

ABSTRACT

Albania continued implementing the judicial reform strengthening judicial independence and prosecutorial autonomy. The vetting process of all judges and prosecutors was finalised in first instance, further strengthening accountability. Challenges remain regarding timely and qualitative evaluations, and appointments of non-magistrate members to the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council. The High Justice Inspector is operational, but the high number of magistrate-inspector vacancies affects its effective operation. While the resilience of the judiciary improved, attempts of undue influence on the judicial system by public officials or politicians aggravated. Sufficient budget was allocated for the modern integrated electronic case management system, but its establishment is foreseen only for 2030. Shortcomings remain regarding the quality of justice including in access to justice, judicial training, financial and human resources. Challenges regarding the length of proceedings and backlog increased, while decisive measures to increase efficiency are yet to be implemented.

The Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2024-2030 has been adopted. The legal framework to fight corruption is broadly in place, but legislation on prevention of corruption needs to be completed. The Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK) further consolidated its positive results in fighting high-level corruption and made tangible progress towards a solid track record in the fight against corruption. The institutional framework for prevention continues to have a limited impact and coordination with law enforcement remained weak. The state police remain vulnerable to corruption. Shortcomings remain with transparency and how effectively the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest checks declarations of assets and interests.

The independence of the Audio-Visual Regulatory Authority remains an issue of concern. Concerns as regards the independence of the public broadcaster have increased. High concentration of media ownership continues to negatively impact media independence. Media market penetration by high profile business groups with political links also remain a serious concern. Shortcomings in terms of fair allocation of state advertising and other state resources as well as the right to access to information remain. Verbal and physical attacks, smear campaigns and strategic lawsuits against public participation targeting journalists are a continued cause for concern and self-regulation remains weak.

Challenges regarding the quality of the legislative process, including limited effectiveness of public consultations, remain. Shortcomings exist regarding the work, methodology and impact of the *ad hoc* parliamentary committee on deepening reforms for good governance, rule of law and anti-corruption. The Constitutional Court continues to function effectively, while there are concerns about the Parliament's ongoing failure to comply with some of its rulings, and legal uncertainty regarding the precise duration of the mandate of its members. The mandates of the Ombudsperson and the Commissioner against Discrimination still need to be renewed, and some obstacles to their effective working remain. Civil society organisations remain overall free to operate, but challenges remain including on registration requirements and limited public funding.

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM¹

Independence

The level of perceived judicial independence in Albania continues to be average among both the general public and companies. Overall, 47% of the general population and 40% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2025². The perceived judicial independence among the general public has slightly increased in comparison with 2024 (46%), while among companies it decreased in comparison with 2024 (45%).

Albania continued implementing the judicial reform, strengthening judicial independence and prosecutorial autonomy. A revised Cross-Sector Justice Strategy 2024-2030 was adopted³. The implementation of the judicial reform continued. The aim of this reform is to promote integrity and professionalism across the judiciary, including through the vetting process, reduced political influence throughout the appointment process, and by contributing to more merit-based career system. The interinstitutional coordination between the Councils and other justice institutions has not improved. A more effective steering mechanism and coordination of all justice institutions needs to be ensured during the implementation of the justice reform strategy. This relates to the need to intensify exchanges, ensure the systematic follow up to joint meetings of the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council by way of operational conclusions, consultations with stakeholders, or coordination of measures and standards regarding the quality of justice⁴.

The vetting process of all judges and prosecutors was finalised in first instance, further strengthening accountability, while gaps to maintaining the high standards set during the vetting process remain. The vetting bodies have finalised the vetting in first instance in November 2024. The overall outcome of decisions in first instance, and where applicable on appeal, resulted in 282 dismissals and terminations (56 % of cases); 350 confirmations in office (44% of cases); and 4 suspension decisions, with the obligation to undergo training (0.49% of cases). 110 appeals remain pending⁵. The Appeal Chamber increased the pace of appeals, including through the appointment of four additional staff, and is currently on track towards finalising of the vetting on appeal before the end of the constitutional deadline of June 2026. The vetting bodies referred 19 vetting cases to prosecution in September 2024. Effective judicial follow up remains to be observed⁶. To maintain accountability of the judicial system after the vetting process, the High Prosecutorial Council, the High Judicial Council, the High Justice Inspector, and the High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest, must update their internal procedures, and ensure they have enough staff and

¹ An overview of the institutional framework for all four pillars can be found here [[hyperlink](#)].

² Flash Eurobarometer 554 and 555 (2025); Flash Eurobarometer 540 and 541 (2024). The level of perceived judicial independence is categorised as follows: very low (below 30% of respondents perceive judicial independence as fairly good and very good); low (between 30-39%), average (between 40-59%), high (between 60-75%), very high (above 75%).

³ Albanian Government (2024), Decision No. 787 on the approval of the Justice Strategy.

⁴ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 8.

⁵ Data provided by the International Monitoring Operation.

⁶ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 3-4. Thus far, in three cases the district prosecutors’ offices decided not to initiate criminal proceedings; three referrals are in the preliminary verification process and in 13 cases criminal proceedings have been registered and investigation is ongoing.

resources to keep carrying out integrity and proficiency checks in line with the vetting standards.

Previously identified shortcomings in the appointments of non-magistrate members to the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council remain. The Parliament appointed three non-magistrate members of the High Judicial Council and three non-magistrate members of the High Prosecutorial Council in September 2024⁷. The process had been delayed and remained heavily influenced by the Parliament due to frequent use of disqualifications and recourse to drawing of lots, without due regard to the highest qualifications of the candidates⁸. As reported previously, shortcomings persist in practice and in the legal framework on the appointment procedure of non-magistrate members, who are not subject to the same standards for background checks and asset verification as magistrate members, affecting the transparency and meritocracy of the process⁹.

Challenges in conducting timely and qualitative evaluations, appointments, promotions, and transfers of magistrates remained, and the Councils lack important operating rules. Both the High Judicial Council (HJC) and the High Prosecutorial Council (HPC) continue to face challenges in ensuring timely and qualitative evaluations of magistrates' performance. They have accumulated a large backlog of evaluations, which delays merit-based appointments, promotions and transfers¹⁰. Since July 2024, the HPC finalised 9 evaluations, out of which only 1 is based on the 2016 legal framework¹¹, and HJC completed 11 evaluations by December 2024¹². The HJC finalised 32 appointments, 3 promotions, 16 temporary transfers and 2 lateral transfers of judges. The HPC finalised 23 appointments, 4 promotions, and 5 transfers of judges¹³. There was no significant development from HJC and HPC in strengthening the transparency of promotions and transfers¹⁴. The HJC lacks the necessary internal operating rules to carry out its functions effectively, and those of the HPC need revising. Both Councils lack internal rules of procedure on conflicts of interest of their members, resulting in potential conflicts of interest not being addressed¹⁵.

The High Justice Inspector is operational, but the high number of magistrate-inspector vacancies affects its effective operation. While the inherited backlog was cleared in 2023, 1 363 cases from that year were carried over to 2024. In 2024, the High Justice Inspector (HJI) registered 1 491 new cases and processed 1 374 cases. 1 480 cases were carried over to 2025¹⁶. Only 9 out of 20 inspectors are currently in office. The selection of four non-magistrate inspectors is ongoing¹⁷. There are still challenges in making the inspector position attractive

⁷ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 8.

⁸ 2024 Enlargement Report, Albania p. 28. The Parliament failed to reach the required two thirds majority and resorted to drawing of lots. Though in line with Law No. 115/2016 on Governance Institutions of the Justice System governing the selection process (Articles 35 (13)-(14) and Article 58 (2)), the use of lots does not observe the merit-based ranking to the detriment of the meritocracy of the process.

⁹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ 2024 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 28.

¹¹ The 2024 Rule of Law Report noted that "The HPC has not yet started the evaluation of prosecutors based on the 2016 legal framework, but it keeps promoting prosecutors based on evaluations performed by the General Prosecutors Office before the 2016 justice reform", p. 6.

¹² Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 16-17.

¹³ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 13.

¹⁴ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 4.

¹⁵ 2024 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 28.

¹⁶ High Justice Inspector (2025), Report on the work of the Office of the High Inspector of Justice, p. 11.

¹⁷ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 9.

for magistrates¹⁸ and legal changes are needed to increase its appeal. The recruitment procedure for the secondment of six magistrates to the HJI has been unsuccessful¹⁹. In terms of operations, the HJI initiated requests for disciplinary proceedings against 11 magistrates including six judges and five prosecutors in 2024 and completed six thematic inspections²⁰. After review from the High Judicial Council, two requests for disciplinary proceeding have been accepted, one has been rejected, one has been suspended and two are still under consideration. After review from the High Prosecutorial Council, one request has been accepted, but with a change of measure, two have been rejected and two are still under consideration²¹.

The random allocation of cases is still not consistently applied in courts, and is only limitedly applied in the prosecution service. Although rules on random allocation of cases remained in place, due to continued delays in filling judicial vacancies in several courts, the random allocation of cases is still not applied consistently²². There have been some limited developments with the random allocation of cases for prosecutors, which started to be applied in practice at prosecution offices of first instance²³.

While the resilience of the judiciary has improved, attempts by public officials or politicians to exert undue interference and pressure on the judicial system raise serious concerns. During the reporting period, six magistrates have been placed under protection, including two judges and four prosecutors. The Special Prosecutor's Office launched one criminal investigation concerning attempted pressure against a magistrate in a case concerning a Member of Parliament²⁴. The investigation and arrest of an elected official, confirmed in February 2025 by the Special Structure Against Organised Crime and Corruption (SPAK)²⁵ Court, triggered unprecedented public reactions by the executive and legislative branches, including attempts to put pressure on SPAK and judicial institutions. This raises serious concerns²⁶. SPAK published two letters of complaint to the Ministry of Interior and the State Police for failure to reinforce security and ensure the safety of SPAK personnel during a protest outside SPAK premises. The governing institutions of the judiciary issued public statements²⁷, denouncing political pressure on the judiciary.

Quality

Implementation of the new judicial map was finalised but access to justice continues to be hampered by shortcomings, including in electronic communication tools, infrastructure and legal aid. The implementation of the judicial map adopted in July 2022 to optimise resources and increase efficiency²⁸ was finalised. An electronic communication tool

¹⁸ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 5.

¹⁹ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 9.

²⁰ High Justice Inspector (2025), Report on the work of the Office of the High Inspector of Justice, p. 4.

²¹ High Justice Inspector (2025), Report on the work of the Office of the High Inspector of Justice, pp. 4, 23-29.

²² 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 5.

²³ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 14.

²⁴ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 19-21.

²⁵ Specialised bodies in charge of investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating corruption cases were established in 2016. These are the Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK), comprising the Special Prosecution Office (SPO) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime courts (SPAK Courts, both of first instance and appeal).

²⁶ SPAK (2025), Letter to Minister of the Interior of 14 February 2025.

²⁷ High Judicial Council (2025), Statement of 12 February 2025; Panorama.com.al (2025).

²⁸ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 7.

between the Tirana District Court and lawyers has been successfully piloted²⁹. However, the lack of funding to expand the electronic communication tools and electronic access to all courts' files, especially the Court of Appeal is limiting access to justice. While the Government allocated the necessary premises to the Court of Appeal, the court infrastructure remained overall poor³⁰. The number of cases involving primary legal aid decreased from 7 008 in 2023 to 6 220 in 2024, while the number of cases involving secondary legal aid increased from 773 in 2023, to 904 in 2024.³¹ However civil society organisations report insufficient access and limited quality of legal aid representation³².

Sufficient budget has been allocated for the implementation of a modern integrated electronic case management system in courts and prosecution offices, but establishment is foreseen only for 2030. Some progress was made with the allocation of state budget for the court component, while the project to fully enable the system is expected to run until 2030³³. This timeline is too long and risks being detrimental to the overall quality of justice. Coordination among the actors remained limited, impacting the pace and joint approach toward an integrated system.

Shortcomings remain regarding the overall quality of judicial training. Amendments to the legal framework on judicial training remain necessary to strengthen the capacity of the School of Magistrates³⁴. Some positive actions have been taken to increase the skills of magistrates in the second year of training and to review relevant curricula of the first and second years³⁵. However, a comprehensive review of the initial and continuous training curricula remains necessary to increase their relevance and quality. The fact that magistrates who have resigned during vetting and are subject to a prohibition to hold high level judiciary positions, are free to take up positions of training staff at the School of Magistrates, continues to constitute a major shortcoming. The admission exam continues to present shortcomings in terms of quality and has not been significantly revised³⁶.

Shortage of financial and human resources, including magistrates, continues to negatively affect the quality of justice. Although the filling of judicial vacancies continued, with 32 judges and 23 prosecutors appointed as of July 2024, significant shortage persists, notably at appeal level. As of April 2024, 221 prosecutors out of 341 (65%) and 272 judges out of 408 (67%) were effectively employed³⁷. In the Court of Appeal, two judges have been appointed, bringing the number of judges in office to 28 out of 78³⁸. An additional source of concern are the quotas decided by the High Judicial Council (HJC) and the High Prosecutorial Council

²⁹ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 23.

³⁰ Albanian Government (2025), Council of Ministers approved on 20 March 2025 the transfer of a state-owned property from the General Directorate of Taxation to the High Judicial Council. The property, located in Tirana will serve as premises for the Appeal Court.

³¹ 2024 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 31; People's Advocate of Albania (2023), Annual Report, p. 68. The new judicial map reorganised the appeal courts into a single appeal court of general jurisdiction, which has caused a number of issues including the lack of infrastructure.

³² Albanian Government (2025), Analysis of 2024 performance of the Free Legal Aid Directorate at the Ministry of Justice.

³³ Country visit Albania, Civil society organisations.

³⁴ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 23.

³⁵ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 8.

³⁶ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 25-26.

³⁷ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp.7-8.

³⁸ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 27-28; High Judicial Council (2025), Annual Report for 2024.

³⁹ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 28.

(HPC) for the School of Magistrates (SoM) for the academic year 2025-2026, as they are largely insufficient to ensure that, in the medium term, vacancies will be gradually filled³⁹. Increasing the number and quality of candidate magistrates and legal assistants admitted to the SoM is essential. Except for the High Court, all courts of general and specialised jurisdiction, at all levels, continued to function with acting chairs, as positions of permanent chairs have not been filled by the HJC despite the legal basis being in place⁴⁰. Legal advisors' positions remain limited. Legal changes are still necessary to provide a separate admission exam for magistrates and legal advisors, as well as a career progression path for the latter⁴¹. Out of 242 additional total staff requested by the justice institutions in 2024, only 133 additional employees were approved by the Parliament⁴². A comprehensive human resources plan including planning per each category of additional staff, is missing. While the Government has continued to increase investments in the justice system over the past years, the allocations remain below the amounts needed by justice institutions⁴³. Albania's expenditure on justice as a whole remains significantly low⁴⁴.

The High Court addressed some problems of consistency and reasoning in the case law. Despite the High Court continuing to unify the case law, problems of consistency of the case law remain⁴⁵. With the publication of court rulings of the SPAK first instance court⁴⁶, court rulings were made publicly available in a timely manner. Courts encounter serious challenges in timely reasoning of decisions.

Efficiency

Challenges regarding the length of proceedings and the large backlog have further increased, while decisive measures to increase efficiency are yet to be implemented. The clearance rate remained well below 100% in 2023 and was particularly low in second instance where it ranged between 43% and 63% for different types of cases (compared to between 87% and 94% for first instance cases)⁴⁷. In comparison with 2022, disposition time further increased in 2023 for all categories of cases in first and second instance, in particular for second instance

³⁹ Country visit Albania, HJC and HPC; Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 25. The number of quotas for candidates to the School of Magistrates in 2025-2026 is 10 for judges, 12 for prosecutors, six for legal advisors and zero for legal assistants. The quotas for the preceding cohort were 20 for judges, 25 for prosecutors and 15 for legal assistants (which were in turn lower than in the previous years).

⁴⁰ Country visit Albania. According to the HJC, it does not have a legal basis to proceed with appointments of Court Chairs. HPC did not identify the same problem and performs appointments of heads of Prosecution offices based on the legal basis in force.

⁴¹ Law No. 115/2016 on Governance Institutions of the Justice System, Articles 244 (4) and 274.

⁴² Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 31. Additional staff includes legal assistants for the appeal Court, judicial secretaries, and support staff (IT, drivers etc).

⁴³ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 31. Out of 71,331,485 ALL requested, 48,330,988 ALL budget was approved.

⁴⁴ CEPEJ (2024), Dashboard Western Balkans – 2023 Data Collection. In 2023, Albania spent about EUR 73.7 million as its implemented Judicial System budget, reflecting a 69,3% increase from 2022 (the budget allocated was about EUR 74.23 million). This amounts to EUR 26,7 spent per inhabitant.

⁴⁵ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 34.

⁴⁷ CEPEJ (2024), p. 16. The clearance rate in 2023 in first instance was 87% for civil and commercial litigious cases, 91% for administrative cases and 94% for the sum of severe and misdemeanour and/or minor criminal cases. In second instance cases, the clearance rate in 2023 was 46% for administrative cases and 63% for the sum of severe and misdemeanour and/or minor criminal cases. For civil and commercial litigious cases in second instance, data is not available for 2023.

criminal cases⁴⁸. The reasons indicated by courts for this negative trend include judicial vacancies as well as vacancies of legal assistants and secretaries, their insufficient continuous training, and the lack of further specialisation of judges. However, an exception was the decrease of disposition time by 38,6% for administrative cases in second instance, driven by the increased number of resolved cases resulting from an increased number of judges in the Administrative Court of Appeal. At the same time, the disposition time in second instance administrative cases remains very high overall⁴⁹. The High Judicial Council (HJC) has not yet adopted a comprehensive roadmap on efficiency. Concerns over the alignment with European standards of the amendments proposed in May 2024 as part of the strategy on backlog reduction by the HJC, have so far not been resolved⁵⁰. Alternative dispute resolution remains underused in practice⁵¹.

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that the level of corruption in the public sector remained high. In the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Albania scores 42/100 and ranks 80th globally⁵². Nonetheless, this perception marks the best score for Albania over the past five years, confirming the positive impact of the implementation of the justice reform.

The Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2024-2030 has been adopted. The new anti-corruption strategy adopted in December 2024 by the Government⁵³ focuses on high-risk areas for corruption (such as property, public procurement, health, education, customs, and taxation), with an emphasis on youth integrity education and addressing relevant previous recommendations⁵⁴. The anti-corruption strategy shows some weaknesses, notably on some aspects of the monitoring mechanism and institutional coordination which might reduce its effectiveness and impact on preventing and reducing corruption.

Although a comprehensive legal framework to fight corruption exists, certain gaps remain. The Code of Criminal Procedure lacks provisions granting competence to Special Courts for Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime over matters related to the execution of their

⁴⁸ CEPEJ (2024), pp. 2, 16-20. In first instance, in 2023, the disposition time increased in comparison with 2022 by 22,6% for civil and commercial litigious cases, 28,2% for administrative cases, and 12,5% for criminal cases. In second instance, in 2023 disposition time increased in comparison with 2022 by 66,7% in criminal cases. For civil and commercial cases in second instance, data for 2023 is not available.

⁴⁹ CEPEJ (2024), pp. 2, 16, 19; Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 34. The disposition time for second instance administrative cases decreased from 8 680 days to 5 326 days. In contrast, the disposition time ranges from 124 days to 462 days for all other types of cases (except civil and commercial litigious cases in second instance, for which data is not available for 2023).

⁵⁰ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 9. "In May 2024 the High Judicial Council presented the strategy on backlog reduction, which entails important amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code, the Civil Procedure Code, Administrative Law, and the law on the organisation of the judiciary. However, consistency of these legal initiatives with the general principles of justice reform and European standards is yet to be fully ensured." A comprehensive roadmap on efficiency, including but not limited to measures to reduce backlog, remains necessary.

⁵¹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 8-9.

⁵² Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 (2025). The level of perceived corruption is categorized as follows: low (above 79); relatively low (between 79-60), relatively high (between 59-50), high (scores below 50).

⁵³ Albanian Government (2024), Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030.

⁵⁴ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 40-41. GRECO (2025), Second Compliance Report by GRECO for the 5th evaluation round, Albania.

judgments⁵⁵. In May 2025, the Government sent the draft law on the asset recovery office to the Parliament for adoption⁵⁶. Albania is not yet a signatory party to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention⁵⁷.

SPAK further consolidated its positive results in fighting high-level corruption, while some shortages remain in terms of staff and infrastructure. The Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK)⁵⁸ and the anti-corruption and organised crime courts (SPAK courts), have delivered positive results in the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of corruption cases, including those involving politicians and high-level officials, as well as the protection of EU financial interests⁵⁹. SPAK shows sound strategic vision and independence in contributing to the fight against high-level corruption, despite increased political pressure, organised crime groups and media. SPAK enjoys a high level of public trust. SPAK's access to state databases was expanded⁶⁰. SPAK actions continued towards establishing its case-management system⁶¹, consolidating its analytical capacity in the fight against organised criminal networks⁶², and developing an action plan to reduce its backlog. The continuously increasing SPAK workload, and the insufficient staff and infrastructure still need to be addressed⁶³. The number of referrals to SPAK from other authorities has decreased further and remains low⁶⁴. Other structures for repression of corruption continued to encounter challenges in the detection and effective investigation of corruption⁶⁵.

Tangible progress was made by SPAK towards a solid track record in the fight against corruption, notably at high level, and the use of financial investigations and asset confiscations has improved. From 1 January to 31 December 2024, the Special Court of Appeal for Corruption and Organised Crime (SPAK appeal court) delivered 24 final adjudications, with 106 persons convicted in final rulings in corruption cases, including 13 convictions in high level cases (including former Minister, former President of the

⁵⁵ 2023 Screening report Albania, Cluster I – Fundamentals, p. 48.

⁵⁶ Albania reported to have established an asset recovery office within the Albanian State Police by a Minister's order, however, its full functioning remains to be developed.

⁵⁷ OECD (2024).

⁵⁸ Special Prosecution Office (SPO) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

⁵⁹ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 49-50. Specialised bodies in charge of investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating corruption cases were established in 2016. These are the Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK), comprising the Special Prosecution Office (SPO) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Anti Corruption and Organised Crime courts (SPAK Courts, both of first instance and appeal). The General Prosecution Office (GPO) is competent to investigate cases of petty corruption.

⁶⁰ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 55.

⁶¹ The system is expected to be operational in 2025.

⁶² Including complex investigations, joint operations, also with international cooperation.

⁶³ Country visit Albania, SPAK; SPAK (2025), written input. The legal definition of high-level corruption sets a low threshold; as a result, SPAK receives a workload of cases which is too high compared to its current capacity and resources. SPAK courts indicate a shortage of administrative staff, lack of an effective case management system, and continuously increasing workload: the total number of new cases increased, with 2775 new cases in 2023, compared to 2059 new cases in 2022.

⁶⁴ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 52-53. During 2024, according to SPAK, there were 6 related referrals from law enforcement agencies during 2024, namely 5 from Albanian State Police and 1 from the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI).

⁶⁵ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p.11. Notably, the General Prosecution Office (GPO), Albanian State Police (ASP) and customs police.

Constitutional Court, former city mayors and other officials)⁶⁶. SPAK's human, technical and financial capacity for financial investigations and asset confiscations has improved⁶⁷, and the level of total asset seizures and confiscations remained stable⁶⁸. The seizure of assets for corruption related crimes declined, while confiscation of assets for corruption-related crimes improved⁶⁹. Albania reported to have established an asset recovery office within Albanian State Police, but its full functioning remains to be demonstrated. The systematic use of special investigative measures has improved, although the gap between seizures and confiscations persists⁷⁰.

Although some organisational steps have been taken, the institutional framework for corruption prevention remains largely ineffective and coordination with law enforcement continues to be weak. The General Directorate on Anti-Corruption (GDA) has been transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Minister of State for Public Administration and Corruption in June 2024⁷¹. The GDA underwent a re-organisation to place greater emphasis on prevention, although it also remains responsible for centralised administrative investigations. Shortcomings persist as regards GDA's capacities to effectively oversee the implementation and assessment of preventive measures, along with thorough risk assessments, particularly in high-risk areas for corruption⁷². Coordination between institutions in charge of corruption prevention and relevant law enforcement structures remains weak and the number of referrals further decreased. The State Audit Institution (ALSAI) has a stronger track record on judicial referrals and cooperation with criminal prosecution bodies. In 2024, ALSAI referred 13 cases with criminal elements to prosecution. Additionally, 35 referrals on issues that require further investigation were shared with prosecutorial bodies upon request⁷³.

The Law on the Police has been revised, while the state police is still highly vulnerable to corruption. The Law on the Police has been revised, including a number of structural changes. The Police Oversight Agency stepped up its activities. In 2024, the Agency received 1 704 citizen complaints regarding the State Police staff conduct directly and 3 334 through a dedicated police line. It launched 63 inspections, up from 51 in 2023, and recommended

⁶⁶ Albanian Government (2025), written input, Justice Freedom and Security Sub-committee, Annex 4. Other subjects include: two ex-Secretary-Generals, an ex-judge, an ex-member of Special Appeals Chamber and four ex-judicial police officers. The SPAK first instance court convicted 93 persons in cases of corruption, including one former mayor for unlawful actions in the procedure to issue a construction permit and abuse of public funds. Regarding high level corruption, during the period January 2024 – September 2024, seven criminal proceedings were sent to trial including 10 high-level officials. By 30 September 2024, six additional investigations in high level corruption cases were launched with respect to 14 individuals. In November 2024, the SPAK appeal court pronounced its final decision regarding the "Elbasan Incinerator case" with a harsher conviction than the first instance judgement for the former Minister and a former member of the Parliament; see more [Albaniantimes.al](https://www.albaniantimes.al) (2024).

⁶⁷ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 65-66. The appointment of the Deputy Director of NBI allowed for the launch of the procedure to hire Judicial Police Services officers, as envisaged by the SPAK Law.

⁶⁸ Agency for Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets (2025), written input: In 2024, seized assets were valued at EUR 22 million, while confiscated assets were valued at EUR 10 million, compared to 21 and 11 million respectively reported in 2023).

⁶⁹ Agency for Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets (2025), written input: The value of seized assets for corruption related crimes dropped from EUR 6 million to EUR 277 287, while confiscation of assets for corruption related crimes increased from EUR 273 000 to EUR 869 000 in 2024.

⁷⁰ Albanian Government (2025), written input pp. 65-67.

⁷¹ Council of Ministers (2024), Decision No. 436 of 26 June 2024.

⁷² 2024 Rule of Law report, Albania, p. 12.

⁷³ State Audit Institution (2025), 2024 Activity Report, p. 27.

disciplinary investigations for 283 employees, 60% more than in 2023. The Disciplinary Investigation Commission imposed disciplinary measures on 43 police officers. The Agency also referred 463 law enforcement employees to criminal prosecution (35% more than in 2023), largely for “abuse of duty” and “passive corruption”⁷⁴. With a view to ensuring the integrity of the police personnel, last year 62 individuals underwent periodic and transitional evaluation, with 46 decisions of confirmation, and dismissal from duty in one case⁷⁵. In March 2025, an internal operation led by the SPAK and the State Police, in collaboration with the Police Oversight Agency, resulted in the arrest of three police officers, due to their alleged involvement with criminal groups⁷⁶.

Shortcomings remain in terms of effectiveness of verifications of declarations of assets and interests by the HIDAACI, including high-risk profiling. Declarations of assets and interests continued to be verified by High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI), but they remain unpublished, with access possible upon request which constitutes a shortcoming⁷⁷. In 2024, HIDAACI performed full verifications on 187 candidates to judicial authorities and 34 officers from the State Police, the Republican Guard and Police Surveillance Agency. HIDAACI has approved and conducted full/periodic controls for 817 subjects in 2024, imposed 101 fines and referred 23 criminal or other cases to law enforcement agencies, including one to SPAK. There was no progress regarding the effectiveness of verifications and further actions seem to be needed as to verify assets potentially concealed through private entities or proxies⁷⁸.

Some steps have been taken towards a reform of the conflict-of-interest and whistleblowers’ legislation, although legislation on prevention of corruption remained complex and incomplete. The regulation of revolving doors, conflicts of interests, lobbying and political party financing remained incomplete, and concerns persisted on the Government’s Ethics Commission⁷⁹. While some preliminary steps were taken towards strengthening the efficiency of the corruption prevention network, by advancing work on alignment of the law on the conflict of interest with European standards, further work is still needed as to fully align the laws on whistleblower protection, lobbying, donations and political party financing with European standards. The number of whistleblowers’ reports continued to be low. During 2024, HIDAACI reviewed six new whistleblower reports and two requests for protection against retaliation⁸⁰, and in 11 cases an administrative fine was imposed⁸¹.

⁷⁴ Police Oversight Agency (2025), 2024 Activity Report.

⁷⁵ Albanian Government (2025), written input on the activities of the Police Oversight Agency and transitional evaluation of police officers pp. 60-61.

⁷⁶ Balkanweb.com (2025). The operation was based on evidence obtained from the encrypted "SkyECC" app, which indicated connections of these officials with criminal networks, primarily in the trafficking of narcotics.

⁷⁷ Only persons authenticated through an e-portal may file the requests for access, which must be authorised by HIDAACI. Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 76-77.

⁷⁸ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania; Country visit Albania, updates received from HIDAACI.

⁷⁹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 14; GRECO (2025), pp. 4, 8, 23. The second Compliance Report by GRECO for the 5th evaluation round on Albania notes that the following recommendations remain partially addressed: new law on conflicts of interest which is in preparation, the effective functioning of the Ethics Commission, the monitoring mechanisms for the contacts of persons entrusted with top executive functions with lobbyists, and abstentions of (deputy) minister(s) from taking part in Council of Minister’s decisions due to potential conflict of interest. In general, GRECO noted that 18 out of 24 recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed, five have been partially addressed, and one remains unimplemented.

⁸⁰ Albanian Government (2025), written input, pp. 91-92.

⁸¹ HIDAACI (2025), written input.

Although efforts on repression and prevention have increased, corruption remains prevalent in many areas, including in high-risk areas for corruption. Limited transparency in public procurement procedures, especially for public-private partnerships, remain a source of concern⁸². Specialisation in investigation and prosecuting corruption in procurement is weak. The misuse of state funding during electoral campaigns remains an area of concern, despite the initiatives undertaken by the Central Electoral Commission to monitor and sanction violations including corruption, in relation to the legislative elections of 11 May 2025⁸³. In response to a parliamentary recommendation, SPAK adopted a strategy to combat electoral crime, including the establishment of investigative teams in collaboration with the Central Electoral Commission, the State Police, and other law enforcement agencies to prevent and investigate electoral crimes⁸⁴. Corruption risks persist notably in health, education and within the police, as well as at the State Cadastre Agency, which are considered high-risk areas for corruption. Dedicated risk assessment plans are being developed by the Government in the area of public procurement and for the State Cadastre Agency⁸⁵, which need to be supported by consolidation and digitalisation of cadastral data. Internal checks and inspection mechanisms in the public administration remain ineffective⁸⁶.

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

The independence of the Audio-Visual Regulatory Authority (AMA) remains an issue of concern, due to the bi-partisan formula for election of board members and their political affiliation. The 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) considers this to be an area of [low risk referring in particular to the risk of political and corporate influence in the appointment procedures of AMA Board members, the political affiliations of the Chair and Board members and shortcomings in enforcement of the Broadcasting Code on media outlets which largely air pre-recorded political content by the government or political parties⁸⁷. Self-regulation in the media sector remains weak and is hindered by limited resources, a polarised media landscape and ongoing use of inflammatory rhetoric in the public debate⁸⁸.

Concerns with regard to the independence of the public broadcaster have increased. Procedural irregularities in the election process of a new Director-General in January 2025 further undermine the principles of merit-based selection and independence of the Albanian Public Broadcaster Albanian Radio Television (RTSH)⁸⁹. The fact that the Steering Council decided to disqualify candidates before the hearing phase and disregarded the secret ballot procedure, breached the provisions in force⁹⁰ and violated the principles of transparency and fairness⁹¹. Following these irregularities, the Parliament discharged the entire Steering Council of RTSH, in apparent contradiction of applicable legislation which only allows

⁸² 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 14-15.

⁸³ The Central Election Commission (CEC) has taken several initiatives to ensure election integrity, including establishing an Inter-Agency Coordination Protocol, a Live Reporting and Monitoring Module, and a social media monitoring platform to track public officials' online activities. Additionally, the CEC has upgraded its Electronic Financing Reporting Platform (PERF) to improve monitoring and reporting of electoral financing, with 96 monitors covering all regions in Albania.

⁸⁴ Albaniantimes.al (2025).

⁸⁵ Albanian Government (2025), written input, p. 98.

⁸⁶ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 15.

⁸⁷ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 16.

⁸⁸ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 16.

⁸⁹ Country visit Albania.

⁹⁰ Law 97/2013 on Audiovisual Media, Articles 102 and 104; RTSH Statute, Article 11.

⁹¹ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 28.

individual disqualification of Steering Council members subject to due process guarantees⁹². MPM 2025 has further increased the risk score, within the medium - high risk band, relating to the independence of public service media, following the above-mentioned irregularities in the selection process, but also lack of fair representation of political actors and viewpoints, and political interference in staff changes⁹³.

High concentration continues to negatively impact media independence and media market penetration by high profile business groups with political links remain a serious concern. There is high concentration in the audiovisual and print market, as well as insufficient legal or self-regulatory safeguards against arbitrary interventions on the editorial line of media outlets, exacerbated by political pressures⁹⁴. High-profile business groups have increased their economic penetration in the media market. Their strong links to political interests are a serious concern. Limited legal safeguards exist against concentration of media ownership and monopolies and there is a lack of legal safeguards regarding cross-media ownership concentration⁹⁵. The high concentration in the Albanian media environment continued to pose a major concern to media independence as also highlighted in MPM 2025, which further increased to very high risk its score for market plurality in Albania⁹⁶. There was some limited improvement on media ownership transparency. In 2024, AMA started publishing on its website summarised information regarding ownership structures and beneficial owners of licenced audiovisual media⁹⁷. MPM 2025 maintains its high-risk score for transparency of media ownership⁹⁸.

Shortcomings in terms of fair allocation of state advertising and other state resources remain. The provisions on clear and transparent distribution of public sector advertising in line with international standards are still lacking and circumvention of the standard public procurement rules in the advertising procurement procedure have not been addressed⁹⁹. MPM 2025 highlights the fact that Albanian legislation does not provide fair and transparent rules for the distribution of indirect subsidies or state advertising to media outlets¹⁰⁰. MPM 2025 therefore has further increased the risk indicator to medium-high risk¹⁰¹. Albania has taken an initial step towards a transparent audience measurement system, which is key to ensuring accountability in public advertising¹⁰².

Shortcomings persist with respect to the right to access to information. Public authorities continue the practice of withholding information based on generic references to “public interest”, which has still not been clearly defined, thus giving public institutions significant discretion to legally restrict or deny access to information. This affects journalists in a disproportionate manner, as they file the majority of information requests. In 2024, the

⁹² Articles 97 and 100 of Law No. 97/2013 on Audiovisual Media.

⁹³ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 27-28.

⁹⁴ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 18.

⁹⁵ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁶ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 18.

⁹⁷ Audio-Visual Regulatory Authority of Albania (2024).

⁹⁸ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 19.

⁹⁹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 16-17.

¹⁰⁰ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 27.

¹⁰¹ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 27.

¹⁰² Country visit Albania, AMA. In 2024, AMA organised two roundtables with key stakeholders and industry actors, who decided to establish the Joint Industry Committee, representing some audiovisual media service providers. The body consists of nine members and will be coordinating the actions necessary to implement an audience measurement. The entity is pending registration as a non-profit organisation.

Commissioner for the Right to Information and Personal Data Protection received 365 complaints from journalists concerning the refusal to provide information and official documents. Of these, 283 cases were resolved by granting the requested information during the administrative review process¹⁰³. MPM 2025 further increased to medium - high risk the protection of the right to information¹⁰⁴. Albania has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents¹⁰⁵.

Verbal and physical attacks, smear campaigns and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) targeting journalists are a continued cause for concern. Defamation remains a criminal offence, and the legal framework does not provide for safeguards regarding SLAPPs¹⁰⁶. The civil law provisions on fraudulent or inaccurate publications are still not aligned with European standards and continue to be used to launch SLAPP suits against journalists¹⁰⁷. Journalists have limited access to legal assistance and limited support from media outlets. There is still a lack of systemic monitoring and reporting on judicial cases involving journalists. In 2024, the Safe Journalists Network reported 45 incidents of threats, pressures and attacks on journalists and media organisations, the majority being verbal attacks, anti-media discourse and online harassment, nearly double the amount recorded in 2022 and 2023 respectively. In 2025, 19 incidents were reported¹⁰⁸. Cases of intimidation and threats against journalists, including by high state officials and police officers,¹⁰⁹ as well as online harassment and smear campaigns, particularly targeting women journalists, remain a concern¹¹⁰. Contact persons for the safety of journalists have been appointed in the General Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Interior and the State Police, and the latter has drafted a Protocol¹¹¹. The use of force including by law enforcement authorities, in particular in the context of demonstrations, continues to be of concern¹¹². The Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists has published five alerts since July 2024, relating to threats, a smear campaign and physical attacks targeting journalists and the criminal prosecution of journalists¹¹³. The Media Freedom Rapid Response project reports 42 alerts since July 2024, consisting of 8 'physical assaults', 32

¹⁰³ Information and Data Protection Commissioner's Office (2025), written input. The total number in 2024 was 939 complaints concerning the refusal to provide information and official documents and continued with the administrative review of 86 cases carried over from 2023. Out of all cases, 623 cases were resolved by granting the requested information during the administrative review process.

¹⁰⁴ MPM (2025), Albania, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ [The Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents](#) (CETS No. 205), also known as the *Tromsø Convention*, entered into force on 1 December 2020.

¹⁰⁶ SCiDEV and BIRN Albania (2025), p. 57. Media organisations reported 45 lawsuits registered until October 2024 as a clear indication of the use of legal mechanisms to pressure and deter journalists.

¹⁰⁷ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 19; Country visit Albania.

¹⁰⁸ Safe Journalists Network (2024, 2025). The 2024 Rule of Law Report noted that "Safe Journalists Network has reported 18 cases of attacks against journalists in 2022 and 24 cases in 2023".

¹⁰⁹ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ Notably cases of online harassment and smear campaigns, and cases particularly targeting women journalists; SCiDEV and BIRN Albania (2025).

¹¹¹ The State Police has drafted and carried out public consultations on the Protocol for Protection of Journalists and Handling Cases of Attacks, specifically addressing the safety issues of women journalists. In November 2024, General Prosecutor issued a circular on priority investigation of cases of attacks against journalists and increased engagement with journalists to improve safety measures.

¹¹² 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 19.

¹¹³ Council of Europe, Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists – Albania. As regards the case of criminal prosecution, on 14 August 2024, the State Police announced criminal prosecution against journalists over reports on the Pogradec police.

‘verbal attacks’, 1 ‘attack to property’, 3 ‘legal incidents’ and 12 ‘interference’¹¹⁴. Limited job security and poor working conditions for journalists combined with self-censorship, pressure from political actors and media owners¹¹⁵ continue to pose serious challenges for media. For these reasons, MPM 2025 further increased the risk indicator in the area to medium to high risk¹¹⁶.

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

Challenges remain regarding the quality of the legislative process, including effectiveness of public consultations. In practice, the implementation of public consultation rules and safeguards is more procedural than genuinely effective. Shortcomings identified in last year’s Rule of Law Report persist, including the lack of timely publication for stakeholders, limited follow up to consultations and the frequent use by the Government of normative acts having the force of law for amending the state budget¹¹⁷. Furthermore, in several cases draft laws proposed by Members of Parliament have been substantially amended to take into account the opinion of ministries without consulting non-government stakeholders¹¹⁸. This practice negatively impacts the quality and transparency of the legislative process.

Shortcomings exist regarding the work, methodology and impact of the *ad hoc* parliamentary committee on deepening reforms for good governance, rule of law and anti-corruption. The committee was established in May 2024, though without securing a cross-party consensus, aiming amongst others to review legislation, institutional architecture and policies in three areas (anti-corruption, good governance, and the rule of law – which includes a justice pillar). The aim is for this committee to develop a National Action Plan. Most justice institutions decided to engage with the committee only formally, in writing, citing concerns about the process and constitutional issues such as their independence and established reporting obligations to the Parliament. Shortcomings exist about the work, lack of transparency, inclusiveness, the methodology and real impact as well as a potential duplication of work already conducted in the context of accession negotiations¹¹⁹. It is important that the work of the *ad hoc* committee is inclusive, transparent and consistent with the positive results of the 2016 justice reform.

Political polarisation continued to impact the parliamentary work. During the 2024 autumn session, clashes between the ruling majority and a part of the opposition continued in Parliament, causing disruptions to its work. During the same period, the opposition party called for several protests and ‘civil disobedience measures’ which at times turned violent¹²⁰. In October 2024, following a request by the majority, the Parliament’s Ethics Secretariat decided to suspend 23 opposition members of Parliament, for allegedly committing violent acts during

¹¹⁴ European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Media Freedom Rapid Response – Albania.

¹¹⁵ Country visit Albania, civil society organisations from media sector; SCiDEV and BIRN Albania (2025), pp. 81-83. According to civil society organisations surveys, working conditions and safety of journalists in Albania have deteriorated over the past year.

¹¹⁶ 2024 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for Albania, pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁷ Country visit Albania, civil society organisations; 2024 Rule of law Report, Albania, pp. 20-21.

¹¹⁸ Albanian Parliament (2025). There were 14 initiatives proposed by MPs that were examined and consulted by the Parliamentary Committees in charge.

¹¹⁹ Country visit Albania: as also reported by stakeholders.

¹²⁰ A2news.com (2024).

the plenary session¹²¹. This led to further disruptions, including frictions between opposition Members of Parliament and the Republican Guard after guards prevented some opposition Members of Parliament, who had been sanctioned, from entering Parliament¹²².

The Constitutional Court continued to function effectively, while Parliament's ongoing failure to comply with some of its rulings and the legal uncertainty over the duration of its members' mandates are a concern. The Court continued to function effectively and resolved its backlog¹²³. During the reporting period, Parliament implemented the ruling of the Court regarding the right of citizens residing abroad to take part in elections¹²⁴. However, Parliament failed to implement the remaining rulings of the Constitutional Court¹²⁵. In an opinion on the matter, the Venice Commission called upon Parliament to respect and implement the Court's decisions and confirmed that the decisions of the Constitutional Court are compulsory for all state bodies, including the Parliament¹²⁶. The implementation of the Constitutional Court decision that declared some amendments to the Law on Inquiry Committees unconstitutional, is still pending¹²⁷. Parliament had six months to implement the ruling, and while discussions have started in Parliament, the deadline was not met¹²⁸. In December 2024, the Constitutional Court issued a decision on the end of mandate of its President, confirming its exclusive competence to adjudicate such cases¹²⁹. Legal uncertainty remains regarding the end of the mandate of two members of the Constitutional Court, due to diverging interpretations of the applicable provisions by Parliament and the High Court. For one of the cases, the President of the Republic, in his role as appointing authority made a formal request to the Constitutional Court to provide clarity on how to reconcile two constitutional principles regarding the calculation of mandates.

On 1 January 2025, Albania had 25 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, an increase of 1 compared to the previous year¹³⁰. On 1 January 2025, Albania's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 25% (compared to 4% in 2024, 75% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 4 years and 3 months (compared to 3 years and 11 months in 2024)¹³¹. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for 11 years, concerns the failure to implement domestic decisions by the public

¹²¹ The Administrative Court subsequently reduced the 60-day suspensions for 3 Democratic Party MPs to 10 days, and the 40-day suspensions for 20 other opposition MPs to 5 days. In compliance with this decision, the MPs returned to Parliament on 7 November.

¹²² Shqiptarja.com (2024).

¹²³ Constitutional Court (2025).

¹²⁴ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022a).

¹²⁵ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022b,c,d). Constitutional Court rulings with effect on legislation not yet implemented by Parliament include those on the disposition of the Civil Procedure Code, on mandatory insurance in public transport, on the criminal code provisions adopted during the pandemic, and two rulings requesting Parliament to refer to it a case regarding the incompatibility of a mandate of a member of Parliament due to alleged conflict of interest (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2023a,b)).

¹²⁶ Venice Commission (2024), para. 57.

¹²⁷ On 9 July 2024, the Constitutional Court found some of the amendments to the Law on Inquiry Committees unconstitutional, as they infringe on the right of a parliamentary minority to establish committees of inquiry and fail to guarantee the effective oversight of the parliamentary work by the minority groups.

¹²⁸ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2024a), Press release of 9 July 2024. The 2024 Rule of Law Report provides an overview of the legal amendments to the Law on Inquiry Committees, p. 21.

¹²⁹ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2024).

¹³⁰ For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

¹³¹ All figures calculated by the European Implementation Network (EIN) and based on the number of cases that are considered pending at the annual cut-off date of 1 January 2025. EIN (2025), written input, p. 1.

administration¹³². As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2024 there were 17 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 22 in 2023)¹³³. On [xx June] 2025, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had [to be updated]¹³⁴.

The mandates of the Ombudsperson and the Commissioner against Discrimination still need to be renewed, and some obstacles to their effective working remain. The Commissioner against Discrimination and the Ombudsperson continued to enjoy a stable level of public trust and awareness about their competences. However, the fact that Parliament failed to appoint the Ombudsperson and the Commissioner against Discrimination, whose mandates expired in 2022 and 2023, respectively, risks to seriously weaken the legitimacy of these independent institutions¹³⁵. To guarantee that its annual report is published before Parliament has debated on it, the Ombudsperson drafted legal amendments that are currently under public consultation¹³⁶. The largest number of complaints received by the Ombudsperson in 2024 concerned the limitation of personal freedom (295 complaints, 16% overall)¹³⁷. The implementation rate of the recommendations issued by the Ombudsperson remains overall low¹³⁸. Both institutions continued to report shortcomings in human resources that have not been addressed by Parliament¹³⁹.

Less than half of the companies surveyed in Albania express high levels of confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection. 40% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts¹⁴⁰. The main reason among companies for their lack of confidence is the difficulty to obtain a fair compensation or to protect property when something goes wrong¹⁴¹. 26% perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (Public Procurement Committee) as very or fairly good¹⁴². 38% perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (Albanian Competition Authority) as very or fairly good¹⁴³.

Civil society organisations remain overall free to operate, but challenges remain, including on registration requirements and limited public funding. The civic space remains “narrowed” due to concerns about the state of press freedom and restrictions to the right to peaceful assembly¹⁴⁴. In early 2025, civil society have denounced an unprecedented campaign of disinformation, defamation, and politically driven public attacks against civil society in the country¹⁴⁵. The main governmental strategic document to support civil society expired in 2023 while the preparation of a new strategic framework is still pending. Previously reported

¹³² Judgment of the ECtHR, 40430/08, *Memishaj v. Albania*, pending implementation since 2014.

¹³³ Council of Europe (2025), p. 156.

¹³⁴ Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

¹³⁵ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 23.

¹³⁶ Country visit Albania; Justice Freedom and Security Subcommittee, Ombudsperson.

¹³⁷ Country visit Albania, Ombudsperson. Respectively followed by the Property rights (214 cases / 12%), the Judicial and Prosecutorial Procedure (213 cases / 12%) and Children's rights (212 cases / 12%).

¹³⁸ The overall implementation rate was 21% in 2024, according to the Ombudsperson.

¹³⁹ Country visit Albania, Ombudsperson; Commissioner against discrimination.

¹⁴⁰ Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).

¹⁴¹ Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025). 15% and 29% of the surveyed investors respectively perceive the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about quality of law-making process and the quality, efficiency or independence of justice as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.

¹⁴² Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).

¹⁴³ Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).

¹⁴⁴ CIVICUS (2025). Rating given on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

¹⁴⁵ Resourcecentre.al (2025).

challenges linked to registration procedures, particularly the non-operation of the Electronic Register of Non-Profit Organisations, access to funding, conducive tax environment and the functioning of the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) persist¹⁴⁶. New instructions on VAT exemption aim to address the main concerns, but effective implementation remains to be demonstrated¹⁴⁷. Criticism of the law on volunteerism continues, particularly due to its limited ability to support participation in voluntary activities¹⁴⁸, while a new draft law is being prepared¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁶ 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Minister of Finance (2025).

¹⁴⁸ Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.

¹⁴⁹ Country visit Albania. See also: European Movement Albania (2024).

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

* The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2024 Rule of Law report can be found at [\[insert hyperlink\]](#).

A2news.com (7 October 2024), Opposition protest, State Police: 10 officers injured (*Protesta e opozitës, Policia e Shtetit: Janë dëmtuar 10 efektivë*) <https://a2news.com/shqiperia/kronike/protesta-e-opozites-policia-e-shtetit-jane-demtuar-10-efektive-i1129756>.

Albanian Government (2024), Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030: <https://www.qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2024/225/9f19ef0c-97b3-43c9-aa8f-e2181147b789>.

Albanian Government (2024), Decision No. 787 on the approval of the Justice Strategy, <https://www.drejtesia.gov.al/baza-ligjore-3/>.

Albanian Government (2025), Analysis from February 2025 of the 2024 performance of the free legal aid directorate at the Ministry of Justice, <https://ndihmajuridike.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Analiza-e-Performanc%C3%ABs-Vjetore-2024.pdf>.

Albanian Parliament (2025), Report on public and civil society participation in the decision-making processes of the Parliament for 2024, <https://konsultimipublik.al/konsultime/1>.

Albaniantimes.al (28 January 2025), SPAK implements strategy to investigate and prevent electoral crimes in 2025, <https://albaniantimes.al/spak-implements-strategy-to-investigate-and-prevent-electoral-crimes-in-2025/>.

Albaniantimes.al (8 November 2024), Former Environment Minister sent to prison for role in incinerator affair, <https://albaniantimes.al/lefter-koka-sentenced-elbasan-case/>.

Audio-Visual Regulatory Authority (2024), Decision No. 40 of 25 April 2024 on requirements and procedures for reviewing changes regarding the ownership structure and the transparency of ownership-related data, <https://ama.gov.al/baza-e-te-dhenave-struktura-pronesore-e-oshma>.

Balkanweb.com (2 March 2025), No operation of SPAK, police are effective and police are not trafficked and drugs, nor are they subject to discipline (*Pas operacionit të SPAK, policia pezullon 3 efektivët e policisë të përfshirë në trafikun e drogës, nis dhe hetim disiplinor*), <https://www.balkanweb.com/pas-operacionit-te-spak-policia-pezullon-3-efektivet-e-policise-te-perfshire-ne-trafikun-e-droges-nis-dhe-hetim-disiplinor/#gsc.tab=0>

Centre for Media Pluralism and Freedom (2025), *Media Pluralism Monitor, Country report for Albania*.

CEPEJ (2024), *Dashboard Western Balkans – 2023 Data Collection*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/towards-a-better-evaluation-of-the-results-of-judicial-reforms-in-the-western-balkans-dashboard-western-balkans->

CIVICUS (2025), Albania, <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/albania/>.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022a), *Decision V-38/22 of 9 December 2022*, https://www.gjk.gov.al/web/Vendime_perfundimtare_100_1.php.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022b), *Decision V-30/22 of 2 November 2022*, https://www.gjk.gov.al/web/Vendime_perfundimtare_100_1.php.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022c), *Decision V-37/22 of 1 December 2022*, https://www.gjk.gov.al/web/Vendime_perfundimtare_100_1.php.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022d), *Decision V-39/22 of 15 December 2022*, https://www.gjk.gov.al/web/Vendime_perfundimtare_100_1.php.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2023a), *Decision V-1/23 of 23 January 2023*, https://www.gjk.gov.al/include_php/previewdoc.php?id_kerkesa_vendimi=3633&nr_vendim=1.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2023b), *Decision V-2/23 of 23 January 2023*, https://www.gjk.gov.al/include_php/previewdoc.php?id_kerkesa_vendimi=3634&nr_vendim=1.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2024), *Decision V-84/24 of 23 December 2024*, https://www.gjk.gov.al/include_php/previewdoc.php?id_kerkesa_vendimi=4533&nr_vendim=1.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2024a), Press release of 9 July 2024, https://www.gjk.gov.al/web/NJOFTIM_VENDIMMARRJEJE_3430_1-94.php. Reference 2

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2025), Annual Report 2024, https://www.gjykatakushtetuese.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/AnnualReport2024_ConstitutionalCourt.pdf.

Council of Europe (2024), Supervision of the execution of judgments decisions of the European Court of Human Rights – 17th Annual Report of the Committee of Ministers – 2023, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/execution/the-supervision-process>.

Council of Europe (2025), Baseline Evaluation Report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on access to official documents, <https://rm.coe.int/baseline-evaluation-report-albania/1680b4ad1a>.

Council of Europe (2025), Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists – Albania, <https://fom.coe.int/en/pays/detail/11709474>.

Council of Europe: Venice Commission (2024), *Opinion on the implementation by Parliament of Constitutional Court decisions* (CDL-AD(2024)040).

Council of Ministers (2024), Decision No. 436 of 26 June 2024.

European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Media Freedom Rapid Response – Albania. Minister of Finance (2025), Instruction No. 6 of 24 February 2025, modifying Instruction No. 6 of 30 January 2015 “On the Value Added Tax in the republic of Albania”.

European Commission (2023), *2023 Screening report Albania, Cluster 1 – Fundamentals*.

European Commission (2024), *2024 Communication on EU Enlargement policy, Albania Report*.

European Commission (2024), *2024 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania*.

European Implementation Network on Enlargement Countries, Written contribution for the 2024 Rule of Law Report.

European Movement Albania (9 July 2024), Working Group for Chapter 23 – The Law on Volunteering in Albania: A priority for the development of an enabling environment for civil society, <https://em-al.org/en/working-group-for-chapter-23-the-law-on-volunteering-in-albania-a-priority-for-the-development-of-an-enabling-environment-for-civil-society-09-july-2024/>.

GRECO (2025), Second Compliance Report by GRECO for the 5th evaluation round on Albania.

HIDAACI (2025), written input.

High Judicial Council (2025), Annual Report of 23 April 2025 on the State of the Judicial System and the Activities of the High Judicial Council [in 2024], <https://klgj.al/media/5thpqzn0/vendim-nr-232-dat%C3%AB-23-04-2025.pdf>.

High Judicial Council (2025), Statement of 12 February 2025, <https://klgj.al/njoftimepershtyp/deklarate-per-shtyp-date-12-02-2025/>.

High Justice Inspector (2025), Report of 30 May 2025 on the work of the Office of the High Inspector of Justice for the period 01.01.2024 – 31.12.2024, <https://ild.al/en/2025/05/30/for-the-work-of-the-office-of-the-high-inspector-of-justice-for-the-period-01-01-2024-31-12-2024/>.

Law 97/2013 on Audiovisual Media.

Law No. 115/2016 on Governance Institutions of the Justice System.

Law No. 47/2021 amending Law No. 95/2016 on the Organisation and Functioning of Institutions for Combating Corruption and Organised Crime (the SPAK Law).

Media Pluralism Monitor (2025), Albania report, [link not yet available].

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2024), Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, Ratification Status as of August 2024 <https://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/WGBRatificationStatus.pdf>.

Panorama.com.al (12 February 2025), Statements against SPAK, HPC reacts: The independence and professional integrity of prosecutors must be respected (*Deklaratat ndaj SPAK, reagon KLP: Të respektohet pavarësia dhe integriteti profesional i prokurorëve*), <https://www.panorama.com.al/deklaratat-ndaj-spak-reagon-klp-te-respektohet-pavaresia-dhe-integriteti-profesional-i-prokuroreve/>.

People's Advocate of Albania (2023), Annual Report 2023, <https://avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/FINAL-RAPORTI%20VJETOR%202023%20Anglisht%20-June%2028.pdf>

Reporter.al (2 February 2025), Institutions do not denounce corruption and organized crime (*Institucionet nuk denoncojnë korrupsionin dhe krimin e organizuar*), <https://www.reporter.al/2025/02/06/institucionet-nuk-denoncojne-korrupsionin-dhe-krimin-e-organizuar/>.

Resourcecentre.al (4 March 2025), Public Call to EU Institutions and Member States, <https://resourcecentre.al/2025/03/04/public-call-to-eu-institutions-and-member-states>.

Safe Journalists Network (2024, 2025), Incidents database, (regional centre: Tirana, year: 2024, 2025), https://safejournalists.net/incidents/?lang=en&keyword=&country=&gender=&type_of_incident=&incident_means=&incident_year=&who_was_attacked=&were_authorities_informed=&by_whom=&perpetrator=&judiciary_status=&type_of_violation=&ja_reaction=&ja_was_informed=&page=1.

Safe Journalists Network (2025), *Incidents database*, https://safejournalists.net/incidents/?lang=en&keyword=&country=&gender=&type_of_incident=&incident_means=&incident_year=&who_was_attacked=&were_authorities_informed=&by_whom=&perpetrator=&judiciary_status=&type_of_violation=&ja_reaction=&ja_was_informed=&page=1.

SCiDEV and BIRN Albania (February 2025), Annual Report Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom towards EU Standards, <https://scidevcenter.org/2025/02/24/annual-report-tracking-albanias-progress-on-media-freedom-towards-eu-standards/>.

Shqiptarja.com (3 October 2024), The DP repeats the scenario: Clashes and flames in the Parliament (*PD përsërit skenarin, Përplasje e flakë në Kuvend*) <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/kuvendi-sot-seance-plenare-pd-me-24-deputete-te-perjashtuar-dje-paralajmeroi-blokim-bardhi-sdo-lejojme-normalitet?r=kh1>.

SPAK (2025), Letter to Minister of the Interior of 14 February 2025.

SPAK (2025), written input.

State Audit Institution (2025)*, 2024 Activity Report, <https://parlament.al/dokumentacioni/aktet/45a2144d-7c36-41b2-86e8-7bab492600c1> (* as of June 2024, the Report remains to be formally approved by Parliament).

State Police of the Republic of Albania (2024), Order 1399 of 21 October 2024.

Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 (2025).

Annex II: Country visit to Albania

The Commission services held virtual and hybrid meetings in February 2025 with:

- Albanian Association of Journalists
- Albanian Disability Rights Foundation
- Albanian Helsinki Committee
- Albanian Legal and Territorial Research Institute (ALTRI Centre)
- Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA)
- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) Albania
- Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG)
- Center Science and Innovation for Development (SCiDEV)
- Centre for European Development and Integration
- Constitutional Court
- CSSP – Berlin Center for Integrative Mediation
- European Movement in Albania (EMA)
- Gender Alliance for Development Centre
- General Prosecutor's Office
- High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI)
- High Judicial Council
- High Justice Inspector (HJI)
- High Prosecutorial Council
- Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM Albania)
- Institute of Policy and Legal Studies (IPLS)
- Media and Information Agency
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption
- National Bureau of Investigation (NBI)
- Office of State Minister and Chief Negotiator for Media Dialogue
- Ombudsperson/People's Advocate
- Partners Albania for Change and Development
- SafeJournalists Network Albania
- School of Magistrates
- Special Prosecution Office (SPO)

* The Commission also met the following organisations in a number of horizontal meetings:

- Amnesty International
- Araminta
- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- European Civic Forum
- European Partnership for Democracy

- European Youth Forum,
- International Commission of Jurists
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- JEF Europe
- Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association.
- Transparency International

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT