**Country Policy and Information Note**

Albania: Human trafficking

Version 10.0

February 2021

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in [Introduction](#_Introduction) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies**:**

* A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
* The general humanitarian situation is so severe as to breach Article 15(b) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC (the Qualification Directive) / Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules
* The security situation presents a real risk to a civilian’s life or person such that it would breach Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules
* A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
* A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
* A claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
* If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

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

Country of origin information

The country information 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)](http://www.refworld.org/docid/48493f7f2.html), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation’s (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](https://www.coi-training.net/content/). Namely, taking into account the COI’s relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

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

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the ‘cut-off’ date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. 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, and
* whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#_Bibliography).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](mailto:cipu@homeoffice.gov.uk).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-advisory-group-on-country-information-iagci) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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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](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-chief-inspector-of-borders-and-immigration/about/research#reviews).

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# Assessment

Updated: 22 February 2021

## Introduction

### Basis of claim

* + 1. Fear of persecution or serious harm by non-state actors (usually traffickers) because the person is a (potential) victim of trafficking.

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### Points to note

#### Decisions by the Single Competent Authority

* + 1. Only expert decision makers in the UK’s Single Competent Authority (SCA) can decide whether or not there are reasonable grounds to accept the person as a victim of trafficking for the purpose of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. However, both Home Office decision makers and the court are able to take factual matters into account when making their findings in an asylum claim. If it has not already been done, decision makers dealing with the asylum claim must make an appropriate referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The case will then be routed to the Single Competent Authority.
    2. The conclusive grounds decision will be included in any outstanding asylum decision made after that decision as a finding of fact on whether the person was a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery or not, unless information comes to light at a later date that would alter the finding on human trafficking or modern slavery.
    3. The outcome of the reasonable or conclusive grounds decision is not indicative of the outcome of any asylum claim. A positive or negative reasonable or conclusive grounds decision on modern slavery does not automatically result in asylum being granted or refused. This is because the criteria used to grant asylum are not the same as the criteria used to assess whether a person is a victim of modern slavery.
    4. When the SCA has issued a positive conclusive grounds decision in a case where the person has also claimed asylum, this should be afforded appropriate weight when considering future risk of persecution. Further, where there has been a negative finding by the SCA, considerable weight can be placed on this. In these scenarios, because the SCA’s findings are subject to a higher standard of proof and are findings as to past treatment, it remains open to asylum decision makers to make different findings for the purpose of the asylum claim and future risk.
    5. The [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fpublications%2Fmodern-slavery-how-to-identify-and-support-victims&data=04%7C01%7CRos.Coles5%40homeoffice.gov.uk%7C7a35a91d2a4f47cad22f08d8c1488ee7%7Cf24d93ecb2914192a08af182245945c2%7C0%7C0%7C637471864667490061%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=KLFkXD4eAAZTqJzxBSUabLcuP0RXkPW%2B646KpCLS3Wk%3D&reserved=0) is aimed at:

1. SCA staff in any part of the UK who make decisions on whether or not an individual is a potential victim/victim of modern slavery for the purpose of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM);
2. and staff in England and Wales: • within public authorities who may encounter potential victims of modern slavery; and/or • who are involved in supporting victims.
   * 1. In cases where a ‘positive conclusive grounds’ decision has been made, a grant of discretionary leave may be considered. For further information, see [Discretionary leave considerations for victims of modern slavery](https://www.ein.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource/dl-for-victims-of-modern-slavery-v2.pdf).

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#### Findings of DC (trafficking: protection/appeal rights)

* + 1. In July 2019, the UK Upper Tribunal held in [DC (trafficking: protection/human rights appeals) Albania [2019] UKUT 00351 (IAC)](https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2019/351.html) that a tribunal deciding a protection or human rights appeal, which concerns alleged trafficking within the scope of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and decisions of the Competent Authority (CA) under the United Kingdom's National Referral Mechanism, should proceed as follows:

‘(a) In a protection appeal, the “reasonable grounds” or “conclusive grounds” decision of the CA [Competent Authority] will be part of the evidence that the tribunal will have to assess in reaching its decision on that appeal, giving the CA’s decision such weight as is due, bearing in mind that the standard of proof applied by the CA in a “conclusive grounds” decision was the balance of probabilities.

‘(b) In a human rights appeal, a finding by the tribunal that the CA has failed to reach a rational decision on whether the appellant has been the victim of trafficking, such as to be eligible for leave to remain in the United Kingdom for that reason alone, may lead the tribunal to allow the human rights appeal, on the basis that removing the appellant at this stage would be a disproportionate interference with the appellant’s Article 8 ECHR [European Convention on Human Rights] rights. This scenario is, however, of narrow ambit and is unlikely to be much encountered in practice.

‘(c) In a human rights appeal, the question whether the appellant has been the victim of trafficking may be relevant to the issue of whether the appellant’s removal would breach the ECHR, even where it is not asserted there is a trafficking-related risk of harm in the country of proposed return and irrespective of what is said in sub-paragraph (b) above: e.g. where the fact of trafficking may have caused the appellant physical or psychological harm. Here, as in sub-paragraph (a) above, the CA’s decision on past trafficking will be part of the evidence to be assessed by the tribunal’ (paragraph 53).

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## Consideration of issues

### Credibility

* + 1. For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction).
    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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-matches-handling-asylum-claims-from-uk-visa-applicants-instruction)).
    3. Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/language-analysis-instruction)).

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### Exclusion

* + 1. Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
    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).
    3. For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave see the Asylum Instructions, [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33(2) of the Refugee Convention](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-instruction-exclusion-article-1f-of-the-refugee-convention), [Humanitarian Protection](https://horizon.fcos.gsi.gov.uk/file-wrapper/humanitarian-protection) and [Restricted Leave](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restricted-leave-asylum-casework-instruction).

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### Convention reason

* + 1. Former victims of trafficking share an immutable characteristic that cannot be changed. However, they may not comprise a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention if they are not perceived as different and do not have a distinct identity within Albanian society.
    2. Sexual exploitation may lead to stigma for the victim. Therefore, a person who has been sexually exploited, whether male or female, is likely to be perceived as different and to have a distinct identity within Albanian society, meaning that they form a PSG.
    3. However, a person who was trafficked for criminal activity or forced labour is less likely to be recoginised as a victim of trafficking and to have a distinct identity within Albanian society. Therefore, they do not form a PSG.
    4. Although Albanian men, women and children who have been trafficked may form a PSG, this does not mean that establishing such membership will be sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case is whether the particular person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
    5. For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction).

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### Risk

#### Risk: general

* + 1. Trafficking in human beings is illegal in Albania. Nonetheless, 96 potential victims and 7 officially-recognised victims were identified by the government and NGOs in 2019. Of these, 36 were adults and 67 were minors; 80 were female and 23 were male, and 6 were non-Albanian. 65 people were victims of sex trafficking, 37 were used for forced labour, and one was forced into marriage for the purpose of domestic servitude. There are concerns that numbers of (potential) victims of trafficking are not being fully captured in available statistics (see [Prevalence](#_Prevalence_1)).
    2. Methods of recruitment are varied and ever changing. Common risk factors, for both male and female victims of trafficking, are poverty, a low level of education, domestic abuse in the family home and physical and mental disabilities. Children in childrens’ homes or who are homeless are also vulnerable. The Roma and Egyptian population are more vulnerable to trafficking due to a combination of these factors. The rural areas of the north offer fewer employment opportunities, making people more vulnerable to traffickers. However, both the south and central areas are affected by trafficking also, and Tirana is a transitory area, both for traffickers and potential victims (see [Vulnerabilities to trafficking](#_Tactics_used_and), [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:) and [Areas of origin of trafficking victims](#_Areas_of_origin)).
    3. Those recruiting may include family members and others known to the victim. Online recruitment, grooming and exploitation have increased across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is evidence of an increase in trafficking for sexual abuse online, and this includes child sexual abuse (see [Impact of COVID-19](#_Impact_of_COVID-19)).
    4. For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction). See also the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) for further information.

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#### Risk: women and girls

* + 1. In the country guidance case of [TD and AD (Trafficked women) CG [2016] UKUT 00092 (IAC)](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) (heard 30 April, 6 May and 3 June 2015 and promulgated 9 February 2016) the Upper Tribunal held that ‘it is not possible to create a typical profile of a trafficked woman from Albania; trafficked women come from all areas of the country and from varied social backgrounds’ (paragraph 119(a)).
    2. The Upper Tribunal found:

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

* + 1. The Upper Tribunal found:

‘… some women are lured to leave Albania with false promises of relationships or work, … others may seek out traffickers in order to facilitate their departure from Albania and their work in prostitution abroad. Although such women cannot be said to have left Albania against their will, where they have fallen under the control of traffickers for the purpose of exploitation there is likely to be a considerable degree of violence within the relationships and a lack of freedom, meaning that such women are victims of trafficking’ (paragraph 119(c)).

* + 1. The Tribunal stated:

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

* + 1. The UT also held that whether a female victim of trafficking would be at risk of persecution and whether they would be able to access protection from the authorities would depend on their individual circumstances, including a number of factors set out at paragraph 119h of the determination; the full list is also set out in [Protection: women](#_Protection:_women) below.
    2. Although reports relied on by the UT in [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) indicated that 18% of women referred to shelters had been subject to re-trafficking, Different and Equal (D&E), an NGO working with victims of trafficking, told the Home Office fact-finding team (HO FFT) in 2017 that the figure is now 4 to 5%. Retrafficking has become a less common occurrence, with a very small percentage of women willingly leaving the security of shelters or re-integration assistance and being re-trafficked. Some women are willingly retrafficked because they see it as an alternative to domestic abuse and some because they want to leave Albania and are not aware of other options for migrating. The risk of re-trafficking must be considered according to the facts of each individual case and their individual vulnerability to retrafficking (see [Re-trafficking](#_Re-trafficking_1)).
    3. In light of the above, and acknowledging the suggested reduction in the likelihood of re-trafficking, the evidence does not suggest there are ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to justify ‘not taking into account and following’ those findings in TD and AD (see para 47 of the Court of Appeal’s determination in [SG (Iraq) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2012] EWCA Civ 940 (13 July 2012)](http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2012/940.html)).
    4. Traffickers generally use false promises of marriage, employment, education or a better life abroad to lure women into prostitution. If these methods don’t work, they may resort to physical and/or psychological violence. Traffickers use family or other relationships to get to know a potential victim or contact them via social media. Gender roles in the country render women more prone to exploitation and make it harder for them to exercise choice. It is not possible to provide a generalised profile of women trafficked for sexual exploitation, but those with economic, health or family difficulties are at greater risk of being targeted. Victims of trafficking tend to be aged 18 to 25; amongst minors, girls aged 14 to 18 are most likely to be targeted for prostitution; under 14’s are mainly used for begging (see [Vulnerabilities‌ to trafficking](#_Tactics_used_and), [Methods of recruitment](#_Methods_of_recruitment) and [Ages of exploited children](#_Ages_of_exploited)).
    5. Traffickers exploit both women and children for sex trafficking and forced labour. Victims of sex trafficking are exploited across Europe. Some women, but not all, are aware that they will be required to work in the sex industry, but believe that they will earn more money than they would in the sex trade in Albania or have more control over what they do. The Roma and Egyptian communities are more vulnerable to forced labour as they are more likely to work in the informal economy (see [Forms of exploitation](#_Forms_of_exploitation)).
    6. Whether or not a woman is at risk of retrafficking will depend on the factors which led to her initial trafficking and on her personal circumstances, as explained above. A woman’s risk of persecution as a result of having been trafficked and her ability to access protection will again depend largely on her personal circumstances (the full list of such circumstances mentioned by the UT in [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) is given in full in the section on [Protection](#_Protection_2) below). Each case must be considered according to its individual facts, with the onus on the applicant to demonstrate why she would be at risk if returned to Albania.
    7. For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction). See also the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) for further information.

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#### Risk: men and boys

* + 1. Male victims of trafficking are likely to come from a background of poverty and violent/abusive family homes. Additional risk factors may include being gay, bisexual, trans or intersex, homeless or resident in a children’s home, or having a disability, whether mental or physical. Blood feuds may present a further risk factor (see [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:). See [Albania: Blood feuds](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) for full information on this subject).
    2. There is evidence that a large percentage of male victims of trafficking were exploited as minors, many from the age of 13 or 14. Trafficked boys are likely to have a low level of education, with one NGO noting an average of 5.5 years in school for trafficked boys, compared with an average of 11.9 years in school for young people as a whole (see [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:)).
    3. Males are expected to provide for their families from their early/mid teens, yet employment opportunities are poor, particularly in the north and in rural and underdeveloped areas of the country. This pressure makes boys/men more vulnerable to offers of work abroad. Most trafficked males are enticed by offers of jobs and suggestions that they can make a lot of money, including through illegal means. As a key risk factor for trafficking is poverty and a lack of future prospects, an offer of work abroad can be very attractive (see [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:)).
    4. Some males are subjected to violence and sexual exploitation by older men as part of a recruitment/grooming process. Males are mainly used for sexual exploitation, begging, criminal activity, labour, or a combination of these. Boys are mainly forced to beg or sell small items, with street children, who are primarily from Roma and Egyptian communities, at greatest risk. Boys are exploited primarily within Albania; for example, for begging and theft in tourist areas, or for cultivating drugs. Young men are more likely to be exploited abroad; in the UK, Albanian gang members recruit boys/young men primarily for ‘county lines’ or cannabis cultivation/cocaine trafficking, but they can also be used in car washes, construction and street crime. Traffickers tell boys/young men that they owe them a debt for bringing them to the UK, and that they must engage in illegal means to pay this off as they are unable to work legally (see [Methods of recruitment: specific to boys/young men](#_Methods_of_recruitment:), [Countries of exploitation](#_Countries_of_exploitation), [Forms of exploitation: specific to boys/young men](#_Forms_of_exploitation:_1), and [Links with organised crime](#_Links_with_organised)).
    5. In Albania, there is a general lack of awareness and understanding that males can be victims of trafficking, which makes boys/men unwilling to accept that they are being/have been exploited. It also means that others may be slow to recognise boys/young men as trafficking victims and that it may be harder for males to receive the help they need (see [Understanding and awareness of trafficking: males](#_Understanding_and_awareness)).
    6. Many of the risk factors used by the UT in [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) may be applied to male victims of trafficking, as well as female victims. The risk of retrafficking, the risk of persecution as a victim of trafficking, and the ability to access protection if required will largely depend on the factors which led to the person to be trafficked initially and on their own individual circumstances. Such circumstances may include the educational level of the person and the person’s family, the economic status of the family, whether the person has a support network in Albania, whether the family was involved in their trafficking, the person’s health, including their mental health, and whether or not they have a disability, either physical or mental. However, those who are identified as trafficking victims and in receipt of assistance should receive the support they need (see [Re-trafficking](#_Re-trafficking_1)).
    7. Each case must be considered according to its own individual facts, with the onus on the person to explain why they may be at risk if returned to Albania.
    8. For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction). See also the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) for further information.

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### Protection

#### Protection: men, women and children

* + 1. Trafficking for both sexual and labour exploitation is prohibited under the law and the penalties for these offences are 8 to 15 years’ imprisonment for cases involving adult victims and 10 to 20 years for cases involving a child. 30 new criminal proceedings for trafficking were registered with the Prosecutor’s Office in 2017, 21 in 2018 and 25 in 2019. There were 9 final convictions in 2017, 3 in 2018 and 5 in 2019. Courts handed down sentences ranging from 7 years and 6 months’ to 17 years’ imprisonment for the trafficking of adults, and 15 years’ imprisonment for the trafficking of children in 2019. The appeals court reviewed and confirmed decisions on 3 cases (5 in 2018) (see [Law](#_Law): [Trafficking](#_General) and [Prosecution: General](#_General_1)).
    2. The US Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report 2020 (USSD TiP Report 2020) found that Albania did not yet fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but that it was making significant efforts to do so and that it had demonstrated increasing efforts compared to the previous year. Actions taken included updating standard operating procedures, sentencing convicted traffickers to significant prison terms, identifying more victims, providing robust training for relevant officials, setting up an Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking, which consisted of 3 survivors, and increasing victim assistance in criminal proceedings. The government continued to implement the National Action Plan to combat trafficking in persons (2018-2020) and the Action Plan for the Social-Economic Reintegration of Women and Girl Victims of Trafficking (2018-2020). NGOs are working together effectively, and co-operating with government bodies as well, to address a wide range of trafficking-related issues, including risk factors, identification of victims, child protection, training for officials and improving judicial processes. The International Organisation for Migration found the National Referral Mechanism to be a good one. In addition, the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinator and the NGO Different and Equal carried out extensive awareness campaigns which included the provision of information to the Roma and Egyptian communities (see [Government and NGO strategies and policies](#_Action_to_combat): [Introduction](#_Introduction_1), [Government strategies](#_Government_strategies_1), [NGO strategies and co-operation with government](#_Bodies_responsible_for), [Standard Operating Procedures](#_Training_for_officials_1), [National Referral Mechanism (NRM)](#_National_Referral_Mechanism), [Training for officials](#_Training_for_officials_2))
    3. However, the USSD TiP Report 2020 found that Albania did not meet the minimum standard required in the following areas: the number of traffickers convicted was very low (5 in 2019 and 5 in 2018), there was insufficient screening for vulnerable groups, such as commercial sex workers and children, the authorities did not participate consistently in mobile victim identification units, the government continued to delay funding for NGO shelters, and social services lacked resources for long-term care and reintegration efforts, particularly for child victims and victims with children. However, Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, stated that, although Albania may have limits to the resources that can be given to addressing trafficking, the country is no different from many other countries in this respect, as no state response is adequate to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, but in Albania there is a dedicated law, a dedicated task force, a National Rapporteur, an NRM, law enforcement and judiciary training initiatives, dedicated prosecutors and courts, and victim shelters, which make the situation better than in many other developed countries (see [Government and NGO strategies and policies](#_Action_to_combat): [Introduction](#_Introduction_1), [Government strategies](#_Government_strategies_1), [NGO strategies and co-operation with government](#_Bodies_responsible_for), [Standard Operating Procedures](#_Training_for_officials_1), [National Referral Mechanism (NRM)](#_National_Referral_Mechanism), [Government and NGO strategies and policies](#_Action_to_combat): [Introduction](#_Introduction_1), and [Funding and assistance for shelters](#_Funding_and_assistance)).
    4. The police have limited capacity to investigate trafficking. Nevertheless, in 2019, they investigated 41 cases of trafficking with 62 suspects; this number included 7 cases, with 17 suspects, for child trafficking, with the remainder involving adults. The police also investigated 2 suspects for knowingly soliciting the sexual services of a trafficking victim. The police have standard procedures to respond to victims of trafficking. In the main, they respect the procedures for interviewing suspected victims, know how the National Referal Mechanism (NRM) works and are aware that they need to refer victims to Social Services. The police have an Anti-Trafficking Unit and interview suspected victims of trafficking in a suitable environment with the presence of a psychologist in order to help and respect the persons involved, and the identification of victims is carried out by Social Services. Co-operation between police and both NGOs and prosecutors has improved in the last 2 years (see [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the)).
    5. However, the police do not consistently participate in the work of mobile identification units and do not always screen potential victims of trafficking during investigations of premises used for commercial sex. On occasion, mis-identification of crimes can occur, and with an over-reliance on arrest targets, and a lack of indicators in place to measure police response to victims of trafficking, some trafficking victims may be missed. There are reports that the police do not always provide sufficient assistance when approached by families of trafficking victims. One NGO reported that when male victims of trafficking exploited in the drugs trade had approached the police for help, the police simply told them to hand drugs back and did not suggest prosecution. However, the police have received training to increase their understanding of trafficking issues, including recognising victims, and this has resulted in improvements in their effectiveness (see [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the) and [Prosecution in cases involving children](#_Prosecution_in_cases)).
    6. By law, the police have a duty to ensure the confidentiality of data related to trafficking victims. The database is secure, data is entered by a designated person, and only the Responsible Authority has access to it. Sources spoken to by the HO FFT were in agreement that unauthorised access would be difficult and is unlikely. Police provide protection at state-run shelters and NGO shelters use private security companies (see [Personal data and confidentiality](#_Personal_data_and_1) and [Security at shelters](#_Foreign_victims)).
    7. Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, independence was sometimes undermined by political pressure, intimidation, corruption and limited resources. However, the government is continuing to bring about judicial reforms. In 2019, the government investigated judges and dismissed those with unexplained wealth or links to organised crime; this led to the dismissal of 64% of judges and 43% of prosecutors who had undergone vetting. Prosecutorial jurisdiction was changed for trafficking cases, with district courts prosecuting cases of trafficking which did not involve organised crime; this led to concerns that district prosecutors did not have the specialism or capacity to prosecute such cases and that mistakes were being made in the handling of such cases. Trial procedures are respected by the government, and defendants have the right to a lawyer free of charge if they cannot otherwise afford one, although in practice, such access could be problematic. Unlike some previous years, no trafficking victims were penalised for forced prostitution in 2019, but some trafficking victims have been penalised due to inadequate identification or a lack of recognition that they have been forced to commit crime (see [Prosecution](#_Prosecution): [General](#_General_1), [The judiciary](#_The_judiciary), [Corruption](#_Witness_protection), [Punishment of victims of trafficking](#_Convictions_for_prostitution_1)).
    8. Victims who testify against traffickers have access to the witness protection programme, which was used by one person in 2019. However, security and support is not always sufficient, and there have been instances of victims and their families receiving threats during trial procedures. Female victims of trafficking who are considered at risk of harm from perpetrators are placed in the Vatra shelter and provided with protection, both at the shelter and as they are transported to court. By law, victims of trafficking may obtain restitution, but in practice, there has as yet been no occurrence of a victim receiving restitution (see [Witness protection and other assistance for victims](#_Witness_protection_and) and [Compensation for victims](#_Convictions_for_prostitution)).
    9. Legal aid is guaranteed by law for victims of trafficking, who are also exempt from court fees. They are provided with legal assistance throughout the legal process, including with related issues such as making compensation claims, and also with psychological assistance. The NGO Different and Equal provides legal assistance free of charge to all those it assists; in some cases, such assistance has included the obtaining of identity documents, help to ensure that victims are not punished for crimes they were forced to commit, and orders of protection for children from their parents (see [Legal aid and legal advice](#_Protection_and_assistance_1)).
    10. With government support, NGOs maintained mobile victim identification units, consisting of police and social workers, in 3 regions in 2019, with a further 3 units set up in 2020. Such units identified 42 potential victims in 2019, but sustainability of the units was uncertain due to a lack of resources. The NGO Another Vision runs a mobile team focussing on vulnerable groups, especially children living on the street, and identified 33 potential child victims of trafficking aged from 3 to 17 over a period of 2 years. As of July 2019, state authories had identified 165 street children, 8 of whom were victims/potential victims of trafficking. Protective orders were obtained for 17 of these children, preventing perpetrators from contacting them, and 4 cases were prosecuted. 67 children were referred to shelters. Boys and men have not traditionally been recognised as potential trafficking victims, which can make it harder for males to receive assistance, but this is beginning to change, with 23 male victims of trafficking identified in 2019. It is also increasingly understood that males can be victims of sexual exploitation, and not only labour exploitation (see [Identification of trafficking victims](#_Identification_of_trafficking_4), [Identification of trafficking victims: specific to males](#_Identification_of_trafficking_1) , [Identification of trafficking victims: specific to children](#_Identification_of_trafficking_3), [Forms of exploitation: specific to children](#_Forms_of_exploitation:) and [Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to males](#_Difficulties_in_implementing_1)).
    11. Procedures to identify victims of trafficking and refer them to the National Referral Mechanism have been established at Albanian border controls. There is a gap between the number of Albanian nationals referred to the UK NRM and those identified as victims of trafficking in Albania, and some NGOs raised concerns about whether people would report their status as trafficking victims at the border on return, or whether they would be recognised as such if they do, particularly boys/young men. However, a further source mentioned the case of a trafficking victim who returned to Albania from the UK and was met by an NGO on arrival (see [Identification of trafficking victims: on return to Albania](#_Identification_of_trafficking_2)).
    12. Victims of trafficking are provided with free healthcare, including mental healthcare, but medicines still need to be paid for. Trafficking victims may have mental health issues arising from growing up in dysfunctional and poor families, as well as trauma from subsequent trafficking experiences. Although one source suggested that mental health provision in shelters is basic, the HO FFT were told that every resident of a shelter is given a mental health assessment and treatment is provided, either within the shelter or elsewhere, depending on the severity of the case. Albania has a shortage of psychiatrists but shelters usually have a psychiatrist. The HO FFT were told by one interlocutor that there are few opportunities for long-term mental health support but by another that a greater level of psycho-social support is offered to those leaving shelters and that this is provided for as long as it is needed (see [Healthcare](#_Healthcare)).
    13. Generally speaking, it has been harder for victims of trafficking across the world to access assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is less assistance available. However, there is evidence of effective co-operation during the pandemic between different organisations and municipalities in Albania, with 800 families in 9 municipalities benefiting from support due to increased co-ordination. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe has adapted its work to respond to the demands of the pandemic in Albania, with a focus on human trafficking and child protection. UNICEF also reported that they have adapted their ways of working in Albania to ensure safety for all, and Different and Equal have distributed food to vulnerable groups, including members of the Roma and Egyptian communities (see [Impact of COVID-19](#_Impact_of_COVID-19)).

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#### Protection: women

* + 1. The Upper Tribunal in [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html), which considered the position of female victims of trafficking, held that

‘… the Albanian government had made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking in recent years. This includes widening the scope of legislation, publishing the Standard Operating Procedures, implementing an effective National Referral Mechanism, appointing a new Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator, and providing training to law enforcement officials. There is in general a [Horvath-standard sufficiency of protection](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldjudgmt/jd000706/horv-1.htm), this will not be effective in every case. Decision makers must therefore consider the individual circumstances of each case before deciding whether there is sufficiency of protection for each victim of trafficking’ (paragraph 119(d)).

* + 1. The Upper Tribunal found that whether a person is at risk of persecution and whether they will be able to access sufficiency of protection from the authorities will depend upon their ‘individual circumstances, including but not limited to the following’:
* The social status and economic standing of her family
* The level of education of the victim of trafficking or her family
* The victim of trafficking’s state of health, particularly her mental health
* The presence of an illegitimate child
* The area of origin
* Age
* What support network will be available (paragraph 119(h)).
  + 1. The Tribunal added that there is a reception and reintegration programme for victims of trafficking in Albania. ‘Returning victims of trafficking are able to stay in a shelter on arrival, and in “heavy cases” may be able to stay there for up to 2 years. During this initial period after return victims of trafficking are supported and protected. Unless the individual has particular vulnerabilities such as physical or mental health issues, this option cannot generally be said to be unreasonable; whether it is must be determined on a case by case basis’(paragraph 119(e) of determination).
    2. The Upper Tribunal further noted that once asked to leave the shelter, a victim of trafficking may live on her own. The challenges she will face will be significant, and will include, but won’t be limited to, stigma, isolation, financial hardship and uncertainty, a sense of physical insecurity and the subjective fear of being found either by their families or their former traffickers. The Tribunal stated that some women would have the capacity to deal with these challenges without undue hardship, but some victims of trafficking, with difficulties such as mental illness or psychological scarring, for example, cannot reasonably be expected to live alone in such circumstances. Therefore each person’s circumstances must be carefully assessed (paragraph 119(f) of determination).
    3. There are 4 shelters used by victims of trafficking; 3 are run by NGOs, and one by the government, and together, they form the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters. The shelters work together effectively and the combined capacity of the shelters is sufficient to meet needs. The shelters provide assistance which includes accommodation, medical and psycho-social assistance, legal assistance, education and training, accommodation in rented premises, monitoring and follow-up, and assistance to the children of victims of trafficking. The support provided by shelters generally consists of three phases, the first crisis intervention phase lasting 3 to 6 months, the next phase of transition to independent living lasting for at least a year, and support to full independence lasting up to three years. Shelters are regularly inspected by the Albanian Ombudsman and the standard is considered to be very good. Although supported by the government, the NGO-run shelters have financial constraints and rely on outside sources for financial assistance. The HO FFT was told that reintegration is not always successful, but this is not an issue unique to Albania (see [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS)](#_National_Coalition_of), [Capacity of shelters](#_Capacity_of_shelters), [Standard of shelters](#_Standard_of_shelters), [Phases of assistance](#_Phases_of_assistance_1), [Funding and assistance for shelters](#_Funding_and_assistance)).
    4. There is a lack of resources for long-term care and reintegration. Nevertheless, by law, every person leaving a shelter must receive financial benefits until they find employment, although benefits are not enough to live on, at the equivalent of about £20 per month. Those who are supported by social welfare (but who are not trafficking victims) receive about £31 per month; in the municipality of Kükes, more than 50% of the population live on social welfare. The average wage is about £161 per month. However, the HO FFT were told that the state will provide financial assistance for food and will also pay for childcare for single women; the basic needs are met. When a woman leaves the government-run shelter, the regional welfare services draw up an individual reintegration plan and the woman will be offered internships and given priority access to jobs. NGO-run shelters also facilitate access to employment and training. Shelters will also assist women to obtain social housing from the state or will subsidise or pay their rent. However, access to social assistance for those in rural areas and those in Roma/Egyptian communities is poor. The different bodies which form the Responsible Authority will track the progress of each individual and assist with their reintegration. Women are monitored for at least 2 years after leaving a shelter, but this period is to be lengthened if required (see [Reintegration: General](#_General_2), [Social housing](#_Social_housing), [Other economic help](#_Other_economic_help), [Monitoring](#_Monitoring_1)).
    5. Progress has been made in providing assistance for women leaving shelters since the hearing of [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) in 2016. Women are monitored for 2 years after leaving a shelter, healthcare has been provided free of charge to victims of trafficking since the end of 2014, and with re-education, vocational training, rent subsidies and economic help, the risk of retrafficking is being reduced. Different and Equal told the HO FFT in 2016 that 4-5% of the women they had assisted were retrafficked. The government and NGOs are working to raise awareness of trafficking, particularly with young people, with a view to prevention and increased reporting and to reduce the the stigma which has been traditionally attached to those who have been trafficked. Although prejudice can be an issue, it has decreased and it is possible for women to live alone, working and paying rent, particularly in Tirana. However, in some instances, families may reject victims of trafficking, and this can cause hardship in a society that relies on family as a safety net in terms of financial and social support; those who are rejected by family may find reintegration harder and be at greater risk of poverty and retrafficking. Risks of retrafficking therefore depend largely on individual circumstances (see [Reintegration](#_Reintegration), [Healthcare](#_Healthcare), and [Women living alone](#_Women_living_alone)).
    6. Decision makers should take account of the vulnerability factors mentioned by the Upper Tribunal in [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) which might be faced by victims of trafficking when accessing protection and reintegration into Albanian society. The sections below provide evidence of assistance for such women, including those with children. The section on [Life in Albania](#_Life_in_Albania) can be consulted to give an indication of how the circumstances of returned victims of trafficking would compare to the societal norms within the country:
* [Vulnerabilities to trafficking](#_Tactics_used_and) – includes information about the age of those at risk of trafficking.
* [Social housing](#_Social_housing) – for information about social housing for trafficking victims who may have been rejected by their families or who are reluctant to return to their home area.
* [Other economic help](#_Other_economic_help) – for information about assistance with food and nursery costs and benefit payments for women and their children.
* [Women living alone](#_Women_living_alone) – for information about life for a woman living alone in different parts of the country, and employment opportunities.
* [Education and training](#_Education_and_young) – for information about education for both trafficking victims and their children.
* [Healthcare](#_Healthcare) – including mental health care.
* [Mentoring and other assistance](#_Monitoring) and [Monitoring](#_Monitoring_1) – for information about ongoing support.
* [Re-trafficking](#_Re-trafficking_1) – vulnerability factors.
  + 1. The government has made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking in recent years, and in general, is both willing and able to protect victims or potential victims of trafficking. However, this protection may not be sufficient in every case, and each case must therefore be considered on an individual basis, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that protection would not be available.
    2. For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction). See also the Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) and the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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#### Protection: men

* + 1. There is no shelter for male victims of trafficking, but the NGO Different and Equal rents flats where they can be accommodated. Different and Equal provide a full range of assistance to male victims of trafficking, including counselling, healthcare, legal aid, accommodation, education/training, support for job-seeking, and monitoring and follow-up. Services are provided in whichever part of the country the person has chosen to live and be re-integrated. There is also assistance with obtaining identity documents and other documentation needed (see [Males: reintegration assistance](#_Re-trafficking) and [Males: shelters](#_Males:_shelters)).
    2. Criminal networks can be extensive across Albania and may have connections with the police. Young men returned to Albania may be at risk of exploitation both from those who exploited them originally, or from other gangs. One source stated that when male trafficking victims have approached the police for help, they have been given insufficient assistance, and may remain vulnerable to organised gangs. Moreover, many male victims of trafficking do not recognise themselves as victims and therefore may not seek assistance from the police. However, the police have received training to increase their understanding of trafficking issues, including recognising victims, and this has resulted in improvements in their approach (see [Re-trafficking](#_Re-trafficking_1) and [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the)).
    3. Although the Country Guidance case of [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) focussed on the situation for women, many of the principles can be applied to male victims of trafficking as well. The Upper Tribunal in [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html) held that the Albanian government had ‘made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking in recent years. This includes widening the scope of legislation, publishing the Standard Operating Procedures, implementing an effective National Referral Mechanism, appointing a new Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator, and providing training to law enforcement officials.’ The Upper Tribunal concluded that, although there is in general a [Horvath-standard sufficiency of protection](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldjudgmt/jd000706/horv-1.htm), this will not be effective in every case. Decision makers must therefore consider the individual circumstances of each case before deciding whether there is sufficiency of protection for each victim of trafficking (paragraph 119(d) of determination).
    4. The Upper Tribunal found that whether a person is at risk of persecution and whether they will be able to access sufficiency of protection from the authorities will depend upon their ‘individual circumstances, including but not limited to the following’:
* The social status and economic standing of her family
* The level of education of the victim of trafficking or her family
* The victim of trafficking’s state of health, particularly her mental health
* The area of origin
* Age
* What support network will be available (paragraph 119(h)).
  + 1. For information about vulnerability factors specific to men, see the list below; the final section, on Life in Albania, can be consulted to give an indication of how the circumstances of returned victims of trafficking would compare to the societal norms within the country:
* [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:) – for example, dysfunctional families, poverty and an expectation that males will provide for the family.
* [Understanding and awareness of trafficking: males](#_Understanding_and_awareness) – lack of understanding/acceptance that males can be victims of trafficking.
* [Methods of recruitment: specific to boys/young men](#_Methods_of_recruitment:) – for example, criminal gangs and family members.
* [Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to males](#_Difficulties_in_implementing_1) – including a difficulty on the part of males to ask for, and accept, help.
* [Identification of trafficking victims: specific to males](#_Identification_of_trafficking_1) – gradual realisation that males can be victims of trafficking, as well as females, and that this can involve sexual exploitation, as well as labour exploitation.
* [Males: accommodation](#_Males:_accommodation) – options available for men.
* [Males: reintegration assistance](#_Re-trafficking) – services available.
* [Males: longer-term challenges](#_Males:_longer-term_challenges) – particularly employment.
* [Re-trafficking](#_Re-trafficking_1) – vulnerability factors.
* [Healthcare](#_Healthcare) – including mental health care.
* [Life in Albania](#_Life_in_Albania) - for information about the average educational level, wage and employment situation in Albania.
  + 1. The government has made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking in recent years, and in general, is both willing and able to protect victims or potential victims of trafficking. However, this protection may not be sufficient in every case, and each case must therefore be considered on an individual basis, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that protection would not be available.
    2. For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction). See also the Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) and the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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#### Protection: children

* + 1. Cases of child trafficking are less likely than cases of adult trafficking to be registered by the Prosecutor’s Office. Reasons for this could include the following: child victims are often trafficked internally, which is not always recognised as trafficking; children do not always recognise themselves as victims of trafficking and are less empowered to bring a prosecution; and childrens’ rights are not always recognised. However, the government has established a Development Centre for Criminal Justice for Minors, with 4 part-time prosecutors and a judicial police officer responsible for child protection in criminal cases. The government is also focussing on improving child protection and safeguarding issues (see [Prosecution in cases involving children](#_Prosecution_in_cases), [Witness protection and other assistance for victims](#_Witness_protection_and) and [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the)).
    2. One NGO-run shelter, Another Vision, provided specialised services for child victims, both boys and girls, aged under 18. A further 3 shelters can accommodate young people aged over 16; one of these will take boys. The shelter run by Another Vision can accommodate 34 children, and duration of stay is decided on an individual basis. Children are enrolled in a local school and receive psychological, medical and legal assistance. Child Protection Units are involved in the reintegration process. When children leave shelters, it can be difficult to find foster care for them if they cannot be returned to their familes, and in these cases, they are referred to childrens’ homes. In a report published in 2016, the Albanian Ombudsman expressed concerns about the living conditions and treatment in such homes, and in 2019, UNICEF reported that more than 70% of approximately 240 children living in institutions had delays in their physical, emotional and cognitive development. A Commissioner for Childrens’ Rights was appointed in 2017 (see [Children : shelters](#_Children) and [Children: other forms of care](#_Children:_other_forms)).
    3. Although child protection laws are appropriate, the child protection system is still being put in place, and there can be a lack of resources to implement the law. The system has limitations, with a greater level of assistance available in urban than rural areas. There can be a lack of awareness of child protection assistance amongst those who need it, and a lack of trust in those systems. However, there is a free hotline for reporting child abuse, which receives abut 400 calls each day, including 95 calls over the last 4 years regarding children at risk of trafficking (see [Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to children](#_Difficulties_in_implementing) and [Child protection](#_Child_protection)).
    4. The government has made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking in recent years, and in general, is both willing and able to protect victims or potential victims of trafficking. However, this protection may not be sufficient in every case, and each case must therefore be considered on an individual basis, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that protection would not be available.
    5. For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction). See also the Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) and the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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### Internal relocation

* + 1. In the country guidance case of [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html), the Upper Tribunal noted that ‘much of Albanian society is governed by a strict code of honour, which not only means that trafficked women would have very considerable difficulty in reintegrating into their home areas on return but also will affect their ability to relocate internally. Those who have children outside marriage are particularly vulnerable. In extreme cases the close relatives of the trafficked woman may refuse to have the trafficked woman's child return with her and could force her to abandon the child’ (paragraph 119(b) of determination).
    2. However, current evidence indicates that the situation has improved since [TD and AD](http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKUT/IAC/2016/92.html). Although stigma can be a concern for victims of trafficking, work is being done to address it. It is possible for women to live alone in Tirana and they can relocate there; it is harder for a woman to live alone in rural areas, although some women do manage it successfully (see [Stigma attached to victims of trafficking](#_Stigma_attached_to_1) and [Women living alone](#_Women_living_alone)).
    3. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they believe they would be unable to relocate to a specific town/city to mitigate any risk. Tirana, for example, is a city of at least 494,000 inhabitants (see [Area of origin: determining features](#_Area_of_origin:)), and there are services available there which are specifically tailored to ensure the safety and re-integration of victims of trafficking. However, each case must be considered on its individual facts.
    4. For information about the average educational level, wage and employment situation in Albania, particularly the situation for women, see [Life in Albania](#_Life_in_Albania).
    5. For further guidance on internal relocation, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-asylum-claims-and-assessing-credibility-instruction). See Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) for further information on these subjects. See also the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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### Certification

* + 1. Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.
    2. Prior to consideration of certification, a person who has received a positive conclusive grounds decision must be considered in line with the guidance on [Discretionary Leave for victims of modern slavery](https://horizon.fcos.gsi.gov.uk/file-wrapper/discretionary-leave-victims-modern-slavery). If the claim falls for refusal on asylum grounds but discretionary leave is to be granted as a victim of modern slavery (or any other leave is granted), certification will not be appropriate. If no leave is to be granted as a victim of modern slavery, certification can be considered, taking all relevant factors into consideration.
    3. Where a protection or human rights claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
    4. For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (clearly unfounded claims)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-suspensive-appeals-certification-under-section-94-of-the-nia-act-2002-process).

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# Country information

Section 3 updated: 6 January 2021

## The trafficking phenomenon

### Definition

* + 1. The United States Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report (USSD TiP Report 2020), reporting on the year 2019 and published in June 2020, noted:

‘The TVPA [Trafficking Victims Protection Act] defines “severe forms of trafficking in persons” as:

* ‘sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
* ‘the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. A victim need not be physically transported from one location to another for the crime to fall within this definition.’[[1]](#footnote-2)

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### Prevalence

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020, reporting on the year 2019, noted that non-Albanians are trafficked to Albania, and Albanians are trafficked both within Albania and abroad[[2]](#footnote-3).
    2. The same report stated:

‘The government increased victim protection efforts. The government and NGOs identified 96 potential victims and seven officially recognized victims (93 potential victims and two officially recognized victims in 2018). Of these, 36 were adults and 67 were minors (28 adults and 67 minors in 2018); 80 were female and 23 were male (60 females and 35 males in 2018); six were foreign victims (one in 2018); and 65 were victims of sex trafficking, 37 of forced labor, and one of forced marriage for the purpose of domestic servitude. In 2018, the government did not provide details about the type of exploitation for all officially recognized and potential victims, but at least 36 were subjected to sex trafficking, 25 to forced labor, 27 to forced begging, and three to forced marriage for the purpose of domestic servitude in 2018.’[[3]](#footnote-4)

* + 1. In their annual report 2019, published in July 2020, the NGO Different and Equal reported that they provided assistance to 78 victims/potential victims of trafficking, plus 25 of their children, in the year 2019[[4]](#footnote-5).
    2. In June 2019, Albania provided a [response to a questionnaire from GRETA](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) (the Group of Experts on Action against **Trafficking** in Human Beings, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Parties), in which it provided statistics of victims of trafficking (VoT) from 2015 to 2018, disaggregated to show gender, adults/minors, the form of exploitation involved, nationality and country of destination (page 47 on)[[5]](#footnote-6).
    3. The University of Bedfordshire and the IOM conducted a joint, 2-year research study on human trafficking, which included a shared learning event in October 2017 in Tirana involving stakeholders from civil society organisations and government agencies, such as law enforcement, childrens’ services and health services; a report of this event was subsequently published in July 2018 and stated:

‘Statistics on trafficking could be improved. Although statistics were available from different agencies, further work to centralize and improve these would be beneficial, including recording exploitation type. The available data on trafficking within Albania does not provide a clear picture of the nature and trends of trafficking, nor does it assist in understanding what makes people vulnerable to trafficking. The underlying data in Albania requires further work in two key respects – recording of exploitation type in national statistics and a mechanism to compare cases and statistics recorded with those from other sources such as shelters.’[[6]](#footnote-7)

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### Vulnerabilities to trafficking

* + 1. The report on the University of Bedfordshire/IOM shared learning event held in October 2017 stated:

‘The causes or drivers of human trafficking appeared to be broad, multiple and overlapping. Stakeholders highlighted multiple vulnerabilities to trafficking in Albania across the different levels of the Determinants of Vulnerability model. These included poverty, other economic factors, low levels of education, mental health issues, forced marriage arrangements and limited options for safe and legal migration.

‘Gender imbalances within the society were outlined as a key factor for understanding trafficking within Albania. Domestic, intimate partner and sexual violence were highlighted. It was suggested that the National Actions Plans for these forms of abuse should be linked to human trafficking Action Plans in a more coherent way. There is a potentional risk factor of being a woman at the individual level which is a consequence of these gender imbalances. This can also arise from household / family and community level imbalances which are reinforced or at least unresolved at the structural level.’[[7]](#footnote-8)

* + 1. The same report noted:

‘The ethnic Roma and Egyptian populations in Albania are identified as experiencing disproportionately high levels of poverty, insecure accommodation, low levels of school attendance and, concomitantly, high levels of illiteracy… This is attributed to a history of stigma and discrimination against these communities, which has resulted in their experiencing greater economic pressures and heightened vulnerability to different types of exploitation, including trafficking…’[[8]](#footnote-9)

* + 1. The report further stated:

‘The unequal nature of gender roles and relationships have discriminated against women and made them vulnerable to violence and exploitation… Families exercise considerable authority over young women in terms of betrothal and marriage, making it difficult for women to exercise choice, and resulting in women being trapped into prostitution…. At the same time, women often lack access to the education and employment that would enable them to avoid exploitation… These are risk factors at the individual level. Research with victims also supports a more direct relationship, namely that young women are frequently recruited for trafficking by members of their own families and will often know their traffickers.’[[9]](#footnote-10)

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2018, Different and Equal included the following observations about the families of those they had assisted:

‘In most cases of trafficking victims, their problems began in childhood. Many come from dysfunctional family relationships where relationships between parents with each other as well as relationships between parents and children are conflictual and highly problematic. Most of them are violent, neglectful parents, parents who expel their children from home and in most cases have a low level of education.

‘In a significant proportion of cases (45%), parents are separated or divorced. Conflicting relationships as a result of living with a step-parent have given reason to victims’ departure from home. One of these cases case saw sexual abuse.

‘In some cases where their parents have abandoned them, victims have lived with grandparents who are helpless to care for them.

‘65% of cases come from low-income families where one of the parents or both are unemployed. In two cases, family members, father or brothers have been involved in committing criminal acts and have been convicted.’[[10]](#footnote-11)

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC Foundation report, ‘Albania: Trafficked boys and young men’, published in May 2019 [Asylos/ARC report 2019], noted the following from an interview with Dr Schwander-Sievers of Bournemouth University:

‘…there are a number of overlapping risk factors which include geographical / topographical and social issues… And if you look at risk factors, of course poverty, low education, but I think there is one thing missing, which is people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Albania would also be the ones who don’t have the right connections for building a future and who are maybe not in the capital or from larger cities but more in the peripheries. So I think there are geographical/topographical and social issues, which go into this picture. We know there are minority issues; this again is related to poverty, but I don’t know whether it’s fair to say “low education,” it’s more like lack of access to education.’[[11]](#footnote-12)

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, Different and Equal noted the educational level of those they had assisted in 2019:
* University: 2
* High school education: 4
* Unfinished high school: 7
* Secondary school: 11
* Primary: 3
* Without education: 0[[12]](#footnote-13)
  + 1. In the same report, Different and Equal observed that of those they had assisted in 2019, 26 were single, 3 were married, 2 divorced and 2 cohabiting[[13]](#footnote-14).

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### Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 provided the following from a January 2019 interview with Professor Haxhiymeri of the University of Tirana, who argued that:

‘… the same risk factors that have been identified for victims of trafficking regardless of gender apply to boys and young men. “There is no research in Albania about the profiles of trafficked boys and young men whereas we have done research on the profiles of trafficked girls and young women in this country. But the risk factors [of] [poverty, low education, suffering from physical or mental disabilities, domestic violence and/or sexual abuse within the family or a pre-existing blood feud, being LGBT and for children, being Roma or Egyptian or homeless] are also true for trafficked boys and young men in my opinion.”’[[14]](#footnote-15)

* + 1. The same source noted that, in an interview of March 2019, Caritas Albania agreed that these criteria applied to Albanian boys[[15]](#footnote-16).
    2. The same report noted the following from an interview with James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society:

‘“From the Albanian boys that I work with the majority of them have come from lower economic background in Albania. … What comes up most commonly and fairly endemically across the boys and young men that I work with is domestic violence. It has actually been the case in every single Albanian boy that I’ve worked with. It’s been very common that they themselves have experienced violence as well as witnessing violence to siblings and their mother.

‘“Definitely poverty and I’ve worked with an Albanian boy who had moderate to severe learning disabilities and I would definitely say that’s a huge reason for them being trafficked. Also exploited from very young ages due to family members not wanting to look after them ... But I would say by far the most common thing I’ve witnessed is the interrelation between poverty and domestic violence that causes a breakdown in the family unit where commonly either the father leaves home or the mother escapes the family environment with children. I have seen a few examples of where people seemed to have fairly stable relationship with their parents but where we still see the classic grooming model at school, through older young people and adults offering them money and trainers.”’[[16]](#footnote-17)

* + 1. The same report noted the following, based on two anonymous sources and Alfred Matoshi of the Mary Ward Loreto Foundation:

‘“Most of the cases come from families in which they are violated physically, psychologically, and even have been in some cases sexually abused. Negligence is one of the factors that we see with the boys.”

‘Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019

“Personally, I have come to know boys who lack family support, a stable family support. The ones I have met had to take care of themselves, their mothers and sisters at a very young age, or have been in and out residential care institutions for “biological“ or “social“ orphans.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“Majority of them come from orphanages and dysfunctional families.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019’[[17]](#footnote-18)

* + 1. The same report continued:

‘In further interviews conducted by Asylos for this report, interlocutors noted the impact of poverty and lack of job opportunities combined with a culture where boys and young men are expected to find work in order to support their family, putting them at risk of trafficking:

‘“... our research interviews indicate that the biggest risk factor for Albanian youth is poverty and/or a lack of decent job opportunities in Albania”.

‘Source: Anne-Marie Barry [Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery at St Mary’s University, Twickenham], written response to questions, March 2019

‘“I can add that for trafficked boys and young men the main risk factor is poverty and the lack of adequate resources to cover the cost of living for young men and boys, in particular for those that live in remote areas (mountain areas and underdeveloped areas of the country) with no prospective for their future, no land as their family property, no possibility to work somewhere to make a living. They are the ones that face higher risks of being ready to accept any offer to work somewhere - these are the groups of people that do not think twice about an offer they get to leave the country and work somewhere else - so this is poverty and lack of future prospects that many young men and boys feeling at a higher risk of trafficking because some of them are also the only source of living for their families - families that have no father, or many children, many sisters that are all depending on the older brother - these are all extra factors that increase the vulnerability of boys to leave the country in any situation”.

‘Source: Professor Dr. Edlira Haxhiymeri, interview record, January 2019

‘“A family’s economic circumstances will be the main push factor. ... The Albanian culture of ‘men’ working and supporting their families is highly relevant and this results in ‘victims’ not perceiving themselves as victims. They are ‘working’ and that is how it will be seen by their families. ... [A]nother relevant factor would be the expectation that a boy starts supporting his family from the age of 14 and any ‘offer of work’ presents an opportunity to do that”.

‘Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019

‘The point about lack of job opportunities is also noted by Mary Ward Loreto Foundation and an anonymous interviewee:

‘“another issue is unemployment which isn’t mentioned here, and we are talking approximately 30% youth unemployment in Albania”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

* + 1. The report again quoted Dr Schwandner-Sievers:

‘“… it’s very patriarchal [in Albania] for young men. So if you can’t see any other way but to migrate or a criminal path to become a successful provider, what are you going to do when everyone expects you to become a provider for your family. So it’s really access or chances to good avenues of building a basic decent future. In that sense, yes, poverty, low education, of course you can have, sometimes, domestic violence, sexual abuse issues, but I don’t think, necessarily, this is the main thing, but it might also be an outcome of economic stress.”’[[18]](#footnote-19)

* + 1. The same report also noted the ages of boys/young men at risk of trafficking, as indicated by two anonymous sources that were interviewed for this report:

‘“The ages of the boys who are victims of trafficking that I am aware of are young. The ages of the cases are from 14 years old up to 31 years old but 50% of the cases are minors. But even for the cases at the age of 18, 19 or 20 or more have been exploited when they were minors. And the abuses that they suffered have happened at a younger age - before 14 years old. So 90% of cases that I am aware of were exploited when they were minors starting from the age of 13/14 years old, sometimes even earlier.”’[[19]](#footnote-20)

* + 1. Dr Schwandner-Sievers added, ‘“In my opinion, we’re looking increasingly at minors.”’[[20]](#footnote-21)
    2. The Aylos/ARC report 2019 continued:

‘Three interviewees also noted the risk profile of LGBTI persons in Albania and non-Albanians as factors that make boys and young men more vulnerable to being trafficked.

‘“There were cases even from the LGBT community and few cases of non-Albanian victims.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019

‘“Escaping a blood feud or homophobic discrimination may be relevant [as a risk factor]”

‘Source: Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“... being a gay man is very difficult, so LGBT is also at risk, definitely, contrary to all the legislation, you would be frowned upon … if you are a gay boy comporting yourself in what is seen as an effeminate way in a conservative context, you might face horrible abuse.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019’[[21]](#footnote-22)

* + 1. See [Ages of exploited persons](#_Ages_of_exploited) and [Identification of trafficking victims: specific to males](#_Identification_of_trafficking_1) for further information on these subjects.

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### Understanding and awareness of trafficking: males

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted that there can be a lack of understanding of what constitutes exploitation of males:

‘“... because the men don’t accept that they have been exploited so it is because of the hard work that we do to make them aware that this is exploitation and trafficking. So, they don’t accept. Even here in Albania we are a patriarchal system and for the males it is hard for them to say that they were exploited for any kind of exploitation, so they are more resistant they don’t want to express or to identify themselves as VOT. In some areas they have a lack of information to accept or know that they are in a situation of exploitation - in the suburbs of Tirana - in the informal areas of Tirana there is a lack of information about trafficking issues - where the level of unemployment is higher and the level of education is very low - and they are people who have moved from the north or south of Albania and they are placed in the suburb areas informal areas - and living in this difficult situation they are more at risk of being trafficked.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[22]](#footnote-23)

* + 1. See [Awareness raising](#_Corruption_1) for information on this subject.

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### Methods of recruitment

* + 1. In their Annual Report 2018, published in October 2019, Different and Equal noted that the following methods had been used to recruit those they had assisted:

‘Forced and exploited to beg for family and other persons

‘Forced by the lover/co-worker/spouse

‘Promise of shelter, food and all-in-all meeting basic needs

‘Social group encouraging involvement in risky situations

‘Exploiting a vulnerable situation

‘Work promise

‘Promise of marriage’[[23]](#footnote-24)

* + 1. The same report noted:

‘21% of the cases have had as a way of recruitment the social impact for engaging in dangerous situations. All these cases were minors under the age of 16…

‘31% of cases have been victims deceived and exploited by known persons such as boyfriend, cohabitant, or other family members…

‘Cases that have had as a way of recruitment a promise for shelter, food, bacis necessites have been in street situation and where mainly exploited to conduct criminal activities such as drug distribution and stealing.’[[24]](#footnote-25)

* + 1. In June 2019 Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated:

‘Regarding the recruitment method, are mostly selected girls with divorced parents, without support or in economic and health difficulties. Initially they create intimate relationships with traffickers and then by means of deception and coercion are used for prostitution. Another way is recruiting through social networks such as FaceBook, Instagram or Snapchat, etc., by offering engagement / marriage, or promising jobs and a better life. One of the job offers is ballerinas in bars, inside or outside the country, mainly in the border countries with our country, such as Kosovo and Macedonia. Also, another way of recruiting is through phone or other people's recognition where traffickers go to girls' families, using as a justification for marriage and being introduced as a groom or family member. Traffickers are generally Albanian citizens, who by using family, social, and intimate relationships with the victims promise them a better life through exploitation for prostitution. Traffickers use fraudulent techniques as a beginning and if they do not give results, psychological and physical violence is used. In some cases victims have denounced physical and psychological violence. …’[[25]](#footnote-26)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated: ‘Traffickers use false promises such as marriage or employment offers to force victims into sex trafficking.’[[26]](#footnote-27)

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### Methods of recruitment: specific to boys/young men

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted that several of the interlocutors interviewed for this report spoke about the profiles of traffickers including members of criminal networks and victims’ family members:

‘“Mostly peers and young adults that form part of a criminal network that I’ve come across. Sometimes small, or sometimes large criminal gangs who are grooming young men into trafficking often from very young ages and in settings the young people are working at to support their families due to poverty or where they are being targeted at school. Age ranges from other teenagers grooming them, exploiting them or adults up to 30s or 40s... The vast majority are being trafficked by other young adult males.”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019

‘“... many boys have been brought into EU countries by family members, after which they will connect to destination countries and/or seek asylum in Europe. ... Albanian criminal networks are operating throughout Europe and the UK and many are associated by law enforcement agencies with drug trafficking. ... In the UK, some members of law enforcement told us that gang members (predominantly males) are recruiting boys and young men into these gangs who are sometimes criminally exploited, such as for ‘County Lines’ or cannabis cultivation.”

‘Source: Anne-Marie Barry, written response to questions, March 2019

‘…

‘“They are mostly relatives who … in many cases play a key role in the trafficking of boys and men from Albania, almost in every case they live abroad. ... [M]ost of them are recruited by their cousins”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“The traffickers may be the relatives of the boys, family members, or even friends or neighbours. But even people who are unknown have recruited them for exploitation.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, Dec 2018 and Jan 2019

‘“There are some groups that are very well organized, which means these groups know the process of trafficking and the vulnerably [sic] of their families, and they are preparing a trip from Albania to Kosovo or Montenegro. … Their trip in Italy (and in other EU countries) are organized often by criminal groups – well-structured criminal groups.”

‘Source: Caritas Albania, interview record, March 2019

‘“These [criminal] groups work mainly in rural areas because these are more undeveloped with less opportunities to make a living, so they identify these young men and boys then they try to make offers to them. These people that organise the trafficking they have experience from abroad and they are also connected to other regional and European networks.”

‘Source: Professor Dr. Edlira Haxhiymeri, interview record, January 2019’[[27]](#footnote-28)

* + 1. The same report quoted from an interview with James Simmonds-Read:

‘“I have seen a few examples of where people seemed to have fairly stable relationship with their parents but where we still see the classic grooming model at school, through older young people and adults offering them money and trainers…

‘“I have seen a degree of sexual exploitation. I don’t have much direct experience of male Albanian young people disclosing sexual abuse but we have had in our service a few young people who have been sexually abused by men as part of a grooming process into a criminal network in Albania rather than for financial purposes i.e. using it as a control tactic. Which is quite common, or where they aspirationally see expensive cars - most of the Albanians boys I’ve worked with are very into cars actually and it seems like criminal networks often drive flashy cars and it attracts them. I’ve seen situations where they’ve been groomed at a carwash in Albania then helping out around the expensive home doing domestic work for good money.”’[[28]](#footnote-29)

* + 1. Professor Haxhiymeri also raised the lure of job offers, stating ‘“The most frequent method is that of offering a job so they can make the most money in the shortest time possible… Sometimes they tell them that they can be engaged in such kinds of activities that can make lots of money even mentioning the trafficking of drugs and arms smuggling and these kind of activities that people know are illegal, risky but profitable at the same time.”’[[29]](#footnote-30)
    2. The same report stated that ‘Two interviewees, James Simmons-Read and an anonymous source, both described how violence was employed, including threats of violence against the family, to break down an individual so that they would be compliant:

‘“Alongside what I’ve mentioned on the grooming process I have seen quite severe levels of violence to break down young men and make them as compliant as possible. I’ve had a few young men disclose quite extreme forms of physical violence and abuse, lots of threatening with weapons. People being very severely beaten and being locked in rooms for days at a time without food and water. Others have experienced initially softer tactics, followed by violence. For others violence wasn’t utilised until they were trying to extricate themselves. Sometime violence and threats against their family. Some have been kidnaped and forced to grow cannabis. Have seen the occasional example of the kidnapping scenario ...”.

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019

‘“Sometimes they even abuse them physically and put them under pressure to do everything they ask them to do. And mostly this has happened with boys who have been released from children’s institutions and they don’t have anywhere or any place to go to live so they use these kinds of methods with them. Sometimes the boys are threatened by them. They are threatened by the traffickers to do the things they ask them to do.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[30]](#footnote-31)

* + 1. See [Areas of origin of trafficking victims](#_Areas_of_origin) for further information on this subject.

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### Areas of origin of trafficking victims

* + 1. Below is a map[[31]](#footnote-32) of Albania, which includes some of the main towns and cities in the country:



* + 1. The report on the University of Bedfordshire/IOM shared learning event held in October 2017 stated:

‘Places of origin for people who had been identified within the ONAC [Office of the National AntiTrafficking Coordinator] figures were mainly Elbasani, Vlora, Tirana and Fieri districts. Limited numbers of people had been identified in Berat, Korçe, Durrës, Dibër and Shkodër districts. For the first time, Gjirokastër district had seen the identification of one person. Figures from a database from the Psycho - Social Centre “Vatra” were presented at the SLE of 99 cases between 2015 and September 2017 which constitute part of 144 cases from 2014 to date. These figures represent both those formally identified as trafficked and potential cases. These cases illustrated an extensive range of places of origin, including: Vlorë, Fier, Berat, Tirana, Elbasan, Lushnjë, Shkodër, Tepelenë, Librazhd, Peshkopi, Burrel, Pogradec, Sarandë, Korçë, Skrapar, Gramsh and Durrës.’[[32]](#footnote-33)

* + 1. In their Annual Report 2019, Different and Equal reported that they had assisted trafficking victims from the following areas during the year:
* Tirana: 16 persons
* Kukes: 3 persons
* Korce: 3 persons
* Elbasan: 2 persons
* Diber: 2 persons
* Berat: 1 person
* Durres: 1 person
* Lezhe: 1 person
* Gjirikaster: 1 person[[33]](#footnote-34).
  + 1. In July 2020, UNICEF reported on the ‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania’ project, which was launched on December 12, 2019:

‘[David Gvineria, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF in Albania] explained the reasons why the project has targeted northern parts of the country and Tirana. “Northern regions of Albania, as much as they are breathtaking and beautiful, also suffer from very high levels of unemployment and ‘brain drain’, and these two factors often are the core ‘driving’ factors for people to take a risky step and fall prey of the traffickers. Tirana on other hand is a transitory area both for traffickers and those who are at risk of trafficking, so we had to take this into account too.”’[[34]](#footnote-35)

* + 1. In the same article, Mr Gvineria added, ‘But to say that the south or central part of the country is not affected by Trafficking would be wrong. However as often, we have more needs than resources and so some periodization is necessary.’[[35]](#footnote-36)
    2. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated:

‘In interviews with Caritas Albania and with Dr Schwandner-Sievers that were conducted for this project, the interlocutor supported the notion that remote living areas make up an additional risk factor.

‘“... people are trying to move internally to find more opportunities within the barracks areas (suburb areas of the main cities in Albania). There is a huge barracks area around the main cities, so it’s quite popular… (When asked whether living in this area is an additional risk factor) Yes, of course, of course, of course.”

‘Source: Caritas Albania, interview record, March 2019

‘“There used to always be this break down between north and south, and there are differences between north and south, but I think, basically, the main thing is rural-urban. People used to say that north is the most backward area, but you know, you have people from the north who have been in university education in England and come back, and you can find teachers who are very contemporary in a northern village school, so you cannot generalize anymore. Equally, you can have semi-urban towns in the peripheries, or if you are not from the externally educated and young intellectual elites in the capital, even in some of the intellectual circles in the capital, Tirana, (communist modernity, for example, pathologised homosexuality and there are cultural legacies) people can be extremely conservative and homophobic.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019’[[36]](#footnote-37)

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### Forms of exploitation

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated: ‘As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Albania, and traffickers exploit victims from Albania abroad. Traffickers exploit Albanian women and children in sex trafficking and forced labor within the country, especially during tourist season.’[[37]](#footnote-38)
    2. The same report noted: ‘Traffickers exploit Albanian victims in sex trafficking in countries across Europe, particularly Kosovo, Greece, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, North Macedonia, Norway, the Netherlands, and the UK. Albanian migrants who seek employment in Western Europe face forced labor and forced criminality, particularly in the UK.’[[38]](#footnote-39)
    3. In July 2020, Different and Equal published their Annual Report 2019, which covered the year 2019, and recorded the forms of exploitation of those it had assisted:
* Sexual exploitation: 49 persons
* Forced labour: 3 persons
* Forced marriage: 2 persons
* Begging: 3 persons
* Criminal activity: 7 persons
* Sexual exploitation and forced labour: 5 persons
* Sexual exploitation and begging: 3 persons
* Sexual exploitation and criminal activity: 1 person
* Begging and forced labour: 1 person
* Begging and criminal activity: 2 persons
* Forced marriage/sexual exploitation: 1 person[[39]](#footnote-40)
  + 1. The GRETA report 2016 noted that:

‘According to the Labour Inspectorate, the sectors most at risk of human trafficking and forced labour in Albania are agriculture, food processing, textiles, mining, construction, restaurants, hotels, entertainment, transport, domestic work as well as the informal economy. The Roma and Egyptian communities are groups which are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation as they are often employed in the informal economy.’[[40]](#footnote-41)

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### Forms of exploitation: specific to children

* + 1. The OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) ‘Child trafficking and child protection’ report, published 3 December 2018, noted:

‘Over the past 15 years, organizations in Albania that were initially concerned about Albanian children being trafficked out of the country to be exploited in prostitution or begging in Italy, Greece or other parts of Europe have reoriented much of their energy to focus on children living or working on the streets in Albania itself. They have realized that cases categorized as “trafficking”, those involving children earning money in commercial sex or being forced to beg and hand some or all of their earnings to a pimp or beggar master, were linked to continued abuse and exploitation, much directed against street children and other children in street situations (in most cases, Albanian children belonging to minority groups who have dropped out of school before finishing elementary education, or who have never attended school).’[[41]](#footnote-42)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated: ‘Children are commonly forced to beg or perform other types of compelled labor, such as selling small items. Traffickers exploit Albanian children, mainly from the Romani and BalkanEgyptian communities, for seasonal work and forced begging. Isolated reports stated that traffickers exploit children through forced labor in cannabis fields in Albania, and some traffickers are likely involved in drug trafficking.’[[42]](#footnote-43)
    2. The US Department of State’s Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2020 (USSD HR Report 2020), which covered the year 2019, noted:

‘There were many displaced and street children, particularly in the Romani community. Some street children begged and some of them became trafficking victims. …

‘The State Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights reported that as of July [2019] authorities had identified 165 street children, eight of whom were victims or potential victims of trafficking. Authorities placed 17 children under protective orders that prevented the perpetrator from approaching or contacting the victim, and sent four other cases for prosecution. They referred 67 children to shelters.’[[43]](#footnote-44)

* + 1. The ARC/Asylos report 2019 stated:

‘In interviews conducted by Asylos and ARC Foundation for this report, Caritas Albania and an anonymous source … noted the particular risk profile for the Roma and Egyptian communities:

‘“… Children are mostly from a Roma community community, and they are, let’s say, trafficked for exploitation inside and outside Albania. … Based on our research, last year, the traffickers are renting children from Roma communities to be used in the streets of Kosovo and Montenegro. They are not directly with their families but with some other relatives, etc. ... Last year, we did a field visit in Kosovo, and we met a lot of children in street—Albanian children—and based on our discussion, they are with some people that they don’t know very well. They are with a grandmother, so an old lady who is not really their grandmother. They rent these children from small communities—Roma communities—in small cities because it’s a good possibility for them to earn a lot of money ….”

‘Source: Caritas Albania, interview record, March 2019

‘“Most of the cases that I know of were Albanian boys and men; some of them come from the Roma and Egyptian communities.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[44]](#footnote-45)

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### Ages of exploited persons

* + 1. In June 2019 Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which noted, ‘In cases of female sex minors, the most vulnerable age group is the 14 to 18 year old who are exploited for prostitution purposes. The age group under 14 is mainly used for begging.’[[45]](#footnote-46)
    2. In the 2019 Annual Report, published in July 2020, Different and Equal noted that, of the 78 victims/potential victims of trafficking whom they had assisted during the year 2019, the age ranges were as follows:

11-15 years old: 18 persons

16-18 years old: 34 persons

Over 21 years old: 26 persons[[46]](#footnote-47).

* + 1. See [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:) for information about the ages of exploited males.

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### Forms of exploitation: specific to boys/young men

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated:

‘“… in the UK, some members of law enforcement told us that gang members (predominantly males) are recruiting boys and young men into these gangs who are sometimes criminally exploited, such as for County Lines or cannabis cultivation... According to the NCA [National Crime Agency] and law enforcement, Albanian organised crime groups play a significant role in the cocaine trafficking market within the UK. Some interviewees who supported Albanian boys claimed that Albanian boys are recruited into these groups and engage in criminality for these groups...”

‘Source: Anne-Marie Barry, written response to questions, March 2019

‘…

‘“I have [heard of cases where boys and young men were trafficked to the UK] for car wash business and for drug like Marijuana farms in houses ... Construction but mostly these two - marijuana farms and car washes.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“[Boys and young men are trafficked to] any and all countries/cities/towns with an established diaspora. [For the purpose of] Drugs and THB [trafficking in human beings]. The European Union provides a lucrative market for traffickers with the richer countries being preferred or where there is an established diaspora (where there already exists an Albanian community) e.g. UK, Spain, Belgium, France, Italy. With regards types of exploitation its street crime and the most frequently reported examples are connected to the supply of Class A and B drugs. Also, as ‘farmers’ in residential cannabis farms. i.e. cannabis being grown in a residential property.”

‘Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019’[[47]](#footnote-48)

* + 1. The report continued:

‘“According to the NCA and law enforcement, Albanian organised crime groups play a significant role in the cocaine trafficking market within the UK. Some interviewees who supported Albanian boys claimed that Albanian boys are recruited into these groups and engage in criminality for these groups... It is believed that many enter the UK with the debt burden from smuggling, and due to their irregular status and inability to seek legitimate employment enter into criminal activity, e.g. drug dealing or cannabis cultivation. Some interviewees told us that boys have reported feeling threatened as a result of the debt they acquired on coming to the UK, and have a strong fear of returning home, which these interviewees believe indicate a situation of trafficking and exploitation”

‘Source: Anne-Marie Barry, written response to questions, March 201

‘“… you have to look at where Albanian Organised Crime is making its money and in the UK its drugs. … children used as drug mules etc who are detected and detained, pose less risk to the [criminal Albanian] organisation as potential witnesses and sources of information. They will be dealt with as children, subject to special protective measures and can claim trafficking as a defence. They are disposable, easily replaced and often, re-cycled after arrest. This does not happen to an adult offender. …

‘Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019’[[48]](#footnote-49)

* + 1. The same report stated:

‘Several sources interviewed by Asylos and ARC Foundation mentioned that young male victims of trafficking are internally trafficked in Albania:

‘“Internally for seasonal work in touristic places... in begging, pick pocketing and theft, selling small things, working in bars and restaurants, working night hours in parking lots, and in cultivating and distributing drugs… Child trafficking is mostly internal – within the borders, but the law/article on child trafficking does not recognize internal movement as trafficking the same way it does for adult trafficking/ trafficking in persons.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“Often internally within their local area. The vast majority its criminal exploitation for drug distribution. Some is very localised e.g. distributing drugs in their own school. Others its traveling on train routes still within the city limits... it’s relatively localised. Very rarely have any talked about international trafficking. It’s domestic exploitation in Albania and then they have left Albania and come to the UK to get away from those networks. ... Some moved from cities further away by vehicles into northern areas or unknown locations in mountainous areas of Albania that have been transported a decent distance - specifically working cannabis cultivation rather than drug distribution (which can also be class A drugs)....”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019

‘Professor Dr. Haxhiymeri explains that she has experienced cases in which individuals were first trafficked internally, thereby “tested” for later external trafficking. “I have heard of cases that have been trafficked internally first and after that externally. So, in a way they have been tested as to whether they are useful and after that they have been trafficked externally”

‘Source: Professor Dr. Edlira Haxhiymeri, interview record, January 2019’[[49]](#footnote-50)

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### Border crossings and trafficking routes

* + 1. The report of the shared learning event organised by the University of Bedfordshire and IOM, which took place in October 2017, stated:

‘It was suggested by one participant that trafficking routes from Albania have remained consistent over time with the following routes outlined [those not involving the UK have not been included here]:

• Albania > Belgium > UK

• Albania > UK > Norway

• Albania > Greece > Italy > France > Nbetherlands [sic] > UK’[[50]](#footnote-51)

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated: ‘Regarding the methodology of border crossing, in cases of prostitution, traffickers generally instruct the victims without accompanying them, but there are cases when they have traveled together legally crossing the border. In some cases, mainly in neighboring countries, border crossing is done illegally.’[[51]](#footnote-52)
    2. The USSD TiP Report 2019 also noted, ‘BMP [Border and Migration Police] updated internal SOPs [standard operating procedures] on identification and developed daily reporting requirements on trafficking victims; however, BMP could not consistently screen migrants due to increased migrant flows and a lack of BMP officers and interpreters.’[[52]](#footnote-53)
    3. In their ninth General Report, covering the year 2019 and published in March 2020, GRETA ‘urged one Party (Albania) to step up its efforts to prevent and detect cases of human trafficking during border controls, paying particular attention to unaccompanied children.’[[53]](#footnote-54)
    4. In the Albania 2020 report, the European Commission noted that, ‘The border police’s investigative powers need to be strengthened, in particular to detect cases of people-smuggling and trafficking.’[[54]](#footnote-55)

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Section 4 updated: 27 January 2021

## Law

### Trafficking

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted:

‘The government maintained law enforcement efforts. Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of eight to 15 years’ imprisonment for a trafficking offense involving an adult victim, and 10 to 20 years’ imprisonment for an offense involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape.’[[55]](#footnote-56)

* + 1. Article 110/a of the Albanian Criminal Code of January 1995 addressed trafficking in adult persons, both male and female, and stated:

‘The recruitment, transport, transfer, hiding or reception of persons through threat or the use of force or other forms of compulsion, kidnapping, fraud, abuse of office or taking advantage of social, physical or psychological condition or the giving or receipt of payments or benefits in order to get the consent of a person who controls another person, with the purpose of exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or forms similar to slavery, putting in use or transplanting organs, as well as other forms of exploitation, both within and beyond the territory of the Republic of Albania, shall be punishable by imprisonment from eight to fifteen years.

‘When such offence is committed against an adult female person, it shall be punishable by imprisonment of from ten to fifteen years.

‘The organization, management and financing of the trafficking of persons is punished with imprisonment of from seven to fifteen years.

‘When such offence is committed in collaboration, more than once, accompanied with maltreatment and forcing the victim to commit various actions through the use of physical or psychological violence, causing serious consequences to the health or threatening his life, is punishable by imprisonment of no less than fifteen years.

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

‘When the criminal offence is committed through the utilization of a state function or public service, the punishment of imprisonment is increased by (¼) one fourth of the punishment given.’[[56]](#footnote-57)

* + 1. Article 110/b, which addressed those who benefit from, or use, services provided by trafficked persons, was added by law in 2013 and stated:

‘The benefit from or use of services provided by trafficked persons, or services which are subject to exploitation by trafficking, being aware that the person is trafficked, shall be punishable by imprisonment of from two to five years.

‘When this offence is committed against a minor, it shall be punishable by imprisonment of from three to seven years.’[[57]](#footnote-58)

* + 1. Article 128/b, which addressed trafficking of minors, stated:

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

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

‘When this crime is committed in collaboration or more than once, or is accompanied with the maltreatment and forcing of the victim through physical or psychological violence to commit various actions, or bring serious consequences to health, it is punished with imprisonment of no less than fifteen years.

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

‘When the criminal offence is committed through the utilization of a state function or public service, the punishment of imprisonment is increased by one fourth of the punishment given.’[[58]](#footnote-59)

* + 1. The GRETA Report 2016 noted that ‘Article 123 provides for measures to protect unaccompanied minors and children who have run away from home. Under the SOPs, those who come into contact with a potential victim are obliged to contact the anti-trafficking police units so that protection measures are taken without delay.’[[59]](#footnote-60)
    2. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA and referred to Article 52/a, which enshrines the principle of nonpunishment of victims of trafficking for offences they are forced to commit while being trafficked:

‘Albanian legislation provides for the exclusion of victims of trafficking from punishment, rather than prosecution. Specifically, Article 52 / a paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code provides that: "Persons affected by criminal offenses related to the trafficking of a person may benefit from the release of the punishment, the commission of criminal offenses during the period of trafficking and the measure who was forced to commit those acts or unlawful inactions ". there is practically no criminal prosecution against victims of trafficking for the acts they are forced to commit for trafficking purposes. The body's process argues that the victim should not be prosecuted for violations committed because of the trafficking since the will of the victim is damaged and subjective is missing in the commission of the criminal offense.’[[60]](#footnote-61)

* + 1. See [Convictions for prostitution](#_Convictions_for_prostitution_1) for further information on this subject.
    2. In February 2019, the Albanian government submitted a report in accordance with a UN Human Rights Council resolution, which stated:

‘Legal and institutional framework in the field of trafficking is improved, and includes amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (Law 35/2017) and an improved position and access to the criminal process for the victim. Law “On Social Care Services” places a requirement on all institutions responsible for treatment of a trafficked persons to take all specific measures and actions for their assistance and support, in order to find a lasting solution. Law “On State Police” provides for additional safeguards for the protection and comprehensive support for victims of trafficking, especially women and children.’[[61]](#footnote-62)

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, the European Commission noted that ‘In December 2019, Albania adopted additional measures to prevent trafficking in human beings, notably by increasing ASP [Albanian State Police] screening of minors leaving the country.’[[62]](#footnote-63) The same report noted, ‘The improved legislative framework for victims, including amendments to the Criminal Procedural Code, has yet to be implemented.’[[63]](#footnote-64)
    2. See [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the) and [Border crossings and trafficking routes](#_Links_with_organised) for further information on these subjects.

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### Prostitution

* + 1. Article 113 of the Criminal Code which addresses prostitution, states that, ‘Exercise of prostitution is punishable by a fine or up to three years of imprisonment. Giving a payment for personal benefit of prostitution shall be punished by a fine or imprisonment of up to three years.’[[64]](#footnote-65)
    2. Article 114 of the Criminal Code, which deals with the exploitation of prostitution, stated:

‘Encouragement, mediation, or receipt of compensation for exercising prostitution shall be punishable by two to five years of imprisonment.

‘When the same offence is committed with minors, against several persons, with persons who are close kin, close kin of the spouse, who have custodial relationships or availing themselves of their official relationship, or when committed in complicity or more than once, or by state and public officials, shall be punishable by seven to fifteen years of imprisonment.’[[65]](#footnote-66)

* + 1. In the 2019 report on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (US DoL Report 2019), the US Department of Labor noted that, ‘The law also does not criminally prohibit the use of children for prostitution.’[[66]](#footnote-67)
    2. See [Convictions for prostitution](#_Convictions_for_prostitution_1) for further information on this subject.

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### Child labour

* + 1. In the 2019 report on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (US DoL Report 2019), the US Department of Labor noted:

‘Albania has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor…

‘The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Albania's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibitions for using children in illicit activities…

‘On March 13, 2019, the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 129 was passed, which sets forth the procedures to identify, assist, and refer children who have been economically exploited. (4,39) The National Council for the Rights and Protection of the Child also created the 2019-2021 National Action Plan for the Protection of Children from Economic Exploitation, including those in street situations, and approved DCM No. 704, which provides guidance to institutions designated as being responsible for protecting children's rights related to identifying children working in violation of the labor law and referring identified cases to social assistance services.

‘The law in 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.’[[67]](#footnote-68)

* + 1. The same report noted that the minimum age for work is 16, or 18 years for hazardous work[[68]](#footnote-69).

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Section 5 updated: 6 January 2021

## Police and protection

### Effectiveness of the police

* + 1. Reporting on the year 2019, the USSD TiP Report 2020 noted that, ‘The Albanian State Police (ASP) investigated 41 cases [of trafficking] with 62 suspects (38 cases with 51 suspects in 2018) - 34 cases with 45 suspects for adult trafficking (30 cases with 42 suspects in 2018) and seven cases with 17 suspects for child trafficking (eight cases with nine suspects in 2018). The ASP also investigated two suspects for knowingly soliciting or patronizing a sex trafficking victim to perform a commercial sex act (three in 2018).’[[69]](#footnote-70)
    2. The same report noted that ‘ASP maintained an Anti-Trafficking Unit, which investigated trafficking in persons in addition to drug and contraband trafficking.’[[70]](#footnote-71)
    3. The report continued, ‘Limited resources and constant turnover within law enforcement created additional obstacles to maintaining capacity to investigate trafficking.’[[71]](#footnote-72)
    4. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 included the view of James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, who stated, ‘“… some people’s families [families of trafficking victims] have gone to the police but in none of those situations have the police been able to meaningfully prevent trafficking.”’[[72]](#footnote-73)
    5. James Simmonds-Read continued:

‘I have worked with a number of male children that have gone to the police, often when the family has been involved and no one has been able to protect them. They tried moving from location to location and the networks have still found them. Sometimes the police are even giving guidance to hand drugs back rather than them do anything themselves or suggest to prosecute them. The police see themselves as having less power than the criminal networks.”’[[73]](#footnote-74)

* + 1. The same report noted:

‘“At Caritas, we have the possibility to invest in the capacity of the police at a local level. We had to take a project, it’s a Department of State project, and we work along with them to increase their capacities and understanding policy, how to get protection and give recognition of the victims of trafficking, etc. It’s changed their attitude because also they are aware about child protection in Albania. Three years ago, you had the law… child protection law, and also, the situation is changing always and they need to be informed or trained about the situation of trafficking. For example, as Caritas, we have, in the past, invested a lot in child friendly rooms, child friendly spaces. We created five spaces for the victims of trafficking, decorating them with the police in the directorate of Obeyis, in the north of Albania, in Shkodra, in the border, in Tirana, in [Flora], in [Turos], safe places, for the victims of trafficking or for the children in order to have, let’s say, a very… to have a very good interview because you know, in Albania, sometimes the interview is done in the big offices with a lot of police officers, and it’s not very easy for the victims or for the children. And Caritas in the past, we create this safe place for children and provide some support, some logistical support on food, food items for the period that the children or the victims are staying in these places. Yes, they changed their attitude thanks to different or similar trainings and also the Albanian government taking a lot out of the budget. The Albanian government is talking a lot about child protection, safeguarding policy, and etc.”’[[74]](#footnote-75)

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA, in which it was noted:

‘To protect and respect the victims of the THB [trafficking in human beings] at each police commissariat, formal interviews are conducted in a suitable environment (friendly room) to realize the VT / VMT [victim of trafficking/ vulnerable or missing or trafficked] identification. Identification is done by the employees of the regional directorates of the State Social Service in cooperation with the employees of the anti-trafficking units. For the child identification cases during the interview, there is also the employee of the Child Protection Unit.’[[75]](#footnote-76)

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, published in October 2020, the European Commission noted, ‘Police and prosecutors cooperated more effectively on investigations and administrative procedures were simplified.’[[76]](#footnote-77)
    2. Citing various sources, the HO FFM noted: ‘Sources the HO FFT spoke to had not experienced, or were aware of, police collusion with traffickers.’[[77]](#footnote-78)
    3. Albania participates in Europol’s operational analysis projects regarding migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings[[78]](#footnote-79).
    4. See [Standard Operating Procedures (adults)](#_Standard_Operating_Procedures) and [National Referral Mechanism (NRM)](#_National_Referral_Mechanism) for further information about the identification of victims of trafficking. See [Identification of trafficking victims](#_Identification_of_trafficking) for information about police involvement in mobile victim identification units and other methods of identification. See [Child protection](#_Child_protection) for information about trust in the police on the part of parents whose children may be at risk. See [Telephone hotline and online support](#_Telephone_hotline_and) for information about the police hotline. For details of police training, see [Training for officials](#_Training_for_officials). For information about co-operation between the police and NGOs, see [NGO strategies and co-operation with government](#_NGO_strategies_and). See [Punishment of victims of trafficking](#_Punishment_of_victims) for information about police involvement in this issue. See [Corruption](#_Witness_protection) for further information about possible collusion between police and traffickers.
    5. For further information on the Police, see Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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Section 6 updated: 6 January 2021

## Prosecution

### General

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, the European Commission stated that 22 new cases of trafficking were referred to the prosecution in 2018 and 25 in 2019[[79]](#footnote-80). In a report published in March 2020, the European Commission stated that in 2019, 25 new cases of human trafficking were referred to the prosecution. It noted that there were five final convictions in 2019[[80]](#footnote-81).
    2. The USSD TiP Report 2020, covering the year 2019, stated:

‘The General Prosecution Office (GPO) investigated 19 new cases with eight defendants for adult trafficking (17 new cases with five defendants in 2018) and six new cases for child trafficking (12 cases in 2018). GPO prosecuted three cases with three defendants (two cases with six defendants in 2018), one defendant for adult trafficking (three in 2018) and two defendants for child trafficking (three in 2018).

‘Courts convicted five traffickers (five in 2018), three for adult trafficking (one in 2018) and two for child trafficking (four in 2018). Judges sentenced three traffickers convicted of adult trafficking to seven years and six months’ imprisonment, 10 years’ imprisonment, and 17 years’ imprisonment, respectively; two child traffickers were sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment. In 2018, one trafficker received two years and eight months’ imprisonment for adult trafficking, and four traffickers received sentences from six years and eight months to 18 years for child trafficking. The appeals court reviewed and confirmed decisions on three traffickers (five in 2018).’[[81]](#footnote-82)

* + 1. The third evaluation round of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which focused on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking, and which was published in December 2020, reported:

‘GRETA is concerned by the low number of convictions for human trafficking and urges the Albanian authorities to take additional measures to ensure that human trafficking cases are investigated proactively, regardless of whether a complaint regarding the crime has been submitted, and making use of special investigation techniques and financial investigations in order to gather evidence. The authorities must provide training and encourage the specialisation of prosecutors and judges to deal with human trafficking cases, ensuring that they are not re-qualified as other offences which carry lighter penalties, and that they lead to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.’[[82]](#footnote-83)

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a [response to a GRETA questionnaire](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81)[[83]](#footnote-84) which included details of investigations, prosecutions and convictions of cases of trafficking (page 50 on).
    2. See [Investment in Albania](#_Investment_in_Albania) for information about investment by the UK government in the criminal justice system in Albania.

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### The judiciary

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted:

‘The government continued judicial reforms that changed prosecutorial jurisdiction for trafficking cases; the Special Anticorruption Prosecution (SPAK) and the Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organized Crime acquired jurisdiction over trafficking cases related to organized crime, while district courts prosecuted trafficking cases without an organized crime nexus. However, prosecutors and observers reported district prosecutors did not have the specialized experience and capacity to prosecute trafficking cases successfully. Authorities reported confusion between overlapping elements of exploitation of prostitution and trafficking and at times applied the lesser charge, because it required less specialization and time, or due to the false belief that trafficking crimes required a transnational element.’[[84]](#footnote-85)

* + 1. The third evaluation round of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which focused on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking, and which was published in December 2020, reported:

‘GRETA welcomes … the setting up of the Special Prosecution Office against Corruption and Organised Crime. However, GRETA is concerned that prosecutors at First Instance Prosecutor’s Offices lack training and specialisation to deal with trafficking cases, the majority of which will fall within their jurisdiction, with consequent weakening of the criminal justice response to human trafficking. GRETA considers that the Albanian authorities should ensure that there are specialised prosecutors trained to deal with human trafficking cases, as well as encouraging the training a specialisation of judges.’[[85]](#footnote-86)

* + 1. The USSD HR Report 2020 noted trial procedures:

‘The constitution and law provide for the right to a fair and public trial without undue delay. The law presumes defendants to be innocent until proven guilty. It provides for defendants to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges against them, with free interpretation as necessary. Defendants have the right to be present at their trial and consult an attorney. If they cannot afford one, an attorney is to be provided at public expense. The law provides defendants adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, and access to interpretation free of charge. Defendants have the right to confront witnesses against them and to present witnesses and evidence in their defense. Defendants may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. Defendants have the right to appeal. The government generally respected these rights, although trials were not always public and access to an attorney was at times problematic. To protect the rights of defendants and their access to the evidence against them, a prosecutor must apply to a preliminary hearing judge and make a request to send the case to trial.’[[86]](#footnote-87)

* + 1. See [Corruption](#_Corruption_1) for further information on this subject. See [Bodies responsible for dealing with trafficking](#_Bodies_responsible_for) for the lack of judicial involvement with meetings of the NRM. See [Investment in Albania](#_Investment_in_Albania) for information about investment by the UK government in the criminal justice system in Albania.
    2. For further information on the Judiciary, see Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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### Corruption

* + 1. The USSD HR Report 2020 stated:

‘Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, political pressure, intimidation, widespread corruption, and limited resources sometimes prevented the judiciary from functioning independently and efficiently…

‘The government implemented an internationally monitored process to vet judges and dismiss those with unexplained wealth or ties to organized crime. As of November [2019], 64 percent of judges and 43 percent of prosecutors who had undergone vetting had failed and been dismissed. As a result, only one of nine judges remained on the Constitutional Court, depriving the court of a quorum; the others had been dismissed during the vetting process or resigned before undergoing vetting… As of November [2019], 18 of the 19 seats on the Supreme Court were also vacant, and the court faced a considerable case backlog. The politicization of past appointments to the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court threatened to undermine the independence and integrity of these institutions.’[[87]](#footnote-88)

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 included information from an interview with Professor Haxhiymeri, who stated:

‘Several sources identify corruption as a barrier to successful implementation of trafficking legislation and as a barrier to access to justice in general in Albania.

‘“Judges accepts bribes … They also for personal interests like family relations or people they know, make decisions against the law. The legal system remains the most corrupt in the country and does not seem to be improved even under the so-called reform of the system... There are different forms of bribes I would say. Cash money in big amounts is one, offering land properties, expensive apartments in the capital city, villa and houses at the beach area, expensive vehicles, jewelry, etc...”’[[88]](#footnote-89)

* + 1. The same report stated:

‘“I’ve even had discussions with officials and NGOs who work in Albania … who have acknowledged that there is a history of direct links between officials in Albanian government and police and traffickers. Some people have been prosecuted. Some individuals known to have been involved or had historic involvement, are still in positions of authority in Albania currently. So it’s my viewpoint that this makes it very difficult to have robust response to these issues.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 3, interview record, 2019

‘“... the only people who get justice are those who have more money and better connections. That means that if you are a vulnerable victim, a really vulnerable trafficking victim, and you’re up against somebody who is a big organized crime boss with lots of money, you have no chance because this person can bribe whomever, and they have the connections too. You are basically excluded from justice, regardless of what is on paper, … There are also real threats and stuff. So corruption is the big issue of whether somebody can actually have fair access to justice and protection.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019

‘“The guy who is directing everything is always outside because he is always in collaboration with the officers or the judge and this is the biggest problem that we have in implementation of the law regarding trafficking… The impact is they [victims of trafficking] have no hope, no trust in institutions… so they re-enter the world of trafficking or they end up in prison.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“I do think there is an endemic problem with direct relationships between law enforcement and criminal networks in Albania… I think it also leads to a culture where boys and young men believe that they cannot rely on or access state support. I think that’s one of the reasons that they leave the country. It also leads to people feeling powerless to escape networks as they see them to be very well connected and they generally don’t believe that relocating to other areas will be enough to prevent them from being at risk again.”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019’[[89]](#footnote-90)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted, ‘The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in trafficking offenses; however, NGOs reported some instances of official complicity and corruption.’[[90]](#footnote-91)
    2. See [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the) for further information about the possibility of collusion between police and traffickers. For further information on the Judiciary, see Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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### Prosecution in cases involving children

* + 1. In May 2018, the Council of Europe (C of E) Human Rights Commissioner, Dunja Mijatovic, visited Albania; the subsequent report was published in September 2018 and stated:

‘The Commissioner welcomes the enactment of the 2017 Code on Criminal Justice for Children, as a positive step towards establishing child friendly justice in Albania. Noting that other important legislative and policy changes will have to take place in order to implement the above legislation, the Commissioner draws the Albanian authorities’ attention to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Guidelines of 2010 on child friendly justice and encourages them to draw inspiration from them and to give them effect.’[[91]](#footnote-92)

* + 1. When interviewed for the Asylos/ARC report 2019, Caritas stated that some interviewees reported that boys/young men were not always recognised as victims of trafficking:

‘“We don’t have any gaps in the legal framework for the child protection. It is the implementation of all laws in Albania in the context. First, child labor, under Albanian mentality, they are always called potential victims of trafficking. Children’s situation or child labor is recognized as part of trafficking, but in our statistics - government statistics - they are never reporting numbers, figures, about this kind of situation, which means the law it’s not implemented. It’s not because we have gaps but because the law is not implemented, and the children are not recognized as being in a situation of trafficking.”’[[92]](#footnote-93)

* + 1. The same report stated:

‘When asked for the reason why fewer children’s trafficking cases than adults are registered by the Prosecutor’s Office, sources interviewed by ARC Foundation and Asylos for this project responded that they thought it is due to the fact that child victims are generally trafficked internally but that this is not fully recognised in law; that children don’t see themselves as victims (especially if they are being exploited by family members); the general weakness of child protection system; that children are less empowered to bring a case than an adult; as well as fear of reprisals and that the government holds a deep sense of shame and denial about child trafficking:

‘…

‘“... this is a new culture. Most of the cases where victims are minors, they do not see themselves as a VOT … so they sent them to institutions like churches or NGOs where they think they are more protected… It is still not at being taken seriously. Because of a cultural concept, the problems of minors have been treated with no precedence and are mainly addressed in non-state institutions. Another reason that there are fewer cases of minors dealt with by the prosecution is that they find it harder to demand their rights or understand whether they have been trafficked or exploited.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“My personal opinion is that there is a lack of understanding when it comes to children’s rights. It’s just under the parapet of visibility in many ways.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019 [[93]](#footnote-94)

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### Legal aid and legal advice

* + 1. The government of Albania submitted a [response](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) in June 2019 to a questionnaire from GRETA which provided comprehensive information about the rights of victims of trafficking and the support available to them as they deal with the justice system[[94]](#footnote-95) (page 16, page 22 on).
    2. Albania’s response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire provided information about legal aid:

‘Legal aid is guaranteed by the state. Human trafficking have been included as eligible legal aid category since May 2013. On December 14, 2017, the new law no.111 / 2017 "On granting state aid guaranteed by the state" was adopted, which entered into force on 1 June 2018.

‘Article 11 of the law, which deals with the special categories of legal aid beneficiaries, regardless of their income or wealth, includes victims of trafficking in human beings at every stage of criminal proceedings as well as minor victims and minor in conflict with the law, at any stage of criminal proceedings…

‘Amendments of the Criminal Procedure Code, Article 58 / gj, have recently provided the right of the victim, to be exempted from the payment of any expenses for obtaining court acts, and fees for filing a lawsuit, related to the status of the victim of a criminal offense. The victims’ access to justice is an important right, which is relevant to the European Union legislation, and should be treated as a right that is implemented directly by the institutions and not as a right that is obtained by the victim's request. In order to benefit from this right, the victim should submit parallel with lawsuit also the request to be exempted from payment of the court fees.’[[95]](#footnote-96)

* + 1. The same [response to the GRETA questionnaire](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) included details of legal aid provided, and the number of recipients, at page 49[[96]](#footnote-97).
    2. Albania’s response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire further stated:

‘With the entering in the program, all the cases that have collaborated with justice institutions, and have denounced traffickers, perpetrators, are intermediated and assisted by centre’s lawyers during all the process, from the denouncement, investigation and in the court till the end of the court procedures. centre’s staff also (lawyers), assist victims during their civil cases, such as compensation claim, legal custody for children, divorce, property issues, etc. Lawyers and Psychologist accompany victims for resolving their issues in all institutions: Police, Prosecution, Court, Execution office, etc.

‘All categories of victims of trafficking are treated in our criminal legislation as harmed by the offense and the nature of the offenses committed to their detriment, this category is characterized by their weakness. To overcome the weakness of their position and to prevent the misuse of this position, victims of trafficking are questioned in the presence of a psychologist and when they are juveniles they may be questioned in the presence of a parent or legal guardian.’[[97]](#footnote-98)

* + 1. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and UN Women conducted a global survey of survivors of trafficking and frontline stakeholders, with the resulting report published in July 2020. One of the Albanian respondents stated, ‘“Our state needs…to increase access to justice for victims of trafficking.”’[[98]](#footnote-99)
    2. The report published in September 2018 concerning the visit of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, to Albania in May 2018 stated:

‘The Commissioner would like to emphasise that effective access to justice, particularly by persons who are in an economically weak situation, cannot be achieved without an effective system of legal aid and legal advice. She is concerned that obstacles to access to justice and lack of access to legal aid for vulnerable groups, including Roma, persons with disabilities and persons with economic difficulties continue to be reported. In this context, the Commissioner welcomes the enactment in 2017 of the new Law on Free Legal Aid which broadens the category of persons benefiting from legal aid and introduces primary and secondary legal aid concepts. The Commissioner is also pleased that the authorities have earmarked the budget for the implementation of this law. The authorities are encouraged to step up their work on the implementation of the legal aid legislation with a view to removing the obstacles to access to justice for vulnerable persons.’[[99]](#footnote-100)

* + 1. Information about the 2017 law on free legal aid can be found [here](https://euralius.eu/index.php/en/library/albanian-legislation/send/21-legal-aid/232-law-on-legal-aid-en).
    2. The collaborative report from the University of Bedfordshire and IOM of July 2018 stated that there was a lack of access to free legal aid and access to justice mechanisms for victims of trafficking[[100]](#footnote-101).
    3. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated that ‘The government hired an additional 19 victim assistance coordinators for a total of 24, who provided legal assistance and guided victims in accessing services.’[[101]](#footnote-102)
    4. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering events of 2019, Different and Equal stated:

‘D&E has provided legal assistance to all beneficiaries in the program through a D&E lawyer. Legal assistance has been consisted mainly on:

-Informing and re-informing all program beneficiaries about their rights,

-Accompanying the beneficiaries for giving statements to the police, the prosecutor,

-Representation and prosecution of all criminal and civil cases of beneficiaries,

-Continuously inform the beneficiaries about the progress of their cases,

-Support for foreign beneficiaries to apply for a residence permit, identification documents at the respective Embassies, etc.

‘15 cases have cooperated with Law Enforcement Structures by denouncing traffickers, 9 of them are new cases that have entered the program during this year.’[[102]](#footnote-103)

* + 1. Different and Equal also noted the following sessions, delivered in 2019, which provided legal information for beneficiaries:

‘Social Services in the Municipality,

- Law on Personal Data,

- Property rights and the position of women in relation to property,

- Law for Foreigners,

- Law on the right to information,

- Knowledge of public institutions in Albania,

-Children' rights

- Free movement of citizens in the Schengen area,

- Rights and obligations of adults,

- Law on Social Security,

- Law on “Measures against Domestic Violence",

- Gender equality and discrimination,

- The judicial system in Albania,

- Access to justice.’[[103]](#footnote-104)

* + 1. The same report noted that ‘During 2019, D&E has organized 9 information sessions with the participation of 488 people in Tirana, Durres, Vlora and Shkodra on the rights of victims of crime, especially victims of trafficking.’[[104]](#footnote-105)
    2. See [Punishment of victims of trafficking](#_Convictions_for_prostitution_1) for further information on this subject.

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### Witness protection and other assistance for victims

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated:

‘Fourteen victims cooperated with law enforcement in investigations and prosecutions (five in 2017); however, the government did not consistently apply a victim-centered approach in investigations and prosecutions. In previous years, law enforcement did not consistently offer sufficient security and support, and victims and their families received threats during court proceedings. SPAK [Special Anticorruption Prosecution] possessed equipment that allowed testimony via video conferences, which was used in one case (the Serious Crimes Court used one in 2018). Victims who testified against traffickers had access to the witness protection program; one victim participated in the program (none in 2018). The government established the Development Center for Criminal Justice for Minors with four part-time prosecutors and a judicial police officer responsible for child protection in criminal proceedings.’[[105]](#footnote-106)

* + 1. The third evaluation round of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which focused on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking, and which was published in December 2020, reported:

‘The protection of victims and witnesses of human trafficking is guaranteed by provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure, including the right to be heard through audio-visual means, as well as the availability of a witness protection programme. GRETA considers that the Albanian authorities should take additional steps to ensure that victims and witnesses of trafficking, as well as their family members, are provided with effective and appropriate protection from potential retaliation or intimidation.’[[106]](#footnote-107)

* + 1. Albania’s response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire stated, ‘At Vatra center, beneficiaries are protected throughout the phases of their legal processes. Possible risk victims are placed in the shelter of Vatra, which is sheltered for 24 hours. They are always accompanied by the center attorney and transported by the center vehicle. All the time that a higher risk or risk is assessed, Vatra has been supported by the State Police.’[[107]](#footnote-108)
    2. [Albania's response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) also provided full information about the treatment of child victims of trafficking (page 26 on)[[108]](#footnote-109).

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### Compensation for victims

* + 1. The third evaluation round of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which focused on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking, and which was published in December 2020, reported:

‘Victims of trafficking can claim compensation for damages as a civil claimant in criminal proceedings, as well as in a separate civil procedure. In the reporting period, there has been only one criminal court decision on compensation of a victim of trafficking, but the perpetrator appealed. The adoption of Law No. 34/2019 "On Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets" aims to improve the administration of seized and confiscated assets and the compensation of crime victims through the creation of a special compensation fund. However, there is still no functioning state compensation scheme available to victims of trafficking. GRETA urges the Albanian authorities to make efforts to facilitate and guarantee victims’ access to compensation, in particular by ensuring that the collection of evidence about the harm the victim has suffered is part of the criminal investigations and by making full use of the legislation on the freezing and forfeiture of assets to secure compensation for victims of human trafficking.’[[109]](#footnote-110)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated: ‘Prosecutors did not seek restitution in criminal cases; no victims received restitution. Applicable law allowed victims to pursue compensation through civil suits.’[[110]](#footnote-111)

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### Avenue of redress

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated:

‘Ombudsman Institution, in order to prevent any case of human rights violations and to protect them, including children, besides the classic process of guaranteeing the right of citizens to complain to the institution, has worked firmly in terms of finding the right and proper mechanisms, to ensure and guarantee in this case a proactive approach of all citizens. Such we can mention: online portal, phone, smartphone application, real-time complaint / request, and postal service.

‘Likewise, to be inclusive and with a wide geographical spread, Ombudsman Institution operates seven regional offices in our country, which promote human rights, as well as contact with citizens to identify violations of their rights from bodies of the state administration.

‘Also, the possibility of dealing with child-initiated cases and conducting various inspections in public administration institutions that provide public services such as health, education, social services, institutions of deprivation of liberty, etc., are the functional duties of the Ombudsman Institution, which have made it possible to increase the visibility on the ground.

‘In any case, appeals to Ombudsman Institution are free of charge ….’[[111]](#footnote-112)

* + 1. Further information about avenues of redress is available in [Albania's response to GRETA, June 2019](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81).

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### Punishment of victims of trafficking

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted: ‘Unlike previous years, the government did not knowingly penalize victims, but it may have penalized some trafficking victims unknowingly due to inadequate identification efforts.’[[112]](#footnote-113)
    2. The third evaluation round of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which focused on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking, and which was published in December 2020, reported that, ‘Albanian legislation contains a specific non-punishment provision. However, GRETA was informed of cases of women who were possible victims of trafficking, but were not identified as such and were convicted for engaging in prostitution. GRETA considers that the Albanian authorities should continue to ensure the application of the non-punishment principle in practice.’[[113]](#footnote-114)
    3. See [Law](#_Law) for information about legal provision to protect victims of trafficking from punishment as a result of being trafficked. See [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the) for further information on this subject.

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Section 7 updated: 6 January 2021

## Government and NGO strategies and policies

### Introduction

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted:

‘The Government of Albania does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Albania remained on Tier 2 [this indicates that the government does not fully meet the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act but is making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards[[114]](#footnote-115)].

‘These efforts included sentencing convicted traffickers to significant prison terms, identifying more victims, and providing robust training for relevant officials. The government, in cooperation with civil society, also set up the Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking, consisting of three survivors, and increased victim assistance in criminal proceedings by establishing the Development Center for Criminal Justice for Minors and hiring additional victim assistance coordinators.

‘However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government convicted five traffickers in both 2018 and 2019, the lowest number of convictions since 2014. The government lacked screening efforts for vulnerable populations—particularly migrants, asylum-seekers, individuals in commercial sex, and children—and authorities did not consistently participate in mobile victim identification units. The government continued to delay funding for NGO-run shelters, and social services lacked resources for long-term care and reintegration efforts, particularly for child victims and victims with children.’[[115]](#footnote-116)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 contained the following recommendations for Albania:
* ‘Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers - including complicit officials - under Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the criminal code.
* ‘Increase efforts to screen vulnerable populations and train police, labor inspectors, and other front-line officials on proactive identification of victims.
* ‘Institutionalize and provide training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial officials, particularly district prosecutors, on investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases, including guidance on issues of consent and coercion in the context of labor and sex trafficking.
* ‘Create funding mechanisms that allocate adequate funding and resources on a consistent and regular basis to the government-run and NGO-run shelters for trafficking victims.
* ‘Expand the jurisdiction of labor inspectors to inspect businesses that are not legally registered.
* ‘Improve the sustainability of, and law enforcement participation in, mobile trafficking victim identification units.
* ‘Increase reintegration services, including access to education for child victims.
* ‘Implement victim-centered approaches and victim witness protection measures during investigation, prosecution, and court proceedings.’[[116]](#footnote-117)
  + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, the European Commission stated that ‘Albania should increase efforts on the early identification of victims and potential victims; intensify cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries and international cooperation; and contribute to the successful reintegration of victims.’[[117]](#footnote-118)
    2. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 included the following thoughts from one of the interlocutors:

‘“A limiting factor will be resources and again, in this respect Albania is no different from many other countries. ... No state response is adequate to prevent and combat THB [trafficking in human beings] but in Albania there is a dedicated law, a dedicated task force, a National Rapporteur, an NRM, law enforcement and judiciary training initiatives, dedicated prosecutors and courts, and victim shelters. Better than some EU Member States in my opinion.”

‘Source: Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019’[[118]](#footnote-119)

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### Government strategies

* + 1. [Albania's response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) set out international agreements signed by Albania on action against human trafficking (page 45 on)[[119]](#footnote-120).
    2. The US DoL Report 2019 noted the following action plans:

‘National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Persons (2018–2020): Ensures the identification and referral for the protection of child victims and potential victims of human trafficking in accordance with standard operating procedures. Increases the use of CPUs [Child Protection Units], police, and border controls to identify victims, including children in to street situations. Raises public awareness of all forms of human trafficking, including forced labor.

‘The Action Plan for the Social-Economic Reintegration of Women and Girl Victims of Trafficking (2018–2020): Increases resources available to victims and attempts to reintegrate female trafficking victims by providing education and social services to combat future forced labor and human trafficking. Part of the Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Persons Action Plan. Active in 2018.’[[120]](#footnote-121)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated: ‘The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. The government continued implementation of the 2018-2020 national action plan and allocated 488.9 million leks [approximately £3,115,980] for its implementation. The government allocated 9.5 million leks [approximately £60,524] to the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (ONAC), compared with 11.9 million leks ($102,190) [approximately £75,815] in 2018.’[[121]](#footnote-122)
    2. The same report noted that:

‘The government did not make efforts to regulate or punish labor recruiters for illegal practices that increased migrants’ vulnerability to exploitation abroad. Labor inspectors did not have authority to inspect informal work activities, including unregistered businesses. The government drafted amendments to the law on public procurement to disqualify companies - including administrative personnel, leadership, or supervisory bodies - convicted of trafficking or exploitation of children from the competition for public contracts… The government did not take steps to reduce the demand for commercial sex.’[[122]](#footnote-123)

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, the European Commission noted that, ‘As regards the strategic framework, Albania has a cross-cutting (2017-2020) strategy on organised crime, illicit trafficking and terrorism. It also has an action plan on the fight against organised crime (the “power of law” action plan) and a strategy (2018-2020) and action plan on the fight against trafficking in human beings.’[[123]](#footnote-124)
    2. See [Education and training](#_Education_and_young) for information about the education and training available to victims of trafficking.

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### NGO strategies and co-operation with government

* + 1. In July 2020, UNICEF interviewed David Gvineria, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF in Albania, who described a project, ‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania,’ which was launched on December 12, 2019:

‘… we were delighted to form a wonderful and diverse coalition from local and international NGOs such as Different & Equal, VATRA, Tjeter Vizion and Terre des Hommes, as well as OSCE presence in Albania.

‘Our program covers four main areas of intervention:

‘1.Reserching [sic] this phenomenon and rolling-out proactive strategic communication, especially targeting most at risk population;

‘2. Strengthening effectiveness of investigation, prosecution and overall application of justice to those who perpetrated and those who have survived the horror of trafficking;

‘3. Early identification, immediate protection and long-term re-integration of victims of trafficking; and

‘4. Early recognition of risk factors (root causes) to trafficking among at- risk and vulnerable populations, prevention work and strengthening of their resilience.

‘Despite C19 challenges, everyone from the coalition made its absolute best not to slow down or stop activities, and as a result we managed to achieve a lot already.’[[124]](#footnote-125)

* + 1. The same article continued with the following question to Mr Gvineria:

‘The project [‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania’] is expected to conclude on March 31, 2021. According to your estimations, what do you expect to achieve at the end of the project?

‘We would like to directly support around 250 Law Enforcement, Prosecution and Judiciary professionals; We are aiming to engage around 240 victims or potential victims of trafficking in the economic empowerment program and secure their financial independence; We are planning to provide support to around 150 young people and children to help them avoid school drop-out; We will secure safe and dignified shelter and full package of services for at least 125 identified victims or potential victims of trafficking; We will have 3 different researches ready to better understand why and how people fall into the trap of traffickers and what drives them to such risky behavior; and finally we are hoping to support the Government, The Office of National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator at Ministry of Interior, with the development of a new National Action Plan on Anti-Trafficking.’[[125]](#footnote-126)

* + 1. In the same article, Mr Gvineria also commented on governmental co-operation, as well as co-operation with other NGOs:

‘The overall cooperation and coordination with the responsible Government structures so far was excellent. The Office of National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, as well as Regional Anti Trafficking Committees in Tirana, Shkoder, Kukes and Diber were extremely open and ready for collaboration. So we are just hoping that this close partnership will continue regardless of C19 challenges. …

‘we have a wonderful and diverse group of coalition members, Government counterparts and lot more of other partners that joined our program along the way. The coordination happened at different levels. Central level coordination is always led by our Government counterpart, the Office of Anti-Trafficking Coordinator; while regional coordination happens with the involvement of all partners active in the region and with the leadership of the Regional Anti-Trafficking Committee. In this process, I also must underscore the invaluable and important role of the UK Embassy in Albania. Their and personally H.E Ambassador Norman’s engagement is exemplary and always brings added value to our work.’[[126]](#footnote-127)

* + 1. The OSCE published an article in April 2020 in which it described some of its work in Albania:

‘Juliana [Juliana Rexha, National Anti-Trafficking Officer from the OSCE Presence in Albania] says that by pointing to horrific children’s forced and organized begging as a form of exploitation and trafficking, the Presence focuses on enhancing the capacities of child protection units, police, and social workers, to provide a prompt response to the particular needs of children in forced begging.

‘“We provide support to the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child (SARPC) and the Tirana municipality to co-ordinate the work of the local child protection units to identify child victims of trafficking and those subjected to forced begging,” she says.

‘In March last year [2019], the Council of Ministers, with the Presence’s technical support, passed a decision on the protection of children from economic exploitation, creating procedures for the identification and referral of child labour cases from the Labour Inspectorate to Child Protection Units.

‘“To bolster its implementation, the OSCE Presence supported the State Labour Inspectorate to finalise a methodology to train labour inspectors how to monitor children’s work and co-ordinate with the appropriate institutions, such as police and child protection workers, when they suspect child labour,” says Irida Qosja, Chief of Labour Relations in the Albanian State Labour Inspectorate.

‘…

‘During 2019, the Presence started an in-depth analysis of the cases of child trafficking and children at risk of trafficking. Based on findings, a report on the profiles and typology of child trafficking and children at risk of trafficking will be issued in early 2020. “This research will map the risk factors that influence the likelihood and particular vulnerabilities of children becoming victims of trafficking,” says Juliana.

‘The Presence also supported the development of a National Action Plan for the protection of children from economic exploitation, which the Ministry of Health and Social Protection signed in October 2019.’[[127]](#footnote-128)

* + 1. The same article noted that ‘the basis of this co-operation [between various organisations which are working together on issues of human trafficking in Albania] resides in an agreement signed in May 2018 by the Presence with UNICEF, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, and World Vision, which facilitates joint training, advocacy, and awareness-raising activities.’[[128]](#footnote-129)
    2. The article further stated that ‘The [OSCE] Presence leads the donors’ coordination in anti-trafficking issues and holds the advisory role in the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking, by ensuring compliance with the numerous OSCE anti-trafficking commitments and recommendations.’[[129]](#footnote-130)
    3. In the Annual Report 2018, published in October 2019 and covering events of 2018, Different and Equal stated: ‘In December 2018, a meeting was held with representatives of the Police Commissariat no. 3 to increase co-operation with community-based police officers and especially those who address domestic violence and child protection cases. Meetings will be held in the following and other police commissariats of District of Tirana.’[[130]](#footnote-131)
    4. See [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the), [Training for officials](#_Training_for_officials_2), [Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to children](#_Difficulties_in_implementing), and [Child protection](#_Child_protection) for information on this subject.

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Section 8 updated: 6 January 2021

## Difficulties in implementing law and policies

### General

* + 1. The collaborative report from the University of Bedfordshire and IOM of July 2018 stated: ‘There is an implementation gap between a strong legislative and policy framework in Albania with practice in reality. Stakeholders at the SLE highlighted high level political commitment to responding to human trafficking in Albania, evidenced by the adoption of a number of policy and legislative measure but there was a feeling that these are not being fully implemented in practice.’[[131]](#footnote-132)
    2. The Asylos/ARC Foundation report 2019 also referred to potential difficulties in implementing law and policies:

‘When asked for their views on the reason for the implementation gap between a strong legislative and policy framework in Albania with practice in reality, sources interviewed by ARC Foundation and Asylos mentioned: issues with identification; a lack of training and expertise; corruption; weak institutions; a lack of witness protection and legal aid; and distrust of the protection system which prevents victims from coming forward.

‘“This state of affairs [the ‘implementation gap’] is common to every country in the world including the UK. It is the consequence of many related factors but lack of or sufficient implementation of procedures aimed at identification, training, awareness and appropriate judicial response are the usual fundamental weak links.”

‘Source: Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019’[[132]](#footnote-133)

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### Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to males

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 also referred to difficulties in implementing policies with a particular reference to males:

‘“… They [victims of trafficking] don’t want to go to the police and do the denunciation. They want to go ahead and be supported and leave behind this situation of exploitation. They show a kind of resistance not to do this kind of denunciation. The reasons for this include; Stigma; Fear from exploiter especially in cases where exploiters are family members; Albanian mentality that males can’t be in the situation of exploitation or trafficking; Lack of information; Lack of elements for the verification of these crimes; Resistance of law enforcement structures to consider exploitation of cases where victims are males. With the penal changes in the legislation the number of condemned traffickers is higher now than it was before. More strong let’s say. The traffickers are condemned.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019

‘…

‘“… for us in Albania it’s a new thing to think that the boys and men can be trafficked because until now we have been thinking only for women and girls. It is a new concept to believe that men and boys can be trafficked.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘…

‘When asked how effective protection measures are for young male victims of trafficking in cases where the trafficker is being prosecuted, sources responded:

‘“Most of the time they are left alone to face all of the threats from their families, the families of the traffickers, or from the community, so I would say this system doesn’t function.”

‘Source: Professor Dr. Edlira Haxhiymeri, interview record, January 2019

‘“It’s hard for me to answer that as none of the young men I work with have ever gone through a process of prosecution. My experience is the police have not been prosecuting.”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019’[[133]](#footnote-134)

* + 1. See [Identification of trafficking victims: specific to males](#_Identification_of_trafficking_1) for further information on this subject.

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### Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to children

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted that a lack of awareness of child protection systems or trust in those systems was raised as an issue by interlocutors interviewed for the report:

‘“Efforts have been made to increase the proactivity of the protection system and increase contact and accessibility to it through child protection workers in municipalities. Still the new legislation on child protection needs to be disseminated in order for the families and children to know about it and exercise their rights, and allow child protection workers do their job…”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019’[[134]](#footnote-135)

* + 1. The same report addressed the issue of Child Protection Units:

‘The disparity between the capacity of CPUs or access child protection more generally in rural and urban areas was also noted:

‘“I can say that in the capital city it is a little bit better but in other areas both small towns and rural areas the situation is really weak - children cannot find any system to protect them”

‘Source: Professor Dr. Edlira Haxhiymeri, interview record, January 2019

‘“Big cities do have a higher number of children in need of protection coming from other areas and the child protection units do not have the means or resources to provide for them. Such cases end up being “referred to their unit” – where they are registered. Except for human resources- the child protection workers – the municipalities do not have much to offer to their children and their case management is sometimes reduced “referring” to others, for basic help.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“If you are from a remote, rural background or a lower social and marginalised neighbourhood even in the cities, you would be more disadvantaged in obtaining formal protection. Unfortunately, it tends to be those with the least [economic and educational capital] which become easiest victimised, yet would feel least hopeful in obtaining protection or security through a state system where corruption and nepotism is such a problem still.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, interview record, February 2019’[[135]](#footnote-136)

* + 1. The following article, published by UNICEF in March 2019, stated that, although suitable laws are in place, Child Protection Units do not always have sufficient numbers of staff to implement these laws:

‘In addition to the municipality of Peshkopi [a city in the northeast of Albania with 50,000 residents], there are 15 more administrative units consisting of the surrounding villages, with the most remote one located 40 km away from the city center. Under the new law on child protection, municipalities have the responsibility to assign one child protection worker in the administrative units with more than 3,000 children. However, these administrative units have no child protection officers in their organigrams. The only employee for social services at this level is the social administrator, who has additional responsibilities, such as distributing the economic and disability allowance. Ejona [Ejona Cania, the Child Protection Worker at the Municipality of Peshkopi] has to travel to these administrative units when an issue of child protection arises, but no car or vehicle is placed at her disposal.

‘“We do not have an emergency center for children, no set budget to provide support for the rent, or food/clothes packages,” Ejona says. “We rely on help from organizations, such as World Vision or Arsis, but this is not enough”, she acknowledges. Nevertheless, she is hopeful that the new social plan, which the municipality is preparing, will take into account such needs.’[[136]](#footnote-137)

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated that interlocutors felt that the child protection system was still in the process of being formed, and that those responsible for implementing it did not always have the necessary training or education. Professor Dr. Edlira Haxhiymeri added:

‘“If I can get tonight a call from a child that is in a difficulty you know I can hardly find a place to put the child and protect him - there is no service available for the child. No accommodation, no families ready to take them - it will take some day to find an orphanage to find a safe place for this child to be accommodated – this is only one aspect that shows how weak the system is and how difficult it is to meet the child’s needs immediately.

‘“… I mean if they cannot find a shelter if they cannot find a system to support, to continue with their education reintegration - I find it difficult to say they can have a protection system to help them.”’[[137]](#footnote-138)

* + 1. See [Child protection](#_Child_protection) for further information on this subject.

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Section 9 updated: 6 January 2021

## Action to address trafficking

### Investment in Albania

* + 1. The UK Home Office published an Annual Report on Modern Slavery in October 2020, in which investment by the UK Government was mentioned:

‘Over £10 million invested in Nigeria, Albania, and Vietnam since 2017. These programmes focus on providing services for trafficked and vulnerable people to ensure their safe rehabilitation and reintegration into society; targeted outreach to increase resilience of at-risk communities; and capacity building of law enforcement and other first responders to ensure a victimcentred approach to handling modern slavery cases.’[[138]](#footnote-139)

* + 1. The same report noted investment by the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund in various countries, including Albania, to support ‘projects trialling innovative approaches.’ £11m was allocated to 13 countries for the period 2017-2021. Phase 2 of this support package is currently underway[[139]](#footnote-140).
    2. The same report detailed further investment in Albania by the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund, with £2m allocated to criminal justice capacity-building, victim support and prevention work for the years 2019-2021[[140]](#footnote-141).
    3. See [Government and NGO shelters](#_Protection), [Reintegration](#_Reintegration), [Awareness raising](#_Corruption) and [Prosecution](#_Prosecution) for further information on these subjects.

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### Bodies responsible for dealing with trafficking

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated:

‘ONAC [Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator], in cooperation with an international organization, produced a report assessing anti-trafficking efforts in Albania and published periodic reports on its website. The government maintained a multidisciplinary working group and a separate task force to develop and monitor anti-trafficking policies. Twelve regional antitrafficking committees comprising local officials and NGOs worked on prevention and victim assistance. NCATS and ONAC signed a memorandum of understanding, which set up the Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking consisting of three survivors; the board met twice in 2019. ONAC held four meetings with stakeholders involved in the NRM but, as in previous years, observers reported prosecutors rarely attended NRM meetings.’[[141]](#footnote-142)

* + 1. See [The judiciary](#_The_judiciary) for further information on this subject.
    2. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire in which it listed the following bodies responsible for addressing trafficking:

‘The National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator [ONAC] is the lead coordinator of all anti-trafficking efforts in the country. The National Coordinator is at the same time the Deputy Minister of Interior and initiates, coordinates, and monitors various agencies' anti-trafficking activities.

‘The State Committee against Trafficking in Persons is a multidisciplinary working group that sets out the anti-trafficking vision, mission, policies and goals. The State Committee is chaired by the Minister of Interior and is comprised of deputy minister level representatives from: The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA); State Police; Ministry of Education and Sport; Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MOSWY); Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Enterprise; Ministry of Energy and Industry; Ministry of European Integration; General Prosecutor’s Office; State Intelligence Service; Ministry of Defense. Representatives from the Shelters Coalition and civil society partners are invited to participate in the State Committee meetings.

‘The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) …

‘The Responsible Authority for Identification, Referral, Protection and Reintegration of VT/VMT [victims of trafficking/ persons who are vulnerable, missing or exploited] guides the implementation of the NRM regarding all cases of potential victims / potential victims of trafficking identified and referred to under this mechanism in accordance with SOPs.

‘The Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees (RATC) assess and address local trafficking issues. During the reporting period RATCs were active in addressing TIP issues in their area, through establishing local action plans, and conducting various meetings in cooperation with partners.’[[142]](#footnote-143)

* + 1. See [National Referral Mechanism (NRM)](#_National_Referral_Mechanism) for further information on this subject.

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### Standard operating procedures

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020, published in June 2020, stated that the government had updated standard operating procedures for identifying and referring victims to services[[143]](#footnote-144).
    2. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire which explained the purpose of standard operating procedures (here referred to as ‘standard action procedures’):

‘By the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) Nr. 499, dated 29.08.2018 “On the Adoption of Standard Action Procedures for Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking”, Standard Action Procedures (SOPs) were adopted for the protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking. SOPs are the basic document for identifying, referring, protecting and assisting victims / potential victims of trafficking. The purpose of the SOPs approval is to protect, including timely and appropriate identification of potential victims of trafficking, whether adults or minors, Albanians, foreigners or stateless persons, for all types of exploitation, internal or international trafficking, whether or not linked to organized crime.’[[144]](#footnote-145)

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### National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020, published in June 2020, stated that the government maintained a multidisciplinary national referral mechanism[[145]](#footnote-146). In the Albania 2020 report, the European Commission noted that ‘The national referral mechanism for (potential) victims of trafficking is fully functional.’[[146]](#footnote-147)
    2. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire which stated:

‘The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is an agreement between state and non-state institutions for the identification, referral and protection of victims and possible victims of terrorism [sic]. The NRM is a formal system, a network established between police, social service, diplomatic and consular services, health, education, prosecution, international organizations (IOM [International Organization for Migration], WV [World Vision] and ARSIS [Association for the Social Support of Youth]), as well as reception and rehabilitation centers for victims of trafficking.

‘Purpose: A framework of cooperation defining the responsibilities of key actors in the fight against trafficking in human beings regarding the identification, referral, accommodation, assistance and rehabilitation of Victims of Trackffiking [sic]; Ensure timely and full coverage of relevant VoT services and implementation of SOPs.

‘In 2018, the National Referral Mechanism was added with 2 new members: Mary Ward Loreto and Terre des Hommes.’[[147]](#footnote-148)

* + 1. The HO FFT was told that the NRM is an organisation of 13 agencies who come together to identify, refer and protect VoT and the IOM gave a detailed assessment of the NRM:

‘Since 2005, Albania has the National Referral Mechanism for identification, referral and assistance of victims and potential victims of trafficking and the IOM is a member of the NRM. Currently, in Albania, the framework is a good one. The Responsible Authority follows all the cases identified outside of Albania, at the border and in the territory in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures approved in July 2001 with decision of Council of Ministers. The penal code and others relating to TiP internal and external and are in line with the international conventions. The identification, referral and assistance of unaccompanied children could maybe be improved a bit. It’s the implementation that needs improving. Albania created the SOPs, for clear procedures for VoT and PVoT [potential victims of trafficking] – in Albania, outside Albania and at the border. Clear steps for people to follow. In 2012, revision of NRM process – to get more involved in the identification of VoT.

‘All cases are referred as PVoT and a group composed of anti-trafficking police and social worker conducts the formal interview for determining the status of victim of trafficking. They are then entitled to access all the packages that are available in Albania.’[[148]](#footnote-149)

* + 1. The IOM also commented, positively, that there is more focus on referrals from Albanian embassies abroad and they have also heard of two referrals from a school psychologist. This is the result of the work of all the stakeholders under the coordination of the ONAC and as a result of national information awareness raising campaigns conducted during the October anti trafficking month.[[149]](#footnote-150)
    2. The Director of Social Services in Kükes explained to the HO FFT that when they get cases they refer them to the NRM: ‘There is a place online where we refer cases. But we are stuck in this phase at the moment where we make the referral, but we don’t get a reply. When it comes to the re-organisation of the Ministries, we are in a limbo. We don’t know who to refer to for now until it is settled. We are sceptical, because we didn’t get enough help from the MoSW; now that it is moving to the MoH, we are concerned.’[[150]](#footnote-151) [In 2017, responsibility for Social Services was moved from the Ministry of Social Work, which has now been dis-established, to the Ministry of Health.]

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### Training for officials

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire issued by GRETA. The [response](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) provided detailed information about training provided for officials (page 11 on and page 19 on)[[151]](#footnote-152).
    2. In July 2020, UNICEF reported on the ‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania’ project, which was launched on December 12 2019 by a group of NGOs and included the following event: ‘Preparation work is ongoing to host a large scale and real situation based simulation training course in Albania in October [2020]. Various groups of law enforcements and other professionals will be involved in this special joint exercise to better address the investigative capacities in the country and improve fight against human trafficking and human traffickers.’[[152]](#footnote-153)
    3. In April 2020, OSCE published an article in which it described its work in Albania, stating:

‘Recognising the intricate and evolving aspects of the child trafficking phenomenon, the training of central and local level professionals has been at the heart of the [OSCE] Presence’s activities.

‘“Ensuring a human rights-based approach to victims of trafficking during all stages of communication between a trafficked person and state officials is a major precondition for effective investigation and prosecution,” says Juliana. “The Presence has supported training for around 100 district level judges and prosecutors over the last two years on the rights of victims of trafficking in the judicial process. We developed a guideline for safeguarding the best interest of child victims of trafficking and exploitation in criminal proceedings.”

‘In 2019, the Presence organised multi-disciplinary training workshops for 57 child protection officers and police in Tirana, while also supporting on-the-job training for child protection workers on the social and psychological assistance of children victims of trafficking.

‘Children in migration flows, particularly unaccompanied minors, who are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, have been part of the focus of the Presence’s work.

‘“Last year, we co-operated with UNHCR to support the authorities in drafting new procedures for the pre-screening of irregular migrants,” says Juliana. “Aim was to enhance the role of the child protection units throughout the process of identification, referral, and assistance to migrant children.”

‘With its partners, the OSCE Presence has worked alongside the Ministry of Health and Social Services and SARPC to organize a conference in support of child protection workers, with more than 150 child protection workers participating.

‘…

‘“The Presence also hosted a national event with the International Labour Organization calling for Albanian institutions to accelerate progress to address trafficking in human beings and child labour,” says Juliana.’[[153]](#footnote-154)

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering events of 2019, Different and Equal reported that ‘208 professionals from various institutions who are in contact with vulnerable groups have been trained to increase their identifying and referring role (police officers, medical staff, teachers, Labor Office specialists, etc.).’[[154]](#footnote-155)
    2. In the same report, Different and Equal mentioned the following training sessions, carried out in 2019:

‘In March 29, 2019 in Diber with the participation of 35 persons such as the Prosecution, Court, Police, Bailiff, the Institution of the Prefect, as well as the representatives of non-profit organizations that provide legal services to victims

‘In May 3, 2019 in Kukës, with the participation of 22 persons representing institutions and law enforcement agencies, Prosecution, Court, Police, Prefect Institution, Media and representatives of nonprofit organizations that provide legal services to victims of crime criminal.’[[155]](#footnote-156)

* + 1. The report also referred to training provided in the field of child protection during 2019:

‘During this year, D&E in cooperation with the State Agency for the Protection of Children Rights, conducted 2 days training with Child Protection Employees from all over Albania. The training on "Child Protection EMPLOYEES for Children of Victims of Trafficking and Domestic Violence" was held on 13 & 14 June 2019. The training provided knowledge on the legal context related to trafficking and domestic violence, the effects of violence and trafficking on victim mothers and their children, existing services for victims and their families, case management and measuring the effectiveness of services provided to mothers and children, etc. 54 participants participated in the training.’[[156]](#footnote-157)

* + 1. See [Child protection](#_Child_protection) for further information on this subject.
    2. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated: ‘The government, at times in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations, trained police officers, judges, district prosecutors, and victim coordinators on various anti-trafficking issues.’[[157]](#footnote-158)
    3. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 interviewed an anonymous source who stated:

‘“ … There have also been trainings for different professionals who work in state or non state institutions and organizations informing them about the NRM, SOPs and their role in identification and referral of VOT. Lately, school psychologists have referred the cases of females as well as males who have interrupted the school. They (the psychologist and the teacher) didn’t have information about them and what was happening to them. Besides the school psychologist there is also the Child Protection Unit (CPU). The CPU functions within the administrative structure of the municipality, as a separate unit, or as a unit of the structures charged with social issues, and their task is to identify and manage cases of children at risk, which are located within the area of the unit’s authority. Child Protection Workers know the children and the families who are living in their territory. There has been a training today with school psychologists where 40 psychologists participated and they received training mostly on the SOPs as these procedures are reviewed and approved in Aug 2018, to explain to them their duties and role in identification, referral and protection of cases of VoT.”’[[158]](#footnote-159)

* + 1. The US DoL Report 2019 stated: ‘During the reporting period, police officers from the Illicit Trafficking Police, State Police, and Border Police received trainings on child protection and trafficking in persons. In addition, due to recent changes in juvenile justice law, the State Police organized a 2-week session on crimes involving minors; 25 police officers attended.’[[159]](#footnote-160)
    2. The Ministry of Interior told the HO FFT that they have started common training with prosecutors and police. This is a new way of investigating and special skills are required. Experiences from the Serious Crimes Courts are being shared. The police are being trained and are pushed to do more[[160]](#footnote-161).
    3. UN agencies also told the HO FFT that they have invested considerably in the training of the police[[161]](#footnote-162).
    4. See [NGO strategies and co-operation with government](#_Bodies_responsible_for) for further information on the ‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania’ project.

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### Awareness raising

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 reported that, ‘ONAC [Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator], in cooperation with civil society, conducted awareness campaigns for students, teachers, and the general public. The government also conducted informational meetings with representatives from the Romani and Balkan Egyptian communities.’[[162]](#footnote-163)
    2. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire, which stated:

‘The Albanian government, and especially ONAC, through awareness campaigns, informs and involves the public on trafficking, identification of potential victims of trafficking and their prevention. Activities for the prevention of human trafficking have included mass of people in general, as well as the most vulnerable groups such as children, young people, marginalized groups etc. For this purpose, manuals, leaflets, brochures for prevention of trafficking and irregular migration are published and distributed, and television commercials, documentaries, television and radio programs are realized for information and awareness. What is more, within the framework of awareness, a number of programs are organized with electronic and printing media about proper reporting of cases of trafficking of persons. National anti-trafficking awareness campaign all over Albania organized during the October month – the month against trafficking in persons, every year since 2015.’[[163]](#footnote-164)

* + 1. The same report stated:

‘… on 14 and 16 June 2017, Ministry of Interior organized 2 informative meetings with representatives of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the area of Selita and Yzberisht, Tirana, with a total of about 60 participants. The activities were conducted in cooperation with the Organization "ARSIS" and the Child Protection Unit in the Municipality of Tirana. The purpose of the meetings was to raise awareness of the Roma and Egyptian communities on the phenomenon of trafficking, forms of trafficking, ways and indicators for identifying possible victims of trafficking, assistance, reporting forms such as National Line 116006 and the Application "Report! Save “!’[[164]](#footnote-165)

* + 1. The [Albania response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) provided further detailed information about actions taken to raise awareness, including providing information to schools, training, workshops, camps and marches, and television shows (page 38 on)[[165]](#footnote-166).
    2. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering the year 2019, Different and Equal reported that ‘164 persons from vulnerable communities were informed about the phenomenon of trafficking in persons and how they can access the services.’[[166]](#footnote-167)
    3. The same report mentioned sessions held in schools to raise awareness of trafficking during 2019:

‘A dedicated awareness campaign on trafficking in persons was organized within … anti-trafficking month. The campaign was coordinated by the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator / Ministry of Interior. D&E conducted 30 information sessions in 9-year schools and gymnasiums in the region of Tirana, including the areas on its outskirts and the surrounding Administrative Units such as: Vora and Ndroqi. Information sessions in schools are organized in cooperation with Child Protection Employees and Psychologists of those schools.’[[167]](#footnote-168)

* + 1. The HO FFM report of 2017 noted

‘Anila Trimi, of the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior said that they had just approved a module for pre-university education level on training – how to prevent trafficking, and how to report cases.

‘Ms Trimi said they also have a free app for Android phones where people can not only report cases, but also see information about cases and understand more about what support and information is available.

‘Most of these activities are done in schools in cooperation with partners.’[[168]](#footnote-169)

* + 1. See [Understanding and awareness of trafficking: males](#_Understanding_and_awareness) for information on this subject. See [Roma and Egyptian communities](#_Roma_and_Egyptian) for further information on this subject.

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### Telephone hotline and online support

* + 1. The GRETA Report of 2016 noted that ‘Albania has had a hotline to report child abuse, ALO 116, since 2009. Callers to this free phone number can obtain advice and information, particularly on financial assistance and health care services. This line is said to receive around 400 calls a day. During the last four years ALO 116 has received 95 calls which concerned children at risk of trafficking.’[[169]](#footnote-170)
    2. In July 2020, UNICEF reported that ‘Professional mental health and psychological counselling platform [www.nukjevetem.al](http://www.nukjevetem.al) since late March is providing online services to individuals affected or at risk for human trafficking. The service also covers issues of more general nature related to anxiety caused by COVID-19. 1,345 people already requested this online service, through chat and emails.’[[170]](#footnote-171)
    3. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated: ‘The State Police Directorate’s hotline received 11 calls but none were trafficking-related calls (three trafficking-related calls in 2018).’[[171]](#footnote-172)
    4. See [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the) for further information on this subject.
    5. See [Child protection](#_Child_protection) for further information on this subject.

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### Personal data and confidentiality

* + 1. In 2016, GRETA produced a report (GRETA report 2016), which stated:

‘Article 127 of Law No. 108/2014 on the National Police states that police officers have a duty to safeguard the confidentiality of all personal data collected, kept and processed by the police to which they have access.

‘The SIVET database set up to gather information on victims of THB from different sources (such as the police, NGOs, social services) is secure and all the information is entered into the database by a designated person from the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinator … Only the Responsible Authority has access to the personal data of victims so that their situation and reintegration can be monitored.’[[172]](#footnote-173)

* + 1. The report on the shared learning event held by the University of Bedfordshire and the IOM in October 2017 stated:

‘Data protection, confidentiality and anonymity were under-regarded in practice. It appears that there is little emphasis given to data protection, confidentiality and anonymity for people who have experienced trafficking across a broad range of sectors within Albania, including within media reports. This is particularly important given historic disregard for data protection and associated principles as well as the geographic and context-specific considerations of a closely connected population within Albania.’[[173]](#footnote-174)

* + 1. The NRCVDV [National Reception Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence] told the HO FFT that they can update data on victims. But because of the confidential nature of the data, it can only be accessed by Social Services and by an order of the court[[174]](#footnote-175).
    2. Anila Trimi at the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior explained to the HO FFT:

‘… they also have a database with data about identification to reintegration. It can also identify trends, for example, where people are moving around. It contains the data from the forms that accompanies the standard operating procedures that are sent. It is the responsibility of the Office of the National Coordinator who are the only people with access.

‘She went on to say that personal details are included on the database, but this is done only with the consent of the victim and to the best of her knowledge no women had refused consent to date.

‘She said she was also not aware of unauthorised access; ‘The name and address of the shelter is not included; only the name of the city. And where people go back to the community, that is what it says.’[[175]](#footnote-176)

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 report, published in October 2020, the European Commission stated:

‘On the protection of personal data, further efforts are needed to align the personal data protection legislation with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 and the Police Directive 2016/680. Albania has not yet signed the 2018 Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data. The capacity of the office of the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection need to be further strengthened so that it can perform its tasks effectively. In 2019, the Commissioner received 301 complaints from data subjects which shows an increased awareness on personal data protection issues compared to previous years. The Commissioner carried out 142 inspections in both public and private entities and issued over the same period 39 recommendations, including one unifying recommentation, 20 decisions and 56 administrative sanctions. This represents a comparable level of activities to 2018. The Commissioner successfully hosted the 41st International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners in October 2019.’[[176]](#footnote-177)

* + 1. For further information see the [Country Policy and Information Note Albania: Domestic Violence](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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### Impact of COVID-19

* + 1. ODIHR and UN Women published a joint report in July 2020 regarding the general impact of COVID-19 on human trafficking; this was not related specifically to Albania:

‘To analyze emerging trafficking in human beings (THB) trends and dynamics and to develop a response based on empirical data to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, ODIHR and UN Women conducted a global survey of (1) survivors of trafficking and (2) frontline stakeholders. Based on the survey findings and empirical data collected, a set of policy recommendations were developed.

‘The survey findings indicate that through the COVID-19 pandemic and afterwards, exacerbation of vulnerability of women and girls to THB for the purposes of sexual exploitation will increase. Online recruitment, grooming and exploitation have been widely used by traffickers during the pandemic. There are also indications that trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation online, including the demand for Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) has increased. The majority of anti-trafficking stakeholders and survivors of trafficking reported decreased accessibility of assistance and services for VoTs and survivors of trafficking.’[[177]](#footnote-178)

* + 1. The same report noted evidence of effective co-operation during the pandemic between different organisations/municipalities in Albania, with an Albanian respondent stating: ‘“We have co-operated very well with the municipalities in providing food and sanitary packages and study materials for children for 800 families in 9 municipalities of Albania. During this time, the municipalities have been much more open to co-operation and co-ordination”’[[178]](#footnote-179)
    2. OSCE published an article in May 2020 which stated:

‘From the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in Albania, the OSCE Presence has adapted its work to better respond to the needs of Albanian institutions, civil society and vulnerable groups. In close consultation with its key interlocutors, the Presence focused on emergency assistance, and immediate needs of host authorities.  The Presence will continue to reshape its mid- to long-term support in line with its mandate and new requirements due to the pandemic.

‘…

‘As COVID-19 poses an increased threat to people at risk of trafficking, the Presence adjusted its support to tackle exploitation and trafficking of persons, focusing especially on the child protection system. It helped the Ministry of Health and Social Protection draft guidelines for child protection management during the COVID-19 crisis.

‘“We will continue to adapt to the changing needs of Albania,” said Borchardt [Bernd Borchardt, Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania]. “… and we will mobilize additional expertise and resources to support their advancement.”’[[179]](#footnote-180)

* + 1. See [Child protection](#_Child_protection) for further information on this subject.
    2. In July 2020, UNICEF published an article covering an interview with David Gvineria, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF in Albania, who mentioned the impact of COVID-19 on their work:

‘The mobility and public gathering restrictions also formed additional barriers to us to be available in the field. We had to cut down or abandon some field visits, we had to move to new normalcy of online communication, which is of course possible but not always effective. But we are UNICEF and adversities of the environment and emergencies are part of our work and training, so we will deliver as we promised to Albanian people and children.’[[180]](#footnote-181)

* + 1. Different and Equal reported that they had distributed 64 food packages in the space of a month to those in need during the pandemic; this included their beneficiaries housed in apartments and members of the Roma and Egyptian communities[[181]](#footnote-182).

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Section 10 updated: 6 January 2021

## Action for specific groups

### Child protection

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 report, published in October 2020, the European Commission noted that, ‘[Albania] should pay particular attention to unaccompanied children and child victims of trafficking, and provide them with adequate protection.’[[182]](#footnote-183)
    2. The OSCE report of December 2018 noted:

‘International organizations (including the OSCE), NGOs and donors wanting to prevent human trafficking and protect children who have already been trafficked (especially from being re-trafficked) worked together to establish and strengthen Albania’s own State-run child protection systems at both the national and local (municipal) level.

‘An important development was the adoption in 2010 of a Working Protocol for Child Protection Workers that defined the roles and responsibilities of different agencies, including State-run Child Protection Units (CPUs), the police, school staff, health professionals, State social services, local government authorities (municipalities and communes) and NGOs (some of which manage emergency shelters or other residential institutions where children receive alternative care).

‘The Protocol envisages a multidisciplinary team approach in which child protection workers co-operate closely with the staff of other State-run agencies as well as NGOs. In early 2018, it was reported that a series of sector-specific policies were being developed by the government to replace the Working Protocol.

‘International organizations have supported the Government of Albania reviewing the vulnerability of children in street situations: a 2014 national study counted more than 2,500 street children, with a third considered either presumed or potential victims of trafficking. Based on these findings, the OSCE Presence in Albania decided to broaden its approach from prevention of child trafficking to strengthening the national child protection system. It partnered with the National Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights, the National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator and the Tirana regional police to provide technical expertise for improving child trafficking legislation as well as developing targeted policies and action plans. This resulted in 2014 in the publication of a set of Guidelines for the Protection of Children in a Street Situation (specifically concerning their identification, immediate assistance and referral).

‘Implementing these Guidelines involved setting up specialist street children teams in Tirana and five other cities in 2015 and providing training on how to apply the Guidelines. These teams reportedly identified 15 child victims of trafficking for the purposes of forced begging and forced labour in 2015. In 2016, the mayors of the areas concerned drafted plans on how to apply the Guidelines in their municipalities. In early 2018 these were reported to be waiting for funding so they could be put into action.’[[183]](#footnote-184)

* + 1. UNICEF published the following (undated) information:

‘Albania has made remarkable efforts in recent years to establish the fundamental pillars for the Child Protection System. The core legislative and policy framework around child protection was significantly 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, both drafted with UNICEF’s extensive support. A dedicated institutional entity — The State Agency on Child Rights and Protection — grew a local network of Child Protection Workers (CPWs), which increases the outreach of Child Protection services everywhere. The process is aligned with a “systems building” approach to child protection, focused on addressing root causes of children’s vulnerability, rather than symptoms alone. However, the entire system is in its infancy and requires significant support, especially at the service delivery level.

‘The new legal provisions require municipalities to provide at least one dedicated full time CPW if the number of children in that municipality is more than 3,000. Otherwise the CPWs are considered part-time. The law also requires that CPWs have social work background and experience. But that’s not the situation in 2018:

‘The biggest weakness of the system, besides a deficit in terms of available qualified workforce, is reflected in the uneven distribution of needed resources and capacities. According to the State Agency on Child Rights and Protection, there are massive disparities in the number of cases reported by different CPWs per year. In fact, out of existing 209 CPWs, only 83 CPWs reported that they managed one (or more) child protection case in 2016.

‘UNICEF Albania supports the Albanian Government to build and strengthen a comprehensive and effective child protection system for all children. The main pillars of this approach consist of:

-        Enhancing legislative and policy framework around child protection;

-        Strengthening mechanisms and capacities of child protection work force for better prevention, identification, case management and response to cases of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children; and

-        Wide public awareness with the objective to change social norms and achieve an increased reporting of child protection cases.

‘UNICEF advocates swift implementation of the Article 46 of Law on Child Rights and Protection, which obliges Municipalities (Social Services) to include child protection related matters in their local plans and facilitate a meaningful implementation of such plan(s).

‘UNICEF uses its convening power to ensure strong national collaboration among key child protection stakeholders to break the “silos” and address the critical bottleneck of child protection work force’s capacities through united front. With this objective in mind in 2018 UNICEF sealed a long-term collaboration agreement in the area of child protection with the Save the Children, World Vision, Terre des Hommes and OSCE offices in Albania.

‘Major shift in public awareness and public attitude towards children’s protection UNICEF is addressing through direct involvement of peer educators, children and child protection champions in every initiative within the child protection program framework.’[[184]](#footnote-185)

* + 1. The report published in September 2018 concerning the visit of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, to Albania in May 2018 stated:

‘The Commissioner welcomes the strengthening of the legal and institutional framework for the protection of the human rights of children, in particular the adoption in 2017 of the Law on the Rights and protection of the Child. However, she stresses the need for more effective implementation of the existing legislation and better co-operation between the different levels of responsible authorities in this field. The Commissioner also emphasises the importance for evidence-based policy making of the collection of reliable data on socio-economic status and desegregated data relating to vulnerable groups, including children, and supports the initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacities of the authorities in this context.’[[185]](#footnote-186)

* + 1. The same report noted:

‘During her field visit in Shkodra the Commissioner visited one of ten community centres “For the family” established by the local authorities where activities are organised for families and children, including after-school and income-generation activities. The Commissioner was informed that, inter alia, these centres play an important role in assisting in the reintegration of Albanian children who returned to Albania after having spent some time abroad. The staff in the centre that the Commissioner visited comprises one psychologist, a community facilitator and a person dealing with income generation activities. The centre is financed by local authorities and donors. Noting with appreciation the enthusiasm of the staff and the work that they carry out, the Commissioner encouraged the national authorities to consider providing financial support to this and similar local initiatives.’[[186]](#footnote-187)

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted:

‘… one interviewee did find there to be adequate trust by victims to approach the authorities, including CPUs [child protection units] and the police:

‘“The families mostly go to the police to ask for help- police is the first station where they go. And there are families that their children are in risk situation or they don’t know what their children are doing during the day and they refer the cases themselves at CPU, they refer this kind of problems and situation to the child protection unit where they are living. For the management of the case and to better address their needs and problems, child protection units organize meetings with other actors in the community e.g. police inspector of the area, teacher, psychologist, child protection worker and even the parents - they meet together, discussing about the cases, evaluating the situation and then an individual protection plan is prepared of how to help and better support the child”.

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[187]](#footnote-188)

The same report quoted Dr Schwandner-Sievers of Bournemouth University: ‘“More often than not, I have been surprised how limited awareness there is of child safeguarding issues and children’s rights, but there is legislation in place, but the legislation is very much pushed through these international legislations and demands. There’s just so little awareness, and generally, an understanding of formal procedures relating to child protection, children’s rights and safeguarding is very different, I think, from the UK.”’[[188]](#footnote-189)

* + 1. See [Training for officials](#_Training_for_officials_2) for information about training provided on the subject of child protection. See [Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to children](#_Difficulties_in_implementing) and [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the) for further information on these subjects. See [Telephone hotline and online support](#_Telephone_hotline_and) for information about a hotline to report child abuse. See [Impact of COVID-19](#_Impact_of_COVID-19) for information about OSCE input into child protection to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

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### Roma and Egyptian communities

* + 1. The 2011 census found that there were 8,301 persons of Roma ethnicity residing in Albania, which represented 0.3% of the population. There were 3,368 persons of Egyptian ethnicity, which represented 0.12% of the population[[189]](#footnote-190). However, in undated information, Minority Rights Group International stated that, ‘There are no official figures for the size of the [Roma] community, but estimates range from 80,000 to 150,000.’[[190]](#footnote-191) The same source stated that ‘The Union of the Egyptians of Albania claims to represent 200,000–250,000 Egyptians – a figure officially disputed.’[[191]](#footnote-192)
    2. Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), which described itself as ‘an independent, non-partisan and nonprofit organization dedicated to the study of economic and social issues in Albania following the democratic changes of 1990,’ provided the following background information about Roma and Egyptians in Albania:

‘Present in Albania for centuries, the Roma and Egyptians are one of the special ethnic groups settled all over the country, mainly in the Western and Southern parts of Albania. The end of socialism marked the beginning of the Roma’s and Egyptians decline from relative well-being to extreme poverty. They currently constitute the poorest and most marginalized group in Albania. Low skills, discrimination, and the collapse of many state-owned industrial and agricultural enterprises during the transition period have contributed to mass unemployment, along with rising illiteracy rates and deteriorating of health, infrastructure, and housing conditions.

‘Because of high unemployment in the formal labor market, Roma and Egyptians seek employment in the informal labor market. When income from the informal labor is insufficient to meet daily needs Roma and Egyptians seek alternative poverty-coping methods such as international migration and, as last resort prostitution and drugs. Forms of cognitive and structural social capital have also emerged during transition to assist families in coping with poverty and economic insecurity in the absence of traditional forms of social organizations and government programs. However, social capital is fragile and does not pull families out of poverty.

‘According to CESS studies, the causes of poverty and social exclusion for Roma and Egyptians in Albania are lack of education, lack of employment, and weak basic infrastructure. The symptoms of poverty and social exclusion are seen in their informal sector activities, – migration, dependence on aid, and drugs, – which they employ as coping strategies in their daily lives. However, while these coping strategies help to sustain their livelihoods at the edges of mainstream society, these equally constitute further constraints and barriers to their inclusion as de facto traps into poverty and social exclusion. Consequently, effective policies are needed to address the multiple dimensions of their poverty and social exclusion and overcome existing social, institution, and political barriers.’[[192]](#footnote-193)

* + 1. In July 2020, UNICEF reported on the ‘Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania,’ which was launched on December 12 2019. David Gvineria, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF in Albania, referred to support for Roma people with regard to trafficking: ‘Roma community is indeed requiring reinforced support and attention. We are always keeping in mind at the planning stage this important equity focus. The program of human trafficking won’t be different. The Services which are already up and running and those which we will set up soon are and will be focusing around areas where Roma community resides.’[[193]](#footnote-194)
    2. See [Vulnerabilities to trafficking](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking) and [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:) for information about risk factors for trafficking for Roma persons. See [Awareness raising](#_Corruption_1) for information about efforts to made to raise awareness of trafficking amongst Roma. See [General health of trafficking victims](#_General_health_of) for information about access to healthcare for persons from the Roma ethnic group. See [Education: disadvantaged students](#_Education:_disadvantaged_students) for information about education for children from Roma families. See [Social housing](#_Social_housing) for information about access to social housing for persons of Roma ethnicity.

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Section 11 updated: 6 January 2021

## Identification of victims

### Identification of families at risk

* + 1. In July 2020, UNICEF reported that ‘30 families at risk were identified [as being at risk of trafficking] (20 in Kukes, 10 in Shkodra) and they are currently being assessed for tailored-made support …’[[194]](#footnote-195)

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### Identification of trafficking victims: on return to Albania

* + 1. The Government of Albania published an undated report on the National Strategy on Migration and Action Plan, 2019 to 2020, in which it noted reception arrangements at the border for victims of trafficking: ‘The procedure for the identification, referral and case management of victims of trafficking is solid and well established in the country. However, it has only been tested on foreign citizens once in the past two years. Among persons on the move, victims of trafficking alone are legally entitled to residential care services provided by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.’[[195]](#footnote-196)
    2. The Asylos/ARC report 2019, which quoted various other sources, referred to the Shpresa Programme’s 2017 research paper:

‘“VoT identification procedures and links into the National Referral Mechanism have been established at Border Controls across Albania. However, NRM is based on self-referral, which may present a barrier of access for some. Return entails passing through an established bureaucratic process, beginning with assessment by Border police at Migration Counters on arrival, for consideration as a Victim of Trafficking (VoT). This would necessitate selfidentification with the authorities as a VoT, with the authorities’ decision based on supporting evidence and documentation, with referral to other agencies for further support.” (p. 31)

‘Source: Dr Enkeleida Tahiraj and the Shpresa Programme, Understanding Trafficking of Girls and Women from Albania, July 2017’[[196]](#footnote-197)

* + 1. The same report stated:

‘… Steve Harvey [Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019] highlights that victims have to be successfully identified as trafficked persons in order to be eligible [for support].

‘…

‘This source shared similar concerns when asked whether male victims who have been identified as VoT or PVoT in other countries, and are then returned to Albania, would be entitled to access support and reintegration packages.

‘“My understanding is that on theory they are supposed to. The bigger question is whether Albanian state is recognising them as trafficking victims. They would for some people- particularly women are being returned to Albania having been sexually exploited may be. My understanding is that there are shelters available and some limited involvement available from charities and those supporting such individuals. It’s my understanding that there are no specialist services for boys and men and given that the government doesn’t believe that boys and young men have been trafficked I would find it very unlikely that they would be entitled to access those support packages. Particularly if someone was returned without a positive decision from the UK NRM. I can’t give a very factual answer to it as I’m not in touch with people who’ve returned but I’m very doubtful based on my understanding of what is available in country. Alongside the further barrier of whether YP [young people] would disclose their trafficked status.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 3, interview record, 2019’[[197]](#footnote-198)

* + 1. The report on the shared learning event held by the University of Bedfordshire and the IOM in October 2017 noted that the number of Albanian nationals referred to the UK NRM is significantly larger than the number of persons accessing support services for trafficked people in Albania:

‘There is a gap between the number of Albanian nationals referred into the UK NRM and the numbers of people accessing support service for trafficked persons in Albania. The difference between the numbers of people referred into the UK NRM and the numbers of people identified as victims of trafficking or potential victims of trafficking within Albania was great. There is a need for further research into the reasons for such differences and potential challenges for reintegration and identification of people returning from the UK to Albania.’[[198]](#footnote-199)

* + 1. The same report noted the experiences of an Albanian victim of trafficking who was trafficked to the UK, and stated that, ‘She was eventually identified by the police …. She returned to Albania and was received at the airport by a local NGO who began providing her support services.’[[199]](#footnote-200)
    2. The HO FFT was told by several sources that there is a system in place to create an alert for people returning to the country without the children they had previously left with; although airports are reasonably well covered in this respect, land borders are less so[[200]](#footnote-201).
    3. See [Identification of trafficking victims: specific to males](#_Identification_of_trafficking_1) and [Identification of trafficking victims: specific to children](#_Identification_of_trafficking_3) for further information on these subjects.

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### Identification of trafficking victims

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated:

‘First responders referred potential victims to law enforcement and state social services, which conducted joint interviews to determine officially recognized victim status. The law provided equal services for both potential and officially recognized victims.

‘NGOs identified the majority of victims; the government identified 43 of the 103 officially recognized and potential victims (33 in 2018), including 42 identified by officials participating in mobile identification units.

‘NGOs, with the support of the government, maintained mobile victim identification units consisting of social workers and police in three regions, but the units’ sustainability was uncertain due to the lack of permanent staff, formalization, and resources. Mobile victim identification units identified 42 potential victims (51 potential victims in 2018).

‘Experts reported police did not participate consistently in the mobile victim identification units despite signing a memorandum of understanding that formalized their participation. Experts also stated that law enforcement rarely initiated cases when civil society identified a potential victim, but ASP [Albanian police] noted that definitional differences with civil society on what constituted trafficking caused obstacles in identification.

‘Observers continued to report that authorities did not consistently screen or implement SOPs for migrants and asylum-seekers and that police did not screen individuals in commercial sex for indicators of trafficking during raids and investigations of commercial sex establishments. The Labor Inspectorate lacked the training to identify victims of forced labor, and identification of forced begging remained inadequate, particularly among unaccompanied children, street children, and children crossing borders for begging.’[[201]](#footnote-202)

* + 1. In July 2020, UNICEF reported that ‘Three new Mobile Units for proactive identification of Potential/Victims of Trafficking (P/VoT) in Kukes, Dibra and Shkodra are in place and fully operational.’[[202]](#footnote-203)
    2. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering the year 2019, Different and Equal noted that:

‘In the framework of the project "Increasing the proactive identification of victims / potential victims of trafficking at the local level" financially supported by the US Embassy in Tirana, it became possible to activate the D&E Mobile Unit. Thanks to this activation and increased cooperation with the Members of the National Referral Mechanism, the identification of VT / PVT and their referral in receiving services and direct assistance at the local level has increased.’[[203]](#footnote-204)

* + 1. The same report noted:

‘… the organization "Different & Equal" in cooperation with the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons drafted "Service Standards of Mobile Units for the identification and referral of victims / potential victims of trafficking". This document is a product of consultation and review with various actors with experience and serious interest in the proactive identification of victims of trafficking in Albania, including the actors provided in the Action Plan, such as: Directorate of AntiTrafficking and Migration in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters, Social Services of the Municipality of Tirana and the Responsible Authority. Standards are in themselves statements of purpose to be achieved. They are designed to help and protect employees engaged with initial identification, to increase and maintain the effectiveness and quality of their work. The process of drafting these standards and the form in which they come, make them ready to be immediately integrated into documents and processes that are planned to further develop the anti-trafficking system.’[[204]](#footnote-205)

* + 1. The report further noted that ‘The Mobile Unit has been part of the meetings of the Cross-cutting Technical Groups organized in the Administrative Units, Municipalities and Schools in the whole region of Tirana and in other areas of Albania.’[[205]](#footnote-206)
    2. See [Effectiveness of the police](#_Effectiveness_of_the) for further information about the role of the police. See [Training for officials](#_Training_for_officials_1) for further information on this subject.

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### Identification of trafficking victims: specific to males

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 recorded the following statement from Professor Haxhiymeri: ‘“… I think they do not make identification [of males] a priority - the rest of the numbers are those of young women and they have been, for all these years, they have been the priority for identification and for referral for other services. Personally, I doubt if NRM staff are really trained to ID boys and young men victims.”’[[206]](#footnote-207)
    2. The same report noted:

‘[Another] source states that victims of forced labour are not being identified as victims of trafficking:

‘“Another challenge faced during the process of identification of males victims of trafficking is the fact that in many cases of forced labor, the trafficking victims or the potential trafficking victims are considered as irregular migrants and are deported without tacking into the consideration the possibility that they might have been exploited.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[207]](#footnote-208)

* + 1. The same report recorded further comment from James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society:

‘Of every nationality I’ve worked with and having specialised in trafficking for the past five years, Albanian males are the most difficult I’ve worked with in terms of disclosure. In terms of trusting professionals there’s a really deeply held belief that you don’t trust professionals, that you keep things to yourselves as individuals, don’t share what you’ve been through with others, even with close friends. This is particularly the case with boys and men and young people I’ve worked with have said so explicitly. So disclosures are not being made.

‘…

‘Albanian society is deeply patriarchal, masculine from my experience and from the accounts I hear from young people. I think that also further worsens and makes it very difficult for both young boys themselves and for society to recognise themselves as victims. It’s a society that views males as by far the dominant gender which encourages dominance in that sense. Which allows systemic domestic violence to play out in households and therefore this creates a whole other layer of the concept of “toxic masculinity” that ultimately hides the reality of male victimhood and doesn’t allow space for it to be acknowledged and spoken about, whether that be publicly or internally within family or friendship networks. I think there’s a huge culture of silence that exists.

‘I also don’t think that many of the Albanian boys that I’ve worked with understood prior to arrival in the UK and prior to our socio educative work around this issue what the concept of trafficking is anyway. I think they might have recognised their experience as exploitative when they experienced abuse, but not thought of it as a crime in their country, but a system of how people get by or how people make money in their society. There is a very low level of awareness of trafficking, of healthy relationships and safety. An additional factor is the boys I’ve supported generally having a deep mistrust of the police whether they have directly encountered them or not and the state’s ability to protect them more widely.”’[[208]](#footnote-209)

* + 1. See [Identification of trafficking victims: on return to Albania](#_Identification_of_trafficking_2) for further information about the identification of male victims of trafficking. See [Difficulties in implementing law and policies: specific to males](#_Difficulties_in_implementing_1) for further information on this subject.

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### Identification of trafficking victims: specific to children

* + 1. The GRETA Report 2016 stated:

‘The SOPs provide for a differentiated procedure for identifying children, taking account of their specific situation. Tailored identification criteria have been established, taking into account the possible involvement of the children’s families in the trafficking and exploitation. The format of interviews carried out for the purpose of formal identification and arrangements for referral to reception facilities are also adjusted accordingly.

‘The mobile team run by the NGO Another Vision in Elbasan, which was the only one still operational at the time of the second evaluation visit, carries out outreach among vulnerable groups, in particular children in street situations, in order to detect potential victims, and liaises with the municipal child protection units and the police. In two years of operation, the mobile team has identified 33 potential child victims of THB aged between 3 and 17 years.

‘Further, following the setting up of a Task Force for children in street situations in Tirana, the partners involved, notably municipal child protection units, identified 15 child victims of trafficking for the purposes of forced begging and forced labour in 2015. There are plans to set up similar task forces in two other towns.’[[209]](#footnote-210)

* + 1. In See [Vulnerabilities to trafficking: specific to boys/young men](#_Vulnerabilities_to_trafficking:) for further information about street children. See [Standard Operating Procedures](#_Standard_Operating_Procedures) for further information on this subject.

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### Emergency response

* + 1. The report on the University of Bedfordshire/IOM shared learning event held in October 2017 noted that ‘a further NGO in Tirana – Arsis – focuses on children who have experienced trafficking, providing them with shelter and emergency services (up to 72 hours).’[[210]](#footnote-211)
    2. The HO FFT met with representatives from the NGO ARSIS, who explained:

‘“We run 72-hour shelters for children, or parents with their children. We had a few of these based on a decision by the former minister. We work in police stations, and the problem is the origin of the children who have been trafficked. We have referred many cases like this to Municipality Officers, and in many cases they were not really provided the proper reintegration into society. We also had problems with the families accepting the children back. They don’t see the real problem.”’[[211]](#footnote-212)

* + 1. In July 2020, UNICEF reported:

‘Emergency response protection teams in Tirana (composed of 6 social workers and 6 psychologists and three drivers), provide immediate assistance to (potential) victims of trafficking as soon as they receive a notification. This also includes safe transportation and psychosocial support 24/7, covering weekends and holidays as well.

‘Emergency safe accommodation is offered at multi-functional center “House of Colors” which is based in Tirana, with temporary accommodation (up to 72 hours) that is able to host up to 7 children and 5 adults (mothers usually) at high and immediate risk situation. All COVID-19 protocols and prevention measures endorsed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection are applied as necessary;

‘28 beneficiaries (23 children and 5 Mothers) received emergency protection services during past months. 70% of the assisted children needed emergency services at police stations. 7 beneficiaries (4 children and 3 mothers) received emergency services COVID-19 related …’[[212]](#footnote-213)

* + 1. See [Government and NGO shelters](#_Protection) and [Children: shelters](#_Children) for further information on these subjects.

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Section 12 updated: 6 January 2021

## Government and NGO shelters

### National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020, which covered the year 2019, stated:

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

‘NCATS and the government provided assistance to 115 officially recognized and potential victims (78 in 2018), including food, mental health counseling, legal assistance, health care, educational services, employment services, assistance to victims’ children, financial support, longterm accommodation, social activities, vocational training, and post-reintegration follow-up. The government provided vocational training for 45 officially recognized and potential victims ….’[[213]](#footnote-214)

* + 1. NCATS published undated information which stated that it was formed in 2007 and summarised the organisation as working on the ‘Collaboration and coordination of activities and services for the protection, assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration of women, girls and children victims of trafficking.’[[214]](#footnote-215) NCATS is composed of the following shelters:
* ‘“Vatra” Psycho-social Center, Vlora
* ‘National Reception Center, Tirana
* ‘Reception Center, Gjirokastra
* ‘“Different & Equal” organization, Tirana
* ‘“Tjeter Vizion” [“Another Vision”] association, Elbasan’[[215]](#footnote-216)
  + 1. The same document stated that ‘NCATS collaborates and coordinates the protective and supportive actions for victims of trafficking through:

• ‘Supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration assistance of victims of trafficking throughout Albania

• ‘Providing expertise in developing National Policies in supporting victims of trafficking

• ‘Reinforcing cooperation with State Institutions at the central and local level, as primary actors in fighting human trafficking

• ‘Sharing experience and expertise, coordinating actions in line with standard operating procedures for victims of trafficking

• ‘Striving to pursue the sustainability of the services offered’[[216]](#footnote-217)

* + 1. The same publication noted that the following services were offered by NCATS members:

• ‘Safe accommodation

• ‘Medical assistance

• ‘Legal counselling and assistance

• ‘Psycho-social assistance

• ‘Mediation with families

• ‘Visits counselling of the victim’s family

• ‘Education and vocational training

• ‘Counseling and employment mediation

• ‘Literacy courses and registration in schools

• ‘Socio-cultural activities

• ‘Temporary accommodation in rented facilities

• ‘Economic empowerment support through small businesses

• ‘Monitoring and follow up of beneficiaries

• ‘Assistance to the children of trafficking victims’[[217]](#footnote-218)

* + 1. The same document also noted that the following categories of beneficiaries were assisted:

• ‘Women and girls, victims of human trafficking

• ‘Women and girls at risk of being trafficked

• ‘Trafficked children or at risk of being trafficked

• ‘Women and girls, victims of domestic violence

• ‘Children of the above mentioned beneficiaries’[[218]](#footnote-219)

* + 1. The HO FFT noted that shelters operate in close cooperation with each other to prevent over reach. The Municipality of Tirana said they have a good relationship with the shelters, referring cases to each other. The Albanian Social Services confirmed this, stating that an initiative created ten years ago by the Ministry of Interior effected cooperation between the state and the NGO run shelters.[[219]](#footnote-220)
    2. For further information about the services provided by both government and NGO shelters, see [National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking (NRCVHT)](#_National_Reception_Centre) and [NGO shelters](#_NGO_shelters). See [Emergency response](#_Emergency_response) for information about short-term, emergency accommodation.

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### Capacity of shelters

* + 1. In 2017, the HO FFT was told by several official sources that the combined capacity of the various shelters is sufficient to address the need from adults and there is no national capacity problem[[220]](#footnote-221).
    2. Again, in 2017, the HO FFT further noted that the capacity of the NRCVHT (National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking) is 80 people. Since 2003, when the centre opened, it has treated 620 people. The average is about 20-30 people per year.

The Director of the NRCVHT said that it has never had a situation where it has had to refuse a person. They have more capacity than requests at the moment.

The Albanian Ombudsman said that the NRCVHT has only 9 residents as at November 2017 so there is capacity for supporting other regions that don’t have a safe house – e.g. northern regions – or returnees[[221]](#footnote-222).

* + 1. The GRETA report 2016 stated that ‘The shelters in Tirana and Vlora have respectively 15 and 20 places, and the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking currently has 15 places. A building previously used to accommodate irregular migrants was in the process of being refurbished at the time of the visit and it would provide a further 90 places.’[[222]](#footnote-223)

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### Funding and assistance for shelters

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a [response to a GRETA questionnaire](https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81) which included details of government funding provided for NGO-run shelters from 2015 to 2018 (page 48 on)[[223]](#footnote-224).
    2. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated:

‘The government operated one specialized shelter and supported three specialized NGO-run shelters. The government allocated 21.5 million leks [approximately £136,903] to NGO-run shelters to support 29 staff salaries, compared with 21.6 million leks [approximately £137,540] to support 29 staff salaries in 2018. The government provided an additional 6.8 million leks [approximately £43,296] for food support to NGO-run shelters, compared with 5.2 million leks [approximately £33,107] in 2018. The government allocated 20.9 million leks [approximately £133,084] to the government-run shelter, compared with 22.5 million leks [approximately £143,272] in 2018.

‘The government did not transfer resources to a fund of seized criminal assets for victim support services in 2018 or 2019.

‘Funding for NGO-run shelters steadily increased over the past four years, but NGO-run shelters continued to operate under financial constraints and relied on outside sources for operating costs. Additionally, funding delays hindered shelter operations, and the government decentralized funding mechanisms for all social programs to municipal governments in 2019. Municipality grants prioritized NGOs that provided local assistance rather than the national scope needed for trafficking shelters, and experts alleged solicitation and bidding procedures at the municipal level were rife with corruption.’[[224]](#footnote-225)

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, published in October 2020, the European Commission stated that the NGO-run shelters remain under-funded[[225]](#footnote-226).
    2. See [Investment in Albania](#_Investment_in_Albania) for information about investment in services for trafficked persons by the UK Government.

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### Standard of shelters

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted that ‘Observers reported the shelters in the NCATS had professional staff and good quality of care.’[[226]](#footnote-227)
    2. One of the participants at the shared learning event held by the University of Bedfordshire and the IOM in October 2017 stated: ‘Shelters offer people a protective place where they can be provided with support but they do not offer paradise or replace what they have lost.’[[227]](#footnote-228)
    3. The Albanian Ombudsman told the HO FFT that they have an inspection strategy, that they regularly inspected the national centres and they inspected the Centre in Vlore for the first time in October 2017[[228]](#footnote-229).
    4. Different and Equal told the HO FFT that shelters are licensed and regulated by the Inspectorate of Social Services so they must adhere to the official standards regarding the level and quality of care and the standard of security they provide for clients. The Human Rights Officer from the US Embassy in Tirana thought the shelters were very good, particularly those run by the NGOs, who are among the best civil society organisations in Albania. He commented that once the girls are there they are generally happy and well taken care of[[229]](#footnote-230).

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### Phases of assistance

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA, in which the rehabilition provided by the 3 NGO-run shelters was described:

‘The National Reception Center for Victims of Trafficking has provided rehabilitation services, by referring the beneficiaries for reintegration services to the other 3 shelters of NCATS, which offer a full package of reintegration services. The reintegration program is divided into three phases, including emergency services, rehabilitation services and long-term monitoring during the process of social inclusion. The reintegration services of these 3 shelters include: accommodation, medical assistance, psychological assistance, psycho-social assistance, education, legal assistance, vocational training, coaching for employment, counseling and support, social activities, mentoring, services for economic empowerment; assistance to children of victims of trafficking.’[[230]](#footnote-231)

* + 1. For further information about the shelters run by NGOs, see [NGO shelters](#_NGO_shelters). See [Emergency response](#_Emergency_response) for information about short-term, emergency accommodation.

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### State-run shelter (NRCVHT)

* + 1. The GRETA report 2016 stated:

‘The delegation … visited the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking [NRCVHT]. The shelter is located on the outskirts of Tirana and its security is ensured by the national police. Victims who have undergone formal identification and are assessed to be in a particularly dangerous situation are placed in this centre… In the first six months of 2015, 10 people were accommodated in the centre. In addition to risk assessment, counselling, medical assistance and legal advice, the centre provides vocational training in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth, either within the shelter or outside it if the victim’s safety is not compromised.’[[231]](#footnote-232)

* + 1. The HO FFT was told by the director of the NRCVHT that length of stay depends on age; and where a minor is involved custody transfers to the centre. Usually victims stay for 3 to 6 months; but there have been cases where people have stayed for two years. The Ministry of Interior stated there is no time limit.[[232]](#footnote-233)
    2. The Director of the NRCVHT also stated: ‘Another important factor when it comes to the NRCVHT is the proceedings that are going on with the trafficker. We evaluate the risk to the person. Depending on that, it affects the length of the stay. But when the person feels safe, or ready for reintegration, they leave. But the NRCVHT maintains contact with regional authorities, NGOs and others to ease integration and maintain support and contact.’[[233]](#footnote-234)

He further stated that the age limit for children remaining in the centre with their mother is 18[[234]](#footnote-235).

* + 1. See [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS)](#_National_Coalition_of) for information about the assistance provided by shelters.
    2. The Director of the NRCVHT told the HO FFT that for entry to this shelter, you don’t need a referral from the court. The police start the proceedings and they send the person to the shelter. It’s also a multi-disciplinary approach to evaluating the needs of the person. He said:

‘It includes a doctor, a lawyer and a person from Social Services. They all make their own separate evaluation of the case, including the psychological evaluation. Due to the fact that there are different proceedings, each shelter has its own approach.

‘The first impact when the person arrives at the centre is to understand their specific, immediate needs. Then we look further, including at mental health needs.

‘Each of the shelters is fully-equipped with:

1. Psychologist

2. Lawyer

3. Social services

4. Education/teacher

‘Every aspect is covered, and while they are there, they are monitored by all of the above.’ [[235]](#footnote-236)

* + 1. The Director of the NRCVHT told the HO FFT that for security reasons someone staying at the NRCVHT is not able to leave the centre to go to work[[236]](#footnote-237).

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### NGO shelters

* + 1. Different and Equal described their mission on their website, stating, ‘D&E is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing high quality reintegration services for victims of trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and to improving the legal, institutional and social context to prevent and counter these violations of human rights.’[[237]](#footnote-238)
    2. Different and Equal also set out their services on their website and described their activities as below:

‘Reintegration services for Albanian victims of trafficking and their children including residential and community services;

‘Activities to facilitate and increase access of victims of trafficking in public services;

‘Community awareness about the consequences of trafficking and the rights of victims of trafficking;

‘Activities for the evaluation of the formal labor market and increasing the access of victims to it;

‘Technical and financial support for income generation and self-employment;

‘Training for NGOs and state institutions;

‘Studies and evaluations of the process of reintegration of victims of trafficking;

‘Participation in the process of identifying victims of trafficking;

‘Information and technical advice on drafting laws and legislation to protect victims of trafficking.’[[238]](#footnote-239)

* + 1. Different and Equal described its work to the HO FFT:

‘D&E, an NGO operating in Albania since 2004, runs a shelter in Tirana which is open to women from all over Albania suffering from sexual abuse, DV or trafficking. It can house 15 women plus 4/5 accompanying children. It can also house pregnant women. They also support people outside of the shelter and can provide support to men by paying for appartments.

‘D&E said they had been able to accommodate everyone who had been referred to them: they cooperated with other NGO and the state run shelter to ensure capacity.

‘D&E described the shelter saying they decided support needs on an individual basis and build a bespoke reintegration plan. The shelter included:

* Case managers (their background is on social work mostly)
* A psychologist
* A doctor
* A lawyer
* A teacher

‘D&E estimated they had supported 200 (70 VoT) people, including children throughout 2016, with 40 cases still ongoing.’[[239]](#footnote-240)

* + 1. In the annual report published in July 2020, Different and Equal stated that during the year 2019, they had assisted 78 victims/potential victims of trafficking, plus 25 children whose mothers were victims of trafficking[[240]](#footnote-241).
    2. In the same report, Different and Equal noted, ‘In addition to direct assistance to beneficiaries, D&E has also supported the victim's family - for example, beneficiary children, assistance for the parent of a minor to find work, family counseling, etc.’[[241]](#footnote-242)
    3. The GRETA report 2016 also referred to the shelter managed by the NGO Vatra:

‘The delegation also visited the shelter managed by the NGO Vatra, located in Vlora at a secret address. At the time of the visit, it accommodated nine female victims, seven of whom aged between 16 and 18. Another seven victims assisted by the NGO were accommodated outside the shelter and 25 others were in the reintegration phase. The vast majority of the victims had been sexually exploited abroad or in Albania. In addition to psycho-social support, victims are offered literacy classes, schooling and vocational training. The NGO Vatra supports victims in their integration into working life, by helping to fund their professional project.’[[242]](#footnote-243)

* + 1. The Tjeter Vizion (‘Another Vision’) shelter provided the following undated information about its services on its website:

‘1. The Social Services for children and families in difficulty, opened in May 2002, is composed of :

-‘Residential centre for children

- ‘Shelter community is a residential facility that welcomes children in state of abandonment in whole or in part, come from families with socio-economic problems, trafficked children or at risk of trafficking.

‘Shelter community offers a protected area, appropriate and friendly, where children face the process of growth, from the physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and relational profile.

‘The service is developed in several phases:

‘The first hosting, service offering (School proceeding, activity awareness, sanitary activities, organized parties, sportive activities, creative and manuals activities), the return to the family of origin, fostering, adoption, or move into protected apartments through the conduct of the beneficiary to the autonomy in the everyday live.

2. ‘Centre for women and girls in difficulty opened in September 2002 and composed of:

- ‘Residential Centre for girls and women

‘The shelter is a residential facility that accommodates the girls and women accompanied from children who have suffered physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence and / or women and girls victims of trafficking. For these target groups, the centre offers: 24 hours accomodation, sustainability, medical care, emotional, psycho –social and health support, legal advice, awareness, help to mother-child relationship, help in external relations, the growth of communication skills and coexistence in community, support in the path of independence and social integration.

* ‘Woman Daily Centre

‘The Woman daily centre is a service offered to girls and women with problems of exclusion, discrimination, abuse and trafficking. The daily centre offers consultation and emotional support to girls and women that have presented social and economic problems such as violence, economic problems, problems for children custody, divorce issues, problems with nutritional pension of their children, problems with the liquidation of micro-credit, difficulty with the custody of children after divorce, the risk of traffic. The centre also offers educational activities, social and recreational activities (seminars, ludo-creative activities, the library, the catering business, and the group of aerobic [sic])

‘Apartments of high autonomy

‘Structures that offer more possibility for the growth of autonomy, responsibility and integration.

3. ‘Youth Centre "RIEMAR"opened in September 2003 to help young people in difficulty”

‘The Centre is proposed as a place of aggregation, for the implementation of creative, social, cultural, educational initiatives and relational for young people in difficulty. For this category the centre offer activities like:

‘Sensitizing activities, information angle, recreational activities, football, cinema, massive festivals, cultural activities, library activities, music activities, Theatre Laboratory.

4. ‘Centre for Professional training

‘This service aims to integrate in the job market young and women in difficulty through the assessment of the market, training on the job, job orientation.

‘The centre offers vocational training courses for: sewing, cooking, foreign languages (Italian, English) P courses, hairdressing course.’[[243]](#footnote-244)

* + 1. Further information about the involvement of Tjeter Vizion with bodies at both national and local level in their work to combat people trafficking is available on their [website](http://www.tjetervizion.org/index.php?faqe=details&id=52&cid=2)[[244]](#footnote-245).
    2. See [Phases of assistance](#_Phases_of_assistance_1) and [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS)](#_National_Coalition_of) for further information about the help provided by the NGO-run shelters. See [Education and training](#_Education_and_young) for further information about assistance provided by Different and Equal.

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### Males: accommodation

* + 1. The GRETA report of 2016 stated:

‘There is no shelter for male victims of trafficking, but the NGO Different and Equal rents flats where such victims can be accommodated. They receive counselling, legal advice, medical services, vocational training and assistance with job-seeking. Eighteen male victims received such assistance in 2014. They were typically aged between 17 and 20, and had been trafficked for the purpose of forced begging, labour exploitation or sexual exploitation. Further, the NGO Vatra in Vlora provided accommodated [sic] in rented flats to three male victims who had been forced into begging or committing offences.’[[245]](#footnote-246)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted that one NGO-run shelter rented apartments for male victims, where they received assistance from NGOs[[246]](#footnote-247).
    2. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 included the following reflections from Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, about accommodation for males:

‘“I did some research and I found only a day service and they can stay there and access a programme but still there are no shelters like for women and girl victims. Male victims only have day centres where they can have trainings, food, clothes and very low level of services but not a residential centre. In all the centres where they accept VOT they do not accept boys. Some of the centres like D&E have flats for rent but very few and very difficult to find the victims who accept to go in this flat. They have to move - they don’t have budget to support him during this process of rescuing him, to give him a flat or a place to live - education – so they always move.”’[[247]](#footnote-248)

* + 1. The same source reported:

‘“There are shelters only for female victims - for males, there aren’t any shelters to accommodate them. Housing is an urgent need for many trafficked men and boys assisted in Albania. The services try to find rented apartments for them and they are accommodated in such rented apartments. They pay the rent of the apartment for a period of time and it depends case by case for the period of financial support. There have been cases that were supported for 1 year even more with the payment of the rent of apartment. This goes for men and the young boys who are 18 years old, but not for minors VoTs. In most of the cases the most basic need for them is housing. As most of the cases assisted are in street situations, with no stable residence, some of them came from child institutions or they have been in a street situation before they started the reintegration process, so they need housing. For the cases concerning minors and when they have a good relationship with their parents, they are sometimes supported in their family and receive services for the entire family to empower all the family of the male as VoT or potential VoT.

‘The services don’t have available apartments but they find them at the moment that a boy needs to be accommodated in an apartment. If the males decide to live in other cities not in Tirana they may receive support and receive payments for the rent of the apartment even there. Actually I know of 13 cases of males who are VoTs or potential VoTs who are either in rented apartments or in their origin family. For the cases who are accommodated, assisted in rented apartments and supported financially, they would also be advised on how to benefit from the programmes that the municipality has.

‘There are three social housing programs: social housing for rent, low cost (rent) housing, and the program of equipping land with infrastructure. So, 2 boys are included in this programme and the municipality supports them in paying a part of the rent of apartments. Actually 5 cases who are potential VoTs are supported in family and the others are in rented apartments. 8 boys are supported in apartments (2 of them have benefited lately by the Municipality program for payment of the rent of apartment and 6 others continue to be supported financially).”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[248]](#footnote-249)

* + 1. See [Children: shelters](#_Children_:_shelters) for information about the situation for boys.

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### Children: shelters

* + 1. The GRETA report of 2016 stated:

‘With regard to the accommodation of child victims of trafficking, … the shelters run by the NGOs Different and Equal and Vatra and the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking can accommodate child victims of trafficking over 16 years of age. Younger children are assisted by the NGO Another Vision, which runs the only shelter specialising in the reception of child victims of THB, in Elbasan. The shelter can accommodate 34 children, divided between two residences. Assistance is provided in the shelter by a multidisciplinary team and children are enrolled in the local school as quickly as possible, even for short periods of time, and receive tailored support from teachers. Vocational training is organised for older children in conjunction with the authorities. The municipal child protection units are also involved in the reintegration process.’[[249]](#footnote-250)

* + 1. The US DoL Report 2019 noted that 43 children were referred to one of the four shelters in the National Shelter Coalition during 2019[[250]](#footnote-251).
    2. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted that one NGO-run shelter provided specialised services for victims aged under 18[[251]](#footnote-252). The OSCE report of December 2018 stated, ‘In most cases, it has been reported, child victims of trafficking are referred for assistance to a specialist centre in Elbasan run by the NGO Tjetër Vizion [“Another Vision”].’[[252]](#footnote-253)
    3. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted that interlocutors had confirmed that the ‘Another Vision’ shelter and the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking received boys[[253]](#footnote-254).
    4. The same report noted:

‘“They [Another Vision, Elbasan] provide services and they have a long term programme. The duration of stay in the program depends on the case; the duration in the program is evaluated on a case by case basis. They have had also cases of males who after 18 years old have been referred to another organisation, providing them with further services based on their needs and supporting them in rented apartments in Tirana or in other cities where they decide to live.

‘“... In Elbasan? Services such as psychological, legal and medical assistance. They also have collaboration with school in Elbasan and all the males attend this school as they are minors, so all of them attend school in different grades. The center in Elbasan provides all the services that they need.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[254]](#footnote-255)

* + 1. See [Emergency response](#_Emergency_response) for information about short-term, emergency accommodation for children and adults.

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### Children: other forms of care

* + 1. The GRETA report of 2016 stated:

‘Generally speaking, in cases where children are identified as victims of THB [trafficking in human beings], the child protection units seek first and foremost to find their families. The SOPs provide for procedures to remove children from exploitative situations within the family context and provide them with assistance tailored to their needs. The appointment of legal guardians requires cumbersome court proceedings, and the preferred approach is to take the child back to their family and support the family. In cases where parents appear to be involved in exploiting their children, the children are ultimately placed in orphanages as a more permanent solution.

‘… children placed in institutions constitute a vulnerable group. The Albanian authorities have referred to several recent texts (Council of Ministers Decision No. 573 of 24 June 2015, on "Standards for the work of the Child Protection Units"; Joint Guideline No. 10 of 25 February 2015 on "Methods, forms of cooperation and intervention procedures to help children at risk for institutions and structures responsible for child protection"; Guideline No. 6 of 21 May 2014 on “The resettlement of children in public and private residential social care institutions”), which aim at improving care services for children under the responsibility of child protection units, particularly those placed in institutions.’[[255]](#footnote-256)

* + 1. The HO FFT met with representatives from Different and Equal, who stated: ‘“… foster care for minors is scarce and it can be difficult to find age-appropriate foster care and accommodation for them upon leaving the shelters... Until now, capacity across all of the shelters combined has not been a problem. The capacity issues are more for children. Once capacity is hit for children, they are referred to places like orphanages, which aren’t really appropriate.”’[[256]](#footnote-257)
    2. The report published in September 2018 concerning the visit of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, to Albania in May 2018 expressed concern about children living in institutions:

‘According to the authorities, in 2017 there were 703 children in institutional care in Albania: 525 of them in public and non-public residential care institutions, including 62 children with disabilities; 41 children in the centre for victims of trafficking; and 75 in the centres for victims of domestic violence.

‘While the number of institutionalised children in Albania does not appear to be high, the Commissioner noted some serious human rights concerns related to institutionalisation.

‘In 2016 the Albanian Ombudsman published a special report “on the situation of respect for the rights of children living in residential institutions, and children and baby homes”, following an inspection by the Ombudsman’s office of nine institutions for residential and daily care of children in Tirana, Durres, Vlora, Shkodra and Korça. The Ombudsman expressed a number of concerns with regard to the living conditions and treatment of children in those institutions, the most worrying of which were related to serious allegations of physical and psychological violence against children, including a case of sexual abuse of a child. The Ombudsman recommended, inter alia, that the authorities establish an effective monitoring of complaints related to violence, negligence, forced labour and exploitation of children in state care institutions.

‘…

‘The Commissioner would like to stress that, while the de-institutionalisation process needs to be stepped up, the authorities need to urgently improve the monitoring of the existing residential institutions and strengthen the work of social protection services in this regard. The National Preventive Mechanism under OPCAT, within the Ombudsman’s office, should continue to play an important role in this context. The Commissioner was also pleased to note that after years of delay a Commissioner for Children’s Rights was appointed last March [2017] in the Ombudsman’s Office.

‘…

‘The Commissioner stresses that in parallel with the development of community-based services and family-like settings for deinstitutionalised children, the authorities need to provide adequate support to biological families who are willing to take care of their children and integrate them in the family. The Ombudsman has therefore called for improving the economic aid scheme to target poor families and children in need, through better social assessment of the living conditions of families.’[[257]](#footnote-258)

* + 1. Quoting other sources, the USSD HR Report 2020, which covered the year 2019, stated:

‘UNICEF reported that as of July more than 70 percent of the approximately 240 children living in public institutions had been evaluated as having delays in their physical, emotional, and cognitive development.

‘Some NGOs raised concerns about the transparency of the treatment of children who were under state residential care. The law allows for moving children out of residential centers and into the care of foster families, but the government and the municipalities have not used this option frequently.’[[258]](#footnote-259)

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### Security at shelters and in other accommodation

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted that NGO-run shelters allowed adult victims to leave the shelter voluntarily, whereas the state-run shelter required victims to notify the shelter director of their whereabouts in order to assist in their protection[[259]](#footnote-260).
    2. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire, stating:

‘All Vatra beneficiaries rated at high risk, or if their opportunities for reintegration in their country of origin are absent, they refer to Vatra Shelter, according to their will. Housing is provided for 24 hours by a licensed private company of the Police, from the Ministry of Interior. When necessary, in case of high risk for victims and escorting victims to law enforcement institutions, Vatra staff requires assistance and protection from the police institution and also the Prosecution Office.

‘The Other Vision organization is equipped and provides the safety and security of the juvenile reception centers through the 24-hour service of cameras, during a night shift a guard is contracted to provide nighttime security. The center is located near the police and in case of any security problem they react immediately and are present. The local police department is working and cooperating with our NGO to provide protection to the victims.’[[260]](#footnote-261)

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted:

‘When asked if there are there effective safeguards against male victims being detected whilst living in the apartments provided by D&E, sources interviewed by ARC Foundation and Asylos stated the following: “I suppose yes. I know risk assessment and risk management is a strong component of D&E rehabilitation and reintegration program. I know it takes into consideration the sense of safety and security of the victim in finding places to live, and making immediate contact in cases of risk.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“A lawyer informs all the cases who have access to this service about their rights, provides support if they decide to denounce the trafficker, even though in most of the cases they do not want to denounce their traffickers. For the cases that have had security problems they may have access to other alternatives, for example shelters accommodation at religious institutions. For other security problems services collaborate with the police. Until now I haven’t heard of any problems or any security problem with the males in rented apartments. If they have any kind of security problem, then they will address them to the police.”

‘“But the problems are not in the rented apartments but mostly in the daily activity that they do, if they go to school or their place of work, they face difficulties in the street, if they have seen the traffickers and they call the police. But the traffickers don’t know the apartment where they stay.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[261]](#footnote-262)

* + 1. The HO FFT was told that the NRCVHT has high security provided by the Albanian state police at every stage – at the shelter and when moving to and from it[[262]](#footnote-263). The Director explained that victims are asked if they want to remain in the centre, or move to an NGO shelter where the security is less tight[[263]](#footnote-264).
    2. The HO FFT was told that police provide armed security for the state shelters, whereas the NGO-run shelters employ a private security company which operates 24/7. Cases are risk assessed and, for high risk cases, victims will be accompanied by security guards to court, school etc.

To enhance security Different and Equal said that that they put the following in place:

* Victims only communicate with their families via the office phone in the staff room at the shelter so the location cannot be traced
* Family members, even trusted ones, are not allowed to know the location of the shelter

The victim’s civil registration is the NGO’s office address rather than the shelter address so that even a corrupt or unprofessional police officer with access to the civil registration system cannot compromise the victim’s location[[264]](#footnote-265).

* + 1. See [Personal data and confidentiality](#_Personal_data_and) for further information on this subject.

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Section 13 updated: 6 January 2021

## Reintegration

### General

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 noted that ‘… experts reported a lack of resources for long-term care and reintegration efforts ….’[[265]](#footnote-266)
    2. Quoting other sources, the Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated:

‘Many factors limit the likelihood of successful reintegration into a country of origin:from low-levels of awareness of supports in Albania, to limitations in its capacity, availability and efficacy that are a major factor in continuing low rates of reintegration. The ‘majority of returnees (60.3 per cent) report that lack of adequate services and an inadequate health system (56.2 per cent) are two key problems faced by them upon return to Albania’.

‘…

‘Resources & supports for reintegration of victims of trafficking: The state provides very limited specific support for Victims of trafficking upon return. These take the form of the agencies such as internal and border police and local social services mentioned previously, which through the NRM direct beneficiaries into either a national state operated shelter based in Tirane or to NGO shelters that are part state funded.’[[266]](#footnote-267)

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, reporting on the year 2019 and published in July 2020, Different and Equal stated that ‘7 Albanian cases identified abroad have been returned to Albania. … As soon as they enter in the program, a complete package of reintegration services is provided for each case based on their needs.’[[267]](#footnote-268) The report set out the ‘complete package of reintegration services … provided to the beneficiaries of the D&E reintegration programme:’

‘Accommodation; ► Security and reintegration plan; ► Immediate medical assistance; ► Negotiation / mediation with the family; ► Psychological assessments and counseling; ► Legal support and assistance; ► Assistance for registration /continuity of the school system; ► Professional Vocational training; ► Social activities; ► Mentoring; ► Employment counseling and assistance; ► Financial support for housing; ► Information on services that exist in the community as well as necessary contacts / service map; ► Income-generating work programs; ► Assistance and support for children of victims of trafficking; ► Monitoring and follow-up of the beneficiaries in the program’[[268]](#footnote-269)

* + 1. The same report set out the 3 phases of assistance provided by Different and Equal for victims/potential victims of trafficking:

‘Phase 1: intervention in crisis situation and accommodation

‘Phase 2: transit phase, which includes semi-independent living

‘Phase 3: reintegration and social inclusion’[[269]](#footnote-270)

* + 1. The GRETA report 2016 stated:

‘When a victim leaves the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking, the regional welfare services draw up an individual reintegration plan. GRETA was informed that victims of THB enjoy priority access to jobs and are offered state-remunerated internships. Similarly, the NGO-run shelters seek the co-operation of employment agencies and potential employers to facilitate access to the labour market for victims of THB, which nevertheless remains difficult. The database … is updated to enable the different entities making up the Responsible Authority to track victims’ progress and contribute to their reintegration.

‘Civil society representatives pointed out that social services monitoring of the reintegration phase was inadequate, chiefly as a result of understaffing. Moreover, trafficked victims do not have priority access to social housing.’[[270]](#footnote-271)

* + 1. See [Phases of assistance](#_Phases_of_assistance) for further information on this subject.
    2. At a meeting with the NRCVHT and Albanian Social Services, the HO FFT was told that they try to provide women leaving the shelters with social support and social housing from the state – both VDV [victims of domestic violence] and VoT receiving the same levels of support. They commented that state-run processes are sometimes more bureaucractic than that the NGOs can offer.

When asked by the HO FFT about re-integration, Anila Trimi, at the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior, acknowledged that they are not 100% successful, saying that this is not unique to Albania, it being a small country with small communities. She also commented that there has to be a willingness from the person to cooperate:

‘We try to accommodate people. We try to assist them to find a job or with vocational training. Since 2015, we have increased support. Then we funded 16 employees to the shelters; in 2016, this went up to 30. We also supplied money for food.

‘If the person does not want to go into a shelter, they could live in the community. Some women did not want to, for various reasons.

‘Additional funding had been supplied through money confiscated from seized criminal assets. Aiming for this to continue. It is only a small amount, but it goes direct to the shelters. The money doesn’t have to come direct from crimes related to trafficking; it can be any illicit criminal behaviour.’[[271]](#footnote-272)

* + 1. The Albanian Red Cross told the HO FFT that they work with former VoT to integrate them into the labour market. They also work to try to reconnect returned VoT with their families[[272]](#footnote-273).
    2. The University of Bedfordshire and IOM reported on a shared learning event held in Tirana in 2017 at which it was noted that, ‘For those from rural areas, access to social assistance, health and educational services was considered to be particularly poor.’[[273]](#footnote-274)
    3. See [Education and training](#_Education_and_young), [Employment](#_Stigma_attached_to) and [Mentoring and other assistance](#_Mentoring_and_other) for further information on these subjects.

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### Social housing

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering the year 2019, Different and Equal provided information about financial and long-term assistance:

‘35 cases and 18 of their children were supported and financially assisted for the rent of the rented apartment; 31 cases and 3 of their children were assisted in their families of origin and 2 cases and 3 children were assisted in other alternative places. D&E has continued to provide financial support for the rent of the apartments to the beneficiaries of the second phase of the reintegration program.’[[274]](#footnote-275)

* + 1. Speaking to a variety of sources the HO FFT was told:

‘In some cases, as a result of social stigma, victims may be reluctant to return to their home community, or may be rejected by their families. If no family support is available to the victim when they leave the shelter, D&E assist with/subsidise payment of rent for their new accommodation, typically for 6-12 months. The Municipality of Tirana also assists with this (this is the only municipality which does). This “Lease Bonus Programme” is paid for a year and if the woman’s situation is still the same after a year the Municipality carries on paying it, but they try to empower the woman to become independent. The Municipality of Tirana said that they don’t have a minimum level of rent and they have a scoring formula to work out how much help a woman needs… The Ministry for Health and Social Welfare said that the ministry which deals with social housing deals with the payment of rent bonuses.’[[275]](#footnote-276)

* + 1. The University of Bedfordshire and IOM reported on a shared learning event on trafficking held in Tirana in 2017, at which it was noted that ‘Access to accommodation for Roma and Egyptian communities was outlined as a difficulty due to low social integration and education levels.’[[276]](#footnote-277)
    2. In the Albania 2020 Report, the European Commission noted, ‘Regarding the implementation of the Law on Social Housing, Roma and Egyptians are already benefitting from the 5% quota foreseen by the law. However, most of the secondary legislation still remains to be adopted.’[[277]](#footnote-278)
    3. See [Roma and Egyptian communities](#_Roma) for further information on this subject.

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### Other economic help

* + 1. Quoting other sources, the Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated:

‘Cash benefits are available to “Victims of trafficking, upon exit from social care institutions until the moment of their employment ….”

‘For victims of trafficking, access to financial aid is conditioned by their stay in social care institutions: victims/potential victims of trafficking, as well as victims of domestic violence, who have no incomes and are placed in public residential institutions (i.e. NRC VoT). Once they leave the centre (as an adult), they can receive ALL 3,000 per month (Just under £18). To get an idea of how minimal this assistance is, the minimum wage in Albania (which is considered the lowest in Europe and not reflecting real needs in the country) is ALL 24,000 equivalent of £161/month and average rents even in outskirts of Tirana are £100 or more per month.’[[278]](#footnote-279)

* + 1. In the Annual Report covering 2019, Different and Equal noted:

‘Information on community services D&E staff provides ongoing case support by providing them with the information they need on existing community services. A map of community services is distributed to beneficiaries, who in some cases are accompanied directly by their case managers to know directly these types of services. Beneficiaries are informed of their right to receive financial assistance such as VoT and they are supported in preparation of the necessary documents.’[[279]](#footnote-280)

* + 1. The collaborative report from the University of Bedfordshire and IOM published in July 2018 stated that there was insufficient financial support for trafficking victims[[280]](#footnote-281) and that ‘The provision of low levels of financial aid to assist “victims” was outlined as an issue, with individuals receiving 3,000 Lek per month (approximately £20) following lengthy bureaucratic processes.’[[281]](#footnote-282)
    2. The Municipality of Tirana told the HO FFT that it offers support to daily centres which provide lunch for women and their children. A food package for use at home can be provided for women who do not want to be identified[[282]](#footnote-283).
    3. The Ministry of Interior also told the HO FFT that the state can and does support women with children. For example, there is financial support to pay for kindergarten; they can also support paying for food/meals. Although acknowledged as not perfect, the basic needs are met. A single mother can send a child to nursery for free[[283]](#footnote-284).
    4. The Director of Social Services in Kükes noted that the Municipality of Kükes is one of the poorest in Albania, with extreme poverty and crime. More than 50% – 10,000 out of 18,000 families – that make up the population in Kükes are supported by social welfare. The social welfare element is around 35 EUR per month[[284]](#footnote-285).
    5. The Albanian Ombudsman commented to the HO FFT that ‘One of the recommendations of the Ombudsman is that there is not a legally recognised living standard as a benchmark. Based on our knowledge, it has become understood it is more a political will.

‘Most of the claims are by economic reasons. The women don’t define themselves as suffering because of being a woman but as the head of a large family with husband outside of Albania, or as single mothers.’[[285]](#footnote-286)

* + 1. The GRETA report 2016 stated:

‘Under Law No. 2039 of 17 March 2011, every victim leaving a shelter must in principle receive [a certain amount of money, now updated]. … However, the authorities acknowledge that this amount is not enough to enable victims to lead independent lives. Only victims who have been accommodated in the shelters receive such benefits and according to NGOs, victims are reluctant to collect the benefits from the relevant local authorities departments because of the stigma attached to victims of THB.’[[286]](#footnote-287)

* + 1. See [Income](#_Income) for details of average income in Albania.

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### Mentoring and other assistance

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering the year 2019, Different and Equal stated:

‘During 2019, three mentors provided mentoring to 16 beneficiaries of the D&E program. Mentors have provided individual support on a weekly basis to beneficiaries who have mentored, tailored to their needs and following jointly agreed activities. D&E has consistently provided individual and group supervision to mentors, so that the mentoring process would be as effective as possible for both parties.

‘The activities carried out during this period between mentors and beneficiaries were:

* Planned and implemented according to the interests and wishes of the beneficiaries,
* Focused on educating and informing beneficiaries,
* Focused on enhancing life skills and adapting to a healthy lifestyle’[[287]](#footnote-288)
  + 1. See [Other economic help](#_Other_economic_help) for information on this subject.

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### Monitoring

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering the year 2019, Different and Equal stated:

‘The beneficiaries of the second and third phases of D&E program are supported with all services in the community based on their needs. Case reintegration progress is monitored by case managers on a daily, weekly and monthly basis; daily monitoring is done by case managers during the work shift. Weekly and monthly monitoring is performed on a regular basis by the case manager and economic empowerment coordinator.’[[288]](#footnote-289)

* + 1. The HO FFT was told that the government tries to build up women leaving the shelters to become independent, although that is sometimes difficult especially when there are children involved. However government focus is in this area and they are monitored for two years after they leave the shelters to check on the re-integration process with the social services operating as a watchdog on the services that are provided once the woman starts the process of re-integration[[289]](#footnote-290).
    2. The Social Services Department at the Municipality of Tirana said that they monitor all the adult cases they manage every six to twelve months, and this currently continues for two years. They are going to move to monitoring for as long as people need them[[290]](#footnote-291).

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### Education and training

* + 1. When the Ministry of Education spoke to the HO FFT they said that because they are part of the NRM, they have been involved in raising awareness – in conjuction with the Ministry of Interior – about trafficking, particularly with those who have returned.

In addition, there is a directive from the Ministry of Education which requires that all educational facilities have to accept people back into schools who have returned from the diaspora abroad – whether a VoT or just as a migrant.

The Ministry of Education said they also support returning migrants by providing special help with teachers or free books to help them get back into education. This might include women who left school or are older than schooling age – but it is also done alongside working: they can do both half-and-half.

The Ministry of Education told the HO FFT that it works with the shelters; ‘it’s a full-scale collaboration. The Ministry gets constant requests from the shelters from women who want to go to school. The same level of collaboration exists with the VoT shelters.’[[291]](#footnote-292)

* + 1. In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated: ‘All VoT/PVoTs who have received integration services attend various professional courses for their free qualification at the Tirana Vocational Training Centers, which is a state institution.’[[292]](#footnote-293)
    2. In July 2020, UNICEF reported on measures being taken to prevent re-trafficking, which included education and training for victims/potential victims of trafficking:

‘UNICEF as the coalition lead, which implements the UK Government supported anti-trafficking program in Albania, has recently launched a specific and tailored economic reintegration program for survivors of trafficking and those at high risk of it. The initiative will be rolled out from September 2020 and will cover 6 regions (Tirana, Shkoder, Kukes, Diber, Vlora and Elbasan). The program is aiming to:

* Support the provision of soft skills and life skills necessary for successful employment and self-employment;
* Create opportunities for people to learn about information and communications technologies (ICTs);
* Roll-out Vocational Training in Public Vocational Training Centres/Career counselling and most importantly support with seed funding opportunities for employment and self-employment.

‘In this endeavour, UNICEF partnered with the local business organization “Key Adviser” ltd, which will deliver the services and implement the program in all 6 target areas. The initiative aims to reach around 240 people who will directly benefit from the program.’[[293]](#footnote-294)

* + 1. See [Employment](#_Stigma_attached_to) for further information on this subject.
    2. In the Annual Report 2019, Different and Equal recorded details of the education provided to victims/potential victims of trafficking, stating, ‘An assessment to determine the educational level of each beneficiary in the program is performed by the D&E teacher and based on this assessment an educational-learning plan is developed as part of the reintegration plan of each beneficiary. … During this period 25 beneficiaries and 10 of their children were supported and they attended school at different levels.’[[294]](#footnote-295)
    3. In the same report, Different and Equal noted that socio-cultural activities were provided each week on 2019 for beneficiaries of the programme[[295]](#footnote-296).
    4. See [Legal aid and legal advice](#_Legal_aid_and) for further information about assistance offered to victims of trafficking. See [Males: reintegration assistance](#_Re-trafficking) for information about training offered to males. See [Life in Albania](#_Life_in_Albania) for information about educational attainment by the populaton as a whole.

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### Employment

* + 1. The Government of Albania produced the 11th report on the implementation of the European Social Charter, covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2018, published in March 2020, which stated:

‘The government [labour market] program has focused on the employment and quality development of the workforce, in line with the vision of the European Employment Strategy 2020, as well as the requirements for Albania's European integration. Vulnerable groups are among the priorities of the Ministry of Finance and Economy to be included in active employment programs, such as employment promotion programs and vocational training programs that are implemented and have different forms of support for target groups: …

‘Under the employment promotion law “vulnerable groups” are considered jobseekers, such as: mothers with children, persons over 50, youth under 18, long-term unemployed, persons below the poverty line, victims of trafficking, persons benefiting from the income support programs, unemployed mothers, divorced women with social problems, persons returning from emigration with economic problems, newly graduated, disoriented persons in the labor market, persons serving prison sentences, persons with disabilities; from Roma and Egyptian community, orphans, etc.’[[296]](#footnote-297)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: ‘Local Employment Offices collaborated with private businesses and NGOs to provide access to training and employment for trafficking victims.’[[297]](#footnote-298)
    2. In July 2020, Different and Equal published the Annual Report 2019, which covered the year 2019, and included information about employment training and professional courses, stating, ‘30 beneficiaries have attended professional courses. … Some beneficiaries have attended more than one course, based on individual skills and desires.’[[298]](#footnote-299)
    3. The same report noted that:

‘During the period January – December [2019], 36 D&E beneficiaries were employed as: assistant chef in restaurants and confectioneries, bartenders, waiters, dishwashers in restaurants, operators in Internet Centers and Call Centers, furniture, bakery salesman, sanitary, food distributor, etc.

‘D&E has supported the beneficiaries of the program in their efforts to enter the formal labor market. D&E staff continuously guides the beneficiaries to choose the professions required in the labor market, adapting of course in each case to their personal skills. D&E has worked closely with the National Employment Service / Regional Employment Directorate and private companies during this period…

‘During 2019, 2 beneficiaries have been involved in the internship program, working as culinary assistants in restaurants. A cooperation agreement is signed with the business company, to define the obligations and responsibilities of each party.’[[299]](#footnote-300)

* + 1. In the same report, Different and Equal reported that 2019 was the second year in which they had implemented a project which ‘… aims to strengthen civil society organizations in Albania, in providing reintegration services to victims of trafficking / domestic violence and to achieve a harmonious social inclusion of former victims, mainly through increasing their level of employment.’[[300]](#footnote-301) The project was implemented in Tirana, Kukesi, Dibra and Saranda[[301]](#footnote-302).
    2. Quoting other sources, the Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated, ‘“Support into employment is available for the registered unemployed. However, this support is geared towards advice rather than effectively finding a job for the applicant. In the current climate of increasing unemployment as elaborated earlier in the paper, chances of finding gainful employment are weak. Chances of a trafficked person finding employment cannot be expected to be better than for other unemployed people, which are very low.”’[[302]](#footnote-303)
    3. See also [Education and training](#_Education_and_young), which also refers to assistance with employment.

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### Childcare

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, published in July 2020 and covering the year 2019, Different and Equal reported on a project providing childcare facilities for children whose mothers had been victims of trafficking:

‘This project provides professional care in the care alternatives "Grandmother's House / Other House" for the children of mothers victims of trafficking …, providing a safe and secure environment while their mothers are at work. The service is provided for children from Monday to Saturday, after the official opening hours of public nurseries and kindergartens. During 2019, in the frame work of this project, it became possible to continue the operation of three child care alternatives, two in Tirana and one in Elbasan, as well as the opening of 2 new child care alternatives in the Municipality of Shkodra and Kamza.’[[303]](#footnote-304) The report noted that 69 children had attended childcare provision at one of these facilities in 2019 and that this provision had enable mothers to work[[304]](#footnote-305).

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### Stigma attached to victims of trafficking

* + 1. The report on the University of Bedfordshire/IOM shared learning event held in October 2017 stated:

‘Social stigma and discrimination as a direct result of human trafficking was discussed at length and considered to be a key issues in support. These discussions centred around those who had been identified as trafficked as well as those who worked with them and access to accommodation and health services. Discriminatory labels in official or media accounts were outlined as common. Stigma and discrimination was also reported to be a key issue for the children of those who had experienced trafficking. Rejection by family members was considered a common response to people who had experienced trafficking first hand.’[[305]](#footnote-306)

* + 1. The same report stated:

‘The issue of social stigma and discrimination were outlined as being key issues faced by those who had experienced human trafficking. Adults who had experienced sexual exploitation are often referred to as “prostitutes” and other discriminatory labels. Support workers were also considered to carry the stigma of the population they worked with. Support workers advised people who have experienced trafficking not to share personal information with others so they, and their children, could avoid being stigmatised. Rejection by family members was reported as being a common response to people who had experienced exploitation and/or human trafficking, as was the loss of employment and livelihood upon exposure of this experience. Children who live in shelters were reportedly being asked to keep their addresses confidential but teachers would sometimes identify these children as living in centres. This stigma permeates other aspects of society such as accommodation and health services.’[[306]](#footnote-307)

* + 1. Many sources told the HO FFT that Albania is a patriarchal society and victims of gender-based violence are often blamed for what happened to them; communities are small and people don’t want to become subject of gossip with an accompanying sense of dishonour by leaving their family[[307]](#footnote-308).
    2. The French police attache said that when VoT have been housed in a shelter in France, they don’t want to return to Albania – and the families don’t want them to come back either. He said it was matter of honour, but it was not linked to Kanun[[308]](#footnote-309).
    3. Different and Equal told the HO FFT that they are working to counter stigma particularly in cases of VoT. They have produced a photo novella showing how a young girl could easily become an unwitting VoT. They shared a hard copy with the Fact Finding Team. It can be found here: <http://differentandequal.org/en/fotonovela-kjo-ishte-historia/>. They have also shown it as film at various places across the country and they said it had a very positive impact, with one man approaching them to say he had rejected his daughter but having seen the film felt guilty. The Ministry of Interior also said that some families do welcome their daughters back[[309]](#footnote-310).
    4. The Director of the NRCVHT said that prejudice against people who have been in shelters has decreased a lot due to a change in mentality and it is now a very manageable issue. There are no problems for people who want to reintegrate and work – the only thing that could hold people back are medical issues. However for trafficking victims leaving a shelter, because this situation is confidential, potential employers would not be told that the woman has been a victim[[310]](#footnote-311).
    5. See [Mental health of trafficking victims](#_Mental_health_of) for further information about stigma. See [Social housing](#_Social_housing), [Women living alone](#_Women_living_alone) and [Healthcare](#_Healthcare) for further information on these subjects.

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### Women living alone

* + 1. Quoting a 2017 research paper by Dr Enkeleida Tahiraj and the Shpresa Programme, the Asylos/ARC report 2019 included the following:

‘Typically a Victim of Trafficking returning from abroad will not have extensive family support, mainly because of the shame brought on the family, and is likely to face hardship and isolation without adequate long-term state or charitable support. Family members play a crucial role in the successful reintegration of trafficking victims.

‘... Risks of Social Exclusion:

‘Returnees are challenged on multiple levels in trying to re-establish themselves in the country. Family, kinship and social networks are a vital component of the “informal safety net” in Albania, assisting a person in addressing hardship, finding employment and providing inclusion in community. In a largely informal economy (which offers the surest route into employment with over 30% of GDP in 2013) and poor public service provision, family is the fundamental source of personal, financial and social security in Albania. Barriers to access essential public services, even for what would appear to be straightforward matters such as transport can derive from lack of family support, the latter typically assured when being part of an extended family... Lack of family support therefore puts returnees at risk of severe poverty, which exacerbates the risks of again falling victim to trafficking.’ Re-trafficking is a reality.’[[311]](#footnote-312)

* + 1. The OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019 stated:

‘In rural areas, strong gender stereotypes and expectations over women’s and men’s roles, in the household and in the family, prevail. Women are usually responsible for taking care of the household, children and dependents. Men are considered de-facto heads of household, have control over the family’s earnings and choose where to live. Additionally, married women may be expected to seek permission from their husband for leaving the house or traveling... In urban areas, reports show that employed women are most likely to be involved in household decision-making...’[[312]](#footnote-313)

* + 1. Several sources told the HO FFT that women can live alone in Tirana and women can internally relocate to Tirana and that social media is allowing more women to realise that they can live alone in Tirana, working and paying rent. The Municipality of Tirana said they see about 67 people a day coming to Tirana from all over the country looking for a job. It is easier for young women to live alone than older women.

It was acknowledged, though, that in rural areas it was more difficult for women to live alone without family or social support, although there are some women who do live alone successfully[[313]](#footnote-314).

* + 1. The Director of Curriculum in Kükes said that if a woman wanted to become independent, there are ways to achieve it. For example, there are women who work on carpets or as seamstresses or in other similar small entrepreneurships which can be done at home. They also work in a family business or elsewhere[[314]](#footnote-315).
    2. The Director of the Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre commented that Kükes is in the poorest region in the country with unemployment officially at 36%, although in reality much higher, with half of families on social welfare of 50EUR per month per family.

She said that even if a woman had the economic means, it would be ‘very scary’ to live alone; she wouldn’t be subject to physical violence, but the psychological pressure would be there[[315]](#footnote-316).

* + 1. Several sources also told the HO FFT that although in some parts of Albania there may be a stigma to living alone, this is not true of Tirana[[316]](#footnote-317). The Ministry for Health and Social Welfare also said there is no prejudice in Albania against women from different areas[[317]](#footnote-318).
    2. The Director of Social Services in Kükes noted that in rural areas there is a stigma for women to get divorced and live alone. He said that sometimes there is reluctance to employ a divorced woman and the social stigma also accompanies the children in their school and neighbourhood. He said the cases of bullying in these cases have increased[[318]](#footnote-319).
    3. See the Country Policy and Information Note [Albania: Domestic violence](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes) (‘Life as a single woman’) for further information on the situation for divorced women, women living alone, stigma for single mothers/divorcees, contact with the father of children, support for single female returnees with children, assistance in finding employment, freedom of movement for women and civil registration and data security.

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### Males: reintegration assistance

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2017, which covered the year 2017, Different and Equal noted:

‘During this period D&E has assisted 17 male potential victims of trafficking/victims of sexual abuse, 2 of them were new cases referred at D&E reintegration program.

‘…

‘Cases were supported with psycho-social counseling, legal aid, medical assistance, support for finding a job, financial support for paying the rented apartment; training to enhance life skills; providing information and intercession for receiving services provided by different community service providers, monitoring and follow up, etc. D&E psychologist has offered regular individual counseling sessions for all male beneficiaries in the program.

‘During this year:

* men VoT / PVoT beneficiaries of the D&E program attended school, 3 hight [sic] school and 1 secondary education
* 2 of the beneficiaries have attended professional cooking and car service courses.
* 7 cases are provided with ID cards.’[[319]](#footnote-320)
  + 1. Different and Equal also provided details of [social and cultural activities](http://differentandequal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Annual_REPORT_2018.pdf) (page 28) for those males they were assisting.
    2. Some of the interlocutors interviewed for the Asylos/ARC report 2019 confirmed that Different and Equal provided services for male victims of trafficking. The same report stated:

‘“The services are the same as the services for female VoTs who are accommodated in the shelter. Services are provided to male VoT across the country, where they decide to live and to be reintegrated. Psychological assistance is provided by psychologists. There are case managers, lawyers, teachers, psychologists and doctors involved. Each of them assess cases of male VoT. The psychologist does a psychological assessment; the lawyer does a legal assessment; and the teacher and doctors do the same on education and health assessment. After the needs assessments, the case manager together with the male beneficiary builds up a reintegration plan based on the assessment done by the multidisciplinary team. Beside the psychological assistance, there is also legal and medical assistance, as they need mostly and this is of great value in helping them during the rehabilitation. For the cases who are exploited for sexual purposes, they need to be attended by a specialist, mostly they face problems of sexual infection, so they need to be treated by a doctor and they do different analysis and are accompanied by a doctor. The legal assistance is another service provided for the males. Since at the beginning they need to apply for identification document, because in most of the cases they do not have any basic documents, any ID or birth certificate and they are supported to acquire these documents. Other services are education, schooling, and vocational training. So, the teacher, after the assessment she makes for each case, tries to register them in order to attend school. Other services are vocational trainings, so to empower and reintegrate them in society; to attend courses and to take a profession. This is mostly for adult males. Most of the courses they attend are for kitchen, cooking courses, language courses for English, Italian, computer courses, hairdresser (barber) courses. They are supported on job counselling and job placements.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[320]](#footnote-321)

* + 1. The report also recorded the view of James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, stating:

‘“I have heard that there is some limited degree of reintegration that is possible, mainly I’ve heard that talked about in terms of shelters, initial support provision on arrival rather than longer-term reintegration support. Certainly none of the young men I’ve work with have been aware of them so my knowledge has not come from young people directly. Those who have been made aware of what is there have no belief in those systems to adequately protect from further exploitation, or to provide ongoing support. There is a very firmly held belief that criminal networks are wide ranging across the country and whatever that support might look like it certainly wouldn’t prevent that risk. So overall, I would say a very low level of awareness of those support provisions at all and again I don’t believe male specialist support is available.”’[[321]](#footnote-322)

* + 1. See [Education and training](#_Education_and_young), [Employment](#_Stigma_attached_to), [Government and NGO shelters](#_Government_and_NGO): [Males](#_Males) and [Males: longer-term challenges](#_Males:_longer-term_challenges) for further information on these subjects.

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### Males: longer-term challenges

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated:

‘When asked to comment on difficulties an Albanian boy or young male victim of trafficking may face if attempting to relocate and settle into a different area, interviewees stated the following:

‘“The main problem is accommodation as the programs offer short term support. Big cities are good in terms of occupation but bad in terms of costs of living and accommodation.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“Of course - finding a job is their main challenge because if they have a permanent job it means they can make enough money every month to find accommodation and also be able to cover their immediate needs but once they decide to move from their home town to main urban areas where they can feel hidden from the community and the history of trafficking then the cost of living is very high and securing accommodation and accessing health care becomes a big challenge to them.”

‘Source: Professor Dr. Edlira Haxhiymeri, interview record, January 2019

‘“We live in a small country where everyone knows everyone, and you rely on your friends and your network to offer you all the services but when we have the problems like health always you have this problem especially with health problems but finding work is very difficult. Accommodation is not difficult. The main challenges are findings work and access to healthcare.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“In many cases service providers find themselves alone or not fully supported in their effort to give reintegration assistance to male VoT. So, it is difficult for VoT to find jobs through the employment offices, therefore the services accompany each of the cases to the employment office in order to provide them with job opportunities. But for the males VoT is more difficult to find jobs and to be sustainable in this job placement or to benefit from the system of social housing. It’s not easy for some cases to maintain their jobs for a long period of time. This is due to many factors. Some of them have difficulties in maintaining stable relationships with their colleagues or their superiors. Some others that have lived in a street situation for a long period of time and find difficulties getting used to work routines, schedules, etc. This is understandable having [sic] into consideration the fact that they have lived for many years without a clear structure in their life. In some cases they have low level of education and they do not have any profession. As I mentioned to you, the municipality of Tirana has some programmes for housing, for paying part of the rent of apartments for them. But for the males is more difficult to profit from this programmes. Providing rented apartments is a good temporary service but does not fulfill the need for long term accommodation. They need long term solutions… The major part of the boys need to be helped immediately once in the assistance program regarding ID and other basic documents that they lack. There are cases that have moved from one area to another and they were supported to be transferred and to be registered in the Civil State.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[322]](#footnote-323)

* + 1. The same report stated:

‘Some sources suggested that relocation difficulties may vary depending on the area of relocation:

‘“Tirana, the capital, offers better opportunities in terms of work opportunities and access to services.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“Always in the rural areas it is harder.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“Yes, because some programmes are provided on the local level and the Municipality of Tirana has more programs than the other municipalities in other cities. Sometimes the programs provided by the Municipality of Tirana, for housing for example are not available at the other cities. In Tirana there are more programmes. Even the job market is very limited in the other cities or areas. … The majority of trafficked persons decide to be reintegrated and to live in Tirana. One of the reasons is that Tirana has more opportunities and there are more programs by the local level structures. There are special programs that are on municipality level. Even the job market is very limited in small cities of Albania.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[323]](#footnote-324)

* + 1. However, Dr Schwandner-Sievers of Bournemouth University noted that poverty can exist anywhere in Albania: ‘“There can be utter destitution anywhere, perhaps more in rural areas, but in marginalised urban areas everywhere across the country, too. This applies to all areas of Albania...”’[[324]](#footnote-325)
    2. See [Social housing](#_Social_housing), [Education and training](#_Education_and_young), [Employment](#_Employment), [Males: reintegration assistance](#_Males:_reintegration_assistance), and [Healthcare](#_Healthcare) for further information concerning these issues.

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### Children

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 referred to the visit of the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, to Albania in May 2018, and the subsequent report published in September 2018:

‘“During her field visit in Shkodra the Commissioner visited one of ten community centres ‘For the family’ established by the local authorities where activities are organised for families and children, including after-school and income-generation activities. The Commissioner was informed that, inter alia, these centres play an important role in assisting in the reintegration of Albanian children who returned to Albania after having spent some time abroad. The staff in the centre that the Commissioner visited comprises one psychologist, a community facilitator and a person dealing with income generation activities. The centre is financed by local authorities and donors. Noting with appreciation the enthusiasm of the staff and the work that they carry out, the Commissioner encouraged the national authorities to consider providing financial support to this and similar local initiatives.”’[[325]](#footnote-326)

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2020 stated:

‘… experts reported a lack of resources for long-term care and reintegration efforts, particularly for child victims and victims with children. For example, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection did not approve funds for the government-run shelter to hire a part-time teacher for victims unable to attend school. Similarly, the government provided free textbooks to children in “social economic difficulties,” but the definition of that phrase did not explicitly include trafficking victims, and some regional directorates of the Ministry of Education used that omission to exclude child victims from receiving free textbooks.’[[326]](#footnote-327)

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### Anonymity in Albania

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 recorded the following views from interviewees:

‘“… this is about can you anonymously live in Albania, and the answer is no, you can’t anonymously live in Albania - that is very different from London or from Bristol or any UK city - because it’s such a small country and because also for cultural reasons, the ways in which people situate you socially. You encounter somebody and you meet somebody, and any social contact you make you are defined as a person through where you are from and who your family is. It is almost a ritual; it is a ritual rhetoric. When you meet someone, you ask “How’s your father? How’s your mother?” And you ask that if you know the father and mother. There also is this very big trope of a good or a bad family. It’s very common in Middle Eastern societies, and prevalent in Albania as well, where it was reinforced during the Communist rule in particular. Albania is an incredibly small society. Also, you have very clear social organization with rules such as post-marital virilocal residence still very common. Society is organised patrilineally. This means that you can relate always somebody through their patrilineage. “Who’s your father?” Mother’s family now matters as well, but you are always judged in terms of whether you are from a good or bad family through your parents’ lineages.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019

‘Dr Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers further expands upon this later in her interview:

‘“… There is no anonymous living such as in Europe’s large cities. What chance do you have to reintegrate into a society, without your family, where everything is reliant on family? Just being given a rented flat in a city without pre-existing social contacts would make you very conspicuous and attract attention and suspicion.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019

‘James Simmonds-Read also suggests that the reintegration assistance that is available for boys and young men would not prevent the risk from criminal networks in Albania:

‘“…Those who have been made aware of what [support] is there have no belief in those systems to adequately protect from further exploitation, or to provide ongoing support. There is a very firmly held belief that criminal networks are wide ranging across the country and whatever that support might look like it certainly wouldn’t prevent that risk…”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019’[[327]](#footnote-328)

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### Re-trafficking

* + 1. Different and Equal told the HO FFT that they had had a few cases, maybe 4-5% of women, who had ended up being re-trafficked. These were women who willingly left their programme. BIRN (the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) said that sometimes people are willingly re-trafficked because they know nothing else and see no other way of getting out of the country[[328]](#footnote-329).
    2. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 quoted from the 2017 research paper from Dr Enkeleida Tahira and Shpresa, which made the following statement in relation to the potential retrafficking of women and girls: ‘“Lack of family support therefore puts returnees at risk of severe poverty, which exacerbates the risks of again falling victim to trafficking. Re-trafficking is a reality.”’[[329]](#footnote-330)
    3. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 continued:

‘Many of the sources Asylos and ARC Foundation interviewed raised concerns about the risks of retrafficking for trafficked boys and young men. James Simmonds-Read states that victims returning to their families can be either a protective or risk factor, and that the existence of extensive criminal networks across the country which have direct police links increase the chances of re-trafficking when asked what the risks of re-trafficking on return to Albania for young males are.

‘“I think that they are very high. I think that obviously it depends on the circumstance of the person’s return, how long they’ve been in UK for, whether they are returning back to a family support network or not. If any of the young males I’ve worked with were returned I’m not sufficiently assured they could access family support networks on return as for whatever reason, communication lines have broken down or been lost. The Home Office and the Red Cross have had real difficulties tracing families for some of the Albanian young people I’ve worked with; that haven’t resulted in anything even when an address is provided. There are often real concerns that that may well mean that the family has been targeted by the traffickers. I’ve had numerous examples where families have been directly targeted by the traffickers prior to the young people leaving and so themselves have been at significant danger; have either been moving around the country regularly, or themselves considered leaving, or have left the country with those young people, but haven’t been able to pay for the journey to accompany them to the UK. Unclear whether they have remained in Albania or ended up in a third country. I have also had some examples, maybe not many, where the family themselves were involved or colluded in the trafficking of their children.

‘Many of the young men I’ve worked with have described criminal networks that are extensive- that involve many members of criminal gangs and they have overheard phone conversations where they are linking up with gangs in other locations in Albania, whether nearby or further away locations, where they have direct links with the police. Therefore that would strongly suggest to me that those individuals could potentially have access to information that could mean they could find those young people who have returned. Further if those particular criminal networks weren’t targeting them then males being returned on their own without guaranteed large safety nets, particularly family would be at huge risk of re-trafficking from other exploitative networks given that they seem to be very prevalent and endemic across lots of parts of the country and are quite visible. Lots of young people talk about visibly seeing criminal gangs around a lot from young ages. For some it’s almost becoming quite a normalized part of day to day life in Albania to witness groups of young men who show indicators of being part of criminal networks. So I think that would make them quite vulnerable to re-trafficking.”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019

‘Dr Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers raises several issues which she says make the risk re-trafficking and/or exploitation very high. She caveats her response by stating that her research on this issue was focused on female victims but that states that ‘by extension, I would be surprised if that was any different for boys because of the whole logic of why it started first of all.’

‘“… young men have a lot of pressure on their shoulders because they have to be the providers for their families and extended families. This is also why this whole set of questions before is a little off what is relevant to people themselves because, in a way, families would want them to go back abroad, and often they would want to keep eyes shut about how income is actually really generated as long as the money comes back and people can live. Deducing this from the situation for women as observed in 2008, and given the wider situation in Albanian society as I know it, if you are really victimized, remigration (in situations of social vulnerability typically ending up in re-trafficking) is your best option for safety, so yes, the risk of being re-trafficked would be extremely high.

‘Asylos: Can you clarify that?

‘I think re-trafficking risks are very high. Now, I have to - again, a caveat - I haven’t done that - those questions - in relation to young boys, but for young women, the percentage was mind boggling. It was like the majority ended up being re-trafficked. This is because they don’t want to be either facing massive stigma, or being locked up in a shelter in Albania with no hope and being married to an old widower or sent back to their family and kept locked up in their family’s house. You know, any of that. They want to have a life and some control over their own fate, so the next opportunity to go abroad, they took, so of course, many ended up in servitude again. I think that, by extension, I would be surprised if that was any different for boys because of the whole logic of why it started first of all. With young women, we also had this escape from patriarchal structures and getting a bit more modern life was very big. With young boys, that is perhaps… it could also be that they are fed up with tradition. At the same time, we also find that young boys reinvent the tradition because they empower them as men.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019

‘This source states that some of the factors which make female victims vulnerable to trafficking apply to “boys” also:

‘“I know there is a high risk of re trafficking for females, that is connected to factors (such as lack of employment opportunities, low wages, high cost of living) that apply to boys also. People who lack family support on return are more vulnerable to trafficking than the others.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘These sources also cite loss of support networks as a factor which relates to re-trafficking, however Steve Harvey believes that this issue may be more applicable to victims of sexual exploitation.

‘“The risk of re-trafficking for victims of sexual exploitation on return is real because of the loss of the family and friends support network and possible threats from family and traffickers. This is not unique to Albania but is poses the greatest threat. Other forms of exploitation may be viewed more constructively … There are no patterns other than the vulnerability of a victim without family or social support.”

‘Source: Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“The risk is high because when you leave Albania you are disconnected from all that you’ve done before - from work possibilities to your network organization or institution because you left the country and you are trying to find another possibility somewhere else. We had some cases where they sell their assets or properties. Starting from the beginning in a country in Albania for someone who has nothing and has abandoned the environment some time ago is very hard this makes a real risk of re-trafficking. …

‘Yes, so with this mentality they still feel they have no choice but to reenter into this world of trafficking, according to what difficulties they experienced in Albania and also what society and the environment in Albania offers (lack of job, future, vision, care, food, home. education). This is for all sectors. We have cases - we work in the prisons - a lot of girls there have been in jail for prostitution and are VOT and still they think that when they leave the prison, they still will do this work. Because they have a better life than when they were living in a village in their community. It happens even with young boys.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘This source believes that the risk of re-trafficking is low for victims in receipt of services, but recognises that often male victims do not benefit from this support as a result of challenges around identification.

‘“Even the males who return back to Albania need to be referred and to be supported. Those who are identified are referred but the problem is for those who are not yet identified. If they do not have access to the services the possibilities to be in risk of re-trafficking exist. So the cases of males of VOT who return to Albania and have joined their families should be referred and they have the right to be supported with the services based on their needs. The support should be provided for the entire family. Yes, because even if the males who are returned to their families need to be supported even in families, so they need to be provided with different services based on their needs. But sometimes they have joined their families without any service being provided, even to the male or to the entire family. These are the boys who are not identified as VoT. Another challenge faced during the process of identification of males victims of trafficking is the fact that in many cases of forced labor, the trafficking victims or the potential trafficking victims are considered as irregular migrants and are deported without tacking into the consideration the possibility that they might have been exploited. Or even for the cases who came back from different countries, if they go to their families, they plan again to go outside of Albania. So, they need to be supported somehow. Even to inform them about the consequences and the risks of unsafe migration or being unaccompanied by their parents.

‘No, but just for the cases who are referred in the programmes and services the risk to be retrafficked is low, because they are supported by the organization or the institution, being provided with the services they need, based on their needs. All the trafficked persons have the right to access the services they need. For the cases who return back to their families without having access to the services, there’s a risk of being in street situation again, because most of the male cases potential VoT come from families who are dysfunctional or disorganized, so they need to be assisted and provided with services.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[330]](#footnote-331)

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 continued:

‘In regards to whether some individuals are more vulnerable to re-trafficking than others, interviewees made the following comments:

‘“A number of the young men I’ve supported have had mental health issues, if not learning disabilities caused by the level of trauma that they’ve experienced so have additional vulnerabilities on that basis. Also those who through their experience of trafficking have become quite compliant, find it very difficult to speak up for themselves, even after lots of work to help them develop confidence. Those without family networks, or whose families themselves were involved in their exploitation. Those where their whole family has been targeted by the criminal networks. So not just those who were targeted by individuals but where it is quite clear that targeting may well have gone on beyond the person leaving the country. I’ve seen an example of reprisals where other members of family have escaped from traffickers and moved to another country e.g. the UK, then seeing those networks target the remaining family in Albania. That would create a risk. I would also say anyone who has been exploited by a network who have witnessed them having direct connections with the authorities creates a risk.”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019

‘“Those who have a dysfunctional family, who live in remote areas and face the prejudice and bullying from small communities, and all of them youth who find difficulties to find a job or a future in Albania and have no financial support from family.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“I think it’s all cultural and social capital, it comes down to, of your own family. If you’re from a family with a good standing in the country with good connections, you will have all the support in the world and will be pretty safe but you’re also least likely to end up in that situation first of all. I think it’s an economic thing, it’s a class thing, and of course, it is a very hierarchical society. They wouldn’t tell you it’s hierarchical. They tell you it’s very egalitarian, but it’s hyper capitalist, hyper individualist now, hyper hedonistic, yet infused with all these things like that, you still… families are so important. These people are entrepreneurs in the informal realm… Of course, I think, if you look at the poverty scale and the scale of social exclusion and inclusion, and social exclusion and discrimination as a Roma boy, you would be on the bottom edge in terms of accepted society, so you are particularly vulnerable. Class, ethnicity, social capital are all important in assessing risks.”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019’[[331]](#footnote-332)

* + 1. The Asylos/ARC report 2019 continued:

‘When asked about the risks of further exploitation for trafficked boys and young men on return to Albania, these sources stated the following:

‘“Lack of long term and comprehensive assistance creates risks for further exploitation in Albania or pushes them to migrate again.”

‘Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019

‘“High if returned to families and if they are placed in a shelter or similar they will only escape to get back to their families, so high.”

‘Source: Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019’[[332]](#footnote-333)

* + 1. The report further noted:

‘Other sources talked about exploitation by criminal networks, with young men being groomed into, and in some cases “going up the ranks” in trafficking gangs:

‘“Exploitation outside of re-trafficking? I suppose it depends on how you define it; people have different definitions of what trafficking is. What I would say is that the biggest risk is of internal exploitation by criminal networks as in within Albania rather than from Albania to another country though being trafficked internationally is also a risk. I would still define that as trafficking as a person is still being moved around or held in a location even if not across international borders. The only area that I can really comment on is that some young men would be at risk of being groomed into criminal networks, it might not initially present as exploitative but it becomes exploitative through the grooming model I have described previously, they are at risk of this internal form of exploitation.”

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019

‘“When they have been trafficked, they learn a lot of other ways of being trafficked or trafficking, so they become experts because they are part of an environment abroad where people are victims in different ways. They share with each other these stories and somehow without knowing they accept their reality which doesn’t have to be accepted, in the sense they think again about reentering this work. So there is a have a large possibility that they can be trafficked or where they can be exploited again.”

‘Source: Mr Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, interview record, January 2019

‘“Re-trafficking for sure and further exploitation …”

‘Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record, February 2019’[[333]](#footnote-334)

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Section 14 updated: 6 January 2021

## Healthcare

### Expenses

* + 1. The GRETA report 2016 stated, ‘At the end of 2014, Law No. 141/2014 amended Law No. 10383/2001 on Compulsory Health Insurance, entitling victims of THB [trafficking in human beings] to free access to health care. Victims must be issued with a card entitling them to free access to medical care provided outside shelters. This will, inter alia, enable victims suffering from psychiatric problems who cannot be cared for by the shelters to receive care and, if necessary, be hospitalised.’[[334]](#footnote-335)
    2. The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: ‘The government provided free health care.’[[335]](#footnote-336)
    3. Quoting other sources, the Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated:

‘Assistance for health is offered in all residential centres and by law victims of trafficking should be provided free health care where they live. Women in shelters receive medical examinations and treatment, typically refers to simple dispensing of medicine and often funds allocated to pay for their medical expenses are not released, resulting in out of pocket expenses. Equally, widespread corruption within the state health system does mean that nominally free services and subsidized medications may not be accessible without out-of-pocket payments being necessary, as well as payments “under the counter” to both medical specialists as well as to administration staff.’[[336]](#footnote-337)

* + 1. The same report noted:

‘“The medical care system ensures medical health for free for people in this category [i.e. for victims of trafficking], so they can be attended or visited by the doctor, but all the medicines need to be bought. Sometimes they need to buy the medicines on a monthly basis…”

‘Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019’[[337]](#footnote-338)

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, Different and Equal reported that, in the year 2019, ‘13 new beneficiaries referred in D&E program have been provided with health cards and the renewal of 7 health cards of former beneficiaries to enable them to benefit from a range of free health services.’[[338]](#footnote-339)

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### General health of trafficking victims

* + 1. In the Annual Report 2019, covering events of 2019, Different and Equal noted:

‘The D&E doctor has made the medical evaluation of the new cases entered in the program and has also addressed and treated the medical needs of all the beneficiaries of the reintegration program, for the beneficiaries who are accommodated in the reintegration center but also for those who are in the second phase of the program.

‘For each new case entered the program, routine tests are performed (whole blood, urine and SST examinations).’[[339]](#footnote-340)

* + 1. The same report recorded the following:

‘D&E has collaborated with a number of public and non-public institutions to provide beneficiaries with various health services such as: Albanian University - Department of Dentistry, through which free dental services are provided to the beneficiaries of the program; Polyclinic No.9; Institute of Public Health; Institute of Hygiene; Dental Polyclinic “UFO”; “Koco Glozheni” Obstetric and Gynecological Hospital and “Queen Geraldine”; QSUT Polyvalent Emergency; Pediatric Emergency.’[[340]](#footnote-341)

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### Mental health of trafficking victims

* + 1. In the 2015 report, ‘Falling through the cracks!,’ Different and Equal reported on the boys and men whom they had assisted:

‘Trafficked men and boys are often traumatized as a consequence of their trafficking experience. Moreover, many trafficked boys are traumatized as a consequence of their life before trafficking, including family abuse and violence, alcoholism within the home, poverty, neglect, abandonment, death of a parent, etc.

‘…

‘As a consequence one of the most important parts of the reintegration process for trafficked boys in Albania is the provision of psychological assistance.

‘Psychotherapy is not yet a profession regulated by law and is too costly, because it is offered only within the private sector of services. The community centers of mental health show low standard and offer mostly psychiatric services only for severe psychological problems, like schizophrenia or high developmental disabilities. Still, the heaviest burden of services related to victims of trafficking is held by NGO-s that work with victims of trafficking.

‘…

‘When is to talk about sexual exploitation, it is a very difficult topic to speak out, and even when they decide to tell their exploitation experiences still they should be reassured many times that this will not be discussed with anyone. Beyond the psychological difficulties from the exploitation experience, there are also other cultural issues, which lead to such resistances. Topics like shame and stigma of being a victim, males being in a position of a victim are issues that affect the way the boys see themselves and their current position.

‘…

‘In the case of adult males, the psychological difficulties are mostly related to the traumas suffered during trafficking and to the disappointment from not fulfilling their expectations regarding the emigration or work experience.

‘…

‘Another sign of psychological damage in adult males has been the fear that the exploiters can harm them or their families. The two foreign cases assisted showed signs of great fears during the stay in Albania. They usually stayed in their apartment, and did not like to move across Tirana because they were afraid that their exploiters could find them. Also, the Albanian male that was trafficked for forced labor, said that he feared continually that something bad would happen to him, or to his family.

‘Another difficulty faced by the adult males is the disappointment faced when they return to their family… Also one of the foreign victims was in doubt if he should return to his home country, because he felt ashamed of his family, due to the unsuccessful story of migration and the fact that he did not earn enough to send to his family.’[[341]](#footnote-342)

* + 1. See [Stigma attached to victims of trafficking](#_Stigma_attached_to_1) for further information on this subjects.

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### Mental healthcare in shelters

* + 1. In 2017, the Directors of the NRCVHT told the HO FFT that as in line with Albanian legislation, every person who approaches the shelters is subject to a mental health assessment and a report is produced. Depending on the level of treatment required and severity, it can be dealt with in either the shelter or the person can be sent to a specific centre.

The Director of the NRCVHT spoke of a specific example of a person who has mental health issues, and they have been undergoing treatment in the centre for two years now.

Normally, the shelters are equipped with a psychiatrist. The law provides that every person in a shelter has the right to the same level of treatment as any other citizen.

The Head of Mental Health and Addictology at the Ministry of Health said psycho-social support is offered to people who come out of shelters, they will get more support than others and there is no time limit on how long they are monitored in the community – it depends on the diagnosis[[342]](#footnote-343).

* + 1. The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted that the government provided free healthcare to the residents of shelters[[343]](#footnote-344).
    2. In the Annual Report 2019, which covered events of 2019, Different and Equal stated that ‘11 beneficiaries with mental health problems are regularly monitored by a psychiatrist receiving appropriate treatment on ongoing basis… Two cases were hospitalized …, respectively in the Psychiatric Service for adults and the Psychiatry Service for children and adolescents, respectively with diagnoses of borderline personality disorder and PTSD with suicidal attempts.’[[344]](#footnote-345)
    3. In the same report, Different and Equal explained some of the therapies used to assist their clients, stating, ‘Psychological and psycho-social counseling, art therapy, occupational therapy, relaxation techniques are activities organized in the frame work of psycho-social assistance. All these activities aim at the psychological well-being of the beneficiaries.’[[345]](#footnote-346) Different and Equal reported that the following therapy sessions were delivered in 2019:

‘Individual psychological counselling provided by a psychologist: 503 sessions

‘Individual psycho-social counselling provided by case managers: 3,644 sessions

‘Group art therapy: 36 sessions

‘Creative work and occupationsl therapy: 33 sessions’[[346]](#footnote-347)

* + 1. Quoting other sources, the Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated: ‘All centres offer “psychosocial” counseling services, but these services offer very basic provision that may fall short of the individual mental health needs of a trafficker person in terms of both length of support, appropriateness and quality. Indeed, treatment is often limited to the prescription of anti-depressants and, where available, counseling is conducted by shelter staff who have no formal training in psychiatry or psychology.’[[347]](#footnote-348)
    2. For further information about mental healthcare in Albania, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: mental healthcare](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-policy-and-information-notes).

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Section 15 updated: 6 January 2021

## Life in Albania

### Introduction

* + 1. This section has been included to provide information about education, employment, wages and benefits, particularly for women in Albania. It also includes geographical and cultural information.

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### Women in society

* + 1. The USSD HR Report 2020 noted:

‘The law provides the same legal status and rights for women as for men, but the government did not enforce the law effectively. Women were underrepresented in many fields at the highest levels. The law mandates equal pay for equal work, although many private employers did not fully implement this provision. In many communities, women experienced societal discrimination based on traditional social norms subordinating women to men.’[[348]](#footnote-349)

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### Area of origin: determining features

* + 1. Encyclopaedia Britannica provided the following undated information:

‘Albania has a mountainous geography. About three-fourths of its territory consists of mountains and hills with elevations of more than 650 feet (200 metres) above sea level; the remainder consists of coastal and alluvial lowlands. The North Albanian Alps, an extension of the [Dinaric Alps](https://www.britannica.com/place/Dinaric-Alps), cover the northern part of the country. With elevations approaching 8,900 feet (2,700 metres), this is the most rugged part of the country. It is heavily forested and sparsely populated.

‘In contrast to the Alps, the central mountain region, which extends north-south from the Drin River to the central Devoll and lower Osum rivers, is more densely populated and has a generally less rugged terrain. In the region’s easternmost portion, the imposing gypsum block of Albania’s highest peak, [Mount Korab](https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-Korab), rises to 9,030 feet (2,752 metres). …

‘Unlike the Alps and the central region, which are covered with dense forests, the mountains of the southern region are either bare or have a thin covering of Mediterranean shrubs, oaks, and pines. They serve essentially as pasture for livestock.’[[349]](#footnote-350)

* + 1. Encyclopaedia Britannica further noted: ‘The longest river in Albania is the [Drin](https://www.britannica.com/place/Drin) (about 175 miles [280 km]), which originates in Kosovo. Other main rivers are the Seman, Shkumbin, and Vjosë, all of which drain the central part of the western plains. Albania also has many lakes, the most important of which are [Lake Scutari](https://www.britannica.com/place/Lake-Scutari) (known in Albania as Lake Shkodër) in the northwest and [Lakes Ohrid](https://www.britannica.com/place/Lake-Ohrid) and [Prespa](https://www.britannica.com/place/Lake-Prespa) along the eastern border.’[[350]](#footnote-351)
    2. The CIA Factbook estimated the population of Albania in July 2020 to be 3,074,579, with its capital, Tirana at 494,000[[351]](#footnote-352). However the Guardian put the population of Tirana in 2018 at 800,000[[352]](#footnote-353).
    3. The Everyculture website published an undated article which stated:

‘Albania is bordered to the north by the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro, which has an approximate 10 percent Albanian minority living in regions along the Albanian-Montenegrin border. The Montenegrin towns of Ulcinj, Tuz, Plava, and Gucinj were traditionally and are still inhabited by Albanians. To the northeast of the Republic of Albania is Kosovo, still a de jure part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Kosovo, which the Kosovo Albanians have declared to be a free and sovereign republic and which the Serbs insist must remain an integral part of Serbia, has about 90 percent Albanian speakers … To the east of the Republic of Albania is the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, one-third of which, along the Albanian border, has an Albanian majority. The central Macedonian towns of Skopje, Kumanovo, and Bitola have sizable (15 to 50 percent) communities of Albanian speakers, whereas the western Macedonian centers of Tetova (Tetovo), Gostivar, and Dibra (Debar), along with the Struga area, all have an Albanian majority.’[[353]](#footnote-354)



* + 1. The same website noted:

‘Albanians can be divided into two cultural groups: the northern Albanians, or Ghegs (sometimes spelled Gegs), and the southern Albanians, or Tosks. The geographic border between the two groups, based on dialect, runs roughly along the Shkumbin River, which flows through the central town of Elbasan to the Adriatic Sea. All Albanians north of the Shkumbin, along with the Albanians of Montenegro, Kosovo, and most of Macedonia (FYROM), speak Gheg dialects with their characteristic nasalization. All Albanians south of the Shkumbin, including the Albanians of Greece, southwestern Macedonia, and southern Italy, speak Tosk dialects with their characteristic rhoticism [inability/difficulty in pronouncing the letter “r” OR having an accent in which an “r” sound is retained before consonants (as in “hard”) and at the end of a word (as in “car”) OR the changing of another sound to “r”]. Although dialect and cultural differences between the Ghegs and Tosks can be substantial, both sides identify strongly with the common national and ethnic culture.’[[354]](#footnote-355)

* + 1. The Everyculture website further stated, ‘Albania is on the border dividing three religions: Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, and Islam… One can estimate today that approximately 70 percent of Albanians in the republic are of Muslim, including Bektashi, background; about 20 percent, mostly in the south, are Orthodox; and about 10 percent, mostly in the north, are Catholic.’[[355]](#footnote-356)

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### Income

* + 1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report 2020 for Albania stated that the Gross National Income per capita was $13,998 (which is approximately £10,277.33)[[356]](#footnote-357).
    2. The same report provided the following statistics:

‘Estimated gross national income per capita, female (2011 PPP $): 11,004.00 [approximately £8,079]

‘Estimated gross national income per capita, male (2011 PPP $): 16,885 [approximately £12,397]’[[357]](#footnote-358)

* + 1. The European Commission’s Albania 2020 report stated, ‘Despite solid employment growth, real wages grew by only about 1.3% in 2018, but picked up to about 2.4 % in 2019 supported by an increase in the minimum wage and public wages. The overall moderate wage growth masks wide sectoral variations…’[[358]](#footnote-359)
    2. Trading Economics, ‘an online platform that provides historical data, conomic forecasts, news, and trading recommendations,’ stated that in the third quarter of 2020, the minimum wage in Albania was 26,000 ALL per month (approximately £176.00)[[359]](#footnote-360).

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### Education: mandatory schooling

* + 1. The European Commission, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and Eurydice (an organisation which publishes information related to education) published a document in 2019 which noted that education is compulsory in Albania for 9 years, from the ages of 6 to 15[[360]](#footnote-361).
    2. The USSD HR Report 2020 noted that, ‘School attendance is mandatory through the ninth grade or until the age of 16, whichever occurs first, but many children, particularly in rural areas, left school earlier to work with their families.’[[361]](#footnote-362)

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### Education: investment in schools

* + 1. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report noted that ‘School principals in Albania reported less staff shortage and more material shortage than the OECD average; but there was no significant difference in staff shortages between advantaged and disadvantaged schools.’[[362]](#footnote-363)
    2. The UNDP Human Development Report 2020 provided the following statistic for Albania: ‘Pupil-teacher ratio, primary school (number of pupils per teacher): 18’[[363]](#footnote-364)

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### Education: average attainment

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, published in October 2020, the European Commission provided information about the general standard of education for the country as a whole, and this is included for purposes of comparison:

‘The results of Albania’s 2018 participation in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) were published in December 2019. Despite steady improvement over the previous four testing rounds (2000, 2009, 2012 and 2015), Albania continued to perform poorly in 2018: 50.3 % of 15-year olds underperformed at PISA levels I or II in reading and 53.3 % in mathematics. Preparations are ongoing for Albania’s participation in PISA 2021.’[[364]](#footnote-365)

* + 1. The OECD PISA 2018 results showed:

‘Students in Albania scored lower than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science.

‘Compared to the OECD average, a smaller proportion of students in Albania performed at the highest levels of proficiency (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject; at the same time a smaller proportion of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in at least one subject.’[[365]](#footnote-366)

* + 1. The same OECD country note recorded student attainments in reading:

‘In Albania, 48% of students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in reading (OECD average: 77%). At a minimum, these students can identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit, though sometimes complex criteria, and can reflect on the purpose and form of texts when explicitly directed to do so.

‘Some a negligible percentage of students in Albania were top performers in reading, meaning that they attained Level 5 or 6 in the PISA reading test (OECD average: 9%). At these levels, students can comprehend lengthy texts, deal with concepts that are abstract or counterintuitive, and establish distinctions between fact and opinion, based on implicit cues pertaining to the content or source of the information. In 20 education systems, including those of 15 OECD countries, more than 10% of 15year-old students were top performers.’[[366]](#footnote-367)

* + 1. The report also noted attainment in mathematics:

‘Some 58% of students in Albania attained Level 2 or higher in mathematics (OECD average: 76%). At a minimum, these students can interpret and recognise, without direct instructions, how a (simple) situation can be represented mathematically (e.g. comparing the total distance across two alternative routes, or converting prices into a different currency)… On average across OECD countries, 76% of students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in mathematics.

‘In Albania, 2% of students scored at Level 5 or higher in mathematics (OECD average: 11%). … These students can model complex situations mathematically, and can select, compare and evaluate appropriate problem-solving strategies for dealing with them.’[[367]](#footnote-368)

* + 1. The report further noted attainment in science:

‘Some 53% of students in Albania attained Level 2 or higher in science (OECD average: 78%). At a minimum, these students can recognise the correct explanation for familiar scientific phenomena and can use such knowledge to identify, in simple cases, whether a conclusion is valid based on the data provided.

‘In Albania, a negligible percentage of students were top performers in science, meaning that they were proficient at Level 5 or 6 (OECD average: 7%). These students can creatively and autonomously apply their knowledge of and about science to a wide variety of situations, including unfamiliar ones.’[[368]](#footnote-369)

* + 1. The UNDP Human Development Report 2020 provided the following statistics for Albania:

‘Mean years of schooling (years): 10.1

‘Mean years of schooling, female (years): 9.7

‘Mean years of schooling, male (years): 10.6

‘Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and older): 93.2%

‘Population with at least some secondary education, female (% ages 25 and older): 93.7%

‘Population with at least some secondary education, male (% ages 25 and older): 92.5%.

‘Literacy rate, adult (% ages 15 and over): 98.1% ’[[369]](#footnote-370)

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### Education: attainment by gender

* + 1. The OECD country note of 2019 further noted equity in relation to gender:

‘In all countries and economies that participated in PISA 2018, girls significantly outperformed boys in reading – by 30 score points on average across OECD countries. In Albania, the gender gap in reading (38 score points) was higher than the average gap…

‘In Albania, girls scored similar to boys in mathematics. Across OECD countries, boys outperformed girls by five score points. While girls slightly outperformed boys in science (by two score points) on average across OECD countries in PISA 2018, in Albania girls outperformed boys in science by 16 score points.’[[370]](#footnote-371)

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### Education: vocational education and training (VET)

* + 1. The European Commission’s Albania 2020 report further noted:

‘… the Qualification standards and framework curricula for most VET programmes are being modernised, even though some Albanian schools lack the teaching skills and adequate equipment to put them into practice. Despite promotional activities and support to students from rural areas in following VET education, participation in VET is low in regional comparison with only 18.2% of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational schools in 2019.’[[371]](#footnote-372)

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### Education: disadvantaged students

* + 1. The USSD HR Report 2020 noted:

‘Parents must purchase supplies, books, uniforms, and space heaters for some classrooms; these were prohibitively expensive for many families, particularly Roma and members of other minorities. Many families also cited these costs as a reason for not sending girls to school.

‘Children in first through fourth grade are legally entitled to free textbooks, but some smaller municipalities did not provide them, and parents had to pay for them. Curricula varied from school to school, so parents of children who changed schools during the academic year had to pay for a second set of schoolbooks. An NGO provided school materials, bags, uniforms, and access to schoolbooks to children in four municipalities who were mainly from Roma and Balkan-Egyptian communities.’[[372]](#footnote-373)

* + 1. The same report stated that ‘Some schools resisted accepting Romani and Balkan-Egyptian students, particularly if the students appeared to be poor. Many schools that accepted Romani students marginalized them in the classroom, sometimes by physically setting them apart from other students.’[[373]](#footnote-374)
    2. The report continued:

‘The government adopted legislation on official minorities in 2017 but had yet to pass all the implementing regulations. The law provides official minority status for nine national minorities without distinguishing between national and ethnolinguistic groups. The government defined Greeks, Macedonians, Aromanians (Vlachs), Roma, Balkan-Egyptians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Serbs, and Bulgarians as national minorities. The legislation provides for minority language education and dual official language use for the local administrative units in which minorities traditionally reside or in which a minority makes up 20 percent of the total population. The ethnic Greek minority complained about the government’s unwillingness to recognize ethnic Greek communities outside communist-era “minority zones.”’[[374]](#footnote-375)

* + 1. The European Commission’s Albania 2020 Report noted the position for those who may be disadvantaged, including Roma and Egyptian children:

‘Although very low overall, the enrolment rates of Roma people and Egyptians increased from the previous academic year in both pre-university (+6 %) and early childhood education and care. Their access to higher education also improved, by 13.8% in the 2018/2019 academic year. Nevertheless, the gap in access to education between Roma/Egyptian children and the rest of children living in the same areas remains very large.’[[375]](#footnote-376)

* + 1. The report of September 2018 concering the visit of the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, Dunja Mijatovic, to Albania in May 2018 stated:

‘While noting with satisfaction that Albanian law enshrines the principle of inclusive education without discrimination on any ground, the Commissioner is concerned that there remain children, in particular Roma children and children with disabilities, who are excluded from mainstream education. The Commissioner calls on the authorities to sustain their efforts aimed at the inclusion of Roma children in mainstream education, in particular by working closely with Roma parents and increasing the efforts to tackle the issue of lack of inclusion of Roma in pre-school education.

‘The Commissioner wishes to underline that the exclusion of children with disabilities from mainstream education further reinforces and legitimises their marginalisation in the later stages of their lives. However, the placement of students with disabilities in mainstream classes can only be successful if accompanied by structural changes. The authorities need to take measures to ensure that children with special education needs effectively benefit from individual support and reasonable accommodation in mainstream settings, in accordance with Article 24 UN CRPD [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities].’[[376]](#footnote-377)

* + 1. The OECD country note of 2019 also noted ‘Equity related to socio-economic status:’ ‘In Albania, socio-economically advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students in reading by 61 score points in PISA 2018. This is smaller than the average difference between the two groups (89 score points) across OECD countries. In PISA 2009, the performance gap related to socioeconomic status was 79 score points in Albania (and 87 score points on average across OECD countries).’[[377]](#footnote-378)
    2. The report further stated: ‘Many students, especially disadvantaged students, hold lower ambitions than would be expected given their academic achievement. In Albania, about one in four high-achieving disadvantaged students – but 1 in 20 high-achieving advantaged students – do not expect to complete tertiary education.’[[378]](#footnote-379)
    3. See also [Education: vocational education and training](#_Education:_vocational_education) for further information about disadvanted students. See [Roma and Egyptian communities](#_Roma) for further information about this ethnic group.

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### Education: truancy

* + 1. The GRETA 2016 report stated:

‘School drop-out is a particular problem in the Roma and Egyptian communities and among children living in rural areas. A national programme, “Zero school drop-out”, was adopted for the period 2009-2013. There are psycho-social structures working with schools and seeking to provide assistance to families so that their children remain at school. Other initiatives have involved summer schools, tutoring and free meals for children attending school. It was also planned to introduce financial aid to help families in precarious financial situations to cover the costs of the school year for their children.’[[379]](#footnote-380)

* + 1. The OECD country note of 2019 also noted truancy:

‘On average across OECD countries, 21% of students had skipped a day of school and 48% of students had arrived late for school in the two weeks prior to the PISA test. In Albania, 31% of students had skipped a day of school and 44% of students had arrived late for school during that period. In most countries and economies, frequently bullied students were more likely to have skipped school, whereas students who valued school, enjoyed a better disciplinary climate and received greater emotional support from parents were less likely to have skipped school.’[[380]](#footnote-381)

* + 1. The UNDP Human Development Report 2020 provided the following statistic for Albania: ‘Primary school dropout rate (% of primary school cohort): 7.6%’[[381]](#footnote-382)
    2. See [Education: disadvantaged students](#_Education:_disadvantaged_students) for further information about the Roma and Egyptian communities and the help available for those who need it. See [Roma and Egyptian communities](#_Roma) for further information about this ethnic group.

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### Education: adult education

* + 1. The European Commission’s Albania 2020 report, which covered the year 2019, noted:

‘According to LFS [Labour Force Survey] data of 2018, adult (25-64) participation in formal or non-formal education and training was extremely low (0.9%) compared to the EU-28 average (11.1%). The Adult Education Survey (AES), which measures participation over a longer time span of one year, also shows a significant gap between Albania (9.2%) and the EU-28 average (45.1%). In 2019, 19,589 people (including 8 480 women) were registered in vocational courses, of whom 8,714 unemployed from the employment offices. In total, 13,570 people were certified during this period.’[[382]](#footnote-383)

* + 1. See [Education and training](#_Education_and_training) for information about education for victims of trafficking.

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### Employment, underemployment and unemployment

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 report, which covered events of the year 2019, the European Commission noted, ‘Despite some improvement, the overall unemployment rate remains high, particularly among women, young people, Roma and Egyptians, and people with disabilities.’[[383]](#footnote-384)
    2. Trading Economics recorded that ‘The unemployment rate in Albania increased to 12.5 percent in the second quarter of 2020 from 12 percent in the corresponding period of the previous year, as the coronavirus pandemic hit the labour market.’[[384]](#footnote-385)
    3. In the Albania 2020 report, covering the year 2019, the European Commission noted:

‘Employment and labour market participation continued to grow in 2019, but these figures hide a high underemployment. In 2019, job creation remains one of the major crosssectoral priorities of the current government. Following the mid-term review of the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) conducted at the end of 2018, a revised action plan was completed in 2019 and the policy framework extended by two years in view of the limited progress on the promotion of employment services at local level and social cohesion.’[[385]](#footnote-386)

* + 1. The report continued:

‘As a reaction to lay-offs due to Covid-19 crisis, the Council of Ministers approved on 29 July 2020 two additional and temporary employment promotion programmes for recently unemployed jobseekers laid off during the peak period of quarantine measures between 10 March and 23 June. One of the programmes targets people who self-declare as informal workers prior to their lay-off. The overall budget for active labour market measures for 2020 was increased by more than 50% from 390 million Lek to 590 Lek.’[[386]](#footnote-387)

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 Report, the European Commission continued:

‘In 2019, there were 70,930 registered unemployed jobseekers (out of which 52% women). Labour offices do not succeed in attracting a significant part of unemployed people, whose number in 2019 was 164,160 according to Labour Force Survey, in particular those with upper secondary and university education. The profile of registered jobseekers tends to be the one of lower educated people, having at most primary education (39,582 or 56% of registered unemployed), with a lower proportion of people having upper secondary education (26,062 or 37%) and a very low coverage of unemployed having university education (5,286 or 7%). This is in stark contrast with the composition of unemployed work force according to Labour Force Survey: 52,859 people having at most primary education (32%), 73,932 people having upper secondary education (45%) and 37,369 people having university education (23%). In addition, almost two thirds of young people not being employment, educated or trained were not actively seeking a job and are out of reach of the labour offices. In 2019, 30,391 registered unemployed (out of which 49% women) found a job through labour offices (LOs). The number of vacancies announced in LOs reached 50,785 in 2019 (minus 17% compared to the previous year). Only a very low proportion of registered unemployed (4% or 2,781) were receiving an unemployment benefit and 48% were long-term unemployed. To support the transition to the labour market of the unemployed, a training on soft skills (so-called Start Smart) was delivered to 12,327 unemployed jobseekers in 2019, especially young people. Other 8,714 unemployed jobseekers were participants in vocational training courses (comparable to the previous year) and 5,338 unemployed jobseekers were beneficiaries from EPPs [employment promotion programmes], of whom 2,589 started benefitting from it in 2019.’[[387]](#footnote-388)

* + 1. The UNDP Human Development Report 2020 also provided the following statistic: ‘Vulnerable employment (% of total employment): 52.9%’[[388]](#footnote-389)

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### Employment: youth (ages 15-29)

* + 1. The European Commission’s Albania 2020 report stated:

‘The youth unemployment rate (15-24 age range) was 27.2% in 2019 down from 28.3% in 2018. Young people aged 25-29 presented significantly better figures, with a 16.7% unemployment rate. Although it decreased as compared to the previous year, it remains high. There was a high percentage of young people not being educated, employed or trained (NEET) at 25.5% (15-24 age range) and 26.6% (15-29 age range).’[[389]](#footnote-390)

* + 1. The same report noted that, ‘In 2019, the labour force participation rate of young people aged 15-24 was lower than for the rest of the population (36.7%), which can be explained by attendance in education as well as a high share of young people not being employed, educated or trained in this age group. However, for the age group 25-29, the labour force participation rate was very high (82.0%) and comparable to the EU-28 average (82.8%).’[[390]](#footnote-391)

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### Employment: women and employment law and strategies

* + 1. The Government of Albania produced the 11th report on the implementation of the European Social Charter, covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2018, published in March 2020, which stated:

‘The Labour Code of the Republic of Albania prohibits any form of discrimination provided on law 10221/2010 “On protection against discrimination” in the exercise of the right to employment and occupation. Article 9/2 defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference, based on gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic, educational or social standing, pregnancy, parental responsibility, parental responsibility, age, marital or marital status, civil status, place of residence, health status, genetic predisposition, disability, living with HIV / AIDS, joining or belonging to union organizations, belonging to a specific group, or in any other cause, which has as its purpose or consequence the obstruction or impossibility of exercising the right to employment and occupation, in the same manner as others.’[[391]](#footnote-392)

* + 1. The same report noted that the ‘Commissioner [for Protection from Discrimination] through decisions and recommendation has addressed several times the situation in employment of vulnerable groups on grounds of political belief, gender, disabilities, education status, roma etc., to authorities by ordering to take appropriate measures to regulate the discriminatory situation.’[[392]](#footnote-393)
    2. The report further welcomed amendments to the Labour Code regarding sexual harassment and added:

‘In addition…, legislative amendments to the Labor Code, entailed improvements in terms of protection issues of pregnant women from discrimination and protection of motherhood. The law has reflected proposals made by social partners, and aims approximation with the legislation of EU acquis communautaire, on occupational safety and health, prohibition of discrimination and special protection of women. Some of the provisions proposed are in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts on Social Law, Albania's national reports on the implementation of the European Social Charter, as revised, and ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. Concretely, Article 9 of the Labor Code explicitly stipulates that the term "discrimination" means any differences, exclusions, restrictions or preferences based on pregnancy, family situation or marital status. Moreover, the employer is obliged to ensure reasonable adaptation of the workplace for persons under conditions of discrimination. In cases of claimed violation of non-discrimination principle, the Labor Code refers to the appeal procedures laid down in the special law on protection from discrimination. In all cases of the appeal procedures, the employer has the burden of proof to provide evidence that the principle of equal treatment at work, has not been violated.’[[393]](#footnote-394) However, the report also noted that improvements in the way cases of sexual harassment are dealt with are needed[[394]](#footnote-395).

* + 1. The report further noted, ‘The law obliges also the [State Labour] Inspectorate to particularly ensure respect of the employment rights of minors, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.’[[395]](#footnote-396)
    2. The OECD SIGI 2019 noted that ‘Women’s employment security is protected when they are on maternity leave (Labour Code, art. 107).’[[396]](#footnote-397)
    3. Eurofound, the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions, noted that, ‘In 2015, Article 115 was added to the Labour Code to guarantee equality of pay. An explicit address to the issue of equal pay between male and female workers is outlined in the Law on Gender Equality in Society (Article 21).’[[397]](#footnote-398)
    4. In the 11th report on the implementation of the European Social Charter, covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2018, the government of Albania noted that, under the National Employment Service, seven employment promotion programmes had neen implemented, one of which was an employment promotion programme for single mothers with dependent children and child-mothers. The report noted that, following the implementation of these programmes, a total of 5,264 unemployed jobseekers had been employed, 62% of which were women and girls and 51% youth aged up to 29 years; 96 persons were returned migrants, and 3 were victims of human trafficking[[398]](#footnote-399).
    5. See [Maternity leave and paid family allowances](#_Maternity_leave_and) for further information on this subject.

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### Employment: women, including discrimination, gender gap, parenthood, and bank accounts

* + 1. The USSD HR Report 2020 stated:

‘There were reports of discrimination in employment, and the CPD [Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination] adjudicated 44 cases through July [2019]. In one example, the CPD received a complaint against Philip Morris Albania, alleging the company fired a woman because she went on maternity leave. The CPD ruled the company had discriminated against the woman based on gender. The company appealed the decision to the administrative court, which upheld the CPD decision; the plaintiff can seek compensation in the trial court system.

‘In another case, the CPD recommended that Albawings airline remove gender and age criteria from job-vacancy announcements and stop requesting pictures of applicants for flight attendant positions. Albawings complied with the recommendations.’[[399]](#footnote-400)

* + 1. The OECD SIGI 2019 stated: ‘Parental leave of 12 days, with full wages paid by the employer, is available to parents to care for children (Labour Code, art. 132) … The law additionally prohibits employers for demanding pregnancy tests before starting employment (Labour Code, art. 105/a). The law does not require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to choose a profession or to register a business (Family Code, art. 63).’[[400]](#footnote-401)
    2. The European Commission’s Albania 2020 report stated:

‘The structure of employees indicates that 29.0% of working women engage in unpaid work in the family business, compared to only 16.4% of working men. A significant percentage (39.6%) of working men are self-employed, compared to 23.1% of working women. The gender pay gap amounted to 10.1% in 2019 compared to 10.7% in 2018….

‘According to the labour force survey 2019 on causes of inactivity, women remain out of the labour force mostly because they are busy with unpaid work at home (21.4%) or are attending school (22.0%). On the other hand, only 1.0% of men declare housework as the reason behind their inactivity, while 30.4% are students or pupils. The changes to the Labour Code introduced more measures to support gender equality in the labour market, mainly related to raising the awareness and supporting the economic empowerment of women in the labour market, but there is no monitoring of the implementation of these changes. Concerns remain over the proportion of women in the informal labour market, especially the textile and shoe industries, without appropriate labour and social protection. There are also concerns over the lack of disaggre[[401]](#footnote-402)gated data on the number of working women in the informal economy.’

* + 1. The UNDP Human Development Report 2020 provided the following statistics for Albania:

‘Female share of employment in senior and middle management (%): 41.3%

‘Share of employment in non-agriculture, female (% of total employment in nonagriculture): 39.2%.’[[402]](#footnote-403)

* + 1. In the Albania 2020 report, which covered the year 2019, the European Commission remarked upon ‘a notable difference of 16 percentage points [in the employment rate] between males and females, significantly more pronounced than in the EU-28 where it was 10.8 percentage points.’[[403]](#footnote-404)
    2. The OECD SIGI 2019 noted that, ‘The law provides married women with the same rights as married men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution (Law on Protection from Discrimination, art. 20).’[[404]](#footnote-405) The UNDP HDR report 2020 also noted that 38.1% of the female population aged 15 or over held an account at a financial institution or with a mobile money service provider [ie a provider which delivers financial services via mobile phones or mobile telephone networks][[405]](#footnote-406).

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### Unemployment: benefits and assistance

* + 1. The US Social Security website provided the following information about unemployment benefit in 2016:

**‘Coverage:**

Employed persons.

Voluntary coverage for self-employed persons. …

**‘Qualifying Conditions:**

Must have at least one year of contributions, not be receiving any other benefits (except for partial disability), be registered at an unemployment office, and be willing to undergo training.

**‘Unemployment Benefits:**

A flat-rate benefit is paid for up to 12 months or for a total of 365 calendar days if the insured has temporary periods of employment.

The unemployment benefit must provide for a minimum standard of living according to law.

Child's supplement: 5% of the unemployment benefit, up to 30%, is paid to each dependent child younger than age 18 (age 25 if a university student or disabled). The supplement is reduced by 50% if one parent is employed or receiving a pension.

Benefit adjustment: Benefits are adjusted annually.’[[406]](#footnote-407)

* + 1. The European Commission’s Albania 2020 report stated that ‘Only a very low proportion of registered unemployed (4% or 2,781) were receiving an unemployment benefit.’[[407]](#footnote-408)
    2. The [US Social Security website, Albania](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) provided information about other types of social security payment in Albania[[408]](#footnote-409).

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### Maternity leave and paid family allowances

* + 1. The US Social Security website provided the following data about maternity leave in Albania in 2016: ‘365 days of maternity leave is paid for at least 35 days before and 63 days after the expected date of childbirth (for multiple births, up to 390 days for at least 60 days before and 63 days after). The monthly benefit is 80% of the insured's average daily wage in the last 12 months for the period of leave before childbirth and for 150 days after; 50% for the remaining period.’[[409]](#footnote-410)
    2. The UNDP Human Development Report 2020 confirmed that mandatory paid maternity leave was 365 days[[410]](#footnote-411).
    3. In 2016, the US Social Security website noted that family allowances are paid to those who have ‘low or inadequate income or a family member with a disability.’[[411]](#footnote-412)
    4. The same website provided information about other types of social security payment in Albania[[412]](#footnote-413).
    5. See [Employment: women and employment law](#_Employment:_women_and) for information about the law concerning maternity leave.

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# Terms of Reference

A ‘Terms of Reference’ (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#_Country_information_1). The Home Office’s Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

* Law on trafficking – men, women, children
* Trafficking – men, women, children
  + Prevalence
  + Risk factors
  + Forms of trafficking
* Action by the state
  + Government action to address trafficking
  + Action by the police
  + Action by the judiciary
* Assistance for victims of trafficking - men, women, children
  + Shelters
  + Financial assistance
  + Employment
  + Situation for those leaving shelters, including accommodation
* Healthcare for victims of trafficking – men, women, children
  + General
  + Mental health
* Societal attitudes
  + Attitudes to victims of trafficking
  + Attitudes to single mothers
  + Life for single women/mothers

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# Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

* Version **10.0**
* valid from **22 February 2021**

**OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE – Do not print or disclose the contents of this section**

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

**End of non-disclosable section**

Changes from last version of this note

Both country information and assessment have been updated to include information about male victims of trafficking.

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