

2024



The Investment Council is a platform set up by the Albanian authorities with support from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to intensify the dialogue between the government and the private sector, improve the business climate and promote good governance. The work of the Council is supported by a Secretariat, an independent body of professionals selected and contracted by the EBRD to engage directly with the business community. The current funding for the Secretariat is provided by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

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Tirana, January 2025



RECOMMENDATIONS

MONITORING REPORT

2024

Secretariat of Albania Investment Council - Team

The work of the Investment Council is supported by the Secretariat, an independent body of professionals selected and contracted by the EBRD to directly engage with the business community.

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State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

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ACRONYMS

AIE	Agency for Innovation and Excellence
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Agency

CoM Council of Ministers

DCM Decision of the Council of Ministers

EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

European Union

GOA Government of Albania
GTD General Tax Directorate
IC Investment Council

ICS Investment Council's Secretariat

MARDMinistry for Agriculture and Rural DevelopmentMECIMinistry of Economy, Culture and Innovation

MIE Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy

MSAPA Minister of State for Anticorruption and Public Administration
MSEBC Ministry of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate

MSLG Ministry of State for Local Governance

MSME Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises

MTRS Medium-Term Revenue Strategy

NAES National Agency for Employment and Skills
NAIS National Information Society Agency

NEC National Economic Council
SCA State Cadastre Agency

SECO Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

s part of its annual agenda, the Investment Council (IC) held three regular meetings in 2024 to assess key challenges faced by the private sector. Discussions focused on fiscal administration, innovation, productivity, competitiveness, enhancing access to foreign markets for Albanian non-food products—particularly the EU—and improving financing opportunities. As a result, 24 new recommendations were approved by the IC chair and members.

Key highlights of the year in implementing the IC recommendations include:

- » A total of 91 IC recommendations were proposed to be included in *five policy and strategic documents*¹. Out of these, 22 recommendations were integrated into these documents, particularly in the "Medium-Term Revenue Strategy 2024-2027" and the "National Reform Agenda 2024-2027", pushing forward their implementation according to the government goals and timelines.
- » *Nine legislative interventions*² proposed through the IC recommendations—covering three strategies, two laws ("On Inspections" and "On Tourism)" and four other decisions and legislative acts on renewable energy, agriculture, and double taxation—were approved, further advancing the level of fulfilled recommendations.
- The collaboration with the National Economic Council (NEC) was re-established to enhance joint efforts in advancing recommendations. NEC restructured under the leadership of the Prime Minister (PM) and coordinated by the Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate (MSEBC), engaged with IC on key business issues. Relevant IC documents and analysis were shared to support NEC's agenda, focusing on critical issues such as inspection reform, informality, access to finance, and the garment industry.
- From the IC Secretariat advocacy initiatives undertaken during the year.
- 2 As detailed in section 4.4.

- » 24 recommendations with progress, triggered positive interventions in the priority sectors:
 - **Tourism** *Improved Formalization and Quality Standards:* Changes in Law No. 30/2024 have standardized services and introduced mandatory certification for accommodation providers; *Data-Driven Policies:* Structured collection and processing of tourism data and the establishment of the "Tourism Statistical Data Committee" are expected to facilitate policy drafting in this sector.
 - **Agriculture and Agro-Processing** *Digitalization of Agricultural Land Maps:* Implementation of GIS platforms that optimize land use and guide farmers; *Regional Cooperation and Certifications:* Mutual recognition of phytosanitary certificates in the Western Balkans, supported by the SEED+ project for testing of the electronic certification; *Improved Agro-Processing Capabilities:* ISUV's accreditation for pesticide residue analysis and other agricultural products, boosts agricultural exports, safety, and market access.
 - **Energy** *Promotion of Renewable Energy:* Legislative and regulatory support, including the approval of decisions like No. 695/2024, which streamlines renewable energy production and incentives; *Energy Market Liberalization:* Operationalization of the Albanian Power Exchange (ALPEX) that enables integration with regional markets.
 - Digital Transformation Across Sectors *Public Services:* Expansion of online payment systems via e-Albania for 17 services and enhanced integration with banking institutions that streamline processes; *Open Banking:* Licensing of the first Open Banking institution, fostering financial inclusivity and competition; *Data Security and Protection:* Implementation of recovery plans and Data Loss Prevention (DLP) solutions to secure digital platforms.
 - **Employment and Economic Development** *Job Mediation Platform:* The Centralized platform www.puna.gov.al has streamlined job mediation, enhancing interaction between employers and job seekers; *Business Internationalization:* Initiatives like participation in global business forums and fairs result in a higher promotion of the Albanian enterprises.
 - **Inspection Reform** *Structural Integration:* Approval of Law No. 99/2024, which integrates inspection reforms with structural improvements, enhancing professionalism and trust in appeal processes.
- » There is limited progress, especially regarding the recommendations issued in the meetings on "Investment Potentials" and "Legal Security on Property," indicating existing challenges in meeting and improving these aspects in the overall context of the country's economic and legal development.
- » Although there is progress, business associations and chambers of commerce should increase their capacities and work for a higher standard of interaction in public policy consultation processes in the country.

To accelerate the implementation of recommendations, this year, the Secretariat put more effort into advocating and promoting accountability, transparency and the importance of government well-functioning through contribution to high-level policy events and increased stakeholder engagement as well as new partnerships.



02

METHODOLOGY

he monitoring report highlights the progress of the IC recommendations issued between 2015 and 2024, with a particular focus on the achievements made during 2024. It is important to note that this report represents a summary of the initiatives undertaken and reported by the public and private institutions in charge of fulfilling the IC recommendations, and it does not assess their extended impact on the private sector. Its content is based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected during 2024 from the following activities:

1. MONITORING ACTIVITIES INTERACTING WITH THE RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTIONS.

- (i) Formal information exchange through written correspondence after each IC meeting addressing the specific recommendations to be implemented; and
- (ii) Follow-up activities with the institutions tasked with the implementation of recommendations performed every quarter.

Direct meetings and communication through written correspondence, e-mails and frequent phone calls have been the focus of cooperation with the institutions that officially reported their activities on the fulfilment or not of the respective recommendations³.

2. **DESK RESEARCH**

Besides the official correspondence, several official documents were consulted to identify the relevant changes related to the progress of the IC recommendations. More specifically, the documents reviewed included: (1) Council of Ministers Decisions (DCMs), (2) Decisions of Ministers, (3) laws and by-laws (pertinent amendments), (4) approved/drafted strategies,

B Detailed in Annex 1.

8

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(5) action plans, (6) EU Progress Reports, and (7) international reports. Annex 1 provides a list of the main documents consulted.

3. **SECONDARY SOURCES**

The most frequent activities are monitoring web and social media platforms, which are explored daily to assess the promotion of the actions taken by public institutions in relation to recommendations' execution in consultation platforms, newspaper articles, press releases, etc. This tool is also essential to measure the transparency of these institutions and their level of engagement with the targeted beneficiaries. Some of the consulted sites are listed in Annex 1.

4. DATA ELABORATION

Any information received from communication with institutions, supporting documents or links to publications are recorded in the database of recommendations. The database is updated with the new information discussed among the Secretariat's experts for an agreement on the status of the respective recommendations. Every quarter, a factual report on the progress of the recommendations is generated.

5. **REPORTING**

The reflection of the findings from the monitoring activities and the progress update is reported to the IC members semi-annually and published on the IC website and social networks semi-annually⁴.

MONITORING PRINCIPLES⁵

The monitoring process was guided mainly by the following values:

- » Working in close collaboration with all stakeholders, partners, and government institutions.
- » Transparency of data and information to IC members.
- » Consult at least two independent sources to cross-check the information received.
- » Continuous feedback on content within the Secretariat team and agreement on the final recommendation's status.
- » Results based mainly on formal evidence.

⁴ Through email and/or presentation in meetings during the year.

As detailed in the "Monitoring Manual" of IC.



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CONTEXT

he IC has been actively operating in Albania for nearly ten years, serving as a key facilitator for communication between the public and private sectors. Its primary objective is to enhance dialogue, reduce information asymmetries, and ensure the active participation of the private sector in economic and structural reform processes. The IC plays a significant role in fostering a transparent, favourable, and investment-friendly business environment. By bridging the gap between various stakeholders, the IC strives to create a collaborative atmosphere that promotes sustainable economic growth and development.

The primary objectives anticipated from the platform since its inception include:

- » IC as a trust builder: Regular, evidence-based and constructive dialogue between the public and private sector builds and/or strengthens mutual trust among key economic actors.
 - KPIs: Positive feedback by government representatives/business associations/companies and the number of IC meetings.
- » **IC as an effective reform tool**: The government and private sector use the IC as an effective tool for sustainable growth reforms.
 - *KPIs:* Number of issued recommendations adopted by the Government; Number of proposals on improvement of investment climate accepted by the relevant authorities; Number of laws, regulations, and policies amended or adopted as per IC recommendations.

As a result, the IC monitoring activities were focused on collecting and analysing data related specifically to the above indicators, with the aim of:

- » Informing stakeholders and providing updates on the implementation status of recommendations issued during IC meetings in 2024.
- » Ensuring that proposed actions are either accomplished or are in the process of being implemented.
- » Supporting donors and aiding in the decision-making process of ICS management through the sharing of pertinent information.

MONITORING SCOPE

The report comprehensively spans the entire duration of IC activity from 2015 to 2024, acknowledging that some recommendations issued in earlier years require an extended timeframe for completion. Meanwhile, recommendations from the most recent year typically necessitate at least six months or more for endorsement and processing by the responsible institutions. Consequently, the subsequent section provides an overview of the overall results, while a specific segment delves into the outcomes specific to 2024.







04

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS PROGRESS

1. RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW 2015-2024

A total of thirty-five IC plenary meetings have been organised since the beginning of its activity, each dedicated to addressing specific business issues determined by the votes of IC members. The members actively contribute by evaluating proposed topics, sharing their comments and perspectives, identifying business-related challenges, and offering not only potential solutions but also concrete suggestions and recommendations during these meetings.

The data reveals that 13% of the overall recommendations were proposed from the IC members directly from discussions in the IC plenary meetings, while 87% originated from a thorough analysis and preliminary research conducted by the Secretariat's team. This comprehensive approach involved desk research of national and international reports, direct engagement with private sector representatives and experts, collaboration with working groups consisting of representatives from government institutions, businesses, and experts, as well as analysis of data from Secretariat surveys. Additionally, expert recommendations and technical-level focus groups discussed preliminary findings prior to IC meetings.

PROFILE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations put forth by the IC target interventions across five key levels: (i) Strategic, (ii) Institutional, (iii) Legal, (iv) Transparency and Awareness, and (v) Policy. A substantial portion of these recommendations (40%) focuses on Institutional Improvements. Historical data indicates a consistent emphasis on areas such as the stabilisation and sustainability of institutions, advocating for a coordinated approach under a common

vision from integrated structures, fostering inter-institutional cooperation, elevating the capacities of operational structures, and enhancing the standard and quality of services. This underscores a persistent commitment to strengthening institutional frameworks and improving operational efficiency within the broader context of the recommendations.

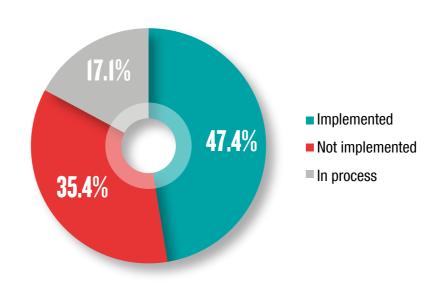
25% out of the total recommendations target legal interventions encompassing over 41 laws and legal acts, signifying a substantial focus on legal reforms. Additionally, 21% of the recommendations advocate for strategic responses, primarily addressing issues related to informality, tourism, legal security on property, workforce skills, access to finance, public and strategic investments, exports, smart specialisation, priority sectors, and other key areas. This distribution underscores a dual emphasis on both legal and strategic considerations within the framework of the recommendations, reflecting insights for a comprehensive approach to address diverse facets of economic and structural development.

In a sectorial breakdown, 60% of the total recommendations target issues relevant to all business sectors. The remaining recommendations concentrate on specific sectors, with the largest share directed towards interventions in the sectors frequently addressed by IC, notably Tourism (7%), Agriculture (7%), Energy (6%), Construction (5%), and Agroprocessing (5%). This distribution highlights a significant focus on key sectors crucial to economic development, aligning with the IC's commitment to address sector-specific challenges and opportunities.

The recurring emphasis in these recommendations, as also highlighted in previous years, revolves around enhancing a strategic approach aimed at fostering formalisation, incentivising growth, and creating a stable and simple supportive legal framework for businesses.

As of now, around 47% of the total recommendations (350) have been successfully implemented to a significant extent, ranging between 70-100%. An additional 17% are currently in the process of implementation, indicating ongoing efforts towards their fulfilment. Around 36% of the recommendations remain not addressed at this time, the majority of which relates to the recommendations approved in the meetings: "On Legal Security on Property" with 12 unfulfilled recommendations, "On Investment Potentials" with 18 recommendations not implemented and "Alternative sources of Energy" with 11 recommendations unfulfilled.

Figure 1. Status of Total IC Recommendations, December 2024 (in %)



In recent years, several key improvements influenced by the IC recommendations are worth highlighting, such as in:

Agriculture and Agro-Processing - Significant progress has been made in creating a more favourable environment for the agricultural sector. Value-added agro-processing activities have been promoted, while formalization of businesses in this sector has been incentivized through national support schemes, including the provision of electronic cards and subsidies like oil support for farmers. These measures have encouraged formalization and investments in agriculture, driving productivity and sustainability.

Tourism and Energy - Efforts to intensify Albania's tourism potential have been bolstered through increased promotion across international channels, enhancing the country's visibility as a destination. In the energy sector, legislative interventions have supported the adoption of renewable energy, marking a crucial step toward sustainability and energy diversification in Albania.

Business Development and Employment - Institutional capacity enhancements in AIDA have improved Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises' (MSMEs) access to funds through streamlined information on financial support projects and targeted internationalization programs. Customs procedures have been modernized with the publication of reference price lists, improved facilities, and the launch of the Digital VAT Refund Platform for online VAT refund requests. Employment incentives have been introduced, including subsidies for hiring unemployed jobseekers and a wage indexing mechanism in public administration, expected to benefit the private sector.

Digital Transformation and Governance - Notable advancements include promoting e-commerce, expanding national broadband coverage, and establishing the Agency for Innovation and Excellence (AIE) to enhance ICT and e-business access for MSMEs. Governance improvements include enhanced transparency in municipalities, better access to information, and strengthened financial reporting. Additionally, the quality of online public services, such as construction permits, has been improved, reflecting a broader push toward digitalization.

2. SECRETARIAT'S ADVOCACY INITIATIVES FOR FULFILMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The volume of recommendations has increased, supported by a structured follow-up process that has fostered greater engagement. This resulted in a notable rise in feedback from relevant institutions, more detailed analyses of data, and heightened involvement from the IC chair and members, who are actively supporting the monitoring and evaluating the outcomes achieved.

In 2024, the Secretariat continued its advocacy efforts toward the implementation of recommendations, actively contributing to key policy-making initiatives by:

Proposing 12 recommendations in the *Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS)* 2024-2027 and the Action Plan 2024-2027. Key proposals included unifying tax procedures under a new fiscal law, automating and modernizing tax administration processes, and incentivizing private sector innovation through targeted fiscal policies. Additional measures were highlighted to formalize the economy, encourage electronic payment systems, and strengthen labour market mechanisms to ensure fair employment practices and workforce alignment with market demands. The MTRS was approved through the DCM no. 847 in December 2024, and 10 of the proposed IC recommendations were included there in to be implemented in the coming three years.

- Suggesting 15 recommendations to be included in the policy document "*National* reform agenda 2024-2027" within the European Union instrument "Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans". In October 2024, out of the proposed suggestions, 11 IC recommendations were included in the final approved document (DCM no. 621) according to three key pillars of the Reform Agenda. More specifically the included recommendations refer to (i) business environment – requiring some action in terms of mobilization of domestic revenues, assessment of all tax exemptions and improvement of the tax system; digitizing cadastral systems; and adopting investment legislation aligned with EU standards⁶; (ii) human capital – several recommendations such as aligning education and vocational training with labour market needs through updated curricula; adoption of the Smart Specialization Strategy; creation of Smart Labs; enforcing regulations and capacities for 5G deployment; implementation of grant schemes for green and digital solutions for SMEs and startups; (iii) energy and green transition - focusing on operationalizing the intra-day electricity markets to advance Albania's green transition.
- Participating in the consultations and prioritizing 59 recommendations on the "Smart Specialization Strategy" in the technical working groups organized, emphasizing the strengthening of collaboration between government, businesses, and international partners to foster innovation and technological advancements. Key suggestions included creating digital skills training programs, promoting ICT investment, and establishing cross-sectoral platforms to drive research and development. The importance of tailored vocational education programs aligned with labour market demands was also emphasized, along with incentives for SMEs to access credit and adopt innovative technologies. Additionally, the recommendations stress integrating Albania into global value chains by supporting export-oriented sectors and improving agricultural practices through better coordination and targeted investments.
- Supporting with comments and input of 5 recommendations on the 'Competitiveness' policy priorities for Albania' prepared by EBRD under the WBIF Structural Reform Facility - Competitiveness Policy Priorities for the Western Balkans. The recommendations emphasized enhancing support for SMEs, particularly in key sectors like tourism and construction, to drive green and energy-efficient initiatives, the development of a national priority intervention plan focusing on renewable energy investments, energy security, and compliance with legislation. They underline sustainable policies by assessing the impact of past incentives and strategic investments to attract investment and improve MSME competitiveness and also showcase the need for local and regional cooperation platforms involving municipalities, businesses, communities, and financial institutions to foster regional economic development.
- Providing support and advocating 10 recommendations on the *National Conference*: "Albania - A gateway to global business" with a focus on economic development and the internationalization of Albanian enterprises. The proposals aimed to enhance MSME integration into international markets through strategic initiatives and suggested creating sector-specific MSMEs databases to tailor export readiness and



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market entry training, institutional support for improving management and internationalization through targeted training programs and partnerships, supporting market research, fostering collaborative business networks for export growth, and establishing a national export portal to provide comprehensive trade information. Additionally, measures to increase MSMEs' participation in trade events, evaluate and refine investment incentives, promote green economy practices, and reward responsible business practices with a national recognition program were suggested.

3. COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS WITH THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL

In December 2023, the National Economic Council (NEC) was restructured under the leadership of the Prime Minister and coordinated by the Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate, who is also a permanent member of the Investment Council. Several working groups were established, and the Secretariat shared backgrounds and analysis from the IC Meetings on topics of mutual interest to both councils, such as:

- » Informality Extended information was exchanged based on the materials prepared and published from the IC Secretariat in 10 meetings, mainly focusing on the technical proposals on informality in two main sectors: tourism and agriculture. 43 recommendations were shared together with the perception of the private sector gathered through 7 surveys and relevant technical notes prepared by the IC Secretariat.
- » Access to finance The shared information consisted of the findings and recommendations addressed in 8 dedicated meetings of the Investment Council and 4 survey responses where access to finance for MSMEs had been examined not only in terms of credit availability from the banking system but also in the context of leveraging available public and non-public funding opportunities.
- » Inspections The information on inspections was focused on 28 recommendations prepared on this topic in January 2019 and in 6 other meetings, and also some analysis on inspection-related challenges highlighted by businesses in the context of 4 surveys and analyses focusing on the formalization of specific sectors or the need for fairer enforcement of the law, particularly within administrative complaint analyses and beyond.
- Challenges in Albania's garment sector (façon), emphasizing strategies to enhance competitiveness and economic sustainability. The IC Secretariat brought into focus 7 recommendations proposing: financing "Network Contract Models" to support internationalization and clustering in specific industries, such as military apparel; introducing mechanisms to mitigate collective layoffs through labour offices; implementing an annual wage indexation system for the private sector; and reforming inflexible social and health contribution systems to combat informal employment. Additionally, incentives for reinvestment were suggested, such as tax exemptions, extending tax loss carry-forward periods, and utilizing state properties for workforce training centres. Strong emphasis was put on the need to foster sectoral business collaboration to access innovation and development funds, further enabling Albania to attract investments and utilize EU and international financial mechanisms effectively.

4. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN 2024

In 2024, twenty-four new recommendations were approved by the IC chair and members during three plenary meetings:

- (1) "Private sector challenges: fiscal administration, innovation and productivity"Aiming to stimulate the debate on the main challenges of entrepreneurship (mainly MSMEs) to invest in innovation and productivity. The analysis focused on the interaction with the tax administration and the impact of the fiscalization reform, the identification of cross-sectoral interventions in fiscal policies and administration, and the productivity of companies.
- (2) "To increase competitiveness and market access of Albanian products with European standards business perceptions" In this IC meeting, the recommendations were centred around the improvement of the access to information and guidance on general and specific legislation requirements on the compliance with standards and technical regulations; institutional support for the MSMEs to be compliant with standards and current local capacities; improve the enforcement procedures, the inspection process, and improve inspectors' competencies and integrity.
- (3) "Access to Finance On improvement of financing instruments perceptions and insights from the business community and financial sector representatives"—
 The proposed interventions focused on enhancing MSME's data collection and transparency to enable better policy and tailored product development; evaluation of the implementation process and assessment of the impact of Sovereign Guarantee Schemes issued through Private Commercial Banks; consideration on expanding Guarantee Schemes to facilitate the elaboration of innovative financial products; accelerating digitalisation efforts of banking services; improving financial education program reach with focus MSMEs; simplification of the lending process, review of bureaucratic procedures and documentation; reconsideration of the bank employees' role in financial adviserships; preparation and approval of a dedicated law for the establishment of the Credit Bureau; and completion of the legal framework to potentially increase the financing options.

On the other hand, based on a continuous follow-up process and formal communications with public institutions, 24 recommendations have been taken into consideration by them with a steadfast commitment to their implementation. Out of this aggregate, 12 recommendations have been considered fulfilled at 70-100%, while the remaining 12 recommendations remain actively in progress.

Public institutions have shown a noticeable readiness to provide information on the recommendations update. However, the responses received have been general and lack specific figures or measurable impacts. Eleven institutions⁷ were approached for information updates related to IC recommendations, and half of them provided comments on the respective status of recommendations: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, National Agency for Employment and Skills, National Agency for Information Society, General Tax Directorate, and National Agency of Cadastre. Their comments influenced the present status of the recommendations, showcasing a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the ongoing processes and implementations.

As detailed in Table 1, 50% of the recommendations with positive progress focus on institutional-level interventions, while 29% address strategic-level interventions.⁸

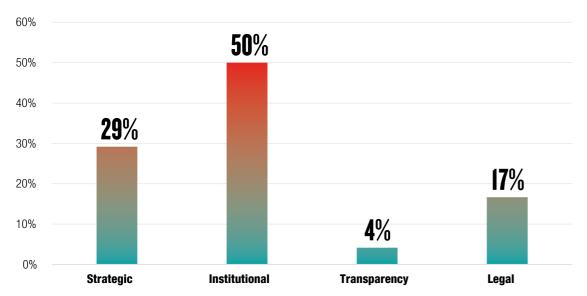




⁷ List of these institutions is in Annex 1.

The specific recommendations and achievements are explained in the sections below.

Figure 2. Recommendations with Progress by Category, December 2024 (in number and %)⁹



While referring to the legal dynamics that influenced the advancement of 17% of recommendations with progress, the following are highlighted:

- » In April 2024, Law No. 30/2024 was approved, bringing changes and additions to Law No. 93/2015, "On Tourism". The approved changes aimed at formalizing the sector and raising the standards and quality of accommodation structures.
- » Amendments to DCM No. 283, dated 1.4.2015, "On the determination of types, rules, criteria, and procedures for the construction of facilities for the production, storage, and processing of agricultural and livestock products on agricultural land" were made in June 2024, concerning the construction of facilities for the production, storage, and processing of agricultural and livestock products on agricultural land.
- » Law no. 99/2024, dated 12.09.2024, "On Inspection in the Republic of Albania" was approved. This legislation aligns inspection reform with public administration and EU standards, strengthening technical and human capacities, introducing business consultation mechanisms to assess regulatory impacts and enhancing the unification of Inspectorate appeals under the Central Inspectorate to improve professionalism, independence, and trust.
- » Instruction of the Minister of Finance no. 11/1, dated 27.11.2024, was approved, introducing some additions and changes in the instructions of the Minister of Finance no. 11, dated 23.7.2024, "On the implementation of agreements for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion".
- » Decision no. 695, dated 13.11.2024 "On the approval of support measures, rules, and procedures for benefiting from support measures for the production of electricity from renewable sources", was approved defining support measures for promoting the use of electricity from renewable solar and wind sources and the procedures for selecting projects to benefit from them.

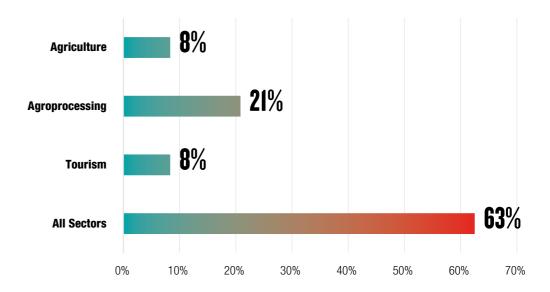
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- ✓ Decision no. 696, dated 13.11.2024, approved the legislative framework "On the definition of duties and responsibilities of the Renewable Energy Operator JSC (Joint-Stock Company)," detailing the responsibilities and operation of this structure.
- ✓ Approval of the "Medium-Term Revenue Strategy 2024-2027 and the Action Plan 2024-2027" through the DCM no. 847 in December 2024.
- ✓ Approved of the "National reform agenda 2024-2027" within the European Union instrument "Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans" through the DCM no. 621 in October 2024.

Regarding the progress of recommendations based on the sectorial approach, during 2024, a clear pattern emerges, as shown in the graph presented below, indicating that 63% of the recommendations with progress¹⁰ have implications across all sectors. Notably, the sectors most significantly impacted by these recommendations are Tourism, Agriculture, and Energy. Table 1, attached in the annex of this report, details the main interventions identified in the affected sectors.

Figure 3. Recommendations with progress by sector in 2024 (in number and %)"



In addition to the favourable progress made with the recommendations, it is important to acknowledge that there are still 124 recommendations that remain unfulfilled. These recommendations are categorised and presented in detail in the graph below based on the respective topics.

The largest proportion of unfulfilled recommendations relates to the ones issued in the meetings on "On Legal Security on Property" with 10% unfulfilled recommendations, "On Investment Potentials" with 15% recommendations not implemented and "Alternative sources of Energy" with 9% unfulfilled.

¹¹ Over the total of 44 recommendations with positive progress during 2024

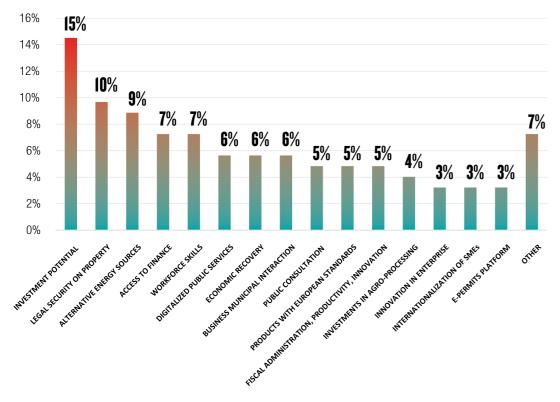




In total, 24 recommendations with positive progress (implemented and in progress) during 2024.

^{10 24} in total during 2024 (implemented and in the process)

Table 4. Recommendations not implemented by meeting, December 2024



Some of the unfulfilled recommendations that we consider important for implementation are:

- » Preparation and approval of a Strategy against the informal economy. The document should be accompanied by an action plan, with sectoral analyses and approach, time limits and well-defined responsible institutions, consulted and coordinated with business representatives.
- » Registration in ASHK of assets/immovable properties under the administration of municipalities. The publication and transparency regarding these property transfer and registration processes ensure their validity for use. This would contribute to economic development and support income generation.
- » Digital Cadastre for state properties to be online and accessible to the public without restriction. In response to the ongoing demands of businesses and citizens and in the interest of transparency, this measure would be highly welcomed and would enhance accountability to taxpayers. It includes the preparation and publication of the state real estate fund available for investment, in accordance with Article 31 of Law No. 55/2015 "On Strategic Investments" and DCM No. 1030, dated 16.12.2015.
- » Monitoring and transparency of the coordination of Public Investments (central and local) in coherence with the requirements of the strategies of priority sectors to enable optimization of investments.
- » Strengthening sectoral business cooperation by fostering innovation and accessing development funds from partners like COSME, the EU, and WBIF. Enhance business associations' engagement, managerial capacity, and inclusiveness while improving private sector participation in public policy.

- » Chambers of commerce and associations should offer targeted training programs for SME leaders, focusing on human capital development and mentorship. Emphasizing investments in technology and automation, it is crucial to prioritize retraining and upskilling staff to meet evolving business needs.
- » Encouraging fiscal policies at the central level for those enterprises that have a budget and a certain number of employees dedicated to R&D.
- » Creation of a Sectoral Export Portal within the framework of the future Export Strategy. This portal should provide members of the business community with: (i) information on foreign markets; (ii) guidelines on export and marketing in foreign markets; (iii) access to networking with international parties; (iv) advice on foreign trade, transport and wholesale; (v) architects and design; (vi) trade representatives/intermediaries; (vii) offers from foreign companies; (viii) statistics on foreign trade and the economic situation.
- by businesses, as well as (2) information on businesses (administrator). In relation to the above, it is suggested to create an informative interface for online information exchange between municipalities and second-level banks. The unification/standardization of the electronic formats of blocking orders would also be quite important.
- ** Creation of Insurance Coverage schemes for agricultural business products by introducing the state as an intermediary. To set up the insurance sector, the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is suggested to generate information based on data, risks for each agricultural sub-sector, and a database with data on weather, rainfall, and temperature fluctuations, for example, through cooperation with signalling stations and investments that manage risk in agriculture.

Accelerating the progress in the implementation of these recommendations would require more attention, active engagement and collaboration from responsible public and private institutions.

Table 1 below lists some of the most important IC recommendations and the specific measures implemented in 2024 to address them.

Recommendation	Achievement	Expected Impact	
TOURISM SECTOR			
	In April 2024, Law No. 30/2024 "On some changes and additions to Law No. 93/2015, 'On Tourism,'" was approved, bringing changes aiming at sector formalization and raising the standards and quality of accommodation structures.		
Standardize the quality of service through the clarification/ specification of categories and	Moreover, along with adding new categories of structures and detailing their classification, it is now mandatory for individuals renting out rooms, villas, and apartments to obtain a categorization certificate and a classification certificate from the Ministry before starting their accommodation activities. However, they are not required to be registered in the National Business Centre (NBC).	These initiatives are set to benefit roughly +18,000 businesses engaged in the accommodation services within the Tourism sector by enhancing their competitiveness.	
classification of tourist entities. Structuring the tourism sector statistics by streamlining the collection and consolidated data processing.	Two articles from Law No. 30/2024, which introduces legal changes, regulate the collection of data via reporting from central and local public institutions, accommodation structures, tourist operators, and travel agencies. Additionally, the "Committee for Statistical Data in Tourism" has been established as a coordinating body under the ministry responsible for tourism, chaired by the Minister. This approach enhances policy and strategy design through real data analysis and provides a more accurate overview of informality in tourism.	The Tourism sector constitutes approximately 15% of the entire service industry and contributes to 17% of Albania's overall economic activity. It directly contributes 8.5% to the GDP and employs around 20% of the national workforce in the country. Investments in this sector account for about 7.5% of all investments in the country. ¹²	

2 https://aida.gov.al/images/PDF/Publikime/TourisM_FactSheet.pdf



Recommendation **Achievement Expected Impact AGRICULTURE** Specific data and information are generated to help agricultural producers with more effectiveness, productivity, cost reduction, guidance on the use of agricultural fertilizers, efficiency of irrigation and drainage schemes and reduction of environmental pollution. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, it has already been finalized: 1) The inventory and classification of agricultural land according to its suitability. Timely update 2) The collection of information on land use and transparency for the year that the initial registration was These interventions foster a regarding carried out and 2023, as well as analysing the more supportive environment digital maps of dynamics of changes in land use based on for agricultural development, agricultural land providing a transparent types that guide 3) Agri-ecological study of the study areas. and secure framework for farmers to plant 4) Digitization of the agricultural land register over 84,000 farmers¹⁴ and where the land is for the municipalities of Berat, Delvina, Finiq, investors in the agricultural Kolonje, Kuçovo, Lushnje, Roskovec and most suitable. sector. partially Vlora and Fier¹³. Whereas, for Korca, the data was expected to be accessible by December 2024. 5) Creation of the WEB-GIS program for land data and updated with the data of the above municipalities. This system is accessible by everyone through E-Albania. This program was carried out in cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, NAIS and the Centre for the Transfer of Agricultural Technology. Some incentives reported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are: In the National Support Scheme for 2024, special provisions have been made to prioritize Groups of Farmers and Agricultural Cooperation Societies (SHBB). These groups are the first to benefit from support 321 applications from farmer measures without applying the principle of Encourage groups, encompassing a proportionality or benefit ceilings but receiving collaboration total of 1685 farmers, and 21 instead full benefits at the 100% level. and cooperation applications from Agricultural Additionally, support for cultivated medicinal between farmers, Cooperative Societies (SHBB) and aromatic plants (MAP), a key exportthrough joined oriented and high-potential agricultural sector. were accounted for in the last farmer groups or has been reinstated in the 2024 scheme. National Support Scheme for SHBB. Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture and 2024. Rural Development (MARD) is developing a sovereign guarantee scheme to support lending in the agri-food sector. This scheme, in collaboration with banks and other financial institutions, includes grants to reduce interest rates and incentives to encourage the mergers of business operators.

https://www.instat.gov.al/media/11652/regjistrat-e-biznesit-2022.pdf





Over 65.2% of the total agricultural land in the country

Recommendation	Achievement	Expected Impact
Formalization in the agricultural sector through the finalization of farm and farmer registrations and the issuance of Farmer Cards.	As per Instruction No. 6, dated 7.03.2024, "On the criteria, procedures, and method of administration of the program fund for agriculture and rural development," all applicants must complete or update their farm registration before accessing support measures from the National Scheme. The Farm Register continues to be frequently updated by farmers benefiting from the National Scheme 2024. To facilitate interaction between the Farm Registry and other national registries and electronic databases, the Farm Registry has been integrated into the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (ARDA) system for the online application of direct payments under the National Scheme. This integration has been developed with the support of NAIS, ensuring seamless data exchange and efficient service delivery.	According to the MARD report, data on approximately 133,000 active farms authorized by the Regional Agricultural Extension Agencies have been corrected and updated.
Better approach towards data-driven governance and policymaking in agriculture and Agri-processing by enhancing data collection, processing, exchange, and analysis within these sectors:	 In MARD, with the change of the organizational structure for the year 2024 was established the Department of Statistics, Analysis, and Reporting managing two sectors (from only one sector active before the changes) Formalized cooperation with other reporting institutions (such as INSTAT) and also potential donors for methodological improvements was set up. Sectoral analysis and policy orientation: this includes identifying trends, assessing impacts of policies, and planning interventions effectively. 	

Recommendation	Achievement	Expected Impact	
AGRI-PROCESSING SECTOR			
		- The Albanian phytosanitary	

Promotion
of regional
cooperation,
synergy for new
potentials for the
region with free
movement of
goods, employers
and capitals, and
easing of non-tariff
barriers.

- The Albanian phytosanitary authority has negotiated and agreed with all the countries of the Western Balkans for mutual recognition and acceptance of phytosanitary certificates that accompany exports of agricultural products.

Within the framework of implementing Additional Protocol 5 of CEFTA, the SEED+ project has enabled the testing of electronic phytosanitary certificate issuance through the CEFTA TRACES NT platform.

- ISUV has been financially supported for the increase of laboratory and technical capacities for the accreditation of methods of analysis of agricultural products. The analyses performed at ISUV are accredited based on the norms established according to the EU acquis. ISUV is in the process of accreditation of pesticide residues in BMA, which ends at the end of 2024 (Group 6 according to "Annex A. in Document SANTE N° 11312/2021.
- MARD, in cooperation with other partners, has organized the participation of producers and Albanian exporting companies in numerous fairs abroad, mainly of fruits and vegetables, aromatic medicinal plants, wine, etc.

- The Albanian phytosanitary certificate is recognized and accepted by all countries of the world as it conforms to the phytosanitary certificate model of the IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention).
- The "Accreditation Certificate" issued by the General Directorate of Accreditation is recognized by all EU member states.

For fruits and vegetables, ISUV is accredited for:

- Pesticide residues for the 3 groups according to the classification of DG-SANTE (Group 1/2/3 according to "Annex A in Document SANTE N° 11312/2021)
- Matrices with high starch and/or protein content and low water content.
- Cereals and their products, dried vegetables/legumes, etc. (Group 5 according to "Annex A. in Document SANTE N° 11312/2021)



Recommendation	Achievement	Expected Impact	
ALL SECTORS			
Adoption of a new directive for avoiding double taxation through automation and electronic procedures, resulting in significant advancements in 2024, with the issuance of two key directives that modernize documentation and enhance fiscal evasion prevention	This recommendation materialized in two key documents: Directive No. 11 of the Ministry of Finance, dated 23.07.2024, titled "On the Implementation of Agreements for Avoiding Double Taxation and Preventing Fiscal Evasion," and Supplementary Directive No. 11/1, dated 27.11.2024. These documents establish standards for implementing agreements and modernize the format of required documents. They enable the recognition of electronically signed certificates and forms in a digitized format, easing processes for taxpayers and the tax administration while enhancing efforts to combat fiscal evasion.	The two legal changes impact all the companies that are subject to the double taxation procedures. They define the criteria and procedures for the implementation of the provisions of the Agreements for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion. Agreements for the avoidance of double taxation allow the elimination of double taxation by determining which of the countries has the right to tax some income of an entity or natural person, or by dividing this right between the two countries, but without burdening the taxpayer with double taxation. These agreements also aim to avoid fiscal evasion through the exchange of information for all natural persons or entities that exercise activity in both countries between which the Agreement was concluded.	
Digitization of banking services and the implementation of 'Open Banking' with the licensing of the first Open Banking institution, improving access to finance and competition in the market:	The acceleration of banking service digitization and the adoption of "Open Banking" principles was concretized on November 26, 2024, with the granting of the license to the first Open Banking implementing institution from the Bank of Albania (Easy Pay).	This initiative enables individuals and companies to securely access and share their account data. It also allows users to make payments through third-party service providers, enhancing access to financial services and fostering market competition, particularly for underserved populations lacking full financial access.	

Recommendation	Achievement	Expected Impact
Progress in Inspection Reform	The Inspection Reform, as a key element of the deregulatory agenda, achieved a major milestone with the approval of Law No. 99/2024, dated September 12, 2024, "On Inspection in the Republic of Albania."	
with the approval of Law no. 99/2024, integrating structural reforms and strengthening	This legislation fully incorporates the recommended measures, aligning inspection reform efforts with structural reforms like public administration and EU legislative standards.	These legal changes affect all the companies performing
capacities, while addressing the unification and centralization of the appeal for increasing professionalism	It emphasizes strengthening technical and human capacities and introduces structured business consultation mechanisms to assess the anticipated impact of regulatory changes, ensuring the reform's inclusiveness and effectiveness.	in Albania, as subjects to inspections from several inspectorates operating under the guidance of the General Inspectorate.
and trust	Moreover, enhances the recommendation to unify and centralize the appeal process of Inspectorates under the Central Inspectorate, aimed at enhancing professionalism, independence, and trust.	
Approval of the "Medium-Term Revenue Strategy 2024-2027 and the Action Plan 2024- 2027"	This strategy was approved through the DCM nr 847 in December 2024. The document outlines various measures and initiatives aimed at improving economic governance and formalization, enhancing institutional collaboration, and fostering capacity building.	The strategy affects all the companies operating in Albania. Key actions that align also with IC recommendations, suggested also during the consultation phase of the strategy, include reducing cash payments through tax administration reforms, encouraging the use of POS systems via banking sector discussions, and analyzing high-risk sectors like construction, tourism, and e-commerce for informality. It also emphasizes improving inter-agency coordination to tackle undeclared work, raising public awareness of the benefits of social contributions, and strengthening taxpayer services through call center upgrades and staff training. Other measures focus on enhancing energy efficiency policies, preventing double taxation, and aligning domestic tax laws with EU standards.





Recommendation	Achievement	Expected Impact
Approved the "National reform agenda 2024- 2027" within the European Union instrument "Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans".	This reform was approved through the DCM no. 621 in October 2024. The reform approved is a three-year target-based action plan, committed to be achieved based on the EU's "New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans", adopted on November 8, 2023. This plan is designed to bring the region closer to EU membership by offering tangible benefits and financial support to accelerate socio-economic convergence and integration into the EU single market. The Reform and Growth Facility for WB6 was approved in May 2024 as a new instrument to support EU-related reforms and economic growth in the region. This Facility will cover the period from 2024 to 2027 and is expected to provide up to €2 billion in grants and €4 billion in loans to the EU's six Western Balkan partners in the coming years. It emphasizes the need for the WB6 to modernize their economies and invest in infrastructure, with a special focus on sectors like education and skills development that can act as key multipliers for socio-economic	The reform affects the overall business climate and all the companies operating in Albania, 125,000+ economic enterprises. The key pillars that align also with IC recommendations include modernizing the business climate with updated revenue strategies, digitizing cadastral systems, and adopting investment laws aligned with EU standards. In human capital, reforms target aligning education and vocational training with labor market needs through updated curricula, the adoption of the Smart Specialization Strategy, and the creation of Smart Labs. Digitalization efforts prioritize deploying secure 5G infrastructure and implementing grant schemes for green and digital solutions for SMEs and startups. In the energy sector, the focus is on operationalizing intra-day electricity markets to advance
Digitization of local administrative public services for businesses operating in the municipal territories.	From the follow-up communications in July 2024, the National Agency for Information Society (NAIS) notes that, in cooperation with the Minister of State for Local Government, they are negotiating with the World Bank for additional financing opportunities.	Albania's green transition. The aim is to expand the existing joint operation to include administrative re-engineering, digital transformation, modernization of local finances, and the integration of local government into the central government's digital infrastructure.
To enable the online payment system for central administrative services,	The National Agency for Information Society, in cooperation with the Bank of Albania (BoA), the Association of Banks (AAB), and commercial banks in Albania, facilitated by the Ministry of Finance, has signed a memorandum of cooperation for the Digitalization Project for electronic payments for public services. For over a year, commercial banks have been developing technical capabilities to facilitate online payments through their banking channels for electronic services on the e-Albania portal.	Currently, 17 online services on the e-Albania portal support online payments through the e-banking channel, where applicants can choose their bank and make payments via their bank's mobile application. So far, only "National Commercial Bank- BKT" bank has completed the necessary technical developments, and online payments for 17 electronic services are now live through this channel. The testing and launching of the online payment feature for the remaining services by other banks are ongoing.

Recommendation	Achievement	Expected Impact
Facilitation of the employment mediation process by AKPA through the centralized platform puna.gov. al.	As reported by AKPA, the platform puna.gov. al. is regularly updated with recent vacancies and the typologies of job ranges within several sectors. Regional meetings were held between institutions under AKPA such as Labor Offices, QFP and Vocational Education Schools, as well as informative meetings with interested parties encouraging participation in the services and programs that AKPA offers.	puna.gov.al. platform aims to increase the interaction between employers and job seekers, where the latter can apply directly to the vacancy without the participation of the Labor Office.
Impacting trust in online platforms by safeguarding the security of information exchanged on digital platforms where administrative services are provided.	NAIS has drafted and approved the document "Instructions for the Implementation of the Updated Document of Continuity and the Plan for Storage of Information." This document outlines comprehensive measures to ensure quick backup and recovery of systems and data in the event of cyber-attacks or other disruptions. The scope of these instructions includes protocols for recovering data, applications, and technological systems to maintain operational continuity during service interruptions or disasters such as cyber incidents, fires, water leaks, or other localized incidents.	The focus is on protecting information and ensuring service availability through collaboration with other institutions and third parties, as defined by legal frameworks or agreements.
	Additionally, NAIS is currently implementing a Data Loss Prevention (DLP) solution to classify and tag data based on its importance. This solution has been fully deployed in the NAIS institution and partially implemented in other government institutions as an initial step based on specific agreements. The data classification includes three defined labels: General, Restricted, and Confidential, each with specifications that can be adjusted by institutions to align with their operational needs while maintaining a baseline of sensitivity for automatically classified information.	These initiatives demonstrate NAIS's commitment to bolstering trust in online platforms by proactively addressing cybersecurity risks and implementing robust data protection measures across administrative services.





The guide is published on the official website of NAIS and can be found at the link: https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Udhezim-nr.-1-dt.31.07.2023-Per-zbatimin-e-dokumentit-te-perditesuar-te-politikave-te-vazhdimesise-se-punes-dhe-planit-per-ruajtjen-e-informacionit.pdf

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ANNEX 1

1. LIST OF MAIN DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- » In April 2024, Law No. 30/2024 brings changes and additions to Law No. 93/2015, "On Tourism," as amended.
- » Amendments to DCM No. 283, dated 1.4.2015 "For determination of types, rules, criteria and procedures for the construction of facilities for production, storage and processing of agricultural and livestock products, on the agricultural land"
- » Law no. 99/2024, dt. 12.9.2024 "On Inspection in the Republic of Albania".
- Instruction of the Minister of Finance no. 11/1, dated 27.11.2024 "For some additions and changes in the instructions of the Minister of Finance no. 11, dated 23.7.2024, "On the implementation of agreements for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion".
- » DCM no. 695, dated 13.11.2024 for the "Approval of support measures, rules and procedures for the benefit of support measures for the production of electric energy from renewable sources for the approval of support measures, rules and procedures for the benefit of support measures for production of electrical energy from renewable sources".
- » DCM no. 696, dated 13.11.2024, "Determining the duties and responsibilities of the Renewable Energy Operator JSC (Joint-Stock Company)", detailing the responsibilities and operation of this structure.
- DCM nr 847 in December 24 "Medium-Term Revenue Strategy 2024-2027 and the Action Plan 2024-2027"
- DCM no.621 October 2024 the "National reform agenda 2024-2027" within the European Union instrument "Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans".
- "Competitiveness policy priorities" document prepared by EBRD



2. LIST OF INSTITUTIONS FORMALLY CONTACTED ON THE PROGRESS OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- » Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development
- » Ministry of State for Local Governance
- » Ministry of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate
- » Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
- Minister of State for Anticorruption and Public Administration
- Agency for Rural Development Albania
- » General Directory of Taxes
- » National Agency for Employment and Skills,
- » National Information Society Agency
- National Agency of Cadastre
- » Agency for Innovation and Excellence

R LIST OF SECONDARY DATA SEARCHED

- » https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/
- » https://kryeministria.al/
- » www.akademi.al
- » https://qbz.gov.al/
- » http://aida.gov.al/sq/ (also FB, Instagram)
- » https://www.parlament.al/Projektligje/IndexList
- » https://invest-in-albania.org/
- » https://www.ashk.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » http://www.azht.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » https://globaldigitalcity.com/
- » https://www.financa.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » https://www.infrastruktura.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » https://arsimi.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » https://bujqesia.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » https://shendetesia.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » https://turizmi.gov.al/ (also FB, Instagram platforms)
- » https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/projects/star-3---consolidation-of-the-territorial-and-administrative-ref.html
- » https://bit.ly/3aB5f47
- » https://eu4municipalities.al/fillon-zyrtarisht-projekti-be-per-bashkite-per-mbeshtetjen-e-bashkive-shqiptare-dhe-komuniteteve-lokale-ne-procesin-e-integrimit-evropian/
- » https://financat-lokale.al/sq/node/89
- Various articles in Monitor Magazine, Business Magazine, SCAN, Exit.al, Balkan Web, News 24, Exit.Al, etc.



