



HORIZONTAL FACILITY FOR WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Strengthening the Protection of National Minorities in Albania

As a part of the European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey” (Horizontal Facility), the Council of Europe will implement the Action “Strengthening the protection of national minorities in Albania”, in close partnership with the Albanian authorities.

The Action will support the authorities in enhancing the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in Albania, by addressing the legislation, policy and practice. Expert advice will be provided with a view to preparing legislation on the protection of national minorities. In addition, steps will be taken to strengthen the capacity of the authorities to implement the new legislation as well as the European standards for the protection of national minorities. Finally, the Action will seek to provide the authorities with comprehensive expertise with respect to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The Action, which started on 1 January 2017 and will be completed on 23 May 2019, has an overall budget of 200.000 Euros.

Objectives and expected results

The **aim** of the Action is to contribute to strengthening the protection of the persons belonging to national minorities in Albania, in line with the European standards.

The action intends to address the following **objectives**:

- ✓ Develop a comprehensive national legal framework for the protection of national minorities;
- ✓ Enhance the capacity of the authorities to implement the national legislation and standards on the protection of national minorities;
- ✓ Increase the awareness about the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Accordingly, the objectives of the Action will be supported through the realisation of the following **expected results**:

- ✓ Enhanced expertise with a view to preparing legislation on the protection of national minorities;
- ✓ Increased knowledge of the national and local authorities about the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and their protection, in line with the European standards;
- ✓ Comprehensive information about the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages made available to the authorities.

Background information

On 11 April 2016, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, and the European Union's Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, announced a new co-operation initiative of the two organisations aimed at supporting South-East Europe and Turkey in their efforts to comply with European standards. The initiative is called the European Union/ Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey (Horizontal Facility). It is a three year programme (May 2016 – May 2019), focusing on three themes: ensuring justice; fighting corruption, economic crime and organised crime; as well as combating discrimination and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. It has a budget of €25 million, of which €20 million has been provided by the European Union and €5 million by the Council of Europe. Through the Horizontal Facility, the European Union and the Council of Europe will assist beneficiary countries to comply with Council of Europe standards and the European Union acquis in the framework of the enlargement process, through a complementary two-fold approach of technical co-operation and the provision of expertise. The Horizontal Facility relies on the Council of Europe's unique working methods, whereby tailor-made technical co-operation activities are based on conclusions and recommendations of the Council of Europe's monitoring bodies, which highlight areas where improvements are needed in the legislation and policies of the beneficiaries to comply with the Organisation's treaties and other standards.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 democratic European countries. Its aims are peace, prosperity and freedom for its 500 million citizens – in a fairer, safer world. To make things happen, EU countries set up bodies to run the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe), the Council of the European Union (representing national governments) and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).

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