

**ENHANCING THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN DRAFTING AND
OVERSEEING LEGISLATION ON MEDIA IN ALBANIA
(WORKING DOCUMENT)**

November 2023

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Abbreviations

AMA-Audiovisual Media Authority

RTSH- Albanian Radio Television

KDRTSH- The Governing Council of Albanian Radio and Television

RIA- Regulatory Impact Assessment

KDIMDP - The Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data.

GDBR- General Data Protection Regulation

Executive Summary

The media environment in Albania is characterized by the clash of interests between the private sector and politics, the lack of transparency in financial resources, and the concentration of media ownership. These factors, coupled with fear and challenging working conditions, have contributed to the restriction of journalistic freedom and the compromised quality of information provided. To ameliorate this situation, a legal framework is required to address these challenges and promote media independence, pluralism, and journalistic quality. Furthermore, the Assembly's supervisory role is crucial for the effective implementation of this legal framework.

After reviewing existing research, analyzing the legal framework, and conducting in-depth interviews, the main findings, along with some areas for future improvements, are presented below. The objective is to enhance transparency and strengthen the role of the Assembly in the media sector in Albania.

- Legislation concerning freedom of expression, the right to information, and the rights of journalists appears comprehensive. However, sporadic non-implementation has been observed, leading to the violation of these essential freedoms and rights.
- Journalists often face censorship from media owners, who maintain close and clandestine connections with the government, economic powers, or other circles of criminal interests.
- Enforcement of journalists' rights in terms of employment remains lax. Instances persist where journalists work without proper employment contracts, or are subjected to contracts with trial periods designed to exert pressure. Additionally, some journalists are legally paid minimum wages and receive additional bonuses through cash payments.

Building on the aforementioned findings and those detailed throughout this paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The Assembly of the Republic of Albania should take the lead in reviewing existing legislation to promote the advancement of the journalism profession. This includes legally defining the status of journalists, providing incentives for the self-organization of this free profession, and offering state support to associations and unions of journalists.
- Ensure complete transparency in the ownership structure, including the identification of beneficial owners, of audiovisual media service providers (OSHMA).
- The Assembly of the Republic of Albania is urged to promote transparency in the legislative process. This involves making every legal initiative filed and included in the approved work program transparent. Additionally, legal initiatives filed in the Assembly should undergo review and decision-making within the year of their submission.

I. Introduction

This document aims to discuss the crucial importance of enhancing the role of the Assembly in legislating and overseeing the media sector in Albania. It will put forward measures and recommendations intended to achieve this objective. As the primary institution representing the will of the people in Albania, the Assembly stands as a cornerstone in the country's democratic governance.

According to both local and international rights protection organizations, the Albanian media environment has experienced a decline in recent years. Under the governance of a government that increasingly restricts journalists' access and advocates for laws inconsistent with international human rights standards and best practices, the deterioration is evident.¹

Notably, the European Commission's annual report on Albania for 2023 highlights the challenges. It emphasizes the intertwining of business and political interests, the lack of transparency in funding sources, and the concentration of media ownership. These factors, combined with threats, unsafe working conditions, and an atmosphere of verbal and physical attacks, smear campaigns, and intimidation lawsuits against journalists, continue to impede media independence, pluralism, and the quality of journalism.² Unfortunately, this situation has shown no signs of improvement. Considering these challenges, the legislative and supervisory role of the Assembly becomes even more critical.

This working document delves into the current role of the Parliament in lawmaking and its oversight role in Albania, with a specific focus on the media sector. Through analysis, it aims to provide recommendations for enhancing the Parliament's role, contributing significantly to ongoing discussions about legal changes within the Albanian media sector.

¹ Internet Governance in Albania and its Role in Media Freedom, BIRN (July, 2020), accessible at: <https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Internet-Governance-1-1.pdf>

² Report Albania 2023, European Commission (SWD (2023) 690 final), page 31. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_690%20Albania%20report.pdf

II. THEORETICAL APPROACH ON THE LEGISLATIVE AND OVERSIGHT ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENT

To analyze the role of the Assembly in the Republic of Albania, reference must be made to the Constitution, specifically Article 1, point 1, which declares, 'Albania is a parliamentary republic.' Article 2, point 2, emphasizes that 'The people exercise sovereignty through their representatives or directly.' Furthermore, Article 7 expressly stipulates that 'The system of governance in the Republic of Albania is based on the separation and balance between the legislative, executive, and judicial powers.' These constitutional provisions delineate the parliamentary system and, consequently, define the role of the Assembly as the wielder of legislative power in the country.

The Assembly can exercise its oversight role in several different forms, including:

- **Questions, interpellations, and motions**³
- All MPs possess the right to submit questions to the Prime Minister or any other member of the Council of Ministers. Deputies present these questions to the Speaker of the Assembly, who subsequently informs the respective member of the Council of Ministers to whom the questions are directed. The purpose of these inquiries is to obtain information on specific issues. It is imperative that these questions be written in a clear and concise manner, addressing matters within the competence of the individuals they are directed to or concerning the administrative activities for which answers are sought.
- **Control by the permanent committees of the Parliament**⁴

The permanent committees of the Assembly have the authority to submit reports or proposals on matters falling under their competence or when specifically requested by the Assembly. Additionally, these committees possess the right to conduct inspections and request documentation to thoroughly analyze particular issues within their respective areas of responsibility.

Commission for Education and Public Media- This permanent parliamentary commission holds the authority to examine draft laws, draft decisions, and other issues presented to the Assembly within its areas of responsibility. It is mandated to conduct studies on the effectiveness of existing laws, monitor their implementation, and oversee the activities of ministries and other central bodies. Furthermore, the commission has the prerogative to propose relevant measures to the Assembly or the Council of Ministers. Additionally, it possesses the right to suggest draft laws, statements, or resolutions for

³ PART THREE, CONTROL OF THE ASSEMBLY CHAPTER I, QUESTIONS, INTERPELLENCES AND MOTIONS. REGULATIONS OF THE ASSEMBLY.

⁴ Article 102, Regulation of the Assembly of the Republic of Albania

approval in the Parliament. The commission's areas of responsibility encompass education at all levels, culture, youth, science, sports, written and visual media. Moreover, it addresses issues related to the sustainable development agenda of the United Nations and the fulfillment of commitments derived from it.

- **Reporting to the Parliament⁵**

At the commencement of each year, the President of the Assembly, in coordination with the Conference of Speakers, determines the submission calendar for reports from constitutional bodies and those established by law in the Assembly. This calendar specifies the institutions to present reports, designates the reviewing committee, and sets the legal deadline for submission. Official requests are then extended to these institutions by the Assembly, and the finalized presentation calendar is announced during the initial plenary session. It is subsequently published and distributed to the relevant institutions.

III. Methodology

In developing this working document, a variety of methods for information collection were employed to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

3.1 Analysis of existing studies

In order to build a clear picture of the problems and spaces that require intervention, ACER has contacted important actors of the media sector in Albania. For this, a list of questions was first built, and in-depth interviews were conducted. These interviews have provided important information, related to the not at all supportive media environment in Albania, also suggesting necessary interventions to improve the situation. The main findings of the in-depth interviews are found in the following sections.

3.2 In-depth interviews

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and identify areas requiring intervention, ACER engaged with key stakeholders within the media sector in Albania. Initially, a set of targeted questions was formulated, serving as the basis for in-depth interviews conducted by ACER. These interviews yielded crucial insights into the unsupportive media environment in Albania, offering valuable suggestions for necessary interventions to enhance the situation. The main findings from these in-depth interviews are outlined in the following sections.

IV. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT IN ALBANIA

The intersection of political and business interests, coupled with opaque funding sources and concentrated media ownership, alongside pervasive fear and adverse working conditions,

⁵ Article 100, Regulation of the Assembly of the Republic of Albania

continues to impede media independence, pluralism, and the quality of journalism in Albania.⁶ This challenging environment often results in restrictions on the freedom of journalism, where political and business influences cast a shadow. The lack of transparency surrounding funding sources further raises concerns about the integrity of news and independent analysis. Additionally, the prevailing climate of intimidation and unfavorable working conditions for journalists and media professionals poses significant challenges in ensuring a free and safe environment for journalism. Addressing these systematic issues requires the development of new measures and policies to promote media independence, pluralism, and the quality of journalism in Albania

According to both local and international rights protection organizations, the media landscape in Albania has witnessed a decline in recent years. This deterioration is attributed to a government that increasingly restricts journalists' access and advocates for laws not aligned with international standards of human rights and best practices.⁷ The European Commission's annual report for Albania in 2023 highlights key issues, emphasizing the intertwining of business and political interests, lack of transparency in funding sources, concentration of media ownership, and threats along with unsafe working conditions. These factors persistently hinder media independence, pluralism, and the quality of journalism. Regrettably, the atmosphere of verbal and physical attacks, smear campaigns, and intimidation lawsuits against journalists has shown no signs of improvement.⁸

The report highlights various challenges related to media freedom in the country, encompassing issues such as restrictions imposed in special cases, the imperative to strengthen access to public information, and the prevalence of political appointments to leadership positions within public institutions, alongside connections between politics, business, and media in Albania. The report emphasizes the necessity for direct and transparent media access to government institutions and their activities, ensuring factual non-partisan public information. A notable concern addressed in the report pertains to the practices of distributing pre-prepared audio, video, and text materials by institutions, public officials, and political parties, particularly in the context of elections. The report underscores the urgency to address these issues to safeguard media freedom and uphold democratic principles.⁹

The European Commission's 2023 report outlines key recommendations aimed at enhancing freedom of expression and media in the country:

- Ensuring zero tolerance for intimidation and facilitating effective prosecution in cases of attacks against journalists, with a specific emphasis on the full decriminalization of defamation.
- Addressing the high concentration in media ownership and significantly increasing transparency in media financing. This includes revising legal requirements for public advertising to align with European standards.

⁶ European Commission, 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement policy, accessible at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_690%20Albania%20report.pdf

⁸ Report Albania 2023, European Commission (SWD (2023) 690 final), page 31. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_690%20Albania%20report.pdf

⁹ Idem, page. 33

- Improving the working conditions for journalists, particularly by reinforcing the protection of employment and social rights of Albanian journalists and ensuring consistent implementation of the labor code.

Echoing a similar perspective, other international organizations, particularly focusing on media freedom, highlight the persistent challenges in Albania. According to Reporters Without Borders, in the 2023 media freedom index, Albania is ranked 96th¹⁰ out of 180 countries included in the report. Although there is a slight improvement from the previous year, this position remains the weakest among all Western Balkan countries for 2023. The report emphasizes that in Albania, editorial independence faces threats from politicized regulations, and journalists often become victims of organized crime and, at times, police violence. This situation is exacerbated by the government's failure to provide adequate protection for journalists.

Within the components of the 2023 media freedom index, the economic and political context in the country emerges as the most problematic, as per the report.¹¹ Notably, the report underscores the concentration of media ownership in the hands of only four or five companies, while public funding constitutes a significant income source for the media. However, the distribution of this funding is characterized as non-transparent and discriminatory, raising concerns about its influence on the media landscape.

The report emphasizes that journalists in Albania face political pressure, which escalated in 2021 during efforts to control information amid parliamentary elections and the Covid-19 pandemic. Editorial independence is curtailed by politicians through highly politicized media regulators, and appointments of individuals overseeing public media administration. Regarding the recent establishment of the Media and Information Agency, the report notes that the centralization of government communications may lead to further restrictions on access to state-held information.

The 2023 Freedom House report assigns Albania a score of 67 out of a possible 100, categorizing it as partially free. In the section dedicated to media freedom, the report underscores that, while the Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the interplay of influential business, political, and media interests impedes the development of independent media outlets, with many perceived as biased towards either the Socialist Party or the Democratic Party. Journalists in Albania face challenges including limited job security, low wages, and exposure to lawsuits, threats, and occasional physical attacks from individuals under media scrutiny.

The report references the Council of Europe's fact-finding mission in 2022, which warned about the deteriorating Albanian media environment, attributing it partly to the concentration of the media sector. The mission also expressed concerns regarding the independence of the country's media regulator, the Audiovisual Media Authority.

The presence of the OSCE in Albania plays a pivotal role in supporting and monitoring media freedom in the country. The OSCE actively contributes to the development of the media landscape by enhancing professional standards and ensuring a legal framework aligned with OSCE principles. The activities of the OSCE Presence in Albania are geared towards unifying Albanian media representatives under universal rules, fostering transparency, upholding the

¹⁰ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Albania, accessible at : <https://rsf.org/en/country/albania>

¹¹ Idem

right to freedom of information and opinion, and ensuring the safety of journalists, with a specific emphasis on the protection of female journalists.

Notably, in October 2023,¹² the OSCE Presence in Albania organized the 8th annual Forum on Media Development. This event centered around pressing issues such as press freedom, media development in the country, the safety of journalists, and the challenges posed by disinformation and propaganda that the media and journalists in Albania currently grapple with

The Albanian Helsinki Committee consistently publishes the National Barometer of Media Freedom in Albania, a report developed within a project supported by the British Embassy in Tirana. The most recent report, covering the situation in 2021, underscores the concerning state of media freedom and freedom of expression in the country. It reveals persistent challenges in both media freedom and the working conditions faced by media workers in Albania.

Data from the report highlight that the most influential factor contributing to the violation of media freedom in Albania is the intervention of the government or political parties, as confirmed by 83% of respondents. This underscores the ongoing challenges and underscores the need for sustained efforts to address and improve the media landscape in the country.¹³

IV. ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEGISLATION IN THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

The legal framework in the Republic of Albania addressing freedom of expression, the right to information, and the protection of personal data receives comprehensive treatment, beginning with the Constitution and extending to the specialized laws that implement its provisions.

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania¹⁴ in articles 22, 23 and 35 regulates the freedom of expression, the right to information, the protection of personal data, as well as the conditions under which they can be collected, used, and made public.

<p>Article 22</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Freedom of expression is guaranteed.2. Freedom of the press, radio and television is guaranteed.3. Prior censorship of means of communication is prohibited.4. The law may require the granting of authorization for the operation of radio or television stations. <p>Article 23</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The right to information is guaranteed.2. Everyone has the right, in accordance with the law, to receive information about the activities of state bodies, as well as persons exercising state functions.3. Anyone is given the opportunity to attend the meetings of the elected collective bodies.

¹² Organization for Security and Co-operation Europe (OSCE) Presence in Albania, Media Freedom and Development, accessible at: <https://www.osce.org/presence-in-albania/media-freedom-and-development>

¹³ Albanian Helsinki Committee, National Barometer of Media Freedom in Albania 2021, accessible at : https://ahc.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Barometri-Kombetar-per-Lirine-e-Medias-ne-Shqiperi_Tetor-2022-KShH.pdf

¹⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of Albania was approved by law no. 8417, dated 21.10.1998.

Article 35

1. No one can be forced, except when required by law, to make public data related to his person.
2. The collection, use and making public of data about the person is done with his consent, except for the cases provided by law.
3. Everyone has the right to know the data collected about him, except for the cases provided by law.
4. Anyone has the right to request the correction or deletion of false or incomplete data or collected in violation of the law.

The constitutional framework ensures both freedom of expression and the right to information. In principle, the right to information has been limited only to the protection of personal data, state secrets, and commercial secrets. Nevertheless, the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, in these provisions, is permissive with minor restrictions on the exercise of these rights.

Law¹⁵ no. 97/ 2013 "On audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania" - This law governs the operations of audiovisual media and their support services, adhering to the principle of technological neutrality. It is applicable to linear audiovisual broadcasts, non-linear audiovisual broadcasts, and their support services. It is important to note that this law does not extend to print media.

(l) Audiovisual broadcasts are conducted based on these principles:

- a) the activity of audiovisual transmissions is free.
- b) the activity of audiovisual transmissions impartially respects the right to information, political beliefs and religious beliefs, personality, dignity and other basic human rights and freedoms. This activity specifically respects the rights, interests and moral and legal requirements for the protection of minors.
- c) the activity of audiovisual transmissions is not allowed to violate the constitutional order, sovereignty, and national integrity.
- ç) the activity of audiovisual transmissions ensures objective and impartial information of the public, accurately presenting the facts and events, as well as respecting the free formation of opinion.
- d) the audiovisual broadcasting activity guarantees the right of every citizen to receive audio and/or audiovisual broadcasting services, offered to the public by operators of audiovisual services, which exercise their activity in the territory of the Republic of Albania.

Audiovisual service operators, during the development of their activity, are also guided by the following principles:

- b) guaranteeing the right to information;
- c) preserving the secrecy of information sources;
- ç) respecting and guaranteeing the right to preserve private life.
- d) not allowing broadcasts that promote intolerance among citizens;
- dh) not allowing broadcasts that incite or justify violence;

¹⁵This law is fully aligned with the directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and the Council, dated March 10, 2010 "On the coordination of certain provisions provided by law, regulations or administrative acts in the member states, related to the provision of audio broadcasting services and picture" (Audio and Picture Media Service Directive, codified version), CELEX Number: 32010L0013, Official Journal of the EU, Series L 95, dated 15. 4. 2010.

- e) guaranteeing the right of reply.
- ë) guarantee of copyright and other rights related to it.
- f) respecting good neighborliness between peoples.

To implement this law, including licensing, subject control, and handling third-party complaints, the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) has been established. AMA has also formed a Complaints Council, responsible for overseeing the implementation of the code and regulations approved by AMA. These regulations focus on upholding dignity and fundamental human rights, especially the protection of minors, the right to information, and the sensitization of public opinion regarding moral and ethical norms in the programs of audiovisual service providers.

Additionally, this law outlines the operation of Albanian Radio Television (RTSH) as a public legal entity. RTSH operates on a not-for-profit basis and is headquartered in Tirana. It is designated as an operator committed to the highest ideals of national public service broadcasting. RTSH provides quality radio and television services to inform, educate, and entertain the public, serving the entire nation and all societal groups, including national minorities. The governing bodies of RTSH include the Governing Council (KDRTSH), General Director, and the Board of Administration.

Law no. 119/2014, titled 'On the right to information,' governs the access to information produced or held by public authorities. Its primary objective is to enhance the integrity, transparency, and accountability of public authorities. Every individual holds the right to access public information without the obligation to provide reasons. The public authority is mandated to inform the requester about the availability of the requested information.

Publicly provided information cannot be denied to any other person making a request unless it contains personal data. Each public authority is required to implement a transparency program, involving the publication of information on its website deemed valuable for the public. Serving as the point of contact between the public and the public authority, the Right to Information Coordinator ensures the provision of information.

Requests for information must be in writing and can be submitted by hand, post, or email, accompanied by the requester's identity and signature. All requests are recorded in the Register of Requests and Responses. Public authorities are obligated to handle information requests promptly, providing the requested information within 10 working days from submission, unless special laws dictate otherwise.

The right to information may be restricted, if necessary, proportionate, and if its provision would harm the rights to a private life, commercial secret, copyright, or patents. The Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data serves as the independent authority responsible for examining complaints and overseeing the implementation of this law.

Law no. 9887, dated 10. 3. 2008, titled 'On the protection of personal data,' establishes the rules for protecting and legally processing personal data. The lawful processing of personal data is conducted while respecting and ensuring basic human rights and freedoms, particularly the right to preserve private life. 'Personal data' is defined as any information related to a natural person, identified or identifiable, directly, or indirectly. This includes details such as an identification number or specific factors related to their physical, physiological, mental, economic, cultural, or social identity.

Law no. 33/2022,¹⁶ titled 'On open data and the reuse of public sector information,' establishes a legal foundation to encourage the utilization of open data in the Republic of Albania, with the goal of fostering innovation in the delivery of products and services. The primary focus of this law is to define the rules and procedures governing the right to reuse open data, whether for profit or non-profit purposes, derived from documents held by public sector bodies or public enterprises in the Republic of Albania.

Law no. 10/2023, titled 'On classified information,' aims to establish fundamental principles and rules for the creation, administration, declassification, depreciation, and supervision of classified information throughout its life cycle. The objective is to safeguard classified information against loss, damage, leakage, compromise, or unauthorized exposure. This law applies to public administration institutions and economic operators requiring access to classified information during their official duties.

On the other hand, law no. 8454, dated 4.2.1999, 'FOR THE OMBUDSMAN,' defines the organizational and operational rules for the ombudsman. The ombudsman protects the rights, freedoms, and legal interests of individuals from illegal or irregular actions or inactions by public administration bodies and third parties acting on their behalf. Operating under principles of impartiality, confidentiality, professionalism, and independence, the ombudsman upholds the highest standards of human rights and freedoms in the country. This law's provisions also extend to the protection of the rights of foreigners, including regular residents, refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons within the Republic of Albania's territory, as specified by law.

Law no. 107/2021 "On Co-Governance" is an innovative legislation that did not exist previously and aims to define rules for co-governance with citizens by inclusively involving them in policy-making processes, ensuring their participation in administrative decision-making procedures, and enhancing the accountability of the state administration through the "With You for the Albania We Love" platform. This law is enforced by state administration institutions under the supervision of the Council of Ministers, as well as by public entities and local self-government units in accordance with the provisions outlined in the law itself. Under this law, citizens and interest groups have the right to lodge complaints and even request interpellation with the Prime Minister or members of the Council of Ministers. The state structures responsible for co-governance with citizens include:

- a) The Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance.
- b) State administration institutions.

¹⁶ *This law is partially aligned with directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated June 20, 2019, "On open data and the re-use of public sector information", number CELEX32019L1024, Official Journal of the European Union, series L, nr. 172, dated 26.6.2019, f. 56–83.*

V. ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK IN ALBANIA IN THE MEDIA FIELD

The institutions or state bodies charged with its implementation originate from the legal framework referred to above. In the following, we are listing the main state institutions, which exercise powers in matters of media, freedom of expression, right to information, etc.

Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) - AMA is a public, independent legal entity, headquartered in Tirana, and acts as a regulatory authority in the field of audio and audiovisual broadcasting services and other support services in the territory of the Republic of Albania. AMA has a chairman, a deputy chairman and 5 members, all of whom are elected by the Assembly for a 5-year term. The objectives of AMA's activity are: AMA, in exercising its functions, ensures:

- a) that all audiovisual services fulfill the needs of the citizens of the Republic of Albania as best as possible, respecting the language and diversity of the traditions, religious beliefs, culture and morals of the citizens.
- b) preservation and support of democratic values defined in the Constitution, especially freedom of expression and media.
- c) providing various services free of charge.

Among the main competencies of the AMA are:

- a) consideration of proposals and applications for the exercise of broadcasting services, including applications for digital broadcasting and the granting of relevant authorizations or licenses, in accordance with this law, including the services provided by RTSH.
- b) issues and withdraws licenses and/or authorizations in bulk.
- c) guaranteeing fair competition, simultaneously ensuring the further development of RTSH.
- ç) cooperation with the Commission for Consumer Protection to guarantee the protection of consumers in the field of electronic media, in the case of dishonest practices of OSHMA and the provision of services at abusive prices.
- d) drawing up strategies for the provision of broadcasting services in the Republic of Albania.
- dh) supervision of the implementation of the service contract related to the RTSH.
- e) drafting and approving the code and regulations of audiovisual broadcasting and other by-laws, pursuant to this law; ë) drawing up and approving regulations for the procedures and criteria for granting licenses and/or authorizations, according to the provisions of this law.
- f) determination of license payments.
- g) preparing and issuing instructions for the RTSH, regarding the fulfillment of its obligations.
- gj) determining the criteria and regulatory measures for the joint use of RTSH transmission infrastructure.
- h) resolving disputes between providers of audio or audiovisual broadcasting services, including disputes with the public broadcaster.
- i) cooperation with the minister for the drafting of the National Frequency Plan.
- j) cooperation and consultation with AKEP, the Competition Authority, the Copyright Office, and other bodies in fulfilling the obligations set forth in this law.

AMA reports to the Assembly, no later than March 31 of each year, on the way of fulfilling its functions and activities for the previous year, including reporting on the realization of the financial plan. The annual report must include information on the development of broadcasting towards persons with special sensory needs and especially the development achieved for the purposes defined in the broadcasting regulation. The AMA may submit reports on its own functions at the request of the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Media.

The commissioner for the right to information and the protection of personal data is the responsible authority for both the law "On the right to information" and the law "On the protection of personal data". In the framework of the first law, the Commissioner has the competence to examine the complaints of persons who claim that their rights have been violated within the framework of the law "On the right to information", while in the case of the second law, the Commissioner supervises and monitors the protection of personal data, respecting and guaranteeing basic human rights and freedoms. In article 30, point 2, of law no. 9887, dated 10. 3. 2008 "On the protection of personal data", as amended, it is provided that: "... the Commissioner, in case of serious, repeated or intentional violations of the law by a controller or processor, especially in repeated cases of non-implementation of his recommendations, acts according to Article 39 of this law and publicly denounces or reports the matter to the Assembly and the Council of Ministers."

So the Commissioner has the legal instruments of reaction and awareness of the public or higher institutions in cases of serious violations of the law on the protection of personal data

The Ombudsman is a constitutional institution that protects the rights, freedoms, and legal interests of the individual from illegal and irregular actions or inactions of public administration bodies, as well as third parties acting on its behalf. It has as its mission the prevention of possible conflicts between the public administration and the individual. The Ombudsman acts based on the complaint or request submitted to him. He also acts on his own initiative, for special cases, made public, but he must always obtain the consent of the interested party or the injured party later. In defense of the interests of a broad community, which may be affected by the administrative proceeding, the Ombudsman has the right to initiate an administrative proceeding and participate in it, in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Administrative Procedure. The Ombudsman does not directly decide on his own to grant the rights to the person who complains but makes recommendations for the replacement of the violated right to the public administration body that, according to him, caused its violation. In cases where the relevant body does not react to the recommendations of the People's Advocate, the latter can turn step-by-step to the higher bodies in the hierarchy, up to the Assembly with a report, also proposing concrete measures to put in place the violated right. Since the Ombudsman protects constitutional rights and freedoms, he has occasionally prepared reports, public reactions in defense of freedom of expression, freedom of the media and especially the community of journalists.

The Agency for Dialogue and Co-governance is a public, central legal entity under the Prime Minister and is responsible for co-governance with citizens through their inclusiveness in policymaking, for guaranteeing their participation in administrative decision-making procedures, as well as for increasing the responsibility and accountability of the administration. state. Among the competences of the Agency are:

- develops mechanisms and monitors their implementation for the inclusiveness of citizens in policymaking.
- guaranteeing their participation in administrative decision-making procedures and increasing the responsibility and accountability of the state administration.
- coordinates through special institutional mechanisms the institutions of the state administration for the development of good practices and their use throughout the state administration for the inclusiveness of every citizen in policymaking.
- guaranteeing their participation in administrative decision-making procedures and increasing the responsibility and accountability of the state administration.

- publishes and informs the public continuously about any activity to increase the role of citizens in improving the quality of public service provision, as well as the undertaking of joint initiatives, projects, or programs.
- examines requests and organizes in cooperation with the relevant institution of the state administration interpellations of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Ministers with interest groups, according to their request, on issues of public or community interest, with the exception of public meetings that are organized according to the law on public notification and consultation.

VI. FINDINGS FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

During the drafting of this study, interviews were conducted with the main state institutions related to the field of media. The complete list of contacted institutions is in annex 1 of this study. The representatives of the institutions have also been invited to an online meeting. Many of them preferred to be sent an interview with questions and would send us the answers. You have all been sent the relevant questions, some have been answered by email and some have yet to send their answers. Following are the interviews with the relevant answers.

The Office of the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, which was contacted during this process, emphasizes that the right to information and the protection of private life/personal data are two fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizen, sanctioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, specifically in Article 23 and Article 35. The institution functions as an independent public administration institution, which, since 2008 (amended in 2014), monitors and supervises the implementation of Law No. 119/2014 "On the right to information," as amended, and Law No. 9887/2008 "On the protection of personal data," as amended, as well as the by-laws issued in their implementation. The Commissioner's office is guided by the principles of transparency, responsibility, and accountability, always keeping the public interest in focus. As the institution supervising the implementation of legislation that guarantees two basic human rights and freedoms – the right to access information/documentation of a public nature and the right to the protection of personal data – the institution carries out broad cognitive and awareness-raising activities. It is worth emphasizing the fact that in recent years, with the strengthening of legal standards, there has been a positive reaction and improvement in the culture of implementing the obligations of the regulatory framework, both in the public and private spheres. This is a continuous process that has positive aspects and aspects that still need to be worked on to bring them to the right parameters.

The main reporting instrument on the activity of the Commissioner's Office is the Annual Report presented to the Assembly of the Republic of Albania, and, on the other hand, the evaluation instrument on the progress of the implementation of the legal framework and the fulfillment of the duties left by the legislator is its Resolution. However, both areas are in dynamic development, leading to the improvement of the legislation on the right to information. Soon, the adoption of a new law on the protection of personal data, fully transposing the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union (GDPR), is expected. With these acts, the national regulatory standards are significantly elevated, aligning with the most modern standards in the continental space (EU and Council of Europe).

Regarding the violation of the right to information in cases where it is exercised by journalists or the media, Law 119/2014 "On the right to information" guarantees every

citizen the right to complain if they do not receive the requested information from public authorities. Since the enforcement of this law, to the extent it can be identified, journalists or media entities have also utilized it. The complaint review process, according to Article 24 of the LDI, is harmonized with the provisions of Law No. 44/2015, the Code of Administrative Procedures. From the available data (Annual Reports for 2020, 2021, and 2022), there is an increase in the number of complaints from journalists/media entities compared to the number from citizens. The legislation on the right to information has also provided instruments such as the Transparency Program and the Register of Requests and Responses, which constitute the main sources for receiving information/documentation from anyone. Their constant updating further strengthens proactive transparency in public authorities, improves accountability, and enhances citizen/public participation in decision-making.

The main problems identified through discussions with media organizations in the country, journalists, and experts in the field, aligned with the assessments of international organizations discussed above, primarily consist of the following issues:

- Intimidation through harsh criminal laws against freedom of expression applies not only to journalists but also to citizens. Albania continues to uphold a criminal regime against defamation and insult, with punitive measures reaching up to 29 thousand euros. The OSCE-ODIHR election observation mission has reiterated the need for the repeal of these articles in the Criminal Code, suggesting that defamation and insult should be addressed only within the Civil Code. Despite numerous recommendations regarding elections and democratic standards, this advice has not been heeded by Albanian policymakers. Even the European Commission, repeatedly over the years, has made the same request, which remains unimplemented.
- Almost a monopoly situation exists in the audiovisual market. Data from the audiovisual market indicate a high level of concentration, with the two main operators controlling more than 50% of the market measured by revenue. Moreover, contrary to the principle of separating ownership from management in the media field, both companies are family businesses. Albania had, in the past, an article limiting ownership in companies with a national license to 40% for individual investors, but this was abolished by the Constitutional Court several years ago as "disproportionate to the purpose." Since then, the Albanian Assembly was expected to introduce another restriction that should be "proportional to the purpose," but there are no plans to implement it soon or in the future. Another legal issue is a controversial decision by the Competition Authority, which declared that media, as activities regulated by a separate law, are not under the jurisdiction of the CA but of the AMA. This has made it impossible to break the monopolistic situation in the television hosting market, where out of the seven licenses, two are controlled by VATS, which has set a barrier price for hosting, three are directly or indirectly controlled by a media, and two by entities unrelated to two other media. Essentially, the current legal framework is considered deficient in terms of ownership limitation and the principle of diversity of information sources.
- Non-transparent financing of the media by the government through government advertisements, primarily through extra-legal favors. This issue is linked to the explicit exclusion of government advertisements from the Public Procurement Law since 2007, allowing various institutions to advertise in specific media without transparency and competition. The European Commission, in its annual Progress Report, has consistently urged the regulation of government advertising in line with EU standards, emphasizing the need for competition and transparency. It's worth noting that the most significant government funding for the media appears to stem not only from advertising but also

from favoritism through preferential legal instruments, such as the 'Strategic Investments Law,' a problem that extends beyond the media sector.

- Third parties and platforms. This issue is connected to the continuous demands of the OSCE-ODIHR for the proper labeling of propaganda materials produced by government press offices during their broadcasts to the media, as well as the regulation of electoral financing by 'third parties.' These are interest groups or portals that, after presenting themselves to the public as independent media or youth initiatives, use political funds to disseminate party propaganda, bypassing the Electoral Code's restrictions on electoral expenses.
- **The legal absence of journalist status** places journalists in the same position as ordinary citizens in dealing with the law, unlike other professions recognized and regulated by law. Due to technological developments and the proliferation of online media, the journalism profession is encountering significant challenges, including job insecurity, working conditions, and gender equality at work. Therefore, determining the journalist's status becomes necessary, encompassing cases of freelance journalists and necessitating a revision of labor legislation in this field. However, establishing the journalist's status also confronts challenges related to the institutions responsible for determining this status, the criteria, and standards they will employ for this purpose, all without infringing or hindering freedom of expression and the media in the country.
- The political, economic, and social context in the country generally does not adequately support the development of media freedom, distorting its healthy role in society. Practical experience has shown that, in certain cases, even in the absence of traditional vertical organization starting from media ownership (as seen in online media), journalistic freedom tends to lean towards anarchy or abuse. Media freedom is also jeopardized by issues such as labor rights in the journalism profession, informality in media employment, challenges related to timely and dignified salary payments, and issues of professional, regional, or gender inequality.

On November 2, 2023, the Ombudsman marked the International Day for Ending Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists with a public statement, emphasizing the significance of a free press and the risks journalists often face in pursuit of truth. The statement underscored the need for institutions and society to be more vigilant against any form of violence that compromises the personal and professional integrity of journalists, who carry out their duties at the risk of their lives. The Ombudsman's call for continued vigilance against such acts highlights the vital importance of press freedom and the indispensable role journalists play in society. Furthermore, the day serves as an encouragement for journalists to view their profession as a mission to society, recognizing that their words, delivered with credibility and discretion, possess the power to inspire change. The statement concludes with a collective condemnation of violence against journalists and a call to work towards a society where their courage is met with respect, not retaliation.

Upon contacting representatives of the Platform for the Safety of Journalists of the Council of Europe for an interview regarding the state of the media and the rights of journalists in Albania, they directed us to their report compiled at the end of November 18, 2022. Among the key findings highlighted in their report, they noted, "Our assessment is that, in general, Albania continues to experience a deterioration of media freedom. While the legal framework remains generally adequate, no progress has been made in recent years in improving the enabling environment for independent journalism and media pluralism."

The efforts of the police in promptly investigating attacks on journalists and implementing disciplinary measures involving law enforcement officers are commendable. Additionally, the initiatives for training police officers on the role and rights of journalists are encouraging. Our organizations also welcome the increase in both the number and quality of state responses to alerts involving threats to media freedom on the Council of Europe's Platform on the Safety of Journalists.

However, despite these positive steps, there is an overwhelming perception among media representatives that the climate for free and independent reporting in Albania is deteriorating. This perception is reflected in the increasing number of media freedom alerts posted on the Platform, including attacks on journalists, discrediting rhetoric from politicians, and concerns about the restrictive climate for access to information.

The primary cause of many threats to independent journalism in Albania continues to be the control of important parts of the media environment by business interests. These media owners, many of whom also own key state-regulated industries relying on public tenders, systematically utilize their media assets to serve their own private or political agendas rather than the public interest. This concentration of media under the control of business groups has intensified in recent years, leading to direct interference in editorial independence and chronic self-censorship within the journalistic community.

In the realm of media regulation, politicized appointments to the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) raise serious questions about the independence of this body.

One of the significant challenges for daily journalistic work is the lack of transparency and access to information. Journalists frequently encounter obstacles when requesting information or comments from public authorities and officials, leading to barriers in scrutinizing those in power. The safety of journalists remains a concern, with recent cases of violence against journalists underscoring the threats media professionals face due to their work. Delays in bringing those responsible for attacks to justice perpetuate impunity. Attempts by high-profile political figures to discredit and denigrate critical journalists persist, and while prison sentences for defamation were abolished in 2012, defamation and insult remain criminal offenses punishable by fines. Self-censorship among journalists is a systemic challenge exacerbated by poor working conditions and labor rights for media professionals. Low pay and professional instability leave journalists vulnerable to pressure from media owners.

Anila Hoxha, a journalist, reiterated her findings shared at the "Southeast Europe Media Forum" organization in the "Media and Politics Albania" section (November 2023). She highlighted several challenges faced by journalists in Albania, including the lack of transparency in accessing information, security concerns, and precarious working conditions, particularly for young journalists.

VII. RISK AREAS OF CORRUPTION AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND SUPERVISORY ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENT IN THE MEDIA SECTOR IN ALBANIA

Every draft law must undergo professional analysis to determine if there is room for the risk of corruption. Even in previous studies for other areas chosen as high risk, the same analysis methodology was applied to identify potential areas for corruption, as outlined in the following scheme: a) ambiguity and b) substantial risks.

Figure 1:Categories of criteria for evaluation of corrupt areas

During the drafting period of this study, no draft laws directly or indirectly impacting media freedom, freedom of expression, or journalists' rights were submitted to the Assembly for consideration.

However, on September 21, 2023, the Parliament approved an amending law to Law No. 119/2014 "On the Right to Information." This amendment aims to bolster the legal position of the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, granting them full authority to carry out their duties independently. The Commissioner will have enhanced powers to review complaints, monitor, and supervise the implementation of this law. This change is expected to facilitate the exercise of the right to information, eliminating delays and bureaucratic obstacles, and ensuring access to information from state institutions for all interested parties.

A. Analysis of draft laws affecting media freedom

(i) Law no. 78/2023 "On some additions and changes to the law no. 119/2014 "On the right to information""

At this stage, following the approval of the law, which is a changing law and not comprehensive, it is not possible to conduct an analysis of potential areas for corruption. However, we will proceed to analyze the innovations it introduces and the unresolved issues that persist.

Novelties of the amending law:

- The law mandates the regular updating of information whenever changes occur, with the date of the last update specified. This measure aims to enhance the transparency of public bodies by providing the public with current information, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the right to information.
- A new provision titled "Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data" has been added, which was initially foreseen in the law on personal data protection. However, for legislative and organizational coherence, it was incorporated into the amending law as part of law no. 119/2014, "On the Right to Information."
- The new provisions offer more efficient solutions for accessing public information, promote responsible behavior within public administration, and consequently, reduce opportunities for corruption while bolstering public trust in government authorities.
- Both the coordinator for the right to information and the head of the public authority will be held accountable not only for explicitly assigned administrative offenses but also for other violations resulting from their actions or inactions. This expansion of responsibility encompasses not just the coordinator and authority head but also any individual whose actions contribute to the breach of law.
- Minimum fines for violating the law's provisions have been revised to ensure proportionality with the offender's salary. The aim is to prevent disproportionate fines that significantly impact public servants' economic and living conditions, emphasizing the preventive aspect of administrative penalties.
- The amended law introduces fines for non-compliance with the Commissioner's decisions to compel institutions to implement them effectively.
- To ensure effective implementation, institutions must cooperate with the Commissioner and provide annual reports by January 31 of the following year. This enables the Commissioner to prepare more accurate annual reports for the Assembly and propose improvement measures based on reliable information.
- Overall, the amending law strengthens the Commissioner's legal position and enhances compliance among state institutions and coordinators for the right to information, fostering adherence to the law "On the Right to Information."

Unsolved problems:

- If the transparency program published on an institution's website were comprehensive, citizens and other stakeholders would have access to real-time information about the key issues under consideration by that institution, reducing the need for additional information requests. However, the current programs lack the dynamic nature of the institution's activities, despite being based on the principles outlined in Article 4 of Law no. 119/2014 "On the Right to Information," which includes models approved by the

Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data (KDIMDP). Consequently, these programs often fall short of public expectations.

- To address this gap, it is suggested that institutions with similar profiles establish interest groups consulted in advance to determine their expectations for a transparency program. For instance, for comparable entities like the General Directorate of Taxes and the General Directorate of Customs, consultations could be conducted with chambers of commerce and industry to identify the information they require in the transparency program. Subsequently, based on this input, tailored models can be developed and approved for these institutions. This approach would enable stakeholders to stay informed about relevant issues in real-time, alleviating the need for frequent information requests.

ii) Recommendations¹⁷ of the Parliament for the Audiovisual Supervision Authority for the year 2023

The Parliament of Albania¹⁸ for the year 2023 has approved nine recommendations for the AMA, among them we highlight two very important ones for our study:

"1. Pursuant to the legal changes adopted regarding the transparency of media ownership, the AMA shall take all measures for Audiovisual Media Service Providers (OSMA) to make public information regarding their ownership structure, including beneficial owners, according to the provisions of the legislation in force.

4. The AMA must be more active and responsive in cases of threats and attacks against journalists, as well as in cases of threats to the media wherever they come from."

- With regard to the first recommendation, it is imperative to verify whether the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) has issued internal directives for conducting periodic inspections or assessments to ensure that the Regional Inspectorates of Environment, Technology, and Occupation (OSHMA) have made this information publicly available. Moreover, it is crucial to ascertain the measures taken by the AMA in cases where these legal obligations have not been fulfilled by the OSHMAs. This verification process should cover the entirety of the year 2023, leading to a conclusion on whether the recommendation has been effectively implemented or if it has been left to sporadic enforcement on a case-by-case basis. Building upon this recommendation, further discourse can be initiated regarding the relationship between the media, state power, and economic influence.
- One fundamental issue highlighted by civil society reactions is the clandestine ties between certain owners of audiovisual media outlets and segments of state power or influential entities in the country. These covert connections have resulted in unjust enrichment of media proprietors and distortion of information disseminated to the public. Expanding the role of the AMA through legislation to include annual audits of the assets of commercial companies licensed as OSHMA, as well as scrutiny of beneficial ownership, could shed light on the motives behind editorial policies and programs that target specific individuals or groups.

¹⁷ For the evaluation of the activity of the Audiovisual Media Authority for the year 2022, accessible at: <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/rezolute/2023/07/06/2222-8/aa7bd3d3-d091-4b2f-b441-a7c25ca61063>;

¹⁸ Assembly of the Republic of Albania, Education and Means of Public Information Committee convenes, accessible at: <https://www.parlament.al/lajme/%206c285006-9d79-41b7-85d6-e629dbb0c42f>;

- In assessing the potential responses of the AMA to defend journalists, it is essential to undertake a comprehensive evaluation using multiple approaches. This involves examining significant events throughout the year, particularly instances where journalists faced threats, blackmail, or even dismissals as punitive measures by employers. Input from affected journalists and journalist associations is crucial in gauging the efficacy of the AMA's actions in safeguarding journalistic freedom. Initial online inquiries do not indicate substantial reactions from the AMA in defense of journalists, highlighting the need for a thorough investigation into its responses.

(ii) **Recommendations¹⁹ of the Parliament for the activity of RTSH for the year 2023:**

The Assembly has approved 13 recommendations to be implemented by RTSH during the activity in 2023, among them we are highlighting some that are related to our study:

"2. To make the activity of KDRTSH transparent on the official website by publishing all the decisions taken together with the relevant relations, the minutes of the meetings and the way of voting..."

10. Informative and explanatory content carried out through conversations, interviews or professional analyzes with experts in the field for draft laws that are in the process of discussion and that are important for the citizen and the community, in the function of public consultation on legal acts.

11. In the framework of transparency, the organizational and organic structure of RTSH should be published on the official website, the created vacancies should be reflected, and the entire recruitment procedure should be transparent.

12. KDRTSH should invest in the drafting of the institution's strategic plan to ensure sustainability and vision in the direction of the public broadcaster..."

- Regarding recommendations no. 1, 11 and 12 are very useful to increase the transparency in the decision-making of the Governing Council and the General Director of RTSH, while there are frequent changes of the General Director of RTSH, which has also brought an impact on the institution, as and in the work of journalists themselves.
- Recommendation no. 12 is very positive, not only for RTSH's work in informing the public, but also in **consolidating the connection between citizens and the Parliament**. As can be seen from the RTSH KUVEND program or from the special broadcasts that appear on RTSH, there is still no broadcast to discuss or explain the draft laws under consideration, as well as the expected effects from their implementation. Perhaps such a show should be broadcast on Radio Tirana and Albanian Television.

i) Some additional findings:

From the beginning of this project, the monitoring we carried out on the online website of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania, www.parlament.al, we found that:

- In the work program of the Assembly,²⁰ for the whole year, initiatives of MPs, groups of MPs or over 20,000 voters, dating from 2021, were carried without explanation and did

¹⁹ Resolution for For the evaluation of the activity of the Albanian Radio and Television for the year 2022, accessible at: <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/rezolute/2023/07/06/2222-9/78abeaf9-f630-4d6a-a960-71d5be13dade>;

²⁰ <https://web-api.parlament.al/Files/202304181119047926Programi%20i%20punimeve%2010%20Prill%202023%20-%2019%20Maj%202023.docx%20i%20ndryshuar.pdf>;

not have an explanatory column on which phase of the parliamentary discussion they were in.

- Even now, at the end of the project in the work program of the Assembly, for the period October 16-November 24, 2023, we find the same initiatives still unreviewed, while the legal initiatives submitted by the Council of Ministers have been reviewed and approved, as such.
- We have checked both on the online site cited above and on the old site staging.parlament.al, many of the cited initiatives are not possible to open or get more information about them.
- A legislature is exercised within 4 years, and it is unacceptable that the initiatives of these subjects such as MPs or voters remain unexamined for one or two years and without any explanation as to why they remain so, without being examined. Meanwhile, among these initiatives we would single out those that have high sensitivity among people, such as:
 1. The draft law "On some changes in the law no. 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums", proposed by MP Ina Zhupa, dated 11. 5. 2022
 2. The draft law "On Referendums", proposed by MP Dashmir Shehi, dated 2.6.2022,
 3. The draft law "On some changes and additions to the law no. 10019, dated 29. 12. 2008 "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania", amended, proposed by 22,699 voters,
 4. The draft law "On setting the living minimum", proposed by 20 thousand voters, etc.
- So there is a lack of transparency about the content of these initiatives, otherwise it is done on the online website of the Assembly for the initiatives of the Council of Ministers, for which the content of the draft law, the accompanying report, the RIA, the public consultation report, as well as the phases of consideration in the commissions are posted online. , in the plenary session, etc., for initiatives from other subjects, the situation is as described above;
- The lack of transparency for these initiatives and the inexplicable delay in their review diminishes the role of the deputy or the 20,000 voters in the legislative process and discourages others from undertaking legislative initiatives aimed at solving the most pressing issues of society.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

- While legislation concerning freedom of expression, the right to information, and journalists' rights appears comprehensive, instances of non-implementation are observed, leading to infringements on these freedoms and rights.
- Journalists often face censorship imposed by media owners who maintain close and clandestine connections with governmental, economic, or criminal entities.
- The prevalence of censorship undermines public confidence in the media, fostering a sense of uncertainty regarding the reliability of information disseminated.
- Journalists' rights in terms of employment remain largely unenforced, with some journalists working without formal employment contracts. Additionally, others may be subjected to probationary contracts designed to exert pressure, or they may receive minimum wages with additional bonuses provided off the books.

Recommendations:

- The Parliament of the Republic of Albania should initiate a comprehensive review of existing legislation to enhance the status and professional development of journalists. This includes legally defining the status of journalists, promoting self-organization within the profession, and providing state support where necessary.
- Associations and unions of journalists should advocate for the rights and interests of their members, ensuring they have the necessary support and resources to carry out their work effectively.
- Complete transparency regarding the ownership structure, including beneficial owners, of audiovisual media service providers (OSHMA) is essential to maintain accountability and integrity within the media sector.
- Transparency should also extend to contracts between OSHMAs, beneficial owners, or journalists, and state institutions or public legal entities, ensuring that all transactions are conducted openly and ethically.
- State institutions and public legal entities should regularly update their online platforms with relevant information, engaging in annual consultations with stakeholders to determine the content and scope of these updates.
- The Parliament of the Republic of Albania should ensure transparency in all legal initiatives by making them publicly available and accessible for review by citizens and stakeholders.
- Legal initiatives filed in the Parliament should be reviewed and acted upon within the same year they are submitted, promoting efficiency and accountability in the legislative process.

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Annex 1: List of contacted institutions

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