

# NATIONAL CONVENTION ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION & PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

## CHAPTER 23 – JUDICIARY AND THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS TOPIC: PRESENTATION OF THE INTERSECTORIAL JUSTICE STRATEGY 2024-2030

The Ministry of Justice has completed the drafting process of the Inter-Sectoral Justice Strategy 2024-2030, prepared in accordance with the obligations arising from Albania's integration process into the European Union. This strategy outlines the most important objectives and expected outcomes for the next seven years. This important document was developed with the technical assistance of the JustAL Project.

The new strategy places emphasis on consolidating the legal framework and ensuring the sustainability of the achievements of the Justice Reform in line with EU acquis, eliminating the backlog, increasing efficiency, and improving the quality of services. It also focuses on strengthening the institutional framework, enhancing the infrastructure of the justice system, and reinforcing accountability and transparency mechanisms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### On legal changes and institutional framework

- It is urgent to complete the regulatory acts for the functioning of two important bodies of the justice system: the High Judicial Council (KLGJ) and the High Prosecutorial Council (KLP), which have so far operated without having such a complete legal basis.
- Activities on promoting mediation should be more proactive, focusing not only on information and awareness campaigns for citizens, but also on intensifying the court referral system and encouraging citizens, where possible, to lean towards alternative solutions through mediation.
- The budget for free legal aid is recommended to be reviewed to align with the needs and demands of the categories of individuals benefiting from free legal aid, while also providing a thorough analysis of the situation of these beneficiary groups.

### Regarding the procedures and effectiveness of justice institutions:

- The objective that aims that 80% of the magistrates will be evaluated through the vetting process until 2030, should be reassessed. This process [the vetting process] should be completed as soon as possible and as quickly as possible.
- It is concerning that prosecutors have either suspended or not even initiated the prosecution of cases against judges or prosecutors, providing unfounded justifications for their actions. This has resulted in many of these cases exceeding the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution. This issue should be prioritized.

- As digitalisation of services is currently developing and also based on the momentum gained by artificial intelligence, it is suggested that the digitization of the court system should be an area of increased focus for improving the provision of online services (to avoid economic costs or save time) and to begin efforts to further advance the possibility of conducting online court sessions.
- In the context of digitization, it is recommended that the Integrated Case Management System be linked with as many other databases as possible containing relevant information that facilitates the acquisition and exchange of information between these online systems.

### Regarding cooperation with civil society actors:

- It is necessary to provide feedback and responses after recommendations and suggestions are made, so that the process is as transparent and interactive as possible, offering information on which recommendations have been considered or not, and when possible, providing the relevant justifications.
- Cooperation with civil society should be structured and formalized to clarify the role and involvement of civil society actors; what is expected of them, and how they can contribute concretely. In this regard, attention should also be given to combining the activities with those of the Chapter 23 Round Table of the Partnership Platform, as well as with other networks and platforms established by civil society actors focusing on issues related to the justice system.
- SCO-s should also be included as watchdogs for monitoring the Strategy and its implementation in those areas and issues where they have expertise and can provide accurate and detailed assessments of the measures and indicators of the strategy.
- It is advised that there be direct communication facilitated by the Ministry of Justice between civil society actors and justice institutions, or the Ministry; to

inform or alert during the monitoring or evaluation of the Strategy, as well as regarding opportunities for joint actions and activities.

### Regarding the implementation and monitoring of the Intersectoral Justice Strategy

- It is recommended that there be better coordination between the Ministry and justice institutions for the implementation of the measures outlined in the Strategy, where these institutions can prepare more detailed action plans for those points and issues that they are directly involved. This would facilitate the monitoring process as well as inter-institutional coordination.
- It is also recommended that deadlines be set not only for activities but also for the measures outlined in the Strategy, as this would facilitate the monitoring process and provide a clearer picture of achievements and challenges. These deadlines would assist both the ministry and the responsible institutions in monitoring, as well as civil society in tracking these results.
- It is recommended to strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms and instruments, as well as to use new methodologies in collaboration with civil society or academia and universities for monitoring the strategy, the planned measures, and the achievement of objectives. Special attention should be given to monitoring and evaluating of:
  - *the aspect of increasing citizens' trust in justice institutions and improving justice services for citizens, as these are two interrelated elements.*
  - *the impact that the strategy may have on gender equality during its implementation by preparing analyses based on specific indicators related to the needs of gender groups.*

*- the impact that the New Judicial Map will have on access to justice, especially for vulnerable groups (whether positive or negative).*

• For a clearer assessment and understanding of the process of how the strategy is being implemented, it is recommended that the indicators be linked not only to the objectives but also to concrete measures of action. In this way, this connection helps to more accurately understand in which areas there is progress and results are achieved, and which ones show problems and require greater attention.