

Money Laundering linked to organized crime as a priority in the EU Integration of Albania: The Role of the Albanian Parliament _____

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the pivotal role of the Albanian Parliament in addressing money laundering linked to organized crime, positioning it as a critical priority in Albania's European Union (EU) integration process. It aims to examine how parliamentary functions, particularly legislative, oversight and accountability, contribute to meeting the EU accession criteria with regard to the fights against money laundering of criminal activities. The paper employs qualitative research methods, relying on the collection and analysis of official documents from international institutions, academic literature, policy briefs, legal resolutions, and national legislative instruments. Findings suggest that while notable steps have been taken, including the adoption of relevant laws in line with international standards and approximation with the EU acquis in the field of money laundering, it is important to ensure consistent engagement of the Albanian Parliament in advancing the progress towards meeting EU accession criteria. The paper is limited by the availability of analyses exploring the chosen topic and the challenge of elucidating it in a limited number of words. Nonetheless, it offers valuable insight into the strengthened role of the Albanian Parliament to influence and oversight EU accession path.

Keywords: money laundering, organized crime, EU integration, international standards, Parliament, EU acquis

Introduction

Money laundering, *often described as cash being placed in the financial system, or cash being converted into assets* (GOPAC, 2012), emerged in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1980s and rapidly spread Western countries during the 1990s and subsequently expanded globally (Levi, 2013). As mentioned in the recordings of the US President's Commission on Organized Crime (1984), *"this criminal activity has long been a vital feature of the organized criminal groups' activities"*. Similarly, Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) argue that the phenomenon of money laundering is closely linked *inter alia* to organized crime, with the one leading to the other being thus in a vicious circle. Overall, money laundering is one of the sophisticated methods resorted by organized crime to conceal the source of their ill-gotten wealth (Transparency International EU). It relies on mechanisms "shell companies, shell entities, channelling money into valuable properties, or transferring assets to offshore or low-tax jurisdictions (Transparency International EU). These practices not only pose serious threats to the financial system and the economic stability, but also undermine rule of law. While the precise extent of money laundering is difficult to measure, it is generally recognized as a major global issue. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that each year, approximately 2% to 5% of the world's GDP is involved in money laundering (Europol).

Money laundering is an evolving challenge worldwide. Setting international standards and fostering global cooperation to address money laundering became evident because of its transnational nature, criminal organizations' influence and the evolving money laundering techniques (Mcdowell, J., Novis, G., 2001; Pavlidis, G., 2023). Apart from the international legal instruments approved by international organizations, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) holds the position of the primary global body to design anti-money laundering standards (Cassani, U., Villard, K.A., in Pavlidis, G., 2023), which are recognized by more than 200 jurisdictions (FATF Recommendations, 2025). Criticism on the ineffectiveness of the modern framework on AML exist (Pol, R., 2020). Relying on other literature debates (Halliday et al., 2014; Levi et al., 2018), Pol (2020) questions whether the FATF model "forces" governments to take a "tick on the box" approach to regulatory compliance or whether it contributes to properly measuring the outcomes of such regulatory compliance. The work of the FATF may have unintended negative impact due to AML measures themselves of failure of implementation (Pavlidis, G., 2023). Nevertheless, the FATF standards have demonstrated significant value as a complementary framework within the broader architecture of anti-money laundering regimes.

International community and states have approved comprehensive legal framework to fight money laundering and are continually adapting legislation that responds to the evolving practices exploited by criminal exponents. In this view, the first attempts to design the money laundering as a criminal offence on an international level appeared in 1988, with the approval of the United Nations (UN) Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance (Vienna Convention). However, it extended only to drug trafficking. In 1990, the Council of Europe (CoE) adopted the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime which criminalized money laundering as an autonomous offence. This time nonetheless, money laundering extended not only to drug trafficking, but to all serious crimes and criminal groups involved in organized crime (Vervaele, 2013). Since then, several international treaties and European Union (EU) legislation have addressed money laundering as a predicate offense.

Addressing money laundering on national level requires a multi-dimensional approach, involving several institutions. As stated in the *“Anti-Money Laundering Action Guide for Parliamentarians”* (2012), a successful and robust AML regime requires the political commitment of a Parliament and a national government to adopt appropriate legislation; grant suitable powers; provide necessary resources to the responsible agencies and prosecute cases and deliver convictions (GOPAC, 2012). The World Bank Group stands on a similar position, identifying three primary objectives of a AML legal framework in a given jurisdiction.

The first pertains to deterring money launders using the financial system of a country; the second is to detect and report such illicit activities and the third objective calls for the prosecution and punishment of the authors. (World Bank Group, 2022). Prevention and the fight against money laundering poses significant importance as it mitigates the risks of misusing the financial system by criminals. However, it is particularly critical to identify the source of money laundering threats to which a specific country is exposed to in order to implement an effective anti-money laundering legal (as well as institutional) framework (World Bank Group, 2022).

Money laundering remains a critical challenge in Albania, particularly due to its connection with organized criminal networks. As outlined by the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime ([SPAK], 2024), money laundering is one of the key criminal activities of organized crime, especially of those operating in the area of narcotics and part of international criminal networks operating in Albania, Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium and Great Britain. These criminal organizations, mostly involved in drug trafficking (SPAK, 2024), rely on money laundering to legitimize their illicit profits and integrate them into the legal economy. Criminal organizations use various schemes to launder their illicit money. SPAK (2024) identifies the following schemes exploited by organized crime to laundering money:

Firstly, illicit funds are “placed” into the economic system, by using cash or payments via cryptocurrencies – techniques exploited to avoid financial authorities’ controls. Illicit funds are then funnelled into circulation through seemingly legitimate transactions carried out by private companies, either already established or created in cooperation with criminal groups to conceal the underlying criminal activity.

Secondly, the process continues with the “layering” of illicit funds. Criminal groups conduct numerous bank transactions between corporate and personal accounts, making it increasingly difficult to trace the origin of the money. Moreover, shell companies created to mask the criminal activity often issue fictitious invoices to legitimize transactions that, in reality, never take place.

The third stage involves the so-called “integration” of illicit funds, typically carried out through investments in real estate. These properties are often subjected to repeated purchases, resales, or loan agreements, creating a chain of fictitious transactions that serve to legitimize the illicit proceeds. Illicit funds are also invested in high-value assets such as vehicles, jewellery, cryptocurrencies, and other forms of movable property.

Money laundering is considered to having a steady growth in Albania, showing also an increase of organized crime activity. (SPAK, 2024) Statistics indicate a significant rise in proceedings related to money laundering of criminal acts or activities. In 2024, the number of registered cases for this offense at SPAK increased by 34% compared to 2023, and has tripled in comparison to 2022.

TABLE 1: Statistics on the registered proceedings for money laundering 2021 - 2024

Article 287 of the Criminal Code	Year			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Registered proceedings for the “Laundering the proceeds of a criminal offence or of criminal activity”	15	20	35	47

Source: SPAK, 2024

Albania has nonetheless made significant progress in addressing money laundering linked to criminal activity, including organized crime (MONEYVAL reports, Progress Reports 2023 – 2024, Screening Report 2024). In the context of Albania’s EU accession process, the Albanian Parliament holds primary responsibility for adopting and aligning national laws with EU anti-money laundering directives and international standards, including those set by the Financial FATF. With the adoption of law no. 15/2025 “On the role of the Parliament in the integration process of Albania to the European Union”, the Parliament is more than ever vested with broader powers to influence, oversight and monitor the process of EU integration of Albania (Gjeta, A., Krasniqi, A.,

2022). By prioritizing anti-money laundering reforms, the Albanian Parliament not only strengthens the country's internal security and rule of law but also fulfills a core requirement of the EU membership process. Its proactive engagement signals Albania's commitment to meeting EU standards, building public trust, and reducing the risks posed by criminal infiltration into economic and political structures.

Methodology

This research paper adopts a qualitative and descriptive methodology to explore the role of the Parliament of Albania in the fight against money laundering linked to organized crime within the broader context of the EU integration process. The methodology is based on a review of legal analysis, combining both international and national frameworks, and guided by a thematic approach focusing on legislative alignment, institutional oversight, and compliance with EU accession benchmarks.

The paper focuses on the definition of money laundering according to international instruments, the legislative role of the Albanian Parliament in aligning the national legal framework with EU *acquis* and international standards, particularly those of the FATF and Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism's (MONEYVAL), as well as the response of the Albanian Parliament to findings and recommendations from EU Progress Reports, Screening Reports, and Common Position documents.

The methodology relies on primary sources, including adopted legislation, EU official documents, MONEYVAL reports, and parliamentary records; secondary literature, such as academic commentary, policy papers and explanatory reports accompanying draft laws, as well as institutional reports, including yearly reports, the National Plan for European Integration 2024–2026 and the Rule of Law Roadmap.

The paper is based solely on document analysis and does not include interviews or empirical field research. Its findings are limited to institutional roles and legal developments, and do not encompass a broader evaluation of implementation outcomes or operational effectiveness of AML mechanisms in practice.

The international definition of money laundering

Money laundering is broadly defined by international organizations such as the UN, the CoE and the EU, as the process of concealing the illicit origin of proceeds generated through criminal activity. It typically involves placing, layering, and

integrating illegally obtained funds into the legitimate financial system to make them appear lawful. While the exact formulations may differ, these organizations converge on the idea that money laundering facilitates the use and enjoyment of illicit profits by disguising their true source.

United Nations

The first efforts to provide a definition of money laundering on an international dimension appeared in the article 3.1 (b) of the 1988 UN Vienna Convention as *“the conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is derived from any offence [...], for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of assisting any person who is involved in the commission of such an offence or offences to evade the legal consequences of his actions”*. Money laundering was criminalized for the very first time as a criminal offence in a mandatory international treaty.

In addition, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 (UN Palermo Convention), which entered into force in 2003, follows a similar approach describing money laundering as: *“i) the conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is the proceeds of crime, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of helping any person who is involved in the commission of the predicate offence to evade the legal consequences of his or her action; ii) the concealment or disguise of the true nature, source, location, disposition, movement or ownership of or rights with respect to property, knowing that such property is the proceeds of crime; iii) the acquisition, possession or use of property, knowing, at the time of receipt, that such property is the proceeds of crime; iii) participation in, association with or conspiracy to commit, attempts to commit and aiding, abetting, facilitating and counselling the commission of any of the offences established in accordance with this article”*. The UN Palermo Convention contains also several provisions addressing the fight against money laundering and confiscation of proceed of crime (article 7, 12 and 14).

Furthermore, in 2003, the UN approved the Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) to complement the UN Palermo Convention. In view of the UNCAC legal regime to prevent and criminalize prevalent corruptive practices, money laundering was also introduced as a criminal offence. A similar definition to subparagraph (i) and (ii) mentioned above of the UN Palermo Convention was provided in article 23 of the UNCAC. Articles 14, 24 contain legal measures to combating money laundering, complemented by article 312 and Chapter V which contain provisions regarding the confiscation of proceeds of crime.

Council of Europe

The CoE has played a critical and long-standing role in the fight against money laundering, recognizing it as a key mechanism through which organized criminal groups consolidate and expand their operations. As the oldest Pan-European organization committed to upholding human rights, the rule of law, and democratic governance, the CoE has developed comprehensive legal instruments and monitoring mechanisms aimed at disrupting the financial structures that sustain organized crime. Through its conventions, expert bodies, and technical assistance programs, the Council has significantly contributed to shaping robust anti-money laundering frameworks across its member states, promoting international cooperation and legal harmonization in addressing one of the most pressing threats to European and global security.

In 1990, the CoE approved the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime which was updated in 2005 with the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (Warsaw Convention). Article 9 provides for a definition of money laundering, following the definitions outlined in the previous international instruments of the UN, CoE and EU. Accordingly, the following acts constitute a laundering offence when committed intentionally: “(a) the conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is proceeds, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of assisting any person who is involved in the commission of the predicate offence to evade the legal consequences of his actions; (b) the concealment or disguise of the true nature, source, location, disposition, movement, rights with respect to, or ownership of, property, knowing that such property is proceeds; and, subject to its constitutional principles and the basic concepts of its legal system; (c) the acquisition, possession or use of property, knowing, at the time of receipt, that such property was proceeds; (d) participation in, association or conspiracy to commit, attempts to commit and aiding, abetting, facilitating and counselling the commission of any of the offences established in accordance with this article”.

European Union

Over 30 years, the EU has constantly revised and strengthened its legislative framework in response to the evolving threats posed by money laundering and the financing of terrorism. These ongoing revisions aim to adapt the legal and regulatory systems to emerging risks, new criminal typologies, and technological developments that criminals increasingly exploit.

The first efforts to preventing and combating money laundering in the EU level appeared in 1991, with the adoption of the Council of the European Communities of 10 June 1991 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering – no longer in force. Money laundering was defined as the following conduct when committed intentionally: *“the conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is derived from criminal activity or from an act of participation in such activity, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of assisting any person who is involved in the commission of such activity to evade the legal consequences of his action; the concealment or disguise of the true nature, source, location, disposition, movement, rights with respect to, or ownership of property, knowing that such property is derived from criminal activity or from an act of participation in such activity; the acquisition, possession or use of property, knowing, at the time of receipt, that such property was derived from criminal activity or from an act of participation in such activity; participation in, association to commit, attempts to commit and aiding, abetting, facilitating and counselling the commission of any of the actions mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs”*.

However, the scope of the 1991 Directive was quite narrow as it applied only to financial institutions and focused on money laundering (laundering of proceeds) from drug trafficking. Since then, the EU has developed major reform in the area of AML (in 2001, 2005, 2015/2018).

Currently, Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Directive 2006/70/EC, (the 4th AML Directive), as amended by Directive 2018/843 (the 5th AML Directive), constitutes the keystone at the EU level to preventing the use of EU financial system for money laundering purposes. According to article 1 (3), the definition of money laundering is set as follows: *“(a) the conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is derived from criminal activity or from an act of participation in such activity, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of assisting any person who is involved in the commission of such an activity to evade the legal consequences of that person’s action; (b) the concealment or disguise of the true nature, source, location, disposition, movement, rights with respect to, or ownership of, property, knowing that such property is derived from criminal activity or from an act of participation in such an activity; (c) the acquisition, possession or use of property, knowing, at the time of receipt, that such property was derived from criminal activity or from an act of participation in such an activity; (d) participation in, association to commit, attempts to commit and aiding, abetting, facilitating and counselling the*

commission of any of the actions referred to in points (a), (b) and (c)”. In order for the above mentioned acts to fall within the money laundering concept, the author of the criminal offence should have knowledge, intent or purpose to carry out the activities (commit the actions intentionally).

The 4th AML Directive was designed to reinforce the EU’s system for combating money laundering and terrorist financing, and reflects the FATF anti-money laundering standards. It aimed at (i) a stronger focus on identifying ultimate beneficial owners and customer due diligence; (ii) broader classification of politically exposed persons (PEPs), covering domestic officials as well; (iii) lower threshold for cash transactions set at €10,000; (iv) inclusion of all types of gambling services, not just casinos; (v) A more robust risk-based approach requiring evidence-based measures. The 5th AML Directive introduced significant amendments to: (i) Increase transparency by creating national registers that are open to the public and show who truly owns companies, trusts, and similar legal entities; (ii) strengthen the role of EU Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) by giving them wider access to information needed to perform their investigations effectively; (iii) reduce anonymity in cryptocurrency transactions and lower the limit for prepaid cards to €150 (with a stricter €50 limit for online use); (iv) expand the criteria used to identify high-risk third countries and introduce stronger checks on financial transactions involving these countries; (v) establish central systems in each Member State to access and track bank account information; (vi) enhance cooperation and information-sharing among anti-money laundering authorities, prudential supervisors, and the European Central Bank to ensure better oversight and enforcement (LSEG Risk Intelligence).

As stated in the EC’s *“Impact assessment accompanying the anti-money laundering package”* of 2021, several high-profile money laundering scandals have emerged in the EU, exposing billions of euros laundered through financial institutions and involvement of professionals such as auditors, tax advisors and trust and company service providers. These alleged cases revealed structural shortcomings in the EU’s existing AML legal system, with evidence pointing to fragmented and inconsistent implementation of AML rules across Member States. A 2019 Commission report *“Towards better implementation of the EU’s anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism framework”* confirmed that these issues could not be resolved by the revised AML Directive. Both the European Parliament and the Council recognized the need for stronger EU-level action. In response, in 2020, the European Commission (EC) adopted an *“Action Plan for a comprehensive Union policy on preventing money laundering and terrorism financing”*, to strengthen shortcomings and divergences in the existing regulatory framework. Particularly, the Action Plan outlined six key priorities as well as measures required to be undertaken by the EC to enforce the EU’s preventive rules on combating money laundering:

- (1) ensuring the effective implementation of the existing EU AML/CFT framework,
- (2) establishing an EU single rule book on AML/CFT,
- (3) bringing about EU level AML/CFT supervision,
- (4) establishing a support and cooperation mechanism for FIUs,
- (5) enforcing Union-level criminal law provisions and information exchange,
- (6) strengthening the international dimension of the EU AML/CFT framework.

Following the adoption of the Action Plan, in 2021 the EC adopted an AML legislative package consisting of four proposals¹, including (EU Commission, 2021):

- (1) the creation of a new EU AML Authority to strengthen the AML supervision within the Union. Considering the reliance on the national implementation of AML rules, weaknesses pertaining to the efficient and effective functioning of the EU AML framework were disclosed. Therefore, it was necessary to establish a single EU authority for anti-money laundering and countering terrorism financing which would be responsible for the implementation of harmonized AML/CFT measures across the EU, would strengthen the existing AML/CFT framework, especially AML/CFT supervision and coordination among FIUs. Consequently, Regulation (EU) 2024/1620 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2024 establishing the Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism and amending Regulations (EU) 1093/2010, (EU) 1094/2010 and (EU) 1095/2010 was approved.
- (2) a new regulation on AML/CFT containing directly applicable rules, including in the area of customer due diligence and beneficial ownership. The regulation includes also a limit of 10.000 Euro to large cash payments. The new EU Regulation 2024/1624 was adopted on 31 May 2024. However, it will apply from 10 July 2027, except for article 3 (3) (n) and (o) which will apply from 10 July 2029.
- (3) a new (6th) AML/CFT Directive, which will replace the existing 4th AML Directive, as amended by the 5th AML Directive. The new Directive aims at further strengthening the preventive AML/CFT framework, reflecting on the issues identified from the application of the 4th AML Directive, as amended with 5th Directive. (EU Commission, 2021). The 6th AML Directive (EU) 2024/1640 was also adopted on 31 May 2024. The 4th AML

¹ Read also European Commission. (2021). Impact assessment accompanying the Anti-money laundering package SWD (2021) 190 final. Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0190>

Directive, as amended with 5th AML Directive will be repealed with effect from 10 July 2027.

- (4) revision of 2015/847/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on information accompanying transfers of funds and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1781/2006”. This Regulation was repealed in 2023 by Regulation (EU) 2023/1113 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on information accompanying transfers of funds and certain crypto-assets and amending Directive (EU) 2015/849.

Prior to the approval of the new Regulation, only certain categories of crypto-asset services were covered by the AML/CFT rules. Accordingly, the new Regulation extends the scope of application to the entire crypto sector, obliging all service providers to conduct customer due diligence. Thus, new rules ensure traceability of virtual assets transfers, prevention and detection of their potential use for money laundering.

Additionally, the EU has adopted Directive (EU) 2018/1673 on combating money laundering by criminal law, which contributes to strengthening the EU’s legal framework by ensuring that serious money laundering offenses are uniformly criminalized across all Member States. The directive translates FATF recommendations and the Warsaw Convention into binding EU law. The following conducts falls within the definition of money laundering according to the EU Directive 2018/1673: *“(a) the conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is derived from criminal activity, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of assisting any person who is involved in the commission of such an activity to evade the legal consequences of that person’s action; (b) the concealment or disguise of the true nature, source, location, disposition, movement, rights with respect to, or ownership of, property, knowing that such property is derived from criminal activity; (c) the acquisition, possession or use of property, knowing at the time of receipt, that such property was derived from criminal activity”*. According to article 3, money laundering shall be considered an offence, if committed intentionally or where the offender suspected or was supposed to have knowledge on the criminal origin of the property.

The national legal framework addressing money laundering linked to criminal activity

The Albanian legislation reflects both domestic priorities and international obligations, incorporating standards set by the FATF, the EU, and the CoE. Albania has acceded to important international instruments (which are integrated into the national legal system) in the area of money laundering, including:

- (1) The UN Vienna Convention, which was ratified by the Republic of Albania with law no. 8722, dated 26.12.2000 “On accession of the Republic of Albania to the Convention of the United Nations against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances”.
- (2) The Palermo Convention, which constitutes the core international instrument to combating transnational organized crime, was ratified by the Republic of Albania with law no. 8920, dated 11.7.2002 “On the ratification of the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime” and two additional protocols”.
- (3) The Warsaw Convention was ratified by the Republic of Albania with law no. 9646, dated 27.11.2006, “On the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism”.
- (4) The UNCAC was ratified by the Republic of Albania with law no. 9492, dated 13.3.2006 “On the ratification of the United Nation Convention against Corruption”.

Over the years, Albania has developed a dual legal framework to combat money laundering: a criminal legal framework, which provides for the prosecution and punishment of offenders under the Criminal Code, and a preventive (administrative) legal framework, which imposes obligations on financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses and professions to detect and report suspicious activity.

Money laundering has been criminalized since 1995 under the section “Criminal offences against order and public security” of the Criminal Code and since then, the provision has been amended several times (in 2003, 2004, 2007, 2012, 2013). Article 287 (1) of the Criminal Code provides a broad and detailed definition of money laundering, covering actions such as concealment, *acquisition*, possession, use, conversion, transfer, and structuring to avoid reporting. More precisely, article 287 (1) defines money laundering originating from a criminal offence or activity as follows: “a) *the conversion or transfer of property, with the intent to conceal or disguise the unlawful origin of such property, knowing that it is the product of a criminal offense or criminal activity*; b) *the concealment or disguise of the true nature, source, location, disposition, movement, ownership, or rights related to the property, knowing that it is the product of a criminal offense or criminal activity*; c) *the acquisition, possession, or use of the property, knowing at the moment of receipt that it is the product of a criminal offense or criminal activity*; ç) *the carrying out of financial operations or fragmented transactions to avoid reporting, in accordance with the legislation on the prevention of money laundering*; d) *the investment in economic or financial activities of money or items, knowing that they are the proceeds of a criminal offense or criminal activity*; dh) *advising,*

assisting, encouraging, or publicly calling for the commission of any of the acts listed above; is punishable by imprisonment from five to ten years”.² The definition of money laundering evidently reflects upon and complies with the international instruments.

In addition, the Criminal Code criminalizes two other offences involving the “opening of anonymous accounts” (article 287/a) and “the appropriation of money or goods derived from criminal offenses or activity” (article 287/b), which serve the criminal activity of money laundering. Article 36 of the Criminal Code provides for a complementary measure, which covers the confiscation of means of committing a criminal offence and of criminal proceeds. Accordingly, the court is required to mandate the confiscation of: objects that were used or intended to be used in carrying out the criminal act; any benefits or assets gained from the offense, including all forms of property and related documentation that prove ownership or interest, whether obtained directly or indirectly through the crime; any compensation or promises made in exchange for committing the offense; other property that holds the same value as the criminal proceeds; items whose creation, use, possession, or distribution constitutes a criminal offense, regardless of whether a conviction has been issued³.

If the proceeds of the criminal offense have been partially or fully transformed into other properties, the latter shall be subject to confiscation. If proceeds of criminal offence shall be merged with legitimate properties, the latter shall be confiscated up to the value of the proceeds of the criminal offence. Confiscation also applies to income or other benefits from the products of the criminal offense, from the properties into which the products of the criminal offense have been transformed or converted, or from the properties with which these products have

² Also: “*If the offense is committed in the course of a professional activity, in collaboration, or more than once, it is punishable by imprisonment from seven to fifteen years. If the offense causes serious consequences, it is punishable by no less than fifteen years of imprisonment. The provisions of this article shall apply even if: a) the criminal offense, from which the proceeds were derived, was committed by a person who cannot be prosecuted or convicted; b) the prosecution for the predicate offense has been statute-barred or amnestied; c) the person who commits the laundering is the same person who committed the predicate offense; ç) no criminal proceedings have ever been initiated, or no final criminal conviction has been issued, for the predicate offense; d) the predicate offense was committed by a person, regardless of their nationality, outside the territory of the Republic of Albania, and is punishable both in the foreign country and in Albania*”.

³ Article 36 of the Criminal Code reads as follows: “the court shall order the confiscation of : “a) *Items that have been used or designated as tools for committing the criminal offense; b) The products of the criminal offense, including any type of property, as well as the documents or legal instruments that prove titles or other interests in the property that directly or indirectly result from or are acquired through the commission of the criminal offense; c) Rewards, given or promised, for the commission of the criminal offense; ç) Any other property, the value of which corresponds to that of the products of the criminal offense; d) Items, the production, use, possession, or transfer of which constitute a criminal offense, even when no conviction has been rendered*”.

been merged, to the same extent and in the same manner as the products of the criminal offense (Article 36, Criminal Code).

However, the fight against money laundering cannot rely solely on the criminalization of the offence. An effective and sustainable response requires a comprehensive, holistic approach that incorporates a robust preventive legal framework. This includes the establishment of clear reporting obligations for financial institutions, effective supervision and enforcement mechanisms, transparency of beneficial ownership, and coordinated efforts between public institutions and private sector actors. Following the recommendations of international organizations, the Parliament of Albania has adopted a broad legislation aiming at preventing money laundering. The primary legislation to prevent money laundering, also in the context of organized crime, includes: law no. 9917, dated 19.05.2008 “On the prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism”, as amended⁴ (law no. 9917/2008) and law no 10192, dated 3.12.2009 “*On the prevention and fight against organized crime and trafficking through preventive measures against property*”, as amended (commonly known as the “Anti-mafia law”). Additional laws of utmost importance for the fight against illicit financial circulations include: law no. 157, dated 10.10.2013 “*On measures against terrorism financing*”, as amended; law no. 34/2019 “*On the administration of seized and confiscated assets*”, as amended; law no. 72/2019 “*On international austerity measures in the Republic of Albania*”, law no. 112/2020 “*On the register of beneficial owners*”, as amended; law no. 154/2020 “*On the central register of bank accounts*”, law no. 9662, dated 18.12.2006, “On Banks in the Republic of Albania”, as amended; law no. 9572, dated 3.7.2006, “On the Financial Supervisory Authority”, as amended; law no. 66/2020, “On financial markets based on distributed ledger technology”, etc.

Law no 9917/2008 focuses on two aspects. First, the preventive one, through setting requirements for reporting entities to identify the customer. Therefore, reporting entities such as banks, notaries, lawyers, real estate agencies, casinos and other entities (article 3), are required to identify and verify their customers especially in transactions considered of high risk (article 4, 4/1, 4/2). Also, reporting entities are required to report suspicious transaction to the Financial Intelligence Agency (article 12). Additional checks are required for politically exposed persons (PEPs), non-residents or complex legal structures (article 7 - 8). Law no 9917/2008 has also a punitive aspect as it requires the application of administrative sanctions (provided that no criminal offence occurs) for non-compliance of reporting entities with the law’s requirements (article 27).

⁴ The law was amended for the first time after its approval in 2011 to address the recommendations in framework of the 3rd horizontal review of MONEYVAL’s evaluation rounds. The full report can be found in the link: <https://rm.coe.int/horizontal-review-of-MONEYVAL-s-third-round-of-mutual-evaluation-repor/168071511d>.

The Anti-mafia law aims to prevent and target assets derived from criminal activity, without necessarily requiring a criminal conviction. It allows for the seizure or confiscation of assets belonging to individuals suspected of involvement in organized crime, drug trafficking, corruption, etc., even without a final criminal conviction (articles 1-2, 5). These measures are applied through a civil proceeding at the request of prosecutors of general jurisdiction or SPAK (article 11, 21). The decision on the request is delivered by either the district courts or the Court against Corruption and Organized Crime, based on the criminal offence committed and the subject matter competence as set out in article 75/a of the Criminal Procedure Code (article 7). If assets do not correspond to legitimate incomes and there is suspicion that they originate from criminal activities, they can be confiscated (article 11). The Anti-mafia law applies not only to individuals under investigation or convicted, but also to persons closely connected to them, such as family members or collaborators (article 3 (2)).

In particular, SPAK has prioritized the fight against the laundering of criminal proceeds by combining criminal investigations with parallel financial investigations. The strategy to target the proceeds of crime is based on three main pillars: Confiscation of criminal proceeds, Confiscation of equivalent value, and Preventive seizure and confiscation measures under the Anti-mafia law. This approach has yielded significant results as in 2024, the total amount of seized and confiscated assets is estimated at €65.5 million, of which €28.7 million (43.8%) represent seized assets, and €36.7 million (56.2%) represent confiscated assets (SPAK, 2024). These values represent a significant increase at around 59.7% of the total amount of seized and confiscated assets compared to 2023 (approx. €41 million in 2023).

The government of Albania has, on the other side, undertaken a high level political engagement not only to align with the FATF/MONEYVAL standards, but enforce the efficiency of the preventive system of money laundering. In this view, in 2023, the Committee for the Coordination of the Fight Against Money Laundering⁵ agreed on drafting the National Strategy on the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing 2024 – 2030 (NSPMLTF 2024 – 2030) and its Action Plan 2024 - 2027, which takes into consideration recommendations of international organizations and the needs of institutions and other involved entities. It also considers its alignment with other strategic documents adopted by the Government (such as the National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2020 – 2030; National Strategy against Organized Crime and Serious Crimes 2023 – 2025; Document of Priority Policies 2024 – 2026; etc). The National Strategy 2024 – 2030 addresses strategic objectives aiming at strengthening the efforts of national authorities to prevent money laundering and at modernizing

⁵ The Committee for the Coordination of the Fight Against Money Laundering operates as a policy-making mechanism on issues of preventing money laundering and terrorist financing.

the mechanisms to fight money laundering (NSPMLTF 2024 - 2030). These objectives include: improvement of regulatory framework and strengthening of inter-institutional coordination; improvement of preventive system's effectiveness; improvement of operational efficiency of law enforcement entities and other agencies in the fight against money laundering; use of technological innovations to reduce risks. (NSPMLTF 2024 – 2030). It must be noted that the EU Commission welcomed the drafting of the Nation Strategy for the prevention of money laundering 2024 – 2030, while it urges to start its implementation by 2025 (Progress Report, 2024).

The Role of the Albanian Parliament in meeting the EU criteria in the field of money laundering

The Parliament of Albania, as the highest representative and legislative power, plays a crucial role in the EU integration process, guaranteeing the democratic legitimacy and the legal and political oversight of the process. Although the EU accession process is primarily a responsibility of the government (EU Policy Hub, 2019), the Parliament is vested with the power to monitor the Government and other national institutions, oversight the implementation of reforms aimed at meeting the accession criteria and lastly, it will ratify the accession treaty of Albania to the EU. The role of the Albanian Parliament in the integration process was strengthened with the adoption of law no. 15/2025 “On the role of the Parliament in the integration process of Albania to the European Union”, as amended. The National Council of European Integration (NCEI), which operates within the Parliament, was established for the very first time (article 5 of the law). NCEI brings together all political fractions, public institutions and civil society to monitor the EU integration process (article 7 of the law). The law further enforces the oversighting role of the permanently parliamentary Committee on EU matters, which is responsible for all EU matters, approximation of national legislation with the EU *acquis*, monitoring the implementation of negotiations criteria and other obligations as part of negotiation framework and SAA, analysing and providing recommendations on the negotiating positions of Albania (article 10 of the law). The competences and responsibilities of the Parliament's internal structures regarding the EU integration process are detailed in article 11 of the law. All in all, it is responsible to monitor and check the Government and other responsible institutions regarding the implementation of obligations in respect of EU accession process, approximation of the national legislation with the EU *acquis*; analyses reports/positions of the EU and Albania and provides recommendations accordingly, etc. In this framework, the Internal Rules of the Albanian Parliament provide comprehensive details regarding the parliamentary oversight of the EU integration process (Chapter IV).

Albania's membership aspirations with the EU have placed a significant emphasis on reforming its legal, political, and economic landscape to meet EU criteria. The fight against money laundering is an essential part of this process, as the EU requires candidate countries to demonstrate that they are combating organized crime, corruption, and financial crimes effectively. The Albanian Parliament plays a crucial role in the fight against money laundering, particularly in the context of organized crime, as part of the country's broader efforts to align with EU standards under the integration process. The obligation to align the national legislation with the EU legislation and standards stems from article 70 of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) signed in 2006 between Albania and the EU (entered into force in 2009), according to which Albania shall gradually approximate the national legislation with the EU *acquis*. Cooperation between Parties of the SAA is also required in order to prevent the exploitation of financial systems for money laundering purposes by criminal activities (Article 82 of the SAA). This is particularly essential as the EU's commitment to a unified internal market includes addressing financial crimes that could undermine the integrity of the financial system. Albania's implementation of EU anti-money laundering regulations is therefore critical to avoid financial instability that could arise from illicit financial activities.

Over the years, the Parliament of Albania has continually approved anti-money laundering legislation in line with the EU and international standards, including FATF/MONEYVAL⁶ recommendations. In the first evaluation round of MONEYVAL, it was noted the involvement of organized crime in money laundering and the lack of a comprehensive regime to tackle *inter alia* money laundering, despite the early efforts⁷ (MONEYVAL, 2000). Based on the recommendations of MONEYVAL, the Albanian Parliament approved law no. 8610, dated 17.05.2000 "On the prevention of money laundering" (fiu.gov.al), which was considered by MONEYVAL "a necessary first step towards an anti-money laundering regime" (MONEYVAL 2000). However, a new law no. 9917, dated 19 May 2008 was approved (currently into force), following the recommendations of MONEYVAL to increase consistency with the FATF recommendations (MONEYVAL, 2006). Since then, several amendments were approved to further comply with reformed legal and institutional architecture (2016 Justice Reform) and MONEYVAL recommendations⁸. In particular, the Parliament approved the amending law no. 120/2021 "On some amendments and additions to law no. 9917, dated 19.5.2008" to fully approximate the 2008 law with EU

⁶ The FATF/MONEYVAL recommendations have a direct and significant impact on Albania's EU integration process as they form the basis for EU standards in this area. In addition, the alignment with these recommendations is closely monitored by the EU during the accession process.

⁷ The Parliament approved the banking law of 1998 which provided general requirements for banks including the lifting of confidentiality provided that there was a suspicion transaction.

⁸ MONEYVAL reports to Albania can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/MONEYVAL/jurisdictions/albania>

Directive 2015/849 of May 2015. Furthermore, law no. 112/2020, “On beneficiary ownership”, was approved by the Albanian Parliament, with the aim to implement the recommendation of MONEYVAL, calling for the creation of a register for the identification of the ultimate owner of companies or non-profit organization (MONEYVAL, 2018). The law is also partially aligned with the EU Directive 2015/849 of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing. In the 4th enhanced follow-up report, released in 2023, MONEYVAL concluded that Albania has made progress to address anti-money laundering technical compliance deficiencies (MONEYVAL, 2023). The EU recognizes that Albania continually improves the anti-money laundering regime in line with MONEYVAL recommendations (Progress Reports 2023 - 2024, Screening Report, 2023). The continued progress of the country in the area of AML has also been noted by the United States Department of State in the “International Narcotics Control Strategy Report” (2025) stating that “*Albania continues to make progress in improving its antimoney laundering/combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime. [...] Ongoing judicial reforms have improved Albania’s AML/CFT regime*”.

With the opening of accession negotiations on Cluster 1 – Fundamentals⁹ in October 2024 and Cluster 2 – Internal Market, Albania has moved forward to fully align with the EU’s policies in the area of justice, freedom and security. Notably, the process involves comprehensive reforms across different domains and it significantly influences the progress of the accession process as a whole. (European Commission, 2023). After the opening of negotiations on both clusters, several interim benchmarks were set out for Chapter 24 (Cluster 1) and Chapter 4 (Cluster 2), which cover organized crime and money laundering. Accordingly, as outlined in the EU Common Position on Cluster 1 (2024), the interim benchmark will be met once Albania has:

- (1) *“further aligned with the EU acquis on the fight against organized crime, including on the criminalization of money laundering, as well as asset recovery and confiscation;*
- (2) *made tangible progress towards a solid track record of investigations, prosecutions, and final convictions in all fields of serious and organized crime, money laundering and terrorist financing;*
- (3) *demonstrated a credible and consistent practice of launching parallel financial investigations when dealing with organized crime and money laundering;*

⁹ Cluster 1 – Fundamentals includes the following areas and negotiating chapters: Functioning of democratic institutions, Public administration reform, Chapter 23 (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/MONEYVAL/jurisdictions/albania> Judiciary and fundamental rights), Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), Economic criteria, Chapter 5 (Public procurement), Chapter 18 (Statistics) and Chapter 32 (Financial control). Money laundering is covered by Chapter 24 (under the organized crime specific area).

- (4) *made tangible progress towards a solid track record in seizure and final confiscation of assets, with a fully operational asset recovery office responsible for identifying and tracing criminal assets, as foreseen by national legislation; [...].*

While, according to the EU Common Position on Cluster 2 (2025), the interim benchmark will be met once Albania has:

- (5) *“aligned with the EU acquis in the area of prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing (notably Anti Money Laundering Directive, Anti Money Laundering Regulation and Transfer of Funds Regulation, as amended). [...] Albania demonstrates that it will be ready to fully implement the acquis from the day of accession.”*

The EU acknowledges that Albania has developed a legal and institutional framework aimed at addressing organized crime. Nonetheless, it highlights the need for further legislative amendments to ensure full compliance with the EU *acquis*, particularly in the areas of criminalizing money laundering and enhancing mechanisms for asset recovery and confiscation. (EU Common Position, 2024). The Progress Report of 2024 highlights the continued efforts of Albania towards the fight against money laundering. The same report notes that Albania “*continued to implement the MONEYVAL recommendations on improving measures on tackling money laundering and terrorist financing [...]*” (Progress Report 2024). As part of the efforts to fight organized crime and trace their illicit assets, the EU Commission recommended Albania to set up the asset recovery office, which would be in charge of identifying and tracing criminal assets, in line with the EU *acquis* (Progress Report 2024).

The Parliament of Albania plays a crucial role in responding to the findings and recommendations of the EU Commission progress reports. Despite the Government holding the primary role to addressing EU recommendations on policy and executive level, in framework of the law no. 15/2015, the Parliament of Albania, as the main legislative body, is responsible for adopting and overseeing the implementation of laws and reforms required to meet EU standards and obligations.

In response to the Progress Report 2024 recommendations regarding the establishment of a recovery office, the Parliament of Albania approved law no. 44/2025 “On asset recovery office” (ARO law), in the plenary session of 26 June 2025. The law is expected to be promulgated and published in the Official Gazette. The approval of the ARO law represents a concrete step toward meeting the EU requirements to advancing the fight against organized crime and money laundering. It also part of broader national efforts to implement the National Plan for European Integration 2024 – 2026 and the Rule of Law roadmap approved by

the government of Albania (Report to the draft law, 2025). The law establishes the Asset Recovery Office, as a special structure within the State Police, with the aim to facilitate the process of tracing and identifying of proceeds, assets and other possessions that are directly or indirectly related to a criminal offence or criminal activity (article 3 and 6 of the law). The ARO law is partly aligned with the EU directive 2014/42 of 3 April 2014, EU Directive 2019/1153 of 20 June 2019, EU Directive 2023/977 of 10 May 2023, EU Directive 2024/1260 of 24 April 2024 and the Decision of the EU Council 2007/845/JHA of 6 December 2007 (ARO law).

National legislation remains nonetheless partially aligned with the EU *acquis* in the area of money laundering, although due to the technical nature of the remaining provisions to be aligned. At the same time, Albania needs still to undertake legal or institutional reforms to fully comply with the FATF/MONEYVAL technical compliance recommendations. In this view, the Parliament of Albania plays a two-folded role by ensuring laws reflect FATF/MONEYVAL recommendations and the EU *acquis* in the area of money laundering and by monitoring and holding institutions accountable for the implementation of AML requirements in framework of the EU accession process.

It must be also noted that, in addition to the law-making role, the Albanian Parliament guarantees through its oversighting and monitoring powers the implementation of AML legal framework. Through parliamentary committees, particularly the Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights and the Committee on Economy and Finance, the Parliament monitors the implementation and effectiveness of AML laws. In addition, the Parliament can summon public officials from the FIU, Ministry of Finance, Bank of Albania, or judiciary bodies to report on progress and challenges in AML laws enforcement.

A comparative overview with Montenegro and North Macedonia

The accession to the EU constitutes a priority for Western Balkans (WBs) candidate countries¹⁰ as well. Moving forward with the European enlargement requires addressing issues concerning organized crime, corruption, state capture and rule of law (Hoxhaj, A., 2020). With the adoption of the revised enlargement methodology in 2020, WBs candidate countries are expected to implement fundamental reforms, including on rule of law, functioning of democratic institutions and public administration, as well as economic reforms (European Commission, 2020). In a broader context, national Parliaments have gained a prominent role in the enlargement process (Koops, J., Costea, S., et al, 2025). The phenomena of organized crime and money laundering is present in the WB region (Zvekic, U., 2017, Agović, A., 2025). Parliaments of WBs candidate countries often

¹⁰ Candidate countries: Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

face similar challenges in addressing money laundering linked to organized crime in order to meet EU requirements and standards. Enlargement reports of WBs candidate countries indicate divergent trajectories of progress towards meeting EU standards on the fight against organized crime and the AML regime.

Montenegro (candidate since 2010) “*has made good progress combating organized crime*” and “*some progress*” in the area of money laundering – adoption of a new law in the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing which aligns with the EU Directives and FATF recommendations, as well as amendments to the law on seizure and confiscation of material benefit derived from criminal activity (Progress Report, 2024). Records of North Macedonia, the first WBs country to be granted candidate status (2005), show a relatively slower pace of progress compared to Montenegro. The EU Commission calls for continued results in the implementation of EU reforms, particularly in the fight against organized crime and anti-money laundering (European Commission, Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, 2024). This affirmation is supported as well by the latest Progress Report (2024), according to which North Macedonia “*has between some level of preparation and a moderate level of preparation in the fight against organized crime*”, while “*limited progress was made in the fight against money laundering*”. The Parliament should in particular approximate the national legislation on the prevention of money laundering with the EU *acquis* (Progress Report, 2024).

Evidently, Montenegro is regarded as a positive example of the enlargement negotiations process and democratic strengthening (Koops, J., Costea, S., et al, 2025). Nonetheless, both countries have made tangible efforts to address such concerns while they have positioned national Parliaments at the cornerstone of the EU accession process.

The Constitution of the Montenegro entitles the Parliament to decide on the manner of accession to the EU (article 15). By contrast to the Albanian case, the Parliament of Montenegro has not approved a special law regulating the role of the Parliament in the EU integration process. However, in 2013 it adopted a resolution “On the matter, quality and dynamics of the integration process of Montenegro to the European Union” which detailed the relationship between the Parliament and the Government regarding the EU accession process. The Resolution set out the responsibility of the Committee on European Integration “*to consider draft negotiating positions on EU acquis chapters and deliver opinions thereof*” (Parliament of Montenegro). To exercise its overseeing and monitoring functions, the Parliament has established since 2003 a permanent parliamentary committee on European Integration. It is the key parliamentary working body responsible to monitor the negotiations and assess the course of accession negotiations (Rules of Procedure, 2021). In 2008, the Parliament had established the National Council on European Integration (NCEI) as an advisory body on EU

accession negotiations. Nonetheless, the NCEI was abolished in 2012, enabling the Committee on European Integration to exercise full overseeing competences in the context of the EU accession process. Other permanent parliamentary committees support the EU accession process through the competence to harmonize the national legislation falling under their scope of activity with the EU *acquis* (Rules of Procedure, 2021).

Similarly, the role of the Parliament of North Macedonia is not regulated by a special law. On a political level, the Parliament is vested with the power to decide on the accession to the EU (Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia). It plays a pivotal role for the dialogue between the majority, opposition and civil society with regard to reforms towards the EU path (Popović, M., 2020). The Committee on European Affairs¹¹ plays the primary role in the exercise of parliamentary oversight of the EU accession process and the harmonization of national legislation with the EU *acquis* (Rules of Procedure, 2023). As part of the Parliament's efforts to not hinder the approximation process, since 2013, Rules of Procedure of the Parliament provide for a "shortened procedure" to adopt draft laws aiming at alignment with EU *acquis* – provided that the harmonization is not complex and voluminous (Rules of Procedure, 2023). In addition, the Parliament of North Macedonia has established as early as of 2007 the National Council on European Integration (NCEI) for a more efficient fulfilment of its oversight role in the context of the EU accession process. The NCEI is composed of 17 Members of Parliament (MPs) and 6 non-voting members: the minister in charge of Integration Affairs, representatives from the cabinet of the President of the Republic, of the Prime Minister, of the Academy of Sciences and Arts, of associations of local self-government and of associations of Journalists (Parliament of North Macedonia). The competences of the NCEI are of an advisory nature, which include: opinions and guidelines on the negotiation position of North Macedonia and on issues raised during the negotiation, evaluating the activities of the negotiation team members, opinions on harmonization of the national legislation with the *acquis*, if necessary, consultations and exchange of information with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the President of the Parliament, etc. (Decision to establish the NCIE, 2007)

While Montenegro and North Macedonia illustrate different paces of progress, both underline the central role of national Parliaments in overseeing EU reforms and putting forward the accession process. As similar challenges persist, Parliaments have followed each-others' steps in establishing parliamentary structures to deal with EU affairs. As detailed above, unlike Montenegro and North Macedonia, Albania has adopted a dedicated law governing parliamentary

¹¹ Competences of the Committee on the European Affairs are listed in the following link (in Macedonian language): <https://www.sobranie.mk/detali-na-komisija.nspx?param=b2ec72ba-50c6-40fc-b611-5dabced75e30>

competences in EU accession, thereby formalizing its monitoring and oversight functions. This approach reflects Albania's commitment to strengthen the role of the Parliament in advancing rule of law, democratic governance and compliance with EU *acquis*.

Conclusions

The Parliament of Albania as the supreme representative and legislative authority plays a pivotal and multifaceted role in the country's EU integration process, especially in advancing reforms required to align with EU standards on the fight against money laundering and organized crime and also to its domestic fight against money laundering, corruption, and organized crime. While the EU accession process is predominantly managed by the Government, the Parliament guarantees democratic legitimacy and legal oversight through its legislative functions and monitoring responsibilities.

The adoption of law no. 15/2025 has significantly strengthened the Parliament's institutional framework and political role in EU integration, particularly through the establishment of the NCEI and reinforcement of the competencies of the Parliamentary Committee on EU Matters. These bodies contribute to inclusive monitoring, inter-institutional cooperation, and legislative alignment with the EU *acquis*.

In the area of anti-money laundering, the Parliament has consistently responded to both EU and MONEYVAL/FATF recommendations by enacting key legislative acts and reforms. From the early approval of foundational laws in 2000 and 2008, to more recent reforms such as law no. 112/2020 on beneficial ownership and law no. 44/2025 on the establishment of the Asset Recovery Office, the Parliament has played a central role in Albania's legal approximation to EU standards. These steps contribute to Albania's compliance with critical EU directives and demonstrate the country's progress on key benchmarks under Chapter 24 and Chapter 4 of Cluster 2 of the accession negotiations.

Despite the legal progress, alignment with the EU *acquis* and international standards remains partial, requiring continued parliamentary engagement. The remaining gaps, primarily technical, still demand legislative updates and institutional strengthening, including effective oversight of law enforcement and implementation practices.

The Albanian Parliament not only ensures the formal transposition of EU AML provisions but also plays a vital oversight role to guarantee that reforms are implemented in practice. Its proactive response to EU progress reports, alignment with MONEYVAL recommendations, and the approval of legal initiatives such as the ARO law illustrate its evolving role as a driver of Albania's transformation

towards EU membership. The Parliament's capacity to sustain this role, particularly in overseeing the enforcement of AML measures, remains a decisive factor for the credibility and success of Albania's integration journey.

From a regional comparative perspective, although partial, the WBs share the common challenge of addressing organized crime and money laundering as core conditions for advancing EU accession. Yet, levels of progress differ markedly. Montenegro is often regarded as the frontrunner, having consolidated parliamentary oversight mechanisms early on and demonstrating tangible progress in aligning legislation with EU standards. North Macedonia, while slower progress, has strengthened its parliamentary structures and procedures to facilitate approximation with the *acquis*. Albania, by contrast, stands out for institutionalizing the role of Parliament through a dedicated law that formalizes its competences in EU accession process, reflecting a more structured approach. Still, across the region, national Parliaments remain pivotal in putting forward the EU integration, ensuring oversight of executive actions, approximation of laws and fostering political consensus - functions that will ultimately determine the credibility and sustainability of each country's EU path.

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