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## **EUROPEAN UNION – ALBANIA**

### **13<sup>TH</sup> SA SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING**

**JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND SECURITY**

**9 - 10 DECEMBER 2021**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Subcommittee meeting on Justice, Freedom and Security between the EU and Albania took place on 9 and 10 December 2021. Representatives from the European Commission and the Albanian authorities discussed the most recent developments in the area of judicial reform, anti-corruption, fundamentals rights, asylum and migration, the fight against organized crime, combating money laundering and counter-terrorism.

The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Michela Matuella, Head of Unit for Albania and North Macedonia at the Directorate General for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission (Commission) and Ms. Adea Pirdeni, Deputy Minister of Justice.

The Commission welcomed the good progress and concrete results in the implementation of justice reform, in a year that continued to be marked by the pandemic. The Commission underlined the importance of timely extending the constitutional mandate of the first instance vetting bodies, in line with the opinion of the Venice Commission, which is essential for the consistency and integrity of the process. The Commission welcomed the first concrete results of the specialized bodies on fight against corruption and organized crime. It also acknowledged the progress achieved in other key areas of justice reform.

The Commission stressed the need for continuous efforts in the fight against corruption, notably at high level. The Commission noted continued focus needed to address the outstanding GRECO recommendations. Concerning fundamental rights, the Commission welcomed the implementation of the law on the finalization of transitional ownership processes. It also called for appropriate consultations followed by swift adoption of the remaining secondary legislation on the protection of national minorities. The Commission raised the importance of resuming progress on freedom of expression, and of ensuring media's direct and transparent access to governmental institutions as well as the independence and legitimacy of the audio-visual regulatory authority, in the context of ongoing appointments.

In the area of home affairs, the Commission welcomed the increased engagement and operational cooperation with EU agencies and EU Member States, as well as the good implementation of the Joint Action Plan on counter-terrorism. Albania should finalize the implementation of the

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) action plan. The Commission recognized Albania's continued efforts in the fight against cannabis cultivation and trafficking.

The Commission welcomed the adoption of the new Asylum law and the majority of its secondary legislation while noting the need for its effective implementation. Albanian authorities shall make continued efforts to address the unfounded asylum applications of the Albanian citizens in EU member states and Schengen-associated countries. The Commission welcomed the efforts to improve cooperation and deliver tangible results with the EU countries most affected. Albania continues to meet the visa liberalization requirements and made progress in addressing last year's recommendations. Albania's visa policy remains to be aligned with the EU *acquis*.