

Independent Reporting Mechanism

Action Plan Review:
Albania 2023-2025

Open
Government
Partnership



Independent
Reporting
Mechanism

Introduction

In January 2021, the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) rolled out the new products that resulted from the IRM Refresh process.¹ The new approach builds on the lessons learned after more than 350 robust, independent, evidence-based assessments conducted by the IRM and inputs from the OGP community. The IRM seeks to put forth simple, timely, fit for purpose, and results-oriented products that contribute to learning and accountability in key moments of the OGP action plan cycle.

IRM products are:

- **Co-Creation Brief:** Brings in lessons from previous action plans, serves a learning purpose, and informs co-creation planning and design.
- **Action Plan Review:** A quick, independent technical review of the characteristics of the action plan and the strengths and challenges IRM identifies to inform a stronger implementation process.
- **Results Report:** An overall implementation assessment that focuses on policy-level results and how changes happen. It also checks compliance with OGP rules and informs accountability and longer-term learning. This product was rolled out in a transition phase in 2022, beginning with action plans ending implementation on 31 August 2022. Results Reports are delivered up to four months after the end of the implementation cycle.

This product consists of an IRM review of Albania's 2023-2025 action plan. The action plan comprises 24 commitments, which the IRM has filtered into 22. This review emphasizes its analysis on the strength of the action plan to contribute to implementation and results. For the commitment-by-commitment data, see Annex 1. For details regarding the methodology and indicators used by the IRM for this Action Plan Review, see Section III.

¹ IRM Refresh: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/accountability/about-the-irm/irm-refresh/>

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Section I: Overview of the 2023-2025 Action Plan

Albania's sixth action plan has broadened the range of policy areas and public institutions engaged in the OGP process. The establishment of the Multi-Stakeholder Committee addresses a long-standing IRM recommendation to institutionalize cooperation between the public administration and civil society in the OGP process. As many commitments are awareness-raising activities, institutions could add value by collaborating with civil society and incorporating measurements of their results during implementation.

Albania's 2023-2025 action plan has 24 commitments. The IRM highlighted one promising commitment.² Commitment 12 would increase the scope of publicly available information published in a fiscal risk statement and improve budget monitoring using key performance indicators (KPIs). The inclusion of gendered dimensions in the planning and execution of budgets is also a positive change.

Many commitments continue from Albania's previous action plans. For example, Commitment 1 will establish a network of civil society organizations (CSOs) that could monitor the integrity plans that line ministries began producing during the 2020-2022 action plan. Commitments 2-4 aim to enhance data submission and data accuracy on the beneficial ownership register, launched during the 2020-2022 plan. Commitment 6 continues the publication of datasets to the open data portal, while Commitments 7-9 continue to enhance public services on the e-Albania portal. Commitment 15 involves the continuous publication of concessions and public-private partnership (PPP) contracts, uptake of the online complaints system, promotion of open contracting standards, and integration of risk assessment tools. Its introduction of a red flag index has potential for results as a corruption prevention tool. The action plan also includes new policy areas such as Commitments 17-22, which aim to improve inclusivity in the delivery of healthcare, social services, and education. Commitment 23 focuses on improving the conduct of regulatory impact assessments and public consultations, and Commitment 24 aims to adopt e-legislation for the Parliament.

The development of the action plan saw more active collaboration with CSOs compared to previous plans. The Government of Albania established the Multilateral Committee, which acted

AT A GLANCE

Participating since: 2011
Action plan under review: 2023–2025
IRM product: Action Plan Review
Number of commitments: 24

Overview of commitments:
Commitments with an open government lens: 17 (71%)
Commitments with substantial potential for results: 0
Promising commitments: 1

Policy areas:
Carried over from previous action plans:

- Monitoring integrity plans
- Beneficial ownership transparency
- Access to justice
- Open data
- Public service delivery
- Open contracting
- Fiscal transparency

Emerging in this action plan:

- Innovation in the defence sector
- Inclusivity in public services
- Regulatory impact assessments
- Open parliament

Compliance with OGP minimum requirements for co-creation: Yes

as a dedicated multi-stakeholder forum for developing and monitoring the action plan. Several surveys and meetings with civil society were held. Feedback was given to CSOs on why certain proposals could not be included,³ and some CSOs' suggestions were included in the action plan.⁴ On the other hand, some MSF members indicated that either they did not take part in co-creation meetings because they felt that their opinions would not be considered or they were not aware that they could have proposed commitments during the co-creation process.⁵ Public institutions that successfully involved civil society in commitment development and implementation could share their experiences with other institutions, to more broadly strengthen the OGP process in Albania.

Many commitments largely focus on raising awareness around various policy areas. The IRM recommends adding value to such activities by clearly offering opportunities to put learning into action and considering ways to measure their results during implementation. This could include identifying specific policy processes for citizen engagement or offering new public reporting mechanisms that enhance public accountability. Moreover, several commitments lacked a clear open government lens or had a weak open government lens. This was particularly evident for commitments led by new ministries. For future action plans, the IRM recommends providing additional information for new institutions to ease their involvement in the OGP process.

² Albanian CSOs were generally not responsive to IRM invitations to contribute to this Action Plan Review. This made it difficult for the IRM to assess the potential for results for some commitments.

³ Rovena Pregja (MoJ), interview by the IRM, 24 July 2023.

⁴ Drita Rina (Save the Children), interview by the IRM, 1 September 2023; Mirela Arqimandriti (GADC), interview by the IRM, 28 August 2023.

⁵ Ermelinda Mahmutaj (EDEN-AI), interview by the IRM, 8 August 2023.

Section II: Promising Commitments in Albania's 2023-2025 Action Plan

The following review looks at the one commitment that the IRM identified as having the potential to realize the most promising results. Promising commitments address a policy area that is important to stakeholders or the national context. They must be verifiable, have a relevant open government lens, and have modest or substantial potential for results. This review also provides an analysis of challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to contribute to the learning and implementation process of this action plan.

Table 1. Promising commitments

Promising Commitments
Commitment 12: Public awareness on budget transparency: This commitment seeks to enhance citizen engagement in budget planning and monitoring, and improve the process of budget monitoring overall. It would improve the scope of the Fiscal Risk Statement, establish key performance indicators for monitoring budget execution, promote gender budgeting, and conduct hearings and workshops with civil society on budget monitoring.

Commitment 12: Public awareness on budget transparency

Implementing agencies and CSO collaborators: Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE), Save the Children Albania (SCA), the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC), the Albanian Initiative for Development (AID).

For a complete description of the commitment, see Commitment 12 in Albania's 2023-2025 action plan: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/albania-action-plan-2023-2025/>

Context and objectives:

This commitment aims to enhance citizen engagement in budget planning and monitoring and improve the process of budget monitoring overall. This entails publishing more information in relation to fiscal risks, improving the process and scope of budget monitoring by adopting key performance indicators (KPIs), promoting gender budgeting, and engaging citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), and academia in budget planning and monitoring. The Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE) seeks to build on the 2020-2022 action plan, where it published government financial statistics and information on fiscal risk management. For this new commitment, the MoFE will design and apply templates for budget monitoring which would include KPIs.⁶ The engagement activities include hearings and workshops with CSOs about fiscal risks, training young people on budget processes, monitoring the budgeting of the 2021-2027 National Strategy for Gender Equality, and implementing gender budgeting at the local level.

CSOs proposed certain milestones during the co-creation process. For example, the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) proposed the gender dimensions to add gender indicators during the technical budgetary process⁷ and Save the Children Albania proposed the youth trainings.⁸ The MoFE and CSOs such as GADC will facilitate monitoring reports on gender budgeting.⁹ Three municipalities will receive 10 training courses on gender budgeting and CSOs will monitor gender budgeting in those municipalities.

Potential for results: Modest

Whereas the previous action plan continued existing practices in budget transparency, this commitment is a step forward by extending the scope of information to be published and monitored, with an emphasis on activities encouraging public engagement.

According to the action plan, greater transparency and understanding of fiscal risks as well as better risk management practices can help establish greater credibility and market confidence in the Albanian economy and economic planning. MoFE representatives note that a fiscal risk report has previously been produced, but only one section summarizing the report was published, and not all the details were included in the report.¹⁰ The MoFE states that information on fiscal risks is published as an annex in annual budget documentation such as Annual Budget Execution Reports, Mid-Year Reports and Budget Proposals.¹¹ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has stated that the publication of a fiscal risk statement in 2024 is an important step towards forward-looking monitoring of fiscal risks.¹² The MoFE has established a unit responsible for coordinating the collection of information on fiscal risks and finalizing the fiscal risk statement.¹³ Publishing this statement in full could mark modest improvements in transparency and indirectly improve decision-making on government finances, enable early risk detection, build confidence among investors and creditors, and increase overall stability and resilience of the Albanian economy. More broadly it could also foster good governance, reduce corruption, and enhance financial accountability. The MoFE considers the publication of the fiscal risk statement to be a considerable improvement to transparency.¹⁴

Improving the scope of monitoring of budget execution would also make a modest contribution towards better decision-making for future budget processes and offer the opportunity to further strengthen the budget process in the future. According to the MoFE, adding KPIs to the monitoring of implementation of public institutions' budgets would enhance the information available for citizens to monitor the budget execution in terms of what was achieved with the spending to make sure that institutions are accountable for how they spend public funds.¹⁵ Every budgetary institution will be required to fill out a template to explain what was achieved through its budgetary funds, as opposed to only reporting on how it spent the funds.¹⁶

Albania scored 6/100 in the 2021 Open Budget Survey on public participation.¹⁷ While hearings on the budget with civil society already take place, the discussions are often overly technical and require specific knowledge, limiting civil society's ability to contribute.¹⁸ While the action plan is not clear on the expected outcomes of the workshops, MoFE representatives stated that they expect civil society to be able to provide more informed comments on budget monitoring and for improved government feedback on the suggestions from CSOs, which is at times missing.¹⁹ This could mark a modest change towards more meaningful interactions between government and civil society on budget monitoring. Workshops for civil society on fiscal risk will be delivered in cooperation with the Albanian Initiative for Development.²⁰ In addition, the development of new and improved gender budgeting indicators could ensure that gender issues are taken into consideration when public spending is planned and executed. The extent to which, or how, trainings and monitoring of gender budgeting at the local level would lead to better gender outcomes in these jurisdictions, or more broadly, is unclear.

Opportunities, challenges, and recommendations during implementation

While the activities in this commitment seek to improve budgeting development and monitoring processes, there is scope for the commitment to strengthen the open government approaches to implementation. This could include actions that not only make information like fiscal risks more transparent, but also making sure this is available in understandable language and formats for citizens. The MoFE states that it has no plans to involve civil society in the preparation of the fiscal risk statement.²¹ There could be opportunities for more engagement in drafting the fiscal risk statement as well as mechanisms for monitoring. Publishing the full fiscal risk statement would allow civil society and the media to meaningfully contribute more broadly to discussions on budgeting, for example. Workshops could specifically seek to improve civil society's knowledge on the technical aspects of the budgetary procedure.²²

The IRM recommends the following steps during implementation:

- **While there are no plans to involve civil society in drafting the financial risk statement,** the MoFE could consider possibilities for overseeing how risks are managed and mitigated (i.e., through hearings), with feedback mechanisms to explain how input has been incorporated or addressed. The IMF has previously highlighted the importance of clearly identifying risk mitigation measures, including enhancing oversight and governance of state-owned enterprises.²³
- **Ensure workshops and gender budgeting activities are sustained beyond the current reliance on donor funding.** This may require specific funding. The MoFE would benefit from cooperating with Save the Children and GADC in the delivery of these planned activities, as these organizations have experience in delivering trainings.²⁴ Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity around the extent to which, or how trainings and monitoring of gender budgeting at the local level would lead to better gender outcomes in these jurisdictions or beyond. Clarifying the objectives on improving gender outcomes would help ensure that gender budgeting activities are more effective and targeted.

Other commitments

Other commitments that the IRM did not identify as promising commitments are discussed below. This review provides recommendations to contribute to the learning and implementation of these commitments.

Under **Commitment 1**, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and CSOs will educate the public and civil servants on corruption prevention. Awareness-raising activities are planned, including videos, e-bulletins, social media publications, and forums with CSOs. The MoJ will also publish an anti-corruption "dictionary" to assist in translating forms of corruption that may not have uniform words in the Albanian language. This dictionary could help clarify different forms of corrupt practices in national legislation and in general usage.²⁵ In addition, the Albanian Legal and Territorial Research Institute²⁶ will create an informal network for CSOs against corruption.²⁷ This network will monitor the implementation of integrity plans of ministries and will develop a new methodology to measure public perceptions of corruption. It may be beneficial to clarify what powers the network will have, what resources will be allocated to support its activities (such as involving the Albanian Institute for Statistics in any methodology development), whether its monitoring will feed into investigations, and whether it will be fully independent from the government.

The IRM has clustered **Commitments 2, 3, and 4**. They follow the launch of Albania's beneficial ownership register during the previous action plan and aim to enhance data submission and data accuracy among reporting entities. They involve communication activities, studying European best practices and reviewing Albania's current legislation in this area. Since Albania already has legal procedures for registering beneficial owners, the IRM recommends finding ways to engage the public in verifying registration data and implementing sanctions for non-compliance to decrease inaccuracies in the register. Discussions around legal changes could look at how to use sanctions to improve compliance, such as exclusion from participation in public procurements and verification of the data by the National Business Centre.

For **Commitment 5**, the MoJ will raise awareness among socially vulnerable groups of available justice mechanisms. The activities include meetings, forums, campaigns, updates on child-friendly justice services, and manuals for citizens and vulnerable groups on accessing justice mechanisms. It will be important to monitor whether these activities increase the number of requests for legal aid among the identified groups. While basic documentation is required for seeking legal aid, the MoJ continues to run projects to improve citizens' access to this service.²⁸

Under **Commitment 6**, the National Agency of Information Society (NAIS) aims to increase the number of datasets on the portal opendata.gov.al. The portal currently provides 91 datasets in fields such as health, tourism, education, and business. The commitment does not specify how many new datasets will be introduced or how many new institutions will publish data. A representative of NAIS confirmed that the aim is to publish data directly to the portal without any human interaction from the systems of public institutions and to upgrade the portal.²⁹ As public institutions are concerned about potentially sharing sensitive data, this commitment involves assisting them in identifying potential data to be published.³⁰ It also entails conducting an Open Data Readiness Assessment (ODRA) to identify new datasets and new institutions for the portal. The IRM recommends using the ODRA's findings as a basis for developing a government-wide open data strategy and action plan for Albania.

Commitments 7, 8, and 9 aim to improve the e-Albania portal. For Commitment 7, NAIS will introduce a life-event model on e-Albania, that would automatically organize all public services related to a particular event.³¹ NAIS has identified potential events, such as looking for employment, planning for retirement, changing residence, and accessing health and disability services.³²

Under Commitment 8, NAIS will transpose the Web Accessibility Directive (EU) 2016/2102 which would provide the legal basis for adapting Albanian government websites and e-Albania for people with disabilities. Implementation of this commitment will depend on the timing of the transposition of the Directive by the Albanian Parliament. The IRM recommends NAIS engaging with civil society to better understand the needs of disabled people, particularly for e-Albania. It may also be worth implementing the WCAG 2.0 standards while the EU directive is being transposed. Even though the WCAG 2.0 standards are not legally binding, they could help bridge existing gaps if the EU directive requires more time than anticipated.

Under Commitment 9, NAIS will improve the feedback mechanism on e-Albania. Currently, e-Albania allows users to provide feedback on e-services by giving their rating and by writing a comment. Feedback is analyzed manually, which is inefficient and does not always result in

necessary corrections.³³ Four civil society meetings have been organized with the Council of Investments and discussions will be held with businesses and CSOs on how to improve e-Albania. While the commitment does not clarify how feedback will be gathered or used for improvement, the IRM considers it to have modest potential results as NAIS indicated that the planned measures (such as quarterly remedial actions and publication of feedback) will ensure NAIS responds to feedback via continuous improvements to e-Albania.³⁴

For **Commitment 10**, the Ministry of Defense and the Albanian Armed Forces will create an Innovation Centre and conduct an information campaign about their roles and missions. According to the action plan, the Centre will encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of national security, civil defense, and cyber security. The role of the Centre on increasing transparency, public accountability, and promoting public participation should be clarified.

Under **Commitment 11**, the Ministry of State for Youth and Children will establish a national database on youth organizations in Albania. The database will provide updated information on the conditions and needs of youth in the country and will support the planning, monitoring, administration, and evaluating of youth policies at the central and local levels. According to the ministry, the features of the database were decided with civil society but the exact information it will contain is still to be decided.³⁵ Once the terms of reference are finalized, civil society will be invited to populate the database.³⁶ Though not stated in the action plan, a ministry representative confirmed that parts of the database will be public, ensuring data protection laws are followed.³⁷

Commitments 13 and 14 align with Albania's Public Finance Management (PFM) Strategy and focus on raising awareness about revenue transparency and public finances, respectively. Commitment 13 lacks an open government lens, as the activities are internal to budget institutions. For example, it is not clear how Save the Children Albania's plan to train municipal staff on the importance of collecting property taxes would open government. The MoFE could clarify how the public assets inventory will improve accountability regarding value estimates, whether there will be sanctions for not producing or updating the inventory list or for instances of misuse, and if civil society will be included in monitoring the inventory. For Commitment 14, the MoFE will work with CSOs in preparing Albania's next PFM Strategy and monitoring reports and will organize trainings for women in business regarding public finances (including on paying taxes). These efforts represent modest changes to existing practices.

Commitment 15 seeks to increase the transparency of public contracts. It calls for continuous publication of concessions and private-public partnership contracts, increased use of the electronic complaints system and collaboration with civil society to promote open data standards in public contracting. The commitment is not clear how it may ensure publication of all concessions and PPP contracts solely through awareness raising (there are no sanctions for not submitting information in a timely manner³⁸). The electronic complaints system was already adopted in 2021,³⁹ but according to a Public Procurement Agency (PPA) representative, work is still in progress to adopt legislation that would mandate the use of the online system.⁴⁰ A red flag identification system for e-procurement already exists,⁴¹ but it is not clear if or how the PPA will incorporate the Albanian Institute of Science's ongoing work in its own red flag system. Adopting the Open Contracting Data Standard for the Public Procurement Commission (PPC)'s website is also a potentially important step towards better access to public procurement data.

However, it is not clear from the action plan if this activity will result in the publication of significantly more data on the entire procurement lifecycle than was available before the plan.

For **Commitment 16**, the Minister of State for Protection of Entrepreneurship (MoSPE) and the National Agency of ICT will develop a platform and database in e-Albania for grant applications for start-ups and entrepreneurs. An evaluation committee will inform every applicant how many points they receive and their ranking. During implementation, MoSPE should clearly define the procedures and criteria of the selection process and make the evaluations publicly available (not just for the applicant). The IRM also recommends transparent monitoring and reporting of MoSPE-funded projects.

Commitments 17-22 aim to improve inclusivity in health and social services and in education. For Commitment 17, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) and CSOs will jointly conduct awareness raising around social services among socially vulnerable groups and children. As written, this commitment lacks an open government lens. However, the MHSP has stated that civil society will be consulted in relevant national councils, which could make the commitment more relevant to open government during implementation.⁴² For Commitment 18, MHSP and CSOs will create a training package for professionals who provide services for vulnerable groups. This commitment could have modest potential for results, due to the engagement of CSOs in developing the training package. For Commitment 19, MHSP will collaborate with CSOs to monitor the quality of services at the local, regional, and central levels, giving the commitment modest potential for results. Commitment 20 and 21 involve raising awareness of the importance of inclusiveness in education and on the impact of digitization of the education system. Both commitments lack an open government lens and have unclear potential for results. Under Commitment 22, the Ministry of Interior will review the National Review Mechanism (NRM) for victims and potential victims of human trafficking to guarantee its effective operation. The commitment includes awareness raising regarding human trafficking, but it is not clear if CSOs or citizens will be involved in the review of the NRM. Therefore, the commitment lacks an open government lens.

Under **Commitment 23**, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will improve the government's conduct of regulatory impact assessments and public consultations, in line with Albania's procedures and standards for public consultations. Among the activities are improving the quality of regulatory impact assessments for draft legislation by ministries and evaluating and validating the quality of public consultations for individual acts. According to the PMO, the objective is to harmonize the legal programming and the real process, part of which will focus on increasing the quality and quantity of trainings delivered to public officials and to harmonize the regulatory impact assessment process and the public consultation process.⁴³ It is not clear how the PMO will measure the results of these activities or how it will improve the drafting and implementation of the General Analytical Program of Projects acts. It will be important to demonstrate how the feedback from public consultations is incorporated into public policies.

For **Commitment 24**, the Parliament of Albania will implement e-legislation by applying the "AKN4AL" standard to parliamentary and other normative documents. The Parliament will also digitalize past parliamentary documents and archives using AKN4AL and incorporate digital records into the e-legislation framework. The commitment could result in a more integrated and transparent legislative workflow and improved access to laws and parliamentary records. Parliament will need to ensure its own capacity and resources to make the new system function

effectively once technical assistance from international donor finishes, and to maintain interinstitutional cooperation (such as via the existing working group).

⁶ The template for budget monitoring is based on the new 'For standard budget monitoring procedures in Central Government Units' Guideline which was approved in 2023.

⁷ Mirela Arqimandriti (GADC), interview by the IRM, 28 August 2023.

⁸ Drita Rina (Save the Children Albania), interview by the IRM, 1 September 2023.

⁹ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023; Mirela Arqimandriti (GADC), interview by the IRM, 28 August 2023. Regarding the performance of gender-based KPIs, Central Government Units prepare budget execution reports that will include this information.

¹⁰ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023.

¹¹ Comment received during pre-publication period, 19 December 2023.

¹² International Monetary Fund, Albania: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2023 Article IV Mission, 27 October 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/10/27/mcs102723-albania-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2023-article-iv-mission>

¹³ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023.

¹⁴ Comment received during pre-publication period, 19 December 2023.

¹⁵ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023. Clarification received during pre-publication period, 19 December 2023.

¹⁶ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023.

¹⁷ See: <https://internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2021/albania>

¹⁸ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023.

¹⁹ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023.

²⁰ Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023.

²¹ Comment received during pre-publication period, 19 December 2023.

²² Vanina Jakupi and Nefrida Coku (MoFE), interview by the IRM, 20 July 2023.

²³ International Monetary Fund, Albania: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2023 Article IV Mission, 27 October 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/10/27/mcs102723-albania-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2023-article-iv-mission>

²⁴ Mirela Arqimandriti (GADC), interview by the IRM, 28 August 2023; Drita Rina (Save the Children Albania), interview by the IRM, 1 September 2023.

²⁵ Rovena Pregja (MoJ), interview by the IRM, 24 July 2023.

²⁶ Elida Jata (ALTRI), interview by the IRM, 23 October 2023.

²⁷ Rovena Pregja (MoJ), interview by the IRM, 24 July 2023.

²⁸ Comment received during pre-publication period, 19 December 2023.

²⁹ Romina Kostani (AKSHI-NAIS), interview by the IRM, 2 August 2023.

³⁰ For example, as soon as the child is registered, a birth certificate would be automatically issued, and other additional services related to childbirth would be offered without citizens having to do their own research.

³¹ Romina Kostani (AKSHI-NAIS), interview by the IRM, 2 August 2023.

³² Romina Kostani (AKSHI-NAIS), interview by the IRM, 2 August 2023.

³³ Romina Kostani (AKSHI-NAIS), interview by the IRM, 2 August 2023.

³⁴ Comment received during pre-publication period, 19 December 2023.

³⁵ Oltion Pengu (Ministry of State for Youth and Children), interview by the IRM, 27 July 2023.

³⁶ Oltion Pengu (Ministry of State for Youth and Children), interview by the IRM, 27 July 2023.

³⁷ Oltion Pengu (Ministry of State for Youth and Children), interview by the IRM, 27 July 2023.

³⁸ According to the PPA interviewee.

³⁹ Open Contracting Partnership, How Albania's e-complaints system reduces red tape for government suppliers, <https://www.open-contracting.org/2022/11/22/how-albanias-e-complaints-system-reduces-red-tape-for-government-suppliers/>

⁴⁰ Xhoana Ristani (PPA), interview by the IRM, 24 July 2023.

⁴¹ See: [Openprocurement.al](https://openprocurement.al).

⁴² Comment received during pre-publication period, 19 December 2023.

⁴³ Eris Cela (Prime Minister's Office), interview by the IRM, 11 October 2023.

Section III. Methodology and IRM Indicators

The purpose of this review is not an evaluation. It is intended as a quick, independent, technical review of the characteristics of the action plan and the strengths and challenges the IRM identifies to inform a stronger implementation process. The IRM highlights commitments that have the highest potential for results, a high priority for country stakeholders, a priority in the national open government context, or a combination of these factors.

The IRM follows a filtering and clustering process to identify promising reforms or commitments:

Step 1: Determine what is reviewable based on the verifiability of the commitment as written in the action plan.

Step 2: Determine if the commitment has an open government lens. Is it relevant to OGP values?

Step 3: Review commitments that are verifiable and have an open government lens to identify if certain commitments need to be clustered. Commitments that have a common policy objective or contribute to the same reform or policy issue should be clustered. The potential for results of clustered commitments should be reviewed as a whole. IRM staff follow these steps to cluster commitments:

- a. Determine overarching themes. If the action plan is not already grouped by themes, IRM staff may use OGP's thematic tagging as reference.
- b. Review commitment objectives to identify commitments that address the same policy issue or contribute to the same broader policy or government reform.
- c. Organize commitments into clusters as needed. Commitments may already be organized in the action plan under specific policy or government reforms.

Step 4: Assess the potential for results of the clustered or standalone commitment.

Filtering is an internal process. Data for individual commitments is available in Annex 1. In addition, during the internal review process of this product, the IRM verifies the accuracy of findings and collects further input through peer review, OGP Support Unit feedback as needed, interviews and validation with country stakeholders, an external expert review, and oversight by IRM's International Experts Panel (IEP).

As described earlier, IRM relies on **three key indicators** for this review:

I. Verifiability

- **Yes, specific enough to review:** As written in the action plan, the stated objectives and proposed actions are sufficiently clear and include objectively verifiable activities to assess implementation.
- **No, not specific enough to review:** As written in the action plan, the stated objectives and proposed actions lack clarity and do not include explicitly verifiable activities to assess implementation.
- Commitments that are not verifiable will be considered not reviewable, and further assessment will not be carried out.

II. Open government lens

This indicator determines if the commitment relates to the open government values of transparency, civic participation, or public accountability as defined by the Open Government Declaration and the OGP Articles of Governance by responding to the following guiding questions. Based on a close reading of the commitment text, the IRM first determines whether the commitment has an open government lens:

- **Yes/No:** Does the commitment set out to make a policy area, institution, or decision-making process more transparent, participatory, or accountable to the public?

The IRM uses the OGP values as defined in the Articles of Governance. In addition, the following questions for each OGP value may be used as a reference to identify the specific open government lens in commitment analysis:

- **Transparency:** Will the government disclose more information, improve the legal or institutional frameworks to guarantee the right to information, improve the quality of the information disclosed to the public, or improve the transparency of government decision-making processes or institutions?
- **Civic Participation:** Will the government create or improve opportunities, processes, or mechanisms for the public to inform or influence decisions? Will the government create, enable, or improve participatory mechanisms for minorities or underrepresented groups? Will the government enable a legal environment to guarantee freedoms of assembly, association, and peaceful protest?
- **Public Accountability:** Will the government create or improve opportunities to hold officials answerable for their actions? Will the government enable legal, policy, or institutional frameworks to foster accountability of public officials?

III. Potential for results

The IRM adjusted this indicator—formerly known as the “potential impact” indicator—to take into account the feedback from the IRM Refresh consultation process with the OGP community. With the new results-oriented strategic focus of IRM products, the IRM modified this indicator to lay out the expected results and potential that would be verified in the IRM Results Report after implementation. Given the purpose of this Action Plan Review, the assessment of potential for results is only an early indication of the possibility the commitment has to yield meaningful results based on its articulation in the action plan in contrast with the state of play in the respective policy area.

The scale of the indicator is defined as:

- **Unclear:** The commitment is aimed at continuing ongoing practices in line with existing legislation, requirements, or policies without indication of the added value or enhanced open government approach in contrast with existing practice.
- **Modest:** A positive but standalone initiative or change to processes, practices, or policies. The commitment does not generate binding or institutionalized changes across government or institutions that govern a policy area. Examples are tools (e.g., websites) or data release, training, or pilot projects.
- **Substantial:** A possible game changer for practices, policies, or institutions that govern a policy area, public sector, or the relationship between citizens and state. The commitment generates binding and institutionalized changes across government.

This review was prepared by the IRM in collaboration with Liljana Cvetanoska and was externally expert reviewed by Ernesto Velasco Sánchez. The IRM methodology, quality of IRM products, and review process are overseen by IRM's IEP. For more information, see the IRM Overview section of the OGP website.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ IRM Overview: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/irm-guidance-overview/>

Annex 1. Commitment by Commitment Data⁴⁵

Commitment 1: Public awareness on mechanism in the fight against corruption.

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Modest

Commitment 2: Raising awareness of the reporting entities regarding the beneficial owners' registration and data update obligation

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- This commitment has been clustered as: Beneficial ownership transparency (Commitments 2, 3, and 4 of the action plan)
- Potential for results: Modest

Commitment 3: Evaluate best practices of EU countries on beneficial owners' data registration

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? No
- This commitment has been clustered as: Beneficial ownership transparency (Commitments 2, 3, and 4 of the action plan)
- Potential for results: Modest

Commitment 4: Review the legislation in beneficial owners' registration

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- This commitment has been clustered as: Beneficial ownership transparency (Commitments 2, 3, and 4 of the action plan)
- Potential for results: Modest

Commitment 5: Public awareness on the mechanisms of access to justice

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Modest

Commitment 6: Add automatic data to the open data portal and conduct an Open Data Readiness Assessment

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Modest

Commitment 7: Identify proactive life-events and implement at least 1 life event in e-Albania portal

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? No
- Potential for results: Modest

Commitment 8: Transpose EU web accessibility directive for government portals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? Yes• Potential for results: Modest
Commitment 9: Develop citizen feedback mechanism for electronic services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? Yes• Potential for results: Modest
Commitment 10: Public awareness on the role of Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? Yes• Potential for results: Modest
Commitment 11: Youth database
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? Yes• Potential for results: Modest
Commitment 12: Public awareness on budget transparency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? Yes• Potential for results: Modest
Commitment 13: Public awareness on revenue transparency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? No• Potential for results: Unclear
Commitment 14: Public awareness on public finances
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? Yes• Potential for results: Modest
Commitment 15: Increase transparency for public contracts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes• Does it have an open government lens? Yes• Potential for results: Modest
Commitment 16: Inter-institutional cooperation to improve public services towards entrepreneurship through the creation of a supportive climate for entrepreneurship
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verifiable: Yes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest
<p>Commitment 17: Public awareness, especially socially vulnerable groups, regarding access to comprehensive services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? No • Potential for results: Unclear
<p>Commitment 18: Strengthen the capacities of professionals providing services to vulnerable groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest
<p>Commitment 19: Synergies between public institutions and CSOs in monitoring and improving public services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest
<p>Commitment 20: Public awareness about inclusiveness in education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? No • Potential for results: Unclear
<p>Commitment 21: Public awareness on the impact of digitization of the education system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? No • Potential for results: Unclear
<p>Commitment 22: Review the National Referral Mechanism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? No • Potential for results: Unclear
<p>Commitment 23: Planning regulatory acts, assessing their impacts, and public consultations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes • Does it have an open government lens? Yes • Potential for results: Modest
<p>Commitment 24: Open and accessible Parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifiable: Yes

- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Modest

⁴⁵ **Editorial notes:**

1. For commitments that are clustered, the assessment of potential for results is conducted at the cluster level, rather than the individual commitments.
2. Commitment short titles may have been edited for brevity. For the complete text of commitments, please see Albania's action plan: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/albania-action-plan-2023-2025/>.

Annex 2: Action Plan Co-Creation

OGP member countries are encouraged to aim for the full ambition of the updated OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards that came into force on 1 January 2022.⁴⁶ IRM assesses all countries that submitted action plans from 2022 onward under the updated standards. OGP instituted a 24-month grace period to ensure a fair and transparent transition to the updated standards. During this time, IRM will assess countries' alignment with the standards and compliance with their minimum requirements.⁴⁷ However, countries will only be found to be acting contrary to the OGP process if they do not meet the minimum requirements, starting with action plans submitted to begin in 2024 and onward. Table 2 outlines the extent to which the countries' participation and co-creation practices meet the minimum requirements that apply during development of the action plan.

Table 2. Compliance with minimum requirements

Minimum requirement	Met during co-creation?	Met during implementation?
1.1 Space for dialogue: The Government of Albania established the Multi-Stakeholder Committee with Order No. 145 on 20 December 2021 to oversee Albania's OGP process and the co-creation of the 2023-2025 action plan. ⁴⁸ The committee met four times between 11 November 2022 and 24 March 2023. The agendas, lists of participants, and minutes of its meetings are available on the OGP webpage. ⁴⁹	Yes	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>
2.1 OGP website: Albania has a publicly accessible OGP webpage. ⁵⁰ It contains the latest action plan and information on the co-creation process, such as invitations to attend consultations and minutes of the committee meetings. ⁵¹	Yes	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>
2.2 Repository: There is an online repository. ⁵² It contains information on the co-creation process up to when the action plan was adopted in April 2023. As of October 2023, the repository does not contain information on the implementation of the 2023-2025 action plan.	Yes	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>
3.1 Advanced notice: During its 11 November 2022 meeting, the Multi-Stakeholder Committee discussed the timeline for drafting the 2023-2025 action plan. ⁵³ On 22 November 2022, the committee published on the OGP website the methodology for drafting the action plan, including the anticipated timeline. ⁵⁴ In addition, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) prepared a questionnaire on its webpage and on the OGP webpage for stakeholders to provide input on the action plan. ⁵⁵ The questionnaire was open from 29 December 2022 to 18 January 2023, meaning that stakeholders were given more than two weeks' notice before the co-creation process started.	Yes	Not applicable

<p>3.2 Outreach: The MoJ sent email invitations to CSOs to participate in the co-creation process.⁵⁶</p>	Yes	Not applicable
<p>3.3 Feedback mechanism: The MoJ organized a questionnaire where stakeholders and the public could propose topics for the action plan.⁵⁷ The questionnaire was open from 29 December 2022 to 18 January 2023. Additionally, the draft action plan was posted for public consultation from 6 March to 20 March 2023.⁵⁸</p>	Yes	Not applicable
<p>4.1 Reasoned response: The MoJ published a feedback report for the co-creation process where stakeholders' contributions were documented.⁵⁹ According to interviewed CSOs, the content of the commitments was agreed with the responsible institutions during the co-creation meetings.⁶⁰ For example, the Albanian Legal and Territorial Research Institute (ALTRI) sent suggestions to the MoJ which sent them back to ALTRI for a final check after they were incorporated.⁶¹ However, other stakeholders reported that they found out that their suggestions were included only after they reviewed the final action plan.⁶²</p>	Yes	Not applicable
<p>5.1 Open implementation: The IRM will assess whether meetings were held with civil society stakeholders to present implementation results and enable civil society to provide comments in the Results Report.</p>	Not applicable	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>

⁴⁶ 2021 OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-participation-co-creation-standards/>.

⁴⁷ IRM Guidelines for the Assessment of Minimum Requirements: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-guidelines-for-the-assessment-of-minimum-requirements/>.

⁴⁸ Prime Minister's Order no. 145, dated 20.12.2021 "For the establishment and operation of the Multilateral Committee on Partnership for Open Government" and amended by Prime Minister's Order no. 177, dated 28.10.2022, https://ogp.gov.al/uploads/2022/12/Order%20OM_Nr%20145_dt%2020%2012%202021_on%20OGP%20Commite_eng.pdf

⁴⁹ See: <https://ogp.gov.al/en/faqe/procesi-i-bashke-krijimit>

⁵⁰ See: <https://ogp.gov.al/en>

⁵¹ See: <https://ogp.gov.al/en/faqe/procesi-i-bashke-krijimit>

⁵² See: <https://ogp.gov.al/>

⁵³ Republic of Albania, <https://ogp.gov.al/uploads/2022/12/Aqjenda.pdf>

⁵⁴ Republic of Albania, <https://ogp.gov.al/uploads/2022/12/Scan-28-Dec-22-17%C2%B724%C2%B705.pdf>

⁵⁵ For example, see the MoJ's call for contribution here, <https://www.drejtësia.gov.al/publikohet-pyetesori-per-bashke-berjen-e-planit-kombetar-te-veprimit-2022-2024-te-partneritetit-per-qeverisje-te-hapur/>

⁵⁶ Elida Jata (ALTRI), interview by the IRM, 23 October 2023; Rovena Sulstarova (IDM), interview by the IRM, 17 October 2023.

⁵⁷ See:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfA5yTs1fb4CUUj_7bILLH9tLK3Ir1wSokPVPkYXueZ01dbcq/viewform

⁵⁸ Draft action plan, <https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/613>

⁵⁹ Feedback report,

<https://ogp.gov.al/uploads/2023/1/7.%20Raporti%20i%20dokumentit%20t%C3%AB%20prioriteteve%20t%C3%AB%20identifikuar%20n%C3%AB%20kuad%C3%ABr%20t%C3%AB%20procesit%20t%C3%AB%20bashk%C3%ABb%C3%ABrjes%20co-creation.pdf>

⁶⁰ Elida Jata (ALTRI), interview by the IRM, 23 October 2023; Rovena Sulstarova (IDM), interview by the IRM, 17 October 2023.

⁶¹ Elida Jata (ALTRI), interview by the IRM, 23 October 2023.

⁶² Interview with Mirela Arqimandriti, GADC, 28 August 2023.