

UNITED NATIONS COOPERATION FRAMEWORK ALBANIA 2027-2031



Republic of Albania
Council of Ministers



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Joint Statement

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the United Nations reaffirm their shared commitment to work in close partnership to advance Albania's sustainable development and European integration objectives. This cooperation is guided by Albania's national priorities and international commitments, as articulated through:

- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and Albania's nationalised Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),¹
- **National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022-2030**,²
- **Albania's accession process with the European Union**,³ including the negotiation chapters of the EU acquis, the Economic Reform Programme, and the Reform Agenda and Growth Plan for the Western Balkans;⁴ and
- **Albania's international and regional obligations**, including commitments under international human rights treaties, labour standards, environmental agreements and Council of Europe instruments.

The **Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania - United Nations Cooperation Framework**⁵ will guide the work of the United Nations system in Albania over the Cooperation Framework period 2027-2031. Building on the achievements and lessons of past cooperation, the Framework represents a joint commitment to support Albania's accelerated EU accession as a key national political and developmental priority while ensuring that reforms deliver inclusive, equitable and sustainable benefits for all people. The Cooperation Framework positions the United Nations as a strategic, upstream partner to Albania's EU-aligned

1. With details stipulated in SASPAC, Roadmap for Achieving the SDGs in Albania (draft), September 2024

2. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania, National Strategy for Development and European Integration (NSDEI 2030), 2022-2030, approved by Council of Ministers Decision no 33/2023 (dated 22.02.2023), published in Official Gazette no 31/2023. See <http://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2023/02/22/88>

3. The UN Cooperation Framework, with the SDGs as the core, people-centered objective, and the EU Accession process have different mandates and dynamics. The SDGs are a universal, long-term commitment grounded in UN norms. In the same time the EU Accession, key national priority of Albania, is understood as a key accelerator of SDG progress.

4. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania, National Plan for European integration 2024-2026 adopted by Council of Ministers decision no 11 January 2024, https://qbz.gov.al/share/ATALLWjYTEGmi_QvHHbjkQ, Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/growth-plan-western-balkans_en, EU Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-technical-assistance/reform-and-growth-facility-western-balkans_en#key-milestones, it is expected that above-mentioned strategic documents, which expire during the CF implementation will be replenished or replaced by other framework documents.

5. This Cooperation Framework is based upon the following guidance: UNSDG, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, [Internal guidance, June 2019](#).

transformation - supporting institutional capacity, policy coherence, evidence-based decision-making and the implementation of international norms and standards. It reflects a shared understanding that sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and good governance are mutually reinforcing and essential to Albania's long-term prosperity and resilience. Through this Framework, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the United Nations commit to working together across three priority areas:

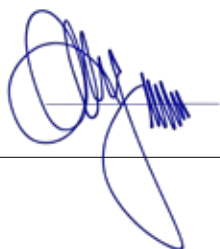
- Inclusive human capital development;
- Sustainable economic transformation and inclusive green growth; and
- Governance, justice and human rights.

The Cooperation Framework underscores a shared responsibility to strengthen national ownership, enhance coordination with the European Union, International Financial Institutions and other partners, and ensure that Albania's reform trajectory remains people-centred, rights-based and resilient to economic, social and environmental risks. By signing this Cooperation Framework, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the United Nations endorse its strategic priorities, outcomes and implementation modalities, and reaffirm their joint commitment to work together in partnership to support Albania's development, reform ambition, and the well-being of all people.

The Council of Ministers
of the Republic of Albania



Ms. Albana Koçiu
Deputy Prime Minister



The United Nations
Country Team Albania



Ms. Ingrid Macdonald
United Nations Resident Coordinator



Signatures Page

In witness thereof, the undersigned, being duly authorized, have signed the United Nations Cooperation Framework for the period 2027-2031 on 29 June, 2026 in Tirana, underscoring their joint commitment to its priorities and planned results.

UN Agency	Name and Title	Signature
FAO	Raimund JEHLE Representative (FAO)	<i>Raimund Jehle</i>
ILO	Claire HARASTY Director DWT/Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe (ILO)	<i>Claire Harasty</i>
IOM	Alma JANI Head of Office (IOM)	<i>Alma JANI</i>
ITU	Jaroslav PONDER Head of ITU Office for Europe (ITU)	<i>Jaroslav Ponder</i>
OHCHR	Francesco MOTTA Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia Regional Hub for Europe and Central Asia (OHCHR)	<i>Francesco Motta</i>
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UNDP	Randi DAVIS Resident Representative (UNDP)	<i>Randi Davis</i>
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UNFPA	Justine COULSON Country director (UNFPA)	Justine Coulson
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UNICEF	Murat SAHIN Representative (UNICEF)	
UNIDO	Solomiya OMELIAN Chief of the Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia (UNIDO)	<u>Solomiya Omelian</u>
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Executive Summary

1. Context and Country Progress Towards the 2030 Agenda

As an upper-middle-income country with EU membership negotiations open across all six clusters, targeting conclusion by 2027 and accession by 2030, Albania is navigating an ambitious reform agenda while confronting important structural challenges, with an estimated 40,000 people emigrating annually, exerts growing pressure on labour markets, social protection and public services. A youth NEET rate of 22.2%, persistent skills mismatches, low industrial productivity, significant climate vulnerability and territorial disparities compound these pressures. Social inequalities remain pronounced: nearly half of all partnered women experience gender-based violence, child poverty stands at 26.6%, and Roma and Egyptian communities face poverty rates exceeding 70%. Albania has nonetheless made measurable progress over the past decade, achieving an HDI of 0.796, placing it 67th globally, and ranking 45th of 167 countries on the 2025 SDG index with a score of 75.2. Important gains have been achieved in health, energy transition, digitalisation and institutional reform that are real. Yet challenges persist in quality education, decent work, environmental governance and equitable service delivery. The Cooperation Framework (CF) 2027–2031 responds to this dual reality, seizing the EU accession opportunity while promoting reforms that are inclusive, equitable and grounded in international human rights standards. It is informed by the Final Evaluation of the UNSDCF 2022–2026, a comprehensive 2025 Country Analysis identifying 13 interconnected development leverage points, and targeted consultations with over 500 stakeholders.

2. Translating Country Analysis and Evaluation Evidence into Cooperation Framework Priorities

The CF positions SDG acceleration as the core development objective, with EU-aligned reforms as a primary accelerator. The UN complements EU financing and conditionality with normative leadership, rights-based safeguards and a people-centred lens. The CF sharpens the UN's dual role in accelerating the SDGs while supporting EU-aligned transformation as a key national priority - positioning Albania's reform process as a means of delivering measurable improvements in people's lives, particularly for those most at risk of being left behind.

The CF represents a deliberate strategic recalibration from the previous cycle. It seeks to elevate the UN from project delivery toward **upstream policy partnership, institutional strengthening and co-implementation** with national systems, embedding scalability and exit readiness so that solutions can be absorbed into national programmes and EU-financed investments. Structurally, the framework has been significantly streamlined - from 4 outcomes and 22 outputs to **3 strategic outcomes and 11 outputs** - improving coherence and sharpening the UN's collective contribution.

3. Theory of Change for the Cooperation Framework Priorities

The central proposition of the CF is that **if Albania invests in i) inclusive human capital development, advances a competitive, ii) inclusive and green economic transformation,**

and iii) consolidates governance, justice and human rights institutions in line with SDG acceleration as well as international standards, then the country will achieve resilient, inclusive and people-centred development outcomes that are sustainable beyond accession. The three priority areas are explicitly designed to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing - human

capital investments increase competitiveness and economic participation; economic transformation generates resources for social investment; and strong governance systems ensure that both are delivered transparently, equitably and sustainably. Progress in one area accelerates progress in the others, while failure in any one can undermine the entire reform agenda.

4. Cooperation Framework Priority Areas and Outcomes

Priority Area	Outcomes	Outputs	UN Agencies
Priority Area 1: Inclusive Human Capital Development	Outcome 1: By 2031, people in Albania – especially women and girls and those at risk of being left behind – have strengthened human capital, including improved learning outcomes, future-ready skills, and decent work prospects, as well as equitable access to quality, inclusive, and gender-responsive health, social, and child protection systems, contributing to demographic resilience and social cohesion.	Output 1.1: High-Quality & Inclusive Health Services Output 1.2: Inclusive & Transformative Education Output 1.3: Future-Ready Skills for 21st Century Jobs Output 1.4: Next Generation Social Systems Output 1.5: Prevention of and Protection from Violence Against Women and Children	ILO, IOM, UN Women, UNDP, UNECE, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO
Priority Area 2: Sustainable Economic Transformation & Inclusive Green Growth	Outcome 2: By 2031, Albania advances sustainable and inclusive economic transformation, achieving higher productivity, competitiveness, and value creation through green and digital business models, promoting low-emission, climate-resilient, gender-responsive, and inclusive development in line with EU accession and international commitments.	Output 2.1: Green Growth & Just Transition Output 2.2: Competitiveness & Private Sector Support Output 2.3: Climate-Resilient Development & Natural Resources and Agrifood Systems	FAO, ILO, ITU, UN Women, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO
Priority Area 3: Governance, Justice & Human Rights	Outcome 3: By 2031, Albania's institutions demonstrate greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability, uphold human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality, and are more effective in preventing and combating corruption, organized crime and cybercrime, while strengthening safe, orderly and rights-based border, migration and diaspora management, in line with EU and international standards.	Output 3.1: Inclusive, Effective, Accountable and Gender-Responsive Institutions Output 3.2: Justice, Human Rights, Gender Equality and Civic Space Output 3.3: Migration, Asylum, Statelessness and Diaspora Governance	ILO, IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UN Women, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS

5. Delivering on the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle

The **Leave No One Behind principle** is operationalised as both a normative commitment and a practical delivery approach. Albania's inequalities are structural and intersecting, linked to disparities in geography, gender, income, ethnicity, disability, age and migration status. Roma and Egyptian communities (poverty rates exceeding 70%), rural and remote populations, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ individuals, migrants and forcibly displaced persons, youth at risk of exclusion, older persons and women-headed households require distinct targeted, sustained and multidimensional responses. LNOB is embedded as a cross-cutting operational lens that shapes how priorities are defined, how results are pursued, and how progress is measured across all three Priority Areas - through disaggregated data, equity-focused monitoring, targeted territorial approaches and strengthened municipal capacities to reach those furthest behind.

6. Cross-Cutting Priorities and Enablers

A set of cross-cutting enablers runs through all three priority areas, ensuring inclusiveness, coherence, effectiveness and sustainability across all outcomes. A **human rights-based approach** constitutes the normative foundation of the entire CF, grounding all outcomes in Albania's international treaty obligations, UPR recommendations and EU fundamental rights standards. **Gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE)** are embedded across all outcomes, supported by a dedicated Gender Equality Accelerator as a system-wide coordination mechanism. **SDG localisation and territorial cohesion** address Albania's stark urban-rural disparities by strengthening municipal governance and EU fund absorption capacity. **Digitalisation, innovation and emerging technology** are promoted as systemic enablers -

with explicit safeguards against digital divides, cybersecurity risks and data-protection gaps. **Foresight, evidence generation and data systems** support INSTAT and line ministries in producing disaggregated, SDG-aligned statistics. **Civil society organisations** are embedded as core governance actors with structured engagement mechanisms, recognising their essential roles in rights monitoring, accountability and community-level action.

7. Critical Assumptions and Anticipated Risks

The Cooperation Framework is built on **a set of core assumptions** that ensure its coherence and effectiveness, including sustained national commitment to EU accession and SDG progress, political and macroeconomic stability, and continued trust in the UN's upstream expertise and neutrality. It also relies on strong national coordination mechanisms and a shared commitment to national ownership, supported by predictable access to EU and international funding, as well as an enabling environment for human rights and civic space. Recognizing that these conditions may shift, the Framework embeds adaptive management to allow timely recalibration. **Key risks are actively managed** through targeted mitigation measures. Potential slowdowns in EU accession reforms are addressed through strengthened policy engagement and regular review cycles, while the risk of reverting to substitution-based approaches is mitigated by clear commitments to capacity transfer and national ownership. Planned Cooperation Framework results will be costed as a part of the CF's Funding Framework and the JEC and UNCT will work to identify financing strategies and approaches to address funding gaps. Challenges related to shrinking civic space and rising anti-rights narratives are countered through strategic advocacy, UN convening power, and support to civil society, alongside measures to address human

rights and gender backlash through institutional strengthening and early-warning systems. Finally, broader macroeconomic, geopolitical, and climate-related shocks are mitigated through foresight and scenario planning, shock-responsive social protection systems, contingency financing, and integrated disaster risk reduction.

8. Partnerships and Financing Strategy

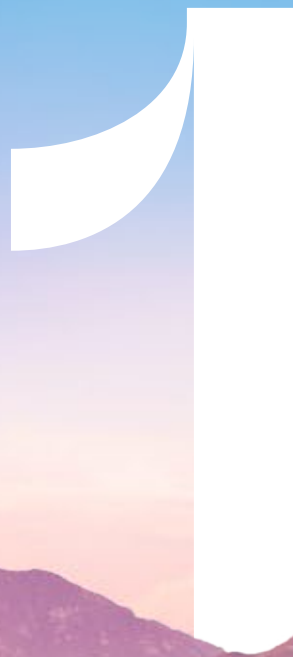
All 20 UN signatories of the CF, participate with a combined envelope exceeding 227 million USD over 2027-2031. As of 1 June 2026, the secured funding for the CF stands at approximately 84 million USD of core and non-core contributions. The partnership architecture rests on five complementary pillars mentioned below. The **Government of Albania** acts as central partner through the CF Joint Executive Committee (JEC) and SASPAC coordination. The SDG Acceleration Fund will continue to support integrated and coherent resource mobilisation and allocation for innovative and joint cooperation efforts focused on SDG achievement and EU accession. **The Fund complements the core budgets of the UN system agencies.** The **European Union** remains the largest donor; the UN may provide complementary normative, institutional and rights-based value to EU-financed reforms through IPA III and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. **International Financial Institutions** — the World Bank, EBRD and EIB — remain the primary source of large-scale investment financing, with the UN contributing upstream policy, safeguards and inclusion to enhance sustainability. **Private sector partnerships** focus on SME competitiveness, ESG standards, responsible business conduct and blended finance instruments - particularly for women and youth entrepreneurs. **Civil society, academia and independent media** serve as essential partners for accountability, rights monitoring, evidence generation and inclusive public dialogue throughout the CF cycle.

9. Oversight, management & implementation modalities

The CF establishes a simplified, coherent and strategically-oriented oversight architecture designed to reduce transaction costs and prioritise strategic engagement over internal compliance. The **Joint Executive Committee (JEC)**, co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator, provides strategic leadership and conducts annual CF reviews, with a structured tripartite UN–EU–Government platform supporting coordinated accession reform dialogue. **Outcome Groups** have been redesigned as strategic coordination platforms — focused on joint analysis, evidence-based policy positioning and coordinated government engagement — supported by the Gender Thematic Results Group, the INSTAT–UN Joint Data Group and the UN Communications Group as specialised cross-cutting bodies.

Implementation is guided by the principle of **adaptive management**. Annual performance reviews compare achievements against expected results and identify where strategies or partnerships require adjustment. The country analysis is updated annually to keep programming responsive to Albania’s rapidly evolving reform trajectory. A formal midterm review may be commissioned at mid-cycle, and foresight and scenario planning are embedded as ongoing analytical functions to identify emerging risks and new opportunities— from shifts in accession pace to economic shocks or climate-related events — and enable timely course corrections. A final independent evaluation will assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, with explicit attention to how human rights, gender equality and LNOB principles were integrated throughout.

Context and Country Progress Towards the 2030 Agenda



1.1 Country Context

Albania is an upper-middle-income country, with which - as of November 2025 - the European Union (EU) has opened the membership negotiations for all six clusters. The country aims to conclude negotiations by 2027 and become an EU member by 2030.

Delivering on this would require bold, coordinated action to boost competitiveness and productivity, strengthen public sector effectiveness, and build resilience against climate, economic, and demographic risks. Albania has made important strides in economic growth, poverty reduction, and institutional reform over the past decade. Aligning with the EU acquis and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans⁶ offers a historic opportunity to deepen reforms, accelerate structural transformation, and improve the quality of life for all Albanians. **The country has made significant strides in aligning its policies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, demonstrated by its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ongoing reforms to meet EU accession requirements.**⁷ However, Albania continues to face persistent challenges in governance, economic diversification, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability that require coordinated efforts to achieve sustainable development priorities.

Albania's economy has demonstrated resilience over the past decade, with average annual gross domestic product growth of around 3–4 per cent, driven primarily by tourism, construction, energy and services, broadly in line with trends across the Western Balkans. At the same time, structural constraints continue to shape development outcomes, including high informality (estimated at 30–35 % of gross domestic product), limited economic diversification, low productivity, and continued reliance on remittances - equivalent to around 9–10 % of gross domestic product - and foreign investment, while youth unemployment remains elevated at around 20 % and women's labour force participation, at 52 % in 2023, lags behind regional averages.⁸ Sustained out-migration of younger cohorts,⁹ similar to other parts of the region, is expected to increase pressure on pension, healthcare and social protection systems¹⁰ over the medium to long term. Albania is also highly exposed to climate change impacts - including floods, droughts, heatwaves and forest fires - while pursuing ambitious commitments to carbon neutrality by 2050 and expanded renewable energy, building on its hydropower base, alongside efforts to address energy security during drought periods, air pollution, biodiversity loss, waste management and pressures on water resources.¹¹

6. Albania's National Reform Agenda 2024-2027 adopted by a Council of Ministers Decision no 621, date 10.10.2024.

See <https://saspac.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Dokument-Politik-Agjenda-Kombetare-e-Reformave-2024-2027-2.pdf>.

7. Guided by a 2030 EU membership vision the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania has adopted a number of strategic reforms including National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2030 (NSDEI), Document of Priority Policies 2024 – 2026, Economic Reform Program 2025-2027, Crosscutting Strategy on Decentralization 2023-2030, Digital Agenda and other relevant sectorial strategies and national action plans.

8. EBRD 2025 "Albania country Strategy 2025-2030" (Approved by Board of Directors on 26 February 2025)

9. A National Youth Strategy 2022-2029, was adopted in October 2022. See https://riniafemijet.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SKR29_Anglisht.pdf

10. National Social Protection Strategy 2024 – 2030, adopted on 13.03.2024. <http://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2024/03/13/152>

11. Albania has adopted a National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2023-2030. See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-01/permbledhje_en_clear_8.6.2023.pdf

Albania is undergoing demographic changes marked by population decline, low fertility, population ageing and sustained emigration-trends that are broadly shared across the Western Balkans and much of South-Eastern Europe. As in neighboring countries, outward migration-estimated at around 40,000 people annually and concentrated among younger and skilled cohorts- is driven by a combination of labour market conditions, governance perceptions and aspirations for higher living standards within the European Union, contributing to labour shortages and longer-term growth constraints.¹² Demographic indicators reflect this transition: the youth dependency ratio declined to 24.0 % from 30.4 % in the 2011 Census, while the old-age dependency ratio increased to 30.4 % from 16.7 %, ¹³ broadly in line with regional ageing dynamics. Albania's population stood at 2,363,314 as of 1 January 2025,¹⁴ a 1.2 % decline from the previous year. Territorial and social disparities persist, with rural poverty rates roughly twice those of urban areas and small and medium-sized enterprises facing barriers to finance, technology and market access, compounded by climate-related shocks such as floods and droughts that affect agricultural productivity and economic stability. **Social inequalities** remain pronounced and intersectional, disproportionately affecting women and girls, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, rural populations and LGBTIQ+ individuals. Despite comprehensive legal frameworks, gaps in implementation and service

coverage remain,¹⁵ including in relation to women's economic participation,¹⁶ unpaid care burdens and gender-based violence, which affects an estimated 47 % of women aged 18–74 who have been in a relationship.¹⁷ Although the at-risk-of-poverty rate declined to 19.2 % in 2024, children, women, and marginalised groups continue to face higher risks of poverty, school dropout, child labour and limited access to quality education and health services.¹⁸

Within this context, the European Union accession process, regional cooperation, digital transformation, renewable energy potential and a growing tourism sector provide strong foundations to accelerate progress toward the SDGs, provided reforms continue to focus on strengthening governance, promoting inclusive economic transformation, reducing inequalities, reinforcing social protection systems and advancing climate adaptation and mitigation through coordinated action across government, development partners, civil society, the private sector and communities. In line with ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation,¹⁹ relevant social security conventions, the European Pillar of Social Rights and EU acquis requirements,²⁰ Albania will progressively ensure universal access to adequate, comprehensive and sustainable social protection across the life cycle. Social protection is recognized not only as a poverty reduction instrument but as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of inclusive economic development, labour market participation and social cohesion.

12. UNFPA 2025 "Albania's demographic challenge: Emigration and low birth rates, risk or opportunity?". <https://albania.unfpa.org/en/news/albanias-demographic-challenge-emigration-and-low-birth-rates-risk-or-opportunity>

13. INSTAT 2025. <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/statistical-literacy/the-population-of-albania/#:~:text=From%20the%20comparison%20between%20the,16.7%20%25%20in%20the%202011%20Census>

14. INSTAT 2025. <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/demography-and-social-indicators/population/publication/2025/population-of-albania-on-1st-january-2025/>

15. EC Report Albania 2025. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/fe9138b7-90fe-4277-a12c-3a03f6d1957f_en?file-name=albania-report-2025.pdf

16. National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030 available at <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/02/national-strategy-for-gender-equality-2021-2030>.

17. INSTAT / UN Women 2018 data. National population-based survey 2018 "Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania". https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Albania/Attachments/Publications/2019/05/print_brief_eng_24.pdf

18. INSTAT 2025. <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/gsf15zlg/silc-2024.pdf>.

19. ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202).

20. Especially Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment.



Photo: UNDP Albania

1.2 Progress Toward Sustainable Development

Albania's human development outcomes reflect noticeable progress alongside persistent disparities.

In 2024, the Human Development Index reached 0.796, placing the country in the high human development category (67th of 191 countries), while the inequality-adjusted HDI stood at 0.706, underscoring remaining gaps in health, education and income distribution. The Gender Development Index of 0.981 (2023) indicates broadly balanced outcomes in basic human development, although significant gender gaps persist in economic participation, political representation

and exposure to violence. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integrated into national planning, including the National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022–2030, with progress monitored through an inter-institutional mechanism under the Deputy Prime Minister's Office. Overall performance remains positive: the 2025 SDG Dashboard ranks Albania 45th out of 167 countries, with a 6.6-percentage-point improvement since 2015 and an overall score of 75.2, above the Eastern Europe and Central Asia average.²¹

Progress has been strongest in health and well-being, gender equality,²² clean water

21. Sustainable Development Report 2025. Available at <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org>

22. In November 2025, Albanian Parliament adopted the new Gender Equality Law which strengthens protections against discrimination, aligns national legislation with EU standards, and promotes equal participation in public and private sectors. UN Women, 2025, Country Gender Equality Profile Albania, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/cgep_web_final.pdf



and sanitation, and in energy transition, infrastructure and digitalisation, reflecting sustained reforms and investment. At the same time, challenges persist in zero hunger, education quality and decent work, with uneven agricultural productivity and nutrition outcomes, learning and inclusion gaps relative to European Union and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development benchmarks, and continued labour market informality, youth unemployment and skills mismatches.²³ Several environmental goals remain off track due to high climate exposure, pressure on natural resources and gaps in monitoring and enforcement, while governance-related SDGs

show mixed performance, combining advances in public administration reform, digitalisation, anti-corruption and judicial transformation with ongoing implementation, capacity and data constraints. As highlighted in the 2018 Voluntary National Review, strengthening data systems, coordination and sustainable financing, alongside greater private sector engagement and the application of Responsible Business Conduct and Human Rights Due Diligence, will be critical as Albania advances on its European Union accession path and uses the SDGs as a framework for inclusive and resilient development.²⁴

23. National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030 available at <https://ageing-policies.unece.org/api/public/attachments/view/56e00f58-84d4-448d-b3f2-d42616a972e8>

24. See <https://albania.un.org/en/46592-voluntary-national-review-sustainable-development-goals>.

1.3 Vulnerability

United Nations Cooperation Framework priorities and strategies focus on addressing vulnerability and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Vulnerabilities are often intersectional and overlapping, affecting multiple groups simultaneously and requiring tailored, multidimensional responses. Albania has ratified major international human rights treaties and adopted anti-discrimination legislation. However, significant implementation gaps persist, resulting in exclusion from essential public services and exposure to discrimination for many individuals and groups. The unavailability of updated, disaggregated data hampers efforts to identify disparities and design targeted interventions. Marginalised groups face compounded disadvantages stemming from discrimination, geographic isolation, socioeconomic status, gender, age, disability, and ethnicity.

Women and girls experience multiple forms of gender-based discrimination and violence.²⁵ Gender-based violence affects nearly half of all women.²⁶ Furthermore, digital violence is rising, fueled by AI-generated abuse, anonymous online activity, and gaps in legal protection while recently adopted laws on gender equality (November 2025) and on prevention of violence against

women (January 2026) are yet to be translated into practice. Recent evidence shows that 41% of women aged 18+ in Albania have experienced at least one form of technology-facilitated violence, with young and educated women (18–24) at the highest risk.²⁷ Women in rural areas face additional barriers in accessing education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making opportunities. The burden of unpaid care and domestic work disproportionately falls on women, limiting their economic participation.²⁸ Women and girls in Albania experience intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination rooted in persistent gender stereotypes, unequal power relations, and deeply embedded social norms that limit their autonomy and opportunities. They face structural barriers across multiple domains, including the labor market, where occupational segregation and wage disparities remain pronounced - as well as unequal access to resources, property, and justice.

Gender and age are major drivers of inequality, intersecting with other factors to compound vulnerability.²⁹ Despite progress through gender equality strategies and international commitments, women - especially rural women, Roma women, women with disabilities, and older women - remain disproportionately affected by social exclusion, violence, and limited access to services and opportunities. Addressing these

25. In January 2026 the Parliament of Albania adopted a new Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence which strengthens protection for survivors of violence wherever it occurs—at home, in the workplace, in public spaces, and online. See <https://albania.un.org/en/309050-united-nations-albania-congratulates-albania-adoption-new-law-prevention-and-protection>

26. European Commission 2025 Report on Albania identifies violence against women and domestic violence as a critical concern with high levels of under-reporting due to social norms and stigma. Albania report 2025 (page 39) https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2025_en https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/fe9138b7-90fe-4277-a12c-3a03f6d1957f_en?filename=albania-report-2025.pdf

27. UN Women 2023. THE DARK SIDE OF DIGITALIZATION: Technology-facilitated violence against women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Source https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/research-tf-vaw_full-report_24-january2.pdf.

28. See the Country Gender Equality Profile, which is a joint EU-UN product, available at <https://albania.un.org/en/306716-country-gender-equality-profile-albania>.

29. See https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/cgep_infographic_eng.pdf.

challenges requires enhanced data collection and analysis, targeted policies, strengthened anti-discrimination enforcement, expanded social protection coverage, and coordinated efforts among government, civil society, development partners, and communities to ensure inclusive development and that no one is left behind in Albania's progress toward the SDGs.

Children, particularly those from poor households, Roma and Egyptian communities, and rural areas, face heightened risks of poverty, malnutrition, school dropout, child labor, and violence.³⁰ Early childhood development services remain underdeveloped, affecting long-term educational and health outcomes. **Roma and Egyptian communities** experience systemic and historical discrimination, resulting in exclusion from education, formal employment, adequate housing, and healthcare. Poverty rates within these communities exceed 70%, and social stigma perpetuates cycles of marginalization. **Persons with disabilities** encounter significant barriers, including inaccessible infrastructure, limited inclusive education opportunities, workplace discrimination, and inadequate social protection. Stigma and attitudinal barriers further limit their full participation in society. **LGBTIQ+ individuals** face discrimination, social exclusion, hate speech, and violence, with limited legal protections and support services. Social stigma hinders their access to healthcare, education, employment, and justice. **Youth**, particularly those not in education, employment, or training (NEET rate 22.2% in 2024), face limited opportunities, driving emigration.³¹ Barriers include skills mismatches, insufficient vocational training, and limited access to financing for entrepreneurship. **Older persons** struggle with inadequate pensions, limited healthcare services, and social isolation, leaving many vulnerable to poverty and exclusion.

Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons encounter protection gaps, limited access to services, legal uncertainties, and integration challenges. The growing influx of third-country nationals to address Albanian labour market gaps across agriculture, construction, and tourism sectors has heightened the imperative to safeguard their fundamental rights and protect them from exploitation, including human trafficking, involvement in illicit activities, and sexual exploitation. **Rural populations** experience geographic disadvantage, with limited access to quality education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic opportunities, perpetuating urban-rural disparities.

Small farmers, informal producers, and micro-enterprises remain vulnerable due to **weak integration into value chains** and **limited compliance with quality and certification standards**. Fragmentation, inconsistent supply capacity, and gaps in aggregation prevent many from accessing demand from tourism, retail, and export markets. As a result, growth in tourism and construction often increases imports rather than local production, excluding rural households and small enterprises from growth. Without improvements in standards, infrastructure, supplier coordination, and industrial upgrading, these groups remain exposed to market fluctuations and excluded from Albania's economic transformation. **Low-income urban and peri-urban populations** face rising vulnerability from rapid urbanisation, rising housing costs, and limited access to stable employment. Internal migration has concentrated vulnerable households in peripheral and informal settlements with poor access to services, infrastructure, and formal jobs. Employment is often informal or seasonal, with income instability and limited social protection, disproportionately affecting rural women, while rising housing and

30. See Eurostat 2024. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

31. See INSTAT 2024. https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/en/DST/START__TP__LFS__LFSV/NewLFSY004/table/tableViewLayout1/



Vromoneri's natural hot springs, also known as Sarandopori, chosen as a pilot area for the #EU4Nature project due to their ecological value.

utility costs increase poverty risks. Without stronger integration into productive employment and improved access to affordable housing and services, urban growth risks deepening socio-economic disparities. **Workers employed in labour-intensive manufacturing and low-value production** face growing insecurity due to declining competitiveness and limited industrial upgrading. Sectors such as textiles, footwear, and basic processing are affected by rising labour costs, exchange-rate pressures, and limited

movement into higher-value activities. Job losses disproportionately affect low- and semi-skilled workers with few retraining options, increasing reliance on seasonal construction and tourism work and reinforcing employment insecurity and income volatility.

UN Development System Support to the 2030 Agenda

2



2.1 Translating Country Analysis And Evaluation Evidence Into Cooperation Framework Priorities

The 2027–2031 United Nations Cooperation Framework (CF) represents a deliberate recalibration of the United Nations’ partnership with Albania at a pivotal moment in Albania’s development trajectory.

It is explicitly designed as a response to two mutually reinforcing sources of evidence: **the Final Evaluation³² of UNSDCF 2022–2026³³** and **the UN Albania country analysis³⁴**. The proposed CF is firmly rooted and well-aligned with the priorities of **key pillars of Albania’s strategic development and human rights framework**, including:³⁵

- National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022 - 2030,³⁶ further detailed in a series of national sectoral strategies,
- National Reform Agenda 2024-2027,³⁷

- The Economic Reform Programme (ERP), 2025-2027,³⁸
- Albania’s international commitments to Agenda 2030 and SDGs,³⁹ as well as the obligations under international conventions such as CRC, CEDAW, CRPD, and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).⁴⁰

As an upper-middle-income country and EU member-candidate, Albania is entering a phase where **SDG achievement depends on the quality, inclusiveness and sustainability of structural reforms**. While EU acquis alignment is the dominant national reform driver, SDG acceleration provides the **people-centred, equity-focused and cross-sectoral lens** through which these reforms translate into tangible development outcomes. In addition, while the analyses show that roughly 35% of SDG targets are not directly covered by the EU Accession process and requirements,⁴¹ their achievement provides a supportive context regarding the demands of

32. UN System Albania, Final Evaluation of UNSDCF 2022–2026, October 2025, https://www.dropbox.com/scl/ff/cyhhkovf25w9vedanp31vp/Final-Evaluation-Report_Albania-UNSDCF-2022-2026_Final_071025.pdf?rlkey=rcn6l2uidkhqmy0j7qt3n5xrq&dl=0.

33. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and United Nations Albania (July, 2021) “United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Albania 2022-2026”.

34. UN System Albania, Albania 2025 Country Analysis, Brief, January 2026, <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/ff/owsp5ksbitrkylo2gft/Country-Analysis-Albania-Brief-January-2026-ver3.docx?rlkey=wdgthnjbiprln5jdszkfidol&dl=0>.

35. Further details can be found in the alignment section of Annex 1: CF Result Framework.

36. Republic of Albania, National Strategy for Development and European Integration (NSDEI 2030), 2022-2030, approved by Council of Ministers Decision no 33/2023 (dated 22.02.2023), published in Official Gazette no 31/2023. See <http://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2023/02/22/88>. NSDEI2030 also commits to the “harmonisation of the implementation of NSDEI 2030 with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”

37. As adopted by Council of Ministers Decision no 621, date 10.10.2024. Source <https://saspac.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Dokument-Politik-Agjenda-Kombetare-e-Reformave-2024-2027-2.pdf>.

38. Republic of Albania, ECONOMIC REFORM PROGRAMME, 2025-2027. Council of Ministers, 15 January 2025. <https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Economic-Reform-Programme-2025-2027.pdf>.

39. See SASPAC, Roadmap for Achieving the SDGs in Albania (draft), September 2024, and <https://www.unglobalaccelerator.org/albanias-global-accelerator-roadmap-towards-jobs-and-social-protection-just-transitions>.

40. In line with accepted recommendations of the Albania Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and other human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms. Ratified Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) by Albania.

41. UN Montenegro (2018), Unravelling Connections: EU Accession and Agenda 2030, case of Montenegro.



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the EU acquis.⁴² **The Cooperation Framework, therefore, positions SDG acceleration as the core development objective, with EU-aligned reforms as a key accelerator for achieving the 2030 Agenda in Albania.** Responding to this reality, the Cooperation Framework sharpens the **UN’s dual role in i) accelerating the SDGs** through supporting **ii) EU-aligned transformation** as a key national priority.⁴³ The UN positions itself as a strategic partner supporting acquis-aligned reforms while ensuring they **deliver measurable SDG results,**

particularly for those at risk of being left behind. The UN will, in particular, support SDGs that are not directly part of the EU acquis. This duality is not a trade-off but a strength: it allows the UN to complement EU financing and conditionality with normative leadership, safeguards for inclusion, and a people-centred lens on reform outcomes.

In practical terms, this repositioning translates into a clear set of strategic shifts.⁴⁴ The UN refocuses its engagement on i) **system-level**

42. Series of stakeholder consultations of the draft 2027-2031 Cooperation Framework (January 2026).

43. Directly responding to all 3 sub-recommendations of Recommendation 2 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting to further reinforce integration between the SDG agenda and EU accession priorities.

44. Directly responding to sub-recommendation of Recommendation 1 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting that UN should prioritize upstream policy advice, technical assistance and institution building, and gradually de-prioritize direct implementation or adjust its implementation models.

policy dialogue, institutional strengthening and normative leadership, aligned with national EU reform priorities and grounded in international human rights, labour and equality standards. It supports ii) a **gradual transition from direct implementation to co-implementation**, prioritising national and local capacity transfer while retaining the UN’s credibility, neutrality and practical grounding where rapid delivery or sensitive reforms require it.⁴⁵ The CF places strong emphasis on iii) **scalability, sustainability and exit readiness**, ensuring that UN-supported solutions move beyond pilots and donor dependency and can be absorbed into national systems, financed through domestic or EU resources, and sustained beyond UN support. A central lesson from the previous CF cycle was the need for **greater strategic focus and clearer articulation of how UN support contributes to transformation**. The new Cooperation Framework responds by consolidating interventions around a limited number of **high-impact, interconnected outcomes explicitly designed to accelerate SDG progress**, while reinforcing national reform priorities and EU convergence. A clearer, more compelling theory of change strengthens accountability, improves external resonance and positions the CF as a unified SDG acceleration framework rather than a collection of sectoral projects.

The evaluation of the previous CF also highlighted the need for stronger coherence, clearer prioritisation and better alignment with Albania’s evolving financing landscape. The new CF responds

by explicitly leveraging **EU accession instruments** and the **National Reform Agenda under the Growth Plan**, as vehicles to secure national uptake and scale-up of UN-supported reforms. Rather than operating in parallel, UN interventions are designed to reinforce these frameworks, helping institutions meet EU standards while strengthening implementation quality and social impact. A central vehicle in this regard is the **Albania SDG Acceleration Fund**,⁴⁶ which is positioned as a key delivery and financing platform of the Cooperation Framework. The Fund is used to drive **integrated, multi-agency programming**, strengthen cross-UN alignment, reinforce transparency and accountability, and enhance national ownership. It provides a mechanism to channel resources toward a limited number of high-impact, scalable interventions aligned with CF priorities, reducing fragmentation and transaction costs for Government counterparts.

Innovation is also positioned as a driver of systemic change, not an add-on. The UN will continue driving systemic change by embedding innovation at the heart of its initiatives supporting Albania’s transition toward a knowledge-based economy and avoiding the so called ‘middle-income trap’.⁴⁷ The CF embeds public-sector innovation across interventions, supporting new ways of working in policy design, service delivery, data use, and financing. This includes responsible use of digital tools, experimentation with new delivery and partnership models, and adaptive management approaches that allow

45. As stipulated in Recommendation 1 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation, this should be done through a phased approach, and not an abrupt shift away from direct implementation as the UN’s operational presence and co-implementation role are essential not only for maintaining credibility and visibility, but also for ensuring that policy advice is grounded in practical realities.

46. Directly responding to sub-recommendation ii) of Recommendation 7 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation to elevate the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund into a nationally co-owned, multi-stakeholder platform aligned with the EU Reform Agenda and national SDG targets. Ensure it supports both acquis-related reforms and SDG agenda outside of EU Accession framework. Strengthen the Fund’s results orientation and policy leverage by focusing on transformative system-level change with scaling potential and advancing innovations. Position the Fund as a contributor to building absorption capacity for EU funds disbursement.

47. The “middle-income trap” is when a country reaches middle-income status but then stalls in growth, unable to transition to high-income because it loses competitiveness in low-wage industries yet hasn’t built enough productivity, innovation, and higher-value capabilities to compete with advanced economies. For more information on role of innovation in upper middle-income countries see for instance World Bank (2024), World Development Report - Middle-Income Trap. Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2024>.

reforms to evolve in response to evidence and risk. These efforts are complemented by a strong emphasis on **boosting national (central and local) institutional capacity**, particularly in planning, procurement and results-based management, recognising that the effectiveness of EU financing depends as much on institutional capability as on available resources.⁴⁸

The new Cooperation Framework is informed by the UN country analyses⁴⁹ developed in line with updated UN analytical guidance, which offer a systemic diagnosis of Albania's development trajectory and are explicitly aligned with EU accession chapters, SDG acceleration pathways, and UN programming principles. The analyses prioritized **13 interdependent leverage points**, selected based on systemic impact, EU acquis relevance, SDG acceleration potential, financing implications and effects on vulnerable groups. Crucially, these challenges were analysed as **interconnected systems**, rather than isolated problems, directly informing the structure of the Cooperation Framework. The context analysis shows that Albania's development constraints and opportunities cluster around **three mutually reinforcing systems**, which now form the backbone of the Cooperation Framework's three Priority Areas and outcomes:

↘ **The first system**
Human Capital and Social Inclusion

Demonstrates that demographic decline and migration pressures are symptoms of deeper structural issues: unequal access to quality education and health care, gaps in social protection especially for vulnerable populations,

skills mismatches, youth unemployment, nutrition challenges, and persistent gender inequalities, including gender-based violence and violence against children. **Priority Area 1: Inclusive Human Capital Development** responds by strengthening life-cycle-based, gender-responsive education, health, social protection and skills systems that enhance equity, employability, productivity and social cohesion.

↘ **The second system**
Green Growth and Rural Transformation

Highlights how a relatively weak industrial base, underdeveloped rural economies, low-productivity agrifood systems, and growing environmental and climate vulnerability constrain competitiveness and resilience, particularly affecting those at risk of being left behind. **Priority Area 2: Sustainable Economic Transformation and Inclusive Green Growth** therefore moves beyond narrow environmental interventions to support SME upgrading, responsible business conduct, green and digital transitions, rural and agrifood transformation, and climate resilience, in a gender-responsive manner, explicitly leveraging EU accession, the Reform and Growth Plan and Berlin Process agendas to enable national uptake and scale-up.

↘ **The third system**
Governance and Systemic Enablers

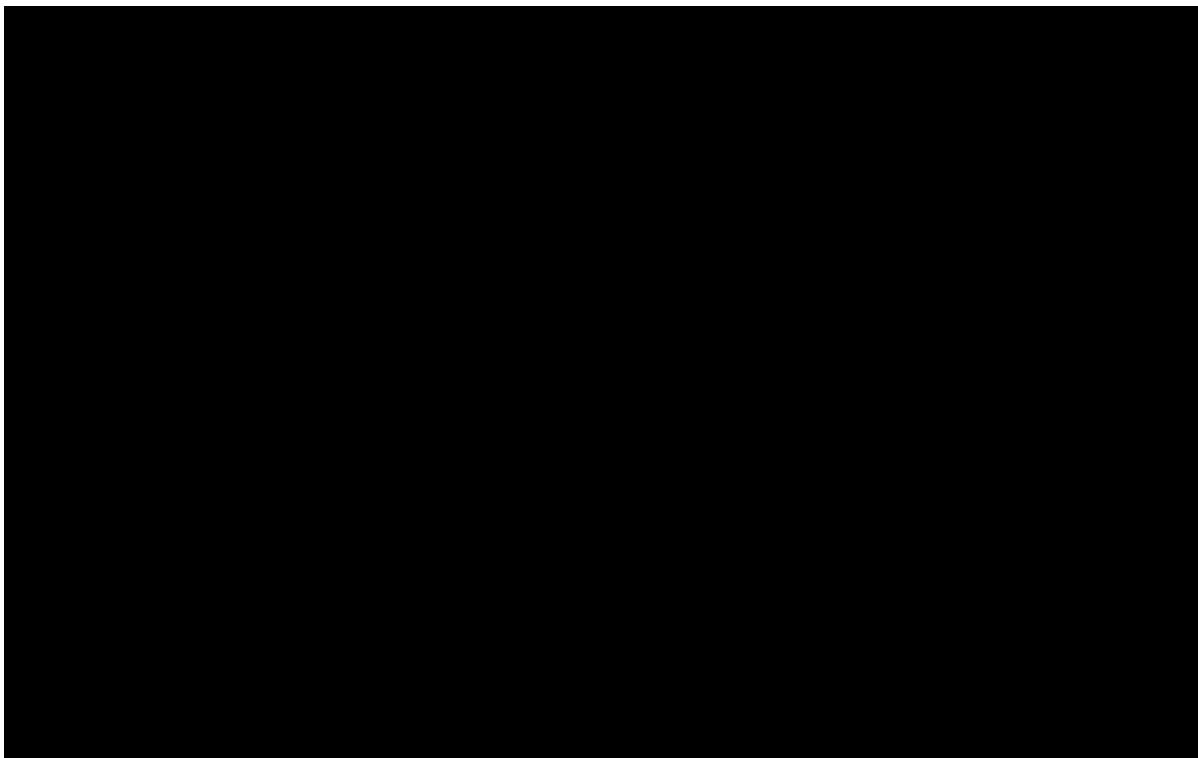
Emerges as the foundational enabler of all other reforms. The context analysis shows that corruption, weak rule of law, limited accountability, low trust and a widening digital divide directly undermine service delivery,

48. EC Country Report have frequently raised concerns about the absorption capacity of EU funding, particularly for local government authorities. See EC Report Albania 2024, pp 24. Source: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf.

49. UN System Albania, Albania 2025 Country Analysis, Brief, January 2026, <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/owsp5ksbitrkylo2gft/Coun-try-Analysis-Albania-Brief-January-2026-ver3.docx?rlkey=wdgthnjpbiprln5jdszfkfidol&dl=0>.



Schoolchildren marking the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.



outcomes,⁵⁰ the new CF has been significantly streamlined to enhance focus and coherence in line with the UN80 reform. While the previous framework **included four outcomes and 22 outputs**, the revised CF now concentrates on **three strategic outcomes and 11 outputs**, recognizing progress so far and reflecting both lessons learned and the priority areas identified collectively by the UNCT.

Such more targeted structure not only reduces overlap and complexity but also strengthens the UN's ability to deliver as one, ensuring that resources, expertise, and partnerships are deployed more effectively to support Albania's sustainable development priorities.

Box 1: Inclusive CF preparatory process 2025-2026

The development of the Cooperation Framework follows a mandatory, system-wide methodology.⁵¹

In Albania, this has included the completion of an Independent Evaluation of the current Cooperation Framework, a comprehensive Country Analysis, and joint prioritization leading to the formulation of an emerging theory of change and results framework. These steps are underpinned by inclusive consultations with national institutions, civil society, development partners, academia, media, vulnerable groups and other stakeholders, and will culminate in formal endorsement and signature by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the United Nations.

Over 2025-2026, UNCT has conducted extensive consultations. In total, around 600 stakeholders actively participated, out of more than 800 reached, through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and structured discussions. These included UN staff and leadership (special attention was given to the active involvement of non-resident agencies), central government institutions, municipal authorities, development partners, civil society organizations, and representatives of national human rights institutions, think tanks, academia, the private sector, media, youth, women, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities and other actors. This breadth of engagement has been central to shaping the emerging priorities of the new Cooperation Framework. A key cornerstone emerging from last year's discussions has been the development of a focused joint initiative on EU Accession Support and SDG Acceleration, financed by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania through the SDG Acceleration Fund. This joint effort, developed with national institutions, is closely aligned with Council of Ministers' 2030 Agenda and EU accession priorities and is coordinated with SASPAC and the Office of the EU Chief Negotiator. The preparation of CF was closely coordinated with the development of the Country Programme Documents of UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP, including the joint consultations with key partners, contributing to alignment, efficiency and coherent presentation of UN work.

50. As stipulated in Recommendation 3 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation.

51. UN DCO (2019), UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance, <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-guidance>.

2.2 Theory of Change for the Cooperation Framework Priorities

Albania stands at a decisive moment in its development trajectory. The country's accelerated path toward European Union accession has become the dominant force shaping national reforms, public investments and institutional transformation.

EU accession is not only the top national policy goal, but the central organising framework through which Albania seeks to modernise governance, strengthen the economy, improve social outcomes and align fully with European Union values, standards and systems. At the same time, Albania continues to face deep-rooted structural challenges—demographic decline and outward migration, skills mismatches, uneven productivity, climate and disaster risks, territorial disparities and persistent inequalities—that cannot be resolved through *acquis* alignment alone. The UN Cooperation Framework is therefore built on the understanding that **successful EU accession and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing and should advance together**. Accelerated reforms can translate into lasting progress if they are implemented with strong institutions, inclusive economic opportunities and sustained investment in people. Conversely, human capital development, economic transformation and social cohesion depend on governance systems that are effective, accountable, rights-based and trusted by citizens. The Theory of Change, therefore, rests on an integrated, system-wide approach that simultaneously strengthens **people, economy and institutions, with the EU accession process acting as an accelerator**.⁵²

The central proposition of this Cooperation Framework is that if Albania invests in i) inclusive human capital development, ii) advances a competitive, inclusive and green economic transformation, and iii) consolidates governance, justice and human rights institutions in line with SDG acceleration needs and EU and international standards, then the country will achieve resilient, inclusive and people-centred development outcomes that are sustainable beyond accession.

➤ **First**

Progress depends on inclusive human capital development across the life-cycle

Albania's demographic pressures, skills shortages and labour-market constraints make investment in people an urgent national priority. If education, health, social protection and care systems are strengthened to be more equitable, gender-responsive and shock-resilient—particularly for those at risk of being left behind—then learning outcomes will improve, labour-force participation will increase, poverty and exclusion will decline, and social cohesion will be reinforced. Future-ready skills, stronger links between education and employment, and expanded access to quality services will equip women, men and young people to contribute productively to a changing economy and to remain engaged in Albania's long-term development. This human capital foundation directly supports EU social *acquis* chapters while also addressing structural vulnerabilities that drive migration and inequality.

52. Directly responding to sub-recommendation of Recommendation 3 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting that the future ToC should be clear and specific, yet aspirational and flexible, underpinned by well-defined accountability and institutional structures.

↳ **Second**

Sustainable progress requires economic transformation that creates decent work, raises productivity, and strengthens resilience for all women and men

Albania's **SDG pathway and EU membership** require a **more competitive, greener, and digital economy** that generates productive employment and upgrades domestic enterprises. Continued reliance on construction, tourism, and low-value services, alongside limited industrial productivity and value-chain integration, constrains export resilience and job quality. Sustainable convergence therefore depends on a shift toward productivity-driven industrial and enterprise upgrading. If policies, regulations, and investments align with EU standards, supported by strong institutions; if SMEs gain access to finance, skills, technology, innovation, and standards compliance; and if climate resilience and environmental sustainability are embedded in development, Albania can strengthen domestic production, integrate into higher-value European value chains, and transition to a low-emission, climate-resilient, diversified economy. This is essential to create stable jobs, reduce migration pressures, and generate fiscal space for human capital and social investment. An inclusive and gender-responsive transformation is critical. Equal access for women and men to decent work, entrepreneurship, and productive resources, targeted support to women- and youth-led SMEs, and embedding gender equality across the care economy, STEM, digitalisation, and green skills will boost productivity, reduce disparities, expand SME market access, and accelerate convergence with the EU acquis.

↳ **Third**

Effective and accountable governance, justice and human rights institutions are the backbone of both sustainable development and EU accession

Rapid legislative alignment needs to be matched by strong implementation, enforcement and accountability. If Albania strengthens public administration, justice systems, oversight bodies and regulatory institutions, fights corruption and organised crime, protects civic space, including expanded volunteer and solidary networks engagement, and independent media; expands access to justice and legal aid; and ensures that migration and asylum systems are managed safely, orderly and in line with international standards, then reforms will be more credible, inclusive and durable. Upholding human rights-including labour rights as human rights⁵³ - and embedding gender equality across institutions will help ensure that EU-driven reforms translate into tangible improvements in people's lives and reinforce the social contract between the state and citizens.

These three priority areas are **interdependent and mutually reinforcing**. Human capital investments increase competitiveness, productivity, and economic participation; economic transformation generates resources and opportunities for human capital strengthening and social inclusion; and strong governance systems ensure that both are delivered transparently, equitably, and sustainably. Progress in one area accelerates progress in the others, while failure in anyone can undermine the whole reform agenda.⁵⁴

The diagram below illustrates the Theory of Change Diagram.

53. The statement that labour rights are human rights applies through the document when referring to human rights.

54. As compared to current UNSDCF, the proposed CF architecture has reduced the number of Outcomes from 4 to 3 and the number of Outputs from 22 to 11 directly responding to sub-recommendation of Recommendation 3 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting consolidating fewer outputs under higher-impact, interconnected outcomes, structured around national reform priorities and the transformative potential of SDG-EU convergence.

IMPACT STATEMENT

By investing in inclusive human capital, accelerating a competitive, green and inclusive economic transformation, and strengthening governance, justice and human rights institutions in line with SDG acceleration and EU standards, Albania achieves resilient, people-centred development outcomes that are inclusive, equitable and sustainable beyond EU accession

OUTCOMES

Priority Area 1: Inclusive Human Capital

Outcome 1: By 2031, people in Albania - especially women and girls and those at risk of being left behind - have strengthened human capital, including improved learning outcomes, future-ready skills, and decent work prospects, as well as equitable access to quality, inclusive, and gender-responsive health, social, and child protection systems, contributing to demographic resilience and social

Priority Area 2: Sustainable Economic Transformation & Inclusive Green

Outcome 2: By 2031, Albania advances sustainable and inclusive economic transformation, achieving higher productivity, competitiveness, and value creation through green and digital business models, promoting low-emission, climate-resilient, gender-responsive, and inclusive development in line with EU accession and international commitments.

Priority Area 3: Governance, Justice & Human Rights

Outcome 3: By 2031, Albania's institutions demonstrate greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability, uphold human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality, and are more effective in preventing and combating corruption, organized crime and cybercrime, while strengthening safe, orderly and rights-based border, migration and diaspora management, in line with EU and international standards

OUTPUT AREAS

- > High-Quality & Inclusive Health Services
- > Inclusive & Transformative Education
- > Future-Ready Skills for 21st Century Jobs.
- > Next-Generation Social Systems
- > Prevention of and Protection from Violence Against Women and Children

- > Green Growth & Just Transition
- > Competitiveness & Private Sector Support
- > Climate-Resilient Development & Natural Resources and Agrifood Systems Management

- > Inclusive, Effective, Accountable and Gender-responsive Institutions
- > Justice, Human Rights, Gender Equality & Civic Space
- > Migration, Asylum, Statelessness & Diaspora Governance

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. Government as Central Partner, Co-Financer and Implementer
2. Albania SDG Acceleration Fund as Core Financing/ Implementation Platform
3. Strategic UN-EU Complementarity Model
4. Structured Collaboration with IFIs and Private Sector
5. Regional and Cross-Border Partnerships
6. Leveraging UN System-Wide Platforms and Global Expertise
7. Streamlined, Forward-looking Oversight and Management Structure
8. Shift to National Implementation and Capacity Transfer
9. Adaptive, Foresight-Driven and Agile Programming

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Sustained access and demand for UN expertise
2. Functioning national coordination and partnership mechanisms
3. Shared commitment to national ownership and capacity transfer
4. Predictable and supportive financing environment
5. An enabling environment for human rights, civic space and accountability
6. Adequate UN system capacity and national commitment to EU accession and institutional reform
7. Overall political, macroeconomic and security stability
8. Continued trust, political learner operating conditions

CROSS-CUTTING ENABLERS

1. Human Rights
2. Leave No One Behind (LNOB)
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)
4. Disability Inclusion
5. Youth Empowerment & Civil Society & Private Sector Engagement
6. SDG Localization and Territorial Cohesion
7. Digitalisation, Innovation and Emerging Technology
8. Foresight, Evidence Generation and Data Systems
9. Regional and Subregional Integration

2.3. Cooperation Framework Outcomes and Partnerships

The streamlined CF comprises 3 priority areas, 3 outcomes, and 11 output areas, as described below.⁵⁴

The partnerships (both participating UN Agencies and contributing national partners) and alignment with the national policy framework, EU accession

process (EU negotiation chapters covered), and the UN framework (SDGs Targets, Six Transitions, and UN Country Analyses: Challenges and Opportunities) are included in the results Framework in Annex I and a contribution to the LNOB principle in the chapter.

PRIORITY AREA 1

Inclusive Human Capital Development

Rationale

This Priority Area places people at the centre of Albania's development trajectory, focusing on strengthening human capital across the life cycle as the foundation for **inclusive growth, social cohesion, and demographic resilience**. It reflects Albania's evolving demographic context, including population ageing, youth outmigration, changing dependency ratios, and the growing importance of diaspora engagement, the care economy, and rural and cultural and creative sectors in sustaining livelihoods, opportunity, and social cohesion.

It responds directly to **UN country analyses, which identify persistent human development and demographic challenges**, including low and unequal education quality, gaps in access to quality health services, fragmented and insufficient social protection, youth unemployment and high NEET rates, skills mismatches, low productivity and poor working conditions driving outward migration, entrenched gender inequality and unpaid care burdens, violence against women and children and gender-based violence, as well as nutrition challenges marked by rising obesity alongside remaining pockets of child malnutrition and food-safety concerns. Together, these factors reinforce poverty and exclusion, constrain labour-market participation, and undermine long-term demographic resilience.

A central premise of this Priority Area is the **strong link between human capital development, poverty reduction, and social cohesion**. Well-

designed **health, education, employment, and social protection systems** reduce vulnerability, prevent and break poverty cycles, and enable people to invest in skills, health, and decent work. In Albania's context, **strengthening social protection as both a safety net and a development instrument** is essential to stabilising households during crises and reinforcing trust and inclusion. Given growing **climate, economic, and geopolitical volatility**, the Priority Area integrates **resilience and shock preparedness**, including shock-responsive social protection, resilient municipal service delivery, and integrated protection mechanisms that mitigate the social impacts of crises. Gender equality, youth participation, and the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities, older persons, and others at risk of being left behind are systematically mainstreamed across all outputs. The Priority Area is **aligned with EU Human Capital and Social Acquis priorities** and contributes to EU acquis chapters **10, 11, 12, 19, 23, 24, 26, and 28**. It is also closely aligned with **Albania's National Reform Agenda 2024–2027, the EU Reform and Growth Facility priorities on human capital, the NSDEI 2030 Social Cohesion pillar, and the Economic Reform Programme**. By supporting reforms that raise productivity, improve labour-market transitions, and strengthen inclusive service delivery, it advances Albania's EU accession trajectory while delivering tangible improvements in people's lives and reinforcing social cohesion.

OUTCOME 1

By 2031, people in Albania - especially women and girls and those at risk of being left behind - have strengthened human capital, including improved learning outcomes, future-ready skills, and decent work prospects, as well as equitable access to quality, inclusive, and gender-responsive health, social, and child protection systems, contributing to demographic resilience and social cohesion.

Theory of Change:

The underlying change logic is that *if* Albania i) **strengthens universal, equitable and gender-responsive health, education and social and child protection systems**; ii) **improves service quality and adequacy**; iii) **enhances coordination across sectors and levels of government expanding rights-based access for groups at risk of being left behind**; and iv) **builds shock-responsive mechanisms that protect households during crises**, *then* human capital formation will accelerate, poverty and exclusion will decline, labour-market participation will increase - including women's participation through reforms in the care economy - and social cohesion and demographic resilience will be reinforced.

In practical terms:

UN support will contribute to this transformation by acting as an evidence- and norms-based partner for human development, grounded in UHC, social protection, eradicating GBV and child protection, and upholding the LNOB principle. The UN will support policy and legal reforms, standards, equity-focused monitoring, and implementation quality to ensure tangible improvements in people's lives. The UN will convene actors around labour-market transitions to better align skills supply with labour demand, strengthen entrepreneurship education and school-to-work pathways, expand apprenticeships and dual education models, and promote decent work. It will also serve as a bridge between social sectors

and the EU accession process, translating acquis requirements into implementable reforms and strengthening coordination across education, skills and employment, social protection and inclusion, gender equality, child protection, and health. Particular attention will be given to expanding the coverage and adequacy of social protection benefits, including pensions, disability, unemployment and child benefits, extending coverage to informal and non-standard workers, rural and self-employed persons, and migrant workers, and ensuring the portability of social security rights in line with EU standards.

Output 1.1

High-Quality & Inclusive Health Services

By 2031, all people in Albania enjoy better health and wellbeing, have greater trust in the health system, benefit from integrated, higher-quality, multidisciplinary, gender-responsive care and infrastructure that address all health needs, while being better protected from health threats and emergencies.

The UN will support Albania in strengthening **equitable, high-quality and resilient health systems** that deliver **integrated, people-centred care** and protect all people, especially those at risk of being left behind. By 2031, this support will contribute to **improved health and wellbeing, greater trust in the health system, and reduced financial, geographic and administrative barriers to access across**



The Institute of Public Health (IPH), with the support of UNICEF launching the vaccination campaign against measles, mumps, and rubella.

the life course. The Cooperation Framework aligns with Albania's commitments to **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**, the **EU health and social acquis**, and international health regulations. UN engagement will focus on **upstream policy advice, institutional strengthening and system integration**, supporting UHC reforms, health financing, the digital health agenda, stronger primary health care and preventive services, and improved responses to non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Particular attention will be given to underserved areas and vulnerable groups, including women, Roma and Egyptian communities, rural populations, migrants, forcibly displaced and stateless persons, persons with disabilities, key populations, older persons and low-income households, in line with **the** Leave No One Behind principle.

Mental health will be treated as a core component of health system strengthening. The UN will support the expansion of community-based, rights-based and integrated mental health services, with a focus on survivors of trauma, torture, gender-based violence and trafficking, as

well as children, adolescents and older persons. Integration of health and social services at community level will be prioritised to ensure continuity of care for the most disadvantaged. **Health security and emergency preparedness** will be strengthened through support to multi-hazard health security and pandemic preparedness plans, grounded in International Health Regulations (IHR) core capacities and aligned with EU requirements. Event- and indicator-based surveillance, early warning systems and cross-border cooperation, including with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), will be reinforced to enable timely detection and response to health threats.

The UN will also support Albania in reducing NCD risk factors by strengthening health promotion, health literacy and intersectoral action, including implementation of WHO "best buys" and commitments under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. **Child and adolescent health** will be advanced through improved immunisation and mental health services. Further attention will be given to sexual and reproductive health and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, while **healthy ageing** will be supported through integrated health, care and social services responsive to the diverse needs of older persons. **Climate change as an emerging health risk** will be addressed through national climate-health adaptation planning, including heat-health action plans within a broader multi-hazard resilience approach. **Digitalisation and data** will be leveraged as system-wide enablers, strengthening health information systems, surveillance, telemedicine pilots and evidence-based decision-making, while ensuring inclusion, data protection and digital literacy. Through these combined efforts, the Cooperation Framework will support Albania in building a **trusted, inclusive and future-ready health system**, contributing to EU accession, SDG acceleration and the realisation of the right to health for all. **Output 1.2: Inclusive & Transformative Education**

Output 1.2 Inclusive & Transformative Education

By 2031, education systems provide more relevant, inclusive, innovative and equitable learning opportunities, supported by inclusive infrastructure, from early childhood through secondary level, resulting in improved learning outcomes and reduced disparities across gender, location and socio-economic status, with particular attention to barriers affecting girls' access, retention and completion.

The Cooperation Framework will support Albania in strengthening **early childhood development and pre-primary education**, recognising their central role in **learning readiness, reducing intergenerational inequality, and enabling women's labour-market participation** by easing childcare constraints. UN support will focus on strengthening the **policy and financing framework for early childhood education and care**, improving **service quality standards**, and reinforcing **local delivery capacity** to ensure **equitable access** across urban, rural, and disadvantaged areas. Across **basic and secondary education**, the UN will support efforts to improve **learning quality and outcomes** through strengthened curricula, pedagogy, teacher competencies, learning assessment systems, and school infrastructure, while promoting **safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments**. **Inclusive and gender-responsive education approaches** will be prioritised to address disparities linked to socio-economic status, geography, disability, and gender, with particular attention to ensuring schools are safe spaces, free from discrimination, bullying, and violence, and supportive of holistic student wellbeing.

The Cooperation Framework will place strong emphasis on the **inclusion, retention, and progression of vulnerable learners**, especially **Roma and Egyptian children, adolescents and youth with disabilities, children from poor**

households, rural communities, and migrant, forcibly displaced, and stateless children. Joint advocacy and targeted measures will support access to national education systems, reduce dropout risks, and strengthen transitions through lower and upper secondary education. UN support will align with **EU education reforms and regional benchmarks**, using **data, evidence, and system analysis** to address learning gaps and improve overall system performance.

Digital learning will be promoted as part of education modernisation, with explicit safeguards to **reduce digital divides** and ensure **safe and responsible use of digital technologies**. Where relevant, **entrepreneurship education** and awareness of **green and digital transitions** will be integrated to strengthen learners' **future pathways, agency, and employability**. Recognising the links between education, culture, and social inclusion, the UN will support approaches that leverage **cultural and creative learning, heritage, and cultural participation** to strengthen identity, inclusion, and youth engagement. Efforts will also focus on improving learning environments and student wellbeing through stronger school leadership, community partnerships, and, where appropriate, prevention-oriented approaches that address risk behaviours through life skills development and positive school climates.



#EU4Schools Programme: Building Schools, Building Dreams!

Output 1.3

Future-Ready Skills for 21st Century Jobs

By 2031, skills development and employment-support systems equip women and men – particularly those at risk of being left behind – with relevant, future-ready skills and inclusive services that enhance employability, entrepreneurship, labour mobility and successful transitions from education to work, contributing to productivity and demographic resilience.

The Cooperation Framework will support Albania in strengthening **integrated skills⁵⁵, employment, and labour-market systems** that respond to **demographic decline, labour shortages, and migration pressures**, while enabling **inclusive access to decent work across the life cycle**. By 2031, women and men—particularly youth and groups at risk of being left behind—will acquire future-ready skills and benefit from **smoother school-to-work transitions**, improved employment opportunities, and **sustainable entrepreneurship education and support pathways**, contributing to productivity, social cohesion, and demographic resilience. UN support will focus on EU-aligned reforms in active labour market policies, vocational education and training (VET), lifelong learning, reskilling and upskilling, ensuring preparedness for “day-after-accession” labour-market needs. This includes strengthening the relevance and quality of VET and lifelong learning, improving labour-market intermediation, anticipating skills demand, supporting recognition of qualifications, and facilitating labour mobility and reintegration of returnees and migrants. Formalisation and upgrading of strategic economic sectors will be supported as a pathway to decent work and competitiveness.

Youth NEET reduction will be addressed through **integrated programmes** combining outreach, counselling, skills development, employability support, and placement pathways, with explicit attention to **rural youth, young women, and those facing multiple disadvantages**. The UN will strengthen **career guidance, apprenticeships and dual education, and work-based learning** through structured collaboration among government, municipalities, education and VET providers, employers, business associations, social partners, civil society, and youth organisations. Youth entrepreneurship and youth-led innovation, prioritised by the Government and the EU, will be supported, including in cultural and creative sectors.

To avoid reinforcing dependency on grants, **entrepreneurship support** will focus on **sustainable business development and responsible financing mechanisms**, including **loan-guarantee instruments where feasible**, promoting market viability and long-term sustainability. A **strong gender lens** will be embedded throughout, addressing women’s employment, women-led entrepreneurship, participation of women and girls in STEM, gender pay gaps, occupational segregation, and the expansion of decent jobs in the formal care economy. Specific measures will ensure **access for asylum seekers and refugees** to skills development, vocational training, and employment opportunities, supporting inclusion, self-reliance, and social cohesion. Across all interventions, the UN will promote **decent work standards, improved working conditions, and prevention of violence and harassment in the world of work**, contributing to Albania’s EU accession readiness and effective participation in post-accession labour markets.

55. Including Life Skills and Vocational Skills, also emphasis on entrepreneurship education as youth might be risk averse especially in TVET and in secondary and tertiary education, in addition to sensitization on greening and digital skills required by the labour market.

Output 1.4

Next-Generation Social Systems

By 2031, social protection and care systems deliver inclusive, child-centred, gender responsive and shock-adaptive support across the life cycle, including measures that recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, reducing vulnerability and contributing to social cohesion.

This output strengthens **inclusive, child-centred, gender-responsive, and shock-adaptive social protection and care systems** as a foundation for **poverty reduction, human capital development, and social cohesion**. The Cooperation Framework will support reforms to **expand coverage, adequacy, and targeting of social protection benefits**, improve coherence across schemes, and strengthen **responsiveness to economic, climate, and food-price shocks** across the life cycle. In recognition of Albania's high levels of informality, reforms will prioritise extending contributory social insurance coverage to informal and non-standard workers through **simplified contribution mechanisms, formalisation incentives, improved compliance systems, and strengthened labour inspection**. Integrated approaches linking formalisation strategies with social protection incentives will support sustainable expansion of the contributory base. Particular emphasis will be placed on **strengthening linkages between social protection and food security**, including improved coverage for rural informal workers and women, and shock-responsive mechanisms that protect household purchasing power during food-price spikes and climate-related shocks. These mechanisms will include strengthened automatic stabilisers, contingency financing arrangements, and enhanced coordination between social registries, employment services, and disaster response systems to ensure timely, rights-based scale-up.



Working directly with vulnerable and marginalized people

Integrated social protection and care delivery will be expanded across all municipalities, improving access and service quality, especially in rural areas and for persons with disabilities, migrants, and other groups at risk of being left behind. **Institutional arrangements, local planning, and financing mechanisms** will be strengthened to improve sustainability and predictability, supported by **workforce professionalisation, continuous training, and integrated management information systems**. To ensure long-term sustainability and intergenerational fairness, the Government will be supported in conducting **regular actuarial assessments** of pension and social insurance schemes, strengthening contribution collection, advancing **digitalisation of social security administration**, and aligning parametric reforms with EU standards, while safeguarding benefit adequacy.

A core priority will be the **care economy**, including **childcare, eldercare, and long-term care**, recognising its role in **women's labour-force participation, gender equality, and demographic resilience**, as well as in the **recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work**. Expansion of the care economy will be framed as a strategic

employment and productivity driver, supporting **decent job creation**, strengthening **maternity and parental protection** in line with ILO Convention No. 183, promoting **shared care responsibilities**, and improving working conditions in the sector. Rights-based **disability reform** will be consolidated across the full continuum, with stronger links to education, skills development, and employment. **Nutrition** will be addressed in line with the EU acquis on food safety and consumer protection, responding to rising obesity and persistent pockets of child malnutrition. Measures will improve the **affordability of healthy diets for low-income households** through evidence-based food-environment actions, including behavioural and fiscal measures and school- and community-based initiatives, coordinated with health and education systems. Stronger linkages between social assistance, active labour market policies, and employment services will promote inclusive **labour-market participation**, with **integrated activation pathways** supporting youth, women, persons with disabilities, and return migrants to transition from social assistance to decent, formal employment.

Output 1.5

Prevention of and Protection from Violence Against Women and Children

By 2031, national and local violence against women and child protection mechanisms are strengthened to deliver integrated, gender-responsive, trauma-informed, survivor-centred and accessible prevention and response services, underpinned by improved normative and policy frameworks, effective multi-sectoral coordination, and sustained positive change in social norms.

This output places strong emphasis on the **prevention of and protection from violence against**

women and children, strengthening **national and local mechanisms** to deliver **integrated, gender-responsive, trauma-informed, survivor-centred, and accessible prevention and response services**. The Cooperation Framework will support improved normative and policy frameworks, effective multi-sectoral coordination, and sustained positive change in social norms that perpetuate violence.

For **gender-based violence and violence against women (GBV/VAW)**, UN support will focus on strengthening **survivor-centred services, referral pathways, and coordination** across police, justice, health, and social services, alongside strengthened implementation of gender equality legislation and quotas. Prevention efforts will include engagement with men and boys, addressing gender stereotypes and harmful norms and practices through awareness-raising, collaboration with media, and support to shelters and socio-economic reintegration pathways for survivors.

For **child protection and violence against children**, support will strengthen the **legal and policy framework**, effective **gatekeeping and alternative care**, and **coordinated case management** through Child Protection Units and intersectoral mechanisms. This will be complemented by **improved data systems and monitoring**, expanded **child- and family-centred, trauma-informed services**, and **nationwide prevention and behaviour-change initiatives**. Across all interventions, systematic inclusion of groups at risk of being left behind will be ensured, including persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian communities, migrants, rural poor, forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Specific measures will support asylum seekers and refugees to access protection, social services, and GBV response mechanisms, strengthening inclusion, safety, and social cohesion.

Linkages with other Priority Areas: Inclusive Human Capital Development: Priority Area



Raising awareness against human trafficking as part of UNICEF's national campaign #EvertetaN'Drit.

1 is closely linked to **sustainable economic transformation and effective governance**, as investments in human capital both depend on and reinforce progress across the Cooperation Framework. **Economic transformation and inclusive green growth** must advance alongside reforms in **education (including TVET), health, and social protection**, ensuring that women, youth, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, migrants, and rural populations have the skills, health, and social support needed to participate in a greener and more digital economy. The **sustainability and equity of human capital investments** depend on **governance reforms** under Priority Area 3, including strengthened public administration, public finance management, accountability, and access to justice, to ensure education, health, and social protection systems are adequately financed, well governed, and rights-based. **Shock-responsive social protection and resilient health and education**

systems under Priority Area 1 reinforce **climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and economic resilience** under Priority Area 2, enabling households and communities to withstand shocks without reversing development gains. A **stronger role for women in the labour market**, supported through care economy reforms, prevention of gender-based violence, and equal access to education, skills, and employment, is a critical cross-cutting driver of **demographic resilience, social cohesion, and SDG achievement**. An **integrated One Health approach** links human capital outcomes with environmental sustainability, recognising interdependence between human health, food systems, animal health, and ecosystems. **Social protection and labour-market reforms** will be designed through **structured social dialogue and tripartite consultation**, strengthening ownership, legitimacy, and sustainability in line with EU social governance principles.

PRIORITY AREA 2

Sustainable Economic Transformation & Inclusive Green Growth

Rationale

Priority Area 2 addresses Albania's need to transition toward a **more competitive, resilient, greener, and digitally enabled economy** capable of generating higher productivity, decent jobs, stronger enterprise competitiveness, and reduced territorial disparities, while aligning with **EU accession requirements and Albania's international commitments**.⁵⁶

It promotes **structural economic transformation** centred on industrial upgrading, SME productivity growth, and value-chain development, ensuring that economic expansion translates into **sustainable and inclusive employment outcomes**. The Priority Area simultaneously advances competitiveness, green and blue transitions, rural transformation, and resilience to shocks. It intentionally goes beyond climate-specific interventions to support **systemic economic transformation**, including industrial and agrifood upgrading, SME competitiveness and productivity growth, value-chain development, digital economy expansion, innovation and R&D ecosystems, enterprise formalisation, and the creation of **decent and resilient jobs**, alongside the application of **Responsible Business Conduct and Human Rights Due Diligence**. A central premise is that Albania's competitiveness and EU market

readiness depend on **strengthening productive capabilities across SMEs and industrial sectors**, enabling firms to meet EU regulatory, quality, sustainability, environmental, and labour standards while improving productivity and resilience. This requires stronger domestic quality infrastructure, enterprise upgrading, and digital and institutional systems capable of implementing the *acquis* in practice, without which firms risk exclusion from EU-regulated markets.

In agriculture and rural development, this includes strengthening the enabling environment and institutional capacity to meet **EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) requirements**, including effective implementation of the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) and the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS). The Priority Area also recognises **cultural heritage and cultural resources** as integral components of sustainable economic transformation, supporting responsible tourism, inclusive local value chains, job creation, and place-based development, particularly in rural, coastal, and heritage-rich areas. In parallel, Albania's coastal and marine assets offer opportunities for a **sustainable blue economy**, aligned with

56. Including commitments under the 3 UN Conventions originating in the Rio Conference in 1992, especially the UNFCCC/ Paris Agreement and Albania's 2NDC, as well as the EU Green Deal and the Western Balkan Green Agenda



Porto Palermo, Nature Marine Park -one of the ten protected areas in the focus of the EU4Nature project..

the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, fostering innovation, decent blue jobs, and strengthened national capacities in marine science, policy, governance, and skills development, including for early-career professionals. The CF will position the development and implementation of Albania's NDC 3.0 as a central element guiding UN support under Priority Area 2, and explore opportunities to address the air pollution, which was recognized as a challenge in the country context analyses. The Cooperation Framework will further support the integration of cultural heritage into responsible tourism and creative-economy value chains as a vehicle for inclusive local development, decent jobs (particularly for women and youth in rural and heritage-rich areas), community cohesion, and the valorisation of traditional knowledge.

This Priority Area responds directly to context analyses identifying **weak industrial performance, low productivity, limited private-sector diversification, stagnation in rural and agrifood systems, environmental degradation, rising climate risks, and labour-market mismatches**, including those reinforcing **gender**

gaps in employment and entrepreneurship. These constraints are shaped by entrenched gender norms, disproportionate unpaid care responsibilities, sectoral and occupational segregation, and women's uneven access to finance, land, technology, markets, and business networks, which depress labour-force participation, earnings, and entrepreneurship. Together, these challenges contribute to regional disparities, outward migration pressures, and demographic decline, while constraining Albania's readiness to compete and comply within the **EU Single Market**. Priority Area 2 aligns with the **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, the SDGs, Albania's National Reform Agenda 2024–2027, the EU Reform and Growth Facility priorities, the Economic Reform Programme, and NSDEI 2030**, as well as EU accession commitments related to competitiveness, green transition, and digitalisation. It contributes directly to EU acquis chapters **1, 3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 20, 25, 27, and 29**. A strengthened **gender dimension** is embedded throughout to tackle structural barriers to economic participation, promote inclusivity, and ensure alignment with **SDG 5 and EU gender equality commitments**.

OUTCOME 2

By 2031, Albania advances sustainable and inclusive economic transformation, achieving higher productivity, competitiveness, and value creation through green and digital business models, promoting low-emission, climate-resilient, gender-responsive, and inclusive development in line with EU accession and international commitments.

Theory of Change:

The underlying change logic is that **if** Albania strengthens i) EU-aligned economic, industrial, agrifood frameworks, energy and environmental frameworks and supports productivity and technological upgrading of SMEs and manufacturing firms, ii) improves the enabling environment for responsible, productive and formal enterprise growth; iii) expands access to finance for SMEs and entrepreneurs - particularly women- and youth-led enterprises - paired with high-quality business development services; iv) builds skills for green and digital transformation and strengthens climate-resilient rural, natural-resource and blue-economy systems, while addressing gender-differentiated impacts of green, energy and digital transitions (including energy poverty and affordability), **then** the economy will raise productivity and competitiveness, reduce regional and gender disparities, and build economic resilience while meeting EU accession and international commitments.

In practical terms:

UN support will contribute to inclusive economic transformation by acting as a policy, safeguards, and systems partner, supporting EU-aligned regulatory frameworks, just transition

approaches, and environmental and social standards that protect vulnerable groups while enabling sustainable growth. This includes applying gender-responsive impact assessments and safeguards across green, blue, and digital investments, operationalising gender-responsive budgeting, and promoting women's leadership and participation in economic and climate-related decision-making. The UN will help link reforms to financing by strengthening readiness for EU funding instruments, IFI pipelines, and climate finance, and by supporting institutions to mobilise, coordinate, and manage public and private investment. It will catalyse inclusive green, blue, and digital business models, ensuring benefits for women, youth, rural communities, and groups at risk of being left behind, including through targeted measures to address women's barriers to finance, standards compliance, technology adoption, and value-chain participation. At the same time, the UN will support the transformation and labour-market alignment for the green and digital economy by strengthening institutional capacity, occupational standards, training pathways, and RBC and HRDD. This includes gender-sensitive curricula, targeted STEM and TVET pathways for women and girls, apprenticeships, reskilling opportunities, and measures that account for care responsibilities and address gender stereotypes, enabling Albania's workforce to participate in post-accession labour markets and sustain inclusive growth.



Photo Sylbica Highlands in Tropoja. In partnership with GEF, UNDP supported 10 livestock farms with solar panel installation in their summer huts

Output 2.1 Green Growth & Just Transition

By 2031, policy and regulatory frameworks for sustainable development, green growth, and just transition are strengthened and aligned with EU standards, enabling inclusive and gender-responsive transition towards low-emission, climate-resilient development informed by demographic trends.

The Cooperation Framework will support Albania in advancing an **integrated green⁵⁷, digital, and circular economic transformation** that strengthens **competitiveness, creates decent jobs, and accelerates convergence with the EU Single Market**. UN support will span the full

policy-to-implementation cycle, focusing not only on strategies, policies, and laws, but critically on **implementation readiness, institutional capacity, and enforcement**, ensuring that reforms translate into measurable economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Support will cover key transformation domains, including **industrial and agrifood policy, energy transition, climate and environmental governance, circular economy, sustainable and resilient value chains, and green, blue, and digital innovation**. Special attention will be given to **strengthening industrial competitiveness through energy and resource efficiency, cleaner production methods, and circular economy practices**, enabling enterprises, particularly SMEs, to reduce production costs,

57. Output 2.1 includes also measures targeting “blue economy” in line with the UN approach outlined here: <https://www.un.org/en/desa/diving-blue-economy>. For the EU, the blue economy is also a separate concept from green economy, and actually the EU has just approved the Ocean Pact https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/european-ocean-pact_en

comply with EU sustainability requirements, and improve resilience to energy and resource price volatility. Within this framework, the UN will support **policy and investment frameworks for circular bioeconomy solutions**, including the valorisation of agricultural residues and processing by-products, aligned with EU standards and climate and energy objectives, generating rural incomes while reducing environmental pressures. **Gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data** will be systematically integrated into policy design and regulatory impact assessments, while **women farmers, processors, and rural entrepreneurs** will be supported to access circular and bioeconomy opportunities through tailored extension services, technology adoption support, green finance, and **gender-responsive standards and compliance systems**.

A strong emphasis will be placed on **EU acquis transposition and implementation** in areas such as **environment, climate, energy, industry, competition, consumer protection, and state aid**. Across all reforms, the UN will embed **inclusion, safeguards, and rights-based approaches**, ensuring that regulatory alignment strengthens **labour standards, environmental protection, and public accountability**. Alignment will explicitly incorporate EU equal treatment, non-discrimination, equal pay, and work–life balance standards, while promoting women’s participation in climate, energy, and industrial governance structures and social dialogue mechanisms. **Just transition and equity considerations** will be systematically integrated to address distributional impacts on livelihoods, affordability, and regional disparities.

Institutional capacity will be strengthened at central and municipal levels to design and implement **green industrial policies and investment pipelines**, including **climate finance readiness** and access to **EU and IFI financing**.

The UN will support **enabling ecosystems for green, blue, and digital entrepreneurship** through business development services, advisory support, financing, and standards compliance, with particular attention to **MSMEs and women- and youth-led enterprises**. Where relevant, the Cooperation Framework will support **sustainable and resilient infrastructure systems** that underpin productivity, decent work, environmental protection, climate resilience, sustainable housing⁵⁸ and urban development, and trade and transport connectivity, complementing IFI-financed investments through strengthened planning, safeguards, and local implementation capacity. **Cultural heritage and territorial assets** will be integrated into policy and regulatory frameworks for sustainable development, tourism, and spatial planning, while **coastal, marine, and blue economy policies** will be aligned with international frameworks, including the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, strengthening science-based decision-making and investment readiness. By linking **regulatory reform, institutional capacity, innovation, and investment readiness**, the Cooperation Framework positions economic transformation as a **systemic transition pathway aligned with EU accession, SDG acceleration, and long-term resilience**.

Output 2.2

Competitiveness & Private Sector Support

By 2031, the authorities, the private sector and communities – including women- and youth-led businesses and entrepreneurs across sectors – have enhanced capacities, including financial and non-financial support, to adopt more competitive, greener and digital business models, engage in transparent procurement, and create decent jobs, including for women, contributing to inclusive economic growth.

58. See “Country Profiles on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management: Albania” (UN 2024), available at <https://unece.org/info/publications/pub/391437>

The Cooperation Framework will support Albania in strengthening a **competitive, inclusive, and sustainable productive sector**, with a particular emphasis on **SME and industrial upgrading** as key drivers of **employment and productivity growth**. Support will target **business environment reforms, investment promotion, competition, and enterprise development**, ensuring that firms, especially SMEs, can upgrade **technologies, management practices, and standards compliance** to integrate into domestic, regional, and EU value chains and sustain productivity gains over time. The Cooperation Framework will support the development of a **competitive, inclusive, and innovative business environment** that enables SMEs and entrepreneurs to grow, innovate, and access markets.

UN support will focus on **green and digital upgrading of enterprises**, including **resource efficiency, circular business practices, digitalisation of business processes, e-commerce, and digital payments**. It will also strengthen **Responsible Business Conduct and Human Rights Due Diligence**, including compliance with quality standards, certification, labour and environmental safeguards, and supply-chain requirements, enabling firms to access foreign markets, reduce reliance on imports, and develop domestic value chains. Platforms such as **SDG4Business**, initiatives aligned with the **Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**, and participation in international expos and trade opportunities will be leveraged to connect enterprises to standards, partnerships, and markets. **Access to finance** will be expanded through collaboration with the **banking sector, development banks, IFIs, and private investors**, helping build financial literacy and economic independence. Financing instruments may include **credit lines, blended finance, guarantees, gender bonds, and other innovative mechanisms**. To ensure that finance translates into improved enterprise performance, it will be paired with **Business Development Services (BDS)**, including



The Golden Hands – a small business incubator in Leskovik where women process fruits and vegetables for distribution.

training, coaching, mentoring, and in-enterprise support, enabling start-ups and SMEs to strengthen management, adopt new technologies, and scale sustainably.

Targeted measures will support **women and youth entrepreneurs**, enterprises led by vulnerable groups including refugees, and businesses in **lagging regions**, such as rural areas and secondary cities. **Gender equality and the Leave No One Behind principle** will be embedded throughout, including support for **women-led SMEs** to access climate finance, participate in green value chains, and adopt climate-resilient business practices. Where relevant, enterprise support will also include **capacity-building on sustainable public procurement**, strengthening readiness to access public markets and financing. Collectively, these interventions will strengthen national and subnational capacity to mobilise, align, and manage EU, climate, and private-sector financing, ensuring that **green and digital transitions** generate **inclusive, territorially balanced, and decent economic opportunities**.



Tourists and farmers harvest local vegetable varieties from the garden at Lile farm together.

Output 2.3 Climate-Resilient Development & Natural Resources and Agrifood Systems Management

By 2031, the authorities, the private sector, and communities have enhanced capacities for climate-resilient development, natural and cultural resource management, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable agrifood systems, including gender-responsive approaches, thereby building resilient economies, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

The Cooperation Framework will support Albania to advance a **climate-resilient, EU-aligned transformation of agrifood systems and rural livelihoods**, strengthening **food security, incomes, and territorial cohesion**. Support will apply an **agrifood systems approach**, addressing interactions and trade-offs across production, post-harvest systems, markets, environmental sustainability, nutrition, and rural livelihoods. Interventions will

focus on **climate-smart agriculture, sustainable and gender-equal land and water management, diversified and resilient agrifood value chains**, and improved access to **finance, markets, extension services, and digital tools**, particularly for smallholders, cooperatives, rural women, and youth. Skills development for farmers will be strengthened, including digital agriculture, climate adaptation practices, productivity enhancement, and market readiness, contributing to inclusive rural economic opportunities. **Climate adaptation practices** will be further strengthened, including through the regional Climate Adaptation Platform, while **protected areas management and biodiversity conservation** will be supported, including through GEF financing.

Food security and nutrition systems will be strengthened at national, territorial, and rural levels through integrated approaches that reduce regional disparities and improve resilience. The UN will support **EU-aligned food safety, nutrition, and water-quality standards**, alongside strengthened **plant and animal health systems**

and **One Health surveillance**, including risk-based inspections, pest and disease monitoring, laboratory capacity, traceability systems, and compliance support for producers and exporters. **Post-harvest and logistics systems** will be upgraded, including aggregation, cold storage, processing, transport, and quality infrastructure, to reduce food loss, improve domestic food availability, enable access to higher-value markets, and meet **EU market requirements**. **Integrated natural-resource management** will be advanced across forests, watersheds, soils, and coastal and marine ecosystems, including restoration of degraded landscapes, **nature-based solutions**, and sustainable **blue-economy opportunities** where relevant. **Climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction** will be strengthened through national and municipal adaptation planning, DRR strategies, and **early-warning systems** responsive to the needs of all women and men. The UN will support municipalities to design, finance, and implement climate and resilience plans, strengthening capacity to access and use EU funding instruments beyond IPA, including the Growth Plan Facility, Twinning, and related EU mechanisms, alongside relevant climate-finance sources.

Community-based resilience and Leave No One Behind approaches will target those most exposed to climate and disaster risks, including the **rural poor, subsistence farmers, rural women, informal settlements, women-headed households, and vulnerable coastal and mountain communities**. Traditional knowledge and cultural practices will be recognised as part of sustainable land use, adaptation, and DRR solutions. **Environmental protection, biodiversity, and cultural heritage** considerations will be integrated into climate and resilience action, including support for protected areas, sustainable tourism, and nature-based solutions. Where relevant, adaptation efforts affecting heritage sites will align with international frameworks, while sustainable coastal and marine governance will strengthen skills, decent

green & blue jobs, and science–policy linkages, contributing to climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and EU-aligned local development. Support will also extend to climate-vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning for cultural heritage sites and traditional cultural landscapes, ensuring heritage protection is mainstreamed in DRR, spatial planning, and nature-based solutions.

Linkages with other Priority Areas: Sustainable Economic Transformation & Inclusive Green Growth

PriorityArea2providesthe**economicfoundationfor sustained investment in people and institutions**, creating a virtuous cycle across the Cooperation Framework. **Increased productivity, enterprise formalisation, and decent job creation** expand fiscal space and domestic resource mobilisation, enabling stronger investment in **education, health, and social protection** under Priority Area 1. At the same time, a **diversified, greener, and more competitive economy** depends on a **healthy, educated, and skilled population**, reinforcing the circular link between human capital development and post-accession labour-market readiness. The effectiveness of **green growth, private-sector development, and rural transformation** also depends on strong governance systems under Priority Area 3, including **transparent regulation, accountable institutions, effective public finance management, responsible business conduct, and the rule of law**, which together create a predictable environment for investment and EU market integration. **Climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction** further protect livelihoods, infrastructure, and service delivery systems, safeguarding development gains and reducing long-term fiscal and social risks. **Gender equality** is a central cross-cutting linkage, as increasing women’s participation in the formal economy, supporting women-led enterprises, and addressing discrimination, unpaid care burdens, and workplace violence are decisive for inclusive growth, productivity gains, and SDG progress.

PRIORITY AREA 3

Governance, Justice and Human Rights

Rationale

Priority Area 3 is retained as a **stand-alone pillar** due to its **foundational importance for Albania's priority of EU accession**, its centrality to Albania's structural development challenges, and the UN's **unique normative mandate** to uphold **human rights, the rule of law, non-discrimination, and inclusive institutions**. Treating governance only as a cross-cutting theme would risk diluting UN visibility and authority in sensitive reform areas and weakening its capacity to leverage global and regional expertise where bilateral support may be constrained. **Effective governance is the enabling condition for results across all other priority areas**, including human capital development and sustainable economic transformation. This Priority Area supports Albania at a **critical reform juncture**. While the country has made notable progress in **justice reform, anti-corruption efforts, combating organised crime and money laundering, digital transformation, and public service modernisation**, EU accession requires **deep, sustained reforms under the fundamentals cluster**, including the judiciary, rule of law, public administration, and fundamental rights. It also requires **strong institutional mechanisms** to manage significant EU and external funds in a predictable, transparent, and accountable manner. Risks of **reform fatigue, institutional fragmentation, and polarised public debate**

heighten the need for independent oversight, evidence-based policymaking, effective public administration, and safeguards that keep reforms rights-compatible and inclusive.

Governance interventions will focus on **strengthening institutional capacity and accountability** across Parliament, oversight bodies, justice institutions, and municipalities; advancing **public administration reform**; improving **public finance management**, including gender-responsive budgeting and anti-corruption procurement practices; strengthening **transparency and civic participation**; and reinforcing Albania's **human rights architecture and gender equality mechanisms**. Priority Area 3 also supports the alignment of governance frameworks with EU standards and national priorities, including property rights, integrity planning, and transparency, while addressing emerging governance risks linked to accelerated EU alignment and post-accession fund management.

A major focus is the **rapid expansion of digital governance**, including justice digitalisation, interoperability, and the responsible use of digital and AI-assisted tools, balanced with strong safeguards for **data protection, privacy,**



One of the winning groups of the bootcamp for young innovators, under the regional project “Youth for Inclusion, Equality and Trust”

and human rights. Digital governance and digital literacy in the justice sector are increasingly central to EU acquis implementation, notably Chapters 23 and 24, and to public trust in institutions. The UN’s **neutral convening role and normative expertise** in justice digitalisation, privacy safeguards, and human rights compatibility represents a clear comparative advantage. This Outcome is anchored in the vision that by 2031, **Albania’s institutions**—particularly justice, law enforcement, oversight, and human rights bodies—**operate more effectively, transparently, and accountably**, upholding the **rule of law, human rights, and gender equality**. It strengthens capacities to **prevent and combat corruption, terrorism financing, organized and cyber-crime, illicit trafficking,**

and to manage **borders, migration, and diaspora engagement** in a safe, orderly, and rights-based manner. It responds directly to context analysis highlighting **uneven implementation of justice reforms, limited public trust, corruption risks, vulnerabilities to organised crime and cyber threats, constrained civic space, and gaps in access to justice for groups at risk of being left behind**. These challenges pose material risks to EU accession progress, public accountability, social cohesion, and Albania’s capacity to manage increasingly complex EU and international funding flows. The Priority Area is closely aligned with **EU accession fundamentals**, including **Chapters 23 and 24, Albania’s National Reform Agenda 2024–2027**, and international human rights and rule-of-law commitments.

OUTCOME 3

By 2031, Albania's institutions demonstrate greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability, uphold human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality, and are more effective in preventing and combating corruption, organized crime and cybercrime, while strengthening safe, orderly and rights-based border, migration and diaspora management, in line with EU and international standards

Theory of Change:

The underlying change logic is that *if* Albania i) strengthens democratic and gender-responsive governance systems, justice and oversight institutions⁵⁹ and local government capacities; ii) advances transparency, integrity and evidence-based decision-making; iii) enhances inter-institutional coordination and improves public finance management and procurement systems; iv) expands access to justice and legal aid - especially those at risk of being left behind;⁶⁰ and protects and expands civic space and inclusive participation; and v) adopts digital and AI-enabled governance tools with robust safeguards for rights, privacy and data protection, *then* institutional effectiveness, accountability and public trust will increase. This, in turn, will enable sustained EU-aligned reforms that are inclusive, rights-compatible and people-centred, while reducing corruption risks, strengthening resilience to organised and cyber-crime, and supporting long-term democratic stability.

In practical terms:

UN support will contribute to this transformation by acting as a normative, technical, and monitoring partner for governance reform, advancing human rights, gender equality, and Leave No One Behind commitments through enhanced laws, policies, institutions, and accountability mechanisms. The UN will support more effective justice and anti-corruption systems and the disruption of terrorism financing, organised crime, and cybercrime through specialised technical assistance, including financial investigations and asset recovery, AML/CFT support, strengthened border management, and enhanced cyber resilience. It will also strengthen public finance governance, oversight institutions, and data, evaluation, and foresight systems to improve policy coherence and implementation quality. At the same time, the UN will serve as a bridge between governance reforms and EU accession, supporting alignment with EU and international standards on migration governance, border security, and human rights, while reinforcing civic space, social dialogue, media literacy, and efforts to counter disinformation and hate speech, ensuring that reforms translate into greater trust, inclusion, and democratic participation.

59. Particularly justice, law enforcement, oversight and human rights bodies.

60. Especially for women, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, rural populations and migrants.

Output 3.1 Inclusive, Effective, Accountable and Gender-Responsive Institutions

By 2031, national and local institutions – including Parliament, oversight, independent and law enforcement bodies, and municipalities – demonstrate strengthened capacity for inclusive, effective, accountable and gender-responsive governance, including improved public finance and digital systems and service, and data-driven policy and decision-making, all enhancing public trust and improving policy implementation and service delivery.

The UN will support Albania in strengthening **effective, accountable, and inclusive democratic governance**, with a focus on institutions that are central to **EU accession, public trust, and service delivery**. Support will strengthen the effectiveness of **Parliament in law-making and oversight**, reinforce the role of **independent oversight institutions**, and enhance the capacity of **public administration and local governments** to design and implement **EU-aligned reforms** transparently and inclusively. Particular emphasis will be placed on **professionalising the public administration**, including strategic human resources planning, merit-based recruitment and retention, and continuous skills development, recognising that **capable institutions and a professional workforce are foundational to sustainable governance**. Institutional governance of **social protection systems** will also be strengthened through enhanced transparency, digital administration, and structured tripartite participation, reinforcing institutional credibility and alignment with **EU social policy governance standards**.

Public finance management (PFM) will be strengthened to improve **budget transparency, fiscal efficiency, and accountability** at both central and local levels. UN support will promote **gender-responsive budgeting and results-based**

planning, execution, and monitoring, alongside improved management and oversight of EU and other external funds. **Public procurement systems** will be strengthened to enhance efficiency, integrity, and sustainability, reducing corruption risks and improving value for money. At the local level, municipalities will be supported to plan, budget, and implement EU-aligned policies and investments, including improved absorption and accountable management of EU funds. Given uncertainty in the accession trajectory, governance reforms will integrate **foresight and risk-management approaches** to strengthen institutional resilience.

Digital transformation, data, and accountability will act as enablers across governance and justice reforms. The UN will support the **digitalisation of justice and oversight institutions** to improve efficiency and transparency, including the publication of judicial decisions with safeguards for **privacy, personal data, and sensitive cases**. **National statistical and data systems** will be strengthened to produce and use high-quality, sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data aligned with EUROSTAT and international standards. Capacities for **research, evaluation, and evidence use** will be reinforced in partnership with academia, youth, and civil society. **Institutional coordination mechanisms**, including national human rights institutions, will be strengthened to monitor and report on SDGs and international human rights obligations, with meaningful participation of civil society and groups at risk of being left behind. Where relevant, governance and rule-of-law support will also contribute to addressing **corruption, financing of terrorism, organised and cybercrime, and illicit trafficking**, including through strengthened financial investigations, asset recovery, AML/CFT support, and improved coordination and alignment with international frameworks.

Output 3.2 Justice, Human Rights, Equality and Civic Space

By 2031, human rights and justice institutions, civil society and media have strengthened capacities and enabling conditions to protect and promote human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination, expand the civic space, and ensure equitable access to justice, particularly for women and people at risk of being left behind, in compliance with EU and international standards.

By 2031, **human rights and justice institutions, civil society, and media** have strengthened capacities and enabling conditions to **protect and promote human rights, gender equality, and non-discrimination**, expand **civic space**, and ensure **equitable access to justice**, particularly for women and people at risk of being left behind, in compliance with EU and international standards, including strengthening grassroot, civic and voluntary networks. The Cooperation Framework will support the strengthening of the **rule of law, civic space, justice, and human rights institutions** as core foundations for **democratic governance, social cohesion, and the EU accession process**. UN support will reinforce the **effectiveness, independence, and accountability of national human rights institutions**, including the Ombudsperson, equality bodies, and oversight mechanisms, enabling systematic monitoring, reporting, and follow-up on UPR, treaty body, and SDG 16+ recommendations. Implementation of anti-discrimination and gender equality frameworks, including gender quota provisions, will be strengthened through improved institutional practice, data, and intersectional analysis, addressing persistent gaps affecting women, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and other marginalised groups. Particular attention will be given to **gender-responsive justice**, including support for drafting, costing, and implementing key legislation such as the **Gender Equality and Domestic Violence Prevention laws**, and for systematic gender mainstreaming across policies and justice institutions. **Civil society**

organisations as core governance actors will be empowered through structured engagement and sustainable funding modalities that enable their role in **rights monitoring, accountability, budget transparency, and evidence-based advocacy**. The UN will work with **media and communication actors** to strengthen **rights-based public discourse**, counter anti-rights narratives, improve debate in sensitive areas, and address **disinformation and hate speech**, contributing to the protection and expansion of civic space, including inclusive participation of women, youth, and marginalised groups. Where relevant, diaspora civic engagement will be supported through consultation and policy feedback mechanisms.

To ensure reforms translate into tangible protection outcomes, the UN will support **justice and law-enforcement institutions** to prevent and combat **corruption, organised crime, and illicit trafficking**, including trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, and firearms trafficking. This includes strengthened **financial investigations, asset recovery** (including emerging risks such as virtual assets), **risk-based border management** along strategic corridors, and enhanced capacities to address **cybercrime and digital evidence**, alongside cooperation between public and private actors and **victim-centred approaches**. **Access to justice** will be strengthened as a practical and measurable dimension of governance reform, with support focused on legal aid systems, court efficiency and case management, alternative dispute resolution, and stronger referral pathways between justice, social, and protection services. Across all interventions, **coordination among justice, protection, and care sectors** will be reinforced to ensure comprehensive responses to the needs of vulnerable women, men, boys, and girls, including survivors of violence and exploitation. Strengthened **national coordination and oversight mechanisms** will improve monitoring of **child rights** and embed evidence-informed commitments into policy and planning, ensuring that justice and human rights reforms deliver **real remedies, accountability, and trust for all**, in line with **EU standards and the Leave No One Behind principle**.



Young people learn about the Youth Guarantee, a European initiative to help youth into the job market.

Output 3.3 Migration, Asylum, Statelessness and Diaspora Governance

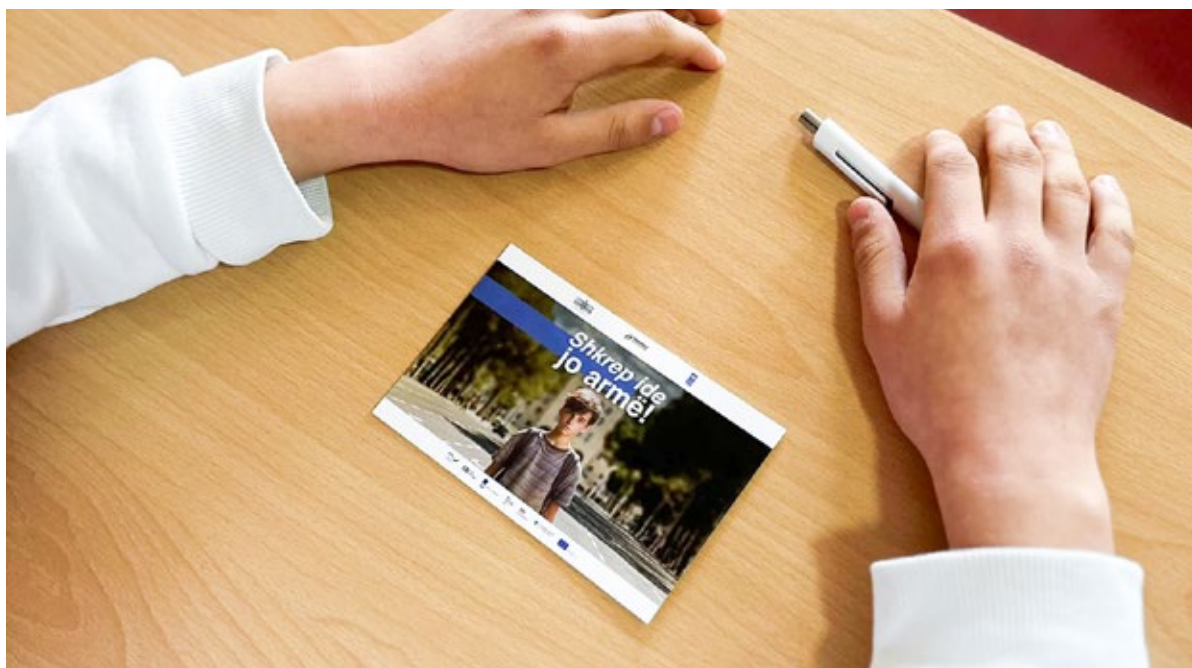
By 2031, institutions manage migration, asylum, statelessness, and diaspora engagement in a safe, effective, gender-responsive, and rights-based manner, aligned with EU and international standards, contributing to Albania's development, demographic resilience, and social cohesion.

The Cooperation Framework will support Albania in strengthening EU acquis-aligned policy, legal and institutional frameworks for **migration**,⁶¹ **asylum, return, and reintegration**, ensuring that migration governance is **rights-based, gender-responsive, and child-sensitive**. National authorities will be supported to **bring asylum and migration legislation into closer alignment with EU and international standards**. Capacities to

deliver **high-quality services for asylum seekers, refugees, displaced persons, and those at risk of statelessness** will be strengthened through improved systems, procedures, and institutional skills. Guidance will be provided to enhance **policy coherence** and promote proven practices adopted by countries with strong migration governance, while **inclusion and integration policies** will be reinforced to ensure equal access to services and community participation for people seeking or granted protection.

UN support will reinforce **national and municipal capacities** to design, coordinate, and deliver **accessible services** for migrants, asylum seekers, forcibly displaced and stateless persons, returnees, and people on the move. This includes strengthening **registration and reception systems, individual case management, legal aid, psychosocial support, and referral pathways**,

61. Supporting implementation of Albania's National Migration Strategy, through strengthening not only policy alignment but also full-system implementation capacity at central and municipal levels, a national coordination and monitoring mechanism for migration governance, including data integration between INSTAT, border and migration authority and municipalities.



Fire Ideas – Not Guns’ - a campaign to ‘Strengthening Control, Management, and Social Reintegration of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Albania’.

with particular attention to **children, survivors of violence, trafficking victims, and persons with disabilities**. Migration and asylum dimensions will be **systematically integrated into labour-market, human capital, and social protection policies**, strengthening coherence across Cooperation Framework priorities and supporting **demographic resilience**. The UN will support **integrated governance mechanisms** linking line ministries, municipalities, civil society, media, the private sector, and diaspora organisations to improve coordination, implementation, and accountability across migration, asylum, return, and diaspora engagement. Particular emphasis will be placed on strengthening **municipal capacities**, where gaps remain acute, to deliver **standardised, community-based return and reintegration services**, including civil documentation, employment and skills referrals, access to education and health services, psychosocial support, and **GBV and trafficking referrals**, in partnership with CSOs and local service providers.

Priority actions will also include developing **interoperable data systems** covering migration flows, reintegration outcomes, and trafficking in persons cases, with **disaggregation by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, and vulnerability**, while ensuring data protection and child-sensitive safeguards, including strong linkages between TIP mechanisms and Child Protection Units. Diaspora engagement will be strengthened as a development asset through institutional platforms that enable two-way dialogue, investment, entrepreneurship, knowledge and skills transfer, and civic participation beyond remittances. **Digital governance and data systems** will support migration case management, monitoring, and evidence-based policymaking, while promoting inclusion and data protection. Government capacity and public understanding will be strengthened to promote the benefits of **regular migration pathways**, ethical recruitment, access to services, and fair working conditions, positioning migrants as contributors to **economic growth, skills development, and social cohesion**. **Cross-border and regional cooperation** with neighbouring

countries and EU institutions will be reinforced on readmission, asylum procedures, cross-border policing, and the prevention of trafficking and smuggling. Through these combined efforts, the Cooperation Framework will support Albania in building **coherent, inclusive, and EU-aligned migration governance systems** that protect rights, strengthen social cohesion, and contribute to sustainable development.

Linkages with other Priority Area: Governance, Justice & Human rights

Priority Area 3 provides the **institutional, legal, and accountability foundations** for inclusive and sustainable development and is instrumental to the achievement of all other priority areas. **Stronger public accountability, oversight, and rule-of-law institutions** enhance decision-making, policy coherence, and resource allocation, which are essential for **green and resilient economic transformation** under Priority Area 2 and for **effective, equitable delivery of education, health, and social protection services** under Priority Area

1. Support for the **implementation and monitoring of EU-aligned and international human rights commitments** embeds rights-based, gender-responsive, and Leave No One Behind principles across economic and social policies, ensuring that EU-driven reforms remain inclusive, people-centred, and socially sustainable. **Improved access to justice, legal aid, and remedies**, particularly for women, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, migrants, and rural populations, reinforces **trust in institutions** and enables meaningful participation in economic and social life, amplifying outcomes under Priority Areas 1 and 2. **Stronger civic participation, media freedom, and structured engagement with civil society and local self-government** enhance social dialogue, policy legitimacy, and implementation capacity, enabling communities to shape decisions and co-create solutions. **Effective governance of migration, asylum, and diaspora engagement** supports labour-market functioning, human capital retention, and knowledge transfer, reinforcing economic transformation and social cohesion across the Cooperation Framework.

2.4. Delivering On The Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle

The principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is central to the 2027–2031 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF) and is operationalised as both a **normative commitment and a practical delivery approach**.

In Albania's EU-accession and upper-middle-

income context, LNOB is not understood as a residual or social add-on, but as a **core condition for sustainable reform, social cohesion and convergence with EU standards**. The CF recognises that unless reforms are inclusive by design and reach those furthest behind first, they risk reinforcing inequalities, undermining trust in institutions, and weakening the legitimacy and effectiveness of EU-aligned transformation. The Albania 2025 Country Analysis demonstrates that persistent inequalities in Albania are **structural**

and intersecting, linked to geography, income, gender, disability, age, migration and displacement status, and exposure to environmental risks. Groups facing compounded disadvantages include Roma and Egyptian communities, rural and remote populations, persons with disabilities, women - particularly women-headed households and caregivers, youth at risk of exclusion, older persons living alone, informal workers, migrants, returnees, forcibly displaced and stateless persons. These inequalities manifest across human capital outcomes, access to quality services, labour markets, digital access, environmental exposure and participation in decision-making. Particular attention is also required for low-income populations in urban and peri-urban areas, where rapid urbanisation, rising housing costs and concentration of informal and low-productivity employment expose households to persistent economic insecurity despite proximity to economic growth centers. In parallel, small and micro farmers and rural producers face growing risks of exclusion as markets modernise and EU-aligned standards, value-chain consolidation and productivity requirements intensify. Without targeted measures supporting SME development, agro-processing, local value-chain integration and rural enterprise upgrading, these groups risk being left behind in Albania's economic transformation, reinforcing both territorial disparities and migration pressures. The CF therefore treats LNOB not as a standalone thematic area, but as a **cross-cutting operational lens** that shapes how priorities are defined, how results are pursued, and how progress is measured across all three Priority Areas. In practical terms, the LNOB is operationalized across CF priorities as follows:

- ↳ Across **Priority Area 1 (Inclusive Human Capital Development)**, LNOB is operationalised through a life-cycle approach that prioritises equitable access to early childhood education, inclusive and quality schooling, primary health care, nutrition, social protection and care systems. The CF emphasises outreach to informal workers, rural populations, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, women and children at risk of violence, and youth facing labour-market exclusion. Prevention and response to gender-based violence and violence against children are treated as core LNOB interventions, recognising their deep links to poverty, educational outcomes, health and long-term exclusion.
- ↳ Under **Priority Area 2 (Sustainable Economic Transformation and Inclusive Green Growth)**, LNOB is embedded by ensuring that green, digital and economic transitions do not exacerbate territorial or social divides. The CF promotes inclusive SME development, rural and agrifood transformation, and just transition approaches that create decent work opportunities for women, youth and rural populations. Climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures explicitly target communities most exposed to environmental and climate risks, including coastal, rural and informal settlements, linking resilience building with livelihoods and social protection.
- ↳ Within **Priority Area 3 (Governance, Justice and Human Rights)**, LNOB is addressed by strengthening gender-responsive governance and access to justice, accountability mechanisms and inclusive digital governance. The CF supports institutions to remove administrative, legal and digital barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized groups, ensuring that reforms in justice, migration and asylum governance, public administration and service digitalisation are accessible, rights-based and non-discriminatory. Civic space, participation and engagement of civil society—particularly organisations representing marginalized groups—are treated as essential LNOB enablers.

Data, evidence and targeting for those furthest behind: A key lesson from both the UNSDCF evaluation and the Country Analysis is that LNOB

cannot be delivered without **robust, disaggregated data and evidence-based targeting**. The CF therefore embeds LNOB within the cross-cutting enabler on **Data, Monitoring and Evidence-Based Policymaking**. The UN will support INSTAT and line ministries to strengthen the production and use of disaggregated data by sex, age, disability, location, ethnicity, income, migration and displacement status. This will enable more precise identification of who is being left

behind, where, and why—and allow policies and programmes to be adjusted accordingly. Equity-focused monitoring will be integrated into the CF Results Framework, ensuring that progress is assessed not only by national averages, but by distributional outcomes and impacts on vulnerable groups. Human rights recommendations and LNOB-relevant SDG targets will be used as practical guidance for implementation and monitoring.

2.5. Cross-Cutting Priorities and Enablers

Cross-cutting enablers are integral to the Cooperation Framework and ensure inclusiveness, coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability across all priority areas.

They reflect the UN’s normative mandate and comparative advantages, and guide how support is designed and delivered to maximise impact, address structural inequalities, and support Albania’s EU accession and SDG commitments. These enablers are systematically integrated across priority areas/ outcomes and outputs to strengthen alignment between policy, implementation, and results, ensure that no one is left behind, and enable transformative, rights-based, and evidence-informed development.

↳ Human Rights

Human rights constitute the **normative foundation of the Cooperation Framework**, guiding all UN support through Albania’s obligations under international treaties, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, Council

of Europe instruments, and EU fundamental rights standards. Across all outcomes, the UN will assist authorities to uphold rights, strengthen accountability, and embed **human rights-based approaches** in laws, policies, budgeting, and service delivery. The UN recognises the need for a **more coherent, visible, and system-wide UN human rights strategy**, ensuring that human rights work is neither fragmented nor overshadowed by political or funding pressures. The UN will reinforce the capacities of **oversight bodies, justice institutions, regulators, and local governments**, while re-centring **civil society organisations** as essential partners in monitoring, accountability, and community engagement. Strategic advocacy and clearer communication of human rights results—especially in sensitive areas—will be prioritised, recognising that visibility is vital for credibility, trust, and policy influence. The current reliance on RC Office resources to sustain human rights capacity is insufficient. The next Cooperation Framework will therefore commit to **resourcing, strengthening, and institutionalising human rights functions across the UNCT**, including treaty body reporting, ILO supervisory body reporting, UPR follow-up, human rights analysis, and support to national

human rights institutions. Human rights work must remain central to the UN's role—even when it is less financially attractive—as it represents the UN's **distinct normative mandate** and is essential for **good governance, social cohesion, and the protection of vulnerable groups**.

↳ Leave No One Behind (LNOB)

The commitment to Leave No One Behind is central to the Cooperation Framework. Albania faces persistent inequalities linked to geography, gender, income, ethnicity, disability, migration status, forcible displacement, statelessness, and age. Rural and poor communities, Roma and Egyptian populations, elderly persons living alone, subsistence farmers, persons with disabilities, women-headed households, migrants, forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and youth at risk of exclusion require **targeted and sustained support**. Particular attention is required for **low-income populations in urban and peri-urban areas**, where rapid urbanisation, rising housing costs, and concentrations of informal and low-productivity employment expose households to persistent economic insecurity despite proximity to growth centres. At the same time, **small and micro farmers and rural producers** risk exclusion as markets modernise and EU-aligned standards, value-chain consolidation, and productivity requirements intensify. Without targeted measures linking local producers and small enterprises to **industrial upgrading, agro-processing, SME development, and value-chain integration**, these groups risk being left behind in Albania's economic transformation. UN interventions will address **structural barriers** to quality services, social protection, employment, justice, and skilling, reskilling, and upskilling opportunities, as well as participation, ensuring inclusive access and effective outreach. LNOB will be operationalised through **disaggregated**

data, stronger equality- and inclusion-focused monitoring, targeted territorial approaches, and improved municipal capacities to deliver services that effectively reach vulnerable groups.

↳ Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)

Gender equality is embedded across all outcomes and remains a **core driver of sustainable development**. Despite progress, Albania continues to face significant gender gaps in labour-force participation, unpaid care responsibilities, entrepreneurship, leadership, and income equality. **Gender-based violence (GBV)** remains widespread, including emerging risks such as technology-facilitated violence. The UN will support the development, adoption, and implementation of **gender-responsive legislation**, institutional strengthening, gender analysis, gender-responsive budgeting, and improved service delivery. The Cooperation Framework includes gender-focused indicators and will establish a **Gender Equality Accelerator**⁶² as a central GEWE implementation mechanism aimed at eliminating violence and discrimination, increasing women's access to decent work and entrepreneurship, and enhancing women's participation in public and political life.

↳ Disability

The UN will place stronger emphasis on **disability inclusion** as a core human rights commitment. Support will focus on aligning national policies and services with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, improving disability-related data and monitoring, and strengthening inclusive education, employment, accessibility, and participation. Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations will be engaged as partners throughout the policy cycle.

62. Modeled on positive example of Gender Equality Accelerator in BiH, <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/vkimc0nculr1vd4x8us0r/GEA-JP-presentation.pptx?rlkey=zl3ywo28at56bkhv9ur0kancp&dl=0>



Participants at the launching of “Voices of YOUth: Gender Equality and Social Cohesion in the Western Balkans” research.

➤ Youth Empowerment

Albania’s youth face limited opportunities, high NEET rates, migration pressures, and challenges in transitioning from education to the labour market. Youth aspirations, well-being, participation and volunteering directly shape Albania’s long-term demographic outlook and competitiveness. Across all outcomes, the UN will engage youth—especially young women, rural youth, and those at risk of exclusion—**not only as beneficiaries, but primarily as change-makers**, strengthening their skills, employment opportunities, soft skills, digital and green competencies, civic participation, and leadership. Targeted investment will strengthen youth soft skills—including communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership—as key enablers of employability, civic engagement, belonging, and resilience. Entrepreneurship skills, including those related to digital and green development, will also be promoted. The UN will support youth

participation in policymaking, mental health and social services, and youth-led innovation and community initiatives. Youth engagement will further be supported through participation in cultural life, heritage safeguarding, and creative initiatives, as well as by strengthening youth participation architecture, including school parliaments and municipal youth councils.

➤ SDG Localisation and Territorial Cohesion

Local development is a critical cross-cutting dimension. Albania faces significant disparities between the Tirana metropolitan area and rural, mountain, and coastal regions. Municipalities often lack adequate capacity in strategic planning, staffing, operation and maintenance of public infrastructure, public finance, procurement, data management, EU fund absorption, and gender-responsive budgeting. The UN will support **SDG localisation**, strengthen municipal governance, expand participatory planning, and



Fifty changemakers came together at Albania's first Gender Datathon to champion change with gender data.

promote area-based development approaches that address multidimensional poverty, environmental risks, migration and asylum pressures, and economic exclusion. Integrated approaches will link governance, public finance, service delivery, and local economic development, fostering social cohesion by reducing territorial disparities and strengthening inclusion, trust, and collaboration among communities. Cultural heritage and local cultural assets will be considered as part of development approaches, ensuring that EU-aligned reforms are understood, owned, and delivered at local level.

➤ Digitalisation, Innovation and Emerging Technology

The UN will continue driving systemic change by embedding innovation at the heart of its initiatives to achieve transformative progress across sectors, supporting Albania's transition toward a knowledge-based economy.⁶³ **Digitalisation has emerged as a key accelerator across governance, the economy, and human capital, while also presenting risks related to digital divides, cybersecurity, data protection, privacy, and digital literacy among vulnerable groups.** Special

63. In line with innovation related sub-recommendation of Recommendation 8 of Albania UNSDCF Final Evaluation.

attention will be given to supporting **digital adoption among SMEs, small producers, and enterprises in lagging regions and peri-urban areas**, enabling participation in modern supply chains, digital commerce, and productivity-enhancing technologies linked to industrial upgrading and green transition pathways. Digital skills development will be treated as a **key enabling factor** for inclusive digital transformation.

↳ Foresight, Evidence Generation and Data Systems

Strengthening data systems is essential for **SDG monitoring, EU accession reforms, and evidence-based decision-making**. The UN will support INSTAT and line ministries to improve the production, analysis, and use of disaggregated data, expand SDG indicator coverage, modernise statistical methods, and strengthen civil registration and vital statistics. Knowledge generation, foresight, and data analysis will be elevated as core delivery modalities.⁶⁴

↳ Civil Society, Participation and Strategic Advocacy

Civil society organisations play a central role in rights monitoring, accountability, policy advocacy, watchdog functions, and community-level action. The UN will strengthen CSO capacities, establish structured engagement mechanisms, and formally embed CSOs within Cooperation Framework implementation modalities. Strategic advocacy and clear, evidence-based public communication will be prioritised to build trust, influence reforms, and ensure visibility of UN-supported work in sensitive areas.

↳ Integrating Regional and Subregional Work

Albania's leadership role in the Western Balkans and the growing emphasis on regional approaches make it essential to articulate how the **UN leverages regional knowledge, standard-setting, technical advisory services, and cross-country initiatives** to support national reforms. The UN's long-standing regional presence—combining normative mandates, operational capacity, and convening power—positions it to facilitate peer learning and the transfer of tested solutions aligned with UN mandates.

↳ Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)⁶⁵

PSEA is a **key priority for the UNCT entities**, with a special focus on prioritizing victims' rights and creating an environment in which sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) do not occur. SEA is unacceptable behavior and is prohibited for UN personnel and UN implementing partners. The UNCT entities will therefore pursue all appropriate means to protect against, prevent and respond to SEA, and will require a similar commitment from its partners. In delivering on the obligations articulated in the present Cooperation Framework, the UNCT and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania affirm their commitment to preventing and responding to reports of SEA in connection with their personnel involved in common/joint projects. It is understood that this would entail the need to: (i) adhere to common values on PSEA, (ii) take preventative measures against SEA, (iii) investigate allegations, and (iv) take appropriate corrective action when incidents occur, including providing support to victims in accordance with a victim-centred approach.

64. In line with sub-recommendation of Recommendation 3 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting to institutionalise strategic foresight mechanisms, such as scenario planning, horizon scanning, and policy labs, within the CF cycle.

65. The mandatory standard language on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) that is required to be included in UN CF, in line with UN system-wide guidance (UNCF Guidance and the UN Protocol on SEA).

2.6. Critical Assumptions and Anticipated Risks

The CF Theory of Change rests on a set of interrelated political, institutional, financial and societal assumptions⁶⁶ that underpin the feasibility and sustainability of the Cooperation Framework, while recognising material risks that could affect delivery and impact.

First, the Cooperation Framework assumes a **sustained national commitment to accelerating SDG progress and EU accession as Albania's central strategic objective and primary driver of institutional reform**. This includes continued political will to advance EU acquis alignment across sectors; to move beyond formal compliance toward effective implementation and enforcement; and to maintain reform momentum in areas requiring long-term transformation, such as justice and rule of law, human rights, education, health, social protection, environmental governance, climate action and national data systems. It is further assumed that Government leadership will continue to regard the UN as a trusted upstream partner supporting policy coherence, SDG alignment, human-rights-based approaches, integrated planning, institutional strengthening and municipal preparedness. While the pace of accession may fluctuate due to geopolitical dynamics, the CF assumes sufficient continuity of reform direction to allow the UN to adapt its engagement while remaining relevant and impactful.

Second, CF implementation assumes a baseline of **overall political, macroeconomic and security stability**, without prolonged disruptions arising

from economic crises, regional insecurity, climate-related shocks or political instability that would significantly divert national priorities or weaken institutional capacity. While the CF explicitly incorporates adaptive mechanisms—such as foresight, risk monitoring and a structured midterm review—its success depends on a sufficiently stable operating environment to sustain long-term, system-level reform processes.

Third, the CF assumes **continued trust, political access and demand for UN expertise**. Effective delivery depends on the UN retaining access to senior decision-makers and being perceived as an impartial, credible and value-adding partner. High-level access is essential for influencing policy direction, facilitating cross-ministerial coordination, advancing EU- and SDG-aligned reforms, and sustaining demand for the UN's normative, analytical and technical contributions. This assumption also depends on effective UN communication, visibility and strategic positioning to reinforce its role as a system-level development partner rather than a project implementer of last resort.

Fourth, implementation assumes **functioning national coordination and partnership mechanisms**. This includes the continued effectiveness of the Joint Executive Committee (JEC), SASPAC, inter-ministerial coordination bodies, IPMGs, EU negotiation structures, the Central Finance and Contracting Unit (CFCU), and other relevant platforms at central and local levels. Strong coordination between national and municipal institutions is critical for aligning external assistance, managing EU funds, monitoring reform progress and ensuring coherence across policies, investments and SDG targets.

66. Elaborated version of key assumptions and anticipated risks can be found here: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/7ua1thrzqyfyxzhb-m6c/UN-Albania-CF-2026-31_Assumptions-and-Risks.docx?rlkey=pm0xqngngc7j0a5iis2lxduad&dl=0.

Fifth, the Theory of Change assumes a **shared commitment to national ownership and capacity transfer**. Both the Government and the UN are expected to progressively shift from externally delivered, project-based support toward nationally led implementation and long-term institutional strengthening. This includes improving public administration systems, municipal planning and budgeting, EU fund absorption capacity, and sustainable service delivery models. The CF assumes openness among national and local institutions to reduce capacity substitution, clarify institutional mandates and adopt modern governance, digital and results-based management tools.

Sixth, the Cooperation Framework assumes a **predictable and supportive financing and delivery environment**, including continued access to EU funding instruments—such as IPA III, the Reform and Growth Facility and related mechanisms—alongside sufficient national budgetary space for co-financing reform implementation. It also assumes stable engagement with IFIs and, where relevant, private-sector partners, enabling the UN to leverage upstream policy support into larger, blended financing flows aligned with EU accession and SDG acceleration. Internally, the UN system is expected to strengthen coordination of financing approaches, including pooled funding, to reduce fragmentation, transaction costs and administrative burden for national counterparts. At the same time, the Theory of Change assumes that the **UN Country Team retains adequate technical, operational and coordination capacity despite organisational and resource constraints**. This underpins a deliberate shift toward fewer, higher-impact interventions; stronger inter-agency collaboration; effective use of pooled resources; and sustained collective leadership under leaner operating conditions, ensuring the UN remains capable of delivering strategic, system-level results even in a constrained resource environment.

Seventh, CF implementation assumes an **enabling environment for human rights, civic space and media freedom**. Progress depends on the ability of civil society organisations, employers' and workers' organisations, independent media, oversight bodies and national human rights institutions to participate meaningfully in policy dialogue, accountability and rights-based engagement. Political openness to UN-supported work on gender equality, non-discrimination and Leave No One Behind principles is essential. This assumption also recognises emerging risks linked to the global rise of anti-rights and anti-gender movements, including external influence, which could challenge progress on inclusion and equality. The CF therefore assumes continued national commitment to constitutional, EU and international human rights standards.

Anticipated Risks:

Implementation of the Cooperation Framework is subject to a set of interlinked political, institutional, financial and contextual risks. **Slowdown, re-prioritisation or superficial implementation of EU accession reforms** may arise due to domestic political dynamics, changes in EU political will and enlargement momentum or shifting geopolitical priorities. Reforms may either stall or be accelerated to meet formal benchmarks without sufficient quality assurance, consultation or institutional consolidation, weakening incentives for deep structural change. Such dynamics risk reducing demand for upstream UN policy engagement, delaying reform programmes, undermining coordination, and limiting Albania's capacity to absorb and manage EU funds effectively. A further risk relates to **reversion to short-term, substitution-based support models**, despite formal commitments to national ownership. Pressures for rapid delivery, high staff turnover or limited administrative capacity may encourage reliance on UN-executed implementation rather than sustained investment

in institutional systems. This could weaken long-term sustainability, delay nationally led implementation and reduce preparedness for post-accession responsibilities.

Fragmented or unpredictable financing environments also pose a significant risk. Changes in EU financing modalities, fiscal constraints, reduced national cost-sharing or limited access to IFI financing windows may affect implementation pace and scale. Poorly coordinated donor financing and overlapping funding requests risk overburdening national systems, diluting strategic focus and weakening alignment with national and SDG priorities. The Cooperation Framework also faces risks linked to **reduced UN delivery capacity due to resource and staffing constraints**. Anticipated budget reductions and downsizing across UN agencies could constrain in-country technical expertise, delay delivery of advisory functions and limit the UN's ability to provide integrated, high-quality support. This reinforces the need for sharper prioritization, stronger inter-agency coordination and effective use of pooled resources.

Progress may further be constrained by **shrinking civic space, rising anti-rights narratives and persistent social exclusion**. Declining media independence, politicization of human rights, gender equality and migration, and the growing influence of anti-gender and anti-rights movements—both domestically and globally—risk undermining LNOB commitments and rights-based reforms. Misinformation and polarised public discourse may weaken public trust, constrain civil society engagement and reduce accountability. Structural inequalities affecting Roma and Egyptian communities, rural populations, migrants and returnees, persons with disabilities, older persons and women may continue to limit equitable access to services and opportunities. Gender norms, unpaid care burdens, slow progress in care economy reforms and persistent gender-based violence risk further

constraining women's participation in education, employment and public life.

Human rights and gender backlash, including potential rollbacks of legal and policy protections on gender equality, elimination of violence against women (EVAW), and restrictions on civic space is another risk. There is a risk of emerging or entrenched institutional and political actors mobilising against gender equality, human rights standards, and democratic freedoms. This could manifest as efforts to weaken existing legislation, reduce public financing for gender equality and EVAW, undermine gender-responsive budgeting, restrict CSO operations—particularly women's rights organisations—and limit civic participation and oversight. Public narratives that delegitimize gender equality (similar to the misinformation campaign accompanying the Gender equality law adoption in November 2025), human rights defenders, or EU-aligned reforms could also gain traction, eroding social support for progressive policies. Such backlash may delay or reverse progress on SDG 5, undermine reforms required under EU *acquis* alignment (particularly those related to fundamental rights, anti-discrimination, and gender equality, reduce trust in institutions, and shrink civil society engagement essential for accountability. Rollbacks could disproportionately affect women, girls, and marginalized populations. To mitigate this risk, the UN will strengthen institutional capacities for gender mainstreaming, human rights monitoring and accountability across central and local government systems, while supporting civil society—particularly women's rights and youth-led organisations—to expand evidence-based advocacy, community engagement and oversight functions. Strategic, value-based communication will be deployed to counter disinformation and promote positive narratives on gender equality, human rights and EU accession standards. High-level UN advocacy, deepened partnership, dialogue and strategic use of UN convening role with Government, Parliament and independent institutions will be sustained



to advance implementation of international norms and safeguard existing legal and policy protections, including on EAW and civic space. Risk monitoring and early-warning indicators will be rolled out to ensure timely identification and facilitate coordinated responses.

Finally, **macroeconomic, geopolitical and climate-related shocks** remain a critical cross-cutting risk. Global economic volatility, energy price shocks, regional insecurity and climate-induced disasters may divert public resources from long-term reforms to crisis response, disrupt labour markets and strain social and protection systems.

Accelerated outmigration and demographic decline may further weaken institutional capacity and service delivery, particularly at municipal level, affecting the sustainability and impact of Cooperation Framework interventions.

Cooperation Framework Implementation Plan



3.1 Cooperation Framework Governance and Management Structure

↳ Oversight & Management

As highlighted in the recommendations of the Final Evaluation of the current UNSDCF,⁶⁷ the next Cooperation Framework (CF) will establish a **simplified, coherent and strategically oriented oversight and management architecture** that strengthens national ownership and positions the UN as a system-level partner for Albania's EU-aligned transformation. The new CF will streamline structures to reduce transaction costs and focus on strategic engagement rather than internal compliance. Stronger linkages between UN mechanisms and national structures – including IPMGs, SASPAC, municipalities and donor platforms – will reinforce coherence, reduce fragmentation and strengthen coordination with the EU, IFIs and bilateral partners. The architecture will support **adaptive management**, using independent midterm review and foresight tools, and will facilitate Albania's gradual transition toward an EU member-state model of UN engagement—where national institutions assume increasing leadership and UN support focuses on upstream, catalytic and system-strengthening roles.

↳ Joint Executive Committee (JEC)⁶⁸

The Joint Executive Committee will **provide strategic leadership and oversight for the Cooperation Framework**. Co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator, it brings together representatives of partner ministries and heads of UN system agencies. Other institutions, development partners or stakeholders

may be invited on an ad-hoc basis. The JEC provides overall strategic direction, reviews progress against CF outcomes and ensures alignment with national and sector programmes, including those overseen by IPMGs. It conducts the annual review and endorses significant adjustments to CF strategies or results as needed. The JEC also advises Outcome Groups and the UNCT on emerging issues, risks and opportunities and promotes partnerships and cost-sharing with civil society, the private sector, philanthropic organisations, international donors and IFIs. Partnership governance will be anchored in close collaboration with SASPAC, which will remain the Council of Ministers' principal mechanism for Cooperation Framework endorsement and overall strategic alignment. To strengthen coherence and accelerate results, the UN and Council of Ministers will explore establishing a two-layered JEC, comprising both a political and a technical tier. The political tier would continue to be co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator. The technical tier would be co-chaired by SASPAC (as the Council of Ministers' technical coordination mechanism) and the UN, ensuring tighter linkage between strategic oversight and operational coordination, smoother follow-up, and more integrated implementation across the CF cycle. In parallel, a **UN–EU–Government tripartite platform** will support coordinated contributions to EU accession, enabling strategic dialogue on reform delivery, financing pathways and public communication. Engagement with the private sector will be guided by a **Private Sector Network** under the pillar 2 platform, enabling structured collaboration on competitiveness, skills,

67. Directly responding to sub-recommendations of Recommendation 4 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting to further strengthen inclusive and integrated CF coordination mechanisms.

68. The sections below incorporate Recommendation 6 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting strengthening UN Agency engagement and accountability in JWP and further improve monitoring and indicator framework.

sustainability and responsible business conduct. To ensure meaningful participation of non-state actors, a **Civil Society Dialogue Forum** will facilitate regular engagement with CSOs, human rights organisations, social partners and independent media, reinforcing transparency, accountability and inclusive governance throughout the CF cycle.

↘ Outcome Groups

Outcome Groups will be **redesigned as strategic coordination platforms**, shifting away from a primarily compliance-driven reporting role. Their focus will be on supporting joint analysis, alignment of workplans, evidence-based policy positioning and coordinated engagement with Government, linking programming with monitoring, communications, partnerships and resource mobilisation. The UNCT will undertake an internal process to clarify Outcome Group roles, membership and leadership arrangements, including their interaction with Joint Work Plans or alternative coordination tools. The guiding principle will be to support coherent, multi-agency implementation that advances CF outcomes, rather than fulfilling internal administrative requirements.

↘ Gender Thematic Result Group (GTRG)

The Gender Thematic Result Group coordinates the **mainstreaming of gender equality across CF design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including alignment with UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)**. It will support engagement in intergovernmental processes, provide policy advice to the UNCT and collaborate with the Communications Group on public awareness and advocacy. The GTRG will also: i) promote UN system accountability on gender equality through the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard, ii) support resource mobilisation for GEWE results and strengthened allocations to interventions advancing gender equality, and iii) facilitate capacity development and improved collection and use of sex-disaggregated data across the CF.

↘ INSTAT–UN Joint Data Group (JDG)

The Joint Data Group **identifies and addresses information and statistical gaps** related to SDG indicators, EU accession monitoring needs and national priorities. It will support the production and use of disaggregated data, strengthen statistical capacity and promote data dissemination and use across sectors, reinforcing evidence-based planning and policy formulation.

↘ Joint Communication Group

Communication will be **repositioned as a core implementation modality, not solely a visibility function**. The UN will adopt a more strategic and coherent approach that supports policy advocacy, public dialogue and citizen understanding of reforms, including the UN contribution to EU accession, human rights and gender equality. Communications will also be used as a strategic tool for resource mobilisation and partnership building, through targeted narratives, evidence-based products and impact stories that highlight the UN's value-added in EU accession and SDG acceleration and can be used in donor briefs, joint proposals and partner engagement. The UN will strengthen co-branded communication with the Government, the EU Delegation, IFIs, CSOs and private-sector partners to amplify joint successes and reinforce the UN's convening role. Additional approaches will include multimedia storytelling, interactive engagement (webinars, town halls, youth- and community-led forums) and targeted digital outreach, including accessible tools and dashboards where relevant.

Overall, the CF will be implemented in **a manner consistent with the UN80 agenda**, promoting a more agile, efficient, and digitally enabled UN presence. The UNCT will continue to adapt its operating model by optimizing in-country capacities and systematically drawing on regional and global expertise to respond to emerging priorities, risks, and opportunities.

BOX 2: Sharpened Implementation Modalities

A Fit-for-Purpose UNCT – Delivering with Fewer Resources:

The 2027-2031 CF will reflect realistic delivery capacity. With several agencies anticipating staffing reductions, implementation will prioritise activities more rigorously and reduce programme fragmentation. The CF will promote flexible staffing arrangements, joint teams, pooled expertise and shared services wherever possible. Joint programming will become increasingly important as individual agency resources shrink. The architecture will avoid overcommitment and enable the UN to maintain quality, coherence and relevance throughout the CF cycle. As Albania advances toward EU membership, the UN’s role will gradually shift from project-based support to upstream, system-focused engagement centred on policy coherence, human rights, data, and institutional strengthening.

New Ways of Working:

The UN will adopt a more strategic, coherent and agile approach, capable of adapting to Albania’s dynamic accession trajectory and evolving risks. This includes strengthening anticipatory capacities through foresight, scenario analysis, risk monitoring and data-driven decision-making, supported by accessible platforms and tools. Stronger internal coherence—particularly around innovation, digital transformation, technology governance and data—will improve the effectiveness of UN support to national institutions. The UN will also strengthen communication practices so that sensitive governance, rights and gender equality work is visible, evidence-based and understood. A stronger partnership posture toward CSOs, the private sector, academia and regional organisations will support both upstream institutional change and downstream community-level impact.

National Implementation and Capacity Transfer:

The 2027-2031 CF will further shift toward national implementation models and long-term capacity strengthening. The UNCT will develop a shared understanding of “national implementation,” including responsibilities, standards and safeguards, recognising that agencies currently interpret the concept differently. Municipalities—central to delivering EU-funded reforms and the CF’s local development agenda—will require strengthened capacities in planning, budgeting, procurement, monitoring and EU funds absorption. Where rapid delivery or complex procurement and sustainable infrastructure management is required to support timely absorption of EU funds, the UN may provide specialised implementation support while simultaneously building long-term national capacity. Direct implementation may also remain necessary in sectors with significant institutional gaps or where timelines require temporary substitution to prevent delays. Implementation arrangements will therefore clarify when direct implementation is appropriate, while maintaining the long-term objective of capacity transfer.

3.2. Partnerships and Resourcing the Cooperation Framework

Building on the successful implementation of the 2022–2026 Cooperation Framework, the UN Albania partnership strategy for the 2027–2031 cycle is anchored in a core group of partners providing predictable, multi-year financing to support structural reforms, while reinforcing national ownership.

The State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC) is positioned as the Government’s primary counterpart for development assistance and donor coordination, ensuring alignment across partners, financing instruments, and implementation modalities. The **European Union** remains Albania’s largest donor and strategic partner, and the principal source of financing for reform implementation through IPA III and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. Strategic support is also provided by long-standing bilateral partners, including Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Norway, and the United Kingdom, complemented by contributions from the United States **and** the Netherlands, as well as specialised vertical funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). A cornerstone of the UN partnership architecture is the **Albania SDG Acceleration Fund**, led by the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) and co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator, representing the highest level of national ownership. To address the SDG financing gap, the UN has expanded partnerships beyond traditional donors to include **International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the private sector, and philanthropic foundations**. Collaboration with the World Bank, EBRD, EIB, and other IFIs

supports the use of blended finance and catalytic investments. In parallel, UN Albania leverages global and regional platforms and funding sources to promote knowledge transfer, cross-border mobility, economic integration, and alignment with EU market standards, strengthening the sustainability and scale of development impact. The UN has maintained active partnerships and collaboration with the **OSCE** on the governance agenda and with **the Council of Europe**, especially on the human rights agenda.

Partnership Modalities

Government as the Central Partner:

The Government is the principal recipient and co-implementation partner of the CF. Ministries and national agencies will increasingly require rapid, high-quality technical expertise - particularly for aligning legislation with the EU acquis, conducting impact assessments, modernising public administration, preparing institutions to implement EU-aligned policies effectively, and meet accession / membership benchmarks. The Albania SDG Acceleration Fund will continue to support integrated and coherent resource mobilization and allocation for innovative and joint cooperation efforts focused on SDG achievement and EU accession. The fund complements core budgets of UN system agencies. The fund has potential to be broadened to include other stakeholders and to support innovative partnership mechanisms with civil society, the private sector and foundations, in support cooperation results. The **Albania SDG Acceleration Fund** will channel resources through a limited number of existing or newly established UN Joint Programmes, enabling rapid start-up, strong accountability and alignment with Government mechanisms, while avoiding

duplication and leveraging proven coordination structures.⁶⁹

Strategic Collaboration with the European Union:

The European Union will remain the largest and most influential development and reform partner in Albania. The UN access to EU funding - through IPA III, the Reform Agenda and Growth Plan Facility, and future structural and cohesion funds - depends on alignment with national sector strategies, negotiation clusters and the broader EU policy agenda. The UN will focus on areas where it brings **unique value to EU-funded reforms**,

including social sectors, human rights and equality, rule of law, governance, climate adaptation, environmental compliance and municipal capacity. Cooperation with the EU will also include support for public communication and citizen engagement, improving understanding of accession reforms and countering misinformation. The strategy prioritises early engagement with line ministries, shared planning cycles with EU counterparts and coordinated technical assistance that supports Albania’s EU-aligned transformation. Close coordination with Team Europe will facilitate joint messaging, strengthen evidence-based policy dialogue and promote coherence across sectors.

BOX 3: UN Support To Albania in its EU Accession Process as the Main National Priority

Strategic Positioning of the UN in the Accession Process:

The United Nations will reinforce its role as a strategic, upstream partner in Albania’s reforms relate to its EU accession process, as reforms shift from legislative alignment toward implementation, enforcement and institutional transformation. The UN will prioritise policy coherence, human-rights alignment, evidence generation and long-term capacity-building across central and local institutions. Drawing on its normative mandate, global expertise, neutrality and community reach, the UN will help ensure that EU-driven reforms translate into inclusive, equitable and sustainable improvements in people’s lives, particularly for those at risk of being left behind.

Supporting the Government / EU-led Chapter Closure and Benchmark Delivery:

With Albania aiming to provisionally close an initial set of chapters by mid-2026 and complete negotiations by 2027, the UN will intensify support to ministries, agencies and municipalities across priority areas, including rule of law, public administration, digital governance, education, social protection, labour, health, migration, energy, transport, environment, climate, procurement and statistics. UN agencies will mobilise global expert rosters, rapid-response advisory capacities and localised technical expertise to support legal approximation, regulatory drafting, benchmark delivery, inspections, policy analysis and implementation monitoring, including through agile mechanisms for rapid deployment of specialised EU acquis expertise. Existing UN workstreams will be scaled up in direct support of accession priorities.

69. See the UN-Albania EU Accession and SDG Acceleration Programme Framework developed through extensive consultations with the Government in 2025.

Institutional Capacity, Administrative Readiness and Municipal Strengthening:

The scale and pace of accession require robust institutions and well-prepared public administrations. Although the process of institutional strengthening is led by the Albania's institutions and the EU, the UN will support central and local institutions in legal drafting, regulatory impact assessments, inspection and enforcement, monitoring and evaluation, budgeting, procurement, strategic human resources planning, workforce development, data systems and quality assurance. As municipalities assume greater responsibility for implementing EU standards, the UN will strengthen their administrative readiness, particularly in environmental management, waste and water services, social services, economic development and digital public services.

Economic Preparedness, SMEs and Sectoral Strategies:

Preparing the economy for EU membership—especially SMEs facing new technical, quality, digital, labour and environmental standards—is a national priority. The UN will support the Government in designing and refining evidence-based and participatory sectoral strategies in areas such as industrial development, agriculture, environment, innovation, skills and employment. While time-sensitive documents may be prepared to meet chapter requirements, the UN will subsequently support their practical implementation. Outreach will be expanded to ensure that SMEs understand EU rules, certification and compliance requirements, and are able to seize opportunities in the single market.

Public Communication, Civic Engagement and Citizen Understanding:

Effective communication is critical to accession success. While public awareness of negotiation and chapter openings and closing is high, understanding of the practical implications of EU membership remains limited. In the areas prioritized by the Council of Ministers and identified by UN-EU strategic dialogue, the UN will contribute to coordinated, people-centred communication efforts that explain the benefits and responsibilities of EU accession and its interconnectedness with SDG agenda in accessible terms, including food safety, consumer protection, labour rights, environmental standards, social services and digital governance. This will include joint campaigns, public dialogues, consultations, and strengthened engagement with civil society and independent media to enhance transparency, participation and accountability, counter misinformation and build public trust.

EU Fund Absorption, Multi-Level Governance and Institutional Resilience:

As Albania transitions from IPA to performance-based financing and EU structural and cohesion funds, institutional capacity to plan, absorb, manage and monitor EU financing becomes essential. The UN will support national and municipal institutions in project preparation, feasibility analysis, financial management, cost-benefit analysis, budgeting, procurement, monitoring and reporting. Particular emphasis will be placed on municipalities, which will carry increased implementation of responsibilities. Peer learning, advisory services and practical tools will strengthen local governance, risk management, participation and service delivery, ensuring that EU-funded investments are effective, transparent, inclusive and sustainable.

Sustaining Reforms Beyond Accession:

Many reforms—especially in human rights, child protection, gender equality, social protection, environmental management, climate governance and digitalisation—must extend well beyond conclusion of EU chapter negotiations. The UN will support Albania in sustaining and deepening reforms, embedding rights-based and gender-responsive approaches, and maintaining strong oversight functions. Through foresight, scenario planning and risk analysis, the UN will help institutions prepare for post-accession responsibilities, demographic change, economic transitions and climate risks, ensuring adaptability, resilience and accountability over the long term.

Structured UN–EU–Government Coordination:

To ensure coherence and predictability, the Cooperation Framework will continue structured tripartite coordination among the Government, the EU and the UN. Coordination will also strengthen complementarities with IFIs, bilateral donors and regional organisations, ensuring that UN normative and technical contributions effectively reinforce EU financing and Albania’s reform leadership.

➤ Strengthened Collaboration with International Financial Institutions (IFIs):

IFIs will remain the primary source of financing for Albania’s large-scale investments in infrastructure, energy, transport, climate transition and public-sector modernisation throughout the CF period. In response, the CF strengthens and systematises UN–IFI partnerships by clearly defining complementary roles. IFIs lead on macroeconomic frameworks, investment pipelines and large-scale financing, while the UN contributes its normative mandate, rights-based and equity-focused approaches, and institutional and community-level engagement. This positioning allows the UN to add distinctive value by **strengthening inclusion, safeguards, accountability and implementation quality, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of IFI-financed investments**. The Cooperation Framework promotes a structured UN–IFI partnership model based on early strategic alignment, regular thematic dialogue and coordinated engagement with Government

institutions. Through this model, the UN will further align its upstream technical expertise with IFI investment pipelines to ensure that enabling policy, institutional and social conditions are in place for inclusive and durable results. Emphasis will be placed on sectors where UN and IFI mandates most clearly reinforce one another, including human capital and economic inclusion, environmental sustainability and climate transition, health and social systems, and digital governance. To maximise impact, the UN will also expand collaboration with IFIs on joint diagnostics, foresight and shared knowledge products that guide policy dialogue and investment decisions over the Cooperation Framework period.

➤ Private Sector:

Albania’s private sector is predominantly SME-based and faces increasing pressure to comply with EU market requirements, while offering limited scope for large-scale corporate financing. The UN will therefore act as a broker for blended

finance instruments, leveraging small-scale UN catalytic funds to attract larger private capital for SDG-aligned and sustainable investments and engage the private sector primarily through **policy alignment, capacity building and promotion of responsible business conduct**, rather than direct financing. Engagement will focus on ESG standards, environmental compliance, labour protection, gender equality, future skills, digital innovation and enhancing productivity and competitiveness. Partnerships with business associations, chambers of commerce, the UN Global Compact network and impact-oriented companies will support sustainability standards, green jobs and innovation-led growth. Responsible business conduct will be promoted to enable access to EU and international markets and integration into value chains. The UN will also support the development of an entrepreneurship culture—particularly among youth and women - addressing risk aversion and strengthening skills in formalisation, greening and innovation. Private-sector contributions to skilling and upskilling will be encouraged through Sector Skills Councils, dual VET and quality apprenticeships.

↳ **Civil Society, Academia, Media and Employers' and Workers' Organizations for Accountability and Public Dialogue:**

Civil society, academic institutions and independent media are essential partners for accountability, evidence generation, democratic participation and rights-based dialogue. Partnerships will strengthen civic engagement, social dialogue, human rights oversight, gender equality advocacy, environmental monitoring, youth empowerment and dissemination of evidence-based knowledge. Academia will contribute to foresight, research, skills development and translation of global policy norms into national frameworks. Media partnerships will support informed public debate, improve understanding of reforms and safeguard independent journalism. Cultural institutions, heritage organisations and creative actors will be

engaged where relevant alongside civil society, academia and media to support community engagement, youth participation, social dialogue and local development initiatives.

↳ **Regional Partnerships:**

As Albania increasingly positions itself as **a regional actor**, partnerships will expand through platforms that promote cross-border cooperation, shared standards and knowledge generation. Regional mechanisms in governance, justice, peace and security, youth mobility, cultural and creative sectors, environment and digital transformation offer opportunities for multi-country initiatives. The UN will engage strategically in regional platforms, where mandate, comparative advantage and national relevance align, supporting regional and cross-border collaboration and knowledge sharing on environment, human rights, transnational organised crime, border security, migration and innovation, while ensuring Albania's regional commitments are synchronized with its national SDG targets.

↳ **Leveraging UN System-wide Capacities and Platforms:**

In line with the ongoing UN transition and the UN80 agenda, the UNCT in Albania will **increasingly leverage system-wide capacities** to deliver integrated, high-impact support. This includes strategic engagement with regional hubs, global policy centres, centres of excellence, and thematic platforms across the UN development system. These assets will complement in-country capacities by providing on-demand technical expertise, innovation, data and analytics, policy advisory services, and scalable solutions aligned with national priorities and EU integration objectives. Through strengthened partnerships and coordinated access to these platforms, the UN will enhance efficiency, coherence, and value for money while ensuring that Albania benefits from global knowledge and best practices.

➤ Resourcing the Cooperation Framework:

Planned results under the Cooperation Framework will be costed through **the CF Funding Framework**⁷⁰. The United Nations system, in coordination with the Joint Executive Committee (JEC), will develop and implement **a Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Strategy** to address financing gaps and support the achievement of CF outcomes and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In partnership with the Government of Albania and international partners, the UN system will identify and mobilize new sources of financing, including opportunities for blended finance and policy reforms that enable increased public and private investment in SDG priorities. The UN system will advocate with international partners for increased levels of core funding and greater flexibility of non-core funding, in line with **the Funding Compact** between Member States and the United Nations development system. This flexibility is essential to sustain the UN's normative, policy advisory, and convening roles in Albania.

The Government of Albania will support UN system efforts to mobilize the resources required to implement this Cooperation Framework and will cooperate with UN system agencies by:

- seeking the opportunities to fund the implementation of selected components of the programme,
- encouraging development partners to make available the financial resources required to implement unfunded components of the programme;
- endorsing UN system efforts to mobilize resources from additional sources, including the private sector, both internationally and within Albania; and
- permitting contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations, which shall be

tax-exempt for donors to the maximum extent permissible under applicable law.

UN system agencies will support the development and implementation of activities under the Cooperation Framework through a range of modalities, including technical assistance, cash-based interventions, provision of supplies, commodities and equipment, procurement and transport services, funding for advocacy, research and analytical work, consultancies, programme design, monitoring and evaluation, capacity-building and training activities, and staff support. Where appropriate, part of this support may be channeled to non-governmental and civil society organizations, as agreed in joint work plans and project documents. Additional support may include access to United Nations-managed global information systems, the UN system's network of country, regional and global offices, and specialized technical platforms, including rosters of consultants and development service providers. UN system agencies may appoint staff and consultants to support programme design, implementation, technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluation, in line with agreed work plans. Subject to annual reviews and demonstrated progress in programme implementation, UN system resources will be allocated on a calendar-year basis and in accordance with the Cooperation Framework. Budgets will be further specified in joint work plans and project documents. By mutual agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the UN system agencies, unearmarked resources may be reallocated to other programmatically equivalent and strategically relevant activities under the Cooperation Framework.

70. Following the guidance in UN, DCO, SDG Financing and Funding the Cooperation Framework, Cooperation Framework Companion Piece, July 2020.

3.3 Business Operations Strategy in Support of the Cooperation Framework

The UN Operations Management Team (OMT) provides operational leadership, guidance and technical support to the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) in advancing harmonised, efficient and cost-effective business operations.

Through the updated Business Operations Strategy (BOS), the UN system will ensure that operational services are directly aligned with and enable delivery of Cooperation Framework results. The OMT will expand the use of high-impact common services and pursue new joint operational solutions that reduce fragmentation, strengthen compliance and increase value for money. This includes strengthened shared procurement, ICT, logistics, human resources, facility management and security arrangements, in line with a Common Back Office (CBO) using the streamlined self-starter approach.⁷¹ By leveraging economies of scale, collective bargaining, long-term agreements and common service centres where feasible, the UN will improve quality, increase efficiency and realise cost-savings across agencies. The OMT will also ensure that operations reflect UN values and national priorities by promoting gender-responsive procurement, disability-inclusive services, and environmentally sustainable operational practices, including greener supply chains and resource-efficient office management. Opportunities for mutual recognition and harmonisation of selected

operational processes—including local recruitment and common vendor due diligence—will be explored in line with UN reform commitments and applicable policies. The OMT will monitor implementation of BOS priorities, identify operational risks and mitigation actions, and support continuous improvement through feedback from programme teams and users of common services.

3.4 Derivation of UN Entity Country Programming Instruments

The Cooperation Framework is recognized as the most important instrument for planning and implementation of UN development activities at country level in support of country priorities, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and nationalized SDGs and targets. The Cooperation Framework guides the programme cycle and the contributions of UN system agencies for the achievement of results. With coordinated planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation, the JEC and UNCT will ensure that agency-specific programming instruments are contributing to expected Cooperation Framework results, strategies and partnerships. The joint Consultations on UN Corporation Framework and Country Programme Documents of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, undertaken in January/ February 2026, represent a significant step towards the

71. UN Sustainable Development Group, Common Back Office: Step by step Guidance Note, https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/fz4cpae64l9b-wgzua68t0/Self_Starter_CBO_Guidance_Note_2026.pdf?rlkey=l33yh5v8yliydzdi2vjnn29jm6&dl=0

derivation of UN entity country programming instruments from the CF to ensure that agency programming instruments will serve to implement the Cooperation Framework outcomes and outputs.

3.5 Joint Work Plans

Outcome Groups prepare biennial **Joint Work Plans (JWP)** with programme partners for **each outcome**. The JWPs reflect: planned cooperation outputs, all major UN system-supported activities, delivered jointly or by individual agencies, resources that are required and available as well as funding gaps. JWPs are an important tool to maximise synergies and avoid duplication. During the annual review and reporting exercises, JWPs will be reviewed and adjusted to respond to new and emerging priorities.

3.6 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (MEL) ensure that the Cooperation Framework delivers measurable results aligned with Albania's national priorities, SDGs and EU accession benchmarks. The MEL system is anchored in the Cooperation Framework Results Framework, which defines outcomes, outputs and indicators aligned with national strategies and nationalised SDG targets. Monitoring will demonstrate how UN-supported outputs contribute to outcome-level changes and to broader national development priorities. Performance information will be regularly updated in UN INFO to provide a transparent, near real-time overview of progress and to support evidence-based decision-making. Leadership from the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) is essential to ensure that performance

evidence is used meaningfully - not only for accountability and reporting, but also to guide strategic dialogue, inform course corrections and strengthen linkages between Outcome Groups, national coordination mechanisms and programme partners. Strong national ownership of MEL processes enables partners to learn continuously, adjust strategies when needed, respond to emerging priorities and improve the overall quality and impact of cooperation.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning: The MEL system helps partners assess whether outputs are being delivered as planned and the extent to which they are contributing to expected outcomes. It supports tracking of outcome indicators and analysis of contribution to observed change. Through regular review and learning cycles, partners can identify risks, implementation constraints and lessons learned, and make informed adjustments to strategies, activities and resource allocations when national priorities or context evolve. To support adaptive management, the Country Analysis (CA) will be updated annually, ensuring that programming remains responsive to emerging evidence and shifts in Albania's reform trajectory. A shared data and analysis repository will be established to consolidate SDG-related statistics, key analytical products and learning outputs. Collaboration with INSTAT and line ministry statistical units will help identify data gaps, strengthen the availability of disaggregated data (including by sex, age, disability and geography where feasible) and promote the systematic use of evidence in planning, budgeting and policy formulation.

Monitoring Joint Work Plans: The JEC and UNCT monitor progress toward Cooperation Framework results through routine reporting by Outcome Groups, using **Joint Work Plans (JWPs) as the primary operational monitoring tool**. JWPs set out expected outputs, major activities, resource requirements and each agency's contribution. Monitoring modalities include joint monitoring missions, periodic progress reviews,

annual multi-stakeholder reviews and thematic studies that complement national assessment processes. These arrangements help ensure that the Cooperation Framework remains a “living framework,” enabling partners to track delivery, monitor expenditures and resource mobilisation, and identify where strategies or partnerships need to be adapted. Monitoring also supports proactive risk management and strengthens the UN’s ability to update contingency arrangements required for disaster and emergency response. Progress reporting will rely primarily on official national statistics from INSTAT and line ministries, complemented by administrative and programme data. The UN will continue to support national statistical capacity to produce high-quality, SDG-aligned, disaggregated data and to strengthen its dissemination and use.

Annual Performance Review and Country Results Reporting: Annual performance reviews and the annual Cooperation Framework Results Report provide a consolidated and transparent account of progress. These reviews compare achievements against expected results, highlight gaps and emerging challenges, and identify where strategies, partnerships or resource allocations require adjustment. The process strengthens alignment with national priorities and sector reviews and supports accountability to stakeholders. The annual Cooperation Framework Results Report—prepared under the leadership of the JEC and UNCT - draws on inputs from Outcome Groups and contributions from all participating UN agencies. It is intended for Government counterparts, development partners, civil society, the private sector, the public, and UN agency governing bodies. It communicates progress, lessons learned, key adaptations made, and the continuing relevance of cooperation.

Midterm Review and Adaptive Management:

Given Albania’s rapidly evolving context—particularly the pace of EU accession reforms, changing public finance conditions and potential political volatility—the Cooperation Framework will incorporate structured flexibility. Given the context, by mid-cycle, UNCT can decide to conduct **a formal independent Midterm Review (MTR)**⁷² to assess progress, recalibrate priorities where needed and adjust implementation arrangements. In parallel, the CF will embed foresight, scenario planning and anticipatory governance as core modality and part of analytical function on an ongoing basis to identify emerging risks (e.g., changes in accession pace, economic shocks, demographic pressures, or climate-related events) and enable timely, agile programme adjustments. This approach supports a shift from a static multi-year plan to a dynamic, forward-looking framework that evolves alongside Albania’s reform trajectory.

Final Evaluation: A final independent evaluation of the Cooperation Framework will be commissioned toward the end of the programme cycle. Managed by the JEC and UNCT, and involving all Cooperation Framework partners, it will assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and will also examine how human rights, gender equality and the Leave No One Behind principle were integrated across programming and implementation modalities. Findings and recommendations will inform the design of the next Cooperation Framework and contribute to institutional learning across the Government and the UN system.

72. Directly responding to sub-recommendation of Recommendation 3 of UNSDCF Final Evaluation suggesting introducing a mid-term review mechanism.

Annexes

ANNEX I: UN Cooperation Framework Results Matrix Result

PRIORITY AREA 1: INCLUSIVE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

OUTCOME 1: By 2031, people in Albania - especially women and girls and those at risk of being left behind - have strengthened human capital, including improved learning outcomes, future-ready skills, and decent work prospects, as well as equitable access to quality, inclusive, and gender-responsive health, social, and child protection systems, contributing to demographic resilience and social cohesion.

UN Agencies: ILO, IOM, UN Women, UNDP, UNECE, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO

Cooperation Partners: Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, Ministry of State for Local Governance, Academy of Training for Local Self-Government (TALGA), Agency for the Support of Local Self-Governance (ASLG), Health Insurance Fund, National Agency for Employment and Skills, National Agency for Information Society, National Diaspora Agency, National Institute for Statistics (INSTAT), National Institute of Public Health (IPH), National Youth Agency, Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), Local Governments, Local Child Protection Units, Civil Society Organizations including professional associations, Youth Networks, academia, national and local media, the European Union Commission, International bilateral donors and the IFIs.

National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2030

Pillar “Social cohesion”

Priorities: European integration

Challenges: Demography

Links to EU accession / SDG Acceleration Project:

Flagship 1: Future-ready skills & Learning for 21st century jobs

Flagship 2: Next-generation social systems

Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans – Reform Agenda of Albania 2024–2027⁷³

Policy Area 2: Human Capital (Sub-area 2.1: Education Skills)

Country Analyses Challenges and Opportunities:

Challenge 1 - Access to healthcare access

Challenge 6 - Low-quality & inclusive education

Challenge 7 - Social protection gaps

Challenge 9 - Gender inequalities, GBV and VAC

⁷³. Likely to be replenished after 2027

Challenge 10 - Demographic decline (youth exodus)
 Challenge 12 - Malnutrition, obesity, food safety (nutrition aspects)

Related SDGs Targets:

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere (Targets 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5)
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Targets 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.c, 3.d)
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.6)
- Goal 8. Decent work and economic growth (Targets 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.8)
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries (Targets 10.2, 10.4)
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Target 16.1, 16.2);
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Targets 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.17)

Related 'Six Transitions': Education, Digital Connectivity, Jobs and social protection

OUTCOME INDICATORS

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Neonatal mortality rate	4.3 (2023) INSTAT data (2023) T: 4.3 M: 3.8 F: 4.8	3.7	WHO	UN IGME UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) - UNICEF DATA INSTAT: neonatal mortality rate (3.2.2)

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
UHC Service coverage index	71% (2023)	82%	WHO	WHO–GHO Metadata: https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/uhc-index-of-service-coverage
Out of pocket expenditure as a % of total health expenditure	48.3% (2023)	35%	WHO UNFPA	Global Health Expenditure Database (who.int)
Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being. Disaggregated by sex	Baseline data from MICS 2026 (to be released in June 2026)	10 % increase from baseline	UNICEF	MICS INSTAT
Learning proficiency in: - Reading - Math - Science Disaggregated by sex	PISA 2025 results - <i>baseline to be updated in 2026</i> - Reading - Math - Science	15 points increase for each area ⁷⁴	UNICEF UNESCO	OECD https://download.uis.unesco.org/SDG4/SDG4-Profile-Albania.pdf
Net enrollment rate (for all pre-university level)	Preschool – Level 0 (2021): T.78.8; M.79.5; F.78 Basic (Level 1+2) (Census 2023): T. 89.1 M. 89.0 F. 89.1 Upper secondary - level 3 (Census 2023): T. 82.3 M. 81.3 F. 83.4	6 pp increase ⁷⁵	UNICEF	INSTAT https://www.instat.gov.al/media/s3ulezgj/chil-dren-and-youth-in-albania-thematic-insight-report-census-2023.pdf

74. The rationale for the target is informed by the Strategy for Pre-University Education and Agenda for Child Rights (2021–2026).

75. The rationale for the target is informed by the Strategy for Pre-University Education and Agenda for Child Rights (2021–2026).

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
At risk poverty (as per national threshold of at-risk-poverty)	19.2 % (2024) Women: 19.5% Men: 18.9% Children 0–17: 26.6% 18-64 years: 18.6% 65 and over: 13.8%	18% ⁷⁶ Women: 19% Men: 18.1% Children 0–17: 1 pp decrease ⁷⁷ 18-64 years: 17.5% 65 and over: 12.5%	UNDP UNICEF UN Women	INSTAT https://www.instat.gov.al/media/gignuadh/aanj-2024.pdf https://www.instat.gov.al/media/gsf15zlg/silc-2024.pdf
Youth NEET	15-29 years: 22.2% (2024) - 24.7% for young women - 19.7% for young men	15-29 years: 15% - 18% for young women - 13% for young men ⁷⁸	ILO UNDP UNICEF	INSTAT Share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training by Sex, Age group, Education level, Type and Year. PxWeb https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/sq/DST/START__TP__LFS__LFSV/NewLFSY014/table/tableViewLayout1/
Violence against women - Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical and sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age (Adjusted SDG 5.2.1)	33.7% (2018) - <i>Baseline to be updated</i>	- 5 pp	UN Women	INSTAT / UN women (data coming in 2026 by UN women)

76. *National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030.*

77. *The rationale for the target is informed by the Social Protection Strategy (2024–2030).*

78. *As per the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030.*

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
% of children aged 1–14 years who experienced any violent discipline by caregivers in the past one month (SDG 16)	Baseline: 2026 MICS (to be updated) Alternative baseline (ADHS 2019): 47.5% Sex of child: Male: 49.4% Female: 45.4%	TBD 30% (defined at the Agenda for Children)	UNICEF	MICS 2026 INSTAT https://www.instat.gov.al/media/5050/adhs-2017-18-pdf.pdf pg. 151 (table 9.13)
Gender Equality Index, by domain	60.9 (2020) Work: 67.6 Money: 59.6 Knowledge: 55.6 Time: 48.1 Power: 60.9 Health: 81.8 <i>Baseline to be updated</i>	62.3 Work: 71.5 Money: 61.9 Knowledge: 52.8 Time: 54.3 Power: 68.1 Health: 82.3	UN Women	INSTAT GEI sipas Fusha, Variabla dhe Viti. PxWeb
Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, disaggregated by sex, age (SDG 5.4.1)	For age group 10+ (2010) Females = 21.7% (5.13 hr) Males = 3.5% (0.50 hr) For age group 15-64 (2010) Women: 24% (5.46 hr) Men: 3.3% (0.48 hr) <i>Baseline to be updated</i>	Population 10+ Females = 16.5% (3.58 hr) Males = 6.5% (1.35 hr) Population 15-64 Women: 17.7% (4.15hr) Men: 7% (1.41 hr)	UN Women	INSTAT
Labour force participation rate (disaggregated by sex) (% of total population ages 15+)	Total: 63.7% (2024) Men: 70.2% Women: 57.4%	Total: 64.4% Men: 70.6% Women: 58.4%	UNDP	INSTAT Labor force participation rate, total (% of total population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate) - Albania Data
Informal Employment	24.7% (2024) Women: 18.2% (2024) Men: 29.5% (2024)	Total: 22.5% Women: 17.3% Men: 28.4%	ILO	INSTAT 8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (SDG 2.1.2) – affordability and access to adequate, nutritious food; equity lens; shock sensitivity	33% (2023)	21.5%	FAO	United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Output Indicator Framework https://help.uninfo.org/un-info/results-framework/results-framework-structure/output-level/output-indicator-framework
SDG 2.2.3 – Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years, by pregnancy status (%).	24.7% (2023)	21%	FAO	United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Output Indicator Framework https://help.uninfo.org/un-info/results-framework/results-framework-structure/output-level/output-indicator-framework
% of children in residential care of the total number of children in all forms of formal alternative care	59,4 (2024)	40%	UNICEF	Indicator reported by IN-STAT General Directorate of State Social Services annually https://www.instat.gov.al/en/children-and-youth-of-ficial-statistics/alternative-care/ratio-of-children-in-centers-with-residential-care-to-the-total-of-children-in-alternative-care-at-the-end-of-the-year/

Joint Outputs

Output 1.1: High-Quality & Inclusive Health Services

By 2031, all people in Albania enjoy better health and wellbeing, have greater trust in the health system, benefit from integrated, higher-quality, multidisciplinary, gender-responsive care and infrastructure for all health needs, while being better protected from health threats and emergencies.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 19; Chapter 23; Chapter 27; Chapter 28.

SDGs: 3, 5, 10, 16, 17

Output 1.2: Inclusive & Transformative Education

By 2031, the education systems provide more relevant, inclusive, innovative and equitable learning opportunities, supported by inclusive infrastructure, from early childhood through secondary level, resulting in improved learning outcomes and reduced disparities across gender, location and socio-economic status, with particular attention to barriers affecting girls' access, retention and completion.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 2; Chapter 19; Chapter 23; Chapter 26.

SDGs: 4, 5, 8, 10, 16, 17

Output 1.3: Future-Ready Skills for 21st Century Jobs.

By 2031, skills development and employment-support systems equip women and men - particularly those at risk of being left behind - with relevant, future-ready skills and inclusive services that enhance employability, entrepreneurship, labour mobility and successful transitions from education to work, contributing to productivity and demographic resilience.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 2; Chapter 3; Chapter 19; Chapter 20; Chapter 26.

SDGs: 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 17

Output 1.4: Next Generation Social Systems

By 2031, social protection and care systems provide inclusive, child-centred, gender-responsive and shock-adaptive support across the life cycle, including measures that recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, reducing vulnerability and contributing to social cohesion.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 19; Chapter 23; Chapter 24; Chapter 28.

SDGs: 1, 3, 5, 10, 16, 17

Output 1.5: Prevention of and Protection from Violence Against Women and Children

By 2031, national and local violence against women and child protection mechanisms are strengthened to deliver integrated, gender-responsive, trauma-informed, survivor-centred and accessible prevention and response services, underpinned by improved normative and policy frameworks, effective multi-sectoral coordination, and sustained positive change in social norms.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 18; Chapter 19; Chapter 23; Chapter 24.

SDGs: 5, 10, 16, 17

Assumptions

- ↘ Sustained National Commitment to EU Accession and Institutional Reform
- ↘ Overall Political, Macroeconomic and Security Stability
- ↘ Continued Trust, Political Access and Demand for UN Expertise
- ↘ Functioning National Coordination and Partnership Mechanisms
- ↘ Shared Commitment to National Ownership and Capacity Transfer
- ↘ Predictable and Supportive Financing Environment
- ↘ An Enabling Environment for Human Rights, Civic Space and Inclusive Public Discourse
- ↘ Adequate UN System Capacity Despite Organisational and Resource Constraints

Risks

- ↘ Slowdown, Reprioritisation or Inadequate Implementation of EU Accession Reforms
- ↘ Reversion to Short-Term, Substitution-Based Support Models
- ↘ Fragmented or Unpredictable Financing Environment
- ↘ Reduced UN Delivery Capacity Due to Resource Constraints
- ↘ Shrinking Civic Space, Rising Anti-Rights Narratives and Persistent Social Exclusion
- ↘ Institutionalized human rights and gender backlash and rollbacks of legal/policy protections on gender equality, violence against women and girls, and civic space
- ↘ Macroeconomic, Geopolitical or Climate-Related Shocks

PRIORITY AREA 2: SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION & INCLUSIVE GREEN GROWTH

OUTCOME 2: By 2031, Albania advances sustainable and inclusive economic transformation, achieving higher productivity, competitiveness, and value creation through green and digital business models, promoting low-emission, climate-resilient, gender-responsive, and inclusive development in line with EU accession and international commitments.

UN Agencies: FAO, ILO, ITU, UN Women, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO

Cooperation Partners: Parliament, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, Ministry of State for Local Governance, Ministry of Tourism, Academy of Training for Local Self-Government (TALGA), Agency for the Support of Local Self-Governance (ASLG), National Agency for Information Society, National Environment Agency, including Environmental Inspectorate Directorate, National Agency for the Protected Areas, National Institute for Statistics (INSTAT), State Labour Inspectorate, Local Governments; CSOs including employers' and workers' organizations, trade unions, business associations, chambers of commerce, academia, networks on sustainability; private sector, including banks; the European Union Commission, International bilateral donors and the IFIs.

National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2030

Pillar "Agenda for sustainable economic development, connectivity and green growth"

Priorities: European integration, energy, agriculture, tourism, digitization

Challenges: Skills, competitiveness, climate change and sustainability, productivity, green transition, energy independence;

Links to EU accession / SDG Acceleration Project:

Flagship 3: Green Economy, Competitiveness and Private Sector Support

Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans – Reform Agenda of Albania 2024–2027²

Policy Area 1: Improving business environment (Sub-area 1.1: Business environment)

Policy Area 2: Human Capital (Sub-area 2.1: Education Skills).

Policy Area 3: Digital (Sub-area 3.1 Digital; and Sub-area 3.2 Green and Digital agenda)

Policy Area 4: Energy and Green Transition (Sub-area 4.1: Market reforms).

Country Analyses Challenges and Opportunities:

Challenge 2 -Youth unemployment / skills mismatch

Challenge 5 - Environmental degradation & climate vulnerability

Challenge 8 - Fragmented rural development

Challenge 9 – Persistent gender inequalities

Challenge 11 - Stagnant agrifood/rural economy

Challenge 12 - Food safety & water quality issues

Challenge 13 - Economic transformation (weak industrial base)

Related SDGs Targets:

- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (Targets 2.4)
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.a, 5.c)
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Targets 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6)
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (Targets 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.a)
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Targets 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9);
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries (Target 10.2, 10.3, 10.4)
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Targets 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.b)
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Targets 12.b, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 12.8)
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Targets 13.1, 13.2, 13.3)
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss (Targets 15.1, 15.2, 15.4, 15.5)
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Targets 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.17)

Related 'Six Transitions': Jobs and social protection; Food systems; Education, Digital connectivity, Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution; Energy access and affordability.

OUTCOME INDICATORS

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Terrestrial protected areas (% of total land area)	23.6% (2024)	25%	UNDP	World Bank Terrestrial protected areas (% of total land area) - Albania Data
Extent of Implementation of Adaptation Measures	0 (2026)	5 (2031)	UNDP	Ministry of Environment

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Progress toward productive and sustainable agriculture, current status score ⁷⁹	3.83 (score in 2023)	4.03	FAO	FAOSTAT under SDG indicators https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/SDGB . Score interpretation: 1 – <1.5: Deterioration away from productive and sustainable agriculture 1.5 – <2.5: Slight deterioration from productive and sustainable agriculture 2.5 – <3.5: No improvement towards productive and sustainable agriculture 3.5 – <4.5: Slight improvement towards productive and sustainable agriculture 4.5 – 5: Improvement towards productive and sustainable agriculture
Employment rate (ages 15–64), sex-disaggregated	15–64 years: 68.6 (2024) Men: 74.9% Women: 62.4%	15–64 years: 72.2 Men: 77.6% Women: 66.8 %	UNDP	INSTAT tregu_i_punes_2024_final.pdf Employment to population ratio, ages 15-24, total (%) (national estimate) - Albania Data
Agriculture value added per worker	5,691.33 USD ⁸⁰ (2023)	6,251 USD	FAO	FAOSTAT

79. Proxy indicator.

80. In 2015 prices.

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Gender Pay Gap	4.9 (2024)	2pp	UN WOMEN	INSTAT: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/ebwma5bq/tre-gu_i_punes_2024_final.pdf
Number of new active enterprises registered, disaggregated by sex of owner	New active enterprises: 15,970 (2024) Women: 32%	New active enterprises: 17,567 Women: 33.6%	UNDP UNWOMEN	INSTAT: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/lgud2dk1/reg-jjstrat-e-biznesit-2024.pdf
	Total active enterprises: 132,172 (2024) Women: 31.4% (2024)	Total active enterprises 145,389 Women: 32.2%		
	Registered Farmers: 105,709 (2024) Women: 14,4% (2024)	Registered farmers Women: 22%		

Joint Outputs

Output 2.1: Green Growth & Just Transition

By 2031, policy and regulatory frameworks for sustainable development, green growth, and just transition are strengthened and aligned with EU standards, enabling inclusive and gender-responsive transition towards low-emission, climate-resilient development informed by demographic trends.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 8; Chapter 15; Chapter 16; Chapter 18; Chapter 20; Chapter 27.

SDGs: 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17

Output 2.2: Competitiveness & Private Sector Support

By 2031, the authorities, the private sector and communities – including women- and youth-led businesses and entrepreneurs across sectors – have enhanced capacities, including financial and non-financial support, to adopt more competitive, greener and digital business models, engage in transparent procurement, and create decent jobs, including for women, contributing to inclusive economic growth.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 5; Chapter 6; Chapter 7; Chapter 8; Chapter 10; Chapter 16; Chapter 19; Chapter 20.

SDGs: 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17

Output 2.3: Climate-Resilient Development & Natural Resources and Agrifood Systems Management

By 2031, the authorities, the private sector, and communities have enhanced capacities for climate-resilient development, natural and cultural resource management, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable agrifood systems, including gender-responsive approaches, thereby building resilient economies, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 11; Chapter 12; Chapter 13; Chapter 15; Chapter 21; Chapter 22; Chapter 27.

SDGs: 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17

Assumptions

- ↘ Sustained National Commitment to EU Accession and Institutional Reform
- ↘ Overall Political, Macroeconomic and Security Stability
- ↘ Continued Trust, Political Access and Demand for UN Expertise
- ↘ Functioning National Coordination and Partnership Mechanisms
- ↘ Shared Commitment to National Ownership and Capacity Transfer
- ↘ Predictable and Supportive Financing Environment
- ↘ An Enabling Environment for Human Rights, Civic Space and Inclusive Public Discourse
- ↘ Adequate UN System Capacity Despite Organisational and Resource Constraints

Risks

- ↘ Slowdown, Reprioritisation or Inadequate Implementation of EU Accession Reforms
- ↘ Reversion to Short-Term, Substitution-Based Support Models
- ↘ Fragmented or Unpredictable Financing Environment
- ↘ Reduced UN Delivery Capacity Due to Resource Constraints
- ↘ Shrinking Civic Space, Rising Anti-Rights Narratives and Persistent Social Exclusion
- ↘ Institutionalized human rights and gender backlash and rollbacks of legal/policy protections on gender equality, violence against women and girls, and civic space
- ↘ Macroeconomic, Geopolitical or Climate-Related Shocks

PRIORITY AREA 3: GOVERNANCE, JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS

OUTCOME 3: By 2031, Albania's institutions demonstrate greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability, uphold human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality, and are more effective in preventing and combating corruption, organized crime and cybercrime, while strengthening safe, orderly and rights-based border, migration and diaspora management, in line with EU and international standards

UN Agencies: ILO, IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UN Women, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS

Cooperation Partners: Parliament, Office of the Prime Minister of R. Albania, State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC), Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of State for Local Governance, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Academy of Training for Local Self-Government, Agency for Support to Local Self-Governance, Albanian School of Public Administration, Albanian State Police, Asset Recovery Office, Audiovisual Media Authority, Electronic and Postal Communications Authority, High Judicial Council and Information Technology Centre for the Justice System, National Agency for Employment and Skills, National Agency for Information Society, National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security, National Diaspora Agency, National Human Rights Institutions, National Institute of Statistics, School of Magistrates, Serious Crimes Prosecution Office, Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime, State Agency for Child Right and Protection, State Probation Services, Local Governments, Albania Media Council, Civil Society Organizations including Women's Alliances, Academia, the Refugee Organization, Chamber of Notaries; Electoral bodies, the alliance of women MPs, and political parties; European Union Commission, International bilateral donors and the IFIs.

National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2030

Pillar "Democracy and strengthening of institutions and good governance.

Priorities: European integration, fight against corruption, digitalization

Challenges – digital transformation, rule of law,

Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans – Reform Agenda of Albania 2024–2027

Policy Area 3: Digital (Sub-area 3.1: Digital).

Policy Area 5: Fundamentals / Rule of Law (Sub-areas 5.1. Fight against corruption and organized crime; 5.2 Cooperation in the field of drugs; 5.3 Money laundering; 5.4 Judiciary; 5.5. Fight against corruption; 5.6. Democracy, Fundamental rights and civil society).

Country Analyses Challenges and Opportunities:

CH. 3 Corruption, weak governance & rule of law

Ch. 4 Digital divide (e-governance capacity gap)

Ch. 9 Gender inequalities, GBV, exclusion (rights dimension)

Related SDGs Targets:

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 5.c)

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Target 8.7)

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries (Targets 10.2, 10.3, 10.7)

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Target 11.a)

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Targets 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.a, 16.b)

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Targets 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.18, 17.19)

Related 'Six Transitions': Digital connectivity

OUTCOME INDICATORS

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI): a) Voice and accountability b) Government Effectiveness c) Rule of law d) Control of corruption	WGI (2023): a) 53.92 b) 60.38 c) 45.75 d) 43.40	WGI: a) 65 b) 70 c) 65 d) 60	UNDP	https://databank.worldbank.org/Worldwide-Governance-Indicators
E-Government Development Index (EGDI)	0.8000 score (2024)	At least 0,9000 score	UNDP	E-Government Development Index (EGDI) https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/2-Albania
Statistical Capacity Index (indicator for SDG monitoring)	83.7 (2024)	85.8	UNICEF / RCO	World Bank https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IQ.SPI.OVRL?locations=AL

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Civil Society participation rate	0.64 (2024)	0.75 ⁸¹	UNDP	Albania Civil society participation index - data, chart TheGlobalEconomy.com (V-Dem)
Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliament and (b) local self government units (SDG 5.5.1).	Baseline 2025: - (a) 35.7% (50 women) - (b) 13% (8 out of 61 mayors are women) and 42% (706 out of 1673 local councilors are women).	- (a) 47% - (b) 25% women mayors and 50% women local councilors	UNDP UN Women	UN Women
% of national budget allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment out of total budget.	10% (2024)	13%	UN Women	Source: MoF
No. of human rights complaints registered, by sex.	1,614 complaints on rights violations (2024) - 1,005 complaints were submitted by men (62.3%) (2024) - 485 complaints were submitted by women (30.0%) (2024) - Gender gap= 2.1 (men/women) Cases reported for children (Ombudsman, IDP commissioner and Antidiscrimination Commissioner): - 258 new cases (2024)	Total reported complaints: 20% increase Gender gap = 1 (2031) Annual increase of 5% in reported cases	UN Women UNICEF	Source: INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania https://www.instat.gov.al/media/zclevpmv/gra-dhe-burra-2025_-.pdf

81. Albania's highest score has been 0.73, while during 2020 and 2024 its score has varied between 0.64 and 0.68. The rationale behind the target is that for a country ready to accede the EU, civil society participation rate must go beyond its highest ever value (0.73)

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Proportion of migrants and returnees accessing quality protection, legal assistance and reintegration services	32% of identified migrants/returnees receiving at least one protection or reintegration service (2024)	60% of identified migrants / returnees receive at least one protection or reintegration service (2029)	IOM	MoI; NAES; State Agency for Child Rights; IOM case management system (MiMOSA); CT/AVRR project monitoring ; partner CSOs
	By sex: Female: 42% Male: 56% Other: 2%	By sex: Female: 45% Male: 53% Other: 2%		
	By age: 0–17: 17% 18–35: 48% 36–59: 28% 60+:7%	By age: 0–17: 20% 18–35: 47% 36–59: 25% 60+: 8%		
	By vulnerability category: Persons with disabilities: 8% Female-headed households: 16% GBV survivors: 13% Unaccompanied/separated minors: 5% Elderly living alone: 3% Extremely low income: 38% No identified vulnerability: 19%	By vulnerability category: Persons with disabilities:12% Female-headed households: 18% GBV survivors: 14% Unaccompanied/separated minors: 7% Elderly living alone: 6% Extremely low income: 40% No identified vulnerability: 17%		
		(Projections per identified caseload of 1,000 persons / year)		

INDICATOR	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (END OF 2031)	REPORTING AGENCY	SOURCES
Level of alignment of Albania's migration management and border governance system with EU acquis Chapter 24 standards	50% (partial alignment in 2024)	100% alignment (2029)	IOM	Ministry of Interior; Border and Migration Police; EC Country Progress Reports; IOM monitoring data
Overall level of protection of property rights in Albania, as measured by the International Property Rights Index (IPRI) overall global rank	IPRI: 4.723 out of 10 (2025) Rank: 71 out of 126 countries (2025)	68 th (2029)	UNOPS	IPRI (Albania) https://internationalpropertyrightsindex.org/country/albania

Joint Outputs

Output 3.1: Inclusive, Effective, Accountable and Gender-responsive Institutions

By 2031, the national and local institutions – including Parliament, oversight, independent and low enforcement bodies, and municipalities – demonstrate strengthened capacity for inclusive, effective, accountable and gender-responsive governance, including improved public finance and digital systems and service, and data-driven policy and decision-making, all enhancing public trust and improving policy implementation and service delivery.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 5; Chapter 10; Chapter 18; Chapter 23; Chapter 32; Chapter 33.

SDGs: 5, 10, 16, 17

Output 3.2: Justice, Human Rights, Gender Equality and Civic Space

By 2031, human rights and justice institutions, civil society and media have strengthened capacities and enabling conditions to protect and promote human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination, expand the civic space, and ensure equitable access to justice, particularly for women and people at risk of being left behind, all in compliance with EU and international standards.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 10; Chapter 19; Chapter 23; Chapter 24.

SDGs: 5, 10, 16, 17

Output 3.3: Migration, Asylum, Statelessness and Diaspora Governance

By 2031, the institutions manage migration, asylum, statelessness, and diaspora engagement in a safe, effective, gender-responsive and rights-based manner, aligned with EU and international standards, contributing to Albania's development, demographic resilience, and social cohesion.

EU chapters covered: Chapter 2 Chapter 18; Chapter 23; Chapter 24; Chapter 30.

SDGs: 5, 8, 10, 16, 17

Assumptions

- ↘ Sustained National Commitment to EU Accession and Institutional Reform
- ↘ Overall Political, Macroeconomic and Security Stability
- ↘ Continued Trust, Political Access and Demand for UN Expertise
- ↘ Functioning National Coordination and Partnership Mechanisms
- ↘ Shared Commitment to National Ownership and Capacity Transfer
- ↘ Predictable and Supportive Financing Environment
- ↘ An Enabling Environment for Human Rights, Civic Space and Inclusive Public Discourse
- ↘ Adequate UN System Capacity Despite Organizational and Resource Constraints

Risks

- ↘ Slowdown, Reprioritization or Inadequate Implementation of EU Accession Reforms
- ↘ Reversion to Short-Term, Substitution-Based Support Models
- ↘ Fragmented or Unpredictable Financing Environment
- ↘ Reduced UN Delivery Capacity Due to Resource Constraints
- ↘ Shrinking Civic Space, Rising Anti-Rights Narratives and Persistent Social Exclusion
- ↘ Institutionalized human rights and gender backlash and rollbacks of legal/policy protections on gender equality, violence against women and girls, and civic space
- ↘ Macroeconomic, Geopolitical or Climate-Related Shocks

ANNEX II: Legal Annexes

1. **Whereas the Government of Albania (the “Government”)** has entered into the agreements listed below with the United Nations, including its Funds, Programmes and other subsidiary organs, and other organizations of the United Nations system (“UN System Organizations”), which are applicable to their programme activities in [*country*] (the “UN Agreements”) under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (the “Cooperation Framework”);
 - ↘ IOM - Agreement between Albania and the International Organization for Migration in Relation to Juridical Status, Privileges and the Immunity of this Organization in Albania on 2 October 1992
 - ↘ UNDP - With the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a basic agreement to govern UNDP’s assistance to the country, which was signed by the Government and [UNDP (the “Standard Basic Assistance Agreement” or “SBAA), which is one of the predecessor legal entities of UNDP (the “Basic Agreement”) on 17 June 1991. This Cooperation Framework, together with a joint results group work plan specifying UNDP programme activities further to this Cooperation Framework, which shall form part of this Cooperation Framework and is incorporated herein by reference, constitute together a “project document” as referred to in the SBAA. The implementing partner and UNDP will sign a project agreement containing the specific arrangements for each project further to the relevant project document.
 - ↘ ITU - Mutatis mutandis the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) between the Government of Albania and UNDP applies.
 - ↘ UNEP - Mutatis mutandis the SBAA between the Government of Albania and UNDP applies
 - ↘ UNFPA - Mutatis mutandis the SBAA between the Government of Albania and UNDP applies
 - ↘ UNHCR - UNHCR Branch Office Agreement (BOA) with the Government of Albania signed on 22 June 1994
 - ↘ UNICEF - A Basic Cooperation Agreement
2. **Whereas the UN Agreements,** together with the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 13 February 1946 (the “General Convention”) and/or the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies of 21 November 1947 (the “Specialized Agencies Convention”) as applicable, form the primary existing legal basis for the relationship between the Government and each UN System Organization for supporting the country to deliver on the Cooperation Framework, and are non-exhaustive and without prejudice to any other legal instruments the Government may enter into, including additional agreements with UN System Organizations for the purpose of their activities in the country:
 - ↘ FAO - The Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations for the Establishment of an FAO Representation in the Republic of Albania signed on 1 December 2014
 - ↘ ILO - A Memorandum of Understanding concluded between the Government of Albania and ILO on 6 February 2013

(BCA) concluded between the Government of Albania and UNICEF 23 July 1993

- UNIDO - Standard Basic Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and UNIDO, signed and entered into force on 8 November 1991
- UNODC - Mutatis mutandis the SBAA between the Government of Albania and UNDP applies
- UNOPS - Mutatis mutandis the SBAA between the Government of Albania and UNDP applies
- UNV - Mutatis mutandis the SBAA between the Government of Albania and UNDP applies
- UN WOMEN - The Basic Agreement concluded between the Government and the United Nations Development Programme on 17 June 1991 (the “Basic Agreement”) mutatis mutandis applies to the activities and personnel of UN WOMEN. Assistance to the Government shall be made available and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the relevant and applicable resolutions and decisions of UN Women’s governing structures.
- WHO - Biennial Collaborative Agreement (BCA) between the Ministry of Health of Albania and the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization for the period 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2021 signed on November 12th 2020.
- For all UN system agencies including OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNESCO, UNDRR assistance to the Government shall be made available and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the relevant and applicable resolutions and decisions of the competent UN system agency’s governing structures

3. With respect to all UN System Organizations:

Assistance to the Government shall be made available and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the relevant and applicable resolutions, decisions, rules and procedures of each UN System Organization.

4. Without prejudice to the above, the Government shall:

- (i) apply to each UN System Organization and its property, funds, assets, officials and experts on mission the provisions of the General Convention and/or the Specialized Agencies Convention; and
- (ii) accord to each UN System Organization, its officials and other persons performing services on behalf of that UN System Organization, the privileges, immunities and facilities set out in the UN Agreement applicable to such UN System Organization.

5. United Nations Volunteers performing services on behalf of a UN System Organization shall be entitled to the privileges and immunities accorded to officials of such UN System Organization.

6. Any privileges, immunities and facilities granted to a UN System Organisation under the Cooperation Framework shall be no less favourable than those granted by the Government to any other UN System Organisation signatory to the Cooperation Framework.

7. Without prejudice to the UN Agreements, the Government shall be responsible for dealing with any claims which may be brought by third parties against any of the UN System Organizations and their officials, experts on mission or other persons performing services on their behalf, and shall hold them harmless in respect of any claims and liabilities resulting from operations under the Cooperation Framework, except where

it is mutually agreed by the Government and the relevant UN System Organization(s) that such claims and liabilities arise from gross negligence or misconduct of that UN System Organization, or its officials, or persons performing services.

8. Nothing in or relating to this Cooperation Framework shall be deemed:

(i) a waiver, express or implied, of the privileges and immunities of any UN System Organization;

or

(ii) the acceptance by any UN System Organization of the jurisdiction of the courts of any country over disputes arising from this Cooperation Framework,

whether under the General Convention or the Specialized Agencies Convention, the UN Agreements, or otherwise, and no provisions of this Cooperation Framework shall be interpreted or applied in a manner, or to an extent, that is inconsistent with such privileges and immunities.

ANNEX III: Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADISA – Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services Albania	IOM – International Organization for Migration
ALMM – Active labour market measures	ITU – International Telecommunication Union
ASCAP – Agency of Quality Assurance in Higher Education	JEC – Joint Executive Committee for the CF
ASPA – Albanian School of Public Administration	JWP – Joint work plan (for outcomes in CF)
CA – (UN system) Country Analysis	KKT – National Territorial Council
CCP – Container Control Programme	M&E – Monitoring & evaluation
CEC – Central Elections Commission	MEA – Multilateral environmental agreement
CF – Cooperation Framework	MEI – Ministry of Economy and Innovation
CO² – Carbon dioxide (greenhouse gas)	MHSW – Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
CPD – Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination	MoC – Ministry of Culture
CSOs – Civil society organizations	MoE – Ministry of Environment
DRR – Disaster risk reduction	MoF – Ministry of Finance
EBRD – European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	MoI – Ministry of Interior
ECD/ECE – Early childhood development / education	MoJ – Ministry of Justice
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization	MoSLG – Minister of State for Local Government
FDI – Foreign Direct Investment	MoSPAA – Minister of State for Public Administration and Anticorruption
GDP – Gross Domestic Product	MoSRP – Minister of State for Relations with Parliament
GEF – Global Environment Facility	MoTCS – Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports
GEWE – Gender equality and women’s empowerment	MTEF – Medium-term expenditure framework
GhG – Greenhouse Gases	NAPA – National Agency for Protected Areas
GoA – Government of Albania	NAVETQ – National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualification
HDI – Human Development Index	NBI – National Bureau of Investigation
IFI – International Financial Institution(s)	NCD – Non-communicable disease
IHR – International Health Regulations	NESA – National Employment and Skills Agency
ILO – International Labour Organization	NLC – National Labour Council
IMF – International Monetary Fund	OG – CF Outcome Results Groups
INSTAT – National Institute of Statistics	PMO – Prime Minister’s Office
IPH – Institute of Public Health	RBM – Results Based Management
IPMG – Integrated Planning and Management Groups	SALW – Small arms and light weapons
	SASPAC – State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination
	SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SMEs/SMAEs – Small and medium enterprises / agro-enterprises

SOE – State-owned enterprise

SSS – State Social Services

TVET – Technical and vocational education and training

UCCIAL – Union of Chambers of Commerce & Industry of Albania

UN Women – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UNCT – United Nations Country Team

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDG – United Nations Development Group

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNDRR – United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

UNECE – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

UNIDO – United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNOPS – United Nations Office for Project Services

UNRC – United Nations Resident Coordinator

UPR – Universal Periodic Review

VR – Voluntary review of progress toward the SDGs

WB – World Bank

WHO – World Health Organization



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