



## From Head of OSCE Presence in Albania

*Dear Readers, dear Friends,*

In the name of the OSCE Presence in Albania, let me extend my warmest wishes for the New Year!

For the past three decades, the OSCE Presence has been a proud and dedicated partner in Albania's journey towards democratic development. In 2026, the Presence will continue its work in line with its mandate and our efforts will focus on justice and electoral reforms, support to law enforcement agencies, the fight against corruption and human trafficking, and the reinforcement of civil society. We will also continue our work in promoting human rights, protecting the environment, supporting independent media and advancing gender equality and youth policies. Throughout this journey, the Presence will be guided by the priorities of the Swiss Chairpersonship of the OSCE.

This Newsletter, which marked its first anniversary last September, will continue to keep you informed about our evolving activities and partnerships: Happy 2026! Gëzuar Vitin e Ri!

*Ambassador Michel Tarran*



### OSCE Presence continues support for Albania's electoral reform



### Constitutional Court reviews progress on Strategic Action Plan

Electoral reform is a priority for Albania and the Presence continues to support the process. On 3 Dec., Amb. Tarran met the co-chairs of the ad hoc parliamentary committee on electoral reform Damian Gjiknuri and Oerd Bylykbashi. On 11-12 December, the Presence helped the Central Election Commission (CEC) organize the 2025 post-election analysis focused on steps to improve election administration based on the 2025 experience. On 18 Dec., the Presence hosted a regular meeting of the International Election Working Group - a platform for the international community and the CEC to review electoral developments in 2025. Amb. Tarran reiterated the OSCE readiness to help with the reform also in a TV interview on 5 December.

Together with the Constitutional Court and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the Presence held a roundtable with key offices of the Court, on 19 December. The event focused on reviewing progress under the Constitutional Court's Strategic Action Plan 2024–2026. Discussions examined the implementation measures undertaken throughout 2025. Particular attention was given to their effectiveness and to the next steps needed to fully achieve the Plan's objectives, given the conclusion of the Plan in 2026. The OSCE Presence in Albania remains committed to supporting the Constitutional Court. This support focuses on strengthening institutional capacities to uphold the rule of law and protect human rights.

## 16 Days of Activism activities



As part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, on 2 December, Ambassador Tarran visited Durrës University. He met with Rector Fortuzi and spoke at an open lecture on digital safety and preventing online gender-based violence. Also under the 16 Days, on 5 December, the Presence offered a security awareness training session for women employees of the Korça Municipality. As the campaign came to a close, the Presence shared on its social media the inspiring messages from members of the Albanian Police Women's Association.

## Access to Sigurimi files manual published

In December, the Presence published a manual for journalists and researchers – a practical tool to help them navigate the archives of the former State Security. The guide provides professional and ethical rules for using sensitive documents from the dictatorship, protecting the dignity of individuals and promoting a fair reassessment of history. The manual was written by German archive expert Dagmar Hovestadt, former spokesperson of the Federal Commissioner for Stasi Records. The Presence encourages national dialogue over Albania's totalitarian past.



## Consultive meeting for Civil Society National Council



On 11 December, the Presence, together with members of the National Council for Civil Society, organized a consultation meeting to discuss the functioning and future direction of the Council as Albania's key national mechanism between civil society and government. The meeting gathered civil society organizations for an open exchange of views and experience-sharing on areas that could be improved. Participants considered the meeting as the first open and structured discussion in several years dedicated to reviewing the Council's effectiveness.

## Elderly people's access to services – an assessment

With nearly 20% of the population aged 65+ and older women comprising the majority, it is essential to ensure that public policies and services respond effectively to the rights and needs of this growing category", Amb. Tarran said at the presentation of the Presence's findings and recommendations about elderly people, on 16 Dec, speaking alongside outgoing People's Advocate Erinda Ballanca. The assessment – based on field visits and consultations throughout Albania – looked at how elderly people access social services and how digital tools affect their rights.



## Reflection on free legal aid implementation



Eight years after the adoption of the Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid, the Presence helped organize a reflection meeting on 18 Dec. Key actors, including the Ministry of Justice that hosted the event represented by Deputy Minister Elona Hoxha, Free Legal Aid Directorate, judges, advocacy and mediation chambers, civil society and international partners participated in the discussion. The meeting focused on reviewing years of implementation and identifying needed improvements and amendments. Ideas and recommendations shared will feed into a comprehensive needs assessment to be presented to legislative institutions for further review.

## Parliamentary visit on environmental priorities



The Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources and Sustainable Development, with the Presence's support, visited Berat on 17 Dec. The visit aimed to strengthen co-operation, gather on-site information and identify priorities for implementing the environmental and sustainable-development legal package in 2026. Opening remarks were delivered by Committee Chair Anila Denaj, Mayor Ervin Ceca and OSCE representatives. The MPs observed waste management, recycling infrastructure, environmental compliance and community involvement.

## Assembly reviews Strategic Plan implementation

On 23 Dec., the Presence supported the Assembly's annual evaluation and end-of-year co-ordination meeting with senior management and parliamentary services. Focus: implementation of the Strategic Plan and assessment of all challenges and developments between two legislatures. The meeting, chaired by Secretary General Genci Gjonçaj, reviewed achievements and gaps from 2025 and identified opportunities for further strengthening inter-service co-ordination, including priorities and measures under the new draft Strategic Plan 2026–2030.



## Supporting women leaders against gender violence



On 13-14 Dec., in Shkodra, the Presence, together with UN Women and the Strong Municipalities project, supported the board of the National Alliance of Women Councillors for its annual meeting and the Regional Conference on Gender-Based Violence. Participants discussed the latest legal and policy developments on gender equality. The conference focused on aligning national and local strategies against gender-based violence, promoting gender-responsive leadership in shaping policies and recognizing women as peace leaders at all levels of governance.

## Celebrating youth on National Youth Day

To celebrate the National Youth Day on 8 Dec., the Presence joined the "Trail of Youth 2030" event alongside the National Youth Agency and partners. The Presence's Youth Advisory Group took part in interactive activities highlighting youth empowerment, representation and ongoing support for youth participation in decision-making. The Presence also launched a call for new members of the Youth Advisory Group – a gathering of young volunteers who provide a youth perspective into the Presence's work.



## Marking Human Rights & Anti-Corruption days



December marks two important dates for the OSCE's work: International Human Rights Day and International Anti-Corruption Day. On Human Rights Day, 10 Dec., the Presence reaffirmed its support to Albanian institutions, civil society and international partners in strengthening human rights protection, promoting inclusion, accountability, participation and non-discrimination. On Anti-Corruption Day, 11 Dec., it highlighted the commitment to partnering with Albanian institutions and society to strengthen the rule of law and ensure accountable, transparent and effective governance.