



Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note

## Albania: Human trafficking

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# Executive summary

Albania is a designated (safe) state under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This means there is, in general, no serious risk of persecution to persons entitled to reside in that state or part of it.

There remains a risk of stigma/discrimination, difficulties in reintegrating and re-trafficking for some victims on return. This is likely to be greater for females than males. However, the onus is on the person to provide credible evidence that they face a real risk of persecution or serious harm on return to Albania.

The UK and Albania announced a Joint Communiqué on [enhancing bilateral cooperation in areas of common interest](#) on 13 December 2022. The communiqué committed to providing sufficient protections within Albania for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.

In the 2016 country guidance case of [TD and AD](#), the Upper Tribunal (UT) held that **'there is in general a Horvath-standard sufficiency of protection** [for a woman or a girl], but it will not be effective in every case' (emphasis added) – thus confirming it is effective in most.

The onus is on the person claiming asylum to explain and substantiate why the 'layers' of protection available – that is, by the state and/or NGOs, shelters, support and re-integration services – would be unavailable to them. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

Female victims of trafficking may be able to internally relocate. They may face discrimination because of their gender and the fact they have been trafficked. However, in general, this is not in itself sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition, or by an accumulation of various measures, that it amounts to persecution or serious harm in the place of relocation, or that relocation would be unreasonable. There is no indication that males generally experience stigma or discrimination; therefore, male victims are likely to be able to relocate.

Further information on the issues for trafficked men, women and children and the range of in-country protections that are being implemented in Albania to support returned victims is provided within this note.

Decision makers still need to read the assessment in full, and use relevant country information as the evidential basis for decisions.

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# Assessment

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person is likely to face a real risk of persecution/serious harm by non-state actors because they are a victim of trafficking
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a grant of asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave is likely, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Modern slavery

1.1.1 Decision makers should note that guidance for competent authority staff in any part of the UK who make decisions on whether or not a person is a potential victim/victim of modern slavery for the purpose of the National Referral Mechanism is set out in the [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance](#) for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The guidance is also aimed at staff:

- within public authorities who may encounter potential victims of modern slavery; and/or
- who are involved in supporting victims

1.1.2 Decision makers also must note that if a person has a ‘positive conclusive grounds’ decision, a grant of permission to stay as a victim of human trafficking or slavery by the competent authorities may be considered. For further information, see [Temporary permission to stay for victims of human trafficking or slavery](#).

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### 1.2 Assessing weight of ‘reasonable or conclusive grounds’ decisions

[DC \(trafficking: protection/human rights appeals\) Albania \[2019\] UKUT 00351 \(IAC\)](#), heard 7 June 2019 and promulgated on 3 September 2019, referencing [Secretary of State for the Home Department v MS \(Pakistan\) \[2018\] EWCA Civ 594](#), provides guidance on the weight to attach to a conclusive grounds decision made by a competent authority in an asylum or human rights case, and the order in which the Tribunal would consider overlapping asylum and MS claims.

### 1.3 Credibility

- 1.3.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.3.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.3.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### 1.4 Exclusion

- 1.4.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 1.4.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.4.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention, Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 The UT, in the country guidance (CG) case of [TD and AD \(Trafficked women\) CG \[2016\] UKUT 92 \(IAC\)](#), heard 30 April, 6 May and 3 June 2015, promulgated 9 February 2016, which considered the position of female victims of trafficking only, observed that 'Trafficked women from Albania may

well be members of a particular social group on that account alone' [119(h)].

- 2.1.2 Women who have been trafficked are likely to belong to a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because they have an immutable characteristic – the experience of having been trafficked – and are likely to have a distinct identity within Albanian society because of prevailing attitudes towards women and victims of trafficking (see [Prevalence](#) and [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)).
- 2.1.3 Men who are trafficked do not form a PSG. Although they have an immutable characteristic – the experience of having been trafficked – they do not have a distinct identity within Albanian society (see [Prevalence](#) and [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)).
- 2.1.4 Although a (female) victim of trafficking may belong to a PSG, such membership itself is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case is whether the person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.1.5 For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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### 3. Risk

- 3.1.1 Albania is primarily a source country for victims who are trafficked across Europe and the UK. In 2022, the government of Albania and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) identified 110 potential victims/victims. Of these, 61 were potential victims of sex trafficking, 35 were potential victims of forced labour/forced begging, and 14 were potential victims of forced criminality. 80 of the victims were women and girls, 4 were men and 26 were boys (see [Trafficking of persons](#)).
- 3.1.2 Women and girls are usually trafficked for sexual exploitation. Males are mostly trafficked for labour exploitation/criminality (see [Trafficking of persons](#)). The majority of traffickers (68% or more) are relatives of their victims, or have close social ties with them (see [Traffickers' profiles and recruitment methods](#)).
- 3.1.3 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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### 3.2 Risk to female victims of trafficking

- 3.2.1 Whether a female victim of trafficking is at real risk of persecution or serious harm will depend on her particular circumstances. The onus is on the person to provide credible evidence that they face such a risk.
- 3.2.2 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), which looked at female victims of trafficking only, the UT held that:

'It is not possible to set out a typical profile of trafficked women from Albania: trafficked women come from all areas of the country and from varied social backgrounds...

'... Re-trafficking is a reality. Whether that risk exists for an individual

claimant will turn in part on the factors that led to the initial trafficking, and on her personal circumstances, including her background, age, and her willingness and ability to seek help from the authorities. For a proportion of victims of trafficking, their situations may mean that they are especially vulnerable to re-trafficking, or being forced into other exploitative situations.’ (paragraph 119 (a and g))

- 3.2.1 The risk of re-trafficking is small; sources suggest that 2% to 5% of trafficking victims are either re-trafficked or have simply left the reintegration programme. Those who lack family support, or who were trafficked by a family member or partner, are at increased risk of re-trafficking by the same perpetrator. Those with supportive families are less likely to be re-trafficked (see [Risk of re-trafficking](#)).
- 3.2.2 In [TD and AD](#), the UT held that ‘Whether [trafficked women] are at risk of persecution ... will depend upon their individual circumstances including but not limited to the following:
- 1) ‘The social status and economic standing of her family
  - 2) The level of education of the victim of trafficking or her family
  - 3) The victim of trafficking’s state of health, particularly her mental health
  - 4) The presence of an illegitimate child
  - 5) The area of origin
  - 6) Age
  - 7) What support network will be available’ (paragraph 119 (h))
- 3.2.3 Since [TD and AD](#) was promulgated, the state has made good, ongoing progress in implementing reforms and measures to tackle trafficking generally. However, female victims (women and girls) who return to Albania may face a risk of re-trafficking, discrimination and stigma (although discrimination and stigma would not amount to persecution), depending on their particular circumstances. Minority communities, particularly Roma, may be at increased risk of trafficking. Therefore, there are not very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to depart from this part of the UT’s findings in [TD and AD](#) (see [Perceptions](#), [Risk of re-trafficking](#) and [Drivers of trafficking/profile of victims](#)).
- 3.2.4 Decision makers need to consider a range of factors that influence risk. Factors 1 to 6 are specific to the person. Further information on Factor 7 is set out in the [Protection](#) section. However, the person must demonstrate that they face a real risk of persecution or serious harm as a result. It is not sufficient to simply demonstrate that one or more of the indicators are relevant to them.
- 3.2.5 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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### 3.3 Risk to male victims of trafficking

- 3.3.1 In general, male victims of trafficking are not at real risk of serious harm or persecution. The onus is on the person to show otherwise.

- 3.3.2 There is limited information about the experience and treatment of male victims of trafficking, including the scale and frequency of re-trafficking. Men and boys who are from lower economic backgrounds, have a low level of education or lack of employment opportunities, have physical or mental disabilities, have experienced domestic abuse or family breakdown, and/or live in remote areas are more likely to be vulnerable to being trafficked or re-trafficked than men and boys generally. Males from minority ethnic communities, particularly Roma, are also more likely to be vulnerable to being trafficked or re-trafficked. When males are exploited, it is generally for forced labour, forced involvement in criminal activities, forced begging (for boys) or, more rarely, for sexual exploitation (see [Drivers of trafficking/profile of victims](#) and [Males](#)).
- 3.3.3 Albania is a patriarchal society with male family members expected to provide for their families. There is a general lack of awareness that men and boys may be victims of trafficking, and those who are trafficked may not accept or recognise that they have been exploited, and may therefore be reluctant to seek assistance. There is, however, little evidence in the sources consulted that men and boys face the same societal stigma or discrimination as lone women (see [Treatment of victims of trafficking, Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#) and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).
- 3.3.4 In general, the available evidence does not indicate that men and boys who have been trafficked to the UK will be at risk of serious harm on return for that reason alone. Whether they face a risk of such treatment will depend on their personal circumstances, such as their age, education, skills and employability, area of origin, health or disability, availability of a support network, and the intent and reach of their traffickers.
- 3.3.5 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 4. Protection

### 4.1 General

- 4.1.1 In the country guidance case of [TD and AD](#) the UT held that ‘**there is in general a Horvath-standard sufficiency of protection** [for a woman or a girl], but it will not be effective in every case’ (emphasis added) – thus confirming that protection is effective in most cases for women and girls, and even more so for men and boys. A reluctance to seek protection is not an indication that it is not available.
- 4.1.2 The United States Department of State (USSD) acknowledged that Albania continues to make significant efforts to address trafficking. The European Commission noted that the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is functioning and assistance has been provided in every case. Shelters offer a full package of services to help a victim of trafficking to recover and reintegrate. Police continue to investigate cases of trafficking. It can be more difficult for Roma to access protection if they have not been registered as citizens. Legal aid is not always available and best-practice procedures are not always followed to protect victims in court. Where the UT has found that,

in general, Albania provides protection to a Horvath standard, compelling evidence would be needed to find that a low number of convictions is due to state inability or unwillingness (see [Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#), [Barriers to protection](#) and [Legal aid, assistance and witness protection](#)).

- 4.1.3 The state has in place a comprehensive legislative and policy framework to address trafficking and support victims, although coordination mechanisms need to be improved in order to implement some of these measures effectively (see [Law, policy and programmes](#) and [Protection](#)).
- 4.1.4 The UT in [TD and AD](#) held that ‘Whether [trafficked women are...] able to access sufficiency of protection from the authorities will depend upon their individual circumstances including but not limited to [the same indicators as set out in paragraph 3.2.2 above]’ (see paragraph 119 (h) of determination).
- 4.1.5 Factors 1 to 6 are specific to the person. Further information on Factor 7 is set out below. The onus is on the person to explain and substantiate why the ‘layers’ of protection available – that is, by the state and/or NGOs, shelters, support and re-integration services – would be unavailable to them. It is insufficient for the person to simply assert, for example, that the police are corrupt and would not help them. Decision makers will need to probe the nature of the alleged corruption and why the police will not assist.
- 4.1.6 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 4.2 Shelters and reintegration services

- 4.2.1 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), based on evidence up to 2015, the UT held:

‘There is now in place a reception and reintegration programme for victims of trafficking. Returning victims of trafficking are able to stay in a shelter on arrival, and in “heavy cases” may be able to stay there for up to 2 years. During this initial period after return victims of trafficking are supported and protected. Unless the individual has particular vulnerabilities such as physical or mental health issues, this option cannot generally be said to be unreasonable; whether it is must be determined on a case by case basis.

‘Once asked to leave the shelter a victim of trafficking can live on her own. In doing so she will face significant challenges including, but not limited to, stigma, isolation, financial hardship and uncertainty, a sense of physical insecurity and the subjective fear of being found either by their families or former traffickers. Some women will have the capacity to negotiate these challenges without undue hardship. There will however be victims of trafficking with characteristics, such as mental illness or psychological scarring, for whom living alone in these circumstances would not be reasonable. Whether a particular appellant falls into that category will call for a careful assessment of all the circumstances.’ (paragraph 119 (e to f))
- 4.2.2 With support from civil society, the government continues to provide support and reintegration assistance to victims. This includes the provision of short-term and long-term accommodation (including 4 shelters), the prioritisation of trafficking victims for access to social housing, healthcare and psychological

support, employment support, internships and opportunities to start new businesses, economic assistance and vocational training (see [Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#) and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).

- 4.2.3 Since [TD and AD](#) was promulgated, through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund (MSF), the UK Government has invested over £3.5 million of Official Development Assistance between December 2019 and September 2022 in a programme delivered by a consortium led by UNICEF (hereafter referred to as the 'MSF programme').
- 4.2.4 The UK Government has signed revised Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with UNICEF and OSCE to continue the delivery of this MSF programme up to March 2025 through an investment of over £2.9 million of Official Development Assistance. These MoUs set out that the MSF programme extension will work closely with the Government of Albania. Two key governance structures, the Joint Oversight Committee and a Steering Committee, have also been set up to support joint work and collaboration between the UK and Albanian governments (see [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#)).
- 4.2.5 The MSF programme is funding 3 primary service providers to provide comprehensive reintegration support to an additional 140 survivors between January 2023 and March 2024. UNICEF signed the contract with these providers on 18 January 2023. This contract will provide assistance to identified victims of any gender or age, including returnees from overseas who wish to access support. This includes immediate and long-term support tailored to an individual's needs, comprising accommodation, medical treatment, mental health support and counselling, legal assistance, personal security, living costs and education and vocational training (see [Annex A](#)).
- 4.2.6 The UK is also providing £11.1 million in grant funding for financial years 2022/23 to 2024/25 (£3.7 million per year) across 10 priority countries, including Albania. The programme will be accessible to all forms of returns (both voluntary and enforced) and will include services such as: a) pre-departure information, b) a 'meet and greet' service on arrival at the airport in Albania, c) access to temporary accommodation prior to any onward journey to a final destination, d) signposting to existing local services, e) support with redocumentation/identification, and f) job counselling and additional support with accessing the labour market (see [Annex A](#)).
- 4.2.7 During the year 2023, the MSF programme supported 130 individuals with entrepreneurial/employment skills, 12 of whom consequently started their own businesses. Overall, there have been 590 beneficiaries of this programme from 2020 to 2023, and it is expected that a further 130 persons will benefit from 2024 to 2025 (see [Annex B](#)).
- 4.2.8 Between January and December 2023, 216 survivors and their dependants received comprehensive services (156 were survivors and 60 were dependants). As of 31 December 2023, 140 Albanian nationals had accepted reintegration support after returning to Albania. The number of readmissions of failed asylum-seekers under the UK-Albania Readmissions Agreement has increased, and this includes those recognised as victims of modern slavery. Steps have been taken to raise awareness of the services

and assistance available to returnees (see [Annex B](#)).

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### 4.3 Mental health services

- 4.3.1 Mental health support is generally available, with shelters providing treatment by trained psychologists. A person may stay in a shelter for 3 to 5 years if mental health issues necessitate this. The LILIUM Centre provides assistance to men, women and children who have suffered sexual violence. The MSF programme continues to deliver mental health support, which is available via all 3 service providers. In addition to in-person therapy, online mental health services are available; these were accessed by 921 people (578 females and 343 males) during 2023 (see [Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#), [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#)).

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### 4.4 Stigma

- 4.4.1 A victim of trafficking may experience stigma from their family and from society. However, work continues to be undertaken to improve understanding and change perceptions about victims of trafficking. The MSF programme has been delivering tailored and targeted messages seeking to change harmful social and gender norms across communities since 2023, in Tirana, Dibra, Kukës and Shkodra (see [Perceptions](#) and [Annex A](#)).

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### 4.5 Re-trafficking

- 4.5.1 In general, the state has taken reasonable steps to prevent the persecution/serious harm of female victims of trafficking by operating an effective legal system for the detection, prosecution and punishment of acts constituting persecution/serious harm, which the person is able to access.
- 4.5.2 There are not very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to depart from the UT's findings in [TD and AD](#). Women are (still) able to obtain effective protection. However, an assessment of the person's individual circumstances is still required and when considering the factors cited at paragraph 119(h) of [TD and AD](#), a holistic approach should be taken.
- 4.5.3 The onus is on the person to provide credible evidence that they cannot access effective protection. It is not sufficient to simply demonstrate that one or more of the risk indicators is relevant to them.
- 4.5.4 As part of its efforts to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable individuals, the MSF programme aims to improve access to community-based social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking in the 4 specified regions (Tirana, Dibra, Kukës and Shkodra). UNICEF has signed contracts with Terre des Hommes to train officials at the municipal level and to coordinate with social services and employment offices to identify and reach individuals at risk and provide them with increased access to social protection, training and information about employment. This partnership is also providing technical and financial assistance to Multi-Functional Community Centres (MFCCs) in Kukës, Shkodra, and Bulqizë

(Dibra region). These MFCCs work to assist vulnerable families and individuals at risk of trafficking and refer them to additional required social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking (see [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#)).

- 4.5.5 For an assessment of the availability of protection generally, see the Country Policy and Information Note [Albania: Actors of protection](#).

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## 4.6 Male victims of trafficking

- 4.6.1 In general, the state is willing and able to provide effective protection to male victims of trafficking. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

- 4.6.2 The CG case of [TD and AD](#) did not specifically consider the availability of protection for men or children. However, many of the measures put in place by the government considered in that case – the laws making trafficking illegal, publishing standard operating procedures, the establishment of a national referral mechanism, the creation of an anti-trafficking co-ordinator, and reintegration support – are applicable to men and children. Whilst men are not currently accommodated in shelters, they may have access to rented accommodation or rent subsidies (see [Prevention and protection](#) and [Shelters and specialised centres](#)).

- 4.6.3 Men and boys appear to have a low awareness of having been exploited/trafficked and may be reluctant to seek protection. However, a reluctance to seek protection does not mean it is not available.

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## 5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 In general, female victims of trafficking may be able to internally relocate, but women and girls identifiable as victims of trafficking may face discrimination from societal actors, including family rejection and discriminatory labels, because of their gender and the fact they have been trafficked (see [Perceptions](#)).

- 5.1.2 However, in general, this is not in itself sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition, or by an accumulation of various measures, that it amounts to persecution or serious harm in the place of relocation, or that relocation would be unreasonable.

- 5.1.3 There is no indication that males generally face discrimination. As such, male victims are likely to be able to relocate. Each case will depend on its particular facts, taking into account the person's ability to support themselves to a subsistence level in the place of relocation and the intent and reach of their former traffickers.

- 5.1.4 Albania is a small country, a little larger than Wales, with a population estimated to be between 2.8 million and just over 3 million. The population of the capital, Tirana, differs across a number of sources, ranging from just under 500,000 to over 900,000. People are generally able to move around freely (see [Freedom of movement and reintegration](#)).

- 5.1.5 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), which considered the situation of female

victims of trafficking only, the UT held:

‘Much of Albanian society is governed by a strict code of honour which not only means that trafficked women would have very considerable difficulty in reintegrating into their home areas on return but also will affect their ability to relocate internally. Those who have children outside marriage are particularly vulnerable. In extreme cases the close relatives of the trafficked woman may refuse to have the trafficked woman’s child return with her and could force her to abandon the child.’ (paragraph 119(b))

- 5.1.6 The Judge in [TD and AD](#) found that it was possible for women to live independently in Albania. The available evidence indicates that the situation has improved for women and girls since then. Although stigma can be a concern for female victims of trafficking, there is support available from the government and civil society, which makes it possible for women to live alone in Tirana, although it can be harder to do so in rural areas (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 5.1.7 The evidence does not suggest that single men and boys experience the social stigma that may apply to lone females (see (see [Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#) and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).

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- 5.1.8 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it **must** be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.
- 6.1.2 If the claim falls for refusal on asylum grounds but permission to stay is to be/has already been granted as a victim of modern slavery (or any other leave is granted) by the competent authorities, certification can still be considered and may be appropriate, taking all relevant factors into consideration.
- 6.1.3 Where a protection or human rights claim is refused from a female, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. Claims from males are likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’.
- 6.1.4 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

## About the country information

This contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content of this section follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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Section updated: 7 June 2024

## 7. Law, policy and programmes

### 7.1 Legal framework: general

#### 7.1.1 Albania is party to the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT), which is:

‘... a comprehensive treaty mainly focused on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguard of their rights. It also aims at preventing trafficking as well as prosecuting traffickers.

‘The Convention applies to all forms of trafficking; whether national or transnational, whether or not related to organised crime and whoever the victim, women, men or children and whatever the form of exploitation, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, etc.

‘The Convention provides for the setting up of an independent monitoring mechanism (“GRETA”) [the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings] guaranteeing Parties’ compliance with its provisions.’<sup>1</sup>

#### 7.1.2 On 15 June 2023, the United States Department of State published the Trafficking in Persons report 2023 (USSD TiP report 2023), which covered the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Referring to domestic legislation, this report noted that ‘Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of eight to 15 years’ imprisonment for a trafficking offense involving an adult victim, and ten to 20 years’ imprisonment for an offense involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape.’<sup>2</sup>

#### 7.1.3 Article 110(b) of the Criminal Code (CC), which addressed those who benefit from, or use, services provided by trafficked persons, was added by law in 2013 and states, ‘The benefit from or use of services provided by trafficked

<sup>1</sup> CoE, [Details of Treaty No. 197](#), 1 February 2008

<sup>2</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023](#) (Prosecution), 15 June 2023

persons, or services which are subject to exploitation by trafficking, being aware that the person is trafficked, shall be punishable by imprisonment of from two to five years. When this offence is committed against a minor, it shall be punishable by imprisonment of from three to seven years.’<sup>3</sup>

7.1.4 In their response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Government of Albania noted:

‘... The Ministry of the Interior... has provided for changes in the Criminal Code... Specifically, in order to avoid the punishment of a person identified as a victim of trafficking, amendments have been proposed to Article 52/a of the Criminal Code with this wording “The person injured by the criminal offense of human trafficking benefits from the exemption from criminal prosecution, for the commission of the offense criminal during the period of trafficking to the extent that he was forced to perform those illegal actions or omissions.”’<sup>4</sup>

7.1.5 The same source noted: ‘Albanian legislation provides for the exemption of trafficking victims from punishment, not from criminal prosecution... In practice, there is no criminal prosecution against trafficking victims for criminal offenses that they were forced to commit for the purposes of trafficking.’<sup>5</sup>

7.1.6 In October 2022, Home Office officials conducted a fact-finding mission (FFM) to Albania to gather information from a range of sources about the human trafficking of men and women, and the situation for single women/mothers (Home Office FFM 2022)<sup>6</sup>. When asked if a VOT (victim of trafficking) would face criminal charges if picked up in a situation of exploitation, the General Prosecutors Office told the Home Office fact-finding team 2022 (Home Office FFT 2022) that ‘The criminal code stipulates that if they commit an offence they have to be punished for that, for example prostitution is punished, even if they are a victim of trafficking they may have received criminal proceeds and so they can be prosecuted. However this is decided by the prosecutor in regard to what is and what is not the fault of the victim. This is done on a case by case basis. There is no golden rule, it is up to the prosecutor to see if the victim has committed a crime.’<sup>7</sup>

7.1.7 Article 128(b) of the CC, which addresses trafficking of minors, states:

‘Recruitment, sale, transport, transfer, hiding or reception of minors with the purpose of exploitation for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor of service, slavery or forms similar to slavery, putting in use or transplanting organs, as well as other forms of exploitation, shall be punishable by ten to twenty years of imprisonment.

‘Organization, management and financing of the trafficking of minors is punished with imprisonment of from ten to twenty years.

‘When this crime is committed in collaboration or more than once, or is accompanied with the maltreatment and forcing of the victim through

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<sup>3</sup> [Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania](#) (published by OHCHR), 27 January 1995

<sup>4</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p18), received 19 December 2022

<sup>5</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p18), received 19 December 2022

<sup>6</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#), December 2022

<sup>7</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p47), December 2022

physical or psychological violence to commit various actions, or bring serious consequences to health, it is punished with imprisonment of no less than fifteen years.

‘When the offence as a consequence has brought about the death of the victim it is punished with imprisonment of no less than twenty years or with life imprisonment.

‘When the criminal offence is committed through the utilization of a state function or public service, the punishment of imprisonment is increased by one fourth of the punishment given.’<sup>8</sup>

7.1.8 A report submitted by the government of Albania in August 2022 to the UN Human Rights Committee, published in January 2023, noted the following law relating to child rights, child protection and trafficking of minors:

‘Law 18/2017 “On the rights and protection of the child”, where equality and non- discrimination are mentioned in its general principles. The law defines what child protection means, clarifying “protection measures” due to violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation. For the first time, the protection of children in street situations or working/exploited for work is foreseen, addressing various forms of violence against children, such as bullying, violence in schools, in the family, sexual abuse, economic exploitation, children’s safety on the Internet, unaccompanied children or victims of trafficking, etc. [...] Article 2, provides for “the effective mechanisms and operation of the institutions charged with taking concrete measures for the promotion, respect and protection of the rights of the child, as well as for establishing a system of integrated and functional child protection, for the prevention and efficient response to all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect”. The law is monitored by the State Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights<sup>9</sup>.

7.1.9 During an interview conducted by the UK Home Office as part of its fact-finding mission, representatives of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) noted that current legislation does not address internal trafficking of children: ‘There is a gap in legislation as internal trafficking of children is not addressed. In the School of Magistrates manual child trafficking is addressed under other family-based offences, for example, abuse and so forth. Disabled adults, children and women can access the legal protection framework. There are provisions for VOT in law.’<sup>10</sup>

7.1.10 In September 2023 the US Department of Labor (US DoL) published the report ‘Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022’ (US DoL Child Labor report 2022). This report noted that Albania has ratified the following:

- International Labor Organization Convention 138 on minimum age
- International Labor Organization Convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labor
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC)

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<sup>8</sup> [Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania](#) (published by OHCHR), 27 January 1995

<sup>9</sup> UN, ICCPR, HRC, [Third periodic report...](#), 10 January 2023

<sup>10</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p23), December 2022

- UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography<sup>11</sup>

7.1.11 The report added, 'The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor. However, gaps exist in Albania's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the failure to prohibit the use of children in illicit activities.'<sup>12</sup> Further information about laws and regulations on child labour are available in section II, information about government policies on child labour in section V and information about social programmes to address child labour in section VI of the [report](#).

7.1.12 In February 2019, the Albanian government submitted a report in accordance with a UN Human Rights Council resolution, which stated: 'Legal and institutional framework in the field of trafficking is improved, and includes amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (Law 35/2017) and an improved position and access to the criminal process for the victim... Law "On State Police" provides for additional safeguards for the protection and comprehensive support for victims of trafficking, especially women and children.'<sup>13</sup>

7.1.13 In the Albania 2023 Report, the European Commission (EC) stated, 'The improved legislative framework for victims, including amendments to the Criminal Procedural Code, is yet to be implemented.' In the sources consulted, CPIT was unable to find information on the delay in implementation (see [Bibliography](#)).

7.1.14 In written communication with Asylos, whose stated aim is to '... ensure that every refugee has the evidence they need to claim their right to asylum' and who do this by 'harness[ing] a broad range of skills to help asylum seekers ... prove the persecution they have endured,'<sup>14</sup> Different and Equal (D&E), a non-profit organisation providing rehabilitation and reintegration services to victims of trafficking, exploitation and abuse in Albania, noted:

'[I]n Albania there have been some positive developments in recent years in improving legislation addressing trafficking, the rights of victims of criminal offences in general, including the position of victims of trafficking. In the framework of the Justice Reform are adopted some laws that regulate special aspects of access to justice, including some specific laws on specific fields and categories, such as the organic laws of justice institutions (law reform package), Law on the Protection of Children Rights, Juvenile Justice Code, amendments to the law on measures against domestic violence, some other laws on the social service reform, etc. This indicates that Albania already has a consolidated practice of legal initiatives that regulate the protection of specific categories. Despite the progress made, the implementation of this legislation in an effective manner remains a challenge. In addition to other factors, the lack of effectiveness in the implementation of anti-trafficking legislation has also been influenced by the

<sup>11</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#) (section II), 26 September 2023

<sup>12</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#) (section II), 26 September 2023

<sup>13</sup> Govt of Albania, [National report submitted...](#) (para 51), 22 February 2019

<sup>14</sup> Asylos, [about us](#), no date

fact that Albania still does not have a dedicated law for the fight against human trafficking and the legislation remains fragmented. In order to improve the effectiveness, there is a need for a special law against trafficking in human beings focused on the protection of victims of trafficking and to increase capacities in terms of professionals and financial resources. The reasons for a specific law against TIP are explained in detail in the Study Report of D&E. The initiative for the new law against human trafficking is part of the National Action Plan against Human Trafficking (2021-2023) as one of the main measures in the section of drafting and changing legislation. Currently we are waiting for the steps that will be taken by the Government institutionally to continue the process of drafting the new law.<sup>15</sup>

7.1.15 With regards to the gap between the law and its implementation, the same interlocutor stated in written communication with Asylos:

‘It seems that there is a marked difference between what is written and foreseen in the laws and the implementation in practice. More specifically, regarding the legislation that regulates the fight against trafficking and the protection of victims, it has been confirmed by various international reports that Albania has problems related to the implementation of the law in practice. Some of the influencing factors in this direction are:

Lack of adequate human resources to deal with trafficking and to guarantee effective protection for victims of trafficking (There are no permanent specialists in key positions and the high turnover of professional cause the lack of knowledge about the phenomenon of trafficking);

High level of poverty and lack of economic growth in society;

During the last years, the recent events in Albania related to the earthquake of 2019, COVID 19, as well as the political situation, have caused a decrease of vigilance toward trafficking in human being, as well as the fight against human trafficking not being considered a priority.<sup>16</sup>

7.1.16 During an interview conducted by the UK Home Office as part of its fact-finding mission, SHKEJ (an Albanian NGO in the field of promoting human rights and social integration of human beings<sup>17</sup>) noted the following:

‘SHKEJ, 10 October 2022 [...]

‘Q. We have spoken to government departments about the legal framework to support VOT. We were told that there is a comprehensive framework in place, do you think it is implemented?

‘A. They may have told you about the framework, but did they tell you that the budget is zero. We have laws and frameworks and we have strategic plans, we have everything but they are not monitored, they have zero budget and change every 2 or 3 years. We have not, as a civil society, seen any evaluation report to show what they have done within this framework<sup>18</sup>

7.1.17 Dr Anta Brachou, a postdoctoral researcher at the Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse, who previously provided

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<sup>15</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p123), April 2024

<sup>16</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p123), April 2024

<sup>17</sup> SHKEJ, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>18</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p68, 8), December 2022

support and advocacy to women victims of trafficking through her work at a UK-based NGO, commented in an interview with Asylos that:

‘what appears to be the main challenge is sometimes the implementation of some of those provisions that are related to trafficking, both in terms of protection and prosecution of trafficking charges [...] From what I understood, the law enforcement side, they are also very much under-resourced. [...] let’s take the UK case. These cases need to be very well-resourced because you’re talking about arguably operations across various jurisdictions. And the conversations that I had with law enforcement representatives, the law is there, but then there are challenges in implementation and one of the challenges is also related to resources above everything else.’ When asked about judicial punishment for acts committed as a result of being trafficked, the interlocutor commented that ‘[This] can happen also because if [victims of trafficking] are charged under the prostitution clause, that means that they would be seen as offenders rather than as victims. So yes, there is that gap in the law that would unfortunately allow for victims to be seen as purely offenders.’<sup>19</sup>

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## 7.2 Legal framework: social benefits for victims (and potential victims) of trafficking

7.2.1 The UN Office on Drugs and Crime explained: ‘Persons may... be termed as “potential”... victims of trafficking. Potential victims are people who have not yet been trafficked, but due to their vulnerability or other circumstances, are at risk of being trafficked.’<sup>20</sup>

7.2.2 In February 2019, the Albanian government submitted a report in accordance with a UN Human Rights Council resolution, which stated: ‘Law “On Social Care Services” places a requirement on all institutions responsible for treatment of a trafficked persons to take all specific measures and actions for their assistance and support, in order to find a lasting solution.’<sup>21</sup>

7.2.3 In December 2022, the Albanian authorities submitted a report on measures taken to comply with Committee of the Parties Recommendation CP/Rec(2020)06 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (the Albanian government’s response of December 2022 to the Council of Europe). The response stated:

‘... the law on social assistance (57/2019) provides [for victims/potential victims of trafficking] as a beneficiary category of social assistance ... With the approval of DCM [Decision of the Council of Ministers] No. 898/2021 tripled the amount of economic assistance for some categories starting on January 1, 2022, [including] VT/PVT...

‘Two Guidelines have been approved for the approval of a) “Protocol for the operation of public and non-public residential centers that provide housing services for victims/survivors of domestic violence and for victims/survivors

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<sup>19</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p126), April 2024

<sup>20</sup> UN ODC, [Trafficking in Persons & Smuggling of Migrants...](#), no date

<sup>21</sup> Govt of Albania, [National report submitted...](#) (para.51), 22 February 2019

of trafficking in the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic” ...

‘In the framework of the reform of social care services, we have recently taken steps... to [develop] social policies, including [for] VT/PVT.’<sup>22</sup>

7.2.4 The response further noted, ‘In the field of health, regarding the protection of victims of trafficking, since 2014, with the 2014 amendments to Law No. 10 383, dated 24.2.2011 “On Mandatory Health Care Insurance in the Republic of Albania”, these persons are included in the categories of economically inactive persons, whose payment is financed by the State Budget or by other sources determined by law.’<sup>23</sup>

7.2.5 The response continued:

‘In the field of social protection and inclusion, in the law on social care services (121/2016), beneficiary categories are also provided for VT/PVT. Also, the law on the protection of children's rights (18/2017), provides provisions for the prevention of violence and sexual exploitation of minors, and there is a mechanism for the referral of trafficked children. To ensure the protection of these categories, the National Social Protection Strategy 2020-2023, as well as the National Agenda for the Protection of Children's Rights (2021-2026) have been drawn up and approved.’<sup>24</sup>

7.2.6 See [Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#) and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#) for further information on provisions available to trafficking victims.

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### 7.3 Policies, programmes and projects

7.3.1 In the response of December 2022 to the Council of Europe, the Albanian government referred to the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Fight Against Trafficking of Persons, 2021 to 2023:

‘The Ministry of the Interior is the main drafting and implementing institution of the strategic and regulatory framework in the field of human trafficking. In this context, specific strategic forecasts, accompanied by concrete implementation measures, related to the prevention, early and formal identification of VT/PVT, as well as the provision of the necessary social and health support, are part of the National Action Plan for the Fight Against Trafficking of Persons, 2021-2023, approved by DCM [Decision of the Council of Ministers] no. 670, dated 10.11.2021, under the coordination of the Office of the National Coordinator, Ministry of the Interior.’<sup>25</sup>

7.3.2 The USSD TiP report 2023 noted that: ‘The government implemented the 2021-2023 NAP and allocated 412.6 million leks (\$3,874,000) [approximately £3,437,000<sup>26</sup>] for its implementation.’<sup>27</sup>

7.3.3 A British Embassy letter to the Home Office of 30 January 2023 referred to

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<sup>22</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p31-32), received 19 December 2022

<sup>23</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p33), received 19 December 2022

<sup>24</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p33), received 19 December 2022

<sup>25</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p31), received 19 December 2022

<sup>26</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>27</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023](#) (Prevention), 15 June 2023

the NAP (2021-2023), stating that it is:

‘... “an instrument aimed at coordinating state and non-state actors, including international organizations, engaged in the fight against human being trafficking”, and that “the mission of the NAP is to promote an effective, adequate and coordinated response to prevent and combat trafficking in persons based on international cooperation, effective inter-institutional cooperation within the country, the participation of victims/potential victims of trafficking and the involvement of civil society and community.”’<sup>28</sup>

7.3.4 ‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania’ is a programme funded by the UK government and implemented by UNICEF (UN Children’s Fund) Albania, with a number of other partners providing services<sup>29</sup>. The website set out the aims of the programme as follows: ‘The programme’s ultimate and long-term goal is the reduction of human trafficking in and from Albania. The programme has been implemented in 2 cycles: the first cycle was implemented from December 2019 to September 2022, and the second cycle that started implementation in October 2022 and will continue until March 2025.’<sup>30</sup>

7.3.5 The website set out the expected results of the project:

‘The project will result in a measurable change in understanding and behavior towards the risks associated with human trafficking. Survivors of trafficking will benefit from the improved quality of protection and prevention services that reduce their vulnerability and mitigate chances of re-trafficking. Reinforced advocacy efforts, through broader and more organized partnerships, will facilitate the gradual phasing out of project supported core interventions and transition to the State-owned and State funded modality.’<sup>31</sup>

7.3.6 The website indicated the beneficiaries of the programme as follows:

**‘The primary target groups of the programme are:** Individuals (boys/girls and men/women) identified as at risk and high risk for trafficking, Potential Victims/Victims of Trafficking (PV/VoTs); Parents/caregivers, and other community members living in disadvantaged communities of the 4 targeted regions; welfare, justice, education, employment and health sector service providers at municipal and community level, journalists, and private sector representatives.

**‘The secondary target groups of the programme are:** Parliamentarians, Decision/policy makers and high-level technical professionals of state institutions at the central level; Members of the four Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees (RATCs); policymakers and technical professionals of municipal-based bodies, grass-root NGOs, representatives of private sector, academia and think-tanks, international entities working in the anti-trafficking response, the population in large.’<sup>32</sup>

7.3.7 Services are provided as part of the programme in the following regions:

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<sup>28</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

<sup>29</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Programme description), no date

<sup>30</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Programme description), no date

<sup>31</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Programme description), no date

<sup>32</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Programme description), no date

Shkoder, Kukes, Diber, Tirane, Elbasan, Fier, Korce, and Vlore<sup>33</sup>.

7.3.8 The website stated that a total of 23,910 beneficiaries have received services since the start of the programme; this includes individuals at risk, at high risk, potential victims of trafficking and victims of trafficking. Of this number, 57% are female and 70% are children<sup>34</sup>. The website further stated that 773 service providers have been involved with the implementation of the programme; of these 92% are 'government' and 8% are 'implementing partners.'<sup>35</sup>

7.3.9 UNICEF published the 'Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming the National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania' report in November 2022 (Evaluation report of November 2022), in which it examined the impact of the programme. UNICEF explained the methodology as follows:

'To ensure that the evaluation was as thorough and reliable as possible, a mixed methods evaluation was developed, including a comprehensive review of secondary data source (i.e., programme documents) related to the evaluation criteria and questions. However, the primary sources of data and information were qualitative in nature...

'UNICEF identified 53 institutions to be sampled, among which a total of 119 individuals were approached and interviewed using a combination of one-on-one and small group interviews and FGDs [Focus group discussions]. The evaluation was conducted over a four-month period from June to September 2022, including data collection in the field during the period from 10 June to 25 July 2022.'<sup>36</sup>

7.3.10 The report stated, 'The majority of respondents thought the Programme has been very important in improving national and municipal responses to human trafficking. They scored the Programme 8.9 on a 10-point scale where 1 was unimportant and 10, very important.'<sup>37</sup>

7.3.11 In the same Evaluation report of November 2022, UNICEF stated, 'To improve outreach, mobile units were used in the project counties to bring field workers and service providers to the communities to provide awareness raising and outreach and to identify PV/VoTs. The mobile units helped field workers access rural, remote and mountainous communities, which are not typically reached by awareness raising and outreach activities.'<sup>38</sup>

7.3.12 The website of the 'Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania' programme noted that steps were being taken to address prevention as part of the programme, stating, 'Individuals (children and adults) are provided with empowerment/community/education services to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking.'<sup>39</sup> The partners involved in providing these services are listed on the [website](#).

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<sup>33</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Geographic distribution), no date

<sup>34</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Programme results), no date

<sup>35</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Programme results), no date

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (pV), November 2022

<sup>37</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p53), November 2022

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#), November 2022

<sup>39</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Geographic distribution), no date

- 7.3.13 Further considering efforts to raise awareness around trafficking, the USSD TiP report 2023 noted, ‘The government, sometimes in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations, conducted awareness campaigns for students, government officials, the public, and teachers.’<sup>40</sup>
- 7.3.14 In the response of December 2022 to the Council of Europe, the Albanian government noted the implementation of the ‘Awareness and Information for Security and Empowerment for All – Albania’ project: ‘For the implementation of this project, local seminars were held with members of the Regional Committees and Anti-trafficking Technical Tables, with representatives of civil society, teachers and students to increase their knowledge and skills on the provision of services and information on regular migration, education, training, business, self-employment and employment opportunities for returnees.’<sup>41</sup>
- 7.3.15 The report also noted the response to the priorities set by the Albanian government in the National Strategy for Migration 2019-2022, which aimed to ensure an effective response to the management of migration from Albania to the EU member states: ‘During the campaign activities, the participants were informed about... the consequences of irregular migration, including the denial of entry, smuggling, exploitation, trafficking and possible involvement in criminal activities.’<sup>42</sup>
- 7.3.16 The report also noted awareness-raising which was carried out with children and young people in mind:
- ‘The activities throughout [October 2022] are mainly focused on: exhibitions with works of high school and 9- year-old students; local discussion forums on trafficking issues; awareness raising activities for child trafficking with local representatives, students and high school students; television programs on national and local television; awareness marches in the capital and district centers; distribution of awareness materials, information boxes and tents, etc.
- ‘In the framework of the anti-trafficking month, October 2022, information sessions in schools have been a strong instrument of awareness. A total of 26 information sessions were held in schools with the participation of 720 students in cooperation with the Child Protection Workers (CPO), the State Social Service, representatives of community centers, as well as psychologists or academic staff. Believing that children and young people can be a strong point of support for any of their peers who may be victims of this phenomenon, leaflets and posters with contact numbers to seek help and report trafficking have been distributed.
- ‘5 focus groups were held with security officers in schools, distribution of awareness-raising materials and videos, as well as awareness-raising activities carried out by the victims themselves, etc. Also, during the month of October 2022, 3 focus groups were held in the community with a participation of 50 people who were informed in which cases they may feel at risk of trafficking and how they can seek help.

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<sup>40</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>41</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p27), received 19 December 2022

<sup>42</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p27), received 19 December 2022

'On 27.10.2022, for the first time in Albania, the study report "Our findings speak for themselves..." was carried out by a group of survivors of sexual violence and trafficking, now researchers, who have collected and analyzed evidence on the experiences of young people in criminal justice, sexual rape and trafficking. For more click the link: <http://differentandequal.org/en/raport-studimor/>'<sup>43</sup>

7.3.17 The report also set out details of work undertaken to ensure the safety of children online:

'Specific interventions by UNICEF have been undertaken in order to prevent child trafficking and the use of ICT [information and communications technology] through training with child protection professionals, guardians, teachers and parents, in close cooperation with local partners and state institutions such as the National Certification Authority Electronics and Cyber Security (AKCESK). ... the work of UNICEF and the Albanian Sustainable Development Organization (ASDO) clearly aims to inform teenagers, young people and their guardians about internet safety. This work is continuing through the BiblioTech centers....'<sup>44</sup>

7.3.18 The report also explained initiatives to raise awareness of trafficking within communities:

'In the framework of the projects that NCATS [the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters] implements, ... [there] have been ... informational sessions with the community in urban, suburban and rural areas, TV and radio talks, production and distribution of informational materials, awareness-raising activities in the public areas, marches and protests, etc.

'During the 2021-2022 period, information sessions were held with the community regarding the phenomenon of trafficking in social media (website, Facebook, Instagram). About 4,500 people have been informed through information campaigns.'<sup>45</sup>

7.3.19 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC considered the effectiveness of some of the policies, programmes and projects aimed at reducing and raising awareness of trafficking. The EC stated that 'Prevention efforts, especially on strategic communication, should be stepped up. Dedicated awareness-raising campaigns should be developed to target communities at risk of trafficking in human beings and high-risk sectors and environments.'<sup>46</sup>

7.3.20 The EC also stated, 'Implementation of the 2021-2023 national action plan on the fight against human trafficking should be supported by adequate funding and better coordination.'<sup>47</sup>

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## 7.4 International assistance and progress

7.4.1 Through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund, the UK Government has invested over £3.5m of Official Development Assistance between December

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<sup>43</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p28), received 19 December 2022

<sup>44</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p28-30), received 19 December 2022

<sup>45</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p28), received 19 December 2022

<sup>46</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p46), 8 November 2023

<sup>47</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p46), 8 November 2023

2019 and September 2022 in a programme delivered by a consortium led by UNICEF. The extended programme aims to strengthen an efficient nationwide system response to human trafficking in and from Albania with the aim of reducing its prevalence<sup>48</sup>. See [Annex A](#) for key outcomes.

7.4.2 Since October 2022, the UK Government has signed revised Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with UNICEF and the OSCE to continue the delivery of the MSF programme up to March 2025 through an investment of over £2.9m of Official Development Assistance. These MoUs (available on request) set out that the programme extension will work closely with the Government of Albania to:

- Strengthen the resilience of people identified as at risk of trafficking/retrafficking from the pull and push factors of trafficking in the four specified regions of Albania
- Provide survivors of trafficking with quality care and protection but also empower them to voice safely their opinion and have a direct say on how to shape their future
- Invest in partnerships with state and non-state institutions, the private sector and human rights groups to strengthen high-level advocacy and facilitate legislative changes and state budgetary allocations to counter human trafficking sustainably
- Produce a scoping study identifying current capabilities, gaps and needs to investigate and prosecute human trafficking<sup>49</sup>

7.4.3 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Government of Albania stated that the Ministry of the Interior considered it very important to coordinate efforts between international organizations working in the field of anti-trafficking<sup>50</sup>. Information about international co-operation is available in the [report](#) (page 21 onwards).

7.4.4 The report further stated:

‘... in terms of regional and international cooperation, the partnership has taken on a new dimension with meetings with counterparts from Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, etc. to intensify efforts in the fight against human trafficking... A number of measures have been taken to further intensify this cooperation, by signing and implementing additional Agreements and Protocols with Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Greece and the United Kingdom for the identification, referral, protection and reintegration of victims/potential victims of trafficking...’<sup>51</sup>

7.4.5 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC commented that ‘Albania continued to actively participate in EMPACT [European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats] Joint Action Days promoting cooperation against...the smuggling of migrants...and trafficking in human beings...’<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

<sup>49</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

<sup>50</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p21), received 19 December 2022

<sup>51</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p26), received 19 December 2022

<sup>52</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p45), 8 November 2023

- 7.4.6 The letter to the Home Office from the British Embassy, dated January 2023, stated that, as part of its efforts to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable individuals, the MSF programme aimed to improve access to community-based social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking in the 4 specified regions (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra). UNICEF has signed contracts with Terre des Hommes to train officials at the municipal level and to coordinate with social services and employment offices to identify and reach individuals at risk and provide them with increased access to social protection, training and information about employment. This partnership is also providing technical and financial assistance to Multi-Functional Community Centres (MFCCs) in Kukesi and Shkodra, and will establish a new MFCC in Bulqiza (Dibra region) in March 2023. These MFCCs work to assist vulnerable families and individuals at risk of trafficking and refer them to additional required social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking<sup>53</sup>.
- 7.4.7 On 20 February 2024, the British Ambassador in Albania, Alastair King-Smith, provided the Home Office with an update on actions taken to address the issue of trafficking in Albania. This letter stated:
- ‘British Embassy Tirana supported Medaille Trust organization to deliver their 8th international conference in Albania, which brought together UK law enforcement partners with Albanian representatives to improve cooperation and understanding on modern slavery in Albania. The Joint Migration Task Force, Medaille Trust and other partners agreed to support any activity around the MSHT [modern slavery and human trafficking] threat and establish a communication pathway for advice, guidance and support.’<sup>54</sup>
- 7.4.8 The update also provided the following information about further assistance provided by the UK:
- ‘Supporting Albania’s capacity to investigate human trafficking:** Comprising a number of Albanian State Police Officers and colleagues from Home Office International Operations and the National Crime Agency, the Joint Migration Task Force (JMTF) was formed in May 2023 to assist in implementation of the Joint Communiqué [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué<sup>55</sup>] with a focus on organised immigration crime, and became fully operational in August 2023. The JMTF has fostered relationships with law enforcement in the UK and Albania, establishing an effective intelligence and information-sharing system. This collaboration has led to the creation of several intelligence reports and identification to date of around 100 cases with multiple individuals involved, helping in the disruption of organised immigration crime and modern slavery and human trafficking in both countries. Additionally, the JMTF is actively involved in identifying irregular migration through the Western Balkans of third-country nationals and disrupting the smuggling and trafficking of persons.’<sup>56</sup>
- 7.4.9 In January 2023, the OSCE provided information to the British Embassy on

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<sup>53</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

<sup>54</sup> [Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana \(Annex A\)](#), 20 February 2024

<sup>55</sup> Albanian & UK Govts, [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué: Enhancing bilateral...](#), 13 December 2022

<sup>56</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

its internationally-funded work in Albania in regard to human trafficking:

‘The OSCE Presence in Albania (the Presence) addresses trafficking in human beings (THB) through a multi-disciplinary approach, building on its long-standing support for the improvement of anti-trafficking legislation and action plans, particularly in the areas of multi-agency procedures for identifying trafficking victims and capacity development to facilitate implementation of the legal framework and OSCE commitments. Over time, the assistance provided by the Presence has evolved into a policy-to-practice strategy, and specifically, the Presence is supporting the country’s policy framework for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking, with a focus on the Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism Framework (NRM). It is presently offering technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior in assessing and launching the revision of the NRM, as the main institutional mechanism that assists state and non-state institutions to identify human trafficking victims and ensure their protection. In doing so, it is also addressing the nexus of technology-facilitated trafficking and migration.

‘To address challenges faced when dealing with the exploitation of children in street situations, the Presence supported the State Agency for the Rights and the Protection of the Child to issue a Guidance on “Data gathering, analysis and determination of action for children at risk of exploitation or trafficking”. To support its implementation, the Presence assisted in the development of a web-based database that unifies and standardizes child trafficking data collected from child protection workers and law enforcement agencies. Together, these actions have led to the development, with the Presence’s assistance, of a Council of Ministers’ Decision on child trafficking data collection, which will standardize institutional data on children at risk and trafficking victims.

‘The Presence also prioritizes capacity development for judges and prosecutors on the effective application of victim-centred and human rights based approaches in the criminal proceedings. With funds from the UK Government, the Presence organized the first ever simulation-based training for anti-trafficking practitioners in Albania in October 2021 and a mock-trial training for students of the School of Magistrates on how to prosecute and convict human trafficking cases in February 2022. In 2021, the Presence developed e-learning anti-trafficking courses for judges and prosecutors through the School of Magistrates and for police through the Security Academy.

‘With funding from the governments of the United States, Norway and Italy, the Presence is focused on building a cohort of specialized staff for the anti-trafficking capacity building at the School of Magistrates and Security Academy, through a training of trainers approach to improve the curricula, introduce innovative training techniques in the continuous education and conduct anti-trafficking related academic research.’<sup>57</sup>

#### 7.4.10 Regarding law enforcement and criminal justice and Albania’s capacity to investigate trafficking in accordance with the obligation under Article 4 ECHR

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<sup>57</sup> OSCE, [Annex A2](#), 19 January 2023

(European Convention on Human Rights), the UK has funded a project delivered by OSCE to deliver simulation-based training (SBT). The OSCE provided details:

'The first Albanian human trafficking simulation-based learning initiative was prepared and delivered by the Presence for the first time in Albania for 52 multidisciplinary trainees, promoting an innovative approach to capacity building in which anti-trafficking practitioners participated in real-time simulated scenarios to identify and investigate human trafficking, improving synergy among key national stakeholders in the restoration and protection of trafficking survivors' human rights and fundamental freedoms. This training was delivered under a UK-funded project. The project increased knowledge and influenced the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of police, prosecutors, judges, victims' advocates, social workers, and labor inspectors to deal with human trafficking cases from a human rights-based and multi-agency approach using innovative and sustainable training tools, based on written feedback from the project's beneficiaries, written correspondence with institutions.'<sup>58</sup>

#### 7.4.11 OSCE are now delivering a scoping report:

'The Scoping Study will analyse the THB trends, starting from traditional patterns such as irregular migration that creates vulnerabilities leading to THB, to new challenges like technology-facilitated THB. The report will analyse the law enforcement and prosecution's ability to investigate and prosecute cases, institutional efforts and infrastructure for THB data collection in order to identify gaps and provide recommendations on necessary interventions to improve the law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute offenders.'<sup>59</sup>

#### 7.4.12 In a letter to the Home Office of 20 February 2024, the FCDO provided an update on assistance being provided to trafficking victims via the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund, and stated 'Delivery of the Albanian Government's [National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#) for the Fight against Human Being Trafficking 2021-2023:<sup>60</sup> a Monitoring and Evaluation consultant was engaged to support the monitoring of the NAP. The first draft of the NAP monitoring report has been completed and the Ministry of Interior plans to circulate it to all relevant stakeholders by January 2024.'<sup>61</sup>

#### 7.4.13 In a letter to the Home Office of 20 February 2024, the FCDO stated:

'... we have enhanced our collaboration with the Albanian Government to deliver the UK-Albania Joint Communiqué signed in December 2022. Two key governance structures support joint work to tackle migration, modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT):

- 'A "Joint Oversight Committee at the level of Ministries of Interior/Home Office" that meets monthly to monitor delivery of the Communiqué commitments on migration, and oversees the operational work of the

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<sup>58</sup> OSCE, [Annex A2](#), 19 January 2023

<sup>59</sup> OSCE, [Annex A2](#), 19 January 2023

<sup>60</sup> Govt of Albania, [National Action Plan for the Fight Against Human Being Trafficking, 2021-2023](#) (unofficial English translation available on request)

<sup>61</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

Joint Migration Task Force.

- 'A Steering Committee with the Ministry of Interior that provides strategic direction for the Modern Slavery Fund programme in Albania. The steering committee meets periodically to discuss programme progress.'<sup>62</sup>

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Section updated: 4 June 2024

## 8. Trafficking of persons

### 8.1 Nature of exploitation

8.1.1 In a report of May 2022, UNICEF noted, 'Albania is significantly affected by, and remains primarily a source country for, human trafficking. Of the non-European Union (EU) trafficking victims identified in the EU, Albanians are the second largest group.'<sup>63</sup>

8.1.2 The USSD TiP Report 2023 stated:

'As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Albania, and traffickers exploit victims from Albania abroad...

'Traffickers exploit Albanian victims in sex trafficking in countries across Europe, particularly Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (UK). Albanian migrants who seek employment in Western Europe are vulnerable to exploitation in forced labor and forced criminality, particularly in the UK...'<sup>64</sup>

8.1.3 A 'Survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices of youth regarding human trafficking in four regions of Albania' by Deanna Davy and Blerina Metanj for UNICEF Albania published in September 2022, prepared in the framework of 'Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania' Programme (UNICEF Albania September 2022 report), collected data from 14 January to 1 March 2022 through face-to-face interviews with 1,387 Albanian youth aged 15 to 29 in 4 regions of the country: Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër, plus 200 Roma youth in Kukes, Shkoder and Tirana<sup>65</sup>. The summary of findings for 4 regions noted that 'Albania is significantly affected by human trafficking... The country is recognised as a major source for human trafficking, with Albanians mostly trafficked to Italy, Greece, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany and Switzerland, often through organized criminal networks. Meanwhile, domestic trafficking has been a significant phenomenon for approximately two decades, with most domestic victims being children and youth.'<sup>66</sup>

8.1.4 The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) 'Third evaluation round' on Albania, published 15 December 2020, based on questionnaires sent to the Albanian government

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<sup>62</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

<sup>63</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#), May 2022

<sup>64</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>65</sup> Davy and Metanj, [Summary ... for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#) (p6), September 2022

<sup>66</sup> Davy and Metanj, [Summary ... for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#) (p4), September 2022

and supplementary information submitted by the government, information from civil society and an evaluation visit to Albania in September 2019 for discussions with government and non-government actors (CoE GRETA report 2020), observed that Albania was:

‘... primarily a source country for victims of trafficking in human beings (THB), but also to some extent a country of destination... The majority of the victims were women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but there were also victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced begging, forced criminality and forced marriage. The vast majority of the victims were Albanian citizens exploited abroad, mainly in Western Europe (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, the Netherlands, United Kingdom) and neighbouring countries (Kosovo...], Greece, North Macedonia)...

‘Children are mainly exploited in begging by their parents or close relatives, or trafficked for the purpose of committing criminal activities, including work on cannabis farms in Albania. Children from the Roma and Egyptian... communities are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. There has been an increase in the number of Albanian children subjected to forced labour in Kosovo... and the UK. Some Albanian children who travelled with their parents to the Netherlands, France and Germany were reportedly left there unaccompanied and vulnerable to exploitation...’<sup>67</sup>

- 8.1.5 A report by lead researcher for UNICEF Albania, Deanna Davy, on the relationship between victims of trafficking (VOT) and their traffickers, published in May 2022 (UNICEF Albania May 2022 report), based on ‘semi-structured interviews with 30 trafficking survivors (27 female, 3 male) and 14 key informants, as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) with 31 representatives of government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs)’, and a review of existing literature, noted:

‘Albanians are trafficked to Italy and Greece, but also other destinations including the United Kingdom (UK), Sweden, Germany and Switzerland. Albanian men, women, girls and boys are trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation, or both, in these, and other, destination countries... In the past decade, domestic trafficking has become a more significant phenomenon in Albania than cross-border trafficking.’<sup>68</sup>

- 8.1.6 The EC’s Albania Report 2022, dated 12 October 2022, covering the period from June 2021 to June 2022, noted that:

‘Albania continues to be a country of origin, transit and destination of trafficking in human beings, but the numbers of victims of trafficking [sic] of Albanian origin has significantly decreased in 2020-2021 period. Albanian women and children are subject to trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour and criminal exploitation to neighbouring countries and EU Member States. There are indications of increased trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation and begging in Albania. Children placed in institutions and children from the Roma and Egyptian communities are particularly

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<sup>67</sup> CoE, [GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#) (p8), 15 December 2020

<sup>68</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Trafficked by someone I know...](#) (p17), May 2022

vulnerable to trafficking.<sup>69</sup>

- 8.1.7 The Home Office FFT 2022 were told by a number of sources that men and boys were generally exploited in forced labour, criminal activities relating to drugs or theft, and begging, whilst women and girls faced sexual exploitation<sup>70</sup>.
- 8.1.8 The USSD TiP report 2023 noted, ‘... Traffickers exploit Albanian women and children in sex trafficking and forced labor within the country, especially during tourist season...’<sup>71</sup>
- 8.1.9 The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) published Concluding Observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania on 30 October 2023. In these Concluding Observations UN CEDAW noted that refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls are at a higher risk of trafficking for purposes of sexual or labour exploitation due to lack of victim identification<sup>72</sup>.
- 8.1.10 When the Home Office FFT 2022 met with a representative of Vatra Psycho-Social Centre in October 2022, they were provided with the following statistics concerning male victims of trafficking:
- 61% forced begging
  - 16% forced labour
  - 13% criminal acts such as burglary, distributing drugs
  - 7% forced begging and forced labour
  - 3% of cases have been minor boys exploited sexually<sup>73</sup>
- 8.1.11 UNICEF’s Evaluation report of November 2022 noted:
- ‘[A] notable trend recently identified is that men and boys are being trafficked to engage in illegal activities, such as drug harvesting and distribution, and street crimes. Traffickers often use debt bondage (i.e., the price of helping VoTs to illegally cross a border into EU countries) to trap men and boys into exploitative situations, particularly from a country such as Albania where young people, particularly young men, do not have many employment opportunities.’<sup>74</sup>
- 8.1.12 On 5 March 2023, The Guardian published an article which stated:
- ‘Dr Andi Hoxhaj, lecturer in law, University College London (UCL), told a home affairs select committee inquiry on Albania that ... some Albanians ... are tricked into travelling to Britain. UK-based Albanian-origin organised crime networks have strengthening ties to impoverished rural areas of Albania, and are focused on “luring young Albanian men to the UK to work and engage in illegal activities” – cannabis farming in particular, he said.’<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> EC, [Albania Report 2022](#) (p42), 12 October 2022

<sup>70</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p23, 26, 33, 65, 68, 81, 100, 109), December 2022

<sup>71</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>72</sup> UN OHCHR, [...Concluding Observations on the 5th periodic report...](#) (para 25), 30 October 2023

<sup>73</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#), December 2022

<sup>74</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming ...](#) (p12), November 2022

<sup>75</sup> The Guardian, [Young Albanian men ‘viciously exploited’ after arriving in UK](#), 5 March 2023

### 8.1.13 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

'Traffickers commonly force children to beg or perform other types of compelled labor, such as selling small items, and also force children into criminality, including burglary and narcotics distribution. Traffickers exploit Albanian children, mainly from the Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities, for seasonal work and forced begging. Isolated reports state traffickers exploit children through forced labor in cannabis fields in Albania and some traffickers are likely involved in drug trafficking.'<sup>76</sup>

### 8.1.14 The report further noted that 'Experts report children with mental and physical disabilities were increasingly vulnerable to trafficking.'<sup>77</sup>

### 8.1.15 In the Child Labor report 2022, the US DoL stated '...children in Albania are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including use in illicit activities and forced begging, and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in scavenging, including scavenging for chromium near mines.'<sup>78</sup>

### 8.1.16 In the Concluding Observations published in October 2023, the UN noted the high number of girls exploited in prostitution in Albania<sup>79</sup>.

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## 8.2 Drivers of trafficking/profile of victims

### 8.2.1 The UNICEF report of May 2022 explained that 'The drivers of human trafficking in Albania are broad, multiple and often overlapping. A number of vulnerability factors come into play in human trafficking in Albania, including harmful social and gender norms, poverty, low levels of education, mental health issues, forced marriage arrangements, and limited options for safe and legal migration. Other factors include discrimination against minority groups, such as Roma, who are often trafficked for sexual exploitation.'<sup>80</sup>

### 8.2.2 The UNICEF Albania September 2022 report noted that 'Most Albanian victims come from a background of poverty and unemployment and have a lack of education. For trafficked children and youth, the risk factors mostly emanate from the household and family, and include family breakdown and abandonment. The consequence of these factors is compounded by the absence of protective safety nets.'<sup>81</sup>

### 8.2.3 Officials consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, including from Caritas, (a Catholic organisation which provides access to social and health services, advocacy for anti-trafficking measures, emergency relief and social development in Albania<sup>82</sup>), Terres des Hommes (a Swiss child relief agency with a mission in Albania<sup>83</sup>), and Key Adviser (a private employment agency licensed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance who are part of a project

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<sup>76</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>77</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>78</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#), 26 September 2023

<sup>79</sup> UN OHCHR, [...Concluding Observations on the 5th periodic report...](#) (para 25), 30 October 2023

<sup>80</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p17), May 2022

<sup>81</sup> Davy, D, [Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#) (p4), September 2022

<sup>82</sup> Caritas, [Albania - Caritas](#), no date

<sup>83</sup> Terre des Hommes, [About Us](#), no date

led by UNICEF Albania and financed by the British Embassy Tirana<sup>84</sup>), indicated that the risk factors for human trafficking, for men, women and children, included the difficult economic situation, being in receipt of economic aid, the person's family situation, for example, divorce, single-headed households or absent parents, early marriage and domestic violence (DV)<sup>85</sup>. Officials working for mobile units (which help identify and refer actual or potential victims of trafficking) in Kukes stated that people living in remote and poor areas of the country were most at risk of being trafficked, adding that 'There are no businesses and no industry and nothing to live on in these areas.'<sup>86</sup>

- 8.2.4 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC noted, 'Children placed in institutions and children from the Roma and Egyptian communities are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.'<sup>87</sup>
- 8.2.5 According to sources consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, most actual or potential victims of trafficking were women<sup>88</sup>.
- 8.2.6 However, the UNICEF report of May 2022 noted, '...men and boys are also trafficked, within Albania and to foreign countries. The ethnic composition of male victims has changed over time: previously, most identified male trafficking victims were Roma or Egyptian, but in more recent years, ethnic Albanian males have been identified.'<sup>89</sup>
- 8.2.7 However, 6 sources told the Home Office FFT 2022 that most men did not accept or recognise that they were victims of trafficking, or that they were not recognised as such by society<sup>90</sup>. The UNICEF Albania September 2022 report found that only 5% of 1,387 survey respondents (aged 15 to 29) recognised that men aged over 18 were at risk of trafficking<sup>91</sup>.
- 8.2.8 In a statement by the Albanian anti-trafficking network United Response Against Trafficking (URAT) (a coalition of religious congregations and nonprofit organisations in Albania) that was published on Arise's website, marking World Day Against Trafficking in July 2023, it was noted that: 'The trafficking of men and boys is very widespread, despite being less considered or discussed. The experiences of trafficked men and boys include various forms of trafficking. Men and boys are exploited for forced labour, sexual exploitation, the use and involvement in low-level criminal activities (theft and distribution of narcotics), and for forced begging.'<sup>92</sup>
- 8.2.9 A representative of Terre des hommes – Albania, an organisation which is involved in anti-trafficking efforts from the transnational level to the local level in Albania, including work to prevent trafficking and raise awareness, stated in an interview with Asylos that: 'Men exploited mainly abroad for forced labor, and young men, mainly for criminality and a few cases of sexual

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<sup>84</sup> Key Adviser, [About us](#), no date

<sup>85</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p51, 91, 100), December 2022

<sup>86</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p54), December 2022

<sup>87</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#), 8 November 2023

<sup>88</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p55, 57, 74, 100), December 2022

<sup>89</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p17), May 2022

<sup>90</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p20, 28, 81, 94, 100, 104), December 2022

<sup>91</sup> Davy, D, [Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#) (p12), September 2022

<sup>92</sup> URAT, [World Day Against Trafficking: Men and Boys](#), 31 July 2023

exploitation, and these cases of sexual exploitation are mainly from the LGBTI community. [...] we have at Terre des Hommes worked directly with victims of trafficking, but this is the information from exchanging with the LGBTI shelter here in Albania.<sup>93</sup>

- 8.2.10 The NGO D&E, in its February 2022 submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, highlighted the vulnerability of Roma and Egyptian minorities to trafficking:

‘As in other countries, the vulnerable groups including ... minorities (Roma and Egyptian minorities), ... remain the most at risk of trafficking in Albania. Regarding the question for the profile of the most vulnerable groups subjected to contemporary forms of slavery we would single out the Roma minority. ... Related to Roma minority 25% of the cases (including minors and adults) assisted at D&E program are from Roma community during 2021. They are exploited for sexual services (female victims), forced begging, committing criminal acts such as distributing drugs or stealing (minor male victims).’

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### 8.3 Numbers and ages of victims

- 8.3.1 According to Ministry of Interior statistics, provided by officials from UNICEF Albania to the Home Office FFT 2022, there were:

- 5 adult VOT (3 female and 2 male) and 154 adult PVOT (potential victim of trafficking) (96 female and 58 male) in 2021 compared with 5 adult VOT (all female) and 81 adult PVOT (57 female and 24 male) in 2020
- 2 child VOT and 110 child PVOT in 2021 compared to 1 child VOT and 57 child PVOT in 2020<sup>94</sup>

- 8.3.2 A 2021 report by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, cited during the Home Office FFM 2022, by the Center for Legal and Civic Initiatives (CLCI), a civil society organisation that provides legal aid to victims of gender-based violence, including trafficking victims<sup>95</sup>, noted that ‘For the year 2021 it is reported the referral and support on rehabilitation and reintegration for more than 254 women and girls, and their children...’<sup>96</sup> An official from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘From [the start of] 2021 to June 2022 the shelters provided support to 396 actual or potential victims of trafficking. These 396 are not necessarily all placed in shelters but they are also helped in the community with reintegration, with education, vocational training, free legal aid, housing and so on.’<sup>97</sup>

- 8.3.3 See also [Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#).

- 8.3.4 Brikena Puka, Executive Director of Vatra Psycho-Social Center, provided statistics to the Home Office FFT 2022, which noted that ‘In 2021, 159 new cases have been identified, supported by the national anti-trafficking

<sup>93</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p32), April 2024

<sup>94</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p13-15), December 2022

<sup>95</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p40), December 2022

<sup>96</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p42), December 2022

<sup>97</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p75), December 2022

coalition shelters. 66 of them have been supported by Vatra.<sup>98</sup> Puka added 'This is not an exact number of cases that have been exploited. This is only the tip of the iceberg', indicating that these were just cases identified in Albania<sup>99</sup>.

- 8.3.5 From 2020 to September 2022, 201 VOT/PVOT were assisted by Vatra, plus 114 of their accompanying children. Of these, 138 (plus 78 accompanying children) were newly assisted during that period and 63 (plus 36 accompanying children) continued to receive assistance from the previous reporting period<sup>100</sup>.

	2020		2021	2022 (to Sept)	<b>Total</b>
	Carried	New	New	New	
VOT/PVOT	63	33	66	39	<b>201</b>
Children	36	17	54	7	<b>114</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>315</b>

- 8.3.6 D&E recorded the age range of those they assisted in 2020<sup>101</sup> and 2021<sup>102</sup>, which included cases carried over from the previous reporting period:

Age	11 to 15		16 to 18		19 to 21		Over 21		<b>Total</b>
Year	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	
# of cases carried	13	6	10	29	14	4	21	36	<b>133</b>
# of new cases	12	8	8	11	4	2	9	9	<b>63</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>196</b>

- 8.3.7 In a report published in July 2020, OSCE set out the results of a study based upon the review of 45 case of potential victims of child trafficking, 31 of whom were girls and 14 boys<sup>103</sup>. The report stated:

'Of the analysed cases, the age of the girls at time of identification ranged from 12 to 17, with the majority, 29 out of 31, or 93% aged 14-16 years old. The boys identified in this research were aged from 11 to 16 years old, with six of the 14 (43%) identified age between 14 to 16 years old. In one case, an infant of less than a year, ... was identified by the Border Police while "unknown persons" were attempting to send the baby to Greece for illegal adoption. In other words, these cases suggest that it is adolescent children

<sup>98</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p65), December 2022

<sup>99</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p65), December 2022

<sup>100</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p73), December 2022

<sup>101</sup> D&E, [2020 Annual report](#) (p1), 10 September 2021

<sup>102</sup> D&E, [2021 Annual Report](#) (p6), 28 July 2022

<sup>103</sup> OSCE, [A Typology of Child Trafficking Cases in Albania](#) (Exec Summary), July 2020

who are most at risk of trafficking in Albania...<sup>104</sup>

- 8.3.8 In the report of May 2022, UNICEF noted that ‘Girls of age 14–18 years are most likely to be targeted for sex trafficking’<sup>105</sup> and that ‘...many interviewed survivors reported that children of age 13–14 years are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking...’<sup>106</sup>
- 8.3.1 According to data provided by Vatra to the Home Office FFT 2022, 79% of the cases of VOT/PVOT were girls and women and 21% men and boys (most of them aged under 15 years old)<sup>107</sup>.
- 8.3.2 A Home Office statistical bulletin, which provided a summary and breakdown of the number of potential victims of modern slavery referred into the UK’s National Referral Mechanism (NRM) or via the Duty to Notify (DtN) process during the year 2023, noted that the second most commonly referred nationality was Albanian (24%; 4,052), of which 78% (3,147) were adults<sup>108</sup>.
- 8.3.3 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:  
‘The government and NGOs identified 110 potential victims and two official victims, a decrease compared with 154 potential victims and five official victims in 2021. Of these, 61 were potential sex trafficking victims; 35 potential labor trafficking victims, including 26 forced begging victims; and 14 potential victims of forced criminality. Thirty-two of the victims were women, four men, 48 girls, and 26 boys; there were two foreign victims from Syria and one victim from Kosovo.’<sup>109</sup>
- 8.3.4 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC stated, ‘In 2022, 112 victims or potential victims were identified and assisted, compared with 159 in 2021.’<sup>110</sup>

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## 8.4 Traffickers’ profiles and recruitment methods

- 8.4.1 A May 2021 report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (Global Initiative) on commercial sexual exploitation of children and child protection responses in the Western Balkans stated with regard to Albania that: ‘Children from all across the country are approached and recruited online by criminal networks and then brought to touristic cities such as Vlora, Durrës and Saranda or to big cities such as Tirana, Shkoder and Elbasan for sexual exploitation in hotels and motels. Organized networks are reported to be involved and often lure the children with pictures of luxurious hotels and lifestyles as well as luring them with the promise of fast money.’<sup>111</sup>
- 8.4.2 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report, citing various sources, considering victims of trafficking generally (female and male) noted:  
‘From an analysis of 99 human trafficking cases presented by Vatra Psycho-

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<sup>104</sup> OSCE, [A Typology of Child Trafficking Cases in Albania](#) (p17), July 2020

<sup>105</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p8), May 2022

<sup>106</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p60), May 2022

<sup>107</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p74), December 2022

<sup>108</sup> HO, [Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism...](#) (section 3.4), 7 March 2024

<sup>109</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>110</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p45), 8 November 2023

<sup>111</sup> Global Initiative, [Exploited in plain sight...](#) (p24), May 2021

Social Centre between 2015 and September 2017, 68 percent of traffickers were either close family members or had close social ties. Of these, 31 percent were reported to be cases in which “boyfriends” had exploited victims, 25 percent were friends and other people known to the victim, and twelve percent were related to the family. In 19 percent of cases victims were exploited by people that they had met on Facebook. Only thirteen percent of cases involved a human trafficker who was not known to the victim. Despite the evidence that in the majority of cases, traffickers are someone who is known to the victim... a 2021 study by UNICEF Albania found that 43 percent of surveyed Albanian youth were unaware that traffickers can be family members...<sup>112</sup>

8.4.3 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report also set out its findings based on interviews, undertaken between 17 May and 30 July 2021, with a relatively small sample of 30 (27 female and 3 male) ‘survivors’ of trafficking, all of whom were over 18 and had been trafficked by someone with whom they had a close connection. The study found:

‘... most of the interviewed trafficking survivors (n[umber]=14; 47% [of the total of 30]) were trafficked by their partner (boyfriend, fiancé, husband). Eight survivors (27%) identified their trafficker as a friend. Only four survivors (10%) identified other family members (parents or grandparents) as their trafficker(s). Thus, 84 percent of the survivors were trafficked by someone who was very close to them. Other traffickers that the interviewed survivors reported having close connections to were employers (n=2; 7%), landlords (n=1; 3%) or the intimate partner of a sibling (n=1; 3%).

‘... 23 of the 30 interviewed survivors (77%) identified their trafficker as male. Of these, most (n=21) identified their trafficker as an individual male. In most of these cases, the male trafficker was of a similar age to the victim, and was responsible for luring young Albanian women into sexual exploitation. Two interviewed survivors identified their traffickers as two males. Five survivors (16.5%) identified their trafficker as female. Three survivors identified their perpetrator as one female, and two that their traffickers were two females. In all five cases of female traffickers, these were friends of the victim. This challenges the notion that human traffickers are always, or at least almost always, male.

‘... With regard to the education level of the traffickers, the survivors suggested that their traffickers had received only limited education. This finding is supported by the interviews and FGDs [focus group discussions] with key informants, who suggested that traffickers generally have limited education, especially higher education, and few decent employment options. This may explain, at least in part, why some individuals decide to engage in criminal activities such as human trafficking.

‘With regard to the age of the traffickers, all interviewed survivors (n=30) reported that their trafficker was older than themselves, and significantly so where the trafficker was a parent or grandparent. Survivors who were trafficked by employers or landlords also noted that their traffickers were significantly older than themselves. However, victims who were trafficked by

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<sup>112</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Trafficked by someone I know...](#) (p31-32), May 2022

an intimate partner were usually of a similar age, with the male trafficker usually being only 1–15 years older than the victim. Where victims had been trafficked by friends, the traffickers were also youth, usually only a few years older than the victim.

‘Regarding the geographic proximity of the traffickers to their victims, many interviewed female survivors trafficked by an intimate partner reported that they had met their trafficker in their local area, suggesting that trafficking in Albania is often localised. Traffickers prey on vulnerable women and girls in their neighbourhood, due to their geographic proximity and ease at which they can recruit and groom their potential victims. Similarly, victims trafficked by friends also reported meeting their traffickers in their immediate vicinity, often through networks of friends or family. Most of the interviewed survivors who had been trafficked by friend(s) had grown up in the same neighbourhood as their trafficker and considered them as close friends.’<sup>113</sup>

#### 8.4.4 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report also found that:

‘None of the interviewed survivors who were trafficked by family members reported that their traffickers were employed at the time of their exploitation, suggesting that household poverty plays an important role in the decision to traffic family members, including children. This highlights the importance of early intervention to identify and support families facing poverty, in order to reduce the risk of child trafficking in households facing socio-economic distress.

‘Interviewed survivors who reported that their traffickers were unemployed at the time of their exploitation suggested that their traffickers’ income generation was derived solely from human trafficking activities, though sometimes from other criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and theft. This highlights the nexus between human trafficking and other forms of serious organised crime.

‘With regards to the traffickers’ involvement in other criminal activities, fourteen interviewed survivors (47%) reported that they knew, or strongly suspected, that their traffickers were operating in small or medium-sized organised crime groups. Twelve survivors (n=40%) reported that they knew or strongly suspected that their traffickers currently, or had previously, trafficked other victims.

‘Regarding other criminal activities perpetrated by the traffickers, six survivors (20%) reported that their traffickers were also engaged in drug trafficking, and three (10%) that their traffickers were engaged in theft or robbery. Four survivors (13%) reported that, in addition to human trafficking offences, their traffickers also engaged in drug trafficking and theft or robbery. Some interviewed survivors, especially those who were trafficked by intimate partners, reported that their trafficker had a record of previous arrests for other crimes committed abroad. One interviewed survivor reported that she later became aware (after her escape) that her trafficker (intimate partner) had been previously imprisoned for attempted rape of a fourteen-year-old child. Another interviewed survivor reported that she later became aware that her trafficker (intimate partner) was using a false name

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<sup>113</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Trafficked by someone I know...](#) (p31-32), May 2022

because of his criminal history and attempts to evade the authorities.’<sup>114</sup>

#### 8.4.5 In the same report, UNICEF summarised recruitment methods as below:

‘... Importantly, the [UNICEF] study finds that traffickers carefully assess their potential victims in terms of their vulnerabilities and desires, in order to identify the best way in which to establish a relationship with them and subsequently to groom them.

‘The study further identifies that traffickers consolidate their efforts to recruit a victim by inserting themselves into the life of the victim and earning the family’s trust.

‘With regard to sex trafficking specifically, the study finds that traffickers (especially young male traffickers) establish romantic relationships with the victims (especially teenage girls), promising them marriage and children together, all of which is used as a ruse to easily transfer the victim to the place of exploitation.

‘Social media are increasingly being used as a tool by young male traffickers to identify potential young female victims with whom they can establish a false relationship before forcing them into sexual exploitation.

‘The study also sheds valuable light on the role of female perpetrators in human trafficking offences, with female offenders frequently playing the role of the victim’s friend. Through a false friendship the female perpetrators are able to easily coerce younger female victims into travelling with them to the place of exploitation, before handing over the victim to a larger group of traffickers. Many female perpetrators are themselves former trafficking victims.

‘For child trafficking victims, the situation is different: recruitment tactics are not required by family members who traffic children as the children are easily forced into exploitative labour through feelings of obligation to their family, and guilt.

‘It should further be noted these tactics differentiate traffickers who have a connection with the victim from those who are strangers. The trafficker who is known to the victim can capitalise on their relationship to easily transfer the victim to a different location for exploitation. Affection and trust are easily manipulated by the trafficker who is known to the victim to coerce them into sexual or labour exploitation, or both. In the recruitment phase, force and threats are not required. Rather, affection and trust are employed to persuade the victim to do what the trafficker wants.’<sup>115</sup>

#### 8.4.6 The report also noted methods used to control victims:

‘... the tactics of threats, violence, confinement and confiscation of identity and travel documents and mobile phone are often used to control the victims... traffickers known to the victim can manipulate them more easily through the use of artificial debts and threats...

‘... It is only when the trafficker’s preferred control tactic (artificial debts and threats) is no longer effective (when, e.g., the victim tries to flee) that the

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<sup>114</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Trafficked by someone I know...](#) (p33-34), May 2022

<sup>115</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p43), May 2022

traffickers adopt more forceful tactics of the use of violence, drugs and confining the victim to the place of exploitation... it is in the trafficker's financial interest to avoid more forceful control methods where possible.<sup>116</sup>

- 8.4.7 The same UNICEF report, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (May 2022), included profiles of typical people traffickers (p12). It noted, '... human traffickers in Albania are often involved in serious organised crime, generating significant profits not only from the exploitation of adults or children, or both, but also through theft, robbery, trafficking of drugs and other criminal activities.'<sup>117</sup>
- 8.4.8 The USSD TiP report 2023 noted that 'Traffickers use false promises such as marriage or employment offers to exploit victims in sex trafficking...'<sup>118</sup>
- 8.4.9 In an April 2023 submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the NGO Arise, which works to combat slavery<sup>119</sup>, described the increasing use of technologies to facilitate trafficking in Albania:

'Our Albanian partners described the centrality of technology for trafficking operations. An overwhelming focus was placed upon internet devices, and the utilisation of social media, fake online adverts, and fake employment agencies. The COVID-19 pandemic was identified as a catalyst for younger Albanians gaining increased access to the internet and online devices. This was, generally, a consequence to the temporary shift towards online learning through lockdowns. It was noted that, necessarily, the greatest shifts in terms of internet exposure occurred in the communities that had previously been subject to the lowest levels of internet access. These young people, aged 10-16 at the time of the pandemic, were identified as the group most vulnerable to growing forms of online targeting. After gaining internet access, or even just increased internet access, higher numbers of young people have been introduced to social media. The anti-slavery organisations noted the distinct popularity of TikTok and Instagram. It was also noted that most online engagement, including social media activity, occurs without parental supervision. Organisations have noted a dramatic increase in online trafficking over the last three years, driven by the harnessing of online forums, social media spaces, and fraudulent advertising.'<sup>120</sup> Further information about the particular exploitation of different social media platforms is available in the report.

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## 8.5 Risk of re-trafficking

- 8.5.1 In the report of May 2022 entitled, 'Trafficked by someone I know,' UNICEF referred to their study of the relationships between trafficking victims and human traffickers in Albania and stated:

'The study identified that relationships between victims and traffickers can have a negative effect on victims' vulnerability to re-trafficking by the same

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<sup>116</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p52), May 2022

<sup>117</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p34), May 2022

<sup>118</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>119</sup> Arise, [About us](#), no date

<sup>120</sup> Arise, ...Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur..., April 2023

perpetrator. Children who are trafficked by family members, and victims who are trafficked by an intimate partner, appear to be at a heightened risk of re-trafficking by the same perpetrator. However, through comprehensive support services, victims can recover from their trauma and make a decision to cut off all contact with the trafficker, thus reducing their vulnerability to re-trafficking.<sup>121</sup>

8.5.2 The report further noted that ‘... victims who have supportive families are better positioned than others to escape trafficking situations...’<sup>122</sup>

8.5.3 The report continued:

‘The study identified that victims’ feelings of trust and affection for their traffickers can make them vulnerable to re-trafficking by the same perpetrators... some victims are reluctant, after being rescued, to provide any information on the perpetrators or cooperate with the police. There is a tendency for some, especially those who have been trafficked by a family member, intimate partner or close friend, to place the blame on themselves, rather than on the trafficker. In such cases, some victims may attempt to flee the police station or family home to reunite with their trafficker...

‘Victims who are trafficked as children by family members appear to be at a heightened risk of re-trafficking by the same perpetrators... those who have been trafficked by a parent or grandparent feel a sense of obligation to support their family... This feeling of obligation was usually combined with a feeling that they had nowhere else to go, and there was no support available to them or their family.’<sup>123</sup>

8.5.4 The report also noted that former trafficking victims who have had children with the trafficker are ‘at heightened risk of re-trafficking by the same person.’<sup>124</sup> However, the report also noted, ‘It should be emphasised, however, that at the time of the interviews most of the survivors reported that they were no longer at risk of re-trafficking. During the time between their escape and the interview they had received support services, including mental health support, health services and legal support, and some survivors were cooperating with the police on the investigation and prosecution of their trafficker(s).’<sup>125</sup>

8.5.5 UNICEF further noted that the situation for those who had been trafficked by former partners may be more complex: ‘Some interviewed survivors who were trafficked by their intimate partner suggested that they now have a love-hate relationship with the trafficker... This highlights the importance of providing victims with long-term support, to help them recover from their experience and prevent them returning to the same trafficker, or falling victim to others.’<sup>126</sup>

8.5.6 UNICEF also reported on those who had been trafficked as children but were now adults, stating, ‘... they no longer want a relationship with the

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<sup>121</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p11), May 2022

<sup>122</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p55), May 2022

<sup>123</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p56), May 2022

<sup>124</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p11), May 2022

<sup>125</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p57), May 2022

<sup>126</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p57), May 2022

family member(s) who trafficked them. They are no longer young, and can now, as adults, understand that they were exploited... through ongoing support from the shelter and other organisations, they understand the risks of trafficking and are confident that they would not be exploited by anyone in the future.<sup>127</sup>

- 8.5.7 The UNICEF report, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#), did not provide statistics concerning the number of victims who had been re-trafficked.
- 8.5.8 The Economic Reintegration report of July 2022 noted the significance of family in the recovery of a victim of trafficking:  
‘The interviews highlighted that relationships with families and friends are important to a survivor’s economic reintegration. Those who have no close ties to family members, or whose family is unsupportive or, worse, has subjected the survivor to exploitation or stigma due to their trafficking experience, will face major hurdles in terms of recovery and economic reintegration. On the other hand, survivors who have a supportive family that helps them to recover from their trauma and (re-)enter study, employment or a business are better positioned to recover and sustain their new livelihoods.’<sup>128</sup>
- 8.5.9 When the Home Office FFT 2022 met with a representative from Tjeter Vizion, which works with vulnerable people in Elbasan,<sup>129</sup> in October 2022, they were told that of the 117 VoTs assisted by Tjeter Vizion over the previous 2 years, 6 persons had been re-trafficked; of these, 4 were men and 2 were women<sup>130</sup>.
- 8.5.10 The representatives of the General Directorate of State Police told that Home Office FFT 2022, ‘In terms of statistics re-trafficking is rare, it doesn’t happen often, however it happens.’<sup>131</sup>
- 8.5.11 The Home Office FFT 2022 also met with the Director of Vatra Psycho-Social Centre, who told them, ‘With cases assisted by Vatra we cannot say exactly if they have been re-trafficked or have left the programme. Or they tell us they don’t want any more contact, this is only 2%, but we cannot say if they have been re-trafficked or just living their own life.’<sup>132</sup>
- 8.5.12 The Home Office FFT 2022 also met with an official from the Ministry of Interior, who stated, ‘Based on statistics since 2013 there has not been more than 3 or 4 cases of human re-trafficking.’<sup>133</sup>
- 8.5.13 Representatives of Caritas also met with the Home Office FFT 2022 in October 2022 and told them, ‘Sometimes re-trafficking is the choice of women and girls. For example, when the re-integration process is not going well or the girl might find it difficult to follow the re-integration plan.’<sup>134</sup>
- 8.5.14 In the sources consulted, CPIT were unable to find more recent statistics on

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<sup>127</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p58), May 2022

<sup>128</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p49), July 2022

<sup>129</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p24), December 2022

<sup>130</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p27), December 2022

<sup>131</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p35), December 2022

<sup>132</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p66), December 2022

<sup>133</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p57), December 2022

<sup>134</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p52), December 2022

re-trafficking rates in Albania (see [Bibliography](#)).

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Section updated: 4 June 2024

## 9. Treatment of victims of trafficking

### 9.1 Perceptions

9.1.1 A report by Deanna Davy, published by UNICEF Albania in July 2022 (UNICEF Albania July 2022 report), looked at the economic reintegration of trafficking survivors, based on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted during the period 14 October 2021 to 7 February 2022, with 14 (13 women, one man) trafficking survivors who had received reintegration support from one of the NGO-run shelters for between 3 months and 4 years, and with key informants, including social workers, social service administrators and shelter staff<sup>135</sup>, as well as data from other open sources. The source noted that:

‘The study identified that society-level stigma towards trafficking survivors, especially those who experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation, is a significant issue in Albania. Both survivors and key informants who participated in interviews for the study underscored that trafficking survivors frequently encounter stigma when enrolling in and undertaking study, vocational training or employment, or starting up a new business. A number of stories were shared by survivors and key informants during the interviews and FGDs regarding discrimination. Survivors and key informants reported that survivors often face stigma when attempting to access state services, such as employment and financial support. They may be belittled, made to feel inferior, branded liars and denied any assistance.’<sup>136</sup>

9.1.2 In the report of May 2022, UNICEF stated:

‘Some victims are reluctant to escape their traffickers because of feelings of shame and fear of stigma...some victims are blackmailed by their traffickers who take photos and videos of them being sexually exploited. Victims may be deeply concerned that the trafficker will send these materials to their families, or post them on the Internet, leading to the victim’s family or community shunning them. This fear is justifiable, as ostracism from the family can occur in some cases after a sex trafficking victim has escaped. One interviewed survivor, for example, reported managing to flee a situation of sex trafficking, running to her family home, and being immediately rejected at the front door by her father.’<sup>137</sup>

9.1.3 The Economic Reintegration report of July 2022 stated:

‘Community-level factors, such as stigma, are also relevant to a survivor’s economic reintegration. In addition to survivors of sex trafficking, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (LGBTQI) survivors and those from minority ethnic groups may experience heightened community-level stigma. The study identified that survivors may experience discrimination

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<sup>135</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in...](#) (p23-25), July 2022

<sup>136</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p50), July 2022

<sup>137</sup> UNICEF, [Trafficked by Someone I Know](#) (p55), May 2022

from family members, neighbours, employers, customers and clients, and even frontline professionals.

‘Survivors who experience community-level stigma are likely to face immense challenges in terms of recovery and reintegration. They may experience discrimination and social exclusion. They may encounter difficulties securing stable housing and decent employment in their local community and may also face challenges in forming relationships with employers, neighbours and other people. Those who face discrimination in their community may feel that they have no choice but to relocate to another area of Albania or consider migration abroad.’<sup>138</sup>

9.1.4 The report continued:

‘The study identified that society-level stigma towards trafficking survivors, especially those who experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation, is a significant issue in Albania. Both survivors and key informants who participated in interviews for the study underscored that trafficking survivors frequently encounter stigma when enrolling in and undertaking study, vocational training or employment, or starting up a new business... Survivors and key informants reported that survivors often face stigma when attempting to access state services, such as employment and financial support.’<sup>139</sup>

9.1.5 Officials from D&E and Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFT 2022 that some VOT were reluctant to apply for economic aid from the state as they faced stigma and discrimination because they had to provide evidence of their VOT status<sup>140</sup>.

9.1.6 Sources consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, including officials from UNICEF Albania, D&E, NISMA ARSIS, CLCI, GPO (General Prosecutor’s Office), Caritas, Ministry of Interior and Key Adviser stated that some VOT, particularly women and girls who had been sexually exploited, faced stigma, discrimination and rejection from both family members and society<sup>141</sup>.

9.1.7 An official from D&E interviewed by the Home Office FFT in 2022 stated that ‘Families face shame as they do not see the woman as being exploited, they see her as exercising prostitution and putting shame on the family. In families where the daughter went abroad or to Tirana, or victims of sexual violence in general, they experience discrimination.’<sup>142</sup> Ines Leskaj, Executive Director of the women’s rights group, Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN), explained to the Home Office FFT 2022 that there was a ‘culture of shame’ against female VOT, due to the ‘widespread patriarchal society... especially in rural areas and small towns.’<sup>143</sup> The official from Tjeter Vizion also noted that ‘Most families, and even Albanian society in general, tend to think a VOT is equal to a prostitute and they can’t accept them as victims or accept that they didn’t choose to be victims. The situation is aggravated for mothers with children. It is much

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<sup>138</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p49), July 2022

<sup>139</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p50), July 2022

<sup>140</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p18, 26-27), December 2022

<sup>141</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p12,18,19,32,43,48,53,58,99), December 2022

<sup>142</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p19), December 2022

<sup>143</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p37), December 2022

more difficult to reintegrate these mothers and their children because they are faced with family abandonment as well as societal rejection.<sup>144</sup> The official from NISMA ARSIS told the FFM team that, in most cases, women had to ‘change location due to discrimination and stigma.’<sup>145</sup>

- 9.1.1 Ana Stakaj, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Imelda Poole (President) of Mary Ward Loreto, an NGO which aims to combat human trafficking through rescue, reintegration, rehabilitation, and prevention<sup>146</sup>, told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘If women and girls get caught up in trafficking there is shame in the family and they are told not to return. It is a system of honour. So they shouldn’t come back to their village as what others think is very important to the family, as it is their reputation. So it is how others will treat them from now on.

‘With adultery or those trafficked they would even be stigmatised by friends and family and would lose status, be abandoned or rejected or some would even be killed. There is a difference between fathers and mothers, mothers usually like to accept, but pressure from fathers and male relatives means that they often cut contact with daughters. So the reason why girls don’t want to come back from the UK is that the family would know.’<sup>147</sup>

- 9.1.2 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘Stigma affects both men and women, boys and girls...’ However, it was the official’s opinion that men and boys feel more stigmatised than women as trafficking was generally associated with sexual exploitation. Consequently, men would never admit they were VOT<sup>148</sup>. When asked whether men faced the same level of stigma as women, the official from NISMA ARMIS stated that they had not noticed a big difference, but added that support services generally had increased in the past 10 years. The same source noted that it was more difficult to identify male VOT<sup>149</sup>.
- 9.1.3 In a letter to the Home Office of January 2023, the British Embassy noted that research under the MSF programme recognised that harmful social and gender norms and stigmatisation of survivors are drivers of human trafficking and re-trafficking. As a result, starting in the first quarter of 2023, the programme will develop a new communication strategy that will deliver tailored and targeted messages seeking to change harmful social and gender norms across communities in the 4 specified regions of Albania (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra)<sup>150</sup>.
- 9.1.4 In the sources consulted, CPIT was unable to find any more recent information on the effects of newly-introduced (since 2022) anti-trafficking measures on perceptions of victims of trafficking (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 9.1.5 See also [Prevention, prosecution and convictions](#) for information on the Albanian state’s efforts to raise awareness and reduce stigma.

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<sup>144</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p26), December 2022

<sup>145</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p32), December 2022

<sup>146</sup> Mary Ward Loreto, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>147</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p97), December 2022

<sup>148</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p100), December 2022

<sup>149</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p32), December 2022

<sup>150</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

## 10. Protection

### 10.1 Overview

- 10.1.1 The USSD TiP report 2023 noted that ‘The government increased victim protection efforts [during the year 2022].’<sup>151</sup> The report further stated: ‘The Government of Albania does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Albania remained on Tier 2.’<sup>152</sup>
- 10.1.2 The USSD described tier 2 countries as those ‘... whose governments do not fully meet the [[Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000](#)] TVPA’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.’<sup>153</sup>

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### 10.2 National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

- 10.2.1 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government noted that ‘The cooperation agreement for the operation of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for the protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking constitutes the basic inter-institutional agreement ... for the identification, referral and protection of victims of trafficking.’<sup>154</sup>

- 10.2.2 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian Government stated:

‘The decision of the Council of Ministers “On the approval of the Standard Action Procedures for the protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking” (DCM no. 499, dated 29.08.2018), aims to define the standard action procedures for the protection in the time and proper way of trafficked persons, women/girls, men, adults or minors, for all types of exploitation, domestic or international trafficking, related or not to organized crime.

‘The main focus of these procedures is the victim and his protection, examining each situation case by case and building some standards accepted by all on how the whole process of identification, referral and then protection of the victim will take place. These procedures apply to all categories of victims/potential victims (minors and adults, women and men, Albanians and foreigners) who are subject to trafficking for all types of exploitation.

‘The Standard Operating Procedures mean specialized sectoral and cross-sectoral/multidisciplinary interventions and their implementation is the

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<sup>151</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>152</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>153</sup> USSD, [TiP report 2022](#) (A Guide to the Tiers), 19 July 2022

<sup>154</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p26), received 19 December 2022

obligation of all state institutions, at the central and local level, that work within the territory of the Republic of Albania or are on a state mission abroad, as well as cooperation with analogous structures of foreign countries. The implementation of the Standard Procedures is also mandatory for non-state agencies that exercise their activity in the territory of the Republic of Albania, at any moment in which they, during their activity, come into contact with a person who they suspect may have been trafficked or they have information that he is a trafficked person.<sup>155</sup>

### 10.2.3 The GRETA report 2020 observed:

‘...The SOPs were updated in 2018 and specify the different actors involved in victim identification and their respective roles, and provide indicators for the identification of victims in different situations. There are two phases of identification: initial identification of presumed victims, which may be carried out by the police, border police, social services, labour inspectorate, regional education directorates, regional health directorates, municipal protection child units and civil society organisations, and formal identification by a group comprising a police officer and a social worker. A so-called “Responsible Authority”, which comprised representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, Education and Sports, Health, and Foreign Affairs, as well as three NGOs, decides on the most complex cases of identification, including when Albanian victims have been identified abroad and returned to the country.

‘Following formal identification, victims are informed of their right to assistance and, if necessary, are accommodated in a shelter. There are no differences in the procedure for identification of victims of human trafficking among Albanian and foreign citizens. The provision of assistance is not conditional on the victim’s co-operation with the investigation and prosecution, despite the continued encouragement of victims of trafficking to testify in criminal proceedings. However, during GRETA’s evaluation visit, concerns were raised by various interlocutors that the police uses the identification interview to put pressure on victims to file reports against perpetrators. In addition, GRETA expressed concerns over the fact that only two victims were formally identified [by] the authorities for 2018, out of the 95 presumed victims, raising questions as to possible delays or impediments in the procedure...

‘GRETA welcomes the efforts made in improving the proactive approach to identification through the setting up of mobile units in three regions of the country (Tirana, Vlora and Elbasan), which visit places where there are risks of trafficking, such as night clubs and begging hotspots. The mobile units are supposed to include NGO representatives and police officers, but the latter reportedly do not participate systematically in the work of the mobile units. At the beginning of 2020, three more new mobile units were set up in the regions of Shkodra, Kukës and Dibër. Mobile units operate in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures for the protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking, as well as the specific Standards of Mobile Units. For the proper functioning of these units, co-operation agreements have been signed between the local Police Directorates and the National

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<sup>155</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p23), received 19 December 2022

Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters.<sup>156</sup>

10.2.4 An official from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFT 2022 that they were not aware if specific training was provided to police officers to identify male VOT, adding that ‘Not a lot of cases are identified or referred by the police. They are mostly identified by other means’, for example, by mobile units who were trained to identify and refer cases into the NRM<sup>157</sup>. An official from D&E told the FFM team that, although police received training, they identified fewer male VOT/PVOT than child protection workers and mobile units. The same source told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘We have one established Mobile Unit in Tirana and one in Shkodra and a considerable number of males were identified by these mobile units.’<sup>158</sup> The official from Tjeter Vizion also stated that it was mobile unit staff who identified VOT/PVOT<sup>159</sup>. Brikena Puka of Vatra noted that ‘Vatra has 5 mobile units in 5 districts, most of the cases [112 or 80% of cases from 2020 to September 2022<sup>160</sup>] are identified by these mobile units and every case identified by mobile units has to be referred immediately to the anti-trafficking unit of the police and also to national responsible authority to the Ministry of Interior.’<sup>161</sup>

10.2.5 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated, ‘The government maintained a multidisciplinary NRM with SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures] for identifying and referring victims to services, though observers reported it only met once in 2022 resulting in limited coordination.’<sup>162</sup>

10.2.6 On 29 June 2023, OSCE reported:

‘On 26 June, Albanian public institutions and civil society organizations signed a new Co-operation Agreement for the National Referral Mechanism for Potential and Victims of Trafficking (NRM)...

‘The new agreement targets existing and emerging types of trafficking in human beings and involves all pertinent institutions in order to guarantee adequate protection to potential and current victims of trafficking in Albania. It follows a thorough needs assessment analysis and consultations with state and civil society stakeholders, conducted by the Presence and the Ministry of Interior, in order to update the NRM framework in line with the Albanian human trafficking challenges, the legal framework, and ultimately with the OSCE commitments...

‘Fifteen representatives of Albania’s state institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) signed the new NRM Agreement. It is worth noticing that the number of signatories has expanded compared to the previous agreement, to include state institutions, such as the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child, the State Labour Inspectorate, the Free Legal Aid, the State Agency or the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets, and the State Employment Service, as well as CSOs [civil society organisations] that provide emergency and long-term assistance to victims of

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<sup>156</sup> CoE, [GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#) (p37), 15 December 2020

<sup>157</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p13), December 2022

<sup>158</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p19), December 2022

<sup>159</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p28), December 2022

<sup>160</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p73), December 2022

<sup>161</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p66), December 2022

<sup>162</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

trafficking, thus, expanding the range of services available for adult and children victims of trafficking.

‘The OSCE Presence in Albania will continue to provide technical assistance to state institutions in the fight against trafficking in human beings, especially in supporting the NRM Agreement’s implementation through the provision of specific guidance and training.’<sup>163</sup>

10.2.7 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC noted, ‘The national referral mechanism for (potential) victims of trafficking remained functional. Assistance was provided in all cases.’<sup>164</sup>

10.2.8 See also [Barriers to protection](#).

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### 10.3 Identification of victims

10.3.1 The website for the ‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania’ programme set out ‘Identification of potential victims/victims of trafficking’ as one of the services provided under the programme, stating, ‘The first-time Identification and referral of a potential victim or victim of trafficking is made by the Mobile Units, and/or implementing partners as per the Standard Operating Procedures protocol.’<sup>165</sup> For a list of partners involved in service delivery, see the [website](#) (Geographic distribution). For further information about the programme, see [Policies, programmes and projects](#).

10.3.2 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government stated:

‘One of the efforts of the Albanian authorities to identify victims of trafficking, especially those who are used for work, is the establishment and operation of Mobile Units. In implementation of the program “Transformation of the national response to trafficking in and from Albania,” financed by the United Kingdom and implemented by UNICEF in 2021, 4 new Mobile Units have been set up and are operating (Kukes, Tirana, Dibër, Shkodër). The establishment of these Mobile Units has enabled the increase in the number of identifications of trafficking cases and served to prevent the phenomenon of trafficking, either through the organization of awareness meetings, but also through periodic meetings of multidisciplinary groups at the local level.’<sup>166</sup>

10.3.3 Officials from Kukes municipality told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘As regards identification of PVOT and VOT we work closely with schools, social administrators and the community. When they suspect someone is a VOT they refer either to the police, then to us and the process begins...

‘Another way to identify PVOT is through the technical anti-trafficking round table. This round table consists of several institutions in Kukes, such as nurses, doctors, labour office officials. If they notice something wrong or

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<sup>163</sup> OSCE, [Albania endorses a new National Referral Mechanism...](#), 29 June 2023

<sup>164</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p45), 8 November 2023

<sup>165</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Geographic distribution), no date

<sup>166</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p27), received 19 December 2022

think someone is a PVOT, this is raised during round table meetings.

‘Also the border or state police may identify PVOT or VOT and they refer immediately to us.

‘A recent positive change was the addition of social administrators as they have been trained in how to identify VOT as they know their communities well and can tell when human trafficking (HT) is happening.’<sup>167</sup>

10.3.4 Referring to Albanians who had travelled abroad via unofficial routes, officials from Kukes municipality stated that ‘... if an illegal migrant is returned to Albania, or if the person identifies themselves [to the authorities], then they are probably a VOT.’<sup>168</sup> Erion Prendi of SHKEJ (an Albanian NGO in the field of promoting human rights and social integration of human beings<sup>169</sup>) stated that it was difficult to identify VOT who had returned from abroad because they did not themselves recognise that they had been trafficked<sup>170</sup>. The official from Terres des Hommes similarly noted that some returning Albanian migrants did not always identify as VOT<sup>171</sup>.

10.3.5 In terms of identifying male VOT/PVOT, sources told the Home Office FFT 2022 that most men did not accept or recognise that they were VOT and that they were not recognised as VOT by society<sup>172</sup>. Mary Ward Loreto representatives stated that men returning from abroad did not self-identify as VOT due to shame<sup>173</sup>.

10.3.6 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

‘... Law enforcement and state social services conducted joint interviews for potential victims who voluntarily requested official victim status. The law provided equal services for both potential and officially recognized victims.

‘MIUs [mobile identification units] in nine regions, consisting of social workers from NGOs and police officers, identified most of the victims every year, but the units’ sustainability was uncertain due to the lack of permanent staff and resources; MIUs identified 75 potential victims (126 in 2021).

‘Experts reported police did not participate consistently in the MIUs despite signing an MOU that formalized their participation and law enforcement rarely initiated investigations when civil society identified a potential victim.

‘Observers continued to report border police lacked resources, interpreters, and knowledge to screen consistently or implement SOPs for migrants and asylum-seekers. However, the government adopted new screening procedures to identify trafficking victims in irregular migration flows.

‘As in previous years, ASP [Albanian state police] did not screen individuals in commercial sex for indicators of trafficking during raids and investigations of commercial sex establishments, and the Labor Inspectorate lacked the training to identify forced labor victims.

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<sup>167</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p61), December 2022

<sup>168</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p61), December 2022

<sup>169</sup> SHKEJ, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>170</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p81), December 2022

<sup>171</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p92), December 2022

<sup>172</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p20, 28, 81, 94, 100, 104), December 2022

<sup>173</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p94), December 2022

'Law enforcement justified cases of potential domestic servitude and forced labor in forced marriages involving Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities as traditional cultural practices and customs.

'Due to inconsistent screening procedures and as it had reported in previous years, the government may have detained or deported some potential victims, including women in commercial sex, migrants, and asylum-seekers.'<sup>174</sup>

- 10.3.7 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC stated, '... The identification of potential victims remains inadequate within Albanian territory and among vulnerable migrants entering the country and those accommodated in reception centres.'<sup>175</sup>

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#### 10.4 Criminal justice system – general

- 10.4.1 For general information about the criminal justice system, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: Actors of protection](#).

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#### 10.5 Training for officials

- 10.5.1 In October 2022, OSCE reported:

'The OSCE Presence in Albania presented today its project on advancing the training capacities of the School of Magistrates and the Security Academy in the fight against trafficking in human beings.

'The Project ... aims to support the Albanian institutions to offer regular, specialized and sustainable training programmes for relevant law enforcement units across sectors as well as for judges and prosecutors. This will enable proper identification and support of victims and consistent application of law based on the seriousness of the crime...'<sup>176</sup>

- 10.5.2 The official from the OSCE told the Home Office FFT 2022 that, while the police received a lot of training on identifying VOT, quality was an issue and there was a lack of awareness of the NRM. The same source noted that 'Women are only proactively identified by the police after they been arrested for prostitution. Most cases that the police have were referred by mobile units.'<sup>177</sup> The official from Caritas Albania stated that although training was given to identify and locate VOT it was not enough, more investment was needed and 'Identification of VOT/PVOT is very low.' The same source stated that 'The Albanian government is only identifying VOT, not PVOT.'<sup>178</sup> Erion Prendi of SHKEJ did not believe that the police were well trained in identifying VOT<sup>179</sup>.

- 10.5.3 Officials from the General Directorate of State Police Anti-trafficking Office told the Home Office FFT 2022 that not all police officers were trained to

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<sup>174</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>175</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p45), 8 November 2023

<sup>176</sup> OSCE, [OSCE Presence launches project to advance Albania's training...](#), 12 October 2022

<sup>177</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p23), December 2022

<sup>178</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p52), December 2022

<sup>179</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p82), December 2022

identify VOT but added that ‘... anti-trafficking officers and border and immigration police... are trained by state police, EU and UK.’ The same source noted that they had not identified any male VOT in 2022 or in previous years<sup>180</sup>. An official from the Ministry of Interior stated that ‘We have organised training and meetings with border police to identify VOT, and also to inform them of the indicators that could show that certain individuals could be at risk, and we have trained them on how to conduct interviews.’<sup>181</sup>

10.5.4 Officials from Kukes municipality told the Home Office FFT 2022 that: ‘We ... provide continuous training to schools, teachers, social workers on indicators of human trafficking (HT) and if they suspect a case they refer to us or police. There is another way, through schools and communities.’<sup>182</sup>

10.5.5 The Albanian government’s response of December 2022 to the Council of Europe stated:

‘Pursuant to the National Action Plan for the Fight against Trafficking in Persons, during 2021, 34 trainings were held in 12 regions of the country with the participation of 481 professionals from various institutions at the local level such as judicial police officers, border police officers, members of the Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees, coordinators at the District Prosecutor’s Offices, prosecutors, representatives from the Municipality and NGOs. The trainings focused on “Promoting the rights of victims of criminal offenses”, including the right to information of victims of trafficking.

‘Likewise, for the period 2021-2022, a total of 6 “workshops” were held on the topic of trafficking and violence, with the participation of lawyers, police officers and officers of the Judicial Police and Probation Service, as well as law students, with a total of 134 participants.

‘The State Police in cooperation with the Security Academy, international organizations and non-profit organizations have developed trainings related to the criminal offense of human trafficking, migrant smuggling, strengthening the capacities of law enforcement structures to prevent human trafficking, strengthening police cooperation between offices, which cover the investigation related to the phenomenon of unaccompanied minors, the risk of trafficking for the purpose of employment, etc...’<sup>183</sup> Further information about training provided is available in the [report](#) (pages 7-8, pages 19-21, and page 27).

10.5.6 The report also set out details of work undertaken to ensure the safety of children online: ‘The State Agency for Children’s Rights and Protection in cooperation with the National Cyber Security Authority (NCSA) in the framework of the implementation of the activities of the “National Cyber Security Strategy 2020-2025” and the “National Agenda for Children’s Rights 2021-2026” has carried out trainings related to the safety of children in the cyber environment where 31 child protection workers and other actors at the local level have been trained.’<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p35), December 2022

<sup>181</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p57), December 2022

<sup>182</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p61), December 2022

<sup>183</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p7), received 19 December 2022

<sup>184</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p28-30), received 19 December 2022

- 10.5.7 Judiciary and law enforcement are addressed as part of the ‘Transforming national response to human trafficking in and from Albania’ programme; the website stated that this involved ‘Provision of multi-stakeholder approach in building institutional capacities of the law enforcement, judiciary and social welfare sectors in combating human trafficking.’<sup>185</sup> Information about partners providing services can be found on the [website](#).
- 10.5.8 For further information about the Transforming national response to human trafficking in and from Albania, see [Policies, programmes and projects](#).
- 10.5.9 Considering shortfalls in training for officials, the UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report found that:
- ‘... the police need training and technical assistance on how to identify, rescue and protect trafficking victims. Both police and prosecutors need training and technical assistance on laws related to human trafficking and the elements of the crime, as well as victim-centred investigations and how to actually investigate human trafficking cases (e.g., evidence collection, chain of custody and interviewing techniques), and how to build cases against human traffickers. Prosecutors also require training and technical assistance to understand how to apply human trafficking laws, what charges to file and how to prosecute such cases in the courts (e.g., evidence use and presentation, victim and witness testimony, and writing legal briefs), and victim-centred prosecution. In addition, both prosecutors and judges need training and technical assistance in the use of child-friendly courts and court processes in human trafficking cases, as well as witness protection. The judiciary needs training and technical assistance to understand how to apply laws related to human trafficking, elements of the crime, and how to hear human trafficking cases and weigh the evidence, as well as the importance of judicial independence to the rule of law. Finally, police, prosecutors and the judiciary alike also need anti-corruption and ethics training.’<sup>186</sup>
- 10.5.10 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated, ‘The government maintained institutionalized training programs at the School of Magistrates for judges, prosecutors, and judicial police. The government, in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations, trained police officers, judges, prosecutors, and victim coordinators on various anti-trafficking issues.’<sup>187</sup>
- 10.5.11 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC stated, ‘Police, prosecutors and judges should receive dedicated training, especially on the rights of victims.’<sup>188</sup>
- 10.5.12 On 28 September 2023, OSCE Presence in Albania reported on training for dealing with human trafficking trials:
- ‘On 27 September 2023, the OSCE Presence in Albania and the School of Magistrates organized a training-of-trainers workshop with the academic staff of the School of Magistrates, judges and prosecutors to introduce a methodology for the development and delivery of mock trial-based training for human trafficking cases.

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<sup>185</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#), no date

<sup>186</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p40), November 2022

<sup>187</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>188</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p46), 8 November 2023

‘The workshop presented the participants with a set of guidelines on how to conduct a mock trial based on a learning-by-doing methodology tailored to the Albanian legal framework.

‘The methodology will contribute to the future judges and prosecutors’ understanding of the issues and challenges typical of trafficking in persons cases and will enable them to hone their skills in handling such cases...

‘The OSCE Presence is working together with the School of Magistrates on a number of initiatives to support the advancement of anti-trafficking programmes in both initial and continuing education...’<sup>189</sup>

10.5.13 On 20 February 2024, the FCDO provided the Home Office with an update on services delivered via the HO Modern Slavery Fund; the letter stated:

**‘Victim support and identification:** in late May [2023], a delegation of representatives from the Albanian Ministry of Interior visited the UK for a study visit on victim support and identification, learning about the UK’s end-to-end approach to modern slavery and human trafficking. The delegation met with policy officials, law enforcement agencies, analysts, first responders and support service providers.

**‘Albania’s capacity to investigate human trafficking:** the programme funded three local workshops in February 2023 and a national workshop in March 2023, involving a total of more than 10 agencies, to discuss how to improve law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute human trafficking offenders. The comprehensive report includes recommendations emphasising the need for political will, institutional support, capacity development and new protocols. Institutional meetings with key stakeholders confirmed endorsement of the findings and commitment to cooperation for implementation. Subject to funding and discussions with the Government of Albania, the intention is to support delivery of the recommendations and offer further assistance to Albanian law enforcement and justice agencies through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund.

‘The trainer manual for child-friendly forensic interviews was developed and a Trainer of Training session for the Security Police Academy took place in October 2023.’<sup>190</sup>

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## 10.6 Prevention, prosecution and convictions

10.6.1 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC noted that ‘The Ministry of the Interior is the main actor in the field of migration’ and the Directorate for Anti-Trafficking and Migration Policies in the Ministry of the Interior comes under its supervision<sup>191</sup>.

10.6.2 The US DoL’s Child Labor Report 2022 stated that ‘In 2022, the government’s criminal law enforcement agencies appeared to function

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<sup>189</sup> OSCE, [OSCE Presence in Albania introduces mock-trial...](#), 28 September 2023

<sup>190</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

<sup>191</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p51), 8 November 2023

adequately in addressing child labor.<sup>192</sup>

10.6.3 The GRETA report 2020 noted:

‘The National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator is a Deputy Minister of the Interior and is supported by the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator.

‘The State Committee for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings continues to co-ordinate anti-trafficking policy. It is chaired by the Minister of the Interior and comprises the Deputy Ministers of the Interior, Education and Sport, Social Welfare and Youth, Foreign Affairs, Health, Justice, Finance, Economic Development, Trade and Enterprise, Energy and Industry, Defence, and European Integration, as well as the State Police, the General Prosecutor’s Office, and the State Intelligence Service.

Representatives from the Shelters Coalition and civil society partners are invited to participate in the State Committee’s meetings.

‘Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees operate in the country’s 12 regions. During the reporting period, they were active in addressing THB issues, through local action plans...’<sup>193</sup>

10.6.4 The US DoL’s Child Labor report 2022 stated that the Ministry of Interior ‘Coordinates operations of the Border Police and each of the Illicit Human Trafficking sections in the country’s 12 Regional Police Directorates through the General Directorate of State Police. Establishes the government’s policy on addressing human trafficking through the State Committee Against Trafficking in Persons, chaired by the Interior Minister.’<sup>194</sup>

10.6.5 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC noted, ‘As part of the organisational and structural reform of the Albanian State Police, an investigative sector has been created in the border and migration police with the aim of preventing, detecting and countering cross-border illegal activity, including people-smuggling and trafficking in human beings. This is a very positive development.’<sup>195</sup>

10.6.6 The USSD TiP 2023 also reported that:

‘[The Albanian State Police] ASP’s Criminal Police Department Directorate of Investigations of Narcotics and Trafficking maintained an Anti-Trafficking Unit, which investigated trafficking in persons in addition to drug and contraband trafficking. Each of ASP’s 12 regional directorates also maintained a section that investigated trafficking. The government continued judicial reforms that changed prosecutorial jurisdiction for trafficking cases; SPAK [Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime] and the Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organized Crime have jurisdiction over trafficking cases related to organized crime, while GPO and district courts prosecuted trafficking cases without an organized crime nexus.’<sup>196</sup>

10.6.7 The GRETA report 2020 also highlighted:

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<sup>192</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#) (section III), 26 September 2023

<sup>193</sup> CoE, [GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#) (p9), 15 December 2020

<sup>194</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#), 26 September 2023

<sup>195</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p55), 8 November 2023

<sup>196</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

'... the existence of a specialised unit for investigating cases of human trafficking within the Criminal Police Department, as well as the setting up of the Special Prosecution Office against Corruption and Organised Crime. However, GRETA is concerned that prosecutors at First Instance Prosecutor's Offices lack training and specialisation to deal with trafficking cases, the majority of which will fall within their jurisdiction, with consequent weakening of the criminal justice response to human trafficking. GRETA considers that the Albanian authorities should ensure that there are specialised prosecutors trained to deal with human trafficking cases, as well as encouraging the training a specialisation of judges.'<sup>197</sup>

10.6.8 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report noted that:

'Under the aegis of the [UNICEF] Programme [on Transforming the National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania], one focus was on strengthening the justice system's ability to investigate human trafficking cases and prosecute and convict human traffickers. It is too early to measure the effectiveness of this initiative because it was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the package of support planned to the justice sector was postponed by one-and-a-half years. In addition, there have been recent justice system reforms that affect which courts have jurisdiction over human trafficking cases. One respondent explained that "Before the justice reform, there was an attorney of serious crimes with dedicated prosecutors [who prosecuted human trafficking cases], but with the justice reforms, cases of human trafficking are handled at the local level."<sup>198</sup>

10.6.9 The same report acknowledged that:

'Measuring the effectiveness of the Programme's [on Transforming the National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania] ability to strengthen the justice system's response to human trafficking requires time. In particular, time is required for the police to investigate a human trafficking case and build a case for prosecution, while public prosecutors need time to file charges and prosecute the traffickers, and court proceedings can take a significant amount of time. If human trafficking cases are not fast-tracked by the court system they can take several years to prosecute. Therefore, it is not until human trafficking cases are pushed through the justice system pipeline that we will be able to understand whether the system has been strengthened and improved, and where gaps, challenges and barriers remain that need to be addressed.'<sup>199</sup>

10.6.10 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

'The government decreased efforts to prevent trafficking. The national coordinator led the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (ONAC) and overall anti-trafficking efforts. The State Committee against Trafficking in Persons, composed of relevant ministry representatives, was responsible for monitoring and implementing various anti-trafficking efforts; the State Committee did not meet in 2022 or 2021. The government also maintained the National Anti-Trafficking Task Force, composed of ministry

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<sup>197</sup> CoE, [GRETA's Report and Government's Comments](#) (p4), 15 December 2020

<sup>198</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p39), November 2022

<sup>199</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p39), November 2022

officials, civil society representatives, and other participants that monitored the NRM; the NRM met once in both 2022 and 2021.

‘Civil society observers reported limited government coordination efforts to prevent trafficking. Twelve regional anti-trafficking committees, comprising local officials and NGOs, worked on local victim assistance and referral mechanisms. The Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking consisted of three survivors that provided recommendations on anti-trafficking efforts and participated in awareness campaigns. Observers reported the Advisory Board was more active in 2022 due to funding from a foreign donor.’<sup>200</sup>

#### 10.6.11 The same report noted:

‘... GRETA, prosecutors, and other observers reported district prosecutors did not have the specialized experience and capacity to prosecute trafficking cases successfully. GRETA and observers reported authorities confused overlapping elements of “exploitation of prostitution” and trafficking and at times applied the lesser charge because it required less specialization and time or due to the false belief that trafficking crimes required a transnational element. Similarly, some authorities prosecuted defendants with “disgraceful acts against minors,” “sexual harassment,” or “sexual intercourse with violence” instead of trafficking. Limited resources, capacity, and reports of constant turnover within law enforcement created additional obstacles to maintaining capacity to investigate trafficking, including a lack of resources to investigate trafficking through virtual means. The government maintained institutionalized training programs at the School of Magistrates for judges, prosecutors, and judicial police. The government, in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations, trained police officers, judges, prosecutors, and victim coordinators on various anti-trafficking issues. The government received two extradition requests from foreign authorities and GPO sent 26 rogatory letters and received 22 rogatory letters from foreign authorities.’<sup>201</sup>

#### 10.6.12 Considering criminal proceedings and convictions, the GRETA report 2020 noted: ‘... in 2015, there were 38 criminal proceedings registered by the Prosecutor’s Office for trafficking in adults... in 2016, 18 for trafficking in adults... as well as two cases of THB [trafficking of human beings] by criminal organisations; in 2017, 20 for trafficking in adults... as well as one case of THB by criminal organisations; in 2018, 12 for trafficking in adults... and in 2019, 19 for trafficking in adults...’<sup>202</sup>

#### 10.6.13 The GRETA report 2020 further noted:

‘As regards convictions, in 2015, 10 men and one woman were convicted of THB by the Serious Crimes Court of First Instance; two of the sentences ranged from two to five years, three for five to 10 years, and six from 10 to 25 years. In 2016, 20 men and two women were convicted of THB; five of the sentences ranged from two to five years, five from five to 10 years, and 12 from 10 to 25 years. In 2017, seven men were convicted of THB; two of the sentences ranged from five to 10 years, and five from 10 to 25 years. In 2018, four men were convicted of THB; two of the sentences ranged from

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<sup>200</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>201</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>202</sup> CoE, [GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#) (p21), 15 December 2020

five to 10 years, and two from 10 to 25 years. The Appeal Court of Serious Crimes reviewed and confirmed decisions in THB cases concerning 13 men and one woman in 2015, 14 men in 2016, 5 men in 2017, and five men in 2018. The Supreme Court confirmed decisions concerning five men in 2016 and six men in 2017.<sup>203</sup>

10.6.14 According to the EC's Albania Report 2022, 'The Prosecution's Office registered 10 new criminal proceedings for trafficking in human beings in 2021, compared to 28 in 2020. The number of final convictions remained very low with two cases with three final convictions, same as in 2020.'<sup>204</sup>

10.6.15 The US DoL Child Labor report 2022 stated, 'The government continued to support the work of the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Court, which was established in 2019 and has the power to hear cases involving human trafficking if linked to organized crime (including cases involving children).'<sup>205</sup> The report noted the following statistics regarding criminal law enforcement related to child labor in 2022 (January to September only):

- Number of investigations: 44
- Number of prosecutions initiated: 19
- Number of convictions: 14
- Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor: 14<sup>206</sup>

10.6.16 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

'The Albanian State Police (ASP) investigated 85 new cases with 112 suspects, an increase compared with 61 cases with 27 suspects in 2021; 71 suspects for sex trafficking and 41 suspects for unspecified forms of trafficking. The ASP investigated no suspects for "knowingly soliciting or patronizing a sex trafficking victim to perform a commercial sex act," the same as in 2021...'<sup>207</sup>

10.6.17 The OSCE official suggested to the Home Office FFT 2022 that 'The low rates of prosecution of traffickers leads to persistent exploitation.'<sup>208</sup>

10.6.18 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

'The government decreased law enforcement efforts [in 2022]. Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of eight to 15 years' imprisonment for a trafficking offense involving an adult victim, and ten to 20 years' imprisonment for an offense involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape...

'The General Prosecution Office (GPO) prosecuted 54 cases with eight defendants, compared with 60 cases with 19 defendants in

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<sup>203</sup> CoE, [GRETA's Report and Government's Comments](#) (p22), 15 December 2020

<sup>204</sup> EC, [Albania Report 2022](#) (p42), 12 October 2022

<sup>205</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#), 26 September 2023

<sup>206</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#) (section III), 26 September 2023

<sup>207</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>208</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p22), December 2022

2021. Separately, the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) initiated two new investigations and continued to investigate two cases initiated and registered in 2021. Of the four investigations, SPAK referred one to court for dismissal and merged two investigations, resulting in two active investigations.

‘Courts did not convict any traffickers, a significant decrease compared with 11 traffickers in 2021, but the same as no convictions in 2020. In past years, judges sentenced some traffickers to lenient sentences, such as probation which undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable, weakened deterrence, created potential security and safety concerns for victims, and was not equal to the seriousness of the crime...

‘... The government continued judicial reforms that changed prosecutorial jurisdiction for trafficking cases; SPAK and the Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organized Crime have jurisdiction over trafficking cases related to organized crime, while GPO and district courts prosecuted trafficking cases without an organized crime nexus. However, GRETA, prosecutors, and other observers reported district prosecutors did not have the specialized experience and capacity to prosecute trafficking cases successfully. GRETA and observers reported authorities confused overlapping elements of “exploitation of prostitution” and trafficking and at times applied the lesser charge because it required less specialization and time or due to the false belief that trafficking crimes required a transnational element. Similarly, some authorities prosecuted defendants with “disgraceful acts against minors,” “sexual harassment,” or “sexual intercourse with violence” instead of trafficking.

‘...The government received two extradition requests from foreign authorities and GPO sent 26 rogatory letters and received 22 rogatory letters from foreign authorities.’<sup>209</sup>

10.6.19 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC noted, ‘The number of perpetrators [of human trafficking] of Albanian nationality registered in the EU remained high in 2021, with Albanian nationals being in the top-10 non-EU countries of origin of suspects (4th) prosecuted (9th) and convicted (7th) persons.’<sup>210</sup>

10.6.20 The report added, ‘The Prosecution Office registered 11 new criminal proceedings for trafficking in human beings in 2022, compared with 10 in 2021. The number of final convictions remained very low with seven final convictions from two cases.’<sup>211</sup>

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## 10.7 Children

10.7.1 In a report dated July 2021, UNICEF cited the child protection frameworks in place in Albania (text in bold is UNICEF’s emphasis):

‘MHSP [Ministry of Health and Social Protection] is the designated body responsible for child protection in Albania. The [National Council on Children’s Rights and Protection] acts as an advisory body whose main task

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<sup>209</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>210</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p45), 8 November 2023

<sup>211</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p45), 8 November 2023

is to coordinate government policy for guaranteeing rights and protection of the child, particularly in justice, social service, education, health and culture...

'SACRP [State Agency for Child Rights and Protection] holds responsibility for coordination and organisation of the integrated child protection system and for implementation of national child protection policies, interventions and measures for prevention of, and protection of the child from, abuse, neglect, maltreatment and violence. This makes the Agency the de facto body with ultimate responsibility for child protection in Albania, subject to ministerial authority and approval, **though it has no management function or role in relation to provision of protection services on the ground.**

'Article 46 of Law 18/2017 identifies the municipality as the ultimate duty-bearer at the local level, and stipulates its statutory responsibility, for implementation of national child protection policies and protection measures, and establishment of effective child protection structures including allocation of funds. The source of such funds is not specified, nor the balance between central government and municipality responsibility to properly fund and resource child protection services...

'Articles 46–52 set the framework for child protection services and outline the structures and staff required at the municipal level to support and protect vulnerable individuals, their families and communities and protect Albanian children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence through provision of child-centred, community-based quality services. **However, the situation regarding financing has not changed and lack of resources continues to impede development of a comprehensive, quality, child protection system.**<sup>212</sup>

10.7.2 The UNICEF report 2021 noted that the framework needed strengthening and also lacked resources:

**'CPR [European Council Country Progress Report] 2019 acknowledges that the resources awarded to the child protection institutions, financial and human, do not correspond to their increased legal responsibilities.** There were only 236 child protection workers in total (52% of the required number) in 2019 out of which only 45 (19%) worked full-time in this function. The new law requires all child protection workers to have a background in social work but currently only 78 out of 236 (33%) have such experience. The child protection structure continues to suffer from a lack of consistent investment in capacities including allied sectors of education and health. The principle of a multi-disciplinary approach is clearly stipulated in the normative framework and is a principle widely acknowledged for its importance. But coordination remains one area in Albania that is not fully functioning and challenged by behavioural, technical and structural aspects. For the most part it takes the form of sharing information, rather than effective and collective decision making and division of labour. Meanwhile, case management is hampered by a lack of social care services to attend for the needs of the child and the family. All of the above issues seriously challenge the availability, accessibility, coverage and effectiveness of child protection

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<sup>212</sup> UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p48), June 2021

services in Albania.<sup>213</sup>

10.7.3 An official from the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection (SACRP) told the Home Office FFT 2022 that there was a Child Protection Unit in each of the 61 municipalities. The official stated that ‘At the moment we have 241 child protection workers. Most of them are social workers and psychologists. The law provides that there should be one child protection worker for every 3,000 children in an administrative unit... Any administrative unit of the municipality having more than 3,000 children shall have at least one child protection worker.’<sup>214</sup>

10.7.4 The SACRP told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘From January to August 2022, 25 child VOT or PVOT have been taken into protection.’ While overall in 2021 there were 2,389 children in protection<sup>215</sup>.

10.7.1 The US DoL’s Child Labor Report 2022 stated that, ‘If a child victim of labor exploitation is identified during the course of a labor inspection, then the agency conducting the inspection first refers the child to the police and state social services, then to an anti-trafficking shelter. The case may also be referred to local Child Protection Units, which can then connect the child to social services.’<sup>216</sup>

10.7.2 The response submitted by the government of Albania to the Council of Europe in December 2022 explained the role of Child Protection Officers:

‘Child Protection Officers manage and monitor cases of children in need of protection including VT/VMT [victims of trafficking/vulnerable, missing or trafficked] children... the Child Protection Officer is part of the formal interview of the children, and in cases where the child is found to be a VT/VMT takes the case for protection according to the legislation in force, implementing the steps for case management. The Child Protection Officer, in cooperation with the Intersectoral Technical Group at the local level, draw up the Individual Child Protection Plan.’<sup>217</sup>

10.7.3 The report continued:

‘The State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child offers advice and technical support... in the management of cases of child victims of trafficking/potential victims of trafficking and economically exploited children SARPC [State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child] has had close cooperation with the Responsible Authority in order to support the cases of child victims of trafficking/potential victims of trafficking and addressing the problems identified... during the process of managing these cases.’<sup>218</sup>

10.7.4 The report further noted:

‘The State Agency for Children’s Rights and Protection in cooperation with the Responsible Authority, in the first half of 2022, held meetings in the

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<sup>213</sup> UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p48), June 2021

<sup>214</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p85), December 2022

<sup>215</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p86), December 2022

<sup>216</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#) (section III), 26 September 2023

<sup>217</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p29), received 19 December 2022

<sup>218</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p29), received 19 December 2022

municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Berat, Kamëz, Korçë, Bulqizë, Elbasan, Vlorë, Shkodër and Tirana with the employees of the Units of Child Protection as well as with local actors representing the Intersectoral Technical Group... From the meetings, it was recommended that there be a continuous need for joint meetings/trainings between the CPU [Child Protection Unit], the police and traffic specialists regarding the strengthening of knowledge and the increase of capacities for issues related to child trafficking.<sup>219</sup>

10.7.5 The US DoL's Child Labor Report 2022 explained that there are 241 Child Protection Units '... located throughout the country at the municipal level [which] identify at-risk children, conduct initial evaluations of each case, and refer children to appropriate social services.'<sup>220</sup>

10.7.6 The US DoL's Child Labor report 2022 also set out the role of the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of Children:

'Oversees implementation of the government's child rights protection policies, including monitoring the National Agenda for the Rights of the Child. Manages cases of at-risk children and refers them to appropriate social services. Sanctions authorities who fail to protect children from violence and exploitation. Coordinates local and central efforts on health, security, and the education of children. During the reporting period, the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of Children met with local Child Protection Units and ad-hoc Cross-Sectoral Technical Groups to improve the local bodies' ability to properly identify children at risk of exploitation. Additionally, the State Agency continued to coordinate regular annual meetings with child protection workers in all 61 municipalities.'<sup>221</sup>

10.7.7 Furthermore, as noted by the USDoL, the Office of the Prosecutor General 'Investigates and prosecutes child trafficking cases through the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Court...'<sup>222</sup>

10.7.8 Considering services provided to children, the response submitted by the government of Albania to the Council of Europe in December 2022 stated:

'Every service is provided with a focus on the child by the Child Protection Units. The package of services offered to victims of trafficking includes the following:

'Meeting the basic economic and social needs of children and families at risk or victims of economic exploitation, including children in street situations.

'Family visits and psychological, social and economic assessments

'Housing

'Psychological counseling

'Support with food packages

'Clothes

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<sup>219</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p29), received 19 December 2022

<sup>220</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#), 26 September 2023

<sup>221</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#) (section III), 26 September 2023

<sup>222</sup> US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2022](#), 26 September 2023

'Hygiene package  
'Medications  
'Employment mediation  
'Psycho-social service  
'Mediation and assistance in conducting medical visits  
'Registration in nurseries, kindergartens, schools  
'Assistance for re-entry into the school system  
'Registration in civil status  
'Free legal service  
'Professional training  
'Development of life skills during reintegration'<sup>223</sup>

10.7.9 Considering criminal proceedings and convictions of those responsible for trafficking children, the GRETA report 2020 noted: '... in 2015, there were... 11 [criminal proceedings] for child trafficking; in 2016... eight for child trafficking... in 2017... six for child trafficking... in 2018... five for child trafficking; and in 2019... six for child trafficking.'<sup>224</sup>

10.7.10 See [Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#) for information about provision for children within shelters and other centres.

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## 10.8 Males

10.8.1 D&E told the Home Office FFT in October 2022:

'Few men ask for help on their own. Only a few go to ask the police for help. Of all the cases of men, only 2 have asked for help. Others were asking for help on something else and by giving help we recognised that this was actually a situation of trafficking. So men feel they have to be strong and not ask for support and we see they are more resistant to receive counselling. We support the employment of males by collaborating with the Regional Employment Office and different business companies.'<sup>225</sup>

10.8.2 The Home Office FFT 2022 also met with a representative from OSCE in October 2022, who stated:

'Men are able to access the same levels of service and can receive education and vocational training – the issue is about the quality of this in general. However, few adult males seek protection from the police. Most men are trafficked for labour exploitation. OSCE is working with the state labour department around the identification of victims. There are a handful of cases of men exploited in labour being referred to the police by shelters, rather than self-referring.'<sup>226</sup>

10.8.3 The Home Office FFT 2022 also met with an official from Tjeter Vizion, which

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<sup>223</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p29), received 19 December 2022

<sup>224</sup> CoE, [GRETA's Report and Government's Comments](#) (p21), 15 December 2020

<sup>225</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p20), December 2022

<sup>226</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p23), December 2022

offers social services for vulnerable children, youth and women in the city of Elbasan. This interlocutor stated, 'In law VOT are equal and there should be no discrimination on ethnicity or gender, so men have the same access [to support services which are in addition to shelters] as women and girls.'<sup>227</sup>

10.8.4 The official from Tjeter Vizion further stated, 'If we are referring to boys up to age 18 we do support them and they are willing to ask for help and access services. They are used to receiving assistance, even up to age 22 or 23. The biggest problem is men, adult men. They tend to be unwilling or reluctant to ask for help.'<sup>228</sup>

10.8.5 The Home Office FFT 2022 were told by an employee from BIRN, a non-governmental media organisation<sup>229</sup>, that male victims of trafficking were not seen as victims.<sup>230</sup> A representative of the General Directorate for Social Services in Tirana gave their perception: 'Personally what we know is that the patriarchal mindset prevails here and men are not viewed as VOT, though maybe boys and minors could be.'<sup>231</sup>

10.8.6 In the Evaluation report of November 2022, which examined the impact of the 'Programme on transforming the national response to human trafficking in and from Albania, 2019-2022,' UNICEF noted that, 'It was... difficult to engage men in awareness-raising activities and meetings.'<sup>232</sup>

10.8.7 The report further stated:

'As of December 2021, UNICEF reported that 6,357 at-risk individuals (including... 2,300 males) had received mental health and psychological care, and 654 individuals had received community services as per the tailored plan of interventions.

'By March 2022, UNICEF reported that 717 beneficiaries (including 417 males ...) were identified at the community level and provided with emergency services. Among the 717 beneficiaries, 144 were PV/VoTs (including ... 66 males) and 573 high-risk individuals (including 535 children and 38 adults).

'In addition, 341 PV/VoTs (including ... 157 males) and 130 dependents received comprehensive services as per tailored plans of intervention, and 237 PV/VoTs and their dependents were assisted by shelters.'<sup>233</sup>

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## 10.9 Barriers to protection

10.9.1 The UNICEF Albania September 2022 report found that 'In general, youth in the four regions [Diber, Kukes, Shkoder and Tirana] know well that they can report a suspected case of human trafficking at the police station (85%) and to police telephone line 129 (75%), with lower levels of knowledge for other reporting channels [such as a teacher or other school professional, child

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<sup>227</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p28), December 2022

<sup>228</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p28), December 2022

<sup>229</sup> BIRN, [About BIRN](#), no date

<sup>230</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p103), December 2022

<sup>231</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p109), December 2022

<sup>232</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p55), November 2022

<sup>233</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p39), November 2022

protection worker, NGOs, health professional]. Only two per cent of surveyed youth in the four regions do not know of any reporting channels.<sup>234</sup> However, the same survey found that 72% of participants were concerned about lack of law enforcement<sup>235</sup>.

10.9.2 An official from D&E told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘Few men ask for help on their own. Only a few go to ask the police for help... men feel they have to be strong and not ask for support...’<sup>236</sup> The official from the OSCE noted that ‘... few adult males seek protection from the police... There are a handful of cases of men exploited in labour being referred to the police by shelters, rather than self-referring.’<sup>237</sup>

10.9.3 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘If the VOT denounces their trafficker then action will be taken [by the responsible authority], we help together with lawyers and police. If they do not want to denounce we cannot force them. Sometimes the VOT do not trust the justice system. We have cases where traffickers have been denounced and the process has been so long, 2 or 3 years, so they have a lack of trust and patience in the process. The other VOT share what has happened to them (in the justice system), and, based on the experience of others, they choose not to make the denunciation.’<sup>238</sup>

10.9.4 In regard to children, the official from NISMA ARSIS told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘There is no criminal responsibility under the age of 14, so criminal networks are recruiting children under the age of 14 to distribute drugs and so forth... What is lacking is child protection, the police has limited capacities to ensure proper referral of the cases to the child protection unit, and we are mandated to provide referral after 24 hours of the identification [of a child VOT] to the child protection unit.’<sup>239</sup>

10.9.5 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government provided information on the subject of combatting corruption in the context of human trafficking. In 2020, investigations led to the identification of 312 corrupt actions on the part of by police officers at Morinë Border Crossing Point, Kukës. However, the individuals concerned were prosecuted and sentenced accordingly and ‘With decision no. 13, dated 16.05.2022, the Court of Appeal for Corruption and Organized Crime has left in force the measures given by the Court of First Instance for all police officers.’<sup>240</sup>

10.9.6 Whilst 2 national online helplines had handled several thousand calls in 2021<sup>241</sup>, the USSD TIP report 2023 noted, ‘The government’s anti-trafficking’s hotline had not functioned since 2020 and the government did not report making efforts to operationalize or manage it.’<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Davy, D, [Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#) (p14), September 2022

<sup>235</sup> Davy, D, [Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#) (p17), September 2022

<sup>236</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p20), December 2022

<sup>237</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p23), December 2022

<sup>238</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p65), December 2022

<sup>239</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p30), December 2022

<sup>240</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p25), received 19 December 2022

<sup>241</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p33), received 19 December 2022

<sup>242</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

10.9.7 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC noted, ‘The 116 006 hotline for victims of crime, including trafficking, should be made functional.’<sup>243</sup> The report continued, ‘Investigations and prosecutions are not conducted consistently with a focus on the victim. A gender-responsive approach to access to justice for victims should be promoted.’<sup>244</sup>

10.9.8 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

‘The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes [in 2022]. In 2021, the government permanently dismissed a police officer for “prostitution and maintaining a brothel” and, in 2020, the government suspended five police officials, including the Director of the Border and Emigration Directorate of Tirana and three chiefs of units, after media reported a story alleging their complicity in an organized trafficking operation. The Tirana Regional Court dismissed charges for the police officers, but the police authorities disciplined the Border and Emigration Director with a temporary downgrade in rank and disciplinary procedures were ongoing against the other three officers at the end of the reporting period.’<sup>245</sup>

10.9.9 The USSD TiP report 2023 noted, ‘Limited resources, capacity, and reports of constant turnover within law enforcement created additional obstacles to maintaining capacity to investigate trafficking, including a lack of resources to investigate trafficking through virtual means...’<sup>246</sup>

10.9.10 Anxhela Bruçi, Coordinator of Arise Albania, part of an international anti-trafficking organisation, explained to Asylos that not being identified as a victim of trafficking would be one of the main barriers to accessing rehabilitation and reintegration services:

‘in terms of accessing [services from shelters], there are no barriers as long as the victims they have been referred in the NRM or they’ve been identified by the structures as victims of human trafficking. When they’re identified, then they can access. And also, the NGOs, they do work very well with each other. So in cases where one of the NGOs is not able to provide a service because they are short on funds, they can refer the victim to get this service from another NGO. So there is a very well cooperation in order to meet their needs. But the barrier is when the victims are not identified. When the victims are not identified as victims of human trafficking, then it’s very hard to access the services.’<sup>247</sup>

10.9.11 See [Identification of victims](#) and [Perceptions](#) for further information on these subjects<sup>248</sup>.

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## 10.10 Legal aid, assistance and witness protection

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<sup>243</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#), 8 November 2023

<sup>244</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p46), 8 November 2023

<sup>245</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>246</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>247</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p213), April 2024

<sup>248</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p215-216), April 2024

10.10.1 See [Witnesses' Protection \(euralius.eu\)](https://euralius.eu) for the law on witness protection.

10.10.2 The GRETA report 2020 noted:

'The protection of victims and witnesses of human trafficking is guaranteed by provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure, including the right to be heard through audio-visual means, as well as the availability of a witness protection programme. GRETA considers that the Albanian authorities should take additional steps to ensure that victims and witnesses of trafficking, as well as their family members, are provided with effective and appropriate protection from potential retaliation or intimidation.'<sup>249</sup>

10.10.3 D&E noted in its 2021 Annual Report that it had:

'... provided legal assistance to all beneficiaries in the program through D&E's lawyer. During the reporting period, all beneficiaries of the reintegration program were informed about their rights and were supported with legal assistance according to their needs. Legal evaluations have been carried out for each new case entered into the program. 30 cases have been supported by the D&E lawyer in their criminal, civil or administrative cases. Thus, out of 33 cases, 13 were criminal, 19 civil and 1 administrative.'<sup>250</sup>

10.10.4 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government stated:

'In accordance with the standards defined in Directive 2012/29/EU, the Code of Criminal Procedure in Albania has primarily guaranteed the right of the victim to benefit from all health, psychological support and care, counseling and assistance, from the moment of identification of her/him as a victim or potential victim of trafficking.

'Regarding the procedural protection tools, the Code of Criminal Procedure has provided in various provisions, protective measures and guarantees for the victims. Articles 58/a and 58/b of the Criminal Procedure Code specifically guarantee the rights of the minor victim and the sexually abused or trafficked victim. Among the rights provided for the minor is that of the trial without the presence of the public, as well as when it is possible and appropriate, the recording of the conversation with audiovisual means to be used as evidence in the criminal proceedings. Accordingly, the legislator has recognized special protection for these categories of victims of trafficking and sexual abuse, who often do not have the will to cooperate in criminal investigations for fear that they or their families may be harmed. While the victim of trafficking is guaranteed the right to be heard through audio-visual means, as well as to request the provision of evidence in accordance with Article 318 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 103 of the Code provides for the prohibition of the publication of acts until the completion of preliminary investigations. Article 279 also provides for the obligation to maintain the secrecy of investigative actions and acts. Likewise, Article 340 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides for a trial with closed doors, when it is necessary to protect the safety of witnesses. The changes to this article in 2017 aim at the special protection of victims of trafficking. Thus, there have been more cases where the trial can take place behind closed

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<sup>249</sup> CoE, GRETA, [Evaluation Report Albania, Third ...](#), Executive Summary, 15 December 2020

<sup>250</sup> D&E, [2021 Annual Report](#) (p14), 28 July 2022

doors even when the victim of trafficking or sexually abused requests it or when adult defendants who are accused of committing crimes against minors are tried. The publication, even in part, of the acts of the judicial review when the trial is held behind closed doors is prohibited.

'Violation of the above obligations is penalized by Article 295/a of the Criminal Code "Disclosure of secret acts or data". In addition to the above, the prosecution is also specially engaged in guaranteeing the protection of personal data, as obligations of international conventions.

'There are several structures that are responsible for the implementation of protective measures, the center at the time of placement of children in its premises, the child protection unit, police structures and state social service workers. Also the multi-sectoral group that evaluates and decides on the intervention and the measures to be taken in this case. The protection and implementation of protective measures are considered the most important for the decisions and the future of the case and in particular the children.

'...[victims] ... have the right to enter the witness protection program if they feel threatened... During the period 2020-2022, there were no cases included in the witness protection program or proposed by the Prosecution to be included in this program.'<sup>251</sup>

10.10.5 The CLCI told the Home Office FFT 2022 that it '... provides free legal aid for victims of gender based violence (GBV), victims of trafficking (VOT), victims of domestic violence and different forms of gender and multiple discrimination.' CLCI added that it provided '... free legal aid for VOT focussing on compensation claims.'<sup>252</sup>

10.10.6 In December 2022, the Government of Albania provided the following response to the Council of Europe:

'As for the legal assistance provided by the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NACTS), the capacities have been increased with professional lawyers and lawyers, who offer a complete package of legal services for VoT/PVoT.

'During 2021, NCATS has assisted with legal aid a total of 272 cases of VoT/PVoT and 120 of their children, who are part of the reintegration program. All beneficiaries of the reintegration program are supported with legal aid according to their needs. Legal assessments are conducted for each new case entered into the program. The assistance offered includes providing information on the legal situation for each case and providing a package of assistance according to the victim's own needs, including primary and secondary legal assistance.

'Even during 2022, NCATS has provided legal assistance (primary and secondary) to all beneficiaries who are part of the reintegration program, including 104 VoT/PVoT.

'During the year 2022, the "Different and Equal" organization, in the framework of a project developed with the support of UNDP, but also in cooperation with the Directorate of Legal Aid, has enabled the establishment

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<sup>251</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p18), received 19 December 2022

<sup>252</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p40), December 2022

of a national network of lawyers and “probono” lawyers for providing free legal aid for crime victims, including victims of trafficking. 70 jurists, advocates and other legal professionals from the private sector (including NCATS) from 12 counties have signed the application form expressing their willingness to contribute with primary and secondary legal aid. During July 2022, 3 “online workshops” were held with the participation of about 40 members of the network of lawyers on various topics related to the provision of legal assistance and the representation of the interests of crime victims. In October, a guide was published with practical information on primary and secondary legal aid for victims of crime, including cases of victims of trafficking.<sup>253</sup>

10.10.7 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated that ‘The government signed cooperation agreements with higher education institutions to add to a list of professionals that provided pro bono legal assistance to victims; however, observers reported lawyers did not always have knowledge on victims’ rights...’<sup>254</sup> The report further stated that 80 victims received legal assistance during the year<sup>255</sup>.

10.10.8 In the Concluding Observations published on 30 October 2023, UN CEDAW commended the adoption of Law 111/2017 ‘On Legal Aid Guaranteed by the State,’ which removes the requirement of cooperation with authorities for victims to access assistance and protection<sup>256</sup>.

10.10.9 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government provided the following information about arrangements for minors:

‘In relation to access to justice for minors and the training of professionals, good work has been done both by the state structures and by the NCAT. The children are assisted by lawyers and are always accompanied by the psychologists of the institutions and NCAT. The establishment of coordinators for victims of crime at the Prosecutor's Office has been the key point, which has enabled and created a successful cooperation between the NCAT and the Prosecutor's Office for sharing information and referring cases.

‘In the premises of the district police, there are special rooms for interviewing children, where, in all cases, during the interview or assistance of children in the police, the presence of a psychologist is evidenced. The “Transformation of the national response to human trafficking in and from Albania” program successfully established child-friendly interview rooms in 5 Police Stations in Albania, specifically in: Kukës, Peshkopi (Diber), Korçë, Fier and Sarandë . Police stations were selected in close cooperation with the State Police and child-friendly rooms were adequately furnished and equipped with high-tech recording equipment for interview processes. Also, a series of trainings were undertaken for police officers and other professionals who work with children in law enforcement institutions in Albania. In order to harmonize the Albanian criminal law with the Directive 2011/36/EU, as well as with the principle

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<sup>253</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p11), received 19 December 2022

<sup>254</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>255</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>256</sup> UN OHCHR, [...Concluding Observations on the 5th periodic report...](#) (para 25), 30 October 2023

related to the highest interest of the child that should lead criminal justice for minors, the Albanian legislator has taken into consideration the amendment of the Criminal Code as of belongs to the criminal offense of trafficking, with the aim of full compliance with EU standards at this level.<sup>257</sup>

10.10.10 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

‘The government reported five victims cooperated in investigations... District courts lacked equipment to allow remote testimony, but SPAK possessed equipment that allowed testimony via video conferences, though it did not record how often it was used.

‘Victims who testified against traffickers had access to the witness protection program; no victims participated in the program in 2022 or 2021.

‘The government reported interviews and testimonies took place in the presence of a psychologist and prosecutors separated victims and defendants during trials to prevent re-traumatization.

‘The government maintained the Development Center for Criminal Justice for Minors with four part-time prosecutors, a judicial police officer responsible for child protection in criminal proceedings, and five child friendly interview rooms.

‘Twenty-two victim assistance coordinators provided legal assistance and guided victims in accessing services; the government appointed victim assistance coordinators to all victims assisting in prosecutions.

‘... observers reported ... courts did not consistently use victim-centered techniques, and the government often did not provide victims with necessary legal documents.’<sup>258</sup>

10.10.11 In written communication with Asylos, Different and Equal and Tjeter Vizion both highlighted, based on NCATS information, that:

‘Related to access to justice, despite the legal improvements, the practical implementation of new law no. 111/2017 “On legal aid guaranteed by the state”, toward the victims of trafficking remain a challenge. The law requires the completion of a procedure with certain requests for documents, which cannot be provided by victims of trafficking, both for primary legal aid and secondary legal aid. NGOs authorized to provide free legal aid will benefit from the state scheme only for providing primary legal aid and not for the secondary legal aid that a trafficking victim needs most. The list of lawyers engaged in providing secondary legal aid does not represent a group of lawyers specialized in representing and protecting the interests of the victims of trafficking. The recent changes (law no 35/2017) to the Criminal Procedure Code related to the competence of dealing with cases of trafficking, which has passed to the Prosecutor’s Offices and District Courts, has made the work of providing free legal assistance difficult because there is a lack of specialized capacities and structures at the district level to guarantee such service.’<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p23), received 19 December 2022

<sup>258</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>259</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p124), April 2024

8.11.11 In addition, Tjeter Vizion explained in written communication with Asylos that:

'Primary legal aid assistance is only related to counselling, document drafting, legal guidance to claim rights in the administration, as well as preparation of files for deposition in court... Secondary legal aid is very necessary, especially for minors to be represented in the court or in the prosecution office from the beginning according to the law. But it is also very important for adults as well to benefit from the secondary legal aid as by themselves they are not able financially and morally to afford the process... Justice institutions, including the Courts, the Prosecutor's Office and the Police, continue to have a mentality and behaviour oriented towards the perpetrator and less towards the victim. According to the rights provided in the Code of Criminal Procedure, the victim can give his testimony through video/audio, but there is lack of the means in the district level courts to realize this.'<sup>260</sup>

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## 10.11 Compensation for victims

10.11.1 In their response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Government of Albania stated:

'... the number of cases applying for compensation is limited. There are only two cases with a Court decision in favor of the victim assisted by the "Different & Equal" Center in cooperation with the Center for Legal Initiatives that have managed to win court proceedings for compensation as victims of trafficking, one case in 2010 (worth 40,000 euros) and another case in 2018 (worth 44,0000 euros – concluded at first instance and currently on appeal). Even for these two cases, it was not possible to execute the compensation decisions, which means that in Albania we still do not have a single case that was compensated as a victim of trafficking.'<sup>261</sup>

10.11.2 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

'Victims could obtain restitution through criminal proceedings or compensation through civil suits. However, judges generally rejected restitution in criminal proceedings and civil suits required victims to submit new testimonies, causing re-traumatization. Additionally, civil courts dismissed or closed civil suits if criminal courts dropped the case or acquitted the defendant. Courts granted compensation to only two victims in cases from 2010 and 2018 but did not disburse compensation to the victims – the case from 2018 remained under appeal.'<sup>262</sup>

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Section updated: 4 June 2024

## 11. Shelters and short-medium term assistance

### 11.1 Types

11.1.1 In their response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the

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<sup>260</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p124), April 2024

<sup>261</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p14), received 19 December 2022

<sup>262</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

Government of Albania noted:

'As far as the protection of victims is concerned, the victims of trafficking in almost all investigated cases, immediately after the identification of the case, are sheltered in reception centers for victims of trafficking, where they benefit from accommodation, food and other free services... As for the centers that deal with victims of trafficking, in any case when a minor or an adult is in the process, they have taken measures to ensure safety throughout the process by protecting them from any danger, especially children. Accompanying, confidentiality are guaranteed in every case presented. Organizations also ensure a secure environment with guards, cameras and staff at all times. In the case of children, the necessary information is obtained and it is estimated that the intervention will be done with the best interest of the child in mind.'<sup>263</sup>

11.1.2 The report further stated:

'The National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters offers a full package of services for VT/VMT [victims of trafficking/vulnerable, missing or trafficked children] including: accommodation in shelters and rental apartments, 24/7 security, medical, legal, psychological assistance, life skills development activities, social-cultural activities, professional training, employment counseling, mentoring, employment training, employment, setting up micro-businesses, mediation with family members, specific services for children of victims, etc. In addition, for all cases in the community, they have been supported with apartments for rent, and with food, hygiene packages, clothing, medications, teaching aids, etc., considering in a special way the situation created as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.'<sup>264</sup>

11.1.3 The report added, 'At the county level, [there are] three specialized services at the county level (Tirana, Elbasan, Vlora) for VT/PVT ... which are managed by civil society. In these centers, all victims of trafficking, or potential victims of trafficking, regardless of gender, benefit from services (396 beneficiaries), even though 90% of victims are women and girls.'<sup>265</sup>

11.1.4 In their response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Government of Albania noted that there was one specialised centre for assisting persons who had experienced sexual violence<sup>266</sup>. The report continued:

'The LILIUM center for the management of cases of sexual violence, fully supported by the state budget, from December 2018 to July 31, 2022, has treated 110 victims of sexual violence, over 80% children and 90% women/girls. For the period January - July 2022, 18 cases of victims of sexual violence were treated in this center, of which 3 men and 15 women, all minors.

'... for the years 2020- 2022, 4 services were financed for victims of domestic violence/trafficking and in situations of danger, four municipalities (Gjirokastër, Berat, Kukës and Maliq, where they treated 125 cases of

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<sup>263</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p18), received 19 December 2022

<sup>264</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p33-34), received 19 December 2022

<sup>265</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p33), received 19 December 2022

<sup>266</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p32), received 19 December 2022

domestic violence); 3 multifunctional centers (Durrës, Elbasan, Pogradec, where 158 cases of girls and women in need of support and empowerment in risk situations were treated); 3 services at the district level (Tirana, Elbasan and Vlorë, where 254 women and girls were treated, as well as their children as the case may be.<sup>267</sup>

#### 11.1.5 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated:

‘The government operated one specialized shelter and supported three specialized NGO-run shelters...

‘The four specialized shelters constituted the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS); victims who required services not available in one shelter were referred to another shelter within the coalition.

‘NCATS and the government provided food, mental health counseling, legal assistance, health care, educational services, employment services, assistance to victims’ children, financial support, long-term accommodation, social activities, vocational training, and post-reintegration follow-up; NCATS and the government supported all official and potential victims in both 2022 and 2021.

‘NCATS maintained the total capacity to accommodate 71 potential and official victims, including 10 children. One NGO-run shelter provided specialized services for victims younger than the age of 18...

‘NGO-run shelters allowed adult victims to leave the shelter voluntarily; the state-run shelter required victims to receive permission from the shelter director for their security.

‘Observers reported the shelters in the NCATS had professional staff and quality care despite funding limitations and the government reported good cooperation between NCATS and government institutions.

‘The government also provided general support through two centers for victims of violence, including trafficking victims, and established four general support centers that offered psycho-social support, legal assistance, and family assistance. However, experts reported a lack of resources for long-term care, employment, and other reintegration efforts, particularly for child victims and victims with children.<sup>268</sup>

#### 11.1.6 The NCATS is composed of 3 NGO-run and one state-run organisations:

- [Different & Equal](#), Tirana
- [Tjeter Vizion](#) (Another Vision), Elbasan
- [“Vatra” Psycho-social Center](#), Vlora
- National Reception Center, Tirana (state-run)

#### 11.1.7 An official from D&E told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘There are no specific shelters for [adult] males. They are supported mostly outside the shelters, with housing and reintegration.<sup>269</sup> Further, in the Evaluation report

<sup>267</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p32-33), received 19 December 2022

<sup>268</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>269</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p17), December 2022

of November 2022, UNICEF noted that there were no shelters for male victims of trafficking<sup>270</sup>. However, the USSD TiP report 2023 stated, ‘One NGO-run shelter... rented apartments for male victims, where they received assistance from NGOs.’<sup>271</sup>

- 11.1.8 In their letter of 20 February 2024, the FCDO provided information about services set up via the HO Modern Slavery Fund, stating, ‘The programme has established a third Community Social Centre in Bulqiza municipality, Diber region, complementing ongoing support to Community Social Centres in Kukes and Shkodra municipality. These centres assist vulnerable families, referring them to essential services and opportunities to prevent trafficking.’<sup>272</sup>
- 11.1.9 See [International assistance and progress](#) for further information on this subject.
- 11.1.10 Further information about shelters and the support offered is also covered in the [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters: General](#).

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## 11.2 Funding and capacity

- 11.2.1 When asked about shelter capacity, an official from D&E told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘There is one government-run shelter, a national reception centre... There are 3 NGO-run shelters, in Tirana, Elbasan and Vlorë – with 15 to 25 beds each. We cooperate with each other when receiving referrals and see what the best options for cases are, or if a shelter is over-capacity. The capacity for shelters is good up to now.’<sup>273</sup>
- 11.2.2 When asked by the HO FFM 2022 team whether they thought a VOT could return to Albania and safely reintegrate and obtain the support needed, SHKEJ responded, ‘To be honest no, at the moment it is really difficult. We have only 3 centres for trafficked women, 2 are private (Vatra and D&E) and one is government run. It would not be difficult to find a shelter for one or 3 months but it’s difficult to find support for a year.’<sup>274</sup>
- 11.2.3 In January 2023, the 3 NGO-run shelters provided information to the British Embassy, Tirana, on their overall existing shelter capacity:

Overall shelter capacity			
	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)
<b>Different and Equal</b> <sup>275</sup>	15 cases (adults and minors) and 3 children		

<sup>270</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p14), November 2022

<sup>271</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>272</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

<sup>273</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p16), December 2022

<sup>274</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p83-84), December 2022

<sup>275</sup> D&E, [Annex A4](#)

<b>Tjeter Vizion</b> <sup>276</sup>			18 (9 girls and 9 boys)
<b>Vatra</b> <sup>277</sup>	12 and their children		20 female

11.2.4 D&E and Vatra also provided information on their in-accommodation support outside of a shelter, for example in a rented apartment or with the VOT's family:

<b>In-accommodation capacity outside of a shelter</b>			
	<b>Adult females</b>	<b>Adult males</b>	<b>Minors (please specify male and/or female)</b>
<b>Different and Equal</b> <sup>278</sup>	45 cases (adults and minors) and 25 of their children	25 (adults and minors)	
<b>Vatra</b> <sup>279</sup>	20	5	30 (18 girls and 12 boys)

11.2.5 The January 2023 British Embassy letter to the Home Office stated that 'Regarding capacity to support adult male victims/potential victims, they are already included within the overall provision and, specifically, Different and Equal, Vatra and Mary Ward Loreto provide support to adult male victims and potential victims outside the shelter, including in rented accommodation.'<sup>280</sup>

11.2.6 In regards to identified VOT/PVOT and shelter capacity, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFT 2022 that the coalition of 4 shelters had responded to 100% of all cases referred to them, adding that the shelters had the capacity to cover all cases and that no one was 'left behind'<sup>281</sup>. Similarly, Brikena Puka of Vatra noted that '... all cases will be provided with shelter if necessary. In all the 4 shelters no one is without shelter, if there is no capacity in one, they go to another shelter.'<sup>282</sup>

11.2.7 Brikena Puka of Vatra also told the Home Office FFT 2022 that 'We also have shelter security and use a private security company, licenced by the Ministry of Interior, and the service is 24 hours for VOT and staff. We provide medical assistance and a doctor and collaborate with health institutions.'<sup>283</sup>

11.2.8 As noted on the NISMA ARSIS website:

<sup>276</sup> Tjeter Vizion, [Annex A5](#)

<sup>277</sup> Vatra, [Annex A7](#)

<sup>278</sup> D&E, [Annex A4](#)

<sup>279</sup> Vatra, [Annex A7](#)

<sup>280</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

<sup>281</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p24,28), December 2022

<sup>282</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p67), December 2022

<sup>283</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p64), December 2022

'NISMA offers its services to children and young individuals who live under conditions of poverty, neglect, victimization, conflict, disapproval, exploitation, isolation, racism, in contact with the law, without parental care, don't have a family or a place to live. Generally, Nisma offers help to those living under difficult situations...

'NISMA ARSIS has established the first model of providing Multidisciplinary [National Emergency] Services to protect children from abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation in the Municipality of Tirana in the center "House of Colors" in the Administrative Unit no.7 in 2010 with the support of UNICEF and Municipality of Tirana. The model established as multi-functional center [including the emergency shelter] developed its services in accordance [with] the needs of children at risk covering the gaps of the system. This model and its methodology are approved by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and replicated in [the] Municipality of Tirana, Municipality of Shkodra and Municipality of Durres. The center "House of Colors" provides support to children, youth and their families on daily bases, with a multidisciplinary team composed by social workers, psychologists, child careers, nurse, teachers, social animators, case managers, that work closely with child protection workers providing, food, hygiene, psychological counseling, psycho-social games, non-formal education, administrative and legal support, community development, family strengthening, counselling for employment, case management.'<sup>284</sup>

11.2.9 During the Home Office FFM 2022, the official from Caritas Albania referred to its 2 shelters which housed children (girls and boys) up to the age of 18, as well as a 72-hour emergency shelter for women and girls<sup>285</sup>.

11.2.10 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government stated, 'A good job has been done for years in the provision of funds by the Albanian government, for the 3 non-state reception centers, for the payment of the personnel who work with the victims and for the payment of food for VT/PVT who are treated in these residential centers.'<sup>286</sup>

11.2.11 The USSD TiP report 2023 noted:

'The government allocated 22.7 million leks [approximately £188,677<sup>287</sup>] to NGO-run shelters to support staff salaries, compared with 22 million leks [approximately £182,859<sup>288</sup>] in 2021. The government provided an additional 7.2 million leks [approximately £59,844<sup>289</sup>] for food support to NGO-run shelters, compared with 6.8 million leks [approximately £56,519<sup>290</sup>] in 2021. The government allocated 20.1 million leks [approximately £167,058<sup>291</sup>] to the government-run shelter, compared with 20.9 million leks [approximately £173,707<sup>292</sup>] in 2021. The government also transferred 22.08

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<sup>284</sup> NISMA ARSIS, [Our actions and services - ARSIS](#), no date

<sup>285</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p50), December 2022

<sup>286</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p34), received 19 December 2022

<sup>287</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>288</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>289</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>290</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>291</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>292</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

million leks [approximately £183,515<sup>293</sup>] from a fund of seized criminal assets to NGOs and the government-run shelter for victim support services, a significant increase compared with 10.2 million leks [approximately £84,782<sup>294</sup>] in 2021.

‘Although the government increased resources to NGO-run shelters in 2022 and 2021, NGO-run shelters continued to operate under financial constraints and relied on outside sources for operating costs. The government denied the shelters’ request for increased funding to enable standard overtime or weekend/holiday pay or to increase staff salaries above minimum wage to assist with retaining and attracting staff. NGO-run shelters reported no funding delays from the government, as in previous years. However, experts reported the bidding process for social programs with municipal governments was not transparent and that no funds were dispersed to shelters due to municipal governments not considering support services for trafficking victims a priority.’<sup>295</sup>

11.2.12 In the Concluding Observations of October 2023, UN CEDAW noted with concern ‘the lack of adequately funded inclusive and accessible shelters for victims of trafficking.’<sup>296</sup>

11.2.13 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC stated that ‘NGO-run shelters remain underfunded.’<sup>297</sup>

11.2.14 Anxhela Bruçi, Coordinator of Arise Albania, part of an international anti-trafficking organisation, commented in an interview with Asylos that:

‘for the NGO-run shelters, approximately 80% of their funding comes from international organisations and nonpublic foundations. For example, private foundations, European Union institutions or embassies. In terms of the public support, the government, at the moment, supports the NGO-run shelters. ...: Different and Equal in Tirana; Vatra psycho-social centre in Vlore; and Tjeter Vizion (Another Vision), in Elbasan. These three NGOs, they receive funding from the government to cover the meal costs for their beneficiaries, which is a very limited support compared to all the other needs that they have. NGO-run shelters also receive government funding to cover the salaries of some of their case workers, but in the rate that the government defines, which is usually near the bottom line of the minimum wage in Albania, which makes it so challenging for the NGOs to keep their staff engaged, to decrease burnout, and to decrease the rates of staff circulation because they would leave the job within the first six months or a year. They’ll be burned out very quickly. The salaries are very low. But at the moment, that’s the situation of funding. ...

‘Unfortunately, it’s time limited. Usually, also from the government, it’s on a yearly basis, after the budget is being approved every year from the government. But also, from the NGOs, it’s also time limited, which means, in the best case scenario, it would be two to three years funds. But usually, they are one-year long or two-year long funds that they do receive. And then

<sup>293</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>294</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>295</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>296</sup> UN OHCHR, [...Concluding Observations on the 5th periodic report...](#) (para 25), 30 October 2023

<sup>297</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#), 8 November 2023

they will have to apply for another project to keep up their direct services.’<sup>298</sup>

11.2.15 A representative of Terre des hommes – Albania, an organisation which is involved in anti-trafficking efforts from the transnational level to the local level in Albania, including work to prevent trafficking and raise awareness, stated in an interview with Asylos that: ‘The three of the NGO shelters. The range of services and the professionalism is there. It’s just that they need to be funded, the services, and the NGOs fundraised most of them by themselves. As I mentioned, I mean, their budget is half and half [state and donor funded].’<sup>299</sup>

11.2.16 Ana Majko, Executive Director of Initiative for Social Change ARSIS, an Albanian-based organisation specialising in the provision of social care and protection services to children, youth and families, including victims of trafficking, explained in an interview with Asylos the funding situation in the case of NISMA ARSIS and how it differs from other shelters:

‘100% of our services are covered by foreign donors, not Albanian authorities at all. We have applied but never get funds on that. ... So for me, it’s a struggle in itself to find resources and to apply for funds for providing supportive services. If I don’t find the funds, I could have to close the center tomorrow. And this is the only emergency shelter in Albania... So this is the only one who opens the door if the police calls or if the state services call or when citizens call. And until the state institution decides to bring the child to the shelter or to a public shelter or to family, or to decide what to do with the child, we provide support. ... And if the funds get reduced, as it happened after COVID especially and the Ukrainian war, we are struggling a lot of generating funds and identifying potential support or donors or partners.’<sup>300</sup>

11.2.17 Ana Majko of ARSIS further commented in an interview with Asylos that: ‘If a child or a woman is in South Albania, they need to come to Tirana or another specific city to get those services. So they have limited access, especially in rural areas, to have dedicated services. They need to change their settlement or their place of living in order to get the right services. There are some services. There are good models, but the accessibility is limited due to long distances; maybe even limitations on these programs.’<sup>301</sup>

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Section updated: 4 June 2024

## 12. Support and reintegration services beyond shelters

### 12.1 General

12.1.1 See [Shelters and short-medium assistance](#) for more information on the support available to victims of trafficking. Sources cited in this section provide information about a range of support services, or their lack thereof, including access to accommodation, employment and financial aid, so should be read in conjunction with the subsequent subsections.

12.1.2 The EC’s Albania Report 2022 noted, in regard to VOT, that ‘Successful

<sup>298</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p192), April 2024

<sup>299</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p186), April 2024

<sup>300</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p190), April 2024

<sup>301</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p186), April 2024

reintegration remains difficult because core protection, care and social services from the state are insufficient.<sup>302</sup>

12.1.3 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report:

'As of December 2021 [for the time frame between January 2020 and December 2021<sup>303</sup>], UNICEF reported that 6,357 at-risk individuals (including 4,507 females and 2,300 males) had received mental health and psychological care, and 654 individuals had received community services as per the tailored plan of interventions. By March 2022, UNICEF reported that 717 beneficiaries (including 417 males and 300 females) were identified at the community level and provided with emergency services. Among the 717 beneficiaries, 144 were PV/VoTs (including 78 females and 66 males) and 573 high-risk individuals (including 535 children and 38 adults). In addition, 341 PV/VoTs (including 314 females and 157 males) and 130 dependents received comprehensive services as per tailored plans of intervention, and 237 PV/VoTs and their dependents were assisted by shelters. Also, 58 high-risk individuals and PV/VoTs benefited from economic empowerment programmes, of which 204 successfully completed the economic reintegration programme. To improve service delivery, 47 service providers were trained to improve their skills to support high-risk individuals and PV/VoTs.<sup>304</sup>

12.1.4 UNICEF Albania, OSCE and Vatra, consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, noted that whilst there was good legislation and policies in place to support VOT/PVOT, these were not implemented at all levels<sup>305</sup>. According to Erion Prendi of SHKEJ, there was no budget to fund support services<sup>306</sup>, whilst the official from Terres Des Hommes stated that, although Albania was doing better compared to neighbouring Balkan countries, funding for reintegration was less than half of what was needed<sup>307</sup>.

12.1.5 In their 2020 Annual Report, D&E described their package of reintegration services provided to beneficiaries of its reintegration programme:

'Shelter, security and reintegration plan; Immediate medical assistance; Negotiation/mediation with the family; Psychological assessments and counseling; Legal support and assistance; Assistance for registration/continuation of the school system; Professional training; Social activities; Mentoring; Employment counseling and assistance; Financial support for housing; Information on services that exist in the community as well as necessary contacts/service map; Revenue-generating work programs; Assistance and support for children of victims of trafficking; Monitoring and follow-up of program beneficiaries.

'In addition to direct assistance to beneficiaries, D&E also supported the victim's family - for example, beneficiary children, assistance for a minor's

<sup>302</sup> EC, [Albania Report 2022](#) (p42), 12 October 2022

<sup>303</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p63-64), November 2022

<sup>304</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p39), November 2022

<sup>305</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p11, 22, 68), December 2022

<sup>306</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p83), December 2022

<sup>307</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p93), December 2022

parent to find work, family counseling, etc.<sup>308</sup>

12.1.6 An official from D&E explained to the Home Office FFT 2022 the services it offered:

‘We have a multi-disciplinary team consisting of a case manager, psychologist, doctor, teacher, lawyer, who all assess the case, make comprehensive needs assessments. Each VOT is assigned a case manager and they attend to the case from start to end until the VOT is reintegrated. After the needs assessment, the beneficiary, together with their case managers, design and follow their individual reintegration plan and the services provided are: medical assistance and psychological support to assess and reduce trauma. We provide education, vocational training and professional courses. There have also been cases where minors are placed in school following exploitation and trafficking. After the person has left the shelter we provide support for employment, counselling, opportunities in the labour market and we liaise with different businesses and different companies.

‘The first stage starts with 3 to 6 months in the shelter, sometimes longer depending on security issues, or where minors cannot return home as their parents are involved in the exploitation, or they can’t return to their home cities/towns due to stigma and discrimination. Even when the VOT improve their relations with parents, and they are supportive, we still provide services, for example, supporting parents if they need to find a job or assist siblings. Or support them to open a small business.

‘Some women are pregnant or with children and we provide the same services. In later stages, when they are employed and do not have family support, we provide after school care for the children of VOT.’<sup>309</sup>

12.1.7 When asked what reintegration support was offered to adult male VOT, an official from D&E indicated there was an issue with the quality of service, but told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘Men are able to access the same levels of service [as women] and can receive education and vocational training...’<sup>310</sup> The official from Tjeter Vizion similarly stated that, aside from access to shelters, ‘In law VOT are equal and there should be no discrimination on ethnicity or gender, so men have the same access as women and girls.’<sup>311</sup> The official from the Albanian Ministry of Interior noted some success in reintegration efforts, but stated that reintegration requires more resources, and more should be done to help men and boys reintegrate<sup>312</sup>.

12.1.8 Referring to reintegration support in general, Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘The state-run shelter provides only reception and rehabilitation services, not reintegration and only short term, not long term.

‘But NGOs provide reintegration for women, men, girls and boys. Tjeter

<sup>308</sup> D&E, [2020 Annual Report](#) (p5), 10 September 2021

<sup>309</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p16), December 2022

<sup>310</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p23), December 2022

<sup>311</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p28), December 2022

<sup>312</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p57-58), December 2022

Vizion provide for children only. Few VOT are men but we provide housing, rented apartments, food packages, medical and psychological assistance. We have a multi-disciplinary team with social workers, nurse, doctor, psychologist, teacher and lawyer. Some cases have never gone to school and we provide support to enrol children or get them back into school.<sup>313</sup>

12.1.9 Brikena Puka of Vatra also told the Home Office FFT 2022 that after a VOT leaves their shelter:

‘The reintegration lasts 5 years based on national standards for VOT and those at risk of being trafficked. But if the VOT after 2 years says, “I do not need any more support”, she signs an agreement and they can opt out of the shelters and services. We follow up after they leave the shelter and we continue to offer support. In cases of mental health problems, we have some with more than 5 years support. In order to prevent re-trafficking we continue to offer support.’<sup>314</sup>

12.1.10 An official from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘Once a person has left the shelter, support is still available. They have a cycle of support for 3 years, though this can be extended beyond 3 years, with professional support as well. This can continue with payments provided for accommodation, basic living needs, food and clothes. This is especially available to single mothers and for those in rural areas, as well as support beyond those leaving shelters.

‘Social care support for VOT includes cash benefits. Legislation exists, but there are resource and capacity constraints and for people on the ground the support is not happening.’<sup>315</sup>

12.1.11 When asked about reintegration support, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘... our services are not short-term but are long-term and robust. As regard children, our services are provided until they leave the shelter and they are placed in a foster family, who are often extended family members, such as grandparents, uncles and so on.

‘This applies to those children who don’t have close family. Those that do have siblings and or parents, they are placed with them.

‘What we do when we place children with foster families is support the family, and help them out with what they need, either jobs, or to be empowered or strengthened to help the child reintegrate much better.

‘In our experience reintegration is a long and tedious process which means we support them even after they are well into adulthood. Especially when these children are girls. So reintegration doesn’t end with placement into a family, it is an ongoing process until we know that they are no longer at risk of trafficking and can make it on their own.’<sup>316</sup>

12.1.12 An official at the Directorate of Social Services in Tirana Municipality told the

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<sup>313</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p64), December 2022

<sup>314</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p65), December 2022

<sup>315</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p10), December 2022

<sup>316</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p25), December 2022

Home Office FFT 2022 that:

'The rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking victims requires a multifaceted approach involving different actors. Assistance to victims of trafficking is not conditioned by the victim's desire to testify, it is provided in response to the victims' needs and includes at least: suitable and safe housing, psychological and material assistance, access to immediate medical treatment, translation when necessary, counselling and information, especially about legal rights, assistance for presentation and consideration during the trafficker's proceedings, access to education, professional training and employment. The services offered by the Directorate of Social Services in Tirana Municipality are:

- 'a) free legal and/or psychological counselling
- 'b) employment with the support of the Employment Promotion Directorate and the Tirana Regional Office
- 'c) long-term housing through social housing programs that Tirana Municipality offers
- 'd) support with the package of services offered in community centres.'<sup>317</sup>

12.1.13 Mary Ward Loreto provides support services to potential and victims of trafficking through Advice and Service Centres in the northern regions of Lezha and Rreshen, in Tirana, and the southern regions of Lushnja and Saranda. Direct beneficiaries are mostly adult men and women and they refer minors to the relevant child protection agencies and NGOs<sup>318</sup>. See [Annex A8](#) for services offered by Mary Ward Loreto.

12.1.14 In January 2023, the British Embassy informed the Home Office that the MSF programme is funding 3 primary service providers to provide comprehensive reintegration support to an additional 140 survivors between Jan 2023 and March 2024. UNICEF signed the contract with these providers on 18 January 2023. This contract will provide assistance to identified victims of any gender or age, including returnees from overseas who wish to access support. This includes immediate and long-term support tailored to an individual's needs, comprising accommodation, medical treatment, mental health support and counselling, legal assistance, personal security, living costs and education and vocational training. The contract also sets out that the programme will support the primary service providers to innovate and advocate for sustainable resources to maintain the support they provide over the long term through the Albanian Government's National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking<sup>319</sup>.

12.1.15 Deanna Davy, lead researcher for UNICEF Albania, wrote a report entitled 'Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania' (Economic Reintegration report), published in July 2022, for which she held interviews with 14 Albanian trafficking survivors and 27 interviews and 6 focus group discussions with professionals providing reintegration support. The Economic Reintegration report explained:

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<sup>317</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p107), December 2022

<sup>318</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

<sup>319</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

'In terms of the national policy approach, the National Action Plan outlines the importance of survivors' economic reintegration, and focuses its survivor reintegration approach on four main areas. The first area is related to the economic empowerment of survivors, including property rights, employment and vocational training, and microenterprise support. The second area is housing, the third is related to education, and the fourth to social care services.'<sup>320</sup>

12.1.16 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government stated, '... the beneficiaries of... respective services are informed and assisted to apply, in order to benefit from all social programs (employment, training, education, social housing, social assistance), after leaving the shelter, at the Local Self-Government Units, to ensure social and economic integration/reintegration of these categories.'<sup>321</sup>

12.1.17 The report further stated:

'The Transformation of the National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania program, in close cooperation with three national shelters (respectively: Different and Equal, Another Vision and Vatra) offered direct support and reintegration services for VT/VMT [victims of trafficking/vulnerable, missing or trafficked children] to the entire duration of the first cycle of the program (January 2020 – May 2023). Support services cover the full spectrum of temporary assistance to VTs/VMTs for case management, including services such as: administrative, legal, economic and health support.'<sup>322</sup>

12.1.18 Assistance/support/reintegration for potential victims/victims of trafficking is referred to on the website of the 'Transforming national response to human trafficking in and from Albania' programme, which mentions 'Provision of tailor-made support to potential victim or victim of trafficking for their successful rehabilitation and reintegration.'<sup>323</sup> Information about the partners providing these services is available on the [website](#) (Geographic distribution).

12.1.19 The website noted that 334 potential victims/victims of trafficking had been reintegrated so far with the assistance of the programme, which commenced in December 2019 and will continue until March 2025<sup>324</sup>.

12.1.20 In the Evaluation report of November 2022, which assessed the 'Programme on transforming the national response to human trafficking in and from Albania, 2019-2022,' UNICEF noted:

'Implementing partners and their field workers recognized that they were engaged in addressing the root causes of human trafficking by strengthening families and providing support to the most vulnerable and poor segments of the population. The majority of municipal stakeholders recognized and appreciated the benefits of the Programme... Municipal stakeholders recognized that the Programme provided families and PV/VoTs with a

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<sup>320</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p15), July 2022

<sup>321</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p33), received 19 December 2022

<sup>322</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p34), received 19 December 2022

<sup>323</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Geographic distribution), no date

<sup>324</sup> UK Govt/UNICEF Albania, [End Human Trafficking](#) (Programme results), no date

comprehensive package of tangible services designed to meet their needs, services that municipalities have often been unable to provide due to a lack of know-how and resources.<sup>325</sup>

12.1.21 The Evaluation report continued:

‘The Programme was also effective at identifying and reintegrating trafficking victims into their communities and families... Once PV/VoTs were identified, service providers faced a range of constraints with regard to ensuring their safety and support for their recovery and reintegration, given the complexities of their needs. To improve recovery and reintegration, municipal authorities recognized the important role the Programme played in improving case management and service delivery to PV/VoTs.’<sup>326</sup>

12.1.22 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC noted, ‘Successful reintegration remains difficult because the state’s core protection, care and social services are insufficient.’<sup>327</sup>

12.1.23 On 20 February 2024, the FCDO provided an update on assistance offered by the UK government government; this letter stated, ‘**Reintegration support** provision for returning Albanian nationals has been in operation since July 2023. Publicity materials have also been published and made accessible to all returning individuals for wider awareness of available services. As of 31 December 2023, 140 Albanian nationals have taken up the offer of reintegration support following return.’<sup>328</sup>

12.1.24 The letter continued:

‘As a result of the Joint Communiqué [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué<sup>329</sup>] and updates to the CPIN guidance, there is an increase in readmissions of failed asylum-seekers under the UK-Albania Readmissions Agreement, including those recognised in the UK system as victims of modern slavery. The Home Office is also encouraging more voluntary returns. To ensure all cases, including enforced returns, know what provisions are available in country so they can make themselves known to the appropriate support services if they wish, we collaborated with the Albanian Government and key service providers to produce a leaflet to signpost returnees to available services - for example, social and health services, as well as administrative and legal support, vocational and skill training and employments opportunities - once they return home. Additionally, we have developed information sheets in English and Albanian which set out the reintegration support available for returning survivors of trafficking to Albania and how it is accessed. We’ve shared them with The Salvation Army, Voluntary Returns Scheme, Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and police to try and increase awareness of and access to this support. We have also asked the Albanian Government and key service provides to inform us should any capacity concerns arise. No issues have been raised to date.’<sup>330</sup>

<sup>325</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p54), November 2022

<sup>326</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p54-55), November 2022

<sup>327</sup> EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p46), 8 November 2023

<sup>328</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

<sup>329</sup> Albanian & UK Govts, [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué: Enhancing bilateral...](#), 13 December 2022

<sup>330</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

## 12.2 Financial assistance

### 12.2.1 The EC described Albania's social assistance package, noting that:

'Social assistance (minimum income) in Albania is a non-contributory scheme covering individuals/households most in need of support. The Law 57/2019 on social assistance distinguishes between two main groups of social assistance beneficiaries:

'a) those falling under one of the "special categories" of individuals/households in need, as identified by this law 57/2019 (e.g. children in foster care, orphan children not in institutions, households with triplets or more (i.e. households with three or more children under 18 born at the same time), victims of domestic violence and victims of trafficking); and  
'b) "poor" individuals/households who do not qualify under any of the special categories...'<sup>331</sup>

### 12.2.2 The UNICEF Albania July 2022 report noted that:

'... trafficking survivors who are unemployed and have a declaration from an appropriate frontline professional that they are a survivor of human trafficking are entitled to receive ALL 9,000 [approximately £75<sup>332</sup>] per month in economic assistance. However, the study identified that few survivors are accessing this economic assistance. The main reasons are that applying for economic assistance is time-consuming, the amount of such assistance is low, and the survivors may face discrimination from frontline professionals when applying for assistance.'<sup>333</sup>

### 12.2.3 The Home Office FFT 2022 were told by officials from UNICEF Albania, D&E, Tjeter Vizion and SHKEJ that, to access state economic assistance, a person must be unemployed and prove that they are a VOT by providing relevant documentation. Some VOT were reluctant to declare their status due to stigma and discrimination<sup>334</sup>.

### 12.2.4 See also [Perceptions](#).

### 12.2.5 The National Action Plan of 2021 for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania noted that Roma families who lack documents cannot benefit from economic aid:

'Trafficking ... Families with no income or insufficient income may benefit economic aid from the state ... and local government. Those eligible, among others, are also potential victims of trafficking when leaving the shelters till their placement to employment. However, not everyone needing assistance may benefit support. Roma families lacking documents or that are not registered with their LGUs, can not benefit. Local organizations often try to fill in these gaps by providing such support as food, clothing, education or training. Family support is generally scarce and does not meet the family

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<sup>331</sup> EC, [ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#), April 2022

<sup>332</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>333</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p11) July 2022

<sup>334</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p11, 18, 26-27, 79 ), December 2022

needs.<sup>335</sup>

- 12.2.6 The EC reported that 'In 2021 (up to 30 November...), there were 65,578 [social assistance] beneficiaries, of which only 1,831 belonged to the first group [those belonging to "special categories", which includes VOT].<sup>336</sup> The same source noted that, though the level of social assistance had increased as of January 2022, '... the level of benefits remains well below the poverty risk threshold.'<sup>337</sup>
- 12.2.7 An official from UNICEF Albania informed the Home Office FFT 2022 that the economic assistance provided to VOT 'does not even cover basic living costs.'<sup>338</sup>
- 12.2.8 According to Ana Stakaj and Imelda Poole of Mary Ward Loreto, speaking to the Home Office FFT in 2022:  
'The basic minimum wage in Albania is 33,000 lek a month (about 300 euro), and cheapest rent is 200 to 250 euro a month, leaving only a 100 euro to live on and with rising cost of living, it is almost impossible to live, it is moving into starvation level really. And that is for people in good jobs working in call centres. Call centres are the biggest employers for the youth. Wages in factories are even less – in sweat shops you earn 150 euro a month. But there is no alternative. And in the south they are not even declaring employees so they are not protected and recruited on the black market.'<sup>339</sup>
- 12.2.9 The CLCI told the Home Office FFT 2022 said that, in practice, the number of VOT applying for financial benefits was low due to prejudice. However, the same source stated that:  
'What I have seen in municipalities is that there are good practices and models supporting VOT to apply for support. At first they need to find and believe in the system and then when the VOT goes to the municipality office, they see an official and are asked for documents, so they need support with this too. Documentation requirements can cause barrier in getting support. Municipalities are doing their best in helping victims apply for support.  
'There are established good models of providing support for VOT to apply for help.'<sup>340</sup>
- 12.2.10 An official from UNICEF told the Home Office FFT 2022 that resource and capacity constraints prevented the implementation of cash benefits in some areas<sup>341</sup>.
- 12.2.11 The EC reported that, other than a one-off payment at birth, there was no family or child benefit<sup>342</sup>.
- 12.2.12 The Economic Reintegration report of July 2022 stated:  
'... trafficking survivors who are unemployed and have a declaration from an

<sup>335</sup> MoHSP, UNDP, CoE, [...National Action Plan for...Roma and Egyptians...](#) (2021-25), 14 April 2022

<sup>336</sup> EC, [ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#), April 2022

<sup>337</sup> EC, [ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#), April 2022

<sup>338</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p11), December 2022

<sup>339</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p96), December 2022

<sup>340</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p43), December 2022

<sup>341</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p11), December 2022

<sup>342</sup> EC, [ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#), April 2022

appropriate frontline professional that they are a survivor of human trafficking are entitled to receive ALL9,000 [approximately £73<sup>343</sup>] per month in economic assistance. However... few survivors are accessing this economic assistance. The main reasons are that applying for economic assistance is time-consuming, the amount of such assistance is low, and the survivors may face discrimination from frontline professionals when applying for assistance.<sup>344</sup>

12.2.13 The report further noted that:

'The interviews identified that not all survivors are aware of this state economic assistance. Only four survivors [out of 14 interviewed] (29%) reported that they have received any assistance from either the central government or the municipality. This suggests that either the survivors are unaware of the state economic assistance, or do not wish to apply for it. There has reportedly also been a downward trend in recent years in the number of unemployed survivors accessing the economic assistance payment... Moreover, the amount of economic assistance is insufficient to pay for rent and other essentials.'<sup>345</sup>

12.2.14 The Economic Reintegration report of July 2022 further stated:

'... a lack of funding for state services ... has negative consequences for survivors. Legislation and policy documents guide, at least on paper, the provision of state economic reintegration services for trafficking survivors. However, the budget limits the ability of some agencies to implement their mandate. Key informant interview and FGD [focus group discussion] participants highlighted that state support, especially at the municipal level, is somewhat ad hoc, with some municipalities providing economic support to survivors at specific times – when the municipality has funds – but not at other times. This leads to frontline professionals reportedly having to approach state agencies with ad hoc requests for support for survivors, some of which are granted, while others are not. In other words, there is no overall consistency to municipality-level economic reintegration support for trafficking survivors.'<sup>346</sup>

12.2.15 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian government noted that the amount of economic assistance for victims and potential victims of trafficking was tripled from 1 January 2022 (it is now ALL9,000, or approximately £73, as noted above).<sup>347</sup>

12.2.16 In the Concluding Observations of 30 October 2023, UN CEDAW welcomed legislative reforms achieved since the consideration in 2016 of Albania's fourth periodic report, including the adoption of Law 59/2019 'On Social Assistance in the Republic of Albania', defining victims of domestic violence and victims of trafficking as categories benefiting from economic assistance<sup>348</sup>.

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<sup>343</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>344</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p11), July 2022

<sup>345</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p47), July 2022

<sup>346</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p50-51), July 2022

<sup>347</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p31), received 19 December 2022

<sup>348</sup> UN OHCHR, [...Concluding Observations on the 5th periodic report...](#) (para 4b), 30 October 2023

12.2.17 See [Education, training and employment](#) for further information.

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## 12.3 Housing and accommodation

12.3.1 The UNICEF Albania July 2022 report noted that:

‘Under the national legislation, [VOT] survivors may access a state housing bonus, and under this scheme, those (alongside survivors of violence) who are employed but have limited income, may receive a 50–100 per cent rent subsidy. However, the study found that very few survivors are able to access the bonus. Key challenges are that accessing the bonus requires proof of a rental tenancy agreement, which few survivors have, as well as state bureaucracy.’<sup>349</sup>

12.3.2 An official from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) told the Home Office FFT 2022 that the MoI provided ‘... subsidies to VOT of trafficking to rent premises for businesses or homes.’<sup>350</sup> A representative of the General Directorate for Social Services in Tirana Municipality stated that one of the services offered to VOT the Directorate included ‘... long-term housing through social housing programs...’ The representative added that ‘The housing services include rent subsidies, loan interest subsidies.’<sup>351</sup>

12.3.3 An official from D&E described to the Home Office FFT 2022 some of the support it provided post-shelter, which it described as semi-independent living:

‘... where they go from shelter to a rented apartment, and we help pay rent on the apartment for one year (the cases are from all over Albania not only in Tirana). In this period D&E try to collaborate with municipalities to include the beneficiaries in the social housing programmes that they have. We help and support the VOT with the preparation of all the documents needed to profit from this programme. It can be difficult as different municipalities have different programmes and the cases are from all over Albania. We support them wherever they choose to live and to be reintegrated.’<sup>352</sup>

12.3.4 The official from D&E also told the Home Office FFT 2022 that, without their support, VOT struggled to access state aid directly. ‘This is why we continue to help as we see that they have to fill in many forms or provide many documents for the service they want. They struggle to get economic aid, to profit from the housing programme, or rent leases, and we support them to provide these documents, this can be expensive, and sometimes support is

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<sup>349</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p11), July 2022

<sup>350</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p57), December 2022

<sup>351</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p108), December 2022

<sup>352</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p17), December 2022

needed from our lawyers.’<sup>353</sup>

- 12.3.5 The same source noted that not all VOT required shelter support, or declined it, in which case ‘... adults might be supported in a rented apartment directly when they enter the programme, or at home with their family.’<sup>354</sup>
- 12.3.6 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFT 2022 that they provided rented accommodation for VOT, which lasted for ‘Sometimes 6 months and sometimes a year, especially when the victims have children. We do advocacy work to local authorities in order for them to provide support for victims through receipt of social housing bonus, after 6 months (or 1 year’s) support provided by Vatra.’<sup>355</sup>
- 12.3.7 The official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘... when it comes to integration and reintegration our organisation provides to children (girls and boys) and women. Our reintegration services are provided in that individuals get a flat or apartment, are placed into families or supported to live independently.’<sup>356</sup> The same source stated that:
- ‘Regards women and girls, after they are over 18 and cannot be placed with families or foster families, we help them to find protective homes.
- ‘Until a while ago we provided apartments to girls aged 18 to 22 years. They were considered protected, by which we mean surveyed by our workers. These protected flats proved to be an excellent tool to integrate women and girls into society. Unfortunately we no longer have funds to run them. This leads us to the high autonomy flats provided to women aged over 22 years of age, high autonomy is accommodation with no surveillance, but we help to provide reintegration support, including help finding jobs, access to vocational training and career guidance.’<sup>357</sup>
- 12.3.8 Officials from CLCI told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘Speaking of VOT and those who apply for social housing, we have good law on social housing and legal aid and all these laws that I mentioned foresee VOT as beneficiaries. In practice the number of cases applying for these benefits is low. It is not because we don’t have laws, but there is hesitation to apply due to prejudice, which makes VOT reluctant to apply for economic help, legal aid and social housing.’<sup>358</sup>
- 12.3.9 Ines Leskaj of AWEN told the Home Office FFT 2022 that, generally. ‘Rents are high compared to salaries.’<sup>359</sup>
- 12.3.10 In the Concluding Observations of October 2023, UN CEDAW welcomed legislative reforms achieved since the consideration in 2016 of Albania’s fourth periodic report, including the adoption of Law No. 22/2018 ‘On Social Housing’, prioritizing access by victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking, and adolescent mothers to social housing services<sup>360</sup>.

<sup>353</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p17), December 2022

<sup>354</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p17), December 2022

<sup>355</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p64), December 2022

<sup>356</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p25), December 2022

<sup>357</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p25), December 2022

<sup>358</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p43), December 2022

<sup>359</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p35), December 2022

<sup>360</sup> UN OHCHR, [...Concluding Observations on the 5th periodic report...](#) (para 25), 30 October 2023

12.3.11 Anxhela Bruçi, Coordinator of Arise Albania, part of an international anti-trafficking organisation, commented in an interview with Asylos that:

‘In terms of housing, [victims of human trafficking] are entitled [to support] if they provide all the necessary documentation, which is a long list of documents to get it. And it also costs to get most of the documents notarized and ready to submit. But when they get accommodation support, they can get up to a year support for rents for apartments. This support is being provided by the municipality, not the central government.’<sup>361</sup>

12.3.12 In further written clarifications following the interview with Asylos, the same interlocutor provided the following information in response to a number of questions about what is required for victims of trafficking to be able to access housing:

‘1. Are you able to specify what documentation a victim of trafficking is required to provide in order to access housing?’

“List of required documents (these might vary from year to year, according to Municipality decisions):

‘x Applicant’s birth certificate and marital status certificate.

‘x Proof of residence in the municipality where housing or residence permit is requested, for families who have moved from other areas of the country.

‘x Verification of net and gross income (verification of employment from the employer) accompanied by verification from the Regional Tax Directorate for the payment of social and health insurance contributions.

‘x Certification from the office of assistance and care at local government units for family members, included in the program of economic assistance and payment for persons with disabilities.

‘x Certification from the employment office of the relevant local unit for persons included in the unemployment payment program.

‘x Certification from the real estate registration office that the family or any of its members do not own an apartment or any environment that can be used as such.

‘x Certification from the real estate registration office for the area of the property owned by the family or any of its members, when the area of the apartment is below the current housing standards.

‘x Certification from the real estate registration office of the country of origin that there is no registered property, which can also be used for housing, for families that have changed residence for the purpose of employment, for all family members.

‘x The court decision, which leaves the child or children in custody for divorced couples, accompanied by the certification from the enforcement office for the amount of the pension they benefit for the children.

‘x If you live in a dwelling with poor conditions or at risk of collapse, the original copy of the certificate issued by the Technical Services of the

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<sup>361</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p197), April 2024

Municipality.

‘x The document issued by the relevant state institutions for persons who have the status of “immigrant”, “immigrant worker” and “asylum seeker”.’

‘2. Is a victim of trafficking required to complete civil registration with the municipality in order to access housing?’

“Yes, because the fund derives from the Municipality, not the central government.”

‘3. Is the individual required to provide information about their family and their family’s financial means in order to access housing assistance?’

“Yes, if they live in the same house or they are part of the same family under civil registration.”

‘4. Does a victim of trafficking require a guarantor in order to access housing assistance?’

“No.”<sup>362</sup>

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## 12.4 Education, training and employment

12.4.1 The Government of Albania produced the 11<sup>th</sup> report on the implementation of the European Social Charter, covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2018, published in March 2020, which stated:

‘Under the employment promotion law “vulnerable groups” are considered jobseekers, such as: mothers with children, persons over 50, youth under 18, long-term unemployed, persons below the poverty line, victims of trafficking, persons benefiting from the income support programs, unemployed mothers, divorced women with social problems, persons returning from emigration with economic problems, newly graduated, disoriented persons in the labor market, persons serving prison sentences, persons with disabilities; from Roma and Egyptian community, orphans, etc.’<sup>363</sup>

12.4.2 Officials from the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) informed the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘Active measures in the labour office are in 3 types: employment, employment promotion (encouragement) programmes, and vocational education and training. Vulnerable groups usually participate in the third level of employability, so they are a good fit for vocational and training as well as employment promotion programmes.

‘Our services are free to job seekers. First, the job seeker comes to the labour office, second, they have an interview and a file is completed on their skills, education and so on. Based on this, the electronic system does some kind of selection and categorises into tiers:

‘Tier 1: employability is considered easier, and we try and match them to a job

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<sup>362</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p198), April 2024

<sup>363</sup> Govt of Albania, [11th National Report on the implementation of...](#) (p6), 6 March 2020

'Tier 2: employability level is not as high, but with vocational training they can possibly get jobs, or employment promotion programmes, like internships.

'Tier 3: employability is much lower, so we cooperate with and incentivise employers to employ this group by subsidising/paying salaries and/or social/health contribution and other expenses according to the costs determined in each employment promotion programme (EPP)...

'VOT job seekers usually score quite low because they usually have a low level of education and have been out of the labour market for some time. But by law they are considered disadvantaged whether or not they are categorised as tier 3.'<sup>364</sup>

12.4.3 Officials from the NAES described the vocational training provided to VOT at its Vocational Training Centres (VTC):

'Tirana has 2 training centres that are subordinate to us, one of the most successful centre[s] is called centre number 4. It has a very good cooperation with Linza, the state-run shelter, they were training VOT in nail art, manicure, pedicure and so on, as well as tailoring. During 2021, VTC Tirana 4, in collaboration with the Center for the Rehabilitation of Trafficked Women in Linza, developed a tailoring course and a manicure and pedicure course with VOT. The trainees attend the course at the Vocational Training Center accompanied by their social worker.'<sup>365</sup>

12.4.4 UNICEF's July 2022 report stated, under the government's policy and programmes to support the economic reintegration of trafficking survivors:

'Female trafficking survivors fall under the category of "unemployed women" in employment services. The employment promotion includes employment support for marginalised jobseekers (including trafficking survivors) for one year. This support includes paying survivors the minimum wage for six months. Another programme aiming to support trafficking survivors' economic reintegration is on-the-job training for jobseekers. Under this programme, jobseekers receive 100 per cent of the minimum wage during the duration of the four months of training. Unemployed trafficking survivors also have the right to register as job-seekers at the Albanian National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), the government agency responsible for assisting Albanian citizens seeking employment. NAES offices reportedly prioritise jobseekers from vulnerable groups, including trafficking victims.'<sup>366</sup>

12.4.5 The UNICEF Albania July 2022 report noted that its study '... identified some key challenges for survivors in entering and sustaining new employment, including lack of decent job opportunities in Albania, lack of interest in the jobs, lack of education, lack of affordable childcare, ongoing trauma and stigma. The study further identified that few survivors are successful in finding employment quickly after registering with the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES).'

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<sup>364</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p111), December 2022

<sup>365</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p111), December 2022

<sup>366</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in...](#) (p15-16), July 2022

<sup>367</sup> Davy D, UNICEF, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p10), July 2022

12.4.6 Officials from the NAES told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘We don’t have many VOT that are declared in labour offices and of the total number of those currently registered, they are all women... Until the end of last month [September 2022] there were 16 women registered.’<sup>368</sup> The NAES cautioned that it was up to the job seeker to declare themselves as a VOT<sup>369</sup>. Statistics provided by the NAES showed that only one registered VOT was in employment<sup>370</sup>.

12.4.7 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFT 2022 that through the project they had supported 240 VOT/PVOT in 2020 and 210 in 2021, 90% of whom were women. The official stated ‘For these people involved in the project, 80% of them successfully completed the programme and they showed enhanced skills. In 2020 we financed 28 business ideas and 36 people were employed. In 2021 we financed 12 business ideas and 46 people were employed.’<sup>371</sup>

12.4.8 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report referred to its partnership with Key Adviser to work on social and economic empowerment with PVOT/VOT, noting that:

‘Empowerment initiatives were evidence-based with a focus on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills building, coupled with grants to support start-up businesses and micro-businesses, and employment opportunities in the form of paid internships and jobs. Key Adviser offered a package of services that provided PV/VoTs with opportunities to be engaged in the labour market. After PV/VoTs finished a series of required trainings they were able to engage in internships for which Key Adviser paid the salary for three months, after which the businesses or companies could decide whether they wanted to employ the intern. Similarly, another implementing partner provided 18 PV/VoTs with grants for establishing mini-businesses and arranged internships and vocational training and connections with businesses that provide internships for youth. The Programme also helped to ensure that PV/VoTs registered with their local Employment Office for vocational training and job placement.’<sup>372</sup>

12.4.9 The same report stated ‘To date, although the number of people employed by the Programme has not been that high, it is a beginning and people are gaining employment skills, and youth are provided with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills...’<sup>373</sup>

12.4.10 The report added that UNICEF had:

‘... documented good results with regard to social and economic empowerment. As of March 2022, UNICEF estimated that 249 families have shown reduced vulnerabilities to human trafficking and 367 adolescents (including 147 boys and 220 girls) used the knowledge and skills gained to prevent human trafficking. In addition, 1,369 adolescents were empowered through the Programme. These results, however, can be fragile given the

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<sup>368</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p110), December 2022

<sup>369</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p110), December 2022

<sup>370</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p112), December 2022

<sup>371</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p99), December 2022

<sup>372</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p37), November 2022

<sup>373</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p37), November 2022

high rates of unemployment in the target counties and the economic insecurity that many families face, particularly in light of the economic crisis caused by the global pandemic and its impact on the country's economy.<sup>374</sup>

- 12.4.11 An official from D&E told the Home Office FFT 2022 that 'For accessing vocational training or employment, this is not easy in some areas of Albania, even Tirana. If a person is displaced to Tirana they will need support to officially register in the civil state and to profit from the municipality programmes and other services at a local level.'<sup>375</sup> The same source also noted 'We support the employment of males by collaborating with the Regional Employment Office and different business companies.'<sup>376</sup>
- 12.4.12 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFT 2022 that 'When we talk to VOT we find that they fear they won't be employed because they think the employers will judge them for being a VOT. However the opposite has happened. Businesses and employers were welcoming and didn't have a problem and treated them equally, a great achievement.'<sup>377</sup> Similarly, the official from Tjeter Vizion stated that VOT were '... mostly hired in businesses or by employers known within the network of shelters. Several organisations help VOT to be employed in the private sector. Business owners no longer see VOT as criminals or prostitutes, that is people you cannot work with, they now see them as victims that need support.'<sup>378</sup>
- 12.4.13 See also [Perceptions](#).
- 12.4.14 The Economic Reintegration report 2022 stated, 'Survivors face a number of challenges in accessing quality vocational training, including lack of access to free childcare, difficulties accessing vocational training in rural areas of the country and the short duration and low quality of some trainings provided in vocational training centres.'<sup>379</sup>
- 12.4.15 The report further noted:
- 'The study found that appropriate training and internships can lead to decent employment for survivors in Albania. Seven interviewed survivors (50%) were... employed in the same field in which they had trained: as a tailor, hairdresser, cook, car mechanic or other profession.
- 'The study identified some key challenges for survivors in entering and sustaining new employment, including lack of decent job opportunities in Albania, lack of interest in the jobs, lack of education, lack of affordable childcare, ongoing trauma and stigma. The study further identified that few survivors are successful in finding employment quickly after registering with the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES).'<sup>380</sup>
- 12.4.16 The report continued:
- 'The Albanian government has developed policy and programmes to support the economic reintegration of trafficking survivors. Female trafficking

<sup>374</sup> Haarr, R.N, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p38), November 2022

<sup>375</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p17-18), December 2022

<sup>376</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p20), December 2022

<sup>377</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p100), December 2022

<sup>378</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p27), December 2022

<sup>379</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p10), July 2022

<sup>380</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p10), July 2022

survivors fall under the category of “unemployed women” in employment services. The employment promotion includes employment support for marginalised jobseekers (including trafficking survivors) for one year. This support includes paying survivors the minimum wage for six months.

‘Another programme aiming to support trafficking survivors’ economic reintegration is on-the-job training for jobseekers. Under this programme, jobseekers receive 100 per cent of the minimum wage during the duration of the four months of training.

‘Unemployed trafficking survivors also have the right to register as jobseekers at the Albanian National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), the government agency responsible for assisting Albanian citizens seeking employment. NAES offices reportedly prioritise jobseekers from vulnerable groups, including trafficking victims...’<sup>381</sup>

#### 12.4.17 The Economic Reintegration report 2022 continued:

‘Further, under Law 65/2016 on social enterprises, survivors of trafficking, comprise one of the main beneficiary groups based on Decision of Council of Ministers (DCM) no. 56/2018 “On the definition of concrete categories of disadvantaged groups”. Under this law, at least 30 per cent of employees should belong to marginalised groups, and trafficking survivors (typically women and girls) are to be given particular support to access the labour market.’<sup>382</sup>

#### 12.4.18 The report also noted opportunities for vocational training:

‘Trafficking survivors can access free vocational training in vocational schools across Albania. There are currently 50 technical vocational schools (41 public, and 9 private) and 10 public vocational training centres, mainly located in urban areas. They are present in almost all regions, with a higher concentration in central Albania. There are 340 private businesses or training providers licensed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, and 30 operating as vocational training centres.’<sup>383</sup>

#### 12.4.19 In the Evaluation report of November 2022, which set out an assessment of the impact of the ‘Programme on transforming the national response to human trafficking in and from Albania, 2019-2022,’ UNICEF stated:

‘The Programme was designed to increase social and economic opportunities for PV/VoTs and individuals at risk of being trafficked. Empowerment initiatives were evidence-based and included TVET [technical and vocational education and training] and skills building, grants to support start-up businesses and micro-businesses, and employment opportunities in the form of paid internships and jobs. UNICEF documented good results related to social and economic empowerment. However, such results may be fragile given the high rates of unemployment in the project areas and economic insecurity that many families face.’<sup>384</sup>

#### 12.4.20 In the response to the Council of Europe of December 2022, the Albanian

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<sup>381</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p15-16), July 2022

<sup>382</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p16), July 2022

<sup>383</sup> D. Davy, [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#) (p16), July 2022

<sup>384</sup> UNICEF, [Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#) (p54), November 2022

government provided the following information:

‘Economic empowerment through employment, professional training and education are an important part of the Reintegration Program for Victims of Trafficking, which in Albania is applied by all shelters of the NCATS. ...

‘For this purpose, the Regional Directorates of Employment and Vocational Training Centers maintain close and mutual relations and cooperation with the members of KKSAT, mainly in relation to:

- Facilitating the registration process of VT women and girls, as unemployed job seekers;
- Advising them about employment;
- Their inclusion in programs to promote employment and professional training;
- Increasing the social responsibility of businesses to hire more women and girls from the categories in need/risk, through the Employment Offices.

‘Regarding training for employment/professional courses, 137 cases of NCATS attended professional courses: cooking, hairdressing and aesthetics, babysitting, embroidery, care for the elderly, computer and foreign language courses (English, Italian, French, German).

‘NCATS has supported program beneficiaries in their efforts to enter the formal labor market through employment and employment counseling. The staff of the centers continuously guide the beneficiaries to choose professions in demand in the labor market, adapting each case to their personal skills. Beneficiaries are trained on how to present themselves to the employer, how to have an effective communication with the employer, but also how to succeed at work, how to prepare a CV, a letter of motivation, etc. ... 189 beneficiaries of NCAT have been employed as: assistant cooks in restaurants and pastry shops, bartenders, waiters, dishwashers in restaurants, Internet and Call Center operators, food distributors, supermarket workers, laundry workers, seamstresses 31 beneficiaries of NCAT have been included in the internship program working in different businesses.

‘The support of the beneficiaries for the opening of small businesses has been the focus of the state structures and organizations that provide services to the victims/potential victims of trafficking. 25 beneficiaries of NCAT have been supported for the preparation of business plans and the opening of 25 small businesses: shop for selling clothes, tailoring, aesthetics, sale of used shoes, shop for production and sale of canneries, shop for baking, grinding and coffee sale etc. For 2022, 7 new VoT/PVoT start-ups have been supported. 10 beneficiaries are involved in organizations and work as mentors.’<sup>385</sup>

#### 12.4.21 The report further stated:

‘State structures and non-profit organizations that provide services to victims of trafficking have collaborated with business mainly for internship programs.

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<sup>385</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p12), received 19 December 2022

During the period 2021-2022, about 24 beneficiaries have been included in the internship program working in different businesses...

'The program "Transforming the national response to human trafficking in and out of Albania"... successfully implemented its economic reintegration component in close cooperation with "Key Adviser" sh.pk, and its local partners... VT/PVT and individuals at risk [were] included in several training courses aimed at improving their employability skills (IT and soft skills)... The cooperation resulted in the employment of 70 individuals for the period 2020-2022, while the created startups number 40 for the same period.'<sup>386</sup>

12.4.22 The report also provided information about educational opportunities to assist (potential) victims of trafficking:

'The educational structures have continued to support the victims/potential victims of trafficking for registration in full-time or part-time pre-university education, the provision of free textbooks and the continuation of education in the most favorable conditions... During the period of the COVID-19 situation, the teaching has been done online and the beneficiaries of the program have been supported and equipped with mobile phones and tablets for the progress of the lessons. For each case entered into the program, an assessment was made to determine the educational level of each beneficiary and then an educational-teaching plan was developed as part of the reintegration plan of each beneficiary. 140 beneficiaries and 84 of their children have been supported and attended school at different levels.'<sup>387</sup>

12.4.23 The USSD TiP report 2023 stated: 'The government and NGOs provided vocational training for 50 victims and National Employment Services offices prioritized jobseekers from vulnerable groups, including trafficking victims; 73 victims registered with the employment office for employment opportunities, 46 of which obtained work. The government also... enrolled 10 victims into an economic assistance program that dispersed 9,000 leks [approximately £73<sup>388</sup>] per month.'<sup>389</sup>

12.4.24 On 20 February 2024, the FCDO provided an update on services and assistance provided via the HO Modern Slavery Fund; this update stated:

'In the period from January-December 2023, the programme has supported **130 individuals at risk and at high risk with entrepreneurial/employment skills, 12 of whom started their own businesses.** Additionally, 15 entrepreneurs from the previous cycle received mentoring sessions and practical advice on expanding their businesses, enhancing online presence and improving customer relations. This brings the total supported by the programme from 2020 to 2023 to 590 beneficiaries; with plans in 2024-25 to extend this to a further 130 individuals.'<sup>390</sup>

12.4.25 The letter also provided information about additional assistance being provided by the UK government, stating, '**New Perspectives Project**... is focused on reducing irregular migration from Albania to the UK... The project

<sup>386</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p24), received 19 December 2022

<sup>387</sup> Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by the authorities...](#) (p12), received 19 December 2022

<sup>388</sup> Xe.com, [Currency converter](#), as at 21 March 2024

<sup>389</sup> USSD, [TiP Report 2023, Albania](#), 15 June 2023

<sup>390</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

has now also expanded scope to include a fourth municipality (Diber) in the north of Albania and is dispersing scholarships, grants and upskilling communities and local government.<sup>391</sup>

12.4.26 See [International assistance and progress](#) for further information on this.

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## 12.5 Healthcare and psychological support

12.5.1 The study by Klea Ramaj of 2021 explored ‘rehabilitation and reintegration challenges faced by Albanian victims of sex trafficking and forced begging upon their return to Albania, as reflected by 15 professionals providing direct assistance to the victims’<sup>392</sup> and found that:

‘Similar to every Albanian citizen, trafficking victims had the right to be issued a health card, which covers the expenses of basic medical services, such as blood tests or doctors’ visits... victims suffered from a host of health complications following their trafficking experience, most of which required medical treatment. Nevertheless, five interviewees suggested that the costs of such medication were not covered by the health card: “The Albanian government needs to invest on drug funds, particularly for vulnerable individuals such as trafficking victims. Medicaments are expensive, while victims’ salaries are quite low... this situation causes discontent among victims” (MD). In addition to a lack of medications, trafficking victims were also faced with scarce psychological assistance after leaving the shelter. Even though most organizations continued the provision of counseling services after victims had been reintegrated in the community, such services were not offered by the Albanian state. Psychotherapy sessions following the victims’ exit from the shelter were infrequent. For example, one interviewee claimed that the staff of her organization would meet with the victims once in every six months after they started to live independently (SW5).’<sup>393</sup>

12.5.2 An official from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:

‘Regarding protection of VOT, the 2014 law on compulsory health care insurance was enacted in 2014 and health insurance for VOT is covered by the state. This enables these individuals to become part of the public health system and reduce the burden to those who provide care. So this assistance is provided from primary health care and also includes referral and provision of secondary and tertiary care including mental health (MH) services. This is provided free and covered by the state budget to VOT, so could include medicines and intermediary diagnostic or treatment services, as well as other free of charge healthcare packages, provide by both public and non-public hospitals (as in nephrology, cardio-surgery, hearing problems, etc.). These packages are 100% financed by the Compulsory Health Care Insurance Fund and are implemented based on protocols approved by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.’<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

<sup>392</sup> Ramaj K, [The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#) (Abstract), 7 May 2021

<sup>393</sup> Ramaj K, [The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#) (p16), 7 May 2021

<sup>394</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p77), December 2022

- 12.5.3 According to the OSCE official, speaking to the Home Office FFT 2022, 'Members of the NRM have been asking for dedicated mental health support, however there are no dedicated services, not even in the shelters. The NRM refers cases to state providers of mental health services however I doubt it is sufficient or is tailored to VOT. There are no standard operating procedures (SOPs) around the provision of mental health support.'<sup>395</sup>
- 12.5.4 When asked what mental health (MH) support was available to VOT, an official from D&E told the Home Office FFT 2022 that there were a lack of specialised centres, but added that:
- 'Every shelter has psychological counselling based on needs and for serious MH [mental health] problems we cooperate with psychiatric hospitals and they have qualitative programmes. Psychological support continues in each phase of the reintegration programme, from shelter into reintegration until they leave the programme. We provide art therapy and occupational therapy, which affect positively VOT by being a stress relief activity, relaxation, building creativity, self-worth and self-esteem, and continue to be an important activity for the psychological support. There are some cases with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a few cases with personality disorder who need to go further with psychological doctor.'<sup>396</sup>
- 12.5.5 The official from D&E further told the Home Office FFT 2022 that long term solutions for VOT with MH problems was difficult, adding that '... in 2 cases when the VOT had MH problems, we tried to collaborate with social services and provide appropriate accommodation, but this was hard so they stayed with us for between 3 and 5 years.'<sup>397</sup>
- 12.5.6 The official from Tjeter Vizion, which supports minors, told the HO FFM 2022 team that PVOT/VOT were '... provided with psychologists, social workers and doctors during their stay with us.'<sup>398</sup> The official from NISMA ARSIS also noted that it provided psycho-social support to children in its care<sup>399</sup>.
- 12.5.7 The official from Caritas Albania told the Home Office FFT 2022 that it offered support in one of its homes for girls, 'Rozalba House', which '... represents a safe place where young woman can feel protected and respected through psycho-social recovery, giving them a new chance to reintegrate back in the community.'<sup>400</sup> Brikena Puka of Vatra stated that they provided '... psychological support and assistance for victims of trafficking and gender-based violence.'<sup>401</sup>
- 12.5.8 Officials from Kukës Municipality told the Home Office FFT 2022 that it provided VOT with '... psychological support until we are sure the individual has fully reintegrated into society, like going back to school, working or living independently, personally or psychologically.'<sup>402</sup> The Directorate of Social Services in Tirana Municipality noted that it provided support according to

<sup>395</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p22), December 2022

<sup>396</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p16), December 2022

<sup>397</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p20-21), December 2022

<sup>398</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p25), December 2022

<sup>399</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p29-31), December 2022

<sup>400</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p50), December 2022

<sup>401</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p70), December 2022

<sup>402</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p62), December 2022

the needs of the VOT, which included free psychological counselling<sup>403</sup>.

12.5.9 An official from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection told the Home Office FFT 2022 that it had established 2 national online helplines for adults and children who were victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence and trafficking, and that during 2021 it had provided 2,383 online counselling and psycho-social sessions and 827 direct counselling sessions (face to face).<sup>404</sup>

12.5.10 Ines Leskaj of AWEN told the Home Office FFT 2022 that, due to a need for such services, it provided mental health support through licensed therapists, though added that, in general, state-run mental health services were lacking<sup>405</sup>. Erion Prendi of SHKEJ, stated that 'Only psychiatric support is available from the state, but not psychological support. There is one psychologist for every 2 or 3 schools, but they are only there twice a week for 600 children. Psychological support has to be paid for. Psychologists are not free for anyone, only free psychiatric help.'<sup>406</sup>

12.5.11 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFT 2022 that there were barriers to providing psychological support and explained that:

'In the Albanian context psychological support is a new concept. Not just in small communities but also in wealthy and well-educated communities. Personally speaking, if you ask for psychological support in Albania people consider you are insane. If you tell someone they need this support they feel judged and feel reluctant to accept such support. But we include psychological support in our soft skills training so they can step in if needed, this way we don't directly target beneficiaries by saying they needed psychological support, so there is a way around it. Psychological support is indispensable for these people, they need the full support and counselling.'<sup>407</sup>

12.5.12 In the letter to the Home Office of January 2023, the British Embassy, Tirana, noted that the MSF programme recognised that taboos around mental health were a contributing driver of human trafficking. The letter confirmed that:

'As a result, alongside the inclusion of mental health support in reintegration services..., the programme is developing tools to engage young people actively in discussions about mental health. UNICEF has signed a contract with Together Foundation Albania to provide web-based mental health and psychological counselling services support through [www.nukjevetem.al](http://www.nukjevetem.al) to approximately 1000 individuals/year. This dedicated psychological assistance is open to all but provided mainly to young people, as well as adults living in remote, rural or marginalised communities. The web-based service provides Q&As from an expert in the field (psychology, medicine) and real-time direct support from counsellors through the chat function. Ten 45-minute sessions are offered. After the 10th session, the individual is assessed and if direct intensive therapy is required, they are referred to psychologists in their area, including free services if needed. If no services

<sup>403</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p107), December 2022

<sup>404</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p75), December 2022

<sup>405</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p38-39), December 2022

<sup>406</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p83), December 2022

<sup>407</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p100), December 2022

are available, or travel is not feasible, online counselling continues.<sup>408</sup>

12.5.13 On 20 February 2024, the FCDO provided an update on delivery of services via the HO Modern Slavery Fund; this update stated:

‘Regarding **mental health support**, I am able to provide additional detail about the nature of the provision. The three primary service providers all offer psychological services for victims of trafficking. A psychologist is part of the core team and works alongside the case manager. The psychologist conducts a psychological evaluation and then prepares individual recovery plans. Throughout their recovery period, including after leaving the shelter, victims of trafficking receive ongoing counselling sessions and, if needed, medication. In cases of serious mental health concerns, shelters collaborate with the Psychiatric State Hospital where individuals stay under supervision for around 2-3 weeks.

‘I previously reported that the programme also included online mental health and counselling services through [www.nukjevetem.al](http://www.nukjevetem.al), provided to approximately 1000 individuals/year. Between January-December 2023, 921 individuals (343 males, 578 females) have accessed this service.’<sup>409</sup>

12.5.14 See [International assistance and progress](#) for further information on this.

12.5.15 Anxhela Bruçi, Coordinator of Arise Albania, part of an international anti-trafficking organisation, commented in an interview with Asylos that:

‘In terms of physical healthcare services, usually, it would work in this way: the victim or survivor would go to there -- would have to register to their local GP doctor, and their local GP would be according to the place where they reside or the municipality where they live. And the local GP will do the initial assessment and would refer them to a specialist for specialist health support, which would take up to three weeks or two months, based on the problem and to which specialist doctor they would be referred. But for physical healthcare, they are available and accessible. A challenge within the healthcare system is, usually, some of the survivors might have severe physical health issues, either from their trafficking experience, forced labor experience, and they would not be entitled to be reimbursed of their medical expenses in terms of the medicine that they would need to take. And that would be a huge burden for them because, usually, this kind of medicine is very expensive. It would go around £150 per month. And here, we have a challenge because the medical support provided by the state would not cover it. But we have cases where NGO-run support, they have covered the bills of this kind of medicine. But that’s also short-term, up to a year. After a year, then it’s based on how much funding they have.’<sup>410</sup>

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Section updated: 4 June 2024

## 13. Freedom of movement and reintegration

### 13.1 Demography and relocation rights

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<sup>408</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

<sup>409</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024 [Annex B](#)

<sup>410</sup> Asylos, [Albania: Trafficking](#) (p209), April 2024

- 13.1.1 Albania is roughly 28,000sqkm<sup>411</sup>, a little larger than Wales<sup>412</sup>, with a population estimated to be between 2.8 million<sup>413</sup> and just over 3 million<sup>414</sup>. The population of Tirana differs across a number of sources, ranging from just under 500,000 to over 900,000 across the 24 administrative units of the capital<sup>415 416 417</sup>. Over 60% of the population live in urban areas and people continue to move to towns and cities, however in general there is a fairly 'even distribution, with somewhat higher concentrations of people in the western and central parts of the country.'<sup>418</sup>
- 13.1.2 Around 18% of the population is aged up to 14 years, and 67% are aged 15 to 64. 15% are aged 65 and older. Around 83% of the population is ethnic Albanian, around 0.9% are ethnic Greeks, around 1% are 'other' ('including Vlach, Romani, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Egyptian') and the remaining 15% 'unspecified'. A small majority are Muslim, while the rest are a mix of faiths, including Roman Catholic 10%, Orthodox 6.8%, atheist 2.5%, Bektashi (a Sufi order) 2.1%, 'other' 5.7%, unspecified 16.2%<sup>419</sup>.
- 13.1.3 The United States Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2023 (USSD HR report 2023) noted:
- 'The constitution and law provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.'<sup>420</sup> Freedom House in its report covering events in 2022 similarly noted 'Albanians generally enjoy freedom of movement, though criminal activity and practices related to historically predominant honor codes limit these rights in some areas. People are generally free to change their place of residence or employment. Access to government documents is affected by bribery.'<sup>421</sup>

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## 13.2 Single women and single mothers

- 13.2.1 Global Initiative published a report in December 2021 in response to questions asked by the Home Office. This report stated that it is possible for a woman to live alone in cities such as Tirana, Durres Fier, Vlora and Shkoder without her family, despite the fact that Albania has a relatively

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<sup>411</sup> US CIA, The World Factbook, [Albania](#), updated 4 June 2024

<sup>412</sup> US CIA, The World Factbook, [United Kingdom](#), updated 4 June 2024

<sup>413</sup> INSTAT, [The population of Albania](#), no date

<sup>414</sup> US CIA, The World Factbook, [Albania](#), updated 4 June 2024

<sup>415</sup> US CIA, The World Factbook, [Albania](#), updated 4 June 2024

<sup>416</sup> Bashkia Tiranë, [Administrative Areas](#), no date

<sup>417</sup> Instat, [Population of Albania](#), 1 January 2022

<sup>418</sup> US CIA, The World Factbook, [Albania](#), updated 4 June 2024

<sup>419</sup> US CIA, The World Factbook, [Albania](#), updated 4 June 2024

<sup>420</sup> USSD, [HR Report 2023](#) (section 2D), 23 April 2024

<sup>421</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023](#) (G1), 9 March 2023

patriarchal culture. These cities are university cities and it is normal for students (male or female) to live alone and work part-time or full-time<sup>422</sup>.

- 13.2.2 The official from Vatra told the Home Office FFT 2022 that, in regard to female VOT, that 'When they have support of family the reintegration is easier for them. We, the family and institutions need to work together on reintegration for it to be successful.'<sup>423</sup> The official from Key Adviser stated 'It is very difficult for VOT to make it without family support.'<sup>424</sup>
- 13.2.3 Officials from Tirana municipality told the Home Office FFT 2022 that '... reintegration is extra hard for single mothers as they have more challenges to overcome. It's actually multi-faceted as in addition they have someone else to care for, financial issues, find a job, child care is an issue when they find a job, who will care for child? Lack of family help, or lack of a family, is an issue also.'<sup>425</sup>
- 13.2.4 When asked whether women could live independently, Mary Ward Loreto representatives told the Home Office FFT 2022 that:  
'There is a huge difference between villages and cities. In Tirana there are some independent girls and women, but there are also some that are submissive to male relatives. Women and girls are mostly blamed and considered responsible for anything that happens to them by men. "Don't dress up and don't go out", so males are not considered guilty because they are just being men. This is the mentality in isolated areas, women and girls are mostly submissive and some of them are not allowed to go to school, some have arranged marriages since they were adolescent, so they cannot escape. Some come to Tirana to study and are independent here, but when they go back it is the same and they go back to being submissive.'<sup>426</sup>
- 13.2.5 The official from Caritas Albania told the Home Office FFT 2022 that, in regard to women living independently, that:  
'For single women with children this is a big issue, we are receiving a lot of requests for financial support and support with housing costs. It is expensive here in Tirana, they are not well educated, they have some problems with their families, and sometimes they marry someone who is not accepted by their family and so they are not supported. And so before, a lot of money from outside was received and 200 euro was enough, but now remittance is very low, and it's not easy to live in Tirana. For women victims of violence and VOT it seems impossible to integrate as they don't have the psychological ability to stay in employment.'<sup>427</sup>
- 13.2.6 When asked by the Home Office FFT 2022 if women VOT could live independently, according to Ines Leskaj of AWEN, who said, 'It is difficult, almost impossible for women to live independently without the support of civil societies... There are few job opportunities, poor salaries unable to meet the cost of living. It is not only difficult for single women, but also for

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<sup>422</sup> Global Initiative, Blood feuds in Albania, 13 December 2021 (report available on request)

<sup>423</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p66), December 2022

<sup>424</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p101), December 2022

<sup>425</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p109), December 2022

<sup>426</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p97), December 2022

<sup>427</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p51), December 2022

children. Social housing programmes are provided by the state, but there are not many opportunities in rural municipalities. The provision of social services to people in general is low.<sup>428</sup>

- 13.2.7 Referring to single mothers, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘It is much more difficult to reintegrate these mothers and their children because they are faced with family abandonment as well as societal rejection.’<sup>429</sup> An official from D&E stated that, with support, ‘... some cases finally live independently but it is a long process. There are financial difficulties, especially for those with children.’<sup>430</sup>
- 13.2.8 Mary Ward Loreto representatives told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘With arranged marriage (more like forced marriage), for the communities in Albania, in the north mostly, the attitude is that woman should be married, if not she has no worth. She is created to be married and have children. She has no rights even in her own house.’<sup>431</sup>
- 13.2.9 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘In Albania there is a mentality in rural areas that families don’t accept divorce. A family thinks when their daughter gets married she should stay with her husband despite DV [domestic violence]. The other issue is there may be no possibility for families support their daughters, because of poverty and lack of accommodation. Families do not have the resources to support their daughters due to acute financial needs.’<sup>432</sup>
- 13.2.10 See the Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: Domestic violence against women](#), December 2022, for further information about life for single women and societal attitudes towards divorced women and single mothers.

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### 13.3 Anonymity in Albania

- 13.3.1 Global Initiative’s report of 13 December 2021 stated, ‘Albania is a small country and people can be easily traced... it is very easy to track someone and find people via family connections across the country.’<sup>433</sup>
- 13.3.2 A number of officials, including those from AWEN, Caritas, Kukës Municipality and Key Adviser, described Albania as a small country<sup>434</sup> when they spoke to the HO FFM team, with some indicating that it would be relatively easy to be located.
- 13.3.3 When the Home Office FFT 2022 asked the representative from AWEN whether she thought it would be possible for a VoT to relocate, she responded, ‘It is difficult. Albania is very small and it is easy for the traffickers to find what they’re looking for. There is less possibility to reintegrate and have a normal life.’<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p37), December 2022

<sup>429</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p26), December 2022

<sup>430</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p19), December 2022

<sup>431</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p97), December 2022

<sup>432</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p64), December 2022

<sup>433</sup> Global Initiative, Blood feuds in Albania, 13 December 2021 (report available on request)

<sup>434</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p38,51,58,62,97), December 2022

<sup>435</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p38), December 2022

- 13.3.4 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘It is not difficult to find someone, because sometimes the girls or the women are not very careful and they put themselves on social media. Even when they go to a job placement we say don’t share information with those in the work place, don’t share your story as you don’t know about the other people, you don’t have to share.’<sup>436</sup>
- 13.3.5 When asked if a victim of trafficking could internally relocate to avoid being found by their trafficker, Ines Leskaj of AWEN told the Home Office FFT 2022 that ‘It is difficult. Albania is very small and it is easy for the traffickers to find what they’re looking for. There is less possibility to reintegrate and have a normal life.’<sup>437</sup> The official from Caritas Albania indicated that it would be easy to be located and added that ‘We are a very small country, we all know each other. It might not be the same trafficker, but someone from within the same network.’<sup>438</sup>
- 13.3.6 In regard to being located by a trafficker, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFT 2022 that it was ‘... not so easy for the victims to be located by traffickers, however it is not always the same trafficker so some victims are re-trafficked, but not always by the same person.’<sup>439</sup> Ines Leskaj of AWEN stated that ‘Criminal groups are responsible for re-trafficking the same women they trafficked in the first place.’<sup>440</sup>
- 13.3.7 The General Prosecutors Office (GPO) told the Home Office FFT 2022 that if a person was in fear of their trafficker they could be placed in the state-run shelter and receive state protection<sup>441</sup>.
- 13.3.8 Officials from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFT 2022 that recent cyber-attacks resulted in the release of everyone’s personal data<sup>442</sup>.
- 13.3.9 In a [Joint Communiqué](#) between the UK and Albania signed on 13 December 2022, the UK commits to “provide support for bolstering cyber communications security to reinforce Albanian GDPR compliance.”<sup>443</sup> The letter to CPIT added that ‘The UK is providing support to the Albanian State Police (ASP) through a new £750,000 UK-funded cyber programme, which started in January 2023. This will help bolster ASP’s cyber and communications security and resilience, with benefits for GDPR.’<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p66), December 2022

<sup>437</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p36), December 2022

<sup>438</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p51), December 2022

<sup>439</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p28), December 2022

<sup>440</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p38), December 2022

<sup>441</sup> HO, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p48), December 2022

<sup>442</sup> HO, [Fact-finding mission report on human trafficking in Albania](#) (p13), December 2022

<sup>443</sup> UK Govt, [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué: ...](#), 13 December 2022

<sup>444</sup> Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

# Annex A: Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana



British Embassy  
Tirana

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Nr.12  
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Tel: 04 2234973  
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30 January 2023

Dear Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT),

1. Following the CPIT fact-finding mission in October 2022, you asked for an update on Albania's national response to human trafficking, especially in light of the [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué](#) signed on 13 December.<sup>445</sup> The response below is based on our review of the 'Country Policy and Information Note Albania: Human Trafficking Version 12.0 December 2022' (CPIN), first-hand observations of British Embassy Tirana staff, conversations, correspondence and collaboration with the Albanian Government and key organisations in the field, and UK-funded projects. You can find further information and supporting evidence in the hyperlinks and annexes (attached). Unless otherwise specified, we have received written consent from third parties for disclosure of this information in the CPIN (available on request).

## Modern Slavery Fund Programme

2. First, I would like to provide further information about **international assistance** (CPIN, Section 9, p. 75). Through the **Modern Slavery Fund**, the UK Government has invested over £3.5m of Official Development Assistance between December 2019 and September 2022 in a programme delivered by a consortium led by UNICEF. The extended programme aims to strengthen an

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<sup>445</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communication-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

efficient nationwide system response to human trafficking in and from Albania with the aim of reducing its prevalence. Key outcomes in this timeframe include:

- i. A stronger ‘whole-of-system’ approach through support to develop the Albanian Government’s National Action Plan against Human Trafficking 2021-2023 ([here](#))<sup>446</sup>.
  - ii. Long-term reintegration services provided to over 376 victims of trafficking and 137 dependents, with over 57% of survivors reporting successful reintegration.
  - iii. [Increased understanding](#) of the attitudes, drivers and challenges that survivors and service providers face in accessing/providing economic reintegration support in Albania<sup>447</sup>.
  - iv. A shared understanding of [knowledge, attitudes and practices of youth](#) regarding human trafficking in four regions of Albania (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra)<sup>448</sup>, and of how knowledge and attitudes [are gradually improving](#)<sup>449</sup>.
  - v. [Strengthened understanding](#) of the relationships between victims and human traffickers in and from Albania<sup>450</sup>.
  - vi. Economic and vocational skills training for over 475 people identified as being at high risk of trafficking; support for 78 of these cases with employment opportunities, out of which 41 have started their own businesses.
  - vii. Increased early identification of victims of trafficking through establishment of three mobile units working in targeted areas. The units have identified 156 potential victims of trafficking, including 112 children.
  - viii. Five police stations equipped to enable sensitive interviewing and safer case handling.
  - ix. Revised training manuals for law enforcement institutions, judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals and simulation-based training for first-line responders to support a multi-agency approach to combatting human trafficking. The simulation-based training, implemented by OSCE, brought together 52 professionals, including prosecutors, police officers, victims’ advocates, labour inspectors, social services and child protection units. Practitioners participated in real-time simulated scenarios to identify and investigate human trafficking.
3. You can find more detail about what has been delivered under the programme at [www.endhumantrafficking.al](http://www.endhumantrafficking.al) and in the [Evaluation of the Programme](#) (November 2022)<sup>451</sup>. Further information about the simulation-based training can be found at [Udhëzues praktik – Trajnimi simulues për identifikimin, referimin dhe mbrojtjen e viktimave dhe hetimin proaktiv të trafikimit të qenieve njerëzore | OSCE](#) and

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<sup>446</sup> [VKM-nr-670-date-10.11.2021-Plani-Kombetar-Antitrafik-2021-2023.pdf](#)

<sup>447</sup> [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania | UNICEF Albania](#)

<sup>448</sup> [First Wave Survey Study on Youth Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices with Regard to Human Trafficking, in Four Regions in Albania | UNICEF Albania](#)

<sup>449</sup> [Survey on youth knowledge, attitudes & practices regarding human trafficking in 4 regions of Albania | UNICEF Albania](#)

<sup>450</sup> [Trafficked by Someone I Know | UNICEF Albania](#)

<sup>451</sup> [End Human Trafficking; 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation | UNICEF Albania](#)

<https://fb.watch/bxRoiCvFOW/><sup>452</sup>. Manuals produced for the police and judiciary respectively can be found at [Trafficking of human beings - a handbook for police officers | OSCE](#) and [Trafikimi i qenieve njerëzore - manual për gjyqtarë, prokurorë dhe profesionistë të tjerë ligjorë | OSCE](#)<sup>453</sup>.

4. Following the CPIT fact-finding mission to Albania in October 2022, the UK Government has signed revised Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with UNICEF and OSCE **to continue the delivery of this programme up to March 2025** through an investment of over £2.9m of Official Development Assistance. These MoUs (available on request) set out that the Modern Slavery Fund programme extension will work closely with the Government of Albania to:
  - i. Strengthen the resilience of people identified as at risk of trafficking/retrafficking from the pull and push factors of trafficking in the four specified regions of Albania.
  - ii. Provide survivors of trafficking with quality care and protection but also empower them to voice safely their opinion and have a direct say on how to shape their future.
  - iii. Invest in partnerships with state and non-state institutions, the private sector and human rights groups to strengthen high-level advocacy and facilitate legislative changes and state budgetary allocations to counter human trafficking sustainably.
  - iv. Produce a scoping study identifying current capabilities, gaps and needs to investigate and prosecute human trafficking.
  
5. I would like to draw your attention to elements of this programme extension, which are of significance to the CPIN:
  - i. The CPIN outlines the **protection and reintegration services** provided by the coalition of shelters and other organisations. The UK-funded programme is funding three primary service providers to provide comprehensive reintegration support to an additional 140 survivors between Jan 2023 and March 2024. UNICEF signed the contract with these providers on 18 January 2023. This contract will provide assistance to identified victims of any gender or age, including returnees from overseas who wish to access support. This includes immediate and long-term support tailored to an individual's needs, comprising accommodation, medical treatment, **mental health support and counselling**, legal assistance, personal security, living costs and education and vocational training. The contract also sets out that the programme will support the primary service providers to innovate and advocate for sustainable resources to maintain the support they provide over the long term through the Albanian Government's National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking ([Annex A1](#)).

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<sup>452</sup> [Udhëzues praktik – Trainimi simulues për identifikimin, referimin dhe mbrojtjen e viktimave dhe hetimin proaktiv të trafikimit të qenieve njerëzore | OSCE](#); [Shikoni videon e trajnimit të simulues kundër trafikimit të qenieve njerëzore në Shqipëri. Trainimi u organizua nga Prezenca e OSBE-së më 18-21 tetor... | By OSCE Presence in Albania | Facebook](#)

<sup>453</sup> [Trafficking of human beings - a handbook for police officers | OSCE](#); [Trafikimi i qenieve njerëzore - manual për gjyqtarë, prokurorë dhe profesionistë të tjerë ligjorë | OSCE](#)

- ii. The CPIN refers to the challenges around **mental health support** for victims of human trafficking. The programme has also identified that taboos around mental health were a contributing driver of human trafficking. As a result, alongside the inclusion of mental health support in reintegration services (outlined in 5.i.), the programme is developing tools to engage young people actively in discussions about mental health. UNICEF has signed a contract with Together Foundation Albania to provide web-based mental health and psychological counselling services support through [www.nukjevetem.al](http://www.nukjevetem.al) to approximately 1000 individuals/year.<sup>454</sup> This dedicated psychological assistance is open to all but provided mainly to young people, as well as adults living in remote, rural or marginalised communities. The web-based service provides Q&As from an expert in the field (psychology, medicine) and real-time direct support from counsellors through the chat function. Ten 45-minute sessions are offered. After the 10th session, the individual is assessed and if direct intensive therapy is required, they are referred to psychologists in their area, including free services if needed. If no services are available, or travel is not feasible, online counselling continues.
- iii. The CPIN outlines the challenges of **stigma**. Research under the programme has also identified that harmful social and gender norms and stigmatisation of survivors are drivers of human trafficking and re-trafficking. As a result, starting in the first quarter of 2023, the programme will develop a new communication strategy that will deliver tailored and targeted messages seeking to change harmful social and gender norms across communities in the four specified regions of Albania.
- iv. The CPIN refers to the Albanian Government's **National Action Plan (NAP) for the Fight against Human Being Trafficking 2021-2023** ([here](#) [in Albanian] [Annex A1](#)).<sup>455</sup> The NAP document states that it is “an instrument aimed at coordinating state and non-state actors, including international organizations, engaged in the fight against human being trafficking”, and that “the mission of the NAP is to promote an effective, adequate and coordinated response to prevent and combat trafficking in persons based on international cooperation, effective inter-institutional cooperation within the country, the participation of victims/potential victims of trafficking and the involvement of civil society and community.” Through the programme, UNICEF will deploy a monitoring and evaluation consultant from February 2023 to support delivery of the NAP within the Anti-Trafficking Sector in the Albanian Ministry of Interior. The consultant will assist with mid-year and yearly progress reports on implementation of the NAP, and may be involved in the early preparations for the next NAP. The Government of Albania has also requested support to meet its commitment under the NAP to establish “**an emergency and multifunctional centre in the north of the country** in cooperation with non-state partners for reintegration and support of vulnerable groups of society, at risk of trafficking, including [potential/victims of trafficking].” As a result, UNICEF will work with the Anti-trafficking Sector in the Albanian Ministry of Interior to deliver a feasibility study on the shelter before the end of March 2023. Establishment of the shelter itself will require funding.

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<sup>454</sup> [Home - NJV \(nukjevetem.al\)](http://www.nukjevetem.al)

<sup>455</sup> [VKM-nr-670-date-10.11.2021-Plani-Kombetar-Antitrafik-2021-2023.pdf](#)

- v. The CPIN refers to the risk of **re-trafficking**. As part of its efforts to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable individuals, the programme will improve access to community-based social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking in the four specified regions. UNICEF has signed contracts with Terre des Hommes to train officials at the municipal level and to coordinate with social services and employment offices to identify and reach individuals at risk and provide them with increased access to social protection, training and information about employment. This partnership is also providing technical and financial assistance to Multi-Functional Community Centres (MFCCs) in Kukesi and Shkodra, and will establish a new MFCC in Bulqiza (Dibra region) in March 2023. These MFCCs work to assist vulnerable families and individuals at risk of trafficking and refer them to additional required social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking.
- vi. Regarding **Albania's capacity to investigate human trafficking** (see also paragraphs 2.ix and 6.i–ii), OSCE are delivering a scoping study that “will analyse the THB (trafficking in human beings) trends, starting from traditional patterns such as irregular migration that creates vulnerabilities leading to THB, to new challenges like technology-facilitated THB. The report will analyse the law enforcement and prosecution's ability to investigate and prosecute cases, institutional efforts and infrastructure for THB data collection in order to identify gaps and provide recommendations on necessary interventions to improve the law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute offenders.” ([Annex A2](#)). OSCE will present preliminary findings in February 2023 with the final report due at the end of March. Subject to funding and discussions with the Government of Albania, the intention is to support delivery of its recommendations through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund.

#### Other UK-Funded Programmes:

6. In addition to the Modern Slavery Fund programme, the UK is providing wider assistance of relevance to the CPIN:
  - i. **Supporting Albania's capacity to investigate human trafficking:** Home Office International Operations (HOIO) collaborated with the Albanian State Police in September 2022 on a public human trafficking **awareness-raising** campaign at Tirana Airport, which opened up collaboration between UK Border Force and the Albanian Border Police.
  - ii. As part of the [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué](#), HOIO and the National Crime Agency (NCA) have established with the Albanian authorities an operational UK-Albania Joint Migration Taskforce (JMTF).<sup>456</sup> HOIO is leading on construction of a building that will be the centre of operations for the Task Force. In January 2023, the UK began deploying subject matter experts in Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) to work in partnership with the Albania authorities to agree the structures and operating procedures for the Task Force, which will include intelligence sharing, capacity-building

<sup>456</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communication-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

- and joint work including to tackle human trafficking according to identified needs.
- iii. **Reintegration:** £11.1m in grant funding for financial years 22/23- 24/25 (£3.7m per year) across ten priority countries, including Albania. The programme will be accessible to all forms of returns (both voluntary and enforced) and will include services such as:
    - a. pre-departure information;
    - b. a 'meet and greet' service on arrival at the airport;
    - c. access to temporary accommodation prior to any onward journey to a final destination;
    - d. signposting to existing local services;
    - e. support with redocumentation/identification;
    - f. and job counselling and additional support with accessing the labour market.
  - iv. £8.4m three-year project in the north-eastern Albanian region of Kukesi. The project takes a whole-of-community approach, thus also reaching individuals vulnerable to human trafficking. The project aims to improve the socio-economic conditions that often drive people to migrate illegally to the UK from the North by increasing communities' resilience to pressure to migrate illegally to the UK; improving social-economic conditions and opportunities, especially for growth; and enhancing relations between communities, the private sector and local governance for local economic development. (See [Annex A3](#) for more details). Further UK funding is being sought to expand this programme and to extend it geographically to other source areas of migration, for example Dibra.
  - v. **Cyber security and GDPR compliance:** the CPIN refers to the cyber-attacks Albania has suffered (CPIN, p.81). In the [Joint Communiqué](#), the UK commits to "provide support for bolstering cyber communications security to reinforce Albanian GDPR compliance."<sup>457</sup> The UK is providing support to the Albanian State Police (ASP) through a new £750,000 UK-funded cyber programme, which started in January 2023. This will help bolster ASP's cyber and communications security and resilience, with benefits for GDPR. This programme will help ensure that the close cooperation between the UK and the Albanian State Police on tackling serious and organised crime and illegal migration remains secure. The cyber programme could be expanded in the future, with further uplifts in funding, subject to agreement from the UK Government and the Albanian State Police.

### Other Non-UK-Funded Programmes

- 7. Beyond the UK-funded programmes, we are aware of other projects that are supporting Albania's national response to human trafficking. For example, OSCE has provided us with the following information about their work:

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<sup>457</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communication-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

“The OSCE Presence in Albania (the Presence) addresses trafficking in human beings (THB) through a multi-disciplinary approach, building on its long-standing support for the improvement of anti-trafficking legislation and action plans, particularly in the areas of multi-agency procedures for identifying trafficking victims and capacity development to facilitate implementation of the legal framework and OSCE commitments. Over time, the assistance provided by the Presence has evolved into a policy-to-practice strategy, and specifically, the Presence is supporting the country’s policy framework for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking, with a focus on the Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism Framework (NRM). It is presently offering technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior in assessing and launching the revision of the NRM, as the main institutional mechanism that assists state and non-state institutions to identify human trafficking victims and ensure their protection. In doing so, it is also addressing the nexus of technology-facilitated trafficking and migration.

To address challenges faced when dealing with the exploitation of children in street situations, the Presence supported the State Agency for the Rights and the Protection of the Child to issue a Guidance on ‘Data gathering, analysis and determination of action for children at risk of exploitation or trafficking’. To support its implementation, the Presence assisted in the development of a web-based database that unifies and standardizes child trafficking data collected from child protection workers and law enforcement agencies. Together, these actions have led to the development, with the Presence’s assistance, of a Council of Ministers’ Decision on child trafficking data collection, which will standardize institutional data on children at risk and trafficking victims.

The Presence also prioritizes capacity development for judges and prosecutors on the effective application of victim-centred and human rights based approaches in the criminal proceedings. With funds from the UK Government, the Presence organized the first ever simulation-based training for anti-trafficking practitioners in Albania in October 2021 and a mock-trial training for students of the School of Magistrates on how to prosecute and convict human trafficking cases in February 2022. In 2021, the Presence developed e-learning anti-trafficking courses for judges and prosecutors through the School of Magistrates and for police through the Security Academy. [See above section on UK-funded projects]

With funding from the governments of the United States, Norway and Italy, the Presence is focused on building a cohort of specialized staff for the anti-trafficking capacity building at the School of Magistrates and Security Academy, through a training of trainers approach to improve the curricula, introduce innovative training techniques in the continuous education and conduct anti-trafficking related academic research.”

8. The CPIN refers to Albania’s **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** and process for identifying victims and referring them for protection and reintegration services. As noted by OSCE (paragraph 7 above), reform of the NRM is underway. As outlined in the NAP, the revision is “to ensure the continued effective and efficient functioning of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) through local, coordination

groups to ensure the continued application of standards and SOPs for the treatment of trafficked persons.” (see [Annex A1](#) and [Annex A9](#)).

## Capacities

9. The [Joint Communiqué](#) refers to a potential increase in returns, “including those over the age of 18, who, have been identified by UK competent authorities as victims of modern slavery (as defined in the UK legislation) and as victims of human trafficking (as defined in the Albanian legislation)” and notes that “on return to Albania, any support needs arising for that individual and protection from re-trafficking, will be available as set out in ECAT” and the Albanian Government “assures that it will continue to implement effectively the joint commitments in the framework of ECAT and ECHR with regard to the treatment of returnees, the prevention and future identification of trafficking victims, and taking into consideration the gender specifics of the returnees.” <sup>458</sup>
10. Regarding **Albania’s capacity** to support these returns according to need, on p.57 of the CPIN, you refer to the capacity of the shelters. Annexes A4-7 outline the overall and current (Jan 2023) capacity of the National Coalition of Shelters and the services they provide in the shelters, in accommodation provided outside the shelters, in families/the wider community.

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11. The CPIN refers to support provided by other organisations not in the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters. Please note that [Mary Ward Loreto \(Annex A8\)](#) provides support services to potential and victims of trafficking through Advice and Service Centres in the northern regions of Lezha and Rreshen, in Tirana, and the southern regions of Lushnja and Saranda<sup>459</sup>. Direct beneficiaries are mostly adult men and women and they refer minors to the relevant child protection agencies and NGOs. Services include:
  - i. Identification according to standard operating procedures;

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<sup>458</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communiqué-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

<sup>459</sup> [Human Trafficking Mission in Albania and UK - Mary Ward Loreto](#)

- ii. rented accommodation and assistance to access social housing programme;
- iii. monthly food packages;
- iv. clothes and hygiene sets;
- v. medical assistance (costs for medications and ensuring access to healthcare);
- vi. mental health (counselling and therapy);
- vii. legal aid and access to free legal services;
- viii. economic reintegration including advice and guidance to attend free professional courses, coaching for employment, vacancy research and guidance, preparation and accompaniment for job interviews;
- ix. reintegration through life and soft skills training.

12. As suggested by the interviews conducted by the CPIT fact-finding mission in October 2022, we understand that to date the shelters have had the capacity to support all identified cases of victims and potential victims, although we do not have data on potential numbers of unidentified cases (CPIN, p.57.). Should there be a need to increase capacities, support in rented accommodation is scalable with the necessary funding and lead-in time to recruit and train additional staff. The shelter and support provider Different and Equal confirmed that: “it needs less than two months to recruit and fully train a new member of staff. If we have the necessary funding, we can assist and support as many cases [adult/minor males and females and accompanying children in accommodation provided outside the shelter] as are needed to be provided with services.” ([Annex A4](#)).

13. Regarding capacity to **support adult male victims/potential victims**, they are already included within the overall provision and, specifically, Different and Equal, Vatra and Mary Ward Loreto provide support to adult male victims and potential victims outside the shelter, including in rented accommodation. In addition, the specific needs of male victims/potential victims are being considered as part of the feasibility study for the multifunctional centre/shelter in northern Albania.

I remain at your disposal for any further detail you require, and will update you further with any substantial developments.

Yours faithfully,

*Alastair King-Smith*

Alastair King-Smith

His Majesty's Ambassador to Albania

List of annexes

[Annex A1:](#)

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[Annex A2:](#) OSCE information request response

[Annex A3:](#) One-pager New Perspectives for Kukes

[Annex A4:](#) Different and Equal

[Annex A5:](#) Tjeter Vizion

[Annex A6:](#)

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[Annex A7:](#) Vatra

[Annex A8:](#) Mary Ward Loreto

[Annex A9](#)

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# Annex A1

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# Annex A2

## Input from OSCE requested by the British Embassy for the UK Country Policy and Information Note

19 January 2023

1. Beyond the UK-funded project, could you please provide information on the other projects OSCE is implementing and contributing to Albania's response to human trafficking. The CPIN report on Albania ALB CPIN Human trafficking ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)) mentions OSCE projects and support in page 76. We would like to include more updated information, if applicable.

The OSCE Presence in Albania (the Presence) addresses trafficking in human beings (THB) through a multi-disciplinary approach, building on its long-standing support for the improvement of anti-trafficking legislation and action plans, particularly in the areas of multi-agency procedures for identifying trafficking victims and capacity development to facilitate implementation of the legal framework and OSCE commitments. Over time, the assistance provided by the Presence has evolved into a policy-to-practice strategy, and specifically, the Presence is supporting the country's policy framework for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking, with a focus on the Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism Framework (NRM). It is presently offering technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior in assessing and launching the revision of the NRM, as the main institutional mechanism that assists state and non-state institutions to identify human trafficking victims and ensure their protection. In doing so, it is also addressing the nexus of technology-facilitated trafficking and migration.

To address challenges faced when dealing with the exploitation of children in street situations, the Presence supported the State Agency for the Rights and the Protection of the Child to issue a Guidance on "Data gathering, analysis and determination of action for children at risk of exploitation or trafficking". To support its implementation, the Presence assisted in the development of a web-based database that unifies and standardizes child trafficking data collected from child protection workers and law enforcement agencies. Together, these actions have led to the development, with the Presence's assistance, of a Council of Ministers' Decision on child trafficking data collection, which will standardize institutional data on children at risk and trafficking victims.

The Presence also prioritizes capacity development for judges and prosecutors on the effective application of victim-centred and human rights based approaches in the criminal proceedings. With funds from the UK Government, the Presence organized the first ever simulation-based training for anti-trafficking practitioners in Albania in October 2021 and a mock-trial training for students of the School of Magistrates on how to prosecute and convict human trafficking cases in February 2022. In 2021, the Presence developed e-learning anti-trafficking courses for judges and prosecutors through the School of Magistrates and for police through the Security Academy.

With funding from the governments of the United States, Norway and Italy, the Presence is focused on building a cohort of specialized staff for the anti-trafficking capacity building at the School of Magistrates and Security Academy, through a training of trainers approach to improve the curricula, introduce innovative training

techniques in the continuous education and conduct anti-trafficking related academic research.

2. Regarding law enforcement and criminal justice and Albania's capacity to investigate trafficking in accordance with the obligation under Article 4 ECHR, the UK has funded a project delivered by OSCE to deliver simulation-based training

Could you please provide brief/concrete details about the SBT and the impact:

The first Albanian human trafficking simulation-based learning initiative was prepared and delivered by the Presence for the first time in Albania for 52 multidisciplinary trainees, promoting an innovative approach to capacity building in which anti-trafficking practitioners participated in real-time simulated scenarios to identify and investigate human trafficking, improving synergy among key national stakeholders in the restoration and protection of trafficking survivors' human rights and fundamental freedoms. This training was delivered under a UK-funded project. The project increased knowledge and influenced the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of police, prosecutors, judges, victims' advocates, social workers, and labor inspectors to deal with human trafficking cases from a human rights-based and multi-agency approach using innovative and sustainable training tools, based on written feedback from the project's beneficiaries, written correspondence with institutions.

OSCE are now delivering a scoping report

The Scoping Study will analyse the THB trends, starting from traditional patterns such as irregular migration that creates vulnerabilities leading to THB, to new challenges like technology-facilitated THB. The report will analyse the law enforcement and prosecution's ability to investigate and prosecute cases, institutional efforts and infrastructure for THB data collection in order to identify gaps and provide recommendations on necessary interventions to improve the law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute offenders.

3. Could you please send documentation related to SBT, including a review/report/video/manual and any other related document; Terms of Reference for scoping report and any other documentation you think is relevant

- Practical Handbook on How to Conduct Simulation-based Training Exercises to Combat Human Trafficking in Albania

[Udhëzues praktik – Trajnimi simulues për identifikimin, referimin dhe mbrojtjen e viktimave dhe hetimin proaktiv të trafikimit të qenieve njerëzore | OSCE](#)

- Albanian SBT:

Facebook: <https://fb.watch/bxRoiCvFOW/>

- Manual for police:

Trafficking of human beings - a handbook for police officers | OSCE

- Manual for judiciary:

[Trafikimi i qenieve njerëzore - manual për gjyqtarë, prokurorë dhe profesionistë të tjerë ligjorë | OSCE](#)

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# Annex A3



## Perspektiva të reja | New perspectives



The "New Perspectives in Kukes" project, funded by the UK Government aims to improve key socio-economic conditions that often drive people to migrate illegally to the UK from the North of Albania. The project is carried out by Swisscontact, in partnership with TAG; and runs between September 2022 to 31 March 2026.

The project pursues three key objectives, namely to:

-  increase communities' resilience to pressures to migrate illegally to the UK;
-  improve social-economic conditions and opportunities in Kukes County, especially for youth; and
-  enhance relations between communities, private sector and local government for local economic development.

The project is currently in its inception phase, gathering improved understanding of the dynamics of the local labour market, the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and opportunities for economic and entrepreneurship development. It also is setting up structures that will enable effective implementation.

The project will:

-  increase the employability of people who currently lack skills or access to (self) employment.
-  provide training tailored to the labour market and micro-entrepreneurship that allows people to economically prosper in Kukes.
-  work with local businesses to provide opportunities for (self) employment, or training people in innovative sectors that allow remote working (e.g. the IT sector).
-  connect businesses to micro-finance institutions, amplify opportunities for investment into the region and improves the enabling business environment.

-  The project adopts an inclusive approach to understanding and addressing key issues that influence the decisions of people and families to migrate illegally. It works with them to enhance their resilience to external pressures and empowers them to seize local economic and entrepreneurial opportunities. The project also addresses the corresponding social norms, communicates positively about opportunities, facilitates (young) people making informed life choices and promotes gender equality.
-  The project maps the business and employment opportunities in the area, among others (agro) tourism, medicinal plants, improved agro-processing or ICT-based services. It aims to cultivate local entrepreneurship, strengthen local businesses and improving their market systems. It also facilitates attracting Albanian and foreign investment that is socially responsible and sustainable.
-  The project collaborates with local and national government, to listen to citizens' and business communities' voices and be more accountable. It assists local authorities to elaborate plans and create a more enabling environment for local economic development that can harness the full potential of the people of Kukes.



# Annex A4



British Embassy  
Tirana

**British Embassy Tirane**  
Rruga "Skenderbej "  
Nr.12  
Tirane

Tel: 04 2234973  
Fax: 04 224 7697  
www.fcdo.gov.uk

Different and Equal,

- 1. How many victims/potential victims of human trafficking do you have the total capacity to support within your current resources (budget, staff, and infrastructure)?**

<i>Overall existing capacity</i>	<b>Adult females</b>	<b>Adult males</b>	<b>Minors (please specify male and/or female)</b>
<b>In the shelter</b>	15 cases (adults and minors) and 3 children		
<b>In accommodation you provide outside the shelter</b>	45 cases (adults and minors) and 25 their children	25 males (adults and minors)	
<b>Other (please specify)</b>			

- 2. How many are you currently supporting?**

<i>Current support</i>	<b>Adult females</b>	<b>Adult males</b>	<b>Minors (please specify male and/or female)</b>
<b>In the shelter</b>	5 cases and 4 their children		3 females

<b>In accommodation you provide outside the shelter</b>  (rented apartment, in their origin family)	26 cases and 24 their children	8 cases and 2 their children	19 females 15 males
<b>Other (please specify)</b>			

**3. If you had the necessary funding, could you increase your capacity?  
How much would it cost per head and how long would it take?**

<i>Increasing capacity</i>	<b>Adult females</b>	<b>Adult males</b>	<b>Minors (please specify male and/or female)</b>
<b>In the shelter</b>	<p><i>For example you might note that it wouldn't be possible to support additional victims in the shelter without additional infrastructure</i></p> <p><b>The capacity of the shelter is 15 cases adults and minors (2-3 their children)</b></p>	<p><i>You might say that you don't currently provide support to adult male victims.</i></p> <p><b>We do not run shelter for male victims. All the males are assisted in rented apartments or in their families</b></p>	<p><b>The minor cases in the shelter are over 15 years old</b></p>
<b>In accommodation you provide outside the shelter</b>	<p><i>For example you might note that it would take x months to recruit the additional staff required and cost x per additional case for the full support and reintegration package.</i></p>	<p><b>It needs less than 2 months to recruit and fully</b></p>	

	<p><b>It needs less than 2 months to recruit and fully train a new member of staff;</b></p> <p><b>If we have the necessary funding, we can assist and support as many cases as are needed to be provided with services.</b></p>	<p><b>train a new member of staff;</b></p> <p><b>If we have the necessary funding, we can assist and support as many cases as are needed to be provided with services.</b></p>	
<b>Other (please specify)</b>			

**4. Please outline the support packages that you provide (eg medical assistance, food, clothes, mental health care, legal assistance, professional courses etc.)**

D&E provides a full package of reintegration assistance to women, girls and males victims of trafficking, sexual abuse and domestic violence through three phase's program: 1) initial crisis intervention, 2) stabilization and transition and 3) social inclusion and reintegration. The package of services includes:

- Accommodation, security, and reintegration plan;
- Immediate medical assistance;
- Intermediation/facilitation with the family of origin;
- Assessment and psycho-social counselling;
- Support and legal assistance;
- Assistance to register and attend schooling;
- Professional training;
- Social activities;
- Mentoring;
- Counselling and support for employment;
- Support for housing like subsidizing the rent and support for long term accommodation through including VoTs in social housing program.
- Information on available services in the community and respective contact information;
- Employment programs aiming to create jobs;
- Assistance and support for the children of the victims of trafficking;
- Monitoring and on-going follow up of the beneficiaries of the program.

5. The information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any of the above information to be included.

We confirm the consent to the information being used in this way. Regarding the manner of identification as a source of information, we would like to be identified as organization not with our personal names

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# Annex A5



British Embassy  
Tirana

**British Embassy Tirane**  
Rruga "Skenderbej "  
Nr.12  
Tirane

Tel: 04 2234973  
Fax: 04 224 7697  
www.fcdo.gov.uk

Tjeter Vizion,

**1. How many victims/potential victims of human trafficking do you have the total capacity to support within your current resources (budget, staff, and infrastructure)?**

The overall capacity of the TVO shelter is 18 beds, which is divided 15 beds used in normal time +3 beds are used for emergency situations. The methodology of assistance is mixed one, male and females assisted with a staff of 9 professionals composed of social workers, psychologist, teachers, and part time nurse, include here also guard and cook.

<i>Overall existing capacity</i>	<b>Female minors</b>	<b>Male minors</b>
<b>In the shelter</b>	9	9
<b>Other (please specify)</b> <b>Mobile Unit &amp; in distance assistance</b>	40 cases of minors as PVoT/VoTs	

**2. How many are you currently supporting?**

<i>Current support</i>	<b>Female minors</b>	<b>Male minors</b>	<b>Female adult</b>	<b>Male adult</b>

<b>In the shelter</b>	5	4	1	
<b>Other (please specify)</b>	6	7	2	
<b>Mobile Unit &amp; in distance assistance</b>				

**3. Please outline the support packages that you provide (eg medical assistance, food, clothes, mental health care)**

TVO NGO provides a full package of reintegration assistance to minors as victims of trafficking/potential victims of trafficking through three phase's program: 1) initial crisis intervention in Shelter, 2) stabilization and transition and 3) social inclusion and reintegration.

24/7 Accommodation, security, and reintegration plan;

This assistance is provided in residential center or in distance. Beneficiaries are provided with shelter accommodation, which are provided for each case on an average from 3-6 months according to their needs.

❖ **Immediate medical assistance;**

The TVO NGO staff in cooperation with different health institutions provide medical assistance for all the beneficiaries of the program. A health assessment is done by TVO NGO medical staff for all the cases entered in the program. Based on this assessment, the beneficiaries are provided with necessary medical visits, analysis and treatments.

❖ **Support in the family of origin;**

TVO staff make efforts to establish healthy relations between minors and families. Knowing the importance of functional family relations to the reintegration process of beneficiaries into the social life, mediation with the family of the beneficiaries is one of the principal services that TVO NGO provides in their program. For the cases who will be reunited with the family of origin, the assistance will be continue to be provided for the whole family.

❖ **Assessment and psycho-social counseling;**

The counseling sessions with beneficiaries of the program are conducted individually and in groups by the TVO NGO psychologist and social workers.

❖ **Support and legal assistance;**

Legal assistance is provided for minors as VoTs/ PVots through the TVO NGO lawyer and in cooperation with the other Legal Centers. All the beneficiaries are informed about their rights, and they are supported with the required legal assistance. Dedicated legal assistance is provided for the cases that had juridical processes against their traffickers.

❖ Assistance to register and attend schooling;

An education assessment is done by the TVO teachers for each of the cases entered in the program and an educational plan is build up together with the cases. The minors, are assisted to reinsert into the school mainstream and follow up.

- ❖ Social and Cultural activities;

Different social and cultural activities are organized and are planned to be organized in different environments of the country, in different youth and community centers and different excursions in other districts of Albania. During summer season, summer camps is organized for minors as PVots/VoTs

### **Support and economic empowerment for victims of trafficking**

- ❖ Professional training;

The beneficiaries who compute 16 years old and up and are drop from the regular education system are helped by the staff of TVO NGO to identify and develop their vocational skills through consultation and insertion in vocational courses. The selection of the vocational trainings is made based on the personal skills and desires of the beneficiaries, taking as well in consideration the job placements demands of the job market. The vocational trainings are provided from VET centers of TVO as we are licensed from the Ministry of health and welfare, but also in collaboration with State Professional Training Centers but as well with private vocational training centers.

- ❖ **Assistance and support for employment;**

The beneficiaries 16 years old and up who are assisted in distance are supported in their efforts to engage in the regular job market. The beneficiaries are helped with counseling and training sessions focusing mainly on increasing their skills and abilities. This assistance is provided through the advisory cycle “Coach for employment”. The purpose of this advisory cycle is to help the beneficiaries increase their skills and abilities in finding and keeping a job.

- ❖ **Internship / on job training program for beneficiaries;**
- ❖ **Support beneficiaries for opening small businesses;**

### **Life skills building and independency**

- ❖ Support for housing like subsidizing the rent and support for long term accommodation through including VoTs in social housing program.

Young PVoTs/ VoTs who compute 18 years old and are willing to live independently are also be supported toward their economic independence - e.g. after completing vocational training and maintaining a job for some time, they move out of the shelter into protected apartments, subsidized by TVO NGO through project financing.

- ❖ **Information on available services in the community and respective contact information;**

TVO case managers provide ongoing support for the cases of the second and third phase of reintegration program, by offering them the needed information on the existing services in the community. A map on community services has been

prepared and is delivered to the beneficiaries, who are sometimes even directly accompanied by their case managers to know directly the addresses of these kinds of services.

❖ **Monitoring and ongoing follow up of the beneficiaries of the program.**

TVO staff monitors beneficiaries' progress in protected houses, in family and in distance, providing regular psycho-social assistance, counseling's or other types of support needed from them

4. The information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any of the above information to be included.

We do fully agree and give our consent in using the above information

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# Annex A6

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# Annex A7



British Embassy  
Tirana

**British Embassy Tirane**  
Rruga "Skenderbej "  
Nr.12  
Tirane

Tel: 04 2234973  
Fax: 04 224 7697  
www.fcdo.gov.uk

Vatra,

1. How many victims/potential victims of human trafficking do you have the total capacity to support within your current resources (budget, staff, and infrastructure)?

<i>Overall existing capacity</i>	<b>Adult females</b>	<b>Adult males</b>	<b>Minors (please specify male and/or female)</b>	<b>Children of victims</b>
<b>In the shelter (aprox. Per year)</b>	12  The capacity of the shelter is 16 adult and minors females per day.	-	20 female	Around 15 children of victims are supported with accommodation in the shelter  In the shelter there are 4 beds for children under 4 years old.
<b>In accommodation you provide outside the</b>	20 women	5 men	30 minors (18 girls and 12 boys)	35- 40 children of victims per year

<b>shelter (aprox.per year)</b>				
<b>Other (please specify) long – term monitoring</b>	25	8		25 children of victims

2. How many are you currently supporting (data for January 2023)?

<i>Current support</i>	<b>Adult females</b>	<b>Adult males</b>	<b>Minors (please specify male and/or female)</b>	<b>Children of victims</b>
<b>In the shelter</b>	4	-	6 girls	3 (children of victims)
<b>In accommodation you provide outside the shelter</b>	15	1	11 (6 girls and 5 boys)	26 children of women victims
<b>Other (please specify) in long term monitoring</b>	20	3		17 children of victims

3. If you had the necessary funding, could you increase your capacity? How much would it cost per head and how long would it take?

<i>Increasing capacity</i>	<b>Adult females</b>	<b>Adult males</b>	<b>Minors (please specify male and/or female)</b>
<b>In the shelter</b>	<i>Actually we can support 12 victims (female adult and minors) per day, because the cost for food for victims (provided by the state) is only for 12 beneficiaries and their children. As well salaries of the staff that provide direct</i>	<i>We don't provide</i>	

	<p><i>assistance in the shelter, (provided by the state for 12 workers) are lower compared to the other residential centres. In this case, the total cost for services in the shelter actually is 144 000 EUR</i></p> <p><i>If we provide services for more 4 beneficiaries in the shelter (according to our capacity) and if we consider higher salaries (according to the average salary), the total cost for covering direct assistance in the shelter would be around 165 000 EUR</i></p>		
<p><b>In accommodation you provide outside the shelter</b></p>	<p><i>Actually total cost for services in the community are 92885 EUR for the support of 26 beneficiaries per year and their children.</i></p> <p><i>If we support a total of 60 beneficiaries per year in the community, cost of services would be around 110 000 EUR</i></p> <p><i>For recruitment of an extra staff we</i></p>		

	<i>need less than 2 months.</i>		
<b>Other (please specify)</b>	The actual budget is 236 885 EUR. The necessary budget needed for the program in shelter and community, for Vatra program is about 275 000 EUR.		

4. Please outline the support packages that you provide (eg medical assistance, food, clothes, mental health care, legal assistance, professional courses etc.)

The package of services, provided for beneficiaries in the framework of the reintegration programme are:

1. Accommodation and support in the protected shelter (24 hours service)
2. Provision of basic needs in the shelter (food, clothing, hygienic items, etc)
3. Medical assistance (shelter and community)
4. Psychological assistance (shelter and community)
5. Legal assistance (shelter and community)
6. Mediation and support to the family members
7. Occupational activities and cultural activities inside and outside the shelter
8. Educational support for school for victims and their children (shelter and community)
9. Mediation and support for vocational training (shelter and community)
10. Provision with training toolkit (for vocation training) (shelter and community)
11. Training for employment and on the job-training (shelter and community)
12. Support and mediation for employment (shelter and community)
13. Support for establishing of microbusiness (community)
14. Financial support for rented apartment (community)
15. Financial support with basic needs, medicines, educational items, etc in rented apartments and/or in family of origin (community)
16. Mentoring, monitoring and support according to the needs, in long term monitoring (community)
17. Proactive identification and referral for services by Mobile Units (community)

5. The information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any of the above information to be included.

We give our consent for the information we provided, to be cited and published under the Authorities mentioned above.

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# Annex A8



British Embassy  
Tirana

**British Embassy Tirane**  
Rruga "Skenderbej "  
Nr.12  
Tirane

Tel: 04 2234973  
Fax: 04 224 7697  
[www.fcdo.gov.uk](http://www.fcdo.gov.uk)

Mary Ward Loreto,

1. Please could you outline the main services your organisation provides to potential and victims of trafficking. For example, food, clothes, rented accommodation, medical assistance, mental health care, legal aid, economic reintegration services...

MWL provides services to potential and victims of trafficking including:

- the initial identification according to standard operation procedures, leading to further steps for protection within the system in Albania (referral to Competent Authority, police and shelters for protection)
- Rented accommodation and assistance to benefit from social housing programs
- Food packages monthly
- Clothes and hygiene sets
- Medical assistance (covering the costs for medications) and ensuring access to health care
- Counselling and therapy for the survivors
- Legal aid and access to free legal services
- Economic reintegration through: advice and guidance in attending free professional courses, coaching for employment, vacancy research and guidance, preparation and accompaniment for job interviews
- Reintegration through Life and Soft skills Training

2. In what regions of Albania does your organisation provide these services?

MWL provides services to potential and victims of trafficking through Advice and Service Centres MWL – ASC in Lezha, Rreshen, Tirana, Lushnja, Saranda.

3. Does your organisation support adult women, adult men, unaccompanied/accompanied male minors, female minors, or all of the above?

MWL supports all of the above. The direct beneficiaries are mostly adults, while for the minors we apply the referral to child protection agencies and NGOs which target minors. Meantime, additional and complementary services are provided by MWL.

4. Within your current resources (budget, staff, infrastructure etc.) what is your total capacity to support victims/potential victims with your services (eg you are able to support x number of victims/potential victims with x services).

- Rented accommodation and assistance to benefit from social housing programs for up to 3 months = 15 beneficiaries
- Food packages monthly up to 3 months = 45 beneficiaries
- Clothes and hygiene sets up to 3 months = 45 beneficiaries
- Medical assistance (covering the costs for medications) and ensuring access to health care = 15 beneficiaries
- Counselling and therapy for the survivors = 45
- Legal aid and access to free legal services = 45
- Economic reintegration through: advice and guidance in attending free professional courses, coaching for employment, vacancy research and guidance, preparation and accompaniment for job interviews = 75
- Reintegration through Life and Soft skills Training = 30

5. Roughly how many are you supporting per year at the moment?

10 – 15 potential / victims of trafficking per year

6. We are interested in understanding what would potentially be needed to increase Albania's capacity to provide protection and reintegration services to potential/victims of human trafficking according to need and would welcome any information that you can provide that would help us with this assessment. Please provide us with any estimated information you can about what would be required to increase your organisation's capacity to support potential/victims of human trafficking with the services you provide and how long would be needed to do so. For example you might say that it would take x months to recruit and train the additional staff required and cost between x and x per additional case for a full support and reintegration package.

We estimate as crucial to support NGOs working on the prevention of human trafficking and reintegration of the survivors of trafficking with funds for direct services and support, and covering the salaries for the staff members.

A full support reintegration package for 1 survivor for 1 year = 7000 euro

Covering of payments for staff per year = 100,000 euro

A full support package for highly vulnerable/at risk to trafficking ( individuals victims of domestic and GBV in poverty) for 1 year = 4500 euro

7. With your consent, the information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any parts of the above information to be used in this way.

[BE Tirana: consent by Mary Ward Loreto given separately by email. Available on request.]

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# Annex A9

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# Annex B: Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 20 February 2024



British Embassy  
Tirana

Rruga Skanderbej  
Tirana, Albania  
Tel: +355 69 202 3058  
Email: Alastair.King-Smith@fdo.gov.uk  
Twitter: @alastairks

*From His Majesty's Ambassador*

Country Policy and Information Team  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London

20 February 2024

*Dear Country Policy and Information Team,*

## **UPDATE ON ALBANIA'S CAPACITY TO SUPPORT VICTIMS AND POTENTIAL VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING**

1. Further to my letter of January 2023, I am writing to provide an update on Albania's capacity to support victims and potential victims of trafficking. The response below is based on first-hand observations of British Embassy Tirana staff, conversations, correspondence and collaboration with the Albanian Government and relevant organisations in the field, and the results of UK-funded projects. Unless otherwise specified, we have received written consent from third parties for disclosure of this information in the Country Policy and Information Note (CPIN) – available on request.

### Governance

2. Since my last update, we have enhanced our collaboration with the Albanian Government to deliver the [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué](#) signed in December 2022<sup>460</sup>. Two key

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<sup>460</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communique-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

governance structures support joint work to tackle migration, modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT):

- a. A “Joint Oversight Committee at the level of Ministries of Interior/Home Office”<sup>461</sup> that meets monthly to monitor delivery of the Communiqué commitments on migration, and oversees the operational work of the Joint Migration Task Force.
- b. A Steering Committee with the Ministry of Interior that provides strategic direction for the Modern Slavery Fund programme in Albania. The steering committee meets periodically to discuss programme progress.

### Modern Slavery Fund Programme

3. Since my last letter, I wanted to draw your attention to the following updates on delivery of the Modern Slavery Fund programme that are relevant to Albania’s support for trafficking victims:
  - a. Firstly, a point of clarification on the number of individuals that the programme can support with comprehensive reintegration services. The programme is funding three primary service providers who have the capacity to provide assistance to 250 survivors at any given time. Between January and December 2023, 216 survivors and their dependents received comprehensive services (156 survivors; 60 dependents).
  - b. The programme has established a third Community Social Centre in Bulqiza municipality, Diber region, complementing ongoing support to Community Social Centres in Kukes and Shkodra municipality. These centres assist vulnerable families, referring them to essential services and opportunities to prevent trafficking.
  - c. In the period from January-December 2023, the programme has supported **130 individuals at risk and at high risk with entrepreneurial/employment skills, 12 of whom started their own businesses**. Additionally, 15 entrepreneurs from the previous cycle received mentoring sessions and practical advice on expanding their businesses, enhancing online presence and improving customer relations. This brings the total supported by the programme from 2020 to 2023 to 590 beneficiaries; with plans in 2024-25 to extend this to a further 130 individuals.
  - d. Regarding **mental health support**, I am able to provide additional detail about the nature of the provision. The three primary service providers all offer psychological services for victims of trafficking. A psychologist is part of the core team and works alongside the case manager. The psychologist conducts a psychological evaluation and then prepares individual recovery plans. Throughout their recovery period, including after leaving the shelter, victims of trafficking receive ongoing counselling sessions and, if needed, medication. In cases of serious mental health concerns, shelters collaborate with the Psychiatric State Hospital where individuals stay under supervision for around 2-3 weeks.

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<sup>461</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communication-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

- e. I previously reported that the programme also included online mental health and counselling services through [www.nukjevetem.al](http://www.nukjevetem.al), provided to approximately 1000 individuals/year. Between January-December 2023, 921 individuals (343 males, 578 females) have accessed this service.
- f. **Victim support and identification:** in late May, a delegation of representatives from the Albanian Ministry of Interior visited the UK for a study visit on victim support and identification, learning about the UK's end-to-end approach to modern slavery and human trafficking. The delegation met with policy officials, law enforcement agencies, analysts, first responders and support service providers.
- g. **Albania's capacity to investigate human trafficking:** the programme funded three local workshops in February 2023 and a national workshop in March 2023, involving a total of more than 10 agencies, to discuss how to improve law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute human trafficking offenders. The comprehensive report includes recommendations emphasising the need for political will, institutional support, capacity development and new protocols. Institutional meetings with key stakeholders confirmed endorsement of the findings and commitment to cooperation for implementation. Subject to funding and discussions with the Government of Albania, the intention is to support delivery of the recommendations and offer further assistance to Albanian law enforcement and justice agencies through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund.
- h. The trainer manual for child-friendly forensic interviews was developed and a Trainer of Training session for the Security Police Academy took place in October 2023.
- i. British Embassy Tirana supported Medaille Trust organization to deliver their 8th international conference in Albania, which brought together UK law enforcement partners with Albanian representatives to improve cooperation and understanding on modern slavery in Albania. The Joint Migration Task Force, Medaille Trust and other partners agreed to support any activity around the MSHT threat and establish a communication pathway for advice, guidance and support.
- j. Delivery of the Albanian Government's [National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#) for the Fight against Human Being Trafficking 2021-2023:<sup>462</sup> a Monitoring and Evaluation consultant was engaged to support the monitoring of the NAP. The first draft of the NAP monitoring report has been completed and the Ministry of Interior plans to circulate it to all relevant stakeholders by January 2024.
- k. As noted in my previous correspondence, the Government of Albania requested support to meet its commitment under the NAP to establish "an emergency and multifunctional centre in the north of the country in cooperation with non-state partners for reintegration and support of vulnerable groups of society, at risk of trafficking, including [potential victims or victims of trafficking]". While a preliminary feasibility study for the shelter has been drafted, ongoing discussions with the government of Albania indicate that immediate construction of the building is not anticipated at this time.

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<sup>462</sup> <https://mb.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/VKM-nr-670-date-10.11.2021-Plani-Kombetar-Antitrafik-2021-2023.pdf> (English translation in Correspondence from BE Tirana, Jan 2023, Annex A1)

#### Other UK-Funded Programmes:

4. In addition to the Modern Slavery Fund programme, please note the following updates to wider assistance the UK is providing of relevance to the CPIN:
  - a. **Supporting Albania's capacity to investigate human trafficking:** Comprising a number of Albanian State Police Officers and colleagues from Home Office International Operations and the National Crime Agency, the Joint Migration Task Force (JMTF) was formed in May 2023 to assist in implementation of the Joint Communiqué, with a focus on organised immigration crime, and became fully operational in August 2023. The JMTF has fostered relationships with law enforcement in the UK and Albania, establishing an effective intelligence and information-sharing system. This collaboration has led to the creation of several intelligence reports and identification to date of around 100 cases with multiple individuals involved, helping in the disruption of organised immigration crime and modern slavery and human trafficking in both countries. Additionally, the JMTF is actively involved in identifying irregular migration through the Western Balkans of third-country nationals and disrupting the smuggling and trafficking of persons.
  - b. **Reintegration support** provision for returning Albanian nationals has been in operation since July 2023. Publicity materials have also been published and made accessible to all returning individuals for wider awareness of available services. As of 31 December 2023, 140 Albanian nationals have taken up the offer of reintegration support following return.
  - c. **New Perspectives Project** (see correspondence from BE Tirana, Jan 2023, 6.iv) is focused on reducing irregular migration from Albania to the UK. See Annex A for more details of the project components and priority sectors. The project has now also expanded scope to include a fourth municipality (Diber) in the north of Albania and is dispersing scholarships, grants and upskilling communities and local government.

#### Capacities

- a. As a result of the Joint Communiqué and updates to the CPIN guidance, there is an increase in readmissions of failed asylum-seekers under the UK-Albania Readmissions Agreement, including those recognised in the UK system as victims of modern slavery. The Home Office is also encouraging more voluntary returns. To ensure all cases, including enforced returns, know what provisions are available in country so they can make themselves known to the appropriate support services if they wish, we collaborated with the Albanian Government and key service providers to produce a leaflet to signpost returnees to available services - for example, social and health services, as well as administrative and legal support, vocational and skill training and employments opportunities - once they return home. Additionally, we have developed information sheets in English and Albanian which set out the reintegration support available for returning survivors of trafficking to Albania and how it is accessed. We've shared them with The Salvation Army, Voluntary Returns Scheme, Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and police to try and increase awareness of and access to this support. We have also asked the Albanian Government and key service providers to inform us should any capacity concerns arise. No issues have been raised to date.

I remain at your disposal for any further detail you require and will update you further with any substantial developments.

*Your sincerely,*

*Alastair*

Alastair King-Smith



Annex A One-pager  
New Perspective for K



Letter from HMA to  
CPIT 30 January 2023

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# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

All the COI included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s). Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared and contrasted to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and it provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#).

The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Law on trafficking – men, women, children
- Trafficking – men, women, children
  - Prevalence
  - Risk factors
  - Forms of trafficking
- Action by the state
  - Government action to address trafficking
  - Action by the police
  - Action by the judiciary
- Assistance for victims of trafficking - men, women, children
  - Shelters
  - Financial assistance
  - Employment
  - Situation for those leaving shelters, including accommodation
- Healthcare for victims of trafficking – men, women, children
  - General
  - Mental health
- Societal attitudes
  - Attitudes to victims of trafficking
  - Attitudes to single mothers
  - Life for single women/mothers

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **16.0**
- valid from **9 July 2024**

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### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure - start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure - end of section

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## Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information and assessment.

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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