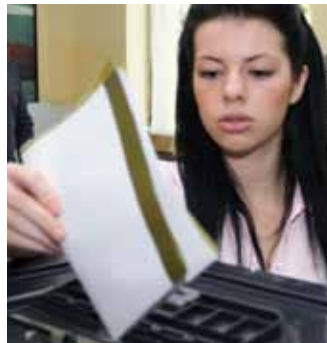


OSCE PRESENCE IN ALBANIA

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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe | Presence in Albania Factsheet

The OSCE Presence in Albania works in partnership with the host country to strengthen state institutions, to underpin a democratic system of ‘checks and balances’ and to foster cross-party and civil society dialogue in order to build confidence in institutions.

Mandate

According to the mandate of the OSCE Presence in Albania, the goal is to promote democratization, the rule of law and human rights, as well as to consolidate democratic institutions in conformity with OSCE principles, standards and commitments. The Presence reports on progress in the country, as well as on the implementation of its mandate.

Overview

In carrying out its overall goal, the Presence focuses particularly on: legislative and judicial reform; property reform; regional administrative reform; electoral reform; parliamentary capacity-building; anti-trafficking and anti-corruption; development of effective laws and regulations on the independent media; promotion of good governance and management of targeted projects to strengthen civil society; and police assistance in co-operation with international partners. These activities help to strengthen Albania’s democratic institutions and assist in its preparation towards further European integration.

How we work

The Presence is led by the Head of Presence, who has overall responsibility for all policy and operational matters. The Presence’s thematic activities are implemented by four thematic departments: Democratization; Rule of Law and Human Rights; Governance in Economic and Environmental Issues; and Security Co-operation. A Project Co-ordination Unit helps co-ordinate the Presence’s project activities, including those implemented outside the capital and maintains contacts with local actors in Tirana and adjacent areas.

WHAT WE DO

DEMOCRATIZATION

The main aim is to provide assistance on: electoral reform; gender; civil society; media and parliamentary reform.

Electoral Reform

The Presence provides assistance sought by state institutions to bring electoral legislation fully in line with OSCE commitments and Council of Europe election standards. The Presence facilitated technical expertise from the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to the Assembly of Albania as part of the latest package of electoral reforms that concluded with the adoption of amendments to the Electoral Code in July 2012. The Presence is also involved in supporting capacity building of national institutions - primarily the Assembly and the Central Election Commission (CEC), as well as civil society actors. It has provided technical support to the CEC during the elections preparation phase, organized several study trips for CEC members, and also helped establish a forum of election commissioners as a step to improve election administration.

Parliamentary Support

The Presence has been running a long-term assistance project to help further modernize the Albanian Assembly, focusing on supporting Members of Parliament and parliamentary committees, as well as on training the Assembly’s administration staff. The project aims to increase transparency of the Assembly’s work and strengthen its administrative efficiency and oversight responsibilities. Support was given



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to further strengthen the Assembly's research capacity with a focus on EU Integration issues, as well as to modernize its human resource management practices and to improve its information technology facilities. The Presence assisted the Assembly in creating a new department for monitoring of the entities that report to or inform the Assembly, and further supported the training of its staff.

Civil Society

The Presence has provided assistance to local civil society organizations in promoting democratic governance by supporting and holding activities that encourage citizens to become more involved in decision-making. It supports the efforts of the national authorities and civil society in implementing the National Strategy on People with Disabilities and on the transparent use of public funds for civil society support.

Gender

In order to promote women's participation in public life, a three-year project to enhance women's role in governance was executed, building on the OSCE's regional experience in supporting the efforts of state and non-state organizations to implement more ambitious gender equality objectives. It has helped the Government to implement the Gender Equality Law and the National Strategy on Gender Equality and against Domestic Violence, as well as inclusion of a gender quota in the revised Electoral Code. In addition, the Presence supports the National Council on Gender Equality, as the State's highest level monitor and advisory body on gender equality.

Media Development

The Presence assists the host country in aligning relevant legislation with EU standards and supports media outlets to enhance their activities accordingly. Activities focus on promoting a free media and freedom of expression, self-regulation, professionalism and responsibility, access to information, support to switch over from analogue to digital broadcasting and the application of ethical standards. Assistance is offered to national institutions and the media community in further building up their capacity to foster media independence. In addition, the Presence assists efforts aiming to create a viable and professional media industry in line with international standards and supports the development of self-regulatory mechanisms.

RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The main goal is to assist the host country in developing a sound legal system. The Presence also promotes respect for human rights and the creation and functioning of state institutions based on rule of law principles.

Legislative Reform

Providing legal and technical expertise to State institutions is one of the Presence's key activities. The Presence regularly offers comments on draft legislation, if it is of broad public interest or affects other projects implemented by the Presence. Overall, the Presence seeks to increase public participation in drafting legislation, as well as furthering the transparency of the legislative process. Currently, the Presence, together with other international actors and national stakeholders, is supporting the Ministry of Justice in its efforts to reform the Criminal Procedure Code. It also promotes the reform of legislation regulating all aspects of the functioning of public administration and has provided input on draft legislation to create administrative courts. The Presence supports the Civil Service Commission in its efforts to increase professionalism and freedom from political interference.

Judicial Reform and Fair Trial Development

The Presence is involved in a number of judicial reform activities. From 2003 to 2008, the Presence observed criminal trials in the district and appellate courts and in the first instance Court for Serious Crimes. On this basis, three reports identifying problems and suggested remedies for improving the criminal procedure were published. In 2008, the focus shifted to observing civil trials and in 2012, the Presence expanded its activities to study also administrative dispute resolution. Activities to increase the independence of the judiciary, specifically the criteria and procedures for appointing, transferring and disciplining judges, have been undertaken and the Presence intends to increase its focus in this area in the future. In the past, the Presence has also been involved in establishing witness protection services. The Presence has also actively encouraged alternative sentences to imprisonment, working with the Ministry of Justice to develop legislation, and assisted the newly established Probation Service in devising training standards for their staff and co-operating with other actors to implement community sentences.



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Human Rights

The promotion of human rights is part of the overall goal of the Presence's mandate. The Presence supported the creation of the Office of the People's Advocate and continues to assist this institution. Project activities in the area of human rights include strengthening the rights of vulnerable groups, including members of minorities. These efforts focus inter alia on the development of systematic protection for children, in particular for those in conflict with the law, and improving protection from domestic violence. The Presence also assesses the conditions of detention facilities and monitors the observance of prisoners' rights to be treated with humanity, dignity and respect while in detention. The Presence assisted in the drafting of the Law on Protection from Discrimination and has helped to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, which it continues to support.

GOVERNANCE IN ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The main aim is to support the Government and civil society on initiatives to: promote economic and environmental well being and good governance; fight corruption; support property reform; and prevent trafficking in human beings.

Property Reform

Since 2003, the Presence has implemented technical assistance projects to assist the Government in achieving the property reform necessary for a productive land market. The Presence works closely with Government institutions, providing expertise on immovable property registration as well as on the restitution and compensation process. It provides the Government with comments on proposed property-related legislation and strategies, monitors the implementation of this legislation and co-ordinates its work with the international community. The Presence's tailored technical assistance places special emphasis on assisting the Government in developing policies which guarantee the status of property under civil law, simplifying property transactions, and allowing a fully-functional land market as an agent of sustainable economic development. The Presence also assists central authorities and local governments in developing sustainable territorial plans, taking into account competing interests of stakeholders to find practical solutions.

Anti-Trafficking

The Presence cooperates with various institutions and partners at central and local levels to facilitate prevention of human trafficking, protection of the rights of victims of trafficking and prosecution of perpetrators. The Presence supports the activities of the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator to promote the advancement of anti-trafficking policies and legislation, build capacity of stakeholders involved in anti-trafficking efforts, to improve data collection and analysis and enhance cross-border co-operation. The Presence continues to support the Government in tackling trafficking for labour exploitation; strengthening child protection mechanisms and enhancing the confiscation and seizure of the criminal assets arising from human trafficking. In addition, the Presence facilitated, together with the Government, cross-border co-operation with anti-trafficking authorities in neighboring countries.

Fighting Corruption

The Presence's activities aim to support the implementation of the National Strategy on Preventing, Fighting Corruption and Transparent Governance and enhance the capacities of anti-corruption institutions to perform their duties effectively and transparently. The Presence supports public institutions in their efforts to achieve a sustained reduction in corruption via education and awareness raising of public officials to promote the implementation of ethics and conflict-of-interest prevention laws, as well as to introduce effective mechanisms in assessing the implementation process. Together with local partners, the Presence organizes projects aiming at local government and civil society to encourage greater accountability and transparency via public participation in planning processes, and in the monitoring of public service delivery.

Local Government

The Presence provides expertise for the national territorial reform and decentralization process. It also supports national efforts aimed at promoting good governance and best practices in decentralization, strengthening local democracy through the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-government and application of good governance principles. The Presence works at both central and local level, assisting Local Government Units to strengthen their capacities, focusing on promoting public

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participation in decision-making, with special attention to women and vulnerable groups and access to information.

Economy and Environment

The Presence assists Albania with good governance aspects of social, economic, and environmental reforms. It promotes the integration of local partners into social and economic development and supports government initiatives that tackle the root causes of corruption, money laundering, and human trafficking. Working with central and local government, and with international and local organizations, the Presence helps raise awareness among citizens and state institutions of the need for participatory approaches to environmental protection planning. It also provides training and technical support to key government institutions and civil society to bolster compliance with associated international conventions such as the ENVSEC Initiative and the Aarhus Convention.

SECURITY CO-OPERATION

The Presence assists the State and Border and Migration Police and works closely with all other in-country police assistance missions. It plays a crucial role in an international consortium that offers development assistance to the Government in the area of law enforcement and the rule of law.

Demilitarization

Through the Forum for Security Co-operation, the Presence continues to work with the Ministry of Defence and support demilitarization of the Albanian Armed Forces in order to reinforce regional stability and security. These activities

include the destruction of surplus conventional ammunition and small arms and light weapons, and the disposal of hazardous chemicals stored in military premises. As a result of the OSCE assistance, Albania is on track to dispose of its 90,000 tonnes of surplus ammunition by 2013 – two years earlier than initially planned.

Police and Border Management Support

The Presence continues to deliver support to the State Police in its fight against organized crime, drug plant cultivation, and domestic violence through Community Policing initiatives. Tailored training on a variety of topics including diversity, leadership, management and forensics are all in progress. A special focus is provided on 'Internal Control Service' issues. The Presence additionally supports the Border and Migration Police by facilitating and strengthening border management, working to enhance the implementation of international standards for border procedures through training, harmonisation of external border controls, and cross-border police and judicial co-operation. The Presence provides assistance to support and facilitate projects related to establishment of joint information exchange centres and training to identify and interview irregular migrants.

Facts and figures

In addition to the core budget of 3,040,600 Euros, the Presence also manages extra-budgetary funds provided by OSCE participating States, totalling 427,978 Euros in extra budgetary funds in 2012. Staff: 85 (international: 20; national professionals: 17; general service staff: 48)

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) works for stability, prosperity and democracy in 57 States through political dialogue about shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference.

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