

Annex I**to the Commission Implementing Decision approving the second release of funds to Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans****Assessment of the Conditions for Payment - Albania****1. Commission assessment of the preconditions for Union support**

Albania has a multi-party parliamentary system and an electoral framework that is conducive to organising democratic elections, though additional progress is needed to address outstanding ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) recommendations. In May 2025, Albania held its parliamentary elections, which, according to the preliminary findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, were competitive, professionally conducted, and managed in an inclusive and transparent manner, despite a highly polarised environment and an uneven playing field for contestants. Albania's Parliament is able to exercise its powers in a mostly satisfactory way. Nevertheless, its oversight role remains limited, and its activity has been affected by disruptions due to high political polarisation and continuous clashes between the ruling majority and part of the opposition. The Constitutional Court of Albania has been effective in upholding institutional checks and balances, though Parliament has failed to comply with some of its rulings. Challenges regarding the quality of the legislative process include the limited effectiveness of public consultations. The environment for civil society organisations remains challenging, including in relation to registration requirements and limited public funding.

Albania continued implementing the justice reform adopted in 2016, which led to significant improvements in the functioning of the judiciary and quality of judicial review. The legal and institutional framework in place ensures strong independence and impartiality guarantees. Justice reform strengthened the separation between executive and legislative powers from the judiciary. Independent procedures to appoint, promote, evaluate and dismiss judges and prosecutors, and ensure the right to appeal against related decisions are in place. The vetting process in first instance under the oversight of the International Monitoring Operation was completed in November 2024, which is a major milestone setting solid basis for continued independence and accountability of the judiciary. There are still challenges with the quality and efficiency of justice, including attempts at political interference which can affect the independence of the judiciary. The law enforcement track record against corruption and organised crime continues to improve, including in high-level cases.

Albania is a party to the main international human rights instruments, though the country is yet to sign the Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It also needs to develop a comprehensive monitoring and data collection system to assess the level of implementation of human rights legislation, policies, and strategies.

Albania's legal framework is generally a good basis for the protection of fundamental rights, although further strengthening in practice remains necessary. In December 2024, the

government adopted a number of highly anticipated by-laws on the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Implementation of laws will be key, notably in the areas of violence against women, protection of rights of the persons belonging to minorities, and the protection of property rights (several of the latter are foreseen in the country's Reform Agenda). The adoption of a revised Law on Personal Data Protection on 19 December 2024 was an important milestone in Albania's alignment with the relevant EU Acquis and standards. An independent and well-resourced Data Protection Commissioner will continue to play a crucial role. There is a need to ensure effective implementation of the Law including through sufficient administrative and budgetary capacity.

There is also a need to effectively implement the National Agenda on Child Rights, with relevant budget and capacities, to better protect children at risk.

Further significant reforms are needed regarding the independence and pluralism of media and freedom of expression, and these reform measures are one of the cornerstones of the Interim Benchmarks for Cluster 1 negotiations. While the amendments to the Law on the right to information introduced some positive changes, there are shortcomings in terms of implementation. Albania's legal and institutional framework for the protection of journalists, is partially aligned with EU Acquis and relevant European standards and significant improvements remain necessary. Media independence and pluralism continued to be affected.

The preconditions are confirmed as met.

2. Commission assessment of the general conditions for payments

1. Assessment of the macro financial stability

Albania's economy has performed strongly in recent years, underpinned by stability-oriented macroeconomic policies and by domestic and external demand, with strong service exports (mainly in the tourism sector). After an increase in GDP of 4% in 2023, strong GDP growth continued also in 2024 (4%). Growth was primarily driven by services and construction sectors, while both industry and agriculture showed some moderation. On the expenditure side, growth was driven by robust domestic demand, with increasing private consumption and investments.

This growth trend continued in the first quarter of 2025, with the Albanian economy experiencing a 3.4% year-on-year GDP growth, underpinned by an expansion in consumption, government spending, investments, and foreign demand. The expansion of the tourism sector is expected to continue to drive economic growth. The Commission's spring forecast projects a robust growth rate of 3.6% and 3.5% in 2025 and 2026 respectively, which is broadly in line with IMF projections, though less than Albania's Ministry of Finance's projections of 3.9% for 2024 and 2025, and 4% in 2026. Private consumption, supported by growing real wages and improvements in the labour market, is set to remain strong over the forecasted period. Growth is expected to be supported by, continued investments, services, construction and real estate. The employment rate rose to 68.5% in 2024, up by 0.7 percentage points from the previous year, and continued to improve in the second quarter of 2025, reaching 69.1%, supported primarily by job creation in the services sector, while the labour force participation rate also increased, driven by rising wages and improving job prospects. Proactive monetary policy,

lower global commodity prices, and a steady appreciation of the Albanian Lek facilitated a reduction in inflation in 2024 (2.2%), below the 3% target of the central bank.

In July 2025 the Bank of Albania eased the policy rate to 2.5%. The Bank of Albania expects inflation to return to target in 2026, supported by higher imported inflation. The banking sector remained well-capitalised and profitable, while the non-performing loans ratio decreased (4% in July 2025). Driven by high demand and favourable financing conditions, private sector credit accelerated in 2024 and continued to be strong in 2025 (with credit growth averaging 12% in the first six months of the year). Given the fast growth in mortgage loans and the acceleration of residential real estate prices, the Bank of Albania adopted borrower-based measures in May 2025.

The current account deficit remained moderate, increasing to 2.4% of GDP in 2024, following a historic low of 1.2% of GDP in 2023. The widening of the deficit in 2024 was primarily driven by a rise in the goods trade deficit, due to a decline in exports and a continued increase in imports driven by the rapid expansion of domestic demand. Net foreign direct investments (FDI) inflows remained the primary source of financing the current account deficit in 2024. They grew by 7% year on year in 2024. In the first quarter of 2025, the total stock of FDI stood at around 15.5 billion Euros, twice as much as the stock at the end of 2015. The top partners include several EU member states such as the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, France and Germany. In the first quarter of 2025, the current account deficit narrowed, with its rolling 4-quarter total standing at 2.1% of GDP (mainly due to an increase in exports of goods and services).

In February 2025, the government issued a EUR 650 million Eurobond with 10-years maturity at favourable market conditions. The stability of the financial system, along with improvements in fiscal indicators, led to an upgrade in Albania's sovereign credit rating, the latest upgrade, in March 2025, being to BB by Standard & Poor. The public debt ratio is on a declining path, reaching 54.2% of GDP in 2024.

While in 2015-2020 convergence with EU income levels stagnated at 30% of the EU average GDP per capita (at purchasing power parity), they then rose steadily to 37% in 2024. Albania's macroeconomic policy mix is appropriate, maintaining macroeconomic stability and supporting economic growth. Improved fiscal performance and a reduction in the debt-to-GDP ratio restored some fiscal space, though vulnerabilities remain and should be addressed, including low government revenues-to-GDP-ratio, with tax expenditures resulting in substantial revenue losses, elevated financing needs and shortcomings in the operationalisation of the public investment management.

In conclusion, the authorities are pursuing a stability-oriented macroeconomic policy, and the general condition is met.

2. Assessment of the soundness of the Public Financial Management system(s)

The legal framework for sound PFM is mostly in place, and Albania has a comprehensive organic budget law. A new 2023-2030 PFM strategy was adopted in June 2024 which is comprehensive, covering all aspects of PFM and domestic revenue mobilization, and focuses primarily on medium-term actions for the period 2023-2026. The strategic framework is further strengthened by specific strategies on debt management, procurement, external audit and customs. In December 2024 Albania also adopted a Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS)

and Action Plan 2024-2027, with the stated aim of an increase of tax revenues by 2.5% of GDP between 2019 and 2027 through reforms of tax policy and of the tax and customs administration. These include increasing VAT registrations and reducing undeclared work and tax fraud. An assessment of the numerous tax exemptions/tax expenditure report was prepared by June 2025, as a commitment under the MTRS. Both the conclusion of the MTRS, and of the exemption assessment are growth plan steps assessed in this file. A higher tax revenue ratio is part of the efforts of fiscal consolidation. Albania has committed to continue its work to increase tax revenues as a share of GDP in a growth-friendly way.

A new PEFA assessment was concluded in July 2025. The PEFA, as well as findings from the recent OECD SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) assessment concluded in early 2025, indicate improvement in several PFM areas. Improvements were noted on public investment management procedures, internal control and audit, budget preparation process, and the mechanisms for allocation of funds to local government. There was a deterioration of performance in expenditure turnout by economic classification (meaning the budget is respected at aggregate level, but there is a lot of reclassifications within it), and budget execution reporting (partially because of a stricter implementation of the methodology). Although results are generally good, they remain weaker in a few areas, such as financial reporting on operations outside of central government (on state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)), public access to information, public asset management, and legislative scrutiny of audit reports. The recent establishment of an audit subcommittee is seen as a positive point but has not yet affected the scores.

Fiscal performance in 2024 was largely in line with the budget consolidation targets of the government, and respected the fiscal rules set out in the organic budget law. Total revenues exceeded the budgeted amount by 5% and saw a 10% increase compared to 2023. Within that, tax revenues followed a similar pattern with a 10.1% nominal increase compared to 2023; attributed to good economic performance, salary increases in public sector and private sector and tax administration efforts, particularly on payroll declaration and increased focus on tourism. Public expenditure increased by 8% in 2024 compared to 2023. Current expenditure increased by 10.5%, mainly due to the new civil service salary policy and social spending. Investment spending decreased slightly compared to 2023 (by 3.1%), attributed mainly to lower than expected implementation of projects financed with foreign grant financing. The budget deficit for 2024 is 0.7% of GDP and public debt stood at 54% of GDP, down by almost 3.6pp from 2023. The budget deficit is set to widen to 2.4% of GDP in 2025 on the back of higher expenditure, especially on capital spending. A lower expenditure-to-GDP ratio (driven by both current and capital spending) is projected to help decrease the budget deficit to 1.9% of GDP in 2026.

The government also reformed public investment management. While weaknesses in investment planning and execution persist, Albania approved its first National Single Project Pipeline (NSPP) in July 2023 as part of the Government 2024–2026 policy priorities, and since then the NSPP and Policy Priority Document have been prepared on a regular basis. The ranking of projects in the NSPP is based on their strategic importance, maturity and financing, necessary to facilitate medium-term budget planning, and is yet to be completed. A decree was recently adopted to include public-private partnerships into the NSPP, and a process to bring the PPP law fully in line with the EU *acquis* is underway. In line with the most recent NSPP, Albania has submitted a draft list of priority projects to be financed by the pre-financing under

the Reform and Growth Facility (RGF) through the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF).

The legal framework for internal control and internal audit is in place and largely aligned with international best practices and PIFC standards. The government produces annually a PIFC report that gives an overview of the different assessments of the PIFC implementation.

The 2024 PIFC report concludes there is some improvement in compliance, but challenges remain in the full application of the legal provisions, and the systems are considered partially effective. Within internal control there is increased compliance, but less so on risk management. Managerial delegation remains underused. On internal audit, most of the required internal audit units have been set up, but there remain some staffing challenges (87% staffing). 958 internal audits were conducted in 2024, and recommendations are generally accepted, although recommendation implementation rates remain relatively low (53.5% within a year, 61% over two years). In July 2025, the Ministry of Finance issued an order on the internal control and verification of measures for the implementation of the RGF, laying out the responsibilities of internal control and internal audit structures regarding the reporting of the reform measures.

In conclusion, the soundness of the public finance management system (including the relevant reform strategy) is sufficiently confirmed, and the general condition is met.

3. Assessment of the transparency and oversight of the budget

Albania's budget transparency is mostly satisfactory, with all key budget documents regularly published. The provisions of the Organic Budget Law are mostly followed, although further improvements in the comprehensiveness and consolidation of budget reporting are needed, including improvements in reporting on SOEs and PPPs. However, budget revisions continue to be done almost exclusively through normative acts by the executive, which is against the commitment to use the regular legislative process for budget amendments.

The government has taken steps to improve the monitoring of fiscal risks, which are particularly important when it comes to SOEs and PPPs. Further improvements in the analytical scope and comprehensiveness of fiscal risk reporting should be pursued. The Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) has an established audit plan, has expanded the scope of audit types, and publishes audit reports in a timely manner. Follow-up of audit recommendations by the executive needs to be improved - the establishment of a parliamentary subcommittee in 2024 dedicated to audit follow-up is a positive step.

In conclusion, transparency and oversight of the budget are sufficiently sound and the general condition is met.

3. Commission review of the achievement of the steps in the Reform Agendas

1.1.1. Increase domestic revenue mobilisation and the comprehensiveness of the tax system, notably via adopting and implementing the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS)

The step under review	<i>MTRS updated and adopted.</i>
Baseline	Existing Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM)
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS) 2024-2027 was adopted by the Council of Ministers (CoM) on 26 December 2024 (DCM No 847) and published in the Official Journal on 9 January 2025. On 24 January 2025, the Minister of Finance adopted Decision No. 14, establishing a Steering Committee and Technical Secretariat to monitor implementation.</p> <p>The strategy was subject to public consultation, including publication of the draft on the consultation portal (https://konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/781) from 20 September to 18 October 2024 and several meetings primarily with business sector representatives. A report on the public consultation is available on the Government public consultation platform.</p> <p>International partners, including the European Commission, provided comments. The preparation was supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Technical Support, including the EU co-funded IMF South-Eastern Europe programme. The Strategy follows the standard government template and is aligned to the National Development Strategy, Economic Reform Programme (ERP) and Public Financial Management (PFM) Strategy.</p> <p>The 2024-2027 MTRS builds on the previous MTRS (2020-2024/2022-2024, also done with IMF support), which, although never formally adopted, was used as a reference by the administration.</p> <p>The Strategy explicitly includes tax policy and tax administration targets from the Reform Agenda, with the primary stated objective of increasing Domestic Revenue Mobilisation (DRM) to ensure fiscal sustainability and financing of public services and development programmes. It is structured around three Pillars: 1) Tax Policy Review, 2) Tax Administration Improvement, and 3) Customs Administration Improvement.</p> <p>The overarching goal is to increase tax revenues by 2.5% of GDP by 2027 (from 25.2% of GDP in 2019 to 27.7%), raising overall government revenue (tax and non-tax) to 30% of GDP. The bulk of this increase (1.8%) will need to be achieved in the 2024-2027 period. Considering historic performance, this is</p>

	<p>an ambitious target and would bring Albania closer to the EU and peer country revenue levels.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers this step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>The Beneficiary provided the following evidence in line with the Reform Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CoM Decision No. 847, dated 26 December 2024, approving the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS) and the 2024–2027 Action Plan. http://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2024/12/26/847 <p>Additionally, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Order of the Minister of Finance No. 14 dated 24 January 2025, “<i>On the establishment of the Steering Committee and Technical Secretariat for monitoring the implementation of the MTRS and Action Plan 2024–2027</i>”. - Details of the public consultation process conducted before the strategy’s approval, including its publication on the governmental platform “Konsultimi Publik”, and the related Consultation Report available at: https://konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/781 - Ongoing dialogue with the Ministry of Finance, Tax Directorate and Customs Directorate (including in the context of the ERP). - Discussions with IMF local office and with technical experts under the EU co-funded IMF SEE programme.
Double funding	<p>Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the achievement of this step. The IMF has provided support and technical input to the MTRS process, including through the IMF SEE III Technical Assistance programme co-financed by the EU. On the basis of the Commission’s assessment, the degree of third-party contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

1.1.1. Increase domestic revenue mobilisation and the comprehensiveness of the tax system, notably via adopting and implementing the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS)

The step under review	<i>[MTRS updated and adopted] Including a measure on (inter alia) an evaluation of all tax exemptions with a view to deciding whether any can be phased out, and with a view to deciding whether the use of the data sets from third parties enable unjustified wealth investigations can be possible</i>
Baseline	Existing DCM
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers the step as fully achieved.

<p>Commission assessment of results</p>	<p>This step is composed of two elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation of all tax exemptions with a view to deciding whether any can be phased out; 2. [Evaluation] with a view to deciding whether the use of the data sets from third parties [to] enable unjustified wealth investigations can be possible. <p>1. Evaluation of all tax exemptions with a view to deciding whether any can be phased out</p> <p>The MTRS, adopted in December 2024, included an initial analysis of some tax exemptions and envisaged further evaluation by June 2025 (measure under MTRS component 1.1 regarding indirect taxes and 1.2 on direct taxes). The Ministry of Finance (MoF) completed an evaluation and shared the report with the Albanian RGF Coordinator (SASPAC) in early July, approved by a ministerial order.</p> <p>The government has indicated that it considers the report to be an internal document. While the publication of the tax exemption evaluation is not explicitly required to achieve this step, the authorities are nonetheless encouraged to ensure some level of public access to the report, as this would help foster transparency and support data-driven policy dialogue on this aspect of tax policy. This is particularly relevant given that Albania lacks legal provisions requiring the regular public disclosure of tax expenditure assessments, even though some such reporting has occurred in the past.</p> <p>The report is comprehensive, covering 74 tax expenditures: 47 VAT, 4 excise duties, 12 personal income tax, and 11 corporate income tax. Exemptions are categorised by type and purpose, assessed for compliance with national legislation, EU <i>acquis</i>, international good practice, and actual performance. Cost estimates are provided, most consistently for VAT (using an IMF-supported model) and less so for other taxes.</p> <p>The report explicitly assesses compliance with EU <i>acquis</i>, particularly for VAT and excise. Assessment of efficiency and effectiveness is less detailed, although some major exemptions reference broader analytical studies (e.g. IMF).</p> <p>The report is an evaluation rather than an action document, but it provides suggested measures. For exemptions not compliant with the EU <i>acquis</i> it recommends alignment by accession or request for transition provisions in line with the EU Common Position on Cluster 3 following Albania's Negotiating Position. For others, such as certain income tax exemptions and thresholds, the recommendations are more open-ended, focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, in line with the broader MRTS.</p> <p>2. [Evaluation] with a view to deciding whether the use of the data sets from third parties to enable unjustified wealth investigations can be possible</p> <p>The MTRS includes measure 2.3.4 on integrating third-party data for tax investigations into unjustified wealth. Potential data sources include the labour inspectorate, road transport directorate, FIA, coastal agency, electricity distributor, municipalities, and social security institute. The strategy foresees concluding memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with these organisations and</p>
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	<p>integrating the data into the General Directorate of Taxation’s (GDT) systems via web services enabled by the National Agency for Information Society (NAIS).</p> <p>Some MoUs pre-dated the MTRS (e.g. with OSHEE, signed 2020 and amended 2024; National Business Center, 2019). Since the adoption of the MTRS, new MoUs have been signed with the State Labour and Social Services Inspectorate (Dec 2024), the General Directorate of Road Transport (May 2025), and the Albanian Investment Development Agency (May 2025).</p> <p>Documentation shows that the GDT Risk Committee’s control plan (May 2025) foresees inspections based on data from labour and road transport authorities. Initial audits using third-party data included 17 individual audits, verification of electricity supply contracts, and audits of 860 high-risk taxpayers. A pilot communication system with second-tier banks is being tested to facilitate account data transfer, with ongoing investigations using this data. Access to the National Vehicle Registry has also been used for planned audits, publicly reported in the media (https://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/tatimet-nisin-verifikimet-per-makinat-luksoze/).</p> <p>The authorities provided an overview of activities undertaken since the adoption of the reform agenda and the MTRS (which included an overview of foreseen third-party data to be accessed and used) to improve access and use of third-party data. This also shows progress towards achievement of the specific related reform steps (audits of high wealth individuals and audits based on third-party data) set for 2026.</p> <p>The Commission concludes that the tax expenditure evaluation sufficiently meets the requirements of the Reform Agenda step.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers this step as achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>The Beneficiary provided the following evidence in line with the Reform Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CoM Decision No. 847, dated 26 December 2024, approving the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS) and the 2024–2027 Action Plan. http://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2024/12/26/847 <p>In addition, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tax expenditure evaluation report and clarifications provided at the request of the Commission. 2. Documentation provided on third-party data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memoranda signed since December 2024 between GDT and labour inspectorate, investment development agency and Road Transport directorate (as well as information on previously signed MoUs). • Information on datasets and initial investigation using third-party data. • Clarifications provided at the request of the Commission.
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the achievement of this step. The preparation of the tax expenditure report was supported by the IMF through technical assistance provided primarily via the EU co-financed IMF SEE III project. The support consisted of expert input, analytical tools and guidance offered throughout the preparation process; however, the process was led and owned by the national stakeholders. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>

Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved
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1.1.2. Ensure transparency and efficiency of state cadastre services, for investors and citizens and provide clear policy for land usage.

The step under review	<i>Adopt a comprehensive Road Map to achieve tangible results to finalise the digitisation processes, therefore, for previously paper-based cadastral ownership titles and cadastral maps in all cadastral zones to be digitalised, by prioritising those with economic relevance and first registrations, to be fully completed</i>
Baseline	No Road Map in place on digitisation processes
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>On 6 June 2025, the General Director of the State Cadastre Agency (SCA) adopted the Digitalisation Roadmap (Order No. 710), based on the laws governing the Council of Ministers and the state cadastre. On 23 June 2025, the Roadmap received further endorsement by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Reform of Integrated Land Management, chaired by the Minister of Justice, and was also presented to the EU for Property Rights Programme Steering Committee on 10 June 2025.</p> <p>The Roadmap sets out the vision, objectives, and concrete steps for the digital transformation of the cadastral system (2025–2028), aiming to establish a modern, transparent, and sustainable system aligned with EU Directive 2007/2/EC. Key objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scanning of all technical and legal documents by December 2025. • Digitising all property cards (ownership titles) by June 2026. • Digitising all cadastral maps by December 2026. • Achieving first-time registration for 95% of cadastral zones by June 2026 (i.e. additional 5%) and 100% by December 2028. • Ensuring continuous maintenance and digitisation of new cadastral data, providing easy, fast, and secure access for authorised users. <p>The Roadmap is comprehensive, including state of play, challenges, risk analysis, monitoring and evaluation, communication, and funding. However, it does not foresee systematic corrections of existing inaccuracies, leaving data reconciliation to ad hoc transactions without a set timeline.</p> <p>Financial resources have been secured, with around EUR 14.4 million from the state budget for digitisation and scanning, and EUR 8.6 million for first-time registrations (EUR 5.1 million to reach the 95% target and EUR 3.5 million for the final 5%). The SCA will add resources from its own budget, with further contributions expected from municipalities. A contribution</p>

	<p>agreement with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) under the EU for Property Rights Programme, expected by September 2025, will support the digitisation of remaining paper-based maps (29,000 maps across 87,000 sheets, representing 90% of all maps), first-time registrations in about 20 cadastral zones, and review of cadastral data in selected areas.</p> <p>While targets may appear ambitious given Albania's long-standing challenges with incomplete or inaccurate records and corruption-marked processes, the Roadmap, backed by renewed SCA leadership and EU support, provides momentum for meeting Reform Agenda deadlines.</p> <p>In conclusion, the Roadmap has been adopted with clear objectives, timelines, and funding, covering the digitisation of all ownership titles and maps by 2028, alongside significant progress in first-time registrations. Strong government commitment will be essential to sustain implementation in line with the accession process. On this basis, the Commission considers this step achieved.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers this step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review of the evidence submitted in line with the Reform Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order no. 710, dated 9 June 2025 of the General Director "<i>On the approval of the Digitalization Roadmap of the State Cadastre Agency 2025-2028</i>" Inter-Ministerial Committee approval, meeting minutes dated 23 June 2025 Numerous meetings with the SCA and other stakeholders, including in preparation and implementation of the EU for Property Rights Programme.
Double funding	<p>No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.</p> <p>Under the contribution agreement with UNOPS, the EU plans to support first-time registration in approx. 20 cadastral zones. However, these zones will not be counted towards the related Reform Agenda targets for first-time registrations.</p>
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

1.1.3. Increase the attractiveness and transparency of investments, in line with EU practices, improve State-owned Enterprises and State Aid governance

The step under review	<i>Adopt PPP/concession law in line with EU acquis and EU best practices</i>
Baseline	Existing legislation
Deadline of the step	June 2025

Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The process of adopting a new Public Private Partnership (PPP) and concessions law is ongoing and has not yet been concluded, so the step cannot be considered achieved.</p> <p>The current concessions/PPP law, adopted in 2013 and amended in 2014, 2015 and 2019 (Law 50/2019), has long been recognised as only partially compliant with Directive 2014/23/EU on concessions. An interinstitutional working group was set up in April 2024 to review the law. Several revisions have since been made, and the Commission’s compliance review of the draft law with the relevant EU <i>acquis</i> (notably Directive 2014/23) is ongoing.</p> <p>On 30 June 2025, the Council of Ministers approved the draft PPP law, which was then submitted to Parliament and published on its website following legal review. The Government has also indicated readiness to introduce further changes to reflect the Commission’s comments during the parliamentary process.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers this step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different draft versions of the new PPP/concessions law, including the version submitted for public consultation, the version prepared following public consultation (30 June 2025), and the version submitted to Parliament taking into consideration some of the EC comments. <p>Additionally, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public consultation report. <p>Checks performed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review of the different draft law versions. - Ongoing <i>acquis</i> compliance assessment by the Commission. - Review of public consultation comments and comments by international partners (including SIGMA).
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. Technical support in the review of the legislation was provided through OECD-SIGMA and through the IMF SEE 3 project co-financed by the EU. Most of this support pre-dates the adoption of the Reform Agenda. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

1.1.3. Increase the attractiveness and transparency of investments, in line with EU practices, improve State-owned Enterprises and State Aid governance

The step under review	<i>Ensure that all the new board members of [state-owned enterprises] SOEs are appointed through transparent and merit-based procedures</i>
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Baseline	Status of existing boards members: all the existing board members are appointed with the current procedure
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>On 16 December 2024, the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MoECI) adopted an Instruction on the appointment of the board members of SOEs of strategic/special importance (i.e. SOEs with six members in the supervisory board). This builds on the existing legal framework prior to the adoption of this Instruction, established by (1) the Law No.9901 on Commerce and Commercial Companies, and the relevant by-laws, which regulate the general governance and accountability of all commercial companies, including SOEs, (2) the Council of Ministers (CoM) Decision No.570 from 2018, and (3) the Instruction No.11 of the Minister of Finance from April 2022, which sets rules on appointment, functioning, and remuneration of supervisory boards, with basic eligibility criteria (requirement for a master diploma, 5+ years of experience, sector-specific knowledge, no conflict of interest and a clean penal record).</p> <p>The December 2024 Instruction, which represents the milestone for this step, sets specific requirements on transparency and merit-based recruitment processes and publication of vacant posts on the Ministry’s website for all SOEs of strategic/special importance under the ownership of MoECI as the sole shareholder. The eligibility criteria were strengthened, in line with the merit-based approach, adding to the previously set criteria of the April 2022 Ministerial Instruction. It also repealed any appointment of an SOE supervisory board member of that category that took place since 10 October 2024, the date when Albania adopted the Reform Agenda. Certain aspects of increased transparency in setting up the selection committee, in the evaluation of board members and in minimisation of political influence, are expected to be addressed in the framework of a follow up step in the Reform Agenda step due by June 2025 (which concerns amending the CoM decision from 2018).</p> <p>Given its legal scope, the December 2024 Instruction concerns SOEs under the ownership of MoECI. In the reporting period, the Ministry has taken the necessary action in line with the Instruction. A number of existing board members were released from duty and re-appointments took place according to the new procedure. Over 90% of newly appointed members remain public administration servants (at director, general director and deputy minister levels). Only one case of appointment of an independent expert as an SOE board member has been recorded.</p> <p>In the following period, and in the framework of the related June 2025 Reform Agenda step, Albania should ensure that the remaining SOEs of special/strategic importance, including all SOEs of special/strategic importance that are not under the majority ownership of MoECI, follow the new appointment procedure after the adoption of the relevant CoM decision.</p>

	<p>The Beneficiary should also continue its work on updating the list of SOEs, including those of strategic/special importance, as well as on further harmonisation of state ownership practices and on increasing the independence and operational autonomy of SOE boards, in line with the recommendations under the OECD competitiveness outlook on Albania (https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/06/western-balkans-competitiveness-outlook-2024-albania_a783c88e/541ec4e7-en.pdf). Strengthening safeguards on transparency, independence and accountability of SOEs remains the focus of the Reform Agenda implementation period.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>As part of its assessment, the Commission reviewed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Copy of Order No. 1107, dated 16 December 2024, “<i>On the announcement of procedures for vacant positions in the Supervisory Councils of companies in sectors of special importance,</i>” ensuring adherence to good governance standards in the appointment process. 2. Link to the official website publication confirming the vacancies and application submission procedures, ensuring public access to the process and transparency in the selection. https://meki.gov.al/newsrooms/vende-vakante/ 3. Copy of Public Announcements of the board members' vacancies. 4. Memo of the MoECI on the selection procedures followed for the new board members. 5. The decisions on the appointment of all the board members that occurred during the reporting period for SOEs under the ownership of MoECI.. 6. Analysis of the procedures followed for the appointment of board members of SOEs of special/strategic importance under the ownership of MoECI during the period October 2024 - June 2025. 7. A List of SoEs of strategic importance and non-strategic/special importance.
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

1.1.3. Increase the attractiveness and transparency of investments, in line with EU practices, improve State-owned Enterprises and State Aid governance

The step under review	<i>[and] amend relevant regulations to introduce rules on the appointment of board members of SOEs, subject to open and merit-based recruitment processes</i>
Baseline	Existing regulations
Deadline of the step	June 2025

Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers the step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>On 30 June 2025, the Government amended the CoM Decision 570 (2018). The amendments, which represent the core of this reform step, are aimed at harmonising procedures for appointment of SOE board members under the Central Government or Local Government ownership. The Decision represents important progress, introducing requirements for an open and transparent recruitment process for SOE board members. These include the publication of vacancy notices, expanding eligibility to independent professionals, and excluding former politically appointed officials for a two-year period after leaving office. It tasks the SOE’s Assembly to determine vacant posts, publish them on the institution’s official website, designate the structure responsible for collecting the submitted applications and for establishment of the evaluation committee that would review the eligibility criteria and shortlist the candidates.</p> <p>While the amended Decision represents a clear progress, if assessed against the OECD Guidelines on Good Governance of SOEs, which encompass the EU best practice in this field, important shortcomings come to light. The Decision does not provide clear implementation guidelines and does not clarify how the ministerial instructions issued in April 2022 and December 2024 (<i>see part one of the step 1.1.3, above</i>) will align with or be incorporated into the new framework. Risks to the open and transparent recruitment process remain since the Decision still effectively allows for the same minister to be charged with proposing and selecting the candidates for the SOE boards. The Decision is unclear on the composition/selection of the evaluation committee (in terms of number of members from each institution/the company itself, selection, etc.) in charge of screening/selecting/shortlisting and ranking of the candidates for the board. Minimising political influence has only partly been addressed, with reference to former political officials only.</p> <p>The OECD Competitiveness Outlook (2024) highlights persistent weaknesses in Albania’s SOE’s governance: politically affiliated individuals serving on boards (including vice-ministers), cases where the state bypasses boards when appointing CEOs directly, and the absence of centrally aggregated data and reporting on SOE performance. These findings point to accountability gaps and weak independence boards.</p> <p>Overall, sound corporate governance, professionalised ownership, integrity, transparency and accountability are essential to address potential conflicts of interest, as well as the risks of corruption and illegal influence. This is particularly important to ensure SOEs remain effective in their mission and accountable to citizens and taxpayers as their ultimate owners.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the	In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:

verification of the step and related findings	- Amended regulation – i.e. the CoM Decision no. 363, dated 30 June 2025 on amending the CoM Decision no. 570 dated 3 October 2018 on the Supervisory Boards of State-Owned Joint Stock Companies. https://www.qbz.gov.al/share/vse4qnGTskq4hP-R75WTcg
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

1.1.4. Improve the investment attractiveness framework and in particular the FDI framework and business environment by deregulation and modernisation of business services.

The step under review	<i>Adopt legal amendments to facilitate administrative procedures for businesses</i>
Baseline	Existing regulations
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>According to the Reform Agenda narrative, this step consists of two sub-actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business Services Deregulation Analysis Report (June 2024); and 2. Adoption of legal amendments to facilitate administrative procedures for businesses (December 2024). <p>The overall objective is to improve investment conditions by reducing bureaucracy, eliminating unnecessary documents, authorisations and permits, and modernising and digitalising services. Deregulation is expected to remain an ongoing process beyond this step.</p> <p>1. Business Services Deregulation Analysis Report</p> <p>An inter-institutional working group chaired by the Minister for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate and the Ministry of Justice was set up in December 2023, including representatives of line ministries, the State Agency for Dialogue and Governance, and National Agency for Information Society (NAIS). A methodology for identifying services for deregulation was developed, and the outcome presented to the Strategic Planning Committee in January 2024. The Business Services Deregulation Analysis Report, adopted in January 2025, is assumed to be based on this work.</p> <p>The Report analysed 568 public services across sectors such as tourism, healthcare, environment, education and defence. It found that 321 services (57%) would undergo improvements, 281 (49%) would be processed faster, and 23% of required documents would be abolished. It also listed planned revisions to 15 laws, 65 CoM decisions and 45 ministerial acts, though without a timeline.</p>

	<p>The Report highlighted weak inter-institutional cooperation, for instance between NAIS, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the Cadastre Agency, and the Ministry of Agriculture. While this is correctly identified, no analysis was provided on how to improve cooperation. Some key services (e.g. from the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the Cadastre Agency) were not covered.</p> <p>Therefore, while the beneficiary has completed the first action “<i>Business Services Deregulation Analysis Report</i>” (albeit initially planned for June 2024, but completed in January 2025), some crucial public services, such as those provided by the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the Cadastre Agency, are not covered. The report lists areas for legal amendments without a clear plan or timeline, and although it identifies inter-institutional cooperation and data interoperability challenges, it does not indicate how these will be addressed.</p> <p>2. Adoption of legal amendments to facilitate administrative procedures for businesses</p> <p>By December 2024, only three laws, 17 CoM decisions and seven ministerial acts (about 20% of those planned) had been amended, mainly in tourism, environment, defence, economy, interior affairs and agriculture. In August 2025, explanations were provided for some of these measures, showing reduced administrative burden, but no follow-up plans for 2025 were reported. This despite the fact that the Beneficiary considers deregulation as an ongoing process and that the Business Services Deregulation Analysis Report lists some specific challenges that require further attention, including in facilitating inter-operability and data exchange between certain institutions.</p> <p>The authorities acknowledged that inter-institutional coordination remains a problem, with businesses still reporting delays when procedures approved by one institution are questioned by others.</p> <p>A pilot between the Ministry of Tourism and the National Business Centre was launched, including partial integration with the tax system to access tax data for permit applications. However, important services, notably those provided by the Cadastre Agency, remain complex despite digitalisation efforts.</p> <p>The work on amending/adopting legislation that would reduce the administrative burden for businesses needs to continue and relevant evidence should be provided covering the full reporting period.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers this step as not achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of adopted acts with legal amendments (each with the corresponding online link), which are listed in the Business Services Deregulation Analysis Report. <p>Additionally, the Beneficiary also provided a web link to the Business Services Deregulation Analysis Report in the English language: https://www.sipermarra.gov.al/raport-derregullimi-i-sherbimeve-p%C3%ABr-biznesin/</p>
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.</p>

Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 31 December 2026.
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1.1.4. Improve the investment attractiveness framework and in particular the FDI framework and business environment by deregulation and modernisation of business services.

The step under review	<i>Adopt legal amendments to improve and facilitate inspection praxis for business</i>
Baseline	Existing inspection procedures
Deadline of the step	December 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>According to the Reform Agenda narrative, this step consists of three sub-actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of the Inspectorates Report (December 2024); 2. Adoption of a package of legal amendments (December 2025); 3. Publication of a checklist on the websites of QKB (National Business Center – Qendra Kombëtare e Biznesit), Central Inspectorate (December 2025). <p>The Beneficiary submitted the Inspectorates’ Report, and reported on the adoption of the Law on Inspectorates, which is considered as the cornerstone of the proposed reform.</p> <p>The Law on Inspectorates, which was adopted on 12 September 2024 and published in the Official Journal (OJ) on 13 November 2024, had not been consulted with the Commission during the drafting process. Once adopted by Parliament, the Law was not decreed by the President of the Republic of Albania, but was sent back for revision, for further discussion with the stakeholders, and for more in-depth analysis as regards its financial implications. However, by a majority vote against the President’s decree, the Parliament left the adopted Law in place without any additional changes. The Law then entered into force 6 months after its publication in the Official Journal, on 14 May 2025.</p> <p>However, the work on completing the legal framework for the implementation of the Law on Inspectorates is still ongoing. On 11 June 2025, the Council of Ministers (CoM) adopted the decision on the organisation and functioning of the General Inspectorate. The General Inspectorate (formerly Central Inspectorate) will operate under the PM Office, as the main body in charge of the organisation of inspection services in the Republic of Albania. The full package of implementing acts is not yet adopted, this is foreseen in the coming months. The step should be completed with the adoption of the entire legal package, i.e. within the initial deadline of December 2025.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>

Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Link to the publication of the Law on Inspections 99/2024 in the OJ of the Republic of Albania, Issue Nr. 192, dated 13 November 2024 https://www.qbz.gov.al/share/EgntNupfQH-11WodwJad2g, as well as the English version in PDF. 2. Decision No. 100/2024 On the repeal of Decree No. 357, dated 10 October 2024, “<i>On The Return to the Assemblies of Law No. 99/2024, ‘On Inspection In The Republic Of Albania’</i>”, ratified by the Parliament on 31 October 2024 and published in the OJ (https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2024/192/32f14276-0093-418a-9321-85288595bbe8;q=Vendim%20No.%20100%2F2024%20), as well as the English version in PDF. 3. Analysis of the Inspectorates Report in English. <p>Additional information was provided on 7 August, as part of clarifications requested by the Commission, regarding the plan for the adoption of the remaining legislation for the implementation of the Law on Inspectorates.</p>
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until December 2026.

1.1.5. Deployment of e-freight and Intelligent Transport Systems

The step under review	<i>Adopt relevant legislation to align with the Regulation of EU 2020/1056 on electronic freight transport information (eFTI)</i>
Baseline	Existing legislation
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as not achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>According to the Reform Agenda, this step is composed of two sub-actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish joint working group which includes relevant ministries for deployment of Regulation and assign coordinating ministry for the deployment of eFTI Regulation (i.e leading ministry). (December 2024) 2. Transpose the eFTI Regulation into national legislation. (June 2025) <p>On 19 June, the CoM issued the Decision on the establishment of the Inter-Institutional Working Group (IIWG) on drafting the regulation on electronic freight transport information. The inter-institutional working group is chaired by the Ministry in charge of economy and trade policies, and is composed of 15 members, including representatives from line ministries (Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy in charge of transport policies, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Interior in charge of border control, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development in charge of sanitary-phytosanitary control), the Customs Directorate, the Directorate</p>

	<p>of Accreditation, the National Agency for Information Society, and the National Cyber-Security Authority. The Directorate on Trade Policies in the Ministry in charge of Economy will serve as the technical secretariat of the IIWG. As part of the work on drafting the regulation on e-freight transport information, the IIWG is going to conduct an analysis of the current legislation, conduct a regulatory impact assessment and consult with stakeholders as needed.</p> <p>Only the first sub-action has been achieved. Therefore, the Commission does not consider the step as fully achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	To conduct its assessment the Commission analysed the CoM Decision on establishment of the inter-institutional working group (in both Albanian and English languages).
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were reported in support of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

1.1.5. Deployment of e-freight and Intelligent Transport Systems

The step under review	<i>Ratify the added Protocol to the United Nations Convention for the carriage of goods, on the “electronic consignment-note” (eCMR) for International Carriage of Goods by Road needed to deploy eFTI</i>
Baseline	Existing legislation
Deadline of the step	December 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>As indicated in the Reform Agenda, the step is composed of two sub-actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal adoption of the Protocol for ratification by the Government. (June 2025) 2. Ratification by the Parliament (December 2025) <p>The decision on the adoption of the draft Law on Adhering to the Additional Protocol was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 30 June 2025 and was submitted to the Parliament for ratification. Therefore, the first sub-action above has been achieved.</p> <p>The full achievement of the step, however, requires as evidence the Act of ratification by the Parliament of the additional protocol to the United Nations Convention for the carriage of goods, on the electronic consignment-note (eCMR)</p>

	<p>for International Carriage of Goods by Road needed to deploy eFTI. The ratification by the Parliament has not taken place.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) dated 30 June 2025 on the adoption of the draft Law on Adhering to the Additional Protocol. <p>In addition, the following evidence was consulted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (in the Albanian language) Publication of the Draft Law and its Explanatory Note on the official website of the Albanian Parliament: https://kuvendiwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/202507080855179212Relacion.pdf
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were reported in support of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until December 2026.

1.1.6. Promotion of export and internationalisation of enterprises, including the facilitation of exports and trade, and value chain support to selected industries with growth potential

The step under review	<i>The laws on Animal Health and on Plant Health are adopted and are fully aligned with the EU acquis</i>
Baseline	No existing laws
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The draft laws were approved by two Council of Ministers (CoM) decisions (No.876 – Plant Health draft law and No.877 – Animal Health draft law) and were published on the official portal for public consultations. After the approval by the CoM, the draft laws were shared with the Commission for acquis compliance check in March 2025. Between April and May 2025, comments were provided by the Commission services, requiring further adjustments to the draft laws to ensure alignment with the EU acquis.</p> <p>Both laws (Law on Plant Health No.40/2025, and Law on Animal Health 41/2025) were adopted by the Parliament on 26 June 2025.</p> <p>The Commission deems the laws aligned, taking also into account that Albania is not yet an EU member state and therefore cannot as yet transpose certain legal provisions. Moreover, the Commission will conduct further checks in line with the accession timetable, once relevant horizontal rules are in place and in the context</p>

	of the related Reform Agenda step concerning the laws on Official Controls (due by June 2026). On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law “On Plant Health” No.40/2025, adopted on 26 June 2025 (English + Albanian version published in the OJ) 2. Table of Concordance (English and Albanian) 3. Law “On Animal Health” No.41/2025, adopted on 26 June 2025 (English + Albanian version published in the OJ) 4. Table of Concordance (English and Albanian)
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. The drafting of these laws was supported through a previous IPA funded project on food safety, but the overall process of consultation, drafting, and approval of the laws was led by the Albanian institutions. On the basis of the Commission’s assessment, the degree of third-party contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

2.2.1. Strengthen the efficiency of the Unemployment Policy Scheme

The step under review	<i>Offer diversified new ALMPs [Active Labour Market Policies] targeting jobseekers’ beneficiaries of economic aid, long-term unemployed jobseekers and long-term unemployed jobseekers with basic/no prior education</i>
Baseline	Existing ALMPs (2023)
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	The basis for the reform measure was laid down in the Council of Ministers’ Decision No.401, on <i>Setting procedures, criteria and rules for implementation of employment promotion program through social reintegration</i> , published in the OJ on 19 June 2024. The target of this ALMP, as final beneficiaries, are the unemployed vulnerable jobseekers, i.e. beneficiaries of economic aid, long-term unemployed and individuals with limited or no formal education. Priority is given to members of Roma and Egyptian communities, people with disabilities, women living in administrative areas without presence of employment office. Each beneficiary participates for six months, receiving support such as specialised employment/self-employment counselling, vocational training, and financial assistance. The National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) manages the programme.

	<p>The programme was operationalised through a competitive grant scheme for specialised civil society organisations (CSOs) via the e-Albania portal. The announcement in the Official Announcements Bulletin (#16 of 7 April 2025) marked the start of the pilot phase. Impact indicators measure beneficiaries' employment status up to six months after completion. The programme is formally approved, budgeted, and regulated via internal NAES guidance for regional and local employment offices. CSO applications for implementation in Durres and Elbasan counties were approved following NAES rules, and 80 unemployed jobseekers were enrolled in the pilot.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the evidence included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CoM Decision No. 401 published in the OJ on 19 June 2024: https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2024/104/3c2b11f7-5baa-4c55-a185-f82885d29b97;q=VENDIM%20Nr.%20401,%20dat%C3%AB%2019.6.2024 2. Guidance # 1549/1 dated 15 August 2024 issued by NAES (https://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Rregullore-e-Riintegrimet-Social.pdf) 3. Launch of the online application service of this ALMP to e-Albania https://e-albania.al/eAlbaniaServices/UseService.aspx?service_code=16686 4. Announcement published in the Official Announcements Bulletin of NAES for the interested CSOs to apply: https://akpa.gov.al/procedurat-dhe-rregullat-per-zbatimin-e-programit-te-riintegrimet-social/ (07 April 2025). 5. “<i>Decision of the Commission for the approval of the projects</i>” signed by all members following NAES Guidelines - Article 8 - Final approval of the projects: The decision of the Commission, according to Annex 10 (5 June 2025 in Durres and 9 June 2025 in Elbasan).
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the achievement of this step. In the course of developing this ALMP, NAES and the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MoECI) were supported through technical assistance (i.e. sharing of best practices for integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Albania during 2023-2024. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>
<p>Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>

2.2.1. Strengthen the efficiency of the Unemployment Policy Scheme

<p>The step under review</p>	<p><i>Adopt the S3 Strategy</i></p>
<p>Baseline</p>	<p>No S3 strategy in place currently</p>

Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) for 2025-2030 was adopted by a Council of Ministers (CoM) Decision (No.824 of 26 December 2024).</p> <p>The preliminary findings and comments of the Commission services on the draft strategy were considered in the final version.</p> <p>The strategy was also made available for a public consultation. It was published in the OJ on 13 March 2025.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Strategy was approved by a CoM Decision No. 824 of 26 December 2024 and published in the OJ (http://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2024/12/26/824).</p> <p>The Beneficiary provided also the English translation of the Strategy.</p>
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. The Beneficiary received methodological guidance for the development of the Strategy through other EU-funded programmes. On the basis of the Commission's assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

3.1.2. Update the framework for cyber resilience, by introducing requirements of NIS2 Directive and strengthening relevant institutions

The step under review	<i>Update the list of critical infrastructure in scope of the national law in line with the NIS2 Directive</i>
Baseline	Existing list not updated in line with the NIS2 Directive
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.

<p>Commission assessment of results</p>	<p>On 30 June 2025, the Council of Ministers formally adopted a new list of critical and essential information infrastructures through Decision No. 364. This list, titled “On the Approval of the List of Critical and Essential Information Infrastructures” was approved, according to the “Law on Cybersecurity” and in line with the NIS2 Directive (Directive (EU) 2022/2555).</p> <p>Article 3(5) of the NIS2 Directive requires <u>Member States to notify the Commission of the number of essential and important entities per sector and sub-sector. As evidence of Albania meeting the present step, the National Cybersecurity Authority (NCA) has provided the Commission with a list containing the number of such entities for each sector and sub-sector. Although the names of individual entities cannot be disclosed, the list includes a total of 215 operators at national level: 133 classified as critical infrastructure; 82 classified as important information infrastructure. The list covers a range of sectors, including energy, financial infrastructure, transportation, drinking water supply, digital service providers, education, tourism, media, and more.</u></p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The methodology adopted through CoM Decision (DCM) No. 683, dated 6 November 2024 and published in the OJ No. 190, page 20929 2. Order of the General Director of NCA, in establishing the working group to conduct the process of identifying information infrastructures based on the criteria set out in the methodology. 3. Details of the consultation process conducted before the methodology’s approval. 4. The standard request and questionnaire addressed to operators as part of the identification process. 5. The statement by the NCA providing an overview of the number and sectors of the entities included in the list (without disclosing their names). <p>The submitted evidence has been reviewed, with the caveat that the DCM No. 364 of 30 June 2025, which introduces the new list of critical and important infrastructures, has not been submitted due to its classified nature.</p> <p>In addition to the submitted evidence, it should be noted that the NCA informed on its website of the adoption of the new list: https://aksk.gov.al/en/aksk-expands-the-network-of-critical-and-important-information-infrastructure-operators/</p>
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. The EU-funded (IPA III) Cyber Balkans project provided support for the development of the methodology for identification of the critical infrastructures. However, the process of public consultation and the finalisation of the methodology, as well as the identification of the information infrastructures based on the criteria of this methodology, and the approval of the final list, were conducted and led by the Albanian authorities.</p>

	Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

3.1.3. Update the framework for a secure and sustainable digital infrastructure

The step under review	<i>Implement regulatory and institutional capacity measures to secure 5G infrastructures roll-out, in compliance with the EU 5G cybersecurity toolbox</i>
Baseline	No 5G networks in place
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>Indicators that measure the achievement of the step are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal provisions for Regulatory Power for 5G Security approved (June 2024) <p>The regulatory power for 5G Security is set in the Law No. 54/2024 "On Electronic Communications in the Republic of Albania". Article 55 establishes clear legal authority for safeguarding 5G and next-generation network security in Albania. It empowers the Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (‘AKEP’ in Albanian) and other relevant bodies (Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy and the national cybersecurity authority) to assess and mitigate risks posed by suppliers and providers, particularly those linked to foreign governments. These authorities are tasked with conducting regular national-level risk assessments using a structured methodology approved by the Council of Ministers, considering factors such as transparency, cybersecurity certifications, and compliance with data protection laws. The article also mandates collaboration between AKEP, the responsible ministry, and the National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security (‘AKCESK’ in Albanian), reinforcing a unified institutional approach to 5G security governance and regulatory enforcement.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Rulebook for Minimum Conditions for 5G Spectrum Auction in compliance with 5G Security Toolbox adopted (December 2024) <p>The rulebook for the 5G spectrum auction was adopted by AKEP in August 2024. The rulebook is the AKEP decision approving the public tender for rights of use in the 3400–3800 MHz band. This document establishes minimum conditions for the 5G spectrum auction. It sets out key auction parameters such as block sizes, pricing thresholds, licensing duration, and technical requirements. Importantly, it also includes a reference to 5G network security requirements that bidders must consider (Notes-point 10, page 4).</p>

3. Completing the 5G Auction, including awarding of frequencies to the successful bidders associated with 5G coverage requirements (March 2025)

The 5G auction process was concluded in November 2024, with frequencies awarded to Vodafone Albania and One Albania. Specific 5G coverage requirements were included in the authorisations.

4. 5G Network Coverage conditions included in the Licences/Authorisations (March 2025)

The individual authorisations issued to Vodafone Albania and One Albania and the AKEP report 2024, Chapter 4 (pages 34-38) contain binding obligations related to security, rollout and investment, including specific 5G network coverage conditions such as population coverage targets by 2027 and 2030.

5. Increase capacities of NRA (AKEP)/expertise developed by the Independent Regulatory Body tasked with running 5G Auction/Licensing (June 2025):

According to the Law 54/2024 (Article 13), AKEP is underscored by its mandate to operate impartially, objectively, transparently, and efficiently in its decision-making processes, free from influence from entities providing electronic communications networks or services. This independence is maintained through effective structural separation between its regulatory functions and any ownership or control interests in such entities. Law requires that AKEP is equipped with adequate financial and human resources necessary to fulfil its responsibilities and actively participate in BEREC. Its staffing and operational structure are sanctioned by the Steering Council, which also regulates employee recruitment and remuneration grounded in market considerations and institutional needs.

AKEP staff participated in national and regional workshops with the aim to increase their capacity regarding 5G. The relevant staff successfully completed the 5G auction and the issuance of relevant licenses.

On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.

Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law No. 54/2024 "On Electronic Communications in the Republic of Albania" - Decree 227, dated 14 June 2024 2. Rulebook 5G - AKEP Decision No. 20, dated 27 August 2024 for “Approval of the public Tender document with an open procedure with the subject “Granting rights of use in the frequency band 3400-3800 MHz” and the public tender notice (Call for offers), with Ref. AKEP/3400-3800MHz/2024””. 4. AKEP Decision No. 29 dated 25 November 2024 “on the approval of the individual authorisation of the undertaking One Albania sh.a for the use of the frequencies of the 3400-3800 mhz band (3420-3540 mhz, unshared spectrum)”. 5. AKEP Decision No. 30 dated 25 November 2024 “on the approval of the individual authorisation of the undertaking Vodafone Albania sh.a for the use of the frequencies of the 3400-3800 mhz band (3420-3540 mhz, unshared spectrum)”.
Double funding	<p>Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. Law No. 54/2024 <i>On Electronic Communications in the Republic of Albania</i> was prepared with the EU-funded assistance. Additionally, the EU financed capacity building activities through Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding. The adoption of the law and of the Rulebook, as well as successful completion of the 5G auction and issuance of relevant licenses was conducted by the staff of the relevant Albanian institutions.</p>
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

3.2.1. Improve enabling environment for innovative businesses and their take up of the potential of the green and digital agenda, including enabling relevant financial support

The step under review	<i>Adopt the Innovative Entrepreneurship Strategy</i>
Baseline	No Entrepreneurship Strategy in place
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	The Strategy for Development of Innovative Entrepreneurship 2024-2030 was adopted by the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 860 on 26 December 2024. The commission shares the assessment of Albania and considers the step fulfilled. The strategy aims to strengthen some of the identified key weaknesses in the Albanian innovation eco-system including linkages between public and private

	<p>actors and inadequate financing for research activities. It includes key sectors such as green and digital through green energy and ICT. The strategy is supported by an action plan and is realistically costed. The strategy is also in line with the S3 strategy as well as the Albanian Business Development Strategy for 2021-2027. Going forward, close monitoring of the implementation will be key to ensure its successful implementation.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>The Strategy for Development of Innovative Entrepreneurship 2024-2030 was adopted on 26 December 2024 and was published in the official Gazette in January 2025.</p> <p>https://www.qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2025/2/9bc2a1b1-5e57-4ca6-bd27-9c83ccc49610</p>
Double funding	<p>Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. The development of the Strategy was initially supported by the EU4Innovation IPA project; however, the government led the process of review of the Strategy through public consultation and adopted the Strategy. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

3.2.1 Improve enabling environment for innovative businesses and their take up of the potential of the green and digital agenda, including enabling relevant financial support

The step under review	<i>Prepare a grant scheme with focus on SMEs and/or start-ups, where 30% of total SMEs and/or start-ups funds target green and/or digital solutions</i>
Baseline	Current call does not cover green and digital agenda solutions for SMEs.
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>This reform measure builds further on the steps the government undertook in the period 2022-2024, such as adopting a new law on the support and development of start-ups (2022) and four CoM Decisions to ensure implementation, including Decision No.467, setting up the start-up agency ‘StartUP Albania’, Decision No.312, creating the register of start-ups and facilitators, Decision No.311, defining the start-up one-stop shop, and Decision No.61, defining the eligibility criteria for start-ups and facilitators as well as the procedures and deadlines for grants and support measures.</p> <p>As part of this measure, this legal framework was complemented by a Call regulation document, published on the official website of the State Ministry for Entrepreneurship. The State Aid Commission approved the proposed scheme through Decision No.122 (Law No. 9374 within the 2025 budget) with a total</p>

	<p>funding of EUR 3 million. The call for proposals was published in December 2024 and it closed on January 2025.</p> <p>With regards to the specific target foreseen by this reform measure, the Call for proposals guidelines specify the following:</p> <p><i>A bonus of 5% on the points obtained from the above criteria will be awarded in cases where:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• The core activity of the startup provides digital solutions and in the green economy this category will be addressed with a dedicated fund of 30% of the total grant fund</i> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary reported on the internal track record and relevant reporting related to preparing this grant scheme.</p> <p>In its report, the Beneficiary also provided links to all the laws and decisions mentioned above.</p> <p>The link to the published guidelines was shared as well: https://www.sipermarrja.gov.al/newsroom/thirrja-per-mbeshtetjen-e-kompanive-startup-dhe-lehtesuesit-e-start-up-eve-nepermjet-granteve-dhe-masave-mbeshtetese-2025/</p>
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the achievement of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

3.2.1. Improve enabling environment for innovative businesses and their take up of the potential of the green and digital agenda, including enabling relevant financial support

The step under review	<i>Execute a grants scheme with focus on SMEs and/or start-ups, where 30% of total SMEs and/or start-ups funds target green and/or digital solutions</i>
Baseline	<p>Existing scheme targets 0% of SMEs and start-up funds, with focus on green and digital solutions.</p> <p>The call for the current grant scheme was published in December 2024, with a reference to 30% of the funding being allocated to green and/or digital activities.</p>
Deadline of the step	December 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Call for proposals was published in December 2024 and it closed in January 2025. Pursuant to the Call:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 422 applications have been received.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 83 contracts have been awarded, out of which 38 are related to green and/or digital. – The overall amount of the Call was 300,000,000 Albanian Lek (EUR 2.96 million) and, of this, the funding allocated for green and/or digital proposals is 133,353,557 Albanian Lek (approximately EUR 1.4 million) or about 45% of the overall amount available in the grant scheme. – All the resulting contracts have been signed and each of the first payments have been made. <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary reported on the internal track record and relevant reporting related to the execution of the grant scheme. This included the evaluation report of the Call for proposals, together with the final list of selected companies.
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the achievement of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

4.1.1. Align with electricity integration package to enable electricity market coupling of the EU and Albania, establish the intraday electricity market, operationalise the package in line with the market coupling operator integration plan by 2025

The step under review	<i>Adopt legal amendments to align with the electricity integration package in line with the Energy Community requirements and start implementation</i>
Baseline	Law with no Legal amendments for alignment with the electricity integration package.
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as not achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The proposed amendments to the Power Sector Law are currently in the draft phase and undergoing public consultation. Additionally, the draft has been submitted to the Energy Community Secretariat for opinion.</p> <p>The amendments aim to fully align Albania's electricity legislation with the Electricity Directive (EU) 2019/944 (recast), Electricity Regulation (EU) 2019/943, Risk-preparedness Regulation (EU) 2019/941 (recast), ACER Regulation (EU) 2019/942.</p> <p>The draft law is accompanied by regulatory acts to align remaining electricity regulations, including: Forward Capacity Allocation Guideline – Regulation 2016/1719 (Albanian Energy Regulator Authority (ERE) decision No. 115, 3 June 2025), Capacity Allocation and Congestion Management Guideline – Regulation 2015/1222 (ERE board decision No. 93, 28 April 2025), Electricity Balancing Guideline – Regulation 2017/2195</p>

	<p>(ERE decision No. 116, 3 June 2025), System Operation Guideline – Regulation 2017/1485 (submitted by TSO to ERE), and Network Code on Emergency and Restoration – Regulation 2017/2196 (submitted by TSO to ERE).</p> <p>The proposed amendments should be approved by the Albanian Parliament and published in the Official Journal.</p> <p>On this basis, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	A desk review of available information, such as the public consultation of the draft law (https://www.infrastruktura.gov.al/single-konsultimi/?id=841) was conducted, as well as continuous monitoring of the key steps of the implementation process, including policy dialogue meetings with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MoIE).
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were identified for the preparation of the draft law. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development provided technical assistance to assist the MoIE staff in drafting the amendments. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

4.1.1. Align with electricity integration package to enable electricity market coupling of the EU and Albania, establish the intraday electricity market, operationalise the package in line with the market coupling operator integration plan by 2025

The step under review	<i>Continue implementation of the electricity integration package by making operational the intra-day electricity market, in line with energy community requirements</i>
Baseline	No intraday Market in Operation. ALPEX is conducting the activities for the operationalisation of Intra Day Market (IDM).
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Albanian day-ahead market has been operated by the Albanian power exchange (ALPEX) since 12 April 2023, with market coupling with Kosovo* operational from 31 January 2024. The intraday electricity market (IDM) was launched and coupled with the intraday market in Kosovo following the Albanian Energy Regulator Authority (ERE) Decision No. 266, dated 10 December 2024. The first IDM auction, for the delivery on 12 December 2024, was conducted on 11 December 2024, marking the official go-live of the IDM and the market coupling between Albania and Kosovo.</p> <p>Results are published on the ALPEX website (https://alpex.al/intraday-market/) including trading volumes and prices for the Complementary Regional Intra-day Auctions (CRIDA) from 11 December 2024 onwards.</p>

	<p>The market has 38 registered exchange members (24 Albania, 14 Kosovo) and four general clearing members (two banks from Kosovo and two banks from Albania). The establishment and operationalisation of the intraday market with Kosovo constitute a significant step toward implementing the Electricity Integration Package.</p> <p>The Commission considers the step achieved and will continue monitoring this in line with Article 17.4 of the Facility Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Albania.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided the Decision of the ERE board no.266, dated 10 December 2024 on the IDM starting date. This decision approves the GO live date. https://www.ere.gov.al/media/files/2024/12/30/Vendim_266_2024.pdf</p> <p>Additionally, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publication in the ALPEX webpage of the results https://alpex.al/intraday-market/ in English and in Albanian languages. 2. Decision of the ERE board no.347, dated 27 December 2022 “On the approval of the electricity market rules (ALPEX limitations, trading procedure, and clearing and settlement procedure)”. https://ere.gov.al/images/files/2023/02/23/Vendimi_Nr.347_2022_rregullat_e_tregut.pdf 3. ALPEX webpage information is in English, it includes also year 2024 Reporting https://alpex.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Raporti-Viti-2024-anglisht-2.pdf 4. Further clarifications provided by SASPAC on 11/09/2025.
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the achievement of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

4.1.2. Gradual tariff adjustments to market prices accompanied with measures to address energy poverty

The step under review	<i>Action Plan for Gradual phase out of public intervention in the price-setting for the supply of electricity, through deregulation for mid and high voltage, in line with the law on Power Sector</i>
Baseline	No Action Plan for deregulation of mid and high voltage
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	Albania has been implementing tariff deregulation as part of the Energy Package Directive. Deregulation of the mid- and high-voltage market follows the sequencing established under the Power Sector Law and has been accompanied

	<p>by consultations and notifications for affected consumers. The Energy Regulatory Authority (ERE) conducted a public information campaign via digital channels (social media and its official website) to (i) inform consumers of their transition to the free market, (ii) remind them of their obligations, and (iii) provide practical guidance on the next steps. Universal Supplier informed clients directly at least 30 days before the end of supply.</p> <p>From January 2024, 20 kV customers, including the State-Owned Enterprise FTL jsc (part of OSHEE Group), gained access to the retail market. An action plan for deregulation of the 6 and 10 kV segments was adopted under MoIE Order No. 322 (30 December 2024), covering the entire 6–110 kV retail market by December 2025. The action plan is in line with the deregulation of the customer market segments envisaged in the Albanian Power Sector Law. Consequently, the action plan is issued pursuant to, and uses, the Power Sector Law as its legal basis.</p> <p>Phases 1–2 (20, 35, 110 kV) and Phase 3 (10 kV, except special-status customers) have been implemented from January 2025. Phase 4 (6 kV, except special-status customers) will start from January 2026, leaving only low-voltage (0.4 kV) clients in the regulated market.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In with the Reform Agenda, the following evidence was provided and taken into consideration for assessment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Order of the Minister of Infrastructure and Energy No. 322 dated 30 December 2024. 2. Further clarifications provided by SASPAC on 11/09/2025. 3. Policy dialogue meeting with MoIE and media reports.
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

4.2.1. Develop transparent and competitive quantity-based action plan for renewable energy: Planning for 3 years in place

The step under review	<i>Adopt a quantity-based auction plan for at least 600 MW of new renewable energy capacities installation for the following three years (ongoing for 300MW to be considered as part of the triennial Auction plan)</i>
Baseline	No quantity-based auction plan for 600 MW renewables
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved
Commission assessment of results	A three-year action plan for auctioning new renewable energy capacities was adopted by Minister of Infrastructure and Energy (MoIE) Order No. 321 (30

	<p>December 2024). The plan covers at least 600 MW of renewable capacity, including 353.9 MW from the 2024 hybrid photovoltaic auction; the remaining 250 MW will be auctioned during 2025–2027, with a total of 300 MW planned. It supports wind and solar technologies, including co-located energy storage, and sets the auction timetable and selection criteria for beneficiaries.</p> <p>The legal basis is Law No. 24/2023 on the promotion of renewable energy and CoM Decision No. 695 (13 November 2024) on support measures, procedures, and competitive project selection.</p> <p>The plan foresees three solar PV auctions (100 MW in Q4 2025, 100 MW in Q3 2026, 50 MW in Q3 2027) and one wind auction of 50 MW in Q3 2027.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Order of the Minister of Infrastructure and Energy No. 321 of 30 December 2024 approving the quantity-based auction plan for the installation of at least 600 MW of new renewable energy capacity for the following three years.
Double funding	<p>Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. The EBRD provided support to the MoIE in drafting the action plan and more broadly in the deployment of the auction scheme; nevertheless, the process of drafting and the adoption of the plan were led by the MoIE. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

4.2.2. Implementation of the Renewable Energy Directive: adopt RES legislation, streamline permitting, establish the renewable energy communities, operationalise guarantees of origin

The step under review	<i>Adopt law to align with 2018 Renewable Energy Directive on biomass/biofuels, including sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions saving criteria for biofuels</i>
Baseline	No biofuels law in place aligned with 2018 Renewable Energy Directive on biomass/biofuels, including sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions saving criteria for biofuels.
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	Albania’s current legal framework does not fully meet the sustainability and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction criteria for biofuels, bioliquids, and biomass fuels set out in Directive (EU) 2018/2001, also called Renewable

	<p>Energy Directive (RED II). To address this gap, a new draft law replacing Law No. 9876/2008 was proposed.</p> <p>Law no. 46 “On the Production, Transport, Trade, and Use of Biofuels and Other Renewable Fuels for Transport” was adopted by Parliament on 26 June 2025, partially aligning with RED II, particularly on biofuels in transport. Sustainability criteria for other sectors were reportedly addressed via the Law No. 24/2023 “For the promotion of Renewable energy”, covering biomass use for electricity generation and heating.</p> <p>The law aims to promote biofuel production and use in transport, encourage energy crop cultivation, reduce GHG emissions, and ensure fuel quality in line with EU standards. Tax incentives for pure biofuels are introduced.</p> <p>However, alignment of sustainability criteria remains incomplete as there are no provisions covering bioliquids and biomass fuels used for electricity generation, heating and cooling. Additional aspects, where transposition with RED II is incomplete or incorrect need to be addressed. Moreover, the foreseen timeline (‘within 36 months’) for the adoption of by-laws related to the verification of GHG emissions saving criteria is deemed too long.</p> <p>Based on the available documentation, the Commission cannot confirm that the national legislation is fully aligned with RED II.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law 46/2025, 26 June 2025 “On the Production, Transport, Trade, and Use of Biofuels and Other Renewable Fuels for Transport” as published in the OJ: https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2025/119/ba0f11fd-7590-4584-bfa3-9a6f29829244 2. Table of Concordance of the Law in English 3. Law No. 24/2023 “For the promotion of use of energy from renewables” https://qbz.gov.al/share/UfgmqkkXT3STp7GpCDbwrQ (submitted on 06/08/2025 after the first request for clarification).
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

4.2.2. Implementation of the Renewable Energy Directive: adopt RES legislation, streamline permitting, establish the renewable energy communities, operationalise guarantees of origin

Title of the step	<i>System to issue serviceable guarantees of origin for renewable energy operational</i>
Baseline	Guarantees of origin for renewable energy
Deadline of the step	December 2024

Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Albanian Energy Regulatory Authority (ERE) has established a system for the issuance, transfer, redemption and revocation/cancellation of Guarantees of Origin (GOs) for energy from renewable sources. As part of the regional project implemented by the Energy Community Secretariat, an electronic register of GOs for Albania has been established via Grexel Ltd., using the G-REX platform compliant with AIB standards, EECS rules, and RED II requirements. This aligns with Article 22(2) of Law No. 24/2023 on the promotion of renewable energy, covering electricity, renewable gas, and heating/cooling.</p> <p>ERE launched a public consultation on the GO Regulation in December 2023 and approved the final regulation on 30 December 2024 (Board Decision No. 300), covering issuance, transfer, disclosure, and cancellation of GOs. The next critical milestone is the adoption of disclosure rules and the calculation of the residual energy mix, expected through the revised Power Sector Law (aligning with the Directive (EU) 2019/944) by the end of 2025.</p> <p>According to additional clarifications received from the Beneficiary on 11 September 2025, the market participants did not express an interest to register for the issuance of the GOs. However, there is one operator which has applied for the registration in the Electronic Register and such right has been granted through ERE decision No. 178 dated 7 August 2025 to the benefit of the company KESH Sh.A.</p> <p>Despite the progress made, an important gap remains. This concerns the lack of adoption of disclosure rules and the calculation of the residual energy mix, which should make the GO system fully operational.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Decision of the ERE Board No. 300 of 30 December 2024 “On the approval of the Ordinance on the Issuance, Transfer, Redemption and Cancellation of Guarantees of Origin for Electricity from Renewable Energy Sources” <i>Source:</i> https://www.ere.gov.al/media/files/2025/01/22/media/files/2025/01/16/Vendimi_Nr_300_2024.pdf
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 31 December 2026.

4.2.2. Implementation of the Renewable Energy Directive: adopt RES legislation, streamline permitting, establish the renewable energy communities, operationalise guarantees of origin

The step under review	<i>Adopt amendments to the in-force regulations for the permit issuance to simplify permit issuance procedures for renewables (households and large installation)</i>
Baseline	No Legal amendments in place – to simplify permit issuance procedures for renewables
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The beneficiary considers this step as partially achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The aim of this step is to amend the existing regulations for granting permits for renewable energy projects, to simplify the permitting procedures for these projects, including large-scale domestic installations. The amendments to the existing regulations will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 24, dated 23 March 2023, "<i>On the Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources.</i>"</p> <p>To achieve the step the Council of Ministers intended to adopt two Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – one (DCM No. 695) related to large installations was approved on 13 November 2024; – the other one focused on households, has not been adopted yet. <p>The Decision of 13 November 2024 establishes the rules and support measures to promote electricity production from renewable sources in Albania, specifically solar and wind. This decision introduces transparent and competitive procedures for selecting eligible projects and allows access to support schemes such as Power Purchase Agreements or Contracts for Difference, valid for up to 15 years. It also defines two procurement approaches—projects with pre-determined locations and projects with bidder-determined locations—both subject to clear legal, financial, technical, and environmental criteria. Furthermore, it guarantees priority access to grid infrastructure and provides institutional support for permitting, thereby improving investment conditions and ensuring alignment with Albania’s energy and climate objectives.</p> <p>Progress on households remains incomplete. The DCM entitled "<i>On the Approval of the Rules, Procedures, Net Billing Support Scheme, Rights and Responsibilities for Renewable Energy Self-Producers,</i>" is currently a draft document and it is under consultation with the stakeholders. It will also be submitted to the relevant ministries for their opinion before the approval.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – DCM No. 695, dated 13 November 2024 “On the approval of supporting measures, rules and procedures for obtaining support measures for the production of electricity from renewable sources” as published in the

	Official Gazette https://www.qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2024/194/2e7ee6c6-a922-4870-b78c-d4f36802c208;q=695,%20dat%C3%AB%2013.11.2024
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

4.4.1. Adoption and implementation of long-term building renovation strategy, and energy efficiency scheme

The step under review	<i>Long-term building renovation strategy adopted, with earmarked necessary financing for 2025 and 2026 to fulfil the 3% annual renovation goal in existing government public buildings</i>
Baseline	No Strategy in place on long-term building renovation
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Albanian Agency for Energy Efficiency (AEE), in cooperation with the EBRD, prepared the building renovation strategy under the REEP PLUS programme. The draft strategy underwent public consultation from 18 December 2024 to 15 January 2025, coordinated with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MoIE) and the EU Build Upon initiative.</p> <p>The strategy analyses the building stock, identifies investment needs, and sets regulatory and financial measures to decarbonise the sector by 2050, structured around three pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decarbonise the building sector and increase the use of renewable energy sources (RES). 2. Improve energy efficiency in public, residential, and commercial buildings. 3. Set renovation targets for 2030, 2040, and 2050 using energy modelling. <p>Three renovation scenarios are defined, each representing a different level of ambition and complexity. Short-term targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For 2025: Renovation of 242 public buildings, totalling 157,584 m² estimated at EUR 41,340,000. • For 2026: Renovation of 244 public buildings, totalling 158,274 m² estimated at EUR 41,545,000. <p>These targets correspond to 3% of the central government building stock (estimated at 3,356,693 m²) and 2% of the municipal public building stock (estimated at 2,832,525 m²) in 2025. Long-term projections foresee EUR 24 billion to achieve full decarbonisation by 2050.</p> <p>The strategy was adopted in a Decision of the Council of Ministers on 28 February 2025. As stipulated in the DCM, the strategy will be reviewed every</p>

	<p>three years. From 25 March 2025 and every two years thereafter, the MoIE will prepare a report on the status of implementation of the long-term strategy for the renovation of the building stock, which will form part of the integrated progress report of the National Energy and Climate Plan. An action plan detailing specific renovation works, costs, and timelines is expected by the end of 2025 with the revised NECP.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – DCM No.125, 28 February 2025 “On the approval of the long-term strategy for the Renovation of the Building Stock” published in the Official Journal: https://www.qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2025/45/da5f5e48-9192-45d9-b86a-2a54f194d4ef
Double funding	<p>Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. The long-term strategy for renovating the building has been prepared by the MoIE staff with the assistance of the EBRD. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

4.4.1. Adoption and implementation of long-term building renovation strategy, and energy efficiency scheme

The step under review	<i>Adopt the national legislation to align with Labelling</i>
Baseline	No legal act in place on labelling to align with Acquis
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as partially achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Law no. 52/2024 “On the labelling of energy-related products” was approved by the Government in April 2024 and adopted by the Albanian Parliament on 16 May 2024. The approval process took place after the draft law was published for consultation on the government’s website between November and December 2023.</p> <p>The new law on energy labelling repeals Law No. 68/2012 “On information on energy consumption and other resources of energy-related products” and is fully aligned with the EU Regulation 2017/1369/20 which establishes the framework for energy labelling and repeals Directive 2010/30/EU. This policy creates the legal framework for achieving national energy efficiency targets, informing end users and market surveillance of energy-related products. This legislative initiative is part of the implementation of the National Energy Strategy 2018-2030 and the National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030.</p> <p>Implementation and transition:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This law replaces Law No. 68/2012 on information on energy products. New regulations will be introduced within 12 months. <p>The by-laws required to fully implement the law have been drafted by MoIE and will have to be approved by a Decision of the Council of Ministers to enter into force. These have not been approved yet.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers this step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Law no. 52/2024 “On the labelling of energy-related products” published in the OJ: https://qbz.gov.al/share/0eexS3wGTTOAhxlt5LqJjA Table of concordance with the EU Regulation 2017/136920. Consultation of the law: https://konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/679
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 31 December 2026.

4.4.1. Adoption and implementation of long-term building renovation strategy, and energy efficiency scheme

The step under review	<i>Legal Amendments of relevant law; [Implement annual rate of building renovation in accordance with indicative targets [number of public buildings renovated] included into the long-term building renovation strategy]</i>
Baseline	No legal amendments in place on relevant law
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The energy performance of buildings in Albania was regulated by Law No. 116/2016, <i>On the Energy Performance of Buildings</i>. However, this law needed to be updated to align with the latest applicable EU directives, particularly Directive (EU) 2024/1275 on the Energy Performance of Buildings (‘EPBD’), which was adopted on 24 April 2024 and entered into force on 14 May 2024.</p> <p>Therefore, a new law <i>On the Energy Performance of Buildings</i> (approved by the Government with DCM No.123 of 28 February 2025 and adopted by the Parliament on 16 June 2025) has been adopted to enhance energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Albania’s existing building stock. The law aims to support the transition toward a zero-emission building stock by 2050 in line with the EU climate and energy goals.</p> <p>The objective of the law is definition of criteria, conditions, requirements, and standards for improving the energy performance of buildings as well as increasing energy efficiency in line with the national objectives related to it.</p>

	<p>With regards to the implementation of the annual rate of building renovation in accordance with the adopted long-term building renovation strategy, the new law provides in its chapter II the legal basis for a national Building Renovation Plan.</p> <p>The law sets the roles and responsibilities as well as obligations with regards to the preparation, adoption and implementation of the National Plan for the Renovation of Buildings. Its objectives are well defined and aligned with the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan. The Building Renovation Plan should include a detailed roadmap with targets and actions, including on budgetary needs and financing measures in order to effectively implement the annual rate of building renovation and achieve the 2% targets of renovation of public building (by June 2027). The adoption of the Plan should take place by the end of 2025.</p> <p>The new law is partly aligned with Directive (EU) 2024/1275 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 on the Energy Performance of Buildings. It followed the regular public consultation process for legislative acts. The law includes the necessary legal provisions for implementing annual rate of building renovation in accordance with indicative targets (number of public buildings renovated) included into the long-term building renovation strategy.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law No. 37/2025, <i>On the Energy Performance of Buildings</i> https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2025/119/ba0f11fd-7590-4584-bfa3-9a6f29829244 (including the translation in English) 2. Table of Concordance in English <p>Additionally, the following information has been taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication of the draft law in the Electronic Registry for notifications and public consultations from 1 November 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o https://konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/792 - Publication on the official website of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, together with the accompanying package.
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

5.1.1. Establish an Asset Recovery Office, as a National Coordination Unit and regional / international contact point, contributing to improvement of seizures and confiscation

The step under review	<i>An Asset Recovery Office is established and operational</i>
Baseline	There is no legal act in place
Deadline of the step	June 2025

Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>According to the Reform Agenda narrative, the indicators that measure operationalisation of Asset Recovery Office (ARO) are the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. ARO law adopted, as well as standard operating procedures. b. ARO director and staff are recruited. c. Number of police databases accessed by ARO. d. Number of upcoming and ongoing requests for information, domestically and internationally. <p>The Law on the ARO, intended to ensure the Office’s full establishment and functioning, was adopted on 26 June 2025, published in the Official Journal on 10 July, and entered into force on 25 July – all after the cut-off date of 30 June 2025. The required by-laws have not yet been presented. Standard operating procedures were defined earlier through Minister of Interior Order (14 April 2023) and General Director of State Police Order (28 July 2023).</p> <p>Regarding staffing, an ARO was established within the Albanian State Police in 2023 by ministerial orders. The beneficiary reported a staff of three (head of sector and two specialists), but it is unclear how many were in place by the cut-off date, and no supporting evidence was provided. While the State Police submitted job descriptions for staff in the Directorate for investigation of economic and financial crime, these do not specify ARO-dedicated tasks. The beneficiary briefly described the roles of the head of sector and specialists, but again without documentary evidence.</p> <p>On operational activity, the beneficiary reported that the ARO has processed over 400 incoming requests from Interpol and Europol, as well as verification cases from the UK National Crime Agency and the German Embassy. Europol confirmed one request from Sweden to the Albanian ARO, which was properly handled. The beneficiary also listed police databases accessible by ARO, though direct access to SIENA – crucial for international information exchange – remains absent.</p> <p>Although the office was foreseen by ministerial orders in 2023 and has carried out some activities, the adoption and entry into force of the law occurred after the cut-off date, and the required by-laws are still missing. Consequently, full implementation was not possible by 30 June 2025.</p> <p>On this basis, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Order of Minister of Interior nr. 47, date 14 April 2023 - Order no. 688, date 10 May 2023 - Order of the General Director of the State Police no. 1093, dated 28 July 2023 "<i>For the structures and specialists of the Criminal Police Department</i>" - <i>Law on the Asset Recovery Office</i>, no.44, dated 26 June 2025 (in Albanian only)

	<p>Assessment has been made based on these documents as well as the submission by the beneficiary, discussions with the authorities (Ministry of Interior, Albania State Police), and consultations with stakeholders, including Europol.</p> <p>The Commission was consulted on the draft law on the Asset Recovery Office before its adoption in the Parliament on 26 June 2025.</p>
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the achievement of this step. While the Ministry of Interior prepared the ARO law, an EU-funded project (implemented by the Council of Europe) provided expertise and advice on the EU best practices in the early drafting stages. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ would run until 30 June 2026.

5.2.1. Strengthen the institutional capacity and strategic framework with the aim of reduction of illicit drugs supply and demand

The step under review	<i>A National Early Warning System is operational</i>
Baseline	The National Early Warning System is not operational
Deadline of the step	December 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>According to the Reform Agenda narrative, indicators that measure operationalisation include:</p> <p>(a) a regulatory basis and operating procedures for National Early Warning System (NEWS).</p> <p>(b) designation of a focal point / coordinator of NEWS and contact points from relevant institutions and agencies.</p> <p>By Ministerial Order, the NEWS was established within the Albanian State Police, consisting of one Head of Unit and two Specialists. However, it remains unclear whether all three posts have been filled.</p> <p>The beneficiary reported that activities began in 2025, including contacts with national and international stakeholders, information-sharing, outgoing correspondence, and responses to inquiries. Between January and mid-June 2025, the NEWS Unit reportedly processed over 50 alerts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 alerts from the Customs Administration • 9 from the Institute of Forensic Police • 8 from the Institute of Legal Medicine • 9 from the Institute of Public Health • 8 from the National Agency for Medicines <p>In the same period, the Unit sent 19 outgoing letters and responded to four official requests from domestic and international institutions. Notably, an EU Drugs</p>

	<p>Agency (EUDA) alert on a newly detected psychoactive substance triggered immediate communication with the Ministry of Health and the Public Health Institute. Similarly, a Europol SIENA/EMPACT notification on increased precursor use was shared with law enforcement and public health authorities.</p> <p>For NEWS to function effectively, a robust and integrated partner network is essential across all relevant fields (police, customs, laboratories, emergency wards, NGOs, and civil society). The beneficiary has not provided conclusive information on the focal point/coordinator. Contact points were designated in the Ministry of Health and the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory under the Ministry of Justice, while the General Directorate of Customs appointed one after the 30 June cut-off date. Customs also noted lacking the technical capacity to analyse psychoactive substances but confirmed readiness to share information on imports and exports.</p> <p>To properly assess functionality, further evidence is required on staffing, operating procedures (detection, verification, risk assessment, dissemination), technical capacity, and the alerts reported by Albanian authorities.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Order no. 127, dated 26 July 2024, of the Minister of Interior “<i>On the setting up and functioning of the National Early Warning System on new psychotropic substances</i>”. - Order no. 233, dated 05 December 2024 “On some amendments in order No. 47, dated 14 April 2023 of the Minister of Interior “<i>On the approval of the structure and organisation in central, local level and special structures of the State Police</i>”, as amended. - Order no. 589, dated 18 April 2025 on approval of job descriptions for the functioning of the unit of the National Early Warning System - Job descriptions for the Head of Unit and specialists within the National Early Warning System unit. - Correspondence between the General Director of the State Police and various institutions (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Customs) to designate a contact person for NEWS. - EU Drug Agency Cover Sheet – 2024 Data Reporting IPA 8 <p>Assessment has been made based on these documents as well as discussions with the authorities (Ministry of Interior, Albania State Police) and consultations with stakeholders, including the EU Drugs Agency.</p>
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the fulfilment of this step. Through the IPA 8 regional project, EU Drugs Agency provides support to Albania, and other partners in the Western Balkans, on drug monitoring and information, which includes support for setting up of the national early warning system. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>
<p>Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step</p>	<p>Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ would run until December 2026.</p>

5.3.1. Ensure a reliable and stable framework to prevent and counter money laundering

The step under review	<i>Adopt a new National Strategy on prevention of Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing and its Action Plan 2024-2030</i>
Baseline	Status of the National Strategy on prevention of Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing and respective Action Plan
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results per each objective	<p>The new National Strategy on prevention of Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing (NSMLTF) and its Action Plan 2024-2030 were adopted by the Council of Ministers (Decision No. 1, 24 July 2024). The Strategy resulted from broad consultations conducted between December 2023 and July 2024 by an Interinstitutional Technical Working Group, reporting to the National Committee for Coordination on the Fight against Money Laundering, led by the Deputy Prime Minister and including the Ministries of Justice, Defence, Finance, and Interior at ministerial level.</p> <p>The Strategy sets six objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Improvement of the regulatory framework and strengthening of inter-institutional coordination; 2) Further increase in the effectiveness of the preventive system; 3) Improvement of the operational efficiency of law enforcement bodies and other agencies in the fight against Money Laundering (ML)/Terrorism Financing (TF); 4) Use and exploitation of technological innovations while reducing risks; 5) Increase in the effectiveness of the supervisory system; 6) Strengthening of international cooperation. <p>A core objective is to address recommendations from Albania's cooperation with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the MONEYVAL Committee of the Council of Europe, and the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units. The Strategy also takes into account relevant international conventions.</p> <p>The Strategy addresses legislative gaps and alignment with evolving investigative practices, balancing prevention, investigation, and coordination. In line with the ongoing EU accession negotiations, it also identifies priority legal acts for 2024-2026, with responsible institutions and timelines.</p> <p>The Strategy also includes a National Risk Assessment Plan for Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing, detailing risk factors and mitigation measures within the Action Plan. For each objective, specific achievement indicators and indicative budget allocations are provided, primarily funded by donor sources.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the	The Commission conducted a desk review of the Decision No.1 of 24 July 2024 " <i>National Strategy for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism</i>

step and related findings	<p><i>Financing 2024-2030 and its Action Plan</i>”, in view of assessing whether the main elements are included in the document:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adequate reference to EU and international standards 2) Adequate priority policies, indicators of achievements, timelines and responsible institutions 3) Budget resources 4) Reference to MONEYVAL, FATF and related bodies, processes and rules 5) Correct identification of the legal reforms, institutions capacities 6) Adequate and comprehensive consultation process including lead institutions involvement <p>Albania consulted the Council of Europe experts and other relevant international specialists regarding the alignment of the strategy with the applicable international and EU standards. The Commission confirms that the consultation process during the Strategy’s drafting has sufficiently incorporated feedback from these experts.</p>
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were reported in support of the achievement of this step. During the drafting of the Strategy and the Action Plan, assistance was provided by GIZ and EC funded expertise in the form of methodological advice in relation to the international acts to be integrated. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

5.4.1. Consolidate judicial independence and accountability by transparency

The step under review	<i>Vetting cases with suspicion of criminal elements finalised at first instance (IQC) with termination decision referred to the prosecution office</i>
Baseline	Total number of cases with termination decision evidenced by IQC in January 2024
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>Between September and December 2024, 19 reports based on IQC referrals were forwarded by the Special Prosecution Office to the Prosecutor’s Offices of Judicial Districts according to legal competence criteria. Accordingly, in the Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on Albania of 8 July 2025, the Commission stated that “The vetting bodies referred 19 vetting cases to prosecution in September 2024. Effective judicial follow up remains to be observed”. Following this assessment, it has been reported by the beneficiary that by June 2025, the total number of cases referred to the General Prosecutor Offices had increased to 26, while one (1) referral remained under the competence of the Special Prosecution Office.</p> <p>Accordingly, the beneficiary reported that, following preliminary verifications by the prosecutors:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 cases are under active investigation; • 1 case remains in preliminary verification; • 1 case is undergoing trial proceedings; • 1 case remains under the competence of the Special Prosecution Office. <p>Judicial follow-up includes ongoing investigations, trial proceedings, and final decisions. Final decisions also cover reasoned closures by the prosecution offices or the Special Prosecution Office (SPAK) where no criminal elements were found. Considering ongoing investigations, 24 cases remain under active investigation, while the one in preliminary verification may continue if further evidence arises.</p> <p>The Commission, therefore, considers that the beneficiary has satisfactorily met the requirement of effective judicial follow-up, as defined by the step under assessment, at this point in time.</p> <p>The IQC mandate ended in December 2024; consequently, no new cases will be referred by the IQC. However, remaining cases may be referred by the High Prosecutorial Council (HPC) and High Judicial Council (HJC), which have taken over the vetting process.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the requirements for achieving the step by 30 June 2025 as met.</p> <p>Nevertheless, pursuant to Article 21(2) and (5) of Regulation (EU) 2024/1449, the step is subject to the principle of reversibility. In line with this, the Commission will monitor the continued implementation of this step, such as by monitoring further developments and outcomes of ongoing investigations (including interim or final decisions), progress of the case currently on trial as well as data on newly referred cases and their prosecutorial follow-up. Should the effective judicial follow-up for vetting cases resulting with suspicion of criminal elements be discontinued, the Commission may adjust subsequent disbursements by deducting the amount corresponding to this reform step.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>To inform its assessment, the Commission requested the independent opinion of the International Observers deployed by the International Monitoring Operation (IMO) overseeing the vetting process. The letter of the IMO was received on 15 July 2025. The IMO confirmed that the referral is consistent with its recommendations.</p> <p>The Commission also reviewed the following evidence provided by the beneficiary (reports submitted by both IQC and SPO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The list of the 53 cases referred by the IQC to SPAK with dates, protocol numbers, referral phase, and current status. - Official response by the Special Prosecutor Office (SPAK) to Ministry of Justice. - Official response by the General Prosecutor Office to Ministry of Justice regarding the status of the 19 vetting cases referred to the prosecution.
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.</p>
<p>Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>

5.4.1. Consolidate judicial independence and accountability by transparency

The step under review	<i>Effective judicial follow up for vetting cases resulting with suspicion of criminal elements continue to be referred to prosecution</i>
Baseline	Status of actual judicial follow up for vetting cases
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>Between 24 September and December 2024, 19 reports based on IQC referrals were forwarded by the Special Prosecution Office to the Prosecutor’s Offices of Judicial Districts according to legal competence criteria. By June 2025, the total number of cases referred had increased to 26.</p> <p>The beneficiary reported that, following preliminary verifications by the prosecutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 cases are under active investigation; • 1 case remains in preliminary verification; • 1 case is undergoing trial proceedings; • 1 case remains under the competence of the Special Prosecution Office. <p>Judicial follow-up includes ongoing investigations, trial proceedings, and final decisions. Final decisions also cover reasoned closures by the prosecution offices or the Special Prosecution Office (SPAK) where no criminal elements were found. Considering ongoing investigations, 24 cases remain under active investigation, while the one in preliminary verification may continue if further evidence arises. The Commission therefore considers that the beneficiary has fulfilled the judicial follow-up requirement, one of the two essential components of this step.</p> <p>Sustainability is a key requirement of the Reform Agenda. The General Prosecution Office is invited to provide data in the next reporting period on the outcomes of ongoing investigations, including interim or final decisions, as well as on the progress of the case currently at trial.</p> <p>Regarding the second component, the IQC mandate ended in December 2024, so no new cases will be referred by IQC. However, remaining cases may be referred by the High Prosecutorial Council (HPC) and High Judicial Council (HJC), who have taken over the vetting process. Data on newly referred cases and their prosecutorial follow-up should also be included in monitoring the reforms.</p> <p>On this basis, the Commission considers the step achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>Assessment of the Commission as part of the Rule of Law report 2025. In this context, a country visit was undertaken in February 2025, relevant interviews and an open public consultation were conducted. In addition, the Commission conducted a desk review of the evidence provided by the beneficiary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Copy of the official response from the General Prosecutor’s Office to the Ministry of Justice, Protocol No. 79/1, dated 9 June 2025.

	- Copy of the official response from SPAK to the Ministry of Justice, Protocol No. 19478, dated 5 June 2025.
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Fully achieved

5.4.1. Consolidate judicial independence and accountability by transparency

The step under review	<i>The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils ensure high transparency, share publicly all the information related to appointments (career periodic evaluations) promotions and transfers, as well as the level of implementation of recommendations of thematic inspections by HJI.</i>
Baseline	The current methodology of HJC and HPC for transparency and publication of information on appointments, promotions and transfers.
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>On 8 July 2025, the Commission published the 2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania (SWD (2025) 928 final), noting: <i>“There was no significant development from HJC and HPC in strengthening the transparency of promotions and transfers”</i>.</p> <p>The High Judicial Council (HJC) and High Prosecutorial Council (HPC) have not conducted a comprehensive assessment or endorsed a methodology to enhance transparency and ensure the publication of data on appointments, promotions, and transfers. While the HPC consistently publishes its decisions, the HJC does not apply the same approach and cites data protection rules as a barrier, without consulting the Commissioner for Data Protection and Right to Information.</p> <p>Both Councils published generalised data in their annual reports (March 2025). However, a dedicated and easily accessible website listing all appointment, promotion, and transfer decisions does not exist. Even in the case of HPC, where decisions are published, accessibility remains limited. The Reform Agenda narrative specifies that the step can only be considered achieved once both Councils conduct an assessment and adopt a methodology for transparency and publication of such data.</p> <p>Proposed amendments to Articles 97 and 145 of Law 96/2016 (“Status of Judges and Prosecutors”) address evaluations and disciplinary reports but not transparency of appointments, promotions, and transfers. Transparency in these matters requires careful assessment in view of data protection rules. Nonetheless, appointments, transfers, and promotions are public records that affect court jurisdiction and access to justice. These are distinct from evaluations or disciplinary measures, where stricter data protection rules may apply.</p>

	<p>Regarding the implementation of High Justice Inspector recommendations, the HJC reflected generalised data in its annual report, but the HPC has not made its annual report public.</p> <p>The reported measures therefore do not sufficiently address the reform step. This is confirmed by the HJC’s stated intention to strengthen transparency on promotions and transfers, and by the government’s intention to amend Law 115/2016 (“On the Governing Bodies of the Justice System”), notably Articles 95 and 149, to remove anonymisation requirements and allow full publication of appointment, promotion, and transfer information, including magistrates’ names.</p> <p>On these bases, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>A desk review of the evidence provided by the beneficiary, in line with the Reform Agenda, was conducted:</p> <p>Links of the High Judicial Council and High Prosecution Council publications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official website: https://klgj.al/ - Annual reports: https://klgj.al/raportevjetoreklgj/ - Permanent commission reports: https://klgj.al/raporte-komisione-perhershme/ - Administrative individual acts: https://klgj.al/akte-administrative-individuale/ - Official website: https://klp.al - Administrative individual acts: https://klp.al/category/vendime-akte-administrative/ - HPC - Transparency Program: https://klp.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Programi_i_transparences.1-1.html <p>To note that the webpage of HJC is not accessible.</p> <p>In addition, information was collected in the context of the Commission’s assessment as part of the Rule of Law report 2025. A country visit was undertaken in February 2025, with relevant interviews conducted as well as open public consultations. The assessment of the Commission was reached jointly by all Commission competent services, following the Rule of Law report methodology.</p>
Double funding	<p>No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the achievement of this step. To note that both HPC and HJC are assisted by EU-funded projects, such as EU4Justice, which provide technical assistance to both institutions through international and local experts. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.</p>
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	<p>Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.</p>

5.4.2. Enhance judicial efficiency at all levels

The step under review	<p><i>The High Judicial Council effectively adopts and implements a comprehensive roadmap to increase efficiency and reduce backlog based on the latest methodology as adopted by the CEPEJ backlog reduction tool-book, with measurable targets, statistics, and robust monitoring structure.</i></p>
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Baseline	No roadmap in place to increase efficiency and reduce backlog of High Judicial Council
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>On 10 June 2025, the High Judicial Council adopted the regulation approving the “Roadmap of efficiency”. Implementation of the roadmap involves three main steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of a working group to discuss the set of legal changes affecting the procedural laws; 2. Finalisation of comprehensive projections and analysis of the needs to reduce backlog, including an objective projection and planning of magistrates and human resources based on the CEPEJ data regarding Albania; 3. HPC and HJC to adopt a regulation on unified statistical data collection. <p>Implementation of the roadmap has started. A working group, to report periodically on progress and discuss legal changes. The roadmap also includes projections and analysis on backlog reduction; however, a comprehensive human resources analysis, which includes court staff and legal advisors, is still pending. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), in cooperation with HJC, adopted a methodology for the collection of judicial statistical data, harmonised across the judicial sector.</p> <p>While vacancy projections have been made public, they do not yet incorporate full backlog reduction planning. Additionally, the working group has yet to finalise and review the HJC regulation on judicial statistics in line with the MoJ methodology.</p> <p>In summary, although the roadmap has been adopted, its full implementation is still pending.</p> <p>On this basis, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>The EC conducted a desk review of the evidence provided by the beneficiary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Final draft of the Roadmap for the Efficiency of the Judiciary in Albania 2025-2027 2. Report No. 2911/1prot dated 05 June 2025, submitted by the High Judicial Council to the Ministry of Justice. Official letter attached in both the original Albanian version and its English translation. 3. Decision no. 251 on the approval of the National Strategy for the Reduction of the Number of Backlog Cases in Courts (2024–2027) 4. National Strategy for the Reduction of the Number of Backlog Cases in Courts (2024–2027) 5. The link to the Report on the State of the Judicial System and the Activities of the High Judicial Council, which includes monitoring of the strategy for reducing pending cases https://klgj.al/raportevjetoreklgj/ 6. The link to the publication of the National Strategy for the Reduction of the Number of Backlog Cases in Courts (2024–2027)

	<p>https://klgj.al/strategjia-e-uljes-se-numrit-te-ceshtjeve-te-prapambetura-2024-2027/</p> <p>7. Decision no.407 of 15 July 2025 on the adoption of the ‘Roadmap for the Efficiency of the Justice System in Albania 2025-2027’</p>
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the achievement of this step. EU technical assistance projects contributed with advice during the drafting process of the Efficiency Roadmap and assisted the working group in its tasks. An EU-funded project will also assist the drafting of the human resources planning. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

5.4.2. Enhance judicial efficiency at all levels

The step under review	<i>Improve the national judicial statistics by adopting and implementing a new instruction of the Minister of Justice on national justice statistics, based on CEPEJ methodology and in consultation with the self-government justice institutions</i>
Baseline	The current instruction No.4 dated 15 April 2019 ‘ <i>On the Completion of Statistical Data</i> ’.
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>On 26 June 2025, the Ministry of Justice issued Instruction No. 2, “<i>On the methodology for the collection of national statistical data in the justice system</i>”.</p> <p>The instruction, based on the Council of Europe European Commission for the efficiency of justice (CEPEJ) methodology, was prepared in consultation with the self-government justice institutions.</p> <p>Full achievement of the step requires adoption and implementation of the instruction. Implementation has not started yet. It can be considered achieved once the first report is produced by justice system institutions, notably the High Judicial Council (HJC) and the High Prosecutorial Council (HPC), in line with the Ministry of Justice instructions. The first reporting cycle is expected by September 2025. To ensure proper implementation, HPC and HJC regulations on data collection need to be consolidated and aligned with the Ministry of Justice Instructions.</p> <p>On this basis, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification	<p>A desk review of the evidence submitted by the beneficiary was conducted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruction nr. 2, dated 26 June 2025 “<i>on the methodology for the collection of national statistical data of the justice system</i>” (English/Albanian).

of the step and related findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Guideline for statistical data collection of national statistical data of the justice system MoJ (English). 3. Link to the publication of Instruction No. 2, dated 26 June 2025, on the official website of the Ministry of Justice of Albania: https://www.drejtesia.gov.al/statistika/
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the achievement of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

5.5.1. Effectively prevent corruption, decrease incidence of corruption

The step under review	<i>Enhance the transparency, by establishment of an open data platform on national and local budget and public spending in partnership with civil society, and publication of all asset declarations on the website of the High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI), in compliance with the law on right to information and protection of personal data</i>
Baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing data on the opendata.gov.al platform, administered by NAIS - Existing online electronic system of asset declarations, administered by HIDAACI
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers the step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The step consists of two distinct components, which are assessed separately:</p> <p>1. Establishment of an open data platform on national and local budget and public spending in partnership with civil society</p> <p>https://transparentalbania.al/The new platform, ‘Transparent Albania’, remains largely a beta-version. While it includes some budget information and links to other existing platforms, all the budget data presented in the portal was already publicly available, and no enhancements have been made to meet the reform step’s objective of “enhancing transparency”.</p> <p>Contrary to the Beneficiary’s statements, the platform does not provide real-time data. It lacks information on local government spending, revenues, or other aspects of public finance. None of the intended functionalities – real time updates, report generation, or data drill-down – are operational. As a result, the portal does not add value in terms of access to budget information, either in content or presentation.</p> <p>Finally, the platform was not developed “in partnership with civil society”. The Beneficiary reported on a single meeting with CSOs held to discuss a concept note and allowing only written feedback. This falls short of the partnership requirement.</p> <p>In sum, the portal does not meet the step’s requirements. It should be (i) developed and populated beyond its current beta-version to include data on central and local</p>

	<p>budget spending and any other public spending in real time, and (ii) developed in genuine partnership with the civil society.</p> <p>2. Publication of all asset declarations on the website of HIDAACI, in compliance with the law on right to information and protection of personal data</p> <p>Since January 2022, the Electronic System of the Declaration of Private Interest (EACIDS) has been functional under DCM No. 330, "<i>On the Creation of the 'Assets and Conflict of Interests Declaration System – EACIDS' State Database.</i>" EACIDS facilitates submission and control of asset declarations, conflicts of interest case, and institutional transparency. In 2024, 4,329 subjects were required to submit declarations, of which 25 did not. Submitted declarations are available to the public upon request, rather than being published online.</p> <p>HIDAACI indicated that in 2024 it managed all individual or media requests for disclosure of declarations within 10 working days, redacting personal data in line with the law. HIDAACI interprets this as fulfilling the legal obligation to “publish” declarations. However, providing declarations only upon request, sometimes taking 8–22 days, is not equivalent to instant public disclosure. The government should review legislation, and HIDAACI should review cybersecurity and data protection rules, particularly under the new December 2024 data protection law, to enable publication or instant availability of declarations of all subjects for at least the 2023–2024 reporting period.</p> <p>Publishing public officials’ asset declarations is critical for combating corruption in Albania. The current approach does not achieve the reform objective of preventing corruption and reducing its incidence.</p> <p>Given the significant shortcomings in both the <i>Transparent Albania</i> portal and the publication of asset declarations, the Commission considers the step not achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>Establishment of an open data platform on national and local budget and public spending in partnership with civil society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of the Transparent Albania portal (link to portal provided) - Link to ‘Open Data’ Platform provided - Review of the documentation provided on the consultation process - Follow-up with some civil society organisations - Consultations with EU-deployed TA experts on support to HIDAACI - Frequent meetings with HIDAACI <p>Publication of all asset declarations on the website of HIDAACI, in compliance with the law on right to information and protection of personal data</p> <p>A desk review of the evidence provided by the beneficiary was conducted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. User Manual for the Publishing of Asset Declaration in Albanian/English. 2. HIDAACI - AKSK Correspondence for the Audit of EACIDS Declaration System in Albanian/English. 3. HIDAACI - IDP Correspondence on Data Protection Evaluation in Albanian/English. 4. HIDAACI Website Access Traffic Report – FortiWeb in English <p>The following evidence was further requested from Albania:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical review of the HIDAACI website’s functionality in English to understand how users can request asset declarations, incl. the user

	<p>authentication process and the types of searchable identifiers for public officials; the provided photographs of the website are in Albanian only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Translation into English of the Law 9049/2003, notably Article 34, to determine the legal obligations concerning publication. - Arguments why the provision of asset information upon request should be considered equivalent to publication of asset declarations. - Analysis of handling requests in 2024, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The number of requests submitted. o The overall number of authenticated individuals submitting requests. o The shares of media, CSOs, and other individuals requesting information. o Information on whether any requests were denied and the reasons for denial. o Categories of information redacted or withheld in fulfilled requests, particularly due to cited concerns regarding data protection or cybersecurity. o The number of complaints submitted to the Data Protection and Access to Information Commissioner (IDP Commissioner). - Assessment from the IDP Commissioner regarding data protection aspects. - Assessment from the Cybersecurity Agency regarding cybersecurity aspects.
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the achievement of this step. Previously, a joint EU-Council of Europe project supported the development of the electronic portal for asset declarations, including the module for publications, which is currently inactive. In addition, the EU-funded good governance project deployed experts to review the asset verifications and publications, with the assignment starting in June 2025 and initial recommendations expected by the end of August 2025. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 31 December 2026.

5.6.1. Enhance freedom of expression, in line with European standards

The step under review	<i>Increased capacities of law enforcement bodies to handle cases of violence, including on the margins of protests, and other criminal cases involving journalists, notably by ensuring high human rights compliance in handling incidents involving journalists, through binding instructions, data collection and capacity building measures</i>
Baseline	75 police officers trained on protection of journalists including on the margin of protests
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.

<p>Commission assessment of results</p>	<p>In October 2024, the General Prosecutor’s Office approved a directive on investigating cases related to journalists’ safety, aimed at strengthening institutional capacities and coordination for their protection. A contact person was appointed in each of the 13 prosecution offices to handle cases involving journalists. While orders of appointment were not submitted, the beneficiary provided links to prosecution office websites where the appointees’ details are available. However, the Reform Agenda also requires the designation of focal points in courts to improve data collection, for which no information was provided.</p> <p>On 21 May 2025, the Albanian State Police (ASP), in consultation with the Council of Europe, issued a protocol for handling cases involving journalists. Thus, both the protocol and the directive are in place, alongside focal points in all prosecution offices.</p> <p>The beneficiary further reported that 100 ASP instructors and mid-level commissars were trained on journalists’ safety and the state’s obligations under EU standards and Council of Europe recommendations. However, the Commission notes that police capacities remain insufficient. The reported number of trained officers was unsupported by evidence; the training itself was very limited (1–2 hours of general content) and did not ensure participation across different ranks. A course on media and freedom of expression was said to be included in the Police College curriculum, but no evidence was provided of its delivery. Likewise, the reported number of magistrates trained on applying EU standards fell below the threshold set in the Reform Agenda, and again, no evidence was submitted. Overall, no documentation demonstrates that law enforcement capacities to handle cases involving journalists have been strengthened.</p> <p>The beneficiary also failed to provide evidence that the Ministry of Justice’s 2024 Priority Recommendations to the General Prosecutor addressed human rights compliance in handling incidents involving journalists, or that the 2025 recommendations were informed by data collected on related cases, as required by the Reform Agenda.</p> <p>In conclusion, while Albanian institutions have adopted binding instruments, the requirements on data collection and capacity building remain unmet. Consequently, none of the three elements – binding instructions, data collection, and capacities – are sufficiently addressed. The Commission therefore considers this step not achieved.</p> <p>On this basis, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>A desk review of the authoritative sources, notably the Media Pluralism Monitor 2025 results Albania – Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, as well as consultations with the Council of Europe who supported through provision of expertise and delivery of trainings (https://www.coe.int/fr/web/freedom-expression/-/strengthening-police-role-to-ensure-journalist-safety-in-albania) was conducted. Discussions with the beneficiary also took place in the context of accession negotiations, as well as bilateral exchanges with civil society actors on the matter. The evidence provided by the beneficiary was further reviewed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Order No. 760 of the General Director of the State Police on the approval of the State Police guideline for the safety of journalists and the contact point 2. Guideline of the State Police for the Safety of Journalists

	<p>3. Order No. 1323 of the General Director of the State Police on the appointment of the contact point for the handling and informing the public about cases of attacks/assaults committed against journalists.</p> <p>4. Link to the publication of the State Police Guideline on “The Safety of Journalists and the Contact Point” (https://asp.gov.al/udhezuesi-i-policise-se-shtetit-per-sigurine-e-gazetareve-dhe-piken-e-kontaktit/)</p> <p>The beneficiary was asked to provide evidence that trainings were conducted as part of the ‘Mandatory In-Service Training Program for State Police employees for the year 2025’ (approved by Order of General Director of State Police No.1619/2024). Based on the information provided by the beneficiary, the level of capacities of the police remains insufficient both in terms of number of training hours and participation of officers directly interacting with protestors and journalists.</p>
Double funding	Contributions from third parties were identified in support of the achievement of this step. The Council of Europe provided technical assistance under the EU Horizontal Facility Programme, in the form of technical expertise and training activities, to ensure compliance with European standards. Based on the Commission’s assessment, the degree of such contributions does not constitute a case of double funding.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 30 June 2026.

5.6.1. Enhance freedom of expression, in line with European standards

The step under review	<i>Conduct a policy impact assessment and a legal gap analysis on the Digital Service Act Regulation with the aim to align it into the national legislation, to increase protection of users’ rights and safe content</i>
Baseline	No Policy Impact Assessment and Legal Gap Analyses reports
Deadline of the step	June 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Beneficiary provided evidence that it conducted a policy impact assessment (PIA) and performed a legal gap analysis (LGA) on the Digital Service Act (DSA) Regulation, with the aim of aligning national legislation, strengthening user rights protection, and ensuring safer online content. Together, the reports form a solid basis for discussions on DSA alignment.</p> <p>The LGA outlines the relevant legal framework in Albania, summarises the main features of the DSA, and identifies key challenges for alignment. It acknowledges the need to reconcile domestic legislation with the DSA while balancing sectoral rules. Related areas are also reviewed, with recognition that amendments will be required to achieve full compliance with the EU acquis. Laws cited include: the Law on Electronic Commerce No. 10128/2009 (partially harmonised with the EU</p>

	<p>E-Commerce Directive); the Law on Copyright (partially harmonised with Directive 2019/790 on Copyright in the Digital Single Market); the Law on Audiovisual Media No. 97/2013 (requiring review to align fully with the AVMS Directive and the EMFA); and the Law on Electronic Communications No. 54/2024. The report further calls on relevant institutions to conduct a deeper analysis of the framework governing harmful online content and to identify outstanding gaps.</p> <p>The PIA assesses the wider societal implications of DSA alignment and highlights key policy issues, including: the designation of a Digital Services Coordinator; the identification of Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines (VLOPSEs); and the supervisory role of the European Commission over VLOPSEs. It also stresses the importance of stakeholder mapping, public awareness-raising, and assigning institutional responsibility for monitoring DSA implementation, which is currently lacking in Albania.</p> <p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the two reports, consolidated into a single document, were prepared following consultations within an inter-institutional working group led by the Ministry of Interior. Participants included the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation; the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy; the Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP); the National Agency for Information Society (NAIS); and the Office of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner. However, no information was provided on consultations with the Ministry of Justice, the Audiovisual Media Authority, or non-governmental stakeholders such as business, media, academia, think tanks, and online media users. Ensuring inclusiveness in the legislative drafting and adoption phases will be essential.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers the step as achieved.</p>
<p>Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings</p>	<p>A desk review of the evidence provided by the beneficiary was conducted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with the DSA by Albania: Policy impact assessment and legal gap analysis. <p>In addition, the Commission mobilised an independent expert to review the documents produced by the beneficiary and provide an independent analysis. This independent analysis was used to complement its own assessment.</p>
<p>Double funding</p>	<p>No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the fulfilment of this step.</p>
<p>Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>

5.6.1. Enhance freedom of expression, in line with European standards

<p>The step under review</p>	<p><i>Adopt amendments of legal framework on transparency of media ownership.</i></p>
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Baseline	AMA draft regulation regarding media ownership transparency in compliance with the current legislation
Deadline of the step	December 2024
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The Beneficiary considers this step as achieved by approving Decision of the Council of Minister (CoM) No. 40 on 26 April 2024 on the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) Regulation. The relevant benchmark is the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec (2018) to the Member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership, which requires public availability of accurate and up-to-date information on direct and beneficial ownership, as well as other interests influencing media decision-making or editorial line.</p> <p>CoM Decision No. 40 establishes a regulatory framework to improve transparency in media ownership. It requires licensed broadcasters to report ownership changes within 30 days, with penalties for non-compliance, and obliges them to disclose ownership structures publicly. AMA must publish this information twice a year on its website. While this improves the visibility and accessibility of ownership data already available through the business registry, the regulation introduces only limited new requirements. It does not oblige audiovisual media to disclose ownership interests in non-media sectors or other forms of influence on editorial decisions.</p> <p>Moreover, AMA has made only partial progress in drafting comprehensive guidelines and defining reporting obligations for media entities. It remains unclear how transparency has improved in cases where no ownership changes have occurred.</p> <p>The Beneficiary should provide evidence on the implementation of CoM Decision No. 40, including an analysis of how it meets European standards on media ownership transparency.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers the step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>A desk review of the evidence provided by the beneficiary was provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law 97/2023 ‘<i>On Audiovisual Media in the Republic of Albania</i>’ - AMA Decision No. 40, dated 26 April 2024 on AMA regulation - Link to AMA website (with sub-links to relevant functions) <p>Two roundtables held with audio-visual media service providers in 2024 were also considered as evidence of stakeholder engagement.</p>
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the achievement of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The ‘grace period’ runs until 31 December 2026.

5.7.1. Aligning visa requirements with European standards

The step under review	<i>Terminating visa-free agreements with at least two countries in 2025, and at least one each in both 2026 and 2027, which are visa required for the EU [measured at the end of each year, i.e. December 2025]</i>
Baseline	13 cases that are non-compliant with EU rules (7 in the permanent list and 6 in the ‘seasonal list’)
Deadline of the step	December 2025
Conclusion of the review of the step by the beneficiary	The Beneficiary considers this step as fully achieved.
Commission assessment of results	<p>The lack of Albania’s alignment with the EU’s visa policy contributes to increase the risks of irregular migration into the EU via the Western Balkans route, as well as broader security risks for the EU. The Commission and the Member States have continuously called for progress on visa policy alignment.</p> <p>As of 31 December 2024, Albania maintained a visa-free regime with 13 countries that were on the EU list of visa-required countries. Seven of these countries benefited from a permanent visa exemption (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, and Türkiye), while six enjoyed a seasonal visa exemption for entry into Albania for tourism purposes (Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Bahrein). The list of countries with seasonal visa exemption is renewed annually; however, this practice is not in line with the EU <i>acquis</i>.</p> <p>To comply with the step requirement for 2025, Albania was expected to remove two countries from its visa-free list by the end of 2025. On 9 April 2025, Albania renewed the list of countries with seasonal visa exemption, removing Bahrein from it. On 24 April 2025, the Council of Ministers also adopted a decision to suspend the visa waiver agreement with Belarus for all passport holders. However, as this suspension was based on Article 10(3) of the agreement itself, which allows either party to terminate the arrangement with six months’ prior notice, the agreement will only be formally terminated and take effect in October 2025, i.e. outside of the current reporting period.</p> <p>Based on the above, the Commission considers this step as not achieved.</p>
Checks performed and evidence used in the verification of the step and related findings	<p>In line with the Reform Agenda, the Beneficiary provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DCM No. 209, dated 09 April 2025, “<i>On some additions and amendments to the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 858, dated 29.12.2021 “On the determination of the criteria, procedures and documentation for the entry, stay and treatment of foreigners in the Republic of Albania”</i>” - DCM No. 236, dated 24 April 2025 on “<i>Suspension of the agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the government of the Republic of Belarus, on the mutual abolition of visa requirements”</i>”

	<p>However, the beneficiary did not provide evidence of publication of these two decisions in the Official Journal.</p> <p>In addition, the assessment was based on the explanation submitted by the beneficiary as well as several discussions with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior and the European Commission.</p>
Double funding	No contributions from third parties were identified or reported in support of the achievement of this step.
Clear conclusion on the achievement of the step	Not achieved. The grace period runs until December 2026.