B I R D

Activity Report 2025

Barleti Institute for Research and Development (BIRD)

BIRD at a Glance

BIRD manages **€615,213.59** in its own budget across three projects: TERRITORY (**€239,357.99**), EVOLVE (**€270,855.60**, including co-financing) and 5HELIX (**€105,000.00**).

€615K BIRD budget in TERRITORY, EVOLVE and 5HELIX	**15** professionals in the BIRD team	**9** projects implemented since 2018	**3** partner countries: Italy, Albania, Montenegro

01 Organisation Profile

Organisation	Barleti Institute for Research and Development
Short name	BIRD
PIC number	885069808
Website	www.bird.al
Contact	Aleksandër Xhuvani, Executive Director director.bird@umb.edu.al

Our organisation

BIRD is the applied research and innovation unit of the Barleti Group, based in Tirana. The Institute builds an evolving innovation ecosystem that responds to digital transformation, connecting academia, industry, government, investors and citizens through the Five-Helix model.

Our work spans the full innovation cycle: from proposal development and applied research to testing, prototyping and the commercialisation of results. BIRD strengthens knowledge and technology transfer, entrepreneurship and professional skills training.

At the heart of our mission is improving quality of life through innovation: community resilience to disasters, green growth, energy efficiency and sustainable tourism. BIRD works with Barleti University, the Municipality of Tirana, the Startup Albania Agency and the EIT network (EIT HEI Initiative, EIT Health, EIT Food, EIT Urban Mobility, Climate-KIC, EIT InnoEnergy, EIT Manufacturing).

02 Team Capacity and Technical Expertise

BIRD's core strength is its team of 15 professionals covering the full project cycle: management, finance and legal affairs, technical and environmental expertise, communication and training. The team is supported by the academic staff of Barleti University and by external experts engaged for specific projects.

Since 2018, BIRD has implemented 9 projects funded by Interreg IPA CBC programmes (Italy–Albania–Montenegro, Greece–Albania, South Adriatic), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Municipality of Tirana.

Team by area of expertise

Area of expertise	Staff	Roles
Project leadership and management	3	Executive Director, Project Manager, Project Coordinator
Finance, administration and legal	3	Finance Manager, Office Coordinator, Legal Officer
Technical and IT expertise	2	Technical Expert, IT Expert
Environment	1	Environmental Expert
Communication and dissemination	1	Communication Expert
Training and capacity building	5	Trainers, Software Trainer, IT Trainers
Total	**15**	

Technical domain expertise

Domain	Application	Reference projects
Disaster risk and emergency management	Drones (UAS), AI and real-time monitoring of floods and fires	TERRITORY
Digital transformation	Open innovation hubs on the EDIH model, digital services for SMEs	EVOLVE, 5HELIX
Environment and green growth	Biodiversity preservation through digital tools	EVOLVE
Energy efficiency	Hub network, training of public building managers	REEHUB, REEHUB PLUS
Sustainable tourism and heritage	SMART TOUR platform, itineraries and guide certification	Smart Travel, Via Dinarica
Entrepreneurship and innovation	Start-up incubation and acceleration, Five-Helix model	5HELIX
Education and capacity building	Trainings, seminars, STEAM education for young people	TERRITORY (WP2), STEAM

03 Operational Pillars

- Applied research
- Testing and commercialisation
- Innovation and entrepreneurship
- Knowledge and technology transfer
- Living labs
- EU proposal development and project management
- Training and capacity building

Operational pillars

EU-funded projects	Innovation ecosystem	Start-up incubation	Thematic areas
2 Interreg projects in implementation; 9 projects since 2018; partners in 3 countries	Five-Helix model; Smart City (CityLab), STAMINA, Triple City, Albania Open Innovation	5HELIX programme: incubation, mentoring, prototyping and acceleration	Smart cities, digital transformation, knowledge economy, manufacturing, health, tourism and culture, agri-food

Horizontal support: facilities and resources, financial management of projects, communication and event organisation.

04 Our Core Expertise in Project Implementation

- **Proposal writing and partnerships:** proposals aligned with Interreg programme objectives, such as TERRITORY and EVOLVE.
- **Applied research:** regional risk analyses, infrastructure assessments and stakeholder needs studies.
- **Advanced technologies:** integration of drones, sensors and AI into monitoring and response systems.
- **Capacity building:** international seminars and local workshops for operators and institutions.
- **Pilot implementation and evaluation:** testing solutions in real conditions, such as the TERRITORY pilot in Shkodër.
- **Knowledge transfer:** knowledge packages and good practices for SMEs and the public sector.
- **Communication and dissemination:** stakeholder engagement, partner meetings and promotion of results at events.

- **Procurement and financial management:** procurement plans, expert contracts and reporting under programme rules.
- **Sustainability:** action plans for the uptake of results beyond the project lifetime.

05 Funded Projects (Concluded and Ongoing)

Project	Programme	Description
TERRITORY	Interreg IPA South Adriatic	Drones and AI for disaster response
EVOLVE	Interreg IPA South Adriatic	Innovation hubs for green growth and biodiversity
5HELIX	Start-up programme	Start-up incubation and digital transformation
STEAM	Tirana – European Youth Capital	STEAM education for young people
REEHUB PLUS	Interreg IPA CBC IT–AL–ME	Energy efficiency in public buildings
Smart Travel on Cultural Routes	Interreg IPA CBC Greece–Albania	SMART TOUR platform for experiential tourism
Regional Academy of Adventure Guides	RCC – Triple P	Policy paper, trainings and Via Dinarica itineraries
Regional Network of Adventure Guides – Via Dinarica	RCC	Training and certification of adventure guides
REEHUB	Interreg IPA CBC IT–AL–ME	Hub network for energy efficiency

TERRITORY – BIRD budget €239,357.99

"Strengthening disaster response capacities through drone technology" improves disaster risk management and climate adaptation in the South Adriatic, using drones (UAS) and AI to address floods, fires and emergencies in Italy, Albania and Montenegro.

Lead partner	Apulian Aerospace Technology District (DTA), Italy
Other partners	BIRD; Municipality of Shkodër; Port of Bar; Port System Authority of the Ionian Sea (Taranto); Municipality of Pescolanciano; ARPA Puglia (associated)
Total budget	€1,074,803.74
BIRD budget	€239,357.99 (€203,454.29 programme co-financing)
Project manager	Prof. Dr. Aleksandër Xhuvani

Main activities

1. Regional risk and capacity analysis in 4 pilot areas.

2. TERRITORY platform with drones, sensors, AI and a command-and-control centre.
3. Pilot demonstrations in Taranto, Pescolanciano, Shkodër and Bar.
4. Training and knowledge transfer (WP2 – Capacity Building, reported by BIRD).
5. Joint action plan and sustainability strategy.

EVOLVE – BIRD budget €270,855.60

"Regional Open Innovation Hubs for Green Growth Through Digital Transformation" establishes open innovation hubs on the EDIH model in Albania and Montenegro to digitalise services that support biodiversity preservation.

Partners	BIRD; CETMA (Italy); Environmental Protection Fund and Tehnopolis (Montenegro); Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation; ARSARP (Italy)
Total budget	€1,037,322.05
BIRD budget	€270,855.60 (including co-financing)
Expected results	2 Biodiversity Digital Hubs, a knowledge transfer package, good practices for SMEs and the public sector

5HELIX – BIRD budget €105,000.00

5HELIX is BIRD's digital transformation hub and start-up incubation programme. Built on the Five-Helix model, it supports students, young innovators and early-stage start-ups in turning ideas into market-ready businesses.

BIRD budget	€105,000.00
Target groups	Students, young innovators, early-stage start-ups
Main activities	Incubation call, information sessions with students, mentoring, prototyping, acceleration, participation in Future2Tech 2026

06 Social Dimension of Our Projects

BIRD's projects have a direct social impact: safer communities, skills and jobs for young people, and better public services.

Project	Beneficiaries	Social impact
TERRITORY	Communities in pilot areas, emergency services, Municipality of Shkodër	Early warning for floods and fires, search and rescue, stronger community preparedness
EVOLVE	SMEs, public institutions, communities in natural areas	Digital services for biodiversity and green growth of local economies

Project	Beneficiaries	Social impact
5HELIX	Students and young people with business ideas	Incubation, mentoring and practical steps from idea to start-up
STEAM	Young people in Tirana	Skills in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics
Via Dinarica (2 RCC projects)	Guides and service providers in rural areas	Training, certification and employment in adventure tourism
Smart Travel on Cultural Routes	Local cultural tourism actors	Valorisation of local heritage and income for communities
REEHUB / REEHUB PLUS	Public building managers, citizens	Energy awareness and lower costs in public buildings

In Shkodër, an area frequently hit by floods, TERRITORY carries the greatest social value of the period: drone technology translates into direct protection for residents.

07 Project Management Team

BIRD team members engaged in current projects:

No.	Name	Position at BIRD	Projects
1	Prof. Dr. Aleksandër Xhuvani	Executive Director; TERRITORY Project Manager	TERRITORY
2	Kejda Nuhu	Project Manager	EVOLVE, 5HELIX
3	Olgerta Puta	Finance Manager	TERRITORY, EVOLVE, 5HELIX
4	Olta Murataj	Communication Expert	EVOLVE
5	Gazmend Zeneli	Environmental Expert	EVOLVE
6	Koi Barbullushi	Software Trainer	EVOLVE
7	External experts (3)	Academic staff and project specialists	TERRITORY, 5HELIX

In earlier projects (2018–2022), a further 12 experts contributed to REEHUB, REEHUB PLUS, Smart Travel on Cultural Routes, Via Dinarica and STEAM.

08 Communication and Activities

BIRD communicates its results through its website www.bird.al, project websites (e.g. evolve.southadriatic.eu), partner meetings and workshops with local stakeholders.

Date	Activity	Location
Late September 2025	EVOLVE kick-off meeting with partners from Albania, Italy and Montenegro	Tirana
July 2025	Launch of TERRITORY and EVOLVE	–
Before launch	Preparation and award of Interreg applications with DTA, CETMA, the Municipality of Shkodër and other partners	Albania, Italy, Montenegro

Project implementation – photo gallery

TERRITORY: Partner meeting · WP2 presentation · Team

Thematic areas: Smart City · Digital Transformation · Productive Economy

EVOLVE: Project news

09 Outlook 2026

Recent years have positioned BIRD as a reliable Albanian partner in EU cross-border programmes, with €615,213.59 in its own budget across TERRITORY, EVOLVE and 5HELIX.

First developments in 2026

- TERRITORY: local stakeholder workshops, including one at Barleti University in Shkodër; risk analysis completed in the 4 pilot areas; on 20 October 2026 BIRD presented WP2 progress at the Mid-Term Review and Steering Committee in Brindisi, Italy.
- 5HELIX: start-up incubation programme (August–December 2026), information sessions with students and participation in Future2Tech 2026.
- The remaining TERRITORY tenders close before 15 December 2026.

Priorities ahead

1. TERRITORY pilot in Shkodër and training of emergency operators.
2. Set-up of the EVOLVE digital hub in Albania and engagement of SMEs.
3. A stronger social dimension across all projects, focused on young people and vulnerable groups.

- Barleti Group project list "Projekte të UniBa – Kërkim i Aplikuar me staf" (August 2026)