



UNITED NATIONS
ALBANIA



SUMMARY COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS 2020

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM, ALBANIA

REVISED IN APRIL 2021



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Political Context, Governance and Institutions

Albania is an upper middle-income country on its path to European Union (EU) accession. Its political and governance environment is shaped by two broad trends: first, the construction of democratic institutions after the fall of communism in 1991, and second, the recognised pathway to becoming a member of the European Union. European integration is the main driver of reform in the country and a shared political priority. An overwhelming majority of Albanians, more than 90 percent, are pro-EU¹, and Schengen Area visa liberalisation, granted in 2010, has perhaps been the most significant event felt by an individual citizen since the fall of communism.

In March 2020, the Council of the European Union agreed to open accession negotiations with Albania, marking another milestone. Reforming the electoral code, completing key steps in the judicial reform implementation and continued progress on public administration reform, as well as combatting organised crime and corruption, are all necessary steps in the EU accession process. To date, all these areas have witnessed varying degrees of domestic political conflict.

By most observers, Albania is still considered to be a hybrid democracy, in transition towards a market economy underpinned by the rule of law and democratic institutions. The political environment in Albania was marked by deep political polarization, electoral conflict and a continued focus on judicial reform. Judicial reform implementation has, since 2016, been slower than expected. Nevertheless, there is a strong consensus amongst international actors that the reform has been deep and meaningful and will result in a much stronger judicial system.

The judicial reform highlights included the independent vetting of judges and prosecutors, establishment of new judicial and prosecutorial councils with stronger institutional insulation from political interference, and of new structures, including a special prosecutorial council and a National Bureau of Investigation. Implementation has been significantly slower than expected. The large number of judges and prosecutors being vetted out—more than 50 percent—resulted in a lack of quorum in key institutions such as the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the High Court and has fuelled criticism of the reform from several quarters. However, towards the end of 2020, the Constitutional Court regained its functionality and started hearings in a number of essential cases, paving the way to the start of EU accession negotiations. Making further progress in the implementation of the justice reform remains a critical priority in moving closer to a truly independent judiciary.

1. Balkan Barometer 2020

Table 1. Freedom House Democracy Score Ratings, Albania, 2005–2020

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Score	3.96	4.21	4.18	4.18	4.18	4.07	3.96	3.86	3.75	3.82	3.86	3.86	3.86	3.89	3.89	3.82

In general, despite important improvements of the legal framework pertaining to the protection and promotion of human rights, there have been gaps and delays with regards to its effective implementation. Some areas of concern include gender equality, domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, anti-discrimination and protection of marginalized groups.

Electoral issues have been a cause of contention in recent years in the country. The ability of Parliament—and political actors more generally—to contribute to democratic development is, however, constrained by political polarisation and, most importantly, weak accountability of elected representatives for failing to meet their obligations under international and domestic law in a human rights framework. A democracy score rating by Freedom House reports that Albania’s Democracy Score declined from 3.86 in 2016 to 3.82 in 2020. Parliamentary elections in 2017 resulted in a majority government for the Socialist Party.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) observers assessed that “Voting was conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly manner and counting was assessed positively overall, although several procedures were not always followed correctly”.

The national parliamentary elections were held in April 2021, following a long and tumultuous process. In the spring of 2020, complex negotiations were re-launched between the parties in Parliament

and the extra-parliamentary opposition in the framework of the Political Council on Electoral Reform, facilitated by external actors, to reform the electoral code in line with OSCE–ODHIR recommendations. In June 2020, a key cross-party agreement was reached on key issues such as the use of biometric IDs, depoliticization of electoral commissions, and vetting of judges in the Electoral College. The electoral amendments were adopted by the parliament in July followed by an adoption of other constitutional amendments related to elections, including opening the MP candidates lists and forming pre-election coalitions. These amendments were adopted without agreement in the Political Council leading to fresh rifts between the ruling party and the opposition, and renewed calls from international actors for inclusive electoral reform.

The ability of Parliament—and political actors more generally—to contribute to democratic development has been severely constrained by political polarisation. “Boycotting” parliament is seen by opposition actors as a tool to influence decision-making. The parliamentary opposition parties resigned their seats² in late 2018 by, though not all members followed through.³ This situation has made political negotiation and agreements even more complicated.

The Albanian Parliament has the potential to play a stronger role in democracy building by offering a forum for public debate, engaging more directly with the population represented by members and overseeing the government. Some notable steps

2. Of 140 seats, 76 are held by the ruling Socialist Party while another 45 are held by former members of the opposition parties who refused to resign or by party members who replaced MPs that resigned their seats and who were not initially elected as they were in the lower part of the electoral lists. Meanwhile, 19 seats remain vacant.

3. With Albania’s list system of parliamentary democracy, when a member resigns from Parliament, other candidates further down the original campaign list have the option to take up the seat. Thus, when opposition party MPs followed the call to resign, some who then had the opportunity to take up a seat did so.

that have been taken by the Parliament (elected in June 2017) include: a more structured approach to engaging with independent institutions, notably the Ombudsperson's office, as well as INSTAT, and the establishment of cross-party caucuses, in particular the Friends of Children Parliamentary Group and the Women's Caucus, the establishment of the Sub-committee on gender equality and the prevention of violence against women, and the establishment of a Sub-committee dedicated to the SDGs, positioned under the Commission on Finance and Economy. Parliament also passed a unanimous resolution in December 2016 to mainstream the SDGs, and adopt procedures requiring draft legislation to indicate its relevance to the Goals.

Institutions and mechanisms to democratise political power have also been evolving rapidly at the local (municipal) level. In 2015, the government undertook a deep territorial reform, modifying more than 350 communes into 61 municipalities with directly elected mayors and municipal councils. The councils are elected using a 'zipper' law, promoting gender equality. The reforms included the devolution of many authorities and a new local financing law. These reforms are widely viewed as a significant advancement in the establishment of local democracy. The UN has been a leading partner in supporting government in its municipal governance efforts.

Civil society in Albania is active, and the UN works with numerous civil society organisations (CSOs). There is space for stepping up UN engagement with civil society actors and creating wide avenues for civil society participation in decision-making processes, including for women's organizations and women's rights defenders. A National Council on Civil Society exists, composed half of government and half of self-selected civil society representatives. However, it remains under-utilised.

Equal participation of women and men in political and public decision making in Albania continues to improve but more needs to be done. The country

is signatory to several international frameworks, and in the past few years has worked to build an institutional framework for gender equality. The national framework requires a representation over 30% for each gender in all public sector institutions at national and local levels since 2008, based on the Law on Gender Equality and the Law 'On Protection from Discrimination', adopted in 2010. Notably, in 2015, the Electoral Code introduced a 50 percent gender quota for the municipal councillors lists, with gender alternating in every other position

In May 2020, the Gender and Women in Decision-Making Working Group (GWDMG)⁴ submitted Unified Proposals on anchoring gender equality provisions in the Electoral Code, calling for a significant improvement in gender equality standards in the on-going electoral reform, including provisions to address violence against women in elections. The approved amendments of the Electoral Code and Constitution, adopted in July 2020 reflect some of these recommendations such as a specific provision on gender equality (Article 4 of EC) and measures to eliminate voting on behalf of other individuals, and family voting. The amendments of the Electoral Code introduced a 30 percent gender quota for the elections of bodies of principal local government units.

A 30 percent gender quota was also established for all levels of the electoral administration. Furthermore, a highly positive development is the rejection of lists of candidates of political parties that fail to comply with the gender quota, which replaces the previous (ineffective) sanction with fines.⁵

The ongoing transition and reform process have curtailed the focus placed on socioeconomic and environmental development agenda. Some of the key structural challenges Albania faces have been met by divergent approaches and responses that threaten to fragment the effectiveness instead of anchoring the country on the path towards

4. A group composed of Albanian CSOs and international originations, including UN agencies such as UN Women.

5. Albania Country Gender Equality Brief, 2020, UN Women, Albania https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2020/12/cgeb%20albania_report_1.pdf?la=en&vs=4248



In 2015, the government undertook a deep territorial reform, modifying more than 350 communes into 61 municipalities with directly elected mayors and municipal councils.

structural transformation and building productive capacity. The third National Strategy for Development and Integration for 2021–2030 (NDSI) will be prepared in 2021. This strategy has the potential of strengthening the interface between the socio-economic and environmental targets and the overall governance reforms. The strategy will also play an important role in the implementation of the new Government of Albania and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022–2026. In addition, the UN in Albania has prepared a COVID-19 Socio-economic Recovery and Response Plan for the country, which includes actions in the short and mid-term to support the government's recovery efforts.

1.2 Demographic Context

Albania's population growth has moved from being one of the highest in Europe to negative growth in the last 30 years and is characterised by high rates of emigration, a low level of childbearing and long life expectancy. According to the latest annual report of the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the population of Albania on 1 January 2020, was 2,845,955 inhabitants, a decrease of 0.6 percent over the previous twelve months. From a very high growth rate of about 2.4 percent per annum prior to the collapse of the communist state in 1990, the population has been steadily falling, by an annual 0.33 percent from 1990 to 2001, to 0.91 percent from 2001 until 2011, with a trend that continues to the present day.

Migration is by far the most important demographic process over the past three decades, causing the population reduction since 1990. Both internal and external migration are unprecedented over this period. The main component of this negative growth has been mass emigration. It is estimated that more than 700,000 Albanians left the country between 1989 and 2001, with a trend that continues to the present, with the population losing another 2,802,100 people in between the two censuses of 2001. Thus, one-third of the country's population have emigrated since 1989. In terms of internal migration, there is a concentration of population in the main cities of Tirana and Durres, with movements mainly from the north of the country. It is estimated that one-third of Albania's population emigrated between the censuses of 1989 and 2011.

Another important demographic characteristic is the rapid reduction in fertility over a very short timeframe. From having one of the highest fertility rates in Europe to one of the lowest, Albania experienced a massive reduction in fertility within a very short period, level of Total Fertility Rate (TFR) shifted from three children per woman in 1990, to 2.2 in 2000, 1.63 in 2010 and 1.36 in 2019. This dramatic reduction is seen at all childbearing ages, in all years. There is no evidence of childbearing postponement in Albania as in most western societies, but rather having the first child in a woman's early 20s. This is supported by evidence from the Albanian Demographic and Health Survey (ADHS) of 2017–2018, which reports that the mean age at first child was 23.8 years. Also, marriage continues to be the norm,

with 68 percent of women of reproductive age in 2017–18 married (ADHS 2018) and with the mean age of first marriage of 22.4 years among females of age 15–49 years. The high level of abortion in the country (171 per 1,000 live births in 2017; Health For All, World Health Organisation 2020) suggests that the Albanian means of fertility control is more a mixture of traditional methods (with traditional contraception prevalence high) and an East European characteristic, where abortion is the most common means.⁶ Also, sex-selective abortion is practiced⁷. According to administrative data of INSTAT, from 1990 onwards, in Albania there are born more males than females, surpassing the natural sex-ratio. Sex ratio at birth has increased, marking 109.0 in 2019, from 108.0 in 2018.⁸

Albania has also witnessed continuous improvements in overall mortality, besides in neonatal mortality. Over the past two decades (2000–2018) mortality in Albania has continued to fall, with life expectancy increasing from 71.4 to 74.4 years for men, and from 76.9 to 80.6 years for women. Men's life expectancy is 1.5 years below the male EU average, whereas women's is 3.7 years below the EU average for women.⁹ Mortality rate has improved among all age groups, with infant mortality falling, from 23 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000, to 10.3 in 2019. Whereas maternal mortality rate (MMR) has deteriorated from 3.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018, to 7 in 2019.¹⁰ These trends suggest that more needs to be invested with regard to delivery facilities across the country and in improving care during pregnancy.

Demographically, migration has also affected another very important phenomenon: ageing of the population. While the number of the economically active has dipped due to emigration, the elderly population has increased as a result of improvements in longevity. Consequently, the proportion of the population older than 65 years has increased, from 5.5 percent in 1990 to 14.7 percent in 2019, and estimated to increase to 20.7 percent by 2030. Addressing the needs of the increasingly ageing population will also be an area where further policy interventions are required.

1.3 Economic Context

Albania is an upper middle-income country on its path to EU accession. GDP per capita in Albania in 2019 was USD 5,448 (current USD; WB), one of the lowest in the region and less than half of that of the new EU member states. Over the past decade, Albania's economy has witnessed a steady growth, by an annual average of 2.4 percent. In 2019, the country witnessed an economic slowdown, caused by weaker power production and a severe earthquake in November, and growth expanded only by 2.2 percent, compared to 4.1 percent in 2018. In 2020, the economy was projected to grow by an estimated 3.5 percent. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent containment measures, the GDP is expected to have contracted by approximately four percent in 2020. In the short to medium term, post-earthquake recovery efforts and the COVID-19 economic stimulus packages are expected to give an additional boost to the economy and help the economy grow again.

6. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/4 paras.32 and 33 (a) The Committee is concerned about the excessive use of abortion as a method of birth control in the State party, including sex-selective abortion.

7. World Vision & UNFPA (2012). Sex imbalances at birth in Albania, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA_report_Albania2012.pdf and "Together for Life" See: <https://togetherforlife.org.al/en/aborti-selektiv-baze-gjinore-ne-shqiperi/>

8. http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6850/population-on-1-january-2020_.pdf

9. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=AL-EU>

10. INSTAT (2020). "Women and Men in Albania". See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

While Albania's economic growth has been stable, its acceleration is paramount for achieving convergence with the aspirational EU standards. The Albanian economy is dominated by services, including tourism, which contribute a large proportion to the country's GDP, reaching 47.9 percent in 2018, a 5.4 percent increase on the level in 2017 in real terms. Nevertheless, agriculture remains very important, accounting for 18.4 percent of GDP, a 1.4 percent increase on 2017. Both tourism and agriculture are characterised by a high of informality and a large female labour force. The other main contributors to GDP (21.3%) in 2018 were industry and construction. In the last two decades, emigration and urbanisation have created a structural shift away from agriculture towards industry and services, leading to diversification of services within the Albanian economy—including banking, telecommunications and tourism—while the manufacturing sector contributed 5.9 percent to GDP in 2018.

The industrial sector in Albania is characterised by low productivity, limited product or process diversification and sophistication, and weak competitiveness.¹¹ The sector almost collapsed during the transition to a market economy. Industry's contribution to GDP (including construction) has grown steadily, from 13.8 percent in 2010 to 21.3 percent in 2018,¹² mostly through improved performance in extracting and mining, while manufacturing (especially textiles) has slowed due to weaker demand from Greece and Italy. The major industries in which Albania has a competitive advantage are mining, footwear, textiles and agribusiness. Almost two-thirds of the manufactured goods are of low value and low complexity due to out-dated technologies and lack of necessary skills and product-specific knowledge.

In 2018, Albania's exports of goods and services amounted around 31.8 percent of GDP and imports of goods and services around 45.8 percent. Albanian exports of goods in 2020 decreased

by 9 per cent compared with 2019 and imports decreased by 6.8 per cent. In regard to exports of goods, main sectors that were impacted include: textile and footwear (-5.3%), minerals, fuels, electricity (-3.5%) and construction materials and metals (-1.2). The pandemic also impacted trading patterns. Exports to Italy, which represented 45 per cent of total exports in 2020, decreased by 13.7 per cent compared to 2019. With the other two main export countries, namely Kosovo and Spain, exports dropped 12.0 and 30.4 per cent respectively. Whereas exports to Germany increased by 12.8 per cent compared to 2019. In regard to main import partners, imports from Italy decreased by 7.4 per cent and from Turkey by 6.2 per cent but increased by 2.7 per cent from Germany and by 2.2 per cent from Greece. However, export markets are few and require diversification, with Albania primarily exporting to countries with which it has a free trade agreement. The EU stands as Albania's main trading partner, accounting for more than 90 percent of exports and 80 percent of imports. Albania remains only partially integrated into regional value chains, because it suffers from limited connectivity, and the quality of infrastructure needs to be improved.

Agriculture continues to be one of the main economic pillars of Albanian economy, contributing 19 percent to the country's GDP (INSTAT 2019) and providing jobs to one-third of the people employed in the country. The average farm size is 1.3 hectares (EU average, 14.2 ha; Eurostat 2019) and farms are mainly family owned and run. Agricultural activity is challenged by increased transport and production costs, limited maximisation of investment effects and the utilisation of advanced technologies virtually impossible. The agri-food sector in general is facing challenges in creating market institutions, improving the efficiency of distribution channels, meeting national and international quality and food safety standards and building an administrative capacity to support these processes.

11. <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2019/albania-in-figures-2018/>

12. <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2019/albania-in-figures-2018/>

The energy sector is of key importance for Albania's economic, strategic and social development. The country is highly dependent on hydropower. The economic disruption caused by weak power generation in dry years when the country needs to rely on imports, underlines the need for urgent efforts to increase the share of renewable energy sources other than hydropower. Albania has large potential for wind and solar photovoltaic power generation, especially along the Adriatic coast, with solar power potential assessed at 1,500–1,700 kWh/m² per annum. It also has considerable potential of biomass from agricultural waste, assessed at approximately 2,300 GWh/year. Increasing the use of these alternative sources will increase the country's resilience to climate change.

Although there have been recent significant increases in infrastructure investments, previous political isolation has left Albania with a low level of infrastructure stock requiring prioritised capital spending. Also, Albania ranks as one of the bottom ten countries in the world with regard to economic risk, from multiple hazards, with 88.5 percent of generated GDP and 86 percent of total territory exposed to at least two disasters. The effect of Albania's level of resilience in critical infrastructure was seen clearly in the 2019 earthquake, which caused damage and economic losses of more than \$1B.

The national minimum wage is USD 232 and the average, USD 470 (31% of the EU average). INSTAT data indicate that average gross monthly wages in the formal sector in Albania were 6–8 percent lower for women than for men during 2014–2016 (SDG Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support, MAPS 2018). In the third quarter of 2019, the labour force participation rate for the population of age 15–64 years was 69.8 percent (INSTAT LFS). Women's labour force participation rate is 62 percent, while for men the figure is 77.7 percent. The registered unemployment rate has continued to decline and, in the third quarter of 2019, reached 11.4 percent for both men and women, with youth unemployment reported at 21.4 percent. Labour-intensive industries continue to be the main source of employment.

Migration of skilled workers, especially those with advanced education and skills, is affecting certain professions, such as medical personnel and information technology. Also, a skills mismatch (labour market needs vs. what the labour force has to offer) is a persistent challenge.

In 2019, Albania is ranked 81st in the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Global Economic Competitiveness Index. The country scores well in terms of its human capital but is uncompetitive in terms of innovation, research and development capabilities, entrepreneurial culture and transport infrastructure. Whereas in the World Bank's Doing Business indicator, Albania ranks 82nd. Persistent weaknesses in the legal framework (e.g., property rights and contract enforcement), along with known difficulties in obtaining construction permits, paying taxes, and accessing electricity affect the country's investment climate. The Human Development Index (HDI) has been improving over the past decades but remains one of the lowest in the region. In 2019, Albania ranked 69th on the Human Development Index (UNDP 2020).

Albania's transition growth model has arguably reached its limit. In order to fulfil its potential, like other countries in the region, it needs to address the middle-income trap. While growth has been significant, diversification in the portfolio of goods that Albania exports remains a key challenge for economic growth. As most of these exports are easy to produce, new production lines with higher complexity will bring greater value to the economy. To accelerate the pace of equitable growth, Albania needs to implement measures that will raise the productivity and competitiveness of its economy.

Innovation, smart skills and readiness to adopt the digital agenda will have to be one of new drivers of economic growth. Sectors with strong potential in the medium- to long-term to create new jobs and stimulate growth include sustainable tourism, digital economy, agriculture, energy and infrastructure. These efforts will also contribute directly to increasing economic resilience by reducing economy's overreliance on one sector or very limited number of products. Focusing on

building enabling environment, prudent macro policies and skills development will support these efforts. In face of the wide range of socio-economic and environmental challenges to inclusive and sustainable industrial development caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a particular focus is needed for institutional transformation and innovation, innovative clusters and ecosystems, and industrial modernization of MSMEs, as well as inclusive capacity-building and technological training. Further strengthening the ties of cooperation and interdependence within the Western Balkans region can support the economic growth of each country, including Albania.¹³

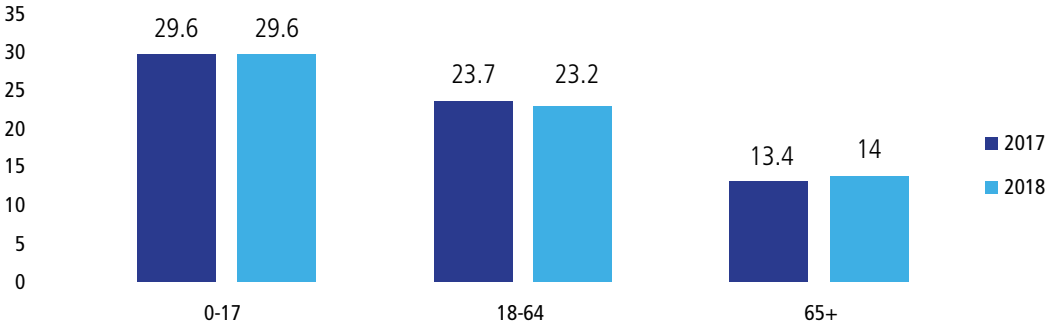
1.4 Social Context

The gap in economic and social inequality has widened and diversified even further. In 2018, 23.4 percent of individuals were at risk of poverty (relative poverty rate), compared to 23.7 percent reported for 2017,¹⁴ while the average rate across EU countries (28 countries) was 16.9 percent. Certain population categories, the unemployed and children (households with dependent children)

are those most affected by risk of poverty (Figure 2). At risk of poverty or social exclusion refers to individuals who are at risk of poverty or severe materially deprived¹⁵ or living in a household with very low work intensity.¹⁶ In 2018, this indicator was estimated to be 49 percent compared to 51.8 percent in 2017. Although the percentage has decreased, the figures are high, representing half of the country's population.

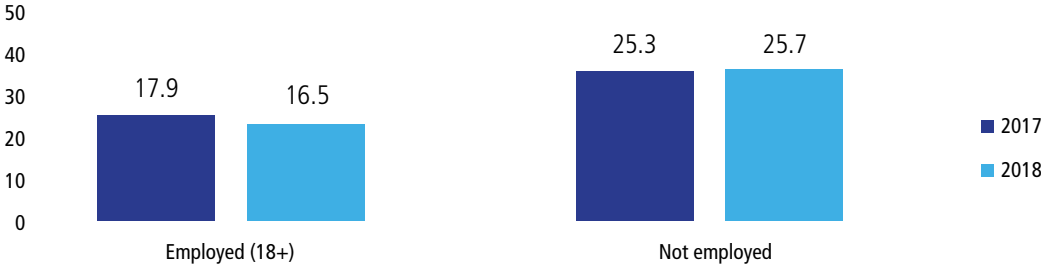
Inclusion of vulnerable people in the labour market is a challenge; more than half of the poor population is inactive, unemployed or not in education,¹⁷ and people living in remote areas are often completely excluded. In 2019, the unemployment rate (15–64 years) fell to 12.2 percent (11.8 percent for women; LFS, INSTAT data 2019), the official youth (15–29 years) unemployment rate is 23.1 percent, having decreased by 2.8 percent since 2017. Unemployment in Albania is largely long term and structural as 66 percent of the unemployed have been unemployed for more than one year. Long-term unemployment remains to be addressed through more flexible and tailored policy interventions. Further, women in general, youth, and those with limited education are more excluded from jobs.

Figure 2.1. At risk of poverty (%), by age group (years), 2017 and 2018



13. See UNCTAD Investment Policy Reviews (IPR) of South-East Europe
 14. These figures do not represent those individuals who are in poverty, but rather the number of them that have incomes below the defined poverty line (60% median equivalised disposable income for the household) and are at risk of poverty.
 15. Severely materially deprived persons are those living in a household who cannot afford at least four of the nine categories of material deprivation related to assets or living conditions or financial aspects.
 16. The work intensity of the household is defined as the ratio of the number of months that all household members have been working during the income reference year to the total number of months that could have theoretically worked during the same period.
 17. INSTAT, 2018. Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Figure 2.2. At risk of poverty (%), by employment activity status, 2017 and 2018



In 2018, there were 53,000 families in receipt of state economic assistance (including unemployment benefit and other forms of assistance for the poor), a number that halved over five years. However, the main reason for this important decrease is most probably the social assistance reform rather than a change in the actual number of unemployed or poor in Albania. Notably, unemployment benefit is received by fewer than ten percent of those who are looking for a job (INSTAT 2018). Among the total number of beneficiaries, fewer than two percent are individuals (victims of violence, trafficking, or orphans), with the rest families.

The last (third) Universal Periodic Review of Albania highlighted that the social protection system in Albania still faces challenges and obstacles, and out of 197 recommendations released, 34 relate specifically to social cohesion and protection, 37 to child protection and 14 to health-care services. The latest communication from the European Commission to the EU Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Albania (2019) notes that the social care services are currently undeveloped, underinvested and lacking in many areas.¹⁸

As for children’s health, there is evidence of a slight increase in the percentage of vaccinated children in Albania in the past 5 years. It should be emphasized that, overall, the vaccination coverage in Albanian children remains very high (over 98%; IPH, 2020). The most recent data

indicate an increase in both infant mortality rate (10.3 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019 vs. 8.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018; INSTAT 2020) and under-5 mortality rate (10.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 vs. 9.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017; INSTAT, 2019).

The (standardized) overall premature mortality rate has only slightly decreased during the period 2012–2017, with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and road injuries remaining to be leading causes. There is evidence of a decrease in the CVD mortality rate in all SEE countries, but the pace of decline in Albania is among the lowest in the region (only 8% decrease from 1990 to 2017).

The first cases of COVID-19 in Albania were recorded on March 8, 2020. The Government initiated a multi-sector reponse with the objective to rapidly expand the capacity of the health sector to address the COVID-19 challenges, and public health safety measures were implemented to prevent and mitigate the further spread of the pandemic.

With international travel and the tourist season commencing during the summer months 2020, followed by the opening of schools in September, and the reopening of restaurants and bars, community transmission increased substantially, triggering a significant increase in COVID-19 cases. Between September 2020 and February 2021 the number of new cases per 100.000 population increased drastically from 405 to 3.076, and the number of active cases per

18. <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy.pdf>

100.000 population increased from 160 to 1.163. By late April 2021, the epidemiological situation had improved substantially with low transmission levels, and consistently low case numbers recorded over several weeks, low mortality rates and declining bed occupancy rates in COVID-19 hospitals (at 22% by April 26th 2021). Meanwhile the national COVID-19 immunization campaign has been progressing, with over 450.000 vaccine doses administered by the end of April 2021.

Budget allocations for COVID-19 and re-prioritization of services will likely have longer-term effects on health services and health care provision, including potential longer-term consequences due to delayed diagnosis, prevention and treatment of chronic diseases, triggering a potential reduction of gains of healthy life years. This is compounded by an already low public spending on health prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, public spending on health as a share of GDP was lower in Albania (2.97%) than in most South Eastern European countries and the EU, with chronic under-funding of key education, health and other social services. Also, the share of out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure) on health in Albania is high, compared to other countries in the region (44,6% in 2018)¹⁹. This includes household spending on medicines, health products, outpatient and inpatient care services (including dental care) and other health services (such as medical laboratory services) that are not reimbursed by a third party (such as the government, a health insurance fund or a private insurance company).

The basis for entitlement to health insurance fund (HIF) benefits is payment of contributions. As informal employment arrangements remain substantial, a significant share of the population does not have access to publicly financed health services, despite efforts to expand access to basic health services for all. The expansion of coverage to uninsured people in 2017, which includes free visits to the Primary Health Care and General Practitioner services is commendable. It lowers

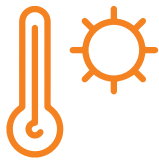
barriers to access health care. Increasing target group coverage for national check-up programs and the breast cancer screening program is also progressing. These constitute progressive steps in the right direction, yet further consolidated efforts are needed to reduce the burden of out-of-pocket spending – through gradually increasing the level of public spending on health – and through policies to specifically target vulnerable population groups and the poor. Further development and fine tuning of targeted coverage policies will be crucial to reduce and minimize financial hardship due to catastrophic health expenditure.

1.5 Environment and Climate Change

As part of the EU accession agenda Albania needs to adhere to strong climate action, sustainable development and protection of the environment. The *EU acquis* contains provisions addressing climate change, water and air quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution, chemicals, noise and civil protection. Progress is reported for alignment of the legislation and policy implementation in line with EU requirements. Further challenges include developing a national vision for 2030 and aligning the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation and monitoring efforts with the EU accession process

Albania ratified the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in January 2019. In July 2019, Albania became the first country in the region with an endorsed Strategy on Climate Change, and related Action Plan, presenting a general cross-cutting strategy with policy objectives and concrete actions, contributing to implementation of the Paris Agreement and the National Determined Contribution (NDC) target. The law 'On Climate Change,' partly transposing provisions of the

19. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.OOPC.CH.ZS?locations=AL> , retrieved April 25, 2021



Findings from Albania's third National Communication show that the coastal area is likely to become warmer over time due to the effects of climate change, while the Adriatic Sea has already experienced an average sea level rise of about 15 cm over the last century, leading to a retreat of the shoreline.

EU Emissions Trading Directive, was adopted, in December 2020,

Currently, Albania is preparing its Fourth National Communication and its First Biennial Update Report and, as part of this process, is reviewing the NDC. The current NDC covers only energy and industrial processes and commits to reducing CO₂ emissions by up to 11.5 percent by 2030 compared to the baseline scenario, and does not cover climate change adaptation, which is necessary for mainstreaming planning and the mid- to long-term response in key economic sectors, such as, urban planning, tourism and agriculture at national and local levels. Findings from Albania's third National Communication show that the coastal area is likely to become warmer over time due to the effects of climate change, while the Adriatic Sea has already experienced an average sea level rise of about 15 cm over the last century, leading to a retreat of the shoreline. Similarly, increased variation in annual and seasonal temperatures, both minimum and maximum, together with a gradual overall rise, are expected.

Water and air pollution, land degradation, biodiversity loss and waste management are Albania's key environmental challenges. Rapid urbanisation and increasing demand for natural resources has led to increasing depletion and

degradation. Disaster risks and climate variability pose additional threats to the country. Water is used widely in the industrial and energy production sectors, and overexploitation of both surface and groundwater has led to difficulties in ensuring necessary water supplies for all users at the required time, in terms of both quantity and quality. In addition to water-related environmental challenges, the country is experiencing challenges with waste management and the application of sustainable production practices by the private sector. In view of the scarce integrated waste management in Albania, disposal at waste dumps is widely applied. There are 78 such open waste dumps in the country, mainly in the outskirts of the cities, towns and villages, and in many instances beside rivers. Agriculture production and arable land in Albania are also the first affected by waste treatment processes such as incineration.

In the industrial sector, the promotion of best available technology (BAT) and best environmental technology (BET) is starting in manufacturing processes for preserving the environment and saving energy resources.

Various national plans and new institutional structures in the area of environmental protection and conservation have been adopted in the recent years, ranging from the National Plan on Air

Quality Management to The National Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2019–2023, opening new paths and opportunities for important decision making for tourism and eco-tourism development in Albania.

Despite the drafting and approval of a number of important strategies that address the environment and climate change adaptation, more focus is needed on their implementation. Also, these strategies are largely gender-blind and hence leave women vulnerable to a number of environmental and climate change-related problems. Such issues include further hindering of their ownership of assets such as land, forestry and pastures, and their access to more technological and extension of services. This situation ultimately undermines women and their families' potential for economic independence, and widens the gap between them and sustainable development.

In addition, Albania has a high level of seismicity, as have other countries in the region, and experiences an annual occurrence of at least one earthquake of magnitude 6.5. The seven largest cities at risk in Albania account for more than 75 percent of the urban risk. Being the most vulnerable to the climate change and disasters, cities should develop and implement local strategies that reduce disaster risk and increase resilience. Earthquake risk reduction is crucial as most strong earthquakes are accompanied by extensive land instability—liquefaction, ground subsidence, surface cracks, landslides and rockslides—and can be responsible for tsunamis, depending upon the location. No Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) or civil protection strategy is in place in Albania. The civil emergencies law passed in mid-2019 provides for establishment of a new National Agency for Civil Protection, but this agency currently has very limited administrative capacity. In the process of strengthening the institutional system for DRR, focus should also be given to strengthening resilience building at

a local level, through the development of local resilience plans, including focus on the local public health systems, in line with SDG 11 and the Sendai Framework commitments. Increased use of early warning systems (EWS) could also increase the capacity to mitigate risks from natural hazards, especially with regard to agriculture. The technical and operational capacities of the Albanian institutions regarding forecasting, monitoring and warning of hydro-meteorological data are still considered to be insufficient in order to cope with the multitude of risks posed to the country.²⁰ Participation in regional initiatives for exchanging information on DRR and combining efforts in monitoring, forecasting and responding to disasters could be enhanced. The national and local DRR processes should be gender inclusive and take into consideration the needs of women and girls who are differently and often disproportionately affected by disasters and crisis and have different and uneven levels of resilience and capacity to recover. This was also confirmed by the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) conducted in Albania following the deadly earthquake of November 2019, which points out the disproportionate impact of the earthquake on women and girls in the affected areas.²¹

1.6 Human rights context

Albania is party to the nine core international human rights instruments covering the full range of rights, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.²² The country is yet to ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (OP-CRPD) and to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR).²³ However, all the main Council of Europe human rights instruments have been signed and ratified, including the European

20. FAO, Comprehensive analysis of disaster risk reduction and management system for agriculture in Albania, 2018

21. <https://albania.un.org/en/46378-albania-post-disaster-needs-assessment-pdna-volume-report-february-2020>

22. Status of Ratifications OHCHR Dashboard, <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>

23. UPR 2019 Recommendations 95.2–95.3 (A/HRC/42/4), CMW paras. 14–15 (CMW/C/ALB/CO/2), CRPD paras. 9–10 (CRPD/C/ALB/CO/1)

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and its protocols, as well as the conventions on the prevention of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, on the action against trafficking in human beings, and on the preventing and combating of violence against women and domestic violence.

A high ratification rate and the issuance of a standing invitation to all Special Procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council are important indicators of Albania's commitment to abide by the international human rights standards, undergo regular scrutiny of the state's efforts, and receive support in fulfilling its obligations. Albania regularly engages with the UN human rights mechanisms. However, the country displays a mixed record in terms of compliance with its reporting obligations to the corresponding UN treaty bodies.²⁴ It has three reports that are overdue, namely the CAT report, which was due in 2016, and the ICCPR and ICESCR reports, which were both due in 2018. Albania has still to present its follow-up response to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which was expected to be ready in 2019.

Furthermore, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances visited Albania in 2016 and in 2020 intended to issue a follow up report but the government has not been able to engage and provide the necessary information on time (postponed to September 2021). The National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and civil society actors are consulted in the preparation of reports as a general practice. However, concerns have been raised that constructive feedback and inputs are not reflected into the final reports presented to the UN human rights mechanisms.²⁵ Whereas there is a legal framework in place, meaningful participation of civil society in such decision-making processes is lagging behind.

Albania's NHRIs, the People's Advocate²⁶ (A status accreditation), the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination,²⁷ and the Information and Data Protection Commissioner are in a unique position to act as both watchdogs and advisors in order to uphold the human rights embedded in the SDGs. However, the UN human rights monitoring bodies have indicated that the lack of sufficient human, technical and financial resources allocated to the two institutions undermines their work on rights promotion and protection. CSOs regularly engage through shadow reports: e.g., on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The principle of participation is reflected across all the SDGs, making essential the need to transition from mere consultation towards active and genuine involvement in public affairs.²⁸

Some of the most persistent human rights issues coincide with SDGs 5, 10 and 16, and SDGs 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 13, which should be seen as inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing. Among the specific groups identified in the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms are migrants, irrespective of their status and ethnic and religious minority, Roma communities, LGBTI, people with disabilities, specific categories of women and girls, and children living in poverty. These groups have limited access to the enjoyment of basic rights, including to health care, education, housing options and social protection.

In addition to the direct applicability of international human rights instruments in the domestic legal order, Albania has undertaken a considerable amount of work in adjusting its national legislation to the adopted international commitments. Legislative harmonisation is

24. Reporting compliance, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/LateReporting.aspx

25. CED paras. 10–11 (CED/C/ALB/CO/1), CRPD paras. 7–8 (CRPD/C/ALB/CO/1)

26. Established under the organic Law on the People's Advocate.

27. Established under the Law on Protection against Discrimination.

28. Guidelines on the right to participate in public affairs, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/DraftGuidelinesRighttoParticipationPublicAffairs.aspx>

ongoing and is in great part sustained by Albania's commitment to the EU accession process.²⁹ The Law against Discrimination was amended in 2020 and new amendments expand the grounds for discrimination to include gender identify, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS, and physical appearance. New amendments, inter alia reverse of burden of proof in favor of claimants on the all cases related to discrimination. Additionally, the amendments provide new forms of manifestation of discrimination very relevant to gender-based, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other forms of discrimination such as intersectional discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment, and hate speech. Now, more focus is needed on the implementation to enable systemic transformation of society that is needed to ensure the enjoyment of human rights by all people. This is of particular concern regarding gender-based discrimination and violence since implementation of the legislative frameworks to prevent and address GBV remains weak, experiences of various forms of violence go unreported, and women have limited access to victim assistance and protection, health care, social security and other basic services. Furthermore, the continued use of hate speech and discriminatory statements in public discourse and the incomplete information on cases prosecuted and convictions³⁰ point to the need for strengthening the legislative prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred,³¹ and taking measures to prevent, investigate and sanction such cases.

Legislative gaps remain in the areas of definition and criminalisation of enforced disappearance.³²

Major concerns have been raised on the need to uphold the fundamental international protection principle of non-refoulement as enshrined in several key human rights instruments ratified by Albania.³³ This constitutes an indispensable component of the customary prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment, and therefore, Albania shall bring its legislation in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement and establish clear and specific mechanisms, or procedures, or both, to assess and verify the risk of a person being subjected to refoulement.³⁴

Progress in building the national legislative framework for the protection of human rights needs to be accompanied by efforts to strengthen national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights and practical implementation of norms and standards. Currently, Albania has no standing national mechanism on following up and reporting on implementation of its human rights obligations (so called National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up). In the absence of such an established structure with dedicated human and financial resources, government efforts to ensure systemic change in areas related to human rights (e.g. health and social services, administration of justice and education), eliminate discrimination and achieve de facto equality fall short of requirements.

29. Chapters 23 and 24 on rule of law and fundamental rights. Full 2019 report of the European Commission, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-albania-report.pdf>

30. UPR 2019 Recommendations 95.25 and 95.46–95.49 (A/HRC/42/4).

31. Pursuant to its obligations under the ICCPR art. 20. Under article 19(3), restrictions on the right to freedom of expression must be (1) 'provided by law', and necessary (2) 'for respect of the rights or reputations of others' or 'for the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health and morals'. Lastly, there is a requirement of (3) necessity and proportionality. The assessment of the proportionality of the measure under art. 19 (3) entails a requirement of the due process safeguards against abuse.

32. CED paras. 12–27 (CED/C/ALB/CO/1).

33. In particular CAT (Article 3), ICED (Article 16), the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees (Article 33). The principle of non-refoulement is universally recognised as a principle of international customary law.

34. CED paras. 28–29 (CED/C/ALB/CO/1), CMW paras. 32 and 72 (CMW/C/ALB/CO/2), CMW para. 32 (a) (CERD/C/ALB/CO/9-12).

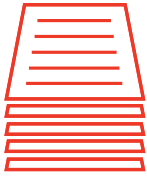
2. National Vision for Sustainable Development

The National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) II concluded its cycle in 2020 and the Albanian government is currently preparing NSDI III and a Vision 2030 for the country. NSDI for 2030 will orient the development of Albania and ensure the country's priorities with respect to the development goals and the European integration process, intertwined with the SDGs. However, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the approaching elections have delayed the preparation of the NSDI III.

The Department for Development and Good Governance (DDGG) at the Prime Minister's Office is in charge of coordinating the preparations of NSDI 2030 and the preparations for other cross-cutting and sectoral strategies (~30), which aim to integrate the SDGs at the indicator level, including mid-term SDG targets (2023). As part of the monitoring process, DDGG prepared a mid-term review of the current NSDI the results from which will feed into the new NSDI. The monitoring report shows that 42 percent of the NSDI II mid-term targets for the year 2017 have been successfully achieved, whilst substantial progress has been achieved in many policy areas covered by the strategy and particularly on striving to meet the conditions for opening the EU accession negotiations.

The following objectives of the current NSDI will likely remain as key pillars of the new NSDI, while prioritising areas of development that boost the country's EU integration:

- Strengthen Democracy, Rule of Law and Good Governance (focusing on justice reform, good governance, human rights, decentralisation, local government, internal affairs, public administration, anticorruption, national security, disaster recovery and civil protection);
- Growth through macro-economic stability, increasing competitiveness, business development, innovation, and economic convergence (focusing on fiscal and macro-economic policies, business development, FDIs, e-Economy, rural and regional development, tourism and cultural heritage);
- Ensuring sustainable development of natural resources (focusing on connectivity areas, transport, energy, broadband, environment, waste management, water and sanitation, and water resources);
- Ensuring social cohesion and employment (focusing on employment and skills, social inclusion and social protection, health, pre-university, university and vocational education, and culture).



The monitoring report shows that 42% of the NSDI II mid-term targets for the year 2017 have been successfully achieved, whilst substantial progress has been achieved in many policy areas covered by the strategy and particularly on striving to meet the conditions for opening the EU accession negotiations.

NSDI is closely connected with the Economic Reform Programme (ERP),³⁵ which outlines the main macro-economic and fiscal policies that aim to establish a clear balance between the internal strengths and external threats, with a view to enabling sustainable growth, increased employment and reduced public debt.

However, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 the macro-economic and fiscal projections introduced are no longer valid. Nevertheless, the actions of the ERP aim for integration and efficient planning, while aligning the key government planning documents, such as NSDI II, sectoral strategies and the Mid-Term Budget Programme (MTBP), still remain relevant.

35. <https://www.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Economic-Reform-Programme-2021-2023.pdf>

3. Country Progress towards Agenda 2030

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on the SDGs³⁶ chaired by the deputy prime minister was established in 2017 and features membership of development partners, civil society, academia and the private sector, and an inter-institutional working group for achievement of the SDGs. In December in 2017, Parliament unanimously approved a resolution³⁷ committing to the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Moreover, SDGs are integrated into NSDI and the National Statistical Programme 2016–2020. In 2020, a dedicated sub-committee on Sustainable Development was established within the parliamentary commission of economy and finance to follow up closely on SDG related aspects.

UNDP's Rapid Integration Assessment tool has been applied and a report on the Harmonisation of the SDGs with Existing Sectoral Policies, launched in February 2018, serves as a useful baseline. UN has also supported the preparation of the country's Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the SDGs³⁸ and its presentation by the deputy prime minister at the 2018 high-level political forum (HLPF).³⁹

The national statistical office, INSTAT, prepared a statistical annex that accompanied the review.

The 2018 MAPS mission by the UN in collaboration with GoA, the EU and the World Bank, identified three main accelerators of SDGs in Albania: i) governance and the rule of law, ii) investments in an inclusive, green economy, and iii) investment in social and human capital. The MAPS report⁴⁰ was launched officially by the government on 19 September 2018,⁴¹ and at the same time the UN and GoA announced the establishment of the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund. The Albanian government has committed itself to an annual contribution to the Fund of USD 2 million and, with this leading contribution, other, flexible, matching funds will be sought from partners. Between Q4 of 2019 and Q4 of 2020, the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund⁴² received contributions from nine sources in support of various development areas (LNB, GBV, Migration, Human Rights, Social Protection and Service Delivery, Child Protection, DRR and Climate Change, and Earthquake recovery), comprising 42 percent of the UN Albania available budget for the year.

36. <https://www.un.org.al/news/inter-ministerial-committee-sdgs-established>

37. <https://www.un.org.al/news/members-albanian-parliament-commit-play-active-role-support-implementation-agenda-2030-and>

38. <http://www.un.org.al/publications/voluntary-national-review-sustainable-development-goals>

39. <http://www.un.org.al/news/albania-presents-voluntary-national-review-sustainable-development-goals-%E2%80%93-during-ecosoc-high>

40. <http://www.un.org.al/publications/mainstreaming-acceleration-and-policy-support-achieving-sustainable-development-goals>

41. <http://www.un.org.al/news/synergies-eu-accession-and-smart-investments-can-accelerate-achievement-agenda2030-albania>

42. Contributors to the SDG Acceleration Fund include Sweden, Switzerland, Netherland, Norway, Spain, EU. Poland, Denmark, United Kingdom, Finland and the Government of Albania

In 2018, the UN Country Team (UNCT) undertook budget analysis of SDG-related spending in Albania (2015–2017)⁴³ to build evidence for investment trends in the SDGs, while UNDP undertook a needs assessment of INSTAT capacities so that they can better monitor and report publicly on the Goals. INSTAT was also supported in the launch of a dashboard of SDG data, hosted on the INSTAT website, and the establishment of an SDG Unit at INSTAT to support the institution in its SDG-related efforts. The joint UN–INSTAT Data Group (established in 2016) continued to meet quarterly. In 2019, UN support to the Albanian government focused on the launch of an exercise for establishment of interim targets for the SDGs that would feed into preparation of the new NSDI, 2021–2030. In parallel, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was supported in conducting a mid-term review of the current NSDI that would also feed into the formulation of NSDI 2021–2030. In 2020, to respond promptly to the COVID-19 recovery needs, UN in Albania engaged heavily in the preparation of a Socio-economic Recovery and Response Plan, which includes UN actions in the short and mid-term to support government's recovery efforts.

Status and Progress on SDG Nationalisation and Localisation

In 2019, UN support to the Albanian government focused on the launch of an exercise for establishment of interim targets for the SDGs that would feed into preparation of the new NSDI 2021–2030. Moreover, the government recently has identified 41 mid-term SDG indicators, out of 82 available in Albania, with mid-term targets defined, that will feed into the development of the new NSDI and more than 20 cross-sectoral strategies will be developed in the coming period.

The mapping of SDG indicators relevant for children, adolescents and youth, undertaken by INSTAT and UNICEF, identified that 20 percent of the indicators are not measured or reported.⁴⁴ Overall, only 36.7 percent of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective are available, with gaps in essential areas such as Violence Against Women, Key Labor Market indicators such as Gender Pay Gap and Skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICTs)⁴⁵.

Extending partnerships with the private sector has been at the focus of the UN work throughout 2019, while promoting the SDG Global Compact to align the actions of companies with SDG-oriented actions. For example, in May 2019, on its 20th anniversary, the Albanian Association of Banks organised an international conference to discuss Banks for Sustainable Development. This event aimed to ensure the participation of reputable international institutions and national policymakers, financial institutions and the UN to discuss recent developments among a broad array of topics on sustainable development, as well as to rekindle the Global Compact.

The UN will continue to provide support to Parliament for implementation of its SDG Action Plan, including strengthening Parliament's monitoring and oversight competencies, while close cooperation and support will be provided to the Sub-Committee on SDGs. In addition, nationwide awareness raising will continue, along with partnership building to deepen efforts, including through engagement with the private sector and the mobilisation of contributions to the SDG Acceleration Fund.

43. http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Final%20Report_SDG_Budget%20Analysis_1.pdf

44. INSTAT and UNICEF, 2020. Well-being Indicators on Children, Adolescents and Youths, <http://www.instat.gov.al/publikime/librat/>

45. See: <https://data.unwomen.org/country/albania>

4. Leave No One Behind

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, United Nations Member States pledged to ensure “no one is left behind” and to “endeavour to reach the furthest behind first”. People are left behind when they lack the choices and capabilities to participate in, or benefit from, human development and when their access to basic rights and needs is obstructed due to, or as a result of, their experience of absolute and relative disadvantage. This chapter looks into vulnerable groups including marginalised women and discrimination against women, older persons, youth, Roma, LGBTI+ persons and refugees and asylum-seekers, returnees and migrants.

Marginalised Women and Discrimination Against Women

Despite making significant progress in the area of legislation and commitments to gender equality in recent years, Albania continues to face a plethora of barriers to achieving gender equality. There still exists a clear distinction between the roles of men and women in both private and public life: men are still widely considered to be the head of household in most Albanian families, with 83 percent headed by men and 17 percent headed by women, while women still have the burden of doing most of the domestic and unpaid care work. Gender inequalities persist in the domain of health care, specifically in health status, health-related behaviour and access to health care, putting Albania’s index score in the domain of health at 81.8, 6.3 points lower than the EU-28 average. Due to rigid and traditional gender roles, gender-based social exclusion is still very much a reality

for women in the country. Among the female population, several marginalised groups have been identified as key groups at risk of being left behind. These include older women, Roma and Egyptian women and girls, women with disabilities, girls in rural areas, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, women in detention, secluded women and asylum-seeking women.⁴⁶

Between 2013 and 2019 the proportion of both women and men in the labor market increased. Despite the increase of women’s activity rate, the gender gap remained persistent. There are also issues around the concentration of women in sectors with a high share of informality, such as agriculture, tourism and the textile and shoe industries, where they lack adequate labour and social protection, an area where there is also limited disaggregated data.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) continues to be one of the most pervasive forms of violence in Albania, exacerbated by traditional perceptions of gender roles and patriarchal values. The VAWG Survey⁴⁷ by INSTAT, UNDP and UN Women (Figure 14), published in 2019, found that one in three women of age 18–74 years (36.6%) recently experienced one or more of five forms of violence (intimate partner violence, dating violence, non-partner violence, sexual harassment, or stalking), while one in two (52.9%) have experienced it during their lifetime.

Gender inequality in the enjoyment of property rights and inheritance remains one of the areas of concern in Albania. Although the Family Code

46. CEDAW Concluding Observations on Albania, 2016

47. <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2019/violence-against-women-and-girls-in-albania-2018/>

and other relevant legislation recognized the property gained during marriage as joint property, women, including in rural areas are largely not registered as co-owners in the family property's titles⁴⁸ This has been the result of some gaps in the legislation, but also because the implementation of the legislation has been too often hindered by discriminatory cultural and social attitudes and practices at the institutional and community levels, including women's lack of knowledge of their rights. New legislation on public notary and cadastre, adopted in 2018 has improved the legal framework and make the joint registration of marital immovable property compulsory. It also has a retroactive effect and enables corrections in property titles for registration of joint property during marriage under the name of both spouses.⁴⁹ However, efforts and interventions are needed to inform women about their property rights, provide legal aid and increase capacities of officials and notaries on the implementation of the legislation.

In recent years, civil society, especially women rights organizations and gender activists have been particularly active in raising their voice not only domestic violence but other forms of violence against women, such as rape and sexual harassment. Other issues were improvements and further work is still required include access to health services, especially for those with intersectional vulnerabilities, access to justice and execution of court decisions and child marriage. COVID-19 has further exacerbated the situation of women, especially those in already vulnerable positions. UN Women's Rapid Gender Assessment (RGA)⁵⁰ revealed that COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting women's mental and emotional health, especially among active working

age women and for those being self-employed. Women experienced limited access to basic health services and COVID-19 pandemic has affected workplace flexibility and has disproportionately increased the burden of unpaid domestic and care work for women.

Children and Adolescents

In 2018, children up to 17 years of age comprised 22 percent of the population of Albania, adolescents and youths, 25.1 and 22.4 percent, respectively. Administrative data indicate slight increase in child mortality and in neonatal deaths and a similar pattern for maternal mortality rates (Figures 3 and 4).

ADHS 2017–2018 found that only one in three (38%) children born in the two years prior to the survey were exclusively breastfed in the first six months of life as World Health Organisation and UNICEF guidelines recommend, while 57 percent were breastfed within one hour of birth, and only 59 percent continued with breastfeeding at one year. Only 29 percent of children of age 6–23 months living with their mothers were fed a minimum acceptable diet in the 24 hours before the survey. One in four (25%) children of age 6–49 months were found to be anaemic.

As regards school attendance, ADHS results confirm that of school-age household members 95 percent of children attend primary school education (gross attendance rate, 99%), with no significant variation by gender, residence or wealth.⁵¹ Children with disabilities and Roma remain among those still facing challenges in attending school, regardless of improvements in previous years, e.g. access to

48. In 2019, a "freedom of information law"-request to the National Cadaster Agency made by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network revealed that "[b]ased on the 43.6 per cent of the data that has been digitalized, 19.1 per cent of private property is registered in the name of women and 80.9 per cent in the name of men". According to the Cadaster Agency's written response, "[o]wnership of immovable properties of the type [including] construction plots, agricultural land, forests and pastures forms a ratio of 18.5 per cent in the name of women to 81.5 per cent in the name of men", while "[o]wnership of homes and apartments is in a ratio of 18.7 per cent in the name of women to 81.3 per cent in the name of men" <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/09/03/tradition-denies-albanian-women-right-to-property/#gsc.tab=0>

49. Albania Country Gender Equality Profile, UN Women, 2020

50. The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary results from a Rapid Gender Assessment, UN Women, 2020 <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/the-impact-of-covid19-on-womens-and-mens-lives-and-livelihoods>

51. INSTAT and IPH, 2018. Albania Demography and Health Survey 2017–2018. Tirana, Albania.

Figure 3. Neonatal mortality trend¹

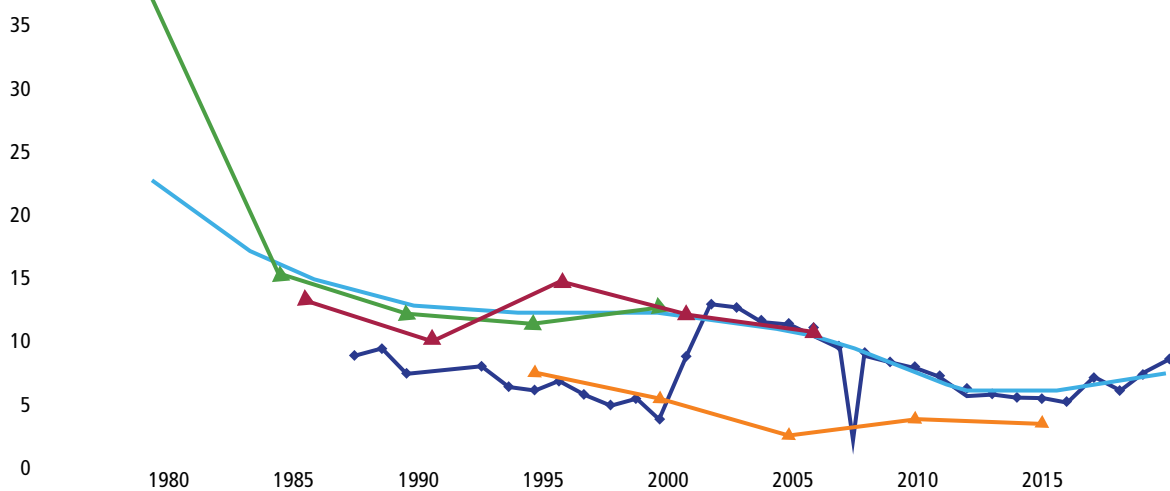


Figure 4. Infant Deaths for 1000 live births

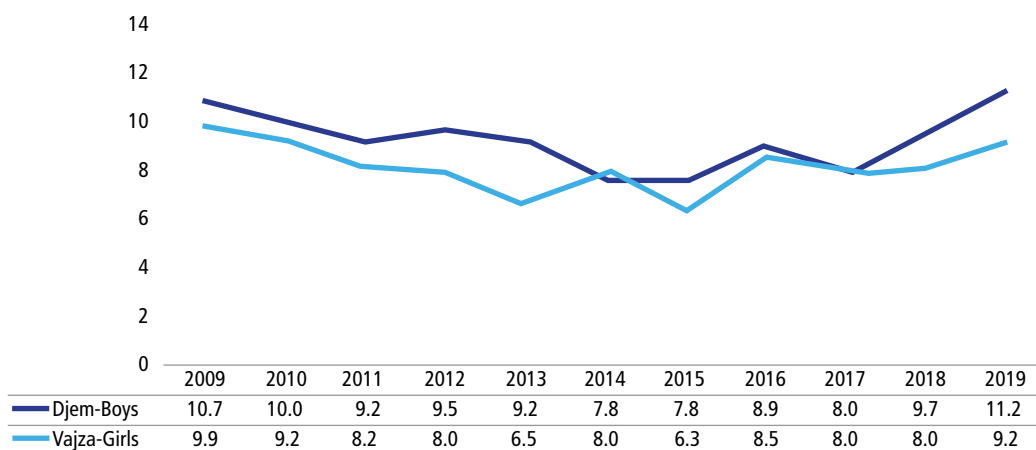
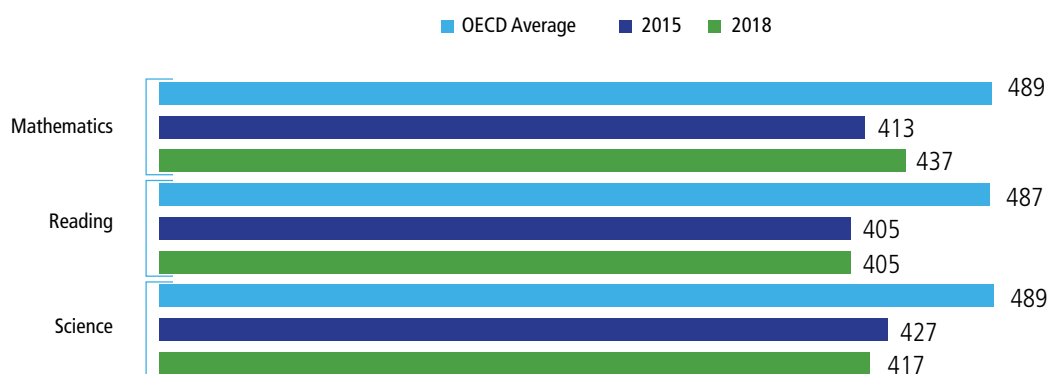


Figure 5. PISA results 2015 and 2018, and OECD average values



Source: PISA OECE 2015 and 2018, Albania

1. <https://childmortality.org/data/Albania>

Roma in education increased from 44 percent (2011) to 66 percent (2017).⁵²

Children in Albania are expected to complete thirteen years of pre-primary, primary and secondary school by age 18. However, when years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning, this is equivalent to only 8.9 years: a learning gap of 4.1 years, meaning that four years of schooling time does not result in learning.⁵³

The education system needs to address a range of issues and the current weaknesses with the education system call for improved 21st-century skill building throughout, by enhancing competency-based curriculum delivery, teacher training, and improving skills for life and employability. In 2018, students still scored less than the OECD averages for reading, mathematics and science, and, compared to the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, the country has made progress only in the results for mathematics⁵⁴ (Figure 5).

The number of children in institutions is decreasing due to fewer children being admitted into institutional care in recent years, but the rate of decrease is slow (9% from 2014 to 2018).⁵⁵ In 2018, the latest figures available reported 703 children registered in residential care. Whereas Albania once had the highest proportion of children in detention in the region, there has been a continual reduction in numbers since 2014.

Youth

Albanian population is among youngest in Europe. The age composition as recorded in the 2011 census implies that for every 100 persons in the economically most productive of ages (15–64 years), there are 47 persons in the dependent ages of 0–14 years and 65 and above. The emigration potential of young Albanians is very high. Albanian

institutions should reconsider the likely long-term ramifications of youth emigration and how this trend could be reversed.

Health, education, social protection and justice services for children and young people continue to suffer from a lack of human, financial and technical capacities, as well as limited outreach and coverage. This is the case particularly for marginalised and vulnerable young people such as Roma, children from rural areas, children with disabilities and key young populations. Intimate partner violence and sexual harassment among adolescents has come to the forefront of public attention after several publicised cases. According to the 2018 GBV survey slightly more than one in five girls have experienced intimate partner violence while dating. Even more prevalent are controlling behaviours, whereby the vast majority (>80%) consider such as normal in a relationship. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, numerous cases of sexual abuse of girls - particularly incest - have been reported, representing a warning sign that the real situation of violence against girls is highly critical.

The level and quality of education, remains an issue of persistent concern among Albanian youth. Their concerns about education are related not only to phenomena within the school, but also to the need to match education with labour market demands. During the COVID-19-induced crisis, accessing online-schooling turned out to be jeopardized by unavailability of computers, laptops and tablets and connectivity to the internet in both urban and rural areas, and in particular among poorer and disadvantaged population groups. Youth are concerned that job offers in the labour market do not match their education qualifications, but yet they have no choice but to accept them. Data from INSTAT show that there is a huge gap in employment for youth between the ages of 15-24, which includes the age of graduation, compared

52. UNDP, World Bank and EC, 2017. Regional Roma Survey, Albania.

53. World Bank, 2018. Human Capital Index.

54. OECD, 2018. Pisa Results: Albania, <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=ALB&treshold=10&topic=PI>

55. 5th and 6th Periodic Report of Government of Albania to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2019; figure refers to children in residential homes and developing centres (public and non public), for years 2014 and 2018.

to other age groups. In 2019, only 22.2 percent of women and 31.2 percent of men from this age group were employed. Further, Albania ranks first in the region with the highest % of NEETs.

Young people continue to exhibit distrust and disinterest in the political process. Yet, they remain active in elections, suggesting that they see the voting process as the main instrument with which to impact the political process. By listing economic well-being and employment as key elements to development, they demonstrate an acute awareness of the need for policies and priorities that can assist the country's socio-economic development.

Older Persons

Albania has started to experience the process of population ageing. This ageing process will continue and projections indicate that older persons are expected to reach 591,000 in 2031, equivalent to one-third of the total population. Population ageing brings about a fundamental transformation of society. It is likely that in the coming decades the older population will build a significant presence in Albanian demographic statistics and in everyday life, becoming an important political, economic and social factor.

Older generations play an important role in the provision of care to their children and grandchildren, as well as their partners, older relatives, and relatives with disabilities. The long-term viability of such inter-generational support systems is debatable, as family size declines and women increasingly participate in the labour force, and for longer. The National Action Plan for Older Persons 2020–2024 envisages the promotion of healthy lifestyles and behavioural changes across generations.

Persons with Disabilities

The National Social Protection Strategy 2020–2023 indicates that, in 2018, the number of people administratively recognised as persons with disabilities was 141,740 (4.8% of the country's population). Of these, 73,425 are labour invalids, who benefit from both the social insurance scheme and supplementary payments from the social protection scheme, and 68,315 children and adults who receive disability allowance and other benefits in the social protection system.

Albania has made progress over the social inclusion of persons with disabilities. A set of policy and legal documents targeting, or mainstreaming, disability-related issues have been developed and approved in various sectors such as education, employment, justice, health, social care and protection, housing and territory planning and infrastructure. Government institutions and structures responsible for policy implementation and monitoring are in place. Additional funding is needed for programmes and actions to the benefit of persons with disabilities, while awareness raising and capacity building for all stakeholders is promoted, in particular for a more accessible environment and better community-based services.

Yet, challenges still exist. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities raised concerns about the insufficiency of effective measures taken to make urgent progress to deinstitutionalize persons with disabilities and the limited progress made in implementing independent living arrangements and the lack of programmes and in-home, residential and individualized support in the community. The CRPD also noted concerns about the lack of a gender equality policy and strategy that addresses the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities.⁵⁶

56. CRPD/C/ALB/CO/1 paras. 33–34



In 2018, the number of people administratively recognised as persons with disabilities was 141,740 (4.8% of the country's population).

Roma

In recent years, Albania has marked substantive political and programmatic efforts with the economic and social inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities. However, many Roma and Egyptians still face deep poverty, discrimination and exclusion. Unemployment is particularly high among this community, and those who are employed occupy most often low paid positions. Poverty is widespread and many people do not have access to necessities such as electricity or clean water. Informal employment continues to be very high among marginalised Roma (in 2017, 50 percent of the Roma women and 69 percent of Roma men).

In recent years, there has been a positive trend in Albania in the field of education. This is particularly the case with compulsory education enrolment of Roma children of age 7–15 years (currently at 66% for both Roma girls and boys) and who have completed compulsory education (43% in total, 40% Roma girls and 47% Roma boys). However, the gap between Roma and Egyptians and non-Roma children living in the same areas remains significant.

LGBTI+ Persons

The Constitution establishes comprehensive rights for Albania's citizens and promotes equality without discrimination. Same-sex relations and expression of LGBTI+ identities are no longer a criminal offence. The Anti-discrimination Law includes sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) as prohibited grounds for discrimination. Despite substantial legal protections, discrimination against LGBTI+ people persists, including denial of the rights to marry and have a family, undergo reassigned gender surgery for transgender people, and to self-determination in relation to bodily integrity for intersex people. The UNDP-supported country report on the status of the LGBTI+ persons rights⁵⁷ highlights some key areas for legal framework improvements, including revising criminal dispositions to remove offences relating to consensual same-sex conduct and other offences used to arrest and punish persons on the basis of their SOGI or expression, criminalising the incitement of hatred on the grounds of SOGI and distribution of homophobic and transphobic materials to the public, and providing legal recognition to same-sex couples and their children, ensuring that benefits traditionally accorded married partners—including those related to benefits, pensions, and taxation and inheritance—are accorded on a non-discriminatory basis.

57. UNDP-supported report Being LGBTI in eastern Europe, <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/te-jesh-lgbti-ne-evrope-lindore--raporti-per-shqiperine.html>



Informal employment continues to be very high among marginalised Roma (in 2017, 50% of the Roma women and 69% of Roma men).

Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees and Migrants

Albania remains predominantly a country of emigration. The majority of migrant communities are present in neighbouring countries—Italy and Greece—though many Albanians have been residing in other EU member states as well, and in North America, for the past two decades. Emigration from Albania is primarily driven by economic reasons. Another group of Albanian citizens living abroad comprises those whose asylum claims have been rejected or who otherwise are residing irregularly there.

Like other Western Balkan countries, Albania has also been affected by mixed population flows, the reasons for which are not only socio-economic conditions but also the effects of various conflicts taking place around the world. The categories of foreigners arriving in the country include, inter alia, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated minors, and stateless persons. The country has now a comprehensive Policy on Migration Governance, legislation better aligned to the *EU acquis*, stronger support services for vulnerable migrants, more

capacitated institutions and more capacities to deal with migration-related dynamics. Since 2019, there has been in place a new National Strategy on Migration and its Action Plan (2019–2022).

According to various periodic reports of key monitoring foreign agencies,⁵⁸ trafficking in human beings remains an issue in Albania and continues to require the full attention and resources of government, as well as of local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations working in the country to advance human rights and social justice.

In 2019, arrivals of refugees and migrants in Albania increased by 85 percent from the year before, totalling 10,557 individuals. Asylum requests increased correspondingly by 52 percent from 2018, totalling 6,677. Over a two-year period (2017–2019), annual figures increased ten-fold. As of February and March 2020, even sharper increases in arrivals and asylum requests were witnessed. This trend was interrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 emergency and the subsequent closure of land borders.

Under the current system, all new arriving asylum seekers are transferred to the National Reception Centre in Tirana. Due to under-funding, overcrowding and high turnover of residents, living conditions and security at the centre do not meet the required standards, including those related to treatment of women and girls, victims of different forms of violence. There are lengthy delays to asylum procedures, notably with regard to the formal lodging of claims of asylum seekers that have remained in the country and confirmed their intention to seek asylum here. Only 61 asylum applications were lodged formally in 2019. These delays, in addition to the deteriorating condition of some reception facilities in the country, and lack of state-provided free legal aid and interpretation, compound onward movement through the region, even among those who had an initial intention to stay in Albania.

58. <https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81>

5. Commitments under international norms and standards

Albania has made important progress with regard to the adoption of a robust legal and policy framework in accordance with international human rights standards. These include access to justice, gender equality and violence against women, elimination of discrimination and protection of minorities and disadvantaged groups, rights of the child, social care and social protection. In addition to some areas where legal improvements may still be necessary, the main priority remains effective and timely implementation of the adopted legislation, which is key to ensuring fulfilment of the country's human rights commitments and achievement of the SDGs.

Since 2016, the country has embarked upon a major reform of the justice system. The judicial reform package includes important laws to ensure access to justice, particularly for disadvantaged groups, such as the new Law on State Legal Aid, the Code of Criminal Justice for Children, amendments to the Criminal Procedural Code that expand protection measures for victims of human trafficking and sexual violence, amendments to the Law on Domestic Violence and Criminal Code, in accordance with important standards of the Istanbul Convention and a Strategy on Legal Education of the Public. However, people continue to face obstacles to accessing justice due to delays in the judicial reform process, including the composition of some of the key judicial bodies. Other factors that contribute to a fragile

framework for access to justice in Albania include low levels of legal literacy, dubious attitudes on what is just, and a lack of trust in the justice system.

In line with SDG 16 and SDG target 17.16, Albania needs to take appropriate measures, including through training, to ensure that judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officials have sufficient knowledge of the provisions of the international human rights instruments to enable them to evoke or apply the provisions in relevant cases. In addition to human rights education for the judiciary, making legal services accessible is essential. The state legal aid system only recently has started to provide some services due to lack of funding and delays in adoption of secondary legislation affecting people in a difficult economic situation, children and marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The need to establish an efficient legal aid system for marginalised groups and increase the capacities of members of the judiciary and lawyers are recommendations present in several human rights bodies reports (CEDAW 2016; UPR 2016, 2019; GREVIO 2017; CERD 2019; CRPD 2019) and a requisite for achievement of several SDGs, including Goals 1, 5, 10 and 16.



The domestic violence legislation has also been improved through the years, including recent amendments in 2020, which require the removal of the perpetrator from the family residence as one of the protection measures.

Gender equality and violence against women

In the area of gender equality and ending violence against women, Albania is party to two of the most important instruments: the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In recent years, the country has taken important steps towards the elimination of gender-based discrimination and gender equality. The domestic violence legislation has also been improved through the years, including recent amendments in 2020, which require the removal of the perpetrator from the family residence as one of the protection measures.

Nevertheless, many gaps persist. The National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality (NSGE) 2016–2020 had a financial gap of 37.2 percent when the strategy was adopted and there has been no clear information from the government on its level of implementation. However, an evaluation report was prepared in 2021, which is serving as the basis of the adoption of the new Strategy on Gender Equality (2021-2030). Intersecting forms of discrimination that many women face because of their gender and other grounds (ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic situation) remain largely unaddressed as strategic and policy

documents either do not provide for specific measures for these groups, or they are not implemented effectively.

There is low implementation of improvements in the labour legislation, including measures introduced to avoid sexual harassment in the work place and lack of employment guarantee schemes for all groups of women of working-age. Challenges also remain in the area of health and in relation to property rights. Moreover, violence against women puts their health and lives at risk, however, their access to medical and psychological rehabilitation services and others specialist support services is insufficient. 205 The root causes of violence against women and domestic violence (VAW–DV) remain largely unaddressed and a more comprehensive legislation is necessary to address all forms of violence against women, in addition to domestic violence. The number of women murdered by their partners and other family members has increased and the government's response to addressing the issue is considered by civil society to be inadequate. The judiciary, health system and special support services particularly lag behind with regard to the fulfilment of their legal obligations. Insufficient budgeting at the national and local levels to implement strategic and legal obligations related to VAW–DV is another reason for the inadequate response.

Anti-discrimination and disadvantaged groups

The anti-discrimination legislation in Albania has been improved to bring it in to conformity with international standards. The law on Protection of National Minorities was adopted in 2017. Despite these developments, there is lack of progress in the implementation of the legislation pertaining to the rights of persons with disabilities and LGBTI+ communities. Human rights mechanisms point to the inadequate efforts to combat structural discrimination against these groups and ineffective implementation of the existing legislation, strategies and action plans, as well as lack of objective evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of these strategies. There is also need for effective investigation and prosecution of incitement to racial hatred and hate crimes based on sexual orientation or gender identity, including hate speech, allegedly perpetrated by politicians and representatives of the media.

Child's rights and protection

In 2019, the Mid-term Implementation Report on the National Action Plan for the Rights of the Child 2016–2020 has affirmed that only 28 percent of the actions planned in the past two years have been fully realised, corresponding to 51 percent of indicators achieved and expenditure of only 9.4 percent of the financial resources planned. The non-realisation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and other international human rights treaties is evident in the fifth and sixth State Reports of Albania to the Committee of the Rights of the Child (2019).⁵⁹

Emigration and asylum

Albania has in recent years advanced legal provisions related to the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and foreign citizens in accordance with international standards. Albania remains primarily a country of transit for mixed movements, with the majority of new arrivals leaving the country a few days after arrival to travel onwards through the region. Albania needs to further strengthen its measures to protect the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in accordance with recommendations of UPR and the CMW Committee. This includes strengthening the capacities of first line officers such as border and migration police, as well as those working in reception centres for irregular migrants and asylum-seekers. Other areas for advancement include full and effective implementation of legislation enabling inclusion of refugees and migrants in health, education, housing and other basic services.

Other human rights issues

There are a number of other human rights issues that equally need to be addressed based on the 2019 UPR recommendations and those of other human rights mechanisms.⁵⁹

Last but not least, it is important that special consideration is given to the impact on the enjoyments of all human rights of the deadly earthquake that hit Albania in November 2019 and the current events related to the measures to contain the global pandemic of Coronavirus. Particular attention should be placed on the rights of disadvantaged groups, who are often the most affected during emergencies.

59. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/043/08/PDF/G1904308.pdf?OpenElement>

6. Cross-boundary, Regional and Sub-regional Perspectives

While the goal of EU accession is considered a main driving force behind economic transformation and stability of the region, the Western Balkans remains at a crossroads among global geopolitical forces. Since the turn of the millennium, the Western Balkans have made much progress towards peace and stability. However, lack of trust and reconciliation, combined with persistent ethno-nationalist rhetoric and action, continue to pose a risk and an impediment for sustainable peace and development in the region. Several regional and bilateral disputes still simmer, many of them related to border demarcation, war-crimes jurisdiction and the interpretation of war history, the fate of missing persons, and ethnic minority rights. Kosovo's⁶⁰ status remains unresolved, splitting the region.

Albania has cultivated close ties with Kosovo and supports Kosovo's international recognition and membership in regional and international organizations. Albania and Kosovo coordinate their foreign policy, including on issues affecting Albanian minorities in the region, co-locate diplomatic offices and hold regular joint government sessions. Albania also maintains close links to Albanian communities in the region, including in Serbia and North Macedonia. However, the legacy of past disputes continues to impact on bilateral relations. During 2020, Albania and Greece resumed discussions on the delineation of

the maritime border and agreed to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice.

A number of diplomatic initiatives launched in recent years have supported progress in regional cooperation, including the Berlin Process led by several EU member states, with the accompanying EU connectivity agenda and the EU Western Balkans engagement strategy. Albania is also engaged in several regional coordination mechanisms and processes in the fields of economic development and trade, strengthening transport and communications infrastructure and interconnectivity, and peacebuilding through dialogue with a focus on youth. Examples include the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (based in Tirana and established in 2016), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the Regional Cooperation Council, the Multi-annual Action Plan on Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans, and sub-regional cooperation mechanism established with Serbia and North Macedonia known as "Mini-Schengen."

The Western Balkan economies are already closely integrated with the EU, which is their largest trading partner and largest source of incoming foreign investment and other financial flows (with the share declining in favour of China), including remittances. The EU is also the main destination for emigration, while monetary and financial

60. References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

systems are strongly dependent on the Euro. The close economic relations with the EU have been boosted by, among others, the Stabilisation and Association Agreements between the EU and individual Western Balkan countries, which also include provisions for a free-trade area.

The region also faces other disconcerting human rights challenges, such as attacks on journalists, discrimination against minorities, and poor protection of migrants and refugees. According to government figures (2015), there are still some 300,000 internally displaced persons in the region, many of whom are subject to discrimination and economic insecurity. With regard to migrants and refugees, numbers of arrivals in the region remain high and mixed movements remain transitory in nature, as most travel through in order to reach EU Member States in Western/Northern Europe. In some Western Balkan countries (particularly those with EU borders) mixed movements continue to face challenging conditions, especially in relation to reception and access to rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted further regional collaboration after demonstrating how interconnected and interdependent regional economies are. However, gaps in regional cooperation remain. From the very outset, the pandemic propelled protectionist measures across the Western Balkans, much like in the rest of world, including disruptions in transport links and supply chains and export restrictions on medical supplies and food products. The crisis has severe ramifications for the economies of the Western Balkans as both aggregate supply and aggregate demand contracted simultaneously and led to disruptions in the flow of goods and people due to the closure of EU and regional borders. At the same time, the leaders of the Western Balkan region took steps to enhance regional cooperation. Leaders in the region agreed to work towards the free movement of goods, services, capital and people, including through maintaining “green lanes” established during the lockdown, and to pursue bilateral and multilateral agreements in this regard.



Increased efforts are needed in treating urban wastewater, eliminating plastic waste and other pollutants entering from the rivers and coastal cities, addressing controlled dumping of waste and improving modern waste collection and recycling.

In addition to economic risks, the region faces weather-related shocks putting pressure on the Balkan’s agriculture and forestry sector. Climate-related disasters will have an adverse effect on the GDP of the various countries, on the agricultural and forestry sectors, as well as on peoples’ livelihoods. Economic growth in the region is dependent upon climate-sensitive natural resources, implicating high costs with regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Albania is a member of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI-SEE), based in North Macedonia, that aims to address disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures at a sub-regional scale, facilitating cross-border cooperation. Also, pollution across the region threatens the health of people, economy, and puts pressure on already strained resources. Yet, a common regional response is missing. Similarly, increased efforts are needed in treating urban wastewater, eliminating plastic waste and other pollutants entering from the rivers and coastal cities, addressing controlled dumping of waste and improving modern waste collection and recycling.

7. Financing Landscape and Opportunities

Together the COVID-19 pandemic and the earthquake in 2019 have caused a major interruption in domestic and international flows in and out of Albania. The pandemic has worsened existing vulnerabilities and the stimulus package adopted by the government have tightened the fiscal space in Albania. The country is further challenged by growing debt burdens and declining investment, trade and tourism.

International private finance

Albania has experienced a stable but slow increase in Foreign Direct Investments over the past decade and net inflows from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have reached an average of 8.4 percent of GDP in 2018, being one of the highest in the region. FDI is concentrated mostly in electricity, extraction industries and telecommunications and sourced from a few countries (WEF, Growth Lab, CID Harvard). In 2019, remittances comprised 9.4 percent of GDP (WB), though they are now also expected to drop due to the global pandemic.

International public finance

The net Official Development Assistance (ODA) disbursements amounted to USD 342.9 million in 2018, representing 2.3 percent of Gross National Income (GNI), a sharp increase from 1.3 percent of GNI in 2017 when the net ODA disbursements were USD 168 million. In 2018, the bilateral share of the gross ODA of USD 464 million was 49.3 percent. In terms of sectoral allocations, 54 percent of the bilateral ODA went to other social infrastructure and services while 24 percent was directed to education. The top donors in Albania include the EU, Germany, Switzerland and the United States (Figure 6). The EU's financing window Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) III for 2021–2027 is expected to increase the funding allocated to the Western Balkans.

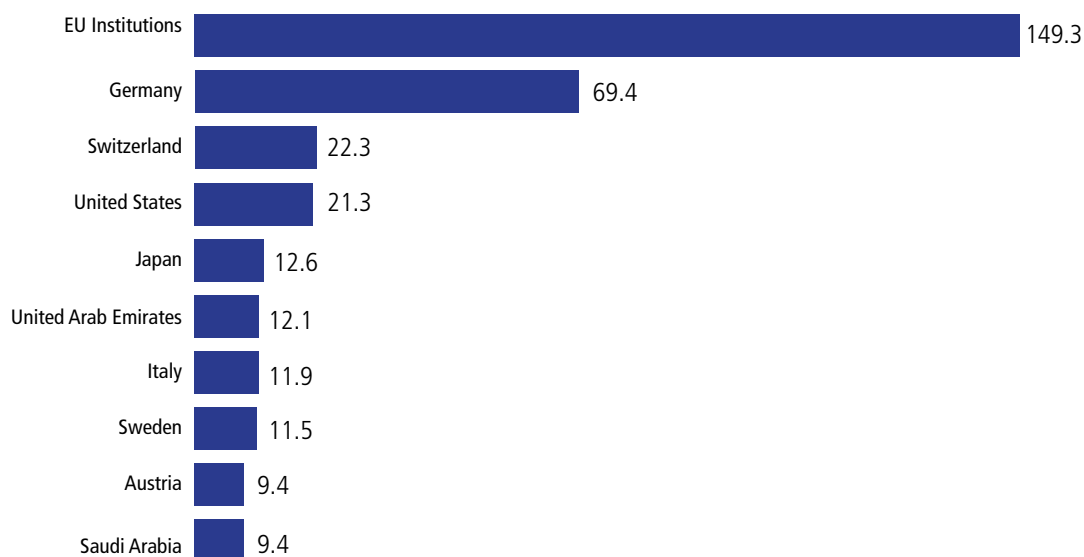
The share of ODA is expected to increase as a result of the recovery efforts following the earthquake that devastated the country in November 2019. A donor conference organised in February 2020 raised EUR 1.15 billion for earthquake reconstruction and recovery.⁶¹ The International Financial Institutions, such as World Bank, European Investment Bank, EBRD, as well as bilateral lenders, such as KfW and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), are a major source of funds for Albania's development projects, especially for infrastructure, and are increasingly tying their activities to the SDG objectives.

61. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pledge_statement_final_0.pdf#page=2



Adonor conference organised in February 2020 raised EUR 1.15 billion for earthquake reconstruction and recovery

Figure 6. Top ten donor countries to Albania (Gross ODA, USD million), 2017–2018 average (OECD, Development Assistance Committee, DAC)



Domestic Incentives and Landscape: Public and Private Finance

Albania has taken steps to modernise its tax administration. However, continuous efforts are still needed to further strengthen it, broaden the tax base and increase compliance, as tax evasion remains high and the country has one of the lowest government revenues in Europe. The reform against informality should remain an ongoing priority. Albania's revenue performance

increased between 2015 and 2018, supported by the growing economy. In 2018, tax revenue stood at 18.6 percent of GDP.⁶² The level of public debt has remained high (67.8% of GDP in 2019) and is expected to rise further due to COVID-19. To support the financing needs, government successfully placed a EUR 500 million seven-year Eurobond in October 2018 and another seven-year EUR 650 million Eurobond, in June 2020.

62. World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GC.TAX.TOTL.GD.ZS?end=2018&locations=AL&start=1995&view=chart>

National Budget Allocations

In 2017, out of 17 SDGs, the Albanian government allocated the largest shares to following SDGs; 2.6 percent of GDP to SDG3 on health, 2.49 percent to SDG10 on reduced inequalities, 2.43 on SDG 9 on innovation and infrastructure and 2.38 percent to SDG 4 on education. According to the same study, allocation for achieving SDG 5 (gender equality), was only 0.05% of GDP in 2017.

Comparing the sectoral budget allocations in Albania with those of neighbouring countries, in 2014, Albania spent 2.9 percent of GDP on public health, while Croatia and Serbia each spent 6.4 percent, and Montenegro, 3.7 percent. Similarly, Albania's share of GDP allocated to social protection between the years 1995 and 2015 was considerably less than in neighbouring countries.⁶³

Alternative Finance

New and innovative financing mechanisms must be found to help bridge the gap between what is available and what is needed to achieve the SDGs in Albania by 2030. There is an urgent need to strengthen and scale up existing innovative mechanisms and explore new ones, such as impact investing, impact bonds (Social or Development Impact Bonds, Blue Bonds, Green Bonds), equity-based crowdfunding, forecast-based financial mechanisms, microfinance, or debt-for-nature swaps.

Forecasts for Potential SDG Finance Sources

Going forward, it is important to maintain momentum with all parties towards achieving SDGs and ensuring that financing is aligned with the ambition of the Agenda 2030 and country's development priorities. The capacities of the government to identify and integrate into the

national budgetary framework more equitable and adequate financing to achieve the SDGs needs to be strengthened. Also, further efforts are needed in engaging with the private sector.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Domestic Financing Landscape

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a severe challenge to the Government's ability to maintain macroeconomic stability. The Government has issued two fiscal stimulus packages (on 21 March 2020 and 13 April 2020), consisting of budget spending, sovereign guarantees, wage subsidies for those businesses and individuals in dire economic distress and a mixture of tax moratoriums. The two fiscal packages together, amounted to about 2.8 per cent of GDP. The government has also supported the economy through various tax deferrals and temporary suspension of requirements for loan classifications. The national budget was revised three times in 2020, to accommodate for the dynamic situation. According to the revised budgets in March and April, the fiscal deficit was set to reach 4 per cent of GDP, and then 8.9 per cent of GDP in July 2020, to finance the measures to cope with the impacts of the coronavirus.

Public debt was first expected to rise to 68.8% of gross domestic product, up four percentage points from a budgeted 64.8% in December 2019, and it is now expected to increase to above 75%. To bridge the financing gap and to support Albania's macroeconomic stability, the IMF, WB, EU and EBRD and development partners, have stepped up their support. IMF has provided US\$190.5 million financial assistance, under the Rapid Financing Instrument. The European Union has provided EUR 4 million, to support the health sector, and EUR 46 million of budget support, to assist the social and economic recovery. The EU also provides support at the macro-economic level, through an additional amount of EUR 180 million, in favourable term loans.

63. Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Albania, 2018.

8. Gaps and Challenges towards Achieving Agenda 2030

Establishing a national vision for the year 2030, particularly in the most relevant policy areas for Albania, identifying policy gaps and accelerating action in priority areas, prioritising the SDGs in the local context, strengthening institutional capacities of all key stakeholders engaged in the process, including the monitoring and reporting institutions, strengthening accountability mechanisms, placing a stronger focus on institutional coordination, enhancing results-oriented monitoring and evaluation systems and tools and performance-based budgeting and financing are key challenges Albania faces towards achieving Agenda 2030. Despite progress and improvements made, alignment and integration between policy development and budgeting needs still to be assured. Integration and potential benefits of implementation of NSDI have yet to be quantified in terms of efficiency gains, e.g. resources per outcome, time path to target, effectiveness, public service delivery, social development and well-being

of citizens, as well as sustainability and resilience of national resources and development patterns. Other challenges include coordination, management and leadership of the SDG implementation process as the institutional setting of policy coordination and implementation undergoes continuous changes following elections (national or local) in the country. Confluence of the on-going horizontal (redesign and functional review of the central apparatus) and vertical (decentralisation, territorial-administrative) governance reforms has introduced significant uncertainties into Albania's overall government structures. Also, adequacy of financing and systemic weaknesses are noted in collecting and analysing statistical data in Albania, remain as key challenges towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

For more in-depth analysis on major gaps and challenges per each SDG, please refer to Annex B.

Appendices

Annex A

Risk Mapping — Multi-Dimensional Risk Analysis

Annex B

Gaps and Challenges towards Achieving Agenda 2030

Annex C

Data repository

Risk Mapping — Multi-Dimensional Risk Analysis

Risk areas	Key risk factors	Likelihood (high, medium, low)	Impact on results (high, medium, low)	Early mitigation and response measures	Risk monitoring
Political stability Risks to the stability of established political and governmental structures in the territory resulting from politically driven factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustained political polarisation - Centralised political system - Limited engagement with civil society - Low accountability and transparency provides space for increased corruption - Coronavirus pandemic response used to limit freedoms for assembly and political affiliation 	high	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support gender quota as part of electoral system - Support legal framework development and implementation for vulnerable groups - Advocacy to ensure respect of human rights during coronavirus pandemic response - Increase civil society engagement in UN's programme implementation - Advocacy 	RC, UNCT
Economic stability Risks to the economic, financial and fiscal stability of the country that could impact governance, social cohesion and people's ability to satisfy their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decline in real GDP growth (WB forecast of -5% for 2020) - At-risk of poverty increases, from 40% to 44% (return to 2005 situation) - Sustainability of public finance and high levels of government debt, aggravated by Coronavirus stimulus spending - Inability to implement required PFM reforms - High debt financing costs further reduces fiscal space - Reduced budgets and effectiveness of public services - Significant fiscal risks and an enormous strain on local financial resources - GBP measures reduced due to reduced budget 	high	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio-economic plan to support COVID-19 recovery with actions on supporting impact assessment of COVID-19 and policy options to sustain or expand health, education and social protection programmes - Support economic diversification efforts - Promote green economy transition and incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy investment 	UNDP, UNECE, UNICEF, RCO
Democratic space Risks to democratic and human rights institutions, and to civil and political rights resulting from shrinking civic space, exclusion, repression and intimidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An increased stand-off between government and opposition could lead to more violent rhetoric and actions on both sides - Threats to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the new anti-defamation package and rules for online media - Weak institutions, protests could block the rule of law reform process, people's trust in institutions could erode further at a critical moment of judiciary reform - Role of media and role of Parliament weak 	medium	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of supported UPR recommendations - Transparent, fair Coronavirus pandemic recovery stimulus spending - Gender mainstreamed assessment and monitoring of COVID-19 impact on vulnerable groups - Strengthen youth engagement in UN processes through Youth Advisory Board 	RC, UNCT
Environment and climate Risks to the ecology of the territory, its ecosystems and its people resulting from factors associated with environment, climate and natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural hazards and lack of coping capacity - Fragile environment created by large-scale disaster that has caused social and environmental damage and weakened institutions and stakeholders - Inadequate waste management - Deterioration of ecosystems and biodiversity; increased pollution 	high	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support national and local DRR measures, including from a gender perspective - Mainstream climate change adaptation, mitigation policies and measures into national policy and budget-making processes - Promote water-use efficiency, biodiversity protection, green technologies - Support government and communities to minimise roll-back of existing nature conservation actions and urge continued investment in protected and conserved areas 	UNDP, UNEP, UNECE
Justice and rule of law Risks to fair, effective and comprehensive implementation and application of the principles of justice, rule of law and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced trust in the perception of Albanian citizens regarding transparency and accountability of central and local government - Coronavirus response measures may increase restrictions on citizens to exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and expression - Decline in perception of role of Ombudsman and opposition parties in holding government accountable - Access to justice for vulnerable groups, including Roma community members, LGBTI+ persons, PWD, elderly, rural women and girls. 	medium	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures above under (1) and (2) and (3) 	RC, UNCT

<p>Public health Risks to the population, the economy and stability of the territory resulting from current and future public health emergencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coronavirus pandemic increases strain on health systems and services with potential for system collapse - Challenge for health system from a recurring epidemic wave with compounding waves of mortality - Shifting of funds from specific budget health programmes, including needed investments, to COVID-19 activities 	high	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country-level coordination, planning, and monitoring: emergency operational unit in IPH, inter-action and post-action review of response - Strengthen national laboratories, testing capacity, trained lab workforce - Strengthen primary health care by strengthening human resources, infrastructure and diagnostics, services, financing and financial protection, and quality of care 	WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA
<p>Regional and global influences Risks to the integrity, stability, safety and prosperity of the territory and its people as a result of the actions of external actors, or the influence of external events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Major negative impacts from COVID-19 on travel, trade, tourism and commerce - Unresolved regional disputes may bring further risks to regional stability - Different status stage of EU integration talks might bring lack of cooperation - Risk of increased level of asylum seekers and refugees, due to some Western Balkan countries' border closure 	high	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support enhanced regional connectivity initiatives - Support reconciliation initiatives through PBF funding projects - Apply for regional eligibility programme to PBSO - Strengthen regional cooperation element in subsequent cooperation framework - Support to border authorities to determine permanent status of eligible cases, including capacity strengthening programmes 	RC, UNCT
<p>Social cohesion, equality and non-discrimination Risks to social unity and equality resulting from direct and indirect discrimination, inequalities and demographic trends</p>	<p>See Political stability and Democratic space (above) Additional risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social cohesion impacted by unaddressed grievances from the country's recent past and high public mistrust of institutions - Slow down of social reforms due to political polarisation - Negative demographic trend; increased emigration - Weak situation of Roma and Egyptian minorities and other vulnerable groups: lack of proper access to employment, education, health, housing and services - Weak national gender equality machinery, increased cases of domestic and sexual violence - Gaps on specialist support services tailored for all groups of women and for all forms of VAWG - Coronavirus brings about insufficient social protection and exclusion of some vulnerable groups - Significant number of families left without protection from economic shocks due to structure of social protection systems; paid leave and unemployment insurance excludes reach of schemes to farmers and rural areas - Persistent educational and skills mismatches and low quality of educational outcomes impede socio-economic inclusion especially of the most vulnerable, while limiting local and national economic development. - Side-lining of women's human rights and gender equality as a result of prioritizing economic goals in response to the COVID-19-induced crisis 	medium	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy development to establish comprehensive and shock-responsive social protection systems - Strengthening national social protection system - Improvements in regulatory and legal policy framework for adequate prevention and response to GBV–DV cases and support in implementation - Support integration of social and health services at local level; use of innovative programmes - Support strengthening of gender equality machinery - Support consistent integration of gender equality goals across all sectors and levels of governance - Strengthening and increasing of effectiveness of Coordinated Referral Mechanisms against domestic violence at the local level - Support strengthening of education system, and ensure access to education for marginalised groups - Strengthen capacities of social service providers at local level - Support those in need, through livelihood and income-generating programmes - Strengthen budgetary gender accountability (gender responsive budgeting in public finance management) through introduction of tracking system 	RC, UNCT UN Women

Gaps and Challenges towards Achieving Agenda 2030



NO POVERTY

The country remains one of the poorest in Europe. Per-capita GDP is about one third the EU average and in 2017 more than 1 in 3 Albanians lived on less than US \$5.50 per day (PPP) – similar to 2008⁶⁴. In 2018 the 'at-risk' of poverty rate was 23%⁶⁵ and 27% among households with dependent children. One third of employment is informal⁶⁶ and many families struggle to meet their basic needs. In 2019, household consumption, fuelled by remittances, accounted for about 9% of GDP and expansion of the tax base and reduction of the informal economy are major policy challenges⁶⁷.

Social protection: Albania's social care and protection systems offer insufficient protection from poverty shocks. Albania invests about 12% of GDP in social protection, significantly lower than most of its neighbours and EU member states⁶⁸ and under-investment in social protection was a factor in simultaneously rising GDP and poverty headcounts between 2008 and 2012⁶⁹. Current protection schemes do not reflect the integrated dimensions of poverty and deprivation: education, health care, and housing. Roma and Egyptian populations, persons with disabilities, isolated rural communities and especially rural women, and at-risk children are highly vulnerable.



ZERO HUNGER

Malnutrition is a critical issue, especially for children and pregnant women; 11% of children aged 6 to 59 months are stunted and 1 in 4 anemic⁷⁰. The prevalence of obesity in both men and women has increased by nearly a third in recent years⁷¹. Agriculture contributes 19% of GDP and employs about one-third workers, but it faces declining importance in terms of government spending⁷². Most farms are family owned and the average size is 1.3 hectares compared to an EU average of 14 ha. Women head only 6.5% percent of all farms and are often excluded from decision-making⁷³. The agrifood sector is characterized by a lack of market institutions, inefficient distribution channels, and struggles to meet national and international quality and food safety standards⁷⁴.



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Several aspects of health system performance lag behind the EU benchmarks. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and road injuries are leading causes of premature mortality. The neonatal mortality rate at 6.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 was accounting for 70% of all infant deaths. In 2019, public spending on health as a share of GDP was lower in Albania (2.97%) than in most South Eastern European countries and the EU, with chronic under-funding of primary health care, maternal and child health and health information systems. Barriers to accessing quality health services are apparent in the high out-of-pocket expenditure as % of current health expenditure (44,6% in 2018)⁷⁵.

Major priorities include: (1) Ending preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age and improving coverage and quality of essential health care services for mothers and new-borns; (2) Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services, in line with EU human and reproductive rights policies; (3) Halving deaths from road traffic accidents; (4) Achieving Universal Health Coverage; (5) Reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases; (6) Strengthening health emergency preparedness and IHR. Ensuring access to quality health services is important, particularly for vulnerable population groups, persons with disabilities, Roma, and other marginalized communities. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the risk of an overloaded health system. The earthquake that affected Albania in November 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic underlined the importance of strong health systems and of adequate emergency preparedness and response capacities. The primary health care strategy calls for a gradual increase of the health budget to approximately 12% of government spending, to ensure adequate preparedness to respond effectively to potential future pandemics and health crises.

64. World Bank, Systematic Country Diagnostic, 2019. 19, 49.

65. INSTAT data in UNCT, Common Country Analysis (CCA), 2020 (draft) 25; UNICEF SITAN, *ibid.*, ++

66. ILOSTAT data in World Bank, *ibid.*, 29.

67. CCA, *ibid.*, 5.

68. United Nations, Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Albania (MAPS-Albania), 2018, 15-16. In 2015: Croatia 22%; Greece 26%; Serbia 23%, based on ILO, World Social Protection Report, 2017-2019.

69. UN, MAPS-Albania, *ibid.*, 14.

70. UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Children (SITAN), 2019; European Commission, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Albania 2019 Report, Brussels, 29.5.2019, 93.

71. CCA, *ibid.*, 27.

72. FAO, 2020. Albania's Agriculture orientation index value of 0.14 in 2018 suggests significantly weaker orientation of government policy and spending toward the agriculture sector relative to its contribution to GDP. Index values for comparators: Croatia 1.59; Greece 0.17; Romania 0.64; and Serbia 0.28.

73. FAO, Smallholders and family farms in Albania. Country study report, 2020, 38.

74. CCA, *ibid.*, 20 based on Eurostat and INSTAT data.

75. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.OOPC.CH.ZS?locations=AL>, retrieved April 25, 2021



QUALITY EDUCATION

Despite major education reforms⁷⁶, there are significant disparities in access to quality education, especially between rural and urban areas and between ethnic Albanian, Roma and Balkan Egyptian populations⁷⁷. Current spending on public education is about 3.1% of GDP compared to an average of 5% in OECD countries. While access for vulnerable groups of children, especially children with disabilities and Roma, has increased, they still face barriers and discrimination to school attendance and learning⁷⁸. Children with disabilities face continuing barriers such as inaccessible infrastructure and a lack of differentiation in curriculum and teaching methods. Many schools and learning institutions lack basic infrastructure and services, especially ICT.

Renewed efforts are needed to strengthen the quality of the education system and improve learning outcomes which are not commensurate with investment⁷⁹. Establishing a foundation for learning in the early years (pre-primary level) is essential for success⁸⁰. Education and training systems need to focus on providing young graduates with the knowledge and skills for success in a dynamic EU-oriented labour market. This will require a greater emphasis curriculum and teaching methods that promote critical thinking, analytical skills, and problem solving, and implementation of comprehensive legislation and strategy for inclusive education. Expanded investment in the physical infrastructure must be paired with capacity development for teachers and school administrators, especially to employ ICT and digital learning resources.



GENDER EQUALITY

Despite significant progress in the area of legislation and commitments to gender equality and fight against violence and domestic violence, gender-based social exclusion is still a reality for most girls and women. This can be seen in key indicators including employment and labour force participation, access to and control of resources including land, violence against women and girls, and access to justice. Persistent barriers include: rigid and traditional gender roles in both private and public life, inequalities in health care and education, and obstacles to women's participation in elections and to serve as political representatives⁸¹. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is pervasive, exacerbated by traditional perceptions of gender roles and patriarchal values: In 2018 one in three women ages 18 to 74 have experienced one or more of five forms of violence recently, while one in two have experienced it in their lifetime⁸². Several groups have been identified as especially vulnerable: Older women, women living in rural areas, Roma and Egyptian women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, women in detention, and secluded women and asylum-seeking women. The gap between legislation and eradication of gender-based violence and discrimination remains considerable and these problems are compounded by a lack of data on women with multiple vulnerabilities and corresponding measures across sectors.



CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Sustainable environmental management and energy production are central to Albania's development efforts. In response to the current energy pressures, the government has taken measures to develop non-hydro energy generation and sets out to achieve an expansion of 38% by 2020. The efficiency of energy use in Albania has progressed little since 2009 as a result of a lack of investment for the realization of the First National Action Plan. Compared to the national target, only 3% of energy is saved as a result of efficiency. Among the national priorities is the achievement of a 15% increase in energy efficiency in all economic sectors, as compared to total final consumption of energy, though, inter alia, adoption of the new legal framework "for energy efficiency", in accordance with Directive 2009/28 of the EC and the EU acquis. The final energy savings for industry are expected at 3 ktoe for 2018 (out of 38.5 ktoe for all sectors) and 7.68 ktoe for 2020 (out of 123.7 ktoe for overall target 6.8% of final energy consumption provision of 2020). Very few Albanian SMEs take resource efficiency measures or offer green products and services.

In 2016, per capita CO2 emissions in Albania were around 1.78 tons, while emissions per unit of GDP were at 0.16 kg per USD 1,000 of GDP. Albania has relatively low per capita emissions, but rather high emissions per unit of GDP due to the low GDP level. Therefore, it can be expected that emissions will grow in the future as the economy develops, but at the same time there is large potential for efficiency gains during this process.

76. UN, MAPS-Albania, *ibid.*, 19. Including: curriculum development, ICT in education, special curricula for pre-school education, teacher training for children with disabilities, and a single legal framework for all providers of TVET.
77. The EU's April 2018 annual report on EU accession notes that "the enrolment of Roma and Egyptians in pre-school education increased by 5%, in elementary schools by 25%, in middle school and high school by 27%, and in pre-university education by 22 %. However, their enrolment rates remain very low overall."
78. UNDP, World Bank and EC, 2017. Regional Roma Survey, Albania. Access of Roma in education increased from 44 percent (2011) to 66 percent (2017). But most Roma ages 18 to 21 have not finished a basic level of education
79. CCA, *ibid.*, 48. In 2018, students scored lower than OECD averages for reading, mathematics and science in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
80. CCA, *ibid.*, 49.
81. CCA, *ibid.*, 15. Including gender stereotypes, negative perceptions, and legal obstacles, contributing to lack of fairness in the electoral process and fewer electoral resources.
82. INSTAT, UNDP and UN Women, VAWG Survey, 2019. Forms of violence: intimate partner violence, dating violence, non-partner violence, sexual harassment, or stalking.



DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Unemployment, largely long terms and structural was 11% percent in 2019, with youth unemployment at 21% percent⁸³. The labour force participation rate was 70% in late 2019, and 62% for women. There is a skills mismatch and inclusion of vulnerable people in the labour market⁸⁴. More than half of the poor population is inactive, unemployed or not in education⁸⁵ and people living in remote areas are often completely excluded. Unemployment and underemployment is particularly high among the Roma and Egyptian communities⁸⁶. The pandemic has increased economic insecurity with risks that more children could be forced into exploitative and hazardous jobs⁸⁷.

While economic growth has been significant, there are few incentives for high technology adoption and little diversification in industry and exports beyond food, garments and minerals. Tourism is a growth engine, accounting for about 27% of GDP in 2019, but has suffered from the pandemic. In 2017, nearly all businesses were small and medium enterprises (SMEs), but they lack an innovation environment focused on smart skills and digital technologies will enable new production lines with higher complexity and greater value-added. Digital infrastructure is a precondition for development of the digital economy and innovation in industry, e-Government, e-Health, provision of interoperable services and of cross-border services.



INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The quality and distribution of infrastructure in Albania is explained by its historical background – with the transition from communism to market economy, the crises posed by the conflicts of the 1990s, natural disasters like the earthquake of 2019 and the worldwide crisis of COVID-19. However, EU candidacy serves as an incentive to focus on the matter structurally, putting infrastructure as one of the priority areas of the country's development agenda of the recent years. Moreover, the tourism and services sectors' increasing role in the country also requires better provision of high-quality infrastructure and logistics.

Upgrading industry to embrace new digital technologies in the context of the transition towards a smart economy is necessary. The digital transformation is at the core of the ongoing fourth industrial revolution. Boosting the uptake of smart technologies along and across industrial value chains and promoting firm growth is key for Albania's integration into WB6 and Europe's growth and competitiveness agenda. Strengthening actions and integration to regional mechanisms being developed under several ongoing initiatives supported by the European Commission are of utmost importance.



REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Rapid economic growth has not narrowed gaps in economic and social inequality. There are multiple reasons for unequal treatment of vulnerable groups: prejudice, stereotypes, racism, homophobia, and intolerance. These are also reflected in the lack of political will to implement and enforce legal and policy frameworks to combat discrimination⁸⁸. A lack of progress toward greater cohesion, gender equality and non-discrimination will result in increasing deprivations (e.g health, education, housing, training, employment) and increased out-migration⁸⁹.



SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Albania is highly exposed to disaster risks⁹⁰: Average annual disaster losses have been assessed at 2.5% of GDP⁹¹. Vulnerabilities are compounded by high levels of poverty, infrastructure deficits, rapid urbanisation and depletion of natural resources. Greater resilience is impeded by weak or fragmented institutional capacities and the absence of a national platform and strategy for disaster risk reduction (DRR), in line with the Sendai Framework⁹². Recent disasters, including the 2019 earthquake, highlight the need for increased resilience at community level and strengthened coordination and capacities to mitigate, manage and recover from shocks⁹³. The focus on replacing assets rather than determining root causes for failure and building back better affect a range of issues including out-migration, tourism, and Albania's economic competitiveness.

83. CCA, *ibid.*, 5. Persons unemployed for more than 1 year represents 66% of all unemployment.

84. CCA, *ibid.*, 18.

85. INSTAT, 2018. Labour Force Survey (LFS). Notably, unemployment benefit is received by fewer than ten percent of those who are looking for a job.

86. For example: 22% of marginalised Roma of age 18–24 years are in employment, education or training compared to 58 percent of non-Roma. Only 18% of Roma of age 15–64 years are employed, compared to 27% of non-Roma. CCA, *ibid.*, 61.

87. CCA, *ibid.*, 49.

88. CCA, *ibid.*, 71.

89. CCA, *ibid.*, 25, 82.

90. CCA, *ibid.*, 23. Nearly 90% of GDP and 86% of total territory has high disaster exposure. According to INFORM Risk Index, Albania's coping capacity index value of 4.2/10 is second highest in the Western Balkans.

91. UN. MAPS-Albania, *ibid.*, 58. See, for example, *Albania's Civil Protection System and Its Related Regional Cooperation*, Institute for Democracy and Mediation (Tirana), pp. 1, 3.

92. The global *Sendai Framework* for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)

93. CCA, *ibid.*, 30. For example: the 2019 civil emergencies law establishes a new National Agency for Civil Protection but it has limited funding and capacity. Albania is not yet participating in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and is not yet linked to the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS).



RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Sustainability is a cross-cutting issue: a shift towards more sustainable lifestyle requires public policy measures targeting both consumers and business to adjust consumption and production, distribution and end-of-life methods. Formulation of policy measures and their successful implementation require multi-stakeholder dialogue, leadership and partnership and coordination between public and private actors, including citizens. Primary policy areas consist of command and control measures (e.g. regulations), market-based instruments (e.g., tax incentives, standards), support to voluntary actions (e.g., commitments and agreements from the private sector to achieve some goals, research) and information provision (e.g., labeling of products, information campaigns). The private sector is dominated by many small firms, the majority of which never grow beyond their small and medium size (SME) enterprise status. In 2019, there were around 162,000 registered businesses of which only 1.2 percent were large companies. The service sector dominates, with firms associated with tourism, in accommodation, food and beverages and transport. Agricultural enterprises as well as construction enterprises and manufacturing, in textile and clothing sector and some metal production. A quarter of all SME's are in the agricultural and agri-processing sectors, accounting for about half of total employment of both women and men, more than one-fifth of GDP and form the main source of employment and income in rural areas.



CLIMATE ACTION

In 2019, as part of its commitment to the Paris Agreement and emissions reduction targets (NDC), Albania was the first country in the region to adopt a national climate change strategy and action plan⁹⁴. The current NDC address only emissions reduction and not adaptation measures and efforts are needed to integrate environmental and climate considerations into the national regulatory framework with measures tailored to the situation of vulnerable groups. For example: (1) Energy subsidies are unsustainable, skew pricing, discourage investments in energy efficiency, and crowd-out private investment; (2) Projected declines in precipitation underscore the need for climate-resilient adaptation for agricultural and water-management challenges⁹⁵; (3) There is great potential for wind, solar, and biomass power generation⁹⁶, greatly increasing the country's resilience to climate change⁹⁷.



LIFE BELOW WATER

The Albanian Blue Economy Programme, currently under development, can be crucial while developing industrial policies and cooperation concepts with Albania. The Blue Economy concept refers to sustainable and inclusive efforts encompassing areas like sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, marine pollution prevention and management, sustainable development of key oceanic sectors like tourism, maritime transport and off-shore renewable energy, as well as management of marine resources.⁹⁸ The concept has been actively promoted by the World Bank Group and the European Union. Throughout 2020, the Albanian Government has been working on the country's Blue Economy programme to determine key marine subsectors and modalities of their sustainable management and development. In line with the big role of fisheries, Albania's tourism sector, including the maritime tourism, is one of the large contributors to the country's growth.

For fisheries and aquaculture to fully realize its potential, they need to transform to a growing and innovative industry that can increase production, develop new value add products and compete in new markets. Sustainability of the sector depends on its ability to protect the environment and adapt itself to climate change impacts on the natural environment. Moreover, the sector must be able to offer the opportunity and means to protect the social fabric and livelihoods in the rural and coastal areas through creating job opportunities, improving access to modern educational facilities, and promoting entrepreneurship of women and youth.

94. CCA, *ibid.*, 29. A draft law 'On Climate Change' partly transposing provisions of the EU Emissions Trading Directive, is yet to be adopted.

95. UN, MAPS-Albania, *ibid.*, 57.

96. CCA, *ibid.*, 230, 28. Estimated solar power potential assessed at 1,500–1,700 kWh/m² per annum; Biomass from agricultural waste, assessed at approximately 2,300 GWh/year; UN, MAPS-Albania, *ibid.*, 77-78.

97. CCA, *ibid.*, 23, 28.

98. "PROBLUE: The World Bank's Blue Economy Program", The World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/problue/overview>



LIFE ON LAND

Environmental sustainability: Water and air pollution, land degradation, biodiversity loss and waste management are major environmental challenges. Rapid urbanisation and increasing demand for natural resources has led to increasing depletion and degradation. Across the Western Balkans urban residents lose an estimated 1.3 years of life due to air pollution, caused by the burning of lignite coal⁹⁹. The importance of hydropower¹⁰⁰ and irrigated agriculture puts water at the heart of the country's energy and rural development challenges. Over-exploitation of surface and groundwater has reduced water quality and availability and projected declines in precipitation underscore the need for climate-resilient adaptation. Waste management is inadequate with municipal waste being disposed in **78 non-compliant municipal landfills. Despite the approval of important strategies that address the environment and** climate change adaptation, there are significant gaps to comply with EU legislation and standards¹⁰¹. Most strategies are gender-blind and hinder access to and management of assets such as land, forestry and pastures, technology and extension services¹⁰².



PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Governance reforms are a priority of both government and people, including judicial reform, efforts to reduce corruption and organised crime, and better protect human rights. There is a stronger institutional framework for anti-corruption, but it is hampered by duplication, jurisdictional tensions, and information gaps. Effective coordination and management of existing anti-corruption structures and resources is critical¹⁰³. The judiciary consistently receives the lowest public trust ratings and it is unable to defend the rights or welfare of vulnerable groups¹⁰⁴. For example, children face a range of types of violence and exploitation at home, at school, and in the community with 1 in 4 adolescents reporting physical abuse once or twice in their lifetime; internet bullying and sexual abuse is a significant issue, and in 2018 children represented 71% of the victims of human trafficking¹⁰⁵.

Concerted implementation of accepted recommendations from the UPR and other human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms will better protect human rights, provide better access to justice, discourage corruption, promote foreign and domestic investment, and allow Albania to compete more successfully in the global economy. However, implementation of these measures remains inconsistent and under-funded¹⁰⁶.



PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

ODA inflows are small relative to foreign direct investment (FDI) and remittances and government budget revenues. EU financing under the instrument for pre-accession (IPA) is the largest component of ODA at about \$100 million annually or 1% of GDP (MAPS 78). International financial inflows, particularly remittances, have fuelled consumption-based economic growth, but investment overall is insufficient to put Albania on the path to sustainable development. Most of the financing of legal and policy reforms, programming, and investments needed to achieve the SDGs in Albania is unlikely to come from ODA. Governance reforms to improve rule of law, reduce corruption, strengthen delivery of services and the country's investment climate are more promising¹⁰⁷. Alternative financing instruments may have potential to leverage greater financing for the SDGs, as well as supporting implementation of the national recovery efforts from the 2019 earthquake and COVID-19 pandemic¹⁰⁸.

For all priorities, effective policy and programme responses will depend upon the quality and availability of statistics to implement and monitor evidence-based policies and plans and nationalized SDG goals and targets to which they will contribute. Addressing data gaps is of critical importance and some gaps continuously recur in different policy areas across the SDGs and the EU accession agenda. These include health and well-being, employment, and education.

99. CCA, *ibid.*, 76.

100. Government of Albania (GoA), *National Action Plan for Renewable Energy Resources in Albania 2015–2020*. Currently, 35% of hydropower potential is used. Environmental trade-offs underline the need for urgent efforts to increase the share of renewable energy sources.

101. The EU *acquis* contains provisions addressing climate change, water and air quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution, chemicals, noise and civil protection

102. CCA, *ibid.*, 29-30.

103. UN, MAPS-Albania, *ibid.*, 50-51.

104. UN, MAPS-Albani, *ibid.*, 50. The *Access to Justice Assessment* in Albania mentions that almost half of the population has had legal problems in the last five years, and that most of these have gone unresolved due to a lack of legal awareness in society and the underperformance of judicial institutions.

105. UNICEF, SITAN, *ibid.*, xx.

106. European Commission, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Albania 2019 Report, Brussels, 29.5.2019, 7-11. Executive and legislative bodies do not pay sufficient attention to these oversight bodies and their recommendations, while the Parliament is yet to strengthen its public oversight role or hold the executive accountable for implementation gaps

107. UN, MAPS-Albania, 6, 20.

108. CCA, *ibid.*, 80-1. For example: Impact investing (Social or Development Impact Bonds, Blue Bonds, Green Bonds), equity-based crowdfunding, forecast-based financial mechanisms, microfinance, or debt-for-nature swaps

Data repository

Macroeconomic indicators	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
GDP						
GDP (current US\$ mln)	11927	11387	11861	13020	15147	15279
Real GDP growth %	3.7	2.2	3.3	3.8	4.1	2.2
GDP per capita (constant 2010 US\$)	4094	4524	4681	4864	5075	5211
Fiscal indicators (% of GDP)						
General government budget revenue	25.9	26.6	27.6	27.7	27.6	27.4
General government budget expenditure	29.4	30.6	29.4	29.7	29.2	29.3
General government budget balance	-3.1	-4.1	-1.8	-2.0	-1.6	-1.9
Public debt	57.7	73.7	73.2	71.8	69.5	67.8
Balance of Payments						
Trade balance (US\$ mil.)			-2881	-3205	-3517	-2970
Goods: exports (US\$ mil.)			789	901	1015	784
Goods: imports (US\$ mil.)			-3671	-4106	-4532	-3754
Current account balance (US\$ bil.)	-1.351	-0.981	-0.898	-0.978	-1.024	-1.166
Remittance inflows (% of GDP)	13.3	11.3	11.0	10.1	9.6	9.6
FDI, net inflows (% of GDP)	9.1	8.7	8.8	7.9	8.0	7.9
Prices						
Consumer prices (index)		100	101.28	103.30	105.39	106.88
Inflation, consumer prices (annual %)	3.6	1.87	1.28	1.99	2.03	1.41

Employment (%)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Labor force participation (15-65 years)	64,2	66,2	66,8	68,3	69,6	
- Men	73,4	74,1	75,8	76,9	77,6	
- Women	55,1	58,3	57,7	59,7	61,6	
Employment rate (15-65 years)	52,9	55,9	57,4	59,3	61,2	
- Men	60,5	61,9	64,3	66,7	68,2	
- Women	45,5	49,7	50,3	52,4	54,4	
Unemployment rate (15-65 years)	17,5	15,6	14,1	12,8	12,0	
- Men	17,5	16,4	15,1	13,2	12,2	
- Women	17,4	14,6	12,8	12,3	11,8	
Youth unemployment (15-24 yrs old)	33,2	28,9	25,9	23,1	21,5	
- Men	32,3	29,7	27,0	23,1	21,3	
- Women	34,7	27,8	24,0	23,1	21,7	
Young people not in employment, education or training, NEET	32,8	30,0	29,7	28,6	26,6	
- Men	29,4	27,5	25,6	24,7	24,3	
- Women	36,6	32,9	34,4	32,7	28,9	

Labor statistics	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Average gross monthly wage (ALL)				50041.5	52376.0	53786.9	
- Men					54940.0		
- Women					49411.0		
Minimum wage (ALL)				24000.0	26000.0	26000.0	
Proportion of informal employment in non-agricultural sector (%)	34.1	31.9	30.3	29.4	30.0		
- Men	40.4	37.1	35.8	34.7	35.6		
- Women	24.1	24.3	22.1	21.5	21.9		
Skilled labour force (% of labour force)	54	53.4	54.6	80.6	79.5		
Employment in agriculture (% of total employment)	41.4	39.8	38.2	37.3	36.7		
- Men	36.5	36.2	34.9	33.5	32.3		
- Women	47.7	45.4	42.5	42.3	41.6		
Demographic indicators	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Population	2,918,674	2,885,796	2,875,592	2,876,591	2,870,324	2,862,427	2,845,955
- Male	1,459,649	1,461,199	1,458,451	1,453,541	1,438,609	1,429,594	1,420,613
- Female	1,459,025	1,424,597	1,417,141	1,423,050	1,431,715	1,432,833	1,425,342
Fertility rate	1.63	1.6	1.54	1.48	1.37	1.36	
Life expectancy at birth							
- Men	74.7	76.1	77	77.1	77.4	77.6	
- Women	79.4	79.7	80.1	80	80.5	80.6	
Urban population (%)	52.2	57.4	58.4	59.4	60.3	61.2	
Young age (0-14) dependency ratio (per 100 people ages 15-64)	33.6	27.2	26.8	26.3	25.8	25.4	
Social indicators	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)				23.7	23.4		
At-risk-of-poverty - men				23.5	23		
At-risk-of-poverty - women				23.9	23.8		
Maternal mortality rate		9.2	3.2	9.7	3.4	7	
Neonatal mortality rate per 1,000 live births		5.20	6.90	6.30	7.30	8.50	
Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births			8.70	8.00	8.90	10.30	
Under-5 mortality rate-per 1000 live births	15.70	9.00	10.20	9.20	10.10	11.00	
Education	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Net enrolment rate, primary		99.32	99.28	99.49	99.65	99.61	
Gross enrol. Ratio. primary		105.54	105.55	107.05	106.99	104.81	
Gross enrol. rate, prim., boys		104.03	103.84	105.47	105.15	103.38	
Gross enrol. rate, prim., girls		107.29	107.53	108.87	109.11	106.44	
Mean years of schooling	9.3	10	10	10.1	10.1	10.1	
- Men	9.8	10.2	10.2	10.3	10.2	10.6	
- Women	9	9.8	9.8	9.9	9.9	9.7	
Gross graduation ratio from tertiary education		39.35	39.7	43.73	45.23	43.22	
The percentage of female graduates from STEM fields in Albania							
Government expenditure on education (% of GDP)		3.44	3.96	3.61	2.5		

Climate and Environment	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018
CO2 emissions (metric tons per capita)	0.978175	1.578574	1.602648	1.577163		
PM2.5 air pollution, mean annual exposure (micrograms per cubic meter)	21.99825	21.27783	19.51254	18.18993	18.2006	
PM2.5 air pollution, population exposed to levels exceeding WHO guideline value (% of total)	100	100	100	100	100	
Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution (per 100,000 population, age-standardized)				68		
Access to electricity (%)	100	100	100	100	100	
Access to clean cooking (%)	39	67	76			80
Renewable Energy share in Total Final Energy Consumption (%)	41.5	37.1	38.6	39.9	37.2	
National Energy Intensity (MJ/USD PPP 2011)	4.5	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.9	
Natural resource depletion (% of GNI)	0.3	0.9	1.1	0.6	1	1.5
Forest area as % of total land area			37.48	37.48	37.47	
Municipal waste recycling rate (%)			25.3	17.2	17.4	18.5
Proportion of waste water safely treated (%)		1	10	10.5	10.5	10.4

Sources: IMF, World Bank, Ministry of Finance and Economy, EIU, INSTAT, HDI, UNESCO, and UN Women

FOCUS ON GENDER

Public life and decision-making	2017		2018		2019	
Women's share of government ministerial positions	46.0%		57.0%		47.0%	
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	29.3%		29.3%		29.5%	
Women's share of managerial positions	33.8%		34.2%		34.7%	
Percentage of female police officers	9.8%		14.3%		14.5%	
Percentage of female judges	45.1%		47.4%		48.6%	
Economic structures	2017		2018		2019	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Average number of hours spent on unpaid domestic work by sex	2:06 hours	5:43 hours	2:06 hours	5:43 hours	2:06 hours	5:43 hours
Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined (total work burden), by sex	11:54 hours	9:45 hours	11:54 hours	9:45 hours	11:54 hours	9:45 hours
Proportion of adults (18 years and older) with an deposit account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, by sex	58.8%	41.2%	58.1%	41.9%	57.3%	42.7%
Gender gap in wages	10.5%		10.7%		10.1%	

Source: UN Women

BROADBAND ACCESS AND INNOVATION

Innovation and Science	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Percentage of Individuals using the Internet	45.00	63.25	66.36	71.85		68.55
Fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	3.58	8.40	9.23	10.53	12.56	15.14
Active mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants		44.88	58.42	70.42	62.79	62.10
Patent applications (residents)		14	20	16	15	4
Trademark applications (residents)	286	509	662	684	917	788

Source: ITU and World Bank

SELECTED GLOBAL RANKINGS

Democracy Score Ratings - Freedom House measures the level of democratic governance in 29 countries from Central Europe to Central Asia through its annual Nations in Transit report. The democracy score incorporates separate ratings on national and local governance, electoral process, independent media, civil society, judicial framework and independence, and corruption.

Year	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
Score	3.96	4.07	3.96	3.86	3.75	3.82	3.86	3.86	3.89	3.89	3.82

Corruption Perception Index - Transparency International's index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, according to experts and business people.

Corruption Perceptions Index 2020	2012	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Score	33	36	39	38	36	35	36
Ranking (out of 180 countries)				91	99	106	104

<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl>

Human Development Index - Albania's HDI value for 2019 is 0.799, which put the country in the high human development category— positioning it at 69 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 2000 and 2019, Albania's HDI value increased from 0.671 to 0.795.

Human Development Index	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Score	0.745	0.788	0.788	0.79	0.792	0.795
Ranking					69	69

Global Economic Competitiveness Index - The index covers 140 economies, the Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 measures national competitiveness—defined as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity.

Global Economic Competitiveness Index	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Score	4.06	4.81	58.1	57.6	
Ranking (out of 140 countries)	80	75	76	81	

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2020.pdf

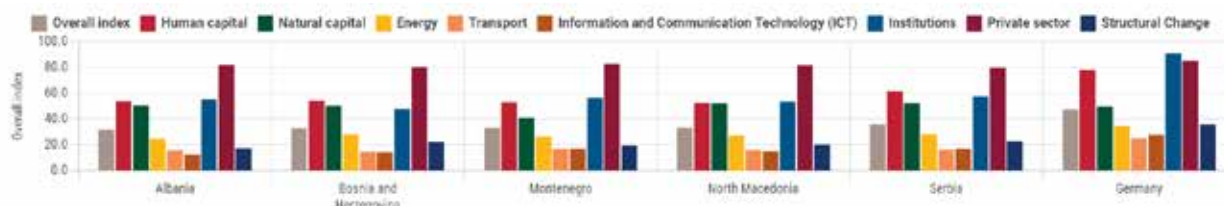
Doing Business indicator - World Bank's Doing Business presents quantitative indicators on business regulations and the protection of property rights that can be compared across 190 economies. The indicator covers 12 areas of business regulation. Ten of these areas—starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts, and resolving insolvency—are included in the ease of doing business score and ease of doing business ranking.

World Bank's Doing Business indicator	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Score	66.06	60.5	68.9	68.7	69.51	67.7
Ranking (out of 190 economies)	68	97	58	65	63	82

<https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/doingbusiness>

Productivity Capacity Index - UNCTAD's Productive Capacities Index (PCI) provides an overview of how far productive capacities have been developed in each country. The index scores a country's performance on productive capacities on a scale of 1 to 100, assessing the effectiveness of policies and strategies as well as existing gaps and limitations. **Albania's overall index is 31.6** (Serbia 35.6, Montenegro 33.2 and North Macedonia 33.3) and the below table shows the scoring of the eight components of the index.

Country comparison of the Productive Capacity Index, 2018



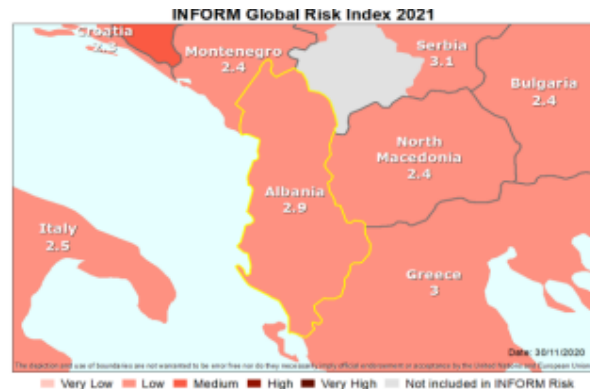
Source: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Pci.html>

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

INFORM Risk Index - global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters. The risk index identifies countries at risk from humanitarian crises and disasters that could overwhelm national response capacity. It is made up of three dimensions - hazards and exposure, vulnerability and lack of coping capacity. Albania's risk index is 2.9 and it ranks 120 out of 190 countries. The below tables are from the Country Profile of Albania, which provides more in-depth information on Albania's risk profile.

Source: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/>

	Value	Rank	Trend (3 years)
INFORM Risk	2.9	120	→
Hazard & Exposure	4.1	68	→
Vulnerability	1.5	159	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.1	109	→



ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES AND COUNTRY PROFILES



Population Dynamics Country Profile

<https://population.un.org/wup/Country-Profiles/>



UNFPA

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/demographic-dividend/AL>



UNICEF

<https://data.unicef.org/country/alb/>



UN Women – Gender Brief 2020

https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2020/12/cgeb%20albania_report_1.pdf?la=en&vs=4248



UNODC

<https://dataunodc.un.org/content/Country-profile?country=Albania>



Water

<https://sdg6data.org/country-or-area/Albania>



WIPO Intellectual Property

https://www.wipo.int/ipstats/en/statistics/country_profile/profile.jsp?code=AL



UNDRR Disaster Risk Reduction - Desinventar:

www.desinventar.net

