

Country Mapping

ALBANIA

February 2026

1. Basic information and indexes

- Population: The population of Albania on January 1, 2025, is 2,363,314 inhabitants¹
- Official languages: Albanian
- Religion: Muslim Community of Albania, Bektashi Community, Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church and Evangelical (Protestant) Community of Albania
- Freedom House ([Nations in Transit 2024](#)): 46/100 – transitional or hybrid regime²
- Freedom House ([Freedom in the World 2025](#)): 68/100 – Partly free
- Press Freedom Index ([Reporters Without Borders](#)): 80/ 180
- Corruption Perception Index 2025 ([Transparency International](#)): 42/100
- [Amnesty International](#): More information for Albania on this link: [Albania](#)
- [Civicus Monitor](#): Narrowed (civic space is considered narrowed, indicating some restrictions on civil society, media, and civic freedoms)
- [OECD Multi-dimensional country reviews](#) (this is more of a resource than one particular index) OECD assessments of Albania highlight that, while progress has been made in expanding digital infrastructure and access to digital services, gaps persist in digital skills, institutional capacity, and effective use of technology, particularly outside central government and urban centres³.
- [Bertelsmann Transformation Index](#): 7.0/10 – “Advanced Economic Transformation and Ongoing Democratic Reforms” (Albania is generally assessed as showing progress in both political and economic transformation, though challenges in governance and institutional reform).

2. State of democracy

2.1. Democratic governance and rule of law

Democratic governance and the rule of law in Albania remain fundamental pillars of the country’s European Union accession process and overall democratic consolidation. Over the past decade, Albania has undertaken institutional and legal reforms, particularly in the justice sector, aimed at strengthening judicial independence, checks and balances, and mechanisms to address corruption, transparency and

¹ National Institute of Statistics. Available online at: <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/demography-and-social-indicators/population/publication/2025/population-of-albania-on-1st-january-2025/>

² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/scores?type=nit>

³ https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2022/04/multi-dimensional-review-of-the-western-balkans_aae194f5/8824c5db-en.pdf

accountability. Despite measurable progress, structural weaknesses persist, affecting the effective functioning of democratic institutions and public trust in governance.

Separation of powers

The Constitution of Albania establishes a formal separation of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches.⁴ In practice, however, the balance between these branches remains uneven. Parliament's ability to exercise effective oversight over the executive branch is limited, stemming an imbalance that weakens the system of checks and balances. According to the European Commission Albania Report 2025⁵ *"the politicisation of parliamentary appointments to top positions in constitutional bodies or independent institutions established by law remains a serious issue"*. These concerns were further reinforced during 2025 by the establishment and operation of ad hoc parliamentary structures, such as the committee on deepening reforms for good governance, rule of law, and anti-corruption. While such mechanisms are formally intended to strengthen accountability and reform processes, questions have been raised regarding their mandate, methodology, and tangible impact.⁶

Independence of judiciary

Judicial independence in Albania has been one of the most transformative elements of the country's reform agenda over the past decade, particularly following the 2016 constitutional amendments and the subsequent launch of a comprehensive justice reform process. The reform package included a new legal framework that provided for a vetting process of judges and prosecutors designed to assess the integrity, professional performance, and asset profiles of sitting judicial officials. This process was intended to restore public trust in the judiciary and align Albania's justice system with European standards.⁷ Central to the reform was the establishment of independent bodies, such as the Independent Qualification Commission and the Special Appellate College, tasked with implementing the vetting process in cooperation with international partners. These mechanisms have reshaped the judicial landscape by removing a significant number of judges and prosecutors from office due to integrity breaches, unexplained assets, or professional misconduct. The introduction of this accountability framework, together with strengthened judicial oversight structures, has fundamentally altered the formal architecture of the judiciary and, at least on paper, enhanced its institutional independence.⁸ However, the ambitious scale and rapid pace of vetting also created challenges. The removal of large numbers of judicial officials resulted in capacity gaps across the court system, with particularly acute effects in higher courts where vacancies and limited staffing have contributed to serious case backlogs and prolonged delays in proceedings. These delays have, in practice, constrained access to justice for many individuals, undermining one of the central aims of the reform, ensuring prompt and fair judgement.⁹

⁴ Article 7, of the Albanian Constitution stipulates *"The system of government in the Republic of Albania is based on the separation and balancing of legislative, executive and judicial powers"*. Available online at: <https://qbz.gov.al/preview/635d44bd-96ee-4bc5-8d93-d928cf6f2abd>

⁵ European Commission (2025) *"EU Albania Report 2025"*. Available online at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2025_en

⁶ Ibid, page no.33

⁷ The 2016 justice reform introduced constitutional and legislative changes to restructure the judiciary and institute vetting for judges and prosecutors: *Strengthening the Judiciary in Albania*, ConstitutionNet. Available online at: <https://constitutionnet.org/news/strengthening-judiciary-albania-story-behind-success-2016-constitutional-reforms>

⁸ Legal Political Studies *"An Analysis of the Vetting Process in Albania"*. Available online at: <https://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Policy-Analysis-An-Analysis-of-the-Vetting-Process-in-Albania.pdf>

⁹ European Commission, *Albania 2023 Report*, SWD (2023) 692 final, Brussels, 8 November 2023; European Commission, *Albania 2022 Report*, SWD (2022) 332 final, 12 October 2022. See sections on judiciary functioning, vacancies in higher courts, and case backlogs resulting from the vetting process. Available online at: [SWD_2023_690 Albania report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/swd2023_690_albania_report.pdf)

While institutional independence has formally improved, concerns persist about the consistency of legal standards and the potential for political influence. The establishment of new justice institutions, including the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Structure (SPAK) and the Special Courts against Corruption and Organised Crime, has strengthened the prosecution of high-level corruption and organised crime cases. Nevertheless, the European Commission and independent monitoring organisations note that, despite progress in the justice reform process, concerns persist regarding the effective independence of the judiciary, particularly in politically sensitive or high-profile cases.¹⁰¹¹ In addition, challenges related to transparency in judicial reasoning and the accessibility of clear, well-articulated judicial decisions continue to affect the credibility and predictability of the justice system in the eyes of legal professionals and the public alike.¹²

Despite the structural gains achieved by the justice reform public confidence in the justice system remains differentiated rather than uniformly consolidated. Survey data and civil society commentary indicate that SPAK enjoys comparatively high levels of public trust, particularly in relation to its handling of high-level corruption cases. However, broader perceptions of the judiciary remain more cautious. For many citizens, progress at the level of specialised anti-corruption institutions has not yet fully translated into consistent perceptions of impartiality, efficiency, and transparency across all courts. Persistent case backlogs, uneven procedural performance, and limited clarity in judicial reasoning continue to affect everyday experiences of access to justice, creating a gap between reform achievements at the institutional level and perceptions of systemic effectiveness.¹³

Checks and balances

Recent 2025 assessments confirm that Albania's system of checks and balances continues to operate within a formally strengthened constitutional framework, yet practical effectiveness remains uneven. The European Commission's 2025 Rule of Law Report notes progress in justice reform implementation and institutional consolidation, including improved functioning of specialised anti-corruption bodies, but also highlights ongoing challenges related to institutional coordination, enforcement of oversight recommendations, and consistency in accountability practices.¹⁴ National reporting on the state of the

¹⁰ European Commission, *2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on Albania*, section on Justice System, noting challenges related to perceptions of political influence and judicial independence, available at:

https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/3732ae59-5ab4-48a6-a3e6-0ef9aa593863_en

¹¹ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2025: Albania*, section on Judicial Framework and Independence, available online at:

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/albania/nations-transit/2025>

¹² European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), *Final Opinion on the Draft Constitutional Amendments on the Judiciary of Albania*, CDL-AD (2016) 009, 14–15 March 2016; European Commission, *Albania 2023 Report*, SWD (2023) 692 final. See also references to the functioning of the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Structure and concerns regarding consistency of legal standards and politically sensitive cases. Available online at: [Venice Commission :: Council of Europe](#)

¹³ Institute for Democracy and Mediation, *Trust in Governance Opinion Poll 2023* (Tirana: IDM, 2023), showing SPAK ranking among the most trusted justice institutions. Available online at: https://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2024/05/Opinion-Poll-2023-EN.pdf; European Commission, *2025 Rule of Law Report: Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in Albania*, COM(2025) final (Brussels: European Commission, 2025). Available online at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/3732ae59-5ab4-48a6-a3e6-0ef9aa593863_en?filename=2025+Rule+of+Law+Report+-+Country+Chapter+Albania.pdf; European Commission, *Albania 2023 Report*, SWD(2023) 690 final (Brussels: European Commission, 8 November 2023), sections on judiciary functioning, case backlogs, and public perception trends. Available online at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_690%20Albania%20report.pdf.

¹⁴ European Commission, *2025 Rule of Law Report: Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in Albania* (Brussels: European Commission, 2025). Available online at:

[3732ae59-5ab4-48a6-a3e6-0ef9aa593863_en](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/3732ae59-5ab4-48a6-a3e6-0ef9aa593863_en)

rule of law similarly acknowledges advances in the completion of key reform stages, while identifying persistent capacity constraints, delays in proceedings, and the need for stronger follow-up mechanisms across oversight institutions.¹⁵

Corruption and Accountability

Corruption continues to pose a significant challenge to democratic governance and the rule of law in Albania. International indicators signal that broader public confidence in governance structures remains fragile, with Albania's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index score reflecting continued concerns about integrity and institutional effectiveness. Albania scored 39 out of 100 in the 2025 edition of the Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking 98th out of 180 countries globally.¹⁶ While the legal framework for anti-corruption is broadly in place and specialised institutions like the SPAK have strengthened the prosecution of high-level corruption cases, gaps remain in enforcement, preventive measures, and institutional coordination.¹⁷ National assessments published in 2025 also note improvements in financial investigations and asset recovery efforts but emphasise ongoing challenges related to public perceptions of corruption, monitoring of anti-corruption strategies, and the timely implementation of legal obligations.^{18,19}

2.2. Political participation and pluralism

Political participation and pluralism in Albania are grounded in constitutional guarantees and a multi-party electoral system. The Albanian Constitution²⁰ guarantees every citizen the right to vote, to freely associate with others, and to establish and join political parties, forming the foundation of democratic participation in the country. Elections are administered by the Central Election Commission of Albania, and successive reforms to the Electoral Code have aimed to align electoral procedures with European standards. Notwithstanding improvements in voter registration systems, ballot security, and dispute resolution mechanisms, the effective realization of political participation continues to be shaped by structural and institutional constraints that affect fairness, competitiveness, and inclusion. Despite procedural improvements, including the fact that for the first time Albanian citizens living abroad were eligible to vote, alongside clearer voter registration processes and generally orderly election day procedures, political participation in Albania continues to be shaped by structural and institutional challenges. The OSCE/ODIHR noted that elections took place in a highly polarized environment and that contestants did

¹⁵ Ministry of Justice of Albania, *Raporti për Shtetin e së Drejtës 2025* (Tirana: Ministry of Justice, 2025). Available online at: [Publikimi i Raportit për Shtetin e së Drejtës 2025 - Ministria e Drejtësisë](#)

¹⁶ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 – Albania*, score 39/100, ranking 98/180. Available online at: [Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 - Transparency.org](#)

¹⁷ European Commission, *2025 Rule of Law Report: Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in Albania*, COM(2025) final (Brussels: European Commission, 2025). Available online at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/3732ae59-5ab4-48a6-a3e6-0ef9aa593863_en?filename=2025+Rule+of+Law+Report++Country+Chapter+Albania.pdf

¹⁸ Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), *Annual Report 2024* (published 2025), reporting progress in financial investigations, confiscation orders, and asset recovery mechanisms. Available online at: <https://spak.al>

¹⁹ European Commission, *Albania 2024 Report* (published 2025 as part of the Enlargement Package), sections on corruption, rule of law, and public administration reform, noting persistent public perceptions of corruption and the need for stronger monitoring and implementation of anti-corruption strategies. Available online at: <https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu>

²⁰ Constitution of the Republic of Albania. Available online at: [Albania Constitution](#)

not enjoy fully equal opportunities, citing concerns related to the misuse of public resources, pressure on public employees, and other practices that undermined competitiveness and inclusive participation²¹.

Electoral integrity (credibility, fairness)

While technical aspects of election administration have continued to improve, including the implementation of out-of-country voting and clearer procedures for voter registration and results management, concerns persist regarding the credibility and fairness of electoral processes. The 2025 Election Observation Mission of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe concluded that elections were competitive but took place in a highly polarized environment where contestants did not benefit from fully equal conditions. The mission reiterated concerns regarding the misuse of public resources, pressure on public sector employees, allegations of vote-buying, and the continued blurring of distinctions between state and party activities during the campaign.²² It further noted shortcomings in the oversight of campaign finance, including gaps in transparency, limited proactive monitoring, and delays in the verification of financial reports.

Political pluralism (mapping political, economic constraints on opposition)

Political pluralism in Albania continues to be formally reflected in a diverse party landscape and a competitive electoral framework. However, 2025 assessments indicate that opposition forces and smaller political movements still face political, economic, and structural constraints that limit equal participation. The 2025 Election Observation Mission of the OSCE, observed that while a range of parties competed, the campaign environment was marked by unequal access to resources and structural advantages enjoyed by larger, established parties. More broadly, established political actors continue to benefit from greater financial resources, stronger patronage networks, and more consistent media exposure, while smaller parties report difficulties in maintaining organizational sustainability and securing meaningful nationwide outreach.²³ Consequently, while pluralism is preserved at the formal level, its practical realisation remains uneven.

Inclusion of minorities, women, youth

Legislative measures, including the mandatory gender quota provisions in the Electoral Code requiring at least 30% representation of each gender on candidate lists, have continued to shape women's participation in politics. Following the 2025 parliamentary elections, women hold approximately 35% of seats in the Albanian Parliament, reflecting compliance with quota requirements. However, remain underrepresented in senior party leadership positions and in key parliamentary committees, which limits their substantive influence over decision making and policy direction.²⁴ In some cases, during the electoral campaign sexist language was used against women candidates, men, and the LGBTQI community.²⁵ With

²¹Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Republic of Albania – Parliamentary Elections, Election Observation Mission Final Report* (2025). Available online at: https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/600169?utm_source

²² Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Republic of Albania – Parliamentary Elections 2025, Election Observation Mission Final Report*, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 2025. Available online at: https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/600169?utm_source

²³ Ibid, page 5

²⁴ Ibid, page 6-7

²⁵ Ibid, page 17

regard to youth, although political parties included younger candidates on their lists in the 2025 parliamentary elections, publicly available data indicate that youth remain underrepresented relative to their demographic weight. Young people aged 15 to 29 constitute approximately 22% of the population in 2025, yet available 2025 analyses suggest that youth participation in political decision making remains limited, with constrained opportunities for young people to shape policy agendas within political party structures.²⁶ Members of national minority communities continue to enjoy full legal rights to political participation, including the right to campaign in minority languages. However, socio economic disadvantages and limited targeted outreach continue to affect effective representation, particularly for Roma communities. The 2025 election observation findings further noted that while voter education materials were produced in minority languages, their distribution was limited and not widely observed, which may have reduced their practical impact.²⁷

Bridging the media section

The 2025 ODIHR Election Observation Mission found that media coverage of the electoral campaign was heavily influenced by party-produced content rather than independent journalism. Television stations frequently broadcast footage supplied directly by political parties without clearly labelling it as political advertising, as required by the Electoral Code, and the Central Election Commission did not take timely measures to address this practice. Reports also indicated that some candidate interviews in current affairs programmes were paid for, effectively amounting to undeclared political advertising. Media monitoring showed that the two largest parties (Socialist and Democratic parties) dominated news coverage across major broadcasters, while smaller contestants received minimal exposure. Online outlets demonstrated even stronger bias.²⁸

2.3. Civic space and fundamental freedoms

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed in Albania, and the legal framework broadly aligns with European human rights standards. In April 2023, the Parliament approved Law No. 30/2023 For some changes and additions to Law No. 97/2023 “For the audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania”, amended.²⁹ The law aligns partially with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2010/13/EU and introduces measures to combat hate speech and disinformation. Defamation remains a criminal offence, although it does not carry imprisonment.

While the legal framework formally guarantees freedom of expression, recent legislative and policy developments have generated debate regarding proportionality and safeguards. Amendments to the Criminal Code in 2025–2026, including the partial decriminalisation of defamation limited to certain

²⁶ Partners Albania for Change and Development, *Youth Participation Monitoring Report 2024* (published 2025), findings on youth engagement in political and public decision making. Available Online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-report-of-political-social-and-economic-participation-of-youth-2024/>

²⁷ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Republic of Albania – Parliamentary Elections, Election Observation Mission Final Report* (2025). Available online at: https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/600169?utm_source

²⁸ Ibid, page 24-25

²⁹ Official Gazette 17/2023, Law no 30/2023 “For some changes and addition to Law no 97/2013 “For the audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania”. Available online at: <https://ama.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Ligji-nr.-30-2023-Per-disa-ndryshime-dhe-shtesa-ne-ligjin-nr.-97-2013-Per-mediat-Audiovizive-ne-Republiken-e-Shqiperise-te-ndryshuar.pdf>

categories of journalists, raised concerns among civil society actors about equality before the law and legal certainty.³⁰ At the same time, discussions around strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and the need for stronger legal safeguards remain ongoing. These developments illustrate the tension between formal constitutional guarantees and evolving regulatory practices.

Freedom of assembly and association

Freedom of peaceful assembly in Albania is constitutionally guaranteed and generally aligned with international human rights standards, requiring prior notification rather than authorisation for public gatherings. In practice, protests and demonstrations take place regularly and are typically permitted without systematic restriction.³¹ Regarding freedom of association, it is constitutionally guaranteed and broadly aligned with international standards. Civil society organisations can register and operate without formal restrictions. In December 2025, the draft law “On the Registration of Non-Profit Organisations” was adopted, introducing administrative sanctions of up to approximately ALL 60,000 for inaccurate reporting or failure to notify changes. Concerns raised by CSOs regarding the proportionality of these sanctions were not reflected in the final law.³² The electronic registry of CSOs is not yet functional. In addition, proposed amendments in 2025 within the Anti-Money Laundering framework expand oversight and introduce terminology referring to “high-risk” nonprofit organisations, raising concerns about proportionality and legal clarity.³³

Governmental approach towards social movements and activists

Academic research on Albania’s social movements characterises mobilisation as episodic, issue-driven, and often reactive to specific governance failures rather than ideologically sustained. Studies highlight the 2018–2019 Student Movement, environmental campaigns, and the National Theatre protests as examples of grassroots mobilisation emerging in contexts of limited institutional responsiveness and low public trust. Scholars note that while the state generally tolerates protest, interactions between authorities and activists reflect broader patterns of political polarisation and weak channels for structured civic participation.³⁴

Bridging the media section

The legal framework for the protection of journalists is in place. However, verbal and physical attacks, smear campaigns, and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) targeting media professionals continued. Media freedom organisations documented 45 cases of violations against

³⁰ The information is retrieved from SCiDEV organisation website. Available online at: Media Landscape – January 2026 Brief - SCiDEV

³¹ Partners Albania for Change and Development “Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development – Country Report 2024” Partners Albania (2025). Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

³² The Constitutional Court abolished the 30-day registration deadline at Tirana Judicial District Court, provisions expanding chancellor powers (now limited to the court), and administrative fines for false data or delays; the new amendments, however, reintroduce proportionate fines up to 60,000 ALL.

³³ Partners Albania (2025). Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/News/legal-opinion-on-the-amendment-of-the-draft-law-on-some-additions-and-amendments-to-law-no-9917-dated-19-5-2008-on-the-prevention-of-money-laundering-and-financing-of-terrorism/>

³⁴ Blendi Kajsiu, “Polarization without radicalization: political radicalism in Albania in a comparative perspective,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (2016). Available online at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14782804.2016.1159545>

journalists' safety in 2024, compared to 46 cases in 2023. Instances of intimidation and threats, including those allegedly involving high-level public officials and police officers, became increasingly visible, particularly affecting investigative and female journalists. Smear campaigns, politically motivated verbal attacks, and disinformation further contributed to a climate of pressure and hostility. The absence of specific safeguards to protect journalists, activists and civil society organisations from intimidation and abusive litigation, including SLAPPs, has aggravated these concerns³⁵. Regarding freedom of the press, Albania ranked 99th out of 180 countries in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index³⁶ published by Reporters Without Borders, placing it among the lowest-ranked countries in the Western Balkans. The Index highlighted concerns related to political interference, media ownership concentration, and economic vulnerability of media outlets.

3. Media

3.1. Media landscape

The media landscape in Albania is pluralistic in structure, with a wide range of television channels, online media outlets, radio stations, and print publications operating at national and local levels. However, despite this diversity, the media ownership remains highly concentrated, and editorials agenda are often shaped by political and economic interests, limiting genuine diversity of viewpoints.³⁷ Television remains the primary source of information for the majority of the population. The media market is led by a small number of national private broadcasters with major national broadcasters include [Top Channel](#) and [TV Klan](#) which dominate audience share and advertising revenues. The public broadcaster, [Radio Televizioni Shqiptar](#) (RTSH), operates multiple television and radio channels and is legally mandated to provide impartial public-interest programming. Nevertheless, media independence and pluralism continue to be affected by overlapping political and business interests, persistent lack of transparency in media financing and ownership, and high concentration of media ownership, which together constrain the media's capacity to operate independently³⁸. Albania has a diverse and rapidly expanding online media landscape, including a substantial number of digital news portals and websites. A media directory listing shows at least around 40 online news portals and web pages operating in the Albanian media space, covering news, politics, and social issues.³⁹ The digital media environment is highly fragmented, with a large number of portals operating with limited transparency regarding ownership, funding sources, and editorial standards. While some outlets engage in investigative journalism and critical reporting, many rely on sensationalist content, re-publication, or politically aligned narratives.⁴⁰ Print media continue to decline in relevance due to falling circulation and financial instability. Most newspapers are no longer

³⁵ European Commission (2025) "EU Albania Report 2025". Available online at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2025_en

³⁶ Reporters Without Borders, *World Press Freedom Index 2024 – Albania*. Available online at: <https://rsf.org/en/country/albania>

³⁷ European Commission, *2024 Rule of Law Report: Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in Albania* (Brussels: European Commission, 2024), Available online at: [0154dce1-5026-45de-8b37-e3d56eff7925_en](https://ec.europa.eu/roa/document/download/0154dce1-5026-45de-8b37-e3d56eff7925_en)

³⁸ European Commission, *Albania 2025 Report* (Brussels: European Commission, 2025), section "Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom,". Available online:

https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/AL_2025_AnnualReport_en.pdf

³⁹ The information is retrieved from IDRA website. Available online at: [web pages and portals - Idamedia](#)

⁴⁰ Reporters Without Borders, *World Press Freedom Index 2024: Albania*, Reporters Without Borders, Available online: <https://rsf.org/en/albania>

economically sustainable through sales alone and often depend on cross-subsidisation from owners' other business interests.⁴¹

Foreign-owned or foreign-operated media outlets have a limited presence in Albania. However, international actors support media development through project-based funding, journalist training, and assistance for investigative journalism, particularly in areas such as anti-corruption, rule of law, and professional standards.³⁸

Television consumption in the country

Television remains a widely used medium in Albania, although its dominance is gradually challenged by online media. According to media consumption surveys, about 75 % of people in Albania use television every day or almost every day, and a further 13% at least once a week. Television historically served as the main source of information for the public, though digital media are becoming increasingly important in news consumption.³⁹

Who supports media development, including financing?

Media financing in Albania relies predominantly on advertising revenues, including both private and state advertising, as well as support from international donors. European Commission reporting^{40,41,42} indicate that state advertising constitutes a significant source of income for many media outlets, particularly in the context of limited market sustainability. However, the lack of transparent criteria and oversight in the allocation of public funds and advertising has repeatedly raised concerns regarding unequal treatment of media outlets and the risk of political influence over editorial independence. Assessments by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom and the OSCE further highlight that selective distribution of state resources, combined with high market concentration, contributes to structural vulnerabilities in the media sector and undermines media pluralism and independence.

3.2. Media freedoms

Constitutional guarantees and sectoral legislation continue to provide protection for freedom of expression and media pluralism. Although Albania maintains a pluralistic media landscape, structural vulnerabilities continue to affect media independence. Market concentration, opaque ownership

⁴¹ European Commission, *Albania 2024 Report*. Available online: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2024-10/AL_2024_AnnualReport.pdf.

³⁸ European Union Delegation to Albania, *Support to Media Freedom and Professional Journalism*, Available online at: <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/albania/en>.

³⁹ Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), *Media Ownership Monitor Albania: Television*. Available online at: <https://albania.mom-gmr.org/sq/media/tv/>.

⁴⁰ European Commission, *2024 Rule of Law Report: Country Chapter on the Rule of Law Situation in Albania* (Brussels: European Commission, 2024), Available online at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/0154dce1-5026-45de-8b37-e3d56eff7925_en?filename=59_1_58088_coun_chap_albania_al.pdf.

⁴¹ European Commission, *Albania 2024 Report* (Brussels: European Commission, 2024). Available online: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2024-10/AL_2024_AnnualReport.pdf.

⁴² Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), *Media Pluralism Monitor 2024: Albania* (Florence: European University Institute, 2024), Available online at: <https://cmpf.eui.eu/mpm2024-results/albania/>.

structures, and the overlap between political and business interests⁴³ shape editorial environments in which economic dependence may influence content priorities.⁴⁴ Economic fragility, including reliance on limited advertising markets and public funds, reinforces systemic pressures that constrain investigative journalism. In this context, even in the absence of direct censorship, indirect forms of influence and self-censorship may emerge as adaptive responses to structural constraints.

4. Civil society organizations (CSOs) landscape

4.1. Very brief historical overview

The historical context of civil society in Albania is closely linked to the country's trajectory of democratisation and its aspiration for integration into European and international frameworks. The roots of organised civic life date back to the late nineteenth century, when Albania was still under Ottoman rule.⁴⁵ By the early twentieth century, approximately 130 associations had emerged, alongside several foundations and religious institutions, many of which were established within the Albanian diaspora and reflected political, cultural, religious, or nationalist orientations.⁴⁶ This early civic development was abruptly interrupted during the communist period (1946–1991), when independent civil society was effectively eliminated and replaced by state-controlled mass organisations. The fall of communism in the early 1990s marked a turning point, allowing nonprofit organisations (CSOs) to re-emerge within a newly pluralistic political environment. The period between 1991 and 2000, however, was characterised by political instability, economic collapse, and major crises, including the pyramid scheme collapse and the Kosovo conflict. Despite these challenges, civil society gradually began to take shape, supported largely by international donors that provided financial and technical assistance, particularly in the areas of humanitarian aid, support to vulnerable groups, public education, and the promotion of human and women's rights.⁴⁷ Between 2010 and 2020, the nonprofit sector experienced significant growth, driven by improvements in the legal framework governing registration and operations, notably through legislation regulating non-profit organisations and their registration. During this period, civil society actors increasingly sought to influence policymaking through advocacy and lobbying initiatives aimed at strengthening the enabling environment. Key developments included efforts to improve the fiscal treatment of CSOs, the establishment of institutional mechanisms for dialogue such as the Agency for the Support of Civil Society and the National Council for Civil Society, and the introduction of binding rules on access to information and public consultation. In parallel, Albania's EU accession process encouraged CSOs to strengthen regional and European networks and cross-border cooperation. Since 2020, civil society developments have been significantly shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite limited funding and operational constraints, most CSOs demonstrated adaptability by shifting to online and hybrid activities

⁴³ Reporters Without Border, 2025. Available online at: [Albania | RSF](#)

⁴⁴ Freedom House, 2024 "Albania: Nations in Transit 2024 Country Report". Available online at: [Albania: Nations in Transit 2024 Country Report | Freedom House](#)

⁴⁵ Hoxha. A., 2011, "A Historical Development of the Philanthropic Activity in Albania", Partners Albania for Change and Development, pg. 44-49. Available online at: https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Nje_Veshtrim_Historik_Zhvillimin_filantropise.pdf

⁴⁶ Shehu. Xh., Pjero. E., Guga. K., 2012, "Development of Non-Profit Sector in Albania". pg. 14. Available online at: <https://journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/oeconomica/article/download/1549/1347>

⁴⁷ Partners Albania for Change and Development, 2014, "Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development – Country Report for Albania 2013", pg. 11. Available online at: https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Monitoring_Matrix_Albania_Country_Report_2013.pdf

and continuing to respond to the needs of their beneficiaries’⁴⁸ Today, Albanian CSOs remain active across a wide range of fields, including democracy and human rights, social services, media, health, and economic development, while addressing cross-cutting issues such as freedom of expression, anti-corruption, and accountability.

4.2. Main, general, official statistics

The nonprofit sector in Albania remains diverse in competencies but continues to face structural and financial challenges. As of the end of 2024, 13,053 nonprofit organisations were registered at the Tirana Judicial District Court, comprising 6,981 associations, 1,733 centres, 892 foundations, and 3,447 other forms⁴⁹, of which only 39%⁵⁰ are active⁵¹. The fact that only 39% of registered organisations are active suggests that legal registration alone does not ensure sustainability. This gap reflects structural weaknesses in funding, institutional capacity, and long-term operational support. The nonprofit landscape therefore appears broader on paper than in practice, with many organisations lacking the resources required for consistent engagement and strategic development. The data from a sample of 784 CSOs in the Partners Albania database shows a diverse focus across multiple sectors, with many organisations working in more than one area. Democracy and Human Rights account for the largest share, with 541 organizations (25%); Services and Social Welfare follow closely, with 444 CSOs (21%); Economic Development is the focus of 336 organizations, making up 16%; Environmental issues are addressed by 176 CSOs, accounting for 8%; Health is a focus for 79 CSOs (4%), media for 55 CSOs (3%), etc.

4.3. Legal environment (formal conditions of operating)

Generally, the legal framework for freedom of association is in line with international standards. Law No. 80/2021 “On the registration of the nonprofit organisations” introduced the provision for electronic registration. However, delays in making the electronic registry, which remains non-functional as of the date of this report, have continued to concentrate the registration and legal amendment processes in Tirana. This centralisation creates both cost and time barriers for organisations based in other cities of Albania. The registration process is lengthy, currently requiring approximately 95 days, while for the legal amendments may take up to 150 days.⁵²

The financial viability and sustainability are hindered by limited public funding and the volatility of international aid. Public funding through the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS), which is the main national mechanism that regulates state support for the nonprofit sector, remains project-based

⁴⁸ Partners Albania for Change and Development, 2020, “Effectiveness in COVID-19 Response – Albania Case Study Report” . Available online at: [Effectiveness in COVID-19 Response – Albania Case Study Report – Partners Albania for Change and Development](#)

⁴⁹ Others include entities not defined as CSOs under Law 8788 “On Nonprofit Organisations.” These include political parties, health clinics, religious institutions, trade unions, sports clubs, etc.

⁵⁰ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-cs-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

⁵¹ According to the Albanian tax authorities, an “active organisation” is considered any legal entity that has conducted organised activities within the 12 months of the last fiscal year.

⁵² Partners Albania for Change and Development, 2025, “Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development – Country Report for Albania 2024”. Available online at: [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSOs Development, Country Report for Albania 2024 – Partners Albania for Change and Development](#)

and limited in scale.⁵³ The sector's heavy reliance on international donors and the significant decline in support from key donors in 2025, including several European Union countries and U.S. Government has led to the closure of essential programmes in critical areas such as strengthening democracy, protecting human rights, environmental protection, education, socio economic development as well as disruption of services for disadvantaged groups.

According to the 2024 Capacity and Needs Assessment Report by the National Resource Centre for Civil Society, 67% out of 110 surveyed organisations reported foreign government as their main source of income. Public funding is insufficient, representing only 11% of the total income, while economic activities were reported by only 20% of organisations.⁵⁴

At present, Albania does not have a dedicated law on philanthropy or endowments, nor does its legal framework provide tax incentives for individual donations. The regulatory environment for giving is limited, with corporate donations governed by the law on sponsorship. Despite the absence of tax incentives for individual giving and only marginal incentives for corporate donations, 56% of organisations reported partnerships with businesses.⁵⁵ Online and offline crowdfunding has become a significant source of income for organisations. According to media monitoring of philanthropic activity, in the first half of 2025, 66% of donations went through online crowdfunding platforms operated by nonprofit organisations.⁵⁶ In this landscape, Albania's only local online crowdfunding platform [Smile.al](https://smile.al) offers a potential avenue for CSOs to mobilise local resources in seven thematic areas: health and solidarity, promotion of cultural heritage, environment, innovative and social entrepreneurship, education and training and sporting activities.

The relationship with state institutions is an important factor in shaping their ability to influence local and national development agendas. While the EU integration process offers a potential framework for structured dialogue, participation of non-state actors, including community foundations, remains limited. The Partnership Platform for European Integration was established to institutionalise the involvement of civil society in this process, as of 2025, only 30 of the planned 33 consultation tables had been created⁶¹. This gap in implementation reduces the opportunities for civil society organisations to contribute their local knowledge towards the EU integration processes and experience to important policy discussions. Existing dialogue mechanisms, such as the National Council for Civil Society, have struggled to maintain credibility due to their limited responsiveness to sector challenges and weak connections with the broader civil society community. This contrast highlights the gap between formal compliance and substantive participation. While consultation procedures are increasingly fulfilled on paper, the frequent use of exemptions and limited mechanisms for incorporating feedback reduce the practical influence of civil society input on legislative outcomes. Participation risks remaining procedural rather than transformative.

⁵³ Ibid, pg. 22

⁵⁴ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025). "Capacity and Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisation in Albania, 2024". Retrieved from: <https://resourcecentre.al/publication/capacity-and-needs-assessment-of-civil-society-organisations-in-albania-2024/>

⁵⁵ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025). "Capacity and Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisation in Albania, 2024". Retrieved from: <https://resourcecentre.al/publication/capacity-and-needs-assessment-of-civil-society-organisations-in-albania-2024/>

⁵⁶ Partners Albania for change and Development. (2025) "Philanthropy Magazine". Retrieved from: https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Philanthropy_Magazine_Ed10.pdf

⁶¹ The information is retrieved from European Movement Albania organisation. More information is available at: <https://em-al.org/en/albanias-eu-membership-process/>

4.4. How/has the position of civil society organizations changed in the past 3-5 years? What are the main causes behind these changes, and in what way do they affect the functioning of CSOs?

According to interviews conducted for this report, and consistent with recent monitoring and European Union assessments, civil society organisations in Albania continue to operate within a formally protected legal framework, yet their effective space for participation and influence has narrowed in practice over the past three to five years. The European Commission in its 2025 Rule of Law Report and Enlargement reporting notes concerns regarding the broader civic space environment.⁵⁷ Civil society actors have also reported increased disinformation, defamation, and politically motivated narratives targeting organisations engaged in governance and accountability work.⁵⁸ These dynamics have contributed to reputational pressure and greater institutional caution, particularly when addressing politically sensitive issues.

Civic space and media are at one of their lowest points. More than 35 years after communism, democratic institutions remain fragile, and civil society is becoming increasingly marginalised rather than strengthened. Limited local democracy, clientelistic practices, and weak institutional responsiveness have reduced organisations' voice and influence. In 2025, smear campaigns targeting organisations working on gender equality, portraying them as "anti-family" or driven by foreign agendas, further undermined their credibility and public trust. (Executive Director of children rights organisation)

A factor shaping this shift has been the gap between formal consultation mechanisms and meaningful participation. According to the 2024 Annual Report on Public Consultation published by the Government of Albania, 78 out of 80 acts requiring consultation were formally consulted, generating 1,003 comments, of which 446 were fully accepted and 102 partially accepted.⁵⁹ However, within the National Plan for European Integration 2024–2026, exemptions from consultation were applied to 68 out of 102 draft acts, limiting stakeholder participation in practice.⁶⁰ Independent civil society monitoring has characterised consultation processes as largely procedural, with limited feedback mechanisms and inconsistent incorporation of civil society input.⁶¹

In addition, financial sustainability has emerged as another defining factor shaping the position of civil society organisations over the past three to five years. The sector remains heavily dependent on international donor funding, with limited diversification of income sources and relatively low levels of domestic philanthropy or state support.⁶² Public funding mechanisms remain project-based and modest

⁵⁷ European Commission, *2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on Albania*, available at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/3732ae59-5ab4-48a6-a3e6-0ef9aa593863_en

⁵⁸ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2025: Albania*. Available online at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/albania/nations-transit/2025>

⁵⁹ Government of Albania, "*Raporti Vjetor i Performancës së Konsultimeve Publike 2024*". Available online at: <https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/documents/reports/Raport%20vjetor%20i%20performanc%C3%ABs%20s%C3%AB%20konsultimeve%20publike%202024.pdf>

⁶⁰ Ibid, page. 18

⁶¹ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024. Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

⁶² Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024. Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>; Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2024) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling

in scale, offering limited opportunities for project and none for institutional or core support. The reduction and suspension of certain international funding streams in 2025 further intensified financial uncertainty, leading some organisations to downsize programmes, reduce staff, or suspend services in key thematic areas.⁶³

These developments have important implications for the functioning of CSOs. The increasing legislative workload linked to EU alignment, combined with short consultation windows and uneven institutional responsiveness, has created operational pressures for organisations. At the same time, the expansion of EU-related legislation has opened new thematic areas for engagement and increased formal entry points for civil society participation. While challenges remain in ensuring meaningful influence, the structured framework for consultation and alignment with EU standards provides a foundation upon which more substantive and results-oriented dialogue can be strengthened.

4.5. General public attitude toward civil society

Public opinion data show that citizens express varying levels of trust across domestic institutions. Religious institutions (67%), SPAK (60.3%), civil society organisations (55.7%), the armed forces (55.7%), the media (53.4%), and the public education system (52.6%) are perceived as the most reliable, with more than half of respondents reporting either great or basic trust in each of these institutions. In this context, civil society organisations appear among the group of institutions receiving majority trust, though trust remains moderate and should be interpreted alongside broader patterns of institutional confidence and public awareness of CSO work.⁶⁴

Yet recent regional developments have created a more challenging public environment for civil society. The suspension of foreign funding, including the U.S. Administration's decision to freeze most American foreign aid, has been accompanied by intensified public narratives targeting the legitimacy of civil society, including disinformation, defamation, and politically driven attacks.⁶⁵ Smear campaigns and hostile rhetoric have, in some cases, discouraged civic engagement and reinforced public scrutiny of organisations' funding sources and activities. The sector's structural reliance on foreign funding further amplifies its exposure to such narratives, increasing vulnerability to political framing and contributing to a more fragile public environment for civic action.⁶⁶

4.6. Challenges for civil society organizations

Despite more than thirty years of civil society activity in Albania, the sector continues to face a set of structural, financial, and perception-related challenges that constrain its effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term development. As of date, there is a lack of comprehensive and reliable public data on the non-

Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2023. Available online at:

<https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2023/>

⁶³ This data is based on the survey that National Resource Centre for Civil Society with organisations that had previous US funding support.

⁶⁴ Institute for Democracy and Mediation "OPINION POLL 2023: TRUST IN GOVERNANCE". IDM, 2023. Available online at: [Opinion-Poll-2023-EN.pdf](#)

⁶⁵ National Resource Centre for Civil Society, 2025, Available online at: [Public Call to EU Institutions and Member States - National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania](#)

⁶⁶ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2025*, Available online at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2025>

profit sector.⁶⁷ There is no consolidated national database that provides essential information on the number of organisations, their legal forms, fields of activity, geographic coverage, number of employees and volunteers, or annual income⁶⁸. Official statistical data are not collected or published in a systematic manner, making it difficult to assess not only the actual size of the sector but also its social and economic contribution to the country's development. The electronic register that would enable this information is yet to be functional.⁶⁹ As a result, the role and value of civil society, particularly its economic value, remain largely unknown⁷⁰ and underestimated by public institutions and the wider public.

Financial sustainability represents another challenge for civil society organisations. The sector has historically relied heavily on foreign donor funding, which remains the main source of income for the majority of organisations. However, in recent years, the overall availability of foreign funding has become increasingly limited due to shifting donor priorities, global geopolitical developments, and the reallocation of resources toward other regions and crises.⁷¹ This reduction in available external funding has intensified competition among organisations, placing additional pressure on their operational capacity and long-term planning. Many organisations face difficulties in covering administrative costs, retaining qualified staff, and maintaining continuity between projects.

At the same time, donor dependency continues to influence the thematic focus of civil society work, at times diverting attention away from locally identified priorities and grassroots needs and reducing the inclusiveness and responsiveness of the sector. Public funding has not been sufficient to compensate for these financial constraints. State support for civil society remains limited in scope and scale, with the Agency for the Support of Civil Society,⁷² established in 2009, continuing to serve as the main public institution mandated to provide financial assistance to nonprofit organisations. The level of funding distributed by the Agency has not increased substantially over the years, despite the growing needs of the sector. Furthermore, although the Agency's mandate includes support for the institutional development of organisations, this form of funding has yet to be effectively implemented.⁷³ As a result, public support remains largely focused on short-term project grants, offering limited opportunities to strengthen organisational capacities, financial sustainability, or long-term strategic development.

"In my 22 years of working in the nonprofit sector, I never seen it in a more difficult position than it is today. This is an extremely challenging moment. The withdrawal of US funding has triggered a domino

⁶⁷ INSTAT does not publish a dedicated statistical dataset on the nonprofit sector as an economic sector.

⁶⁸ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2023) "Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024", pg. 8. Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/monitoring-matrix-report-2022.pdf>

⁶⁹ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024, pg. 12. Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

⁷⁰ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024, pg. 12. Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

⁷¹ Partners Albania for Change and Development (2025) "Community Foundation in Albania". Available online at: [Publications – Partners Albania for Change and Development](#)

⁷² Agency for the Support of Civil Society, 2024, Decision No. 02, dated 23.04.2024 "For the approval of project proposal, call for proposals 17 and the funding amounts. Available online at: <https://amshc.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Vendimi-Nr.-2-I-Bordit-Mbikqyres-2024.pdf>

⁷³ Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024, pg. 23. Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

effect, influencing even other bilateral and multilateral donors and further limited support to civil society. This situation poses a particular challenge for small and medium-sized organisations, which often lack the capacity to compete with larger organisations.” (Executive Director of youth organisations)

And in the last years, Albania is progressing in accession negotiations at a time when the civil society ecosystem supporting democratic oversight is facing financial contraction. This tension risks weakening the very actors expected to contribute to reform sustainability and alignment with EU standards.

Geographical disparities within the civil society sector further compound these challenges. Civil society in Albania initially developed as a predominantly urban phenomenon, and this pattern remains largely unchanged. The majority of organisations continue to be based in larger cities such as Tirana, Shkodra, Vlora, and Elbasan, even when their activities extend to other parts of the country⁷⁴. Organisations operating in smaller municipalities and rural areas are often underdeveloped, lack stable funding, and do not have permanent staff. Compared to organisations based in urban centres, those working in rural areas rely primarily on project-based staff and temporary engagement, which limits continuity, institutional memory, and long-term presence in local communities. These territorial disparities reduce the reach of civil society and contribute to uneven access to civic initiatives and services across the country.

With recent development, public perception also remains a significant challenge for civil society organisations in Albania. Despite their contributions to public debate, service provision, and advocacy for democratic and social reforms, many organisations continue to face public scepticism. A segment of the population perceives civil society organisations as detached from citizens’ everyday concerns or as primarily accountable to donors rather than to local communities. This perception weakens public trust, limits civic participation, and reduces broader societal support for civil society initiatives, particularly those focused on advocacy, accountability, and rights-based work.

4.7. Main actors in each of the areas of civil society (min. 5 examples with hyperlinks to their websites/social media working in each of the areas):

Areas of civil society work	4-5 most active/known orgs in that area + hyperlink to their website/social media	Very brief (2-3 sentences description of the org)
Civic engagement/democracy	Partners Albania for Change and Development The Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI) European Movement Albania Civic Resistance ALTRI	- Partners Albania is an independent Albanian NGO established in 2001, working to support civil society and facilitate inter-sector cooperation in order to strengthen democratic institutions and advance economic development. - CDI is a civil society organisation in Albania that promotes good governance, democratic participation,

⁷⁴ Partners Albania for Change and Development, 2025, “Capacity and Needs Assessment of Civil Society in Albania 2024” <https://resourcecentre.al/news/capacity-and-needs-assessment-of-civil-society-organisations-in-albania-2024/>



		and transparency through policy research, advocacy, and citizen engagement. - European Movement Albania is an independent, non-profit organization, combining think tank and advocacy instruments. established in 2007, in response to Albania's increased efforts at speeding up the process of preparing for EU accession. - Civic Resistance (Qëndresa Qytetare) is an Albanian civil society organisation and grassroots movement focused on strengthening democracy, fighting corruption, and empowering citizens to hold public institutions accountable. - The mission of the ALTRI Center during the exercise of its activity is research, study, awareness, advocacy and lobbying on legal and territorial issues as well as supporting the legislative process and drafting of legislation.
Gender/Women's rights	Gender Alliance for Development Center The Albanian Women Empower Network-AWEN Counseling Line for Women and Girls - CLWG Women Centre "Light Steps"	- Established in 1994 as the Women's Center, Gender Alliance for Development Centre is a non-partisan non-profit organization with over 20 years of experience in research, public education, capacity development assistance, monitoring, and advocacy. GADC promotes democratic development and good governance with special focus on gender equity and social inclusion. - AWEN is established on July 1st, 2009 (and legally registered on December 27th, 2011) as initiative of eight non-profit organizations aiming at strengthening the cooperation among organizations in order to enhance the impact of joint activities at national level and to empower the feminist movement in Albania.



		3. CLGV opened the first Counseling Line for Women and Girls who have been abused in Albania in 1996 and provide telephone counseling as well as face-to-face counseling to hundreds of women every year by offering free psychological and legal counseling, with the aim of empowering and supporting women who are victims of violence. 4. The Women Centre “Light Steps” of Shkodra, is a civil society organisation dedicated to supporting and empowering women and girls, promoting gender equality, and providing services and advocacy to address social and economic challenges they face.
Migration	1. Nisma për Ndryshim Shogëror ARSIS (Nisma ARSIS) 2. Different and Equal 3. Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) 4. Vatra Centre	1. Nisma për Ndryshim Shoqëror ARSIS (Nisma ARSIS) is a non-profit organisation established in 2006 that works to protect and empower vulnerable children, women, and families in Albania through child protection, anti-violence and anti-trafficking interventions, emergency shelter and refugee support, education and community-based services, minority inclusion, youth engagement, and socio-economic empowerment initiatives. 2. D&E is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing high quality reintegration services for victims of trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and to improving the legal, institutional and social context to prevent and counter these violations of human rights. 3. The Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) is an independent, non-partisan and nonprofit organization dedicated to the study of economic



		and social issues in Albania following the democratic changes of 1990. Naturally areas like migration, issues related to marginalize societal groups like Roma, economic and social development as well as regional and European integration became the main areas of CESS research activity. 4. “Vatra” Psycho-Social Center works for the prevention of human trafficking, domestic violence and all other forms of violence and abuse, protection of survivors of these phenomena in Albania, and their socio-economic empowerment through information, education, advocacy, residential and community services.
Youth engagement/activization	1. Beyond Barriers Association 2. National Youth Congress 3. Youth Act Albania 4. Code Albania 5. CRCA/ECPAT Albania	1. BBA is a non-profit, civil society organization, established in 2004 working with young people in national, regional and European levels, by promoting inclusion and skills through non formal education. 2. The National Youth Congress is the umbrella youth organisation in Albania dedicated to empowering young people by representing their interests, strengthening youth participation in decision-making, and fostering collaboration among youth organisations at the national level. 3. Youth Act Albania is a youth-led organisation that promotes active citizenship, democratic participation, and social inclusion by empowering young people through advocacy, civic education, community initiatives, and policy engagement at local and national levels. 4. Code Albania is a youth-led organisation active in Shkodra that engages young people in civic participation and community



		initiatives through trainings, volunteering, and local campaigns. 5. CRCA/ECPAT Albania is a non-governmental, non-political, non-religious, and non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and advancement of children and youth rights in Albania.
Climate/environment	1. EcoAlbania 2. Milieukontakt Albania 3. PPNEA 4. Environmental Center for Development Education and Networking 5. The Resource Environmental Center Albania (REC Albania)	1. The center for Protection of the Natural Ecosystems in Albania (EcoAlbania) is a non-governmental environmental organisation created as a joint initiative of professors of the Department of Biology of the Tirana University and the “Save the Blue Heart of Europe” team in Albania. 2. Milieukontakt Albania has more than 19 years of experience working with civil society on environment, nature and sustainable development as well as with authorities dealing with these issues in Albania. 3. Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) is a non-governmental environmental organization that operates nationwide, known to be the first environmental organization in Albania. 4. Eden Center is an Albanian environmental organisation dedicated to promoting sustainable development, environmental protection, and public awareness through research, advocacy, and community engagement initiatives. 5. The Resource Environmental Center Albania (REC Albania) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to inspiring and catalysing action for the sustainable development of Albanian society.
Transparency and accountability, including election monitoring	1. Albanian Helsinki Committee 2. Institute for Democracy and Mediation	1. The Albanian Helsinki Committee is an independent human rights organisation in Albania that monitors and reports on



	3. Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions - KRIIK 4. Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance	human rights violations and advocates for stronger rule of law and the protection of fundamental freedoms. 2. IDM is an Albanian think tank that conducts policy research and supports democratic governance, rule of law, anti-corruption, and European integration through analysis, advocacy, and public dialogue. 3. Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions is a civil society coalition in Albania that promotes democratic reforms, European integration, and the strengthening of accountable and transparent institutions through monitoring, policy advocacy, and structured dialogue with public authorities. 4. Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance is an independent research and policy organisation in Albania that advances democratic governance, rule of law, and institutional accountability through analysis, public dialogue, and evidence-based policy recommendations.
Media/media freedoms	1. Albanian Media Institute 2. Albanian Center for Quality Journalism 3. Association of Journalist of Albania 4. Citizens Channel 5. AMFORA	1. Albanian Media Institute promotes professional journalism, media ethics, and media freedom through training, research, and advocacy. 2. The Albanian Center for Quality Journalism is a non-profit media organisation based in Tirana, focused on investigative, in-depth and data-driven journalism. 3. Association of Journalists of Albania advocates for media freedom, professional standards, and the protection of journalists, contributing to a more reliable and accountable information environment in Albania.



		4. Citizens Channel is an independent, non-profit media platform based in Tirana, Albania, focused on community reporting, social justice, and citizen participation in public life. 5. Amfora.al (Amfora Media) is a non-profit online media outlet based in Durrës that produces in-depth investigative reporting on democracy, transparency, and corruption, with a strong focus on cultural heritage and archaeology.
Disinformation	1. Faktoje.al 2. Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Albania – BIRN Albania 3. Qendra Res Publica 4. AWA – Albanian Women Audiovisual 5. SCiDEV Center	1. Faktoje is an independent, non-partisan fact-checking media organization based in Albania. It focuses on verifying public claims, political promises, and widely circulated news, with the aim of improving transparency, accountability, and media literacy in the country. 2. BIRN Albania is an independent media organisation that promotes investigative journalism, transparency, and accountability through in-depth reporting, media monitoring, and support for professional journalism standards in Albania. 3. Qendra Res Publica supports access to information and transparency, contributing to countering misinformation. Albania and the Western Balkans. 4. Albanian Women Audiovisual (AWA – Albanian Woman in Audiovisual) is a non-profit organisation in Albania that promotes and protects the rights and representation of women, girls, and youth in the audiovisual sector through advocacy, training/mentoring, and concrete media projects. 5. The Center Science and Innovation for Development (SCiDEV) is a Tirana-based independent think tank focusing on democratization, media, science

		communication, and digital transformation in
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4.8. Notable not registered or informal initiatives

In recent years, Albania has witnessed the emergence of informal civic initiatives and grassroots movements had a visible impact on public debate. These initiatives are often issue-driven, decentralised, and mobilised primarily through social media platforms rather than through institutional structures. They tend to emerge around specific triggers, including environmental protection, urban development, education reform, anti-corruption concerns, gender-based violence, and transparency in governance. One of the most significant examples has been the student mobilisation of 2018–2019, which, although initially spontaneous and not institutionally structured, shaped national debate on higher education reform and government accountability.⁷⁵ Similarly, civic mobilisation surrounding the protection of the National Theatre in Tirana generated sustained public debate and international attention regarding cultural heritage and urban governance.⁷⁶ Environmental protest movements opposing hydropower development and large-scale infrastructure projects have also demonstrated the ability of informal civic groups to influence media coverage and policy discussions. A notable example is the civic mobilisation to protect the Vjosa River, which brought together local activists, environmental organisations, international advocacy networks, and informal grassroots initiatives. The campaign played a significant role in raising national and international awareness about the ecological value of the Vjosa as one of Europe’s last wild rivers and contributed to the government’s decision in 2023 to designate it as a National Park.⁷⁷ This case illustrated how sustained civic engagement, including informal mobilisation and digital advocacy, can shape policy outcomes and public discourse.

However, the sustainability and frequency of such informal initiatives remain uneven. Survey findings suggest that civic movements in Albania face significant visibility and engagement deficits.⁷⁸ While certain moments, such as “Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit”⁷⁹ have generated strong mobilisation and public visibility, sustained collective action is comparatively rare and tends to decline once immediate triggers fade. Many initiatives are reactive and event-driven, with limited long-term organisational continuity or access to stable resources.

Although the causes promoted by these movements are widely perceived as relevant and their activity is expected to be stronger, this coexists with high social apathy and low levels of direct engagement.

⁷⁵ Blendi Kajsia, “Polarization without radicalization: political radicalism in Albania in a comparative perspective,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (2016). Available online at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14782804.2016.1159545>

⁷⁶ Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), reporting and analysis on the National Theatre protests, available at: <https://balkaninsight.com>

⁷⁷ Riverwatch and EuroNatur, documentation of the “Save the Blue Heart of Europe” campaign and the Vjosa River National Park designation; see also reporting by Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), available online at: <https://balkaninsight.com> and campaign information available online at: <https://www.saveblueheart.org>

⁷⁸ Center for Economic and Social Studies, “SOCIAL (CIVIC) MOVEMENTS IN ALBANIA AN ANALYSIS ON CITIZENS’ PERCEPTION AND MOVEMENTS CAPACITIES TO TRIGGER CHANGE”, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2020. Available online at: <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Report-English-FINAL.pdf>

⁷⁹ More information about this movement is available at: https://www.facebook.com/mbroteatrin/?locale=sq_AL

Informal structures enable rapid mobilisation particularly through television and social media, but sustaining long term participation remains a structural challenge⁸⁰.

4.9. CSOs needs and gaps

Program Delivery and Management (program project management, MEL)

With regard to program delivery and management, all interviewed organisations reported using a licensed Microsoft Office 365 as their primary digital productivity environment. This includes authorised access to Microsoft services such as Outlook, Word, Excel, Teams, Forms, and SharePoint, ensuring compliance with standard security, data protection, and licensing requirements. These tools are used for email communication, document drafting, basic data tracking, internal coordination, data collection, and document management. Outlook serves as the primary channel for internal and external communication; Word supports narrative reporting and administrative documentation; Excel is used for budget management and basic indicator tracking; Teams facilitates staff and external communication and coordination; Forms is applied for surveys and feedback collection, and only one organisation report the usage of Microsoft Forms for advance requests and travel authorisations and has also integrated it into its internal project management procedures; and SharePoint is used as a structured document management system, including document libraries with version control and access management. For trainings organisations highlighted to use free of charge available social tools like Mentimeter, and Zoom. One organisation has an CRM in place that record the beneficiaries and stakeholders that have benefited from the project.

We had a case management system in place for three years to record our cases, but the costs of maintaining and updating it were extremely high, and we no longer use it.

The main problem for our organisation and for organisations we work with is the lack of sustainable funding for case management and MEL systems, forcing us to rely on manual Excel-based processes despite the high need for proper digital infrastructure." (Executive Director of children and youth organisations)

While this set of tools enables organisations to meet essential operational needs and demonstrates a moderate level of digital functionality, their overall use remains largely operational rather than fully integrated across programme management and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) processes. For national organisations working with local and grassroots organisations, it was emphasised that the needs at the local level are more pronounced and require targeted support. When asked about Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL), most organisations interviewed reported that they conduct MEL activities.

Further discussion indicated that these processes are carried out largely manually, with digital tools used mainly for documentation and data storage rather than as integrated MEL systems. Respondents identified limited training opportunities, outdated hardware, particularly among organisations providing social services and daily care, insufficient funding, and uneven levels of digital confidence among staff as key factors constraining their ability to expand digital practices beyond core operational needs.

⁸⁰ Center for Economic and Social Studies, "SOCIAL (CIVIC) MOVEMENTS IN ALBANIA AN ANALYSIS ON CITIZENS' PERCEPTION AND MOVEMENTS CAPACITIES TO TRIGGER CHANGE", Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2020. Available online at: <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Report-English-FINAL.pdf>

Fundraising and Development (donor management, donor engagement, calls monitoring, grant writing, fundraising)

Concerning fundraising and development activities, findings from interviews with experts and CSOs indicate that these functions are entirely sustained through human capacity rather than digital infrastructure. Within the interviewed organisations, fundraising is largely carried out through staff-driven processes, and none reported using dedicated digital tools or platforms for this purpose. Donor identification, engagement, monitoring of calls for proposals, grant writing, and reporting are mainly managed by staff members relying on their experience and direct communication with donors. Information on funding opportunities and donor requirements is typically tracked manually, through donor's website, email correspondence, social media platforms, or individual monitoring of calls for proposals. At the time of the interviews, none of the organisations reported using specialised digital tools for donor relationship management, fundraising automation, or systematic tracking of funding opportunities. Interviewees identified several needs in this area, including support in systematising donor information, improving tracking mechanisms for funding opportunities, and strengthening long-term strategic donor engagement. While there was expressed interest in adopting more structured tools or digital platforms, this was frequently accompanied by concerns related to limited staff capacity, lack of technical training, and the absence of internal processes necessary for effective implementation and sustainability of such systems.

"We are a small team of five, with only three people directly involved in project design and management, so fundraising and donor communication depend entirely on our internal capacity. We do not use any dedicated digital tools; instead, we manually monitor donor websites and calls for proposals and adapt independently to different donor platforms.

The three staff members engaged in project design fulfil multiple roles simultaneously, and we need support to better systematise donor information and improve the tracking of funding opportunities." (Executive Director of environment organisations)

Communications and Marketing (organization media/social media presence, campaigning, digital marketing, content and graphics creation)

Communications and marketing activities within the interviewed organisations are primarily carried out through staff-led coordination, and in some cases supported by outsourced services or hired experts. All organisations reported having a website and maintaining an active presence on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn. These platforms are used to increase visibility, disseminate activities, communicate campaigns, and engage target audiences. Posting and interaction with followers are managed either by designated communications staff, where such roles exist, or by programme staff who assume communication responsibilities alongside their primary duties. More specialised tasks, including graphic design, video production, or campaign development, are occasionally outsourced, particularly by organisations with larger project portfolios or specific communication needs. With regard to the management of the web page, only the administrator or the hosted company has access to the web.

Two organisations, one working in the environmental field and the other providing social services for migrants, reported the absence of dedicated communications personnel. In these cases, outreach

activities are handled on an ad hoc basis and shaped by immediate project requirements and available staff capacity. Communication planning, content scheduling, and performance tracking are often informal and unsystematic. Even among organisations with designated staff or external support, the use of structured digital tools for content management, audience analytics, and campaign performance monitoring remains limited. As such, institutional learning and continuity in communication strategies are constrained, particularly when responsibilities shift between staff members or external providers. While social media platforms enable basic outreach, the absence of clearly defined roles and integrated digital systems limits organisations' ability to plan long-term campaigns, systematically assess impact, and build a coherent and sustainable digital presence. Most marketing campaigns are done through Facebook platform. With regard to content and graphic design, most organisations reported using Canva as their primary tool. One organisation indicated that it outsources graphic design services, while another reported using a combination of Canva, Piktochart, and Adobe Illustrator for more advanced design needs. So, content production relies mainly on accessible, user-friendly tools rather than specialised professional design software.

" We use Instagram primarily to communicate with younger audiences and Facebook to engage with donors. However, although we post regularly, there is a need for greater knowledge on how to optimise these platforms, including identifying the best times to post and how to analyse performance data, as we currently do not systematically use analytics to inform our communication strategies. (Executive Director of youth organisations)

Operations and Collaboration (information management, team collaboration, finance management)

Three of the interviewed organisations indicated that they use customised Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems to systematise information management and facilitate partner identification. These systems are used to organise contact databases, track communication with donors and partners, manage project-related information, and maintain institutional records in a more structured manner. The use of CRM tools reflects an effort to move beyond informal data management practices and improve continuity, coordination, and accountability within the organisation. One organisation working in the field of children's and youth rights, which also provides online counselling services, reported using a dedicated case management system (SCART) to manage service delivery and client information. The system supports secure documentation of cases, tracking of consultations, and internal monitoring of service provision. This indicates a higher level of digital systematisation in service-oriented work, particularly where confidentiality, data protection, and structured follow-up are essential. Another organisation working in the area of women rights offering also online consulting mentioned that they have improved their customised CRM (Cast Mode LKGV) in the area of data protection in consultation of Commissioner for the Right to Information and Personal Data Protections. All the other organisations mentioned that being a small team information management and team collaborations is conducted via meetings and Microsoft Office 365.

Concerning financial management, one of the interviewed organisations reported using Excel as its primary tool for financial management. When asked about the rationale for this choice, the organisation explained that Excel was perceived as practical, familiar, and easy to use within their existing workflow. Another factor influencing this decision was the average age of the staff, which is approximately 45 years. The organisation noted that team members feel more comfortable working with familiar tools rather than

adopting specialised financial management software that would require additional training and adaptation. Another organisation, working in the field of children and youth rights, indicated that it uses QuickBooks for financial administration since it is an easy application and in the last months, they have included AI tools to facilitate financial transaction. While other interviewed organisations reported using Alpha as their accounting software, reflecting a more structured approach to financial management. Overall, the findings suggest varying levels of digitalisation in financial management, ranging from basic spreadsheet-based systems to dedicated accounting software solutions.

Physical security (office and workers protection, crisis management)

With regard to physical and digital security, the interviewed organisations demonstrate uneven levels of preparedness, with most measures concentrated on basic digital safeguards rather than comprehensive organisational security planning. Several organisations reported relying on Microsoft security features embedded within their licensed Microsoft 365 environment, including access control, password management, and two-factor authentication. Cloud-based services are widely used for hosting and data storage, and regular backups are conducted in some cases to minimise data loss risks. However, only one organisation reported using dedicated antivirus software such as Bitdefender as an additional layer of cybersecurity protection.

Staff skills and training

When it comes to staff skills and training, all interviewed organisations emphasised a need for continuous capacity-building across the areas outlined above, particularly on the recent developments. Having project-based support, organisations highlighted the importance of dedicated financial resources, in addition to technical trainings, to cover subscription fees and maintenance costs for digital platforms and software. Without such support, even when staff competencies are strengthened, the long-term sustainability and effective use of digital tools remain uncertain. Only one organisation, working in the field of media and disinformation, reported that it provides training on digital media literacy targeting journalists. Another organisation, active in the area of children and youth rights, indicated that it delivers accredited digital training programmes for teachers.

Program Delivery and Management (Project Management and MEL)

Although organisations use licensed Microsoft Office 365 tools effectively for day-to-day operations, their use remains largely operational rather than strategically integrated into programme management and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems. According to the interviews, there is a clear need to strengthen organisational capacity in the effective use of Microsoft Office 365 for streamlining internal procedures and improving workflow management. In addition, there is limited awareness of digital platforms specifically tailored to the way how organisations operate, including tools that can support project management, documentation, and data protection. The interviewers also highlight the need to identify and adopt more suitable and sustainable solutions for Monitoring and Evaluation systems, as current practices remain largely manual and lack integrated digital support.

Fundraising and Development

The needs identified in the program delivery and management are applicable to this topic, in particular in access to information on available digital solutions. Fundraising functions rely almost entirely on human capacity and personal networks, without structured digital systems. Thus, the interviews highlighted the need to establish simple and affordable digital systems for tracking funding opportunities, managing donor information, and organising information according to donor funding cycle, that would support organisations in the future.

Communications and Marketing

Organisations maintain active social media presence but operate primarily at platform level without integrated communication strategies or analytics-driven decision-making. As regards, the interviewers stressed a need to strengthen strategic communication capacities. Capacity-building support is required to help organisations move from ad hoc, platform-based posting toward the development of integrated communication strategies aligned with their mission, advocacy objectives, and target audiences. This includes training on strategic messaging, audience segmentation, branding, and content planning. Organisations, particularly those working with youth, stressed that there is a need to increase practical skills in the use of analytical tools to inform decision-making processes within organisation including measuring reach and assessing impact to adapt the communication plan based on the data received from digital platforms. For organisations working on environmental issues in particular, communication functions are often underdeveloped and treated as secondary to programme implementation. Therefore, targeted support is needed to institutionalise communication roles, integrate communication planning into project design, and allocate resources for sustained outreach efforts. Building these capacities would contribute to stronger advocacy impact, broader public mobilisation, and improved donor visibility.

Operations and Collaboration

Interview findings indicate that organisations, particularly small and grassroots-level organisations, have significant capacity-building needs in operations and collaboration, primarily related to strengthening digital systematisation, data protection, and institutional continuity. Another key need identified in this area concerns the financial dimension of digitalisation. The interviews revealed that most organisations operate on a project-based funding model, where digital infrastructure and system development are rarely covered by project budgets. As a result, there is a lack of consistent and long-term financial resources to invest in digital systems. Even in cases where systems have been previously established, their maintenance and regular updating remain costly, making sustainability a major challenge.

Interviewees highlighted the need for clearer guidance on what digital safety entails in practice and how it can be effectively implemented within daily organisational operations. This includes building practical understanding of cybersecurity risks, safe data storage, password management, secure communication tools, and incident response procedures.

Media literacy/critical thinking

Most organisations do not work systematically with media, nor do they have structured approaches to media literacy or critical thinking within their programmes. Engagement with media-related issues tends

to be reactive and limited to communication needs rather than integrated as a core component of advocacy or service delivery. As a result, there is a need to build foundational understanding of what media literacy and critical thinking mean in practice for civil society organisations and how these concepts can be operationalised within programme design, youth engagement, and community outreach.

Mis- and Disinformation

Interviews with CSOs report that while staff members are generally aware of the risks and can identify obvious misinformation, there is limited structured capacity in areas such as digital risk assessment, strategic counter-messaging, and online response. Organisational capacities in this field often rely on individual experience rather than institutionalised procedures. In this context, organisations identify the need for targeted support, including training on recognising and responding to disinformation, developing strategic communication and crisis management plans, strengthening digital security and monitoring capacities, and building partnerships with media and fact-checking actors. Support for proactive communication strategies and data-driven messaging would further enhance resilience to reputational risks and strengthen public trust.

5. Disinformation Landscape

5.1. What are the biggest challenges around addressing disinformation in the country?

Albania's information ecosystem is characterised by structural, professional, and regulatory weaknesses that continue to undermine effective responses to disinformation. As noted above, the highly fragmented media landscape, marked by hundreds of online news portals operating alongside traditional broadcasters, creates incentives to prioritise speed, sensationalism, and audience engagement over accuracy and verification, particularly in outlets lacking transparent ownership, sustainable financing, and effective editorial oversight. Within this environment, attempts to misinform and disseminate propaganda remain persistent, driven by low professional standards, weak self-regulation, and intense political polarisation.⁸¹

Analytical assessments of the Albanian media environment indicate persistent weaknesses in media ethics and journalistic practices that contribute directly to the spread of disinformation. Studies analysing Albanian-language media content show that verification standards are frequently compromised, particularly in online outlets operating under strong political and economic pressure, where speed and audience engagement take precedence over accuracy.⁸² Disinformation narratives are often reproduced without contextualisation or independent confirmation, especially in coverage related to international

⁸¹ Albanian Media Institute (2021) "*Media polarization and media (dis)trust in Albania*". Available online at: <https://institutemedia.org/media-polarization-and-media-distrust-in-albania/>

⁸² Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Albania. *False News on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in the Albanian-Language Media*. Tirana: BIRN Albania, 2023. <https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/False-news-on-Russias-invasion-of-Ukraine-in-the-Albanian-language-media.pdf>

crises, geopolitical alignments, and domestic political competition.⁸³ These analyses further demonstrate that politically affiliated actors play a central role in shaping and amplifying misleading narratives, exploiting both traditional and digital media ecosystems to reinforce polarisation and undermine trust in democratic institutions.⁸⁴ The findings point to systemic challenges rather than isolated professional lapses, highlighting the interaction between weak editorial safeguards, political influence, and insufficient self-regulatory mechanisms as key drivers of disinformation in Albania.

Interviews conducted with media and disinformation-focused organisations indicate that disinformation has increased in recent years, particularly during the 2025 electoral period. Disinformation is reported to circulate primarily through social media platforms, online portals, and informal digital networks, where content spreads rapidly and without verification. Civil society organisations note that disinformation, particularly those working on human rights affects their work by distorting public debates and contributing to social polarisation. In some cases, organisations working on sensitive issues, particularly in the areas of women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights, have experienced reputational attacks, misrepresentation of their positions, or the dissemination of inaccurate information about their activities.

5.2. Are there recurrent or particularly noticeable disinformation narratives in the country?

The Albanian media landscape reveals vulnerability to foreign information manipulation, marked by the recurrent circulation of narratives aligned with adversarial actors such as Russia, China, and far-right networks.⁸⁵ While Albania remains firmly pro-Western at the political and societal level, its digital media space has proven exposed to hostile narratives that portray NATO as fuelling or provoking regional conflicts and depict the European Union as divided, overbearing, or disconnected from citizens' interests. This exposure does not stem from a shift in public alignment but rather reflects the impact of organised disinformation strategies employed by foreign and domestic actors whose interest's conflict with those of NATO and the EU. As documented in analyses of Albanian media and social media content, these narratives are primarily generated by external actors, including Russia, China, and Iran, and are amplified through hybrid tactics such as propaganda, manipulation, and coordinated disinformation campaigns. These actors exploit technological advances, social media platforms, and weak editorial filtering to spread false or distorted messages that seek to undermine trust in Euro-Atlantic institutions, justify Russia's military aggression against Ukraine by framing NATO as the aggressor, and present the EU as an ineffective or hegemonic project. The circulation of such narratives in the Albanian media environment illustrates how a fragmented digital ecosystem and reliance on republished content can function as a conduit for foreign-origin disinformation, even in a country with a strong pro-NATO and pro-EU orientation.⁸⁶ This phenomenon is largely driven by systemic weaknesses in the local online media market, where minimal

⁸³ Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Albania. *The Distribution of Disinformation Narratives by Hostile Actors Against NATO and the EU in the Albanian Media*. Tirana: BIRN Albania, 2024. <https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/The-distribution-of-disinformation-narratives-by-hostile-actors-against-NATO-and-the-EU-in-the-Albanian-media.pdf>

⁸⁴ Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Albania. *Media Monitoring and Disinformation Analysis Reports*. Tirana: BIRN Albania, various years. <https://birn.eu.com/network/birn-albania/birn-albania-outputs/>

⁸⁵ Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Albania, *The Distribution of Disinformation Narratives by Hostile Actors Against NATO and the EU in the Albanian Media* (Tirana, 2024). Available online at: <https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/The-distribution-of-disinformation-narratives-by-hostile-actors-against-NATO-and-the-EU-in-the-Albanian-media.pdf>

⁸⁶ Ibid, page 10 - 13

regulation, anonymous ownership, and limited financial resources have fostered a copy-paste editorial culture in which speed and traffic generation are prioritised over rigorous fact-checking and sources.

Disinformation during the electoral period circulated primarily through social media platforms, particularly Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, where both official political actors and unaffiliated third-party pages disseminated manipulative and misleading content⁸⁷. Monitoring identified 58 third-party pages that promoted or attacked candidates without transparency, often using AI-generated or manipulated materials and bot-driven engagement to artificially amplify visibility. These pages typically lacked clear identification, verifiable contact information, or affiliation with recognised media or political entities⁸⁸. In addition, targeted advertising, including diaspora-focused campaigns, was used to influence voters, demonstrating a coordinated and increasingly sophisticated use of digital channels for disinformation purposes.⁸⁹

5.3. Who is countering it?

At the parliamentary level, the Ad Hoc Special Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Interference and Disinformation (FIMI) was established in April 2024, in response to growing concerns about foreign interference, hybrid threats, and their impact on democratic processes.⁹⁰ The Commission operated as a temporary, mandate-bound body tasked with reviewing the existing legal and institutional framework, assessing Albania's vulnerabilities to foreign interference and disinformation, and proposing strategic and legislative measures broadly aligned with European Union acts and recommendations.

Throughout 2024, the Commission conducted a series of hearings and consultations with public institutions, security and intelligence bodies, media representatives, and civil society organisations. These proceedings aimed to map risks related to external influence, cyber threats, and disinformation campaigns. However, the work of the commission was marked by limited political consensus, as the parliamentary opposition largely boycotted its activities, citing concerns over the scope of the mandate, the lack of adequate safeguards for freedom of expression and media independence, and the potential for misuse of counter-disinformation measures for political control. This boycott raised broader questions about the inclusiveness, balance, and legitimacy of the process.⁹¹ The Commission concluded its mandate with the drafting of the National Strategy against Foreign Interference and Disinformation,⁹² accompanied by an action plan assigning follow-up responsibility primarily to the executive branch. It aims to safeguard national interests through a coordinated and effective approach to addressing the challenges posed by foreign malign interference, including disinformation, in order to preserve the stability and integrity of the country's democratic processes.

⁸⁷ Likmeta B., Voko K., "SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING Albania's Parliamentary Elections 2025", International Idea, 2025. Available online at: [Social Media Monitoring: Albania's Parliamentary Elections 2025](#)

⁸⁸ Ibid, page 1

⁸⁹ Ibid, page 6

⁹⁰ Balkan Insight. "Albania Parliament's Disinformation Committee: Welcome Vigilance or Threat to Free Expression?" *Balkan Insight*, April 25, 2024. Available online at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/04/25/albania-parliaments-disinformation-committee-welcome-vigilance-or-threat-to-free-expression/>

⁹¹ Balkan Insight. "Albania's Anti-Disinformation Drive Raises Fears of Media Control." *Balkan Insight*, 2024. Available online at: <https://balkaninsight.com>

⁹² Official Gazette 138/2025 "National Strategy against Foreign Interference and Disinformation". Available online at: <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2025/138/cbf95d79-f5b6-494f-b637-e3c169c459ce>

How active is the government in the effort of combatting disinformation?

International and regional evaluations further suggest that Albania lacks a coordinated whole-of-government approach to countering disinformation. The country has not adopted a comprehensive national action plan comparable to emerging EU practices.⁹³ Government responses have instead tended to rely on ad hoc measures, public statements, or platform-level interventions framed around public safety or security concerns. Media freedom organisations have cautioned that such responses, if not embedded within transparent, proportionate, and rights-based frameworks, risk undermining freedom of expression and public trust.⁹⁴ At the regulatory level, the primary institutional actor remains the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), whose mandate focuses on audiovisual broadcasters and compliance with ethical and professional standards. However, multiple assessments note that AMA's competencies do not extend to online-only media or social media platforms, which represent the main channels through which disinformation circulates in Albania⁹⁵. As a result, existing oversight mechanisms remain partially misaligned with the structure of the contemporary digital information ecosystem.

Monitoring reports and international assessments consistently indicate that Albania has not yet developed comprehensive regulatory or co-regulatory tools specifically designed to address disinformation in digital media while safeguarding freedom of expression.^{96,97} Although media legislation is broadly aligned with European standards, implementation challenges persist, and institutional mechanisms for digital platform governance remain limited. Available evidence suggests that its approach remains largely reactive and fragmented, with limited preventive capacity. Long-term effectiveness is constrained by the absence of sustained institutional mechanisms, insufficient investment in media literacy and independent journalism, and the lack of systematic cooperation with civil society actors, who continue to play a central role in fact-checking, investigative reporting, and resilience-building efforts.⁹⁸

Are media/media associations active when it comes to combating disinformation?

Media actors and media associations in Albania have shown increasing engagement in addressing disinformation, although efforts remain fragmented and largely project-based. Independent media outlets such as reporter.al⁹⁹, fact-checking platforms,¹⁰⁰ and investigative journalism organisations¹⁰¹ play a central role in monitoring public discourse and exposing false or misleading narratives. Professional

⁹³ SafeJournalists Network, monitoring reports on media freedom and regulatory interventions in the Western Balkans, available at: <https://safejournalists.net>

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ European Commission, *Albania 2025 Enlargement Report*, section on media regulation and digital environment, available at: <https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu>

⁹⁶ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2025: Albania*, section on media environment and disinformation, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/albania/nations-transit/2025>

⁹⁷ Regional Cooperation Council, *Balkan Barometer 2024 – Public Opinion Survey*, findings on trust and information sources, available at: <https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/home>

⁹⁸ European Commission, *2025 Rule of Law Report – Albania Chapter*, section on freedom of expression and civic space, available at: <https://commission.europa.eu>

⁹⁹ More information on the reporter.al is available online at: <https://www.reporter.al/>

¹⁰⁰ Faktoje.al

¹⁰¹ Birn Albania

associations and journalist networks have also raised concerns about online harassment, coordinated smear campaigns, and the impact of politically polarised information environments on public trust.¹⁰² At the institutional level, a structured dialogue between Albanian authorities and media stakeholders was launched in January 2025 with the objective of discussing key legislative and regulatory reforms aimed at strengthening freedom of expression, media freedom, and pluralism. The platform sought to provide a space for consultation on reforms affecting the media environment, including measures indirectly related to countering disinformation.¹⁰³ In June 2025, media representatives presented a set of concrete recommendations addressing transparency, regulatory independence, and safeguards against disproportionate restrictions.¹⁰⁴ The work of this dialogue platform remains ongoing, and its effectiveness will depend on the extent to which proposed recommendations are meaningfully reflected in legislative amendments.

Recent European assessments have consistently underlined the importance of aligning media-related legal amendments in Albania with Venice Commission standards prior to adoption, particularly to safeguard freedom of expression and regulatory independence.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, although Albania's Law on the Right to Information is broadly aligned with European norms, implementation challenges persist. The European Commission has noted shortcomings in the practical enforcement of transparency obligations, including delays in responses to information requests, which can hinder journalistic oversight and investigative reporting.¹⁰⁶ In this context, media organisations and journalist associations have increasingly engaged in public advocacy to protect regulatory independence, promote transparency, and counter disinformation, particularly during politically sensitive periods.¹⁰⁷

Which CSOs are focusing on it? (reference point 3.7)

Several civil society organisations in Albania are actively engaged in media-related work, particularly in the areas of investigative journalism, fact-checking, media literacy, and countering misinformation. [Faktoje.al](#) focuses on fact-checking and monitoring the accuracy of public statements and political discourse, contributing to accountability and transparency. [BIRN Albania, part of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network](#), plays a central role in investigative journalism, covering corruption, governance, public finance, and rule of law issues. [Citizens Channel](#) operates as an independent civic media platform that amplifies grassroots issues and underrepresented voices in public debate. [SciDEV](#) promotes evidence-based reporting and science journalism, strengthening the quality of information available to the public. Media Literacy Albania works on building critical thinking and digital literacy skills, particularly among youth, aiming to increase resilience to misinformation and disinformation.

¹⁰² The information is retrieved from the European Center for the Press and Media Freedom. Available online at: https://www.ecpmf.eu/safejournalists-and-mfrr-smear-campaigns-against-independent-media-and-civil-society-organisations-must-stop/?utm_source

¹⁰³ The information is retrieved from the Council of Europe website. Available online at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tirana/-/launch-of-the-open-dialogue-on-freedom-of-expression-in-albania-2>

¹⁰⁴ The information is retrieved from the SciDEV webpage. Available online at: [SciDEV contributes to high-level plenary on strengthening freedom of expression and media independence in Albania - SciDEV](#)

¹⁰⁵ Venice Commission. (2020). *Albania – Opinion on amendments to the Law on Audiovisual Media Service*. Council of Europe. Available online at: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2020\)013-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2020)013-e)

¹⁰⁶ European Commission. (2023). *Albania 2023 Report*. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2023_en

¹⁰⁷ SciDEV 2025. Information Available at: <https://scidevcenter.org/2025/09/01/media-landscape-august-2025-brief/>

5.4. What is the impact of the disinformation on CSO/civil society

Disinformation and coordinated smear narratives have had a tangible impact on civil society organisations in Albania, particularly those working on governance, anti-corruption, media freedom, environmental protection, and human rights. While Albania does not exhibit systematic state-led disinformation campaigns against CSOs comparable to some regional contexts, monitoring reports and documented cases show that politically polarised media environments and online ecosystems contribute to reputational attacks, delegitimisation narratives, and targeted harassment of civic actors.¹⁰⁸ Several civil society representatives have reported being subject to online smear campaigns and public accusations questioning their funding sources, political neutrality, or legitimacy, particularly when engaging in watchdog activities or criticising public policies.¹⁰⁹ Fact-checking platforms such as [Faktoje.al](https://faktoje.al) and investigative media including [Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Albania](https://birn.eu.com) have documented misleading narratives related to public spending, electoral processes, and international funding, which often spill over into attacks against organisations involved in monitoring or advocacy work.¹¹⁰

The impact of such narratives is multifaceted. First, reputational damage may reduce public trust and complicate partnerships with local institutions. Second, disinformation and smear campaigns may discourage civic participation and increase self-censorship among activists, particularly in smaller communities. Third, they can generate additional administrative and communication burdens for organisations forced to publicly defend their credibility rather than focus on programmatic work. Regional monitoring, including reporting by the European Commission and civil society networks, notes that hostile rhetoric and delegitimisation narratives contribute to a more constrained civic space environment.¹¹¹ In addition to reputational effects, online harassment linked to disinformation campaigns disproportionately affects women activists and journalists, who often face gendered abuse and coordinated attacks on social media platforms.¹¹² This has implications for inclusion and equal participation in public debate.

Groups most vulnerable to disinformation include:

Certain groups in Albania are particularly vulnerable to the effects of disinformation due to structural, social, and digital inequalities. Youth are especially exposed, as they rely heavily on social media platforms as their primary source of information, often in environments where media literacy and critical verification skills remain uneven.¹¹³¹¹⁴ At the same time, older populations, particularly in rural areas, face lower levels of digital literacy and may depend more on informal networks or unverified online content, increasing susceptibility to misleading narratives.¹¹⁵ Minority communities, including Roma and Egyptian communities, may experience both targeted misinformation and limited access to reliable information

¹⁰⁸ European Commission, *Albania 2025 Enlargement Report*, section on civil society and media environment, available at: <https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu>

¹⁰⁹ SafeJournalists Network, reports on harassment and smear campaigns in the Western Balkans, available at: <https://safejournalists.net>

¹¹⁰ Faktoje, monitoring of misleading public claims, <https://faktoje.al>; Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Albania, investigative reporting, <https://birn.eu.com>

¹¹¹ SafeJournalists Network, gendered online harassment monitoring reports, <https://safejournalists.net>

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ European Commission. (2023). *Albania 2023 report*. Available online at:

https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2023_en

¹¹⁴ SciDev Center. (2024). *Foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) – Analytical report Albania*. Available online at:

https://scidevcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FIMI-Analytical-Report-Albania_SciDEV.pdf

¹¹⁵ International Telecommunication Union. (2023). *Measuring digital development: Facts and figures*. Available online at: <https://www.itu.int>

sources, reinforcing existing social exclusion.¹¹⁶ Women activists and journalists represent another vulnerable group, as they are disproportionately subjected to gendered disinformation, coordinated online harassment, and reputational attacks designed to silence or intimidate them.¹¹⁷ Additionally, civil society organisations working on politically sensitive issues such as anti-corruption, electoral monitoring, environmental protection, and governance reforms are often exposed to delegitimisation narratives and smear campaigns, which can undermine public trust, restrict civic participation, and create a chilling effect on advocacy efforts.¹¹⁸

In overall, Albania's civic environment reflects a dual dynamic: formal institutional consolidation alongside persistent structural fragilities. While legal frameworks and EU alignment processes provide structured entry points for civil society engagement, financial contraction, reputational pressures, and uneven participatory practices constrain the sector's effective influence. The sustainability of democratic reforms will therefore depend not only on legislative progress, but also on the resilience and institutional strengthening of the civil society ecosystem itself.

6. Digital inclusion

6.1. In the society

Digital inclusion in Albania has improved significantly over the past decade, particularly in terms of internet access and mobile connectivity. However, disparities remain in digital skills, media literacy, and institutional digital capacity, including within the civil society sector. Internet access in Albania is widespread. According to the 2025 Survey on Information and Communication Technologies conducted by the INSTAT, 87.2% of individuals aged 16–74 used the internet in 2025, and 97.3% of users reported going online several times per day.¹¹⁹ In early 2025 Albania had approximately 2.45 million internet users, representing about 88.4% of the population.¹²⁰

Mobile connectivity is highly developed as 3.97 million mobile cellular connections in early 2025, equivalent to 143% of the total population, reflecting multiple SIM usage and multi-device ownership.¹²¹ Social media use is also widespread, with an estimated 1.41 million social media users in January 2025, representing 50.7% of the population.¹²² However, digital access does not necessarily translate into advanced digital skills or high media literacy. Albania ranks among lower-performing countries in the

¹¹⁶ UNDP Albania. (2023). *Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania – Socio-economic assessment*. Available online at: <https://www.undp.org/albania>

¹¹⁷ OSCE. (2022). *Online violence against women journalists in South-East Europe*. Available online at: <https://www.osce.org>

¹¹⁸ CIVICUS. (2023). *Civic space monitor: Albania*. Available online at: <https://monitor.civicus.org>

¹¹⁹ INSTAT, *Survey on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Usage in Households and by Individuals 2025*, available online at: <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/social-condition/information-and-communication-technologies-ict-usage-in-households-and-by-individuals/publication/2025/survey-on-information-and-communication-technologies-ict-usage-in-households-and-by-individuals-in-2025/>

¹²⁰ DataReportal, *Digital 2025: Albania*, available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-albania>

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid

Media Literacy Index, which assesses resilience to disinformation and critical engagement with media content¹²³, ranking in 38th out of 41 European countries assessed.

Educational outcomes also reflect structural challenges. The OECD PISA 2022 country note for Albania indicates that student performance remains below the OECD average in key competencies such as reading and problem-solving, which underpin digital literacy and critical information assessment.¹²⁴ The Regional Cooperation Council,¹³² highlights that while internet use and social media engagement are widespread across the Western Balkans, including Albania, digital confidence and advanced digital competencies remain unevenly distributed. The report indicates that citizens are comfortable using basic digital functions such as messaging applications, social networking platforms, and online browsing, yet show lower levels of confidence when it comes to more complex digital tasks. These include completing online administrative procedures, using e-government services independently, conducting secure online transactions, or applying digital tools for professional development and business activities. The data also reveal disparities across demographic groups. Younger and urban populations report higher levels of digital confidence and usage, whereas older age groups and individuals in rural areas are less likely to use advanced digital services or trust digital public platforms. This uneven distribution of digital skills affects not only access to services but also participation in digital governance processes and online public debate. In Albania's context, where digital public services are expanding as part of broader public administration reform, such gaps suggest that digital transformation is progressing faster than the development of comprehensive digital literacy, potentially reinforcing socio-economic divides.

The International Telecommunication Union, in its Digital Skills Assessment for Albania,¹³³ identifies significant gaps in intermediate and advanced digital competencies, despite high levels of basic connectivity. The assessment notes that while a large share of the population demonstrates basic operational skills such as internet browsing, messaging, and social media use, fewer individuals possess the skills required for more complex digital tasks. These include data management, cybersecurity awareness, digital content creation, use of productivity software, coding, and the application of digital tools in professional contexts. The report further underlines structural weaknesses in the digital skills ecosystem, including fragmentation between education curricula, vocational training, and labour market demands. It highlights the need for stronger coordination between education institutions, public employment services, and digital transformation strategies to ensure that digital skills development aligns with evolving economic needs. Without such coordination, the digital transformation of public services and private sector innovation risks outpacing the population's capacity to effectively and securely use advanced digital tools. In this context, digital skills gaps have implications not only for economic competitiveness but also for institutional capacity and civic participation, including within civil society organisations.

6.2. Internet freedoms

¹²³ Open Society Institute Sofia, *Media Literacy Index 2023*, available online at:

<https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>

¹²⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *PISA 2022 Country Note: Albania*, available online at:

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/albania_1ccc35b9-en.html

¹³² Regional Cooperation Council, *Balkan Barometer 2024 – Public Opinion*, available online at:

<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/home>

¹³³ International Telecommunication Union, *Digital Skills Assessment for Albania*, available online at: [Final-Albania-Digital-Skills-Assessment.pdf](#)

Internet access in Albania remains generally open, with no evidence of systemic nationwide shutdowns or long-term connectivity restrictions. However, recent developments demonstrate that regulatory decisions can directly affect the digital information environment. In March 2025, the government announced and began enforcing a temporary ban on the social media platform TikTok, citing concerns related to youth safety and online violence¹²⁵. The decision triggered significant public debate regarding proportionality, due process, and freedom of expression, with critics questioning whether a platform-wide restriction constituted a necessary and balanced response. Following months of public scrutiny and political debate, the government lifted the temporary ban in early 2026, restoring access to the platform¹²⁶.

6.3. Digital skills and technological gaps among the CSOs

The findings from interviews and available assessments indicate that civil society organisations in Albania demonstrate a moderate level of basic digital functionality, yet significant gaps remain in advanced digital skills, system integration, and long-term technological planning. Most organisations can use standard productivity tools such as Microsoft 365 for communication, documentation, and coordination. The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) show progress in broadband infrastructure and e-services, yet only 34% of citizens aged 16–74 have at least basic digital skills, compared to 55% across the EU. These figures reflect advancements in basic digitalisation but also underscore the region’s weak foundation for progressing toward more complex technologies such as AI. AI development requires not only digital infrastructure but also robust data governance, algorithmic capabilities, and specialised human and institutional capacities, areas where the Western Balkans continue to lag behind. Recent regional assessments and expert consultations confirm that, although governments have begun exploring AI applications in public services and administration, institutional capacity, technical expertise, and ethical oversight mechanisms remain underdeveloped, limiting the region’s ability to adopt and govern AI responsibly.¹²⁷ Findings from the World Bank’s GovTech Maturity Index (GTMI) reinforce these concerns. Although 90% of governments in the region operate open government portals, only 60% maintain platforms to capture citizen feedback, and a mere 43% publish engagement statistics.¹²⁸ These figures reflect persistent participation challenges, and lack of access and meaningful engagement to decision-making processes.

7. The State of AI in CSOs

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) within the civil society sector in Albania remains at a very early and exploratory stage. While global nonprofit research indicates rapidly growing experimentation with AI tools, adoption among Albanian CSOs is minimal and largely informal. According to interviews

¹²⁵ Reuters, “Albania starts turning off TikTok amid concern over youth violence,” 13 March 2025, available online at: <https://www.reuters.com/technology/albania-starts-turning-off-tiktok-amid-concern-over-youth-violence-2025-03-13/>

¹²⁶ Partners Albania for Change and Development “Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development – Country Report 2024” Partners Albania (2025). Available online at: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

¹²⁷ https://www.respaweb.eu/0/news/787/exploring-ai-for-better-governance-in-the-western-balkans-and-beyond?utm_source

¹²⁸ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5d13114a-ce69-4dee-a181-13cb5afe616f/content>

conducted for this report, there is almost no structured understanding of AI applications within the sector. Where AI is used, it is limited primarily to basic research or project proposal tasks. International research provides a useful comparative benchmark. The TechSoup and Tapp Network State of AI in Nonprofits 2025 report finds that globally, nonprofits are increasingly using generative AI for content creation, fundraising optimisation, workflow automation, and data analysis.¹²⁹ Similarly, Google's report on Nonprofits and Generative AI highlights that many organisations internationally are adopting AI to improve productivity and communication efficiency.¹³⁰ However, these trends are not yet reflected in Albania's CSO ecosystem.

7.1. Integration of gen-AI in the CSO sector (including needs and gaps in the area)

From a civil society perspective, the gap is particularly significant. There is little to no critical mass of CSOs working on digitalisation or AI governance, and awareness of the human rights implications of AI remains low. Initial training and capacity-building efforts for CSOs have begun in Albania but remain fragmented and insufficient to generate meaningful engagement. Most National Resource Centres (NRCs) and local CSOs at regional level still focus on general digital transformation, with minimal understanding of algorithmic accountability, data ethics, or AI oversight. This gap prevents them from functioning as effective watchdogs or partners in policy dialogue with government institutions.

Interviews indicate that the understanding and use of generative AI among Albanian CSOs remains limited. The most commonly used tools are ChatGPT, Gemini and Canva, while one organisation reported using Perplexity. AI applications are primarily used to support research and reporting tasks. Only organisation working on media and dis information mentioned that for the training program they use Midjourney.

Although most organisations are aware of publicly available AI tools such as ChatGPT, knowledge of how AI systems function, their limitations, ethical considerations, and potential institutional applications remain minimal. AI is not currently perceived as a strategic instrument for organisational transformation, but rather as an occasional support tool.

Where AI is used, its application is largely confined to research-related tasks, such as gathering background information, summarising policy documents, generating ideas for project proposals, or translating content. There is no evidence of AI being integrated into structured monitoring and evaluation systems, donor management processes, beneficiary data analysis, communication automation, or predictive analytics. AI use remains individual rather than institutional, and no formal internal policies or guidelines governing its application were identified.

CSOs are not currently exploring more advanced AI solutions such as automated data analysis, chatbot-based service provision, predictive fundraising tools, or AI-assisted evaluation systems. This reflects both limited technical knowledge and broader digital maturity gaps within the sector. The main barriers to AI adoption include lack of technical skills, limited awareness of practical use cases, financial constraints related to subscription-based tools, and uncertainty about legal and ethical implications. Organisations also expressed concern about data protection, especially when handling sensitive beneficiary information. In many cases, the absence of internal digital policies prevents systematic experimentation. Attitudes

¹²⁹ TechSoup and Tapp Network, *The State of AI in Nonprofits 2025*, available online at: <https://www.techsoup.org>

¹³⁰ Google, *Nonprofits and Generative AI*, available at: <https://www.google.com/nonprofits>

toward AI are cautious. While some staff members recognise potential productivity gains, others express concern about misinformation, reliability of outputs, and ethical risks. Importantly, AI is not currently viewed as a priority investment area, particularly given funding instability and more immediate operational needs.

“We use AI tools, mostly Chat GPT and Perplexity but we believe there should be a clear ethical protocol in place to address issues such as plagiarism and responsible use of the AI platform, particularly for us that provide counselling services. We need guidelines for how to use AI, and what are the data that we should not include.” (Executive Director of organisations working in counselling service for women and girls)

There is a clear need for a comprehensive AI strategy that goes beyond the use of basic tools and ensures a structured, technically advanced integration of AI into organisational work. This includes setting up AI systems for training purposes at a more sophisticated level, enabling staff to use them effectively and responsibly. In addition, due to the absence of dedicated marketing personnel, there is a strong need for AI-supported communication solutions, such as a virtual AI agent, to assist with outreach, content creation, and promotion. Overall, the organisation requires both strategic guidance and technical capacity to meaningfully and sustainably integrate AI into its operations.

“There is a technical but mostly financial need to set up and use AI for training purposes, not just at a basic level but in a more advanced and technical way. Additionally, since we do not have dedicated marketing staff, having a virtual staff member in the form of an AI agent to support communication and promotion would be highly necessary.” (Expert, media and digitalisation organisations)

7.2. AI regulation in the country

At present, Albania does not have a binding or operational legal framework specifically regulating the use of artificial intelligence. While discussions have begun at policy level, there is no adopted AI law, nor are there specific compliance obligations for civil society organisations regarding AI use. On August 2025, the National Information Society Agency (AKSHI) opened the public consultation process for the draft law “On the approval of the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy of Albania 2025–2030 and the Action Plan.”¹³¹ The draft strategy outlines a national vision for AI development and identifies sectors where AI has high potential application, including health, education, agriculture, transportation, climate, cultural heritage and tourism, public services, and energy. However, the document constitutes a strategic framework rather than a regulatory regime and does not establish binding rules on AI deployment.

In practice, based on interviews and available information, CSOs remain subject only to existing legislation, primarily the Law on Personal Data Protection and general cybersecurity provisions. There are no specific guidelines or oversight mechanisms addressing the responsible use of AI within the nonprofit sector. Consequently, organisations operate in a regulatory grey area, with limited guidance on transparency of AI-generated content, accountability, algorithmic bias, or intellectual property rights.¹³²

¹³¹ https://konsultimipublik.gov.al/documents/RENJK_694_Draft-Strategjia-2024-2030--dhe-Plani-i-Veprimit-2024-2027.docx

¹³² Mazelliu A., Xhaferaj O., Curraj E. “Protecting Human Rights in the age of Artificial Intelligence: EU & Albanian legislation approaches. Albanian Helsinki Committee, 2025. Available online at: <https://ahc.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/AHC-SCIDEV-Policy-Paper-AI-and-Human-Rights.pdf>

