

KEY FACTS

Official name: Republika e Shqipërisë (Republic of Albania)

Head of State: President Bujar Faik Nishani (PD) (from 11 Jun, inaugurated 24 Jul 2012)

Head of government: Prime Minister Edi Rama (PSS) (elected 23 Jun 2013)

Ruling party: Coalition: Aleanca për Shqipërinë Europiane (Alliance for a European Albania) consisting of 37 parties lead by the Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë (PSS) (Socialist Party of Albania) and including Aleanca Socialiste për Integrim (ASI) (Socialist Alliance for Integration), Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim (LSI) (Socialist Movement for Integration) and Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë (PDK) (Christian Democratic Party) (elected 23 Jun 2013)

Area: 28,748 square km

Population: 3.24 million (2012)*

Capital: Tirana

Official language: Tosk Albanian; the Albanian language is divided into two dialects – Gheg, north of the river Shkumbinit, and Tosk in the south.

Currency: Lek (L) = 100 qindarka

Exchange rate: L105.81 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$3,913 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 1.30% (2012)*

GDP: US\$12.69 billion (2012)*

Labour force: 1.11 million (2012)

Unemployment: 15.00% (2012)*

Inflation: 2.02% (2012)*

Balance of trade: -US\$2.86 billion (2012)*

* estimated figure

Albania



Albania, by a combination of successful economic management and good luck, has avoided the worst of the economic storms that continued to beset the euro-zone in the first half of 2013. While a majority of Europe's countries still floundered, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Albania enjoyed modest growth of 1 per cent in the first half of 2012. This was well down on the 2.7 per cent registered in 2011; one factor in the fall was the severe winter weather of early 2012. Prime Minister Sali Berisha could claim that Albania 'did not feel the recession – in fact, our economy grew' adding that this was 'Not bad for a nation which was once the second poorest in the world.'

Elections

The June 2013 parliamentary elections saw one person killed and two injured in a poll station shooting incident. One of the injured was a candidate for Prime Minister Berisha's Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë (PD) (Democratic Party of Albania). The shooting reportedly followed a dispute between PD supporters and backers of the opposition Aleanca Socialiste për Integrim (ASI) (Socialist

Alliance for Integration). The satisfactory conduct of the election, in which all 140 parliamentary deputies' seats were in play, was essential if Albania's efforts to join the European Union (EU) were to advance. The EU had required the vote to comply with international standards if accession talks were to continue. Albania had first applied for EU membership in 2009.

The 37-party Aleanca për Shqipërinë Europiane (Alliance for a European Albania), lead by the Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë (PSS) (Socialist Party of Albania) and its leader, Edi Rama, was generally expected to defeat the 25-party Aleanca për Punësim, Mirëqenie dhe Integrim (Alliance for Employment, Prosperity and Integration), lead by Mr Berisha of the PD, the seasoned incumbent politician who has dominated Albania's political life for over two decades. Pre-election polls gave Mr Rama's alliance 50 per cent of the national vote, seven points clear of Berisha's coalition. After the last vote, in 2009, the PSS boycotted parliament for 18 months, accusing Sali Berisha, the Prime Minister and PD leader and former onetime personal physician to the dictator Enver Hoxha, of electoral fraud. Although the 2012 presidential electoral campaign had been largely peaceful, there were still media reports of vote-buying and irregularities in the registration process.

The biggest issue before the elections and probably afterwards as well, was over the future of Albania's Central Electoral Commission (CEC). The continued dispute between Mr Berisha's ruling coalition (of no less than 25 centrist and centre-right parties) and the opposition coalition of Mr Rama (which, not to be outdone, consisted of 37 opposition parties), was complicated when the seven-member commission could apparently only muster four members. The minimum legal requirement is five. Parliamentary seats are awarded according to a party's share of the vote in each of 12 districts. Thus, a party which won 50 per cent of the vote in a 12-seat district could expect to win six seats. In the end the 23 June result was 57.62 per cent (84

seats) for the Aleanca për Shqipërinë Europiane (Alliance for a European Albania) of Edi Rama, to 39.46 per cent (56 seats) for Sali Berisha's Aleanca për Punësim, Mirëqenie dhe Integrim (Alliance for Employment, Prosperity and Integration).

The election turnout in 2009 had been 54 per cent and in 2013 pretty much the same at 53.50 per cent. The 2013 election was the eighth since the fall of communism in 1990.

Observers reporting for the Vienna-based Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) in Europe noted that a 2012 overhaul of voting procedures had improved election standards. Albania has twice been denied EU candidate status following criticism that it has not done enough to fight corruption and introduce democratic reforms, notably that of holding elections that comply with international and European standards. In May 2013 the Albanian parliament had held an extraordinary session to pass the last three laws in a series of 12 key recommendations required by the EU as part of Albania's quest for eventual membership.

As his centre-right coalition government lagged behind in the polls, Sali Berisha had resorted to a traditional election gambit by announcing that his government had 'approved in principle wage and pension increases of 6 per cent, to come into force after the election.' Mr Berisha claimed that his Socialist opponent, Edi Rama, 'never mentioned salaries, but only taxes and their increase'. A survey commissioned by Ora News TV and conducted by IPR Marketing gave Mr Rama's alliance 50 per cent of the national vote, well ahead of Mr Berisha's grouping with 43 per cent. Because of Albania's complicated regional and proportional voting system, the election outcome could have turned out to be much closer than it actually did.

Albania has a long history of contested polls that do not meet international standards. The last general elections in 2009 sparked a political crisis between the ruling Democrats and opposition Socialists which was still reverberating in 2013. The parliamentary elections of 2009 and the 2011 local elections were generally satisfactory, but OCSE observers noted a number of serious irregularities. However, after the parliamentary election of 2009 the PSS decided not to accept the official results, claiming that there had been evidence of fraud by the ruling DP. The PSS's claims were rejected by the CEC which turned down the PSS's request for a

recount in some of Albania's smaller regions. The dismissal of the PSS's claims brought about a parliamentary boycott and for a period of almost two years a sulky SP was not present in parliament.

The June elections were seen as both a test and an opportunity for Albania to get its process towards joining the European Union back on track. In edging his party into an apparent voting lead, Mr Rami had had to overcome the Socialists' image of a force that is 'less patriotic' than the ruling PD. Many Albanians viewed the PSS as 'soft' on national and foreign policy issues, possibly due to the close bonds with Greece that the party had sought to develop. This perception had been exploited by Sali Berisha to increase the popularity of his PD and for portraying it as the sole protector of Albanians living outside Albania. In 2012, a key change had been the emergence of new political forces that challenged Albania's mainstream politics by addressing sensitive national issues. Probably the best known was the 'Red and Black Alliance', a movement-like party with a political platform that sought to unite all Albanians across the political divide. In the actual election it secured just 10,171 votes (0.59 per cent) and failed in its bid to win a seat.

These political developments were of concern to both the PD and PSS parties. As the party landscape in Albania became more complex, endorsing Samuel Johnson's observation that 'Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel,' Albania's main parties were both focussing on rebuilding their patriotic image.

The PD and PSS parties believed that in the 2013 Albanian parliamentary elections there was a risk of haemorrhage of votes to smaller parties. The fluidity of the party system and the growing influence of nationalist elements preoccupied the two main Albanian parties. 'Leakage' to smaller parties could well have upset the electoral balance between the majority and the opposition, so delicate that even a small number of votes could have cost either of the two parties the 2013 election. In the end, only seven of the 55 parties that put forward candidates actually polled enough votes to be allocated seats.

Corruption

There is still a fair amount of corruption in Albania. In one survey, forty-eight per cent of firms reported the necessity of bribes. There are numerous areas where legislation needs to be improved and greater transparency imposed; one obvious area in need of improvement is that of land ownership. It was all given back to private individuals post-communism, yet disputes still arise. Albania ranked a lowly 113 out of the 176 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2012 *Corruption Perceptions Index*.

The economy

Albania was, in some respects, the most exposed periphery country to the euro-zone crisis. Some two-thirds of migrants in Greece are from Albania. The Greek crisis represented a triple threat to Albania as remittances dipped, foreign direct investment (FDI) slowed and returning migrants tried to find work. The Greek

KEY INDICATORS		Albania				
	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*3.17	*3.19	*3.20	2.83	*3.24
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	13.00	12.20	11.80	12.80	*12.69
GDP per capita	US\$	4,102	3,819	3,715	3,992	*3,913
GDP real growth	%	7.5	3.3	3.5	2.0	*1.3
Inflation	%	3.4	2.2	3.6	3.4	*2.0
Unemployment	%	12.8	13.0	13.6	13.3	*15.0
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	19,244.3	1,048.0	1,547.9	962.1	*1,122.8
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	4,907.5	4,264.1	4,305.3	4,460.7	*3,983.8
Balance of trade	US\$m	-3,551.9	-3,216.1	-2,757.5	-3,498.7	*-2,861.0
Current account	US\$m	-1,752.0	-1,874.9	-1,403.9	-1,561.6	*-1,283.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	2,319.8	2,313.9	2,469.6	26,467.9	*2,515.7
Foreign exchange	US\$m	2,307.4	2,229.6	2,386.3	2,566.7	*2,423.1
Exchange rate	per US\$	83.89	94.98	103.94	100.11	*107.79
* estimated figure						

banking subsidiaries were also a possible source of contagion. In the region as a whole, Greek banks' market share in south-eastern Europe was about 20 per cent.

GDP growth, which had been strong in 2011 was declining in 2012, also largely due to the euro-zone crisis. According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), various indicators in 2012 lead to a severe slow-down in economic activity and vulnerability to the problems of the euro-zone, which are likely to remain present for some time.

Significant steps have been taken by the Albanian authorities to protect the banking sector. These include measures to allow foreign bank branches to be converted into subsidiaries. In 2013 the Albanian banking sector appeared to be coping well with the pressures emanating from the euro-zone crisis.

Further reforms are needed to advance in the EU accession process. Strengthening democracy and the rule of law are key to achieving this objective and continued vigilance is needed to address any fallout from the crisis in the euro-zone periphery. The unfavourable external environment is expected to persist throughout 2013 and various macro-economic indicators such as industrial production and retail turnover point to continued weak economic activity in the second quarter.

The slow and erratic progress in the containment and resolution of the euro-zone crisis means that the external environment will remain unfavourable to a recovery in economic activity. Domestic demand is also expected to remain weak, especially in the light of weakening credit growth and the decline in remittances, which remain an essential source of income for many Albanians. In the view of the EBRD, GDP growth in 2013 is likely to be below the levels seen in recent years and vulnerabilities will remain high as long as neighbouring euro-zone countries remain in difficulties.

Risk assessment

Politics	Fair
Economy	Fair
Regional stability	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1920s Italy withdrew from Albania and agreed to recognise its independence. Tirana was declared the capital city. Political instability followed. Prime Minister Ahmet Beg Zogu took the crown, proclaiming himself King Zog I.

1939 Italian troops under Benito Mussolini invaded Albania and King Zog fled.

1940 The Italians used Albania as their platform for the invasion of Greece.

1941 The Albanian Communist Party (ACP) was formed, with Enver Hoxha as its leader.

1943 German forces invaded and occupied Albania following surrender by the Italians.

1944 The Germans were forced out by Enver Hoxha's Communist resistance fighters. He proclaimed the constitution of the Democratic Government of Albania and became first secretary of the politburo. Albania became a Stalinist state and remained staunchly isolationist until the 1990s.

1945 The official language was based on Tosk Albanian.

1945–46 Tribunals were held which condemned thousands to death or imprisonment as 'war criminals' and 'enemies of the people'. Non-communists were purged from government positions.

1948 Albania broke its ties with Yugoslavia. The USSR began economic aid to Albania. The ACP was renamed the Partia e Punës (Party of Labour of Albania) (PLA). 1955 Albania became a founding member of the Warsaw Pact.

1961 Relations with the USSR soured when Albania supported China in the Sino-Soviet ideology dispute. Albania withdrew from the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon).

1967 The Communist government outlawed religion, making Albania the world's only formal atheist state.

1968 Albania withdrew from the Warsaw Pact over the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia.

1976 A new constitution was adopted in which Albania declared itself the independent Peoples' Socialist Republic and reaffirmed its policy of self-reliance.

1985 Hoxha died and Ramiz Alia became first secretary of the politburo.

1989 Communist rule in Eastern Europe collapsed. Freedom of religion was restored.

1990 The PLA was renamed the Partia Socialiste ë Shqipërisë (PSS) (Socialist Party of Albania) and pursued a more liberal democratic ideology. Opposition parties were legalised. Thousands of people tried to flee the country when the right to travel abroad was granted.

1991 After an interim constitution was approved, multi-party elections were won by the PSS. Ramiz Alia was elected to the new post of executive president. Fatos Nano was forced to resign as head of government as the political and economic situation began to deteriorate. A caretaker government took power.

1992 The Partia Demokratike (ë Shqipërisë) (PD) (Democratic Party (of Albania)) won an overwhelming victory in parliamentary elections, ending five decades of communist rule. PD leader, Sali Berisha, was elected president.

Aleksander Meksi was appointed prime minister. Ramiz Alia, Fatos Nano and several others from the old Communist regime were tried and jailed for corruption.

1994 A national referendum rejected a new constitution, which would have given too much power to the president.

1995 Albania was admitted to the Council of Europe.

1996 The PD won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections, which were tainted by accusations of fraud.

1997 Leka, the son of King Zog, attempted to restore the monarchy but a referendum voted against it and he went abroad. Fraudulent pyramid investment schemes collapsed and many Albanians lost their life's savings, sparking weeks of rioting. President Berisha not only dismissed the prime minister and the head of the army but also closed down opposition newspapers and declared a state of emergency. The solution to the profound political crisis was fresh parliamentary elections in which the PSS were swept back into power and President Berisha resigned.

The convictions of communist-era leaders were overturned; Fatos Nano was elected prime minister and Rexhep Majdani became president.

1998 Refugees from the war in Kosovo (Serbia) fled into Albania. Nano resigned due to protests over the economy, and was succeeded by Pandeli Majko. Voters approved Albania's first post-Communist constitution, which declared the country a parliamentary republic.

1999 There was a mass refugee exodus of Kosovans into Albania as thousands fled attacks by Serbian forces. Prime Minister Majko was succeeded by the Socialist, Ilir Meta.

2000 Albania joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

2001 Ilir Meta and the PSS won general elections.

2002 Prime Minister Ilir Meta resigned after failing to resolve an internal PSS feud with the president. Pandeli Majko became prime minister. Alfred Moisiu was elected president by parliament. Pandeli Majko resigned and Fatos Nano became prime minister again. The royal family returned from exile.

2003 Albania and the EU began Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) talks.

2005 Albania signed a US\$15 million deal with the US Occidental Petroleum Corporation for oil and natural gas drilling. The opposition PD won parliamentary

elections and Sali Berisha became prime minister.

2006 The SAA with the EU was signed.

2007 Bamir Topi was elected president by parliament. Opposition parties had objected to his candidacy on the grounds that he was a representative of the ruling party.

2008. The electoral system was changed to the closed list proportional representation method.

2009 Albania joined Nato. Four coalition blocs contested parliamentary elections. The AN government coalition, including the PD and Partia Republikane (RP) (Republican Party), Partia Demokratike e Re (PDR) (New Democratic Party) and the Partia për Drejtësi dhe Integrim (PDI) (Party for Justice and Integration), was sworn into office; Sali Berisha remained in office as prime minister.

2010 The first Albanian sale of government bonds; US\$398 million of five-year bonds with a yield of 7 per cent, was managed by Deutsche Bank and J P Morgan Chase banks. Remittances were reported to represent 15 per cent of GDP, with most monies coming from Greece and Italy. The EU rejected Albania's application for candidate status; visa requirements for travel in EU were eased.

2011 In January, over 21,000 anti-government demonstrators rallied in Tirana protesting about corruption and alleged vote rigging of the 2009 elections; four people were killed by security forces. In May, violence broke out among political supporters following the announcement that the ruling PD's Lulzim Basha had beaten the incumbent PSS candidate Edi Rama in the 8 May mayoral election in Tirana. A census held on 1 October recorded a population of 2,831,741. In December, Leka Zogu, the self-proclaimed heir to the defunct throne of Albania, was buried in Tirana in an official ceremony attended by President Topi and Kosovo's President Atifete Jahjaga, and other political and religious leaders.

2012 On 6 January, the World Bank agreed to provide extra funding to ease the economic turmoil caused by the euro-zone debt crisis. Since 1991, Albania has been in receipt of US\$1.4 billion in international aid and loans, to fund a number of infrastructure, education and public health services, plus anti-poverty programmes. On 11 June, after four rounds of voting, parliament elected Bujar Faik Nishani (Mehmeti) as president, with 73 votes (out of 140). President Nishani took office on 24 July. On 24 September, parliament voted to amend the constitution to curtail the right of immunity from prosecution for members of parliament, the judiciary and top officials. On 12 November the EU announced €81 million

(US\$105.1 million) had been allocated to assist Albania in a range of reforms to fight organised crime, as well as to finance infrastructure improvements.

2013 The Aleanca për Shqipërinë Europiane (Alliance for a European Albania) consisting of 37 parties ranging from far-left to right and led by the Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë (PSS) (Socialist Party of Albania) won the 23 June parliamentary elections with 57.63 per cent (84 seats, out of 140). Prime Minister Sali Berisha and his Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë (PD) (Democratic Party of Albania), lead party in the 25-party Aleanca për Punësim, Mirëqenie dhe Integrim (Alliance for Employment, Prosperity and Integration), came in second with 39.46 per cent (56); the PD conceded defeat on 26 June in what was widely noted as a sign of political maturity. Turnout was 53.50 per cent. Leader of the PSS, Edi Rama, became prime minister.

Political structure

Constitution

Albania's communist constitution of 1976 was abrogated in 1991, when the democratic, Republic of Albania came into being under an interim constitution.

A new constitution was agreed by referendum and came into effect on 28 November 1998. It provides for multi-party elections and guarantees freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly and organisation.

Independence date

28 November 1912

Form of state

Unicameral parliamentary democratic republic

The executive

The president is head of state and shares control of the armed forces with the prime minister. The president is elected by parliament to a five-year term and is limited to two terms. The ballot is secret and the winning candidate must achieve a three-fifths majority. The president appoints the prime minister nominated by the party or coalition of parties that has a majority of seats in the Assembly. If the Assembly fails to approve the president's appointee three times, the president dissolves parliament. The prime minister and Council of Ministers are in charge of the country's economic, social and cultural affairs. The president and prime minister are jointly responsible for foreign relations and security affairs.

National legislature

The unicameral parliament, Kuvendi ë Shqipërisë (Assembly of Albania) has 140 members, elected for four-year terms. In November 2008 the electoral system was changed to the closed list proportional representative method. There are now 12

multi-party constituencies corresponding to the 12 national administrative regions, wherein parties must win at least 3 per cent of the vote (and pre-election coalitions 5 per cent) before they can be placed on the closed list to become deputies of the assembly. The new system tends to favour leading political parties.

The Assembly meets twice a year. In addition to passing legislation, the Assembly also elects the president and approves the president's appointment of the prime minister and the prime minister's choices for the Council of Ministers.

Legal system

The court system is headed by the Supreme Court. Its members are appointed by the president to nine-year terms with the consent of the Assembly. Judges in appeals and district courts are appointed by the president upon the recommendations of the Higher Judicial Council, which is headed by the president and includes the chair of the Supreme Court and the minister of justice. A separate constitutional court rules on constitutional matters and consists of nine members appointed by the president with the Assembly's consent.

Last elections

30 May, 4, 8 and 11 June 2012 (presidential); 23 June 2013 (parliamentary)

Results: President: Bujar Nishani (PD) was elected in the fourth round of voting with 73 out of 76 votes cast.

Parliamentary: The Aleanca për Shqipërinë Europiane (Alliance for a European Albania) consisting of 37 parties ranging from far-left to right won with a total of 57.63 per cent of the vote (total 84 seats allocated, out of 140) (including the Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë (PSS) (Socialist Party of Albania) 41.36 per cent (66 seats); Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim (LSI) (Socialist Movement for Integration) 10.46 per cent (16); Aleanca Socialiste për Integrim (ASI) (Socialist Alliance for Integration) 0.85 per cent (1); Partia Demokratiane e Shqipërisë (PDK) (Christian Democratic Party) 0.46 per cent (1). Second was 25-party Aleanca për Punësim, Mirëqenie dhe Integrim (Alliance for Employment, Prosperity and Integration) with a total of 39.46 per cent (total allocated seats 56) (including the Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë (PD) (Democratic Party of Albania) 30.63 per cent (49 seats); Partia Republikane e Shqipërisë (PRS) (Republican Party) 3.02 per cent (3); Partia Drejtësi, Integrim dhe Unitet (PDIU) (Party for Justice, Unification and Unity) 2.61 per cent (4). No other parties won any seats. Turnout was 53.50 per cent. Edi Rama, leader of the PSS became prime minister.

Next elections

2013 (parliamentary); July 2017 (presidential)

Political parties

Ruling party

Coalition: Aleanca për Shqipërinë Europiane (Alliance for a European Albania) consisting of 37 parties lead by the Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë (PSS) (Socialist Party of Albania) and including Aleanca Socialiste për Integrim (ASI) (Socialist Alliance for Integration), Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim (LSI) (Socialist Movement for Integration) and Partia Demokristiane e Shqipërisë (PDK) (Christian Democratic Party) (elected 23 Jun 2013)

Main opposition party

Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë (PSS) (Socialist Party of Albania)

Population

3.24 million (2012)*

Albania is the poorest country in south-east Europe.

Last census: 1 October 2011:

2,831,741 (provisional)

Population density: 120 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 52 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: -0.1 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

Albanians make up 97 per cent of the population. The largest ethnic minority group is the Greeks, who account for around 2 per cent of the total. Other groups include Macedonian, Montenegrin, Vlach and Gypsy (Romany) groups.

Religions

Muslim (70 per cent), Christian Orthodox (20 per cent) and Roman Catholic (10 per cent).

Education

Despite its many failings, the communist regime virtually eliminated illiteracy. However, since 1991 the situation has deteriorated markedly, with equipment and buildings in a parlous state. Although high attendance rates in primary schools have been maintained, enrolment in pre-primary schooling and at the secondary or tertiary level has declined. In Albania, the government has closed down a third of public kindergartens and pre-school attendance has dropped dramatically. Unqualified teachers in elementary schools account for 10 per cent of teaching staff, and in the secondary schools, 8 per cent. The government has an ongoing programme to replace equipment and reconstruct buildings in urban areas and is also focussing on teacher training and enrolment rates. The current structure of the sector has resulted in a misalignment

between the supply and demand of education. Consequently, the government is also engaged in a school construction programme to provide facilities for those areas where there are currently no school facilities.

The total expenditure on education is around 3 per cent of GDP.

Literacy rate: 99 per cent adult rate; 99 per cent youth rate (15–24) (Unesco 2005).

Enrolment rate: 100 per cent (primary); 71.5 per cent (secondary) (World Bank).

Pupils per teacher: 18 in primary schools.

Health

Although Albania's modest healthcare sector functioned adequately during the communist era, it suffered from substantial underfunding. The government recognises the problem and plans to strengthen managerial capacities and to decentralise health planning. It will take many years to create a system capable of providing even basic healthcare.

HIV/Aids

Albania had been screened from the initial impact of the Aids epidemic by the isolation imposed by the former communist state. However, the country opened its borders following the advent of democratic government in 1991 and the first HIV case of HIV was detected in 1993. By 2003, 177 cases had been reported of which 37 had died of Aids. Between 2001–03 the percentage of HIV positive females increased and their numbers now match male infection rates.

Life expectancy: 77 years, 2010 (Unicef 2012)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 1.5 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef 2012)

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 17 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 14 per cent of children aged under five are malnourished (World Bank).

Welfare

Albania's social infrastructure is in a poor state. Never well developed, social disintegration in 1997 led to further deterioration of virtually all services as funds dried up.

The collapse of central government authority in 1997 has led to already poor tax collection rates falling further. Neither the funds nor the infrastructure exist to provide adequate welfare coverage. It has been estimated that more than one million people are living below the poverty line. The Albanian Institute of Statistics reported in late-1999 that over one-third of families have only one income source averaging US\$64 per month.

The government is attempting to remedy this by introducing community-based social services for vulnerable groups and is in the process of reorganising the state pension system based on the actuarial model. The aim is to increase coverage in rural areas in order to reduce poverty.

Main cities

Tirana (capital, estimated population 587,135 in 2012), Durrës (Durrazzo) (168,254), Vlore (124,415), Elbasan (100,362), Shkoder (Scutari) (86,677), Korca (62,601), Fier (56,623), Berat (43,633), Kavaja (39,749), Lushnje (37,765).

Languages spoken

Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Tosk and Gheg are also spoken. English, Italian, German and French are also spoken in business circles.

Official language/s

Tosk Albanian; the Albanian language is divided into two dialects – Gheg, north of the river Shkumbinit, and Tosk in the south.

Media

Press freedom in Albania has been declared partly free by the US-based media watchdog, Freedom House, and the government has used criminal and tax laws to target and intimidate media sources it wishes to stifle.

Due to the country's poor infrastructure, mountainous terrain and low economic development, access to media can be poor.

Press

The print media is not sophisticated and tends towards sensationalism. Many newspapers are published by political parties and interest groups.

Dailies: In Albanian, political party publications include *Rilindja Demokratike* (<http://pages.albaniaonline.net/rd>), and *Zeri i Popullit* (www.zeripopullit.com). Private newspapers include *Shekulli* (www.shekulli.com.al) the largest daily, *Gazeta Shqiptare*

(www.balkanweb.com/gazetav4), *Koha Ditore* (www.koha.net), *Sot* (www.sot.com.al), *Korrieri* (www.korrieri.com) *Koha Jonë* (www.kohajone.com), are tabloids. In English, *Albanian Daily News* (www.albaniannews.com). And *Tirana Times* (www.tiranatimes.com).

Weeklies: In Albanian, general interest magazines include *Shqip* (www.shqip.al), and *Veriu Observer* (www.gazetaveriu.neffirms.com). *Sporti Shqiptar* (www.sportishqiptar.com.al) is a sports publication.

Business: In Albanian, *Biznesi* (www.biznesi.com.al) is a newspaper, *Monitor* (www.monitor.al) is a magazine.

The Albanian Chamber of Commerce publishes *Probiznes News* (www.cci.gov.al) magazine.

Broadcasting

Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH) (www.rtsh.al) is the state broadcaster, operating from Tirana.

Radio: In Albanian, RTSH (<http://rtsh.sil.at>) operates three national stations, including an international service. There are two commercial national broadcasters, Plus 2 Radio (www.plus2radio.com.al) and Top Albania Radio (www.topalbaniaradio.com). Other local commercial radio stations include Radio Saranda (www.radiosaranda.com), Radio Planet (www.planet93fm.com) and Radio IMR (www.radio-ime.com), which has talk and information programmes.

There are foreign radio broadcasts received in foreign languages including, English, Italian, French and German.

Television: RTSH operates one national station; it also has a satellite service for expatriate communities in neighbouring countries. Funding is provided by government grants, subscription and commercial advertising. Programmes include news, current affairs and documentaries as well as popular shows. TV Arberia (www.telearberia.tv) is a private network.

National news agency: Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA)

Economy

Although the service sector accounts for almost 60 per cent of the economy, Albania is still a country where primary industries are important. Agriculture, including timber products, accounts for around 20 per cent of GDP and employs almost 60 per cent of the workforce. Other industries include mining of ores, cement, chemical and energy production. Manufacturing also accounts for around 20 per cent of GDP, with products geared for the export market.

GDP growth, which had been consistently high since 2000, fell from 7.5 per cent in 2008 to 3.3 per cent 2009 as the global economic crisis cut world trade. In 2010, while so many Western economies fell into recession Albania made a concerted effort to enhance the financial system and make progress towards a functioning market economy, according to an assessment by the European Union (EU), reporting on Albania's progress towards membership. Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe, despite poverty levels having fallen by almost 15 per cent since 2002; GDP per capita had never been higher than US\$4,102 (in 2008), but with the downturn in the economy this fell steadily to US\$3,715 in 2010. Per capita income

is estimated to have risen to US\$3,992 in 2011.

Foreign remittances amounted to US\$1.1 billion in 2010 (10.9 per cent of GDP), and were estimated to have risen to US\$1.2 billion in 2011.

EU membership is not expected before 2015; however the EU has signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement and continues to fund infrastructure improvements. Other international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and IMF and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have all invested in projects of improvement. The rebuilding of the technical and physical infrastructure, from telecommunications to roads and railways, is a major priority. While the government encourages foreign investment in agriculture, agri-processing, manufacturing and export-oriented activities, poor basic services, such as electricity, discourage investor interest. Efforts to develop a larger tourist industry are also hindered by poor infrastructure and under-investment. Efforts to counter the grey economy include a simplified tax system and structural reforms. The EU has warned that measures to curb corruption and organised crime must be robust and continuous in order to improve foreign investment confidence. On 12 November 2012 the EU announced €81 million (US\$105.1 million) had been allocated to assist Albania in a range of reforms to fight organised crime, as well as to finance infrastructure improvements. On 6 January 2012, the World Bank had agreed to provide extra funding to mitigate the economic turmoil caused by the euro-zone debt crisis. Since 1991, Albania has been in receipt of over US\$1.4 billion in international aid and loans, to fund a number of infrastructure, education and public health services, plus anti-poverty programmes.

External trade

Albania is a signatory of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), along with Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia and Kosovo. Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria have a trilateral agreement to build a new Balkan oil pipeline (AMBO), from Burgas, on the Black Sea, to the port of Vlore, in southern Albania. Its estimated cost was US\$1.2 billion and had a supply target of 750,000 barrels per day, with the construction postponed until 2009; by late 2010 construction was still awaiting a start date.

Imports

Principal imports include machinery, capital goods, electrical and electronic goods, vehicles, minerals, fuels and oils.

Main sources: Italy (30.5 per cent of total in 2011), Greece (10.6 per cent), China (6.4 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are minerals, including hydrocarbons and hydroelectricity, chrome products, copper wire, ferro-nickel ore and bitumen, chemicals and iron and steel. Major manufacturing plants include cement, textiles and footwear and food processing, plus engineering products.

Main destinations: Italy (53.4 per cent of total in 2011), Serbia (9.3 per cent), Turkey (7.4 per cent).

Agriculture

Agriculture, formerly the largest sector in the economy, has declined to less than 25 per cent of GDP, but remains an important social as well as economic factor in Albanian life. The sector is dominated by small-scale subsistence farming, which is underdeveloped and poorly financed. There is minimal mechanisation and little use of fertilisers and pesticides. Despite government attempts to privatise farmland, outside financial assistance has been needed to develop farming. Albania's fish catch declined sharply following the collapse of Communism and has not recovered. The sector is in generally poor shape. The fishing fleet comprises ageing and poorly equipped vessels and there is a shortage of fishermen. Development of the marine fisheries, including rehabilitation and construction of ports and other infrastructure, is a government priority.

There is some freshwater fishing in rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Fish farming of marine and freshwater species is increasingly important. Internal consumption of fish has increased in recent years, leaving about half of the approximately 4,000 tonnes of production for export, mainly to Greece and Italy.

Forests cover less than two-fifths of the land area, the equivalent of 991,000 hectares (ha).

The forest industry is small-scale and is based mainly on imported raw materials to meet domestic production needs. Forestry is of little importance to GDP, with most timber production being used for domestic fuel. Timber processing and associated activities have been transferred to the private sector, but forest management remains in state hands.

Industry and manufacturing

The industrialisation policy of the Communist era was aimed at making Albania completely self-sufficient. Although this meant that Albania was one of the few countries in the world without any foreign debt, it also meant that the industrial sector relied on outdated and inefficient

machinery which produced poor quality goods unable to compete in international markets.

A side-effect of the search for higher productivity was a complete absence of environmental concerns, with industrial wastelands, oil slicks and abandoned equipment littering the country. Combined with thousands of broken concrete bunkers and derelict factories, Albania faces major, long-term environmental problems.

The industrial sector has experienced a disastrous decline in output since 1990. The sector is focused mainly on engineering, chemicals, metals, construction materials, food processing and other agro-allied industries. The sector employs around 10 per cent of the workforce and accounts for around 19 per cent of GDP. There is virtually no light industry.

Foreign investment is the key to reviving industrial output, and consequently the government has been attempting to portray Albania as a low-wage manufacturing base with extensive natural resources on Western Europe's doorstep. Foreign companies have become involved in rehabilitating and modernising Albania's chrome industry by taking over a number of steel plants and mines.

Tourism

Albania's tourist and travel industry is modest, contributing just 7.6 per cent to GDP. The sector directly employs 67,000 workers (6.8 per cent of total employment) and indirectly employs 233,000 (23.9 per cent of total employment).

In 2011, direct foreign investment in the sector was estimated to be US\$227 million (L22.8 billion), which was 4.6 per cent of total investment. International visitor numbers were predicted to be 2.58 million, with visitor spending expected to generate US\$3.29 billion (L238 billion) in foreign earnings.

Attractions for visitors are typically Mediterranean beach resorts, unspoilt (undeveloped) countryside and historic sites. As the infrastructure grows and improves Albania as a destination for the less-seasoned European traveller will also develop.

Environment

Macedonia and Albania participate in the Lake Ohrid Conservation Project (LOCP) which is a bilateral project supported by the World Bank.

Mining

The mining sector contributes as much as 20 per cent to GDP and employs some 15 per cent of the workforce.

Albania used to be the world's third-largest producer and second-largest exporter of chromium. The industry is undergoing

rehabilitation. As with all areas of the Albanian economy, the mining sector suffers from obsolete technology and techniques, the disruption of supply lines and lack of management skills.

There are extensive reserves of copper, iron, zinc and nickel. In addition, there are smaller reserves of uranium, titanium-magnetite, gold and silver. Most of these reserves are in remote and mountainous areas of northern Albania, which increases production costs.

Proven oil reserves were 199 million barrels in 2008, with production at 6,000 barrels per day (bpd). However, consumption was 34,000bpd, all of which was imported, mainly from Russia. There are two small oil fields currently in production at Patos and Morinza, which account for most production.

The state-owned Albpetrol is responsible for policy, administration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in Albania, either solely or in partnership with foreign oil and gas companies.

Armo the former state-owned oil refiner, with two facilities at Ballsh and Fier with total capacity of 26,000bpd, was sold to a US-Swiss investment group in 2008.

The Albanian Macedonian Bulgarian Oil (Ambo) pipeline, to carry Russian and Caspian oil through the Baltic from the Black Sea port of Burgas in Bulgaria to Vlore on the Albanian Adriatic, via Macedonia – and avoiding the congested Turkish straits – was proposed in 2004 and endorsed in 2007 but by 2011 construction has yet to start.

The Swiss-based Manas Petroleum Corporation announced oil and gas finds close to the border with Kosovo in north-western Albania in 2008. Estimates of oil were 2.98 billion barrels and 85.4 billion cubic metres (cum) of natural gas. If deposits are gas only the find could be as large as 792.9 billion cum. A call for tenders for the Albanian section of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) was issued in April 2011.

Proven natural gas reserves were 849.6 million cum in 2008, with production at 28.3 million cum, all of which is consumed domestically.

Albania has coal reserves estimated at around 700 billion tonnes, with production at 130,000 tonnes in 2008. Sufficient coal (of generally low quality) is produced for domestic consumption. Production is carried out at 21 mines in four basins run by various state-owned stock companies.

Energy

Total generating capacity was 1,684MW in 2007, producing around 5.5 billion kilowatt hours. The bulk of energy (around 90 per cent of total output) is produced from three hydropower plants in the north

of Albania, although supplies are affected by drought conditions during summer.

There are small oil-fired power stations but imports have become prohibitively expensive, so that in 2009 Albania announced plans to invest in three new hydroelectric schemes, based in the south and capable of producing an additional 40 per cent of hydropower. Two loans of US\$21.6 million and US\$35.3 million were provided by the World Bank in 2011, to ensure the repair and safeguard of the three hydroelectric power plants on the Drini River, which had been damaged by severe flooding in the winter of 2010–11.

On 15 June 2012 the official inauguration of the Ashta hydroelectric power plant took place. When fully operational, the world's largest matrix power plant (allowing efficient use of water flow) will have an installed capacity of 53MW, allowing generation of 242GWh per year. However, several foreign investors in the energy market have warned the government that a national strategy must be enacted to improve the connection of new power plants to the power grid.

A new thermal power plant on the coast at Vlora, which will be fuelled by imported liquefied natural gas (LNG), has been planned since 2007 but is awaiting World Bank investment.

In 2008 the state-owned utility Kesh was in the process of being privatised, with the help of USAID. Kesh was under-funded and lacked commercial experience to provide a modern electricity service to all customers. The infrastructure was in poor condition; about a quarter of electricity generated was lost during distribution because of damaged network. Theft of electricity and non-payment of bills were common. Power cuts were frequent and to meet demands Albania imported energy mainly from Greece and Macedonia. The discovery by Swiss-based Manas Petroleum Corporation of a huge and untouched natural gas and oil field in the north-west in 2008 could result in an overhaul of Albania's energy mix.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

The Tirana Stock Exchange opened in mid-1996. Since the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997, it has been faced with the daunting task of rebuilding the confidence of potential investors.

Banking and insurance

The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is involved in the development and privatisation of the banking system. An attempt to privatise the Savings Bank of Albania, the last state-owned bank, failed in June 2002

when two Italian banks pulled out of the tender.

Albania's central bank is the Banka e Shqipërisë (Bank of Albania). It has the power to authorise the creation of and supervise new banks, including those with foreign capital.

Central bank

Banka e Shqipërisë (Bank of Albania)

Main financial centre

Tirana

Time

GMT plus one hour (daylight saving, late March to late October, GMT plus two hours)

Geography

Albania's 28,748 square km are split into three main areas: a coastal plain, mountains and an inland plain. Albania shares a border with Montenegro and Serbia (Kosovo) to the north, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to the north-west and Greece to the south. The Adriatic and Ionian Seas are to the west. The country's Albanian name, Shqipëria, which translates as 'land of the eagles', reflects its remote and mountainous nature; mountains cover over 70 per cent of the land area. The highest mountain entirely within Albania is Mt Jezerce (2,694 metres) in the north, although Mt Korab on the border with FYROM reaches 2,751 metres.

The longest river, the Drini (285km), drains into Lake Ohrid on the border with FYROM. To the north, the Drini joins the Buna river, the only navigable waterway in Albania. There are three natural freshwater lakes in Albania, all of which share borders with either Greece, Montenegro or the FYROM. Numerous artificial lakes have been created by hydroelectric power stations damming rivers, the largest of which are in the north around Kukes and Skhodra.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Albania has a Mediterranean climate, with long, hot and dry summers and cool, cloudy and wet winters. Autumn has humid weather brought by the warm sirocco wind. The high inland mountains can become cold during the winter months. July is the hottest month; November, December and April are the wettest months. It is warmest in the south-west and coldest in the north-east.

Dress codes

During the summer, light clothing is recommended, with warmer clothes essential during the winter months, particularly in mountainous regions.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all.

Visa

Not required by most citizens of Europe, North America, Australasia and a few Asian countries for visits up to 90 days. A US\$10 entry tax is levied. (For a full list of exemptions visit www.mfa.gov.al/english/info2.asp.) An entry-exit form is issued at the border: the entry portion is handed in at passport control and the exit portion should be kept until departure.

Currency advice/regulations

The import and export of local currency is not permitted.

The import of foreign currencies is allowed without limitation, although all amounts must be declared on arrival. Export of foreign currency is allowed within the limits of the declaration given, less the amounts exchanged or spent. Keep exchange receipts.

Travellers cheques are accepted by banks and large tourist hotels. ATMs are available in Tirana and other main towns.

Customs

Personal items may be taken into Albania without incurring duty.

Health (for visitors)

Medical facilities are limited and medicine is in short supply. Doctors and hospitals generally expect immediate cash payment for health services. Health care is free for citizens of countries with reciprocal health agreements. Full medical insurance is advisable.

Mandatory precautions

A vaccination certificate for yellow fever is required if travelling from an infected area.

Advisable precautions

It is advisable to have immunisations against hepatitis A and B, typhoid and tetanus. Polio immunisation is not recommended for adults who received childhood inoculations. There is a risk of rabies. Access to clean water in the country is variable, and it is not usual to drink tap water.

Hotels

Hotel provision of all standards, including international hotels, is improving. Increasing numbers of hotels can be contacted directly by telephone. Bookings can be arranged online through Albania Holidays Ltd (www.albania-hotel.com).

Credit cards

Major international hotels in Tirana accept American Express, Mastercard and Diners Club (but not Visa). Cases of credit card fraud have been reported.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 28 Nov (Independence and Liberation Day), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

Variable dates

Orthodox Easter Monday, Labour Day (first Mon in May), Eid al Adha, Islamic New Year, Birth of the Prophet, Eid al Fitr.

Islamic year 1435 (5 Nov 2013–24

Oct 2014):: The Islamic year contains 354 or 355 days, with the result that Muslim feasts advance by 10–12 days against the Gregorian calendar. Dates of feasts vary according to the sighting of the new moon (*hila*), so cannot be forecast exactly.

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0800–1600.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0800–1600.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0700–1500.

Shops

Mon–Sat: 0800–1200, 1500–1900.

Social customs/useful tips

It is customary to shake hands on meeting and taking leave. Business cards are exchanged. Albanian business meetings are reasonably relaxed. Delays to negotiations can be expected as bureaucratic tendencies still exist.

Albanians are a naturally friendly and curious people with a good sense of humour, and are keen to talk to and meet foreigners.

Small gifts are appreciated. Round up the bill slightly when in restaurants.

Local body language customs: nodding the head up and down indicates no, and side to side indicates yes.

Security

It is advisable to be extremely cautious in Albania. Security has improved in recent years, but crime is still a serious problem and armed criminal gangs operate in most areas. There are a large number of semi-automatic weapons in private hands.

Travel to the north-eastern border areas between Albania and Kosovo is not recommended.

Avoid giving anything to women and children asking for money, as they target foreigners and will follow the compassionate whenever they see them again. Visitors should dress down and not display watches, cameras or other expensive items.

Getting there

Air

Albania is accessible by air from numerous European centres, including Athens,

Bucharest, Budapest, Ioannina, Paris, Rome and Zurich.

National airline: Albanian Airlines.

International airport/s: Rinas Mother Teresa Airport (TIA), 25 km from Tirana.

Airport tax: US\$10

Surface

Road: There are road links from all bordering countries, including Greece at Kakavia and Kristalopigi, and Kosovo (in Serbia) at Han-i-Hotit and Vrbnica, and Macedonia at Cafasan.

Rail: There are no passenger rail links between Albania and the rest of Europe and travel in some of the border regions is inadvisable.

Water: There are ferry services connecting Durrës and Vlorë with Trieste, Ancona, Brindisi and Bari in Italy and Rijeka and Pula in Croatia. Others connect Durres to Kopa in Slovenia and Sarandra to Corfu.

Main port/s: Durrës, Vlorë and Sarandra.

Getting about

National transport

Air: Ales Airlines (a private joint Italian-Albanian company licensed by the Albanian government) serves eight small airports across the country.

Road: Out of approximately 21,000km of roads, only 3,000km are paved. Road conditions can be unpredictable – narrow, unsurfaced and potholed, with the added risk of straying cattle or pedestrians. Mountain roads are often impassable. The roads are considered to be the worst in Europe.

Buses: Buses run frequently between Tirana and Durrës and other towns to the north and south. Tickets are sold on the bus.

Rail: The rail network is approximately 720km, single-track and unelectrified. Trains are diesel.

City transport

Taxis: The only city with a taxi service is Tirana. There are taxi transfers from Rinas airport to the city centre.

Buses, trams & metro: A flat-fare bus service operates in the main cities, including Tirana. Airport buses operate from the airport to the city centre every three hours. Journey duration is 30 minutes.

Car hire

Driving in Albania is only recommended for those with no other choice. An international driving permit or a national driving licence is required. It is advisable to hire a local car and driver through travel agencies. Traffic drives on the right.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially

to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling code (IDD) for Albania is +355, followed by area code and subscriber's number:

Berat	32	Korca	82
Durrës	52	Shkoder	22
Elbasan	54	Tirana	4
Fier	34	Vlore	33

Useful telephone numbers

Police: 19

Fire: 18

Ambulance: 17

Chambers of Commerce

Albanian British Chamber of Commerce and Industry, PO Box 1547, Tirana (tel: 227-000; fax: 230-636; e-mail: info:abcci.com).

American Chamber of Commerce in Albania, Rruga Deshmoret e 4 Shkuritit, Tirana (tel: 259-779; fax: 235-350; e-mail: info@amcham.com.al).

Korça Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bulevard Republika, Korça (tel/fax: 824-457; e-mail: albchamber1@albchamber.com).

Tirana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Rruga e Kavajes 6, Tirana (tel: 230-284; fax: 227-997; e-mail: ccitr@abissnet.com.al).

Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania, Rruga e Kavajes 6, Tirana (tel: 230-283; fax: 227-997; e-mail: root@ccitr.tirana.al).

Banking

Albanian State Agricultural Bank, Tirana (tel: 27-738).

Albanian State Bank for Foreign Relations, Tirana.

Alpha Credit Bank, Deshmoret e Kombit Blvd 47, Tirana (Internet site: <http://www.alpha.gr>).

Arab Albanian Islamic Bank, Deshmoret e Kombit, Tirana (tel: 23-873).

Bankandertregtare (Intercommercial Bank), Tirana Tower, Rruga e Kavajes 59, Tirana (tel: 58-755/60; fax: 58-752; e-mail: icbs1@albaniaonline.net).

Banko Italo Albanese (Banka Italo Shqiptare) (Italian-Albanian Bank), Rruga e Barrikadave, Tirana (tel: 33-966; fax: 35-701).

Fefad Bank, Tirana (tel: 3-496, 37-958; fax: 33-481).

National Bank of Greece, Blvd. Deshmoret e Kombit, VEVE Business Centre, Tirana (tel: 33-621, 35-542).

National Commercial Bank of Albania, Tirana (tel: 50-955; fax: 50-960; e-mail: bkt@albmail.com).

Savings Bank of Albania, Rr Deshmoret e 4 Shkurti, 6 Tirana (tel: 24-540/051; fax: 23-587/695).

Tirana Bank, Blvd. Deshmoret e Kombit, NR55/1, Tirana (tel: 33-441).

Central bank

Banka e Shqiperise (Bank of Albania), Sheshi Skënderbej 1, Tirana (tel: 222-152; fax: 223-558; e-mail: public@bankofalbania.org).

Stock exchange

The Tirana Stock Exchange opened in mid-1996. Since the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997, it has been faced with the daunting task of rebuilding the confidence of potential investors.

Travel information

Lufthansa Tirana Rinas Airport Office (tel: 42-350/54/58; fax: 42-350/60).

Ministry of tourism

Ministry of Tourism, Blvd Deshmoret e Kombit, Tirana (tel: 28-123); fax: 27-922).

Ministries

Albanian Assembly, Kurvendi, Blvd Dëdhmotët e Kombit, nr 4, Tirana (tel: 42-37-418, 42-47-354, 43-62-003; fax: 42-27-949; email: head-directory@parlament.al; internet: www.parlament.al).

Committee of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Health and Environmental Protection, Bulevari Bajran Curri, Tirana (tel: 42-682; 35-229; fax: 35-229).

Department of Economic Development and Foreign Aid Co-ordination, Tirana (tel: 28-467; fax: 28-363).

Industrialeksport – 4 Shkurti Street 6, Tirana (tel: 4550).

Institute of Statistics, Tirana (tel: 22-411; fax: 28-300).

Makinaimport (State Trade Organisation for the Import of Machinery), 4 Shkurti Street 6, Tirana (tel: 25-220, 25-221).

Mineralimpex (State Organisation for Export of Minerals), 4 Shkurti Street 6, Tirana (tel: 25-832, 23-848).

Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Blvd Dëdhmotët e Kombit Tirana (tel: 28-318, 32-675; fax: 23-806, 27-924).

Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (tel: 32-833; fax: 34-052).

Ministry of Finance and Economy, Dëdhmotët e Kombit, Tirana (tel: 28-405; fax: 28-494).

Ministry of Health and Environment, Ministria e Shendetesise, Tirana (tel and fax: 34-615).

Ministry of Industry, Transport and Trade, Sheshi Skenderbej, Tirana (tel: 25-353, 32-289; fax: 27-773, 616-835).

Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, Sheshi Skenderbey, Tirana (tel: 25-353; tel/fax: 27-773/616/835).

National Agency for Privatisation (tel/fax: 27-937).

National Committee of Energy, Dëdhmotët e Kombit, Tirana (tel/fax: 28-475).

President's Office, Tirana (tel: 28-491; fax: 33-761).

Prime Minister's Office, Tirana (tel: 34-816; fax: 34-818).

Other useful addresses

Agroeksport – State Trade Organisation for the Export of Agricultural and Food Products, 4 Shkurti Street 6, Tirana (tel: 25-227, 25-229, 23-128).

Albanian Embassy (USA), 2100 S Street, NW, Washington DC (tel: (+1-202) 223-4942; fax: (+1-202) 628-7342).

Albanian Telecom, Myslim Shyri 42, Tirana (tel: 32-047; fax: 33-323).

Albkontrol (Organisation for Inspection of Exported and Imported Goods), Rruga

Skënderbeu 15, Durrës (tel: 22-354; fax: 22-791).

Artimpex (State Organisation for Export), 4 Shkurti Street 6, Tirana.

British Embassy, Rruga Vaso Pasha 7/1, Tirana (tel: 34-973; fax: 34-975).

Bureau for the Registration of Patents & Trade Marks, Konferenca e Pezes Street 6, Tirana.

Business Economic Development Department, c/o Ministry of Industry and Trade, 3 Rruga Andon Zamo Cajupi, Tirana (tel: 34-673; fax: 34-658).

Foreign Investment Promotion Centre, Ekspozita Shqiperia Sot (Protokolli), Blvd Jeanne d'Arc, Tirana (tel: 27-626; fax: 28-439, 42-133).

Insig, Insurance Institute, Rruga e Dibres 91, Tirana (tel: 341-84, 341-69, 341-70; fax: 341-80, 238-38).

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME) Foundation, c/o Ministry of Industry and Trade, 3 Rruga Andon Zako Cajupi, Tirana (fax: 34-892); EU Expert (fax: 42-413, 34-609).

Transshqip (State Organisation for the Transport of Goods in Foreign Trade), 4 Shkurti Street 6, Tirana (tel: 23-076, 24-659).

US Embassy, 103 Rruga Elbasanit, Tirana (tel: 424-7285; fax: 423-2222; e-mail: wm_tirana@pd.state.gov).

National news agency: Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA)

Bulevard Zhan D'Arc, 23, Tirane (tel: 251-152; fax: 234-230; internet: www.ata-al.net).

Internet sites

Albanian Daily News:
www.albaniannews.com

Albanian Economic Development Agency:
aeda.gov.al

Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:
www.mfa.gov.al

Albanian Telegraphic Agency:
www.ata-al.net

Bank of Albania: www.bankofalbania.org