup>2</sup>) is  $21.09 \pm 1.87$  and for 2022-2023 also shows that average age (year) is  $19.3 \pm 2.51$ , body height is  $175.7 \pm 5.87$  cm, body weight is  $68.9 \pm 5.48$  kg and body mass index is  $21.87 \pm 3.21$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>.

Graph 2 shows that average of the 10x5m shuttle run test of the students according to the study courses in their respective faculties. As we see in graph 2, students of the first course of 2023-2024 resulted with a speed value of 18.95 sec better than 2022-2023 students with a speed of 20.35 sec.

### Graph 2, Results of the Shuttle Run 10x5m test of 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 students



### Graph 3, Results of the T-Test agility test of 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 students

Graph 3 shows that average agility T-Test of students according to the study courses in their respective faculties. As we see in graph 3, the students of the first course of 2023-2024 resulted with a speed value of 12.59 sec better than the students of 2022-2023 with a speed of 14.88 sec.

## Discussion

Agility is the ability to quickly change the direction of movement, the position of the body in space and time, easily and controlled as possible, without losing balance. It mainly refers to the visual reaction, speed speed that a successful athlete should have (Demirhan et al., 2017). The research aims the study was to compare the ability of speed and agility among students as a basic criterion to continue the university. As a result of this study, which was conducted to determine the most usable test students to determine the agility levels according to sports branches, the following were determined in terms of the basic characteristics of the students. According to graph 2, students of the first course of 2023-2024 resulted with a speed value of 18.95 sec better than 2023-2024 students with a speed of 20.35 sec in the 10x5m shuttle run

test. As we see in graph 3, the students of the first course of 2023-2024 resulted with a speed value of 12.59 sec better than the students of 2022-2023 with a speed of 14.88 sec. This is a confirmation that two different generations of physical education and sports students are not quite uniform when it comes to agility either a motor ability. This is perhaps expected considering the nature of the studies and the activities that students develop their studies every year. Also, among students, there are quite a few athletes from different sports who are actively training, as a result of minimal changes within the groups. In the literature, Molenaar (2009) found a significant difference according to T-test results in his strength study on female volleyball players. In their research article, Sonoda et al, (2018) concluded that there is a statistically positive relationship between agility and the T-test results they performed for agility. In their study, Schedler et al. (2020) concluded that muscle strength has a positive effect on agility. Some studies stated that the T-test is a good measure of strength, speed and agility. These studies support the results of the present research. Moreover, in the literature, contrary to the results of the present research, (Ferreira et al., 2018) found in the study he conducted that strength is not a factor directly affecting agility in ice hockey. In his master's thesis completed in Mukesh et al. (2021) concluded that there is no significant relationship between agility and strength. Kutlu et al. (2012) found a statistically significant difference between Illinois agility test values of professional amateur soccer players and university students. As a result of the present research, positive relationships were found between two agility tests of participants. The literature has works which compared speed values and agility tests. Çakmak concluded in his master's thesis in 2019 that there was a statistically significant relationship between the Illinois agility test values of speed values. Contrary to the above-mentioned results, Tatlısu et al. (2019) concluded that there is no significant relationship between the Agility T-test and speed values, in their study conducted.

According to the presented results, I think that there are some factors that influence the level of performance of the students, which have the origin of the development of physical culture, sports in the youngest (children), including future candidates who enroll in this sports faculty.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the study showed the high practical importance of testing agility characteristics of students and show prospects for the practical use of the test system for these components at the student level, to achieve high fitness of sports commands and successful games. The practical benefit of these results obtained lies in the ability to use them in the teaching process to develop the agility abilities of students, which has prospects for higher results. This is just one evidence for some future research that would include a larger number of students in their physical parameters.

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## **Profitable Tourism Alternatives in the Vlora Region**

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### **Abstract**

Tourism has been identified as a social phenomenon and economic enterprise that has marked developments since the second half of the twentieth century. Developments in technology, transportation and a degree of geo-political stability in some regions of the world have made it possible to record an increase in economic well-being for many citizens in industrialized and developing countries during this period. The rapid development of tourism in Albania has brought not only positive economic consequences, but at the same time, it has also brought out the problems and challenges of the future. Since Vlora represents one of the most important tourist destinations in Albania, this article deals with these problems and challenges for this tourist destination. Tourism represents one of the most significant alternatives for the sustainable and long-term use of these values, and the general social-economic development of the country, especially in unfavorable economic times. This is the reason that tourism was one of the priority sectors in the attention of almost all governments of the post-communist period. In addition, tourism continues to remain one of the most underdeveloped sectors in our country. This article is based on primary data collected from a sample survey of this tourist destination. The article closes with the relevant conclusions.

**Keywords;** tourism alternatives, profitable, development, manage tourism, economic

### **Introduction**

There are several factors that justify the focus on tourism, since tourism, compared to other forms of export economic activities, has an important difference: the consumer of the good and service goes to the exporting country, unlike other types of business which they have to take home goods and services to the consumer. For this reason, the analysis of the tourism economy requires greater attention to transportation and marketing, compared to other forms of business. Also, the concept of industry in the case of tourism cannot be cemented strictly as for the agriculture, construction, etc. industry. This is because tourists consume and purchase goods and services from several industry groups, and typically less than two-thirds of spending goes to hotels and restaurants, which are generally identified with the tourism sector.

The way tourism development affects life chances is closely related to the impact it has on income and income distribution. The discussion here is on the nature of the impact and the groups affected, rather than on the extent of income change.

Regarding employment, the main question is how employment is affected by tourism, what skills are needed and the type of worker. Tourism also generates income for other agents such as investors, landowners, banks or the government, to name a few.

The increased benefits to society from the transfer of land and labor to tourism are generally not equal to the prices or wages paid. These resources are usually taken from other productive activities and this transfer can mean changes in the availability and prices of some goods. In this way, there may be effects on the well-being of people who are not directly involved in tourism. If tourism succeeds in increasing the availability of desired goods this will bring benefits to locals, but if tourists compete with locals for a limited supply then the outcome is likely to be negative for locals as consumers, if it is not like that even as a producer.

### **In this document, 3 forms of employment are identified**

1. direct employment in businesses that sell goods and services directly to tourists, such as hotels, restaurants, transport operators and shops.

Direct employment from hotels depends on the location, size, price category, service or even the situation of the country, reflecting the salary level or the investment policy. The Caribbean Tourism Research Center suggests that large hotels, and specifically those in higher categories, create more jobs per bed compared to smaller hotels in lower categories. Also, seasonal work is more stable in these hotels, as this category of hotels can attract customers out of season or promote the development of business conferences. Regarding wages, hotel workers are treated more favorably than agricultural workers.

2. Indirect employment stimulated by spending on tourism in activities such as production, wholesale or activities that provide services and goods for tourism businesses.

As a form of indirect employment, we can mention agriculture, food processing, craft activities, as well as the transport and distribution of these goods. In Tunisia, for every hotel worker, three-fourths of jobs are created in agriculture, more than one in shops and the preparation of goods such as handicrafts bought by tourists, slightly more than one in other activities related to the production and distribution of goods for hotels, etc.

However, the extent to which tourism generates employment in agriculture depends on many factors including natural conditions, the opportunity for local production, the typology of meals required by hotels, the prices of imported goods, the efficiency of distribution mechanisms and government policies in this regard. field.



3. employment in investment activities such as construction or other industries that are based on capital goods.

Tourism also promotes the production of goods that are needed to ensure the basic activity of tourists, from plates, glasses, kitchen utensils, furniture, sanitary ware, etc., as well as in many other areas.

### **Who benefits from tourism employment?**

When tourism development is gradual, most of the jobs in the first steps of the process are occupied by the people in the area. If before the development of tourism in a rural area people left for the city, whether pushed by the lack of work or attracted by the employment opportunities in the city, the employment that tourism would bring would stop this movement. When tourism flows increase, when service facilities increase, and especially if there is mass tourism, then migrants can constitute an increasing part of the labor force. This happens especially quickly if large resorts are built, in sparsely populated areas or which have not had tourism before. 15. E. W. Blake, "Stranger in Paradise," *Caribbean Review*, vol. 6 (1974), pp. 9-12, discusses the social problems and tensions in the Virgin Islands between the native labor force and immigrant workers imported because of a tourism-induced labor shortage.

There seem to be two categories that benefit most from employment in tourism: young people and women.

### **The effects of tourism on local consumption**

Tourism also affects well-being through changes in prices, variety and quality of goods and services. In the conditions that the treatment of employees of tourism or related activities can be more favorable, then the transfer of resources from alternative productive activities, such as agriculture to tourism, can be identified. This development can reduce the amount of product produced and increase prices. The replacement of local employees with migrants who have less skills can also be evidenced. In both cases, the positive effect of the increase in employment is offset by the effect of the increase in prices, and this is particularly sensitive for the poor sections of society.

On the positive side, tourists seek to see artistic performances, historical sites and natural beauty as well as sample local products and handicrafts. In this way, a good basis is created for the development and preservation of these activities or places.

An important resource that locals and tourists can compete for is beaches and parks. A common complaint is that these facilities are generally reserved for tourists and wealthy residents<sup>1</sup>. The value that is created by tourism can be summarized as the combination of the perceived quality of the destination and the price that the tourist

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy, P., Pritchard, M. P. & Smith, B. (2000). *The destination product and its impact on traveler perceptions. Tourism Management*

has to pay (Chang & Wildt, 1994). However, creating the perception of quality or value is not an easy task since experiences are complex and intangible (Zeithalm, 1988). In this context, it is important to understand the role that the destination has in generating perceptions of quality, value and the intention to return. For this purpose, the links between the product mix offered by the destination and the perception of value and quality of the visitors are analyzed. The results of the analysis show that the general elements of the environment and quality are the most important elements that build perceptions of value and the intention to return to a destination<sup>21</sup>. Meeting the needs of this growing population that was wealthy, educated and sophisticated became a driving factor for many industries. In this context, tourism was one of these industries that gradually and quietly became a driving force in many societies and economies in different parts of the world, changing working styles, living conditions and income distribution. For many years the flow of benefits from tourism has been taken for granted by tourist destinations. This approach left many aspects of economic growth and well-being in developing countries out of focus. However, when aspects of welfare and economic growth in these countries were put at risk, a change in approach began. This new approach means that much of tourism development involves community development. If handled properly, tourism can become an important engine for achieving more inclusive social goals. While societies may aspire to achieve these goals, communities are struggling to manage tourism development effectively. Unfortunately, work is still needed to design an integrative framework for managing all aspects of tourism development. Tourism represents one of the most significant alternatives for the sustainable and long-term use of these values, and the general social-economic development of the country, especially in unfavorable economic times. This is the reason that has put tourism as one of the priority sectors in the attention of almost all governments of the post-communist period. In addition, tourism continues to remain one of the most underdeveloped or underdeveloped sectors in our country. This is the reason that has put tourism as one of the priority sectors in the attention of almost all governments of the post-communist period. In addition, tourism continues to remain one of the most underdeveloped or underdeveloped sectors in our country.

### **Components of tourism development**

The main components used in this book for tourism planning are:

- Tourist spots and activities - any type of activity that includes nature, culture, with special features that attract tourists to visit;
- Accommodation - hotels and other types of facilities and related services where tourists can spend the night during their travels;

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<sup>1</sup>Crouch, G. I. & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1999). *Tourism, competitiveness, and societal prosperity*. *Journal of Business Research*

- Other tourist attractions and activities - this includes, but is not limited to, tour operators, travel agencies, restaurants and other types of food service providers, retail centers for handicrafts, souvenirs, necessities, banks, points currency exchange and other financial services, tourist information points, personal services such as beauty salons, medical centers, public defense centers and police and fire services, customs, etc.
- Transport points and services – access to transport of the country, region or development area, internal transport connecting points of interest including all necessary forms of land, water and air transport.
- Other infrastructure – infrastructure needed for water supply, electricity, waste water and waste removal, telecommunications, radio, WIFI, or other elements needed for the area or region.
- Institutional elements – this includes human resource planning, education, training programs, marketing strategies, promotion programs, public and private organizational structures related to tourism, complete regulatory counter, including laws and regulations that regulate tourism, investment policies, economic, environmental and sociocultural from the public and private sector which help the development of tourism<sup>3</sup>1.

The weak points identified in the study are related to the lack of position of Albania's products offered in the global tourism market, the lack of information, the insufficient use of marketing that enables proper promotion of the country, the lack of qualification and education of appropriate human resources

The study divides human resources in tourism as possible for work and potential resources for qualification, and considers that increasing the qualification of human resources is at the center of efforts for the development of this industry, since qualified human resources determine the direction of service and product marketing<sup>4</sup>2.

## **Methodology of the study**

### **Initial considerations**

The methodology that was followed to carry out this work is based on two sources of data, primary sources and secondary sources.

This study begins through the collection of secondary data as well as the review of available literature and reports. Through this instrument, existing information, data and previous reports (secondary data) and data received from the Municipality of

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<sup>1</sup>Kotollaku, M. (2014) *Profesionalizmi Në Shërbimin Turistik, Gur Themeli Për Zhvillimin e Turizmit në Shqipëri*

<sup>2</sup>Chheang, V. (2013). *Tourism and regional integration in Southeast Asia. Japan: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization.*

Vlora, mainly, but not only, from the Statistics office as well as from reports published by local organizations will be collected and analyzed. and international that have published in this field of study.

If we will try to give a typical structure of such a study, then we emphasize that the steps I followed during this study are:

1. Identification of the problem
2. Knowledge of previous studies and data for problem 2
3. Formulation of hypotheses
4. Outline of the study
5. Data collection
6. Data analysis
7. Interpretation of results
8. Drawing conclusions and recommendations

Data processing was carried out through statistical processing and econometric modeling, passing through several stages. In the first stage, the data is subjected to the analysis of the Likert scale, which is used to measure the perceptions, preferences, or opinions of individuals regarding different topics. To incorporate these data into econometric models, several models adapted to address their features are often used. Some of the more common methods we can use depending on the data include:

- Regression Analysis: The use of regression analysis is common when modeling the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. These models are used to predict how a dependent variable (such as meanings expressed on a Likert scale) varies in relation to one or more independent variables (such as type of tourism business, etc.)
- Prob and Log model: These models are specific to handle binary variables or restricted categories. Their use can be effective to predict, for example, the likelihood that an individual will agree or disagree with a certain statement, using Likert scales.
- Sign and factor analysis: This model is used to identify hidden structure or certain factors that influence individuals' responses on a Likert scale.

### **Collecting primary data, conducting survey**

As mentioned above, the survey was carried out in the period November 2023-January 2024. This period outside the tourist season was chosen for the reason that in this period the managers of the tourist units have more time to answer questions and fill in the questionnaires.

The first step in this direction was the selection of tourism companies whose managers would be interviewed. Initially, the database of tourist companies operating in this municipality was obtained from Vlorë Municipality. The summary of tourist companies in the Municipality of Vlorë according to the field in which they operate is given below:

**Table 1. Structure of tourist companies operating in the municipality of Vlora**

Type of activity	Nr	The structure in %
Tourist agency	56	11.1%
Cruise ship	20	4.0%
Hotel Bar	379	74.9%
Dhoma plazhi	51	10.1%
in total	506	100.0%

Source: Vlora Municipality

**Table 2. Indicators of the distribution of the number of full-time employees**

N	Valid	115
	Missing	0
Mean		15.5130
Median		7.0000
Mode		2.00
Std. Deviation		18.06633
Variance		326.392
Minimum		1.00
Maximum		120.00
Percentiles	25	3.0000
	50	7.0000
	75	20.0000

The following table presents data on the number of full-time employees during the tourist season in these businesses, where it is noted that on average a tourist business in Vlorë municipality during the tourist season has an average of 18 seasonal employees with a median of 7 employees (half of these businesses employ during the tourist season up to 7 additional employees)

## **Secondary data**

This stage of data collection and literature review is the first stage of the study as an initial research and it was very useful because it provided us with more in-depth knowledge about this problem and helped us to get more information from scientific research.

In the relevant chapter, summary details are given of the literature that has been identified and collected and that has been reviewed to lay the foundations for the collection of primary data. In this part, important reports, research materials, articles and other publications of the field were used. Also, according to the request, the database of tourist businesses of the municipality of Vlora was made available to us. This database contains 506 businesses that operate in the field of tourism.

More information about the analyzed literature can be found in the bibliography of the paper.

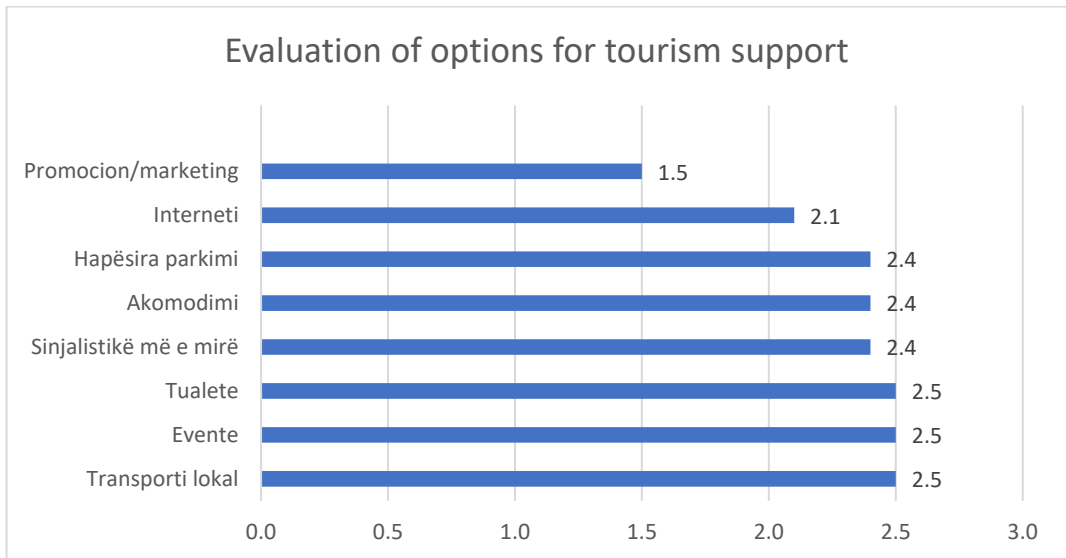
Through this instrument, the existing information, data and reports that already exist (secondary data) were collected, systematized and analyzed.

This phase of data collection and literature review as an initial search to gain knowledge on this field of study also served us by providing us with key useful guidelines during the collection of information but also to have a clearer view of where I should focus for the work done for the type and method of processing and analyzing the primary data.

## **Primary data**

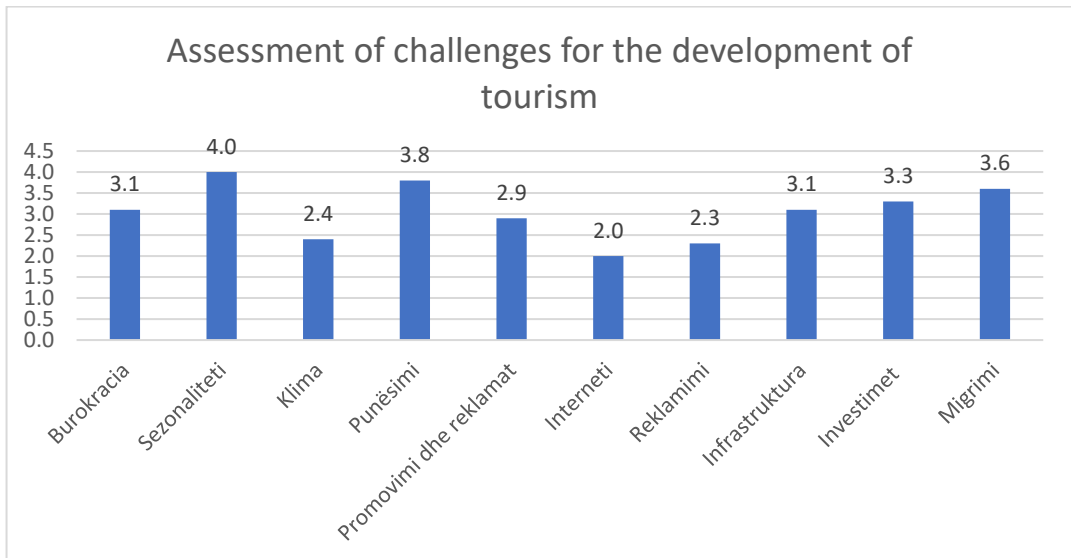
Based on the primary data collection strategy, the associated questionnaire was constructed. We emphasize that for the validation of the hypotheses and the drawing of conclusions, a special importance was given to the primary sources, which are represented by the data collected through the questionnaire that was designed and approved by the leader of the work (see the attached questionnaire), questionnaire that I directed you to the interest groups, which in our case are the owner representatives, managers or employees in key positions. The main reason for selecting this interest group was to fill the gap that exists from secondary data.

The collection of primary data through the questionnaire was carried out using the database of tourism companies in the area and using random sampling. Determining the number of interviews was carried out and determined through classic formulas for determining the number of questionnaires, where part of the statistics was taken from the pilot test.



Data processing was carried out through statistical processing and econometric modeling, passing through several stages. In the first stage, the data is subjected to the analysis of the Likert scale, which is used to measure the perceptions, preferences, or opinions of individuals regarding different topics. To incorporate these data into econometric models, several models adapted to address their features are often used. Some of the more common methods we can use depending on the data include:

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- **Prob and Log model:** These models are specific to handle binary variables or restricted categories. Their use can be effective to predict, for example, the likelihood that an individual will agree or disagree with a certain statement, using Likert scales.
- **Sign and factor analysis:** This model is used to identify the hidden structure or certain factors that influence the responses of individuals on a Likert scale.



Important in this work was the realization of the questionnaire addressed to businesses, which gave us more information about the challenges these businesses face. From the surveyed businesses it was noticed that they are facing the difficulty of finding qualified employees in the market, among the main challenges these businesses considered immigration, the lack of qualified staff, the lack of tourist infrastructure, but also the insufficiency of the support provided by the state is one of the main concerns of businesses. Also, an important conclusion that was reached was the fact that the lack of labor force for businesses also affects the way of organizing and operating the business activity, where these businesses do not use ways or means to motivate employees (such as rewards in performance basis), or even the lack of necessary training and qualifications that can be provided by them constitute an issue that needs improvement, to consequently positively affect the success of the business. So, at the foundation of tourism development are human resources, which must be carefully managed in all aspects.

### **Summary and conclusions**

The main recommendations that are given after the completion of the study belong to two main directions: the first recommendation is addressed to businesses operating in the tourism sector, which should take steps to train and motivate employees in order to increase their business performance. theirs, which is also the main interest of these businesses and; the second recommendation is related to the government, which should undertake and design supporting policies in favor of businesses operating in this sector, to ease their burden, to further promote the development of tourism and the economic development of the country, but of course having as the main focus the drafting of policies that will prevent the emigration of the labor force (especially the qualified one) that constitutes one of the main assets of these



businesses and is the promoter of progress and continuity towards success and development.

- To improve the internal dynamics of innovation: pushing businesses in the tourism sector 7
- Improve training of operators, staff.
- Development of the role of public and private agents: regionalization of action.
- To develop different tourism products from the experiences of tourists/travelers;
- to analyze the sociological and psychological phenomena of visitors/tourists to understand their motives and expectations for a professional management of tourist attractions, museums, exhibitions, excursions, etc.;
- to be successful entrepreneurs through the planning and development of innovative tourist services;

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## **Insulin Resistance; is it an Actual Pathologic Compromise of Cellular Integrity or it is just a Potential Toxic Influence on Cellular Function**

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### **Abstract**

**Aim:** Demonstration of a possible co-incident toxic influence on cellular function leading to a potential insulin resistance rather than it is an actual permanent compromise of cellular integrity. **Background:** The spread of DM is rising all over the world in a dramatic way same as the fire spreading in hey especially in developing countries giving the term "diabetic epidemic" an actual credibility. The late three decades demonstrated grave antibiotic aggression towards the stomach bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*. *H. pylori* could be forced to migrate to the colon under the influence of the antibiotic violence with consequent accumulation of profuse toxic amounts of colonic ammonia unopposed or buffered by any acidity leading to a biological toxic stress to the body that could predispose to toxic pancreatitis and stress diabetes among those disadvantaged susceptible population. In the same manner, a toxic influence on cellular function could also develop leading to a sort of insulin resistance. **Design:** A Prospective multiple-case clinical study. **Methods:** A potent natural colon clear was done for insulin-dependent diabetic patients developing insulin resistance. **Results:** Response of most patients for insulin administration markedly recovered. **Conclusion:** The challenge of insulin resistance might be just a potential toxic influence on cellular function rather it is an actual permanent compromise of cellular integrity.

**Keywords:** diabetes mellitus, insulin, insulin resistance, potential toxins, stress diabetes.

### **Introduction**

The widespread prevalence and the challenges constituted by *Helicobacter pylori*; namely its close relation to acid peptic disease, gastric carcinoma and lymphoma have led to the widely-established medical concept that *H. pylori* eradication should be a necessary attempt. Although eradication regimens apparently eradicate *H. pylori* from the stomach; the emergence of antibiotic-resistant *H. pylori* strains and the

severe side effects are major drawbacks of these treatments particularly if it is proved that these medications do not readily eradicate the bacterium but actually force it to migrate from the stomach elsewhere where adverse sequels could emerge. The exact prevalence of the abnormal-behavior/existence migrating *H. pylori* strains constituted lately more than 80-90% among population of developing countries (Volk et al, 1996; Farinha& Gascoyne, 2005; Nasrat et al., 2015a).

The latest reports in literature demonstrated a definite flare up of many medical challenges strictly related to *H. pylori* existence through immune or different unknown reasons. (Farinha& Gascoyne, 2005). The flare up of these *H. pylori*-related medical challenges is sufficient to denote that the current combined antibiotic eradication strategies are inadequate to control all the problems associated with the stomach bacterium.

*H. pylori* colonized the stomach since an immemorial time (Farinha& Gascoyne, 2005; Nasrat et al., 2015a); as if both the stomach and the bacterium used to live together in peace harmless to each other; this might indicate that *H. pylori* could be a natural biological bacterium that has been forced to lead a pathologic attitude being obliged to migrate to an unusual shelter and rendered a foreign structure to the tissues of the new habitat.

In addition, if *H. pylori* is forced to migrate to the colon it would perform the good biological function in an improper place where it is essentially entitled to protect the gastric wall from its acid if it goes in excess and to protect the whole gut together with the human body from absence of the acid during absence of food. Accumulation of profuse toxic amounts of ammonia in the colon produced by the colonic *H. pylori* strains has been reported to lead to an onset of toxic stress to the body and the development of stress diabetes. (Nasrat et al., 2015a; Nasrat et al., 2015b).

Insulin resistance is defined as the inability of a known quantity of exogenous or endogenous insulin to increase glucose uptake and utilization in an individual as it does in a normal person. Insulin resistance or "Insulin Resistance Syndrome" could constitute a cluster of abnormalities that might lead to type II diabetes. In this context, it might be needed to consider whether insulin resistance should be defined as a disease entity that needs to be diagnosed and treated with specific drugs to improve insulin action or not. (Lebovitz, 2001).

**Design& Setting:** A prospective multiple-case clinical study done during the period from October, 2019 to May, 2023 in Zaitona Medical Center, Medina, Saudi Arabia.

### **Patients & Methods**

The study included 27 patients with type II diabetes and an average age range between 46 to 67 years, they were average to well-built. They developed diabetes during the latest two decades exactly 5 to 23 years earlier to the study. They were on oral pills then shifted to insulin therapy and later all of them developed different

grades of resistance to insulin. Patients were on different strategies of insulin treatment; 8 patients were on fractionated 10 units of regular insulin twice or thrice daily with meals, 14 patients were on 10 units of regular insulin in the morning and 20 units long acting insulin at noon while 5 patients were following 30 units of mixed insulin in the morning with breakfast. Their blood sugar level was ranging between 180-210 mg/dl while on insulin medication. All patients were investigated for existence of colonic *H. pylori* strains employing a specific test; *H. pylori* fecal antigen (Farinha& Gascoyne, 2005; Nasrat et al., 2015a). A potent natural colon clear measure was done for all patients, it was not repeated except for those patients who demonstrated inadequate response to insulin therapy (Nasrat et al., 2015a).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Patients have been made aware about the concept, strategy of the study and safety of the natural colon clear remedy. Patients were allowed to follow their own medications and were able to lead their own usual style of life except for carefulness towards outside-home meals. They were free to quit the study at any time. An informed signed consent was taken from all patients.

### **Results**

All patients were found positive for colonic *H. pylori* strains and all of them have completed the study, 6 patients (22%) needed revision of the colon clear. Most patients, 24 patients (89%), showed marked recovery of response to insulin therapy even they needed to reduce their usual insulin dose to near half the dose or even less for fear of developing hypoglycemia where their blood sugar level became ranging between 110-130 mg/dl, 3 patients (11%) remained resistant to insulin therapy in spite of revision of colon clear possibly due to improper care about their diet style or outside-home meals. Patients were followed up for 18 months and advised for adequate colon care via carefulness about their diet and employment of colon clear upon developing any frank colonic troubles. 10 patients (37%) were not able to complete adequate follow up until 18 months, the three patients who failed to show recovery of insulin response after the natural colon clear remedy were among them.

### **Discussion**

DM in developing countries has been lately described as the fire when spreads in hay giving the title "diabetic epidemic" an actual credibility (Al-Nozha et al., 2004 Nov). Traditional risk factors do not appear fully sufficient to explain this dramatic spread of diabetes in these countries; in a way that further indicates that the traditional measures employed to control the spread of the disease would never be adequate or decisive (Nasrat et al, 2015b).

DM, a disease of rich, which was once considered a disease of the developed world has become a worldwide pandemic resembling an ocean tsunami wave flooding the whole world with two thirds of the poor diabetic population living over the

developing side of the globe. (Katulanda, 2006; Wissow, 2006). As much as the precise statistical revision strongly correlates between the prevalence of *H. pylori* and the flare up of DM in developing countries, it also reveals that the diabetic challenge was not as such in these countries before the antibiotic violence towards *H. pylori* (Hossain et al, 2007; Einecke, 2006; Yach, 2006). The literature reports indicate that most of the diabetic patients in the world are inadequately controlled in spite of regular follow up of medications and extreme carefulness about style of life that could mean existence of a missed underlying environmental error influencing the challenge of diabetes (Nasrat et al, 2015b; Ikeda, 2001; Mason, 2002; Songür, 2009).

*H. pylori* recurrence; whether it is gastric recurrence from dental plaques, fecal-oral recurrence or recurrence via meals is hardly avoidable (Nasrat et al, 2015a). The current antibiotic therapies appear to be successful only in forcing *H. pylori* outside the stomach to recur later or migrate and hide elsewhere mostly in the colon. The migrated *H. pylori* strains in the colon would continue producing ammonia for a reason or no reason leading to accumulation of profuse toxic amounts of ammonia, un-opposed or buffered by any acidity; this matter could constitute a biological toxic stress to the body that could lead to stress diabetes. Administration of traditional oral hypoglycemic pills to a stressed pancreas means an insistence to flog a tired horse leading to turn a potential condition into an established chronic illness with consequent dramatic flare up of the diabetic phenomena all over the world (Nasrat et al, 2015b).

In the same manner, a toxic influence on cellular function could also develop because of accumulation of profuse toxic amounts of ammonia leading to a sort of potential insulin resistance. This suggestion is supported by the results of this clinical study where recovery of insulin response was frankly demonstrated among most patients via a simple detox measure employing colon clear.

Several studies have reported that insulin resistance was demonstrated among patients with gastro-esophageal reflux disease (Budiyani et al, 2018). It has been further reported that functional dyspepsia and esophageal reflux disease could have been greatly related to migration of *H. pylori* from the stomach to the colon (Nasrat, 2017). This finding of the association of esophageal reflux with insulin resistance could further conform with the concept of this study as the migrating colonic *H. pylori* strains could be responsible for accumulation of ammonia in the colon with the development of a sort of toxic stress to the body that could lead to a potential condition of insulin resistance. The concept of this study could be further supported by the suggestion that environmental pollution could constitute different reasons of cellular stress that could participate in leading to insulin resistance, therefore; insulin resistance might be adequately prevented or attenuated by multiple approaches targeting different reasons of cellular stress (Onyango, 2018).

In the light of the accurate determination of recent findings and statistics, a revision of the current guidelines for the management of *H. pylori* and newly discovered DM might be needed. It might be incorrect that the current world's burden of DM is on the account of type II diabetes. It seems that the antibiotic violence has obliged a domestic bacterium to become wild in attitude and sequels instead of getting rid of it. The stress element caused by the accumulated toxic amounts of colonic ammonia in leading to an onset of diabetes is not just hypothetical as upon the basis of this concept the diabetic condition has been readily and adequately corrected in many newly-discovered diabetic patients. (Nasrat et al., 2015a; Nasrat et al., 2015b).

It has been further illustrated that the world's burden of diabetes during latest three decades was not on the account of type II diabetes but on stress diabetes caused by a biological toxic stress that could influence potential toxic pancreatitis due to accumulation of profuse toxic amounts of colonic ammonia (Nasrat, 2023). It is worthy to emphasize that type II diabetes is not curable while stress diabetes could be corrected simply via elimination of the reason of toxic stress. In the same manner, a toxic influence on cellular function could also develop leading to a sort of insulin resistance which could be readily and simply corrected by elimination of the reasons of cellular toxic stress.

Accordingly, "Insulin Resistance" might not be a definite disease entity that requires specific treatment but it could be just a potential condition developing consequent to a biological toxic stress to the body leading to a potential or temporary toxic influence on cellular function which could be readily corrected by simple healthy detox measures.

### **Acknowledgement**

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### **Conflict of interest**

No conflict of interest is existing.

### **Conclusion**

The challenge of insulin resistance might be just a potential toxic influence on cellular function rather it is an actual permanent compromise of cellular integrity. Insulin Resistance might not be a definite disease entity that requires specific treatment but it could be just a potential condition developing in consequence to a biological toxic stress which could be simply cured and corrected by traditional detox measures. Accordingly, accurate revision and severe re-determination of the scientific guidelines of *H. pylori* eradication should be needed.

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## **The Development of Music Life in Albania in the Years (1900-1965) Looking from the Historical and Educational Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The paper provides a detailed exploration of the artistic development of music in Albania from 1900 to 1965, emphasizing the impact of societal changes and educational philosophies on Albanian Art Music. By examining primary documents and analyzing musical works from specific periods, the study explores how historical and political factors shaped music during this time. The political regimes from 1945 to 1960 focused on developing music institutions, schools, theaters, and extracurricular education, leading to significant contributions to music composition. Albanian music, influenced by classical and romantic traditions and rooted in Balkan folk music, played a key role in supporting patriotic and enlightenment ideals. Key figures like Palok Kurti and Prenk Jakova were instrumental in transforming Albanian music, blending Western musical traditions with Albanian identity. The establishment of formal music education and cultural institutions during this period contributed to national consciousness amidst political and social changes. New vocal and orchestral ensembles introduced operas by Albanian composers, helping to solidify the foundation for Albanian music genres. The study also highlights the efforts to institutionalize musical education in a society that had been hindered by Ottoman rule, contributing to the broader history of music and cultural development in Albania.

**Keywords:** Musical system, institutionalization, scientific-artistic, musical education

### **Introduction**

#### **Historical Overview of Albanian Artistic Life**

In the second half of the 20th century, when European countries celebrated over 100 years of the jubilees of cultural and artistic institutions, Albania, this small country in the southeast of Europe, was timidly taking its first steps. Influenced by historical, political, economic, and social factors, it inherited from the past a significant educational, cultural, and artistic backwardness. Four centuries under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, accompanied by intermittent peasant uprisings, not only did not

favor development and progress, but on the contrary, left it a backward feudal country. This paper aims to explore the ways in which these historical and societal elements have shaped Albanian Art Music during this pivotal period. How did the political regimes between 1900 and 1965 influence the establishment and development of musical institutions and education in Albania? The individual initiatives of a number of idealistic intellectuals with a formed national vision, among them ideologues, poets, artists, and musicians who were creators and performers, tried to contribute to the country's development to change the face of national culture. Incorporated into the general patriotic movement of the people for freedom, progress, and prosperity, their role had special significance in spreading enlightenment ideas for awakening national consciousness, primarily in the field of education, knowledge, and cultivation of the mother tongue for the creation of Albanian literature. Moreover, in the programs of patriotic associations and clubs established throughout the major cities, serving this ideal, artistic activities also found a place and significance, including fine arts, theater, and cultivated music, represented by the creation of wind bands, choirs, mandolin groups, and small orchestras. As representative phenomena of musical culture in Albania for the time, they acquire historical value without claiming the stratification of a genuine tradition with professional values in this field. The period of the National Renaissance, which began in the 1830s, was crowned with the Declaration of Independence on November 28, 1912. It represents a glorious era for Albania and the Albanian nation, an enlightening, democratic, and progressive era during which transformative changes and significant developments took place. It is closely linked with the creation of the tradition of patriotic song and urban song, in which, alongside the use of European melodies, we also encounter genuine original creations where, for the first time, professional technical means of the classical and romantic tradition find application.

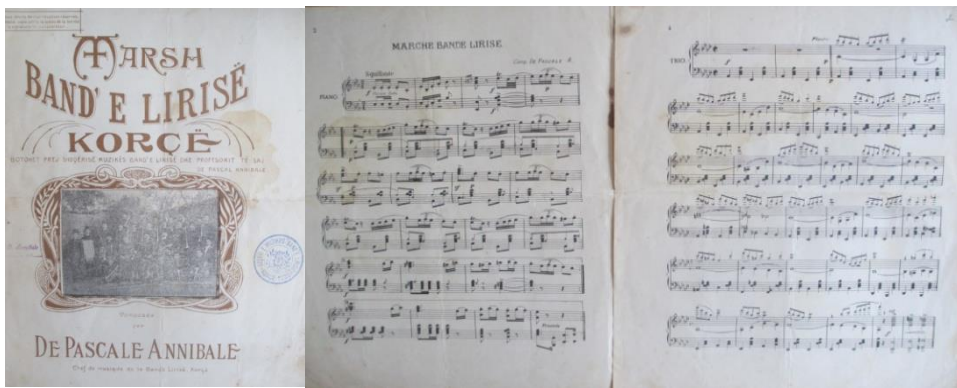
## **Methodology**

This research is based in a qualitative research( descriptive) design on one of the arts events for which it has been developed music evolution as an art in Albania from 1900 to 1965. It implements two central modes: documentary and music analysis. This study looks at primary sources of music from Albania and is a selection of documents such as archival material, government reports and periodicals. Documents were chosen by historical importance and the musical analysis is based in their structures, styles, and cultural conditions. There are many documents from National State Archive of Albania. This being said, with the use of document and musical analysis, we hope that it will demonstrate a more holistic view of Albanian Art Music. The objective is not to write only a history, but rather to offer an understanding of complex interrelations between music, history and cultural identity in Albania during this period. Images and audio music samples were utilized for illustrative purposes.

## Historical Overview and Content: Precursors of Professional Music

The names Palok Kurti (1860-1920), Frano Ndoja (1867-1923), and Martin Gjoka (1890-1940), who were active in the north of Albania, in the city of Shkodër, as well as Thoma Nasi (1892-1964) in the southern city of Korçë, are among the most distinguished contributors to the musical life of the time. They also played a significant role in the creation of a new urban cultural and artistic mindset. We cannot overlook the first wind band formed in 1878, initially led by the Italian Giovanni Canale and subsequently by Palok Kurti. In Korçë, the "Liberty Band" was formed, directed by Pascal Anibaldi in 1909, who also composed the Anthem of the Liberty Band, a document recorded in (Central state archive) <sup>1</sup>.

### Fig.1 March of Freedom (Pascalle Anibale)



Around 1922, the first military band in Albania was formed in Shkodër. This information comes to us through the newspaper "Ora" on June 17, 1920, where it reads: "Frano Ndoja established in a few days the first band of the Albanian army." Ora, June 17, 1920. An effort from the immigrant colonies came for the formation and activity of the National Band "Vatra" in September 1916, composed of Korçë emigrants in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, and led by the distinguished musician and conductor Thoma Nasi. The "Vatra" Band is among the most important musical organizations outside and inside the country for the period in question, contributing modestly to creating an artistic atmosphere in the country. It began its activities in the second decade of the last century. The lively, buoyant character that is typical of marches in general is due significantly to the dynamics and articulations. Not surprisingly, marches have also tended to use simple major triads like C-E-G and common harmony sequences such as I-IV-V-I. This leads right to a strong, march feel. A bass line that plays throughout, holding down the harmony, is an important aspect of any dance music production. In the "Trio" section most marches go into a closely related key, usually the subdominant (IV). The harmony may have homophonic texture, where the melody takes centre stage with chordal accompaniment. Rhythm

<sup>1</sup> CSA, Central State Archive Found.109, File, 212,pp 1-3

and Melody: A simple but strong rhythm, often with dotted rhythms to give a bouncy feel. Big and bold melodies that are written to be memorable, perfect for the ceremonial setting. The staccato and legato passages articulate and bring variety to make it more interesting. They collectively come together and make for a piece that lively, but also very organized making it perfect marching or ceremonial purposes.

**Fig.2 Scores from March “Albania” O moj Shqypni , F.Ndoja**



Meanwhile, efforts continued to form an orchestral cell composed of mandolins and guitars, which accompanied various vocal groups of the cultural-artistic societies or clubs of the time. The personalities mentioned, with their multidimensional activities as band and choir leaders, composers, and instrument teachers, arrangers, and processors of folk songs and urban folklore, became pioneers of professional music in Albania, laying the foundations for an Albanian urban musical tradition. Equally important is their contribution to educating the advanced tastes of the public, creating a suitable welcoming environment for subsequent professional developments. Their compositions, mainly in the genre of songs, instrumental, vocal, orchestral, and choral miniatures, secular and religious, such as marches, anthems, serenades, suites, and dance arrangements for bands, used the structures of the well-known classical-romantic forms, while the harmonic language was intertwined with elements of Albanian folklore, especially in the instrumental parts. (Frano Ndoja, 1920), reflected in CSA, Found. 830, File.1, p.13)

In the history of Albanian music, the above-mentioned composers are valued as the first musicians that preceded professionalism, but at the same time, they are recognized as musicians of a specific historical period who, compared to European music, manifested their weaknesses which appeared in limitations of creative possibilities.

However, in the clarity of the message they undertook to convey, these creations, within the aesthetic limits of the time, fulfilled their mission by laying the groundwork for the identity-creation history of our nation, the themes and motivations of which were aimed at layering the national artistic and cultural ideals. In these bands or

cultural societies that we mentioned, the musical education that would assist in choral singing or playing instruments was done in an amateurish manner.

Gradually, the need for education in this field was being recognized. This prompted the inclusion of musical education in the corpus of general education with the opening of the Normal School of Elbasan on December 1, 1909. (Encyclopedic Dictionary, 2004) It was the first school for teachers in Albania, which became the fundamental center of national education where thousands of teachers were prepared. (Çeliku, M. 2009)

Initially, in the early years of the Normal School, the only music subject included in the school's curriculum was singing, which was taught by Hasan Mezja. (Bevapi, K. 1995)

A year after the declaration of Independence (1913), the subject would be taught by Ahmet Gashi (Myzyri, H. 2004), who, at the Normal School, taught students not only history and geography but also solfège and the national songs of the time in choral form with multiple voices (Ratkoceri, D. 2007). The opening of the Normal School would finally create the conditions for teaching music and musical instruments on solid didactic and professional foundations, further promoting the dissemination of Western musical traditions in public spaces of the city, while cultivating a love for musical art.

### **The Period After Independence, 1912-1939**

The period following Independence, particularly after the 1930s, is characterized by new trends in two directions:

First, artistic life was organized as a completely professional activity. Second, it was accompanied by a qualitative leap in performances.

After returning to their homeland, full of dreams and passions, a constellation of talented musicians—graduates of the most renowned schools in Western Europe, instrumentalists and lyrical singers, distinguished and esteemed even on prestigious foreign stages—became promoters of a more active musical cultural movement. This movement invigorated both the quantity and quality of artistic life in the country, influencing the establishment of a healthy climate within the parameters of European professional tastes.

Numerous tours, organized on improvised stages as private initiatives throughout the country, featured not only interpretations of patriotic and civic Albanian songs but also arias from world operatic masterpieces as well as works by classical and romantic composers.

Sopranos Marie Kraja (1911-1999), People's Artist; Tefta Tashko Koço (1910-1947), People's Artist; Gjyzevina Kosturi (1912-1985), Merited Artist; Jorgji Truja (1909-1994), People's Artist; and tenor Kristaq Antoniu (1907-1979), People's Artist, are

the pioneers of establishing our tradition of operatic lyric art. For the artistic values they offered, they are still regarded as honored figures of the Albanian nation today.

Pianists Lola Gjoka (1910-1985) and Tonin Guraziu (1908-1999) were the first soloists on the pianoforte, presenting recital concerts that were significant events for their time. Their roles were equally important as concertmasters in accompanying lyrical artists and later in the fields of piano and vocal pedagogy. Here, we must highlight the complex roles played by Jorgji Truja, Lola Gjoka, Marie Kraja, and Tonin Guraziu in the activities of the Nana Mbretneshë Institute for the emancipation of Albanian women.

In October 1933, the Nana Mbretneshë Institute was established; in addition to general lessons, solfège theory was taught for 2 hours a week by teacher Jorgjia Filçe, and violin lessons were provided for 2 hours by Anny Marashi. Despite the lack of standardized textbooks, the young teacher Filçe brought her Western experience and developed the programs herself, selecting and organizing various materials according to the needs and level of the course. In addition to education through musical training based on a social perspective, these personalities provided a transformation of the repressed consciousness and the backward mentality that characterized the time, cultivating a love for musical art and achieving liberation through it.

Albanian musical artistic life during this period was organized on the basis of individual initiatives within the framework of artistic societies. Efforts for musical education in Albanian schools, the establishment of a symphony orchestra, or theaters supported by the state remained unrealized. These aspirations became a reality after the victory of World War II (May 9, 1945) against German Nazism, of which the anti-fascist national liberation struggle of the Albanian people was a part.

### **The Expansion of Musical Institutions After World War II, 1945**

The 1940s marked a crucial period in the process of music institutionalization. This period was characterized by a growing recognition of the importance of cultural institutions in nurturing artistic talent and promoting artistic expression. Amidst these developments, music schools emerged as the primary catalysts for institutionalizing artistic music in Albania. With the political power taken by the Communist Party, special attention was given in its programs to the institutionalization of art and culture. This period carried the ideological artistic atmosphere dictated by socio-political conditions. In this period Artists needed to pander to socialist preferences – that is, stuff featuring themes of patriotism and collectivism. Others returned only to find that their creative outlets had dried up and their chance for personal expression had been quashed. Everything had to be approved by the state due to very strict government censorship. Composers were consequently discouraged from writing music deemed politically unacceptable and self-censorship prevailed.: Being limited in exposure to Western musical trends and innovations, composers were unable to integrate variety into the music as much,

resulting in a more self-sufficient environment. Much of the Albanian regime's support for traditional folk music was as a vehicle to drive nationalistic themes and while this preserved folklore, it also constrained the musical development agenda.

Musically, it is noteworthy that the contributions were original and distinct, which was influenced, as mentioned, by such circumstances as the lack of information and creative freedom. In these circumstances, there were also primarily positive developments, such as:

First, the establishment of musical institutions, including the entire educational system.

Second, the formation of various artistic branches in artistic groups, cultural societies, festivals, decades, surveys, etc.

Third, several scientific foundations were laid regarding research methodologies, teaching, qualification, criticism, cultural journalism, teaching materials, etc.

Despite the fact that many of them belong to an adaptive technical formulation, such as translations, adaptations, and borrowings, we can say that these experiences coming from abroad brought essential techniques for delving into professional art. It should be understood that there can be no talk of innovations akin to those of German, Italian, or Viennese schools. However, through the qualifications of our artists in these countries, a kind of work discipline for further professionalization—beyond just music—was achieved. Artists like Lola Gjoka, Tefta Tashko, and composers such as Kristo Kono, Kostandin Trako, and many others were among the first to direct musical development toward a professional path.

Among the important developments during this period was the opening of the first professional artistic school in Albania on December 26, 1946. The National Artistic School "Jordan Misja" served over the years as the seedbed for the growth and training of young musicians across all specialties. Graduates from this institution fulfilled the urgent need for music education in general and for the establishment of other musical institutions. Four years later, in 1950, the conditions for the formation of the Albanian Philharmonic were created, which operated until the establishment of the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet in 1953. It played a crucial role in presenting complete staged works from the classical ballet, operatic, and symphonic repertoire for the first time on the Albanian stage.

January 28, 1951, marks the first symphonic concert of the Philharmonic, which included works such as "Symphony No. 1 in E-flat major" by J. Haydn, "Violin Concerto in A major" by W.A. Mozart, "Variations on a Rococo Theme" for cello and orchestra by P.I. Tchaikovsky, and the "Overture to the opera "The Bartered Bride" by B. Smetana. Among the staged works are: "The Fountain of Bakhchisarai," a ballet in 4 acts, music by B.V. Asafiev (May 1, 1951); the opera "Rusalka" by composer A.S. Dragomizhski; "Ivan Susanin" by M. Glinka; "The Bartered Bride" by B. Smetana, and



others. Later, the Radio Tirana orchestra, the Army Ensemble, and the Ensemble of Folk Dances and Songs were created, and February 15, the final moment was the inauguration of the State Conservatory of Tirana (later known as the Higher Institute of Arts) on January 15, 1962. This would be the highest institution for music education in Albania (Shuteriqi 2002, 6-7)."

In terms of popular music, the National Ensemble of Songs and Dances was established, along with the National Folklore Festival of Gjirokastër and supporting cultural and scientific institutions that helped promote this art not only domestically but also worldwide, gaining increasing popularity. This institutionalization of art also included academic processes, which deepened with the creation of books, scientific methods, studies, etc. The same can be said for the popular direction of music. Given that folklore tends to develop mainly outside institutions and their frameworks, the need for the institutionalization of this genre of music also arose. At the time, the Institute of Popular Culture played a specific role in researching, collecting, and aggregating folk art in all its forms. It made folk art a primary component of textbooks, further concretizing this activity by incorporating it into folklore lessons in schools. From a creative perspective, some foundational milestones were established, such as the First Symphony of Çesk Zadeja, the first opera "Mrika" by Prenk Jakova, instrumental concerts, and other genres like film music, etc.

### **Prenk Jakova (1917-1969) and the First Major Stage Work, the Albanian Opera "Mrika" in Socialist Realism**

Prenk Jakova, along with Kristo Kono in Korçë, is one of the few Albanian composers who divided their creative work between two historical periods of Albanian music: the period from 1878 to 1940 and from 1950 to 1990. However, unlike Korça, during the 1920s and 1930s, Shkodra managed to create a more identifiable profile in both musical activity and creativity, the traces of which would be present in the music of the two decades following World War II. An important reason for this lies in the fact that several key figures of Albanian music at the time (Zadeja, Harapi, Daija, etc.) were originally from Shkodra and were formed in the same artistic and cultural environment. Prenk Jakova, who was actively involved in the musical developments before the war, undoubtedly became one of the main bearers of this heritage during the subsequent period (1950-60) (Kalemi, 2006). The opera "Mrika," created by Prenk Jakova along with librettist Llazar Siliqi, began work nearly seven years earlier, when, on the occasion of the construction of the Ulza hydroelectric plant in 1951, the musical work "Dritë mbi Shqipëri" (Light over Albania) was staged. Built on this initial foundation, the work was completed in 1958 and was staged in December of that same year, directed by Andrea Skanjeti, at the Migjeni Theater in Shkodra. (Shuteriqi, 2021) In its original version, as it was presented at the premiere, the opera consisted of four acts. A year later, in November 1959, it was staged by the professional troupe of the National Theater of Opera and Ballet in Tirana (with principal soloists Maria Kraja, Ibrahim Tukici, and Lluk Kaçaj) and condensed into

three acts. This remained the final version with which "Mrika" experienced dozens of other premieres and according to which it was published.

**Fig.3 Foto Opera Mrika Clavir and Vocal partitura**



"Mrika" is conceived as a traditional opera, primarily based on the models of 19th-century Italian opera: vocal melodies with lyrical expression predominates, while the orchestra, serving a supportive function, contains a simple chordal texture, mainly focusing on the primary tonal functions. The vocal forms, often in the style of songs, are constructed as closed numbers. On this traditional foundation, Jakova, with the intuition of a vocalist and a keen sensitivity to folk music, succeeded in incorporating elements of local folklore, giving the music a distinctly northern Albanian flavor. This is immediately felt in the short introduction (a type of prelude) of the opera, set within the framework of a descending quintet in a minor second, according to the tuning and playing on the çiftelia (a traditional string instrument). Within the same framework, the first part of the aria "Dielli ka prendue" (The Sun has Set) of "Mrika" is constructed, whose melody fulfills the internal tones of the base quintet. This pure diatonic, included in the harmony of G minor, conveys an idyllic atmosphere in its simplicity. Even more directly, the utilization of northern Albanian folk materials is presented in the ensemble of girls (companions of Mrika) in Act I of the opera, in the aria of Mara, Mrika's mother, in several recitatives, etc. Mrika, as the main character, is characterized by three arias, two of which are in Act I and the third aria in Act II of the opera. The second aria, like the first, has a simple two-part form with contrast, typical

of a song. The third, "Çjanë këto trazime" (What Are These Disturbances), is a grand aria with elements of cantilena and declamation, showcasing a brilliant vocal style. As one of the most outstanding achievements of traditional Albanian music, this aria has experienced numerous performances by Albanian sopranos. In the Albanian musical life of the late 1950s, the opera "Mrika," like Česek Zadeja's symphony (1956), marked a significant historical event: the birth of classical national Albanian opera. As a foundational work of the genre, "Mrika" also remains a cornerstone in the heritage of traditional music within the boundaries of the 1950-80 period that this era encompasses in the history of Albanian music. With "Skënderbeu," Jakova also remains an important figure in Albanian opera of the 1960s. Other representatives of the genre in this decade include Tish Daija with the operas "Pranvera" (Spring, 1960) and "Vjeshta e Artë" (Golden Autumn, 1965), and Kristo Kono with "Lulen e Kujtimit" (The Flower of Remembrance, 1961).

## Conclusions

In a panoramic overview, we explored the history of artistic life in Albania, from the formation of artistic societies or bands to the institutionalization of music education in general education and musical institutions. These institutions represented a significant potential for change, as they provided model environments for social development, cultivating aesthetic taste and transforming backward mentalities. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that cultural organizations also served the national ideal and simultaneously laid a solid foundation for the institutionalization of music.

This research has focused on the evolutionary development of Albanian artistic music in the period from 1900 to 1965, and it demonstrated how social changes, educational regulations and institutional agenda have shaped this process. The study shows the intricate ties between a nation's musical progress and its historical or social environment.

These were difficult times in a region where the political history was constantly turbulent and there was still an influence of cultural backwardness, however Albanian music developed successfully during this period. The early work of pioneers such as Palok Kurti and later Frano Ndoja, Thoma Gaqi orysonet by almost all people it was adored but nothing much Albanian the music scene did not change there » Made in Italy».

A milestone was the establishment of teaching music in state schools with the opening, already in 1908 but operational four years from that date onwards, by Normal School of Elbasan. The post-independence era not only saw a surging set of artistic talents stream back to the motherland, but also taking with them habits that subtly fused western European musical traditions into their sound. This time also saw the birth of numerous important institutions like Institute for Empowerment of

Albanian Women “Nana Mbretneshë” or contribution with music branches at schools and has helped to cultivate love traditional musical art.

The Communist system in the period after World War II was also marked by a great increase in musical institutions, such as schools and teacher training colleges, theatres (although they fell under restrictions), and theatrical orchestras—the Kosovo Symphony Orchestra being founded only ten years later—and not less importantly by the founding of Albanian Philharmonic. Although ideologically motivated, those years gave rise to a symphony orchestra; the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet was founded (1954), followed by new genres making their appearance on stage that all played an important part in creating national musical identity.

The research demonstrates how people, institutions and societal forces are key to shaping Albanian Artistic Music. It also points out the strong heritage of pioneers such as Jorgjia Filçe Truja, Maria Kraja and Lola Gjoka who have greatly contributed to music education and created an artistic expression in Albania. However, it also reflects how political and social elements of Albanian society are woven through the kaleidoscope that bears witness to a rich tapestry of Albania's unique musical tradition.

More research could be done on the potential implications of different political regimes for music education and artistic expression in further future work. Furthermore, exploring how different musical genres have evolved and changed in Albania over time, looking at the role of playing technique developments that overlap with a series routinely strategies used by traditional musicians would help to shed light on other essential qualities about Albanian music history. This study helps future research to explore the influence of international music trends on Albanian composers or examining the role of popular music in the post-1965 era.

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## External influence in the Western Balkan Countries

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### Abstract

There is still strong external influence from Russia, Turkey and China in the Western Balkan countries. Their policies go against European Union enlargement policy which may endanger the whole integration process of the Western Balkan countries which are eagerly looking forward to be part of the EU. The greatest influence exercised in the Western Balkan countries is noted from Russia as it is the greatest support of Serbia but not only. It is related to the Balkan region due to its historical ties because of Pan-Slavic movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They still have strong economic collaborations even though they started to somehow decrease due to EU sanctions because of the Russia-Ukraine war. The influence of Turkey in the Balkans is mainly concentrated in cultural, religious, educational and information linkages especially with Muslim population in the region. It is related with the Balkan countries by means of historical ties as Ottoman Empire occupied such region for more than five centuries. Chinese influence in the region is concentrated in economic and technical cooperation with all Western Balkan countries with the exception of Kosovo whose independence it refuses to acknowledge. Unlike Russia and Turkey, China is not related to these countries through history but without any doubt a rising force in the region and its economic influence should not be ignored as the financial and economic links between China and the Western Balkan countries have increased. The greatest interest of these countries is to compete with the European Union in the region as their EU enlargement process is delayed a lot and they hope that the Western Balkan countries are not part of EU. This topic needs to be explored further due to the fact that the Balkans is considered by many scholars as the crucial geopolitical point with a mixture of influence of EU, Russia, Turkey and China. It is this influence which needs to be further estimated what will happen to these countries if the tensions are not solved with agreement and consensus between them.

**Keywords:** external relations, EU, cooperation, religion, the Balkans

## **Introduction**

Bieber and Tzifakis consider the Western Balkan countries as a geopolitical chessboard with the main actors EU and Russia, Turkey and China. Their influence is not new to the Western Balkan countries even though nowadays Russia, Turkey and China are considered as third actors as they are non-EU countries. This topic analyses the bad influence that these countries are having in the Balkans region, the importance of diminishing the influence of these countries in the Western Balkans, the reason why it is important to stress the fact that it is not just an issue of being part of the European Union but it is also a matter of security as well as the importance why the EU must support these countries to be its Member States. As it is presented by many researchers, the Western Balkans has always been a strategic point of conflicts and high tensions which are not solved yet. It has always been a matter of possession and power. Russia and Turkey are related to the Western Balkan countries not only by means of economic investments and collaboration, but also by means of old historic ties. Whereas China considered by researchers that its role is to be acting like a Trojan horse, playing with no rules having bids with less bureaucratic rules differently from the EU interfering in this way in the relation between the Western Balkan countries and the EU endangering the enlargement process. Russia's role in the Western Balkan countries seems to be as many researchers stress the one of increasing or causing misunderstandings by using corruption and misleading them in regards to their relationship with NATO and EU. Whereas Turkish role in the Western Balkans is contributing in recovering the most important aspects of a country such as education, culture and spreading the Muslim region and Turkish language especially in the countries with Muslim population.

In fact, the security it is mentioned even by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, who stated, "investing in the stability and prosperity of the Western Balkans means investing in the security and future of our Union". This means that not it is not just a matter of the Western Balkans security but also of the European Union.

## **Literature Review**

Many researchers have analysed the fact of the influence of Russia, Turkey and China in the Western Balkan countries but most of them have treated the countries separately.

Polović considers Russia influence in the Western Balkans as "Malignant" and stresses the fact that Russia considers as a part of its wider geopolitical sphere. (Polović, 2023) Jeta Loshaj divides the Russia's strategy of causing problems to the EU into three categories. First, the geostrategic ambition is demonstrated by Russia's effort to prevent or harm the NATO and EU presence in the region, as was the case in Montenegro with the effort of getting access to the Port of Bar. Second, the imperial appetite of Russia as the war in Ukraine is showing, Russia never gave up on its

imperial ambitions. Similar to the war in Ukraine, Russia sees itself as a powerful geopolitical actor – as in previous centuries – not only in the WB, but also at the global level. The third motive is geopolitical as Putin holds a few grudges towards the West. Therefore, a lot of the things he does are as a result of his victim mentality, and thus, his quest for revenge against the West.

Boffey mentions that the European Commission has referred Russia as the primary source of disinformation in Europe (Boffey, 2018) whereas Asya Metodieva expresses her concern Russia has outsourced its disinformation activities by building loose relationships with local disinformation actors that support its interests. Pushing targeted narratives through these actors aims to weaken the West while strengthening Russian influence in the region and she analyses the role of disinformation proxies in pushing anti-West narratives. (Metodieva, 2019) European Parliament on its briefing dated 18.04.2023, stated that the Western Balkan countries have emerged as a frontline in Russia's geopolitical confrontation with the West. While the Russian Federation has strong historical ties with the Western Balkans, and holds a certain soft-power attraction for the region, its influence and economic impact there are declining.

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747096/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)747096\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747096/EPRS_BRI(2023)747096_EN.pdf)

Concerning Chinese influence in the Western Balkans Adrian Hackaj discusses on the high investments that China has made to these countries and he stresses the fact that for the EU Chinese role is important in the region as it “provides a vital impetus for economic modernization, competitiveness, economic growth and connectivity in the region”. (Hackaj, 2019) whereas Indrajit Roy at al highlights that it has been popular to ascribe grand ambitions to China's economic diplomacy in the Western Balkans—both geo-economic and geopolitical. On the geo-economic side, Vangeli and Pavličević, for example, have argued that the Western Balkans are central to China's economic plan in Europe (Roy at al, 2024). Mare Ushkovka argued that attitudes of China to Western Balkan countries vary between states, with Serbians having the most favourable views on China as a foreign partner. She also argues that while public perceptions on China have seen a positive shift in Macedonia and Albania, this has not translated in a change in their pro-EU stance. But in fact according the Balkan barometer, in recent years the positive attitude to the EU of the Western Balkan countries is decreased in comparison to 2018 when they had high expectations and more trust in the EU. Even though some researchers provide positive attitude to the Chinese influence and it seems no direct threat to WB countries integration, it is necessary to stress the fact that China is benefiting from the fragile economies of the Western Balkan countries and in some countries, notably Serbia, according to Clingendael Institute, institutionalised ties with the EU are also increasingly paired with political ties with China, in an attempt by incumbent leaders to maximise the benefits of external engagements. This has implications for the environment in which



EU accession and enlargement processes play out, in which for some countries the EU is no longer the 'only game in town' (Clingendael Institute, 2020)

Jusufi dhe Ukaj argue that Turkey as a country spreading through the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Caspian, the Mediterranean, the Gulf, and the Black Sea, it needs to exert influence in all these regions and thus achieve a strategic role at the global level. Many researchers argue about investments that Turkish government has made to the Western Balkan countries are mainly to Muslim communities. According to Liridon Lika through the diplomatic initiative, mediation, privatization of strategic sectors and cultural exchange Turkey has emerged as a real player, making the Western Balkans the only region where the principle of "zero problems with neighbours" gives the most tangible results, (Lika, 2015) whereas Kevin Agolli argues that the parallel interaction of economic assets and soft power would enable a repositioning of Turkey in the geopolitics of the Balkans and create opportunities for its transformation into a hegemonic regional power. (Agolli, 2021 :28) Adam Balcer argues that Turkey does not have sufficient potential to torpedo the EU's agenda in the Western Balkan region. Its leverage in the region is decisively smaller than the EU's but however, Turkey may significantly hamper the EU interests in the region, particularly in case of substantial slowdown of the enlargement process in certain Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia) resulting in an increase of euroscepticism among the Balkan Muslims and ethnic Macedonians (Balcer, 2013).

## **Discussion**

### **Russia's influence on the Western Balkans**

Russia shares historical, cultural, religious ties with the Western Balkan countries as Russia's influence in the region is prominent and it exercises a great influence and strives to preserve it as such. Russia is the greatest support of Serbia and there is also support from Russia in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Scholars notice no direct interest of Russia in the Western Balkan countries economic or political one, but still Russia is identified by researchers and the EU that its influence in the Western Balkan countries seems to aim revealing the EU and NATO weaknesses trying to convince these countries that Russia is the only country which can protect them. It is also estimated by scholars that Russia takes advantage of the slow pace of their European integration and aims to stimulate and spread doubts and scepticism in the region.

One of the most prominent interference that Russia exercises in the Balkans is its influence in the domestic affairs which is noticed in the example of Montenegro before joining NATO (2015-2017) whose membership was endangered by the Russian influence to block it. Its interference is also noticed in the efforts that Russia has made by means of dis(information) campaigns and corruption in order to undermine the EU and NATO integration of the Western Balkan countries. Russia used the chance of

the conditionality to North Macedonia to increase contradictions and to stimulate protests regarding the name change of Macedonia into North Macedonia.

Svetoka has highlighted the fact that Russia prefers to exercise its influence with minimal cost, and such efforts would not be possible without the support of local collaborators. This is noticed in the relationships and alliances that Kremlin with local powerholders in Serbia and BiH's Republika Srpska, (Svetoka, 2020, p. 2-3) whereas Scazzieri focuses on the fact that Moscow has carefully cultivated support in the region, supporting nationalist groups and using misinformation to undermine the West, often appealing to a common Orthodox Christian, pan-Slavic identity. Russia hopes to use the resultant pro-Russian sentiments in NATO members North Macedonia and Montenegro to weaken the alliance's cohesion (Scazzieri, 2021, p. 8).

According to Bieber and Tzifakis Russia's economic involvement in the region should not be underestimated for three main reasons: a. it is frequently masked as Russian capital flows are transferred through third countries, b. it is strategically focused and concentrated on a few key economic sectors (e.g. energy and banking), and c. the Russian state exerts substantial influence over the decisions of the country's private corporations. Bieber and Tzifakis also highlight that if Russia has any region-wide plan for the Balkans, this is to establish another gas transit route to Europe. (Bieber and Tzifakis, 2019)

The future influence of Russia in the Western Balkan region is open. To Russia, the Western Balkans have established themselves as "a transit region for its energy exports to Western European markets" and the sentiment is rather towards a preservation of the degree of influence rather than a competition with Brussels. On the international political scene, Russia is seen as a tactical player taking swift decisions and acting flexibly. (Hake 2019: 8) According to Loshaj Russia enjoys political, economic, and cultural relations with Bosnia, particularly with Republika Srpska (RS) and its leader, Milorad Dodik and it is among the WB states most vulnerable to Russian meddling in several aspects: political, military, and economic. (Loshaj, 2024)

It is of great concern the fact that Serbia is greatly influenced by Russia and it is the greatest support of Serbia in regards to its relation to Kosovo. Even though Serbia has received much more investments from the EU than from Russia, it has not yet decided which side to take EU or Russia. Even though it is noticed that Serbia is making progress towards the EU integration, the fact that its supporter is Russia is a possible danger in the Balkans and Europe as well concerning the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo which are not finalized yet and tensions are caused time after time between the two.

In the past, Serbian public opinion was supportive of closer ties with Russia: a poll carried out in mid-2016 by NSPM magazine showed that 72 % were in favour of an alliance with Russia, compared to just 8 % for NATO. However, a February 2022 poll

concluded that half of Serbs want to stay neutral when faced with a choice between the EU and Russia. This foreign policy alignment became highly visible in February 2022, when Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia joined the EU's sanctions against Russia, while Montenegro announced it would adopt them in April. The Serbian government adopted conclusions in which it voiced support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine but refrained from applying the EU sanctions. Russia remains Serbia's biggest arms supplier, yet is in increasing competition with China. On 29 May 2022, the Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić announced that his country had signed an agreement on a new three-year gas contract with Russia. (Stanicek, 2022)

According to Bieber and Tzifakis Russia has used a variety of instruments to exercise—often pernicious—influence in the region, focusing its efforts on actors with a cultural/religious affinity to appeal to, namely Serbia, Republika Srpska (the predominantly Serb entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Montenegro and North Macedonia. Diplomatically, it has taken advantage of its great power status in the UN Security Council to act as a spoiler of various Western initiatives. For instance, it has opposed the recognition of Kosovo independence; it has indirectly encouraged Milorad Dodik's rhetoric for the secession of Republika Srpska; and it has sought to thwart EU and U.S. diplomatic efforts to resolve the political crisis in North Macedonia following the eruption of the wiretapping scandal. At the political level, United Russia, the ruling party in Russia, has developed close ties with several like-minded political parties in Serbia, Montenegro, Republika Srpska and North Macedonia. (Bieber and Tzifakis, 2019)

Golding argues that the Russians and their policies in the Balkans triggered the alarm bells that spurred the European Union into action. While negotiations had at one point significantly slowed, the EU has recently pushed the Western Balkans to the top of their agenda and implemented a new campaign to incentivize the Balkan region.

However, Golding and many other researchers stress the fact that the European Union will not be able to reduce Russia's influence in the region until all of the Western Balkan states are full members of the EU. Thus, it is critical that the Union continue its push for future enlargement into the Balkans to cement their geopolitical influence in the region and reclaim the Balkan peninsula as a vital part of Europe. (Golding, 2018)

Out of the three, Russia is the country which represents the biggest challenge to the EU as it is a strong actor in the geopolitics opposing EU and NATO. Despite the fact that most of the six Western Balkan countries sanctioned Russia based on the EU recommendations, still the influence of Russia is strong especially in Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro. It is to be emphasized the fact that Russia cannot leave the fragile countries of the Western Balkans to be part of the EU and NATO despite of their efforts. With the EU stimulation and financing of the Western Balkan countries, especially after Russia-Ukraine war the influence of Russia is somehow weakening, the only thing that it can do to keep their influence strong in

the Balkans is the propaganda which is made of lies, corruption disinformation in order to impede such countries to be out of its territory of influence with the only purpose to destabilize the region and to prevent EU to have the whole Balkan region part of it.

### **Turkish influence in the Western Balkans**

Turkish relations with the Western Balkan countries date back to the Ottoman Empire during which such countries were occupied by the Turks for centuries leaving a trace in their history, culture and religion as some of them were diverted into Muslims mainly citizens of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Albania and Kosovo. It is due to such influence that there are three main religions dispersed in the above-mentioned Balkan countries.

Turkey considers the Western Balkan states as its neighbours. Turkish leaders say that up to 10 million people citizens of Turkey can trace their roots to the Western Balkans. Several waves of migration during the 20th century of both Turks and Slavic Muslims brought hundreds of thousands of Balkan migrants to Turkey, and reinforced the cultural and family ties with the region.

Nowadays the Turkish influence in the Balkan region is noticed to be multifacet especially in terms of culture, religion, education and economy which is more predominant in the region.

According to Jusufi, Ukaj, Turkish businesses, stimulated by politics, have engaged in several “strategic projects” in the Western Balkans, such as the construction of the Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway and the Durrës-Prishtina highway. (Jusufi, Ukaj p.6)

Before the 1990-s Turkish influence was not as it is today. It was the architect of the AKP’s foreign policy was Ahmet Davutoğlu, who laid out his foreign policy vision in the book “Strategic Depth”, published in 2001. He highlighted that the importance and effective usage of religion in relations between Turkey and Balkan countries. He highlighted that idea that the basis of Turkey’s political influence in the Balkans is the Ottoman remnants, the Muslim communities.

One strong collaboration in the Balkans countries is The Turkish Development Agency (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, TIKA) which has financed the restoration of several Ottoman-period cultural and historical monuments and mosques. Turkey is also building schools and universities in those parts where they are likely to be appreciated, for example in areas with a predominantly Muslim population. (Petrovic and Reljic 2011: 8) An example, is an investment that was inaugurated on 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 2024 by Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister is the “Prayer Mosque” built in Tirana with a Turkish investment of over 30 million euro. This is the largest mosque in the Balkans region.

Another example, in Montenegro, most of the €5 million that has been donated thus far has focused on projects in the northern parts of the country where there is a

significant Muslim population. TIKA has financed the reconstruction of a school in Rožaje, selected because over 200 of its students take Turkish as their elective course. Also, it has financed the building and opening of the medresa in Tuzi, near Podgorica—the first Muslim religious school in Montenegro since 1918. TIKA's activity fund concentrates 50 to 70 percent of its resources to restoration. As a result, it has rebuilt or participated in the rebuilding of numerous monuments of Ottoman cultural and historical significance in BiH – be it bridges, fountains, residences, or mosques – over a period of two decades. (Vračić, 2016)

In Albania, Turkish schools enjoy the reputation of being among the best and are attended by approximately 3,000 students per year. In addition, Turkish universities receive Albanian students, according to some unofficial estimates up to 1,500, and, similarly, 100 students per year from Kosovo receive state scholarships from Turkey to attend Turkish universities. Bosnia and Herzegovina, the private Bosnia-Sema Educational Institution– International Burch University (IBU) was established in Sarajevo in 2008 with the support of Turkey, becoming the second Turkish institution of higher learning in that country. (Petrovic and Reljic, 2011, P. 8)

Another kind of collaboration is through The Yunus Emre Foundation which is a public foundation promoting Turkish language and culture, has opened Cultural Centers in all Western Balkan countries, offering courses attended by thousands of students in the region. In the Balkans this foundation has created two centers in Albania respectively one in Shkoder and one in Tirana. In Bosnia and Hercegovina three centers one in Foynitsa, one in Mostar and one in Sarajevo. It has created three centers in Kosovo, 1 center in Montenegro and one in North Macedonia.

According to Agolli, the continuous economic growth of Turkey and its transformation into a more than regional economic power, created enough facilities to increase its presence and create stronger ties with the Balkan countries. The increase of Turkish investments affects every sector in the countries of the region, creating a closer connection, which was not only limited to the cultural context, but also to the economic one. (Agolli, 2021)

In 2021, the value of Turkish-Serbian trade exchange stood at 1.7 billion euros and Turkey's exports to Serbia have increased almost twofold since 2017. Since 2017, its exports to BiH have increased by 65%, up to 649 million euros, and the value of trade exchange between the two countries stands at around 832 million euros. In the case of Kosovo and Albania, Ankara is their second biggest trade partner – after the EU – in 2021 Turkey's exports to these countries stood at 587 million euros and 647 million euros, respectively. In the case of North Macedonia and Montenegro, Turkey is their fifth biggest trade partner and in 2021 its exports to these countries stood at 530 million euros and 110 million euros, respectively. (Szpala, 2022:4)

With regards to the Turkish “hard power”, it is important to be highlighted that Turkish contribution concerning the strengthening of its military links with all the

countries of the region and even the Western Balkan countries which want to join NATO. As important aspect in this regard is the training of young Bosnia and Herzegovina military professionals by the Turkish government.

The Turkish government also gives yearly grants to Bosnia and Herzegovina nationals to attend the military high school or military academy in Turkey for a period of two to four years. The Turkish armed forces have provided assistance for the education and training of a large number of Albanian military officers in Turkish universities and military academies. (Petrovic and Reljic, 2011:10)

Turkey has been playing an increasingly active role in the Western Balkans, cementing its position as a regional power and prominent interlocutor with regards to issues concerning the Western Balkans. Türkiye's active role has included playing mediator between the entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, between Serbia and Kosovo and in fact throughout the Western Balkans, taking its place as a mediating and stabilizing factor. (Ibish, M. & Sezer, F. 2023:5)

Petrovic and Rejlic argue that an improvement of relations with the Western Balkans countries is likely to help Turkey to secure more allies for its EU bid in the future, notably if these countries join before Turkey does. (Petrović and Rejlic, 2011)

Some EU states, particularly France, think that Turkey's influence in the Western Balkans poses a threat. But unlike Russia, Turkey does not aim to stop the Western Balkans' closer integration into the EU and NATO. Instead, Ankara supports the region's further integration into the two institutions, thinking that this would allow it to gain more friends in both. The French concern about Turkish influence in the Western Balkans is shown on 17 April 2018, when French president Macron said in the European Parliament that he doesn't want a Balkans that turns toward Turkey or Russia, but he doesn't want a Europe that, functioning with difficulty at 28 and tomorrow as 27, would decide that we can continue to gallop off, to be tomorrow 30 or 32, with the same rules."

### **Chinese influence in the Western Balkans**

China does not have any cultural and ethnical ties with the Western Balkan countries like Russia and Turkey but still China is without any doubt a rising force in the region and its economic influence should not be ignored.

It seems that the main investment in the Western Balkan countries is that geographically, the Western Balkans (and Greece) constitute the final part of China's new Maritime Silk Road. In view of extending the New Silk Road (NSR) into the Balkans, China primarily invests in regional infrastructure, such as ports, railroads and highways, mainly through the so-called "16+1 format" which includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. (Hake and Radzyner 2019: 8-9)

China's primary interest seems to be the improvement of the region's internal connectivity in order to facilitate the transport of Chinese manufactured products from the Greek port of Piraeus to Europe and along other transport lines.

Regarding the relation of China with Kosovo Zweers mentions that China maintains no diplomatic relations with Kosovo, which it does not recognise as an independent state China has at times used its influence to prevent Kosovo's participation in international organisations. In 2015, for example, China voted against Kosovo's United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) membership. In 2017, Kosovo withdrew its Interpol application as the assembly was hosted in China, with the reason being lack of international support but also the unfriendly environment. (Zweers, 2020).

According to the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), China invested €32 billion in the region in 2009- 2021. In Serbia alone, Chinese investment reached €10.3 billion.

Often countries had to legislate ad hoc for Chinese projects to meet Beijing's demands that contracts be awarded directly to Chinese contractors. This creates loopholes and exceptions in the legal system and delays the region's convergence with EU norms. As such tendering procedures do not involve open and transparent bidding, they militate against efficient public spending and encourage corruption: in short, while EU institutions try to promote clear rules for spending every 500 euros to make sure public money is used in the most efficient way, contracts for Chinese-built highways worth up to 500 million euro are decided without any tender. (Makocki and Zoran Nechev, 2017:2)

Covid vaccines situation, according to Dimitar Bechev, "for China, it's a golden opportunity to embarrass the EU and the West more broadly." For the Balkans, China is also the best option to tease the EU, as Vuksanovic from the Belgrade Center for Security Policy explained: "It is also a way to provoke and leverage the EU to do more. The China factor is an important way to extract as much as you can from Beijing, but also to potentially motivate the Europeans to do more." (Güzeldere 2021:9)

In security terms too, China's role is not fully aligned with the EU's interests. Beijing has supported Russia's efforts to abolish the post of High Representative in Bosnia and to de-legitimise the current incumbent, Christian Schmidt. Beijing's stance has therefore indirectly emboldened Dodik to be more assertive. (Scazzieri, 2021, p. 10)

Even though China is not considered to be a real threat to the integration of the Western Balkan countries but still the strategies that it uses such as corruption and easy assistance for the loans to the Western Balkan countries go against the EU regulations and makes the hard way and the EU bureaucracies seem useless and tiresome. China's purpose to support the Western Balkan countries does not support their integration to the EU but this is because its idea is to exercise influence in such region before being part of the EU. In this way the Balkan countries can serve as a

bridge in the relation between EU and China as well as make China be an important player in this part of the Balkans.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used in this research paper is reviewing the literature related to the influence of Russia, Turkey and China are exercising in the Western Balkan countries. It provides a thorough analysis explaining how this influence is influencing on the integration process as well as contributing in raising euroscepticism of the Balkan countries in the EU process. For the analysis of this paper are used different documents such as policies, research works from other researchers and policy briefs and EU briefing which could provide important evidence that the influence of Russia, Turkey and China to the Western Balkans countries are a crucial point not only from the geopolitical aspect but also from the security aspect. That is the main reason which this topic need to be addressed in order to safeguard these countries and not be involved in disinformation and corruption and their games and be far from reaching their main goal e.i. to be part of the European Union.

### **Conclusion**

There is external influence of Russia, Turkey and China in the Western Balkan countries. Their interests go against European Union enlargement policy. That is why the EU must find other ways in order to hasten the enlargement process of the Western Balkan countries. If there is still a strong influence of the above-mentioned third actors in the region, there is still the fear of a possible war as there are still unsolved conflicts between the Western Balkan countries.

The greatest influence exercised in the Western Balkan countries is noted from Russia as it is the greatest support of Serbia but not only. It is related to the Balkan region due to its historical ties and it has different economic collaborations even though they started to decrease due to EU sanctions because of the Russia-Ukraine war. These sanctions are supported even by some Western Balkan countries but also not fully supported by Serbia. The influence of Turkey in the Balkans is mainly concentrated in cultural, religious, educational and information linkages especially with Muslim population in the region. It is related with the Balkan countries by means of historical ties as Ottoman Empire occupied such region for more than 4 centuries. The influence of Turkey is not harmful to the EU integration of such countries but there is still the chance that the Western Balkan countries rely more on Turkey than the EU which is not positive for the EU enlargement.

Chinese influence in the region is concentrated in economic and technical cooperation with all Western Balkan countries with the exception of Kosovo whose independence it refuses to acknowledge. China is not related to these countries through history but without any doubt a rising force in the region and its economic influence should not be ignored as the financial and economic links between China and the Western Balkan countries have intensified significantly since 2015. Even though China has no historic



ted with such countries, their investments in the region are huge but like some analysts consider China acts like a trojan horse in the Western Balkan region.

The greatest interest of these external actors is to compete with the European Union in the region as their EU enlargement process is delayed a lot and they hope that it is not part of EU. Bieber and Tzifakis consider the Western Balkan as a geopolitical chessboard. Being in the middle, the ones harmed are the Western Balkan countries.

Therefore, the enlargement process must not be prolonged any longer. It is required more collaboration between EU and the Western Balkan countries so that the influence of Russia, Turkey and China is decreased and that these countries wouldn't look for salvation in them.

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## Study on Nutritional Composition of Fungus *Ganoderma Lucidum*

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### Abstract

*Ganoderma lucidum* (*G. lucidum*) (also known as Reishi or LingZhi) is a medicinal mushroom known since ancient times and widely used in Traditional Asian Medicine. Even in modern times, it is recommended as a functional food and alternative treatment for various diseases of the body. Compounds with biological activity are numerous, but there are three classes of compounds that have been intensively studied and their therapeutic activity has been proven by both in vitro and in vivo tests. Polysaccharides, terpenes and phenolic compounds are the most abundant biocompounds. They mainly exhibit antioxidant, antitumour, anti-inflammatory, anti-aging, cardioprotective, hepatoprotective activities and are involved in metabolic regulatory processes. In the present study, we aimed to determine the nutritional values in the alcoholic extract of the fruiting body of the mushroom *G. lucidum*, purchased from a mushroom farm. The total content of polysaccharides and polyphenols was determined spectrophotometrically. The antioxidant activity was determined by DPPH and FRAP methods. The results obtained correlate with the reference studies and we conclude that the analysed mushroom, *G. lucidum*, is a mushroom with nutritional and therapeutic potential for the human organism.

**Keywords:** Polysaccharides, Polyphenols, Antioxidant, Antitumour, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-aging

### Introduction

*Ganoderma lucidum* (*G. lucidum*) is a fungus that has been known under various names in traditional Asian medicine since ancient times. It is most commonly found under the names Reishi and Lingzhi. It has proven to be a "source of longevity" as its long medicinal use (approximately 2000 years), which is common among the Asian

population, has led to the promotion of natural remedies and alternative treatments [1]. Its medicinal benefits cover a wide range of acute and chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, liver and kidney diseases, neurological disorders, inflammatory diseases, cancer, and it acts on oxidative stress, thus having an anti-aging effect and exhibit antimicrobial activity [1-6] In terms of chemical composition, the mushroom species *G. lucidum* contains more than 400 compounds with biological activity, but according to the scientific literature, polysaccharides and triterpenes are found in the most significant amount. Lipids, proteins, peptides, vitamins and minerals are part of the chemical composition of fungal species, with justified biological activities that each of them possess [7,8].

The most studied bioactive compounds in the mushroom composition are carbohydrates, especially polysaccharides (glucose, galactose, xylose, fucose, rhamnose), which have been shown to have pharmacological benefits in terms of antioxidant, antitumour and antimicrobial activities. The second class of bioactive compounds that have attracted the interest of researchers are terpenes, but triterpenes have been found in significant amounts, such as: ganoderic acid, ganoderol, lucidenic acid [9]. The beneficial activities reported for triterpenes are antioxidant, antitumour, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and antiviral [10]. The phenolic class is also one of the most studied classes in mushroom composition, but the polyphenolic acids exert most of the biological activity, these are: gallic acid, p-hydroxybenzoic acid, p-coumaric acid and protocatechuic acid. Polyphenolic acids have been shown to contribute significantly to antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial activities [11].

Due to numerous studies on bioactive compounds and their diversity in the mushroom species *G. lucidum*, we wanted to determine the nutritional profile to obtain clear evidence on the content of the mushroom of interest, polysaccharides and polyphenols to confirm the presence of antioxidant activity.

## **Materials, Equipments and Methods**

### ***G. lucidum* characterisation**

The *Ganoderma lucidum* mushroom sample was purchased from a mushroom farm in Mehedinti County, Romania. The mushroom was cultivated under optimal conditions, in bags with sawdust substrate, wood trunks and grains, at a controlled temperature of 20-24°C for about 90 days [12]. Figure 1 shows the specimen we took at work, *G. lucidum* (Reishi) mushroom, characterised by a reddish-brown cap, with a shiny surface, woody texture with a bulky body, weighing 0.25g, width 8-9 cm and length 9-10 cm.

We brought the mushroom to the powder stage by cleaning it with a brush, then dried the specimen at a temperature of 24-25°C for 15 days, cut it into small pieces and then passed it through a grinder to become powder. In order to obtain the finest powder

(Figure 2), the powder obtained was passed through a sieve with a mesh size of 0.87 mm [13].



**Figure 1.** *G. lucidum* mushroom fruiting body (personal archive)



**Figure 2.** *G. lucidum* mushroom in powdered form obtained after grinding

### Equipments

All laboratory equipment used in this study has been metrologically verified to ensure calibration and reproducibility of experiments with accurate measurements.

### *G. lucidum* ethanolic extract

In order to obtain the ethanolic extract, Soxhlet apparatus was prepared for extraction. Thus, 3 g of the obtained *G. lucidum* powder was subjected to 5 refluxes for 2.5 h (30 min refluxing) using 300 mL of 96% ethyl alcohol. The alcohol filtrate and dried ethanolic extract were obtained by low pressure filtration using Whatmann No. 1 filter paper [14].

The extraction yield (%) was calculated using the equation (1):

$$\text{Extraction Yield \%} = \left( \frac{\text{practical mass obtained}}{\text{theoretical mass}} \right) \times 100 \quad (1)$$

Nutritional composition of *G. lucidum* fruiting bodies

#### Moisture content

Moisture content was determined according to the standards of the Association of Official Analytical Chemistry (AOAC) [15]. 3 g of dried mushroom was placed in an oven at 105°C for 2.5-3 h, during which time the mushroom had a constant weight. After drying, the sample was placed in a desiccator for cooling. The results were obtained using equation (2):

$$\text{Moisture \%} = \frac{(W_1 - W_2) \times 100}{W_1} \quad (2)$$

where,  $W_1$  is mass (g) of sample before drying;  $W_2$  is mass (g) of sample after drying.

#### Ash content

Ash determination is an important step in mineral content analysis. We determined the ash content by the conventional ashing method at high temperature, 600°C for 2 hours. The resulting ash is placed in a desiccator to keep it away from atmospheric moisture until it cools down [15]. The result is expressed as a percentage and calculated using the following equation (3):

$$\text{Ash \% (dry weight)} = \frac{M_{\text{ASH}}}{M_{\text{DRY}}} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

where,  $W_{\text{ASH}}$  is ash content obtained;  $W_{\text{DRY}}$  is dry sample before incineration.

#### Crude protein content

The crude protein content of the analysed mushroom was determined by the total nitrogen method (N x 6.25). The total nitrogen content was determined by the Kjeldahl method. A UdK DK6 digester equipped with a 127 distillation unit was used for the analysis. The sample was first mineralised with sulphuric acid in the presence of mercury (Hg) and selenium (Se) catalysts. After alkalisation of the sample, ammonia is released by alkaline steam distillation and captured in boric acid solution followed by titration with hydrochloric acid. The amount of protein is calculated by multiplying % N by 6.25. The result is then expressed as a percentage relative to the amount of mushroom powder used in the analysis [15, 16].

#### Crude fat content

Crude fats were determined following the method described by Roy et al. 2018. Thus, they were extracted with petroleum ether in a Soxhlet apparatus for 4.5-5 hours. After evaporation of the ether, the fatty residue obtained was determined gravimetrically. The results are expressed in percentages, referred to the amount of powder taken in work [15, 17].

#### Dietary fibre content

A simple and inexpensive gravimetric method was used for the determination of crude fibre. Fat and non-fibrous matter were removed from the sample using an acid-alkaline mixture. The insoluble fibre residue obtained was washed, filtered and dried. The result was weighed and the fibre content was estimated as a percentage by weight of the sample analysed [18].

#### Total carbohydrates

Carbohydrate was calculated by difference using the equation (4) described by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2003, adapted by Singh et al. 2020 [19, 20]:

$$\text{Total carbohydrates (\% dry weight)} = 100 - (\% \text{ moisture} + \% \text{ ash} + \% \text{ protein} + \% \text{ fat}) \quad (4)$$

#### Determination of total polysaccharide content

For total carbohydrate analysis, the aqueous extract of the fruiting body of *G. lucidum* was prepared. 25 g of the powder was extracted with 250 mL of bidistilled water at a temperature of 24-25°C for 24 hours on a mechanical shaker. At the end of the time, the solution was filtered and the precipitate was allowed to dry. The extraction yield was calculated using the above equation (1). The total polysaccharide content of the aqueous solution was determined by the phenol-sulphuric acid method. 0,1 mg of the aqueous extract was mixed with 0,5 ml of 4 % phenol (prepared immediately before use) to which 2,5 ml of concentrated sulphuric acid was added. The mixture was homogenised. Polysaccharide content was determined using a Turner 690 spectrophotometer (Figure 3) at a wavelength of 490 nm [16, 21]. The absorbance of the samples was compared with the glucose calibration curve according to the following equation (5):

$$y = 0.0136x + 0.0735 \quad (5)$$

where, y - sample absorbance measured at 490 nm; x - carbohydrate concentration,  $R^2 = 0.9958$  (correlation coefficient).



**Figure 3. Spectrophotometer Turner 690**

## **Determination of antioxidant activity by different assays**

### **Total phenolic content (TPC)**

The total phenolic content of the 96% alcoholic extract was determined by the method described by Salamah et al. 2018, adapted to the present working conditions. Folin-Ciocalteu reagent (1:10 v/v) was used, and as a standard we used gallic acid solution, prepared before use, in different concentrations 50-450 mg/mL. We mixed 0.5 mL of each concentration of gallic acid obtained with 2.5 mL of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent, to which we added 1.2 mL of 7.5%  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$ . The absorbance is read at 765 nm on a Turner 690 spectrophotometer. Take 0.5 mL of the ethanolic extract of *G. lucidum* and mix with 2.5 mL of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent, followed by 1.2 mL of 7.5%

Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>. The mixture is left in the dark for 30-40 minutes and the absorbance is read at a wavelength of 765 nm. The results are expressed in milligrams gallic acid equivalent (GAE) per gram of dry weight (dw) [22]. The absorbance was compared with the gallic acid calibration curve using the following equation (6):

$$y=0.0078x+0.1861 \quad (6)$$

where, y - sample absorbance measured at 765 nm; x - total phenolic content; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.9959.

#### DPPH assay

The antioxidant activity of the extract obtained from the fungus *G. lucidum* was measured by free radical scavenging activity using the 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) free radical assay. 2 mg powder of the fruiting body of *G. lucidum* was taken and dissolved in methanol, over which a DPPH solution with a concentration of 20 mg/L was added. The resulting mixture was left in the dark for 30 minutes. Ascorbic acid was used as a positive control. Absorbance was measured using a Turner 690 spectrophotometer at a wavelength of 517 nm [16, 23]. The DPPH activity was determined according to equation (7):

$$\% \text{ Inhibition} = A_{\text{control}} \left( \frac{A_{\text{sample}} - A_{\text{blank}}}{A_{\text{control}}} \right) \times 100 \quad (7)$$

where, A<sub>sample</sub> - absorbance of the sample read at 517 nm; A<sub>control</sub> - DPPH absorbance without powder mixture; A<sub>blank</sub> - Ascorbic acid absorbance.

#### Ferric Reducing Antioxidant Power assay

The method is based on the ability of the sample to reduce Fe<sup>3+</sup> ions to Fe<sup>2+</sup>. For the determination, 2.9 mL of FRAP reagent was mixed with 0,1 mL of the ethanolic extract obtained at different concentrations. After mixing, the sample was left in the dark for 30 minutes. Absorbance was measured using a Turner 690 spectrophotometer at a wavelength of 593 nm against the blank solution [16, 24]. The standard solution was ascorbic acid solution and the results are expressed in µg ascorbic acid equivalent (AAE) per mL of the extract.

#### Statistical analysis

All determined tests were performed in triplicate. Data are expressed as means ± standard deviation (SD). The results were studied using SPSS 16.0 parametric tests. One-way ANOVA was utilized in order to correlate the chemical composition data of the mushroom species. When differences were found, the Duncan multiple comparison test was used, and differences were considered significant at p < 0.05.

#### Results and Discussion

Nutritional properties and chemical composition of the fungus



The results obtained for the nutritional profile and chemical composition of the mushroom of interest are presented in Table 1, obtained by adapting to the available working conditions. The yield of the aqueous extraction was 52.92%.

**Table 1. Nutritional profile of *Ganoderma lucidum***

No.	Nutritional compound (g/100g)	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Value (Mean±SD)
1	Moisture	38.70	33.33	41.93	37.98 ± 4.34
2	Ash	9.26	8.51	9.46	9.07 ± 0.50
3	Crude protein	5.25	5.10	6.14	5.49 ± 0.56
4	Crude fats	1.75	1.70	2.04	1.83 ± 0.18
5	Dietary fibres	2.89	2.91	2.90	2.9 ± 0.01
6	Total carbohydrates	33.47	39.49	28.44	33.80 ± 5.53

In the determinations carried out, it can be observed that the calculated moisture content has a value relatively close to that of El Sheikha 2022 [8]. The total carbohydrate content has the highest value in the nutrient profile, corresponding to the estimated reports of Gharib et al. 2022 [12] and Rahman et al. 2020 [24]. The ash, fibre and crude fat contents have values close to those estimated by other authors such as Gharib et al. 2022, Rahman et al. 2020 and Stojkovic et al. 2014 [12,24,25]. In our case, the crude protein content was low compared to the literature reviewed [12,24].

Based on the results obtained and the reports of other authors observed in different studies, we concluded that the climatic conditions and the soil origin of the reference mushrooms have a great importance for the nutritional profile. Thus, we observed that in regions with a warmer climate, favourable for mushroom development, the contents in the chemical composition may vary in significant percentages compared to the nutritional profile obtained from the fruiting body of the mushroom we analysed [8, 24].

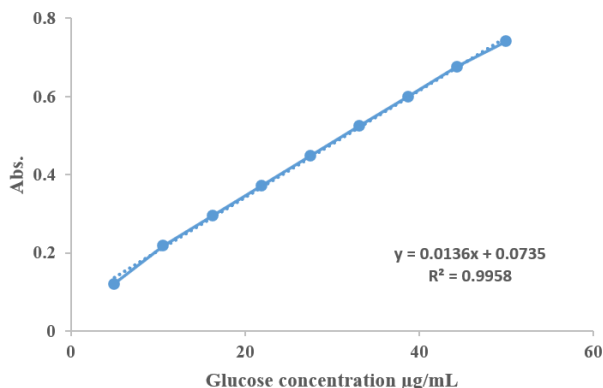
The amount of bioactive compounds is closely correlated with physicochemical factors and soil enzyme activity. Studies investigating the effect of soil quality on *Ganoderma lucidum* metabolites have reported that differences in soil depth and soil enzyme activity play a significant role in metabolite concentration [26, 27]. However, a detailed knowledge of the composition of bioactive compounds and an in-depth substrate-based analysis of different soils in different geographical regions have not been investigated and should be further investigated [28].

### Total polysaccharide content of *G. lucidum* aqueous extract

Polysaccharides are known as macromolecules with antioxidant activity involved in various biological processes. They are considered as one of the most important metabolites of the fungus *Ganoderma lucidum*, representing a significant amount in its nutritional composition.

The carbohydrate content determined from the aqueous extract of *G. lucidum* was evaluated at  $36.72 \pm 0.27$  mg/g DW of the extract, calculated according to the equation (5) described above using the glucose calibration curve, as shown in Figure 4.

To determine the total polysaccharide content, the calibration curve was established at different glucose concentrations. The calibration curve was obtained by reading three concentrations of glucose solutions. A calibration curve point was established.



**Figure 4. Calibration curve of glucose at different concentrations for the determination of total polysaccharides.**

The results obtained for total polysaccharide content are presented in **Table 2**. The reported value is the mean of three experimental readings with standard deviation (SD). Also, values reported by other authors for total polysaccharide content are presented.

**Table 2. Results on polysaccharide content in *G. lucidum* compared with other literature data**

	Data from the present study (Mean ± SD)	Data from the literature	Reference
Polysaccharide content	$36.72 \pm 0.27$ mg /g DW	655.0 mg/g DW	[21]
		112.82 mg/g DW	[29]
		24.06 mg/g DW	[29]

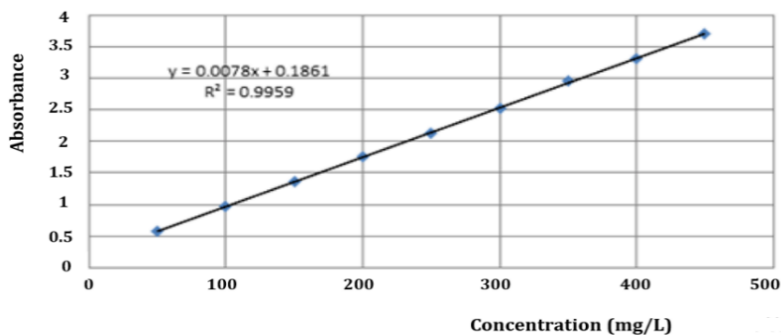
Following studies estimating the total polysaccharide content we observe that the values vary considerably, thus Kozarski et al. 2014, determined a content of 655.0 mg/g DW. Skalicka-Wozniak et al. 2012, determined the total polysaccharide content for *Ganoderma lucidum* on different wood type substrates and the content ranged from 112.82 to 24.06 mg/g DW [21, 29].

From studies estimating the total polysaccharide content, it can be seen that the values vary considerably, for example, Kozarski et al. 2014, determined a content of 655.0 mg/g DW on fresh wild fruiting bodies. Skalicka-Wozniak et al. 2012, determined the total polysaccharide content for *Ganoderma lucidum* on different woody substrates and the content ranged from 112.82 on maple substrates to 24.06 mg/g DW on birch substrates [21, 29]. Thus, the medium in which the mushrooms are grown has a strong influence on the amount of polysaccharides, as observed in the literature. The mushroom of interest on which the polysaccharide content was determined was grown on a sawdust substrate and the polysaccharide content was 36.72 mg/g DW.

### **Antioxidant activity**

The presence of an excess of reactive oxygen species or a decrease in the level of antioxidant components in the body leads to damage to body tissues by various factors (physical, chemical and physiological) and can cause a variety of irreversible/reversible diseases such as ageing, infertility, development of tumours, infections of the genito-urinary and digestive systems. Antioxidant activity is noted through reactions and mechanisms such as free radical scavenging, free radical reducing capacity and prevention of ionic catalyst chain formation of transition metal catalysts [30]. In the present study, antioxidant activity was determined by determination of total phenolic content, DPPH radical scavenging assay and FRAP method.

Some studies have shown that triterpenoid compounds exert antioxidant activity by reducing free radicals in cancer cells, also have an effect on intracellular levels of reactive oxygen species and endogenous antioxidant enzymes in spleen lymphocytes reducing radiation-induced oxidative damage [31, 32]. Polysaccharide compounds contribute beneficially in reducing oxidative damage induced by reactive oxygen species. Some studies have shown benefits on reducing some forms of cervical carcinoma post  $\gamma$ -radiation [33].



**Figure 5. Calibration curve of gallic acid standard [34]**

For the determination of antioxidant activity, alcoholic extract was prepared using 96% ethanol. The extraction yield was 65.67%. For the determination of TPC, the calibration curve was generated and the results were obtained using the above equation (6) (Figure 5).

The calibration curve was obtained by absorbance readings, in triplicate, of nine different concentrations of the standard gallic acid solution.

The results are averages of three determinations with standard deviation (SD), obtained for total polyphenol content (TPC) and are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Results obtained for total phenolic content (TPC)**

	Data from the present study	Data from the literature	Reference
TPC	25.66 ± 0.15 mg GAE/g DW	28.11 mg GAE/g DW	[35]
		30.91 mg GAE/g DW	[36]
		39.30 mg GAE/g DW	[37]

The total phenolic content of the fungal species studied, *Ganoderma lucidum*, was 25.66 ± 0.15 mg GAE/g DW. It was determined using the GAE calibration curve [34]. Consulting the literature, the value obtained is close to the value of 28.11 mg GAE/g d.w. obtained by Gasecka et al. 2016 [35]. Other authors determined TPC and the results were 30.91 mg GAE/g and 39.30 mg GAE/g d.w. reported by Sheikh et al. 2015 and Wu et al. 2015 [36, 37].

The antioxidant capacity tests carried out on *Ganoderma lucidum* powder by means of the DPPH assay and the FRAP assay gave the results that are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Results obtained for antioxidant capacity by DPPH and FRAP assays**

	Data from the present study	Data from the literature	Reference
DPPH	23.92 ± 0.1 %	24.04 ± 0.33 %	[24]
		51.3 ± 1.04 %	[38]
FRAP	119.080 ± 50.66 µg/100g	614.83 ± 0.05 µg/100g	[24]
		49.87 ± 1.58 µMol TE/g	[38]

For DPPH and FRAP assay determinations the results were 23.92 ± 0.1 % respectively 119.080 ± 50.66 µg/100g. Literature indicates approximate values on DPPH test and relative values on FRAP test. Thus Rahman et al. in 2020 reported values for DPPH assay of 24.04 ± 0.33 % and for FRAP assay the value of 614.83 ± 0.05 µg/100g [24]. Kolniak-Ostek et al. in 2022 reported for DPPH assay 51.3 ± 1.04 and for FRAP assay 49.87 ± 1.58 µMol TE/g [38]. The antioxidant properties of compounds from *G. lucidum* have been intensively studied over the years through numerous studies and thus their antioxidant capacity has been demonstrated [39].

### Conclusions

*Ganoderma lucidum* (Reishi or LingZhi) is a natural source of nutritional interest due to its rich composition. It is well known that *G. lucidum* has been traditionally used in Asian medicine since ancient times for its proven medical benefits such as anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antitumour, antimicrobial and antiviral activity. A comprehensive review of the literature shows that *Ganoderma lucidum* is a mushroom of current interest, and the interest of researchers is mainly focused on the nutritional composition and the quantitative and qualitative determination of compounds with biological activity. In this study, the nutritional composition and antioxidant activity of the *G. lucidum* mushroom have been highlighted, and the nutritional content observed following the determination of moisture, ash, crude protein, crude fat, dietary fibre and total carbohydrates has been correlated with the results observed in the scientific literature, allowing us to conclude that this mushroom has nutritional properties beneficial to human health.

The total content of polysaccharides was determined using the aqueous extract and the results indicated a relative content compared to studies that determined carbohydrates on the same species of mushroom but with different geographical origins. The differences in the results are due to the geographical location and the growth conditions of the mushroom. It has been observed that factors such as growth substrate, warmer climate and tropical geographical location have a positive influence on the nutritional content and the content of bioactive compounds such as polysaccharides and triterpenes. However, more in-depth studies on the correlation between the concentration of bioactive compounds in the *G. lucidum* mushroom and the substrate of the ridge soil should be targeted, as this information is currently

insufficient and a detailed analysis would improve the understanding of these differences and the quality of the final product.

In the current study, the antioxidant activity was demonstrated by determining the total phenolic content, DPPH and FRAP assays. The mushroom species is known for its antioxidant activity, especially for its antitumour effect and its activity on oxidative stress reduction processes. The ethanolic extract was used to determine the antioxidant activity for DPPH and FRAP assays and to determine the total phenolic content. The results showed that the mushroom has antioxidant activity, and the results were correlated with several studies in the literature.

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## **Physico-Chemical Methods Applied To Bioactive Compounds Determination From Ceramium Rubrum On The Romanian Coast Of The Black Sea**

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### **Abstract**

The red seaweed species *Ceramium rubrum* found in abundance along the Romanian Black Sea coast. Phylum Rhodophyta, Class Florideophycidae, Family Ceramiaceae, Genus *Ceramium* to which the species *Ceramium rubrum* belongs, is recognized due to two compounds: agar-agar and carrageenan which are widely used in the medical, pharmaceutical and food industry for their properties, agar-agar and carrageenan. The study aims to determine and quantify the active principles in the red seaweed *Ceramium rubrum* using IR and UV-VIS spectrometry and chromatographic methods. For IR spectrometry, dry algal powder and standard  $\beta$ -carotene used. For simultaneous evaluation of  $\beta$ -carotene, chlorophyll a and chlorophyll b, a chromatographic method (high performance liquid chromatography) applied. The antioxidant capacity analyzed by chemiluminescence method, showing remarkable results.

**Keywords:** *Ceramium rubrum*, red algae, bioactive compounds, UV-VIS, IR, HPLC analysis

### **Introduction**

The species *Ceramium rubrum* is part of the red algae group: Phylum Rhodophyta, Class Florideophycidae, Family Ceramiaceae, Genus *Ceramium* (Huds. C. Ag.), which represented by multicellular algae. This is also present in the Black Sea, throughout the year, but especially in spring and summer, at depths from 0.5m to 4.5m [1]. *Ceramium rubrum* colonizes the rocky substrata on the infralittoral and medium, being an annual species. Algae are well known for their biotechnological significance, especially red algae, but they are also appreciated as a natural food source [2].

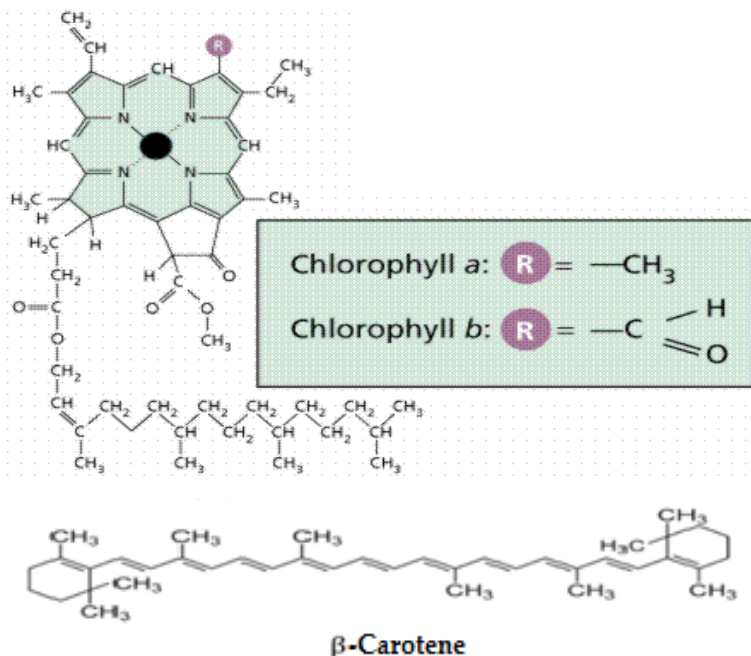
Nowadays, we want to discover new biologically active compounds from red seaweeds, these being the least studied, with pharmaceutical, cosmetic and nutraceutical applicability [3]. Polysaccharides are also important compounds found in all types of algae. A study determined a yield of 4.27% polysaccharides obtained from the species *Ceramium rubrum*, the galactan type being in the highest proportion of 78%. In Figure 1 is shown *Ceramium rubrum* algae.



**Figure 1. *Ceramium rubrum* algae**

Galactans (agar and carrageenan) used in the food industry as a food additive to thicken or stabilize food, but also for technical purposes [4]. Another study carried out on *Ceramium rubrum* in Turkey, concluded that this species has antioxidant properties due to the high content of phenolic compounds, flavonoids and carotenoids [5]. In a recent study where 3 species of algae from the Sea of Marmara were examined, including the species *Ceramium rubrum*, it revealed an increased content in total proteins and lipids for this species. Fatty acids were also determined, and among them the most abundant were palmitic and oleic acids. Linoleic acid and  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid, which cannot be synthesized by humans and are important for nutrition, have been detected in *Ceramium rubrum* [6]. Red algae are also important due to their antimicrobial capacity, which has been proven in various studies, including one that was conducted on 4 species of red algae, including the species *Ceramium rubrum*, collected from the Red Sea in Egypt. These were tested against ten multidrug resistant clinical isolates of Gram + and Gram - bacteria and different concentrations of methanol extract of *C. rubrum* show activity against *S. flexneri*, *E. coli*, *P. aeruginosa* and *K. pneumoniae*. The bioactive compounds that have been identified in red algae and due to which the antioxidant capacity is present are phenols, terpenes, acetogenins, indoles, fatty acids and volatile halogenated hydrocarbons [7]. Chlorophylls are greenish pigments, playing a key role in capturing energy from the light source, transferring it and separating charges during photosynthesis. They are non-polar, and they contain a hydroporphyrin ring or a porphyrin centrally linked to a magnesium ion. Cancer research has shown that chlorophyll is a very powerful therapeutic remedy for this condition, chemoprevention and chemotherapy [8]. Carotenoids have an important role in the

protection of all plants against photooxidative processes, because they have an effect of trapping peroxy radicals and singlet oxygen, due to their antioxidant capacity  $\alpha$ -carotene,  $\beta$ -carotene and their derivatives are the main carotenoids found in red algae. Figure 2 shows the chemical structures of the 3 pigments chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and  $\beta$ -carotene.



**Figure 2. The chemical structures of chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and  $\beta$ -carotene**

Containing a conjugated polyene in its structure, beta-carotene is an unusual type of oxygen-free lipid antioxidant.  $\beta$ -carotene may reduce the occurrence of epithelial cell cancers, which account for more than 90% of cancer deaths, and a diet rich in it leads to a reduced risk of cancer occurrence, according to observational studies [9].

In this study, a chromatographic method used to separate, identify and quantify chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and  $\beta$  carotene in a sample. This method applied to the analysis of *Ceramium rubrum* extract with good results compared to external standards. Identification and determination of each component was done after correlating the spectrophotometric and chromatographic spectral profile. The antioxidant capacity of this species was also determined using the photochemiluminescence method. Firstly, phytochemical studies were carried out on 3 types of extracts of *Ceramium Rubrum* to determine the active principles found in this type of algae. From the three extracts obtained, etheric, alcoholic and aqueous, a series of particularly important bioactive compounds, from a pharmaceutical point of

view were highlighted, such as reducing compounds, catechic tannin, cumarines, flavonoic aglicoles, ozes and poliozes [10].

## Materials and Methods

Macroalgal material – the main step to perform detailed laboratory analysis is the harvesting and preservation of algae. In order to collect the intact material, it is usually done manually with the help of a knife. In order to be able to differentiate them when harvesting, they are placed in a bag with water, on which must be specified the place of harvest, the depth and the date. The extraction was carried out with 90% acetone for these *Ceramium rubrum* red algae, after they had previously been dried in the dark at room temperature and finely ground. After filtering the extract, it introduced into a volumetric flask containing the same solvent. To analyze by spectrophotometer and chromatographic analyses, the stock solution diluted with different solvents.

Standards – The analyzes are carried out on the red algae extract against the standards of  $\beta$ -carotene, chlorophyll a and chlorophyll b, reporting the correlated results of IR, UV-VIS spectrometry and HPLC. In a volumetric flask, the 3 standards of chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and  $\beta$ -carotene were dissolved in diethyl ether. To prepare standard solutions by dilution with the appropriate solvents, the stock solution used to perform these chromatographic and spectrophotometric analyses.

## Equipment

- The Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometer (FT/IR 4200) by Jasco is a highly advanced instrument for infrared spectroscopic analysis. Below is an overview of its key features and specifications: wavenumber Range: 7800 to 350  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ; accuracy:  $\pm 0.01 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ; high-intensity ceramic source; detector: DLATGS; ATR correction.
- The **CINTRA 10e Spectrometer** is a UV-Visible spectrophotometer designed for high-speed, accurate spectral analysis. Here are the key specifications and features: **wavelength Range: 190–1200 nm; Monochromator: Czerny-Turner mounting with holographic grating; automatic lamp Peaking; detector: Silicon photodiode.**
- The High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) system by GBC. Below is a detailed overview of its configuration and key features: LC 1150 quaternary solvent delivery system; LC 1150 Column oven; LC 1460 vacuum on-line degasser; detector: LC 5000 photodiode array detector (DAD); WinChrom chromatography data management system.
- Photochemiluminometer PHOTOCHEM Analytik Jena, Germany, 2008 - is an advanced analytical device used primarily to measure the antioxidant

capacity of various substances. It operates based on photochemiluminescence (PCL). This light emission is directly proportional to the antioxidant capacity of the sample being tested [11].

## Methods

The results of the HPLC method, which was carried out on sample and standard solutions, were illustrated by the superimposed chromatogram, maximum spectrum plot and its graph. A chromatogram generated by the maximum spectrum plot, showing the maximum absorbance at each point, can show how the chromatogram will appear when the wavelength for each sample, are optimized. In order to have the spectra for each peak detected in real time, with the diode-array detector. The expression of the ability of the column to retain the compound is rendered by the capacitance factor and ranges from 1 to 15. To analyze the sample solutions and standards, used in spectrophotometric method were compared. By the spectral plot and superimposed spectra, the results were illustrated [12].

Antioxidant capacity - The plant product (20 mg) was dissolved in 1 mL of ethyl alcohol, after first drying, grinding and finely pulverizing to a fine powder, and a cold extract was obtained. Extraction was carried out for 24 and 72 hours respectively in an amber beaker at room temperature. Separation was carried out by decantation, without filtration, after the mixtures had been shaken regularly. By comparison with the standard substance Trolox the antioxidant capacity for each algal mass extract was determined using the standardized method ACL – (Antioxidant capacity of lipid soluble substances). In order to obtain a photochemical reaction, the samples were exposed to external radiation from a phosphorus-lined Hg lamp, which provides maximum energy at 351 nm and produces free radicals in the sample to be analyzed. Antioxidants present in the sample annihilate the free radicals after they have been released, but some of them remain in the sample and mix with the photosensitive reagent without the need for an external excitation source. The photomultiplier detects the photon that has been emitted and amplified as a result of the chemical reaction. The total antioxidant capacity of the device electrical signal will be converted into concentration values and measured [13].

## Results and Discussion

HPLC analysis - The chromatographic conditions used for the analysis of the standard solution of 25mg/L of each component:  $\beta$ -carotene, chlorophyll a and chlorophyll b, are presented in Table 1. The Table 2, lists the results for the 3 solutions that were analyzed at the same time and the same chromatographic conditions.

By comparing the retention time of the standard with the sample, they are usually identified. By superimposed normalized spectra of the sample and the standard, the diode array detector achieves a better identification. The identity of each separate

component was confirmed using the similarity index. The results reveal very well separated components in Figure 2.

**Table 1. The parameters of HPLC**

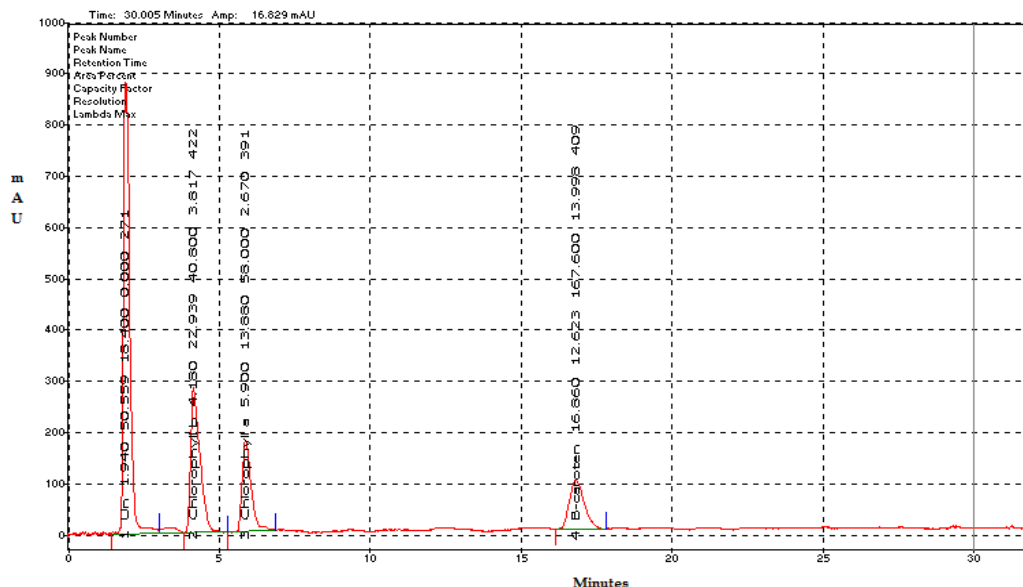
Tehniques	Features HPLC
Mobile Phase	methanol/water/ethyl acetate=18/1/1 A: 5% water C: 90% methanol D: 5% ethyl acetate
Detector	PDA (200–700 nm); units: mAU
Column	RP-18 Nucleosil® 5 µ 150 ×4.6 mm; Guard column RP-18 Nucleosil® 5 µ; 50 × 4.6 mm
Injection	Rheodine valve
Temperature	30 °C
Elution	Isocratic
Flow rate	1mL/min
Sample size	100 µL
Sample concentration	0,5 mg/mL
Standard concentration	12,5 mg/L (dilution with elution solvent)

**Table 2. The chromatographic analysis results**

Peak No	Peak I	Peak II	Peak III	Peak IV
Component	Mixture	Chlorophyll a	Chlorophyll b	β-carotene
Resolution	0	2.67	3.818	13.99
Area (%)	50.56	13.89	22.94	12.624
λ max (nm)	271	391	422	409
t <sub>R</sub> (min)	1.95	5.90	4.17	16.86
Capacity factor	18.4	56	40.7	167

The standard substances chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and β-carotene were prepared by dissolution in ethyl ether, the optimal solvent for all three compounds. After chromatographic optimization of the concentration and separation method, standard

solutions of 25 ppm concentration were prepared by dilution with the elution solvent. These were analyzed chromatographically. In Figure 3 are presented the chromatogram for standard solution of chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and  $\beta$ -carotene 12,5 mg/L each. To make the working solution by diluting with elution solvent.



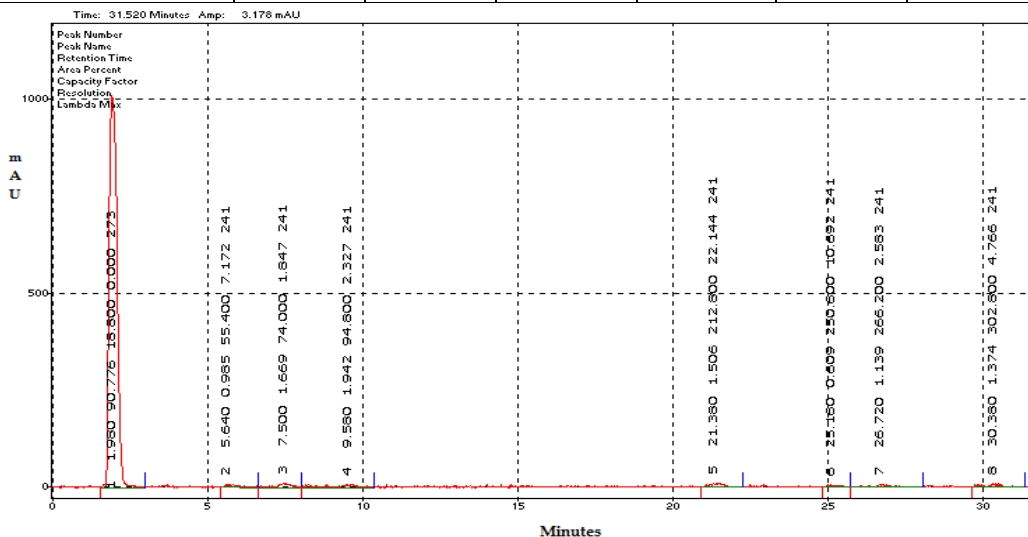
**Figure 3. The chromatogram for standard solution of chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and  $\beta$ -carotene 12,5 mg/L each. Peaks 2, 3 and 4 show the presence of chlorophyll b, chlorophyll a and  $\beta$ -carotene respectively.**

Ceramium rubrum extract in 90% acetone was used. Dried and shredded algae were macerated in cold and dark for 12 hours in a cloth cartridge with 90% acetone: 1g plant product weighed to analytical precision with 40mL 90% acetone. After 12 hours, the extract was quantitatively filtered, the cartridge was washed with 90% acetone and brought to a 50 mL volumetric flask with the same solvent. The concentration of the extract obtained is 20 mg plant product/mL 90% acetone. In order to discover the optimal chromatographic concentration, several diluted solutions were tested. To reach a better reproducibility, more than 5 chromatographic analyzes were used at this concentration level (0.5 mg/mL). Table 3 and Figure 4 show the results of the chromatographic analysis of the Ceramium rubrum standard solution.

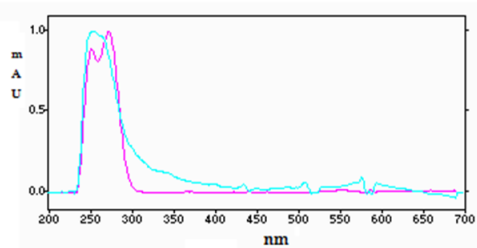
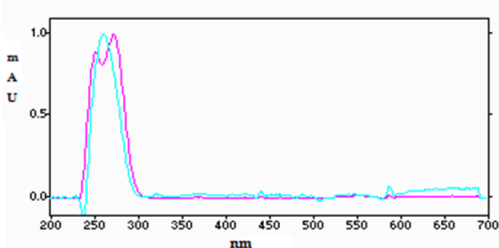


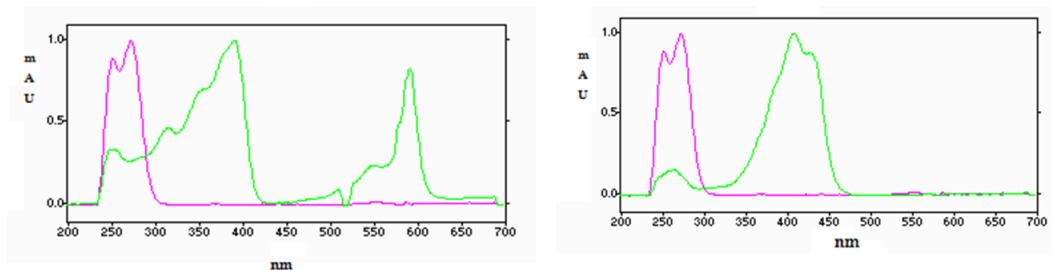
**Table 3. The results of chromatographic analysis for the Standard solution of Ceramium rubrum 0,5 mg/mL**

Peak No	Peak I	Peak II	Peak III	Peak IV	Peak V	Peak VI
Resolution	0	7.172	1.847	2.325	22.144	10.692
Area (%)	90.779	0.984	1.669	1.942	1.505	0.609
$\lambda$ max (nm)	273	241	241	241	241	241
$t_R$ (min)	1.99	5.65	7.5	9.55	21.36	25.16
Capacity factor	18.8	55.4	75	94.7	212.9	250.8



**Figure 4. The chromatogram for Ceramium rubrum 0,5 mg/mL**





In the entire chromatogram for *Ceramium rubrum* from Figure 4, there are 7 peaks that represent compounds from chlorophyll and carotenoid pigments. These peaks are highlighted in Table 3, where we especially note the area of the peak (%). The size of the peak area is conditioned by the amount of pigment found in the composition of the algae. We also find from Table 3 that the level of the areas of peaks 2-7 is below approximately 2%. The most important peak is peak I, which has an area of 90.779%.

In Figure 5 are shown in detail the peak I superimposed spectra of the solutions of the red alga *Ceramium rubrum* and the standard solution of chlorophyll a. In Figure 6 are shown the peak I superimposed spectra of the solution of the red alga *Ceramium rubrum* and the standard solution of  $\beta$ -carotene.

Using the peak area under the curve, the sample was quantified. The calculation of the concentration takes into account the mass of the sample, the volume of the flask for the extract, the dilution factors (F) and the concentration determined by the chromatographic method:

$$C = \left[ \frac{V_{S,flask} \text{ (mL)} \times 10^{-3}}{m_{sample} \text{ (g)}} \times F \times C_{det.} \left( \frac{\text{mg}}{\text{L}} \right) \times 10^{-3} \right] \times 100 \text{ g active subst/100g sample} \quad (1)$$

$$C = \left[ \frac{50 \text{ (mL)} \times 10^{-3}}{1.009 \text{ (g)}} \times 40 \times 18.115 \left( \frac{\text{mg}}{\text{L}} \right) \times 10^{-3} \right] \times 100 = 3.59 \text{ g chlorophylls/100g sample} \quad (2)$$

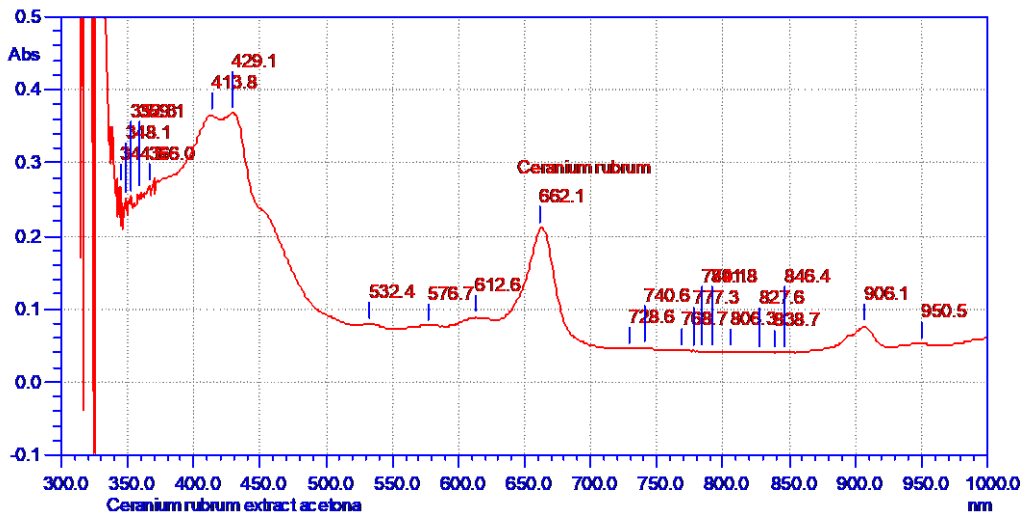
For the optimal separation of the chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b, and  $\beta$ -carotene standards, a chromatographic method was used, the HPLC method, which offers an improvement in precision, versatility and reproducibility. Also, through these methods the presence of the three types of pigments, chlorophyll a, chlorophyll b and  $\beta$ -carotene in the algal mass used by *Ceramium rubrum* was demonstrated and was calculated with the help of the above equation and the amount of total chlorophylls found in it studied species, 3.59 g chlorophylls/100g sample.

Although there are few studies on *Ceramium rubrum* that highlight the levels of total chlorophyll and  $\beta$ -carotene, we can still compare the existence of these pigments with studies done on other species of red algae. Thus, Rosemary et al. (2019) highlighted the chlorophyll pigments: chlorophyll a content ( $8.96 \pm 0.39$  mg/g d.w.) and chlorophyll b content ( $7.74 \pm 0.33$  mg/g d.w.) and total carotenoid content ( $1.28 \pm 0.5$

mg/g d.w.) on the red alga *Gracilaria corticata* originating from the southeast coast of India, and Choudhary et al (2023) studied the red alga *Halymenia porphyrifomis* originating from the Arabian Sea and reported the existence of chlorophyll biocompounds through total chlorophyll content ( $7.0 \pm 0.04$  mg/g d.w.) and total carotenoid content ( $0.20 \pm 0.01$  mg/g d.w.) [14,15].

### Spectrophotometric analysis in UV-VIS for *Ceramium rubrum*

UV-VIS spectrophotometric analysis was performed on extracts of the seaweed *Ceramium rubrum* obtained by maceration with acetone. The absorption spectrum obtained in the range 300-1000 nm is presented in Figure 7. The presentation of the whole spectrum of the alga *Ceramium rubrum* allows to highlight the component constituents.



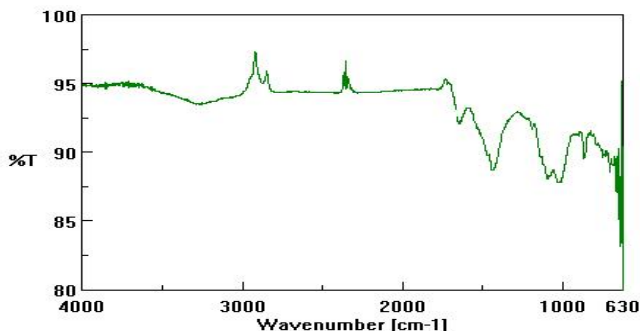
**Figure 7. The absorption spectrum of the *Ceramium rubrum* extracts 35 mg/mL in acetone 90%, in the range of 300–1000 nm**

### Spectrophotometric analysis in IR

The IR spectrophotometric study was performed on dried powders of the seaweed *Ceramium rubrum* and standard substances  $\beta$ -carotene, cholecalciferol, retinol and ergocalciferol.

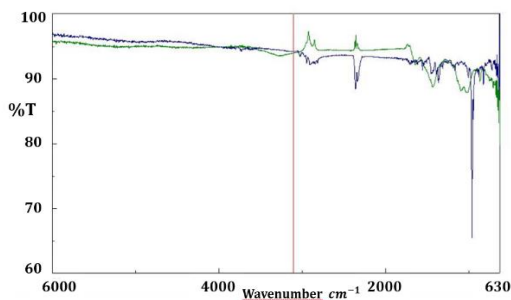
In order to highlight the structures of the different compounds of interest in the composition of the red algae *Ceramium rubrum*, we used the method of superimposing the IR spectra of the algae spectrum with the spectra of the studied compounds.

A specific IR profile for the dry powder of Ceramium rubrum is 4.000–630  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and can be seen in Figure 8. Next, this IR spectrum is overlapped with other spectra of interest taken in the study.

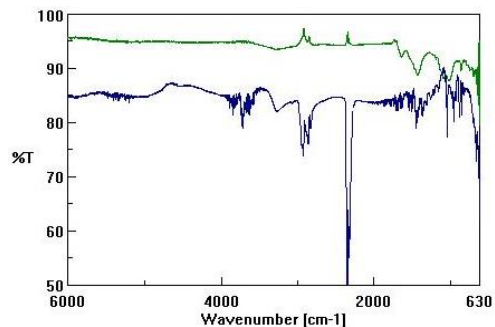


**Figure 8.** The spectrum of Ceramium rubrum dried powder, in the range of 4.000–630  $\text{cm}^{-1}$

Figure 9 shows the superimposed IR spectra for Ceramium rubrum seaweed powder and  $\beta$ -carotene solid substance. Figure 10 shows the superimposed IR spectra of the seaweed Ceramium rubrum dry powder and cholecalciferol solid substance.

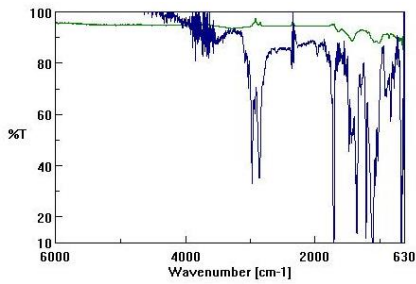


**Figure 9.** The Overlaid IR spectra of Ceramium rubrum dried powder (upper curve) and  $\beta$ -carotene (lower curve), in the range of 4000–630  $\text{cm}^{-1}$

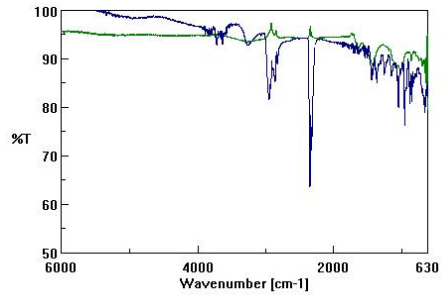


**Figure 10.** The Overlaid IR spectra of Ceramium rubrum dried powder (green) and cholecalciferol solid substance (blue), in the range of 4000–630  $\text{cm}^{-1}$

Figure 11 shows the superimposed IR spectra for Ceramium rubrum seaweed powder and retinol solid substance. Figure 12 shows the superimposed IR spectra of the seaweed Ceramium rubrum dry powder and ergocalciferol solid substance.



**Figure 11.** The Overlaid IR spectra of Ceramium rubrum dried powder (green) and retinol solid substance (blue), in the range of 4000–630  $\text{cm}^{-1}$

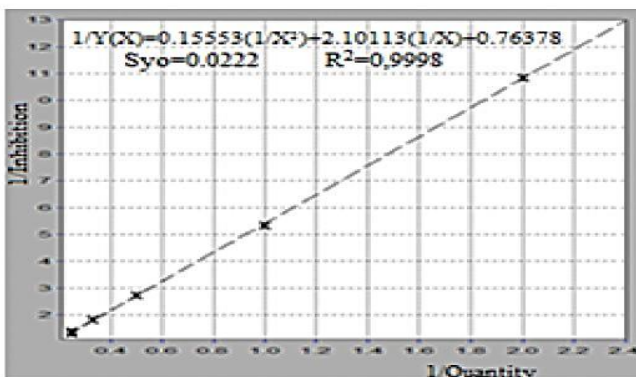


**Figure 12.** The Overlaid IR spectra of Ceramium rubrum dried powder (green) and ergocalciferol solid substance (blue), in the range of 4000–630  $\text{cm}^{-1}$

Using the IR spectrophotometry method, the presence of  $\beta$ - carotene and some vitamins, such as cholecalciferol (Vitamin D3), ergocalciferol (Vitamin D2) and retinol (Vitamin A), were determined in Ceramium rubrum algae, which are important sources in nutrition and also contributes to the antioxidant capacity.

### Antioxidant capacity

Analytik Jena Germany reagent kits used the calibration curve to determine the antioxidant capacity, these being: R1 (dilution solvent), R2 (buffer reagent), R3 (photosensitive reagent), R4 (reagent size). By measuring a series of standard solutions containing 0.5, 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 nmol Trolox (suitable for 5-30  $\mu\text{L}$  R4), as can be seen in Figure 13, this is how the curve was constructed calibration. Table 4 show the results in nmol/sample, Trolox equivalent units. According to the ACL method quantified by comparison with the Trolox standard substance, the antioxidant capacity of the algal mass was expressed at the time of extraction and the volume of the sample used.



**Figura 13. Calibration curve for standard Trolox (ACL method, Analytik Jena, Germany)**

**Table 4. The antioxidant capacity of Trolox (ACL method)**

Algae species	Volume sample (µL)	Analysis time (s)	Extraction time (Hours)	Equivalent units Trolox (nmol/g dry sample)	Equivalent units Trolox (nmol/volume sample)
Ceramium rubrum	20	120	24	52.3	1.043
	20	120	72	141.5	2.84

By means of the chemiluminescent method, it was demonstrated that this species of red algae *Ceramium rubrum* has antioxidant properties, being able to be used in the pharmaceutical and medical fields in the treatment of many ailments. The highest antioxidant capacity is identified in the case of the *Ceramium rubrum* sample at 72 hours, which proves that it has a high antioxidant capacity.

Compared to other studies that were carried out to determine the antioxidant capacity of the *Ceramium rubrum* species, the values that were obtained in this study are close. The antioxidant properties of the biocompounds of *Ceramium rubrum* species have also been proven by other studies. Biris-Dorhoi et al (2018), in the study carried out on five species of green, brown and red algae, including the species *Ceramium rubrum*, the following values were obtained for *Ceramium rubrum* 0.1%- 0.530 nmol/volume sample, for *Ceramium rubrum* 1%- 1.623 nmol/ volume sample, and for *Ceramium rubrum* 5% - 1,271 nmol/volume sample [16].

**Conclusions**

The rich composition of the red alga *Ceramium rubrum* was investigated by modern methods and techniques. By the physicochemical analysis presented in this study, (HPLC), the existence of chlorophyll pigments (chlorophyll a and chlorophyll b) and β-carotene is highlighted as the main conclusion. Other bioactive compounds of pharmacognostic interest are also highlighted from UV- VIS spectral analysis.

From the study of the antioxidant activity by chemiluminescence method, the antioxidant capacity due to the biochemical composition of *Ceramium rubrum* algae was evidenced

By IR spectrophotometric analysis it was demonstrated the existence of β-carotene pigments and vitamins A, D2 and D3 in the biochemical composition of the red algae *Ceramium rubrum*.

Red algae, especially this *Ceramium rubrum* species, are very little studied for their potential, although it has been demonstrated that they constitute an important source

of valuable compounds and can be further exploited for its antioxidant capacity and it can be used in the pharmaceutical and nutraceutical fields.

The present study can be considered a start for new researches that highlight the bioavailability of biocompounds from *Ceramium rubrum*. It also deserves extended future research to expand the possibilities of using this species of algae in other industries such as the food industry or the cosmetics industry, along with applications in the pharmaceutical industry.

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## **The Problems Arising from the Application of the Right to Judgment Within a Reasonable Time Against the State of Albania**

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### **Abstract**

My contribution to the present conference shall address in this topic: The problems arising from the application of the right to judgment within a reasonable time against the state of Albania. This work analyzes the conditions that should be completed by the heir unable to work, to be considered or not subject to Article 5,6 of the Convention. The reason for the selection of this topic, this topic was born following the decisions of the Strasbourg court in the incorrect application by the Albanian courts of Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The research work is directed to the study of doctrine, legislation and analysis of case law for cases with the same object, where are identified about cases/decisions, the conclusions of which are discussed below. The first part focuses on the normative-legal regulation of the protection of the right to trial within a reasonable time in Albanian legislation. The second part gives a concise overview of the trial of the case within a reasonable time. The jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court, the procedural moments where the institute is selected, the evolution with the changes of the civil procedure code and the practical cases judged by this court. The third part deals with the comparative analysis between practical cases. Violation of the principle of trial within a period in the case of *Laçej* and others against Albania, request no. 22122/08. In the *Zeço and Seat SHPC* case against Albania, requests no. 61445/12, the *Mulla v. Albania* case, request no. 72348/11, the *Mulla v. Albania* case, request no. 72348/11, etc. Conclusions. Changes to the Code of Civil Procedure (CPC) in 2017 brought important changes to increase citizens' access to justice, providing reasonable deadlines for trial and mandatory execution, this analyzes the practical implementation of the changes undertaken, within the reform in law, in connection with the Code of Civil Procedure. In the framework of the Reform in Justice, the KPC provided that the reasonable time for the completion of the process for the civil trial at each of the three levels of trial (court of first instance, court of appeal and high ) is two years. However, the legal regulations are numerous and continue to be problematic for the review of the non-trial within a

reasonable time, including the trial of the appeal in the Supreme Court, as well as the lack of effective means of appeal in this regard, ECHR. unjustifiable is also the violation of the principle of trial within a reasonable time, for the review of the non-execution of the final court decision, the violation of the effective means of appeal and the right to property in the procedural aspect, the ECHR assesses that the delay in the execution of the court's decision is unjustifiable and contradicts Article 6 of the ECHR.

**Keywords:** Reasonable time, judgment within a reasonable time, instability of judicial jurisprudence, different decision-making, delay in judgment, effective means of appeal

## Introduction

The jurisprudence of the Court of Strasbourg to carry out a regular legal process. The problems found by everyone in the report of Albania.

In recent years, the Strasbourg court has taken into consideration and evaluated the problems related to the implementation of a regular legal process and has evaluated through the Albanian justice system the implementation of a regular legal process. The notion of human rights is based on the theory of natural rights. They are attributes or qualities that a person possesses as a human being and as such, they are inseparable from the human being. For this reason, the state has no choice but to recognize and guarantee them. Recognition and guarantee does not mean only a formal sanctioning of rights in legal acts, but simultaneously means the creation of mechanisms and guarantees which enable their real and effective protection. In a democratic society, the individual is at the center.

The protection of human rights constitutes the foundation and bases of the activity of a state of law, and due process of law is one of the basic guarantees that states offer in the protection of other rights. The principle of due process as a universal principle, also sanctioned in other acts of an international nature, determines that every subjective right of the individual in a judicial conflict must pass and be analyzed in the procedural test of due process, otherwise, the court has given a completely illegal decision violating the fundamental constitutional rights of individuals. This right is the totality of the principles mentioned above, which together constitute the individual's guarantee that the judicial power is realizing the constitutional function of delivering justice without arbitrariness. The European Convention gives the most complete meaning for the regular judicial process Human Rights (hereinafter "Convention") which was signed by the member states of the Council of Europe on November 4, 1950 and entered into force on September 3, 1953. Article 6 of the Convention stipulates that "1. Every person has the right to have his case heard fairly, publicly, within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal, established by law, which will decide whether conflicts over his rights and obligations

of a character civil, whether for the validity of any accusation of a criminal nature directed against him. The judgment must be given in public, but the presence of the press and the public in the courtroom may be prohibited during all or part of the proceedings, in the interests of morality, public order or national security in a democratic society, when the interests of minors or the protection of the private life of the parties in the process requires this, or to the extent deemed absolutely necessary by 12 courts, when in special circumstances the publicity would be of a nature that would harm the interests of justice". The Council of Europe, through the Convention, created the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter "Court" or "ECtHR") as a permanent mechanism that would ensure compliance with the obligations arising for the contracting party states.<sup>1</sup>

### **Legal regulations and court practice**

The legal regulations are the amendments to the Code of Civil Procedure in 2017 in articles 399/1 - 399/12 of the Code of Civil Procedure (hereafter CPC), the rules for the adjudication of requests for ascertaining the violation of the reasonable term, the acceleration of the procedures are provided and compensation for damage. Through these provisions, the legislator has provided the right of the parties to submit a request to the court for the determination of the violation and the acceleration of the procedures (item 1 of article 399/6, of the CPC). When there is a final decision to establish the violation and speed up the procedure, the requesting entity can file a lawsuit for compensation of damage, according to the legal provisions (item 2, article 399/6, of the CPC) articles 399/1-399 /12 of the Code of Civil Procedure have created an effective mechanism for ordinary (normal) time of judicial activity, where the primary goal is not "monetary compensation" of the parties in protracted processes, but the prevention of this through mechanisms for speeding up the procedures, in order to provide justice in time by the courts. An integral part of the acceleration of the proceedings is the decision of the competent court that (1) ascertains the passage of reasonable trial terms and (2) orders the taking of concrete measures to accelerate the trial of the case. In this context, only finding a violation of the reasonable trial period, without the possibility for the court to order the taking of concrete measures to speed up the procedure (because there is an objective impossibility for proceeding), is not a decision-making option for the court that examines the request for "fair compensation" according to articles 399/6(1) and 399/7(2) of the Code of Civil Procedure. For the procedure that the law expressly provides in relation to the presentation and review of requests for ascertaining the violation of the reasonable term of judgment. This is also in the light of the findings of the Constitutional Court<sup>2</sup>, which states that: "[...] ordinary courts, during the implementation of procedural provisions and consideration of requests for acceleration, should avoid excessive formalities and consider these requests with priority, otherwise, this legal remedy

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[2] See Article 19 of the ECHR

[1] See the Decision of the Constitutional Court no. 39, date: 09.12.2021

would lose the purpose for which it was approved by the legislator. [...]”In this perspective, in order to avoid unnecessary administrative delays and in order to comply with legal procedures, it is important to clarify a legal and practical aspect related to the incorrect filing of the request/complaint for establishing the violation of the deadline reasonable, directly to the court that is competent for the review on its merits, instead of the court that is alleged to be late. In this regard, the petitioner/complainant who claims violation of the right to a trial within a reasonable time must procedurally file his request in the court where it is alleged that the "violation" of the reasonable time of the trial is taking place ("the court in delay" ) and not directly in the court that is competent for its examination, according to Article 399/6(1) of the Code of Civil Procedure (only in the Supreme Court these factual qualities are combined). This is because, according to Article 399/5(1) of the Code of Civil Procedure, "[the] claim is filed in the court's secretariat that is in arrears[...]" . In the following, Article 399/7(2) of the Criminal Procedure Code connects the submission of a request to the court that is alleged to be late, with the emergence of the obligation to perform some procedural actions by this court (sending to the competent court according to Article 399/6( 1) of the Code of Civil Procedure within 15 days, of the file and the written opinion of the relator judge, about the progress of the case, the causes of the delay and his proposal for resolving the situation). So, if the violation of trial deadlines is claimed before the court of first instance, but the request for establishing a violation of the deadline and taking measures for acceleration is not filed there, but submitted directly to the court of appeal, then the latter should not register it as a case for trial, but forward it to the court of first instance and then to the latter, in accordance with Article 399/7(2) of the Code of Civil Procedure, within 15 days of receiving the request for finding a violation of the reasonable term and speeding up the trial, send the appeal request to the appellate court for consideration, together with the file and the written opinion of the judge of the first instance if the unreasonable delay is alleged to be happening in the appellate courts, the request is not filed directly with the Supreme Court , but at the appellate court in question (the court in delay) and from the moment of the filing of the appeal request for the finding of the violation of the reasonable term and the acceleration of the trial, within 15 days it sends it to the Supreme Court for consideration, together with the file and the written opinion of the relator judge. . This is because the judge, in his written opinion for the court that will examine the request for finding a violation of the deadline, will have the opportunity to clarify that he performed the "remedial" action for the delayed trial. , according to article 399/6 point 1, even before the above deadlines have passed, taking into account the complexity of the case, the object of the dispute, the proceeding or the trial, the behavior of the body that is conducting the procedures, as well as of any other person related to the case, when they claim delays in the investigation, trial or execution of the decision. The degree of compliance with this principle significantly determines the effectiveness of the judicial process<sup>1</sup>. (See the

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[<sup>1</sup>] See the Qufaj v. Albania decision; Decision Scopelliti v. Italy, dated 23.11.1993 of the ECHR

decision H. against France, dated 24.10.1989 of the ECHR). The period of the reasonable term for the conclusion of a civil judicial process extends from the moment of filing the lawsuit until the moment of the execution of the court decision. The court has a main and special position, as it is the only body that is responsible for the delivery of justice and as such it participates obligatorily in all relationships that are created during the trial of the case. Provisions of articles 399/1-399 /12 of the Code of Civil Procedure are aimed at creating a procedural tool that provides solutions to cases where negligence or excessive prolongation of the procedures is found, for which there is no reasonable justification in order to respect the principle of a regular process legal according to Article 6 of the ECHR. The purpose of this tool is to give opportunities to subjects, who are in the above conditions, to have an effective procedural tool to solve the situation in which they are and to conclude the procedures in the most reasonable time. In this sense, the law has provided deadlines, which are considered reasonable, according to the degrees of judgment. Article 399/2 of the CPC stipulates that the reasonable terms of the trial must be evaluated in relation to the concrete circumstances that have influenced the duration of the process, specifically "In the duration of the trial or proceeding, the time when the case is suspended for legal reasons is not counted, when has been postponed due to the requests of the requesting party, according to this chapter, or when there are circumstances of the objective impossibility of proceeding.". In article 399/9 of the CPC, several criteria are identified in relation to the assessment of the standard of judgment within a reasonable time, specifically, "[...] the court assesses the complexity of the case, the object of the dispute, of the proceeding or of the judgment, the conduct of the parties and the trial panel during the trial, [...] as well as any other person related to the case" The European Court of Human Rights (hereafter ECHR), in its consolidated jurisprudence, has identified several constituent elements of this standard. Referring to this jurisprudence, it results that in the calculation of the reasonable term, various factors are taken into consideration, such as: the complexity of the case; conduct of litigants; the conduct of judicial and administrative authorities.<sup>1</sup>

- a. Regarding the complexity of the case, this evaluation criterion takes into account all the factors and elements related to the case, the nature of the interests involved in it, the importance of the facts, the importance of the legal solution, the number of accused persons and witnesses, the international elements, the connection of the case with other cases and the intervention of other persons in the procedure.<sup>2</sup>

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[2] See the decision Buchholz v. Federal Republic of Germany dated 06.05.1981 and Bjelic v. Slovenia ap. no. 50719\06, dated 18.10.2012. of the ECHR

[1] See the decision Traggiani v. Italy dated 19.02.1991; Manieri v. Italy dt. 27.02.1992, Stefancic v. Slovenia, date 25.10.2012 ECHR

- b. As far as the applicant's behavior is concerned, this criterion is related to the way the parties in the process have behaved towards the proceedings. The diligence shown by them for the completion of the process, the obstacles they have created and other factors that are related to their actions or inactions that have affected the progress of the process. However, this should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, as a person is not obliged to cooperate with the prosecuting authorities actively in order to speed up the judicial proceedings leading to his conviction.<sup>1</sup>
- c. Regarding the conduct of the authorities for the assessment of the duration of the reasonable term of the trial, the ECtHR has assessed that only delays attributed to the state can be taken into account. These delays can be caused either by the judicial authorities or by the administrative authorities. Causes of this nature in the jurisprudence of the ECHR have been pointed out, for example: the wrong joining of some cases which has caused unnecessary delays, the postponements of court hearings not based on law, the illegal suspension of the judicial process, delays on the part of public law enforcement agencies of the state in submitting evidence requested by the court, transferring criminal cases from one court to another, holding appeal hearings.<sup>2</sup>

The court decision of the Durrës court of first instance no. 11-2018-2735, dated 31.05.2018, by which the return of the acts was decided, while as the case number registered in the appeal for which it seeks to establish the violation of the deadline, it refers to with number 1303/21234-205 which concerns the examination of his appeal against the final decision no. (11-2018-6514)1993, dated 18.12.2018 of the Durrës Judicial District Court, this decision was taken by the court of the Durrës judicial district after the new filing of his lawsuit, for which the Durrës district court had previously decided to return the acts with decision no. 11-2018-2735, dated 31.05.2018. petitioner alleging violation of reasonable trial period, the high court panel requested official records to the Court of Appeals of General Jurisdiction. From the response returned by the latter with the letter dated 13.07.2023, it appears that the applicant did not appeal against this decision on the return of the acts, but appealed against decision no. (11-2018-6514) 1993, dated 18.12.2018 of the first instance court in Durrës, by which it was decided to dismiss the plaintiff's request for the lawsuit with the object: "The obligation of the defendants, the Ministry of Justice Tirana and the Ministry of Finance Tirana for rewarded me in the amount of 100,000 (one hundred thousand ALL. In the conditions when the applicant in the request for determination of the reasonable term, despite the confusion about the number of the decision of the court of first instance and about the date of the decision, refers to a correct number of the case registered in the Court of Appeal, for which he requests

[2] See *Eckle v. Federal Republic of Germany* decision, dated 15.07.1982 ECHR

[1] See *Ewing v United Kingdom*

the acceleration, this case, which is related to the lawsuit filed by him against the Ministry of Finance with the object of payment of compensation, the panel assesses to analyze the claims made by the applicant for violation of the reasonable deadline for this case. at the time of registration of the request in the Court of Appeal of Durrës, it results that the case has passed the review period in the Court of Appeal of Durrës (and then in the Court of Appeal of General Jurisdiction), as defined in article 399/2 point 1, letter "b", of KPC (2 years, in the conditions of omission for the civil trial in the Court of Appeal). The applicants have not taken positions that would have caused unreasonable delays in the trial. But on the other hand, it is justified that the citizen made requests for acceleration in order to present to the court the particulars of the trial with prevalence of this case in relation to the other cases that await the trial at the same time or before it. In other decisions, the court, especially for the sake of speed, must maintain the order of registration of the case. the behavior of the authorities is an obstacle to the trial within a reasonable time, because even the courts in their countries have different attitudes. The Venice Commission has emphasized that the judicial reform, the process of verification of judges/prosecutors in Albania, was necessary even if it would bring unforeseen consequences. In addition to the undoubted positive aspects on the quality of the judiciary in the long term, in the short term the verification process affects the number of active judges in the system, causing a temporary practical problem until their replacement.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that the courts cover non-respect of this principle by continuously and repeatedly violating the judgment of the previous deadline. instruments for solving and not creating such a situation should have been found, not violating in a continuous manner and not respecting the European Court of Human Rights (hereafter ECHR) in its consolidated jurisprudence, has identified some constituent elements of this standard. The non-compliance of which does not in any way justify the violation of the reasonable deadline by the courts for the examination of the issues of "Judgment of requests for ascertaining the violation of the reasonable deadline, the acceleration of the procedures and the compensation of the damage", is an innovation of law no. 38/2017, in order to make effective the provisions of Article 6 (1) of the European Convention "On the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms", as well as Article 42 of the Constitution, regarding the adjudication of cases within a reasonable time . This intervention of the legislator aimed to create an effective tool for addressing the problem of trials exceeding reasonable deadlines, which is designed to be implemented under the conditions of a normal activity of the judiciary. The initiative came as a result of several decisions of the European Court of Human Rights against Albania, etc.<sup>2</sup>), in which the necessity for Albania to create an effective mechanism for addressing the issue of the development of judicial procedures beyond reasonable deadlines was laid out. The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania

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[2] See the opinion of the European Commission for Democracy through the (Venice Commission) Albania on the appointment of judges to the Constitutional Court.

[1] The case of Luli and Others v. Albania (2014)

accepts in its decision no. 39, date: 09.12.2021 that the mechanism embodied in articles 399/1-399/12 of the CPC [...] can be effective in ordinary organizational circumstances and functioning of the judicial system. In this particular case, doubts are raised about the possibilities that the acceleration tool has to respond to the appropriate degree to the need of the right of individuals to trial within a reasonable time in relation to the real possibilities of the judicial system, due to the high volume of cases, as well as its human and infrastructural resources as a whole [...] but still this is not worthy of a Constitutional Court which has a Constitutional mission, not justificatory. The behavior of the authorities in the absence of filling the courts with judges, the delays in the appointment of new judges who, apart from others, have considerable economic value, the consequences of which are borne by the Albanian taxpayers, who not only do not find justice, but pay for not having it. From the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutor's Council, extending the vacations and probation of those who are part of the system for unjustified reasons that lead to this situation in which the Courts of First Instance of the General Jurisdiction, the Court of Appeal and the Court that High even today after 9 years of the adoption of the justice reform with irreparable consequences for this decade of the justice system.

### **Jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court regarding the trial within a reasonable time**

The principle of trial within a reasonable time is of fundamental importance for the trial of cases as it constitutes one of the elements of the regular legal process provided for in Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This principle is based on the postulate "Justice delayed is justice denied". The degree of compliance with this principle significantly determines the effectiveness of the judicial process<sup>1</sup>. In the consolidated practice of the European Court of Human Rights (hereafter ECHR), which has determined that the period of reasonable time for the conclusion of a civil judicial process extends from the moment of filing the lawsuit to the moment of execution of the decision judicial. <sup>2</sup>The court has a position main and special, since it is the only body that is responsible for the delivery of justice and as such participates in a mandatory manner in all relationships that are created during the trial of the case, the consolidated jurisprudence of the ECHR has identified several constituent elements of this standard. In its reference, it results that in the calculation of the reasonable term, various factors are taken into consideration, such as: the complexity of the case; conduct of litigants; the conduct of judicial and administrative authorities.<sup>3</sup> With the practice of the Constitutional Court,<sup>4</sup> it was decided to annul the decision no. 2/5/2, dated 17.06.2021, of the Administrative College and the obligation of the Administrative Court of Appeal to judge the case within 6 months. In this

[2] See Decision H. v. France, dated 24.10.1989 of the ECtHR

[3] See the decision Qufaj v. Albania; Decision Scopelliti v. Italy, dated 23.11.1993 of the ECtHR

[4] See the decision Buchholz v. Federal Republic of Germany dated 06.05.1981 and Bjelic v. Slovenia ap. no. 50719\06, dated 18.10.2012. of the ECHR

[1] See decision no. 2, dated 17.02.2022 of the Constitutional Court of Albania



decision, the Constitutional Court, among other things, assessed: "...in this particular case, the petitioner's behavior was not the reason for prolonging the trial of her case... the petitioner's case appears complex, but not to the extent that it justifies the delay of second-instance trial for more than 4 years... the administrative trial of the applicant's appeal continues for more than 4 years without second-instance decision-making, although the legislator has defined administrative trials as fast, providing for short deadlines procedural in law no. 49/2012. The duration of the administrative trial has caused delays in the execution of the judicially accepted search, unappealed by the litigants, as a result the applicant has been unable to freely exercise the right to property, acquired from the implementation of the law on the return and compensation of properties for the part of her property remaining after the expropriation from 2015..." the overload in the courts is a well-known and prolonged situation, which does not depend on the applicant, but only on those responsible for the administration of the justice system, the task of which is to create an efficient and well-staffed judicial system, in order to best respond to the requirements of the rule of law, which includes the conclusion of judicial processes in accordance with the standards imposed by the right to due process regularly, while this constitutional obligation is not observed by them. But what we see and it is unfortunate is the fact that the postulate "Justice delayed is justice denied" is simply misinterpreted in many decisions of the high court. In decision No. 00-2023-4148 05.10.2023 The Administrative College of the High Court states: "On 05.07.2023, the petitioner addressed the High Court, requesting the determination of the violation of the reasonable deadline and the acceleration of the trial procedures of the civil case no. .11243-00954-00-2019, registration date 16.04.2019, where he submitted: "Determining the violation of the reasonable term in the trial of this case, due to the passing of the 2-year legal term for the trial of cases in the Supreme Court, defined in Article 399/2 letter "b" of the Code of Civil Procedure . - The case must have priority in the trial, as it was decided in the trial at first instance that the trial be dismissed and by the Court of Appeal it should be annulled and sent back for a retrial. - There is no reason to justify the extension of the trial term beyond the 2-year period. - The applicant is in a difficult economic situation and is threatened with real danger from 3 non-realization of rights and causing further economic damages, as a result of the alienation of the assets of the defendant Besnik Binjaku.. With letter no. 4035 prot, dated 21.07. 2023, the Chancellor of the Court requested the opinion of the relator judge. With letter no. 4035/1 prot, date 21.07.2023, the relator judge submitted, among other things: "Currently, the Civil College of the Supreme Court is examining the merits cases, registered in 2015, which have passed for trial, following their selection in the Counseling Chamber. The case that is the subject of this request is a case that is pending to be considered in the Advisory Chamber, but was registered in the Supreme Court in 2019. The case, in terms of object and procedural progress, presents special causes, which gave priority to its trial outside the aforementioned

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[<sup>1</sup>] See paragraph 38 of decision no. 2, dated 17.02.2022 of the Constitutional Court of Albania

chronological order, in accordance with the criteria defined by the High Judicial Council in Decision no. 78, dated 30.5.2019 of the Supreme Judicial Council, "On the calendar of consideration of cases in the Court of Appeal" and from article 460 of the Code of Civil Procedure, but the Civil College is judging cases of this category (demolition and return for retrial) until 2018, and from the verifications carried out, the requesting party has not previously submitted a request for the acceleration of the trial. After I became aware of the request, the necessary measures were taken to schedule the case for trial on 04.10.2023. ... Therefore, I consider that this request cannot be accepted"

As it appears from the content of the decision, the high court itself, which should apply the article in article 399/2 letter "b" of the Code of Civil Procedure, violates it. In conclusion, we say that when the high court violates the code of civil procedure, it states in this case that ".. in terms of the behavior of the authorities for the assessment of the duration of the reasonable term of the trial, the ECtHR has assessed that only the delays attributed to the state can be considered. These delays can be caused either by the judicial authorities or by the administrative authorities. Causes of this nature in the jurisprudence of the ECHR have been pointed out, such as: the wrong joining of some cases which has caused unnecessary delays, the postponements of court hearings not based on law, the illegal suspension of the judicial process, delays on the part of of public law-enforcement agencies of the state in submitting evidence required by the court, transferring criminal cases from one court to another, holding appeals sessions.<sup>1</sup> The latest jurisprudence of the ECtHR in the case of *Bara and Kola v. Albania* - applications no. 43391/18 and 17766/19, dated 12.10.2021. The ECtHR states that, disregarding the understandable delay resulting from comprehensive reforms of the justice system and the vetting process, states have a general obligation to organize their legal systems in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of Article 6/1, including that of a fair trial within a reasonable time. Furthermore, the ECtHR noted that since 2012 the backlog of the Supreme Court had gradually increased and remained at a significant value. Although it is not for the ECtHR to decide on the proper interpretation of domestic law, the Supreme Court's approach in the first applicant's case of not accounting for the effects of ongoing reforms of the justice system on its operation over the long term of the proceedings, in these circumstances, would not be consistent with its jurisprudence under Article 6/1 on the "reasonable time" requirement, as it could shift to the individual litigants the full burden of any delay caused by the reforms in the justice system. In conclusion, there is a violation of Article 13 in relation to Article 6/1 of the Convention. At the same time, the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court,<sup>2</sup> where on the criteria for ascertaining the violation of the constitutional right to a regular legal process, as a result of not judging the case within a reasonable time, it was emphasized that the

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[2] See *Ewing v United Kingdom*

See the decisions in court decisions no. 33/2021, 34/2021, 35/2021 and 37/2021

[3] See the decisions in court decisions no. 33/2021, 34/2021, 35/2021 and 37/2021

reasonableness of the extension of the process must be evaluated according to the special circumstances of the case, taking into account especially the behavior of the applicant and the risk that this extension of trial deadlines brings for him, the complexity of the case, as well as the behavior of the authorities<sup>1</sup> with the behavior/interest in the applicant and the risk from the judicial procedures, the Constitutional Court in its jurisprudence stated that the evaluation of behavior is a determining element of the reasonable duration of the proceedings, analyzing the circumstances of whether the applicant has acted in accordance with the procedural rights, showing or not a continuous interest in adjudication of the case within a deadline as suitable as possible for him and if he has caused or has caused delays in this regard. In the specific case<sup>2</sup>, the applicant does not appear to have caused or caused delays in this regard. Regarding the complexity of the case, the Constitutional Court in its jurisprudence has stated that all aspects of the case are important, including its object, disputed facts and the volume of written evidence. The complexity of the case, in balance with the principle of ensuring the appropriate administration of justice, may justify considerable time duration. Regarding the conduct of the authorities, the Constitutional Court has emphasized that Article 42 of the Constitution, as well as Article 6 of the ECHR impose the obligation to organize the legal system of the country in such a way that the courts meet the requirements of the standards for a legal process, including that of judgment within a reasonable time. In this regard, the courts have the duty to ensure that all subjects participating in the process behave in order to avoid any unnecessary delay<sup>3</sup> (In conclusion, the workload of the courts is not a constitutional argument that can justify not judging cases within the deadlines determined by the legislator<sup>4</sup> in the assessment of the general duration of the procedures.

### **Analysis of practical cases by the ECHR.**

Analyzing the individual constitutional appeal before the Albanian Constitutional Court in depth can lead to different conclusions regarding its particular aspects. However, for the purposes of this article, we will focus only on the aspect of its effectiveness with the aim of guaranteeing the rights derived from Article 6 of the ECHR and Article 42/2 of the Constitution. The individual appeal in the Constitutional Court is practically considered as an effective tool as far as the elements related to some basic procedural rights are concerned, such as: the right to appeal, the right to defense, the principle of the competent court, adversary in the trial, etc. In these cases, the Constitutional Court not only finds the violation committed by the courts or other public administration bodies, but also annuls the act produced by them as a result of

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[2] see decisions no. 33, dated 01.11.2021; no. 16, dated 16.03.2021; no. 76, dated 04.12.2017 of the Constitutional Court).

[3] see decisions no. 69, dated 17.11.2015; no. 12, dated 05.03.2012 of the Constitutional Court

[4] see decision no. 22, dated 29.04.2021 of the Constitutional Court).

[1] see decisions no. 33, dated 01.11.2021; no. 16, dated 16.03.2021; no. 3, dated 06.12.2018; no. 26, dated 27.03.2017 of the Constitutional Court.

an irregular legal process, returning it to them for reconsideration. However, referring to concrete cases as well as the practice of the ECtHR, this appeal does not turn out to be effective as it pertains to some special elements of the regular process, such as: issues related to the non-execution of court decisions (together with the right to compensation), issues related to the extension of the judicial process beyond the reasonable term as well as other material rights. I do not see it appropriate to dwell on the issue of whether or not the appeal to the Albanian GJK should be considered (at least in the formal sense) the last effective national remedy. This has already been stated repeatedly by the ECHR,<sup>1</sup> which entails the obligation to be taken into consideration by the competent Albanian institutions. In relation to claims for trial within a reasonable time, the ECHR has emphasized that Article 13 of the ECHR guarantees an efficient solution before local authorities for violations of Article 6/1 of the ECHR. Effective means available to litigants in a domestic system for raising claims about the prolongation of proceedings. Due process will be considered effective, within the meaning of Article 13 of the Convention, if they prevent the alleged violation or its continuation, or provide an adequate address for any potential violation that has already occurred. Article 13 therefore offers an alternative: an appeal tool is effective if it can be used either to speed up the taking of a decision by the courts examining the case, or to provide litigants with an appropriate remedy for delays incurred up to at this moment. However, the ECHR has emphasized that the best solution in absolute terms is undoubtedly the prevention of the violation. Where the judicial system has shortcomings in relation to the request on the duration of the procedures according to Article 6/1 of the ECHR, the creation of an appeal tool to speed up the procedures in order to prevent their prolongation is the best solution. This remedy would undoubtedly offer an advantage over a remedy that only regulates compensation, since it prevents further violations in relation to the same procedures, i.e. it does not redress violations a posteriori, as a remedy for compensation does.<sup>2</sup> The cases of ECtHR practice where the Albanian state has established a violation of the reasonable time limit, problems arising from the continuous duration of the trial time limits, as in the Zeqo and Seat SHPC case against Albania, requests no. 61445/12 and 53157/15, decision dated 22.06.2023, regarding the violation of the right to trial within a reasonable time, the ECHR assesses that the requests are well-founded, since the delay for more than 9 years and 5 months for the completion of trial from the first instance to the Supreme Court is unjustifiable and violates the principle of trial within a reasonable time. in the Mulla v. Albania case, request no. 72348/11, decision dated 06.07.2023, regarding the violation of the right to a trial within a reasonable time, the ECHR assesses that the request is well-founded, since the delay of more than 7 years and 5 months for the completion of the trial at the levels of domestic judiciary is unjustifiable and violates this right to a trial<sup>3</sup>In the case of Hamitaj v. Albania, request

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[2] See also the cases Balliu, Beshiri, Marini, Qufaj k. ALBANIA

[3] See the case of Scordino v. Italy, March 29, 2006

[1] <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-225322>

no. 11254/1, decision dated 20.07.2023, regarding the violation of the right to trial within a reasonable time and the effective means of appeal, the ECHR assesses that the request is well-founded, since the delay for more than 6 years and 3 months for the conclusion of the trial at the domestic judicial level is unjustifiable and violates this right. Violation of the principle of trial within a reasonable time In the case of *Laçe* <sup>1</sup>and others against Albania, request no. 22122/08, decision of September 29, 2022, for the non-trial within a reasonable time, including the appeal trial in the Supreme Court, as well as the lack of effective means of appeal, the ECtHR considers that the delay in the trial in the Supreme Court moreover that 4 (four) years is unjustifiable and violated the principle of trial within a reasonable time<sup>2</sup> Violation of the right to be tried within a reasonable time (Key words: Reasonable time, trial within a reasonable time, insurance of claim) In the case of *Vjola SHPK and DE SHPK* against Albania, request no. 18076/12, decision dated 30.01.2024, for the violation of the right to property and failure to judge the case within a reasonable time, the ECHR assesses that the request is well-founded, since the trial of the case at all judicial levels for more than 7 years, and especially for more than three years in the Supreme Court, violates the right to be tried within a reasonable time. In cases where the insurance of the claim is required, the domestic courts must react immediately and not delay their judgment, as this violates the right to be heard within a reasonable time.<sup>3</sup> Conclusion:

The legal regulations are the amendments to the Code of Civil Procedure in 2017 in articles 399/1 - 399/12 of the Code of Civil Procedure (hereafter CPC), the rules for the adjudication of requests for ascertaining the violation of the reasonable term, the acceleration of the procedures are provided and compensation for damage. Through these provisions, the legislator has provided the right of the parties to submit a request to the court for the determination of the violation and the acceleration of the procedures (item 1 of article 399/6, of the CPC). When there is a final decision to establish the violation and speed up the procedure, the requesting entity can file a lawsuit for compensation of damage, according to the legal provisions (item 2, article 399/6, of the CPC) articles 399/1-399 /12 of the Code of Civil Procedure have created an effective mechanism for ordinary (normal) time of judicial activity, where the primary goal is not "monetary compensation" of the parties in protracted processes, but the prevention of this through mechanisms for speeding up the procedures, in order to provide justice in time by the courts. Despite the legal changes and legal provisions, the improvement of the non-compliant legislation of the reasonable deadline is often unjustified, and the practice of the courts in dismissing all requests as unfounded remains and leaves room for non-compliance with this principle, as well as violated the principle of timely judgment. reasonable. The latest jurisprudence of the ECtHR in the case of *Bara and Kola v. Albania* - applications no. 43391/18 and

[<sup>2</sup>] <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-219730>

[<sup>3</sup>] <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-230623>

[<sup>8</sup>] <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-230623>

17766/19, dated 12.10.2021. The ECtHR states that, disregarding the understandable delay resulting from comprehensive reforms of the justice system and the vetting process, states have a general obligation to organize their legal systems in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of Article 6/1, including that of a fair trial within a reasonable time.