

# **THE ROLE OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TOWARD THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STUDY CASE: ALBANIAN ALPS TOURISTIC REGION**

***Mr.Sc. Halil BAJRAMI, PhD Cand.***

Dardania College, Prishtina/ Kosovo

***Dr. Sci. Ejup FEJZA***

Universum College Prishtina/ Kosovo

***Dr. Sci. Ali ISMAJLI***

Kosovo Customs/ Kosovo

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## **Abstract**

Tourism today plays a big role in the development and sustainable growth. Its role is highlighted in the sustainability of economic development of the country. In the global economy, its role is increasingly being seen as a sector with multi-dimensional effects such as: economic, environmental and social effects. Kosovo, in terms of tourism resorts, has five touristic regions constituting an offer to diversify touristic resort market: competitive on the local and regional market. Albanian Alps Touristic Region (the case of this study), has significant advantages compared to other touristic regions of Kosovo in terms of tourism resources available for sustainable development of tourism. Current studies by local and international tourism institutions show the possibilities of tourism development in Kosovo, with a special emphasis on tourism region of Albanian Alps. Balkan yeasts include three countries: Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro. The potential in tourism in these three countries has been put at the service of regional tourism offer in the regional tourism market and beyond. Today, tourism is increasingly turning into a key sector of the economy to generate financial revenues and create opportunities for new jobs. One of many struggles faced by Kosovo's tourism economy today is identifying a genuine strategy to develop the tourism product, and the use of marketing strategies that will orient towards sustainable tourism development. Thus, the aim of this study is to analyse the role of public institutions towards the sustainable growth through tourism. Public institutions, including ministries and municipalities responsible for tourism development in Kosovo are ten. Research was conducted in the period May to July 2014.

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**Keywords:** Sustainable tourism, tourism policy, sustainable tourism models, The Albanian Alps Tourism Region

## **Introduction**

Kosovo has inherited from the past a low level of economic development, which has been associated with: economic coercive measures (destruction of the economic system), the last war, slow process of privatization, lack of FDI, and so on. In this context the tourism sector has also been influenced by these processes. The tourism sector is a heterogeneous sector that requires coordinated activities of public, private and local community engagement in the planning and development of tourism. Alongside the development of the tourism product that has had considerable difficulties even the tourism marketing has been at a low level, not to say there was no marketing department as a distinct function within the different stakeholders responsible for tourism. Tourism is developed without any plans and tourism potential is still outside the normal flow of genuine tourism development. Albanian Alps Touristic Region is the most abundant location for the development of tourism. Touristic region comprises of the municipalities of: Peja, Deçani, Gjakova, Istogu, Klina, and Rahoveci. Among the most important places to be visited in this region are: Albanian Alps mountain massifs, Rugova Gorge, valleys and canyons of Drini i Bardhë, Lumëbardh of Peja and Deçani, Erenik, Mirusha waterfalls, mountain lakes, cities like Decani Peja, Gjakova; thermal sources, the legacy of rich and varied cultural-historical monuments (prehistoric discoveries), medieval churches, mosques, baths, bridges, inns, etc. In this region there are also other attractive cultural heritages to be seen such as: Old Market in Gjakova, Grand Bazaar in Peja, rural settlements, towers, etc. Ethnographic and folklore heritages play a significant role for the tourism of this region. Rugova coating, dances and folk songs, traditional customs are to be mentioned as the most important ones.

## **The purpose of the paper**

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the role and importance of public institutions towards the tourism development in the Albanian Alps Touristic Region.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Sustainable Tourism Planning***

During tourism planning there was no attention showed to environmental and socio-cultural aspects. Different stakeholders responsible for tourism development such as tourism operators, governmental

institutions, local community, are primarily focused on maximizing economic benefits. Environmental and social impacts are often underestimated despite cultural role in tourism marketing planning. In the '90s there was showed interest to economic sustainability as well as environmental aspects. To develop a sustainable tourism partnership is required integration, community involvement and environmental stewardship. (Godgrey 1998). Model of sustainable tourism development, and sustainable development is highlighted as "Our Common Future" and its definition is given as: "Fulfilling needs of today's generation without dishonour ability of coming generations to meet them" (Bakiu, 2011) The experience of many countries has demonstrated that the Planning of Tourism Development can bring benefits and storage of tourist markets satisfaction. (Gorica, 2013).

### ***Tourism planning models***

In recent literature, many researchers emphasize the need for sustainable development and enhance cooperation in the planning process Tourism Planning involves measurement of tourism demand and resources destination (Keogh 1990 Hunt 1991); Jamal and Getz 1995; SAUTTER and Leisen 1999). Getz has suggested over 150 models of tourism planning. He recognizes two basic types: theoretical models and process models (1986). Theoretical models conceptualize some aspects how the tourism as a system functions which can lead to the model of the entire system or of the part of it. Depending on whether they are descriptive, explanatory or preachers, models are described below:

- ***Explanatory models*** show how a system works with or without specific casual relationships.
- ***Descriptive models*** define the components of the tourism system.
- **Models preachers** lie on a casual acquaintance relationship to allow forecasting.

Other models are:

- ***Models process*** tends to optimize process management or planning processes and are more conceptual in their orientation. There are a number of ways for sustainable environmental planning; examples include environmental and ecological. These ways of planning are used more on "important" or "sensitive" issues. Eagles (1984) defines a way "sensitive" as an area with a unique natural scenery which meets the following criteria: individual owns plants, rare species, vital ecological functions, the combination of human and land forms that can be valuable for scientific research.
- **Models of ecological planning** differ from those environmental because they focus on ecosystems. However ecological aspects are

often taken into consideration in planning processes as part of the environmental factors that should be evaluated as well as economic and social considerations.

### **Carrying Planning Capacity**

A combined method of natural resource planning is the one that relies on the carrying capacities. Carrying capacity is the level of usage after which impacts exceed acceptable levels specified by the standards set. Butler (1980) has divided the carrying capacity on the four different types as are: ecological, physical, social and facilitation capacity.

### **Planning of community-based tourism**

In many studies of researchers in tourism planning, there is the common opinion that the role of the community in the process of tourism development is still treated as an object of observation more than as a partner in this process (Tosun 2000).

Debates concerning this issue are very important to focus not only on whether the community should be involved in the process of tourism development but also on how and when to be involved. The question is whether community involvement will increase management control and the benefits of the tourism development in their localities (Woodley, 1993).

The researchers of this issue are increasing the need to emphasize decentralization of planning and its integration into the objectives of community development orientation (Haywood 1988).

### **Opportunities of Albanian Alps Touristic Region for sustainable tourism development**

For the sake of economic development of Kosovo, tourism development is very important and the Albanian Alps Region plays a crucial role. Its natural and cultural heritage combined with attractive geographical environment is a very good precondition for fostering not only the tourism development but also the economic growth of the country.

Cultural and natural heritages of the Region are shown in the Annex of this paper. The data, presented in the tables of the Annex, shows that the Albanian Alps Touristic Region possesses sufficient resources for planning and development of sustainable tourism, for certain types of tourism with particular emphasis on mountain tourism and cultural tourism. Based on the specifics of the Region such as: geographical position, natural and cultural heritage, climate, flora and fauna, young workforce, there exist the real opportunities for the creation of tourism products, focusing on the development of these types of tourism:

**Winter sports tourism.** With its natural resources that this touristic region offers, there exist good opportunities for the development of this type of tourism. Recent studies indicate that the Region of Albanian Alps, not only in Kosovo but also in neighbouring countries, has advantages for the development of this type of tourism and there are real opportunities to build ten centres for winter sports and tourism development. (Problems development of winter tourism in Yugoslavia, 1969, Geneva), see table below.

#### Touristic Centres in Albanian Alps

| Main centres    | Number of skiers | Total capacity of centres |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Rusolia Yeast   | 19.250           | 40.000                    |
| Kurvala Yeast   | 11.250           | 22.000                    |
| Belegu Mountain | 7.550            | 15.000                    |
| Koprivnik       | 6.620            | 11.000                    |
| Rosa Zogut      | 5.150            | 10.000                    |
| Starac          | 4.150            | 8.000                     |
| Strellci Yeast  | 3.855            | 7.000                     |
| Hala            | 3.780            | 7.000                     |
| Leqinati Yeast  | 2.760            | 5.000                     |
| Mokna Yeast     | 2.030            | 4.000                     |
| Total           | 65.393           | 129.000                   |

Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry of Kosovo

These centres, along with opportunities for the development of winter sports tourism have emphasized the importance of border tourism cooperation, most notably as the project of Balkan Peaks, project developed between the three countries: Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro. Based on the project Balkan Peaks presented to the mass in the meeting held in the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi, in April 2013, the World Tourism Council (WTC) through the evaluation process has ranked the Albanian Alps Tourism Region at the first place.

**Cultural Tourism-** As in any other country, as well as in Kosovo, starting from prehistoric periods and up to the present day, continuity of human life appears with the ethno-culture formations where they inherited a lot of data on the importance and cultural values. Kosovo presents a rich treasure of ethno-cultural, material and natural resources that makes it attractive for the tourists.

**Speleo-tourism-** Kosovo is known for having beautiful and unique caves. Identified so far, there are a significant number of caves in the Region and the most famous ones are Radavc and Rugova Gorge Caves.

**Health tourism-** Touristic centres, besides their role in the development of winter sports tourism, will create the conditions for summer tourism development as well as health tourism. Thermal water sources are another opportunity for the development of health tourism and the best

known in this region is Ilixha Bath in Istog, which is currently used by local and foreign tourists, but there exist other sources of thermal water which are unused, and could be included in the future as a good opportunity for the development of this kind of tourism.

***Transit Tourism-*** Presents the most potential and significant factor on tourism development in Kosovo. The inclusion of Kosovo in two corridors (corridors eight and ten) will create more opportunities for tourism development in general and transit tourism in particular. The building of the National Highway Durrës-Vermicë actually presents a good opportunity for the development of different types of tourism.

***Rural tourism-*** The basic characteristics of the current situation of rural tourism, put the Touristic Region of the Albanian Alps as one with the high potential in the region. Spatial characteristics, the state of biodiversity, geo-communication position, climate and other natural features, are a good basis for the inclusion of rural tourism in the overall tourism trends in Kosovo (MTI, 2003).

## **Methodology**

The aim of the research is to identify and assess the role of public institutions responsible for the tourism in the Region of Albanian Alps towards the tourism development. Initially, a questionnaire based survey was prepared. Some of the most important questions of this survey are part of this paper. For the preparation and confirmation of results on this paper is used quantitative method of data collection. Survey questionnaire is used as the main research instrument, which consists of 6 questions to 10 public institutions, six municipalities and four ministries, such are: Municipalities of Klina, Istogu, Peja, Decani, Juniku and Gjakova and Ministries: Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Questionnaires were distributed and collected from all ten public sectors responsible for tourism in this region. Hence, the survey was conducted between May and July 2014.

**Delimitations:** In this study is included only the Albanian Alps Touristic Region and not other touristic regions in Kosovo such as: Sharri Touristic Region, Prishtina Touristic Region, Anamorava Touristic Region and Mitrovica Touristic Region.

## **The purpose of the paper**

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the role and importance of public institutions towards the tourism development in the Albanian Alps Touristic Region.

**Main objectives:**

- Literature review on the sustainable development through tourism.
- Preparation of questionnaire and delivery of the same to the public institutions and presentation of gathered data
- Concluding the findings from the study done.

**Research questions:**

- What is the role of public institutions as decision makers toward the sustainable tourism development/
- Is the local community involved in decision making for the development of tourism in the region of Albanian Alps?
- Is there proper budgeting policy to support tourism development in the Region?

**Hypotheses:**

H1 - Public sector at central and local level has not developed strategies for sustainable tourism development but was satisfied with the incorporation of tourism development in the context of economic development strategies of their institutions.

H2- Public institutions do not have allocated separate budget for tourism, but they incorporate budget within their total budget.

H3- Local community is not involved enough in tourism development plans for the region.

**Findings**

| Questions  | Answers                       | Results |
|--|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Do you have a tourism unit in your organisational chart and how is it organised?  | YES, as a sector              | 6       |
|  | YES, as division              | 4       |
| 2. Which developing strategy is drafted and implemented by your institution?         | Economic development          | 9       |
|  | Tourism development           | 1       |
| 3. Is there any cultural heritage monument protected by UNESCO?                      | YES                           | 3       |
|  | NO                            | 7       |
| 4. Do you have separated budget, allocated only for tourism?                         | YES                           | 4       |
|  | NO                            | 6       |
| 5. Is local community involved in the decision making regarding tourism development? | YES                           | 4       |
|  | NO                            | 6       |
| 6. Which is your marketing strategy for tourism development?                         | Event organisation            | 2       |
|  | Creative marketing activities | 5       |
|  | Tax incentives                | 3       |

## **Conclusions**

### **Hypotheses testing**

**H1** - Public sector at central and local level has not developed strategies for sustainable tourism development but was satisfied with the incorporation of tourism development in the context of economic development strategies of their institutions– This hypothesis is tested because nine of ten institutions interviewed declared that they do not have a separated strategy for tourism development, they have only economic development strategy, while only one institution has declared that they have a separated strategy for tourism development. This is shown on question number 2.

**H2** - Public institutions do not have separated budget for tourism, but incorporate budget within their total budget. This hypothesis is tested partially because from 10 interviewed institutions 4 of them have allocated separate budget for tourism while 6 of them do not have allocated separate budget for tourism. This is shown on question number four.

**H3**- Local community is not involved enough in the tourism development plans for the region- This hypothesis is tested as partially because from 10 interviewed institutions 4 of them have declared that the community is involved in the tourism development plans while 6 of them declared that community is not involved enough in the tourism development plans. This is shown on question number five.

### **Other conclusions**

- Albanian Alps Touristic Region, based on the geographical position and abundant tourism resources, has significant advantages for the development of sustainable tourism comparing to other tourist regions of the Republic of Kosovo.
- Public institutions of Kosovo responsible for tourism development in general and the Albanian Alps Region in particular have not been involved as much as they should towards the tourism development and its sustainability. Public institutions did not prepare plans for tourism development, did not provide sufficient financial support to the Region and did not include all stakeholders for the common goal, the development of the tourism in the Albanian Alps Touristic Region.
- Public sector institutions have not organized tourism on the department level within their institutions, but only in the sector or/ and division. From the ten institutions surveyed, it turns out that on the organizational structure of tourism, six institutions have organized tourism at the sector level, while four of them at the division level.



- Two municipalities within the Albanian Alps Touristic Region (Peja and Deçani) and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports possess cultural heritage monuments protected by UNESCO
- Marketing strategy for tourism development in five public institutions is based on creative marketing strategy through brochures and social media, two public institutions based their marketing strategy on organising events and three public institutions based their strategy on offering tax incentives.

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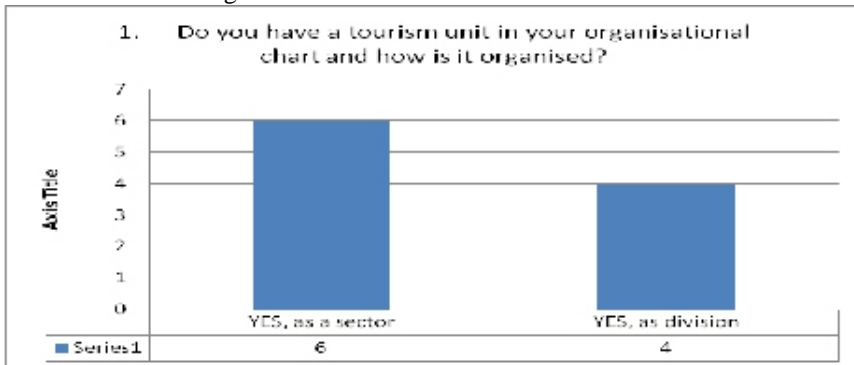
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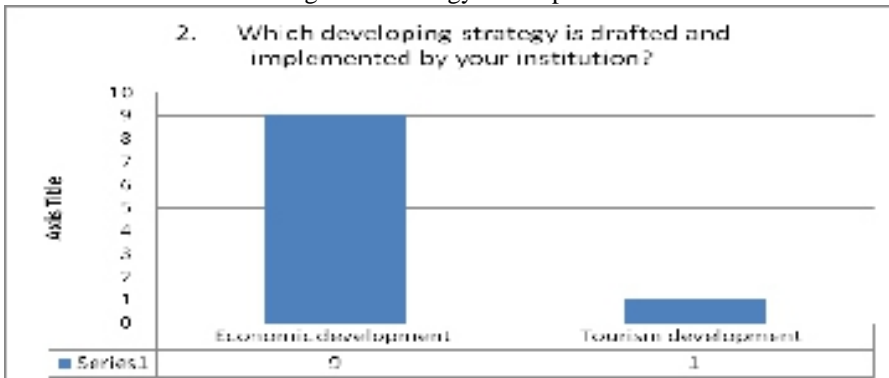
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- <http://mti-ks.org/>
- <http://mbpzhr-ks.net/>

**Annex**

**Figure 1. tourism unit within the institution**



**Figure 2. Strategy development**



**Figure 3. Monuments of cultural heritage protected by UNESCO**

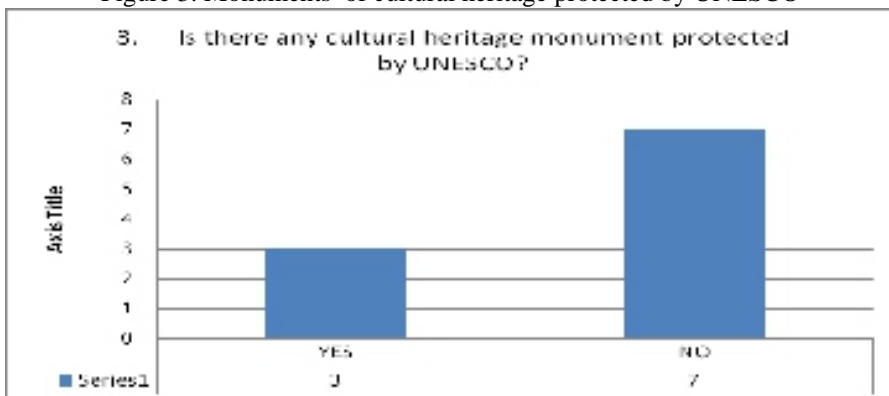


Figure 4. Budget allocated for tourism

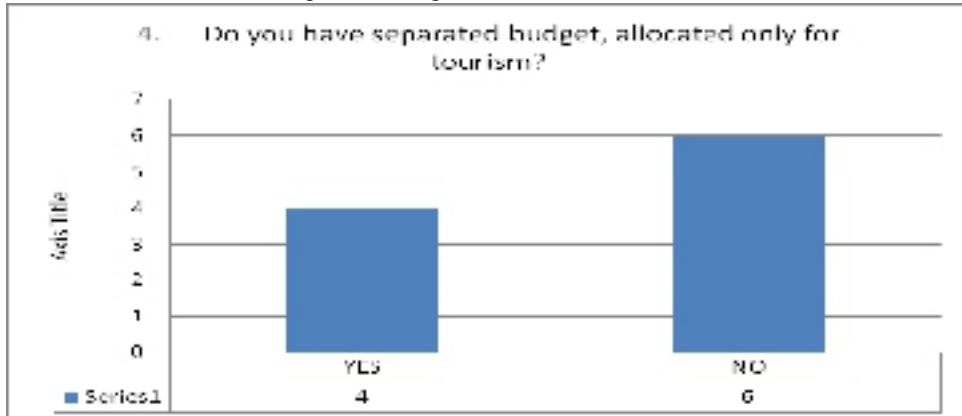


Figure 5. Involvement of local community in the decision making

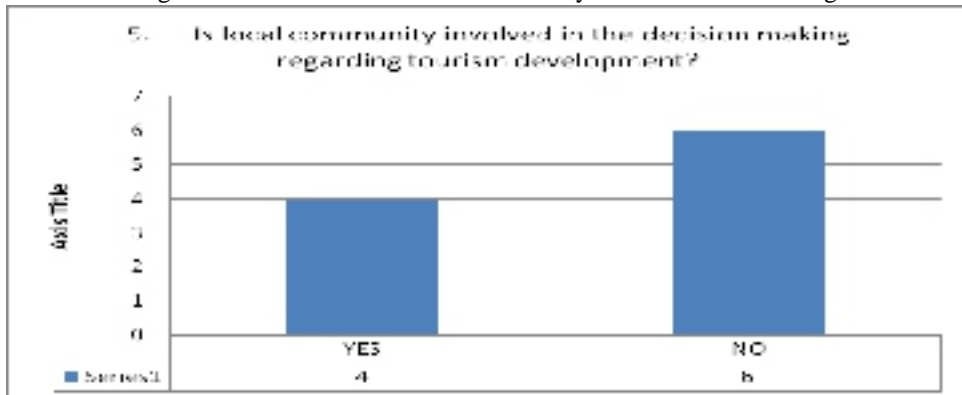


Figure 6. Marketing strategy for tourism development

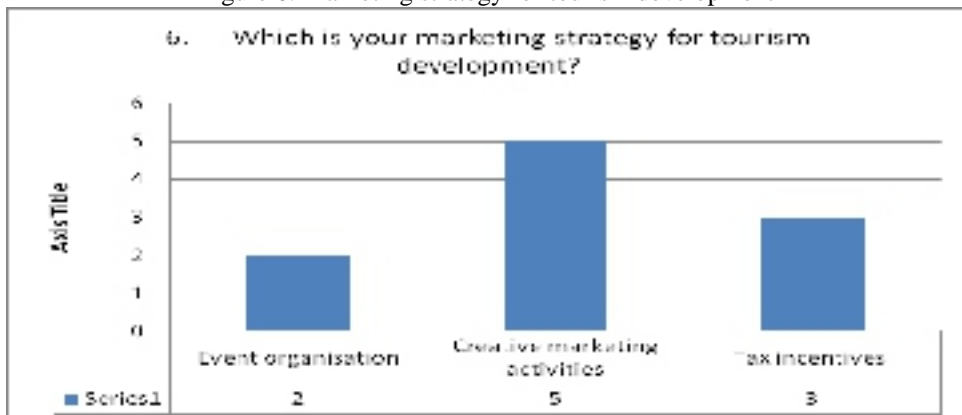


Table 1. General data of Albanian Alps Touristic Region (AATR)

| <b>Nr</b> | <b>Indicators</b>                   | <b>Kosovo</b>        | <b>AATR</b>         | <b>Kosovo/AATR/%</b> |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>General data</b>                 |                      |                     |                      |
| 1.1.      | Area                                | 10906km <sup>2</sup> | 2325km <sup>2</sup> | 21.31%               |
| 1.2.      | Locality                            | 1469                 | 311                 | 21.17%               |
| 1.3.      | Municipalities                      | 38                   | 7                   | 18.42%               |
| 1.4.      | Population                          | 1,739,825            | 314,894             | 18.1%                |
| 1.5.      | Registered businesses               | 94806                | 14867               | 15.68%               |
| 1.6.      | Nr. of employees                    | 237886               | 19468               | 8.81%                |
| 1.7.      | Touristic registered businesses     | 6247                 | 1059                | 16.95%               |
| 1.8.      | Nr. of employers                    | 7695                 | 1159                | 15.10%               |
| 1.9.      | Nights of staying- domestic/foreign | 138750               | 11159               | 8.42%                |
| 1.10.     | Visitors/ domestic                  | 95454                | 7792                | 8.16%                |

Source: Kosovo Tax Administration and Kosovo Statistical Agency, 2012

Table 2. Cultural heritage of the Region

|           |   |     |     |        |
|-----------|---|-----|-----|--------|
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Cultural heritage</b>                      |     |     |        |
| 2.1.      | Archaeological Heritage                       | 400 | 111 | 27.75% |
| 2.2.      | Architectural Heritage                        | 821 | 319 | 39.28% |
| 2.3.      | Fields of Architectural Heritage              | 200 | 18  | 9%     |
| 2.4.      | Special Zones                                 | 44  | 8   | 18.20% |
| 2.5.      | Cultural heritage objects protected by UNESCO | 4   | 3   | 75%    |

Source: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Kosova, 2013

Table 3. Natural Heritage of the Region

|           |                           |    |    |        |
|-----------|---------------------------|----|----|--------|
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Natural Heritage</b>   |    |    |        |
| 3.1.      | Natural protected Zone    | 11 | 4  | 36.36% |
| 3.2.      | National Park             | 2  | 1  | 50%    |
| 3.3.      | Regional Park             | 2  | 1  | 50%    |
| 3.4.      | Natural Monuments         | 58 | 16 | 27.11% |
| 3.5.      | Forest Park               | 2  | 1  | 50%    |
| 3.6.      | Protected Motifs          | 2  | 2  | 100%   |
| 3.7.      | Gorge (5 most prominent)  | 5  | 3  | 60%    |
| 3.8.      | Heights (top 10)          | 10 | 5  | 50%    |
| 3.9.      | Caves                     | 6  | 2  | 33.31% |
| 3.10.     | Main Rivers               | 8  | 3  | 37.50% |
| 3.11.     | Artificial lakes ( Top 4) | 4  | 1  | 25%    |
| 3.12.     | Source of Thermal Water   | 9  | 3  | 33.31% |

Source: Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, 2013