

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Promoting Freedom of Expression in Albania through Open Dialogue

<b>Project title</b>	Promoting Freedom of Expression in Albania through Open Dialogue
<b>Project area</b>	Albania
<b>Budget</b>	167 000 Euros
<b>Funding</b>	Co-funded by the Council of Europe and the European Union
<b>Implementation</b>	Division for Co-operation on Freedom of Expression Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department Directorate General II: Democracy
<b>Duration</b>	01.2025-12.2026 (24 months)

#### I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

The right to freedom of expression and information, enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), is a fundamental pillar of any democratic society. Together with the right to information, it promotes transparency, accountability, and fosters a culture of openness and trust between the government and the public. The media plays a crucial role in this framework, acting both as a watchdog and a platform for public discourse. As a member of the Council of Europe, Albania has committed to upholding legal guarantees for freedom of expression and implementing safeguards for the safety of journalists and other media actors.

Despite these commitments, various reports highlight ongoing challenges. The 2024 European Commission Report for Albania notes that the country remains moderately prepared in the area of freedom of expression, with limited progress recorded. Similarly, the 2024 Rule of Law Report raises concerns over the intersection of business and political interests, lack of transparency in media financing, concentrated media ownership, intimidation of journalists, and the increasing use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). Moreover, international and civil society reports, including the 2023 European Commission Screening Report, emphasise the urgent need for structured dialogue between the Albanian government, media, and civil society.

Albania's EU integration process remains a strategic priority, driving its ambitious reform agenda. On 15 October 2024, Albania formally opened accession negotiations on Cluster 1 – Fundamentals, in which freedom of expression is a key component. One of the interim

benchmarks set by the EU in this process focuses explicitly on this issue: “Enhanced freedom of expression, including media freedom, through a reformed legislative and regulatory framework in line with European standards, best practices, and recommendations, as well as concrete measures to enhance the safety of journalists.” In this context, Albania has submitted three roadmaps guiding its reform efforts and is actively working to strengthen its legislative and policy framework on freedom of expression and media freedom, ensuring effective implementation in practice. The aim is to enhance the reform agenda and create an enabling environment that aligns with the highest European standards on media freedom and independence.

The European Union and the Council of Europe have a long-standing partnership in supporting Albania’s democratic reforms, particularly in the media sector, where Council of Europe standards play a central role in shaping regulatory frameworks. Strengthening civil society and enhancing freedom of expression are core priorities for Albania’s EU accession process and integral components of its Rule of Law Roadmap.

The project “Promoting Freedom of Expression in Albania through Open Dialogue” aims to address the current challenges that Albania is facing in the media sector. These challenges revolve around three key areas, which form the main pillars of our project:

- **Safety of Journalists and press freedom violations**
- **Access to information**
- **Media ownership and independent journalism**

By addressing the key priorities concerning freedom of expression and media freedom in Albania, this initiative will facilitate the implementation of the Council of Europe standards and the recommendations and priorities of the media sector under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) of negotiations towards Albania’s accession to the European Union.

Additionally, this initiative is designed to establish an inclusive platform for dialogue, bringing together diverse stakeholders, including government institutions, regulatory bodies, media professionals, civil society organisations, journalists, media outlets, academia, and experts.

## II. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

<b>Impact</b>	Enhanced freedom of expression standards in Albania
<b>Intermediate Outcome 1</b>	Effective and deliberative dialogue between public institutions and media actors contributes to an improved media landscape in line with the European standards.
<b>Immediate Outcome 1.1</b>	A structured and sustainable dialogue framework is institutionalised, enabling public authorities, media actors, and civil society to collaboratively advance freedom of expression and media freedom.
<b>Immediate Outcome 1.2</b>	Media regulatory framework and related measures are improved in view of the EU integration agenda in line with the European standards.

## III. PROPOSED PARTNERS/BENEFICIARIES

Stakeholders from public institutions would involve:

- Ministry of Justice (MoJ)
- Ministry of Interior (MoI)
- Ministry of Infrastructure
- Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA)
- Media and Information Agency (MIA)
- Competition Authority
- AKEP
- Central Electoral Commission
- Commissioner of Data Protection and the Right to Information (CDP)
- People's Advocate
- Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD)
- School of Magistrates (SoM)
- High Judicial Council (HJC)
- High Prosecutorial Council (HJP)
- General Prosecution Office

Stakeholders on rights-holders would involve:

- Media outlets
- Media and civil society organisations
- Key journalists
- Academia

#### IV. PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Overall project management and supervision will be ensured by the Division for Cooperation on Freedom of Expression at the Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII) in coordination with the Council of Europe office in Tirana.

In addition, international and national consultants (experts) will be involved to provide technical expertise, contributions to the development of outputs and to the implementation of activities.

The Faculty of Journalism of the University of Tirana will serve as a facilitator from the content, as well as organisational perspective. Competent staff from the faculty will play an important role in coordinating and hosting the activities of the platform which would involve:

- thematic group meetings
- plenary sessions
- thematic assessments, including synthesis of relevant EU and CoE reports and recommendations
- experts guide to nurture the legal and policy dialogue in line with the best European standards.

[Division for Co-operation on Freedom of Expression](#)

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