

Electoral Program of the Democratic Party of Albania
Family at the Heart of Albania's Future
A contract with Albanians!

Contents

Introduction: Albania at a Crossroads – Reconstruction through Conservative Values	2
Good governance.....	4
The Economic Model – Strengthening the Albanian Family, the Individual and Building an Economy that works for all	6
Economic sovereignty and Industrialization: Agriculture, Tourism and Energy as our foundations of the economy	16
Security, Anticorruption and Fight Against Organized Crime	21
Education.....	24
Healthcare	34
Decommunization	39
Private Property Rights	46
Territorial Development and Decentralization	52
A modern transportation system – Roads, Ports, Airports and Railways.....	55
Protecting and strengthening the Albanian Family	56
A strong, healthy, vibrant Albanian youth	59
Protecting our Environment.....	61
International relations	62
A New Horizon – Building the Contract with Albanians	69

Introduction: Albania at a Crossroads – Reconstruction through Conservative Values

In the run-up to the 2025 elections, a group of professionals, intellectuals, and engaged citizens, together with proposals from the Democratic Party departments and structures, have gathered to contribute and build a platform that aims to represent a new, conservative and center-right vision for Albania's future.

While maintaining an independent approach, the groups of professionals and intellectuals have drafted the doctrinal basis and proposals for the Democratic Party's electoral program, with particular emphasis on preserving the center right values that protect and empower the individual and the family, promote economic development and improve the quality of life of citizens.

In this process, our goal is to build a common sense and realistic platform that responds to the concrete needs of the Albanian society. Subsequently, this platform, combined with the proposals from the DP Departments, and consulted with the different interest groups will become the final electoral program of the Democratic Party and an integral part of its future governance. This program includes clear policies and measurable objectives that aim to address the country's most critical challenges. At the heart of these proposals lies our conviction that Albania can build a secure and prosperous future, based on the principles of individual freedom, family values and the development of powerful and durable institutions.

This document reflects the contributions of a number of experts and engaged citizens, under the coordination of Nikola Kedhi and with the approval of the Democratic Party Chairman Sali Berisha, who come from different disciplines and spheres, bringing a comprehensive and thoughtful perspective for all aspects of the country's development. These proposals were merged with the work done by the Departments of the DPA, and were consulted with various interest groups, which were all finalized in the Political Program of 2025.

Our vision is to create a sustainable development for Albania, where economic freedom and individual responsibility are at the heart of economic policies, encouraging economic growth and improving the standard of living for all citizens, with limited government interventions in the economy, free and fair competition, fiscal responsibility and a reduction in our public debt.

Albania stands today at a crucial crossroads for the nation's fate. Over the last decade under socialist governance, our nation has faced a historic and planned depopulation, attempts to undermine the country's territorial integrity, misgovernment, unprecedented corruption in the last 30 years and the attempted destruction of all hope for Albanian families. The wounds of our communist past remain open, and the Democratic Party assumes its share of responsibility.

The state continues to expand its control over every individual and family, stifling their economic potential, freedoms and rights. Many Albanians feel disillusioned, seeing a government that puts politics before people, bureaucracy before development, and dependence on the state before individual freedom. For when men are left free to decide, they choose freedom in every case.

A mass exodus of our brightest minds and hard-working citizens is weakening the social fabric almost irreparably and leaving entire regions depopulated. The family, the foundation of our society, has been hit economically and culturally, bringing about a demographic crisis that threatens our existence as a nation.

We are convinced there is hope. The Democratic Party, after an unprecedented aggression on the European continent against it that called into question its very existence, is ready to govern.

We believe that the solutions to our challenges lie in restoring the values that have held our people for centuries: faith in family, hard work, entrepreneurship and respect for private property and personal freedom. These values are not relics of the past, but the foundations of our future.

Our program is built on policies that have been proven to work, wherever they are implemented: tax cuts, reduction of bureaucracy and arbitrary state intervention of the Albanian citizen, empowering families and unleashing the economic potential of our country. We need less dependence on the state and more focus on the individual and the family. We believe that no one is immune from corruption. But by putting in place the right mechanisms and controls, we will minimize anyone's chances of harming the interests of Albanians. This requires an intense sense of patriotism. The Democratic Party is the national interest grouping, and we have the will to do everything so that the Albanian family has enough confidence to return, live, work, grow and strengthen in their own country.

By doing so, we will reverse the depopulation crisis, create jobs and build a future where Albania produces, exports and develops sustainably. We will build an economy that works for all Albanians!

We suggest that these proposals serve as the basis for discussions with stakeholders, in every district and municipality of Albania, in public debates and roundtables, to be further enriched and finalized. We propose that for the health, education, property, pension and depopulation program the idea of a National Pact should be put forward!

An Optimistic, Hopeful and Realistic Vision for Albania of the Future

The Albanian family is at the heart of the Democratic Party's program. Without a healthy family, with economic, educational, health and legal security, there can be no strong Albanian society.

We are not merely offering some policies or proposals. We are extending our hand to every Albanian to join a long-term, optimistic, and realistic vision. We see an Albania where families are supported, not burdened or violated; Where young people choose to stay, educate, invest and build their future; And where a dynamic economy creates opportunities for everyone. Then they will return to their home and to the place they belong to. Our country will be a place where:

- Families are at the heart of our political decisions, supported by an economy that values their contribution, with low taxes, incentives to form new families, deregulation, elimination of government repression, free and fair markets. Families that breathe freely again.
- Freedom in markets is guaranteed, and competition minimizes the influence of the so-called oligarchs.
- The remnants of communism, patronage system and cronyism have been removed from our institutions, replaced by meritocracy, accountability and a culture of entrepreneurship.
- Our patriotic education system prepares the next generation with the skills to innovate, create and lead, fostering a nation of producers, innovators and thinkers and not just consumers.
- The reformed health system reaches every individual, with trained, well-paid doctors and who provide decent service.
- The justice system guarantees equality before the law and ensures justice for every Albanian citizen.
- The property issue is given a final settlement with a Grand National Pact.
- Agriculture and tourism flourish, led by farms and enterprises that guarantee sustainable development, while energy independence secures our future.
- Albania stands strong, both in terms of national security and in its strategic alliances, ensuring democracy, separation of powers, stability and prosperity.

This is the Albania we can build together. By upholding our centuries-old values, empowering families and promoting economic freedom, we will create a sustainable and prosperous future for generations to come.

The Democratic Party has suffered as much as any Albanian the arrogance and authoritarianism of the socialist government. We know what we must do so that what has happened these years occurs never again, and freedom and welfare, together with the balance of powers, is reinforced.

Now is the time for change—a real and lasting change that embraces the strength of our people and the potential of our nation.

Together, we will transform Albania into a beacon of hope, a country where families grow strong, have economic opportunities, and the nation develops steadily.

Good governance

We believe in limited government which implies a system in which the government has the least power over the citizens and the decisions that other branches of power make – decisions and laws that limit the powers of government to avoid abuse. Limited governance ensures human rights and is the only system that creates opportunity where people run the government rather than the opposite. For this reason, the constitution and laws of the country limit the activity and propensity for government abuse. The concept of limited government does not simply mean a small government in numbers but a government with the least power and influence in the life of the Albanian citizen and family.

Limited government was born in the 1200s magna carta in the United Kingdom and then became a symbol of American democracy with the federalist papers clearly defining the role of government in a democracy, separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism.

In Albania, it was the Democratic Party that in 2005 brought the concept of limited government for the first time. Although Albania came from a communist past where the authoritarian system was one that governed with a strong hand and lacked freedoms and basic human rights, in the early years of democracy the DP worked to ensure the separation of powers and ensure the adoption the first democratic constitution in the country. Despite the Democratic Party's work to break the statist system, since 2013 Albania is run by a completely statist government where the powers of the government and its influence are not only limited but have taken control of all other powers.

We strongly believe that only with a strong system of checks and balances, separation of powers and democratic representation, can our country have a democratic state to function properly. To achieve this, we must:

- Respect the rule of law;
- Respect the constitution and the laws of the country;
- Ensure the country has a small and clear legal corpus;
- Reformat the institutions of representation;
- Establish a two-chamber system of people's representatives to prevent any kind of political staleness and to make a legislative check and balance;
- Strengthen the mechanisms that protect the opposition in parliament and in public life, making it a decision-making partner on national issues.

- Restore the efficient functioning of public services and administration, providing services on time to the citizens.
- Depoliticize and ensure a functioning justice system is established;
- Ensure public transparency in every sector of the country;
- Depoliticize the administration – meritocracy and productivity the basic criteria for hiring and evaluation;
- Reduce the regulatory framework;
- Reduce state intervention in the economy and ensure free market and free entrepreneurship;
- Reduce the level of taxes and state control in Albanian families and individuals;
- De-ideologize public administration;
- Depoliticize education and return autonomy to the education system and other sectors that depend on the state;
- Decentralize the decision-making process and sanction the right to referendum at national and local level by law;
- Decentralize territorial decision-making;
- Ensure democratic representation and independent institutions;

To get here, Albania must have an independent and transparent justice system, adopt a new reform on territorial administration, carry out a new administrative reform, educational reform, and reform for the decentralization of local government. For all this, the Democratic Party will propose a National Pact and will launch comprehensive national public consultations to correct the mistakes of the past decade.

Mayors will have to be independent of the influence of the Executive, and will have to be accountable only to voters. This decentralization and restoration of decision-making in communities closer to the individual and families will restore life in other cities beyond Tirana, including cultural, industrial, artistic and economic activities. As power is decentralized and economic development permeates the entire territory of the Republic, the level of welfare will bring about a greater demand for restriction of power at the center.

A country with Albania's past and the consequences that the ubiquitous criminal state of communism has brought is in immediate need of individual freedom. This freedom cannot come as long as decision-making is concentrated in the hands of an individual, in the office of prime minister.

We aim at a restriction of the mechanisms by which the government can influence and a distribution of this limited power between the institutions of the President, prime minister, legislative and judiciary, so that the powers can control each other. We are ready to create all mechanisms to strengthen the Legislative and independently from the Executive, including the creation of a second chamber in the Assembly, which could serve as a crisis resolution mechanism and further limiter of the Executive.

This limitation of the power of the government and the administrative state we think will have to be enshrined in the Constitution, to be the greatest guarantee for Albanian citizens. We as conservatives believe that our Constitution should have a Declaration of Rights and Dignity of Albanians to permanently assure the entire nation of the freedoms and personal rights given by God and that no government can touch, including the right to life, speech, property, religion, the press, protest, fair trial and free enterprise, and to point out the fact that sovereignty belongs to the Albanian people, and the final decision-making belongs to them alone.

Another very important principle for us is the 'citizen empowerment' in the processes of drafting government policies. This means engaging in the assembly on the governing policies of stakeholders and affected by the governing policies. This principle is important and necessary to be implemented at both levels of government, but it is crucial for the local level of government. Local level governing issues directly affect citizens, and their assembly for us conservatives is the most effective way to protect the natural rights of citizens (especially the protection of property rights, the freedom to express free opinion and the

preservation and improvement of the quality of life). For this reason, we will continue to organize public debates in every corner of Albania, where the word of the Albanian citizen is heard and he/she participates in every decision-making process.

On the other hand, the limited government expresses irresistible means by reducing government spending, low taxation, encouraging free enterprise and fair competition, low national debt and free market and without interference. It is a successful model that brought about the greatest growth in the history of welfare in the developed Western world and strengthened the individual and the family. We are confident that this model will work in Albania as well.

The battle for limited government is an attempt at freedom over oppression. This is the battle of every conservative to preserve the freedoms, rights and dignity of every Albanian citizen and family and to give them all the legal mechanisms to protect themselves from abuses of governments. Only then will the Republic be strengthened, institutions will be established on a stable basis, and the welfare of Albanians will increase, as in every capitalist and democratic country in Europe and the United States of America.

The Economic Model – Strengthening the Albanian Family, the Individual and Building an Economy that works for all

Our vision is to create a sustainable development of Albania, where economic freedom and individual responsibility are at the heart of economic policies, encouraging economic growth and improving the standard of living for all citizens, with limited government interventions in the economy, fiscal responsibility and a reduction in debt.

The Albanian Democrats strongly believe that every individual has the inalienable right to live, to be educated, to work, to choose, to create a strong and secure family, to be independent in decisions on their life, to climb the social ladder on the basis of meritocracy, to have the freedom to honor his own history, tradition and the God he believes in. Therefore, to achieve all these elements and to enable and respect these rights that form the identity and dignity of every individual, an economic system is needed, compatible with these cultural and human values, quite natural in all human beings. We believe that every individual has the skills and opportunities to decide and choose freely for himself, his family and community.

Encouraging Private Initiative – A capitalist, free-market system that is competitive, fair, and rooted in conservative and universally human values and principles restores dignity to the Albanian individual, family, and nation. We believe the Albanian economy and citizens' well-being are best served by a system of free and fair entrepreneurship, economic freedom, private property rights, and the rule of law. This system thrives under policies promoting free trade, fair competition, reduced regulatory burdens, and streamlined bureaucracy, while avoiding clientelist government interventions that distort markets.

In Albania, this ideal system has yet to be fully implemented. Instead, it has been hindered by a mix of clientelism, populist rhetoric, and socialist centralization. We propose patriotic capitalism, which combines the finest conservative values with the sound principles of free-market economics.

A Meritocratic and Patriotic System – Such a system fosters a close, symbiotic relationship between freedom, competition, meritocracy, solidarity, and justice. Freedom must operate within a moral framework that includes shared beliefs and a spiritual heritage passed down through patriotism, family, and education.

The market economy, education, and democracy are interconnected. A free-market economy requires a more educated population, which in turn encourages greater participation in politics and decision-making. Individuals equipped with the right economic means and a strong foundation in education and patriotism will naturally uphold family, cultural, and historical values, while also embracing innovation and progress to enhance societal welfare through meritocracy.

A market economy encourages the creative spirit of individuals, emphasizing meritocracy while safeguarding human dignity and freedom against state interference and arbitrariness. By empowering individuals, families, and communities, it builds social unity and peace, deriving strength from responsibility, competition, and solidarity. When individuals join forces and cooperate, they create innovation and societal advancement. Free and fair competition, entrepreneurship, and such a system collectively drive significant improvements in citizens' lives, enabling Albania to thrive in the 21st century and rise to its challenges.

Proposed principles, goals and policies

Principle 1: Protection of Free Markets and Economic Freedom

The government, by nature, operates as a monopoly and thus tends to misallocate resources and act in ways that may not align with the best interests of its citizens. In contrast, the market is the most democratic institution available. It allows individuals to interact freely, make mistakes, and self-correct until achieving a balance of social satisfaction. Government intervention disrupts this balance.

The needs and desires of individuals drive overall market equilibrium, determining what to produce, how much, and at what price. This competition spurs enterprises to innovate and utilize resources efficiently, ultimately lowering costs and raising living standards. No government can ever understand individual needs better than the people themselves.

Our goal is to minimize or eliminate subsidies and regulatory barriers while establishing a fair and proportional fiscal system to foster a more competitive entrepreneurial environment. We are convinced that Albania must transition from a society heavily dependent on state intervention, due to extreme poverty, to one where individuals succeed through their skills and efforts.

Promoting Individual Rights and Dignity as the Foundation of a Free Society

A just and prosperous society is built upon individual rights such as the right to life, work, choice, and the establishment of strong families rooted in conservative and humanistic values. These rights safeguard human dignity and meritocracy, the cornerstone of a fair economic and social system.

Education is critical for a functioning democracy and a developed economy, serving as the foundation for these individual rights.

Promoting Capitalism and Free Markets as the Engines of Economic Growth

The Democratic Party (DP) supports a capitalist system grounded in free enterprise, fair competition, economic freedom, private property rights, and the rule of law. A government committed to these elements can address the systemic issues of clientelism and oligarchy.

A legal framework ensuring security and rule of law is essential for a thriving capitalist, free-market economy. By reducing market barriers, streamlining bureaucracy, and cutting taxes, the DP will foster technological innovation and entrepreneurship.

The DP envisions not just short-term growth but sustainable economic development over the next three decades. This requires fiscal incentives for entrepreneurship, industrialization, and transformation into a producing and exporting economy. These efforts will create dignified jobs, foster innovation, and elevate Albania's services sector.

Limiting Government Intervention to Maximize Individual Freedom and Entrepreneurial Rights

Excessive government interference distorts the market and fosters inequity. The DP advocates limiting the government's role to essential public services such as security, health, diplomacy, education, and science, and protecting the most fragile, while encouraging private enterprise to boost efficiency and quality.

Many of today's so-called "oligarchs" are products of state favoritism rather than free-market meritocracy. The DP commits to curbing such practices and ensuring transparency in public-private partnerships and tenders.

Policies will focus on promoting free trade, reducing excessive regulation, and digitizing public services to increase efficiency and reduce corruption. Additionally, bolstered cybersecurity measures will prevent data breaches and enhance public trust.

The DP proposes revising concessionary contracts and public-private partnerships (PPPs) to ensure transparency, accountability, and fair returns for the Albanian state.

Judicial reform and a favorable economic climate will not only support domestic businesses but also attract substantial foreign investment. Addressing long-standing issues like property disputes, tax incentives, and legal enforcement is central to creating a trustworthy business environment.

Principle 2: A Fair, Simple, and Proportionate Tax System

Flat Proportional and Low Taxation

The DP advocates a simple, low, and fair tax system, such as a flat 10% tax on enterprise profits, dividends, and personal income. This approach will reduce the burden on citizens, discourage tax evasion, and boost economic activity. The broader tax base and increased individual incomes will offset any short-term revenue reductions.

A flat tax system fosters capital accumulation, meritocracy, efficiency, investment, and innovation. It minimizes the temptation for tax evasion and formalizes the economy.

Taxes should be transparent, easy to understand, and seen as tools for societal benefit, not as punitive measures. By simplifying tax codes and reducing rates, the DP seeks to encourage entrepreneurship and reward meritocracy.

Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs, the backbone of Albania's economy, require targeted support:

- Small businesses with revenues up to 8,000,000 LEK will be taxed at 5%.
- Start-ups led by young entrepreneurs or women will enjoy zero taxes for three years, followed by a 50% tax reduction for two years.
- Technology, fintech, and agro-tourism start-ups will benefit from a 50% tax reduction for three years.

Encouraging SMEs through tax relief and deregulation will enable them to thrive, hire more workers, and contribute to a more dynamic economy.

Value-Added Tax (VAT) Adjustments

- **Review and simplification of VAT rate:** Based on a detailed analysis of macro-economic indicators, during the first term of government, DP will assess the proposal for lowering the standard VAT rate to 17%, in order to induce consumers to spend more, thus promoting economic growth.
In principle we support the simplification of VAT categories, with the aim of reducing administrative costs for businesses and reducing errors and tax evasion. A simpler structure may include, for example, the reduction of the number of differentiated VAT rates, only to two levels, 17% and 7%, by imposing interventions that have been made in the existing VAT scheme to favour individuals or investments with political support.
- **Reduction of VAT rate for key sectors or basic products:** We support the reduction of VAT rate to 7%, for specific sectors such as agriculture, tourism and basket staples, to ease costs for consumers and support the development of important sectors. Reduction of VAT on essential products such as food and basic services will be proposed in order to support low-income groups, reducing the cost of living for these categories. Thus, the reduction of VAT will be realized for objectives closely related to priority sectors and public welfare. In no case will the VAT scheme be interfered with to favour investment of entrepreneurs with ties to politics.
- **Measures to improve VAT collection and combat tax evasion:** Improving tax administration and implementing new technologies for monitoring transactions can increase VAT revenues, to neatly reduce the vat rate, without creating negative effects on the budget.

Principle 3: Deregulation - Removal of excessive Regulatory Burden to Increase Entrepreneurship:

The DP aims to reduce the bureaucratic and regulatory burden to create a competitive business environment, where the state is not an obstacle, but a partner of businesses and citizens. Too much red tape hurts free enterprise and hampers economic growth, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The level of digitalization, coupled with increased security, should be increased for public services, under the example of other post-communist countries, such as Estonia.

- We propose facilitating the opening and closing procedures of businesses, entity with fiscal identities and registration with tax and social/health insurance bodies. We need to encourage the use of digital signatures.
- Reduced license requirements for certain activities with the purpose of promoting entrepreneurship
- Facilitate inspection procedures and reduce the contact of state employees with business. We propose promoting self-regulation or self-criticism of certain standards in business segments as a good way to increase professionalism (similar to the order of a doctor, pharmacist, lawyer's chamber, etc.).
- Facilitating arbitration and judicial proceedings for the resolution of disputes between businesses with each other or between state and business.
- A major problem for self-employed and small businesses is the challenge of not having to pay for bills issued to larger businesses. Currently, in Albania, their invoice is not recognized as an executive title, meaning that they do not have a direct means of claiming payment legally and effectively. This creates significant difficulties for the liquidity and sustainability of these small businesses.
 - We suggest two measures to improve the situation:
 - Legal changes to recognize invoice as executive title – This would provide small businesses with a robust mechanism to demand payment of dues immediately and reduce the uncertainty they have in their receipt.
 - State support for self-employed and small businesses – In cases where their bills are not repaid by large businesses, the state can intervene to protect them. This can be achieved by adopting practices like those in Spain, where the state publishes lists of large businesses that have not paid dues to small businesses. As a stricter measure,

large businesses that have outstanding obligations can be subject to control until the debt is repaid.

These measures would promote transparency and accountability of large businesses to small ones, strengthening the business ecosystem and ensuring a fairer and more sustainable environment for small businesses and the self-employed.

Our goal is to create the proper legal infrastructure and security needed for domestic and foreign investors, small, medium and large entrepreneurs. We believe in reducing the limits of bureaucracy and areas where the state can influence and significantly limiting government influence and interference in the private sector, to create for all citizens the necessary opportunities to unfold entrepreneurial and worker skills.

With a fair and proportional tax system, with a much-reduced bureaucracy, with greater competition, the Albanian citizen will have more products, with lower costs, and with higher wages.

Principle 4: Responsible fiscal policy – Reducing unnecessary government spending, debt limitation and coordination with monetary policies

1. Limiting public debt and avoiding the Central Bank financing budget deficits:

The DP stresses the importance of fiscal responsibility and lowering public debt to prevent economic incompetence.

As a conservative party, the DP will pursue a responsible fiscal policy, with low deficits and a long-term balanced budget. Public spending should be targeted and accompanied by a commitment to keep public debt under control. The reduction of public debt should not come as a result of external factors, such as the continued depreciation of foreign currencies, as has happened in the last two years, but should be based on the good management of public revenues and expenditures by the government.

As a conservative centre-right force, the DP believes that high debt levels not only hinder the economy's current development, but also burden future generations and limit the government's ability to invest in critical areas such as infrastructure, education or health.

2. Reduce unsustainable public spending and reform the public sector:

Flat and low taxes do not work if, on the other hand, the government increases its market interventions, magnifies its impact on citizens' lives and spends unfetteredly on unproductive programs and sectors. We cannot spend more than the revenues we collect from citizens, and we must have the highest regard for the income that the Albanian citizen takes away from himself and gives to the state.

Fiscal responsibility means a maximum reduction of operating costs and the complete elimination of corrupt tenders, misuse of assets and public finances, and the preferable treatment of government clients. Reducing the debt level to the historical minimums, consolidating the finances of the Albanian state, restoring government spending to normalcy, eliminating bureaucratic abuses and government corruption, to save Albania from the economic catastrophe created by socialist government and clientelist left policies, with expected grave consequences for the coming decades, is a moral and patriotic duty of every citizen.

We propose:

- Tax consolidation by reducing the level of evasion or maximizing the level of tax revenue collection, a more efficient administration, promoting foreign direct investment and boosting exports. With legal and fiscal certainty, with a fair and proportionate tax system, production and exports will go up, leading to job growth, strengthened enterprises, increased government revenues, and reduced debt.

- reduction of public expenditures by administering concessions and PPPs well and managing public expenditure (reduction of administration, setting as a condition, as in any private enterprise, the final product of each employee his/her ability, and productivity, reduction of inefficient and abusively used subsidies, efficiency in social assistance, pension reform to reduce budgetary obligation, prioritization based on efficiency of public investments).
- increased accountability for concessions and PPPs, starting with an in-depth audit of current contracts, to see if the terms were in the interest of Albanian taxpayers, if there has been damage to the Albanian economy and to verify compliance with the terms;
- reducing unnecessary government expenditure, operational expenses of various ministries and dissolves, and uncompromising corruption war. Reforming the public sector, changing the mindset and functioning, orienting it towards productivity and competitiveness, will make administration more efficient, focused on key functions and services, and bringing it closer to the citizen;
- to discipline of the annual budget deficit, which accumulates public debt
- a more efficient administration of public debt through prolonging maturity and increasing public debt management instruments.
- Setting limits for the level of public debt and focusing on maintaining a balanced budget in the medium term. Avoiding monetary financing of debt, where the government would try to cover the deficit by relying on the central bank. Creating money simply to cover the deficit would lead to high inflation.

As part of reforming government programs, we promise pension reform by introducing Pension Column 2, which gives a final solution to this plague within 3 decades.

The expected outcome of these measures will be greater economic stability, avoiding debt crises, and protecting the purchasing power of citizens.

To minimize government corruption, we propose:

- Digitalization of public services, with particular attention to the growth of cyber security
- Reform of inspectors to make them more efficient and based on risk analysis, avoiding human contact with enterprise.
- Maximum transparency in public procurement
- Autonomy and self-finance of state institutions

The philosophy of the socialist government, rooted in corruption and misuse of public funds, seems to have found salvation in massive debt growth (and the improvement of public debt indicators in recent years is not a result of careful management of fiscal policies by the government but direct impact of massive overvaluation of lek against foreign currencies), to fund ever-increasing government spending and public private partnerships.

- Economic damage in the last decade
- The High State Control (ALSAI) in some reports of recent years has highlighted problems in PPPs projects, where a good part of them are considered dangerous for public finances. According to the Supreme State Audit, from 2013 to 2022, there is about 805 billion ALL economic damage. ALSAI has identified over 72.3 billion ALL economic damage during 2023, ALL 138 billion economic damage in 2022 and 159 million euros of economic damage during 2021.
- According to transparency international's Corruption Perceptions Index, Albania ranks among the most corrupt countries in Europe, facing serious problems in governance effectiveness and rule of law. Only 8% of Albanians believe their government is committed to fighting corruption.
- The problem with the rising debt is that in the last decade it has not been accompanied by real economic growth for albanian citizens and families. Public debt is issued to pay the expenses

of previous debts, often corrupt investments with low returns, and to keep the administration constantly expanding. The only reason for the debt reduction in the last three years has been to undervalue the euro, not government reforms or increased welfare.

In our opinion the welfare of the Albanian individual does not increase by borrowing and wasting taxpayer money. It is clear to us from the studies of the major economic experts that the increase in debt and government spending through budget deficit has a very negligible impact on the real economy. Addition to deficit spending increases cronyism and abuse and leads to mediocre economic growth, high unemployment or fictitious and inefficient employment and reduced competitiveness. Recent studies show that a public debt that reaches and exceeds 100% of GDP, reduces real growth of the economy annually by 1.6%, reduces investment and weakens employment by 0.6% per year. If this path continues, the country could face a severe debt crisis and the destruction of the Albanian economy.

So, it is an immediate need to reduce the amount of debt, stop unnecessary government spending, review the damages from losses in arbitration, curb corruption, and stimulate the private sector. Reducing public debt depreciation goes on the same line even as reducing unnecessary public spending and reducing fiscal revenues that come from tax cuts policy. In our vision, this is done through supply side policies that stimulate private enterprises, increase investment, help production, and increase employment. This goes in the same direction as our conservative philosophy of limited government, decentralisation and fiscal responsibility.

3. Reform of the Pension and Health Insurance System

Pension schemes:

The pension system in our country remains one of the country's biggest social scars. This has come:

- a. From the increase in life expectancy of the population, which has led to increased costs of the scheme
- b. From the reduction of contributions as a consequence of mass immigration and informality, which has led to the reduction of the income of the scheme.

Starting in 2011, with the assistance of the World Bank, the first private pension schemes, known as Column III, have been established in Albania, from the contribution of those participating on a voluntary basis. Despite market development, these schemes have grown gradually mainly due to modest levels of financial education, lack of alternative ways of investing, but also low fiscal support.

In these conditions, when the current state pension scheme is running at a deficit (Column I or pay-as-you-go) as costs increase, we think that the pension scheme in Albania needs immediate structural reform that enables the financial health of the pension system in the country, but also a dignified income for the most delicate group in society.

To this end, unlike the short-term corrective decisions that have been made to date, we see as the final solution to the problem of stability of pension schemes, the introduction of Column II of pensions which from the operational point of view are efficient (self-financed) just like Column III, but on the other hand, they will be mandatory for a significant part of the population, especially for younger generations.

Due to the high cost of this structural reform, as well as based on international models, we are of the opinion that the most suitable solution for Albania will be the "gradual model", according to which current contributors to pension schemes will share the value of contribution partly in Column I (ISSH) and partly in the Second Pillars to be created. Thus, a gradual transition of generations from a problematic and deficit pension scheme (Column I) to an efficient and operational scheme (Column II) will be enabled, while

Column III will continue to be voluntary as its purpose is additional, to provide an additional income for those who have a sufficient income level.

Pension reform is a very important structural reform and has an extraordinary financial cost, extended over generations, exceeding the time limits of 3-4 political mandates of a government. For this reason, the approval of this reform must have a strong political commitment of all sides for the good of the country.

We undertake to study professionally, together with the World Bank and international experts, all possible models and calculate the costs of this reform, with the intention that during the second term, we will begin its immediate implementation, giving a final solution to the problem of pension schemes in the country in full compliance with the best international standards.

Consolidation and Liberalization of the Health Insurance Scheme:

The health insurance scheme is also very inefficient, having on the one hand considerable expenses for reimbursing the drug scheme, and on the other hand a very negligible tangible benefit to citizens of young and middle age. This insensitivity discourages contributors from getting involved and contributing to the scheme, making the latter inefficient and financially unstable.

The lack of perception of the real benefits that this scheme brings to international standards is due to the non-liberalization of the use of services. Contributors to the health insurance scheme can only benefit from the state health system, while it is impossible for citizens who choose to receive service from the non-public (private) system to benefit from the contributions of the health insurance scheme.

Therefore, the need for a radical reform of the health insurance scheme according to international best practices by liberalising the use of contributions gives beneficiaries the opportunity to use these benefits in both the public and private health schemes. Liberalizing the use of these services would have a fairer and efficient distribution of the use of these funds to each contributor, eliminating the current distortion, and would push health service operators to improve quality and attract as much funds as possible. This reform would also require a review of the level of contributions in line with the income level and age of the contributor.

Like pension reform, this structure should be analyzed with the support of serious international partners who have full expertise for such reforms, based on the best international standards. The reform for liberalization of the health insurance scheme will run parallel to the pension scheme reform, with the aim of getting them ready to be implemented in the second term of the government.

Independence of the Central Bank and keeping inflation and foreign market under control

Central bank independence is essential to ensure that monetary policy is not used for short-term political purposes, but to maintain long-term economic stability. Monetary stability is important for conservatives, who consider inflation a hidden form of taxation that undermines citizens' purchasing power. Instead of the government increasing public spending aggressively during economic crises, as has been the case in the last four years, conservative doctrine suggests using limited fiscal incentives to aid recovery while maintaining price stability through prudence monetary policies.

Monetary and fiscal policies should be coordinated in such a way as to avoid excessive reliance on short-term stimulus measures and focus on creating an environment that fosters sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness. Some of the measures we propose are:

- De facto securing the independence of the central bank to pursue a monetary policy oriented towards maintaining price stability and low inflation, without interference by government fiscal policies. The DP guarantees the avoidance of any direct or indirect influence by government that

may result in monetary policies being used for short-term political purposes, while maintaining the confidence of markets and stability of the currency.

- Coordination between monetary and fiscal policy will aim to avoid unaffordable stimulus measures that create pressure on prices, as well as avoid the phenomenon of recent years, where economic growth is generated through high inflation, directly in household and business budgets.
- Ensure that fiscal and monetary policies are controlled and transparent, increasing trust in governance and ensuring long-term benefits for citizens.
- Establish mechanisms for greater accountability and transparency in public finance management, to ensure that government and monetary institutions act in the best interests of citizens and markets.
- Balancing short-term policies with long-term objectives of macroeconomic stability and development to avoid crisis cycles driven by temporary economic measures.

Principle 5: Transforming the Albanian Economy into Manufacturing and Exporting – Industrialization, Manufacturing and Economic Sovereignty:

1. Change in our economic model

The DP proposes **a change in the country's economic model, and a focus towards production to transform Albania into a producer and exporter of local products, with acceptable quality for the domestic and European market.**

Industrialization through factories, agricultural businesses, new technology. This will enable our farmers to not merely remain in the early stages of production, but also to process what our economy produces. This is fundamental to establish a discipline and market culture, work norms, respect, meritocracy and competitiveness in society.

2. Support for Key Sectors:

The DP identifies agriculture, agro-industry, tourism, energy, services in the field of technology and information as key sectors for economic development, stressing the need for sustainable policies and competitive advantages compared to other markets. Coordinating these priority sectors with each other creates the effect of multiplying the positive effects by increasing the value added to the country's economy (for example agriculture and agro-industry can serve tourism very well, reducing import dependence for food and consumer goods).

DP policies will support the modernization and expansion of these sectors, including investments in infrastructure, technology, and human capital.

For a detailed section of this section, please refer to the Democratic Party's programme for Industrialization, Agriculture and Tourism.

Principle 6: A strong economy needs stable financial markets – Financial Market Development, Access to Finance and Financial Inclusion:

1. Financial Education and Inclusion:

DP aims to promote financial education and inclusion to allow individuals and businesses to access financial products and services responsibly.

We believe that increasing financial literacy empowers the individual to make informed decisions about saving, investing and managing their finances.

2. Market developments:

The DP proposes developing financial markets, including crowdfunding and creating a stock exchange, to facilitate access to capital for small and medium-sized enterprises.

DP policies should promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment, creating an ecosystem suitable for economic growth and development.

We therefore believe that financial market development should be based on two main pillars:

- Consolidation of banking and financial services sectors of lending
- Strong support for the development of the capital market in all equity financing stages such as business angels, startups, venture capital, private equity, alternative investment schemes, up to the development of the stock exchange.

Albania is one of the countries with the lowest financial literacy levels in Europe. We are also not a country with a rich financial past. Nearly half a century into a vicious communist regime wiped out any possibility of financial development in the country, as there was no freedom.

On the other hand, we must be aware that unlike other post-communist countries which had a financial development before communism, there were never the right circumstances for inclusion or financial markets in Albania before 1945. It has always been a struggle for survival over the centuries. The centuries lived under threat from neighbours, and some five decades under a terrorist rule have prevented Albania from focusing on many areas, including financial markets. In the Financial Development Index our country stands among the last countries, as it has only the banking sector and to some extent the insurance sector.

Of course, some kind of skepticism exists in Albanian society mainly due to the events of 1997, with the pyramid crisis. However, we believe that financial education, financial inclusion and development of these markets must move together.

Financial inclusion means that Albanian individuals, families and businesses have the means to use useful and affordable financial products and services to meet their needs, in a responsible, sustainable and knowledgeable way.

Teaching individuals with the financial mechanisms and tools used in the Western world and that have contributed to the growth and prosperity of those nations, facilitates daily life and helps families and businesses plan for everything from long-term goals to unexpected emergencies. This includes not only the development of the banking sector, but also that of stocks, bonds and financial derivatives.

We are aware that Albania already has a maturing financial sector as in the main indicators related to capital, assets, economy financing, level of financial services per capita, etc. However, the financial sector in Albania has an inconsistent development, with a dominant and relatively well-developed banking sector, according to international standards characterized by a very high level of liquidity and deposits (over 15 billion euros of deposits in 2023), with a contemporary payment system which is developing rapidly and with an upward trend.

On the other hand, we have a very modest capital market, which has active institutions but manages relatively small levels of pension funds and investments. The Albanian Stock Exchange is operationally functional according to international best practices, but unused, non-liquid and still without the involvement of the business to raise capital through the issue of securities.

Another element missing from the capital market is private financing schemes that enable the financing of startups or growing companies (mainly small and medium-sized enterprises) in the form of private equity or venture capital financing.

By assessing the performance and the inconsistent development of the financial system in the country, we believe that we can find the right way to unleash the potential of existing dormant capital in the banking market and outside of it and its orientation towards the capital market and business financing by increasing the efficiency of private enterprise financing.

Starting from this approach, we aim to promote the development of the capital market through the promotion of collective investment in the private business financing market. In this format, we intend to promote the development of the Albanian Stock Exchange by fiscally and legally incentivising Albanian businesses to see it as a window for capital growth. This would encourage the generation of sufficient funds for financing with significant amounts and rapid domestic business rates, positively affecting the increase of fiscal transparency and reduction of informality in the Albanian economy.

In this scenario we will also include the process of privatizing small packages (up to 30%) of shares or listing corporate bonds of State Enterprises, setting not only the example for private enterprises, but also promoting the development of financial transparency in public enterprises. The stock market's development would give them the opportunity to generate relatively higher rates of return for dormant savings and create many opportunities for individual or institutional investors (pension and investment schemes) to diversify their funds and better manage risk with higher rates of return.

Another element that should be further promoted is the part of the capital market that provides financing opportunities for the borrowing of SMEs. Allocating funds to the capital market in the form of crowdfunding, or in riskier mechanisms such as private-equity or venture capital, will enable small and medium-sized businesses in the country to grow at high speeds and prepare for further listings on the Albanian Stock Exchange.

The various studies of financial and economic experts, as well as the history of the last fifty years in Western societies, show that the development of financial inclusion, and the creation of a full and sustainable financial system encourage investment and saving, foreign capital flows in the form of FDIs, increase the transparency of companies, improve their liquidity. They help fair competition and increase confidence in a country's economy and financial system by both foreigners and citizens.

For us, as supporters of the market economy, it is necessary to create a medium- and long-term plan regarding the development of capital and insurance markets. These markets must then be strengthened and stabilized and followed by the development of other more complex markets. In parallel, it must continue with strengthening, sustainability, transparency and competitiveness of the banking sector as well as the rapid liberalization of electronic and digital payments and give a very high priority to the open banking process.

The revolutionization and liberalization of digital payment services will have a very positive effect on the country's economy as it reduces the costs of online commerce, further increasing the development potentials especially of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which are considered the backbone of any economy. The market economy will never be complete unless we develop a complete, strong, secure and sustainable financial system, developing financial education and increasing the involvement in the markets of Albanian citizens.

Economic sovereignty and Industrialization: Agriculture, Tourism and Energy as our foundations of the economy

The Albanian economy must change its model, from simply a net importer, consumer and service provider, to producing and exporting high quality domestic products. This is first done through the

soft industrialization of the country (processing industry), which is one of the main aspects that regulates the hierarchy and social order of a country, establishing in society certain norms of work, respect, meritocracy and competitiveness. All Western countries have travelled towards their development through two insoluble processes: democratization and industrialization. Albania has unfortunately taken steps backwards in both processes over the past decade.

In view of this, we look at the agriculture, tourism and energy sectors of the Albanian economy, supported by our tradition, knowledge and skills over decades and centuries, natural and human resources and the possible competitive advantage towards the countries of the region. National production is experiencing critical moments in Albania due to a policy of depopulation, massive corruption, government intervention, unfair competition and non-implementation of the law. The socialist government consistently supports various strategic initiatives, aiming to strangle our producers with unaffordable bureaucracy and regulatory policies, which end up destroying our sea, village and industry.

Agriculture is not seen as a genuine industry and development engine. We think that a new approach to agricultural and livestock farming, as true rural enterprises, a development of agro-processing industry, agrotourism, the use of time-consuming technologies that bring low-cost production and the confrontation with competitors in the region, underlie the sustainable development of rural Albania.

Reducing costs and increasing support for the development of the agricultural sector will increase the competitiveness of the domestic product compared to other countries in the region. Following this process, we think it is essential that **foreign products are subject to the same rules, obligations and standards that Albanian companies and products should have.**

Albania must also protect its national interests within its energy sovereignty. With the natural resources of our country, this is achieved through a free, sustainable, efficient and clean energy, which provides affordable prices for Albanian families and enterprises. Albania has all the possibilities to do this in terms of natural resources and by avoiding misuse of public energy companies and sufficient hydro resources, **Albania can become energy independent.** The energy supply of all Albanians does not have to depend on crises and/or price swings of other countries.

Free competition, the removal of numerous energy taxes and the liberalization of the sector lead to lowering of the price of energy for Albanian households.

Undoubtedly, promoting tourism in Albania, due to various natural resources, as in few other countries, of coastline and human capital is our priority to influence the development of Albania's competitive advantage, not only in the region, but also by thinking about integration into the European Union. We will have to have our strategic sectors to deliver to a community of countries that was originally born as an economic union.

Tourism should also be seen as an important industry and a significant job-maker throughout the year, through the attraction of domestic and foreign capital, preserving our natural resources, strengthening rural, mountain, marine, cultural and historical tourism, and helping to preserve and spread our natural and artistic heritage, in the conservative spirit of national asset protection.

Concrete proposals for agriculture:

1. Direct and Fair Assistance to Farmers

- a. Doubling funding for direct support to farmers, including agricultural inputs (seeds, seedlings, breed animals) and modern technologies, linked to a well-defined sustainable development strategy of agriculture, and processing industry.

b. Eliminating bureaucracy: Simplified bureaucratic procedures for farmers, eliminating corruption and clientelism. Direct funding based on documented production.

2. Development of Irrigation Infrastructure and Automation

a. Increasing irrigation capacity: Investments for rehabilitation and modernization of the network of irrigation and drainage channels, bringing underwater all areas of cultivatable land within the mandate.

b. Reduce costs for the purchase of modern agricultural equipment through grants and interest-free loans.

3. Farming cooperation and marketing

a. Promoting cooperation between farmers: Stimulating the creation of cooperation between different farms that enable cost reduction and securing contracts with traders and exporters.

b. Marketing of Albanian products: Establishing a national agency for the marketing of local agricultural products, with a focus on the brand "Made in Albania" and exports. Improve links with foreign markets and promote Albanian products in Europe.

4. Focus on Organic and Quality Products

a. Policy on quality and organic products: Promoting organic production and supporting farmers oriented towards European standards, thus improving export opportunities.

b. Export certifications: Increasing certification capacity for products that meet international standards, ensuring access to European markets.

5. Incentives for Agro-tourism and Rural Development

a. Support for agro-tourism: Grants and soft loans for the creation of businesses in the field of agritourism, crafting and processing of local products, creating jobs and improving incomes in rural areas.

b. Improve infrastructure for rural areas: Investments in roads, water supply and energy infrastructure to improve livelihood and productivity in the countryside.

6. Reforming Food safety and veterinary schemes

a. Food safety: Improving food safety standards, guaranteeing consumer protection and increasing confidence in Albanian products.

b. Developed veterinary services: Support for the modernization of veterinary and phytosanitary services, integrating them with European standards.

7. Fair VAT: Adjustment of vat scheme for agriculture to equalise the level of VAT in sales and purchases.

Specific proposals for tourism:

1. Infrastructure Development and Access Facilitation

- a. Infrastructure investment: Improving roads and energy infrastructure in tourist areas, especially rural and coastal areas, providing easy and safe access for visitors. Albania has shown in recent years that, with increasing numbers of tourists, it lacks service and infrastructure capacities, thus making the incoming tourists not return.
- b. Improve urban and inter-urban transport that the country today does not have at the level it needs.
- c. Development of tourist ports and airports: Modernizing and expanding capacities of tourist ports and local airports to cope with the increasing number of international tourists.

2. Fiscal Policies and Support for Local Enterprises

- a. Fiscal equity for enterprises in this sector, removing any clientelist favoritism, and ensuring fair and fair competition.
- b. Facilitation for start-ups in tourism: Support for new enterprises providing tourist services, offering grants and loans with soft conditions for the development of new activities in underdeveloped areas.
- c. Formalization of all supplies and services for actors operating in the tourism sector.
- d. Review of the entire legal structure done to favor government clients, and to the criteria applied to strategic investors.

3. Rural Tourism and Agro-Tourism Promotion

Support for agrotourism: Grants and soft loans to encourage the creation of agroturistic farms that integrate tourism with local production of organic food, crafts and traditional activities.

4. Preserving and Promoting Cultural Heritage

Restoration and maintenance of cultural heritage: Investments in the restoration of historical and cultural objects, creating tourist itineraries focused on Albanian history and culture.

Cultural festivals and traditional events: Grants for the organization of festivals that promote local heritage and traditions, attracting foreign and domestic tourists.

Development of museums and cultural centers: Building and modernizing new museums and cultural centers in cities and villages with tourist potential.

5. International Promotion and Sustainable Marketing

- a. International marketing strategy: Establishing an agency for international marketing of Albanian tourism, focusing on promoting destinations that offer sustainable and authentic experiences.
- b. Enhanced online visibility: Initiatives for the development of digital platforms that promote Albanian destinations and offer tourists detailed information and booking opportunities for accommodation and activities.
- c. National brand creation: "Made in Albania" brands for tourism products and services, combining quality of service with promotion of national identity.

6. Standardization of services

- a. Certification of the quality of tourist services: Establishing mandatory standards and certifications for hotels and restaurants to ensure quality and safety in service.
- b. Training of the workforce in tourism: Training programs for tourism workers, offering professional certifications to improve services and raise the level of professionalism in the sector.

7. Sustainable Environmental Policies

- a. Conservation of natural areas: Creating long-term plans for protected areas and forests, ensuring that tourism development does not harm the environment and biodiversity.
- b. Sea tourism and coast guarding: Program for protecting the Albanian coast from pollution and erosion, as well as from unseaworthy constructions that damage the Albanian coast or mountains.

8. Specialized and Seasonal Tourism

Development of sports and adventure tourism: Support for building infrastructure for sporting activities, such as mountaineering, rafting, and water sports, diversifying the tourism offer.

Health tourism and wellness: Creating specialized resorts for wellness and health tourism, promoting Albania as a destination for healthy holidays and alternative treatments.

Concrete proposals for energy

The aim of the energy proposals is to create an energy independent, low-cost and clean Albania

1. Diversification of Energy Resources

- a. Encouraging investments in solar and wind energy: Fiscal help for building solar panels and wind parks across the country. Establish a national programme for attracting private and foreign investment to these sectors.
- b. Establishing legal frameworks for renewable energy: Modernizing laws and regulations to encourage more investment in renewable energy, providing investor guarantees and fast licensing procedures.

2. Liberalization of energy market for price reduction

- a. Energy market liberalization: Opening the market to greater competition between energy producers and suppliers, ensuring lower prices for consumers and removing the state monopoly.
- b. Incentives for clean energy use: Tax benefits for households and businesses that install solar panels or use green energy, reducing dependence on the grid and creating a broad base of energy-independent consumers.

3. Development of Energy Storage Infrastructure

- a. Investments in energy storage technology: Subsidies for the construction of energy storage plants, especially for solar and wind energy, to guarantee continuous supply even during periods without sun or wind.
- b. Smart grids: Invest in smart grid infrastructure to optimize energy use and balance supply and demand efficiently.

4. Policy on Reducing Energy Costs for Consumers

- a. Solar Energy in Housing Grants: A National Program for Installing Solar Panels in Residential Homes, aiming to support low-income households to produce their own energy and lower their monthly bills.
- b. Energy tariff review: Implementing a tariff reform to lower prices for ordinary consumers and small businesses, ensuring a fairer and reasonable energy tariff.

5. Development of Infrastructure

Energy distribution networks: Modernizing the national distribution grid to better integrate wind and solar power, building new capacities and improving efficiency.

6. Hydrogen Energy Development and New Innovations

- a. Focus on hydrogen technology: Developing pilot plants for hydrogen power generation, with the aim of diversifying the resources and being one of the first countries in the region to invest in this clean energy source.
- b. Incentives for Green Technologies research and development: Support start-ups and research projects that engage in innovative clean energy technologies, creating opportunities for new discoveries that will strengthen Albania's energy independence.

7. Conservation and Expansion of Hydropower Resources

- a. Efficient management of hydropower plants: Modernizing existing hydropower plants and ensuring their maintenance, improving efficiency and minimizing losses to the network.
- b. Development of new sustainable hydropower projects: Assessing the possibilities for the construction of small hydropower plants, which have low environmental impact, to meet domestic demand.

8. Improving Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Industry

- a. National Energy Efficiency Programme: Establishing a program to improve energy efficiency in public and private buildings, renovation and insulation of buildings to reduce energy consumption.
- b. Energy savings in industry: Fiscal ease for industries adopting new technologies for energy efficiency, stimulating productivity growth and lowering costs.

9. Involvement of Local Communities in The Development of New Energies

- a. Empowering communities to produce clean energy: Support for local communities that want to build small solar or wind energy projects for local use, helping them become energy independent.
- b. Focus on rural areas: Encouraging energy projects involving agriculture and rural tourism, integrating renewable energy with local economic development.

Security, Anticorruption and Fight Against Organized Crime

Throughout its history, the most difficult moments of Albania and Albanians have been times when uncertainty and wars have dominated. Peace and security in a long-term context for Albanians is a matter of national security and existence. Since Albanians are in the five Balkan countries, the conceptual security extent takes on a Balkan dimension, which makes it more complex and necessary to have a regional approach.

For Albanians, a safe Balkans is a safe Europe, and then it is a safe world.

Regional security depends directly on Albania and the Albanian factor. The Democratic Party has been a stabilizing factor in the region, always relying on public diplomatic means and on the continued and unwavering relations with our strategic partners, national identity and religious harmony, opposing by any legal means the malign influences that seek regional destabilization and so it will continue to be. Integration

into the North Atlantic Alliance, was not only a historic moment for the Albanian people and in particular the triumph of our government but remains a great responsibility from which several obligations arise.

We are committed to continuing cooperation in collective and peacekeeping missions together with other allies, increasing focus on the field and the defence industry, and diversifying in order to increase efficiency in facing current security challenges.

Cybercrime and the exploitation of migratory movements as demographic weapons by non-benevolent states dictates that we should have at a minimum a regional approach to dealing with these risks.

Increasing cooperation in preventing international crimes, terrorism, cyber attacks and illegal migration are priorities for our political philosophy in the service of the highest national interest: sovereignty. We, unlike the left, believe that a country's energy security should be a reflection of strategic objectives and fundamental principles of foreign policy, being open to any cooperation based on the highest interests of the nation.

The placement on the international map of our country in terms of drug and illicit trafficking, organized crime and terrorism, are of great concern to Albanians, our strategic allies and to us democrats. During the government of the center right, Albania came out of the notorious lists and maps of world trafficking. Unfortunately, this map was undone the moment the DP went into opposition. Currently, the rapid spread of drug planting throughout the country's territory, supported by politicians and governments with power, as spoken by international institutions and countries neighboring us, has put Albania in a very difficult international position, as it has directly affected national security, the reputation of the country and the security of other countries near us.

The incrimination of the government through the support it has given to drug trafficking from countries in the Americas, and as far as Asia, has placed us as a country on the list of the most incriminated countries in the world according to international reports and has brought to Albania the law enforcement agencies of the United States and other Western countries to directly deal with the alarming situation of drugs and organized crime in Albania and their relations to the government and its cronies. This is also why the biggest security agencies and the most serious in the fight against drugs, terrorism and smuggling have been deployed in Albania.

In the face of this extremely worrying situation, like every center right and conservative party in the West, the Democratic Party will continue to stand firmly in opposition to any bill or legislative initiative aimed at legalizing drugs for supposedly medical purposes or even amnesty or the use of golden passports aimed at laundering money obtained from drug trafficking and supported by politicians and governments with power. It is also scientifically proven that all states that have had and adopted a liberal approach to these issues are looking for a way back. For us as conservatives, national security is of the highest priority. The nation and territory are the basic elements we strongly defend.

National security has been violated in recent years from within and outside the country, not only by absurd decisions of the current government supported several times by our allies and the globalist mainstream, but also by the international justifications and commitments that the Albanian government has undertaken to increase its international appreciation during the humanitarian crises of the past years. Often these international commitments, without respect for the measure and standards, have been counter-productive, have undermined the national security of the country and have become a burden on Albanian taxpayers.

We are currently in a state where party and power interests are put in the foreground, maybe even irreparably damaging national security. Risking national security is becoming an unchanging pattern of the ruling majority.

The hacking of albanian personal data from the official e-Albania portal, together with the hacking and public release of sensitive data for some law-keeping agencies in Albania, or bank data and personal ID numbers of Albanian citizens deliberately released, have jeopardized the national security and personal safety of Albanian citizens. The extraction of data through the Patronage and Activist systems the ruling party has built, in order to control the vote through government pressure, constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights and violation of the national security of the country and citizens.

We consider as sacred the freedom of the individual, the preservation and security of albanian citizens as well as the national security of the country. Hence, we will take immediate measures to restore the dignity of the citizens and to guard against any kind of internal or external danger to our citizens and territorial integrity. Although punishment is not the practice of conservatives, when national security and that of citizens of the country is violated, the violators must face justice and the austerity measures to stop the abuse should be such as to be established in accordance with human rights and protection of Albanian citizens.

The center-right programme for security and the fight against organized crime should aim at restoring public order and security in every corner of Albania. Building on the success of the Democratic Party in 2005-2006, when an effective fight against organized crime and gangs was waged, this program will focus on strict law enforcement and setting public order as a national priority:

Concrete Proposals for Security and The Fight Against Corruption:

1. Fighting organised crime and gangs

- The return of intensive actions against organized crime, based on the successes of the DP of 2005-2006, with state-coordinated operations to root out gangs and criminal organizations. A special unit will be created to fight organised crime, working closely with international partners such as the FBI, Europol and Interpol.
- Strengthening the law on the confiscation of illegal assets and assets acquired by organized crime, increasing efforts to identify and seize illegal assets supporting criminal activities.
- Strengthening borders and fighting international trafficking, especially drug and arms trafficking, using advanced technologies and tighter controls on maritime and land borders

2. Uncompromised war on corruption:

- Cooperation with the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR), a joint global initiative of the World Bank and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), aimed at helping developing countries recover assets stolen from corrupt officials and transfer them to foreign countries. The initiative aims to combat corruption by recovering stolen funds that have passed through the global financial system illegally.
- We will trace and return assets stolen by corrupt former officials who may have transferred funds overseas.
- We will empower local institutions to follow the money, investigate and confiscate illegal assets and return them to the service of the public interest.
- Support for the judicial system and investigative bodies to pursue high-level corruption cases, cooperating with international partners in search of hidden assets abroad.
- A zero-tolerance policy against corruption, with the construction of a strong and decentralized anticorruption system, including proactive investigations based on public and anonymous denouncing.
- Depoliticization and professionalization of public administration, creating a mechanism that frees the state from the political influence of corruption and gangs. This will be achieved through

structural reforms that limit political interference in appointments and administration decision-making.

3. Cyber security and reforming the police

- Major investments in cyber security, creating a specialized agency for the protection of critical digital infrastructure, interconnected with global cyber defense centers. The latest technologies for preventing cyber attacks and protecting state and private institutions will be implemented.
- Reforming the state police, completely depoliticizing and raising standards of professionalism and meritocracy. Police officers will receive international training on the most modern crime-fighting techniques, making police more efficient and accountable to citizens.
- Strengthening police on the ground and restoring security on the streets, with a greater and more visible presence in urban and rural areas, to guarantee the safety of every citizen and to combat small and organized crime.

4. Strengthening the Armed Forces

- Modernising the Armed Forces to adapt them to new regional and global security challenges. This process will include investments in new military technologies, training with NATO partners and increasing capacities for border protection and national security.
- Increased budget for defence (reaching 2% of GDP), making Albania a stronger and reliable NATO member, in line with international obligations for collective security. This will enable the Armed Forces to face new threats, such as terrorism and possible conflicts in the region.

Education

The basic principles of the organization and functioning of our education system will be:

- ✓ Protection of human dignity;
- ✓ Quality and increased access to education;
- ✓ Solidarity with the most vulnerable students and students;
- ✓ Protection and promotion of education;
- ✓ Internationalization of education;
- ✓ Efficiency and cost reduction – effectiveness in the educational - scientific system.

Access to Education: Education is the source of opportunities for every individual and guarantees the sustainable development of society. A nation has no future without investing in the education of the younger generation. Therefore, we support education reforms at all levels to increase its quality. Education must be free from ideological influences by aiming at a complete depoliticization and decommunization of content and curricula, especially in the social sciences.

Depoliticization and Decommunisation of Education: The proposed reforms aim to eliminate political influence in the education system and restore meritocracy for academic and teaching staff. Centralized politics has degraded the quality of education. The system must be liberated from these influences to create an open environment, where education only serves the intellectual development of younger generations.

Education and Development of Society: A quality education creates citizens with identity and dignity. General education, universities and vocational schools should help each individual build a secure future for himself and his family, while preserving the historical and cultural values of the Albanian nation. Parents and teachers should have a central role in children's education, not the state or international organizations.

Reforming Vocational Education and Universities: Every degree must have real market value in order to justify the costs of education. The focus on vocational education and universities as scientific research centers is essential for the preparation of a skilled workforce and for the development of the country. Universities will function as "research-based" institutions, where research is a priority, and academic programs will be supported in this regard.

Investments in Scientific Research: We support multiplying funding for scientific research, establishing centers of excellence and improving international cooperation for the development of science and innovation. This development will also include a reformation of the Academy of Sciences, to support projects with high impacts for the country.

Academic Authority Recovery: Recovering the prestige of teaching and academic staff is important for a strong education system. Meritocratic competition and depoliticization of the system are essential for improving the quality of education and science. Decentralizing decision-making and reducing political interference will help improve education management at the local level.

Development of Education as a Key Factor for Society: The expansion of educational opportunities, whether public or private, should be equal for all, regardless of geographic area or economic challenges. Scholarships and meritocratic assistance should follow the student and not the institution, rewarding the creativity and potential of students and students.

Brain Gain: We support the return of the Albanian "brain" from the diaspora through incentives, such as soft loans to small and medium businesses, as well as programs to integrate Albanian excellence into national development. Internationalization of education and science will help Albania's full integration into the developed world.

Education is the main pillar for the country's development and the well-being of citizens. Our program aims at a depoliticized, decentralized and research-based system where quality and meritocracy are at the center of attention. Only through a deep and honest reform can we build a sustainable future for Albania.

Concrete proposals for education

Tagline/ Goal: A Dignified, Accessible, Education System, with Quality and Opportunity – We Know How to Build It!

Quality education for students as:

- (i) missionaries of the protection and development of human freedom and rights, of democracy, the family and our national values;
- (ii) promoters of the development of the European Albania and stoppers of its depopulation;
- (iii) well-educated citizens possessing the skills and competencies required by the knowledge-based society and the labor market.

1. The public budget for education and science reaches 5% of GDP (currently it is 3.1%). This means that the budget reaches 1 billion euros, if the average GDP in 2025-29 amounts to around 21-22 billion euros, where:

- The budget of pre-university education amounts to 3.2% of GDP;
- The budget of higher education doubles to 1% of GDP;

- The budget for science is 10-fold and reaches 0.8% of GDP.
- Private investment in education, research and innovation amounts to about 1.5% of GDP.

Albania invests less than any country in Europe in education and science, or more precisely at the level of underdeveloped third world countries. This is the main cause of low quality in education and nearly non-existent products in science. In the three socialist terms Albania has developed according to the models of countries where the black economy is ruled by drug money, trafficking, oligarchy and corruption, which has increased the wealth of only that group involved in the black economy and impoverished all other citizens across the country, leading to a massive depopulation mainly oriented towards the expulsion of the center-right youth and electorate from the country.

The more this low level of investment in knowledge continues, the deeper the lag in the country's overall development compared to the EU and developed countries, the more difficult and longer the country's INTEGRATION into the EU will be.

The DP has the historic chance to make a decision and in 2025 to mark a big turn in investing in knowledge and science, investing in education and science as a European country and not as a third world country! This will not be a sacrifice for the country, but an investment that guarantees all the social economic development of the country.

This nearly doubled investment (compared to factual budgets) is required with the main goal: **ensuring quality education for every child and young person, every student, regardless of where he resides, in the center of Tirana or in the country's most remote village, and regardless of the economic situation of the parents.** Put differently, with this investment, the face of our education should be completely changed to:

- (1) Access for every child and young person;
- (2) Modern content based on our and European traditions;
- (3) Schools and universities with modern and secure infrastructure; and
- (4) Teachers and professors freed from political control and with the same status as their counterparts in the countries of democratic Europe.

2. The teachers and professors give the face to the school and university. They will be relieved of party control, enjoy a status with the highest level of academic freedom and their salaries will be above the average salaries of teachers and teachers in the Western Balkans region.

We pledge to **double the salaries of teachers and professors: by 35% in the first and second year of term and from 15% in the third and fourth year of the mandate.** (The **minimum salary of teachers is 1300 Euros/month**, while the **minimum wage in public universities will be 2500 Euros for professors and 2000 Euros for teachers with the rank of Doctor**)!

3. National Project: Schools and Universities of the 21st Century or "Schools and universities with modern infrastructure. Students and pupils will have in each school and faculty all necessary conditions of space, sanitation, running water, heating, furnishing, laboratories, digital infrastructure, libraries, etc. As in any school and university in developed countries.

Within 6 months a new regionalization map of schools in depopulation and poorer areas of the country will be developed, which considers the drastic reduction in the number of students, and within 3 years the project will be completed in these areas.

Within two years the project will be completed at public universities. Within 4 years the project for kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools of the country will be completed. Digital infrastructure will be provided in all public schools and universities within the first 2 years of government.

Albania is the country with the largest number (50-70%) of schools and universities without minimum sanitation and water supply conditions, no heating (90% of schools), without minimum furnishings and laboratory and digital infrastructure. Not only pupils but also students in public schools and universities have almost zero chance of using PCs, without talking about other more advanced IT tools. The internet speeds in universities and the few schools of some cities that might have it, is very low – a massive theft from the companies that provide it.

Only about 10% of students and less than 20% of students have PCs or laptops at home because they and their families have no financial opportunity to buy them. This situation is only encountered in countries emerging from wars and conflicts. This situation must change as soon as possible, so that pupils, students, teachers and professors have normal learning and work conditions just the same as citizens of a European country.

Albania is the only country in Europe that does not yet have a modern university library with a paper and digital fund. In this context, the University Science Library of Tirana is envisioned, which will be used by students of public and private universities of Tirana and regional universities, high school students, lecturers and researchers of the country, as well as interested citizens/readers from Tirana and the whole country. (This library can be estimated at approximately \$10 million.)

As the depopulation continues, the total number of public schools and universities will likely not be over 1000. Given the investments made for new schools and reconstructions in the last 20 years, one can assume that no more than 300 of them require new construction or deep reconstruction. This means that the biggest investment is for partial reconstruction and entity with their infrastructure. Based on this argument, this investment is projected to be around 150 million Euros/year and in total 500-600 million Euros. It is a necessary investment as Albania finally will have modern schools and universities.

4. The program "Albanian digital education of the 21st century": Digitalization of curricula, teaching and learning, quality assessment and education management according to the best models of other countries similar in size to our country, especially Estonia.

5. Program: Quality education for "Forgotten and Depopulated Albania"

Special policies for rapidly mitigating inequality and discrimination of students and students of the areas most at risk of depopulation, of the poorest areas of the country as well as of the most fragile groups (minorities, paraplegics and tetraplegics). These areas will be determined on the basis of the 2023 Census data and poverty indicators.

a. Kindergartens and elementary schools with lunch and normal conditions for every child preschool and school pupils. Every child should have attended kindergarten for at least 1 year. Every child pursues primary education - access to be 100% and abandonment optional zero. Other home-schooling experiences/models of children will be available by applying a support package (training, online learning, parent's payment) for one of the child's parents.

b. The 9-year-old school with no collective classes, lunch and normal conditions, so that every child can complete 9-year education - access is 100% and abandonment option is zero.

- c. Large secondary schools, with lunch, in the center of administrative units. Every 15-year-old should have the real opportunity to continue their general secondary or vocational education.
- d. General, vocational or specialized (oriented) secondary schools with boarding schools in the center of municipalities. These schools will also serve students from the outer areas who receive scholarships and will reside in the dormitory.
- e. Social support of families to avoid the abandonment of school by their children, to pursue and successfully complete secondary and higher education;
- f. Scholarships for living expenses for students of these areas in dormitories/student centers;
- g. Zero fees for students in these areas in all university study cycles;
- h. Free package for digital education of students and students of these areas (free internet, free digital equipment, free access to Open Educational Resources).
- i. Free texts on paper and electronic.
- j. Free post-lesson consultations, preparatory for the students of these areas to prepare for maturities and university studies, so that they have the chance to compete in the most needed branches for these areas, especially medicine, teachers, IT, agriculture, environment, food, etc.
- k. Primary and secondary school students will have to give up their telecommunications equipment – especially mobile phones – appropriate photo or audio recording devices, and intelligent devices for internet access, which will be returned at the end of the day (Hungarian model).
- l. Realistic supplementation in salary and additional remuneration for teachers who choose to work in these areas but are not residents in these areas (according to the model for doctors).

6. A modern system of secondary and higher vocational education oriented towards the demands of the labour market and economic development of the country is developed.

- a. Strengthen professional high schools.
- b. Strengthen practical training in professional higher education programs.
- c. The multifunctional centers of AFP (QSHAFP)
- d. Expand the opportunities of oriented professional education.
- e. Establish and institutionalize the "Professional Practice Fund"
- f. Self-employment of students completing vocational programs
- g. Vocational high schools, Vocational Colleges provide training for young Albanians in the Diaspora; internationally renowned intensive training courses for vocational training, based on the practical skills gained through exercising for several years of the profession in the countries where they live. These courses will be internationally recognized and certified and aim to theoretically shape young people for the professions they own and practice, as practical skills have been evaluated according to the standards used by other countries. The theoretical supplementation will be realized through combining the learning in presence with other online forms (Blend learning, Distance learning, etc.). At the end of the course,

candidates are certified in a Vocational Training Certificate, which helps young people to be classified into higher categories in the profession where they work and be better paid.

7. Achieve the quality and standards of international level at all levels of pre-university education (APU). All Albanian certificates and diplomas meet international standards and guarantee the mobility of students.

- a. Developed countries' standards for structure, curricula, texts and source materials in pre-university education (APU) apply.
- b. 19-year-old students have two foreign languages.
- c. Albanian students possess digital competencies at the level of developed countries.
- d. PISA 2028 achieves above-average classification of the region.
- e. Secondary education for every 15-year-old. The same applies to Vocational Education, i.e. the compulsory choice between general or professional education.
- f. The state maturity rises to the maturity level of developed countries.
- g. Application of international quality assurance standards, structures and practices in pre-university and higher education.
- h. Continuous training course for textbook authors. This course is organized by the state with the financial support of publishing houses.
- i. Financial autonomy of secondary schools and larger 9-year schools is gradually applied.

8. Program "Albanian University -2035".

The program aims to, through double investment: (i) reform university studies programs, (ii) develop research and innovation, (iii) develop human resources, and (iv) modernize the infrastructure of universities, so that they provide quality education to students at close to international levels.

- a. In cooperation with the academic community, the new Higher Education Institution (HEI) Law is drafted that better responds to the reformation of the HEI system and scientific research for the next 10-15 years. Institutional organization, self-government, choice of management authorities and university management are improved according to contemporary models that focus on student research, academic quality and performance, efficiency and transparency of self-government, institutional, financial, academic and human resources management of the university.
- b. Reforming public HEI funding to b3 oriented by the "Performance-Based- Funding" model, where, in addition to the academic component, national and international performance in research, knowledge transfer and innovation is assessed.
- c. Reform of higher schools with "University" status includes priority investment for:
 - i) Deep reform of study programmes to respond to labour market demands and align them with international standards. The scientific-oriented programs "Master of Science" and "Doctorate" are

reformed in order to be closer to those of counterpart universities and are offered in two languages: Albanian and, when necessary, English. Highly oriented vocational programs, which include the post-secondary vocational cycle (level 5 of the Qualifications Framework), The Professional Bachelor (Level 6) and The Master Professional (Level 7), are reformed to improve mainly the practical formation of students.

(ii) Reform the institutional organization for the second "scientific research" mission so that they are effective in designing and developing research projects with domestic and foreign funding. Scientific research units, especially interdisciplinary ones (interdisciplinary departments), and research groups of the professor form (Professorship or Chair), rather than the current teaching-research groups, are supported with priority, on the basis of research projects, for intensifying scientific research in important directions for the country (see scientific research program). HEIs with "University" status that offer doctoral studies and enjoy the right to promotion for academic titles (Associate Professor, and Professor) are supported with priority through investment for the development of scientific research, in order to justify their academic status as universities where the study programs are supported in research-based University research.

(iii) Institutional organization for the third mission "Knowledge Transfer, Technology and Innovation".

(iv) Universities should be included in international rankings with specific targets to approach, by 2035, in field rankings.

(v) The Programme considers regional universities as centers of knowledge and development and supports them for their comprehensive reform, with the aim of providing programmes oriented to the needs mainly of the region.

d. Reform of higher education schools with the status of "University College", "Academy", and "Higher Vocational Colleges".

e. All public and private HEIs are supported to enter into partnership with one or more prestigious foreign universities, which support them in comprehensive Reformation under the Higher Education Development Strategy Goals 2035.

9. The "Teachers of the New Generation" program: Reforming teacher preparation and training as a key factor for the quality of schooling of students and young people.

- "Next Generation Teachers" Program/Strategy - Collaboration with partner organizations with the best expertise to design a comprehensive strategy for the preparation and training of teachers in our country, at least for the next two decades.
- Support reforming teacher programs in universities;
- Increase the level of practical and theoretical part of the state exam for the teacher. The points accumulated in it should be the basis for the job competition, without needing another mechanism such as the State Portal.
- Creating a comprehensive system of continuous teacher training;
- Support short-term programs for re-education or expansion of scientific skills in another subject at HEIs, to better respond to teacher needs;
- Training all teachers on new curricula and ICT and digital education.

10. Real investment and depoliticization of scientific research and innovation. The DP does not believe that soviet model academies and politically selected university and scientific groups can do science. The vision of the DP is that depoliticized universities, with their professors, researchers and especially their

doctorate and postdoctoral fellows, are the true locomotive of a modern system of research, development and innovation (Research & Development & Innovation – RDI). DP guarantees that every Albanian researcher, both inside and outside the country, will have the opportunity and will be supported to realize his research ideas that serve the development of our country.

10.1. The multiplication (tenfold) of national investment for science, which emerges in the budget as a special voice "Fund for Science and Innovation", will begin in the first year of the mandate with fivefold of the current funding. The Science and Innovation Fund will be used for the following directions/programmes: (i) Establishing modern interdisciplinary laboratories, with state-of-art infrastructure in priority areas of applied and natural sciences, comparable to that of developed countries; (ii) Establishment of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research Centers; (iii) Research projects within the national research programmes; (iv) Scholarships of doctoral and postdoctoral fellows; (v) The Programme of Excellence in Research; (vi) Excellent professors from researchers of the Albanian scientific Diaspora or foreign researchers; (vii) Co-finance of international research projects, attended by researchers from Albania and other countries, and (viii) Establishment of Knowledge Transfer, Technology and Innovation and Services Centers at universities and research institutions.

University and Doctoral Scholarships in the strategic fields that will define the educational-scientific policy of the DP. About 70-100 scholarships, Bachelor & Master's degree, as well as PhD level, in strategic scientific disciplines for the development of a country (banking, business, AI /anthropology, philosophy), disciplines that cannot become performable in our university, at least for the next 4 years.

10.2. Drafting and adopting within the first 6 months of governance of a modern law on scientific research, development and innovation (RDI), which guarantees academic freedom and scientific research, autonomy of the institutions of the scientific system, and applies the best democratic standards of policy making, management and evaluation of RDI in Albania.

10.3. The freedom of research for any Albanian applicant is fully applied: Every applicant with the scientific degree "Doctor", regardless of where he works, in public or private universities, or research centers of the country, has the right to compete, without obtaining prior permission from anyone, with a research project directly at the Agency within the National Research Programmes or other programs. Success in application is determined by the quality of the project evaluated by boards/commissions composed only of the best Albanian and foreign scientists selected with the participation of the academic community of the country.

10.4. The "Research Excellence Program" for doctoral and postdoctoral studies is established. In this program are selected the best research projects for the degree "Doctor" and Postdoctoral studies, which are carried out in research groups with international level research results, which also cooperate with groups of well-known universities and research centers of developed countries.

10.5. DP will fund annually, through the Science Fund, at least 600 PhDs and 50 postdoctoral degrees. No doctoral and postdoctoral student will pay out of pocket for doctoral and postdoctoral studies! Each doctoral and postdoctoral student is funded by the "Fund for Science", with a scholarship for the workplace at universities or research centers, the costs of implementing the scientific project and the publications that will result from it. Albanian and foreign PhD students with a winning project will have a job funded with a 2-year scholarship of 1500 Euros/month from this Fund, while Albanian and foreign postdoctorals with the awarded project will have a job funded with a 3-year scholarship of 2100 Euros/month, financed by this Fund. Albania has approximately 2600 new researchers, bringing the total number to over 9000, which will increase the current ratio

of about 2.3 seekers/1000 inhabitants to 3.8 seekers/1000 inhabitants and will approximate it with the new EU countries.

10.6. DP supports with priority the creation of "Research Centers and Interdisciplinary Research Laboratories of Excellence" in public and private universities, as well as in research and development institutions in priority areas of research and development, where larger groups of researchers are conducted, comprising doctoral and postdoctoral students.

The DP will invest in the first mandate 30 million euros for the establishment, for the first time in Albania, of modern interdisciplinary laboratories of scientific research in applied sciences and services, with modern infrastructure of international standards, which enables Albanian researchers to undertake fundamental and applied scientific research comparable at least to those they carry out in other countries of the region. Within 4 years, 15 modern interdisciplinary laboratories (each costing approximately 2 million Euros) will be established in the following applied science fields (1 laboratory per field):

- ✓ Underground resources, geosciences, mineral processing;
- ✓ Materials and nanotechnology;
- ✓ Architecture, construction and urban development;
- ✓ Agriculture, live-in, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries;
- ✓ Food and food safety,
- ✓ Biotechnology and molecular biology;
- ✓ Burimet Ojre;
- ✓ Clean energy and renewable energy;
- ✓ Environment and climate change;
- ✓ ICT, digitalization and artificial intelligence;
- ✓ Medical and health sciences;
- ✓ Veterinary medicine and animal health;
- ✓ Applied mathematics and statistics;
- ✓ Nuclear physics and biophysics;
- ✓ Applied chemistry, industrial and food.

10.7. 100 teaching-didactic laboratories are established in the country's public universities. Our students will learn in modern teaching laboratories. Investments that will "upgrade" or set up all teaching-didactic laboratories for students in public universities (100 teaching-didactic laboratories in public universities are funded with about 10 million euros from the Science and Innovation Fund).

10.8. Creation of "Excellent Professorships" by researchers of Albanian scientific diaspora or foreign researchers". DP will invite Albanian affirmed researchers and foreign researchers, who have completed an excellent PhD and a postdoctoral fellowship at least 2 years in prestigious universities or research centers, and are affirmed with their international publications, to submit projects to establish their own research clusters of excellence, adhered to our universities and institutions of foreign research, supporting them with salaries up to 2 times higher compared to the salary of the professor in our universities, as well as all other expenses for PhD students and for the realization of the research project.

10.9. Priority support for the creation of "Knowledge Transfer, Technology and Innovation Units" in public and private universities with an independent public legal status.

10.10. Change the status of the Research Agency, moving it closer to an independent National Public Authority, which establishes the freedom of scientific research for any researcher on the basis of competing with projects and evaluating merit by scientists outside any political influence. As a model for the Agency/Authority we will take the counterpart agencies/foundations in other countries (eg. Slovenia).

10.11. Transparent, non-bureaucratic and completely digitized procedures for application, evaluation, approval and management of research projects are adopted.

10.12. The Agency/Authority is a member of the Network of Authorities/Agencies/Foundations of the Countries of the Region to co-fund research groups projects of the countries of the region.

11. DP considers inter-Albanian integration in education and science as the safest path to inter-Albanian integration as a whole.

Every school, university and research center of our country should have its counterparts, its Albanian speaking "twins" in the Balkans.

Despite the propaganda, over nearly 12 years, cooperation in education among Albanians in the Balkans is unfortunately weakening. The youth are consciously isolating themselves from each other. Fewer and fewer Albanian students are studying at our universities from Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro, while students from Albania at Albanian-speaking universities in the Balkans are inconsiderable. The same trend is also observed in exchanges between high schools. While inter-Albanian integration of academic communities should be targeted in the fields of science, today not only are they moving away from each other, but almost an environment of mistrust has been created between them. This trend does not serve inter-Albanian integration and needs to be changed.

DP considers students, students and knowledge people as the best promoters for accelerating inter-Albanian integration.

Therefore, the DP, based on its successful tradition started in 1992, will promote and support the intensification of real cooperation between Albanian schools and universities in the Balkans, with the objective that every school and university of Albania be twinned with at least one Albanian counterpart institution in Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, the Presevo Valley etc.

12. Internationalization is the main path of integration of Albanian education and science in Europe and in the family of developed countries.

Each university, research center, high school and vocational school will collaborate closely with other counterpart institutions in Europe, the US and beyond.

The DP considers internationalization as the main route for integration of Albanian education and science in Europe and in the family of developed countries. The past initiatives in this direction have been inadequate. Therefore, the DP, based on its early tradition since 1992, will encourage and support every public university, research center, gymnasium and vocational school to develop a close cooperation with counterpart institutions in Europe, USA and beyond.

13. Supporting Albanian schooling of Albanian children in diaspora and absorbing the "brain" of the academic diaspora in the benefit of the development of our education and science.

a. Every Albanian child in the diaspora will have the opportunity to learn Albanian language, culture and history of Albanians.

b. Brain Gain and Brain Circulation programs in higher education and scientific research.

c. The inauguration of an Albanian online digital library, general and encyclopedic, in the service of children and young people of the Albanian diaspora.

d. Inauguration of an Albanian online laboratory /school, in the service of children and youth of the Albanian diaspora. (Both the library and the lab can work through a modest annual subscription and through support from the diaspora and country business.

14. Promoting private investment, especially in vocational education, scientific research and innovation will be a priority.

The DP will adapt the most successful experiences/models of countries similar to our country, for the increase of private investment in education, scientific research and innovation by local Albanian enterprises and especially from the entrepreneurial and academic scientific diaspora.

a. Stimulating private investment in preschool and pre-university education in major cities.

b. Stimulating large private companies, domestic or foreign, to open vocational high schools and vocational branches/programs in the fields that exercise their business.

c. Stimulating large businesses to support with their capacities the practical formation of students and vocational education students integrated with the practice.

d. Encourage private higher schools to profile in professional programs in cooperation with the private manufacturing or service sector in the respective sectors.

e. Promoting through the Science Fund, private high schools and domestic and foreign companies, to invest in research, technology transfer and innovation

Healthcare

Diagnosis of the Health System in Albania

The Socialist Party, during the 2013 elections, used health care as a two-pronged campaign promise: Free Healthcare and the British (Bismarck) system of organization and operation.

- Both promises were promoted through a powerful propaganda machine, portrayed as solutions to save the health system.
- Today, both of these promises have "failed," and propaganda can no longer mask the current state of the health system, which fails to provide citizens with basic and vital health services.

It is well known that in authoritarian societies, the state of the country is evaluated through two contrasting lenses:

1. Through the eyes of the government, which paints a virtual reality filled with light, prosperity, and success.
2. Through the eyes of the citizens, who live in a grim reality marked by poverty, hardship, and pain.

When viewed from the perspective of Albanian citizens, especially the tens of thousands of sick individuals relying on this so-called health "paradise," the reality is deeply concerning. Citizens experience this failure firsthand, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, receiving low-quality services, facing shortages of basic supplies such as medicines and reagents, and enduring poor sanitary conditions. Additionally, corruption in the system, often reaching extreme levels, extorts citizens both financially and emotionally.

Second, the system's performance is clearly reflected in health indicators, which reveal a stagnant, substandard, and inaccessible health care system.

As Pythagoras stated, "*Numbers rule the universe.*" Statistical data, which are accurate and unbiased, expose the flaws in governance and position Albania's health system at the bottom in Europe. It is not even comparable to developed EU countries but aligns more closely with the lowest-ranking countries in the region. For example, key indicators from the World Health Organization, such as infant mortality, the number of doctors, hospital beds, visits, and bed utilization rates, show that Albania lags far behind both EU nations and neighboring countries.

The Current Situation in Numbers

To assess Albania's health system, data from neighboring Montenegro and Serbia, as well as EU countries Italy and Germany, were analyzed using four basic indicators:

1. Health expenditure per capita.
2. Percentage of GDP allocated to health.
3. Private health expenditures.
4. Infant mortality rates.

Among these, infant mortality is the most universally accepted indicator for evaluating the quality, access, and effectiveness of a country's healthcare services.

Health Expenditure Per Capita

Health care spending in Albania is alarmingly low, at just \$464.70 per capita. This amount is half that of Montenegro and Serbia and seven times lower than in Italy. The gap widens further when compared to Germany, where per capita health expenditure is 14 times higher.

The implications of such low investment are severe, affecting both the quality and accessibility of healthcare services for Albanian citizens.

Country	Expenditure (US\$)	Ratio to Albania
----------------	---------------------------	-------------------------

Albania	464.7	-
Montenegro	985.0	2 times higher
Serbia	919.2	2 times higher
Italy	3,350.0	7 times higher

Country Expenditure (US\$) Ratio to Albania

Germany	6,626.0	14 times higher
---------	---------	-----------------

Percentage of GDP Allocated to Health

Albania allocates only 7.3% of its GDP to health care, lagging behind Montenegro (10.6%), Serbia (10.0%), Italy (9.0%), and Germany (12.7%). Despite Albania's relatively lower GDP, the percentage devoted to health is insufficient to improve health services or infrastructure, leaving citizens underserved.

Private Health Expenditures

A significant issue in Albania is that 59.7% of health care costs are borne directly by citizens. This is starkly higher than in Germany and Italy, where private spending accounts for just 12.2% and 21.9%, respectively, reflecting robust public health systems.

This over-reliance on private spending has dire consequences:

- Families face catastrophic health expenditures that can lead to poverty.
- Low-income groups experience limited access to care, deepening health inequalities.
- The system places undue strain on citizens, undermining social cohesion.

This stark reality contrasts sharply with the Socialist Party's promise of free healthcare. Instead, citizens face a poorly funded, corruption-laden health system that exploits patients and their families.

Infant Mortality

The infant mortality rate in Albania is 8.4 per 1,000 live births, significantly higher than in Montenegro (2.3) or Italy (2.2). This figure underscores the direct consequences of underfunding and mismanagement in the health system, with vulnerable populations such as infants and mothers suffering most.

A country that fails to safeguard the lives of its infants cannot adequately care for its broader population.

Analysis of Additional Statistical Sources

Other analyses and data highlight the following critical concerns for the Albanian health system:

- a. Albanians live, on average, seven years less than EU citizens.
- b. For every 1,000 live births, 3.4 times more infants die within the first year of life in Albania than in the EU.
- c. Albania has approximately 2.5 times fewer doctors and nurses per capita than EU countries.
- d. Cardiovascular disease mortality is 1.8 times higher in Albania compared to the EU.
- e. Albania has significantly fewer hospitals and hospital beds per capita.
- f. Albanians pay 60% of their health expenses out-of-pocket, compared to 25% in the EU.
- g. Despite spending levels approaching the regional average, Albania's health system indicators remain among the worst in quality and efficiency.

Analysis and Findings

The data and evidence are unyielding. They unmask propaganda, revealing a health system that is underfunded, neglected, and exploited, resting on a foundation of financial burden shifted onto the citizen.

As the figures illustrate, Albania lags far behind neighboring countries and is even further from EU standards in terms of investment and service quality. With insufficient spending, a heavy reliance on private payments, and high infant mortality rates, the Democratic Party and its allies face a monumental challenge: to improve the nation's health system and provide accessible, quality, and cost-effective healthcare.

Key Problems in the Health System

1. **Lack of Access and Inequality**

Healthcare is neither universally accessible nor equitable in Albania. Gaps exist in public health, primary care, hospital services, dental care, and pharmaceutical services. These disparities are both geographical and financial.

2. **Poor Quality of Services**

The population remains deeply dissatisfied with the quality of public health services. Many Albanians seek medical care abroad, spending tens of millions of euros annually in countries like Italy, Germany, France, and Turkey. This exodus reflects the inadequacy of domestic healthcare facilities.

3. **Low Efficiency**

Public health services yield limited results despite the money spent, owing to outdated management models and widespread corruption. Mismanagement drains public funds, leaving Albania among the least efficient health systems in Europe.

4. **Extreme Centralization**

Despite superficial reforms, Albania's health system remains highly centralized, akin to outdated socialist or communist models.

5. **Chronic Underfunding**

Health system financing is critically low. Out-of-pocket payments constitute 60% of total health financing, compared to 6–15% in EU countries. This burden drives patients and families into financial ruin.

6. **Human Resources Mismanagement**

Human resources are poorly handled, with issues ranging from unqualified hospital directors to nepotism in hiring, undermining meritocracy in a system as vital as health care.

7. **Lack of Digitization**

Albania's health system has yet to embrace digital transformation, lagging behind even lower-income countries. Examples include:

- Absence of electronic patient records.
- An unfinished health information exchange system, despite costing taxpayers 14 million euros.
- Minimal involvement of international companies to modernize health infrastructure.

8. **Insufficient Training**

Healthcare staff lack regular training and updates on modern medical practices, further hampering service quality.

A Vision for Restoring Health Care in Albania

Mission: To rebuild Albania's health system, transitioning it from a profit-oriented model benefiting a few oligarchs to one that prioritizes the life and well-being of every citizen.

Goals:

- Increase life expectancy for Albanians while ensuring these years are lived in good health, free from disease, and enriched by physical, mental, and social well-being.

Motto: *"More years of quality life!"*

Guiding Principles:

1. Reorganize the health system based on the Bismarck model.
2. Adopt sustainable policies for strategic development and evidence-based interventions.
3. Place family health at the center of the system as the cornerstone of community well-being.
4. Improve service quality and access to affordable healthcare.
5. Base health system financing on insurance schemes, emphasizing individual responsibility while providing safety nets for vulnerable populations.
6. Implement short- and medium-term programs for priority groups, such as the elderly and those needing cancer prevention and treatment.
7. Develop accountable public-private partnerships (PPPs) to enhance health infrastructure and services.
8. Launch digital transformation, including electronic health records and telemedicine, within the first term of governance.

Practical Implementation

The reform will proceed in phases, prioritizing urgent needs and evidence-based interventions. Key steps include:

1. Establishing clear care programs for pregnant women, children, adults, and the elderly.
2. Efficient use of health resources while gradually increasing funding to meet regional and EU standards.
3. Introducing value-based care models that align compensation for healthcare workers with measurable health outcomes.
4. Developing human resources, infrastructure, and medical equipment, aiming to improve the doctor-patient ratio.
5. Prioritizing prevention and early diagnosis to reduce long-term healthcare costs.
6. Digitizing health records to create a connected ecosystem, ensuring seamless and secure access to care.

7. Strengthening private healthcare by treating private providers as equal partners and promoting fair competition.

Conclusion

The Socialist Party's 12 years in power have turned Albania's health sector into a desert of neglect and corruption, with consequences visible in every metric. Infant mortality, high out-of-pocket expenses, and the exodus of patients abroad exemplify this failure.

A conservative government will address these systemic issues by aligning health reforms with conservative principles: personal responsibility, family-centered care, strategic partnerships, and transparent governance. By implementing this vision, Albanians will experience longer, healthier lives, with a health system that truly serves its people.

Decommunization

Rehabilitation of Former Convicts and Political Persecutors

The communist regime inflicted the deepest social wounds Albania experienced in the second half of the 20th century. These scars continue to impact the lives of those who survived the dictatorship and their families.

This unacknowledged systemic crime mirrors the devastation of war, with:

- 5,037 men and 450 women executed for political reasons.
- 21,788 men and 7,367 women sentenced to political imprisonment.
- 48,217 men and 10,792 women interned for political reasons.
- 11,536 families expelled from main cities and border areas.
- 64 foreign nationals executed or deceased in Albanian prisons.
- 1,215 foreign men and 38 women imprisoned.
- 95 Kosovo Albanians executed.
- 120 Catholic clergy members executed or imprisoned.
- 83 Bektashi clergy members executed or imprisoned.
- 60 Muslim clergy members executed or imprisoned.
- 39 Orthodox clergy members executed or imprisoned.
- 2,169 religious institutions destroyed or closed (*ref. 2024*).

Three decades after the fall of communism, it is an opportune moment to evaluate the strategies and measures undertaken by Albanian governments to address the damages inflicted by the regime. It is essential to assess efforts to achieve sustainable decommunization and their outcomes. This evaluation

will help the Democratic Party outline what still needs to be done to end the injustices and discrimination suffered by those persecuted under the dictatorship and their families.

Measures Undertaken Over the Years

Albanian governments have focused on measures to restore the rights of communism's victims and integrate them into a democratic society with equal rights. These measures include:

- Developing a legal framework, primarily between 1992 and 1997, with subsequent amendments. This framework addressed issues such as:
 - Declaring the innocence of those convicted under the regime.
 - Recognizing the genocide committed by the communist state against its victims.
 - Conducting vetting of officials and others tied to protecting the democratic state.
 - Granting the status of "politically persecuted."
 - Providing compensation for former prisoners and exiled individuals.
 - Returning and compensating confiscated properties.
 - Designating symbols to commemorate victims and crimes of the communist regime.
- Implementing measures outlined in the legal framework.
- Allocating special quotas for university admissions and employment in state institutions for victims of communism and their descendants.
- Establishing institutions to address communist crimes and support integration, such as:
 - The Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes (2010).
 - The Institute for the Integration of Politically Persecuted Individuals (1997).
 - The Authority for Information on Former State Security Documents, 1944–1991 (2016).

Unaddressed Measures

Despite progress, several measures remain unfulfilled even 32 years after the fall of communism. Key unaddressed initiatives include:

- Completing reparations for former prisoners and persecuted individuals.
- Finalizing the process of returning and compensating confiscated properties.
- Establishing a National Museum of Victims and Crimes of Communism, as well as memorials such as the Obelisk of Victims in Tirana and monuments in other cities, as mandated by Law No. 10241, dated 25.02.2010.

Addressing Perpetrators vs. Victims

While efforts have focused on supporting victims, little attention has been paid to exposing and holding accountable the perpetrators who orchestrated and carried out the regime's atrocities. Public knowledge of the full scope of the communist apparatus is limited, derived mainly from victims' testimonies in books, media interviews, documentaries, and private research conducted by NGOs, universities, and, more recently, the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes.

The Role of the Democratic Party

Efforts to address the repercussions of political persecution have predominantly occurred under Democratic Party leadership during the periods 1992–1997 and 2005–2013. Notable legislative efforts include:

- **Law No. 7514 (30.09.1991)** and its 1993 amendments: This law declared the innocence, amnesty, and rehabilitation of former convicts and political persecutors.
- **Law No. 7598 (01.09.1992)**: Established a special monetary fund to support former convicts and politically persecuted individuals.
- **Law No. 8001 (22.09.1995)**: Defined genocide and crimes against humanity committed during communist rule. Article 3 restricted certain individuals—such as former officials of the regime—from holding public office or high administrative positions until December 31, 2001.

However, the communist rebellion of 1997 undermined these laws. Subsequent socialist governments diluted their provisions, weakening their impact on achieving justice.

Key Omissions and Challenges

1. **Lack of Reconciliation and Justice:**
Albanian governments have failed to secure acknowledgment of guilt from perpetrators or to ensure justice. Without reconciliation, the integration of victims and their descendants remains incomplete.
2. **Inadequate Rehabilitation Support:**
There have been insufficient efforts to provide mental and physical rehabilitation for victims or psychological support for them and their families.
3. **Failure to Decommunize Society:**
The lack of a comprehensive approach to decommunization has allowed communist-era narratives to persist unfiltered, particularly in media and cultural works, creating nostalgia and misinformation about the regime.
4. **Audit Findings (2016):**
An audit conducted by the High State Audit under Mr. Bujar Leskaj concluded that the legal framework and measures taken had only partially addressed the rehabilitation of former political prisoners. Fragmented laws, insufficient financial resources, and poor institutional coordination hindered meaningful progress.

Proposal for the Democratic Party's 2025 Electoral Program

The Democratic Party acknowledges its own past shortcomings in addressing this critical issue. Moving forward, the Party will ensure the following:

Decommunization:

- Promote a nationwide public reflection on the communist system and its lasting damage.
- Implement all measures outlined in the 2006 Resolution on Communist Crimes and Law No. 10241, dated 25.02.2010.
- Open and publicize communist-era files.

Rehabilitation of Victims

More specifically, the Democratic Party commits to drafting and implementing in cooperation with representative organizations of the politically persecuted (such as the Nationwide Union of Integration of and Political Prisoners of Albania etc.) of an action plan to:

- Increase the pension to the level of the minimum vital level for ex-convicts and politically persecuted people who have no other economic opportunities, family support or no descendants.
- Priority resolution of the residential issue for ex-convicts and politically persecuted people who, although they may have needed, have not received special support in this regard and live in severe conditions.
- Launch a nationwide campaign offering psychological support to victims and their families to address trauma.
- Establish the National Museum of Victims and Crimes of Communism and construct memorials in Tirana and other cities.

Cultural and Historical Preservation:

- Establishment of the National Museum of Victims and Crimes of Communism in Albania.
- Erection of the Obelisk of Victims and Crimes of Communism in Tirana, as well as memorial monuments in other cities of Albania.
- Return to museums of some of the prisons and internment camps (including Spaç Prison, Burrel, etc.).
- Honouring after the death of key Albanian anti-communist figures, including the organizers of the Spaç Revolt and the establishment of their names for naming streets and squares.
- the naming of a square in Tirana in honour of the Revolt of Spaç where monuments of the heroes of this revolt Pal Zefi, Hajri Pashaj, Dervis Bejko, Skender Daja and a wall with the names of the revolt's participants are placed.
- Review of the date of the Victims of Communism Memorial Day following the process of reflection and discussion with representative organizations of ex-convicts and politically persecuted, if it is deemed necessary (a suggestion comes from the Union for 24 January 1945, the date of the first anticommunist uprising).
- Conducting a hearing session in the Albanian Parliament on the crimes of communism where the survivors of the dictatorship are invited to speak.
- Full support for the implementation of an annual conference on the occasion of the Remembrance Day of the Victims of Communism, for sharing the results of the latest studies on the crimes of communism and the damages of its victims among scholars, policy makers, representatives of victims of communism and the general public, a conference which will be accompanied by the holding of a session at the Albanian Parliament for victims of communism.
- To enable the sustainable decommunization of Albanian society, the measures to be taken are among others:
- To give a clear political mandate to a relevant Ministry, which will draft within the first hundred days of government, and implement, in cooperation with partners and stakeholders, a four-year programme, which will be oriented by these main objectives and directions:
 - Condemning the crimes of communism by law and recognition of state guilt and apologies to victims of communism in Albania, including crimes committed against clergy (clergy and cult objects).
 - Priority follow-up and implementation of the review of textbooks to reflect in a realistic way the reality of communism, the damages and social wounds it created, the results of the study work carried out to date that reflect its consequences on Albanian people and society, but also more broadly in other countries led by the communist system; measures undertaken over the years for rehabilitation of ex-convicts and political persecutors, the content of the main laws and resolution on condemnation of the crimes of communism. As part of the school programme, the development of trip for high schools to the most famous places for crimes committed (prisons such as Spaç, The Camp of Kukes and beyond) will be included.

- Suspension of the broadcast on Albanian television (national, local, public and private) until the conclusion of a review and filtering process of the entire fund of films realized by The New Albania Cinema studio and recorded material of the plays staged at the time of communism, in order to prevent the spread of falsehoods, insults against ex-convicts and political persecutors, as well as the baseless glorification of the communist system and its leading figures as well as social life in that system.
- Increased funding support for the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes and support for organizations that conduct research and activities to detect the crimes of communism and its damages caused by it in Albania.

Part Two: Platform of the Democratic Party of Albania on the decommunization of Albanian School Curricula and Education. (Lindita Doda)

Other former communist countries made a clear, serious and real, responsible break with the legacy of communism. In Albania, this did not happen. It didn't happen in our political elites or our cultural heritage. In addition to the attitude of the political elites that led the country, this came from indifference and irresponsibility of social and academic actors to the real, serious construction of our school system and the stance of the historical truth of our communist period.

Especially in the last decade, reminiscences of the past have been revived in every sector of life, from governance, the judiciary to social and cultural life.

It is essential that the Democratic Party reformulate its ideological axis as a political force of the values of individual freedom, to give a final solution to this issue, as today's pupils, students and young people lack adequate knowledge of communism in Albania.

That is why it is important to first decommunize the curricula and textbooks. The study of curricula and school texts will be reviewed by a group of experts who focus on the real treatment of history, economics and literature in the communist period. "Based on the survey conducted with teachers by IDMC Albania in 2020, 60% of the teachers surveyed are not sure what the figure of victims of the communist regime is because it is not mentioned in the history textbooks."

This data shows that there is a significant lack of information, whether in the curricula of teaching in schools but also in university curricula in the field of teaching.

All important events must be documented and made known in schools and universities, from 1942 to 1991; to shed light on the country's communist past, causing this past to be introduced into the textbooks of all generations so that they do not remain a victim of historical fraud.

Identify as important historical dates of resistance and freedom uprisings against the regime such as the Bari Neck, Spaç uprising, the Zhapokica uprising, the notorious trials and the convictions of the nation's elite etc.

The real number of persons executed and missing in the communist period is much higher than what has been declared. There is an urgent need to stop using communist symbols in public.

Specifically, the proposals for Decommunization through education interventions are as follows:

1. The Democratic Party of Albania, when in government should draft a law on National Education, which prohibits the recycling of the legacy of communist ideology in school textbooks, and in Higher Education Institutions.

2. The platform for the Decommunization of school texts, based on special law, will be implemented through the Ministry of Education.
3. The Ministry of Education should align, configure and coordinate groups of specialists and experts regarding the specificity of the problems of existing textbooks.
4. The Ministry of Education with the scientific expert groups, enter into cooperation agreements with specialized institutions (Institutes, Associations, University Departments and specialists known for dealing with the communist dictatorial past of society), to closely examine the strategies of approach to problems and difficulties that may arise.
5. The Ministry of Education should support the experts and consultant groups to undertake a radical review of school curricula (altertexts) at the compulsory school levels (grades VI-IX) and high schools for the period of communist dictatorship.
6. The Ministry of Education, which coordinates the specialist groups, oversees and evaluates the evidence of problems in school textbooks, assesses the extent of contamination with communist ideological propaganda and the continuation of its glorification and to discuss in detail and decide on the future of the curricula.
7. The Ministry of Education with its instruments (expert groups and consultants), with the right given by the law, will begin implementing the Platform for Decommunization of textbooks and substitution with true and educational information or materials.
8. Review and include (as expected) humane formation subjects (History, Literature, Philosophy, Civic Education or Social Knowledge).
9. The Ministry of Education will introduce a course entitled "Albania during the communist dictatorship: 1944-1991".
10. The text is drafted by a group of authors, experts for the historical period in question and preserves the character of detailed, documentary and anthropological information.
11. The group of authors of the compilation of the obligatory curricular subject is chosen by experts in history, culture, law, economics, etc., who are specialized for the period 1944-1991. The Ministry of Education and the Albanian government should guarantee to the group of experts who draft the subject "Albania during the Communist Dictatorship: 1944-1991" free access to state and institutional archives (AQSH, Archive of the Ministry of Interior, AIDSSH, IKK etc.
12. The course "Albania during the Communist Dictatorship: 1944-1991" examines the destructive impact of the Stalinist regime on various aspects of Albanian society. The regime exercised widespread terror and oppression, leading to the following societal devastations:
 - Economic Destruction: The regime dismantled the private market and private property, confiscated movable and immovable assets, and wiped out the class of landowners, manufacturers, traders, and craftsmen. The economic system was restructured to serve the state, leaving widespread poverty.
 - Religious Persecution: The regime imposed strict control over religious communities, forcing them to alter their statutes and subordinating them to state ideology. Temples were destroyed, clergy were arrested, punished, and executed, and religious practices were outlawed.
 - Class Liquidation: The regime sought to eliminate the former landowning and middle classes, alongside political opponents, using terror as a tool of vengeance. Many were persecuted, imprisoned, or exiled.

- Justice System Breakdown: The judiciary was subverted to serve the dictatorship. Mass show trials were held, including the trials of political deputies, and the legal defense system was dismantled, leaving individuals without proper legal protection.
- Cultural Destruction: The regime banned works by important national writers and intellectuals, including Faik Konica, Gjergj Fishta, Ernest Koliqi, Arshi Pipa, and Martin Camaj, among others. The regime erased the rich cultural heritage of the country, including the Gheg language and its literary traditions. Socialist realism became the state-enforced ideology, mutating culture to serve the regime's interests.
- Education: The educational system was used as a tool for ideological indoctrination, creating generations of citizens who were taught to conform to the regime's dogma from early childhood through university.
- Agriculture and Industry: The regime imposed five-year plans that devastated agriculture and industry. By the late 1980s, these policies had led to economic collapse, with the state labeling certain groups as "hostile" to its goals.
- Order and Security: The regime maintained power through unrelenting terror. The state security apparatus, including penal colonies, prisons, and internment camps, was used to control the population. The communist justice system, acting as a tool of political repression, was responsible for widespread persecution and, in some cases, genocide against Albanian citizens.

This course provides a comprehensive understanding of the totalitarian nature of the Stalinist regime in Albania and its systemic efforts to destroy the social, cultural, economic, and political foundations of the country.

13. For the creation of this essential text, which is a mandatory part of the curriculum, a collaborative approach should be adopted, involving a team of experts and consultants from each relevant field. This will prevent the text from being solely written by one or two individuals. The text should include primary sources, such as real human documents, letters, judgments, descriptions, diary entries, or memoir fragments. These should ideally come from individuals who endured the horrors of the communist regime, particularly those who suffered in prisons or forced labor camps. Notable figures whose testimonies could be included are Father Zef Pllumi, Arshi Pipa, Uran Kalakulla, Sami Repishti, Father Konrad Gjollaj, Dom Simon Jubani, Pjetër Mëshkalla, Pjetër Arbnori, Fatos Lubonja, and Visar Zhiti, among others.

Additionally, the text should incorporate important works published by the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes and the Consequences (ISKK), as well as accounts of significant anti-communist uprisings and revolts. These include the uprisings in the North, such as in Kelmend, Anamal/Koplik, and Postribë, as well as the 1948 revolt in Zhapokica in the South. Also, key moments like the Revolt of Spaç Prison in May 1973 and the Revolt of The Qafe-Bari in May 1984 should be highlighted to provide a comprehensive view of the resistance against the communist regime.

14. Only through the mandatory inclusion of a foundational curricular text, such as *Albania during the Communist Dictatorship: 1944-1991*, can the multifaceted nature of the new generation's memory be revived—a memory that has been criminally neglected but holds undeniable cognitive and educational value. This approach will allow students to engage with the past in a way that fosters critical understanding and reflection.

15. In each chapter of this course, students will be introduced to significant personalities, including literary and political figures such as Musine Kokalari, Sabiha Kasimati, Trifon Xhagjika, Havzi Nela, Arshi Pipa, Genc Leka, Vilson Blloshmi, Shefqet Beja, Riza Alizoti, Selaudin Totos, and Abdyl Kokoshi. Students will explore the biographies and actions of these individuals, focusing on their acts of resistance against the communist regime. They will read supplementary literature, watch relevant films, and view documentaries about these martyrs to deepen their understanding of their sacrifices.

16. Lastly, this mandatory school subject will encourage Albanian students to visit historical sites of suffering—former communist prisons and forced labor camps—where the heroes they have learned about endured their trials. The course text will also include a map of prisons and internment camps, as well as a map of executions, providing a complete topography of communist terror. The necessary materials for this are already available from the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes and the Consequences (ISKK).

Private Property Rights

We believe that freedom and property are inherently connected and inherent to every individual. The stronger the foundation of private property, the stronger the common good. We believe that private property is a powerful instrument for cultivating a sense of responsibility among people. Ownership of private property defines the obligations of its owners, as they accept both moral and legal responsibilities with respect to that property. Private property regulates society by ensuring the protection of law and order.

Respect for property, as a fundamental human right, ensures both individual and social security, promotes peaceful relations on moral grounds between individuals, and fosters respect for law and order. It also entails respect for the property of others, its protection, and the obligation to maintain and develop it responsibly.

I. The Problem of Ownership in Albania

Current Situation and Statistics

- **Land for Compensation:** According to data from the former Commission for the Return and Compensation of Property, there are 7,200 hectares of land and 68,000 hectares of agricultural land to be compensated. This represents a minimum financial obligation of EUR 6.5 billion under Law 133/2015.
- **Untreated Files:** Approximately 10,000 files are still unresolved by the Property Handling Agency.
- **Legalizations:** Through 79 VKMMs, 339 hectares of land have been expropriated from owners for the legalization of informal constructions, with a financial bill amounting to ALL 40 billion.

The Memorandum of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe emphasizes the need for a comprehensive solution to the issue of ownership rights. This solution should not only address the current challenges faced by Albania but should also draw from the experiences of other Council of Europe member states in implementing the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECJ).

Recommendations

1. **Conflict Resolution:** A clear and fair mechanism for resolving conflicts related to property rights should be established. Council of Europe member states have diverse experiences in resolving property-related conflicts, including different methods for compensation and conflict resolution.
2. **Transparency and Determination of Values:** The processes of conflict resolution and compensation should be transparent, with property values being clearly determined.
3. **Deadline and Efficiency:** A reasonable deadline should be set for the implementation of decisions and compensation.
4. **Respect for the Rights of Owners:** It is essential to ensure that the rights of owners are respected throughout the compensation process.

5. **Enforcing Laws and Regulations:** Laws and regulations should be enforced fairly, with due involvement of all relevant processes.

These recommendations and experiences are crucial to helping Albania develop an inclusive policy for compensation and securing property rights.

- It has been noted that there exists a legal vacuum within the internal system, and there are no effective means to resolve the issue of restitution and compensation of property, along with other issues related to guaranteeing this right. The Albanian legal framework is ineffective and lacks proper complaint mechanisms. The lack of funds is not a valid excuse for the state's failure to compensate individuals, and there remains a clear need for appropriate legal, administrative, or financial changes.
- The failure to respect property rights, one of the most fundamental rights in a democratic state, is a troubling situation in the Albanian context. This issue is concerning for two reasons:
 - a) It violates the rights of individuals, and
 - b) The Albanian state is required to pay substantial amounts due to these decisions.

In many instances, internal judicial bodies themselves either contribute to or exacerbate the non-enforcement of judicial decisions and the law on return and compensation, which stipulates that decisions become final after all avenues of complaint have been exhausted. Under the Civil Code, the final and executable decision is that of the Court of Appeal. A ruling addressing property cases involving the ATP is non-executable when treatment in the Court of Appeal expires.

After the enactment of Law 7698/1993 in 1993 and Law 9235/2004, as amended, and subsequent judicial involvement in property matters for the recognition, restitution, and/or recognition of the right to compensation, the current situation presents a mixed picture. According to how the cases have been treated and the benefits provided, several groups of "Former Owners" can be identified:

- Those who have fully or partially exhausted the recognition and return of property through administrative decisions of competent institutions for property return or court decisions.
- Those who have exhausted the formal recognition of property and its eventual return by administrative and judicial acts.
- Those who have completed the formal recognition of property and are entitled to compensation, but have not yet received any form of compensation.
- Those who have exhausted formal recognition of property and the form of compensation, but have not yet received compensation, either at the time or currently.
- Those who, following decisions by pre-existing administrative and judicial authorities, have recognized property rights but have benefited from concrete financial sums through the legalization processes of informal areas.
- Those who have received formal legal (administrative) recognition of property but have not had their subsequent rights over this property determined. In some cases, the decision is expressed solely as a recognition of property, without clarifying whether it involves return or compensation.
- Those who, through decisions from administrative institutions at the time, have partially recognized property rights, particularly for agricultural land, and have not exhausted the recognition process. Even in these cases, the return or compensation of property may not have been fully addressed.
- Those who have received formal legal recognition of property based on documents and evidence presented in court but have not yet completed the process of recognition, restitution, and

compensation for various reasons. These individuals have not yet obtained a final recognition decision.

- Those who have formally and legally benefited from compensation in the form of property but, due to the inability to dispose of or enjoy the property, have not exhausted their rights. This is particularly relevant for cases where compensation parcels are located along the Adriatic Sea coastline, but the right to physical compensation has not been fully utilized.
- Those who have received formal legal recognition of their compensation rights, which were based on administrative acts issued between 2009-2024. This group includes those who agreed to receive a reduced amount (e.g., 20%, 40% of the total value) of their compensation, paid in periodic installments over several years.

Additionally, there are categories of individuals who have acquired property under the provisions of the Civil Code, such as:

- Beneficiaries of Law 7501 and similar laws.
- Beneficiaries of the Law on Housing Privatization.
- Beneficiaries of the legalization law.
- Beneficiaries of local administrative contracts aimed at economic and business development. In this context, abuses have occurred, with investors altering the designated land use by increasing the value of the investment to benefit from changes in land designation, especially along the Adriatic coast.

To these categories, we must also add entities that have benefited from concessions, public-private partnerships, and those who have received property through strategic investor status or other favorable legal actions.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize those who belong to the category of owners by law:

- Those who have benefited from the legalization of lands and houses against a fee.
- Those who have benefited from the legalization of yards and land under apartments according to favorable and regulatory VKMs.
- Those who, through final judgments, have exhausted claims of uninterrupted possession in good faith or misguidance. Despite their properties being in the process of being recognized and returned by administrative institutions, these individuals may still be awaiting final resolution.
- Those who have acquired property rights through court decisions as heirs of former owners.

In light of this complex picture of potential claimants, suitable and coherent solutions should be explored to increase guarantees for the recovery of legal and financial situations of those unfairly expropriated after 1944. This will require careful consideration of the current legal framework and the handling and administration of property issues. The laws concerning class actions, ATP regulations, VKM 827, and the registration of ATPs must all be evaluated and reformed as necessary.

II. Lines and Principles for Resolving the Issue

Resolving the property issue requires an integrated approach, along with significant legal and institutional reforms.

The Main Principles of Our Proposals

a. Physical Property Return:

This should be the central principle of the process, following the best practices of other Central and Eastern European countries. To reduce the financial burden on the state budget, priority should be given to physical compensation, where the state's land fund is made available for this purpose. An identification of available properties is necessary, which may include unutilized land, vacant buildings, or other public properties.

- The identified properties must be fairly valued to ensure they are equivalent to the confiscated property and must meet the needs and interests of former owners. This could include farmland for farmers, commercial buildings for business owners, etc.

b. Fair Compensation:

When physical restitution is not feasible, financial compensation should be based on the market value, rather than the values set by government valuation maps. In all cases, compensation must reflect the fair value of the property for its legitimate owners.

c. Alternative Compensation Schemes:

To reduce the financial burden, the state should consider using financial instruments such as bonds, gold, shares in state-owned companies, or participation in investment funds as alternative means of financial compensation.

d. Improving the Legal Framework and Clear Codification of Property Laws:

A new law must be adopted that establishes clear standards and deadlines for completing the restitution and compensation process.

e. Transparency and Digitalization:

- Modernize ownership records and create a digital map of ownership titles.
- Establish mechanisms for transparency and accountability at every step of the process.
 - Complete the national systematic census and create the electronic public register of consolidated real estate.Ensure 100% completion of national-level processes:
Strengthen the property rights system and their protection, aligning with the standards of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) under the Sectoral Justice Strategy. This will aim to increase the security of lawfully acquired property and investments, as well as the dynamism of the land market within a 4-year period.
Modernize the information system for property rights, achieving 100% digitalization of the real estate system in line with the INSPIRE Directive standards.

III. Proposed Concrete Measures

The "Moratorium on Land and Property Looting"

Within this framework, we propose the following measures:

1. Inventory of All Lands in the Republic of Albania:

Conduct an inventory to assess the current state of land ownership, identifying the properties that were owned in 1945 and comparing them to current holdings. With political will and the involvement of the relevant Ministry, this inventory should be completed as soon as possible.

2. Review and Repeal of Problematic Laws:

Review the legal framework related to property ownership, treatment, evaluation, administration, and certification.

- Repeal any laws that create new ownership claims on properties that have already been recognized, returned, and certified, especially those made for electoral or clientelist purposes, or those resulting from party contributions, legalized under VKM 827. This VKM is an unconstitutional act that overrides the law and the Constitution, creating new private owners in the name of public interest.
- The principle of legal security must be guaranteed in all legal acts. Rights, guarantees, and obligations should primarily be addressed through laws. Sub-legal acts must adhere strictly to the legal hierarchy, be as few as possible, and should not be the primary source of the process.
- Interest groups, especially associations of legitimate owners, should be included in all working groups formed by state institutions to draft legal acts and public policy documents.
- The current Law 133/2015 on property treatment should be repealed, as its compensation scheme has failed. A new law on restitution and compensation should include physical restitution as a core principle, with both physical and financial compensation complementary to one another. Financial compensation should be based on market value.
- Repeal the Law on Legalizations and all related acts that serve as the legal foundation for future legalizations. For constructions built without permits but legalized, the state should consider imposing a special tax to fund the property compensation process. The tax level could depend on the builder's financial capacity, building size, and use.
- A new law on expropriation for public interest (currently the law from 1999, amended) should be adopted in line with European best practices. The law must clearly define public interest cases, such as public transport infrastructure, education, and national defense infrastructure, to avoid abuse. Expropriation should only be allowed for state entities that prove all alternative means of acquiring the property have been exhausted. The property owner must be involved in the expropriation process and have the right to appeal in court. Compensation should be based on market value and include damages (including not only investments but also lost income or expected profits).
- Repeal the Law on Strategic Investments and Law 20/2020, as they are disadvantageous for expropriating entities.

3. Reorganization of the Cadastral Agency and ATP:

Remove the jurisdiction and administrative authority of the ownership processes from these bodies. The Cadastre or the Census Bureau should only serve as a public repository of acts and historical institutional records for each parcel. The ATP has not issued any decisions since 2013 and has acted only as if it has valued properties based on 1944 prices (1 lek). It has misled the public and former property owners.

4. Establishment of Proper Service Mechanisms:

Establish service mechanisms to assist all Albanian citizens in managing the disposal, possession, and enjoyment of private property in Albania.

5. Ending Prepaid Applications and Procedural Delays:

Eliminate the need for prepaid applications and reduce the procedural delays that span years, which are often accompanied by multiple new applications requiring payment. Develop an

electronic service system that guarantees high performance, effectiveness, and accuracy. Payment should only occur when the service is received.

6. Implementation of the Reparation Principle:

Where possible, implement the principle of reparation to reduce the financial burden on the state (taxpayer) for entities that were expropriated without justification, but whose property rights were recognized. This will ensure the right to compensation.

7. Resolution of Unresolved Property Issues:

Resolve issues regarding properties that have not been returned or compensated through the judicial system. Consider the creation of administrative courts to address ownership disputes not settled by a final decision.

8. Implementation of the "Guarantee Fund" Concept:

Implement a "Guarantee Fund" related to land development, particularly in urban areas or areas of economic or tourist interest. This fund will serve as a mechanism for compensating former owners. After identifying properties through preliminary identification processes, the state can proceed with compensation or development initiatives.

9. Reflection of Historical Chronology in Land Ownership:

In revising the cadastral activity, the historical chronology of each parcel must be reflected. This will involve tracking all documents related to rights, whether real or ideal, in historical (or electronic and physical) records. This reflection will help identify hidden invoices and previously unknown entities benefiting unjustly, holding them accountable through taxes.

10. Compensation for Urban Development Areas:

For lands located in urban areas with development potential, we propose introducing a compensation model that benefits former owners. This could involve either direct compensation or allowing the former owners to benefit from additional building permits, such as two extra floors in a development area. A special law would regulate this compensation, which would be managed by the state until full compensation is provided.

11. Property Burden Tax for Beneficiaries of Past Laws:

Impose a property burden tax on landowners who have benefitted from past laws (e.g., Law 7501) if their properties overlap with former owners who have not received compensation or restitution. This tax will be linked to the original beneficiary, whether under Law 7501 or privatized housing laws.

12. Taxation of Privatized Properties:

Introduce a property reparation tax on privatized apartments or properties that are sold after 1992. This will create an incentive for urban development by attracting investors to build new multi-story properties, where they will also be subject to the same property taxes.

13. Reparation for Properties Expropriated for Public Interest:

For properties expropriated before 1991 under the guise of public interest, the reparation will be evaluated based on the law that recognizes the property and compensates the owner. The balance between the compensation and the value claimed over the years should be addressed.

14. Identification of Abusive Beneficiaries under Law 7501:

Identify those who have abusively benefited from Law 7501 by alienating or falsifying civil records to gain property. This will involve reviewing foundational records and statistical documents from the time.

15. Invalidation of Unjustly Benefited AMTPs:

Declare the absolute invalidity of AMTPs that have been unjustly obtained or do not serve the intended purposes of the law. These individuals should not be exempt from taxes.

16. Repeal of the Law on Strategic Investments

17. Identification and Mapping of State and Private Property:

Map out state and private properties digitally to allocate resources for targeted physical compensation. Former owners will be invited to apply for compensation in physical form. If they decline, their right to compensation in other forms will be extinguished.

18. Tax Exemption for Village Properties:

Exempt village houses and their surrounding courtyards from taxation when sold or revised. Formalize and legalize inherited village lands, applying Law 7501 as the mechanism for property recognition.

Territorial Development and Decentralization

The Democratic Party believes that, in the context of a country's development, two aspects are most important: population and territoriality, which encompasses the areas where the population carries out its life, economic, cultural, and social activities. Everything else is the product of the interaction between these two aspects, particularly the work of individuals and groups aimed at sustainably and intergenerationally utilizing natural and territorial resources, with the goal of developing a higher standard of living and dignity for the individual, the family, and the nation.

The Democratic Party, as an organization of individuals who respect freedom of belief, considers God, the Creator, or Nature to be the greatest and only architect of nature. We believe that nature, as designed and developed, reflects order, harmony, proportion, beauty, simplicity, and elegance. If it weren't, the world would be chaotic, ugly, and disorganized. On the other hand, we always believe that every architect—even the best human architect—is an architect of culture. Any interference with nature harms its natural state. Therefore, we, as right-wing thinkers, must intervene by evaluating and considering every construction and development project down to the smallest detail.

We believe that the Fatherland should be loved in every inch of its territorial extent, not just the border that separates us from our neighbors or the flag that identifies us. We must appreciate and love all of its natural resources, wherever they are located, not just in the big cities. The new love for the Fatherland will involve the smart, sustainable, and inclusive development of its natural and territorial resources. On one hand, we aim to take advantage of all the good that nature offers, and that technology allows us to transform into material goods to improve the current standard of living for citizens; on the other hand, we will protect and replenish these resources to pass them on to future generations. We will need to create governance conditions so that every citizen and family can engage with and benefit from this patriotic approach.

The Democratic Party believes farmland should be treated as a "protected area." Albania is the poorest country in Europe in terms of agricultural land per individual. We have less farmland than Egypt, which has about 70% of its territory covered by desert. In 1994, according to the statistics at the time, we had a land fund of 2,300 m² per inhabitant, while another statistic from the mid-2000s shows that this indicator has fallen to 1,700 m² per inhabitant. We recognize that this reduction in agricultural land is the result of incorrect policies pursued during the transition years, including those when the Democratic Party was in government.

We believe that national, regional, and local governments should not have a hierarchical relationship, and no government level should be superior to another. After 70 years of political and associational populism, Albania must establish a clear understanding of what should be delegated to each level of government. As we have previously outlined, this is important in every governmental scope, but is particularly crucial in sectors that impact the territorial and urban dimensions of the country. The principle of reducing the scope of government activity should guide this political exercise. We believe that Albania must have a more decentralized division of responsibilities between the three levels of government. We are convinced that the closer decision-making is to the community, the more effective the solutions to problems will be, as well as the better the balance of urban and territorial aspects.

The Democratic Party stresses that Albania's territorial dimension needs the "Utopia" of polycentric urban regions. Its urban dimension must adopt a polycentric approach across various urban scales. We will achieve this through an inclusive political stance for a balanced redistribution of the population across the national territory. This will aim to bring together natural and human resources, not only as an opportunity for economic prosperity but also as a patriotic approach. This political strategy will work toward preventing the depopulation of the Homeland and fostering national cohesion on the one hand, while preventing societal atomization and building communities based on solidarity on the other. Every national, regional, and local policy, and any project undertaken, should consider this political stance as a national priority.

We believe that Albania's spatial structure needs a balance of inhabited centers within each regional or local government entity. Polycentrism, with its two characteristics—specificity and complementarity—should define these inhabited centers. We recognize that urban Albania today consists of two opposing typologies of urban centers: large, overcrowded, high-density areas or abandoned, underpopulated, low-density housing. Both of these models are difficult and costly to manage, not to mention the inner urban imbalances that affect citizens' quality of life and the public health of communities. The first represents a severe lack of employment opportunities and other life activities; the second suffers from a lack of funding for basic public services.

We believe that the philosophy "The city is built for people and by people" is not just a slogan for urbanism, but rather the most fundamental principle in creating intelligent, sustainable, and inclusive living centers. Territories adapted for human life, which are not developed in accordance with planning that results from democratic processes involving all stakeholders, are doomed to fail in every respect. The Albanian case is a classic example of this kind of unchecked urban and construction development.

Today's Albania urgently needs to initiate planning processes where citizen involvement is a priority. We commit to building a legal system and planning practices that ensure this democratizing and productive necessity, improving the urban quality of residential complexes, neighborhoods, and cities as integral entities.

Reform of the Planning and Territorial Development System

The reform of the territorial planning and development system is of vital importance, not only for its primary goal—the planned development of the country's territorial and urban dimension—but also as a:

1. **Key component in the fight against corruption** (reducing governance overreach and strengthening local government);
2. **Key instrument of good governance** (constitutional equality and citizen empowerment in decision-making);
3. **Substantial contribution to the structuring of models for other sectors of national and social development** (social structure, political, economic, and cultural models);

4. **Protection of the environment from harmful developments** (natural and territorial resources, including the impacts of global warming);
5. **Provider of high-quality urban living for citizens** (housing, transport, employment, quality of infrastructure, and environmental quality of inhabited centers).

This reform is necessary for three fundamental reasons:

- (a) Albania has failed to stabilize a system of territorial and urban planning that aligns with the principles and practices of Western democratic and developed countries;
- (b) The socialist government has created a hyper-centralized system of power in this sector, often exceeding even the communist dictatorship-era system;
- (c) The socialist government has exploited this key sector for the country's most corrupt development projects.

The required reform will provide:

1. Protection of the natural environment and public ownership of land from exploitation and damage caused by corruption and irresponsible governance;
2. Spatial, territorial, and urban development based on planning instruments designed and adopted in democratic and inclusive processes involving stakeholders and citizens;
3. Facilitation of the building development permitting process and addressing injustices in the development of private ownership in cities and other territories of national importance, among other issues.

This is a medium-term and systemic reform, as it requires profound changes in the entire system, including cultural, legislative, and daily management practices. It is also complex because it involves several specific and complementary components. Some of the most essential components include:

1. **Administrative-Territorial Reform**

Administrative and territorial reform is necessary for the territorial planning and development sector, among other aspects. It will be based on the principles of decentralizing government functions to local governments and empowering citizens within these local governments. The principles outlined by EU institutions or wider regional organizations will guide every element of this reform.

This proposal organizes governance into three levels: national, regional, and local. These levels must be fully autonomous in terms of the functions they perform in territorial governance, while being coordinated with each other.

2. **Drafting and Adopting 'Territorial Planning and Development' Legislation**

The new legislation will be based on the principles of good urban governance, focusing on: sustainable economic and social development; horizontal and vertical coordination; variety; mandatory planning; continuity in planning; transparency and accountability; one-stop service and acceptance; specifically in planning; delegation and sub-delegation of competencies; efficiency, professionalism, and accountability in the planning and control process; subsidiarity; and harmonization with European standards in territorial planning and environmental criteria. This new legislation will create a comprehensive system with two main components: territorial planning and development control. Stakeholders and citizens affected by development should be

voluntary planning authorities, as their involvement is consistent with their constitutional and legal rights, not an obligation. Planning authorities should have full legitimacy over their decision-making.

3. **Review of Legislation on 'Legalization, Urbanization, and Integration of Informal Areas and Buildings'**

The new legislation will be based on two core right-wing principles: reducing the role and size of government and increasing individual freedom to engage in private transactions. It will rely on three main pillars:

- First, the legalization of buildings, formally recognizing them as property to the builder or owner.
 - Second, returning the land to the legitimate owner, allowing them to benefit from its sale or redevelopment at a later stage.
 - Third, letting the moral mechanisms of the free market operate by regulating ownership relationships between the two owners. These three pillars will expedite the legalization process, make it fairer, and reduce costs for taxpayers. The government function of legalization and urbanization should be transferred to local governments.
- ### 4. **Review of National and Local Land Plans and Drafting Regional Instruments**
- One of the essential projects in territorial planning and development will be to revise existing national and local plans, while focusing on regional planning for a more efficient distribution of the population and resources in Albania.

A modern transportation system – Roads, Ports, Airports and Railways

Transport is a key element for the economic and infrastructure development of the country, enabling Albania's best connection to the region and Europe. The Democratic Party has in the past contributed significantly to improving national roads and infrastructure, completing major projects such as the Nation's Road, and paving over 11,000 km of roads. Investments in this sector have helped to improve the circulation of goods and people, boosting the economy and tourism. However, the challenge of developing a rail system remains one of the priorities for the future, to ensure a more efficient, free and ecological transport.

A top priority for the Democratic Party will be to invest in modern railways, to create an integrated national network that connects the country's main cities and improves regional connections. Following European models, this development will contribute to the growth of the economy, reduce road traffic and pollution, as well as reduce the costs for transport of goods. Furthermore, the possibility of implementing the interport concept will be seen, which will facilitate the circulation and distribution of goods through seaports and railways, making Albania an important logistics center in the region.

International corridors that run through Albania, such as Corridor VIII, represent extraordinary opportunities to further integrate the country into European and global markets. The DP will support

strategic investments in these corridors to ensure that Albania becomes a key transport and trade point in the Balkans, improving infrastructure and attracting foreign investment.

1. Network Rail development:

- Reconstruction of the railway network: The initiative to build the first modern railway network connecting the capital Tirana with the main cities of Albania, such as Durres, Shkodra, Elbasan, Vlora, Korça, etc. The aim is to reduce freight transport costs and increase passenger safety, while simultaneously helping economic development and tourism.
- Railroad for freight: Establishing a network dedicated to transporting goods that facilitates the flow of agricultural and industrial products to ports and major cities, reducing the burden on automobile routes.
- Public-private partnership financing (PPP): To reduce the financial burden on the state, this project can be financed in cooperation with the private sector and with the support of the EU or international development institutions.

2. Modernization and Expansion of Ports:

- Development of Durres port as an international hub: Modernization of the infrastructure of the port of Durres to compete with the largest ports in the Adriatic, to turn it into an important cargo transport point. This includes upgrading container terminals, building modern warehouses and creating amenities for fast freight transport.
- Port of Vlora and Saranda: Transforming these ports into important centers for tourism, offering dedicated services for cruise ships and yachts. Furthermore, the port of Vlora can be developed for transporting goods in southern Albania, creating an important link to international markets.
- Interport concept: Construction of an interport in strategic areas such as Durres, to serve as a logistics center connecting road, rail and sea transport. This will help speed up freight turnover and lower logistical costs for businesses.

3. Transparency and Resettled Agreements for Occupied Ports:

- The “theft” of the port of Durres: Review of the signed agreements regarding the port of Durres to ensure that they are in line with national interests. Any suspicious agreement aimed at privatization without protecting Albania's strategic interests should be reviewed or cancelled.
- Audit of the Vlora and Saranda ports: A transparent investigation and audit to assess whether current agreements for these ports are legal and beneficial to the Albanian economy. If the receiving of these ports is done contrary to the public interests, steps will be taken to bring them back under state control.

4. Facilitation of International and Regional Transport:

- Regional integration: Projects connecting Albania to the Balkan rail network, to create new trade corridors connecting Kosovo, North Macedonia, Greece and Montenegro.
- International shipping: Developing agreements with countries in the region and the EU for the creation of green corridors in shipping, which favour fast and low-cost trade exchanges.

Protecting and strengthening the Albanian Family

Family and family values are and remain the foundation of society. The weight of the latter depends precisely on its functionality and the entire society. In the hands of the family is the future of society and the nation. We have a valuable tradition of family and its protection, but as everywhere in the world and in Albania the way of life has changed and policies that are called sensitive and future oriented should take into account first the best Albanian family tradition and its protection. For this reason, family policies must be based on traditional values and new realities. Family does not exist as a notion only of self. It is an essential part of society, cultural and social life, surrounded by healthy, morally clothed structures.

Therefore, above all, in these troubled times, we resolutely defend the family as well as traditional marriage — which in our tradition and civilization are sacred and irreplaceable. Given the danger that is in place, we see it as a duty to place proper emphasis on the need for support and protection of rights related to family, family values, and especially the protection of the lives of future generations since conception.

Like all society, the Albanian family has suffered deformities, deterioration and not infrequently dissolution. The lack of clear and conservative policies for the family and its preservation, the depopulation of the country, poverty and the economic and social changes of the country, as well as the shifts from rural to urban areas, the lack of a clear perspective for the future, are the main factors of the deterioration of the family in Albania.

The uncertainty in marriage and lack of cohesion in coexists, the lack of support for single parents and high infant mortality and low birth rates in the country, have brought great problems with the dissolution of the family in many young couples and especially in the middle class.

Family values bind men and women together in equality. Our family policies aim to create the optimal conditions for as many people as possible to decide on a life with children. For this reason, it is important to have the means so that parents can combine family and work.

Within the family people seek social and moral virtues, equal obligations, faith and responsibility, and respect for individualism. In the family it is the best life experience of generations. For this reason, family values are fundamental elements for the development of the individual but also for social coexistence. It is precisely this that we conservative Democrats feel an obligation to defend family values as our best tradition.

b) Demographic changes in Albania and depopulation

Albania, due to the consequences of misgovernment, a carefully planned agenda, destructive economic and socio-political conditions, has long faced mass migration, especially of youth and middle class.

Politicized administration, lack of education, lack of meritocracy, hopelessness for the present and future, crisis of confidence, lack of labour and low paid and unpaid work, ethnicity and centralization of central and local government, and lack of urban and territorial decentralization, politicization of society and lack of democratic representation, have brought about the current situation of depopulation of Albania.

Such a phenomenon that risks escalating, for us, is extremely worrying. The solution can only be achieved by having an effective economic, social and legal platform that will enhance and develop the well-being and quality of life. In particular, supporting young families with special economic programs.

The decline of birth rates in the country, the decline in standard of living, the decline of the health and care system, and the binding measures by the state are very worrying problems for us. For this reason, we think that the new approach to stopping the phenomenon of depopulation and birth reduction should have a national character and is a matter of Albanian national interest that must be urgently addressed with certain policies where individual freedom, rule of law, creation of equal opportunities and democratic representation take national priority.

We propose a Grand National Pact to stop and reverse the trend of depopulation and demographic decline.

1. Strengthening New Families

- Interest-free loan for new marriages: Offering an interest-free loan of up to 2 million ALL for couples who marry for the first time, forgiven if they have at least three children.
- Bonus for every child born: A bonus for every child born, high value for the third and fourth child, encouraging families to have more children.

2. Big Families Tax Break

- Exemption from income tax for mothers with four or more children.
- Tax cuts for families with three or more children: Large families will benefit from lowering other percentages of taxes such as VAT and local taxes.

3. Housing and Homeownership Loans

- Home program for young families: Families with three or more children will be included in a relief program for purchasing a new residence.
- Interest reduction on housing loans: Subsidized housing loans with minimal interest for new families and those with children that are forgiven after the birth of the third child.

4. Loans for family vehicles

Seven-seat car soft loans: Offering soft loans for seven-seat car purchases for families with three or more children, lowering transport costs for large families.

5. Maternity leave and Parent support

- Extending the maternity leave and leave period for fathers: Paid leave for mothers up to two years, and for fathers up to 6 months, increasing benefits for multi-child families.
- Grandparents' help: Allowing grandparents to receive financial assistance to care for grandchildren when their parents are at work.
- Relief from the tax burden for single mothers

6. Policy on Reverse Immigration

- Return program for diaspora Albanians: Providing tax benefits and relief to Albanians returning from emigration, including soft housing loans and bonuses for children born after returning.
- Boosting investment for return home: Support for entrepreneurship and investments of Albanians who want to return to develop businesses in Albania.

(For more, please refer to the Family Department's program in the Democratic Party. Since a document was compiled by the DP, we have not been extended to this section)

A strong, healthy, vibrant Albanian youth

The Democratic Party was created by young people. They are the heart that beats relentlessly, to give the necessary oxygen, the necessary energy, and vital inspiration to the Democrats. The Democratic Party strengthens and shows its best side when young Albanians have all the opportunities to unleash their enormous potential, to highlight their anti-communist spirit and to guide us toward the future, respecting, honoring and appreciating their families, traditions and histories.

Therefore, the Democratic Party is determined to focus on its policies and alongside the action and political decision-making of the Albanian youth. Our goal is to create the right conditions for the development of youth in their homeland, the push for the formation of new families and the immediate halting of immigration by restoring hope.

First, we aim to be the guarantees that families' voices for their children are heard powerfully and always. Parents and children should be the primary decision makers through participation in school boards or other mechanisms that will need to be created.

Decentralization of power will enable the process of hearing, reviewing and facilitating decision-making on problems of children and young people, so that the decision-making process comes as close as possible to them in the communities where they live. Restoring extra-curricular activities (sports, arts and science), safe community life, and developing creative processes and critical thinking as a child are key goals for us. Above all, it is our firm conviction that at the foundation of a strong Albanian state lies patriotic and scientific education and the maximum security of children and youth everywhere in the territory of the Republic.

We defend without compromise the right of young people to participate in associations, student organizations, discussion forums, the unfolding of ideas and the implementation of the projects of young Albanians.

Our belief is that the youth is the guarantor and initiator of the prosperity, wealth and well-being of the Albanian family, community and state in the future. Our youth will therefore have to say their opinion on the fates of the nation and society.

We are convinced that the Albanian youth is enshrined with values such as family, friendship, teamwork and activities aimed at strengthening traditional principles of civil society. We are all created with these values.

Today, Albania has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment. **Our goal is to provide the market economy, quality education, vocational schools, means to strengthen the Albanian family and restore meritocracy, to ensure the place for young Albanians in the labor market, with dignified incomes and high social mobility.**

This achievement will be essential, as the youth will be in charge of the 21st century Albania. **The strengthening of our nation depends on the strengthening of the Albanian youth.**

Our program will focus on developing economic opportunities, increasing vocational and educational skills, engagement in cultural, economic, social and political processes, and promoting traditional values such as family, work and patriotism.

This program is based on the best examples of successful foreign practices to motivate and empower the young Albanian generation to take an active role in building their country's future.

1. Promoting employment and entrepreneurship opportunities

- **National Youth Entrepreneurship Programme:** Taking examples from programs in the US and Britain, a special fund will be created to support youth start-ups. This fund will offer grants, training and mentoring to young people who want to start their own businesses, highlighting innovation in technology, agriculture and tourism. Legal and practical options for alternative forms of fundraising, like crowdfunding, will be created.
- **Youth Employment Initiative:** A scheme that will encourage businesses to hire young people, lowering the burden of contributions to employers for every employed young person. Tax reliefs will be created for companies focusing on training and developing youth workforces, following models from Germany and Israel.

2. Educational and professional program for young people

- Internationally recognized diplomas and market-related education: Profound reforms to the education system to adapt school curricula to labour market demands. Young people will have the opportunity to obtain internationally recognized diplomas from Albanian universities through agreements with European and American institutions.
- Expanding vocational education and practical training: In cooperation with the private sector, vocational schools and training centers will be created that prepare young people for the labour market in areas such as information technology, renewable energy and tourism. The German and Swiss models of dual education will be integrated, offering a combination of theoretical and practical learning.

3. Active participation in political and social life

Initiative for youth involvement in decision-making: Local and national youth forums will be established that will function as advisory councils for the government, providing young people with the opportunity to be directly involved in decision-making and to provide proposals on issues such as education, employment, environment and technology.

4. Empowering national values and traditions

- Cultural and educational program for national identity: An education and promotion programme will be developed that will emphasize the importance of national heritage, history and traditional Albanian values. This program will include cultural activities, inclusion of young people in national projects for preserving cultural heritage and promoting patriotism.
- Supporting family and youth involvement: Building on the practices of conservative countries like Hungary, our programme will promote building strong family values in young people.
- We pledge to implement initiatives that support young people in creating sustainable families through tax reliefs for young couples and soft home purchase loans.

5. Empowering youth access to technology and innovation

- Innovation and Technology Centers for Young People: Innovation Centers will be established throughout Albania that will provide courses and training for young people in areas such as programming, robotics and artificial intelligence. These centers will take the Silicon Valley and Scandinavian countries model to create an innovative generation and move towards free economic zones for technological services, certain health services, and industrial services.

6. Mobility and international exchanges

- Youth Exchange Agreements with European countries and beyond: Intergovernmental agreements will be established with the EU and other countries to promote youth and professional exchange programmes, following the model of successful programmes such as Erasmus. This will give young people the opportunity to benefit from international education and experience.
- Youth passport for travel to the EU and beyond: A special initiative for young Albanians that will enable them to travel cheaper and access to cultural and educational events in the EU and other partner countries. This initiative aims to facilitate and encourage the travel of young Albanians to European Union countries and other partner countries for educational, cultural and professional reasons. It will function as a special identity card and benefits programme for young people, based on similarly successful models of European countries, such as the European Youth Card.

7. Promote sports activities

- Program to promote sports and active life: The government will encourage the construction of sports centers and the creation of programs to encourage young people to engage in sports and physical activities. Through joint investments with local communities, gyms and sports fields for young people will be built, following the models of successful EU countries.
- Fighting technology addiction: Following the example of advanced countries such as Japan and South Korea, educational programs will be created to raise awareness of the dangers of technology addiction and promote its healthy use.

Protecting our Environment

Albanian democrats are in defense of nature, but not falling prey to the use of the environmental issue for the interests of neo-Marxist groups and for personal gain.

Environmental protection, especially natural assets, is a fundamentally conservative principle. We have to protect it in the best way possible, as it doesn't just belong to us. It is inherited from our ancestors, so its preservation is a double obligation, as it belongs to the new generation that is growing, as well as the generations of the future, which have not yet been born. It's invaluable wealth to us, and as such it can't be placed on the market.

Misuse of natural assets and environmental pollution, often tolerated for the sake of various personal and political interests, must be stopped. Therefore, the exploitation of natural assets must be done ethically according to modern standards and technology, with responsibility, not causing pollution or damage.

Forests, parks, rivers, lakes, seas, etc. We must be taken care of and protected and must urgently stop the exploitation of the clientelist and irresistible that results from aggressive development.

It will also stop immediately the urban massacre in cities and stop issuing of building permits without criteria and on clientelistic basis, serving the construction mafia and cleaning of illegal money, and thus the increase of green areas in the cities should be encouraged.

We will also encourage the use of renewable energy as well as ecological materials and vehicles; the use of everyday tools from ecological soaking materials and recycling of waste must be carried out with contemporary methods.

It is our duty as conservationists – defenders of nature – to preserve the landscape as part of our natural heritage, an expression of the true beauty of our country, guaranteeing its harmony with communities and human rights, historical, agricultural and livestock heritage.

Essentially, however, there remains the promotion of local and concrete environmental initiatives against focused environmental planning, the ending of abuses of tenders and unsolicited bids, the massacre of incinerators (incinerators) of urban waste, lack of control for gas emissions and revision of fuel processing. We will pass a new law for the recycling of waste.

In this context, we condemn the incinerator affair as one of the issues of great public sensitivity, and with one of the greatest financial damages to Albanian taxpayers. All aspects of this affair conflict with everything a conservative believes, from pollution to the way concessions are awarded and to the lack of transparency, corruption and impunity. The greatest damage today with the incinerator issue is done to the environment as waste continues to be burned and buried, thus representing a major problem for the public health of citizens.

The lack of transparency of the race, the destruction of the environment and cultural heritage are the elements that make the conservatives oppose the same scheme exploiting corruption in the Port of Durres, Port of Vlora, Vlora Airport or the Archaeological Park of Butrint. All of them will be reviewed and even cancelled.

These themes are of particular importance to conservatives as they violate every free market rule, fair competition that we believe in, and damage our environment and cultural heritage. Not only should concessions and tenders be made with pure competition and maximum transparency, but they should not be awarded to offshore companies or those whose owners are not known to the endowment.

The preservation and improvement of the natural environment must be done by respecting the quality of life of the people, without the burden of this change on the shoulders of Albanians, by charging them with new taxes or regulations. For us, as conservatives, protecting the environment is a primary issue, as it is a legacy that we are charged with preserving, enriching and passing on to generations to come. We believe that environmental protection is done starting from family, community and increasing their level of living.

The programmes and ideas forced by the global or local left to guarantee environmental preservation are aimed only at creating a new political order, which substantially modifies people's lives and further focuses decision-making on a few hands.

Albania is a country that sources its energy from water sources rather than from high-polluting energy sources. Considering this fact, the preservation and use of the water resources, rivers, seas and lakes of our country is carefully made even more essential.

We believe that promoting the protection of the natural environment is done with the human being as the main protagonist. In the face of radical environmentalism of programmes forced from above, the preservation of natural and protected areas cannot be done by harming local communities and traditional ways of production. Decentralization and the delivery of responsibilities and management to local and community government is key in this process.

In the face of over-exploitation models of natural resources, it is necessary to ensure that all human activity, especially economic, respects the natural heritage of Albanians.

International relations

Albania has a special and irreplaceable role in international politics, stemming from its geostrategic position between the East and the West. As a state located in a historically conflict-laden region with opposing

forces and interests, Albania has had and continues to have a significant influence on the stability of the Balkans and on international relations beyond it.

With NATO membership since 2009 and the aim of integration into the European Union, Albania has played and continues to play a key role in promoting stability and peace in a region fraught with ongoing tensions and the legacies of past conflicts.

In an era where global and regional geopolitical challenges are becoming increasingly complex, facing threats like hybrid warfare, cybersecurity, and energy transformations requires a proactive foreign policy based on strong partnerships and well-articulated national interests. In this context, the Democratic Party of Albania (DP) commits to a foreign policy that not only relies on historical alliances with the West but also adopts strategic approaches to tackle new challenges. A strong diplomacy, a globally interconnected economy, and a modernized defense system are the three main pillars that will empower Albania as an important actor in the region and beyond.

With this new platform, DP aims to address key issues that have impacted the loss of trust among citizens and foreign partners in the political system and Albania's international role. We aim to redefine strategic relations with allies, restore the integrity of Albanian diplomacy, and advance specific interests that strengthen our position in an increasingly multipolar world order.

a) Sovereign Albania

For us, national and economic sovereignty are the primary foundations for any relationship Albania has with the world. This sovereignty stems from the Albanian people, who are the source of all public power and remain the basis of all decision-making. Every power, according to our principles, is created to serve the interests of the people and to realize their will.

Under this principle, the Albanian people have the inalienable right to make direct or indirect decisions about Albania's future, including changes in the political and economic system. This right is essential and cannot be restricted by external or internal factors.

Ensuring the security, freedom, and self-governance of Albanian citizens is an undisputed priority for us. We are committed to defending these values against any possible threat, whether from outside or inside the country.

Concurrently, we will work to ensure the economic well-being of Albanian citizens, guaranteeing that every citizen and every other entity, without discrimination, respects Albania's economic interests.

We strongly believe that the people and the Constitution of the Republic of Albania are above any external factor, and we oppose any attempt to impose influences that contradict the will and decisions of the Sovereign.

b) Recognition of Kosovo and the National Issue

Aware that we are united with Kosovo and the rest of the Albanian nation outside our borders not only by history, blood, language, and shared traditions but also by the spirit of freedom and self-determination, we pledge to always protect the territorial and political integrity of the Republic of Kosovo against any plan or factor threatening its identity, whether local or international.

In shaping our foreign policy, the recognition and protection of Kosovo plays a very significant and undisputed role.

We are one nation, one origin, in different states, with the aim of uniting in the Euro-Atlantic families or according to the aspirations of Albanians in both states.

National political dignity and the protection of the fundamental rights of Albanians in Kosovo, the Albanian state-forming community in North Macedonia, Albanian minorities in Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece, as well as the rights of every Albanian worldwide, are among the ideals of our conservative spirit, for which we do not negotiate.

Any negotiation or agreement regarding Albania's land, maritime, or aerial borders, already defined, must first be based on the sovereignty of our territorial integrity, the national interests of the Albanian people, and the sovereign's decision.

c) Relations with the United States of America

The Democratic Party of Albania considers the relationship with the United States of America as one of the main pillars of its foreign policy, building this partnership on a shared vocation for the struggle for freedom, democracy, and unrestricted rights for individuals. This deep and continuous engagement has always been closely aligned with the vision and values of the Democratic Party, which was born as a counterbalance to a dictatorial and unjust regime. This shared history has made the USA our key partner for security, development, and long-term prosperity of Albania. This relationship, deepened through a mutual commitment to freedom and democracy, has remained unchanged despite significant political changes and global challenges we have faced over the past decades.

Within this framework, the Democratic Party views the partnership with the USA as an irreplaceable opportunity to strengthen democratic institutions in Albania, to protect our national sovereignty, and to develop a society that values private initiative and individual freedom.

d) European Integration

The European Union is a story of freedom, peace, and prosperity. The European Union project is a union of forces and values that emerged after the end of World War II. Albania, due to its history of isolation and communism, remained outside this initiative which later turned into a spirit and a large family. In the early post-communist period, Albania became part of the dream for a united Europe, and Albanians rose in their anti-communist revolution with the slogan "Let's make Albania like the rest of Europe."

Our connection with Europe has deep historical, cultural, and economic roots. As a people who have empathy for tradition, history, and European values in their DNA, Albanians consider European integration as one of the major interests in the hierarchy of strategic interests.

Albania's integration into the European Union is a national strategic priority for the Democratic Party. The traditional values of Europe, the European Renaissance, are the guidelines of our political philosophy, and as such, we will strive to adapt and preserve them at every stage of the integration process, without ever alienating Albanianism and traditionalism. The sovereignty of each state in the large European family develops and is protected if we come together and act together. Our bilateral relations with EU countries, the United Kingdom, and other European nations will be of particular importance to the Democratic Party.

The slowdown in reforms, rampant corruption, organized crime, and a lack of a realistic approach regarding the EU have diminished our negotiating power for EU membership. No regional or bilateral initiative can replace European integration, but we are convinced that with our invaluable help, Albania will continue efforts to join the EU as soon as possible, and will be a success story in the future in fulfilling the reforms for membership.

Concrete proposals of the Democratic Party:

For a center-right conservative force, the main objective in foreign relations is to strengthen Albania's sovereignty, consolidate its strategic position in the region, and ensure full EU membership within the first term of government. This program must be based on strong diplomacy, strategic partnerships, and deep internal reforms that accelerate the European integration process.

1. European Integration as the top priority

- Entry of Albania into the EU within the first term: This will be the top priority. For this purpose, the next government will focus on fulfilling the EU criteria for judicial reform, fighting corruption, and the rule of law. Concrete steps will be taken to end the capture of institutions and improve their functionality.
- Continuous engagement with the European Commission and member states to secure full political and technical support. High-level delegations will lead uninterrupted diplomatic talks to strengthen the political will of European partners.

2. Strategic partnership with the USA

Returning to strong engagement with the USA: The USA remains Albania's primary ally for security and defense. In an increasingly globalized world with new geopolitical challenges, this strategic partnership should be based on several key points that reflect the shared interests of Albania and the United States, as well as the common values they share:

Collective Security and Defense: In times when global threats are becoming more sophisticated and varied, from hybrid wars, cyberattacks, to the escalation of international tensions with actors like Russia and China, cooperation in the field of security is essential. Albania, as a NATO member, has a direct interest in strengthening ties with the United States in collective security defense and contributing to regional stability. Cooperation with the USA is necessary to tackle cyber threats that have taken on global dimensions and to ensure more advanced protection against external and internal attacks. In this context, close cooperation in cybersecurity, preparation of armed forces, and the development of defense infrastructure will be a priority for the Democratic Party.

Economic Development and Market Freedom: One of the key values that link the Democratic Party with the United States is the deep belief in the power of the free market and competition as drivers of economic development. Post the economic devastation from recent left-wing and monopolistic policies, Albania needs a strong partnership to create new investment opportunities and to strengthen key sectors like energy, infrastructure, and technology. The USA can provide support for developing a more diversified economy, focusing on renewable energy and modern technologies. Close cooperation with American companies and strategic investments will improve Albania's competitiveness and contribute to job creation, offering opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

Integration into International Structures and Strengthening Diplomacy: The engagement of the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom in strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law has been crucial in supporting Albania's integration into international organizations. These strategic partnerships have been essential for Albania's progress in EU integration processes, an inseparable objective for the Democratic Party. We are ready to cooperate and continuously receive support for judicial reform, the fight against corruption, and improvement in the rule of law, key aspects for achieving European standards. We are committed to working on strengthening Albanian diplomacy and increasing engagement in international relations, creating new opportunities for Albania on the global stage.

Protection of Democratic Values and Individual Freedom: The Democratic Party, having emerged as a counterbalance to dictatorship and embraced ideals of freedom and human rights, is fully aligned with the USA and the European Union in defending these fundamental values. Albania, in cooperation with our allies, must strengthen democratic institutions and protect individual freedoms and rights. This is a commitment to ensure a strong and free society where citizens can express themselves and realize their potential in a safe and democratic environment. For the Democratic Party, this partnership is an opportunity to deepen internal reforms that promote a strong rule of law and an independent justice system.

Fight Against Terrorism and Dictatorships: In a world divided by deep political polarization and threats from authoritarian and extremist regimes, partnership with allies is necessary to fight international terrorism and to promote democracy against dictatorships. Albania, as a NATO member and a pro-Western country, plays a significant role in supporting international policies aimed at addressing global security threats. We will meet our obligation to spend 2% of GDP on defense, and contribute within NATO to the fight against terrorism and radicalism, ensuring lasting peace in the region.

Energy and Environmental Challenges: New Challenges of the Time: The Democratic Party is the force that achieved the construction of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), helping to reduce Europe's dependency on Russian gas. The increasing demand for energy and environmental protection are two challenges affecting not just Albania, but the entire globe. Albania, with its rich hydro resources and great potential for renewable energy, has the opportunity to leverage these resources for a sustainable energy supply. Our geographical position also gives us the opportunity to play a key role in enhancing energy security for the European continent.

3. Expanding Regional Cooperation

- Encouraging cooperation with Western Balkan countries: Albania will play a leading role in regional initiatives like the Berlin Process, ensuring that economic and political cooperation advances national interests. With our policies, we will restore good neighborly relations based on common interests, with Albanian interest as primary, restoring the Albanian factor as a key player in the region.
- Regional cooperation will have as its guiding star the strengthening of the positions of Albanians in the region, coordinating with the government of Kosovo and other Albanian political forces in the region. Increasing trade with Kosovo by removing customs barriers and ensuring tax incentives will be our priority in the first year of governance.
- Good neighborly policy: We will intensify relations with neighboring countries by promoting peace, stability, and economic integration. We will support the rights of Albanians in these countries and fight any form of discrimination against them. The principle of reciprocity will be fundamental in relations with the governments of neighboring countries.

4. Economic and Trade Diplomacy

Encouraging Foreign Investment: To position Albania as a leader in foreign investments in the Balkans, we will develop a focused and concrete strategy that includes a series of measures to attract and retain foreign investors, directly competing with other countries in the region, such as Serbia.

To position Albania as a leader in foreign investments in the Balkans, the government will engage in creating a favorable and sustainable environment for international investors by implementing specific measures aimed at attracting investments in strategic sectors like renewable energy, information technology, infrastructure, and agriculture. Albania will develop free economic zones and industrial parks, offering special conditions for investors, including reduced taxes and streamlined administrative procedures. This will create

opportunities for the development of new industries and the strengthening of sectors with great growth potential, especially in resource-rich industries like energy and agriculture.

Part of this commitment is also the improvement of infrastructure, investing in ports, railways, and roads that connect Albania with other markets in the region and the EU, to facilitate the movement of goods and investments. Albania will also leverage its relations with the European Union and the United States to strengthen economic diplomacy, by signing bilateral and multilateral agreements that ease investors' access to the Albanian market. In this context, a sustainable strategy will be established to improve Albania's image as a reliable investment destination through legal reforms, enhancing transparency and credibility of public administration, and an uncompromising fight against organized crime and international drug cartels that have turned Albania into their base.

Moreover, efforts will be made to compete with other countries in the region by offering more competitive conditions and strong support for investors seeking new business opportunities. To further increase the capacity to attract large investments and ensure long-term sustainable development, Albania will create investment platforms that facilitate access for foreign investors and Albanians living in the diaspora, creating opportunities for major projects in sectors like renewable energy and green infrastructure. This commitment will bring a noticeable increase in foreign investments and position Albania as a stable leader in Balkan investments, creating a competitive and favorable environment for economic development and job creation.

Expanding Albanian Markets: Albanian diplomacy will aim to sign new trade agreements with countries outside the EU, including the United Kingdom, the USA, Japan, and Gulf countries, ensuring broader market access for Albanian exports, particularly for our certified products, on global markets.

5. Reorganization and Modernization of Albanian Diplomacy

- Reorganization of the Diplomatic Service: Increasing the professionalism of Albanian diplomats is vital for a successful foreign policy. The government will reform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including more experts in important fields and eliminating political appointments.
- Digital Diplomacy: Albania will embrace digital diplomacy to promote its image and influence international issues through the use of modern communication technologies.

6. Migration Policy and Diaspora

- Full Engagement with the Albanian Diaspora: Our diaspora is a great national asset, and the government will increase communication and support to involve them more in national decision-making. Platforms will be created to encourage their investments in Albania, through Diaspora Bonds or similar mechanisms.
- Economic Diplomacy for the Protection of Migrant Rights: Albanian embassies will focus on protecting the rights of Albanian migrants, especially in EU countries and the USA, ensuring full legal and political support for them.

7. Combating Foreign Influence from Powers Opposed to the West

Mitigating Russian and Chinese Influence: Addressing the influences of Russia and China: Albania will increase vigilance and oversight of possible and undesirable influences from Russia and China by taking clear and concrete steps to ensure the sovereignty and security of the country. This will be achieved through:

Strengthening the law and rules on strategic investments: Albania will implement a clear and strict policy for controlling investments coming from these states in key sectors such as energy, technology, and critical infrastructure. This includes creating a detailed monitoring and control system for every strategic investment and reevaluating the permissions for projects that could have national security implications.

Oversight of companies with foreign capital: Creation of strong regulatory mechanisms for monitoring companies that have ties to states like Russia and China, to ensure they operate in compliance with Albanian and European laws and regulations, and are not used for insincere political or economic purposes that could harm national interests.

Strengthening international cooperation with allies: Albania will intensify cooperation with international allies, including NATO and the European Union, to develop joint defense strategies against potential threats from foreign influences. This includes engagement in intelligence information exchange, support in security policies, and enhancing Albania's defense capabilities.

Diversification of economic partners and investment sources: Albania will strive to diversify investment sources and develop relations with countries and organizations that share common democratic values and respect the principles of Albanian state independence and sovereignty. This will encourage the growth of opportunities for sustainable and clean investments from reliable partners.

Creation of a coordinated national defense policy: Through improving national security and defense policies, Albania will engage in developing its defense capabilities to counter external threats. This will include strengthening the army and the national security system, as well as involvement in European Union and NATO defense strategies.

Increasing transparency and public control: To ensure any potential foreign influence happens in line with national interests and democratic values, Albania will increase transparency and strengthen public control mechanisms over decision-making processes for strategic investments and agreements. This will involve monitoring every contract and agreement made with states like Russia and China to prevent corruption and power abuse.

New Partnerships with Balkan and Mediterranean Countries: Albania will aim to strengthen new partnerships with Balkan and Mediterranean countries, creating cooperation opportunities in key sectors like transportation, renewable energy, and digital technologies. This will involve fostering closer ties through integrated infrastructure, enabling more efficient trade exchanges and boosting regional investments. Albania will also engage in joint projects that promote the use of clean energy resources and environmental protection, contributing to strengthening the region's position in global economies and ensuring sustainable development for all involved countries.

We are aware that currently, there are many foreign influences from destabilizing forces in the region, and for this, we commit to intensifying diplomatic efforts to create a common regional diplomatic platform, ensuring a coordinated and aligned approach among Balkan states against any attempt by these forces to destabilize the region.

To challenge these destabilizing forces, Albania must focus on strengthening cooperation with European and Western partners to build political, economic, and security barriers that minimize the influence of third powers in the region. A direct and concrete step would be the creation of a joint European initiative for monitoring and controlling strategic investments by foreign destabilizing forces, making it harder for these states to make investments that could threaten the economic and political security of the region. This initiative could include establishing a joint monitoring and assessment agency for strategic investments, which would oversee every investment in important sectors like infrastructure, energy, and natural resources, ensuring they are driven by common interests and help the sustainable development of the region, without allowing these influences to gain power and undermine the independence of Balkan and Southeastern European states.

8. Acceleration of Reforms for National Security and EU

Albania will commit to enhancing its capabilities in this area, creating a robust defensive infrastructure against cyber threats. This step is essential for protecting sensitive data, including that of citizens and institutions, and ensuring security in strategic sectors such as energy, finance, and public administration.

We will engage in **the creation of a national cyber security agency** that will closely cooperate with international agencies and implement standardized security protocols to align with EU and NATO requirements.

Similarly, the fight against organized crime and corruption will remain an unwavering priority. Part of the EU integration process is meeting its requirements for strengthening the rule of law and improving the criminal justice system. Albania will undertake a deep judicial reform, which includes combating organized crime and corruption at every level of the state. We will implement an integrated national strategy to fight organized crime, which will include concrete measures to increase international cooperation in combating criminal groups, creating a strong foundation for cross-border investigations and joint operations with other security agencies like Europol and Interpol.

A New Horizon – Building the Contract with Albanians

Now is the time to set the direction for Albania for the coming decades. We can choose to continue with the failed policies of the past, or we can opt for a bright future built upon a hopeful, optimistic, and realistic vision, based on conservative values and policies that have been proven to work everywhere and at all times, and that are valuable for all Albanians.