

Climate change tirana

Many countries are increasingly vulnerable to destructive weather events - floods, droughts, windstorms, or other parameters. The vulnerability is driven in part by recent extremes in climate variability but also countries' sensitivity to events exarbadted by past practices, socioeconomic conditions, or legacy issues. The degree to which vulnerability to weather affects the countries' economies is driven by their coping or adaptive capacities.

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The tiny Mediterranean enclave of Albania had for decades been one of the most politically isolated countries on Earth. Sandwiched between Kosovo and Montenegro on the north and Greece to its south, the country's post-World War II isolationism had by the 1990s begun to ease, giving way to an unprecedented era of western-styled openness and economic opportunity.

That's because Albania's application for entry into the European Union is partially contingent on adhering to the EU's strict environmental protection regulations. At risk is not only entry into the EU, but potentially the loss of billions of dollars in aid that could follow.

Yet a local geographer at the University of Tirana is hopeful that Albania can successfully mitigate climate change's effects locally while convincing the EU that it is an environmental team player. That is, all without sacrificing sustainable economic growth.

Climate change is a problem for Albania; heavy rainfalls cause floods and heatwaves cause long periods of droughts affecting people's lives and the economy, Sonila Papathimiu, a geographer at the University of Tirana in Albania, told me in her office. Changes in temperature and precipitation have a direct impact on agriculture, especially in the western lowlands which have a more Mediterranean climate, she said.

This technology also offers information on rainfall distribution and drought severity, as well as data to improve disaster response and planning, said Papathimiu. In addition, such data allows researchers to assess changes in vegetation through metrics such as the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, she noted.

This NDVI index helps in understanding how climate change affects agricultural productivity and natural ecosystems in Albania, said Papathimiu. Analysis of Land Use and Land Cover changes over time also helps to reveal and understand patterns of urbanization, deforestation and land degradation, which have intensified due to climate change, she said.

The Vjosa River basin, a cornerstone of Albania's abundant natural resources, is threatened by both climate change and foreign nationals who are rushing in to build vacation homes near the country's popular southern beaches.

The Vjosa is only one of nine so-called "Wild Rivers" in Europe, which means that the river remains in its natural direction without being adulterated by dams that could change either its direction or flow.

Vjosa's delta and the nearby Narta Lagoon contribute to its ecological richness, supporting local wildlife and enhancing the resilience of the ecosystem against environmental changes, said Papathimiu.

This Vjosa River is untamed, with almost all its tributaries intact, Papathimiu and colleagues noted in a 2022 paper published in the Proceedings of the International Symposium on Innovative and Interdisciplinary Applications of Advanced Technologies. As such, they provided habitats for spawning fish, migratory birds and others, they said. The river is also of outstanding importance for the critically endangered European eel, the authors write.

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