

Home Sweet Home

Housing Challenges in the Municipality of Tirana

Roberto Morea / Cesare Ottolini / Ariola Zeneli /
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He actively supports campaigns against evictions, displacements and housing rights violations (Zero Evictions Campaign) on all continents and collaborates with the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing Rights. As a member of the (former) UN-Habitat Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (AGFE) he has coordinated missions to Rome, Italy and Argentina. In 2011 he co-founded, and remains a member of the International Steering Committee and Jury, of the International Tribunal on Evictions. He co-founded and lives in a collectively owned housing cooperative, Cooperativa Coralli, together with migrants and Italians. He has published articles and research in the fields of habitat rights and urban studies. Written and spoken languages (in order of knowledge): Italian (mother tongue), French, Spanish, English, Portuguese.

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Cover: A uniquely painted apartment complex in Tirana, Albania | Photo by Dario Daniel Silva for Unsplash

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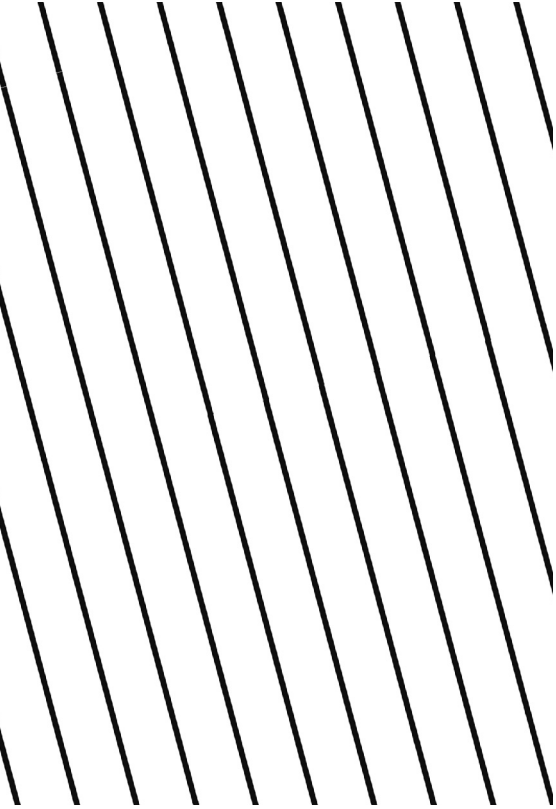
Preface

by Roberto Morea

This publication reports part of the field-study work carried out by the Albanian ICSE (Instituti për Kritikë dhe Emancipim Shoqëror; Institute for Critique and Social Emancipation) and part-supported by transform! europe, and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, in the city of Tirana. Through targeted interviews, it details housing conditions in Albania, especially for the younger generations. The study therefore collects figures and data accompanied by comments and moods, making the numbers part of a true story that really enters into people's lives.

Although Albania is not a European Union member-state, the economic and social processes that are developing there represent a trend that has already been underway for some time also in EU countries. The possibility of having affordable housing has, indeed, become increasingly problematic in recent years, to the point of inducing the European Commission itself to appoint a figure responsible for addressing the issue — or, as some say, to at least show that it is dealing with it.

In reality, the submission of European policies to the laws of the market has gradually deprived member-states of any possibility of pursuing their own autonomous housing plan, leaving the invisible hand to act anything but invisibly in the lives of European citizens. To account for the European dimension, we thought it right and proper to frame the issue with a preface that in some way also describes the responses of social movements that are getting organised in Europe and beyond. We think that it is crucial to shed light on the social issues that accompany the transformations of European societies, as a counter to EU policies that are increasingly aimed at taking away public resources, in favour of armaments and militarisation.



1. A European and Internationalist Strategy for the Right to Housing

Cesare Ottolini

International Alliance of Inhabitants

The World Zero Evictions Days in October last year highlighted the new level of the challenge on the housing issue in Europe, with the appointment of Dan Jørgensen, the first EU Commissioner for Energy and Housing.

On the one hand are social organisations, trade unions, progressive local authorities, and left-wing political forces mobilised for policies based on housing as a right. The guidelines of this right are summarised in the European Parliament Resolution of 21 January 2021, “A decent and affordable home for all”.

On the other hand stands the variegated real estate economic-political bloc, committed to extractivist policies of parasitic rent thanks to the financialisation of the sector, increasingly led by the European Investment Bank with its EIB Group 2024-2027 Strategic Roadmap.

At the center is the data that reports the severity of the housing crisis in Europe and that makes us so indignant. For there are more than 1,286,691 homeless people, more than 33,623,251 families in a situation of serious deprivation of housing, 17,812,318 families who spend over 40% of their income on housing, and 6,204,290 families in default of rent and home mortgages through no fault of their own. This is a crisis that especially affects the working classes and the impoverished middle class, especially tenants, so much so that a survey



reveals that 46% of tenants feel at risk of losing their home within a few months. This European housing crisis is part of the structural crisis that is leading to the failure of UN Development Goal 11.1. For worldwide there are already 1.6 billion homeless and poorly housed people who are suffering this crisis, dramatically increasing by a further 2 billion by 2030, with over 120 million refugees and at least 15 million people evicted every year.

Photo by Getty Images for
Unsplash+ | A house trapped in a
caged prison illustration

1.1 Investigating the Root Causes of the Structural Housing Crisis: Developmentalist and Extractivist Neoliberalism

Once upon a time, the housing issue may have been considered a personal problem, perhaps to be addressed with local policies. But the historical evolution of production relations, and the division of labor with the consequent urbanisation, starting from cities and poor areas of the world, cities and poor areas of the world, have increasingly highlighted its special character. It lays the roots of social conflicts, claims and mobilisations extending from the local to the national and to the European and international levels.

It is, therefore, necessary to investigate and discuss these fundamental issues, and not just at the level of appearances. This must be done in order to understand how to effectively deal with a crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic only served to expose, and that wars are exacerbating, primarily with murder and the generalised increase in military spending financed by welfare cuts, especially healthcare and housing.

This crisis has its roots in the structuring of neoliberal policies, particularly in their European variant, based on the unlimited development of the urbanisation of mother earth, which is aggravating the climate crisis, environmental disasters, and the impact of wars. These policies are guided by the vultures of the financialisation of the economy, which extracts parasitic rent to concentrate wealth in a few hands, often spurred along by the public-private partnership encouraged by the New Urban Agenda of Habitat 3, impoverishing the already poor and even the middle classes.

Given the nature of the European Union, housing policies do not benefit from structural funds because, at least so far, housing is not a priority. Meanwhile, the EU Commission for freedom of competition has always been concerned to request and obtain from member states the cutting of policies that favor public housing or regulate rentals.

Because of this approach, rather than taking advantage of the Green Deal and the Recovery Plans to relaunch the economy and social cohesion, which is also a goal of the European Union, only 52.2 billion euros has been dedicated to sustainable social housing. This is totally insufficient to fill the 57 billion euros/year gap that we are today suffering.

1.2 The Negative Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Housing Crisis: Financialisation, Tax Evasion, Housing Insecurity And Discrimination

On the other hand, the massive introduction of Artificial Intelligence in this sector which is so fundamental to the life of populations, especially the working and middle classes, is accelerating the crisis. Digital platforms, launched with short-term rentals, Airbnb and the like, are increasingly invasive and high-performing, in turn altering the quality and purposes of the services offered. Starting with the aim of screening the customers of owners and banks, they discriminate against categories considered at risk of insolvency, such as migrants and those evicted for non-payment, and are evolving towards a “turnkey” service for owners who entrust their homes as assets, as “tokens” from which to extract a guaranteed income, without any longer having any relationship with the tenant or the borrower. These platforms rely on “competing algorithms” that create real cartels, putting prices on steroids and favoring the financialisation of the sector. A hardly negligible consequence is the increase in global tax evasion, a primary source of social injustice. The Tax Justice Network estimates that tax evasion by multinationals alone amounts to approximately US\$492 billion per year, including over US\$230 billion in Europe, but global tax evasion and avoidance is certainly higher, especially thanks to the deregulation of the housing market.

Although AI's negative impact on the housing issue is no mere *threat* insofar as these effects are already being felt, [the EU Regulation on Artificial Intelligence](#) says nothing about its

regulation in real estate markets. This means leaving free rein to the owners of real estate platforms to remove rental contracts from the already inadequate regulation by law, in turn increasing housing insecurity and unaffordability.

This is a key issue that shows even more clearly the need to have a European and internationalist strategy, with effective tools to tackle the housing crisis and to propose alternative and properly grounded policies.

1.3 The EIB: Assisted Financial Capitalism for a Fake “Social Housing” in Favour of Investment Funds

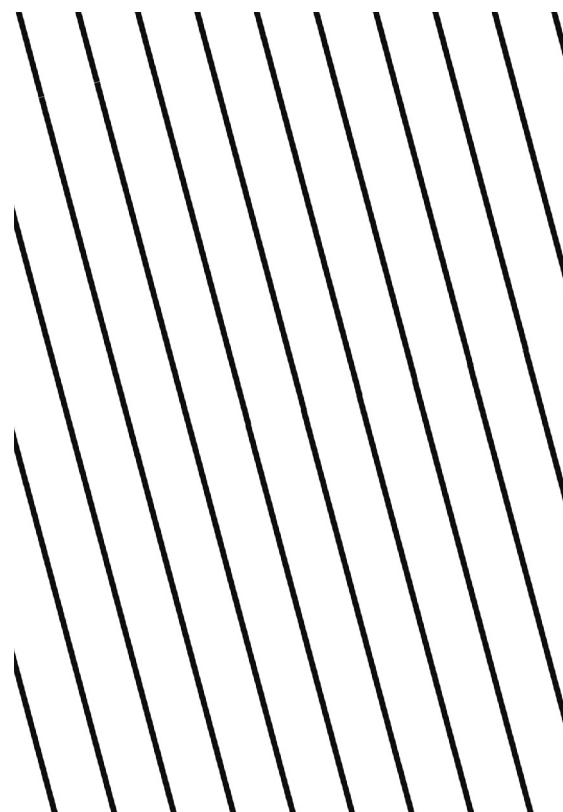
The EIB is wasting no time in seizing the opportunity offered by the housing crisis: on the same day as Ursula Von der Leyen’s appointment, [the European Investment Bank](#) Group met to applaud the proposal of the European Commissioner for Housing and set conditions for managing this very rich dish: to achieve the European climate objectives, investments of 275 billion euros per year are needed for the energy efficiency of buildings, with over 57 billion euros per year to make up for the shortfall in “sustainable” housing.

The EIB is, therefore, working in concert with the new EU Commissioner on a European Plan for “sustainable” housing, i.e. a fake “social housing”, consisting of housing units built in partnership between private investors and local governments, for sale or rent at near-market prices to families with medium-to-high incomes. These are financial products that offer “impact investments” and guarantee investment funds consistent returns (at least +3% above inflation, i.e. up to 13-14%), to be extracted from a segment of the population that, in fact, could find housing solutions with their own means. This is not the public and social housing that is needed.

This European Housing Plan would like to count on 50% of the residues of the Next Generation EU funds, amounting to hundreds of billions of euros, appropriately shifting the deadline for their use to 2028.

To this end, the EU should change the current rules on state aid and public debt limits.

The EIB proposal thus aims to overcome the crisis of “financialised bricks and mortar” with a solid countercyclical public intervention to make the impoverished middle classes “bankable”. But it does not address the structural causes of the housing crisis does not offer answers to the majority of the population suffering from its effects. In other words, it is an “assisted financial capitalism” to relaunch the European economy in crisis with bricks and mortar. Moreover, this can be termed a radioactive brick, given that the new commissioner Dan Jørgensen proposes the development of nuclear power in the strategy for decarbonisation, autonomy and energy efficiency.



1.4 It Is Not Enough to Be Indignant: Local, National, European, Internationalist Mobilisation Is Needed

The EIB proposal, which risks heavily structuring EU policies on the housing issue, makes it clear that the conflict over housing does not only concern speculative and illegal forms, but also underlying policies, namely the liberalisation of markets and privatisations, which favor the cycle of reproduction of capital with the extraction and accumulation of income in a few hands. This cycle is accelerating thanks to the financialisation of the real estate sector, especially housing, which has no borders: for it is global.

It is not enough to be indignant. We must assert housing as a primary human right, recognised in international treaties and conventions ratified by almost all countries around the world. These agreements have especially been endorsed by the countries of the European Union, and their defense and implementation radically conflicts with neoliberalism in all its variants, including the EU one. These are legal obligations, not mere recommendations, enforceable through recourse to the European Court of Human Rights. For the European countries that have also ratified the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg) it is possible, and has been done successfully in hundreds of cases, to submit an appeal to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to obtain a request for precautionary measures to suspend evictions and to assign adequate alternative housing.

It is not enough to be indignant. Therefore, we support the mobilisations for the right to housing that are taking place at various levels in many European countries, in opposition to the financialisation of the housing sector, in favor of the development of social housing as a robust public service, and for the regulation and moderation of rents. From here follow the initiatives against evictions, from pickets to appeals to the UN Committee on Rights; mobilisations against unsustainable rent levels; the social recovery of uninhabited public buildings, through their occupation; the Berlin referendum vote in favor of the expropriation of large landowners; the battles for the regulation of short-term rentals and the touristification of cities; and the fights for the reception of migrants and refugees and against gender discrimination.

1.5 Relaunching the United Mobilisation for the Right to Housing, Towards a European Social Forum for Housing

To try to build a strategy of mobilisations for the right to housing that are really effective, and not just a symbolic expression of dissent, we should start from the structural nature of the housing crisis — a cause of precariousness steeped in unsustainable costs

and inhumane evictions — and from the claim, defense and implementation of housing as a primary human right.

What needs doing, then? The International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI) has always been committed on the European front. We might note, for example, the first European States General for Housing at the European Parliament in 2007. This battle front necessarily also includes the inhabitants of the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, who represent six out of ten of the 560 million people in the 26 coastal countries, and not only the migrants and refugees who manage to cross this sea. Hence the proposal of the Mediterranean Network of Inhabitants launched at [the first Forum of the Inhabitants of the Mediterranean, held in Marseille in 2019](#).

Therefore IAI immediately relaunched the [unitary mobilisation](#) of the various movements, associations and networks to form a European Social Forum for Housing, following the example of the Italian Social Forum, capable of mobilising. Hence, the request to the EU Housing Commissioner to define a European Housing Plan based on the European Parliament Resolution on housing, and a first concrete measure, while waiting for this Plan to produce results: the European moratorium on evictions and the protection of housing rights defenders, at risk in many countries, as in Italy with the Security Bill 1660.

This European Housing Plan should be based on housing as a right, established in particular by Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC), ratified by most EU countries, reaffirmed in Principles 19 and 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in Articles 16, 30, 31 of the revised European Social Charter.

On this basis, it should be established by EU regulation/directive that it is impossible to carry out evictions without adequate alternative housing, the development of adequate social public housing thanks to structural financing by the EU, and the regulation of rents and their moderation, starting with short-term rentals.

Along the same lines is the Wemove Europe petition [“EU: Solve the housing crisis”](#) which collected tens of thousands of signatures in mid-summer. This is a line shared by the [European Trade Union Confederation](#), FEANTSA and progressive local authorities.

In other words, if the housing mobilisations pursued in different countries are to achieve the success that they deserve, this success must count on local roots, European commitment, internationalist solidarity and real alliances. That is to say, it must be based on a shared vision and objectives at the European and international levels.

Hence the proposal for a European meeting at the beginning of 2025 to share and coordinate the respective commitments and mobilisations regarding the EU. Already scheduled are the International Days against the financialisation of the housing sector, from 25 to 28 April 2025, as decided by [the International Assembly for Housing in Barcelona](#) in which over 250 activists from over twenty countries participated. Also on the agenda are the World Zero Evictions Days in October 2025.

2. Housing Challenges in the Municipality of Tirana

Currently, around 132,000 families reside in rental houses or properties owned by others, an 87% increase since 2011.

2.1 Housing Issues in Tirana

Ariola Zeneli, Vitori Cipi, Xhuljane Uku, Xhuliano Bregasi

Over the past decade, Tirana has undergone rapid urban and economic advancement, emerging as a significant hub for youth and for young families pursuing their educational and professional prospects. This development has, however, also brought certain problems, particularly in the housing sector.

2.1.1 Demographics of the Municipality of Tirana and Familial Composition

About one-third of the Albanian population lives in the Tirana district, with 26% residing in the Municipality of Tirana. From 2011 to 2023, Tirana's number of inhabitants rose by 40,753. This

rate of increase is not good news for builders, who had been working according to mistaken data which projected growth of around 20-25,000 inhabitants. In fact, in this twelve-year period the population of Tirana increased by 3,300 inhabitants annually (many times less than the projections of the Municipality of Tirana).

The average family size has decreased from 3.6 to 2.8 people, due to falling birth rates, emigration, and an ageing demographic, with the current average age at 35.5 years. Families primarily consist of couples with children (52.2%), whereas those without children represent 37.5%. Furthermore, 62.5% of adults residing alone are above 60 years of age, posing issues for housing, schooling, and healthcare (Census 2023).

2.1.2 Property Ownership

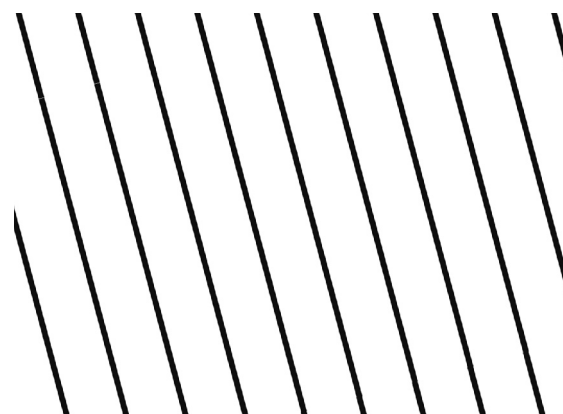
The number of Albanian families who do not own their homes has risen markedly, as per the 2023 Census. Currently, around 132,000 families reside in rental houses or properties owned by others, an 87% increase since 2011. The ownership rate, presently at 82.5%, is exaggerated, as young individuals residing in other places, such as Tirana, are still considered members of their original families. Homeownership is primarily concentrated among older generations, who gained from privatisation initiatives or built their own residences.

Young individuals encounter considerable obstacles in acquiring homes due to insufficient income, a scarcity of affordable financing, and escalating housing costs, particularly in Tirana, where the real-estate market is heavily shaped by speculation. Most young people depend on rented accommodation or cohabiting with their parents for extended periods. The lack of a robust social housing system has compelled numerous families to invest in privately constructed residences, frequently established informally, as a means of securing long-term stability, hence lessening the need for government intervention.

2.1.3 Family Economic Development

Tirana has experienced significant economic growth, contributing more than fifty percent of the national GDP. In the first quarter of 2024, the Albanian economy expanded by 3.63%, while the construction industry experienced a significant growth of 14.04% (according to the Institute of Statistics, INSTAT). The city provides abundant employment prospects in industries including construction, information technology, healthcare, education, and services. Tirana has the highest incomes nationally, particularly for the specialised occupations offered on the labour market (INSTAT 2024).

The most recent census (2023) indicates that 25% of Albania's employment is located in Tirana, reflecting an 18% decline since the 2011 census. As the capital and the country's primary commercial centre, it provides a diverse array of work possibilities across several sectors. In 2022, Tirana had 53,168 active enterprises, representing 29.2% of the nation's total active businesses. Tirana exhibits a greater concentration of major enterprises relative to the national average.



¹ Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) "Census Of Population And Housing In Albania", 2023 <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13787/cens-2023.pdf>

² Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) "Quarterly Economic Growth, Quarter I - 2024", 2024, <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13607/pbb-tr1-2024.pdf>

³ Idem

⁴ Bank of Albania "Real Estate Market Survey Results and Housing Price Index, Second Half 2022", p.7 https://www.bankofalbania.org/rc/doc/Tregu_i_pasurive_te_paluajtshme_6M_II_2022_Analize_e_Plote_docx_25137.pdf

⁵ Adapted from Homezone.al <https://homezone.al/report/stats>

⁶ Monitor.al "Average inflation 6.7%, the highest level in 24 years, the poor most exposed". 18/01/2023 <https://monitor.al/2022-inflacioni-mesatar-6-7-niveli-me-i-larte-ne-24-vjet-te-varfrit-me-te-ekspozuar/>

⁷ <https://www.numbeo.com/>

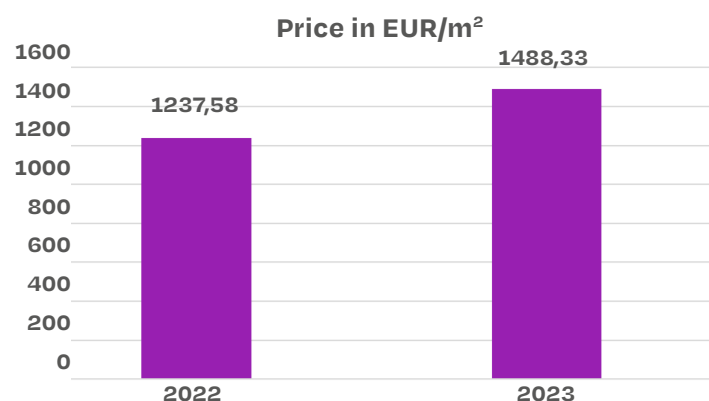
⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe "Country profile on urban development, housing and land management: Albania - Summary report" (Information document No. 4) 2023 <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Inf%20doc%204%20CP%20Albania%20summary.pdf>

⁹ Bank of Albania "Real Estate Market Survey Results and Housing Price Index, Second Half 2023" https://www.bankofalbania.org/rc/doc/Vrojtim_mbi_Ecurine_e_Tregut_te_Pasurive_te_Paluajtshme_ne_Shqiperi_6MII_2023_27288.pdf

Figure 1: Average price per square metre in the Municipality of Tirana

Nevertheless, when examining the evolution of Tirana and the economic advancement of families residing and employed in the city, it is imperative to contextualise this, through a comparison with Albania's other 61 municipalities. These latter have fallen behind considerably in their development and investment. The Eurostat report for 2023 indicates that Albania ranks lowest in income per capita, at merely 35% of the European level, and also lowest in consumption per capita, at 42% of the European average. Notwithstanding improved salaries in Tirana, in 2022 average pay saw a moderate increase of 4,700 Albanian lek (7.72%), followed by a further rise of 6,198 Albanian lek (9.44%) in 2023.

The Fischer index of house prices in Tirana has shown consistent growth over the past five years, with a notable increase of 39.5% in the first half of 2022, especially on the outskirts of the capital, where the surge approached 40%. Following a 11.4% decrease in the latter half of the year, the yearly growth rate was 13.9%. A comparable trend was noted in 2023, while in 2024 the index increased by 23.5%, with the city centre representing 46% of total sales (Bank of Albania Surveys). Although prices in the centre remain high, the periphery is gaining appeal for purchasers due to infrastructure spending that has heightened demand and driven up property values (Figure 1)



Over the course of the last year on record, the average house price per square metre rose by €250 (Homezone, 2023). In 2023, the average price per square metre in Tirana approximated €1,500, reflecting a 20.9% rise, whilst the average salary remained below €700, resulting in a substantial disparity between housing expenses and income. The mean cost of a one-bedroom apartment (60 m²) is approximately €84,540, a two-bedroom apartment (78 m²) is about €109,900, and a three-bedroom apartment (120 m²) amounts to €169,080 (Monitor 2024). Tirana ranks among the costliest cities in Europe, with the lowest purchasing power, surpassing the expenses of cities such as Rome and Barcelona (Numbeo). A UN analysis indicates that escalating property prices may be partially attributable to money laundering, with 32% of houses sold in 2021 acquired by non-residents. Correspondingly, surveys conducted by the Bank of Albania indicate that in the latter half of 2023, 26% of properties were acquired by non-residents. A significant number of these transactions were executed without bank loans, prompting worries regarding the origin of the money.

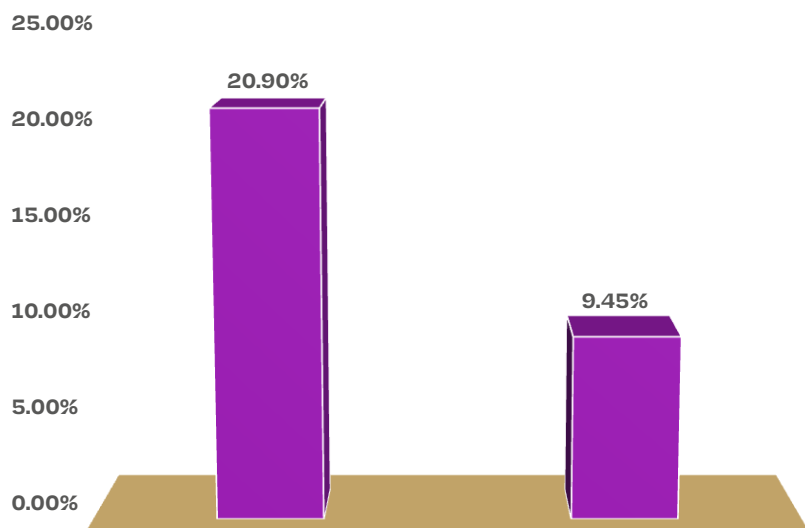


Figure 2: The disparity between house-price growth per square metre (left) and pay growth (right)

In 2023, the average price per square meter in Tirana reached approximately €1500, while the average salary did not exceed €700. During this year, the price per square meter increased by 20.9%, while the average salary increased by only 9.45%, creating a major gap between the increase in the cost of housing and the increase in wages.

Merely 60% of houses are funded via loans, which generally encompass up to 70% of the sale value, indicating a significant dependence on unmonitored private money. Young families are encountering challenges due to escalating interest rates, which hit 3% in March 2023—the highest rate since 2013. The increased interest rates have a threefold effect: they add to the expense of mortgage loans, rendering them pricier for families; they worsen borrowers' repayment capacity, heightening the risk of default; and they encourage speculation in the housing market, as developers encounter increased financing costs, which inflate flat prices and complicate accessibility for purchasers.

2.1.4 Construction Permits and the Housing Crisis in Tirana: An Appeal for Immediate Reform

In the last seven years, Tirana has undergone a development surge that has altered the city's urban environment. Throughout this period, over 8,133 construction licenses have been granted, establishing the construction sector as a primary revenue generator for the municipality of Tirana. This is mainly owed to the infrastructure impact tax imposed on new constructions, which contributes substantially to the city's finances. This construction boom has also involved significant social and economic issues.

Notwithstanding this rapid advancement, Albania's population persists in its fall. The influx of individuals relocating to Tirana from neighbouring regions has declined from 21,000 new residents in 2019 to merely 5,700 in 2023. The decrease

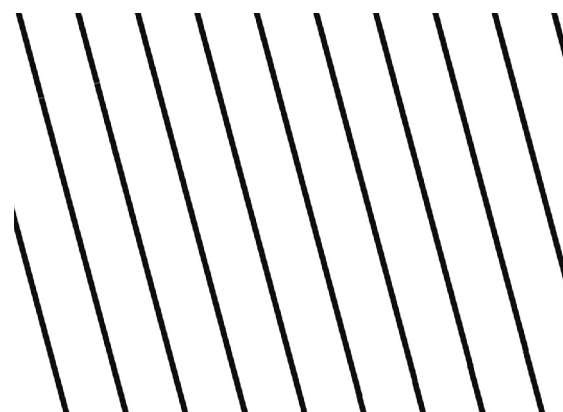




Photo by Mika Baumeister for
Unsplash | A graffiti criticising high
rental prices

in internal migration has raised questions over the need for significant new developments, particularly when housing remains unaffordable for most of the population.

The construction business serves as a revenue source for the city and is closely linked to the criminal economy. A report from August 2020 by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime reveals a troubling statistic: around 60% of construction enterprises that obtained permits in Tirana between 2017 and 2019 were unable to substantiate their financial sources. Moreover, it is estimated that over €1.6 billion was laundered through the construction business during this period, casting significant doubt on the economic and legal integrity of the sector.

One prominent result of this situation is the focus on luxury developments. Investors favour building high-rise buildings and opulent developments, accessible solely to a limited segment of the population. This method artificially inflates real estate prices and lowers access to affordable homes for the general public. Furthermore, public spaces are diminishing as numerous areas are appropriated by these new developments.

Tirana is currently undergoing an urbanisation process that worsens social and economic disparities, resulting in a city characterised by lavish buildings, diminished open spaces, and an increasing number of citizens grappling with the challenge of securing cheap accommodation.

2.1.5 The Increase in Rental Prices in Tirana: Contributing Factors and Social Consequences

The rental market in Tirana has experienced a significant price surge, influenced by several economic and social variables. This dynamic is intricately connected to advancements in the real estate market and demographic shifts impacting the capital.

Research by the Bank of Albania indicates that rental costs in Tirana increased by 12% until 2020, and this rising trend has persisted in the following years. The current average rent for a two-bedroom flat is almost €573 per month. The 2019

¹⁰ Lapsi.al "Money Laundering/Albanian Economy Dominated by Construction (double the figures of the EU)", <https://lapsi.al/2021/06/15/pastri-mi-i-parave-ekonomia-shqiptare-e-dominuar-nga-ndertimi-shifrat-sa-dyfishi-i-be/>

¹¹ Bank of Albania "Economic Magazine 6M1-2023", p. 8 https://www.bankofalbania.org/rc/doc/Revista_Ekonomike_6M1_2023_Shqip_web_24864.pdf

earthquake compelled numerous inhabitants to migrate to the capital, while the COVID-19 lockdown heightened the demand for homes, hence strengthening this tendency.

In 2023, real estate companies documented a 35% surge in rental costs in certain parts of Tirana, with rentals in neighbourhoods adjacent to the “Air Albania” stadium rising to €1,200 for a two-bedroom flat. Rent prices in outlying areas have increased significantly, with one-bedroom apartments priced between €350 and €450 a month.

The role in the construction sector of illicit financing from organised crime is also making this situation worse. It has added to property and rental prices, rendering housing inaccessible for most residents. But there are also other causes. Real estate agencies participate in speculative activities, and property owners are increasingly favouring short-term rents that yield greater income than long-term leases.

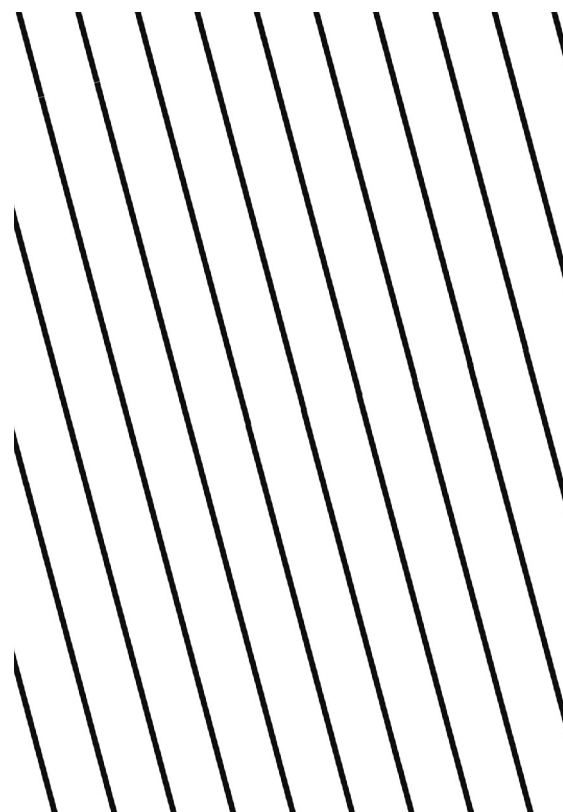
The increase in rental prices is posing difficulties for Tirana’s inhabitants, who must choose between higher expenses in the city centre or compromising their time and quality of life by residing in more affordable, remote locations. In the absence of significant intervention from state institutions, this scenario is expected to deteriorate, rendering housing ever-more unattainable for the majority of inhabitants.

2.1.6 Vacant Properties and the Housing Crisis in Tirana: The Urgency for Prompt Reforms

A critical problem in Albania’s housing sector is the substantial disparity between the quantity of vacant residences and the demand for housing. INSTAT data indicates that the country possesses around 1.08 million residences, although the number of households is merely 756,000. Consequently, 33% of residences remain unoccupied, posing a significant issue for policymakers. This issue is particularly concerning in Tirana, where a review of electricity consumption data indicates that 51,129 flats used zero kilowatt-hours of electricity in 2023.

This number indicates that approximately 17.4% of residences in the capital are unoccupied, a figure that has risen by a factor of 3.4 since 2018. Should this tendency persist, at the present rate of population growth, it would take 45 years for these dwellings to be occupied, assuming no new construction occurs. The substantial inventory of unoccupied residences, coupled with demographic decrease and heightened migration, raises significant questions over the need for the persistent construction proliferating in Tirana.

These figures underscore the pressing need for prompt adjustments in housing policies. Targeted interventions could reallocate resources to improve housing for families facing difficulties in obtaining a home, rather than persisting with excessive construction that results in vacant buildings around the city. In the absence of a holistic strategy to address this issue, housing challenges in Albania will become sharper, resulting in diminished access to cheap and sustainable housing for inhabitants.



2.2 Public Housing in Albania

Social housing is a critical component of social programmes in Albania, especially in Tirana, where significant internal migration and escalating housing prices have intensified the problem. The shortfall in terms of financial resources, as well as inconsistent policies, have led to housing programmes that do not adequately address the requirements of all citizens.

In Albania, social housing initiatives include state support for the most vulnerable groups, as outlined in the Social Housing Strategy 2016-2025. This initiative seeks to enhance housing infrastructure and offer financial assistance to support low-income households. Housing is deemed expensive when expenses surpass 15-25% of a family's monthly income, necessitating institutional intervention.

2.2.1 Initiatives Executed in the Municipality of Tirana

Between 2018 and 2024, 4,350 persons applied for the rental subsidy programme in Tirana, although only 2,146 received financial support. Furthermore, within the interest subsidy scheme, of the 7,645 applicants, merely 2,652 received benefits during the same period. The data reveal that the Municipality of Tirana cannot satisfy even 50% of the demand for social housing, meaning that many families face challenging economic and social circumstances.

A. From 2018 to 2024, there were 4,350 applications for **rental subsidy**, with 2,146 individuals receiving financial help, being 49% of the total applicants. Presented below are the annual statistics:

- In 2018, there were 808 applications and 275 beneficiaries.
- In 2019, there were 815 applications and 312 beneficiaries.
- In 2020, there were 663 applications and 242 recipients.
- In 2021, there were 539 applications and 341 recipients.
- In 2022, there were 538 applications and 317 recipients.
- In 2023, there were 642 applications and 427 beneficiaries.
- In the first half of 2024, there were 345 applications and 232 beneficiaries.

This programme primarily focusses on low-income families, although it does not comprehensively address the needs of individuals with impairments.

¹² Council of Ministers. (2016, June 1). Decision Of The Council Of Ministers no. 405, dated 1.06.2016, Approval of the Social Housing Strategy 2016-2025 https://transform-network.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/VKM_nr_405_date_1.06.2016.pdf

B. The Interest Subsidy on Loans programme, executed in 2018, 2020, and 2022, assisted 2,652 families from a pool of 7,645 applicants, i.e. 34% of the applicants.

In 2018, there were 2,814 applicants and 1,104 beneficiaries, or 39.2%.

In 2022, there were 2,581 applicants and 742 beneficiaries, or 28.7%.

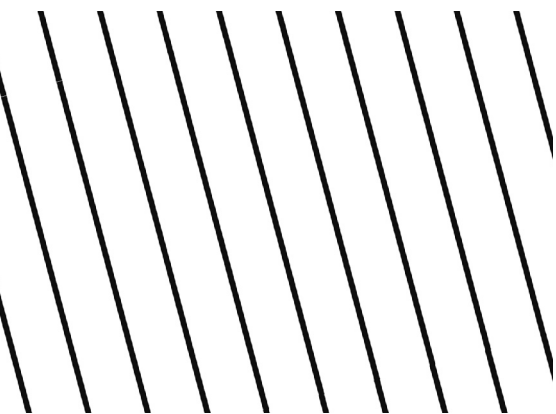
C. The Low-Cost Housing Programme (BKU) intends to support the middle class; yet, it remains unimplemented despite significant demand. Between 2015 and 2018, 1,255 citizens submitted applications, although no recipients were documented.

D. Between 2015 and 2017, 2,435 applicants requested social housing in the Shkoza area, with 418 families receiving assistance. According to the Municipality of Tirana, the social housing allocation is inadequate to satisfy the demand from applicants. Notwithstanding the rise in building permits since 2019, the Municipality of Tirana has gained roughly 83,326.1 m² of construction area due to the enforcement of a regulation that mandates builders to allocate 3% of newbuilds to social housing. Nonetheless, many sites remain unutilised, and the municipality has failed to designate locations for these spaces. This demonstrates a bias towards builders, placing citizens at a disadvantage in terms of access to cheap housing.

2.2.2 Susceptibility in Social Housing

Statistics obtained from information requests to the Municipality of Tirana indicate that the most vulnerable populations include:

- Individuals with impairments: Among 23,409 individuals with impairments in Tirana, hardly 415 families availed themselves of social housing programmes from 2018 to 2024.
- The substantial influx of students and young individuals in Tirana has resulted in issues due to rising housing and rental prices. The soft loan programme is among the few that provides assistance to young couples, however the number of recipients remains limited.
- Roma and Egyptian Communities: Merely 5% of beneficiaries from social housing initiatives between 2018 and 2024 originate from these communities, despite their position among the most in-need categories.
- Victims of Domestic Violence: Among 3,388 domestic violence cases managed from 2020 to 2023, merely 25 women received rental subsidies, and 5 obtained interest subsidies, underscoring substantial deficiencies in meeting the needs of this group.



2.2.3 Participation of the Private Sector in Social Housing in Tirana

Law No. 22/2018 sought to guarantee affordable housing by mandating private builders to allocate 3% of the construction area for any building exceeding 2,000 m² to the social housing fund. In 2022, this rule was revised due to demand from builders, and the obligation was limited to spaces larger than 2,000 m². This change drastically lowered the space designated for social housing.

Example: Previously, a building of 2,500 m² was mandated to devote 75 m² to the stock of social housing. However, the revised legislation now stipulates that only the area exceeding 2,000 m² must be allocated, resulting in a contribution of merely 15 m².

A further challenge was the decision to permit builders to satisfy this responsibility through monetary compensation, resulting in a reduction of available social housing units. Constructors frequently opt to compensate in cash rather than offer housing units, with revenue from these contributions between 2020 and 2023 fluctuating between 360 million and 959 million ALL (Albanian Lek). (For the year 2020, 360,975,000 Lekë; _for the year 2021, 496,746,000 Lekë; _for the year 2022, 959,850,000 Lekë;_ for the year 2023, 893,830,000 Lekë.)

The execution of the law has been inadequate, and the absence of transparency has obscured the use of the collected funds. The proportion of builders fulfilling their legal commitments has been extremely low, and the Municipality of Tirana has not clarified the reasons for the incomplete collection of housing taxes or the allocation of the income generated from these taxes for social housing initiatives.

2.2.4 Final Assessment

Despite the implementation of these measures to mitigate the social housing problem in Tirana and Albania, inadequate funding and budgetary constraints have perpetuated a persistent challenge. In particular:

Contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP):

- The funds designated for social housing represent a minimal fraction of GDP, at approximately 0.03%.

Consolidated Budgetary Expenditures:

- Spending on social housing represents under 0.1% of consolidated budget expenditure, considerably limiting the capacity to meet the requirements of vulnerable populations.

The Municipality of Tirana must actively engage to bolster support for disadvantaged groups and improve transparency in the execution of the social housing programme.

2.3 Housing Supply in the State Market

Xhuljane Uku

According to the constitution, a property owner is one who has acquired the property through three official channels of the civil, administrative and international commercial code. The first way is through an inheritance deed, the second way is through a sale-purchase deed, and the third one is through donation.

Since 2005, with the beginning of the legalisation process, it has been deemed necessary to make changes to the civil, administrative, criminal and commercial codes, to examine the administrative possibility of opening a fourth way of owning property – i.e. through the process of Legalisation of Informal Buildings.

Accommodation in Tirana is primarily offered according to National Strategies in various fields, which affect:

- I-** The banking system, through the provision of soft loans. This policy is possible for many MPs, and starting from 2024 it will also be offered to public administration employees. Provided that we have data on the amount of money or people involved.
- II-** Employment System and Labour Costs. According to INSTAT Albania, state revenues from the construction sector through social contributions on workers' wages are among the lowest, compared to the financial activities sector, or health, education and cultural services. This is also reflected in the average net income from the salary of construction workers, which is much lower than the average of other sectors, averaging 630,000 ALL/year, while financial services average 871,000 ALL/year. One of the measures taken to improve this precarious labour climate in the construction sector is that of changing, through legal decisions, the labour costs for each element of working activity. This decision is constantly updated to guarantee an increase in the appreciation of the workforce.
- III-** This next measure, last updated in 2018, is related to labour costs. Property Restitution System. With the 1998 constitution, the Albanian state was theoretically obliged to finally resolve claims for the return of properties seized during the communist regime. However, nothing has been done to fulfil this provision. A law was adopted in 2004, and since then it has not been treated and discussed except in administrative terms. For this reason, the ATP (Property Treatment Agency) was established in 2015, and still today remains the body responsible for implementing this policy. The issue continues to be debated due to the lack of transparency in information, decision methodology, processing, and beneficiaries, with the issuance of ad hoc decisions. The Property Treatment Agency, in implementation of point 14 of the Council of Ministers Decision No. 221, dated 23 March 2016, presents an annual report of its work from 1993 to date.

¹³ Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 610, dated 22.9.2022. "On the determination of detailed rules for the appointment of the supervisor, their duties and responsibilities, the general conditions and elements of ensuring professional liability, as well as the rules, procedures and the keeping of documentation during the development of the works".

¹⁴ Decision No. 629, dated 15.7.2015 "On the approval of technical manuals for prices of construction works and their technical analyses" (amended by Decree No. 631, dated 26.10.2018).

¹⁵ 19,987 decisions were financially evaluated. The value for these decisions is 116,149,629,679 ALL (one hundred and sixteen billion, one hundred and forty-nine million, six hundred and twenty-nine thousand, six hundred and seventy-nine) (the value is expected to change as the ATP is awaiting the completion of appeals by the subjects based on legal deadlines); 2,817 are the decisions where it has not been determined where the pre-purchase falls; 2,460 decisions for which the subject is considered compensated, the value of - 27,287,716,865.14 ALL (minus twenty-seven billion, two hundred and eighty-seven million, seven hundred and sixteen thousand, eight hundred and sixty-five); 748 decisions deleted during the decision re-evaluation process; 80 decisions deleted according to approved memos and e-mails sent by the working groups.

IV- Property Legalisation System. This system represents the largest, measurable state policy directly affecting property and the housing supply in Albania and Tirana. The Durres and Tirana regions represent the largest area of informal settlements in Albania. Divided into 55 informal zones, amounting to a total of 8000ha, with a special Decision Council Ministers to simplify the administrative process, this central region of Albania has its largest informal zone in the former Durres Marsh, at 700ha, and the smallest zone, in Tirana, the Blloku area, at 2ha. Originally conceived as a social policy for Albanian citizens who migrated to the cities for work and a better life, today this policy is associated with the massive use of voter propaganda and targeted construction in the territory for electoral purposes. According to various reports from the former ALUIZNI office, today the State Cadastre, only 33% of informal buildings for which applications have been submitted have been legalised.

V- The system of property recognition through the Cadastre. This is the most complex system of property management for buildings and land in Albania. Through property registration, conflicts, social ambiguities, and property valuations are resolved according to legal and territorial provisions which result in compensation and purchase prices as a floor price. The latest updated law for the property recognition system is Law No. 33/2012 (Amended by Law No. 9/2016) "On the Registration of Immovable Properties". This is the channel through which all buildings that are selected for the transfer of ownership through the process of legalisation of the building and property, as well as those who need to update the old ownership document according to legal provisions and the cartographic system, must pass. The Ombudsman notes in the annual report that during 2021, 133 complaints were filed on ownership issues, compared to 59 the previous year. The complaints were mainly directed at the structures of the State Cadastre Agency, its local directorates, municipalities, IMTs (Territory Protection Inspectorate, in albanian *Inspektorati i Mbrojtjes së Territorit*) under them, the Property Treatment Agency, as well as the bodies that are tasked with the reconstruction of buildings damaged by the November 2019 earthquake. One of the main problems that the Ombudsman highlights in his analysis of the property issue are cadastral maps. In this account, existing cadastral maps have a high tendency to not be in accordance with the situation on the ground. The most frequently encountered problem is that real estate units (parcels and buildings) are in many cases incorrectly positioned. Over time, due to changes in specifications and references, the problem has increased. In many cases, when there are different copies of map sheets, it is discussed which map is current or accurate. In the offices of the ASHK, data on parcels is not lacking, but the status of the property is not known with certainty.

VI- The system of encouraging the construction business in the city. For this reason, it was approved through a Council of Ministers No. 354, dated 11 May 2016. According



to this manual, the Albanian state creates the conditions for competition and work procedures on construction sites, and not only them. According to the Strategic Plans for Social Housing, the 5-Year Social Housing Programme 2022-2027 in the Municipality of Tirana (Local Housing Plan), provides a quantitative overview of some of the potential causes of housing loss, such as natural or socio-economic disasters, and offers solutions distributed throughout the territory without linking the territorial problem to alternative solutions. Inhabitants and square meters are considered the primary guide to achieving the stated goals. For example, if there is an analysis of the vulnerability of the Roma community, it is not clear about the constitutional, legal and administrative nature of the codes to be addressed, in relation to the respective need for housing. There is no clarity on shelter programmes for vulnerable groups, such as those affected by domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, or other known health pathologies – or indeed, on new developments related to the numerous immigrants in the city seeking to move toward the European Union, or students present on a daily or monthly basis. The Directorate of Public Services, at the Municipality of Tirana, is required to submit to the minister responsible for housing, by January of each year, its request for financing, investments and subsidies, according to this law, from the funds of the current year's budget. This request must be accompanied by information regarding: i) the number of families registered to be addressed by social housing programmes; ii) the number of families that have been dealt with within a year; iii) the income of the local self-government unit, which will be used for social housing programmes in the following year, and the amount of funds requested from the state budget, based on the 5-year housing programme; iv) the areas of land approved for social housing programmes; v) the level of rent approved by decision of the council of the local self-government unit. One of the most common ways to address the challenge of vulnerability in shelters and the homeless is through large-scale construction permits such as PDVs.

Photo by Yunus Tuğ for Unsplash+
| An old run down building with
graffiti on it

The “TRO30” master plan integrated into the Strategic Vision behaves as rational and goes towards a uniformisation of the centre with an exclusive character for the rest of the neighbourhoods of the municipality or even beyond.

- VII-** The offer of accommodation in Tirana is provided through the General Local Plan, PPV. This PPV, according to legal provisions No. 107/2014 “On territorial planning and development”, was approved for the Municipality of Tirana in 2017. This Plan was approved in full legal and technical compliance. According to the law in force, the PPV consists of three main elements, 1) an in-depth analysis of the territory, 2) a Strategic Vision Plan which deals with the distribution of public services as works of primary constitutional importance such as schools, hospitals and public safety, to some extent guiding social or market policies (which also depend on political will), 3) and a Development Plan which determines land use coefficients, and other criteria that are written into the so-called “passports” of the given area. Anyone who wants to develop in the future should consult the PPV and the development passports. But problems arise at each stage: The Territorial Analysis is key both for the subsequent stage, the strategic vision, and for the development plan. The Strategic Vision for markets, schools or even transportation will be drafted precisely based on the In-Depth Territorial Analysis. This data collection is done by actors at the local, regional, and also governmental levels. Therefore, the information has an institutional character, which does not work the same way for all actors; here, it is worth mentioning in particular the cartographic system, that of municipalities, the ALUIZNI office and that of Land Registries. There are also cases where various public actors, even though they ought to monitor the territory, do not have the necessary means and capacity to access maps or any substantive information. This institutional erosion began with the disappearance of the Ministry of Territorial Development and continues even today at the local government level – where municipalities lack funds due to interventions from above in urban developments. As for the first phase, namely the In-depth Analysis of the territory, the problem remains the lack of harmonisation among institutions and the lack of skills and in particular economic resources.

Therefore, the “TRO30” master plan integrated into the Strategic Vision behaves as rational and goes towards a uniformisation of the centre with an exclusive character for the rest of the neighbourhoods of the municipality or even beyond. Meanwhile, its legal nature requires that it act in the form of a vision and not that of immediate applicability – as happens with 3D political advertisements directly in the Project, or even copying works, as in the case of the National Theatre, without any public discussion.

2.3.1 Housing Supply in the Private Market

19th century houses: Historic apartments with Ottoman and oriental influences, located in the Old Bazaar and Barrikadave Street, with a purchase price of €1,200-2,500/m² and rents of €600-1,200/month, often financed through special loans for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Austrian, Italian, and World War-period houses: Neoclassical and art deco-style buildings, with a purchase price of €1,000-2,200/m² and rents of €500-1,000/month, located on Zogu I Boulevard and Durres Street, which are being replaced by modern luxury developments.

Communist-era houses: Multi-story buildings for mass housing, with a purchase price of €800-1,300/m² and rents of €300-500/month, widespread in Kombinat, Lapraka and Kinostudio, which are being transformed by modern developments.

Houses from the 1990s-2000s: Chaotic buildings of varying quality, with a purchase price of €900-1,500/m² and rents of €350-700/month, located mainly in Astir and Ali Dem, creating homogeneous urban areas.

Post-2010 houses: Modern buildings with amenities such as gyms and parking lots, with a purchase price of €1,500-2,800/m² and rents of €700-1,500/month, located in the Bllok and Komuna e Parisit areas, which increase the pressure on public services.

New Generation, with strong foundations: Luxury multifunctional projects in the city centre, with a purchase price of €2,000-4,500/m² and rents of €1,200-3,000/month, targeting the elite market and significantly impacting the urban development of Tirana.

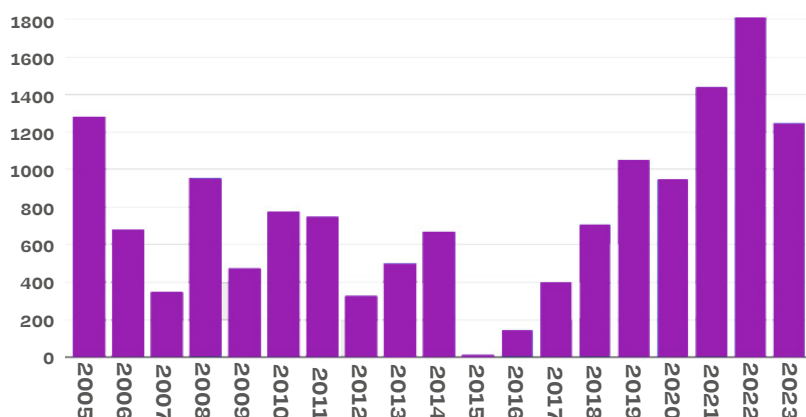


Table 1: Building surfaces according to construction permits approved each year for Tirana Prefecture.

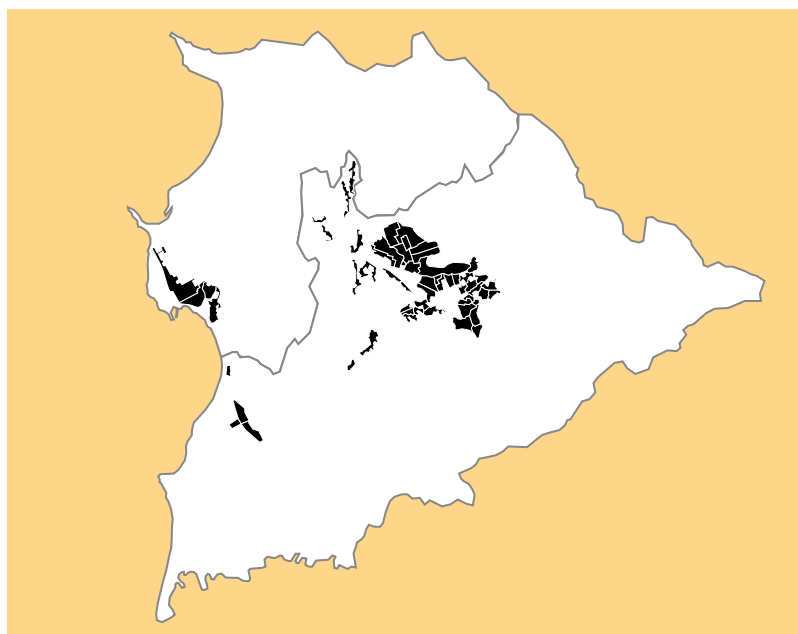


Figure 2: Map of Dures and Tirana Districts and the various informal zones declared by a special DCM in 2014, in order to guarantee the administrative process in the sale of public land to private interests for construction purposes. Data from ALUZNI 2018 (Summary Report).

Informal Areas for Group	ha	Total Informal Areas for Tirana and Dures Region. (ha)
Total Informal Areas for the Municipality of Tirana	2506	
Total Informal Areas for the Municipality of Kamez	1983	
Total Informal Areas in the small villages outside Tirana	1229	
Total Informal Areas for Paskuquan	672	
Total Informal Areas in the small villages outside Tirana	538	
Total Informal Areas for the Municipality of Tirana	473	
Total Informal Areas for the Municipality of Tirana	1418	8819

Figure 3: Summary table of areas, in hectares, for each informal macro area in the Dures and Tirana Regions. Data from ALUZNI 2018 (Summary Report).

2.3.2 Third Sector

- **Third sector development:** This sector, represented by non-profit organisations, communities, and religious or educational institutions, can bring a social and integrated approach to solving the housing crisis in Albania.
- **Creating property unions:** Housing cooperatives and homeowners' and tenants' associations can improve housing conditions, negotiate more affordable rents, and encourage collective investment in maintenance.
- **Involvement of religious and educational institutions:** These institutions can manage housing for vulnerable categories, using their unused spaces for social projects and mediating in the negotiation of rents.

2.4 Report on Primary Data

Xhuliano Bregasi

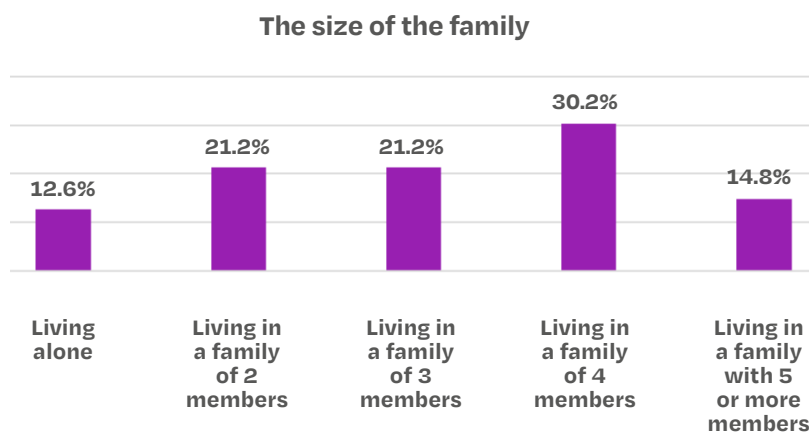
This report summarises the main findings from a study conducted to understand the challenges faced by young people in relation to housing and employment in the Municipality of Tirana. The study involved conducting 20 in-depth interviews with vulnerable groups and completing 300 questionnaires from young people under the age of 35. This study sheds light on some of the key factors that influence the social and economic situation of young people in the capital.

2.4.1 Demographic Profile of Participants

The majority of respondents in the questionnaire are women, accounting for about 66.3% of respondents, while men account for 33.7%. Although the focus of the questionnaire was on young people under the age of 35, the largest age group of those who completed it is between 22-25 years old, representing the younger generation facing challenges in the beginning of their economically independent lives.

The size of the family

The data collected show that most of the participants come from families with 3 or more members. The exact percentage of family sizes is as follows:



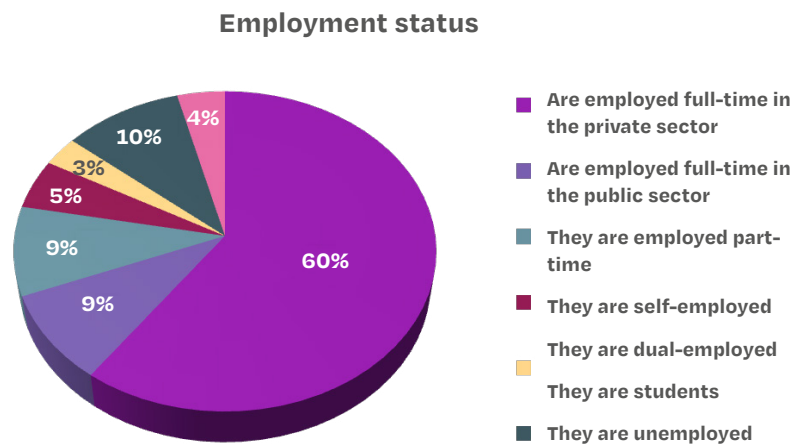
Graph 1: The size of the family

This data shows that a significant portion of young people live in larger families, which may reflect the difficulties that they face in achieving housing independence, as well as the lack of opportunities to afford Tirana's high housing costs.

Employment status and level of education

As for employment, the majority of young people are employed full-time in the private sector, with the following percentages describing their employment situation:

Graph 2: Employment status



Regarding their educational level, most of the respondents have completed university studies. Out of all of them:

- 61.1% have completed a master's degree;
- 32.1% have completed a bachelor's degree;
- 6.3% have completed secondary education;
- 0.5% have completed doctoral studies.

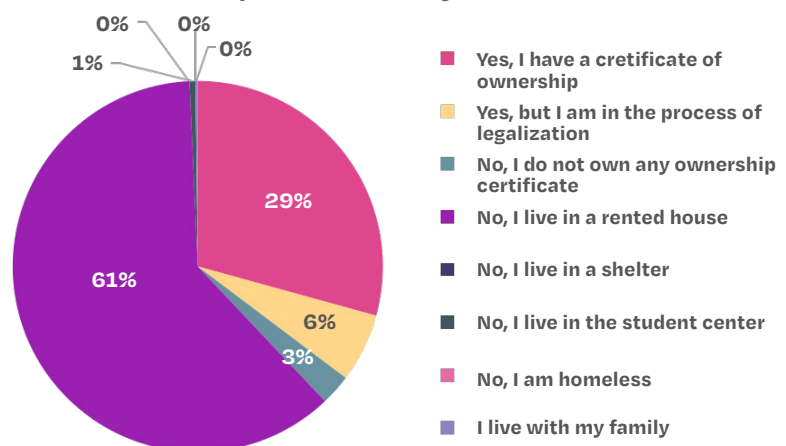
Meanwhile, despite the high level of education, there is still a significant percentage of young people who are unemployed or self-employed, needing greater support for sustainable employment and more income.

2.4.2 Current Housing and Ownership Situation:

Ownership certificate

The graph shows a high percentage of individuals living in rented accommodation, with 59.5% of respondents stating that they live in rented accommodation, while only 28.4% have a certificate of ownership for their apartment.

Do you have a certificate of ownership for the apartment where you live?



Graph 3: Do you have a certificate of ownership for the apartment where you live?

This shows a clear trend that home ownership among young people is declining, and more and more individuals **are forced** to choose renting as a means of housing. This issue is related to the fact that today young people find it difficult to own a house due to the **increase in housing prices, low wages, high living costs**, and so on. In the 2023 census data, we are told that **82.5%** of Albanians are homeowners, but this figure is considered inflated. The imbalance of the questionnaire, dominated by the fact that young people live in rented accommodation, clearly shows that the census figure is an exaggeration. Many young people living in cities like Tirana as students or workers are still counted as part of the Family Economic Unit from the city where they come or where they were born. This means that they are counted as indirect owners of their parents' homes, even though they actually live in rented accommodation in the city where they study or work.

P.T., a young cohabitant who lives with his partner in Tirana, says: "We are far from the goal of saving to buy an apartment, even at this young age, even with these salaries we have. Tirana does not give us any ease or opportunity to save at these prices."

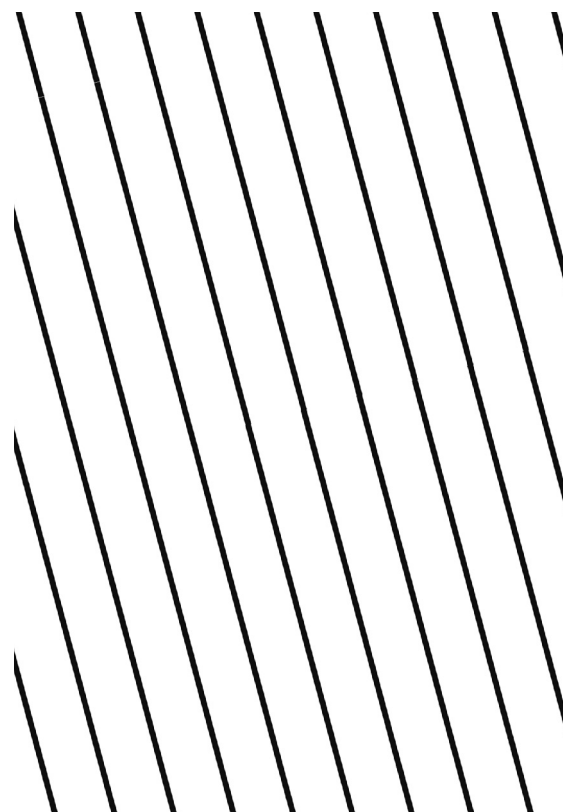
Another issue that this graph addresses is related to the issue of property. As mentioned above, one of the problems that Tirana (even the whole of Albania) has faced concerns properties and informality in the construction sector. In this regard, there have been two state interventions through the property restitution system and the property legalisation system. The latter was conceived as a social policy for Albanian citizens who migrated to cities for work and a better life, but there have been many problems and lengthy processes. According to various reports from the former ALUIZNI, today the State Cadastre, only 33% of applications resulted in legalisation of informal dwellings. Even in our questionnaire, a similar percentage of 5.8% of people were still involved in a long process and 2.6% who did not have a certificate.

D.M.

"My father came to this area in '93-'94 and bought the property in cash, without any documents or certificates, as everyone did back then. We were able to build wherever we wanted and no one prevented us from doing so. There are 6 of us living in this house."

"In the process of legalisation, we only have the private house (not the courtyard), which is two stories with a roof. Each floor is around 92-93 m² and there is a garage in the courtyard. The surface of the yard is about 300 m². We have been in the legalisation process since 2005, not only for my house, but the entire Lapraka area. After a few years, they came and assessed the property and told us an amount of money that had to be paid for the legalisation process, about 21 million old ALL, which is still a lot today, let alone back then. Of course, such an amount was not paid by anyone in the neighbourhood, actually."

D.M. says that one of the reasons why he suspects they still don't have the certificate could be the fact that the Lapraka area is seen as a new opportunity for *gentrification* in Tirana. From the



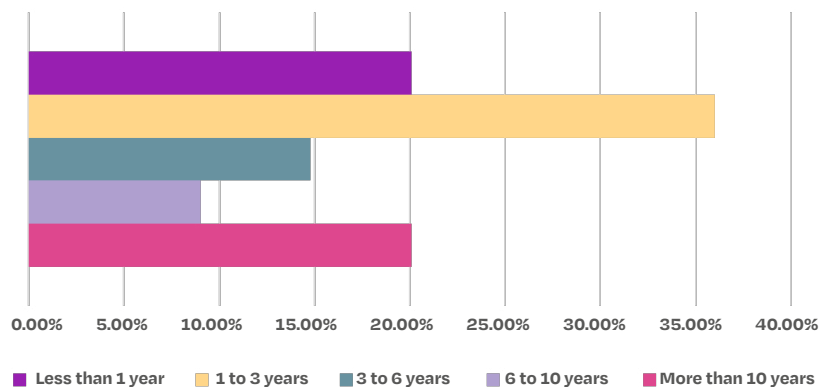
conversation with him, another problem was identified, related to the corruption of officials in connection to this process.

“That property is the investment of the whole family and of course we have tried to give bribes just to get the ownership certificate. But the problem is that no official accepts cash for any family. Apparently, there is someone very big behind the project that will be implemented, who has aroused fear, that is why this money is not accepted. From conversations with residents of the neighbourhoods, very large amounts have been offered and still have not been accepted.”

Another problem is related to the use of property certificates by political parties during elections. Political campaigns with the legalisation process have often blurred the boundaries between state and party in Albania, while it is criticised as one of the ways to influence voters.

The time you have lived in the same house

How long have you lived in your current apartment?



Graph 4: How long have you lived in your current apartment?

Analysing the questionnaire on the time that respondents have lived in their current homes, a clear trend of high housing instability is observed for a significant portion of the population.

- **20.1% of respondents** have lived in their home for **less than a year**, indicating high mobility and lack of long-term stability in the home.
- **36% of respondents** have lived in their dwelling for **1 to 3 years**, which also suggests a relatively high level of instability, as such a short period of time indicates a tendency for rapid displacement.

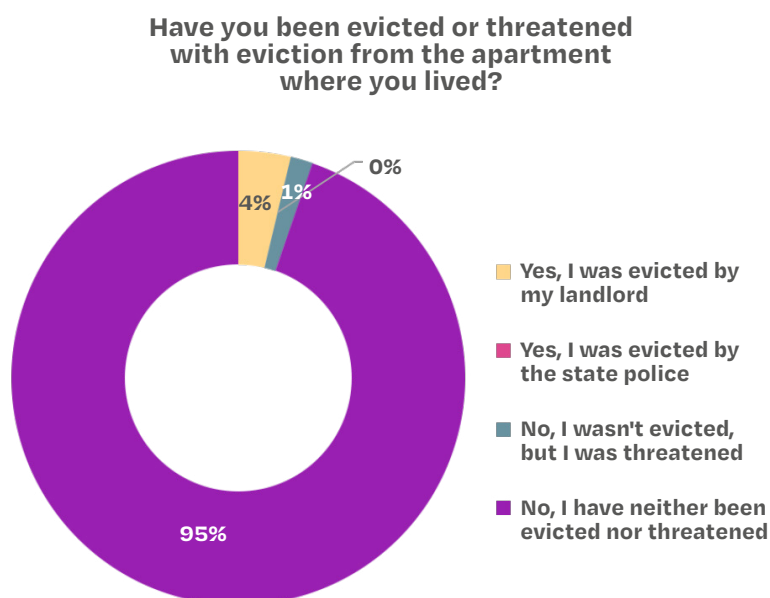
These two groups make up **56.1%** of the total respondents, meaning that more than half of the people have moved their homes within a period of three years or less.

J.M. describes a difficult experience of constant displacement, changing **12 homes in 8 years** (from 2016 to 2024). This translates to **an average of one home every 8 months**.

“I have been living in Tirana since 2016 and have changed 12 houses in all these years. The difficulty all these years has been the ability to find a house. In the beginning, there was the newspaper “Çelësi” and the announcements put on the walls of the neighbourhoods. Over the years, other online channels were added.”

J.M.’s account and the survey best illustrate the problem of the instability of the rental market. Frequent displacement, lack of stability, and economic pressure are realities that many citizens in Tirana face — creating a major challenge for their social and economic lives. A clear intervention by the authorities and a rent regulator may be necessary to create a more stable housing market.

Have you been evicted or threatened with eviction from the apartment where you lived?

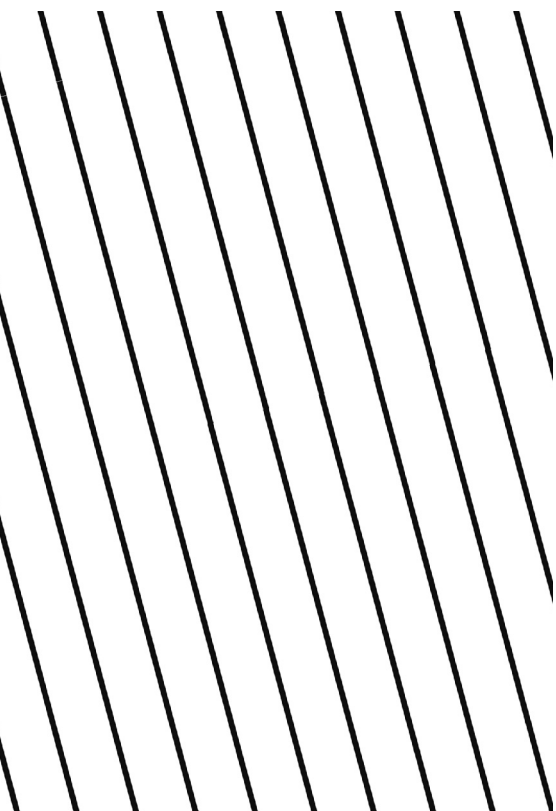


Graph 5: Have you been evicted or threatened with eviction from the apartment where you lived?

Based on the data from the questionnaire, the majority of respondents have not been affected by evictions or threats from their landlords. However, the eviction situation in Tirana, mainly related to new urban development projects, has created major problems for a large share of citizens. Cases of forced displacement have increased significantly and mainly affect residents of areas that are involved in infrastructure and construction projects.

Impact of urban development projects

Projects such as **“Unaza e Re”** (the “New Ring Road”), **“Bulevardi i Ri”** (“New Boulevard”), the **Area near the Artificial Lake** and **“5 Maji”** (the 5th of May), have affected thousands of residents, forcing them to relocate to make way for “development”. These projects, which are part of the urban transformation of Tirana, are often supported by the government and by private investors. But in most cases, they have not included a fair and clear mechanism for compensating the residents, who are forced to leave their homes.



Some of the testimonies conducted by Citizens Channel journalists explain the lack of fair compensation, the lack of alternative housing, and the negative social and economic impacts.

“Justice must do its job. The evidence is there, in the “5 Maji” neighbourhood... Out of the 160 or so families that have been evicted and out of all those that they plan to evict, these people don’t want to settle any of them. They want them all as slaves.”⁶

“I have been out since October 14, 2021. They built a condominium where my house used to be. The construction is finished and we are waiting for the draw to get in, because the house is ready. Why can’t I move in now?”

– Dritan Ahmetaj said for Citizens Channel.

Residents who have been receiving a rental bonus for two years say they are unable to afford the cost of renting apartments in the capital.

“I pay four hundred thousand ALL for rent, water, electricity. I get a hundred and eighty thousand ALL as a bonus,” says Mëhilli.

Despite the fact that none of our interviewees has been directly affected by such projects, there have still been attempts to review certain areas.

D.M, resident of Lapraka: “In recent years, we have received over four or five different projects related to each other. They are projects that have to do with the development and opening of roads. One of the projects was the one for the Great Road Ring, which the mayor Veliaj has also presented. If the works start tomorrow, we do not know what will be done on the land where we are, whether there will be a building, a road, a garden or something else. If a project is carried out, in my neighbourhood alone there are about fifty families that could be affected.”

2.4.3 Preference and Need for Accommodation

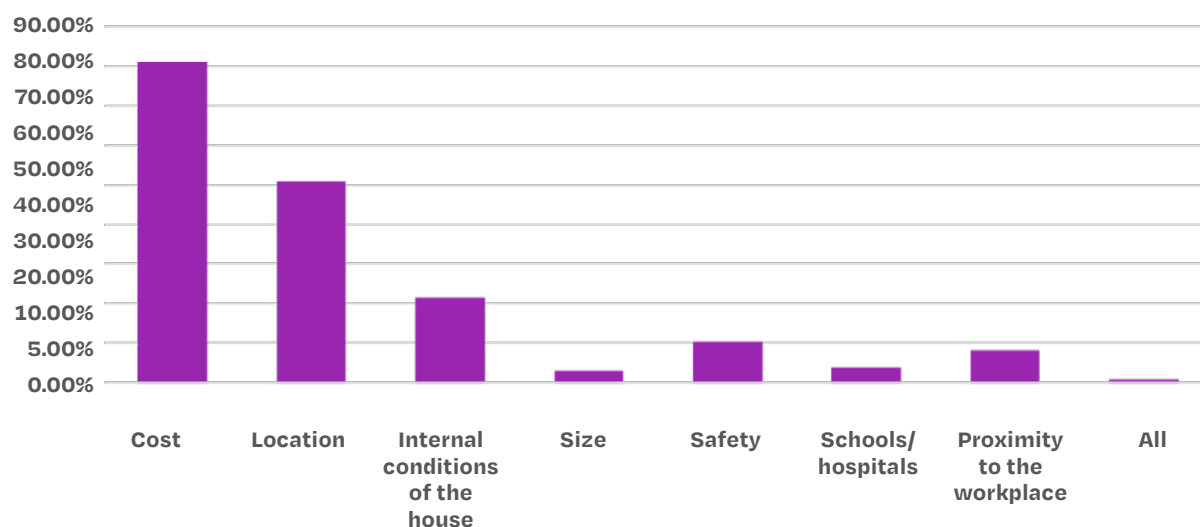
What are the most important current factors in selecting a home?

Young men and women in Tirana face great challenges in selecting an apartment, the three main factors being: **price** (81.1%), **location** (51.1%) and **internal conditions** (21.6%).

Price is the biggest barrier, as most cannot afford housing in better areas. The cheapest housing is usually far from the centre, forcing young people to choose between **closeness**

¹⁶ Kryeziu, Erisa. “Tirana: - Suburban residents affected by massive demolitions unite in protest”, August 25, 2022

Factors of choosing a home



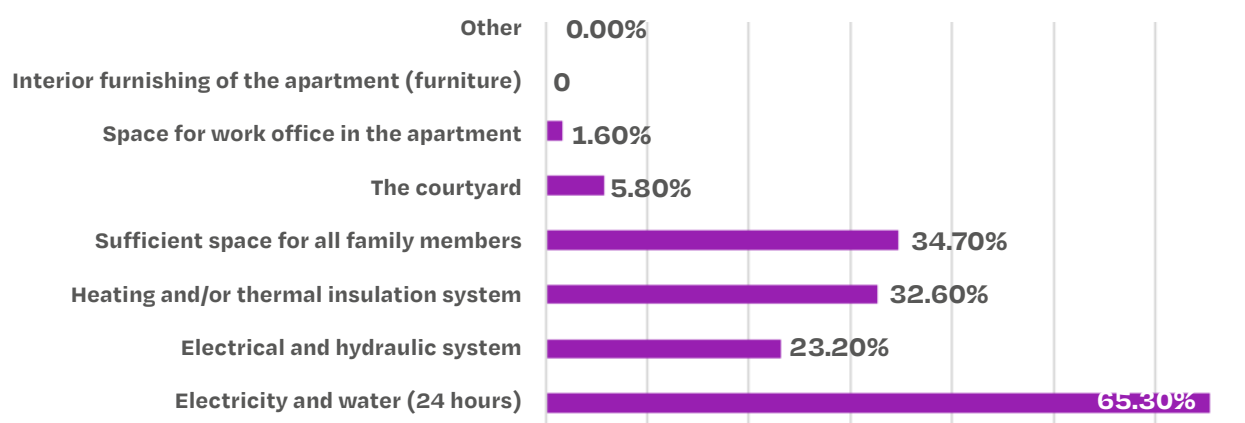
to services (work, university, institutions) and economic affordability. **Internal conditions** are often compromised due to high prices, leaving many young people in inadequate housing conditions.

The lack of easy access to services and high prices make housing in Tirana unaffordable. Instead, young people either have to share the house with others, live with their parents, or, for the most part, seek temporary solutions, creating difficulties in achieving economic and social independence.

Which of the two internal conditions of the apartment do you consider to be the most necessary?

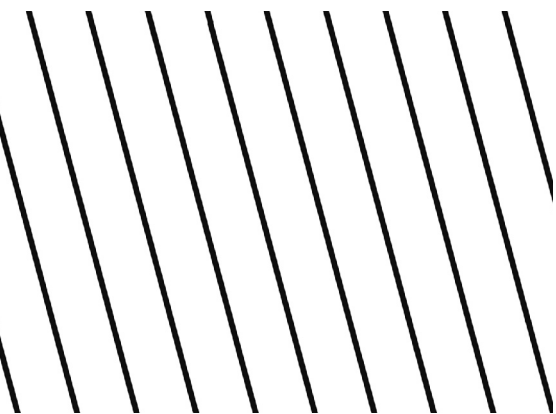
Graph 6: Factors of choosing a home

Internal conditions of the apartment



From the citizens' answers regarding the internal conditions of the houses in Tirana, it is clear that the lack of a stable water and electricity supply for 24 hours a day is one of the most important problems for the majority of them (65.1%). This fact

Graph 7: Internal conditions of the apartment



is indicative of a deep-rooted problem that has affected the residents of Tirana for many years and that continues to be unresolved at a satisfactory institutional level. This is especially worrying for a city that has experienced rapid urban and demographic development, such as Tirana, where the demand for basic services is increasing. The problem is not new and has been a point of discussion for suburban neighbourhoods as well as those experiencing a high influx of new construction.

In addition to the need for a stable supply, the data show the importance of other factors related to the quality of life: the combination of a 24-hour water and electricity supply with adequate space for all family members (17.4%), elements that represent an essential need. Many families are facing difficulties in finding sufficient spaces for daily living. Tirana has experienced a rapid increase in new construction, but often these projects have not been adapted to the needs of families with many members.

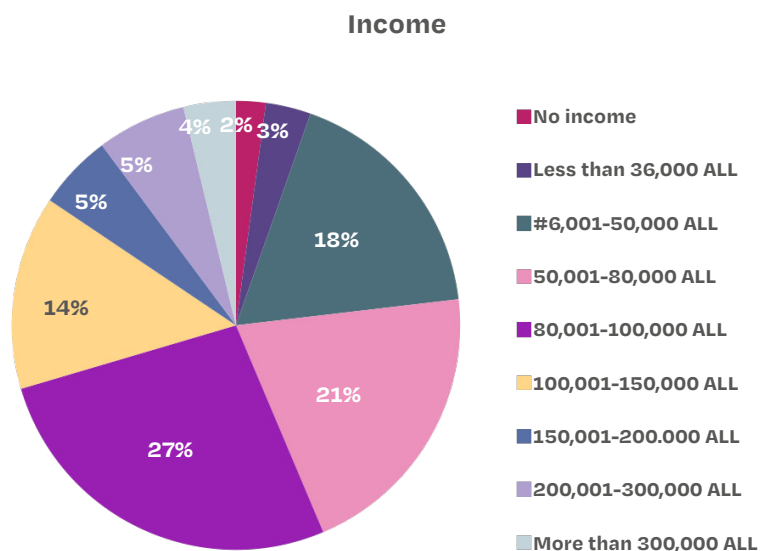
The supply of water and electricity 24 hours a day, as well as the hydraulic and electrical systems (15.3%) show that the problems are not limited only to the lack of these provisions, but also to the quality of the system that provides them. Many buildings, even new ones, are facing problems in the maintenance or quality of engineering systems, thus causing permanent shortages or unexpected service interruptions.

Also, the combinations of the problem of the 24-hour water and electricity supply with those of thermal insulation and heating systems (14.7%) and interior furnishings (7.4%), show that there is a significant need to improve heating and insulation conditions, which are vital for the quality of life, especially during the winter season, and also a need for improvements and investments in interior furnishings, which help to create a more comfortable living environment. The lack of these conditions increases citizens' frustration and affects their overall quality of life. Families face difficulties not only in providing for their daily needs, but also in investing in long-term solutions, such as thermal insulation and interior furnishing, which require large financial investments.

2.4.4 Financial Information and the Affordability of Housing

Monthly household income

Figures on the monthly household income of young people in Tirana show a difficult economic situation. 3.2% of respondents report that they live on less than 36,000 ALL per month, while 17.4% have a monthly income ranging from 36,000 to 50,000 ALL. Another 2.1% have no income at all, making it impossible for them to afford basic living costs.



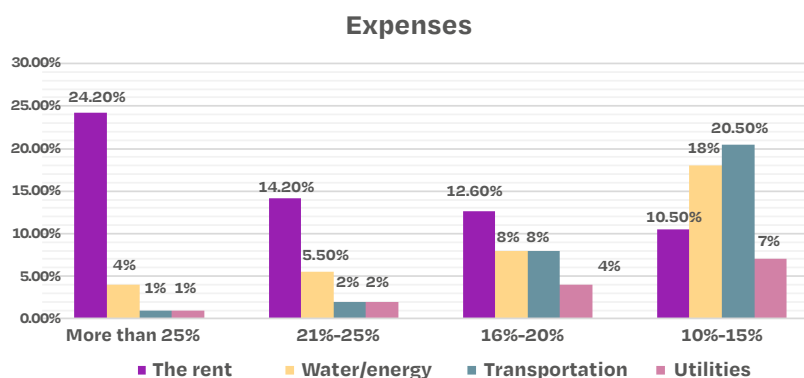
Graph 8: Income

Such data clearly reflects the close link between low income and the inability to secure adequate housing. In this context, the need for stronger economic and social policies targeting young people becomes clear. Support measures for affordable housing and subsidies for low incomes would alleviate financial pressure. Without such interventions, many young people in Tirana will continue to face a difficult cycle, in which living and housing are unaffordable.

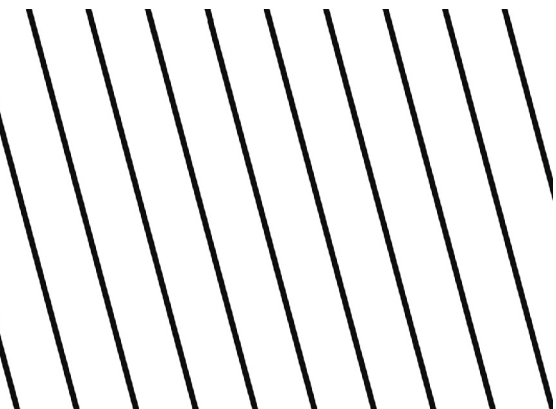
Percentage of household income spent on rent/water/energy/transportation/utilities.

The data collected on housing costs in Tirana show a major problem in terms of housing affordability, especially when compared to the percentages set by the **Law on Social Housing**. This law stipulates that average-income families should not spend more than **25%** of their monthly income on housing, while for low- and very low-income families, the percentages are **20%** and **15%**, respectively. If these limits are exceeded, housing is considered unaffordable and state intervention is required.

24.2% of the respondents spend **more than 25%** of their income on rent, exceeding the limit set for families with average income, while **14.2%** spend between **21%-25%**, which indicates that most youth are paying more than the affordability limits stipulated by the legislation.



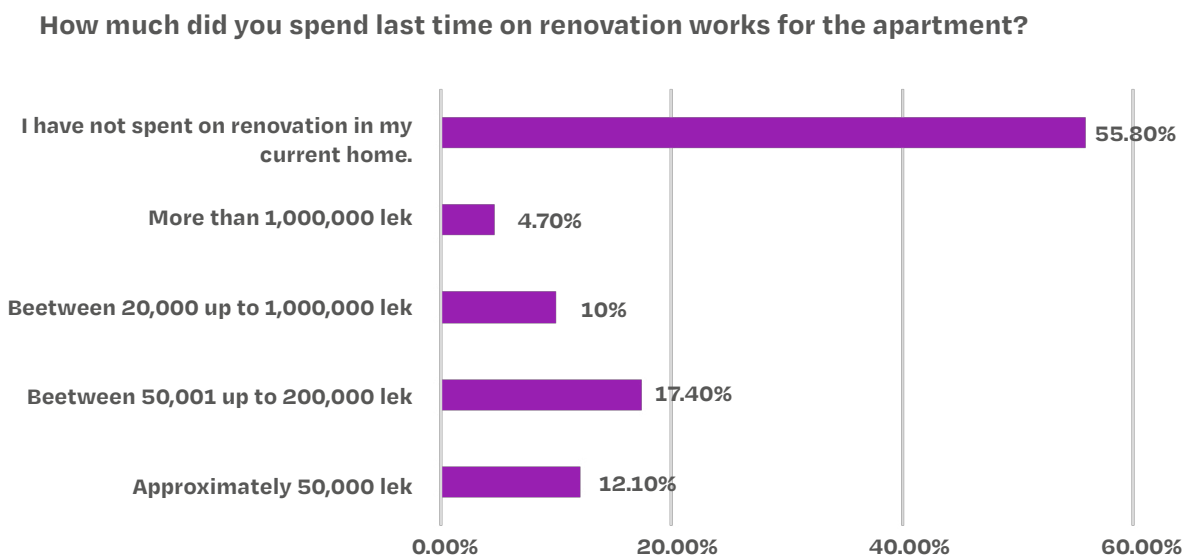
Graph 9: Expenses



In addition to rent, data on **water and energy costs** show that **36%** of respondents spend a significant portion of their income on housing, with a high percentage spending more than **10%-15%**, further increasing the financial burden on these households. **Transportation** also poses a significant burden, with **32%** of respondents reporting spending a significant portion of their income on this cost — most in the **10%-15%** range. In terms of **utilities**, **14%** of respondents face significant expenses, including costs for services such as gas, internet, and others, which add to the overall economic burden on them.

Considering that most respondents spend a large portion of their income on rent, transportation, water, energy, and utilities, it is clear that for many young people and for many families that housing is unaffordable according to the criteria set in legislation. This highlights the urgent need for state intervention and the implementation of social programmes to support housing affordability for these groups.

How much did you spend, last time, on renovation works for the apartment?

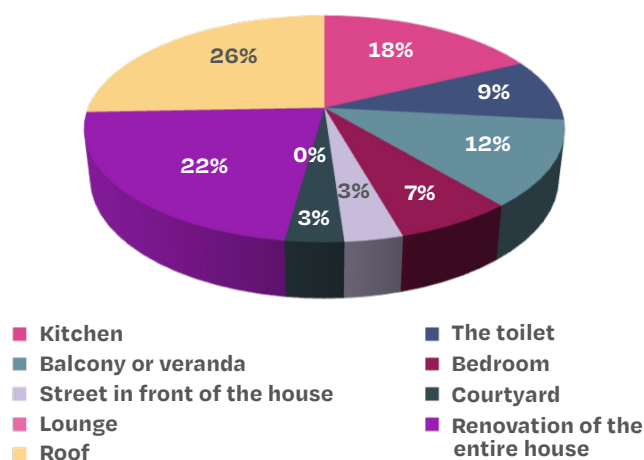


Graph 10: How much did you spend last time on renovation works for the apartment?

The graph shows how much households spend on renovating their homes. Some households invest more, while a smaller proportion have limited opportunities for renovations, showing differences in financial opportunities for home improvements. Criticism: The ability to renovate a home is closely linked to economic inequalities, with lower-income households remaining limited in improving their living conditions.

If so, where were these works carried out?

If so where were these works carried out?



Graph 11: If so, where were these works carried out?

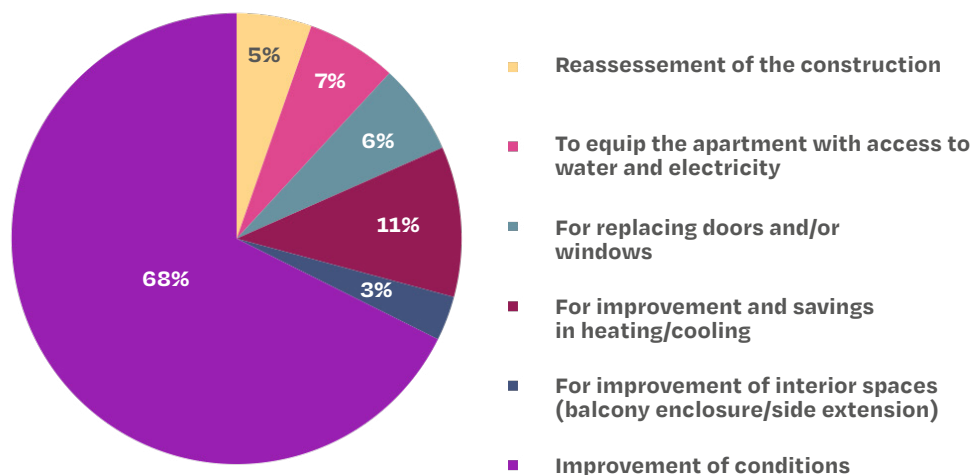
This graph shows the trends in housing renovation.

Most households do not renovate often, while a smaller group tends to make more frequent renovations to improve the quality of the dwelling.

Criticism: Not renovating frequently may be an indicator of a lack of financial resources to maintain and improve the quality of the dwelling.

If so, for what kind of reason did you do these works?

If so, for what kind of reason did you do these works?



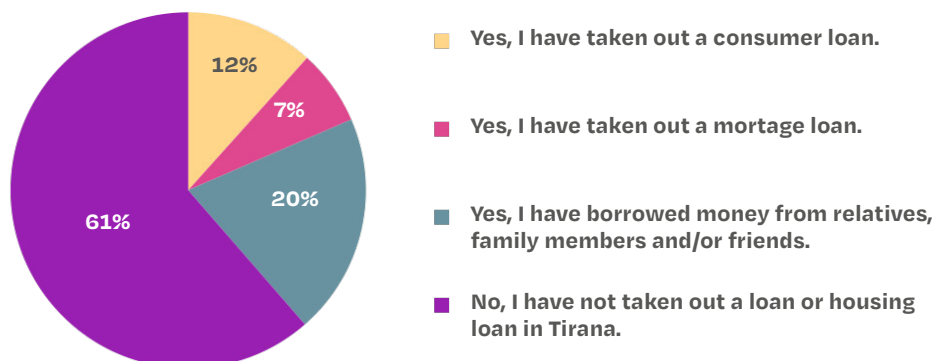
Reasons for renovation vary from household to household. Some households renovate to increase quality of life or property value, while others see no need for renovation or view it as less important.

Graph 12: If so, for what kind of reason did you do these works?

Criticism: Lack of renovations may be a sign of financial constraints or other more important priorities for households, leaving homes in an unsuitable condition.

Have you ever taken out a loan or credit to afford housing in Tirana?

Have you ever taken out a loan or credit to afford housing in Tirana?



Graph 13: Factors of choosing a home

A significant percentage (61.1%) of young people surveyed declare that they have not had to take out a debt or loan for housing so far, which shows that some of them manage to afford living without having to seek external funds. This may be related to several factors, such as living with parents or choosing not to invest in buying an apartment yet. Although thus far they have not felt the need to take out debt or loan, only 30.2% of them are saving to buy an apartment. While the majority (64.7%) of these young people find it impossible to save to buy an apartment due to rising prices, which do not give them any chance for their savings to be enough to buy an apartment in Tirana.

Among those who have been forced to take on debt, support from within their circle of family and friends predominates (20%), a trend that reflects the great importance of family ties in Albanian society. This shows that young people are more confident in seeking help from relatives, rather than resorting to bank loans, which often carry high interest rates and financial risks.

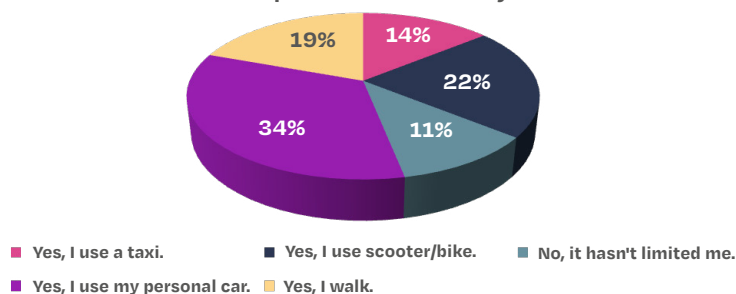
On the other hand, a small proportion of young people choose consumer loans (11.6%) and mortgages (6.8%), but these figures indicate a general reluctance to enter into long-term financial relationships with banks. This may be related to the difficult conditions of the banking market in Albania, where interest rates are high and bank loans do not always offer security for young people who are at the beginning of their careers.

Tirana, as a rapidly developing city that experiences high levels of migration from other parts of the country, especially from young people coming for studies or employment, poses a major challenge in meeting housing costs. However, despite the great economic development and the need for specialists, young people continue to rely heavily on their families to meet their financial needs. This avoidance of bank loans is also a way to avoid the heavy burden of bank interest, which can significantly affect the economic well-being of young people facing housing in a chaotic and costly city like Tirana.

2.4.5 Location and Community Preferences

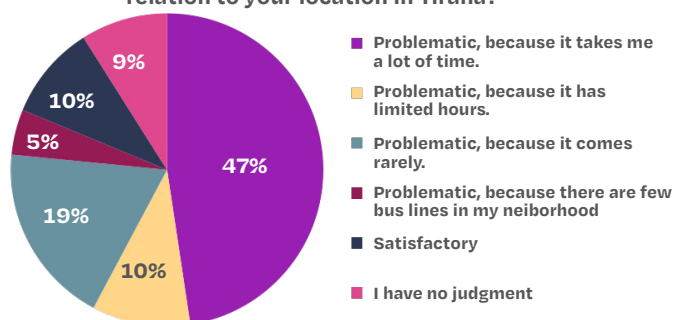
How do you rate the public transportation service in relation to your location in Tirana?

Has the public transportation service limited you from using alternative transportation relative to your location?



Graph 14: Has the public transportation service limited you from using alternative transportation relative to your location?

How do you rate the public transportation service in relation to your location in Tirana?



Graph 15: How do you rate the public transportation service in relation to your location in Tirana?

The analysis of both graphs shows a complete overview of the experience of public transport users in Tirana and the ways in which they adapt to the limitations they encounter.

- Main concerns with public transportation

In the first graph, **40%** of respondents report that public transport service is problematic because it takes too long, while **10%** say that buses pass infrequently. These concerns clearly indicate that **efficiency and frequency of services** are the main problems with public transport in Tirana. These issues are critical for residents who depend on public transport to meet their daily needs, and this negative experience forces many of them to seek alternatives.

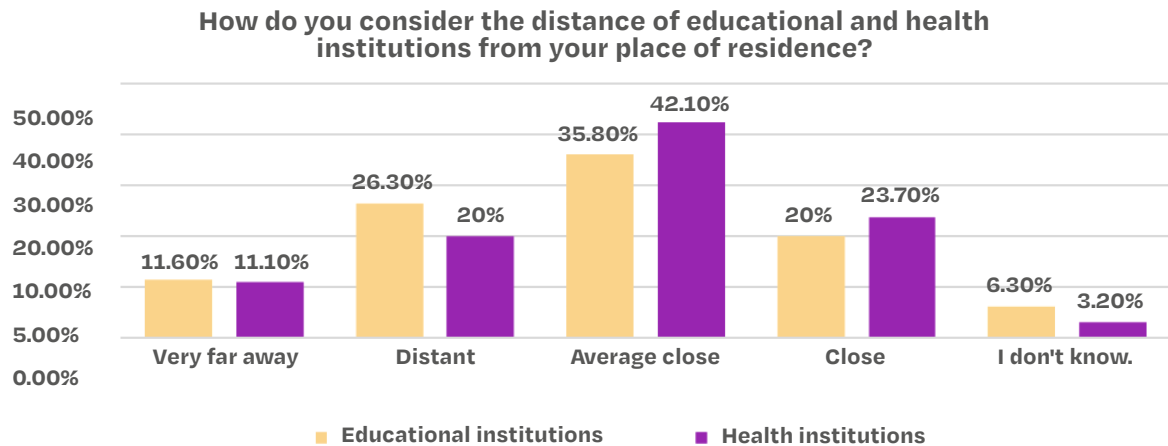
- Alternative transportation options

In the second graph, it can be seen that **33.7%** of citizens choose to walk due to the limitations of public transport, while **21.6%** use their own car. This finding shows that the **lack of efficiency of public transport pushes citizens to make alternative choices**, ranging from walking to using private cars, worsening the traffic situation and pollution in the city. The choice to walk also shows that for short distances citizens feel more compelled to avoid long waits for public transport. **About 14.2%** of users choose to use taxis, a method that is more expensive and often not sustainable for daily use, but which is probably chosen due to the need for a more reliable means of transportation.

- The impact on everyday life and the economy

The main concern that emerges from this analysis is that the **low efficiency of public transport forces residents to use more expensive or less comfortable alternatives**, such as private cars, taxis or scooters/bicycles. Furthermore, those who choose to walk face other sacrifices, such as **higher costs in terms of time spent**, especially in suburban areas or for long distances.

How do you consider the distance of educational and health institutions from your place of residence?



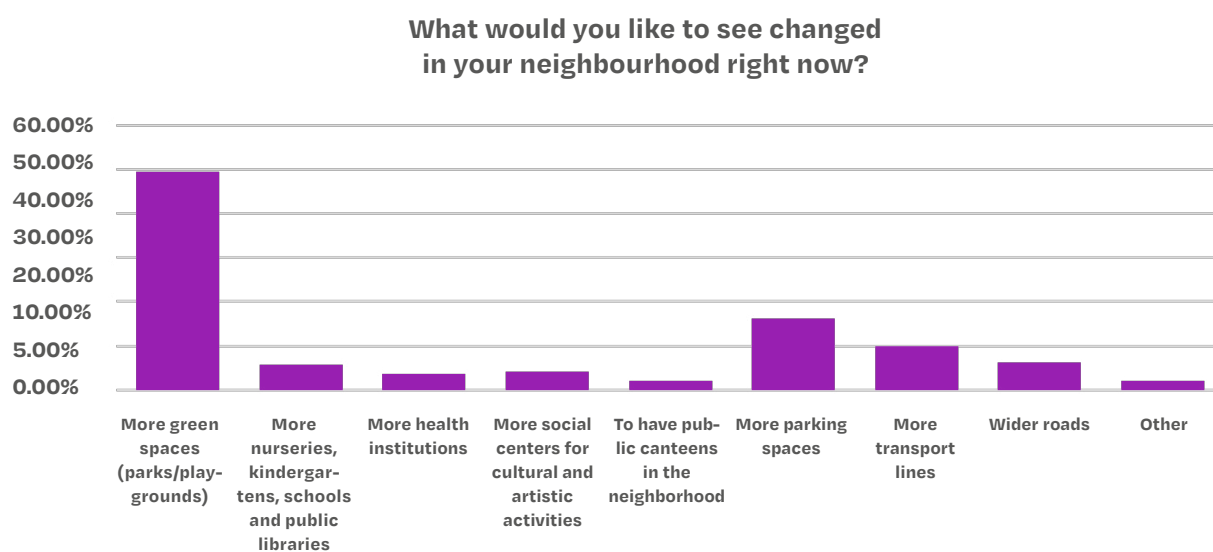
Graph 16: How do you consider the distance of educational and health institutions from your place of residence?

Another important element of the housing situation is related to access to health and educational services. The graph above illustrates the perception of the distance of educational and health institutions from citizens' residences, comparing the percentages of responses in several different categories. The data shows that **26.3%**, more than a quarter of respondents, consider educational institutions to be far away, and **23.7%**, about a fifth of participants, consider the distance of educational institutions to be close, indicating that there is a portion of the population that has ease of access to these services. However, on average, about 11% of respondents consider these distances from their homes to be too far. This often forces citizens to find immediate and alternative solutions.

V.M. says: "For children, there are only private places for services or for any activity. We also have a private kindergarten for our son, because I don't trust the state-run ones. I didn't even know that Astir had a public kindergarten, but still, there isn't one in my neighbourhood, which is a very large area. We also have a private kindergarten close to my apartment and I don't need to deal with transportation, plus I've also received good references here for the service it provides."

D.M. also expresses himself in the same way: “Here we only have the Trauma Hospital, which does not serve us much in everyday life, but only when we have serious needs. Other times we have to go to the “Mother Teresa” Hospital. We also have the Polyclinic in the neighbourhood, but it is more for children. For us it is somewhat close, but considering the Lapraka area which is spread out, for others it is very far. The solution so far has been a doctor who worked in private practice, who helped us in cases of need, but unfortunately, he has passed away. But for the residents, for any need, such as a fever, he would solve a lot of problems.”

What would you like to see changed in your neighbourhood right now?

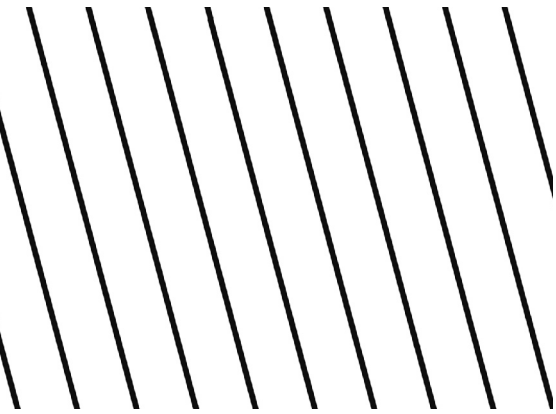


Half of respondents (49.5%) expressed the need for more green spaces, with more trees, playgrounds and public parks. Green spaces are important for mental and physical health, providing opportunities for recreational and social activities and increasing the quality of life.

This is also expressed by V. (a young parent), who sees the importance of green spaces and playgrounds for children: “The ideal place for me to live is the outskirts of Tirana, with private houses and lots of greenery, had I more economic opportunities. But the old Aviation Field is not bad either; there are green spaces and places for children to play.”

Unplanned construction in Tirana is increasingly replacing green spaces and causing the disappearance of parks. This also has serious consequences for the health and well-being of citizens, especially for children, as well as other age groups. In addition, the lack of trees and green spaces contributes to air pollution, deteriorating the quality of the environment and making it less tolerable to live in. The heavy traffic induced by unorganised construction is another factor that negatively

Graph 17: What would you like to change in your neighborhood right now?



affects air pollution. This situation requires a better urban plan to restore green spaces, to ensure a healthier environment and to support the well-being of the entire community.

A portion of 16.3% of respondents express the need for more parking spaces. The increase in the number of vehicles in the city has led to a lack of parking spaces, worsening the experience of car users and not only them. This statistic shows that urban planning and parking spaces are not keeping up with the increase in the number of vehicles and population. This bottleneck has often led to Tirana's streets being blocked by double parking, worsening traffic on the city's main roads.

"In my neighbourhood there are no sidewalks at all, or even if there are some, they are very narrow, or cars are parked there. Even the roads are blocked most of the time, because cars park on the main road, which brings chaos and heavy traffic to the neighbourhood." - says D.M., who lives in the Lapraka area and considers the lack of parking spaces and the occupation of the road by double parking, as well as the increase in traffic in the neighbourhood, to be very problematic.

While 10% of young people express the need for more public transport lines. Efficient public transport is essential for free movement and access to employment, education and social activities. The lack of good public transport constantly pushes citizens to use personal cars, bringing a number of problems to Tirana's roads, such as increased traffic and lack of parking spaces.

The data shows that young people in Tirana have clear needs related to green spaces, transport infrastructure and urban planning. Also, the preferred neighbourhoods of young people can be divided into three categories:

- Greenery and tranquillity

Some prefer neighbourhoods where there is still greenery, especially those near the Artificial Lake, the Dry Lake, and the surrounding areas. These neighbourhoods are attractive for their quiet environment and clean air, appealing to those who value a more peaceful lifestyle. However, these areas have less access to basic services, which makes them less practical for some residents.

- Closeness to services

Many other young people prefer neighbourhoods closer to the centre, such as “Pazari i Ri”, “Myslym Shyri”, “Mine Peza” etc., due to easy access to services without the need for public transportation or getting stuck in traffic. These areas offer a balance between convenience and access to services, making them more attractive, even though they are more densely urban.

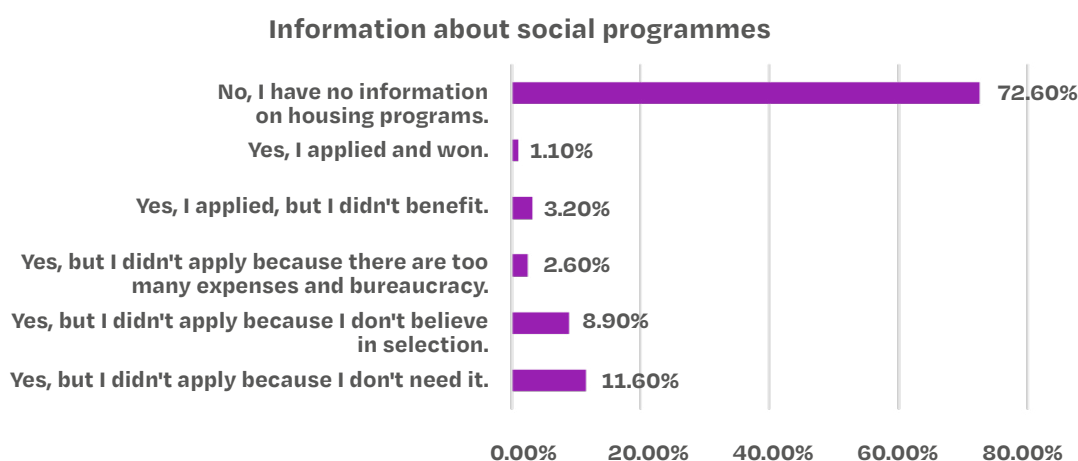
- Lack of suitable neighbourhoods

Many respondents express dissatisfaction with all of Tirana's neighbourhoods, highlighting deficiencies in infrastructure, urban planning, and services. For these individuals, no neighbourhood meets the conditions necessary to be considered habitable.

Regarding this complexity, D.M. says: *“I don't see any ideal neighbourhood to live in, to be honest. I think that because of the clean air I could choose the Liqeni (Lake) or Dajti (mountain) area, but I'm sure that many other necessary services will be missing there. But, if it were my only criterion, it would be enough to have greenery around.”*

Investing in green spaces and infrastructure should be a priority for local authorities and urban planners to improve the quality of life in the city of Tirana.

Information about social programmes



The survey results shown in the graph show a significant lack of information among citizens regarding social housing programmes, which constitutes a serious problem for municipal institutions. Over **72.6%** of respondents have no information about these programmes, indicating that there is a fundamental gap in the municipality's public communications regarding the opportunities offered for social housing. This lack of information means that a large portion of citizens are unable to benefit from services directed toward vulnerable groups, such as low-income families or individuals in urgent need of housing.

Graph 18: Information on social programmes

Another worrying aspect is the lack of trust in the selection system, with 8.9% of respondents who are aware of the programmes but do not apply, showing scepticism about the application process and the distribution of aid. This indicates a widespread perception that the system is either corrupt or dysfunctional. Furthermore, 2.6% cite cost and bureaucracy as factors that prevent them from applying, suggesting that there are practical obstacles that could be alleviated by reforming the process.

In general, municipal institutions are not adequately fulfilling their duty to ensure easy and equal access for citizens to these programmes. These figures indicate a lack of public awareness campaigns and a failure of municipal offices to reach out to the neediest communities. More coordinated and visible efforts are needed to educate citizens about their rights and to increase the transparency of processes related to social housing programmes.

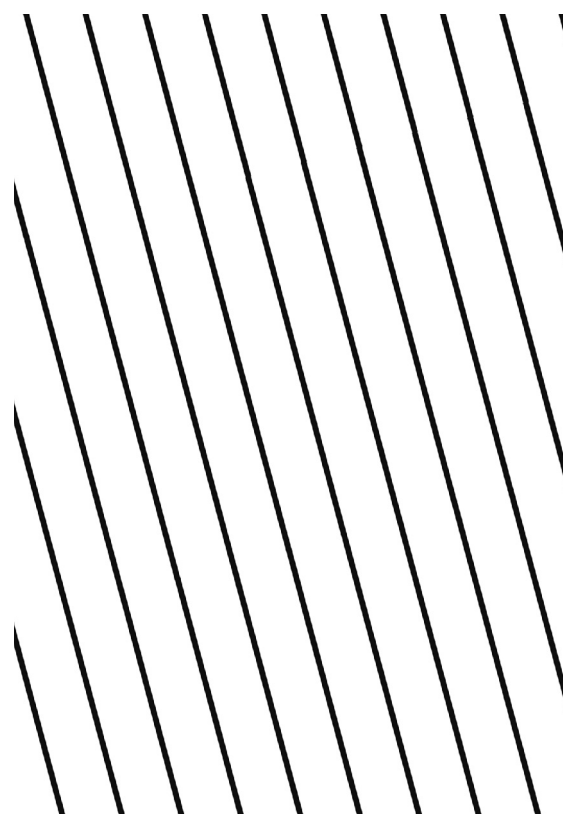
2.5 Conclusions

The private market

1. **Population growth in Tirana has been lower than government projections**, although construction has continued unabated. This imbalance between the number of housing units and the actual population shows that construction policies are not fully based on the city's real *demographic* needs, leading to problems with urban planning and resources.
2. **Rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation** has brought numerous challenges to the infrastructure and quality of life in Tirana. The concentration of economic activities, businesses, and institutions in the capital has resulted in a massive migration of young people and the workforce, creating a new, smaller household economic unit. This has increased the demand for housing; however, many individuals are not included in the housing market due to the economic inability to afford high property prices.
3. **The high figure for home ownership in the latest census is questionable**, as it includes young people who are registered as part of households in their hometowns, while living in rented accommodation in cities like Tirana. This creates a false image of the reality of housing, as young people who work and study in the capital often do not own the homes they live in, reflecting a gap between the data and the real housing situation.
4. Young people are often forced to share living spaces with other people.
5. **Building permits in Tirana are issued in the absence of a proper urban strategy**, favouring luxury construction that is affordable only to a minority of the population.

This has led to the increase in real estate prices and has excluded a large share of citizens from the opportunity to enter the housing market. **Construction has become a money laundering machine**, with building permits often serving speculative or dirty investments. This documented practice increases housing prices and hinders the development of social housing, which is essential for low-income citizens.

6. **The dependence of the Albanian state and the Municipality of Tirana on the construction industry** to finance their operations and investments has brought short-term financial benefits to the public coffers. This increase in revenue comes from construction permits and related taxes.
7. **There is a risk of an economic bubble in the real estate market**, due to speculation by real estate agencies and the lack of state control. Fluctuations in the number of properties sold and the Fischer index suggest that this market may be heading towards a crisis. Phenomena such as speculation in the real estate market and the injection of dirty money into the construction sector, also into rental apartments, have created a price bubble, leading to the construction of luxury apartments, which are affordable only to a small minority of the population. **Inflated prices encourage buyers to act quickly**, fearing further increases, leading to an oversupplied market.
8. **Apartment prices in Tirana are extremely high** and do not match the incomes of young people, or the urban plan and services within the neighbourhoods. These prices are often artificially inflated and influenced by planned development projects. The example of the Astir area shows how expected major projects, such as the construction of the Grand Ring Road, have led to significant increases in property prices, even though the project is not yet completed. This reflects speculation in the real estate market. The **market** has also been stimulated by economic, demographic and social factors. The 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly increased the demand for housing, which has resulted in a steady increase in rents and apartments for sale.
9. **The existence of many uninhabited apartments that are not part of the market offer** prevents the softening of prices for both purchase and rental, further worsening the housing situation in Tirana.
10. **Rental prices have increased by 12% by 2020 and 13.4% in 2022**, affecting not only the centre of Tirana, but also the suburban areas such as Astir, Fresk and Kinostudio. Also, the **increase in the use of short-term rental apartments** (Airbnb) has narrowed the long-term rental market, further contributing to the increase in prices and making affordable housing increasingly difficult.
11. **Inability to save and invest in real estate**. Due to high living costs and low wages, many young people



are unable to save to invest in their own properties. This prevents them from creating long-term housing stability.

12. Absence of regulators and supervisory policies in the private market.

The state market

- 1. Beneficiaries of Social Housing Programmes.** Social housing programmes primarily attract families with incomes that are six to eight times higher than the poverty level. This creates an access problem for families with very low incomes, as well as those who are closer to or below the poverty line. Due to eligibility criteria or problems in allocating funds, the most vulnerable families often remain excluded from these programmes, creating an inequality in the distribution of resources.
- 2. Lack of sustainable funding.** A major challenge for the state housing market is insufficient funding for the construction of social housing and other affordable housing programmes. In many cases, funds are limited and the construction of social housing does not match the pace of market needs.
- 3. Bureaucracy and implementation.** Bureaucratic procedures often make it difficult for citizens to benefit from social housing programmes. The Municipality of Tirana does not carry out extensive public-information campaigns when applications for social housing programmes open, due to the large number of applicants for these programmes and the low offer that the Municipality can provide for. Also, according to the testimonies received from citizens, the long and complex process for application, verification and benefit can lead to delays and often to abuses of the process.
- 4. The absence of data and non-application of all programmes.** One of the main problems is the lack of accurate data on social housing needs, as well as the lack of monitoring and evaluation of existing programmes. Often, not all planned social housing programmes are applied or implemented properly, due to the lack of financial resources, the lack of free land available to the Municipality of Tirana, institutional capacities or lack of coordination between the Municipality of Tirana and other responsible institutions.
- 5. Lack of inter-institutional cooperation.** The Municipality of Tirana, the National Housing Authority (EKB) and local councils often do not cooperate effectively to implement social housing policies and programmes. Also, the Municipality of Tirana gives its free land areas for building permits. On the other hand, the Municipality of Tirana cannot make the

areas that private entities have provided toward the 3% housing fund available to social housing programmes, due to the lack of cooperation with the EKB. In conclusion, the lack of a unified approach between these institutions creates delays, inconsistencies in the allocation of funds and failure to address the real needs of the population for housing, as well as an increase in the number of homeless people.

6. Favouring builders at the expense of the public interest:

- In May 2022, the Ministry of Finance began consultations on a series of amendments to the 2018 law, including Article 19, which changes the number of square meters that builders must give to the social housing fund. If previously builders were obliged to give the housing fund 3% of the surface area for each object built over 2,000 m², with the amendments to the law they now have to give up only 3% of the construction surface area beyond 2,000 m². **Example:** If previously a 2,500 m² object had to give the housing fund 75 m², the amendment to the law obliges it to provide surface area only for the 500 meters over 2,000 m², which translates into only 15 m².
 - Also, with the DCM [No. 325 of 29 May 2024](#), the Council of Ministers decided that the area that builders must supply for social housing may also be provided in other locations, which is to say, not necessarily in the place where it is being built. Meanwhile, the reference price of housing and services vary from area to area. However, in many cases, builders have benefited from urban development projects by minimising this percentage, or by Prioritising high-revenue projects over the public interest. This has created an imbalance between affordable housing needs and luxury projects built by the private sector, further exacerbating the housing problem for low-income families.
- 7.** The Municipality of Tirana has not taken measures to implement the legal obligation for private entities to hand over 3% of the construction area over 2,000 m², and they do not have any report on the number of social housing units created thanks to this obligation. From 2019 to date, the Municipality of Tirana has never ensured a 100% enforcement rate.
- 8. Social Rental Housing Program.** While this programme aims to help low-income families, it does not fully cover the most vulnerable segment of the population, those living near or below the poverty line. Although rents are subsidised, costs can still be unaffordable for these groups. This indicates a significant gap between the programme's objective and the reality of housing needs. It also does not adequately address the needs of vulnerable people.

¹⁷ DCM nr. 325, 29/05/2024.

2.6 Recommendations

“Adequate, safe and affordable housing for all!”

The private market

1. **Developing an urban planning strategy based on demographic needs.** The Municipality of Tirana should create and implement a long-term urban plan, based on accurate demographic data and the real needs of the population, avoiding uncontrolled construction that does not reflect the demands of current residents. Building permits should be linked to projects that meet the needs for affordable housing, not only for luxury projects.
2. **Establishing a rent and purchase price regulator.** A rent regulator in Albania could set limits on the increase in rents and the price of apartments, as well as ensure that they remain affordable for the middle and lower classes. This implies a formalisation of the rental and purchase market; this requires a general analysis by the state regarding wages and family incomes, so that rent does not exceed 25% of income.
3. **Review of the value of the reference price,** based on the analysis of national data such as: the number of homeless people, vulnerable groups, average household income and access to key services, such as health, education, transportation, etc.
4. **The creation of Intermediary, Non-Profit and Controlling Property Syndicates,** which can help improve housing conditions, negotiate more affordable rents and encourage collective investment in repairs and maintenance. These structures can be a powerful mechanism for protecting the rights of residents, as well as for creating a fairer balance between owners and tenants. They will also push for the release of empty apartments onto the market at a reasonable price, not exceeding the reference price value.
5. **Incentives for bringing vacant apartments to the market:** - Progressive taxation for the purchase of second, third, fourth and so on. To alleviate the pressure on rental prices and vacant properties, fiscal incentives should be offered to owners of vacant apartments, so that they can rent out their apartments for long-term rent or put them onto the housing market. A tax on properties that remain vacant for a long time could also be applied, as well as **higher taxation on building permits issued for commercial reasons.**

6. **Increasing control over investment in the sector and fighting corruption.** There should be a stronger focus on implementing anti-money laundering laws, better controlling foreign and domestic investment in the construction sector. This will help prevent speculation and the artificial inflation of property prices.
7. **Increasing the supply of rental housing in suburban areas.** The government can invest in infrastructure and public transport to increase the attractiveness of suburban areas as places to live. By making these areas more accessible and connected to the city centre, pressure on central areas can be reduced and rental demand can be balanced.

The state market

1. To solve the problem of homelessness in Albania, a **multidimensional approach that addresses political, economic and social factors** is needed. Homelessness is linked to poverty, illiteracy, inequality, discrimination, property issues, political instability, corruption and weak protection of property rights. Therefore, interventions that simply aim to increase the number of housing units will not be sufficient.

Integration of the Social Housing Strategy into other reforms. To be sustainable and effective, the Social Housing Strategy must be integrated with the Territorial and Administrative Reform, as well as other strategies such as the Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Decentralisation and Local Governance (SNDQV) 2015-2020 and the Social Inclusion Policy Document (DPPS) 2015-2020.
2. **The creation of a strong institutional environment.** This is necessary in order to establish a system that allows the effective implementation of social housing programmes. This includes using digital technologies to record and share data on applicants and beneficiaries, facilitating the application process and costs for vulnerable groups, and improving monitoring.
3. **Strengthening of relations between the central and local governments.** It is important to strengthen relations between the central government and local units, in this case the Municipality of Tirana, to ensure coordination and successful implementation of social housing programmes.
4. **Review of the DCM which, in relation to social housing, violate the public interest,** specifically the DCM [no. 325 of 29 May 2024](#) and Article 9 of the Social Housing Law.
5. **Commitment of municipalities to force private entities to hand over 3% of the construction area.**

Strengthening monitoring and legal accountability. A strong monitoring system is needed to ensure that lawbreakers are held accountable. This requires clear political will and institutional commitment.



Photo: by Dario Daniel Silva for
Unsplash | A green apartment
building in Tirana Albania

Expansion of areas of social interest. The inclusion of these areas in urban planning aims to improve livelihoods and provide necessary social services for low-income groups.

- 6. Review the functions of the National Housing Authority and strengthen its relationship with local government.** Increase its capacities for the construction and management of social housing and provide more direct funds from the state, while not allowing financial “autonomy”. This would bring in the involvement of an actor that is not traditionally part of the market, that will offer lower rents than the private market and help citizens avoid the high costs of the free market. There are not infrequent cases where municipalities do not offer land for construction to the EKB (*National Housing Authority*), mainly due to: lack of possession of vacant land; ownership problems; privatised state properties, for which they are in court cases. In cases where they are offered, they are considered unsuitable by the EKB. In municipalities where there is vacant land, construction permits are issued to private entities.
- 7. Focus on the needs of the most vulnerable groups.** Housing programmes should address the needs of extremely low and very low-income families by providing services such as rent subsidies, assistance with support services, and mediation with landlords to prevent eviction.

3.

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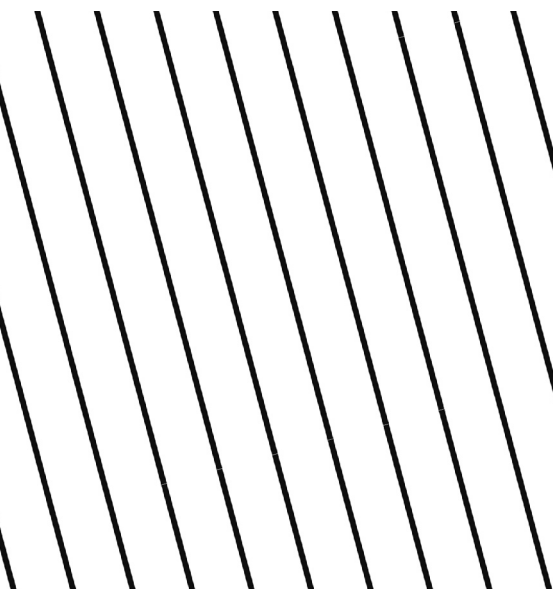
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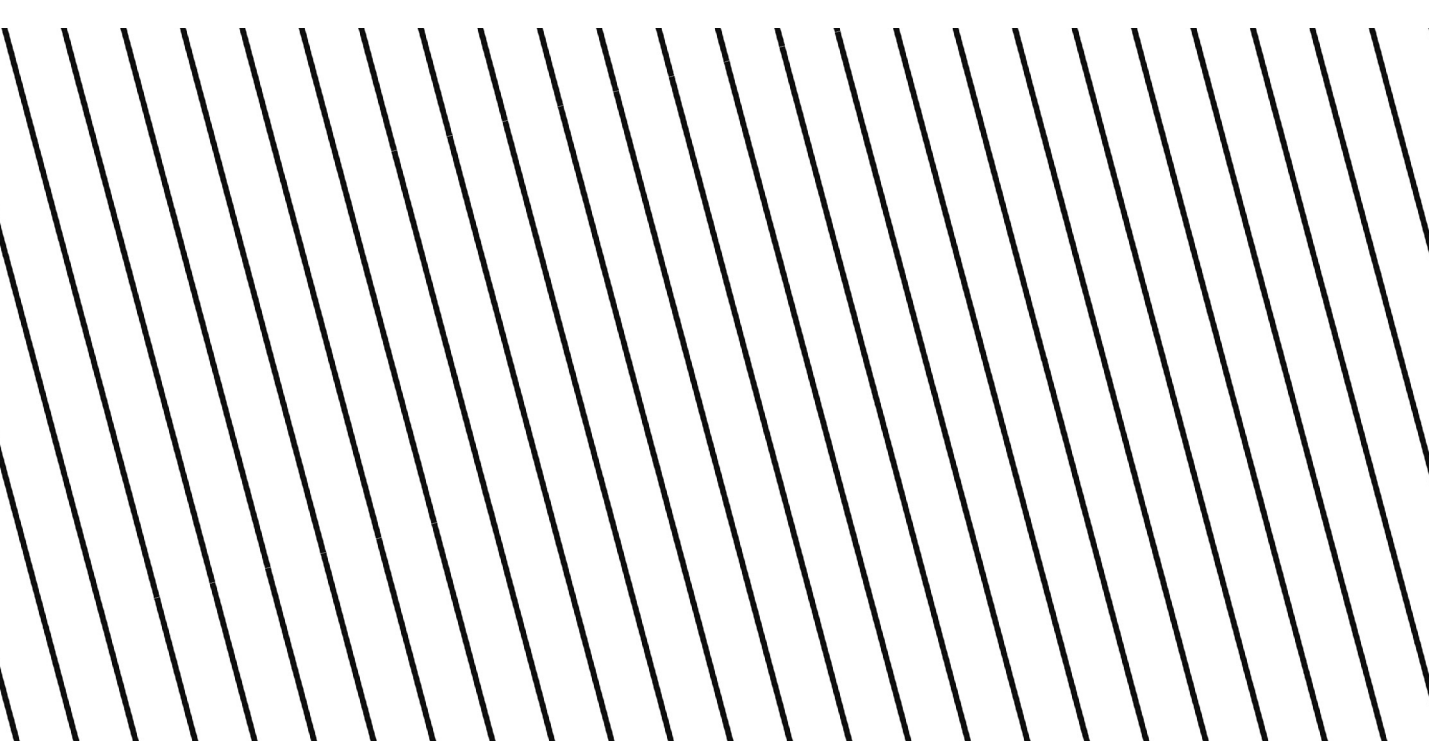




Photo: by Dario Daniel Silva for
Unsplash | A narrow city street in
Tirana, Albania



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Transform! Luxembourg*

www.transform.lu

MOLDOVA

Transform! Moldova *

transformoldova@gmail.com

NORWAY

Manifesto Foundation *

www.manifestanalyse.no

POLAND

Foundation Forward /

Naprzód

www.fundacja-naprzod.pl

PORTUGAL

Cultures of Labour and Socialism – CUL:TRA

info@cultra.pt

SERBIA

Center for Politics of Emancipation – CPE*

www.pe.org.rs

SLOVENIA

Institute for Labour

Studies – IDS*

www.delavske-studije.si

SPAIN

Neus Catala Foundation

(Catalonia)

www.neuscatala.cat

Europe of Citizens Foundation – FEC

www.lafec.org

Instituto República y Democracia*

www.institutorepublica.info

Iratzar Foundation

(Basque Country)*

www.iratzar.eus

SWEDEN

Center for Marxist Social

Studies

www.cmsmarx.org

TURKEY

Sol-Blog*

solparti.org

UK

The World Transformed –

TWT*

www.theworldtransformed.org

Transform! UK – A Journal

of the Radical Left

www.prruk.org

On the transform! europe website, you can find reports on current events relevant to Europe, as well as analyses of economic, political and social topics. In order to enable direct exchange between politicians, academics and activists involved in social movements, our calendar provides an overview of relevant international conferences and events. Moreover, transform! europe enables free access to publications released or supported by the transform! network which cover a wide range of topics on a high level. They can be downloaded from the website.

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