

MONITORING REPORT ON GAPS AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES IN LABOUR LEGISLATION IN ALBANIA:

Chapter 19- Social Policy and Employment



OLOF PALMES
INTERNATIONELLA
CENTER



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Disclaimer

This report assesses selected gaps in labour legislation, labour relations, labour rights, and related cross-cutting issues in Albania under Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment of the EU acquis. It examines the current level of legal alignment, institutional capacity, and effective implementation, with particular attention to challenges identified through national practice, stakeholder input, and relevant EU accession documents.

The analysis presented is the result of the independent work of the Centre for Labour Rights – Albania and is intended to provide a balanced, evidence-based, and objective contribution to discussions on Albania's alignment with Chapter 19 and the effective enforcement of labour and social rights.

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List of Acronyms

AIAS	Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies
ALL	Albanian Lek
CASE	Corrective Action and Strategic Enforcement
CPD	Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Environment Agency
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EP	European Parliament
EPSR	European Pillar of Social Rights
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
ILO	International Labour Organization
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics of Albania
MEKI	Ministry of Economy and Innovation
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills
NEET	Young people not in employment, education or training
NLC	National Labour Council
OPIC	Olof Palme International Centre
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SLISS	State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services
SII	Social Insurance Institute
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

Albania is **moderately prepared** in the area of social policy and employment under Chapter 19 of the European Union (EU) acquis. The core legal and institutional framework is largely in place, including the Labour Code, occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation, equality and non-discrimination rules, employment policy instruments, social protection structures, labour inspection mechanisms and formal social dialogue bodies. However, the main challenge is no longer only legislative approximation, but the effective implementation and enforcement of labour and social rights in practice.¹

A central finding of this report is the persistent gap between formal legal guarantees and the experience of workers. Desk review, stakeholder input and civil society monitoring indicate recurring problems in the implementation of rules on employment contracts, working time, OSH, equality, non-discrimination and social dialogue. These problems are particularly visible in sectors characterised by informality, subcontracting, seasonal work, low wages or weak worker representation, including construction, mining, garment and footwear production, tourism, agriculture, services and small enterprises.

In labour law, Albania remains partially aligned with the EU acquis, particularly in relation to working conditions and the information and consultation of workers. Informal employment, partially declared work, weak documentation of employment terms, under-declaration of wages, unpaid overtime and limited protection of non-standard forms of work continue to reduce the practical effect of labour rights. Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions is especially relevant for future alignment. Further reforms should ensure clear written information, predictable work schedules, protection from abusive flexible arrangements and better coverage of non-standard forms of employment, including seasonal, casual, remote, platform-type and dependent self-employment arrangements.

Labour Inspectorate data used for this report indicate that, in 2025, **9,532 entities** were inspected, covering more than **205,000 workplaces**, while **268 fines** were imposed with a total value of **64.5 million ALL**. Inspections identified **2,591 informal workers**, of whom approximately **98% were formalised** during the inspection process. At the same time, **275 workplace accidents** were recorded, resulting in **212 injured workers** and **48 fatalities**, confirming that enforcement activity has not yet translated into sufficient prevention in high-risk sectors.

OSH remains one of the most critical implementation gaps. Albania has adopted the Policy Document for Health and Safety at Work and its Action Plan 2025–2030, aligned with the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021–2027. However, the Interministerial Council of Occupational Health and Safety and its secretariat remain to be established, while prevention remains weak in high-risk sectors such as construction, mining, energy, infrastructure and manufacturing.

The EU Common Position for Cluster 3 records Albania's request for a transitional period until **31 December 2032** concerning occupational exposure limit values for nitrogen monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide in underground mining and tunnelling facilities under Commission Directive (EU) 2017/164. This is a specific Chapter 19 accession bookmark and requires a credible phased compliance plan covering affected worksites, protective measures, monitoring systems, technical investments, costs, worker protection and implementation deadlines.

Social dialogue remains a structural weakness. The National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils provide formal platforms, but their practical influence depends on regular meetings, transparent representativeness, meaningful agendas and follow-up. Collective bargaining coverage remains weak, especially

¹ Source reference: European Commission, Albania Report 2025, Chapter 19; EU Common Position, Cluster 3, Chapter 19; Cluster 3 Screening Report

at sector and enterprise level. Available secondary data indicate approximately **70 active collective labour agreements** nationwide in 2024, covering around **64,000 employees**, with private-sector coverage estimated at **10–12%**.

Equality and non-discrimination are supported by a functioning legal and institutional framework, but enforcement remains limited. Gender inequalities persist in labour-market participation, employment outcomes, pay, maternity-related protection, workplace harassment and career progression. The gender employment gap reached **13% in 2024**, compared with **10.4% in 2023**, while the unemployment rate was **9.6% for women** and **8.0% for men**. The gender pay gap narrowed to **4.9%**, but women remain concentrated in low-paid and labour-intensive sectors.

Vulnerable groups continue to face barriers to stable and protected employment. Roma and Egyptian communities remain exposed to informal work, low-paid employment and limited access to social protection. Persons with disabilities face weak implementation of reasonable accommodation in practice. Young workers often enter the labour market through internships, temporary work, informal jobs or low-paid service positions. In 2024, the rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) was **25.6% for young women** and **23.5% for young men**.

The report also identifies insolvency and protection of workers' claims as an underdeveloped labour-rights issue. Alignment with Directive 2008/94/EC requires effective protection of employees' outstanding claims, including through a wage guarantee mechanism or equivalent protection. This issue should be linked with broader reforms on formalisation, social insurance, restructuring and just transition.

Overall, the main Chapter 19 gap is a combined **alignment, enforcement, institutional and governance gap**. Albania has the basic legal and institutional architecture, but the system does not yet operate as an integrated labour-rights enforcement framework. Priority areas include stronger labour inspection, more effective sanctions, improved OSH prevention, transparent employment conditions, better regulation of non-standard work, stronger social dialogue, improved equality enforcement, protection of workers in insolvency, and integrated monitoring of labour-market risks.

The report recommends targeted corrective and implementation measures, referred to as **CASE actions**, including a Chapter 19 legal and implementation dashboard, strengthened risk-based enforcement, operational OSH coordination, a social dialogue revitalisation programme, improved protection of workers affected by insolvency, integration of equality checks into labour inspection, targeted measures for vulnerable groups, and sector-specific OSH campaigns.

Albania's Chapter 19 framework can therefore be characterised as **structurally established but operationally incomplete**. Meaningful alignment will depend on converting formal legal approximation into enforceable protection for workers in practice.

I. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to assess selected gaps and cross-cutting issues in Albania's legal and institutional framework related to labour relations, industrial relations, labour rights, social protection, equality, and employment-related enforcement under Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment of the EU acquis.

The report identifies areas where Albania's legislation is not yet fully aligned with EU standards, but also focuses on the more persistent challenge: the gap between legal provisions and their implementation in practice. For this reason, the analysis does not treat alignment only as a legislative exercise. It also examines institutional capacity, enforcement practice, coordination between institutions, access to remedies, and the ability of workers and social partners to use existing rights effectively.

The scope of the report covers the main areas relevant to Chapter 19, including labour law, working conditions, occupational safety and health, industrial relations and social dialogue, equality and non-discrimination, employment-related protection of vulnerable groups, workers' rights in insolvency situations, and institutional capacity for enforcement. The report does not provide a detailed article-by-article commentary on each Albanian law. Instead, it focuses on horizontal and recurring issues that affect the functioning of the labour-rights system as a whole.

Particular attention is given to the coherence of legislation, the relationship between legal rules and workplace practice, and the functioning of institutions responsible for labour governance. These include the ministries responsible for labour, employment, social protection and finance; the State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services; the judiciary; the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; the Ombudsman; tax and social insurance institutions; social partners; and civil society organisations.

The report also considers how labour-rights issues are experienced in practice. For this reason, desk research is complemented by stakeholder input, civil society monitoring, institutional and inspection data, and available field-based observations. These sources help identify recurring implementation problems, including informality, weak documentation of employment relationships, underreporting of discrimination and harassment, limited access to remedies, weak collective bargaining, and occupational safety risks in high-risk sectors.

The approach is analytical and problem-oriented. It focuses on identifying systemic weaknesses, such as partial alignment with newer EU directives, inconsistencies in implementation, weak enforcement mechanisms, limited data integration, insufficient institutional coordination, and low trust in complaint mechanisms. These issues are assessed in terms of their impact on Albania's overall alignment with Chapter 19 and on the effective protection of labour and social rights.

The report aims to provide a structured assessment of where Albania stands in relation to Chapter 19, with a focus on the reforms needed to convert formal legal alignment into enforceable protection in practice. In this sense, the report treats labour rights not only as a matter of social policy, but also as part of Albania's broader EU accession, rule-of-law and fundamental-rights agenda.

1. References and Sources Methodology

This report is based on a structured review and triangulation of multiple sources. The objective is to ensure that the findings are evidence-based, balanced, verifiable and grounded in both formal documentation and practical experience.

The primary desk-review sources include official documents of the Government of Albania, national legislation, secondary legislation, policy strategies, action plans, institutional reports and available administrative data. The report also relies on European Commission documents, including the annual Albania Reports, the Cluster 3 Screening Report, and accession-related documents relevant to Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment. These sources provide the main basis for assessing Albania's legal alignment with the EU acquis, the level of institutional preparedness and the implementation challenges identified in the EU accession process.

International standards and comparative perspectives are drawn from the International Labour Organization and other relevant international organisations. These sources are used to assess Albania's compliance with labour standards in areas such as employment relations, working conditions, occupational safety and health, collective labour rights, social dialogue, equality and non-discrimination, violence and harassment at work, social protection and protection of vulnerable workers.

The desk review is complemented by qualitative evidence drawn from civil society monitoring, trade union input, stakeholder observations, academic research, reports prepared by international foundations and development partners, and available case-based information. These sources are used to capture practical implementation gaps that may not be fully visible in official reporting, including barriers faced by workers in accessing rights, difficulties in organising at workplace level, underreporting of violations, and sector-specific labour risks.

Labour Inspectorate data used for this report include figures on inspection activity, informal workers identified and formalised, sanctions, workplace accidents, injured workers, fatalities, accident-triggered inspections and accident reporting. These data are used as part of the report's evidence base for assessing enforcement capacity and occupational safety and health outcomes.

Where stakeholder or field-based input is used, it is treated as qualitative evidence. Such input helps identify patterns, perceptions and recurring implementation problems, but it is not treated as a substitute for official statistics or legal findings. Where possible, stakeholder observations are cross-checked against European Commission reports, national institutional data, civil society research, trade union information, media reporting or other independent sources.

Media reporting has been used selectively and cautiously to illustrate concrete cases and real-life examples, particularly in relation to workplace accidents, labour disputes, informality, non-payment or delayed payment of wages, harassment, discrimination, and unsafe working conditions in high-risk sectors. Media information is not treated as a stand-alone basis for legal or institutional conclusions. It is used where it helps illustrate broader patterns already identified through other sources, or where it points to issues requiring further institutional attention.

All findings have been triangulated across different categories of sources wherever possible, including EU accession documents, national legal and policy documents, institutional data, civil society evidence, stakeholder observations, trade union information, academic research and media reporting. This approach is intended to

reduce bias, improve reliability and distinguish between confirmed findings, informed assessments and issues requiring continued monitoring.

The report reflects the independent assessment of the Centre for Labour Rights – Albania. References to public institutions, European Union bodies, international organisations, social partners, civil society organisations, foundations, media outlets or reported cases are made for analytical and evidentiary purposes only. Such references do not imply endorsement by those organisations of the findings, conclusions or recommendations presented in this report.

II. Context and Institutional Framework

Labour governance in Albania is organised through a multi-institutional system in which responsibilities are shared between policy-making institutions, enforcement bodies, judicial authorities, equality and human rights institutions, social protection institutions, employment services and social partners. The main institutional components required under Chapter 19 of the EU acquis are in place. However, their effectiveness depends on coordination, administrative capacity, budgetary resources, reliable data systems and the ability of institutions to ensure practical enforcement of labour and social rights.

The **Ministry of Economy and Innovation** has a central role in relation to labour relations, employment policy, vocational education and training, skills development and labour - market measures. Its functions are directly relevant to Chapter 19, particularly in relation to working conditions, employment services, active labour-market policies, formalisation, skills matching and support for employability. It also has an important role in linking labour-market reforms with enterprise development, competitiveness and economic transformation.

The **Ministry of Health and Social Protection** is the main policy institution responsible for social protection, social inclusion, health-related policies, vulnerable groups, disability inclusion, child protection, social care services and broader social inclusion measures. In the context of Chapter 19, its role is particularly important for linking labour-market participation with social protection, inclusion of vulnerable groups, access to services, and health-related aspects of occupational safety and health.

The **Ministry of Finance** plays a supporting but important role through fiscal policy, taxation, public expenditure, social insurance contributions and budget allocations for relevant institutions. Although it does not directly regulate employment relations, it has a significant impact on labour governance through its role in addressing informality, financing labour inspection and social protection systems, ensuring the sustainability of social insurance, and supporting reforms linked to EU budget support and public finance management.

The **State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services** is the main enforcement institution responsible for monitoring compliance with labour legislation, employment contracts, working conditions and occupational safety and health standards. It is a key institution for the practical application of EU labour-law and occupational safety requirements. Its effectiveness is particularly relevant for combating informal employment, monitoring working time, enforcing occupational safety and health obligations, and ensuring that workers receive the protection provided by law. Recent developments in risk-based inspection planning and digital inspection tools are positive, but inspection effectiveness remains constrained by the scale of informality, fragmented labour markets, human-resource limitations and the need for stronger follow-up of violations.

The **judiciary** provides the main mechanism for resolving labour disputes and ensuring access to justice in employment-related matters. Courts are essential for reviewing dismissals, enforcing contractual and wage-related claims, addressing discrimination, deciding compensation claims and ensuring legal remedies in workplace accident cases. However, practical challenges remain, including the length of proceedings, costs, limited access to legal support for vulnerable workers and difficulties in enforcing final decisions. These challenges reduce the deterrent effect of labour law and may discourage workers from pursuing remedies.

The **Ombudsman** is an important protection mechanism for workers' rights, especially in cases involving public administration, public-sector employment, administrative abuse, non-enforcement of legal obligations, discrimination or violations affecting vulnerable persons. Although the Ombudsman does not issue legally binding decisions, it can investigate complaints, issue recommendations, identify systemic problems and exert institutional pressure for compliance with the law. Its role is particularly relevant where labour-rights violations intersect with public administration, equality, access to services or enforcement of court decisions.

The **Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination** plays a central role in addressing discrimination complaints and promoting equal treatment, including in employment and services. The Commissioner's work is relevant to gender equality, disability discrimination, maternity-related discrimination, racial or ethnic discrimination, harassment and other forms of unequal treatment in the labour market. Coordination between the Commissioner, Labour Inspectorate, Ombudsman, judiciary, employment services and social protection institutions remains important for ensuring effective remedies in employment-related discrimination cases.

Social partners, including trade unions and employers' organisations, are formally integrated into labour governance through the **National Labour Council** and other consultation mechanisms. The National Labour Council remains the central tripartite body at national level. However, social dialogue continues to be weak in practice, due to limited collective bargaining coverage, fragmented trade union structures, weak representativeness, limited sector-level bargaining and insufficient follow-up of consultation outcomes.

Regional Tripartite Councils should also be considered part of the institutional framework under Chapter 19. They can serve as territorial mechanisms for connecting labour-market policies, employment services, vocational education and training, occupational safety and health concerns, local economic development and social dialogue. Their role is particularly relevant in regions affected by informality, seasonal employment, sector-specific labour risks or restructuring. Their practical contribution should be assessed through regular monitoring of composition, frequency of meetings, agendas, decisions, participation of social partners and follow-up of conclusions.

Civil society organisations, including the **Centre for Labour Rights**, and international partners such as the **International Labour Organization**, the **Olof Palme International Center** and the **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung** contribute through monitoring, research, capacity building, awareness-raising, legal support and policy dialogue. Their role is particularly relevant in identifying practical implementation gaps, supporting workers' access to information, strengthening social dialogue and providing independent evidence on labour rights and working conditions.

Overall, Albania has the basic institutional architecture for Chapter 19. The main institutional challenge is not the absence of structures, but the limited capacity of the system to operate as a coordinated, evidence-based and enforcement-oriented labour governance framework. Stronger coordination between institutions, better data integration, more effective labour inspection, meaningful social dialogue and improved access to remedies are necessary to convert formal alignment into practical protection for workers and vulnerable groups.

A detailed institutional mapping of the main bodies and actors involved in Chapter 19 implementation is provided in **Annex 1**

1. Challenges and constraints

From an *acquis* perspective, Albania's institutional structure under Chapter 19 can be considered formally adequate. The system includes institutions responsible for labour policy, employment measures, social protection, occupational safety and health, equality and non-discrimination, social dialogue, enforcement and judicial redress. This provides the basic institutional architecture needed to implement the main areas covered by Chapter 19.

However, the effectiveness of this structure remains constrained by several systemic factors.

First, responsibilities are fragmented across several institutions. Labour relations, employment policy, social protection, fiscal policy, vocational education and training, equality, inspection, social insurance and judicial remedies are not managed through a single institutional chain. This requires strong coordination between the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Finance, the State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services, employment and skills institutions, tax and social insurance authorities, equality bodies, the Ombudsman, the judiciary and social partners. In practice, coordination remains uneven, especially for issues that cut across institutional mandates, such as informal employment, undeclared work, workplace accidents, discrimination in employment, vulnerable workers and the social effects of economic restructuring.

Second, enforcement capacity remains limited, particularly in labour inspection. The Labour Inspectorate is central to the practical implementation of labour legislation and occupational safety and health rules, but its effectiveness is constrained by human resources, inspection coverage, sectoral specialisation, access to reliable data and the scale of informality. Risk-based inspection planning is a positive development, but it needs to be supported by stronger analytical capacity, better data integration, sufficient staffing, effective follow-up of corrective measures and stronger coverage of high-risk sectors.

Third, data and monitoring systems remain insufficiently integrated. Labour-market information, inspection findings, occupational accidents, social insurance data, employment-service data, court decisions, discrimination cases, Ombudsman recommendations and social protection data are collected by different institutions, but are not yet connected in a way that allows systematic monitoring of Chapter 19 implementation. This limits evidence-based policy-making, early identification of non-compliance and the ability to measure whether legal alignment produces concrete improvements for workers.

Fourth, social dialogue remains weak in practice despite formal recognition. The National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils provide platforms for consultation, but tripartite and bipartite dialogue remain insufficiently developed. Trade union fragmentation, weak representativeness, low collective bargaining coverage and limited sector-level bargaining reduce the capacity of social partners to contribute effectively to labour-law implementation, wage dialogue, occupational safety and health prevention, skills policy and just transition measures.

Fifth, access to effective remedies remains uneven. Courts, the Ombudsman, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, labour inspection procedures and administrative complaint mechanisms provide avenues for protection, but vulnerable workers may face practical barriers such as lack of information, fear of retaliation, costs, delays, difficulties in proving employment relationships and problems enforcing decisions. These barriers are

particularly significant for informal workers, women facing discrimination or harassment, workers injured at work, young workers, Roma and Egyptian workers, persons with disabilities and workers in small or subcontracted enterprises.

Sixth, there is still a gap between formal consultation and practical participation. Social partners and civil society organisations are included in some consultation processes, but their influence on policy design, enforcement priorities and follow-up measures remains uneven. Stakeholder input gathered for this report indicates that consultation is often perceived as formal rather than genuinely negotiated, especially where draft policies or legal changes are presented without sufficient time, data or structured follow-up.

Overall, the main constraint is not the absence of institutions, but the limited ability of the system to function as an integrated labour-governance framework. The key challenge is to move from formal institutional coverage to coordinated implementation, stronger enforcement, reliable monitoring, effective remedies and meaningful participation of workers, employers and civil society at national, regional, sectoral and enterprise level.

III. Labour Law and Employment Relations

Albania's Labour Code provides the main legal basis for employment relations and incorporates several core principles of European Union (EU) labour law, including the protection of workers, regulation of working time, employment contracts, annual leave, maternity protection, temporary agency work, termination of employment, and information obligations towards employees. The legal framework therefore provides a broad foundation for labour-rights protection.

However, Albania's alignment with the EU acquis remains partial, particularly in relation to working conditions and the information and consultation of workers. This makes labour law an active Chapter 19 accession issue, not only a domestic employment-policy matter. The key challenge is to ensure that formal legal provisions are translated into enforceable rights in the workplace.

A central gap concerns the formalisation and documentation of employment relationships. Although the Labour Code requires employment relationships to be formalised and provides for information on basic working conditions, workers in several sectors continue to face weak documentation of employment terms. This affects salary, working hours, overtime, social insurance contributions, leave entitlements, maternity protection and dismissal rights. The problem is not only legislative, but also practical: where enforcement is weak, informal and semi-formal employment arrangements may continue despite the existence of formal legal obligations.

Informality remains one of the main labour-law constraints. In practice, it appears through the absence of a written contract, under-declaration of wages, non-payment of overtime, partial cash payment of salaries, undeclared working hours, or unclear work schedules. These practices undermine compliance with Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions, because workers may not receive clear, enforceable and predictable information on the essential terms of employment.

Labour Inspectorate data used for this report indicate that inspections in 2025 identified **2,591 informal workers**, of whom approximately **98% were formalised** during the inspection process. These figures show that informal employment remains a persistent labour-law challenge, particularly in seasonal and fragmented sectors, while also confirming that targeted inspections can have an immediate formalisation effect.

Another key gap concerns non-standard forms of employment. The Labour Code regulates standard employment relationships, fixed-term work, part-time work and temporary agency work, but newer and more flexible forms of work are not yet fully addressed. These include platform work, remote and hybrid work, casual work, on-call work, seasonal work, dependent self-employment, and other arrangements where the boundary between employee and self-employed status may be unclear. As a result, some workers may remain outside the full scope of labour protection, especially in sectors with high informality or weak workplace representation.

This issue is directly relevant to Directive (EU) 2019/1152. Further alignment should ensure that workers receive clear and timely information on essential employment conditions, including the type and duration of contract, place of work, remuneration, working time, probation, training rights, predictability of work schedules, rules on additional employment, and protection against abusive practices in flexible or irregular work arrangements. The existing Labour Code contains information obligations, but the gap lies in adapting these obligations to newer employment models and ensuring that they are enforced in practice.

Working time remains another area where the gap is mainly practical. The Labour Code contains rules on working hours, weekly rest, annual leave and overtime, reflecting elements of Directive 2003/88/EC. However, implementation is uneven. Stakeholder observations and civil society monitoring indicate that in sectors such as services, tourism, garment and footwear production, agriculture and small enterprises, workers may experience unpaid overtime, irregular schedules, weak recording of working hours and limited access to complaint mechanisms. Stronger working-time recording, inspection and sanctioning mechanisms are needed to ensure that legal protections are applied in practice.

Fixed-term and part-time work also require continued monitoring. Directive 1999/70/EC on fixed-term work and Directive 97/81/EC on part-time work aim to prevent abuse and ensure equal treatment. In Albania, the main risks relate to repeated use of fixed-term contracts, informal or disguised part-time work, under-declared working hours and unequal treatment in practice. Labour inspection and courts should be able to identify when such arrangements are used to avoid full employment obligations.

A further concern is the limited effectiveness of worker information and consultation mechanisms. EU labour standards require workers to be properly informed and consulted on matters affecting employment, especially in cases of restructuring, collective redundancies, transfers of undertakings, major workplace changes or company closures. In practice, these mechanisms remain weak due to limited trade union presence, low collective bargaining coverage and weak workplace-level representation.

Labour inspection remains central to making labour-law protections effective. Recent developments in risk-based inspection planning and the use of digital inspection tools are positive. However, enforcement capacity still needs to be strengthened, particularly in informal, seasonal, subcontracted and high-risk sectors. Inspection activity should be assessed not only by the number of inspections carried out, but also by whether violations are corrected, whether repeat offenders are addressed, whether sanctions are dissuasive and whether workers receive effective protection.

Occupational safety and health, equality and social dialogue are addressed in detail in later sections of this report, but they also affect employment relations. Workplace accidents often reveal failures in contractual formalisation, supervision, training and employer accountability. Discrimination and harassment affect access to employment, job security and working conditions. Weak social dialogue reduces workers' ability to negotiate wages, working time, safety measures and dispute-resolution procedures. For this reason, labour law should be understood as part of a broader enforcement and governance framework under Chapter 19.

Overall, Albania's labour-law framework provides a solid formal basis for employment relations, but the main gap lies in partial alignment, informality and weak implementation. The priority is to move from formal legal provisions to enforceable labour protection. This requires further alignment with EU directives on transparent and predictable working conditions, working time, fixed-term and part-time work, information and consultation of workers, collective redundancies and transfers of undertakings; better regulation of non-standard forms of work; stronger action against informality and wage under-declaration; more effective inspection and sanctions; and stronger worker representation at workplace, sectoral and national level.

IV. Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue

Albania's legal framework recognises the right of workers and employers to organise, establish representative organisations, engage in collective bargaining and participate in social dialogue. These rights are relevant to Chapter 19 of the EU acquis, particularly in relation to social dialogue, collective labour relations, and the information and consultation of workers. At national level, the National Labour Council remains the main tripartite consultation platform between the Government, employers' organisations and trade unions. At regional level, Regional Tripartite Councils provide an additional platform for territorial social dialogue and may play an important role in addressing local labour-market issues, informality, skills needs, occupational safety concerns and employment challenges.

In practice, however, industrial relations remain weak and fragmented. The trade union landscape includes long-established confederations, such as the Confederation of Trade Unions of Albania and the Union of Independent Trade Unions of Albania, together with their sectoral federations and affiliated unions. These confederations benefit from historical presence, formal recognition, institutional participation and links with international trade union organisations, including European and global federations. Such links provide visibility, access to networks and occasional project-based support. However, formal recognition does not automatically translate into effective representativeness in all sectors, regions or enterprises.

The assessment of trade union representativeness should distinguish between central-level confederations, sectoral federations, affiliated unions, regional structures and actual workplace presence. This distinction is important because the practical strength of trade unions depends not only on legal recognition, but also on membership, fee collection, internal democracy, financial sustainability, sectoral presence, workplace organisation and capacity to provide services to members.

A major gap concerns transparency and verification of representativeness. Although the legal framework provides for representative trade unions and employers' organisations, the practical assessment of representativeness remains difficult due to limited publicly available information on membership numbers, fee collection, territorial and sectoral presence, and financial sustainability. Major confederations and unions do not regularly publish independently verifiable membership data. This makes it difficult to assess which organisations genuinely represent workers in specific sectors, regions or enterprises, and weakens the legitimacy of collective bargaining and consultation.

This issue also creates uncertainty for public institutions and employers when selecting social dialogue partners. A clearer and more transparent system for assessing representativeness would help strengthen the credibility of social dialogue, reduce disputes between organisations, and improve the quality of consultation. Such a system should avoid excessive administrative control over trade unions, but should ensure objective and verifiable criteria for participation in tripartite bodies and collective bargaining processes.

Collective bargaining coverage remains low, especially in the private sector. Most collective agreements appear to be concluded at enterprise level, while sector-level bargaining remains rare. In practice, many workers in construction, garment and footwear production, services, tourism, agriculture, media and small enterprises rely mainly on minimum legal standards rather than collectively negotiated conditions. As a result, wages, overtime, occupational safety and health measures, training, protection against dismissal, grievance procedures and dispute-prevention mechanisms are rarely negotiated collectively.

Available secondary data indicate that collective bargaining coverage is uneven. Decent Work Balkans 2025 reports approximately **70 active collective labour agreements** nationwide in 2024, covering around **64,000 employees**, with much higher coverage in the public sector than in the private sector. It also estimates private-sector coverage at around **10–12%**, concentrated mainly in industry and transport. These figures indicate that collective bargaining remains substantially more limited in private-sector employment and should be monitored through official data on the number of active agreements, workers covered, sectors covered and level of agreement.

Indicator	Latest figure identified	Source status
Active collective labour agreements nationwide	About 70 in 2024	Decent Work Balkans 2025
Employees covered by collective agreements	About 64,000 in 2024	Decent Work Balkans 2025
Public-sector coverage	About 85% of public-sector employees	Decent Work Balkans 2025
Private-sector coverage	About 10–12%, mainly in industry and transport	Decent Work Balkans 2025
Trade union organisation rate	About 17% of employees in 2024	Decent Work Balkans 2025
Adjusted collective bargaining coverage rate	51.1% in 2018	OECD/AIAS ICTWSS; older comparative estimate
Trade union density	40.2% in 2018	OECD/AIAS ICTWSS; older comparative estimate

Stakeholder observations and civil society monitoring suggest that collective representation is particularly weak in private-sector workplaces where workers fear dismissal, retaliation or non-renewal of contracts. In sectors such as call centres, mining, construction, garment production and services, attempts to organise workers have reportedly faced pressure on organisers or employment insecurity. These observations should be understood as qualitative evidence of practical barriers to freedom of association and should be read together with the low level of private-sector collective bargaining coverage.

Smaller sectoral and enterprise-level unions also operate outside the main confederations. Some may be active in sectors such as education, health, media, extractive industries, public services, call centres, garment and fashion production. However, many face serious financial and organisational constraints. They may struggle to cover basic costs, provide legal support to members, maintain offices, organise campaigns or participate in structured dialogue. This creates an uneven playing field between larger confederations and smaller independent unions.

Real-life examples illustrate the weakness of collective representation. In garment and footwear production, where many workers are women, working conditions are often shaped by production targets, subcontracting arrangements and low margins. Workers may prioritise job security and daily income over collective action, especially where workplace representation is weak. In construction, subcontracting and informal employment

make union organisation difficult. In the media sector, journalists may face precarious contracts, delayed payments or pressure from owners, while collective bargaining remains limited.

Social dialogue mechanisms remain more formal than influential. The National Labour Council provides an institutional platform, but stakeholder input and available secondary evidence suggest that its practical influence on policy-making remains limited. Consultations are often government-led and may not always result in negotiated or jointly owned outcomes. At sector and workplace level, dialogue is even weaker. This creates a gap with the purpose of Directive 2002/14/EC, which requires meaningful information and consultation of workers, not only formal participation in consultation bodies.

Regional Tripartite Councils may offer an opportunity to strengthen social dialogue at territorial level. Their potential role is important in regions affected by seasonal work, tourism, agriculture, mining, construction, migration, skills shortages or high informality. Their effectiveness should be assessed through evidence: whether they meet regularly, whether trade unions and employers participate meaningfully, whether they discuss concrete local labour-market problems, and whether their conclusions are followed up by institutions.

Overall, the main gap in industrial relations is not the absence of legal recognition, but weak representativeness, low collective bargaining coverage, limited workplace presence, insufficient protection of organisers, and weak follow-up of consultation. Strengthening social dialogue requires a transparent representativeness framework, better data on collective agreements, stronger sector-level bargaining, protection against anti-union practices, support for social partner capacity, and more effective use of the National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils.

V. Working Conditions and Occupational Health and Safety

Albania's occupational safety and health (OSH) framework reflects several core principles of Directive 89/391/EEC, the European Union (EU) Framework Directive on safety and health at work. These include employer responsibility for prevention, risk assessment, worker training, protective measures, workplace consultation and supervision by the Labour Inspectorate. Elements of alignment also exist with specific EU directives, including Directive 92/57/EEC on temporary or mobile construction sites and Directive 2009/104/EC on the use of work equipment.

The 2025 Albania Report records an important policy development: Albania adopted the Policy Document for Health and Safety at Work and its Action Plan 2025–2030, aligned with the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021–2027. This creates a clearer strategic basis for OSH reform. However, the Interministerial Council of Occupational Health and Safety and its secretariat remain to be established. This means that the policy framework has advanced, but the institutional coordination mechanism required for systematic implementation is not yet fully operational.

Despite this formal and policy alignment, implementation remains a major concern. Fatal and serious workplace accidents reported in recent years show that OSH obligations are not yet consistently applied in practice. The problem is particularly visible in high-risk sectors such as construction, mining, energy, infrastructure works and manufacturing. Reported incidents often involve falls from height, unsafe machinery, inadequate supervision, lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), unsafe excavation works, electrical incidents, failures in work equipment, or accidents in subcontracted operations.

Media reporting and civil society monitoring are used in this report as illustrative evidence of recurring workplace risks. They are not treated as substitutes for official accident statistics. However, where reported cases are consistent with Labour Inspectorate data, European Commission findings or stakeholder observations, they help identify patterns of non-compliance and areas requiring stronger prevention and enforcement.

In construction, fatal falls from buildings, scaffolding or unfinished structures point to gaps in the practical implementation of safety requirements linked to Directive 92/57/EEC. Construction-site safety requires clear coordination, site planning, safe access, prevention of falls, PPE and clear responsibilities between contractors and subcontractors. In practice, smaller construction sites may lack proper scaffolding, safety harnesses, barriers, signage, daily supervision and documented risk assessments. Informal or semi-formal employment further weakens accountability, because workers may not be properly registered, trained, insured or protected.

In mining and extractive industries, accidents linked to underground work, structural instability, exposure to harmful substances, unsafe equipment, explosions or collapses reveal weaknesses in prevention and risk management. Risk assessments may exist formally, but stakeholder observations suggest that they are not always used as living management tools. Training, emergency procedures, health surveillance, ventilation, monitoring of exposure values and subcontractor control may be insufficient, particularly in smaller or less closely supervised operations.

The EU Common Position for Cluster 3 makes the mining and tunnelling issue particularly relevant for Chapter 19. It records Albania's request for a transitional period until 31 December 2032 concerning occupational exposure limit values for nitrogen monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide in underground mining and tunnelling facilities under Commission Directive (EU) 2017/164. This should be treated as a specific Chapter 19 accession bookmark requiring a credible phased compliance plan. Such a plan should identify affected companies and worksites, current protective measures, monitoring systems, technical investments required, cost implications, worker-protection measures and the timetable for gradual compliance.

In energy and infrastructure works, including hydropower, roads, tunnels, maintenance and technical installation activities, accidents may be linked to equipment failure, poor contractor coordination, inadequate lock-out/tag-out procedures, insufficient worker training or weak supervision of subcontracted work. These risks are relevant to Directive 2009/104/EC on the safe use of work equipment and to the general preventive principles of the OSH framework. These sectors should therefore be included in risk-based inspection planning and targeted OSH campaigns.

The Labour Inspectorate has the mandate to inspect workplaces and impose administrative sanctions. Recent reforms in inspection methodology are important and should be acknowledged. Inspections are carried out through the centralised e-inspection platform, where inspector actions are recorded electronically. The inspection approach is increasingly risk-based, supported by risk assessment matrices and digital inspection tools. This is a positive step towards more targeted enforcement.

However, inspection effectiveness depends on quality and follow-up, not only on the number of inspections. Inspections need to reflect real working conditions and focus on the highest risks, particularly in construction, mining, manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture and subcontracted work. Workers should be able to provide first-hand information during inspections without fear of retaliation. Workplace safety councils and worker representatives should function in practice, meet regularly and participate actively in risk prevention. Occupational health services should also be strengthened to ensure health monitoring, early detection of risks and prevention of occupational diseases.

Labour Inspectorate data used for this report indicate that **275 workplace accidents** were recorded in 2025, resulting in **212 injured workers** and **48 fatalities**, compared with **168 accidents in 2023** and **177 accidents in 2024**. This indicates a concerning upward trend in workplace accidents, particularly in construction, mining and manufacturing. The same data indicate that accident-triggered inspections increased by **23%** and that the accident-reporting rate reached **96%**. While this may point to improved reporting and institutional follow-up, the increase in accidents and fatalities shows that prevention remains weak and that OSH obligations are not yet producing sufficient practical protection.

The main gap in OSH is therefore not only legal alignment, but implementation and prevention. Albania has the basic OSH framework and a new strategic policy document, but it needs to make prevention operational at workplace level. This requires stronger risk-based inspection, better accident investigation, systematic follow-up of corrective measures, stronger sanctions for serious breaches, active worker participation, functioning workplace safety councils, effective occupational health services and better coordination between labour inspection, health institutions, social insurance, prosecution services, courts, municipalities and social partners.

Overall, OSH should be treated as one of the most critical Chapter 19 implementation gaps. The priority is to move from formal compliance to measurable prevention, especially in high-risk sectors. This requires a credible OSH implementation dashboard, sector-specific inspection plans, strengthened accident and fatality reporting, targeted campaigns in construction and mining, and a dedicated compliance plan for the 2032 transitional request concerning exposure limit values in underground mining and tunnelling.

1. Proposed Legislative Improvements on Sanctions and Enforcement

To ensure that sanctions are effective, proportionate and dissuasive, Albania should further strengthen the legal framework on penalties and enforcement for labour-law and occupational safety and health violations. The objective should not be limited to punishment after a breach has occurred. Sanctions should also prevent violations, promote compliance and ensure that employers treat workers' rights and workplace safety as core management responsibilities.

First, fines should be proportionate to the size, turnover and economic capacity of the employer. A system based only on fixed penalties may be insufficiently dissuasive for larger companies, especially in high-risk sectors such as construction, mining, energy, infrastructure and manufacturing. The law could introduce differentiated penalties calculated by reference to annual turnover, company size, number of workers affected, seriousness of risk or the economic benefit obtained from non-compliance. This would help ensure that sanctions have a comparable deterrent effect for both small and large employers.

Second, legislation should introduce clearer graduated and escalating sanctions. Repeated violations should trigger progressively stronger consequences, including higher fines, mandatory corrective measures, temporary suspension of specific activities, suspension of permits or licences where relevant, and, in the most serious cases, temporary closure of the workplace or activity. This would discourage repeated non-compliance and reduce the risk that employers treat administrative fines as a predictable business cost.

Third, sanctions should be linked more clearly to the seriousness of the violation and the level of risk created. Higher penalties should apply where violations expose workers to serious or imminent danger, involve failure to conduct risk assessment, lack of protective equipment, unsafe machinery, unprotected work at height, unsafe excavation, exposure to hazardous substances or failure to train workers. The most serious category should cover

violations that contribute to fatal or life-changing workplace accidents, especially where negligence, repeated warnings or failure to implement previous inspection measures can be established.

Fourth, criminal liability should be clarified and applied effectively in cases of serious breaches of occupational safety and health duties, particularly where violations lead to death or serious injury. This should include clearer accountability for administrators, managers, site supervisors, contractors and subcontractors where they have decision-making responsibility over unsafe working conditions. The purpose is not to criminalise every workplace accident, but to ensure accountability where fatal or serious harm results from preventable breaches, gross negligence or systematic disregard of legal duties.

Fifth, enforcement should address economic crime and employment informality more directly. Undeclared work, under-declaration of wages, non-payment of social insurance contributions, partial cash payments and concealment of employment relationships should be treated as serious violations affecting both workers' rights and public revenue. Stronger cooperation is needed between labour inspection, tax administration, social insurance institutions and prosecution authorities where labour-law breaches also involve fiscal evasion, social contribution fraud or repeated undeclared employment.

Sixth, the legal framework should improve transparency and publication of sanctions. Public disclosure of serious or repeated violations, especially in high-risk sectors, could act as an additional deterrent and encourage compliance through reputational pressure. Publication should be regulated clearly, respect due process and data-protection rules, and distinguish between final sanctions and pending procedures. It could include the name of the employer, type of violation, sector, sanction imposed and corrective measures required.

Seventh, sanctions should be linked to mandatory preventive and corrective measures. Employers found in serious violation should not only pay fines. They should also be required to implement corrective action plans, provide mandatory worker training, carry out independent safety audits where appropriate, update risk assessments, repair or replace unsafe equipment and report back to the Labour Inspectorate within a defined deadline. Follow-up inspections should verify whether these measures have been implemented in practice.

Eighth, worker participation should be strengthened as part of enforcement. Safety committees, worker representatives and trade unions should be involved in identifying risks, reporting unsafe conditions and monitoring corrective measures. Workers should be able to speak freely during inspections without fear of retaliation. Protection against retaliation should be reinforced for workers who report labour-law violations, unsafe working conditions, harassment or discrimination.

Finally, the 2025 inspection and accident data show why sanctions and enforcement reform are necessary. The Labour Inspectorate inspected a significant number of entities and imposed sanctions, yet workplace accidents and fatalities increased compared with previous years. This indicates that enforcement activity alone is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by stronger prevention, dissuasive penalties, systematic follow-up of corrective measures and real employer accountability. Occupational safety and health must therefore be treated not as a formal compliance requirement, but as a daily management duty and a core element of labour-rights protection.

The detailed action table on sanctions and enforcement, including the relevant EU acquis, Albanian legal framework, responsible institutions and expected outputs, is provided in **Annex 4**

VI. Equality and Non-Discrimination

Albania has a relatively comprehensive legal framework on equality and non-discrimination, including the Labour Code, the Law on Protection from Discrimination, and legislation on gender equality. These laws broadly reflect the principles of Directive 2006/54/EC on equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in employment and occupation, Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, and Directive 2000/43/EC on equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

However, practical enforcement remains limited. Albania remains only partially aligned with the *acquis* on non-discrimination in employment and social policy. The legal and institutional framework exists, but further alignment and stronger implementation are still required, particularly in relation to racial equality, employment equality, gender equality, equality-body standards, reasonable accommodation, pay transparency, and effective remedies.

Gender equality remains a major labour-market concern. Women continue to face disadvantages in employment, pay, promotion, job security, work-life balance and access to decision-making positions. The Gender Equality Index for Albania was **60.4 in 2020**, below the EU average. The gender employment gap reached **13% in 2024**, compared with **10.4% in 2023**, while the unemployment rate was **9.6% for women** and **8.0% for men**. These figures show that formal legal guarantees have not yet eliminated structural inequalities in labour-market participation and employment outcomes.

Gender inequalities are particularly visible in low-paid and labour-intensive sectors. In garment and footwear production, services, agriculture, social care and other low-paid segments of the labour market, women are often concentrated in lower-paid jobs with limited bargaining power, weak workplace representation and limited career progression. These conditions raise concerns under Directive 2006/54/EC, particularly in relation to equal treatment, equal opportunities, protection against discrimination, access to promotion and equal pay.

Discrimination may occur before, during and after employment. Stakeholder observations and civil society monitoring point to practices such as women being informally asked during recruitment about marital status, children or maternity plans, and cases where employment contracts are not renewed after pregnancy or maternity leave. Such practices are rarely formally recorded as discrimination cases, because workers may fear retaliation, lack information on remedies, or lack trust in complaint mechanisms. The low level of formal complaints should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of low discrimination risk.

Workplace harassment and gender-based violence represent an important dimension of equality in employment. Albania has ratified International Labour Organization Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, which recognises violence and harassment as a violation of human rights and a threat to equal opportunities in employment. The legal framework should therefore ensure clear definitions, preventive employer duties, confidential reporting channels, protection from retaliation, effective remedies and institutional follow-up.

In practice, workplace harassment, including verbal, psychological and sexual harassment, remains underreported. This is often linked to fear of retaliation, weak internal complaint mechanisms, limited trust in institutions and lack of awareness of available remedies. According to the Centre for Labour Rights study **“Violence and Harassment in the World of Work in Albania: A Comparative Approach across Six Strategic Sectors”** (2021), the most common reported forms of workplace abuse were physical gestures and verbal violence, while other behaviours included inappropriate touching, threats, attacks and intimidation. Women reported higher exposure to combined forms of violence and harassment than men. The study also found that violence was more often

reported in interactions between different genders, and that around one in four participants considered workplace violence and harassment to be widespread in Albania.

Persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in access to employment. Although national legislation provides for inclusion and reasonable accommodation, implementation remains weak in practice. Employers may fail to adapt workplaces, provide accessible facilities, adjust tasks or ensure inclusive recruitment and retention practices. This creates a gap with Directive 2000/78/EC, which requires reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in employment and occupation.

Roma and Egyptian communities remain particularly exposed to informal work, low-paid employment and limited access to social protection. Although Directive 2000/43/EC prohibits discrimination on racial or ethnic grounds, the main challenge in Albania is structural exclusion rather than direct discrimination alone. Barriers relate to education, housing, documentation, social status, discrimination, weak access to formal employment and limited outreach by labour-market institutions.

Young workers are another vulnerable group. They often enter the labour market through internships, informal work, temporary contracts or low-paid service jobs. In practice, they may lack knowledge of their rights and may accept unpaid overtime, unclear contracts, unstable schedules or unsafe working conditions. This links equality and non-discrimination with Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions, because young workers are among the groups most likely not to receive clear, timely and enforceable information on employment terms. In 2024, the NEET rate was **25.6% for young women** and **23.5% for young men**, indicating a continued risk of labour-market exclusion among young people.

The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination plays a central role as Albania's equality body, including in employment-related cases. In 2024, the Commissioner continued to handle cases mainly in the areas of employment and services. Albanian reporting for 2024 indicates that complaints in the field of employment concerned alleged discrimination on grounds including political belief, educational status, place of residence, gender, pregnancy, belonging to a special group, health status, race and family status. During the period 21 March–22 July 2024, the Commissioner issued **38 decisions** in the field of employment, including **9 decisions finding discrimination**.

The Ombudsman also has an important role in promoting equality and non-discrimination, especially where unequal treatment arises from public administration, public-sector employment, enforcement of court decisions, access to services, or treatment of vulnerable groups. The Ombudsman can contribute to identifying systemic problems affecting workers, especially in relation to public-sector employment, administrative procedures, access to remedies and treatment of vulnerable persons.

Despite the existence of the Commissioner, the Ombudsman, courts and labour inspection, labour-related discrimination remains underreported. This suggests low awareness, fear of retaliation, limited access to legal support, weak internal workplace complaint procedures and insufficient coordination between institutions. Labour inspection does not yet systematically integrate equality and non-discrimination issues into workplace inspections. This limits the ability of the enforcement system to detect discrimination linked to recruitment, maternity, disability, wages, harassment, working conditions or dismissal.

Overall, Albania's equality framework is formally established but operationally incomplete. The main gaps concern practical enforcement, underreporting, weak remedies, insufficient institutional capacity, lack of disaggregated labour-market data, and structural exclusion of vulnerable groups. Priority actions should include stronger

coordination between the Commissioner, the Ombudsman, Labour Inspectorate and courts; integration of equality checks into labour inspections; improved protection against retaliation; targeted monitoring of gender pay and maternity discrimination; workplace harassment procedures aligned with ILO Convention No. 190; and labour-market inclusion measures for Roma and Egyptians, persons with disabilities, women in low-paid sectors and young workers.

Gender gap indicators to be monitored:

Indicator	Latest available figure / status	Relevance for Chapter 19
Female labour force participation rate	69.1% for women compared with 80.7% for men in Q4 2022, according to the Cluster 3 Screening Report.	Shows structural gender gap in access to and participation in the labour market.
Gender employment gap	13% in 2024 , compared with 10.4% in 2023 , according to the 2025 Albania Report. (Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood)	Indicates worsening gender inequality in employment outcomes.
Female unemployment rate	9.6% for women compared with 8.0% for men in 2024. (Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood)	Shows that women continue to face higher unemployment.
Gender pay gap	4.9% in 2024 , narrowed from 6.2% in the previous year, according to the 2025 Albania Report and INSTAT “Women and Men in Albania 2025”. (Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood)	Relevant to Directive 2006/54/EC and future alignment with EU pay-transparency standards.
NEET rate among youth	25.6% for young women and 23.5% for young men in 2024. (Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood)	Shows higher labour-market exclusion risk among young women.

VII. Insolvency and Protection of Workers’ Rights

Although insolvency is primarily regulated under commercial, company and restructuring law, it has direct implications for labour rights under Chapter 19 of the EU acquis, particularly in relation to the protection of employees when an employer becomes insolvent. Employer insolvency may result in unpaid wages, unpaid compensation, loss of employment, unpaid social insurance contributions, interruption of employment-related rights and difficulties in accessing effective remedies. For this reason, insolvency should not be treated only as a business or creditor issue, but also as a labour-protection issue.

EU labour law provides specific safeguards through Directive 2008/94/EC on the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer. This Directive requires Member States to ensure that employees’ outstanding claims arising from contracts of employment or employment relationships are protected, including through guarantee institutions. Directive (EU) 2019/1023 on preventive restructuring is also relevant, because early restructuring mechanisms can help preserve viable businesses, protect employment and reduce the social impact of insolvency.

In Albania, the insolvency framework provides general procedures for liquidation, restructuring and bankruptcy of companies. However, the protection of workers’ claims within insolvency proceedings remains limited in practice. Workers may face delays or difficulties in recovering unpaid wages, compensation for unused leave, severance or termination-related payments, unpaid social insurance contributions and other employment-related entitlements when an employer becomes insolvent. These difficulties become more serious where workers have incomplete documentation, undeclared wages, partially cash-based payments, or no formal written contract.

A key gap concerns the absence, limited effectiveness or insufficient visibility of a wage guarantee mechanism equivalent in practice to the protection required by Directive 2008/94/EC. Even where legal provisions recognise employees' claims, the practical accessibility, scope, funding and speed of compensation may not be sufficient to ensure timely protection. A functioning guarantee mechanism would be particularly important for workers in low-wage, informal or financially unstable sectors, where unpaid wages can have immediate social consequences.

Another issue concerns the priority of workers' claims in insolvency procedures. Labour claims may be formally recognised, but they do not always benefit from effective prioritisation, simplified procedures or fast-track treatment. In practice, workers may be in a weaker position than secured or institutional creditors, especially where the employer's remaining assets are limited. This creates a risk that insolvency law protects business restructuring and creditor recovery more effectively than it protects workers' basic income claims.

Procedural barriers also affect workers' ability to claim their rights. Workers may not receive timely information on the opening of insolvency proceedings, may not understand the deadlines or documents required to submit claims, may not be represented collectively, or may lack access to legal assistance. These barriers are particularly problematic for informal or semi-formal workers, who may have difficulty proving the existence, duration and value of the employment relationship. In such cases, insolvency protection becomes closely linked to labour inspection, formalisation, social insurance records, tax records and access to evidence.

The protection of social insurance contributions is also important. When employers fail to pay contributions before insolvency, workers may face difficulties in proving pension, health insurance, maternity, unemployment or other social security entitlements. This creates a direct link between insolvency law, labour law, tax administration, social insurance administration and social protection.

The relevance of this issue will increase in the context of economic restructuring, business closures, sectoral transformation and future just transition processes. Without adequate safeguards, insolvency can create significant social and economic risks, including loss of income, increased informality, unpaid social insurance contributions, household poverty and reduced trust in institutions. A modern insolvency framework aligned with the EU acquis should therefore combine efficient business restructuring with enforceable protection of workers' rights.

A detailed comparison between Albania's framework and Directive 2008/94/EC is provided in **Annex 2**.

1. Strengthening the Insolvency Framework in Albania in line with EU Acquis

Strengthening Albania's insolvency framework in line with the EU acquis requires a balanced approach. Insolvency procedures should allow efficient restructuring or liquidation of businesses, but they must also ensure that employees are not left without effective protection when an employer fails. This requires legal, institutional and procedural reforms.

A first priority is the establishment or strengthening of a wage guarantee mechanism capable of ensuring timely payment of outstanding wages, holiday pay and other employment-related claims. Such a mechanism should be accessible, adequately funded and designed to provide rapid compensation. It should define clearly the categories of workers covered, the types of claims protected, the maximum amount or reference period covered, the procedure for submitting claims and the responsible institution.

A second priority is the clear prioritisation of workers' claims within insolvency proceedings. Labour claims should be recognised, ranked and processed in a way that reflects their social importance. Where possible, simplified and fast-track procedures should allow employees to submit claims without excessive administrative burden. Workers should not be required to navigate complex insolvency procedures without information, representation or legal support.

A third priority is to address the position of informal or semi-formal workers. Insolvency protection will remain incomplete if workers who were actually employed are excluded only because the employer failed to formalise the relationship. The framework should therefore allow flexible proof mechanisms, using labour inspection findings, tax records, social insurance data, witness statements, payroll evidence, bank transfers, electronic communications or other documentation capable of proving the existence of the employment relationship.

A fourth priority is the development of preventive restructuring tools. Directive (EU) 2019/1023 promotes early restructuring frameworks that can help companies avoid insolvency where recovery is possible. From a labour-rights perspective, preventive restructuring is important because it can preserve employment, reduce abrupt closures and limit unpaid wage accumulation. However, workers should be informed and, where appropriate, consulted during restructuring processes. This links insolvency reform with worker information and consultation rights, including the broader logic of Directive 2002/14/EC.

A fifth priority is stronger institutional coordination. Effective protection of workers in insolvency depends on cooperation between courts, insolvency administrators, labour inspection, tax authorities, social insurance institutions, employment services and social partners. Coordination is particularly important where a case involves unpaid wages, undeclared employment, unpaid social contributions, dismissal, bankruptcy and possible criminal or administrative liability. A cooperation protocol should clarify information-sharing, referral procedures, claim verification, worker notification and follow-up responsibilities.

A sixth priority is access to justice and information. Workers should be able to understand their rights and access compensation mechanisms without excessive cost or complexity. This may require standard information notices, online guidance, support from labour offices, trade union assistance, legal aid in selected cases and clear templates for submitting claims. Particular attention should be given to vulnerable workers, including women in low-paid sectors, informal workers, migrant or returned workers, Roma and Egyptian workers, young workers and persons with disabilities.

Finally, insolvency reform should be linked with broader labour-market and social protection policies. Workers affected by restructuring or insolvency may require re-employment support, reskilling, unemployment benefits, social assistance or counselling. This is particularly relevant in the context of future economic modernisation, energy transition, industrial restructuring and just transition processes. Insolvency procedures should therefore not end with the closure or restructuring of a company, but should connect affected workers with employment and social support services.

The corresponding action table on insolvency and protection of workers' rights is provided in **Annex 3**.

VIII. Enforcement and Institutional Capacity

The enforcement of labour legislation in Albania depends on several institutions, including the State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services (SLISS), the judiciary, equality bodies, social protection institutions, employment services, tax and social insurance authorities, social partners and, in serious cases, prosecution authorities. The legal framework defines the mandates of these institutions, but implementation is affected by limited capacity, weak coordination, fragmented data systems and uneven access to remedies. This creates a persistent gap between formal legal rights and their practical enforcement.

The Labour Inspectorate is the central institution responsible for checking compliance with employment contracts, working conditions, occupational safety and health (OSH) requirements, working time, wages, formalisation of employment and other labour standards. Its role is directly relevant to the enforcement of Directive 2003/88/EC on working time, Directive 89/391/EEC on OSH, Directive 92/57/EEC on temporary or mobile construction sites, Directive 2002/14/EC on information and consultation of workers, and Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions.

The European Union (EU) has identified enforcement and inspection as a Chapter 19 priority. Albania is assessed as partially aligned with the EU acquis in labour law, particularly in the areas of working conditions and information and consultation of workers. The EU has also underlined the need to strengthen administrative capacities for enforcement and inspection in order to combat informal employment effectively. In OSH, Albania remains partially aligned and must demonstrate adequate institutional and inspection capacity to apply the acquis effectively.

Recent developments show progress in inspection methodology. The use of intelligent risk assessment matrices and the e-inspection platform represents a positive step towards more targeted and evidence-based enforcement. Risk-based planning can improve the use of inspection resources by directing controls towards sectors, employers and activities with higher compliance risks. However, this approach depends on the quality of data, the reliability of risk indicators, the capacity of inspectors and the follow-up of findings.

Labour Inspectorate data used for this report indicate that **9,532 entities** were inspected in 2025, covering more than **205,000 workplaces**, while **268 fines** were imposed with a total value of **64.5 million ALL**. Inspections identified **2,591 informal workers**, of whom approximately **98% were formalised** during the inspection process. In the same period, **275 workplace accidents** were recorded, resulting in **212 injured workers** and **48 fatalities**. These figures show that inspection activity can produce immediate corrective effects, particularly in relation to formalisation, but also that inspection coverage, sanctions and follow-up measures have not yet produced sufficient prevention in high-risk sectors.

Inspection remains particularly difficult in informal, seasonal, subcontracted and fragmented sectors. Construction, agriculture, domestic work, tourism, small services, subcontracted work and parts of the media sector are harder to monitor than formal workplaces with stable employment records. Workers in these sectors may not complain because they fear losing their job, are not formally registered, receive part of their salary in cash, or do not trust complaint mechanisms. This reduces the ability of institutions to detect violations unless inspections are proactive, targeted and supported by reliable data-sharing between institutions.

The intersection between informality, workplace accidents and weak access to remedies is particularly important. Where workplace accidents involve unregistered workers, subcontracting, incomplete employment documentation or unpaid social insurance contributions, enforcement becomes more complex. Such cases may

require coordinated action by the Labour Inspectorate, tax administration, social insurance institutions, police, prosecutors, courts and health institutions. Without coordinated follow-up, accountability remains fragmented.

The judiciary is essential for resolving labour disputes, enforcing employment rights, reviewing dismissals, protecting workers against discrimination and ensuring compensation in workplace accident cases. However, workers face practical barriers in accessing justice. Court procedures may be lengthy and costly, and many workers lack access to legal aid or specialised advice. These barriers are particularly relevant for informal workers, women facing discrimination or harassment, dismissed workers, workers injured in workplace accidents, and workers whose wages or social insurance contributions have not been paid.

Access to justice constraints should also be understood in the wider justice-system context. Delays, backlog, costs and difficulties in enforcing final decisions reduce the practical value of labour rights. Even where legal remedies exist, workers may be discouraged from pursuing claims if the procedure is slow, uncertain or costly. For labour-rights enforcement, timely remedies are especially important because unpaid wages, unlawful dismissal, discrimination or accident-related compensation have immediate effects on workers' income and family welfare.

Legal aid and information services should therefore be better connected to workers' needs. Labour-related legal aid should cover dismissal, unpaid wages, discrimination, harassment, workplace accidents, social insurance disputes and insolvency-related claims. Trade unions, civil society organisations and legal aid institutions can play an important role in helping workers understand procedures, collect evidence and access remedies.

Equality bodies also form part of the enforcement architecture. The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) is responsible for handling discrimination complaints and promoting equal treatment, including in employment and services. The Ombudsman plays a complementary role in cases involving public administration, public-sector employment, non-enforcement of administrative or judicial obligations and broader human rights concerns. However, coordination between equality bodies, labour inspection and courts remains insufficient. Labour inspection does not yet systematically integrate equality and non-discrimination issues into workplace inspections.

Coordination between institutions remains a major weakness. Many labour cases involve several issues at the same time. For example, an unregistered worker injured at a construction site may require action by the Labour Inspectorate, tax administration, social insurance institutions, police, prosecutors, courts and health institutions. A woman dismissed after maternity leave may require action by the employer, Labour Inspectorate, Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, court and social insurance institutions. In practice, such cooperation is not always systematic, and information-sharing often depends on individual initiative rather than formal protocols.

Monitoring systems are also fragmented. Data on inspections, sanctions, workplace accidents, court cases, discrimination complaints, informal employment, social insurance contributions, occupational diseases and social protection claims are collected by different institutions, but are not fully integrated. This prevents proper risk analysis, weakens evidence-based policy-making and makes it difficult to assess whether Chapter 19 alignment is improving the actual situation of workers. The e-inspection platform and risk assessment matrices provide a basis for stronger monitoring, but they should be connected with broader labour-market, social insurance and equality data.

Civil society organisations, including the Centre for Labour Rights, play an important complementary role by providing legal aid, monitoring, research, worker awareness and advocacy. International organisations and foundations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), Olof Palme International Center and Friedrich

Ebert Stiftung also contribute through reports, training, social dialogue support, capacity building and trade union development. Their contribution is particularly important in areas where workers do not report violations directly to institutions.

EU and donor support is important, but labour rights should not be treated only as part of broader employment or social inclusion programmes. Labour rights are also fundamental rights. Safe work, fair treatment, equal access to employment, freedom of association, protection from discrimination, protection from violence and harassment, payment of wages and access to justice are not only social-policy issues. They are also part of Albania's rule-of-law, human-rights and EU accession agenda.

Overall, enforcement and institutional capacity remain among the most important Chapter 19 gaps. Albania has the basic institutional architecture, but the system does not yet operate as an integrated labour-rights enforcement framework. The priority should be to strengthen inspection capacity, improve inter-institutional coordination, develop integrated monitoring systems, link labour enforcement with tax and social insurance enforcement, improve access to legal remedies, and ensure that social partners and civil society are meaningfully involved in identifying and addressing labour-rights violations.

Suggested monitoring indicators

Enforcement area	Indicator to monitor	Institution/source
Labour inspection coverage	Number of inspections; share of declared economic activities inspected; share of risk-based inspections	State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services
Informality enforcement	Informal workers identified; workers formalised; wage under-declaration cases; repeat violations	Labour Inspectorate; Tax Administration; Social Insurance Institute
OSH enforcement	Workplace accidents; fatal accidents; accident investigations; corrective measures; follow-up inspections	Labour Inspectorate; health/safety authorities
Sanctions	Number and value of fines; warnings; suspensions; repeated violations; sanctions by sector	Labour Inspectorate
Access to justice	Number of labour disputes; duration of proceedings; enforcement of judgments; legal aid cases related to labour rights	Courts; Ministry of Justice; Legal Aid Directorate
Equality enforcement	Employment-related discrimination complaints; decisions finding discrimination; remedies applied	Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination
Ombudsman follow-up	Labour/public employment-related complaints; recommendations issued; implementation rate	Ombudsman
Inter-institutional cooperation	Joint inspections; referrals between institutions; data-sharing agreements; coordination protocols	Labour Inspectorate; Tax Administration; Social Insurance Institute; courts/prosecution

IX. Cross-Cutting Issues

The analysis identifies two levels of cross-cutting issues under Chapter 19. The first concerns systemic gaps that affect the labour governance framework as a whole: partial alignment with newer EU acquis, enforcement deficits, weak data systems, limited institutional coordination, low access to remedies and insufficient social dialogue. The second concerns thematic cross-cutting issues: gender equality, human rights, climate-related occupational risks, environmental exposure and just transition.

Legal and implementation gaps remain visible across several areas. Albania has transposed or reflected many core elements of the EU labour and social acquis, but further development is needed in relation to newer EU standards and their practical application. Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions is particularly relevant because workers in informal, seasonal, casual, platform-type or irregular employment may not receive clear and enforceable information on employment terms. Directive 2002/14/EC on information and consultation of workers is also weakly reflected in practice, especially in private enterprises without trade union presence or functioning worker representation.

Enforcement deficits cut across the whole labour system. Rules on working time, employment contracts, wages, occupational safety and health, equality, non-discrimination and termination of employment exist, but they are not consistently applied. This creates a recurring gap between law and practice. The problem is visible in unpaid overtime, weak recording of working time, unsafe construction sites, informal or partially declared work, low reporting of discrimination or harassment, and limited enforcement of worker information and consultation rights.

The interaction between systemic gaps and real-life cases is particularly evident in situations involving workplace accidents combined with informal employment. A fatal or serious workplace accident may simultaneously involve occupational safety breaches, absence of a written contract, undeclared work, unpaid social insurance contributions, subcontracting chains, criminal liability, insurance issues and compensation for the family. If each institution addresses only one part of the case, accountability remains fragmented and workers or their families may not receive effective protection.

Similar patterns arise in relation to excessive working hours, unpaid overtime and weak documentation of employment terms. These issues are relevant to Directive 2003/88/EC on working time and Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions. In sectors such as services, tourism, garment and footwear production, agriculture and small enterprises, workers may accept irregular schedules, unpaid overtime or unclear contracts due to economic pressure, fear of dismissal, lack of information or weak collective representation. This shows that enforcement cannot rely only on formal legal obligations; it also requires active inspection, worker information, collective representation and accessible complaint mechanisms.

Weak data systems affect all areas of Chapter 19. Data on inspections, sanctions, workplace accidents, occupational diseases, informal employment, social insurance contributions, discrimination complaints, Ombudsman recommendations, court outcomes and social protection claims are collected by different institutions, but are not fully integrated. This weakens monitoring and limits the ability to identify high-risk sectors, repeat offenders, vulnerable groups and recurring forms of non-compliance. The e-inspection platform and risk assessment tools provide a basis for improvement, but they need to be connected with wider labour-market, social insurance, equality and justice data.

Institutional coordination remains limited. Labour-rights violations are often multi-dimensional, but institutions tend to respond separately. For example, a woman dismissed after maternity leave may need protection through labour inspection, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the court system and social insurance institutions. An unregistered worker injured at a construction site may require action by the Labour Inspectorate, tax authorities, social insurance institutions, police, prosecution services, courts and health institutions. Without clear referral protocols, shared data and coordinated follow-up, enforcement remains fragmented.

Gender equality is a central cross-cutting concern. Women are disproportionately affected by low-paid work, weak career progression, unpaid care responsibilities, maternity-related discrimination, workplace harassment and limited access to worker representation. Gender equality should therefore be mainstreamed across labour

inspection, employment services, social protection, collective bargaining, occupational safety and health policy and judicial remedies. It should not be treated only as a separate equality issue.

Human rights are also central to Chapter 19. Labour rights include dignity at work, safe and healthy working conditions, non-discrimination, equal treatment, freedom of association, collective bargaining, protection from violence and harassment, payment of wages, social protection and access to remedy. Vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian communities, young workers, women in low-paid sectors, informal workers and workers in subcontracted arrangements often experience limited access to these rights in practice. This means that labour policy should be treated not only as a social or economic policy field, but also as part of Albania's broader human-rights and rule-of-law agenda.

Environmental and occupational risks are increasingly linked. Workers in construction, mining, waste management, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and manufacturing may be exposed to extreme heat, chemicals, dust, noise, unsafe machinery, unstable structures, electrical risks and other environmental hazards. Directive 89/391/EEC requires prevention of workplace risks, and this preventive approach should increasingly include climate-related and environmental risks. Heat exposure, in particular, is becoming more relevant for outdoor workers in construction, agriculture, transport and infrastructure works. National occupational safety and health policy should therefore incorporate climate-adaptation measures, including heat-risk protocols, working-time adjustments during extreme weather, hydration and rest measures, protective equipment and employer obligations for outdoor work.

The just transition agenda is becoming more relevant as Albania invests in energy transition, infrastructure, climate-related reforms and economic modernisation. New sectors may create employment opportunities, but they also require reskilling, occupational safety standards, labour inspection, social dialogue and protection for workers affected by restructuring. Without strong social dialogue and active labour-market measures, transition processes may increase inequalities rather than reduce them. Workers in carbon-intensive, extractive, informal or low-skilled sectors may be particularly exposed to restructuring risks.

Social dialogue is therefore a cross-cutting condition for effective Chapter 19 implementation. It is relevant to working conditions, occupational safety and health prevention, wage-setting, restructuring, equality, skills development, employment measures and just transition. The National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils should be used more actively to discuss labour-market risks, sectoral enforcement priorities, occupational safety campaigns, regional employment challenges and transition measures. Their role should be assessed not only by whether meetings take place, but also by whether their conclusions influence policy, inspection priorities and practical measures.

Overall, the cross-cutting challenge under Chapter 19 is to move from fragmented legal and institutional responses to an integrated labour-governance approach. This requires coherent legal alignment, stronger enforcement, better data integration, coordinated institutional action, gender and equality mainstreaming, climate-sensitive occupational safety and health policy, and meaningful social dialogue. Without these elements, formal alignment with the EU acquis will not be sufficient to ensure effective protection of workers in practice.

Priorities for cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting issue	Proposed action	Main institutions	Expected output
Legal inconsistencies and partial alignment	Prepare a Chapter 19 legal alignment tracker covering labour law, OSH, equality,	Ministry responsible for labour; MEKI/MEI; Ministry of Health and Social Protection; Ministry of Justice.	Updated tracker of EU acquis, Albanian legislation, gaps and planned amendments.

	social dialogue and social protection.		
Enforcement deficit	Develop a joint enforcement plan for informality, working time, OSH and equality.	Labour Inspectorate; Tax Administration; Social Insurance Institute; Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination.	Annual joint enforcement priorities and referral protocol.
Fragmented data	Create a Chapter 19 monitoring dashboard.	Labour Inspectorate; INSTAT; Social Insurance Institute; courts; equality bodies.	Integrated indicators on inspections, accidents, sanctions, disputes, discrimination and informality.
Gender equality	Integrate gender checks into labour inspection and employment services.	Labour Inspectorate; Commissioner; employment services; social partners.	Gender-sensitive inspection checklist and annual reporting on gender-related labour violations.
Human rights and access to remedy	Establish worker referral pathways for legal aid, Ombudsman, Commissioner and courts.	Legal Aid Directorate; Ombudsman; Commissioner; civil society organisations.	Standard referral mechanism for workers with labour-rights complaints.
Climate-related OSH risks	Develop heat and climate-risk protocols for outdoor and high-risk work.	Labour Inspectorate; Ministry responsible for labour; health authorities; employers; unions.	Sectoral guidance on heat exposure, rest, hydration and work organisation.
Just transition	Establish social-dialogue process on transition risks and reskilling.	National Labour Council; Regional Tripartite Councils; employment services; social partners.	Transition risk map and reskilling plan for affected workers.

X. Alignment with EU Acquis

Albania has made progress in aligning its labour and social policy framework with the EU acquis under Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment. The Labour Code, occupational safety and health legislation, anti-discrimination framework, social dialogue provisions, employment policy instruments and social protection measures reflect many core EU principles. However, alignment remains partial and uneven. The main challenge is not only the transposition of EU rules into national legislation, but also their effective implementation, enforcement, monitoring and practical impact on workers.

The Chapter 19 acquis covers minimum standards in labour law, equal treatment between women and men in employment and social security, occupational safety and health, non-discrimination, social inclusion, social protection and social dialogue. It also requires consideration of relevant International Labour Organization conventions and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The EU Common Position for Cluster 3 provides the key accession reference for Albania's current alignment status. It notes that Albania is partially aligned with the European Pillar of Social Rights and invites Albania to adopt a Social Rights Action Plan in line with the Pillar. In labour law, Albania is assessed as partially aligned with the acquis on working conditions and information and consultation of workers. The EU also underlines the need to strengthen administrative capacities for enforcement and inspection in order to combat informal employment effectively.

In labour law, the Labour Code provides the main basis for employment relations and reflects several EU labour-law principles. It regulates working time, weekly rest, annual leave, information on basic conditions of work, temporary agency work, transfers of undertakings and minimum wage. However, the framework remains weaker in relation to newer and more complex labour-market developments, including non-standard forms of work, platform work, dependent self-employment, remote and hybrid work, on-call work, seasonal work and irregular or unpredictable schedules.

Directive 2003/88/EC on working time is partly reflected in the Labour Code through rules on working time, rest periods, annual leave and overtime. However, implementation remains a central gap. Problems persist in the monitoring of working hours, unpaid overtime, excessive working time, weak recording systems and informal work arrangements. These issues are particularly relevant in services, tourism, garment and footwear production, agriculture and small enterprises, where workers may have limited bargaining power and weak access to complaint mechanisms.

Directive 1999/70/EC on fixed-term work and Directive 97/81/EC on part-time work are also partially reflected in the Labour Code. The main risks relate to the abuse of successive fixed-term contracts, unclear limits on repeated renewals, weak monitoring of precarious contractual arrangements and insufficient protection of part-time workers in practice. The issue is not only whether legal rules exist, but whether labour inspection, courts and social partners can detect and address abusive or discriminatory use of such contracts.

Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions is particularly important for future alignment. Albania still faces gaps in ensuring that all workers receive clear, timely and enforceable written information on employment terms, including duties, place of work, remuneration, working time, probation, training, predictability of schedules and rules on additional employment. The relevance of this Directive is heightened by informal employment, partially declared wages, seasonal work, platform-type arrangements and other forms of insecure or poorly documented work.

Occupational safety and health is one of the most important areas of partial alignment and weak implementation. Directive 89/391/EEC, the Framework Directive on safety and health at work, is broadly reflected through the Law on Safety and Health at Work and related legislation. However, Albania remains only partially aligned with the health and safety at work acquis, and further alignment and implementation are required. The 2025 adoption of the Policy Document for Health and Safety at Work and its Action Plan 2025–2030 is an important step, but the Interministerial Council of Occupational Health and Safety and its secretariat remain to be established.

Alignment with Directive 92/57/EEC on temporary or mobile construction sites remains particularly relevant because construction continues to be a high-risk sector. Construction-site coordination, contractor and subcontractor responsibilities, prevention of falls from height, scaffolding, protective equipment, site supervision and worker training require stronger implementation. Directive 2009/104/EC on the use of work equipment also remains relevant in construction, manufacturing, energy, infrastructure and mining, where equipment maintenance, inspection, training and technical safety remain important enforcement concerns.

Specific OSH risks require further attention. Albania is partially aligned with Directive 98/24/EC on chemical agents at work, while further alignment is needed on occupational exposure limit values. The EU Common Position records Albania's request for a transitional period until 31 December 2032 for the implementation of limit values for nitrogen monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide in underground mining and tunnelling facilities under Directive (EU) 2017/164. This should be treated as a specific Chapter 19 accession bookmark requiring a phased compliance plan, technical investment, exposure monitoring, worker-protection measures and clear institutional follow-up.

Equality and non-discrimination legislation is broadly developed but remains uneven in implementation. The Labour Code, Law on Protection from Discrimination and gender equality framework reflect the main principles of Directive 2006/54/EC, Directive 2000/78/EC and Directive 2000/43/EC. However, enforcement gaps remain in relation to equal pay, maternity-related discrimination, work-life balance, pay transparency, reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, workplace harassment, low reporting of discrimination, and structural exclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities.

Social dialogue and worker participation remain weak in practice. Albania's social dialogue framework is formally established, but its practical effectiveness is limited by weak collective bargaining coverage, fragmented representation, limited sector-level dialogue and insufficient worker participation at enterprise level. The National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils provide formal platforms, but their impact depends on regular meetings, meaningful agendas, transparent representativeness and follow-up of conclusions. This confirms that alignment in social dialogue is primarily an implementation and institutional-capacity challenge, not only a legal one.

Employment policy is also part of Chapter 19 alignment. Albania has continued implementation of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030 and extended the Youth Guarantee pilot until the end of 2027. However, employment support schemes and active labour-market measures require further strengthening, especially for NEET youth, Roma and Egyptian communities, persons with disabilities, returned migrants, long-term unemployed persons and recipients of economic aid. Social protection and social inclusion remain areas requiring stronger alignment and implementation.

The above findings show that Albania's Chapter 19 alignment can be assessed as **partial formal alignment with significant implementation gaps**. The strongest formal alignment is found in the general Labour Code framework, OSH framework legislation and equality legislation. The weakest areas concern practical enforcement, informal employment, working-time monitoring, transparent and predictable conditions for non-standard workers, worker information and consultation, sector-level social dialogue, OSH enforcement in high-risk sectors, chemical exposure limit values in mining and tunnelling, social protection and inclusion, and protection of workers in insolvency.

Alignment Matrix – Chapter 19 EU Acquis and Albanian Framework:

EU acquis / instrument	Area	Albanian legal / policy framework	Current alignment assessment	Key gaps / bookmarks
European Pillar of Social Rights	Overall social rights framework	Planned Social Rights Action Plan; National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030; social protection and employment policies	Partial	EU invites Albania to adopt a Social Rights Action Plan in line with the Pillar.
Directive 2003/88/EC	Working time	Labour Code	Partial	Enforcement of working hours, overtime, rest periods and recording systems; informal work limits practical application.
Directive 1999/70/EC	Fixed-term work	Labour Code	Partial	Monitoring of successive fixed-term contracts; prevention of abuse; precarious work arrangements.

Directive 97/81/EC	Part-time work	Labour Code	Partial	Equal treatment in practice; under-declared or informal part-time arrangements; weak monitoring.
Directive (EU) 2019/1152	Transparent and predictable working conditions	Labour Code; employment contract rules; inspection practice	Low-Partial / further alignment needed	Clear written information, predictable schedules, non-standard work, platform/remote/casual work, enforcement of contract transparency.
Directive 98/59/EC	Collective redundancies	Labour Code	Partial	Worker information and consultation in restructuring; weak workplace representation. Screening Report notes partial alignment.
Directive 2001/23/EC	Transfers of undertakings	Labour Code	Partial	Safeguards exist, but practical information, consultation and enforcement need strengthening. Screening Report notes safeguards in national law.
Directive 2002/14/EC	Information and consultation of workers	Labour Code; social dialogue provisions	Partial / weak in practice	Weak enterprise-level mechanisms; limited worker representation; low collective bargaining coverage. Screening Report notes partial alignment.
Directive 2009/38/EC	European Works Councils	Labour Code / related framework	Partial	Limited relevance before accession but requires full readiness; Screening Report notes partial alignment.
Directive 2001/86/EC	Employee involvement in European Companies	Company/labour framework	Early stage	Screening Report notes alignment is still at early stage.
Directive 2003/72/EC	Employee involvement in European Cooperative Societies	Company/labour framework	Not yet aligned / not commenced	Screening Report indicates alignment had not commenced for certain worker-involvement instruments.
Directive 89/391/EEC	OSH Framework Directive	Law No. 10237/2010 "On Safety and Health at Work", as amended; Labour Code; OSH policy document 2025–2030	Partial / broadly reflected but implementation weak	Prevention, risk assessment, worker participation and enforcement remain weak; Commission assessment states Albania is partially aligned.
Directive 89/654/EEC	Workplaces	OSH legislation and by-laws	Partial	Screening Report states partial alignment with workplace acquis.
Directive 92/57/EEC	Temporary or mobile	OSH legislation and by-laws	Partial	Construction-site coordination, supervision,

	construction sites			subcontractor accountability, falls from height, PPE and site-risk management.
Directive 2009/104/EC	Use of work equipment	OSH legislation and technical rules	Partial	Maintenance, inspection, training, machinery safety and enforcement gaps.
Directive 92/91/EEC	Mineral-extracting industries through drilling	Law on Safety and Health at Work; sectoral mining/extractive rules	Not aligned / only some provisions identified	Screening Report states Albania is not aligned, although some provisions are identified in Law No. 10237/2010.
Directive 98/24/EC	Chemical agents at work	OSH legislation	Partial	Further alignment and enforcement needed for hazardous chemical exposure at work.
Directive (EU) 2017/164	Occupational exposure limit values	Not aligned according to Screening Report	Not aligned / transitional request	Transitional request until 31 December 2032 for NO, NO ₂ and CO in underground mining/tunnelling; EU requested detailed compliance information.
Directive (EU) 2019/1831	Occupational exposure limit values	Not aligned according to Screening Report	Not aligned	Further legal transposition and technical enforcement capacity required.
Directive 2006/54/EC	Gender equality in employment and occupation	Labour Code; Law on Gender Equality; Law on Protection from Discrimination	Broadly aligned / enforcement gap	Gender employment gap, pay gap, maternity-related discrimination, low-paid sectors, weak remedies.
Directive 2000/78/EC	Equal treatment in employment and occupation	Law on Protection from Discrimination; Labour Code; disability inclusion framework	Broadly aligned / enforcement gap	Low reporting; weak reasonable accommodation in practice; discrimination based on disability, age, religion/belief, sexual orientation.
Directive 2000/43/EC	Racial equality	Law on Protection from Discrimination; Roma and Egyptian inclusion policies	Broadly aligned / structural gap	Structural exclusion of Roma and Egyptians from formal employment, education and social protection.
Directive 2008/94/EC	Protection of employees in employer insolvency	Insolvency law; Labour Code; social protection framework	Partial / requires strengthening	Wage guarantee mechanism, priority of workers' claims, access to compensation, informal workers' proof of employment.
Directive (EU) 2019/1023	Preventive restructuring	Insolvency/restructuring framework	Relevant for further alignment	Early restructuring should preserve employment; workers' information and consultation during restructuring should be strengthened.
ESF+ / future EU funds	European Social Fund / social inclusion and	Employment services; social protection institutions;	Capacity to be strengthened	Administrative capacity for future ESF+ management and absorption; link with active

management requirements	employment support	Chapter 22 coordination structures		labour-market measures and vulnerable groups.
UNCRPD	Rights of persons with disabilities	Disability rights and inclusion framework; social protection; employment measures	Partial	EU acquis requires full alignment because the EU is party to the UNCRPD; implementation and independent living/community inclusion need strengthening.

XI. Areas Requiring Legislative Development

The analysis shows that Albania has established a broad legal and institutional framework under Chapter 19, but several areas still require legislative development, regulatory clarification and stronger implementation rules. These gaps relate both to incomplete alignment with the EU acquis and to weaknesses in enforcement. Legislative development should therefore not be understood only as the adoption of new legal texts, but also as the creation of practical mechanisms that allow existing rights to be applied, monitored and enforced.

1. Labour law and employment relations

In labour law and employment relations, the legal framework needs to be updated to reflect changes in the labour market. Current legislation mainly covers traditional employment relationships, while newer forms of work are not sufficiently regulated. These include platform work, remote and hybrid work, casual and seasonal employment, on-call work and situations of dependent self-employment. As a result, some workers may remain outside full legal protection or may not receive clear, predictable and enforceable employment conditions.

This creates a gap with Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions. Further amendments to the Labour Code and implementing by-laws should ensure that all workers receive clear written information on essential employment terms, including workplace, duties, remuneration, working time, probation, training, predictability of schedules, rules on additional employment and termination procedures. Standardised contract templates and minimum information forms could be introduced for high-risk sectors such as tourism, construction, agriculture, domestic work, services and seasonal employment.

Rules on working time and overtime also require further development in practice, in line with Directive 2003/88/EC. This should include clearer obligations on recording working hours, stronger monitoring of overtime, effective compensation rules, safeguards against excessive working time and improved enforcement in sectors where unpaid overtime and irregular schedules are frequent. These measures should be supported by labour-inspection checklists and digital reporting tools.

Further legislative review is also needed on fixed-term and part-time work, in light of Directive 1999/70/EC and Directive 97/81/EC. The objective should be to prevent abuse of successive fixed-term contracts, ensure equal treatment of part-time workers and address situations where part-time or temporary arrangements are used to disguise regular employment.

2. Information, consultation and worker participation

Worker information and consultation rights require stronger legislative and practical implementation. Albania is partially aligned with the EU acquis on collective redundancies, information and consultation of workers and European Works Councils. However, enterprise-level mechanisms remain weak, particularly in private-sector workplaces without trade unions or worker representatives.

More detailed legal provisions and by-laws should clarify when employers must inform and consult workers, what information must be provided, the timing of consultation, worker-representative rights, protection from retaliation, and remedies where consultation obligations are breached. This is particularly important in cases of restructuring, collective redundancies, transfers of undertakings, major workplace changes, changes in work organisation and company closures.

3. Industrial relations and social dialogue

In industrial relations and social dialogue, the legal framework requires further clarification and strengthening. A major gap concerns representativeness. Although the Labour Code provides for trade unions, employers' organisations, collective agreements, the National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils, the practical determination of representativeness remains insufficiently transparent.

Legislative improvements are needed to define clear criteria for representativeness, ensure transparency of membership and financial sustainability, regulate reporting obligations, and distinguish between national, sectoral, regional and enterprise-level representation. These rules should strengthen credibility and transparency without creating excessive administrative control over trade unions or undermining freedom of association.

Collective bargaining mechanisms also require strengthening, especially at sector level, where coverage remains limited. The legal framework should create clearer incentives and procedures for sectoral collective bargaining, including registration or notification of agreements, monitoring of collective bargaining coverage, support for social partners and, where appropriate, mechanisms for wider application of sectoral agreements.

Regional Tripartite Councils should also be supported by clearer procedural rules, reporting duties and links to national policy-making. They can become important platforms for addressing local labour-market issues, informality, seasonal work, vocational skills, occupational safety and health concerns and employment restructuring. Their role should be monitored through measurable indicators, including frequency of meetings, participation of social partners, issues discussed, recommendations issued and follow-up by institutions.

4. Occupational safety and health

In occupational safety and health, the legal framework is broadly developed but still requires further legislative and regulatory strengthening. The adoption of the Policy Document for Health and Safety at Work and its Action Plan 2025–2030 is an important step, but the Interministerial Council of Occupational Health and Safety and its secretariat remain to be established. This requires regulatory follow-up to make the coordination framework operational.

Further development of secondary legislation is needed to ensure practical implementation of Directive 89/391/EEC. This should include clearer and more enforceable rules on risk assessment, prevention planning,

worker training, health surveillance, emergency procedures, worker participation, safety representatives and workplace safety committees. Risk assessment should be treated as a living management tool, not only as paperwork prepared for inspection purposes.

More detailed by-laws are also needed for high-risk sectors such as construction, mining, energy, manufacturing, infrastructure works, waste management and agriculture. In construction, rules should further clarify contractor and subcontractor responsibilities, safety coordination, work at height, scaffolding, excavation safety, protective equipment, site access, signage and daily supervision, in line with Directive 92/57/EEC. For work equipment, technical regulations should be updated and enforced to ensure safe use, maintenance, inspection and training, in line with Directive 2009/104/EC.

Specific attention is required for chemical, physical and biological risks. The transitional request until 31 December 2032 for occupational exposure limit values for nitrogen monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide in underground mining and tunnelling facilities should be treated as a specific legislative and implementation bookmark. Albania should prepare a detailed compliance plan, including current protective measures, affected worksites, exposure monitoring, technical investments, implementation costs, worker-protection measures and a timetable for gradual compliance.

5. Equality, gender and vulnerable groups

In equality, gender and protection of vulnerable groups, further legislative and regulatory measures are required to improve implementation. Albania's framework broadly reflects the principles of Directive 2006/54/EC, Directive 2000/78/EC and Directive 2000/43/EC, but enforcement and alignment gaps remain.

Legislative development should address equal pay monitoring, pay transparency, maternity and return-to-work protection, work-life balance rights, women's access to decision-making positions and effective remedies for gender discrimination. This should be supported by employer reporting obligations, gender-disaggregated labour-market data and stronger inspection and complaint mechanisms.

Workplace harassment and gender-based violence also require clearer legal and procedural rules. Albania has ratified ILO Convention No. 190, and the legal framework should provide clear definitions, internal reporting procedures, employer prevention duties, confidentiality safeguards, protection from retaliation, remedies and links with labour inspection and equality bodies. These rules should apply to public and private workplaces, including sectors where underreporting is likely.

Additional implementing regulations are needed to ensure reasonable accommodation and accessibility for persons with disabilities. This should include employer obligations, practical accommodation procedures, possible support measures, monitoring by labour and equality institutions, and remedies where reasonable accommodation is denied.

Cross-sector measures are also needed to address the structural exclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities from formal employment. This requires stronger links between anti-discrimination law, employment services, social protection, education, local government and targeted formalisation measures.

6. Social protection, social inclusion and employment support

Social protection and social inclusion require further legal and policy development. The EU Common Position states that Albania is not aligned with the EU acquis on social protection and social inclusion and encourages Albania to step up its efforts. It also notes partial alignment of the institutional and legal framework on persons with disabilities and child protection and care, and invites Albania to strengthen the social protection system, including for vulnerable groups and the social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Legislative development should include stronger mechanisms for the transition from economic aid to employment, clearer links between social protection and employment services, improved indexation of economic aid benefits, better access to community-based services, and stronger referral pathways for vulnerable workers and families. The 2025 Albania Report notes that the Strategy for Social Protection is being implemented, that the Social Fund budget increased by 14% for 2025, but that no mechanism is yet in place for the establishment and implementation of an indexation mechanism for Economic Aid benefits.

Employment support measures should also be strengthened in legislation and implementation, including active labour-market measures, Youth Guarantee implementation, NEET identification and referral, support for long-term unemployed persons, persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian communities, returned migrants and recipients of economic aid. The 2025 Albania Report notes continued implementation of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030 and extension of the Youth Guarantee pilot until the end of 2027.

7. Enforcement, inspection and sanctions

Legislative improvements are needed to strengthen labour inspection and compliance mechanisms. This includes improving the legal basis for risk-based inspections, increasing inspection powers where necessary, clarifying follow-up obligations, strengthening worker protection during inspections, and introducing a clearer and more effective sanctions framework. Current penalties are not always sufficiently dissuasive, especially for larger employers or serious OSH breaches. Sanctions should be proportionate to risk, company size, turnover, number of workers affected, recurrence of violations and the economic benefit obtained from non-compliance.

There is also a need to establish clearer legal frameworks for coordination between the Labour Inspectorate, tax authorities, social insurance institutions, the judiciary, prosecution services and equality bodies. Cases involving informal employment, workplace accidents, unpaid wages, discrimination or unpaid social insurance contributions often require joint action. Formal protocols and data-sharing rules would improve case-handling and accountability.

Regulatory measures are also required to develop integrated data and monitoring systems. The 2025 Albania Report notes progress in labour inspection through intelligent risk assessment matrices, with 75% of inspections planned on the basis of risk assessment, but also states that the interface between these matrices and the e-inspection platform would increase the efficiency of the Labour and Social Services Inspectorate's work. This should be translated into legal and administrative measures on data interoperability, mandatory reporting and evidence-based inspection planning.

8. Insolvency and protection of workers' claims

Protection of workers in cases of employer insolvency requires legislative development in line with Directive 2008/94/EC. Albania should ensure that insolvency and labour-law rules provide timely and effective protection of unpaid wages, holiday pay, severance-related claims, unpaid social contributions and other employment-related entitlements.

The framework should provide clear priority for workers' claims, simplified procedures, information rights for workers and an effective wage guarantee mechanism or equivalent protection. The mechanism should be accessible, adequately funded and capable of providing rapid compensation.

Directive (EU) 2019/1023 on preventive restructuring is also relevant because early restructuring can preserve employment and reduce the social impact of business failure. Albanian legislation should ensure that workers are informed and, where appropriate, consulted during restructuring processes. It should also link insolvency procedures with employment services, reskilling measures and social protection for affected workers.

9. Climate-related OSH risks and just transition

Climate change and environmental risks increasingly affect working conditions, particularly in construction, agriculture, transport, infrastructure, mining, energy and waste management. New legal and policy measures are needed to address risks such as extreme heat, air pollution, dust, chemicals, unsafe environmental exposure and climate-related emergencies, building on the preventive principles of Directive 89/391/EEC.

The concept of just transition also requires a stronger legal and institutional framework. Albania should develop mechanisms to support workers affected by economic restructuring, energy transition and industrial change. This should include reskilling, re-employment support, social protection, regional employment measures, worker information and consultation, and involvement of social partners through the National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils.

10. Informality and formalisation

Reducing informal employment remains a key legislative and enforcement priority. This requires a combination of legal, administrative and fiscal measures, including simplified employment registration, stronger sanctions for undeclared work, incentives for formalisation, improved coordination between labour inspection and tax/social insurance authorities, and better protection for workers who report undeclared employment.

Formalisation should not be treated only as a fiscal issue. It is also necessary for protecting wages, working time, occupational safety and health, maternity rights, social insurance, pension rights, unemployment protection and access to remedies. Legislative development should therefore link formalisation with workers' rights, social protection and enforcement.

Summary table – Areas requiring legislative development

Area	Required legislative development	EU acquis / accession link	Main Albanian framework to review
Transparent and predictable working conditions	Clear written information, standard contracts, predictable schedules, non-standard work rules	Directive (EU) 2019/1152; EU Common Position on working conditions	Labour Code; employment contract by-laws
Working time	Recording of hours, overtime, rest periods, compensation and enforcement	Directive 2003/88/EC	Labour Code; inspection rules
Fixed-term and part-time work	Prevention of abuse, equal treatment and monitoring	Directive 1999/70/EC; Directive 97/81/EC	Labour Code
Information and consultation	Stronger enterprise-level information and consultation procedures	Directive 2002/14/EC; Directive 98/59/EC; Directive 2009/38/EC	Labour Code; social dialogue rules
Social dialogue	Transparent representativeness, sectoral bargaining, Regional Tripartite Councils	EU Common Position on social dialogue	Labour Code; NLC/Regional Council rules
OSH framework	Practical risk assessment, worker participation, OSH coordination mechanisms	Directive 89/391/EEC; EU OSH Strategic Framework	Law on Safety and Health at Work; OSH policy document 2025–2030
Construction safety	Contractor/subcontractor duties, site coordination, work at height, PPE	Directive 92/57/EEC	OSH by-laws; construction safety rules
Work equipment	Maintenance, inspection, training and machinery safety	Directive 2009/104/EC	Technical OSH regulations
Chemical exposure / mining and tunnelling	Exposure limit values and phased compliance plan	Directive 98/24/EC; Directive (EU) 2017/164; transitional request to 2032	OSH law; mining/tunnelling safety regulations
Equality and gender	Pay transparency, work-life balance, women on boards, maternity protection	Directive 2006/54/EC; EU gender equality acquis	Labour Code; Gender Equality Law; anti-discrimination law
Employment equality and racial equality	Full alignment with Employment Equality and Racial Equality Directives	Directive 2000/78/EC; Directive 2000/43/EC	Law on Protection from Discrimination; Labour Code
Disability inclusion	Reasonable accommodation and accessibility in employment	Directive 2000/78/EC; UNCRPD	Disability legislation; Labour Code; employment measures

Workplace harassment	Definitions, reporting, prevention, retaliation protection	ILO Convention No. 190; equality acquis	Labour Code; anti-discrimination law; OSH rules
Social protection and inclusion	Stronger links between economic aid, employment and community services	EU Common Position: not aligned on social protection and inclusion	Social protection strategy; economic aid legislation
Labour inspection and sanctions	Risk-based inspections, stronger powers, dissuasive sanctions, data-sharing	EU Common Position on enforcement and inspection	Law on Inspection; Labour Code; OSH law
Insolvency protection	Wage guarantee mechanism, priority of workers' claims, simplified procedures	Directive 2008/94/EC; Directive (EU) 2019/1023	Insolvency law; Labour Code; social insurance rules
Climate-related OSH risks	Heat protocols, environmental exposure rules, climate-risk prevention	Directive 89/391/EEC; EU OSH policy	OSH law; sectoral by-laws
Just transition	Reskilling, re-employment, social dialogue and worker protection in restructuring	EU Common Position on just transition	Employment and skills legislation; social protection framework
Informality	Formalisation incentives, sanctions, simplified registration, joint inspections	EU Common Position on informal employment enforcement	Labour Code; tax and social insurance rules; inspection law

XII. Conclusions

Albania has reached a stage where the main elements of the legal and institutional framework under Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment are in place. The Labour Code, occupational safety and health legislation, equality and non-discrimination framework, employment policy instruments, social protection measures, labour inspection mechanisms and social dialogue structures reflect many core EU principles. However, Albania's alignment remains partial and uneven. The main challenge is no longer only the adoption of legislation, but the effective implementation, enforcement and monitoring of labour and social rights in practice.

The analysis shows that systemic weaknesses continue to affect the effectiveness of labour governance. These include incomplete alignment with newer EU standards, regulatory gaps, limited enforcement capacity, weak inspection coverage in high-risk and informal sectors, fragmented data systems, insufficient coordination between institutions, weak access to remedies and limited social dialogue. As a result, there remains a significant gap between formal alignment and the reality experienced by many workers.

The most important Chapter 19 gaps concern informal and semi-formal employment, weak documentation of employment relationships, insufficient enforcement of working time and overtime rules, limited protection of non-standard workers, occupational safety and health risks, weak collective bargaining coverage, limited worker participation, and underreporting of discrimination and harassment. These gaps are particularly visible in construction, mining, garment and footwear production, tourism, agriculture, services, small enterprises and subcontracted work.

Occupational safety and health remains one of the most critical implementation challenges. Albania has adopted the Policy Document for Health and Safety at Work and its Action Plan 2025–2030, but stronger implementation is needed through risk-based inspections, operational OSH coordination, functioning workplace safety structures, better accident investigation, effective sanctions and stronger employer accountability. Labour Inspectorate data used for this report show an increase in workplace accidents and fatalities in 2025 compared with previous years. This confirms that prevention must become the central priority of OSH policy and enforcement.

The specific accession issue concerning occupational exposure limit values in underground mining and tunnelling facilities under Directive (EU) 2017/164 should be treated as a priority bookmark. Albania's request for a transitional period until 31 December 2032 requires a credible phased compliance plan, including identification of affected worksites, current protective measures, exposure-monitoring systems, technical investments, financing needs, worker-protection measures and a realistic implementation timetable.

Social dialogue remains structurally weak. The National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils provide formal platforms, but their effectiveness depends on regular meetings, transparent representativeness, stronger capacity of social partners, sector-level bargaining and meaningful follow-up of conclusions. Without effective social dialogue, reforms in working conditions, wages, occupational safety and health prevention, formalisation, restructuring and just transition will remain incomplete.

Equality and non-discrimination require stronger enforcement. Albania has a functioning legal framework and equality institutions, but practical gaps remain in relation to gender equality, equal pay, maternity-related discrimination, workplace harassment, reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, and labour-market inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities, young people and other vulnerable groups. Labour inspection, equality bodies, the Ombudsman and courts should work more systematically together to ensure that discrimination in employment is detected, remedied and prevented.

The protection of workers in insolvency situations is an underdeveloped labour-rights issue. Employer insolvency can lead to unpaid wages, unpaid social insurance contributions, loss of employment and limited access to remedies. Albania should strengthen the link between insolvency law and labour protection, including through clear priority of workers' claims, simplified procedures and an effective wage guarantee mechanism or equivalent protection.

The report also shows that labour rights should be recognised more clearly as fundamental human rights within Albania's EU accession and rule-of-law agenda. Safe work, fair treatment, non-discrimination, freedom of association, collective bargaining, access to wages, social protection and effective remedies are not only social-policy issues. They are essential elements of dignity, equality, justice and democratic governance.

Overall, Albania's progress under Chapter 19 can be characterised as **structurally established but operationally incomplete**. Meaningful alignment will depend on moving from formal legal approximation to enforceable protection in practice. This requires targeted legislative refinement, stronger inspection and sanctions, integrated data systems, better institutional coordination, improved access to justice, active social dialogue and measurable CASE actions linked to the accession bookmarks identified in the EU screening and negotiation process.

Priority Reform Directions

Priority area	Main reform direction
Labour law and employment relations	Strengthen protection of non-standard workers, improve written information obligations, and enforce working-time and overtime rules.

Informality	Link labour inspection, tax administration and social insurance data to detect undeclared work, wage under-declaration and partial cash payments.
Occupational safety and health	Move from formal compliance to prevention through risk-based inspection, accident investigation, sanctions and functioning workplace safety structures.
Social dialogue	Strengthen representativeness, sectoral bargaining, workplace participation and the functioning of national and regional tripartite bodies.
Equality and non-discrimination	Integrate equality checks into labour inspection and improve remedies for gender discrimination, harassment, disability discrimination and exclusion of vulnerable groups.
Insolvency protection	Establish or strengthen mechanisms to protect unpaid wages and employment-related claims when employers become insolvent.
Institutional coordination	Develop referral protocols and data-sharing between labour inspection, tax, social insurance, equality bodies, courts and prosecution services.
Monitoring	Create a Chapter 19 implementation dashboard with indicators on inspections, accidents, sanctions, informality, disputes, discrimination and social dialogue.
Just transition	Link economic restructuring and climate transition with reskilling, employment services, social protection and social dialogue.

Annex 1 Institutional Mapping under Chapter 19: Albania

This annex maps the main institutions and actors involved in the design, implementation, enforcement and monitoring of labour and social policy under Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment. The mapping shows that Albania has the main institutional architecture required for Chapter 19, but effective implementation depends on stronger coordination, data-sharing, inspection capacity and social dialogue.

Function	Institution / Actor	Main role under Chapter 19	Relevant acquis / issue
1. Policy and legislation	Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation / ministry responsible for labour and employment	Leads labour relations, employment policy, vocational education and training, skills development, labour-market measures and parts of Chapter 19 alignment. Coordinates reforms related to working conditions, employment services and labour-market inclusion.	Labour law; employment policy; active labour-market measures; Directive (EU) 2019/1152; Directive 2003/88/EC; social dialogue and employment support schemes.
	Ministry of Health and Social Protection	Leads social protection, social inclusion, health-related policies, vulnerable groups, disability inclusion and aspects of occupational health and safety. Important for linking labour-market participation with social protection and inclusion.	Social protection and inclusion; disability inclusion; vulnerable groups; occupational health; European Pillar of Social Rights; UNCRPD.
	Ministry of Finance	Responsible for fiscal policy, taxation, public expenditure, social insurance contribution policy and budget allocations. Influences labour formalisation, financing of labour institutions, social insurance sustainability and EU budget-support reforms.	Informal employment; social contributions; financing of labour inspection and social protection; public finance management.
	Ministry of Justice	Relevant for labour-related access to justice, court efficiency, legal aid, insolvency protection of workers, and criminal accountability for serious workplace safety violations.	Directive 2008/94/EC; Directive (EU) 2019/1023; access to justice; Criminal Code provisions on OSH breaches.
2. Enforcement and compliance	State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services	Main enforcement body for labour legislation. Inspects employment contracts, working time, wages, occupational safety and health, formalisation of employment, and	Directive 2003/88/EC; Directive 89/391/EEC; Directive 92/57/EEC; Directive 2009/104/EC; Directive (EU)

		compliance with labour standards. Imposes sanctions and monitors corrective measures.	2019/1152; enforcement of labour law and OSH.
	Tax Administration	Detects and addresses wage under-declaration, undeclared employment, contribution evasion and informal business activity in cooperation with labour inspection.	Informality; undeclared work; fiscal compliance; social insurance contributions.
	Social Insurance Institute / social insurance authorities	Administers social insurance contributions and entitlements. Relevant for ensuring that workers are properly registered and protected for pensions, sickness, maternity, unemployment and workplace-related claims.	Social protection; formalisation; unpaid contributions; workers affected by employer insolvency.
	National Agency for Employment and Skills	Implements employment services, active labour-market measures, skills programmes, Youth Guarantee-related measures and support for vulnerable jobseekers.	Employment policy; Youth Guarantee; NEET inclusion; vulnerable groups; reskilling and just transition.
3. Justice and redress	Courts	Resolve labour disputes, dismissals, unpaid wage claims, contract disputes, discrimination cases, compensation claims and enforcement of individual labour rights.	Access to justice; labour-law enforcement; Directive 2008/94/EC; Directive 2006/54/EC; Directive 2000/78/EC.
	Prosecution and criminal justice authorities	Investigate and prosecute serious occupational safety and health violations, especially where workplace accidents result in death or serious injury.	Directive 89/391/EEC enforcement logic; serious OSH breaches; Criminal Code Article 289 on breach of safety rules at work.
	Legal aid institutions	Provide access to legal assistance for workers who cannot afford representation, including in dismissal, discrimination, unpaid wage, accident and social protection cases.	Access to remedies; effective enforcement of labour and equality rights.
4. Equality and rights protection	Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination	Handles discrimination complaints, including employment-related discrimination. Promotes equal treatment and issues decisions/recommendations.	Directive 2000/78/EC; Directive 2000/43/EC; Directive 2006/54/EC; equality bodies standards.

	Ombudsman	Protects fundamental rights, especially in relation to public administration and public-sector employment. Investigates complaints and issues recommendations. Can identify systemic issues affecting workers.	Fundamental rights; administrative fairness; public employment; access to remedies; non-discrimination.
5. Social dialogue and representation	National Labour Council	Main national tripartite consultation body between Government, employers and trade unions. Discusses labour legislation, employment, vocational training, OSH, social and economic development and ILO standards.	Social dialogue; collective bargaining; worker information and consultation; Chapter 19 social-policy governance.
	Regional Tripartite Councils	Regional tripartite platforms involving employers, trade unions and state/local structures. Relevant for local labour-market issues, informality, seasonal work, skills needs, OSH risks and employment measures.	Regional social dialogue; local labour-market governance; formalisation; OSH and employment coordination.
	Trade unions and confederations	Represent workers, negotiate collective agreements, participate in tripartite bodies, monitor working conditions and support workers' rights.	Freedom of association; collective bargaining; Directive 2002/14/EC; social dialogue acquis.
	Employers' organisations	Represent business interests, participate in tripartite dialogue and collective bargaining, contribute to labour-market policy and compliance discussions.	Social dialogue; collective bargaining; employer participation in policy-making.
6. Civil society and international partners	Centre for Labour Rights and other civil society organisations	Provide legal aid, monitoring, research, worker awareness, advocacy and independent evidence on labour-rights implementation.	Access to rights; monitoring; worker awareness; human-rights approach to labour standards.
	International Labour Organization	Provides international labour standards, technical assistance, Decent Work Country Programme support, research and capacity building.	ILO conventions; OSH; social dialogue; decent work; violence and harassment at work.
	Olof Palme International Center	Supports labour rights, trade union capacity, democratic participation and civil society engagement.	Social dialogue; worker representation; civil society support.

	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	Provides research, policy dialogue, trade union support and social-democratic policy expertise.	Social dialogue; labour rights; equality; policy research.
	European Union / EU Delegation and EU-funded programmes	Supports accession-related reforms, capacity building, policy alignment, employment and social inclusion programmes.	Chapter 19 alignment; European Pillar of Social Rights; EU accession benchmarks and monitoring.

Key institutional gaps identified

The institutional architecture exists, but the following gaps affect performance:

Gap	Practical effect
Fragmented institutional responsibilities	Labour rights cases often require action by several institutions, but coordination is not systematic.
Limited labour inspection capacity	Informal, seasonal, subcontracted and high-risk sectors remain difficult to monitor.
Weak data integration	Inspection, accident, court, equality, social insurance and employment data are not fully connected.
Weak social dialogue in practice	Collective bargaining coverage and worker participation remain limited, especially in the private sector.
Limited access to remedies	Workers may face delays, costs, fear of retaliation or lack of legal support.
Insufficient local-level coordination	Regional Tripartite Councils need clearer monitoring, agenda-setting and follow-up.

Institutional coordination priorities

Priority	Required action
Labour inspection and informality	Establish regular cooperation between Labour Inspectorate, Tax Administration and Social Insurance Institute.

Workplace accidents	Create protocols between Labour Inspectorate, police, prosecution, courts, health authorities and social insurance institutions.
Equality at work	Strengthen cooperation between Labour Inspectorate, Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and Ombudsman.
Social dialogue	Improve functioning of the National Labour Council and Regional Tripartite Councils, with regular reporting and follow-up.
Data monitoring	Develop a Chapter 19 dashboard covering inspections, accidents, sanctions, disputes, discrimination, informality and vulnerable groups.

Annex 2 – Comparison Table: Albania and Directive 2008/94/EC

Directive 2008/94/EC requires Member States to protect employees' outstanding claims in the event of employer insolvency, including through guarantee institutions. The table below identifies the main points of comparison between the Directive and the Albanian framework from a Chapter 19 perspective.

Key requirement under Directive 2008/94/EC	EU standard	Current situation in Albania	Gap identified	Priority action
Protection of unpaid wages	Member States must ensure protection of employees' outstanding claims arising from employment contracts or employment relationships.	Workers may face delays or difficulties in recovering unpaid wages when employers become insolvent.	Unpaid wages may remain unprotected or paid only after lengthy procedures.	Establish or strengthen an effective wage guarantee mechanism.
Guarantee institution	Protection should be ensured through a guarantee institution or equivalent mechanism.	The practical existence, visibility or effectiveness of a wage guarantee mechanism remains limited.	Workers may lack access to timely compensation independent of employer assets.	Create or designate a responsible guarantee institution with clear funding and procedures.
Scope of protected claims	Protection should cover outstanding employment-related claims within the limits allowed by the Directive.	Coverage of claims is not always clear in practice.	Some entitlements, such as holiday pay, severance-related claims or other employment benefits, may not be effectively covered.	Define protected claims clearly, including wages, holiday pay and other employment-related entitlements.
Timeliness of payment	Compensation should be provided without undue delay.	Workers may face lengthy court or insolvency procedures.	Delays reduce the protective effect of the system.	Introduce fast-track procedures for employee claims.
Coverage of employees	Protection should apply to employees, with only limited exclusions permitted.	Informal or semi-formal workers may struggle to prove employment status.	Workers actually employed may be excluded because the employer failed to formalise the relationship.	Allow flexible proof mechanisms using inspection records, tax data, social insurance data, payroll evidence and witness statements.

Priority of labour claims	Employee claims should be protected in insolvency situations.	Labour claims may be formally recognised but may not receive effective priority in practice.	Workers may be disadvantaged compared with secured or institutional creditors.	Strengthen priority and enforceability of workers' claims in insolvency procedures.
Access to procedures	Workers should be able to claim entitlements through accessible procedures.	Procedures may be complex and difficult to understand.	Workers may miss deadlines or fail to submit claims due to lack of information or legal support.	Introduce simplified claim forms, standard notices and access to legal aid or trade union support.
Information to workers	Workers should be informed of their rights and claim mechanisms.	Awareness of rights in insolvency situations remains limited.	Underreporting and non-submission of claims.	Require insolvency administrators and competent institutions to notify affected workers.
Institutional coordination	Effective implementation requires cooperation between courts, administrators and public institutions.	Coordination between courts, insolvency administrators, Labour Inspectorate, tax authorities and social insurance institutions remains fragmented.	Delays and weak verification of claims.	Establish a formal coordination protocol and data-sharing process.
Monitoring and reporting	Systems should allow monitoring of claims, payments and unresolved cases.	Data on worker claims in insolvency cases are not systematically integrated.	Weak monitoring of worker-protection outcomes.	Develop a reporting system on claims submitted, approved, paid and pending.

Annex 3 – Action Table: Insolvency and Protection of Workers' Rights

CASE / Reform area	EU acquis link	Albanian framework to review	Required action	Responsible institutions	Expected output / KPI
CASE 1: Wage guarantee mechanism	Directive 2008/94/EC on protection of employees in employer insolvency.	Insolvency legislation; Labour Code; social insurance legislation; budget/fund rules.	Establish or strengthen a guarantee mechanism for unpaid wages, holiday pay and employment-related claims.	Ministry responsible for labour; Ministry of Finance; courts; social insurance institutions.	Wage guarantee mechanism operational; claims paid within defined deadline.
CASE 2: Priority of workers' claims	Directive 2008/94/EC protective purpose.	Insolvency hierarchy of claims; bankruptcy and restructuring procedures.	Clarify ranking and enforceability of workers' claims; introduce fast-track treatment for employment-related claims.	Ministry of Justice; courts; insolvency administrators; Ministry responsible for labour.	Workers' claims clearly prioritised; average processing time reduced.
CASE 3: Simplified claims procedure	Directive 2008/94/EC effectiveness requirement.	Insolvency procedural rules; court forms; administrative procedures.	Introduce simplified claim forms, worker notification rules and legal support pathways.	Courts; insolvency administrators; labour institutions; trade unions; civil society legal-aid providers.	Standard worker claim template adopted; workers informed in each insolvency case.
CASE 4: Informal and semi-formal workers	Directive 2008/94/EC; Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions.	Labour Code; labour inspection records; tax and social insurance data.	Allow flexible proof of employment relationship where work existed but was not properly declared.	Labour Inspectorate; courts; tax administration; social insurance institutions.	Evidence protocol adopted; more workers able to prove employment claims.

CASE 5: Social insurance contributions	Chapter 19 social protection principles.	Social insurance legislation; tax legislation; insolvency claims rules.	Protect workers where employers failed to pay contributions before insolvency.	Social Insurance Institute; tax administration; courts; Ministry of Finance.	Contribution gaps identified and addressed; workers not penalised for employer non-payment.
CASE 6: Preventive restructuring and employment preservation	Directive (EU) 2019/1023 on preventive restructuring.	Insolvency/restructuring law; company law; labour consultation rules.	Ensure restructuring tools include worker information and consultation and consider employment preservation.	Ministry of Justice; courts; insolvency administrators; employers; trade unions.	Worker consultation included in restructuring plans; jobs preserved where viable.
CASE 7: Institutional coordination protocol	Chapter 19 implementation and enforcement requirements.	Insolvency law; Law on Inspection; institutional cooperation rules.	Create protocols between courts, insolvency administrators, Labour Inspectorate, tax authorities and social insurance institutions.	Ministry of Justice; Labour Inspectorate; tax administration; Social Insurance Institute.	Protocol adopted; joint case-handling mechanism operational.
CASE 8: Re-employment and social support	Chapter 19 employment policy, social protection and social inclusion principles.	Employment services legislation; social protection legislation; unemployment benefit rules.	Connect workers affected by insolvency with employment services, reskilling and social assistance.	National Agency for Employment and Skills; social protection institutions; municipalities.	Referral pathway operational; affected workers registered for support services.

Annex 4 – Action Table: Sanctions and Enforcement under Chapter 19

CASE / Action	EU acquis / standard linked	Albanian legal framework linked	Proposed measure	Responsible institutions	KPI / Output
CASE 1: Review sanction model for labour-law and OSH violations	Directive 89/391/EEC; Chapter 19 requirement for effective implementation and enforcement of labour law and OSH acquis.	Labour Code; Law on Safety and Health at Work; Law on Inspection.	Review whether current fines are sufficiently proportionate and dissuasive. Introduce differentiated penalties based on company size, turnover, number of workers affected, seriousness of risk and economic benefit from non-compliance.	Ministry responsible for labour; State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services; Ministry of Finance; Parliament.	Legal review completed; draft amendments prepared; proportionality criteria introduced in sanctions framework.
CASE 2: Introduce graduated and escalating sanctions	Directive 89/391/EEC; Directive 92/57/EEC; Directive 2009/104/EC.	Labour Code; Law on Safety and Health at Work; Law on Inspection; sectoral OSH by-laws and technical safety regulations.	Establish higher penalties for repeated violations; allow suspension of dangerous activity; introduce stronger consequences for repeated breaches of OSH or labour-law obligations.	Ministry responsible for labour; Labour Inspectorate; licensing authorities; municipalities where relevant.	Escalation mechanism adopted; repeat-offender cases tracked; reduction in repeated violations.
CASE 3: Link sanctions to severity of risk	Directive 89/391/EEC; Directive 92/57/EEC; Directive 2009/104/EC.	Law on Safety and Health at Work; Labour Code; technical OSH secondary legislation.	Categorise violations by risk level. Apply higher sanctions for lack of risk assessment, unsafe work at height, unsafe machinery, absence of PPE, hazardous substances, unsafe excavation or failure to train workers.	Labour Inspectorate; ministry responsible for labour; OSH experts; social partners.	Risk-based sanction categories adopted; inspection checklists updated; high-risk violations tracked separately.
CASE 4: Strengthen	Directive 89/391/EEC;	Criminal Code provisions on breach	Clarify administrative and criminal referral	Ministry of Justice; ministry responsible	Protocol for serious/fatal accident cases adopted; criminal

accountability for fatal and serious workplace accidents	Directive 98/24/EC; Directive (EU) 2017/164, especially for mining and tunnelling.	of safety rules at work; Law on Safety and Health at Work; Law on Inspection; Labour Code; mining, construction and technical safety regulations.	procedures for fatal or serious accidents. Define accountability of administrators, managers, site supervisors, contractors and subcontractors where preventable breaches lead to death or serious injury.	for labour; Labour Inspectorate; General Prosecutor's Office; State Police.	referrals tracked; standard accident-investigation template introduced.
CASE 5: Address undeclared work and employment-related economic offences	Directive (EU) 2019/1152; Chapter 19 labour-law acquis; EU requirement to combat informal employment effectively.	Labour Code; Law on Inspection; tax legislation; social insurance legislation; Criminal Code provisions where fiscal evasion or contribution fraud is involved.	Create joint inspection protocols between labour inspection, tax administration and social insurance institutions. Target undeclared work, partial cash payments, wage under-declaration, unpaid overtime and false self-employment.	Labour Inspectorate; General Directorate of Taxes; Social Insurance Institute; Ministry of Finance; ministry responsible for labour.	Joint inspection plan adopted; informal workers identified and formalised; recovered contributions tracked; repeat informality cases reduced.
CASE 6: Publish serious and repeated sanctions	Directive 89/391/EEC prevention logic; Chapter 19 enforcement requirements.	Law on Inspection; Law on Safety and Health at Work; Labour Code; legislation on personal data protection and access to public information.	Establish legal basis for publishing final sanctions for serious or repeated violations, while respecting due process and data protection.	Labour Inspectorate; ministry responsible for labour; Information and Data Protection Commissioner.	Public register of final serious/repeated sanctions operational; number of published sanctions; follow-up compliance rate.
CASE 7: Link sanctions with corrective action plans	Directive 89/391/EEC; Directive 92/57/EEC.	Law on Safety and Health at Work; Law on Inspection; Labour Code; OSH secondary legislation.	Require employers found in serious violation to submit corrective action plans with deadlines, responsible persons, training measures, equipment improvements	Labour Inspectorate; employers; OSH specialists; worker representatives.	Corrective action plan template adopted; percentage of serious violations followed by corrective plans; follow-up compliance rate.

			and risk-assessment updates.		
CASE 8: Require independent safety audits in high-risk cases	Directive 89/391/EEC; Directive 92/57/EEC; Directive 2009/104/EC; Directive 98/24/EC; Directive (EU) 2017/164.	Law on Safety and Health at Work; Labour Code; technical safety regulations; mining and construction safety rules; inspection legislation.	Mandate independent OSH audits for employers with fatal accidents, repeated serious violations or high exposure risks. Prioritise construction, mining, manufacturing, energy, infrastructure and tunnelling.	Labour Inspectorate; accredited OSH experts; employers; ministry responsible for labour.	Audit requirement introduced; number of audits completed; repeated serious violations reduced in audited entities.
CASE 9: Strengthen worker participation in enforcement	Directive 89/391/EEC; Directive 2002/14/EC.	Labour Code; Law on Safety and Health at Work; trade union and collective bargaining provisions; anti-retaliation rules where applicable.	Ensure workers can speak confidentially during inspections; strengthen protection against retaliation; activate workplace safety representatives and committees; involve trade unions in risk prevention.	Labour Inspectorate; trade unions; employers; Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination; Ombudsman.	Worker interview procedure adopted; retaliation complaints monitored; functioning safety representatives/committees increased.
CASE 10: Develop sector-specific OSH enforcement campaigns	Directive 92/57/EEC; Directive 2009/104/EC; Directive 98/24/EC; Directive (EU) 2017/164; Directive 89/391/EEC.	Law on Safety and Health at Work; Labour Code; Law on Inspection; construction, mining, energy and technical safety by-laws.	Prepare annual enforcement campaigns in construction, mining, manufacturing, energy, tourism, agriculture and infrastructure. Combine inspections, guidance, worker information, employer training and sanctions.	Labour Inspectorate; ministry responsible for labour; Regional Tripartite Councils; social partners; municipalities.	Annual sectoral inspection plans adopted; targeted inspections implemented; accidents and serious violations reduced by sector.
CASE 11: Improve OSH data and	Directive 89/391/EEC; EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety	Policy Document for Health and Safety at Work and Action Plan 2025–2030; Law on	Create an OSH enforcement dashboard integrating accident data, inspection findings,	Labour Inspectorate; ministry responsible for labour; National Agency for	Dashboard operational; quarterly enforcement reports produced; interoperability between risk

enforcement monitoring	at Work 2021–2027; Chapter 19 monitoring requirements.	Safety and Health at Work; Law on Inspection; e-inspection framework; administrative data rules.	sanctions, corrective measures, repeat violations and sectoral risk profiles. Link risk assessment matrices with the e-inspection platform.	Information Society; Ministry of Finance; Social Insurance Institute.	matrices and e-inspection improved.
CASE 12: Promote compliance culture and prevention	Directive 89/391/EEC; EU OSH Strategic Framework 2021–2027; European Pillar of Social Rights.	Labour Code; Law on Safety and Health at Work; Policy Document and Action Plan 2025–2030; collective bargaining and worker consultation provisions.	Issue practical guidance for employers and workers; organise training on risk assessment, PPE, work at height, machinery safety, chemicals, emergency procedures and worker consultation.	Labour Inspectorate; employers' organisations; trade unions; ILO and development partners; Regional Tripartite Councils.	Training sessions delivered; workers/employers trained; compliance improved in follow-up inspections.

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Centre for Labour Rights (CLR) – Albania

The Centre for Labour Rights (CLR) Albania is an independent civil society organisation dedicated to promoting, protecting and advancing labour rights, social justice and decent work in Albania. Through research, monitoring, advocacy, capacity building and policy dialogue, CLR works to strengthen the protection of workers' rights, improve working conditions, promote social dialogue and contribute to the development of a fair, inclusive and sustainable labour market.

This monitoring report is a clear reflection of CLR's commitment and dedication to advancing labour rights and addressing the key issues covered under Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment of the European Union acquis. Through independent analysis, evidence-based monitoring and constructive policy recommendations, the report identifies existing gaps, implementation challenges and priority areas for reform within Albania's labour and social policy framework. It demonstrates CLR's ongoing commitment to contributing to informed public debate, stronger institutions and more effective social dialogue.

CLR recognises that progress under Chapter 19 is of fundamental importance for Albania's European Union accession process. Stronger labour rights, effective social dialogue, safe and healthy working conditions, equality, non-discrimination and social inclusion are not only core European values but also essential building blocks for sustainable economic development, social cohesion and democratic governance. By supporting improvements in these areas, CLR seeks to contribute to Albania's continued progress towards EU membership and to ensuring that European standards translate into meaningful improvements in the lives and working conditions of workers across the country.

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