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NATIONAL CONVENTION ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

WORKING GROUP FOR CHAPTER 24: Justice, Freedom, Security

Strengthening Institutional Capacities and Best Practices for the Functioning of the Asset Recovery Office (ARO)

25 March 2026, 09:00 – 12:00

- The Asset Recovery Office (ARO) is a newly established structure in Albania, created as a requirement of the process of aligning legislation with the EU standards for combating corruption and organized crime on the framework of Chapter 24.
 - In this regard, it is important that this structure has a clear description of its functions, procedures, and the standards to be implemented, ensuring unified and operational functioning.
 - It is important that the internal organization of the ARO is defined through secondary legislation and internal institutional regulations, ensuring operational flexibility and clear inter-institutional coordination.
 - The ARO may have limited, but it should have highly specialized capacities (a small and focused structure), supported by sufficient human and financial resources.
- It is recommended that there should be accurate and clear budget planning for the capacity building of ARO, which should include projections of staffing and operational needs, as well as dedicated training programs focused on:
 - enhancing digital skills and the use of specialized databases
 - familiarity with the procedures, standards, and legal framework of the EU in the field of asset recovery
 - strengthening language capacities (particularly English) for effective and real-time international cooperation
- Currently, the ARO does not have investigative powers; however, under the new EU Directive 2024/1260, which is expected to be transported, an expansion of its functions is envisaged, including the possibility of administrative measures for the preservation of assets (not classical confiscation), thereby creating scope for rapid intervention and notification of judicial authorities. In this regard, it is recommended that these innovations are reflected in the legal and procedural framework of the ARO in Albania.



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- It is recommended to strengthen cooperation and coordination with:
 - justice institutions and specialised structures (SPAK), the courts and the prosecution offices, as well as with fiscal and information agencies
 - European and regional counterpart offices through the rapid and structured exchange of information
 - the Financial Intelligence Agency and the agency for the management of seized assets, with the aim of achieving institutional synergy
 - the private and banking sector for rapid access to financial information and asset tracing, as well as with international technology platforms and companies for access to relevant data (e.g., digital platforms and online services)
- From the experience of EU countries, delays in the exchange of information are a recurring problem. For this reason, it is recommended:
 - the establishment of binding legal deadlines for the provision of information
 - defining expedited procedures for high-risk cases
 - providing sanctioning mechanisms in cases of non-cooperation or unjustified delays
- It is suggested that representatives of the ARO in Albania should be included in the EU ARO network and database, enabling the rapid identification of counterpart contacts and direct operational communication in urgent cases. It is recommended to ensure membership and active participation in the European ARO network, as well as the use of secure interinstitutional communication platforms for the exchange of information in real time
- From the Slovak experience, a continuous increase in requests for information within the EU has been observed, which requires that the ARO in Albania build sufficient capacities for the rapid and efficient processing of such requests. Continuous training of ARO staff is essential and should include:
 - the use of information systems and databases
 - financial investigations and asset tracing
 - interinstitutional and international cooperation
 - the use of secure communication platforms
- Training should be continuous and aligned with the new legal developments in the EU, including the new Directive on asset recovery. It is recommended to ensure regular participation in international training programs and exchanges of experience with EU countries.



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Information and awareness-raising; involvement of non-state actors

- As a newly established structure and in the context of the changes introduced by EU Directive 2024/1260, it is recommended to carry out a structured information and awareness-raising campaign on the role, function, and obligations of the ARO, as well as on the responsibilities of other institutions within the chain of cooperation.
- These campaigns may be carried out in cooperation with civil society, academia, and experts in relevant fields (organized crime, financial crime, money laundering, and cybercrime), targeting public and justice institutions; the financial and banking sector; businesses and economic actors; the media and journalists as actors of public information; as well as citizens and interest groups.