

## IDPC CONFERENCE

### Access to information – Openness, transparency and digitalisation

6 June 2023 | 9:00 am

Maritim Hotel Plaza, Salla “Queen Geraldine”, K. 3

**Welcoming remarks by Olsi DEKOVI  
Deputy Head  
Council of Europe Office in Tirana**

Dear Commissioner Dervishi,

Dear Deputy Speaker Felaj,

Dear Minister Ekonomi,

Dear Mr Goldbart,

Distinguished representatives of public authorities, media and civil society,

I am happy to be here with you today to address such a critical topic Access to information – Openness, transparency and digitalisation.

In an era where information flows freely and effortlessly, the dual aspects of **access to information** and **data protection** have become more pressing than ever. The ability to access reliable and accurate information is crucial for individuals, organizations, and societies to make informed decisions, exercise their rights, and foster transparency.

Simultaneously, striking a balance between access to information, safeguarding personal data and ensuring privacy, has become a paramount concern, given the exponential growth and opportunities of data-driven technologies and the potential risks they pose to our

fundamental rights. At the same time – access to accurate and reliable information as an integral part of freedom of expression – has become all the more relevant in combating disinformation.

In navigating these challenges, the Council of Europe has been at the forefront of shaping legal frameworks, promoting human rights, and encouraging democratic governance. Instruments which Albania is a party to and has ratified such as the European Convention on Human Rights, Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108) and its Additional Protocol regarding supervisory authorities and transborder data flows and the Protocol amending Convention 108 (Convention 108+) and, most recently, the Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention), are there to direct our work and actions in protecting and promoting human rights.

The ratification of Tromsø Convention in 2022 was seen as an essential step to increase legitimacy of public authorities, fostering their integrity, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, while promoting transparency and public participation in the decisions that influence our common future.

Albania has taken important steps towards the adoption of an advanced legal framework in the field of access to information as there are aspects of it that need further consideration.

In this regard, I want to commend and recognise the work of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner Office in ensuring actions toward the implementation of regulatory standards, and they are (but not limited) to:

- area of rapid digitalisation;
- increasing awareness (through different tools and events such as this one we are today); and
- most important for actively seeking and exploring paths for cooperation with relevant international partners.

These are indicators that, the institution has already a clear vision of:

**what and how this already process (which has already started) can only improve the access to information and ensure the protection of personal data in Albania; and become sustainable while in line with the European standards.**

Without any doubt, there is still space to initiate, work and improve.

A CoE Needs Assessment Report from the cooperation angle highlights key areas in which its technical assistance and expertise could further support the work of the IDPC; and other stakeholders.

That includes but is not limited to:

- development of **guidelines** on applying treaty law;
- providing methodology for the **design and delivery of awareness raising;**
- **training** on proactive provision and handling of requests for public documents;
- **development of user-friendly guidelines and methodology** to support elaboration and monitoring of transparency programs by public authorities;
- **provision of operational guidance** on techniques for administrative investigation/inquires and public interest test[s]; and

- **technical expertise and recommendations** securing enhanced accessibility for the right holders to exercise their right.

On that note, I look forward to further collecting ideas and recommendations on how we could best have common approaches towards such important goal: that is supporting the application and implementation of the relevant tools and standards on access to information through openness, transparency and digitalisation while safeguarding data protection.