



## Training election administration ahead of 11 May elections

From 24 Jan to 23 Feb, with the Presence's support, the Central Election Commission conducted a Training of Trainers Programme, a key step in preparing for 11 May elections administration. Eighty-four selected trainers received knowledge and skills to support all aspects of the electoral process. The programme aimed to increase the quality and professionalism of election administration, while helping to build a sustainable and skilled trained body to contribute beyond electoral periods. It was part of our project funded by Sweden, Switzerland, USA and Poland.

## Empowering police officers to combat human trafficking

Anti-trafficking police officers and psychologists from police directorates of all 12 regions of Albania participated in a cascade training programme organized with the State Police from 21 Jan to 5 Feb. The programme equipped participants with skills to mentor and train fellow officers, ensuring sustained capacity building. It focused on techniques for interviewing victims of trafficking, emphasizing a victim-centred approach and multi-agency co-operation. The programme is part of the Presence's project funded by the UK, Norway, Italy and Ireland.



## Walls of Remembrance against firearms in Shkodra and Elbasan

Two Walls of Remembrance were unveiled in Shkodra and Elbasan, in January, as part of our awareness campaign for youth on risks of firearms. Civil society, Local Safety Councils and young people worked together to create the installations. Through excerpts from books, news, creations and historical fragments, these walls are a reminder of the consequences of violence and importance of peace. The Presence's project on small arms and light weapons is funded by the EU, Germany and France.



## OSCE strengthens Albania's asset recovery efforts

Asset recovery and extended confiscation were the focus of a workshop by the OSCE Secretariat and the Presence, on 28-29 Jan. The event brought together key institutions involved in asset recovery, including the Prosecutor General's Office, SPAK, district prosecutors and judges, National Bureau of Investigation, State Police and the Agency for the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets. Amb. Tarran emphasized the asset recovery critical role in combating organized crime and corruption.

## Drafting of parliament's new Strategic Plan



On 24 January, Deputy Head of Presence Clarisse Pasztori participated in an analysis meeting on Albanian parliament's Strategic Plan 2025-2030, chaired by Assembly Speaker Elisa Spiropali. Pasztori emphasized the importance of an inclusive consultation process involving all stakeholders in drafting the new strategy and reaffirmed OSCE's continued support as a long-term partner. On 29 January, Ambassador Tarra attended a wider consultation meeting of parliament with the international partners on the same topic. The Presence assists the drafting of the Strategic Plan with expertise.

## Focus on e-legislation, OCV, work at local level

E-legislation and out-of-country voting (OCV) were discussed at two Democracy Insights meetings, on 30 January and 26 February. The event on e-Legislation – a process we support through a Swiss-funded project – was attended by Assembly's SG and Swiss Ambassador. In the other event, CEC's OCV Director provided updates on the first-time out-of-country voting process - a key component of the Presence's project funded by Sweden, Switzerland, US and Poland. Also, on 6 February, the Presence held a retreat on "How to work on the local level", with the participation of the Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of State for Local Governance.



## Cascade training for police ahead of elections



On 24 February, in close partnership with the State Police and the support of the Central Election Commission and the General Prosecutor's Office, we started a cascade training course for police officers who will be engaged with election duties in the 11 May parliamentary elections. About 140 high- and mid-level police officers underwent training from 24 to 26 February following a high-level launching event. The training then targeted about 160 trainers, who will, in turn, train about 6,000 police officers across the country. Prior to the launching of the training programme, on 3 February, Ambassador Tarra met with General Director of the State Police Ilir Proda.

## Encouraging youth participation in elections

Statistics show low youth voter turnout. To discuss ways to address this issue, the Presence and its Youth Advisory Group organized a #YouthTalk event on 11 February. Key topics discussed with Central Election Commission and civil society representatives included voter education, the responsibility to vote, election administration and out-of-country voting. The crucial role of young people in building a stronger democracy was also a key point in a public message by Ambassador Tarra on Global Election Day. He encouraged all Albanian citizens, pointing out those who live abroad and youth, to vote in 11 May elections.



## Amb. Tarra visits Durrës University, officials



"You are not the future, you are the present of this country so it is up to you to start working now for it," Ambassador Michel Tarra told students of Durrës University, during an open lecture, on 13 January. The event focused on democratization and electoral processes, the Presence's assistance and youth rule in democratic processes in Albania. Before the lecture, Tarra visited Durrës Prefecture, where he met with Prefect Emiljan Jani and his staff. On 15 January, Ambassador Tarra returned to Durrës for a meeting with Mayor Emiriana Sako, with whom he discussed topics including security, Local Safety Councils, youth and co-operation between the Presence and the Municipality.



On 24 February, as part of the 10th Edition of Memory Days 2025 held by the Albanian Institute for Democracy, Media and Culture, the Presence organized a study visit to the BunkArt 1 museum for 25 students from the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Tirana. The event aimed to raise awareness among young people of Albania's past and encourage dialogue about the implications of historical human rights violations for the present and future. Since 2015, the OSCE Presence has been supporting a national dialogue in Albania about the human rights violations under the communist regime.

## Tackling child trafficking and exploitation

On 20 and 21 February, the Presence organized two planning workshops with the Ministry of Interior, the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection and the State Labour Inspectorate. These workshops aimed to design a series of local co-ordination meetings to strengthen the capacity and co-operation of stakeholders in addressing child trafficking in its various forms, including criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation and labour exploitation. Representatives from the above institutions participated in the workshops, focusing on defining priorities for the upcoming local-level meetings, which will take place throughout 2025.



## Meeting of International Election Working Group



On 28 February, we resumed the periodic International Election Working Group meetings for 2025 with a focus on the preparation for the 11 May parliamentary elections. Representatives from OSCE participating States and international organizations in Albania gathered to discuss key election-related developments. Central Election Commission's Director of Cabinet provided updates on out-of-country voting registration process and election preparations. The International Election Working Group is an OSCE Presence-led platform, that serves as a forum for exchanging information and co-ordinating efforts on electoral matters.

## Raising awareness on victims' rights

The Presence joined the Ministry of Justice and civil society organizations to inform citizens about victims' rights during the National Awareness Week on Protection of Crime Victims, from 15 to 22 February. The Presence supported the publication in the English language of the "Manual on how to obtain free legal aid", along with relevant application forms for foreign citizens living in Albania. Five hundred copies of the manual were delivered to the Free Legal Aid Directorate for countrywide distribution. The Presence also supported the Ministry on a "street law" initiative to inform the public about victims' rights.



## Contributing to national draft strategies



The Presence's legal support in drafting and reviewing key policy documents aims to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights in line with OSCE standards and commitments. During February, the Presence reviewed and provided comments on several important draft legislation, strategies and policy documents: parliament's Draft Strategic Plan 2025-2030; Draft National Strategy on Countering Foreign Interference and Disinformation (2025-2030); Draft National Action Plan for Pillar I: Good Governance, prepared by the Special Parliamentary Committee; Draft National Action Plan for Pillar III: Rule of Law, by the same Committee; and National Action Plan for Pillar II - Anticorruption.