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Countries Background Information

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Albania

Albania

Last Internet Update: 15.11.2002

Geographic Coordinates: 41 00 N, 20 00 E

Location:

Southeastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea, between Greece and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Geography:

strategic location along Strait of Otranto (links Adriatic Sea to Ionian Sea and Mediterranean Sea)



Introduction

Background:

; In 1990 Albania ended 44 years of xenophobic communist rule and established a multiparty democracy. The transition has proven difficult as corrupt governments have tried to deal with high unemployment, a dilapidated infrastructure, widespread gangsterism, and disruptive political opponents. International observers judged local elections in 2001 to be acceptable and a step toward democratic development, but identified serious deficiencies which should be addressed through reforms in the Albanian electoral code.

Geography



Albania

Climate:	mild temperate; cool, cloudy, wet winters; hot, clear, dry summers; interior is cooler and wetter
Terrain:	mostly mountains and hills; small plains along coast
Lowest Point:	Adriatic Sea 0 m
Highest Point:	Maja e Korabit (Golem Korab) 2,753 m
Natural Resources:	petroleum, natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, timber, nickel, hydropower

People

Population:	3,544,841 (July 2002 est.)
Pop Growth Rate:	1.06% (2002 est.)
Ethnic Groups:	Albanian 95%, Greek 3%, other 2% (Vlach, Gypsy, Serb, and Bulgarian) (1989 est.) ;note: in 1989, other estimates of the Greek population ranged from 1% (official Albanian statistics) to 12% (from a Greek organization)
Religions:	Muslim 70%, Albanian Orthodox 20%, Roman Catholic 10% ;note: all mosques and churches were closed in 1967 and religious observances prohibited; in November 1990, Albania began allowing private religio
Languages:	Albanian (Tosk is the official dialect), Greek

Government

Government Type:	emerging democracy
Capital:	Tirana
Independence:	28 November 1912 (from Ottoman Empire)
National Holiday:	Independence Day, 28 November (1912)

Economy

Economy Overview:

Poor and backward by European standards, Albania is making the difficult transition to a more modern open-market economy. The government has taken measures to curb violent crime and to revive economic activity and trade. The economy is bolstered by remittances from abroad of \$400-\$600 million annually, mostly from Greece and Italy. Agriculture, which accounts for 52% of GDP, is held back because of frequent drought and the need to modernize equipment and consolidate small plots of land. Severe energy shortages are forcing small firms out of business, increasing unemployment, scaring off foreign investors, and spurring inflation.

GDP - per capita:	purchasing power parity - \$3,800 (2001 est.)
Industries:	food processing, textiles and clothing; lumber, oil, cement, chemicals, mining, basic metals, hydropower

Transportation

Railways:	total: 447 km ;standard gauge: 447 km 1.435-m gauge (2001 est.)
Highways:	total: 18,000 km ;paved: 5,400 km;unpaved: 12,600 km (1998 est.)
Waterways:	43 km ;note: includes Albanian sections of Lake Scutari, Lake Ohrid, and Lake Prespa (1990)
Airports:	11 (2001)

Transnational Issues

International Disputes:

the Albanian Government supports protection of the rights of ethnic Albanians outside of its borders in the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia while continuing to seek regional cooperation; many Albanians illegally transit neighboring states to emigrate to western Europe