

# Donor programming in Albania in other (non-justice and security) sectors relevant to organised crime<sup>1</sup>

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## Question

*What are other (non-UK) donors currently doing in Albania in other serious and organised crime-relevant sectors (e.g. wider governance, livelihoods, social, and education sectors)?*

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<sup>1</sup> This helpdesk report has a companion piece on donor programming in Albania in justice and security sectors in relation to countering serious and organised crime (authored by Luke Kelly).

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# 1. Overview

This helpdesk report provides an overview of sectors relevant to the existence and prevalence of organised crime in Albania; and a mapping of donor work in these sectors. While the programmes and projects discussed are not necessarily designed and adopted specifically to counter organised crime, linkages can be inferred. Literature was selected through database searches (Google, Google Scholar, Web of Science) and by visiting multilateral and bilateral donor websites.

Corruption and organised crime are prevalent in Albania and remain key problems in the country. Institutional and everyday petty corruption undermine social trust and creates an environment in which the rule of law is weak and higher order criminal activity can more easily flourish (UNODC, 2015). Corruption is closely interlinked with organised crime as many of the country's senior state officials are involved in smuggling, contrabands, tax evasions and land grabbing (Sokoli and Resulaj, 2013). Corruption poses a major money laundering risk in Albania as it generates significant amounts of criminal proceeds (COE, 2018). Trafficking in human beings and drugs are also key problems. Albania has been the region's top producer of cannabis (Global Initiative, 2019). Trafficking in humans for sexual exploitation occurs internally. Many girls and women, particularly Roma and other marginalised groups with low socio-economic backgrounds, are trafficked in main cities in Albania (Meçe, 2016).

Organised crime and economic inequality and development are correlated (EC, 2018). Key areas of development requiring attention to tackle organised crime in Albania and elsewhere include: livelihoods and employment; rural development; governance reform; and service delivery. Improving the poor socio-economic conditions of vulnerable populations, for example, can help to prevent human trafficking (Meçe, 2016). This query uses these core areas to structure this report.

**Livelihoods, employment and rural development challenges in Albania:** Albania struggles with maintaining sustainable growth and inclusive job creation (SDC, 2018). The agricultural sector faces various structural challenges, rendering rural areas the poorest in the country (Meçe and Ribaj, 2019). The Government of Albania has identified employment and the sustainable growth of the agricultural sector as key development priorities (UNDP, 2016a). High unemployment and lack of productive outlets among youth, women and other vulnerable groups - and in rural areas can contribute to marginalisation, migratory pressures and the persistence of corruption and patronage systems (EU, 2019; GIZ, 2019a, UNDP, 2016b and 2014).

**Governance and service delivery challenges in Albania:** There is also a high correlation between anti-corruption, good governance and public services in Albania (Muçollari, 2018). The quality of service delivery in the social sectors suffers from a weak governance framework, corruption, and inequity (World Bank, 2018). The health sector, for example, experiences high levels of corruption.<sup>2</sup> Rural populations and women are particularly disadvantaged, as are the elderly, disabled and poor (SDC, 2018). In turn, combating corruption requires a high level of good governance and effectiveness of public services (Muçollari, 2018). In Albania, this requires decentralisation of public services (Muçollari, 2018).

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<sup>2</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Transparency in Health Engagement. <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-transparency-health-engagement>

Donor support in **livelihoods, employment and skills training** is primarily aimed at:

- increasing labour market participation and providing job opportunities for all, with particular attention to vulnerable groups and regions;
- increasing the quality and coverage of vocational education and training (VET);
- improving the quality and effectiveness of labour market institutions and services; and
- fostering business competitiveness, with particular focus on small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship.
- Key multilateral and bilateral donor agencies include: EU, UNDP, SDC, GIZ and USAID, with emerging assistance from Gulf donors.

Donor support in **rural development** is primarily aimed at:

- improving competitiveness of the agricultural and agro-food sectors, providing access to capital and technical assistance;
- adopting a market integration and value chain approach to production;
- supporting women's and youth economic empowerment in rural areas; and
- promoting diversification, in particular supporting the rise of the tourism industry
- Key multilateral and bilateral donor agencies include: EU, FAO, GIZ, USAID

Donor support in **governance** is primarily aimed at:

- supporting decentralisation efforts, to bring decision making processes closer to citizens;
- promoting cooperation between various government levels;
- local governance reforms, including technical assistance to better manage tax collection and budgeting processes, and performance monitoring systems; and
- countering corruption, through municipal integrity plans, and strengthening civil society to act as watchdogs and engage in other anti-corruption actions
- Key multilateral and bilateral donor agencies include: EU, UNDP, USAID, SDC

Donor support in **service delivery** is primarily aimed at:

- strengthening citizen-centric public service delivery;
- building institutional and administrative capacity to deliver such services;
- increasing governance and transparency of services, such as healthcare, through stronger oversight agencies, and greater cooperation among agencies and civil society;
- supporting digitalisation of public services and digital platforms to collect citizen complaints; and
- supporting service delivery, such as drug prevention programmes, to communities vulnerable to drug use, cannabis cultivation and trafficking
- Key multilateral and bilateral donor agencies include: EU, UNDP, UNODC, USAID

Donor support in **awareness-raising: anti-trafficking and corruption** is primarily aimed at:

- training seminars on trafficking in human beings for various stakeholders;
- developing digital reporting mechanisms and educational tools, such as smartphone applications that can broaden reach to rural areas; and
- helping women to identify corruption and to be aware of the legal framework and available reporting mechanisms
- Key multilateral and bilateral donor agencies include: UNICEF, UNODC, USAID

## 2. Livelihoods, employment and skills training

Albania has achieved considerable macro-economic stability; however, it still struggles with maintaining sustainable growth and inclusive job creation (SDC, 2018). **Employment has been identified as a priority** by the Government of Albania (UNDP, 2016a). High youth unemployment and inactivity, low female employment, high share of informal and vulnerable employment, insufficient social care services and low quality of education are key problems (EU, 2019). While the overall unemployment rate in Albania is 13.6 per cent, youth fare considerably worse in the labour market with as many as 26 per cent of those actively seeking employment being unable to find work.<sup>3</sup> There is also a reported difference in labour force participation between men and women, with the rate for women around 18 percentage points lower than for men (see Meçe and Ribaj, 2019). These problems can exacerbate migratory pressures and the persistence of corruption and patronage systems (GIZ, 2019a).

Efforts are needed to support increases in investment and productivity – and to foster absorption into the labour market, with particular attention to often marginalised groups (SDC, 2018). A key challenge is **improving the labour market relevance, quality and targeting of active employment policies**. There has been recent progress in the promotion of skills development and **vocational education and training** (VET). However, they are often still limited in scope, sometimes low in quality – failing to equip students with adequate knowledge and competences to transition to the labour market. They are also absent in some northern/north-eastern and southern parts of Albania (EU, 2019 and 2018; UNDP, 2014). In addition, **entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy** of the population remain underdeveloped and affect **access to finance** (EU, 2019). Despite the importance of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) in fuelling the economy in Albania in terms of total businesses and the workforce, inadequate levels of financing go to MSMEs.<sup>4</sup>

Economic and active labour market policies need to **better target vulnerable jobseekers**, such as the long-term unemployed, rural workers, women with family responsibilities, youth, the elderly, disabled, and Roma and Egyptian populations (EU, 2019). **Rural labour markets**, for example, have often been peripheral to policy discussions on growth and employment in Albania, despite higher incidences of unemployment and poverty in rural areas and greater prevalence of women in unpaid labour. Training services tend to have an urban bias, with minimal access to rural populations (UNDP, 2014). Few women participate in training programs due to inadequate time, distance and the way in which training programs are organised (male dominance and improper planning of the event) (Zhllima et al., 2016).

**Youth in Albania are a key demographic that need to be effectively targeted.** Many young Albanians wish to leave the country as they perceive poor employment and livelihood opportunities (Meçe and Ribaj, 2019). In countries that have a strong vocational educational system, young people are less often in temporary employment and unemployment (Jorgoni et al, 2015). In Albania, shortcomings in the educational and VET systems, coupled with the challenges to equip youth with knowledge and skills relevant to the labour market, contribute to

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<sup>3</sup> UNDP Albania. Skills Development for Employment.

[https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/operations/projects/poverty\\_reduction1/skills-development-for-employment-.html](https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction1/skills-development-for-employment-.html)

<sup>4</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: SmartCapital. <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-smartcapital>

the high youth unemployment rate (EU, 2019). Entrepreneurship programmes for youth have also been non-existent, although there have been some efforts by donors to fill this void (Jorgoni et al, 2015).

Donor support in these areas are primarily aimed at increasing: labour market participation and providing job opportunities for all; increasing the quality and coverage of VET; and improving the quality and effectiveness of labour market institutions and services.

## European Union (EU)

The EU's competitiveness and innovation portfolio in Albania centres on support for **fostering business competitiveness**, particular through the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs); greater market integration; improving the business environment; and developing tourism. Specifically, the EU has provided advice to develop SME policy, including technical support for businesses for access to credit. In the area of tourism, the EU has promoted SME development, cultural heritage and urban requalification in various locations (e.g. in Korca, Elbasan, Shkodra and Berat) (EC, 2018).

Through its education, employment and social policies portfolio, the EU has also provided policy- and infrastructure-based assistance for **vocational training and employment systems** that improve the skills base of the labour force. It also supports the social inclusion of vulnerable groups and minorities, in particular Roma and Egyptians (EC, 2018).

## United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP supports employment and skills development in Albania and has contributed to **changes in the governance of active labour market programmes**. It has promoted the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in related policies, for example through the project, *Addressing Social Exclusion through Vocational Education and Training* (UNDP, 2016a). The *Kukes Regional Development Initiative* is aimed at improving livelihoods, promoting participation and supporting the private sector (UNDP, 2016a). UNDP has also helped to foster entrepreneurship through the *Art Gold project*. It supported the establishment of Local Economic Development Agencies in Shkoder and Vlore regions to offer services to entrepreneurs and institutions, such as technical and financial assistance for the creation of micro, small and medium enterprises (UNDP, 2016a).

Based on the 2017-2021 Country programme, UNDP is also focused on ensuring that economic growth policies and programmes in Albania are **inclusive, gender-responsive and reach rural areas** (UNDP, 2016b). UNDP is also working with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth to help young people find viable and productive routes to employment that build skills, rather than relying on informal patronage networks for jobs in the public sector (UNDP, 2016b). The UNDP has supported employment and skill enhancement for disadvantaged youth in poor regions of Albania through employment promotion initiatives within the framework of the MDG Fund Youth Employment and Migration Joint Programme (UNDP, 2016a). This includes the *Local-level Responses to Youth Employment Challenge* project, implemented with the International Labour Organisation. It contributed to the adoption of new labour market measures that assist job seekers in re-employment and provide quality services to enterprises. It specifically targets youth with disabilities (UNDP, 2016a).

## Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Switzerland has been supporting macro-economic stability, private sector development and youth employment in Albania (SDC, 2018). It has focused on **strengthening VET** and vocational skills development (VSD) systems such that it is more oriented to the labour market and **effectively considers vulnerable groups** (e.g. Roma, Egyptians, orphans and young offenders). It seeks to support school-to-work transition schemes and lower the number of persons who are neither in education, employment or training (SDC, 2018).

*The Skills Development for Employment (SD4E) programme* (2014-2018), implemented jointly by the Government of Albania, the SDC and the UNDP, aims to increase employment in Albania through: improved, diversified and better managed employment promotion measures (e.g. VET) provided to young people in urban and rural areas; **support for entrepreneurship**; improved frameworks for up-scaling of work-based learning schemes; quality assurance of VET; and better **access to information to job seekers** on the state of the market. The programme also seeks to understand existing good practices of VET and VSD reform (UNDP, 2014).

By 2017, the programme had produced a new employment promotion programme that targets orphans; and revised programmes targeting women single heads of households and recent university graduates. Criteria for funding of *Active Labour Market Measures* was redesigned to give priority to businesses that seek to employ disadvantaged women, orphans, people with disabilities, youth.<sup>5</sup> Support to young entrepreneurs can be particularly important in rural areas where vacancies are few and funding for business ideas limited (UNDP, 2014). Targeted regions for the programme include: Shkodra, Tirana, Fier, Vlora and Gjirokastra (UNDP, 2014).

*The Coaching for Employment and Entrepreneurship (C4EE)* project, implemented by SDC and Swisscontact, focuses on promoting labour market opportunities for young people by addressing labour market constraints and establishing a **system of coaching** to guide youth. The 2017-2020 project phase aims at skills development and labour market facilitation of young (and other disadvantaged) unemployed job seekers in Albania. Coaching processes provide career counselling, support for drawing up business plans and generating funding, among other services. Youth participants in the coaching processes have gained employment (59 per cent of those trained) and average net income per employed beneficiary has increased (Swisscontact, 2018).

## Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

GIZ is addressing the problem of unemployment in Albania by working on **increasing the competitiveness of companies**, primarily MSMEs; fostering vocational training; and supporting productivity in the agricultural sector. The *Promotion of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ProSME)* programme (2014-2016) focused on improving entrepreneurial capacities and innovation capabilities, by offering demand-driven services and strengthening the implementation of support strategies. Specific regions of focus included: Tirana, Shkodër, Dibër, and Korçë and Gjirokastrë. **Rural and peri-urban areas** were targeted to reach poorer population groups. The

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<sup>5</sup> UNDP Albania. Skills Development for Employment.

[https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/operations/projects/poverty\\_reduction1/skills-development-for-employment-.html](https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction1/skills-development-for-employment-.html)

project sought to contribute to gender equality by actively involving interest groups and associations of female entrepreneurs in management and in support measures (GIZ, 2019b).

The Albanian and German Governments have also been working together to **improve vocational education** in Albania since 2010. The *Vocational Education and Training* programme (2010-2016) sought to reduce unemployment, particularly among young people, by improving VET and adapting education to the needs of the labour market.

The programme supported the *Kamza Multifunctional VET Centre*, created in 2012.<sup>6</sup> It is the only vocational training provider in the large, socially disadvantaged region of Kamza (150,000 inhabitants), which has a high proportion of internal migrants from rural regions and a high youth unemployment rate. Over one third of the families of students are officially classified as poor. The Centre serves as a **regional training provider** and strives to improve the employability of students. It has improved the quality of selected training courses which are relevant to both the labour market and the creation of an investment-friendly climate. Teachers and school management partake in systemic training, which allows for continuous improvements in the quality of teaching. The proportion of vocational students, including young women, has increased significantly in the Kamza region as a result of the Centre. **By improving opportunities** for young people in the labour market, the programme also contributes to **alleviating migratory pressure**. The Centre can be viewed as a pilot and relied upon to improve, enhance and expand vocational education and training nationwide at the operational level. For example, achieving greater proximity to companies is seen as an effective tried-and-tested method of developing targeted VET courses that closes the gap between the artificial learning environment of vocational schools and real work requirements.

## Italian development cooperation

The key objective of the Italian Development Cooperation in Albania include fostering sustainable social and economic development. This includes strengthening the capacity of local entrepreneurship, in particular small and medium enterprises, and facilitating collaboration with private banks. It also includes strengthening inclusive education and vocational education and training; promoting social and economic inclusion of marginalised groups (e.g. unemployed youth, rural women and people with disabilities); and employment generation in rural and disadvantaged areas.<sup>7</sup>

## USAID

USAID's current programme, and 2011-2018 Country Development Cooperation Strategy, include the promotion of economic growth through **improved competitiveness** of small and medium enterprises and a stronger financial sector.<sup>89</sup> The *Development Credit Authority (DCA) Guarantee for SME Lending* (2005-2019), implemented by USAID and Raiffeisen Bank, is designed to increase **access of SMEs to financial resources** that are needed to expand and diversify their products and services. *Smart Capital* (2016-2019)<sup>10</sup> provides enterprises with

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<sup>6</sup> GIZ. Vocational education and training (VET) programme. <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/20447.html>

<sup>7</sup> Italian development aid in brief – Albania: <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/71/>

<sup>8</sup> USAID - Albania: <https://www.usaid.gov/albania>

<sup>9</sup> USAID- Albania: <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/cdcs>

<sup>10</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: SmartCapital. <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-smartcapital>

professional business plans to start their business operations and raise capital; and with access to finance and **smart technologies**. Programme interventions are implemented nation-wide, with attention to rural and underdeveloped areas. Entrepreneurs in Albania's **tourism sector** can experience various constraints in terms of lack of capital and business acumen. The *Tourism Investment and Finance Fund (2016-2020)*<sup>11</sup>, implemented by USAID, the Embassy of Sweden in Tirana, and the Centre for Economic and Business Education (CEBE Albania), provides capital and technical assistance, such as business advisory services and financial literacy, to MSMEs operating in Albania's tourism sector. The Fund concentrates efforts to develop the **agro-tourism and eco-tourism** communities in rural, and natural and protected areas (see also the section on rural development).

**Support for business competitiveness is also targeted to youth.** The *People First (2016-2018)*<sup>12</sup> project aims to develop the tourism sector in Albania by improving the business environment and workforce capacities. It creates partnerships between prospective employees, Vocational Training Centres, businesses, and prospective employees, particularly youth and women. People First trains VTC instructors, including with specific techniques to encourage woman and youth to participate in classroom activities. The project focuses on four regions: Albania's southern coast, Durres-Kavaja corridor, Shkodra and Albania's northern mountains, and the Korca region including Lake Ohrid, Pogradec, and Voskopoja. The *HH Boutique Hotel* in Dhërmi, for example, has staff entirely made up of young trainees and interns. The project also works with the UNDP to include Roma and other marginalised youth.

Another project aimed at youth is *Growing Social Businesses in Albania (2016-2019)*<sup>13</sup>, implemented by USAID and Yunus Social Business Balkans. It aims to promote entrepreneurship and the **development and growth of social businesses** in Albania. These businesses are designed in part to **address the needs of low-income, vulnerable and under-served communities**. The project conducts and/or facilitates public events, workshops, and other types of promotional events across the country to create awareness for the potential of social businesses and to educate aspiring entrepreneurs on basic business principles. It provides support for the start-up phase of the business; tailored advisory and coaching services for later-stage businesses; and access to expansion capital for the most promising social businesses.

The *Economic Empowerment of People with Disabilities (2010-2019)*<sup>14</sup> project, implemented in partnership with the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation, supports equal rights and **access to employment and education for people living with disabilities** in Albania. It works with private companies and the Government to improve their **capacities to accommodate people with disabilities in the workplace**; and advocates for improvements in legislation for greater inclusiveness of people with disabilities in the workforce. It also supports job seeking people with disabilities directly to attend vocational training courses and to become self-employed.

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<sup>11</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Tourism Investment and Finance Fund

<https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-tourism-investment-and-finance-fund>

<sup>12</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: People First

<https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-people-first>

<sup>13</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Yunus Growing Social Businesses in Albania

<https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-yunus-growing-social-businesses-albania>

<sup>14</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Support for Persons with Disabilities

<https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-support-persons-disabilities-and-disability-rights>



## Abu Dhabi Fund For Development (ADFD)

ADFD is supporting the development of the tourism industry and commercial sector in Albania. In 2019, it allocated concessionary loans to support the Tirana Northern Boulevard and Tirana River Rehabilitation projects, both of which are expected to attract further investment opportunities to the Albanian capital and to create job opportunities for its residents.<sup>15</sup>

## Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD)

QFFD focuses on infrastructure and construction projects in Albania. In 2018, it signed a grant agreement with the Government of Albania to finance the reconstruction project of the "Jeronim De Rada" school in Tirana. The project aims at securing a new and modern learning environment in the capital Tirana.<sup>16</sup>

## 3. Rural development

Agriculture remains one of the most important economic sectors in Albania representing 20 per cent of its GDP (GIZ, 2015). It is the main source of income in rural areas and accounts for almost half of its total employment. However, Albania's agricultural sector continues to face various structural challenges. **Rural areas are still the poorest areas** of the country and a **significant portion of self-employed individuals are engaged with agriculture**, with a low proportion engaging in non-farm work (Meçe and Ribaj, 2019). Sustainable growth of the agricultural sector has been pronounced as one of the top priorities by the Government of Albania (GIZ, 2015).

It is important to consider issues of employment and economic diversification in rural areas. Cross-cutting themes such as youth employment, SME and green jobs should be considered alongside the larger scheme of rural labour market and rural development. **Tourism has emerged in recent years as a promising area for diversification**. Northern Albania which is largely rural and mountainous is the poorest region, with the highest poverty levels in the north-eastern districts of Kukës, Pukë, Malsi e Madhe and Dibrë. Situated in Albania's alpine region, there is large potential for tourism development catering to both international and local visitors.<sup>17</sup>

Almost half of Albania's youth resides in rural areas, thus challenges in rural areas directly affects youth employment (Meçe and Ribaj, 2019). There is also limited participation of women in vocational training and knowledge and information sharing about agriculture and rural development (FAO, 2016, ix). Access to finance remains a key constraint for Albanian rural businesses (Meçe and Ribaj, 2019). At the same time, women's entrepreneurship has been shown to be successful when they have access to the necessary material assets (FAO, 2016).

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<sup>15</sup> Abu Dhabi Fund invests USD65m in boosting Albanian tourism, June 2019.

<https://financialobserver.eu/recent-news/abu-dhabi-fund-invests-usd65m-in-boosting-albanian-tourism/>

<sup>16</sup> Qatar, Albania sign grant agreement, October 2018.

<https://www.gulf-times.com/story/609643/Qatar-Albania-sign-grant-agreement>

<sup>17</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: AgroTourism Albania

<https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-agrotourism-albania>

## European Union

The EU's agriculture and rural development component includes **fostering the competitiveness of the farming and food sector** and improving the quality of life in rural areas (EC, 2018). The *European Fund for South East Europe and the Western Balkans Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility* provides support to business services, access to capital, market integration and export development and technical assistance (EC, 2018). The *Rural Credit Guarantee Fund*, funded by the EU, KfW bank and the Government of Albania provides loans and grants to the agricultural sector (Meçe and Ribaj, 2019).

## Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

The FAO, which established a representative office in Albania in 2015, works primarily with the UN Programme of Cooperation, which is aligned with the Country Programming Framework (CPF). The CPF 2015-2017, which reflects priorities for the government and FAO for their joint work in the country, identified the acceleration of **women's economic empowerment in rural areas** as a key priority (FAO, 2016). This can be achieved through: addressing barriers and using innovative methods to enable women's access to information; identifying local women leaders that can mobilise and inform female members of the community when implementing projects; and supporting capacity development of extension services and vocational education to provide better support to rural women (FAO, 2016). It is important that training meetings are accessible to women, providing transportation when necessary. FAO also supports income diversification and the creation of off-farm employment for women and men (FAO, 2016).

## GIZ

GIZ's *Support to agriculture and rural development (SARD)* project (2012 to 2017)<sup>18</sup> sought to support Albania's rural reform efforts, aimed at **modernising and reforming its agricultural sector**. Farmers and enterprises, such as food processing businesses, that planned to invest in modernisation (e.g. new irrigation systems or new machinery) and compliance with minimum standards (e.g. food safety, animal protection and environmental regulations) could qualify for grants (GIZ, 2015). The overarching objective of SARD is to improve the quality of life in rural areas by improving competitiveness of the agricultural and agro-food sectors.

The rural, mountainous areas in Albania tend to experience greater levels of poverty than the lower-lying coastal regions, and tend to have underutilised agricultural resources. Farmers' production tends to be primarily subsistence-oriented due to the absence of well-structured value chains that would enable their access to markets. German-Danish support to Albania aims at increasing the viability of the rural economy in these most disadvantaged areas in Albania, through employment and income generation for farmers and agri-business. The *Support to Agriculture and Rural Economic Development in Disadvantaged Mountainous Areas (SARED)* (2014-2018)<sup>19</sup> project supports farmers in adopting a **value chain approach** to production for four selected commodities with high economic potential (small livestock; medicinal and aromatic plants; fruit trees and nuts; and rural tourism). This is coupled with a regional focus on the poorest areas. Support consists of capacity building of central and local actors (public and private) and a matching grant scheme implemented through the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture

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<sup>18</sup> GIZ – Albania: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/294.html>

<sup>19</sup> GIZ. Support to Agriculture and Rural Economic Development in Disadvantaged Mountain Areas. <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/31116.html>

in close cooperation with Germany. Other projects on vocational training and economic development provide support, and are complementary to it.

## USAID

USAID is helping to promote **agrotourism** in Albania and rural access to financing. The *Development Credit Authority (DCA) Guarantee for Agriculture Lending* programme (2012-2022), implemented by USAID and two Albanian Banks (ProCredit and BKT Bank) provides loans aimed to increase access for farmers and agribusinesses to financial resources which are needed to expand and increase their competitiveness.

The *AgroTourism Albania* project (2016-2019)<sup>20</sup>, in partnership with Sweden, involves the provision of technical assistance for the **commercialisation of six family farms** in northern Albania. This includes support to enterprises in increasing their knowledge on business practices and hospitality standards; marketing and promotion efforts; and partnerships with local tourism agencies, tour operators, tourist information centres and municipalities. The project aims to improve the living conditions of inhabitants of rural areas of Shkodra, Malësi e Madhë and Puka through employment in a sustainable and vibrant agro-tourism sector – through the creation of replicable agrotourism models. The project is implemented by an Albanian NGO, CEED Albania, which provides entrepreneurs with business know-how and connects participants to mentors and to a community of entrepreneurs that can provide support for business development. It will involve various trainings, workshops, roundtables and other capacity building activities. A special focus will be to empower women's decision-making role in operating and managing enterprises.

Diber is one of Albania's most beautiful mountainous regions. The *Diber: Trails and Tradition* project (2017-2020)<sup>21</sup> aims to develop and **promote sustainable tourism enterprises in communities in northern Albania**. In particular, it seeks to increase employment, particularly among youth and women, and to increase incomes of Diber families involved in the tourism supply chain. Working with the Municipality of Diber, the project supports improved governance and public services; greater private sector opportunities and better information, communication and technology infrastructure in relation to tourism development. It also aims to raise awareness of the tourism model, improve the quality and technical skills of producers and suppliers of products and services, promote business linkages between touristic suppliers and agriculture and handicraft producers; and create an internship programme targeted to youth and volunteers.

## Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)

Within the scope of the *Project on the Development of Beekeeping* in Albania, TIKA recently supplied 40 family businesses with 400 hives with bees along with apiculture equipment and honey extractor machines.<sup>22</sup> It seeks to support family businesses to make a living off of the production of **low-cost, high value-added and easily marketable bee/honey products** in 14 different rural regions in Diber. The businesses also received training in these processes. The

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<sup>20</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: AgroTourism Albania

<https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-agrotourism-albania>

<sup>21</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Diber: Trails and Traditions

<https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-diber-trails-and-traditions>

<sup>22</sup> TIKA Provides Beekeeping Support to Albania, 2019.

[https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/tika\\_provides\\_beekeeping\\_support\\_to\\_albania-53179](https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/tika_provides_beekeeping_support_to_albania-53179)

aim is to export products to domestic and foreign markets, create employment opportunities, and to subsequently implement the project in other regions in Albania with suitable conditions.

## 4. Governance

There is a high correlation between anti-corruption, good governance and public services in Albania (Muçollari, 2018). **Combating corruption requires a high level of good governance** and effectiveness of public services. In Albania, this requires **decentralisation of public services** (Muçollari, 2018). Several assessments conducted in Albania confirm a serious lack of institutional **capacity in local government** units to deliver high quality and effective public services (Muçollari, 2018). The division of competences from central to local governments tends to facilitate corruption (Muçollari, 2018). See also the section on service delivery.

### European Union

EU assistance in Albania includes work on democratic development and good governance, regulatory reform and administrative capacity building and infrastructure development. Democratic development and good governance involves efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, to reform the civil service and public service delivery, and to empower civil society. Funding for projects is provided in the form of grants, contracts and increasingly budget support (EC, 2018).

### UNDP

Through its democratic governance and local development portfolio in Albania, the UNDP has supported territorial and administrative reform, in partnership with the Government of Albania. It provided project management and implementation expertise and coordinated donor contributions through a pooled fund. The UNDP has also supported policy planning, public service delivery, and anti-corruption efforts (UNDP, 2016a).

Based on the 2017-2021 country programme, the UNDP is implementing various **local governance reform** priorities, including performance monitoring systems for service delivery; gender mainstreaming of municipal service delivery plans; and further improvements of administrative and public finance management capacities to prepare local authorities for European integration (UNDP, 2016b).

In partnership with the National Anticorruption Coordinator, the UNDP will pilot and help replicate **municipal integrity plans** across the new municipalities. This translates the National Strategy on Anticorruption into local action. It will also support **anti-corruption actions within civil society** (UNDP, 2016b). The UNDP will further support the Government and its civil society partners with monitoring the progress and effectiveness of governance reforms (UNDP, 2016b).

### USAID

Subsequent to constitutional changes in Albania in 2016, American experts have been given broad access in the fight against organised crime and corruption (Glos, 2018).

USAID's democracy assistance programmes in the Western Balkans have aimed at providing opportunities for local NGOs to undertake programmes that give voice to people's growing

frustrations and deep concerns about ineffective and dysfunctional structures of governance that are unable to deliver services and entitlements (Quadir and Orgocka, 2014).

Through the *Planning and Local Governance Project* (2012-2019)<sup>23</sup>, USAID aims to **foster acceptance at the national policy level and at the local level of the principles of decentralised governance**. It also seeks to disseminate and institutionalise practical and effective methods of, and techniques for, municipal management. Originally partnering with 15 local governments, these were consolidated as a result of territorial reform into 13 local units (Tirana, Durrës, Fier, Lushnjë, Berat, Kuçovë, Patos, Vlorë, Sarandë, Elbasan, Korçë, Vora, and Kamzë). USAID provides **technical assistance and on-the-job training to staff in the 13 municipalities** and administrative units to: improve tax collection; increase own-source revenues; better manage assets; increase the predictability, accuracy, and transparency of budgetary processes through e-government solutions; increase citizen participation in local government decision-making. The use of information and communication tools and training has helped to reduce corruption and error, and contributed to higher tax collection.

Through the *Accelerated Civic Development and Cooperation Project* (2017-2020)<sup>24</sup>, USAID supports organisations working in the democracy and governance sector in Albania. It assesses their organisational capacity and develops interventions aimed at **strengthening the efforts of civil society organisations to work effectively as watchdogs to counter corruption** in Albania. USAID also aims to improve efficiency and effectiveness in governance and government services; and support public-private partnerships. The project works with national government institutions to improve their performance by making them more efficient in managing resources and more and accountable to civil society and citizens. Monitoring of good governance is achieved in part through surveys, analyses, and corruption assessment reports.

## SDC

Democratic governance represents Switzerland's largest programme portfolio – and is mainstreamed in the promotion of anti-corruption measures and through attention to inclusion in social, economic and political spheres (SDC, 2018). Switzerland supports sub-national executive institutions to perform their functions by supporting further decentralisation efforts, promoting **cooperation between various government levels** and strengthening local governments (SDC, 2018). The *Strengthening Local Government Structures and Cooperation of Local Elected Representatives in Albania* project, funded by SDC, focuses on the modernisation of human resource management procedures and practices, and fostering inter-municipal cooperation and cooperation of local elected representatives.<sup>25</sup> The aim is to bring decision-making processes closer to the civil society and citizens, including vulnerable groups, and to enhance their participation (SDC, 2018).

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<sup>23</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Planning and Local Governance Project. <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-planning-and-local-governance-project>

<sup>24</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Accelerated Civic Development and Cooperation. <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-accelerated-civic-development-and-cooperation>

<sup>25</sup> COE Albania. Strengthening Local Government Structures in Albania. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tirana/strengthening-local-government-structures-in-albania>

## 5. Service delivery

The quality of service delivery in the social sectors in Albania **suffers from a weak governance framework, corruption, and inequity** (World Bank, 2018). Despite some recent progress in access to education and in the health sector, such as a national strategy for more sustainable health financing, the education and health care systems continue to display significant shortcomings in quality and equity (World Bank 2018). **Rural populations and women are particularly disadvantaged, as are the elderly, disabled and poor.** Required out-of-pocket payments for healthcare exclude many who cannot afford it (SDC, 2018). In addition, social assistance allowances are inadequate to lift the poor above the extreme poverty line. Social care services for inclusion of vulnerable people are insufficient and many local government units lack capacities and resources to plan and deliver them (EU, 2019).

As mentioned, effective public services are linked to combating corruption (see governance section). **Corruption** remains a persistent problem throughout Albania, with **high occurrences in the health sector** leading to reduced community access to appropriate and high quality healthcare.<sup>26</sup> Further, efforts to effectively tackle serious and organised crime and drug trafficking require improved **service delivery to communities vulnerable to cannabis cultivation and trafficking** (EC, 2018).

### EU

The *Support to Improve Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery in Albania* project (2017 - Ongoing)<sup>27</sup>, funded by the EU, is part of larger reforms to counter corruption, undertaken by the Government of Albania since 2014. The main objective of the EU project is to further **strengthen citizen-centric public service delivery** in Albania through **institutional and administrative capacity building** to deliver such services, and creating a sustainable business model for public service delivery. The project also aims to undertake legal-structural reform that will result in the integration and **digitalisation of public services**. The planned interventions will contribute to improving public service access and quality for citizens and businesses. It will also contribute to greater efficiency in the Albanian public administration, alongside strengthening the rule of law and fighting against corruption.

### UNDP

The UNDP has been supporting the Government of Albania's reform of public administrations since 2014 by changing the way public services are provided. It adopts a variety of interventions, adopting a citizen-centric approach to combatting corruption, fostering a **customer-care culture**, and increasing the efficiency of the Albanian public administration. The UNDP has supported the national Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania to become operational and capable of overseeing the implementation of service delivery reform. It has also helped to develop the framework and to build the capacities of the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration to manage the process (UNDP, 2016a).

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<sup>26</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Transparency in Health Engagement. <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-transparency-health-engagement>

<sup>27</sup> "Support to Improve Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery in Albania" Project funded by EU (2017 - Ongoing). <https://www.idracompany.com/en/project-1/support-to-improve-citizen-centric-public-service-delivery-in-albania>

## UNODC

UNODC has supported **family skills training programmes** in Albania since 2010, aimed at the **prevention of drug use**, HIV/AIDS and crime among young people (UNODC, 2015). The programme trains families, facilitators, and trainers to sustain project implementation. The UNODC-WHO Programme on Drug Dependence Treatment and Care has also been implemented throughout the Western Balkans, including Albania, involving the training of thousands of experts on comprehensive drug dependence treatment (UNODC, 2015).

## USAID

USAID supports Albania in increasing the ability of local governments to raise revenue and provide more effective services to citizens in areas ranging from health care to clean water. The Government of Albania has outlined in its Anticorruption Strategy and Action Plan specific actions to **increase governance and transparency of the health system**. USAID's *Transparency in Health Engagement* project (2017-2019)<sup>28</sup> aims to improve health services for Albanian citizens by focusing on: fighting corruption; improving transparency of government functions; and encouraging cooperation among selected independent government agencies, civil society organisations and media to push for transparency and more responsible governance in the health sector. The project works to **strengthen the capacities of three independent government oversight agencies**: the Albanian Supreme Audit Institution, the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and the Prevention of Conflicts of Interest, and the Office of the Ombudsman.

The project will generate evidence through: performance audits, complaint investigations, and asset reporting; designing and implementing assessments to measure corruption and relevant mediating factors; and performing public sector reforms and audits. Reports will be made available to stakeholders to increase accountability. Civil society will have improved access to data on the wealth of public officials in addition to improved capacity to conduct their own investigations into conflicts of interest and corrupt practices in the health sector. A robust **software solution** with a public search interface will also improve the media's and civil society's ability to monitor government performance. The *Peoples Advocate App*, supported by USAID, offers a **new platform to collect complaints from citizens**, with a particular focus on youth – a group that has been less active in reporting instances of corruption<sup>29</sup>

The *One Stop Shop in Patos* (2017-2018)<sup>30</sup> is an activity that was supported by USAID, with the aim of increasing citizen participation in and access to municipal services in Patos Municipality. The project involved the construction of a **new meeting space for the Municipal Council** and the establishment of a one-stop-shop with adequate infrastructure to make standardised services accessible to the public. The aim is to **increase transparency** in the governance of Patos, with the meeting space, and provide timely services to citizens with **streamlined procedures**.

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<sup>28</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: Transparency in Health Engagement: <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-transparency-health-engagement>

<sup>29</sup> Ombudsperson, with USAID assistance, launches Mobile App to help citizens submit complaints on health sector activities, October 2018. <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/news/ombudsperson-usaid-assistance-launches-mobile-app-help-citizens-submit>

<sup>30</sup> USAID FACT SHEET: G2G Partnerships: <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/news-information/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-government-government-g2g-partnerships>

## 6. Awareness-raising: anti-trafficking and corruption

### UNICEF

UNICEF has worked in collaboration with various multilateral and bilateral agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs) to implement the project, *Together Against Child Trafficking* in Albania. The aim is to build the foundations for an institutionalised system of protection for children at risk and victims of trafficking and other forms of exploitation (Botchkovar et al., 2016). Training seminars on trafficking in human beings have been organised for head teachers, teachers and school psychologists, in urban and rural areas. Training took place in 2013 in the towns of Kukës, Korça, Fier, Shkodra, Tirana, Gjirokastra and Berat in at both teachers and orphanage staff. There has also been training of representatives of regional-level institutions, members of child protection units and representatives of CSOs (GRETA, 2016).

### UNODC

UNODC facilitates anti-corruption efforts through support for the development of awareness and advocacy campaigns by CSOs and public-private initiatives. A UNODC anti-corruption project in Albania specifically focused on **helping women identify corruption and raising awareness of the legal framework and available reporting mechanisms** (UNODC 2013).

### USAID

USAID has funded and implemented programmes in Albania designed to counter trafficking in persons. It has partnered with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Government in Albania to fund a variety of **public awareness materials and campaigns**, as well as the publication of the standard operating procedures produced by the Ministry of Interior. USAID and IOM have organised workshops and training sessions on various aspects of human trafficking and victim reintegration services in Tirana and other regions in Albania (GRETA, 2016). USAID also partnered with MTV Exit in Albania to raise awareness about human trafficking (Botchkovar et al., 2016). Another USAID project, implemented by Creative Associates, involved the production of six *video postcards*, highlighting anti-trafficking CSOs and their work in six regions of Albania. (Botchkovar et al., 2016). Research finds that messaging that both presents information about trafficking and provides citizens with concrete next steps to protect themselves and their families can be a simple, effective way to promote behaviours that reduce trafficking vulnerability (Botchkovar et al., 2016).

USAID also supported an Android app to combat trafficking in Albania (Botchkovar et al., 2016). "**RAPORTO! SHPETO!**" ("*Report! Save!*") is a smartphone application that is connected to the Government of Albania's New National Hotline, "116006." This hotline is available for everyone to call or text, free of charge, and report identified or suspected cases of trafficking, to which the police will send officers in response. It also helps users to locate the nearest social service centres (shelters, hospitals etc.) (NetHope Blog, 2014; USAID, 2014). This new application **broadens the access of Albanians to reporting mechanisms**, as many Albanians, particularly those living in rural areas, only use mobile phones. As such, they could not access the old national hotline number that could only be dialled with a landline. The App's knowledge centre also helps educate Albanians about the problem of human trafficking and how to identify and prevent it (NetHope Blog, 2014; USAID, 2014).



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