



# Special Reports

FINANCIAL TIMES

# Albania 2009

The Financial Times proposes to publish this FT Report on December 7, 2009.

(Advertising copy deadline: November 23, 2009).

*We plan to include the following features (please note that this list is provisional):*

## **1. Introduction**

After joining Nato last April, Albania hopes to become an official candidate for European Union membership and receive from the Commission a date for starting accession talks. But a general election last June, narrowly won by the Democratic party of Sali Berisha, the prime minister, fell short of European standards according to international observers. Albania faces an uphill task to meet the EU criteria amid slowing economic growth and weaker foreign investment. This piece, setting the scene for the special report, outlines the challenges facing the country in the current environment.

## **2. Rule of Law**

Under the supervision of Bamir Topi, the country's president, the judicial system is becoming more independent and transparent although corruption and political interference are still widespread. This article examines Albania's progress on meeting EU benchmarks in justice and human rights.

## **3. Economy and Banking**

Albania still expects to see positive growth this year but a return to previous high growth rates averaging more than 6 per annually will be hard to achieve. Foreign remittances have fallen and commercial banks face a sharp rise in non-performing loans. The lek's recent decline against the euro highlights concern over the high percentage of foreign currency denominated lending in the banking system. This article looks at the deepening impact of the economic crisis.

## **4. Energy**

Albania has signed deals worth more than Euro1.5bn with international investors to build new generating capacity with a focus on renewables. This piece considers the country's prospects for ending a chronic domestic energy shortage and later becoming an electricity exporter.

## 5. City Profile – Vlora

The country's only deepwater port has attracted interest from international investors seeking to upgrade facilities for maritime transport and develop oil and gas storage capacity. Can Vlora become a trading hub for the southern Balkans?

## 6. Entrepreneurship

This piece looks at successful Albanian companies set up by local entrepreneurs.

### **Editorial Information**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Special Reports are written by FT staff journalists and a small number of selected freelance writers. They will be specialists in the field and already have regular contacts to update them. It is therefore difficult for an unsolicited submission to be so compelling that it forces its way on to a writer's agenda.

However, it does happen occasionally. We ask that all submissions be sent to [ftreports@ft.com](mailto:ftreports@ft.com), from where they are forwarded to the appropriate writer.

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