EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 17.7.2026
SWD(2026) 928 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

2026 Rule of Law Report
Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania

Accompanying the document

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions

2026 Rule of Law Report
The rule of law situation in the European Union

{COM(2026) 900 final} - {SWD(2026) 901 final} - {SWD(2026) 902 final} - {SWD(2026) 903 final} - {SWD(2026) 904 final} - {SWD(2026) 905 final} - {SWD(2026) 906 final} - {SWD(2026) 907 final} - {SWD(2026) 908 final} - {SWD(2026) 909 final} - {SWD(2026) 910 final} - {SWD(2026) 911 final} - {SWD(2026) 912 final} - {SWD(2026) 913 final} - {SWD(2026) 914 final} - {SWD(2026) 915 final} - {SWD(2026) 916 final} - {SWD(2026) 917 final} - {SWD(2026) 918 final} - {SWD(2026) 919 final} - {SWD(2026) 920 final} - {SWD(2026) 921 final} - {SWD(2026) 922 final} - {SWD(2026) 923 final} - {SWD(2026) 924 final} - {SWD(2026) 925 final} - {SWD(2026) 926 final} - {SWD(2026) 927 final} - {SWD(2026) 929 final} - {SWD(2026) 930 final} - {SWD(2026) 931 final}

ABSTRACT

Albania continued implementing the judicial reform, as well as the Cross-Sector Justice Strategy. The vetting process of all judges and prosecutors was fully completed following the finalisation of the appeal phase, further strengthening judicial independence, accountability and integrity across the justice sector. Some progress has been made to embed the high standards of the vetting process in the ordinary justice system, including through the revision of the rules on the appointments of non-magistrate members to the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council. The High Justice Inspector remains operational but consistently faces a high number of magistrate-inspector vacancies. Although the judiciary remains resilient, attempts of undue influence on justice institutions, and personal attacks on magistrates continued. Previously identified challenges remain in conducting timely and qualitative evaluations of judges. The overall quality of judicial training has improved, and the backlog of cases has been partly reduced,while the full operability of a modern integrated electronic case management system remains to be achieved, including maintenance plan and trainings.

The Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2024-2030 and its action plan for 2024-2026 are being implemented. The legal framework for fighting corruption is largely in place, and significant steps have been taken to further align with EU acquis and European standards. The Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK) has continued to deliver positive results in fighting high-level corruption and building a solid track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions. The institutional framework for corruption prevention has improved, but coordination with law enforcement remains weak. Corruption risks continue to be prevalent in the State Police, public procurement and in high-risk sectors, for which Albania is currently rolling out risk assessments. While the effectiveness and transparency of verifications of declarations of assets and interests by the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI) have improved, shortcomings persist.

Concerns persist regarding the independence of the media regulatory authority, stemming from the nomination procedure for board members and their political affiliation. The limited independence of the public broadcaster also is a concern. While steps were taken to address media ownership transparency, media concentration and market penetration by business groups with political links remain a serious concern. While some steps have been taken towards establishing an audience measurement system, fair allocation of state advertising and other state resources is still not ensured. Shortcomings persist with respect to the right to access to information. Cases of verbal and physical threats, smear campaign and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) targeting journalists continued, while partial decriminalisation of defamation was introduced for registered journalists.

Concerns remain regarding the quality of the legislative process, including the consistent application of evidence-based policymaking and the effectiveness of public consultations. Political polarisation continues to negatively impact parliamentary work. The Constitutional Court continued to be effective in upholding institutional checks and balances. A new Ombudsperson and a new Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) were appointed. Overall, civil society organisations (CSOs) continue to operate freely, but continue to face challenges, such as discreditation, limited transparency in policy making, uneven consultation practices, and financial sustainability constraints.

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM[1]

Independence

The level of perceived judicial independence in Albania continues to be average among the general public and is now high among companies. Overall, 50% of the general population and 69% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be 'fairly or very good' in 2026[2]. The perceived judicial independence among the general public has slightly increased in comparison with 2025 (47%), while among companies it has significantly increased in comparison with 2025 (40%).

Albania continued the implementation of the judicial reform and of the ongoing Cross-Sector Justice Strategy, which contributed to strengthening judicial independence, transparency and efficiency. The implementation of the far-reaching and comprehensive justice reform initiated in 2016 and of the cross-sector Justice Strategy 2024-2030 continued. Coordination between the High Judicial Council (HJC) and the High Prosecutorial Council (HPC) has improved with the organisation of three joint meetings in 2025[3] and was formalised by the adoption of a common regulation, which also ensures follow-up of the operational conclusions of these meetings[4]. A fourth meeting took place in April 2026[5]. Consultation with other relevant justice institutions has also been enhanced[6]. Following the adoption of operational conclusions in December 2025, the two Councils aim at drafting/adopting a unified action plan for 2026[7] for issues that affect both Councils. Coordination among all justice institutions is yet to be further strengthened, along with enhanced data-driven policymaking in the context of the implementation of the sectorial strategy.

The vetting process of all judges and prosecutors was fully completed with the finalisation of the appeal phase, further strengthening judicial independence, integrity and accountability. In March 2026, the Special Appeal Chamber issued its last decision, thus concluding a nine-year process of re-evaluation of all sitting judges, prosecutors, and senior legal assistants[8]. The overall outcome of vetting decisions rendered by the Independent Qualifications Commission and, where applicable as reviewed by the Special Appeal Chamber, resulted in 456 dismissals and terminations (57 % of cases) and 348 confirmations in office (43% of cases)[9]. During the reporting period, two new cases in which the vetting process revealed criminal elements were referred to prosecution. One case is undergoing

---

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

2 Flash Eurobarometers 581 and 582 (2026). 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 (2026), pp. 40-41.

4 Regulation "On joint meetings and inter-institutional cooperation between the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council": https://klp.al/2025/08/01/per-miratimin-e-rregullores-per-mbledhjet-e-perbashketa-dhe-bashkepunimin-nderinstitucional-ndermjet-keshillit-te-larte-gjyqesor-dhe-keshillit-te-larte-te-prokurorise/

5 Joint meeting of the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council, April 2026: https://klgj.al/aktivitete/mbledhja-e-pare-e-perbashket-per-vitin-2026-fokus-te-vleresimet-etiko-profesionale-dhe-ulja-e-backlog-ut/

6 Albanian Government (2026), p. 40. In 2025, coordination and joint meetings between the Councils have included engagement with the High Inspector of Justice, the School of Magistrates and the General Prosecutor's Office.

7 Albanian Government (2026), p. 41.

8 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 2-3.

9 International Monitoring Operation (2026).

preliminary verification, and one has been registered and is under investigation. However, the effective judicial follow-up on these cases revealing criminal elements remains limited[10].

Some progress has been made to maintain the high standards set during the vetting process in the ordinary justice system. Legislative amendments have been adopted to clarify procedures to conduct asset and background checks, and to strengthen transparency, for appointments, promotions and evaluations of magistrates by the HJC and HPC[11]. Furthermore, the High Justice Inspector (HJI) approved a new methodology for asset and background checks and conducted related training, with a view to further integrating the standards set by the vetting process into its regular procedures[12]. Although additional resources have been allocated, the HJC, the HPC, the HJI and the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI) still lack sufficient resources to maintain these checks in line with the vetting standards[13].

Rules on the appointments of non-magistrate members to the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council have been revised to improve transparency, accountability and ensure a merit-based process. In January 2026, legislative amendments have been adopted to subject the appointment procedure for non-magistrate members to the same standards for background checks and asset verification as those applicable to magistrate members[14]. The Ombudsperson, Parliament and other appointment bodies, as well as other relevant institutions, including High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI), have not yet adopted rules of procedure to fully implement these amendments, and contribute to the independence and professionalism of both Councils.

Despite stronger transparency rules for evaluations and promotions, previously identified challenges remain in conducting timely and qualitative evaluations. The HPC advanced significantly in clearing its accumulated backlog on evaluations, while the HJC has steadily continued to conduct evaluations**.** However, both the HJC and the HPC continue to face challenges in ensuring timely and qualitative evaluations of magistrates' performance. In 2025, the HPC evaluated 40 prosecutors, and the HJC evaluated 50 judges[15]. The process lacks streamlining to ensure that all judges are evaluated in a timely manner for their access to promotion. The HJC finalised 42 appointments, 7 promotions, 14 temporary transfers and 25 lateral transfers[16] of judges, including 4 without consent. The HPC finalised 26 appointments, 5 promotions, 24 lateral transfers and 6 temporary transfers of prosecutors[17]. Transparency of evaluations, promotions and transfers have been strengthened through the adoption of a regulation by the HJC as well as legislative amendments regarding the publication of decisions on promotions and transfers[18]. However, the transparency of lateral transfers still needs to be improved, since they continue to be used extensively instead of

---

10 Albanian Government (2026), p. 2. For the reporting period, from previously initiated cases, a total of 18 criminal proceedings remain under investigation, 1 criminal proceeding continues to be under trial before the court of first instance, and for 5 proceedings, a request for their dismissal has been submitted to the court.

11 Amendments to article 32 of Law 96/2016 on "The status of judges and prosecutors in the republic of Albania", as amended.

12 Albanian Government (2026), p. 4; Country visit Albania, HJI.

13 AHC Contribution (2026), pp. 3-4.

14 Albanian Government (2026), p. 5; Amendments to Law 115/2016 on "Governance institutions of the justice system", as amended.

15 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 18-19.

16 Lateral transfers are horizontal transfers to another Court at the same level.

17 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 14-16.

18 Amendments to articles 43 and 47 of Law 96/2016.

merit-based promotions. The HPC and the HJC have amended internal operating rules to carry out their functions more effectively, including provisions regulating conflicts of interest among their own members[19].

The High Justice Inspector remains operational but consistently faces a high number of magistrate-inspector vacancies. In 2025, the High Justice Inspector (HJI) registered 1 792 new cases and processed 1 635 cases[20]. Only 10 out of 20 inspectors are currently in office. Legislative amendments were adopted reducing the seniority requirement for magistrate-inspectors (from 13 to 10 years)[21]. A significant increase in the number of inspectors is yet to be observed through the implementation of these amendments and the adoption of further measures. In terms of operations, the HJI initiated requests for disciplinary proceedings against eight magistrates including three judges and five prosecutors in 2025 and completed seven thematic inspections. After review from the High Judicial Council, one request for disciplinary proceedings has been accepted, one has been rejected, and one is still under consideration. After review from the High Prosecutorial Council, two requests have been terminated without a final decision, one has been suspended, and two have been rejected[22]. A more consistent application of disciplinary measures is yet to be ensured by the Councils and the HJI.

The random allocation of cases is applied in courts, but previously identified challenges, including judicial vacancies, limit its effectiveness. While the rules on the random allocation of cases remained in place, persistent delays in filling judicial vacancies across several courts continue to hinder their consistent application[23]. The random allocation of cases for prosecutors is applied in practice but remains limited to first-instance prosecution offices[24].

Attempts continued by public officials and politicians, including at the highest levels, to exert undue influence on justice institutions and personal attacks on magistrates, including against SPAK. During the reporting period, several physical threats were made against prosecutors of the entire system, Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK) Prosecutors, Head Prosecutors, Prosecutors and former Prosecutors, as well as the former head of HPC[25]. Eight magistrates have been placed under protection, including two judges and six prosecutors[26]. Attempts by public officials or politicians, including at the highest levels, to publicly exert undue influence on justice institutions and personal attacks on magistrates at all levels continued throughout the reporting period. The suspension of a high-level official from duty ordered by the SPAK Court, in accordance with current provisions of the Criminal Procedural Code, as well as SPAK‘s request to the Parliament to lift said official’s parliamentary immunity, triggered significant negative reactions from the executive and legislative branches, including direct attacks against SPAK and judicial institutions. The governing institutions of the judiciary issued public statements, denouncing political pressure

[19] 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 27. Decision No. 769/2025 of HJC and decision No. 339/2025 of HPC.
[20] Albanian Government (2026), p. 7.
[21] Albanian Government (2026), p. 6; Amendments to articles 53-55 of Law 96/2016.
[22] Albanian Government (2026), pp. 8-12.
[23] 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 4.
[24] Albanian Government (2026), p. 20.
[25] Albanian Government (2026), p. 22.
[26] Albanian Government (2026), p. 24.

on the judiciary[27]. According to European standards, all powers of the State must foster and protect the trust of the general public in constitutional institutions, including the judiciary[28].

Quality

Previously identified shortcomings in access to justice persist, including legal aid, infrastructure, and the security of courts[29]. The piloting of an electronic communication tool between the Tirana District Court and lawyers has continued, while this tool is not yet rolled out in all courts. While temporary premises have been allocated to the General Appeal Court, the overall quality of court infrastructure remains poor[30]. The number of cases involving primary legal aid decreased from 6 220 in 2024 to 5 863 in 2025, while the number of cases involving secondary legal aid increased from 904 in 2024, to 924 in 2025[31]. The fatal shooting of the Tirana Appeals Court Judge during a court hearing has further emphasised concerns about the inadequacy of court infrastructure and underscored the need for measures to ensure the safety of magistrates[32]. The HJC adopted a strategy to address security issues and has agreed immediate measures with Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice. Additional budget has been approved for an additional guard in all courts. Furthermore, in January 2026, the High Judicial Council approved 29 posts for additional security personnel for the courts of Albania. However, visible improvements to the security of court premises, including the functional metal detections and related measures, have not been observed.

The implementation of a modern integrated electronic case management system (ICMS) in courts and prosecution offices remains to be finalised[33]. For the Courts component, the physical hardware infrastructure has been installed by the HJC. While the implementation phase of the development of new ICMS was officially launched in March, the full completion of the process remains to be finalised, in order to address persistent challenges to the overall quality of justice[34]. With regards to the case management system of the Prosecution offices, the business requirements for the new system have been developed and approved by the IT Centre Board. A tender was launched for the selection of the implementing company for the development of the software. Achieving effective integration will require enhanced and coordinated efforts among all actors, including on the necessary legal amendments to align frameworks for both courts and prosecution offices.

The overall quality of judicial training has improved, while a strong emphasis on practical skills is still lacking. The School of Magistrates (SoM) has made further progress in enhancing the quality of the initial and continuous training for magistrates. A new curriculum for the first year of the initial training programme has been introduced, providing

---

27 Country visit Albania, HJC, civil society organisations.

28 See Venice Commission (CDL-AD (2013)038), para. 21-22. See also CCJE (2015), Opinion No. 18, "The position of the judiciary and its relationship with the other powers of state in a modern democracy", para. 54: "Any analyses and criticisms by one power of state of the other powers should be undertakes in a climate of mutual respect".

29 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 5.

30 Albanian Government (2026), p. 24. Following the approval of the state budget for 2026, the HJC has secured funds for the reconstruction of the former "Large Taxpayers' Branch" building, which has been put into use by the General Appeal Court. This building provides a temporary solution to the court's needs for premises, until a new building is procured.

31 Albanian Government (2026), p. 45. The number of state-funded authorised NGOs increased from 2 (two) in 2024 to 4 (four) in 2025.

32 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 30.

33 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 5.

34 Interim European Union Common Position (2026), p. 30.

a clearer structure of topics and a stronger emphasis on practical skills[35]. The SoM training's focus on practical skills necessary for effective judicial and prosecutorial practice remains to be reinforced, including strengthening the mentorship programme of the second and third years of training. The continuous training programme has been revised, and use of digital tools has improved. Legislative amendments have been adopted to ban former magistrates who were dismissed or resigned during the vetting from taking up positions as training staff at the School for Magistrates, thereby strengthening the integrity of the institution[36]. The first phase of the admission exam has been reviewed and was used in the April 2026 session[37]. A dedicated admission exam for legal assistants has been organised in May 2026. This represents a significant step towards improving the quality and efficiency of the system.

Persistent shortage of financial and human resources, including magistrates and support legal and administrative staff, adversely affects the quality of justice. Although the filling of judicial vacancies continued, with 42 judges and 26 prosecutors appointed as of July 2025, significant shortage persists, including at appeal level. As of January 2025, 242 prosecutors out of 341 (71%) and 306 judges out of 417 (73%) were effectively employed[38]. In the Court of Appeal, five judges have been appointed, and six judges have been assigned under a delegation scheme, bringing the number of judges in office to 40 out of 78[39]. The quotas decided by the HJC and the HPC for the SoM for the 2026-2027 academic year are insufficient to address challenges concerning the quality and efficiency of the judicial system[40]. These quotas are determined following an assessment of current and upcoming vacancies, based on the existing organisational structure, but are not sufficient to fully meet the needs of the judicial system in the medium term. Increasing the number of magistrates in the organisational structure is crucial, and discussions and assessments ongoing in the Councils need to continue and be followed up[41]. Full implementation of the judicial map has not yet been concluded. The HJC has approved a regulation on the appointment of court presidents, and the appointment of all court presidents is yet to be finalised, ensuring that the assessment of candidates is carried out in line with the vetting standards, including where the transitory provisions on the appointment of acting presidents adopted through legal amendments are applied. Legal advisor positions remain very limited in number compared to the immediate needs of the system. However, separate competition process and training programme for legal advisors and legal assistants have been established through legal amendments, which are expected to increase their number [42]. Out of 219 additional total staff requested by the justice institutions in 2025, only 100 additional employees were approved by the Parliament[43]. A comprehensive human resources plan, including planning for each category of additional staff, is still missing. Although investments in the justice system have

35 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 27-29.
36 Amendment to article 264 of Law 115/2016.
37 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 31-33.
38 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 37-40.
39 Albanian Government (2026), p. 34. Eleven judges were assigned under a delegation scheme: 6 to the General Appeal Court; 1 to the Administrative Court of Appeal and 4 to the Special Court of First Instance.
40 Country visit Albania, HJC and HPC; Albanian Government (2026), pp. 44-45. The number of quotas for candidates to the School of Magistrates in 2026-2027 is 10 for judges, 12 for prosecutors, six for legal advisors and 35 for legal assistants.
41 Country visit Albania, HJC and HPC.
42 Amendment to article 274 of Law 115/2016.
43 Albanian Government (2026), p. 41.

continued to increase, overall expenditure remains low[44] and the budget allocated for additional human resources has not increased independently of the request of both Councils.

The High Court continues steady efforts to unify the case law and ensuring public access to final court rulings. The High Court continues its efforts to unify the case law by providing internal guidance to lower courts[45]. However, challenges regarding the consistency of the case law remain[46], and courts still encounter serious challenges in providing timely reasoning for their decisions.

Efficiency

The length of proceedings and backlogs have been reduced in first-instance cases as well as at the High court, but high disposition times and low clearance rates persist in appeal cases, while further measures to increase efficiency are yet to be implemented[47]. The clearance rate improved in first-instance cases, reaching over 100%, but remained particularly low in second-instance cases, where it ranged between 42% and 77% for different types of cases[48]. Compared with 2023, disposition times decreased in 2024 for all categories of first-instance cases, while in second instance they decreased for administrative and criminal cases. Disposition times for second-instance civil and commercial cases in 2024 are very high[49]. The backlog of the High Court was reduced by over 50%from 30 000 in 2022 to 12 356 in June 2026[50]. While steps to address the backlog have been undertaken with additional recruitments[51], the high number of judicial vacancies, as well as vacancies for legal assistants and secretaries, and insufficient infrastructure continue to hamper efficiency. The HJC has adopted a comprehensive roadmap to increase efficiency and reduce the backlog, and its effective implementation is still to be observed[52]. While some steps have been taken to increase the use of mediation services, including training and awareness-raising activities, mediation remains largely underused in practice. Implementation of the roadmap measures is important to ensure a systematic efficiency policy, which addresses the backlog in both the short and long term. The roll-out of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) solution in case management, including the digitisation of court decisions is currently being planned and budgetary resources have been allocated for it.

---

44 CEPEJ (2025), Dashboard Western Balkans – 2024 Data Collection. In 2024, Albania spent EUR 77,8 million as its implemented Judicial System budget. This amounts to EUR 28,2 spent per inhabitant.

45 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 40-41.

46 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 6.

47 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 6-7.

48 CEPEJ (2025), p. 16. The clearance rate in 2024 in first instance was 105% for civil and commercial litigious cases, 103% for administrative cases and 102% for the sum of severe and misdemeanour and/or minor criminal cases. In second instance cases, the clearance rate in 2024 was 42% for civil and commercial litigious cases, 77% for administrative cases and 66% for the sum of severe and misdemeanour and/or minor criminal cases.

49 CEPEJ (2025), pp. 2, 16-20. In first instance, in 2024, the disposition time decreased in comparison with 2023 by 21% for civil and commercial litigious cases, 9,4% for administrative cases, and 12,1% for criminal cases. In second instance, in 2024, disposition time decreased in comparison with 2023 by 38,5% for administrative cases and by 12,7% in criminal cases. For civil and commercial cases in second instance, data for 2023 is not available.

50 Albanian Government (2026c). High Court (2025), p. 50.

51 This comprises 100 additional judicial administrators, 41 additional legal advisors, and 59 legal assistants.

52 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 49-51.

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 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, Albania scores 39/100 and ranks 91st out of 181 globally[53]. This perception has improved over the past five years[54]. The 2026 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption in Albania shows that 86% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 71%) and 39% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 73% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 65%) and 75% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 37%). Furthermore, 44% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 38%), while 52% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 31%)[55].

The Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2024-2030 and its action plan for 2024-2026 are being implemented. The implementation of the strategy is led by the Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption, with technical coordination by the General Directorate of Anti-Corruption. The operationalisation of the Strategy is supported through coordination and monitoring mechanisms, standardised reporting and quality review systems, as well as capacity building activities, across central and local governments. The Strategy continued to be implemented at a high rate[56], including through important legislative reforms in the field of corruption[57] and the development of sector-specific corruption risk assessment methodologies.[58]. Further strengthening institutional capacities to coordinate, monitor, and report, would enhance implementation and impact, in particular enhancing the role of anti-corruption coordinators and the effective implementation of corruption risk assessments.

The legal and institutional framework to fight corruption is broadly in place, with an operational Asset Recovery Office, while certain gaps persist. The Code of Criminal Procedure still does not grant competence to Special Courts for Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime over matters related to the execution of their judgments[59]. A new law on the Asset Recovery Office was adopted in June 2025[60], and secondary legislation required for the implementation of this law has been finalised[61]. An Asset Recovery Office established within the Albanian State Police is expected to lead to an increased asset seizures and confiscations. The Agency for the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets, which acts as national Assets Management Office, was expanded from 14 to 36 employees. The use of financial

53 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).

54 In 2021, the score was 35, while, in 2025, the score is 39. The score significantly increases/decreases when it changes more than five points; improves/deteriorates (changes between 4-5 points) and is relatively stable (changes from 1-3 points) in the last five years.

55 Data from Special Eurobarometer 573 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026).

56 83.5% of planned activities completed in 2025.

57 Law "On the prevention of conflict of interest in the exercise of public functions", Law on Lobbying, Law "On some amendments to law no. 60/2016 "On whistleblowing and protection of whistleblowers", as amended".

58 Albanian Government, JFS SC (2026), pp. 41-44.

59 2023 Screening report Albania, Cluster 1 – Fundamentals, p. 48.

60 Law No. 44/2025 on the Asset Recovery Office.

61 Albanian Government, (2026), p. 62.

investigations has improved, although it still lacks a more proactive approach. Albania is still not a signatory party to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention[62].

SPAK continued to demonstrate robust capacities to deliver positive results in fighting high-level corruption, despite reported media and politicians' attempts to discredit, exert pressure and undue influence. The Special Anti-Corruption Structure (SPAK)[63] continues to demonstrate independence and robust capacities to deliver positive results in fighting high-level corruption, despite reported media and political attempts to exert undue influence and inappropriate rhetoric[64]. Work on developing SPAK's case-management system continued, resulting in the finalisation of a significant number of modules increasing its operational effectiveness. SPAK adopted a Backlog Reduction Strategy 2025-2027[65]. Increases in SPAK's human resource, particularly with the planned recruitment of 40 new investigators and 10 Judicial Police Services Officers[66], are expected to enhance capacities to manage the growing workload, while additional legal advisors are still missing[67]. SPAK's human, technical and financial resources for financial investigations and asset confiscations has also further improved[68].

SPAK continued building a solid track record in combating corruption, particularly at high level, while the number of referrals to SPAK from other institutions remains low. SPAK and the anti-corruption and organised crime courts (SPAK courts) have further consolidated their 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 interests[69]. In 2025, SPAK investigated 30 high-level officials and former officials (including a Deputy Prime Minister, former Speaker of Parliament, former Minister and former Members of Parliament). 18 of them were referred to court and 10 were convicted with a final ruling. In 2025, the number of completed investigations increased by 3.8% compared to 2024[70]. In 2025, SPAK reported a 17.7% increase in new investigations and 12.2% in completed cases against corruption, however, the value of seizures (about EUR 1.1 million) and confiscations (about EUR 100 000) from corruption offences, particularly involving high-level officials, remain modest and with a low ratio highlighting the need to strengthen the effectiveness of confiscation procedures. The number of referrals to SPAK from other authorities has increased but remains overall low[71].

---

62 OECD (2024); Albanian Government (2026), p. 63. Albania states its intention to ratify the Convention by 2027, according to the Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030.

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

64 Country visit Albania, Civil society organisations.

65 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 32.

66 Albanian Government (2026), p. 67.

67 Country visit Albania, SPAK.

68 Albanian Government (2026), p. 67. As of March 2026, the recruitment of four financial investigators in the Financial Investigation Sector was in the final stages.

69 Albanian Government (2026), Annex no. 3. 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 and money laundering.

70 SPAK (2026).

71 Albanian Government (2026), p. 66; 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 8-9.

The institutional framework for corruption prevention has improved but coordination with law enforcement remains weak. The Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption (MAPA) adopted a manual for interinstitutional coordination in the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy, an overall methodology for sector-based corruption risk assessments and -reviewed methodologies for risk assessment in public procurement. However, shortcomings persist as regards the capacity of the General Directorate on Anti-Corruption (GDAC), to effectively implement and assess the impact of preventive measures, and to coordinate between institutions in charge of corruption prevention and relevant law enforcement. At the same time, attention was given to high-risk sectors through the appointment of anti-corruption coordinators in key institutions. The State Audit Institution (ALSAI) maintained its track record on judicial referrals and cooperation with criminal prosecution bodies. In 2025, ALSAI referred eight cases with criminal elements to prosecution. Additionally, there was continued information sharing at the request of prosecution authorities (43 materials on issues requiring further investigation were shared with prosecutorial bodies upon request in 2025)[72].

Despite some efforts, the State Police remains highly vulnerable to corruption. The Police Oversight Agency (POA) has continued its activities to prevent and investigate corruption within police ranks. In 2025, the Agency received 1 677 complaints from citizens regarding the conduct of the State Police staff directly and 3 846 through a dedicated police line. It launched 40 inspections and recommended disciplinary investigations for 108 employees. The Disciplinary Investigation Commission imposed disciplinary measures on 114 police officers. The Agency also referred 444 law enforcement employees to criminal prosecution, in most cases for "abuse of duty" and "passive corruption"[73]. To further ensure the integrity of the police staff, 77 police staff have undergone periodic and transitional evaluation (vetting) so far, with 53 decisions of confirmation, and dismissal from duty in one case[74]. The transitional evaluation process is currently being carried out for 75 staff of the State Police, Police Oversight Agency, and Republican Guard. Concerns were raised regarding POA's vetting and background checks of its own staff[75], while an administrative investigation has been recently completed and sent for trial.

While the effectiveness and transparency of verifications of declarations of assets and interests have improved, shortcomings persist[76]. Declarations of assets for nearly 300 officials, including members of Parliament and government, members of justice institutions, and mayors, have been published on the website of the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI), allowing public scrutiny and enhancing transparency and the effectiveness of verification of such declarations[77]. However, the number of published declarations remains very limited compared to the total number of declarations processed by the agency. In 2025, HIDAACI performed full verifications on 177 candidates for different positions in the justice system and 19 officers from the State Police, the Republican Guard and Police Surveillance Agency. In 2025, HIDAACI imposed 75 fines. To enhance the effectiveness of verifications, HIDAACI is developing a risk-based model, including a red-flag verification manual, and has drafted an operational action plan for 2026-

72 Annual Performance Report 2025, Albanian Supreme Audit Institution (2026, p. 26).
73 Albanian Government (2026), p. 73.
74 Albanian Government (2026), p. 76.
75 These shortcomings were reiterated after an employee of the POA was revealed to be linked to an organised crime group following a deadly shooting close to Tirana Airport. Balkanweb.com (2026).
76 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 10.
77 Albanian Government (2026), p. 81.

2027[78]. Further efforts are needed to strengthen operating procedures and methodology to ensure effective verification, including the identification of undeclared or concealed assets.

Significant steps have been taken to reduce the complexity of anti-corruption legislation and align it with European standards and EU acquis, while effective implementation is yet to be ensured. Legislation on conflicts of interests, lobbying and whistleblowers protection, including provisions on post-employment restrictions, were revised, to align it with European Standards and EU *acquis,* while reducing the complexity of anti-corruption legislation[79]. Sound implementation of this legislation will be key in ensuring the effectiveness of the integrity framework. The number of whistleblower reports remains low[80]. During 2025, HIDAACI reviewed 11 new whistleblower reports and eight requests for protection against retaliation[81]. The misuse of state resources during electoral campaigns is still an area of concern. The coordination mechanism established between SPAK, the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the General Prosecutor's Office led to better information sharing on electoral crimes and perceived as providing deterrent effect. A Special Parliamentary Committee was established to work on an electoral reform, including the revisions to the legal framework on political party financing, for which cross-party consultations and roundtables have been organised. The revision of legislation on donations and sponsorships is underway.

While a structured framework for corruption risk assessment was adopted and applied in some high-risk sectors, further targeted preventive measures are needed. Certain sectors continue to be identified as particularly vulnerable to corruption risks, notably health, education, public procurement, public-private partnerships, law enforcement, property, tax and customs. Business integrity remains an area requiring particular attention. Corruption risks also persist in state-owned or partially state-owned enterprises, which have taken on significant public responsibilities, including in public procurement in digital and infrastructure sectors, involving also EU funds. Transparency in public procurement procedures, especially for public-private partnerships, is still limited, in particular with regard to the granting of strategic investor status[82]. Political interference is still widespread and calls for greater safeguards[83]. The new Anti-Corruption Strategy focuses on vulnerable sectors, particularly public infrastructure, cadastre and property rights, customs, tax administration, education, health and public procurement. Effective implementation with focus on results, strong monitoring mechanisms and institutional coordination should continue. In April 2025, a methodology for corruption risk assessment in the public sector was adopted, introducing a structured framework for identifying and mitigating corruption risks across public institutions. During the reporting period, risk assessments were carried out or initiated in several high-risk sectors, including public procurement, health and property. Following such

78 Albanian Government (2026), p. 83; Country visit Albania, HIDAACI.

79 Albanian Government (2026), pp. 59-61.

80 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 10. HIDAACI is preparing an action plan for the implementation of the law on conflicts of interest, including an awareness raising campaign. Country visit Albania, HIDAACI.

81 Albanian Government (2026), p. 100.

82 The law on strategic investments that was initially adopted as a temporary law in 2015 is still in force. It provides legal grounds for advantages granted to this category of investors in terms of fiscal incentives or simplified procedures of obtaining certain subject to domestic or foreign political influence. 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 11.

83 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.

an assessment in the property sectors, the State Cadastre Agency adopted an Integrity Plan 2025-2027 introducing targeted preventive measures[84].

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

Concerns persist with regard to the independence of the Audio-Visual Regulatory Authority (AMA), stemming from the bi-partisan formula applied for the election of board members and their political affiliation. The distribution of board members appointments between the majority and the opposition still leaves room for political influence[85]. According to the 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), the risk related to the independence of the media authority is assessed as low, reflecting the existence of formal safeguards in the appointment procedure. However, concerns remain regarding the political affiliations of the Chair and board members and limited enforcement practice, particularly regarding the Broadcasting Code[86] and the widespread use of pre-recorded political content in media coverage[87]. Albania is drafting legislation to reform the media environment, including new amendments to the Law on the Audiovisual Media aiming to strengthen AMA's independence and efficiency. Limited resources, polarisation of the media landscape and ongoing use of inflammatory rhetoric in public debate has continued to undermine self-regulation in the media sector[88].

The limited independence of the public broadcaster remains an issue of concern. In February 2025, the Parliament voted to dismiss in block all 11 members of the steering board of the Public Broadcaster, Albania Radio Television (RTSH) following alleged irregularities in selecting the new Director-General. A new council was appointed in March 2025. The political backgrounds of certain steering board members raised concern about partisan influence rather than the merit-based selection and independence required by the Audiovisual Media Law and the RTSH Statute[89]. RTSH also faced significant financial challenges as well as labour related issues leading to an intensified public debate on how to reform the broadcaster[90]. Following a detailed assessment by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), a reform support mission for RTSH was launched in 2026 to address identified issues including in the broadcaster's structure, with the aim of aligning with European standards in this area. MPM 2026 assessed the risk score relating to the independence of public service media to the medium–high risk range, citing irregularities in the selection process, limited

84 Albanian Government, (2026), pp. 52-54.

85 The law provides for an appointment procedure whereby three candidates should have the support of the majority in the parliament and three the support of the opposition, while the 7th member, the chair, is appointed through a majority vote in the Parliament; 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 15; Law No. 97/2013 on Audiovisual Media Services, Article 9; Venice Commission Opinion "On draft Amendments to Law no 97/2013 on the Audiovisual Media Service" (2020)

86 AMA includes in its organizational structure the Council of Complaints, an independent entity elected by AMA, whose function is to examine and address the public's complaints and inquiries concerning human rights and dignity in the audio-visual media sector, by implementing the Broadcasting Code and other AMA regulations.

87 MPM (2026), Albania, p. 17; During electoral campaigns, AMA has the task to monitor and to measure the volume of institutional advertising and the overall broadcasting of political advertisements, according to rules set out in the Electoral Code, ensuring that all political parties receive equal media coverage. AMA also monitors prohibited activities of public institutions in media outlets designated as such by the Central Electoral Commission, up to four months before election day.

88 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 37.

89 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 12; 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 37; Albanian Government (2026), p. 114.

90 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.

representation of political viewpoints in programming and concerns regarding political influence over staff appointments and editorial decisions[91].

Steps were taken to address media ownership transparency, while media concentration and market penetration by business groups with political links remain issues of serious concern. In January 2026, Albania adopted amendments to the Law on Audiovisual Media to increase media ownership transparency, thereby further aligning with the European Media Freedom Act and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive[92]. AMA continued to publish information on ownership structures and beneficial owners of licensed or authorised audiovisual media on its website, which now has to be actively provided by media outlets to AMA[93]. MPM 2026 decreased the high-risk score for transparency of media ownership to medium-high risk, reflecting the improvements made to the legal framework while underlining that the introduced transparency requirements do not apply to print and online sectors[94]. Albania is in the preliminary stages of drafting proposals to tackle media market concentration. Meanwhile, mechanisms to address media market concentration, including cross-media ownership rules, remain limited[95]. Economic penetration of the media market by business groups with political links and the overlap of political, business and other interests remain a serious concern[96]. MPM 2026 therefore assesses the indicator for market plurality in Albania as high risk, reflecting the strong influence of a limited number of business groups operating across several media sectors.

The fair allocation of state advertising and other state resources is still not ensured, while some steps have been taken towards establishing an audience measurement system. The legal framework still lacks provisions on clear and transparent distribution of public sector advertising in line with international standards. Standard public procurement rules in the advertising procurement procedure can still be circumvented[97]. MPM 2026 highlights that Albanian legislation still lacks clear and transparent rules governing the allocation of state advertising and indirect subsidies to media outlets, creating risks of selective distribution and political influence. The relevant indicator increased to high risk[98].

Shortcomings persist with respect to the right of access to information. The right of access to information is guaranteed by Law No 119/2014 "On the Right to Information". Public authorities continue to frequently rely on generic references to "public interest" or "confidentiality clauses" in public contracts when refusing requests, leaving significant discretion to public institutions. In practice, journalists and civil society organisations, who are mostly affected, continue to face delays, refusals, or incomplete responses to information requests, particularly in politically sensitive areas such as public procurement, major public

91 MPM (2026), Albania, p. 21.

92 Among others, a provision was introduced to oblige media providers to disclose their ownership structure (Art. 33(1)). Law no. 15/2026 "On some addenda to law no. 97/2013 "On the audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania".

93 The Audiovisual Media Authority monitors ownership structures and market developments in relation to audiovisual media and on the basis of information obtained from the National Business Center (NBC) and other publicly available sources.

94 MPM (2026), Albania, pp. 20.

95 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations; 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania p. 37; Albanian Government (2026), p. 73.

96 2023 Enlargement Report, Albania p. 33; 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 17; 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 12.

97 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 16-17.

98 MPM (2026), Albania, p. 31.

investments and EU accession-related reforms[99]. In 2025, the Information and Data Protection Commissioner received 386 complaints from journalists concerning the refusal to provide information and official documents. Of these, 311 cases were resolved by granting the requested information during the administrative review process[100]. MPM 2026 decreased the risk level related to the protection of the right to information to medium - low risk notably in light of improvements made to the protection for public disclosures[101]. The Information and Data Protection Commissioner issued 12 recommendations on institutional transparency[102]. Albania has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents[103].

Cases of verbal and physical threats, smear campaign and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) targeting journalists continued while partial decriminalisation of defamation was introduced for registered journalists. In January 2026, Albania removed criminal provisions on defamation for registered journalists[104] under certain conditions[105]. However, Albania committed to fully decriminalise defamation[106]. Amendments to the Criminal Code also strengthened protection of journalists against violence and serious threats, by increasing sanctions related to attacks against them[107]. Preparatory work in the form of legal analysis has begun to align the legal framework with EU Anti-SLAPP *acquis* to include effective procedural safeguards in the law. Journalists still have limited access to legal assistance, and systematic monitoring of judicial cases involving journalists remains limited. In 2025, the Safe Journalists Network reported a slight decrease in the number of incidents affecting journalists with 42 cases of threats, pressures and attacks on journalists and media organisations[108]. In 2026, 9 incidents were reported[109]. Journalists continue to face intimidation and threats, including by government officials[110]. Women journalists remain particularly targeted by online harassment and smear campaigns [111]. The Circular on the safety of journalists issued by the General Prosecutor instructs prosecutors to treat cases of attacks against journalists and media workers as a priority[112]. The Media Freedom Rapid Response project reports 42 alerts since July 2024, consisting of 8 ‘physical assaults’, 32 ‘verbal attacks’, 1 ‘attack to property’, 3 ‘legal incidents’ and 12

99 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
100 Information and Data Protection Commissioner’s Office (2026), written input.
101 MPM (2026), Albania, pp. 15.; Law “On some amendments to law no. 60/2016 “On whistleblowing and protection of whistleblowers”, as amended”.
102 Albanian Government (2026), p. 115.
103 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.
104 The registration requirement for journalists was strongly criticised by the media community and civil society.
105 Criminal Code, Article 120: *a) the main purpose is to inform the public on matters of general interest; b) at the time of publication, he did not know and, in the specific circumstances, could not reasonably have known that the factual data or information were false and has made reasonable efforts to verify their accuracy; and c) after being informed by the person concerned or by the competent authorities that the factual data or information are manifestly false or manifestly inaccurate, he acts without delay to provide a rebuttal or clarification or to remove them or to disable access to them*.
106 Interim European Union Common Position (2026), p.14.
107 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
108 45 cases reported in 2024.
109 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”.
110 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
111 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
112 Albanian Government (2026), p. 120.

'interference'[113]. Journalists continue to struggle with limited job security and poor working conditions. In May 2025, the State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services and AMA published on their websites an information leaflet aiming to raise awareness on rights and obligations of media workers[114].

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

Concerns remain regarding the quality of the legislative process, including the effectiveness of public consultations and the consistent application of evidence-based policymaking. The Constitutional Court in February 2026 found that the parliamentary procedure for approving amendments to the Parliament's Rules of Procedure was unconstitutional. The Court repealed these amendments due to a violation of the principle of representative democracy related to the freedom of expression of the MPs[115]. The implementation of evidence-based policy making and public consultation rules remains procedural rather than effective. Previously identified shortcomings persist, including the lack of timely publication of drafts for stakeholders' review, the quality of the consultation process and limited follow-up[116]. Draft laws continued to be tabled at the very last moment by one single MP, which affects the quality and transparency of the legislative process[117].

Changes to the Parliament's Rules of Procedure were adopted in a consensual manner contributing to maintaining an overall institutional balance in the Parliament. While initially the Constitutional Court rejected the new Rules of Procedure adopted by Parliament in September 2025, new Rules of Procedure were adopted[118] in May 2026 through a consensual process that took into account key concerns raised by the opposition and civil society[119]. The amendments strengthen important safeguards on public consultation and transparency[120].

Political polarisation continues to negatively impact the functioning of the parliamentary work. In 2025 and 2026, several protests called by the opposition turned violent[121]. Parliament's oversight over the executive further shrunk[122]. A number of requests from the opposition for establishing inquiry committees were turned down in 2025[123]. The politicisation of parliamentary appointments to high-level positions in constitutional bodies or independent institutions remains a serious issue[124].

The Constitutional Court continued to effectively uphold institutional checks and balances, deliberating on milestone cases related to the division of power between the

113 European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Media Freedom Rapid Response – Albania.
114 Albanian Government (2026), p. 113.
115 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2026).
116 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
117 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
118 Albanian Government (2026). The amendments to the Parliament's Rules of Procedure adopted in May 2026 include the reorganisation of the structure of the Assembly's standing committees, from 8 to 11 committees, and the definition of their respective fields of responsibility.
119 Statement by Civil Society on the New Regulation Parliament of 13 March 2026.
120 The new amendments to the Parliament's Rules of Procedure strengthen accountability mechanisms and parliamentary oversight on institutions and introduce new protections for the parliamentary minority.
121 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 4.
122 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations. Albanian Government (2026c). The Parliament adopted an Annual Parliamentary Oversight Calendar for 2026.
123 Shqiptarja.com (2025).
124 2025 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 4.

parliament, the government and the judiciary[125]. High-profile constitutional cases tested the court's role in the separation of powers. The Court continued to function effectively. During the reporting period, Parliament implemented the rulings of the Court regarding the Law on the registration of non-profit organisations [126]. However, Parliament still needs to implement a ruling of the Constitutional Court, which requires the Civil Procedure Code to be amended[127]. While the Parliament also acted to implement the Constitutional Court decision related to the Law on Inquiry Committees, this was done beyond the deadlines set by the Court and triggered criticism on inadequate implementation from the opposition[128]. The Constitutional Court issued a ruling clarifying the calculation of its members' mandate, thereby resolving the legal uncertainty surrounding the end of two members' terms and reconciling the applicable constitutional principles[129]. Two vacancies at the Court remain to be filled. While all the criteria for the selection of the constitutional judges are in place, challenges persist in ensuring the timely and transparent implementation of the selection process.

The refusal by Parliament to lift the immunity of a Member of Parliament has raised concerns as regards the principles of checks and balances and of equality before the law. In March 2026, Parliament rejected a request from SPAK to lift the immunity of a Member of Parliament over charges of violation of equality in tenders[130]. This refusal raised concerns about the principles of checks and balances and of equality before the law[131]. In parallel, a group of Members of Parliament from the ruling majority proposed amendments to the Criminal procedure Code aimed at expanding the category of officials who cannot be suspended from their functions, as a precautionary measure, during judicial proceedings. The amendments raised concerns that they could hamper the effectiveness of criminal investigations, including for high-level corruption investigations, and that their timing could contribute to a perception of impunity[132].

On 1 January 2026, Albania had 28 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, an increase of 3 compared to the previous year[133]. At that time, Albania's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 29% (compared to 25% in 2025; 71% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 4 years and 5 months (compared to 4 years and 3 months in 2025)[134]. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for 12 years, concerns the failure to implement domestic decisions by the public administration[135]. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2025

125 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 15-16.
126 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2023).
127 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022).
128 Discussions in Albanian Parliament, 22 November 2025: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gVHrxjP9Bg.
129 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2025).
130 SPAK, 31.10.2025 [https://spak.gov.al/njoftim-per-shtyp-date-31-10-2025/].
131 According to the recent Constitutional Court decision, parliamentary immunity is a functional guarantee intended to safeguard the free and independent exercise of public office and to protect Member of Parliament from politically motivated attacks and does not constitute a personal privilege. In its case law, the Court has recalled that such immunity is limited to measures involving deprivation of liberty or house or personal search.
132 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
133 For an explanation of the supervision process, see the website of the Council of Europe.
134 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 2026. EIN (2026), written input, p. 1.
135 Judgment of the ECtHR, 40430/08, *Memishaj v. Albania*, pending implementation since 2014.

there were 17 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (the same as in 2024)[136]. On 17 June 2026, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had increased to 32[137].

A new Ombudsperson and a new Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) were appointed. Both institutions continued to enjoy a stable level of public trust and awareness about their competences. A new Ombudsperson (People's Advocate) was appointed in December 2025 after the previous mandate had expired in 2022, without the cross-party support in Parliament that had traditionally accompanied the appointment[138]. Amendments to the Law on the People's Advocate were adopted ensuring that the Ombudsperson's annual report is published before being submitted to Parliament[139]. The State Budget for 2026 envisages an increase of three additional staff members in the People's Advocate office. The largest number of complaints received by the Ombudsperson in 2025 pertained to the restrictions of personal liberty with 169 complaints corresponding to 9.56% of new cases registered. The implementation rate of the recommendations issued by the Ombudsperson remains overall low [140]. In May 2026, parliament appointed a new CPD. The previous mandate had expired in 2023[141]. Both institutions continued to report shortcomings in financial resources that have not been addressed by Parliament[142]. The CPD also reported insufficient human resources.

More than two thirds of the companies surveyed in Albania express high levels of confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection. 71% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and court, a figure which has significantly increased in comparison with 2025 (40%)[143]. Further, 69% perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (Public Procurement Committee) as very or fairly good, a figure which has significantly increased in comparison with 2025 (26%)[144]. 57% perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (Albanian Competition Authority) as very or fairly good, a figure which has significantly increased in comparison with 2025 (38%)[145].

Overall, civil society organisations (CSOs) continue to operate freely, but continue to face challenges, such as discreditation, limited transparency in policymaking, uneven consultation practices, and financial sustainability constraints[146]. The civic space continues to be considered as "narrowed" by Civicus[147]. With a two-year delay, amendments to the Law No. 80/2021 "On the Registration of Non-Profit Organisations" were adopted to comply with the decision of Constitutional Court Decision that annulled *inter alia* the

136 Council of Europe (2026), p. 162.
137 Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).
138 The previous mandate holder of the People's Advocate remained in office in the interim period.
139 Date of submission of the first annual report after adopted amendments was 30.04.2026.
140 The overall implementation rate was 21% in 2025, according to the Ombudsperson.
141 The previous mandate holder of the CPD remains in office in the interim period.
142 Country visit Albania, Ombudsperson.
143 Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025). In 2026, only 15% and 7% of the surveyed investors respectively perceive concerns about quality, efficiency or independence of justice the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about the quality of the law-making process as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.
144 Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).
145 Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).
146 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
147 CIVICUS (Dec 2025). Albania's score is 68/100. Ratings by Civicus given on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

mandatory registration requirement for non-profit organisations[148]. Overall, the amendments largely reflect the Court's decision, but the issue of administrative sanctions remains a concern[149]. The Electronic Register Non-Profit Organisations is not yet operational[150]. The main governmental strategic document to support civil society expired in 2023 while the preparation of a new strategic framework is still pending. Changes to improve the functioning of the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS)[151] have not yet been made[152]. The public funding made available to CSOs through the Agency has not increased and remains insufficient[153]. Progress has been made in the implementation of VAT exemption, addressing a long-standing concern raised by civil society[154].While consultation exercises were carried out with CSOs on the Law on donations and sponsorship, concerns remain on the potentially restrictive effects of certain provisions on the operating environment for civil society, including excessive administrative burdens. Negative narratives and online smear campaigns continued[155]. Human rights defenders and CSOs working on gender and LGBTIQ+ rights were particularly targeted.

148 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2023).
149 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
150 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
151 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 24; 2025 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 17.
152 Draft law on "some amendments and additions to Law N°10093, dated 9 March 2009, on the organisation and functioning of the Agency for the Support of Civil Society" (under public consultation).
153 Average annual budget of EUR 800,000 in line with the minimum legal requirements.
154 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations, GoA contribution. Following the instructions issued in February 2025, VAT exemption to grant agreements funded through bilateral agreements between the Albanian Government and foreign governments and ratified by Parliament is now operational. Further awareness-raising among CSOs, suppliers and the Tax Administration outside Tirana is particularly needed to ensure full and efficient implementation.
155 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

** The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2026 Rule of Law Report can be found at https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2026-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en*

A2news.com (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-policiae-shtetit-jane-demtuar-10-efektive-i1129756

Albanian Government (2026), written contribution for the 2025 Rule of Law Report.

Albanian Government (2026b), written input, Justice Freedom and Security Sub-committee.

Albanian Government (2026c), additional written contribution for the 2025 Rule of Law Report.

Balkanweb.com (2026), Assassination in Rinas! Tirana Prosecutor's Office requests suspension of AMP director allowed employment of Muçi Shaljani in violation of the law (*Atentati në Rinas! Prokuroria e Tiranës kërkon pezullimin e një drejtori të AMP, lejoi punësimin e Muçi Shaljanit në shkelje të ligjit (Emri)*), https://www.balkanweb.com/en/atentati-ne-rinas-prokuroria-e-tiranes-kerkon-pezullimin-e-nje-drejtori-te-amp-lejoi-punesimin-e-muci-shaljanit-ne-shkelje-te-ligjit/#gsc.tab=0.

CEPEJ (2025), *Dashboard Western Balkans – 2024 Data Collection*, Towards a better evaluation of the results of judicial reforms in the Western Balkans – "Dashboard Western Balkans" - European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

Centre for Media Pluralism and Freedom (2026), Media Pluralism Monitor, Country report for Albania – [Not yet published].

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

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022), *Decision V-30/22 of 2 November 2022,* https://www.gjykatakushtetuese.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Vend.30_22.docx.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2023), *Decision V-62/23 of 20 November 2023*, https://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2023/11/20/62.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2025), *Decision V-60/25 of 16 October 2025,* https://www.gjykatakushtetuese.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/vend.6025.pdf.

Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2026), Final decisions of February 2026, https://www.gjykatakushtetuese.gov.al/vendime-perfundimtare-shkurt-2026/

Council of Europe (2026), *Supervision of the execution of judgments decisions of the European Court of Human Rights – 19th Annual Report of the Committee of Ministers – 2025,* https://rm.coe.int/2025-annual-report/48802b1633.

Council of Europe (2025a), https://www.coe.int/en/web/execution/the-supervision-process.

Council of Europe (2025b), HUDOC database, https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22documentcollectionid2%22:[%22GRANDCHAMBER%22,%22CHAMBER%22]}.

Council of Europe, Venice Commission (2013), Opinion on the Legislation on Defamation in Italy, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 97th Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 December 2013), https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2013)038-e.

Council of Europe, Consultative Council of European Judges (2015), Opinion No. 18/2015 on the position of the judiciary and its relation with the other powers of state in a modern democracy, https://rm.coe.int/16807481a1.

Discussions in Albanian Parliament, 22 November 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gVHrxjP9Bg.

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

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

European Commission (2023b), *2023 Communication on EU Enlargement policy, Albania Report*.

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

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

European Commission (2025a), *2025 Communication on EU Enlargement policy, Albania Report*.

European Commission (2025b), *2025 Rule of Law Report, Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania*.

European Implementation Network (2026), *Input from the European Implementation Network for the 2026 Rule of Law Report*.

High Court (2025), Annual Performance Report, https://gjykata-media.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/Raporti_vjetor_ANGLISHT_109e16c924.pdf

High Judicial Council (2025), Decision No. 769/2025.

High Prosecutorial Council (2025), Decision No. 339/2025 – https://klp.al/2025/11/17/per-miratimin-e-rregullores-per-kodin-e-etikes-dhe-parandalimin-e-konfliktit-te-interesit-per-anetaret-e-keshillit-te-larte-te-prokurorise/.

Institute for Political Studies, Opinion on the draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Albania (2026) (*Opinion mbi draftin e ndryshimeve në Rregulloren e Kuvendit të RSH (2026)*), https://isp.com.al/opinion-mbi-draftin-e-ndryshimeve-ne-rregulloren-e-kuvendit-te-rsh-2026/.

International Monitoring Operation (2026), *Written contribution for the 2026 Rule of Law Report*.

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.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation 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.

Safe Journalists Network (2024, 2025), *Incidents Database*, https://safejournalists.net/incidents/?lang=en&keyword=&country=&gender=&is_gender_based=&type_of_incident=&life_threat_type=&other_threat_type=&physical_attack_type=&organisation_threat_type=&organisation_attack_type=&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.

SPAK (2026), *Written contribution for the 2026 Rule of Law Report*.

Shqiptarja.com (2025), PS rejected the request to establish investigative commissions for McGonigal and May 11; the PD appealed to the Constitutional Court (*PS rrëzoi kërkesën për ngritjen e komisioneve hetimore për McGonigal dhe 11 majin, PD ankim në Kushtetuese*) https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/ps-rrezoi-kerkesen-per-ngritjen-e-komisioneve-hetimore-per-mcgonigal-dhe-11-majin-pd-ankim-ne-kushtetuese.

Shqiptarja.com (2026), PS rejects the request for an investigative commission on IPARD funds; PD takes it to the Constitutional Court: violation of the opposition's rights (*PS i rrëzoi kërkesën për komision hetimor për fondet e IPARD, PD e çon në Kushtetuese: Cenim i të drejtave të opozitës*), https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/ipard-ii-pd-con-ne-kushtetuese-rrezimin-e-kerkeses-per-komisionin-hetimor-u-cenua-e-drejta-e-opozites.

Transparency International (2025), *Corruption Perception's Index 2025 https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025*.

Annex II: Country visit to Albania

The Commission services held virtual and hybrid meetings in February 2026 with:

- Albanian Association of Journalists
- Albanian Center for Economic Research
- Albanian Helsinki Committee
- Albanian Institute of Sciences (AIS)
- Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA)
- Albanian Media Council
- Albanian Media Institute
- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) Albania
- Berlin Center for Integrative Mediation (CSSP)
- Centre for the Study of Democracy and Governance (CSDG)
- Centre Science and Innovation for Development (SCiDEV)
- Centre for European Development and Cooperation
- Constitutional Court
- European Movement in Albania (EMA)
- General Prosecutor's Office
- High Court
- 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
- National Bureau of Investigation (NBI)
- Ombudsperson/People's Advocate
- Partners Albania for Change and Development
- Special Prosecution Office (SPO)
- Tirana Legal Aid Society (TLAS)
- Together for life
- Union of Albanian Judges

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

- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- End FGM EU
- European Civic Forum
- European Partnership for Democracy
- Human Rights Watch
- ILGA-Europe
- International Federation for Human Rights

- Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association
- Transparency International EU