



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2025)0155

2023 and 2024 reports on Albania

European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2025 on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Albania (2025/2017(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Albania, of the other part¹,
- having regard to Albania's application for EU membership, submitted on 24 April 2009,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III)²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1449 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on establishing the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans³,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 February 2020 entitled 'Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans' (COM(2020)0057),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 November 2023 entitled '2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy' (COM(2023)0690), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'Albania 2023 Report' (SWD(2023)0690),

¹ OJ L 107, 28.4.2009, p. 166, ELI:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2009/332/oj.

² OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1529/oj>.

³ OJ L, 2024/1449, 24.5.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1449/oj>.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 November 2023 entitled 'New growth plan for the Western Balkans' (COM(2023)0691),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 March 2024 on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews (COM(2024)0146),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 July 2024 entitled '2024 Rule of Law Report' (COM(2024)0800), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled '2024 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania' (SWD(2024)0828),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 October 2024 entitled '2024 Communication on EU enlargement policy' (COM(2024)0690), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'Albania 2024 Report' (SWD(2024)0690),
- having regard to the Reform Agenda of Albania submitted under the EU's Reform and Growth Facility, as approved by the Commission on 23 October 2024,
- having regard to the final report of 29 September 2023 by the Election Observation Mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on Albania's local elections of 14 May 2023,
- having regard to the final report of 26 July 2021 by the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE/ODIHR on Albania's parliamentary elections of 25 April 2021,
- having regard to the Joint Opinion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR of 11 December 2020 on the amendments to the Albanian constitution of 30 July 2020 and the amendments to Albania's electoral code of 5 October 2020,
- having regard to the Sofia Declaration adopted at the EU-Western Balkans summit of 17 May 2018, and the Sofia Priority Agenda annexed thereto,
- having regard to the Zagreb Declaration adopted at the EU-Western Balkans summit of 6 May 2020,
- having regard to the declarations of the EU-Western Balkans summits held in Brussels on 13 December 2023 and 18 December 2024,
- having regard to the Berlin Process launched on 28 August 2014,

- having regard to Reporters Without Borders' 2024 World Press Freedom Index,
 - having regard to Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index,
 - having regard to the 2024 Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Albania,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A10-0106/2025),
- A. whereas enlargement is the most effective EU foreign policy instrument and a geostrategic investment in long-term peace, democracy, stability and security throughout the continent;
 - B. whereas the EU remains the main political and economic partner of the Western Balkan countries; whereas the EU continues to be by far Albania's biggest trade and investment partner and its largest provider of financial assistance;
 - C. whereas enlargement is a merit-based process based on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights; whereas Albania's EU accession depends on lasting, in-depth and irreversible reforms across fundamental areas, starting with the rule of law and the functioning of democratic institutions;
 - D. whereas Albania has been an EU candidate country since 2014, began accession negotiations in July 2022 and successfully completed the screening process in November 2023;
 - E. whereas Albania opened negotiations on 'Cluster 1: Fundamentals' on 15 October 2024, on 'Cluster 6: External Relations' on 17 December 2024, on 'Cluster 2: Internal market' on 14 April 2025 and on 'Cluster 3: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth' on 22 May 2025;
 - F. whereas Albania is a reliable foreign policy partner and is fully aligned with the EU's common foreign and security policy;
 - G. whereas Albania has been a target of foreign malign influence campaigns aiming to sow discord, provoke tensions and violence and destabilise the whole region, including Russian disinformation and election meddling, as well as questionable investments from non-EU actors such as China; whereas Russian and Iranian cyber attacks against Albania in 2022 and 2023 disrupted critical government

functions, illustrating the hybrid threat environment Albania faces as it progresses toward EU integration;

- H. whereas electoral shortcomings and serious vulnerabilities persist in Albania's electoral system; whereas the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations to further improve the conduct of elections in Albania have not yet been fully addressed;
 - I. whereas Albania participates in EU common security and defence policy missions and operations, including in EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
 - J. whereas protection of national and ethnic minorities is crucial for aspiring EU Member States; whereas the implementing legislation on free self-identification and the use of minority languages has been adopted in Albania;
 - K. whereas the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine highlights the critical importance of EU enlargement for ensuring security and stability on our continent;
1. Welcomes Albania's unwavering commitment to EU integration, reflecting consensus among all political parties, both governmental and opposition, and overwhelming support among citizens, and commends its consistent full alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy and promotion of the rules-based international order, including its categorical response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine through its alignment with the EU's restrictive measures against Russia and Belarus; acknowledges the country's active role in the region and in regional initiatives;
 2. Welcomes Albania's ambition of closing accession negotiations by the end of 2027 and the swift progress made in recent years, notably the opening of two clusters of negotiating chapters in 2024 and two further clusters so far in 2025; recalls that candidate countries undergo in-depth transformations to fulfil membership criteria during accession negotiations, which last as long as it takes to implement the necessary reforms; stresses the need to strengthen the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the accession process, including its parliamentary dimension; cautions against any actions that could undermine the system of checks and balances;
 3. Notes that the pace of EU accession is determined by the candidate country's progress on aligning with the EU *acquis*, its track record on implementing it and the due functioning of all the country's institutions, and is grounded in the rule of law, good governance and fundamental rights; urges Albania to accelerate reforms to strengthen the rule of law and economic growth, counter corruption and organised crime, prevent human trafficking, ensure the protection of fundamental rights and make progress in the areas of

freedom of expression, freedom of information and media pluralism and independence;

4. Welcomes the EU's new Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, which will provide EUR 922 million in grants and loans to Albania when it meets the conditions set out in its ambitious Reform Agenda;
5. Takes note of Albania's adoption of the National Plan for European Integration 2024-2026; welcomes the fact that Albania has established the bodies in charge of the integration process; calls for greater efforts to increase transparency and engage in public communication on EU integration;
6. Welcomes the decision to open the European Parliament's antenna office for the Western Balkans in Tirana; notes that the office will serve as a key contact point between the European Parliament and national parliaments, civil society and local partners from across the Western Balkans region;
7. Welcomes the involvement of 18 Albanian participants in the Enlargement Candidate Members initiative launched by the European Economic and Social Committee, which aims to foster closer ties with candidate countries and facilitate their gradual integration into the EU;

Democratic institutions, media and civil society

8. Insists on the importance of constructive political debate and orderly parliamentary conduct as key aspects of democratic governance; reaffirms the joint responsibility of Albania's political forces to strengthen constructive and inclusive political dialogue and overcome ongoing high political polarisation in the country; deplores the continued confrontations and inflammatory rhetoric by politicians from all parties and the clashes between the ruling majority and the opposition; underlines the need to foster a political culture based on mutual respect and adherence to democratic norms, ensuring that political competition does not undermine institutional stability, and to demonstrate full respect for the role of parliamentarism, by putting an end to political attacks; calls for genuine dialogue to promote political stability and progress, emphasising the need for cross-party consensus on the EU integration agenda and the meaningful involvement of civil society; emphasises the need for more effective parliamentary oversight and improved functioning of institutions;
9. Recognises the growing threat of foreign malign influence and hybrid interference in Albania's democratic institutions; highlights that Kremlin-aligned narratives have sought to erode public confidence in democratic institutions and promote anti-Western sentiment; calls on Albania to enhance institutional resilience against

covert political funding, media manipulation and cyber threats that directly impact its EU accession process; calls for the EU institutions to closely monitor Albania's exposure to foreign malign influence;

10. Welcomes Albania's blocking of Russian disinformation domains but stresses the need for a coordinated EU-Albania disinformation response mechanism, modelled on the EUvsDisinfo platform, to rapidly debunk and counteract Kremlin narratives; advocates for increased regional cooperation among Western Balkan countries to share best practice and develop joint strategies in combating disinformation and foreign interference; warns of the increasing footprint of Chinese state-backed media in Albania;
11. Emphasises the Albanian Parliament's duty to respect the rulings of the Constitutional Court without delay; stresses the fundamental and irreplaceable role of parliament in safeguarding checks and balances; calls on Albania to ensure genuine democratic accountability and stronger, more transparent governance;
12. Takes note of the July 2024 amendments to Albania's electoral code, which enable out-of-country voting by the Albanian diaspora and introduce partially open candidate lists; takes note of the parliamentary elections of 11 May 2025 and underlines that, based on the preliminary conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR, the elections were competitive and professionally conducted but took place in a highly polarised environment and contestants did not enjoy a level playing field; expresses concern that the ruling party benefited from the widespread use of administrative resources; notes that the publication of the OSCE/ODIHR final report, which will include the final assessment and recommendations to be implemented, is expected in the coming months; calls on all parties to demonstrate political will for a comprehensive and inclusive electoral reform to implement all recommendations from the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission fully and in a timely manner, including those on the electoral and party financing framework;
13. Regrets that the environment for free media and independent journalists has been declining in recent years; notes with concern that media independence and pluralism in Albania continue to be affected by high market concentration, the overlap of business and political interests, lack of transparency of funding and ownership, intimidation and precarious working conditions for journalists; notes that, according to the 2024 Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, Albania ranks 99th, reflecting ongoing issues related to media ownership concentration, political interference and threats against journalists; highlights that the lack of transparency in media financing and ownership structures increases the risk of editorial bias and foreign propaganda penetration and undermines public trust in journalism; calls on the Albanian authorities to ensure media ownership transparency and enforce a policy of zero tolerance for

the intimidation of journalists; calls on the Albanian Government to support independent fact-checking platforms as a means to ensure public access to accurate information and to uphold the integrity of the information space;

14. Recalls that any revision of media laws should be in line with the Venice Commission recommendations and should take place in a transparent and inclusive manner in consultation with media organisations, with the aim of improving media freedom and self-regulation; welcomes the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists launched by the Council of Europe, together with the EU and a network of prominent press freedom organisations; regrets that there has been no progress in aligning the legislative framework with the EU *acquis* and EU standards, including the European Media Freedom Act¹; recalls the need to strengthen investigative journalism, fact-checking and media literacy and to tackle hate speech, disinformation and fake news; expresses concern over enduring inflammatory anti-media rhetoric, including by high-level politicians, public officials and other public figures, which fuels the culture of intimidation; strongly condemns the increasing verbal attacks against journalists reporting on rule of law and corruption matters, as well as misogynistic online harassment targeting women journalists, smear campaigns, violence and rioting, and calls for the final convictions of the attackers to be ensured; regrets that the criminal code does not provide protection to journalists against threats and violence, calls on the authorities to adopt a legal framework that efficiently protects journalists, human rights defenders, environmental activists and other stakeholders against the concerning increase of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), to decriminalise defamation and to respect the role of independent journalism as a crucial check on power and to engage with the media in a manner that upholds democratic principles;
15. Recalls the responsibility of national and local authorities to improve transparency, accountability and inclusiveness by conducting meaningful and regular public stakeholder consultations; notes with concern that the Albanian Parliament's implementation of the legal framework for public consultations remains predominantly formal; stresses the need for greater transparency regarding public data and key legislative projects; insists that the financial resources, administrative capacity and fiscal autonomy of local authorities should be improved;

¹ Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act) (OJ L, 2024/1083, 17.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj>).

16. Welcomes Albania's vibrant and constructive civil society, which plays a crucial and positive role in the reform process; welcomes the improvement of electoral monitoring and the increasing participation of civil society in overseeing the democratic process; underlines that civil society is vital in fostering democracy and pluralism and promoting good governance and social progress; encourages the Albanian Government to bolster the role of civil society, including women's rights organisations, in the EU accession process, from an early stage and in a transparent legislative process; regrets that civil society organisations operate in a challenging environment and receive limited public funding; insists that the groundwork for an effective VAT exemption system be laid in compliance with the commitments taken by Albania under the EU-Albania Cooperation Agreement and the IPA III; urges the authorities to speed up the drafting of the 2024-2027 roadmap for the government policy towards a more enabling environment for civil society development and to closely monitor the implementation of this roadmap;
17. Welcomes the establishment of the new position of Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption and underlines the importance of its effectiveness and of delivering public administration and anti-corruption reforms; remains concerned, however, that there has been limited progress in public administration reform; insists that the Albanian authorities effectively implement provisions on merit-based recruitment and review the effectiveness of the current monitoring structures for the new public administration and anti-corruption reforms; underlines the need to foster a culture of accountability, non-partisan access to public information and scrutiny of public institutions, including with regard to the implementation of the Reform Agenda; notes that public entities need to improve their compliance with transparency requirements and their responsiveness to information requests;
18. Regrets that limited progress has been made in aligning the legal framework for procurement with the EU *acquis*; expresses concern over the newly introduced temporary exemptions in public procurement law; calls on the Albanian authorities to improve competitive procurement procedures in line with the EU *acquis*;
19. Welcomes the progress made by Albania in improving data transmission to Eurostat;

Fundamental rights

20. Notes that Albania's legal framework for gender-based violence is not yet fully aligned with the Istanbul Convention; expresses serious concern that violence against women remains a pressing issue, with the number of femicides remaining high; welcomes the establishment of a femicide watch by the Ombudsperson; urges the enhancement of support services for victims, particularly healthcare,

shelter funding, free legal aid, and victim reintegration and rehabilitation; stresses the need for increased financial and institutional support to be given to prevention programmes, public awareness campaigns, and specialised training for law enforcement and judicial authorities to ensure a victim-centred approach;

21. Expresses concern about persistent shortcomings, such as non-alignment or partial alignment with the EU *acquis*, regarding persons with disabilities and gender equality; recognises the need for Albania to fully align its legal framework on gender-based violence with the Istanbul Convention; notes that, according to the World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Gender Gap Report, Albania has fallen six places to rank 23rd globally, indicating a widening gender gap; expresses serious concern that violence against women remains a pressing issue, with the number of femicides remaining high; calls for the full and effective implementation of existing legislation, including stricter enforcement of protective measures and enhanced judicial responsiveness to gender-based violence cases, as highlighted in the European Commission's 2024 report on Albania;
22. Welcomes the adoption of a new and better-financed national action plan for LGBTI+ persons; regrets, however, that there has been no progress in initiating the necessary legislation in this field and calls on the authorities to adopt the necessary legislation on the recognition of gender identity and sex characteristics, as well as on same-sex partnerships/marriages; deplores the fact that LGBTI+ persons continue to face threats and derogatory media campaigns, with public institutions failing to provide adequate protection; notes that women living in rural and remote areas, Roma and Egyptian women and LGBTI+ individuals continue to face limited access to primary healthcare; urges public institutions to demonstrate strong commitment to protecting LGBTI+ rights and to act decisively against discriminatory and hateful language towards the LGBTI+ community;
23. Calls on Albania to fully respect the autonomy of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and refrain from any actions that undermine its freedom of religious expression or its property rights; calls for an end to interference in ecclesiastical appointments and for dialogue with religious authorities to safeguard religious pluralism;
24. Welcomes the adoption of the pending implementing legislation on the rights of persons belonging to minorities, specifically on self-identification and the use of minority languages, including at the level of local self-government units, and underscores that these by-laws have to be fully and effectively implemented in order to render the exercise of minority and education rights feasible in practice; calls on the authorities to ensure the effective implementation of the bylaws, notably by allocating adequate resources to central agencies

and local government; calls on the authorities to ensure that procedures for selecting the members of the Committee on National Minorities are reviewed in line with the recommendations of the Commission and of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; calls on the authorities to increase the capacity of the State Committee on National Minorities and to ensure that it is fully functional and has adequate resources at its disposal; expresses concern over persistent issues of discrimination and social exclusion affecting minority groups in Albania; calls on the Albanian Government to fully respect and protect human rights, including the rights of minorities, and to ensure that all allegations of human rights abuses, including hate speech, are promptly and thoroughly investigated; urges the Albanian authorities to enhance institutional mechanisms to prevent discrimination and ensure the meaningful political participation of all communities, in line with the recommendations of the Commission's 2024 report on Albania; calls on Albania to protect and promote the cultural heritage, languages and traditions of its national minorities; calls on Albania to provide education for national minorities in their mother tongue, including adequate primary and secondary schooling in Greek in regions traditionally inhabited by the Greek national minority, and to ensure unrestricted access to state primary, secondary and higher education for all of its citizens throughout the country, thus fully implementing the relevant legislation;

25. Calls on Albania to protect and preserve the religious and cultural heritage of the Greek Orthodox minority, including through the restoration and legal recognition of churches and cemeteries; calls on the authorities to refrain from expropriating or demolishing properties of historical or cultural significance to the Greek minority;
26. Recalls that Albania should safeguard the right to property, in particular, by making decisive progress on first registration and compensation, improving the transparency of the state cadastre and the quality of the property register cadastral data, and ensuring that the right to a fair trial and the right to effective remedy are respected in cases of expropriation and removal of properties;
27. Encourages the Government of Albania to address and rectify the injustices inflicted by the communist regime upon all religious denominations;
28. Expresses concern over the slow restitution of the religious properties confiscated by communists; notes with concern, furthermore, that, despite numerous requests by religious denominations, the Government of Albania has not returned all

sacred objects, relics, icons and archives confiscated during the Communist regime¹;

29. Calls for increased investment in the modernisation of the education system, ensuring its quality and inclusiveness; calls on Albania to implement measures to foster opportunities in employment and education for persons with disabilities;
30. Welcomes the conduct of the 2023 census in Albania; calls on the authorities to publish the detailed data and thematic analysis in line with the Commission's recommendation in its 2024 report on Albania;
31. Welcomes the adoption of the law on personal data protection, aimed at full alignment with the EU *acquis*; commends the Albanian authorities for the adoption of the implementing legislation on the procedure and fair compensation for the use of orphan works and the database of copyright works, but expresses serious concern about the handling of personal data and weaknesses in IT systems; calls on the Albanian authorities to strengthen safeguards against data breaches, enhance prevention and public awareness, and improve institutional capacity in order to effectively implement the new Law on Personal Data Protection; calls on Albania to further collaborate with the EU Intellectual Property Office;
32. Recognises the closer cooperation between Albania and the EU in managing migration flows and border control processes, in particular through the new national strategy on migration for 2024-2026 and cooperation with Frontex; takes note of the Italy-Albania Memorandum of Understanding;

Rule of law

33. Commends the progress Albania has achieved in the implementation of the justice reforms aimed at strengthening the independence, transparency and accountability of the judiciary, including on the vetting process, completed at first instance; welcomes the new reform process 'Good governance, rule of law and anti-corruption for Albania 2030' launched by the Albanian Parliament; stresses that any initiative to strengthen governance, rule of law and anti-corruption efforts must be built on inclusivity, transparency and collaboration;
34. Expresses concern about continued political interference with and pressure on the judicial system; notes with concern shortcomings in the merit-based appointments of non-magistrate members of the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecution Council and their

¹ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/albania/>.

integrity; regrets the persistent challenges regarding the functioning of the judiciary noted in SPAK's 2024 report;

35. Calls for urgent steps to ensure judicial independence and institutional integrity;
36. Highlights that Albania ranked 80th in Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, indicating the need for substantial progress in combating high-level corruption and ensuring judicial independence; underscores the key work of Albania's Special Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Structure (SPAK) in building up a track record of investigating, prosecuting and convicting in high-level corruption cases as well as cases involving the protection of the EU's financial interests; stresses the importance of ensuring the full independence of anti-corruption institutions and encourages the strengthening of their operational and investigative capacity; welcomes high-level corruption investigations and proceedings; stresses that increasing the number of final convictions of high-level officials remains an important priority; urges all actors to refrain from any actions that undermine the work of independent institutions such as SPAK; expresses its regret at the environment of intimidation that the judiciary operates in, and at instances of undue pressure that it endures, which pose a serious threat to judicial independence; expresses concern that the lack of institutional support for magistrates facing threats weakens public trust and seriously jeopardises the rule of law and Albania's EU integration process;
37. Notes the challenges concerning the quality and efficiency of the justice system, including the high number of judicial vacancies, insufficient court staff, the quality of initial and continuous judicial training, the consistency of case-law and the lack of a modern integrated case management system; notes that budget allocations are insufficient, particularly for the court component; underlines that reducing the backlog of unprocessed files in the judicial system should remain a priority; welcomes, however, the fact that the Constitutional Court of Albania has improved its efficiency by reducing its backlog and continues to uphold institutional checks and balances;
38. Welcomes the adoption of national legislation to align with the EU *acquis* on anti-money laundering; notes the need to establish a strong asset recovery office and to improve vetting procedures and the processes for investigating, prosecuting and obtaining convictions in high-level corruption cases, including through the seizure and final confiscation of criminal assets;
39. Calls on Albania to continue aligning its legal framework, and notably the criminal code, with the EU *acquis* on the fight against organised crime and the trade in drugs and firearms, as well as

combating cybercrime, extremism and terrorist threats; remains concerned about the persistent threat and diversification of activities of Albanian mafia groups in Europe; regrets the fact that, despite efforts to dismantle their networks, including through the use of data from the Sky-ECC encrypted messaging service in investigations, these criminal groups are still heavily involved in drug and arms trafficking, migrant smuggling, human trafficking and money laundering in several Member States, in particular in the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and France; notes the appointment of additional prosecutors to the Special Prosecution Office as well as the establishment of a financial investigation unit; commends Albania's participation in joint operations and cooperation under the European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats (EMPACT) on drug trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime; further acknowledges the intensified cooperation with EUROPOL, EUROJUST, FRONTEX, INTERPOL and the CARIN Network in fighting organised crime and dismantling transnational crime networks; encourages Albania to strengthen its mechanisms for sharing intelligence with EU agencies to enhance regional stability; calls for sustained efforts to align Albania's security policies with EU strategies, fostering a more integrated and resilient regional security framework; calls on Albania to strengthen the fight against human trafficking in cooperation with the Member States and EU agencies; stresses the need to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as Albania remains both a destination and a transit country; welcomes the adoption of a new strategy for the protection of victims of crime; emphasises the importance of continuous training for migration control personnel to ensure the effective implementation of European regulations and a stronger response to human trafficking networks;

40. Encourages the European External Action Service and the Commission to further help boost Albania's resilience against hybrid threats in the area of cyber security, information manipulation and protection of critical infrastructure; calls on Albania to assess the risks associated with foreign direct investment and to screen such investment, particularly in strategic sectors such as energy, mining and telecommunications, in order to avoid economic dependencies and debt traps and protect national interests, enhance security and ensure consistency with EU standards;
41. Calls for the EU and the Western Balkan countries to establish a framework for effective cooperation between the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the accession countries with a view to facilitating close cooperation and the prosecution of misuse of EU funds; welcomes the fact that Albania has concluded a bilateral working arrangement with the EPPO;

Socio-economic reforms

42. Welcomes Albania's engagement in implementing the EU's Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, encompassing EU single market integration, regional economic integration, fundamental reforms and increased financial support;
43. Reiterates the importance of improving the public infrastructure within the Western Balkan countries and developing connections with EU Member States; recalls the potential of the economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans to enhance regional connectivity through rail and road infrastructure; in that respect, urges the authorities in all countries to complete Corridor VIII connecting Albania, North Macedonia and Bulgaria; recalls the importance of improving flight connections between the Western Balkan countries and with the EU Member States;
44. Welcomes Albania's Reform Agenda addressing the business environment, human capital, digitalisation, energy and the green transition, fundamental rights and the rule of law; welcomes, furthermore, Albania's participation in the EU's Digital Europe programme; welcomes the fact that Albania has been ranked as a regional leader in public administration and digital public procurement by the Support for Improvement in Governance and Management programme, run by the EU and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;
45. Encourages the Albanian authorities to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion by further improving access to education and housing, as well as social and healthcare services, especially for disadvantaged populations and minority groups, including Roma and Egyptians; calls for the implementation of Albania's National Social Protection Strategy 2024-2030 and National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030; calls on Albania to adopt further measures to fight against youth unemployment and calls on the Albanian authorities to effectively implement the National Agenda for the Rights of the Child by providing assistance to children facing exclusion and poverty;
46. Commends the Albanian authorities for the adoption of legislative acts to reform higher education and for the implementation of the National Strategy for Education 2021-2026; calls on Albania to expand media literacy as a core subject in school curricula while ensuring that teachers receive dedicated training and modern resources to deliver high-quality programmes; encourages collaboration with EU educational initiatives and regional networks such as the Western Balkans Media Literacy Observatory to implement best practices in critical thinking and digital literacy education;
47. Welcomes the progress made by Albania in concluding bilateral agreements with EU Member States on social security and in its

preparations to enable the connection of its employment services system to EURES, the European network of employment services;

48. Welcomes the fact that Albania joined the Single Euro Payments Area in November 2024, which reduces costs for citizens and businesses and will contribute to Albania's further integration into the single market; commends the Albanian authorities on the alignment with the EU *acquis* on payments (Payment Accounts Directive¹) and on their actions that have resulted in Albania's removal from the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force; recognises Albania's efforts to improve economic competitiveness and calls on the government to continue with structural reforms to foster a more attractive business environment in line with EU standards; regrets that the inefficiency in public administration, an excessive regulatory framework, corruption and large informal economy undermines the business environment and impedes competition;
49. Commends the improvement of Albania's fiscal performance; calls on the Albanian authorities to further enhance fiscal risk analysis by strengthening the relevant Ministry of Finance department; calls for greater transparency and accountability of state-owned enterprises through annual financial reports; calls on Albania to strengthen its public internal financial control and to ensure that the recommendations of the Supreme Audit Institution (ALSAI) are implemented;
50. Welcomes the further alignment of legislation with the EU *acquis* on private pension funds, bank recovery and the resolution framework; calls on Albania to complete its alignment with the EU *acquis* on insurance, capital markets, securities markets, investment funds and financial market infrastructures;
51. Welcomes the agreement reached at the Tirana Summit on reduced roaming costs; in this respect, calls on the authorities, private actors and all stakeholders to work towards achieving the agreed targets of substantially reducing roaming charges for data and further reducing prices for roaming between the Western Balkans and the EU to levels close to domestic prices by 2027; welcomes the implementation of the first phase of the roadmap for roaming between the Western Balkans and the EU;

¹ Directive 2014/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features (OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 214, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/92/oj>).

52. Is concerned about the lack of progress in company law legislation in Albania; calls on the Albanian authorities to complete the alignment of company law legislation with the EU *acquis*;

Environment, biodiversity, energy and transport, sustainable tourism

53. Stresses that more efforts are needed for Albania to align with the EU *acquis* on the environment; calls for its alignment with the EU's Environmental Impact Assessment¹ and Strategic Environmental Assessment² directives; underlines the need to strengthen the fight against environmental crime;
54. Highlights the need for transparent and inclusive public consultations in line with the Aarhus Convention, ensuring the active involvement of local communities, NGOs and scientific institutions in environmental decision-making processes, especially on projects with large environmental and socio-economic repercussions; warns that the lack of proper stakeholder engagement undermines governance standards and Albania's compliance with its obligations under the EU *acquis*; expresses concern about the economic and environmental impact of non-competitive foreign-funded development projects;
55. Recalls that substantial efforts are needed for Albania to achieve the goals relating to climate protection, energy efficiency, diversification and greening of energy supply and transport; notes that air and water quality and waste management remain particularly challenging issues for the country; urges the central government and local authorities to step up their efforts to improve air quality and reduce potentially lethal pollution; urges the Albanian Government to prioritise the implementation of climate adaptation strategies, the development of renewable energy sources and the modernisation of the country's waste management system to meet EU standards and support sustainable economic growth; encourages the Albanian authorities to strengthen measures and investments to expand the public transport and railway systems;
56. Firmly believes that environmental protection and sustainable tourism development must go hand in hand; welcomes the establishment of the first wild river national park in Europe, the Vjosa Wild River National Park, and calls for sufficient resources to

¹ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/92/oj>).

² Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/42/oj>).

be allocated to its protection; calls on the authorities to fully respect the national park's ecological integrity and to reconsider infrastructure projects, notably the water abstraction project on the Shushica river, in line with international biodiversity conservation standards and best practice to ensure that the park's biodiversity, habitats and ecological functions remain intact; reiterates its concern over the construction of the Vlora airport in the Vjosa-Narta Protected Area, in violation of national and international biodiversity protection norms, and calls on the Commission to address the issue in chapter 27 of the accession negotiations; calls on the Albanian authorities to adopt the implementing legislation for the Law on Cultural Heritage and Museums;

57. Expresses serious concern regarding recent amendments to Albania's Law on Protected Areas that allow large infrastructure and tourism projects in ecologically sensitive zones; calls for these legislative amendments to be reversed with a view to ensuring full and strict compliance with national and international legal frameworks and conservation standards and addressing marine waste pollution affecting neighbouring countries;
58. Calls on the Albanian authorities to designate and effectively manage key protected areas for the survival of critically endangered species, in particular the Balkan lynx, including through comprehensive biodiversity monitoring programmes, and to implement and strictly enforce anti-poaching legislation; urges Albania to abandon the plans for the Skavica hydropower plant on the Black Drin river, given its severe ecological, social and cultural impacts, including the displacement of local communities;

Regional cooperation and foreign policy

59. Welcomes the Security and Defence Partnership between the EU and Albania, adopted on 19 November 2024, which establishes a platform for enhanced dialogue and cooperation on security and defence issues and represents a significant step forward; stresses the importance of ensuring that this partnership translates into concrete actions, including joint training initiatives, shared intelligence capabilities and enhanced border security measures to address regional and global security challenges; underlines the need for deeper security cooperation within the Western Balkans, fostering closer coordination among regional partners to combat organised crime, cyber threats, and hybrid challenges; calls for strengthened EU support for regional security initiatives that enhance stability and resilience across the Western Balkans; acknowledges that this partnership represents a significant step forward in strengthening Albania's role as a reliable security partner of the EU; further emphasises that the partnership will, among other things, facilitate joint initiatives and capacity-building efforts, thereby contributing to

a more resilient and integrated security architecture in the Western Balkans;

60. Welcomes the adoption of the national security strategy in 2024 to further fight hybrid threats and the new law on cybersecurity; welcomes the joint declaration signed by Albania, Kosovo and Croatia, which aims to improve cooperation and strengthen defence potential, while providing full support for Euro-Atlantic and regional defence integration;
61. Expresses concern over the growing influence of Russia in the EU neighbourhood; commends the actions taken by Albania's Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP) in October 2024, which resulted in the closure of 155 Russian-operated online accounts involved in disseminating disinformation, as well as eight accounts linked to cyber espionage groups¹; underlines that these measures reflect Albania's ongoing efforts to mitigate cyber threats; urges the EU to enhance its support to Albania in countering Russia's malign influence and safeguarding regional stability;
62. Commends Albania's full alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy, including its support for EU sanctions against third countries, and its positive contribution to common security and defence policy missions, particularly EUFOR Althea, which underlines the country's commitment to contributing to regional and international security and stability, and welcomes Albania's participation in operations led by the EU and by NATO, and its collaboration with Europol and Interpol; calls for its further participation in EU-led crisis management operations and common security and defence policy missions such as the maritime security operation EUNAVFOR Aspides; recognises the strategic importance of the Adriatic-Ionian region for European security and economic stability; calls on Albania to enhance its maritime security capabilities in coordination with the EU and NATO;
63. Welcomes the Albanian Government's continued efforts in promoting good neighbourly relations; recalls, in this respect, the importance of Albania's undertaking to resolve any border disputes in conformity with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and in accordance with the UN Charter and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, including, if necessary, by following the judgments of the International Court of Justice; welcomes Albania's active contribution to the Berlin Process; further encourages sustained and constructive engagement in regional cooperation initiatives, in line with EU values and enlargement objectives, as it contributes to peace, security and stability in the Western Balkans; cautions against any actions, such as the Open Balkans initiative, that could

¹ <https://politiko.al/english/e-tjera/-mbyll-155-llogari-ruse-ne-internet-per-dezinformimin-ne-tirane-i517028?>

undermine the common regional market or deviate from the Berlin Process, to the extent that they create obstacles to EU integration and cohesion, potentially jeopardising Albania's progress toward deeper regional and European integration;

64. Welcomes the ratification by Albania of bilateral agreements on the coordination of social security systems with Croatia, Montenegro and Bulgaria;
65. Emphasises Albania's constructive role in promoting stability and cooperation in the Western Balkans, particularly through bilateral dialogue with neighbouring countries and its engagement in regional organisations;

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66. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, to the Council, to the Commission, to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and to the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Albania.