

ALSAI representatives attend the workshop on Simplified Cost Options (SCOs)

On 15–16 February 2024, the first workshop organized within the framework of the EU-funded project “Support for the Formulation of the Operational Programme” on Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) was held at the Ministry of Finance in Tirana. The workshop formed part of the preparations for the launch of the EU Operational Programme for Youth Employment 2023–2027, financed under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and co-financed by the Albanian State Budget, for which the Ministry of Finance/CFCU has been designated as the Contracting Authority.

During the first day of the workshop, topics related to understanding Simplified Cost Options were addressed. SCOs represent a departure from the real-cost principle. They may be used in connection with IPA funds in accordance with the EU Financial Regulation and PRAG procedures. However, to date, SCOs have only been used by Albanian institutions/organisations in the context of Interred cross-border cooperation programs.

Since SCOs are a key method for implementing Cohesion Funds after accession, Albania needs to prepare for their adoption. In this context, the National Plan for European Integration 2024–2026, approved by Council of Ministers Decision No. 16 of 11 January 2024, includes under Chapter 22 the “definition and adoption of simplified measures for the implementation of cohesion policy, including national methodologies for simplified cost options.”

On the second day, exercises were conducted on the justification of estimated costs based on SCOs. The control and audit of SCOs were also addressed, including the ex-ante assessment of the methodology, the scope of verifications, the audit of the calculation method, and possible irregularities (errors and fraud) related to the use of SCOs.

The ALSAI was represented at the workshop by Mr. Aldo Kume, Ms. Anjeza Gjoçi and Mr. Sigi Zaimi, auditors in the Central Institutions Audit Department.