

## **Gent Sejko: Money talks - 100 years: life and events - Bank of Albania**

Address by Mr Gent Sejko, Governor of the Bank of Albania, at the launching ceremony of the exhibition "Money talks: 100 years: life and events - Bank of Albania", Prishtina, Kosovo, 26 February 2026.

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Your Excellency Prime Minister,

Dear Governor Ismaili,

Dear guests,

As an Albanian, I am profoundly honoured to stand before you today in Prishtina. To gather here, in the capital of Kosovo, to commemorate a defining milestone in our monetary and state-building history, embodies a significance-both personal and institutional-that transcends the observance of anniversaries. Last year, we commemorated one hundred years since the founding of the Bank of Albania in 1925; this year, we proudly mark the centenary of the entry into circulation of the first Albanian national currency in 1926.

This stop in Kosovo bears a deep and enduring symbolic significance. Our shared history has risen from sacrifice, shaped by tireless effort, and illuminated by vision. From the League of Prizren to distinguished patriots and statesmen-Ymer Dishnica, Sulejman Vokshi, Hasan Prishtina, Isa Boletini, Bajram Curri, among many others-have played a decisive role in awakening national consciousness and in the birth, consolidation, and strengthening of the Albanian state. It is therefore only natural that an exhibition devoted to money, to the central bank, and to the journey of the Albanian state should find its way to Kosovo. For the history revealed through money is our narrative, woven into the collective memory of all Albanians, wherever they may live.

This exhibition invites us to reflect on a simple yet profound idea: across the centuries, currencies and banknotes have never been only instruments of exchange. They carry symbols, preserve heritage, and reflect identity.

Before becoming a symbol, money is a social contract-an agreement founded on trust. For a currency to function, there must exist the confidence of citizens that it preserves its value, that it is widely accepted, and that it is upheld by strong institutions and sound rules. In this sense, the history of money is always the history of public trust: the history of the state, of the economy, and of the enduring relationship between citizens and their institutions.

The exhibition "Money Talks: 100 Years: Life and Events – Bank of Albania" seeks to recount this journey as both an institutional history and a history of everyday life. It tells the story of how we have been paid and how we have saved; how we have faced hardship, rebuilt our economy, and sought stability and prosperity-often under difficult circumstances. It is the history of a nation that, despite hardship, has remained steadfast in its determination to build.

Through this narrative, the history of the central bank and of the Albanian currency is revealed as the broader journey of our nation across three defining epochs, shaped by political transformations, geopolitical developments, and economic events that have decisively influenced the destiny of Albania. Over the course of its history, the Bank has operated under every monetary regime—from the gold standard, through the strict controls of centralized planning, to modern frameworks of monetary policy guided by the objective of price stability.

In preparing this exhibition, we have drawn upon a rich documentary heritage preserved at the General Directorate of Archives in Tirana and the Italian State Archives in Rome. These records also bear witness to the activity of the National Bank of Albania in several cities of Kosovo, including Prizren, Prishtina, Peja, and Gjakova, where, in the early 1940s, the Bank operated through its branches, subsidiaries, and agencies. Part of this documentary heritage is presented today through faithful reproductions, allowing the public to encounter, at close range, the tangible imprints of a shared past.

Within this narrative, particular emphasis is placed on the dawn of the modern Albanian state. November 1912 marked not only the proclamation of independence, but the birth of the symbols that bind us as one people. It is in this historic moment that we recall the vision of Ismail Qemal Vlora, who conceived the founding of a central Albanian bank as the "basic cell" of national economic revival and as a cornerstone in the construction of the independent Albanian state—a guiding vision that illuminated the road forward and continues to resonate across generations.

Precisely for these reasons, we have envisioned this exhibition not merely as a collection to be observed, but as a living experience—an educational journey to be explored, reflected upon, and embraced. Today, financial decisions touch our lives more frequently and with greater complexity: from the use of digital services to lending, investing, insurance, savings, and family planning. In this context, financial literacy emerges as a cornerstone of both individual well-being and the prosperity of society at large.

Over recent decades, central banks around the world have sought to deepen their dialogue with the public—not merely to explain policies, but to build enduring bridges of communication. Exhibitions, museums, educational programs, citizen engagement, and outreach publications are among the ways we bring an institution that can appear complex, even enigmatic, closer to the people—more accessible, more transparent, and more meaningful. In a world transformed by technology, where payments evolve and risks take new forms—from price fluctuations to geopolitical uncertainties—the fundamental lesson remains unchanged: stability rests upon strong institutions, prudent decision-making, and an informed public. At its very core, the mission of a central bank is to serve this stability and to safeguard the confidence. These principles are not abstract concepts; they are forces that shape the real lives of citizens—impacting wages, household savings, lending to the economy, and the plans of businesses.

Reflecting on the state-building vision of Ismail Qemal Vlora, we are reminded that history is not only to be remembered, but to guide us toward the right path. Our vision today is firmly oriented toward the European Union, where alignment with European rules and practices represents not only a political aspiration, but a concrete enhancement of the lives of our citizens—a commitment to stability, prosperity, and the

shared values that define our nation's future. In this spirit, steps such as the approximation of European payment standards and objectives like integration into SEPA are clear examples of how "the narration of money" continues to be written-more transparently, more confidently, and with stronger economic connections. They represent a step forward in coexisting under the same sky and sharing the same values, embodied in the flag of the European Union.

In conclusion, allow me to underscore the expansion of this exhibition beyond Tirana to Kosovo, and throughout the Albanian lands it represents, which gives it both temporal and spatial reach, enriching the story it tells. In this context, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Central Bank of Kosovo for their generous support and warm hospitality here in Prishtina. Such cultural and institutional exchanges are essential-not only for preserving and sharing our common history, but also for strengthening regional cooperation in areas that directly shape the lives of our citizens.

This project has come to life through the work of many people, and through close collaboration with historians, economists, architects, archivists, and communication experts. The exhibition you see today is the tangible result of this collective effort-a shared achievement born of close cooperation between the Bank of Albania, the academic community, institutions of knowledge and culture, and our partners both at home and abroad. I would like to extend a special thanks to the Italian Institute of Culture in Tirana, as well as to all the professionals and partners who have contributed to making this initiative possible.

I warmly invite you to explore this exhibition with curiosity, to experience it as part of our shared history, and to contemplate the journey we have undertaken together. If it succeeds in awakening interest, inspiring reflection, and sparking discussion about our monetary history, then it will have achieved its highest purpose.

Dear friends,

The launch of this exhibition coincides with the eve of Kosovo's Independence Day, 17 February 2008. This date remains a momentous one for the people of Kosovo and for Albanians everywhere, marking the crowning of a long-standing and legitimate dream of freedom and independence. It also represents the beginning of efforts to build a new sovereign state, grounded in democratic values, increasingly reflecting dignity and political maturity, and standing as a pillar of peace and stability in the region.

Happy Independence Day!

Thank you, and welcome to the exhibition!