From the research, stakeholder meeting and activities in and around Qeparo we have accumulated a great number of insights and recommendations for different stakeholder groups. First of all we want to frame these insights and experiences in the context of national policies that address one or more of the sectors that we have focussed on.
Tourism Integrated Model of Albanian Ionian Riviera (TIMAIR)

Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade and Entrepreneurship

The TIMAIR is a model that provides direction for sustainable development, approaching the tourism potential of the region through planning, integration and investments. It focuses on how the tourism sector can contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Southern coastal area of Albania as a destination.

TIMAIR defines 5 different zones (similar to the ones used in Chapter 04 on tourism) parallel to the Albanian Coastline that each have specific features and require a specific approach:

- **The Sea Zone / Blue Zone**: sea coastal area where ports, marinas and floating docks can be constructed.
- **The Beach Zone / White Zone**: including all the beaches, part of which should remain virgin, without any construction at all, and the other part as beach stations, which can accept only light and movable constructions.
- **The Shore Zone / Green Zone**: land shore area right next to the beach, where resorts, hotels and camping areas can be constructed.
- **The Hill Zone / Grey Zone**: the area in the upper part of the hills where most of the traditional coastal Mediterranean villages are already situated.
- **The Mountain Zone / Brown Zone**: the hinterland where the mountainous villages are situated, and farming and agriculture activities support the tourism development with local bio food and agro-tourism activities.
Qeparo has a unique position where all four zones come together. This creates a possibility to develop specific, products characteristic to these zones in a relatively small area.
Furthermore Qeparo has the potential to cover a number of the elements of TIMAIR such as:

**Potential mixed use of resorts, hotels, guest houses and diffused hotels**
The variety of accommodations in Qeparo should be further developed and quality standards implemented to fulfil the needs of international travellers. This can be done by developing diverse accommodations such as beach hotels and bed and breakfasts in the village as well as agro-tourism accommodation in the hinterlands.

1. **Diversified tourism products due to the close proximity of different zones.**
   There are limited places worldwide where beach and mountain vacations can be combined as easily as in Qeparo. This offers an opportunity to extend the season by attracting different segments such as outdoor tourists, bird watchers, hikers, etc. But to realize this, a consequent product development and a quality shift in the field of accommodation is necessary.

2. **Working towards shared infrastructure**
   Urgent and necessary infrastructure investments offer a possibility to add value beyond their specific use. An aqueduct can also serve as a hiking path, a water treatment plant can produce energy and fertilizer, shading elements above parking area’s can generate energy, maintenance roads can serve as access to remote camp sites, etc. Especially in the development of road infrastructure, other modalities than vehicles need to be considered (pedestrians, cyclists, animals)
3. **Protection of landscape, scenery and nature**

In order to protect the landscape, it is crucial to share a common understanding of what 'landscape' is. The old fashion and limited interpretation of landscape as solely aesthetic (natural) sceneries should be permanently abandoned. Instead, it should be considered as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'.

Seen from this perspective, the local landscape preservation is twofold: on the one hand the preservation of natural landscape as wild and 'untouched', where the human presence is kept to a minimum (sea, coast and mountains). On the other hand rural and urban landscapes should be sustainably exploited to avoid neglect and abandonment; their identity should be reinforced in order to reflect the past and future of the territory and its communities. The heritage of the traditional houses in upper Qeparo and the nowadays-abandoned agriculture terraces, for instance, are landscapes with enormous potentials, to be restored and re-imagined.

4. **Unique and sustainable positioning of Albanian Ionian Riviera Destination**

Small destinations such as Qeparo need to rely on a regional or national approach to be marketed abroad. Recent initiatives of the Albanian government, but also of institutions such as GIZ and the National Coastal Agency, help to formulate common goals and instruments for the successful implementation of a sustainable tourism strategy. It is extremely important to have the wider context and especially regional competitors in mind when developing such a strategy and formulating unique selling propositions of a location. For more information, please refer to the Appendix “Implementation Plan for Tourism”.

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**Recommendations**

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National Strategy for Development and Integration

Qeparo and Surrounding Area as a Living Lab for National Program Priorities

In the second National strategy for development and integration, the Albanian central government elaborates on numerous themes, strategies of different ministries and ambitions for the future to grow towards EU integration. The development of Qeparo along the lines of integrated, cross sectoral, inclusive and circular strategy as proposed in this report potentially provides the government with a living lab for a large number of their own ambitions and strategies.

It can, in general, provide an arena to work on at least four of the six National Program Priorities: “(1) providing innovative citizen-centred good governance; (2) increasing the availability of irrigated and drained land; (3) more cost-effective availability and reliability of power (electrical) supply; (4) enhanced innovation and competitiveness; (5) greater security of land tenure and resolution of outstanding property issues” (NSDI II second draft 31 July 2015)

A designated area could perhaps be earmarked as a "Green zone" or "sustainable development zone". In that way new strategies, regulations and policy, together with initiatives from private sector, can develop in a more or less protected environment where innovation will not be held back by rules and regulations that are in place “outside” the area.

Furthermore the integrated approach for Qeparo applies to all the principles of sustainability that are essential for EU integration. A number of these principles are already visible in the results of this project so far.

Principles of sustainability:

- **Human development and social cohesion**, where Albanian citizens are at the centre of development, in a free, democratic, socially inclusive, cohesive, healthy, safe and just society with respect for fundamental human and civil rights, and a rejection of all forms of discrimination.

- **Environmental preservation**, through the promotion of sustainable production and consumption, the prevention of environmental degradation, the integration of environmental issues in all sectorial strategies, in the notion of corporate social responsibility, and in the application of the precautionary principle in planned activities.

- **Participation and consultation**, where citizens, civil society and the private sector participate in or are consulted on policy decision-making, and where social dialogue is promoted and encouraged.

- **Investments into sectors and market segments** that yield profits without diminishing the base of these profits. This means a reduction of impact but also a long term vision that includes life-cycles of investments and products. A new hotel can, for example, in its first years serve to an exclusive high-end clientele. Towards the end of the investment cycle the target group may change and prices can be lowered, until the end of the investment cycle is reached, a renovation becomes necessary and the standards can be upgraded to the latest standards and the product cycle can start again.
The Qeparo pilot in the context of Agricultural development strategy according to NSDI II*

The government priority of ‘increasing the availability of irrigated and drained land’ clearly is a relevant issue that also came forward from our mission’s fieldwork. The interlinkage between agricultural, landscape and tourism development on the one hand, and the need for proper irrigation on the other is highlighted in the case, “Restore Terraces and Aqueduct” (case 12 on page 177-188) as a means to revitalize terrace agriculture, making the terraces productive for food production as well as attractive to tourists. It is recommended that not only the Qeparo irrigation system, but also those of other communities along the Riviera are renovated and made operational. When combined with reforestation of denuded hills this will not only contribute to increased water storage, but also to reducing flooding, and to making agriculture, the landscape, and communities more resilient to the effects of climate change.

We further recommend providing support to farmers in accessing higher-value markets for off-season harvests as well as in improving the production methods of the crops and livestock concerned. Similarly, support to local farmers in setting up and improving food conservation techniques to process food produced outside of the tourist season and to add value to their products is needed. Further, farmers should be supported in cultivating new crops for which there is (local) demand in the tourist sector, but which are currently not being produced locally even though the local conditions allow for those crops to be cultivated. Farmers need to get access to proper seeds suitable for local conditions and be trained in the whole cultivation cycle of the crops concerned.

The Riviera is a very suitable location to pilot the application of the agricultural model of the future as described in Chapter 2. Since it best caters to higher-end markets, more holistic approaches to agriculture can be applied easily in this context while integrating Albanian experience and insights into the approach.

A longer-term recommendation would be to assess the local cultivated and wild biodiversity to determine which have the greatest potential of being cultivated locally for higher-end markets. This could include location-specific varieties of common crops with distinct culinary characteristics as well as wild plants and herbs to be used in cuisine and in herbal medicine or for pharmaceuticals.

Considering the many actors and projects active in the Riviera it will be very valuable to get insight into all that is going on by a map-based application (just as in Google maps) that allows projects to be mapped literally and be linked on the basis of the content of the projects. One such example is the tool developed by Trimpact (www.trimpact.nl).

The Riviera is a very suitable location to pilot the application of the agricultural model of the future as described in Chapter 2. Since it best caters to higher-end markets, more holistic approaches to agriculture can be applied easily in this context while integrating Albanian experience and insights into the approach.

* see appendix I for the extract from NSDI II on Agricultural strategy
Summary of Overall Recommendations

For national government and agencies:

- Use *pilot areas* as experimental zones to cut across the boundaries of policy areas and work together to try out strategy and policy (2 to 3 year period);

- Establish *inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial working groups* to develop integrated economic concepts. Territorial development can and should take a leading role in this as it is the place where the different sectors come together. Aligning and coordinating policies therefore is essential to its success;

- Create *short feedback loops* by working closely with all stakeholder groups: local government, entrepreneurs, community and civil society. This can provide reason and motivation to adjust policy and strategy based on practical insight as we go;

- Use lessons learnt in other area's to create spin-off and scale up the effect of sustainable development (after 1 or two years);

- Make plans and documents *publicly accessible* and actively communicate. Too often initiatives are doubling up or are pulling in different directions.

- Limit *general construction* and aim for small but excellent developments and the upgrading of the existing investments;

- Continue *investment in high quality public space*;

- Invest in *training and developments* of standards. People are hungry for guidelines and standards;

- Develop a *tourism sector-wide approach* around best practices on water, energy, and waste efficiency.

For local government:

- Use *momentum of this pilot* to create critical mass for the development of a training and educational centre on the Ionian Riviera coast;

- Work on *Public Private Partnership initiatives* to make this work: the goals, costs and benefits for such a centre are neither pure public nor private;

- Partner up with local community and international experts to make the initiative for building guidelines and guidelines for products and services into a sustainable success;

- Facilitate and work together with national government and agencies to create a pilot area where initiatives for development can be supported and brought into practice in a swift, transparent and orderly manner;

- Establish a *database* on local economic activity to help monitor development and direct investments. Data is convincing. If baselines are not clear, estimates cannot be made and goals cannot be set;

- Create *policy and business environments* which maximise engagement with sustainable tourism in Qeparo. (Develop planning requirements and laws related to planning, siting, design, construction, materials, renovation, demolition and impact assessment to protect natural and cultural heritage and local communal rights)
For Qeparo community and specifically entrepreneurs:

- **Put effort in fine-tuning the local model** for development and make sure it has as much support as possible. This can function as the foundation for future activities and initiatives and can be used as the basis of any discussion;

- **Get organised**: If sustainable development is the ambition for the Qeparo area, entrepreneurs and community should get organized and create leverage in all future processes and discussions with developers, the government, and companies from outside, or to lobby for public funding. We believe this to be THE crucial piece of the puzzle to make any initiative work;

- **Work on a collective sense of ownership** of public space. Competition with other places in Albania that attract local and especially international visitors and customers can be won in the long run by having a clean and well organized area where people can be proud to live and work;

- **Declare protected areas and public assets**. Find agreements on how to protect and exploit these assets collectively (e.g.: monastery, Qeparo Fshat, olive grove, beach);

- **Develop a destination management plan** based on responsible tourism management, integrating views, roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders that enter into a destination partnership with stakeholders representing the visitors, industry, communities, and environment (VICE);

- **Develop and promote** sustainable products and services that are compatible with its ecological, social, cultural and economic circumstances;

- **Determine a joint** (public sector/industry) destination marketing plan including quality visitors profile, length of stay, yields, and local spending (based on the VICE).

For international and national NGO’s and donor organisations:

- **Use the concept of joint pilot area’s to bundle efforts of different organisations** and create maximum impact;

- **Do so by creating round tables** for these area’s and involve organisations that cover different themes to prevent unnecessary competition or crowding out;

- **Make use of national and international communication channels**, for instance from specific value chains such as tourism or processed foods to communicate successes;

- **Document approach and concepts** developed and share openly. Good examples are happily followed;

- **Make micro-loans available** and offer additional step-by-step incentive packages that become available when previous phases are implemented or milestones have been reached.

- **Provide assistance** in the preparation of investment projects. The requirements are often very high and it is difficult to take the first steps.
This report has been prepared in collaboration of CITYFÖRSTER, MVO Nederland and:

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