

GRECO: Fifth Round Evaluation Report on Albania



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News

On 3 December 2020, GRECO published its [fifth round evaluation report](#) on Albania. Albania has been a member of GRECO since 2001 and fully implemented most of the recommendations of the first four evaluation rounds. That said, the level of corruption remains high in the country and is prevalent in many areas of public and business life. Importantly, the Council of the European Union decided to open accession negotiations with Albania on 25 March 2020. Among the requirements to be fulfilled before the first intergovernmental conference on this issue, Albania should *inter alia* ensure the transparency of political funding, continue the implementation of judicial reform, and further strengthen the fight against corruption and organised crime. Strong awareness of these deficits and pressure at the political level is evident regarding the importance of effectively addressing corruption in the country. GRECO observed that the tense political situation in Albania is not conducive to this, with protest marches in 2019 to demand the resignation of the government as well as ongoing tensions between the government and the president of the republic. The latter cancelled and postponed the June 2019 elections, exceeding his powers according to the Venice Commission. Moreover, the Constitutional Court still has not been established to date.

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ISSN: 1862-6947

<https://eucrium.eu>



GRECO acknowledges a number of measures that have been taken in recent years to curb corruption in the country under these circumstances. These include an entire series of laws adopted since 2011 to strengthen the integrity of the public sector as well as a 2018-2020 action plan to implement the Inter-Sectorial Strategy against corruption. Some high-ranking state officials have been convicted of corruption offences, and procedures to establish specialised anti-corruption bodies have been completed.

However, GRECO considers the judicial reform to be complex and in need of acceleration so as not to weaken judicial control over law enforcement. As regards central governments (top executive functions) the Inter-Sectorial Strategy against corruption and the Action Plan for its implementation foresaw the adoption and implementation of an integrity plan by each ministry, which have not been drafted yet. GRECO calls for a swift adoption of these plans, also taking into account the specific integrity risks of ministers and their political advisers. The existing Ministerial Code of Ethics should be complemented with concrete guidance for its implementation regarding conflicts of interest and other integrity-related matters (gifts, lobbying, etc.). Members of the Council of Ministers and political advisors must undergo systematic awareness raising on integrity-related matters via regular training. In addition, the report recommends publishing the names of political advisers online for the sake of transparency. Explicit rules on post-employment restrictions should apply both to ministers and to political advisers. Lastly, as a matter of priority, GRECO recommends the recruitment of prosecutorial and technical staff for the office of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor provided with adequate human and technical resources and with prosecutors who benefit from highly specialised training.

As regards law enforcement agencies (police and border guard), one specific concern is over current transitional vetting in the State Police, which is likely to result in a significant number of qualified staff leaving the force. The vetting process also does not adequately capture all possible integrity risks and should therefore be replaced with regular integrity checks over the course of the careers of police staff members.

Other critical concerns relate to the possibility of the State Police receiving private donations/sponsorship and it providing additional services in return for payment. Private donations and sponsorship need to be eliminated or at least strictly regulated in order to limit any risk of corruption. Any donations and sponsorships received should be published on a regular basis, indicating the nature and value of the donation and the identity of the donor. An integrity plan for the State Police should be implemented as a matter of priority, and the ethical principles and rules of conduct in the State Police Regulation must include a manual providing practical guidance.

GRECO further lists the politicisation of the Albanian Police among its concerns. This development needs to be counterbalanced by measures increasing the stability of top senior officials in their positions, irrespective of political changes. Ultimately, explicit rules on post-employment restrictions should also apply to police employees, and the effective implementation of the law on whistleblowers must be ensured, including by means of regular police staff training.

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The project is co-financed by the [Union Anti-Fraud Programme \(UAFP\)](#), managed by the [European Anti-Fraud Office \(OLAF\)](#).



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