



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

## MEMO

Brussels, 16 October 2013

### Key findings of the 2013 Progress Report on Albania

The Progress Report on Albania is part of the 2013 Enlargement Package adopted by the European Commission on 16 October. The European Commission concluded that Albania made good progress on its path towards EU integration, notably by adopting measures identified as essential for granting candidate country status and by continuing to deliver reforms against the key priorities of the Commission's 2010 Opinion. Albania took initial steps towards improving the efficiency of investigations and prosecutions in the fight against organised crime and corruption. The 2013 parliamentary elections were conducted in an overall smooth and orderly manner. In view of this, the European Commission recommends that Albania be granted EU candidate status on the understanding that Albania continues to take action in the fight against organised crime and corruption. In order to be able to move to the next stage and open accession negotiations, Albania needs to meet further key priorities, with particular focus on administration reform, the rule of law and fundamental rights. Constructive and sustainable political dialogue will remain essential for a successful reform process.

#### Political criteria

**Albania has made further progress towards fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria for membership of the EU.** Government and opposition cooperated to adopt a number of important legal acts in Parliament including the Law on Civil Service, the amended Law on the High Court, and the rules of procedure of Parliament. As regards freedom of expression, the legislative framework improved with the adoption of the Audio-Visual Media Law.

The international election observation mission of the June parliamentary elections found the elections to be conducted in an overall smooth and orderly manner. Significant progress was made improving the treatment of prisoners and further steps taken in the reform of the public administration. Important steps were made to reform the judiciary, improve the fight against corruption, increase the seizures of narcotics and criminal assets, and implement recommendations to fight money laundering. Amendments to the Criminal Code addressed trafficking in human beings. Measures on antidiscrimination were taken to enhance protection of human rights. Albania's constructive engagement in regional cooperation remains essential.

**However, additional and sustained efforts will be necessary to fully comply with the political criteria.** As regards democracy and the rule of law, it is essential to build on recent progress and ensure the political dialogue and joint reform efforts are sustainable. Concrete measures to strengthen the accountability, independence and efficiency of the judiciary are necessary. The track record of investigations, prosecution and convictions in corruption cases at all levels needs to be strengthened, building on initial results. The fight against organised crime needs to be further upgraded. Consistent implementation of the property rights strategy needs to be ensured. The reform of the public administration needs to be pursued vigorously. Legislative and policy tools in the field of human rights, in particular regarding Roma, need to be further and better implemented.

## **Economic criteria**

**The Albanian economy continued to maintain macroeconomic stability.** Albania has made further progress towards becoming a functioning market economy. It should be able to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union in the medium term, provided that it accelerates structural reforms, including by reinforcing the rule of law and property rights, fighting corruption, addressing payment arrears, as well as developing infrastructure and enhancing human capital.

**The economy remains fragile and vulnerable to both domestic structural weaknesses and global economic volatility.** The GDP has kept growing, mainly due to increasing positive net exports. There was a slight improvement in the labour market but unemployment remains high. Concerns remain over the high level of budget deficit, public debt and its short term bias, as well as the non-performing loans in the banking system. Fiscal predictability needs to be ensured by reducing the recurrent overestimation of revenues and by rendering the tax collection more efficient. Improving the business and investment environment is essential for diversifying the economy and boosting its long-term growth potential. Albania needs to complement stability-oriented fiscal and monetary policies with structural reforms to ensure long-term sustainable economic growth.

## **EU legislation**

**Albania has made moderate progress in improving its ability to assume the obligations of membership** by approximating its legislation and standards to the EU, in particular in the areas of public procurement, statistics, justice, freedom and security, and customs union.

**However, increased efforts are needed** as progress has been limited in other areas such as intellectual property law, taxation, energy, environment and climate change. Sustained efforts are needed to strengthen administrative capacity for the implementation and enforcement of legislation and to improve transparency and accountability.

## **Key dates**

1999: The EU proposes the new Stabilisation and Association Process for countries of Southeast Europe

June 2000: The European Council states that all the Stabilisation and Association countries are potential candidates for EU membership

June 2003: Thessaloniki Summit; the EU perspective for the Western Balkans is confirmed

June 2006: The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU is signed

April 2009: The SAA enters into force. Albania presents its application for membership of the EU

November 2010: The Commission issues its Opinion on Albania's application for EU membership, including a set of 12 key priorities to be fulfilled in view of opening of accession negotiations

December 2010: Visa-free travel to Schengen area for citizens of Albania

## **More information**

[IP/13/930](#): EU enlargement priorities for 2014

[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/strategy-and-progress-report/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/strategy-and-progress-report/index_en.htm)