ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT
ALBANIAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS (AIPA)

Reporting period: September 2025 – September 2026

1. Introduction and Overall Assessment

As Executive Director of the Albanian Institute for Public Affairs (AIPA), I present the annual activity report for September 2025 – September 2026. This document reviews project implementation, results achieved, relations with partners, staff experience, and matters requiring attention in the coming period. The report draws on institutional documentation and announcements published by AIPA, distinguishing completed achievements from longer-term objectives.

During this period, we pursued two main areas of work: international cooperation and analysis of rural development policies through RuralProof – Interreg Europe; and education of young people on integrity, transparency, and civic participation through the project "Youth Against Corruption," supported by the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (AMSHC). These initiatives differ in scale and target groups, but together reflect our mission: connecting research and policy dialogue with meaningful community engagement.

In my assessment, the most significant progress this year has been the transition from planning and analysis to tangible activities: completion of RuralProof's analytical phase in Albania, consultation with stakeholders, and delivery of a full cycle of education and youth engagement in schools. At the same time, we need to strengthen the measurement of long-term outcomes, internal documentation, and the distribution of responsibilities within the team.

2. Mission, Leadership, and Institutional Organisation

AIPA operates as a non-profit organisation in the fields of public policy, good governance, human rights, civic education, sustainable development, and applied research. Our approach combines the study of public affairs with training, dialogue, and partnerships. This enables us to work with institutions and experts as well as citizens and local communities.

During the reporting year, institutional management focused on meeting project obligations, coordinating partners, representing the organisation at international events, public communication, and supporting staff in the preparation of analytical and educational outputs. Registration records confirm AIPA's legal identity under tax identification number L11618451F; the legal documents of other cooperating entities are not treated as AIPA's own legal records.

The internal staff assessment for September 2025–March 2026 highlights expertise in identifying calls for proposals, project development, and activity coordination. It also identifies an organisational challenge: a substantial share of the workload is concentrated among a relatively small group of

experts. We therefore need clearer role allocation, a shared reporting calendar, and a more sustainable system for archiving supporting evidence.

3. RuralProof – Interregional Cooperation and Rural Development Policies

3.1. Project Relevance and AIPA's Role

RuralProof, supported by the Interreg Europe programme, aims to help partner regions improve the responsiveness of public policies to the needs of rural areas. The project addresses challenges such as territorial inequalities, population decline, access to services, and the need for decision-making tailored to each territory's characteristics. AIPA is a project partner and contributes to the analysis of the Albanian context, the exchange of experience, and stakeholder engagement.

For our institute, RuralProof offers value beyond participation in an international consortium. It provides a concrete opportunity to compare rural policy instruments across countries, identify gaps at national level, and connect technical recommendations with the experiences of institutions, businesses, and local organisations. The project began in May 2025 and runs until April 2029; accordingly, the results presented here are interim results.

3.2. Situation Analysis and Exchange of Experience

Between September and December 2025, our involvement focused on the Status Quo Analysis. This work examined rural development challenges and policy instruments with the aim of establishing a shared analytical foundation for subsequent phases. At the second interregional meeting, held on 3–4 December 2025 in Dobele, Latvia, partners presented progress on their national analyses, discussed methodological challenges, and defined the next steps for case studies. AIPA contributed to discussions concerning Albania and to the exchange of practices among partners.

This phase was important because it established a comparative foundation for the project. Policy analysis cannot rely solely on describing problems; it requires identification of existing instruments, responsible stakeholders, and barriers to implementation. The work undertaken created the conditions for moving from identifying challenges to discussing possible alternatives.

3.3. National Consultation and Completion of the Analytical Phase

On 28 April 2026, we organised an event in Albania to present the findings of the Status Quo Analysis and Case Study. Participants included representatives of agribusiness, academia, chambers of commerce, associations, and organisations interested in rural development. The discussion focused on the challenges facing rural areas and possible directions for improving public policies.

I regard this meeting as an important outcome of our work during the year because it brought technical analysis into direct dialogue with stakeholders who face territorial challenges firsthand. Their involvement helps assess the feasibility of recommendations and identify needs that may not always emerge from strategic documents. The public announcement confirms that the event took place and the analytical phase was completed, but does not provide an exact attendance figure or a list of adopted recommendations; therefore, we do not present these as quantitative indicators.

3.4. Meeting in Greece and Lessons Learned

In June 2026, we participated in the third interregional meeting in Larissa, Greece. Discussions focused on findings from territorial analyses, policy gaps, development objectives, and place-based approaches. The study visit to the Meteora–Trikala area provided an opportunity to learn about integrated local development practices and the LEADER/CLLD approach.

These exchanges have provided a clear lesson for our future work: policy recommendations must be evidence-based, but they must also be discussed with those responsible for implementing them. Practices observed abroad are learning resources, not models that can be transferred automatically. Their adaptation requires an assessment of the institutional framework, capacities, and needs of Albanian territories.

3.5. Interim Results and Next Steps

By the end of September 2026, AIPA's documented results included contributions to the Albanian situation analysis and case study; organisation of a stakeholder consultation; participation in two interregional meetings during the reporting period; and exchanges of experience on rural development instruments. We do not claim that policy changes have been adopted or that final territorial impacts have been achieved, as these require further stages of work and dedicated measurement.

In the next phase, we will seek to systematise recommendations, document consultations, identify potentially adaptable practices, and continue dialogue with relevant institutions. Better archiving of analytical outputs, attendance lists, and meeting minutes will help us demonstrate project progress more clearly.

4. "Youth Against Corruption" Project – AMSHC

4.1. Purpose and Geographic Coverage

The "Youth Against Corruption" project, supported by the Agency for the Support of Civil Society under Call No. 18 of 2025, was implemented as an educational and participatory initiative in secondary schools. The approved funding amounted to EUR 17 500 for an eight-month period. Its purpose was to help young people better understand corruption, integrity, and transparency, while also providing practical opportunities for them to express their views.

The first phase, documented in December 2025, involved 250 students in ten cities: Tirana, Fier, Pogradec, Saranda, Dibër, Mat, Durrës, Kukës, Lushnjë, and Prrenjas. Information sessions and dialogue with students were accompanied by a questionnaire on perceptions of corruption and governance. This approach allowed us to begin by listening to young people rather than merely delivering information to them.

4.2. Training, Youth Activism, and Tangible Outputs

In January and February 2026, civic training sessions addressed governance, transparency, integrity, anti-corruption, and active participation. The sessions used practical examples and interactive discussions; a post-training questionnaire was also administered to assess possible changes in

knowledge and attitudes. Without processed questionnaire data, we cannot report percentages of improvement, but the assessment tool provides a useful basis for monitoring.

In February–March 2026, the project moved into youth activism. More than 70 students took part in presentations, essays, and paintings conveying messages about justice, transparency, and opposition to corruption. This phase shifted students' roles from training participants to creators of public messages for their peers.

In March 2026, the project concluded with the installation of "Transparency Boxes" in the ten participating schools. The boxes are intended to provide an anonymous channel for concerns, suggestions, and reports of unfair situations within the school environment. Their installation was accompanied by information sessions on civic responsibility. This is the project's most tangible output: a mechanism that may remain in use after the funding period ends.

4.3. Assessment of Results and Sustainability

From an institutional perspective, the project demonstrated our ability to coordinate activities across several cities, work with school communities, and combine information, training, creative expression, and practical action. The documented results are 250 students involved in the initial phase, more than 70 young people in the creative component, and ten Transparency Boxes. These figures should not be added together as unique individuals, since the same students may have participated in multiple phases.

The project's sustainability depends on how the boxes are managed, the confidential handling of messages, and schools' responses to concerns raised. Without post-project monitoring, we cannot assert that the mechanism has reduced corruption or produced a measured change in behaviour. Nevertheless, it provides a concrete starting point for fostering a culture of listening and accountability in schools.

5. Development of New Initiatives and Partnerships

Alongside project implementation, we explored new opportunities for cooperation and project development in cross-border collaboration. Discussions and preparatory work within our professional network addressed initiatives such as RELMIS under IPA III Albania–Kosovo, focusing on labour-market information and tourism skills, and LIGHT under IPA III Montenegro–Albania, focusing on routes, heritage, and sustainable tourism.

These initiatives illustrate our areas of interest and our capacity to develop ideas with partners, but the documents reviewed do not yet confirm AIPA's legal status as a partner in the respective application forms. We therefore do not report them as projects awarded to, contracted by, or implemented by the institute. Once the application documents have been verified, we will be able to specify the institutional role and contribution accurately.

6. Partnerships, Communication, and Team Capacity

This year's activities involved two important forms of cooperation. Through RuralProof, we worked with European partners and Albanian stakeholders from the business sector, academia, and civil society. Through the AMSHC project, we collaborated with schools and students in ten cities. These relationships broadened opportunities for dialogue and strengthened AIPA's profile as an organisation able to operate both at policy level and within communities.

Public communication relied on announcements published on AIPA's official website, documenting project phases and key activities. Regular publication enhances transparency and visibility, but in the coming year it should be more systematically accompanied by outcome indicators, accessible outputs, and standardised evidence. For the institute, communication is not merely promotion; it is also a record of our accountability to partners and the public.

Internal analysis shows that staff have experience in project development, applied research, coordination, and reporting. Nevertheless, to support a growing portfolio, we need to strengthen delegation, professional development planning, and a shared quality-assurance mechanism for deliverables.

7. Annual Review and Priorities for the Next Period

At the close of September 2025 – September 2026, I consider that AIPA has maintained continuity in its work and delivered tangible results in two areas of its institutional mission. In rural development, we contributed to analysis, consultation, and interregional exchange. In civic education, we engaged students across several cities and established a practical mechanism for expressing concerns in schools. These are documented achievements on which we can build future work.

Our priorities for the coming year are: (i) continuing RuralProof through documented analytical outputs and consultations; (ii) following up on the operation of the Transparency Boxes, where feasible in cooperation with schools; (iii) developing partnerships and new applications based on clearly defined institutional roles; (iv) standardising monitoring, archiving, and reporting; and (v) increasing staff participation through a more balanced distribution of responsibilities.

As Executive Director, I believe our central challenge is not simply to increase the number of activities, but to consolidate their quality and demonstrate their impact over time. To this end, we will continue to invest in reliable partnerships, the professional development of our team, and working approaches that connect research with the real needs of citizens and territories.

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