



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Albania: Unaccompanied children

Version 1.0

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Executive summary

Children do not form a particular social group (PSG) in Albania.

In general, a person is unlikely to face treatment by state or non-state actors which amounts to persecution or serious harm solely on the basis that they are a child. This includes unaccompanied children. Where appropriate, decision makers should also consider the relevant [Country Policy and Information Note\(s\)](#).

Albania has a functioning criminal justice system and legal framework to address child protection. However, a lack of co-ordination, and staffing and financial issues can affect capability. In general, the state is willing and able to offer protection to children, including unaccompanied or lone children who may be at risk of persecution or serious harm. The onus is on the person to show otherwise.

In general, internal relocation is likely to be reasonable, particularly to urban centres such as, but not limited to, Tirana and Shkoder.

If adequate and sustainable reception arrangements with family members or the state of Albania cannot be made, and there is no current prospect of them being made, and but for this it would be reasonable for the child to return, decision makers must consider granting UASC leave under paragraphs [352ZC to 352ZF of the Immigration Rules](#).

Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 12 June 2025

About the assessment

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

- faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by state or non-state actors on the grounds of being an unaccompanied child
- can obtain effective protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- can relocate within a country or territory to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, 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 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).
- 1.1.2 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](#)).
- 1.1.3 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](#)).
- 1.1.4 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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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 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.
- 1.2.2 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).
- 1.2.3 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 Children do not fall within the scope of the Refugee Convention for the reason of as a particular social group (PSG).
- 2.1.2 Children are not considered to form a PSG within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because while they do share an innate characteristic, they do not have a distinct identity in Albania because the group is not perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.1.3 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention reasons necessary for the grant of asylum, the question is whether the person will face a real risk of serious harm to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).
- 2.1.4 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 Return and reception arrangements for unaccompanied children

- 3.1.1 Whilst not country-specific to Albania, in [HK & Ors \(minors, indiscriminate violence, forced recruitment by Taliban, contact with family members\) Afghanistan CG \[2010\] UKUT 378 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 15 July 2010 and promulgated 23 November 2010, the EWCA held that it would not, in all cases, be appropriate to draw an adverse inference that the child would be safely received merely from the failure of the child to try to make contact with his or her family (paragraph 35). Conversely, nor did it necessarily follow that a child with no family to receive them in Afghanistan could not safely be returned (paragraph 36).
- 3.1.2 Again, whilst not country-specific to Albania, in [ST \(Child asylum seekers\) Sri Lanka \[2013\] UKUT 292 \(IAC\) \(25 June 2013\)](#), heard 30 April 2013 and promulgated on 25 June 2013, the Tribunal confirmed that an assessment of

risk (of conditions on return) is required on the hypothesis that the child will be removed at the time of decision (paragraph 29).

3.1.3 When assessing an unaccompanied child's claim for asylum or humanitarian protection, decision makers must first consider whether the child qualifies for protection without reference to their status as a UASC. This means assessing the risk of persecution or serious harm on the basis that the child would return to Albania at the time of the decision. Only after this protection assessment has been completed should decision makers consider whether the child's return would, in practice, take place. Return would only occur where all of the following conditions are met:

- Family contact has been established and is ongoing;
- Adequate reception arrangements are in place;
- It is in the child's best interests - as a primary consideration - to leave the UK, return to their home country, and reunite with family members; and
- Safe and practical return arrangements have been confirmed.

3.1.4 In the case of [Ravichandran \[1995\] EWCA Civ 16](#) the Tribunal held that '... in asylum cases the appellate structure ... is to be regarded as an extension of the decision-making process'. This applied the general principle that an appellate tribunal must consider asylum cases on the basis of the latest evidence when considering return, including any which postdates the original decision, whilst also taking into account the hypothetical scenario, utilised in [ST \[2013\]](#), that return and reception arrangements are in place.

3.1.5 However, if adequate and sustainable reception arrangements with family members or the state of Albania cannot be made, and there is no current prospect of them being made, and but for this it would be reasonable for the child to return, decision makers must consider granting UASC leave under paragraphs [352ZC to 352ZF of the Immigration Rules](#).

3.1.6 In 2021, the government of Albania informed the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child that it co-operated with other countries to enable the safe return of unaccompanied children, either to the care of state authorities or to their families. In March 2023, Eurostat referred to the return of 70 Albanian unaccompanied minors from various European countries. NGOs also assist returning families with reintegration into parts of Albania, including SOS Villages Albania, an NGO currently working on a project to create 'sustainable and structural solutions' for 20 returning unaccompanied Albanian children (see [Reception arrangements and reintegration](#)).

3.1.7 For further guidance on reception arrangements for the return of unaccompanied children, see [Risk on the basis of being an unaccompanied child](#), [Reception arrangements and reintegration](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Processing children's asylum claims](#).

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3.2 Risk on the basis of being a child

3.2.1 Simply being a child from Albania does not of itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

- 3.2.2 Whilst not country specific to Albania, in [LQ \(Age: immutable characteristic\) Afghanistan \[2008\] UKAIT 00005](#), heard 6 October 2006 and promulgated on 15 March 2007, the Tribunal held that ‘At the date when the appellant’s status has to be assessed he is a child and although, assuming he survives, he will in due course cease to be a child, he is immutably a child at the time of assessment. (That is not, of course, to say that he would be entitled indefinitely to refugee status acquired while, and because of, his minority. **He would be a refugee only whilst the risk to him as a child remained**)’ (paragraph 6 – emphasis added).
- 3.2.3 In the case of [ST](#), the Tribunal found that risk on return must be assessed at date of decision. However, the Tribunal also held that ‘It is clear that the grant of the status of refugee cannot be evaded by the respondent in effect saying that although there is a risk of ill-treatment today, the Secretary of State proposes to grant discretionary leave to remain until the risk has diminished. Where an asylum claim is determined substantive and the criteria for the status are met, there is a right to the status...’ (paragraph 27).
- 3.2.4 Equally, the Court of Appeal held in [EU \(Afghanistan\) & Ors v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2013\] EWCA Civ 32 \(31 January 2013\)](#), heard 17 December 2012, that ‘... to grant leave to remain [as a refugee] to someone who has no risk on return, whose Convention rights will not be infringed by his return, and who has no other independent claim to remain here ... is to use the power to grant leave to remain for a purpose other than that for which it is conferred’ (paragraph 6).
- 3.2.5 [ST](#) held that any risk of serious harm that **might** happen to a child in his or her country of origin does not necessarily make that child a refugee (paragraph 22 – emphasis added).
- 3.2.6 In Albania, a child is/children are defined as a person under the age of 18 (see [Domestic law](#)). UNICEF noted that, in 2023, there were 542,174 children aged between 0 and 17 in Albania (see [Demography](#)).
- 3.2.7 Children in Albania have a legal right to free and compulsory education until the age of 16. Challenges including discrimination, poverty and limited support services remain for children in rural areas, minority groups (including Roma and Egyptians), and children with disabilities. Corporal punishment in schools, whilst prohibited, reportedly still occurs, with one source noting that of the 41 cases of violence and sexual abuse against children from 2018–2023, 24.3% occurred in educational institutions. However, the education system is overall inclusive, with high enrolment rates and gender parity at most levels. Reforms, such as the National Strategy for Education 2021–2026, support for vulnerable groups, teacher training and targeted financial support exist to improve access and quality (see [Education](#)).
- 3.2.8 According to 2022 data, Albania had low levels of child poverty based on international poverty lines. Only 0.8% of children lived on less than the equivalent of £2.81 per day, and 13.7% on less than £5.27, performing better than several Western Balkan countries. Whilst challenges remain, less than one third of children in Albania are living in poverty, and fewer than half the general population is affected by multidimensional poverty. To further reduce these figures, the government has increased financial aid and incentives for families with children (see [Child poverty](#)).
- 3.2.9 Laws exist in Albania to protect children from all forms of violence, including

corporal punishment, sexual abuse, and exploitation. Available information shows that violence against children does still occur and cultural attitudes may contribute to underreporting or tolerance. In 2022, Child Protection Units managed 2,496 cases of children in need of protection and the ALO 116-111 support helpline reported handling 848,000 calls between 2009 and 2023. Whilst violence against children does still occur, available statistics and reportage does not support that there is a generalised or widespread risk of violence to children amounting to persecution across the population (see [Violence against children](#)).

- 3.2.10 Albania prohibits child labour, with the minimum legal working age set at 16, and has established enforcement mechanisms. However, challenges persist in effectively eliminating child labour, particularly within the informal sector. Available data suggests the issue affects a minority of children; the US Department of Labor reported that 4.6% of children aged 5–14 were engaged in unlawful work in 2022. Efforts to combat child labour include school reintegration programmes and collaboration with international partners (see [Child labour](#)).
- 3.2.11 For information that may also be relevant to the child, including guidance on assessing risk, see the relevant [Country Policy and Information Note\(s\)](#).
- 3.2.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3.3 Risk on the basis of being an unaccompanied child

- 3.3.1 In general, a person is unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from state and/or non-state actors on the sole basis that they are an unaccompanied child. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.3.2 The Court of Appeal considered unaccompanied children in [HK \(Afghanistan\) \[2012\]](#) and held, as a general principle, that ‘The onus is on the asylum seeker to make good the asylum claim, and that applies to children as it does to adults’ (para 34).
- 3.3.3 In the case of [ZH \(Afghanistan\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2009\] EWCA Civ 470 \(07 April 2009\)](#), on eligibility for UASC Discretionary Leave, the Court of Appeal held that:

‘The mere fact that a child applicant for asylum falls within the [unaccompanied minor] policy of the Secretary of State is not in my judgment of itself sufficient to discharge the burden on the child applicant to demonstrate that he is at real risk, or there is a serious possibility that he will be persecuted if returned. The threshold for what amounts to persecution is relatively high, the policy sidesteps that difficulty by being broader in scope. The unaccompanied child does not have to demonstrate that he would be at real risk of persecution if returned to fall within the Secretary of State’s policy. All he has to demonstrate is that he is unaccompanied, that his parents cannot be traced and that adequate reception arrangements cannot be made for him. Thus, the policy is plainly broader in scope for perfectly understandable policy reasons than the narrower definition of what amounts to refugee status. Thus it does not follow automatically, simply from the fact that a child falls within the Secretary of State’s broader policy, that there is a real risk or a serious possibility that that particular child’s basic human rights

will be so severely violated that he will suffer what amounts to persecution' (paragraph 10).

- 3.3.4 Available information shows that children without parental care in Albania are, by law, placed primarily in family-based settings, such as with relatives or less commonly in foster care, with institutional care used only as a last resort and for the shortest possible duration. The legal framework is comprehensive and is continuing to focus on deinstitutionalisation and shift to expand alternative care services. As of late 2023, around 500 children remained in residential institutions which have been criticised for lacking specialised services and support staff. However, some have started integrating preparatory support for independent living, including access to education, vocational training, and transitional housing. An increasing number of municipalities have started to implement elements of the national deinstitutionalisation plan, with financial backing from the Social Fund Programme, a government initiative designed to support the implementation and expansion of social care services (see [Public care institutions](#)).
- 3.3.5 A civil society report in 2024 estimated at least 2,600 children to be in a 'street situation' mostly involved in begging. Albania has developed legal and institutional frameworks to protect street children, including criminalising exploitation of children for begging, with increasing referrals for prosecution. As a result of the 2015 – 2017 national action plan, the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection (SACRP), established on-site teams in municipalities to identify and assist children in a street situation, offering services such as school enrolment, healthcare, counselling, and family support. Most recent available statistics showed that, between 2016 and 2017, 963 children were identified and over 500 enrolled in school. While children in street situations remains an issue, it affects less than 1% of children in Albania and does not indicate a generalised risk to the wider child population (see ['Street children'](#)).
- 3.3.6 For further information which may also be relevant, including guidance on assessing risk, see the relevant [Country Policy and Information Note\(s\)](#).
- 3.3.7 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 The government operates a generally effective, accessible criminal justice system and is continuing to take reasonable steps to prevent violence against children, and to promote the protection of children from persecution or serious harm.
- 4.1.2 Children's rights are safeguarded through both domestic and international legal frameworks. The Constitution of Albania guarantees special protection for children, including the right to be protected from violence and exploitation. The Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child in Albania provides key protections to ensure children's wellbeing and safety, addressing issues such as abuse, exploitation, and neglect. The law prohibits child labour, trafficking, and corporal punishment and guarantees access to education, healthcare, and social services (see [Constitution](#) and [Domestic legislation](#)). Internationally, Albania is a party to key treaties such

as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights, which further protect children's rights (see [International law](#)).

- 4.1.3 The government of Albania has implemented legal reforms and successive national strategies, including the 2021–2026 Agenda on the Rights of the Child and the 2022–2024 Child Protection Programme, which provide clear frameworks for ensuring children's rights and protection. In 2023, the European Commission found that the legal and policy framework covering the rights of the child in Albania increasingly reflected international standards and EU requirements (see [Effectiveness of child protection](#)). Whilst implementation has been criticised as inconsistent, with some areas lacking the resources or personnel to apply laws effectively, in general the reforms demonstrate a willingness and ability to protect children in Albania (see [Constitution](#), [International law](#), [Domestic legislation](#)).
- 4.1.4 Albania has taken steps to strengthen protections for children within the justice system through the establishment of structures and services designed to assist minors who are victims of crime. Whilst there are challenges with implementation and consistency across the country, since 2016, the Office of Victims' Assistance has delivered tailored support (including counselling and guidance through criminal proceedings) and provided victim coordinators to inform, support and connect children to relevant services. Measures have been implemented to ensure non-discriminatory access to support, regardless of background, and capacity-building efforts for prosecutors, police officers, and victim coordinators have been prioritised to improve institutional responses (see [Government support and protection](#)).
- 4.1.5 Child Protection Units (CPUs) are established in every municipality throughout Albania and are staffed by more than 240 trained Child Protection Workers (CPWs), many of whom have professional qualifications. The workforce still remains below recommended levels, and in more rural areas, CPWs reportedly lack resources (see [Government support and protection](#) and [Effectiveness of child protection](#)).
- 4.1.6 Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) offer services such as emergency shelter, psychological and legal counselling, reintegration support, vocational training, and family-style care, particularly in urban centres. Some also work in partnership with local authorities to strengthen child protection systems and advocate for legal and policy reform. The ALO 116-111 helpline has handled over 848,000 calls since 2009, supporting children in crisis or seeking advice (see [Non-governmental organisation \(NGO\) support](#)).
- 4.1.7 Whilst challenges such as limited cooperation from state authorities and constrained budgets persist, children in Albania do have access to formal mechanisms for redress through independent institutions. These include the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination and the People's Advocate (Ombudsperson), where children can seek assistance in cases of discrimination, mistreatment, or violations of their rights. In 2021, the Commissioner processed 8 valid complaints involving children, and the People's Advocate handled 226 cases, requests, and notifications related to child rights. Since 2014, the People's Advocate has operated a dedicated Section for Children's Rights Protection and Promotion, with a specific

commissioner and support staff (see [Avenues of redress](#)).

- 4.1.8 For guidance on assessing the availability of state protection for children from particular groups, see the relevant [Country Policy and Information Note\(s\)](#).
- 4.1.9 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 In general, there are parts of the country where an unaccompanied child would not have a well-founded fear of persecution, and it will be reasonable for them to relocate there. Urban centres such as, but not limited to, Tirana and Shkoder are most equipped and developed in offering extra support such as multidisciplinary centres for children and families in need.
- 5.1.2 While the onus is on the person to establish a well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm, decision makers must demonstrate that internal relocation is reasonable (or not unduly harsh) having regard to the individual circumstances of the child.
- 5.1.3 For guidance on assessing the availability of state protection for particular groups, see the relevant [Country Policy and Information Note\(s\)](#).
- 5.1.4 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(3) of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.
- 6.1.2 Where a claim is refused and adequate reception arrangements are in place, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.3 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 section 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 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.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **31 March 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

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

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7. Demography

7.1 Population

- 7.1.1 Instat, the institute of statistics for Albania¹ noted that ‘The resident population in Albania, according to the 2023 Population and Housing Census, is 2.4 million usual residents...’²
- 7.1.2 UNICEF’s April 2024 an [infographic on children in Albania](#) noted that, in 2023, there were 542,174 children aged between 0 and 17 in Albania³.

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8. Legal context

8.1 Constitution

- 8.1.1 Article 54 of the [Constitution of Albania](#) makes specific reference to the welfare and protection of children:

‘1. Children ... [and] the young... have the right to special protection by the state.

2. Children born out of wedlock have rights equal to those born within marriage.

3. Every child has the right to be protected from violence, ill treatment, exploitation ...’⁴

¹ Instat, [About us](#), undated

² Instat, [The population of Albania](#), undated

³ UNICEF, [Children in Albania](#), April 2024

⁴ [Constitution of Albania](#), Article 54

8.2 International law

- 8.2.1 Albania is a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it ratified in 1992⁵.
- 8.2.2 Albania has ratified the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)⁶ plus other Council of Europe (CoE) conventions protecting fundamental rights, including the [Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(CETS No. 201\)](#)⁷.

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8.3 Domestic legislation

- 8.3.1 Law No. 18/2017 On the Rights and Protection of the Child defines a child as any person under 18 years of age and outlines ‘... the rights and protection that any child is entitled to, the mechanisms and responsible authorities that shall guarantee effective exercise of, respect for, promotion of these rights, and also the special protection of the child.’⁸
- 8.3.2 See [Law No. 18/2017 On the Rights and Protection of the Child](#) for all constitutional rights related to children in Albania.
- 8.3.3 Eurochild, the ‘largest network of organisations and individuals working with and for children in Europe’⁹, published their 2023 Albania country profile in January 2024 (Eurochild 2023 report). The profile noted:

‘At national level, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection is responsible for children’s rights in Albania. There is also a Minister of State for Children and Youth ... working to support the government in areas related to children and youth’s rights. The aim is to strengthen youth involvement in decision-making processes and protect the rights of young people. The Minister of State for Youth and Children also has as its mission to protect the rights of young people and to guarantee their participation in social life, through drafting, developing, and monitoring youth policies, and coordinating issues related to the protection, care, health, welfare and well-being of children ...’¹⁰
- 8.3.4 The Albanian government’s Media and Information Agency (MIA) published an undated article concerning the National Social Protection Strategy, 2024-2030. The article highlighted how the Strategy seeks to emphasise responsible social protection for children, inspired by the European Child Guarantee, as well as a focus on integrated service models, family-based care, and parental support, while also transitioning residential centres into alternative care approaches for children with disabilities¹¹.
- 8.3.5 The Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) published the [National Agenda on Rights of the Child, 2021-2026](#), which stated:

‘The National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2021-2026 (NARC 2021-2026) is a document created on behalf of the Albanian government by the

⁵ OHCHR, [Status of ratification interactive dashboard](#), no date

⁶ ECtHR, [Albania](#), October 2022

⁷ CoE, [Treaty list for a specific State](#) (Albania), 9 March 2023

⁸ Albania, [Law No. 18/2017 on the Rights and Protection of the Child](#), 23 February 2017

⁹ Eurochild, [About us](#), undated

¹⁰ Eurochild, [Albania – 2023 Country Profile](#), 24 January 2024

¹¹ MIA, [National Social Protection Strategy 2024-2030](#), no date

Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in collaboration with the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection, and in consultation with other responsible ministries, local self-government units, independent institutions, civil society organizations, and international organizations working in the field of child rights and protection. NARC is a commitment to achieving child rights in Albania between 2021 and 2026 ...

'This ... serves as the foundation for coordinating efforts across ministries and sectors, as well as leading the national regulatory framework toward an aligned and effective children's strategy ...

'NARC has four strategic goals: (i) good governance to respect, protect, and fulfill children's rights; (ii) the elimination of all forms of violence and child protection; (iii) child and adolescent-friendly systems and services; and (iv) the promotion of children's rights in the digital world. The defined goals allow for the continuation of the previous National Agenda as well as alignment with the European Strategy, which includes the Council of Europe's priorities as well as the current Sophia Strategy ...'¹²

- 8.3.6 The Albanian Ministry of State for Youth and Children (MSYC) published a [National Youth Strategy and Action Plan, 2022-2029](#), which stated: 'The youth strategy national policy and programming efforts are focused on ensuring equal rights and opportunities, support and engagement for vulnerable, marginalized youth and youth most affected by poverty, violence, maltreatment, disability, and social exclusion. This strategy intends to guide Albanian youth towards further action that positively affects their future.'¹³

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9. Social and economic rights

9.1 Education

- 9.1.1 [Article 18](#) of Law No.18/2017 On the Rights and Protection of the Child provides for the right to education for all children, including ensuring equal access to free education, protection from violence and discrimination and specific measures to support vulnerable groups¹⁴.
- 9.1.2 Corporal punishment is explicitly prohibited in schools in Albania¹⁵.
- 9.1.3 See [Eurydice Albania](#), published by the European Union and updated regularly, for an overview of the education system in Albania.
- 9.1.4 Considering attendance, the US State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2023 (USSD HR report 2023) for Albania stated, 'School attendance was mandatory through the ninth grade or until the age of 16, whichever came first, but many children, particularly in rural areas, left school earlier.'¹⁶
- 9.1.5 The BTI 2024 Country Report for Albania stated, 'Access to education for female students is also relatively good, with the enrollment ratio above the rate for men in tertiary education.'¹⁷

¹² MHSP, [National Agenda on Rights of the Child, 2021-2026](#) (Intro and scope), no date

¹³ MSYC, [National Youth Strategy and Action Plan, 2022-2029](#), October 2022

¹⁴ Govt of Albania, [Law No 18 2017 On the rights and protection of the child](#), 2017

¹⁵ End Corporal Punishment, [Corporal punishment of children in Albania](#), October 2023

¹⁶ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

¹⁷ BTI, [Country Report 2024; Albania](#) (p.24), 19 March 2024

- 9.1.6 On 30 October 2024, the European Commission published the 2024 Albania Report as part of the European Union's annual enlargement package, and which provided an updated assessment of Albania's progress toward meeting the criteria for EU membership (EC Albania 2024 report). The report noted, 'Albania is moderately prepared in the field of education ... Some progress was made with the implementation of the National Strategy for Education 2021-2026 and the adoption of legislative acts to reform higher education. Albania still needs to strengthen the quality and inclusiveness of education ...'¹⁸
- 9.1.7 On 5 December 2023, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a 'forum and knowledge hub for data, analysis and best practices in public policy'¹⁹ published 'The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)' results. The PISA test 'assesses the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in mathematics, reading and science ...'²⁰ The EC Albania 2024 report noted, 'The PISA 2022 results published end 2023 show declining results for Albanian students in all areas (mathematics, reading and science). Findings point to a serious need to address teaching and learning quality and inclusion in the education system ensuring that young people are equipped with the right skillset for the job market.'²¹ However, it should be noted that the OECD reported 'In Albania, students reported spending significantly less effort on PISA in 2022 in comparison to 2018, and there are clear indications that students did not engage seriously throughout the test and questionnaire (see Annex A7 in PISA 2022 Results, Volume I). Results must therefore be interpreted with caution.'²²
- 9.1.8 The EC Albania 2024 report also noted:
 'The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) reported that public spending on education represented 3.33% of GDP in 2023, while the forecast for 2024 and 2025 is 2.41% and 2.68% respectively (considerably lower than the EU average 5%). According to INSTAT data in academic year 2023-2024, 533,711 pupils and students were enrolled in formal education, with a decrease of 3.7% compared to the previous year. In the same period, 416,538 pupils and children were enrolled in pre-university education (up to upper secondary education), marking a decrease of 3.8% compared to the previous year. 66,711 children were enrolled in preschool education, 4.4% less compared to the previous school year. In the basic education, 258,072 pupils were enrolled, 47.9% of which were girls, 3.4% less than the previous academic year, 54.7% in primary education and 45.3% in lower secondary education. 91,755 pupils were enrolled in upper secondary education, a decrease of 4.3% compared to the previous school year. Regarding early childhood education, 66,711 pupils enrolled in 2023-2024, less than the 69,750 who enrolled the previous academic year ...'²³
- 9.1.9 A report dated April 2024, submitted for the fourth cycle of the UN Universal Periodic Review of Albania by a consortium of civil society

¹⁸ EC, [Albania 2024 Report](#), page 15, 30 October 2024

¹⁹ OECD, [About the OECD](#), undated

²⁰ OECD, [PISA 2022 Results \(Volume I and II\) - Country Notes: Albania](#), 5 December 2023

²¹ EC, [Albania 2024 Report](#), page 78, 30 October 2024

²² OECD, [PISA 2022 Results \(Volume I and II\) - Country Notes: Albania](#), 5 December 2023

²³ EC, [Albania 2024 Report](#), page 79, 30 October 2024

organisations/networks, all of whom are part of Human Rights House Albania (HRHA), ‘a major human rights informal network’²⁴ (UPR report 2024) noted: ‘The right of the child to education has been one of the most negatively affected during the reporting period. Despite some advancements during 2013-2018, first Covid and later violence in schools have had a tremendous impact on the quality of education. Public education is the only sector where on daily bases [sic] there are serious allegations of violations of the rights of the child...

‘No school in Albania fulfils the criteria to be considered a safe school and safe space. Despite calls for better cooperation between the Ministry of Education and civil society, for the last four years there has been almost no cooperation between CSO’s and the Ministry.’²⁵

9.1.10 In 2024, UNESCO published ‘Education sector analysis: Republic of Albania’. It noted:

‘In general, the Albanian educational system operates similarly to its western Balkan neighbours.

‘Basic education is well established, and the schooling of young Albanians takes place smoothly at the corresponding ages in the compulsory education cycle.

‘Internal efficiency is good, with very low levels of repetition and drop-out. School life expectancy from pre-primary to tertiary level is 16.2 years, of which 13.0 are at pre-university level, 0.5 in vocational education, and 2.6 in higher education. Enrolment levels have remained high for both boys and girls in general and vocational education over the past 10 years, and gender disparities are more apparent at post-basic levels, with boys more likely to be enrolled in technical and vocational streams than girls. At university level, women are much more likely to enrol, and participation of women in traditionally male-dominated sectors has improved over the past 10 years. Disparities in access and retention exist for minority groups and students with disabilities, especially for girls. Children from poorer households are more likely to drop out after entering the education system than children from richer households. In rural settings, boys are more likely to be out of school than girls. The situation is particularly dire for poor girls in urban settings, who are almost 10 times as likely to drop out from lower secondary school than their male counterparts.’²⁶

9.1.11 The same source noted:

‘Low enrolment of children with disabilities in pre-primary education could be due to social stigma and a lack of provision of trained teaching assistants at the pre-primary level, some families not yet being aware that their children have disabilities and trying to “solve problems” at home, and families that do want to send their children to pre-primary school finding that there is no adequate support for their children’s needs. While legislation exists that requires public and private institutions at the primary level to have teaching assistants and individualized teaching plans in place, a decrease in enrolment begins at the lower secondary level ... which is linked to learning

²⁴ HRHA, [UPR 4th Cycle JS5 Children and youth in Albania \(Statement of interest\)](#), 7 April 2024

²⁵ HRHA, [UPR 4th Cycle JS5 Children and youth in Albania](#), 7 April 2024

²⁶ UNESCO, [Education sector analysis: Republic of Albania](#), 2024

problems and bullying. A study by World Vision and Save the Children (2018) found that the self-reported attendance from parents with children aged 2 to 17 with disabilities was 75.7%, which was statistically lower than that of children without disabilities for the same age group, at 93.1%. Furthermore, ... children with disabilities “are statistically less likely to attend school than children without disabilities in each sub age-group, by sex, and in each type of residence” (World Vision in Albania and Kosovo and Save the Children Albania, 2018: 37).²⁷

9.1.12 Considering measures to support children with disabilities, UNESCO noted:

‘The MES has implemented several initiatives to overcome these challenges: 15,000 teachers have been trained in strategies for teaching students with disabilities, and special education centres have been transformed into special resource centres that offer support to all students from all schools. These resource centres help teachers draft individualized learning plans and offer specialized training based on different diagnoses; for example, students with hearing disabilities receive tech-enabled support from trained professionals and have specialized schools with adapted facilities.’²⁸

9.1.13 Considering children from ethnic minorities, the same source noted:

‘Particular challenges affect children from these communities. Social and economic discrimination, high levels of poverty and unemployment, the practice of early marriage (which particularly affects girls), and low social value placed on formal education lead Roma children to face heightened risks of low access, high drop-out, and high absenteeism ...

‘Fully committed to address those issues, the Government of Albania, and in particular the MES, has put in place several strategies and plans targeting this population. The National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania 2021–2025 (MSWY, 2021) and its predecessor, the National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2016–2020 (MSWY, 2015), set the roadmap for all policies aimed at enrolling and keeping Roma children in the education system in Albania. These include free textbooks and transportation for children living more than 2 kms from their school in pre-university education, the possibility to reintegrate into the school system for children who have left, and special scholarships for Roma or Egyptian children who have dropped out or are at risk of drop-out.

‘Special programmes to improve learning outcomes are being implemented, and since September 2022 Roma mediators have been introduced to stabilize attendance and ensure that children stay in the education system. Finally, plans are being drafted to teach Romani from Grade 1 to Grade 9 and to include elements of Roma and Egyptian culture in the general curriculum.

‘Other interventions include:

‘— A digital platform, administered by the Ministry of Health, aims to centralize all programmes and services targeting Roma and Egyptian communities, in order to improve coordination between programmes. The platform includes spaces for local education offices to report on relevant

²⁷ UNESCO, [Education sector analysis: Republic of Albania](#), 2024

²⁸ UNESCO, [Education sector analysis: Republic of Albania](#), 2024

indicators. The Government of Albania has also signed a declaration to achieve a completion rate of 90% at lower secondary and 50% at upper secondary level for Roma and Egyptian children.

‘— Roma graduates from upper secondary school have their bachelor’s programme fees waived and need only pay 50 per cent of tuition for a master’s programme. Additionally, special quotas exist for every tertiary programme, regardless of the 6.5 grade point average (GPA) threshold.’²⁹

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9.2 Health and welfare

- 9.2.1 For information about healthcare for children, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: Healthcare](#).

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9.3 Child poverty

- 9.3.1 In July 2023, the World Bank published a Policy Research Working Paper, ‘Global trends in child monetary poverty according to international poverty lines,’ which included data concerning the percentage of children living in households which were poor in monetary terms (at \$2.15 [£1.65³⁰], \$3.65 [£2.81³¹] and \$6.85 [£5.27³²] per day) in 2022. The data included the below information for Albania and 4 other countries of the Western Balkans, reproduced in a table compiled by CPIT, and indicated that Albania performs relatively better than several of its Western Balkan counterparts regarding child poverty³³:

Country name	\$2.15	\$3.65	\$6.85
Albania	0.0%	0.8%	13.7%
Kosovo	0.3%	4.1%	33.4%
Montenegro	4.1%	9.5%	27.2%
North Macedonia	5.3%	12.1%	29.3%
Serbia	0.0%	2.0%	12.7%

- 9.3.2 On 20 November 2024, Eurochild published a report entitled ‘Children’s Realities in Europe: Progress and Gaps’. The report noted that in Albania, 50.1% of children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2021, a 0.9% decrease from 2020. In 2022, the rate declined further to 27.4%, although girls remained more vulnerable than boys (28.6% vs. 26.3%). In contrast, in Kosovo, 23% of children were living in poverty in 2023, with 7% in extreme poverty, while in Serbia, 27.1% of children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2022, a 0.4% decrease from 2021³⁴.
- 9.3.3 In 2023, UNICEF noted that 101,883 children lived in families receiving economic assistance; this indicator was defined as ‘... the number of children (under 18 years old) that leave [sic] in households and benefit from the national economic aid. The indicator is reported at national level and is

²⁹ UNESCO, [Education sector analysis: Republic of Albania](#), 2024

³⁰ Xe.com, [2.15 USD to GBP - US Dollars to British Pounds Exchange Rate](#), 18 March 2025

³¹ Xe.com, [3.65 USD to GBP - US Dollars to British Pounds Exchange Rate](#), 18 March 2025

³² Xe.com, [6.85 USD to GBP - US Dollars to British Pounds Exchange Rate](#), 18 March 2025

³³ World Bank, [Global trends in child monetary poverty... international poverty lines](#), July 2023

³⁴ Eurochild, [Children’s Realities in Europe: Progress & Gaps](#), 20 November 2024

disaggregated by geographic division.³⁵ The source did not explain what was meant by 'economic assistance.'

- 9.3.4 Albania's combined fifth and sixth periodic report under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was submitted to the Committee in November 2019 and formally published by the UN in 2021 (Albania UN submission 2021). It noted that: 'Poverty and other related socio-economic problems remain a cause for placement of children in institutions. However, the number of such cases has dropped in recent years (from 76 children in 2013, to 50 in 2017) due to measures taken to tackle poverty ...'³⁶
- 9.3.5 The United Nations concluding observations on Albania's combined fifth and sixth periodic report were published on 17 October 2023 (UNCRC report 2023). It noted that '... one third of the child population lives in poverty, with girls, young children (aged under 5) and teenagers most affected...' and that 'almost half of the population is affected by multidimensional poverty ...'³⁷ The source did not specify what was meant by 'multidimensional' poverty, nor what data was used to measure it.
- 9.3.6 The UPR report 2024 stated that 'Albania lacks data on youth poverty and the Institute of Statistics doesn't publish any data on this regard...' and that 'Albania doesn't have any programme for the alleviation of child poverty, either through cash handouts or free food in schools. Children and their families often depend for their survival to the aid given by CSOs or religious organisations, while a properly organised and sustainable state food aid is non-existent.'³⁸
- 9.3.7 The UNCRC report 2023 noted 'The Committee welcomes the measures taken to increase cash transfers for families and children, including the increase in financial aid, the adoption of a baby bonus policy and the tripling of assistance for children without parental care.'³⁹
- 9.3.8 The Albania 'baby bonus' initiative was explained in an article, originally published in Albanian, by BalkanWeb, a news source focused on the Balkan region⁴⁰ on 1 January 2025. It noted:
- 'Since 2019, the government and the Ministry of Health have continued to support the baby bonus program, which has benefited about 227 thousand families who have given birth to their children.
- 'From January 1 to November 2024, 24,061 newborns have benefited from the baby bonus. The baby bonus is benefited only by families living and contributing in Albania by supporting 40,000 ALL [Albanian Lek] for the birth of the first baby; 80,000 Lek for the second child, 120,000 Lek for the birth of the third baby.
- 'Even in the 2025 budget, a fund of 2.2 billion Lek has been allocated for the Baby Bonus Program, supporting families from its first steps.'⁴¹

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³⁵ UNICEF, [Number of children living in families receiving economic assistance](#), 2023

³⁶ UNCRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Albania...](#) 12 November 2021

³⁷ UN CRC, [Concluding Observations ... Combined 5th and 6th ...](#) (para 35), 17 October 2023

³⁸ HRHA, [UPR 4th Cycle JS5 Children and youth in Albania](#) (section 2.1), 7 April 2024

³⁹ UN CRC, [Concluding Observations ... Combined 5th and 6th ...](#) (para 35), 17 October 2023

⁴⁰ BalkanWeb, [Homepage](#), no date

⁴¹ BalkanWeb, [Minister Koçiu visits the first children of 2025: Baby bonus for 10...](#) 1 January 2025

9.4 'Street children'

9.4.1 The Albania UN submission 2021 noted:

'In 2014, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Education and Sports, signed a cooperation agreement on the Identification and Protection of Children in a Street Situation. National Action Plan [NAP] on the Identification and Protection of Children in a Street Situation 2015–2017 was implemented. SACRP [State Agency for Child Rights and Protection] monitored implementation of the NAP, coordinated the inter-sectoral interventions, and supported local stakeholders.

'... The on-site teams responsible for the identification process of children in a street situation, provision of first aid, immediate referrals to the responsible case management structures were set up in each municipality. There are 29 on-site teams active in the 30 municipalities involved. Services offered to families include: counselling, enrolment of children in school, kindergarten nursery, financial assistance, finding employment, medical care, referrals to child day care centres, placement in social care institutions according to the child's best interests.

'Several campaigns and training sessions were carried out addressing the rights and situation of children in a street situation, including the SACRP-led campaign "No Children on the Street for Work and Begging" in the city of Tirane, which aims to raise awareness among citizens of the exploitation of child labour in street situations by disseminating information sheets on reporting, available services, parental responsibility.'⁴²

9.4.2 The same source reported on official data of 'street children':

'In 2016 and 2017, 963 street children were identified and reported to SACRP. In both years, pursuant to Joint Order No.2 between the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, a considerable number of children (total 549) in a street situation or potential victims of trafficking were enrolled in school.

'Children in street situations are, under Law 18/2017, recognised as a category of children who need special protection (not considered as offenders). In cases where children are used by a family to beg on the street, the families are treated as offenders according to the Criminal Code, which considers the exploitation of a child for begging as a criminal offence.

'Several measures have been taken by the state police bodies against the economic exploitation of children, including child begging, as part of the efforts to protect street children. Number of cases of child exploitation for begging referred to the prosecution office has increased, from 4 in 2012 to 15 in 2017.'⁴³

9.4.3 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated:

'At year's end an Amber Alert system, pending since a 2020 international workshop organized by Child Right Center Albania and the Global Center for Missing and Exploited Children, had not been implemented. There was a large population of unaccompanied, displaced children who were homeless, particularly in the Romani community. Some children begged, and some

⁴² UNCRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Albania...](#) 12 November 2021

⁴³ UNCRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Albania...](#) 12 November 2021

became trafficking victims. Since the law prohibits the prosecution of children younger than 14 for burglary, criminal gangs at times used displaced children to burglarize homes. There was no specialized police unit for missing persons. Nisma ARSIS [see 13.4.1] reported the number of children on the streets had increased from the previous year, mostly in the capital.⁴⁴ The USSD HR Report 2023 did not provide an update on the implementation of the Amber Alert system⁴⁵.

- 9.4.4 However, in June 2023, the Child Rights Centre Albania (CRCA), a children-focused rights organisation in Albania⁴⁶ reported:

‘Albania got one step closer to introducing the Amber Signal for missing children. On June 13-14, the final training was held in Tirana for about 30 police officers, who came from 12 police directorates in the country, as well as child first line responders ...

‘Every year between 100-120 children and teenagers go missing or runaway in Albania. The children often find themselves in situations of danger to their lives or safety.

‘The Amber Alert is a rapid emergency notification system for missing children. It is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement, media, transport agencies and children’s institutions/organizations, working together to distribute emergency notifications of missing children. The purpose of the Amber Alert is to mobilise the communities to assist in the search and safe recovery of a missing child.’⁴⁷

- 9.4.5 At the time of writing, it was unclear from the sources consulted whether the Amber Alert system had been fully implemented (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 9.4.6 The UPR report 2024 stated that at least 2,600 children were in a ‘street situation’, mostly being used for begging⁴⁸. The report did not state what exactly was meant by ‘street situation.’

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10. Violence against children

10.1 Child abuse, including corporal punishment and sexual violence

- 10.1.1 [Article 23](#) of Law No.18/2017 on the Rights and Protection of the Child provides for protection from all forms of violence, including corporal punishment⁴⁹.
- 10.1.2 In July 2022, Parliament approved a Law on a National Register of Sex Offenders which introduced a national mechanism for monitoring persons who commit sex crimes... It aimed to provide protection for all, but placed particular emphasis on the protection of ... children ...⁵⁰.
- 10.1.3 The USSD HR Report 2023 stated: ‘... The country had a statutory rape law with the minimum age of 14 for consensual sex. The penalty for statutory rape was five to 15 years in prison. If the offense led to the death of a child

⁴⁴ USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

⁴⁵ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 22 April 2024

⁴⁶ CRCA/ECPAT Albania, [Home](#), undated

⁴⁷ CRCA, [Albania moves closer to introducing Amber Alert](#), 14 June 2023

⁴⁸ HRHA, [UPR 4th Cycle JS5 Children and youth in Albania](#) (section 2.3), 7 April 2024

⁴⁹ Govt of Albania, [Law No 18 2017 On the rights and protection of the child](#), 2017

⁵⁰ CRCA, [Albania approves National Register of Sex Offenders](#), 21 July 2022

victim, the penalty could increase to life imprisonment. The law prohibited making or distributing child pornography, which was punishable by imprisonment for three to 10 years. Possession of child pornography was illegal.⁵¹

- 10.1.4 In 2023, the organisation ‘End Corporal Punishment,’ which is hosted by the World Health Organisation and ‘acts as a catalyst for progress towards universal prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment of children’⁵², published an article which noted legal provisions regarding corporal punishment:

‘The Criminal Code, as amended in 2008 by Law No. 9859, punishes “physical or psychological abuse of the child by the person who is obliged to care for him/her” with imprisonment from three months to two years (art. 124b). The Law on Measures against Violence in Domestic Relations provides for other measures to protect the child from violence in the home, based on the best interests of the child.’⁵³

- 10.1.5 The most up-to-date version of the Criminal Code is available [here](#) in Albanian only.

- 10.1.6 Considering prevalence of violence against children, in 2021, 2,389 children identified as at risk and / or in need of protection, had cases which were managed during the year by child protection units and child protection staff⁵⁴. In 2022, Child Protection Units managed 2,496 cases of children in need of protection⁵⁵.

- 10.1.7 In June 2022, CRCA reported on preliminary data from their research into public attitudes on violence against children in Albania. The article explained:

‘The main purpose of the report is to identify the attitudes of parents, children, and members of the community towards violence against children. The study was conducted over a period of several months with a sample of 274 adults: 89% women and 11% men. Their age ranged from 18 to 65+, while most of the respondents were from the age-group 18-44 years old. Almost 64% of the respondents were living in large cities, while the rest in suburbs, small towns and rural areas.’⁵⁶

- 10.1.8 The article stated that the main findings of the research were as follows:

‘Almost 60% of respondents think that it is acceptable to spanking the child on the bottom, hitting, or slapping them on the face or other body parties [sic];

‘50% of respondents accept it when parents yelling or screaming at a child with insulting names;

‘At least 20% admit to beating their child with a belt, stick or other hard objects.

‘40% of the participants in the research are indifferent to any kind of violence against children.

‘Almost 25% of the interviewees would not report a case of violence against

⁵¹ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

⁵² End Corporal Punishment, [Country report: Albania](#) (p.6), last updated October 2023

⁵³ End Corporal Punishment, [Country report: Albania](#) (p.1), last updated October 2023

⁵⁴ UNICEF, [Number of children at risk and / or ...](#), 2021

⁵⁵ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.37), 8 November 2023

⁵⁶ CRCA, [Albania: 1 in 3 people would not report violence against children...](#), 1 June 2022

children to the authorities.

‘Almost 50% of the adults admit that they are influenced by their spouse when using violence against children, while 33% accept that they are influenced by teachers of their children.

‘Meanwhile, only 44% of people would report a case of sexual violence against a child to the police.’⁵⁷

- 10.1.9 In March 2023, UNICEF published a report entitled *The Reporting of Violence Against Children in Albania*, which examined public perceptions and practices around reporting violence against children, including corporal punishment. The research was based on a nationally representative household survey of 1,201 adults aged 18–64 and aimed to explore knowledge, attitudes and behaviours relating to violence against children⁵⁸. Considering perceptions of corporal punishment, the report noted:

‘Acceptance of corporal punishment in the home varies considerably depending upon the form the punishment takes, with spanking children on the bottom, twisting their ear, pulling their hair, and shaking them seen as the most commonly acceptable forms. There is less acceptance of emotional abuse of children as a means of discipline within the home, with refusing to speak to the child as the only commonly accepted form of emotional punishment. ...

‘... Adults are also split regarding the acceptance (and by extension perhaps the effectiveness) of more positive and non-violent approaches to discipline, with 40–59 percent feeling that it is never acceptable to use techniques such as giving children something else to do to stop the behaviour, isolating them, or imposing other measures.’⁵⁹

- 10.1.10 The same report considered the 1,201 adults’ perceptions to levels of violence against children and the reporting of it and noted:

‘The majority of adults in Albania do not think that VAC [violence against children] or domestic violence is common in the country ... In all, 27 percent felt that harsh or physical punishment of children was very common, with another 67 percent thinking it does occur...

‘... When asked about specific forms of sexual VAC, the majority of adults reported that they think sexual abuse of children, sexual harassment, stalking of girls and the sexual abuse of children by other children is either common or very common. Such perceptions have been largely informed by indirect experience or exposure to information in the public domain rather than by direct personal experience of different forms of violence. Nevertheless, adults were more likely to report personal knowledge of child maltreatment or neglect in their community than they are of the other forms of violence.’⁶⁰

- 10.1.11 In the Country Office Annual Report 2023 for Albania, UNICEF stated:

‘Persisting societal norms still pose significant barriers to early identification, speaking up, reporting, and denouncing violence in society, or advocating for remedies for child rights violations. ... While a minority of adults are aware of violence against children (VAC) cases and tend to report them, these reports

⁵⁷ CRCA, [Albania: 1 in 3 people would not report violence against children...](#), 1 June 2022

⁵⁸ UNICEF, [The Reporting of Violence Against Children in Albania](#), Executive summary, March 2023

⁵⁹ UNICEF, [The Reporting of Violence Against Children in Albania](#), Key findings, March 2023

⁶⁰ UNICEF, [The Reporting of Violence Against Children in Albania](#), Key findings, March 2023

are often not made to authorities. It is noticeable that instances of sexual harassment are less likely to be reported than other forms of VAC.’⁶¹

10.1.12 The UNCRC report 2023 noted that in Albania there was a ‘... social and cultural tolerance of [child sexual exploitation and abuse] ...’⁶²

10.1.13 In January 2024, the findings of the ‘Health Behaviour in School-aged Children – 11, 13 and 15 years old’ was published by the Faculty of Medicine and Institute of Public Health Tirana. The school-based survey was conducted in May 2022 via self-administration questionnaires of 5,454 children⁶³. Considering child abuse and maltreatment, the report noted:

‘The measurement of child abuse and maltreatment, restricted only to young people aged at least 15 years, included an assessment of lifetime and/or past-month physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Initially, young people were asked whether a parent or other adult in the household had ever hit, beaten, kicked, or physically tried to hurt them in any way.

‘Overall, about two-thirds (67%) of the young people reported having never been physically hurt by their parents or other adults in their respective households. One in four young people (26%) reported having been physically abused once or twice in their lifetime, whereas 7% had experienced physical abuse many times during their lives. There were no significant gender differences in the levels of physical abuse ...

‘The same question was asked about physical abuse regarding the frequency of occurrence in the past 12 months preceding the survey ... Overall, about 11% of the young people reported having been physically hurt by their parents or other adults in their households during the past 12 months. Similar to lifetime violence, no significant gender differences were found in the levels of physical abuse during the past 12 months ...

‘Subsequently, young people were asked whether a parent or other adult in the household had ever sworn at them, insulted them, humiliated them, threatened them, or made them felt unwanted (referred to as emotional abuse). Overall ... the prevalence of lifetime emotional abuse was about 16%, with a significant difference between boys and girls (12% vs. 19%, respectively ...

‘The same question was asked about emotional abuse regarding the frequency of occurrence in the past 12 months before the survey. The overall prevalence of past-year emotional abuse was about 10%, which was somehow higher in girls than in boys (about 12% vs. 8%, respectively; ...). Young people aged 15+ years were subsequently asked about sexual abuse in their respective contexts and household circumstances. More specifically, they were asked whether someone at least five years older and/or an adult had attempted or actually had sexual intercourse with them. The overall prevalence of sexual intercourse was about 3% during adolescent lifetime and/or in the past 12 months preceding the survey, a finding which was significantly more prevalent among boys than girls (lifetime: 5.2% vs. 2.7%, respectively ...).’⁶⁴

⁶¹ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023; Albania](#)

⁶² UN CRC, [Concluding Observations ... Combined 5th and 6th ...](#) (para 26), 17 October 2023

⁶³ FoM and Institute of Public Health Tirana, [Health Behaviour in School-aged...](#), January 2024

⁶⁴ UNICEF, [Health Behaviour in School-aged Children - 11, 13, and 15 years old...](#) January 2024

10.1.14 In May 2024, the news outlet CNA reported on prevalence data collected by the National Children's Telephone Line ALO 116-111:

'... 848,743 children, teenagers, young men and women, parents, relatives and family members have called during the 14 years of operation of ALO 116-111 to discuss and report various issues related to children.

'119,828 children, teenagers and young people, have received psycho-social counseling for various issues that have been referred to as a concern by them.

'Tirana, Durrës, Fieri, Elbasani, Vlora, Korça and Shkodra, are the cities with the highest number of cases and phone calls received, where during the period 2018-2023 the District of Tirana had a tripling of cases and phone calls received by the service, compared with the County of Durrës ranking second ...

'Girls report a higher percentage of their problems and concerns at ALO 116-111 (54%), compared to boys who make up about 46% of children and young people for the period 2009-2023.

'The two age groups that have called and reported the most problems at ALO 116-111 are the 10-12-year-old and 13-15-year-old age groups with 106,566 callers (the highest number corresponds to the 13-15-year-old age group).'⁶⁵

10.1.15 The CNA article continued:

'Throughout the years 2009-2017, referring to the cases reported for assessment and referral ... 20% of cases ... [relate to] abuse and violence (in the family, community, school) ...

'Throughout the years 2018-2023, there is a galloping increase in the cases of exploitation of children for reasons of profit (not on the Internet), where this figure goes from 2% to 41% of cases.

'... During the years 2018-2023, 41 cases of violence and sexual abuse against children, teenagers and young people up to the age of 18 were reported.

'Children report that the most unsafe environment where violence, harassment or sexual abuse has occurred is the family with 41.4% of cases (17), followed in second place by the community with 34% of cases (14) and educational institutions with 24.3 % of cases (10).

'The ... categories of problems reported by boys near ALO 116-111 [included] ... abuse and violence in school ... [and were counted in] 2,570 assessment and referral cases.

'The ... categories of problems reported by girls [included] ... abuse... exploitation for profit reasons as well as family relations issues [and were counted in] 5,589 assessment and referral cases.'⁶⁶

10.1.16 The CNA article did not include a breakdown of how many of the 848,743 callers were children, nor did it include breakdowns by problem 'type' in the statistics, which also included addictions to gambling, narcotics, internet

⁶⁵ CNA, [June 1 finds Albania with more cases of children being exploited for profit](#), 31 May 2024

⁶⁶ CNA, [June 1 finds Albania with more cases of children being exploited for profit](#), 31 May 2024

usage and bullying among children and teenagers⁶⁷.

10.1.17 A report entitled, 'Sexual violence against children in Albania,' written by B. Dine and A. Hazizaj, and supported by CRCA/ECPAT Albania (Child Rights Centre Albania/Every Child Protected Against Trafficking), published in July 2023 (Dine-Hazizaj report of July 2023), explained that data was collected from 66 victims of sexual violence who were being supported by Barnahus (an organisation which provides multiple services for child victims of sexual abuse⁶⁸) during 2019-2023. The results showed, 'In terms of gender, the highest number of cases reported in Barnahus belongs to girls with 85% of cases, while boys account for 15% of the total of all reported and treated cases. This data shows that girls are potentially many times more affected and at risk of sexual violence through peers and older adults.'⁶⁹

10.1.18 The report also noted findings on forms of violence: 'Sexual violence is one of the main forms of violence against children ... The study shows that both boys and girls experience multiple forms of violence in addition to sexual violence. Psychological violence is the most common sexual violence experienced in cases of sexual violence. Neglect is a form of violence that is only manifested in girls. In 5% of cases, these characteristics are not specified.'⁷⁰

10.1.19 The report provided information on where, and by whom, the 66 victims had been attacked:

'According to the data collected, sexual violence, in 33 cases occurred at the abuser's home ... In 21 cases sexual violence has occurred at the victim's home. These two places where the event takes place are indicators that the rapists are people close to or trusted by the family. The data also shows that in addition to sexual violence being reported to occur most often at the home of the abuser or victim, the relationship between them is equally close. In 24 cases, the abusers are the victim's friends, followed by neighbours on 16 occasions, and then close family with 10 cases.'⁷¹

10.1.20 The report concluded:

'-The age group holding the main mass of sexual violence against children is that of under-18s (peer sexual violence), which indicates a pronounced lack of sexual education for children, especially those boys in the family and at school.

'- Children living in families with high numbers of cohabiters (parents, close ones, neighbours, etc.) make up the highest number of children reporting sexual violence. This tells us that sexual violence occurs in an environment where there are many people and the degree of trust of parents is higher towards them.

'- The economic situation of the family, while not a determinant factor in sexual violence against children, still has a small impact on it. Children from low-income families report a higher proportion of cases of sexual violence

⁶⁷ CNA, [June 1 finds Albania with more cases of children being exploited for profit](#), 31 May 2024

⁶⁸ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p2), July 2023

⁶⁹ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p8), July 2023

⁷⁰ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p8), July 2023

⁷¹ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p9), July 2023

10.2 Underage marriage

- 10.2.1 The legal minimum age for marriage is 18⁷³ - but see information below about the possibility of marriage at a younger age with parental consent.
- 10.2.2 In 2021, UNICEF reported that there were 19 marriages involving a person aged 13 to 18 in Albania in 2021⁷⁴. The ages of those married nor the circumstances were not included in the report.
- 10.2.3 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated:
- ‘... During the year [2022] Nisma ARSIS reported 24 cases of early marriages of children in the Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities, many of whom were identified at the police station in the interviewing process. Terre des Hommes identified 21 minors in the towns of Levan and Driza and offered assistance and services. Two other cases were reported in Kukes girls, age 16, married to adults. The State Agency for the Protection of Children and the state police did not maintain statistics on cases of early marriage.’⁷⁵
- 10.2.4 The USSD HR report 2023 noted that, although the legal minimum age for marriage is 18:
- ‘... the law allowed for younger individuals to marry with parental consent. Authorities did not always enforce the law, and legislation did not prescribe measures to prevent child marriage. NGOs Nisma Arsis and Terre des Hommes noted underage marriages often occurred with Romani and Balkan-Egyptian children, largely due to poverty, exploitation, and marginalization.
- ‘Nisma Arsis noted an increase in early marriages, particularly in the northern part of the country, linked to young men emigrating to other countries in Europe, where parents perceived better opportunities for their daughters to lead better lives. The State Agency for the Protection of Children reported forced or early marriage was not a widespread problem, although more common in Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities.’⁷⁶
- 10.2.5 The EC’s Albania 2023 report stated:
- ‘The persistence of child marriage, driven by gender inequality, poverty and social exclusion, remains a matter of concern. The lack of official data means it is not possible to provide an accurate picture of the phenomenon, while the laws to protect minors from child marriage are generally ineffective or applied inconsistently. However, since 2021 the government has prioritised addressing child marriage in its budgeted national policy framework, and the 2021-2026 national agenda on the rights of the child contains objectives and measures to combat this practice.’⁷⁷

⁷² Dine, B. and Hazizaj, A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p11), July 2023

⁷³ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

⁷⁴ UNICEF, [Number and percentage of marriages up to 18 years old](#), 2021

⁷⁵ USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

⁷⁶ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

⁷⁷ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.37), 8 November 2023

10.3 Trafficking

10.3.1 See Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: Human trafficking](#).

11. Child labour

11.1.1 [Article 24](#) of Law No.18/2017 On the Rights and Protection of the Child protects children from economic exploitation⁷⁸.

11.1.2 In 2023, the US Department of Labor published their Worst Forms of Child Labor report covering events in 2022, (US DoL report 2022). It noted that in Albania, the minimum age for work is 16, or 18 for hazardous work⁷⁹. The report stated, '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.'⁸⁰

11.1.3 The report continued:

'Albania does not explicitly prohibit using, procuring, or offering children under age 18 for illicit activities, including in the production and trafficking of drugs. Article 129 of the Criminal Code only prohibits inducing or encouraging children under age 14 to participate in criminality. Additionally, Article 25 of the Law for the Protection of the Rights of the Child provides for protection of children against the use of alcohol and drugs, as well as the illicit production and trafficking of these substances, but does not criminalize inducing a child to participate in these acts.'⁸¹

11.1.4 Further information about relevant laws and international conventions ratified is available in the [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) report for 2022 (section II).

11.1.5 UNICEF reported that in 2021, 128 child labourers were reported by the Labour Inspectorate⁸².

11.1.6 The US DoL report 2022 stated that in 2022, 4.6% of children aged 5 to 14 were working, which equated to 23,665 children⁸³.

11.1.7 The same report noted that '... 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 ... '⁸⁴

11.1.8 The report added that 87.5% of working children worked in agriculture, 9.6% in services (this includes begging, various types of work on the street, and employment in wholesale/retail, hotels, restaurants, and call centres) and 2.9% in industry (this includes scavenging near mining sites, construction

⁷⁸ Govt of Albania, [Law No 18 2017 On the rights and protection of the child](#), 2017

⁷⁹ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section II), 26 September 2023

⁸⁰ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section II), 26 September 2023

⁸¹ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section II), 26 September 2023

⁸² UNICEF, [Number of child labourers reported by the Labour Inspectorate, 2021](#)

⁸³ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section I), 26 September 2023

⁸⁴ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#), 26 September 2023

and other activities)⁸⁵.

- 11.1.9 The US DoL report 2022 stated that in 2022, Albania made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor⁸⁶ and that 'In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Albania took actions to address child labor. However, gaps exist within the authority of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including lack of authority to inspect informal work locations such as private farms and unregistered businesses.'⁸⁷
- 11.1.10 The same report added that 'The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including coordination among agencies ... Coordination between SILSS [State Inspectorate for Labor and Social Services] and the Albanian State Police has traditionally been sporadic.'⁸⁸
- 11.1.11 Considering the process of identification and protection of children found to be working, the same report further noted, '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 (CPUs), which can then connect the child to social services.'⁸⁹
- 11.1.12 The US DoL further noted that 'The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor'⁹⁰ and 'In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address the problem in all sectors.'⁹¹
- 11.1.13 In February 2022, Education International (EI), a 'Global Union Federation that brings together organisations of teachers and other education employees from across the world,' representing '... more than 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories ...',⁹² stated:
- 'The Albanian trade unions FSASH and SPASH have been involved in projects to combat child labour since 2002, with the support of international partners. More than 500 trade union leaders and 6,000 teachers have been trained in preventing dropping-out and in reintegrating former child labourers into school. The unions estimate that these efforts have resulted in more than 2,800 children returning to school and another 6,600 not dropping out.
- 'The trade union training covers the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and national legislation on child labour. It is also very practical: it strengthens teachers' skills to identify and support vulnerable children, those

⁸⁵ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section I), 26 September 2023

⁸⁶ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#), 26 September 2023

⁸⁷ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section III), 26 September 2023

⁸⁸ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section IV), 26 September 2023

⁸⁹ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section III), 26 September 2023

⁹⁰ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section V), 26 September 2023

⁹¹ US DoL, [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Albania](#) (section VI), 26 September 2023

⁹² EI, [Who we are](#), no date

most at risk of dropping out of school. It also covers inclusive education techniques, including through art, culture and sport.

‘When a school is newly involved in an FSASH and SPASH project, a child monitoring group is set up within the school. It consists of the head teacher, a union representative, teachers, student representatives and parents. They identify children who are dropping out of school in the school’s catchment area and students who are at risk of dropping out ...

‘... Despite school closures due to the pandemic, 32 of the 61 children identified as child labourers were able to return to school in the two project schools in 2019-2021, and 84 of the 104 students identified as being at risk of dropping out are now attending classes regularly. Twenty-five new trade union trainers on child labour have also been trained across the country, and child labour awareness materials have been printed widely by FSASH and SPASH.’⁹³

11.1.14 Further information about the project is available [here](#).

11.1.15 In the Albania 2023 report, the EC stated ‘On child labour, the system for monitoring child labour and other forms of exploitation, and the coordination of law enforcement between the Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights and the Labour Inspectorate, is weak.’⁹⁴

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12. LGBT+ children

12.1.1 For information on the situation for members of the LGBT+ community in Albania, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: Sexual orientation and gender identity and expression](#).

12.1.2 On 19 May 2023, Pink Embassy reported:

‘PINK Embassy in partnership with CRCA/ECPAT Albania and ALO 116-111 [telephone helpline for children] launched today the joint campaign “Safe Schools for LGBTI children and teenagers”. The campaign is supported by the Council of Europe and the European Union and aims to promote the establishment of safe spaces and environments in schools and universities, for LGBTI children and youth” ...

‘The National Campaign “Safe Schools for LGBTI Children and Youth” focuses on two main elements. The first one is the development of informative and awareness-raising materials for parents, LGBTI youth and teachers regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, questions related to sexuality and the coming out process. The brochures will contain practical information on where parents, teachers, children, and young people can find more information and support.

‘While the second element of the campaign is the awareness of young people in universities, such as students and young professionals on LGBTI rights. The campaign has planned to hold information sessions and lectures at several public universities, especially in faculties where young people study to become future teachers, social workers or lawyers, professions that,

⁹³ EI, [...success in combating child labour](#), published 4 February 2022, updated 17 June 2024

⁹⁴ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.100), 8 November 2023

due to public services, are more in contact with LGBTI persons.’⁹⁵

12.1.3 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published an article on 28 November 2024 in which it considered LGBTI equality in Albania. The article did not specify the methodology or the sample size upon which its findings were based, but it noted that ‘In schools, 54% of LGBTI students face discrimination from peers, and 25% experience bias from teaching staff’⁹⁶.

12.1.4 In February 2024, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) Europe, a LGBTI-rights non-governmental organisation⁹⁷ published their annual review of the human rights situation of LGBTI persons in Albania, covering the period of January to December 2023. It noted:

‘Aleanca’s annual survey found that 30% of LGBTI respondents were unable to complete compulsory education because of discrimination and economic challenges. 63% believe teachers and principals are not well informed on LGBTI issues despite training carried out in the frame of the National Action Plan. 262 people participated in the survey, which has not been publicly published. CSOs [civil society organisations] continued to advocate for more inclusive school curricula, particularly in relation to sex education. Aleanca reimbursed university fees and vocational courses for 15 cases.

‘PINK Embassy and CRCA/ECPAT Albania followed up on over ten cases of bullying of LGBTI minors, revealing that public schools lacked protocols for handling SOGI-based violence or discrimination.

‘The Albanian National Child Helpline (ALO 116-1110) reported a 30% increase in calls from LGBTI children reporting peer bullying and violence. One adolescent attempted suicide due to continuous bullying without adequate protection.’⁹⁸

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13. Childcare and protection

13.1 Government support and protection

13.1.1 See the [Law No.18/2017 On the Rights and Protection of the Child](#) for all relevant legislation on child protection.

13.1.2 Articles 46 – 52 of the [Law No.18/2017 On the Rights and Protection of the Child](#) establish the framework for child protection services, detailing the necessary structures and personnel at the municipal level to support and safeguard children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence⁹⁹.

13.1.3 In the Country Profile of 2023, Eurochild stated:

‘Albania has made remarkable efforts [sic] in recent years to establish the fundamental pillars for the Child Protection System. The core legislative and policy framework around child protection was significantly [sic] reinforced in 2017, with the adoption of the new Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child and the Criminal Justice for Children Code. The process is aligned with

⁹⁵ Pink Embassy, [PINK Embassy launches the national campaign ...](#), 19 May 2023

⁹⁶ UNDP, [UN Free and Equal in Albania: The Fight for LGBTI Equality](#), 28 November 2024

⁹⁷ ILGA, [Who we are](#), undated

⁹⁸ ILGA Europe, [Annual review of the human rights situation of lesbian, gay...](#) February 2024

⁹⁹ Govt of Albania, [Law No 18 2017 On the rights and protection of the child](#), 2017

an approach to gradually build a system of child protection, focused on addressing root causes of children's vulnerability, rather than symptoms alone, and working across different [sic] sectors working with children.'¹⁰⁰

- 13.1.4 On 30 June 2023, Albania submitted a report to the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), pursuant to the CoE's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, published on 24 July 2023 (GREVIO report 2023). The report set out measures ensuring a rapid court response in cases involving children and Emergency Barring Orders (EBO), with decisions made within 24 hours. It also highlighted protection measures for children at risk of violence, and provisions for the temporary removal of parental responsibility and alternative care when in the child's best interest¹⁰¹.

- 13.1.5 The GREVIO report 2023 stated:

'In recent years, two new "One-stop centres" services have been set up in Albania at the premises of the regional hospitals in Fier and Shkodër for minor girls and boys who are victims of sexual violence. Placing the centres in close proximity to hospital facilities makes it possible for children to receive rapid, integrated 24-hour treatment as well as healthcare services, including trauma-specific interventions, counselling and therapy. Parents of children who have been sexually abused are also offered support by these centres in case of a crisis.

'The centres offer: first aid, emergency care; support during a crisis; specialized medical support and counselling; specialized psychological counselling and therapeutic intervention; safe transportation; referral of the case to relevant institutions.

'UNICEF Albania has supported the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in the adaptation of hospital premises, where this new service model is offered, and it has also contributed to the development of work standards and protocols for the professionals who are part of the "One-Stop Centres" teams.'¹⁰²

- 13.1.6 The Albania UN submission 2021 explained assistance available to victims of crime who are minors:

'In January 2016, the Office of Victims' Assistance was established ... These coordinators provide assistance and counselling to victims with a special focus on minors ...

'The Prosecution Office has taken measures so that the victims of violence in criminal proceedings are informed about their rights at every stage of the criminal process ... Pursuant to the law and general instructions mentioned above, the prosecuting body (prosecutor or judicial police) and victims' coordinators regularly inform all victims about their rights without any discrimination based on age, race, language, religion, gender and sexual orientation. Victims are assisted to use their rights and, where appropriate, are referred to the necessary service providers established to provide for their rights and protection. The Prosecution Office has attached special

¹⁰⁰ Eurochild, [Albania – 2023 Country Profile](#), 24 January 2024

¹⁰¹ Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.53), 24 July 2023

¹⁰² Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.52), 24 July 2023

importance to the continuous training of victim coordinators in this field.

‘Additionally, other measures have been taken such as provision of trainings by the School of Magistrates and other trainings supported by national and international organizations designed to increase the capacities of prosecutors, judicial police officers (JPOs), and victim coordinators ... The Prosecutor’s Office has attached great importance to institutional cooperation with local and international actors.’¹⁰³

- 13.1.7 The Dine-Hazizaj report of July 2023 considered the protection available to child victims of sexual violence and noted that ‘The legal framework guarantees the right of victims of sexual violence to free social and legal services, whenever possible.’¹⁰⁴
- 13.1.8 The report further noted that, ‘Over the last two years, there has been an increase in awareness of law enforcement and justice institutions regarding the prosecution of sexual crimes ... The latest data from the Institute of Statistics show a slight increase in prosecution ...’¹⁰⁵
- 13.1.9 The Dine-Hazizaj report published in July 2023 provided an analysis of support received by 66 child victims of sexual violence. It stated: ‘While waiting for the confirmation of sexual violence against a child, various service sectors intervene, including the social services sector providing services in over 64 cases, followed by police services with 51% of cases, medical, legal / judicial services, and mental health services. In two cases no psychosocial services have been provided.’¹⁰⁶
- 13.1.10 The report further noted that legal action was taken in approximately 50% of cases. This included:
- Prosecution of the perpetrator¹⁰⁷;
 - Court orders to protect the child¹⁰⁸;
 - Implementation of immediate protection procedures¹⁰⁹.
- 13.1.11 In the Albania 2023 Report, the EC stated, ‘The national strategy for cybersecurity and its 2020-2025 action plan have been adopted. The strategy includes a chapter on the protection of children online as a priority for the country. Five key pillars in this chapter look at tackling specific areas of their protection online, including capacities for the investigation and prosecution of crimes against children committed over the internet, which remain a major problem.’¹¹⁰
- 13.1.12 The report continued:
- ‘The 2021-2026 national agenda on the rights of the child (NARC) set out the strategic framework, in line with the national and international commitments in this area. Elimination of all forms of violence and child protection, including online is one of the four strategic goals of the national agenda. The

¹⁰³ Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.58), 24 July 2023

¹⁰⁴ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p4), July 2023

¹⁰⁵ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p5), July 2023

¹⁰⁶ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p10), July 2023

¹⁰⁷ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p10), July 2023

¹⁰⁸ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p10), July 2023

¹⁰⁹ Dine,B. and Hazizaj,A, [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p10), July 2023

¹¹⁰ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.34), 8 November 2023

systematic collection of reliable and comparable data disaggregated by age and sex is essential for evidence-based policy-making and for effective protection of children.’¹¹¹

- 13.1.13 The USSD HR Report 2022 noted: ‘Authorities generally enforced laws against rape and sexual exploitation of minors effectively, but NGOs reported that they rarely enforced laws prohibiting child pornography and the online sexual exploitation of children.’¹¹²
- 13.1.14 However, the USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘... government institutions reported launching several initiatives to address surging rates of online child sexual exploitation.’¹¹³
- 13.1.15 The Albania UN submission 2021 stated that, at the local level, Child Protection Units (CPUs) and Child Protection Workers (CPWs) were:
‘... responsible for the coordination and provision of child protection services and case management, in cooperation with a number of stakeholders from various sectors operating at the local level. In every municipality and administrative unit with more than 3,000 children, an ad hoc Cross-sectoral Technical Group (CTG) for addressing child protection cases is established, composed of representatives from the police, social services, education, health and justice, NGOs, other relevant individuals with knowledge of the situation for children.’¹¹⁴
- 13.1.16 The UNICEF report 2021 noted that ‘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 ... law requires all child protection workers to have a background in social work but currently only 78 out of 236 (33%) have such experience.’¹¹⁵ The EC’s Albania 2023 Report stated, ‘The number of child protection workers (241 in all 61 municipalities) remains far below the total number needed.’¹¹⁶
- 13.1.17 In October 2022, Home Office officials conducted a fact-finding mission (HO FFM 2022) to Albania to gather information from a range of sources about human trafficking of men and women, and the situation for single women/mothers¹¹⁷. An official from the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection told the HO FFM 2022 team 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.’¹¹⁸
- 13.1.18 In the Country Office Annual Report 2023 for Albania, UNICEF stated, ‘[UNICEF’s] support to the [Government of Albania] in ensuring an adequate and capacitated social protection workforce continued. UNICEF supported

¹¹¹ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.37), 8 November 2023

¹¹² USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

¹¹³ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

¹¹⁴ UN CRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 27), 15 February 2021

¹¹⁵ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p.48), June 2021

¹¹⁶ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.38), 8 November 2023

¹¹⁷ Home Office, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#), December 2022

¹¹⁸ Home Office, [Report of a FFM, October 2022](#) (p.85), December 2022

the Order of Social Workers to license over 500 social workers.’¹¹⁹

13.1.19 The GREVIO report 2023 stated:

‘If violence is reported to the child protection worker, who is part of the child protection units at municipality level, the case management steps are followed in accordance with the legislation in force. On a case-by-case basis, as required by the court, the child protection officer performs the necessary assessments and is at the disposal of the judicial process. In the event that children are abused by both parents, they request from the court to protect them and take measures to place them in custody. In the course of the procedures for the execution of court decisions on divorces/exercise of parental responsibility/awarding custody, visitation rights where violence has been identified are carried out in the presence of a child protection officer.’¹²⁰

13.1.20 The GREVIO report 2023 stated:

‘Abused children can call ALO 116111, which is a specialized, free 24/7 service provided by a CSO and also supported by the state budget. ALO 116111 received 2,212 calls and referred 1,034 cases in 2018; 4,765 calls and 979 referred cases in 2019, as well as 34,912 calls and 983 referred cases of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and bullying reported to this service and referred to the relevant institutions in 2020. In 3,570 calls children received psycho-social support from an online counsellor.’¹²¹

13.1.21 Considering the role of the police, the GREVIO report 2023 noted: ‘In situations of violence where children are involved, the police officer, in cooperation with the Local Domestic Violence Coordinator/social worker and the child protection worker, performs a risk assessment, which serves as important evidence in court proceedings to determine not only the necessary protective measures but also the custody and visitation rights.’¹²²

13.1.22 Considering the role of courts in circumstances of child abuse, the same report considered the role of courts in child protection. The law outlines protective measures for victims, including the removal of perpetrators from the residence, restrictions on contact with the victim and their family, and placement of victims and children in shelters. It also allows for temporary removal of parental responsibility, supervision of visitation, and monitoring of court decisions through social services. A visitation schedule is determined by the court, with supervised visits by experts¹²³.

13.1.23 Considering the state of Albania’s efforts in training officials in child protection, the charity Terre des Hommes reported that 298 professionals were trained working in the child protection and justice systems in 2023¹²⁴.

13.1.24 In the Country Office Annual Report 2023, UNICEF stated that, with UNICEF support, 47 child protection workers had received on-the-job coaching on case management referral pathways¹²⁵.

13.1.25 UNICEF continued: ‘Training workshops improved the capacities of 119 (55

¹¹⁹ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023; Albania](#)

¹²⁰ Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.54), 24 July 2023

¹²¹ Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.48), 24 July 2023

¹²² Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.54), 24 July 2023

¹²³ Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.55), 24 July 2023

¹²⁴ Terre des Hommes, [About Us](#), no date

¹²⁵ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023; Albania](#)

male) police and other professionals in applying the Criminal Justice for Children Code in three municipalities ... Additionally, UNICEF provided training for child-friendly forensic interviews to five training institutions (20 participants; 2 male), following the revision of the training manual.¹²⁶

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13.2 Effectiveness of child protection

- 13.2.1 In the report, National Agenda on the Rights of the Child (NARC) 2021-2026, prepared on behalf of the Albanian Government by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, it states that 'Child protection services have shown problems in the handling of many forms of violence against children, beginning with early identification, referral, and treatment. Children from the poorest groups of the population, children with disabilities, children in social care institutions, LGBTI teenagers, migrant or refugee children, as well as children from Roma and Egyptian communities, are all at increased risk of various forms of violence, including bullying, stigma, abuse, and trafficking. According to administrative police data from 2017, children accounted for 61 percent (70 children) of all cases of sexual abuse in Albania.'¹²⁷
- 13.2.2 The UNICEF report 2021 stated that '... [a] lack of resources continues to impede development of a comprehensive, quality, child protection system.'¹²⁸
- 13.2.3 The report continued:
'The child protection structure continues to suffer from a lack of consistent investment in capacities ... 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 services in Albania.'¹²⁹
- 13.2.4 In the Country Office Annual Report 2023 for Albania, UNICEF stated, 'Despite violence towards women and children remaining a persistent concern in Albania, children's access to a continuum of integrated child protection services, especially for survivors of violence, abuse, and exploitation, remained challenging in 2023.'¹³⁰
- 13.2.5 The EC's Albania 2023 Report stated, 'Further efforts are needed to ensure an adequate and systematic response to all types of violence against children.'¹³¹
- 13.2.6 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted, 'NGO Terre des Hommes reported local child protection mechanisms were weak, with frontline workers lacking support, budget, transportation, offices, and professional capacity.'¹³²

¹²⁶ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023; Albania](#)

¹²⁷ MHSP, [National Agenda on the Rights of the Child, 2021 - 2026](#) (page 17), January 2022

¹²⁸ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p.48), June 2021

¹²⁹ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p.48), June 2021

¹³⁰ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023; Albania](#)

¹³¹ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.38), 8 November 2023

¹³² USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

- 13.2.7 The UN CRC report 2023 opined that it was ‘seriously concerned’ about ‘... the failure to implement effective procedures to prevent, identify, report and respond to violence against children in a child-sensitive manner, including to provide victim support and access to remedies; ...’¹³³
- 13.2.8 The same reported noted concern about: ‘... Underfunded... protection and welfare services; ... [and] The insufficient number of staff working in the child protection system and in the provision of government services, including in the ... welfare [sector].’¹³⁴
- 13.2.9 The UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW) published Concluding Observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania on 14 November 2023. These Observations noted ‘Reports that family court judges often fail to take domestic violence into account in deciding on child custody and visitation rights in divorce cases and unnecessarily interrogate children who have already testified before a social worker and, in some cases, force the child to be in unprotected contact with the violent parent...’¹³⁵
- 13.2.10 On 11 September 2023, Human Rights in Democracy Centre (‘a non-profit and non-religious organization whose mission is to work for the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms in Albania’¹³⁶) and Rosalyn Park (a lawyer with experience in the area of domestic violence against women¹³⁷) submitted a joint shadow report for the 86th Session of UN CEDAW (9 October - 27 October 2023). This report stated:
- ‘Courts have issued contradictory orders concerning minors that have placed them at greater risk for further violence, such as permitting sleepovers with the abusive parent. Only 57% of abused children have been included in Protection Orders together with their family members who requested IPO/Pos [interim protection order/protection order]. Although the law provides protection for minors who were victims of direct or assisted violence in the 43% for whom orders were not issued, only in 14% of these cases were the children assisted by a psychologist during the judicial process. The study also identified flagrant violations of the law where minor victims of domestic violence were not protected by a lawyer.’¹³⁸
- 13.2.11 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that the government enforced the law on criminalising abuse and neglect effectively¹³⁹. The report further noted, ‘Authorities generally enforced laws against rape and sexual exploitation of children effectively, but NGOs reported the government rarely enforced laws prohibiting child pornography and the online sexual exploitation of children.’¹⁴⁰
- 13.2.12 The UN CRC report 2023 opined that there was ‘... insufficient implementation of the last two National Agendas for Child Rights and Protection and of other laws and policies relating to the protection of children

¹³³ UN CRC, [Concluding Observations ... Combined 5th and 6th ...](#) (para 26), 17 October 2023

¹³⁴ UN CRC, [Concluding Observations ... Combined 5th and 6th ...](#) (para 35), 17 October 2023

¹³⁵ UN CEDAW, [Concluding observations ... fifth periodic report...](#) (para 47(c)), 14 November 2023

¹³⁶ HRDC, [...Shadow Report ... Elimination... Discrimination against Women](#), 11 September 2023

¹³⁷ HRDC, [...Shadow Report ... Elimination... Discrimination against Women](#), 11 September 2023

¹³⁸ HRDC, [...Shadow Report ... Elimination... Discrimination against Women](#), 11 September 2023

¹³⁹ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

¹⁴⁰ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

from violence ...¹⁴¹

13.2.13 Considering the legal framework guaranteeing victims of sexual violence free social and legal services, the Dine-Hazizaj report of July 2023 noted:

‘... most municipalities do not have specialized services for this purpose, [so] providing services becomes difficult if not impossible. This difficulty is added to the fact that municipalities have very limited budgets for the provision of social care services, while contracting services of NGOs that provide specialized services to victims of sexual violence is almost impossible because there is no legal basis that would make this possible. This catch-22 situation, despite the principle that victim support is and should be at the center of all interventions, becomes impossible to implement and, most victims either receive very limited services or receive no service that suits their situation.’¹⁴²

13.2.14 In May 2024, the news outlet CNA reported on the ALO 116-111 helpline for children, and noted that ‘... it has been evaluated by the International Children's Line (CHI) as one of the best quality lines in the region in terms of service provision and support for children and young people.’¹⁴³

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13.3 Avenues of redress

13.3.1 Considering avenues of redress, in 2021, 8 valid complaints for children were handled by the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination¹⁴⁴. In the same year, 226 complaints, requests, notifications and cases initiated, were handled by the People's Advocate on the rights and protection of the child¹⁴⁵.

13.3.2 The UNICEF report of June 2021 stated:

‘In 2014, the Law on the Ombudsperson was amended, establishing a Section for Children's Rights Protection and Promotion within the institution of the People's Advocate, comprising one Commissioner for Children's Rights Protection and Promotion and three assistant commissioners. The Strategic Plan 2019–2022 of the institution has placed children as a priority, especially those who belong to vulnerable groups.

‘In 2020, Parliament approved amendments to the Anti-discrimination Law that improve the effectiveness of the work of Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination processes, including children's participation and access to the remedies provided by the Commissioner. However, the Ombudsperson, the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination and other independent institutions still face poor implementation of their recommendations by the Albanian administration. It is necessary to strengthen the capacities of these institutions in handling cases of human rights violations, especially adequate budgeting to fulfil their functions.’¹⁴⁶

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¹⁴¹ UN CRC, [Concluding Observations ... Combined 5th and 6th ...](#) (para 26), 17 October 2023

¹⁴² Dine, B. and Hazizaj, A., [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p4), July 2023

¹⁴³ CNA, [June 1 finds Albania with more cases of children being exploited for profit](#), 31 May 2024

¹⁴⁴ The People's Advocate, [... complaints, requests, notifications ... cases initiated...](#), 2021

¹⁴⁵ UNICEF, [... complaints, ... People's Advocate on the rights and protection of the child](#), 2021

¹⁴⁶ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p.76), June 2021

13.4 Non-governmental organisation (NGO) support

13.4.1 The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of the organisations that provide support and accommodation to vulnerable children:

- [Barnahus Albania](#), established by Child Rights Centre Albania/Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (CRCA/ECPAT), works to prevent sexual violence against children and provides integrated services. It offers free trauma care, legal aid, case management, and multi-disciplinary support. The centre also raises awareness, trains professionals, and advocates for better child protection systems. Since Barnahus Albania opened, over 66 cases of children and adolescents, almost 90 percent of them, girls, have been treated and received protection and care from the service¹⁴⁷.
- [Hope for the Future](#) was founded in November 1999 to provide reintegration services to returnees and internal migrants. Its services include information and counseling about the general situation in Albania, job brokering, training courses, capacity building and financial support for small businesses, psychological and legal counseling as well as financial aid.
- [Nisma-ARSIS](#) provides support and shelter to children and young people facing poverty, neglect, victimization, conflict, discrimination, exploitation, isolation, racism, legal troubles, lack of parental care, homelessness, and other challenging circumstances. Their services are accessible in Tirana, Durrës, Shkodra, Korça, Cërrik, Devoll, Vlora and Saranda Municipalities and also work with stakeholders, including Child Protection Units, social workers, teachers and the police to support and further appropriate services for children.
- [Save the Children](#) focuses on child protection, education, and family support. Save the Children's 2022-2024 Child Protection Programme aims to strengthen child protection systems, promote inclusive services, and support children, youth, and communities against violence which targets over 5,000 beneficiaries in multiple Albanian municipalities. The organisation is also piloting foster care to support children in residential institutions.
- [SOS Children's Villages Albania](#), active since 1995, provides family-like care, strengthens families, and advocates for child rights. Its projects include alternative care, support for vulnerable families, and reintegration of unaccompanied children returning to Albania, offering temporary shelter and coordinated care with state agencies. According to their website, there are 13 families where children can be looked after by SOS mothers.
- [Terre des Hommes](#), a Swiss charity, operates in Albania to further children's rights and protection and juvenile justice.
- [UNICEF Albania](#) works nationwide, including in Shkodra and Lezha, to support vulnerable children through social protection, education, child rights monitoring, and justice reform. It helps align national laws with international treaties, promotes positive social change, and ensures

¹⁴⁷ Dine, B. and Hazizaj, A., [Sexual Violence against children in Albania...](#) (p5), July 2023

children's best interests are prioritised.

- 13.4.2 The charity Nisma-ARSIS stated in undated information that it provides 'temporary housing and food services for young people without home or in major difficulty'¹⁴⁸ The charity also stated that it supports children at immediate risk with 'The Service of Safe Emergency Shelter in Albania 24/7 days per week.'¹⁴⁹

'Nisma runs the only Emergency Shelter for children at high risk in Albania, including immediate intervention in the field, safe transportation and support in a police station after working hours, weekends, and holidays.

'The emergency safe accommodation (Shelter) service for 11 years has preceded the need for a positive, sustainable practice in the child protection system, providing social services for children and their families (for children at high risk (victims of all forms of abuse, violence, neglect, trafficking, exploitation, without parental care, in contact with the law and foreign unaccompanied and separated children). It also enhanced the development of local and regional cooperation networks. Its aim is to protect and treat children unaccompanied in need of immediate protection and assistance due to life-threatening situations and guarantee their rights by providing immediate accommodation, food and a protected environment.'¹⁵⁰

- 13.4.3 The same charity stated that it provided the following assistance to help young people to prepare for employment: 'assessment, orientation, basic skills development (fighting illiteracy), placements in vocational training programs, job search, support of work placements, productive workshops and social enterprise initiatives.'¹⁵¹
- 13.4.4 The charity stated that it provided 'Coaching for employment (C4E) providing 9 months coaching for vulnerable youth (like returnees, youth from Roma and Egyptian communities, youth without parental care, youth in the scheme of the economic aid, etc)' ¹⁵² The charity did not specify whether 'returnees' were returning asylum-seekers or migrants.

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13.5 Public care institutions

- 13.5.1 Article 31 of Law no.18/2017 outlined the provisions for alternative care, prioritizing placement in a family environment, whether with extended family, foster care, or, if necessary, a residential care institution for the shortest duration¹⁵³.
- 13.5.2 Law 18/2017 and Law 121/2016 (Social Care Services) provide for alternative care services for children without parental care, such as with a relative, foster family, residential care institution, or temporary shelter^{154 155}.
- 13.5.3 Under the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 839/2014, age eligibility for placement in residential institutions increased from 15 years to

¹⁴⁸ Nisma-ARSIS, [Child protection and child rights](#), no date

¹⁴⁹ Nisma-ARSIS, [Child protection and child rights](#), no date

¹⁵⁰ Nisma-ARSIS, [Emergency Response](#), no date

¹⁵¹ Nisma-ARSIS, [Child protection and child rights](#), no date

¹⁵² Nisma-ARSIS, [Child protection and child rights](#), no date

¹⁵³ Govt of Albania, [Law No 18 2017 On the rights and protection of the child](#), 2017

¹⁵⁴ Albania, [Law No. 18/2017 on the Rights and Protection of the Child](#) (Article 57), 23 Feb 2017

¹⁵⁵ Albania, [Law No. 121/2016 on Social Care Services](#) (Articles 8, 17, 24), 24 November 2016

18 years¹⁵⁶. Under DCM No. 106/2017, children are placed in institutions suitable for age categories 0-5, 6-15 and 16-18 years¹⁵⁷.

- 13.5.4 The joint NGO report submitted in September 2023 to the Committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women noted:

‘Law No. 22/2018 “On Social Housing” defines “specialized housing” as housing where local government units serve one or more of the following:

‘... children who are without parental care or have been taken under protection by state institutions and who are preparing to move to independent life, minors from 14-18 years of age or youth aged 18-21, after release or completion of criminal justice programs ...

‘Although the 2018 law stipulates the creation of specialized housing, in reality, this service is still not offered.’¹⁵⁸

- 13.5.5 A 2020 report on social services in Albania noted there were 3 state-run residential homes for children without parental care in the Municipality of Shkoder: ‘Two of the residential home care for children, those for the age of 0-3 years old and 6-15 years old are under the administration of the Municipality of Shkoder (buildings and staff), while the residential home care for children aged 16-18 is a new structure created (September-October 2018) and administered by the State Social Service.’¹⁵⁹

- 13.5.6 The report also provided details of privately-run residential services in Shkoder: ‘There are four private residential services for children without family. The most of these services are provided by religiously [sic] organizations, mainly Catholic, such as the Ravasco Family House, the Family Home, the Sister Home of Mother Teresa, and “Hope” Project.’¹⁶⁰

- 13.5.7 The report also noted the residential services available for children without parental care in Tirana, including 2 state-run (for 0-3 and 6-18 years of age respectively) and 4 privately-run facilities¹⁶¹.

- 13.5.8 A UNICEF report published in 2021 stated that ‘In 2019, 218 children were residing in the nine public care institutions, three of which operate under SSS and six are co-managed by MHSP and LGUs. The dual-ownership model apparently creates some difficulties in terms of daily management, particularly regarding staff selection, appointment accountability and performance management. There are also 69 children with disabilities placed in five public development centres, two reporting directly to SSS and the others, jointly managed.’¹⁶²

- 13.5.9 The report also noted that a ‘needs assessment found that institutions do not provide a suitable environment for children’s psychological and emotional development and that about 70 percent of children in them display developmental delays, caused by environmental factors.’¹⁶³

- 13.5.10 Referring to Albania’s Deinstitutionalization Plan, UNICEF reported in 2021

¹⁵⁶ UN CRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 51), 15 February 2021

¹⁵⁷ UN CRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 27), 15 February 2021

¹⁵⁸ HRDC, [...Shadow Report ... Elimination... Discrimination against Women](#), 11 September 2023

¹⁵⁹ Project Task, [Social Services in Albania: Background and State of the Art](#) (p.69), 2020

¹⁶⁰ Project Task, [Social Services in Albania: Background and State of the Art](#) (p.97), 2020

¹⁶¹ Project Task, [Social Services in Albania: Background and State of the Art](#) (p.60-62), 2020

¹⁶² UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#), June 2021

¹⁶³ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#), June 2021

that the core aim for children in care was to ‘... move provision away from residential institutions into day care services and other effective, community-based alternatives. Its focus is on integrating children into families, either their own or through fostering, and involving appropriate community-based services and wider social structures...’¹⁶⁴ The report added that this would ‘... accelerate full and irreversible closure of residential institutions.’¹⁶⁵

13.5.11 The USSD HR Report 2022 referred to the assessment of children resident in public residential institutions from 2021 to 2022, which was carried out by Nisma, ARSIS, and UNICEF: ‘Following the assessment, the National Plan of De-institutionalization was integrated in the 2021-2023 Social Fund Program, committing the government to establish and financially support alternative childcare services in the Vlora and Korça municipalities.’¹⁶⁶

13.5.12 The Albania UN submission 2021 noted that there were 9 residential state care institutions for children¹⁶⁷. There were 18 privately-run children’s homes^{168 169}.

13.5.13 The UNICEF 2021 report described a lack of foster care:

‘The advantages of a family environment over other models of care have been amply demonstrated over many decades but still kinship foster placements predominate. No [local government units] have been able to compile and approve an inclusive list of foster families and the lack of community-based care services in most [sic] leaves little real child-friendly options available to children in need of alternative care. The financing mechanism is based on the concept that foster care is a charity and not a job. As a result, allocations are only made for children in care but not for remuneration, training and supervision of the foster care families and the related workforce to support foster care families. There is a belief that foster care is culturally alien to Albanian culture and traditions, that it is mainly practiced by foreigners in the country, and that very few people are willing to nurture other people’s children, including those with disabilities.’¹⁷⁰

13.5.14 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated that, ‘Children usually remained in institutions for long periods of time due to legal ambiguities and lengthy procedures regarding child custody.’¹⁷¹

13.5.15 The USSD HR Report 2022 reported that

‘During the year Nisma, ARSIS, and UNICEF completed an assessment of children resident in public residential institutions from 2021-2022. The assessment of 68 children in four public institutions found that more than two-thirds of institutionalized children had living biological families and parents and the reasons for separation from their families were often related to abuse, mistreatment, exploitation, abandonment, or economic hardship.’¹⁷²

¹⁶⁴ UNICEF, [Albania Child Notice 2021](#) (p.61, para 151), 2021

¹⁶⁵ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p.55), June 2021

¹⁶⁶ USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

¹⁶⁷ UN CRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 33), 15 February 2021

¹⁶⁸ UN CRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 150), 15 February 2021

¹⁶⁹ UNICEF, [Albania Child Notice 2021](#) (p.62, para 153), 2021

¹⁷⁰ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p.54), June 2021

¹⁷¹ USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

¹⁷² USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

13.5.16 The Albania UN submission 2021 noted:

‘Measures to prepare children for independent life after leaving a residential institution are integrated into the work of the SCIs [social care institutions]. This includes supporting children in accessing services and benefits (housing programmes, scholarships for placement in high-school dormitories) and seeking employment (job placement registration, matching or developing their skills with businesses and employers). When children have been unable to return to their families on reaching the age of 18 years, they are accommodated in semi-independent youth centres or apartments provided by NGOs. A CPW [Child Protection Worker] monitors the child after they leave the residential institution.’¹⁷³

13.5.17 In the same report, the Government of Albania referred to Law 22/2018 On Social Housing, which ‘... provides for the right of children without parental care, or those in residential institutions, who are preparing to move to an independent life, those in conflict with the law, following their release from prison, or after completion of a programme of alternative measures, who are in need of housing.’¹⁷⁴

13.5.18 The USSD HR Report 2023 stated, ‘The Ministry of Health and Social Protection reported 193 children in residential care institutions as of November.’¹⁷⁵

13.5.19 In the Country Office Annual Report 2023 for Albania, UNICEF stated, ‘While the government remained committed to the de-institutionalization of children by transforming residential care institutions, approximately 500 children remained in such facilities in December 2023.’¹⁷⁶

13.5.20 Reporting specifically on institutionalised children, the USSD HR Report 2022 stated ‘The National Therapeutic and Rehabilitation Center for Children ... provided diagnostic services, treatment, education, and assistance with the development and rehabilitation of children up to age six. In addition, the government maintained a dedicated department of Child and Teenage Psychiatry Service at the Mother Tereza public hospital in Tirana that offered residential psychiatric health care services for children and teenagers.’¹⁷⁷

13.5.21 The USSD HR Report 2022 referred to the assessment of children resident in public residential institutions from 2021 to 2022 carried out by Nisma, ARSIS, and UNICEF, which found that 70 percent of the children assessed were identified with untreated trauma and showed developmental delays¹⁷⁸.

13.5.22 The report added that ‘Institutions lacked specialized services, such as psychotherapists and speech therapists. There was a shortage of qualified psychologists, social workers, and supervision of care staff.’¹⁷⁹

13.5.23 For more on healthcare, see the Country Policy and Information Notes [Albania: Medical and healthcare provision](#) and [Albania: Mental health](#).

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¹⁷³ UNCRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 154), 15 February 2021

¹⁷⁴ UNCRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 156), 15 February 2021

¹⁷⁵ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 22 April 2024

¹⁷⁶ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023: Albania](#)

¹⁷⁷ USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

¹⁷⁸ USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

¹⁷⁹ USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

14. Judicial rights

14.1.1 In the Country Office Annual Report 2023, UNICEF reported that children's right to justice remained high on the government's 2023 agenda¹⁸⁰. UNICEF stated, 'Capacity-building efforts strengthened the Ministry of Justice's ability to monitor the Justice for Children Strategy (2022-2026) and improve data collection and reporting.'¹⁸¹

14.1.2 The EC's Albania 2023 Report stated, 'The 2022-2026 justice for children strategy enlarges the from criminal justice to equitable access to justice for all children and in all areas of law, seeking to consolidate child-friendly justice. Its full implementation would require more resources, investment, coordination and accountability. The coordination and implementation of the strategy requires a dedicated service within the Ministry of Justice.'¹⁸²

14.1.3 The UNICEF 2021 report stated:

'The justice system is not yet friendly to and accessible by all children. ... there are still structural gaps in juvenile justice in Albania and fulfilling the regulatory framework would require a shift in the administrative culture, considerable capacity building, specific adapted infrastructure, the establishment of community services, and inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional coordination at the central and local level.

'Social norms should be conducive to children's equitable access to justice but a general lack of trust in institutions and the deeply entrenched social beliefs that make it unacceptable for children to confide in an adult outside of the home about problems within the home prevent children from accessing the justice system. Poor children are even less likely to approach the justice system to claim their rights, and this often overlaps with other factors such as disability, gender and ethnic origin.

'Court fees, the costs of legal representation, distance to justice institutions, limited knowledge on child rights, and where to seek redress, and lack of child-sensitive procedures further inhibit children and families from accessing remedies.'¹⁸³

14.1.4 In 2021, 229 children received free legal aid¹⁸⁴.

14.1.5 The EC Albania 2023 Report stated:

'Despite the legal framework on free legal aid and institutional set up, few children benefit from legal aid compared with the number of children involved in criminal law, family and civil law and administrative law cases. The budget allocated for legal aid in 2022 amounted to around EUR 800 000 [£687,696¹⁸⁵], markedly higher than in 2021. The budget spent in 2022 is estimated at EUR 400 000 [£343,806¹⁸⁶] (up from EUR 245 739 [£211,181¹⁸⁷] in 2021). However, the dedicated state budget should be further increased to make the legal clinics fully operational. The staffing of

¹⁸⁰ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023; Albania](#)

¹⁸¹ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023; Albania](#)

¹⁸² EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.38), 8 November 2023

¹⁸³ UNICEF, [Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#) (p.51), June 2021

¹⁸⁴ Ministry of Justice, [Number of children receiving free legal aid, 2021](#), 2021

¹⁸⁵ [Xe Currency Converter](#) (1 EUR = 0.859511 GBP), 24 April 2024

¹⁸⁶ [Xe Currency Converter](#) (1 EUR = 0.859511 GBP), 24 April 2024

¹⁸⁷ [Xe Currency Converter](#) (1 EUR = 0.859511 GBP), 24 April 2024

the free legal aid directorate is complete, and ten centres are in operation across the country. It remains important to improve the collection, analysis and reporting of statistical data on free legal aid.¹⁸⁸

14.1.6 The report further stated that, 'The Albanian state police has created units in 16 police departments or stations where trained police personnel conduct child-friendly interviews. The proper maintenance and uninterrupted functioning of these facilities require an adequate budget from the state police.'¹⁸⁹

14.1.7 In the Country Office Annual Report 2023 for Albania, UNICEF stated, 'The use of child-friendly interview units doubled in 2023 compared to 2022.'¹⁹⁰

14.1.8 The GREVIO report 2023 stated:

'Juvenile interview rooms have been established in all 12 Regions in the country and in the Police Stations No. 5 and 6 in Tirana, Kurbin and Saranda, where privacy and other standards are guaranteed according to international standards. Also, in order to increase access and to guarantee services for victims of violence, especially for women and girls with disabilities, based on DCM no. 1503, dated 19.11.2008, the General Directorate of State Police has made sure to build/add tramps [sic] in all the new buildings, rehabilitated or refurbished facilities with budget resources.'¹⁹¹

14.1.9 See [Role of Non-governmental organisations \(NGOs\)](#) for further information about services available. See [Protection of children: role of police](#) for further information on this subject.

14.1.10 The GREVIO report 2023 stated:

'Criminal legislation provides for the obligation of public bodies to guarantee that victims of criminal offenses are treated with respect for their human dignity and are protected from re-injury, during the exercise of their rights (Criminal Procedure Code, Article 9/a). Minor victims have the right to confidentiality of their personal data (CPC article 58/a, paragraph 1/b). ... The court may decide that criminal proceedings, or parts thereof, take place behind closed doors (CPC, Article 340) ... where it is deemed necessary in the questioning of minor witnesses.... Judicial examination always takes place behind closed doors when juveniles are tried or adult defendants are tried, who are accused of committing criminal offenses against minor victims, the age of the victim at the time of trial notwithstanding. The presiding judge informs the participants in a closed-doors trial about the obligation to preserve the confidentiality of information learned in the hearings.'¹⁹²

14.1.11 The report continued:

'Article 58/a of the CPC provides that the minor victim has the right to request, through the representative, that the trial take place without the presence of the public and to be questioned without delay by duly specialized persons. When possible and appropriate, the conversation is recorded both on audio and video. This recording can be used as evidence in criminal proceedings and is evaluated together with other evidence,

¹⁸⁸ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.39), 8 November 2023

¹⁸⁹ EC, [Albania 2023 Report](#) (p.38), 8 November 2023

¹⁹⁰ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2023: Albania](#)

¹⁹¹ Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.57), 24 July 2023

¹⁹² Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.55), 24 July 2023

according to the criteria set forth in the Criminal Procedure Code. When the minor victim is under 14 years old, the conversation takes place in environments adapted for minors.¹⁹³

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1. Return and reintegration

- 1.1.1 Referring to the return of unaccompanied or separated minors to Albania from EU countries, the Albania UN submission 2021 noted: ‘Cooperation in this area is focused on obtaining information from the requesting countries, enabling safe return/readmission of unaccompanied or separated minors to their families or their surrender to the state entity which is entrusted by the law with their reception. Cooperation of the border and migration police structures with the state social service, has been ongoing.’¹⁹⁴
- 1.1.2 According to Eurostat information dated 21 October 2024, a total of 35 unaccompanied Albanian minors were ‘ordered to leave’ 3 European countries between 1 October 2021 and 31 December 2022 – 5 in Belgium, 25 in Greece and 5 in Sweden¹⁹⁵. During the same period, 5 unaccompanied Albanian minors were returned from Sweden to Albania following an order to leave¹⁹⁶. Of the returns from Sweden, none were Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR)¹⁹⁷.
- 1.1.3 The Return and Reintegration Facility, funded by the European Commission (DG HOME) and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)¹⁹⁸, stated:

‘The project on the Reception and Care Services for Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) is carried out in which basic care, psychological support, and recreational activities are made available to unaccompanied minors returning to Albania from EU Member States (EU MS). It is implemented in cooperation with the local service provider, SOS Children’s Villages Albania.’¹⁹⁹
- 1.1.4 SOS Children’s Villages Albania (SCVA) also described a project to provide assistance to returning unaccompanied children in Albania:

‘SOS Children’s Villages Albania is in the second year of implementation of the project entitled “Support for the return of unaccompanied children to Albania” through the provision of temporary care services (reception center) until a final decision is made by state authorities (during the time their family members are traced). This project is implemented in close partnership with

¹⁹³ Govt of Albania, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68...](#) (p.67), 24 July 2023

¹⁹⁴ UNCRC, [Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by...](#) (para 235), 15 February 2021

¹⁹⁵ Eurostat, [Third-country unaccompanied minors ordered to leave...](#), last updated 21 October 2024

¹⁹⁶ Eurostat, [Third-country unaccompanied minors returned...](#) (Total), last updated 21 October 2024

¹⁹⁷ Eurostat, [Third-country unaccompanied minors returned...](#) (AVR), last updated 21 October 2024

¹⁹⁸ RRF, [What we do](#), undated

¹⁹⁹ RRF, [Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Albania](#), undated

the State Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights. The project is funded by Repatriation and Departure Service (R&DS) of the Ministry of Justice and Security of the Netherlands...

- 'Project duration 12 months (August 2023 – July 2025)
- 'National project implemented by SOS Children's Villages Albania in cooperation with the State Agency for the Child Rights and Protection
- 'The goal is to create a sustainable [sic] and structural solutions for 20 returning unaccompanied children by EU countries to Albania, by providing shelter [sic] and basic care for a limited period and integrating/referring them to state facilities
- 'The project is funded and supported [sic] by International Centre for Migration Policy Development'²⁰⁰

1.1.5 See [Non-governmental organisation \(NGO\) support](#) for further information about assistance for returnees provided by NGOs.

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2. Internal relocation

2.1.1 The USSD HR report 2023 noted that: 'The constitution and law provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.'²⁰¹

2.1.2 The Freedom House report, Freedom in the World 2024, stated: '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 ...'²⁰²

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²⁰⁰ SCVA, [Support for the return of unaccompanied children to Albania](#), undated

²⁰¹ USSD, [HR Report 2023](#), 23 April 2024

²⁰² Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024](#), 2024

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](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

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

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and 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

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Law and policy
- Position of children in society
 - Attitudes towards children
 - Gender roles
 - Minority ethnic groups
 - Children with disabilities
 - Street children
 - Impact of poverty
 - Healthcare
 - Education
 - Violence and abuse
 - Prevalence
 - Types of abuse
 - Trafficking of children
 - Underage marriage
 - Action taken to address violence and abuse
 - Child protection
 - System in place
 - Effectiveness of system
 - Children in care
 - Number of children in care
 - System in place
 - Effectiveness of system
 - Outcomes for children
 - Justice for children
 - Access to justice
 - Detention of children
 - Return and reintegration

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **2 July 2025**

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.

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Changes from last version of this note

This is the first CPIN on this subject.

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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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