

Gent Sejko: Smart money talks – 100 years national currency

Address by Mr Gent Sejko, Governor of the Bank of Albania, at the opening ceremony of Global Money Week 2026, Tirana, 17 March 2026.

* * *

Dear representatives of public institutions,

Dear representatives of the banking sector,

Dear pupils, students, teachers, and friends of Money Week,

It is always a pleasure to launch the events of Global Money Week 2026, a global initiative celebrated each year in many countries that brings younger generations closer to essential financial and economics literacy.

This Week has already become an important moment for bringing together public institutions, the financial sector, the education system, and both the national and international partners in a unified effort: enhancing financial literacy across society, especially among the younger generation.

For Albania, the year 2026 bears a special significance: it marks the 100th anniversary of the issuance of the first Albanian national currency. This anniversary offers us an opportunity to reflect on the history of the Albanian Lek and the crucial role the national currency has played in the country's economic and institutional progress.

Global Money Week is coordinated worldwide by OECD-INFE and aims to ensure that children and young people understand how finances function in our everyday life. This year's international theme "Smart Money Talks", emphasizes the importance of open and informed communication regarding financial matters.

In this spirit, the slogan chosen for this year's activities in Albania is: "Smart Money talks – 100 Years National Currency". This slogan aims to connect our reflection on the history of our national currency with the need to promote a healthier financial literacy, prevent mistakes or fraud and empower young people to take charge of their financial well-being.

Dear students,

The history of the national currency is deeply intertwined with the development of the state and its economic institutions. The issuance of the Albanian Franc and Lek in 1926 marked a milestone in solidifying the country's monetary sovereignty and in the establishment of a modern financial system.

For over a century, the Albanian lek has been more than just a means of payment. It has stood as a powerful symbol of the nation's economic sovereignty and a benchmark for monetary stability. Across different historical periods, our national currency has mirrored the evolution of Albanian financial institutions and the efforts to build a modern and sustainable economy.

The confidence that households and enterprises have in the national currency is one of the pillars on which the functioning of the economy and the role of the central bank in maintaining financial stability are based.

The Albanian monetary and financial system has swept through many transformations. From an economy once dominated by cash, we have gradually advanced toward a more sophisticated financial infrastructure, where electronic payments and digital services are playing an increasingly pivotal role. In view of this transformation, the role of money is evolving alongside the advancements in technology and financial markets.

The Bank of Albania -throughout this process - has played a vital role in safeguarding monetary stability, modernizing payment systems, and laying the groundwork for the functioning of a stable and reliable financial system.

In today's world, as technology rapidly transforms the way we manage our money, financial education is becoming increasingly important. The activities of Global Money Week 2026 aim to create spaces for learning, discussion, and reflection on these topics. Through open lectures, competitions, educational activities, and interactive sessions, students will have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the financial world and the importance of cautious decision-making.

This year, our educational activities are also dedicated to the significant anniversary of the national currency-an anniversary best displayed in the exhibition "Money Talks: 100 Years Life and Events, Bank of Albania (1925–2025)." Through this exhibition, the public can get acquainted with the history of money and our national central bank.

Dear guests,

Global Money Week is the result of collaboration among many institutions and partners. I would like to sincerely thank the Ministry of Education, the Albanian Association of Banks, the Deposit Insurance Agency, the World Bank, Junior Achievement of Albania, the commercial banks, and all those who contribute to the realisation of this important initiative in support of financial education and inclusion in Albania.

In conclusion, I encourage you all, especially the pupils and students, to take full advantage of this week to gain deeper insights into how money works and how to manage it wisely. The financial choices you make today will have a lasting impact on your future well-being.

Thank you, and I wish you a creative week full of new knowledge and valuable experiences!