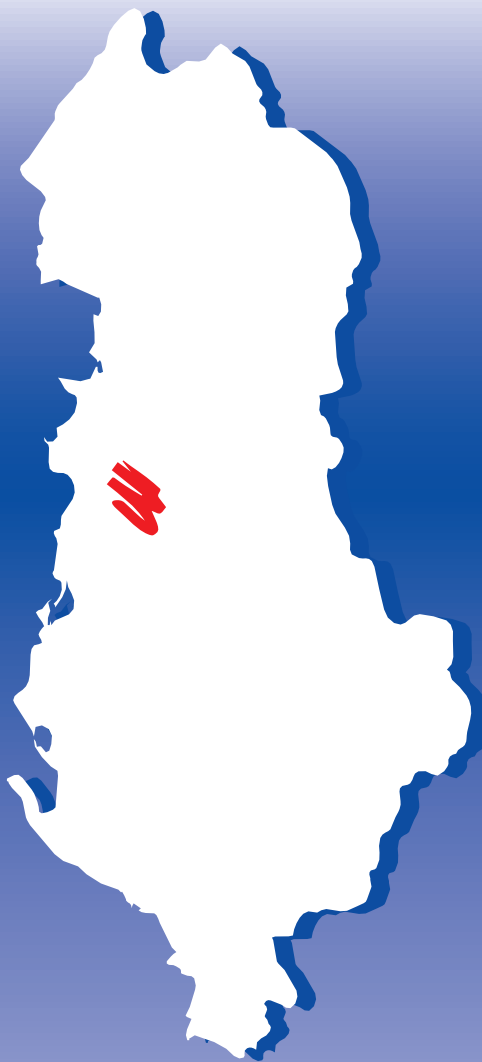




**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY**  
OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL



# ALBANIA IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD 2020

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## REPORT



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**For more Informations and details:**

Catholic University Our Lady of Good Counsel  
Rruga Dritan Hoxha, Tirana, Albania

✉ [info@unizkm.al](mailto:info@unizkm.al)

✉ [cespic@unizkm.al](mailto:cespic@unizkm.al)

🌐 <https://www.unizkm.al/categories/cespic/posts>

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### ***CESPIC TEAM***

Prof. Raul Caruso, Director

Dr. Antonella Biscione, Research Fellow

Laura Yzeiraj, Management Team

Megi Xhaçi, Management Team

Sindi Kovaci, non-resident research assistant

Matteo Marroni, non-resident research assistant

Jorida Rexhepi, Administrative Assistant

Denisa Muhameti from Confronti Study Center ([www.confronti.net](http://www.confronti.net)) has also participated into this report.

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## Foreword

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**Albania in the Eyes of the World** is a yearly report which collects, and analyses different socioeconomic metrics drawn from international reports and studies. The aim of ‘Albania in the Eyes of the World’ is to describe where Albania is heading concerning different social, economic and political topics. It is intended to be a kind of *vademecum* providing guidance on Albanian development path. The pros of such approach are evident. In only one document it is possible to find a set of information whose combination eventually turns to be extremely valuable for students, scholars, journalists, policymakers, entrepreneurs and investors. Moreover, the report also includes five paragraphs which deepen some relevant aspects of socio-economic path of Albania: (i) the economic scenario; (ii) the integration into EU; (iii) the environmental sustainability; (iv) the agricultural sector and (v) the risk of a surge in domestic violence against women because of COVID-19 lockdown.

Needless to say, 2020 will be remembered primarily for the COVID-19 crisis and all the implications the pandemic is bringing to the world. We are learning how to deal with the virus on a daily basis, and our habits are likely destined to be modified until a reliable and secure vaccine is delivered. Although the reports included in this draft are based on data and facts occurred in year 2019, a particular focus will also be given to real and expected consequences of this watershed period, obviously with a specific focus on Albania and the Western Balkans area. Emergency aside, year 2020 has been an important for Albania whose accession process to the European Union received the green light by the EU Council, and horizon has been cleared for the start of negotiations<sup>1</sup>. The entire negotiating framework, proposed by the Commission is expected to strengthen European focus on political – rule of law, democratic institutions and public administration – and economic reforms.

In the report the reader will delve into these topics and others connected to the socioeconomic development of Albania, and to a lesser extent of the Western Balkans Six – Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo, in addition to Albania.



Raul Caruso

Director

European Centre of Peace Science, Integration and Cooperation  
Catholic University ‘Our Lady of Good Counsel’

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<sup>1</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_519](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_519)

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- XVII. **Nuclear Threat Initiative, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the Economist Intelligence Unit**, *Global Health Security Index 2019*, Washington D.C. (USA), October 2019.

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## *Abbreviations*

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<b>ASP</b>	<b>Albanian State Police</b>
<b>CPI</b>	<b>Corruption Perceptions Index</b>
<b>ETI</b>	<b>Energy Transition Index</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>FAO</b>	<b>Food and Agriculture Organisation</b>
<b>GDP</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>
<b>GGGR</b>	<b>Global Gender Gap Report</b>
<b>GHS</b>	<b>Global Health Security</b>
<b>GPI</b>	<b>Global Peace Index</b>
<b>GPO</b>	<b>General Prosecution Office</b>
<b>HCI</b>	<b>Human Capital Index</b>
<b>HDI</b>	<b>Human Development Index</b>
<b>HDR</b>	<b>Human Development Report</b>
<b>IEP</b>	<b>Institute of Economics and Peace</b>
<b>IFAD</b>	<b>International Fund for Agricultural Development</b>
<b>INSTAT</b>	<b>The Institute of Statistics (Albania)</b>
<b>IO</b>	<b>International Organisation</b>
<b>KOF</b>	<b>Konjunkturforschungsstelle</b>
<b>LSI</b>	<b>Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim</b>
<b>MENA</b>	<b>Middle East and North Africa</b>
<b>ND-GAIN</b>	<b>Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>OCCPO</b>	<b>Organised and Corruption Prosecution Office</b>
<b>ONAC</b>	<b>National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator</b>
<b>PD</b>	<b>Democratic Party of Albania</b>
<b>PP</b>	<b>Positive Peace</b>
<b>PS</b>	<b>Socialist Party of Albania</b>
<b>RoL</b>	<b>Rule of Law</b>
<b>SDG</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goal</b>
<b>SPAK</b>	<b>Special Anti-Corruption Prosecution</b>
<b>TIP</b>	<b>Trafficking in Persons</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations International Children Emergency Fund</b>
<b>US</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>WB6</b>	<b>Western Balkans Six</b>
<b>WEF</b>	<b>World Economic Forum</b>
<b>WHO</b>	<b>World Health Organisation</b>
<b>WJP</b>	<b>World Justice Project</b>



## 1. COVID-19 Regional Safety Assessment

The *COVID-19 Regional Safety Assessment* is a report issued in June 2020 and updated at the end of August 2020 by the *Deep Knowledge Group* evaluating countries response to the novel Coronavirus pandemic. The draft analyses 250 territories/states and uses 130 parameters grouped in 6 categories – 34 indicators – to classify countries into 4 different tiers according to data availability and parameters offered. The 6 categories assessed are: (i) Quarantine Efficiency; (ii) Government Efficiency of Risk Management; (iii) Monitoring and Detection; (iv) Healthcare Readiness; (v) Regional Resiliency (indicators: Infection Spread Risk, Culture Specifics and Societal Discipline, Level of Modern Sanitisation Methods, Demography, Chronic Diseases, Geopolitical Vulnerability) and finally (vi) Emergency Preparedness.

At regional level, the June report highlighted that Europe has been the most prepared area (average score<sup>2</sup> of 562), followed by North America (549), Asia and the Pacific and MENA (502), and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (480). The regions striving the most are South America (445), Central America (405) and Sub-Saharan Africa (359).

According to the *COVID-19 Regional Safety Assessment* update (23<sup>rd</sup> of August), Germany is the most organized country with an overall rate equal to 762.4, New Zealand is second (757.7) and South Korea third (750.79). Moving to Albania, the *COVID-19 Regional Safety Assessment* locates the country at position 70 with an aggregate score of 489.28. Albania's profile with assessed categories is provided in chart 1.

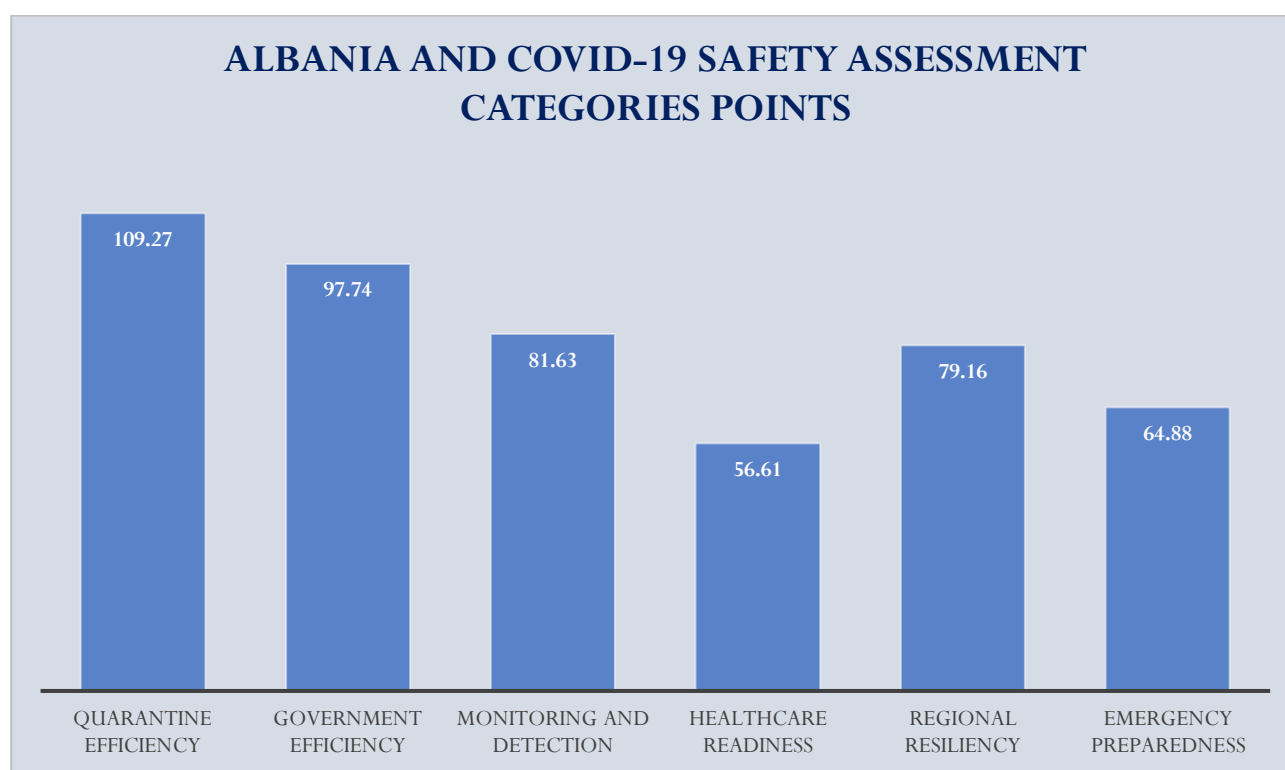


Chart 1

Albania, according to data provided by the report, is performing decently in Quarantine Efficiency (109.27) and Government Efficiency (97.74). Monitoring and Detection is another indicator where the country shows values in line with those of other European countries. Weaker performances can be observed with reference to Healthcare Readiness, Emergency Preparedness (56.61) and Emergency Preparedness

<sup>2</sup> “The values of each parameter are averaged to determine the value of their parent indicator. Then, the indicator score is multiplied by the weight of the indicator and is normalized (multiplied by 100) in order to allow for a final category value to be made by summing the individual values of all normalized indicators in each category. Finally, the aggregate value of each category (consisting of the sum of indicators and respective scores assigned) is multiplied by the weight of the category. The final cumulative index score for each region is obtained by summing the individual category weights.

(64.88<sup>h</sup>). In chart 2 the same analysis is given with regard to the remaining WB6 evaluated by the *Deep Knowledge Group*.

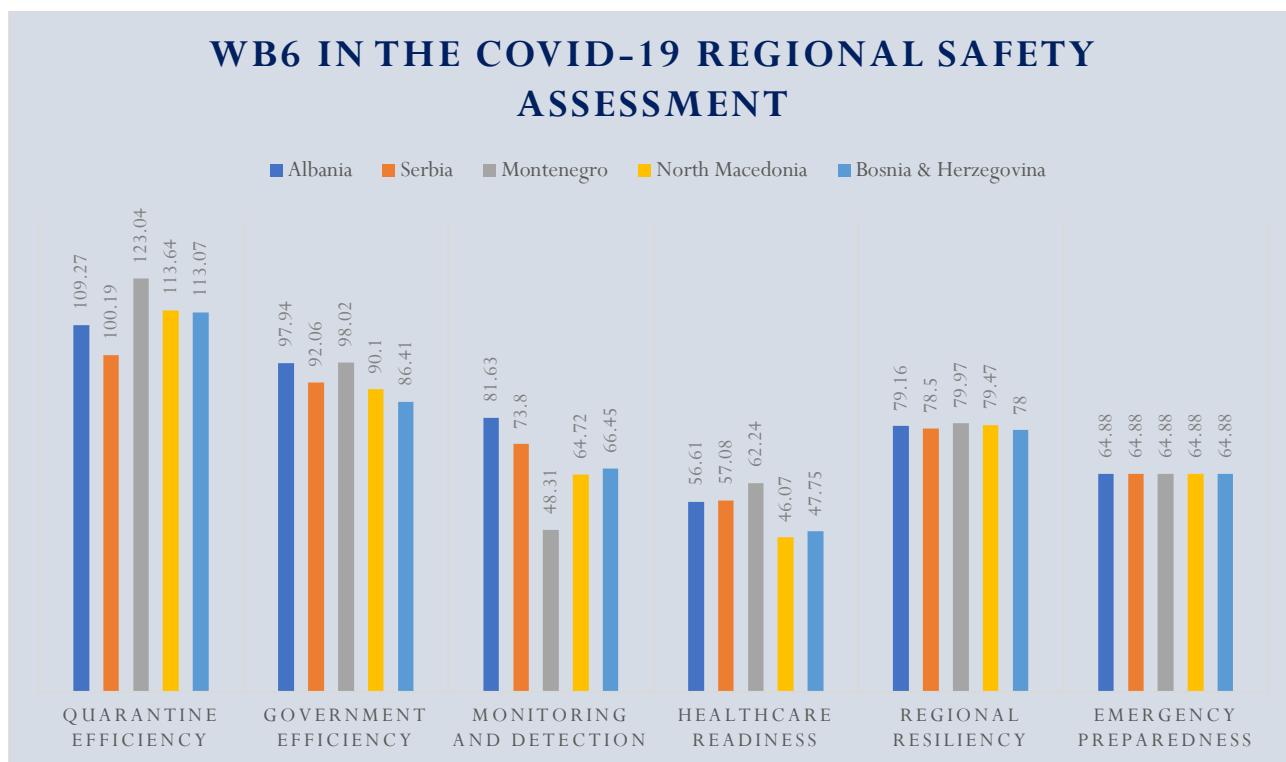


Chart 2 [Kosovo is not assessed by the report]

As aforementioned, Albania is the best performing country from the WB6. Montenegro comes second (83<sup>rd</sup> in the ranking with an overall score of 476.45), followed by Serbia at position 99 (aggregate score of 466.51). North Macedonia, which does have an aggregate score of 458.88, ranks 115<sup>th</sup>. Bosnia & Herzegovina (the worst performing from the WB6) achieved a score of 456.55 and stands at position 120. Concerning singular categories, Montenegro registered high results in Quarantine Efficiency (123.04) and Government Efficiency (98.02) but performed poorly in Monitoring and Detection (48.31), while Serbia stood out in Monitoring and Detection (73.8)(position 17, score 82) and Regional Resiliency (position 11, score 91).

Although the WB6 hold a certain preparedness for facing the global health crisis, it looks like they are all facing difficulties with regard to readiness of their health sectors – Health Readiness domain highlights low scores for every WB6. A second, general perspective will be offered in the report thanks to the analysis of the *Global Health Security Index*.

## 2. Human Development

The *Human Development Report* (HDR) and its respective index is issued yearly by the *United Nations Development Programme* since 2010. The *Human Development Report* ranks world countries according to their level of development taking into account three major indicators: (i) Health-life expectancy at birth; (ii) Education-expected years schooling for school-age children and average years of schooling in the adult population; (iii) Gross National Income per capita (PPP US\$).

The *Human Development Report* marks its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a 2020 edition that focus heavily on the human footprint, that is why is named “The Next Frontier: Human Development and Anthropocene<sup>3</sup>”. As stated by the report “[...]To survive and thrive in this new age, we must redesign a path to progress that respects the intertwined fate of people and planet and recognizes that the carbon and material footprint of the people who have more is choking the opportunities of the people who have less[...]” (UNDP Human Development Report 2020, 2020, p. iii). According to the report, temperature increase at the level that characterised the 1986-2005 period would worsen inequalities in human development, and countries with high ecological threats are bound to know greater social vulnerability. For this reason, the HDR devised a new tool, Planetary pressures–adjusted Human Development Index, which hooks the development of world countries to the impact they have on the planet.

As reported by the 2020 HDR (2019 values), Albania ranks 69<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries. This does not represent an improvement of 2019 position, nonetheless, the country improved its 2020 *Human Development Index* (0.795) compared to previous year’s score (0.791). With regard to the new Planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index, Albania registered a 0.756 score which virtually makes the country gain 28 positions in the ranking. In addition, the country ranks 41<sup>st</sup> in the Gender Inequality Index. In chart 3, Albania’s profile from 2018 to 2020 (2017-2019 values) is presented. Gender Inequality Index (this indicator is to be read in reverse where 0 represent the best and 1 the worst value possible) and Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index<sup>4</sup> scores are also included.

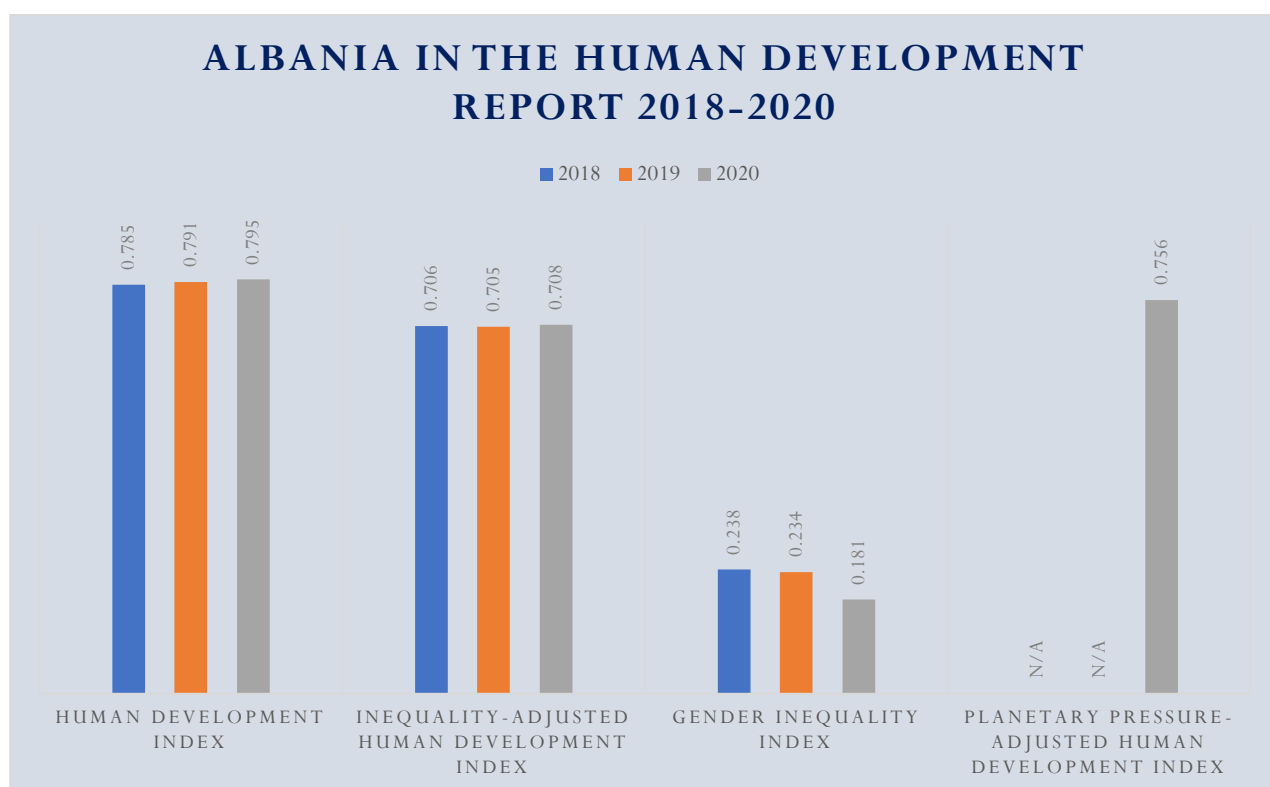


Chart 3

<sup>3</sup> According to the *National Geographic* definition the Anthropocene Epoch “is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth’s history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet’s climate and ecosystems”.

<sup>4</sup> The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index measures intra-generational inequality and regulates the overall value accordingly.

Concerning the other WB6, Montenegro confirmed its status as the country with the highest human development (0.829) and ranks 48<sup>th</sup>. It is followed at position 64 by Serbia (0.806 HDI value). Bosnia & Herzegovina (0.780) and North Macedonia (0.774) close the group ranking respectively 73<sup>rd</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup>. Regarding the Planetary Pressure value, Albania is the WB6 country with the lightest footprint on the planet. Montenegro comes second (0.738) followed closely by Serbia (0.732). In this domain too, North Macedonia (0.720) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (0.718) close the loop. Concerning the Gender Inequality Index, Montenegro (26<sup>th</sup>) is the most gender-equal country out of the WB6, and it is followed by Serbia (35<sup>th</sup>). Bosnia & Herzegovina (38<sup>th</sup>) and North Macedonia (37<sup>th</sup>) also showed significant values in this specific domain. Every WB6 country showed significant values concerning this specific domain. Looking at the ranking, Albania and North Macedonia remained stable, while Montenegro (+4) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (+2) improved. On the contrary, Serbia lost one position. In chart 4, WB6 profiles are provided with reference to the 2020 *Human Development Report*. The entire group improved its 2020 HDI compared to 2019 report: Montenegro and Serbia by 0.013 and 0.07 respectively; Bosnia & Herzegovina and North Macedonia registered an increase of 0.011 and 0.015.

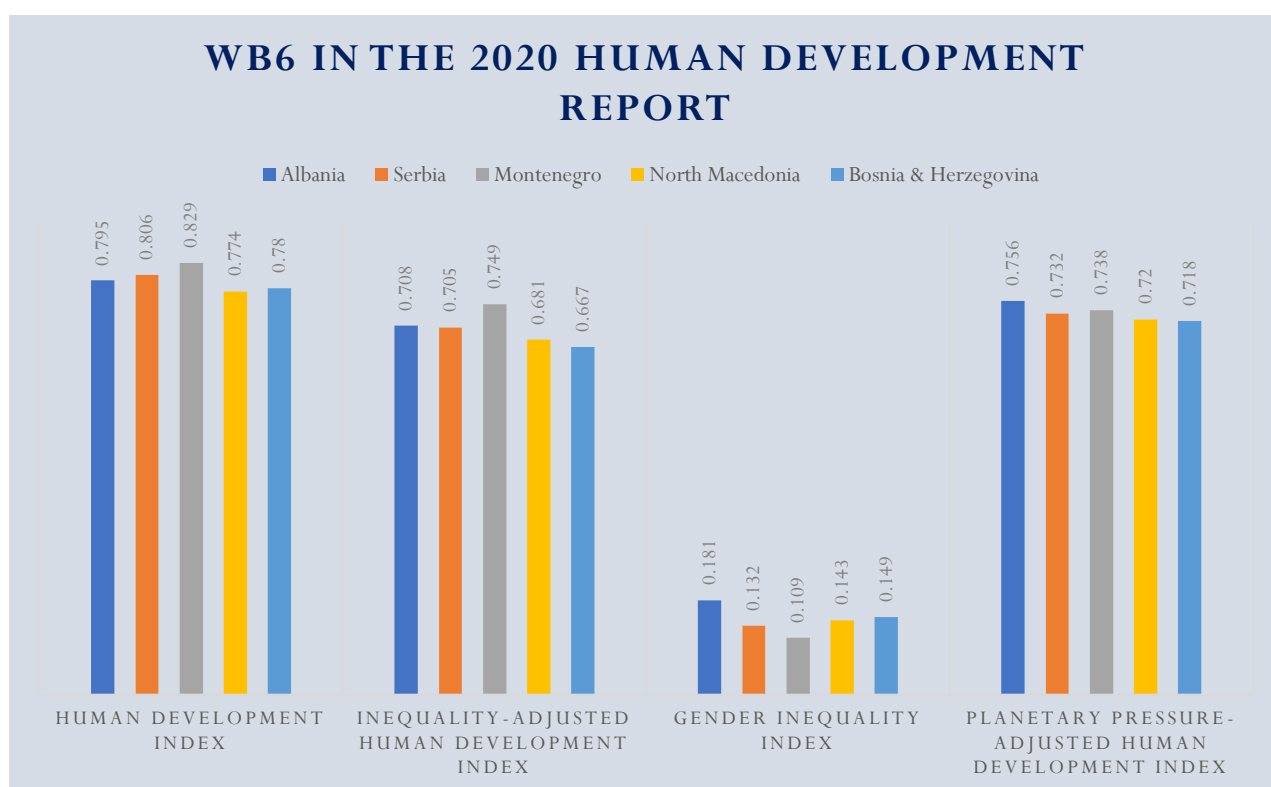


Chart 4 [Kosovo is not included as not evaluated by the HDR]

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### 3. Global Peace Index

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The *Global Peace Index* is a yearly report issued by the *Institute of Economics and Peace* which focuses on peace levels obtained by world countries according to different indicators and topics.—The index analyses 3 main domains: (i) Level of Safety and Security Inside the Society; (ii) Gravity and Extent of Internal and External Conflicts; and finally (ii) Levels of Militarisation – in turn disaggregated in 23 indicators<sup>5</sup> – and covers 99.7% of the world population.

As claimed by the *Global Peace Index 2020* (14<sup>th</sup> edition of the report), global peacefulness this the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that a reduction has been registered concerning global peacefulness. On average, world peace level decreased by 0.34%, and the outlook elaborated as a consequence of the pandemic leads to believe that peace condition will be even worse in the coming years (see box 1). In 2019, 81 countries recorded a deterioration and 80 an improvement. In the same year, the overall impact of violence on global economy was \$14.5 trillion or 10.6% of world GDP – a slight improvement of 0,2% from 2018. Since 2009, peacefulness has declined by 2.5%.

Middle East and Northern Africa region (MENA) confirms its status as the least peaceful region while Europe renews its conditions as the most peaceful. Concerning the first, four of the ten least peaceful countries of the ranking are located there. Europe, despite being the most peaceful region, registered the largest number of protests, riots and strikes (1,600) over the 2011-2019 period.

With reference to the countries of interest of this report, only Serbia and North Macedonia improved their rankings (+1 and +2). Albania (-2) fell at position 55 and registered a score of 1.872 – an increase of 0.51 – in a scale where 1 means most peaceful and 5 least peaceful. Montenegro ranks 68<sup>th</sup> (-2), Bosnia & Herzegovina 79<sup>th</sup> (-1) and Kosovo 85<sup>th</sup> (-6). Albania profile is provided in chart 5 together with the comprehensive score and results for every domain of the GPI from 2015 to 2020.

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<sup>5</sup> GPI domains and indicators are: “Ongoing internal and external conflict” domain – number and duration of internal conflict; number of deaths from external organized conflict; number of deaths from internal organized conflict; number, duration and role in external conflict; intensity of organized internal conflict; relations with neighboring countries; “Social safety and security” domain – level of perceived criminality in society; number of refugees and internally displaced people as a percentage of the population; political instability; political terror scale; impact of terrorism; number of homicides per 100,000 people; level of violent crime; likelihood of violent demonstrations; number of jailed population per 100,000 people; number of internal security officers and police per 100,000 people; “Militarization” domain – military expenditure as a percentage of GDP; number of armed services personnel per 100,000 people; volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as recipient (imports) per 100,000 people; volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as supplier (exports) per 100,000 people; financial contribution to UN peacekeeping missions; nuclear and heavy weapons capabilities; ease of access to small arms and light weapons.

## Albania and Global Peace 2015-2020

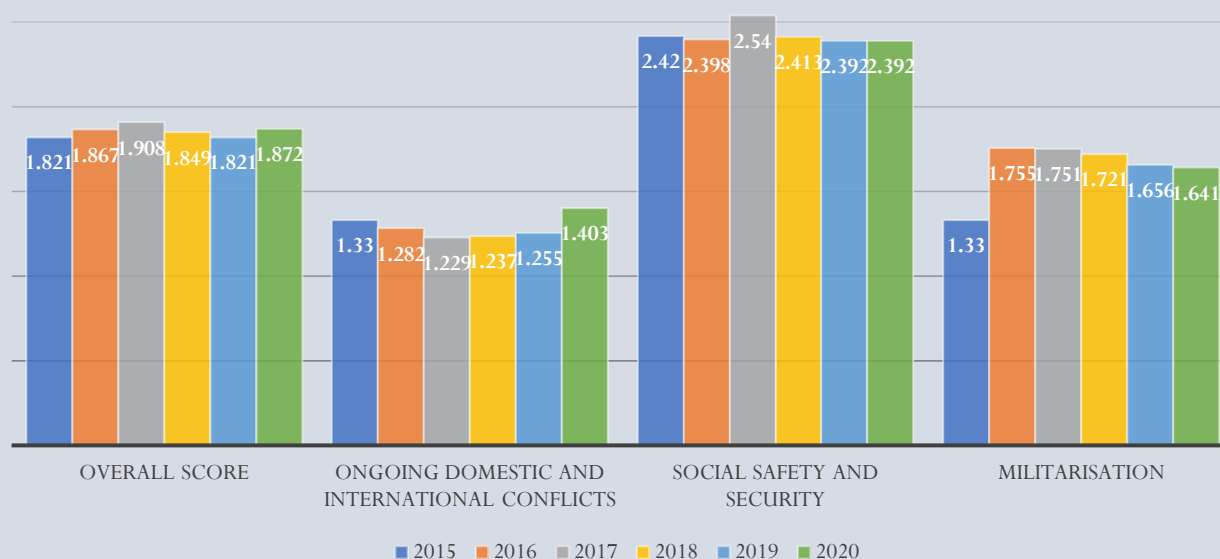


Chart 5

Taking as reference the 2015-2020 timeframe, it is possible to see that Albania has made no comprehensive improvement on peace levels, and this could be partly due to the fact that there has been a clear decay both in “Ongoing and Domestic conflicts” and “Militarisation”. The decay highlighted by the first domain may be connected to the wave of protests, which characterised the first semester of 2019, when thousands of government critics invaded the streets asking the resignation of PM Edi Rama and the restoration of the path towards democratic institutions and access to the European Union. The situation was normalised especially thanks to an agreement reached by the ruling Socialist Party and the opposition with regard to the long-requested electoral reform – amongst the main points on which European Institutions insisted. In addition, the diplomatic relationship with Serbia is problematic and linked to the negotiations the latter is having within European offices with regard to the *de jure* recognition of Kosovo and their respective borders.

The impact of violence on the Albanian economy has been estimated in a 6% of Gross Domestic Product (\$2,257.3 millions). The country ranks 28<sup>th</sup> in the European region (out of 36). Chart 6 and 7 present the same analysis for the other WB6.

## WB6 IN THE GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2015-2020

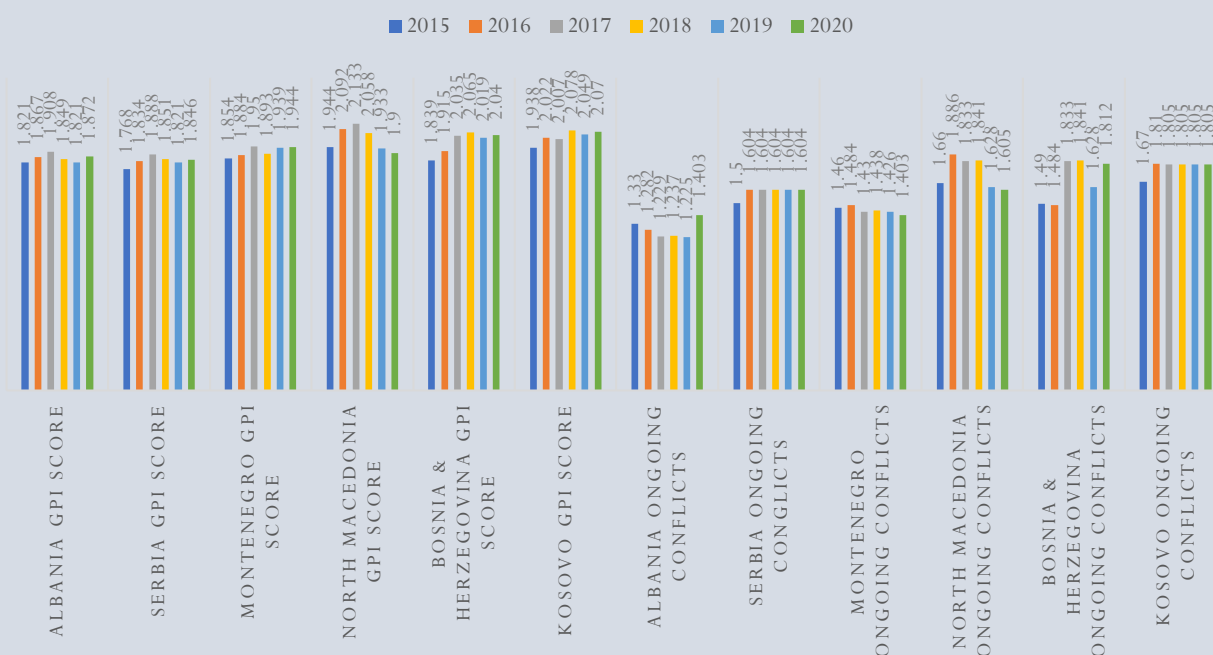


Chart 6

## WB6 IN THE GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2015-2020

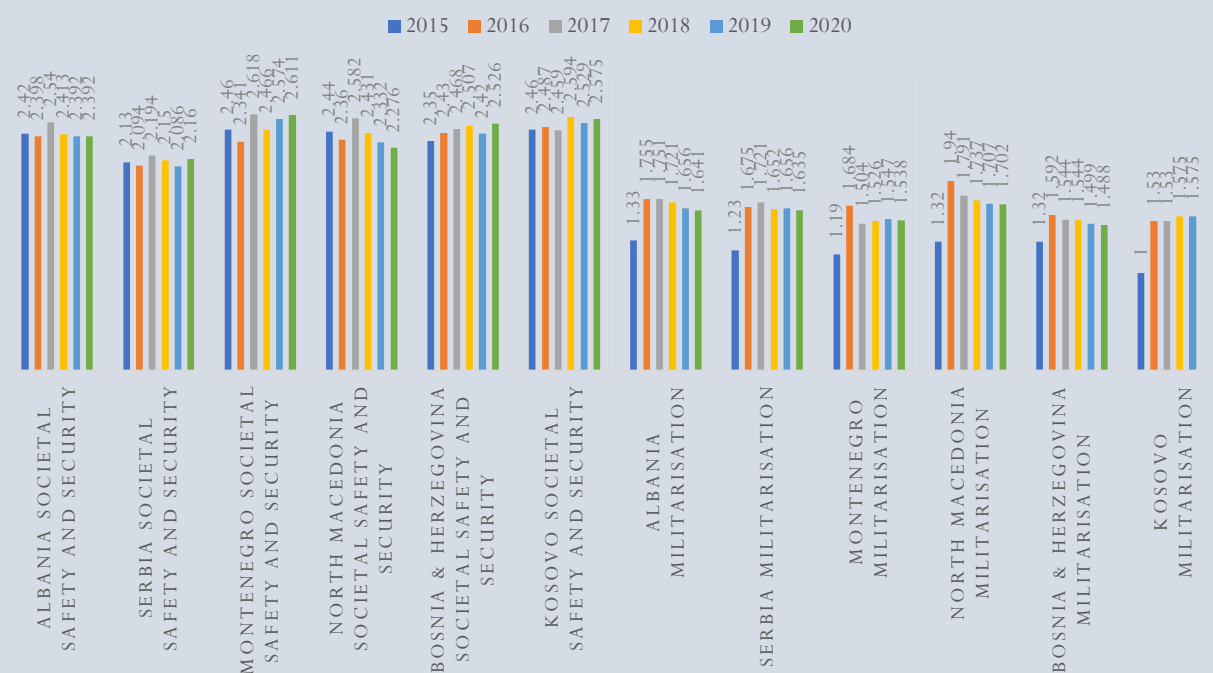


Chart 7

Country from the WB6 group, with the only exception of North Macedonia (-0.033), registered a worsening of the comprehensive GPI score. This deterioration seems to be connected particularly to the domain “Societal safety and security” for Serbia (+0.074) , Montenegro (+0.037), Bosnia & Herzegovina (+0.106) and Kosovo (+0.046); whilst Albania, as aforementioned, worsened especially its “Internal and external ongoing conflicts” domain (+0.178).

Considering the peacefulness levels of the WB6 over this period, it is possible to say that, lately, there is a negative peacefulness trend. With the forthcoming issues of the GPI, the shape of this pattern will be better

defined, particularly taking into account the consequences of the pandemic and the political process of the EU accession.

## **BOX 1: COVID-19 and Peace**

The COVID-19 crisis is going to change all the rules and will demand the framing of a new global socioeconomic and political structure. Not to say that all the processes one can see harshened by the pandemic were not already in place. The sanitary crisis only made them clearer.

As stated by the report *COVID19 and Peace* by the IEP, the pandemic and the lockdown that followed have had a beneficial short-term effect on violence and crime levels – number of incidents caused by battles dropped, in the second quarter of 2020, to a little more of 6,000 (nearly 10,000 in the first quarter), while incidents provoked by riots decreased from the 3,000 of the first quarter to 2,000 – source *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project* or *ACLED*, data elaborated by IEP. However, this probably will not be a lasting situation as conflicts like the one in Yemen – halted by Saudi Arabia after a heed by the UN – are to be restored as soon as the health crisis is contained.

Notwithstanding this welcomed development, and despite registering a decrease in drug dealing activities, drug cartels, taking advantage of the attention of the state out on other issues, consolidated their control on certain territories in Latin America. In addition, online crimes – e.g. phishing –, according to Google, increased by a 350%.

While there is still debate on the real consequences of the pandemic on our societies peace levels, many of them to be discovered in the medium-term, it cannot be denied that global economy and those of single countries will face many challenges, starting with the rising of national debt and unemployment and ending with increasing poverty rates. Countries preparedness to respond to populace needs will decide the extent to which peacefulness will be affected.

Another matter of concern is the effect COVID may have on food security. There are already symptoms of a disruption in the food supply chain – e.g. food prices inflations; loss of incomes; reduction of remittances; social disorders – particularly evident in conflict-affected states. Considering that there are more than 820 million people threatened by food insecurity, the pandemic may lead to believe that this absolute number will soar. Moreover, this topic is particularly important for the WB6 which have very delicate food security levels.

Surely, the real effects of the pandemic on the world and on the cluster examined by this report will be disclosed in the medium/long-term, and with the coming issues of *Albania in the Eyes of the World* they will be examined with more tangible and reliable data. For the moment, one can only prophesy the future outlines of the world.



## 4. Positive Peace Index

The *Positive Peace Index* is a yearly publication issued by the *Institute of Economics and Peace* conceptually developing the thematic of global peace. The positive peace concept, in the words of the *IEP*, is defined as “the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies”. These strong and effective sociopolitical structures endow the national community with the means to embed justice and equity in the social system. According to the report, higher levels of positive peace lead to better performances concerning environmental outcomes, *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, wellbeing of the population, higher per capita income and a stronger resilience.

The *Positive Peace Report* assesses positive peace through eight indicators (pillars): (i) Well-functioning Government; (ii) Sound Business Environment; (iii) Equitable Distribution of Resources; (iv) Acceptance of the Rights of the Others; (v) Good Relations with Neighbors; (vi) Free Flow of Information; (vii) High Levels of Human Capital; (viii) Low Levels of Corruption.

The 2019 report highlighted a few trends that deserve attention; since 2009, 128 countries improved their positive peace – 35 worsened their statuses; globally positive peace improved by 2.6%, particularly due to an increase in Free Flow of Information, Sound Business Environment and High Levels of Human Capital; eight out of nine world regions ameliorated their positive peace levels, and this fact has been evident in Russia and Eurasia, and South Asia; the largest deterioration of positive peace occurred in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Venezuela and Brazil.

With regard to Albania, the country improved its comprehensive positive peace score<sup>6</sup> (2.68 in 2019) by 0.04, and it ranks 52<sup>nd</sup> (gaining one position from previous year). As one can see in chart 8, Albania is clearly showing a steady positive trend concerning its peace levels – since 2016 an increase of 0.16 has been registered concerning its overall positive peace.

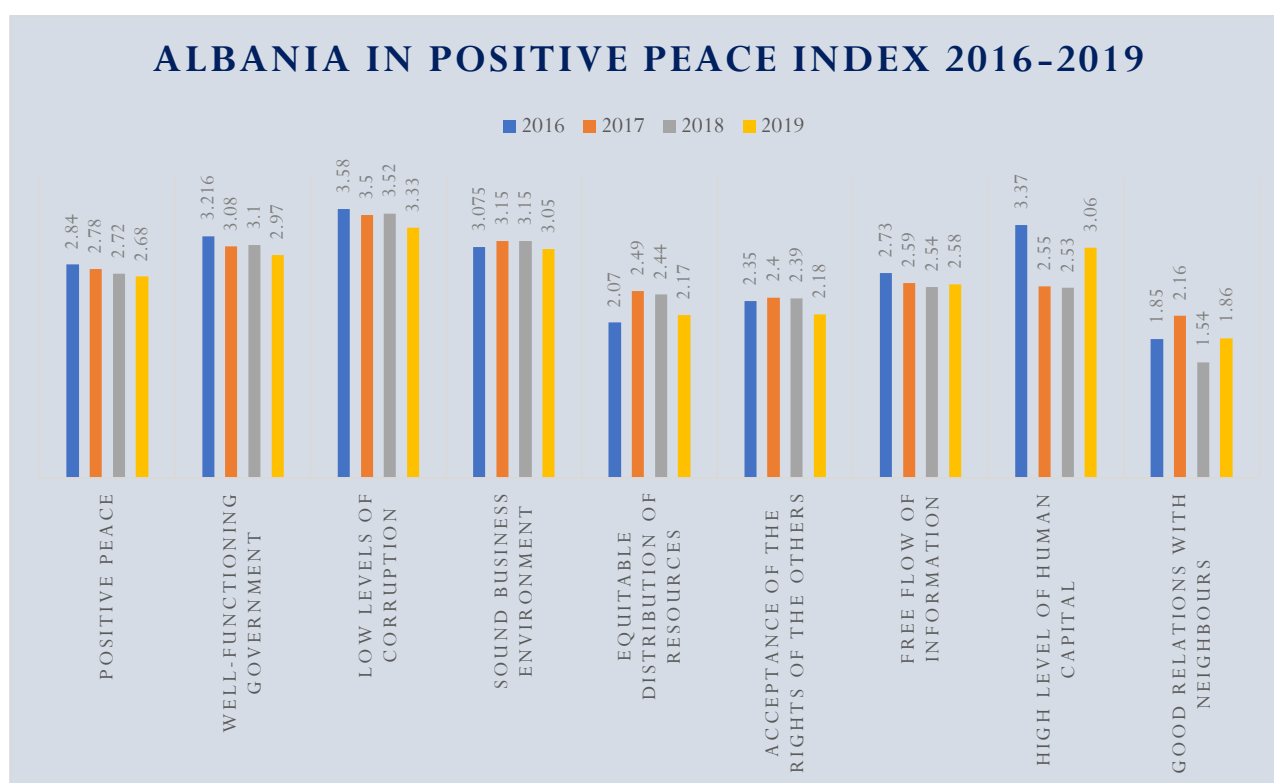


Chart 8

The country, compared to 2018 performances, recorded an improvement of all of its PP pillars except for Free Flow of Information (-0.04), High Level of Human Capital (-0.53), and Good Relations with Neighbours (-0.32). As aforementioned, the last pillar could be linked to the delicate handling of the Kosovo

<sup>6</sup> Positive Peace assessment is based on a 1-5 ratio where a range score of 1-2.38 means very high positive peace level, 2.39-3.26 high, 3.27-3.68 medium, and 3.69-5 low.

issue and that of the treatment of Albanian minorities across the Balkans region (especially in North Macedonia). Concerning Free Flow of Information, an increase in these specific realms could have been hindered by the fact that the Government was discussing at the end of 2019 a law (passed in Parliament in December of the same year), which institutes an authority that has the power to judge and fine online media sources. The act has been strongly criticized by local and international groups, and the European Commission. Beside these matters of concern, Albania appears to be on the right path to improve its governmental structure and counter corruption. In chart 9 and 10 the same analysis is provided with reference to the WB6 in general.

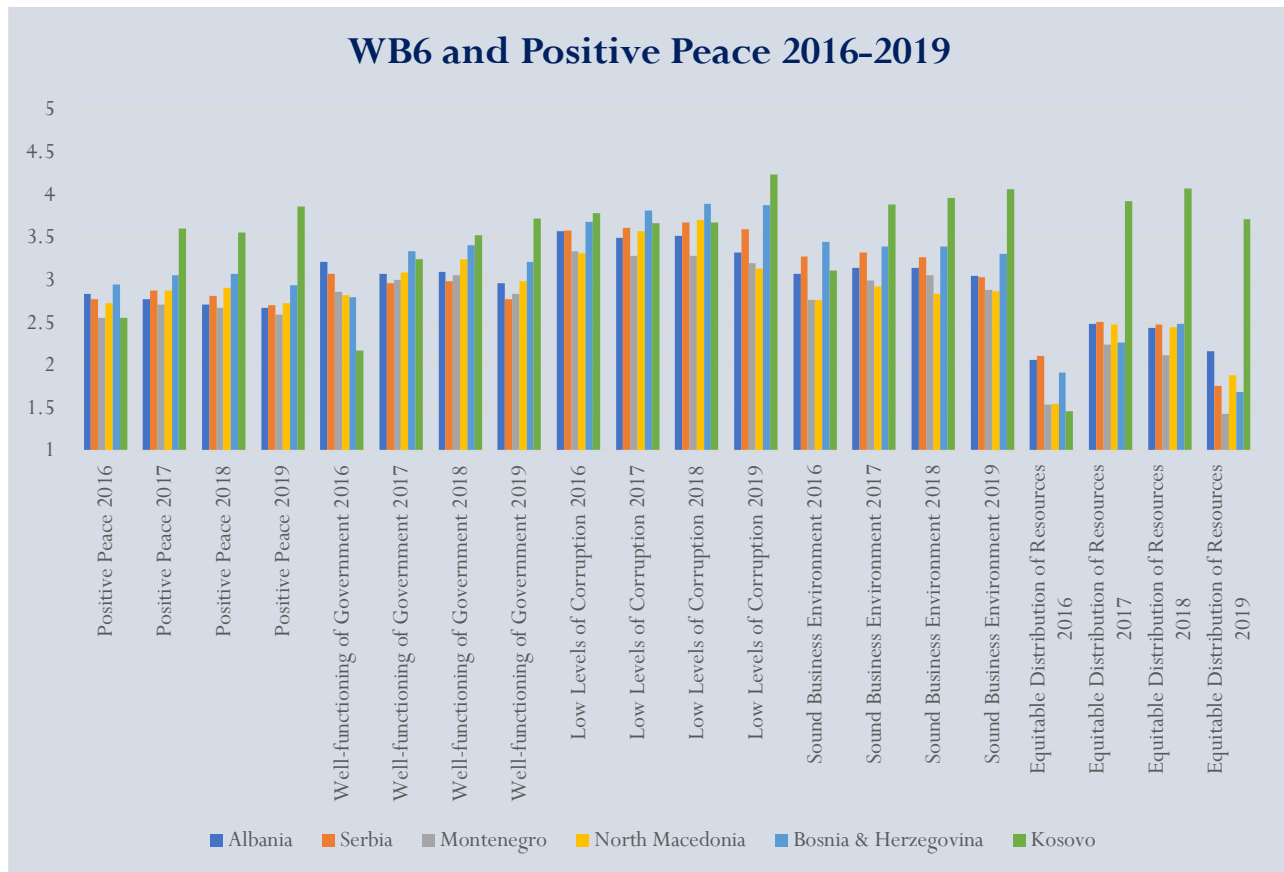


Chart 9

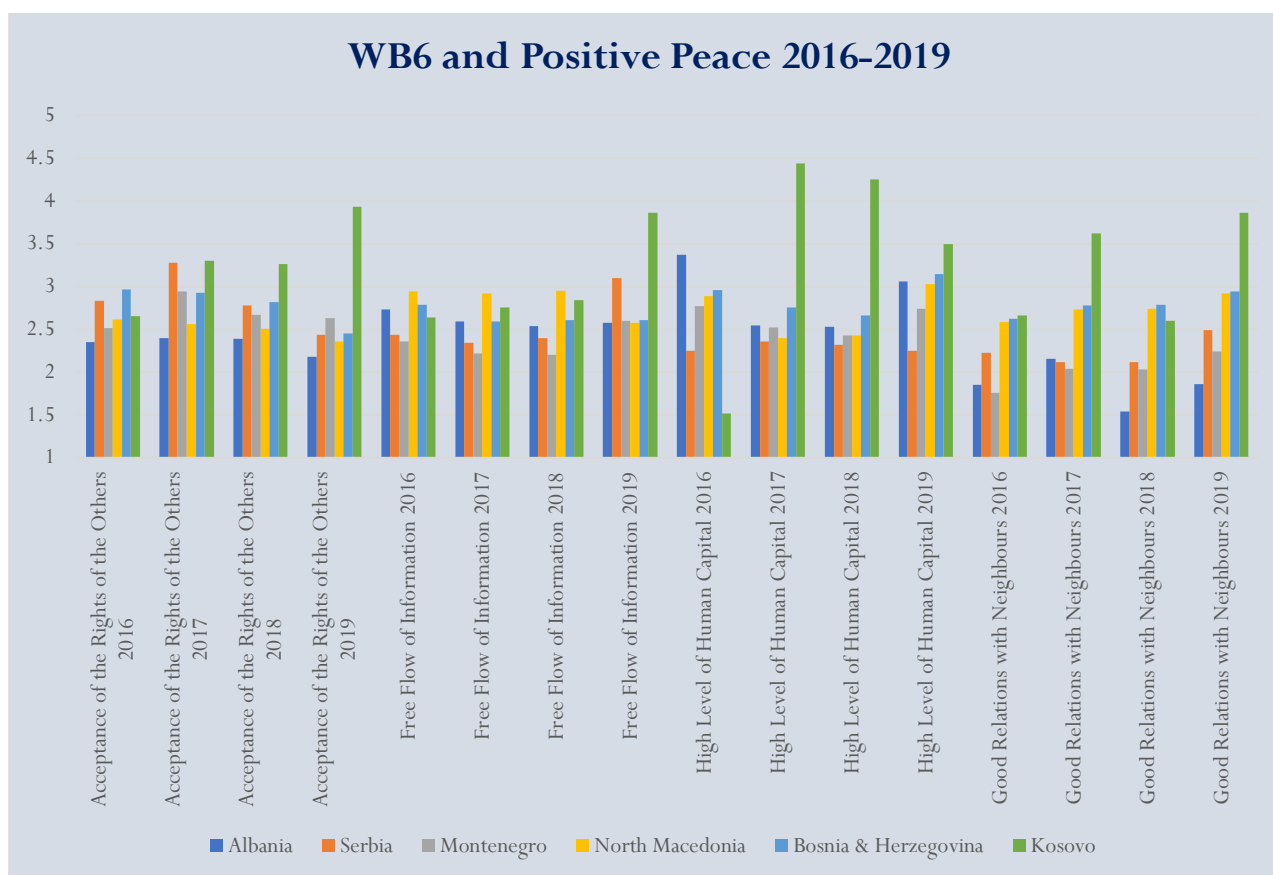


Chart 10

Montenegro is the best performing country out of the WB6 (position 47 and PP score of 2.6.). Major improvements have been detected in Well Functioning of Government (2.84, +0.22 from previous year) and Equitable Distribution of Resources (1.43, +0.69). Serbia ranks 55<sup>th</sup> with a PP score of 2.71. Important improvements have been found in Well Functioning of Government (2.78, +0.21 compared to 2018), Sound Business Environment (3.04, +0.23) and Equitable Distribution of Resources (1.76, +0.72).

North Macedonia stands at position 56 (comprehensive score of 2.73): the country registered its best performances in Free Flow of Information (2.58, +0.37), and Acceptance of the Rights of the Others (2.36, +0.15). Bosnia & Herzegovina ranks 65<sup>th</sup> with a PP score of 2.94. The pillars in which an improvement can be highlighted are Equitable Distribution of Resources (1.69, +0.8) and Acceptance of the Rights of the Others (2.45, +0.37). Kosovo can be found at position 138 with an overall score of 3.87: is the worst performing country among the WB6, whose pillars have all deteriorated except for Equitable Distribution of Resources (3.72, +0.36) and High Level of Human Capital (3.5, +0.7). Particularly severe has been the decay in Good Relations with Neighbours (3.86, -1.2).

Confirming a difficult period of good relations within the WB6, all the countries of the cluster worsened this particular pillar – Albania (-0.32), Serbia (-0.37), Montenegro (-0.21), North Macedonia (-0.18), and Bosnia & Herzegovina (-0.15). Positive peace is still a long process for the area, and this latter pillar may be fundamental in boosting the others.

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## 5. *Human Capital Index*

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According to the definition given by the *World Bank*, The *Human Capital Index* (HCI) is an international metric that benchmarks key components of human capital across countries. Measuring the human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by her 18th birthday, the HCI highlights how current health and education outcomes shape the productivity of the next generation of workers.”

This new *World Bank*’s effort highlights important progress made by countries in improving their human capital in the last decade (+4% on average), particularly due to improvements in the access to education and health – in turn boosted by economic growth; nonetheless, a special warning comes from the importance of defending the advances obtained from the current crisis brought by the pandemic.

In spite of increase in human capital levels, considerable gaps still exist. For instance, on average, a child born in the pre-Covid era could expect to fulfil a 56% of his/her potential productivity at work. This gap affects with still greater intensity low-income countries and those involved in conflicts, violence and institutional fragility, where a child could expect to reach 37% of his or her human capital – compared to the 70% that can be reached by a child from a high-income country.

The 2020 update of the *Human Capital Index* gathers data for the HCI components<sup>7</sup> as of March 2020. Components are calculated on a 0-1 range – 1 represents full human capital utilisation –, and a lower value and upper value for every country are also presented – any country measured value could swing, given the availability and accuracy of a full set of data, between a lower and a higher score. The report assessed a total of 174 countries.

With respect to the main country analysed by this draft, Albania ranks 50<sup>th</sup> (56<sup>th</sup> in 2018) with an HCI value of 0.63 (0.63 in 2018), a lower value of 0.62 and a higher value of 0.64. This means the country is above the world average and confirmed a positive trend starting from year 2010 – during this period Albanian improved from an initial 0.54 to the actual 0.63. An important peculiarity of the country is that, on average, girls have a higher HCI (0.66) than boys (0.61).

Given the different standards of measurement for the HCI indicators, chart 11 and 12 show a comparison between WB6 pondered to ease the reading of the values. Under a time perspective, a comparison will be presented concerning data from 2020 and 2018.

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<sup>7</sup> HCI components are Survival: this measure intends to assess the possibility for children to pass the year -5 threshold and to start the human capital accumulation process – which is the beginning of the education career; Expected Years of Learning-adjusted School: this indicator mixes the expected years of schooling at age of 18 with a quality component which comes from a comparison of how much children learn in school and the relative attainment in international student achievement tests – “Harmonised Test Score”; Health: it is composed of two main indicators which are “rate of stunting of children under age 5” and “adult survival rate” – proportion of 15-year old persons who survive until age of 60.

## WB6 IN HCI 2020-2018 COMPARISON

■ Albania ■ Serbia ■ Montenegro ■ North Macedonia ■ Bosnia & Herzegovina ■ Kosovo

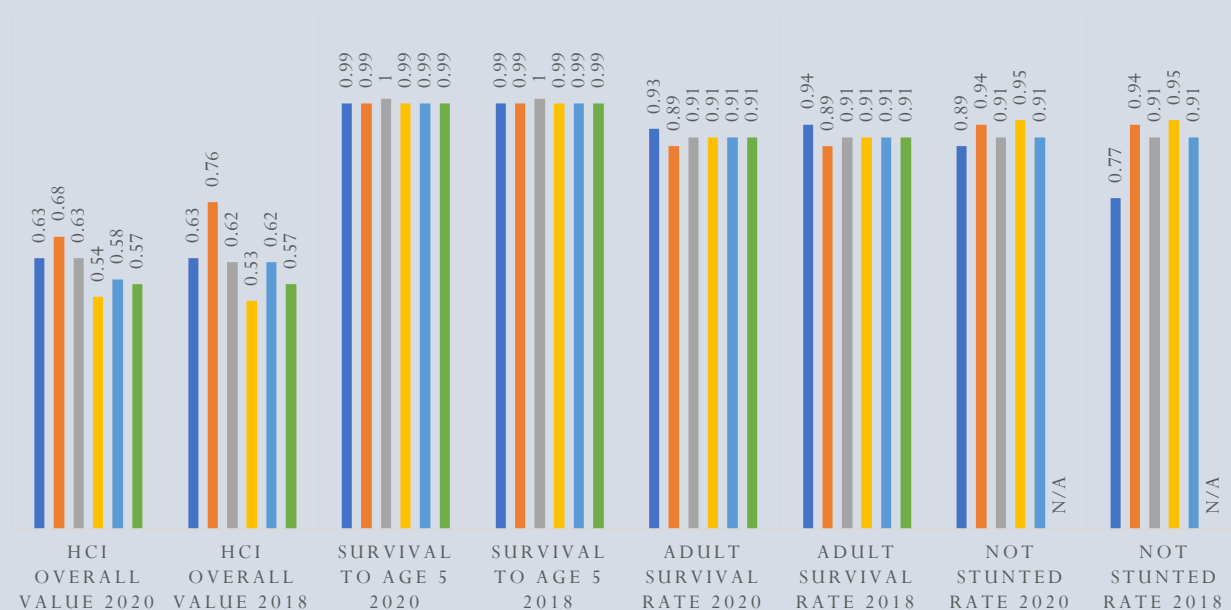


Chart 11

## WB6 IN HCI 2020-2018 COMPARISON

■ Albania ■ Serbia ■ Montenegro ■ North Macedonia ■ Bosnia & Herzegovina ■ Kosovo

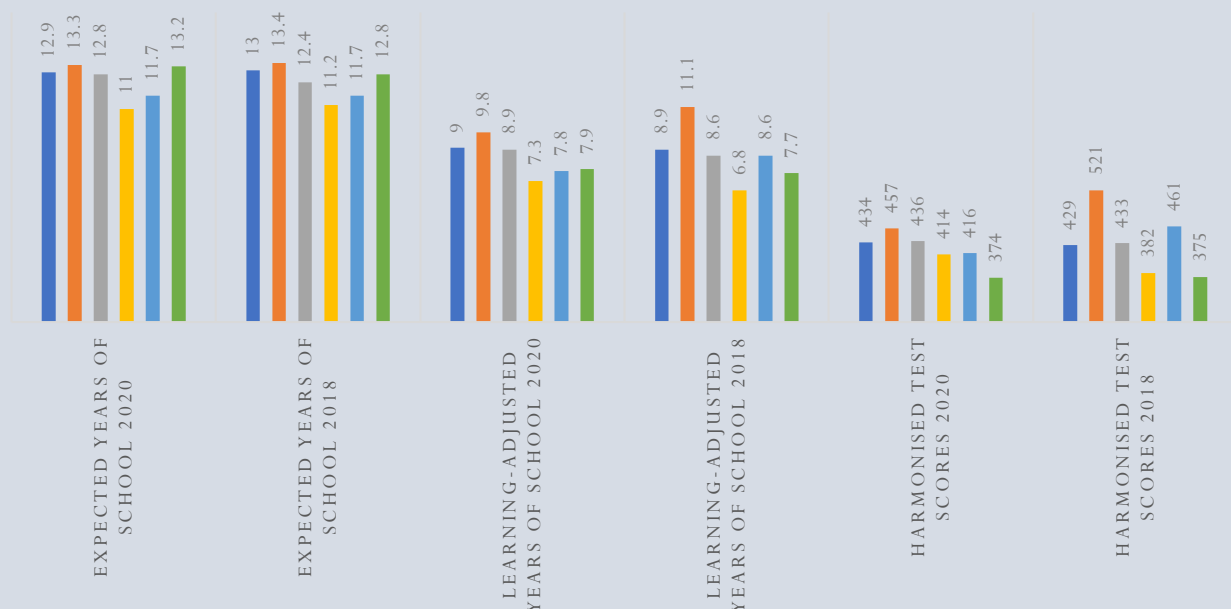


Chart 12

Concerning the HCI overall score, between 2018 and 2020 only two countries registered a slight improvement – North Macedonia and Montenegro (+0.1) – while Serbia (-0.8) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (-0.4) experienced a serious decay. No change can be detected in Albania and Kosovo HCI comprehensive value.

With regard to the three main categories of the HCI, the WB6 disclosed good performances in Survival to Age 5 and Health – with Albania highlighting a significant change in its Not Stunted Rate (from the 0.77 of 2018 to the 0.89 of 2020). However, in the Expected Years of Learning-adjusted School domain, the situation gives us a worse picture. Basically, each of the WB6 – Montenegro excluded – registered a deterioration in at

least one indicator: Albania, despite a very slight decrease in Expected Years of School (-0.1), experienced an amelioration of both Learning-adjusted Years of School (+0.1) and Harmonised Test Scores (+5 – calculation range for this indicator is 300-625 –). In contrast to the advances achieved by Montenegro – +0.4 in Expected Years of School, and +0.3 in Learning-adjusted Years of School –, Serbia exhibited a grievous worsening of Learning-adjusted Years of School (-1.3) and Harmonised Test Scores (-64). North Macedonia improved its Learning-adjusted Years of School (+0.5) and Harmonised Test Scores (+32) while decaying in Expected Years of School (-0.2); Kosovo increased its values in Expected Years of School (+0.4) and Learning-adjusted Years of School (+0.4) experiencing a not very significant change (-0.1) in Harmonised Test Scores; Bosnia & Herzegovina worsened in Learning-adjusted Years of School (-0.8) and Harmonised Test Scores (-45). Considering these values, access to education and quality schooling appears as a fundamental issue to tackle for boosting human capital in the WB6.

## 6. State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World

The FAO's *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* – jointly prepared with IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO – is “[...]an annual flagship report to inform on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and to provide in-depth analysis on key challenges for achieving this goal in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[...]”.

According to FAO, the world is encountering several obstacles to meet targets set by *United Nations' Development Goal 2 – Zero Hunger*. The 2020 report highlights that the world is still off track to end hunger by 2030. Data show that target 2.1 – Ensuring Access to Safe, Nutritious and Sufficient Food for All People All Year Round – and 2.2 – Eradicating All Forms of Malnutrition – are still a chimera and while in 2019, due to recalculation of data concerning China, the number of undernourished lowered to 690 million, in 2018 the total number of undernourished was 820 million, new estimates, subsequent to Covid crisis, foresee an increase in absolute number by 2030 (840 million). Within this scheme, children appear the most affected age group. In fact, in 2019 about 144 million children under 5 years of age (21.3%) were estimated to be stunted. The pandemic must be added to the other well-known factors contributing to hunger such as climate change, conflicts and economic recessions.

In addition, a growing number of people are experiencing reduction in quantity and quality of food; in 2019, 25.8% of world population did not have regular access to sufficient food.

One good news is that between 2000 and 2019 the prevalence of child stunting decreased by one-third.

With respect to Albania (and the WB6 in general), data of previous reports highlighted food security and nutrition levels beyond standards required by a high human development country or state from the Southern Europe region. Chart 13 provides Albania's profile in the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*.

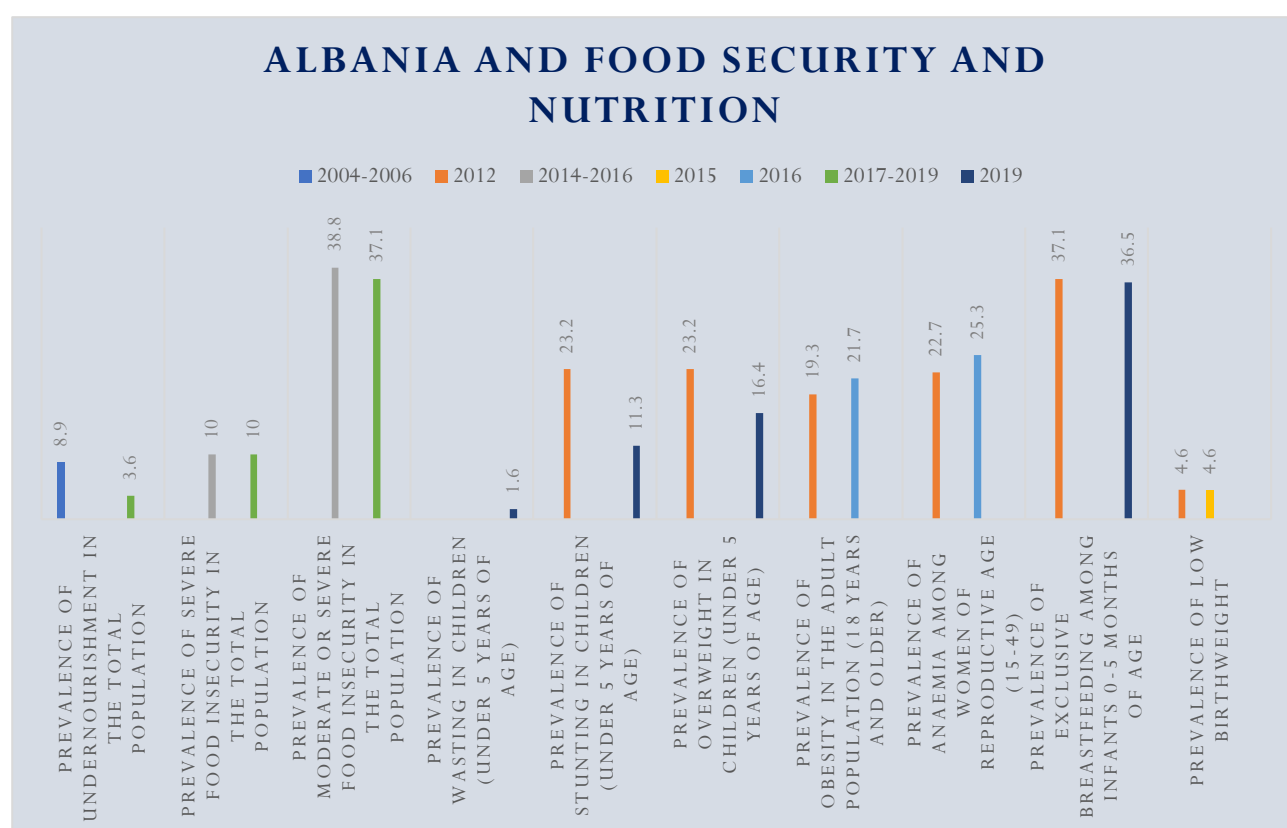


Chart 13

Among the indicators that are worthy of attention one can find: Prevalence of Undernourishment in the Total Population where Albania experienced improvements – 8.9% in 2004-2006 compared to the 3.6% in 2017-2019, although still under Southern Europe<sup>8</sup> average (<2.5%); Prevalence of Severe Food Insecurity in

<sup>8</sup> Southern Europe countries are Albania, Andorra, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain.

the Total Population where no change occurred in the period considered – 10% value against the 1.5% average of Southern Europe; Prevalence of Moderate and Severe Food Insecurity in the Total Population – Albania registered a slight improvement passing from the 38.8% of year 2014-2016 to the 37.1% of 2017-2019 (Consider Southern Europe average of 8.5%); a considerable improvement was registered in Prevalence of Stunting in Children Under 5 Years of Age – the country highlighted a prevalence of 11.3% in 2019 when, in 2012, it was 23.2%. Despite the positive change obtained in nearly every indicator, Albania needs a more effective action to end hunger within its borders.

Following the analysis, in chart 14 an examination of the WB6 food security and nutrition levels is presented with the most recent data.

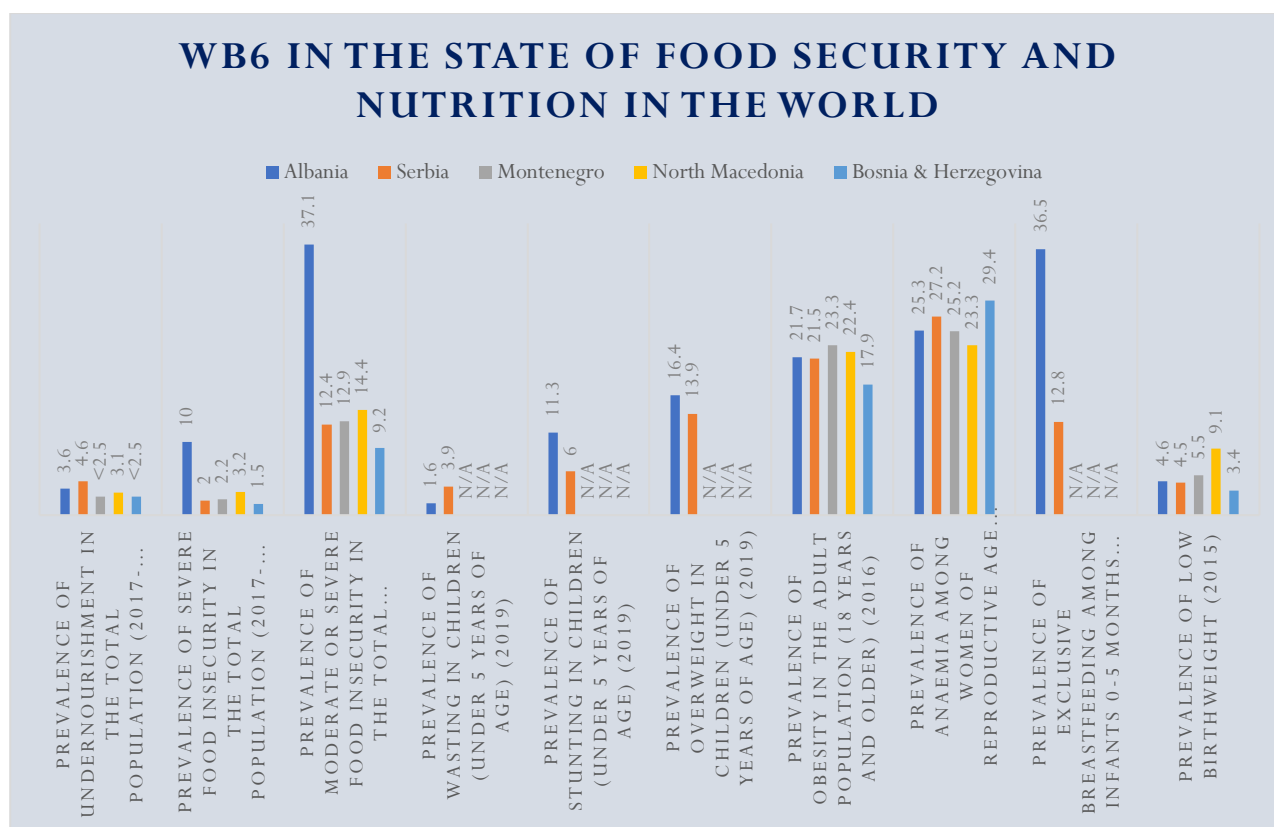


Chart 14 [Kosovo is not included in the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020]

With reference to Prevalence of Undernourished in the Total Population, the data show that only Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina (<2.5%) exhibited the same levels as Southern Europe average. If one considers Prevalence of Severe Food Insecurity in the Total Population and Prevalence of Moderate or Severe Food Insecurity in the Total Population – Southern Europe average of 1.7% and 9.5%, respectively –, only Bosnia & Herzegovina is able to reach the regional standard. The other indicators such as Prevalence of Obesity in the Adult Population and Prevalence of Low Birthweight, the WB6 highlight results in line with or better than those registered in the region (21.8% and 7.3%). Despite some encouraging values, the WB6 show a low overall level of food security and nutrition, and interventions to decrease poverty rate<sup>9</sup> and increase access to quality food are needed.

<sup>9</sup> According to the *World Bank*, percentage of people living with less than 5 (PPP) dollars is 38% in Albania (2017 data), 3.9% in Bosnia & Herzegovina (2011), 21.6% in Kosovo (2017), 4.8% in Montenegro (2014), 23.1% in North Macedonia (2015) and 20.3% in Serbia (2017).



## 7. Freedom in the World

*Freedom in the World* is a yearly publication of US-based NGO *Freedom House* assessing the condition of civil liberties and political rights across the globe. First produced in 1973, the report evaluates a total of 210 countries and territories according to information and data coming from external analysts obtained through on-the-ground research, consultations with local actors and analysis of governmental and nongovernmental sources. For each country, the report evaluates the following indicators: (i) in the Political Rights domain – Electoral Process, Political Pluralism and Participation, Functioning of Government; (ii) in the Civil Liberties domain – Freedom of Expression and Belief, Associational and Organisational Rights, Rule of Law, and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights. A rating ranging from 1 “Most Free” to 7 “Least Free” is assigned to every country<sup>10</sup>.

According to the 2020 report, in 2019, global freedom confirms its downward trend and 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of decline. 64 countries registered a worsening in their freedom levels while only 37 experienced an improvement. 25 out of 41 established democracies and experienced a deterioration of their freedom. Ethnic, religious and minority groups are increasingly being targeted by both autocratic and democratic regimes – India representing a clear example of democracy promoting a religious vision of civic participation and hindering the fulfilment of civil rights of Muslim sections of the society. In addition, protests in not free or partly free countries to protect individual and collective freedoms have been ineffective due to low support of established democracies. The report calls for an international solidarity movement in aid of civil societies demanding freedom.

With regard to Albania, the country registered an overall Freedom score of 67/100 and confirmed its “Partly Free” status – Freedom rating of 3. The overall score represents a negative change from previous years’ score (68/100). Chart 15 provides a complete picture of Albania status within the *Freedom in the World* from 2016 to 2019.

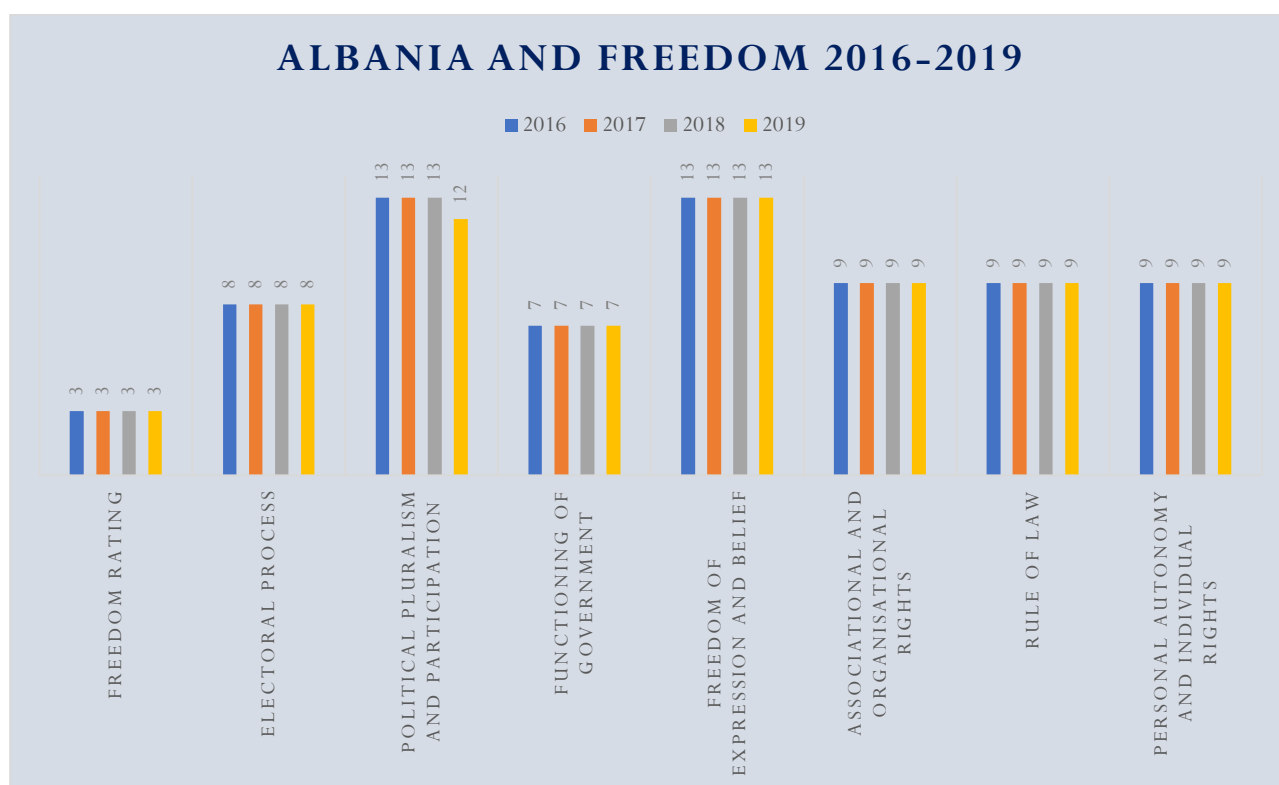


Chart 15

As highlighted in the chart, the overall decline can be attributed to a worsening of Political Pluralism and Participation – specifically due to the impossibility to favour electoral pluralism in the June 2019 local

<sup>10</sup> Beside the pondered freedom score, one can find an overall score ranging from 0 to 100 which is composed by Political Rights and Civil Liberties results which in turn are calculated on a 0-40 and 0-60 scale, respectively.

elections which the opposition decided to boycott. In this perspective, the electoral reform started by the ruling Socialist Party, and agreed with the opposition, appears to be a fundamental aspect for Albania's democracy future. The main domains rating and scores assessed by *Freedom in the World* show that Albania registered a 27/40 in Political Rights – rating of 3 – (down from the 28/40 of year 2018), and 40/60 in Civil Liberties – rating of 3 – (this indicator is stable over time).

## **BOX 2: Albania Electoral Reform**

The Electoral Reform is amongst the most impellent issues the country has to tackle, even more given the importance attached to this chapter by the European institutions in order to negotiate Albania accession to the EU. The overall process is not a simple one as it involves both legislative reform and constitutional and territorial changes, and agreement between the Socialist Party and the oppositions has been difficult and troubled. The starting point of the reform was the July amendment to the Constitution (articles 64 and 68) which is supposed to include pre-electoral formation of coalitions and open lists of candidates. If President Ilir Meta does not issue a decree endorsing the amendments, the parliament could vote again over the changes in the new parliamentary session set to start in September. The centre-right opposition, which lately has been boycotting the parliamentary sessions, protested against the constitutional changes and said it would not consider it mandatory for the opposition nor for the citizens.

The reform was continued by minor laws consisting in electronic identification of voters and de-politicization of the Electoral Commission. More important changes are expected with the amendment of the Electoral Code, which is now subjected to different proposals coming from the Socialist Party, the extra-parliamentary opposition and the parliamentary opposition. The only topics on which the different bills seem to agree is to respect gender quotas and let citizens vote for only one party and candidate. Disagreement exists concerning the system. The system proposed by the PS and the Democratic Group is a closed list system and offers very few opportunities for a person voted by voters to be elected MP. The system proposed by PD, LSI and Rudina Hajdari is a system with 100 percent open lists. Deputies are elected based on the preferred vote they receive. Once the parties agree on which proposal to accept, the draft will be discussed in the Law Commission and if deemed necessary by the commission members, changes will be made. After these discussions, the draft goes to the assembly for approval. To approve the amendments to the Electoral Code, 84 votes are required.

Despite its negative trend, Albania is the freest country out of the WB6. Serbia comes second with a total score of 66/100 while Montenegro and North Macedonia registered a comprehensive result of 62/100 and 63/100, respectively. Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo close the group with a 53/100 and 56/100. They are all considered “Partly Free”. Chart 16 contains information on the remaining Western Balkan Six, comprising overall and domain scores.

## WB6 AND FREEDOM 2016-2019

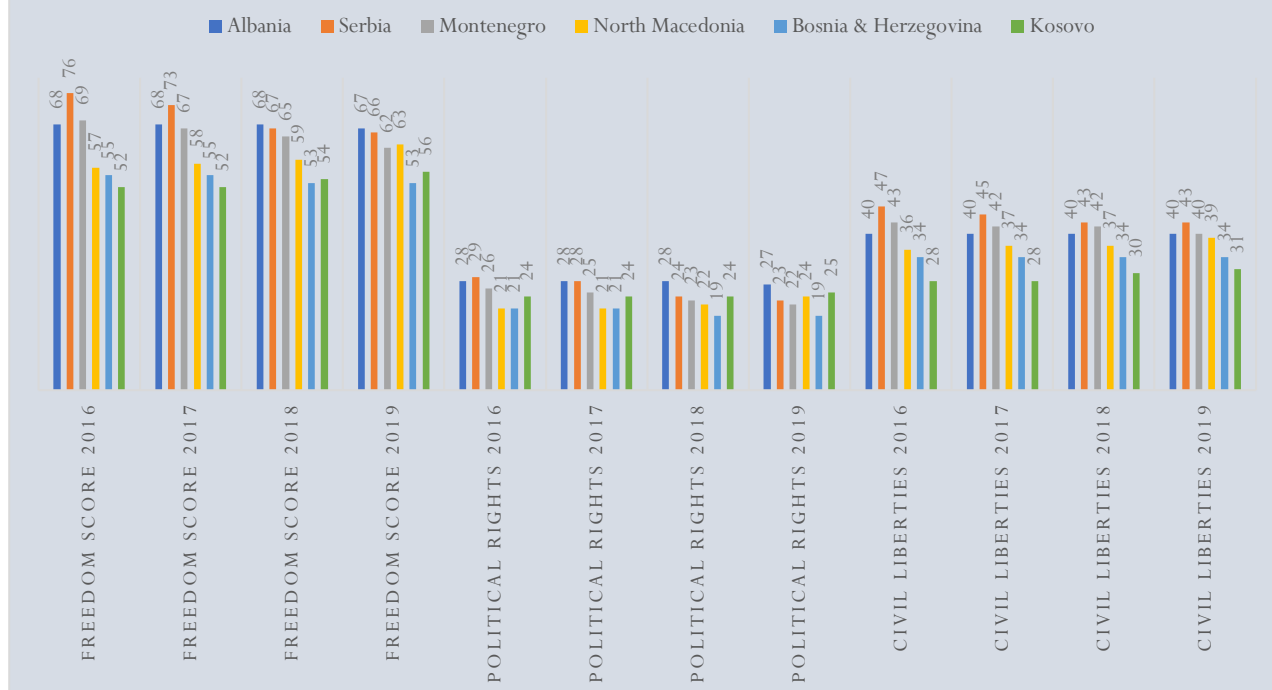


Chart 16

In the region, Albania (-1), Serbia (-10), Montenegro (-7) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (-2) show a worsening of their freedom levels in 2016-2019, on the contrary North Macedonia (+6) and Kosovo (+4) improve their performance. The situation is particularly serious in Serbia, which has experienced a worsening of its Political Rights (-6) and Civil Liberties (-4). Montenegro shows also a reduction of 4 in Political Rights and of 3 in Civil Liberties. Concerning the improved countries, Kosovo increased its freedom levels, this result depends on the positive change in Civil Liberties (+3) and Political Rights (+1) while North Macedonia improved both its Political Rights and Civil Liberties by a +3.

Based on the WB6 conductWB6, one can easily state that the downward trend of global freedom can also be detected, though with few exceptions, in the Balkans. With no surprise, *Freedom of the World* highlights Functioning of Government and Rule of Law as the indicators where the WB6 expressed the lowest performances. Respectively, Albania – 7/12 and 9/16, Serbia – 5/12 and 9/16, Montenegro – 5/12 and 9/16, North Macedonia – 6/12 and 9/16, Bosnia & Herzegovina – 4/12 and 7/16 and Kosovo – 5/12 and 6/16.

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## 8. *Economic Freedom*

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The *Economic Freedom in the World* is a report published by the *Fraser Institute* based research and educational organization focusing on best practices about public policies worldwide. The report covers 162 territories and states and investigates over the wide concept of economic freedom. According to the *Fraser Institute*, the economic freedom is the level governments and public policies safeguard properties, and sustain individual choices or capabilities to enter, carry activities and move within the economic market. The measurement of economic freedom is based on 5 main areas:

- (i) **Size of Government:** the extent that government, through public enterprises, spending and taxation, held the decision-making role in the market, preventing full capacity of individual choices and economic freedom;
- (ii) **Legal System and Property Rights:** how government protects individuals and their property rights, a condition considered at the foundation of economic freedom achievements;
- (iii) **Sound Money:** this concept is strongly connected to inflation and measures how savings and incomes are protected from volatile and high inflation rates;
- (iv) **Freedom to Trade Internationally:** concerns how international businesses and investors are stimulated to enter into the market and into the exchange capitals, trade products and services with national actors;
- (v) **Regulation:** is the condition for which governments enforce regulations, flexible enough to let privates freely operate their business and individuals make the best choices to enter the labour market.

In the final part, the report contains a section in which it analyses the Gender Legal Rights Adjustment. This is gender disparity adjustment index that gives information on the degree of economic freedom of women compared to men.

The 2020 *Economic Freedom of the World* stresses the fact that economically free states outperform states which are not economically free. These indicators stand out: countries in the top quartile of the index had an average GDP per capita of \$44,198 (2018) compared to \$5,754 for countries in the bottom quartile; in the top quartile, average income for the poorest 10% was \$12,293 compared to \$1,558 in the bottom quartile; 1.7% of the population from the top quartile experienced extreme poverty against 31.5% in the bottom quartile.

The most recent data (2018) confirm Hong Kong in the top position. Singapore comes next and the other best scoring countries are New Zealand, Switzerland, United States, Australia, Mauritius, Georgia, Canada and Ireland. The lowest-ranking countries are Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Republic of Congo, Algeria, Iran, Angola, Libya, Sudan and Venezuela – many of them are characterised by conventional wars or low-intensity conflicts.

Pointing the lights on Albania, the country, with an overall score of 7.80 (0-10 scale), ranks 26<sup>th</sup> in the 2020 index. These performances confirm Albania positive trend – the country ranked 34<sup>th</sup> in the 2018 index (7.54 score) and 30<sup>th</sup> in the 2019 index (7.67 score) – and its status as the economically freest WB6.

Chart 17 describes Albania economic freedom profile employing 2010, 2015 and 2018 data.

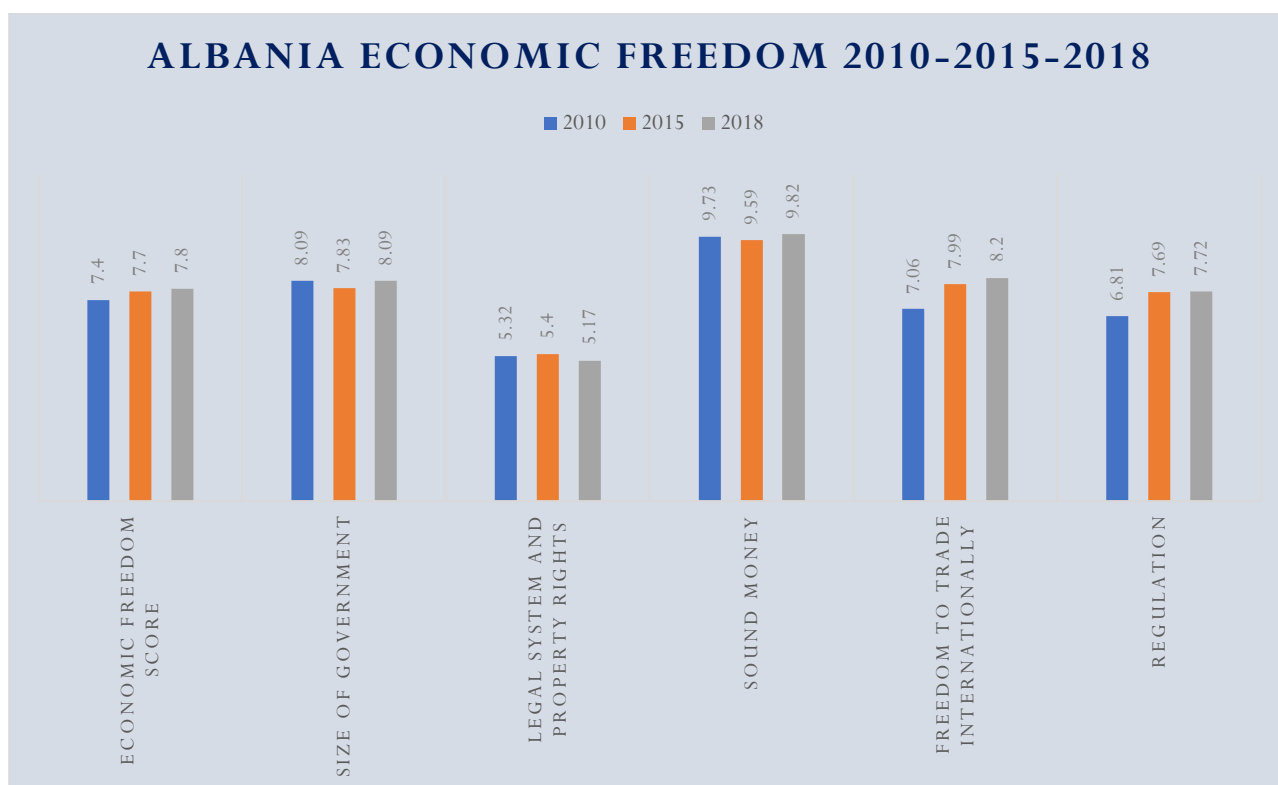


Chart 17

In the timeframe assessed, Albania shows an improvement in all of the indicators composing the economic freedom, with the exception of Legal System and Property Rights (5.17). This result probably depends on the lack of improvement of some sub-indicators such as Judicial Independence (3.56), Impartial Courts (3.55) and Legal Enforcement of Contracts (3.91). Promising are the improvements registered in Regulation (7.72) and Freedom to Trade Internationally (8.2). With regard to these indicators, Albania increase is due to significant progress in Credit Market regulation (9.74, +0.53 compared to year 2015) and Regulatory Trade Barriers (8.11, +0.69 compared to 2017 result). Size of the Government (8.09) and Sound Money (9.82) are the domains where Albania is better positioned (ranking respectively 22<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in the index). In chart 18 the same analysis is offered concerning the WB6.

## WB6 ECONOMIC FREEDOM 2010-2015-2018

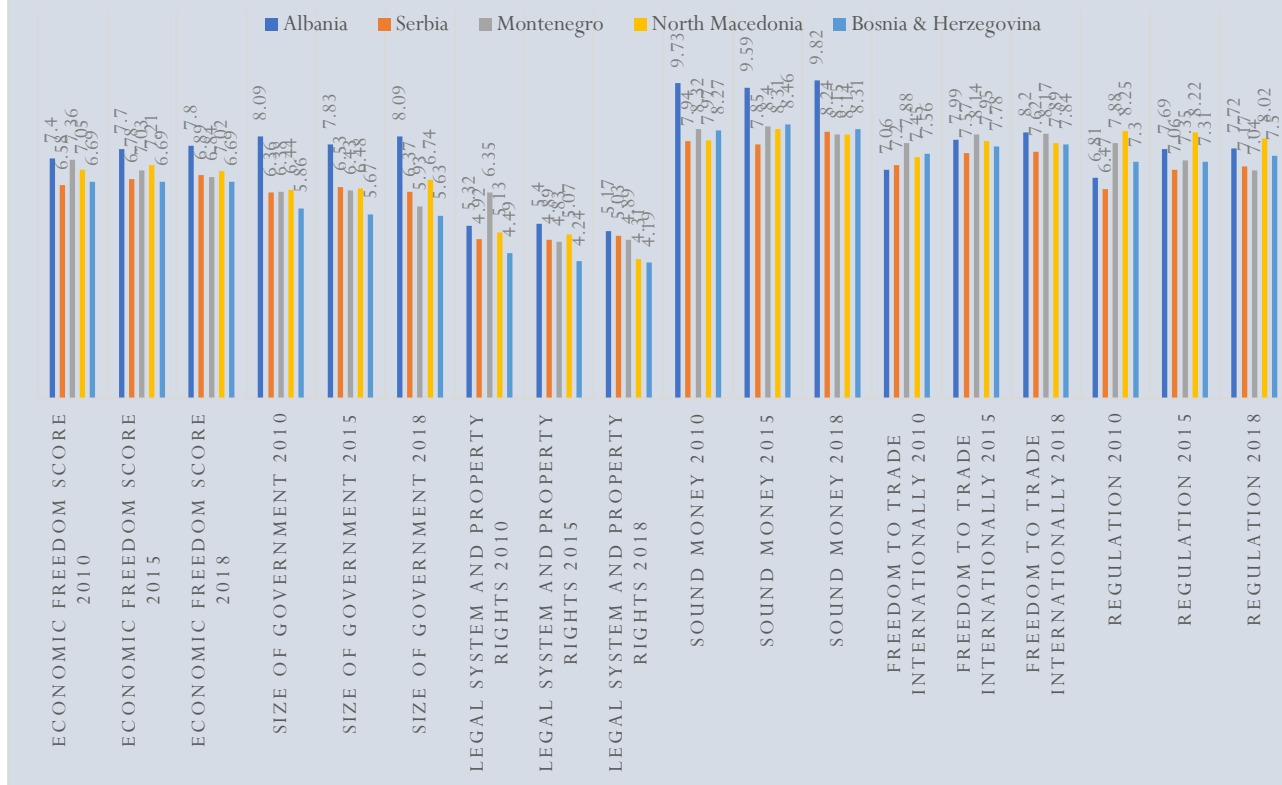


Chart 18 [Kosovo is not included as has not been assessed by the Economic Freedom in the World]

Among the WB6, excluding Albania whose economic freedom has been already discussed, North Macedonia comes next as the economically freest from the Western Balkans Six – comprehensive economic freedom score of 7.02 and 73<sup>rd</sup> in the rank. The country exhibited a significant score in Regulation (8.02), yet with a deterioration from 2015 result (-0.22), where it is the best performing WB6. In Legal System and Property Rights, which is a matter of concern for every country analysed, North Macedonia registered a worrying deterioration (-0.76) between 2015 (5.07) and 2018 (4.31).

Serbia, which ranks 80<sup>th</sup>, is the only country (besides Albania) to register improvements in its overall score (6.89, +0.31 compared to 2010). The country experienced improvements of all the indicators assessed between 2010 and 2018 – Size of Government (+0.01), Legal System and Property Rights (+0.11), Sound Money (+0.3), Freedom to Trade Internationally (+0.42) and Regulation (+0.57).

Particularly worrying is the decay occurred to Montenegro (83<sup>rd</sup>), which, in 2018, registered a comprehensive score of 6.84 compared to previous 7.03 (2015) and 7.36 (2010). Between 2010 and 2018, the country worsened in every domain except for Freedom to Trade Internationally (+0.29). The decreases in Size of Government (-0.43), Legal System and Property Rights (-1.46) and Regulation (-0.84) are worthy of attention.

Bosnia & Herzegovina, which is the least economically free from the WB6, ranks 92<sup>nd</sup> with a score of 6.69 – no change compared to 2010 and 2015. Between 2010 and 2018, the country slightly improved its Sound Money (+0.04), Freedom to Trade Internationally (+0.28) and Regulation (+0.2) while it worsened in Size of Government (-0.23) and Legal System and Property Rights (-0.3).

## 9. Globalisation Index

The *Globalisation Index* by KOF – Konjunkturforschungsstelle, a branch of the Federal Polytechnic School of Zurich. The index maintains up-to-date globalization levels of world countries since 1970. Last update refers to year 2019 (2017 globalisation data). Every globalization variable assessed by the index is measured on a 0-100 scale and it has a different weight on the calculation composing the overall globalization score. Variables fall under 12 sub-indices or indices – as the case of Political globalization, and they finally consist of 6 main indices – Economic Globalisation (de facto), Social globalisation (de facto), Political globalisation (de facto), Economic globalisation (de jure), Social globalisation (de jure), Political globalisation (de jure). Each of these three domains is aggregated to the *Globalisation Index* with an equal weight of 33.3. De facto globalisation measures real flows and activities whereas de jure globalisation measures policies, conditions and institutions in charge of facilitating activities.

According to the 2019 index, in 2017, the world highlighted an overall globalisation score of 62.1 – an improvement from 61.86 (2016 score). The 2017 comprehensive score is made up of a de facto globalisation of 59.36 and a de jure globalisation of 64.15 – respectively +0.28 and +0.20 compared to 2016 data. With regard to Albania, in 2017, the country ranked 75<sup>th</sup> with an overall globalisation score of 67.48, which represents an improvement of 0.57 compared to 2016. Despite the positive change, Albania lost 12 positions in the ranking – it was 63<sup>rd</sup> in the 2018 index (ranking for year 2015). A more detailed analysis of the country, inclusive of a 2013-2017 investigation, is shown in chart 19.

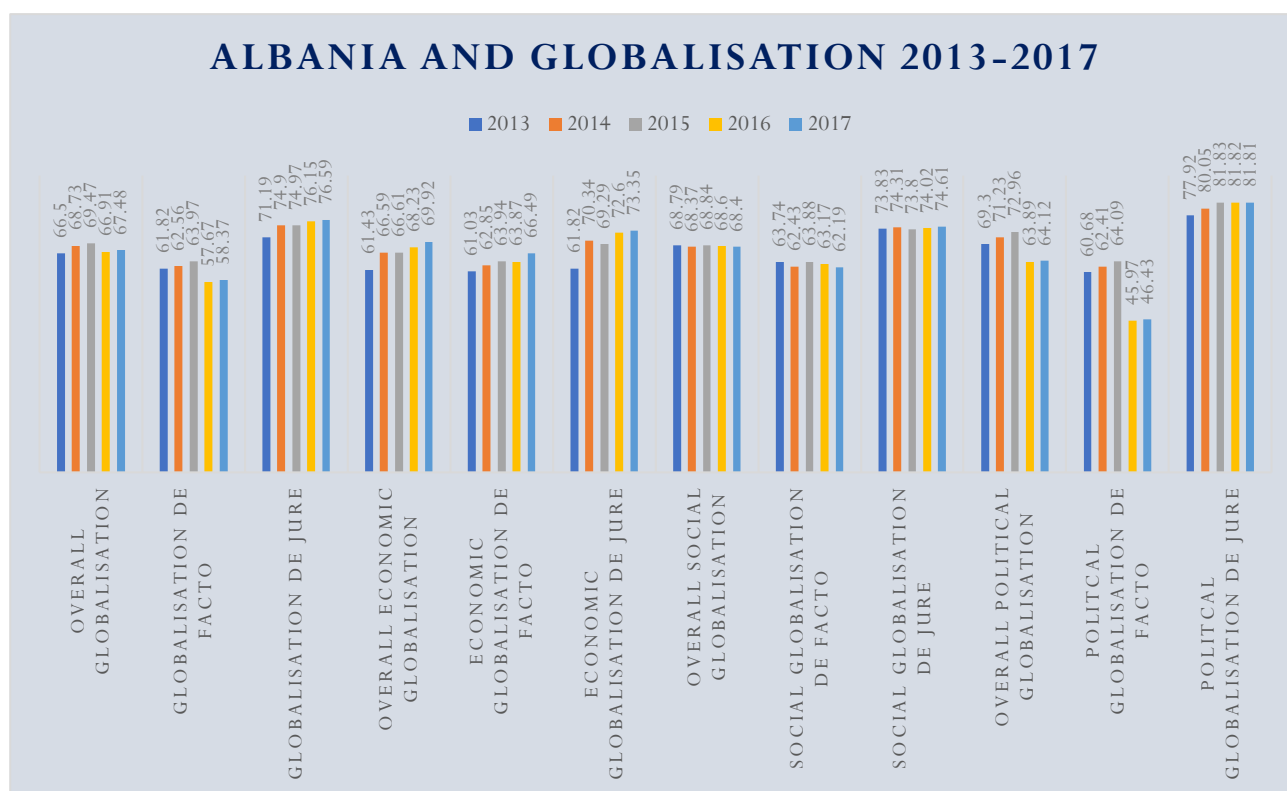


Chart 19

As shown in chart 19, Albania exhibited ups and downs in its overall globalisation score. Nonetheless, in the 2013-2017 period, the balance was positive (+0.98). Concerning the three domains assessed by the *Globalisation Index*, Economic Globalisation registered a significant improvement (+8.49) while Social Globalisation experienced a slight decay (-0.39). Particularly worrying is the deterioration manifested in Political Globalisation (-5.18). Values for this indicator are the synthesis of a negative trend regarding de facto Political Globalisation – which refers to the diffusion of governmental policies using as parameters the participation in UN peacekeeping missions and the presence of embassies and international NGOs in the country, and a positive trend concerning de jure Political Globalisation – the ability to engage in international political cooperation (i.e. number of signed treaties, memberships in international organisations and diversity amongst treaty partners).

A similar analysis is provided with reference to the WB6 in charts 20 and 21.

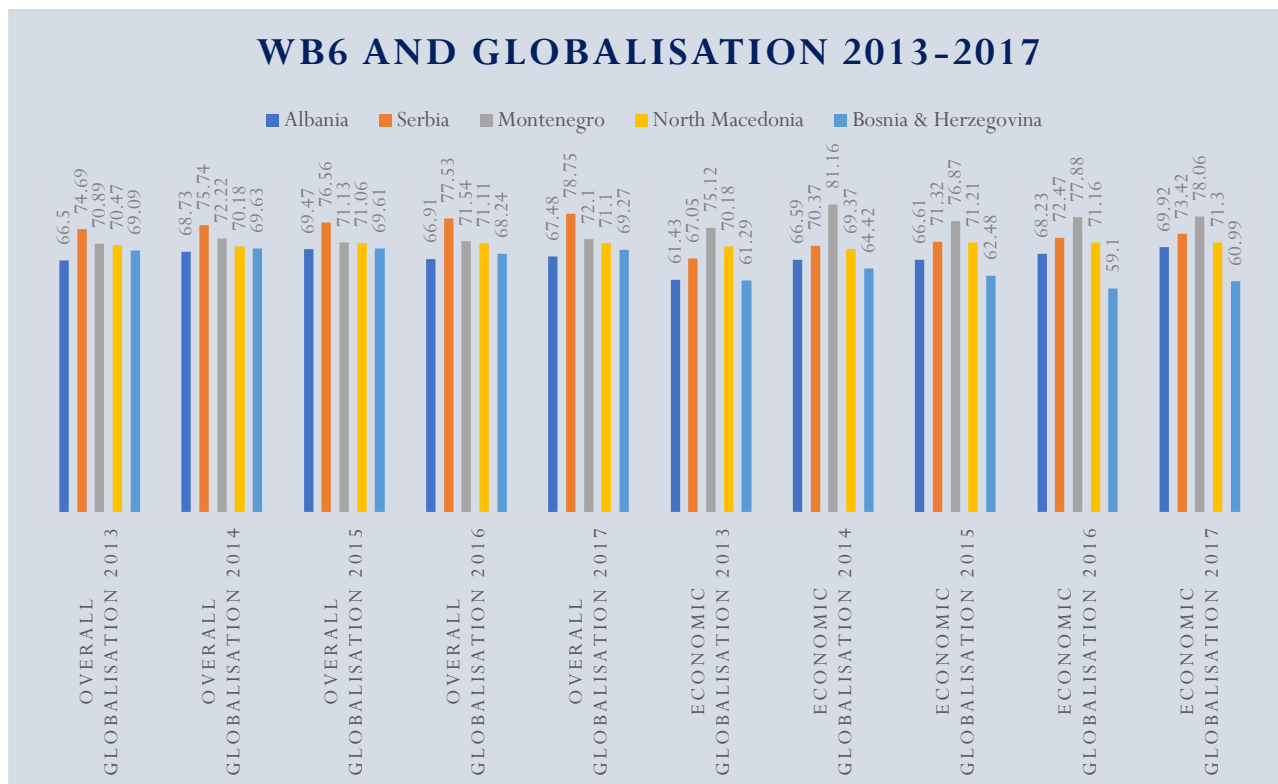


Chart 20 [Kosovo is not included as it has not been evaluated in the Globalisation Index]

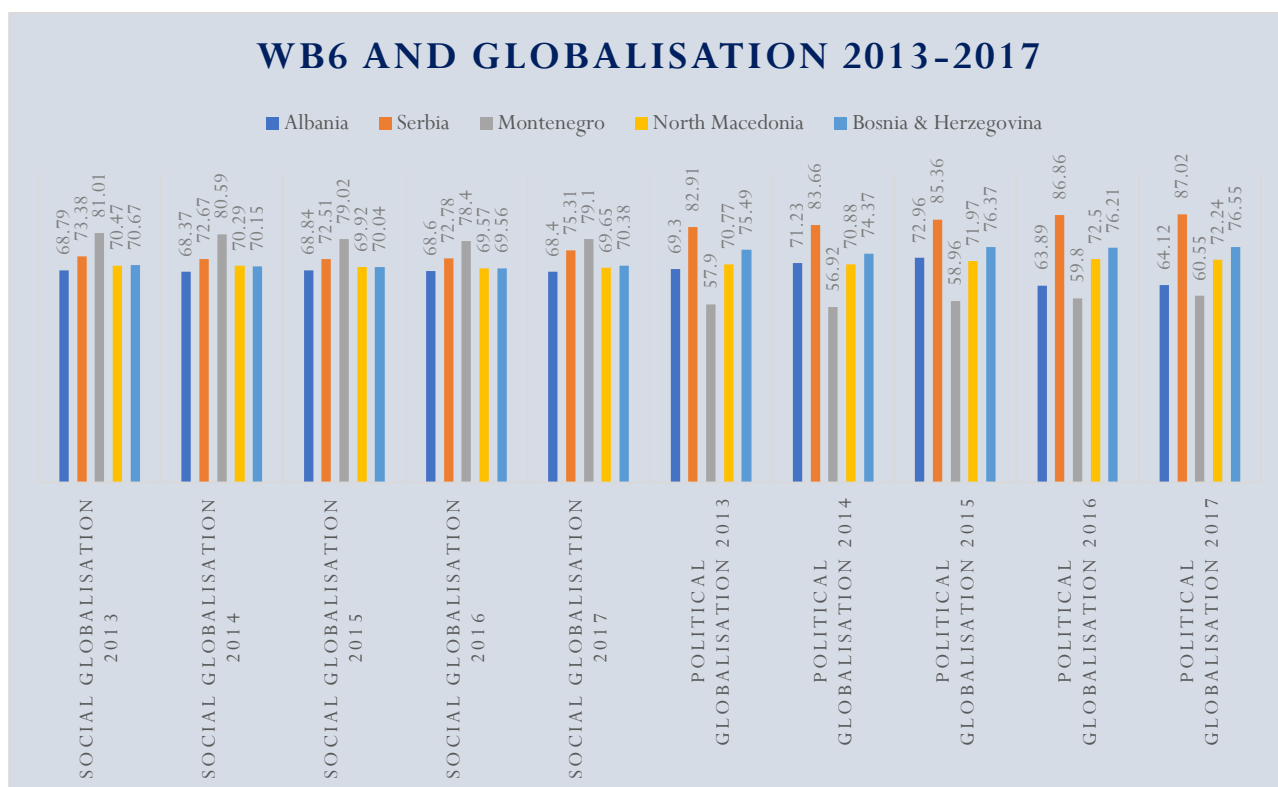


Chart 21 [Kosovo is not included as it has not been evaluated in the Globalisation Index]

As one can deduce from charts 20 and 21, Albania is the least globalised country among the WB6 while Serbia, with a comprehensive score of 78.75, ranks 36<sup>th</sup> in the index and is the most globalised in the cluster. Its values are particularly relevant with respect to Political Globalisation – here Serbia registered a score of 87.02 compared to the world average of 62.5. Montenegro, which ranks 55<sup>th</sup>, revealed a comprehensive score



of 72.1. The country performed better than the other WB6 in Economic Globalisation (78.06) and Social Globalisation (79.1), however, the overall value is undermined by a very low Political Globalisation score (60.55). The analysis is completed by North Macedonia (58<sup>th</sup>) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (64<sup>th</sup>) with respective overall scores of 71.1 and 69.27. Concerning these countries, they exhibited important values in Political Globalisation – 72.24 for North Macedonia and 76.55 for Bosnia & Herzegovina, nonetheless, North Macedonia is only above Albania when it comes to Social Globalisation (69.65) and Bosnia & Herzegovina highlighted low levels in Economic Globalisation (60.99). Every country from the WB6 has globalisation levels above the world average but below, except for Serbia, Europe and Central Asia region (overall globalisation of 75.13), which is the second most globalised region in the world only behind North America.

## 10. Press Freedom

The *Press Freedom Index* is a yearly report issued by *Reporters Without Borders* since 2002. The report assesses 180 countries and regions according to the levels of freedom and safety granted to journalists, media pluralism and independence of media, and legislative frameworks. The analysis is made through the evaluation of both qualitative (questionnaire answered by experts) and quantitative data (such as abuses and acts of violence against journalists). Every country evaluated is assigned with a score ranging from 0 (free) to 100 (not free) and positioned under a specific “situation” according to its results – Good Situation, score between 0 and 15; Satisfactory Situation, between 15.01 and 25 points; Problematic Situation, between 25.01 and 35 points; Difficult Situation, between 35.01 and 55; and Very Serious Situation, for scores ranging between 55.01 and 100.

According to the 2020 *Press Freedom Index*, Albania ranks 84<sup>th</sup> (two positions down from the 2019 index) with an overall score of 30.25, which is a decrease from the 29.84 of 2019 (data for year 2018). The country stands in the Problematic Situation category, thus confirming persisting concerns over press freedom. On this issue, Albania is under the scrutiny of several organisations and institutions (e.g. *European Union*, *Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe*, or the *International Press Institute*) which lately have been carrying out investigations and research on how Albanian institutions are dealing with the issue.

Albania profile in the *Press Freedom Index* is given in chart 22 with reference to a 2013-2019 timeframe.



Chart 22

Chart 22 shows that the press freedom deterioration of Albania is a constant. The country was returning to levels similar to those expressed at the beginning of the decade (in 2012, overall score was 30.88). There are reasons for this, and they are discussed in box 3.

### BOX 3: Press Freedom in Albania – Policies and Matters of Concern

Press freedom is among the topics of debate in Albania. The overall context is under the watch of many national and international organisations which constantly remark the little progress the country has made in the 2010-2020 decade, and things do not seem to get better. In December 2019, the Albanian Parliament passed two controversial laws, the “Anti-defamation Package” which allow the Government to receive complaints about online news outlets and impose restrictions and fines. The package has been firmly criticised by journalists and IO such as the Council of Europe, seeing it as a step back on the path to consolidate European standards. The Government responded claiming that the laws were intended to fight the spread of fake news. Even when laws do exist and defend freedom of speech and media freedom – press law, law on audio-visual media, and law on access to information – their implementation remains a major issue. According to *European Commission’s 2019 Progress Report for Albania*<sup>11</sup> the country has some level of preparation/is moderately prepared – with reference to chapter 10 (Information, Society and Media) of the *Acquis Communautaire*. However, the report highlights the fact that limited advances were reached during the reporting period and threats against journalists have increased. Despite greater financial resources assigned to the audio-visual media regulator (*Audiovisual Media Authority*) and a new Code of Ethics for journalists (2018), ownership of audio-visual media and transparency of funding and public advertising remain fundamental issues. The *European Commission* suggests the introduction of laws regulating transparency and limiting monopolistic behaviours in media ownership. The latter is among the priority indicated by several civil society and international organisations. For instance, according to *Reporters without Borders’* project *Media Ownership Monitor*<sup>12</sup>, the media market in Albania is highly concentrated. The top four owners of the television market reach an audience between 48.93% and 58.60%. Concentration can also be seen in the press, where the four owners have market share of 43.29%. In radio, the concentration is even higher, with four owners constituting 63.69% of the audience. Media pluralism needs significant changes in policies and laws implementation.

Next, in chart 23, the same analysis is provided with regard to the WB6 scores to realize if the entire region knows the same trend as Albania.

<sup>11</sup><https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-albania-report.pdf>

<sup>12</sup><http://www.mom-rsf.org/en/countries/albania/>

## WB6 and Press Freedom Scores 2013-2019

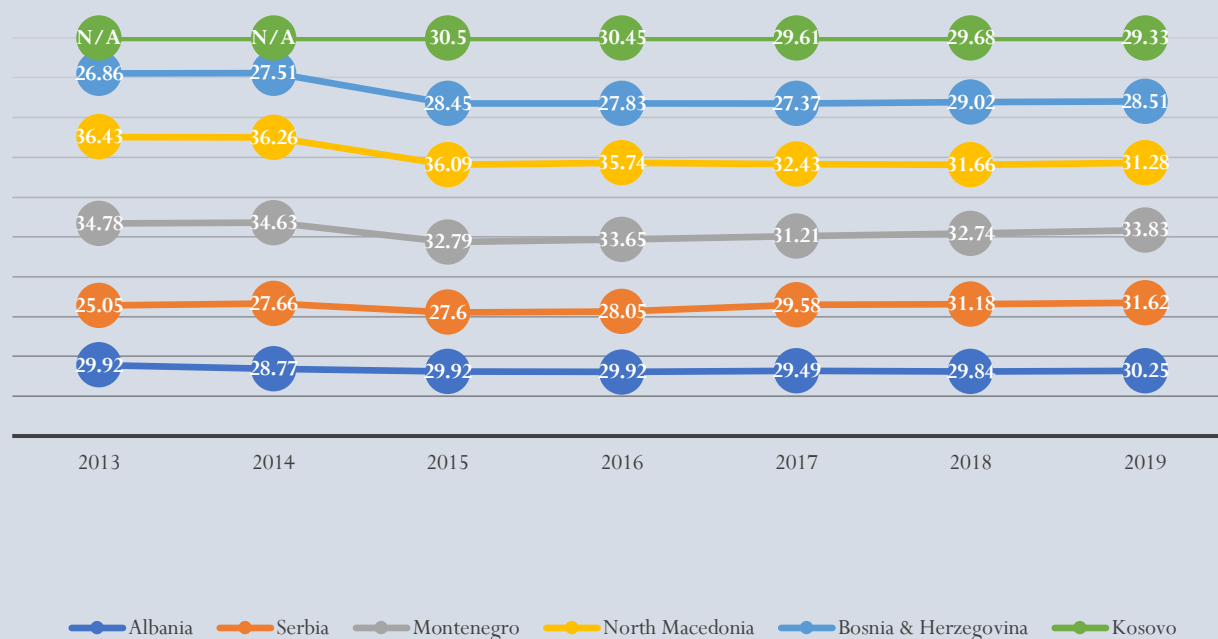


Chart 23

What can be excerpted from this time analysis of the *Press Freedom Index* is that North Macedonia (-5.15) Montenegro (-0.95) and Kosovo (-1.17) experienced an improvement in their press freedoms. Concerning the other WB6, Serbia – currently 93<sup>rd</sup> in the ranking – experienced a 6.57 points loss. The country, back in 2013, ranked 54<sup>th</sup>. Bosnia & Herzegovina (58<sup>th</sup>) registered a deterioration of 1.65 points but improved its ranking – it ranked 66<sup>th</sup> in the 2014 report. Albania, between 2013 and 2018, although exhibiting a score deterioration (+0.33), gained one position in the ranking – it ranked 85<sup>th</sup> in 2014 *Press Freedom Index*. Every country from this cluster is in the Problematic Situation category. Press freedom remains a delicate issue for the WB6.

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## 11. Rule of Law

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In the definition of *World Justice Project*, rule of law is “the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace – underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights. Traditionally, the rule of law has been regarded as the domain of lawyers and judges. But everyday issues of safety, rights, justice, and governance affect us all; everyone is a stakeholder in the rule of law” (World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index 2020*, p. 9). The *Rule of Law Index* is a yearly report published by the *World Justice Project* in order to assess and rank countries and territories according to the provisions and enforcement concerning specific standards of regulatory, judiciary, institutional and legal frameworks. The *Rule of Law Index* evaluates 128 countries through scores and rankings based on 8 factors – Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice and Criminal Justice. The index is compiled from household, legal practitioners and experts’ surveys.

Rule of Law is one of those aspects on which WB6 are required to focus in order to reinforce its credentials to speed up the *EU* accession process. The Western Balkan Six, to different extents, share some common issues with respect to RoL and the features of fully functioning democracies. According to a report by the *Governance and Social Development Resource Centre* – a partnership of institutes, universities and think tanks which provides applied knowledge assistance to institutions such as *United Nations* and *European Union* – the WB6 present significant critical issues in the following fundamental aspects: judicial independence – there is a significant politicization of the judiciary, influences and corruption of the system. And this reform is one of the priorities set by the *EU*; with regard to judiciary efficiency (years of low budgeting in the judiciary ended up creating inefficiencies and excessive duration of court trials and cases; corruption) there is, due to impartiality and inefficiency of the judiciary, inadequacy in processing corruption crimes, especially those involving high-ranking officials. The depoliticization of the judiciary is essential in countering corruption and fighting organised crime. Other matters of concern are war crimes prosecutions, media freedom, minority rights and asylum frameworks. A more detailed explanation of critical issues connected to rule of law and corruption in Albania will be provided in box 4, in the chapter dedicated to the *Corruption Perceptions Index*.

Pointing the attention to the *Rule of Law Index 2020*, Albania ranks 78<sup>th</sup> with an overall score of 0.50 – 0 representing the worst and 1 the best score possible – which means that the country lost 0.1 points and 7 positions compared to 2019 report (data from 2018). The profile of Albania in the *Rule of Law Index* and a time analysis of the 2015-2019 period are presented in chart 24.

## RULE OF LAW IN ALBANIA 2015-2019

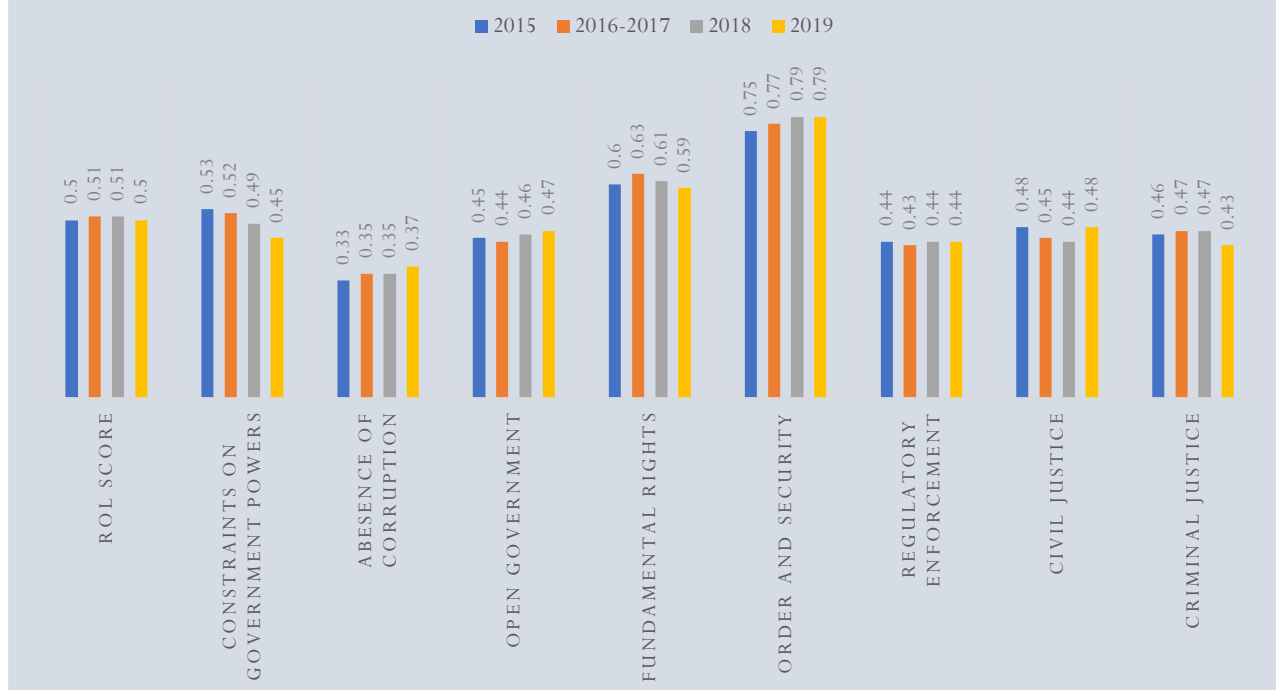


Chart 24

Over the 2015-2019 period, no advances can be attributed to Albania regarding its overall RoL score (0.50). Nonetheless, negative changes can be seen in several indicators such as Constraints on Government Powers (-0.8), Fundamental Rights (-0.1) and Criminal Justice (0.3). Improvements have been registered in Absence of Corruption (+0.4), whose value remains among the lowest – 100 out of 128 in the global rank, score of 0.37 compared to 0.52 world average –, Open Government (+0.2) and Order and Security (+0.4) – where the country ranks high (34<sup>th</sup>). Absence of Corruption aside, Constraints on Government Powers (96<sup>th</sup> in the ranking), Regulatory Enforcement (98<sup>th</sup>) and Civil Justice (87<sup>th</sup>) appear as the most worrying indicators. In addition, Albania values are below world average in every rule of law pillar except for Order and Security and Fundamental Rights (respective scores of 0.78 and 0.57). Albania performances in the *Rule of Law Index* partly confirm the aforementioned critical aspects.

The status of the remaining WB6countries is provided in chart 25, referring to data and values related to the 2020 index.

## WB6 IN THE RULE OF LAW INDEX 2020



Chart 25 [Montenegro and Kosovo are not included as they have not been assessed by WJP]

The WB6 highlight similar overall score – range is between 0.50 of Serbia and Albania and 0.53 of North Macedonia – and indicators values – Order and Security and Fundamental Rights are the pillars where the countries in the cluster performed relatively well and above world average – while the remaining pillars present scores relatively lower compared to global standards. Only Bosnia & Herzegovina (0.48 in Criminal Justice) exhibited values above the world average (0.47). North Macedonia is the country with the best score and ranking (58<sup>th</sup>), followed by Bosnia & Herzegovina (64<sup>th</sup>). Serbia and Albania (respectively 75<sup>th</sup> and 78<sup>th</sup>) come at the end. In conclusion, none of the WB6 evaluated by the *Rule of Law Index* disclosed comprehensive scores above the world average (0.56).

## 12. Corruption

*Corruption Perception Index* is a yearly publication by *Transparency International* which assesses corruption levels in the public sector according to a number of business operators, professionals and experts' opinion surveys and interviews. The index does not take into account distrust and disillusionment of people living in the countries. The CPI is calculated using 13 data sources<sup>13</sup>. Data collected by the CPI cover the following topics: bribery; diversion of public funds; use of public office for private gains; nepotism in the civil service; state capture. Moreover, when available: government's ability to enforce integrity mechanism; effective prosecution of corrupt officials; red tape and excessive bureaucratic burden; existence of adequate laws on financial disclosure, conflict of interest prevention and access to information.

According to the 2019 *Corruption Perception Index* corruption is higher in countries where money can freely flow into election campaigns – countries performing well have solid campaign financing regulations, and where Governments are more inclined to listen and protect the interests of wealthy people. Based on a 0-100 scale – 0 assigned to “highly corrupt” countries and 100 to “very clean” ones, the report emphasized that, out of 180 countries evaluated, the average score is 43/100, and 2/3 of the world countries registered a score below 50/100. Western Europe and EU is the least corrupted region (66/100) while Sub-Saharan region is the most corrupted (32/100). Eastern Europe and Central Asia (35/100), Middle East and North Africa (39/100), America (43/100) and Asia Pacific (45/100) stand all below the 50/100 threshold.

The CPI, consistent with this global corruption analysis, gives the following recommendations: manage conflict of interests; control political financing; strengthen electoral integrity; regulate lobbying activities; empower citizens; tackle preferential treatment; reinforce check and balances.

With respect to Albania, in 2019 report – 2018 data, the country ranks 106<sup>th</sup> (it was 99<sup>th</sup> in 2018 report) with an overall score of 35/100 (it was 36/100 in 2018). One could easily state that lately Albania is experiencing a deterioration trend concerning its corruption levels. It is not by chance that, back in 2015 (*Corruption Perception Index 2016*), the country totaled a 39/100 score (83<sup>rd</sup> in the ranking). In chart 26, Albania profile is presented together with a 2013-2018 temporal analysis.

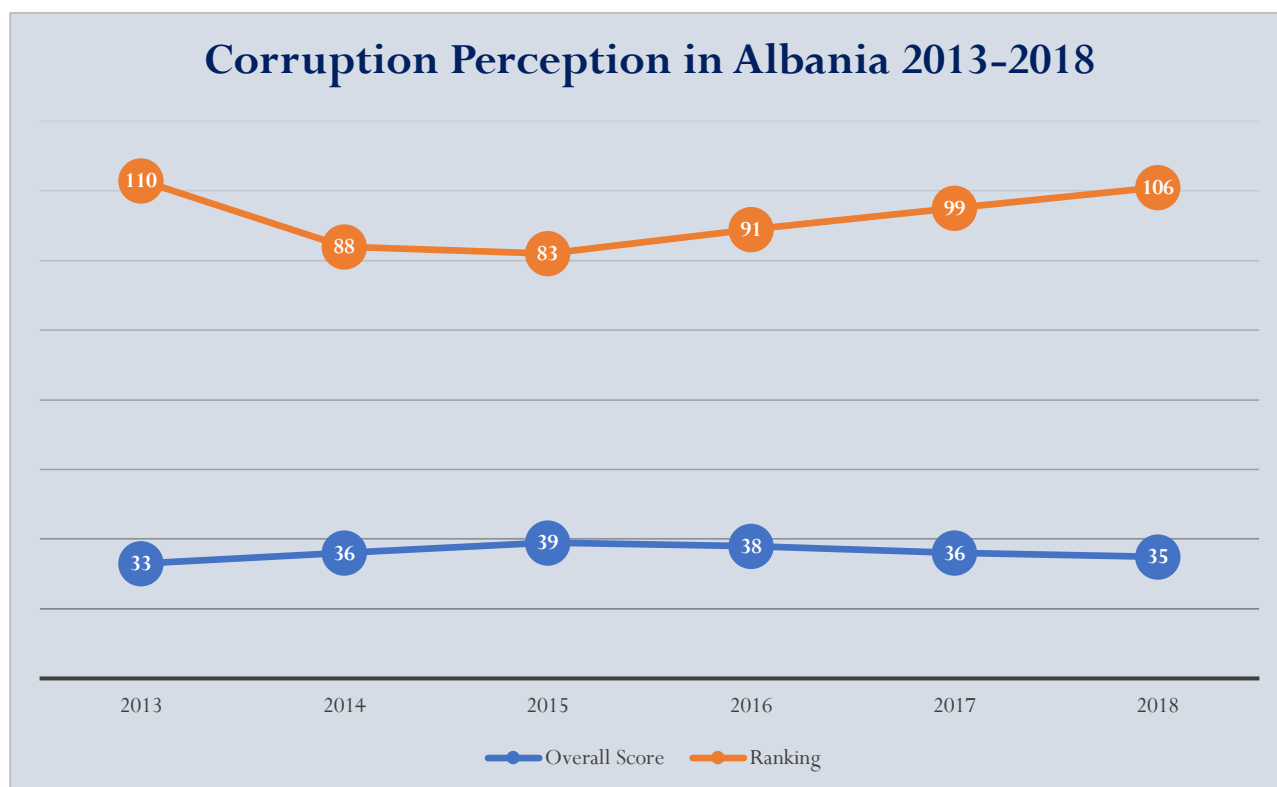


Chart 26

<sup>13</sup>[https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2019\\_CPI\\_SourceDescription\\_EN-converted-merged.pdf](https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2019_CPI_SourceDescription_EN-converted-merged.pdf)



As one can see in chart 26, Albania frustrated improvements registered between years 2013 and 2015. Corruption can be considered a major challenge for the country, which is constantly striving to reach regulatory and political frameworks in line with those expressed by the Western Europe region.

#### **BOX 4: Rule of Law and Corruption. Pillars for Albania EU Integration**

In the *Commission Staff Working Document: Update on the Republic of Albania* by the European Commission, the advances on rule of law, judiciary and corruption were analysed. European institutions praised Albania progress in the re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors. The strengthening of the vetting system on magistrates and judges has been a pivotal point in the EU-Albania cooperation framework. The commissions established at national level, supported by *International Monitoring Operation* set by the EU and the United States. In March 2020), vetting institutions have completed 234 vetting cases out of a total of 811 magistrates expected to undergo vetting. So far, 60% of the vetted magistrates were dismissed or resigned. Due to this process, many vacancies appeared through the judiciary system. Consequently, Albanian authorities are implementing a re-distribution to fill the gap created by vetting activities.

Albania, in order to increase independence of the judiciary, established new self-government institutions like the *High Judicial Council*, *High Prosecutorial Council*, *Justice Appointment Council* and *High Justice Inspector*. These new bodies have been working since 2019 to guarantee independent governing of the judiciary. Constitutional Court is undergoing a process of renewal to appoint new members in substitution of the vetted ones.

To counter corruption and organised crime, two bodies are on the verge to be instituted: The *Special Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Structure* and the *National Bureau of Investigation*. In addition, operational and coordination capacities of certain bodies fighting against corruption were strengthened and a task force unit (the *Anti-Corruption Task Force*) was established within the Ministry of Justice. Since 2018, this task force recommended 118 dismissals and 38 criminal referrals.

In the field of fight against organised crime, police cooperation with *Europol* and EU member states intensified, resulting in large-scale operations and arrests of notorious criminal groups. Due to improvements obtained in the vetting, referral and prosecution system, in 2019, 246 convictions of law and middle-ranking officials occurred.

Thanks to these achievements and the respective tangible results, the *European Commission* reiterated its recommendation to further accession negotiations with Albania.

Having assessed corruption-related issues in Albania, the attention turns to the other WB6. According to the *Corruption Perception Index 2019*, Montenegro is the least corrupted country out of the cluster with a comprehensive score of 45/100 and ranking at position 66. Serbia comes second (91<sup>st</sup>) with a score of 39/100. Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo are paired at position 101 (score 36/100). North Macedonia (and Albania) is the most corrupted from the *Western Balkan Six* with an overall score of 35/100 (106<sup>th</sup>). WB6score between 2013 and 2018 are shown in chart 27.

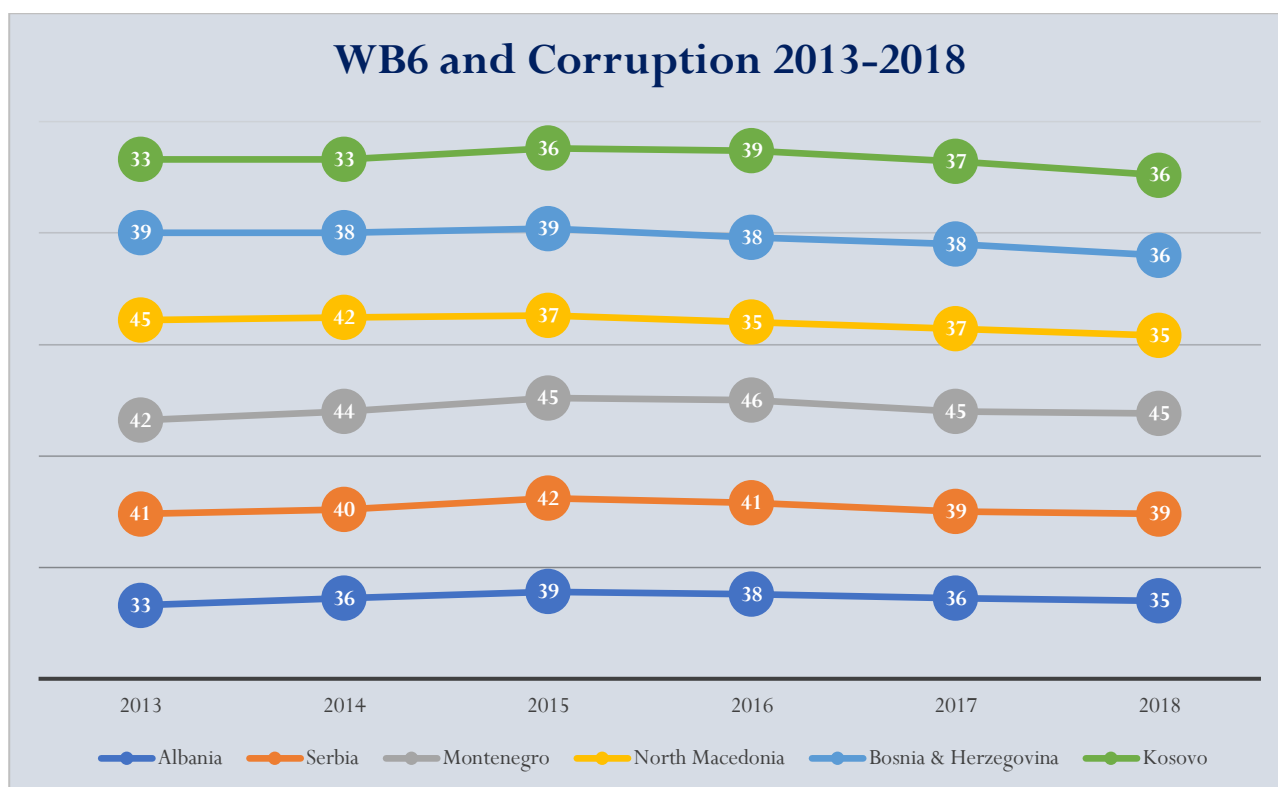


Chart 27

As highlighted by scores presented in chart 27, in the 2013-2018 period, only Albania (+2), Montenegro (+3) and Kosovo (+3) registered an increase. However, the first two experienced a significant decay after registering their maximum levels in 2015 and 2016, respectively. North Macedonia (-10) is the country that suffered the most serious deteriorations. Symbolising a worrying situation, all the WB6 have scores highly below the regional average (66/100). More has to be done to achieve levels in line with those of European countries, especially *EU* members – to note that Montenegro is the only country that can compete with worst performing *EU* member states like Hungary (44/100), Romania (44/100) or Bulgaria (43/100).

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### 13. Human Trafficking

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According to the *Palermo Protocol* – Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, “[...] *human trafficking shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation*[...]” (United Nations, *Palermo Protocol* 2000, art. 3) .

The *Trafficking in Persons* is a report issued annually by the *United States Department of State* which appraises countries according to their capabilities to tackle and counter modern slavery within their borders and cooperate with other regional countries. According to the *Trafficking in Persons 2020*, human trafficking has experienced a surge since the beginning of the century due to the increase in human movements and an ever-expanding barriers-free world. Globally, governments have responded often creating effective regulatory frameworks to punish traffickers or implementing practices and standards to assist and protect victims. Among the actions underlined by the report that still need to be taken and enforced, one can find forced labour, especially when state sponsored; increase labour trafficking prosecutions; repeal laws that require force, fraud, or coercion for child sex trafficking; and stop penalizing victims for unlawful acts committed when pressed by traffickers. The long-term objective to create society where dignity and human inherent values benefit from a broad consensus is also fundamental.

The *US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons* is basically a narrative report, however a 4-tier classification, going from “fully meeting minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking” (tier 1) to “not fully meeting minimum standard and not making significant efforts for the elimination of trafficking” (tier 3), is available for every evaluated country. In the following discussion, WB6 profiles in the *TIP 2020* are provided with a description of their current status and the recommendations received to fight human trafficking.

As stated by the *Trafficking in Persons 2020*, Albania confirms its presence in the tier 2 category which means that the country “does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so”. No changes can be attributed to Albania, as it was already a tier 2 country in 2018 report. Nonetheless, the government implemented several actions to tackle the issue. For instance, it established, in cooperation with the civil society, the *Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking*, and increased victim assistance in proceedings by setting up the *Development Centre for Criminal Justice for Minors*. Overall, the country accomplished the objective to increase prison terms for convicted traffickers and identification of victims. A better training was also provided to relevant officials. Despite these improvements, the government failed in some areas. It convicted only five traffickers in both 2018 and 2019 (the lowest number since 2014). The government also missed to provide screening for vulnerable groups as migrants, asylum-seeker, children and individuals in commercial sex. A delay in NGO-run shelters funding was detected by the report. National services lack resources for long-term care and reintegration of victims.

Among recommendations dedicated to the country, one can find: investigate, prosecute and convict traffickers – and complicit officials, increase efforts to screen vulnerable groups, train police officials, labour inspectors, prosecutors and judicial officials. The *TIP 2020* found out that Albania has a proper legislative framework for sentencing traffickers with stringent penalties and sufficient imprisonment years. Concerning prosecutions, The *Albanian State Police (ASP)* investigated 41 cases with 62 suspects (38 cases with 51 suspects in 2018), 34 cases with 45 suspects for adult trafficking (30 cases with 42 suspects in 2018) and 7 cases with 17 suspects for child trafficking (8 cases with 9 suspects in 2018). The *ASP* also investigated 2 suspects for knowingly soliciting or patronizing a sex trafficking victim to perform a commercial sex act (3 in 2018). The *General Prosecution Office (GPO)* investigated 19 new cases with 8 defendants for adult trafficking (17 new cases with 5 defendants in 2018) and 6 new cases for child trafficking (12 cases in 2018). The government also promoted judicial reforms, assigning prosecutorial jurisdiction to the *Special Anti-Corruption Prosecution (SPAK)* and jurisdiction over trafficking crimes to the *Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organised Crime*. On a district level, local prosecutors are found to be lacking specialised experience and capacity to prosecute trafficking crimes. Concerning prevention efforts, the government furthered the implementation of the 2018-2020 national action plan allocating \$4.2 million. The *National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (ONAC)* was provided with \$81,580. The *ONAC*, in cooperation with international organisations, drafted a report assessing anti-

trafficking efforts in the country. ONAC, in cooperation with civil society organisations, conducted awareness campaigns for students, teachers and the whole population.

Regarding the other WB6, every country is in the tier 2 category with the exception of Bosnia & Herzegovina (tier 2 Watchlist which is the category below tier 2 and above tier 3). Serbia “does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so”. The country is a tier 2 since 2018 and, compared to the previous reporting period, demonstrated significant efforts to counter human trafficking. The Serbian Government adopted the 2019-2020 national action plan and allocated sufficient resources for its implementation. It also adopted standard operating procedures for the identification, referral and support to victims. However, some matters of concern remain. For instance, proactive identification is inadequate and, as a result, the government identified the fewest number of victims since 2015. The investigation and sanction of complicit officials are a weak feature of the system. Victims are still being penalised and victims’ rights are often violated during proceedings. Cooperation with civil society has improved, but the funding of civil society organisations is not significant. The government identified 36 victims (76 in 2018). First responders reported 135 potential victims (193 in 2018); law enforcement denounced 55 potential victims (89 in 2018), social welfare organizations reported 40 (45 in 2018), other government entities 12 (21 in 2018), and civil society 24 (38 in 2018); and 4 victims self-identified.

Montenegro returned to the tier-2 category after three years under the tier 2 watchlist. The government made significant efforts. It investigated and prosecuted more suspects and convicted two traffickers under its trafficking law and imposed significant prison terms; significantly increased the number of identified victims; eliminated the requirement for victims to cooperate with law enforcement in order to receive services. Nonetheless, several criticalities persist. The government has not included civil society organizations in victim identification procedures and has not promptly provided information on anti-trafficking issues to all stakeholders. The government increased victim protection efforts and identified 39 official victims and 85 potential victims (no official victims and 4 potential victims in 2018). However, police did not identify any child victims of forced begging (22 in 2018).

North Macedonia has been a tier 2 country since 2015 (previously it was in tier 1 category). The North Macedonian government increased its support to NGOs awarding the first grant and improved victim protection. The government also adopted prevention initiative like the establishment of the independent office of the *National Anti-Trafficking Rapporteur* and the promotion of awareness campaign. Courts issued harsher sentences compared to previous years. Notwithstanding these improvements, the government fails to meet certain standards, particularly with respect to adequate funding and equipment to police and resources to the *Organised Crime and Corruption Prosecution Office (OCCPO)*. The government kept up law enforcement efforts. Articles 418(a) and (d) of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labour trafficking and prescribed a minimum penalty of four years’ imprisonment. The OCCPO investigated 4 cases, the anti-trafficking task force investigated 6 additional suspects. The government prosecuted 9 defendants in three cases (8 defendants in three cases in 2018). Courts convicted 5 traffickers (7 in 2018).

Bosnia & Herzegovina has been a tier 2 watchlist country since 2018 (previously was considered a tier 2 country). The country is promoting important initiatives to fight human trafficking. The state coordinator involved civil society organisations and other stakeholders in the draft of the national strategy. In addition, more victims were identified compared to the previous year. However, several significant improvements are still required. The report found out that the government is not improving efforts compared to TIP 2019. Among the most worrying issue one can find that the government did not approve a state budget which delayed funding of anti-trafficking initiatives. In addition, law enforcement continued to investigate trafficking under lesser offenses, while judges continued to issue sentences below minimum penalties. The government identified 61 potential trafficking victims (36 in 2018). Of these, 19 were victims of sex trafficking, 36 of forced begging, 3 of forced marriage and 3 of multiple types of exploitation.

Kosovo has been a tier 2 country since 2013 and it has showed increasing efforts if compared to previous reporting period. The government was able to identify more victims and persecute more suspected cases. Funding for victims’ protection increased as well as the coordination for joint investigations and inspections. However, judges continue to issue weak sentences on traffickers and funding dedicated to NGO-run shelters decreased for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, creating a dependence from foreign donors. The law enforcement and criminal code (revised in 2018, went into force in 2019 and reclassified prostitutions offenses as human trafficking) provide sufficient and stringent punishment for convicted traffickers – 5 to 12 years imprisonment.

Authorities received 43 new cases involving 80 suspects (34 cases in 2018). Police arrested 22 suspects (22 in 2018) and 9 suspects for “utilizing sexual services from a trafficking victim” (7 in 2018). Courts convicted 8 traffickers (9 in 2018) and convicted 5 perpetrators who “utilized sexual services from a trafficking victim” (5 in 2018).

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## 14. Gender Equality

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According to *UNICEF*, “gender equality means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike.” The concept is a top priority for the international community. It is not by chance that the *UN* sustainable development goal (*SDG*) number 5<sup>14</sup> is dedicated to gender equality and women’s empowerment. As stated by the *United Nations*, “gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world”. To understand a little more of how the world is carrying on its efforts toward gender equality one can list some facts: 1 in 5 women or girls have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the last year. 49 countries do not have laws protecting women; women representation in national parliaments is at 23.7%; 750 million women or girls were married before the age of 18 and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone female genital mutilation. At least, one can say that more than 100 countries allocated budget funds for gender equality.

Gender equality is annually measured by the *World Economic Forum – WEF* through its *Global Gender Gap Report* (GGGR). The *Global Gender Gap Report 2020* (data for the year 2019) replaces GGGR 2018 (2018 data). It “benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, education, health and political criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups. The rankings are designed to create global awareness of the challenges posed by gender gaps and the opportunities created by reducing them”. 2020 report found out that, globally, the average reached equality is at 68.6%, which is a slight improvement from 68% of the 2018 report. However, there is still a 31.4% gap that needs to be filled. Overall, 89 countries, out of 149 evaluated, improved their gender gaps. Among the 4 sub-indices (Health and Survival, Educational Attainment, Economic Participation and Opportunity, Political Empowerment) Political Empowerment is the one registering the greatest gender gap (completion of only 24.7% of gender equality), nonetheless, 108 countries improved their condition. Economic Participation and Opportunity comes after—57.8% of this gap has been closed so far. Things appear to be much better in Health and Survival and Educational Attainment, with respective gender equality of 96.1% and 95.7%.

With regard to Albania, the country ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in the index with an impressive overall score of 0.769, where 1 represents gender equality. Albania gained 14 positions and improved its score of 0.035 compared to the 2018 report. In chart 28, Albania profile is provided together with scores from 2014-2019 period.

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<sup>14</sup>*SDG 5 targets: 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. 5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life. 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences 5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. 5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women. 5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.*

## ALBANIA GENDER GAP 2014-2019

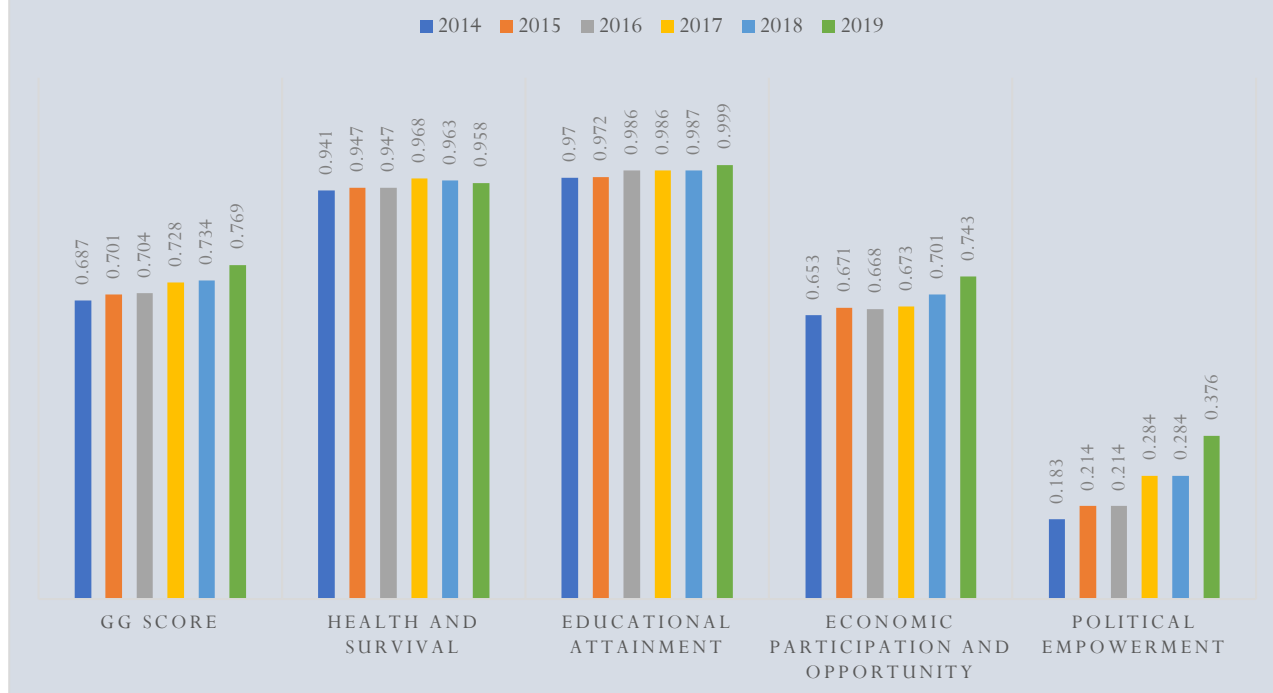


Chart 28

Looking at chart 28, one can state that the global pattern seeing Political Empowerment as the weakest sub-index remains true for Albania, too. Nevertheless, with a Political Empowerment score of 0.376 (+0.193 compared to 2014 score) Albania is clearly above world average (0.239) and it ranks high (23<sup>rd</sup>). The country ranks 36<sup>th</sup> in Economic Empowerment and Opportunity – score 0.743 compared to world average of 0.582, 40<sup>th</sup> in Educational Attainment – score of 0.999 against a global average of 0.954. In contrast with these results, the country ranks low (145<sup>th</sup>) in Health and Survival, however its 0.958 score is in line with world average.

Chart 29 shows a comprehensive analysis of WB6gender gap and sub-indices scores. Individual profiles and changes over the 2014-2019 period are discussed separately.

## WB6 AND GENDER GAP 2019 SCORES

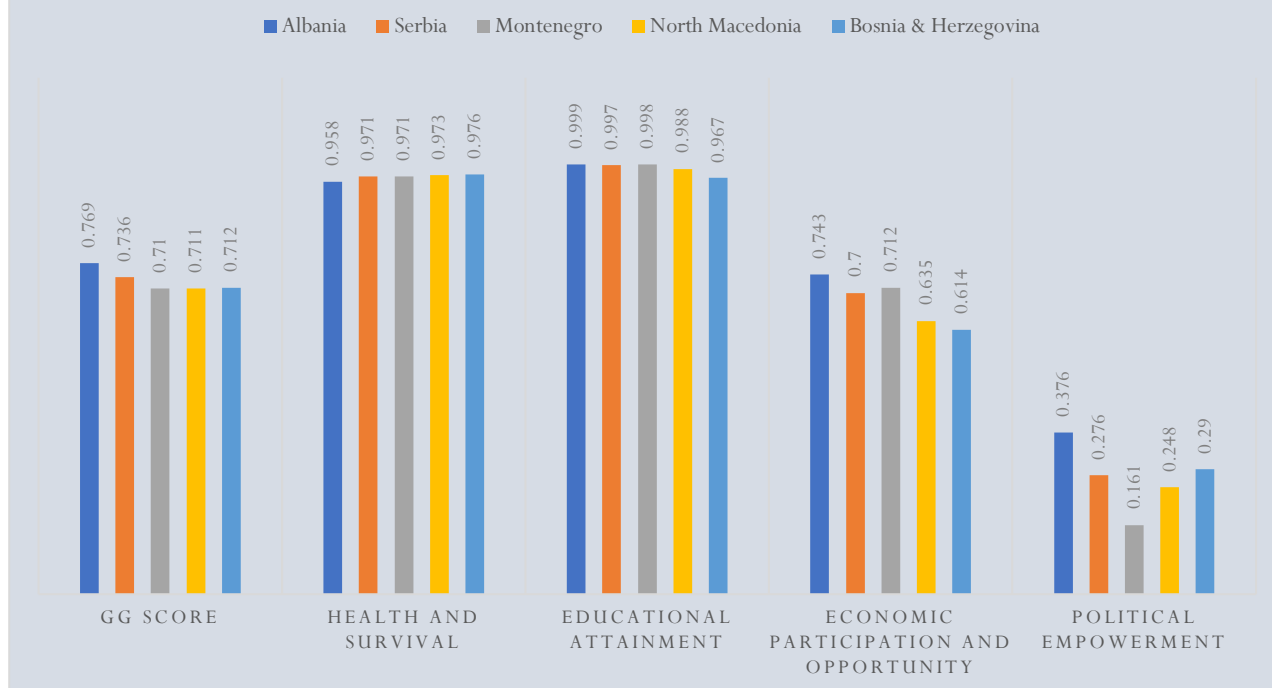


Chart 29 [Kosovo is not included as it has not been evaluated in the Global Gender Gap Report]

Out of this cluster, Albania is confirmed to be the most gender equal country. Followed by Serbia, 36<sup>th</sup> in the rank and with an overall score of 0.736. Montenegro (0.71), North Macedonia (0.711) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (0.712) are distant and rank respectively 71<sup>st</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup>. All the WB6 exhibit high scores in Health and Survival and Educational Attainment. Concerning Economic Participation and Opportunity and Political Participation, and despite differences in singular country scores, all the WB6 are above world averages. The only exception is Montenegro which performs poorly in Political Empowerment (0.161 against global average of 0.239). With respect to their changes over the 2014-2019 period, all the WB6 improved their comprehensive scores (Bosnia & Herzegovina was not covered in the 2014 report). Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia increased respectively by a 0.027, 0.017 and 0.018. Comparing data from year 2014 with those from year 2019, improvements in the overall score are mainly due to positive changes registered in Political Empowerment. As a matter of fact, every country from this group registered the most impressive changes in this sub-index – Albania, already discussed, +0.193, Serbia +0.08, Montenegro +0.058 and North Macedonia +0.074. The first available data for Bosnia & Herzegovina (2016) confirms this general improvement as the country experienced an increase of 0.099 between 2016 and 2019.

Overall, the WB6 highlighted an impressive condition of their gender equality standards and are on the right path. Nonetheless, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Bosnia & Herzegovina are lagging behind if compared with Serbia and Albania. The latter can be regarded as one of the most gender equal countries of the world.



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## 15. Climate Change

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During the 2020 pandemic we have had confirmation of the gravity that human footprint has on the planet. It is well known that the spread of certain diseases is partly caused by the same human activities that contribute to climate change. In the words of Daniel R. Brooks, professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Toronto: “We live in a world in which human population expansion and increased density, and increased globalization of travel and trade act synergistically with climate change to produce an explosive emerging disease crisis that represents an existential threat to technological humanity.”; as the world was going beyond the first Sars-Cov-2 wave, in China authorities were once again focused on studying a new potential pandemic virus coming from pigs – strain “G4” of H1N1<sup>15</sup>. Climate change and contagious diseases are co-travellers.

The global health crisis encouraged vigorously the insertion of environmental issue in the political discourse. One cannot know where this is heading, nonetheless, political decision makers have started debating on initiatives to boost progress and development in a sustainable way. For instance, the *EU* is in the process of turning into reality its well-known Green Deal – the strategy drafted by the *European Commission* to make the European economy sustainable and turn environment and renewable resources into opportunities and drivers for economic development. The *European Union* is planning to invest €100 billion in the plan. The Green New Deal is likely to be resumed for debate in the United States too, where the first motions failed to pass in the US senate. Other countries are following and planning to reorient their economies toward environmental sustainability. Notwithstanding national efforts, the framework that will most likely have a global impact is the Paris Agreement – drafted and signed within the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. However, the treaty suffered the withdrawal of the United States and misses a binding enforcement mechanism; thus, the achievement of the targets set is linked to the will of state parties. Rendering the provisions of the Paris Agreement mandatory would be a great leap forward.

Every country plays a role in the process of becoming resilient to climate change, consequently several studies are focusing on how single countries are carrying out their environmental policies. The *Global Adaption Initiative* (ND-GAIN), launched by the *University of Notre Dame* (Indiana, USA), is “a research effort designed to enhance the world understanding of the concept of adaptation to climate change”. It “summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience. It aims to help governments, businesses and communities better prioritize investments for a more efficient response to the immediate global challenges ahead”. The adaptation examined by the initiative follows two main indicators: I. Risk Mitigation (Vulnerability); II. Opportunities Exploration (Readiness). The country index uses 20 years of available data among a total of 45 indicators and ranks 181 countries. Assigned scores range from 0 (least likely to adapt) to 100 (most likely to adapt) while indicators fall under 2 main subjects – Vulnerability and Readiness – and 9 sectors – Food; Water; Health; Ecosystem service; Human habitat; Infrastructure; Economic; Governance; Social readiness – in turn divided into 45 sub-indicators. Sub-indicators are calculated on a 0-1 scale. While 0 represents the best score possible under Vulnerability-related indicators, 1 represents the maximum result for Readiness-related indicators.

According to the ND-GAIN (last updated in July 2020 with data referring to 2018), Albania ranks 75<sup>th</sup> with a comprehensive score of 49.9 – Vulnerability 0.430 and Readiness 0.427. The country improved its position in the ranking (78<sup>th</sup>) and score (49.7) compared to 2017 data. Albania still has adaptation challenges but is well positioned to adapt. In chart 30 Albania profile and scores for every indicator assessed by the ND-GAIN during the 2015-2018 period are presented.

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<sup>15</sup> H1N1 is a subtype of Influenza A virus. Some H1N1 strains are endemic in pigs and birds and can potentially cause of pandemic disease as swine influenza and avian influenza. The G4 strain of H1N1 was actually found in the blood of pig farm workers.

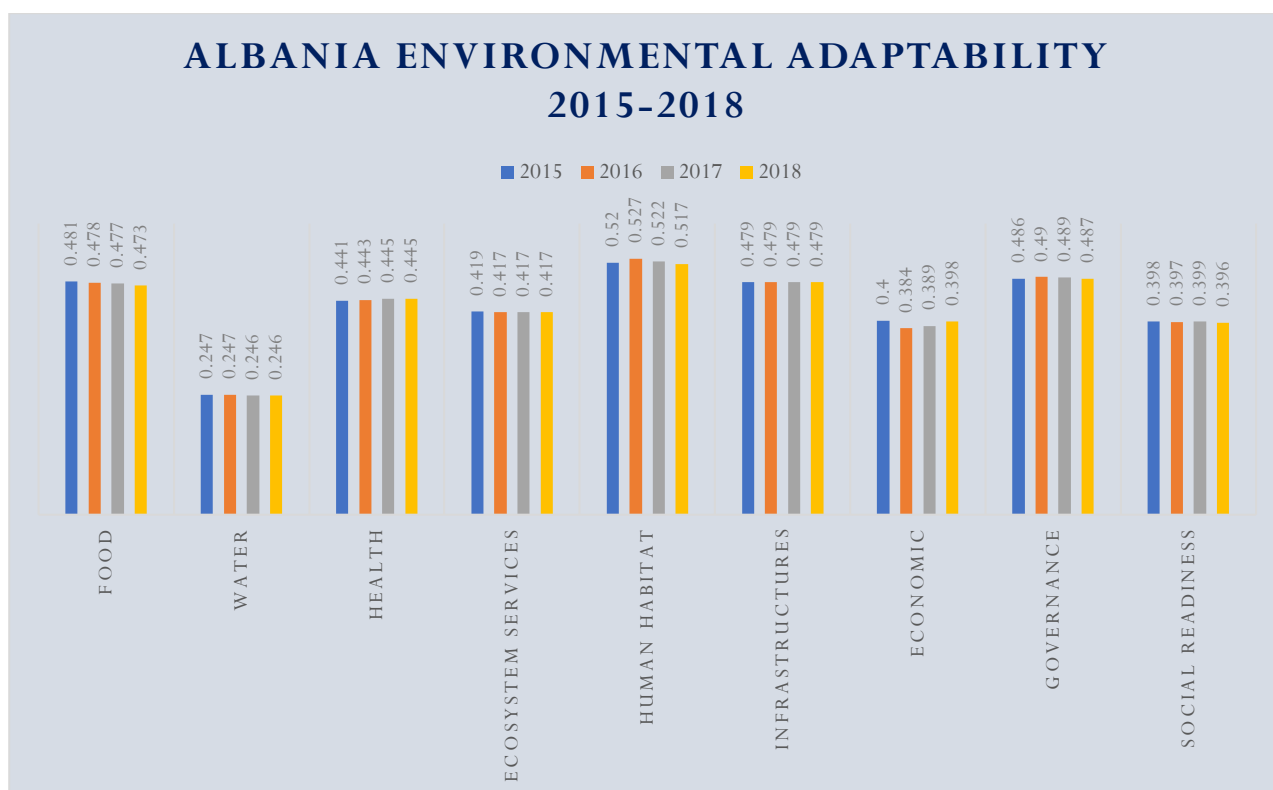


Chart 30

With regard to indicators composing the adaptability score, Albania improved in domain except for Health, Economic and Social Readiness. Decreases as well as improvements have not been that prominent; a clear increase can be seen in Food (-0.008) and Human Habitat (-0.005). Health, Economic and Social Readiness worsened respectively by 0.004, 0.002 and 0.002. Sub-indices where Albania seems to be striving the most and that actually affect the overall performance are Agricultural Capacity (0.942) – Food (Vulnerability), Medical Staff (0.865) – Health (Vulnerability), Control of Corruption (0.308) – Governance (Readiness), and Innovation (0.024) – Social Readiness (Readiness). In chart 31, an analysis of the WB6 is presented with scores referring to 2020 update (2018 data).

## WB6 ENVIRONMENTAL ADAPTABILITY 2018

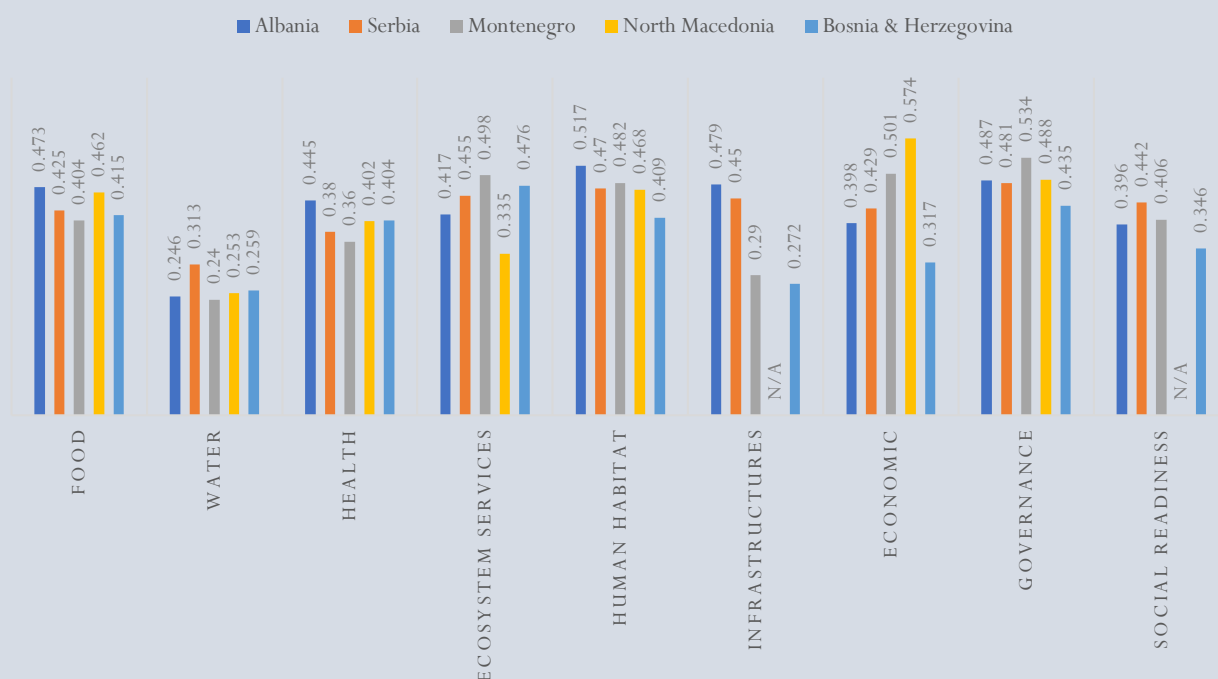


Chart 31 [Kosovo is not included as not evaluated by the ND-GAIN]

North Macedonia, 44<sup>th</sup> in the ranking, with a comprehensive score of 57.4 (Vulnerability 0.384, Readiness 0.531) is the most adaptive among the countries of the cluster. The country performs particularly well in Economic (0.574). North Macedonia is followed by Montenegro (55<sup>th</sup>) and Serbia (68<sup>th</sup>) with respective overall scores of 55 and 51.8. Bosnia & Herzegovina is the least prepared country. It ranks 79<sup>th</sup> with an adaptability score of 49.7.

Considering the relation between food security and climate change, as shown in chart 31, Albania confirms its status as the most food insecure from the WB6. Water, due to the significant water resources of the area, does not seem a matter of concern, nonetheless, despite having per capita availability of water above the European average, the WB6 highlighted some deficiencies in the management of water resources. In the coming future more effective legislation for protection of water and river basins and better infrastructures in the sector of water supply are expected. Overall, the WB6 are performing decently in every ND-GAIN indicator. They are well positioned to adapt and their contingency to the EU environmental efforts will likely foster this process. As a matter of fact, in 2020, North Macedonia and Montenegro pledged to cut carbon dioxide emissions and align their climate policies with *European Union* standards.

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## 16. Energy Transition

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The *Energy Transition Index* is a tool designed by the *World Economic Forum*. The index, which is at its third edition, “[...] benchmarks countries on the performance of their energy system and their readiness for energy transition. It offers a framework for countries to design long-term energy transition roadmaps by considering current energy system performance and highlighting the necessary enablers that improve countries’ readiness for energy transition. Over the past year, developments across the three pillars of the energy triangle – economic development and growth, energy security and access, and environmental sustainability – have attested to the complexity of the energy system and highlighted the need to accelerate energy transition[...].” (World Economic Forum, *Fostering Effective Energy Transition 2019*, p. 5).

The *Energy Transition Index 2020* assessed 115 countries according to their performance in two main dimensions: System Performance, which includes the domains Security and Access, Environmental Sustainability, and Economic Development and Growth, and Transition Readiness, in turn divided in Energy System Structure, Capital and Investment, Regulation and Political Commitment, Capital and Investments, Human Capital and Consumer Participation, Infrastructure and Innovative Business Environment, and Institutions and Governance.

The 115 countries evaluated constitute 90% of world population, 93% of total energy supply and 98% of global nominal gross domestic product. As the world economy is going through one of its most delicate phases, the ETI, confirming the importance to adapt economic growth to the concept of sustainability, indicates that energy transition and climate change mitigation policies need to be implemented orderly so as to avoid systemic disruption of the financial system. The increase in oil price fostered capital investments and research project in the clean energy sector. Overall performances of the sector confirm energy as a driver for economic growth. Certifying the trend, in 2019, despite a global GDP growth of 2.3%, energy sector emissions remained flat, and global spending on renewables continued to increase. Important signs come from the financial sector too. In 2019, \$255 billions of green bonds and loans were issued, reaching an all-time high – a 49% increase year on year. However, in spite of this momentum, countries need to strengthen their commitments towards environmental sustainability, multiplying policies, research and initiatives for the purpose.

According to the *Energy Transition Index 2020*, Albania ranks 52<sup>nd</sup> with an ETI score of 56.5 out of 100 – 63 in System Performance and 50 in Transition Readiness. Compared to the previous year, Albania lost 14 positions and experienced a decrease of 3.5 in its ETI score (-4 in System Performance and -2 in Transition Readiness). In chart 32, Albania ETI *profile* over the 2018-2019 period (country scores were not available in the first report) is presented.

## ALBANIA ETI SCORES 2018-2019

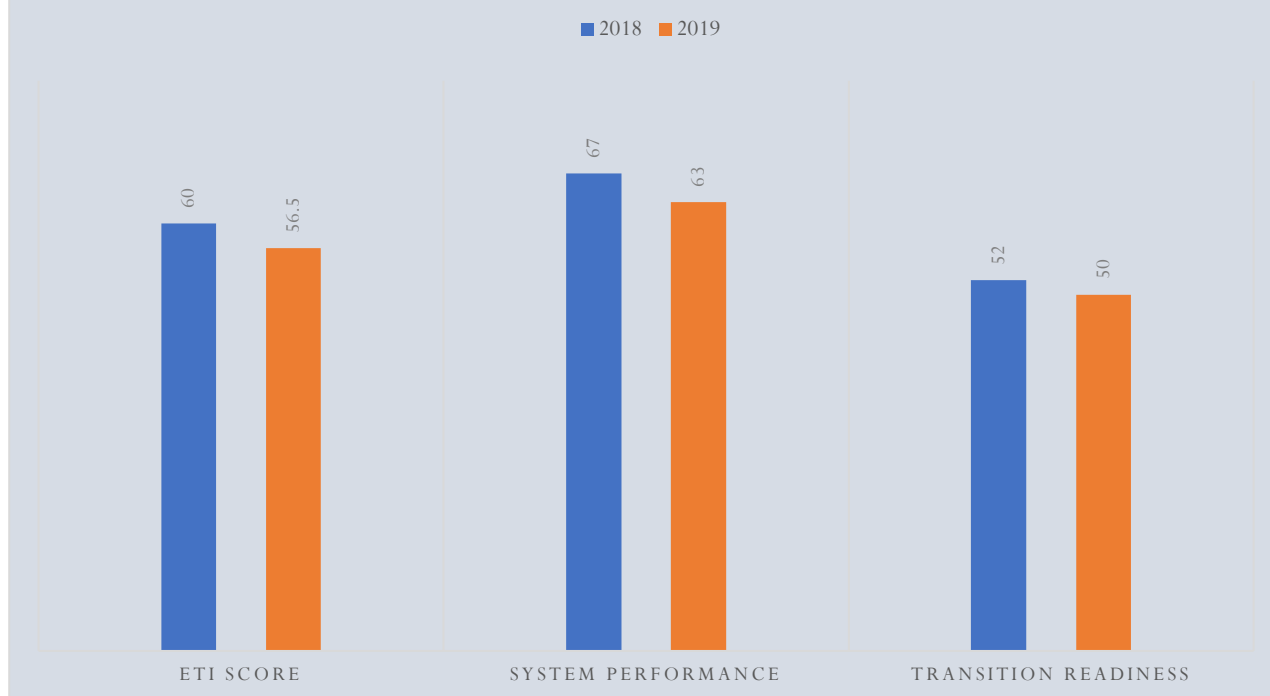


Chart 32

Although Albania experienced a decrease in all indicators, its overall ETI(56.5) is above world average which is 55.1.

### BOX 5: Energy Transition Policies in Albania and the WB6

According to the *Energy Community Secretariat*<sup>16</sup> and its *Energy Transition Tracker*, Albania (and the WB6) has set in motion its policy to convert its energy market towards the carbon-free sector. The biannual tracker highlights the fact that recently renewables support schemes in the waterpower, solar and wind sectors have been gaining ground in the area. Nonetheless, their overall share is only 6% of total installed electricity generation capacity. Amongst the criticalities encountered, one can point to the absence of an open market. In Albania there are three major producers with one producer owning a 60% share. More in general, this stands true also for the remaining WB6, where the country with the highest level of market competition is Bosnia & Herzegovina which, anyway, sees the three largest producers holding more than 80% of the energy market. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is another matter of concern. The WB6 on average emit 8 times more carbon dioxide than EU-27 to produce the same GDP. In Albania CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are determined for about 70% by the road transport sector and for 30% by industrial sector. With regard to energy efficiency, the WB6 are not meeting their potentials. In this field, only Bosnia & Herzegovina was able to reach its *Energy Community* target. Albania, with less than 60% of energy efficiency is both missing its national and the EU-set target – respectively more than 60% and 100%.

All the WB6 are in the process of drafting their national energy and climate action plans which are going to establish a stable legal and policy framework for decarbonisation, energy and climate policies in line with the provisions adopted with the Paris Agreement. To date, only North Macedonia submitted its plan for evaluation by the *Energy Community Secretariat*. Based on the agreed timeline, the other plans are expected to be submitted by the end of 2020.

<sup>16</sup> The *Energy Community* is an international organisation established between the EU and third countries in order to extend the energy internal market. Parties to this IO are the WB6, Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine. Norway and Turkey participate as observers.

In chart 33, the same analysis is provided referring to the WB6.

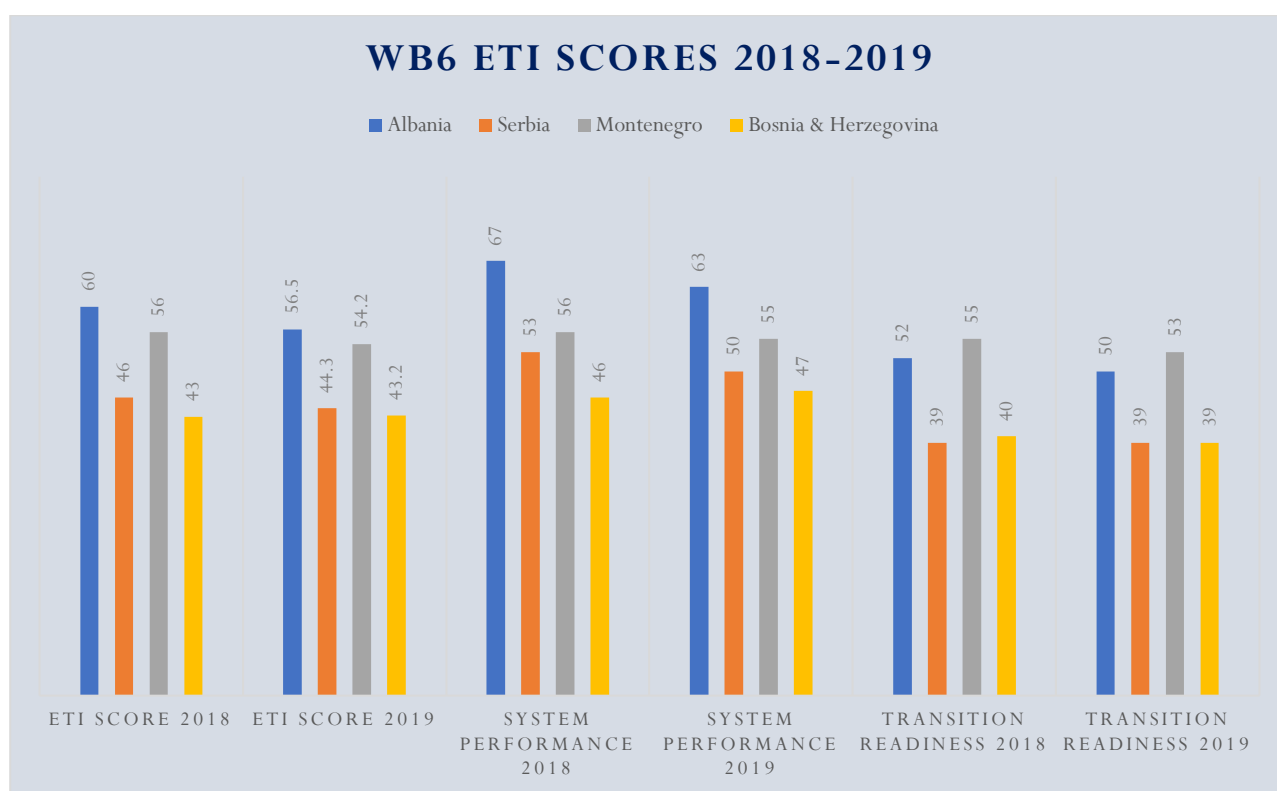


Chart 33 [North Macedonia and Kosovo are not included as not evaluated by ETI]

Proving a still unbalanced development of their energy transition strategy, all the WB6, save Bosnia & Herzegovina, exhibited a deterioration in their ETI scores. Albania is confirmed as the most advanced in the clean transition, followed by Montenegro – 62<sup>nd</sup> in the index. Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina remain distant at position 100 and 103, respectively. Except for Albania, all the WB6 are below world ETI score (55.1).

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## 17. Health

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Health, these days, is a major theme. Concerns raised by the COVID-19 pandemic showed how even the strongest democracies, lately, have been neglecting national health services. Anti-epidemic or pandemic plans' updates were discarded by national authorities as something that could be postponed. As the pandemic suggests, health sector needs a constant monitoring and evaluation by national and international institutions. The *Global Health Security Index* is designed by the *Johns Hopkins University*, the *Nuclear Threat Initiative* (a Washington-based NGO working for high quality of life, environment and the health of future generations) and the *Intelligence Unit of The Economist*. The Index is prepared with the support of the *Open Philanthropy Project*, the *Bill and Melissa Gates Foundation* and the *Robertson Foundation*. The *GHS Index 2019* (data updated to July 2019) evaluated 195 countries according to their levels of health security. In an era where urbanisation, climate change, massive migrations and displacement are knowing unprecedented levels, pathogens are more likely to spread. Countries are often unprepared for such outbreaks. Thus, the *GHS Index* "[...] seeks to illuminate those gaps to increase both political will and financing to fill them at the national and international levels. Unfortunately, political will for accelerating health security is caught in a perpetual cycle of panic and neglect. Over the past two decades, decision makers have only sporadically focused on health security, despite concerns stemming from the 2001 anthrax attacks, the emergence of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronaviruses, and the looming threat of a pandemic caused by a novel strain of influenza [...]" (Johns Hopkins University and Nuclear Threat Initiative, *Global Health Security Index 2019*, p. 6).

The *GHS Index* is based on open data published at a national level or reported to and by an international organisation. The index prioritises, in addition to health security and country capacities, the capabilities for stopping outbreaks. The evaluating framework prepared by the *GHS Index* consists of 140 questions, organized across 6 categories<sup>17</sup>, 34 indicators, and 85 sub-indicators. As this is the first draft of the index, time analysis of the WB6 health security will not be provided.

As stated by the index, Albania ranks 39<sup>th</sup> with an overall score of 52.9 out of 100 and is in the orange countries' category (i.e. "more prepared") – the other two categories are yellow, "most prepared", and red "least prepared". Albania is the most prepared country in the WB6. In chart 34, Albania profile with scores for each category of the *GHS Index 2019* is provided.

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<sup>17</sup> Prevention, Detection and Reporting, Rapid Response, Health System, Compliance with International Laws and Risk Environment.

## ALBANIA IN GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY INDEX 2019

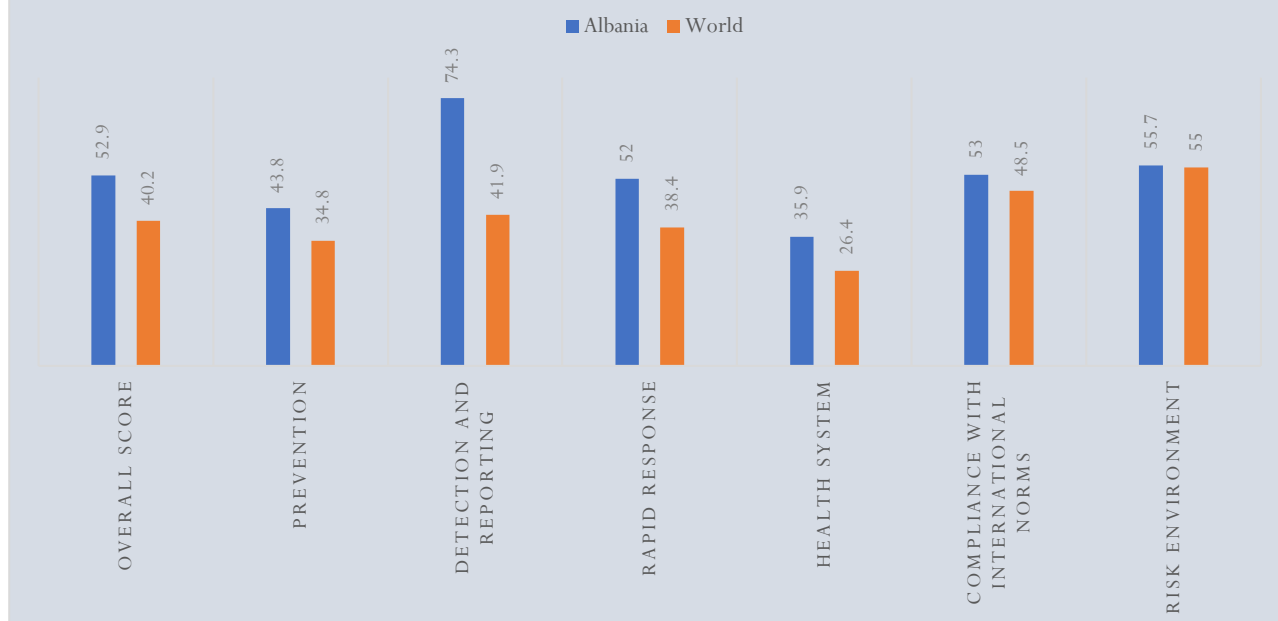


Chart 34

As one can excerpt from chart 34, Albania has an overall health security superior to world average (40.2). In addition, the country outperforms average scores for every indicator. In chart 35, an analysis of the WB6 health security levels is presented.

## WB6 IN GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY INDEX 2019

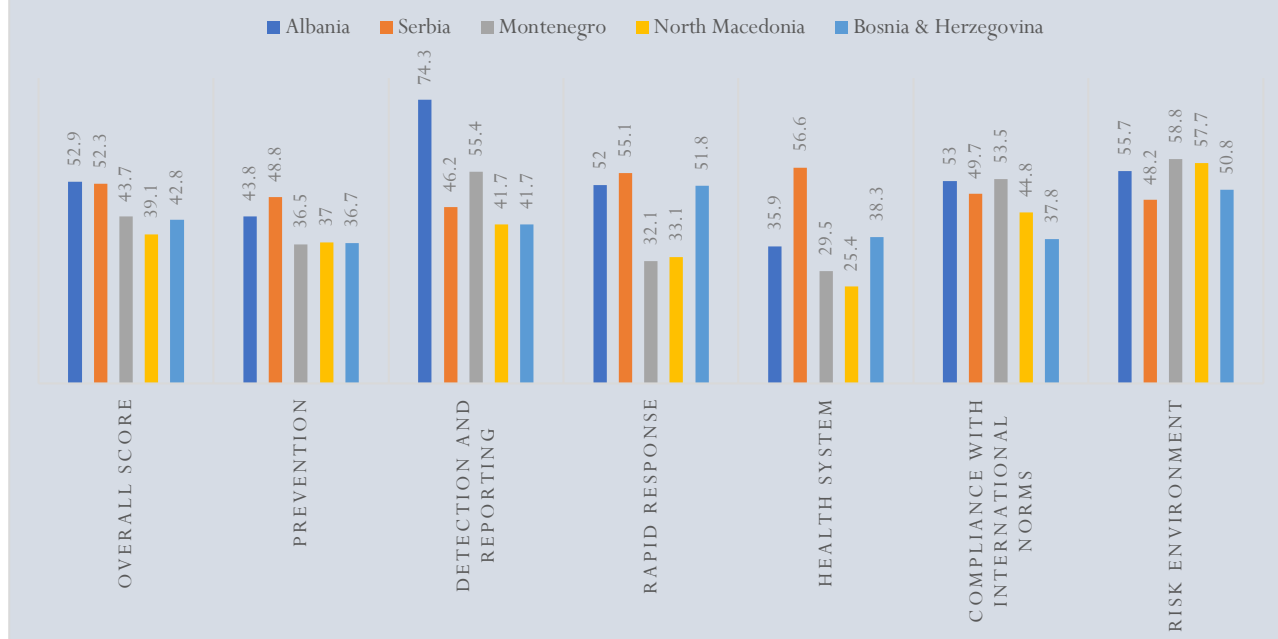


Chart 35 [Kosovo is not included as not assessed by the GHS Index 2019]

Serbia is the second country in the WB6 group (41<sup>st</sup> in the ranking) with an overall score of 52.3. The country is above world average in every indicator except for Risk Environment – Serbia scored 48.2 against the world average (55). Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina positioned themselves very far from Albania and Serbia. They rank respectively 68<sup>th</sup> and 79<sup>th</sup> – with overall scores of 43.7 and 42.8. North Macedonia is the



lowest ranking WB6(90<sup>th</sup>) with a comprehensive score of 39.1 and is the only country below world average (40.2). Generally speaking, the WB6 highlighted sufficient levels in every indicator and present a good, yet improvable, health security.

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## 18. Deepenings

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### 18.1 Albanian Economic Scenario

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Antonella Biscione

In the last year, Albania has been affected by two consecutive severe shocks. On November 26, 2019 Albania was devastated by a strong earthquake that led to 51 deaths and the destruction of 11,490 housing units. The losses and damage caused by this first shock represented 7.5% of GDP (UN Albania, 2020). The first months of 2020 were marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, this unexpected crisis brought out the economic and social fragilities of the country. At the beginning of the pandemic, in Albania the total COVID-19 cases were limited, as a consequence of stringent actions of containment applied by the Albanian authorities. However, since then they have significantly accelerated.

Also, in Albania, as in all countries of the world, the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have interrupted the regular performance of the country's economy and healthcare services, since a large part of the production sector has had to face the closure of production facilities and the closure of borders for travel and tourism. Since before the COVID-19 emergency crisis, annual GDP growth in 2019 has significantly decreased due to reduced hydropower production, declining investment and the effects of the earthquake. In fact, economic growth was on average 2.4% in the period 2013-2017, up to 4.1% in 2018 before decreasing to 2.2% in 2019 (European Commission, 2020). According to the World Bank (2020), in a base case scenario for 2020, the recession would be considerable; in fact, annual GDP growth is expected to reduce by 5% and in case of a negative scenario of extended shutdowns, Albanian production could contract by almost 7%. Estimates released by Instat (see figure below) show that in the second quarter of 2020 Albania has experienced a reduction in GDP of nearly 10% compared to the same period of 2019.

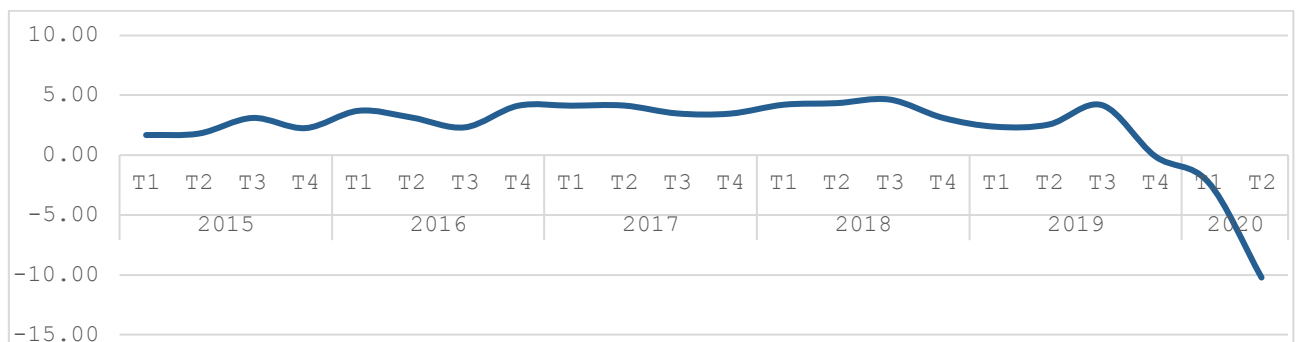


Chart 36[GDP growth 2015-2020]

Figure 1 simply visualizes that GDP began to decrease in the second quarter of 2019. In particular, since the last quarter of 2019 it shows a negative growth rate. The sectors that have had positively impact are agriculture, forestry and fishing by +2.63% and real estate activity by +5.46%. The sector whose GDP has significantly reduced are trade, transport, accommodation and food Services (-26.35%) followed by financial and insurance services (-21.68%), arts, entertainment and recreation services (-19.56%) professional services and administrative services (-19.45%) and finally industry, electricity and water (-19.12%).

Sector		Agriculture forestry and fishing	Industry, electricity and water	Trade, transport, accommodation and food Services	Financial and insurance services	Real estate activities	Professional activities and administrative services	Arts, entertainment and recreation services
2015	T1	1.11	0.76	1.11	14.27	-3.76	15.84	-2.15
	T2	0.83	4.73	-0.43	5.45	-1.25	8.01	1.61
	T3	1.36	1.64	-0.41	1.07	5.03	13.31	1.79
	T4	-0.45	12.02	2.36	0.8	3.22	4.94	20.44
2016	T1	2.95	15.42	1.3	1.07	2.96	6.82	11.03
	T2	0.37	5.25	3.92	4.53	1.84	8.46	11.82
	T3	2.25	2.38	5.3	18.03	0.08	2.69	17.16
	T4	3.6	-1.77	4.56	11.15	-0.37	6.93	9.52
2017	T1	2.1	8.6	3.02	14.94	1.47	11.81	2.54
	T2	0.27	9.82	4.36	11.31	1.79	7.8	1.63
	T3	0.64	14.23	5.05	7.42	0.06	14.45	6.34
	T4	0.48	16.33	4.03	11.36	2.8	12.51	3.34
2018*	T1	1.37	9.45	2.28	-1.19	-1.28	9.98	8.48
	T2	1.38	8.4	5.45	1.57	-0.34	10.3	10.37
	T3	1.43	2.88	6.47	2.9	1.19	6.31	5.05
	T4	0.29	5.2	3.02	8.07	0.17	1.45	-1.83
2019**	T1	1.35	6.08	4.35	8.76	8.49	6.55	-13.96
	T2	1.71	6.33	3.82	13.84	6.61	3.91	-15.55
	T3	0.52	5.14	4.92	12.05	3.47	14.11	-19.43
	T4	-3.23	3.2	2.13	9.84	5.47	-1.8	-10.45
2020**	T1	3.48	-7.99	-3.93	-7.18	2.96	-8.18	4.1
	T2	2.63	-19.12	-26.35	-21.68	5.46	-19.45	-19.56

Chart 37 [Contribution to GDP growth]

Real growth rate comparison with the quarter of previous year (chain-linked volume measures, reference year (2010=100), 2018\* Provisional, 2019/2020\*\* Estimates

Industry in the second quarter of 2020 has experienced a turnover reduction equal to 20.5 % and a decline in production volume of 22.8%. Also, domestic and foreign market demand for goods and services has dropped rapidly. During the first ten months of 2020, Albanian exports contracted by 12.2% with respect to the same period of the previous year. Imports have similarly experienced a significant reduction of 9.7%. COVID-19 has also led to uncertainty in global capital flows, for the period 2020-2021, the downward pressure on FDI flows could range from -30% to -40% (Unctad, 2020). Remittances have also shrunk considerably due to the contraction in economic performance in the host countries. In Albania, remittances have played an important role in the country economy and in 2019 they reached 9.4% of GDP. Despite the rise in inflation to 2% in October 2020 due to the increase in food prices and depreciation of the Albanian currency, it continues to be considerably below the target of 3%. The Bank of Albania has not changed its accommodative monetary policy position decided in 2019, it has only reduced the repo rate by 1% to 0.5% (European Commission, 2020).

There is evidence that COVID-19 is worsening the poverty, inequality and vulnerability of families and their children especially in Albania that is still one of the European countries with one of the highest levels of poverty; in fact, in 2019 34.6% of Albanians were living on less than USD 5.5 per day per capita. According to the simulations performed by the World Bank (2020), poverty level in Albania could reach a 40% increase if the baseline scenario was taken into account. In the worst-case scenario, however, this rate could be 44%. The report also indicates that in the best-case scenario, poverty would be back to the 2012 level (39.10%) and in the worst-case scenario, it would be the same as 2005 level (42.60%). In addition, since most people

employed in agriculture sector are already poor and the simulation does not presuppose a reduction in income in agriculture, the increase in poverty is mainly due to the loss of a significant share of earnings for the urban population. Concerning the labour market, the economic downturn has led to a contraction in the employment level equal to 3.9% year after year, with a loss of 34,000 jobs. The unemployment rate (15-64 years) increased by 0.6 to 12.5%, the same level experienced in early 2019. The most affected was the 15-29 age group for whom the unemployment rate rose from 1.4% to 21.4% (World Bank, 2020).

To conclude, in a short time Albania had to face two consecutive crises. The global economic recession caused by COVID-19 will exacerbate the consequences of the two shocks and will ask the government and development partners to take rapid action to alleviate their macroeconomic effects on the country's economy and society. Once the crisis is over, it is expected that the normalization of economic activity and the reconstruction of earthquakes will drive sustained growth; for this to occur, considerable structural reforms are required in the medium term.

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## 18.2. *Albania on its European Path*

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Denisa Muhameti

On 24 March 2020, the Council of the European Union agreed on opening accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia. This decision confirmed the Union's commitment towards the European perspective of the Western Balkans, which takes us back to the Thessaloniki Summit of 2003. In that occasion the European Council stated that, the future of the Balkans is within the European Union, which gave hopes to the WB states for the future of the region, as an integral part of the EU. The adaptation of the Western Balkan States to the EU requirements for membership refers to the political, social and institutional alignment of the candidate countries with the EU laws, norms and rules. Alignment to the *acquis communautaire* is central to the enlargement process as stated in the Copenhagen criteria of 1993, which foresee that a country is qualified to join the Union when it has achieved stable institutions, a functioning market economy, and commitment to the obligations of membership. The conditionality related to rule of law is firmly made explicit in the enlargement project. In the case of the Western Balkans the conditionality is made even stricter, as these countries are required to effectively implement the *acquis communautaire* as part of their legislations and constitutions before accession. Enlargement is part of the integration project of a "united Europe", as acknowledged in the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950.

The EU south-eastward enlargement has always been of great importance for the future of the Union. It strengthens not only security and stability but brings also economic and financial benefits. EU relations with WB countries took the form of a regional approach in 1997, by establishing a political and economic conditionality. Enlargement in Southeast Europe remains at the heart of the Unions external relations. In several occasions, the European Council has expressed its commitment to the membership of all Western Balkan States and Turkey. Since 1990s, human rights have shaped the EU's external relations with the so-called Third Countries. The political conditions for full membership are strictly connected to the respect of human rights, democracy and rule of law, as enshrined in art.2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) of 2007. The founding constitutional principle of the Union became an explicit condition for applying for membership in the EU for countries that aspired to be member states. In addition, accession negotiations can be successful only if candidate countries are willing to perform good implementation policies with regard to the Copenhagen criteria and the Stabilization and Association Agreement. After 2003 Thessaloniki Summit, none of the Western Balkans States has accessed the EU. The process of joining the European Union takes time and negotiations take years. Besides, political will is a necessary precondition for the implementation of reforms.

The EU established relations with Albania in 1991 and signed a Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) one year later. Albania started negotiations on Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2003, after being officially recognised by the EU as a "potential candidate country" in 2000. The agreement was successfully signed in 2006 and entered into force in 2009. This event marked the conclusion of the first major step towards Albania's path in the EU. Afterwards, the Commission identified 12 key priorities for the start of the accession negotiations with Tirana in 2010.<sup>18</sup>

The European Commission (henceforth EC), upon request from the Council of the European Union, prepared an assessment on the readiness of the Albanian government to start accession negotiations on 16 November 2009 and submitted the Questionnaire on accession preparation one month later, while Albania delivered the responses back to Brussels in April 2010. The EU Council, upon recommendation of the European Parliament, recognised these efforts in 2014, when Albania was officially granted the status of candidate country for membership. The EC recommended the opening of the membership talks with Albania in the 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. In June 2018, the European Council agreed on setting out a path towards starting accession talks with Albania in June 2019. The European future of the Western Balkans was re-affirmed in 2018 when the EC adopted a renewed strategy for the region – A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans – where EU leaders strongly recommitted themselves to the enlargement process. This step creates the opportunity for candidate countries to get the political and financial support that can stimulate domestic reforms and facilitate agreements. This strategic investment in the region based on common values aims at bringing more stability

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<sup>18</sup> European Commission, 2010c

and strength in Europe as a whole and is part of the Union's very own political, security and economic interest. The new strategy is a key driver of transformation and brings new depth in the momentum reform. Accordingly, a credible enlargement perspective requires efforts and reforms in candidate countries. The Council has on several occasions stressed the critical need for Albania to further consolidate the progress achieved in the judicial reform, in particular the vetting system, in the fight against corruption and organised crime, and in the area of fundamental human rights. The EC reiterated the recommendation on opening accession negotiation in May 2019; however, due to objections from Netherlands and France, the EU General Affairs Council decided to postpone their decision on opening negotiations to October, which led to criticism both in Albania and North Macedonia, and the EU. It is not unusual to see EU member states disagree on the opening of accession negotiations with candidate countries. Albania has often met opposition from Greece when it comes to minority rights and criticism from Germany in relation to alleged ambitions for “Greater Albania”. In November 2020, Netherlands expressed its intention to block Albania’s integration, after the 2020 EC report was published. The Netherlands has vetoed many times Albania's advancement, claiming lack of credible reforms, high-level corruption and organized crime. In December 2013 the Dutch parliament voted against a government proposal to grant Albania the status of EU candidate. This decision was followed by a statement from President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker according to which negotiations should continue, but ‘no further enlargement will take place over the next five years’<sup>19</sup>, which raised concerns about the EU’s commitment to the ongoing accession process. This episode was followed by a statement from the outgoing Enlargement Commissioner Füle, who remarked that ‘[i]t was a wrong message to the Western Balkans at a wrong time’.<sup>20</sup> A similar situation occurred in June 2018, when the Netherlands blocked the opening of EU accession negotiations, insisting on the concerns over corruption of high officials and organised crime.

The EC publishes country reports every year to monitor and assess countries' progress towards accession. These reports track the adaption and amendments of laws, the establishment of institutions and the launch of government programmes to manage and address key EU priority issues. On 6 October 2020, the EC published its latest report on Albania highlighting that the country has not yet overcome the tensions within the Parliament. In January 2020, the ruling majority and the opposition joined efforts by establishing a new platform - the Political Council – with the purpose of advancing the electoral reform. While the political dialogue has indeed made some improvements, it needs to be further strengthened to implement the Constitutional amendments and recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODHIR).

Moderate preparedness has been witnessed in both the public administration and the judicial system. The High Judicial Council has managed to fill the vacancies at the High Court and the Constitutional Court, which allows the judiciary to perform their duties. Important developments have been made towards the fulfilment for the first intergovernmental conference (IGC). The Special Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Structure (SPAK), the Special Prosecution Office (SPO) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) can all perform their functions. The vetting process has produced tangible results as well as the fight against corruption and organised crime, which are expected to significantly strengthen the overall capacity of the system to investigate and prosecute these crimes. Corruption is a common problem in the region and raises concerns in Brussels. Despite the considerable progress that Albania has made, the judiciary seems to not be immune from criminal structures, which makes the advancement of further reforms in this particular sector very cumbersome. Moderate progress has been made in the fulfilment of the economic criteria as well. The country has the capacity to develop further the functioning of the market economy; nevertheless, these efforts have been halted by COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated structural weaknesses.

The report also shows that Albania performs good neighbourly relations and participates actively in regional cooperation. After giving the green light to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in March 2020, the EU and the Western Balkans States met at the Zagreb Summit on May this year, and lately the Commission has adopted a comprehensive Economic and Investment Plan to support and bring the Western Balkans closer to the EU. This plan is expected to produce positive economic outcomes in the

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission, Strasbourg, 15 July 2014

<sup>20</sup> The Economist, The western Balkans and the EU. In the queue, 27 September 2014, available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2014/09/27/in-the-queue>

region, which are to be strengthened and harmonized within the Berlin Process in combination with the adoption of plan for the creation of a regional common market.

The development gap in the Western Balkans has a direct impact on the economic future of the region. The rapid growth recorded in the early 2000s, did not bring effective economic reform, which often have been delayed due to the inability of the regional economies to withstand the competitive pressures of the EU common market.<sup>21</sup> Economies in the region have remained undeveloped, dependent on aid, loans and remittances, and prone to high levels of state intervention. Convergence with the average EU GDP per capita seems a distant goal with the current average growth rates. Albania is currently receiving €1.2bn of developmental aid until 2020 from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), a funding mechanism for EU candidate countries.

European Union integration is a very complex process that requires the adoption and the implementation of reforms in a wide range of areas. The reform process of the Western Balkan countries faces several challenges with regard to policy alignment and harmonisation, information systems, and economic development. In addition, general underdevelopment and limited institutional capacity make the momentum reform more cumbersome.

## ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE

What has changed? The *acquis* is split in 35 chapters with the purpose of better balancing between the domains. The most difficult one is separated and united to less complex issues in order to ease negotiations. Some policies have moved between the chapters, which have in turn been renamed throughout the process.

**Status as of Oct 2020:** Zero Chapters Opened

**Chapter Status:** 3 chapters at early stage; 8 chapters with some level of preparation; 21 chapters with moderate preparation; 1 chapter with good level of preparation; 2 chapters with nothing to adopt

Fifth enlargement. The 31 negotiation chapters of <i>acquis communautaire</i>	Sixth enlargement. <sup>22</sup> The 35 negotiation chapters of <i>acquis communautaire</i>	2020 European Commission Report
1. Free movement of goods	1. Free movement of goods	Moderately prepared
2. Free movement of persons	2. Freedom of movement of workers	Some level of preparation
3. Freedom to provide services	3. Right of establishment and freedom to provide services	Moderately prepared
4. Free movement of capital	4. Free movement of capital	Moderately prepared
5. Company law	5. Public procurement	Moderately prepared
6. Competition policy	6. Company law	Moderately prepared
7. Agriculture	7. Intellectual property law	Moderately prepared
8. Fisheries	8. Competition policy	Moderately prepared
9. Transport policy	9. Financial services	Moderately prepared

<sup>21</sup>European Commission, 2018

<sup>22</sup>Applies to Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey

10. Taxation	10. Information society and media	Moderately prepared
11. Economic and Monetary Union	11. Agriculture and rural development	Some level of preparation
12. Statistics	12. Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy	Some level of preparation
13. Social policy and employment	13. Fisheries	Early stage
14. Energy	14. Transport	Some level of preparation
15. Industrial policy	15. Energy	Moderately prepared
16. Small and medium-sized enterprises	16. Taxation	Moderately prepared
17. Science and research	17. Economic and monetary policy	Moderately prepared
18. Education and training	18. Statistics	Moderately prepared
19. Telecommunication and information technologies	19. Social policy and employment	Some level of preparation
20. Culture and audio-visual policy	20. Enterprise and industrial policy	Moderately prepared
21. Regional policy and co-ordination of structural instruments	21. Trans-European networks	Some level of preparation
22. Environment	22. Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments	Moderately prepared
23. Consumer and health protection	23. Judiciary and fundamental rights	Moderately prepared
24. Cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs	24. Justice, freedom and security	Moderately prepared
25. Customs union	25. Science and research	Early stage
26. External relations	26. Education and culture	Moderately prepared
27. Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)	27. Environment and climate change	Some level of preparation
28. Financial control	28. Consumer and health protection	Early stage
29. Financial and budgetary provisions	29. Customs union	Moderately prepared
30. Institutions	30. External relations	Moderately prepared
31. Others	31. Foreign, security, defence policy	Good level of preparation



	32. Financial control	Moderately prepared
	33. Financial and budgetary provisions	Some level of preparation
	34. Institutions	Nothing to adopt
	35. Other issues	Nothing to adopt

Chart 38 [Acquis Communautaire Chapter Status]

## ALBANIA'S PATH TIMELINE

### July 2020

Presentation of the draft negotiating framework to the Member States.

### 25-03-2020

The Council decides to open accession negotiations.

### 01-06-2018

The Council sets out the path towards opening accession negotiations.

### 01-04-2018

The Commission repeats its unconditional recommendation to open accession negotiations.

### 27-06-2014

The Council granted the candidate status to Albania in June 2014.

### 12-11-2013

The EU and Albania hold the first meeting of the High Level Dialogue on Key Priorities

### 10-10-2012

European Commission recommends that Albania be granted EU candidate status, subject to completion of key measures in certain areas

### 01-02-2011

An action plan addressing the 12 key priorities identified in the European Commission opinion is adopted by Albania

### 15-12-2010

Visa free regime for Schengen area introduced for all Albanian citizens having a biometric passport

### 09-11-2010

European Commission delivers opinion on Albania's EU membership application

### 24-04-2009

Albania submits its application for EU membership

### 01-04-2009

Stabilisation and association agreement enters into force

### 01-01-2008

EU-Albania visa facilitation agreement enters into force.

### 01-01-2007

IPA funds available to help Albania prepare for membership

### 01-12-2006

Interim agreement enters into force.

### 12-06-2006

Stabilisation and Association Agreement and Interim Agreement is signed.

**01-05-2006**

EU-Albania Readmission Agreement enters into force.

**01-06-2004**

Council adopts European partnership with Albania

## **MAIN STEPS TO EU ACCESSION**

1. Country submits an application to the Council.
2. Commission submits an Opinion on the application.
3. EU Member States decide unanimously to grant the country candidate status.
4. After conditions are met, the accession negotiations are opened with the agreement of all Member States.
5. Commission proposes a negotiating framework as a basis for the talks.
6. During negotiations, the country prepares to implement EU laws and standards. All EU Member States must agree that it met all requirements.
7. Once negotiations on all areas are finalised, Commission gives its Opinion on the readiness of the country to become a Member State.
8. Based on this Opinion, EU Member States decide unanimously to close the negotiation process. The European Parliament must also give its consent-
9. All EU Member States and the candidate country sign and ratify an Accession Treaty, which enables the country to become an EU Member State

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### 18.3. *Environmental Sustainability*

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In 2015, the United Nations set up 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. Although SDGs are all interdependent with one another, upon suggestion from the Stockholm Resilience Centre<sup>23</sup>, they can be organized into three layers: environment, society, and economy. Environment represents one of the three pillars of sustainability, the very foundation of the SDGs, upon which the society and the economy sustain themselves. Sustainability consists in the human ability to meet its needs within ecological constraints. There are four goals about the environment: clean water and sanitation (SDG 6); climate action (SDG 13); life below water (SDG 14); and life on land (SDG 15). Environmental protection and nature conservation are fundamental constitutional values for Albania (art. 56).<sup>24</sup> Everyone enjoys the right to be informed and to engage for the protection of the environment in its very own and community's interest. Environmental sustainability gains new momentum vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda and European Union accession. EU membership is the core priority of Albania's strategic ambitions and the driving political and development force towards achieving SDGs by 2030.

The Government of Albania designates several mid-term priority areas for its policy alignment with reference to sustainable development goals. Although the adoption of 2030 Agenda is not binding, countries, including Albania, have voluntarily joined the universal call for sustainable action and have expressed their will to integrate the SDG framework in their strategic development plans for 2030. In this respect, Albania's strategic priorities for sustainable environment are unfolded in the Second National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015–2020 (NSDI II), which aims at upgrading the country from a middle income to an upper-middle income economy. Environmental goals fall within the third and fourth pillars of NSDI II 2015-2020, respectively Growth through Investment in Human Capital and Social Cohesion and Growth through Sustainable Use of Resources and Territorial Development.<sup>25</sup>

Albania Baseline Report on the Sustainable Development Goals, published in 2017, provides a detailed overview on where the country stands vis-à-vis domestic policy harmonisation with the SDG framework. There is no perfect overlap between SDG targets and national policy areas. The relationship between the two is characterised by high level of complexity and demands substantial and coordinated institutional efforts at the international and national level. Albania's national policy alignment with reference to SDG 6, SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15 is represented in the figures below. The progress on harmonisation with national policy framework dates to 2017. With reference to SDG global performance, according to Sustainable Development Report 2020 (SDR), Albania ranks 68/193, with an overall score of 70.82/100, and a spillover effect of 94.3/100.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**

The domestic policy framework is partially aligned with SDG 6 means, namely Targets 6.a and 6.b. While the first one has no particular strategic relevance for the country, progress has been made on the latter, with reference to participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

Albania is facing significant challenges with reference to SDG 6, particularly on the treatment of anthropogenic wastewater.<sup>27</sup> Although the score is moderately improving, more efforts are needed to achieve the goal. Water supply companies perform poorly in terms of efficiency due to high level of non-revenue water, exacerbated by transfer of ownership titles and lack of infrastructure (Target 6.1 and 6.4). Lack of sewage processing

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<sup>23</sup> Stockholm Resilience Centre

<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/>

<sup>24</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Albania, Art. 56.

<sup>25</sup> There are four strategic policy pillars: 1) growth through macro-economic and fiscal stability; 2) growth through enhanced competitiveness and innovation; 3) growth through investment in human capital and social cohesion; and 4) growth through sustainable use of resources and territorial development.

<sup>26</sup> Sustainable Development Report 2020, Albania Country Profile, available at

<https://dashboards.sdindex.org/static/countries/profiles/Albania.pdf> last accessed on 24.12.2020

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

systems and waste-water systems contributes to the degradation on water quality and water pollution, especially in coastal areas, rivers and lakes (Target 6.2 and 6.3). Tracking mechanisms are needed to measure global indicators with reference to Target 6.5 on integrated water resources management and Target 6.6 on protection of water ecosystems. Domestic policy framework is aligned with Targets 6.1 and 6.2, partially aligned with Targets 6.3, 6.5 and 6.6, and not aligned with Target 6.4. Among all indicators listed in the table below only 6.1.1, 6.2.1 are available, while 6.3.1 and 6.4.1 are partially available.

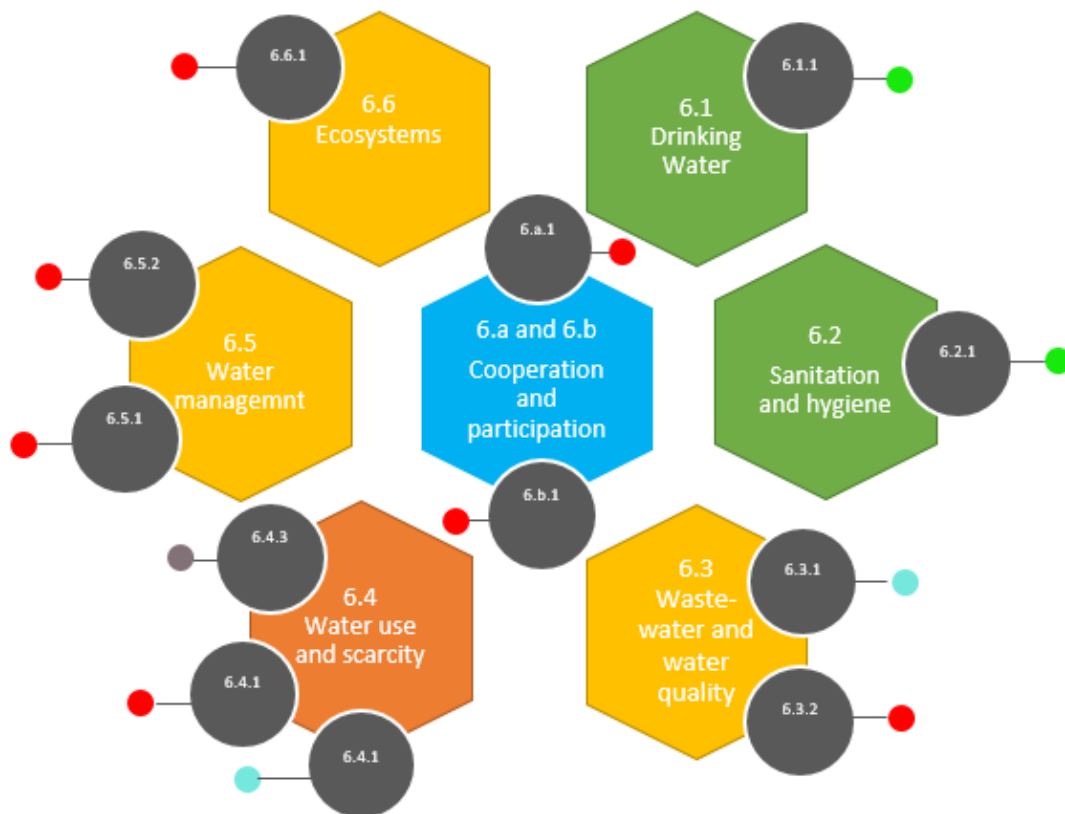


Chart 39 [SDG 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all]

### Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Both SDG 13 means, namely Target 13.a and 13.b are not applicable to Albania. The domestic policy framework is aligned with Target 13.2, partially aligned with target 13.1, and not aligned with target 13.3. Among all indicators only 13.1.1 and 13.3.1 are available.

However, according to SDR 2020, SDG 13 on climate action is the environmental goal where Albania performs better. Albania has achieved satisfying levels on this SDG and it is maintaining good performance with reference to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions related to energy, embodied in imports and fossil fuel exports.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Ibid



Chart 40 [SDG 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts]

## Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development<sup>29</sup>

The domestic policy framework is the least aligned with SDG 14 (see figure below).<sup>30</sup> All SDG 14 means, namely 14.a, 14.b, 14.c are not aligned with national policy. Albania is partially aligned with Targets 14.2 and 14.4 and not aligned with the rest of the targets. Among all indicators only 14.5.1 and 14.a.1 are available. Major challenges remain particularly with reference to fish caught by trawling and Clean Water score.<sup>31</sup> For this particular goal, Albania's score is stagnating and not increasing at 50% required rate.

<sup>29</sup>Target 14.7 “By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism” is not applicable to Albania

<sup>30</sup> Sustainable Development Report 2020, Albania Country Profile, available at <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/static/countries/profiles/Albania.pdf> last accessed on 24.12.2020

<sup>31</sup> Ibid



Chart 41 [SDG 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development]

## Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

With reference to SDG 15, the domestic policy framework is partially aligned with Targets 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.6, 15.7 and not aligned with Targets 15.8 and 15.9. Among all indicators, 15.1.1, 15.1.2, 15.2.1, 15.5.1, 15.9.1, 15.a.1 and 15.b.1 are available. While 15.3.1 and 15.4.1 are partially available the rest are not. The domestic policy framework is partially aligned with all SDG 15 means, namely Targets 15.a, 15.b, and 15.c. Albania is improving moderately with reference to SDG 15, however challenges still remain as the progress made is insufficient to attain the goal. Albania's performance is following a negative trend with reference to Red List Index of species survival, while it is on track with reference to Target 15.1 on terrestrial and freshwater sites important to biodiversity and import-related threats and Target 15.2 on forest management.



Chart 42 [SDG 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss]

● aligned    ● partially aligned    ● not aligned  
● available partially    ● available    ● not available    ● not applicable

### Indicators and Custodian Agencies

6.1.1	Safely managed drinking water services (WHO, UNICEF)
6.2.1	Safely managed sanitation and hygiene services (WHO, UNICEF)
6.3.1	Wastewater safely treated (WHO, UN-Habitat, UNSD)
6.3.2	Good ambient water quality (UNEP)
6.4.1	Water use efficiency (FAO)
6.4.2	Level of water stress (FAO)
6.5.1	Integrated water resources management (UNEP)
6.5.2	Transboundary basin area with water cooperation (UNECE, UNESCO-IHP)
6.6.1	Water-related ecosystems (UNEP)
6.a.1	Water- and sanitation-related official development assistance, that is part of a government coordinated spending plan (WHO, OECD)
6.b.1	Participation of local communities in water and sanitation management (WHO, OECD)
13.1.1	Persons affected by disaster per 100.000 people (UNDRR)
13.1.2	National and local disaster risk reduction strategies (UNDRR)
13.1.3	Adoption and implementation of local disaster risk reduction strategies (UNDRR)
13.2.1	Establishment or operationalization of an integrated policy/strategy/plan (UNFCCC)

13.3.1	Mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning integration into primary, secondary and tertiary curricula (UNESCO-UIS)
13.3.2	Adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions implementation into institutional, systemic and individual capacity-building (UNFCCC)
13.a.1	USD mobilization per year (UNFCCC)
13.b.1	Climate change-related planning and management (UNFCCC)
14.1.1	Coastal eutrophication and floating plastic debris density index (UNEP)
14.2.1	National exclusive economic zones management (UNEP)
14.3.1	Average marine acidity (IOC-UNESCO)
14.4.1	Fish stocks (FAO)
14.5.1	Protected marine areas (UNEP-WCMC, UNEP, IUCN)
14.6.1	Implementation of international illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing instruments (FAO)
14.a.1	Marine technology research budget (IOC-UNESCO)
14.b.1	Legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework for small-scale fisheries (FAO)
14.c.1	Implementation of the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS, FAO, UNEP, ILO)
15.1.1	Forest area (FAO)
15.1.2	Terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity (UNEP-WCMC, UNEP, IUCN)
15.2.1	Sustainable forest management (FAO)
15.3.1	Degraded land (UNCCD)
15.4.1	Mountain biodiversity (UNEP-WCMC, UNEP, IUCN)
15.4.2	Mountain Green Cover Index (FAO)
15.5.1	Red List Index (IUCN)
15.6.1	Fair and equitable sharing of benefits (CBD-Secretariat)
15.7.1	Traded wildlife (UNODC, CITES)
15.8.1	Invasive alien species prevention or control (IUCN)
15.9.1	Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (CBD-Secretariat & UNEP)
15.a.1 & 15.b.1	Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems (OECD, UNEP, WB)
15.c.1	Traded wildlife (UNODC, CITES)

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## 18.4. Albania's Agricultural Sector

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The agricultural sector is one of the most important sectors of Albania's economy. According to the European Commission (EC), during the period 2003-2019, agricultural production has experienced an increase at an average rate of 3-3.5%.<sup>32</sup> In 2019, this sector generated 23% of the country's GDP and provided employment to 43% of the total employed. Agriculture has been the main employment choice for people living in rural areas. This sector faces several challenges, mainly migration (and all the implications it has for the informal economy); land fragmentation, with holdings dominating on average 1.2 hectares (ha), compared to 14 ha in the EU-27;<sup>33</sup> competitiveness and diversification of agricultural production; technological level and mechanized agricultural techniques; quality standards and product marketing; and infrastructure development (irrigation and drainage systems).<sup>34</sup> As far as it concerns the European integration process, Albania's main objectives with reference to agriculture consist in increasing the productivity sector through the normative harmonisation with the Community's *acquis* in some priority areas. Article 95 of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), in force since 2009, states that the EU-Albanian Partnership cooperation aims "at modernising and restructuring the Albanian agriculture and agro-industrial sector, [...through] the gradual approximation of Albanian legislation and practices to the Community rules and standards".<sup>35</sup>

The European Union (EU) is Albania's most important trading partner. Agricultural trade relations have been established prior to the SAA, through an Interim Agreement in 2006, and both provide for a high level of liberalisation in a great number of imported (and exported) agricultural products and facilitate their entry to the EU duty-free, with exception of some products, which are subject to preferential tariff rate quotas (TRQs).<sup>36</sup>

Albanian exports in agricultural products to the EU-27 have increased enormously in the last decade. The import-export ratio has decreased below 3<sup>37</sup> for the first time in the last 30 years. As a result, in the first six months of 2019, the agricultural sector has experienced an increase of 24.1% compared to the same period in 2018.<sup>38</sup> The EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is the main tool that provides financial and technical assistance to candidate countries in support of reforms in a variety of areas, including agricultural and rural development.

Under the IPA 2007-2013 (IPA I), the agricultural sector has received technical assistance to support the alignment of Albanian statistics to EU standards, to provide administrative assistance, to strengthen institutions and capacity building, and promote rural development. For this purpose, the EU has designed a specific support mechanism that focuses on rural areas and agri-food sectors, the instrument for pre-accession assistance for rural development (IPARD), which aims at making the agricultural sector more sustainable and helping candidate countries to align with the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP) through the adoption of specific measures set at European level. These are: investments in physical assets of agricultural holdings, investments in physical assets concerning processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products, agri-environment-climate and organic farming, implementation of local development strategies, farm

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<sup>32</sup>European Commission, Agriculture in the enlargement countries, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/international-cooperation/enlargement/agriculture-eu-enlargement/candidates\\_en#candidates](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/international-cooperation/enlargement/agriculture-eu-enlargement/candidates_en#candidates)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Stabilisation and Association Agreement, Art. 95, Agriculture and agro-industrial sector, available at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22009A0428\(02\)&rid=1](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22009A0428(02)&rid=1)

<sup>36</sup> European Commission, Agri-food trade with enlargement countries available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/trade/agricultural-international-trade/bilateral-agreements/enlargement-countries\\_en#al](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/trade/agricultural-international-trade/bilateral-agreements/enlargement-countries_en#al)

<sup>37</sup> The ratio was above 6 in 2013

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Shqipëria rrit eksportet e prodhimeve bujqësore, zgjerohet harta në vendet e BE-së. Ministri Çuçi: Shifrat nuk janë të rastësishme, raporti import-eksport është ulur nën 3, 22 July 2019, available at <https://bujqesia.gov.al/shqiperia-rrit-eksportet-e-prodhimeve-bujqesore-zgjerohet-harta-ne-vendet-e-be-se-ministri-cuci-shifrat-nuk-jane-te-rastesishme-raporti-import-eksport-eshte-ulur-nen-3/>

diversification and business development, and technical assistance.<sup>39</sup> Under IPA 2014-2020 (IPA II), Albania aims at making the farming and food sector more competitive, applying food safety standards, and improve the quality of life in rural areas.<sup>40</sup>

In 2014, Albania adopted Inter-sectorial Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (ISARD) 2014–2020, a new strategic framework for the future development of agriculture and rural areas. The new strategy provides for the adoption of policies that promote development and growth of agricultural production, which aim at improving competitiveness and alignment with EU acquis. At the heart of this strategy are sustainable use of natural resources and social inclusion. The framework sets out the mechanism of adoption in three main policy areas: rural development; farmers' and rural infrastructure support; and institutional development and regulatory adjustment to EU standards.<sup>41</sup> The previous experiences on integration and enlargement show that agriculture is one of the most challenging sectors when it comes to accession negotiations. Agriculture is one of the most complex, sensitive and critical issues due to its significant size and its structural deficiencies.<sup>42</sup> It is also one of the most demanding sectors of the integration process especially when it comes to long-term extensive obligations. The implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) requires candidate countries to meet some specific economic aspects and community standards. With regard to the Western Balkans States, there are several pre-accession and accession measures that need to be adopted in support of the implementation of the CAP and rural development. Competitiveness is crucial to the accession process with reference to both agriculture and the related economic sectors. This requires the ability to cope with market forces within both the EU and the region. The functioning of the market economy under the CAP, based on clear property rights, functioning markets, price liberalisation and macroeconomic stability, requires the adoption and the application of statistical standards in understanding, programming and implementing agricultural policy. In order to meet the political goals of the accession process, it is necessary to set up an adequate agricultural administration, in particular in the area of agricultural policy formulation, analysis, implementation, support payment and control.<sup>43</sup>

Agriculture and rural development fall under chapter 11 of the negotiation process. On 6 December 2019, representatives from the EC and Albania met in Brussels to discuss of the progress that has been made towards the implementation of the SAA with reference to agriculture and fisheries. The EC welcomed Albania's efforts in implementing IPARD related measures and encouraged further strengthening of the capacity of the Managing Authority and the IPARD Agency, with the purpose of ensuring its transparent implementation. Moreover, Albania is expected to prepare a national food safety policy and implementation plan in line with EU standards, and to strengthen its administrative capacity, in order to easier implementation.<sup>44</sup>

The process of European integration bears with it some costs, especially for the agricultural sector, which needs radical reforms in order to align with the CAP. Although some challenges remain in the short run, in the long run the EU integration process is expected to bring considerable benefits.

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<sup>39</sup> European Commission, Overview of EU pre-accession assistance for rural development (IPARD), <https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/international-cooperation/enlargement/pre-accession-assistance/overview>

<sup>40</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Albania - financial assistance under IPA II, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/albania\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/albania_en)

<sup>41</sup> Klodjan Rama, Edvin Zhllima, Drini Imami, 'Albania's challenges of implementation of Agri-Environmental Policies in the framework of EU Accession, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Tirana, 2018

<sup>42</sup> European Commission, Agriculture in the enlargement countries, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/international-cooperation/enlargement/agriculture-eu-enlargement/candidates\\_en#candidates](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/international-cooperation/enlargement/agriculture-eu-enlargement/candidates_en#candidates)

<sup>43</sup> Emil Erjavec, Tina Volk, Miroslav Rednak, Pavel Ciaian & Marius Lazdinis (2020) Agricultural policies and European Union accession processes in the Western Balkans: aspirations versus reality, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, DOI: 10.1080/15387216.2020.1756886

<sup>44</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Chapter 11: Agriculture And Rural Development, available at: <https://punetejashtme.gov.al/kapitulli-11-bujqesia-dhe-zhvillimi-rural/>

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## 18.5. *Domestic Violence During COVID-19 Pandemic*

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Denisa Muhameti

Lockdowns and quarantines were essential in order to prevent contagions and suppress the spread of Covid-19. However, for victims of domestic violence (henceforth DV) these measures posed a serious threat to their security, physical and mental health. Over the past months, while countries were globally experiencing the greatest socioeconomic crisis since World War II, existing disparities and inequalities amplified, with women being affected disproportionately in comparison to men. DV has increased exponentially together with the spread of the virus. While support services have been made inaccessible during the early stages of containment measures, victims have been forced to lockdown at home with their abusers, being they intimate partners or family members.

In 2020, the United Nations and its agencies have expressed deep concern about the domestic abuse rise. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, police, women shelters and NGOs have reported a surge of this phenomenon. Although the worldwide evidence is high, only few cases are really reported. This being said, data and figures are not sufficient in providing an exhaustive representation of this worrying issue. Often victims do not report violence because they are scared or because they face obstacles in reaching networks and organizations that provide support and shelter. Albania is no exception to the occurrence of this phenomenon.

The Government of Albania entered the lockdown from 10 March to 31 May and it has tried to manage proactively these cases. Women's rights activists argue that inside homes violence has been silently on the rise and victims have not received the necessary support for them and other family members. In fact, on the one hand the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs) support and services at the municipality level have experienced a decrease on the other not all of them are effectively functioning, due to the lack of staff, budget and inability to treat all forms of violence for all the concerned groups.<sup>45</sup> According to the 2018 survey on violence against women and girls (VAWG), supported by the Swedish Government, UNDP and UN Women, in Albania one out of two women have experienced sexual, physical or psychological violence in their lifetime.<sup>46</sup> According to UN Women, DV has risen to 60% during the pandemic.<sup>47</sup> The National Counselling Line received a total of 948 calls during January-March, an increase of 30% in March alone, and an increase of 50% in April 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year. However, official data show a decrease in the number of reported cases of DV in comparison to the previous years, which raises some serious concerns on the non-prosecution of these crimes. In the beginning of June, frequent episodes of violence, including the sexual abuse of a teenage girl, shocked Albanian public opinion and triggered protests and demonstrations on the streets, notwithstanding the health emergency. Thousands of citizens gathered and condemned all forms of violence and discrimination against women, girls and minors. International and civil society organizations called for law enforcement and effective response from institutions. During the crisis, it has been of vital important to put information about available services at the heart of tackling DV and make sure they reach out to the public, in order not lose sight of the life-threatening issues affecting all age groups regardless of their gender, especially those from the most vulnerable ones. The deterioration of human rights due to COVID-19 raised awareness both at the United Nations and Council of Europe on the need to provide a global response in ensuring and protecting them by taking all legislative measures to punish perpetrators and eliminate domestic violence, especially violence against women. The Swedish-United Nations Joint Programme "Ending Violence Against Women in Albania" (EVAWIA) provided specialized support services to victims of gender based and DV in collaboration with local and central government authorities, respectively Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP), Ministry of Interior (MoI) and General Directorate of State Police (GDSP). UN Women and UNDP provided technical support and guidance to all Coordinated Referral Mechanisms through the development of two standardized protocols related to a comprehensive and accountable legal response and

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<sup>45</sup> UN Women Albania, Country Gender Equality Brief Albania 2020, December 2020

<sup>46</sup> UN Women Albania, Albania: The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods, available at: <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2020/07/factsheet-albania-fin-min.pdf?la=en&vs=1208>

<sup>47</sup> UN Women Albania, available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/unwomenalbania/photos/a.671774129534524/3790728807639025/>

assistance on the proper functioning of shelters and management of DV cases during the pandemic emergency at the municipality level.<sup>48</sup> Much of the support has been provided through social media, awareness-rising events and competitions, and online information campaigns. The Swiss Government-supported UN Joint Programme 'Leave No One Behind' (LNB) in partnership with the Albanian Government provided support to the poorest and most vulnerable groups – people with disabilities and members of minority groups – through comprehensive information and awareness-rising packages, online training sessions for the professional staff, and online education for children of Roma and Egyptian communities.<sup>49</sup> The Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD) – United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) – has issued three recommendations in response to COVID-19 crisis. One of them refers to amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania, notably Article 130/a on "Domestic Violence"<sup>50</sup>, which aims at tightening penalties in case of breach of the law, in accordance with the recommendations of the Istanbul Convention and United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW). Consequently, international organisations and non-governmental organisations have taken appropriate action to tackle COVID-19 impact on women's rights. At the regional level the Council of Europe has put in place information campaigns about initiatives, practices, statements and guidelines in accordance with the Istanbul Convention.<sup>51</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly urged CoE member states to apply the convention accordingly and to put women safety at the heart of all necessary measures to tackle coronavirus. In May 2020, the European Union High Representative Josep Borrell made a declaration on human rights in the times of the coronavirus pandemic, which reconfirms the need to put human rights at the forefront of the recovery phase both at the EU and global level.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)<sup>53</sup> call on the EU Member States to protect women's rights effectively.<sup>54</sup> These efforts include: ratification of the Istanbul Convention for those countries which have not yet done so; cross-country collaboration in the police, justice and health sectors; harmonisation of data collection and exchange of good practices; and introduction of the definition of femicide in national legislations legal.

The year 2020 was supposed to be more gender balanced, as the Beijing Platform for Action marked its twenty-fifth anniversary. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic became fast a human rights crisis, by deepening pre-existing inequalities and exposing social, economic and political vulnerabilities.

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<sup>48</sup> UNDP, United Nations Joint Programme Ending Violence Against Women in Albania, Response to COVID-19 in Albania, May 2020

<https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/projects/united-nations-joint-programme-end-violence-against-women-in-alb.html>

<sup>49</sup> UNDP, 'Leave No One Behind' Response to COVID-19 in Albania <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/Project%20documents/project%20leave%20no%20one%20behind.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/SP/COVID/States/ALBANIA.docx>

<sup>51</sup> Council of Europe, Gender Equality, Women's rights and the COVID-19 pandemic, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/women-s-rights-and-covid-19>

<sup>52</sup> European Council, Council of the European Union, Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell, on behalf of the European Union, on human rights in the times of the coronavirus pandemic, Press release, 5 May 2020, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/05/05/declaration-by-the-high-representative-josep-borrell-on-behalf-of-eu-on-human-rights-in-the-times-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

<sup>53</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU - Fundamental Rights Implications - Bulletin 2, 28 May 2020, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-april-1>

<sup>54</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, EU rights and equality agency heads: Let's step up our efforts to end domestic violence, 29 April 2020 available at <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2020/eu-rights-and-equality-agency-heads-lets-step-our-efforts-end-domestic-violence>



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**For more Informations and details:**

Catholic University Our Lady of Good Counsel  
Rruga Dritan Hoxha, Tirana, Albania

✉ [info@unizkm.al](mailto:info@unizkm.al)

✉ [cespic@unizkm.al](mailto:cespic@unizkm.al)

🌐 [www.unizkm.al](http://www.unizkm.al)