



PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY: REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE

MONITORING REPORT

ACTION PLANS

COMMON REGIONAL MARKET (CRM) – REGIONAL DIGITAL AREA AND

GREEN AGENDA – DECARBOANISATION REFERENCE IN REFORM AGENDA

INSTITUTE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES (ISP)

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The project “Parliamentary Diplomacy: Regional Cooperation Through Enhanced Parliamentary Dialogue” is led by the Institute for Democracy (IDSCS) with the partners from the Western Balkan region: Institute Alternativa (IA), Institute for Political Studies (ISP), CRTA - Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability, Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI), and the Network of Progressive Initiatives (NPI). You can find more about the project at the following link: <https://idscs.org.mk/en/2023/06/23/parliamentary-diplomacy-regional-cooperation-through-enhanced-parliamentary-dialogue/>



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PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY: REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE

The project “Parliamentary Diplomacy: Regional Cooperation Through Enhanced Parliamentary Dialogue” is led by the Institute for Democracy (IDSCS) - North Macedonia with the partners from the Western Balkan region: Institute Alternativa (IA) - Montenegro, Institute for Political Studies (ISP) - Albania, CRTA - Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability - Serbia, Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI) - Kosovo, and the Network of Progressive Initiatives (NPI) - Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The overall objective of this project:

The aim of the project is to enhance multi-level regional cooperation to consolidate and maintain the dynamics of the EU integration process.

Specific Objectives:

1. Strengthening regional cooperation at the parliamentary level;
2. Enhancing local ownership and implementation of the Berlin Process Commitments;
3. Enchanting oversight role of WB Parliaments on the executive.

CONTEXT

In the Western Balkans, while parliaments are constitutionally the highest political institutions, their influence in regional

cooperation efforts has often been limited, raising concerns about democratic backsliding and the dominance of the executive branch in decision-making processes. However, initiatives such as the **Berlin Process** have highlighted the importance of parliamentary involvement, particularly in monitoring and supporting regional agreements and reform efforts.

The **Common Regional Market (CRM)** and the **Green Agenda** are key components of the Berlin Process and align with the EU integration objectives of the region. Strengthening parliamentary oversight and enhancing the involvement of national institutions in these processes is essential for ensuring the effective implementation of the **CRM Action Plan 2.0** and the **Reform Agenda**. Effective governance, improved coordination, and clear legal frameworks are crucial for aligning regional commitments with national legislative processes.

To ensure the successful implementation of these action plans, Albania must continue its progress in digital transformation and decarbonization, addressing gaps in communication between the executive and legislative branches. Key areas of focus include improving digital infrastructure, facilitating cross-border energy trade, aligning carbon pricing mechanisms with EU standards, and ensuring the gradual phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies in line with EU environmental policies.

In addition to government actions,



strengthening the role of **civil society** in monitoring implementation, advocating for transparency, and ensuring public participation is critical. Enhancing stakeholder engagement and creating inclusive policies will be important to ensure that reforms benefit all citizens and are aligned with the overarching goals of the **Berlin Process**.

Overall, Albania is making significant progress towards the goals outlined in the **CRM Action Plan 2.0** and the **Reform Agenda**, particularly in the areas of **digitalization** and **decarbonization**. However, to successfully integrate these frameworks and advance its EU accession, Albania must address challenges related to regional cooperation, financial coordination, and private sector involvement. By addressing these gaps, Albania can strengthen its position in the region and continue to move towards EU integration.

METHODOLOGY

The Methodological Approach for Comparing the Action Plan for the Common Regional Market (CRM) and the Reform Agenda in the Growth Plan (GP) for the Western Balkans provides a structured approach to compare the **CRM Action Plan** and the **Reform Agenda** for the Western Balkans, with a focus on digitalization and decarbonization.

1. Digitalization and Decarbonization:

Both frameworks address **digitalization** and **decarbonization** as key priorities. The **CRM Action Plan 2.0** focuses on regional digital infrastructure and aligning with EU standards, while the **Reform Agenda** emphasizes digital transformation for economic growth and

EU integration. In terms of **decarbonization**, both documents highlight the need for green energy policies, carbon pricing, and the transition to renewable energy, with a focus on aligning with EU environmental regulations.

2. Overlapping Activities and Implementers:

There is overlap in the activities related to digital and green transformations, particularly in the roles assigned to ministries like Energy, Transport, and Digital Transformation. While both documents share similar goals, there are some repetitive actions and a need for clearer integration between them. For example, the **Reform Agenda** includes more specific actions on e-government, which aren't fully covered in the CRM Action Plan.

3. Future Steps and Recommendations:

To improve coordination, it is important to refine the alignment between the **CRM** and **Reform Agenda** to avoid overlaps and close any policy gaps. Strengthening inter-ministerial coordination and creating joint task forces could ensure better implementation of complementary actions. Involving local stakeholders more in the process will foster regional ownership, ensuring both frameworks contribute effectively to the EU integration goals of the Western Balkans.



I. DESCRIPTION ON THE AGREEMENTS AND REFORM AGENDA, ALBANIAN CONTEXT

The Common Regional Market (CRM), endorsed at the 2020 Sofia Summit¹ under the Berlin Process, aims to enhance regional economic cooperation and align the Western Balkans (WB6) with EU standards. Its Action Plan (2021-2024)² focuses on four key areas:

1. *Regional Trade Area* – free movement of goods, services, capital, and people.
2. *Regional Investment Area* – improving investment policies and integration into EU value chains.
3. *Regional Digital Area* – advancing digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and e-commerce.
4. *Regional Industrial and Innovation Area* – fostering industrial cooperation, innovation, and SME development.

Albania has ratified key agreements under the Common Regional Market framework to facilitate regional mobility and professional recognition within the Western Balkans. *The Freedom of Movement with Identity Cards* agreement, in effect since June 1, 2023, simplifies travel by allowing citizens of the WB6 countries to cross borders using only ID cards for short stays of up to 90 days within 180 days. Similarly, the *Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications* agreement ensures that diplomas from accredited institutions in signatory countries are mutually recognized. Professional mobility has been enhanced through two additional agreements. *The Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors, Dentists, and Architects* (effective

June 1, 2023) allows certified professionals to work across the region under predefined criteria. Furthermore, in March 2024, Albania ratified the *Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Nurses, Veterinarians, Pharmacists, and Midwives* within the framework of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), further strengthening cross-border professional mobility. These agreements support regional integration by improving labor market access and facilitating the movement of professionals across WB6 countries.

These objectives align also with the Reform Agenda under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, which emphasizes economic convergence with the EU by promoting: Industrial modernization and digital transformation; Stronger cooperation in innovation policies; Sustainable economic growth through regional synergies.

To maximize benefits, Albania must ensure greater parliamentary involvement, stakeholder consultation, and awareness-raising efforts to support the country's integration into the EU-aligned regional market. The Albanian government has to inform the parliament immediately on the reform agenda.

SHORT DESCRIPTION ON THE AGREEMENTS

1. ***Freedom of Movement with Identity Cards***

The agreement “*On Freedom of Movement with Identity Cards*” has been approved by the decision of the government nr. 55, date 1.2.2023 and entered into force on June

1 <https://www.rcc.int/pages/143/common-regional-market> (last consulted on August 17th 2023)

2 <https://www.rcc.int/docs/543/common-regional-market-action-plan> (last consulted on August 17th 2023)

1st 2023, based on the law nr. 43/2016, “*On international agreements in the Republic of Albania*” article 19.

This agreement provides facilitation for travel conditions & good relations by simplifying the administrative procedure for entry, transit and short stay using only ID cards within the Western Balkans Countries and ensures equal treatment of all citizens in the whole region. The Freedom of Movement with ID cards, according to this agreement means that, Citizens can travel using only ID Cards in the border controls and they can stay in a different country in the WB6 for a short stay. A short stay, as provided in the agreement, means a period of 90 over 180 days. This agreement is valid only for the citizens that holds an ID card from the Western Balkans Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia). The Ministry of Interior³ is responsible for the implementation of this agreement.

2. Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

The Agreement “*On Higher Education Qualifications*” has been approved by the decision of the government nr. 55, date 1.2.2023 and entered into force on June 1st 2023, based on the law 43/2016, “*On international agreements in the Republic of Albania*” article 19. This Agreement provides that obtained diplomas from mutually recognized high education institutions are valid in all Western Balkan Countries that have ratified this agreement. The Ministry of

Education and Sports⁴ is responsible for the implementation of this agreement.

3. Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctor of Medicine, Dentists and Architects

The Agreement “*On Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctor of Medicine, Dentists and Architects*” has been approved by the decision of the government Nr. 35, date 27.1.2023 and entered into force on June 1st 2023, based on the law 43/2016, “*On international agreements in the Republic of Albania*” article 19. This Agreement provides that professionals as listed in the articles and fulfilling the criteria as in the three annexes of the agreement itself can exercise their professions in the receiving country that have ratified the agreement. The Ministry of Education and Sports⁵ is responsible for the implementation of this agreement.

4. Recognition of The Professional Qualifications of Nurses, Veterinarians, Pharmacists and Midwives

On March 2024, the EAC approved the draft law “*On Ratification of The Agreement on The Recognition of The Professional Qualifications of Nurses, Veterinarians, Pharmacists and Midwives in The Context of The Central European Free Trade Agreement*” and the agreement is approved by the Parliament by the law 24/2024, on 21.03.2024. The law has been published in the official gazette on 11.04.2024, meaning that it entered into force 15 days later is publication⁶.

3 <https://cdinstitute.eu/2023/07/03/state-of-affairs-of-3-crm-mobility-agreements-3ma/> (last consulted on August 17th 2023)

4 <https://cdinstitute.eu/2023/07/03/state-of-affairs-of-3-crm-mobility-agreements-3ma/> (last consulted on August 17th 2023)

5 <https://cdinstitute.eu/2023/07/03/state-of-affairs-of-3-crm-mobility-agreements-3ma/> (last consulted on August 17th 2023)

6 <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2024/03/21/24/4d5860d7-d40e-4aea-866f-b0fdee5fe129>



SHORT DESCRIPTION ON THE REFORM AGENDA

Albania's Reform Agenda is a strategic initiative aligned with the European Union's Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, aiming to accelerate the country's socio-economic development and integration into the EU. Approved by the European Commission in October 2024, this agenda outlines key reforms for the 2024-2027 period, focusing on enhancing economic integration, strengthening governance, and closing the socio-economic gap between Albania and EU member states⁷. Central to this agenda is the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) for 2024-2026, which delineates macroeconomic and fiscal policies designed to foster sustainable economic growth, increase employment, and ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances⁸. Additionally, Albania's commitment to the EU's Growth Plan is evident through its participation in the Reform and Growth Facility, a €6 billion financial instrument adopted for 2024-2027, aimed at supporting the implementation of reforms that will accelerate economic convergence with the EU⁹.

Collectively, these initiatives underscore Albania's dedication to advancing its reform agenda, strengthening institutional frameworks, and fostering economic growth in line with EU standards.

II. INVOLVEMENT OF ALBANIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN BERLIN PROCESS

Regarding the involvement of the Parliaments in the Berlin Process and following the Conference in North Macedonia, on “*Enhancing Berlin Process through Parliamentary Diplomacy*”, the Parliament of the Republic of Albania, specifically, the European Affairs, considered important a follow-up on the implementation of the three agreements approved and ratified by the Albanian Government as mentioned above. In this regard, the Committee on European Affairs decided to have a hearing session for each of the agreements and their state of play of the implementation.

The competent organs for their Implementation are respectively: Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education and Sports. As mentioned above, the Government has a constitutional obligation to inform the Parliament (*Albanian Constitution, art. 121, paragraph 3*) and it has not happened officially.

Following the conference, the Committee hold a first hearing session with the Ministry of Education and Sports on October 3rd, 2023. The object of the hearing sessions was “*on implementation level of the agreement “On Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctor of Medicine, Dentists and Architects¹⁰” in the Western Balkans*” as far as the Ministry of Education is also responsible

⁷ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-approves-reform-agendas-albania-kosovo-montenegro-north-macedonia-and-serbia-paving-way-2024-10-23_en

⁸ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-approves-reform-agendas-albania-kosovo-montenegro-north-macedonia-and-serbia-paving-way-2024-10-23_en

⁹ <https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Economic-Reform-Programme-2024-2026-2.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://web-api.parlament.al/Files/202310171540232232Procesverbal,%20dat%C3%AB%2003.10.2023.pdf>



for the agreement on higher education qualifications. On October 4th, the Committee on European Affairs held also another hearing session with the minister of Interior, with object “on implementation level of the agreement *“On the freedom of movement with identity cards”*”¹¹. During these hearing sessions noticed that with the entry into force of the agreement, the number of the persons travelling in between the six countries has increased. For both hearing session, with the ministry of interior and the ministry of education and sports, the Committee on European Affairs has requested to send further information regarding the further steps on the concrete results of the benefits deriving from the cooperation in the fields covered by the agreements.

The Committee on European Affairs, considering the importance of the Berlin Process, has already organized a conference “On the Role of the Parliament in the Berlin process”. The aim of the conference was to encourage the participating country in the Berlin process to involve also the Parliament as far as the parliamentarians are representatives of the citizens and they have to be informed on the decision making, either through laws approved or by holding the government accountable for the policies, as far as the government reports in the parliament upon the decisions taken.

The Albanian Parliament furthermore has continued on monitoring the progress of the Berlin Process in two different directions. The Albanian Parliament, according to the law 15/20215 has to different organs that relates to the EU integration issues: the

Parliamentary Committee on European Affairs (EAC) and the National Council on European Integration (NCEI). Members of the Parliament compose the first one and members of the parliament and different independent institution compose the latest. ***In this view, the Berlin process has a holistic oversight: by the decision makers and by independent institutions that contributes to the European Integration process.***

The NCEI held on 10 July 2024 the meeting on the topic: “*Progress of reforms within the Berlin Process*”. The Minister of the Interior reported on the fulfilment of commitments and agreements signed within the Berlin Process. He informed the NCEI’s members on the regional cooperation and last year’s agreement regarding the integrated management of borders, the management of the migration challenge, the fight against organized crime and the work to prevent human trafficking.

The EAC, during the reporting period and following the decision of the government to send the regional agreements, upon request of the Parliament, has continuously focused the oversight role upon the implementation of the agreements and the progress made in the Berlin Process engagements. In this regard, in June 2024, the EAC has hold a hearing session¹² on engagement taken in the Berlin Process framework, together with European integration process and the measures taken following the findings of the screening process. The Minister of State and Chief Negotiator has reported on the Berlin process. ***The Parliament and specifically the EAC, according to the MPs, has not been informed***

11 <https://web-api.parliament.al/Files/202310171541506252Procesverbal,%20dat%C3%AB%2004.10.%202023.pdf>

12 <https://kuvendiwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/202406251540399827Procesverbal%2C%20dat%C3%AB%2004.06.2024.pdf>



on the commitment of the Government in the Berlin Process, including a legislative agenda or an economic agenda, following the action plan. The chair of the committee has raised the issue of the ownership of the process criticizing the Government for exclusives of the management of the Berlin process without informing the parliament.

On July 2024 the EAC held two different hearing session with the Governor of the Bank of Albania, and the Minister of Finance on SEPA membership of Albania. The Governor of the Bank of Albania declared that the SEPA¹³ agreement has the origin in the Berlin Process and it is one of the concrete steps of this process. In the hearing session with the Minister of Finance, the EAC raised the issue of further needs for the approximation of the legislation to cope with the obligations deriving from the SEPA and the readiness of the Bank to uphold and adapt to the new requirements needed.

In November 2024, the EAC held a meeting with the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs on progress made in the negotiation process. In that hearing session the minister declared that *“Undoubtedly some of the most important objectives of our foreign policy for the year 2025 will include the advancement of the European integration process and the **preparation of the country for membership until 2030**, strengthening our commitment to reforming institutions and of processes, active **participation in regional initiatives (Berlin Process, Growth Plan, as well as other EU programs)**, to ensure the gradual integration of the region into the European Union¹⁴”*

During the monitoring period of the EAC activity on the Berlin Process, the EAC has held also meetings in closed doors on the Negotiations positions for the accession in the European Union. Considering that in the law 15/2015 the negotiations are covered by confidentiality; it has not been possible to know the content of the discussion. However, **considering the importance the EAC has given to the Berlin process, it might be considered that Berlin process has been on the discussion at least on Cluster VI.** The EAC has, in total organized four meetings on negotiations position.

During the hearing session at the EAC it has also been mentioned that **the Government has also approved the National Agenda on the reforms based on Reform Agenda of the EU.** This document has been approved by decision of the Council of Ministers nr. 621, date 10.10.2024. The document has been consulted with the civil society through the website of the Government, but on those issues, **the document has not been consulted with the parliament and nor informed on the content. The Albanian government has to inform the parliament immediately on the reform agenda.**

At the end of February 2024, the EAC organized the XXI COSAP meeting, inviting also other countries as guests, such as Kosovo, Türkiye, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. On the proposed and adopted agenda, the main focus was the cooperation of the Balkan Countries six on the European Integration process and had as the basis of discussion the functional approach of the

¹³ <https://kuvendiwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/202410011451346159Procesverbal%2C%20dat%C3%AB%2017.07.2024.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://kuvendiwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/202502181552096484Procesverbal%2C%20dat%C3%AB%2011.11.2024.pdf>



Berlin Process

In this regard it has to be considered that EAC has reach the goal to bring the role of Parliament into the Berlin process as a concrete initiative.

III. THE COMMON REGIONAL MARKET PRIORITIES: REGIONAL DIGITAL AREA AND GREEN AGENDA

Digitalization in Albania

Digitalization is a key pillar in Albania's efforts to enhance economic competitiveness and regional integration within the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2.0 and the Reform Agenda (RA) - Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. *These initiatives recognize the transformative potential of digital infrastructure in fostering economic growth, governance efficiency, and connectivity with the EU digital economy.*

One of the primary focuses of both frameworks is broadband expansion, ensuring widespread internet access and strengthening Albania's digital infrastructure. While the CRM targets regional broadband harmonization, the RA focuses on national-level broadband deployment. The implementation of 5G technology is another shared priority, with CRM advocating for a coordinated regional 5G rollout, while the RA ensures country-specific 5G policies align with EU standards. Additionally, cybersecurity and data protection play a crucial role, with CRM emphasizing regional cybersecurity cooperation through ENISA, and the RA ensuring Albania aligns its cybersecurity framework with EU regulations. Furthermore, both frameworks promote

digital education and AI, with CRM fostering regional cooperation on digital skills and AI integration, while RA advances national-level AI policy development.

Another key area of alignment is e-governance services, with CRM advocating for cross-border interoperability of public services, while RA focuses on enhancing national e-governance platforms. Overall, digitalization efforts in Albania under CRM and RA demonstrate strong alignment but require further harmonization to ensure seamless regional integration.

Decarbonization in Albania

Decarbonization is a core objective for Albania's transition toward a climate-neutral economy by 2050, aligning with the EU Green Agenda and the Reform Agenda's climate and energy policies. A key focus is the expansion of renewable energy, with CRM emphasizing cross-border electricity market integration and RA prioritizing national renewable energy investments. Albania, largely dependent on hydropower, is now diversifying into solar and wind energy to ensure energy security.

Energy efficiency is another shared priority, with CRM supporting harmonized regional energy efficiency standards, while RA focuses on domestic renovation projects for energy-efficient buildings. Furthermore, CRM's push for carbon pricing and emissions reduction integrates Western Balkans into the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), whereas RA seeks to implement Albania's national carbon pricing mechanisms.

In the transport sector, sustainable mobility is emphasized, with CRM focusing on regional green transport corridors, while RA prioritizes local infrastructure development, such as EV charging stations and rail modernization. Additionally, climate adaptation strategies



are being incorporated into both frameworks, with CRM fostering region-wide resilience plans, and RA ensuring Albania's national adaptation measures align with EU policies. Overall, while both CRM and RA support Albania's decarbonization, increased funding coordination and stronger public-private partnerships are needed to fully leverage the opportunities presented by these frameworks.

IV. OVERLAPPING ACTIVITIES/RESPONSIBLE IMPLEMENTORS

The Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2.0 and the Reform Agenda share several overlapping priorities, particularly in the areas of **digital transformation and decarbonization**. Both frameworks recognize the need for enhanced **connectivity, cybersecurity, renewable energy adoption, and sustainable mobility**, reflecting Albania's commitment to aligning with EU standards. However, while CRM emphasizes regional market integration and cross-border cooperation, the Reform Agenda is more focused on national-level regulatory frameworks and implementation.

One of the key challenges in aligning these two frameworks is ensuring adequate financial mechanisms and implementation monitoring to avoid policy duplication and inefficiencies. Although many initiatives are aligned, such as broadband expansion, AI development, and carbon pricing, gaps remain in areas like smart city infrastructure and integrated funding strategies. Addressing these gaps will require stronger coordination

among national and regional stakeholders, as well as increased engagement from the private sector.

KEY OVERLAPS AND GAPS

Overlapping Activities

The most prominent areas of overlap include broadband deployment, cybersecurity, AI promotion, renewable energy transition, and green transport infrastructure. These activities are central to both CRM and RA, ensuring Albania's gradual alignment with EU policies.

Gaps Identified: CRM places a stronger emphasis on regional market connectivity, whereas RA focuses on national policy and regulatory alignment with the EU.

Missing Elements: A significant gap lies in financial coordination mechanisms, where both frameworks lack a structured funding approach to support infrastructure projects effectively.

Responsible Implementors

Regional Level: RCC, Energy Community, European Commission, ENISA, GEANT.

National Level: Ministries of Energy and Infrastructure, Economy, Finance

Private Sector & Civil Society: Telecom operators, AI & digital training providers, environmental NGOs, renewable energy investors.

V. FUTURE STEPS: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensuring Albania's successful transition in both digitalization and decarbonization



requires a strategic approach that balances regional cooperation with national policy priorities. The Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2.0 provides a framework for regional digital and green integration, while the Reform Agenda focuses on national-level implementation. However, despite strong alignment in objectives, gaps remain in financing mechanisms, infrastructure coordination, and policy harmonization.

To bridge these gaps, Albania must strengthen its financial coordination, cross-border cooperation, and private sector engagement. Additionally, effective monitoring mechanisms are needed to ensure that the implementation of CRM and the Reform Agenda avoids inefficiencies and duplication. By improving policy synchronization and fostering a collaborative approach, Albania can leverage both frameworks to accelerate EU integration and economic modernization.

POLICY GAPS & COMPLEMENTARITIES

While both the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2.0 and the Reform Agenda share a common vision for Albania's digital and green transition, their implementation structures present notable gaps and complementarities. CRM emphasizes regional market integration, aiming to harmonize standards across the Western Balkans, whereas the Reform Agenda is structured to align national policies with EU regulations. The challenge lies in ensuring that Albania leverages both frameworks effectively without duplicating efforts or creating policy inconsistencies.

One of the most pressing gaps is regional coordination in broadband deployment and cybersecurity, where fragmented

national policies risk delaying Albania's digital integration. While the CRM promotes cross-border digital connectivity, the Reform Agenda is more focused on national digital governance. Similarly, both frameworks stress digital skills development, but there is no unified regional approach to align training programs with labor market needs.

In the energy sector, Albania's commitments to climate neutrality and renewable energy expansion align with both frameworks. However, the harmonization of carbon pricing mechanisms remains a challenge. CRM calls for the integration of Albania into the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), while the Reform Agenda focuses on developing domestic carbon pricing mechanisms, leading to potential inconsistencies in implementation.

The transport sector also presents significant gaps. While CRM pushes for regional green transport corridors, the Reform Agenda prioritizes national infrastructure improvements such as EV charging stations and rail modernization. Without enhanced coordination, Albania risks misalignment in transport policies that could hinder cross-border mobility and logistics efficiency.

To address these challenges, Albania must adopt a dual-track approach that ensures regional commitments under CRM are seamlessly integrated with national reforms under the Reform Agenda. Stronger public-private partnerships, synchronized financial mechanisms, and coordinated implementation strategies are critical to maximizing the impact of both frameworks.

Gap: Regional coordination on broadband and cybersecurity still requires improvement to prevent fragmentation.

Overlap: Both CRM and RA prioritize digital



skills development, but they lack a unified regional digital education framework.

Complementarity: While CRM fosters regional energy and transport cooperation, RA's national-level climate targets align closely with EU environmental goals.

Challenge: The lack of harmonization in green transport policies between CRM and RA could slow down the transition to sustainable mobility.

Achieving seamless coordination between the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2.0 and the Reform Agenda requires a well-structured approach that ensures regional alignment while addressing Albania's national policy needs. While both frameworks share objectives such as digital infrastructure development, energy transition, and cybersecurity, discrepancies in their implementation strategies pose challenges for effective execution. CRM primarily focuses on regional cooperation, whereas the Reform Agenda emphasizes national compliance with EU regulations.

A significant challenge lies in financial coordination—there is a need for synchronized investment strategies that leverage both regional funding mechanisms and national budget allocations. Additionally, monitoring and reporting mechanisms must be strengthened to track progress and prevent inefficiencies caused by duplicated efforts. Another key aspect is public-private collaboration, which remains underutilized in Albania's reform efforts. Engaging businesses and civil society can accelerate progress in both digital and energy sectors while ensuring practical and sustainable policy implementation.

To overcome these obstacles, Albania must pursue policy harmonization, enhanced financial coordination, and a structured

monitoring framework that aligns CRM and the Reform Agenda. Strengthening regional cooperation while ensuring national-level adaptability will be essential in achieving long-term success.

Recommendations for Improved Coordination

1. Develop a joint digital infrastructure roadmap to align broadband deployment, 5G rollout, and cybersecurity measures at both regional and national levels.
2. Enhance collaboration between Albania's cybersecurity authorities and regional initiatives to strengthen cyber resilience.
3. Improve financial coordination mechanisms to secure funding for renewable energy and decarbonization projects.
4. Facilitate cross-border energy trade agreements to ensure Albania benefits from regional electricity market integration.
5. Expand public-private partnerships to accelerate smart transport and alternative fuel infrastructure.
6. Establish a unified monitoring framework to track CRM and RA implementation progress, ensuring synergies between national and regional policies.
7. Assure a continuation between CRM and RA at the policy and financial level to overcome the overlapping between the two documents.
8. Clarify the funding of the RA vis a vis to CRM.

Assessing regional ownership and EU Integration support

The successful implementation of both the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2.0 and the Reform Agenda is highly dependent on the level of regional ownership



and Albania's commitment to EU integration. While CRM fosters cross-border cooperation and market harmonization, the Reform Agenda aligns national policies with EU acquis. The challenge lies in ensuring that Albania actively participates in regional initiatives while simultaneously advancing domestic reforms that comply with EU accession requirements.

One of the critical aspects of regional ownership is institutional coordination between Albania and its Western Balkan counterparts. While Albania has made progress in aligning policies with CRM objectives, further efforts are needed to strengthen governmental capacities, regional dialogue mechanisms, and implementation tracking. Additionally, EU integration support remains essential, particularly in technical assistance, financial aid, and policy guidance to bridge remaining gaps.

A well-structured approach that balances regional cooperation with national reforms will enhance Albania's ability to leverage both frameworks effectively. Strengthening multi-level governance, ensuring sustainable financing, and fostering private sector involvement will be crucial in solidifying Albania's role in regional development and advancing toward EU membership.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

To ensure the effective implementation of both the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2.0 and the Reform Agenda, it is essential to take targeted actions at different governance levels. The successful integration of these frameworks requires improved financial coordination, stronger institutional mechanisms, and greater involvement of stakeholders from public institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

For the **Government**, this means developing clearer legal frameworks to ensure that regional commitments under CRM align with national legislative processes. Additionally, Albania must focus on enhancing digital infrastructure through strategic investments and better coordination between ministries responsible for digital transformation, energy policies, and transport reforms. The government should also work to facilitate cross-border energy trade, align carbon pricing mechanisms with EU standards, and ensure the gradual phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies in line with EU environmental policies.

For **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**, their role should be strengthened in monitoring policy implementation, advocating for transparency, and ensuring public participation in reform processes. CSOs can contribute by conducting independent assessments of Albania's progress in CRM and the Reform Agenda, raising public awareness about the importance of digital inclusion, and advocating for better environmental governance in the transition towards green energy.

For the **Parliament** and **MPs**, their role is



crucial in passing the necessary legislation to support Albania's integration into EU-aligned regional frameworks. MPs should work to ensure that all proposed policies are backed by strong legal foundations, promote legislative oversight of reform implementation, and facilitate stakeholder consultations to create more inclusive policies. Additionally, Parliament should foster dialogue between national institutions and regional bodies to streamline cooperation in digitalization and energy transition efforts.

Overall, Albania is making significant strides in digitalization and decarbonization, with strong alignment between CRM Action Plan 2.0 and the Reform Agenda. However, improved regional cooperation, funding coordination, and private sector engagement will be critical in ensuring successful EU integration. By addressing these gaps and ensuring better policy harmonization, Albania can solidify its position as a key regional player while advancing its EU accession goals.



MONITORING REPORTS

PRIORITY 1: COMMON REGIONAL MARKET AND REFORM AGENDA					
Common Regional Market – Regional Digital Area– Reform Agenda -Action Plan					
Activity in CRM AP 2.0	Dead- line	Progress (policies, activities)	Activity in Reform Agenda Action Plan	Deadline in Reform Agenda	
		- Instructions: provide the latest updates from your previous monitoring reports or if something has changed provide that info here			
1	Provide fixed broadband internet access for most households	2024	National Broadband Plan adopted; investments from EU, EBRD, and national budget; fiber optic expansion ongoing in rural areas; law on Electronic Communications updated	Support the development of broadband infrastructure and digital access	2026
2	Establish Broadband Competence Offices (BCOs)	2021	BCO established under Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy; ongoing training programs for regional offices; regulatory framework being strengthened	Strengthening BCOs to support broadband rollout	2026
3	Interconnection of academic and research networks in WB6 with GEANT	2022	Albania’s universities connected to regional GEANT network; bandwidth upgrades planned in 2025 under EU funding	establish a clear and transparent relationship between national qualification levels and the relevant European QF levels	2026
4	Develop 5G roadmap and ensure implementation	2023	5G strategy approved; spectrum auction completed; first 5G pilot networks launched in Tirana and Durrës; regulatory framework aligned with EU rules	fortify Albania’s digital framework by ensuring secure and sustainable digital infrastructures	2030
5	Reduce roaming charges intra-WB6 and EU-WB	2023	WB-EU Roaming Agreement enforced; 2026 target set for further cost reductions; National Authority for Electronic Communications and Postal Services (AKEP) monitoring implementation	Facilitate affordable digital access for businesses	2030
6	Complete the final phase of the Regional Roaming Agreement	2021	Agreement finalized; monitoring system in place; cost analysis of user benefits conducted		2023
7	Finalise the Roadmap for lowering the roaming charges between EU and WB	2023	Policy document approved; regional operators negotiating next phase of reductions	Ensure seamless regional connectivity	2030



REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE

	Develop Digital Skills Strategies	2022-2023	National digital skills strategy adopted; integration into secondary and higher education; vocational training programs launched; EU-funded digital reskilling projects in progress	establish a dynamic educational system that equips students with the relevant skills and digital competence	On going
9	Establish a repository of digital training programs and MOOCs	2022	Digital education platform developed under AKSHI (National Agency for Information Society); EU funding secured for content expansion	advancement of digital skills and literacy for young people	On going
10	Develop Digital Education Action Plans for disadvantaged groups	2022	Roma and rural youth targeted in National Digital Education Policy; funding allocated for equipment and training	Reform Agenda objectives aim to establish a dynamic educational system that equips students with the relevant skills and digital competence needed	On going
11	Organise regular high-level meetings, including Digital Summit	Annually	Albania hosted 2023 Digital Summit; policy discussions ongoing on AI, cybersecurity, and e-governance; next summit scheduled for 2024	In the RA for Albania there is no mention of the AI, however the Albanian Government is committed to the implementation of AI tools	Ongoing
12	Align standards for metadata for open data	2023	Law on Open Data being revised; interoperability framework developed with EU support; open data portal updated	establishment of open data platform on national and local budget and public spending	2026
13	Reach agreement on regional interoperability of toll services	2024	Feasibility study completed; policy discussions with neighboring WB6 countries underway	Ensure integration of toll services	2030
14	Agree on smart city principles and standards	2023	Smart City Action Plan developed; Tirana and Durres implementing pilot projects with EU funding		
15	Promote AI applications regionally	2024	AI policy framework approved; focus on ethical AI use and innovation hubs; pilot AI research projects funded by Ministry of Digitalization	Develop AI regulatory frameworks	2030
16	Strengthen cybersecurity capacities in WB	2021-2024	Cybersecurity Law updated; National Cybersecurity Center established; partnership with ENISA for capacity building	Albania is fully in line EU policy on cybersecurity	2030
17	Undertake regional activities to facilitate participation of WB in EU HPC	2024	Discussions on integrating WB research institutions into EU HPC networks; Albania mapping its research needs		
18	Undertake regional activities to improve digital economy statistics	2023	National Statistical Institute collaborating with EU experts on harmonizing digital economy metrics	Albania's 2024-2026 Economic Reform Programme, developing the digital economy	2026
19	Regional cooperation in digital transformation, particularly e-government	2024	Albania participating in regional digital governance projects; interoperability framework under development	Albania's 2024-2026 Economic Reform Programme includes strengthening e-governance,	2026



PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY



20	Agree on minimum technical standards and specifications for data exchange	2024	National interoperability standards in finalization stage; pilot projects in government institutions	Ensure data compatibility across WB6	2030
21	Align regional actions to ensure personal data protection and privacy	2024	Albania aligning data protection laws with EU GDPR; Data Protection Authority conducting compliance assessments	Strengthen data security policies	2030
22	Develop mentoring programs for WB CSIRTs	2023	Albanian CSIRT cooperating with EU cybersecurity agencies; mentorship framework in early phase	Build cybersecurity response capacity	2026
23	Enhance cyberspace resilience through private sector involvement	2024	Public-private cybersecurity partnerships under development; industry roundtables on cyber resilience	Strengthen business sector cybersecurity	2030



REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE

Green Agenda – Decarbonisation– Reform Agenda Action Plan					
Action	Deadline	Progress (policies, activities)	Activities in Reform Agenda Action Plan	Deadlines	
1	Align with the EU Climate Law with a vision of achieving climate neutrality by 2050	2025	Draft Climate Law under consultation; National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) in progress	Albania's targets and measures for the use of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and decarbonisation up to 2030	2030
2	Set forward-looking 2030 energy and climate targets	2025	Policy alignment with EU Fit-for-55; Albania reviewing interim targets	it is aimed to reduce final energy consumption by 9.4% (cf. 8.4%), to increase the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 59.4% (cf. 54.) 4%, while GHG emissions reduction target remains at 18.7%.	2030
3	Develop and implement integrated Energy and Climate Plans	2022	NECP submitted to Energy Community; awaiting further EU alignment	Albania's Reform Agenda is fully compatible with the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, notably regarding climate action, including decarbonisation, energy and mobility, as well as its strong focus on digitalisation	2026
4	Prepare and implement climate adaptation strategies	2028	National Adaptation Plan in drafting phase; pilot projects in coastal and agricultural regions	Develop adaptation plans for key sectors	2026
5	Align with the EU Emissions Trading System and/or introduce other carbon pricing instruments	2024	National Carbon Pricing Policy under review; feasibility study completed; stakeholder consultations ongoing	It is also aligned with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, in particular the focus on diversification of renewable energy, and the emission trading scheme	2030
6	Increase opportunities for the deployment of nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change	2025	Pilot reforestation and wetland restoration projects launched	The Approval of Law no.2/2023 "on fluorinated greenhouse gases" will also contribute to reducing emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and making Albania climate-neutral by 2050.	2026
7	Ensure participation of WB economies in the European Climate Pact or consider the development of a similar mechanism	2025	Albania engaging in regional discussions; planning national awareness campaigns	Albania is fully aligned with EU acquis and EU policies on Climate	2026

8	Review and revise, where necessary, all relevant legislation to support progressive decarbonisation of the energy sector	Ongoing	Legislative review underway; alignment with EU Energy Directives in progress	Harmonize energy policies with EU Green Deal	2030
9	Prepare an assessment of the socio-economic impact of decarbonisation at the individual economy and regional level	2025	Initial impact study conducted; further research needed	Develop mitigation strategies for economic transitions	2030
10	Prioritize energy efficiency and improve it in all sectors	Ongoing	New energy efficiency regulations adopted; incentives for industries under review	Promote sectoral energy-saving initiatives	2030
11	Transposition and full enforcement of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive	2025	National implementation framework under development	Improve energy efficiency in building standards	2030
12	Support private and public buildings renovation schemes and secure appropriate financing	Ongoing	EU-backed financial instruments being developed; municipal grant programs launched	Expand renovation programs for energy efficiency	On going
13	Increase the share of renewable energy sources and provide the necessary investment conditions	Ongoing	Solar and wind auctions conducted; regulatory incentives for private investment improved	Incentivize solar and wind projects with regulatory reforms	Ongoing
14	Decrease and gradually phase out coal subsidies, strictly respecting state aid rules	Ongoing	Albania does not use coal but is phasing out oil-based power generation subsidies	Gradual reduction of non-renewable energy support	2030
15	Ensure participation in the Coal Regions in Transition initiative for the Western Balkans	2025	Policy discussions ongoing despite Albania's non-coal status	Engage in just transition strategies	2026
16	Develop programs for addressing energy poverty and financing schemes for household renovation and providing basic standards of living	2025	Subsidy mechanisms for low-income households under review	Establish long-term social energy programs	2026



REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE

17	Support the development of smart transport infrastructure, promote fostering of innovative technologies	2026	EV charging infrastructure expansion; smart traffic solutions piloted	The main challenge will be their implementation to improve efficiency and reduce final energy consumption in buildings, in industry, services and other activities of central government and local units with the focus on water supply systems, wastewater treatment, public lighting, public transport, etc., through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting missing bylaws, • Implementation of new adopted bylaws, • Additional policies and measures are required to support these objectives, • Investments in capacity-building, • Awareness activities on EE through labelling of energy related products, informative champagne etc., • Financial support. 	2027
18	Implement the Regional Action Plan for Rail Reforms	2025	Rail connectivity improvements planned; EU funding discussions ongoing	Modernize rail transport infrastructure	2030
19	Define rail freight and inland waterway transport corridors	2026	Feasibility studies launched; Albania working on regulatory adjustments	Improve logistics efficiency via sustainable corridors	2027
20	Define an overall strategy to shift traffic from road to more environmentally friendly modes	2027	National transport strategy revised; incentives for public transport expansion introduced	Promote multimodal transport solutions	2028
21	Identify the EU technical standards and ensure their implementation and digitalization of all transport modes	2024	Digital freight tracking systems being tested; policy adjustments in progress	Standardize transport sector regulations with EU standards	2025
22	Implement the Regional Transport Facilitation Action Plan	2023	Cross-border agreements signed; regulatory alignment ongoing	Streamline regional transport policies	2030
23	Implement the Regional Road Safety Action Plan	2025	National road safety law passed; EU-funded capacity-building projects in place	Improve road safety monitoring and enforcement	2026
24	Implement the Road Action Plan	2026	Highway sustainability assessments underway; resilience planning included	Develop sustainable road transport solutions	2027



25	Develop and implement climate resilience plans for Western Balkan economies' transport networks	2025	Flood risk mapping for major highways and rail networks ongoing	Strengthen climate resilience in infrastructure planning	2026
26	Promote preparation and implementation of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans for urban areas in the Western Balkans	2025	Tirana and Durrës implementing smart mobility solutions; EU technical assistance secured	Expand sustainable urban transport initiatives	2026
27	Define a plan for deployment and building of charging stations for electric vehicles	2024	National EV charging station master plan finalized; first phase of installations underway	Expand EV infrastructure and incentives	2026
28	Increase regional cooperation in the area of alternative fuels infrastructure development	2026	Joint feasibility studies with WB6 partners; discussions on cross-border fuel corridors ongoing	Develop harmonized fuel infrastructure investments	2027