

Inter-Sectorial Strategy against Corruption
2024 - 2030

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INTER-SECTORAL STRATEGY AGAINST CORRUPTION

2024 - 2030

Foreword

Since 2015, Albania has adopted and implemented a strategic framework in the fight against corruption, with the aim of coordinating efforts of all institutions responsible in the fight against corruption, such as Government's institutions, independent institutions vested with powers of the fight against corruption as well as law enforcement and judicial institutions. The Government of Albania, for its part, has led the efforts in the fight against corruption, in parallel, in several areas, with a special emphasis on the roll out of the digitization of public services, the establishment of functional complaints handling systems, as well as strengthening the institutional architecture in the fight against corruption to advance anti-corruption policies, to monitor them and then take actions regarding the trends of corruption appearing in the governmental apparatus. Simultaneously, all public institutions responsible for the prevention, awareness raising and punishment of corruption, have developed further in terms of the implementation of anti-corruption policies, but also in increasing the effectiveness of the investigations and adjudication of corruption cases.

Throughout this period of time, Albania has made significant progress in the fight against corruption through the adoption and implementation of the justice reform, as one of the most effective reforms in the fight against corruption, both through the implementation of the system of transitional re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors, and through the establishment of special structures for the investigation of corruption and organized crime, notably the Special Prosecutor's Office against Corruption and Organized Crime and the National Bureau of Investigation, as well as the First Instance Court and the Court of Appeal against Corruption and Organized Crime. The work of these institutions has been positively assessed by international partners, including European Union and the United States.

To further consolidate achievements in the area against corruption and directly address all obligations that stem from the EU accession negotiation process, strengthening and improvement of the strategic framework to guarantee sustainability of reforms and continuation of efforts to reduce significantly corruption cases, is of particular importance. The fight against corruption remains one of the main challenges of the country, therefore it is necessary to strengthen and coordinate all institutional efforts to systematically address any issues that undermine the integrity of institutional performance.

At the governmental level, the prioritization of anti-corruption policies was upgraded to another level in 2024 with the establishment of the Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption, who simultaneously exercises the powers of the National Coordinator against

Corruption, who coordinates the work of the executive pillar regarding Government's anti-corruption policies and implements all commitments, in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, transparency and accountability.

In this context, the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption 2024-2030, is a document that sets out the specific commitments of all institutions that exercise powers in prevention, punishment and awareness raising in the fight against corruption, including public institutions at the central and local level, independent institutions as well as law enforcement institutions as well as the judiciary.

Based on this institutional framework, the new Strategy describes a new approach with systemic intervention in areas prone to corruption, further strengthening of the legal framework in the fight against corruption, the roll out of measures to prevent corruption at the local government, the promotion of business integrity further consolidation of the institutional framework responsible for the investigation and adjudication of corruption, as well as the promotion of integrity in the private sector, as well as the awareness and education of young people on legality and integrity.

This new strategic framework guarantees full compliance with the commitments undertaken by Albanian institutions in the Roadmap for the Rule of Law and coherently addresses the findings of the Screening Report for the first subchapter of “Clusters” of the European Commission on the necessary steps to improve Albania's performance in the fight against corruption, as one of key areas in advancing the rule of law and setting milestones in the EU accession process.

The Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030, consists of three policy goals: prevention (I) – punishment (II) – awareness raising (III).

The first policy, Prevention (I) aims at consolidating and developing tools and mechanisms for the prevention of corruption, promoting integrity, transparency and ethics at all levels of government, both at the central and local level. Preventing corruption reduces the need for criminal punishment and has a wider impact on promoting public trust and good governance of public officials. Prevention will be focused on sectors prone to corruption and promotion of the work of public officials in terms of integrity and accountability. By prevention, further promotion of legitimate use of public funds, transparency of funding of political parties, and regulation of lobbying instruments, etc. is also aimed. Special focus will be given to incentives of the private sector to promote integrity of companies.

Through the second policy; Punishment (II) the Strategy aims the consolidation of the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases. Law enforcement institutions and justice bodies will intensify the use of effective investigative tools, dedicated to fighting corruption, sufficient human and financial resources to this end, as well as increasing international cooperation in the fight against transnational crime. This policy goal aims the completion of the regulatory framework, operational structures and the interaction between the structures responsible for the criminal investigation of corruption.

Through the third policy, Awareness raising (III) the aim is to increase awareness and education against corruption, by strengthening the education related to integrity in the pre-university

education system, throughout its cycles, as well as strengthening the public sector education to have in place an accountable public sector.

The Intersectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030, is a policy document at the national level that promotes the cooperation of executive power bodies, independent constitutional authorities, non-governmental institutions and the private sector.

The Albanian Government and all other institutions co-responsible in the fight against corruption, through this Strategy, remain committed to undertake all the necessary interventions at the legal, institutional and operational level, as the best response to address the needs that come up in the fight against corruption.

List of Acronyms

AASCA	Agency of the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets
ADG	Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance
FIA	Financial Intelligence Agency
PSA	Police Supervision Agency
CA	Contracting Authorities
NAIS	National Agency of Information Society
ASCS	Agency for the Support of Civil Society
PPA	Public Procurement Agency
ASPA	Albanian School of Public Administration
SCA	State Cadaster Agency
ATP	Agency for Treatment of Property
CTA	Concessions Treatment Agency
EU	European Union
NBI	National Bureau of Investigation
DPoA	Department of Public Administration
GDoA	General Directorate of Anti-Corruption
GDC	General Directorate of Customs
GDT	General Directorate of Taxation
SCCOC	Specialized Court for Corruption and Organized Crime
HIJ	High Inspector of Justice
HIDAACI	High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interests
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
CI	Central Inspectorate
CRIPCI	Commissioner for the Rights to Information and Protection of Personal Data
NCAC	National Coordinator Against Corruption
HJC	High Judicial Council
HPC	High Prosecutorial Council
HSA	High State Audit
CM	Council of Ministers
CCSS	Commissioner for the Civil Service Supervision
CEC	Central Elections Commission
MSPAA	Minister of State for Public Administration and Anticorruption
MES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MECI	Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation
MEFA	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MSRP	Minister of State for Relations with the Parliament
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MSLC	Minister of State for Local Government
MSEBC	Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
GPO	General Prosecutor's Office
SP	State Police
ART	Albanian Radio Television
SASPAC	State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination
SPAK	Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime
SoM	School of Magistrates
ARO	Asset Recovery Office

PART I

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

1. Purpose of the strategic document

The purpose of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy against Corruption 2024-2030 is to guide main policies around the fight against corruption, led by all institutions responsible in the fight against corruption. The Inter-sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030 is complemented by an Action Plan which sets out specific implementation measures, deadlines and institutional responsibilities and guarantees a monitoring mechanism of these measures to increase effectiveness and inter-institutional coordination.

Three options were considered while drafting this policy document:

(i) **Option 0:** The *status quo* option, which in principle meant not taking any actions until 2023 and not continue with the anti-corruption reform process. The completion of the current strategy will result in the termination of the 18 strategic objectives, measures and related activities and would make it impossible to further address the objectives that pose a high risk, as well as it would affect the continuation of the reforms in this area by hindering the progress of the negotiation process of Albania's accession to the European Union

(ii) **Option 1:** Extending the timeline of the current Strategy and its Action Plan, would be one option, once the term for the implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy against Corruption 2015-2023 come to an end. This possibility would save the cost of the process of drafting a new strategy, but on the other hand it would make it difficult to refresh the vision of the fight against corruption, the increasingly dynamic nature of the corruption phenomenon as well as the preparation of a clear legal and institutional response for current issues.

(iii) **Option 2:** The adoption of a new strategy, for the period 2024-2030, puts the efforts on the reconceptualization of specific objectives, considering the current stage of the implementation of the Strategy and the need to include new relevant areas and sectors, as well as addressing all obligations stemming from the negotiation process with the EU in the field of the fight against corruption. The new strategy would provide strategic programming for areas and sectors prone to and at risk of corruption, by ensuring the coordination of different stakeholders within and outside the public sector. This would be ensured by adopting a shared line of actions and commitment, which would promote a coordinated and integrated approach in the fight against corruption. This approach would include completion of legal and institutional reforms, followed by an intensive investment program in the institutions that deliver services. At the same time, improvement of the coordination, management and communication capacities would be ensured to adjust to the needs of the units until the completion of the legal implications of the Strategy in 2030.

After considering the above opportunities and into account the status of the reform, option no.2 is considered as the most appropriate.

In this light, the drafting process of the Strategy underwent three phases:

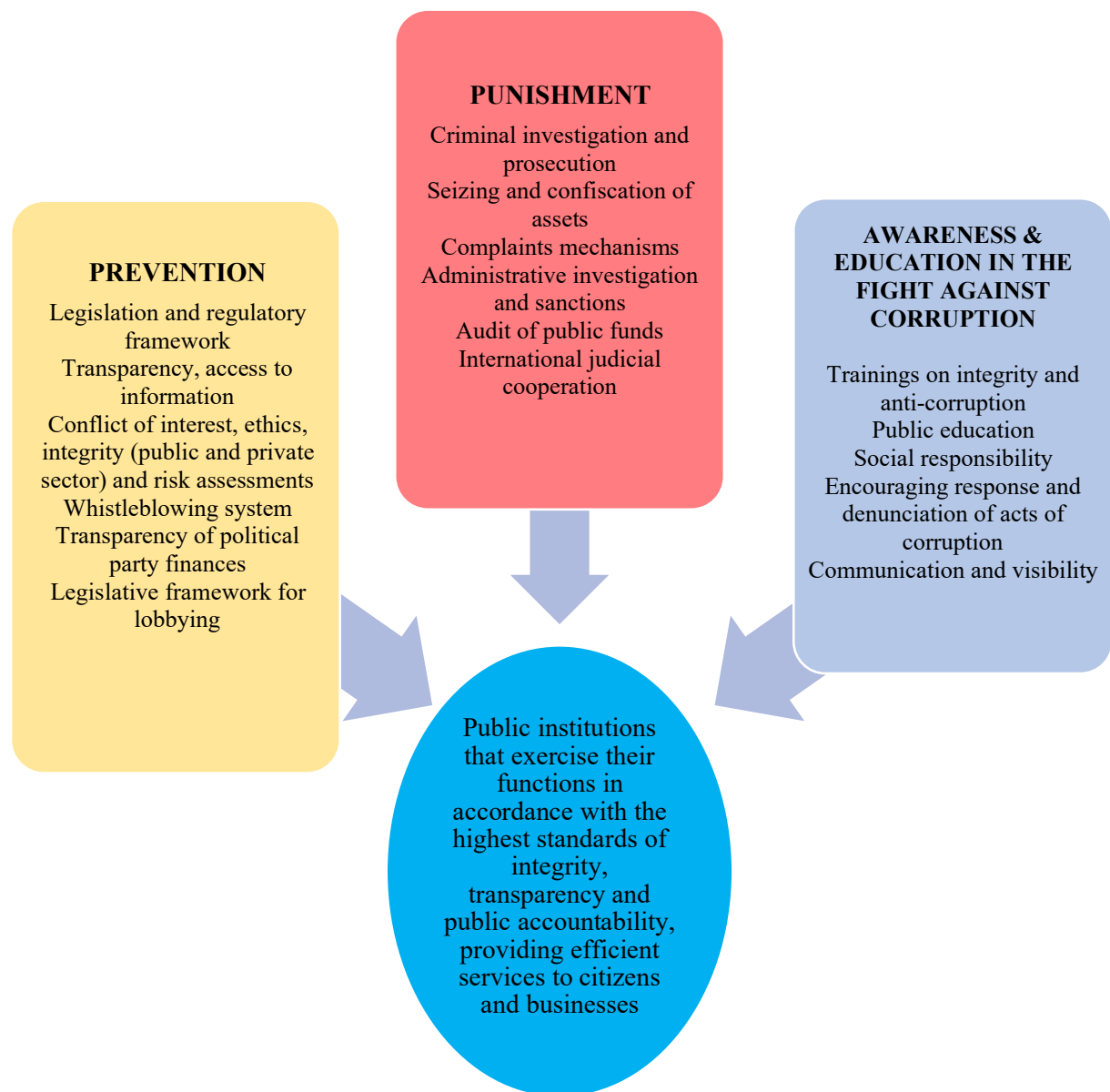
Phase I: This phase focuses on laying the foundation for the development of a new strategy and adapting it to current developments and challenges identified throughout the negotiation process, especially in the Acquis Screening Report of the Legislation for the for the first subchapter of July 2023 and the obligations undertaken considering the Roadmap for the Rule of Law. To analyse the changes in the context of the fight against corruption, this phase focuses on the analysis of the current situation of corruption in the country, the identification and analysis of sectors and areas that are more at risk of corruption and that require intervention. Also, based on the analysis of the situation, the specific objectives of the strategy for the period 2024-2030 were defined. These objectives clearly describe the goals in the fight against corruption fully compliant with the vision of Albania for 2030.

Phase II: After the preparation of the institutional ground in the above-mentioned phase, the next step was the drafting of the strategy concept, with all its constituent elements. This phase aims to implement legal and institutional reforms to address the challenges and risks of corruption. The whole process is carried out through the identification and drafting of the necessary legal reforms to increase transparency and accountability in the various sectors and fields. To implement the new legal and institutional changes, mechanisms and structures are built that will ensure their effective implementation and monitoring.

Phase III: In the final phase, increasing the capacities of institutions and stakeholders in managing successfully the efficiency of the strategy and in addressing the challenges of corruption, is aimed. Capacity building is enabled through the professional development of human resources engaged in the fight against corruption, by contributing to the deepening and roll out of the reforms. The changes undertaken will be efficient by enabling that the public officials are able to monitor and continuously improve the workflow in line with the objectives of this Strategy.

Monitoring and evaluation of progress by means of new mechanisms set up to achieve the expected results, is critical at this stage. The strategy defines specific objectives, programs, measures and activities that will achieve tangible and realistic goals and results, providing as clearly and concretely as possible the obligations for each institution responsible for their implementation. This approach ensures an effective implementation of anti-corruption activities, which include a vast number of public institutions (executive, local, constitutional, judicial institutions) which require a high level of cooperation between each other.

Figure no. 1: Policy Objectives



2. Legal and institutional framework in the fight against corruption

Albania has gradually improved its legal and institutional framework in the fight against corruption,

Over the years, Albania has ratified important international instruments in the fight against corruption, such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption¹, the Council of Europe's

¹ United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), Merida 2003-ratified from the Republic of Albania by the Law no. 9492, dated 13.03.2006.

Civil and Criminal Law Convention on Corruption², the United Nations Convention against International Organized Crime and the two Additional Protocols, the Agreement between the Republic of Albania and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) for Strategic and Operational Cooperation.

The domestic legal framework against corruption contains a series of acts starting with the Constitution, laws (Codes) and procedural laws (Codes), laws on the organization and operation of institutions as well as the regulatory framework of anti-corruption instruments and investigations and punishments, etc.

Regarding provisions of the Criminal Code, the latter defines corruption as a criminal offense punishable by criminal law³. However, beyond this definition, the Albanian legislation provides for a series of actions that are based on the need for integrity in governance, institutional transparency and public accountability as prerequisites for the prevention of corruption. Notably, the Albanian legislation provides legal obligations for public institutions in terms of transparency of public administration work⁴, prevention of conflict of interest⁵, control over the declaration of assets of public officials⁶, reporting and protection of whistleblowers⁷ and ethics in governance⁸.

From an institutional point of view, in the framework of the justice reform, a milestone was reached in taking further the fight against corruption through the creation of the Special Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime and Corruption, the National Bureau of Investigation and the First Instance Court and Appeal Court for Corruption and Organized Crime. For about four years now, these institutions have been creating a solid history (track record) of investigations, adjudications and sentencing criminal offenses of corruption, as well as seizing and confiscating the proceeds of crime of corruption.

At the government level, efforts to fight corruption are led by the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, who coordinates all Government's efforts to prevent, raise awareness and punish corruption in public administration.

Albania has been named by OECD Sigma as one of the countries in the front line for meeting the standards of e-government, as well as by the European Commission for reducing corruption and

² Criminal Convention on Corruption and additional protocol (1999), Council of Europe - ratified by the Republic of Albania by the Law no. 8778, dated 26.4.2001; Civil Convention on Corruption of the Council of Europe (1999) - ratified by the Republic of Albania by the Law no. 8635, dated 6.7.2000.

³ Criminal code of the Republic of Albania, Articles 244.244/a, 245, 259/a and 260

⁴ Law no. 119, dated 18.9.2014, "On the right to information", as amended and the Law no. 9887, dated 10.03.2008, "On the protection of personal data", as amended.

⁵ Law no. 9367, dated 07.4.2005, "On the prevention of conflict of interest in the exercise of public functions" as amended.

⁶ Law no. 9049, dated 10.4.2003, "On the declaration and control of assets, financial obligations of elected officials and some public servants" as amended.

⁷ Law no. 60, dated 2.6.2016, "On whistleblowing and protection of whistleblowers", as amended.

⁸ Law no. 9131, dated 8.9.2003, "On the rules of ethics in public administration". Here we can also mention by-laws and decisions that regulate the rules of ethics for members of the Assembly, or for police structures and subjects of the judicial system, judges and prosecutors.

informality through the provision of digital services. The transition from 14 online services in 2013 initially only for 50 thousand users, to 1240 completely online services in 2024 for 3.1 million registered users, from stamps and signatures on paper to electronic ones is undeniable evidence of the high scale of digitization in interaction with citizens and businesses, avoiding physical interaction at the premises. Across the spectrum of public services, both for citizens and businesses, revolutionizing the delivery of health care-related services (referral system, electronic prescriptions, patient registry, nurse recruitment), education system services (teacher recruitment, application to schools and universities, digital registers), road transport services (licenses and permits), business registration and fiscalisation, have significantly reduced the corruption windows.

Thanks to the digitization of services and the increase in the number of digital systems, presently we are much more equipped with options to track inefficiencies and delays in replying to requests, which can often become a cause of corruption. Therefore, the benefits from digitization in recent years have been two-fold, both in terms of the complete eradication of corruption at the service counters, but also the increase of internal accountability and the continuous improvement of the performance of service-providing institutions.

At the same time, the last 10 years have marked a revolution of the entire architecture of the operation of public procurement in Albania. The alignment with EU *Acquis* and the use of electronic systems, *open data* in public procurement, have been considered as positive developments in the annual report and the Screening Report of the European Commission for Albania. In the latest SIGMA report, the field of public procurement has a maximum rating in three of the indicators related to the quality of the legal framework, the central institutional and administrative capacity to implement and monitor public procurement policies effectively and the development of complaints handling procedures.

One of the main anti-corruption indicators in procurement processes, namely the number of procedures with negotiation without announcement, in 2013 was 33.2% of the total procurement procedures, while in the last decade this figure has suffered a drastic decrease reaching only 2.9 % in 2023, an achievement also assessed in the annual reports of the European Commission. Another indicator of the improvement of performance of the electronic procurement system is the savings achieved as a difference between the limit fund and the declared winning fund, which was 6.6% in 2013, while in 2023 it turns out to be 15%, thus influencing directly in the optimization of the use of public funds.

However, despite the above achievements, there are still a number of problems in terms of the effectiveness in the fight against corruption, both in terms of prevention, investigation and punishment, as well as awareness regarding the phenomenon of corruption and the detrimental effects it has for the society.

2.1. Link to the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2030 (NSDI III)

Ensuring a strong legal and institutional framework is essential for the success of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy against Corruption.

Through legal and institutional reforms, the aim is to prevent, punish abusive practices and raise awareness on the effects of corruption in the society. The improvement of the efficiency of the mechanisms through the added coordinating role of the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, as well as the implementation of the monitoring of anti-corruption instruments should be addressed according to the provisions of NSDI.

In the section "Democracy and the strengthening of institutions and good governance" of the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2030, "Transparency and the fight against corruption", among others, are foreseen the main issues directly related to anti-corruption reforms, which require a special focus:

- Strengthening integrity and preventing corruption in the public administration and all state bodies. Special focus is dedicated to institutions that provide public services to citizens, such as public procurement, electronic services, handling cases and denunciations of corruption.
- Strengthening the implementation of the law and the rule of law, punishing corrupt acts in which public officials may be involved and guaranteeing the integrity of state bodies.
- Involvement of the public in the fight against corruption, by providing them information about the Government's activities against corruption and encouraging them to actively use the mechanisms to denounce it.
- Citizen awareness and youth education to engage productively in the fight against corruption.

2.1.1. Policy goals

The Inter-Sectoral Strategy against Corruption, 2024-2030, foresees 3 Policy Goals:

Political Goal 1: Prevention of corruption - Strengthening of legal and institutional mechanisms and capacities for the prevention of corruption and strengthening of integrity in the public administration, with a focus on sectors of a high risk of corruption.

Political Goal 2: Punishment of corruption - Increase the performance of all structures responsible for pursuing, investigating and punishing corruption cases.

Political Goal 3: Awareness raising and education in the fight against corruption - Increasing citizens' awareness and educating the public to proactively engage in the fight against corruption.

2.2. The link between the ISAC 2024-2030 and sectoral and inter-sectoral strategies

The Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030 is harmonized with the goals, objectives and provisions of the following national strategies:

- Strategy against Organized Crime and Serious Crimes 2021-2025;
- Inter-Sectoral Justice Strategy 2021-2025;
- Inter-Sectoral Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance 2023-2030;
- Inter-Sectoral Strategy Digital Agenda of Albania 2022-2026";
- Inter-Sectoral Juvenile Justice Strategy 2022-2026;
- National Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030 and the Action Plan.

2.3. The link with the National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) & EU Acquis

The Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030 is also closely linked to the PKIE & EU *Acquis*. Specifically, Chapter 23: Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, is an essential chapter in the process of accession negotiations. This chapter covers three important areas: (i) the judicial system, (ii) anti-corruption policies and (iii) fundamental rights.

The latest progress reports from the European Commission for Albania for the years 2021-2023 submits that Albania has reached a certain level of preparation in the fight against corruption and acknowledges the country's ongoing efforts in advancing this agenda. In addition to the implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, it is emphasized that the process of transitional re-evaluation in the judicial system has brought results in the fight against corruption. The reports recognize the progress achieved especially through the continuation of the implementation of the comprehensive justice reform, demonstrating the establishment and full operation of the Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), consisting of the Special Prosecutor's Office and the National Bureau of Investigation, as well as the establishment and full functioning of the Special Court for Corruption and Organized Crime (SCCOC). In this respect, the contribution of the Special Prosecutor's Office - SPAK, in improving the seizure and confiscation of criminal assets in corruption cases, is particularly underlined.

The Progress Report published in 2023 highlights the increase in the number of convictions for corruption at senior levels, as an important priority in the fight against the culture of impunity. The report also gave its evaluations for the General Directorate of Anticorruption (as a structure within the Ministry of Justice in the reference period of the report), whose capacity should be further strengthened. Increased attention is required for the most sensitive (vulnerable) sectors from corruption and for which risk assessments and dedicated intervention measures as well.

These recommendations are also underlined in the July 2023 Screening Report for Albania for subchapter I " Fundamentals". Among the important steps that must be taken to guarantee the effectiveness of preventive anti-corruption efforts, the need for increased cooperation and coordination between authorities with preventive and punitive powers, the need for improving the capacities of HIDAACI for verifying declarations of wealth and private interests are highlighted, as well as the necessity of strengthening the efficient implementation of the legal framework for the promotion of whistleblowing of corrupt practices and the protection of whistleblowers. The report also recommends taking additional measures to increase the efficiency of the public consultation process and further strengthen the public procurement framework.

Regarding the punitive approach, the Report emphasizes the need to increase the capacities and consolidate the functioning Special Prosecution Office Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), including its structural component, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), providing the necessary investigative tools and a modern case management system. Also, the strengthening of cooperation with the State Police and the expansion of financial investigations and confiscation of assets are emphasized. The Commission particularly encourages the establishment of a solid track record of investigating and punishing high-level corruption and increasing expertise in seizing assets at home and abroad.

In accordance with the above, the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030 guarantees the alignment of the relevant measures and deadlines with the concrete commitments undertaken by the authorities involved in the fight against corruption in the Roadmap for the Rule of Law, approved by the Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 736, dated 13.12.2023. The Roadmap addresses the findings and recommendations of the Screening Report for Group-chapter I, envisaging among the key commitments the sustainable and efficient implementation of the strategic and legal framework for corruption in full compliance with EU standards. In order to reduce the incidence of corruption, the authorities are committed to continuously address the risks of corruption in the most vulnerable sectors, as well as to measure the effectiveness of these measures through the objectives of the Performance Indicators of the new Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy, 2024-2030, on an annual basis.

The Roadmap simultaneously foresees the continuous implementation of the awareness-raising objectives of the Strategy, focusing especially on awareness within public administration institutions, as well as the increased participation of civil society in the process of policy-making and monitoring for the fight against corruption. To guarantee transparency and stability, the authorities are committed to ensure stability in the process of assets declaration, as well as conflict of interest. At the same time, in terms of inter-institutional cooperation, the improvement of cooperation between state agencies and prosecution services is foreseen, with the aim of increasing coherence in the fight against corruption. The priority remains addressing GRECO's recommendations for Albania and the sustainable consolidation of law enforcement agencies engaged in the fight against corruption until 2027.

In the punitive approach, the anti-corruption commitments of the Roadmap aim to increase the capacities of law enforcement agencies, especially the Special Prosecutor's Office - SPAK, to better conduct proactive and cross-border investigations of high-level corruption cases, as well as improving the track record of proactive investigations and prosecutions, including the sectors of high risk of corruption and guaranteeing definitive punishments for corruption. Also, the authorities aim to improve the performance for the systematic follow-up of the confiscation of the proceeds of crime of corruption until 2030, narrowing the gap with the seized assets, among others through the training and intensive training of officials involved in the entire identification cycle, tracking, freezing, confiscation and recovery of assets, aiming for increasingly efficient processes by 2030.

In line with the above, the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030, as the umbrella strategic document in the fight against corruption, reflects commitments for a sustainable and efficient implementation of anti-corruption measures in accordance with the European standards.

The strategy guarantees full compliance with the commitments undertaken by Albanian institutions in the Roadmap for the Rule of Law and coherently addresses the findings of the European Commission on the necessary steps to improve Albania's performance in the fight against corruption.

2.4. The link with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goal no. 16, foresees the promotion of inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of equal access to justice for all and the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions in all levels. The Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030 aims to strengthen institutional structures, accountability and transparency of institutions. In the three goals of the policy, measures are programmed for intervention in these areas, to promote the consolidation of a functional system in the fight against corruption. The strategy is detailed in 16 specific objectives that are in direct correlation with objective no. 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2.5. The link of the ISAC 2024-2030 with other international agreements

The importance of preventing and fighting corruption is highlighted by the inclusion of specific issues in various international legal instruments, reflecting the global commitment to address this phenomenon Albania has signed and ratified a high number of agreements dedicated to the fight against corruption, and not only, namely as follows:

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) is a multilateral international treaty against corruption adopted by the UN General Assembly in October 2003 which entered into force in December 2005. It was ratified by the Parliament of Albania on March 13, 2006. By the Law no. 9492 and was decreed by the President by the decree no. 4820, dated 28.03.2006.

Through the Law no. 8635, dated 6.7.2000, Albania ratified the Civil Convention of the Council of Europe "On Corruption", and later through the Law no. 8778, dated 26.04.2001, our country ratified the Criminal Convention of the Council of Europe on Corruption and at the same time the Additional Protocol to the Criminal Convention on Corruption by the Law no. 9245, dated 24.6.2004. All these three international instruments aim to prevent and fight corruption, emphasizing the importance of the fight against corruption to safeguard the rule of law and democratic governance.

Subsequently, on June 12, 2006, the Republic of Albania signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union. The Stabilization and Association Agreement reflects the main directions and commitments undertaken in order to guarantee progress towards the European Union membership process. During the implementation of the SAA, the Republic of Albania must prove not only that it shares the same values with the European Union, but also that it has the necessary capacities to implement the obligations agreed upon in the Agreement. The Stabilization and Association Agreement gives Albania obligations, including in the fight against corruption. Specifically, Article 4 of this agreement, Articles 78 and 85 envisage the obligation of the Albanian state to proactively engage and cooperate with the countries of the region and the EU

in the fight against corruption, both in the public and private sectors, contributing thus improving and strengthening the institutional architecture and rule of law.

All the aforementioned commitments charge the Government of Albania with responsibility and also are a demonstration of all our efforts in more than a decade in the fight against corruption, as well as the implementation of a comprehensive approach in prevention, punishment and awareness raising in the fight against corruption.

2.6. Achievements and lessons learned from the implementation of the reform during the period 2015-2023

In 2015, the Albanian Government approved the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2015-2020, the implementation of which was postponed until 2023. Throughout these years, the ISAC has been the main document that determined the anti-corruption policy in Albania and guided anti-corruption actions at the national level.

The vision of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy against Corruption 2015-2023 aimed to ensure *"transparent Albanian institutions with high integrity that enjoy the trust of citizens and guarantee quality and incorruptible service"*, and enabling this by setting out outputs and commitments in the Action Plan, for 18 specific objectives. The strategy consisted of three major policy goals: prevention (A), punishment (B) and awareness raising (C).

A significant number of reforms planned in this strategy produced the following results:

- Increasing the transparency of public authorities at the central and local level: 337 public authorities have implemented transparency programs and ensured public information through the coordinators of the right to information, as well as 222 public authorities have published online the register of requests and complaints.
- Harmonization of domestic legislation for public procurement according to EU standards and increasing the structures and capacities of operators: The Public Procurement Agency has regularly entered the changed elements in the register of forecasts below the 20%⁹ rate as well as the procedures with negotiation without prior announcement of the notice of the contract and contract changes below the 10%¹⁰ rate.
- Assets declaration of public officials: fully functional system, by ensuring so full transparency in the declaration of assets process for public officials. The status relating to the full operability of the system by HIDAACI was assessed as “completed” in the round V of GRECO assessment, already in its first stage in December 2022.

⁹ <https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Albania.pdf>, pg. 155-177.

¹⁰ This commitment has been reaffirmed in the Intersectoral Justice Strategy 2024–2030, adopted in December 2024, in alignment with the strategic priorities and obligations set forth by the Albanian Government in the Rule of Law Roadmap.

- Establishing and implementing the first legal framework for whistleblowing and protection of whistleblowers¹¹, and establishing and making functional the respective structures, in the public and private sector.
- Digitization of 95% of public services through the national service platform E-Albania, eliminating the human factor in the delivery of services, and providing 1240 online e-services to all citizens, in all sectors.
- The development and implementation Integrity Plans as tools for the prevention of corruption prevention in ministries, subordinated institutions of the ministries, as well as in 24 units of local government.
- Improvement of financial inspections for abuses of public funds for 90% of alerts received and which meets the criteria of the law.
- Collection, processing and harmonization of consolidated statistics for criminal offenses related to corruption and organized crime for intermediate, semi-annual, and annual periods, by integrating data from all law enforcement bodies, such as the State Police, prosecutors and the courts.

In light of the punitive approach, through the implementation of the ISAC 2015-2023, some of the main achievements are as follows:

- Strengthening the capacities of law enforcement agencies, including SPAK and its investigative unit BKH, general jurisdiction prosecution offices and the police to investigate and prosecute corruption and economic crime.
- Strengthening inter-institutional and international cooperation through international cooperation networks in the framework of EUROJUST, INTERPOL, EUROPOL, CARIN Network, etc and ensuring direct access for the Albanian State Police, general jurisdiction prosecution offices and SPAK in 21 state databases.
- Improving the legal and institutional framework for the management of seized and confiscated assets.
- The General Directorate of Anticorruption in the Ministry of Justice, through its mechanism of the Anticorruption Coordinators Network, has processed a total of 1342 complaints, in only two years from the commencement of its activity, since its establishment in 2021, proposing 532 disciplinary measures for identified violations, 263 recommendations for changes of a legal/regulatory/institutional nature, as well as 48 criminal referrals.

Through the implementation of ISAC 2015-2023, some of the main achievements in terms of awareness are:

¹¹ Law no. 60, dated 2.6.2016, "On whistleblowing and protection of whistleblowers", as amended.

- A number of activities were organized to increase the level of awareness on the risks of corruption and on the exercise of public functions based on integrity principles, including various interest groups,
- Annual communication and Visibility Plans for the fight against corruption have been drafted and published. These plans aim increase of transparency and public awareness about the efforts needed to fight corruption, public commitment and regular update on the results achieved.
- Integrity Weeks are held on an annual basis in cooperation with international partners, to provide information on the importance of integrity and encouraging public debate about this phenomenon.
- Meetings and cooperation forums were held with business organizations (chambers and business associations) with the focus on denunciation of corruption cases.
- Publications have been prepared and distributed for the public on the mechanisms of denunciation of the fight against corruption, such as: Anticorruption Guide and Anticorruption Dictionary; informative clips were also recorded related to the of the Network of Anticorruption Coordinators, anti-corruption aiming at educating and raising awareness of the public on ways how corruption can be reported and involvement in the fight against this phenomenon.
- Electronic information instruments, the anti-corruption e-bulletin, have been drafted and distributed monthly, to inform the public on the progress, activities and initiatives undertaken in the fight against corruption.
- Anti-corruption programs were developed by the Civil Society Support Agency, **"Fight against Corruption and Public Legal Education"**, including projects proposed by civil society organizations in the field of procurement, health, law enforcement and the right to information.

Also, during the years of the implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy, 2015-2023, the monitoring mechanism has been established and developed, a dedicated technical directorate in the Directorate General of Anti-corruption, that collects, analyses and evaluates data on the implementation of the strategy and action plans. This mechanism aims at implementing effectively measures envisaged in the Strategy in order to have the full overview of efforts and overall performance of responsible institutions in meeting the objectives set out in this Strategy.

The establishment of the Coordinating Committee for the implementation of the Inter-sectoral Anti-corruption Strategy, in 2018¹², in the capacity of the body that reviews and approves

¹² Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 241, dated 20.4.2028, "On the approval of the 2018-2020 action plan, on implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2015-2020, and the passport of indicators, the creation, operation and duties of the Committee Coordinator for the implementation of the Inter-sectoral Strategy against Corruption, 2015-2020, and the Interinstitutional Anticorruption Task Force"; Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 516, dated 1.7.2020, "On some changes and additions to decision no. 247, dated 20.3.2015, of the Council of Ministers, "On the approval of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2015-2020, and the approval of the action plan 2020-2023, on implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2015-2023 and the passport of indicators".

monitoring reports and addresses interventions for timely actions. Nine annual monitoring progress reports and interim reports have been produced for the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, based on a specific methodology according to the performance of the objectives. All monitoring reports are published and can be easily accessed by citizens.

The implementation of the Inter-sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2023 also strengthened the cooperation between public authorities, by coordinating the communication bridges between the central and constitutional institutions, which are responsible for the implementation of anti-corruption policies.

The implementation and monitoring of the Inter-sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2023 also consolidated the cooperation with civil society organizations active in the anti-corruption policy, making them part of the meetings of the Coordinating Committee. This approach assisted for a meaningful exchange of ideas and strengthening joint actions in the fight against corruption.

The level of implementation of the measures in the Action Plan marked an implementation rate of 70% of the Strategy.

However, despite the achievements and developments in the fight against corruption, the implementation of the ISAC 2015-2023 also highlighted the need to address a number of challenges that were identified in terms of increasing the effectiveness of the fight against corruption, at this stage of the country's development.

The implementation of the Inter-sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2023 identified the need to ensure further harmonization of the legal framework with the EU *acquis* on anti-corruption, competent institutional capacities and financial resources to prevent, investigate and adjudicate corruption effectively, in accordance with the domestic context of the country.

The harmonization of the legal and institutional framework ought to extend also to those mechanisms of the fight against corruption such as: the improvement of whistleblowing structures and the protection of whistleblowers, lobbying as an instrument against corruption or legal measures against the bribery of foreign public officials. At the same time, it is necessary to undertake joint initiatives with the private sector in order to establish integrity systems as well as coordinate measures in cases of incidence of corruption.

Continuous, periodic trainings for anti-corruption staff are important, contributing to the increase of capacities and positively affecting the overall institutional performance.

The strategy also highlighted the need for effective coordination with all stakeholders involved from the early stages, in order to increase effectiveness and maintain progress in the implementation of the foreseen measures.

2.7. Continuation of the strategy with a clearer focus

In view of the continuation of the strategic intervention, priority action areas were identified based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of performance indicators, scope, forms and other issues related to corruption in Albania. This approach helped in identifying areas at high risk and defining specific measures to adequately address the corruption phenomenon. This analysis was based on various sources of information, including the monitoring reports for the implementation of the Strategy since 2015, the annual reports of the European Commission for Albania, the evaluations carried out by GRECO, the reports on the implementation of the integrity plans developed in cooperation with the authorities public, reports of the Directorate General of Anticorruption based on the administrative investigations carried out, analyses of the perception of corruption, reports of civil society, etc.

In addition to the shortcomings in the implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2015-2023, the non-inclusion of some levels of government and public authorities in the strategy document also affected the addressing of these priorities. The Inter-sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2023 was only focused on the public institutions at the central level and did not foresee a full territorial scope to include local self-government units in the measures against corruption. To ensure effective actions against corruption, synergy of all actions across all levels of the Government is required. The constitution and legislation for local self-government have transferred to the local government considerable normative, administrative and financial powers that may expose these bodies to corruption. Municipalities have been engaged in the development of integrity plans, but in most cases, they lack the necessary capacities and resources for their design or implementation. Furthermore, the second level of government, the districts, have not been involved in this process.

The Inter-sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2023 did not foresee a full involvement of regulatory bodies, which play a role in the implementation of public policies and guarantee the implementation of the policy framework. These bodies play a crucial role in ensuring a sustainable and fair climate in the relevant domains. Important regulatory institutions are, *inter alia*, Energy Regulatory Authority, the Water Regulatory Authority, the Electronic Communications Authority and Post Office, Railway Regulatory Authority, Financial Supervision Authority and Competition Authority. The inclusion of these authorities in the anti-corruption strategy was considered necessary to ensure good governance and sustainable economic and social development. These institutions are the main gatekeepers against corruption in the sectors that they oversee and have a direct impact in increasing transparency and integrity in society. By exercising their regulatory functions, they contribute directly to increasing accountability, integrity and strengthening good governance.

Corruption in the private sector has not been part of the focus of the Strategy 2015-2023. In a free market economy, private business is the engine of development, so ensuring the right business climate is essential.

At this state of the implementation of anti-corruption reforms, the focus of the Strategy will be a clear sectorial implementation to address the risk of corruption in key sectors as such, properties,

tax and costs, healthcare, public contracts and education. Despite the positive impact stemming from the digitization of many services and reducing corruption in these areas, there is still work to be done to address corruption in the most critical sectors and transform these sectors as a pushing force towards a more sustainable and healthy economy in Albania.

The strategy also provides a direct intervention approach to anti-corruption promotion, education and awareness to invest sustainably in providing education from an early age about standards of good governance, through the lens of increasing the strengthening of education on integrity and legality with the aim of empowering the younger generations who have as a reference point only the standards of integrity and justice.

To guarantee the sustainability and continuity of policies for the progressive reduction of corruption, strengthening the integrity of institutions and promoting good governance, the Government of Albania, along with the other responsible institutions, presents this new Strategy against Corruption, for the period 2024 - 2030.

3. Vision statement

Vision

Considering the developments so far, the vision of the Inter-sectoral Strategy against Corruption, 2024-2030 is: *“Public institutions that exercise their functions in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, transparency and public accountability, providing efficient services to citizens and businesses”*.

This vision is intended to be implemented through three policy goals:

The first goal: Prevention of corruption - Strengthening legal and institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption and strengthen integrity in public administration, with a focus on sectors at a high risk of corruption.

The second goal: Punishment of corruption - Increasing the performance of all structures responsible for pursuing, investigating, and punishing corruption cases.

The third goal: Awareness and education on the fight against corruption - Increase awareness and education of citizens to proactively engage in the fight against corruption.

PART II

POLICY GOALS AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF ISAC

2024-2030

The Inter-sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2024-2030, is structured in three main pillars that reflect the goals of the policies, namely: (I) prevention of corruption, (II) punishment of corruption, and (III) awareness of the fight against corruption.

Areas of intervention under each policy goal include:

(I) Implementation of effective and standardized instruments against corruption, in line with legal and institutional provisions as well as improvement of technical and professional capacities remains a crucial priority. The implementation of integrity instruments in the public administration, including the local government, aims at strengthening control mechanisms regarding the use of public funds. Improvement and standardization of the mechanisms in the fight against corruption, including whistleblowing and protection of whistle-blowers, lobbying, transparency and control of the financing of political parties, is a key component in achieving the vision of the Strategy 2024-2030. Also, the importance of the sustainable development in vulnerable sectors such as property, education, health, taxes, customs, public procurement, is underlined to reduce effectively the risk of corruption in these areas.

(II) Improvement of coordination and increased quality in the field of administrative and criminal investigation of corruption. This intervention requires increased judicial cooperation and establishment and development of operational cooperation structures between law enforcement bodies. Ensuring an effective implementation of the anti-corruption legislation, for the investigation and effective criminal prosecution of the crime of corruption, as well as creating opportunities for the law-enforcement bodies to have the appropriate investigative and procedural means and resources for investigation and comprehensive and effective procedures in the fight against corruption.

(III) Increasing the awareness and level of education of the public against corruption. This approach will be considered as a key priority; by emphasizing the essential role that anti-corruption education plays in the prevention of corrupt actions. Investment in this respect aims to inform and encourage citizens to recognize and report corruption cases in the state administration. This intervention is considered crucial in strengthening citizens' responsibility in fighting corruption at all levels.

All the measures and actions for implementation as well as the time limits are provided in the Action Plan in Annex no. 1.

The first policy goal: Prevention of corruption – It constitutes the first pillar of the ISNK 2024-2030 and includes 9 Specific Objectives. This Goal will focus on reforming the legal and institutional framework in the fight against corruption, strengthening the transparency of public institutions in all sectors and levels of government. Also, it will be aimed to strengthen the system of early detection (signalling) and address corruption through systematic assessments of the risk of corruption in the sectors identified as sensitive to corrupt actions.

The interventions will also focus on increasing the transparency of the financing of political parties, the good management of funds and financial resources and public assets. At the same time the application of corruption mechanisms in the decision-making links of the local government, as well as the promotion and building of partnerships to guarantee a private sector that serves as a promoter of integrity and cooperates efficiently with the public sector in the fight against corruption, will be aimed.

For the implementation of this part of the strategy, the Albanian Government, through the authorities at the central and local level, in cooperation with the independent constitutional bodies and bodies of judicial power, will undertake dedicated interventions and provide adequate resources, in order to effectively implement and measure progress for each of the objectives. This data will be analysed on a semi-annual and annual basis.

This political goal (I) aims to achieve the following objectives:

Specific Objective 1.1: Strengthening the legal framework and institutional capacities in the prevention of corruption.

Specific Objective 1.2: Strengthening the transparency, accountability and integrity of public institutions at all levels of governance.

Specific Objective 1.3: Development of a sustainable approach for the prevention of corruption in risk sectors (high prevalence of corruption).

Specific Objective 1.4: Strengthening of corruption prevention mechanisms in local self-government units.

Specific Objective 1.5: Protection of public finances and assets from misuse during the exercise of public function.

Specific Objective 1.6: Strengthen the whistleblower framework for early detection of corruption.

Specific Objective 1.7: Strengthening financial transparency and integrity of political parties.

Specific Objective 1.8: Setting up the legislative and institutional framework on lobbying as a corruption prevention instrument.

Specific Objective 1.9: Promotion of integrity in the private sector.

The link between policy goal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The first goal of the Policy aims to strengthen legal and institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption and strengthen integrity in public administration. This policy goal has specially highlighted the focus of the intervention in some sectors at high risk of corruption and has promoted a group of active mechanisms in the fight against corruption. Prevention policy focuses

on promoting well-organized and strong public institutions, as well as creating an environment suitable for the rule of law and the fight against corruption.

This political goal is related to objective no. 16 of the SDG: *"Peace, security and strong and effective institutions"*.

Specific Objective 1.1: Strengthening the legal framework and institutional capacities in the prevention of corruption

Analysis of the situation and challenges

Our domestic legal framework against corruption, defines the rights, obligations, powers and procedures, as well as the cooperation and coordination between policymaking, law-making and operational institutions in the effective prevention and fight against corruption. Despite that there is a regulatory framework already in place, but there is a need for further improvements through the adoption of new laws and the improvement of existing legislation to further harmonize with international standards.

The need to improve the legislation will be identified based on the recommendations of international organizations and through a detailed review of the existing legislation, identifying the needs for legal changes, with the priority aim of aligning the legislation with the *acquis* and EU standards. In this process, the Roadmap for the Rule of Law has an essential role, as it foresees the adoption of the law "On the Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Exercise of Public Functions" by 2025, the amendment of the law "On Whistleblowing and Protection of Whistleblowers" by in 2025 in order to be aligned with the EU *acquis*, the adoption of the law "On Lobbying" until 2027, the adoption of the law "On Financing Political Parties" until 2027, as well as the ratification of the Convention "On Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions" until 2027.

Also, the legal initiatives within this strategy are aligned with the recommendations of GRECO, namely Recommendation No. 3 of the 5th Round of the GRECO Evaluation, according to which the aim should be to harmonize and increase the natural coherence of the legal and institutional framework in the fight against corruption and the integrity of public officials. Also, through the approval of the manual "Corruption Proofing of Legislation Manual for the services of the Assembly" review and control of the lawmaking process will be intensified to reduce risk of corruption that might come as a result of a new law and amendment of existing ones, which will be extended to the activity of technical structures of the Assembly.

The prevention and fight against corruption also requires the engagement of efficiently organized institutions with clear tasks and competences, resources, professional knowledge and skills, integrity and a high degree of cooperation and coordination between them. Albania has a consolidated system of anti-corruption institutions covering all important aspects of corruption prevention and punishment, with different levels of capacity and expertise. However, the organization and engagement of these structures to increase efficiency in the fight against corruption, needs improvement.

The completion of the government cabinet with the position of Minister of State for Public Administration and Anticorruption from January 2024, who is also the National Coordinator against Corruption, is a testimony of the increased attention towards the priorities declared, in the fight against corruption to align the work of the executive pillar with the anti-corruption policies of the Government and to implement all commitments undertaken in line with the highest integrity, transparency and accountability standards. In order to guarantee an efficient implementation of the anti-corruption legislation, the holistic system of bodies that act in the fight against corruption needs strengthening and better cooperation, information exchange and further coordination.

The need to improve the institutional capacities of the bodies engaged with powers in the fight against corruption will be identified based on the assessment of the current human, professional and financial capacities of all institutions responsible for the fight against corruption, compared to the planned and necessary capacities. The improvement, coordination and cooperation of anti-corruption institutions will be identified by considering the challenges in these processes, together with the measures that must be taken to address the problems. This cooperation will periodically review in the meeting that will be held jointly between the authorities involved in the fight against corruption.

Expected outcomes from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.1 aims to address all the findings and recommendations identified in the performance evaluations of Albanian institutions by national and international state and non-state mechanisms. These findings will be reflected through the approval and revision of legal acts and institutional measures that must be undertaken by the Albanian authorities.

Expected outcomes of this objective are as following:

Outcome 1: Strengthening the legal framework for the prevention of corruption.

Outcome 2: Continuous strengthen of the institutional framework in the prevention of corruption.

Outcome 3: State structures prepared, with capacities and anti-corruption mechanisms in action.

Outcome 4: Ensuring standard administrative procedures in the preparation and adoption of anti-corruption legislation.

Outcome 5: Anti-corruption resistant and functional public administration (fully functional technical capacities).

Leading institutions: National Coordinator against Corruption, National Commissioner for Elections, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Council of Ministers, line ministries, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, ASPA, institutions responsible for the implementation of ISAC, the Agency for the Support to Local Government, Commissioner of the Right to Information and Personal Data.

Participating institutions: Implementing institutions of the ISAC 2024-2030, Commissioner for the Protection of Personal Data, line ministries, Assembly, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, ASPA

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures (concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on the implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached).

	Specific Objective 1.1: Strengthening the legal framework and institutional capacities in the prevention of corruption.
1.1.1	<i>Measure: Strengthening the legal framework for the prevention of corruption</i>
1.1.2	<i>Measure: Improvement of administrative procedures in the preparation and approval of legislation for the prevention of corruption</i>
1.1.3	<i>Measure: Strengthening the institutional framework and technical professional capacities for the prevention of corruption</i>
1.1.4	<i>Measure: Strengthening cooperation and coordination between preventive institutions against corruption</i>

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU *acquis* under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.1.1 The percentage of legal and bylaws (internal acts and international agreements) approved from those planned to be approved.	Strengthening legal and institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption and strengthen integrity in public administration.	1.1 Strengthening the legal framework and institutional capacities in the prevention of corruption.	ASSEMBLY NCAC
Outcome	1.1.2 The percentage of central and local public institutions that have set up and put into operation anti-corruption structures.	Strengthening legal and institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption and strengthen integrity in public administration.	1.1 Strengthening the legal framework and institutional capacities in the prevention of corruption.	NCAC

Specific Objective 1.2: Strengthening the transparency, accountability and integrity of public institutions at all levels of Government

Analysis of the situation and challenges

Transparency, accountability, integrity and the fight against corruption are clear commitments undertaken by Albania in the framework of reforms and the path of integration into the EU. In this respect, the country has regularly consolidated the relevant interventions in accordance with

international standards, by addressing the needs for interventions regularly to further strengthen the fight against corruption by increasing the standards of the institutional framework to ensure a better prevention and coordination of actions. In this context, this strategic framework will help to promote further an accountable and transparent public administration. The transparency of public institutions, at all levels of Government, constitutes the basis for monitoring their work. Accountability of public authorities prevents the abuse of power, while carrying out the activity with integrity and according to the prescribed performance rules prevents unethical behaviour. For this reason, these elements have an essential role in preventing corruption in the state's activity. The transparency of public institutions in Albania has significantly improved with the digitization of 95% of public services, until the end of 2023, while there is still space and need for the continuation and improvement of free access to information and increasing the number of institutions that follow the principles of Open Government. *E-albania*, as the government portal for all public services once offered in the offices and physical counters of the institutions are offered electronically, is definitely a success story in this regard. It acts as a single point for the provision of public services of government institutions to citizens and businesses 24/7.

The need for improving and standardizing services in terms of transparency is expected to be strengthened by maintaining the services provided so far and assessing for added work processes, as well.

The annual reporting of the performance of public institutions, has been considered an added value of transparency and the right to information, to facilitate public information. However, proactive transparency will need to be advanced by promoting the publication of Transparency Index Registers, improving the Right to Information Manual.

Accountability and reliable control of the implementation of anti-corruption instruments has been improved through the online submission of declarations of assets and interests, while it is still necessary to improve the transparency and accessibility of declarations of private interests, as well as to continuously strengthen their auditing. Asset declarations, gift registers, their establishment and administration within the framework of official public activity, in the exercise of state duty, are the best guarantee against corruption. Public institutions at all levels of Government must guarantee the implementation of the highest standards of integrity and their control as a form of dealing with corruption during the exercise of their duties. This will contribute to building a public administration more accountable and transparent that promotes the trust of citizens in public institutions.

Carrying out risk assessments and preparing Integrity Plans in all line ministries and other institutions, including those of local government has improved further the implementation at all levels of Government. It is evaluated that the standardization of the mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Integrity Plans based on the establishment of a passport of indicators will increase the effectiveness of their use and serve as a good data base for future policy initiatives not only by the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator but also in cooperation with civil society partners. Codes of Ethics are currently in place and the process for their improvement continues with the support of international projects.

Officials must report their interests in the respective forms, and cases of conflict of interest shall be subject to administrative inquiry. However, it is necessary to continue and improve these processes to guarantee an efficient application of the law to increase transparency.

Moreover, the procedures for monitoring and implementing the Code of Ethics at all levels of government, taking into account the special rules for political officials will be improved and a dedicated manual will be prepared. This harmonized framework and in accordance with the legal and institutional framework in the fight against corruption and the integrity of public officials and political functionaries according to the requirements of GRECO (Round V for Albania) increases and qualifies the standardization of actions, by contributing for an improved institutional and governmental performance.

Expected outcomes from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.2 aims to address all those recommendations and interventions expected and that remain in the process from the Inter-sectoral Strategy against Corruption 2015-2023, to enable the efficient implementation of the main preventive mechanisms that affect the daily activity of the administration bodies at all levels of the Government.

Expected outcomes for this objective are as following:

Outcome 1: Increased transparency and monitoring in administrative processes and services provided to the public.

Outcome 2: Proactive participation of stakeholders in public institutions, in order to develop and implement public policies.

Outcome 3: Improving accountability and public performance of state officials and civil servants.

Outcome 4: Increasing professional capacities, in order to increase efficiency during the exercise of the task.

Outcome 5: Increasing citizen trust in public institutions.

Leading institutions: Line ministries, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate, National Agency for Information Society, ASPA, Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, High Inspectorate of Declaration and Control of Assets and Conflict of Interest, Department of Public Administration, Council of Ministers/State Minister for Relations with the Parliament, National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, , Commissioner for Civil Service Supervision, Assembly, Police Supervision Agency, General Tax Directorate, Custom Directorate, the Albanian School of Magistrates

Participating institutions: National Agency for Information Society, Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, ASPA, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption institutions implementing ISAC, Security Academy, High Inspectorate of Declaration and Control of Assets and Conflict of Interest, Department of Public Administration, Ministry of Justice.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1.

	Specific objective 1.2: Strengthening the transparency, accountability and integrity of public institutions at all levels of governance.
1.2.1	<i>Measure: Strengthening the transparency of public institutions at all levels of Government</i>
1.2.2	<i>Measure: Strengthening the accountability of public institutions at all levels of Government</i>
1.2.3	<i>Measure: Strengthening the integrity of public institutions at all levels of Government</i>
1.2.4	<i>Measure: Improving cooperation between the Police Supervision Agency and the Military Police, the Tax Directorate and other police structures with a focus on the number of sanctions (measures) given to officials of law enforcement agencies for abuse of office and corruption</i>
1.2.5	<i>Measure: Drawing up a framework harmonized and in coherence with the legal and institutional framework in the fight against corruption and the integrity of public officials and political functionaries (reflecting recommendation iii, of Round V of GRECO for Albania)</i>
1.2.6	<i>Measure: Modules on integrity and prevention of corruption included in the training program of the Albanian School of Magistrates</i>

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.2.1 The percentage of central and local public institutions that produce and publish an annual report of the institution's activity (increasing trend).	Public institutions enable the active participation of all actors in the development and implementation of public policies, improving the accountability of state officials.	1.2 Strengthening the transparency, accountability and integrity of public institutions at all levels of Government.	Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data

Outcome	1.2.2 The percentage of declarations of assets and private interests, submitted and audited, out of the total number to be submitted.	Public institutions enable the active participation of all actors in the development and implementation of public policies, improving the accountability of state officials.	1.2 Strengthening the transparency, accountability and integrity of public institutions at all levels of Government.	HIDAACI
Outcome	1.2.3 The percentage of public institutions (central, local) and judicial power bodies that have drawn up integrity plans (codes of ethics) (increasing trend).	Public institutions enable the active participation of all actors in the development and implementation of public policies, improving the accountability of state officials.	1.2 Strengthening the transparency, accountability and integrity of public institutions at all levels of Government.	NCAC

Specific Objective 1.3: Development of a sustainable approach for the prevention of corruption in risk sectors (high prevalence of corruption)

Analysis of the situation and challenges

Regardless that Albania has made significant steps in assessing the risk of corruption it is still very prevalent in some sectors where the contact with the public and groups of interests is more frequent. This is relevant for the sector on property rights, health and social care, education, public contracts, tax and customs which have a significant influence in the governance process, economy and society, especially in the level of trust of the public in institutions.

Addressing the risks of corruption in the property sector is fundamental for the consolidation of a transparent and accountable system for the efficient provision of cadastral services, while the prevention of corruption in the health and social care system is consistent with fundamental rights and ensuring access to equal for quality health care. On the other hand, better control of procedures in the services provided by the tax administration will reduce fiscal evasion, as well as increase the efficiency of monitoring the actions or inactions of officials in the tax sector and their involvement in cases of abuse of office. Corruption risk assessment in the public procurement sector will also reduce problems and complaints from economic operators and investors, while the prevention of corruption in customs procedures, controls and assessments by the customs administration will increase efficiency of the customs sector.

In light of the above, the prevention of corruption in these sectors will be improved by first conducting an in-depth and detailed assessment of the risk of corruption for each sector to identify the processes and procedures most exposed to corruption, as well as the forms of its manifestation. For this purpose, a methodology will be developed for conducting the risk assessment of corruption in the public sector, then adapted for risk assessments in each sector, especially those prone to corruption.

The implementation of the methodologies will be carried out in close cooperation between the GDoA and the relevant state institutions that are responsible for these sectors.

After conducting risk assessments in all sectors with a high risk of corruption, specific measures will be drawn up for the prevention of corruption in services and procedures that will address the abusive spaces in the identified shortcomings of the services provided with the aim of addressing them in a systemic manner. All preventive mechanisms will be broken down in the Action Plans for the prevention of corruption in the relevant sectors with a high risk of corruption. In this way, the implementation of measures to prevent corruption in property management, health and social care, education, public procurement, public-private partnership, taxes and customs, will include implementation, continuous monitoring, reporting, capacity building, engagement of interested parties and public awareness in the same way as other measures and activities provided for in the Strategy, by ensuring a holistic and continuous approach in preventing corruption in these important sectors

It is expected that these measures will develop a sustainable approach for the prevention of corruption in sectors with high risk of corruption and will significantly contribute to the anti-corruption reforms in the proper functioning of the public administration. Another priority for the National Coordinator against Corruption will be to guarantee that the prevention of corruption is properly integrated through the design of policies and programs (action plans) and through the regular review thereof.

This can be enabled through a complete review at the end of the three-year cycle of the implementation of measures, by identifying risks of corruption in other potential sectors, such as state entities, infrastructure and environment. This process will ensure that the anti-corruption measures are appropriate and effective in the prevention of corruption in different sectors and that they respond to the dynamics of developments in these sectors.

Expected outcomes from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.3 aims to address all those recommendations and requests evidenced in the EC progress report for the country, the commitments made in the anti-corruption component of the Roadmap for the Rule of Law, but also other evaluation reports, to enable intervention and recovery of the situation in order to improve public services and return the trust of citizens in the inter-institutional fight against corruption.

Expected outcomes of this objective are as follows:

Outcome 1: Creation of standard mechanisms for periodic and regular assessment of corruption in sectors with high risk and prevalence of corruption.

Outcome 2: Regular monitoring of the most vulnerable and affected sectors to/from corruption to identify and implement adequate intervention in order to detect, prevent or punish corruption.

Outcome 3: Continued research and analysis to assess the results of interventions in sectors/institutions most at risk or vulnerable to corruption.

Outcome 4: Provision of efficient and transparent cadastral services.

Outcome 5: Increase of fair competition during public procurement processes.

Outcome 6: Provision of procedurally well-regulated and controlled tax and customs services to ensure transparency and efficiency.

Outcome 7: Quality and efficient education and health system for citizens.

Leading institutions: General Directorate of Anticorruption, State Cadaster Agency, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Concession Treatment Agency, General Directorate of Taxes, General Directorate of Customs, institutions subordinate to Ministry of Education and Sports.

Participating institutions: Property Treatment Agency, General Directorate of Anticorruption, Albanian School of Public Administration, line ministries, contracting authorities, Ministry of Finance, Public Procurement Agency

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific objective 1.3: Development of a sustainable approach for the prevention of corruption in risk sectors (high prevalence of corruption)
1.3.1	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in the public sector
1.3.2	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in the management of the property sector
1.3.3	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in the health and social care system
1.3.4	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in the field of pre-university education
1.3.5	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in the field of public procurement
1.3.6	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in the field of public-private partnership
1.3.7	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption for the tax administration
1.3.8	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in the customs system
1.3.9	<i>Measure:</i> Prevention of corruption in other public sectors, sensitive to the economy and the public

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.3.1 The ratio of the number of corruption risk assessments carried out with the number of sectors/institutions with a high risk of corruption (increasing trend).	Regular monitoring of the most vulnerable/affected sectors to/by corruption to identify and implement adequate intervention in order to detect, prevent or punish corruption.	1.3 Development of a sustainable approach for the prevention of corruption in risk sectors (high prevalence of corruption).	NCAC
Outcome	1.3.2 The ratio of the number of action plans carried out for the prevention of corruption, by the number of sectors/institutions with a high risk of corruption (increasing trend).	Regular monitoring of the most vulnerable/affected sectors to/by corruption to identify and implement adequate intervention in order to detect, prevent or punish corruption.	1.3 Development of a sustainable approach for the prevention of corruption in risk sectors (high prevalence of corruption).	NCAC

Specific Objective 1.4: Strengthening of corruption prevention mechanisms in Local Self-Government Units

Analysis of the situation and challenges

The decentralization of the Local Government guarantees the exercise of decision-making and administrative powers at the local level, including a wide range of financial instruments in use by the local government. However, by increasing the powers increases likelihood of corruption, Albania has made gradual improvements in increasing the capacities of local government authorities to combat corrupt practices, even though there is still a long way to go for their consolidation. In this context, assessments of the regulatory framework and consultations with the institutions of local government have been carried out to promote ethical behaviour. Establishing principles of ethical behaviour and a culture of integrity in the municipal administration.

The process of decentralization strengthens accountability by bringing the Government closer to the citizens. However, increased contacts between local officials and citizens, may increase the risk of unethical behaviours and integrity, which leads to behaviours that undermine transparency and accountability. Therefore, it is necessary to take proactive management measures to prevent and manage these risks, by creating a sustainable approach towards integrity and accountability in the local government. In this context, the drafting of Integrity Plans and relevant action plans by local government units and monitoring their implementation provide the conceptual framework for policies and measures to prevent violations of the integrity of public officials. These plans serve as a tool to address and manage integrity related risks, by improving transparency and accountability at the local level and ensuring that public officials meet the highest ethical standards in exercising their tasks.

Integrity instruments have already begun to be drafted and approved at the local level, as a mechanism that helps to better understand and address risks of corruption within the institution. There are 24 municipalities out of 61 that have approved Integrity Plans until the end of 2023 and that have designated integrity coordinators as mechanisms to ensure their implementation.

In order to improve the prevention of corruption at all levels of Government, the country must continue its efforts to strengthen the capacities of Local Self-Government authorities in the fight against corruption, together with the connecting instruments between the central and local Governments in this field. This will be achieved through a detailed assessment of the current situation in the prevention of corruption at the local level, especially in relation to the conducted assessment of the risk of corruption and the prepared and approved integrity plans.

Performing risk assessments in local government units, where it has yet to be carried out, will be encouraged and supported by applying methodology that will be adapted to the specifications for performing such an assessment at the local level. This will be followed by the preparation of an Integrity Plan template for local government units that will take into account all findings from risk assessments and best practices at the country level, but also regional and international experiences in this field.

To perform and support these processes, it is necessary to increase the professional capacities of the technical staff of municipalities and districts, with the know how in the prevention of corruption and the legal and regulatory framework for integrity. In this regard, the role of anti-corruption focal points becomes crucial for inter-institutional coordination. The anti-corruption contact points in the municipalities and regions will be considered the technical staff who will be responsible for the implementation of the Inter-Sectoral anti-corruption strategy and reporting on its implementation, as is the case with the integrity coordinators who are responsible for the follow-up and implementation of the instruments of integrity and right to information coordinators. Human resource structures near them should be informed about the establishment and administration of anti-corruption instruments, including gift registers, declaration of conflict of interest, or reporting.

In order to achieve this goal, the strengthening of cooperation between the Local Self-Government Support Agency, the General Directorate of Anti-corruption and other anti-corruption institutions in municipalities and regions through the appointment of anti-corruption contact points is of particular importance. Increased communication and visibility, in order to increase the transparency of the activity of municipalities and districts, is also considered an added value and ensures the good implementation of anti-corruption mechanisms, making the collegial bodies of the Municipal Councils direct partners as the authorities where actions and interventions take place for integrity policies, namely the approval and monitoring of their implementation.

Expected outcomes of the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.4 aims at the adoption and integration into the institutional activity of anti-corruption policies in the local government units. These units and the representative structures of

the central government must have in place mechanisms and implement anti-corruption instruments, like those applied in the central administration bodies.

Expected outcomes of this objective are as following:

Outcome 1: General strengthening of capacities to coordinate the implementation of the anti-corruption policy at the local level.

Outcome 2: Strengthening of local government mechanisms in the implementation, monitoring and periodic evaluation of the anti-corruption strategy and the anti-corruption framework.

Outcome 3: Creation of the Network of Anticorruption Contact Points in government institutions with local powers.

Outcome 4: Increasing the role of Municipal Councils in strengthening integrity and implementing anti-corruption policies at the local level.

Leading institutions: General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Local Self-Government Support Agency.

Participating institutions: General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, districts, ASPA, Local Self-Government Support Agency Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, municipalities, districts

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1.

	Specific objective 1.4: Strengthening of corruption prevention mechanisms in Local Self-Government Units
1.4.1	<i>Measure:</i> Identification of ways to improve corruption prevention in all local government Units
1.4.2	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening mechanisms for effective prevention of corruption in all Local Self-Government Units
1.4.3	<i>Measure:</i> Implementation of preventive mechanisms adapted to the specifics of Local Self-Government

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
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Outcome	1.4.1 The ratio of the number of municipalities and regions that have carried out corruption risk assessments to the number of those that have not yet (increasing trend).	General strengthening of capacities to coordinate the implementation of the anti-corruption policy at the local level.	1.4 Strengthening of corruption prevention mechanisms in local government.	Local Self-Government Support Agency Municipalities districts
Outcome	1.4.2 The ratio of the number of municipalities and regions that have prepared Integrity Plans to the number of those that have not yet (increasing trend).	General strengthening of capacities to coordinate the implementation of the anti-corruption policy at the local level.	1.4 Strengthening of corruption prevention mechanisms in local government.	Local Self-Government Support Agency Municipalities districts

Specific Objective 1.5: Protection of public finances and assets from misuse during the exercise of public function

Analysis of the situation and challenges

Trust in the institutions and bodies that exercise control and evaluation tasks plays a crucial role in increasing credibility of reforms undertaken by Albania to fight corruption. This trust helps in legitimizing these reforms by ensuring that citizens consider the efforts of the Government of reliable and effective. through the legal and regulatory framework depends a lot on the effectiveness and trust of the institutions, the bodies that have control and evaluation powers.

Over the years, several steps have been taken to strengthen the institutional framework and improve financial and economic supervision mechanisms, inter alia, the improvement of internal and external audits to ensure more transparency and accountability in the use of public funds. The Ministry of Finance has consolidated a comprehensive approach for the prevention of corruption and the control of mismanagement of public assets. Through the creation of inspection mechanisms in public institutions, improvements in planning in financial management and in the control of procurement processes, which, applied in total theirs, have gradually increased. These measures helped the overall efficiency of public investments and installed the policy of zero tolerance to corruption.

The Government of Albania has approved the Sectoral Strategy of Public Finance Management 2023-2030 and the Action Plan 2023-2026¹³, which envisages the creation of a public finance management system based on transparency, accountability, fiscal discipline, efficiency and equality in the use of public resources for providing improved public services and economic development according to EU standards. The systems for Internal Public Financial Control have been improved by ensuring sound financial management mechanisms. The concept of managerial accountability and delegation of authorities has been strengthened and the shortcomings of Financial Management and Control in public institutions have been addressed.

¹³ Approved by the Decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 390, dated 12.6.2024, "On the approval of the sectoral strategy of public finance management, 2023-2030".

Internal audits are implemented in all public institutions in accordance with the legal standards in force. Cases of fraud and irregularities in the public administration are dealt with effectively by the Public Financial Inspection and the Anti-Fraud Coordination Service Network that implements the anti-fraud strategy. Adequate financial management systems have been established to absorb the financial support of IPA-III and future EU IPAs as efficiently as possible.

On the other hand, over the years the independent function of the High State Audit has been regularly and steadily implemented in accordance with ONISA's principles and international auditing standards. This enabled auditing practices transparent, unbiased and in line with the best international standards, by contributing to the improvement of the public resources management and increased accountability in the public administration. The annual reporting of the Supreme State Audit to the Assembly and the cooperation with the parliamentary structures has been strengthened to enable the Parliamentary Committee for Economy and Finance to properly implement its oversight and controlling role.

The protection of public finances and assets from misuse during the exercise of the public function was a priority in the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption, 2015-2023. Based on which, budgetary institutions have continued to develop and implement Plans for the Improvement of Secure Quality (PISQ) and provide Continuing Vocational Training (CPD) and other training for internal auditors through national and international training programs (CEF). Internal auditors in the country, of which 90% are certified, play a key role in safeguarding public finances and assets. This process is critical in ensuring quality and effectiveness of control mechanisms, both internally and externally. In this context, the importance of protecting public finances and assets is a key component of the fight against corruption, by strengthening control structures and increased efficiency in the public sector. Internal auditing is one of the most effective forms of preventing financial abuse, and by increasing transparency and efficiency in the management of public resources.

The fight against corruption in the management of public finances must be regarded as a comprehensive commitment of public authorities that play a role in monitoring and governing various economic and social sectors. In general, the bodies with powers of policy implementation such as regulatory entities mentioning: Energy Regulatory Authority, Water Regulatory Authority, Electronic and Postal Communications Regulatory Authority, Railway Regulatory Authority, Financial Supervision Authority, Competition Authority. These bodies have been created and ensure that activities in certain markets are developed in a transparent and legal manner to protect the interests of consumers who are citizens of the country and by promoting free competition, as a prerequisite for sustainable economic development. For this purpose, it is intended that the technical and professional capacity of the regulatory entities should be maintained at the same standards, relying on the same commitment to the prevention of corruption, but also the full implementation of legal rules, and with the establishment of teams of level expertise high.

One of the innovations of this Strategy is the inclusion of the anti-corruption approach in the work of the inspectorates. In order to efficiently realize this commitment, the identification of opportunities for the inclusion of the anti-corruption framework in their work will be carried out. Based on the findings, a manual will be prepared for the inclusion of the anti-corruption approach in the work of the inspectorates, including guidelines on the forms of communication, coordination

and reporting. Moreover, dedicated training will be provided to the staff to build capacities in the fight against corruption and promotion of an integrated approach in the inspection activities.

Expected outcome of the implementation of measures related to the specific objective

Specific Objective 1.5 aims to ensure the unification and implementation of regular control regarding the use of state budget funding. The reorganization of the inspection structures and the increase in the frequency of controls will constitute increased guarantees for the quality and timely use of the planned funds.

Expected results for this objective are as following:

Outcome 1: Strengthening the effectiveness of internal and external audit as well as financial control.

Outcome 2: Strengthening the capacities of internal and external audit, and financial inspectors.

Outcome 3: Improving the monitoring of public procurement and public expenditure procedures.

Leading institutions: General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Central Inspectorate, Ministry of Finance, High State Audit, regulatory bodies, ASPA.

Participating institutions: Institutions responsible for the implementation of ISAC, municipalities, line ministries, Supreme State Audit, School of Magistrates, Security Academy, regulatory entities, private sector.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures (specific activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1.

	Specific Objective 1.5. Protection of public finances and assets from misuse during the exercise of public function
1.5.1	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the role of inspections in the prevention of corruption
1.5.2	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the role of internal and external audits in the prevention of corruption
1.5.3	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the role of regulatory bodies in the prevention of corruption

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.5.1 Increasing audits in areas of public sensitivity to promote the effective use of public funds, strengthening the accountability and integrity of the administration.	Strengthening the effectiveness of internal and external audit and financial control.	1.5 Protection of public finances and assets from misuse during the exercise of public function.	HSA
Outcome	1.5.2 The percentage of recommendations implemented by public institutions against the total number of recommendations given (increasing trend).	Strengthening the effectiveness of internal and external audit and financial control.	1.5 Protection of public finances and assets from misuse during the exercise of public function.	MoF HSA

Specific Objective 1.6: Strengthening the whistleblower framework for early detection of corruption

Analysis of the situation and challenges

Whistleblowing plays an important role in the prevention and detection of corruption, as the possibility of reporting it affects the avoidance of abuse of power by elected and appointed public officials. Albania has drafted and approved the legal framework that regulates whistleblowing, the protection of whistleblowers and the obligations of public authorities and private entities to set up and make these structures or units fully functional. Dedicatedly addressing a specific objective for whistleblowing, the strategy aims to improve the legal framework for whistleblowing through its revision in order to guarantee the clarity of the guidelines and the legal protection provided for whistleblowers as well as updating the country's legislation with the developments of latest in the legislation of the European Union.¹⁴

The legal framework in force for whistleblowing has envisaged the organization and functioning of the whistleblowing units and procedures for the application of this mechanism. Further improvement of achievements in this field will be made possible through the revision of the legal framework with the aim of harmonizing with Directive (EU) 2019/1937. This process will also be accompanied by the approval of by-laws that will arise because of the approximation of the framework law on whistleblowing within 2025. The approximation of the country's law with the EU Directive and ensuring effective implementation is a key step in the fight against corruption. Aligning the law with the Directive would extend protection to people who report alleged acts of corruption. This will encourage people to report more proactively corrupt acts, by contributing to

¹⁴ Directive (EC) 2019/1937 of 23 October 2019 “On the protection of persons who report breaches of the EU law”.

the effectiveness of investigation against corruption. Improvement of the whistleblowing network will increase credibility and accountability by enabling a prompt and tailored response to reported cases.

Strengthening the rights and protection of whistleblowers should be developed in parallel with the development of public awareness campaigns. The latter that can further contribute to the overall goal such as creating a work environment where corruption is detected and reported at the earliest stages of abuse. This approach helps in mitigating and curbing implications of corruption in the society, by strengthening transparency and accountability in the public and private sector. Creating such environment, i.e where whistleblowing is nurtured and protected, is a crucial step towards the effective prevention of corruption.

Simultaneously with the legal improvement, the institutional framework for whistleblowing will be strengthened based on the assessment of the network of persons responsible for receiving corruption denunciations and reports, their position, the way of communication, cooperation and reporting. The findings will be used to initiate and promote the creation of ways to report corruption in institutions that have this legal obligation, but that have not yet designated persons responsible for receiving corruption reports and denunciations, or where the turnover is high. Moreover, the capacities of these persons will be strengthened through trainings accompanied by the improvement of the exchange of information on denunciations and reporting of corruption between HIDAACI and the General Directorate of Anticorruption.

Also, the instruments for reporting corruption and the encouragement of society to report corruption will be improved based on the evaluation of the existing instruments to denounce and report corruption in institutions of all levels.

Expected outcomes of the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.6 aims to further improve the legal framework for anti-corruption through further harmonization of the EU *acquis* for the efficient use of the whistle-blowing mechanism, with the ultimate goal of preventing corruption.

Expected outcomes of this objective are as follows:

Outcome 1: Alignment of whistleblowing legislation with the European Union whistleblowing Directive.

Outcome 2: Increasing the information of citizens and state administration officials on whistleblowing.

Leading institutions: Council of Ministers, Minister of State for Public Administration and Corruption, High Inspectorate of Declaration and Control of Assets and Conflict of Interest, General Directorate of Anticorruption.

Participating institutions: Minister of State for Public Administration and Corruption, High Inspectorate of Declaration and Control of Assets and Conflict of Interest, General Directorate of Anticorruption.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1.

	Specific objective 1.6: Strengthen the whistleblower framework for early detection of corruption
1.6.1	<i>Measure: Strengthening the legal framework for whistleblowing</i>
1.6.2	<i>Measure: Strengthening the institutional framework for whistleblowing</i>
1.6.3	<i>Measure: Improving tools for reporting corruption and encouraging corruption reporting</i>
1.6.4	<i>Measure: Improving protection for individuals who report corruption (whistleblowing)</i>

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.6.1 The percentage of legal and bylaw acts on whistleblowing and whistleblower protection, approved against those planned to be approved (increasing trend)	Increasing the contribution of whistleblowing as a tool for building integrity and anti-corruption.	1.6 Strengthening the whistleblower framework for early detection of corruption.	ASSEMBLY Prime Minister's Office

Specific Objective 1.7: Strengthening financial transparency and integrity of political parties

Analysis of the situation and challenges

Strengthening the financial transparency and integrity of political parties is an essential element for the rule of law and the prevention of corruption, due to the high level of participation of political parties in all decision-making processes. Albania has made some significant progress in recent years in terms of strengthening the financial transparency and integrity of political parties thanks to the improvement of the legal framework for the financing of political parties and the obligation they must publicly declare the sources of funding and expenses.

In November 2020, Parliament approved amendments to the law “On Political Parties”, enabling this act to comply with the provisions of the Electoral Code. These changes helped to regulate the public financing of political parties, the treatment of private donations and loans, as well as the

prohibition of the use of public resources for electoral subjects. The law also defines the procedures for reporting, publication, auditing of campaign funds and expenses, as well as sanctions in case of violations. The European Commission commended the Central Election Commission for its efforts to strengthen its oversight role for campaign financing, in line with ODIHR's recommendations.

The measures taken to control the finances of political parties have helped to reduce the impact of unknown or unidentified, and sometimes even illegal, contributions to the financing of political parties. These measures improved transparency and accountability of political parties with respect to their financial resources. This information is also available to the public¹⁵ for all political parties, on the official website of the State Election Commissioner.

The strategy aims to provide a broader perspective for control mechanisms, financial reporting, tracking and identification of donors and expenses, as well as citizens' access to information on political party finances, by complying with the obligations that stem from the Roadmap on the Rule of Law regarding the adoption of the Law “On Financing Political Parties” withing 2027.

In order to further advance in strengthening the financial transparency and integrity of political parties, it is foreseen to intervene in the rigorous implementation of existing regulations, as well as to standardize and apply stronger sanctions for non-compliance, monitoring, as well as a more comprehensive audit of the finances of political parties. These measures aim at preventing corruption and money laundering, by increasing accountability and transparency of political parties regarding their financial resources.

Interventions also aim to control and curb the influence of financial and human resources of public administration during electoral campaigns and periods, by making sure that they are kept away from political influence. These measures are necessary to preserve the integrity of the electoral process and guarantee that the public administration will not be used for electoral purposes, by contributing so to a stronger and more transparent democracy.

Expected outcome of the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.7 aims to increase the control of the finances of political parties, for all their financial resources, to guarantee the purity of the image and the promotion of personal and political integrity in the political life in the country, of persons with civic values, educated and with contributions to public life.

Expected outcomes of this objective are as following:

Outcome 1: Strengthening the transparency and control of the funding sources of political parties.

Outcome 2: Increasing citizens' trust in political parties.

Leading institutions: State Election Commissioner.

¹⁵ The financial reports of political parties and those of the audits carried out for them are published on the website: <https://fpp.kqz.gov.al/kreu/reports>.

Participating institutions: General Directorate of Anticorruption, civil society organizations.

Measures and activities

This specific objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1.

	Specific Objective 1.7: Strengthening financial transparency and integrity of political parties
1.7.1	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the financial transparency of political parties
1.7.2	<i>Measure:</i> Promoting the importance of financial transparency and integrity of political parties

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU *acquis* under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.7.1 Drafting the law on funding of political parties.	Political parties to enable transparency and control of funding sources.	1.7 Strengthening financial transparency and integrity of political parties.	SEC

Specific Objective 1.8: Establishing the legal and institutional framework for lobbying as a corruption prevention instrument

Analysis of the situation and challenges

To strengthen public trust in public administration institutions, the decision-making process while exercising the functions in all its phases should be as transparent as possible. Citizens must be guaranteed the right to be informed on the actors which have access to and influence governmental decision-making. In this context transparency is essential to maintain public trust in state institutions. On the contrary, if such forms of influence are exercised without full transparency and accountability, the public may start having doubts, thus undermining democracy and the integrity of the decision-making process.

Albania has already carried out some preliminary interventions to shape a sub-legal and institutional framework for lobbying, addressing the issues of transparency and integrity of public

and political officials in their relations with lobbyists and groups of interest during the exercise of their duties. The advancement of these interventions by providing the establishment of the lobbying instrument and the special legal framework will limit the presence of conflicts of interest and will guarantee the declaration of the activities by the officials. It will as well provide to the responsible authorities the opportunities to supervise and monitor vigilantly the activities, meetings and communications of the officials with lobbyists. This approach aims to detect and prevent cases of corruption, ensuring that the interaction between the public officials and the lobbyists are transparent and regulated by law.

In the GRECO Fifth Evaluation Round Compliance Report on Albania, adopted on 2nd of December 2022, recommends that Albania formalize the lobbying instrument and that members of the Government engage in making public their contacts with lobbyists and third parties established through various means of communication (e-mail, phone calls and messages).

The Parliament of the Republic of Albania, based on Decision no. 61/2018, dated 05.04.2018 "On the adoption of the Code of Ethics of the Member of the Parliament of Albania", pursuant to Article 22, has created a special register for lobbying, interest groups and civil society organizations that maintain relations with members of the parliament and parliamentary committees. This register aims to increase transparency and involve the public in the legislative process by facilitating the interaction of the government with the various actors of the society and ensuring that these relations are open and honest.

The prevention of corruption through the regulation of lobbying will be strengthened through the adoption of a dedicated legal framework and the establishment of special institutional arrangements for its implementation. It will involve the establishment of a new body or institution responsible for monitoring the lobbying, of s well-defined competencies and operates with clear procedures. This body will ensure that the lobbying activities are transparent, monitored and reported in compliance with the law.

The legal framework will be based on a detailed analysis of the international standards and best practices for transparent lobbying, especially through recommendations from international organizations operating in this field. These recommendations will help to build a credible system which ensures the adequate regulation of lobbying, thus supporting prevention of corruption and guaranteeing integrity in public decision-making.

Expected outcomes of the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.8 aims to prevent corruption through the regulation of lobbying, by the adoption of a dedicated legal framework

Expected outcome for this objective:

Outcome 1: Establishment and efficient implementation of the legal framework on lobbying, in accordance with international best practices.

Leading institutions: General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption, National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, implementing institutions of ISAC

Participating institutions: Council of Ministers, High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interests.

Measures and activities

This specific objective will be implemented through the following measures (concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached).

	Specific Objective 1.8: Establishing the legal and institutional framework for lobbying as a corruption prevention instrument
1.8.1	Measure: Establishment of legislative and institutional framework for lobbying

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU *acquis* under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.8.1 The ratio of the number of legal and sub-legal acts on lobbying adopted against the number of those planned for adoption (increasing trend).	Transparent, accountable and verifiable lobbying for the public.	1.8 Establishment of the legislative and institutional framework for lobbying as an instrument for the prevention of corruption.	NCAC

Specific Objective 1.9: Promotion of integrity in the private sector

Analysis of the situation and challenges

The private sector plays an important role in the prevention of corruption, especially in the context of its potential influence on relationships that can create corrupt situations. In recent years, Albania has adopted a horizontal approach of cooperation with the private sector and their representatives, in informative roundtables and forums. These meetings served to discuss the anti-corruption measures and promote integrity in private sector. Furthermore inclusive, periodic meetings were held to share the technical amendments of the private sector with public administration structures, in order to strengthen the fight against corruption and increase integrity.

In a free market economy, private business is the drive of development, so ensuring the right business climate is essential in regulating the market. Recognizing the importance of this sector in

the development of economic relations that also affect the principles of a democratic government, the prevention of corruption requires intervention in this sector as well.

Integrity in the private sector is essential to guarantee sustainable development and market competitiveness. Companies that operate with integrity build trust with customers, partners and investors, thereby strengthening their reputation in the market and improving financial performance. To strengthen integrity in the private sector, it is essential to implement business ethics policies, guarantee transparency in financial management and create a company culture that promotes honesty and responsibility. With this approach, businesses not only build trust with customers, partners and investors, but also significantly contribute to the prevention of corruption and abuse of office. The fight against bribery and other corrupt practices is also vital for the protection of entrepreneurs and business actors, taxpayers and entities indirectly affected by business transactions.

The promotion of the need for integrity in the private sector¹⁶ will be carried out in cooperation with the chambers of commerce in the country and their associations, which have direct relations with businesses, in order to identify the relevant challenges and obstacles for the increase of integrity in the private sector, as well as ways to overcome them. In order to raise awareness on the challenges and obstacles related to integrity in the private sector, as well as to promote solutions to overcome these challenges, regular public activities that emphasize the need for integrity in the private sector will be organized. At the same time, the model Code of Ethics and Integrity Plan for private companies will be prepared in close cooperation with chambers of commerce and big companies that have already established and implement integrity mechanisms.

In some sectors, corruption in the private sector is also a real risk and requires additional attention. Corrupt transactions from one private entity to another not only affect these businesses individually, but also the entire supply chain by distorting markets, undermining fair competition and increasing costs for companies. These practices undermine general business standards, reducing the level of transparency in economic transactions and damaging the general trust of economic actors in the markets. Corruption in the private sector has major impacts on the ability of markets to attract foreign investment and build sustainable relationships with international partners. It limits the ability of markets to function openly and fairly, making them less attractive to investors seeking stability and good governance.

For this reason, the implementation of robust anti-corruption mechanisms in the private sector is essential to guarantee sustainable economic development. These mechanisms help maintain standards of integrity and transparency, ensuring that markets function fairly and reliably for all economic actors. Such an environment increases the attractiveness of the markets for foreign investments and creates a strong ground for sustainable relations with international partners.

¹⁶ An incentive in the forecast also comes from the UNCAC (United Nations Convention Against Corruption) which foresees corruption both in the private sector and in the public sector. Other international initiatives that provide guidance on business ethics such as: World Economic Forum, Transparency International, OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), and G20.

The OECD's definition of key areas for the private sector, such as corporate governance, anti-corruption, social responsibility, digitization and innovation, provide guidelines to ensure the effectiveness of proposed efforts in this area. The provisions of the OECD Convention "On Combating Bribery of Foreign Officials in International Business Transactions" aim at combating corruption in international business transactions. Improving transparency in public procurement helps to reduce the risks of corruption in the private sector, making businesses more aware of the need to improve integrity and develop their programs within the framework of corruption prevention. Also, efforts to improve reporting systems for abuses and potential corruption denunciations continue, as private businesses are regularly encouraged to develop clear policies and procedures for preventing corruption in the workplace. These efforts are in line with international best practices and provide a clear path to increasing accountability and honesty in the private sector, creating a more stable and credible business environment that is protected against corrupt practices.

By coordinating awareness campaigns, the government not only makes citizens and businesses more aware of the dangers of corruption, but also creates an enabling environment for the development of sustainable anti-corruption policies. Collective action, which includes collaboration with civil society organizations and the private sector, is vital to building a strong infrastructure of integrity and accountability at all levels.

Expected outcome from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 1.9 brings an innovation to the anti-corruption strategic framework for the upcoming years by including new measures and mechanisms which aim to increase transparency and accountability in private sector. The private sector plays an important role in the country's strategic programming, contributing to the standardization of interventions and actions in accordance with the international regulatory framework.

Expected outcomes of this objective are mentioned:

Outcome 1: Identification of the need for increased integrity and corruption risk assessments in the private sector.

Outcome 2: Strengthening of professional capacities for cooperation in analysis and research on corruption in the private sector.

Leading institutions: National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Competition Authority, National Agency of Information Society.

Participating institutions: Chambers of Commerce and Business, General Directorate of Taxes, General Directorate of Customs.

Measures and activities

This specific objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 1.9: Promotion of integrity in the private sector
1.9.1	<i>Measure: Promoting the demand for integrity in the private sector</i>

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the *EU acquis* under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	1.9.1 The percentage of private sector entities with which public institutions have established collaborations for raising and promoting integrity in the private sector against the number of collaborations established last year (increasing trend).	Update on integrity regulation and corruption risks in the private sector to be carried out regularly.	1.9 Promotion of integrity in the private sector.	NCAC MECI MoF
Outcome	1.9.2 The percentage of joint activities between public institutions and entities of the private sector for the promotion of integrity in the private sector against the number of such activities carried out last year (increasing trend).	Update on integrity regulation and corruption risks in the sector Privat is done regularly.	1.9 Promotion of integrity in the private sector.	NCAV MSHSKM MoF

THE SECOND GOAL OF THE POLICY: “PUNISHMENT OF CORRUPTION” - constitutes the second pillar of the ISAC 2024-2030 and includes 3 Specific Objectives. This Goal will focus on reforming the legal and institutional framework through the application of a repressive approach to maximize impact in the fight against corruption. Some of the interventions foreseen in this context are related to administrative investigation, criminal investigation, international judicial cooperation, as well as the establishment and operation of communication networks to strengthen the fight against corruption and enable a solid track record of the investigation.

In this context, the Albanian Government, through the responsible authorities at the administrative level, the law enforcement agencies and the judicial power bodies will implement dedicated interventions in order to ensure the fulfilment of the anti-corruption objectives. These institutions will provide the necessary resources to ensure the efficient implementation of the measures and to measure the progress of achievement.

The process of monitoring and evaluating these measures will be based on a periodic analysis, which will be carried out every six months and annually, aiming to highlight the progress and challenges in the implementation of the foreseen measures. The data gathered from these analyses will help to adapt and improve the strategy during its implementation phase, ensuring that the objectives are achievable and measurable on an ongoing basis.

This policy goal (II) aims to achieve the following objectives:

Specific Objective 2.1: Strengthening the legislative, institutional framework and professional capacities for the effective administrative investigation of corruption.

Specific Objective 2.2: Strengthening capacities, resources and performance for effective criminal investigation and prosecution of corruption.

Specific Objective 2.3: Strengthening international cooperation of law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies in the fight against corruption, economic crime and money laundering.

The link between policy goal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The second policy goal aims to increase the performance of all structures responsible for administrative verification and inspection, criminal prosecution, investigation and punishment of corruption cases in the public sector. The punishment policy aims to create the conditions for a peaceful and inclusive society, ensuring sustainable development and access to justice for all, as well as contributing to the establishment of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

This policy goal is linked to the 16th goal of the SDG: "Peace, justice and strong and effective institutions."

Specific Objective 2.1 Strengthened the legislative and the institutional framework and capacity building for effective administrative investigation of corruption cases

Analysis of the situation and challenges

In addition to the prevention of corruption, Albania has gradually developed during the last years a good institutional architecture to support the identification and administrative verification of corruption cases in public administration agencies in order to ensure punishment of such cases.

In October 2021 by the decision of the Council of Ministers No. 618, dated 20.10.2021¹⁷, the General Anticorruption Directorate was established. This structure was created to centralize the

¹⁷ This Decision of the Council of Ministers was repealed after the entry into force of DCM no. 436, dated 26.06.2024 "On the creation, organization and operation of the General Directorate of Anticorruption".

drafting of anticorruption policies and to coordinate the administrative investigation of corruption cases in public administration bodies that provide services to the citizen. During its operation, the General Anticorruption Directorate has issued concrete recommendations to public institutions, with the aim of improving the institutional performance and the service delivery process. In addition, it has taken administrative measures and filed criminal reports with the law enforcement bodies, on cases where criminal liability has been established. These actions aim to strengthen the integrity of the public administration and prevent cases of corruption through a structured and sustainable approach.

Furthermore, in November 2021, the law "On Co-governance" was adopted, which re-dimensioned the platform "Shqipëria që duam" and via "Report Corruption" section, all citizens can report cases of corruption.

The reviewing of the legal and regulatory framework to strengthen coordination between structures serves the maximum to the function of preventing corruption in the public administration, aiming at conducting effective and independent investigations, which are essential for the prevention of criminal acts of corruption by public administration staff.

The primary function of the administrative investigation is the identification of abusive practices, with the aim of taking systemic and non-sporadic measures. Based on the current practice of the General Directorate of Anticorruption, the aim will be to address the problems of the institutional efficiency which are due to opportunities for corruption.

Expected results from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 2.1 re-dimensions the framework of administrative investigations and the follow-up of reporting and complaints by the internal structures which handle the complains and corruption cases in order to take systemic measures.

Expected outcomes of this objective are the following:

Outcome 1: General strengthening of the capacities of the structures involved in the administrative verification and investigation of corruption cases in public administration.

Outcome 2: Increased coordination and cooperation of the bodies that conduct verification and administrative investigation of corruption cases.

Outcome 3: Establishment and consolidation of a system which handles in a systemic way the administrative investigation of corruption cases.

Leading institutions: Council of Ministers, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, High Inspectorate for Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interest, Special Structure against Corruption and Organised Crime.

Participating institutions: Albanian State Police, General Prosecution Office, the Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Albanian School of Public Administration.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 2.1: Strengthened legislative and institutional framework and capacity building for effective administrative investigation of corruption
2.1.1	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the institutional framework and coordination of investigation and administrative verification of corruption
2.1.2	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening institutional capacities for investigation and administrative verification of corruption
2.1.3	<i>Measure:</i> Increasing the performance of the structures responsible for the investigation and administrative verification of corruption

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	2.1.1 Percentage of analysis done following the administrative investigations in order to take systemic measures (increasing).	General strengthening of the capacity of the structures involved in the administrative verification and investigation of corruption cases in the administration.	2.1 Strengthening the legislative and institutional framework and capacities for effective administrative investigation of corruption.	GDoA

Specific Objective 2.2 Strengthening capacities, resources and performance for effective criminal investigation and prosecution of corruption

Analysis of the situation and challenges

The fight against corruption requires an independent and efficient justice system as well as law enforcement agencies equipped with sufficient financial, human and technological resources.

These bodies should have the skills to effectively use the digital tool in order to ensure the enforcement of anti-corruption legislation supported by impartial criminal investigations and prosecutions.

Albania, in recent years, has shown significant progress in this direction, demonstrating consistent results in the investigation and trial of corruption crimes. International evaluations have particularly emphasized the role of the Special Prosecution Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), as well as other law enforcement agencies, which have been evaluated for effective criminal prosecution and successful trial of corruption cases. Within this framework, the role and activities of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) are duly recognized as a contributing institution during the 2022–2023 period, having submitted a total of 17 corruption-related referrals to SPAK.

In these years, criminal prosecution bodies have improved their performance through the application of proactive investigation methods, such as wiretapping and special methods, including surveillance, simulations, controls, seizure of material evidence, letters of rogatory and undercover agents. The Special Prosecution Office - SPAK, recorded an increase of cases of 16% in 2023, recording 67 criminal proceedings compared to 28 cases in 2022. In total, 447 corruption cases were investigated, of which 38 were sent for trial.

Proactive investigative methods were used intensively during the year, including wiretapping and special operations such as surveillance and simulations. Interceptions were used in 186 proceedings, which is quite a significant increase compared to the last year. Other agencies also reported significant surge of cases of prosecution and conviction of corruption offences. The State Police recorded a total of 443 criminal offenses, with a detection rate of 84.19%. With regard to corruption cases, there were identified 194 criminal cases, of which 167 were detected, reaching a detection rate of 86.8%. In total, 20 criminal proceedings were conducted against senior officials, including 22 persons under investigation or in court proceedings¹⁸.

The Special Prosecution Office (SPAK) during the years 2021 and 2022 has seized and confiscated, respectively, 21 million euro and 31 million euro of assets derived from criminal activity. In 2023, the Special Prosecution Office submitted to the court 8 requests for seizure, of the value of money, commercial entities, movable and immovable properties, of which 7 were admitted by the court involving a value of around 275,553,016 ALL. It also submitted 6 requests for confiscation which were admitted by the court involving and amount of ALL 64,341,850¹⁹.

Effective, proportionate and legal sanctions against corruption, as well as the recovery and confiscation of the proceeds of these crimes, contribute to the trust on justice and law enforcement and act as a deterrent to future crimes. The strategic intervention specifically aims to enhance the capacities, resources and performance to increase the efficiency of the investigation and prosecution of cases of corruption. It aims to increase the efficiency of the justice system as a whole, to detect, investigate and punish all illegal activities in this field. Improving professional capacities will allow law enforcement agencies to conduct investigations according to the highest

¹⁸ The 2023 annual monitoring report of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2023;

¹⁹ Annual report of SPAK, 2023.

standards set by criminal legislation and international conventions, as well as provide sufficient evidence to prosecute individuals involved in acts of corruption.

The objective to strengthen the capacities, resources and performance in investigations and criminal prosecution of corruption cases is closely linked to the European integration process of Albania, considering the importance of increasing the integrity of local institutions and demonstrating their capacities to fight corruption. Being an important criteria of Albania's integration process, it is necessary to guarantee the strengthening of the justice system so that it is capable of investigating and prosecuting corruption cases, especially high-level ones. In this context, the Special Prosecution Office (SPAK), including its specialized professional and technical structures vested with investigative authority, such as the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) plays a key role. The achievement of this goal will consolidate not only the credibility of the justice system, but also the advancement of Albania on its path towards integration into the European Union.

Expected outcomes from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 2.2 is of special importance within the inter-Sectoral strategic framework against corruption in the areas of law enforcement, as it aims to ensure the issuing of efficient and proportional sanctions against corruption crimes by the respective authorities.

Expected outcomes of this objective are as following:

Outcome 1: Increased coordination and cooperation between law enforcement agencies.

Outcome 2: Strengthening the professional capacities of law enforcement authorities in the management and use of knowledge of the criminal investigation of corruption and cases of corruption in other sectors.

Outcome 3: Increasing the quality of effective criminal investigation, prosecution and sanctioning of the crime of corruption.

Outcome 4: Increasing the number of anti-corruption operations with the use of special investigative and proactive techniques.

Leading institutions: Ministry of Justice, High Judicial Council, High Prosecution Council, Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), State Police, Security Academy, General Prosecutor's Office, Special Court Against Corruption and Organized Crime, School of Magistrates, National Bureau of Investigation, Police Oversight Agency, High Inspectorate for Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interest, Financial Intelligence Agency.

Participating institutions: Ministry of Justice, Council of Ministers, Assembly, Ministry of Interior, High Judicial Council, High Prosecution Council, Special Structure Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), State Police, Security Academy, General Prosecutor's Office, Special Court Against Corruption and Organized Crime, School of Magistrates, National Bureau of Investigation.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 2.2: Strengthening capacities, resources and performance for effective criminal investigation and prosecution of corruption
2.2.1	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the legislative framework for ensuring efficient investigation activities and criminal punishment of corruption
2.2.2	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the institutional framework and professional capacities of law enforcement agencies and their staff, with a focus on the investigation and prosecution of corruption
2.2.3	<i>Measure:</i> Sustainable consolidation of law enforcement agency structures to ensure proactive anti-corruption investigations (performance improvement)
2.2.4	<i>Measure:</i> Increasing the performance of law enforcement agencies for the criminal investigation of corruption through institutional cooperation, communication with the public and administration of statistical information

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	2.2.1 The percentage of legal and bylaw acts approved for the criminal investigation of corruption against those planned to be approved.	Increasing the quality of effective criminal investigation, prosecution and punishment of the crime of corruption.	2.2 Strengthening capacities, resources and performance for effective criminal investigation and prosecution of corruption.	ASSEMBLY Prime Minister's Office
Outcome	2.2.2 Ratio of completed criminal investigations for corruption against ongoing investigations (reduction of backlog) (increasing trend).	Increasing the quality of criminal investigation, prosecution and punishment of the crime of corruption.	2.2 Strengthening capacities, resources and performance in the investigation and prosecution of corruption.	SPAK General Prosecutor's Office
Outcome	2.2.3 The percentage of the value of assets seized as a result of the investigation of corruption cases from the average value of assets seized in the last three years (increasing trend).	Increasing the quality of effective criminal investigation, prosecution and punishment of the crime of corruption.	2.2 Strengthening capacities, resources and performance for effective criminal investigation and prosecution of corruption.	SPAK AAPSK

Specific Objective 2.3 "Strengthening international cooperation between law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies in the fight against corruption, economic crime, and money laundering."

Analysis of the Situation and Challenges

Corruption cannot be fought alone. Cooperation and exchange of experiences, as well as continuous dialogue among countries and their law enforcement agencies through networks on ways to develop and implement reforms and tools to prevent, detect, and prosecute corruption, are the key components for making the fight against corruption successful in practice.

International cooperation between law enforcement agencies and justice system bodies in the fight against corruption, including economic crime and money laundering, holds fundamental importance, particularly in the fight against transnational crime. Economic crime can have significant impacts on a country's financial stability. In this context, international cooperation enables the timely and efficient exchange of information to effectively stop criminal activities at a global level.

Albania is a strong partner in international cooperation, with increased communication between the Special Prosecution Office (SPAK) and its counterpart authorities across Europe, the U.S., and even countries in Central and South America. Such direct interactions and communications increased every year. Frequent communication and information exchange have also taken place through various networks and communication channels such as Eurojust, Interpol, Europol, and liaison officers attached to foreign embassies in Tirana. It is specifically noted that, in 2023, the investigative unit attached to SPAK—the National Bureau of Investigation (BKH)—carried out a total of 39 information exchanges with the DEA, Europol, Italy, the Nordic countries, and ten additional European nations.

The data of the past two years indicate that the State Police exchanged 405 pieces of information with Interpol; 2,740 correspondences with Europol; and 77 cases through the CARIN network in 2022. In 2023, there were 443 exchanges of information with international partners, including: 266 with Interpol, 79 with Europol, and 88 with the Department of International Relations. In this context, it remains a priority to continue improving performance and deepening positive results in the areas of economic crime and money laundering.

National investigative and prosecutorial bodies, such as the Special Prosecution Office (SPAK) and the General Prosecutor's Office, and the State Police, are members of the GlobE Network—the Global Operational Network of Law Enforcement Authorities—a mechanism established by the UNODC to facilitate and enhance transnational cooperation in cases of corruption. This network facilitates sharing of cases and experiences between prosecutors and judicial police officers. Additionally, the establishment of the Asset Recovery Office, the expansion of state databases accessible to law enforcement agencies, and addressing the challenges in reporting and

information exchange between the police, prosecution, and the Financial Intelligence Agency are key development in strengthening criminal investigation.

The effectiveness of actions conducted to enforce the law and combat corruption, as well as support the efforts of partner countries, depends on the reputation and professionalism of law enforcement institutions and agencies. To improve the results and increase the influence of law enforcement bodies, efforts will be increased to facilitate and coordinate actions in multilateral fora, in addition to active engagement in the UNCAC convention.

Mutual assistance among partner countries, including the strengthening of cooperation and the detection of criminal networks, has the potential to significantly enhance Albania's capacity for achieving better results in this regard.

Expected outcomes from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 2.3 engages law enforcement agencies in international cooperation, taking into account the cross-border nature of corruption-related crime. To improve the performance of Albanian authorities in international cooperation and with foreign missions requires adequate professional capacities and sufficient resources.

The expected outcomes of this objective include:

Outcome 1: Promotion of effective investigations of corruption cases and economic crime by Albanian law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies, in cooperation with multilateral international organizations such as EUROPOL, CARIN, UNODC, GlobE, etc..

Outcome 2: Strengthening the framework and capacities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the investigation of corruption and economic crime.

Outcome 3: Providing advanced skills development programs for law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to investigate corruption and economic and financial crime.

Leading institutions: State Police, Ministry of Justice, Special Prosecution Office against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), General Prosecutor's Office, Asset Recovery Office, Agency for the Administration of the Seized and Confiscated Assets.

Participating institutions: -

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 2.3: Strengthening international cooperation between law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies in the fight against corruption, economic crime, and money laundering.
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2.3.1	<i>Measure:</i> Improvement and documentation of international cooperation between law enforcement agencies (both those of special jurisdiction and those of general jurisdiction), for the investigation and prosecution of corruption crimes and economic crimes.
2.3.2	<i>Measure:</i> Establishment of international cooperation between Asset Recovery Offices to trace information on wealth and assets acquired through corruption and economic crimes.
2.3.3	<i>Measure:</i> Capacity building, information exchange, and joint activities within the framework of international cooperation in the fight against corruption.

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	2.3.1 The ratio of the number of operations launched by Europol or Interpol in the field of the fight against financial and economic crime where Albania participates against the average number of these operations in the past three years (increasing trend).	Effective investigations of corruption and economic crime by Albanian law enforcement and judicial authorities in cooperation with international organizations.	2.3 Strengthening international cooperation among law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities in the fight against corruption, economic crime, and money laundering.	SP SPAK GPO

THE POLICY GOAL: “AWARENESS AND EDUCATION AGAINST CORRUPTION” - The third pillar of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy (ISAC) 2024 - 2030 includes 4 Specific Objectives and it will focus on promoting the educational role and social activities of stakeholders in the fight against corruption. It aims to engage young people, civil society, the private sector, and public administration to become promoters of the fight against corruption with the aim of establishing a “culture of integrity” in public activities and service delivery.

To implement this part of the Strategy, the Albanian government and public administration plan to build stable partnerships and integrate the principles of institutional and inter-institutional partnership between public and non-public entities. This data will be analysed on a semi-annual and annual basis to monitor progress in the implementation of the proposed measures.

This policy goal (III) aims to achieve the following objectives:

Specific Objective 3.1: Increase citizens' awareness on the negative consequences of corruption and encourage them to reject, report, and denounce corruption.

Specific Objective 3.2: Educate young people about ethics, integrity, and proactive engagement in the fight against corruption.

Specific Objective 3.3: Involve public opinion, especially the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia in the fight against corruption.

Specific Objective 3.4: Strengthen the participation of women in identifying and combating corruption at various levels and sectors.

The link between policy goal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The third policy goal aims to raise awareness among citizens and educate young people, stakeholders, the public and society to proactively engage in the fight against corruption. The education and awareness policy focuses on establishing partnerships and undertaking collective actions in efforts to combat corruption.

This policy goal is linked to Sustainable Development Goal 16: *"Peace, justice, and strong institutions."*

Specific Objective 3.1: Increase citizen awareness of the negative consequences of corruption and encourage them to reject, report, and denounce corruption.

Analysis of the Situation and Challenges

Raising awareness against corruption is a fundamental step and a key strategic element in advancing the fight against corruption. When citizens are well-informed about the negative consequences of corruption, they are better prepared to reject and report corruption cases. Through information and awareness raising, citizens are empowered as important partners in the joint effort for a just society, guided by the principle of the rule of law and accountability. This creates an enabling environment, which increases transparency and accountability in public administration and in other public institutions in general.

In recent years, Albania has undertaken a series of initiatives to raise awareness about corruption, and the Ministry of Justice, as the National Coordinator Against Corruption (until 2023), has invested with high priority to increase the public attention in this regard. In the years 2022-2023, 3 annual awareness raising campaigns were delivered, including the promotion of the Network of Coordinators Against Corruption. For such purpose videos were published, there was increased cooperation with academia, and the tradition of holding editions of the "Integrity Week" was consolidated.

During 2023, 15 instructional videos have been published to promote the reporting of corruption and the existing mechanisms for such action. Along these activities, several other institutions have also delivered campaigns to raise awareness and activate the mechanisms for reporting corruption. Viewed in the context of Albania's European integration, enhancing the rule of law and the

efficient functioning of public administration are essential requirements. In this framework, increasing awareness against corruption and promoting accountability are key factors for meeting these requirements and advancing Albania in the integration process.

Awareness raising and regular information to encourage the reporting of corruption cases aims to promote the values of ethics and integrity, as well as helps in developing a law-abiding culture from an early age, through education in schools. This process is of key importance because in this period the character of children and young people is shaped.

Making young people aware of the importance of integrity is vital for building a just and transparent society. Young people, as the future of our society, play a crucial role in shaping a culture that promotes honesty and accountability in society. When young people are well informed and aware of the values of integrity, they are better prepared to identify and oppose unethical and corrupt behaviour. This approach helps create an environment where rules and laws are respected, strengthening citizens' trust in institutions and contributing to a future where transparency and accountability remain fundamental principles. Education on integrity, from a young age, equips young people with the necessary skills to be responsible citizens and defenders of the right principles in their social and professional lives.

The National Coordinator against Corruption, in close cooperation with partners from the public sector and other actors, will set as priority the awareness raising campaigns and civic education programs. These programs aim to emphasize the essential role that each individual plays in promoting a culture of integrity, encouraging the active involvement of citizens in the fight against corruption. One of the key elements of this engagement is to explore ways through which the participants of these programs can act as "ambassadors of integrity," becoming living examples of good practices and multiplying the positive impact of these efforts within their communities.

In addition, the National Coordinator against Corruption will focus on developing new opportunities for cooperation in the field of anti-corruption education. These efforts will aim to provide citizens and the general public with clearer and more accessible information about the importance of the fight against corruption, ensuring that their messages and efforts are consistent and coordinated with those of public information tools. This approach aims to raise awareness and create a more coherent approach to empower citizens in the fight for transparency and integrity.

Expected outcomes from the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 3.1 aims to encourage citizens and the general public to report corruption quickly and in real-time. Such approach to reporting corrupt cases is considered as a bridge of cooperation with public administration and as an active tool for building effective institutions.

Expected outcomes of this objective include:

Outcome 1: Informed and aware citizens regarding the opportunities for proactive use of corruption reporting channels.

Outcome 2: Increased public trust in the fight against corruption.

Outcome 3: Enhanced citizen participation and public discussion about the risks of corruption and integrity.

Leading institutions: National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Agency for Dialogue and Co-governance.

Participating institutions: Civil society organizations and media.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 3.1: Increase citizens' awareness of the negative consequences of corruption and encourage them to reject, denounce, and report corruption.
3.1.1	<i>Measure:</i> Increase continuous awareness and communication with citizens about the negative consequences of corruption in society.
3.1.2	<i>Measure:</i> Promote methods for reporting corruption and encourage citizens to denounce it.

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	3.1.1 Citizens are more informed on the active mechanisms against corruption.	Increased public trust in the fight against corruption.	3.1: Raising citizens' awareness about the negative consequences of corruption and encouraging them to reject, denounce, and report corruption.	NCAC

Specific Objective 3.2: Educating young people on ethics, integrity, and proactive engagement in the fight against corruption.

Analysis of the Situation and Challenges

The goal of promoting the education of young people on ethics, integrity, and proactive engagement in the fight against corruption stems from a careful approach followed during the implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy, 2015-2023, by the National Coordinator Against Corruption.

This goal takes on special importance in the effort to raise awareness and prepare young people to effectively contribute to prevent and reduce corruption in society. Taking the necessary steps is seen as a successful practice to include the adequate curricula in schools and institutions within the pre-university education system, which will cover the values of ethics and integrity.

The pilot project implemented in 2020-2021 by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Italian Embassy in Albania focusing on the implementation of an anti-corruption educational module in 4 high schools in Tirana, will be rolled out nationwide. The pilot project has been replicated in the academic year 2023-2024 in 12 high schools across the country. It has been evaluated as a strong foundation for supporting the further development of the curriculum on integrity and anti-corruption. This project is a successful outcome of the cooperation agreement between the National Coordinator Against Corruption and the Ministry of Education and Sports, supported by the Italian Embassy in Tirana. This project will expand to during school years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 in high schools in Tirana, Durrës, Shkodër, Vlorë, Korçë, and Gjirokastër.

The education of young people regarding ethics, integrity, and proactive engagement in the fight against corruption is closely linked to the country's European integration process and also comes as a commitment made by Albania for progress on this journey. By preparing a new generation of citizens who are aware of these values, it will be ensured that young people and children receive the appropriate and necessary information for them.

The establishment of such a culture requires coordinated actions in multiple directions: from building ethics and integrity in the expectations of young people through their education, to facilitating exchanges among actors at the national level to strengthen the understanding of challenges and make them more determined to act and respond. This approach also aims to convey the spirit of rejection of corruption to their families and communities.

Additionally, educational and awareness campaigns will be organized for young people, encouraging them to actively participate in the fight against corruption and to promote ethical behaviour in their daily lives.

From a long-term perspective, the aim is to form a new generation of conscious citizens who are prepared to contribute to building a more integrated and just society. This target group is part of a broader strategy for combating corruption, which dedicates a special place to the youth as a change factor for the future of Albanian society. The use of this approach aims to contribute to creating the conditions for building a fairer society through the inclusion of young people as an active part in the efforts to have transparency and accountability.

Expected outcomes of the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Specific Objective 3.2 focuses on encouraging young people and new social groups to consolidate ethical behaviour, integrity, and principles of trust in the fight against corruption. The planned interventions are the school curriculum, cooperation with the media and delivery of awareness raising campaigns.

The measures will be implemented to achieve the following outcomes:

Outcome 1: Revision of the school curriculum of young people, aiming to teach fundamental ethical values and behaviours which reject corruption.

Outcome 2: Periodic awareness and sensitization campaigns against corruption, with the active participation of young people.

Leading Institutions: National Coordinator Against Corruption, Ministry of Education and Sports (Quality Assurance Agency of Pre- University Education).

Participating Institutions: General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Albanian Radio-Television, other media and Higher Education Institutions.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 3.2: Education of young people on ethics, integrity, and proactive engagement in the fight against corruption.
3.2.1	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the component of ethics and integrity in curricula at all levels of pre-university education.
3.2.2	<i>Measure:</i> Strengthening the aspect of ethics and integrity in educational programs on media (TV and radio).
3.2.3	<i>Measure:</i> Promoting the importance of proactive youth engagement in anti-corruption efforts.

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
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Outcome	3.2.1 The percentage of schools where the ethics curriculum has been taught compared to the average of schools where this curriculum has been delivered in the last three years (increasing trend).	A higher level of awareness about ethics, integrity, and the fight against corruption.	3.2 Educating young people about ethics, integrity, and proactive engagement in the fight against corruption.	NCAC
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Specific Objective 3.3: Involving the entire society, especially the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia in the fight against corruption.

Analysis of the Situation and Challenges

The effective fight against corruption requires the engagement of all actors in society. The involvement, particularly of the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia, helps create a common and inclusive environment where all parties can contribute to the prevention and fight against corruption.

The involvement of all social spheres, through civil society organizations that operate in different fields, is also addressed in the Inter-Sectoral Strategy Against Corruption 2015-2023. In this framework, CSSA has made open calls for specific proposals for projects in the fight against corruption, as part of the anti-corruption program and the reprogramming of funds for this purpose.

By bringing all stakeholders together, this objective promotes a joint and coordinated approach among them in the fight against corruption, aiming to ensure a just and more transparent society that develops sustainably. The inclusion of this approach is an innovation compared to the previous strategy, considering the importance of stakeholders' contributions to improving institutions, enforcing the law, and creating a more favourable environment for the economic and social development of the country.

The private sector plays a significant role in this regard by promoting transparency, ethics, and corruption risk management in business, which helps create a favourable environment for fair competition. The use of joint communication methods in the form of publications and tools that have a public impact and interest will bring together anti-corruption initiatives between the public and private sectors.

Additionally, academia can provide expertise and scientific research to explore the most effective methods for preventing and combating corruption, as well as to assist in the development of effective policies and strategies against corruption.

Civil society will introduce new cooperation tools, where the Coalition Against Corruption and the Network of Civil Society Organizations will be institutionalized to achieve even more sustainable impact. Such initiatives as the Integrity Pact, tested in EU countries, are considered as robust monitoring and audit mechanisms to ensure the proper management of the funds and the public budget by the public sector.

Cooperation between the private sector, civil society, academia, research experts and the media, as stakeholders with significant contributions and programmatic resources, is key to establishing

a "culture of integrity" in society through a comprehensive approach. The engagement and clear division of responsibilities between these actors and the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator represents an important opportunity for the progress of anti-corruption efforts, ensuring a synchronization of the activities and contribution of each actor in a harmonized and coordinated manner. This approach can lead to increased effectiveness and impact in preventing and fighting corruption.

Expected outcome of the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Objective Specific 3.3 directs anti-corruption efforts towards strengthening cooperation with civil society, the private sector, as well as academia and students as promoters of change. This objective aims to create a powerful alliance where freedom of thought, the driving force of economic development and creative initiatives come together to maximize interventions and achieve better results in the fight against corruption. This comprehensive approach aims to create a lasting and tangible impact on improving transparency and integrity in society.

Measures will be implemented to achieve these outcomes:

Outcome 1: Increased participation of the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia in promoting transparency and integrity.

Outcome 2: Initiatives and policy activities supported by scientific research and qualified expertise.

Outcome 3: Increased accountability of institutions and public officials supported by cooperations with independent expertise.

Leading institutions: Line Ministries, National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, General Anti-Corruption Directorate, National Information Society Agency.

Participating institutions: Agency for Dialogue and Co-governance, Ministry of Finance, Public Procurement Agency, Civil Society Organizations, Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, private sector, public authorities.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 3.3: Involvement of the entire society, especially the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia in the fight against corruption.
3.3.1	<i>Measure:</i> Active and expanded involvement of the private sector in the fight against corruption.
3.3.2	<i>Measure:</i> Active and expanded involvement of civil society organizations in the fight against corruption.
3.3.3	<i>Measure:</i> Promotion of Integrity Pacts with civil society organizations in the fight against corruption.
3.3.4	<i>Measure:</i> Involvement of academia in the fight against corruption.

3.3.5	<i>Measure: Involvement of the media and journalism in the fight against corruption.</i>
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The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	3.3.1 Percentage of joint anti-corruption campaigns between public institutions and the private sector, civil society organizations, academia, and the media, compared to the average number of campaigns over the last three years (increasing trend).	Broad involvement of society, the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia in enhancing transparency and integrity.	3.3 Involvement of the public opinion and especially the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia in the fight against corruption.	NCAC

Specific Objective 3.4: Strengthening the participation of women to identify and combat corruption at various levels and sectors.

Analysis of the Situation and Challenges

Gender aspects are important and should be considered in the context of developing and programming anti-corruption policies, as women and men are affected by corruption in different ways, and they experience different types of corrupt practices and behaviours.

In recent years, Albania has had high levels of representation for women and girls, thereby significantly narrowing the gender gap and its impact on the less represented gender. Currently, 66% of the members of the Council of Ministers are women, indicating balanced representation at high leadership levels. Additionally, Albania has implemented a number of projects and programs dedicated to a special gender approach and promoting the participation of women and girls in the fight against corruption.

Over the years, a number of different awareness-raising activities have been carried out to sensitize public opinion and increase awareness of the impact of corruption on women's lives. Despite these positive developments, there is still a lack of consolidated data on women reporting corruption and women actively or passively engaged in combating corruption.

Thus, the inclusion of women in identifying cases and combating corruption marks an important step toward gender equality. By integrating a gender perspective into the inter-institutional anti-corruption agenda, it significantly facilitates the identification of specific aspects of corruption that affect women and girls differently from the rest of society. This includes forms of bribery, gender-

based violence committed in the context of corruption, as well as other specific issues in the fight against corruption characterized by a gender dimension.

The participation of women in identifying and advancing the fight against corruption is one of the vital elements in deepening anti-corruption efforts. This Specific Objective of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030 aims to address such challenge by acknowledging the deep socio-cultural nature of the phenomenon of corruption (alongside its legal aspects) and the contribution of women to building a just society that develops sustainably.

Through this entirely new strategic approach, it will be possible to raise awareness of the impact of corruption on women and girls. Specifically, the inclusion of a gender component in civil society support projects and in assessing the extent of gender victimization by corruption will ensure that a portion of the measures taken against corruption for the entire society are specifically aimed at addressing the needs and concerns of women and girls.

The strengthening of the participation of women and girls in the identification and fight against corruption aims to increase their overall level of involvement in these efforts, improve public awareness, identify specific aspects of corruption, enhance public policies, and further increase the level of institutional transparency and accountability.

Cooperation with organizations that promote gender equality and interaction with them on measuring corruption will help shed light on the nature and specific impact of corruption on women and girls. Therefore, the "cornerstone" of this approach lies in the provisions made in this strategy, ensuring the inclusion of the gender perspective in the fight against corruption.

Expected outcomes of the implementation of measures related to the Specific Objective

Objective Specific 3.4 highlights the importance of the role of women and girls in the promotion and intensification of the fight against corruption, also contributing to the collection of data that help identify the spread and trends of this phenomenon. This objective aims to illustrate the scale and scope of specific forms of corruption, including analysis of specific types that particularly affect women and girls, to help develop effective policies in this area.

Measures will be implemented to achieve these outcomes:

Outcome 1: Engagement and inclusion of gender-based organizations in projects against corruption.

Outcome 2: Continuation of the anti-corruption program by CSSA.

Outcome 3: Dialogue and gender-based cooperation in the fight against corruption.

Leading institutions: Agency for Support to Civil Society, National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, General Directorate of Anti-Corruption.

Participating institutions: General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Institute of Statistics, Civil Society Organizations.

Measures and activities

This Specific Objective will be implemented through the following measures, while the concrete activities for the first period of implementation of the ISAC can be found in the Action Plan 2024-2026, on implementation of the ISAC 2024-2030, Annex 1, attached.

	Specific Objective 3.4: Strengthening the participation of women in identifying and combating corruption at various levels and sectors.
3.4.1	<i>Measure:</i> Inclusion of the gender component in the terms of reference and allocation of a specific budget for integrity and anti-corruption projects announced by CSSA.
3.4.2	<i>Measure:</i> Organizing communication and awareness activities with stakeholders focused on the gender perspective in strengthening integrity and combating corruption.

The link of the main outcome indicators with the first Policy Goal, the Specific Objective and the responsible institutions, with the relevant sub-chapter of the EU acquis under the SAA

Indicator type	Performance indicator	The link with the policy goal	The link with the specific objective	Responsible institution
Outcome	3.4.1 The ratio of projects on anti-corruption with a gender focus against their number in the last three years.	Increased engagement of women in the political and economic participation of the country.	3.4 Strengthening the participation of women to identify and combat corruption at various levels and sectors.	CSSA

PART III

PRIORITY GOVERNMENT MEASURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENT

In the framework of implementing the three Policy Goals and the priority Specific Objectives that address the targeted interventions required for the anti-corruption reform, the following priority government measures are foreseen under the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy, 2024-2030.

- Measure 1.2.6** Draft legislation in compliance and coherence with the legal and institutional framework in the fight against corruption and the integrity of public officials and political functionaries (reflecting recommendation iii) of Round V of GRECO for Albania).
- Measure 1.3.2- 1.3.8** Prevention of corruption in the management of property sectors/ health system and social care/ education/ public procurement/ public-private partnership/ tax administration/ customs system.
- Measure 1.6.1** Strengthening the legal framework for whistleblowing.

Measure 1.8.1	Creation of legislative and institutional framework for lobbying.
Measure 2.2.1	Strengthening the legislative framework to guarantee efficient activities for the investigation and criminal punishment of corruption.
Measure 2.2.2	Strengthening the institutional framework and professional capacities of law enforcement agencies and their staff, with a focus on the investigation and prosecution of corruption.
(Measure 3.1.1)	Increasing awareness and continuous communication of citizens about the negative consequences of corruption in society.
(Measure 3.2.1)	Strengthening the ethics and integrity component in the curricula at all levels of pre-university education.

PART IV

IMPLEMENTATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND COORDINATION

The coherent, effective and successful implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030 is intended to be achieved through an improved implementation approach, through the inter-institutional coordination of the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator and the conduct of the functional tasks of the General Directorate of Anti-Corruption. This directorate is responsible for the coordination, issuance and follow-up of the necessary instruments for the implementation of anti-corruption policies, as provided by the decision of the Council of Ministers no. 436, dated 26.06.2024. In addition to monitoring, evaluation and reporting, the General Directorate of Anticorruption will be the structure responsible for the full implementation of the strategy, including the follow-up of the recommendations issued to the institutions, the implementation of priority policies, and the compilation of monitoring reports, which will evaluate and reflect on the results achieved.

To ensure the effective implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030 and the achievement of the anticipated outcomes it require a shift from traditional monitoring to a more proactive approach. This entails timely planning and efficient delivery of the measures and activities (outputs) by a central office. The General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, under the leadership of the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, it is the reasonable and adequate structure to have such role due to its competencies, hierarchy in the anti-corruption structures and its experience in implementing previous anti-corruption strategies.

To achieve this goal, coordination and cooperation between institutions with anti-corruption competences (GDAC, HIDAACI, CIMPDP, SAI, PPA) will be upgraded. The implementation of activities will be by a plan for the upcoming reporting period, prepared by the contact points for the implementation of the strategy, and to be then approved by the Directorate General of Anti-Corruption.

To enhance capacities and expand the scope of expertise, it is necessary to have the active involvement of anti-corruption coordinators, integrity coordinators, coordinators for the right to information, as well as human resources specialists within institutions. They will support the anti-corruption contact points in the institutions responsible for implementing the activities whenever these activities are related to their area of expertise and responsibility.

The effective and successful implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy, 2024-2030, aims to be achieved through a monitoring and evaluation system in accordance with Decision No. 290, dated April 11, 2020, "On the creation of the state database of the Integrated Planning Information System (SIPI/IPSIS)." The preparation of Monitoring Reports will follow a milestone process to verify the implementation progress of the Specific Objectives and the detailed measures outlined in the Action Plan.

The monitoring and evaluation process will be approved by Anti-Corruption Thematic Team, as outlined in the Prime Minister's Order No. 90, dated August 1, 2023. This process is managed by the Good Governance Unit in the Prime Minister's Office, acting as the technical secretariat for Justice and Democracy, and by SASPAC, which also serves as the central coordination unit for the Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMGs).

The Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) in the priority area of "Democracy, Rule of Law, and Good Governance" operates at a technical level through 8 thematic teams, one of which is anti-corruption, referred to as the Thematic Team for Anti-Corruption.

In the meetings of the thematic teams there will be discussed reports, challenges and obstacles that emerge during the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (ISAC) and the proper functioning of the respective institutions, which solutions need a unified approach. There will also be defined the future steps to ensure the efficient delivery of these actions.

Additionally, coordination between the implementing institutions of the strategy will be a key priority. Civil society organizations active in the field will also participate in these meetings providing valuable insights and assessments on the monitoring and evaluating of the results.

Monitoring and Evaluation System

The National Coordinator Against Corruption will prepare biannual and annual reports to monitor the progress of implementing the Strategy, based on the standards of the IPSIS Methodology for monitoring and reporting on strategic documents. The reports will provide timely and necessary information to policymakers regarding the implementation progress of the measures outlined in the Action Plan of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy (ISAC) for the next seven years.

The Action Plan of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy will be reviewed every three years to ensure a realistic assessment of its implementation in accordance with its funding level.

The monitoring and evaluation process of the Strategy will be supported by the unified and systematic reporting of data from all institutions involved in the implementation of the

Intersectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2030. According to this strategic document, each institution will report on the level of implementation of each objective and measure, the allocated budget, the issues encountered, and the overall assessment of the progress.

Statistical processing of data will be carried out through the coding of responses based on reports received from implementing institutions. These reports are primarily narrative in nature but they also include statistical elements, reporting Performance Indicators to measure the progress of the implemented measures.

Based on the procedures for reporting and monitoring the Strategy, as foreseen in the DCM No. 290, dated April 11, 2020, "On the establishment of the state database of the Integrated Planning Information System (SIPI/IPSIS)," the process of preparing Monitoring Reports includes the following phases:

Phase 1: Receiving contributions from all reporting institutions and consolidating the package in accordance with the System's standards.

Phase 2: Sending the complete reporting package for evaluation to the Good Governance Unit in the PMO, in accordance with the system standards. The complete package should include the following documents:

- a. the consolidated report on the progress in the implementation of the Strategy in accordance with the standards of the IPSIS System.
- b. the measures' implementation plan for the respective reporting period in accordance with the system standards.
- c. Passport of the Indicators in accordance with the standards of the system for the reporting period.

Phase 3: Consolidation of the package after receiving and reflecting the comments brought by the Good Governance Unit of the PMO.

Phase 4: Organization of the Anticorruption Thematic Team meeting.

Phase 5: Reflecting on comments and finalizing the monitoring report package.

Phase 6: Publication of the monitoring report.

Phase 7: Submission of meeting notes and operational conclusions of the ATT meeting and the final package, together with the link for acknowledgment to the Good Governance Unit at the PMO and SASPAC.

PART V

ACTION PLAN AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES

The detailed Action Plan, attached as Annex 1 to this strategic document, has been developed in accordance with the IPSIS methodology. It is costed, and detailed budgets are forecasted in the same manner within the IPSIS system, providing the appropriate breakdown for budget programs according to the institutions.

This chapter provides information regarding the financing of the Action Plan, 2024-2026, of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy (ISAC), 2024-2030, with the aim of achieving three policy goals and specific objectives. Therefore, this section will present information on the allocation of financial resources for the Policy Objectives, as well as the financial needs that may arise in the future. Financing will be covered by the state budget, from donors in the form of grants, loans, or any other capital fund or technical assistance provided. The total cost for the implementation of the Strategy is estimated to be in Albanian Lek. The measures costed in the 2024-2026 Action Plan, which are planned to be covered by state budget funds, are within the allocated funds for the responsible institutions.

The following details the financing, its sources, and the funding needs for each of the Policy Objectives of this document. In the costing of the measures, objectives, and goals of the strategy, the costing methodology follows IPSIS standards, and there is no duplication of measures with other national sectoral or intersectoral strategies. During the process of allocation of the funds, challenges were encountered to fully and accurately determine the funds allocated by various donors for the specific measures of the strategic document. The collection of the full data will enable the accurate calculation of the necessary budget to implement all the planned policies.

Below it is presented the allocation of funding sources for the purpose of the strategy goals. The financial gap and unfulfilled needs are also given for each of the goals. The sources of financing the financial gap of each Policy Goal are the state budget, donors through grants or other technical assistance funds.

The Minister of State for Public Administration and Anticorruption in the role of the National Anti-Corruption Coordinator and the General Directorate of Anticorruption are the institutions responsible for coordinating actions to enable the successful implementation of the measures provided for in the strategy.

The financing gap is related to the new policies that will be followed to extend the approaches to specific sectors or even business. They are related to training expenses, research on the current situation or perception of various phenomena, information distribution, online platforms or web pages and structural changes.

The total cost of the Action Plan of the strategy for the period 2024 - 2026 is **991.76 million ALL**, and the financial gap is 9.9%. Therefore, the financing gap amount is a total of **98.064 million lek**.

When analysing the financing gap by Policy Objectives, it can be observed that for the First Policy Goal, the gap amounts to 24.13 million lek, for the Second Goal it is 55.4 million lek, and for the Third Goal it is 18.53 million lek.

The identification of current and capital expenditures is made possible after determining the strategic framework, according to the objectives, specific objectives, and measures of the strategy.

This strategic document primarily sources its funding from the state budget, accounting for approximately 87.6%. The dedicated and confirmed funding from donors specifically for the measures outlined in the strategy is 2.5%. The donors include the European Union, the World Bank, and support from the Swiss government, among others.²⁰

Considering the composition of total expenses, the majority of financing for each Goal is allocated to salaries and other current expenses.

Table 1: Cost by Policy Objectives (in lek)

	Paga dhe sigurime shoqërore	Shpenzime korente të tjera	Shpenzime kapitale	Totali
Qëllimi 1 - Parandalimi i korrupsionit	638,089,173	215,427,450	0	853,516,623
Qëllimi 2 - Ndëshkimi i korrupsionit	85,606,955	26,566,000	1,380,000	113,552,955
Qëllimi 3 - Ndërgjegjësimi dhe edukimi në luftën kundër korrupsionit	2,560,539	20,980,000	1,150,000	24,690,539
Total	726,256,667	262,973,450	2,530,000	991,760,117

As noted, the focus has been placed on establishing infrastructure, institutions, and strengthening human capacities for the prevention of corruption. The costs for achieving the first objective account for the largest share, at 86.1% of the total costs. The costs for achieving the second objective represent approximately 11.4% of the total costs, while the costs for achieving the third objective account for 2.5% of the total costs.

²⁰ Due to the lack of detail by measures, the amount of €3.85 million in technical support from the EU for justice institutions such as SPAK, BKH, and others, which is set to begin in 2025, has not been included in the funds covered by donors.

The following table presents the annual allocation of total expenditures. The table highlights the aim to increase support for measures to prevent corruption, as well as to raise awareness and educate against corruption, which reflects growth throughout the implementation years of the strategy.

Table 2: Allocation of Funds by Year (in lek)

	2024	2025	2026
Qëllimi 1- Parandalimi i korrupsionit	266,910,307	328,604,188	258,002,128
Qëllimi 2 - Ndëshkimi i korrupsionit	33,727,863	39,975,327	39,849,766
Qëllimi 3 - Ndërgjegjësimi dhe edukimi në luftën kundër korrupsionit	4,348,944	3,120,798	17,220,798
Totali	304,987,114	371,700,312	315,072,691

Regarding the source of funding, the state budget covers the largest percentage of expenditures. Information for each of the policy objectives is provided in the table below.

Table 3: Source of Financing (in lek)

	State Budget	Donators	Financial gap
Qëllimi 1- Parandalimi i korrupsionit	813,581,055	15,806,000	-24,129,568
Qëllimi 2 - Ndëshkimi i korrupsionit	52,478,102	5,670,000	-55,404,854
Qëllimi 3 - Ndërgjegjësimi dhe edukimi në luftën kundër korrupsionit	2,560,538	3,600,000	-18,530,001
Totali	868,619,695	25,076,000	-98,064,423

In this strategic document, 9 policy objectives have been defined for the first Goal, 3 policy objectives for the second Goal, and 4 policy objectives for the third Goal. Among these objectives, Objective 1.2: Strengthening transparency, accountability, and integrity of public institutions at all levels of governance, holds the largest share in the total cost of the strategy at 78.5% of the total cost, while Objective 2.2: Strengthening capacities, resources, and performance for effective criminal investigation and prosecution of corruption, accounts for 9.7 % of the total cost.

Meanwhile, the objectives with the smallest shares are Specific Objective 3.4: Strengthening women's participation in identifying and combating corruption across various levels and sectors, accounting for 0.16% of the total costs and Specific Objective 3.3: Involving the private sector,

civil society organizations, and academia in raising awareness and combating corruption, representing 0.11% of the total cost.

PART VI

PASSPORT OF INDICATORS

Monitoring Indicators for the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy, 2024-2030

The monitoring indicators for the implementation of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy (ISAC) will be based on the use of several key performance indicators related to the policy objectives and specific objectives of the action plan, as reflected in the latter.

The progress of the ISAC's implementation will be monitored and evaluated by periodic measuring the indicators, which have been established in accordance with the respective policy goals and objectives. Additionally, the targets set may be revised by decision of the Anti-Corruption Thematic Team to ensure their achievement.

The Performance Indicator Passport according to the three policy goals of the ISAC, along with their methodology descriptions and targeted values, is presented in Annex 2, attached.