

GUIDE FOR OPEN PARLIAMENT IN ALBANIA

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ACRONYMS

AIS	Albanian Institute of Science
BIRN	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
EU	European Union
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
IDM	Institute for Democracy and Mediation
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
NDI	National Democratic Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGP	Open Government Partnership
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE
PACEP	Parliamentary Support and Civic Education Program
RDF	Resource Description Framework
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
XML	Extensible Markup Language

1. INTRODUCTION

This guide addresses the concept of the "open parliament" and its importance in building accountable, transparent, and inclusive governance in Albania. **According to the "Declaration for an Open Parliament"¹ the concept of an "open parliament" refers to an institution that is inclusive, transparent, and accountable to citizens.² It promotes transparency by ensuring that citizens are informed about its work, empowers active citizen participation in the legislative process, and gives citizens the opportunity to hold parliamentarians accountable for their actions.** The declaration emphasizes that through an open parliament, citizens' interests are better represented, and democratic institutions are strengthened.³

Commitments to an open parliament are rapidly increasing within the framework of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), where many parliaments, including the Albanian parliament, are co-creating their commitments or action plans to further promote legislative openness. An open parliament is an essential part of open governance.⁴

The measurement and evaluation of an open parliament are conducted through several key indicators, which, according to the "Declaration for an Open Parliament," include four main pillars.⁵ First, promoting a culture of openness, meaning parliamentary information belongs to the public and should be accessible to all. Second, making parliamentary information as transparent as possible means that parliament should follow policies ensuring full transparency through proactive publication of information, regularly reviewing these policies to benefit from evolving best practices. Third, to ensure broad access, parliamentary information should be available to citizens equally and non-discriminatorily through various channels, such as direct observation on the parliament's website, print media, radio, and live or on-demand broadcasts. Fourth, this information should also be published in open and structured electronic formats, giving citizens the ability to analyze and reuse it with technological tools.⁶ Using the indicators from each of these pillars, an assessment of the level of openness of the Albanian parliament has been conducted. The goal of this guide is to provide an evaluation of the current state of parliamentary openness in Albania and to suggest concrete steps for its improvement. The report aims to assist the Albanian parliament in meeting the standards of an open parliament by enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen inclusion in legislative processes.

This guide is structured into four main chapters. The first chapter addresses efforts made by various actors, including the government, to improve the "openness" of the Albanian parliament. The second chapter describes the methodological steps adopted to develop this guide. The third chapter provides an analytical assessment of all the indicators for evaluating an open parliament, referencing primary and secondary sources. The final chapter offers recommendations to the Albanian parliament for further improving the concept of an "open parliament."

¹ The Declaration for Open Parliaments is a call directed at national parliaments and legislative institutions, initiated by civil society organizations that monitor parliamentary work, to increase commitment to transparency and citizen engagement in parliamentary processes.

² Opening Parliament Declaration. <https://openingparliament.org/declaration/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ep-content/uploads/2021/11/Open-Parliaments-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

⁵ For Albania, the civil society organizations that have participated in the development or have expressed support for the Declaration on Open Parliaments are three: the Center for Parliamentary Studies, MJAFI, and the Coalition for Reforms, Integration, and Consolidated Institutions.

⁶ The four pillars of the open parliament defined in the Declaration on Open Parliament <https://openingparliament.org/declaration/>.

2. ABOUT THE OPEN PARLIAMENT IN ALBANIA

Albania has taken significant steps to strengthen accountability and build a more transparent and participatory parliament, drawing on international best practices. However, efforts for an "open parliament" do not seem to have yielded the expected results. Parliamentary initiatives and efforts to advance towards "openness" have largely been driven by external factors, within the framework of initiatives and projects by international organizations.

One such organization has been NDI. In its ongoing efforts to promote the openness of the Albanian parliament, NDI launched a regional initiative in 2009 to develop the legislative, representative, and oversight capacities of parliaments, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy.⁷ Drawing on experiences from the parliaments of Central Europe, this initiative addresses important legislative issues in the process of EU integration. The focus has been on budget oversight, staff development, the oversight operations of committees, and e-parliament applications. In this regard, NDI has continued with several other initiatives specifically targeting the parliament and its orientation towards the concept of "openness." In this regard, NDI has further continued with several other initiatives that have specifically targeted the parliament and its orientation towards the concept of "openness." In a survey conducted by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) and NDI during 2020, it was found that the majority of citizens (54%) admit that the parliament has not been open to citizens in terms of participating in parliamentary committees.⁸ This result reflects an aspect of the lack of parliamentary openness, viewed from a citizen's perspective.

NDI in cooperation with the Parliament of Albania have started work to make a comprehensive assessment of the development of the parliament using some indicators for democratic parliaments. Indicators for Democratic Parliaments is a comprehensive self-assessment tool designed to help parliaments assess their capacity and practice according to democratic standards. They are suitable for all parliaments, regardless of political system or stage of development. Developed by the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), the indicators include 18 indicators, grouped into four areas. All these indicators also signal the opening of the parliament.⁹ Despite the support given by the Parliament, the results of such a measurement are expected to be evaluated during the year 2025.¹⁰

"Parliamentary openness" has been assessed by referring to a series of indicators that have evolved over time. In the report titled "Analysis of Parliamentary Openness in Albania and the Region," prepared by the organization MJAFT in 2019, which was the third of its kind developed in Albania and the region, an overview of the openness of the Albanian parliament and those in the region is provided, following an improved methodology based on a series of criteria for an open parliament. According to this report, referencing the monitoring results conducted from December 2018 to February 2019, the Albanian Parliament scored positively on 72.94% of the institutional openness indicators.¹¹ This result is 17.49% higher than the average performance in the Western

⁷ NDI/Albania, Ulic, J., & National Endowment for Democracy. (2020). Stronger Parliaments vital to Democracy: Overview of Resources and Expertise available to Members of Parliament. In *Central and Eastern Europe Regional Programs: Western Balkans Legislative Strengthening Initiative*. NDI.

⁸ National Democratic Institute. (2020). *Political Engagement Survey in Albania 2020*. <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Albania%20Political%20Engagement%20Survey%202020%20English.pdf>

⁹ Parliament of Albania. Standards and indicators for an open parliament. Retrieved from <https://kuvendiwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/DeklarateTransparence.pdf>

¹⁰ Roundtable discussion held on November 5, 2024.

¹¹ Merkoçi, A. & MJAFT! Movement. (2019). *Analysis of Parliamentary openness in Albania and in the region*. https://www.mjaft.org/sites/default/files/Parliament%20Openness_Albania.pdf

Balkan region. However, it has experienced a slight decline compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, the Assembly remains the public institution with the highest level of openness at the national level. Regarding administrative performance, the four pillars of good governance for the Albanian Parliament are as follows: 83.43% for accessibility indicators, 78.52% for awareness, 82.86% for integrity, and 62.21% for transparency. The Parliament has recorded lower results in transparency concerning information on the state budget, public procurement, and organizational information. Key information about the activities of the Parliament is published on the official website of the institution, including a three-week calendar, agendas for plenary sessions, and voting results of the deputies.¹²

Commitments to an open parliament are rapidly increasing within the framework of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), where many parliaments, including the Albanian parliament, are co-creating their commitments or action plans to further promote legislative openness. An open parliament is an essential part of open governance. The National Action Plan 2023-2025 for the implementation of the Open Government Partnership includes strategies aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in legislative processes¹³ aims to develop commitments in eight areas, one of which is "open parliament."¹⁴

More specifically, one of the planned measures in this direction is Commitment 24, titled "Open and Accessible Parliament." Commitment 24 aims to coordinate with the Assembly for an open and accessible parliament. This commitment includes improving the platform of the inter-institutional mechanism for monitoring independent institutions, as well as implementing the e-legislation system. The results of the OGP report for this period are not yet public, but it is noted that modest results have been achieved in this regard.¹⁵

Overall, plans to promote an open parliament have been part of projects funded by international organizations. One such project is the "Support for the Parliament and Civic Education (PACEP)" in Albania, which aims to assist the Assembly in improving its performance and the professionalism of its administration, as well as strengthening its representative, oversight, and legislative functions. PACEP is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and is implemented by the OSCE Presence in Albania and the National Democratic Institute (NDI).¹⁶

This project is designed in two phases. Currently, we are in the first phase of its implementation, which runs from 2018 to 2024¹⁷ while the second phase is planned for the period 2023-2028.¹⁸

The expected results of the first phase of the project included:

- **Result 1** – The Parliament's administration fulfills its functions efficiently and effectively.
- **Result 2** – The Parliament improves its legislative, oversight, and representative functions by better representing citizens and holding the executive branch accountable.
- **Result 3** – Citizens claim their space in the country's democratic developments and are prepared to hold deputies accountable and influence reforms.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ep-content/uploads/2023/04/Albania_Action-Plan_2023-2025_EN.pdf

¹⁴ Other areas include: anti-corruption and beneficial ownership, access to justice, digital transformation and innovation, fiscal transparency, public services, inclusion, the right to information, consultation, and regulatory impact assessment.

¹⁵ Open Government Partnership. (2024). IRM Action Plan Review: Albania 2023-2025 [OGP Report].

https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Albania_Action-Plan-Review_2023-2025_EN.pdf

¹⁶ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. (n.d.). *International Cooperation Projects in Albania: Phase 1.*

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/albania/en/home/international-cooperation/projects.html/content/dezaprojects/SDC/en/2017/7F09576/phase1.html?oldPagePath=>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. (n.d.). *International Cooperation Projects in Albania: Phase 2.*

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/albania/en/home/international-cooperation/projects.html/content/dezaprojects/SDC/en/2017/7F09576/phase2.html?oldPagePath=>

All three of these anticipated results are essential components of the assessment of an open parliament. More specifically, one aspect highlighted is the implementation of e-legislation by applying the “AKN4AL” standard for parliamentary and normative documents.

3. METHODOLOGY

This guide has been constructed based on extensive research of literature, evidence, reports, and laws, as well as primary data obtained from in-depth interviews.

3.1 RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The working group conducted in-depth research of the literature, encompassing a wide range of information sources. The research was carried out through careful utilization of reports from national and international organizations, academic materials, strategic documents, and other consulted documents. A complete list of sources can be found in the references section.

3.2 ASSESSMENT OF INDICATORS FOR AN OPEN PARLIAMENT.

In constructing the evaluation matrix for the current situation of parliamentary openness, the list of indicators developed in the document "Declaration on Open Parliaments," which is based on four main pillars, was utilized.

The first pillar is "Promoting a Culture of Openness," assessed through 12 indicators. The second pillar is "Ensuring Transparency of Parliamentary Information," evaluated through 14 indicators. The third pillar is "Facilitating Access to Parliamentary Information," measured using 8 indicators. The fourth pillar is "Enabling Electronic Communication of Parliamentary Information," assessed through 10 indicators. In the focus of developing this guide, each of these indicators has been evaluated based on evidence that is either publicly available or gathered through primary sources.

3.3 DISCUSSION TABLE

On November 5, 2024, a group of 35 participants took part in the roundtable discussion organized by the Albanian Center for Economic Research and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. The purpose of this activity was to discuss the guide, shared in advance with the guests, as well as receiving suggestions for further improvements. The discussions, suggestions and issues raised regarding the open parliament in Albania are included in this guide.

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF “OPEN PARLIAMENT” IN ALBANIA - IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

The Declaration on Open Parliament ¹⁹presents four key pillars for achieving parliamentary transparency. Each pillar has its own criteria that must be followed by parliaments as closely as possible in order to achieve the goal of an "open parliament."

Pillar 1: PROMOTING A CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY

¹⁹ The Declaration on Open Parliaments is a call directed at national parliaments and legislative institutions, initiated by civil society organizations that monitor parliamentary work, to enhance commitment to transparency and citizen involvement in parliamentary processes.

Criterion 1: *Acknowledgment of the Public's Right to Parliamentary Information.*

Parliamentary information belongs to the public. Citizens should be allowed to reuse and republish parliamentary information, in whole or in part. Any exception or restriction to this principle must be precisely defined in detail by law.

Criterion 2: *Advancement of the Culture of Transparency through Legislation.*

Parliament has the obligation to adopt legislation, as well as internal procedural rules and codes of conduct, to guarantee to the public access to parliamentary information.

Criterion 3: *Protection of a Culture of Transparency through Oversight.*

In fulfilling its oversight function, the parliament will ensure that laws guaranteeing government transparency are effectively implemented, allowing the government to operate in a fully transparent manner.

In Albania, there are certain limitations regarding access to sensitive documents related to national security, privacy, or confidential information. However, despite these potential restrictions on information access, the law clearly defines these limitations, specifically the law on the right to information.²⁰, this aligns with Criterion 1. Although information is available, aside from the aforementioned confidential information, the format in which it is provided may limit reuse. For example, some documents are in PDF formats, which are not automatically readable by machines, making reuse difficult.

There are legal regulations aimed at facilitating public engagement in the legislative process and creating a transparent relationship between the public and parliament, such as the Law on Public Notification and Consultation²¹, which is a key instrument for promoting parliamentary transparency and public engagement and aligns with Criterion 2, or the law on the right to information²² in accordance with Criterion 3.

Albania has also committed to regional and international agreements to enhance parliamentary transparency, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP)²³. Also, Parliamentary reports and progress related to these commitments demonstrate alignment with global norms for open parliament.

However, despite the existence of these legal frameworks aimed at achieving parliamentary transparency, there is often negligence from public authorities in consulting with the public. This can lead to a decline in the quality of laws and policies and reduce public trust regarding their influence on the legislative process. Various studies^{24/25} show that there is a lack of mechanisms to gather public opinions on legislation and the work of parliament as a whole. These studies, specifically the

²⁰ LAW No. 119/2014 amended ON THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION. (2014).

https://www.drejtesia.gov.al/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/Ligj_119_2014_18.09.2014.pdf

²¹ Law 146/2014 "On public notification and consultation"; Council of Ministers. (2014). LAW No. 146/2014 ON PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND CONSULTATION. In DECISION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA.

https://www.adisa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Ligj_146_2014_30.10.2014.pdf

²² LAW No. 119/2014 amended ON THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION. (2014).

https://www.drejtesia.gov.al/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/Ligj_119_2014_18.09.2014.pdf

²³ National Action Plan 2023-2024. PQH/OGP. <https://ogp.gov.al/faqe/cfare-eshte>

²⁴ IDM. (2020, March 18). *Report | CSO Participation in Decision Making in Albania.* <https://idmalbania.org/report-cso-participation-in-decision-making-in-albania/>

²⁵ IDM. (2023, September 29). *Research Report: A Decade of Public Consultation Law in Albania: Call for Reform.*

Welcome to IDM. <https://idmalbania.org/research-report-a-decade-of-public-consultation-law-in-albania-call-for-reform/>

report from the Institute for Democracy and Mediation, inform us that the cooperation between parliament and the public is superficial and insufficient.²⁶

Therefore, a suggestion to better fulfill this criterion would be to create a "feedback" system where citizens can share their opinions on parliamentary activities, fostering a more proactive relationship. Additionally, transparency is not always at the required level according to these criteria; for example, the implementation of the law on the right to information is often incomplete. There are gaps and delays in information dissemination. BIRN Albania²⁷ and AIS²⁸ have reported that many public institutions in Albania have not responded to requests made under the law on the right to information.

Criterion 4: *Promoting Citizen Education.*

The parliament is responsible for actively promoting citizen education regarding the rules, procedures, work, and functions of the parliament and its members. Within the framework of the PACEP project, efforts are being made to raise awareness and educate citizens. However, concrete results are still not evident in this regard.

Criterion 5: *Engaging Citizens and Civil Society.*

The parliament is obliged to actively engage civil society, without discrimination, in parliamentary processes and decision-making. This is done to ensure that citizens' interests are effectively represented and to give citizens the right to make requests of their government. The Albanian Parliament has attempted to enhance citizen education regarding parliamentary information. Some examples include open days organized by the parliament for students and the parliament's website²⁹, distribution of brochures with various information. This is a good attempt to approach the fulfillment of Criterion 4. There are also initiatives to increase public engagement, such as public hearings and online consultations, for which there is also an official website. These initiatives are in line with Criterion 5³⁰.

However, there is much place for improvement³¹. For example, there could be more educational programs, especially for youth, such as school visits to Parliament. Although these visits take place, their frequency is sporadic and does not consider schools in rural areas. In these areas, access to such initiatives is very limited, leaving citizens uninformed. It should be noted that there is also a lack of promotion for informative activities, which causes citizens not to be aware of these programs, leading again to a lack of information.

For those informative programs that do take place, there is no standard monitoring method regarding the efficiency and quality of the program. A monitoring system should be created so that citizens can express their dissatisfaction and make suggestions for improving the programs, something that would benefit both Parliament and the public. Regarding initiatives for citizen engagement related to Criterion 5, there are still many shortcomings. The main concern is related to the efficiency and transparency of these initiatives.

The parliamentary process in Albania faces obstacles in ensuring that all demographics, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, or ability, are actively engaged. Reports suggest that while some efforts

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ BIRN Albania - BIRN. BIRN. <https://birn.eu.com/network/birn-albania/>

²⁸ Albanian Institute of Science. <https://ais.al/new/>

²⁹ Albanian Parliament. <https://www.parlament.al>

³⁰ Public Consultation Platform in Albania. <https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al>

³¹ Ibid

are made to include marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, these initiatives may not be sufficient to guarantee their effective participation in decision-making.³²

The European Parliament and other international bodies emphasize the need for parliaments to not only provide information but also to create opportunities for public contribution to the legislative process. This includes platforms for citizen feedback, such as electronic petitions and public discussions.

Current practices in Albania should align more closely with these standards to significantly improve citizen engagement, as the current assessment is that there has been no improvement.³³

Criterion 6: Protection of an independent civil society.

The parliament has the obligation to support measures to ensure that civil society organizations are able to operate freely and without restrictions. The Albanian legal framework remains a very important tool for achieving this criterion. The aforementioned laws, hearings and consultations are some good ways for parliament to achieve these criteria.

According to international laws such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³⁴ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,³⁵ States have an obligation to protect the rights of civil organizations. Organizations in Albania often face obstacles in their functioning due to a lack of support from state institutions and potential intimidation from political or institutional repression they may encounter.

Criterion 7: Enabling effective monitoring of Parliament.

Parliament should recognize the right and duty of civil society, the media, and the public to oversee the parliament and its members. Parliament should engage in consultations with the public and civil society organizations that monitor parliament to reduce barriers to accessing information.

The Albanian parliament has initiated efforts to increase public participation. These initiatives include public consultations on draft laws and collaborations with NGOs to promote dialogue between citizens and parliamentarians. However, challenges remain regarding the level of public engagement, as mentioned above.

Criterion 8: Sharing of best practices.

Parliament should actively participate in international and regional exchanges of best practices with other parliaments and civil society organizations to enhance transparency, improve the use of information and communication technologies, and fulfill democratic principles.

Albania has participated in several international organizations that promote transparency and improve governance, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union). These platforms provide opportunities for the exchange of best practices.

However, Albania's participation in international organizations is often limited. While membership exists, active engagement and contributions to discussions are minimal, according to the Mjaft

³² Partners Albania. (2024). *Participation of Civil Society and Citizens in Decision-making, Study on the Legal and Regulatory Framework and Practice in Albania – Partners Albania for Change and Development*. <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/participation-of-civil-society-and-citizens-in-decision-making/>

³³ Kryeziu, E. (2024, April 11). "Freedom House" report: Democracy in Albania no improvement. Citizens.al. <https://citizens.al/en/2024/04/11/the-report-of-freedom-house-democracy-in-Albania-no-improvement/>

³⁴ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.). Pakti Ndërkombëtar për të Drejtat Civile dhe Politike. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

³⁵ Merkoçi, A. & MJAFT! Movement. (2019). *Analysis of Parliamentary openness in Albania and in the region*. <https://www.mjaft.org/en/reports/report-albanian-parliament-openness;>

report.³⁶ Therefore, one suggestion is for the Albanian Parliament to aim to increase engagement in these organizations in order to update the practices it follows regarding transparency.

Criterion 9: Ensuring legal resources.

Parliament should adopt legislation to ensure that citizens have effective access to legal or judicial remedies for parliamentary information.

Criterion 10: Dissemination of complete information.

Parliamentary information available to the public should be as comprehensive as possible, reflecting the entirety of parliamentary actions, except in cases specifically defined by law.

Criterion 11: Timely provision of information.

Parliamentary information should be provided to the public in a timely manner. As a general rule, information should be offered in real-time. In cases where this is not possible, it should be provided as quickly as possible.

Criterion 12: Ensuring accurate information.

Parliament will ensure a process for maintaining authoritative records and guaranteeing that the information published for the public is accurate.

The Law on the Right to Information³⁷ remains one of the most important instruments to ensure that citizens receive the information they request. This law complies with all criteria from 9 to 12. Current laws and regulations on transparency require Parliament to publish information on laws, plenary sessions, commissions, and accompanying documents. Parliamentary reports and commission documents are made public according to the internal regulations of the Assembly³⁸ and established transparency practices. Generally, these documents can be found on the official Parliament website and are made public after approval in committees or plenary sessions. Through these practices, the Albanian Parliament aims to ensure that the distributed information is accurate and complete. However, there is room for improvement regarding the standards set by these criteria (9, 10, 11, 12). According to the MJAFT report³⁹, Albania meets only 60% of these parliamentary transparency criteria. It is worth noting that this report is dated, but there is evidence to support its accuracy, such as the aforementioned report published in 2024, which states that there has been no improvement in transparency practices.⁴⁰

Regarding the provision of complete and timely information, this process is often limited by a lack of regular updates and full access to all relevant materials. According to a report from the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)⁴¹, in Albania, the publication of documents is often fragmented, lacking supporting documents that are essential for understanding the full framework of the Assembly's legal activities. For example, commission reports and proposed amendments are often missing.

³⁶ Merkoçi, A. & MJAFT! Movement. (2019). *Analysis of Parliamentary openness in Albania and in the region*.

³⁷ LAW No. 119/2014 amended ON THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION. (2014). https://www.drejtesia.gov.al/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/Liqi_119_2014_18.09.2014.pdf

³⁸ Regulations of the Assembly of Albania. (n.d.). <https://www.parlament.al/Kuvendi/Rregullorja>

³⁹ Merkoçi, A. & MJAFT! Movement. (2019). *Analysis of Parliamentary openness in Albania and in the region*. https://www.mjft.org/sites/default/files/Parliament%20Openness_Albania.pdf

⁴⁰ Kryeziu, E. (2024, April 11). "Freedom House" report: Democracy in Albania no improvement. Citizens.al. <https://citizens.al/en/2024/04/11/the-report-of-freedom-house-democracy-in-Albania-no-improvement/>

⁴¹ IDM. (2023, September 29). *Research Report: A Decade of Public Consultation Law in Albania: Call for Reform*. Welcome to IDM. <https://idmalbania.org/research-report-a-decade-of-public-consultation-law-in-albania-call-for-reform/>

In many cases, the publication of documents in Albania by Parliament occurs several days later. The World e-Parliament⁴² report suggests that documents should be made public within 24 hours of preparation. Albania lacks a clear legal regulation for the publication of agendas and commission documents within specified timeframes. Countries such as Greece and India make these documents available to the public within 24 hours.

If we focus on the criterion that parliamentary information must be accurate, international practices to ensure accuracy include the use of open standards for documents, as well as XML-based markup systems to minimize human errors and improve accuracy in processing and publishing legislative documents. The European Parliament employs exactly this technology to ensure compliance with this criterion. Albania has shown interest in adapting new technologies but lacks any evidence that such a system has begun to be used in Albania.

PILLAR 2: ACHIEVING TRANSPARENT PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

Criterion 13: *Adoption of policies for parliamentary transparency.*

Parliament will adopt policies that ensure the proactive dissemination of parliamentary information, including policies regarding the formats in which this information will be published. Transparency policies will specify the conditions for their periodic review to leverage technological developments and best practices. When Parliament is unable to publish information immediately, it should create partnerships with civil society to ensure broad public access to parliamentary information.

The Law on the Right to Information ensures public access to parliamentary documents. The establishment of the Ombudsman to address access to information issues is an improvement towards compliance with transparency standards.

There is a lack of a clear strategy that includes periodic reviews of transparency policies, as occurs in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom.

Criterion 14: *Enabling information on the roles and functions of Parliament.*

Parliament should make information about its constitutional role, structure, and functions available.

Criterion 15: Enabling information about Members of Parliament.

Parliament will provide sufficient and regularly updated information for citizens to understand the credentials of a member concerning their party affiliation, electoral mandate, roles in Parliament, attendance, and identities of personal staff. Contact information for parliamentary offices and the electoral units of members should also be available.

Criterion 16: *Enabling information about parliamentary staff and administration.*

Parliament will make information about its administrative function and the structure of parliamentary staff that manages and administers parliamentary processes publicly available.

There have been some efforts by the Albanian Parliament to provide information about its roles and functions. For example, Article 22 of the Constitution clearly states the right of civil society to access public information, and the Parliament's website offers information about the roles of Parliament and its members, including names, party representation, and the committees in which they serve.

⁴² World e-Parliament Report 2010. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2016-07/world-e-parliament-report-2010>

However, there are numerous deficiencies. There needs to be improvement in citizen participation in legislative processes through educational resources and interactive tools. This includes educational videos and other interactive resources, as implemented in countries like the United Kingdom.

Additionally, information could be more detailed and accessible to citizens. More detailed information regarding electoral mandates, professional experiences, and career histories of members is often lacking or limited. In some cases, information about personal staff and their roles outside Parliament is not included. According to IPU guidelines,⁴³ many parliaments around the world provide detailed information about their members, including biodata, photos, information about committees, and parliamentary activities. For example, the Parliament of South Africa has a well-organized system for providing this information. One suggestion is for the Albanian Parliament to adopt best international practices by creating an online platform where each member has a personal page with detailed information about their career, legislative activities, and contact methods with citizens. This would help increase citizen engagement and trust in parliamentary institutions.

According to best practices, contact information for members should always be publicly available, but in Albania, this has not been standardized, leaving citizens without a clear means of access.

Criterion 17: *Enabling information about the Parliamentary Agenda.*

Documentation regarding the planning of parliamentary work will be made available to the public, including the calendar of sessions, information about scheduled votes, the agenda, and the schedule of meetings and committees. Except in rare cases related to urgent legislation, Parliament will provide sufficient advance notice to allow the public to give suggestions and contributions. The Albanian Parliament has improved its practice in publishing work calendars and the agenda for its sessions. According to information from the official Parliament website, information about scheduled sessions, votes, and committees is regularly announced, allowing citizens and civil society organizations to engage more easily in legislative processes.

However, there are often delays in publishing the agenda, hindering the possibility of full engagement from citizens. International organizations such as the European Commission and the OECD have provided recommendations for improving transparency and citizen engagement in legislative processes in Albania.

According to the 2010 World Digital Parliament Report⁴⁴, 85% of parliamentary websites publish daily schedules, with 70% offering the calendar of plenary sessions at least two days before meetings. These recommendations include increasing access to information and improving communication between parliaments and citizens.

Criterion 18: *Engaging Citizens in Legislative Drafting.*

Draft legislation will be made public upon its presentation. Recognizing the need for citizens to be fully informed and to contribute to issues under consideration, Parliament will strive to ensure public access to preparatory analyses and background information to encourage a broader understanding of discussions on policies related to proposed legislation.

⁴³ Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Home*. <https://www.ipu.org/>

⁴⁴ UN DESA/DPIDG. (2021). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/world-e-parliament-report-2010.html>

The draft of legislation is generally made public at the time of its presentation. The Albanian Assembly has an official website where legislative documents are published, including proposed laws, amendments, and reports. The Assembly has made some progress in providing access to legislative information. For example, the e-Albania platform allows citizens to view various government documents, including drafts of laws. The Assembly has initiated public consultations on several draft laws.

While the law requires documents to be accessible, there are concerns regarding the level of public awareness and understanding of these documents. The level of detail and analysis provided alongside these documents needs to be improved. Reports⁴⁵ Reports indicate that while civil society organizations often participate in these discussions, their influence on final outcomes may be limited. Many citizens might not even be aware of the legislative calendar, a factor stemming from a lack of promotion.

Criterion 19: *Publication of Committee Session Records.*

Reports of committee proceedings, including created and received documents, witness testimonies during public hearings, transcripts, and records of committee actions, must be made public promptly.

Albanian legislation stipulates that committee proceedings reports, including documents created and received, witness testimonies from public hearings, and committee action records, should be made public immediately. The law allows committee hearings and meetings to be open to the public, enabling citizens to access information about legislative decisions.

However, delays often occur in publishing this information, and despite the law permitting and requiring transparency in committee hearings and meetings, its implementation is imperfect.

Criterion 20: *Registration of Parliamentary Votes.*

To ensure accountability of members to the electorate for their voting behavior, Parliament should minimize the use of voice voting in plenary sessions and primarily employ roll-call voting or electronic voting, making a register of members' voting behavior available to the public. Additionally, Parliament should minimize the use of proxy voting to ensure it does not reduce parliamentary transparency and democratic accountability.

In Albania, electronic voting is often used in plenary sessions, and the voting results are subsequently published on the Parliament's website, providing some transparency regarding deputies' behavior.

However, discussions in parliamentary committees are often held behind closed doors, limiting direct public access to the committee voting process. An area needing improvement is the minimization of voice voting and broader implementation of electronic or roll-call voting, ensuring that each deputy's vote is recorded and made public.

Criterion 21: *Publication of Plenary Session Records.*

Parliament should create, maintain, and publish easily accessible records of its plenary procedures, ideally in the form of audio or video recordings, stored online in a permanent location, as well as in the form of written transcripts.

⁴⁵ Merkoçi, A. & MJAFT! Movement. (2019). Analysis of Parliamentary openness in Albania and in the region. https://www.mjaft.org/sites/default/files/Parliament%20Openness_Albania.pdf

In Albania, plenary sessions are broadcast live and recorded, offering citizens the opportunity to follow parliamentary activities through media channels and the internet. The official website of the Albanian Assembly includes the agenda, deposited documents, and session recordings, fulfilling this criterion.

Suggested improvements include further strengthening the publication of written transcripts of parliamentary debates, which are often not accessible to the public.

Criterion 22: *Publication of Reports Created by or for Parliament.*

All reports should be made fully public except in cases specified by law.

With the approval of Law No. 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation, the aim was to strengthen institutional openness. This law requires the legislative process to be open and to involve citizens and non-profit organizations in decision-making.

A critical aspect for Albania is the need to include complete data in open formats in reports submitted by Parliament. This lack hinders the analysis and use of information by third parties, ensuring the integrity and quality of political decisions made based on that information. There are overall issues with the full implementation of this law.

Criterion 23: *Enabling Information on Budget and Expenditures.*

Parliament has the responsibility to publicly provide complete, detailed, and easily understandable information about the national budget and public expenditures, including past, current, and projected revenues and expenditures. Additionally, Parliament is tasked with publishing information about its own budget, including information on its execution and contracts. This information should be made public comprehensively, using a consistent taxonomy, along with summaries, explanations, or reports in simple language that help promote citizens' understanding.

Criterion 24: *Declaration of Assets and Ensuring Members' Integrity.*

Parliament will make sufficient information available to allow citizens to form informed judgments regarding the integrity and honesty of its members, including information on members' asset declarations, their parliamentary expenditures, and their non-parliamentary income, including interests, dividends, rent payments, or other benefits in kind.

Albania has taken several steps regarding budget transparency and the publication of public expenditures. The Law on Financial Management⁴⁶ and Control and the Law on Internal Auditing⁴⁷, aim to ensure transparency in the national budget. The legal framework also requires public officials, including deputies, to declare their financial assets, business interests, and any potential conflicts of interest, in accordance with international standards for transparency.

Challenges remain in the lack of full implementation of these laws. Albanian public institutions publish budgetary and expenditure data, including their annual budget and financial reports. The level of detail and clarity of this information for citizens remains limited. Platforms like Open Data Albania⁴⁸ and the Ministry of Finance publish data in open formats, but there is often a lack of simplified summaries for citizens to easily understand information regarding public spending and fund allocation. Audit reports from the Supreme State Audit often include audits of expenditures and

⁴⁶ Law No. 114/2015 on internal auditing in the public sector. Ministry of Finance. Retrieved from https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Liqji-Nr.114-date-22.10.2015-Per-auditimin-e-brendshem-ne-Sektorin-Publik_.pdf

⁴⁷ Law No. 10296/2010 on Financial Management and Control as amended. Ministry of Finance. https://infrastruktura.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Liqj_10296_8.7.2010.pdf

⁴⁸ Open Data Albania. (n.d.). Open Data Albania. <https://opendata.al/>

are publicly available, although they do not always include the most up-to-date data or simplified information for the public.

Also, if we follow international best practices regarding information on the wealth and integrity of parliament members, Albania has much room for improvement. For example, in Canada, India, and South Africa, lawmakers are required to declare not only their assets but also those of their family members, in order to avoid exploiting legal loopholes. Although this is a very advanced phase of parliamentary transparency, Albania should aim to provide more information about every member of Parliament and their finances.

Criterion 25: Declaration of information on unethical activities and possible conflicts of interest.

Parliament will adopt clear rules to ensure the dissemination of necessary information to protect against real or perceived conflicts of interest and ethical violations, including relevant information about members' interactions with lobbyists and pressure groups. Parliament will also make public the final results of any judicial or parliamentary investigation related to allegations of misconduct, conflicts of interest, or corruption.

Albania has made significant progress in improving transparency and accountability within its parliamentary system, especially concerning conflicts of interest, fulfilling 9 out of 10 GRECO⁴⁹ requirements in this area. An important development is the Electronic System for the Declaration of Assets and Conflicts of Interest, which aims to improve monitoring and verification of asset declarations by public officials and elected representatives.⁵⁰

Albania has not implemented such a mechanism that would ensure transparency in the relationships between parliamentarians and interest groups, making it more difficult to oversee these relationships.

There are delays in the adoption of laws regulating transparency and accountability. This slowdown negatively affects the improvement of the situation and the full integration of international standards in the field of ethics and transparency.

Criterion 26: *Enabling access to historical information.*

Parliamentary information on previous sessions will be digitized and made available to citizens forever, for reuse without legal restrictions or fees. If a parliament cannot digitize and make its information available, it should work with external organizations to facilitate the public dissemination of parliamentary information without restrictions. The parliament should ensure public access to a parliamentary library to allow members and the public to access historical information.

The digitization of parliamentary information, as mentioned above, is one of the steps taken to achieve this criterion.

One area for improvement is the creation of a publicly accessible parliamentary library. There is still no complete and well-defined system that guarantees continuous access for citizens.

PILLAR 3: FACILITATING PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

Criterion 27: *Enabling multiple channels to access information.*

⁴⁹ Alice. (2020, October 6). Albania Satisfies Nine out of Ten GRECO Recommendations - Exit - Explaining Albania. Exit - Explaining Albania. <https://exit.al/en/albania-satisfies-nine-out-of-ten-greco-recommendations/>

⁵⁰ Council of Europe. (2022, March 1). Electronic System of Declaration of Assets and Conflict of Interests – preventing corruption through increased transparency of assets. *Council of Europe Office in Tirana*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/tirana/-/electronic-system-of-declaration-of-assets-and-conflict-of-interests-preventing-corruption-through-increased-transparency-of-assets>

The parliament should ensure that information is accessible through multiple channels, including physical experiences, such as open days at the parliament, print and online media, radio and television broadcasts, the internet, and mobile device technology.

The official parliament website, television broadcasts, and the e-Albania portal are some very good factors regarding the achievement of this criterion.

However, there is a lack of diversified channels. Information is not accessible to all groups of citizens, such as those in rural areas where there is often a lack of internet access.

Criterion 28: *Ensuring physical access.*

The parliament and plenary sessions must be physically accessible and open to all citizens, subject only to demonstrable public safety restrictions.

Criterion 29: *Ensuring access from the media.*

The parliament will ensure that the media and independent observers have full access to parliamentary procedures; the criteria and process for granting access to the media will be clearly defined and made publicly available.

Criterion 30: *Enabling real-time and on-demand broadcasts.*

Efforts must be made to provide citizens with access to real-time and on-demand archives of parliamentary procedures through radio, television, and the internet. Albania has made progress in this regard by allowing the media to participate in plenary sessions. This enables citizens to receive information about plenary sessions or various committees, often in real-time.

Although security measures are important to protect parliamentarians and public employees, prohibiting citizens from observing the proceedings may create a sense of exclusion. What is important is that restrictions are clearly defined, published, and non-discriminatory. Countries like South Africa have included public access in their Constitution, making physical access an important standard for parliamentary transparency. In Albania, there is a need for improvements in this aspect to ensure that all citizens can follow parliamentary activities and contribute to the democratic process.

Criterion 31: *Facilitating access throughout the state.*

As much as possible, access to parliamentary information should not be restricted by geographic barriers. However, using the parliament's website facilitates access to parliamentary information without geographic restrictions; in areas where access to and use of the internet is limited, the parliament should seek other means to ensure public access to parliamentary information nationwide.

The government has made efforts to provide parliamentary information through the official parliament website, making it easier for citizens across the country to access information. Some institutions have implemented systems to receive and organize citizens' opinions through channels such as SMS, which help engage citizens in legislative processes.

Lack of Infrastructure in Rural Areas: While online access is beneficial, many citizens in rural areas may not have good internet access, which negatively affects their ability to obtain the necessary information.⁵¹

Financial Limitations: Financial and infrastructural issues often hinder the full implementation of strategies for facilitating access, especially those that require investments in technology and information centers.

⁵¹ IDM. (2023, September 29). *Research Report: A Decade of Public Consultation Law in Albania: Call for Reform*. Welcome to IDM. <https://idmalbania.org/research-report-a-decade-of-public-consultation-law-in-albania-call-for-reform/>

Inclusion of Different Social Levels: Further efforts must be made to ensure that all social groups, including those with low incomes, have equal access to parliamentary information and technology.

Criterion 32: Use of Plain Language.

The parliament must ensure that legal or technical language does not serve as a barrier for citizens seeking access to parliamentary information. While the need to use precise language in law writing is recognized, the parliament has an obligation to develop summaries in plain language and similar tools to make parliamentary information accessible and understandable for members and citizens with different education and expertise.

Some institutions have begun publishing summaries and information in plain language, which are easier for those without a legal background to understand. This is important for encouraging citizen participation in democratic processes. Albania has developed several initiatives to improve its communication with citizens, including the use of digital platforms to facilitate access to parliamentary information. This includes the creation of online portals that offer simplified information about legislation and parliamentary procedures. Non-governmental organizations, such as the "Institute for Public Policy" and the "Center for Research and Policy Development," have played an active role in promoting transparency and access to parliamentary information, advocating for the government to use simpler and more understandable language for legislation.

Although there are efforts to create simplified materials, there is often a lack of necessary resources to develop these materials systematically. This can limit the opportunities to reach a broader audience. Many citizens are not aware of these initiatives and how to access the necessary information. This requires informational campaigns to raise awareness about the content and ways to access parliamentary information.

Criterion 33: Use of Multiple National or Working Languages.

When the Constitution or parliamentary rules provide for the use of multiple national or working languages in parliament, the parliament will make every reasonable effort to ensure immediate interpretation of sessions and rapid translation of the parliamentary record.

The Constitution provides for the use of the Albanian language as the official language, but recognizes other languages, such as those of various ethnic communities in the country. One of the main challenges is the lack of immediate interpretation for parliamentary procedures. This would greatly assist in including citizens who speak other languages, eliminating discrimination in the information provided. The majority of parliamentary information is in Albanian, and translations into other languages are scarce. This creates a barrier for citizens who speak other languages and negatively affects their participation in democratic processes. Despite efforts to include citizens from different communities, many feel excluded from the parliamentary process due to language barriers.

Criterion 34: Ensuring Free Access.

Parliamentary information will be available to citizens for unrestricted access, reuse, and sharing free of charge.

Information about draft laws, approved laws, and parliamentary discussions is available on the official website, also including the results of votes and the attendance of deputies at sessions. Parliamentary sessions are broadcast live on television, which improves public transparency. Some areas still remain problematic, particularly concerning public access to information about the state budget, details of public procurements, and the organizational structure of the Assembly, where this institution performs poorly. Furthermore, while the law on public consultation exists, there is a lack of clarity regarding how public recommendations influence the legislative process, indicating that mechanisms for openness and transparency have not yet been fully and effectively implemented.⁵²

⁵² Merkoçi, A. & MJAFT! Movement. (2019). Analysis of Parliamentary openness in Albania and in the region. https://www.mjaft.org/sites/default/files/Parliament%20Openness_Albania.pdf

PILLAR 4: ENABLE THE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION OF PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

Criterion 35: *Enabling Information in Transparent and Structured Formats.*

Parliamentary information will be prepared and published in a transparent and structured format, such as structured XML, which can be read and processed by computers, so that parliamentary information can be easily reused and analyzed by citizens, civil society, the private sector, and the government.

The Albanian Parliament has made improvements regarding the transparency of parliamentary information. There is a 73% fulfillment of indicators for measuring institutional transparency on the part of the parliament.

The Albanian Parliament still does not fully meet the requirement for using structured and open formats, such as XML. The Open Data portal of Albania (OpenData)⁵³ provides data from various institutions, including the Parliament, but many of them are still not in formats that can be easily processed by software, such as XML formats. The information presented is often in simpler formats like PDF or tables, which require additional processing to be reused or effectively analyzed by stakeholders such as citizens and civil society organizations.⁵⁴

Criterion 36: *Ensuring the usability of technology.*

The Parliament must ensure the technological usability of parliamentary information by providing clear guidelines for using any online database or tools that enable citizens to reuse parliamentary information from the Parliament's website.

According to recent reports, there have been improvements in providing access to data for citizens through official web pages. Access is still not entirely simple and structured for users without in-depth technological knowledge. The official Parliament portal offers a range of documents and information for citizens, but some of the main challenges are the lack of clear guidelines for using databases and online tools. Citizens often encounter difficulties finding or using information in easily understandable and navigable formats.

Compared to best international practices, such as using W3C standards for accessibility for persons with disabilities and improving website design for easier usability, Albania has not yet fully implemented these standards. Implementing helpful features, frequently asked questions, and contacts for technical support are aspects that need improvement to provide citizens with easier and non-discriminatory technological access.⁵⁵

Criterion 37: *Protection of Citizens' Privacy.*

The Parliament's websites will have a clear and concise privacy policy to inform citizens about how their personal data is being used. The Parliament will not use membership or registration requirements that restrict public access to information on the Parliament's websites or allow tracking of personally identifiable information without explicit consent.

Albania has adopted laws and regulations that protect personal data, including the Law on Personal Data Protection, which is harmonized with EU standards on this issue. These laws help strengthen the protection of citizens' privacy. However, many official Albanian websites do not have a clear and easily understandable policy for the protection of personal data for citizens visiting them. In many cases, government institution websites in Albania require registration or identifying information to access certain information. This contradicts the principle of open and non-

⁵³ Open.Data.gov.al. Home. <https://opendata.gov.al/>

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Merkoçi, A. & MJAFT! Movement. (2019). Analysis of Parliamentary openness in Albania and in the region. <https://www.mjajt.org/en/reports/report-albanian-parliament-openness;>

discriminatory access to parliamentary information. There is insufficient clarity regarding how user data is collected and used, and citizens are often unaware of the processing of this data.

Criterion 38: *Use of Open Formats and Open-Source Software.*

Many public documents and data are still released in proprietary formats, such as PDF or other formats tied to specific software, like Microsoft Office. This hinders access and reuse of information by citizens, making it more difficult to use for other purposes, such as research or analysis.⁵⁶

According to the Sunlight Foundation, non-discriminatory access to data means that citizens should be able to access information without being required to identify themselves or justify their use of that data.⁵⁷

Criterion 39: *Allowing downloads for reuse.*

Parliamentary information should be easily downloadable, in bulk, and in well-documented formats to allow for easy reuse of information.

The Albanian parliament provides information on its official website.

Currently, the Albanian parliament does not offer a clear option for bulk downloading of documents. Information usually must be obtained document by document, making the process slower and more difficult for those who want to analyze massive data. According to the World Report on e-Parliament and other studies, Albania needs to improve how it provides parliamentary information to better align with global best practices. This would help increase citizen engagement and facilitate data analysis.

Criterion 40: *Maintenance of parliamentary websites.*

Even in countries with limited internet usage, the maintenance and regular updating of a comprehensive parliamentary website is an important aspect of parliamentary openness in the modern connected world. The parliament should ensure that parliamentary information is available in electronic format and consider online distribution as an essential communication tool. There is little public information indicating whether the parliament effectively uses metadata to facilitate information search. This is an area that may need improvement. There are also many cases where the e-Albania system does not work properly or is blocked, perhaps due to overload.

Criterion 41: *Use of simple and sustainable mechanisms.*

The parliament should make it as easy as possible for citizens to quickly find the desired parliamentary information by creating databases that enable simple and complex searches using appropriate metadata. Information should be available in a location that remains permanent, for example, on a website with a stable URL. The Albanian parliament should create databases that allow simple and advanced searches for parliamentary information. This means that information should be organized in such a way that citizens can easily find what they are looking for, including documents, laws, and parliamentary activities. The use of metadata is an important factor in facilitating searches. Metadata helps classify and describe documents, making it easier for citizens to find the necessary information. The parliament should adopt approved standards for metadata that would help increase search efficiency. It is essential that information is available at stable

⁵⁶ Open Formats and Open Source for Better Government. (2010, April 1). Govloop. <https://www.govloop.com/community/blog/open-formats-and-open-source-for-better-government/>
Ibid

⁵⁷ Sunlight Foundation. (n.d.). <https://sunlightfoundation.com/>

URLs, meaning that links to documents should not change over time. Tools like Akoma Ntoso⁵⁸ can provide a framework for standardizing metadata and legal information. These tools help facilitate the semantic interoperability of documents, making it easier for users to understand the relationships between different documents.

Criterion 42: *Grouping information with the same meaning.*

The parliament should strive to enhance citizens' ability to find important parliamentary information by linking parliamentary information to other related information, for example, by linking references in the history of a draft law to previous versions of legislation, relevant committee reports, expert testimonies, and sponsored amendments. Some parliaments use standards like RDF to link documents. If the Albanian Parliament were to use such standards, it would ease the process of linking information and help create a more organized information structure. Some countries, like Brazil, have developed platforms such as LexML to unify legislative information and facilitate access to it. Currently, there is no clear information on whether Albania has any such platform that enables linking legislative information.

Criterion 43: *Enabling the use of alert services.*

Where possible, the parliament should offer citizens the option to subscribe to services that notify them about certain categories of parliamentary actions through email, SMS, or other technologies. Currently, the Albanian Parliament provides notification services through its web system, where citizens can be informed about activities and significant changes, such as laws and committee activities. However, information on registering for notification services via email or SMS is not widespread. In some cases, the information may be in a general form and not personalized for each citizen. According to the World Report on Parliament 2010, about 47% of parliaments offer some form of notification service. In Albania, there is no consolidated system that provides automatic notifications to citizens for important events.

Criterion 44: *Facilitating two-way communication.*

The parliament should strive to use interactive technological tools to enhance citizens' ability to contribute meaningfully to legislation and parliamentary activity, as well as to facilitate communication with parliamentary members or staff. The Albanian parliament has made efforts to engage citizens through its official website and social media platforms. However, the level of interactivity and the feedback mechanisms available to citizens remain limited.

Currently, there is no established system that allows citizens to provide real-time feedback or engage in discussions on draft laws through a public forum, as seen in other global parliaments. While the Albanian Parliament has a presence on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, engagement is often more focused on disseminating information rather than facilitating dialogue or gathering input from citizens.

According to the World Report on Parliament 2010, while 88% of parliaments provide public contact information via email, only 18% use online discussion groups for legislative actions. This trend reflects the situation in Albania, where the focus is more on providing information than on encouraging active participation.

⁵⁸European Commission. *Akoma Ntoso* EU (AKN4EU) version 3.0. https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/news/akoma-ntoso-eu-akn4eu-version-30-has-been-published_en

This narrative analysis of these indicators that assess the degree of "open parliament" is accompanied by the two tables below. Table 1 provides a simplified presentation of the progress that the Albanian Parliament has made concerning these indicators. Meanwhile, Table 2 offers a detailed description along with the relevant sources for these indicators.

Table 1: Measure of Progress on "Open Parliament" in Albania

No.	Criteria	Summary Assessment of Progress			
		Slow Progress	Efforts – Awaiting Results	Results Achieved but Still Work to Do	Completed/ Achieved
PILLAR 1: PROMOTING A CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY					
1	Recognition of the public's right to parliamentary information.				
2	Advancing a culture of transparency through legislation.				
3	Protecting a culture of transparency through oversight.				
4	Promoting citizen education.				
5	Engaging citizens and civil society.				
6	Protecting an independent civil society.				
7	Enabling effective monitoring of Parliament.				
8	Disseminating best practices.				
9	Ensuring legal resources.				
10	Disseminating complete information.				
11	Enabling timely information.				
12	Ensuring accurate information.				
PILLAR 2: ACHIEVING TRANSPARENT PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION					
13	Adopting policies for parliamentary transparency.				
14	Enabling information on the roles and functions of Parliament.				
15	Enabling information on members of Parliament.				
16	Enabling information on parliamentary staff and administration.				
17	Enabling information on the Parliamentary Agenda.				
18	Engaging citizens in legislative drafting.				
19	Publishing committee session records.				
20	Recording parliamentary votes.				
21	Publishing plenary session records.				
22	Publishing reports created by or for Parliament.				
23	Enabling information on the budget and expenditures.				
24	Declaring assets and ensuring the integrity of members.				
25	Declaring information regarding unethical activities and potential conflicts of interest.				
PILLAR 3: FACILITATING PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION					
26	Enabling access to historical information.				

27	Providing multiple channels for accessing information.				
28	Ensuring physical access.				
29	Guaranteeing access from the media.				
30	Enabling real-time and on-demand broadcasts				
31	Facilitating access across the country.				
32	Using plain language.				
33	Utilizing multiple national or working languages.				
34	Ensuring free access.				
PILLAR 4: ENABLING THE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION OF PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION					
35	Enabling information in transparent and structured formats.				
36	Ensuring the usability of technology.				
37	Protecting citizens' privacy.				
38	Using open formats and open-source software.				
39	Allowing downloads for reuse.				
40	Maintaining parliamentary websites.				
41	Using simple and sustainable mechanisms.				
42	Grouping information with similar meanings.				
43	Enabling the use of alert services.				
44	Facilitating two-way communication.				

5. THE IMPACT OF SELECTED INDICATORS ON THE ADOPTION OF EFFECTIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND CORRUPTION-FREE LEGISLATION

The following criteria, principles, or indicators have been selected for broader and separate analysis due to their impact on the possibility of consulting draft laws at each stage of the process. The main purpose of expanding the consultative process, even at the stage when the draft laws have passed approval by the Council of Ministers and await consideration by the Parliamentary Committees and the Assembly, is to minimize the scope for corruption on one hand, and on the other, to ensure the adoption of effective and stable laws.

In fact, the law on public notification and consultation defines public consultation as the collection of opinions and suggestions from interested parties on the content and improvement of the draft act until its final approval. Currently, public consultation is conducted through public announcements and closes before the draft reaches the Assembly. Further consultations and hearings are sporadic, and their impact seems limited, as the opinions collected at this stage are not structured in a way that makes them accessible to interested parties or the public in general.

WFD is assisting the legal service of the Parliamentary and Assembly Commissions in introducing Corruption Prevention Assessments as an additional opinion in the consultation process of draft laws. Regardless of the viewpoint of this evaluation, its findings align with those of other actors who, in hearings, have raised issues and concerns regarding specific aspects of the draft law under consideration. This is a crucial phase in the review of draft laws, and consultations with civil society organizations and the public can add real value and influence the creation of more effective laws that ensure greater integrity.

Currently, the consultation process for draft laws at this stage is not effective for two main reasons. The primary and most discouraging issue is the insufficient time between the publication of the draft laws on the Assembly's website and their examination in the Commissions, followed by the Assembly. The second issue, which requires more commitment from the Assembly, is the lack of mechanisms for consultation and interaction with interested parties and the public in general.

A more in-depth analysis of Principles 2, 5, 11, 13, and 34 of the Open Parliament Declaration aims to highlight their key role in facilitating effective consultation on draft laws and ensuring corruption-proof legislation—an area in which WFD has invested significant resources and expertise. By examining these principles through the lens of consultation and transparency, the goal is to identify opportunities for creating an open, participatory, and accountable legislative process that actively prevents corruption.

Principle 2: Advancing a Culture of Transparency through Legislation

The standard understanding of Principle 2 focuses on the obligation of Parliament to adopt laws and internal rules that foster a culture of openness. This culture guarantees the public's right to information about government and Parliament, promotes open government, protects freedom of expression, and encourages the engagement of civil society in legislative processes.

Adherence to this principle is closely linked to effective consultation on draft laws. To cultivate a culture of openness, Parliament must systematically involve citizens and civil society in the phase of the legislative process that takes place within the Assembly—from the arrival of the draft law and the publication of the package on the Assembly's website, up until its approval. Promoting an open Parliament not only ensures consultation on draft laws before they are passed, but also enables citizens to be meaningfully involved in the consideration, debate, and amendment of legislation. This

allows Parliament to integrate stakeholder input at every stage, strengthening public trust and fostering greater involvement in legal outcomes.

In practice, enabling and creating instruments to support freedom of expression provides a window through which both civil and professional opinions can be presented. This helps identify potential sources of corruption, offering a broader range of analyses and perspectives that assist parliamentary committees and the Assembly in reviewing draft laws. By guaranteeing the effective communication of professional and citizen opinions on draft laws, Parliament can prevent hidden agendas and potential conflicts of interest. Furthermore, an open and accountable environment where civil society can freely express concerns contributes to identifying corruption risks as early as the drafting stage of legislation.

Principle 5: Engagement of Citizens and Civil Society

This principle emphasizes Parliament's duty to engage citizens and civil society without discrimination, ensuring they have a meaningful role in the decision-making process and the opportunity to submit requests.

Effective consultations, in line with this principle, require structured channels of involvement that empower citizens and civil society to provide suggestions and feedback on draft laws. Such engagement must be transparent and accessible, allowing all citizens to follow and influence the legislation that affects their lives. Extending consultations to the parliamentary scrutiny stage further enables citizens to voice their opinions on proposed changes, ensuring their feedback is recorded and considered throughout the legislative process.

From the perspective of preventing corruption, civil society and citizens possess the expertise, experience, and personal insights necessary to serve as watchdogs against corruption, particularly when involved early in the legislative process. By consulting with civil society groups focused on governance and anti-corruption, Parliament gains professional knowledge about how laws can be vulnerable to corruption and conflicts of interest. Public engagement throughout the review process also discourages legislators from pursuing self-interest, as they understand their actions will be subject to scrutiny by citizens.

Principle 11: Providing Timely Information

This principle requires that parliamentary information be made available to the public in real time, or as soon as possible if real-time publication is not feasible.

Timely information is essential for effective consultation, as it ensures that citizens and civil society have access to the latest versions of relevant documents, such as the Relation and RIA, to form their suggestions on draft laws. By providing real-time access to proposed bills, updates, and parliamentary discussions, the consultation process becomes more responsive. Extending the consultation process to the parliamentary review stage and allowing sufficient time to collect comments and suggestions ensures that citizens are kept informed and that their input is valued throughout the legislative process.

Disseminating information in a timely manner and allowing adequate time for feedback from stakeholders and citizens is crucial for transparency. If draft laws and their amendments are made accessible as soon as possible and are widely consulted, the risk of introducing vulnerable regulations or "last-minute" changes that may open the door to corruption is reduced. Transparency and consultation act as safeguards against manipulation by those seeking to use the law for personal or political gain. Any sudden or questionable changes would quickly attract the attention and scrutiny of the public or organizations involved in the consultation process, who can then continue their advocacy efforts.

Principle 13: Adoption of Parliamentary Transparency Policies

This principle emphasizes the need for Parliament to adopt transparency policies that facilitate the proactive dissemination of information, specify publication formats, and ensure regular reviews to incorporate technological innovations and best practices.

Proactively making information available is essential for creating a more inclusive consultation process, as it allows organizations and citizens to access draft laws in standardized, user-friendly formats. Parliament's internal procedures that require open access to documents at any stage of consideration ensure that citizens are both informed and engaged. When combined with a feedback loop where public comments are visible, this approach fosters a transparent, dialogue-based process. Additionally, feedback gathered from citizens during the consultation should be made public, reinforcing Parliament's accountability to its citizens.

A well-defined transparency policy, embedded in the regulatory framework governing Parliament's activities and subject to regular reviews, ensures that the publication of parliamentary information remains rigorous and resistant to manipulation. By mandating the publication of draft laws and creating effective mechanisms for collecting public opinions within a reasonable timeframe, Parliament also ensures that the review process is transparent. This reduces the risk of introducing provisions that could promote corruption. Collaboration with civil society organizations that specialize in data and transparency further strengthens these efforts, making it easier to detect and address any questionable aspects of the legislative process.

Principle 34: Providing Free Access

This principle requires that parliamentary information be available to citizens for unrestricted and free access, reuse, and sharing.

Open access is crucial for creating a comprehensive consultation process. By removing barriers to access to bills, supporting documents, and parliamentary records, Parliament empowers citizens to engage fully in the legislative process. Citizens should also have the opportunity to reuse and share legislative information to stimulate broader public debate and generate collective feedback. Extending the consultation phase to the parliamentary scrutiny phase ensures that any revisions or changes remain publicly accessible, making it easier for citizens to track amendments and stay engaged throughout the process.

Free access to information enables the public and civil society to act as independent watchdogs against corruption. Unrestricted access supports data analysis, public reporting, and widespread sharing, which can reveal patterns that indicate corruption risks. By providing full access to all legislative materials, including consultations and reviews, Parliament strengthens transparency and accountability, reducing the opportunity for corrupt practices.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis conducted, the following action points are proposed to enhance the openness of Parliament and address potential corrupt practices in certain aspects of its activities:

- The Parliament should carry out and publish periodic evaluations of the level of "openness," accompanying it with objective evaluation measures.
- Parliament should publish documents and reports in open and easy-to-use formats, to enable simple and direct access to all citizens. Parliament must ensure that all parliamentary records are complete and up-to-date, ensuring that citizens have accurate and consistent information.

- Parliament should develop tools and guidelines that help citizens use electronic information without technological difficulties, including clear instructions and user support.
- Parliament should improve digital systems to disseminate information proactively, ensuring that information is available in real time and without delays. Additionally, Parliament should improve the digital infrastructure for the distribution of information in processable formats, using technologies that facilitate the use and analysis of data.
- Parliament should provide translations and materials accessible to all citizens, including those with language barriers, to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to access information.
- To strengthen the legislative process, the consultation phase of draft laws should be extended beyond the initial drafting phase to cover the entire parliamentary review process. Moreover, the time allotted for consultation should be reasonable, allowing interested parties to address their objections without creating unnecessary delays. The consultation process at the parliamentary level should rely on effective and transparent communication instruments, taking advantage of advances in information technology. This approach ensures that citizens' feedback is taken into account throughout the process, including during revisions and improvements.
- In addition, all feedback received from consultations should be made publicly accessible, demonstrating Parliament's commitment to transparency and providing citizens with an overview of how their suggestions influenced the final version of the draft laws.

By integrating these principles early in the consultation process and making all relevant information available in real time and without barriers, the Albanian Parliament can foster a culture of openness, prevent corruption, and increase public trust.

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ANNEX

Annex 1: Summary of the Assessment of Open Parliament Indicators in Albania

Pillar	Criterion	Standard for Meeting the Criterion	Assessment of the Albanian Parliament		Source
Promoting a culture of transparency.	1. The recognition of the public's right to parliamentary information	Parliamentary information belongs to the public; citizens should be allowed to reuse and republish parliamentary information, in whole or in part. Any exceptions or restrictions to this principle must be clearly and precisely defined by law.	In accordance: There are certain limitations on access to sensitive documents related to national security, privacy, or confidential information. While these may create restrictions on accessing information, the law clearly defines these limitations (Law 119/2014 as amended), and according to this criterion number 1, they are in compliance.	For improvement: Although the information is available, the format in which it is provided may restrict reuse. For example, some documents are in formats that cannot be automatically read by machines (e.g., PDF), which limits the ease of analysis or reuse by citizens or third parties.	Law 119/2014 as amended, on the right to information. The internal regulations of the Assembly of the Republic of Albania (Article 105 is the most important, Articles 106 and 107 dh).
	2. Advancing the culture of transparency through legislation	Parliament has the obligation to adopt legislation, as well as internal procedural rules and codes of conduct, that create an environment guaranteeing the public's right to government and parliamentary information, promote a culture of open governance, ensure transparency in political financing, protect freedoms of expression and assembly, and ensure the engagement of civil society and citizens in the legislative process.	In accordance: There are legal frameworks aimed at facilitating public engagement in the legislative process, such as Law No. 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation, which is a key instrument for promoting transparency and civil society engagement in legislative processes in Albania. This law aims to ensure that citizens and civil society organizations have the opportunity to contribute and provide feedback on the policies and laws that affect their lives.	For improvement: Despite the existence of such legal frameworks, public authorities often neglect the consultation process with the public. This can harm the quality of laws and policies and reduce public trust in their influence on the legislative process. Various studies also indicate a lack of mechanisms for gathering public feedback and responses. Additionally, there is a perception that the collaboration between parliament and the public is superficial and insufficient. (Report from the Institute for Democracy and Mediation)	https://idmalbania.org/research-report-a-decade-of-public-consultation-laë-in-albania-call-for-reform/ 'A Decade of the Law on Public Consultations in Albania: A Call for Reform' https://idmalbania.org/report-cso-participation-in-decision-making-in-albania/ 'Civil Society Participation in Decision-Making in Albania' Law 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation.

3. Protection of a culture of transparency through oversight	In fulfilling its oversight function, Parliament will ensure that laws guaranteeing government openness are effectively implemented, that the government operates in a fully transparent manner, and that it also works to promote a culture of transparency.	In accordance: There are oversight mechanisms and legal frameworks (the aforementioned laws) that assist in meeting this criterion, such as the law on the right to information. Albania is committed to several regional and international agreements, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP), aimed at increasing government transparency and citizen engagement. Parliamentary reports and progress related to these commitments demonstrate compliance with global transparency standards.	For improvement: Although these mechanisms exist, the implementation of the law on the right to information is inadequate. There are gaps and delays in information provision, which contradicts the principle of parliamentary transparency. Reports from organizations like BIRN Albania (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) and AIS (Albanian Institute of Science) indicate that many public institutions in Albania have delayed or failed to respond to requests made under the Law on the Right to Information. This highlights the difficulties in obtaining information from ministries and municipalities regarding public contracts or the distribution of funds.	https://ogp.gov.al/faqe/cfare-eshte https://birn.eu.com/neteork/birn-albania/ https://ais.al/nee/
4. Promoting citizen education	Parliament has the responsibility to actively promote citizen education, especially among young people, by fostering an understanding of the rules and procedures of Parliament and its members.	In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has made efforts to enhance citizen education regarding parliamentary information. Some examples of this include open days organized on certain occasions for students, the Parliament's website, the distribution of brochures with various information about Parliament, and the Youth and Parliament program.	For improvement: Many educational programs, such as school visits to Parliament or potential visits by Parliament staff to these schools, may not reach all regions of Albania, particularly rural areas where access to such initiatives can be limited. There is also a lack of promotion for informative activities that Parliament may organize, resulting in people being unaware of these opportunities. Additionally, there is no monitoring mechanism for educational programs concerning their effectiveness and quality. A method should be established for citizens to express their impressions and suggestions regarding these educational mechanisms provided by Parliament.	https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/albania/en/home/international-cooperation/projects.html/content/dezaprojects/SDC/en/2017/7F09576/phase1
5. Citizen and civil society	Parliament has the obligation to actively engage citizens and civil society, without discrimination, in parliamentary processes and	In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has initiated efforts to increase citizen	For improvement: OSCE has noted that, although there is a legal framework supporting public	https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/participation-of-civil-society-and-citizens-in-decision-making/

	engagement	decision-making, in order to effectively represent the interests of citizens and uphold their right to petition their government.	engagement, such as through public hearings and online consultations for legislation. However, there are concerns regarding the effectiveness and transparency of these efforts.	<p>participation, its implementation often falls short of reaching diverse groups of citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parliamentary process in Albania faces obstacles in ensuring that all demographics—regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, or ability—are actively engaged. Reports suggest that while some efforts are made to include marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, these initiatives may not be sufficient to guarantee their effective participation in decision-making. • International Standards and Recommendations: The European Parliament and other international bodies emphasize the need for parliaments not only to provide information but also to create opportunities for public contribution in the legislative process. This includes platforms for citizen feedback, such as electronic petitions and public discussions. <p>Current practices in Albania should align more closely with these standards to significantly improve citizen engagement.</p>	https://citizens.al/en/2024/04/11/the-report-of-freedom-house-democracy-in-Albania-no-improvement/
6.	Protection of an independent civil society	Parliament has the obligation to support measures to ensure that civil society organizations can operate freely and without restrictions.	In accordance: The legal framework remains a very important tool for achieving this criterion. The aforementioned laws are a way in which the Albanian Parliament has aimed to fulfill this. Additionally, a culture of citizen involvement has been initiated	<p>For improvement: According to international laws, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, states have an obligation to protect the rights of civil organizations. However, organizations in Albania often face obstacles in their operations due to a</p>	https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/in

			through public hearings and consultations.	lack of support from state institutions and potential intimidation from repression or suppression they may encounter.	ternational-covenant-civil-and-political-rights
7. Facilitating Effective Parliamentary Oversight	Parliament must recognize the right and duty of civil society, the media, and the public to oversee Parliament and its members. Parliament will engage in consultations with the public and civil society organizations that monitor Parliament to encourage effective oversight and reduce barriers to accessing parliamentary information.	In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has engaged in various initiatives to increase public participation and consultations. This includes public hearings, consultations on draft laws, and collaborations with NGOs to promote dialogue between citizens and parliamentarians. Parliament aims to allow different organizations to monitor its actions and movements to achieve transparency.		For improvement: Challenges remain regarding the level of public involvement and the effectiveness of these consultations.	
8. Dissemination of Best Practices	Parliament will actively participate in international and regional exchanges of best practices with other parliaments and civil society organizations to enhance the transparency of parliamentary information, improve the use of information and communication technologies, and strengthen adherence to democratic principles.	In accordance: Albania has participated in several international organizations that promote transparency and governance improvement, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). These platforms provide opportunities for the exchange of best practices and enhancement of parliamentary transparency.		For improvement: Albania's participation in international parliamentary organizations is often limited. While membership exists, active engagement and contributions to discussions are minimal.	https://www.mjافت.org/en/reports/report-albanian-parliament-openness https://www.google.com/search?q=kuvendi+i+shqiperise&oq=kuvendi&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbEUqBggAEEUYOzIGCAAQRRq7MhAIARAUzGIMBGNQCGLLEDGIAEMgclAhAAGIAEMgclAxAAGIAEMgclBBAAGIAEMgclBRAAGIAEMgYIBhBFGD0yBggHEEUYPdIBCDE1MTlqMG00qAlAsAIA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
9. Ensuring Legal Resources	Parliament should adopt legislation to ensure that citizens have effective access to legal or judicial remedies in cases where access to government or	In accordance: Albania has a law regulating access to public information, Law No. 119/2014 on the Right to Information. This law aims to ensure that citizens		For improvement: According to a report published by the MJAFT Movement, Albania meets only 60% of the criteria for parliamentary transparency, indicating that improvements	https://www.mjافت.org/en/reports/report-albanian-parliament-openness

	parliamentary information is contested.	have easy access to the information they request from state institutions.	are needed in several areas to meet international standards.	
10. Dissemination of Complete Information	Parliamentary information available to the public should be as complete as possible, reflecting the entirety of parliamentary actions, except in cases that are specifically and clearly defined.	In accordance: Current laws and regulations on transparency require Parliament to publish information about laws, plenary sessions, committees, and accompanying documents.	For improvement: This process is often limited by a lack of regular updates and full access to all relevant materials. According to a report from the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), the publication of parliamentary documents in Albania is often fragmented, with essential supporting documents missing that are crucial for understanding the full context of the Assembly's legislative activities. For instance, reports from committees and proposed amendments are frequently absent, which are vital for fully grasping the legislative process and facilitating citizen engagement in decision-making.	Report of Mjaft. IDM Albania
11. Facilitating Timely Information	Parliamentary information will be made available to the public in a timely manner. As a general rule, information will be provided in real-time. If this is not possible, parliamentary information will be published as soon as it becomes available internally.	In accordance: Parliamentary reports and committee documents are made public according to the rules of the Assembly and established transparency practices. Generally, reports and other documents are distributed after review and approval in committees or plenary sessions, making them accessible to the public on the official website of the Assembly of Albania.	For improvement: In many cases, the publication of documents by Parliament in Albania occurs after several days. The e-Parliament report suggests that documents should be made public within 24 hours of preparation. In Albania, there is a lack of a clear legal framework for publishing agendas and committee documents within specified deadlines. This creates barriers to civil society and citizen participation in important legislative discussions. Countries like Greece and India make parliamentary information available to the public within 24 hours.	
12. Ensuring Accurate Information	Parliament will ensure a process to maintain authoritative records and guarantee that the	In accordance: The Assembly of Albania, through its practices and regulations, aims to ensure that the information released	For improvement: International practices for ensuring the accuracy of information include the use of open standards for documents, as well as	

		<p>information it publishes for the public is accurate.</p>	<p>to the public is accurate and complete. A process that aids in this regard is the documentation and publication of the minutes from plenary sessions and committees, where the internal rules of the Assembly establish deadlines and mechanisms for verifying their accuracy before publication. This practice aligns with international standards for parliamentary transparency, which require all documents and information to be verified before being made public.</p>	<p>XML-based markup systems to minimize human errors and enhance accuracy in the processing and publication of legislative documents. For example, the European Parliament employs such a system to ensure that all amendments and changes to legislation are stored individually and verified for accuracy. The use of open formats like XML for legislative documents in Albania is not as widespread as in some other parliaments, such as the European Parliament.</p> <p>In some cases, Albanian institutions have shown interest in adopting advanced technologies for the storage and dissemination of information. However, there is a lack of clear data indicating the use of XML as a widely approved standard at the parliamentary level for the publication of laws or other official data.</p>	
<p>Achieving Transparent Parliamentary Information</p>	<p>13. Adoption of Policies for Parliamentary Transparency</p>	<p>Parliament will adopt policies that ensure the proactive dissemination of parliamentary information, including policies regarding the formats in which this information will be published. Parliamentary transparency policies will be publicly available and will specify the conditions for their periodic review to leverage technological developments and best practices. When Parliament cannot immediately publish complete parliamentary information, it should develop partnerships with civil society to ensure broad public access to parliamentary information.</p>	<p>In accordance: The "Law on the Right to Information" ensures public access to parliamentary documents. In Albania, there have been improvements in legislation, such as the establishment of the Ombudsman to address issues related to access to information.</p>	<p>For improvement: There is still no clear and comprehensive transparency policy that fully meets the best international practices outlined in this provision. Additionally, there is a lack of a public strategic plan that includes periodic reviews of transparency policies to benefit from technological advancements, as practiced in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom.</p>	

<p>14. Facilitating Information on the Roles and Functions of Parliament</p>	<p>Parliament should make available information about its constitutional role, structure, functions, internal rules, administrative procedures, and workflow, as well as similar information for its committees.</p>	<p>In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has made some efforts to fulfill the principle of providing information about its roles and functions, based on the following aspects: The legal framework: Article 22 of the Constitution clearly states the right of civil society to access public information, except in cases specified by law. The official website of Parliament offers information about the roles of Parliament.</p>	<p>For improvement: There is still room for improvement, especially regarding the clarity and accessibility of this information. Citizen participation in legislative processes can be enhanced through educational resources and interactive tools. This includes the use of educational videos and other interactive resources, similar to those implemented in other countries, such as the United Kingdom.</p>	
<p>15. Enabling information about parliament members</p>	<p>The parliament will provide sufficient and regularly updated information for citizens to understand a member's credentials, party affiliation, electoral mandate, roles in parliament, attendance, identities of personal staff, as well as any other information that members wish to disclose about themselves and their credentials. The contact information for parliamentary offices and the electoral units of members will also be made available to the public.</p>	<p>In accordance: The official website of the Albanian Parliament provides some information about members, including their names, party representation, and the committees they serve on.</p>	<p>For improvement: • However, the information could be more detailed and accessible to citizens. Detailed information about the electoral mandate, professional experience, and career history of members often lacks or is limited. In some cases, information about the personal staff of members and their other roles outside of parliament is not included. According to IPU guidelines, many parliaments worldwide provide detailed information about their members, including biodata, photos, information about committees, and parliamentary activities. For example, the Parliament of South Africa has a well-organized system for providing this information. One suggestion is for the Albanian Parliament to adopt international best practices by creating an online platform where each member can have a personal page with detailed information about their career, legislative activities, and contact methods for citizens. This would help increase citizen engagement and trust in parliamentary institutions.</p>	<p>https://www.ipu.org/</p>

	<p>16. Enabling Information About Parliamentary Staff and Administration</p>	<p>Parliament will make available information about its administrative functioning and the structure of the parliamentary staff that manages and administers parliamentary processes. Contact information for the staff responsible for providing information to the public should be publicly accessible.</p>	<p>In accordance: On the official parliamentary website, information is provided about these factors, such as details regarding its functions.</p>	<p>For improvement: Currently, information about the staff and administration is quite limited, lacking complete details on the identity and responsibilities of each staff member. According to best practices, information such as contact numbers and the responsibilities of staff providing information to the public should be available. In Albania, this practice has yet to be standardized, leaving citizens without a clear and simple way to contact administrative staff. A step forward would be the creation of an organizational chart of the parliamentary administration, including the roles, responsibilities, and budget of each unit. This would help increase citizen trust and ensure that the parliamentary administration acts in the public interest.</p>	
	<p>17. Informing citizens about the Parliamentary Agenda</p>	<p>Documentation regarding the planning of parliamentary work will be made available to the public, including the calendar of sessions, information about planned votes, the agenda, and the schedule for committee hearings. Except for rare cases related to urgent legislation, the parliament will provide sufficient notice in advance to allow the public to offer suggestions and contributions to members regarding the issues under consideration.</p>	<p>In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has improved its practice in publishing work calendars and agendas for its sessions. According to information from the official website of the Parliament, information regarding planned sessions, votes, and committees is regularly announced, allowing citizens and civil society organizations to more easily engage in legislative processes.</p>	<p>For improvement: Delays often occur in the publication of the agenda, hindering the opportunity for full engagement from citizens. International organizations such as the European Commission and OECD have made recommendations for improving transparency and citizen engagement in legislative processes in Albania. According to the 2010 World Digital Parliament Report, 85% of parliamentary websites publish daily schedules, with 70% providing the plenary calendar at least two days before meetings. These recommendations include increasing access to information and improving communication between parliaments and citizens.</p>	<p>https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/publications/ëorld-e-parliament-report-2010</p>

<p>18. Engagemnt of citizens in law drafting</p>	<p>Draft legislation will be made public and published upon its introduction. Recognizing the need for citizens to be fully informed and to contribute to issues under consideration, the parliament will seek to ensure public access to preparatory analyses and background information to encourage a broad understanding of discussions regarding the proposed legislation.</p>	<p>In accordance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft of legislation is generally made public at the time of its introduction. The Albanian Assembly has an official website where legislative documents are published, including proposed laws, amendments, and reports. • The Assembly has made strides in providing access to legislative information. For example, the “E-Albania” platform allows citizens to view various government documents, including draft laws. The Albanian Assembly has initiated public consultations for several draft laws. These consultations involve soliciting feedback from civil society, interest groups, and the general public. 	<p>For improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the law requires documents to be accessible, there are concerns about the public's level of awareness and understanding of these documents. • The level of detail and analysis provided alongside these documents can vary, leading to uncertainty about how well-informed citizens are regarding legislation. • Reports indicate that while civil society organizations often participate in these discussions, their level of influence on final legislative outcomes may be limited. Many citizens may not be aware of the legislative calendar or opportunities to provide their input. This is partly due to insufficient information and awareness campaigns by the Assembly. 	<p>https://www.rti-rating.org/ep-content/uploads/Albania.pdf Report of MJFT.</p>
<p>19. Publication of Committee Meeting Records</p>	<p>Reports of committee procedures, including created and received documents, witness testimonies in public hearings, transcripts, and records of committee actions, should be made publicly available promptly.</p>	<p>In accordance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albanian legislation stipulates that reports of committee procedures, including created and received documents, witness testimonies during public hearings, and records of committee actions, must be made public immediately. • The law allows for hearings and committee meetings to 	<p>For improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are sometimes delays in the publication of this information, reducing the transparency of the process. Despite the law allowing for this transparency of hearings and committee meetings, its implementation is imperfect. 	

			be open to the public, ensuring that citizens have access to the information that informs legislative decisions.		
20. Recording of Parliamentary Votes	To ensure the accountability of members to the electorate for their voting behavior, the parliament will minimize the use of voice voting in plenary sessions and will use name-calling voting or electronic voting in most cases, maintaining and making publicly available a register of the voting behavior of individual members in plenary and committee sessions. Additionally, the parliament will minimize the use of proxy voting and ensure that this does not undermine transparency and democratic accountability standards.	In accordance: In Albania, electronic voting is often used in the plenary sessions of parliament, and the voting results are announced on the official website of the Assembly. This provides some transparency regarding the voting behavior of members of parliament.	To be improved: However, discussions in parliamentary committees are often held behind closed doors, limiting the public's direct access to the committee voting process. An aspect that requires improvement is minimizing the use of voice voting and implementing a wider use of electronic voting or roll-call voting, ensuring that each member's vote is recorded and made public.		
21. Publication of Plenary Session Records	The parliament will create, maintain, and publish easily accessible records of its plenary procedures, ideally in the form of audio or video recordings held online in a permanent location, as well as in the form of a written transcript or Hansard.	In accordance: In Albania, plenary sessions are broadcast live and recorded, offering citizens the opportunity to follow parliamentary activities through media channels and the internet. The official website of the Albanian Assembly includes the agenda, submitted documents, and recordings of the sessions, fulfilling some of these transparency criteria.	For improvement: There is an opportunity to enhance the data format, making it more accessible for analysis by civil society and other organizations. Additionally, there is a need to further strengthen the publication of written transcripts of parliamentary debates, which are not fully accessible to the public in many cases.	https://www.ipu.org/	
22. Publication of reports created by or for Parliament	All reports created by Parliament or required to be submitted to Parliament, its offices, or committees will be made public in full, except in circumstances specified in detail by law.	In accordance: With the adoption of Law No. 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation, the aim was to strengthen institutional openness. This law requires that the legislative	For improvement: A critical aspect for Albania is the need to include complete data in open formats in the reports submitted to parliament. This allows for analysis and use of information by third parties, ensuring the integrity and	https://idmalbania.org/research-report-a-decade-of-public-consultation-laë-in-albania-call-for-reform/	

			process be open and involve citizens and non-profit organizations in decision-making.	quality of political decisions made based on that information. Its implementation has faced challenges, with reports highlighting issues such as a lack of enforcement at every stage of the process and the limited impact of consultations in practice.	
23. Provision of information on the budget and expenditures	Parliament has the responsibility to publish complete, detailed, and easily understandable information about the national budget and public expenditures, including past, current, and projected revenues and expenditures. Additionally, Parliament is tasked with publishing information regarding its own budget, including details about its budget execution and contract offers. This information will be made publicly available in full, using a consistent taxonomy, along with summaries, explanations, or reports in plain language that help promote citizen understanding.	In accordance: Albania has taken several steps towards budget transparency and the publication of public expenditures. The Law on Financial Management and Control (No. 10296/2010) and the Law on Internal Audit (No. 114/2015) aim to ensure the transparency of the national budget.	For improvement Implementation remains at the level of full execution. Albanian public institutions publish budget and expenditure data, including their annual budget and financial reports. However, the level of detail and clarity of information for citizens remains limited. Platforms like Open Data Albania and the Ministry of Finance publish data in open formats, but often lack a simplified summary that allows citizens to easily understand information about public spending and fund allocation. Audit reports from the High State Audit often include audits of expenditures and are publicly available, although they do not always include the most up-to-date data or are simplified for the general public.	Law No. 10296/2010 on Financial Management and Control Law No. 114/2015 on Internal Auditing	
24. Declaration of assets and ensuring the integrity of members	Parliament will provide sufficient information to allow citizens to make informed judgments regarding the integrity and honesty of members, including information on members' asset declarations, their parliamentary expenses, and their non-parliamentary income, including interests, dividends, rental payments, or other benefits in kind.	In accordance: Albania has a legal framework that requires public officials, including members of parliament, to declare their financial assets, business interests, and any potential conflicts of interest, in line with international transparency standards.	For improvement: Citizens should have sufficient data available to assess the integrity of individual members, including their assets, parliamentary expenses, and income outside parliament (e.g., dividends, rents). According to international practices, such as those in Canada, India, and South Africa, legislators should declare not only their assets but also those of close family members to avoid exploiting legal loopholes. For instance, South Korea requires the declaration of both tangible		

				and intangible properties of members of parliament, which are made public for greater accountability.	
25. Declaration of Information on Unethical Activities and Potential Conflicts of Interest	The parliament will adopt clear rules to ensure the distribution of necessary information to protect against real or perceived conflicts of interest and ethical violations, including relevant information about members' interactions with lobbyists and pressure groups. The parliament will also publicly disclose information about the final results of any judicial or parliamentary investigations related to allegations of misconduct, conflicts of interest, or corruption.	In accordance: Albania has made significant progress in improving transparency and accountability within its parliamentary system, particularly regarding conflicts of interest and unethical behavior. An important development is the Electronic System for the Declaration of Assets and Conflicts of Interest, which aims to enhance the monitoring and verification of asset declarations by public officials and elected representatives. Additionally, Albania has fulfilled nine out of ten recommendations from the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), highlighting improvements in the code of conduct for parliamentarians and the mechanisms established for declaring conflicts of interest.	For improvement: Albania has not implemented a mechanism to ensure transparency in the relationships between parliamentarians and interest groups, making it more difficult to monitor these relationships. Although there are rules for reporting unethical behavior and conflicts of interest, there is often a lack of publication of investigation results related to these issues. This creates doubts about the integrity of officials and raises concerns about the transparency of the process. There are delays in the approval of laws regulating transparency and accountability. This slowdown negatively impacts the improvement of the situation and the full integration of international standards in the field of ethics and transparency.	https://www.coe.int/en/ëeb/tirana/-/electronic-system-of-declaration-of-assets-and-conflict-of-interests-preventing-corruption-through-increased-transparency-of-assets https://exit.al/en/albania-satisfies-nine-out-of-ten-greco-recommendations/	
26. Ensuring Access to Historical Information	Parliamentary information from previous sessions will be digitized and made available to citizens indefinitely, for reuse without legal restrictions or fees. If a parliament cannot digitize and make its information available, it will collaborate with external organizations to facilitate the public dissemination of parliamentary information without restrictions. The parliament will ensure public access to a parliamentary library to allow	In accordance: Albania has made some efforts to provide access to historical parliamentary information, but there are still visible challenges and issues in this regard, such as the digitization of parliamentary information.	For improvement: The lack of a publicly accessible parliamentary library. There is still no comprehensive and well-defined system that guarantees continuous access for citizens.		

		members and the public to access historical parliamentary information.			
Facilitating access to parliamentary information	27. Providing multiple channels for accessing information	The Parliament will ensure access to information about its work through multiple channels, including print media, radio and television broadcasts, the Internet, and mobile technology.	In accordance: The online platform, the website, is one way.	For improvement: Lack of diversified channels: Although there are some efforts to communicate parliamentary information through traditional media and digital platforms, access to information is still limited. In rural areas, where there is often a lack of internet and written resources, parliamentary information may not reach effectively, making radio and television important channels for disseminating information. Information in different formats: There is a need to provide information in various formats that meet citizens' needs. The lack of diverse formats and channels makes it difficult for citizens to access the information they seek, including the voting history of deputies, which is a crucial aspect of parliamentary transparency. Some countries, like New Zealand and the United Kingdom, have developed advanced systems that provide clear and accessible information on parliamentary actions.	
	28. Ensuring physical access	The Parliament and its plenary sessions will be physically accessible and open to all citizens, subject only to demonstrable public safety and space restrictions.	In accordance: Albania has made efforts to ensure citizens' physical access to plenary sessions, allowing citizens and the media to follow the work being done. This is an important sign of transparency and democratic engagement.	For improvement: While there is an effort to ensure physical access for citizens, there are still barriers preventing a significant portion of the population from attending parliamentary events. These barriers may include space limitations and public safety issues. The lack of a well-defined and clear public gallery can send the message that following parliamentary proceedings is not welcomed.	https://www.ipu.org/ World e-parliament Report 2010

				<p>Security and limitations: Although security measures are important to protect parliamentarians and public employees, preventing citizens from observing proceedings can create a sense of exclusion. It is essential that any restrictions are clearly defined, published, and non-discriminatory.</p> <p>Countries like South Africa have included public access in their Constitution, making physical access an important standard for parliamentary transparency. In Albania, improvements are needed in this regard to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to follow parliamentary activities and contribute to the democratic process.</p>	
29. Ensuring Media Access	The Parliament will ensure that the media and independent observers have full access to parliamentary procedures; the criteria and process for granting media access will be clearly defined and made publicly available.	In accordance: Guaranteed Access: The Albanian Parliament has made efforts to ensure media access to its proceedings. They have the right to attend plenary sessions and committees, which is a positive step for transparency. Regulations and Procedures: There are rules that define the criteria and process for accrediting journalists.	For improvement: The rules and criteria should be clearer and more accessible to all interested parties. Occasionally, journalists and independent observers have faced difficulties in securing full access, especially during significant political events.		
30. Providing Real-Time and On-Demand Broadcasting	Efforts should be made to provide citizens with real-time access to archives and on-demand access to parliamentary procedures through radio, television, and the Internet.	In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has begun to offer some live broadcasts of plenary sessions and committees, facilitating citizens' access to parliamentary activities. There are initiatives to create an electronic archive that allows viewing of proceedings on demand, which is a	For improvement: Despite efforts, there are still limits to the reach and dissemination of live broadcasts, and many citizens do not have regular access to these services. The necessary infrastructure for broadcasting and archiving content may be insufficient, hindering the provision of comprehensive and clear services. Some countries have developed advanced platforms to facilitate	<p>https://www.coe.int/en/ëeb/portal/home</p> <p>https://www.idea.int/</p>	

			step forward in terms of transparency and public access.	searching and viewing video content, which remains to be achieved in Albania.	
31. Facilitating access throughout the state	As much as possible, access to parliamentary information will not be restricted by geographical barriers. However, the use of the parliament's website facilitates access to parliamentary information without geographical limitations; in areas where access to and use of the internet are restricted, the parliament will seek other means to ensure public access to parliamentary information throughout the country.	In accordance: The government has made efforts to provide parliamentary information through the official website of the Parliament, making it easier for citizens across the country to access information. Some institutions have implemented systems to receive and organize citizens' opinions through channels like SMS, which help engage citizens in the legislative processes.		For improvement: Lack of Infrastructure in Rural Areas: While online access is beneficial, many citizens in rural areas may not have good internet access, which negatively impacts their ability to obtain the necessary information. Financial Limitations: Financial and infrastructural issues often hinder the full implementation of strategies to facilitate access, especially those requiring investments in technology and information centers. Inclusion of Different Social Levels: Further efforts are needed to ensure that all social groups, including those with low incomes, have equal access to parliamentary information and technology.	Council of Europe International Institute of Democrats
32. Using plain language	The parliament must ensure that legal or technical language does not serve as a barrier for citizens seeking to access parliamentary information. While the need for precise language in the drafting of laws is recognized, the parliament has an obligation to develop summaries in plain language and similar tools to make parliamentary information accessible and understandable for members and citizens with varying backgrounds and expertise.	In accordance: Some institutions have begun publishing summaries and information in plain language, which are easier for those without legal training to understand. This is important for encouraging citizen participation in democratic processes. Albania has developed several initiatives to improve its communication with citizens, including the use of digital platforms to facilitate access to parliamentary information. This includes the creation of online portals that offer simplified information on legislation and parliamentary procedures. Non-governmental organizations, such as		For improvement: Lack of Resources: Although there are efforts to create simplified materials, there are often insufficient resources to systematically develop these materials. This can limit opportunities to reach a wider audience. Citizen Awareness: Many citizens are unaware of these initiatives and how they can access the necessary information. This requires informative campaigns to raise awareness about the content and ways to access parliamentary information.	

			the "Institute for Public Policy" and the "Center for Policy Research and Development," have played an active role in promoting transparency and access to parliamentary information, urging the government to use simpler and more understandable language for legislation.		
33. Use of Multiple National or Working Languages	When the Constitution or parliamentary rules provide for the use of multiple national or working languages in parliament, the parliament will make every reasonable effort to ensure immediate interpretation of sessions and prompt translation of the parliamentary record.	In accordance: The Albanian Constitution provides for the use of the Albanian language as the official language, but also recognizes other languages, such as those of various ethnic communities in the country. This serves as an important basis for the inclusion of multiple languages in parliamentary practice. The Albanian Parliament has made efforts to include translations and interpretation of parliamentary processes for representatives of different communities.	For improvement: One of the main challenges is the lack of immediate interpretation for parliamentary procedures. This would greatly assist in including citizens who speak other languages, eliminating discrimination in the information provided. According to reports, most parliamentary information is in Albanian, and translations into other languages are scarce. This creates a barrier for citizens who speak other languages and negatively impacts their participation in democratic processes. Despite efforts to include citizens from various communities, many feel excluded from the parliamentary process due to language barriers.		
34. Ensuring Free Access	Parliamentary information will be available to citizens for unrestricted access, reuse, and sharing free of charge.	In accordance: Information on draft laws, approved laws, and parliamentary discussions is available on the official website, including the results of votes by deputies and their attendance at sessions. Parliamentary sessions are broadcast live on television, which enhances public transparency.	For improvement: Some areas remain problematic, particularly regarding public access to information about the state budget, details of public procurements, and the organizational structure of the Assembly, where this institution has low performance. Furthermore, while the law on public consultation exists, there is a lack of clarity regarding how public recommendations influence the legislative process, indicating that mechanisms for openness and transparency have not yet been fully and effectively implemented.		https://www.mjaft.org/sites/default/files/Openness%20of%20Parliament%20in%20the%20region%20and%20Albania.pdf

Electronic Accessibility of Parliamentary Information	35. Ensuring information is provided in transparent and structured formats	Parliamentary information will be prepared and published in a transparent and structured format, such as structured XML, which can be read and processed by computers. This will allow parliamentary information to be easily reused and analyzed by citizens, civil society, the private sector, and the government.	In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has improvements regarding the transparency of parliamentary information. There is a fulfillment of 73% of the indicators for measuring institutional transparency by the parliament.	For improvement: The Albanian Parliament still does not fully meet the requirement for the use of structured and open formats, such as XML. Albania's Open Data Portal (OpenData) provides data from various institutions, including the Parliament, but many of them are not yet in formats easily processed by software, such as XML formats. The information presented is often in simpler formats such as PDFs or tables, which require additional processing to be effectively reused or analyzed by stakeholders such as citizens and civil society organizations.	https://opendata.gov.al/ https://www.mjaft.org/sites/default/files/Parliament%20Openness_Albania.pdf
	36. Ensuring the usability of technology	Parliament will ensure the technological usability of parliamentary information by providing clear instructions for the use of any online database or tools that enable citizens to reuse parliamentary information from the parliament's website. To the extent that the parliament provides a user interface, it will use best practices to improve its usability.	In accordance: According to recent reports, there are improvements in providing access to data for citizens through official websites.	For improvement: Access is not yet completely simple and structured for users without in-depth technological knowledge. The official portal of the Parliament offers a range of documents and information to citizens, but some of the main challenges are the lack of clear instructions for using databases and online tools. Citizens may often struggle to find or use information in formats that are easy to understand and navigate, especially in the absence of a more convenient and accessible interface. Compared to international best practices, such as using W3C standards for accessibility for people with disabilities and improving the design of websites for easier usability, Albania has not yet fully implemented these standards. The implementation of help functions, frequently asked questions, and contacts for technical support are aspects that need to be improved to provide citizens with easier and non-discriminatory access to technology.	https://opendata.gov.al/ https://www.mjaft.org/sites/default/files/Parliament%20Openness_Albania.pdf

<p>37. Protection of citizens' privacy</p>	<p>Parliament websites will have a clear and concise privacy policy to inform citizens how their personal data is being used. Parliament will not use membership or registration requirements that limit public access to information on Parliament websites or allow the tracking of personally identifiable information without clearly expressed consent.</p>	<p>In accordance: Albania has adopted laws and regulations that protect personal data, including the Law on Personal Data Protection, which has been harmonized with EU standards on this matter. These laws help strengthen the protection of citizens' privacy.</p>	<p>To be improved: Many official Albanian websites do not have a clear and easy-to-understand policy for the protection of the personal data of the citizens who visit them. In many cases, the websites of government institutions in Albania require registration or identification information to access certain information. This contradicts the principle of open and non-discriminatory access to parliamentary information. There is not enough clarity on how user data is collected and used, and citizens are often unaware of the processing of this data. According to the Sunlight Foundation, non-discriminatory access to data means that citizens should have access without requiring identification or justification for their use.</p>	<p>https://sunlightfoundation.com/ https://opendata.gov.al/</p>
<p>38. The use of open formats and open-source software</p>	<p>The Parliament will prioritize the publication of digital information in non-proprietary and open formats, as well as the use of free and open-source software applications.</p>		<p>For improvement: Many public documents and data are still issued in proprietary formats, such as PDF or other formats tied to specific software, like Microsoft Office. This restricts access and reuse of information by citizens, making it more difficult to utilize for other purposes, such as research or analysis.</p>	<p>https://www.govloop.com/community/blog/open-formats-and-open-source-for-better-government/</p>
<p>39. Allowing downloads for reuse</p>	<p>Parliamentary information should be easily downloadable, in bulk, and in well-documented formats to enable easy reuse of the information.</p>	<p>In accordance: The Albanian Parliament provides the information on its official website.</p>	<p>For improvement: Most documents are available only in PDF format, which isn't always easy to reintegrate and analyze. There have been efforts to provide some documents in more open formats, but this is not yet common practice. Much of the information remains</p>	

				<p>limited to forms that don't allow for easy data manipulation.</p> <p>Currently, the Albanian Parliament does not offer a clear option for bulk downloading of documents. Information usually has to be accessed document by document, making the process slower and more challenging for those who want to analyze data at scale. According to the World e-Parliament report and other studies, Albania should improve the way it provides parliamentary information, better aligning with global best practices. This would help increase citizen engagement and facilitate information analysis.</p>	
40. Maintenance of parliamentary websites	<p>Even in countries with limited internet access, the regular maintenance and updating of a comprehensive parliamentary website is an important aspect of parliamentary openness in today's modern, connected world. The Parliament should ensure that parliamentary information is available in electronic format and view online distribution as an essential communication tool.</p>			<p>For improvement:</p> <p>There is not much public information indicating whether the Parliament effectively uses metadata to facilitate information retrieval. This is an area that may need improvement.</p> <p>Additionally, there are many cases where the e-Albania system does not function properly or gets blocked, possibly due to overload.</p>	
41. The use of simple and stable mechanisms	<p>The Parliament should make it as easy as possible for citizens to quickly find the desired parliamentary information by creating databases that allow for simple and complex searches through the use of appropriate metadata. Information should be available in a location that remains permanent, for example, on a website with a stable URL.</p>			<p>For improvement:</p> <p>The Albanian Parliament should create databases that allow for both simple and advanced searches of parliamentary information. This means that information should be organized in such a way that citizens can easily find what they are looking for, including documents, laws, and parliamentary activities.</p> <p>The use of metadata is an important factor in facilitating searches. Metadata helps classify and describe documents, making it</p>	

				<p>easier for citizens to find the necessary information. The Parliament should adopt approved standards for metadata that will enhance search efficiency.</p> <p>It is essential that information is available at stable URLs, meaning that document links should not change over time. Tools like Akoma Ntoso and Bungeni can provide a framework for standardizing metadata and legal information. These tools help facilitate the semantic interoperability of documents, making it easier for users to understand the relationships between different documents.</p>	
42. Grouping of related information	"The Parliament should strive to enhance citizens' ability to find important parliamentary information by linking parliamentary information with related information. For example, this could involve connecting references in the history of a legislative project with previous versions of the legislation, relevant committee reports, expert testimonies, sponsored amendments, and sections of Hansard that contain the record of parliamentary debate on that specific legislation."			<p>For improvement: Some parliaments use standards like RDF to link documents. If the Albanian Parliament adopted such standards, it would facilitate the process of linking information and help create a more organized structure for data. Some countries, like Brazil, have developed platforms such as LexML to unify legislative information and facilitate access to it. Currently, there is no clear information on whether Albania has any such platform that enables the linking of legislative information.</p>	
43. Enabling the use of alarm services	Whenever possible, the Parliament should provide citizens with the option to subscribe to services that notify them about specific categories of parliamentary actions through the use of email, SMS messages, or other technologies.	In accordance: Currently, the Albanian Parliament offers notification services through its website system, where citizens can be informed about important activities and changes, such as laws and committee activities.		<p>For improvement: However, information about registering for notification services via email or SMS is not as widespread. In some cases, the information may be general and not personalized for each citizen. According to the World Parliament Report 2010, about 47% of parliaments offer some form of notification service. In Albania, there</p>	https://www.ipu.org/

				is no consolidated system that provides automatic notifications to citizens for important events.	
44.Facilitating Two-Way Communication	The Parliament should strive to use interactive technological tools to enhance citizens' ability to provide significant contributions regarding legislation and parliamentary activity, as well as to facilitate communication with members or parliamentary staff.	In accordance: The Albanian Parliament has made efforts to engage citizens through its official website and social media platforms.	For improvement: The level of interactivity and the feedback mechanisms available to citizens remain limited. Currently, there is no established system that allows citizens to provide real-time feedback or engage in discussions on draft laws through a public forum, as seen in other global parliaments. While the Albanian Parliament has a presence on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, engagement is often more focused on broadcasting information rather than facilitating dialogue or gathering input from citizens. According to the 2010 World e-Parliament Report, while 88% of parliaments offer public contact information via email, only 18% use online discussion groups for legislative actions. This trend reflects the situation in Albania, where the focus is more on providing information than on encouraging active participation.		