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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

DRAFT AMENDMENTS

TO THE CONSTITUTION

OF ALBANIA

AND

EXPLANATORY NOTE

CDL-REF(2015)038

Project**Parliamentary Document***Group of High Level Experts***DRAFT - LAW****No. ___/2015****ON SOME AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW NO 8417,
DATED 21/10/1998 “CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA”, AS AMENDED**

In reliance on Articles 83, point 1, and 177, point 1, of the Constitution, upon the proposal of more than one fifth of the members of the Assembly,

ASSEMBLY**OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA****DECIDED:**

The following amendments shall be affected to the law no 8417, dated 21/10/1998, “Constitution of the Republic of Albania”, as amended:

PART ONE**BASIC PRINCIPLES****Article 1**

The phrase “European values” shall be inserted into the Preamble of the Constitution. The Preamble of the Constitution shall be amended to read as follows:

We, the people of Albania, proud and aware of our history, with responsibility for the future, and with faith in God and/or other universal values, with determination to build a social and democratic state based on the rule of law, and to guarantee the fundamental human rights and freedoms, with a spirit of religious coexistence and tolerance, with a pledge to protect human dignity and personhood, as well as for the prosperity of the whole nation, for peace, well-being, culture and social solidarity, with the centuries-old aspiration of the Albanian people for national identity and unity, with a deep conviction that European values, justice, peace, harmony and cooperation between nations are among the highest values of humanity, Decide this Constitution:

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Article 2

The fourth paragraph shall be inserted in Article 2, next to third paragraph, to read as follows:

4. "The Republic of Albania participates in the European Union to jointly assume along with other member states the state powers, based on an agreement ratified with majority of all Members of Assembly"

Article 3

Point 4 shall be inserted in Article 12, next to point 3, to read as follows:

4. "The military forces of the allied states may be deployed and pass through the Albanian territory, as well as the Albanian military forces may dispatched abroad, upon a decision of the Council of Ministers in compliance with the ratified international agreements".

Article 4

The phrase "sexual orientation" shall be added up in Article 18, point 2, next to the phrase "religious and philosophical". Article 18, point 2 shall be amended as follows:

"No one shall be discriminated against unfairly due to such causes as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical conviction, sexual orientation, economic, educational, social situation or parental affiliation".

Article 5

Article 39, point 2, shall be amended as follows:

"Extradition shall only be permitted if explicitly provided for in the international agreements where the Republic of Albania is a party, only upon judicial decision, as well as in case it is provided by the legislation of the European Union".

Article 6

Article 43 shall be amended as follows:

"Anyone shall be entitled to file a complaint against a judicial decision before a higher court provided in case the court decision is final. The law can provide differently in cases of minor significance or value.

Article 7

Point 4 shall be added up in Article 64 to read as follows:

4. "Albanian citizens shall elect their representatives to the European Parliament by direct voting."

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Article 8

Article 80/1 shall be added up next to Article 80 to read as follows:

80/1. "The Council of Ministers shall report to the Assembly on the decisions being prepared in the context of participating at the institutions of European Union, whereof the Assembly shall draw conclusions and draft resolutions".

Article 9

Point 3/1 shall be added up next to point 3 in Article 109 to read as follows:

3/1. "This right shall be mutually recognised to the European Union citizens being resident in Albania, under the legislation of the European Union and the rules set out in the Electoral Code".

Article 10

Article 122 point 3, shall be repealed.

Article 11

Point 2/1 shall be added up next to point 2 in Article 122 to read as follows:

2/1. "The European Union law shall prevail over the domestic law of the Republic of Albania".

Article 12

Paragraph 2 shall be added up next to paragraph g) in Article 131 to read as follows:

"The Constitutional Court cannot declare unconstitutional a law approved by Assembly to the effect of revising the Constitution".

Article 13

Point 2/1 shall be added up next to point 2 in Article 161 to read as follows:

2/1. "The Bank of Albania shall, in compliance with the agreements with the European Union, delegate to the institutions of this Union powers from those provided for in point 1 of this Article".

PART EIGHT
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

Article 14

Paragraph 3 shall be added up to Article 124:

Article 124

1. The Constitutional Court shall guarantee the observation of the Constitution and make its final interpretation.
2. The Constitutional Court shall be subject only to the Constitution.
3. The Constitutional Court shall have a separate budget, which it administers independently.

Article 15

Article 125 shall be amended as follows:

Article 125

1. The Constitutional Court shall consist of 9 (nine) members, from which three (3) shall be appointed by the President, three (3) members by the Assembly of Albania and three (3) members shall be elected by the joint meeting of the High Court and the High Administrative Court. The members being appointed by the President and the Assembly shall be selected from the list drafted by the Justice Appointments Council. The appointment procedure of the members of the Constitutional Court shall be foreseen by law.
2. The judges of the Constitutional Court shall be appointed for a 12 year mandate without the right to re-appointment and they shall be selected out of the ranks of the lawyers of at least 15 years' experience as judges, prosecutors, advocates, law professors, senior employees in the public administration, with a renowned activity in the constitutional, human rights and other areas of law. The candidates shall not have been sentenced before in connection with the commission of a criminal offence and they shall not have been involved in the leading forums of the political parties. The detailed criteria for the appointment of the members of the Constitutional Court shall be provided for by law.
3. One-third of the composition of the Constitutional Court shall be renewed every 4 years, under the procedure set out by law.
4. The Chairman of the Constitutional Court shall be elected by secret voting, by the absolute majority of the members of the Constitutional Court, for a period of 4 years, without the right to re-election. The election procedure of the Constitutional Court Chairman shall be provided for by law.
5. The Constitutional Court judge shall continue to stay in office until the appointment of his successor.

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Article 16

Article 126 shall be amended as follows:

Article 126

The Constitutional Court judge shall enjoy immunity in connection with the opinions expressed and the decisions made in the course of assuming his functions.

Article 17

Article 127 shall be amended as follows:

Article 127

1. The mandate of Constitutional Court judges shall end, upon:
 - a) reaching the age of 70 years;
 - b) the expiry of the 12 year mandate;
 - c) his resignation;
 - ç) being declared incapable to act by final court decision;
 - d) being sentenced by final judicial decision in connection with the commission of a crime or by a final decision in a disciplinary procedure;
2. The end of the mandate of the Constitutional Court member shall be declared upon the decision of the Constitutional Court.
3. Where the position of a judge remains vacant, the body having appointed the preceding judge under Article 125/1 shall appoint a new judge, the latter staying in office until the expiry of the mandate of the outgoing judge.
4. Where the mandate of the judge ends due to one of the causes set out in sub-paragraphs c), ç) and d) of paragraph 1 of this Article or as a consequence of the disciplinary violation under Article 128, the procedure for appointing the next judge shall start immediately and it shall end within 60 days since the declaration of the end of the mandate upon the decision of the Constitutional Court.

Article 18

Article 128 shall be amended as follows:

Article 128

The Constitutional Court member shall be disciplinarily liable under the law.

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Article 19

Article 128/a shall be added up next to Article 128 to read as follows:

Article 128/a

In the case of the member of the Constitutional Court resigning, he shall submit his resignation to the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, the latter immediately informing the appointment body to the effect of having the vacancy filled in under Article 125.

Article 20

Article 129 (no amendment)

The Constitutional Court judge shall assume office after swearing in before the President of the Republic.

Article 21

Article 130 shall be amended as follows:

Article 130

Being a Constitutional Court judge shall not be compatible with any other compensated professional activity, unless otherwise provided by law.

Article 22

Letter f in Article 131 shall be amended as follows:

f) final examination of the complaints of individuals against judicial acts and the acts of the public power, impairing the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, following exhausting the entire legal remedies for the protection of these rights, unless provided elsewhere by the constitution.

Article 23

In Article 131 letter g) shall be added with the following content:

The Constitutional Court shall decide on:

g) examination of jurisdictional, as well as material and functional power disputes between the High Court and the High Administrative Court, as well as between the Constitutional Court itself and the High Administrative Court.

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Article 24

Article 132 shall be amended as follows:

Article 132

1. The decisions of the Constitutional Court shall be final and binding for enforcement.
2. Unless otherwise provided by the law, the decisions of the Constitutional Court shall, normally, enter in force on the day of their publication in the Official Journal. The Constitutional Court may decide that the law or any other normative act be repealed on another date. The minority's opinion shall be published along with the decision.

Article 25

Article 133 (no amendment)

1. The admission of complaints for adjudication shall be decided by a number of judges as determined by law.
2. The Constitutional Court shall decide with the majority of all its members.

Article 26

Article 134 shall be amended to read as follows:

Article 134

1. Recourse to the Constitutional Court shall be only upon the request of:
 - a) President of the Republic;
 - b) Prime Minister;
 - c) not less than one-fifth of the members of parliament;
 - ç) Ombudsman;
 - d) Head of High State Audit;
 - dh) any court, in the event of Article 145, point 2, of this Constitution;
 - e) Personal Data Protection Commissioner;
 - ë) Commissioner against Discrimination;
 - f) High Judicial Council and High Prosecutorial Council;
 - g) local governance units;
 - gj) religious communities forums;
 - h) political parties and their organisation;
 - i) individuals.
2. The entities provided for in sub-paragraphs ç, d, e, ë, f, g, gj, h and i of paragraph 1 of this Article may file a request only regarding the issues connected to their interests.

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PART NINE

COURTS

Article 27

Article 135 shall be amended to read as follows:

Article 135

1. The judicial power shall be assumed by the High Court, High Administrative Court, as well as by the Appeal Court, first instance courts, which shall be set up by law.
2. The administrative adjudication shall be organised in two instances and it shall encompass the Administrative Court of First Instance and the High Administrative Court.
3. The Assembly may establish specialized courts; however, under no circumstances shall it establish extraordinary courts.

Article 28

Article 136 shall amended to read as follows:

Article 136

1. The members of the High Court and High Administrative Court shall be appointed by the President of the Republic, upon the proposal of the High Judicial Council, with a 12 year mandate, without the right to re-appointment.
2. The members of the High Court and High Administrative Court shall be selected from the ranks of the judges with at least 15 years' experience and from among the renowned lawyers with not less than 20 years' experience having worked as advocates, law professors, or in the senior public administration. They shall not have been sentenced earlier in connection with the commission of a criminal offence, as well as not be involved with the leading forums of the political parties. The criteria and procedure of selection and appointment of members of the High Court and the High Administrative Court and the conditions for the continuation of the profession as judge shall be provided for by law.
3. The Chairman of the High Court and that of the High Administrative Court shall be elected for a 5-year period without the right to re-election, by secret voting and by the absolute majority of the members. The procedure of election shall be provided for by law.
4. The other judges shall be appointed by the High Judicial Council.
5. Judges may only be Albanian citizens with higher legal education. The selection conditions and procedures shall be set out by law.

Article 29

Article 137 shall be amended to read as follows:

Article 137

1. The judges shall enjoy immunity in connection with the opinions expressed and decisions made in the course of assuming their functions.

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2. The judges shall be disciplinarily liable under the law.

Article 30

Article 138 shall be amended to read as follows:

Article 138

The time of stay in office for judges cannot be restricted, unless provided for differently in the Constitution. The salary and other benefits cannot be reduced, except in cases of a sanction given to the judge.

Article 31

Article 139 is changed as follows:

1. The mandate as High Court or High Administrative Court judge shall end, upon:

- a) reaching the age of 65 years;
- b) the expiry of the 12 year mandate;
- c) his resignation;
- ç) being declared incapable to act upon final court decision;
- d) being sentenced by final court decision in connection with the commission of a crime or by a final decision in a disciplinary procedure.

2. The end of the mandate of the High Court or High Administrative Court member shall be declared upon the decision of the High Court or High Administrative Court respectively.

3. Where the position of a judge remains vacant, the body having appointed the preceding judge under Article 136/1 shall appoint a new judge, the latter staying in office until the expiry of the mandate of the outgoing judge.

4. Where the mandate of the judge ends due to one of the causes set out in sub-paragraphs c), ç) and d) of paragraph 1 of this Article as well as a consequence of the disciplinary violation, the procedure for appointing the next judge shall start immediately and it shall end within 60 days since the declaration of the end of the mandate upon the decision of the High Court or High Administrative Court.

Article 32

Article 139/a shall be added next to 139 to read as follows:

Article 139/a

Where the member of the High Court or High Administrative Court resigns, he shall submit his resignation to the Chairman of the High Court or High Administrative Court, the latter immediately informing the appointment body, while the latter filling in the vacancy within 60 days.

Article 33

Article 140 repealed

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Article 34

Article 141 shall be amended to read as follows:

Article 141

The High Court and the High Administrative Court shall have revising jurisdiction and ensure the unified implementation of the law by the lower courts. Falling under its scope of their jurisdiction shall be the judicial matters being examined by the lower courts, except those matters falling under the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court.

Article 35

Article 142 (no amendment)

1. Judicial decisions must be reasoned.
2. The High Court and High Administrative Court must publish its decisions as well as minority opinions.
3. The state bodies are obliged to execute judicial decisions.

Article 36

Article 143 shall amended to read as follows:

Article 143

Being a judge shall be compatible with no other compensated professional activity, unless otherwise provided by law.

Article 37

Article 144 repealed (incorporated into Article 147)

Article 38

Article 145 (no amendment)

1. Judges are independent and subject only to the Constitution and the laws.
2. When judges find that a law comes into conflict with the Constitution, they do not apply it. In this case, they shall suspend the proceedings and send the case to the Constitutional Court. Decisions of the Constitutional Court are binding for all courts.
3. Interference with the activity of the judges entails liability according to law.

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Article 39

Article 146 (no amendment)

1. Courts shall render their decisions in the name of the Republic.
2. The judicial decisions shall, under all circumstances, be announced publicly.

Article 40

Article 147 shall be amended to read as follows:

Article 147

1. The High Judicial Council shall guarantee the independence, accountability as well as appropriate functionality of the judicial power in the Republic of Albania
2. The High Judicial Council shall be composed of 11 members. Six of the members are judges being elected by the judges of all levels of the judicial power. The criteria and procedure of election of the judge members shall be regulated by law. Five other members come from: from the legal profession, 1 member; from law professors, 2 members; from lay professors of the School of Magistrates, 1 member; and from the civil society, 1 member. The lay members shall be appointed by the Assembly with three fifth of all the members and based on the proposals from the respective structures and the opinion of the Justice Appointments Council.
3. The Assembly shall vote separately for each group of candidates. When the Assembly fails to reach the three-fifths majority in the first voting, the proposing body shall make a new proposal within 15 days. The Appointments Council shall provide an opinion within 7 days of the submission of the new proposals. The Assembly shall vote on the new candidates within 7 days of the submission of the opinion of the Appointments Council. If this majority is not reached even in the second voting, the candidates ranked highest by the Appointments Council shall be deemed appointed.
4. The Minister of Justice shall attend the meetings of the High Judicial Council as an observer. The Minister of Justice may request the initiation of the investigation of disciplinary misconduct against judges.
5. Members of the High Judicial Council shall practice their duty full-time for a period of five years without the right of immediate re-election. At the end of the term, the judge members return to their previous working positions. The lay members who before the appointment worked full time in the public sector shall return to the previous working positions or, if not possible, to positions equivalent to them.
6. The Chairman of the High Judicial Council is elected in the first meeting of the Council from the ranks of the lay members by a 2/3 vote of all members. When in the first voting, the High Judicial Council does not reach a two-thirds majority, within 7 days from the first voting, a second voting shall be held. If even in the second voting this majority is not reached, the Chairman of the High Judicial Council is elected by a simple majority within 7 days. The mandate of the Chairman shall match that of the member of the High Judicial Council.

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Article 41

Article 147/a shall be added up next to Article 147 to read as follows

Article 147/a

1. The High Judicial Council shall exercise the following powers:
 - a) Appoints, evaluates, promotes and transfers judges, except judges of the Constitutional Court;
 - b) decides on disciplinary measures on judges, except judges of the Constitutional Court;
 - c) Proposes to the President of the Republic candidates for members of the High Court and High Administrative Court, according to the procedure established by law.
 - d) Approves the rules of judicial ethics and monitors their observation.
 - e) Directs and manages the administration of the courts;
 - f) Proposes and administers the budget of the courts;
2. The High Judicial Council shall do the strategic planning for the judicial system, reports publicly and before the Assembly on the state of the judicial system and exercises other powers defined by law.

Article 42

Article 147/b shall be added up next to Article 147/a to read as follows:

Article 147 / b

1. The mandate of the member of the High Judicial Council shall end upon:
 - a) reaching the pension age;
 - b) expiry of the 5 year mandate;
 - c) his resignation;
 - ç) being convicted upon final judicial decision in connection with the commission of a crime or by a final disciplinary decision;
 - d) is declared by the court unable to fulfil the function.
2. The expiry of the mandate shall be declared upon a decision of the High Judicial Council.
3. Where the position of the member remains vacant, the body having appointed the preceding member, shall, under Article 147, appoint the new member, the latter staying in office until the expiry of the member of the outgoing member.
4. Where the mandate of the member ends due to the causes provided for in points c), ç) and e) of this Article and due to the disciplinary violations under Article 147/c, the appointment procedure for the new member shall start immediately and end within 60 days since the entry into effect of the decision declaring the end of the mandate of the preceding member.
5. Where a member of the High Judicial Council resigns, he shall submit his resignation to the Chairmen of the High Judicial Council, the latter shall inform forthwith the appointment body, the latter filling in the vacancy under Article 147.

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Article 43

Article 147/c shall be added next to Article 147/b to read as follows:

Article 147 / c

The member of the High Judicial Council shall be held disciplinarily liable under the law.

Article 44

Article 147/ç shall be added next to Article 147/c to read as follows:

Article 147/ç

Being a High Judicial Council member shall be compatible with no other compensated professional activity, unless otherwise provided by law.

Article 45

Article 147/d shall be added next to Article 147/ç to read as follows:

Article 147/d

1. The High Inspectorate of Justice shall be responsible for investigating the disciplinary violations and complaints against the judges, prosecutors, members of the High Judicial Council, High Prosecutorial Council and Prosecutor General, as well as for the initiation of the disciplinary proceedings against them. The High Inspectorate of Justice shall also be responsible for inspecting the courts and prosecution offices.
2. The High Inspectorate of Justice shall be composed of 5 members, 3 coming from the judiciary and 2 from prosecution office. They shall be appointed by the Assembly with three-fifths of all the members, from among the candidates selected by the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council.
3. The High Judicial Council shall select and rank six candidates from among the ranks of the judges or former judges with at least 20 years' experience as a judge, demonstrating good performance and high integrity, based on the proposals of the judges. The selection and ranking procedure for the candidates shall be regulated by law.
4. The High Prosecutorial Council shall select and rank four candidates from among the ranks of the prosecutors and former prosecutors with at least 20 years' experience as prosecutors, demonstrating good performance and high integrity, based on the proposals of the prosecutors. The selection and ranking procedure for the candidates shall be regulated by law.
5. The Assembly shall vote separately for each group of candidates. Where in the first voting the Assembly does not reach the majority of three-fifths for any of the candidates of each group, the candidates ranked on the first three positions by the High Judicial Council and first two positions by the High Prosecutorial Council shall be deemed appointed.
6. The members of the High Inspectorate of Justice shall have the status of the High Court member.
7. The candidates for the High Inspectorate of Justice shall be subject to a thorough verification of the property, integrity and their past.

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8. The procedures for making the decisions by the High Inspectorate of Justice shall be regulated by law.

9. The Minister of Justice shall attend the meetings of the High Inspectorate of Justice as an observer and he may request the initiation of the investigation of the disciplinary misconduct against judges, prosecutors, members of the High Judicial Council, High Prosecutorial Council, Prosecutor General as well as the conduct of inspection and verification of complaints.

10. The members of the High Inspectorate of Justice shall assume their office on full time basis for a period of nine years, without the right to immediate re-election. Upon the expiry of the mandate, the members shall return to their previous working positions.

11. The Inspector General of the High Inspectorate of Justice shall be elected from among the ranks of the judge members with two-thirds of the votes of the members of the Inspectorate. Where in the first voting the majority of two-thirds is not reached, a second voting shall occur within 7 days from the first voting only for the candidate having obtained more votes in the first voting. Where this majority is not obtained in the second voting, the Inspector General shall be elected by the Assembly by simple majority within 7 days.

12. The Inspector General shall preside over the meetings of the High Inspectorate of Justice and it shall coordinate and supervise the activity of the administration.

Article 46

Article 147/dh is added after article 147 / d, with this content

Article 147/dh

1. The mandate of the member of the High Inspectorate of Justice ends when that member:

- a) Reaches the age of retirement;
- b) Ends the mandate of 9 years;
- c) Resigns;
- ç) Is declared by the court unable to fulfil the function;
- d) Is punished by a final court decision for committing a crime or by a final decision in a disciplinary procedure.

2. The end of the mandate of a member is declared by decision of the High Inspectorate of Justice. When a member of the High Inspectorate of Justice resigns, he submits it to the Inspector General, who shall immediately notify the appointing authority to fill the vacancy in accordance with article 147 / d, item 2/3/4.

3. When the seat of the member remains vacant, the body that has appointed the previous member, according to Article 147 / d, shall appoint a new member, who remains in office until the end of the mandate of the outgoing member.

4. When the member's mandate is terminated for reasons provided in items c), ç) and d) of this Article or for disciplinary offenses according to Article 147/e, the procedure of appointment of the new member begins immediately and ends within 60 days from the date of entry into force of the decision declaring the end of the mandate of the previous member.

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Article 47

Article 147 / e is added after Article 147 / dh, with this content:

Article 147/e

A member of the High Inspectorate of Justice bears disciplinary responsibility according to law. The inspection in this case is done by the Minister of Justice.

Article 48

Article 147/ë is added after Article 147/e, with this content:

Article 147/ë

Being a member of the High Inspectorate of Justice is incompatible with any other compensated professional activity, unless provided otherwise by law.

Article 49

Article 147/f is added after Article 147/ë with this content:

Article 147/f

1. The Disciplinary Tribunal of Justice reviews the cases of disciplinary violations and takes disciplinary measures against members of the High Judicial Council, the High Prosecutorial Council and the Prosecutor General, the High Inspectorate of Justice and Independent Qualification Commissioners and their staff, and considers appeals against disciplinary measures imposed on judges and prosecutors by the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council.
2. The Disciplinary Tribunal consists of the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, the Chairman of the High Court, the Chairman of the High Administrative Court, the Prosecutor General, the Minister of Justice, the Chairman of the National Chamber of Advocacy, the oldest member of the Constitutional Court, the oldest member of High Court and the oldest member of the High Administrative Court.
3. The Chairman of the Constitutional Court is the Chairman of the Disciplinary Tribunal of Justice. The Chairman of the High Court is Vice Chairman of the Disciplinary Tribunal of Justice.
4. Organization and functioning of the Disciplinary Tribunal of Justice is regulated by law.
5. The appeals against decisions of the Disciplinary Tribunal shall be adjudicated by the Constitutional Court.

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PART TEN

PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Article 50

Article 148 is changed as following:

Article 148

1. The Prosecutor's Office exercises criminal prosecution and represents accusation in court on behalf of the state. The Prosecutor's Office performs other duties as prescribed by law.
2. Prosecutor's office is an independent body and it functions on the principle of decentralization, according to the law.
3. In the exercise of their powers, prosecutors are subject to the Constitution and laws.
4. Prosecutors are appointed by the High Prosecutorial Council after finishing the School of Magistrates and after a passing an evaluation and audit of their assets and their background.
5. Prosecutors have disciplinary liability in accordance with the law.

Article 51

Article 148/ a is added after Article 148 with this content:

Article 148/a

1. The High Prosecutorial Council is responsible for issues of the status and career of prosecutors. Elements of the status, modes of assessment and professional development of prosecutors are regulated by law.
2. The High Prosecutorial Council consists of 11 members. Six of them are prosecutors elected from among prosecutors at all levels of prosecution. The criteria and procedure for selecting the prosecutor members shall be regulated by law. Five other members come from: advocacy, one member; from professors of law, two members; from teachers of the School of Magistrates, one member; and from civil society, one member. The non-prosecutor members are appointed by the Assembly by three-fifths of all members, based on proposals from the relevant structures and the opinion of the Justice Appointments Council.
3. The Assembly votes separately for each group of candidates. In the event that the Assembly, in the first voting, fails to reach the three-fifths majority, the proposing structure makes a new proposal within 15 days. The Appointments Council gives a new opinion within 7 days from the submission of new proposals. The Assembly votes on the new nominations within 7 days from the submission of the opinion of the Appointments Council. If even in the second voting the majority is not reached, the candidate ranked highest by the Appointments Council is considered appointed.
4. The Minister of Justice takes part in meetings of the Prosecutorial Council as an observer. The Minister of Justice may request the initiation of the investigation of disciplinary misconduct against prosecutors.
5. Members of the High Prosecutorial Council exercise this duty full time for a period of 5 years without the right to consecutive re-election. At the end of the mandate the prosecutor members return to their previous work. The lay members who before the appointment worked full time in the public sector, return to their previous work or if that is not possible, in positions equivalent to them.

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6. The Chairman of the High Prosecutorial Council is elected at the first meeting of the Council from among the lay prosecutor members by 2/3 of the votes of all members. When in the first voting, the High Prosecutorial Council does not reach the two-thirds majority, within 7 days from the first voting there is a second voting. If even in the second voting this majority is not reached, the Chairman of the High Prosecutorial Council is elected by simple majority within 7 days.

Article 52

Article 148/b is added after Article 148/a with this content:

Article 148/b

1. The High Prosecutorial Council exercises these responsibilities:
 - a) Appoints, evaluates, promotes and transfers prosecutors;
 - b) Decides on disciplinary measures against prosecutors;
 - c) Proposes to the Assembly candidates for Prosecutor General in accordance with the procedures prescribed by law.
 - ç) Adopts rules of ethics for prosecutors and supervises their observance.
2. The High Prosecutorial Council drafts strategic plans for the Prosecutor's Office, reports publicly and before the Assembly on the state of the Prosecutor's Office and other responsibilities defined by law.

Article 53

Article 148/c is added after Article 148/b with this content:

Article 148/c

1. The Prosecutor's Office of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure is responsible for the criminal prosecution and representation of accusation against judges, prosecutors and senior officials, as established by law, at the Anti-Corruption Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal.
2. Prosecutors of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure are independent.
3. Prosecutors of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure must have 10 years of experience as prosecutors, should not be convicted, should have high reputation for integrity, and must complete a statement and successfully pass a review of their assets and their background, as well as periodic reviews of their financial accounts and telecommunications as well as of their close family members.
4. Prosecutors of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure shall be appointed for a term of 10 years by the High Prosecutorial Council.
5. The National Bureau of Investigation conducts investigations under the direction of prosecutors of the Prosecution Office of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure.

Article 54

Article 149 is changed as following:

Article 149

1. The Prosecutor General is appointed by three-fifths of members of Parliament, upon the proposal of the High Prosecutorial Council and with the opinion of the Justice Appointments

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Council, for a 9-year term with no right of re-appointment on duty. The procedure for selection and appointment of the Prosecutor General is determined by law.

2. The prosecutor general shall be selected among highly qualified lawyers, with no less than 15 years of professional experience, of high moral and professional integrity, that have graduated from the school of magistrates or have a university degree in law at the master's level or above in a reputable university in Albania or abroad. He must not have been punished before for a criminal offence and not to have held a political post or a post in a political party during the last 10 years before running for the position of Prosecutor General.

3. The Prosecutor General bears disciplinary responsibility under the law.

4. The Prosecutor General exercises these powers:

- a) Represents accusation in the High Court and the Constitutional Court;
- b) Issues only written general guidance to prosecutors of the Prosecutor's Office, with the exception of those of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure;
- c) Represents the Prosecutor's Office before foreign countries, with the exception of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure;
- ç) Manages the Prosecutor's Office administration, with the exception of the Special Anti-Corruption Structure;
- d) Proposes and administers the budget of the Prosecutor's Office;
- dh) Makes the strategic planning for the Prosecutor's Office, reports publicly to the Parliament on the state of the Prosecutor's Office, and exercises other powers defined by law.

Article 55

Article 149/a is added after Article 149 with this content:

Article 149/a

1. The mandate of the Prosecutor General ends when:

- a) Reaches the age of 70;
- b) Resigns;
- c) Is declared by the court unable to fulfil the function;
- ç) Is convicted with a final decision for a criminal offense or by a final decision in a disciplinary procedure.

2. The termination of the mandate of the Prosecutor General is declared by decision of the High Prosecutorial Council or occurs after a decision of the Disciplinary Tribunal that the Prosecutor General has committed a serious disciplinary offense.

3. After the end of a 9-year mandate, the Prosecutor General shall be appointed as a judge in the Court of Appeal.

Part Ten/1 is added after Part Ten with this content:

Article 56

Article 149/b

1. The Justice Appointments Council is responsible for verifying the fulfilment of legal requirements and professional and moral criteria of lay members of the High Judicial Council, lay members of the High Prosecutorial Council, the candidate for Prosecutor General as well as the candidates for members of the Constitutional Court. In the exercise of its responsibilities, the

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Justice Appointments Council examines and ranks the candidates proposed by the proposing institutions and advises the Assembly and the President in making appointments.

2. The Justice Appointments Council meets whenever it is necessary.

3. The Justice Appointments Council is composed of the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, the Chairman of the High Court, the Chairman of the High Administrative Court, the Chairman of the High Judicial Council, the Prosecutor General, the Chairman of the High Prosecutorial Council, the Minister of Justice, the Chairman of the National Chamber of Advocacy, the oldest judge of the Constitutional Court, the oldest judge of the High Court and the oldest judge of the High Administrative Court.

4. The Chairman of the High Judicial Council is Chairman of the Justice Appointments Council. The Chairman of the High Prosecutorial Council is Vice Chairman of the Justice Appointments Council.

5. The Chairman of the High Judicial Council, through the administration of the Council, creates working conditions for the operation of the Appointments Council as well as for the documentation of this activity.

6. The functioning of the Appointments Council is regulated by law.

PART EIGHTEEN

TRANSITORY AND LAST PROVISIONS

Article 57

Article 179 shall be amended to read as follows:

Article 179

1. The mandate of the constitutional bodies that will exist after the entry into force of this law ends according to the provisions of the law no.8417, dated 21.10.1998 "The Constitution of the Republic of Albania", as amended.

2. Members of the Constitutional Court shall continue their activity as members of the Constitutional Court, in accordance with the previous mandate. The composition renewal of Constitutional Court shall be as follows:

a) the new members who are due to replace the members whose mandate expires in 2016 shall be appointed, respectively, by the President and by the Assembly, and they shall stay in office until 2026.

b) the new member who is due to replace the member whose mandate ends in 2017 shall be appointed by the meeting of the High Court and the High Administrative Court, and shall stay in office until 2026.

c) the new members who are due to replace the members whose mandate ends in 2019 shall be appointed, respectively, by the President, by the Assembly and by the meeting of the High Court and the High Administrative Court, and they shall stay in office until 2030.

ç) the new member who is due to replace the member whose mandate ends in 2020 shall be appointed by the President, and he shall stay in office until 2030.

d) the new members who are due to replace the members whose mandate ends in 2022 shall be appointed, respectively, by the Assembly and by the meeting of the High Court and the High Administrative Court, and they shall stay in office until 2034.

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3. Members of the High Court shall continue their activities as members of the High Court in accordance with the previous mandate. The new members due to replace the members, whose mandate expires, shall be appointed under the provisions of this law.

4. The members of the High Administrative Court shall be appointed within 3 months since the constitution of the High Judicial Council under this law. The initial appointments to the High Administrative Courts shall be staggered to ensure continuity in the work of the Court.

5. Members of the High Council of Justice shall end their activity as members of the High Council of Justice three months after the entry into force of this law. Election of new members to the High Judicial Council shall be made within 3 months after the entry into force of this law. Three judge members and two lay members of the High Judicial Council shall be appointed initially for a 3-years term, with the purpose of partial renewal of this body.

6. The Prosecutor General shall hold office until the appointment of the new Prosecutor General, in accordance with this law. The current Prosecutor General shall be appointed as a judge at the Tirana Court of Appeal within three months from the date of termination of the mandate.

7. The High Prosecutorial Council shall be established within 3 months from the entry into force of this law. Three prosecutor members and two lay members of the High Prosecutorial Council shall be appointed initially for a 3-years term, with the purpose of partial renewal of this body.

Article 58

After article 179 of the Part seventeen shall be added article 179/1 with the following content:

In accordance with the provisions of Annex 'Transitional Qualification Assessment of Judges and Prosecutors' all judges, including members of the High Court and Constitutional Court, prosecutors, members of the High Council of Justice unless replaced according to Art. 179 no. 5 of this Constitution, the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Albania unless replaced according to Art. 179 no. 6 of this Constitution and their legal advisors shall be, *ex officio*, assessed and re-evaluated in order to re-establish public trust and confidence in these essential democratic institutions.

Transitional Qualification Assessment of Judges and Prosecutors

Article 59

Measures to Establish Public Trust

1. In order to safeguard the rights of the citizens of Albania to equally and fairly access courts and to have crimes fairly prosecuted, but to address grounded concerns that this right is denied by corruption, criminal influence and the poor proficiency of some members of the judiciary or prosecution, the application range of some articles of this Constitution, in particular Articles 128, 131 f, 135, 138, 140, 145 Nr. 1, 147 Nr. 6, 149 Nr. 2 of the version before the entry of this amendment, are limited to the extent necessary to give effect to this Part. All judges, including members of the High Court and Constitutional Court, prosecutors, members of the High Council of Justice (unless replaced according to Art. 179 Nr. 5 of this Constitution), the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Albania (unless replaced according to Art. 179 Nr. 6 of this Constitution) and legal advisors shall be, *ex officio*, assessed and re-evaluated in order to re-establish public trust and confidence in these essential democratic institutions. The re-

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evaluation shall cover all persons listed in sentence 2, regardless of whether they are on secondment or other leave from their position.

2. An Independent Qualification Commission shall be established and a Qualification Assessment shall be conducted.

e) 3. The Independent Qualification Commission shall operate and decide independently according to the provisions of this Part. The procedure followed by the President to eliminate candidates not matching the criteria, the structure, jurisdiction and procedures of the Independent Qualification Commissions, the personal protection and the timing of the assessments shall be regulated by special law.

Article 60 International Monitoring Operation

1. The international monitoring operation is a cooperation between the European Commission, the United States of America, other international organizations and bilateral international assistance. It shall be empowered to appoint International Observers in both instances of the Independent Qualification Commissions. It is chaired by and acts through the European Commission, who coordinates international assistance.

2. International Observers shall have qualifications similar to the Commissioners of the Independent Qualification Commission. International Observers shall have full access to the files at all levels of the Qualification Assessment, may file findings or opinions at any stage of the Qualification Assessment, may present and request evidence.

3. International observers may send unreasonable decisions to the alternative commission of first instance or the extended appeal commission, in particular if the international observer finds sufficiently convincing indications that the proposed decision is inappropriate, ignores facts or important evidence, is not based in law, or results from improper influence. If the International Observer sent the case to the alternative or extended commission, that commission shall decide instead of the one which was previously competent. The assessee can appeal the decision of the international observer of the first instance commission to the international observer of the appeal commission within a week.

4. In the case that Parliament selects one Commission of first instance, the alternative commission of first instance consists of the three substitute Commissioners. If Parliament selects two Commissions of first instance, the alternative commission of first instance for a case shall be the Commission that has not heard the case. If Parliament selects three Commissions of first instance, the alternative Commission for a case shall consist of one of the other Commissions of first instance.

Article 61 Independent Qualification Commission

1. An Independent Qualification Commission shall consist of two public commissioners, up to three First Instance Commissions consisting of three first instance commissioners each, and a Second Instance Commission with three appeal instance commissioners, and at least three substitute commissioners ("Commissioners"). If only one Commission of first instance is implemented, then at least six substitute commissioners must be appointed. They shall serve from January 1, 2016 until December 31, 2019. The commissions cease to have effect automatically by this date if their duration is not prolonged with simple majority by Parliament.

2. The Independent Qualification Commission shall operate with accountability, integrity and transparency and with the objective of promoting an independent and competent system of justice free from corruption.

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3. All commissioners, directors, and other personnel as set by law must consent to the yearly disclosure of their assets, constant monitoring of their financial accounts and waiver of the privacy of their communication related to their work for the period of ten years. All asset declarations shall become public.

4. All commissioners shall have a university degree in law at the master's level or above, obtained in Albania or abroad, and no less than fifteen years' experience as a judge, prosecutor, advocate, notary, law professor or attorney in ministries or public administration, or other legal profession related to the judiciary, and shall have a high reputation for integrity. Nominees for commissioner may not have been judges, prosecutors or legal advisors in the two years prior to their nomination. Nominees for commissioner may not have been an elected official, as a political appointee, or as an official of a political party in the ten years prior to their nomination. Nominees shall not have been convicted for a crime which may have been punished with imprisonment, either inside or outside of Albania.

5. All candidates applying for the position of commissioner shall provide their curriculum vitae, copies of their degrees and passport, and a signed recent full asset declaration in accordance with the Law, No. 9049, Date 10.04.2003, "On the declaration and audit of assets, financial obligations of elected persons and certain public officials," as amended.

6. Within one month of the entry into force of this Part, the Ombudsperson shall invite the public to apply for the position of commissioners within one month of the advertisement. All Albanian courts and State institutions may propose candidates and include their consent to be nominated and any Albanian citizen meeting the qualification requirements may apply. Within one month, the Ombudsperson shall assess whether the criteria are met, and compile the applications which meet all criteria into a list of names of those who are qualified, and send the list with the applications to Parliament. International Observers shall have the necessary access to people and documents to monitor the application and qualification process for commissioners.

7. Within one month of receiving the pool, Parliament shall decide with a simple majority whether to have one, two or three first instance committees, shall decide the number of substitute commissioners with a simple majority, and shall appoint with a 3/5 majority the First Instance and Appeal Instance Commissioners and the two Public Commissioners from the pool of qualified candidates provided by the Ombudsperson. Parliament shall also select at least three substitute Commissioners by 3/5 majority with a priority numbering to facilitate the assignment. If the Parliament fails to select all or some commissioners with a 3/5 majority within one month of the pool being received by Parliament, the President of the Republic shall select in public the missing commissioners out of the pool of those candidates matching the criteria by lot within a month. International Observers shall have the necessary access to people and documents to monitor the appointment process for commissioners.

8. All Commissioners shall work full time and may not hold any other position or employment during their mandate, in accordance with Article 143 of this Constitution. All Commissioners shall have a status equal to that of a High Court Judge for the duration of their mandate. All commissioners shall receive a gross salary of 600.000 Lek monthly. The commissioners shall receive their salary, regardless of the duration of their active mandate, for ten years, unless they have been removed by the disciplinary tribunal. They shall receive an additional yearly pension, which is for each complete year of service 2 % of the annual salary. For periods of less than a year the pension shall be calculated accordingly. The pension shall be paid monthly after the end of the tenth year.

9. The Public Commissioner shall represent the public interest before each instance of the commission, may request and present evidence and may appeal the decision of the first instance commission

10. The Independent Qualification Commission shall have a Registrar and at least three Directors, one who shall oversee the asset declarations, one to oversee the proficiency

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assessments and one who shall oversee background assessments. They shall submit reports on each person's assessment and recommend action to the Commission, with other duties established by law.

11. The Independent Qualification Commission and the international observers shall have a budget, staff and facilities established by law sufficient to support their duties.

12. The official language of the Independent Qualification Commission shall be Albanian and English, and it shall have translators and interpreters accordingly.

13. The Commissioners of the Independent Qualification Commission are subject to disciplinary liability to be determined by the Disciplinary Tribunal established under Article 147/g.

14. Commissioners, international observers, Commission staff, and their families shall be protected at highest level in accordance with the law.

Article 62

Qualification Assessment

1. All officials subject to re-evaluation under Art. 59, paragraph 1, shall be subject to Qualification Assessment by the Independent Qualification Commission. They shall undergo an Asset Assessment under Article 63, a Background Assessment under Article 64 and a Proficiency Assessment under Article 65. At any time before or during the qualification assessment, an assessee may resign from their office and is not assessed any further. Assesseees who resign under this provision may no longer serve as a judge at any level, prosecutor, member of the High Judicial Council or High Prosecutorial Council, or Prosecutor General for the duration of ten years.

2. The Commission may publish information and take into account comments obtained from the public. It respects the balance between privacy and investigation needs.

3. Official bodies of the Republic of Albania shall cooperate with and disclose requested information to the Independent Qualification Commission, grant direct access to their databases and may provide opinions and proposals in accordance with the law.

4. The Commission's directors, the Commissioner, the Public commissioner and the international observers shall review the assessee's background check questionnaire and declarations, may interview people named in the questionnaire or others, and shall cooperate with other state or foreign institutions to review the veracity and accuracy of the disclosure. The Independent Qualification Commission and the international observers shall have direct access to all relevant government databases and files if not classified. They shall have in particular access to the assesseees' personal files, statistical data, files selected for evaluation, self-evaluations, opinions of supervisors, training records and complaints, verification of complaints, disciplinary decisions against the assessee, property and land registers, bank accounts, tax offices, car registration data bases,, border control documentation as well as any other relevant documents.

5. The Registrar shall compile a dossier of the reports, recommendations and files on the asset, background and proficiency assessments, and shall submit it to the Commission.

6. The Commission shall review all three assessment dossiers in accordance with procedures established by law, and shall decide, based on an assessment of all three reports and the information obtained.

7. International Observers shall have access to all stages of the Asset Assessment, Background Assessment, and Proficiency Assessment, as well as the First Instance and Appeals Instance of the Independent Qualification Commission.

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Article 63 Asset Assessment

1. The Independent Qualification Commission shall conduct an assessment of assets of the officials subject to re-evaluation under Art. 59, paragraph 1, with the purpose of identifying assessees who possess or have the use of assets greater than can be legitimately explained, or those assessees who have failed to accurately and fully disclose their assets and those of their families.
2. Assesseees shall submit a fully detailed, new asset declaration to the Commission as regulated by the Law, No. 9049, date 10.04.2003, "On the declaration and audit of assets, financial obligations of elected persons and certain public officials", as amended.
3. The High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interests shall review the asset declaration and submit to the Registrar of the Commission a report about the legitimacy of the assets and the accuracy and fullness of the disclosure, and may submit a recommendation about disciplinary measures.
4. Legitimate income shall be defined by law. Income shall only be considered legitimate if it has been declared and taxes have been paid.
5. If the assessee has assets greater than twice the amount justified by legitimate income, a presumption in favor of the disciplinary measure of dismissal shall be established which the assessee shall have the burden to dispel. For any criminal proceedings relating out of the procedure the burden of proof remains on the State.
6. If the assessee has not submitted the asset declaration in time or takes steps to inaccurately disclose or hide assets in his or her possession or use, a presumption in favor of the disciplinary measure of dismissal shall be established which the assessee shall have the burden to dispel. For any criminal proceedings relating out of the procedure the burden of proof remains on the State.

Article 64 Background Assessment

1. The Independent Qualification Commission shall conduct a background assessment of the officials subject to re-evaluation under Art. 59, paragraph 1, with the purpose of identifying assesseees with regular and inappropriate contacts with members of organized crime,
2. Assesseees shall submit a detailed background questionnaire and declaration to the Commission for the period January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2015, as regulated by law.
3. If the assessee has regular and inappropriate contact with members of organized crime, a presumption in favor of the disciplinary measure of dismissal shall be established, which the assessee shall have the burden to dispel. For any criminal proceedings relating out of the procedure the burden of proof remains on the State.
4. If the assessee does not submit the background questionnaire or declaration within the deadline or takes steps to inaccurately disclose or hide contacts with members of organized crime, a presumption in favor of the disciplinary measure of dismissal shall be established, which the assessee shall have the burden to dispel. For any criminal proceedings relating out of the procedure the burden of proof remains on the State.

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Article 65 Proficiency Assessment

1. The Independent Qualification Commission shall conduct a proficiency assessment of the officials subject to re-evaluation under Art. 59, paragraph 1, with the purpose of identifying assesseees with who are not qualified to perform their role and those who have deficiencies which can be remedied with education.

2. The Proficiency Assessment shall be conducted with the assistance of inspectors from the relevant inspection service at the time of the Assessment. The Proficiency Assessment for judges shall assess judicial capacity, organizational skills, written decisions, orders and judgments, ethics and commitment to judicial values, personal quality and professional commitment, based on standards provided by law. The Proficiency Assessment for prosecutors shall assess prosecutorial capacity, investigation, organizational skills, written decisions, orders and requests, ethics, decisions to not prosecute, and commitment to prosecutorial values, personal quality and professional commitment. The Proficiency Assessment for legal advisors shall assess legal research, written product, organizational skills, ethics, personal quality and professional commitment.

3. The Commission's director overseeing proficiency assessments shall review the documents and information and shall provide a report to the Commission and may submit a recommendation of disciplinary measures.

4. If the assessee has demonstrated inadequate knowledge, skill, judgment, or aptitude, or there is a consistent pattern of work inconsistent with the position, the deficiency shall be identified and a presumption in favor of the disciplinary measure of suspension with education to remedy that deficiency shall be established which the assessee shall have the burden to dispel. For any criminal proceedings relating out of the procedure the burden of proof remains on the State.

5. If the assessee has demonstrated inadequate knowledge, skill, judgment, or aptitude, or there is a consistent pattern of work inconsistent with the position, but the deficiency cannot be remedied with education or training, a presumption in favor of the disciplinary measure of dismissal shall be established which the assessee shall have the burden to dispel. For any criminal proceedings relating out of the procedure the burden of proof remains on the State.

6. If the assessee acts to substantially prevent or confound his or her assessment, or has demonstrated such poor knowledge, skill, judgment, aptitude, or a consistent pattern of work which can threaten or diminish the rights of citizens, the assessee shall be considered inadequate and a presumption in favor of the disciplinary measure of dismissal shall be established which the assessee shall have the burden to dispel. For any criminal proceedings relating out of the procedure the burden of proof remains on the State.

Article 66 First Instance Qualification Assessment

1. For each assessee, the Registrar of the Commission shall combine the files, reports and recommendations from the Asset, Background and Proficiency Assessments. The Commission shall assign according to transparent criteria one member of the First Instance Commission to be a Rapporteur.

2. The Rapporteur can seek additional information, and shall draft a proposed finding and disciplinary measure for the Commission. The assessee shall be given a copy of the proposed finding and disciplinary measure, and shall have within a deadline set by law the right to agree, object or to submit additional evidence.

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3. The first instance commission shall provide the assessee with a hearing. It can include oral or written tests based on the field of work experience of the assessee.

Article 67 Disciplinary Measures

1. If the Independent Qualification Commission determines that an assessee required disciplinary measures, the first instance or appeals Commission shall issue a reasoned decision, which orders either the disciplinary measure of one year suspension with education or the disciplinary measure of dismissal.

2. A reasoned decision ordering suspension with education identifies an assessee's deficiency, suspends the official with 60 % of the salary of a first instance judge, assigns the assessee to the School of Magistrates until the education program starts and orders one year of education and testing available at the School of Magistrates, which is designed to remedy the deficiency. At the end of the education program, the suspended official shall be tested. The test is done with supervision of the European Commission. Assesses failing the test are dismissed by the first instance commission and shall enjoy the appeal to the appeal commission. The appeal shall be final.

3. A reasoned decision ordering dismissal has immediate effect, unless an appeal is filed. In the case of appeal the salary is 60 % of the salary of a judge in first instance. In the case of a successful appeal the remaining 40 % are paid, in the case the dismissal comes into effect the paid 60 % of the salary have to be reimbursed to the State. A final decision ordering dismissal has *ex lege* immediate effect.

4. An assessee filing an appeal of a disciplinary measure is suspended pending the decision of the Appeal Instance Commission.

5. An assessee can agree with the Commission to retire early and to receive pension immediately. The pension amount is reduced and takes into account to the years served by the official, and the years remaining until the standard pension age.

Article 68 Appellate Instance Qualification Assessment

1. The assessee and each of the Public Commissioners shall have the right to appeal to the appellate instance of the commission within the period provided by the law.

2. The international observer takes part with the same rights like those in first instance. If the observer exercises the right to transfer the decision to the extended Commission. In the case one first instance commission exists, he extended Commission shall be the original members of the appeal Commission and those three substitute members, who have not decided in first instance, If two or three commissions of first instance exists, the extended Commission shall be the original members of the appeal Commission and another Commission, or if not available, those three substitute members, who have not decided in first instance.

3. The Appeal Instance Commission shall uphold or modify the decision of the first instance commission in a reasoned, written decision. It may not impose a more strict disciplinary measure without providing the assessee with sufficient notice to prepare and respond in a hearing.

4. If an assessee resigns, retires or agrees to a report and recommendation, there can be no appeal.

5. The Appeal Instance Commission is the final instance. There is no further remedy within Albanian jurisdiction.

Project**Parliamentary Document***Group of High Level Experts***EXPLANATORY NOTE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS*****Introduction***

The Assembly of Albania has established an *Ad Hoc* Parliamentary Committee¹ to analyse the current situation in the justice system, set out the objectives of the justice reform and propose the necessary constitutional and legal amendments for meeting these objectives. In more concrete terms, the scope of activity of the Committee shall encompass:

f) - Analysing the current situation of organisation and functioning of the justice system, to the effect of pointing out the sets of problems and needs for improvement, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and by way of an all-inclusive discussion with the justice system, local and international experts, other interested entities and the public opinion.

g) - Drafting a strategic document for the objectives of the justice system reform, based on the analysis of the current situation of the organisation and functioning of the justice system;

h) - Proposal for the approval of a comprehensive package of the necessary draft-laws for reforming legislation, regulating the organisation and functioning of the justice system institutions, including the constitutional ones, drafted with the contribution and support of the justice system institutions, local and international experts, other interested entities and the public opinion.

i) To the effect of accomplishing the tasks referred to above, a Senior Level Experts Group (SLEG) has been set up attached to the parliamentary committee. SLEG is assisted by a technical secretariat. These structures were entrusted the task of preparing an analysis of the situation that the justice system currently is and the causes having brought about this situation. Upon the completion of the analysis phase, SLEG prepared another document (Strategy of Justice Reform), wherein the objectives of the reform and concrete solutions to the problems identified in the analysis were suggested. These materials, being currently approved by the *Ad Hoc* Parliamentary Committee, have served as a basis for drafting this concept paper, whereon the opinion of Venice Commission (VC) is being requested. Specifically, VC is requested to issue an opinion whether the solutions proposed in this concept paper are in compliance with the best European practices and standards in their respective fields.

Background

The Constitution of RA was approved in 1998. Since the date of approval it has been amended three times. The first amendment occurred in 2007 in order to extend the term in office for the local government bodies. The second amendment, which is more significant, occurred in 2008, to the effect of changing the way of election of the President of the Republic, the procedure for the vote of confidence of the government and the office mandate of the Prosecutor General. The

¹ Decision no 96/2014 of the Albanian Parliament.

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third amendment occurred in 2012 to weaken the immunity of the senior state officials against the criminal prosecution.

In the 17-year period of its application, the Constitution has generally managed to ensure the functioning of a democratic state in Albania, although failures have not been missing. Thus, for instance, the 98' Constitution did not manage to isolate to the extent and appropriate fashion the independent institutions against the impact of the political majorities. The Constitution did not manage to ensure a true and effective supervision of the Parliament over the Government. However, it is clear for all the stakeholders and observers of the political and institutional life in Albania that the most significant failure of the 98' Constitution was its inability to establish an independent, accountable and efficient justice system. The Analytical Document of the Justice System, currently approved by the Ad Hoc Committee for justice reform, has identified exhaustively the justice system problems in all the aspects (independence, accountability and efficiency). Regarding the causes having brought about these problems, the Analytical Document has identified as such the lack of quality and coherence of the constitutional and legal regulations (specifically following the 2008 amendments), high level of corruption among the ranks of judges and prosecutors, low professional level of judges and prosecutors, lack of efficient mechanisms of control over them, lack of clear division of powers among the bodies governing the justice system, disproportional impact of politics on justice etc.

The recurrent efforts of different governments to address these problems (and the reasons underlying them) have failed, because the proposed legal interventions have been fragmentary and in any case did not affect respective constitutional regulation. SLEG has stated unequivocally that the situation that the justice system in Albania is in calls for fundamental constitutional changes, because the current Constitution lacks some essential mechanisms and procedures, which will make it possible to guarantee the independence, accountability and efficiency of the justice system.

Problems in the justice system

The Analytical Document of Justice Reform exhaustively identified the problems affecting the justice system in Albania. On this basis, the Justice Reform Strategy sets objectives and proposes concrete solutions. In this concept paper, only those ideas and problems are being treated, proposals of which relate to the provisions of the Constitution. As for the problems, they are summarized as follows:

1. Under the Constitution of Albania, the President of the Republic is an institution that stands outside the traditional powers. Taking advantage of his position above the parties, the Constitution has vested the President with core competencies in the field of justice. More specifically, abiding by the principle of separation and balancing of powers, the Constitution vests the President with the power to appoint members of the Constitutional Court, High Court and the Prosecutor General with the consent of Parliament. Likewise, the President appoints the ordinary judges and prosecutors. The purpose of these formulas being made use of by the Constitution for the appointment of justice functionaries is that the President (being above the parties) has to guarantee the effective protection of the justice system against the interference of partisan institutions. The Analytical Document of the Justice System has concluded that after the change of the fashion of election of the President in 2008 (now the Constitution allows the

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selection of the President by an ordinary parliamentary majority²) the President, being politically biased (or at least can be as such), cannot carry out this important function. The Analytical Document concludes that the eventuality of political partiality of the President (as a result of changing the way of his election) makes improbable the application of the current formula for the appointment of judges of the Constitutional Court, High Court and the Prosecutor General (see above) and guaranteeing the independence of the justice system. In fact, the practical implementation of this formula has been hampered considerably thus bringing about delays in the appointments, exceeding the terms of tenure of judges whose mandate has ended or they have resigned, conflicts about the procedures and criteria applied by the President in the selection of candidates, and the politicization of the appointment process as a whole.

2. As to the Constitutional Court (CC), the Analytical Document of the Justice System has identified some important issues concerning its organization and functioning. The first problem has to do with the failure of the formula for appointing the CC members (see above). One consequence of this failure is the extension of the mandate of the constitutional judges beyond the period provided for by the Constitution. The second problem (or group of problems) has to do with the politicization of the composition of the CC and the poor quality of its decisions. The Analytical Document concludes that these problems are caused by the lack of accurate professional criteria in the selection and appointment of CC members. The third problem identified by the analytical document has to do with lack of correct procedures for the resignation of a CC judge and the lack of a clear distinction between the reasons for the end of mandate and dismissal of a CC member. Another problem is the recurrent deadlock in the decision-making of the CC, because of the conflict of interest of its members who overwhelmingly come from other judicial instances where they have previously participated in the adjudication of cases. This has led to the violation of an individual's right to a fair hearing by way of denying him (the individual) a final decision. Finally, the Analytical Document concludes that under the current regulation of the Constitution, the scope for complaints of individuals before the CC is very limited, thus making the adjudication before the CC an ineffective tool for having their problems solved.

3. Regarding the High Court (HC), the Analytical Document of the Justice System has identified some important issues concerning its organization and functioning. The first problem has to do with the failure of formula for the appointment of High Court members (see above). Consequently, HC is currently working with an incomplete organogram (only 17 out of 19 members provided for by law are on duty). Likewise, HC members continue to remain in office, despite the expiry of the period provided for by the Constitution. Another problem is the low level of professionalism and independence of the High Court, as a whole. The Analytical Document emphasizes that this problem is caused by a lack of accurate professional criteria in the selection and appointment of members of the High Court. The third group of problems identified by the Analytical Document in connection with HC has to do with low efficiency in trial. The most evident demonstrations of the lack of efficiency in the work of the High Court are: (i) unreasonable delays in the adjudication of cases, (ii) the systematic encroachment by the High Court of its competence to review, by often acting as a court of fact, (iii) inadequacy of initial

² Opinion of the Venice Commission, Ad-CDL (2008) 033, "On Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania", approved by the Assembly on 21 April 2008, under which: Article 5 having amended Article 87 of the Constitution provides for the election of President of the Republic. The most important change is that while the majority of 3/5 of all members of Parliament was required in five rounds of voting, currently an absolute majority vote is sufficient in the fourth and fifth voting. Hence, maintaining the balance, this change is welcome. While the election of the President should actually be based on the consensus of the main political forces, there comes a moment that a decision should be taken and the principle of majority should be allowed to prevail (par.13).

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jurisdiction of the High Court in adjudicating the criminal charges against senior state officials; (iv) rendering unjustified decision in camera, at variance with the practice of the ECHR and the CC; (v) frequent changes of unifying decisions; (vi) low quality in the reasoning of decisions; and (vii) lack of consistency in the case-law. The fourth group of problems identified by the Analytical Document regarding the High Court deals with the complete absence of accountability mechanisms for judges of the High Court. Although it is the top of the judicial pyramid, HC is not, in organizational terms, part of it (the judiciary), since it is subject to a separate system of appointment, operation, promotion and removal from office of judges. Finally, another set of problems have emerged as a result of the creation of special administrative courts in 2012. More specifically, the law on administrative courts has created special administrative courts of first instance and second instance (appellate). Despite the creation of a specialized administrative chamber at HC, the administrative matters at the High Court are usually adjudicated by penal and civil judges, who do not have the specialization required to judge these matters, because under the law on the High Court, all the judges of the High Court may be included in the adjudication of the entire matters. This has become a cause for the lack of coherence in the administrative case law of the High Court. Another problem, falling under this group, is the fact that for the adjudication of administrative cases the Administrative Chamber of the High Court refers to two (2) procedural laws: (i) the law on administrative courts and (ii) of the Code of Civil Procedure. This has become a cause for uncertainty about the applicable law in certain cases, thus undermining the coherence of jurisprudence and bringing about the extension of administrative proceedings beyond the three-month period, foreseen by the law. Finally (remaining with this group of problems), the Analytical Document highlights the fact that while the administrative judges of first instance and the appeal should be tested in an exam in order to get specialized, the judges of the Administrative Chamber of the High Court are not required to obtain any specialization and nor obliged to pass this administrative law test.

4. Regarding the prosecution system, the Analytical Document has identified some important issues as follows: (i) the politicization of the process of selection and appointment of the Prosecutor General (PG) due to the failure of the constitutional formula for his appointment (see above). Besides the failure of the constitutional formula concerning the appointment, the politicization of the appointment process of PG was caused by the lack of detailed criteria and selection procedures, which are not provided either in the Constitution or in law; (ii) lack of independence of prosecutors in the investigation, as a result of over-centralization of the system and of undue powers of higher prosecutors and the PG, particularly over the investigations conducted by lower prosecutors. The Analytical Document concludes that the combination of politicization of PG (as a result of the method of election) with his exaggerated powers concerning the investigations of the lower prosecutors may be an explanation for the failure of the investigation into the corruption of senior officials; (iii) the absence of a functional career system within the prosecution system which should build on an efficient system of evaluation of professional skills and ethical qualities. Consequently, the appointment and promotion of prosecutors is not done on a professional basis and clearly defined criteria. The role of the Prosecution Council in this process is negligible, since the entire powers in the field of career of prosecutors are concentrated in the hands of the PG; (iv) uncertainty in hierarchical, material and territorial organization of the prosecutor's office, as well as the relations prosecutor's office - judicial police, which caused lack of efficiency in the work of the prosecution, lack of proactive investigations and unjustified termination of criminal investigations etc.

5. As to the High Council of Justice (HCJ), the Analytical Document of the Justice System has identified several important issues related to its organization and functioning as follows: *First*, the Analytical Document notes that the HCJ has shown an evident corporatist spirit in its

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operation. The most evident instances of the demonstration of corporatism in the work of the HCJ have been the promotion of HCJ members, while serving on the council and the formation of groups and alliances within the Council is often an obstacle to punish certain judges. SLEG concludes that the current composition of the HCJ where 10 of its 15 members come from the judiciary paves the way for corporatism³. *Second*, it is highlighted that the current constitutional and legal framework does not provide for any criteria for selection of members of the HCJ appointed by the Assembly and no accountability mechanism for the HCJ members in general is in place. This has a direct impact on the quality of the work of the High Council of Justice. *Third*, it is highlighted that HCJ is not fully guaranteed in its independence since the members appointed by Parliament are voted by a simple majority of the latter (a simple majority of 36 MPs is sufficient for the appointment of a HCJ member) thus creating the possibility of undue influence of the respective political majority on the elected members. *Fourth*, HCJ is not being managed effectively. As pertinent reasons, the following have been identified (i) chairing of HCJ by the President of the Republic having brought about practical anomalies in the functioning of the Council (SLEG is of the opinion that the HCJ membership of the President and the latter chairing the HCJ do not fit well with the constitutional standing of the President as a stakeholder exercising his powers outside the 3 traditional powers) and (ii) the power of the President to nominate the Deputy Chairman of HCJ (who is the Executive Director of the HCJ) which has brought about the failure to make the appointment of Deputy Chairman since 1 year, due to the inaction of the President. *Fifth*, the Analytical Document noted that the powers of the High Council of Justice in the management (governance) of the judicial power are not sufficient to allow for the Council to develop comprehensive policies and strategies of sustainable governance of the judiciary. Some of the most important responsibilities in the governance of the judiciary (e.g., application of judicial ethics, the initial training of magistrates, the system of case management, keeping statistical data and public reporting, budgeting, implementation and auditing of budget, strategic planning, management of judicial administration, etc.) have not been entrusted to the HCJ, as the main governing body of the judiciary. Likewise, the Analytical Document noted that the assignment of the governance responsibilities among different actors is not always clear. The most striking overlap of responsibilities is between the HCJ and the MoJ, in connection with the inspection of the courts, complaints against judges and disciplinary proceedings against judges. *Sixth*, SLEG considers the membership of the Minister of Justice (MoJ) with the HCJ problematic and unacceptable, regarding his exclusive power to initiate disciplinary proceedings against judges. *Seventh*, despite the will of the constitution-maker, HCJ in practice is not functioning as a real collegial body, since the members of the Council (except Vice Chairman) do not serve full time. Consequently, their involvement in the affairs of the Council is reduced to casting the vote during the plenary session of the HCJ⁴. In the current structure of HCJ, commissions as internal structures with decision-making powers in various fields of activity of the council are missing. *Finally*, the Analytical Document notes that the lack of responsibilities (competencies) for issues related to the status of judges of the High Court does not guarantee the accountability of the latter and do not avoid political influence in the process of their appointment.

³ HCJ currently consists of the President of the Republic, the President of the High Court, the Minister of Justice (these 3 members are *ex officio*), 3 members elected by Parliament and 9 judges of all levels elected by the National Judicial Conference.

⁴ HCJ members do not take active part in preparing the files and draft decisions.

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j) Objectives aimed at to be achieved by the justice reform

1. Reframing the powers of the President in connection with the justice system

The constitutional amendments of 2008 changed the way of electing the President by enabling him to be politically biased (see above). On the other hand, its core competencies in connection with the justice system remained unchanged (see above). The Draft Strategy of Justice Reform concludes that as long as the formula of electing the President remains unchanged, it is necessary to overhaul his powers in relation to the justice system by adjusting the formula of his election to his powers and relations with the judicial authorities and prosecution office⁵. More specifically, the strategy of justice reform proposes to maintain the actual formula of electing the President and to reduce his constitutional powers associated with the justice system as follows:

(i) to appoint formally the members of the High Court and High Administrative Court, upon the concrete proposals coming from High Judicial Council after conducting a transparent selection process based on clearly defined and measurable criteria. SLEG is of the opinion that such a formula responds better to position of the President in the institutional configuration that has resulted from the 2008 constitutional amendments. SLEG also thinks that this formula is able to significantly reduce the political influence in the process of appointing the members of the High Courts and increase their professional quality.

(ii) To have exclusive competence for the appointment of three (3) out of nine (9) members of the Constitutional Court (6 other members are proposed to be nominated and appointed by parliament and judiciary) at the end of a transparent selection process and based on objective criteria. SLEG is of the opinion that this formula responds better to the constitutional position of President and avoids clashes with the parliament in the process of appointing CC members. In general, these new formulas are evaluated by SLEG as appropriate to ensure the proper functioning and efficiency of the institutions of the justice system and to avoid political conflict in the process of appointments.

Regarding the overhauling of the powers of the President in relation to the justice authorities, a different formula of electing the head of state has also been identified. Under this view, the new role of the President will be better guaranteed with an election formula of wide consensus (formula with 2/3 or 3/5). Experts supporting the selection formula of wide consensus argue that, in this way the guarantees of independence and efficiency increase, resulting from the substantial role of the President on appointments to the CC and HC. Likewise, changing the formula to the qualified majority, increases active legitimacy of the President of the Republic as a symbol of unity of the people who stands above political parties. Moreover, civic confidence to the President as a neutral constitutional institution is higher, but also his profile as a guarantor of constitutionality takes more legitimacy for all other powers that are not related to the justice system.

In the final variant, there was supported the stance, according to which, the overhauling of the role of the President in relation to the new constitutional powers related to the justice system does not dictate the change of the formula of his election. The role of President is reduced compared with the previous constitutional powers he had, therefore there is no need to change the formula of his election. While maintaining the current formula of electing the President, the

⁵ SLEG considers that it is natural that a President elected based on consensus exercise more responsibilities in relation to the judiciary, as compared to a president elected unilaterally.

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situations arising from the failure to reach political consensus that can lead the country to new elections with financial and administrative costs are avoided.

Independence and effectiveness of the High Court

Against the backdrop of the problems and shortcomings identified in the Analytical Document of the Justice System for the High Court (see above), SLEG proposes the following:

(i) Repealing the constitutional provision vesting the High Court with original jurisdiction to adjudicate criminal charges against senior state officials;⁶

(ii) Clearly defining in the Constitution the jurisdiction of the High Court as a court of third instance, examining complaints only on points of law interpretation (no matters of fact) from the lower courts;

(iii) Establishing a High Administrative Court with jurisdiction separated from the High Court for Civil and Criminal Matters⁷ as the second and last instance in the trial of administrative cases;

(iv) Providing for a procedure to resolve disputes between the ordinary and administrative courts regarding their jurisdiction (subject matter jurisdiction);

(v) Restructuring the system of administrative courts, providing for the High Administrative Court to be the second and the last instance in the system, having initial and review jurisdiction in specific cases provided for by law;⁸

(vi) HC to be transformed into a career court and be fully integrated into the judicial system. This means that the High Judicial Council (HJC) be vested with all the powers necessary to verify the criteria, assessment and nomination of candidates for members of the High Court. It is proposed that the HJC decisions for nominating candidates for members of the High Court to be adopted by qualified majority within the Council⁹. Subsequently, the candidates nominated by the HJC shall be decreed by the President following a formal evaluation of them (i.e., only in relation to meeting the criteria and abiding by the selection procedure). Then the law should provide that in case of rejection of candidates, the President should ground his decision. While in case of inaction of the President within a specified period, the candidate proposed by the HJC shall be considered elected;

(vii) A number of the HC members (no more than 20%) has to come from the ranks of law academics, advocacy and other legal professions in order to make possible the combination of

⁶ This approach is consistent with the opinion of the Venice Commission (document CDL-AD (2014) 016), "On amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Code of Civil Procedure," which has also recommended that HC should have its original jurisdiction removed.

⁷ Albanian administrative adjudication system is a mixed system. The administrative adjudication in Albania starts with the administrative court of first instance and administrative appeal (as in Germany, France, Italy) and ends at the High Court that adjudicates also criminal civil, and administrative matters (same as in the British system, or Scandinavian countries).

⁸ SLEG is of the opinion that a separate administrative jurisdiction will enable the accelerated and specialized adjudication of administrative matters. The complete separation of the administrative jurisdiction is justified due to some features of the adjudication of administrative matters such as the transfer of the burden of proof to the administrative bodies, the active role of the judge, the possibility that the court issue an administrative act etc. This intervention will also lead to reduction of current HC work load by at least 30%.

⁹ Although this regulation is thought to be done at a second stage in the law.

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professional experiences at the High Court. The representation of each of the aforementioned groups of professionals of law at the High Court must be based on a percentage defined by law. The law should also provide for the criteria to be met by a candidate for HC member (be it a candidate from the judiciary, or a candidate who is not from the judiciary)¹⁰. SLEG considers that this model of selection and appointment of judges of the High Court minimizes the politicization of the process of appointing members of the High Court by way of keeping parliament out this process and limiting the discretion of the President. On the other hand, the latter continues to play the role of control from outside the judicial system by ensuring a balance in the appointment of members of the High Court;

(viii) Clear and objective criteria have to be provided for, focused on professional merits¹¹ to be met by candidates for members of the High Court. As such can be: a) the experience as a lawyer and professional experience and as a judge, prosecutor, advocate, university professor, a lawyer in senior positions in public administration (at least 15 years). Having academic titles may be considered as an advantage;¹² b) high moral and professional integrity (though this criterion is not objective); c) clean criminal record; d) being subject to no effective disciplinary measures; e) not being member of the leading forums of political parties, etc. Also, in order to create guarantees and resilience in decision-making, it is proposed that the mandate of the High Court judges to be longer in time (12 years);

(x) Selection and appointment of the Chairman of the High Court must be made by the members of the High Court, unlike the current arrangement under which the appointment is made upon the proposal of the President and with the consent of parliament. SLEG considers that this model reduces the possibility of political influence or of other nature, and strengthens the collegiality by giving judges a significant role in the management of the High Court. It is proposed that the mandate of the Chairman be limited in time (5 years) without the right of re-election in order to enable management of the HC by way of rotation;

There was also a minority opinion of the experts, who support the variant of appointment of members of the High Court and the High Administrative Court only by the High Judicial Council, without the involvement of the President in the appointment process. Their opinion is based on the opinion of the Venice Commission, according to which "in any case, it is not appropriate for the President to take part in the appointment of judges"¹⁷. However, the version presented above prevailed within the SLEG.

¹⁰ According to the model of appointing the HC judges from outside the system, which is being applied in different countries, the proposing power is vested with bodies outside the judiciary belonging to areas where they come from. The origin of these members may be from the fields of law (lawyers, notaries), or from academic field, but their appointment may need the consent / approval of the HCJ (Italy).

¹¹ Opinion of the Venice Commission CDL (2011) 065 on the Law of Turkish CC: It is important to note that the selection of judges should be based on objective criteria previously set out by law or by the competent authorities and those (criteria) should focus mainly on merits.

¹² See also CDL-AD (2006) 006, Opinion on Two Draft Laws amending Law No. 47/1992 on the organization and functioning of the Constitutional Court of Romania, § 17 "It is very welcome that CC consists not only of career judges and prosecutors but also of lawyers and professors of law. Such a composition has a positive effect on the decisions of the court. The Venice Commission is of the opinion that the CC should be open to candidates from all branches as long as the proper legal qualification is guaranteed." Also the Opinion of the Venice Commission CDL (2011) 065 on the law of Turkish CC.

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2. Independence, impartiality and transparency of HJC

Given the phenomena and problems identified by the Analytical Document for HJC, SLEG proposes a comprehensive overhaul of the Council as follows:

(i) It is proposed that the name of the HCJ name be change into "The High Judicial Council" or "HJC" reflecting the true nature of this body as institution only of the judiciary governance;

(ii) The number of members reduced to 11 (as out of 15 currently). Of these, 6 are judges in order to guarantee independence and self-governance of the judiciary.¹³ It is proposed that judge members be appointed by the general meetings of fellow judges of the same level, according to the proportion below: 1 (one) member by the general meeting of judges of the High Court and High Administrative Court; 2 (two) members by the general meeting of judges of the Courts of Appeal; and three (3) members by the general meeting of judges of the Court of First Instance¹⁴. SLEG considers that this way of electing judge members abides by the principle of proportionality, because it involves all levels of the judiciary and creates a fair balance between judge members and lay members.¹⁵ It is proposed that 5 of the HJC lay members be appointed by the Assembly with a qualified majority of 3/5 of all members, on the basis of proposals coming from the legal profession (1 member), academic field (2 members from the law faculty full-time university readers), the School of Magistrates (1 member from internal or external professors, provided that he/she is not a judge), civil society (1 member) and the opinion of the Justice Appointment Council. In case of failure to reach the required majority of the Assembly in the first voting, it is proposed that the proposing structures represent other candidates. If the Assembly does not reach the required majority for the second time it is proposed that the nominees proposed and ranked above by the Appointments Council¹⁶ be considered appointed. SLEG thinks that this type of composition avoids the management and governance of the judiciary only by judges, while enhancing the quality, impartiality and trust of citizens in the administration of justice.¹⁷ While the qualified majority for the appointment of members elected by the Parliament is instrumental to the de-politicization of the HJC and is in compliance with the approach recommended by the Venice Commission¹⁸.

¹³ See comments of the Venice Commission no. 403/2006, dated 26.10.2007, which refer in its report on judicial appointments (CDL-AD (2007) 028).

¹⁴ This proposed solution means that the National Judicial Conference will be abolished.

¹⁵ The Venice Commission stated that: at least half of the members must be judges (...) a substantial portion of the members must be judges (CDL-AD (2007) 028, Report on judicial appointments, §§19, 20 and CDL-AD (2014) 008, Opinion on the draft of the High Council of Justice and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina §§27, 28 CDL-INF (1998) 009, Opinion on amendments to the law on major Constitutional provisions of the Republic §§9-12 of Albania). Between judge members should have a balanced representation of judges of courts of different levels, and this principle should be stated (CDL-AD (2012) 024, Opinion on the constitutional amendments related to the judiciary in Montenegro §23 as and CDL-AD (2011) 010, Opinion on the constitutional amendments in Montenegro §39).

¹⁶ The establishment of a justice Appointments Council was also proposed. See hereunder for more details.

¹⁷ According to the Venice Commission, not only judges, but "users of the judicial system" such as lawyers, representatives of civil and academic circles should have a seat on the National Judicial Council, since uniformity can lead to easy analysis of themselves and to absence of public responsibility in understanding the external needs and requirements (Summary of Opinion and Reports of the Venice Commission about the courts and judges, paragraph 4.2.2, p 77). It is advisable to judicial councils to include members who are not representatives of the judiciary itself. However, such members should preferably be appointed by the legislative rather than the executive (Summary of Opinion and Reports of the Venice Commission about the courts and judges, paragraph 4.3., P 85).

¹⁸ CDL-AD (2002) 015, Opinion on the draft amendments to the law of the judicial system in Bulgaria § 5. According to the Venice Commission, it should be ensured that the opposition also have an impact on the composition of the Council. One possibility would be to require two-thirds or three-quarters for the election of members by the Parliament

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(iii) It is proposed that HJC members perform their duties on full time basis, in order to ensure efficiency and abidance by the collegiality of this body, to avoid potential conflicts of interest and to ensure the accountability of members in the exercise of their functions. This implies that the mandate of judge members be suspended, while serving at HJC and be calculated for purposes of seniority. At the end of the period of service at HJC, the judge member must return to his previous position¹⁹. The lay member, who before his appointment to the HJC worked on full time basis in the public sector, at the end of the period of service in HJC should also return to the previous position;

(iv) The President of the Republic be no longer a member of the High Judicial Council, in order to guarantee the independence of the HJC and avoiding political influence²⁰. As for the Minister of Justice, given the important role of MJ in the functioning of the judiciary, it is proposed that the MJ be a non-voting member. It is also proposed that MJ do not have the exclusive right to initiate disciplinary proceedings against judges;

(v) The Chairman of the High Council of Justice be appointed by the Council from among the members elected by the Assembly with 2/3 of the votes of the members of the High Judicial Council. SLEG thinks this is a balanced solution and ensures the support of the members themselves for the election of the Chairman of the High Judicial Council;²¹

(vi) The HJC, as the government of the judiciary, which currently is responsible for the appointment of judges of first instance and appeal, the assessment, transfer and promotion of judges of first instance and appeal; the discipline of judges of first instance and appeal, including review of complaints and inspection of activities of judges,²² is proposed to have the same power over the members of the High Court and High Administrative Court. The only difference will be with regard to the appointment of members of the High Court (HC) and High Administrative Court, for which the HJC will have the authority to propose the candidates (see above). SLEG believes that such a solution guarantees independence of the judiciary and enhances the responsibility of HJC for all matters relating to the status of judges, what is in accordance with international standards²³ and coincides with the opinion of the Venice Commission in the Memorandum of February 2014.²⁴

(vii) The HJC be entrusted new responsibilities for the administration of the judicial case management system, maintaining the statistical system of the judiciary, the relations of the judiciary with the public and media, court administration management, reporting to the public

(...) but, at the same time procedural safeguards must be taken against the dangers of stalemate (Summary of Opinions and Reports of the Venice Commission about courts and judges, paragraph 4.3, p 85).

¹⁹ It is proposed that the return to their previous position for judge members be written in the Constitution.

²⁰ In Opinion No. 10/2007, CCJE recommends that "prospective members of the Judicial Council, whether or not judges, they should not be active politicians, members of parliament, the executive or the administration. This means that neither the Head of State if he / she is the head of government, nor any minister can be a member of the Council of the Judiciary

²¹ According to the Venice Commission, the election of the Chairman by the Council, by the lay members, entails a balance between the necessary independence of the Chairman and the need to avoid the possible corporatist tendency within the Council (CDL-AD (2007) 028, Report on judicial appointments, § 35)

²² Inspection and review of claims made by the HCJ, as well as by the MoJ

²³ The Venice Commission supports the opinion that a judicial council should have a decisive influence on the appointment and promotion of judges and disciplinary measures against them (CDL-AD (2007) 028, Report on judicial appointments, §§24, 25) ; See also Overview of Opinions and Reports of the Venice Commission on Courts and Judges, paragraph 3.3, page 73

²⁴ CDL (2014)021

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and Parliament, administration of physical and security infrastructure, and performance measurement of courts which currently is being assumed by MoJ;

(viii) Responsibilities for the judicial budget to be transferred to the HJC²⁵. This solution avoids the involvement of the executive (MoJ) with the control of every detail of the operational budget of the courts, ensures compliance with international standards, and allows a more comprehensive approach to the development of judicial budget policies. SLEG has judged that as an institution governing the judiciary, it is self-evident that the High Judicial Council has to deal with issues of budgetary policies of the judiciary;

(ix) The responsibilities for strategic planning be transferred over to the HJC²⁶;

(x) The HJC shall operate through three (3) permanent commissions²⁷: Disciplinary Commission, Career Assessment Commission and Management Commission. The Commissions should have full-fledged decision-making powers in their relevant areas. Appeals against the decisions of the commissions may be considered at the plenary meeting of the High Judicial Council. These commissions, according to the issues due to review, will be supported by specialized support staff. SLEG thinks that this solution will contribute to raising the efficiency of the HJC in the exercise of its powers;

(xi) HJC shall not have the powers of investigating into the disciplinary violations and the complaints against judges. It is also proposed that the powers of the HJC to inspect courts shall be abolished. To this effect it is proposed to establish an independent inspectorate (High Justice Inspectorate) which shall be responsible for investigating the disciplinary violations and complaints against judges at all levels, members of the High Prosecutorial Council and Prosecutor General. The Inspectorate shall also be responsible for the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against functionaries mentioned above and for inspecting the courts and prosecution offices. The disciplinary proceedings initiated by the High Justice Inspectorate against judges shall be examined and decided by the High Judicial Council. The disciplinary proceedings initiated by the Inspectorate against prosecutors shall be examined and decided by the High Prosecutorial Council. While the disciplinary proceedings instituted against the members of both councils (HJC and HPC) as well as against the Prosecutor General shall be examined and decided by a special disciplinary tribunal (High Justice Tribunal). It is proposed that the High Justice Inspectorate be composed of 5 members (3 judges and 2 prosecutors) appointed by the Assembly by three fifth of the entire members, from among the candidates selected and ranked by the High Judicial Council and High Prosecutorial Council. It is proposed that Inspectors shall have the status of a High Court judge and a term of nine years, without the possibility to renew the mandate for a second term. On the other hand, it is proposed that, in order to complete the cycle of checks and balances, the Minister of Justice be the body responsible for the investigation of the disciplinary violations and for instituting the disciplinary proceedings against inspectors before the Disciplinary Tribunal. It is deemed that the accomplishment of inspection by an independent body is necessary since it separates the inspection from the decision-making process for imposing the disciplinary measure. While the appointment of inspectors by the Assembly with three fifth of the members of all the members from the list of candidates selected and ranked by the HJC and HPC shall be instrumental to depoliticizing the process of appointment and guaranteeing the quality of the composition of the Inspectorate. Besides improving the disciplinary system, the establishment of an Independent

²⁵ Eventually, a special commission within HCJ.

²⁶ Eventually, a special commission within HCJ.

²⁷ This amendment will not be done in the Constitution but in the law.

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Inspectorate is expected to improve the implementation of the code of judicial ethics which is currently the responsibility of a non-functional body like the National Judicial Conference (NJC).

(xii) Establish the Justice Disciplinary Tribunal, which will be responsible for reviewing cases of disciplinary violations and taking disciplinary measures for members of the High Judicial Council, the High Prosecutorial Council, Independent Inspectorate, Independent Qualification Commission and the Prosecutor General, as well as examining complaints against disciplinary measures imposed on judges and prosecutors by the High Judicial Council and High Prosecutorial Council. It is deemed that this new institution will affect the strengthening of the accountability of the governing institutions of the justice system. It is proposed that the Disciplinary Tribunal consists of 9 *ex officio* members who are: the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, the Chairman of the High Court, the Chairman of the High Administrative Court, Prosecutor General, Minister of Justice, the Chairman of the National Chamber of Advocacy, the most senior member of the Constitutional Court and the most senior member of the High Court and the High Administrative Court.

(xiii) Establish a Justice Appointments Council, which is responsible for verifying the fulfillment of legal requirements and professional and moral criteria of candidates for members of the High Judicial Council, candidates for members of the High Prosecutorial Council, Prosecutor General and of candidates for members of the Constitutional Court. It is proposed that in the exercise of his responsibilities, the Justice Appointments Council shall review and rank based on merit the candidates proposed by the proposing institutions, and shall advise the Assembly and the President in making appointments. It is deemed that this proposed regulation will positively affect the de-politicization of the process of appointments to high positions in the judiciary by reducing the discretion of the appointing political bodies and enhancing quality in the composition of the institutions governing the justice system.

(xiv) Finally, given that the proposed reform will affect the most fundamental aspects of the organization and functioning of the HJC (number of members, the composition, the chairmanship of the body, powers, full time membership, way of appointment and dismissal of members etc.), SLEG proposes the adoption of certain transitional provisions which would have the effect of early termination of the mandates of the HJC members and regulation of the legal situation that will be created after the entry into force of the proposed constitutional changes.

There has been another view of some experts that the responsibilities for the administration (with the exception of management of the judicial administration that will be charged on the HJC) remain with the Minister of Justice (MJ)²⁸, provided that for the decision-making on these matters, the MJ shall take the preliminary opinion of the HJC. These responsibilities shall be regulated in a legal level, without having to be provided for in the Constitution. According to them, the MJ has already a consolidated tradition in performing those functions and he is in a better position to lobby for the necessary budgetary support for the exercise of these responsibilities. However, in this case the threat of political interference of the Executive in matters of judicial administration still remains.

²⁸ Provided that decisions on these issues the MJ takes the opinion of the HJC.

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3. Role and mission of the Prosecutor's Office

Prosecution system under the current Constitution²⁹ is situated on the border between the executive and the judicial power. As such, it appears with typical executive powers, as well as with typical judicial powers. This has also led to double functional dependency of prosecutor's office by the court and the executive. This hybrid model has become a cause for the unclear position of the prosecutor's office in the framework of division and balance of powers and it has caused overlapping of powers of control over the prosecutor's office and the lack of its (control) effectiveness.

To address this situation and problems and shortcomings that have emerged in the work of the prosecutor's office in the years since the entry into force of the Constitution (see above), SLEG has developed some important proposals as follows:

(i) The status of the prosecutor's office, as an independent prosecution body (independent of the three traditional powers), is to be provided for in the Constitution and include functional independence as well as the organizational one;

(ii) High Prosecutorial Council (HPC) be reconceived as an independent constitutional body with full and exclusive powers in the field of the status of prosecutors (recruitment, appointment, transfer, re-appointment and discipline of prosecutors). Also, it is proposed that the HPC constitutionally be given powers to nominate the candidate for Prosecutor General (PG). SLEG thinks that the division of powers of the PG with the HPC would affect the growth of internal independence of prosecutors in relation to more senior prosecutors and the external independence of the institution³⁰;

(iii) Establish an Independent Inspectorate vested with the competence of investigation of disciplinary violations and complaints against prosecutors at all levels, initiation of disciplinary proceedings against them and the inspection of offices of the Prosecutor's Office (see above). SLEG considers that this intervention will enable the functioning of the system of accountability in the prosecutor's office, which until now has been almost non-existent;

(iv) Provision of a partial functional decentralization within the prosecution system in order to guarantee internal independence of prosecutors against senior prosecutors. SLEG finds that the partial functional decentralization of the prosecutor's office does not jeopardize the functioning of the body, because the (functional decentralization) is thought to be accompanied by the necessary changes to the criminal procedural legislation that shall give the court a role in the development of criminal investigation (preliminary investigation judge to be distinguished from the judge who adjudicates the case on the merits). In this way, the court shall conduct the functional control of the prosecutors, which so far was carried out by senior prosecutors. However, the most senior prosecutors will retain some small functional surveillance powers on lower prosecutors;

²⁹ Under Article 148 of the Constitution "The prosecutor's office exercises criminal prosecution and represents the accusation in court on behalf of the state. The prosecutor's office exercises other duties prescribed by law. Prosecutors are organized and operate at the judicial system as a centralized body. In the exercise of their powers, the prosecutors are subject to the Constitution and laws."

1. CDL-AD (2014) 008, Opinion on the draft law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, §§24 and 41,42]

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(v) Provision of a complete decentralization of the prosecution system in the administrative aspect in accordance with the instances of the prosecutor's office (first instance, appeal and General Prosecutor's Office);

(vi) Provision of the minimum / basic criteria in the Constitution that the candidate for PG must meet in order to guarantee the quality of the candidates, transparency in selecting them and strengthening public confidence in the integrity and professionalism of the candidacy;

(vii) Regarding the procedure of appointment of PG, it is proposed that he is appointed by a qualified majority (3/5) upon the proposal of the HPC for a term of 9 years, without the right of reappointment. The procedure for the selection and appointment of the Prosecutor General shall be determined by law.

(viii) Regarding investigation of the cases related to corruption and organized crime, a special and consistent structure of the prosecutor's office and investigations shall be established (Special Structure of Anti-Corruption and the National Bureau of Investigation);

(ix) Finally, given that the proposed reform, if approved, will bring about a comprehensive structural and functional redesigning of the prosecution system, the powers of the PG, the method of his selection and appointment, the length of constitutional mandate, the procedure for his dismissal, elevation of the Prosecutorial Council at constitutional level and complete structuring of its powers for the appointment, career, promotion and discipline of prosecutors, different from the current constitutional and legal arrangements, SLEG believes that it is required to adopt transitional constitutional provisions for the early termination of the mandate of the PG.

Among the group of experts there has been an alternative attitude designed to conceive the Prosecutor's Office as part of the judiciary. There were suggestions that the Minister of Justice should have a role in this model, which should not be of a procedural nature, but of the organizational one, including coordination and cooperation with the PG, as in this way it ensures access of the government to effectively implement criminal policy³¹. Furthermore, in terms of full administrative decentralization, the Prosecutor's Office will need a governance structure and this role can be fulfilled by the Minister of Justice. Also, it was proposed the inclusion of the preliminary investigations judge in the system (other than the judge who adjudicates the merits of the case), who will control the interaction between the procedural subject that carries out the investigation with the one that conducts criminal proceedings.

4. The immunity of judges

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, judges of all levels enjoy immunity either in the form of *unaccountability (non liability)* for consequences that may result from the exercise of duty by them, or in the form of *immunity (inviolability)* of some aspects / phases of criminal proceedings. The second aspect of immunity of judges (inviolability) was significantly limited as a result of the constitutional amendments of 2012 that lifted protection from criminal preliminary investigation (or initiation of criminal proceedings)³². As a result of this important

³¹CDL-AD (2015) 003, *Opinion Përfundimtar mbi projekt-ligjin e rishikuar për Prokurorinë Publike të Malit të Zi*, §§ 65, 113 " Ministria e Drejtësisë nuk duhet të ketë funksionin e kontrollit të përditshëm të prokurorisë edhe pse një input në çështje të përgjithshme të politikave do të ishte e arsyeshme."

³² Other smaller changes include expanding the application of the clause *in flagrante (flagrant delicto)* (possibility to arrest / detain an official with immunity if caught during or immediately after the commission of a crime) by referring to

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amendment, the prosecutor's office can now file a criminal charge against a judge at any level and carry out preliminary investigations freely. Other forms of inviolability (interim protection from arrest, personal search and house control) remained in force. Based on Articles 126, 137 (2) and (4) of the Constitution, the ordinary judges, judges of the High Court and judges of the Constitutional Court cannot be arrested or deprived of liberty in any form or exercise personal search or house control against them without the authorization of the High Council of Justice (for judges of first instance and appeal), or the Constitutional Court (for judges of the High Court and the Constitutional Court).

From the analysis carried out in the framework of the Reform in Justice System, it has resulted that despite the change of the Constitution in 2012, by which the criminal prosecution immunity of judges was lifted (preliminary investigation), the special protection that was reserved for judges is still great. Protection from personal search and house control in particular is an unjustified barrier in the process of gathering evidence. In fact, the number of investigations and criminal penalties against judges remain very low despite the limitation of immunity in 2012. Moreover, the Criminal Procedure Code makes a contradictory arrangement of procedures followed for the arrest or detention of a judge, or for the exercise of personal search or his residence search. As a result of this contradictory arrangement, the authorization of the HCJ to arrest or search a judge is also required when the court has already authorized such action. Furthermore, it seems that the wording of Article 126 of the Constitution creates a situation of conflict of interest in the cases when the CC must give its consent for the arrest, personal search and house control of one of its members. Despite these facts, SLEG proposes the necessary constitutional amendments be made for a complete lifting of immunity (inviolability) of judges at all levels.

5. Disciplinary liability of judges / prosecutors

The Analytical Document of the Justice System comes to the conclusion that the constitutional and legal framework in Albania does not make a complete and coherent adjustment of disciplinary liability of judges and prosecutors. So, the disciplinary system for ordinary judges is defective in terms of inspections. The adjustments made to the latter (inspections) by the laws on the HCJ and the MoJ are confusing. As a result, there are uncertainties about the nature of various types of inspections and verification of complaints, the goals that they follow, the use of their findings, etc. Furthermore, the responsibility for conducting inspections on courts and judges is fully overlapped between the HCJ and the MJ. Another problem affecting the disciplinary regime of ordinary judges is the fact that the MJ has the exclusive right to initiate disciplinary proceedings against judges. On the other hand, the inspection of prosecutors is the responsibility of the MJ. This arrangement has proven to be not functional in practice. While for members of the CC and the HC there is no proper system of discipline and accountability. This is true even for members of the High Council of Justice. They can be dismissed by the Assembly only through an *impeachment* procedure.

Given the above, SLEG considers that the Constitution should stipulate in general terms that:

(i) All judges and prosecutors should be subject to a regime of accountability and discipline. Furthermore, particular laws should explicitly provide concrete disciplinary violations, specify the procedures of the disciplinary process, specify the procedures of cooperation between disciplinary bodies and other bodies such as HIDAA, tax authorities, money laundering

any type of crime except serious crimes and the obligation of the Assembly to decide on the prosecutor's office request for authorization to proceed with open voting.

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authorities, etc., to provide unequivocally that the judges / prosecutors who features unexplained wealth growth or standard of living has the burden of proof in the disciplinary process, and when the judges / prosecutors who fail to justify their wealth can be dismissed.

(ii) Establish an Independent Inspectorate, which shall have the authority to investigate disciplinary cases of judges and prosecutors at all levels and request initiation of disciplinary proceedings against them. This means the creation of a single inspection structure for all judges, except the judges of the CC. The Independent Inspectorate shall also be responsible for investigating complaints against judges, prosecutors and members of the HJC, the HPC, Independent Qualification Commission and complaints against the PG. It must have the right to initiate disciplinary proceedings against judges before the High Judicial Council, against prosecutors before the High Prosecutorial Council, against members of these two councils and the PG before a Special Disciplinary Tribunal (See above). This would facilitate the overcoming of institutional conflict of powers between the MJ and the HCJ about the inspection process and the initiation of disciplinary proceedings, it would concentrate the power of inspection in one hand and would make it possible to use the limited human resources more effectively, etc. This would also allow the adoption of a comprehensive legal framework for the investigation/inspection, which is in accordance with European standards.

(iii) The Independent Inspectorate be composed of judges and prosecutors with experience, former well known judges and prosecutors or jurists with long professional experience and high integrity. Clear criteria will be established by law. Inspectors shall have the status of a High Court judge and a nine-year term (see above). Their election will be made by the Assembly e by qualified majority to avoid politicization of the process and increase the reliability of the inspectors. Clear procedural requirements shall be determined by law.

(iv) Establish a competent body for the inspection and initiation of disciplinary proceedings against inspectors before the Justice Disciplinary Tribunal. While, the inspection and verification of complaints about judges and prosecutors at all levels, as well as to members of the HJC and the HPC and the PG and Independent Qualification Commission, will be done in every case by the Independent Inspectorate, the decisions whether to establish or not disciplinary measures will be taken respectively by the HJC for judges, the HPC for prosecutors and by a special tribunal (High Disciplinary Tribunal) for members of the HJC, the HPC and for the PG.

(v) The High Disciplinary Tribunal shall consist of the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, the Chairman of the High Court, the Chairman of the High Administrative Court, Prosecutor General, Minister of Justice, the Chairman of the National Chamber of Advocacy, the most senior member of the Constitutional Court and the most senior member of the High Court and the High Administrative Court (see above). It is proposed that appeals against decisions of Tribunal will be made before the Constitutional Court.

(vi) For members of the CC there shall be provided specific disciplinary procedures, leaving to the CC itself the right to proceedings against its members, according to a detailed procedure provided for in the organic law of the CC. In all cases, the only disciplinary measure to be applied to members of the CC is the dismissal from duty.

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6. Efficiency and independence of the CC

The process of appointing constitutional judges, according to the constitutional provisions is the joint competency of the President and the Assembly and it goes in two stages: the first stage of selection of candidates by the President and the second stage of the approval of the candidates by the Assembly. This process has years that it does not function properly. Practical implementation of the President-Assembly institutional cooperation has proved insufficient. A President who, because of the election formula comes from the parliamentary majority, but also the minimum *quorum* required by the Constitution for the approval of the candidacy chosen by the President, to appoint a constitutional judge, does not offer sufficient guarantees in terms of respect for the independence, impartiality and quality in composition of the Constitutional Court, in the second phase of the appointment process. Likewise, the chairman of the CC is elected by the same procedure for a period of 3 years with the right of re-election.

From the analysis of constitutional provisions presented in the analytical document regarding the activity of the CC, the process of appointment / election of candidates for constitutional judges does not result efficient, because there are no clear criteria for candidates, the transparency in selection and their proposal to the Assembly is missing and there is no transparency in the (dis) approval by the Assembly. As a result of the inefficient process of appointment, the judges regularly stay in office beyond the mandate because of failure in filling the vacancies in time.

Adjustments to the process of resignation of a judge are lacking, who is obliged to remain in office several years beyond the constitutional mandate, as long as the successor judge is not appointed. Also, there is no distinction between the causes of the end of the mandate and dismissal, which creates uncertainty about the consequences of each of them. Clear constitutional provisions related to disciplinary liability for constitutional judges are lacking.

Also, the reformulation of issues related to the jurisdiction of the CC and the entities that put it in motion is necessary, in order to make the appeal before it be effective. For all these reasons, as stated in several decisions of the ECHR, the CC is found not to be fully effective in protecting human rights and freedoms. These shortcomings observed have led to the lack of quality and efficiency in its decisions. Despite those problems identified by the Analytical Document of the Justice System, and in line with the objectives of reform in the Constitutional Court articulated in the strategy of reform in the justice system, GENL has made the following proposals:

(i) Members of the CC shall be appointed according to the following formula: 3 members by the President, three by the Assembly and three from the judiciary, respectively by the joint meeting of the HC and the HAC. This imposes the representation of several branches of power.³³ So, for instance, as candidacies from the judiciary will be only judges, the President and the Assembly must choose at least 2 members of other professions (lawyers, prosecutors, professors of law or from the academic world, etc.). For the judiciary, as well as for the Assembly, it is recommended to be applied the approval by qualified majority of all members, following a transparent process through an Appointments Council (*ad hoc commission*), which will be applied even for the candidacies selected by the President. This Council shall make the ranking of candidates,

³³ Referring to opinion CDL-AD (2009) 024 ³³ of the Venice Commission regarding the appointment of constitutional judges in Ukraine, the Commission has welcomed the displacement of exclusive competence of the appointment by the President to a mixed system which ensures the selection of judges from three main branches of the power, as this system has more democratic legitimacy. In contrast, the rejection of this system and going to a combination of appointment by the President with the approval of the Parliament is not welcomed. Such formula of election is in Italy and Ukraine

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according to scientific criteria laid down in the organic law. Rejected candidates may address the CC, if they claim that the selection process is not respected by appointing bodies. This election formula ensures the participation of several bodies and stakeholders in the process, as each body has essential authority unshared with others, which guarantees the non-blocking of the process by creating the possibility of exchanging the experiences of members of the CC. Also, this process is not significantly dominated by politics, and it enables balancing.

(ii) Provision of the most objective criteria for selecting the members of the CC. They must be provided mainly in the Constitution, but also in law and they should be focused mostly on merits.³⁴ The required criteria that the candidates must meet should mainly be: experience as a jurist (at least 15 years); professional education: judges, prosecutors, lawyers, university professors, jurists who have worked in senior positions in public administration or advisors in the Constitutional Court. The identified candidates alongside their activity must have a kinship with academic life (not necessarily have scientific titles, but it can be a preferential criterion), be well known for their engagement in the field of human rights or areas related to constitutional right (e.g. administrative law, constitutional law and European law, etc.).³⁵ Candidates must be of high moral and professional integrity and not to have been members of steering forums of political parties. The whole process of appointment should be characterized by transparency and publicity (which have been missing until now), since these elements contribute to the quality of constitutional justice and also in the perception and in strengthening public confidence in the independence of the constitutional judges and therefore in the legitimacy of the guarantor of the Constitution. To ensure the timely appointment of new members, the law shall charge The Chairman of the CC with the task to inform notifies the appointing bodies 6 months before the end of term.³⁶ The law shall specify even the obligation for the publication in the Official Journal or in the media, by specifying the body which has the task of filling the vacancy.³⁷ The proposed candidates must appear within a period which should not be shorter than 30 days from publication of the call for applications. Attached to the appointing bodies functions the Appointments Council, which shall make the ranking of the candidates according to their qualifications. The proposed candidacies must be accompanied by a summary to justify the candidacy. The list of selected candidates respects the ratio of 1: 2 or 1: 3, ie for each vacancy 2-3 candidates and it is accompanied by a report explaining the reasons for the selection and distinct criteria in relation to others. Once the hearing sessions with the candidates are held, they pass to the collegial bodies for voting, who in any case vote secretly and without debate. Setting clear deadlines will enable a timely completion of vacancies in the CC, which currently does not happen.

³⁴ Opinion of the Venice Commission CDL (2011) 065 on the Law of the CC of Turkey: *"It ought to be stressed, that the selection of judges must be based on objective criteria preestablished by law or by the competent authorities and should primarily focus on merits."* (it is important to note that the selection of judges should be based on objective criteria pre-established by law or by the competent authorities and those (criteria) should focus mainly on the merits.

³⁵ See also CDL-AD(2006)006, Opinion on two draft laws amending Law No. 47/1992 on the organization and functioning of the Constitutional Court of Romania, § 17 *"It is very welcome that the CC consists not only of career judges and prosecutors but also by lawyers and professors of law. Such a composition has a positive effect on the decisions of the court. The Venice Commission is of the opinion that the CC should be open to candidates of all branches as long as the proper legal qualification is guaranteed."* Also the Opinion of the Venice Commission CDL (2011) 065 on the CC law of Turkey.

³⁶ In cases such as Moldova, the Chairman of the CC notifies the appointing body (the Parliament, Government and the High Council of Magistrates) within 3 days from the date of declaration of the vacancy, seeking the appointment of a new judge.

³⁷ The organic laws of Croatia (Article 6), Slovenia (Article 12), Romania on the CC.

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(iii) The term of members of the CC becomes 12 years (from 9 years that it is currently) in order to create more security for the independence of the members of the CC and stability in decision making, due to the particularity of the constitutional adjudication.

(iv) Election of the Chairman of the CC will be made by the members of the CC, because it guarantees the independence from the appointing bodies and increases the accountability of the members of the CC to regulate their own internal affairs. The mandate of the Chairman shall be four years without the right to reappointment, in order to ensure rotation in the running of the CC. His selection procedures are provided for in the organic law of the CC.

(v) Provision of accurate procedures for granting and accepting the resignation of the CC judge, which are missing currently. It shall be provided that The judge submits the resignation in writing to the Chairman of the Court, who notifies the relevant appointing authority in order to take measures for the appointment of a successor judge within a certain legal deadline from the date of submission of the request for resignation. If after the expiry of 3 months from the date of submission of the application, the successor has not been appointed by the appointing authority, the mandate of the resigned judge ends.³⁸ It is also needed to accurately provide for in the Constitution cases of termination of the mandate of the CC for cases such as: the expiry of the tenure or attainment of a maximum age; resignation; death³⁹.

(vi) Expand the jurisdiction of the CC in order to protect more effectively the rights of the individual. Actually, the individual complaint to the CC is not an effective tool in terms of the Constitution, the ECHR and relevant practice of the ECHR. Therefore, it is suggested to clarify the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court regarding: (a) the review of the constitutionality of individual acts of central bodies in the last instance, aiming to distinguish them from the review of legality by administrative courts;⁴⁰ (b) the review of jurisdictional, substantial and functional disputes over between the High Court and the High Administrative Court that is to be established, as well as between the Constitutional Court and the High Administrative Court, as the most appropriate body to end these disputes and enable the establishment of a legal security in the jurisprudence of these higher courts; (ç) expand the individual constitutional appeal, which must be reformulated for a greater protection of individuals against the public power (*the German model-Verfassungsbeschwerde*), as appreciated by the opinion of the Venice Commission.⁴¹ One of the changes that the Constitution of 1998 brought was the restriction of the right of individuals to address the CC. From the ability of individuals to challenge acts of judicial and public authorities that restrict their rights and fundamental freedoms, was passed to the right to a due judicial process, which, also due to the definition, but also because of the practice of the CC, is already limited only to procedural violations, not including the breach of material rights.⁴² The CC is constantly criticized by the ECHR that in some cases it does not meet the criteria of an effective legal tool for Albanian citizens.⁴³ The idea to reformulate article 131 / f of the Constitution is supported in order to make the CC an effective and protective tool of all the constitutional rights of individuals in order to be completely

³⁸ Article 20 pg.1 / 2 law on the Constitutional Court of Serbia.

³⁹ Law on the Constitutional Court of Romania

⁴⁰ Article 144 of the Constitution of Austria.

⁴¹ Summary of opinions and reports of the Venice Commission on Constitutional Justice, para. 5.2, page 19.

⁴² See also the opinion of the Venice Commission on constitutional changes in Ukraine, CDL-AD (2013) 034, § 11 CDL-AD (2010) 039 Study on Individual Access to Constitutional Justice, Adopted by the Venice Commission at 17-18 December 2010

⁴³ See decisions of the ECHR against Albania: *Qufaj; Shkalla; Gjonbocari* etc.

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in accordance with its role.⁴⁴ Also there will be a re-dimensioning of the subjects that may initiate a constitutional trial.

Anti-corruption measures

As stated above, the Albanian prosecutor's office is organized in a deeply hierarchical and centralized manner, with lower prosecutors subject to orders and instructions of the higher ones. Functioning of the Prosecutor's Office under the principle of hierarchy, for years, has caused adverse effects in its operations, with an impact on the respect of legality, protection of rights and freedoms of the individual and proceeding according to principles of fairness and transparency in decision making. The independence of prosecutors in relation to the hierarchical leader is practically limited by turning them into implementers of the orders of superiors.⁴⁵ The Department for Investigation of Economic Crime, Corruption and Organized Crime in the General Prosecutor's Office is responsible for investigating and prosecuting in the first instance the cases of corruption involving the President, Prime Minister, government members, MPs and judges of the High Court and the Constitutional Court⁴⁶. However, despite the transfer of powers to investigate and prosecute corruption involving "senior officials" to the Serious Crimes Prosecutor's Office, corruption cases involving top officials of the state (President, Prime Minister, Ministers, MPs and judges of the High Court and Constitutional Court) are not investigated because the jurisdiction for offenses involving those officials under the Constitution (Article 141) belongs to the High Court. This arrangement is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, because it excludes top officials from the application of preventive seizure under anti-mafia law. Secondly, because it means that the High Court judges decide on cases involving politicians who have nominated and appointed them. Another obstacle until now has been the particular protection from the immunity those officials enjoy under the current constitution. For this reason, it was suggested:

(i) Establishment of a decentralized Prosecutor's Office, which will have a structure with powers that can independently investigate organized crime and corruption. To this end, constitutional changes are required so that the right of the prosecutor of a lower level be clarified to continue prosecution if the case is dismissed by the higher prosecutor. This is the minimum requirement to fight judicial corruption.

(ii) Establishment of the Special Structure of Anti-Corruption within the Prosecutor's Office will bring more efficiency in the fight against corruption⁴⁷. This unit will be responsible for the prosecution of judges, prosecutors and senior officials, provided for by the law. The cases investigated by this structure will be tried by special courts for corruption cases, according to the law. Provision of this structure in the constitution with its powers and independent from the Prosecutor General will make it possible to ensure its well-functioning without encountering obstacles that may come as a result of frequent changes of legislation. Also, the provision in the

⁴⁴ Countries that have expanded the individual constitutional appeal (Verfassungsbeschwerde) are: Austria, Croatia, Armenia, Czech Republic, Montenegro (with recent constitutional changes), Slovenia, Germany, Latvia, Malta, Poland.

⁴⁵ See above the findings and problems on the prosecution.

⁴⁶ All criminal cases involving those officers under the Constitution (Article 141) are reserved for the High Court

⁴⁷ The so far consulted models are the USKOK Croatia and Romania with the DNA model. The model that is supported more in discussions with expert groups is the Romanian model for the establishment of a National Anti-Corruption Prosecution. However, this model provides for a High Council of Magistrates with two separate chambers for the judiciary and prosecution. In this way, the Albanian version will be a "hybrid" variant, as after the the SLEG discussions the establishment of a High Council with two chambers has received little support, said differently a Prosecutor's office within the judiciary

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Constitution shows the priority that Albania gives to the fight against corruption as one of the main criteria for its accession to the EU.

(iii) Prosecutors of the Special Structure of Anti-Corruption shall be appointed by the High Prosecutorial Council from among prosecutors with no less than 10 years of experience as prosecutors, not previously convicted by a court decision, with high moral integrity. Before appointment to this task, they complete the statement of assets and conflicts of interest, and are subject to periodic financial and telecommunications audits, which lies to them and their close family members⁴⁸.

(iv) Prosecutors of the Special Structure of Anti-Corruption will be independent not only from the Prosecutor General but also from each other (when they should investigate against their colleagues), so no organizational or structural dependency of any kind or of any other nature that prevent them from fulfilling the function they have. The forecast of a 10-year mandate for the prosecutors of this structure is thought as reasonable period for their sustainability in office but also for the investigation of more difficult cases because of their complex nature. Benefits and other guarantees because of the duty may be provided by law. Even these prosecutors, despite having no organizational dependency, they are subject to disciplinary responsibility, under the law.

(v) This structure will be assisted in its functions by the National Bureau of Investigation, which will conduct investigations under the direction of prosecutors of the Special Structure of Anti-Corruption of the Prosecutor's Office. The National Bureau of Investigation is required to have a clear line of dependency and also a clear jurisdiction to guarantee the well-functioning of the entire special structure of anti-corruption.

On the process of re-evaluating judges and prosecutors

Albania intends to undertake a large-scale effort to reform the judiciary. One of the measures that it intends has to do with an overhaul in the system of all judges and prosecutors in order to reduce the influence of organized crime, politicians and corruption, as well as to assess their qualifications.

I. The legal framework of the Venice Commission

Various efforts have been made even in other countries to subject judges and prosecutors to a qualification assessment. Recent examples include Kosovo, Serbia and Ukraine. Reappointment process in Kosovo was a *sui generis* procedure incorporated into the declaration of independence and the Constitution of 2008 and consequently it can be less applicable to an existing democracy like in Albania. The process of re-appointment in 2009 in Serbia received criticism from the Venice Commission, as every decision on the non-appointment of all judges or prosecutors was equal to the removal from office and, as such, there must be individual guarantees⁴⁹. Moreover, the Constitutional Court of Serbia in 2012 found that since it was a non-

⁴⁸ Due to the restriction of privacy, it is necessary to provide for it in the constitution.

⁴⁹ . See Opinion on the draft laws on judges and organization of courts in the Republic of Serbia, the Venice Commission's Opinion no. 464/2007 §61 (March 19, 2008) Document No. CDL-AD (2008) 007 and preliminary opinion on the draft decisions of the High Judicial Council and State Prosecutorial Council on the Implementation of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Judges and the Prosecution in Serbia, the Venice Commission's Opinion no. §9 606/2010 (20 June 2011), Document no. CDL-AD (2011) 015

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differentiated body that took decisions of first instance and appeal, this combined body deprived judges and prosecutors of their right to a fair trial⁵⁰.

Recent decisions of the Venice Commission for assessment of qualification processes and lustration for Ukraine provide the necessary details about this kind of process⁵¹. The transitional process for conducting assessments of qualification for judges and prosecutors presented by Ukraine was considered to be inappropriate, but as concept it was not rejected. Opinions expressed some basic concepts that must be followed by an assessment of qualification for judges and prosecutors.

The joint opinion made clear that an assessment of qualification for incumbent judges must be "wholly as a specific case and be made under more rigorous safeguards to protect those judges who are eligible to exercise their duty."⁵²

In fact, Albania is in a very specific situation. Albania is a candidate country for the European Union, but it has a pronounced distrust in its judicial and prosecution system and with indicators of a judiciary and prosecution system unable to self-regulate at all levels. With an unprecedented convergence of political will on judicial reform and substantial international support, this is a moment in history that the Albanian justice system can undergo a deep and comprehensive reform. However, it is clear that such a reform can be ignored - fully or partially - without a thorough assessment of the people who make up the system. Albania does not doubt that very special circumstances exist which justify these measures and believes that the proposal provides sufficient rigorous guarantees to protect the rights of incumbent judges and prosecutors.

II. Re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors in Albania

Some of the main reasons for undertaking this deep reform in the justice system is the high degree of corruption in Albania, the low quality of work and failure of the existing mechanisms to control judges and prosecutors in cases of violations of law while on duty. The existence and the level of corruption in the judiciary is no more a matter of perception in Albania. Not only the public⁵³ confirms the high level of corruption, but also the judges already accept that the justice system is not free from external influences⁵⁴. A recent survey of Albania's judges found that 25% of those judges themselves admit that their system is corrupt, while 57% of judges admitted that the judicial system was not free, or partly free from political influence.⁵⁵ Further, the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interest reviewed the declaration of all 399 judges, High Court judges and Constitutional Court judges. Based only on their declarations, 73% of Albanian judges have declared family assets of over 14 million ALL (or

⁵⁰ The CC of Serbia, Decision nr. VII-U-534/2011.

⁵¹ See Joint Opinion of the Venice Commission and the Directorate for Human Rights (DHR) of the Directorate General for Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG) of the Council of Europe Convention on the Law on the Judicial System and Status of Judges and Changes in Law the High Council of Justice of Ukraine, the Venice Commission's Opinion no. §§71-81 801/2015 (23 March 2015), Document no. CDL-AD (2015) 007 and the basic principles set out in the Final Opinion on the Law on Clean Government (Law on lustration) of Ukraine, the Venice Commission's Opinion no. 788/2014 (19 June 2015), Document no. CDL-AD (2015) 012

⁵² The Joint Opinion of the Venice Commission no. §74 801/2015

⁵³ *Corruption in Albania, Perception and Experience*, Institute for Development Research and Alternatives, Pg. 22-24 (2009).

⁵⁴ *Survey of Albanian Judges*, Center for Transparency and Freedom of Information (2012). In the 2013 Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer, the judiciary was listed as the most corrupt institution in Albania.

⁵⁵ *Survey of Albanian Judges*, Center for Transparency and Freedom of Information (2012).

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about 100000 Euro). Of that figure, 35% of those declared assets of over 35 million ALL (or about 250000 Euro. Some have declared millions. It should be noted that in the 2014 CEPEJ evaluation of Albania, net annual judicial salaries range from only 5.747 Euro to 12 030 Euro⁵⁶. State Department Report on Human Rights 2013 describes the Albanian justice system as inefficient and subject to political pressures, fraud and corruption⁵⁷. Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Nils Muiznieks, in the report of 2014, stated that in Albania "the high level of corruption in the justice system seriously impedes the functioning of justice and reduces public confidence in justice and the rule of law". Freedom House Report of 2014 also describes the Albanian justice as a system that suffers from chronic corruption, political interference and political career in the judiciary⁵⁸.

One of the measures to be taken with a view to amending the grave situation in the justice sector is:

(i) Establishing a system of comprehensive reevaluation of judges and prosecutors in order to reduce the impact of organized crime, politics and other corruptive elements in the delivery of justice, but also increase the professional quality of judges and prosecutors. Concrete mechanisms are projected to reach a positive and real outcome from this reevaluation process. It is intended that the evaluation system is based on a strong system of declaration of assets, including the establishment of a court and an anti-corruption unit of the Prosecutor's Office and an inquiry service for this purpose.

(ii) A special commission will be establish in order to conduct the reevaluation within a reasonable period of time. This special and temporary commission with clearly defined powers and functions will implement an important elements of this reform, enabling multi-dimensional scanning of every judge and prosecutor.

(iii) The reevaluation process will include comprehensive control of judges and prosecutors in three important elements: the assets of judges and prosecutors, detection or identification of their links to organized crime and ultimately evaluation of the work done and their professional skills. If the final outcome of the three tests results negative or insufficient, the Commission will come up with a decision that varies from the obligation of a judge or prosecutor for education at the School of Magistrates for a year - if professional skills are insufficient - until removal from office. The three-folded examination of judges and prosecutors intends not only the separation ones and for all of elements related to crime but also the incompetent ones who have benefited the workplace on the basis of political connections or financial corruption. The current evaluation system, which is more a self-defensive than a self-regulation system for these elements has failed in the identification and expulsion from the system of those judges and prosecutors. For this reason, the professional evaluation of judges and prosecutors appears to be a necessity through a special and comprehensive that takes into account the experience and specialty of each judge and prosecutor.

(iv) An Independent Commission of Qualification shall be established that will include evaluation of all judges and prosecutors, regardless of the level and jurisdiction. It will have a limited mandate starting from January 1, 2016 until December 31, 2019. Committee members will be lawyers who have long experience (at least 15 years) as judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law

⁵⁶ Report on European Judicial Systems, Edition 2014 (2012 data): Efficiency and Quality of Justice," pp. 301 and 309, CEPEJ (2014).

⁵⁷ *Human Rights Report, Albania* United States Department of State, Pg. 1, 7 (2013).

⁵⁸ *Nations in Transit*, Freedom House, Pp. 49, 59 (2014).

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professors as well as enjoy high reputation. They will have the status of a member of the High Court. The Commission will consist of first instance and that of appeal. Details of the its functioning will be provided by law. This process will be conducted by local structures under strict international supervision, in order to increase the reliability of the process. The presence of international observers shall also be provided, who will have access to the files of judges / prosecutors and shall supervise the entire decision-making process, will assist the process and will provide any kind of assistance that will be necessary for the commission. In order to ensure the process but also reduce the possibility of corruption within the Commission, its members will have a special treatment for themselves and their family. They will also be guaranteed special protection from the state.

Transitory Provisions

Going through the effort of providing a solution to the problems identified by the Justice System Analytical Document and further to the objectives outlined by the Justice Reform Strategy, the proposed reform in the justice system implicates various aspects of the organisation and functioning of the existing constitutional institutions of the justice system. The constitutional amendments proposed by the SLEG expand actually on the Constitutional Court, High Court, High Council of Justice, Prosecution Office and all the other stakeholders involved in the governance of the judiciary. On the other hand, the proposed amendments shall, as long as they are approved, establish new institutions of the governance of the judiciary. Such institutions are the High Justice Inspectorate, High Disciplinary Tribunal and the Justice Appointments Council. Third, the proposed amendments affect a reshuffling of the powers among the various justice institutions. Thus, many of the powers assumed currently by the Minister of Justice are proposed to be vested to the High Judicial Council. It is further proposed that the High Judicial Council and the Minister of Justice do not assume any responsibility in investigating into the disciplinary violations and complaints against judges and neither in inspecting the courts, with such powers being assigned to an independent inspectorate. It is finally proposed that the standing of some existing institutions be strengthened (for instance, High Prosecutorial Council), while further institutions be abolished (such as the National Judicial Conference). Against such essential and massive amendments being proposed, it is necessary to evaluate whether it is possible for the existing institutions to continue with their activity by way of simply approving some transitory provisions; or they should be reframed through the termination of the mandate of the serving functionaries, thus paving the way to the constitution of new institutions. In making such an assessment, SLEG has naturally leaned, to the extent possible, towards preserving the mandate of the existing institutions. Further to this assessment, SLEG has reached the following conclusions:

Constitutional Court – SLEG is aware that the mandate of the Constitutional Court can be interrupted just under very specific circumstances. The main amendments proposed for CC encompass its composition, way of appointment of members, time of stay in office, list of entities entitled to take recourse to the CC and the remit of powers of the court. These are, certainly, meaningful changes amending the profile of CC. However, SLEG shares the opinion that the role and source of legitimacy of CC has not sufficiently been changed to justify the interruption of the mandate of the existing court, thus constituting a new court. It is deemed that a detailed transitory provision regulating the renewal of the CC, in response to new circumstances, shall be sufficient for the CC to assume the new tasks and the new way of functioning efficiently.

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High Court – SLEG is aware that the mandate of the High Court can be interrupted just under very specific circumstances. The proposed amendments actually change essentially the profile and the role of the High Court. The main amendments encompass: (i) proposal to separate the administrative jurisdiction of the HC, consequently, abolishing the Administrative Chamber of the High Court, establishing the High Administrative Court (HAC), thus significantly reducing the workload of the existing judges at HC; (ii) transforming the HC into a pure career court. This means that the High Judicial Council shall expand its authority over the HC and HAC members, same as for other judges (for instance, the performance of these courts shall be evaluated by HJC, the latter due to impose disciplinary measures on the HC and HAC members etc.); (iii) changing the way of appointment of the HC and HAC members, thus transforming the legitimacy from entirely political to judicial, in an effort to do away with the direct political impacts and recognising to the HJC an essential role in the process; (iv) providing for more objective criteria building on professional merits regarding the selection of candidates for HC and HAC members, who shall be subject to a strict control regarding their professional skills through a couple of filters; (v) changing the time of stay in office for the HC and HAC members from 9 to 12 years, which is to occasion the presence of judges with various mandate in the court; (vi) reframing the constitutional powers of the High Court, which is to transform it into a mere court of law, concentrated on the unification of judicial practice (which might dictate the need for changing the professional profile of the existing members, but also renaming this court as court of cassation); (vii) abolishing the initial jurisdiction of HC for adjudicating the criminal cases against the senior state functionaries, etc. It is clear that these are essential changes, creating a high court of an entirely different physiognomy, dimension but also a new name. Considering the range and depth of the proposed changes for the HC (which, referring to the problems identified in the Justice System Analytical Document and to the objectives of the reform specified in the Justice Reform Strategy, has not been capable of contributing to healing the justice system), as well as being aware of the critical importance of observing the mandate of judges, as the highest guarantee for their independence, SLEG did not manage to come up with a common approach in terms of interrupting the HC mandate or its continuation. Finally, being conditioned by this string hesitation within the SLEG, the continuation of the mandate of HC has remained unchanged, thus including just a transitory provision for the establishment of a HAC within 3 months since the entry into effect of amendments. However, referring to the strong reservations of some SLEG members regarding this approach, we suggest that the Parliament ask the Venice Commission for an opinion on the other option; thus, whether, due to such interventions with the Constitution, which provide another dimension to the High Court, in terms of powers, composition, functioning, procedure in appointment and dismissal etc., an early interruption of the mandate of the HC members could be deemed legitimised and in compliance with the international standards.

High Council of Justice – SLEG is aware that the mandate of the High Council of Justice (HCJ) can be interrupted only under very specific circumstances. The proposed amendments regarding HCJ bring about an essential change to the role and legitimacy of HCJ. The most important changes encompass: (i) changing the number of members, from 15 to 11, as well as the procedure for their election; (ii) composition of the body by way of changing the relationship between the judge and lay members, and the profile of the lay members; (iii) abolishing *ex officio* the three most senior functionaries from the membership with this body (President of the Republic, Chairman of the High Court, Minister of Justice); (iv) assumption of chairmanship of this body by one of the lay members, thus depriving the President of the Republic of this entitlement; (v) abolishing the constitutional function of the Deputy Chairman of the High Council of Justice; (vi) extensive expansion of the powers being proposed, due to include all the aspects

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of the administration of the judiciary (even the proposal for the budget administration) and the strategic planning; (vii) going over from the part time to full time membership, thus boosting the efficiency and collegiality of the HJC; (viii) providing for a pure accountability system for HJC members; (ix) way of appointing and dismissing the members; (x) assuming the responsibilities on public reporting and to the assembly on the issues of the judiciary, and (xi) changing the name of the body from HCJ to HJC. Referring to the depth and range of the proposed changes for the HCJ (which are, as such, dictated by the problems identified in the Justice System analytical Document and the objectives of the reform specified in the Justice Reform Strategy, SLEG proposes the approval of some transitory provisions which shall bring about the consequence of the early termination of the mandates of the HCJ members and the regulation of the legal situation which will ensue the entry into effect of the proposed constitutional amendments.

Prosecutor General – SLEG is aware that the mandate of the Prosecutor General (PG) may be interrupted only under very specific circumstances. However, referring to the fact that the reform being proposed for the prosecutorial system and specifically for the PG shall, as long as it is approved, bring about a comprehensive, structural and functional reframing of the prosecutorial system, powers of PG, way of his selection and appointment, duration of the constitutional mandate of PG, procedures for his dismissal, amending the professional requirements and criteria (including a higher education level, which is consistent with the position's focus on High Court arguments and issuing written guidance) which should be met by the candidates for PG, upgrading the Prosecutorial Council to the constitutional level and the comprehensive structuring of its powers (of the Council) regarding the appointment, career, promotion and disciplining the prosecutors, differing from the current legal and constitutional regulation, changing the hierarchical relationship within the prosecutorial system and separation of a part of the current portfolio of PG with the establishment of the specific anti-corruption structure, SLEG is of the opinion that it is necessary to provide for transitory constitutional provisions for the early termination of the PG mandate.