

Civic space in the EU: Mapping of national approaches to civic space monitoring, participation and protection

Albania

February 2025

Contractor: IDRA Research & Consulting

Authors: Blerta Kalavace

DISCLAIMER:

This document was commissioned under contract as background material for comparative analysis by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project “Civic space and national rule of law dialogues”. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of the FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

Table of Contents

1.	MONITORING AND REPORTING ON CIVIC SPACE	3
1.1.	Monitoring initiative from the side of the State	3
1.2.	Other monitoring initiatives.....	3
2.	PARTICIPATION	5
2.1.	Rules on participation.....	5
2.2.	Consultative/participatory bodies.....	6
2.3.	Awareness raising and capacity building on participation.....	7
3.	ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTION	8
3.1.	Civil society strategy	8
3.2.	Protecting an enabling environment	8
3.3.	Law on recognition and protection of defenders	10
3.4.	Support and funding for protection of defenders	11
4.	PROMISING PRACTICE (OPTIONAL)	12

1. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON CIVIC SPACE

1.1. Monitoring initiative from the side of the State

Has there been any initiative from the side of the State (government/parliament) to observe/monitor the restrictions/challenges/threats for civic space actors in your country in the last three years?

There have not been many state initiatives to monitor and address restrictions, challenges, and threats to civic space actors in Albania over the last three years.

The government introduced *Instruction No. 27/2023*, setting a 0% VAT rate for projects funded by foreign donors. However, the implementation has created administrative burdens that limit CSOs' ability to benefit from it.¹

1.2. Other monitoring initiatives

Has there been any other actor/body/mechanism that has observed/monitored civic space restrictions/challenges/threats in your country in the last three years?

Yes, several actors, bodies, and mechanisms have monitored civic space restrictions, challenges, and threats in Albania over the past three years. These include both domestic and international organizations.

1. National Actors:

- **Partners Albania for Change and Development**
 - Through its *Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development*, Partners Albania systematically assesses the legal and practical environment for CSOs, tracking restrictions and challenges to civic space.²
- **Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC)**
 - Engages in legal advocacy, monitoring human rights, and tracking restrictions on civic freedoms. AHC has challenged restrictive laws, such as *Law No. 80/2021 on NPO Registration*, at the Constitutional Court.³

¹ European Commission, [Albania Report 2024](#)

² Albania, CSO, Partners Albania, [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development: Country Report for Albania 2023](#).

³ Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC), [Contribution and Challenges of Civil Society in Albania](#)

- **Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)**

- Published the *Participation of Civil Society in Decision Making in Albania* report, analyzing the challenges CSOs face in engaging with state institutions.⁴

2. International and Regional Organisations:

- **European Union (EU) and European Commission Reports**

- The EU regularly assesses Albania's progress on civic freedoms as part of its enlargement monitoring. Reports highlight shrinking civic space and the need for more inclusive policy-making.⁵

- **Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN)**

- Conduct regional assessments on the enabling environment for CSOs, including Albania, along a set of indicators.⁶

3. Independent Media and Civil Society Watchdogs:

- Investigative journalism platforms such as *BIRN Albania*⁷ and *Reporters Without Borders*⁸ regularly report on government actions affecting civic space, including media freedoms and restrictions on protests.

⁴ Albania, CSO Report, Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), [CSO Participation in Decision-Making in Albania](#)

⁵ European Commission, [Albania Report 2024](#)

⁶ Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), [Official Website](#)

⁷ Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) Albania, [Official Website](#)

⁸ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), [Albania](#)

2. PARTICIPATION

2.1. Rules on participation

Are there any binding rules in place in your country for the participation/consultation of civil society organisations for developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?

Albania has binding rules for the participation and consultation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the development, implementation, and monitoring of laws and policies. The main legal framework includes:

1. **Law No. 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation** - This law regulates public consultations, requiring government institutions to consult CSOs and other stakeholders when drafting laws, national strategies, and public policy documents. Institutions must provide advance notice and allow at least 20 days for public input.⁹ According to Article 19, public authorities are required to review the comments and recommendations received during the consultation process. They must then:
Summarize Accepted Recommendations – The final draft of the legal act must include a summary of the recommendations that were accepted. Justify Rejected Recommendations – If recommendations are not accepted, the public authority must provide a summary explaining the reasons for their rejection. Publish the Summary – This information should be made available through one of the official notification methods listed in Article 11, such as the electronic register or other public communication channels.
2. **Law No. 119/2014 on the Right to Information** - ensures transparency by obligating public authorities to make information accessible to CSOs and the public.¹⁰
3. **Law No. 10093/2009 on the Organisation and Functioning of the Agency for Civil Society Support**¹¹ – Establishes a government agency to provide funding and institutional support for CSO participation.

⁹ Albania, Law No. 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation ([Ligji nr. 146/2014 Për njoftimin dhe konsultimin publik](#))

¹⁰ Albania, Law No. 119/2014 on the Right to Information ([Ligji nr. 119/2014 "Për të drejtën e informimit", i ndryshuar](#))

¹¹ Albania, Law No. 10 093, dated 9.3.2009 on the Organization and Functioning of the Agency for Support to Civil Society, ([Ligj nr. 10 093, datë 9.3.2009, për organizimin dhe funksionimin e Agjencisë për Mbështetjen e Shoqërisë Civile](#)).

4. **Law No. 119/2015 on the National Council for Civil Society** – Creates a formal advisory body for CSOs to engage with the government on policy matters.¹²

2.2.Consultative/participatory bodies

Are there any consultative/participatory bodies in your country that ensure the participation of civil society in developing/implementing/monitoring laws and policies?

Albania has several consultative and participatory bodies that ensure civil society's participation in developing, implementing, and monitoring laws and policies. Key bodies include:

1. **National Council for Civil Society (NCCS)** – Established under Law No. 119/2015, this is the main advisory body facilitating dialogue between the government and civil society organizations (CSOs). It provides recommendations on policies affecting civil society and ensures their involvement in decision-making processes.¹³
2. **Agency for the Support of Civil Society (AMSHC)** – Created by Law No. 10093/2009, this agency provides financial support to CSOs and promotes their involvement in governance processes.¹⁴
3. **Parliamentary Committees and Public Hearings** – The Albanian Parliament includes mechanisms for public consultations, allowing CSOs to contribute to legislative processes through hearings and expert opinions.¹⁵
4. **Local Consultation Mechanisms** – Many municipalities have consultative councils or forums where CSOs participate in local policy-making and budget planning. CSOs have established structures and procedures for public consultation, although they are not fully institutionalized and integrated into standard work procedures.

¹² Albania, Law No. 119/2015 on the National Council for Civil Society ([Ligj nr. 119/2015 për krijimin dhe funksionimin e këshillit kombëtar për shoqërinë civile](#))

¹³ Albania, webpage, National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) ([Këshilli Kombëtar për Shoqërinë Civile](#))

¹⁴ Albania, webpage, Agency for the Support of Civil Society (AMSHC) ([Agjencia për Mbështetjen e Shoqërisë Civile](#))

¹⁵ Albania, webpage, Parliament of Albania, Coordinator for the Civil Society, ([Koordinatori për Shoqërinë Civile](#))

Generally, the municipalities do not have personnel specifically dedicated to cooperation with CSOs.¹⁶

Although mechanisms for civil society engagement exist, they are often ineffective in practice. The NCCS lacks transparency and effectiveness, with no published minutes since 2020 and limited awareness among NPOs. AMSHC provides support but does not publicly monitor funded projects. Parliamentary committees accept some civil society input, but many NPOs are unsure if their contributions are considered. Local consultation mechanisms exist but are inconsistently applied due to resource and information gaps. Overall, civil society views engagement as largely symbolic, with weak institutional support and transparency issues.¹⁷

2.3. Awareness raising and capacity building on participation

Does your Member State fund or carry out meaningful awareness raising and/or capacity building to support participation in your country?

In Albania, the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS) is the main state institution providing funding for civil society organizations, aiming to enhance civic participation and capacity building. As part of its 17th grant call, ASCS has allocated funds to priority areas such as participation in decision-making, human rights protection, and strengthening the capacities of organizations.¹⁸

While state mechanisms for support exist, most initiatives aimed at strengthening participation are primarily driven by international donors and civil society organizations, rather than by the government itself.

¹⁶ Albania, CSO Report, West Minister Foundation for Democracy, Participation of Civil Society in Decision-Making in Albania, ([Pjesëmarrja e Shoqërisë Civile në Vendimmarrje në Shqipëri](#))

¹⁷ Albania, CSO, Partners Albania, [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development: Country Report for Albania 2023.](#)

¹⁸ Information sourced through Request for Information with ASCS

3. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTION

3.1. Civil society strategy

Does your country have a general civil society strategy / civil society development strategy in place?

Albania currently does not have an active general civil society strategy or civil society development strategy in place.

The Road Map for the Government Policy towards a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development (2019-2023) was supposed to guide state-CSO cooperation. However, no progress was reported in 2023 regarding its implementation, and no new strategy has been developed to replace it as a central policy coordination institution for civil society has led to limited monitoring, weak implementation, and insufficient dialogue with CSOs.

The drafting of a new 2024-2027 Road Map has been recommended but has yet to be initiated.¹⁹

Despite these challenges, Albania's Open Government National Action Plan promotes transparency, public participation, and collaboration with civil society. **Open Parliament** enhances citizen engagement in legislative processes, while **Strengthening Synergies with CSOs** fosters partnerships for policy monitoring and implementation. **Capacity Building for Service Providers** trains professionals to support vulnerable groups. These commitments reinforce Albania's dedication to open governance and inclusivity.²⁰

3.2. Protecting an enabling environment

Is there a dedicated policy/framework (or support measures) in place in your country to enhance and protect an enabling environment for civil society to work on fundamental rights?

Albania has a legal and institutional framework that, in theory, supports an enabling environment for civil society organizations (CSOs) working on fundamental rights. However, significant gaps remain in implementation, political commitment, and sustainability.

Legal Framework

¹⁹ Information sourced through Request for Information with ASCS

²⁰ Albania, Open Government Partnership National Action Plan 2023–2025 ([Partneriteti për Qeverisje të Hapur – Plani Kombëtar 2023–2025](#))

Several laws provide formal guarantees for civil society participation and protection: The Constitution of Albania ensures fundamental rights, including freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly.

Law No. 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation²¹ mandates that public institutions consult CSOs in policy and law-making, though consultations are often formalistic and ineffective.²²

Law No. 119/2014 on the Right to Information²³ obliges public authorities to provide information upon request, but in practice, access is sometimes delayed or restricted, especially for watchdog CSOs.²⁴

Institutional Mechanisms

National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) – Established as a government dialogue platform, but its effectiveness is limited due to lack of political will, irregular meetings, and low influence on decision-making.²⁵

Agency for the Support of Civil Society (AMSHC) – Provides state funding to CSOs, but its transparency and impact are criticized. Many CSOs rely on international donors instead of state support.²⁶

Challenges & Gaps

Lack of a Comprehensive Strategy

The Road Map for the Government Policy towards a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development (2019-2023) expired, and no replacement strategy has been adopted.

The absence of a central coordinating body results in fragmented policies and weak enforcement.

²¹ **Law No. 146/2014:** On Public Notification and Consultation ([Për njoftimin dhe konsultimin publik](#))

²² Albania, CSO, Partners Albania, [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development: Country Report for Albania 2023.](#)

²³ Albania, Law No. 119/2014 on the Right to Information, ([Ligj nr. 119/2014, për të drejtën e informimit](#))

²⁴ Albania, CSO, Partners Albania, [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development: Country Report for Albania 2023.](#)

²⁵ Albania, CSO, Partners Albania, [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development: Country Report for Albania 2023.](#)

²⁶ Albania, CSO, Partners Albania, [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development: Country Report for Albania 2023.](#)

Barriers to Advocacy & Human Rights Work

CSOs working on democracy, anti-corruption, and human rights report political pressure, bureaucratic obstacles, and lack of access to policymaking.

Public institutions sometimes selectively engage with CSOs, favoring those aligned with government priorities.

Financial Constraints

While ACSC provides some funding, it is insufficient and often not directed toward watchdog organizations.

Many human rights-focused CSOs rely on foreign donors, making them vulnerable to funding instability.

3.3. Law on recognition and protection of defenders

Is there a dedicated law (and/or guidelines) in your country dealing specifically with the recognition and/or protection of human rights defenders?

No, Albania does not have a dedicated law specifically for the recognition and protection of human rights defenders (HRDs). However, some general legal provisions offer indirect protections:

Existing Legal Framework Providing Indirect Protection

1. The Constitution of Albania²⁷ guarantees freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, which are essential for human rights defenders (HRDs).
2. Law No. 119/2014 on the Right to Information²⁸ allows HRDs and journalists to access public information, but implementation remains inconsistent.
3. Law No. 60/2016 on Whistleblower Protection provides safeguards for individuals reporting corruption, but it does not extend to broader human rights defenders.²⁹

²⁷ Albania, Constitution of the Republic of Albania, ([Kushtetuta e Republikës së Shqipërisë](#))

²⁸ Albania, Law No. 119/2014 on the Right to Information, ([Ligj nr. 119/2014, për të drejtën e informimit](#)).

²⁹ Albania, Law No. 60/2016 on Whistleblower Protection, ([Ligj nr. 60/2016, për sinjalizimin dhe mbrojtjen e sinjalizuesve](#))

4. Law No. Nr.10 173, dated 22.10.2009 on the Protection of Witnesses and Justice Collaborators³⁰ offers some protection for individuals in high-risk cases, but it is not tailored to HRDs.

3.4.Support and funding for protection of defenders

Is there any dedicated support/funding by the State for the protection of (individual) human rights defenders in your country?

Albania does not have dedicated state mechanisms or funding specifically for the protection of individual human rights defenders (HRDs).

³⁰ Albania, Law No. 10 173, dated 22.10.2009 on the Protection of Witnesses and Collaborators of Justice, ([Ligj nr. 10 173, datë 22.10.2009, për mbrojtjen e dëshmitarëve dhe të bashkëpunëtorëve të drejtësisë](#))

4. PROMISING PRACTICE (OPTIONAL)

Please highlight one specific practice that you consider a promising practice on civic space in your country in the area of civic space - including monitoring, participation, enabling environment, and protection.

One of the most promising practices in Albania for strengthening civic space is the National Resource Centre for Civil Society (NRC)³¹. This initiative plays a crucial role in supporting civil society organisations (CSOs) by enhancing their capacity, promoting participation in decision-making, and monitoring the enabling environment.

The NRC provides training, technical assistance, and mentorship to CSOs, particularly those working on human rights, governance, and anti-corruption. It helps organizations navigate legal and financial challenges, such as registration, tax compliance, and funding access, which are often barriers to their effective operation. By equipping CSOs with essential knowledge and skills, the NRC strengthens their ability to advocate for civic rights and engage in democratic processes.

A key function of the NRC is monitoring civic space conditions. It regularly produces reports and assessments on the freedom of association, participation, and financial sustainability of CSOs. These reports serve as valuable tools for advocacy and policy change, helping to push for legal and institutional reforms that create a more enabling environment for civil society. The NRC also facilitates cooperation between CSOs and government bodies, ensuring that civil society voices are included in policy discussions and legislative processes.

In addition to capacity-building and advocacy, the NRC plays an important role in protecting civic space. It offers legal advice and resources to CSOs facing pressure, bureaucratic obstacles, or political interference. This support enables organizations to respond strategically to restrictive policies and shrinking civic space through legal action and coordinated advocacy efforts.

The National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania is a structured and sustainable support mechanism that enhances monitoring, participation, and protection in the civic space. While challenges remain, this initiative demonstrates a practical and effective approach to strengthening civil society in Albania and ensuring its active role in democratic governance.

The initiative is financed by the European Union, and is implemented by Partners Albania in partnership with the Albanian Center for Population and Development (ACPD) and the European Movement in Albania (EMA).

³¹ Albania, Webpage, CSO, [National Resource Centre for Civil Society \(NRC\)](#)