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ACCESSION DOCUMENT

Subject: EUROPEAN UNION COMMON POSITION
– Cluster 4: Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity

EUROPEAN UNION COMMON POSITION

(following Albania's Negotiating Position AD 10/25 CONF-ALB 9)

Negotiating Cluster: 4

Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity

Including chapters 14 – Transport Policy, 15 - Energy, 21 - Trans European Networks, 27 - Environment and Climate Change

This position of the European Union is based on its general position for the Accession conference with Albania (AD 5/22 CONF-ALB 2), and is subject to the negotiating principles endorsed therein, in particular:

- any view expressed by either Albania or the EU on a specific chapter of the negotiations will in no way prejudice the position which may be taken on other chapters;
- agreements reached in the course of negotiations on specific chapters, even partial ones, may not be considered as final until an overall agreement has been reached for all chapters;

as well as to the requirements set out in points 2, 3, 5, 10, 16, 23, 26, 31, 38, 45, 46, 47 and 48 of the Negotiating Framework.

The EU encourages Albania to continue the process of alignment with the EU *acquis* and its effective implementation and enforcement, and in general to develop already before accession, policies and instruments as close as possible to those of the EU.

The EU notes that Albania, in its position AD 10/25 CONF-ALB 9 accepts the EU *acquis* under Cluster 4 as in force on 16 June 2025 and declares that it will be ready to implement it by the date of its accession to the European Union except under chapter 27, where it requests for transitional measures in the fields of air quality, water quality, waste management, chemicals and industrial pollution and risk management.

As an overall response to Albania's requests for transitional measures, the EU recalls its general negotiating position that transitional measures are exceptional, limited in time and scope, and accompanied by a plan with clearly defined stages for the application of the *acquis*. They must not involve amendments to the rules or policies of the EU, disrupt their proper functioning, or lead to significant distortion of competition. The EU takes note that Albania plans to adopt Directive/Regulation Specific Implementation Plans (DSIPs/RSIPs) as an integral part of Albania's negotiating position, and underlines that it is a prerequisite for further work on the transitional periods notably in order to provide ongoing, detailed and budgeted plans for alignment with the directives/regulations concerned. To enable a substantive examination of the requests, the EU underlines the importance for Albania to submit DSIPs/RSIPs at an early stage of the negotiations and to include in these all elements set out below.

The submission of these DSIP/RSIP do not prejudice the EU's position on accepting Albania's requests for the requested transitional periods. The EU also notes that Albania will report on a regular basis on the implementation of the DSIPs/RSIPs.

1. Chapter 14 – Transport Policy

The EU notes the efforts Albania has made to align with the EU *acquis* in **road transport** and stresses that further progress is required.

The EU notes that Albania needs to fully align with the Eurovignette Directive¹, the European Electronic Tolling Systems (EETS) Directive², tariffs and crisis measures³, clean vehicles⁴, intelligent transport system (ITS)⁵ and alternative fuels infrastructure (AFIR)⁶ *acquis*. Albania's legislation is currently only partially aligned with weights and dimensions legislation (WDD)⁷. While definitions are in line with the Directive, key elements such as weight and length requirements have not yet been incorporated into national law.

¹ Directive 1999/62/EC.

² Directive (EU) 2019/520.

³ Regulation (EEC) 4058/89 and Regulation (ECC) 3916/90.

⁴ Directive (EU) 2019/1161.

⁵ Directive (EU) 2010/40.

⁶ Regulation (EU) No 2023/1804.

⁷ Directive 96/53/EC.

The EU stresses the need for further alignment and for establishing national access points, as required under previous ITS *acquis*.

The EU positively notes Albania's efforts to fully comply with the requirements of the EU *acquis* on road infrastructure safety management. The EU recalls that in the area of distinguishing signs and on road safety, the legislation remains to be fully aligned with the EU *acquis*, including with the Directive on cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offences⁸.

The EU positively notes Albania's alignment with the training of drivers' *acquis*⁹ and welcomes its reported alignment with the *acquis* on driving licences¹⁰. The EU stresses that national legislation needs to fully align with EU provisions on dimension and weight of vehicles¹¹. The EU emphasises the need for alignment with the EU *acquis* on road operators¹² and access to the haulage market¹³. The EU stresses the importance of full implementation of the international passenger transport *acquis*¹⁴ in particular regarding the new provisions introduced by the Mobility Package I.

The EU notes Albania's partial alignment with social provisions, including driving time and rest periods¹⁵ and invites further efforts toward full implementation. The EU urges Albania to ensure full implementation on tachographs and complete the transition to the smart version.

On **rail transport**, the EU welcomes the steps taken regarding the separation of infrastructure management and rail operations, which is the cornerstone of the single European rail area. The EU urges continued enhancements in railway safety, the institutional framework and interoperability standards, as well as closer cooperation with the European Railway Agency (ERA). The EU stresses also the need for Albania to align with and implement the European Rail Network for competitive freight¹⁶ ensuring greater integration into the EU's transportation network.

⁸ Directive (EU) 2015/413.

⁹ Directive (EU) 2022/2561.

¹⁰ Directive 2006/126/EC.

¹¹ As certain values for heavy-duty vehicles differ from those set out in Annex I of the Directive 96/53/EC.

¹² Regulation (EC) No 1071/2009.

¹³ Regulation (EC) No 1072/2009.

¹⁴ Regulation (EC) No 1073/2009 and Regulation (EU) No 361/2014.

¹⁵ Regulation (EC) No 561/2006.

¹⁶ Directive 2012/34/EU as amended by Directive (EU) 2016/2370, and the relevant implementing acts.

The EU invites Albania to align with the **combined transport directive** ¹⁷ including full alignment with the EU's shift towards railway and waterway transport.

The EU welcomes Albania's alignment with the EU *acquis* on air **passenger rights** and encourages Albania to further align with passenger rights on bus and coach, waterborne and rail¹⁸, including EU provisions on carriers' liability, as well as concerning strengthening enforcement bodies and their oversight activities.

The EU notes Albania's progress in aligning with the EU *acquis* in the area of **aviation** in relation to market access. The EU welcomes Albania's alignment with EU *acquis* on airport charges, and ground handling. The EU underlines the need for Albania to align with the *acquis* on aviation safety, aerodromes, aircrew, drones, information security, services, Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research (SESAR), market operation, environmental noise, working time, aviation security, as well as on occurrences reporting and aviation accident and incident investigations. The EU also notes Albania's partial alignment on civil aviation security and stresses the need to continue alignment efforts in this area.

The EU notes Albania's partial alignment with the EU *acquis* on **maritime transport and maritime security** and encourages further improvements in its legal framework in trade facilitation, mainly in interoperability, reporting and technical specifications. The EU stresses the need for Albania to align with the EU *acquis* on maritime ports and maritime safety, including areas like Community vessel traffic monitoring, tanker design requirements and flag state control. The EU encourages continued efforts to align with the *acquis* to reduce environment impacts and pollution, while complying with the requirements of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the Committee on Safe Seas and the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

¹⁷ Directive 92/106/EEC.

¹⁸ Regulation (EU) No 181/2011, Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010, Regulation (EU) No 2021/782.

The EU welcomes Albania's delisting from the "black list" of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MoU) and notes its current placement on the "grey list". The EU underlines the need for Albania to accelerate its alignment with the Port State Control *acquis* and invites it to take all measures necessary to join the Paris MoU.

The EU encourages Albania to align fully with the *acquis* on enhancing port security¹⁹ and Enhancing Ship and Port Facility Security Regulation²⁰, which go beyond the International Mandatory Measures of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code of the International Maritime Organisation.

The EU notes that Albania has no navigable **inland waterways**, with only recreational navigation in lakes, and that no basins are shared with the EU, though international transport agreements are in place for the lakes with North Macedonia and Montenegro. The EU underlines the need for Albania to align with the *acquis* on vessels, market access, jobs and skills and environmental standards. The *acquis* on river information systems is only applicable to Albania if the country plans to integrate its lakes into the Trans-European Transport Networks.

The EU stresses the importance of integrating environmental considerations into the transport sector and invites Albania to include these during the implementation phase of the EU *acquis* in the field of transport.

The EU encourages Albania to continue **fighting corruption in the area of transport policy**, through concrete measures for integrity, accountability and transparency including in public contracts, licensing and permits, and inspections.

¹⁹ Directive (EC) 2005/65

²⁰ Regulation (EC) No 725/2004

2. Chapter 15 – Energy

The EU, regarding **horizontal energy legislation**, welcomes Albania's National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) for 2021-2030 and invites Albania to finalise its review and update in line with the 2030 Energy Community targets and recommendations. The EU urges Albania to further align its national legislation with the Governance Regulation²¹ and provide a track record of implementation.

The EU stresses the need to incorporate the 2030 Energy Community **energy efficiency** targets. The EU urges Albania to accelerate its legislative and institutional alignment with the EU energy efficiency *acquis*, particularly the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED)²² and the Energy Performance of Building Directive (EPBD)²³ including the necessary applicable penalties. The EU invites Albania to further develop its legislation by implementing a long-term renovation strategy and aligning with eco-design and product standards. The EU positively notes Albania's alignment with the EU *acquis* on energy labelling²⁴, a step that contributes to improve energy efficiency.

The EU welcomes Albania's ambition in **renewable energy** targets and stresses the need to finalise its alignment with the renewable energy *acquis* particularly on biofuels. The EU underlines the importance of completing the permitting EU *acquis*²⁵ to accelerate renewable energy deployment. The EU invites Albania to ensure its ability to promote energy from renewable sources.²⁶

The EU urges Albania to ensure the **security of supply** for gas, electricity and oil maintaining sufficient stocks and begin constituting these stocks. The EU invites Albania, regarding gas, to implement key provisions on burden sharing mechanism and complete certification procedures. The EU also invites Albania, regarding electricity, to align with the Risk Preparedness²⁷ *acquis*. The EU stresses the importance of further aligning with the Oil Stocks²⁸ *acquis*.

²¹ Regulation (EU) No 2018/1999

²² Directive (EU) 2018/2002

²³ Directive 2010/31/EU, as amended by Directive (EU) 2018/844. This legal framework was repealed by Directive (EU) 2024/1275 (recast)

²⁴ Regulation (EU) 2017/1369

²⁵ Regulation (EU) No 2022/2577

²⁶ Directive (EU) 2023/2413 amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC

²⁷ Regulation (EU) No 2019/941

²⁸ Council Directive 2009/119/EC

The EU notes Albania's progress on **Electricity Integration Package**²⁹ and urges for full alignment and implementation. The EU welcomes the unbundling and certification of the Transmission Systems Operator and emphasises the steps taken to establish a competitive electricity market. The EU urges Albania to align with the capacity allocation and congestion management (CACM), electricity balancing and forward capacity allocation guidelines, system operation guidelines and emergency and restoration network code, and to implement an intra-day market to further integrate with regional and the EU electricity systems.

The EU notes Albania's efforts toward aligning with the **internal market for gas**³⁰ *acquis* and urges for full implementation in particular of the "full-REMIT" model, and the EU Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators'³¹ requirements. The EU stresses the continued implementation of natural gas market rules through the Energy Regulatory Entity's (ERE) powers.

The EU acknowledges Albania's partial alignment with the **Euratom *acquis* concerning nuclear and radiation safety and safeguards**. The EU invites Albania to complete its legislative, institutional and operational alignment with Euratom requirements. This includes ensuring that all Euratom primary and secondary legislation – applicable to all EU Member States whether they generate nuclear energy or not – is adequately integrated into its national laws. Furthermore, the EU encourages Albania to step up its efforts to join the European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange (ECURIE) and European Radiological Data Exchange Platform (EURDEP). The EU encourages Albania to continue **fighting corruption in the area of energy policy**, through concrete measures for integrity, accountability and transparency including in public contracts, licensing and permits, and inspections.

²⁹ Directive (EU) 2019/944/, Regulation (EU) 2019/943, Regulation (EU) 2019/942 and Regulation (EU) 2019/941

³⁰ Directive 2009/73/EC including gas network codes, Regulations (EU) 2017/460, Regulation (EU) 2017/459, and Regulation (EU) 703/2015, Regulation (EU) 1227/2011

³¹ Regulation (EU) 2019/942

3. Chapter 21 – Trans European Networks

The EU underlines the need for Albania to align with the EU *acquis* on **Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E)**. The EU invites Albania to establish long-term infrastructure planning, carry out necessary strategies, to investigate the potential for offshore renewables, for the development of associated grids, and for the decarbonisation of industry and transport as well as to assess infrastructure investment needs notably in electricity transmission, storage and smartening the grids. The EU underlines the need for Albania to enhance efficiency and environmental compliance of infrastructure permitting.

The EU notes Albania's partial alignment with **Trans-European Networks for Transport (TEN-T)** and urges the country to fully align with and enforce the related EU *acquis* across all transport modes. The EU also draw's Albania attention to the new TEN-T regulation³², which has come into force in 2024. The EU stresses the need for Albania to strengthen its institutional framework and administrative capacity for developing and monitoring TEN-T. The EU also urges Albania to develop the future TEN-T network priority projects and make continued progress towards completion of the projects on Western Balkans–Eastern Mediterranean European Transport Corridor.

The EU encourages Albania to continue **fighting corruption in the area of Trans-European Networks**, through concrete measures for integrity, accountability and transparency including in public contracts, licensing and permits, and inspections.

4. Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate Change

The EU encourages Albania to ensure that environmental protection requirements are integrated into the definition and implementation of other sectoral policies and that resource efficient, low emissions and climate-resilient development is promoted. The EU also points out that all new investments should already reflect national environmental legislation, in line with the *acquis*.

³² Regulation (EU) 2024/1679

The EU notes Albania has made some progress in aligning with the EU *acquis* regarding the **environmental horizontal legislation**, often referred to as ‘environmental rule of law’, but underlines that Albania needs to improve substantially the legislative alignment and implementation in this sector. The EU underlines that the inspections and enforcement capacity should be strengthened, especially to prevent and address environmental crimes more effectively. The EU notes further alignment is required with regarding environmental assessments of plans, programmes and projects. The EU urges Albania to ensure effective alignment and implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)³³ and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directives³⁴, by carrying out inclusive impact assessments to guarantee that the adoption of relevant public plans and programmes as well as the approval of various public and private projects comply with the EU environmental assessments *acquis*, with effective involvement of the public in drawing up of projects and plans relating to the environment. To support this, Albania is encouraged to strengthen its administrative capacity and structures, and to invest substantial resources.

The EU notes that the amendments to the law on Protected Areas (Law No. 21/2024) and the extension of the 2015 legislation on strategic investments have raised concerns as these lead to extensive tourism and industrial investment in protected areas and now permit activities which risk compromising Albania’s ecological and biodiversity values, including potential Natura 2000 sites, in conflict with EU standards.

The EU welcomes Albania’s commitment to align with the SEA Directive by 2026 and the EIA Directive by 2027, along with its intention to adopt an Action Plan in 2027 including capacity-building, a roadmap, and monitoring. The EU also takes note Albania’s intention to ensure by 2027 that all infrastructure investments and environmental assessments fully comply with the EU *acquis* and involve proper coordination and impact evaluation.

³³ Directive 2011/92/EU, amended by 2014/52/EU

³⁴ Directive 2001/42/EC

The EU also notes that Albania's progress in aligning with the Aarhus *acquis*, particularly in access to information, public participation, and access to justice and urges the country to continue these efforts. It emphasizes the need for further attention to ensuring that the public, including civil society organizations, can challenge plans and calls on Albania to take swift action to address these issues, in line with the Aarhus *acquis*. The EU reiterates that is equally important to ensure access to national courts for individuals and NGOs in line with the established standards of access to justice in environmental matters, also *inter alia*, in the nature, air quality and water sectors, where there are no explicit EU secondary legislative provisions, but only case law. However, the EU is concerned that in practice, larger infrastructure investment projects have proceeded without adequate transparency and consultation processes.

The EU underlines Albania's alignment with the INSPIRE Directive ³⁵ and invites to further develop its spatial data infrastructure and make geospatial environmental data available and accessible. The EU also welcomes the establishment of an Inter-institutional group against environmental crime and underlines the need for Albania to align with the Environmental Crime Directive³⁶. The EU further underlines that Albania needs to align with the Environmental Liability Directive³⁷. The EU also invites Albania to participate actively in existing EU environmental enforcement networks of environmental practitioners (i.e., IMPEL, ENPE, EUFJE and EnviCrimeNet) and stresses the importance of strengthening the capacities and the resilience to attempts of undue influence of actors along the enforcement chain such as the judiciary and environmental inspectorates. The EU notes that Albania has benefitted from LIFE Programme initiatives and is interested in being fully associated to the Programme in the future. The EU also underlines the importance of providing credible financial planning for the future implementation of the *acquis*.

³⁵ Directive 2007/2/EC establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE).

³⁶ Directive (EU) 2024/1203

³⁷ Directive 2004/35/EC

The EU notes that Albania needs to make further efforts to strengthen its alignment with the EU **air quality acquis**, including by extending and improving the air monitoring system. The EU encourages Albania to continue pursuing efforts in aligning and implementing the air quality *acquis*, to reinforce the existing monitoring system and structures in charge of the collection and processing of data and of future reporting to the Commission, to strengthen administrative capacity, and to invest in necessary human resources and in equipment. The EU stresses that Albania needs to make continued efforts to further reduce air pollution. The EU notes Albania's plans to update its air quality strategy and management plan by 2026, expand monitoring and develop modelling by 2028, and ensure real-time public access to air quality data by 2027. The EU also encourages Albania to ratify the Gothenburg Protocol to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution ahead of accession.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Article 13 and Article 19 of Directive (EU) 2024/2881 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe until 2036 or for 6 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU invites Albania to reconsider its request for Article 19. The EU considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request for Article 13 and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. State of play of available monitors;
- b. Current levels of pollutants;
- c. Currently available tools to monitor emissions;
- d. Timeline for the implementation of the EU *acquis*, including phasing in to meet limit values.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Article 4 and Annex II of Directive (EU) 2016/2284 on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants (NEC Directive) until 2036 or for a period of 6 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. State of play on atmospheric emission and current efforts for their reduction;
- b. Difficulties it is facing in meeting the emission reduction targets;
- c. Currently available tools to monitor emissions;
- d. Timeline for the implementation of the EU *acquis* including phasing in of limit values.

The EU notes Albania's good level of alignment on volatile organic components (VOC) in paints and its partial level of alignment on VOC emissions. The EU urges Albania to implement the Directives and dedicate proper financial and human resources.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Article 3 of Directive 2009/126/EC on Stage II petrol vapour recovery during refuelling of motor vehicles at service stations and for Articles 3 Paragraph 1, Article 4 Paragraph 1, Article 5 Paragraph 1, and Article 6 Paragraph 1 of Directive 94/63/EC of 20 December 1994 on the control of volatile organic compound emissions resulting from the storage of petrol and its distribution from terminals to service until 2036 or for a period of 6 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of its two requests in the area of volatile organic compounds *acquis*. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide the respective detailed DSIPs including:

- a. Current situation and technologies available for Volatile Organic Compounds;
- b. Investment required to meet the EU targets;
- c. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU notes Albania is only partially aligned with the *acquis* on **waste management** and needs to undertake major efforts to achieve progress in this sector, including by assessing the environmental impacts of both waste generation and waste treatment processing. The EU also notes Albania's partial alignment with the Waste Framework Directive³⁸, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive³⁹, Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation⁴⁰ and most EU *acquis* on waste. The EU stresses the need to align with the Single Use Plastics *acquis*⁴¹. The EU further notes the new waste *acquis* in the areas of Waste Shipment⁴² and Batteries⁴³ which introduce stricter sustainability and waste management requirements. The EU encourages further inclusion of circular economy aspects, especially consideration of non-waste related aspects of products' lifecycles.

The EU notes Albania's commitment to strengthen the level of approximation of Albanian legislation with the EU *acquis* in the field of waste management and improve and strengthen the internal waste management system, including the operationalisation of the national waste agency, and thus adopt in 2025 a new law on waste management as well as a law on extended producer responsibility.

³⁸ Directive 2008/98/EU

³⁹ Directive 2012/19/EU

⁴⁰ Regulation (EU) 2025/40. Directive 94/62/EC is repealed with effect from 12 August 2026, with specific exceptions as stated in Art 70 of the Regulation.

⁴¹ Directive 2019/904/EU

⁴² Regulation (EU) 2024/1157

⁴³ Regulation (EU) 2023/1542

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementations of Articles 11 and 22 of the Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC, until 2036 or for a period of 6 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted by Albania in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Current situation on waste management challenges, including infrastructure and collection issues;
- b. Financial and technical constraints for nationwide bio-waste collection by 2030;
- c. Key investments, including cost projections, required for an integrated waste management system;
- d. Strategies to enhance public awareness and participation;
- e. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis* targets.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 50 and 52 of the Packaging and Packaging waste Regulation (EU) 2025/40, until 2040 or for a period of 10 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed RSIP including:

- a. Recycling for key materials and related transportation costs;
- b. Investments required to meet the EU *acquis*.
- c. Extended Producer Responsibility development;
- d. Packaging waste fluctuation due to tourism;
- e. Challenges in implementing a deposit refund scheme and supporting recycling SMEs;
- f. Strategies to enhance public awareness and participation;
- g. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of Council Directive 1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste until 2036 or for 6 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Challenges in landfill diversion and pre-treatment of waste;
- b. Investment required for municipal waste landfilling, recycling and recovery to meet the EU *acquis* requirements;
- c. Recycling capacities and export costs.
- d. The status of plans for green waste composting and food waste recycling;
- f. Strategies to enhance public awareness and participation;
- g. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU notes Albania's progress to meet EU *acquis* in **water quality** and underlines the importance of allocating the necessary administrative and financial resources to ensure effective implementation. The EU also notes Albania's legislative alignment with the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The EU urges finalisation of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for all River Basin Districts, and the securing of funding for their implementation. The EU further notes Albania's well-structured institutional framework regarding Urban Wastewater Treatment (UWWT) as well as the substantial investment and capacity needs in that area. The EU emphasizes the significance of maintaining high water quality standards to safeguard public health and the environment. The EU recalls the importance of safe and clean drinking water. The EU also urges Albania to align further with the provisions Drinking Water *acquis*⁴⁴. The EU stresses Albania needs to have plans in place to quickly and efficiently respond to floods. The EU encourages Albania to take action on poorly classified bathing sites by implementing proper management measures and, where necessary, imposing swimming prohibitions, in line with the bathing water *acquis*⁴⁵. The EU further underlines the importance of developing operational water monitoring system to identify polluted waters and designating nitrate vulnerable zones.

The EU stresses that Albania needs to align with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and allocate sufficient resources for its implementation. The EU urges Albania to accelerate progress on the Groundwater Directive, aiming for full alignment, and to strengthen its administrative and technical capacities. The EU invites Albania to improve its alignment with the environmental quality standards *acquis*⁴⁶ by establishing a monitoring system and enhancing capacities.

The EU stresses that despite notable progress with the Floods Directive Albania needs to have plans in place to quickly and effectively respond to floods, along with continued coordination with the Water Framework Directive, strengthened civil protection authorities, and ongoing consultations to address future challenges.

⁴⁴ Directive (EU) 2020/2184

⁴⁵ Commission Implementing Decision 2011/321/EU

⁴⁶ Directive 2008/105/EC

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 4, 8, 11, 13, 16 of Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The EU notes Albania will provide the length of the transition period after completion of the DSIP.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Current situation of water quality and plans to monitor water quality;
- b. Key infrastructure water treatment facilities, legal and institutional challenges of the EU *acquis*;
- c. Details on water safety, quality monitoring, and emerging pollutants;
- d. Investment required, costs and timeline for short, medium and long term actions;
- e. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis* targets.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 3 (1), Article 4 (1), Article 5 (2), Article 6 (1) and Article 7 of Directive 91/271/EEC concerning urban wastewater treatment (UWWT) in 2027, until 2050 or for 20 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and EU invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP reflecting the requirements of the recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (EU) 2024/3019 including:

- a. Current situation of existing water treatment facilities;
- b. Investments and capacity-building measures to meet UWWTD requirements;
- c. Key milestones for wastewater collection and treatment by 2040 and 2050;
- d. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 5, 14 and Annex I, Parts A and C of Directive (EU) 2020/2184 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (DWD), until 2040 or for 10 years following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of its request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Current situation of drinking water quality and plans to monitor;
- b. Investment prioritization, funding, and transitional period plans addressing administrative, funding, and affordability challenges;
- c. Financial efforts and capacity-building strategies;
- d. Milestones for water quality monitoring, compliance, and the risk-based approach by 2040;
- e. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6 of Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by Nitrates from Agricultural Sources. The EU notes Albania will provide the length of the transition period after completion of the DSIP.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Identification of polluted waters or waters at risk of pollution and designation of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones;

- b. Development of voluntary agricultural practice codes and adoption of mandatory action plans for farmers;
- c. Monitoring of water quality to control nitrate pollution and limiting nitrogen application from manure;
- d. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 3, and 6 of Directive 2006/118/EC on the Protection of Groundwater against Pollution and Deterioration. The EU notes Albania will provide the length of the transition period after completion of the DSIP.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Criteria for assessing groundwater status (timeline for applying EU-wide groundwater quality standards and for establishing and applying national threshold values).
- b. Identification of significant and sustained upward trends in concentrations of pollutants in groundwater bodies being at risk and definition of starting points for trend reversals.
- c. Measures to prevent or limit input of pollutants in groundwater.
- d. Supporting the characterization, delineation, and status assessment process at the groundwater body level
- e. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period for the full implementation of the plans outlined in Article 7 of Directive 2007/60/EC, on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks. The EU notes Albania will provide the length of the transition period after completion of the DSIP.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Completion of pending Flood Hazard and Risk Maps;
- b. Finalization of plans for flood-risk areas and approval of plans for river basins;
- c. Implementation and monitoring of all plans, as only one is currently in progress;
- d. Timeline for the implementation, including the development of bylaws for flood risk management and phasing in of the EU *acquis*.

The EU recalls the importance of **nature protection** to protect Europe's biodiversity. The EU urges the alignment with Wild Birds⁴⁷ and Habitats⁴⁸ *acquis* and urges effective monitoring, data gathering, and clear authority responsibilities, including at the municipal level. Albania needs to complete the alignment with all obligations under these Directives and accelerate implementation. The EU expresses strong concerns that the amended Law on Protected Areas permits infrastructure projects that could threaten biodiversity and Natura 2000 sites and urges Albania to take immediate action to bring the relevant national legislation in line with the EU nature protection *acquis*. The EU also urges for alignment with EU nature preservation standards. The EU encourages Albania to sufficiently assess the compliance of infrastructure projects with EU standards on biodiversity and nature protection before allowing them to proceed. The EU invites Albania to strengthen its processes for licensing, inspecting, and closing non-compliant zoos and to improve alignment with the CITES Regulation⁴⁹ by boosting monitoring and enforcement. The EU encourages Albania to further align with the ABS⁵⁰, Timber⁵¹, and FLEGT⁵² Regulations, the Deforestation-free Products Regulation⁵³ and Nature Restoration Regulation⁵⁴ and with the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets.

⁴⁷ Directive 2009/147/EC

⁴⁸ Directive 92/43/EEC

⁴⁹ Regulation (EC) No 338/97

⁵⁰ Regulation (EU) No 511/2014

⁵¹ Regulation (EU) No 995/2010

⁵² Regulation (EC) No 2173/2005

⁵³ Regulation (EU) 2023/1115

⁵⁴ Regulation (EU) 2024/1991

The EU underlines the importance of limiting the impact of **chemicals** on the environment. The EU invites Albania to align on the Biocides Regulation⁵⁵ and allocate more resources for inspection and enforcement. The EU stresses the importance of alignment and implementation of REACH⁵⁶, including through strengthening inspection resources, as well as with the PIC Regulation⁵⁷, the Asbestos Directive⁵⁸ and the Mercury Regulation⁵⁹. The EU also invites Albania to finalise alignment with CLP⁶⁰. The EU urges Albania to align with the Animal Experiments Directive paying particular attention to its definitions. The EU also stresses the need to intensify efforts to align with the Stockholm Convention on POPs, especially in inspection and enforcement.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of Articles 26, 29, 33, 34, 43, 89(2-3), 94 (1), 95 of Regulation (EU) No 528/2012 concerning the making available on the market and use of biocidal products, until up to 12 months following the date of accession to the EU.

The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request and EU invites Albania to provide a detailed RSIP including:

- a. Compliance with biocidal product registration
- b. Data sharing
- c. Mutual recognition and authorizations
- d. Timeline for the implementation, including phasing in of the EU *acquis*

⁵⁵ Regulation (EU) No 528/2012
⁵⁶ Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006
⁵⁷ Regulation (EU) No 649/2012
⁵⁸ Directive 2009/148/EC
⁵⁹ Regulation (EC) No 1102/2008
⁶⁰ Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008

The EU notes Albania's low alignment with EU legislation on **industrial pollution and risk management**. The EU urges Albania to strengthen efforts to align, implement, and enforce the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) and European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Regulation (E-PRTR) in order to reach a fully integrated approach and to closely monitor the revision of both acts. The EU invites Albania to take the necessary steps to consistently implement the Seveso *acquis*. The EU also urges swift alignment on Asbestos particularly regarding building demolitions and waste management. The EU also invites Albania to ensure that its eco-labelling becomes the EU Eco-label after accession. The EU further invites the country to intensify efforts on EMAS, supporting companies in adopting the scheme and conducting communication campaigns.

The EU takes note that Albania has requested a transitional period to exempt from the full implementation of several Articles included in the Chapters II, III and V of the Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions for [10] years following the date of accession to the EU. The EU notes the information submitted in support of this request in the area of industrial pollution. The EU nevertheless considers that more detailed information will be required before the EU can take a position on this request. This request needs to be considered also for Directive (EU) 2024/1785 which amends the aforementioned Directive and will be applicable as of 2026. The EU invites Albania to provide a detailed DSIP including:

- a. Current situation of industrial emissions levels;
- b. Establishment of monitoring, reporting and permitting systems for industrial installations;
- c. Plan for bringing industrial plants into full compliance with IED requirements, including projected costs;
- d. Strategy for adopting BAT solutions;
- e. Investment required to meet the EU *acquis* targets;
- f. Phasing in and the timeline for the implementation of the EU *acquis*.

The EU notes Albania's partial alignment with the **Noise** Directive. The EU urges Albania to determine which roads, railways, airports and agglomerations are in the scope of the Directive and prepare strategic noise maps and noise action plans accordingly. The EU welcomes Albania's participation in the Union **Civil Protection** Mechanism (UCPM). The EU encourages to continue improving its civil protection system. The EU invites Albania to link its national emergency communication system to the Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS).

On climate change, the EU underlines the need for Albania to step up its legislative alignment with EU climate *acquis* that is currently at a limited level. The EU welcomes some progress that has been achieved by Albania's adoption of a **Climate** Law and an NECP. The EU stresses the need for Albania to develop efforts to further implement a national system for estimating GHG emissions and removals, and to ensure compliance with the reporting requirements under Governance Regulation. The EU invites Albania to adopt a long-term strategy with a 2050 climate neutrality objective.

The EU encourages Albania to further align with the relevant *acquis* on fuel quality, particularly on biofuel blends and gas oil used in non-road mobile machinery. The EU invites Albania to align with EU *acquis* on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and Fluorinated Gases.

The EU stresses the importance for Albania to make progress on the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), particularly in establishing and implementing the EU's monitoring, reporting, verification and accreditation (MRVA) legislation⁶¹, including the legislation on the monitoring, reporting and verification for maritime transport⁶². The EU underlines that Albania needs to also align with the EU ETS secondary legislation, including those concerning the Union Registry, free allocation, auctioning, and the shipping sector.

⁶¹ Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2066 and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2067 as amended

⁶² Regulation (EU) 2015/757

The EU also stresses that Albania has to align with the CBAM and develop the necessary capacities in its customs administration and invites the country to start preparations.

The EU stresses further efforts are needed regarding Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF). The EU stresses the lack of alignment with CO2 standards for cars, vans, and heavy-duty vehicles and invites Albania to put in place the appropriate monitoring and reporting systems⁶³.

The EU invites Albania to begin reflecting on a potential Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) permitting system and the obligations of oil and gas companies to fund storage capacity by 2030.

The EU invites Albania to continue **fighting corruption in the area of environment**, through concrete measures for integrity, accountability and transparency including in public contracts, licensing and permits, and inspections.

* * *

In view of the present state of Albania's preparations, and subject to Albania meeting the interim benchmarks on Cluster 1, the EU notes that, on the understanding that Albania has to continue to make progress in the alignment with and implementation of the EU *acquis* covered by the following chapters, and without prejudice to any additional conditions established in the further benchmarks defined for Cluster 4, these may only be provisionally closed once it is agreed by the EU that the following benchmarks are met:

⁶³ As per Regulation (EU) 2019/631 and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/392 for cars and light commercial vehicles and Regulation (EU) 2019/1242 for heavy-duty vehicles

Chapter 14 – Transport Policy

- Albania has an advanced level of alignment with the EU *acquis* concerning road charging and tolling.
- Albania has aligned with the requirements of the EU *acquis* on the transport of dangerous goods, social *acquis* in road transport, rules for access to the occupation of road transport operator and dimensions and weights for certain types of heavy goods vehicles, as well as with the Roadworthiness Testing Directive⁶⁴ and the Vehicle Registration Documents Directive⁶⁵.
- Albania has aligned with the Intelligent Transport System in road and rail transport and began its implementation.
- Albania has ensured that a competent, independent and effective railway regulatory body, a national safety authority and a national investigating body are fully operational. Albania has ensured alignment with EU rail safety and interoperability *acquis*.
- Albania has aligned with the *acquis* on air traffic management, air operations and occurrences reporting and aviation accident and incident investigations.
- Albania has advanced level of alignment with the EU *acquis* on maritime safety and security and took the necessary measures to no longer be grey listed.
- Albania has aligned with the *acquis* on passenger rights in all modes of transport and ensured the role of national enforcement bodies upon accession.

⁶⁴ Directive 2014/45/EU

⁶⁵ Directive 1999/37/EC

Chapter 15 – Energy

- Albania has aligned with the Internal Energy Market *acquis*, in particular with the Electricity Integration Package
- Albania has aligned its legislation with the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy *acquis* including implementing legislation, and has demonstrated progress in their implementation
- Albania has aligned its legislation with emergency Oil Stocks, and Risk Preparedness for Electricity Regulation⁶⁶, including designating a competent authority to manage energy stocks, and has begun to constitute actual stock.

Chapter 21 – Trans European Networks

- Albania has aligned its legal framework with the TEN-E Regulation⁶⁷.
- Albania has agreed with the European Commission, after due consultations, the future TEN-T network priority projects. Albania has an advanced level of alignment with TEN-T regulation⁶⁸ and achieved sufficient progress towards completion of the projects on Western Balkans–Eastern Mediterranean European Transport Corridor.
- Albania ensures adequate institutional and administrative capacity with high standards of integrity needed to undertake the responsibilities of the *acquis* in this chapter.

⁶⁶ Directive 2009/119/EC and Regulation (EU) 2019/941

⁶⁷ Regulation (EU) 2022/869

⁶⁸ Regulation (EU) 2024/1679

Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate Change

- Albania has aligned its legislation with the horizontal environmental *acquis*⁶⁹ and demonstrated tangible progress towards a solid track record of implementation and enforcement in this area including for impact assessment (Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment Directives), especially for infrastructure investments whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements on public participation, transboundary consultations and access to justice in environmental matters. Albania has demonstrated that it will be ready to effectively implement and enforce the horizontal legislation by the date of accession. Albania ensures that its national spatial data infrastructure complies with the INSPIRE Directive.
- Albania has aligned with EU *acquis* on environmental crimes and made tangible progress towards a solid track record on environmental crime, such as wildlife crimes and deterioration of habitats, illegal shipment or dumping of waste, pollution crimes and illegal trading in hazardous substances.
- Albania continues to align with relevant EU *acquis* on air quality⁷⁰ and certain atmospheric pollutants⁷¹. It reports emissions annually, in line with the NEC Directive⁷², has adopted a National Air Pollution Control Programme and has presented an analysis of cost-effective emission control strategies for 2030. Albania continues to take measures to improve air quality, particularly in areas exceeding EU limit values and by developing or updating air quality plans, as envisaged by the Ambient Air Quality Directive.⁷³

⁶⁹ Council Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, Directive 2001/42/EC, Directive 2003/4/EC, Directive 2003/35/EC, Directive 2004/35/CE, Directive (EU) 2024/1203, Directive 2007/2/EC

⁷⁰ Directive (EU) 2024/2881

⁷¹ Directive 2016/2284/EU

⁷² Directive 2016/2284/EU

⁷³ Directive (EU) 2024/2881

- Albania continues to align with relevant EU waste acquis, respecting the waste hierarchy and dedicates appropriate funding to infrastructure investments. Albania establishes waste prevention programmes, prepares waste management plans – national and regional – that include information on all waste streams and the solutions to manage them, including type and capacity of waste management infrastructure, separate collection schemes and economic instruments. Albania continues to align with the EU acquis in the water sector and develops river basin management plans for each river basin district lying entirely within its territory, including the portions of international river basin districts falling within its territory, and ensures that the legal basis and mechanisms for international coordination of these plans are in place. Albania has an advanced level of alignment with the drinking water legislation, and further aligns with Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- Albania continues to align with the EU *acquis* in the area of nature protection⁷⁴, including by repealing the incompatible provisions enacted through amendments to the law on Protected Areas (Law No. 21/2024) and by terminating the 2015 legislation on strategic investments. Albania has submitted to the Commission the list of proposed Natura 2000 sites, sufficiently covering the habitat types and species in line with the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives. Albania has ensured the capacity to manage the Natura 2000 network, including by granting appropriate protection status to designated areas and effectively implementing the necessary conservation measures leading to their preservation and improvement. Albania demonstrates that it will be fully prepared to ensure the implementation and enforcement of the EU nature protection *acquis* requirements at the date of accession.

⁷⁴ Regulation (EU) 2024/1991, Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014, Council Directive 1999/22/EC, Directive 2010/63/EU, Directive 2009/147/EC, Council Directive 92/43/EEC, Regulation (EU) No 511/2014, Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97, Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009, Council Regulation (EEC) No 3254/91, Regulation (EU) 995/2010, Regulation (EU) 2023/1115, Council Regulation (EC) No 2173/2005

- Albania has an advanced level of alignment with the *acquis* in the areas of chemicals⁷⁵, noise⁷⁶ and civil protection sectors, and demonstrates that it will be fully prepared to ensure the implementation and enforcement of the EU requirements at the date of accession.
- Albania has an advanced level of alignment with the climate EU *acquis*⁷⁷, and has demonstrated it will be ready to implement and enforce it upon accession. Albania establishes a robust monitoring and reporting framework, in line with reporting requirements under the Governance Regulation. Albania established a long-term strategy aligned with the EU's climate-neutrality goal for 2050.
- Albania has an advanced level of alignment with the EU *acquis* in the area of emission trading, notably by adopting legislation on the functioning of the European Emissions Trading System (EU ETS)⁷⁸ and its successive amendments. In particular Albania has ensured that the relevant legislation on monitoring and reporting, accreditation and verification (MRVA) and monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) from maritime sector under the EU ETS in its entire scope is in place and implemented. Albania has further aligned with the Union Registry, free allocation, and auctioning. Albania ensures sufficient progress to be able to implement the CBAM upon accession.
- Albania has demonstrated adequate capacity of the administrative bodies at all levels with high standards of integrity, including inspection services, further improves coordination of work and demonstrates that all appropriate administrative structures and adequate training are in place in good time before accession to enable implementation and enforcement of the *acquis* in all areas of this chapter.

⁷⁵ Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008, Regulation (EU) 2024/2865, Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006, Regulation (EU) No 649/2012, Regulation (EU) 2019/1021, Council Directive 96/59/EC

⁷⁶ Directive 2002/49/EC

⁷⁷ Notably EU ETS Directive, MRV Maritime Regulation, EU Climate Law, Governance Regulation and *acquis* on Ozone depleting substances, Fluorinated gases, CO2 emission standards from vehicles, car labelling, fuel quality, LULUCF, Carbon Capture and Storage, Carbon Removals Certification, and Social Climate Fund

⁷⁸ in line with the EU ETS Directive 2003/87/EC as amended

Monitoring of progress in the alignment with and implementation of the EU *acquis* will continue throughout the negotiations. The EU underlines that it will devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned above with a view to ensuring Albania's administrative capacity, its capacity to complete legal alignment in all sectors under this cluster, as well as further progress in implementation and enforcement. Particular consideration needs to be given to the links between the chapters of the present cluster and other negotiation chapters. A final assessment of the conformity of Albania's legislation with the EU *acquis* as well as of its implementation capacity can only be made at a later stage of the negotiations. In addition to all the information the EU may require for the negotiations in this cluster, and which is to be provided to the Conference, the EU invites Albania to provide regularly detailed written information to the Stabilisation and Association Council on progress in the implementation of the EU *acquis*.

In view of all the above considerations, the Conference will have to return to this cluster at an appropriate moment.

Furthermore, the EU recalls that there may be new EU *acquis* between 16 June 2025 and the conclusion of the negotiations.
