



### OSCE Secretary General visits Albania

OSCE Secretary General, Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu, completed his first official visit to Albania on 17 May, where he participated in the European Political Community Summit, emphasizing the OSCE’s ongoing contribution to regional security and stability. Sinirlioğlu met with President Bajram Begaj, Prime Minister Edi Rama and Foreign Minister Igli Hasani, Assembly Speaker Elisa Spiropali, civil society and visited Presence’s premises. “We will continue to support Albania on its reform agenda through our OSCE Presence, whose work is very much appreciated in the country”, he said.

### Addressing environmental issues in Ishëm and Fushë-Kruja

Environmental concerns brought us to Ishëm and Fushë-Kruja for a field visit, on 19 May, where we engaged with local authorities and civil society to better understand the challenges and explore solutions on the ground. Ambassador Tarran and OSCE staff met with *Recycle Albania*, discussed with the Ishëm Administrative Unit local environmental challenges and spoke with Denisa Kasa, a passionate youth representative, who is actively mobilizing more than 150 young people for river clean-up actions and raising awareness on pollution and nature protection.



### Mentoring anti-trafficking police officers

The Presence launched the second phase of its mentorship training programme for police officers working on human trafficking cases. Previously trained senior officers now lead as mentors and trainers. The programme includes sessions across six regions, with participants from all twelve. In May, two sessions were held – in Shkodra on 22 May and Tirana on 27 May – gathering 38 police officers and psychologists from Tirana, Fier, Shkodra and Lezha. The initiative is part of a Presence’s project funded by the UK, Norway, Italy and Ireland.



### Supporting action against money laundering

About 70 judges and prosecutors participated in a training session on investigative and adjudicating techniques on money laundering organized by the School of Magistrates and the OSCE Presence on 19 and 20 May. “Albania is beginning to see results emerge from its new judicial institutions, but more work can and must be done. Improved and enhanced investigation and adjudication of offences related to money laundering is therefore paramount to ensure accountability, transparency and to combat impunity”, Ambassador Michel Tarran said.





## Ambassador Tarran visits OCV Centre



Ambassador Tarran, accompanied by State Election Commissioner Ilirjan Celibashi, visited the Central Election Commission's Centre for Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) on 7 May. OCV Director Jona Josifi briefed him on the process of voting from abroad, implemented for the first time in Albania. Speaking to RTSH on the spot, Ambassador Tarran noted was very impressed with the level of professionalism shown in organizing the collection of votes. He emphasized that vote secrecy mainly depended on the voters themselves. The parliamentary elections in Albania were observed by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

## Informing intl. partners and public on elections

On 8 May, three days ahead of parliamentary elections, the Presence gathered the International Election Working Group – a Presence-initiated forum of the OSCE participating States and international organizations in Albania. Representatives from the Central Election Commission and the OSCE Presence updated participants on the latest developments and the final steps leading up to election day. Additionally, the Presence supported the CEC in carrying out a social media campaign reaching both in-country and out-of-country voters throughout the election process.



## Boosting youth engagement in elections



Youth engagement, first-time voting and the significance of participating in the electoral process were at the focus of a discussion that the OSCE Presence organized with its Youth Advisory Group (YAG) and other young people ahead of the 11 May elections. YAG members and other young people also participated in a TV programme at the Dimension 4 studio in public broadcaster RTSH, to talk about the role and participation of youth in elections and the importance of including the youth perspective in public policies. They stressed that the youth is present, active and ready to contribute to the society.

## Students visit former communist prison of Spaç

On the 52nd anniversary of the Spaç Revolt, the Presence organized an informative visit for students to the former notorious communist prison. The visit aimed to deepen young people's understanding of Albania's communist past and encouraged reflection on the importance of resisting totalitarianism, valuing freedoms and defending human rights. Former political prisoner Demir Abazi shared his moving testimony, offering students a firsthand glimpse into life under a repressive regime. They explored the ruins of cells, isolation rooms and forced labor sites—witnessing the inhumane conditions prisoners faced.



## Youth Cyber Camp 2025



Sixty motivated young participants from across the Western Balkans came together, in Golem, on 16-18 May, for an intensive, hands-on experience in the world of cybersecurity. Organized by the National Authority on Cybersecurity, with the support of the OSCE Presence and other key partners, the Cyber Camp provided a dynamic regional platform for learning, collaboration and innovation. From exploring human-related cyber risks to building friendships through team-based activities, the camp empowered the next generation of cybersecurity leaders across the Western Balkans.

## Gender-based violence talks with med students



On 14 May, the University of Medicine Tirana, in co-operation with the OSCE Presence, organized an awareness-raising activity against gender-based violence. The students came together to discuss the causes, consequences and ways to prevent it. Rector Xheladin Draçini emphasized the crucial role of education in the fight against gender-based violence. He highlighted that the university plays a key role in shaping not only future professionals but also citizens who uphold values such as equality, respect and human dignity. The event was part of the Presence's activities against gender-based violence and for gender equality.

## Making free legal aid accessible across Albania

Legal issues can be particularly challenging—especially for individuals who lack the financial means to hire a lawyer. To address this need, free legal aid is provided to ensure that everyone has access to justice. Together with the Directorate of Free Legal Aid, the OSCE Presence organized a series of information and co-ordination meetings with the municipalities of Kamza, Vora, Rrogozhina and Peqin. These meetings aimed to raise awareness about the state-guaranteed right to free legal aid and to inform citizens on how to effectively access these services.



## Training police to prevent radicalization



On 29 and 30 May, the Presence, in partnership with the National Co-ordination Centre on Countering Violent Extremism and the Albanian State Police, held sessions in Berat and Vlora to strengthen police capacity in preventing radicalization and violent extremism. Building on earlier sessions in five regions, the training gathered officers from border, community policing and patrol units. Participants were introduced to a tailored “barometer” to spot early signs of radicalization and trained on referral protocols for timely, co-ordinated responses.

## Strengthening media development partnerships

Ambassador Tarran met with Prof. Dr. Mark Marku, Dean of the University of Tirana's Faculty of History and Philology, on 26 May, to discuss strengthening collaboration and advancing Albania's goals in the areas of media freedom and freedom of expression. The Presence and the University will collaborate on key topics such as the independence of RTSH, Albania's public service media and transparency in media ownership. These efforts will help shape the agenda of the Presence's upcoming annual Media Development Forum. Ambassador Tarran also toured the University's Integrated Digital Media Laboratory.



## Presence stresses importance of press freedom



In a statement on World Press Freedom Day, on 3 May, the Presence reaffirmed that freedom of expression and independent media are fundamental to a vibrant and resilient democracy. The Presence welcomed recent steps taken to strengthen journalist protections, but added that media professionals and organizations continue to face threats and pressure, underscoring the urgent need to ensure their safety. In another statement, on 27 May, the Presence expressed concern over reported incidents faced by journalists during the electoral process.