

ICT Use in Small and Medium Enterprises for Development in Vlora Region

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Republic of Albania, in its efforts to build a sustainable growth of the country and the region, considers information and communication technologies, (hereafter named ICT), as an essential tool with a major impact in terms of building the information society.

According to the strategy document for ICT 2007-2013, a document of Albanian government, ICT should be used in all business sectors as transport, tourism, agriculture, environment, leisure, culture, etc. and to contribute to the entire population.

Despite the challenges facing Albania and other developing countries, computers and other ICTs have tremendous potential to help overcome them. This requires not only public sector leadership, but also private sector engagement. The strategy implementation in Albania has included different actions regarding not only central and local administration, but also private sector and businesses. Implementation, on the other hand must be supported by regional and local level strategies and action. In this context, the Pitagora project is one of the projects undertaken by different actors in Albania and especially in Vlora Region to study the current use and future possibilities of using ICT in Vlora Region.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the use by businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses, SMEs, given that ICT is considered by many authors as well as by orientations of the European Union, a powerful engine for regional and local economic development.

On the other hand, as indicated above, the strategy of the study will include surveys through structured questionnaires, to identify some very important aspects of ICT use in SMEs.

The important indicators included in the survey are general data about SME in the region, and the ICT presence within organizations as well as ICT use, in the light of their importance for regional development.

As the analyses show, the characteristics of SME and their business operations affect the use of ICTs in this region. In fact, the low level of cooperation in the value chain between clients and suppliers, small number of operation abroad and types of sectors most developed in the region create some opportunities for ICT use but also some challenges. The use of specific software and the depth of use in ICT are some of the solution recommended for the relatively low level of ICT use in the region.

Keywords: ICT Use, SME, Businesses, Economic Sector, Clients, Suppliers, Effective Operations, Vlova Region.