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### Key findings of the 2011 Progress Report on Albania

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#### Key findings of the 2011 Progress Report on Albania

*The Progress Report on Albania is part of the 2011 Enlargement Package adopted by the European Commission on 12 October. The European Commission concluded that, although progress was made during the last year in some of the 12 key priorities identified in the 2010 Opinion on the country's European Union membership application, conditions for opening of accession negotiations have not yet been met.*

#### Political criteria

**Albania has made limited progress towards fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria.** Albania's government made efforts to move ahead on the EU integration agenda, notably through the preparation of an Action plan to address the EU's key priorities. This process included discussion with opposition in the Parliamentary committee for European integration. There have been some limited improvements in parliamentary rules of procedure. Albania has adopted a judicial reform strategy and an action plan, which provide a good basis for reform efforts. A Council of Ministers decision introduces a uniform approach and standards for the establishment of public bodies. The fight against organised crime has progressed, notably through good international cooperation and implementation of the 'anti-mafia' law including confiscation of criminal assets. The adoption of the Law on Protection of the Rights of the Child and some improvements in the treatment of detainees in prison represent important advances in the field of human rights. Albania continues to play a constructive role in maintaining regional stability and fostering good neighbourly relations with other Western Balkan and EU countries.

**However, considerable and sustained efforts will be required to address shortcomings in the political field.** As regards democracy and rule of law, the persistent political stalemate and further confrontational developments have hampered implementation of reforms and important pieces of legislation are awaiting adoption. This climate of polarization also affected the local elections of 8 May. Despite a relatively good conduct on voting day and an overall positive counting process, the elections were marked by shortcomings and controversy, notably as regards the adjudication of post-election appeals for the Tirana mayoral election. Electoral reform has stalled. Essential steps in public administration reform have not been completed and the functioning of the judicial system needs to be further improved. Progress on fighting corruption has been limited. There are some concerns over pressures hampering media independence. Progress on adoption and implementation of a property reform strategy and action plan is limited. Implementation of legislative and policy tools in the field of human rights and protection of minorities, including Roma, needs further improvement.

#### Economic criteria

**The Albanian economy maintained macroeconomic stability and positive growth during and in the aftermath of the global crisis.** Albania has made some progress towards becoming a functioning market economy. Its capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union in the medium term is on track, provided Albania steps up structural reforms, including by reinforcing the legal system and strengthening physical and human capital.

**Although domestic demand was muted, strong exports led to an economic growth of 3.8% in 2010.** Inflation has remained stable thanks to Albania's sound monetary policy. However, the political stalemate hampered the capacity of the government to implement necessary structural reforms. Shortcomings regarding property rights, the enforceability of contracts and the rule of law, together with weak infrastructure and human capital as well as the large scale informal economy continued to hinder economic development. The relatively high public debt and the high level of non-performing loans in the banking sector remain issues of concern.

#### EU Legislation

**Albania has made some progress in improving its ability to assume the obligations of membership** by approximating its legislation and standards to the EU, in particular in the areas of free movement of goods, enterprise and industrial policy, justice, freedom and security, and financial control.

**However, increased efforts are needed** as progress has been limited in other areas such as free movement of workers, public procurement, intellectual property law, air transport, information society and media as well as energy and environment. Overall, the administrative capacity for implementation and enforcement of legislation needs to be strengthened.

#### EU - ALBANIA KEY DATES

**June 2000:** The European Council states that all the Stabilisation and Association countries are "potential candidates" for EU membership

**June 2003:** Thessaloniki Summit; the EU perspective for the Western Balkans is confirmed

**1 April 2009:** Entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement

**28 April 2009:** Albania presents its application for membership of the EU

**9 November 2010:** The Commission adopts the Opinion on Albania's EU membership application, including a set of 12 key priorities to be fulfilled in view of opening of accession negotiations

15 December 2010: Entry into force of visa liberalisation for Albanian citizens travelling to Schengen countries

**For more information:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press\\_corner/key-documents/reports\\_oct\\_2011\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_oct_2011_en.htm)