Albania is often quoted as a hidden gem for tourists. But when I googled ‘agro tourism in Albania’ about a year ago, just because I like to get out of Tirana, all I found were studies. Of course some great initiatives are there, but you still have to carefully look for them. With its amazing food, beautiful mountains, and coastlines, this country deserves a much broader public that comes to visit, than the ‘off the beaten track tourist’.

The Dutch government sees corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a business case. Albania can still make a choice to go left or go right. To go for mass tourism or for high quality small scale agro tourism. Looking at what already exists in the country and in the region, and looking at the scale at which Albanians like to do business, it seems quite clear that there is fertile ground for small scale sustainable business concepts. That is why the Dutch Embassy supported a cooperation with MVO Nederland, Cityförster, and other partners, to work on an inspiring concept for sustainable tourism, combining it with agriculture. This is best developed in a concrete area, and Qeparo, an old village along the beautiful coastline of Albania, seemed an interesting destination.

The Albanian government has a vision. In the development of its regional plans, the metabolism of the country, a concept also developed by Dutch experts, is a basis for regional urban planning. It means working from an integrated perspective, taking into account local energy, food and water maps before doing your urban planning. Many of the challenges that exist in this country are actually CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) related. Sustainable tourism therefore really is the sensible thing to do.

Ideas are sometimes at risk of remaining stuck in plans, laws or roundtables. I am excited that we can present to you 18 business cases in and around Qeparo. Small ones, such as taking a hike with a shepherd, or buying local produce, and bigger ones, such as creating a local tourism activity and training centre or restructuring the beautiful aqueduct. Albanian and Dutch experts together with local citizens have identified these concrete opportunities for cooperation. Albanian women, men, farmers, and small entrepreneurs are ready for a fruitful harvest in Qeparo.
This report has been prepared in collaboration of CITYFÖRSTER, MVO Nederland and:

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