



# THE EU AND ALBANIA

May 2025

Albania is an **EU candidate country** since 2014.

APRIL 2009	JUNE 2014	APRIL 2018	MARCH 2020	JULY 2022	OCTOBER 2024	DECEMBER 2024	APRIL 2025	MAY 2025
Application for EU membership; Stabilisation and Association Agreement entered into force	European Council grants status of candidate	Commission recommends opening of accession negotiations	European Council decides to open accession negotiations	Intergovernmental Conference on accession negotiations Start of the screening process	Opening of accession negotiations for Cluster 1 - Fundamentals	Opening of accession negotiations for Cluster 6 – External Relations	Opening of accession negotiations for Cluster 2 - Internal Market	Opening of accession negotiations for Cluster 3 - Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth

## GROWTH PLAN FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

In 2023, the EU announced a landmark **Growth Plan** to accelerate Western Balkans partners' socio-economic development and EU integration. The Plan aims to boost socio-economic convergence through enhanced economic integration with the EU's single market, regional integration within the Common Regional Market, and the acceleration of fundamental reforms. As part of the gradual integration into the EU's single market under the Plan, Albania joined the geographical scope of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) in November 2024.

As part of this Growth Plan, Albania was invited to prepare a Reform Agenda focusing on reforms to unlock national and regional growth potential and related to the fundamentals of the enlargement process, including the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

A €6 billion **Reform and Growth Facility (RGF)** for the Western Balkans is providing key support to the implementation of the Growth Plan.

The Commission approved the Reform Agenda of Albania in October 2024, representing €922.1 million in non-repayable grants and favourable loans. Albania has received the pre-financing foreseen under the EU's Reform and Growth Facility.



The EU is  
Albania's

largest trade  
partner

largest  
investor

largest provider of  
financial assistance

Albania's Reform Agenda addresses critical issues and sets clear targets for progress across key policy areas. The successful implementation of these reforms will significantly enhance its **business and investment environment** (e.g. on tax and cadastre), **digital and green transition** (e.g. joining the EU digital wallet and cybersecurity, linking to EU energy market and carbon pricing), **human capital development** (e.g. reforming the curricula and digital skills), and

## ONGOING EU SUPPORT FOR ALBANIA

The **EU** is the **largest provider of financial assistance** to Albania. It offers a variety of programmes and instruments to support Albania's development and EU accession process.

### Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

Between **2021-2024** the EU has committed around **€455 million** of financial and technical assistance to Albania under IPA III. Assistance is provided in the form of **non-repayable grants**. This includes:

- **€80 million Energy Support Package**, which supported vulnerable families and SMEs in Albania in dealing with energy prices.
- **€50 million support to youth employment** and vocational education and training
- **€50 million support to renewable energy and energy efficiency of buildings**, deployment of electric high-speed recharging infrastructure for clean road vehicles, and energy efficiency and environmental protection in the water sector
- **€30 million support for an ICT infrastructure** for better services for the society and the integration with EU IT systems, cybersecurity and digital connectivity
- **Over €30 million support for improving the protection of the environment** and developing inclusive and gender responsive circular economy and sustainable green growth in Albania.

### Global Gateway in Albania

In the framework of Global Gateway, the EU has identified investments in sustainable transport, clean energy, environment and climate, digital future, human capital and the private sector. These investments aim to support a green and digital transition and bring the region closer to the EU's single market.

For projects in Albania, since 2020 the EU has already mobilised an expected €1.4 billion in investments thanks to more than €600 million in EU grants. Funds are raised through tools such as the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF). This includes:

- **Rehabilitation of the 120 km railway** section Vore-Hani i Hotit, including the renovation of 12 train stations, and new signalling and telecommunication systems.
- **Belshi 50 MW solar photovoltaic power plant**, producing 79 GWh/year of electricity and displacing over 50,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.



### What we are achieving together



**713 MW** renewable energy generation capacity installed



**185 km** of railway lines rehabilitated



Improved water and sanitation services for over **975 000 people**



**627 schools** equipped with smart labs for **198 000 students/year**

- **A floating solar photovoltaic power plant** at Vau i Dejës' lake, producing 18 GWh of electricity and displacing 8 700 tonnes of CO2 each year. It is the first hybrid floating solar and hydropower plant in the region together with the reservoir hosting one of the largest hydropower plants in Albania. This project is funded by the WBIF Bilateral Donors.
- **654 computer labs** in 615 primary and secondary schools to enhance the computer programming skills of young students.

## CLOSE TRADE & INVESTMENT LINKS

**The EU is Albania's main trading partner.** In 2023, the EU accounted for 57.7% of Albania's total trade in goods (72.1% of total exports and 50.6% of total imports). Total EU Foreign Direct Investment reached €736.3 million in 2022.\*

Progressive trade liberalisation and mutual duty-free access for most goods has been taking place since 2006 and is currently based on the EU – Albania **Stabilisation and Association Agreement** (SAA).

## FOREIGN & SECURITY POLICY

Albania has continued to fully align on EU's **Common Security and Defense Policy** positions and declarations. In addition:

- Albania continued to actively participate in EU crisis management missions and operations under the Common Security and Defense Policy, notably **EUFOR Althea** in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Under the **European Peace Facility**, in 2024 the EU adopted a €13 million measure to strengthen operational effectiveness, mobility and protection of the Albanian Armed Forces.
- The EU provides support in facing hybrid threats, including cyber and foreign information manipulation and interference.

## PEOPLE TO PEOPLE CONTACTS

- Since 2010, Albanians benefit from **visa-free travel** to the EU.
- The EU has funded over **7 700** exchanges between EU and Albanian citizens in the areas of education, training, youth, and sport under **ERASMUS+** since 2021.
- In April 2024, the EU has supported the establishment of a **new College of Europe campus** in Tirana.

\* Source: DG Trade

