



**International Conference:**  
**DEMOCRACY THAT DELIVERS: TEN YEARS LATER**  
**UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF THE WESTERN BALKANS**

**CIVIL SOCIETY THAT DELIVERS:**  
**Ideas and Instruments for a Credible Enlargement Strategy:**  
**Coalition Building and Monitoring for Anti-Corruption**

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## MAIN ISSUES:

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## SELECTED INDICATORS REGARDING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

2018 Nations in Transit: <b>Transitional Government or Hybrid Regime</b>	Democracy score	4,50 (2017) vs 4,25 (2008)	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_Albania.pdf">https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_Albania.pdf</a>
	Civil society	3,00 (2017) vs 3,00 (2008)	
	Corruption	5,25 (2017) vs 5,00 (2008)	
2017 Transparency International Ranking	Rank (91/180)	91/180	<a href="https://www.transparency.org/country/ALB">https://www.transparency.org/country/ALB</a>
	Score (38/100)	19/50	
Obstacles to business operations and growth	Corruption	2,2	Balkan Barometer 2017   Business Opinion Survey. <a href="https://www.rcc.int/seeds/results/2/balkan-opinion-barometer">https://www.rcc.int/seeds/results/2/balkan-opinion-barometer</a>
	Macro-economic instability	2,3	
	Tax administration and tax rates	2,5	

Corruption is continuously ranked among the major challenges faced by Albania

SELECTED INDICATORS REGARDING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION  
(CONTINUED)

SELDI (2016)	Corruption Pressure	49,6% (2016) vs 72,8% (2001)	<a href="http://seldi.net/fileadmin/public/PDF/Publications/CAR_Albania_2016/Raporti_i_Vleresimit_te_Korruptionit_2016.pdf">http://seldi.net/fileadmin/public/PDF/Publications/CAR_Albania_2016/Raporti_i_Vleresimit_te_Korruptionit_2016.pdf</a>
	Involvement in Corruption	40,2% (2016) vs 53,3% (2001)	
2017 Top five significant obstacles	Tax burden	79%	ACER Survey (commisioned by OSCE Presence in Tirana - unpulbished)
	Grey economy / unfair competition	75%	
	Instability and unpredictability of laws and regulations	64%	
	Tax regulation / administration	61%	
2017 Freedom Status <b>(PARTLY FREE)</b>	Agregate Score	68/100	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/albania">https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/albania</a>

Corruption remains a major obstacle to the capacity of public institutions to build societal trust...

## INTRODUCTION: CURRENT STAND OF ALBANIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

- Civil society in Albania has a relatively short history, actually struggling with rapid systemic transformation and a turbulent political and economic environment
- Key strengths of the sector come from within but are limited by government's policy towards civil society organisations and civil society in many areas, notably public consultation processes, public funding for CSOs, financial and legal operations of CSOs, volunteering, social service provision and the collection of data on civil society development.
- The European integration process provides an opportunity to reinforce the government's policy towards civil society and a number of measures undertaken in recent years, namely the establishment of a government agency supporting CSO development and a National Council for Civil Society have moved things forward.

## CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHS

- CSOs are generally open to networking and exchange of information.
- Civil society organisations (especially think tanks) have better capacities to influence policies and achieve greater impact;
- CSOs' advocacy and lobbying activity is fully supported by, and well-grounded in research work and analysis;
- There is currently an upward trend in state actors willingness to cooperate with CSOs, although often driven by a pro-forma approach;
- CSOs human resources and capacities are often attractive to political and governmental actors. Yet, once involved in politics, former civil society members have failed to facilitate a greater impact of civil society;
- CSOs are generally flexible and efficient in adjusting to developing situations or sectors;
- There is a high level of sensitivity among citizens on specific situations or the needs of certain social groups (marginalized communities, people in need etc.);
- Civil society has been quite successful in promoting certain values such as religious harmony, interethnic relations or good neighbourly relations at the national and regional level;
- Well targeted activities of CSOs do succeed in attracting citizens' support (for instance trainings for people in need or marginalized categories, e.g. unemployed women).



## CIVIL SOCIETY WEAKNESSES

- The painful transition period has led to individualistic attitudes and apathy towards volunteering;
- Citizens are sceptical of civil society and perceive CSOs mainly as a source of financial benefits, and they are widely perceived as, and identified only with non profit organisations;
- Political bias is present among some CS organisations and representatives, which undermines their objectivity and hence public support;
- Civil society actors do not see the inter-linkages between certain negative phenomena and their consequences. Rather they tend to focus on the consequences and not with the root causes;
- CSOs are largely based on, and dependent on foreign donors' funding and with the latter's withdrawal the sustainability of civil society's actions, as well as existence of portions of it, is threatened;
- CSOs do not rely on consultations with citizens and interest groups during involvement in policy making processes;
- Low levels of civic participation are often the consequence of policy/decision makers underestimating the values of civic actions and initiatives;
- Cooperation between the Government, civil society and the private sector is at low levels, a fact reflected in the lack of sustainability of civic actions and hence, lack of interest by citizens to be included in "sporadic" (not sustainable) actions, and
- Accountability, transparency and democratic (internal governance) among CSOs still remain problematic.

## EU INTEGRATION: ALBANIA SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

- Albania was identified as a potential candidate for EU membership during the Thessaloniki European Council summit in June 2003. In June 2014, Albania was awarded candidate status by the EU.
- EU Integration of Albania - Current Priority Issues:
  - **Public administration reform,**
  - **The judicial reform,**
  - **The fight against corruption, organised crime and drug trafficking,**
  - **Respect for human rights, etc.**

Civil society needs to be focused on these top priorities of the country



## ANTI-CORRUPTION AS A FOCUS OF CSOs ACTIVITIES

- A large number of CSOs are being focussed on this issue, but the tangible results are still missing
- Main achievements are related to measuring public perception, public awareness campaigns, improving public understanding understanding about the corruption issues in public procurement, etc.
- Weak public understanding about the cost of corruption
- In stead of informing and education, mass-media is part of the noise, misinformation and disinformation, citizens trust to the media has been lowered, except

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## JUSTICE REFORM : POSITIVE SIGNES AND HOPES

**Vetting:** a viable institutional mechanism to assess judges and prosecutors' suitability for public employment. **The objective:** strengthening integrity and accountability in the public sector and restore confidence in national institutions and government. It is going through the investigation and evaluation of skills, competencies, personality, assets and other aspects of a given individual of the judiciary system.

- An increasing number **high level judges and prosecutors have resigned** including the former General Prosecutor, but Constitutional Court is out work..
- **The Government of Albania has increased financial, human resources and logistical support to the Vetting institutions;**
- **The recovery of criminal assets confiscated has been improved, but still far away from the expectations...**
- **Drug trafficking during the previous year has been significantly reduced, but the stocks remain still there...**
- **The number of “one-stop-shop” public service units has been increased** contributing to the cut of red tape for Business, Health and Education Services.
- **Due to developing of a digital governance platform of interaction with citizens more transparent procedures through E-Participation are mentioned...**but the law on freedom of information is not properly applied

The re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors has been and it is a key pre-condition that Albania needs to fulfil...

## JUSTICE REFORM: CIVIL SOCIETY MODEST CONTRIBUTION

- In 2017, the civil society, led by the Soros foundation, appealed politicians to accelerate the implementation of the **Vetting law**, which is a condition for opening Albania's EU accession negotiations.
  - CSOs played a crucial role in **giving voice to all Albanian citizens and hold institutions accountable**. There is a need to facilitate different voices to be heard, especially from the weaker groups...
  - *The role of civil society as watchdog, gatekeeper and contributive is vital to the justice reform*
  - **Engaging citizens and civil society in decision-making and holding the government and representatives accountable**
- Justice Reform is moving on...

## IDEAS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS

- Ongoing public awareness, especially about the consequences of bad governance and "state capture";
- Monitoring of public policies, especially in areas, such as: public procurement, concessions and public-private partnerships, which constitute the "zone of risk" for the capture of the state (SELDI, 2016);
- Increase the professional capacities of CSOs, providing professional expertise, reports and studies; collaborate with government without losing identity and mission;
- Increase and robust the grassroots collaboration.

## IN STEAD OF CONCUSSIONS...

- EU accession as a strategic goals, based on **citizens contribution** and not just in a decision of EU Commission and Parliament;
- Europe has been build based on sacrifices, contributions and faith for a better future, Albanian and other Western Balkan countries need to build **realistic hopes** for a better future within the country;
- Anticorruption reforms: legacy of EU conditionality or national achievement? **MORE A NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT...**
- Question: was the EU successful in promoting democratic standards in the Western Balkan states? **YES, IT WAS!**

Let's hope that tomorrow will be a turning point for Western Balkans...

Let's work every day to building hopes within our countries...

Thank you for your attention!

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