



OSCE

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

NEWSLETTER

October 2024



Key media issues discussed at 10th Media Development Forum

Representatives from media, public institutions, academics and civil society gathered at the OSCE Presence's 10th annual Media Development Forum, on 23 October, a key event focused on the future of media freedom and integrity in Albania. Discussions focused on the intersection of media policy and journalist safety, need for continued reforms to strengthen media landscape, communication between media and government, media-court relationship and media ownership and its impact on journalistic independence.

OSCE Presence strengthens police-prosecutors collaboration against human trafficking

On 30 October, the Presence concluded a two-month critical series of meetings bringing together police and prosecutors to strengthen the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to combat human trafficking and protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation. The meetings – in Shkodra, Tirana, Elbasan, Vlora, Kukës and Durrës – were organized under our anti-trafficking project supporting Albanian institutions' fight against trafficking, funded by United Kingdom, Norway, Italy, and Ireland.



Out-of-country voting: CEC conducts study visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina

From 14 to 17 October, a delegation from the Central Election Commission (CEC) visited Sarajevo to learn from Bosnia and Herzegovina's nearly-three-decade experience with out-of-country voting. The visit came at a crucial time as Albania aims to facilitate the participation of its citizens abroad in the 2025 elections. The Presence organized the visit as part of its project "Support to electoral reform and processes in Albania" funded by Sweden, Switzerland, U.S. Mission to the OSCE and Poland.



Strengthening co-operation with local government stakeholders

The Presence's events in Albania's regions intensified during October, spreading throughout the fields of its mandate. Ambassador Michel Tarran also engaged in these outreach activities by visiting Lezha, Shkodra, Vlora and Berat, where he met with Mayors, civil society, youth and other local actors and participated in events on strengthening Local Safety Councils, risk of small arms and light weapons, parliamentary outreach, voter education and anti-trafficking.



Constitutional Court in study visit to London



A delegation of the Constitutional Court led by Chair Holta Zaçaj conducted a study visit to London, on 10 and 11 October, where they met with representatives of the United Kingdom's Supreme Court, Administrative Court and Judicial College. The purpose of the visit was to expand knowledge on judicial processes and practices on the application of common-law principles and the use of judicial precedent in decision-making. The visit was part of the Presence's project in support of the Court, funded by the United States of America, Italy and Greece.

Empowering women on cybersecurity

With the aim to empower aspiring women in cybersecurity, on 24 October, together with the National Cybersecurity Authority the OSCE Presence organized a workshop where successful women in the field shared their personal journeys, discussed challenges and opportunities available in the cybersecurity landscape. In related news, on 10 October, Deputy Head of Presence Clarisse Pasztory addressed the National Cybersecurity Conference, emphasizing the critical need for international co-operation to address cybersecurity challenges.



Cybercrime and electronic evidence training



Fifty prosecutors and judicial police officers from Shkodra, Lezha and Korça joined our "Cybercrime and electronic evidence" training sessions in Shkodra and Korça in October. The events focused on the challenges of investigating and prosecuting cybercrime offences, as well as on how to practically handle electronic evidence. Participants gained practical skills and knowledge for addressing cybercrime-related challenges in Albania. The meetings also served as excellent platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity-building.

Start of new campaign against violent extremism

On 1 October, in collaboration with the Co-ordination Centre for Countering Violent Extremism, we kicked off, from Durrës, a new round of awareness and training sessions with community policing officers and border police. These sessions aim to enhance the capacity of law enforcement in early identification and referral mechanisms to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. Together, we are building a safer, more resilient community, by equipping frontline officers with the knowledge and tools to make a real difference.



Enhancing environmental governance, security



Based on the results of a national survey on environmental governance and security in Albania, on 22 October, the Presence launched a two-month tailored awareness and engagement campaign focused on crucial environmental themes. The campaign kicked off in Librazhd with a dynamic event gathering youth, academia, civil society and local institutions to tackle forestry issues. It will continue in Gjirokastra, Dropull, Shkodra, Maliq, Devoll and Korça. The survey and campaign are part of our project funded by Norway, France and Italy.

Support for E-Legislation in Albania



A delegation of 13 officials from Albanian parliament participated in a workshop in the Italian Senate to exchange and learn from best practices in e-legislative processes, on 18 October. They engaged in in-depth discussions and hands-on demonstrations, gaining insights into how the Italian Senate has successfully integrated its e-systems with work-flows of legal procedures and improved the inter-institutional co-ordination, for greater efficiency and transparency of law-making in Italy. The visit was part of our Swiss-funded project "Support for E-Legislation in Albania".

Parliament meets youth, civil society in regions

Majority and opposition parliamentarians participated in meetings with youth and civil society organizations that the Assembly and the OSCE Presence organized at the regional constituency offices in Peshkopi and Berat regions. Ambassador Michel Tarran was also present. The main scope of the meetings was to discuss about the challenges of youth and civil society organizations in the regions, the relationship with Parliament and MPs and opportunities for participation in local and central level.



Together to prevent youth crime



In end October, the Presence wrapped up an impactful round of information sessions on youth crime prevention in Koplik, Dibër, Berat, Kuçovë, Dimal, Gjirokastër, Përmet, Këlcyrë, Tepelenë and Memaliaj municipalities. We engaged with 129 first-line practitioners from local police directorates, social services, child protection units, probation service, prosecution office, regional education and health authorities and schools to strengthen early identification and referral mechanisms for better interinstitutional collaboration on youth crime prevention. Over 145 primary and secondary education students participated in these events.

No democracy without youth engagement

Democracy has no future without youth engagement. In view of 2025 parliamentary elections, together with the Central Election Commission, we travelled to Vlora and Berat for voter education sessions targeting high school and university students and introduce RINKrijon, a youth competition for the best slogan, video and graphic for 2025 elections. Attending the sessions, Ambassador Tarran emphasized the crucial role of youth in shaping the future of the country. The events were organized under our project funded by Sweden, Switzerland, U.S. and Poland.



Comprehensive approach against child work



Raising awareness about child work and strengthening children rights was at the focus of the #YouthTalk organized with our Youth Advisory Group with the participation of youth activists and a panel comprised of speakers from state institutions, national and international organizations, on 15 October. Discussions focused on the role of the institutions, effective legislation and new difficulties deriving by online exploitation of children. Participants emphasized the importance of an comprehensive approach to ensure a safer future for children.

Workshop on accessing Sigurimi files



Journalists, researchers and students gathered in the premises of the Authority on Former State Security Files for a workshop on access to former state security records organized by the Presence and the Authority, on 25 October. The workshop raised their capacities to access and report on Sigurimi records. The event was led by Dagmar Hovestädt, a former spokesperson of Germany's Stasi Records Archive, who's also the author of the Presence-commissioned Manual on Access to the Sigurimi Files for Journalists and Researchers – a basis material for the workshop.

Training police on witness protection

From 21 to 25 October, the Presence delivered a training session on witness protection for police officials in Tirana. The programme focused on the psychological aspects of witness protection, emphasizing the importance of communication skills, stress management and positive psychology in safeguarding vulnerable individuals. The training was part of our support to Albania's law enforcement agencies to address priority challenges. It was organized under a Norway-funded project.



Elbasan youth embraces SALW campaign



Elbasan high school students and local Youth Forum members embraced the awareness campaign against risks and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW), on 15 October. The Presence organized the event together with the Ministry of Interior, State Police and Woman Centre for Development and Culture Albania as part of its SAWL project funded by the EU, Germany and France. Young people were invited to be part of the brainstorming process on how to lower SALW risks and evolve themselves as communication facilitators to become a voice of the campaign.

Raising awareness on personal data protection

Personal data protection has never been more pressing and the field of education is no exception. Together with Information and Data Protection Commissioner, on 16 October, the Presence presented the findings on unified recommendations for schools. The event gathered tens of participants from educational institutions, students and parents from Shkodra, Lezha, Kurbin, Tropoja, Malësia e Madhe, Vau i Dejës and officials of Shkodra municipality and region. Inclusion of all relevant stakeholders is key in raising awareness about the importance of data protection.



Regional co-operation on youth empowerment



On 22 October, the Head of Presence Ambassador Michel Tarran received in a meeting the Secretary General of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), Albert Hasani, to discuss regional co-operation on empowering youth. They emphasized the importance on advancing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and reaffirmed their commitment to fostering opportunities for young people to enhance peace and stability in the Western Balkans region.

First gender audit in Albanian parliament



National parliaments are well placed to serve as a role model on advancing gender equality. The OSCE Presence, with OSCE/ODIHR expertise, is supporting the Assembly of Albania for the implementation of its first participatory gender audit. A series of events, from 28 to 30 October, included a workshop with MPs and parliamentary staff and interviews with parliamentary structures. The audit will produce recommendations aiming to advance gender-balanced representation, gender mainstreaming in policy and party vision and gender sensitivity in organizational culture.

Equal access to justice for all citizens

Acknowledging the important mission of the Free Legal Aid Directorate in ensuring equal access to justice for all citizens and in close collaboration with them, we organized an interactive training for civil society operators offering free legal aid for citizens, on 31 October. The training equipped participants with methods and techniques in communicating with and receiving citizens from the special categories, including minors, victims of crime in general and domestic violence in particular, minority populations including Roma and Egyptian ones and persons with disabilities.



Women's Municipal Excellence Programme



Over two dozen new women councillors and Deputy Mayors of Lezha and Fier municipalities joined our information sessions, part of the Women's Municipal Excellence Programme (WoMEP). Discussions focused on role of women councillors and deputy mayors; authority of local governments under new legislation; gender equality; budgeting process; development of cities according to general local plans; and bringing citizens' concerns into municipal councils. Since 2020, WoMEP stands as a flagship initiative in the Presence's efforts to foster gender equality at the local level.

Tailored training on informant management

From 21 to 23 October, staff of the State Police Informant Management Unit engaged in a tailored training focused on informant management. Officials of the National Bureau of Investigation and Police Oversight Agency also participated in the training developed in collaboration with ICITAP. Topics included selection and handling of informants and best practices for conducting successful operations and engaging in joint international investigations. This initiative boosts law enforcements' fight against national and transnational organized crime and serious offenses.



Border officers meet neighbouring colleagues



Albanian border police officers got together with their Montenegrin and Macedonian colleagues in two separate meetings organized by the Presence, in Shkodër and Pogradec. They discussed the border situation, irregular migration, joint patrols and information sharing and evaluated as excellent the management of the tourist season. These meetings take place several times a year, supported by the OSCE Presence, with the aim of strengthening co-operation and increasing the exchange of information among border police in the region.