



GUIDELINE FOR MONITORING AND
ANALYSIS OF THE “FUNCTIONING OF
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS” CRITERIA
(CLUSTER 1)



Funded by
the European Union



PUBLISHER

European Movement in Albania (EMA)
Rr. Milto Tutulani, Nd.1, Ap. 3.
Tel: +355 44 104 247
E-mail: info@em-al.org
Web: www.em-al.org

AUTHOR/S

Florian XHAFA

YEAR OF PUBLICATION:

2025

This material was produced within the project “Building Partnership on Fundamentals: Empowering CSOs for the EU accession process”, with the financial support of the European Union. Its content is the sole responsibility of the European Movement in Albania and the authors, and does not necessarily reflect the views and positions of the European Union.

The project “Building Partnership on Fundamentals: Empowered CSOs in the EU accession process” is being implemented by the European Movement in Albania (EMA), with the financial support of the European Union IPA Civil Society Facility 2021, in cooperation with the Academy of European Integration and Negotiations (AIEN), Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA) and the Center for Transparency and Freedom of Information (CTFI).



Funded by
the European Union



INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE	04
<hr/>	
II. EU and National Framework	
2.1. The European Union Context	06
2.2. Albania's Commitments and Institutional Arrangements	07
<hr/>	
III. Methodological Framework for Monitoring and Analysis	
3.1. Objectives and Analytical Logic	10
3.2. Principles of Monitoring	10
3.3. Sources of Information	11
3.4. Methodological Tools	12
3.5. Process and Coordination	12
3.6. Validation and Dissemination	13
<hr/>	
IV. Thematic Areas and Analytical Dimensions	
4.1. Electoral Process	13
4.2. Functioning of Parliament	16
4.3. Civil Society and Participatory Democracy	18
4.4. Integrative Perspective	20
<hr/>	
V. Monitoring Process and Reporting Cycle	
5.1. Stage I – Data Collection and Observation	22
5.2. Stage II – Analysis and Drafting	22
5.3. Stage III – Validation and Peer Review	22
5.4. Stage IV – Communication and Dialogue	23
5.5. Stage V – Follow-Up and Policy Feedback	23
5.6. Synchronisation, Outputs, and Use of Results	24
<hr/>	
Conclusion and Way Forward	26

Annex 1 - Consolidated Indicator Matrix for Monitoring the Functioning of Democratic Institutions	27
Table 1: Electoral Process Indicators	27
Table 2: Functioning of Parliament Indicators	28
Table 3: Civil Society and Participatory Democracy Indicators	29

Annex 2 - List of Relevant Legal Acts and EU Standards	31
--------------------------------------------------------	----

Annex 3 - Glossary of Key Terms and Acronyms	37
----------------------------------------------	----

Annex 4 - References and Sources	42
----------------------------------	----

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Guideline for Monitoring and Analysis of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions has been developed as a practical and methodological instrument to strengthen the participation of civil society organisations, independent experts, researchers, and media representatives in Albania's European Union (EU) accession process. It provides a structured approach for observing, analysing, and reporting on reforms related to the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI) chapter, which forms part of Cluster 1 – Fundamentals of the EU accession negotiations.

The consolidation of democratic institutions represents one of the principal conditions for opening and advancing negotiations under Cluster 1, alongside the rule of law and public administration reform. Ensuring that democratic institutions function effectively and in accordance with European standards is a fundamental precondition for the credibility of Albania's overall accession process. Active monitoring and analysis by non-state actors serve not only to enhance transparency and accountability but also to promote public understanding and ownership of the reforms that underpin the country's path towards EU membership.

This Guideline pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it aims to provide a coherent framework for evidence-based monitoring, enabling observers to assess progress in aligning Albania's democratic governance with the principles and practices of the European Union. It builds upon the findings of the European Commission's 2024 Report on Albania, the 2023 Screening Report for Cluster 1, and the commitments undertaken through the national roadmap for the Functioning of Democratic Institutions. Second, it seeks to strengthen the analytical capacity of non-state actors by setting out clear methodological principles, thematic indicators, and relevant sources of information that facilitate credible and comparable analysis across different monitoring initiatives. Third, it aspires to foster constructive dialogue and accountability, linking the monitoring efforts of civil society with institutional mechanisms such as the Partnership Platform for European Integration, the National Council for European Integration, and the relevant committees of the Parliament of Albania. Through these instruments, the findings generated by independent monitoring can contribute meaningfully to policy debate, decision-making, and public communication on EU-related reforms.

The Guideline is underpinned by four key principles. Objectivity and evidence orientation require that all assessments be based on verifiable information and transparent methodologies. Inclusiveness and participation ensure that a wide spectrum of civil-society actors and experts are engaged in the monitoring process. Complementarity recognises that civil-society monitoring is not a substitute for official governmental or European Commission reporting but rather a means of reinforcing them through independent validation and dissemination. Finally, transparency and accountability oblige that findings be accessible to the public, contributing to informed debate and to greater trust in the institutions that lead the accession process.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Guideline applies to all institutions, organisations, and individuals involved in the observation and analysis of developments under the FDI chapter. It may serve as a reference for joint initiatives between state and non-state actors, capacity-building programmes, or independent research efforts aimed at assessing Albania's progress towards the standards of a stable, democratic, and accountable governance system required for EU membership.

II. EU AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. THE EUROPEAN UNION CONTEXT

The functioning of democratic institutions lies at the heart of the European Union's political identity and serves as a cornerstone of the accession process for candidate countries. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) establishes that the Union is founded upon the principles of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights. These principles form the constitutional and moral foundation of the EU and constitute binding political criteria for membership.

The Copenhagen European Council of June 1993 further elaborated these principles through the Copenhagen Criteria, which require that any state aspiring to join the Union must demonstrate the existence of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities. These criteria represent the essential conditions of membership and define the scope of assessment throughout the negotiation process.

In the context of the enhanced enlargement methodology adopted in 2020, the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI) is a core component of Cluster 1 – Fundamentals, together with the rule of law, public administration reform, and economic criteria. It assesses the extent to which state institutions operate on the basis of separation of powers, effective checks and balances, political accountability, inclusiveness, and pluralistic participation. The European Commission, in cooperation with the Council of the EU and other institutional actors, evaluates these elements through its annual enlargement reports, screening findings, and the ongoing dialogue with candidate countries.

European standards in this field are further guided by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and by the work of complementary international bodies such as the Council of Europe, the Venice Commission, and the OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). These instruments and bodies provide authoritative guidance on democratic elections, parliamentary conduct, political pluralism, and the role of civil society.

The Commission's 2024 Report on Albania confirms that while the country has maintained a constitutional framework consistent with democratic principles, challenges persist in ensuring effective oversight by the Parliament, inclusiveness of the electoral process, and the creation of an enabling environment for civil society. The report emphasises the need for sustained efforts to address political polarisation, strengthen parliamentary accountability, and improve the mechanisms for consultation and participation of non-state actors.

2.2. ALBANIA'S COMMITMENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

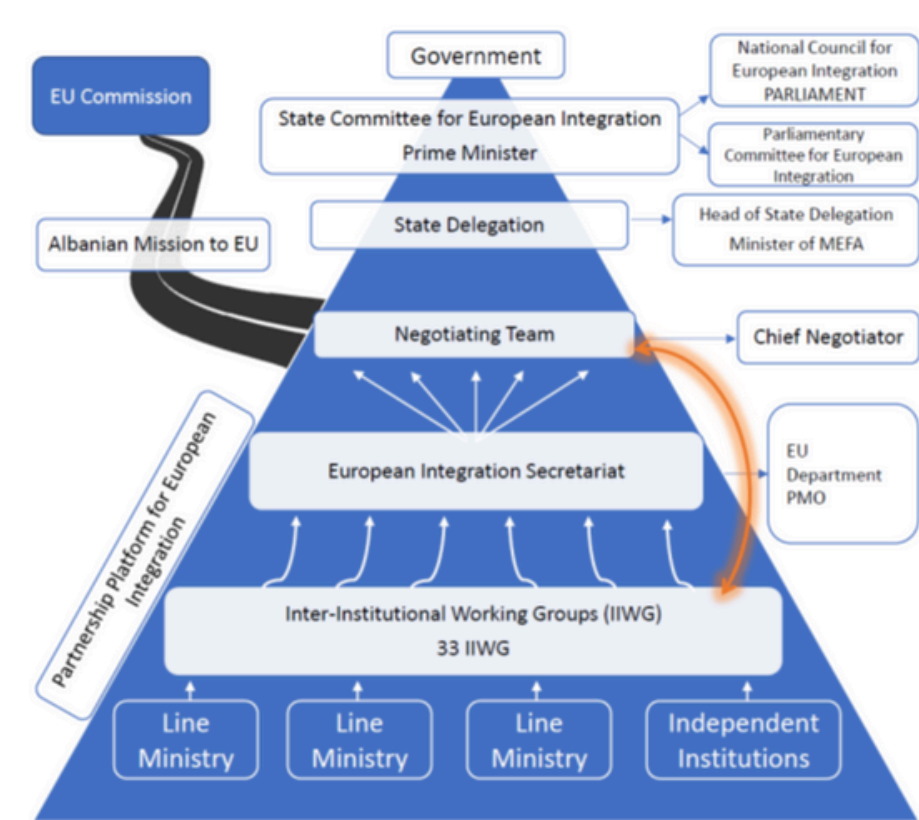
Albania's obligations regarding the functioning of democratic institutions are anchored in both its constitutional framework and its commitments under the European Union (EU) accession process. The Constitution of the Republic of Albania enshrines the principles of sovereignty, political pluralism, separation and balance of powers, and respect for human rights. In the context of accession negotiations, these principles are operationalised through the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI)—one of the three official roadmaps serving as opening benchmarks for Cluster 1 – Fundamentals, alongside those on Rule of Law and Public Administration Reform (PAR).

The FDI Roadmap defines Albania's reform commitments in three key dimensions:

- The electoral process, ensuring integrity, inclusiveness, and alignment with OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations;
- The functioning of Parliament, strengthening oversight, transparency, and civic participation; and
- The accountability of independent institutions, including mechanisms that safeguard pluralism, freedom of expression, and the role of civil society.

Implementation of these commitments is closely interlinked with the national negotiation structures established by Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 749 of 19 December 2018 and DCM No. 422 of 6 May 2020, as amended by DCM No. 746 of 9 December 2021. These legal acts provide the organisational foundation for the accession process and define the coordination channels between institutions responsible for EU integration.

At the top of this architecture stands the State Committee for European Integration (SCEI), chaired by the Prime Minister, which provides political direction, oversight, and approval of negotiating positions, including those relevant to Cluster 1. Within the FDI context, the SCEI ensures that reforms related to electoral integrity, parliamentary transparency, and civic participation are prioritised and coherently reflected in Albania's negotiation commitments.



The State Delegation, led by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and comprising the Chief Negotiator and the Head of Albania's Mission to the EU, conducts the political dialogue with EU institutions. Its mandate includes the formal opening and closing of negotiations under each cluster. For the FDI Chapter, this delegation acts as the primary channel for communicating Albania's reform progress to the European Commission, drawing on evidence and assessments prepared through the technical structures below.

Operational coordination is managed by the Chief Negotiator, who heads the Negotiating Group and oversees the technical work of the European Integration Secretariat and the Inter-Institutional Working Groups (IIWGs). The Chief Negotiator is responsible for ensuring coherence between Albania's commitments under the FDI Roadmap and the broader accession framework, including progress monitoring and preparation of national reports for the Intergovernmental Conference.

The European Integration Secretariat, functioning within the Prime Minister's Office (EU Directorate), serves as the administrative backbone of the negotiation process. It coordinates data collection, legislative alignment reports, and cross-institutional inputs related to the implementation of the FDI Roadmap. The Secretariat also supports the development of national negotiating positions, ensuring consistency with EU guidance, the Screening Report for Cluster 1, and the European Commission's Annual Reports.

The Inter-Institutional Working Group on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (IIWG-FDI) is the principal technical structure responsible for preparing analytical assessments, identifying gaps in compliance, and proposing policy and legislative measures aligned with the roadmap's targets. Chaired by the designated Negotiator (typically at Deputy Minister level) and composed of representatives from line ministries, constitutional bodies, and independent institutions, the IIWG-FDI ensures that reforms are evidence-based, measurable, and properly sequenced.

In operational terms, the IIWG–FDI works in coordination with several key national institutions:

- The Assembly of Albania, as the primary body for law-making, oversight of the executive, and appointment of independent authorities;
- The Central Election Commission (CEC), leading electoral administration, voter education, and campaign finance transparency;
- The Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), responsible for media regulation, pluralism, and monitoring of campaign coverage;
- The People’s Advocate (Ombudsperson) and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, ensuring compliance with human rights and anti-discrimination standards;
- The High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest (HIDAACI), ensuring integrity and transparency in public office; and
- The Ministry of Justice, which provides legal expertise, coordinates cross-cutting reforms on good governance, and supports alignment of legislation with European standards.

The FDI chapter’s inclusive governance approach is complemented by the participation of non-state actors through institutionalised consultative mechanisms, notably the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI) and the National Council for European Integration (NCEI). The PPEI serves as the primary interface between government and civil society, facilitating structured dialogue, consultation, and the validation of monitoring results. The NCEI, chaired by the Speaker of Parliament and composed of representatives from political parties, civil society, and academia, ensures political and societal consensus on key accession-related reforms.



This multilayered coordination framework ensures that political decision-making, technical assessment, and civic oversight are interconnected. It also establishes clear linkages between Albania’s institutional reform commitments and the procedural milestones of the accession process—screening, roadmap implementation, negotiation positions, and benchmark monitoring.

The effective functioning of these structures is essential not only for fulfilling Albania’s obligations under the EU negotiation framework but also for ensuring democratic accountability, institutional stability, and public trust in the accession process.

III. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MONITORING AND ANALYSIS

The monitoring of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI) within the EU accession process represents a systematic and evidence-based activity aimed at assessing the alignment of Albania's democratic governance with the standards and values of the European Union. It seeks to ensure that the commitments defined in the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions are implemented effectively, measured consistently, and communicated transparently to both national stakeholders and European institutions.

The methodological framework set out in this Guideline provides a structured approach for civil society organisations (CSOs), researchers, and independent experts to observe, analyse, and report on Albania's progress in meeting the requirements of Cluster 1 – Fundamentals. It aligns with the European Commission's assessment logic, which combines legal alignment, institutional performance, and track record of implementation as the core dimensions of evaluation.

3.1. OBJECTIVES AND ANALYTICAL LOGIC

The overarching objective of the monitoring process is to generate independent, verifiable, and comparable assessments of Albania's performance in strengthening democratic institutions. It is guided by three analytical dimensions:

1. Compliance – assessing the degree of alignment between Albania's constitutional, legislative, and institutional frameworks and the EU's political and legal standards on democracy and governance.
2. Implementation – evaluating whether the adopted legal provisions, institutional mandates, and administrative procedures function effectively in practice.
3. Impact – analysing how reforms translate into tangible improvements in accountability, inclusiveness, and public trust in democratic processes.

3.2. PRINCIPLES OF MONITORING

The monitoring of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI) within the EU accession process represents a systematic and evidence-based activity aimed at assessing the alignment of Albania's democratic governance with the standards and values of the European Union. It seeks to ensure that the commitments defined in the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions are implemented effectively, measured consistently, and communicated transparently to both national stakeholders and European institutions.

The process is also characterised by participation, reflecting the need for broad engagement of civil-society organisations, academic institutions, media representatives, and thematic networks in order to capture a diverse range of perspectives on democratic governance. At the same time, complementarity ensures that civil-society monitoring operates in harmony with official reporting mechanisms, in particular those led by the European Commission, the Parliament of Albania, and the Inter-Institutional Working Groups, thereby reinforcing and enriching formal assessments. Finally, the framework is governed by the principle of transparency, which requires that findings be made publicly available in clear and accessible forms, contributing to informed debate, institutional accountability, and public trust in the EU accession process.

3.3. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Monitoring and analysis should draw on a combination of primary and secondary sources, ensuring both institutional reliability and independent verification. Key sources include:

- Official national documents: the Constitution, laws, by-laws, parliamentary records, annual reports of independent institutions (CEC, AMA, HIDAACI, Ombudsperson), and Government decisions (DCMs, ministerial orders).
- EU-level documents: the European Commission's Annual Reports, the Cluster 1 Screening Report, and the Rule of Law and Democracy sections of the EU Rule of Law Report (2025).
- International assessments: reports by the OSCE/ODIHR, the Council of Europe and Venice Commission, Freedom House, Transparency International, and the World Bank Governance Indicators.
- CSO-generated data: shadow reports, policy briefs, and monitoring surveys conducted by Albanian and regional NGOs active in governance, media, and electoral integrity.
- Public data and open sources: media monitoring, academic research, and publicly available statistics.

To ensure validity, all data sources should be cross-verified through triangulation, combining documentary evidence, institutional reporting, and independent observation.

3.4. METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

Monitoring under the FDI chapter applies both qualitative and quantitative analytical tools designed to translate complex political and institutional developments into measurable results.

Qualitative analysis includes legal and policy reviews, stakeholder interviews, focus-group discussions, and case studies of institutional practices. It aims to capture the depth of democratic processes, including the inclusiveness of decision-making, the quality of political dialogue, and the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms.

Quantitative analysis is based on measurable indicators that reflect institutional performance—such as the number of implemented ODIHR recommendations, parliamentary oversight sessions held, or CSO consultations conducted within the PPEI framework.

These tools are organised within an indicator matrix, structured along three analytical pillars:

1. Elections and Political Pluralism;
2. Parliamentary Functioning and Oversight;
3. Civil Society and Participatory Democracy.

Each pillar includes baseline indicators, targets derived from the FDI Roadmap, and benchmarks consistent with the European Commission's monitoring methodology.

3.5. PROCESS AND COORDINATION

Monitoring should follow an annual cycle aligned with the European Commission's reporting calendar. CSOs and independent experts are encouraged to:

1. Collect and analyse data continuously throughout the year;
2. Produce interim analytical notes for submission to the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI);
3. Contribute to the preparation of civil-society shadow reports that complement the Government's annual self-assessment under Cluster 1; and
4. Present findings at consultation events organised by the PPEI, the National Council for European Integration (NCEI), and parliamentary committees.

The European Integration Secretariat, acting as technical coordinator, ensures that monitoring findings from civil-society sources are considered in the Government's reporting and that feedback loops are established between CSO analyses, IIWG discussions, and the Chief Negotiator's periodic progress reviews.

3.6. VALIDATION AND DISSEMINATION

The credibility of the monitoring process depends on transparent validation and communication. Each monitoring report should undergo peer review by independent experts or thematic networks, ensuring methodological soundness and neutrality.

Validated reports should be made publicly accessible through dedicated online platforms, workshops, and press briefings, thus reinforcing civic engagement and institutional accountability. Dissemination should prioritise clarity, neutrality, and constructive policy orientation, presenting findings not as criticism but as evidence-based contributions to Albania's democratic consolidation and EU integration efforts.

IV. THEMATIC AREAS AND ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS

Monitoring of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI) in the context of Albania's EU accession is structured around three thematic areas that reflect the pillars of the FDI Roadmap: the electoral process, the functioning of Parliament, and the role of civil society and participatory democracy. Together, these areas capture the essential dimensions through which democratic institutions ensure legitimacy, accountability, and inclusiveness. The analytical approach adopted in this Guideline follows the logic of the Cluster 1 Screening Report and the European Commission's 2024 Report on Albania, combining a focus on legal alignment, institutional performance, and practical impact.

The monitoring and analysis of these areas aim to assess both the formal compliance of Albanian institutions with European standards and the substantive quality of democratic governance. Each thematic area is examined through a common analytical structure that considers the EU standards and reference framework, Albania's state of alignment and implementation, the main developments and challenges, and the indicative indicators and data sources relevant to civil-society monitoring.

4.1. ELECTORAL PROCESS

The conduct of democratic elections remains one of the most visible tests of Albania's adherence to the principles of the European Union. In the EU's political framework, as defined by Article 10 of the Treaty on European Union and the Copenhagen Criteria, the legitimacy of democratic institutions depends on elections that are free, fair, and competitive. The Union also expects that electoral processes are administered impartially, that citizens are able to participate without intimidation, and that the media environment ensures equal access and pluralism. These standards are further elaborated by the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters and the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Methodology—both of which guide the European Commission's annual assessments within Cluster 1 – Fundamentals.

In Albania, the electoral framework has evolved significantly over the past decade. The Electoral Code, last amended in 2020, remains broadly aligned with European and international standards and continues to regulate key aspects of the process, including campaign financing, media coverage, and voter registration. The Central Election Commission (CEC), restructured in 2020 into a three-tier professional body, has demonstrated administrative competence and transparency in recent cycles. Its technical performance during the 2023 local elections and the 11 May 2025 parliamentary elections was widely acknowledged as professional and well organised. The introduction of electronic voter identification and digital finance disclosure tools has enhanced procedural integrity. Yet, despite these operational advances, the credibility of the process continues to be affected by structural and political challenges.

International and domestic observers have repeatedly underlined that electoral competition in Albania takes place within a highly polarised political environment. The OSCE/ODIHR Final Report on the 2025 Parliamentary Elections praised the professionalism of the CEC but pointed to persistent misuse of administrative resources, pressure on public-sector employees, and an unequal playing field in media coverage and campaign financing. The Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) increased its monitoring activity, yet gaps remain in sanctioning capacity and in the transparency of ownership and financing of media outlets. The European Commission's 2025 Enlargement Package similarly emphasised that while Albania has maintained the technical integrity of elections, it has made limited progress in addressing long-standing ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, particularly those concerning depoliticisation of election administration, the regulation of campaign finance, and the implementation of gender quotas.

The national Ad-hoc Committee on Electoral Reform—whose earlier mandate expired without results—was re-established by Parliament in October 2025 with the objective of adopting a comprehensive, cross-party reform ahead of the next electoral cycle. The inclusiveness and effectiveness of this process will serve as an important benchmark for assessing Albania's commitment to democratic consolidation under the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI).

Within this context, monitoring of the electoral process must focus not only on legal compliance but also on the quality and credibility of implementation. It should evaluate whether reforms translate into equal competition, genuine voter choice, and growing public trust. To support this, the Guideline introduces a monitoring tool that operationalises these principles into concrete, measurable indicators. The tool enables civil-society organisations, research institutes, and media watchdogs to track progress and to provide evidence-based inputs to the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI) and the National Council for European Integration (NCEI). It transforms narrative evaluation into data-driven observation, allowing alignment with the European Commission's assessment logic and with ODIHR's follow-up reporting.

The table below summarises the current situation of the Albanian electoral process as of November 2025 [1], providing an integrated overview of EU standards, Albania's performance, recent developments, key indicators for civil-society monitoring, principal data sources, and the main risks and recommendations that inform policy dialogue and advocacy.



#	Indicator (what you measure)	Operational definition & measurement	Baseline	Latest status	Target / benchmark	Data source & verification	Frequency	Notes for CSO use
1	Implementation rate of priority ODIHR recommendations	% of priority recommendations marked "implemented" or "partially implemented" by ODIHR since last national election cycle	Local 2023: limited progress	Parl. 2025: competitive & well-run, but many long-standing recommendations still pending; "no level playing field" cited	≥75% implemented before next national election	ODIHR Final Report + follow-up tables; cross-check CEC/legal amendments	Semi-annual	Prioritise depoliticization of lower-level administration, campaign finance, misuse of state resources. (osce.org)
2	Timeliness and resolution of electoral complaints	Share of complaints decided within legal deadlines; % decisions upheld on appeal	2023: mixed timeliness	2025: complaints handled; transparency of reasoning noted as uneven in public comms	≥95% within deadlines; reasoned decisions published within 48h	CEC Complaints & Sanctions Commission register; Electoral College judgments	Per election & quarterly off cycle	Track publication timestamps vs. deadline; sample quality of reasoning. (osce.org)
3	Misuse of administrative resources	Documented cases of intimidation/pressure on public employees; use of public assets in campaigns	2023: observed concerns	2025: misuse and pressure again reported by observers	Zero substantiated cases	ODIHR Final; CSO incident logs; media documentation; prosecutor notices	Weekly during campaign	Log incidents with evidence (photos, memos); seek prosecutorial outcomes. (osce.org)
4	Campaign-finance transparency & enforcement	% parties/candidates filing on time; % filings audited; sanctions applied; disclosure usability score	2023: inconsistent disclosures	2025: disclosures filed; verification & enforcement remain weak; social media spend monitoring piloted	100% on-time filing; ≥50% audited; all sanctions public	CEC finance portal; audit reports; AMA/CEC social-media monitoring memos	Quarterly, weekly in campaign	Include digital ad libraries & spend; note BIRN/CEC training outputs. (BIRN)
5	Media pluralism in campaign	Share of prime-time coverage among main contestants; count of sanctionable imbalances	2023: high concentration; bias	2025: observers noted imbalanced coverage and legal ambiguities	Balanced distribution within legal thresholds; effective sanctions	AMA monitoring bulletins; CSO media watch; ODIHR media chapter	Weekly during campaign	Compare AMA data to independent content analysis; note sanction follow-through. (oscepa.org)
6	Voter turnout & inclusiveness	Turnout overall; by gender/age/region; accessibility complaints; diaspora modalities (if applicable)	2023 locals: low-mid	2025 parl.: turnout ~42% (prelim. press); inclusiveness issues persist	≥50% turnout; reduced disparities; robust accessibility	CEC official results; CSO observation; ODIHR	After results; annual synthesis	Use official CEC once certified; treat media figures as provisional. (AP News)
7	Women's representation	% women on lists (legal quota compliance) and % women elected	2023: quota formally in law	2025: compliance on lists; elected share TBD per final results	Meet list quota; steady rise in seats held by women	CEC candidate data; final mandate allocation	Per election	Cross-check substitutions post-election for quota backsliding.
8	Electoral administration professionalism	CEC decisions published with reasons; training delivered; technology pilots evaluated independently	2023: mixed	2025: process professionally managed; training on media/digital	All key decisions reasoned & on time; training plans public	CEC decisions; training plans; observer reports	Quarterly	Extract KPIs from CEC strategic plan & training logs. (osce.org)
9	Legal framework clarity & reform progress	Status of ad-hoc committee; number of amendments adopted in inclusive process	Committee expired in 2024	Parliament re-established electoral reform committee (Oct 2025); work ongoing	Comprehensive, consensus-based reform before next cycle	Parliamentary decisions; committee workplan; published drafts	Monthly	Track inclusiveness (opposition, CSOs) and Venice/ODIHR concordance. (en.ata.gov.al)
10	Public confidence in elections & CEC	Surveyed trust levels; trend vs. previous cycle	2023: low-moderate	2025: to be measured post-election	Upward trend year-on-year	Reputable polls (IDRA/ISP); media surveys	Annual	Pair with qualitative trust groups in low-trust regions.
11	Social-media campaigning compliance	Disclosure of political ads; compliance with code of conduct; removal of unlawful content	Fragmentary 2023	2025: external monitoring study available for campaign	Full disclosure; swift takedowns; transparency dashboards	CEC/AMA notices; platform libraries; IDEA study	Weekly during campaign	Log ads spend, sponsor IDs, and platform responses. (idea.int)

[1] European Commission, Albania 2025 Report (SWD (2025) 690 final, Brussels, October 2025); OSCE/ODIHR, Final Report – Parliamentary Elections 2025; Venice Commission, Opinion No. 1138/2024 on the Draft Amendments to the Electoral Code of Albania.

4.2. FUNCTIONING OF PARLIAMENT

The functioning of the national parliament constitutes a core dimension of democratic governance and is a vital indicator under the EU's accession framework. The principles of separation of powers, legislative accountability, and public participation in decision-making are deeply embedded in the Union's political architecture through Article 10 of the Treaty on European Union and in the Council of Europe's standards for democratic parliaments. In the context of candidate countries, the European Commission evaluates national assemblies not only for their formal capacity to legislate, but also for their practical ability to exercise oversight of the executive, guarantee transparency of proceedings, and facilitate meaningful consultation with civil society.

In Albania, the Assembly of the Republic of Albania holds legal authority to adopt legislation, approve the budget, exercise oversight and review government actions. Recent reforms – including the adoption of e-legislation procedures and improvements in committee transparency – reflect progress toward aligning national practice with European standards. At the same time, the Assembly faces enduring challenges: political polarisation, weak follow-up on oversight hearings, and limited openness to structured civil-society input. A commentary by the CD Institute [2] highlights that Albania's parliamentary reform agenda still lacks full institutionalisation within the broader roadmap for the Functioning of Democratic Institutions.

The European Parliament's resolution on Albania, adopted in July 2025, emphasised concerns regarding the "effective functioning" of oversight mechanisms and the need to reinforce the Assembly's role in the EU-integration oversight process. Civil-society support to parliament through instruments such as post-legislative scrutiny and corruption-proofing of legislation has advanced with support from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy [3], yet implementation remains uneven.

Given this context, monitoring of parliamentary functioning must transcend formal institutional alignment and attend to the quality of legislative deliberation, oversight practice, and stakeholder participation. It must assess whether the Assembly's work is inclusive, whether committees respond to public and civil-society input, and whether oversight results in actionable outcomes. To support this, the following monitoring table provides civil-society actors with concrete indicators, data sources, and risk-recommendation pointers to frame their tracking and reporting.

[2] CDI Commentary. National Parliament and the Reform Agenda 2024-2027. April 2025
https://cdinstitute.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Commentary_National-Parliament-and-RA.pdf

[3] <https://www.wfd.org/>



#	Indicator (what you measure)	Operational definition & measurement	Baseline	Latest status (Nov 2025)	Target / benchmark	Data sources & verification	Frequency	Notes for CSO use
1	Committee on European Integration (CEI) activity and transparency	Number of meetings held; % of minutes and reports published within 14 days	2023: irregular meetings; minutes delayed	2025: increased frequency but publication backlog persists	≥12 meetings / year; 100 % minutes publicly available within deadline	– Assembly of Albania official portal (“Komisioni për Integrimin Europian”) – EU Delegation to Albania Transparency Review (2025) → EUD Tirana – CSO monitoring (IDM Albania / Institute for Democracy and Mediation) → IDM Publications	Quarterly	Compare held vs published meetings; note EU acquis topics on agenda.
2	Oversight hearings and follow-up	Number of hearings; % with government written responses within 60 days	2023: low frequency; minimal follow-up	2025: more hearings (esp. EU alignment / PFM); few substantive responses	≥8 hearings per committee / year; ≥70 % responses received	– Assembly Committee Agendas & Minutes – Government Responses Register (PMO) – European Commission 2025 Report on Albania – § 2.1 Democracy – Balkan Insight coverage	Semi-annual	Verify content depth of responses; note non-answers.
3	Public consultation on draft laws	% of bills open for ≥20 days; % of CSO recommendations incorporated	2023: consultations limited	2025: consultation portal operational; = 40 % incorporation	≥90 % bills consulted; ≥60 % feedback acknowledged / integrated	– consulttime.parliament.al portal – Open Government Partnership Albania Self-Assessment 2024 – AIS Open Data Albania – Venice Commission opinions	Per session	Track qualitative impact of CSO inputs on final text.
4	Transparency of legislative process	% of draft bills published ≥5 days before vote; % of sessions livestreamed	2023: many late uploads	2025: improved timeliness; streaming standard for plenary / partial for committees	≥95 % on-time uploads; 100 % plenary livestreams	– Assembly Document Database – EU Delegation Support to Parliament Project M&E 2025 – BIRN Albania Parliament Monitor	Monthly	Log delays during budget sessions and streaming interruptions.
5	Gender and minority representation	% of women MPs and committee chairs; % of minority MPs in leadership roles	2023: women 32 %; minorities under-represented	2025: women = 35 %; minorities stable (~3 %)	≥40 % women; representation proportionate to population	– Assembly member list 2025 – CEC official election results 2025 – European Commission 2025 Report Annex – UN Women Albania Gender Monitor 2025	Annual	Analyse if representation translates into policy leadership.
6	Post-Legislative Scrutiny (PLS)	Existence of PLS procedure in Rules of Procedure; # PLS reports per year	2023: pilot (WFD)	2025: rules adopted; 2 PLS reports issued (public finance, media laws)	Full PLS operational; ≥3 reports / year with follow-up	– Assembly Rules of Procedure 2024 – WFD Albania – Post-Legislative Scrutiny – EU Delegation Parliament Support Project – Institute for Democracy and Mediation (Policy Briefs)	Semi-annual	Assess follow-up actions to PLS recommendations.
7	Civil-society and media access to parliamentary proceedings	% of committee sessions open; livestream availability and transcripts	2023: limited access	2025: more open hearings; livestreams expanded to EU and Economy committees	≥75 % open hearings; transcripts within 10 days	– Parliament Communication Office Bulletins – BIRN Albania Monitor – Transparency International Albania Parliament Tracker	Quarterly	Record denied requests and restricted media coverage.
8	Government response to Parliamentary recommendations	% of Assembly recommendations acted upon within 6 months	2023: low compliance	2025: minor increase; responses	≥70 % substantive responses	– Assembly–Government Correspondence Register – Prime Minister’s Office Annual Report 2025 – European Commission 2025 Report § 2.1 – Institute for Political Studies (Albania) Oversight Analysis 2025	Annual	Distinguish symbolic from substantive responses; flag non-implementation.
9	Independence and capacity of Parliamentary Research Service (PRS)	PRS budget share (% of parliament budget); # research papers / year	2023: low capacity (<10 staff)	2025: budget +40 %; 5 papers published; peer-review ongoing	≥10 peer-reviewed papers / year; open repository	– Budget Law 2025 (Parliament line) – PRS Publications page 2025 – EU Technical Assistance to Parliament (IPA III) – University of Tirana Policy Centre	Annual	Track topic independence and citation in debates.

4.3. CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

A vibrant civil society is indispensable to the functioning of democratic institutions and is explicitly recognised by the EU as a key actor in the accession process. Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union calls for open, transparent, and regular dialogue between institutions and representative associations. The Copenhagen Criteria further underscore the importance of civil society as a guarantor of pluralism and a counterbalance to political and institutional authority.

Recent assessments present a mixed picture. The European Commission's 2024 report on Albania noted limited progress in enabling-environment reforms, including the predictability of public funding and tax incentives, and called for stronger implementation of civil-society roadmaps and consultation standards ([EC 2024 Albania Report](#)). In 2025, the Rule of Law Report – Albania underlined the importance of inclusive policymaking and civil-society participation in anti-corruption and good governance agendas ([EU Rule of Law Report 2025 – Albania chapter, PDF](#)). At the same time, several independent sources find that while legal protections for association and assembly remain in place, the sustainability of CSOs is constrained by limited domestic financing and uneven consultation practice ([Freedom House 2025 – Albania](#); [Monitoring Matrix – Albania Country Report 2024 \(published 2025\)](#)).

Media freedom—integral to participatory democracy—shows a modest improvement in 2025, with Albania rising in the RSF World Press Freedom Index (reports indicate a move to around 80th), yet structural vulnerabilities persist, including economic pressures on media outlets, conflicts of interest, and uneven regulatory enforcement ([RSF country page](#); context reporting on the 2025 index: [rtsh.al](#)). Access to information remains a cornerstone of civic oversight; the Commissioner for the Right to Information reports continued use of the appeals mechanism but also highlights challenges in timely institutional compliance ([IDP Annual Reports](#); [IDP Annual Report 2024, PDF](#)).

Monitoring in this area should focus on the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for dialogue, the transparency of funding frameworks, and the extent to which civil society contributes to policymaking and oversight. Civil-society actors, academic institutions, and media organisations should assess the inclusiveness of consultations within the PPEI, the responsiveness of ministries to civil-society proposals, and the access of independent organisations to decision-making processes.

At the same time, monitoring should evaluate the broader enabling environment for civil society, including freedom of association, access to information, and media freedom. Independent institutions such as the People's Advocate, the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection, and the Audiovisual Media Authority are critical partners in ensuring that civic participation and media pluralism are protected.

The ultimate goal of this monitoring dimension is to assess whether citizens and non-state actors are genuinely able to influence public policy and whether their engagement contributes to the transparency and legitimacy of Albania's democratic governance.

The table below operationalises these dimensions into measurable indicators for CSOs, researchers, and media organisations to track and report through the PPEI and other dialogue channels.



#	Indicator (what you measure)	Operational definition & measurement	Baseline	Latest status (Nov 2025)	Target / benchmark	Data sources & verification	Frequency	Notes for CSO use
1	Structured participation in EU-accession consultations (PPEI)	# PPEI roundtables held; # CSOs participating; % minutes/action points published within 15 days	2023: ad-hoc	2025: PPEI tables active (consultation on IPA programming and reforms); publication improving	≥8 PPEI tables/year; 100% minutes published	PPEI info: caa.gov.al – PPEI; EUD Tirana: EAS Delegation	Quarterly	Record CSO inputs and whether they appear in follow-up documents.
2	NCCS functionality and inclusiveness	# NCCS meetings/year; CSO attendance rate; % decisions or recommendations published	2023: irregular	2025: meetings held; minutes and calls public via ASCS	≥4 meetings/year; decisions online in 10 days	NCCS: amshc.gov.al/kkshc ; ASCS bulletins: ASCSDitar 2024–25 (PDF)	Semi-annual	Track whether recommendations inform policy or budget lines.
3	Public funding for CSOs (predictability & transparency)	#/value of annual ASCS grant calls; % of grants with published criteria, scores, contracts; average disbursement delay	2023: limited predictability	2025: annual calls; transparency improving but domestic funding remains modest	100% criteria/scores/contracts online; ≤30 days disbursement	ASCs strategy & calls: ASCs Strategy 2022–26 (doc) ; ASCS site: amshc.gov.al	Annual	Capture delays and contract publication; note VAT/tax issues if relevant.
4	Implementation of civil-society enabling-environment roadmap	Existence of 2024–27 roadmap; # actions implemented/total; stakeholder involvement	2019–23 roadmap lagging	2025: CSOs call for assessment & new roadmap	New 2024–27 roadmap adopted with clear M&E	EC 2024 report (§ CSO enabling env.); PDE ; CSO open letter (Feb 2025): BCSDN	Semi-annual	Map actions and responsible institutions; score implementation.
5	Access to information – compliance & appeals	% timely responses by institutions; # appeals; % appeals upheld by Commissioner	2023: mixed	2025: continued appeals; compliance uneven by sector	≥90% timely responses; decreasing appeals over time	IDP annual reports: IDP Reports ; 2024 report (PDF): IDP 2024	Quarterly	Sample 20 key institutions; track appeal outcomes.
6	Media freedom & pluralism (context indicator)	RSF rank/score; qualitative notes on ownership transparency, regulatory enforcement	2023–24: low rank	2025: ranking improves (~80th); structural risks persist	Continuous improvement; stronger AMA enforcement	RSF: Albania – RSE ; Index context 2025: RSF Index 2025 note ; local summaries: RTSH	Annual	Use as a context lens; triangulate with media monitoring.
7	Consultation quality in the Assembly (law-making)	% draft laws consulted ≥20 days; % CSO proposals acknowledged/integrated	2023: inconsistent	2025: portal active; ~40% incorporation noted by CSOs	≥90% consulted; ≥60% proposals addressed	Parliament consultation portal: konsultime.parliament.al ; OGP Albania: OGP page	Per session	Pair with Section 4.2 data to see legislative follow-through.
8	Participation breadth beyond Tirana	% of PPEI/NCCS participants from regions; # local hearings outside Tirana	Centralised	2025: regional outreach events via NRC and partners	≥30% participants from regions; ≥6 local hearings/year	National Resource Centre: resourcecentre.al ; NRC news: NRC newsfeed	Semi-annual	Track travel bursaries/translation to ensure inclusiveness.
9	CSO safety & enabling environment (incidents)	# documented intimidation/SLAPPs vs. CSOs/journalists; legal outcomes	Under-reported	2025: isolated incidents; legal follow-up unclear	Zero substantiated incidents; swift remedies	Freedom House 2025: FH Albania 2025 ; BIRN reports: Annual Report 2024 PDF	Quarterly	Record cases with dates, legal basis, outcome.
10	EU support programmes uptake (CSF & media)	# CSO projects financed; € disbursed; thematic spread	Fragmented	2025: IPA III CSF & Media Programme launched for 2024–25	Full absorption; diversified beneficiaries	EC Action Document (Albania CSF & Media 2024–25): PDF	Annual	Use to evidence sustainability and capacity-building reach.

4.4. INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The three thematic pillars of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions—electoral integrity, parliamentary performance, and participatory democracy—are interdependent dimensions of Albania’s democratic governance. Their interaction determines the overall credibility and resilience of the country’s institutions in meeting the political criteria for EU membership. A comprehensive understanding of democratic functioning therefore requires monitoring not only within each pillar but also across them, identifying patterns of progress, interlinkages, and systemic bottlenecks that may influence the trajectory of reforms under Cluster 1 – Fundamentals.

At the institutional level, the electoral process shapes the composition and legitimacy of Parliament, while Parliament, in turn, determines the framework within which elections are conducted and civil society operates. The inclusiveness and fairness of electoral competition directly affect the diversity and representativeness of the legislature, influencing the quality of deliberation, oversight, and law-making. Similarly, the extent to which Parliament maintains open procedures and constructive dialogue with civil society determines whether the voices of citizens and non-state actors can translate into policy outcomes. When one of these components underperforms, the broader system of checks and balances weakens, leading to declining public trust and reduced accountability.

The integrated analysis of monitoring results should therefore focus on three cross-cutting dimensions:

1. Accountability and Oversight – assessing how electoral integrity, parliamentary scrutiny, and civic participation collectively ensure that power is exercised transparently and responsibly. Indicators from Sections 4.1 and 4.2—such as the publication of campaign-finance data, the responsiveness of government to parliamentary recommendations, and the follow-up to post-legislative scrutiny—can be combined to measure the overall strength of horizontal accountability.
 2. Inclusiveness and Representation – evaluating whether political institutions and participatory mechanisms reflect Albania’s social diversity and guarantee equal access to decision-making. Gender representation in Parliament, the participation of women and minority groups in elections, and the regional distribution of CSO engagement (as captured in the monitoring tools) form a composite picture of representational quality. This dimension can be complemented by qualitative evidence from the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI) and the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) on stakeholder inclusion.
 3. Transparency and Public Trust – examining how openly institutions communicate, publish decisions, and engage with citizens, as well as how these practices influence confidence in democracy. Transparency indicators—such as the timeliness of legislative publication, access-to-information compliance, and CEC disclosure of electoral data—can be triangulated with public-opinion surveys to estimate trends in trust toward Parliament, the CEC, and independent institutions.
-

By analysing results along these dimensions, civil-society organisations can produce integrated scorecards that summarise the state of Albania’s democratic governance. From a policy perspective, cross-pillar analysis should pay special attention to trends that cut across institutions:

- Polarisation and political culture continue to influence both the quality of elections and the functionality of Parliament. Sustained dialogue mechanisms between political actors and civil society remain the best corrective to this trend.
- Institutional transparency shows uneven but measurable improvement; however, gaps in enforcement and communication persist. Consolidating digital tools—such as the konsultime.parlament.al portal, the CEC campaign-finance platform, and the PPEI website—could create an integrated ecosystem for public accountability.
- Gender equality and inclusiveness advance incrementally across all pillars but require stronger institutional incentives and enforcement mechanisms.
- Capacity constraints in oversight bodies and CSO funding sustainability continue to affect the consistency of monitoring and implementation.

The integrative perspective thus transforms individual monitoring exercises into a systemic evaluation of Albania’s democratic resilience. When applied consistently, this approach enables civil society, academia, and media to identify both the structural interdependencies and the leverage points for reform. It also ensures that national dialogue on EU integration moves beyond isolated technical assessments toward a comprehensive understanding of how democratic institutions function together as a coherent system aligned with European standards.

V. MONITORING PROCESS AND REPORTING CYCLE

The monitoring and analysis of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (FDI) must be carried out through a structured, cyclical process that aligns with the European Commission’s annual enlargement reporting calendar and with Albania’s own coordination mechanisms under Cluster 1 – Fundamentals. The purpose of this process is to transform the independent observations of civil society, academia, and media into credible, evidence-based inputs that contribute to official evaluation, policymaking, and public accountability.

The reporting cycle follows a twelve-month sequence, corresponding broadly to the European Commission’s timeline for the preparation of its annual country reports, typically published in the autumn.

Each stage of the cycle combines data collection, analysis, validation, and communication, ensuring that findings remain both rigorous and policy-relevant.

5.1. STAGE I – DATA COLLECTION AND OBSERVATION

Monitoring begins with continuous observation and data gathering across the three FDI pillars—electoral process, parliamentary functioning, and participatory democracy. Civil-society organisations, independent experts, and academic institutions collect both quantitative data (e.g., number of hearings, percentage of ODIHR recommendations implemented, gender ratios) and qualitative evidence (case studies, interviews, policy analyses, and media reviews).

To ensure comparability and transparency, all data should be recorded using the indicator templates presented in Section 4. For each indicator, observers document the source, date, verification method, and a short qualitative note explaining context or anomalies. Digital tools such as online dashboards or shared databases (e.g., through the National Resource Centre or the PPEI secretariat) can facilitate standardised data entry and peer review.

5.2. STAGE II – ANALYSIS AND DRAFTING

Once sufficient data have been collected, analytical teams consolidate the findings into preliminary thematic assessments. Each thematic pillar (elections, parliament, civil society) is summarised through: a) a short analytical narrative describing key trends and deviations from EU standards, b) a colour-coded or scored indicator table, and c) cross-pillar reflections aligned with the integrative dimensions outlined in Section 4.4.

This phase also includes identification of emerging issues—for example, reforms delayed by political stalemate or newly adopted regulations requiring follow-up. Draft reports should explicitly link findings to the relevant benchmarks in the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions and the Cluster 1 Screening Report, ensuring direct relevance for EU-level monitoring.

5.3. STAGE III – VALIDATION AND PEER REVIEW

Validation guarantees the credibility and neutrality of monitoring outcomes. Before publication, draft reports undergo:

1. Technical peer review by independent experts, research institutes, or academic partners.
2. Consultation with stakeholder groups, including public institutions, to verify factual accuracy while maintaining analytical independence.
3. Internal quality-assurance checks, confirming consistency of scoring and compliance with methodological standards.

Validated findings can then be consolidated into an annual Civil Society Shadow Report on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions.

5.4. STAGE IV – COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE

The results of civil-society monitoring must be systematically communicated through established dialogue structures. The principal channels are:

- The Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI), which serves as the primary interface for CSO engagement in accession monitoring and allows structured presentation of findings to government and EU representatives.
- The National Council for European Integration (NCEI), chaired by the Speaker of Parliament, where civil-society evidence can inform parliamentary oversight and political consensus on EU reforms.
- The European Commission Delegation to Albania (EUD), which regularly collects independent input from civil society for use in the annual Country Report and the Rule of Law Report cycles.

Dissemination should combine formal submission of written reports with public presentations, policy briefs, and media summaries designed for wider audiences. Open publication of data on institutional websites and social-media channels strengthens transparency and encourages constructive public debate.

5.5. STAGE V – FOLLOW-UP AND POLICY FEEDBACK

For civil-society organisations, the value of monitoring lies not only in producing evidence but in ensuring that this evidence translates into real institutional change. Once each reporting cycle concludes, CSOs should review how their findings have been received and acted upon by public authorities. This stage is an opportunity to transform monitoring results into advocacy tools that influence the national reform agenda and strengthen accountability within the EU-accession process.

CSOs are encouraged to analyse official reactions to their recommendations, track which proposals have been accepted, partially implemented, or ignored, and document these outcomes in a structured “feedback register.” This record allows organisations to measure responsiveness across time and to identify patterns of resistance or reform inertia. By sharing such assessments through the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI), the National Council for European Integration (NCEI), or thematic coalitions, civil-society actors can collectively press for stronger follow-up and maintain pressure for reform continuity.

Follow-up activities may also involve targeted advocacy campaigns, thematic policy briefs, or public discussions highlighting unresolved issues identified through monitoring. By keeping these findings visible and evidence-based, CSOs help close the accountability loop, sustain public attention on reform commitments, and reinforce the principle that democratic progress under Cluster 1 depends on continuous dialogue between institutions and society.

5.6. SYNCHRONISATION, OUTPUTS, AND USE OF RESULTS

For civil-society organisations, timing is a decisive factor in determining whether monitoring results influence policy or remain overlooked. To maximise their impact, CSOs should align their reporting efforts with the EU’s official enlargement calendar and Albania’s national reporting and consultation mechanisms. Synchronisation ensures that civil-society evidence reaches decision-makers at the precise moments when assessments, policy updates, or negotiation positions are being prepared.

The European Commission’s Country Report—published each autumn—remains the key milestone in the annual cycle. The Commission and the EU Delegation collect data and stakeholder input between January and September, finalising drafts in early autumn. In parallel, the Government’s Self-Assessment Report for Cluster 1 is compiled between February and May, while the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI) and the National Council for European Integration (NCEI) organise consultation events in the spring and early summer. Aligning civil-society reporting with these moments allows CSOs to present their findings while analysis and decision-making are still ongoing.

The table below summarises this timeline and identifies entry points where CSOs can contribute evidence, engage in dialogue, or disseminate their results.



Process / Forum	Lead Institution	Typical Period	Civil-Society Entry Point
European Commission Country Report cycle	DG ENEST / EU Delegation to Albania	January – September (drafting); publication in October	Submission of <i>CSO Shadow Report</i> and updated indicator dashboards (March–April)
Government Self-Assessment Report (Cluster 1 – FDI)	Chief Negotiator / IIWG–FDI	February – May	Participation in PPEI consultations and provision of independent data or analysis
PPEI Annual Review Forum	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs / PPEI Secretariat	June – July	Presentation of consolidated CSO monitoring results and recommendations
Parliamentary oversight on EU integration (NCEI hearings)	Parliament – Committee on European Integration / NCEI	September – October	Inclusion of civil-society evidence in hearing documentation and public sessions

Synchronisation with these processes enables civil-society actors to ensure that their findings are both visible and policy-relevant. To support this engagement, each annual cycle should yield three interconnected outputs:

1. Thematic briefs (5–10 pages) summarising developments, indicator data, and risks for each FDI pillar—Elections, Parliament, and Civil Society.
2. An Annual Civil-Society Report on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions, consolidating the three pillars and offering an integrated analysis aligned with the European Commission’s reporting logic.
3. A public monitoring dashboard, hosted by the PPEI or the National Resource Centre for Civil Society, displaying headline indicators, colour-coded progress scores, and short explanatory notes accessible to policymakers, journalists, and citizens.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The Guideline for Monitoring and Analysis of the Functioning of Democratic Institutions provides a coherent methodological and analytical framework enabling civil-society organisations, independent experts, and research institutions to observe and evaluate the state of democratic governance in Albania. Developed in the context of the EU-accession process and grounded in the principles of the Copenhagen criteria, the Guideline positions non-state actors as essential contributors to accountability, transparency, and reform ownership under Cluster 1 – Fundamentals.

Through the integration of thematic and cross-cutting indicators, the Guideline offers a structured approach to analysing electoral integrity, parliamentary performance, and participatory democracy. The monitoring tools presented in Section 4 translate abstract principles into measurable criteria that can be systematically tracked over time. When applied consistently, they allow civil-society actors to identify both progress and stagnation, to recognise emerging risks, and to formulate evidence-based recommendations for policy improvement.

The broader significance of this Guideline lies in its contribution to a culture of informed and participatory governance. By aligning their monitoring cycles with the European Commission’s reporting calendar and the national negotiation structures, CSOs can ensure that independent data and analysis directly inform policy decisions and EU assessments. The collaboration between the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI), the National Council for European Integration (NCEI), and civil-society networks transforms monitoring from a parallel exercise into a core element of Albania’s institutional learning process.

Looking forward, the Guideline should be regarded as a dynamic instrument, open to periodic revision and adaptation. As Albania advances through the accession stages, new benchmarks and policy areas may emerge—ranging from digital governance and media resilience to civic education and social accountability. These developments will require the refinement of indicators, the integration of new data sources, and the continued professionalisation of monitoring practices. Future iterations of the Guideline may also incorporate regional comparative perspectives, drawing on experiences from Western Balkan peers to benchmark Albania’s progress within the broader European context.

ANNEX 1 – CONSOLIDATED INDICATOR MATRIX FOR MONITORING THE FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Reference Sources:

- Roadmap for the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (April 2024)
- European Commission Albania Reports 2024 & 2025
- Cluster 1 Screening Report – Functioning of Democratic Institutions
- ODIHR & Venice Commission recommendations (2021–2025)
- CEC Strategic Plan 2025–2028

Table 1: Electoral Process Indicators

No.	Indicator	Definition / Measurement	Baseline (2023)	Status (2025)	Target / Benchmark	Official Source / Reference
1	Implementation of ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations	Percentage of priority recommendations implemented from 2019–2025; classification by category (legal, institutional, administrative)	Approx. 35 % implemented	Moderate progress; most legal gaps identified, reform stalled in 2024–25	≥ 75 % implementation before 2027 elections	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> , Sec. 1.1; <i>EC 2025 Report</i> , § 2.1; <i>ODIHR Final Report 2025</i>
2	Depoliticisation of electoral administration	Proportion of commissioners recruited through professional merit-based procedures; absence of party appointment	High politicisation at local level	Draft law under preparation by ad-hoc committee re-established Oct 2025	Legal depoliticisation model adopted by 2026; applied by next local elections	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> Measure 1.2.1; <i>Screening Report FDI</i> § 24
3	Electoral Code amendments	Adoption of consolidated reform law incorporating ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations	Fragmented amendments 2020	Draft amendments under parliamentary review (2025)	Comprehensive reform law adopted by 2026	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.1.2; Parliament CEI Workplan 2025
4	Biometric identification and electronic voting	Percentage of polling stations using electronic ID and counting; presence of independent audit	Limited pilot (2021–23)	Used in ≈ 60 % polling stations during 2025 elections	Nationwide deployment and audit by 2027	<i>CEC Strategic Plan 2025–2028</i> ; <i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.3.1
5	Diaspora voting mechanism	Legal framework and technical readiness for external voting	Absent	Legal feasibility study completed 2025	Operational system by 2027 parliamentary elections	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.2.3; <i>Screening Report FDI</i> § 26
6	Inclusiveness of voter registration	Accuracy of voter list; participation of minorities and PWD	Frequent inaccuracies	Improved data linkage; still limited disaggregated reporting	Comprehensive and inclusive register by 2026	<i>CEC 2025 Report</i> ; <i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.3.2
7	Campaign-finance transparency	Share of political entities submitting and publishing reports within deadlines; share audited	Inconsistent disclosures	Digital finance reporting platform operational 2025; enforcement partial	100 % on-time filing; ≥ 50 % audited	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.4.1; <i>CEC Finance Portal 2025</i>
8	Enforcement of sanctions for misuse of administrative resources	Number of verified cases investigated and sanctioned per cycle	Low enforcement	Few investigations 2025; weak sanctions	Zero tolerance; full enforcement by 2026	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.4.2; MoJ Anti-Corruption Unit 2025
9	Transparency of political-advertising expenditure	% of total campaign spend declared; verification of social-media ads	Not monitored	Monitoring pilot (CEC/AMA 2025)	100 % disclosure by 2026	<i>CEC 2025 Report</i> ; <i>AMA Election Monitoring Bulletin 2025</i>
10	Media-ownership transparency	Publication of media ownership and financing data; sanctions for concealment	Fragmented data	Draft media-ownership law under consultation	Law adopted and enforced by 2026	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 2.2.1; <i>AMA Monitoring Report 2025</i>
11	Equal access and impartiality in media coverage	Share of prime-time coverage among contestants; # of corrective actions by AMA	Imbalance favouring incumbents	Partial improvement; sanctions limited	Balanced coverage within legal thresholds	<i>AMA 2025 Report</i> ; <i>ODIHR Media Chapter 2025</i>
12	Voter-education and civic-awareness programmes	Number of CEC or CSO-led education campaigns; participant reach	Sporadic CSO initiatives	National voter-education campaign launched 2025	Annual nationwide campaigns covering all municipalities	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.5.1; <i>CEC Programme 2025–26</i>
13	Gender equality in electoral participation	% women candidates / elected; enforcement of quota	Women ≈ 32 %	Women ≈ 35 % elected 2025	≥ 40 % representation; full quota enforcement	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 2.1.3; <i>CEC Results 2025</i>
14	Electoral dispute-resolution efficiency	Average days to resolve complaints; % decisions reasoned & published	Delays common	Improved timeliness 2025; transparency uneven	100 % within legal deadlines	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.6.2; <i>CEC Complaints Register 2025</i>
15	Institutional cooperation (CEC–AMA–MoJ)	Frequency of joint coordination meetings; adoption of common guidelines	Irregular	Regular coordination since 2025 elections	Quarterly meetings; annual joint report	<i>FDI Roadmap</i> 1.7.1; <i>CEC Annual Report 2025</i>
16	Citizen trust in electoral institutions	% respondents expressing trust in CEC (survey)	40 %	48 % (2025 survey)	≥ 60 % by 2027	<i>EC 2025 Report</i> Annex Survey; <i>IDRA Poll 2025</i>
17	Alignment with EU democratic benchmarks	Overall assessment score (EC reporting)	“Moderate progress”	“Limited progress, further efforts required” (EC 2025)	“Good progress” by next cycle	<i>EC 2024 & 2025 Reports on Albania</i>

Table 2: Functioning of Parliament Indicators

No.	Indicator	Definition / Measurement	Baseline (2023)	Status (2025)	Target / Benchmark	Official Source / Reference
1	Code of Conduct for MPs adopted and enforced	Existence of updated Code; # ethics/COI cases reviewed; sanctions applied	Outdated/fragmented	New Code adopted; induction sessions held; few cases concluded	Fully operational ethics regime; reasoned decisions published	FDI Roadmap (Parl. integrity/ethics); EC Albania Report 2024/2025
2	Post-Legislative Scrutiny (PLS) institutionalised	Rule in Rules of Procedure; # PLS reviews per year; % reviews with government follow-up	Pilot format	Rule adopted; 2 PLS reviews completed	≥3 PLS reviews/year; formal gov. responses	FDI Roadmap (PLS); EC 2024/2025; SOP Accession Talks (oversight role)
3	Oversight hearings and follow-up	# committee hearings with line ministries/independent bodies; % written gov. responses within 60 days	Low/irregular	More hearings; follow-up still weak	≥8 hearings/committee/year; ≥70% timely responses	FDI Roadmap (oversight strengthening); EC 2024/2025
4	SAI (State Audit) recommendations followed up	Sub-committee or mechanism in place; # SAI findings reviewed; % actions implemented	No structured follow-up	Sub-committee constituted; initial reviews	Annual review cycle; ≥60% actions addressed	FDI Roadmap (SAI follow-up); EC 2024/2025
5	E-legislation & digital parliament workflow	% draft laws processed end-to-end digitally; public access to dossiers	Manual/partial	Pilot running; partial publishing	Full digital workflow by roadmap deadline	FDI Roadmap (digitalisation); EC 2024/2025
6	Transparency of legislative process	% draft laws & committee agendas published ≥5 working days before vote; livestream availability	Late postings common	Timeliness improving; livestreams expanded	≥95% on-time posting; plenary & key committees streamed	FDI Roadmap (transparency); EC 2024/2025
7	Public consultation quality	% draft laws consulted ≥20 days; % CSO inputs acknowledged/integrated	Sporadic consultation	Consultation portal active; ≈40% incorporation	≥90% consulted; ≥60% inputs addressed	FDI Roadmap (consultation standards); EC 2024/2025
8	CEI (Committee on European Integration) effectiveness	# CEI meetings/year; % minutes/reports published within 14 days; # acquis scrutiny sessions	Irregular & delayed	Increased frequency; backlog in postings	≥12 CEI meetings; 100% timely minutes; regular acquis scrutiny	FDI Roadmap (EU scrutiny); EC 2024/2025; Screening logic
9	Parliamentary questions & interpellations	# PQs & interpellations; % answered within statutory deadlines; quality of answers	Low responsiveness	Slight improvement; quality mixed	≥85% answered on time; reasoned replies	FDI Roadmap (accountability tools); EC 2024/2025
10	Inquiry committees' usage	# inquiries launched; # reports adopted; % recommendations acted upon	Rare	Used selectively	At least 2 inquiries/term with follow-up decisions	FDI Roadmap (inquiry powers); EC 2024/2025
11	Participation of independent institutions	# hearings with Ombudsperson, HIDAACI, AMA, IDP, etc.; % recommendations reflected in laws	Ad-hoc	More frequent hearings	Annual cycle with follow-up register	FDI Roadmap (checks & balances); EC 2024/2025
12	Parliamentary Research Service (PRS) capacity	Staff count; # research briefs/year; # trainings; citation of PRS outputs in debates	Limited unit	Staff expanded; 5 briefs in 2025	≥10 peer-reviewed briefs/year; routine citations	FDI Roadmap (capacity-building); EC 2024/2025
13	Gender equality in parliamentary leadership	% women as committee chairs/rapporteurs; trend vs. previous legislature	Women ≈32% MPs	Women ≈35%; leadership shares rising slowly	≥40% women in leadership roles	FDI Roadmap (gender/inclusion); EC 2024/2025
14	Minority and youth representation	Presence in committees/leadership; participation in hearings	Limited	Stable/under-represented	Representation proportionate to population; youth engagement formats	FDI Roadmap (inclusion); EC 2024/2025
15	Conflict-of-interest and asset-declaration oversight	# MPs filing on time; # verifications/audits by HIDAACI; outcomes	Gaps in verification	Verification stepped up; outcomes few	100% filings; systematic verification with published outcomes	FDI Roadmap (integrity); EC 2024/2025
16	Open data on law-making	Availability of datasets (bills, amendments, voting records) in machine-readable format	Minimal	Initial datasets available	Full open-data portal for legislative records	FDI Roadmap (open gov/digital); EC 2024/2025
17	Stakeholder access to committees	# CSO/academic/sector experts heard per major bill; regional representation	Centralised/Tirana-heavy	Invitations increased; still uneven	≥1 multi-stakeholder hearing per major bill; ≥30% regional speakers	FDI Roadmap (participation); EC 2024/2025
18	Coordination with accession structures	# joint CEI-IIWG/Chief Negotiator sessions; use of screening/roadmap evidence	Fragmented	More joint briefings held	Regular joint sessions; evidence-based EU scrutiny	SOP Accession Talks; FDI Roadmap (Cluster-1 linkage)
19	Publication of committee reports & impact assessments	% committee reports and RIAs posted with bills; timeliness	Low	Improving slowly	100% reports/RIAs published with drafts	FDI Roadmap (quality of law-making); EC 2024/2025
20	Citizen engagement channels	Availability and usage of petitions/e-participation tools; # submissions addressed	Limited	Pilots underway	Functioning e-petition; annual review of submissions	FDI Roadmap (civic tools); EC 2024/2025

Table 3: Civil Society and Participatory Democracy Indicators

No.	Indicator	Definition / Measurement	Baseline (2023)	Status (2025)	Target / Benchmark	Official Source / Reference
1	Functionality of PPEI round tables	Number of PPEI meetings/year; % minutes and action points published ≤15 days; participation by CSOs, academia, media	Ad-hoc, irregular publication	Regular PPEI tables; publication improving	≥8 round tables/year; 100% minutes on time; multi-stakeholder participation	FDI Roadmap – participation in EU integration; PPEI guidance/records
2	NCCS operation and follow-up	Number of NCCS meetings/year; % decisions/recommendations published; % items with documented follow-up	Irregular meetings; limited follow-up	≥4 meetings held; minutes online; variable follow-up	≥4 meetings/year; 100% decisions online ≤10 days; follow-up note per item	FDI Roadmap – CSO dialogue; NCCS/ASCS framework
3	Adoption and implementation of the CSO Development Roadmap (next cycle)	Existence of 2026–2030 Roadmap; % actions implemented vs. planned; annual progress note	Prior roadmap expired; gaps in M&E	Drafting initiated with CSO input	New Roadmap adopted 2026; ≥50% actions implemented by 2027	FDI Roadmap – CSO enabling environment; EC assessments
4	Transparency of public funding for CSOs (ASCS and line ministries)	% grant calls with published criteria, scores, contracts; average disbursement delay (days)	Partial transparency; delays common	Transparency improved; delays persist in some lines	100% criteria/scores/contracts online; ≤30 days average delay	FDI Roadmap – financing; ASCS strategy & annual calls
5	VAT/tax facilitation for CSOs	Legal basis in force; % of eligible projects receiving VAT/tax relief; guidance published	Partial/uneven	Implementation pending/partial	Full operationalisation by fixed deadline; annual guidance updated	FDI Roadmap – fiscal framework for CSOs; MoF/ASCS notices
6	CSO registration and legal predictability	Time to register (days); existence of unified/digital registry; % refusals overturned on appeal	Procedures fragmented	Registry modernisation underway	Fully digital registry; predictable timelines	FDI Roadmap – legal environment; MoJ registry reform
7	Quality of public consultation across government	% draft policies/laws consulted ≥20 days; % CSO inputs acknowledged/integrated; publication of consultation reports	Uneven practice	Consultation portal active; ~40% incorporation in sample	≥90% consulted; ≥60% inputs addressed/acknowledged	FDI Roadmap – participation; Law on Public Consultation; government portal
8	CSO participation in EU-accession policy processes	Number of CSO submissions to IIWG-FDI/PPEI per semester; % referenced in official notes	Sporadic	Submissions more regular; referencing uneven	≥10 substantive submissions/semester; referencing in official syntheses	FDI Roadmap – linkage to negotiations; SOPs for talks
9	Regional inclusiveness of participation	% participants from outside Tirana in PPEI/NCCS events; # outreach sessions held in regions	Centralised in Tirana	Regional outreach initiated	≥40% regional share; ≥6 regional hearings/year	FDI Roadmap – inclusiveness; NRC for Civil Society
10	Access to Information (ATI) compliance	% ATI requests answered within statutory deadline; # appeals; % appeals upheld by Commissioner	Mixed compliance	Compliance ~70%; appeals increasing	≥90% on-time responses; declining appeals trend	ATI legal framework; Commissioner (IDP) annual reports
11	Proactive transparency of institutions	% institutions publishing budgets, contracts, consultation reports, and datasets proactively	Patchy	Gradual improvement; gaps remain	≥80% institutions meet proactive publication checklist	FDI Roadmap – transparency; open government standards
12	Media freedom – structural context	Position/score in recognised index; qualitative notes on ownership transparency and state advertising rules	Low ranking; weak ownership transparency	Ranking improves; structural risks persist	Continuous improvement; ownership & state-advertising rules enforced	FDI Roadmap – media; national media regulatory framework
13	AMA monitoring and enforcement	# monitoring reports during election and off-cycle; # sanctions; timeliness of decisions/publication	Limited sanctioning	Monitoring expanded; enforcement variable	Regular reports; proportionate sanctions; timely publication	FDI Roadmap – media oversight; AMA reports
14	Safety of CSOs and journalists	# incidents of intimidation, SLAPPs; % with effective legal remedy or closure	Under-reported	Few documented cases; follow-up inconsistent	Zero substantiated incidents; swift legal response	FDI Roadmap – guarantees for civic space; Ombudsperson/justice data
15	Participation of vulnerable and minority groups	# targeted consultations/briefs; # policy measures influenced; accessibility of venues/materials	Limited outreach	Targeted events increasing	Annual plan delivered; evidence of policy uptake	FDI Roadmap – inclusiveness; anti-discrimination framework
16	CSO role in anti-corruption and integrity policies	# CSO inputs to integrity/anti-corruption strategies; % reflected in final documents	Ad-hoc	More systematic involvement	Documented uptake in policy drafts	FDI Roadmap – accountability; Anti-corruption strategies
17	Open data for civic oversight	# datasets published relevant to FDI (parliament, CEC, finance, media); API/machine-readable availability	Sparse	Datasets increasing; format mixed	Core FDI datasets open, timely, machine-readable	FDI Roadmap – digital transparency; open data policy
18	Impact pathway: CSO evidence to policy change	# CSO recommendations accepted/partially accepted per cycle; time to decision; published justification	Not tracked	Tracked by several networks; no standard format	Annual impact register with responses and timelines	FDI Roadmap – feedback loops; PPEI follow-up notes
19	Training and capacity-building (state & CSO)	# trainings delivered to line ministries on consultation; # CSO trainings on evidence methods	Fragmented	Programmes running	Annual training plan delivered; evaluation results public	FDI Roadmap – capacity for participation; ASCS/EUD programmes
20	Public service media governance	Compliance with independence and governance standards; # board decisions published	Concerns on independence	Governance reforms under discussion	Governance compliance; decisions published	FDI Roadmap – media governance; relevant acts

INTERPRETATION

- All indicators correspond to actions and milestones explicitly mentioned in the FDI Roadmap and the European Commission 2025 Report.
 - Each entry identifies the responsible institution (eg. CEC, Parliament, AMA, MoJ) and expected timeframe for compliance within the EU negotiation context.
 - The matrix is formatted to align with Cluster 1 performance tracking, allowing direct cross-referencing with the IIWG–FDI monitoring template.
-

ANNEX 2 – LIST OF RELEVANT LEGAL ACTS AND EU STANDARDS

I. European Union Legal and Policy Framework

Category	Legal/ Policy Reference	Relevance to FDI Monitoring
Treaty Provisions	Treaty on European Union (TEU) – Articles 2, 6, and 10	Establishes the EU’s foundational values of democracy, rule of law, and participation; defines representative democracy and pluralism as accession preconditions.
	Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) – Title II (Provisions on Democratic Principles)	Defines institutional principles of democratic participation and representation relevant to governance benchmarks.
Accession Principles	Copenhagen Criteria (1995) – European Council Conclusions	Core political criteria for candidate states: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights, and protection of minorities.
Institutional Standards	European Commission – Enlargement Methodology (2020)	Reaffirms “Fundamentals First” principle; FDI falls under Cluster 1 benchmarks.
	European Council Negotiating Framework for Albania (2022)	Defines monitoring obligations and the role of civil society; includes the FDI Roadmap as part of opening benchmarks.
Electoral Standards	Venice Commission – Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (2002, revised 2021)	Reference document for assessing electoral systems, administration, and integrity.
	OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Guidelines (4th Edition, 2021)	Provides benchmarks for free, fair, and transparent elections.

	EU Council Conclusions on Democracy and Elections (2019)	Calls for stronger civil-society monitoring and transparency in electoral management.
Parliamentary Standards	Venice Commission – Report on Parliamentary Oversight (CDL- AD(2018)011)	Defines best practices in legislative oversight and accountability.
	European Parliament Resolution on Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy (2022/2041(INI))	Sets standards for openness, inclusiveness, and follow-up on oversight.
Civil Society and Participation	EU Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries 2021–2027	Establishes enabling-environment benchmarks for CSO participation and sustainability.
	European Democracy Action Plan (COM/2020/790)	Outlines EU commitments to strengthen civic space and media freedom.
Media and Access to Information	EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive (Directive (EU) 2018/1808)	Provides benchmarks for independent regulation, pluralism, and transparency of media ownership.
	EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR – Regulation (EU) 2016/679)	Relevant for access-to-information standards and personal-data handling by institutions.
	Directive (EU) 2019/1024 on Open Data and Public Sector Information (PSI Directive)	Framework for proactive publication and data transparency benchmarks.

II. Albania – National Legal and Institutional Framework

Category	National Act / Decision / Strategy	Relevance to FDI Monitoring
Constitutional Provisions	Constitution of the Republic of Albania (1998, as amended) – Articles 1–7, 45–46, 77–83	Guarantees democratic governance, separation of powers, freedom of association and assembly, and parliamentary oversight functions.
Electoral Legislation	Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania (Law No. 10019, 29.12.2008, as amended 2020)	Core legal framework for elections; subject to ongoing reform per ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations.
	CEC Decision No. 4/2021 and CEC Regulation No. 6/2023	Operationalise electronic voter identification and campaign-finance reporting.
Parliamentary Rules	Rules of Procedure of the Assembly (Decision No. 166, 15.12.2023)	Updated provisions on Post-Legislative Scrutiny, hearings, and stakeholder consultation.
	Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament (Decision No. 12/2024)	Establishes standards of integrity and conflict-of-interest prevention.
Electoral Standards	Decision of Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 749, 19.12.2018	Defines organisation and functioning of structures responsible for EU accession negotiations.
	DCM No. 422, 10.06.2020	Regulates the role and composition of Inter-Institutional Working Groups (IIWGs).
	Prime Minister’s Order No. 69, 2021 – Establishment of the Chief Negotiator’s Office	Establishes the operational coordination structure for Cluster 1.

Civil Society Legislation	Law No. 8788/2001 “On Non-Profit Organisations” (as amended 2022)	Legal basis for establishment, registration, and operation of CSOs.
	Law No. 146/2014 “On Notification and Public Consultation”	Sets procedural standards for public participation in policymaking.
	Law No. 119/2014 “On the Right to Information”	Provides the basis for access-to-information monitoring indicators.
	CEC Decision No. 4/2021 and CEC Regulation No. 6/2023	Operationalise electronic voter identification and campaign-finance reporting.
Media Regulation	Law No. 97/2013 “On Audiovisual Media in the Republic of Albania” (as amended 2020)	Legal framework for AMA oversight and media pluralism.
	Law No. 8503/1999 “On the Right to Information on Official Documents” (partly replaced by Law 119/2014)	Historical basis for transparency standards.
Institutional Strategies and Plans	Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions (April 2024)	Core national benchmark document under Cluster 1; defines reform measures, deadlines, and responsible institutions.
	National Strategy for Development and European Integration (NSDEI 2022–2030)	Aligns political reform priorities with EU fundamentals.
	Strategy for the Development of Civil Society 2022–2026 (ASCS)	Defines CSO funding, capacity-building, and participation objectives.

	CEC Strategic Plan 2025–2028	Details actions for biometric systems, campaign-finance transparency, and voter education.
	Parliamentary Reform Roadmap 2024–2026 (WFD–EUD Support)	Outlines institutional capacity-building measures, digitalisation, and PLS implementation.
Access and Oversight Bodies	Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection (IDP) – Annual Reports	Source for compliance data and appeals tracking.
	Ombudsperson (People’s Advocate) – Annual Reports	Source for civic-space and human-rights-related complaints.

III. Process and Reference Documents

Document / Framework	Relevance
Cluster 1 Screening Report – Functioning of Democratic Institutions (2023, external version)	Identifies Albania’s compliance gaps and opening benchmarks for negotiations.
European Commission – Albania Report 2024 (SWD(2024) 690 final)	Annual assessment of progress under Fundamentals cluster.

European Commission – Albania Report 2025 (SWD(2025) 690 final)	Updates on reforms in elections, parliament, and civil society; provides latest benchmarks.
2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on Albania	Provides context for transparency, accountability, and democratic-function indicators.
Standard Operating Procedures for the Process of Accession Talks (published 2023)	Defines institutional workflow and documentation standards for accession.
Albanian Institutional Structures for Accession Negotiations	Outlines functional mapping of Chief Negotiator’s Office, IIWGs, and PPEI.
Negotiations Process Phases for Albania (2024)	Visual summary of negotiation stages and inter-institutional coordination.

ANNEX 3 – GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Term / Acronym	Definition / Explanation
AA / SAA	Association Agreement / Stabilisation and Association Agreement: the contractual framework governing Albania–EU relations and the foundation of pre-accession obligations.
AMA	Audiovisual Media Authority: independent regulatory body overseeing audiovisual broadcasting, media licensing, and campaign-media compliance in Albania.
ASCS	Agency for the Support of Civil Society: public agency managing grant schemes and capacity-building for non-profit organisations.
Benchmark	A specific condition or milestone to be fulfilled for progress in accession negotiations. Cluster 1 benchmarks include adoption of the FDI Roadmap and demonstration of sustained democratic performance.
CAA	Commissioner for the Accession / Chief Negotiator’s Office for EU Accession: leads coordination of negotiation structures and prepares Albania’s self-assessment and reports for each Cluster.
CEC	Central Election Commission: independent constitutional institution managing elections, campaign finance, and electoral data.
Cluster 1 – Fundamentals	The first thematic cluster in the EU-accession negotiation framework, encompassing Chapters 23 and 24 (Rule of Law), Public Administration Reform, Economic Criteria, and Functioning of Democratic Institutions.

Code of Conduct (Parliament)	Ethical framework regulating Members of Parliament's behaviour, conflicts of interest, and transparency obligations; adopted in 2024.
CSO	Civil Society Organisation: any non-profit, non-governmental actor, including associations, foundations, and think-tanks, engaged in advocacy, service delivery, or policy research.
DGENEST	The Directorate-General for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Commission takes forward the EU's Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood policies, that started operating since 1 February 2025 and has replaced the former DG NEAR.
DGNEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission; responsible for enlargement policy and monitoring from, and been replaced by DGENEST.
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe, 1950); sets binding standards on rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and assembly.
EC (European Commission)	The EU's executive institution responsible for assessing candidate countries' progress and issuing annual enlargement and rule-of-law reports.
EEAS	European External Action Service: the EU's diplomatic service, including EU Delegations in candidate countries.
EUD Tirana	Delegation of the European Union to Albania: the EU's permanent diplomatic representation managing assistance and monitoring progress on reforms.
FDI Roadmap	Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: Albania's official strategic plan defining commitments, actions, indicators, and deadlines under Cluster 1.

Freedom House	International NGO producing the annual Freedom in the World index; often cited as a contextual indicator of democratic performance.
HIDAACI	High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interests: monitors asset declarations and integrity of public officials.
IIWG-FDI	Inter-Institutional Working Group on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions: national coordination body within Cluster 1 responsible for monitoring FDI Roadmap implementation.
IPA III	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III (2021–2027): EU's financial instrument supporting candidate countries' reforms and capacity building.
IDP	Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data; monitors enforcement of access-to-information law.
MEFA	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs: lead institution coordinating EU integration and functioning of the PPEI Secretariat.
NCCS	National Council for Civil Society: advisory body facilitating dialogue between CSOs and government, chaired by the Minister responsible for civil-society relations.
NCEI	National Council for European Integration: high-level forum chaired by the Speaker of Parliament, bringing together institutions, political parties, and CSOs for EU-integration dialogue.
NPEI	National Plan for European Integration: Albania's medium-term policy and legislative plan for <i>acquis</i> alignment.

ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE): monitors elections and issues recommendations forming part of EU political criteria.
OGP	Open Government Partnership: global initiative promoting transparency, participation, and accountability; Albania joined in 2011.
PPEI	Partnership Platform for European Integration: participatory mechanism for consultation between state institutions and civil-society actors on the EU-accession process.
PLS (Post-Legislative Scrutiny)	Parliamentary function to evaluate the implementation and impact of adopted laws; introduced in Albania's Rules of Procedure (2024).
PRS	Parliamentary Research Service: internal unit providing evidence and analysis to parliamentary committees.
RIA (Regulatory Impact Assessment)	Analytical tool assessing the economic, social, and environmental effects of proposed legislation.
Roadmap Action/ Measure	Specific reform item within the FDI Roadmap defining responsible institution, timeline, and indicator of achievement.
RSF	Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières): organisation producing the World Press Freedom Index.
Rule of Law Report	Annual European Commission report evaluating justice systems, anti-corruption frameworks, media freedom, and checks and balances in all EU Member and candidate states.

SAI	State Audit Institution: constitutional body auditing public finances and reporting to Parliament.
SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures)	Government document detailing the steps and coordination mechanisms for accession talks, including the role of IIWGs and CSO consultation.
TEU/TFEU	Treaty on European Union and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: primary EU treaties defining governance, competencies, and enlargement provisions.
Transparency Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative measure used to assess openness of institutional processes (e.g., publication deadlines, data availability).
Venice Commission	European Commission for Democracy through Law: Council of Europe advisory body providing legal opinions on constitutional and electoral matters.
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy: UK-based parliamentary-development organisation supporting Albanian parliamentary reforms.

Annex 4 – REFERENCES AND SOURCES

A. European Union Documents and Reports

- European Commission (2025). Albania 2025 Report – Commission Staff Working Document. SWD(2025) 690 final, Brussels, October 2025. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2025_en
- European Commission (2024). Albania 2024 Report – Commission Staff Working Document. SWD(2024) 366 final, Brussels, November 2024.
- European Commission (2025). Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on Albania. COM(2025) 560 final, Brussels, July 2025.
- European Commission (2023). Cluster 1: Fundamentals – Draft Screening Report (external version). DG NEAR, Brussels.
- European Commission (2022). Negotiating Framework for Albania. Council of the European Union, Brussels, July 2022.
- Council of the European Union (2019–2024). Conclusions on Enlargement and the Stabilisation and Association Process.
- European Parliament (2025). Resolution on Albania’s Progress in EU Integration. P9_TA(2025)0155, Strasbourg, 10 July 2025.
- European Commission (2021). Revised Enlargement Methodology – Clusters and Fundamentals First Approach. COM(2020) 57 final.
- DG NEAR (2024). Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) Indicative Strategy Paper for Albania (2021–2027).
- European Commission / DG NEAR (2024). Action Document for Civil Society Facility and Media Programme (2024–2025).

B. Council of Europe and International Standards

- Council of Europe, Venice Commission (2002). Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters. CDL-AD(2002)023rev.
- Venice Commission (2019, 2021, 2024). Opinions on the Electoral Code of Albania. CDL-AD(2019)025; CDL-AD(2021)019; CDL-AD(2024)011.
- Council of Europe (2018). Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 on Civil Participation in Political Decision-Making.
- European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Council of Europe, 1950.
- European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985). Council of Europe Treaty Series No. 122.

- OSCE / ODIHR (2025). Final Report – Parliamentary Elections, Albania, 11 May 2025. Warsaw, August 2025.
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF) (2025). World Press Freedom Index 2025 – Albania Country Profile. <https://rsf.org/en/country/albania>
- Freedom House (2025). Freedom in the World 2025 – Albania Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/albania/freedom-world/2025>

C. National Legal and Institutional Framework

- Constitution of the Republic of Albania (1998, consolidated amendments).
- Law No. 10019/2008, “Electoral Code of Albania,” last amended 2020; new reform pending 2025–26.
- Law No. 119/2014, “On the Right to Information.”
- Law No. 146/2014, “On Public Notification and Consultation.”
- Law No. 25/2018, “On the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA).”
- Law No. 45/2016, “On the Organisation and Functioning of the Parliament of Albania (Rules of Procedure),” revised 2024.
- Law No. 8788/2001, “On Non-Profit Organisations,” with reform package under preparation (2025).
- Decision of Council of Ministers No. 749/2018, On the Organisation and Functioning of Inter-Institutional Working Groups for EU Accession Negotiations.
- Decision of Council of Ministers No. 422/2020, On the Duties of the Chief Negotiator for EU Accession and Coordination Structures.
- Decision of Council of Ministers No. 240/2021, On the Establishment of the Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI).
- Decision of Council of Ministers No. 738/2021, On the Establishment of the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS).
- ASCS Strategy for Civil Society Support (2022–2026). Tirana, 2022.
- CEC Strategic Plan 2025–2028. Approved by Decision No. 31, Tirana, March 2025.
- Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament. Adopted by Assembly Decision No. 10/2024.
- State Audit Institution (SAI) Annual Reports (2023–2025). Tirana, published on <https://klsh.org.al>.
- FDI Roadmap (Functioning of Democratic Institutions), approved April 2024, Inter-Institutional Working Group – Cluster 1.

Annex 4 – REFERENCES AND SOURCES

D. Institutional and Procedural Documents

- Albanian Institutional Structures for Accession Negotiations. Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2024.
- National Council for European Integration (NCEI) Rules of Procedure. Parliament of Albania, 2024.
- National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) 2023–2027. Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2023.
- Negotiation Process Phases for Albania – Steps of the Process (Final Presentation). Government of Albania, 2024.
- Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI) Guidelines and Terms of Reference. Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2023.
- Standard Operating Procedures for the Process of Accession Talks for the Republic of Albania. Government of Albania, 2024.

E. Supporting Analytical and Research Sources

- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN). Media Monitoring and Civic Space Reports (2024–2025). <https://birn.eu.com/>
- CDI Commentary. National Parliament and the Reform Agenda 2024–2027. April 2025 https://cdinstitute.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Commentary_National-Parliament-and-RA.pdf
- IDRA Polls (2025). Citizen Trust and Governance Survey. Tirana, April 2025.
- Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) (2025). Policy Briefs on Parliamentary Accountability and CSO Engagement. <https://idmalbania.org/publications/>
- Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development – Albania Country Report 2024. Published by BCSDN / IDM Albania, March 2025.
- Open Government Partnership (OGP) Albania – Self-Assessment Report 2024. <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/albania/>
- Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania. Annual Report on CSO Participation and Dialogue 2025. <https://resourcecentre.al/>
- Transparency International Albania (TIA). Parliamentary Integrity and Public Procurement Transparency Reports (2024–2025).

- UN Women Albania. Gender and Leadership Monitor 2025. Tirana, May 2025.
- Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). Parliamentary Reform Roadmap 2024–2026 – Albania. London/Tirana, 2024.

F. Online Official Resources

- Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS): <https://amshc.gov.al>
- Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA): <https://ama.gov.al>
- Central Election Commission (CEC): <https://kqz.gov.al>
- Chief Negotiator's Office / CAA: <https://caa.gov.al>
- Commissioner for the Right to Information (IDP): <https://idp.al>
- Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEFA): <https://puneteshme.gov.al>
- National Council for Civil Society (NCCS): <https://amshc.gov.al/kkshc/?lang=en>
- Parliament of Albania: <https://www.parlament.al>
- Partnership Platform for European Integration (PPEI): <https://caa.gov.al/en/the-european-integration-partnership-platform>