



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Albania: Background information, including actors of protection, and internal relocation

Version 2.0

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Preface

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and policy guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the policy guidance contained with this note; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country information

COI in this note has been researched in accordance with principles set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#) and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), namely taking into account its relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability.

All information is carefully selected from generally reliable, publicly accessible sources or is information that can be made publicly available. Full publication details of supporting documentation are provided in footnotes. Multiple sourcing is normally used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, and that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided. Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source is not an endorsement of it or any views expressed.

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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Policy guidance

Updated: 24 July 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Summary of issues

- 1.1.1 Whether in general, those at risk of persecution or serious harm from non-state actors are able to seek effective protection and/or internally relocate within Albania.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Protection

- 2.2.1 Albania is an EU candidate country with a legal framework for the protection of human rights which has been assessed as being broadly in line with European standards (see [EU membership](#)).
- 2.2.2 The Ministry of Interior oversees the police with the state police being the main organisation responsible for internal security while the Republican Guard has responsibility for protection of high level state officials, foreign dignitaries and certain state properties. The State Intelligence Service (SHISH) gathers information and carries out foreign intelligence and counter intelligence activities (see [Security Apparatus](#)).
- 2.2.3 There is a fully functioning police and judicial system. Civilian authorities generally maintain effective control over the police but there are instances of corruption and of the police having committed abuses. The government has internal mechanisms to investigate and punish police abuse and corruption and are reported to carry out investigations and issue sanctions (see [Security Apparatus](#) and [Corruption](#)).
- 2.2.4 Albania also has an independent ombudsman (the People's Advocate) who processes complaints, including those against police officers. The complaints relating to the police are mainly related to problems with arrests and detention. The ombudsman has reported increased implementation of his recommendations related to mistreatment (see [Avenues of redress](#)).

- 2.2.5 There is an established independent judicial system across the country. However the functioning of the judicial system is reported to be affected by politicisation, intimidation, limited accountability, poor inter-institutional cooperation, insufficient resources, lengthy proceedings and backlogs (see [Judiciary](#) and [Corruption](#)).
- 2.2.6 In general, a person fearing non-state (including 'rogue' state) actors is likely to be able to obtain effective state protection; however each case must be determined on its own facts. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that the state is not willing and able to provide effective protection.
- 2.2.7 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.3 Internal relocation

- 2.3.1 The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal and external movement, and the government generally respects these rights. Internal migrants must transfer their civil registration to their new community of residence. They must demonstrate that they are legally domiciled in order to access essential Government services. Some citizens lack formal registration, particularly Roma and Balkan-Egyptians, and while the law does not prohibit their registration it can sometimes be difficult to complete. There are no legal restrictions on women's freedom of movement in Albania, but in reality, women may have to seek permission from their husbands or family before travelling within Albania (see [Freedom of Movement](#)).
- 2.3.2 In general, a person fearing non-state (including 'rogue' state) actors is likely to be able to internally relocate to another area of Albania, and for this to be reasonable depending on the nature and origin of the threat and the personal circumstances of the person.
- 2.3.3 For further guidance on internal relocation, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and [Gender Issues in the Asylum Claim](#).

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3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 In general, a person fearing non-state (including 'rogue' state) actors is likely to be able to obtain effective state protection.
- 3.1.2 Internal relocation to another area of Albania is generally reasonable if the risk will not be present in the place of relocation.

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Country information

Updated: 11 July 2017

4. History

4.1 Recent history

- 4.1.1 For an overview of Albania's recent history see the BBC's Albania Profile, [timeline of key events](#)¹.
- 4.1.2 More detailed information on Albania's history can be found on The Federal Research Program of the Library of Congress: A Country Study: Albania² and also at Eurodocs History of Albania: Primary Documents³.

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4.2 EU membership

- 4.2.1 The European Commission's Albania 2016 progress report noted:

'In June 2014, the European Council granted Albania candidate status. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) has been in force since April 2009 and Albania has implemented smoothly its obligations. Regular political and economic dialogue between the EU and Albania has continued through the relevant structures under the SAA. The government engaged in EU-related reforms and continued to make progress in meeting the objectives set out in the five key priorities for the opening of accession negotiations.'⁴
- 4.2.2 The same source also stated 'The legal framework for the protection of human rights is broadly in line with European standards. Albania has ratified most international human rights conventions. However, enforcement of human rights protection mechanisms remains to be strengthened. As regards freedom of expression, Albania has some level of preparation / is moderately prepared. The overall environment is conducive to the freedom of expression, but better implementation of the legislation is needed.'⁵

¹ BBC News Europe, 'Albania Profile', 18 March 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17679574> Accessed: 26 April 2017.

² US Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 'A Country Study: Albania', 27 July 2010, <https://cdn.loc.gov/master/frd/frdcstdy/al/albaniacounryst00zick/albaniacounryst00zick.pdf>. Accessed: 26 April 2017

³ Eurodocs, History of Albania: Primary Documents, 08 January 2015 https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/History_of_Albania:_Primary_Documents#Albania:_Until_the_19th_century. Accessed: 26 April 2017.

⁴ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 4 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 26 April 2017

⁵ European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 5 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 26

5. Geography and demography

5.1 Geography

5.1.1 Albania covers an area of 28,748 sq km⁶. The World Travel Guide, undated, noted that:

'Albania is bordered by Montenegro and Kosovo to the north, the Republic of Macedonia to the east and Greece to the southeast. Italy lies across the Mediterranean to the west; at its narrowest point, close to where the Adriatic and Ionian Seas meet, Italy and Albania are only 75km (47 miles) apart. Albania's highest point is the summit of Mt Jezerca (2,693m/8,835ft), in the Dinaric Alps in the far north. The largest lake in the Balkans, Lake Shkodra, straddles the border between Albania and Montenegro; in the southwest, Lake Ohrid is shared with Macedonia and the Prespa Lakes between Albania, Macedonia and Greece.'⁷

5.1.2 Albania is a unitary state composed of 12 counties (qarku), 36 districts (rrethe), 309 communes (komuna) and 65 municipalities (bashkia)⁸. Its capital is Tirana⁹.

5.1.3 A comprehensive collection of maps, relating to Albania, covering provinces, cities, history, geography, culture, political and physical topics can be found at the following. [Maps of World: Albania](#)¹⁰ and the [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection](#).¹¹

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5.2 Demography

5.2.1 According to the CIA World Factbook, the population of Albania is approximately 3,038,594 (July 2016 est.) Ethnic groups comprise Albanian 82.6 percent, Greek 0.9 percent, others 1 percent (including Vlach, Roma (Gypsy), Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Egyptian) and unspecified, 15.5 percent (2011 est.) The main languages spoken are: Albanian 98.8 percent (official - derived from the Tosk dialect), Greek 0.5 percent, others 0.6 percent (including Macedonian, Roma, Vlach, Turkish, Italian, and Serbo-Croatian) and unspecified 0.1 percent (2011 est.).¹²

5.2.2 All mosques and churches were closed in 1967 and religious observances prohibited. In November 1990, Albania began allowing private religious

April 2017

⁶ CIA World Factbook, Albania (Geography) , 12 January 2017

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>. Accessed: 26 April 2017.

⁷ The World Travel Guide – Albania: Geography, undated

<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/guides/europe/albania/weather-climate-geography/>. Accessed: 26 April 2017

⁸ International Institute of Administrative Sciences, 'IIAS Knowledge Portal on Public Administration'

<http://www.pa-knowledge.org/profiles/member-countries/country-profile-albania/>. Accessed: 26 April 2017.

⁹ CIA World Factbook, Albania (Geography), 12 January 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>. Accessed: 26 April 2017.

¹⁰ Maps of World: Albania, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/albania/google-map.html>. Accessed: 12 May 2017.

¹¹ The University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection: Albania Maps

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/albania.html>. Accessed: 12 May 2017.

¹² CIA World Factbook, Albania (people and society) , 12 January 2017

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>. Accessed: 26 April 2017.

practice (2011 estimate). Religions followed are: Muslim 56.7 percent, Roman Catholic 10 percent, Orthodox 6.8 percent, atheist 2.5 percent, Bektashi (a Sufi order) 2.1 percent, other 5.7 per cent and unspecified 16.2 per cent.¹³

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6. Economy

6.1.1 The CIA World Factbook noted:

‘Albania, a formerly closed, centrally-planned state, is a developing country with a modern open-market economy. Albania managed to weather the first waves of the global financial crisis but, more recently, the negative effects of the crisis have caused a significant economic slowdown. Close trade, remittance, and banking sector ties with Greece and Italy make Albania vulnerable to spillover effects of debt crises and weak growth in the euro zone.

‘Remittances, a significant catalyst for economic growth, declined from 12-15% of GDP before the 2008 financial crisis to 5.7% of GDP in 2014, mostly from Albanians residing in Greece and Italy. The agricultural sector, which accounts for almost half of employment but only about one-fifth of GDP, is limited primarily to small family operations and subsistence farming, because of a lack of modern equipment, unclear property rights, and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land. Complex tax codes and licensing requirements, a weak judicial system, endemic corruption, poor enforcement of contracts and property issues, and antiquated infrastructure contribute to Albania's poor business environment making attracting foreign investment difficult.’¹⁴

6.1.2 The Heritage Foundation 2017 Albania Country Profile noted Albania's:

‘[...] transition to a more open and flexible economic system has been facilitated by substantial restructuring over the past decade. The country has made considerable progress in income growth and poverty reduction. A competitive trade regime supported by a relatively efficient regulatory framework has encouraged the development of a growing entrepreneurial sector.

‘Albania continues on a path of gradual economic recovery, confronting challenging external conditions, but more reform is needed to ensure the growth of economic freedom and encourage vibrant economic development. The judicial system remains inefficient and vulnerable to political interference, and corruption is still perceived as widespread. Expansionary government spending has led to budget deficits and growing public debt in recent years, but the deficits have been narrowing.’¹⁵

¹³ CIA World Factbook, Albania (people and society) , <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html> 12 January 2017 . Accessed: 26 April 2017.

¹⁴ CIA World Factbook – Albania (economy), 12 January 2017 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>. Accessed: 28 April 2017

¹⁵ Heritage.Foundation – Albania Country Profile, 2017 <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/albania>. Accessed: 26 April 2017

- 6.1.3 Further background on the Albanian economy can be found in the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index 2016 Country Profile](#).

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7. Constitution

- 7.1.1 The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) noted that:

‘The Constitution of the Republic of Albania was adopted by the Parliament on November 22, 1998...It enshrines democratic values and establishes a national, sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible state.

‘As the fundamental law of Republic of Albania, the Constitution specifies the structure of the government of Albania, the rights and duties of the country's citizens, the procedure for passing laws and defines Albania as a parliamentary republic based on the separation and balancing of legislative, executive and judicial powers (Article 7). The unicameral Parliament represents the legislative branch. The executive branch is represented by the President as Chief of State, Prime Minister as the Head of Government and the Council of Ministers. The judicial branch is composed by the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and multiple Appeal and District Courts.’¹⁶

- 7.1.2 A full text of the constitution (with some amendments up to July 2016) can be viewed at [Albania constitution](#).

- 7.1.3 The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provided details of the ratification status on human rights treaties in Albania [OHCHR Human Rights Treaty Ratification Status](#).

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8. Political system

- 8.1.1 Ernst & Young Global Limited (EY Albania), in its guide and profile, ‘Doing business in Albania, 2014’, gave the following overview of the political system.

‘Albania is a parliamentary republic. Integration into the European Union and NATO has been the ultimate goal of all the post-communist governments in Albania. The major priorities of the current government are thorough reform of the legal system, fast and stable growth of the economy, development of the education, health, sports and culture to reach the EU standards, ensuring national prosperity and EU membership.

‘The head of state in Albania is the President of the Republic. The President is elected to a 5-year term by the Albanian Assembly by secret ballot, requiring more than 60 per cent of the votes of all deputies. The President has the power to guarantee observation of the constitution and all laws, act as commander in chief of the armed forces, exercise the duties of the

¹⁶ The World Intellectual Property Organization – Albania, Constitution of the Republic of Albania, undated <http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/details.jsp?id=9481>. Accessed: 28 April 2017

Assembly of the Republic of Albania when the Assembly is not in session, and appoint the prime minister.

'Executive power rests with the Council of Ministers (the Government). The prime minister is appointed by the President; ministers are nominated by the President on the basis of the prime minister's proposal. The Assembly must give final approval of the composition of the government. The government is responsible for carrying out both foreign and domestic policies. It directs and controls the activities of the ministries and other state organs.

'...The Albanian Assembly (Kuvendi i Shqipërisë) is the lawmaking body in Albania. It is composed of 140 deputies, who are elected through a proportional system. Parliamentary elections are held at least every four years. The Assembly has the power to decide the direction of domestic and foreign policy; approve or amend the constitution; declare war on another state; ratify or annul international treaties; elect the President of the Republic, Attorney General and his or her deputies, provide consent to the election of members of the Supreme Court by the President; and control the activity of state radio and television, state news agency and other official information media.'¹⁷

8.1.2 On 27th June 2017 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported that 'Albania's left-wing Socialist Party secured a second governing mandate in the June 25 parliamentary elections, winning a majority of seats in parliament, nearly complete results show.'¹⁸

8.1.3 The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) published its 'Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions' on the 25 June 2017 parliamentary elections which can be found here:

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/325491?download=true>

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9. Security apparatus

9.1 Overview

9.1.1 The US State Department 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

'The Ministry of Interior oversees the State Police, the Guard of the Republic, and the Border and Migration Police. The State Police are primarily responsible for internal security. The Guard of the Republic protects senior state officials, foreign dignitaries, and certain state properties. The Ministry of Defense oversees the armed forces, which also assist the population in times of humanitarian need. The State Intelligence Service (SIS) gathers information, carries out foreign intelligence and counterintelligence activities, and is responsible to the prime minister.

¹⁷ Ernst & Young Global Limited (EY Albania), 'Doing business in Albania', 2014, General overview (p.7) [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Doing_business_in_Albania_2014/\\$FILE/EY-doing-business-in-albania-2014.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Doing_business_in_Albania_2014/$FILE/EY-doing-business-in-albania-2014.pdf). Accessed: 2 May 2107.

¹⁸ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Albania's Socialists Secure Governing Mandate In Parliamentary Vote, 27 June 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/albania-socialists-parliamentary-elections/28581341.html>, Accessed: 11 July 2017

‘Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over police, the Guard of the Republic, the armed forces, and the SIS, although officials periodically used state resources for personal gain and members of the security forces committed abuses.’¹⁹

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9.2 Police

9.2.1 The Interpol website noted:

‘The Albanian State Police is the national police and law enforcement agency which operates throughout the Republic of Albania. The General Director is the highest administrative, technical, and operational authority in the State Police, which sits structurally in the Ministry of Interior.

‘The General Directorate of State Police is made up of the following departments: Organized and Serious Crimes; Public Security; Border and Migration; Support Services; Police Training.’²⁰

9.2.2 The US State Department 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

‘Police did not always enforce the law equitably. Personal associations, political or criminal connections, poor infrastructure, lack of equipment, or inadequate supervision often influenced law enforcement. Low salaries, poor motivation and leadership, and a lack of diversity in the workforce contributed to continued corruption and unprofessional behavior. Authorities made efforts to address these problems by renovating police facilities, upgrading vehicles, introducing the use of in-car and body cameras, and publicly highlighting anticorruption measures.

‘Impunity remained a serious problem, although the government made greater efforts to address it, in particular by increasing the use of camera evidence to document and prosecute police misconduct. In April the Supreme Court upheld the one and three-year sentences handed down, respectively, to Guards of the Republic Ndrea Prendi and Agim Llupo, charged in the 2011 killings of four protesters.’²¹

9.2.3 The same USSD report noted:

‘Since 2014 the government has increased police salaries and instituted an open competition for new recruits, although the Albanian Security Academy reportedly exerted inappropriate influence over police hiring, firing, and promotions. Police were not compliant with special orders mandating women comprise 50 percent of new recruits, with the goal of reaching 30 percent female representation across the police force. The March appointment of a diversity specialist increased senior-level attention to the problem.’²²

¹⁹ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 2 May 2017

²⁰ Interpol – Albanian State Police, 2017 <https://www.interpol.int/Member-countries/Europe/Albania>. Accessed: 2 May 2017

²¹ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

²² US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

9.2.4 A UN Women article from July 2016 noted: ‘There has been a slight increase of women in Albania holding leadership roles in the police force, from 6.6 per cent in 2012 to 9.9 per cent today. Overall, 1,468 women now represent 14 per cent of the Albanian State Police, up from 9 per cent in 2011. Recruitment policies were modified in 2011, requiring 50 per cent of new cadet recruits to the Police Academy be women until 2014.’²³

9.2.5 The European Commission’s 2016 report on Albania noted:

‘The country has reached some level of preparation in the fight against organised crime. Overall, some progress was made, in particular on identifying and destroying cannabis plots. However, police and prosecution fail to identify criminal gangs behind drug cultivation and trafficking, and efficient judicial follow-up in criminal proceedings is seldom secured. There was little progress on fulfilling the recommendations identified last year. The police was modernised and international police cooperation intensified, especially with Europol. However, cooperation between police and prosecution needs to be further strengthened so that they can dismantle criminal networks more effectively. The number of final convictions in organised crimes cases is still limited, marking only a slight increase in recent years.’²⁴

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9.3 Police abuses

9.3.1 The Freedom House 2016 Freedom in the World Report noted that ‘Police reportedly engage in abuse of suspects during arrest and interrogation... The...government has replaced a number of prison officials and police commanders, and has disbanded several police units, to combat corruption and rising crime rates.’²⁵

9.3.2 The US State Department’s 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

‘The most significant human rights problems were pervasive corruption in all branches of government, particularly in the judicial and health-care systems, and domestic violence and discrimination against women.

‘Other human rights problems included significantly substandard prison and detention center conditions, notably overcrowded, aged infrastructure, with a lack of medical treatment for inmates. Reportedly, police and prison guards sometimes beat and abused suspects and detainees and occasionally held persons in prolonged detention without charge. Political pressure,

²³ UN Women – Steering the path to leadership for women police officers in Albania, 7 July 2016 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/7/steering-the-path-to-leadership-for-women-police-officers-in-albania>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

²⁴ European Commission – 2016 Albania Report, 9 November 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 4 May 2017

²⁵ Freedom House – 2016 Freedom in the World Report, 2016 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/albania>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

intimidation, widespread corruption, and limited resources sometimes prevented the judiciary from functioning independently and efficiently.’²⁶

9.3.3 A Human Rights Europe article from March 2016 referred to a Council of Europe anti torture report that ‘reveals “extremely poor conditions of detention” in most police establishments, except at Tirana Regional Police Directorate and Korca Police Station.’²⁷

9.3.4 A Council of Europe Press Release from March 2016 on its anti torture report noted that ‘Although a majority of detainees indicated that they had been treated correctly whilst in police custody, a number of allegations (including from juveniles) of recent physical ill-treatment by police officers were also made.’²⁸

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9.4 Avenues of redress

9.4.1 The US State Department 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

‘While the government had mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption, police corruption remained a problem. The Service for Internal Affairs and Complaints conducted audits, responded to complaints, and carried out investigations with increased emphasis on human rights, prison conditions, and adherence to standard operating procedures. This office fielded 2,202 complaints, including 1,777 phone calls via the anticorruption “green line.” As of September [2016] authorities dealt with 34 cases involving 46 officers as administrative violations and handled eight cases involving eight officers as criminal offenses, forwarding them for prosecution. During the year the ombudsman also processed complaints against police officers, mainly relating to problems with arrests and detention.’²⁹

9.4.2 The same USSD report noted:

‘The Office of the Ombudsman is the main independent institution for promoting and enforcing human rights. The ombudsman is authorized by law to monitor and report on prisons and detention centers. The office may initiate an investigation in some cases where a victim is unable to come forward to do so. Although the ombudsman lacked the power to enforce decisions, he acted as a monitor for human rights violations. The Office of the Ombudsman was underfunded and understaffed. The ombudsman reported to the Assembly annually. Although the Assembly distributed copies

²⁶ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

²⁷ Human Rights Europe - Albania: Poor detention conditions and prison healthcare revealed in new anti-torture report, 3 March 2016 <http://www.humanrightseurope.org/2016/03/albania-poor-detention-conditions-and-prison-healthcare-revealed-in-new-anti-torture-report/>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

²⁸ Council of Europe Press Release - Anti-torture Committee calls upon Albanian authorities to address poor detention conditions, prison healthcare services, and provide safeguards for involuntary hospitalisation, 3 March 2016 <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=2421003&Site=DC&direct=true>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

²⁹ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

of some of the ombudsman's annual and special reports or posted them online, it rarely discussed the reports in plenary or committee sessions. The Assembly consulted the ombudsman's office on draft legislation related to human rights, but often this was only at the last minute or at the request of the ombudsman. The Assembly has a committee on legal issues, public administration, and human rights.'³⁰

9.4.3 According to Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies: 'The Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD) is the equality body in Albania, established since 2010, by an organic law, fully aligned/approximated with the European Directives in the field of non-discrimination.'³¹

9.4.4 The European Commission's 2016 report on Albania (covering the period October 2015 to September 2016) stated: 'On non-discrimination, the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) handled a slightly decreased number of cases, while it increased the amount of actions it brought of its own initiative. Its participation in judicial processes doubled compared to 2014. In the reporting period, the CPD issued 11 sanctions.

'On hate crimes, the state police appointed a dedicated focal point. However, the number of reported cases remained insignificant and no judicial prosecution has yet been initiated.

'On the promotion and enforcement of human rights, the Ombudsman continued to actively promote the rights of vulnerable groups. In 2015, out of 349 recommendations addressed, 160 recommendations were accepted, 68 remained without reply and 54 were refused, while the rest were under review. The work of the Ombudsman's Office continued to be limited by lack of funding and personnel, and the resources of its central and local offices need to be enhanced to ensure that they can function satisfactorily. In 2016, its budget allocation was slightly increased, allowing for the recruitment of Commissioners on Children's Rights and on the Prevention of Torture. However, the two commissioners are yet to be appointed, either due to an insufficient number of candidates or their failure to meet the legal requirements. Most complaints submitted to the Ombudsman's Office continued to relate to social rights, mainly healthcare, pension issues, employment, education and housing and the failure of the state administration to act within the legal deadlines provided by law.'³²

9.4.5 According to the Peoples Advocate website:

³⁰ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

³¹ Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies. Albania: Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination. Undated. <http://www.equineteurope.org/CommissionerforProtectionfromDiscrimination> date accessed: 24 March 2017

³² European Commission, Brussels, 9.11.2016 SWD(2016) 364 final Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2015 Report, Accompanying the document: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. 9 November 2016. Page 65. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 21 March 2017

'The People's Advocate (Ombudsman) Institution is provided for the first time in the Albanian Constitution adopted in November 1998, while the Law No. 8454 "On the People's Advocate Institution" (amended later on) was firstly adopted by the Albanian Parliament in February, 4. 1999. This law is designed to take into consideration the legislation of other countries of Europe, which have previously created such an institution. The direction of the People's Advocate is a monocratic one. The Ombudsman is elected by a three-fifths majority of all members of the Assembly for a period of 5 years with the right of re-election.'³³

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9.5 Military service

9.5.1 The Albanian military is 'an entirely professional volunteer force'³⁴.

9.5.2 According to the CIA World Fact Book, updated January 2017, the following is applicable 'Military service age and obligation: 19 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service; 18 is the legal minimum age in case of general/partial compulsory mobilization (2012).'³⁵

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10. Judiciary

10.1 Organisation

10.1.1 The EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), in a report, Commercial Laws of Albania, January 2013, An Assessment by the EBRD, dated January 2013, stated that:

"The judicial system of Albania comprises trial courts (of first instance), courts of appeal and the Supreme Court. Trial courts hear a variety of cases in the first instance (civil, commercial, criminal and administrative). There are six appellate courts of general jurisdiction that try appeals against the decisions of the trial courts and sit in panels consisting of three judges. The Supreme Court has jurisdiction in the first instance for certain cases established by law and hears appeals against the decisions of the lower courts. The Supreme Court also issues guidelines for purposes of unification and harmonisation of judicial practices.'³⁶

10.1.2 The US State Department's 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

'Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, political pressure, intimidation, widespread corruption, and limited resources sometimes prevented the judiciary from functioning independently and

³³ Peoples Advocate. About Us. Undated. <http://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/en/rreth-nesh-0n>. Accessed: 24 March 2017

³⁴ Republic of Albania, 'Armed Forces', undated, <http://www.aaf.mil.al/english/index.php/politikat-e-rekrutimit/72-politikat-e-rekrutimit-te-ushtareve-profesioniste>,. Accessed: 3 May 2017.

³⁵ CIA World Factbook – Albania, January 2017 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>. Accessed: 3 May 2017

³⁶ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Commercial Laws of Albania, An Assessment by the EBRD, January 2013, (2.1 Constitution and courts p.4) <http://www.ebrd.com/cs/Satellite?c=Content&cid=1395239073513&pagename=EBRD%2FContent%2FDownloadDocument>, Date accessed: 4 May 2017.

efficiently. Court hearings were often not open to the public. Court security officers frequently refused to admit observers to hearings and routinely telephoned the presiding judge to ask whether to admit an individual seeking to attend a particular hearing. Some agencies exhibited a pattern of disregard for court orders. The politicization of appointments to the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court threatened to undermine the independence and integrity of these institutions. As of September [2016], two vacancies in the Supreme Court remained unfilled after nearly three years, despite a considerable backlog of cases facing the court.’³⁷

10.1.3 The European Commission 2016 Albania report noted:

‘...progress was made in the past year, notably through the adoption of a set of constitutional amendments that paved the way for comprehensive and thorough justice reform. This work followed an intensive process of public consultation and close cooperation with the European Commission for democracy through law (Venice Commission) at the Council of Europe, which adopted an opinion on the constitutional changes. A law on the re-evaluation of judges, prosecutors and legal advisors was adopted. As part of measures to fight corruption and re-establish public trust in the judiciary, the law provides for the re-evaluation (vetting) based on 3 criteria: integrity through assets assessment, background assessment (inappropriate links with organised crime) and professional competence. Its application has been suspended by the Constitutional Court, which is reviewing its constitutionality.’³⁸

10.1.4 The same European Commission report noted:

‘Albania has 408 professional judges (14 per 100 000 inhabitants), 336 prosecutors (11.6 per 100 000 inhabitants) and 946 judicial administrative staff (2.31 employees per judge). There are also 1 880 practising lawyers (65 per 100 000 inhabitants).

‘...The efficiency of the court system remained a concern, due to insufficient financial and human resources, inadequate planning and a lack of sound legal provisions regulating the internal organisation of the courts. Backlogs remained high, in particular in administrative courts, appeal courts and at the High Court. The reform aims to diminish the workload of the High Court by narrowing the scope of its competences. The High Court will be transformed into a cassation court tasked with providing legal interpretation and unifying case-law rulings. Its current competence to handle criminal charges against the highest state officials will be transferred to a special first instance and appeal court also responsible for the adjudication of the criminal offences of corruption and organised crime.

‘...Although clearance rates have improved in some first instance courts, they remain highly problematic in administrative courts, appeal courts and

³⁷ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 4 May 2017

³⁸ European Commission – 2016 Albania Report, 9 November 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 4 May 2017

the High Court. The overall length of proceedings is a cause of concern and is primarily related to a lack of capacity and the inadequacy of the relevant provisions of the codes of procedure. There is no effective, unified internal monitoring mechanism applied in all courts. Enforcement of judicial decisions is a cause of concern, in particular on property-related cases.’³⁹

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10.2 Independence

10.2.1 Problems with independence placed Albania 120th out of 140 countries in judicial independence, according to a World Economic Forum study.⁴⁰

10.2.2 The Freedom House 2017 Nations in Transit Report noted:

‘On 22 July 2016, the Albanian parliament adopted a long-awaited set of constitutional amendments aimed at reforming the justice system in a unanimous vote of all 140 members. Only through intense pressure from the European Union (EU) and the United States was the political consensus reached to achieve this historic break with the past. The constitutional amendments will enable an overhaul of the process for reevaluating, or “vetting,” judges and prosecutors, and a broader institutional reorganization of the justice system... Following the amendments’ approval, the parliament passed a set of seven priority laws urgent for the implementation of justice reform. Some 40 additional justice-related laws were still being prepared at year’s end.

‘...The radical reform that should follow is intended to address pervasive corruption in the judiciary as well as strengthen its independence from organized crime and political meddling.’⁴¹

10.2.3 The same Freedom House Nations in Transit Report noted:

‘The justice reform package includes a series of reconstructed and new judicial institutions to be set up by spring 2017 that are intended to ensure independence, functionality, and accountability, and, particularly, to combat corruption within the judiciary and among state officials. The High Judicial Council (HJC) and the High Prosecution Council will stand at the apex of the judicial and prosecutorial apparatuses. Corruption, organized crime, and other criminal offenses committed by current and former top-ranking officials will be investigated and adjudicated by special prosecutors in specialized courts. A Special Prosecutions Office, including a subordinate investigative unit, will be independent of the Prosecutor General. Prior to their appointment, all special judges and prosecutors will have to pass a review of their assets, background (i.e., potential ties to organized crime), and will consent to periodic reviews of their financial accounts and personal

³⁹ European Commission – 2016 Albania Report, 9 November 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 4 May 2017

⁴⁰ World Economic Forum – The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016 http://www3.weforum.org/docs/gcr/2015-2016/Global_Competitiveness_Report_2015-2016.pdf. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁴¹ Freedom House – 2017 Nations in Transit, April 2017 https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_Albania.pdf. Accessed: 5 May 2017

communications. A High Justice Inspector will verify complaints against judges and prosecutors at all levels, investigate any misconduct by them, as well as inspect all courts and prosecution offices. All candidates for the top judicial positions will come under the scrutiny of the Justice Appointments Council. To re-establish the proper functioning of the rule of law, independence, and public trust in the judiciary, a reevaluation mechanism has been introduced. In collaboration with the International Monitoring Operation, an Independent Qualification Commission and an Appeal Chamber will operate for five and nine years, respectively, to ensure that the assets, background, and proficiency of all civil servants in the judicial sector are in compliance with the law. Also, two Public Commissioners will represent the public interest in the reevaluation system.’⁴²

10.2.4 A Balkan Insight article from February 2017 noted ‘A mission made up of EU and US legal experts will oversee the setting up of bodies that will vet around 800 Albanian justice officials to ensure they are competent and uncorrupt ... The law on vetting envisages the screening of around 800 judges and prosecutors in Albania to check on their professional ability, moral integrity and independence from organised crime, corruption and political officials.’⁴³

10.2.5 An Associated Press referred to an article in April 2017 ‘which reminds that the judiciary reform passed last year, but it is being blocked by opposition's boycott of the Albanian Parliament, which must create the Vetting Law institutions, the core mechanism for vetting judges and prosecutors. The opposition claims that these institutions may be subject of manipulation.’⁴⁴

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10.3 Legal aid

10.3.1 The June 2015 report by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated:

‘The State Commission on Legal Aid (SCLA), which is charged with the implementation of Law No. 10 039 of 22 December 2008 on Legal Aid (LLA), was set up in 2010. It established six local offices, only in 2014. The law provides that all persons benefitting from social aid or eligible for social aid are entitled to legal aid.

‘However, several international experts have recently expressed their concerns about the enduring ineffectiveness of the free legal aid system. Civil society informed ECRI that persons in need of legal aid are not able to present the required detailed application documents to the SCLA; the SCLA only deals with a small number of cases per year; and its budget would be too low to hire lawyers for all persons in need. Furthermore, according to

⁴² Freedom House – 2017 Nations in Transit, April 2017

https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_Albania.pdf. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁴³ Balkan Insight - International Mission Monitors Vetting Of Albanian Judges, 13 February 2017 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/international-experts-closely-monitoring-vetting-of-albanian-judges-02-11-2017>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁴⁴ Top-Channel TV – ‘Associated Press: "Albanian opposition is blocking the judiciary reform"', 13 April 2017 <http://m.top-channel.tv/lajme/english/artikull.php?id=19821>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

Article 15.1 LLA, the SCLA shall evaluate several rather open criteria before awarding free legal aid such as the value of the claim, the merits of the legal arguments, the probability of success and the complexity of the case. As a result, legal aid is mostly provided by NGOs and few discrimination cases have been brought before the courts. The CPD confirmed that victims of discrimination do not obtain legal aid and that only some NGOs provide legal aid. The People's Advocate has also been redirecting complainants to NGOs in recent times.

'In addition, the court fees in compensation cases are still too high. The Constitutional Court ruled in February 2013 that judges can decide to exempt plaintiffs from paying court fees. According to civil society representatives judges were however reluctant to make use of this power. ECRI welcomes that in 2014 the judge's power to exempt plaintiffs from court fees and to grant free legal aid in urgent cases was enshrined in law. ECRI expects that the judges will make use of this power.'⁴⁵

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10.4 Fair trial

10.4.1 The US State Department's 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

'The law presumes defendants to be innocent until convicted. It provides for defendants to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, with free interpretation as necessary, and to have a fair and public trial without undue delay. Defendants have the right to be present at their trial, consult an attorney and have one provided at public expense if they cannot afford one. The law provides defendants adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, access to interpretation free of charge, and the right to access government-held evidence. Defendants have the right to confront witnesses against them and to present witnesses and evidence in their defense. Defendants may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. Defendants have the right to appeal. The government generally respected these rights, although trials were not always public and access to a lawyer was at times problematic. Despite the statutory right to free legal aid, NGOs reported that very few individuals benefitted from this during the year.'⁴⁶

10.4.2 The Freedom House 2017 Nations in Transit Report noted that 'At year's end, 488 applications from Albanian citizens were waiting to be heard by the ECtHR [European Court of Human Rights]. Many concern the right to a fair trial, lengthy proceedings, and non-enforcement of final court decisions, in particular, cases involving restitution of property, a long-standing and pervasive problem affecting a significant part of the population.'⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Council of Europe: European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), ECRI Report on Albania (fifth monitoring cycle), 9 June 2015, CRI(2015)18, Para 20-22 available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55b25bb24.html>. Accessed: 22 March 2017

⁴⁶ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁴⁷ Freedom House – 2017 Nations in Transit, April 2017 https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_Albania.pdf. Accessed: 5 May 2017

10.4.3 Fair Trials International, [Fair Trials is a human rights organisation that works to uphold fair trial rights, according to internationally recognised standards of justice] in Defence Rights in Albania, dated 26 March 2014, reported that:

‘A number of reports expressed concerns about lengthy pre-trial detention in Albania, during which most detainees were not informed of their rights, did not receive timely access to a lawyer and were not always brought before a judge within the constitutional time periods. The facilities of pre-trial detention have been criticized by international organisations and NGOs for being poorly maintained and allowing police officers to coerce and ill-treat detainees. Police officers have been reported to arbitrarily arrest and detain people in Albania, due not only to widespread corruption across the country but also because there is no mechanism in place holding authorities accountable.’⁴⁸

10.4.4 The same source, discussed the Right to a Fair Trial in Albania and noted that violation findings by the ECtHR of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (criminal cases only) between 2009 and 2014, showed that Albania was held in violation of Article 6 in four cases. Those cases found a violation of Article 6(1), the right to a fair public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal.⁴⁹

10.4.5 It continued:

‘The area of greatest concern related to the absence of legal aid and legal advice in spite of recent reform. In many cases, officers have failed to inform defendants of their right to free legal advice and questioned them without the presence of a lawyer. A number of reports drew the attention to a lack of infrastructure within the judicial system, leading to many cases being held in the judge’s office as opposed to taking place in open court. The structural problems generate further delays and inconsistencies within the Court, increasing the number of lengthy trial proceedings. Despite reports underlining the progress being undertaken relating to reducing corruption, political interference, bribes and bias towards the prosecution amongst judges, Albania still has a long way to go before ensuring that judges are independent, efficient and accountable.’⁵⁰

10.4.6 The European Commission 2016 Albania report noted:

‘In 2016, the High Court handled around 4 400 applications, an increase on the previous year, but the Court is still handling cases from 2012. The clearance rate improved in the large first instance courts, albeit unevenly; it remained below 100 % in all courts. The process of producing and collecting court statistical data is unreliable and manual data processing should be phased out. Backlogs remained significant, especially in all higher courts (the High Court has around 16 777 pending cases). The reform envisages a

⁴⁸ Fair Trials International, ‘Defence Rights in Albania’, 26 March 2014 <https://www.fairtrials.org/defence-rights-in-albania/>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁴⁹ Fair Trials International, ‘Defence Rights in Albania’, 26 March 2014 <https://www.fairtrials.org/defence-rights-in-albania/>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁵⁰ Fair Trials International, ‘Defence Rights in Albania’, 26 March 2014 <https://www.fairtrials.org/defence-rights-in-albania/>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

new territorial distribution of courts and judges. The notification of court proceedings to parties is highly deficient and needs to be changed to take into account the lack of a reliable address system.’⁵¹

- 10.4.7 A June 2015 Balkan Insight article notes that an expert panel summoned by parliament's Commission on Justice Sector Reform stated that ‘corruption is seen a “normal” way to deliver justice at all levels of the system, from police to prosecutors and judges.’⁵²

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11. Corruption

- 11.1.1 In June 2015, the Guardian carried an article entitled ‘Albania makes headway in battle to beat corruption and improve its image’ in which it reported that in February 2014 ‘the government launched an online anti-corruption portal to allow citizens to anonymously record instances of unscrupulous practices. The website covers 12 key areas, including police, health and customs.’⁵³ By June 2015 ‘[...] 6,840 reports have been logged. Many of these involve complaints about poor service, but 777 cases directly relate to accusations of corruption, with 35 reports referred to prosecutors.’⁵⁴

- 11.1.2 Based on an unofficial translation of the online anti-corruption portal from Albanian-English, by February 2017 there had been 14,424 reports⁵⁵.

- 11.1.3 The Organised Crime and Reporting Project referred to a September 2016 Transparency International report:

‘Transparency International (TI) released its first corruption assessment on Albania Thursday, and the news is not good: Albania is home to some of the worst corruption in Europe.

‘And if the country does not get serious about cleaning up its act, its bid to join the European Union (EU) could be derailed, said Cornelia Abel, TI’s Coordinator for Southeast Europe and Western Balkans.

‘The watchdog non-governmental organization expressed concern over the country’s failure to curb corruption, saying that while Albanian laws guarantee political freedom, they don’t give corruption-fighting bodies enough muscle.

“It is troubling that institutions that are set up to ensure decision makers act in the interest of Albanian citizens are not given the strength, impartiality and resources to do so,” said Abel.

⁵¹ European Commission – 2016 Albania Report, 9 November 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁵² Balkan Insight, Albanian Justice System Slammed as Totally Corrupt, 9 June 2015 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/judges-in-albania-pays-up-to-300-000-for-their-positions-report-says>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁵³ The Guardian, ‘Albania makes headway in battle to beat corruption and improve its image’, 26 June 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/26/albania-battle-against-corruption-organised-crime>. Accessed: 24 February 2017.

⁵⁴ The Guardian, ‘Albania makes headway in battle to beat corruption and improve its image’, 26 June 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/26/albania-battle-against-corruption-organised-crime>. Accessed: 24 February 2017.

⁵⁵ Stopkorrupsionit.al, <http://www.stopkorrupsionit.al/>. Accessed: 24 February 2017.

‘Anti-corruption institutions in Albania are regularly subjected to political pressure, preventing them from implementing meaningful reforms. Such institutions include the Prosecutor’s Office, the High Court, the Central Election Commission and the High Inspectorate for the Declaration of Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interest, TI said in a release.’⁵⁶

11.1.4 The Freedom House 2017 Nations in Transit Report noted:

‘The fight against corruption is at the core of the justice reform package passed in 2016. The laws on vetting and “organization and functioning of the institutions specialized in fighting corruption and organized crime” (commonly called the Special Prosecution against Corruption, or SPAK) are the primary new mechanisms against economic and political corruption as well as the influence of organized crime in the judiciary and beyond. The vetting law is aimed at cleansing the justice system through a detailed examination of the assets, professionalism, and possible ties with organized crime of all judges, prosecutors, and candidates for posts in the new judicial system.

‘The second initiative, SPAK has a broader anticorruption goal. It aims to investigate and adjudicate all corruption and organized crime offenses by former and current senior officials, including political leaders. All SPAK magistrates will be thoroughly vetted prior to their appointment and subject thereafter to periodic financial examinations as well as inspections of their communications. The Special Prosecutions Office, including its supporting investigative unit, will be independent of the General Prosecutor. The new independent investigative unit, National Bureau of Investigation (BKH), is modeled after the American FBI, and its experts will be trained at the latter’s academy in the U.S.’⁵⁷

11.1.5 The same Freedom House report noted:

‘The so-called decriminalization law adopted in December 2015 is intended to facilitate the removal of incriminated individuals from public office. Pursuant to the law, officials submitted self-declaration forms in 2016 that were then referred to the Prosecutor’s Office for review by its Integrity Verification Office established in March. The self-declaration forms revealed that at least 10 MPs, split equally between the left and right parties, and 5 PS and PD mayors had problems in the past with the justice system, meaning they had been arrested, prosecuted, or convicted for various offenses. In response to media allegations of lack of full transparency by some of the declared subjects, the mayors of Kavaja and Tepelena claimed that they had not been aware of the criminal sentences against them. After the General Prosecutor accused two MPs and the mayor of Kavaja of lying about their pasts and hiding their criminal records, the Central Election Commission decided to dismiss them from office.

⁵⁶ Organised Crime and Reporting Project - Albania: Transparency International Reports on Large-Scale Corruption, 9 September 2016 <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/5631-albania-transparency-international-reports-on-large-scale-corruption>. Accessed: 5 May 2017

⁵⁷ Freedom House – 2017 Nations in Transit, April 2017 https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_Albania.pdf. Accessed: 8 May 2017

‘Several other public officials were suspended or forced from office due to corruption allegations in 2016. In May, PS MP Koco Kokëdhima was removed from office after the Constitutional Court found that one of his companies had benefited from public funds while he was an MP. In July, a High Court judge, Majlinda Andrea, was suspended from duty following a prosecution inquiry that revealed she had taken €50,000 through her spouse for a positive ruling on a case being tried by the court. In September, the former PD minister of labor and social welfare, Spiro Ksera, was sentenced by the Tirana District Court to 20 months in prison on abuse of office charges.

‘On 2 June, the parliament adopted a new law on whistleblowers that covers public- and private-sector employees. The law specifies new procedures for investigating disclosed misconduct in the workplace, while also offering protection from any form of retaliation against whistleblowers.

‘Since February, Tirana police officers have been patrolling with cameras installed on their uniforms as part of a project aimed at curtailing bribery and other misconduct, which will expand to other cities in the future. Bribery has been a major and persistent concern in Albania, particularly among traffic police.’⁵⁸

11.1.6 The US State Department’s 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

‘The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by public officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. In December 2015 the Assembly approved decriminalization legislation preventing individuals with criminal convictions from serving as mayors, parliamentarians, or in government or state positions.

‘During the year authorities took additional steps to combat corruption. In July the Assembly unanimously approved constitutional amendments to approve a sweeping reform of the judiciary that included the creation of new anticorruption institutions. These included establishing an independent prosecutor’s office and investigation unit, the sole responsibility of which will be the investigation and prosecution of high-level corruption and organized crime. In August the Assembly approved a law on vetting aimed at reducing corruption among prosecutors and judges. The government also expanded the use of body cameras on police officers to deter street-level corruption.’

‘A number of government agencies investigated corruption cases, but limited resources, investigative leaks, real and perceived political pressure, and a haphazard reassignment system hampered investigations. The Ministry of Justice reported that convictions at district courts decreased by 37 percent in 2015 compared with 2014. No data was available with regard to the convictions at appeals courts. In selective instances involving international actors, anticorruption agencies cooperated with civil society.’⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Freedom House – 2017 Nations in Transit, April 2017
https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_Albania.pdf. Accessed: 8 May 2017

⁵⁹ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 8 May 2017

11.1.7 The same USSD report noted:

‘Corruption was pervasive in all branches of government. At the beginning of the year, 75 corruption cases were pending, with an additional 29 cases filed through June. Through August the courts convicted 76 defendants of corruption; 25 cases were dismissed. There remained 121 defendants charged with corruption awaiting trial. As of July, the web portal established in 2015 to allow citizens to report corruption by public officials had received 14,752 complaints, 94 of which the coordinator referred for prosecution.

‘While prosecutors made significant progress in pursuing low-level public corruption cases, including corrupt prosecutors and judges, prosecution of higher-level crimes remained elusive due to investigators’ fear of retribution, a general lack of resources, and corruption within the judiciary itself. In September a court sentenced Spiro Ksera, a labor minister from the previous government, to 20 months in prison for abuse of office after he misappropriated 30 million leks (\$240,000) meant to benefit the Romani community. In May authorities removed the mayor of the Dibra municipality, Shukri Xhelili, after broadcast of video footage in which he appeared to solicit sexual favors from a woman in exchange for a job. Xhelili appealed the decision to the Constitutional Court, which upheld his dismissal.’⁶⁰

11.1.8 The same USSD report noted:

‘The law requires public officials to disclose their assets to the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interest (HIDAACI), which monitored and verified such disclosures and made them available to the public. During the year the number of HIDAACI inspectors investigating declarations of assets and conflicts of interest increased from 12 to 28. The law authorizes HIDAACI to fine officials who fail to comply with disclosure requirements or refer them to the prosecutor.

‘As of September, HIDAACI had fined 253 individuals, including ministers, deputy ministers, Assembly members, and heads of institutions for not disclosing their assets, for delaying their submissions, or for conflicts of interest. HIDAACI reported that by August it had referred 63 new cases for prosecution. These cases involved 13 judges, two prosecutors, seven Assembly members, two ambassadors, and 39 local government officials on charges including refusing to declare, hiding, or falsifying asset declarations, money laundering, falsification of documents, and corruption.’⁶¹

11.1.9 The European Commission 2016 Albania report noted:

‘...corruption remains prevalent in many areas and continues to be a serious problem.

‘...Since 2010 there has been a positive trend in the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in the fight against corruption involving junior or middle-ranking officials, even though the track record

⁶⁰ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 8 May 2017

⁶¹ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 8 May 2017

remains low overall, especially regarding corruption cases involving high-level officials.

‘Poor inter-institutional cooperation and exchange of information continued to hamper proactive investigation and effective prosecution of corruption. Financial investigations resulting in the confiscation of assets were very low. Penalties imposed in corruption cases.

‘...The National Coordinator against Corruption (who is also the Minister of State for Local Issues) is responsible for the design, coordination and monitoring of anti-corruption policies. The independence and accountability of HIDAACI [the High Inspectorate for the Declaration of Audits and Assets and Conflict of Interest and the High State Audit] need to be strengthened to reduce the still high risk of political influence. The internal controls framework has yet to be streamlined to achieve better inter-institutional coordination and effectiveness. The scope of audits conducted by the High State Audit auditors and internal auditors overlap, while their findings often differ significantly. The role of the Council of Ministers' Unit for Internal Administrative Control and Anti-corruption has yet to be further clarified. Financial inspection needs to be stepped up to fight high-risk fraud, corruption and mismanagement of public funds. The capacity of all the bodies mentioned above needs to be substantially strengthened.

‘Further efforts are needed to improve transparency of public administration; step up implementation of institutions' transparency programmes; and ensure the disclosure of information of public interest in a timely and efficient manner. There is no code of ethics for MPs and MPs' asset declarations are not published automatically. Training for public officials on good governance and anti-corruption is provided by the School of Public Administration. Complaints of corruption can be filled in on the online portal launched by the government in 2015. Corruption statistics are collected by an inter-institutional working group that includes the Ministry of Justice, the State police, the General Prosecutor's Office, the High Court of Justice, and the High Inspectorate for Declaration and Audit of Assets and Prevention of Conflict of Interest. There is no system of sectoral risk assessments implemented either at policy or law enforcement level. Corruption-proof methods in legislation drafting are not yet applied.’⁶²

11.1.10 The Institute for Democracy and Mediation 2016 report on Police Integrity and Corruption in Albania (following a 2014 report) noted:

‘In some segments of police, corruption seems to have decreased, such as in the traffic police, or remained unaffected such as in the case of Internal Affairs and Complaints Service (IACS), but has increased in the rest of police services. Anti-corruption strategic framework and measures have been partially implemented. Their enactment has been impeded by lack of adequate resources and capacities, by grassroots tolerance of corruption, low public trust, and politicization of the fight against corruption.

⁶² European Commission – 2016 Albania Report, 9 November 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 8 May 2017

'While the number of police officers investigated and punished for corruption has increased over the last two years, most of them are low- and mid-rank officers. On the other hand, public perception on spread of corruption among top police officials has increased.

'Bribery is the most widespread form of corruption and remains almost unchanged just like two years ago, as other forms of corruption have increased their presence. Cooperation with criminals, involvement in illegal traffics, manipulation of evidence, and corrupt procurements are among corruption forms with significant rise. Likewise, public perception on corruption and violation of Police rules on recruitment, appointment, and promotion has worsened.'⁶³

11.1.11 The same Institute for Democracy and Mediation 2016 report noted:

'The fight against corruption and the efforts to curb corruption have produced no results in strengthening the culture of integrity as an instrument to resist temptation for abuse with the rights and privileges of the police profession.

'The culture of silence for reporting fellow officers' corrupt acts continues to prevail in the State Police and the will to report violations is persistently depleted.

'The efforts placed in the last 2-3 years to introduce a culture of integrity and anti-corruption improvement in police education and training curricula have not produced visible results. However, the government's attempt to engage the public in reporting corruption has led to some results and complaints filed with the Internal Affairs and Complaints Service have intensified.'⁶⁴

11.1.12 The same Institute for Democracy and Mediation 2016 report noted:

'There are an increasing number of citizens who think that political leaders use police for corrupt purposes and that the police use their position for corrupt acts. Similarly, citizens think that police leaders tolerate corruption and there is a culture of tolerance and omission of action to restrain corruption in the State Police.

'The perception that police is used for corrupt purposes by the politics and that political influence in the police affects the escalation of corruption is quite common among police officials themselves.

'Pervasive and lasting corruption in the State Police and the approach to fight corruption as a problem linked with individual officials' conduct have led to failure in addressing corruption systemically by targeting police organization by means of strengthening integrity and anti-corruption culture.'⁶⁵

⁶³ The Institute for Democracy and Mediation - Police Integrity and Corruption in Albania, 2016 http://seldi.net/fileadmin/public/PDF/Publications/Police_Corruption_and_Integrity_2.0/Police-Integrity-and-Corruption-in-Albania-2.0.pdf. Accessed: 9 May 2016

⁶⁴ The Institute for Democracy and Mediation - Police Integrity and Corruption in Albania, 2016 http://seldi.net/fileadmin/public/PDF/Publications/Police_Corruption_and_Integrity_2.0/Police-Integrity-and-Corruption-in-Albania-2.0.pdf. Accessed: 9 May 2016

⁶⁵ The Institute for Democracy and Mediation - Police Integrity and Corruption in Albania, 2016 http://seldi.net/fileadmin/public/PDF/Publications/Police_Corruption_and_Integrity_2.0/Police-Integrity-and-Corruption-in-Albania-2.0.pdf

12. Citizenship and nationality

12.1.1 Albanian citizenship is determined according to the [Law on Albanian Citizenship, No. 8389, dated 5 August 1998](#).⁶⁶

12.1.2 The US State Department 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

‘An individual acquires citizenship by birth within the country’s territory or from a citizen parent. Parents were encouraged to register the birth of a child in a timely manner, and the law provides for a monetary reward for parents who register their children within 60 days of birth. Often, however, authorities did not disburse the reward. There were no reports of discrimination in birth registration, but onerous residency and documentation requirements for registration made it more difficult for the many Romani and Balkan-Egyptian parents who lacked legally documented places of residence to register their children or to access government services dependent on registration.

‘According to the domestic branch of the NGO Association for the Social Support of Youth (ARSIS), children born to internal migrants or those returning from abroad, especially from Greece, frequently had no birth certificates or other legal documents and consequently were unable to attend school or have access to services. This was particularly a problem for Romani families, in which couples often married young and failed to register the births of their children.’⁶⁷

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13. Freedom of movement

13.1.1 The US State Department 2016 Human Rights Practices Report noted:

‘The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

‘The government cooperated with UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning migrants, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern. Police allowed UNHCR to monitor the processing, detention, and deportation of some migrants.

‘...In order to receive government services, individuals moving within the country must transfer their civil registration to their new community of residence and prove the legality of their new domicile through property ownership, a property rental agreement, or utility bills. Many persons could not provide this proof and thus lacked access to public services. Other citizens, particularly Roma and Balkan-Egyptians, lacked formal registration

[and-Corruption-in-Albania-2.0.pdf](#). Accessed: 9 May 2016

⁶⁶ Legislationonline.org, Law on Albanian Citizenship ,

<http://www.legislationonline.org/documents/action/popup/id/6645>. Accessed: 9 May 2017.

⁶⁷ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017

<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 9 May 2017

in the communities where they resided. The law does not prohibit their registration, but it was often difficult to complete. Many Roma and Balkan-Egyptians lacked the financial means to register, and many lacked the motivation to go through the process.’⁶⁸

13.1.2 The Freedom House 2016 Freedom in the World report noted that ‘Albanians generally enjoy freedom of movement and choice of residence or employment, though criminal activity and practices related to traditional honor codes limit these rights in some areas.’⁶⁹

13.1.3 The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development Social Institutions and Gender 2016 Country Profile noted:

‘There are no legal restrictions on women’s access to public space in Albania, either within the country or abroad. The Article 38 of the Constitution guarantees every Albanian citizen (regardless of gender) the right to travel freely within the country, apply for a passport, and to choose where to live.

‘...The official Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) report [2010] notes that women may have to seek permission from their husbands or family before travelling within Albania or abroad, placing effective de facto limits on their access to public space and freedom of movement. The CEDAW report states that in rural areas in particular, married women report needing to seek their husband's permission before leaving the house (except in cases of medical emergency).’⁷⁰

13.1.4 The official CEDAW [2016] report noted that ‘the Committee is concerned about secluded women and girls who live in isolation imposed as a result of blood feuds for lengthy periods, and about their extremely limited access to education, health care, participation in public and political life and freedom of movement.’⁷¹

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13.2 Means of support

13.2.1 In a letter of 30 January 2017, the British Embassy in Tirana stated that:

‘After the economic crisis of 2008 in countries like Italy and Greece, many Albanian illegal economic emigrants mostly residing in these countries, started to return to Albania. In 2010, in order to meet these challenges, the Albanian Government adopted the Strategy ‘On the Reintegration of the Returned Albanian Citizens’ (the Strategy was meant to be in effect until 2015 but according to a senior official we met at the Ministry of Social Welfare is still the document they refer to and use as guidance) and adopted

⁶⁸ US State Department - 2016 Human Rights Practices Report, March 2017 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265600.pdf>. Accessed: 9 May 2017

⁶⁹ Freedom House – Freedom in the World, August 2016 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/albania>. Accessed: 9 May 2017

⁷⁰ The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development - Social Institutions and Gender 2016 Country Profile, 2016 <http://www.genderindex.org/country/albania>. Accessed: 9 May 2017

⁷¹ Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women – Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Albania, 25 July 2016 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/ENACARRegion/Pages/ALIndex.aspx>. Accessed: 9 May 2017

its institutional infrastructure to address their needs. Presently, according to the Strategy and the senior official (whom a British Embassy official met on 24 January 2017), returned Albanian citizens have the opportunity to be given information regarding their rights and benefits at the border. According to the Strategy, the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Embassies around the world informs Albanian citizens that plan to return about the possibilities they have upon returning.⁷²

13.2.2 A report published by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), in July 2015 stated:

'There are 36 migration desks, one in each district, to facilitate the reintegration of returnees. However, the role of their staff is mainly to provide an information service. A 2013 report recommended that further efforts are needed to make their role more effective and proactive.

'Returning families face a difficult reality, cutting across economic, social, administrative and other issues. In 2013, 60.3 per cent complained about the lack of adequate support and 41.2 per cent said that the reintegration services needed improving. Many turned to the private sector instead for help (40.6%), the majority of these to access health and medical services (58.5%).

'If they have the necessary documentation, children born abroad can be registered at civil registry offices and in schools. Children that are not registered at the country of destination, a certificate of child delivery is necessary. For children that have been registered in the country of destination, a birth certificate is necessary. In both cases documentations should be legally recognized by the authorities of the country of destination (respectively by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), legalized by the Albanian consulate at the country of destination. To register at school, documents such as a child immunization record and child civil registration is necessary. Economic aid and referrals made for vocational training opportunities can be provided through the LGU, in line with current provisions. Some NGOs offer needs-based reintegration support to returnees (eg. legal, medical or psychosocial help, vocational training or through income generation activities).

'There are no other specific reports about difficulties faced by returning children in accessing services. A 2014 study on children on the move reported, however, that the most critical issues facing them related to those without civil registration (mainly from the Roma population) whose access to essential services was obstructed.'⁷³

13.2.3 Information obtained in January 2017 by British Embassy in Tirana stated:

'According to the official from the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Director of the Albanian Social Services (met on 20 on January 2017) in order to benefit from social state support every Albanian citizen upon returning based on his/her place of residence, should register in one of the Employment

⁷² British Embassy Tirana, Albania. Letter dated 30 January 2017. Available on request.

⁷³ UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). 'Child Notice Albania'. (Pages 84-85). 7 July 2015.

http://www.unicef.org/albania/UNICEF_Child_Notice_Albania_2015.pdf . Accessed: 26 May 2017

Offices. According to the website of the National Employment Service there are currently twelve Employment Offices in Albania (one for every region). According to the senior official of the Ministry of Social Welfare, these Employment Offices will assess the person's professional capabilities and will try to find him/her employment; when necessary the applicant will be asked to attend free of charge a professional course offered by the Albanian Government.

'During a visit conducted on 25 January 2017 at the Employment Office of Tirana, an employee working on migration issues said that, upon registration at the Employment Offices the applicant will be given written confirmation attesting their unemployment status and with this document returnees will be able to register to benefit from health services free of charge.

'According to Directive No. 8, dated 23.6.2004 'On the calculation of the social welfare benefit' of the Minister of Social Welfare and Youth, to receive social welfare benefits the returned citizen should apply at the Offices of the Social Services situated within the municipalities.

'During a meeting with the senior official of the Ministry of Social Welfare, the British Embassy was told that the municipalities have housing offices, where returned citizens who do not have accommodation can register to benefit from the status of a homeless person and subsequently to benefit social housing.

'According to the Strategy and the senior official from the Ministry of Social Welfare, children of returned Albanian citizens will have priority to be registered in schools in Albania and extra lessons of Albanian language will be offered to them. Any previous diploma/qualifications earned abroad will also be recognized.'⁷⁴

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14. Exit and return

14.1 Visa liberalisation

14.1.1 The European Commission 2016 Albania report noted

'As part of the monitoring mechanism in place since visa liberalisation [December 2010, for citizens of Albania travelling to the Schengen zone], the Commission has been regularly assessing the progress made by the country in implementing reforms introduced under the visa roadmap. The monitoring mechanism also includes an alert mechanism to prevent abuses, coordinated by Frontex. A readmission agreement between the European Union and Albania has been in force since 2006.'⁷⁵

14.1.2 The latest report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Fifth Report on the Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring for the Western Balkan Countries, was published on 25 February 2015. The report provided an overview of the development of the post-visa liberalisation

⁷⁴ British Embassy Tirana, Albania. Letter dated 30 January 2017. Available on request.

⁷⁵ European Commission – 2016 Albania Report, 9 November 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 9 May 2017

monitoring mechanism, reviews the functioning of the visa-free travel scheme and recommends reforms to prevent the recurrence of the problems that have beset this scheme since 2010⁷⁶.

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15. Passports and ID cards

- 14.1.1 In 2008 the government undertook a programme in which new biometric ID cards⁷⁷ were issued to all citizens 16 years old and over. Applications for new biometric passports⁷⁸ were then processed from January 2009 onwards. This was in response to document security concerns which affected ease of travel abroad. Borders were closed, visa processes were long and only a selection of people would travel outside Albania. Corruption was also an issue. This issue also impacted on the country's integration aspirations in relation to the European Union⁷⁹.
- 14.1.2 See the EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Report: Albania, revised and updated November 2012, for comprehensive information on Citizenship both current and historical, including modes of acquisition and loss⁸⁰.

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16. Forged and fraudulently obtained documents

- 16.1.1 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) noted in a Response to Information Request (RIR), dated 16 October 2006, that:

'In October 2005, the Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA) reported the takedown of a "mega laboratory" in Albania that was forging various travel documents, including passports and visas, as well as American Green Cards, unspecified ID cards, bank cards and telephone cards. During the raid about 1,000 passports from 29 countries, including Canada, the United States, and Australia were confiscated. Additionally, a number of border passage stamps for Greece and Italy were found, as well as stamps from the Albanian consulate in Washington, other unnamed Albanian ministries, and

⁷⁶ European Commission, 'Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Fifth Report on the Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring for the Western Balkan Countries in accordance with the Commission Statement of 8 November 2010, COM(2015) 58 final', 25 February 2015 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/com/com_com\(2015\)0058_/com_com\(2015\)0058_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/com/com_com(2015)0058_/com_com(2015)0058_en.pdf). Accessed: 9 May 2017

⁷⁷ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 'Albania: The biometric identity card; its appearance, use and the biometric data stored on it; requirements and procedures to obtain a biometric identity card within Albania; whether it can be replaced and renewed from abroad, including requirements and procedures', 22 September 2011, ALB103817.E, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4f5f1e0b2.html>. Accessed: 9 May 2017.

⁷⁸ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 'Albania: The biometric passport; its appearance and biometric data stored on it; requirements and procedures to obtain a biometric passport from within Albania; whether it can be replaced or renewed from abroad (2012-June 2015)', 9 June 2015 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5587bbf14.html>. Accessed 9 May 2017.

⁷⁹ Aleat Identity Services, 'The Albanian ID Card and Biometric Passport – Our Success Story', 2014, <https://www.aleat.al/en>. Accessed: 9 May 2017.

⁸⁰ The University of Edinburgh, School of Law, 'The Europeanisation of Citizenship in the Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia (CITSEE), Country Report: Albania', (Revised and updated November 2012) <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/CountryReports/Albania.pdf>. Accessed: 9 May 2017.

entry and exit stamps for Rinas Airport...The Associated Press (AP) also reported that the same police operation involved the arrest of nine individuals, including four Tirana airport law enforcement agents, three other airport officials and two tourism agency owners who were all charged for forging travel documents and selling them to prospective illegal migrants.’⁸¹

16.1.2 The European Commission Fifth Report to the European Parliament on the Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring for the Western Balkan Countries, released 25 February 2015, noted that ‘The most common types of fraudulent documents used by Albanian travellers were Greek and Italian identity documents.’⁸²

16.1.3 The European Commission 2016 Albania report noted that ‘the detection of false or fraudulent documents remained low, in particular at the international airport.’⁸³

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Version control and contacts

Contacts

If you have any questions about this note and your line manager, senior caseworker or technical specialist cannot help you, or you think that this note has factual errors then [email the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this note (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability, you can [email the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **24 July 2017**

Changes from last version of this note

Update of country information

⁸¹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Albania: Availability of fraudulent identity documents, including incidents where individuals were detained for using these false documents and government measures designed to address this situation (2005-September 2006) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f147dfa.html> . Accessed: 9 May 2017

⁸² European Commission, ‘Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Fifth Report on the Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring for the Western Balkan Countries in accordance with the Commission Statement of 8 November 2010, COM(2015) 58 final’, 25 February 2015 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/com/com_com\(2015\)0058_/com_com\(2015\)0058_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/com/com_com(2015)0058_/com_com(2015)0058_en.pdf). Accessed: 11 May 2017

⁸³ European Commission – 2016 Albania Report, 9 November 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf. Accessed: 9 May 2017

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