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2025 Rule of Law Report
Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania

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2025 Rule of Law Report
The rule of law situation in the European Union

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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 full operability 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 remains 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 SYSTEM[1]

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 2025[2]. 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 adopted[3]. 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[4], 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 justice[5].

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 pending[6]. 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 observed[7]. 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.
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 (2024b), Decision No. 787 on the approval of the Justice Strategy.
4 In June 2025, the first joint meeting took place with two other scheduled for July and September 2025.
5 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 8.
6 International Monitoring Operation (2025).
7 Albanian Government (2025d), 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[8].

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 2024[9]. 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 candidates[10]. 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 process[11].

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 transfers[12]. Since July 2024, the HPC finalised 21 evaluations, and the HJC completed 11 evaluations based on the legal framework in force[13]. 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 prosecutors[14]. There was no significant development from HJC and HPC in strengthening the transparency of promotions and transfers[15]. 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 addressed[16].

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)

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8 Albanian Government (2025a), p. 2. Some preparatory work has started to strengthen institutional capacities, including the addition of three councillors in the HPC budget for 2026-2028, and Albania states its intention to prepare a study outlining the relevant vetting standards.

9 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 8.

10 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.

11 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 4-5; Albanian Government (2025a), p. 3. Given that the existing constitutional and legal mechanisms, which have been repeatedly used to unblock procedural deadlocks, specifically the drawing of lots, do not ensure the selection of the most highly qualified candidates and thus do not guarantee a merit-based selection process, Albania stated the intention to change the legislation in force.

12 2024 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 28.

13 Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 16-17. Albanian Government (2025a), p. 5.

14 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 13.

15 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 4; Albanian Government (2025a), p. 6. The HJC states its intention to strengthen transparency on promotions and transfers.

16 2024 Enlargement Report, Albania, p. 28; Albanian Government (2025a), p. 7. The HPC states the intention to work on draft amendments to the internal regulation, including the by-laws regarding the conflict of interest.

registered 1 491 new cases and processed 1 374 cases. 1 480 cases were carried over to 2025[17]. Only 9 out of 20 inspectors are currently in office. The selection of four non-magistrate inspectors is ongoing[18]. There are still challenges in making the inspector position attractive for magistrates[19] and legal changes are needed to increase its appeal. The recruitment procedure for the secondment of six magistrates to the HJI has been unsuccessful[20]. In terms of operations, the HJI initiated requests for disciplinary proceedings against 15 magistrates including six judges and nine prosecutors in 2024 and completed six thematic inspections[21]. After review from the High Judicial Council, two requests for disciplinary proceedings have been accepted, one has been rejected, one has been suspended, one has been terminated without a final decision, and one is still under consideration. After review from the High Prosecutorial Council, one request has been accepted, but with a change of measure, two requests concerning the same prosecutor have been partially accepted with a change of measure, two have been rejected, one has been terminated without a final decision, two have been suspended pending the Appeal Chamber's decision, and one is still under consideration[22].

The random allocation of cases is applied in courts, although its overall efficiency remains to be improved, and it 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 consistently[23]. There have been some developments with the random allocation of cases for prosecutors, which started to be applied in practice at prosecution offices of first instance[24].

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, seven magistrates have been placed under protection, including one judge and six prosecutors. The Special Prosecutor's Office launched one criminal investigation concerning attempted pressure against a magistrate in a case concerning a Member of Parliament[25]. The investigation and arrest of an elected official, confirmed in February 2025 by the Special Structure Against Organised Crime and Corruption (SPAK)[26] Court, triggered unprecedented public reactions by the executive and legislative branches, including attempts to put pressure on SPAK and judicial institutions. This raises serious concerns[27]. 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 statements[28], denouncing political pressure on the judiciary.

17 High Justice Inspector (2025), p. 11.
18 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 9.
19 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 5.
20 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 9.
21 High Justice Inspector (2025), p. 4.
22 High Justice Inspector (2025), pp. 4, 23-29. Albanian Government (2025a), p. 10.
23 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 5.
24 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 14.
25 Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 19-21. Albanian Government (2025a), p. 15.
26 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).
27 SPAK (2025a).
28 High Judicial Council (2025b); Panorama.com.al (2025).

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 efficiency[29] was finalised. An electronic communication tool between the Tirana District Court and lawyers has been successfully piloted[30]. 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 poor[31]. 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.[32] However, civil society organisations report insufficient access and limited quality of legal aid representation[33].

Sufficient budget has been allocated for the implementation of a modern integrated electronic case management system in courts and prosecution offices, but full operability is foreseen only for 2030. Some progress was made with the allocation of state budget for the court component and the establishment of operations is foreseen for 2027, while the project to fully enable the system is expected to run until 2030[34]. This timeline is too long and risks being detrimental to the overall quality of justice. Despite efforts to improve cooperation, 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 Magistrates[35]. 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 years[36]. 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 revised[37].

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

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29 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 7.
30 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 23.
31 Albanian Government (2025c), 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), 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 (2025b)..
33 Country visit Albania, Civil society organisations.
34 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 23.
35 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 8.
36 Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 25-26.
37 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp.7-8.

judges and 23 prosecutors appointed as of July 2024, significant shortage persists, notably at appeal level. As of December 2024, 221 prosecutors out of 341 (65%) and 272 judges out of 408 (67%) were effectively employed[38]. In the Court of Appeal, two judges have been appointed, bringing the number of judges in office to 28 out of 78[39]. An additional source of concern are the quotas decided by the High Judicial Council (HJC) and the High Prosecutorial Council (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 filled[40]. 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 place[41]. 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 latter[42]. Out of 242 additional total staff requested by the justice institutions in 2024, only 133 additional employees were approved by the Parliament[43]. 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 institutions[44]. Albania's expenditure on justice as a whole remains significantly low[45].

The High Court addressed some problems of consistency and reasoning in the case law. The High Court continued to unify the case law through regularly identifying issues for unification, issuing internal guidance and disseminating key decisions monthly[46]. However, problems of consistency of the case law remain[47]. With the publication of court rulings of the SPAK first instance court[48], 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

38 Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 27-28; Albanian Government (2025a), p. 17.
39 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 28.
40 Country visit Albania, HJC and HPC; Albanian Government (2025d), 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).
41 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.
42 Law No. 115/2016 on Governance Institutions of the Justice System, Articles 244 (4) and 274.
43 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 31. Additional staff includes legal assistants for the appeal Court, judicial secretaries, and support staff (IT, drivers etc).
44 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 31. Out of 71,331,485 ALL requested, 48,330,988 ALL budget was approved.
45 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.
46 Albanian Government (2025a), p. 19.
47 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 9.
48 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 34.

where it ranged between 43% and 63% for different types of cases (compared to between 87% and 94% for first instance cases)[49]. 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 criminal cases[50]. 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 overall[51]. 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 resolved[52]. Alternative dispute resolution remains underused in practice[53].

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 globally[54]. 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 2025 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 86% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 69%) and 45% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 85% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 65%) and 63% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 35%). Furthermore, 56% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 30%), while 51%

49 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.

50 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.

51 CEPEJ (2024), pp. 2, 16, 19; Albanian Government (2025d), 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).

52 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.

53 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 8-9.

54 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).

of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 33%)[55].

The Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2024-2030 has been adopted. The new anti-corruption strategy adopted in December 2024 by the Government[56] 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 recommendations[57]. The anti-corruption strategy incorporated measures to enhance monitoring and institutional coordination mechanisms. However, further strengthening of institutional capacities, planning, coordination and monitoring mechanisms remain needed.

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 judgments[58]. In May 2025, the Government sent the draft law on the asset recovery office to the Parliament for adoption[59]. Albania is not yet a signatory party to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention[60].

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)[61] 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 interests[62]. 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 expanded[63]. SPAK actions continued towards establishing its case-management system[64], consolidating its analytical capacity in the fight against organised criminal networks[65], and developing an action plan to reduce its backlog. The continuously increasing SPAK workload, and the insufficient staff and infrastructure still need to be addressed[66]. The number of referrals

55 Data from Special Eurobarometer 561 (2025) and Flash Eurobarometer 558 (2025).
56 Albanian Government (2024a).
57 Albanian Government (2025d)pp. 40-41. GRECO (2025).
58 2023 Screening report Albania, Cluster 1 – Fundamentals, p. 48.
59 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.
60 OECD (2024); Albanian Government (2025a), p. 20. Albania states its intention to ratify the Convention by 2027, according to the Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030.
61 Special Prosecution Office (SPO) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).
62 Albanian Government (2025d), 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.
63 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 55.
64 The system is expected to be operational in 2025.
65 Including complex investigations, joint operations, also with international cooperation.
66 Country visit Albania, SPAK; SPAK (2025b). 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.

to SPAK from other authorities has decreased further and remains low[67]. Other structures for repression of corruption continued to encounter challenges in the detection and effective investigation of corruption[68].

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 Constitutional Court, former city mayors and other officials)[69]. SPAK's human, technical and financial capacity for financial investigations and asset confiscations has improved[70], and the level of total asset seizures and confiscations remained stable[71]. The seizure of assets for corruption related crimes declined, while confiscation of assets for corruption-related crimes improved[72]. 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 persists[73].

Although some organisational steps have been taken, the institutional framework for corruption prevention remains largely ineffective and coordination with law enforcement needs further strengthening. The General Directorate on Anti-Corruption (GDAC) has been transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Minister of State for Public Administration and Corruption in June 2024[74]. The GDAC underwent a re-organisation of capacities dealing with administrative investigation and risk assessment and to place greater emphasis on prevention, although it also remains responsible for centralised administrative investigations. Shortcomings persist as regards GDAC's capacities to effectively oversee the implementation and assessment of preventive measures, along with thorough risk assessments. Some efforts have been made, particularly in high-risk areas for corruption, but effective implementation is

67 Albanian Government (2025d), 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).

68 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 11. Notably, the General Prosecution Office (GPO), Albanian State Police (ASP) and customs police.

69 Albanian Government (2025f). 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 (2024).

70 Albanian Government (2025d), 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.

71 Agency for Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets (2025). 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.

72 Agency for Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets (2025). 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.

73 Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 65-67.

74 Council of Ministers (2024).

yet to be demonstrated[75]. 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 request[76].

Despite some anti-corruption efforts including the revision of the Law on the Police, the state police is still highly vulnerable to corruption. The Law on the Police has been revised, including a number of structural changes[77]. 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 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"[78]. 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 case[79]. 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 groups[80].

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 shortcoming[81]. In 2024, HIDAACI performed full verifications on 211 candidates to judicial authorities and 35 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 proxies[82].

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. The composition of the Ethics Commission

75 2024 Rule of Law report, Albania, p. 12.
76 State Audit Institution (2025), p. 27.
77 GRECO (2025), p. 23.
78 Police Oversight Agency (2025).
79 Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 60-61.
80 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.
81 Only persons authenticated through an e-portal may file the requests for access, which must be authorised by HIDAACI. Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 76-77.
82 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania; Country visit Albania, updates received from HIDAACI.

has been revised to exclude political members[83]. 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 retaliation[84], and in two cases an administrative fine was imposed[85].

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 concern[86]. 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 2025[87]. 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 crimes[88]. 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 Agency[89], which need to be supported by consolidation and digitalisation of cadastral data. Internal checks and inspection mechanisms in the public administration remain ineffective[90].

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

83 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.

84 Albanian Government (2025d), pp. 91-92.

85 HIDAACI (2025). At the conclusion of the administrative investigations for the period 2016 – 2024, in 13 cases, action was taken issuing an administrative fine, out of which 2 were issued during the reporting period.

86 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 14-15.

87 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.

88 Albaniantimes.al (2025).

89 Albanian Government (2025d), p. 98.

90 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 15.

pre-recorded political content by the government or political parties[91]. 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 debate[92].

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)[93]. The fact that the Steering Council decided to disqualify candidates before the hearing phase and disregarded the secret ballot procedure, breached the provisions in force[94] and violated the principles of transparency and fairness[95]. Following these irregularities, the Parliament discharged the entire Steering Council of RTSH, in apparent contradiction of applicable legislation which only allows individual disqualification of Steering Council members subject to due process guarantees[96]. 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 changes[97].

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 pressures[98]. 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 concentration[99]. 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 its score for market plurality in Albania to very high risk[100]. 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 media[101]. MPM 2025 maintains its high-risk score for transparency of media ownership[102].

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 has not been addressed[103]. MPM

91 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 16; 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 15.
92 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 16.
93 Country visit Albania.
94 Law 97/2013 on Audiovisual Media, Articles 102 and 104; RTSH Statute, Article 11.
95 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 28.
96 Articles 97 and 100 of Law No. 97/2013 on Audiovisual Media.
97 MPM (2025), Albania, pp. 27-28.
98 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 18.
99 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, pp. 16-17.
100 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 18.
101 Audio-Visual Regulatory Authority of Albania (2024).
102 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 19.
103 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 16-17.

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 outlets[104]. MPM 2025 therefore has further increased the risk indicator to medium-high risk[105]. Albania has taken an initial step towards a transparent audience measurement system, which is key to ensuring accountability in public advertising[106].

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, based on large volume of information requests, copyright issues, and confidentiality clauses on public contracts. This affects journalists in a disproportionate manner, as they file the majority of information requests. In 2024, the 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 process[107]. MPM 2025 further increased the risk level related to the protection of the right to information to medium - high risk[108]. Albania has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents[109].

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 SLAPPs[110]. The civil law provisions on fraudulent or inaccurate publications are still not aligned with European standards and continue to be used to launch SLAPPs against journalists[111]. 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 reported[112]. Cases of intimidation and threats against journalists, including by high state officials and police officers,[113] as well as online harassment and smear campaigns, particularly targeting women journalists, remain a

104 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 27.
105 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 27.
106 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.
107 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.
108 MPM (2025), Albania, p. 14.
109 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.
110 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.
111 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 19; Country visit Albania.
112 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".
113 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 19.

concern[114]. 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 Protocol[115]. The use of force, including by law enforcement authorities, in particular in the context of demonstrations, continues to be of concern[116]. 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 journalists[117]. 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 'interference'[118]. Limited job security and poor working conditions for journalists combined with self-censorship, pressure from political actors and media owners[119] continue to pose serious challenges for media. For these reasons, MPM 2025 further increased the risk indicator in the area to medium to high risk[120]. A structured dialogue between Albanian institutions and media actors was conducted between January-June 2025, with the aim of discussing key legislative and regulatory reforms to enhance freedom of expression, including media freedom[121].

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[122]. 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 budget[123]. 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 stakeholders[124]. 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, without a cross-party consensus, aiming amongst others to review legislation, institutional architecture and policies

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

115 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, the General Prosecutor issued a circular on priority investigation of cases of attacks against journalists and increased engagement with journalists to improve safety measures.

116 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 19.

117 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.

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

119 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.

120 MPM (2025), Albania, pp. 12-13.

121 Albanian Government (2025a), p. 41.

122 SIGMA (2024), p. 22. SIGMA noted positively that the numbers of legal acts consulted and number of participants in the consultation increased, but a number of shortcomings remain.

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

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

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 an analytical document and a National Action Plan, including proposed measures within the remit of the committee. While a number of institutions participated in the process, 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 concerning the work, transparency, inclusiveness, as well as the Committee's methodology. At the same time, close attention must be paid to a potential duplication of work already conducted in the context of accession negotiations[125]. 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, guaranteeing the independence of justice institutions.

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 violent[126]. 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 the plenary session[127]. 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 Parliament[128].

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 backlog[129]. During the reporting period, Parliament implemented the ruling of the Court regarding the right of citizens residing abroad to take part in elections[130]. However, Parliament failed to implement the remaining rulings of the Constitutional Court[131]. 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 Parliament[132]. The implementation of the Constitutional Court decision that declared some amendments to the Law on Inquiry Committees unconstitutional is still pending[133]. Parliament had six months to implement the

125 Country visit Albania: as also reported by stakeholders.
126 A2news.com (2024).
127 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.
128 Shqiptarja.com (2024).
129 Constitutional Court (2025).
130 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Albania (2022a).
131 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).
132 Venice Commission (2024), para. 57.
133 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.

ruling, and while discussions have started in Parliament, the deadline was not met[134], although Albania stated its commitment to enact the legal changes needed[135]. In December 2024, the Constitutional Court issued a decision on the end of mandate of one of its judges, who is at the same time the President of the Court, confirming its exclusive competence to adjudicate such cases[136]. 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 year[137]. 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)[138]. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for 11 years, concerns the failure to implement domestic decisions by the public administration[139]. 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)[140]. On 16 June 2025, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had increased to 28[141].

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 institutions[142]. To guarantee that its annual report is published before Parliament has debated on it, the Ombudsperson drafted legal amendments that are currently under public consultation[143]. The largest number of complaints received by the Ombudsperson in 2024 concerned the limitation of personal freedom (295 complaints, 16% overall)[144]. The implementation rate of the recommendations issued by the Ombudsperson remains overall

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

135 Albanian Government (2025a). Albania explained that with regard to the implementation of Decision no. 54/2024 of the Constitutional Court, the Assembly has the intention to draft a new legal initiative "On some additions and amendments to Law no. 8891, dated 02.05.2002, 'On the organization and functioning of the investigative committees of the Assembly', as amended, however progress was affected by the conduct of general parliamentary elections.

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

137 For an explanation of the supervision process, see the website of the Council of Europe.

138 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.

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

140 Council of Europe (2025), p. 156.

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

142 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 23.

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

144 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%).

low[145]. Both institutions continued to report shortcomings in human resources that have not been addressed by Parliament[146].

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 courts[147]. 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 wrong[148]. 26% perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (Public Procurement Committee) as very or fairly good[149]. 38% perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (Albanian Competition Authority) as very or fairly good[150].

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 assembly[151]. In early 2025, civil society have denounced an unprecedented campaign of disinformation, defamation, and politically driven public attacks against civil society in the country[152]. 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 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) persist[153]. New instructions on VAT exemption aim to address the main concerns, but effective implementation remains to be demonstrated[154]. Criticism of the law on volunteerism continues, particularly due to its limited ability to support participation in voluntary activities[155], while a new draft law is being prepared[156].

145 The overall implementation rate was 21% in 2024, according to the Ombudsperson.
146 Country visit Albania, Ombudsperson; Commissioner against discrimination.
147 Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).
148 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.
149 Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).
150 Flash Eurobarometer 555 (2025).
151 CIVICUS (2025). Rating given on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.
152 Resourcecentre.al (2025).
153 2024 Rule of Law Report, Albania, p. 24. The NCCS has so far failed to deliver on its broad mandate and its internal organisation does not allow it to exercise its prerogatives. In 2023, Albania indicated plans to review the legal framework in 2024 with a view to changing provisions related to its composition and functioning, but no clear results have been reported so far. According to the Government, some activities by the NCCS took place during 2024, for example meetings and consultations with civil society representatives.
154 Minister of Finance (2025).
155 Country visit Albania, civil society organisations.
156 Country visit Albania. See also: European Movement Albania (2024).

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

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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

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