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Managing green growth in selected non-EU Balkan countries[1]

Abstract

It has become clear that economic growth is not the only way of expressing a country's development and progress. Recently, development has also come to incorporate the components of environmental protection and social equity within a broader perspective of sustainable development. One of the instruments that can be used to quantify this is the Green Growth Index (GGI). This facilitates policymaking in achieving sustainable development since it is based on four dimensions: efficient and sustainable resource use; natural capital protection; green economic opportunities; and social inclusion. The goal of this article is to present the GGI scores achieved by five non-EU Balkan countries in 2019 and 2020. The research points to the conclusion that each country has started on its path to achieving green growth and sustainable development, but there are possibilities for further improvement in separate/particular dimensions. Hence, a recommendation for these countries is that they increase their efforts in those dimensions in which they have lower values to raise their overall GGI ranking.

Keywords*: green management, Green Growth Index, sustainable development, improvement, constitutional protection*

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The ultimate goal and, at the same time, the purpose of the appearance of this concept is to create a society in which resources are, and will be, used to continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the environment. In the last few decades, sustainable development has increasingly been used for the measurement of countries' development achievements, and is based on three pillars: economic growth; social equity; and environmental protection. Basically, sustainable development is:

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> … no longer quantitative but qualitative development, in other words a balanced striving for all human values, whether material or intangible, in harmony with nature. The old vision of the 'affluent society' had resulted in an unjust and ardent 'consumer society'. The new vision proposes a 'sustainable society' as the attainable model of a just and prosperous world. (Decleris 2000)

> Thus, it became anachronistic to talk about the development and protection of the environment as for two separate issues. Dualism is gone. There is only one 'sustainable development'. (Matlievska 2010)

> In dynamic systems such as human society, sustainability is a matter of balance, held through time and space. It is actually the *quinta essentia* of sustainable development. (Matlievska 2013)

The key promoters of this concept are the international organisations, especially the UN which, in 2015, set 17 goals that each member state should strive to achieve. For quantified goal setting, this global indicator framework includes 231 unique indicators.[2] However, countries face difficulties in monitoring its development and creating policies based on all 231 indicators. Therefore, scientific and educational institutions offer different ways to aggregate and consolidate the indicators. One of the most recent methods to track countries' development is the Green Growth Index (GGI) calculation, developed in 2019 by the Global Green Growth Institute.[3] The GGI is a composite index measuring a country's performance in achieving sustainability targets including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),[4] the Paris Climate Change Agreement,[5] and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.[6] The development of the GGI is an important step toward developing a common understanding of green growth and the indicators that can operationalise its concept. The GGI aims to provide policymakers with a metric to measure green growth performance and to base their decisions.

The GGI rests on four dimensions:

1. efficient and sustainable resource use
2. natural capital protection
3. green economic opportunities
4. social inclusion.

2 For more about the SDG Indicators, see: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/.

3 The Global Green Growth Institute was established as an international intergovernmental organisation in 2012 at the Rio+20 United Nations conference on Sustainable Development, dedicated to supporting and promoting strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in developing countries and emerging economies. Read more at: https://gggi.org/.

4 For more about Sustainable Development Goals, see: https://www.sightsavers.org/policy-and-advocacy/global-goals.

5 Of which the full name is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. See more at: https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement.

6 See: https://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/targets/compilation-quick-guide-en.pdf.

Each dimension consists of four separate categories.[7] The first dimension, efficient and sustainable resource use, entails: efficient and sustainable energy; efficient and sustainable water use; sustainable land use; and material use efficiency. The second dimension, natural capital protection, consists of: environmental quality; greenhouse gas emissions reduction; biodiversity and ecosystem protection; and cultural and social value. The third dimension, green economic opportunities, consists of: green investment; green trade; green employment; and green innovation. Finally, the fourth dimension, social inclusion, encompasses: access to basic services; gender balance; social equity; and social protection.

For each of these four dimensions, calculations and numerical expressions are possible because they are based on selected indicators (the overall GGI framework represents 36 green growth indicators[8]). This enables the facilitated monitoring of countries not only in terms of the achievement of green growth but also of sustainable development. Simultaneously, the overall score of each country on the GGI can be tracked, while it is also possible to monitor the progress achieved in each dimension individually. Thus, policymakers have a clear perspective regarding the dimension on which they should focus in order to improve the figure and, therefore, the overall GGI value.

The methodology used for the calculation of the GGI and its four dimensions is explained in detail in the two reports that are the subject of review in this article – *GGGI Report 2019*; and *GGGI Report 2020*. Moreover, the following research methods have been applied: analysis, synthesis, selection, comparison and generalisation.

The goal of this article is to explore the achievements of five non-EU member countries located in Europe – Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and North Macedonia – in terms of the GGI and each dimension individually, in 2019 and 2020. In this regard, following this introduction, the second part explains the research methodology while the third focuses on the constitutions of the selected countries in terms of the incorporation of provisions related to environmental protection and natural resources. The fourth part provides an overview of the GGI, followed by a fifth part giving an overview of the achievements of Europe as a continent compared to others as well as an overview of the achievements of southern Europe countries compared to other European sub-regions. An overview of the achievements of the five selected countries is presented in the sixth part. As a research result, the conclusions and recommendations are offered in the last section of the article.

7 An explanation of all the categories can be found at: https://greengrowthindex.gggi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2020-Green-Growth-Index.pdf, p. 3.

8 'GGGI Insight Brief No. 3 Assessment and Main Findings on the Green Growth Index' December 2019, p. 3. This can be found at: https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/GGGI-Insight-Brief-No.-3_Final.pdf.

Methodology

Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and North Macedonia were selected for the research. They all have at least three similarities: former socialist countries; the same geographical region; and a strategic commitment to EU accession.

For the purposes of the article, a brief content analysis was conducted of the 1974 constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the 1976 constitution of Albania, as well as the 2019 and 2020 GGGI reports. Further on, content analysis of other relevant sources was also conducted. In addition, analysis was carried out of the data related to the individual GGI dimensions and the overall Index. More precisely, data in original form was selected and extracted from both of the GGI reports.

The comparative method was used to contrast the available data in the two reports, as follows:

- at world level, i.e. for the five continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and Oceania), trend data for the period 2005-19 and data for 2019
- at the level of European sub-regions (southern Europe, eastern Europe, western Europe and northern Europe), data for 2019
- at country level (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia), data for 2019 and 2020.

This determines the differences between the continents/regions, the European sub-regions and the selected Balkan countries according to each of the four dimensions of GGI and the overall Index.

After selection, analysis and comparison, certain conclusions and recommendations have been summarised (synthesised).

The comparison between the achievements in 2019 and 2020 has its limitations because, in the calculation of the GGI, the methodological approach that was used for the preparation of the *GGGI Report 2019* and the *GGGI Report 2020* differed. This means that a comparison of these two years indicates an interpretive range of effects.[9]

A comparative analysis of the constitution of SFR Yugoslavia (1974) and the constitution of Albania (1976) in terms of environmental protection provisions

When focusing on the four dimensions of the GGI calculation, it can be seen that two of them refer to the environment. Therefore, it would be appropriate to look into the originations of environmental protection in the constitutions of the five selected countries. Since four of them ((North) Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) were republics within the country of SFR Yugoslavia, a

9 'Considering the significant updates on the 2020 Green Growth Index with the replacement of about 28% of the 36 indicators, the country's performances from last year's report on the Index cannot be compared to those from this year' (Acosta et al. 2020: 8).

brief review of its constitution of 1974 in this area follows,[10] succeeded by a review of Albania's constitution of 1976.[11]

Article 192 of the SFR Yugoslavia constitution reads:

> Man shall have the right to a healthy environment.[12]

Furthermore, para. 2 of the same Article goes on to read:

> Conditions for the realization of this right shall be ensured by the social community.

In the literature (see for example Boyd 2012; Boyd 2013[13]), it is indicated that Portugal (in 1976) and Spain (1978) are the first countries whose constitutions recognised and acknowledged this right; yet, it was SFR Yugoslavia's 1974 constitution that had, for the first time anywhere in the world, defined the right to a healthy environment and the community's obligation to provide it, alongside the other constitutionally guaranteed rights.

In addition, it is beneficial to point out other articles of this constitution which provide the basis for the sustainable use of natural resources – the birth of the idea and the concept of sustainable development and, more specifically, of that of green growth. Article 193, para. 1 reads:

> Anyone who utilizes land, water or other natural goods shall be bound to do so in a way which ensures conditions for man's work and life in a healthy environment.

Article 193, para. 2 states:

> Everyone shall be bound to preserve nature and its goods, natural landmarks and its rarities...

Article 86, para. 1 lays down that:

> All land, forests, waters and watercourses, the sea and seashore, ores and other natural resources must be used in conformity with statutorily defined general conditions which ensure their rational utilization and other general interests.

It is evident that the SFR Yugoslavia constitution of 1974 provides the basis for the rational use of natural resources, the manner of their utilisation being targeted on enabling life in a healthy environment, as well as the obligation to preserve nature and its goods, etc.

10 The constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1974) can be found at the following link: https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia-Constitution1974.pdf.

11 The constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania (1976) can be found at the following link: https://data.globalcit.eu/NationalDB/docs/ALB%20The%20Constitution%20of%20the%20Peoples%20Socialist%20Republic%20of%20Albania%201976.pdf.

12 Chapter III: Freedoms, rights and duties of man and of the citizen.

13 Boyd 2013 summarises and updates the research originally published in Boyd 2012.

There appears to be no article in the constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania of 1976 that enshrines the right to a healthy environment. Yet, Article 20 defines citizens' obligation, among other things, to take care of environmental protection and the protection of natural resources, specifying that:

> Protection of the land, natural wealth, waters and the atmosphere from damage and pollution is a duty of the state, of the economic and social organizations, and of all citizens.

Both constitutions contain provisions that refer to the obligation to protect natural resources; however, the SFR Yugoslavia constitution also defines the human right to a healthy environment. Hence, it is evident that, in the countries under review in this article, environmental protection and the protection of natural resources is a constitutionally guaranteed category historically; and that this provides a basis for policymaking, actions and monitoring of the situation in this field.

Overview of the GGI

The scores obtained for the Green Growth Index and its dimensions are within a range of 1 to 100, with 1 indicating the lowest, or very low, performance and 100 the highest, or very high, performance. A score of 100 in the Index, dimensions and indicator categories indicates that a nation has achieved a specific aim since the indicators are benchmarked against sustainability targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals, other globally accepted targets and leading country performers. The scores are classified within an indicated range and can be interpreted as follows:

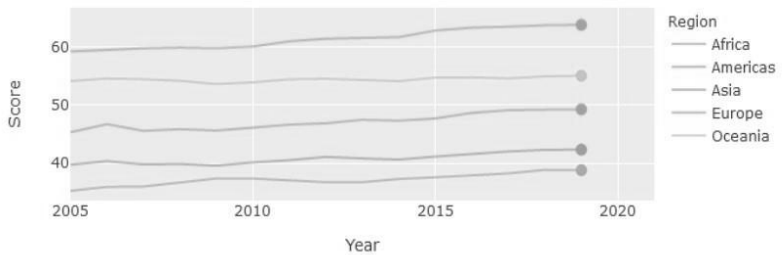
- 80-100 – this range implies very high scores, where the target was reached or almost reached
- 60-80 – this range refers to high scores, suggesting a strategic position in which the target can be fully reached
- 40-60 – this range includes moderate scores, towards finding the right balance for progress and to avoid moving away from the target
- 20-40 – this range consists of low scores, with countries still finding the right policies to align development in order to achieve the target
- 1-20 – this range contains very low scores, requiring significant actions to improve the position relative to the target.

The non-EU Balkan countries – including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia – belong to the geographic region of Europe and, within this region, they are part of the sub-region of southern Europe, simultaneously being western Balkan countries. Accordingly, this article first compares the GGI rankings for the five continents – Africa, Europe, the Americas, Oceania and Asia – while a comparison between the four sub-regions of Europe – eastern, northern, southern and western Europe – follows, as does a comparison between the five Balkan countries. An analysis of the data is presented, with an analysis of the scores in the four GGI dimensions and that for the overall GGI.

Overview, results and discussion of the Green Growth Index performance of the continents, with special emphasis on Europe

The outcome of a review of the trends in the Green Growth Index by continent, from 2005 to 2019, is shown in Figure 1. This highlights that Europe is the leader when it comes to GGI performance over time. The scores for Europe suggest that it did better than the other continents during the period 2005-19.

Figure 1 – Trends in GGI by region from 2005 to 2019



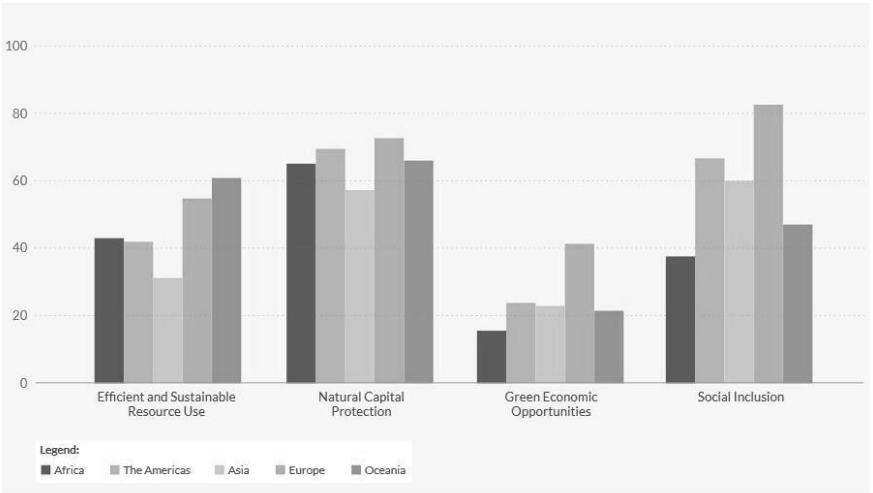
Source: Acosta et al. (2020: Figure 13, p. 28).

Europe's ranking in 2019, as a region, compared to the ranking of the other continents, may be observed and follows in Figure 2. To deepen the insight, Europe's achievements in the four dimensions of the GGI may be compared to those achieved elsewhere.

As can be seen in Figure 2, across all continents, achievements for the individual dimensions of green growth are generally highest for natural capital protection and social inclusion and lowest for green economic opportunities. In 2019, compared to the other continents, the results in Europe were mostly high. In terms of social inclusion, Europe was followed by the Americas and then Asia; Oceania was fourth-ranked and Africa last. In natural capital protection, first-ranked Europe was followed by Oceania, Africa and Asia which had the lowest result. In green economic opportunities, Europe was a convincing leader with a result that was almost double, or twice as good, as the other four regions which had quite close results. In this group, the Americas were ranked in second place, Asia third and Oceania fourth, while Africa had the lowest result. The situation was different in the dimension of efficient and sustainable resource use, where Oceania was ranked first, followed by Europe in second. Next were Africa and the Americas, which were close to each other with similar results, while Asia was in last place. Europe had the strongest performance in 2019 compared to the other continents.

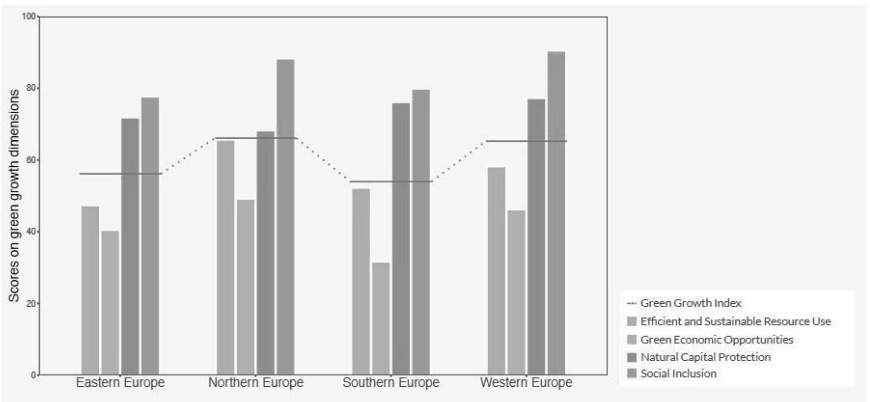
This article turns next to a brief evaluation of the achievements of Europe's sub-regions, it being important to look at the outcomes for southern Europe (to which sub-region belong the five countries under review in this article) in context compared to those of the other European sub-regions. The results of the Green Growth Index and its dimensions in the four European sub-regions in 2019 are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 2 – Performance in green growth dimensions by geographic region/continent in 2019



Source: Acosta et al. (2019: Figure 19, p. 53).

Figure 3 – GGI and its dimensions in European sub-regions in 2019



Source: Acosta et al. (2019: Figure 23, p. 58).

Figure 3 highlights that, in 2019, all of Europe's sub-regions stood out in terms of the dimensions of natural capital protection and social inclusion, having scores that are ranked from high to very high. They were also doing rather well when it comes to efficient and sustainable resource use. Green economic opportunities was

the dimension which required increased focus by all sub-regions, due to it having the lowest values.

In regard to efficient and sustainable resource use, southern Europe was ranked third, with northern Europe first and western Europe second; eastern Europe had the lowest scores. Southern Europe had low scores in green economic opportunities and was in fourth place, while northern Europe was again positioned first, followed by western Europe and then eastern Europe, as second and third respectively. The lowest scores of southern Europe can also be seen in terms of natural capital protection; the leader in this dimension was, once again, northern Europe followed by western Europe, with eastern Europe ranked third. In social inclusion, southern Europe was third, after western Europe which did slightly better than northern Europe. Eastern Europe was in fourth place, with a similar score to third-ranked southern Europe.

Overview, results and discussion of the GGI performance of non-EU Balkan countries

As previously indicated, the five selected countries are all similar according to three criteria (their past political system, their geographic location and their strategic goal); thus, it is intriguing to see whether they are similar according to their achievements in the four dimensions and whether they are closely ranked. Their scores for 2019 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Green growth dimension sub-indices and overall Green Growth Index and rankings, selected southern European countries, 2019

	Dimensions				**Green Growth Index**		
	Efficient and sustainable resource use	**Natural capital protection**	**Green economic opportunities**	**Social inclusion**	**Scores**	**Level**	**Rank**
Serbia	40.26	74.02	33.89	74.83	52	Mod	30
Albania	50.27	80.49	23.42	75.14	52	Mod	31
Montenegro	57.54	68.12	9.40	72.36	40	Mod	35
Bosnia and Herzegovina	40.15	62.24	9.27	64.66	35	Low	37
North Macedonia	45.09	78.15	-	73.97	-	-	-

Source: GGI Report 2019.

Table 1 reports the overall 2019 Green Growth Index results for the five non-EU Balkans countries alongside the scores received on each of the four green growth dimensions and their 2019 ranks (out of 43 European countries). In that year, North

Macedonia had no overall GGI score, nor was its rank assessed, because there was no score for green economic opportunities.[14]

In terms of efficient and sustainable resource use in 2019, Montenegro had the highest score, followed by Albania. North Macedonia was placed third, followed by Serbia and then Bosnia and Herzegovina. The difference between first-ranked Montenegro and last-ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina was over 17 points.

Regarding natural capital protection, the leader in this group was Albania, followed by North Macedonia. Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina had the lowest rankings on this dimension. Here, the difference between first-ranked Albania and last-ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina was almost 18 points.

The third dimension, green economic opportunities, is perhaps the most interesting for analysis. Clearly, Serbia has the best achievement in the region, followed by Albania. There is a drastic difference with the other two countries that received scores, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the difference between first-ranked Serbia and last-ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina was no fewer than 24.6 points (on a measure where the scores were anyway low).

In terms of social inclusion, all the five countries have high performances. The leader in this area was Albania, followed by Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina again bringing up the rear. The difference between first-ranked Albania and last-ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina stood at almost 10.5 points: a much narrower difference than on any of the other dimensions.

Thus, in 2019, Bosnia and Herzegovina was ranked last in each of the dimensions. Albania was the leader of the group in two of them (social inclusion and natural capital protection), Montenegro led in terms of efficient and sustainable resource, and Serbia was best in green economic opportunities.

After the 2019 scores for the non-EU Balkan countries, the scores for 2020 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the overall 2020 Green Growth Index results for non-EU Balkans countries and the scores for all four green growth dimensions, North Macedonia again receiving no score for green economic opportunities. Serbia was again ranked in first place among the five, with Albania second, Montenegro third, and Bosnia and Herzegovina fourth. As in 2019, North Macedonia had no overall GGI score, and thus no rank, as a result of the missing dimension score.

Concerning efficient and sustainable resource use, the best ranked country was Montenegro, followed by Albania. These were followed by North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, all of which had fairly close and similar scores. The difference between first-ranked Montenegro and last-ranked Serbia was almost nine points.

Turning to natural capital protection, the leader in the group was Albania, whose score was significantly higher than North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Here, the difference between first-ranked Albania and last-ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina was almost 21 points.

14 The Index is not computed if the score for one dimension is missing.

Table 2 – Green growth dimension sub-indices and overall Green Growth Index and rankings, selected southern European countries, 2020

	Dimensions				Green Growth Index		
	Efficient and sustainable resource use	**Natural capital protection**	**Green economic opportunities**	**Social inclusion**	**Scores**	**Level**	**Rank**
Serbia	57.31	69.51	40.91	76.70	59.46	Mod	28
Albania	65.05	82.62	9.44	80.69	44.98	Mod	35
Montenegro	66.06	60.91	12.75	71.65	43.78	Mod	36
Bosnia and Herzegovina	58.70	61.76	9.54	69.05	39.31	Low	37
North Macedonia	59.70	74.72	-	72.71	-	-	-

Source: GGI Report 2020

The third dimension, green economic opportunities, again showed the greatest discrepancy in the ranking of the countries in the region. Serbia had the highest score, while significantly lower scores were obtained for Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania (9.44). The difference between first-ranked Serbia and lowest-ranked Albania exceeded 31 points – and, once more, this on a measure where the leading score, despite representing a relatively quite considerable advance on 2019, still barely attained moderate.

In terms of social inclusion, the five countries in the region all achieved high results in 2020 as well as in 2019, again ranking highest in this dimension. Here, the difference between first-ranked Albania and last-ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina was over 11 points.

In 2020, Albania was a leader in two dimensions (natural capital protection and social inclusion), Montenegro was a leader in efficient and sustainable resource use and Serbia was the best in green economic opportunities. Bosnia and Herzegovina was positioned last in two dimensions (natural capital protection and social inclusion), Albania last in green economic opportunities, while Serbia had the poorest achievement in efficient and sustainable resource use.

Despite the methodological limitations related to the comparison of the achievements of the countries from 2019 with those from 2020, the sum of the provided data in the reports by thematic units for the surveyed countries are highly indicative of the conditions and may be subject to a focused analysis and discussion.

In 2019, Serbia was ranked in 30th place and in 2020 in 28th; in both years, Serbia showed the best performances compared to the other countries, while moving up two positions in the GGI rankings. In terms of the individual dimensions, Serbia showed better results in 2020 compared to 2019. Namely, in efficient and sustainable

resource use, Serbia made progress in 2020 by almost 17 points (from 40.26 in 2019 to 57.31 in 2020). In the dimension of natural capital protection in Serbia, there was a decrease in 2020 compared to 2019 by about 4.5 points (from 74.02 in 2019 to 69.51 in 2020). Progress was achieved in green economic opportunities of almost seven points (from 33.89 in 2019 to 40.91 in 2020), as well as in social inclusion, although in the latter case progress was not so evident, being less than two points. Although a decline is noticeable only in the dimension of natural capital protection, comparing the two years in Serbia, it would be reasonable to recommend that Serbia should pay more attention to this dimension; nevertheless. one should bear in mind that this is the dimension in which Serbia achieved the best result compared to the other three.

Albania dropped by four positions in 2020 and is in 35th place compared to 2019, when it ranked in 31st. In terms of the dimensions, in terms of efficient and sustainable resource use, Albania made progress of almost 15 points (from 50.27 in 2019 to 65.05 in 2020). Although not as much in evidence, Albania also made progress in natural capital protection by a little over two points. In the dimension of green economic opportunities, however, there was a drastic decline in 2020, when it scored just 9.44 compared to the 23.42 achieved in 2019. In social inclusion, Albania made progress by over five points in 2020 compared to 2019 (75.14 in 2019 and 80.69 in 2020). Albania should thus make more effort in the dimension of green economic opportunities, generally a weakness among all Balkan countries.

In terms of overall GGI ranking, Montenegro dropped by one position in 2020 (35th place in 2019; 36th in 2020). In sustainable resource use, in 2020 it made progress by more than eight points, reaching 66.06 points. In natural capital protection, Montenegro witnessed a decline in 2020 of over seven points, dropping to 60.91 points. In terms of green economic opportunities, Montenegro showed some progress in 2020 compared to 2019 (from 9.27 points in 2019 to 12.75 in 2020). A slight decline in 2020 compared to 2019 is observed in social inclusion (72.36 in 2019 and 71.65 in 2020). Montenegro has achieved generally good results in all dimensions. It should be emphasised that, in the third dimension, of green economic opportunities, Montenegro showed progress of three points and should continue this growing trend.

Bosnia and Herzegovina retained the same ranking – 37th – in both reviewed years. Turning to the dimensions, Bosnia and Herzegovina made significant progress in 2020 in efficient and sustainable resource use, increasing its score by more than 18 points (from 40.15 in 2019 to 58.70 in 2020). Regarding the second dimension, natural capital protection, in 2020 there was a slight decline compared to 2019 (from 62.24 points to 61.76). In the third dimension, green economic opportunities, Bosnia and Herzegovina showed very little progress in 2020, shifting slightly from 9.27 points in 2019 to 9.54 in 2020. In social inclusion, it made progress of approximately 4.5 points compared to 2019 (69.05 in 2019, rising to 64.66 in 2020). Just as with the other countries, the weakest results were in the dimension of green economic opportunities; however, it did achieve progress in efficient and sustainable resource use. Being the last ranked country in both reviewed years, it is advisable for Bosnia and Herzegovina to improve its achievements in all four dimensions.

North Macedonia, lacking an assessment in the dimension of green economic opportunities in both years, has no overall GGI ranking. As for the other dimensions, the situation is as follows. In the dimension of efficient and sustainable resource use, the country made good progress in 2020 of almost 15 points compared to 2019 (from 45.09 in 2019 to 59.70 in 2020). In 2020, there was a decline in natural capital protection by almost 3.5 points (from 78.15 points in 2019 to 74.72 points in 2020). Although marginally so, in 2020 there was a decline in the dimension of social inclusion of slightly more than one point (73.97 in 2019 dropping to 72.71 in 2020). The main weakness for North Macedonia is the lack of data on the dimension of green economic opportunities and, accordingly, the inability to calculate an overall GGI score. Hence, the direction for Macedonia is to provide data related to the indicators in the dimension of green economic opportunities. This would allow the country to track its progress in that dimension and, consequently, the progress regarding the overall GGI.

Conclusions and recommendations

The SFR Yugoslavia constitution (1974) was the first constitution in the world in which the right to a healthy environment is a constitutionally guaranteed category. Although the constitution of Albania (1976) does not contain a right to a healthy environment, it does impose a duty on citizens to protect the land, the natural wealth, waters and the atmosphere from damage and pollution.

The trend from 2005 to 2019 in all five continents was upwards, with Europe and the Americas having the highest growth. According to the Green Growth Index, Europe was the best performer in 2019 and in 2020 compared to the other four continents.

In 2019, compared to the other three sub-regions within Europe, southern Europe had a high score in the dimensions of natural capital protection and social inclusion, showing the lowest rank in green economic opportunities. Regarding efficient and sustainable resource use, it is ranked only third out of the four.

In regard to the Balkan countries, the conclusion regarding the sequence in their rankings, both in 2019 and 2020, is interesting: it is exactly the same. More precisely, in both 2019 and 2020, Serbia was ranked the highest of the four countries receiving an overall score, followed by Albania, then Montenegro, while Bosnia and Herzegovina was lowest.

There are observable and quite dramatic differences between the countries in terms of the green economic opportunities on offer, indicating that all the countries need to pay more attention to green investment, green trade, green employment and green innovation.

Each of the non-EU Balkan countries have to make additional improvements, as the GGGI reports for both 2019 and 2020 show sharp differences with Europe in general. In particular, it can be noted that the countries in question are ranked among the lowest.

Furthermore, additional efforts have to be made in all these non-EU Balkan countries in order to improve the general performance in regard to the GGI. The

data presented for 2019 and for 2020 highlight the precise sectors in which such improvements need to be made.

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