

CDI Executive Director contribution at the RGF Monitoring Committee in Tirana, 24.09.2025

From the preparation of draft Regulation of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, CDI has actively channeled the perspectives of the region's civil society into shaping this new instrument. Our engagement started with contributions to the Opinion of European Economic and Social Committee on the draft Reform and Growth Facility Regulation. Notably, both the Monitoring Committee and the Scoreboard were among the CDI recommendations that made their way into the Facility's final Regulation.

With the support of the Embassies of Switzerland and of the Netherlands, CDI is currently working along three main lines:

- Bringing best practices and standards from EU Member States Recovery and Resilience Facility to support and enrich Albania's national efforts on RGF.
- Monitoring the implementation of reforms.
- Facilitating the Growth Plan country dialogue to ensure stakeholders are well-informed, actively involved, and offered opportunities for constructive engagement.

In short:

- In March 2025, we organized the first national roundtable on the role, contribution, and expectations of social actors and business representatives in monitoring Albania's Reform Agenda, with the newly appointed RGF National Coordinator.
- In cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee, CDI introduced EU best practices and expertise on the Reform and Growth Facility participatory governance, drawing on the experience of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) in Member States.
- In June 2024, we organised a visit of Albanian CSO representatives, parliamentary staff, and business stakeholders to Brussels for discussions with EU institutions on monitoring and oversight of the RGF.
- Through our Growth Plan Dialogue, we have engaged with parliamentary structures and will host in late autumn a dedicated session of National Council for European Integration: "RGF: One Year After."
- With four years of experience, the RRF provides valuable knowledge and lessons for governments, technical support structures, CSOs, and other actors involved in RGF implementation. Last week, under the auspices of SASPAC, we held a high-level seminar to translate RRF lessons into guidance for RGF stakeholders.
- Back the Growth Plan Dialogue with evidence, we launched in April the region's first Reform and Growth Facility Scoreboard-REFORM TRACKER. This bottom-up tool complements the recently launched European Commission's official scoreboard, offering accessible figures, insights, and regular updates. It is the go-to resource for tracking Albania's reform and investment progress under the Growth Plan.
- In the coming days, we will release the first monitoring report covering October 2024–June 2025, alongside a dedicated analysis of RGF-supported economic reforms. We have already published briefs on parliamentary oversight and RGF governance.

For CDI the Growth Plan is not only about the money, but about good governance; how reforms are implemented, and membership preparedness. Although the RGF is only a four-year instrument, we see it as an opportunity for the country to develop and strengthen its institutional good governance - including capacities and skills - with regard to the implementation of future EU performance-based instruments.

This is also the aim of our cooperation with SASPAC. Our Memorandum of Understanding lays the ground for specialized CSO contribution to RGF good governance — by drawing on EU standards with RRF, best participatory governance standards, and risk mitigation practices in performance-based funding instruments. How Albania performs today under RGF will determine how quickly we advance in accession reforms and how ready we are tomorrow to seize the benefits of EU membership.

For CDI, RGF acts as a good governance, financial and technical accelerator, allowing Albania to strengthen institutions, align laws and policies, and develop strategic reform planning - all of which are essential for fulfilling EU membership obligations from day one. In this optic, raising domestic governance standards is not optional — it's essential.

After an engagement of more than 18 months with RGF, at this stage we recommend and encourage the following line of actions:

- Strengthening inter-institutional coordination: 22 out of 31 reforms are cross-sectoral. The National Reform Agenda's integrated approach allows progress in one area to reinforce others, maximizing reform impact as well as their alignment with EU accession goals. Timely inter-institutional coordination is essential given the tight reporting deadlines and the pace of negotiations.
- Establishing structured sectoral consultations: Government and business stakeholders should be engaged in systematic consultations for upcoming reforms, which will intensify throughout 2026. Line Ministries should prepare a clear and predictable consultation calendar in advance. Interviews with business representatives during our monitoring confirmed that the inclusiveness and quality of consultations directly affect the quality and credibility of legislation adopted under the RA, the legitimacy of the reforms and their impact.
- Enhancing communication: Targeted communication plans for each policy area are needed to foster understanding, awareness, ownership, and transformation at all levels.
- Introducing a mid-term assessment: This was already our recommendation during the Reform Agenda consultation. The next Multi-Annual Financial Framework brings a renewed focus on performance-based support, but according to the RGF Regulation the Facility will be evaluated after its completion (from 31st December 2027 until 31 December 2031). Given that MFF negotiations will take place within the next two years, a mid-term assessment to identify strengths, weaknesses, and early lessons learned is crucial for preparing the next external action instrument(s).
- And finally, the RGF-linked technical assistance must contribute to a culture of performance-based monitoring and evaluation methodology and standards. Inclusivity and partnership must be a main building block. The MoUs that SASPAC has already signed with Albanian social actors are an indicator of government's commitment in this direction.