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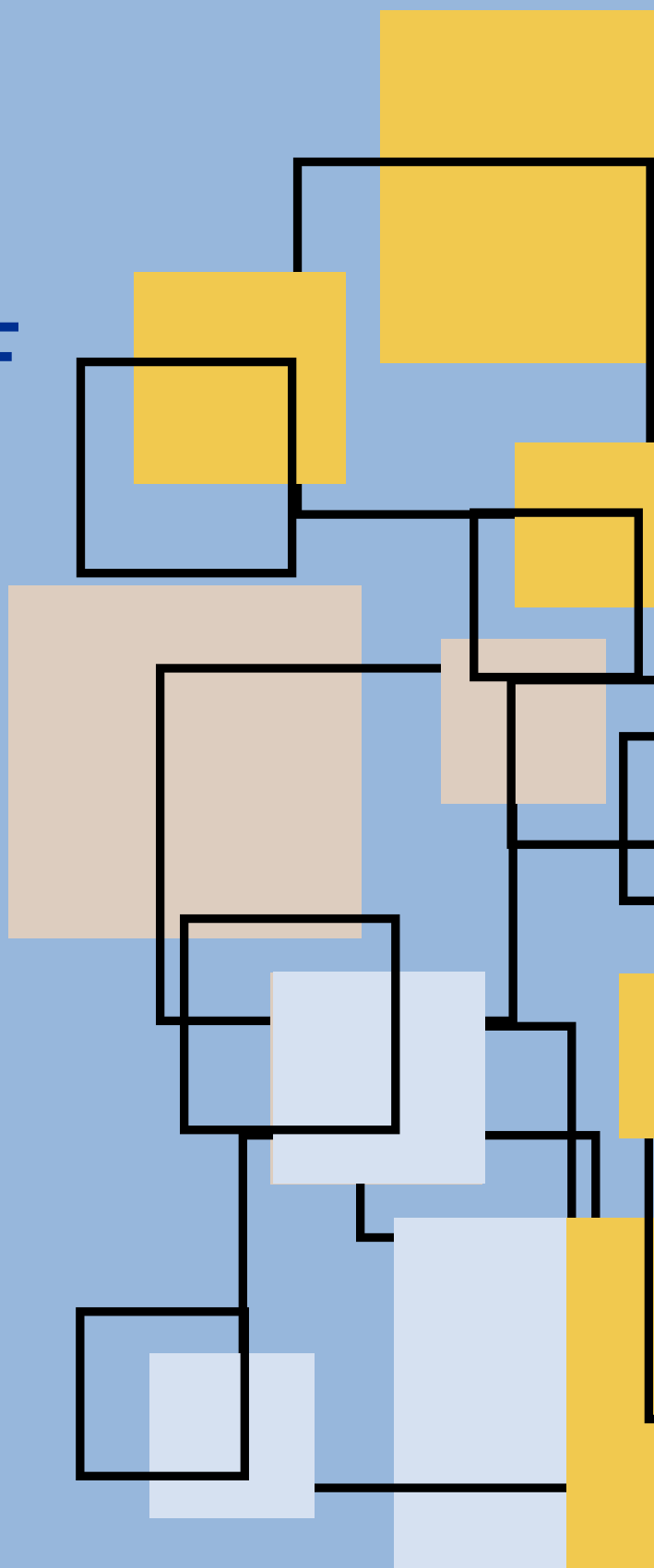
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Report

2025

2024 SUMMARY OF THE MONITORING REPORT OF BUDGET PLANNING AND ALLOCATION



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Introduction

Amidst persistent fragile political consensus among parliamentary forces, the Justice Reform ultimately attained approval in July 2016. With the amendments to the Constitution, this reform brought about huge changes in the organisation and governance of the Justice system, the drafting of the legal package of the Justice Reform, as well as amendments to other 40 laws. The structure of the judiciary underwent a radical change and another level of independence, effectiveness and due management was designed for justice institution

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- Law no. 76/2016. "On some addenda and amendments to Law No. 8417, dated on 21.10.1998., The Constitution of the Republic of Albania"
 - Law no. 115/2016 on the "Governance of institutions of the justice system"
 - Law No. 95/2016 on the Organisation and Functioning of Institutions for Combating Corruption and Organised Crime (amended)
 - Law No 96/2016. "On the status of judges and prosecutors in the Republic of Albania"
 - Law no. 97/2016 "On the Organisation and Functioning of the Prosecution Office in the Republic of Albania"
 - Law No. 98/2016 "On Organisation of the Judicial Power"
 - Law no. 84/2016 "On transitional re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors" (Vetting Law)
 - Council of Ministers Decision No. 495, dated 21.7.2022, "On the reorganisation of judicial districts and territorial powers of the courts" in reliance on Article 100 of the Constitution and Article 13(5) of Law no. 98/2016, "On the organisation of judicial power in the Republic of Albania", as amended.
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The Justice Reform established new institutions: the vetting institutions, the Independent Qualification Commission (KPK) and the Independent Appeals Commission (KPA), the High Judicial Council (KLGJ), the High Prosecutors' Council (KLP), the High Inspectorate of Justice (ILD), the Justice Appointments Council (KED), the Special Prosecutors' Office against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK), the National Bureau of Investigation (BKH), the Special Court against Corruption and Organized Crime (GJKKO).

The new Justice governance model was accompanied by a revised financing approach and strengthening the independence of the Justice system's budgeting. Justice institutions are financed from the State Budget or other legal sources¹, while budget planning is carried out by Justice institutions. The budget is voted and approved by the Parliament.

The High Judicial Council (KLGJ) is charged by Law no. 115/2016, 3.11.2016 "For the governing bodies of the justice system" ² to propose the budget for the judicial system, while KLGJ also administers and controls the budget of country's courts. Before the reform, the administration and budgeting were carried out by a budget administration office, reporting to a board headed by the

[1] Article 95, law no. 115/2016, 3.11.2016 "For the governing bodies of the justice system" (some articles amended by the decisions of the Constitutional Court no. 41, dated 10.4.2017 and no. 78, dated 12.12.2017).

[2] Article 95/3, Law no. 115/2016, 3.11.2016 "For the governing bodies of the justice system" (some articles amended by the decisions of the Constitutional Court no. 41, dated 10.4.2017 and no. 78, dated 12.12.2017).

chairman of the Supreme Court.

The judicial system³ in the country includes 13 courts of JP of the First Instance; 1 Court of Appeal of General Jurisdiction; 1 Special Court of First Instance against criminal offenses of corruption and organized crime, 1 Special Court of Appeal against criminal offenses of corruption and organized crime; 2 Administrative Courts of First Instance, 1 Administrative Court of Appeal; 1 Supreme Court⁴. In the courts, the budget will be approved by the Council of the Court. Meanwhile, the General Prosecutor's Office monitors the budget of the country's prosecutors' offices. The budget prepared and managed by Justice institutions has an internal monitoring by the structure responsible for the performance of the budget. The structure of financial management is set up in each court, while its size depends on the category of courts. The monitoring reports are prepared according to the relevant instructions of the Ministry of Finance⁵. The State Supreme Audit Institution (the SAI) carries out the external monitoring, as the main Justice institutions (KLGJ, KLP, SPAK) prepare annual report of their operation, to be scrutinized and approved by the Parliament.

Budget are a powerful tool to monitor Justice institutions, so civil society and public can hold them accountable, by tracking budgetary allocations/financial flows/resources or to ways into which money flows. The monitoring of the budget in Justice institutions is the third component implemented by the CTFI (Center for Transparency and Freedom of Information) of the even wider project "Building Partnership on Fundamentals: Empowered CSOs in the EU Accession Process", supported by the EU and in the process of implementation by four organizations during 2023-2026.

MAIN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE BUDGET MONITORING

Main goals and objectives of the budget monitoring are:

- Assessment of the financial performance of justice institutions selected to be monitored based on key performance indicators and financial metrics, through tracking of the yearly approved budget;
- Holding justice institutions accountable for their financial decisions and resource management practices, assessment of the integrity of the budget for the judiciary institutions.

[3] Law no. 98/2016, 6.10.2016 "On the organization of judicial power in the Republic of Albania"

[4] Decision of the KLGJ no. 211, dated 10.06.2022 "For the approval of the evaluation report and the proposal of the inter-institutional work group on the reorganization of judicial districts and territorial powers of the courts"

[5] Instruction no. 22 dated 17.11.2016 "On Standard Monitoring Procedures of Central Government Units"; Instruction no. 14 dated 30.05.2023 "On standard budget monitoring procedures in Central Government Units"; Instruction no. 9, dated 20.03.2018

Outputs of the action are:

- a. The desk research (completed, 2023)
- b. Methodology on Monitoring of the selected and leading institutions of the Justice system (completed 2023)
- c. Analytical report of current situation on dissemination of budget and expenses in justice system (completed for years 2023, 2024).
- d. Monitoring and production of yearly monitoring reports and summaries on dissemination of budget and expenses in each one of the targeted Justice institutions. (completed for years 2023, 2024)
- e. Drafting of a policy paper for each year of monitoring. (completed for years 2023, 2024)
- f. Drafting of a short and friendly “Budget literacy” guide. (completed)

METHODOLOGY

The monitoring for year 2024 has been implemented in the same institutions as year 2023. There have been selected 11 Justice system institutions to be monitored based on the New Judicial Map and the Decision of the KLGJ on the determination of the categories of courts. The new judicial map⁶ established the reorganization of the courts of first instance of general jurisdiction, from 22 judicial district courts to 13 such courts; the reorganisation of the appeal courts of general jurisdiction, from 6 appeal courts, to 1 Court of Appeal of General Jurisdiction, with headquarters in Tirana; the reorganisation of the administrative courts of first instance, from 6 administrative courts to 2 such courts.

The selection of institutions for monitoring was performed considering their role in budgeting, the size of the budget that is allocated for them in relation to the entire justice system and the need to examine during the monitoring the ‘behaviour’ with the budget in some levels⁷ of the judiciary⁸. The selected justice institutions monitored are:

[6] Decision of the KLGJ no. 211, dated 10.06.2022 “For the approval of the evaluation report and the proposal of the inter-institutional work group on the reorganization of judicial districts and territorial powers of the courts”

[7] Decision of the KLGJ no. 147, dated 29.03.2023, “On determining the categories of courts”

[8] The first (high) category includes: the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal of General Jurisdiction, the Special Court of Appeal for Corruption and Organized Crime, the Court of Administrative Appeals, the Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Tirana, Special Court of First Instance for Corruption and Organized Crime, Administrative Court of First Instance, Tirana. The second (middle) category includes: the Court of First Instance of the General Jurisdiction, Durrës; Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Elbasan; Court of First Instance General Jurisdiction, Fier; Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Korça; Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Shkodër; Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Vlora; Court of First Instance General Jurisdiction, Berat; Court of First Instance of General

a. KLGJ (High Judicial Council), KLP (High Prosecutors Council) as most important governing justice institutions, SPAK (Special Prosecution Office) as an institution with independent budget and specific task, Independent Qualification Commission (KPK), as an institution with independent budget that belongs to vetting institutions.

b. GJKKO (Special Court Against Corruption and Organized Crime), Supreme Court (Supreme Court), the First Instance Administrative Court of Tirana and the Appeal Court of Tirana that belong to courts of first level category.

c. First Instance Administrative Court in Lushnja, The First Instance Court of JP in Durrësi as a second level category of courts.

d. The First Instance Court of JP in Kukësi included at the third level category of courts.

The KLGJ⁹, KLP¹⁰, SPAK¹¹, KPK¹² have a budget that is defined according to the law, creating management independence in relation to each other, while all other institutions that are courts selected to be monitored, receive the budget based on the decisions of the KLGJ¹⁵.

For the fulfilment of this component of the action, 5 experts continue monitoring and producing the monitoring documents: 1 expert for analytical report on budget and expenses in Justice system and yearly policy papers; 2 Monitoring experts; 1 expert for budget guide and 1 communication consultant.

Through monitoring process, the necessary information has been provided in several methods, including:

Jurisdiction, Lezhë: Administrative Court of First Instance, Lushnjë. And in the third (low) category are included: Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Dibër, Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Gjirokastër, Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Kukes, Court of First Instance General Jurisdiction, Sarandë.

[9] Article 95/3, 96/4a Law no. 115/2016, 3.11.2016 "For the governing bodies of the justice system" (some articles amended by the decisions of the Constitutional Court no. 41, dated 10.4.2017 and no. 78, dated 12.12.2017).

[10] Article 188/1.2, Law no. 115/2016, 3.11.2016 "For the governing bodies of the justice system" (some articles amended by the decisions of the Constitutional Court no. 41, dated 10.4.2017 and no. 78, dated 12.12.2017).

[11] Article 56/1,2,3; Law no. 95/2016, 6.10.2016 "On the organization and operation of institutions to fight corruption and organized crime"

[12] Article 19/1,2; Law no. 84/2016 "On the vetting of judges and prosecutors in the Republic of Albania"

[13] Article 95/3, 96/4a Law no. 115/2016, 3.11.2016 "For the governing bodies of the justice system" (some articles amended by the decisions of the Constitutional Court no. 41, dated 10.4.2017 and no. 78, dated 12.12.2017).

- 100- verbal and written (on hard copy and online) communication between CTFI and institutions selected for monitoring, most of them based on the law 119/2014 “On the right to information”;
- 12 informative meetings and interviews in Justice institutions working place with 17 officials of the monitored institutions, including vice chairmans of courts, court chancellor, General Secretaries of Justice institutions, directors of finance and budget departments, heads of finance and budget sector, budget and finance specialists;
- consultation of 11 official websites of Justice institutions;
- consultation of other websites linked to objectives of the action, like Parliament, Ministry of Justice, CEPEJ, KLSH, Ministry of Finance, many Albanian media.
- consultation of 56 of 4-th, 8-th and 12-months budget monitoring reports, PBA1 and PBA2 for the last 4 years, published by the 11 institutions under monitoring;
- consultation of various other budget documents, such as annual budgets forms, balance sheets, 44 annual reports issued by Justice institutions in the last 4 years, several work plans, self-check forms, internal rules, bylaws and laws, strategies.
- consultation of 4 resolutions and decisions adopted by the National Parliament on independent justice institutions like KLGJ, KLP, KPK, SPAK; 1 SAI audits, 3 auditing reports by the Audit Department of KLGJ, various media articles and broadcasting reports, monitoring through broadcasting of 4 meetings of the Parliamentary Commission for Legal Affairs and 1 plenary sessions of the Parliament.

The CTFI has held through 2024, 3 info sessions and 1 civil forums with 135 participants (civil society representatives, students at faculties of law and economy, lawyers, media representatives, court representatives). The main topics included budget overview in Justice Institutions, money flow in Justice, and involvement of civil society ensuring the transparency of the budget. During the monitoring process, the CTFI has considered a verification process for the data obtained in different ways or sources, in order to evaluate their accuracy through cross-checking of different financial reports or documents from different sources (mainly data issued by KLGJ and courts).

A list of qualitative and quantitative indicators has been defined and measured during monitoring, as follows:

- Budget allocation per program and per product;

- Budget execution rate expressed through percentage of the allocated budget that has been spent;
- Cost per case that shows costs of 1 court proceeding and 1 prosecutor's investigation; Reallocations of the budget;
- Budget compliance to show adherence to budgetary regulations and policies; level of investments;
- Budget transparency measured through monitoring of online availability and accessibility of budget documents; plain language and user friendly format to enhance understanding ability; request and answers register.

Some other indicators that measured courts effectiveness are based at CEPEJ methodology, include:

- a. Total backlog (TB): Cases remaining unresolved at the end of the year.
- b. Disposition time (DT): The ratio that measures how quickly the court turns over received cases or, how long it takes for a type of case to be resolved.
- c. Clearance rate (CR): Relationship between the new cases and completed cases within a period, in percentage.

Through monitoring, the CTFI and its experts have ensured some data accompanied by a comparative analysis. The monitoring report has included findings and recommendations. The findings, as well as recommendations will be shared with Justice Institutions and relevant stakeholders, including Parliament MPs, government authorities and other public and civil society organisations, through info sessions, civil forums and other online communication activities.

MONITORING HIGHLIGHTS

JUDICIARY

According to Article 95 titled "Annual Budget of the KLGJ" of the Law No. 115/2016, "On Governing Bodies of the Justice System"¹⁴, the role of the KLGJ is determined in relation to the budget of the judiciary, where it is emphasized that: "...3. The High Judicial Council is responsible for drafting its annual and mid-term budget in consultation with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance. 4. The High Judicial Council participates in the meeting of the Parliament, where the draft budget of the judicial system is discussed; 5. The High Judicial Council is responsible for the supervision of expenses, distribution of funds and keeping accurate accounts, according to

[14] Article 95,96 Law No. 115/2016, "On Governing Bodies of the Justice System"

the provisions of the legislation in force for the budget system in the Republic of Albania". The Article 96 of this law, entitled "Implementation of the judicial budget" stipulates other duties of the KLGJ in relation to the judicial budget.

Budget administration in courts

At court level, the responsibility of drafting and implementing the budget belongs to the Directorate of Budget and Financial Management for the courts of the first category¹⁵ and to the Sector of Budget and Financial Management for the courts of the second and third¹⁶ categories. The budget and finance managers in the courts are responsible for preparing the draft budget of the court, monitoring budget expenditures, making payments and any other financial transaction foreseen by the budget, as well as for the administration of material and monetary values, according to the law. They are supervised by court Chancellor and report periodically to the Court Council. The Court Council¹⁷ is a new controlling and decision-making structure within the courts. It consists of the head of the court, the vice head of the court and the chancellor.

Legal basis of financial reporting and budget drafting and monitoring¹⁸

The financial and budgetary functions in the judicial administration are determined by Law no. 98, dated 06.10.2016 "On the organization of judicial power in the Republic of Albania", later amended. The Article 45 of the aforementioned law provides that "The financial staff exercises and implements the obligations arising from Law no. 9936, dated 26.06.2008, "On management of the budget system in the Republic of Albania", later amended, from Law 10296, dated 08.07.2010, "On financial management and control", later amended, from acts in their implementation as well as from relevant decisions of responsible institutions such as the Supreme Court in the cases of courts and other institutions with an independent budget, such as SPAK, KLP, vetting bodies and the General Prosecutor's Office"¹⁹.

[15] KLGJ decision no. 298, dated 30.05.2023 'On the adoption of standard rules for the organization chart, description of duties and responsibilities of the positions of civil judicial officers and other employees of the First Instance Administrative Court Tirana'

[16] KLGJ decision no. 150, dated 29.03.2023 "On the approval of the standard rules for the organization chart, description of the duties and responsibilities of the positions of judicial civil servants and other employees of the courts of general jurisdiction, the second and third category, with offices service"

[17] Article 27, 28, law no. 98/2016 "On the organization of judicial power in the Republic of Albania"

[18] More information is found at "2023 Summary of the monitoring report of budget planning and allocation", CTFI

[19] Article 45, law no. 98, dated 06.10.2016 "On the organization of judicial power in the Republic of Albania"

The regulatory framework on which the financial statements are drawn up are Law No. 25/2018 "On accounting and financial statements", Instruction No. 8, dated 09.03.2018 "On the procedures for the preparation, submission and reporting of financial statements in General Government Units", later amended by Instruction no. 5 dated 21.02.2022, while the monitoring of the budget is based on the instruction of the Ministry of Finance no. 22, dated 17.11.2016 "On the standard procedures of monitoring the budget for the units of the central government".

The Law No. 9936, dated 26.6.2008 "On management of the budget system in the Republic of Albania" has defined the hierarchy of the implementation and monitoring of the budget within the institutions of central Government in Articles 18, 19, 20. The Justice institutions are part of these institutions. At the top of this pyramid²⁰ is the 'First Authorizing Officer' who is the General Secretary of the ministry responsible for finance, then follows the 'Authorizing Officer'. At the end of the pyramid stands the 'implementing officer', who is a high-level public administration employee of the civil service of the general government unit.

The authorizing officer, according to this Instruction no. 22²¹, has the responsibility to report to the First Authorizing Officer periodically every four months, but not later than the 30th of the following month, the monitoring reports on budget implementation for financial performance. The four-month and eight-month reports must be submitted to the unit responsible for monitoring, in the Ministry of Finance, by the end of the fourth week after the end of the four-month period, specifically on May 30; September 30; while the annual report has to be submitted until the end of February of the next year. The Strategic Management Group (GSM) meets every four months to approve the monitoring report. The Instruction No. 22 requires that these monitoring reports to be published on the official website of each institution.

Among other things, the report contains 4 annexes which are published in Excel format and in a table form. Each of the annexes has a specific theme: Annex 1 shows the expenses according to the programs (salary, social security, other expenses...) by highlighting the foreseen plan, the review, the realized plan and the differences; Annex 2 presents the report of budget program's expenses according to incurred expenses; Annex 3 presents the summary report of the realization of program's performance indicators/products; Annex 4 expresses the ratio of program's policy objectives' realization. The Instruction No. 22 provides for another link in the budget monitoring and reporting process, the Program Management Team (EMP)²², which is created within the departments and includes the main officials of the departments. EMP prepares a report for the Strategic Management Group (GSM)²³ which includes data related to the performance of each

[20] Article 18, 19, 20, law no. 9936, dated 26.6.2008 "On management of the budget system in the Republic of Albania"

[21] Instruction of FM no. 22 dated 17.11.2016 "On Standard Budget Monitoring Procedures of Central Government Units"

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

budget item/product, the updated content of expenses and the realization of products; as well as recommendations for further actions that are under the responsibility of GSM. The GSM is established every year and includes the main heads of the institution. The composition may be the same in several years.

The Instruction No. 22 has a highly-technical administrative language, often exceeding the language used in court documents, which makes this material almost incomprehensible for an employee with an average education in matters of finance and budget. Meanwhile, the annexes are simpler to understand by budget officials but difficult to understand without a guide for a journalist, representative of interest groups or a citizen who has an interest in the budgeting of judicial sector.

The preparation for drafting the budget in the courts starts in January²⁴, when KLGJ send the Instruction to start the process. The head of the court by a written order establishes the EMP and the GSM. In February, the first phase of the Medium-term Budget Program (PBA) is formulated, according to realisation of previous year's budget. In each case, the foreseen figures are accompanied by justification per each one (amount of expense/investment, etc.).

The second phase of the PBA is in July of the same year²⁵. After the end of this phase, the budget is submitted to the KLGJ, mainly in the month of August. Throughout the year, the budget officers in the courts hold periodic meetings with the KLGJ regarding the budget. In general, KLGJ takes into account all courts' requests for the budget, especially in current expenses but the picture is not the same when it comes to the realisation of courts' requests for investments²⁶. KLGJ approves its budget in November. After the approval by the KLGJ, the proposed budget is submitted for review and approval to the Assembly of Albania in November, together with the general budget of the state. Before the Assembly, the Ministry of Finance examines and harmonizes the budget requests of all institutions, including the KLGJ.

Then the draft budget is discussed and reviewed by the parliamentary committees and subsequently approved in the plenary session of the Assembly, usually before the end of the year, to enter into force at the beginning of the next year.

Below is a diagram that explains the stages of budget preparation in the judiciary.

[24] Instruction no. 9, 20.03.2018, "On standard budget implementation procedures", of the Minister of Finance and Economy

[25] Budget guide, CTFI, 2024

[26] The Deputy President of the First Instance Administrative Court, Lushnjë, Hazbi Balliu; Annual job analysis, 2023, Appeal Court of General Jurisdictions



Fig. 1 - Stages of budget preparation in judiciary

Salaries and bonuses of magistrates

Currently, the salaries of magistrates²⁷ are at the top at the salary pyramid in Albania. They are paid according to salary levels G1, G2, G3, which in figures range from 400,000 ALL to 481,000 ALL per month²⁸.

Classification G1 refers to the magistrate who exercises his/her function in the courts of the first instance of general and administrative jurisdiction, or the prosecutor's office near to the first instance courts.

Classification G2 refers to the magistrate who exercises his/her function in the courts of appeal of general and administrative jurisdiction, in the prosecutor's offices next to the appeal court, as well as the magistrate in the Special Court for the Fight against Corruption and Organized Crime (GJKKO), first instance.

Classification G3 refers to the magistrate who exercises his/her function in the Supreme Court and in the General Prosecutor's Office, as well as the magistrate in the Court of Appeal against Corruption and Organized Crime and in the Special Prosecutor's Office (SPAK).

In addition to the above-mentioned salary, magistrates also benefit from other allowances or rewards related to seniority at work, difficulty at work, reward for service in the delegation scheme²⁹, overtime, weekend work and a social category also benefits from compensation for interest rates on

[27] KLGJ Instruction No. 78 dated 16.02.2023 "On the calculation of the basic reference salary of the magistrate (judge)"

[28] Monitoring report 2023, CTFI

[29] KLGJ Instruction No. 559, dated 29.12.2022 "On determining the procedure and measure of the financial treatment of the judge for service in the delegation scheme, for temporary transfer, for temporary appointment and appointment for a special case"

loans for accommodation³⁰. The salary structure of magistrates is based on almost 40% of its total on bonuses for various reasons.

In the Supreme Court, there are judges who do the same job but are paid differently, because the law favors judges who come from Special Courts (GJKKO & GJAKKO). Even the judicial administration has such big differences in salary. The budget director at GJKKO receives a higher salary than the budget director of the KLGJ, which is a governing body of the judicial system. This is due to the addition of 50% of the basic salary for the budget director at GJKKO, due to the work difficulty. The payment of supplementary insurance is an obligation for the administration in SPAK, BKH, but it is not included in GJKKO, although their financial treatment is almost the same in other scenarios and according the law.

New Judicial Map, categories of courts, impact on judiciary

The new judicial map³¹ is the most important action drafted, adopted and monitored by the KLGJ with important changes in the structure and management of the judiciary, including the budget. Through a decision on 10.06.2022, the KLGJ approved the reorganization of the courts of first instance of general jurisdiction, from 22 courts of judicial districts to 13 such courts, and the reorganization of administrative courts of first instance, from 6 administrative courts to 2 such courts, the reorganization from 6 courts of appeal, to a Court of Appeal of Tirana.

The deep transformation of the judicial structure in Albania was not foreseen in the budget and was not accompanied by a financial bill. This brought complications to the 2023 budget, while producing new challenges in the area of investments in courts.

Nine months later, with decision No. 147, dated 29.03.2023, the KLGJ issued another important decision that interfered with the structure of the courts, that of categorizing them into three categories³². The categorization of courts had the purpose of selecting them according to the number of judges, the workload, the territory they covered and the population in this territory. Through this decision, the organizational chart of the courts was structured according to the category, also determining the corresponding salary levels of the magistrates.

[30] DCM no. 732, dt. 13.11.2019, "On the rules for the duration of work, days off and leave, overtime hours and their remuneration, as well as the compensation of expenses for the performance of duties outside the workplace for judicial and prosecution civil servants"

[31] Decision of the KLGJ no. 211, dated 10.06.2022 "For the approval of the evaluation report and the proposal of the inter-institutional work group on the reorganization of judicial districts and territorial powers of the courts"

[32] Decision of the KLGJ no. 147, dated 29.03.2023, "On determining the categories of courts"

Space problems in Albanian courts

The space situation in courts continues to be one of the major problems which were further increased by the implementation of the new judicial map. For years, the need for the construction of new buildings for the Courts of First Instance of JP in Tirana, Durrës, Fier, Lezhë, the Court of Appeal of JP, as well as extensive reconstructions in the courts of Kukës, Korça, and the Administrative Court of First Instance in Tirana, has been present. Even the Supreme Court, despite not being subject to the decision of the KLGJ on the new judicial map, has had for years the problem of the lack of space necessary to perform its functions under normal conditions.

The KLGJ does not have authority to decide on permit of the new buildings at the disposal of the courts. Meanwhile, in the last two years, it has continuously provided funds for projects or construction that have either been reduced or deducted from the budget because the government or local government has not granted relevant permits. In total, the capital expenditure fund for 2024 for program 03310 (courts) according to the revised annual budget in the amount of 338,000,000 ALL, has been realized in the total amount of 298,302,877.60 ALL, or 88%. This fund has been used for repairs and reconstructions as well as for advances in the use of technology in the courts.

The difference is related to the non-liquidation of the contracted value for some procurement objects because the products did not meet the contracted criteria; the lack of offers from economic operators during the procurement procedure, which led to the cancellation of the procedures; the differences (surplus) from the fund's online procurements. For the product M290068 "Building Construction and Full/Partial Reconstruction", funds in the amount of 113,900,000 ALL were programmed for 2024. The revised budget in this project code as a result of the above-mentioned changes is in the amount of 84,494,900 ALL or 77%.

1. The Supreme Court has allocated funds in the amount of 3,800,000 ALL which was revised to the amount of 3,020,000 ALL and was used to carry out maintenance-level works for some repairs in the premises of this court building. The court has fully completed the implementation of the procurement object. During 2024 there was no change in relation to finding a solution for new premises of the Supreme Court. Despite the reconstructions in the court, the 2024 annual report of the Supreme Court emphasized that "The situation regarding the provision of appropriate working conditions and environments is still not where it should be, due to the structure of the Supreme Court building, which does not allow for major interventions. The working premises of the Supreme Court appear to be insufficient for the current number of judges and administrative staff. Working conditions continue to be inappropriate and insufficient, with offices where some employees work outside the standards of the ratio

between space and number of employees”³³. By mid-2025, the construction permit for the new court has been approved³⁴.

2. For the Court of Appeal of JP, funds in the amount of 27,000,000 ALL have been detailed. The revised fund in the amount of 26,030,000 ALL has served for the reconstruction of the premises of the existing building. The works were mainly focused on the reconstruction of the electrical and computer network. The court has fully completed the realization of the fund in 26,009,661 ALL, or 100%. During 2024, a competition was opened for the rental of premises of 8000 square meters for the Court of Appeal, but no bids were submitted in the two calls. In 2025, there was a decision of the Council of Ministers for the allocation of an additional building for the Appeal Court³⁵.

3. For the Court of First Instance of JP, Berat, funds in the amount of 1,700,000 ALL have been detailed. The object of the investment is the adaptation of the server room. The fund was not implemented because the procurement procedure was canceled after no bids were submitted.

4. The Court of First Instance of JP, Durrës, was redistributed funds in the amount of 852,000 ALL, in order to functionalize the building of the former Court of Appeal Durrës, for the transfer of the civil chamber. The court has fully completed the implementation of the procurement object in the amount of 673,227 ALL, or 79%. The difference is the surplus of online procurement. During 2024, the Durrës court council decided to move the civil chamber of the court to the former Appeal building in Shkozë, creating space for the more normal functioning of the court, after the failure of efforts for 8 years to secure a construction site or a spacious public building for the Durrës court.

5. The Court of First Instance of JP in Elbasan, distributed the fund in the amount of 15,000,000 ALL, revised to the amount of 14,942,900 ALL was used for the commissioning of the heating-cooling air conditioning system. The court has completed the implementation of the fund in the amount of 10,557,847 ALL. The difference is the procurement surplus.

6. The Court of First Instance of JP Lezhë, distributed the fund in the amount of 340,000 ALL, in order to adapt the premises of the former Kurbin Court for the archive of this court. The court has fully completed the implementation of the fund, in the amount of 300,000 ALL or in the amount of 88%.

7. For the Court of First Instance of JP Korçë, funds in the amount of 2,400,000 ALL have been detailed with the object of reconstruction of the terrace of the building. The court has fully completed the implementation of the procurement object in the amount of 2,299,795 ALL, or in the amount of 96%. The difference is a procurement surplus.

8. For the Special Court of First Instance Against Corruption and Organized Crime (GJKKO), funds in the amount of 10,200,000 ALL have been redistributed for the purchase of 3 new elevators for

[33] Annual performance report, GJL 2024 p.9

[34] Monitoring Report of the Supreme Court, 2024, CTFI

[35] Monitoring Report of the Court of Appeals of the Republic of Kosovo, 2024, CTFI

for the building, where the Special Courts of First Instance and the Court of Appeal for Corruption and Organized Crime operate. The court has fully completed the implementation of the fund of 10,022,400 ALL, or 99%. The court may face the challenge of additional space after some time.

9. For the Administrative Court of First Instance in Tirana, funds in the amount of 13,000,000 ALL have been detailed at the beginning of the year, revised to the amount of 12,310,000 ALL with the purpose of adapting the server room. The court has completed the procurement procedures but the liquidation of the works situation has not been carried out due to non-fulfillment the standards.

10. For the Administrative Court of First Instance of Lushnje, funds in the amount of 16,500,000 ALL have been detailed. The object of the investment was the reconstruction and adaptation of the premises of the building of the former Court of the Judicial District of Lushnje for the Administrative Court of First Instance of Lushnje. The new court is accommodated in this building and has also taken its third floor, which was previously used by the Prosecutor's Office of the Judicial District of Lushnje. The court has completed the implementation of the procurement object and realized the fund in the amount of 12,543,471.6 ALL, or 98%. Project M290068 "Building Construction and Full/Partial Reconstruction" in the amount of 84,494,900 ALL was implemented in the amount of 65,090,105 ALL, or 77%, after the procurement procedures were not completed by the Administrative Court of First Instance of Tirana and the Court of First Instance of Berat.

11. For the Kukës Court was given budget funds in the amount of 23,300 thousand ALL (the first phase of the project) for the reconstruction of premises. The second phase will be completed during 2025.

12. Meanwhile, the Fier Court is also in a serious situation. The building of the First Instance Court of JP in Fier was built around 1985, and currently houses 3 institutions: the First Instance Court of JP in Fier on the first and second floors, the Bailiff's Office in Fier on part of the first floor, and the Prosecutor's Office on part of the first and second floors, and on the third and fourth floors.

In the completely inadequate infrastructure, 14 judges exercise their duties, who conduct court sessions in 5 courtrooms. In the small offices of the judges, about a square meter, judicial secretaries also assist.

For the normal development of the court's activity in cooperation with KLGJ, the Ministry of Justice and the Local Government, the construction or arrangement/location of the court in another building must be carried out, it was emphasized in the 2023 annual report. "In cooperation with KLGJ and the Ministry of Justice, we request the relocation of the State Bailiff's Office to another building, creating the possibility for the court's area to be increased by the space of the Bailiff's Office and for this space to be adapted as an environment for minors or an archive"³⁶.

Budget

KLGG has received a budget of 4,967,459, 000 ALL (approximately 50 million euros)³⁷ for 2024, divided respectively into:

- Program 01110, “Planning, management and administration” in the amount of 381,059,000 ALL. This budget belongs to the KLGG as an institution.
- Program 01140, “Support for Justice System Technology, QTI”, in the amount of 16,800,000 ALL.
- Program 03310, “Judicial Budget” in the amount of 4,569,600,000 ALL³⁸. This budget item belongs to the country's courts.

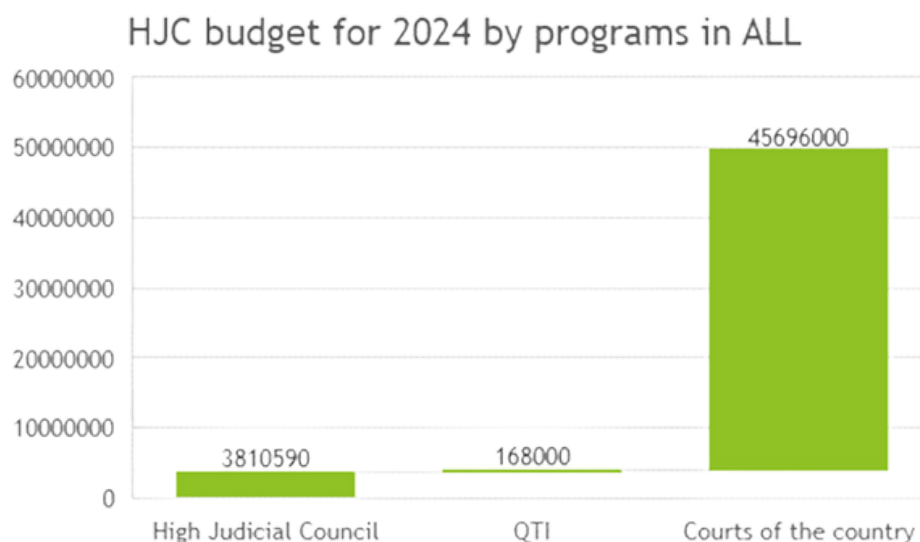


Table 1 - HJC budget for 2024 per programs in ALL

During 2024, the total budget has been reduced by 57,739,042 ALL³⁹, of which; the budget for the KLGG has been reduced by 21,187,306 ALL; the QTI program has been increased by 100,000 ALL, while the program for the courts has been reduced by 36,661,736 ALL.

The budget requests for the entire judicial system (KLGG, Courts and QTI) for 2024 were programmed in the amount of 7,331,450 thousand ALL (approximately 74 million euro), during the preparation of the PBA2 in September 2023, while the final budget ceilings approved by the Ministry of Finance were in the amount of 3,885,650 thousand ALL (approximately 39 million euro), therefore the budget requests for the fiscal year 2024 were higher than the approved ceiling in the amount of 3,445,800 thousand ALL, or 89% more than the approved budget ceilings⁴⁰. The revised annual budget for the budget group was in the amount of 4,909,719,958 ALL.

[37] https://www.bankofalbania.org/Tregjet/Kursi_zyrtar_i_kembimit/Arkiva_e_kursit_te_kembimit/

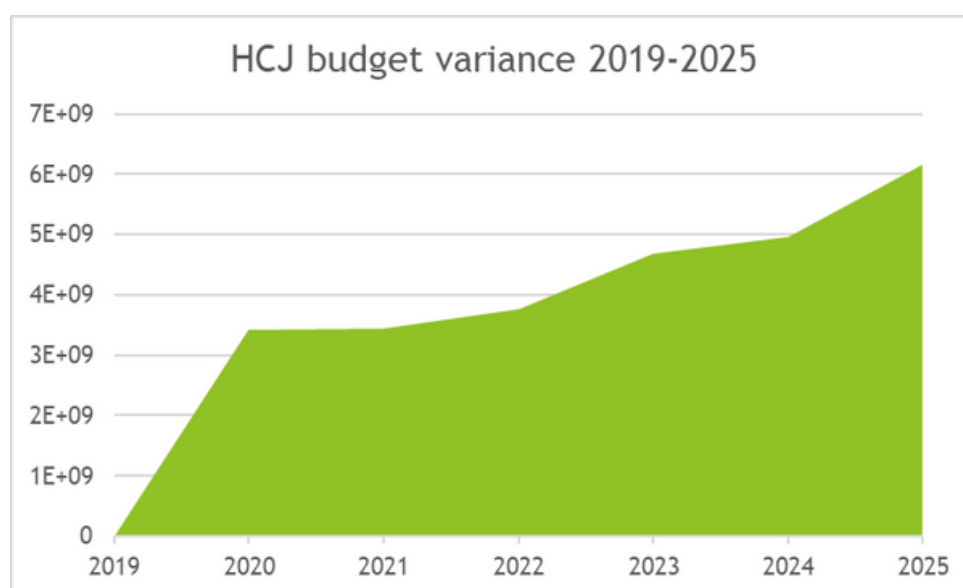
[38] Law No. 97/2023 "On the 2024 Budget"

[39] KLGG/ Budget monitoring report for the period January-December 2024

[40] Minutes of the meeting of the KLGG, held on 24.08.2023

Years	HCJ budget
2019	3,005,910, 000
2020	3,409,150,000
2021	3,444,200,000
2022	3,759,808,000
2023	4,684,713,846
2024	4,967,459,000
2025	6,159,959,000

Table 2 - HCJ budget variance 2019-2025



Graph 1 - HCJ budget variance 2019-2025

While in absolute terms the approved budget for 2024 is approximately 17.5 euro/capita, while the average of European countries is 28.3 euro/capita, for countries with a GDP of less than 10,000 euro/capita. This means that despite the increase in the judicial budget, we are still far from the EU average⁴¹.

Cases of budget interference: During the 2024 budget year, the judicial system budget was revised 11 times, increasing and decreasing by an absolute amount of -57,739 thousand ALL⁴². The changes were implemented through communication with the Ministry of Finance and the approval of the documents by it. In its annual monitoring report, the KLGJ did not highlight any delays in the Ministry of Finance's response to the KLGJ's proposals for reviewing the expenditures of various budget programs.

Expenditures from generated revenues

The courts, in accordance with the VKM and the instructions of the Ministry of Justice and the

[41] European judicial systems - CEPEJ Evaluation Report – 2024 Evaluation cycle (2022 data)

[42] Annual report of the KLGJ, 2024, p.39

and the Ministry of Finance, have also used the revenues generated by them⁴³. For the year 2024, the realization of expenditures from revenues outside the limit (only for program 03310 - Judicial Budget) is in the amount of 20,590,177.8 ALL, of which in the amount of 11,927,197 ALL in goods and services (Art.602) and in the amount of 8,662,980.8 ALL in capital expenditures (Art 230*231).

The budget risk of the KLGJ

In the KLGJ risk register for 2024, it is foreseen as a medium risk 'failure to administer budget requests received from courts of all levels in a timely manner'. Also, 'failure to prepare the final PBA document within the deadlines and submit it for consideration by the Commission and plenary session'⁴⁴ is foreseen as a medium risk. From the monitoring of the budget implementation, there has been a wide movement of the budget, many of which in favor of the courts and their needs.

Budgetary needs⁴⁵

For the budget year 2025, the approved budget for the judicial system is in the amount of 6,159,959 thousand⁴⁶, approximately 62 million euro, (of which the amount of 105,000 thousand ALL is foreign funding). The needs identified by KLGJ have been about 41% higher than the approved and allocated budget, or in absolute value 2,520,569 thousand ALL. The request for additional human resources from KLGJ was the allocation of 272 additional employees; the Assembly has approved 133 additional employees, for the year 2025.

In addition to the problems of court space mentioned above, the main projects to be implemented during 2025 are⁴⁷: The project for the development of a new Court Case Management System, which have been planned to complete in 5 years, according to the assessment in the Council of Europe roadmap; The Enterprise Service BUS (ESB) project is expected to be implemented in a 3-year period. The implementation of an ESB will help the KLGJ, in order to provide a unified approach to communication between services; The project "Increasing cybersecurity capacities", is expected to be implemented in a 3-year period.

[43] Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 432, dated 08.06.2006, "On the creation and administration of secondary revenues generated by budgetary institutions," as well as the Joint Instruction of the Minister of Finance and Economy and the Minister of Justice No. 33, dated 29.12.2014, "On determining the service fee for actions and services of the judicial administration."

[44] Order of the High Judicial Council No. 17, dated 26.02.2024, "On the approval of the internal risk register of the High Judicial Council, 2024."

[45] Annual Report of the High Judicial Council, pp. 46–47.

[46] Law No. 115/2024, "On the State Budget for the Year 2025."

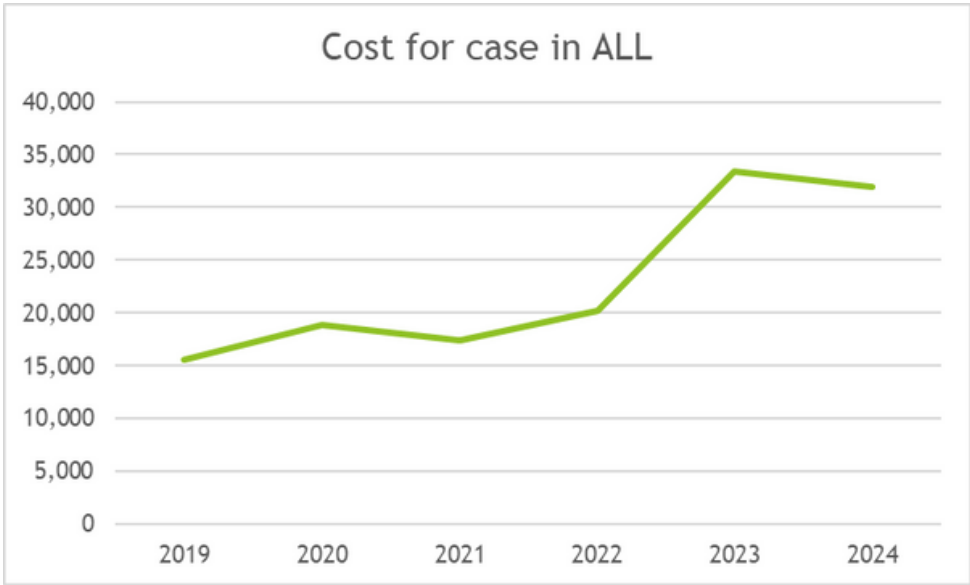
[47] Annual Report of the High Judicial Council, pp. 47.

Cost per unit, cases reviewed

The number of cases reviewed for 2024 was 148,800. During 2024, 128,812 such cases were completed or 87% of the planned number. For the completion of 128,812 cases, 4,114,928,779 ALL (current expenses) were spent, or an average of 31,945 ALL / case. The cost per case in the judiciary in 2024 has decreased compared to 2023.

Years	No. of cases reviewed	Cost for product/ALL	Cost per case/ALL
2019	153 989	2 392 685	15 538
2020	128 374	2 418 546 000	18 839
2021	142 491	2 486 572 000	17 450
2022	131 865	2 659 597 000	20 169
2023	119 802	3 999 474 025	33 384
2024	128 812	4 114 928 779	31 945

Table 3 - Average cost per unit of the product 'cases reviewed' in the judiciary through years 2019-2024



Graph 2 - Average cost per 'cases reviewed' in the judiciary through years 2019-2024

The cost of a case in the GJKKO during 2024 was 74,470 ALL. While for 2023 the cost of a case was 74,797 ALL. For 2022 the cost of a case was 58,191 ALL. The cost of a case in the Administrative Court of First Instance in Tirana during 2024 was 15,913 ALL. While the cost of a case in 2023 was 13,310 ALL.

Year	Cost for case
2024	15 913 ALL
2023	13 310 ALL
2022	10 423 ALL

Table 4 - Cost of a case in the Administrative Court of First Instance, Tirana in 2022-2024

The cost of a case reviewed in the Administrative Court of First Instance, Lushnje for the year 2024 is 39,790 ALL⁴⁸. For the Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction, Durrës, the cost per case for the year 2024 was 22,401 ALL. During the year 2023 the cost per case is 20,670 ALL.

Years	Cost for case/ALL
2020	13 850
2022	11 830
2023	20 670
2024	22 401

Table 5 - Variance in cost per case over the years in the Durrës court

For the Court of First Instance of JP, Kukës, the cost per case is 43,728 ALL, among the highest costs in the courts reviewed by the project. For 2023, this cost was 32,504 ALL. The cost per case at the Court of Appeal of JP was 47,247 ALL⁴⁹. The cost is lower than in 2023 because the number of cases reviewed is higher during 2024. For 2023, the cost per case was 52,195 ALL.

The cost for a case in the Supreme Court in 2024 was 50,000 ALL⁵⁰. For 2023 the cost for a case was 45,762 ALL.

Years	No. of cases	Current spending	Cost for case/ALL
2022 (Tirana)	3 305	164 166 700	49 672
2023	8 812	459 944 840	52 195
2024	9 850	465 386 610	47 247

Table 6 - Variance in cost per case over the years in Court of Appeal of JP, in 2022-2024

[48] 12-Month Budget Monitoring Report of the Administrative Court of Lushnja, 2024

[49] Budget Monitoring Report, 2024, GJAJP, Annex 3.2

[50] Budget Implementation Monitoring Report, 2024, GJL, Annex 3

Procurement

For 2024, 40 procurement procedures were foreseen in the KLGJ, while by the end of the year 33 procedures have been carried out. In some cases, there is a significant decrease in the procured value from that previously determined, such as the purchase of software with a discount of approximately 38%; maintenance of audio equipment with approximately 35%. But there are also purchases of small value that are half of the planned budget, such as in the case of the purchase of brushes.

Meanwhile, there are cases where both the declared and the procured values are the same, as happened in the purchase of fuel.

Audit of the courts

The Internal Audit Directorate⁵¹ of the KLGJ has conducted several audits during 2024 and has listed through an annual report of the activities of this directorate the findings and recommendations in 7 courts. 7 audits have been conducted in various entities and 1 audit to verify the implementation of recommendations left in previous audits of 2023. The internal audit has recommended 83 measures at the end of its audits⁵².

Regarding issues affecting finances, the recommendations emphasize the need to be documented all steps in procurement, including technical specifications, calculation of the limit fund and establishment of qualification criteria; archiving of documentation of procurement procedures; improving fuel and asset management; reviewing payments received unfairly by employees seconded without legal basis; assigning employees responsible for cash and securities; maintaining and accurately documenting monetary transactions; and arranging accounts in financial statements.

Backlog in courts

By the end of 2024, the judiciary in Albania recorded 136,916 unresolved cases, or backlog, reflecting a slight decrease compared to 2023, when the backlog stood at 139,896 cases. At the Supreme Court, the backlog decreased by 19.8% compared to the previous year, dropping to 20,888 cases by the end of 2024 from 26,058 cases at the beginning of the year.

[51] Law No. 114, dated 22.10.2015, "On Internal Audit in the Public Sector," as amended. Point 4.3 of Chapter IV of the Internal Audit Manual, approved by Order of the Minister of Finance No. 100, dated 25.10.2016.

[52] Internal Audit Activity Report for 2024, HJC (High Judicial Council), pp. 23–26.

In the Courts of Appeal of JP, the backlog reached 41,700 cases by the end of 2024, up from 37,662 cases at the beginning of the year. This marks a 10.7% increase or 4,038 more cases than the previous year.

The Special Court of Appeal for Corruption and Organized Crime maintained a low level of backlog. At the beginning of 2024, the backlog was 25 cases and remained stable at 25 cases by year-end.

At the Special Court Against Corruption and Organized Crime (GJKKO), 169 cases were pending review at the end of 2024, compared to 126 cases in 2023.

The Administrative Court of Appeal reported 23,862 pending cases at the end of 2024, an increase of 806 cases or 3.5% compared to 2023. Approximately 29.6% of the backlog consists of cases pending for over five years, exceeding reasonable time limits for adjudication.

At the First Instance Administrative Courts in Tirana and Lushnja, the backlog stood at 8,396 cases at the end of 2024, marking a slight decrease of 4.5% compared to the previous year.

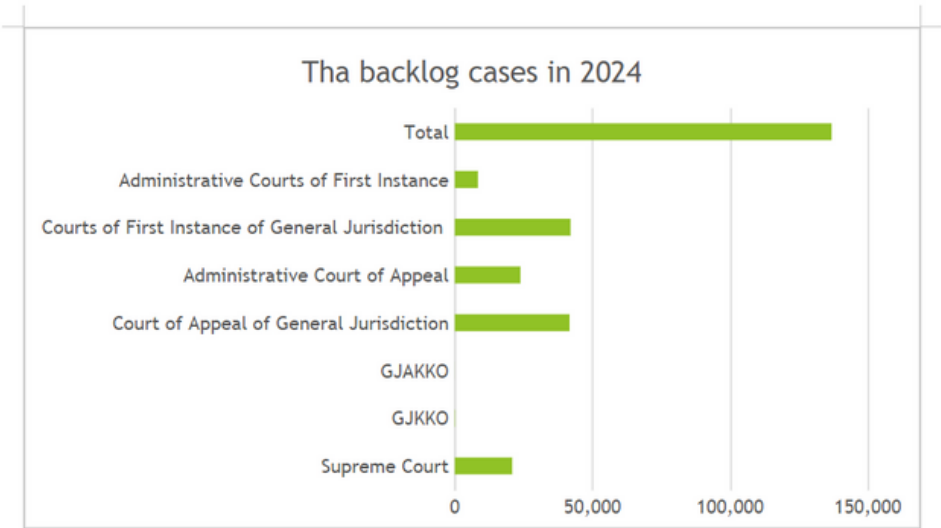
By the end of 2024, the First Instance Courts of JP reported a total of 42,070 pending cases. This represents a slight decrease of around 4% compared to the backlog in the previous year, which were 43,853 cases.

The volume of backlog (delayed) cases in the courts at the end of 2024 was 136,916 cases, at the end of 2023 was 139,986 cases, and 132,008 cases at the end of 2022⁵³.

Courts / years	2022	2023	2024
Supreme Court	31 827	26 058	20 888
GJKKO	152	126	169
GJAKKO	34	25	25
Court of Appeal of General Jurisdiction	31 370	37 662	41 700
Administrative Court of Appeal	21 166	23 056	23 862
Courts of First Instance of JP	40 866	44 181	42 070
Administrative Courts of First Instance	7 354	8 788	8 396
Total	132 008	139 896	136 916

Table 7 - The backlog cases in judiciary during 2022-2024

[53] KLGJ, annual report, 2022; KLGJ, annual report, 2023



Graph. 3 -The backlog cases in judiciary during 2022-2024

Effectiveness Indicators

Following are some of performance indicators of court functioning, based on the CEPEJ methodology. These indicators among them are: Case resolution rate (CR indicator) and Disposal time (DT indicator).

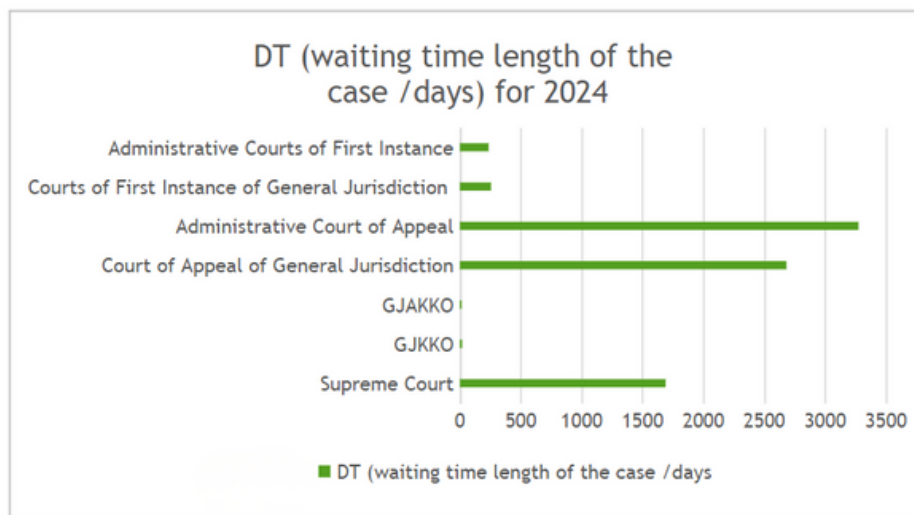
year	2023 (DT in days)	2024 (DT in days)	2023 (CR %)	2024 (CR %)
Supreme Court (civil)	2,087	1,690.4	265.2	357
Special Court of First Instance (GJKKO)	16.4	18	100.9	99
Special Court of Appeal (GJAKKO)	30.7	14.5	103.3	102.3
Court of Appeal of JP(civil)	2,790.7	2,683	52	64.2
Administrative Court of Appeal	5,326	3,275.5	46	76.7
First Instance Courts of JP	193	256	94.5	103
First Instance Administrative Courts (civil)	272 (civile)	236	90	100

Table 8 - Judiciary efficiency indicators for the year 2023-2024

Meanwhile, the rate of liquidation of CR cases, the time of liquidation of DT cases according to groups of courts is as follows in the table of efficiency indicators:

Courts/Indicator	TB (stock of cases)/no. of cases	DT (waiting time length of the case /days	CR (Case Adjudication norm) /%
Supreme Court	20 888	1 690.4	357
GJKKO	169	18	99
GJAKKO	25	14.5	102.3
Court of Appeal of JP	41 700	2 683	64.2
Administrative Court of Appeal	23,862	3,275.5	76.7
Courts of First Instance of JP	42,070	256	103
Administrative Courts of First Instance	8 396	236	100
Total	136 916	-	-

Table 9 - Efficiency Indicators of the judicial system in 2024⁵⁴



Graph 4 - Efficiency Indicators of the judicial system in 2024⁵⁵

Addressing the backlog by the Administrative Court of Appeal

The Administrative Court of Appeal has drafted and approved the “Strategy for Reducing the Number of Backlogs in Courts” and has drafted an action plan for its implementation. The working group⁵⁶ focused mainly on the courts of appeal and other courts considered in need.

The strategy⁵⁷ has defined 7 objectives, three of which (1,2,4) directly address the issue of the

[54] KLGJ, annual report, 2024

[55] ibid

[56] Order No. 42, dated 20.07.2023, “On the Preparation of the Strategy for Reducing the Number of Backlog Cases in Courts.”

[57] National Strategy for Reducing the Number of Backlog Cases in Courts, 2024–2027

the backlog, while 4 others aim to improve the environment that will lead to the reduction of the backlog. Parts of the strategy lay out the need to increase the financing of the system, especially in the area of salaries through an increase in the number of employees.

The strategy foresees an increase in the number of judges of the Administrative Court of Appeal to 19 judge positions (compared to the 13 positions it currently has); an increase in the number and simplification of the hiring process of legal assistants/other non-judge support staff. It is proposed to increase the number of legal assistants up to two legal assistants per judge in the courts of first instance and appeal, to increase their financial treatment as an incentive for legal professionals to choose this career (objective 2).

Objective 3⁵⁸ emphasizes the need to exchange electronic versions of judicial documents such as court decisions between courts or other actors in the process⁵⁹ and standard models for court decisions/court orders and other documents, and to conduct court hearings remotely. Their implementation requires financial support. The above proposals that follow the objectives, especially objective 4, are accompanied by proposals for legal amendments. They have been submitted to the Parliament by the KLGJ since 2024 on May.

Meanwhile, the KLGJ has sent some of these proposals to the Ministry of Justice and the Parliament since July 2023, while in June 2022 it has proposed some legal changes that consist in improving the legal procedures for the selection of court presidents. These proposals, inexplicably, are still in the consultation phase with the Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights. As in the project of the new judicial map, in the case of the National Strategy for reducing the backlog in the courts, the project has not been accompanied by a financial package necessary to support the objectives of the strategy. To achieve the objectives, investments and money are needed, which the strategy has not foreseen either as a separate item or in the action plan accompanying the strategy.

[58] Note: Instead of a practice where court staff must rewrite the elements of a court decision in a report to be prepared for judges (in the absence of an electronic version of a court decision) or the elements of appeals or requests of a different nature, a court's support staff can directly use a digital version of them through the exchange of electronic format between courts or even through strengthening cooperation with other actors in the process such as legal representatives, prosecutors, experts, etc. For old cases, the use by the court of scanners as is currently happening for court decisions, can help in creating digital and editable files, which will save valuable time in the preparation of cases, especially in courts of appeal.

[59] Note: Standard templates can contribute positively to reducing the time needed for judges, law assistants and court secretaries or other court support staff to draft and conceptualize court decisions and orders. Previous pilot projects implemented in Albanian courts have shown that, for example, in the area of enforcement orders, which are of possible templates to limit the working time spent during the preliminary initiation and drafting of decisions/orders. If it is necessary to draft standard templates for drafting relations by the law assistants or their acts, it should be decided to request other secretaries who can be selected by the other members supporting the law.

However, the conclusions of the KLGJ report for the year 2024⁶⁰ require support from the Assembly in relation to: The approval of the legal amendments proposed and sent to the Assembly by the working group "On the drafting of a strategy for reducing the number of backlogged cases in the courts", which aim to reduce the workload and increase efficiency; the proposed legal amendments regarding the minimum experience required to be elected as a court president; the amendments related to increasing transparency through the publication of information on the status of judges, in a complete and non-anonymized manner; financial support for the continuation of the implementation of investment projects in the IT infrastructure for the judicial system, as well as the increase in funds for capital expenditures (investments) in improving the construction infrastructure, in several courts in the country (the Court of Appeal JP, the courts of first instance JP of Fier, Tirana, Durrës and Lezha).

Employees of judicial institutions

The number of employees of the Judicial System approved by law for the year 2024 is 1,759 employees, of which; 138 employees belongs to KLGJ staff, 6 employees belong to the QTI, 1,615 employees are the judicial staff. The actual number for the year 2024 for the judicial system is 1,527 people, or 86.8%. While there are 227 vacancies of which⁶¹; 33 are vacancies in the KLGJ, 1 is in the QTI, 198 are permanent vacancies in the courts. The number of employees of the KLGJ, approved by law, is 138 employees, while on December 31, 2024, there are 108 employees, so there is a shortage of 30 employees⁶². The number of employees approved by law for the QTI is 6 employees, while there are currently 5 employees.

For the year 2024, the number of employees approved by law for the courts, (program 03310 "judicial budget"), is 1,615 employees, of which 408 are magistrates and 1,207 are employees of the judicial administration. On December 31, 2024, the courts actually had 1,417 employees, of which 333 are magistrates and 1,084 are administrative employees. In total, there are shortages in the organic structures of 198 employees; of which 75 are judges (permanent vacancies) and 123 are administrative employees. Meanwhile, out of 333 magistrates, 61 (temporary vacancies) of them are suspended by decision of the KPK and are paid at 75% of the salary. The categorization of courts by a decision of the KLGJ in 2023⁶³ has created a gap in the methods

[60] Annual Report of the High Judicial Council (HJC), 2024, p.127

[61] Note: In the following paragraph, 30 employees – not 33 – are marked as vacancies by the HJC. In some cases, there are discrepancies in figures referring to the same issue across reports of justice institutions. Some differences relate to the fact that certain vacancies are temporarily filled, others stem from differing calculation methods, and in some instances, from simple computational errors. These deviations, however, do not significantly alter the overall picture of the challenges within the judiciary.

[62] Budget Commission Report, 2024

[63] Decision of the High Judicial Council (HJC) No. 147, dated 29.03.2023, "On the Determination of Court Categories."

of payment and treatment of non-judicial administration in the courts. A working group has been established by the KLGJ for the reform of the judicial civil servant, which includes the approval of sub-legal acts, the drafting of rules and the evaluation of the categories of judicial civil servants. During discussions at meetings organized by the qTIL⁶⁴, court officials have raised this problem, also requesting their treatment.

KLGJ has established a working group for the drafting of rules for the evaluation of the categories of judicial civil servants, which has been intensively engaged, through the holding of periodic meetings among its members while the relevant acts are being drafted. The activity of this working group is expected to be finalized in early 2025, thus guaranteeing the framework for the standardization of the work of the civil judicial administration, increasing its integrity, accountability and professionalism⁶⁵. Within the framework of the Strategy for reducing the stock level, KLGJ has proposed increasing the number of judges from 408 to 417 judges. Regarding the increase in the number of legal assistants in the framework of filling current vacancies, 6 legal assistants were accepted into the civil judicial service in October 2024⁶⁶. Meanwhile, for 2025, KLGJ has initiated the procedure for verifying the winning candidates in the admission exam to the initial training program at the School of Magistrates for the academic year 2024-2025, for 11 legal assistants. In courts of all levels, it results that for 2024, 113 judicial civil servants have been trained.

During 2024, a total of 272 judges have effectively exercised the function of judge in courts of all levels in the same period of time. This means that the judicial system during 2024 has functioned with almost 66.6% of its capacity, almost 6.6% more than in 2023. During 2024, 32 magistrates have been appointed. Referring to statistical data, the number of magistrates appointed to the system from 2019 to 2024 is 144 magistrates, of which 4 judges in the Supreme Court from among prominent jurists and 140 magistrates graduated from the School of Magistrates.

In relation to the losses from the system as a result of the vetting process, there are 113 decisions of dismissal from office by a final decision by the KPA, of which 24 decisions belong to the year 2024. Since the beginning of the vetting process, 144 judges have been dismissed from office, by decision of the KPK with a financial effect in the amount of 965,768,125 ALL, until December 31, 2024. During 2024, a total of 60 judges with a decision by the KPK for dismissal whom are awaiting the final process in the KPA, while maintaining the status of judge due to suspension, as well as simultaneously benefiting from 75% of the initial gross salary, according to the law. Such a situation is calculated with a financial effect in the amount of 140,992,975 ALL.

From the data available to the Human Resources Directorate at the KLGJ, it results that the number of vacancies in the system for judges is 136 vacancies (of which 75 permanent and 61 temporary)⁶⁷.

[64] Civil Forum, Kukës, December 23, 2024. QTIL, EMA, EU

[65] Annual Report of the High Judicial Council (HJC), p.27

[66] Decisions of the High Judicial Council (HJC) No. 592 and No. 593, dated 09.10.2024; No. 483, dated 31.07.2024; No. 588, dated 09.10.2024; No. 591, dated 09.10.2024; No. 282 and No. 283, dated 29.05.2024; and No. 585, dated 09.10.2024.

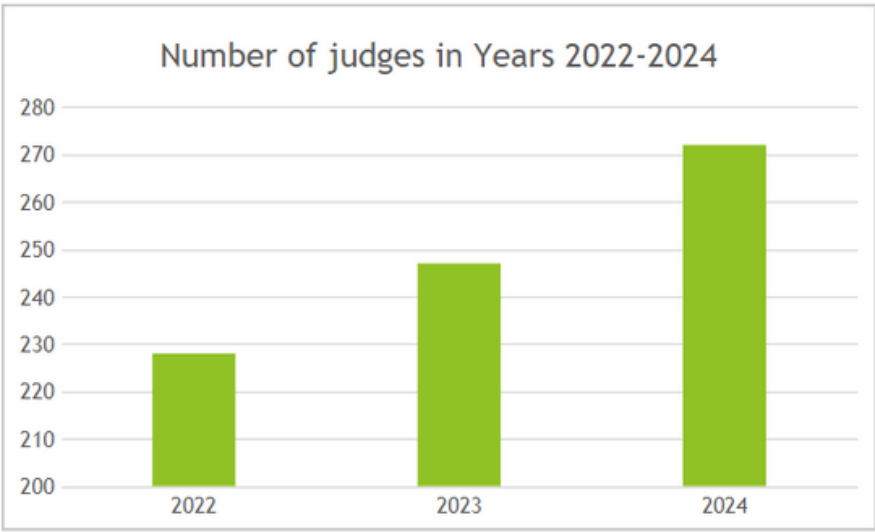
[67] HJC Report, p.33

No.	Court	January 1, 2024			December 31, 2024		
		Organizational structure	Actual structure	Effectively in office	Organizational structure	Actual structure	Effectively in office
1	Supreme Court	19	19	18	19	18	17
2	Appeal Court JP Tirane	78	34	25	78	31	28
3	Special court of Appeal	11	10	10	11	10	10
4	Court JP Berat	8	9	5	8	8	6
5	Court JP Dibër	7	8	7	7	9	7
6	Court JP, Durres	23	14	12	23	14	16
7	Court JP Elbasan	18	16	11	18	18	13
8	Court JP Fier	21	24	14	21	23	17
9	Court JP Gjirokastrë	7	8	4	7	9	4
10	Court JP Korçë	15	16	12	15	18	11
11	Court JP Kukës	7	8	5	7	8	7
12	Court JP Lezhë	11	12	7	11	11	9
13	Court JP Sarandë	7	8	6	7	10	6
14	Court JP Shkodër	15	15	10	15	17	10
15	Court JP Tiranë	80	63	49	80	62	55
16	Court JP Vlorë	16	17	12	16	18	12
17	GJ K.K.O	16	9	9	16	11	11
18	Appeal court of Administrative	13	8	11	13	7	13
19	Court of first instance of administrative Lushnjë	9	10	6	9	10	7
20	Court of first instance of administrative Tiranë	27	21	14	27	21	17
		408	329	247	408	333	272

Table 10 - Number of magistrates (judges), during the year 2024

Years	Number of judges according the KLGJ Decree	Actual number of judges	Percentage of actual number of judges/judges per KLGJ Decree
2022	408	228	56
2023	408	247	60.5
2024	408	272	66.6

Table 11 - Number of actual judges at work in 2022-2024



Graph. 5 - Number of actual judges at work in 2022-2024

The number of non-judge staff per 100 000 inhabitants for Albania for the year 2023 according to the judicial structure is actually 37.44, against the European average for the year 2020 of 55.549. So, it turns out that, despite the increase of human resources in the judicial administration, the number of non-judge staff per 100 000 inhabitants for Albania, continues to remain far from the European average. While the ratio of judges/judicial administrative staff is 2.9 according to the structure, in fact that ratio was 4.6, a little bit more than European average, which is 3.9. So here, the European standard has been reached according to the fact but not according to the complete structure.

SPAK/ Budget

The budget⁶⁸ allocated for the program "Activities of the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime" for 2024 is planned at 1,901 million ALL⁶⁹ and with the revised annual budget at 1,310 million ALL⁷⁰. According to the revised plan, the amount of 1,042,000,000 ALL represents current expenses, and the amount of 268,000,000 ALL represents capital expenses.

According to the actual realization, the total realized expenses are in the amount of 1,224,000,000 ALL or 93% of the revised plan, of which current expenses were realized in the amount of 975 million ALL, while capital expenses in the amount of 249 million ALL. The expenditure on salaries is

[68] Note: The Special Prosecution Office Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) has the institution code 1041001 in the Government Financial Information System. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has the institution code 1041002 in the same system.

[69] Law No. 97/2023, "On the State Budget for 2024."

[70] Directorate of Budget and Financial Management, SPAK (2024).

worth about 855.9 million ALL or about 65% of the total budget of SPAK, of which the Special Prosecution Office in the amount of 417.1 million ALL and the BKH in the amount of 438.8 million ALL. The Special Prosecution Office has realized 368.9 million ALL in salaries and 34.7 million ALL in insurance or about 96% of the planned expenses for 2024⁷¹; the National Bureau of Investigation has realized 380.3 million ALL in salaries and 28.6 million ALL in insurance or 93% of the planned expenses for 2024⁷². The underperformance is a result of vacancies in the two institutions, SPAK and BKH. The request submitted by SPAK for the addition of 40 investigators to the National Bureau of Investigation has been taken into consideration⁷³.

Capital Investment Expenditures

The initially approved fund for the capital investments item was 550 million ALL⁷⁴. As a result of the additions and reductions, reflected in the approved budget, the revised plan for the capital investments item is 268 million ALL. During the 12 months of 2024, the expenditure for this item is presented in the amount of 249.3 million ALL, or otherwise 93% of the final annual plan.

Several projects have been implemented through this fund:

Operational and technological capacities have been established⁷⁵, such as secure and functional premises, equipment with advanced technology for forensic investigations and analysis, as well as the creation of integrated information management systems and databases. During 2024, the procurement of the approved fund with the object "Construction and reconstruction of the new SPAK building" was canceled due to non-fulfillment of the criteria by the participating economic operators according to the definitions of the Contracting Authority. This has resulted in a reduction of funds in the amount of 282 million lek for this item. During 2024, SPAK's assets were increased by the additional building of the former UKT worth 744,178,250 ALL as well as the inventory of the Public Commissioners' office, which includes furniture, vehicles and small inventory worth 4,606,611 ALL.

Other investments⁷⁶

Completing the establishment of the Case Management System remains a priority for the Special Prosecution Office. The system has a modular construction and in December 2024 the development of the modules was completed. Due to the completion of the ICITAP support project, this process has been suspended and is expected to be completed within 2025, with EU funds. Increasing the memory capacity of the BKH interception system is a priority to cope with the increasing load of the system that continues in 2025.

Construction of a new data center is now planned in the new building, while the purchase of new servers and the improvement of data storage capacity have been completed.

[74] Law No. 97/2023, "On the State Budget for 2024."

[75] SPAK, Annual Report 2024, p.90.

[76] Ibid., p.93.

Comparison with other years

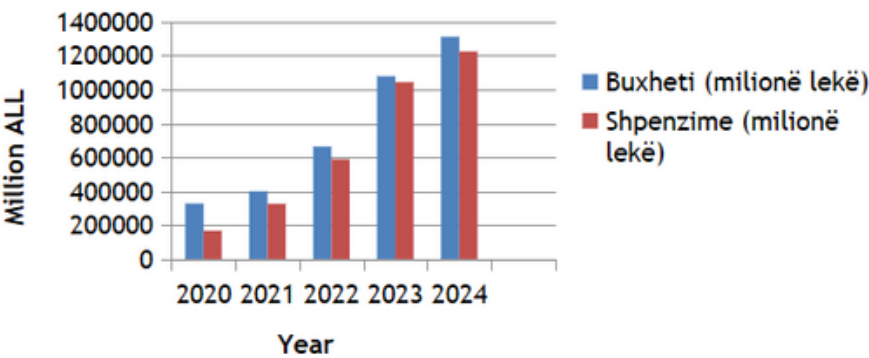
The budget has increased starting from 2020 to 2024 because during these years human capacities, investments in technology and infrastructure have increased. The level of funds realization has improved, from 51% in 2020 to 93% in 2024.

The structure of expenses during these years is almost unchanged. Thus, current expenses constitute an average of 78-81% of the total, reflecting the weight of salaries, financial treatments and operating costs of the institution; capital expenses maintain a level of around 20% of the total. The highest specific weight is occupied by salary expenses and the lowest specific weight is occupied by other transfers.

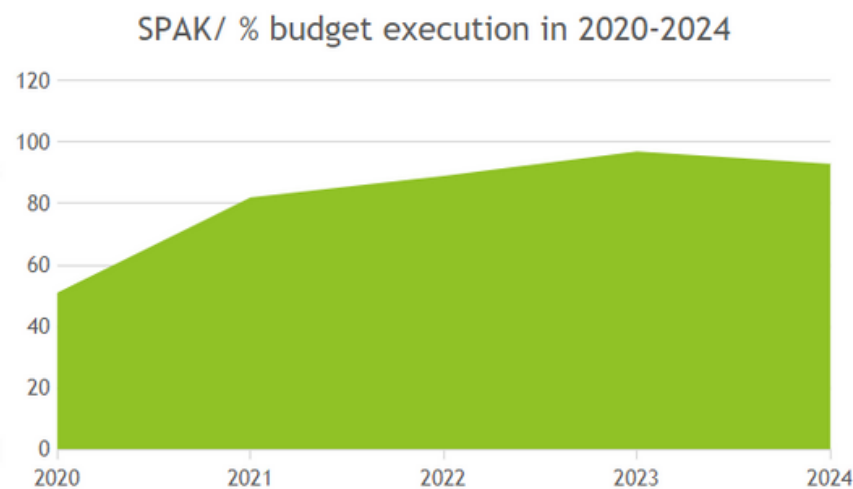
Years	Estimated budget/million ALL	Implemented budget/million ALL	Realization in %
2020	327 175	167 051	51%
2021	399 448	325 760	82%
2022	663 300	588 063	89%
2023	1 077 438	1 042 742	97%
2024	1 310 547	1 224 100	93%

Table 12 - Budget variance from 2020 when SPAK began operating until 2024

SPAK/ Annual budget and expenses (2020-2024)



Graph. 6 - Budget variance from 2020 when SPAK began operating until 2024



Graph. 7 - Percentage of budget execution in years by SPAK

Revenues generated by the institution

The revenues generated by the institution, which mainly include fees for procedural expenses (photocopies, scanning, CDs, court fines), reach the amount to 1,691,890 ALL. According to the Special Prosecution Office's Instruction No. 613 dated 15.09.2023 "On the Procedural Expenses of the Prosecution", these revenues were transferred to the state budget at the end of the year⁷⁷.

Funding from other institutions

SPAK has been supported by the Agency for the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets (AAPSK), which has provided funds at SPAK's request for the purchase of security equipment and systems, electronic devices for the development of investigations, etc. Through the Protocolled Contract No. 1189, dated 30.03.2023, a grant in the amount of 169,208,320 ALL was approved for the Special Prosecution Office. From this fund, procedures amounting to a total of 47.9 million ALL or about 28% of the total planned budget have been implemented in 2024, which has been procured in several lots.

Assistance, support, and assets from foreign donors

The total value of donations for SPAK for 2024 is 5,174,072 ALL. International missions, such as ICITAP, OPDAT, and EU4LEA, have brought valuable expertise and resources to support the implementation of advanced systems and the improvement of IT infrastructure, as well as to strengthen data analysis and management capacities.

[77] Instruction of the Special Prosecution Office No. 613, dated 15.09.2023, "On the procedural expenses of the Prosecution Office"

There have been in-kind donations from the U.S. Department of State and the Spanish Foundation “Internacional Y Para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas.”

The U.S. Department of State has provided a ‘Forensic Workstation - Talino KA-301’ valued at 3,598,221 ALL, and also a laptop worth 898,625 ALL. Meanwhile, the Spanish foundation has provided office equipment and furniture valued at 677,226 ALL. Funds from Eurojust: During 2024, the Special Prosecution Office was allocated a total fund of 1,247,711 ALL based on the Eurojust Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) funding program. EUROJUST reimburses up to 95% of expenses related to these criminal proceedings, mainly for translation of documents, accommodation, and travel^[78].

Seizures and confiscations in 2024

Immovable properties, monetary values, business shares, and crypto currency wallets have been seized and confiscated in a total estimated value of approximately 65.5 million euro. The value of seized assets for 2024 is 2,800,705,512 ALL, while the value of confiscated assets amounts to approximately 36.7 million euros. Compared to 2023, there is an increase of about 59.7% in the total value of seized and confiscated assets.

Seized assets	28 million euro
Confiscated assets	36 million euro
Total	64 million euro

Table 13 - Seizures and confiscations

Forecasting of budget-related risks

SPAK has approved the institution’s strategy for the years 2024–2027. In the risk analysis, the strategy has identified the potential reduction of the institution’s financial capacities as a low-level risk. “The reduction of the budget and various financial obstacles in fulfilling the needs of the Special Prosecution Office” is the definition of this risk, which is assessed at a low level^[79].

Cost for file

The cost per unit of the product “completed case file” at SPAK for 2024 is 6,141,195 ALL.

[78] SPAK, Annual Report 2024, p.94
[79] SPAK, Strategic Plan 2024–2027, p.23

Year/no. of files	Budget/ALL	Cost per file/ALL
2021/226	299 528 000	1 325 345
2022/196	568 712 900	2 901 596
2023/ 193	1 034 304 000	5 359 088
2024/220	1 351 063 000	6 141 195

Table 14 - SPAK/Cost per product "completed case file" for the years 2021–2024

Procurement

For the year 2024⁸⁰, SPAK had planned 25 procurement procedures under the category "Goods and Services Expenditures" and 11 procurement procedures under "Capital Investments." However, the register of procurement implementation lists a total of 61 procurements. The discrepancy arises due to the different reporting methods used in the two registers⁸¹.

In some cases, a high level of non-implementation is observed, even when it concerns the strengthening of SPAK's capacities. For example, for the item "Purchase of operational and technical equipment," the annual procurement plan was 9,000,000 ALL. This plan was revised down to 72,000 ALL and, in the end, was not implemented at all. Expenditures were lowest in January, at 4.4% of the total, and peaked in December, reaching 32%.

The largest expenses were for system maintenance (surveillance and expertise), followed by utility service expenditures (electricity, water, telephone, internet, etc.) and payments for services provided by the State Cadastre Agency, which represents the third largest expense category. Operational expenses included payments for lawyers, experts, and translators, taxes, office supply purchases, cleaning materials, fuel, transport maintenance, building maintenance, and so on. A comparison of the years 2020–2024 shows savings from procurement procedures when comparing the limit fund to the procured amount: The total saved limit fund for investment procedures over the 2020–2024 period is 62,417,814 ALL⁸².

Issues raised by SPAK on funding

In SPAK's 2024 Annual Report, 10 issues are highlighted across various operational areas, 4 of which have direct financial implications. According to the report, no legal advisors have been

[80] SPAK/Register of forecast of public procurements 2024; Register of realization of public procurements 2024

[81] Ibid

[82] SPAK Annual Report, p. 102

assigned to the Special Prosecutor’s Office; the completion of the Case Management System remains a priority for the Special Prosecution. Due to the conclusion of ICITAP’s support project, this process has been suspended and is expected to be completed within 2025, funded by the EU. There is also a need for analysis unit in SPAK to support complex investigations, risk assessments, etc. The status of the liaison specialist in the international cooperation and joint investigations sector remains problematic, as the position is treated as a regular civil servant role.

KLP/ Budget

For the year 2024, KLP administered and managed funds⁸⁴ in total 214,083,000 ALL. The initial budget plan was 214,083,000 ALL, or approximately 2.1 million euro. The revised plan amounted to 216,994,000 ALL, while the actual execution was 199,960,000 ALL, representing 92% of the total.

Account no	Naming	Initial budget plan year 2024	Budget plan year 2024	Actual 12-month realization 2024	
				In value	In %
600	Wage Fund	152 840	151 000	145 596	96%
601	Contrib. Social & Health Insurance	20 760	18 600	17 027	92%
602	Other Goods and Services	30 483	34 083	34 078	100%
606	Transfers to Individuals	4 000	3 311	3 259	98%
	Total	214 083	216 994	199 960	92%

Table 15 - The composition of the budget expenditures (current expenditure) for 2024

[83] Constitution of the Republic of Albania, Article 179/b, point 8; Law no. 16/2022 "On an amendment to Law no. 8417, dated 21.10.1998, 'Constitution of the Republic of Albania,' as amended."

[84] Law no. 97/2023 "On the budget for the year 2024."

KLP was not satisfied with the amount of the budget initially approved by the Ministry of Finance for the year 2024. The Council approved the budget requests under the PBA 2024–2026; however, the Ministry of Finance did not take into account the requests for amendments. This is because, in VKM No. 436, dated 19.07.2023, “On the Approval of the Final Ceilings of Expenditures for the PBA 2024–2026” has been defined expenditure ceilings lower than those proposed. This issue was raised on November 7, 2023, before the Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights in the Parliament. The PBA budget expenditure requests for the years 2024–2026 were partially accepted by the Committee, which approved a staffing level of 72 employees. In the risk strategy approved on December 12, 2023, it is emphasized that an external risk lies in the budget ceilings imposed by the Ministry of Finance, the freezing of funds allocated by the annual law, and the reduction of funds through normative acts proposed by the Ministry of Finance⁸⁵. This risk is considered to have both a high probability and high impact⁸⁶.

Cost per decision of KLP

For the KLP, the cost was calculated for the product “decisions taken by the KLP”⁸⁷. During 2024, a total of 301 decisions were taken, compared to 200 initially planned, with a total expenditure of 199,960,000 ALL. The actual cost per unit (i.e., per decision taken) was 664,319 ALL.

Year/No. of decisions	Cost per decision/ALL
2021/200	710 750
2022/200	712 727
2023/406	460 579
2024/301	664 319

Table 16 - Cost per decisions taken by the KLP during 2021-2024

Procurement

In the procurement forecast register of the KLP, 19 procurements were planned for the year 2024⁸⁸. The purchases with the highest budget were those for ICT equipment and software, with a projected value of approximately 4.1 million ALL. However, only 13 procurement procedures have been carried out, and purchases for ICT equipment and software were not included among them.

[85] Risk Management Strategy, 2023, p.8

[86] Ibid, p.11

[87] HJC/Annual Budget Monitoring Annexes for the Year 2024

[88] HJC/Register of Forecasted Public Procurements 2024; Register of Executed Public Procurements 2024

TRANSPARENCY FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS

In terms of transparency regarding data and information related to the budget, a total of 11 institutions mentioned in the monitoring report above have been monitored for their practices. The institutions of Justice have published the Transparency Program online on their official webpages and based on the law "On the right to information⁸⁹", they must publish the main relevant documents such as legislation, strategic documents, reports and annual reports on their work and activity that are of relevance for the general public. Meanwhile, the Instruction no. 22 of the Ministry of Finance for budget monitoring⁹⁰ requires public institutions to publish 4-monthly, 8-monthly and annual budget monitoring reports (including annexes) on this online section of institutions' website.

The publication of information is monitored in the three rubrics of the Transparency Program, mandatory to be published there. The three monitored rubrics are: "Information on the budget and financial data" where: the annual budget, the annual budget implementation monitoring report followed by annual budget monitoring annexes, the annual report or annual analysis are published; "Information on procurement procedures/competitive procedures of concession/public private partnership", where, among other things, the Forecast and Performance Registers are published; "Register of requests and responses" where all requests for information and their responses must be published.

The level of clarity and comprehensibility of the published documents was also evaluated. All the data gathered have been processed based on a short and simple evaluation form through closed questions "Yes" or "No" and with the possibility of comments about findings. Below is the table with the data that reflects the level of transparency of publication of documents selected to be monitored based on three rubrics of Transparency Program regarding: the budget, procurement registers of the institutions and responses to requests for information.

Year	Budget of the year	Budget Monitoring Reports and annexes	Annual Reports/ Analyses	Procurement Register (p/r)	Requests and Answers Register
2023	1	5	4	2	4
2024	3	5	3	1	1

Table 17 - Performance of the Transparency Program – Institutions Failing to Publish Financial and Management Documents

[89] Article 4, 6, 7, 8, Law "On the right to information",
[90] Instruction of FM no. 22 dated 17.11.2016 "On Standard Monitoring Procedures of Central Government Units"

Institutions/ Required documents	Budget 2024	Budget Monitoring Reports and annexes	Annual Reports/ Analyses	Procur. Register (p/r)	Requests and Answers Register	Comments
KLJG	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	In some cases when the responses to the request contain documents, those documents are not attached
GJKKO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Ad.Court. F.I, Lushnjë	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	In 10 requests processed by the court, the responses have been published, while in 6 others, the responses have not been published.
Ad. Court F.I, Tiranë	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Responses were not published in 9 cases, while they were published in summary form in 3 cases.
Court of Ap. JP	Yes	No. The annual balance sheet of the court has been published.	No	Yes	Yes	Only in 5 out of 24 requests for information the response has been published. In the other cases, only the fact that a response was received was announced.
Supreme Court	Yes	No (the monitoring report was published only the narrative part without annexes)	Yes	Yes (only procurement execution register)	Yes	
Court Durrës	No	No (4 and 8 month monitoring reports have been published)	Yes	Yes	Yes	In 2024, responses to requests were also published, unlike in 2023.]
Court Kukës	No	No (monitoring reports for 8 months of 2024 have been published)	Yes	Yes (Forecast log is placed in another window)	Yes	There is no publication for 2024. But registration for 2025 has begun, also publishing the answers.
KLP	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	There is no record of requests and responses for the year 2024. The archive remains until 2022
KPK	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	The KPK closed all activity in mid-2025. Meanwhile, only the annual report has been preserved on one page.
SPAK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Table 18 - Transparency of Justice institutions through the publication of budget and financial documents

As it can be seen from the table above, 3 of the 11 monitored institutions have published all the documents selected for monitoring which are SPAK, KLJG, GJKKO, while 7 of 11 monitored institutions have partially published them. It is worth mentioning that some of these institutions have added the publications after communicating with the project team, beyond monitoring timeline, like Court of Kukësi, Administrative court of Tirana.

3 institutions has not published data on the amount of the budget for 2024, 3 institutions have not published the annual report/analysis for 2024, 5 institutions have not published the annual budget implementation monitoring report 2024 following by annual budget monitoring annexes, but all of institutions have been published them partially (4 or 8 monthly reports); 1 institution has not published both procurement registers but only one of them, forecast register. Only 1 institution have not published the answers to the requests they have received (KLP) compare with 4 in 2023.

The published documents related to the budget, specifically, annual budget monitoring annexes, are difficult or partially understandable, due to codes, figures reduced to thousands or millions of ALL, poor scanning and their placement in vertical and not horizontal positions on the page.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

KLGIJ AND THE COURTS

KLGIJ was allocated a budget of 4,967,459,000 ALL for the year 2024, which is higher than the budget from the previous year. The revised annual budget amounted to 4,909,719,958 ALL. The approved budget for 2024 corresponds to approximately 17.5 euro per inhabitant, while the average for European countries with a GDP below 10,000 euro per capita is 28.3 euro per inhabitant. The budget requests for the entire judicial system (KLGIJ, Courts, and the QTI) for 2024 were programmed at 7,331,450,000 ALL. These requests were significantly higher than the approved ceiling of 3,445,800,000 ALL, exceeding it by 89%.

The annual budget execution, as a consolidated group, reached 4,734,657,970.2 ALL or 96%. Of this: Program 01110 (KLGIJ) was executed at 90%, Program 01140 (QTI) at 76%, Program 03310 (Courts) at 97%. The budget was revised 11 times during 2024.

In up to 30% of cases, there was a significant reduction in the procurement procured value compared to the initially projected amount, while in up to 0% of procurements the procured value matched the forecasted one. The average cost for cases reviewed in court is 31,945 ALL/case. Financial support has been secured for the creation and functioning of the new Integrated Case Management Information System (ICMIS). A working group has been established for the reform of judicial civil servants, which includes the approval of sublegal acts, drafting of regulations, and assessment of civil servant categories, addressing discrepancies in payments for the same roles across courts.

Progress has been made regarding the construction of new buildings for the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals of JP. There has been no progress in addressing space needs for first instance courts of JP in Fier, Tirana, and Lezhë. For the Supreme Court, the construction permit has been granted, the contract has been signed, and the commencement of the building construction is expected in 2025. For the Court of Appeals of JP, an additional building has been designated for its function in Tirana. The existing premises of the Court of Appeals have undergone reconstruction, mainly of the electrical and IT infrastructure.

The First Instance Court of JP in Durrës has operationalized the building of the former Durrës Court of Appeals for the relocation of the civil chamber. In several other courts, interventions have been carried out to improve building conditions and systems. As with the judicial map reform project, the National Strategy and the action plan for reducing the backlog of court cases have not been accompanied by the necessary financial package to support the strategy's objectives.

By the end of 2024, the judiciary in Albania recorded 136,916 unresolved cases, or backlog, reflecting a slight decrease compared to 2023, when the backlog stood at 139,896 cases. At the Supreme Court, the backlog decreased by 19.8% compared to the previous year, dropping to 20,888 cases by the end of 2024 from 26,058 cases at the beginning of the year. In the Courts of Appeal of JP, the backlog reached 41,700 cases by the end of 2024, up from 37,662 cases at the

beginning of the year. This marks a 10.7% increase or 4,038 more cases than the previous year.

The Administrative Court of Appeal reported 23,862 pending cases at the end of 2024, an increase of 806 cases or 3.5% compared to 2023. By the end of 2024, the First Instance Courts of JP reported a total of 42,070 pending cases. This represents a slight decrease of around 4% compared to the backlog in the previous year. For the first time in several years, a reduction in the backlog has been recorded at the [Tirana Administrative Court of First Instance](#), which has carried a heavy load of administrative cases. The waiting time for a case at the [Administrative Court of Appeal](#) is 3,275 days, while for the Court of Appeal of JP it is 1,545 days. There are inaccuracies in the KLGJ's reporting of figures related to the backlog at the [High Court](#), as well as inaccuracies in the reporting for the Court of Appeal of JP regarding the CR (case resolution rate). These discrepancies become evident when comparing the KLGJ's annual reports with those of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal or when comparing reports from 2024 to those from 2023.

The KLGJ is seeking the support of the Parliament regarding: The approval of proposed legal amendments submitted by the working group "On drafting the strategy for reducing the number of backlogged cases in courts," aimed at reducing the backlog and increasing efficiency; The proposed legal changes related to the criteria for the election of court chairs; Financial support for the continued implementation of IT infrastructure investment projects in the judicial system; An increase in capital expenditure funds (investments) for improving building infrastructure in several courts across the country (the Court of Appeal and first instance courts in Fier, Tirana, Durrës, and Lezhë).

The KLGJ has proposed increasing the number of judges at the Administrative Court of Appeal from 13 to 22, or increasing the total number of judges in the system from 408 to 417. The Supreme Court has requested the addition of judges, even on a temporary mandate, until the situation at the Supreme Court and the two Courts of Appeal will be normalized. During 2024, a total of 272 judges were actively exercising their functions across all levels of courts, which represents 66.6% of the system's full capacity—an increase of 6.6% compared to 2023. In 2024, 32 magistrates were appointed. The number of judicial vacancies stands at 136 (of which 75 are permanent and 61 temporary). The Court of Appeal of JP has the most significant shortage of judges. According to the decree, it should have 78 judges, but currently only has 26. Most of the monitored courts are still led by their vice chairman.

According to the SWOT analysis developed by the KLGJ, described in the "Strategic Plan 2022–2024," several weaknesses and threats have been identified, including an insufficient budget and the lack of effective information technology systems in the courts.

There were no changes in 2024 to the salary structure of magistrates, which is composed of approximately 40% in bonuses for various reasons—leaving the system vulnerable and exposed to unpredictable or unfriendly salary initiatives. The salary gap between magistrates and judicial administrative staff ranges from 1:3 to 1:7—meaning that a magistrate earns 3 to 7 times more than a judicial administration employee.

In 2024, the archive of the Court of Appeal of JP received nearly 2,800 document requests.

The Court Council of the Special Court Against Corruption and Organized Crime (GJKKO) has taken a decision regarding the support staff, affecting their monthly salaries. However, the issue of supplementary insurance payments for SPAK support staff remains unresolved. They have sent a letter with their arguments to the KLGJ, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Economy. For the 2025 fiscal year, the approved budget for the judicial system is 6,159,959,000 ALL (of which 105,000,000 ALL is foreign funding).

KLGJ requested the approval of 272 additional employees; the Parliament approved 133 additional employees for 2025. The needs identified by the KLGJ for 2025 were 41% higher than the approved and allocated budget.

KLP

For the year 2024, KLP had a budget of 214,083,000 ALL, with an execution rate of 92%. No funds were spent from the investment fund. The KLP has amended the regulation on overtime payments, removing, among other things, the 200-hour annual threshold that was in place under the previous regulation approved in 2019. The KLP considers as an external risk the imposition of budget ceilings by the Ministry of Finance, the freezing of legally allocated funds by the Ministry, and budget cuts through normative acts proposed by the Ministry of Finance. This risk is considered to have both high probability and high impact.

Another identified risk is the non-allocation of a special fund by the Ministry to the institution, as well as the obstruction of the Secretary General's authority to motivate staff through performance incentives. In 2024, a total of 301 decisions were issued, exceeding the 200 initially projected, with a total cost of 199,960,000 ALL. The actual cost per decision was 664,319 ALL.

The Assembly resolution on the KLP for 2023 requested that the institution engage in measures to reduce the backlog in the prosecution system as well. Some experts are conducting a study to determine the annual workload of prosecutors in the JP first instance prosecution offices of Lezhë and Elbasan, and to compare it with the CEPEJ average. This study will assess the current state of the backlog and propose a mechanism to reduce it.

SPAK

SPAK budget for 2024 was initially planned at 1,901 million ALL and revised to 1,310 million ALL. The budget execution rate was 93% of the revised plan.

During 2024, the procurement process for the approved fund dedicated to "Construction and reconstruction of the new SPAK building" was canceled twice due to participating economic operators failing to meet the criteria.

The execution level of funds has improved over the years, increasing from 51% in 2020 to 93% in 2024.

The expenditure structure has remained largely unchanged: current expenditures account for approximately 78–81% of the total, while capital expenditures remain around 20%. For 2025, the approved SPAK budget is 2,369 million ALL—almost double the 2024 expenditure (BKH) has over 100 vacancies: 1 in the Director’s cabinet, 50 in judicial police service positions, 40 investigators, 11 administrative staff. SPAK request to add 40 investigators to the NBI (impacting the budget by 250 million ALL) and 11 additional staff members (impact of 54 million ALL) has been taken into consideration. For magistrates, financial investigators, NBI investigators, and experts, salary expenditures are also affected by standby duty and overtime compensation.

Assets seized and confiscated include real estate, monetary amounts, business shares, and cryptocurrency wallets, with a total value of approximately 65.5 million euros. Seized assets account for 43.8% of the total value, confiscated assets account for 56.2%. There has been a 59.7% increase in the total value of seized and confiscated assets compared to 2023.

In its risk analysis, the SPAK strategy identifies a low-level risk for potential reduction of institutional financial capacity: “Reduction of the budget and financial obstacles hindering the fulfillment of SPAK’s needs.” The cost per case for 2024 was 6,141,195 ALL—an increase of 800,000 ALL compared to 2023. In 2025, SPAK will also assume the functions of the Commissioner of the Independent Qualification Commission (KPK). Ten legal advisors are planned, with a budget impact of 53 million ALL. Currently, 41 cases remain to be adjudicated by the KPA.

A dispute exists between SPAK and the Ministry of Finance regarding overtime and standby compensation, regulated by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 568, dated 06.10.2021, “On the approval of rules regarding working hours, rest periods, overtime and compensation in state administration institutions, independent institutions, and local government units.” The financial impact of these payments is 40 million ALL, allowing for up to 200 additional hours per year per prosecutor.

A decision by the KLP to amend the 2019 regulation removed this 200-hour cap for prosecutors. The largest expenditures are for the maintenance of systems (wiretapping and forensic analysis), followed by utility services (electricity, water, phone, internet, etc.), and payments for services provided by the State Cadastre Agency, which is the third-largest expenditure category.

Procurement savings—the difference between the budget ceiling and the actual procurement value—for 2024 amounted to 53,574,648 ALL including VAT. No legal advisors have been allocated to the Special Prosecution Office, which, according to SPAK, undermines the quality of investigations and court representation. SPAK has also expressed the need for an analysis unit to support complex investigations, risk assessment, etc. The status of the Liaison Specialist within the International Cooperation and Joint Investigations Sector remains problematic, as the position continues to be treated as a regular civil servant role.

RECOMMENDATIONS

KL Gj

- A sustained increase in capital expenditure (investments) in the coming years is essential to achieving the objectives related to improving court infrastructure, which would significantly impact the efficient functioning of the judiciary and accelerate the reduction of case backlog.
- The KL Gj should accompany its backlog reduction strategy with a clear assessment of the financial impact related to the implementation of the action plan.
- The KL Gj and the courts should strengthen their lobbying efforts and make full use of the legal avenues available to discuss and request necessary investments from Parliament, avoiding administrative decisions that block investment funds in the judiciary.
- While there have been very positive developments in early 2025, the KL Gj should continue to insist and advocate for new buildings for the Fier Court, the First Instance Court of JP in Tirana, Lezhë, and Kukës, as well as a long-term solution for the Court of Appeal of General Jurisdiction.
- Frequent changes to the budget increase interaction with government institutions such as the Ministry of Finance, which may lead to delays in fund allocation. These delays can also create inter-institutional pressure or tension.
- The KL Gj must urgently address, even through past acts, the appointment of court presidents.
- Revenues generated in administrative courts from judicial services and fees (accounting for 10% of the total revenues) should be redirected more toward improving access to justice for citizens, rather than operational costs—considering their modest contribution to the overall budget. For example, simplifying the payment process for court services and proposing a reduction in fee amounts.
- The Ministry of Finance should authorize the full amount of court revenues to be allocated to the courts by making necessary procedural adjustments, particularly for the last months of the year.
- The KL Gj should eliminate disparities in the treatment of non-judicial staff across different categories of courts.
- The KL Gj should adopt decisions that definitively regulate the payment of supplementary insurance contributions for judicial administrative staff in the Special Anti-Corruption Court (GJKKO).

- The KLGJ and KLP should collaborate with the Ministry of Finance and Parliament to ensure a proper and unified understanding of overtime and standby pay, by establishing a standardized regulation for all magistrates in the system—agreed upon by the Ministry of Finance and the relevant parliamentary committee.
- Likewise, Court Council decisions that affect financial treatment of court staff should be harmonized across all courts to avoid discrepancies from one court to another.
- Parliament should respond to the KLGJ's proposed legal amendments addressing the case backlog emergency. These proposals have been formally submitted since 2023 and 2024, yet Parliament has not reviewed them.
- The imposition of budget ceilings by the Ministry of Finance, freezing of legally approved annual funds, and budget cuts through normative acts proposed by the Ministry hamper justice initiatives that require budgetary support. This risk is considered to have both high probability and high impact across several institutions.
- The Ministry of Finance and judicial institutions should ease the PBA preparation process by moving away from rigid ceilings and instead engaging in dialogue to set reasonable limits jointly.
- Judicial institutions should exercise their right to submit direct budget requests to Parliament when needs are not met due to the Ministry's budget ceilings.
- Judicial institutions should standardize financial documents published under the Transparency Program on their designated websites and ensure they are easily accessible and understandable to users.
- The improvements made to the register of requests and responses should be extended to other financial documents to better inform citizens about the institutions' finances.
- Parliament should review the request from the KLGJ and especially from the Supreme Court to increase the number of Legal Service Unit members (to two legal advisors per judge), as well as to increase the number of judges at the Supreme Court (for one term) until the backlog is cleared.
- The Supreme Court and KLGJ should ensure transparency around the agreement for the construction of the new courthouse and its associated costs, even if those costs are not directly funded by them.

KLP

- The KLP should address the issue of prosecutorial backlog in its annual reports. While this issue was briefly mentioned in the 2022 report, it was not addressed at all in 2023. In 2024, a study was initiated on the backlog in two prosecution offices, with plans to later develop a strategy. While it is true that the backlog in criminal cases is smaller than in civil and administrative cases, a backlog still exists. The prosecution's approach to addressing the backlog is slow and poorly coordinated with the KLGJ's backlog reduction strategy.
- The number of vacancies in the prosecution system is high—121 prosecutors are missing from the 341 required by decree. A study on the distribution of prosecutorial workload would help increase their efficiency and better meet the system's needs.

SPAK

- Parliament should review and financially support SPAK's request for legal advisors.
- Parliament should ensure upfront funding for completing the case management system, especially in the absence of EU funding.
- Parliament should provide financial support to SPAK to establish an analysis unit that will assist with complex investigations, risk assessments, etc.
- In cooperation with the government and Ministry of Finance, Parliament should address the issue concerning the status of the Liaison Specialist within the International Cooperation and Joint Investigations Sector, who is currently treated as a civil servant.
- SPAK should avoid procurement and investment delays due to the lack of contractors by drafting transparent tender calls tailored to the institution's needs, with the aim of attracting broader competition.

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