

DGAPanalyse

Prof. Dr. Eberhard Sandschneider (Hrsg.)

Otto Wolff-Direktor des Forschungsinstituts der DGAP e.V.

September 2012 N° 11

Albania's Long Road into the European Union

Internal political power struggle blocks central reforms

by Ulrike Stern and Sarah Wohlfeld

Summary

Albania's Long Road into the European Union

Internal political power struggle blocks central reforms

by Ulrike Stern and Sarah Wohlfeld

In 2009 Albania submitted its formal application for European Union (EU) membership. Supported by a broad majority of its citizens, the top politicians of the country vowed to make the achievement of this membership their main political goal.

Nevertheless, so far Albania has made little progress in developing and consolidating its democracy effectively. One of the biggest obstacles is the deep polarization between the two major parties – the Democratic Party (DP) and the Socialist Party (SP) – and the strong personal feud between their leaders, Salih Berisha and Edi Rama. This political tension prevents an effective co-operation between the parties and therefore any speedy progress to implement the necessary reforms. But the conflict touches all levels of society. While the media is largely party-political and prone to take sides in the ongoing political power struggle between the SP and DP – either overtly or covertly – the civil society is divided as well and only very few organizations are truly independent.

The causes for this strong polarization in Albania can be found in the political culture of the country – which historically has had next to no experience of democracy. The former Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha firmly adhered to Stalinist lines, imposing communism and strict isolation from all other countries. The shadows that this era cast are still noticeable today. After 1990, a part of the oligarchical power elite is still in place and the past has not been dealt with honestly.

Aside from the extreme political polarization, hurdles to an EU membership that still need to be overcome include the lack of a rule of law, rampant organized crime and corruption, and an economy that is hardly able to compete with those of other EU members. The European Commission has outlined twelve key priorities as identified in the EU 2010 Opinion on the Country's European Union Membership Application – conditions that Albania still has to meet before it can be accepted as an EU candidate. However, little progress has been made so far. A decisive and long-lasting change can only be brought about through the political willpower of the Albanian elite, which essentially means that their involvement in those power machinations they currently engage in needs to be subjugated in favour of a stronger focus on urgently needed political reform. On a long-term basis, only a European socialized generation can effectively execute fundamental reforms in Albania.

Zusammenfassung

Albaniens langer Weg in die Europäische Union

Innenpolitischer Machtkampf blockiert zentrale Reformen

von Ulrike Stern und Sarah Wohlfeld

Im Jahr 2009 hat Albanien sein Beitrittsgesuch bei der Europäischen Union (EU) eingereicht. Unterstützt von der breiten Bevölkerungsmehrheit deklarieren alle politisch bedeutsamen Kräfte des Landes den EU-Beitritt als oberstes Politikziel.

Dennoch macht Albanien nur geringe Fortschritte in Richtung einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung und Konsolidierung seiner Demokratie. Eine der wichtigsten Ursachen hierfür ist die starke Polarisierung zwischen den beiden großen Parteien, der Demokratischen Partei (DP) und der Sozialistischen Partei (SP), und die stark personalisierte Fehde ihrer beiden Vorsitzenden, Salih Berisha und Edi Rama. Das bipolare politische System behindert ein kooperatives Miteinander und somit ein rasches Fortkommen im Reformprozess. Der Konflikt reicht weit in die Gesellschaft hinein. Die Medien sind eingebunden in die politische Auseinandersetzung und vertreten mehr oder weniger offen entweder die Interessen der DP oder der SP. Auch die Zivilgesellschaft ist gespalten. Nur wenige Organisationen agieren politisch unabhängig.

Die Ursachen für die starke Polarisierung in Albanien liegen vor allem in der politischen Kultur des Landes, das in seiner Geschichte kaum Erfahrungen mit Demokratie gemacht hat. Der ehemalige albanische Diktator Enver Hoxha hatte ab 1944 ein stalinistisch geprägtes, kommunistisches System der totalen Kontrolle und Abschottung nach außen installiert. Die Nachwirkungen dieser Zeit sind bis heute spürbar. In Albanien hat nach 1990 weder ein umfassender Austausch der Elite noch eine ehrliche Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit stattgefunden.

Neben der extremen politischen Polarisierung sind mangelnde Rechtsstaatlichkeit, Korruption, organisierte Kriminalität und ein im europäischen Vergleich kaum konkurrenzfähiges Wirtschaftssystem weitere Hürden Albanien auf dem Weg in die EU. Die Europäische Kommission hat im Sinne ihres Konditionalitätsansatzes 2010 zwölf Prioritäten benannt, die Albanien vor der Verleihung des Kandidatenstatus bearbeiten soll. Bislang hat es hierbei jedoch kaum Fortschritte gegeben. Für nachhaltigen Wandel ist der politische Wille der albanischen Elite entscheidend; sie muss ihre Machttaktikereien den dringenden Reformen unterordnen. Langfristig kann nur eine europäisch sozialisierte Generation das Land grundlegend reformieren.

Inhalt

The Crippling Power Struggle in Tirana	7
A Backlog of Reform Due to the Boycott of Parliament	8
The 2012 Presidential Elections: A Showdown	9
A Tug of War Over Voting Reform	10
The Effects of Polarization on Society	11
The Media – Instrumentalized and Submissive	11
Civil Society – Dependent and Weak	11
The Inability to Compromise – A Consequence of Dictatorship	12
A Pseudo-Process of Coming to Terms with the Past	12
Beyond Polarization – Further Hurdles in the European Integration Process	13
A Fragile Justice System and Corruption	13
Criminality and Organized Crime	14
An Economy That Needs To Catch Up	14
European Engagement in Albania	15
Pressure Through Conditionality	15
Sustainable Change Is Only Possible Through Personal Responsibility	16
Footnotes	17
A Continuing Power Struggle or a European Outlook?	17

Die DGAP trägt mit wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen und Veröffentlichungen zur Bewertung internationaler Entwicklungen und zur Diskussion hierüber bei. Die in den Veröffentlichungen geäußerten Meinungen sind die der Autoren.

Albania's Long Road into the European Union

Internal political power struggle blocks central reforms

By Ulrike Stern and Sarah Wohlfeld

Over the last two decades, European enlargement policy has greatly contributed to the development of democratic and market-based structures in Central and Eastern Europe. Hopes that this success could be transferred to countries in the Western Balkans were equally high. The consolidation of democratic systems and the region's integration with Europe comply with the genuine security and stability interests of the European Union.¹ Aside from Croatia, which will become an EU member in 2013, it would be inadvisable to admit any other country in the region to the Union any time soon. This is also true of Albania, which officially applied for EU admission in April 2009.

The political elite in Tirana, including prime minister Salih Berisha,² have thus declared EU accession as their highest political priority.³ Even twenty years after the collapse of communism – which ended the total isolation experienced in Albania under the Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha – there is still a wide rift between the country's desire to join the EU and the actual likelihood of accession. In order to assess the prospects for development in Albania, the following will include an analysis of the domestic context and the roots of the country's democratic deficits – in view of the fact that democratization is above all an internal process that is driven by domestic actors.⁴ We will conclude by examining European engagement in Albania.⁵

The Crippling Power Struggle in Tirana

Albania's admission to the EU is currently a distant prospect. At the same time, the country's foreign policy is extremely constructive: Albania maintains good relations with neighboring countries and advocates regional cooperation. Political elites completely abstain from nationalist agendas and have a moderating influence on Albanian minorities in the region. In contrast, the country's domestic conditions reveal fundamental shortcomings.

Since achieving independence in 1991, Albania's political system has featured two large political parties that are in irreconcilable opposition with one another – the Democratic Party (DP; Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë) under Berisha and the Socialist Party (SP; Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë) under current chairman Edi Rama.⁶ The two parties dominate the parliament (Kuvend) as well as public opinion. Smaller parties have thus far been unable to break the resulting bipolarity of the political system.⁷

As the successor party of the communist Albanian Worker's Party (Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë), the SP won the first parliamentary election in 1991; the recently founded DP was barely organized at this time. Then the Democrats, who see themselves in the tradition of European conservative parties, triumphed in early elections in 1992. Their power was affirmed in the 1996 parliamentary elections. A short time later however, the government became embroiled in a "pyramid crisis" in which

Albanian citizens lost a lot of money due to investments in complex pyramid schemes with shady financial advisors. A violent uprising followed that could only be brought under control through a 6000-strong multinational UN force.⁸ The elections that followed in 1997 brought the SP back in power, and a new change of government took place in 2005. Since then, Berisha, who has been decisive in forming the country's policies since the end of communism – both as chairman of the DP and as a former president – has been Albania's prime minister.

The deep animosity between the DP and SP has led to permanent conflict and has dominated political debates down to the local level; the central government has even been known to impede the work of office holders from the opposition party.⁹ In recent years, polarization has intensified due to a strong personal feud between the two party leaders, Berisha and Rama. In the process, the parties themselves have played a secondary role; they serve merely as an institutional base for party leaders. Once in power, they stand unchallenged at the top of government. Intra-party democracy is practically non-existent; party chairmen are accepted almost without any criticism.¹⁰

The Albanian system is profoundly personalized; identification with a party is based less on agenda and ideology than on personal loyalties.¹¹ The possession of power is mainly an end in itself and serves to enhance the personal profit of those in power. Leaders rarely allocate appointments, assignments, or permits based on objective criteria, but rather under the rules of a clan and clientele economy. Those who engage with one of the parties hope to profit from a possible election victory.¹² During changes in government, public authority personnel undergoes sweeping replacements – and not only in the highest positions, which thus robs public agencies of important experience and expertise.¹³

At the same time, ideological differences between the DP and SP are extremely slight. Integration with Europe tops the official agendas of both parties. But harmonization with the EU is currently blocked due to their extreme polarization.

Institutions that are constitutionally independent, as well as the democratic process itself, have been exploited for leaders' own advantage.¹⁴ The following will show this using the example of the parliament, the presidential election, and voting reform.

A Backlog of Reform Due to the Boycott of Parliament

Polarization had far-reaching consequences following the 2009 parliamentary elections. Indeed, decision-making is strongly concentrated in the party leaderships; parliament's influence is rather weak – which is also due to meager financial and administrative resources.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the constitution states that reform proposals can only be put in motion through a majority in the Kuvend. All laws that affect the Albanian constitution require a three-fifths majority.¹⁶ This applies to many of the decisions made on harmonization with EU law. The three-fifths quorum became unattainable after the 2009 parliamentary elections: The SP boycotted the parliament and Socialist MPs no longer turned up at the plenum. The DP already began using this instrument of political contention in 1997; following its loss in that year's parliamentary elections, the party even boycotted parliamentary activities.¹⁷

The SP's parliamentary boycott even preceded the victory of its political opponent. After the election, the DP formed a coalition government with the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI; *Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim*), which arose in 2004 after splitting from the SP, the Party for Justice and Integration (PDI; *Partia për Drejtësi dhe Integrim*), and the Party for Justice and Unity (PDU; *Partia për Drejtësi dhe Unitet*). The Socialists under Rama accused the DP of massive voter fraud. Indeed, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) election observation mission documented irregularities during voting. It particularly criticized the politicization of technical and administrative functions – especially with regard to the vote count, which ground to a halt in certain regions due to conflicts between the parties – as well as flawed election methods. However, on a whole the OSCE came to the conclusion that the election did meet fundamental democratic standards.¹⁸

The climax of this domestic power struggle was reached in January 2010: A violent riot broke out during anti-government demonstrations. Three demonstrators were killed – the details of what happened are still unclear today. European partners and international representatives in the country subsequently put pressure on the Albanian government and the opposition and called for constructive cooperation between them. The two largest groups in the European Parliament, the European People's Party (EPP) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (PASD), attempted to mediate between the two parties in May 2010, but the effort failed. Local elections in May 2011 were likewise marked by a poisoned climate, irregularities, and protests – above all in the capital Tirana.¹⁹

The actual motives that led the Socialists to return to parliament in September 2011 are still unclear. It can however be assumed that international pressure became too great, although the party also wanted to prevent being blamed by citizens for stagnant EU integration.²⁰ Even though the Kuvend has theoretically constituted a quorum since the fall of 2011, the situation remains fragile. Whether Berisha and Rama can overcome their deep-seated animosity for one another and participate in consensual decision-making in the future remains in question.

The 2012 Presidential Elections: A Showdown

To date, the biggest test of the DP and SP's ability to cooperate after the SP's return to parliament in the fall of 2011 has been the presidential elections that took place in May and June 2012. The authority of the president was reduced considerably in 1998 in favor of the prime minister's power. Nevertheless, he still holds the power to nominate the prime minister, in addition to leading the high command of the armed forces and presiding over the highest councilor of justice.²¹ In addition, it falls to him to work with the parliament to appoint, among others, constitutional court judges, the justice for the highest court, the attorney general, and the chairman of the comptroller's office.

The president is elected by a three-fifths majority in parliament – or with an absolute majority

upon the fourth ballot. The term runs five years with the possibility of one additional term. If the parliament cannot agree on a single candidate by the fifth ballot, the parliament is dissolved and new elections take place. The possibility of electing the president with an absolute majority first came about through changes made to the constitution in 2008. Prior to this, a qualified majority was necessary for each ballot (a two-thirds majority until 1998 and a three-fifths majority afterward).²²

The background for the changes to ballot procedure was the problematic 2002 and 2007 presidential elections: In both cases, no coalition held a qualified majority in parliament, which meant that the elections turned into showdowns between the government and the opposition. After a long tug of war, a blockade on the part of the opposition, and international pressure, a candidate prevailed.²³ The new ballot modality was supposed to prevent future impasses through the risk of dissolving parliament. As with the constitutional changes made in 2008, they were emphatically embraced by the OSCE and the Venice Commission of the European Council,²⁴ even though the improvements made abuse more likely. If a candidate is elected with an absolute majority as of the fourth ballot, he could work with the strongest group in parliament to fill high-ranking posts according to political motives.²⁵ But it was above all the way that the changes were adopted that were problematic. In light of international calls for constitutional reform, the party heads agreed to wide-ranging revisions without a public debate. This rare unity between Berisha and Rama was facilitated by the upcoming parliamentary elections: Both sides hoped to profit from the new rules in the event of an electoral victory.

A positive signal of cooperation came with the nomination of a consensus candidate during the 2012 presidential election. In the run-up to the election, every political camp declared a desire for such a candidate – despite pressure from international actors in the country. This was especially true of Rama; the SP chairman stylized the presidential election rhetorically as a key election insofar as he made Albania's EU accession dependent on the nomination of a consensus candidate.

It amounted to a weeks-long tug of war in which even determining the information on specific ballots led to fierce conflicts between hostile groups in the Kuvend. The candidate nominated by the Democrats was rejected by the Socialists due to his partisanship,²⁶ and the Socialists were confronted with allegations of having a blockade mentality. The first three ballots, in which a qualified majority (and thus votes from the opposition) would have been necessary, took place without the candidates. A candidate acceptable to both sides was not found until the end – the SP did not offer a nomination throughout the entire voting process. During the fourth ballot, the governing coalition single-handedly voted Bujar Nishani as president. Nishani had been a member of the DP since 1991 and in parliament since 2005, and became interior minister for the Berisha government in 2011 following a number of cabinet postings.

The election of an active member of government further intensified the aggressive rhetoric. The rivalry between the parties made it appear questionable in retrospect “whether the often evoked ‘consensus candidate’ was ever possible at all.”²⁷ In the end, it is unclear how Nishani will serve his post. A few weeks after he took office, he was already confronted with serious allegations from the opposition of having followed Berisha’s personal wishes in naming a new head of the intelligence service without prior deliberation – a purely political move. Outgoing president Bamir Topi was actually a DP candidate who left the party during his time in office.

Even if the election of the president was consistent with the constitution and was officially embraced by foreign representatives, the discussions and conflicts that took place in the run-up to the election once again revealed the inability of the main actors to reach compromise and it diverted attention from pressing reform processes such as voting reform.

A Tug of War Over Voting Reform

Following the controversial presidential election, the voting reform strongly supported by the EU and OSCE came back onto the Albanian political

agenda. Since 1998, the details of election laws were codified not only in general laws, but also in the constitution. This was supposed to prevent a victorious party from changing the laws to suit their own interests after an election. However, the fight over electoral law, which is carried out on the one hand between the government and the opposition and on the other hand between the two large parties and smaller parties, continued unabated.²⁸

The constitutional changes made in 2008 included important proposals made by the OSCE regarding electoral law – above all, regional proportional representation was introduced that was less complex and thus easier for voters to understand. The OSCE and the European Council praised the new law as a solid technical foundation for the realization of democratic elections, although they also criticized loopholes and unclear passages. Recommendations for the further development of regulations mostly concern technical aspects regarding the composition of the electoral commission as well as the counting of votes, the handling of appeals, computer-based voter registration, candidates’ access to public media, and campaign financing.²⁹

Since the end of 2011, a parliamentary committee convened on this matter has worked on implementing international proposals. Following initial positive signs, both the government and opposition accused each other of blocking any sort of progress. Multiple deadlines set by parliament for the adoption of electoral reform passed without agreement. It was not until intense pressure was exerted (mostly from the OSCE and the European Commission) to link reforms directly to Albania’s status as a candidate for the EU that the parliamentary committee came to an agreement on July 12, 2012, which parliament confirmed a few days later.

International actors embraced the new election laws. But one of the biggest obstacles to orderly elections in Albania is the lack of political will to act within the laws. There is a threat that the new regulations will be subordinated to the political power struggle because the electoral commission and its administration still consists of party appointees.³⁰

Following the successful passage of voting reform, an agreement concerning the restriction of immunity for parliamentarians, ministers, and judges appeared possible; an important step toward effectively fighting corruption. The DP and SP agreed on an appropriate draft bill in July 2012. However, the opposition made their endorsement of the law dependent on further changes to the constitution; amongst other things, they called for the introduction of a qualified parliamentary majority for the occupation of important positions in the legal system. What followed was public name-calling and mutual accusations, especially from party leaders Berisha and Rama. Consequently, the SP voted against the law in August; Berisha then announced a referendum.

But the content of the referendum can only be established in parliament with votes from the opposition. It is thus entirely unclear when and in what form the new rules regarding immunity will be approved.

The Effects of Polarization on Society

The conflict between the DP and SP not only affects the political system; it also has a negative influence on the independence of media and on civil society.

The Media – Instrumentalized and Submissive

The media landscape in Albania is dominated by the public radio broadcaster and diverse private businesses. Freedom of opinion is fundamentally guaranteed. In order to survive however, many media outlets now count on financial sources that have a political agenda. Almost all important radio and print media outlets are close to either the DP or the SP. The result is a polarized media landscape with television, radio, and newspaper outlets that more or less openly represent the interests of one party. Media power is fully integrated in the political conflict; independent news coverage practically never occurs.³¹

Public radio is entirely under the influence of the government. Local personnel, as well as employees of the state news agency, are mostly replaced after a change in government. And the government exerts pressure on private media outlets that fail to conform in their reporting – for example through the introduction of accommodation taxes or through the cancellation of rental contracts.³²

Business representatives use the media to exercise influence on politics. Representatives of the influential construction industry are often owners or shareholders in media outlets. “Good press can be had in exchange for building permits.”³³ The mixture of politics and economic interests with news coverage is one of the greatest challenges for independent media.³⁴ Moreover, most journalists are not registered and work without fixed contracts. This in turn makes them especially susceptible to political pressure and self-censorship because they can be fired at any time.³⁵ Thus, the quality of the media product suffers.

The Internet and social media are hardly able to compensate for the weaknesses of the Albanian media system. Indeed, there is some exchange about political topics on these platforms, but most people do not participate.³⁶ The lack of a self-concept for an active civil society is just as much to blame as the inadequate number of internet connections, above all in rural areas.

Civil Society – Dependent and Weak

Albanian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are largely divided between supporters of either the government or the opposition. Organizations that seek to refrain from this conflict lack a broad public platform. “Influence only develops for those who play along. And you can only play along if you have a position.”³⁷ There is a lot of overlap between staff in politics and civil society. For many, a career in civil society is a springboard for political office.³⁸ In turn, former politicians often find jobs in civil society organizations. Such conduct exacerbates the politicization of civil society on the one hand and damages the credibility of truly independent organizations on the other. Accordingly, trust in civil society as a motor of change is low.³⁹ In

addition, the concept that citizens themselves control those who govern and can thus determine the country's direction has not been fully established. This is also evidenced by the fact that demonstrations and referendums occur selectively and mostly at the local level.⁴⁰

Civil society plays a minor role in the political process. Although there are around 1600 NGOs in the country, there is a lack of formal mechanisms and experience with including them in political decision-making processes. There is also a lack of will among political actors to utilize their expertise for the benefit of civil society. Valuable knowledge that could contribute to higher quality laws and their efficient implementation remains underutilized.⁴¹

Civil society actors also tend to lack sufficient material resources.⁴² The majority of Albanian NGOs rely on international funds, including from the EU. But the formal requirements connected to such funds are very high; not every organization is in a position to fulfill them. Since April 2009, financial support has also been made available from the state-owned Civil Society Support Agency. However, civil society representatives have criticized its awarding process, which discriminates against organizations that are critical of the government.⁴³

The Inability to Compromise – A Consequence of Dictatorship

The causes of the strong polarization in Albania can be found in the country's political culture. There has never been a civil society in the Western sense; compared to other countries in the region, Albania's founding as a national state in 1912 came rather late. Since then, Albania has had little experience with democracy and democratic changes of government. After a very short democratic phase in the 1920s, a monarchical authoritarian regime took power, which was followed by occupation under Italian and German troops during the Second World War and the takeover by the communist Enver Hoxha in 1944, which was one of the most repressive systems of any time.

Internationally, Albania was completely isolated until the beginning of the revolts against the Stalinist regime in 1990y – especially after splitting first with Yugoslavia, then with the Soviet Union, and finally with China. The Communist Party dominated and monitored all aspects of life. Any kind of opposition was repressed; offenses against the system were punished severely and immediately. Possessing power within the party offered one a form of life insurance – while the loss of power was extremely dangerous.⁴⁴

The mentality of authoritarian control and the strong focus of power in which compromise and consensus were seen as weaknesses continues today.⁴⁵ A vital exchange of elites has not taken place. Many political actors who have taken to the political stage over the last 20 years were socialized within the communist system.⁴⁶ The instability of state institutions, corruption, poverty, and the constant unproductive power struggle between the parties has made it difficult for citizens to identify with the new state.

A Pseudo-Process of Coming to Terms with the Past

The continuity of personnel after the system change prevented an honest coming to terms with the country's communist past. Nonetheless, today accusations of involvement in the communist system are deployed as a rhetorical weapon in political conflicts. The goal of this instrumentalization of the past is the defamation of political opponents.⁴⁷

Shortly after its electoral victory in 1992, the DP abandoned employees in government agencies and state-owned business who did not agree with them by pointing to their alleged involvement with the old regime. The accusations were unverified, and the accused were not given an opportunity to raise objections. Most of the DP leadership was opposed to a truly transparent reworking of the past because they themselves had careers under the communist system. This was the beginning of a continuous pseudo-process of coming to terms with the past.

In 1995, a new law gave an examination board exclusive access to the former state security agency's files (known as Sigurimi; Drejtoria e Sigurimit të Shtetit). The goal of bringing former representatives of the communist regime to justice and reviewing political pressure on government employees was thwarted from the beginning by the intransparent work of the party-occupied committee and the politicized application of laws. The majority of the suspects belonged in the SP camp. The law was softened by the SP government after its electoral victory in 1997 and was finally invalidated in 2001. The fact that there were no citizen protests was due to the lack of authenticity attributed to the Sigurimi files: for 20 years, politically biased power-holders had access to the documents and thus could have manipulated them.⁴⁸ Even today, there is still no effective lustration law in Albania. A new attempt by the DP government in 2009 also failed after the international community, and in particular the Venice Commission, strongly criticized the government's new proposed law,⁴⁹ and the opposition filed a suit with the constitutional court.

An honest discussion about the past that fosters a fundamental change in mentality among the elites has not yet taken place. Today, public debates are dominated by the country's European future.

Beyond Polarization – Further Hurdles in the European Integration Process

The Albanian people are unified in their desire for European integration. Despite a process of rapprochement that has been tedious and full of deprivation and the ongoing euro crisis, acceptance of the need for EU integration has remained steady among a majority of Albanians. 90 percent of the population endorsed EU accession in 2010.⁵⁰ But today, the country's EU membership appears far off. In addition to polarization and a lack of due process, widespread corruption, organized crime, and inadequate economic development are the central challenges to Albania's sustainable democratic stabilization and European integration.

A Fragile Justice System and Corruption

Since the collapse of communism in 1991, the Albanian judicial system has been completely reconstructed and restructured a number of times. But comprehensive judicial reforms that correspond to international standards have not yet been adopted. As with all state structures, the judicial system is extremely politicized; its independence has been undermined by the government's ongoing attempts to exert influence.⁵¹ The highest judicial council, to which the minister of justice belongs, has been particularly open to executive influence – the council determines, among other things, the appointment of judges, the transfer of personnel, and disciplinary proceedings. Even the office of the attorney general is regularly confronted with attempts at political instrumentalization.

Serious deficiencies also exist with regard to the formulation and implementation of legislative acts. This is due to a lack of political will, insufficient technical knowledge, and ignorance of local events in legal texts. External expertise during the formulation and implementation of laws is barely utilized.

One of the biggest threats to the judicial system's ability to function is corruption. There has been hardly any progress on this point in the past few years. Immunity for judges, poor working conditions, and relatively low salaries increase officials' vulnerability to corruption.⁵² Corruption in the judicial system in turn hampers the effective prosecution of corruption cases in other areas of politics and society.

The main problem in the fight against corruption is not a lack of quality anti-corruption laws, but rather their implementation – a consequence of weak institutions and inadequate political will. This is particularly true of corruption cases within the political elite. Even if they become public, they very rarely result in an investigation. If the accused actually do have to take responsibility before a court, the likelihood of conviction is extremely low.⁵³ In this context, the case against Ilir Meta, chairman of the LSI and a member of the Berisha government since 2009, received broad public attention. Despite overwhelming evidence, Meta

was acquitted of corruption charges by the highest court in January 2012. Even though he resigned from his post as deputy prime minister and as Minister for the Economy, Trade, and Energy in 2011 due to public pressure, he remains his party's chairman in parliament.⁵⁴

While the fight against corruption in the judicial and political systems is insufficient, the last ten years have seen a small decline in day-to-day corruption.⁵⁵ Among the population, the perception of how widespread corruption is has sunk since 2002 according to Transparency International's "Corruption Perception Index" (CPI). Since 2008 however, the country's ranking has slowly declined and stagnated.⁵⁶ Albania rates poorly compared to other countries in the region: Except for Kosovo, every country in the Western Balkans has had better results. In 2011, Albania was tied with India, Kiribati, Swaziland, and Tonga for 95th place on the CPI.

Criminality and Organized Crime

The general conditions for organized crime, smuggling, and drug cultivation are favorable in Albania, not least because of its geographic composition. "The country is difficult to control."⁵⁷ The few areas of level land accompany large swaths of jagged mountains. There are also innumerable bunkers and tunnels that developed during Hoxha's rule and through coal mining that are now used as criminal havens. In the southern part of the country, areas where cannabis is cultivated are constantly being discovered; more plants are confiscated every year.⁵⁸ Human trafficking and smuggling also continue to be a problem. The smuggling of forced prostitutes grew in the last few years as much as the business of conventional prostitution.⁵⁹ However, as with other areas of organized crime, there are a lack of reliable figures.⁶⁰

Organized crime and corruption are closely connected with the process of post-communist transformation and the resulting instability and weaknesses of Albanian state institutions. Organized crime bosses are often closely linked to state structures to the point where it is difficult to contain their criminal activities.⁶¹ The country's weak eco-

nomics development and resulting low standard of living also increase the appeal of criminal activity.⁶²

An Economy That Needs To Catch Up

Following the end of its strongly managed economy, Albania began at an extremely low level of economic development. Notwithstanding its steady upward trend over the last 20 years, it remains uncompetitive compared to other European states.

High unemployment (around 12 percent), a widely prevalent shadow economy, low domestic demand, a lack of legal certainty, as well as decreased transfers from abroad have all had negative effects on the country's economic development. Albania was more strongly affected by the global financial and economic crisis than many of its neighbors. The negative effects became apparent in the country's decreased exports.

This meant that annual overall growth rates between 5 and 6 percent that were seen from 2004 to 2008 dropped to around 3.5 percent in 2009 and 2010. The ongoing effects of the euro crisis have led experts to predict a growth rate of only around 2 percent in 2012.⁶³

The government's strategy to boost economic development includes a flat tax of 10 percent that was introduced in 2008 which is supposed to stimulate consumption and foreign direct investment (FDI). In addition, they are attempting to boost growth through large investments – above all in infrastructure⁶⁴ – and by privatizing state-owned enterprises. Measures to promote economic growth have been financed by increasing the national debt; it is expected to reach 62 percent of GDP in 2013. Steps to limit public spending do not exist, despite international appeals.⁶⁵

Despite these efforts, the country's potential for economic growth – in tourism, the export of raw materials and minerals such as chrome and oil, and in agricultural products such as nuts and olives – has not been fully utilized. Widespread corruption and an unreliable energy supply also stifle engagement with foreign businesses.⁶⁶ Another stumbling block toward realizing the country's economic

potential is unclear land ownership conditions – a relic of the post-communist phase of upheaval.⁶⁷

Since the 1990s, the country has also been unable to prevent a “brain drain” – the mass emigration of capable and well-educated workers.⁶⁸ In the meantime, experts have observed a significant “brain gain”; since the middle of the last decade, the number of people returning to Albania has steadily increased.⁶⁹ But polarization in the political system and in society has made it difficult for returnees to gain access to the civil service and national commercial enterprises without suitable personal networks.⁷⁰ Thus, there is a significant danger of “brain waste” or even “brain re-drain.”⁷¹ The successful integration of capable returnees in state structures and the domestic economy is thus essential to economic progress and, ultimately, to successful European integration.

European Engagement in Albania

Negotiations over a Stability and Associate Agreement (SAA) between the EU and Albania began in 2003 and were concluded in February 2006; the agreement came into effect in 2009. The stability and associate process (SAP) that is behind such agreements responds differently to the individual needs of target countries and is geared toward EU accession. A central instrument of this is annual progress reports that describe a country’s success in fulfilling accession criteria.⁷² The Commission composes the reports based on a first draft from EU delegations in target countries.

After Albania officially submitted their EU application in 2009, it turned out that the country’s progress reports from the previous two years had been unsatisfactory. As a result, the application was denied upon the Commission’s recommendation to the Council. The main criticism was the difficult situation between government and opposition camps and the resulting failure of reforms. Nevertheless, the introduction of visa liberalization between the EU and Albania that occurred in 2010 can be counted as a success for the harmonization process. Albanian citizens who hold a biometric

passport can now travel within the Schengen area for three months without a visa.

Since 2007, EU financial aid has been distributed through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).⁷³ From 2010 to 2012, the EU has disbursed 84 million euros annually through the IPA in the area of “Transition Assistance and Institution Building,” as well as around 10 million euros for “Cross-Border Cooperation” to Albania. In 2013, total payments to the country in these two areas will increase by around 3 million euros.⁷⁴ In the process, the EU will concentrate on supporting system change, the efficiency of state facilities, the harmonization of Albanian laws with EU law, economic development, as well as support for civil society.

The EU has reformed its expansion strategy since the last rounds of enlargement in 2004 and 2007. This includes a more consistent application of conditionality instruments and a stronger emphasis on national responsibility.⁷⁵

Pressure Through Conditionality

Direct conditionality through the prospect of EU membership constitutes the most effective lever for Albania’s further development in the short and medium term.⁷⁶ The most exact demands possible are formulated in individual areas to ensure the consistent and efficient use of conditionality instruments. The EU has sought to facilitate the completion of the reform process with the help of detailed benchmarks and intermediate reform steps. This conditionality also empowers citizens to bind the actions of politicians directly to concrete results. Power struggles at the expense of integration efforts thus have a direct impact on politicians’ standing.

Accordingly, in its 2010 progress report, the Commission stated twelve concrete priorities that Albania should focus on to obtain candidate status. They address the country’s most pressing needs for reform: democratic dialogue between the different political camps and the securing of the Albanian parliament’s functional capability. In addition, an OSCE recommendation was oriented toward elec-

toral reform, a reform of the public administration, the implementation of the rule of law, the appointment of an ombudsman, an effective fight against corruption and organized crime, a reform of land rights, and the enforcement of human rights and the rights of minorities.⁷⁷

The Albanian government and the parliament have officially geared their reform efforts toward these priorities. A government action plan specifies measures, timetables, resources, and responsible actors for the implementation of the twelve priorities.⁷⁸ Albania was able to record a small initial victory in December 2011 with the appointment of an ombudsman who was accepted by both parties. He will advocate for the safeguarding of the rights of individual people and groups vis-à-vis state authorities. The formal adoption of voting reform in July 2012 also showed that the two hostile political camps are also capable of compromise in certain cases. Of course, such agreements are only achieved with much effort and pressure from abroad; voting reform was only approved due to the influence of the EU, the OSCE, and the European Council after many missed deadlines. Additionally, implementation of the numerous pending reforms will demand even greater efforts because they are challenging and comprehensive.

The fact that important reforms have been impeded and delayed due to polarization is also shown in the discussion over the restriction of immunity for parliamentarians, ministers, and judges. Although the DP and SP were able to agree on the wording of the law, reciprocal accusations and vituperation determined the order of the agenda. In the end, the draft law failed to pass parliament; exactly when this reform will occur is unknown.

Sustainable Change Is Only Possible Through Personal Responsibility

In light of the stagnant reform process, pro-European statements by those in power are likely just lip service. Elected politicians know that the advantages of EU integration will come into effect after their term in office, and they are hardly willing to become victims of compromise in the con-

text of a painful reform process;⁷⁹ there is much temptation to merely be satisfied with everything that has already been achieved. Pressure through conditionality can sometimes force agreement, as was the case with voting reform. But sustainable change requires Albanian actors to be convinced of the value of constructive cooperation. It is only through the realization of the intrinsic value and sensibility of respectful cooperation between governing and opposition parties on genuine reforms – “local ownership” – that the reform process will bear fruit over the long term.⁸⁰ But this is precisely the central challenge since the core of the problem lies in the Albanian actors’ inability and unwillingness to work together. Even civil society and the media are only able to act as a partial corrective to those in power.

European socialization is hence indispensable for reforming the country in a long-term, sustainable manner. This includes the involvement of Albanian actors, particularly young elites, in certain EU programs and policy areas – even before the granting of official candidate status. Policy areas that foster European socialization include science and education. Albania already takes part in the Erasmus Mundus Program, which enables Albanians to receive student visas in the EU. Beyond the field of education, European socialization also occurs through Albania’s involvement in the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Unit Program, which provides technical support from short-term EU experts in Albania who assist in harmonizing and implementing Albanian laws in accordance with EU regulations. In addition, visa-free travel facilitates people-to-people contact. This helps promote socialization with European values. Thus, knowledge of the European integration process and recognition of the sensibility of reform grows – and with it also the likelihood of a more rapid and sustainable harmonization between Albania and the EU.

The European socialization of the Albanian elite and of the population at large involves clearly communicating the demand of personal responsibility and the conditions and costs of the harmonization process⁸¹ – precisely because there are large knowledge gaps concerning the importance and

consequences of strong integration with European institutions. One can thus control exaggerated expectations about European criteria and reduce the potential for frustration. The credibility and dependability the EU gains through this accounts for the fact that, despite the necessary struggles experienced through the reform process, Albanians still exhibit a pronounced desire to join the EU.

A Continuing Power Struggle or a European Outlook?

Albania has made little progress toward sustainable development and the consolidation of its democracy. As with the 2012 presidential election, the 2013 parliamentary election will certainly slow the reform process once again, as political protagonists once more stir conflict during the election campaign. Overcoming this polarization is the key to Albania's future European integration. In the long term, self-dependent action by an elite that has

been socialized to Europe is the only way to lead the country into the EU.

The EU's next progress report on Albania will be published in October 2012; the European Council will then decide on the country's membership prospects in December. However, in light of the country's poor results at fulfilling the EU's twelve priorities, it appears doubtful that Albania will be awarded candidate status. Such a step would be a politically motivated decision that is not justified by any objective criteria.

Ulrike Stern is program officer at the Center for Central and Eastern Europe of the Robert Bosch Stiftung at the DGAP; Sarah Wohlfeld is program officer at the Center for Central and Eastern Europe of the Robert Bosch Stiftung at the DGAP.

Translation by Colin M. Adams.

Notes

- 1 Cf. Jens Oliver Schmitt, "Albanien zwischen Staatszerfall und hürdenreicher Annäherung an die Europäische Union," in: Iskra Schwarz / Arnold Suppan (eds.), *Quo vadis EU? – Osteuropa und die EU-Erweiterung*, Vienna 2008, p. 435–446, here p. 439.
- 2 Party chairman from 1991 to 1992, subsequently took over the presidency; withdrew from the presidency in 1997 and returned as party chairman; prime minister since 2005.
- 3 Interview with Sali Berisha on January 12, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 4 Cf. Wolfgang Merkel, *Systemtransformation. Eine Einführung in die Theorie und Empirie der Transformationsforschung*, Wiesbaden 2010, p. 436.
- 5 Sources include 24 expert interviews with representatives from politics, science, the media, and civil society, which the authors conducted in January 2012 in Tirana and Shkoder as well as in May and June 2012 in Berlin.
- 6 Party chairman since 2005, mayor of Tirana from 2000 to 2011.
- 7 The DP and SP have acquired considerable membership numbers and a majority of voters. Approximately 10 smaller parties make up a voter potential of between 2 and 5 percent. In addition, there are a large number of very small parties that do not have their own power base and that are frequently established as splinter parties. Cf. Michael Schmidt-Neke, "Das politische System Albanien," in: Wolfgang Ismayr (ed.), *Die politischen Systeme Osteuropas*, Opladen 2010, p. 1007-1052, here p. 1030.
- 8 Cf. UN Security Council (ed.): Resolution 1101 (1997) from March 28, 1997, <http://www.un.org/depts/german/sr/sr_97/sr1101.pdf> (accessed on May 13, 2012).
- 9 Cf. Interview with Gentian Mema on January 7, 2012 in Shkoder, Albania. Mema is director for international relations at the Shkoder city council.
- 10 Cf. Interview with Gjergji Vurmo on January 10, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Vurmo is program director at the Institute for Democracy and Mediation.
- 11 Cf. Peter Schubert, *Albanische Identitätssuche im Spannungsfeld zwischen nationaler Eigenstaatlichkeit und europäischer Integration*, Frankfurt/Main et al. 2005, p. 75.
- 12 Cf. Interview with Michael Weichert on January 11, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Weichert was head of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung's (FES) office in Tirana, Albania.

- 13 Cf. Interview with Gjergji Vurmo on January 10, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 14 Cf. Corina Stratulat / Gjergji Vurmo, “Opportunity knocks: can the EU help Albania to help itself?” European Policy Centre Policy Brief, March 2012, p. 2, <http://epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_1432_opportunity_knocks.pdf> (accessed on April 15, 2012).
- 15 Cf. European Movement Albania (ed.): “Which role for the Albanian parliament in the EU integration process? Assessment of the oversight role and administrative capacities (Policy Brief), Tirana [???], November 2010, p. 2.
- 16 Art. 78 and 81 of the Albanian constitution.
- 17 Cf. Susanna Di Felicianantonio, “EU Foreign Policy and Albania,” in: *European Foreign Affairs Review* 4/1999, p. 519–536, here p. 521.
- 18 Cf. OSCE/ODIHR (eds.): “Republic of Albania – Parliamentary Elections 28 June 2009,” OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Final Report, Warsaw, September 2009, <www.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/38598> (accessed on April 4, 2012).
- 19 Cf. Gledis Gjipali, “Albania,” in: Freedom House (ed.), *Nations in Transition 2012*, p. 47–64, here p. 48–49, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Albania_final_0.pdf> (accessed on August 27, 2012).
- 20 Cf. Interview with Michael Weichert on January 11, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 21 The highest judicial council, which consists of the president, the chairman of the highest court, the justice minister, three parliamentarians, and nine judges, appoints judges and decides on personnel transfers and disciplinary actions.
- 22 Cf. Schmidt-Neke, op.cit. (Footnote 7), p. 1012.
- 23 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1013.
- 24 The European Commission for Democracy Through Law, also known as the Venice Commission, is an institution of the European Commission. It is an international, independent advisory body for issues of constitutional law. Cf. European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission – ed.), “Opinion on the Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania,” CDL-AD(2008)033, <<http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2008/CDL-AD%282008%29033-e.pdf>> (accessed on April 4, 2012).
- 25 Cf. Gjipali, op.cit. (Footnote 19), p. 62.
- 26 The former constitutional court judge Xhezair Zaganjori withdrew after the Socialists rejected his candidacy. On the fourth ballot, the Democrats nominated Artan Hoxha, an economic expert and commentator for Albanian media. This was also rejected by the Socialists. Surprisingly, Hoxha withdrew minutes before the deciding ballot despite his certain election due to only needing an absolute majority on the fourth ballot.
- 27 Thomas Schrapel, “Nishani neuer Staatspräsident, Analyse der Wahlen vom 11. Juni 2012,” Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. (ed.), *Länderbericht*, 2012, p. 3.
- 28 Cf. Schmidt-Neke, op.cit. (Footnote 7), p. 1026.
- 29 Cf. European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) (eds.): “Joint Opinion on the Electoral Law and the Electoral Practice of Albania,” CDL-AD(2011)042, p. 4, 20 <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/86424>> (accessed on March 5, 2012).
- 30 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20–21.
- 31 Cf. Interview with Michael Weichert on January 11, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 32 Cf. FRIDE (ed.): “Democracy Monitoring Report – Albania,” April 2010, p. 17, <http://www.fride.org/download/IP_Albania_ENG_ap10.pdf> (accessed on March 3, 2012).
- 33 Cf. Interview with Albanian radio journalist on January 13, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. The journalist asked to remain anonymous.
- 34 Cf. FRIDE 2010, p. 17.
- 35 Cf. Gjipali, op.cit. (Footnote 19), p. 57.
- 36 Cf. Interview with Aldo Merkoçi on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Merkoçi is responsible for press and public relations at the civil society group “MJAFIT.”
- 37 Interview with Eugen Wollfarth on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Wollfarth is the OSCE ambassador in Albania.
- 38 Cf. Interview with Gjergji Vurmo on January 10, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 39 Cf. Interview with Gledis Gjipali on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Gjipali is director of the “European Movement Albania.”
- 40 Cf. Interview with Aldo Merkoçi on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 41 Cf. Stratulat / Vurmo, op.cit. (Footnote 14), p. 3.
- 42 Cf. Schmidt-Neke, op.cit. (Footnote 7), p. 1041.
- 43 Cf. Interview with Aldo Merkoçi on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 44 Cf. Robert C. Austin / Jonathan Ellison, “Post-Communist Transitional Justice in Albania,” in: *East European Politics & Societies* 2/2008, p. 373–401, here p. 378.
- 45 Cf. Michael Weichert, “Albanien am Scheideweg. Von der politischen Krise zur Krise des politischen Systems?” (FES Tirana, Perspektive), March 2011, p. 2–3, <<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/07893.pdf>> (accessed on December 15, 2011).
- 46 Interview with Besnik Mustafaj on January 10, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Mustafaj is co-founder of the DP and served as foreign minister from 2005–2007.
- 47 Cf. Interview with Michael Weichert on January 11, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.

- 48 Cf. Austin / Ellison, *op.cit.* (Footnote 44), p. 382 ff.
- 49 Cf. European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) (ed.), “Amicus Curiae Opinion on the Law of the Cleanliness of the Figure of High Functionaries of the Public Administration and Elected Persons of Albania,” CDL-AD(2009)044, <<http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2009/CDL-AD%282009%29044-e.pdf>> (accessed on April 12, 2012).
- 50 Cf. Eunacal Institute Tirana (ed.), “Analysis of key survey results on the perceptions and expectations of citizens and business toward Albania’s EU accession and the use of web 2.0 technologies for political deliberation,” Tirana, November 2010, p. 3, <http://eunacal.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Executive_Summary_EUNACAL_and_OSFA_Survey.pdf> (accessed on June 15, 2012).
- 51 Cf. Gjipali, *op.cit.* (Footnote 19), p. 49, 59.
- 52 Cf. European Commission (ed.): “Albania 2011 Progress Report,” SEC(2011) 1205 final, October 12, 2011, p. 11, <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2011/package/al_rapport_2011_en.pdf> (accessed on May 3, 2012).
- 53 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 14.
- 54 Cf. Vilma Filaj-Ballvora, “Kultur der Straflosigkeit in Albanien,” in: Deutsche Welle Online, January 21, 2012, <<http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,6700468,00.html>> (accessed on April 12, 2012).
- 55 Cf. FRIDE 2010, p. 18 ff.
- 56 CPI-Score for Albania: 2,5 (2002); 2,5 (2003); 2,5 (2004); 2,4 (2005); 2,6 (2006); 2,9 (2007); 3,4 (2008); 3,2 (2009); 3,3 (2010); 3,1 (2011).
- 57 Interview with Eugen Wollfarth on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 58 It remains unclear whether this is due to increased production or to better work by state bodies.
- 59 Cf. Interview with Eugen Wollfarth on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 60 Cf. OSCE Presence in Albania (ed.): “Anti-trafficking,” <<http://www.osce.org/albania/43317>> (accessed on May 13, 2012).
- 61 Cf. Steven Blockmans, *Tough love: The European Union’s relations with the Western Balkans*, Brussels 2007, p. 334.
- 62 Cf. Misha Glenny, “Balkan Organised Crime,” in: Judy Batt (ed.): *Is there an Albania Question?*, Chaillot Paper, 2008/107, p. 87–104, here p. 103f.
- 63 Cf. Interview with Artan Hoxha on January 12, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Hoxha is president of the Institute for Contemporary Studies (ISB) in Tirana and was temporarily the DP’s candidate for the 2012 presidential election.
- 64 Cf. Speech from then Albanian Foreign Minister Edmond Haxhinasto on November 8, 2011 at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Berlin, Germany.
- 65 Cf. Gjergj Erebara, “IMF urges Albania to raise taxes,” *AlbanianEconomy.com*, June 24, 2011, <<http://www.albanianeconomy.com/news/2011/06/24/imf-urges-albania-to-raise-taxes/>> (accessed on May 13, 2012).
- 66 Cf. Schmitt, *op.cit.* (Footnote 1), p. 445.
- 67 Cf. OSCE Presence in Albania (ed.): “Property Reform,” <<http://www.osce.org/albania/44305>> (accessed on May 13, 2012).
- 68 Cf. European Movement Albania (EMA), “Is the return worth it? On the reintegration of high skilled returnees in Albania,” Policy Paper, December 2011, p. 3.
- 69 Unfortunately, insufficient data prevents numerical determinations here. See the interview with Blerta Hoxha on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Hoxha is policy researcher at the European Policy Movement (EMA) in Tirana.
- 70 Cf. Interview with Blerta Hoxha on January 9, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 71 Cf. European Movement Albania (EMA), *op.cit.* (Footnote 68), p. 6.
- 72 Cf. Blockmans, *op.cit.* (Footnote 61), p. 251.
- 73 Cf. European Council (ed.): Provision (EG) Nr. 1085/2006 of the Council from July 17, 2006 on the establishment of an instrument for pre-accession assistance, Official Register Nr. L 210 from July 31, 2006 p. 0082–0093, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:210:0082:01:de:HTML>> (accessed on December 6, 2011).
- 74 Cf. European Commission (ed.): “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) – Revised multi-annual indicative financial framework for 2012 – 2013,” October 12, 2011, COM(2011) 641 final, <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/how_does_it_work/miff_12_10_2011.pdf>, S. 8 (access on November 13, 2011).
- 75 Cf. Council of the European Union (ed.): Conclusion of the Chairmanship, European Council on December 14/15, 2006 in Brussels, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/de/ec/92219.pdf> (accessed on May 12, 2012).
- 76 In addition to the EU, national actors such as the German GIZ or American USAID, as well as multinational actors such as the World Bank and the OSCE, influence the country’s further development through diverse aid programs, for example in the areas of promoting small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), environmental protection, and public administration.
- 77 Cf. European Commission (ed.): Commission Opinion on Albania’s application for membership of the European Union, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM(2010)680, November 9, 2010, p. 11 f., <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/al_opin-

- ion_2010_en.pdf> (accessed on November 13, 2011).
- 78 Cf. Stratulat / Vurmo, op.cit. (Footnote 14), p. 2.
- 79 Cf. Interview with Blerta Hoxha on January 10, 2012 in Tirana, Albania.
- 80 Cf. Remzi Lani/ Deniz Devrim, "Is Albania's Moderating Voice in Southeast Europe Taking for Granted?" in: notes international CIDOB, May 2010, p. 5.
- 81 Cf. Interview with Arcena Trashani on January 13, 2012 in Tirana, Albania. Trashani is currently a DP parliamentarian and was Minister for European Integration between 2005 and 2007. In 2006, she signed the SAA for the Albanian side.

