

Indicators Assessment- Unitary States

Albania

Center for the Study of Democracy

May 2020

This Indicators Assessment report offers a country assessment of 4 composite indicators: (1) state-religious institutions relations, (2) status of religious minority groups, (3) religious radicalisation level, and (4) radicalisation prevention measures. It is part of a series covering 23 countries (listed below) on four continents. This assessment report was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:

Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

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The GREASE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 770640

The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Raciunas from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

For further information about the GREASE project please contact: Professor Anna Triandafyllidou, anna.triandafyllidou@eui.eu

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

Country Assessment Report

Name of Country Assessed: Albania

I. Composite Indicator 1: State-Religious Institutions Relations

Overall Assessment:

The [1998 Albanian Constitution](#) does not explicitly define Albania as a secular state. However, the Constitution outlines that the state and religious institutions/communities mutually respect each other and are independent from each other, thus legalising a state-religion relationship characterised by mutual autonomy. Such a relationship is supported by the expectation that the state is neutral on matters of religion without favoring a particular religion. There is no mentioning in the Constitution of religious institutions and religious groups as being allowed to participate in formal political decision-making. Nor does the Constitution speak to any participation of religiously-based political parties in political life. As stated in [Article 10.6](#) religious communities are to be treated as juridical persons and have independence in the “administration of their properties according to their principles, rules and canons, to the extent that interests of third parties are not infringed.” Along these lines [Article 24.1](#) guarantees “freedom of conscience and religion,” as well as freedom of religious communities to set up educational institutions as long as they do so separately from public education. Religious communities also enjoy freedom of expression ([Article 22.1](#)), press, radio and television ([Article 21.2](#)) upon reception of proper licensing. The Law on Audio-Visual Media in Albania dictates freedom of ownership of media by religious organisations as long as they broadcast free and just content.

In practical terms, although the Constitution claims that the state and religion are independent from one another, evident are some dependencies, especially when it comes to the funding of major religious communities which actively rely on state funds in addition to financial support from foreign donors. A tight relationship between the state and religious communities is mediated through a series of mechanisms such as: bilateral agreements, the presence of the Interreligious Council which is in charge of defending the interests of religious communities, and the State Committee of Cults which regulates relations between the state and religious communities and protects freedom of religion. Typically, the state does not interfere in the administrative affairs of religious communities except in the cases when religious communities are seeking state support for the resolution of convoluted administrative matters such as the issue of restitution of titles and property after the end of Communism.

In terms of participation of religious communities in political decision-making, there is a following of the secular principle only with symbolic exceptions, particularly in non-controversial instances (e.g., in 2015 the heads of the Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox and the Bektashi communities took part together with the Albanian Prime Minister in a march in Paris honoring the victims of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack). In some instances, particular religions have become instrumental for politicians in advancing their political agendas (e.g., in 2014, the then PM declared himself to be Catholic before Pope Francis's visit to Albania to allegedly receive the support of the Pope for Albania's future EU membership), but this has not resulted in an ongoing merging of the political and religious. There are no political parties in Albania which are registered as explicitly

religious. The Christian-Democratic Party has had very limited participation in political life since the end of Communism.

Freedom of religion exists in practice, but there are certain privileges provided only to the 5 main religious communities (Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox, Bektashi, and Protestant) which already have agreements with the state. Religious institutions manage 114 educational institutions across Albania. Media outlets which have openly declared themselves as “religious” are present.

1. State autonomy from religion	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law defines the state as secular	High	2020
(1b) Practical Dimension: Actual level of state political autonomy/independence from religion	Medium	2020
2. Participation of religious institutions and religious groups in political decision-making and policy-making.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation forbids formal participation of religious institutions and religious groups in formal political decision-making.	Insufficient Information	2020
(2b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious institutions and religious groups lack formal participation in political decision-making.	High	2020
3. Religiously-based political parties in political life.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation forbids participation of religiously-based political parties in political life.	Insufficient Information	2020
(3b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religiously-based political parties lack participation in political life.	High	2020
4. State non-interference in the regulation of religious matters of religious institutions and religious communities (including regulation of religious courts, councils, religious family laws, etc.).	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(4a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation enforces state non-interference in the regulation of religious matters of religious institutions and religious communities.	Very high	2020
(4b) Practical Dimension: In practice, there is no state interference in the regulation of religious affairs of religious institutions and religious communities.	High	2020
5. State non-interference in the regulation of the administrative matters of religious institutions and religious communities (including personnel and funds).	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(5a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation enforces state non-interference in the	Very high	2020

regulation (e.g., personnel, financial matters) of the administrative matters of religious institutions and religious communities.

(5b) Practical Dimension: In practice, there is no state interference in the regulation of the administrative affairs (e.g., personnel, financial, etc.) of religious institutions and religious communities.

Very high

2020

6. State recognition of freedom of religion.

Score

YEAR
(Most Recent)

(6a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation allows freedom of religion.

High

2020

(6b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious groups/communities enjoy freedom of religion.

Medium

2020

7. Freedom for religious groups/communities to set up and manage educational institutions.

Score

YEAR
(Most Recent)

(7a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation allows religious groups/communities to set up and manage educational institutions.

High

2020

(7b) Practical Dimension: Religious groups/communities set up and manage educational institutions.

High

2020

8. Autonomy of religious media

Score

YEAR
(Most Recent)

(8a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation recognises and allows religious media.

High

2020

(8b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious media practice their activity.

High

2020

II. Composite Indicator 2: Status of Religious Minority Groups

Overall Assessment:

According to the [1998 Constitution of the Republic of Albania](#) all religious communities are equal ([Article 10.3](#)). The state declares its neutrality on questions of religion, recognises the independence of religious groups and the legal identity of registered religious minority groups. In terms of religious minority groups' participation in political life, the legal framework does not grant rights of such groups to political participation. When it comes to the initiation of government proceeding and access of these communities to state-level mechanisms, religious minority groups are treated in a way similar to individuals – they can request the initiation of proceedings by the Constitutional Court ([Article 13.1\(e\)](#)). The Constitution does not speak to a special social security status to religious minority groups and grants all religious minority groups with access to public spaces, as well as accommodation of their religious practices and rituals in public ([Article 24](#)) as long as their activities in public spaces are in compliance with the Law. There is no mentioning in the Constitution of a particular financial relationship between religious minority groups and the state. Rather, the law stipulates that matters of access to public funds from religious minority groups are resolved on an individual group basis through official agreements with the state ([Article 10.5](#)). Religious minority groups can own houses of worship, as guaranteed by [Article 41](#)'s right to ownership of property clause.

In practice, religious minority groups enjoy legal registration status recognised by the state. Such groups acquire the official status of a juridical person by registering as non-profit organisations. As registered non-profit organisations, religious minority groups can open their own bank accounts, own property and be exempt from certain taxation. This, however, does not mean that religious minority groups have decision-making power in political life – they can ask for state support, but they do not own or exercise power in political life, as indicated in the presence of the State Committee of Cults which mediates the relationship between religious minority groups and the state. State support in the form of special social security benefits is present for religious minority groups which have written agreements with the state (e.g., lower price for electricity and water). Along these lines, the government provides public fund arrangements for the activities of religious minority groups (such as Catholics, Orthodox, the Bektashis) including property restitution, tax exemptions on income, donations and religious property.

In practice, all religious minority groups enjoy access to public spaces without restrictions. All religious minority groups also enjoy freedom to publicly practice their religions to the extent at which they follow the state law.

Although according to law religious minority groups can own houses of worship, in practice such a right to ownership has been contested. Despite the presence of the State Agency for the Restitution and Compensation of Property, many of the cases of religious minority groups' requests for religious property restitution have not been addressed. Some religious minority groups, such as the Evangelical community, have had particularly challenging times with obtaining land to build their own houses of worship.

1. Legal status of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation recognises religious minority groups.	Very high	2020
(1b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious minority groups enjoy legal registration status recognised by the government.	High	2020
2. Religious minority group participation in political life.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Legal Dimension: Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to participate in the political life of the state.	Insufficient Information	2020
(2b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups participate in political life.	Very low	2020
3. Special social security status of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to special social security benefits.	Insufficient information	2020
(3b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious minority groups have special access to social security benefits.	Medium	2020
4. Access of religious minority groups to public spaces.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(4a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups right of access to public spaces.	High	2020
(4b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups enjoy access to public spaces.	High	2020
5. Access to public funds for initiatives/activities of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(5a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups right of access to public funds for their own initiatives/activities.	Medium	2020
(5b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups have access to public funds for their own initiatives/activities.	Medium	2020
6. Public accommodation of cultural practices specific to religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(6a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation allows public accommodation of cultural practices specific to religious minority groups.	High	2020
(6b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups express their cultural practices publicly.	High	2020
7. Ownership of houses of worship.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)

(7a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to own their houses of worship.	Very high	2020
(7b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups own houses of worship.	Medium	2020

III. **Composite Indicator 3: Radicalisation Levels**

Overall assessment:

Structural factors: In the period between 2000 and 2020, Albania has been fairly stable when it comes to some structural factors affecting radicalisation. There have been no notable changes in terms of the **level of rule of law** in the country between 2015 and 2020. The country scores in 78th place in the global rule of law ranking (4 places lower than in 2019). The **level of religious-related government restrictions** has remained stable and low between 2009 and 2017 – a tendency different from that among the majority of European countries where increasing levels of government restrictions have been established. The **level of protection of human rights** has also remained stable between 2006 and 2019 and overall has been at a moderate level for this period. Changes have been observed in the **level of state legitimacy** from low in 2006 to moderate in 2019. Notable are also improvements evident in the **level of group grievances** which marked an increase between 2006 and 2015 and a worsening of the situation, but which decreased between 2015 and 2019, marking improvements. There has been a steady tendency of decrease in economic inequality and the level of **uneven economic development**.

Perception-based indicators: **Political grievances** in terms of **distrust in national institutions** are high, with distrust in government at 69% and distrust in parliament at 75% for 2019. Taken in the context of previous years, there is a tendency for a declining trust in these institutions. **Political grievances** in the form of **general discontent with politics** is also marked by an increasing tendency, with 69% of Albanians in 2019 who were unhappy with politics versus 53% of the population in 2015. In 2019 such dissatisfaction among Albanians is 10% higher than the average of South-Eastern Europe. **Economic discontent** is also present in the country, with an increasing percentage of Albanians claiming that **the financial situation of their households is bad or very bad**. However, data for 2019 suggest that only about 1/3 of the population considers that the **economic situation of the country is the most serious problem**. Data on **perceived discrimination and polarisation** are limited for Albania, but available 2019 data suggest discriminatory perceptions in relation to Roma. Around half of the Albanian population considers that unemployment and financial insecurity mostly contributes **to radicalisation and violent extremism** (51%), followed by reasons such as weakness of state and security structures (27%), propaganda/fake news (11%) and social media influences (9%).

Incidence-based indicators: There has been no **state-based armed conflict** in Albania for the last 20 years, but there were 15 **terrorist attacks** in the country for that period. Most of these attacks occurred after 2015. Fourteen out of the 15 attacks were committed by unknown perpetrators and one incident is suspected to have been executed by “Muslim extremists.” The level of **incidence of violent acts** motivated by religious hatred or bias has been low between 2015 and 2018, but the low number of registered occurrences may be due to specific provisions within the Albanian Criminal Code and not necessarily the fact that they are few. **Social hostility indices** for the country have been low. Information on the **nature of violent extremism actors** is limited, due to the Albanian government's decision to classify any details on the preventative missions it has executed. The presence of significant violent extremist/actors/networks has ranged from High (2015) to Moderate (2010, 2018).

Threat actors have been mainly identified as foreign fighters acting as local agents who have been exposed to global extremist influences.

1. Structural factors/environment	Score/Level/Percentage	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Level of Freedom	Level: Partly free Freedom score: 67	2020
(1b) Level of adherence to rule of law	Overall rank: 78 Overall score: 0.5	2020
(1c) Level of religious-related government restrictions	Low (1.6)	2017
(1d) Level of state legitimacy	Moderate (5.7)	2019
(1e) Level of protection of human rights	Moderate (4.2)	2019
(1f) Level of group grievances	Moderate (4.3)	2019
(1g) Uneven economic development	Low (3.0)	2019
(1h) Wealth disparity (top 10% possessing above average percentage of the total income share)	Percentage: 27%	2017

2. Perception-based indicators (social grievances)	Percentage (%)	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Distrust in national institutions	Parliament: 75% Government: 69%	2019
(2b) Political discontent	Dissatisfaction with country direction: 69% Dissatisfaction with administrative services: 27%	2019 2019
(2c) Economic discontent	Dissatisfaction own financial situation: 55% Dissatisfaction national economy: 53% Economic situation is the most serious problem: 33%	2019 2010 2019
(2d) Discrimination	Discrimination is widespread: no data available Opposing diversity: no data available Discomfort with minorities: <i>Uncomfortable working with Roma: 20%</i> <i>Uncomfortable working for a Roma employer: 28%</i> <i>Uncomfortable with children going to school with Roma children: 20%</i>	2019 2019 2019

	<i>Uncomfortable with their children marrying a Roma: 67%</i> <i>Uncomfortable buying products from Roma/made by Roma: 25%</i> <i>Uncomfortable having friends who are Roma: 23%</i> <i>Uncomfortable with inviting Roma to their house: 39%</i> Dislike neighbors from minority groups: no data available Experienced discrimination: no data available	2019 2019 2019 2019
(2e) Views on violent extremism	VE is a serious problem/threat: no data available Endorsement of VE actions/ actors: no data available Contributing factors: <i>Unemployment/financial insecurity: 51%</i> <i>Weak state/social security structure: 27%</i> <i>Social media: 9%</i> <i>Propaganda/fake news: 11%</i> Other: n/a	2019 2019 2019 2019

3. Incidence-based indicators (religious violence and conflict)	Score/Level/Number	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) State-based armed conflict	No	2020
(3b) Level of social hostilities involving religion	Level: Low Score: 0.1	2017
(3c) Incidence and impact of terrorism	Score: 0.42 Number of Incidents: 0	2019
(3d) Violent extremist incidents	Number: 1	2018
(3e) Significant violent extremist actors/networks	Level: Moderate	2018

IV. **Composite Indicator 4: Radicalisation Prevention Measures**

Albania has been developing legislation to address religious radicalisation as part of its broader anti-terrorism efforts since the early 2000s and the first provisions for amendments in the Albanian Criminal Code addressing terrorism and related acts (2001). In 2011, the Albanian government approved the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2011-2015) which set tackling violent radicalisation as a national priority. This strategy was followed by the Anti-Terrorism, Organized Crime/Illegal Traffic Strategy & Action Plan, 2013-2016. The current Albanian [National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism](#) was adopted in 2015. The strategy was created in compliance with the basic human right standards and principles of rule of law, as outlined by the UN counter-terrorism standards. The National Strategy refers to the issue of foreign fighters and criminalizes their recruitment. The Strategy also sets to “improve communication with the public to raise awareness of radicalisation and its associated threats.” Overall, the anti-radicalisation legislative framework complies with the Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act, 2009.

The Center for Countering Violent Extremism (formed in 2018) is tasked with the strategy to counter radicalisation and violent extremism, whereas the inter-institutional coordination of strategies in regards to financing of terrorism belongs to the Coordination Committee for the Fight against Money Laundering (2013). Monitoring mechanisms ensuring the impact of the strategy and the national plan exist at the level of the Council of Europe through the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism.

There has been interinstitutional **participation of government actors** in the development and implementation of the strategy, including the Ministry of Welfare and Youth, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the leading institutions. Although NGOs have an active involvement in counter-terrorism and extremism initiatives on the ground (e.g., prevention, rehabilitation, community policing, etc.), they are not involved in the actual development of the national strategy.

With the adoption of the National Strategy in 2015, **comprehensive measures to prevent violent radicalisation** have been developed. Between 2015 and 2020, the country has been involved in initiatives by the OSCE including trainings and awareness building activities for various target groups, as well as OSCE training programs for law enforcement officers (2017). **Education initiatives and programs for youth** and students on online radicalisation have been designed and implemented between 2015 and 2020, and among women in 2020 (through the “Violent Extremism Prevention Network by Women in Development Korça”). Since 2015 **grassroots initiatives** have emerged run entirely by CSOs (e.g., the initiatives implemented by the International Association for Solidarity). Since 2015 the Albanian Center for Public Communication has been developing counter- and alternative-narrative campaigns in the periphery of Tirana. There have been no particular programs aimed at supporting victims of terrorism and violent extremism so far. Currently, there are no programs and **measures to prevent radicalisation into violent extremism in prison and probation settings**. However, the Ministry of Justice has been working on drafting four laws to address radicalisation threats and counter religious violence in prisons.

1. Comprehensive strategic approach	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legislative foundation for adoption of PVE action plan	Yes	2020
(1b) Existence of PVE strategy and a national action plan	Yes	2020
(1c) Presence of comprehensive monitoring mechanisms of strategy / action plan implementation	Yes	2020
(1d) Presence of dedicated body tasked with PVE strategy development and coordination	Yes	2020
(1e) Compliance of strategy and action plan with human rights standards and the principles of rule of law	Yes	2020
(1f) Participation of a wide range of government actors in development and implementation of PVE strategy and action plan	Yes	2020
(1g) Participation of non-government actors in development and implementation of PVE strategy and action plan	High participation	2020
(1h) Reference to FTFs and related measures in PVE strategy/action plan	Yes	2020
(1i) Reference to terrorism financing and related measures in PVE strategy and action plan	Yes	2020
(1j) Reference to communication counter- or alternative narrative campaigns in PVE strategy/action plan	Yes	2020

2. Comprehensiveness of measures - areas of action, actors and projects	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Development and implementation of programmes for support of victims of terrorism and violent extremism	No	2020
(2b) Training for frontline practitioners	Yes	2020
(2c) Initiatives to improve the preparedness of security forces, law enforcement and justice institutions to deal with radicalisation.	Yes	2020
(2d) Development and implementation of P/CVE-specific education initiatives for youth	Yes	2020
(2e) Development and implementation of P/CVE education initiatives and projects for women	Yes	2020
(2f) Platforms for intra and interfaith dialogue between the state and religious leaders	Yes	2020
(2g) Networks for civil society, religious leaders, youth and women's organisations for dialogue, cooperation and best practices.	Yes	2020
(2h) Grassroots initiatives by civil society actors focussed on prevention	High level	2020
(2i) Counter- and alternative- narrative campaigns	Yes	2020
(2j) Multi-agency cooperation and/or referral mechanisms at local level identifying and supporting at-risk persons	Yes	2020
(2k) State-commissioned research on religiously-inspired radicalisation and violent extremism	Insufficient Information	2020
(2l) programs and measures to prevent radicalisation into violent extremism in prison and probation settings	No	2020

Project name: Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

Project Acronym: GREASE

Project Coordinator: Professor Anna Triandafyllidou

Contact: anna.triandafyllidou@eui.eu

March 2020

Document series reference: D3.2 Indicators Assessment



This document can be downloaded from the publications section of the GREASE website at <https://www.grease.eui.eu/>

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The GREASE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 770640