

Implementation of the National F-Gas Certification Scheme in Albania Progress and Practical Experience

Albania has recently taken important steps toward establishing a structured national certification system for professionals working with fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases). The process moved from the adoption of the legal framework into practical implementation, with an active and concrete role played by the National Ozone Unit.

The legal basis was established through the adoption of the Law on Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases in February 2023. However, the transition required more than legislation alone. In November 2024, a Government Decision created, for the first time, a structured national certification system defining who must be certified, for which activities certification is required, how technicians are trained and assessed, how certification bodies operate, and how professional competence is maintained over time.

The new framework introduces a significant change in the way technical work with F-gases is approached. Technicians are no longer expected only to repair or maintain equipment, but also to prevent refrigerant leakage, recover gases safely, understand the climate impact of refrigerants, and work with alternative technologies and lower climate-impact solutions.

The certification scheme applies to a broad range of sectors beyond traditional refrigeration and air conditioning systems. It also includes refrigerated transport, heat pumps, fire protection systems, electrical switchgear, and solvent-based equipment. This reflects a wider environmental approach aimed not only at controlling refrigerants themselves, but also the entire technical chain where these substances are used.

The Albanian system follows a category-based structure aligned with European standards. Four certification categories define different levels of authorization depending on the type of activity, the size of the equipment, and the level of intervention in the refrigeration circuit. In parallel, four dedicated training modules have been developed, covering refrigeration and air conditioning systems, fire protection systems, electrical switchgear, and solvent-based equipment.

Certification is based on demonstrated competence rather than simple participation in training. Candidates must complete the relevant training programme and successfully pass both theoretical and practical assessments. This principle represents one of the strongest elements of the Albanian scheme, as it creates a real verification system for technical skills and environmental responsibility.

The framework also introduces a transitional period of up to 24 months, allowing technicians to continue working while enrolled in certification training programmes and operating under the supervision of certified professionals. This approach allows implementation without disrupting the functioning of the market.

Another important component of the system is the requirement that certification bodies be accredited according to ISO/IEC 17024, ensuring transparency, reliability, and consistency with internationally recognized standards. The publication of authorized certification bodies by the national accreditation authority further strengthens market trust and institutional oversight.

One of the most important aspects of the Albanian experience is that implementation activities started before the full institutional system became operational. Rather than waiting for all structures to be completed, the National Ozone Unit adopted a proactive approach focused on building technical capacity in advance.

In cooperation with UNEP, Centro Studi Galileo in Italy, Barleti Group, and Tirana College of Technology, several training and certification activities were organized for Albanian RAC technicians according to European standards.

The first training programme took place in June 2023, before the national certification scheme had been formally adopted. Through cooperation between the National Ozone Unit, Centro Studi Galileo and Barleti Group, 15 technicians were trained and certified according to European standards.

A second programme followed in November 2023, organized together with Centro Studi Galileo and Tirana College of Technology, during which 19 technicians were trained and certified.

The third training and certification programme was organized in May 2026 in cooperation with Centro Studi Galileo and Tirana College of Technology, resulting in the certification of 24 additional technicians.

As a result of these activities, Albania has already trained and certified a total of 58 RAC technicians according to European standards, even before the national certification scheme becomes fully operational. These certificates are registered in the relevant European certification registry, providing technicians with internationally recognized professional credentials.

The implementation process has also advanced at institutional level. The “Harry Fultz” Technical College has initiated contacts with the national accreditation authority and submitted the documentation required to begin the accreditation process, with the objective of becoming the first institution in Albania authorized to conduct training and certification activities under the national scheme.

The Albanian experience demonstrates that the transition in the RAC sector does not begin only with legal acts. It begins when technical skills are developed, standards are implemented, and the way the sector operates starts to change in practice.

At the same time, important challenges remain. These include increasing certification capacity, ensuring the quality of training programmes, strengthening practical assessment procedures, improving field control, and effectively managing the registry of certified personnel.

An additional important principle of the Albanian scheme is that certification is not permanent. Certificates remain valid for ten years and require continuous professional updating as the sector evolves with new refrigerants, technologies, and safety standards.

The experience gained so far shows that successful implementation depends not only on institutions, but also on technicians working every day in the field — installing, maintaining, checking for leaks, recovering refrigerants, and applying environmental standards in practice.

Through this process, Albania has already taken important first steps toward building a more professional, environmentally responsible, and climate-conscious RAC sector aligned with European standards.