



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Albania: Trafficking

Version 11.0

September 2022

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 the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an 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 - that is information in 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
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#) / Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 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 \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [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. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

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

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the bibliography.

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

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](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 9 September 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 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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1.2 Points to note

a. Modern slavery

- 1.2.1 Decision makers should note that guidance for competent authority 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 is set out in the the [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance](#) for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The guidance is also aimed at staff:

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

- 1.2.2 Decision makers also must note that if a person has a 'positive conclusive grounds' decision, a grant of discretionary leave may be considered. For further information, see [Discretionary leave considerations for victims of modern slavery](#).

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 2.2.3 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](#), Humanitarian Protection and [Restricted Leave](#).

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2.3 Convention reason(s)

- 2.3.1 The Upper Tribunal (UT) in the country guidance (CG) case of [TD and AD \(Trafficked women\) CG \[2016\] UKUT 92 \(IAC\)](#), heard 30 April, 6 May and 3 June 2015, promulgated 9 February 2016, observed that ‘Trafficked women

from Albania may well be members of a particular social group on that account alone' (paragraph 119(h)).

- 2.3.2 Women who have been trafficked are likely to belong to a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because they have an immutable characteristic – the experience of having been trafficked – and are likely to have a distinct identity within Albanian society because of prevailing societal attitudes towards victims of trafficking and women (see Prevalence and Treatment of victims of trafficking).
- 2.3.3 Men who are trafficked, mostly for labour exploitation, are not likely to form a PSG. This is because that while they have an immutable characteristic – the experience of having been trafficked – the available evidence does not indicate that society generally perceives male victims to be a distinct group (see Prevalence and Treatment of victims of trafficking).
- 2.3.4 Although a victims of trafficking may belong to a PSG, such membership itself is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case is whether the particular person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.3.5 For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Risk

- 2.4.1 Whether a victim of trafficking is at real risk of persecution or serious harm will depend on their particular circumstances. However, the onus is on the person to show that.
- 2.4.2 Decision makers will need to consider a range of factors that influence risk including: age, area of origin, education level, socio-economic status of their family, health, availability of a family support network and, in the case of women and girls, whether they have an illegitimate child.
- 2.4.3 Albania is a source country for the trafficking of women, men and children to other European countries, including the UK, although domestic trafficking is becoming an increasingly significant phenomenon. There is limited data on the numbers of Albanians trafficked, but this is likely to be in the thousands. According to Eurostat, of the Albanian victims of trafficking recorded in the European Union in 2018 (included data for the UK) a small majority were trafficked for sexual exploitation, while just over third were trafficked for criminal activities and labour exploitation (see [Prevalence](#)).
- 2.4.4 Most are trafficked by close family members or people they have close social ties, including those with links to criminal networks. Victims are often lured into trafficking by promises of marriage or employment, although coercion is sometimes used (see [Prevalence](#)).
- 2.4.5 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), which looked at female victims of trafficking only, the UT held that:

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

‘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.

‘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 establishment 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 considerable violence within the relationships and a lack of freedom: such women are victims of trafficking.

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

- 2.4.6 Since [TD and AD](#) was promulgated, the state has made some progress in implementing reforms and measures to tackle trafficking generally. However, female victims (women and girls) who return to Albania may face discrimination and stigma, and a risk of re-trafficking, depending on their particular circumstances (see [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)). Therefore, there are not very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to depart from the UT's findings in [TD and AD](#).
- 2.4.7 There is limited information about the experience and treatment of male victims in the available sources, including the scale, nature and frequency of re-trafficking and other harm. However, the trafficking of men and boys appears to be primarily for labour exploitation and criminality rather than sexual exploitation. Men and boys who are from poor backgrounds, have low/poor education, have physical or mental disabilities, experienced domestic including sexual abuse, and live in remote areas are more likely to be vulnerable to being trafficked (and re-trafficked) than other men and boys (see [Prevalence](#) and [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)).
- 2.4.8 Albania is a patriarchal society with male family members expected to provide for their families. There is a general lack of awareness that men and boys may be victims of trafficking, and those who are trafficked may not understand that they have been exploited and be reluctant to seek assistance (see [Prevalence](#)). There is, however, little evidence in the sources consulted that single men and boys, including those who may have been exploited, face the same societal stigma as lone women and/or negative attitudes experienced by single mothers, as former victims of trafficking (see [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#), [Protection](#), [Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).

- 2.4.9 In general, the available evidence does not indicate that men and boys who have been trafficked to the UK will be at risk of serious harm on return for that reason alone. Whether they face a risk of such treatment will depend on their personal circumstances, including such factors as their age, education, skills and employability, area of origin, health and disability, availability of a support network, and the intent and reach of their traffickers.

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2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 In general, the state has taken reasonable steps to prevent the persecution/serious harm of victims of trafficking – be they men, women or children - by operating an effective legal system for the detection, prosecution and punishment of acts constituting persecution/serious harm, and which the person is able to access. Whether the protection is available will depend on the facts of the case, with the onus the person to demonstrate that it is not available.
- 2.5.2 The state has put into place a strong legislative and policy framework to tackle trafficking and support victims but there has been a gap effectively implementing these measures (see Law and policy, and Protection).
- 2.5.3 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), which considered the position of female victims of trafficking only and based on evidence up to 2015, the UT held:
- ‘In the past few years the Albanian government has made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking. 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, but it will not be effective in every case. When considering whether or not there is a sufficiency of protection for a victim of trafficking her particular circumstances must be considered.
- ‘There is now in place a reception and reintegration programme for victims of trafficking. Returning victims of trafficking are able to stay in a shelter on arrival, and in “heavy cases” may be able to stay there for up to 2 years. During this initial period after return victims of trafficking are supported and protected. Unless the individual has particular vulnerabilities such as physical or mental health issues, this option cannot generally be said to be unreasonable; whether it is must be determined on a case by case basis.
- ‘Once asked to leave the shelter a victim of trafficking can live on her own. In doing so she will face significant challenges including, but not limited to, stigma, isolation, financial hardship and uncertainty, a sense of physical insecurity and the subjective fear of being found either by their families or former traffickers. Some women will have the capacity to negotiate these challenges without undue hardship. There will however be victims of trafficking with characteristics, such as mental illness or psychological scarring, for whom living alone in these circumstances would not be reasonable. Whether a particular appellant falls into that category will call for a careful assessment of all the circumstances.’ (paragraph 119 (d to f))

2.5.4 The UT in [TD and AD](#) held in paragraph 119h – a comprehensive concluding assessment taking into account risk of persecution/serious harm, whether protection was available, and scope for a woman to safely reintegrate into society including in a location other than her home area:

‘... Whether they are at risk of persecution on account of such membership 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:

- ‘1) The social status and economic standing of her family
- 2) The level of education of the victim of trafficking or her family
- 3) The victim of trafficking’s state of health, particularly her mental health
- 4) The presence of an illegitimate child
- 5) The area of origin
- 6) Age
- 7) What support network will be available.’

2.5.5 Both the US State Department and Freedom House acknowledge that Albania is making progress in tackling trafficking. The government continues to investigate, prosecute and convict traffickers, albeit numbers of convictions are low. The government, with support from civil society, also continues to provide support and reintegration assistance to victims, including through the provision of short-term and long-term accommodation (including at 4 shelters), food, healthcare, financial support, employment services and vocational training (see Protection and Support and assistance). Therefore there are not very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to depart from the UT’s findings in [TD and AD](#) that in general women are able to obtain effective protection, but this will depend on the facts of the case.

2.5.6 The CG case of [TD and AD](#) did not specifically consider the availability of protection for men or children. However, many of the measures put in place by the government considered in that case – the laws making trafficking illegal, publishing standard operating procedures, the establishment of a national referral mechanism, the creation of anti-trafficking co-ordinator, and reintegration system – and, as evidenced in the available country information, are applicable to men and children (although men do not appear to be accommodated in shelters but may have access to rented accommodation) (see also [Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).

2.5.7 Men and boys, however, appear to have a low awareness of being exploited/trafficked and may be reluctant to seek protection. Conversely, men and boys are unlikely to face the same stigma as women and girls, particularly lone women with children, of having been trafficked from other members of society and which can impact their reintegration (see [Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).

2.5.8 In general, men and children are likely to be able to access effective

protection. However, this will depend on their particular circumstances, considering factors similar to those identified in TD and AD for females. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they would not be able to obtain protection.

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2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 Albania is a small country, a little larger than Wales, with a population estimated to be between 2.8 million and just over 3 million, almost 500,000 of whom live in the capital, Tirana. People are generally able to move around freely (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 2.6.2 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), which considered the situation of female victims of trafficking only, the UT held:
- ‘Much of Albanian society is governed by a strict code of honour which not only means that trafficked women would have very considerable difficulty in reintegrating into their home areas on return but also will affect their ability to relocate internally. Those who have children outside marriage are particularly vulnerable. In extreme cases the close relatives of the trafficked woman may refuse to have the trafficked woman's child return with her and could force her to abandon the child.’ (paragraph 119(b))
- 2.6.3 However, available evidence indicates that the situation has improved since [TD and AD](#). 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 although it is harder for a woman to live alone in rural areas, some women do manage it successfully (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 2.6.4 Single men and boys do not appear to experience the same social stigma as lone females (see [Treatment of victims of trafficking, Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).
- 2.6.5 In general, internal relocation may be reasonable but depends on the facts of case, taking into account the person's ability to support themselves in the place of relocation and the intent and reach of their former traffickers.
- 2.6.6 For further guidance on internal relocation, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 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.
- 2.7.2 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. 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.

- 2.7.3 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.
- 2.7.4 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

Section updated: 8 September 2022

3. Prevalence

3.1 Numbers and nature of exploitation

3.1.1 The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 'Third evaluation round' on Albania dated 15 December 2020 based on questionnaires sent to the Albanian government and supplementary information submitted by the government, information from civil society and evaluation visit to Albania in September 2019 for discussions with government and no-government actors (CoE GRETA report 2020), observed:

'Albania is primarily a source country for victims of trafficking in human beings (THB), but also to some extent a country of destination. According to statistical information provided by the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinator (ONAC), the number of victims of THB per year was as follows: 109 in 2015 (71 presumed and 38 identified victims)... including 48 children; 95 in 2016 (62 presumed and 33 identified victims), including 44 children; 105 in 2017 (79 presumed and 26 identified victims), including 56 children; 95 in 2018 (93 presumed and two identified victims), including 67 children; and 103 in 2019, including 67 children... The majority of the victims were women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but there were also victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced begging, forced criminality and forced marriage. The vast majority of the victims were Albanian citizens exploited abroad, mainly in Western Europe (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, the Netherlands, United Kingdom) and neighbouring countries (Kosovo*, Greece, North Macedonia) ...

'The proportion of child victims of trafficking remains high (around 48%). Children are mainly exploited in begging by their parents or close relatives, or trafficked for the purpose of committing criminal activities, including work on cannabis farms in Albania. Children from the Roma and Egyptian... communities are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. There has been an increase in the number of Albanian children subjected to forced labour in Kosovo* and the UK. Some Albanian children who travelled with their parents to the Netherlands, France and Germany were reportedly left there unaccompanied and vulnerable to exploitation...'¹

3.1.2 A UNICEF report by Deanna Davy, 'Trafficked by someone I know: A qualitative study of the relationships between trafficking victims and human traffickers in Albania' (UNICEF report 2022) based on 'semi-structured interviews with 30 trafficking survivors [27 female, 3 male] and 14 key informants, as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) with 31 representatives of government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs)', and a review of existing literature, citing other sources noted:

'... While the true volume of domestic and international trafficking of Albanian nationals remains unknown, the United States (US) Department of

¹ CoE, [GRETA report 2020](#) (page 8), 15 December 2020

State 2021 Trafficking in Persons report refers to 81 potential victims, and five officially recognised victims in the 2020 reporting year. Among non-EU trafficking victims identified in the EU, Albanians are the second largest group (after Nigerians), with the 2018 Report of the European Commission reporting more than 1,300 Albanian victims of the phenomenon in Europe [of whom 54% were victims of sexual exploitation, 10% forced labour, 26% involved in criminal activities, 2% in domestic servitude, 1% forced begging, 1% other, and 6% unknown²].... Albanians are trafficked to Italy and Greece, but also other destinations including the United Kingdom (UK), Sweden, Germany and Switzerland. Albanian men, women, girls and boys are trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation, or both, in these, and other, destination countries... In the past decade, domestic trafficking has become a more significant phenomenon in Albania than cross-border trafficking.³

- 3.1.3 The US State Department's Trafficking in Persons report 2022, covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, (USSD TIP 2022), noted 'The government and NGOs identified 154 potential victims and five official victims, compared with 81 potential victims and five official victims in 2020. Of these, 61 were sex trafficking victims, 65 forced labor victims, and 33 victims of multiple types of exploitation; 99 were female, and 60 were male; 112 were children, and 47 were adults; and three were foreign victims, two from Romania and one from Serbia.' The USSD TIP report further noted '... 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... Traffickers commonly force children to beg or perform other types of compelled labor, such as selling small items, and also force children into criminality, including burglary and narcotics distribution. Traffickers exploit Albanian children, mainly from the Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities, for seasonal work and forced begging. Isolated reports stated that traffickers exploit children through forced labor in cannabis fields in Albania, and some traffickers are likely involved in drug trafficking. Traffickers exploit Albanian victims in sex trafficking in countries across Europe, particularly Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (UK). Albanian migrants who seek employment in Western Europe are vulnerable to exploitation in forced labor and forced criminality, particularly in the UK.'⁴
- 3.1.4 The Home Office's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) statistics for the period April to June 2022, released on 11 August 2022, logging the number of potential victims of trafficking referred to the Home Office, noted that 'The most common nationality referred was Albanian, which accounted for 27% (1,130) of all potential victims (matching the proportion of the previous quarter). The number of Albanian nationals, which reached its highest figure

² European Commission, '[Data collection on trafficking...](#)' (page 165), 20 October 2020

³ Davy, D, UNICEF, '[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)' (page 17), May 2022

⁴ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (page 82), 22 July 2022

since the NRM began, has surpassed UK nationals for the second consecutive quarter... most (81%; 910) were adult potential victims.’⁵

- 3.1.5 See the [Asylum Research Consultancy / Asylos COI compilation report, including interviews and correspondence with expert sources, covering the period 1 January 2016 and 31 March 2019, published May 2019, \(ARC/Asylos report 2019\)](#) (section 2.4).

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3.2 Drivers of trafficking / profile of victims

- 3.2.1 A report published in July 2018 of a study conducted in partnership between the University of Bedfordshire and the, then, International Organisation for Migration (now UN Migration), based on a ‘Shared Learning Event’ (SLE) of government and civil society stakeholders in Tirana between 24 and 26 October 2017 (UofB/IOM report 2018), 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.... There is a potential 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.’⁶

- 3.2.2 The UofB/IOM report 2018 also 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...’⁷

- 3.2.3 The UofB/IOM report 2018 also 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

⁵ UK Home Office, [NRM statistics April to June 2022](#), 11 August 2022

⁶ UofB/IOM, [‘Vulnerability’ to human trafficking \[...\]](#), p.7, July 2018

⁷ UofB/ IOM, [‘Vulnerability’ to human trafficking \[...\]](#), p.19, July 2018

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.’⁸

- 3.2.4 The 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.’⁹

- 3.2.5 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 provided the following from a January 2019 interview with Professor Haxhiymeri of the University of Tirana, who argued:

‘... 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.”’¹⁰

- 3.2.6 While James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, noted in the same report:

“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

⁸ UofB/IOM, [‘Vulnerability’ to human trafficking \[...\]](#), p.19, July 2018

⁹ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.32, May 2019

¹⁰ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.16, May 2019

see the classic grooming model at school, through older young people and adults offering them money and trainers.”¹¹

- 3.2.7 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 also noted, based on two anonymous sources and Alfred Matoshi of the Mary Ward Loreto Foundation who were interviewed/written responses between December 2018 and March 2019:

“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 ‘¹²

- 3.2.8 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 report continued, citing various sources (identified in the text below):

‘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”.

¹¹ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.16, May 2019

¹² Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.22, May 2019

'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

3.2.9 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 quoting Dr Schwandner-Sievers observed:

"... 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."¹³

3.2.10 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 citing 2 anonymous sources:

"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."¹⁴

3.2.11 Similarly Dr Schwandner-Sievers is cited in the ARC/Asylos report 2019 as stating "In my opinion, we're looking increasingly at minors."¹⁵ The Asylos/ARC report 2019 also stated (sources are referenced in the text below):

'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.

¹³ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.32, May 2019

¹⁴ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.28, May 2019

¹⁵ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.28, May 2019

“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 2019’¹⁶

3.2.12 The Asyls/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 2019’¹⁷

3.2.13 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:

¹⁶ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.30, May 2019

¹⁷ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.34, May 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... 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.”... “But to say that the south or central part of the country is not affected by Trafficking would be wrong...”¹⁸

- 3.2.14 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted that there can be a lack of understanding of what constitutes exploitation of males:

“... 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 2019’¹⁹

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3.3 Traffickers’ profiles

- 3.3.1 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted that several of the interlocutors interviewed/corresponded with (cited in the text below) provided information about the profiles of traffickers of boys/men, 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

¹⁸ UNICEF, [‘Interview of Child Protection Specialists at UNICEF ...’](#), 30 July 2020

¹⁹ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.107, May 2019

the UK and many are associated by law enforcement agencies with drug trafficking...”

‘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 vulnerability [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 2019²⁰

3.3.2 ‘The UNICEF report 2022, citing other sources, considering victims of trafficking generally (female and male) noted:

‘From an analysis of 99 human trafficking cases presented by Vatra Psycho-Social Centre between 2015 and September 2017, 68 percent of traffickers were either close family members or had close social ties. Of these, 31 percent were reported to be cases in which “boyfriends” had exploited victims, 25 percent were friends and other people known to the victim, and twelve percent were related to the family. In 19 percent of cases victims were exploited by people that they had met on Facebook. Only thirteen percent of cases involved a human trafficker who was not known to the victim. Despite the evidence that in the majority of cases, traffickers are someone who is known to the victim... a 2021 study by UNICEF Albania found that 43 percent of surveyed Albanian youth were unaware that traffickers can be family members...’²¹

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

²⁰ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.35, May 2019

²¹ Davy, D, UNICEF, [‘Trafficked by someone I know...’](#) (pages 31 to 32), May 2022

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

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

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

'With regard to the age of the traffickers, all interviewed survivors (n=30) reported that their trafficker was older than themselves, and significantly so where the trafficker was a parent or grandparent. Survivors who were trafficked by employers or landlords also noted that their traffickers were significantly older than themselves. However, victims who were trafficked by an intimate partner were usually of a similar age, with the male trafficker usually being only 1–15 years older than the victim. Where victims had been trafficked by friends, the traffickers were also youth, usually only a few years older than the victim.

'Regarding the geographic proximity of the traffickers to their victims, many interviewed female survivors trafficked by an intimate partner reported that they had met their trafficker in their local area, suggesting that trafficking in Albania is often localised. Traffickers prey on vulnerable women and girls in their neighbourhood, due to their geographic proximity and ease at which they can recruit and groom their potential victims. Similarly, victims trafficked by friends also reported meeting their traffickers in their immediate vicinity, often through networks of friends or family. Most of the interviewed survivors who had been trafficked by friend(s) had grown up in the same neighbourhood as their trafficker and considered them as close friends.'²²

3.3.4 The UNICEF report 2022 also found that:

²² Davy, D, UNICEF, '[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)' (pages 31 to 32), May 2022

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

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

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

‘Regarding other criminal activities perpetrated by the traffickers, six survivors (20%) reported that their traffickers were also engaged in drug trafficking, and three (10%) that their traffickers were engaged in theft or robbery. Four survivors (13%) reported that, in addition to human trafficking offences, their traffickers also engaged in drug trafficking and theft or robbery. Some interviewed survivors, especially those who were trafficked by intimate partners, reported that their trafficker had a record of previous arrests for other crimes committed abroad. One interviewed survivor reported that she later became aware (after her escape) that her trafficker (intimate partner) had been previously imprisoned for attempted rape of a fourteen-year-old child. Another interviewed survivor reported that she later became aware that her trafficker (intimate partner) was using a false name because of his criminal history and attempts to evade the authorities.’²³

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3.4 Recruitment methods

3.4.1 In June 2019 Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated:

‘...Initially [the victims] ... 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.

²³ Davy, D, UNICEF, ‘[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)’ (pages 33 to 34), May 2022

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. ...²⁴

3.4.2 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 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.”²⁵

3.4.3 The ARC/Asylos report 2010 citing Professor Haxhiymeri noted “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.”²⁶

3.4.4 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 also stated that

‘Two interviewees, James Simmonds-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 ...”.

²⁴ CoE, GRETA, [Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire for the evaluation \[...\]](#), p.34, 20 June 2019

²⁵ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.43, May 2019

²⁶ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.45, May 2019

'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 2019'²⁷

- 3.4.5 The USSD TiP Report 2022 stated: 'Traffickers use false promises such as marriage or employment offers to exploit victims in sex trafficking... Traffickers adapt operations to the impacts of the [COVID 19] pandemic and shift recruitment and advertisement tactics to online means, particularly social media...'²⁸

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3.5 Ages of victims

- 3.5.1 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.'²⁹ 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 persons³⁰.

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Section updated: 8 September 2022

4. Treatment of trafficking victims

4.1 Discrimination and stigma

- 4.1.1 The UofB/IOM report 2018 based on stakeholder discussions held in October 2017 in Tirana stated: 'Social stigma and discrimination as a direct result of human trafficking was discussed. 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.'³¹

- 4.1.2 The UofB/IOM report 2018 further stated:

'The issue of social stigma and discrimination were outlined as being key issues faced by those who had experienced human trafficking. Adults who

²⁷ Asyl/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.46, May 2019

²⁸ USSD, [TiP Report 2020](#), Albania, p.69, 25 June 2020

²⁹ CoE, GRETA, [Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire for the evaluation \[...\]](#), p.34, 20 June 2019

³⁰ D&E, [Annual report 2019](#), p.3, 16 July 2020

³¹ UofB/ IOM, ['Vulnerability' to human trafficking \[...\]](#), p.8, July 2018

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.³²

- 4.1.3 Quoting a 2017 research paper by Dr Enkeleida Tahiraj and the Shpresa Programme, the Asyls/ARC report 2019 focussing on the treatment of male VoT 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.

‘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.³³

- 4.1.4 CPIT was not able to find more up to date information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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4.2 Re-trafficking

- 4.2.1 Different and Equal told the Home Office fact finding team 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 country³⁴.

³² UofB/ IOM, [‘Vulnerability’ to human trafficking \[...\]](#), p.29, July 2018

³³ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.173, May 2019

³⁴ Home Office, [Report of HO FFM, Albania, 31 Oct-7 Nov 2017](#), para. 2.10.1, February 2018

4.2.2 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 re-trafficking 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.”³⁵

4.2.3 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 continued:

‘Many of the sources Asylos and ARC Foundation interviewed raised concerns about the risks of re-trafficking 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

³⁵ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.181, May 2019

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 it 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 taking 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 re-trafficked 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 2019’³⁶

4.2.4 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

³⁶ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.182, May 2019

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 2019’³⁷

4.2.5 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 2019’³⁸

4.2.6 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

³⁷ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.186, May 2019

³⁸ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.187, May 2019

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 2019’³⁹

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Section updated: 8 September 2022

5. Law and policy

5.1 Legal rights

5.1.1 The USSD TiP Report 2022 noted: ‘[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.’⁴⁰

5.1.2 Article 110/b of the Criminal Code (CC), which addressed those who benefit from, or use, services provided by trafficked persons, was added by law in 2013 and states: ‘The benefit from or use of services provided by trafficked 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.’⁴¹

5.1.3 Article 128/b of the CC, which addressed trafficking of minors, states:

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

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

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

³⁹ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.187, May 2019

⁴⁰ USSD, [TIP 2022](#) (page 81), 22 July 2022

⁴¹ Legislation Online, [Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania](#), 27 January 1995

‘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.’⁴²

- 5.1.4 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA and referred to Article 52/a of the CC, 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.’⁴³

- 5.1.5 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.’⁴⁴

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5.2 Policy measures and programmes

- 5.2.1 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.

⁴² Legislation Online, [Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania](#), 27 January 1995

⁴³ CoE, GRETA, [Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire for the evaluation \[...\]](#), p.21, 20 June 2019

⁴⁴ Government of Albania, [National report submitted..](#)], para.51, 22 February 2019

'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.'⁴⁵

- 5.2.2 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted 'The government adopted the 2021-2023 National Action Plan (NAP) and allocated resources to the NAP... [including] 412.6 million leks ([US]\$3.9 million) for its implementation. [The Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator] ONAC produced a report assessing the implementation of the NAP but did not publish periodic newsletters on anti-trafficking activities in 2021.'⁴⁶
- 5.2.3 The USSD TIP report 2022 also noted 'The Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking consisted of three survivors who provided recommendations on anti-trafficking efforts and participated in awareness campaigns, but the board remained inactive due to the pandemic. The government, in cooperation with civil society, conducted awareness campaigns for schoolchildren, students, government officials, and the public.'⁴⁷

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Section updated: 8 September 2022

6. Protection

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 The UofB/IOM report 2018, identified concerns in October 2017 by stakeholders, noting: 'There is an implementation gap between a strong legislative and policy framework in Albania with practice in reality. Stakeholders at the [stakeholder learning event] 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.'⁴⁸

6.1.2 Similarly, the Asylor/ARC Foundation report 2019 also referred to potential difficulties in implementing law and policies (source cited at end of quote):

'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 Asylor 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 I 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.”

⁴⁵ US DoL, [2019 Findings on the worst ...](#), 30 September 2020

⁴⁶ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

⁴⁷ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

⁴⁸ UofB/IOM, ['Vulnerability' to human trafficking \[...\]](#), p.8, July 2018

‘Source: Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, written response to questions, March 2019’⁴⁹

- 6.1.3 With regard to child trafficking, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe report, ‘A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania’, July 2020, based on a review of 45 (31 girls and 14 boys) potential child trafficking cases identified between 2016 and 2019 (OSCE report 2020), noted:

‘Much of Albania’s law and policy provides a strong basis for effective response to child trafficking within a broader child protection framework. However, the evidence examined in this study suggests that the full potential of this child protection framework is not being realised due to unsatisfactory implementation by the key actors responsible for child protection. This is problematic as the evidence examined indicates that there is significant trafficking of children within and beyond the borders of Albania.’⁵⁰

- 6.1.4 However, the USSD TIP report 2022, covering events in 2021, noted that while ‘The Government of Albania does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking... [it] is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Albania remained on Tier 2 [“Countries whose governments do not fully meet the [\[Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000\]](#) TVPA’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards”. Albania has been ranked in tier 2 in every year since 2015⁵¹]. These efforts included investigating more cases and prosecuting and convicting significantly more traffickers.’⁵²
- 6.1.5 While Freedom House also noted progress in the government’s efforts to counter trafficking in its report covering 2021 ‘While Albania continues to struggle with human trafficking, authorities are becoming more proactive in addressing the issue. In recent years, the government has cooperated with civil society leaders, creating the Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking and increasing victim assistance in criminal proceedings with a new Development Center for Criminal Justice for Minors.’⁵³

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6.2 Criminal justice system - general

- 6.2.1 Albania has an established Criminal Code (1995) that ‘defines criminal offences, sentences and other measures taken against perpetrators’⁵⁴.
- 6.2.2 The European Commission’s Albania 2021 Report dated October 2021 noted:

⁴⁹ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.76, May 2019

⁵⁰ OSCE, [‘A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania’](#) (page 37), July 2020

⁵¹ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (A Guide to the Tiers), 19 July 2022

⁵² USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

⁵³ FH, [‘Freedom in the World 2022’](#) (Albania), February 2022

⁵⁴ Euralius, [‘Albanian Legislation’](#) (Criminal Code), 2017

'The Albanian State Police (ASP) has a total of 11 802 employees, equivalent to 260 officers per 100 000 inhabitants, compared with an EU average of 326 (Eurostat, 2017). In 2020, a significant increase of 587 police officers was added to the staff of the ASP to strengthen its operational capacities, while in 2021 the increase was 157 police officers. Staff rotations are frequent, affecting the ASP operational capacity. Following the establishment of the [Special Anti-corruption and Organised Crime Structure] SPAK at the end of 2019 and the transfer of some of the former Serious Crime Prosecution Office's competences to local prosecution offices, judicial police officers are in need of further training to investigate in particular financial crime, money laundering and serious trafficking offences. Albania should provide the relevant institutions with adequate resources in order to ensure continuity in the fight against organised crime.

'The Special Anti-corruption and Organised Crime Structure (SPAK) comprising the Special Prosecution Office (SPO), and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), as well as the First and Second Instance Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Courts (SPAK Courts) are operational. In March 2021, the Assembly adopted amendments to the SPAK law, extending its jurisdiction to all terrorism offences, reinforcing its focus on high-level corruption and introducing targeted career development measures'⁵⁵.

6.2.3 The USSD human rights report covering events in 2021 stated: 'The Ministry of Interior oversees the Guard of the Republic and the State Police, which includes the Border and Migration Police. The State Police are primarily responsible for internal security.... Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. There were some allegations of abuses by members of the security forces.'⁵⁶

6.2.4 The USSD human rights report 2021 went to note:

'Police corruption remained a problem. Through August the SIAC received 1,155 complaints which were within the jurisdiction of the service and entered them into the SIAC Case Management System. Most of the complaints alleged a failure to act, violation of standard operating procedures, abuse of office, arbitrary action, police bias, unfair fines, and passive corruption. SIAC referred to the prosecution 149 cases involving 215 officials. The Office of the Ombudsman also processed complaints against police officers, mainly concerning problems with arrests and detentions.

'Police did not always enforce the law equitably. Personal associations, political or criminal connections, deficient infrastructure, lack of equipment, and inadequate supervision often influenced law enforcement. Authorities continued to address these problems by renovating police facilities, upgrading vehicles, and publicly highlighting anticorruption measures. The government established a system for vetting security officials and, as of November 2019, had completed vetting 32 high-level police and SIAC leaders.'⁵⁷

⁵⁵ EC, '[Albania 2021 Report](#)' (page 37), 19 October 2021

⁵⁶ USSD, '[Human rights report 2021](#)' (Executive summary), 12 April 2022

⁵⁷ USSD, '[Human rights report 2021](#)' (section 4), 12 April 2022

6.2.5 The USSD's Overseas Security Advisory Council report of October 2021 noted:

'Police now have a visible presence throughout Tirana and other larger Albanian cities, although their response is often delayed due to limited resources and manpower. Police tend to respond more rapidly to reports from members of the international community.

'The Albanian government is trying to make a concerted effort to improve the country's law enforcement capabilities, particularly in the areas of counterterrorism and organized crime. Corruption and lack of resources within the police present continual challenges.'⁵⁸

6.2.6 The USSD OSAC also observed 'Corruption and barriers to information sharing among government agencies, insufficient intra-agency coordination, and a poorly functioning judicial system continue to hinder Albania's law enforcement efforts at all levels.'⁵⁹

6.2.7 However, the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index report of April 2022 covering events between 2019 and January 2021, observed with regard to changes to the rule of law:

'... Albania pursued major reforms, especially in the area of the rule of law, but also in other areas closely monitored by the European Union in the context of EU enlargement conditionalities and the approximation of legislation with the *acquis communautaire*. Long-needed reforms were advanced even during the coronavirus pandemic, which has absorbed substantial resources, necessitated a shift in focus, and to some extent exacerbated social and political concerns. The success of several major reforms has been recognized by the European Council, which in March 2020 voted unanimously to open accession negotiations with Albania.

'The judicial reform – the most prominent of the reforms pursued during the review period – shows the progress made, but also the challenges ahead and difficulties with international rule promotion in the Albanian context. Specifically, under the close assistance and supervision of the European Union and other international structures, the judicial reform has moved to institutionalize a new judicial architecture and vet a significant proportion of members of the existing system. All social, political and governing actors have committed to reform, at least rhetorically. Nevertheless, five years after the beginning of the reform, many of the foreseen steps, including the creation of several new organs, are yet to be completed. Every step of the reform has been delayed, obstructed and sometimes deformed by powerful actors that have traditionally controlled the system and stand to lose from an independent justice system. This mixed record of progress shows the duality between fast institutional changes and actual resistance to implementation. This gap marks the country's political and economic transformation as well as experience of governance, and is a hallmark of the Albanian hybrid democratic system.

6.2.8 Freedom House in its report covering events in 2021 considered: ' The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but the underfunded

⁵⁸ USSD, OSAC, '[Albania Country Security Report](#)', 22 October 2021

⁵⁹ USSD, OSAC, '[Albania Country Security Report](#)', 22 October 2021

courts are subject to political pressure and influence, and public trust in judicial institutions is low. Corruption in the judiciary remains a serious problem, and convictions of high-ranking judges for corruption and abuse of power are historically rare.⁶⁰ While the USSD human rights report 2021 similarly noted ‘Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, political pressure, intimidation, corruption, and limited resources prevented the judiciary from functioning fully, independently, and efficiently.’⁶¹

6.2.9 However, the USSD report for 2021 went on to further note

‘The government continued to implement an internationally monitored process to vet judges and prosecutors and dismiss those with unexplained wealth or ties to organized crime. As of September, 42 percent of the judges and prosecutors vetted had failed and been dismissed, 36 percent passed, and 22 percent resigned or retired. During the year the number of vetted Supreme Court judges grew to fill nine of the 19 seats on the court. Assignments of vetted judges were sufficient to establish administrative, civil, and penal colleges and allow courts to begin adjudicating cases. The Supreme Court, however, must have at least 10 judges to be able to elect the remaining three Constitutional Court judges. As of July 31, the Supreme Court had a backlog of 36,608 cases pending adjudication.

‘The politicization of past appointments to the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court at times threatened to undermine the independence and integrity of these institutions.

‘The implementation of justice reform provisions led to a pause in normal disciplinary processes while the country established independent disciplinary bodies...’⁶²

6.2.10 See the European Commission’s, Albania 2021 Report, which reviewed Albania’s progress on reforms to meet the requirement to accede to the European Union, for more detail on reforms of the rule of law and functioning of the judiciary⁶³.

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6.3 Government bodies and agencies involved in anti-trafficking efforts

6.3.1 The GRETA report 2020 noted:

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

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

⁶⁰ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2022](#)’ (Albania), February 2022

⁶¹ BTI, ‘[Albania Country Report 2022](#)’ (Executive Summary), April 2022

⁶² USSD, [Human rights report 2021](#) (section 1e), 12 April 2022

⁶³ European Commission, ‘[Albania 2021 Report](#)’ (Rule of law), 19 October 2021

General Prosecutor's Office, and the State Intelligence Service. Representatives from the Shelters Coalition and civil society partners are invited to participate in the State Committee's meetings.

'Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees operate in the country's 12 regions. During the reporting period, they were active in addressing THB issues, through local action plans...'⁶⁴

6.3.2 The US Department of Labor in its report, *Worst Forms of Child Labour 2020*, covering events in 2020, noted that:

'[The] Minister of Interior ... Coordinates operations of the Border Police as well as each of the Illicit Human Trafficking sections in the country's 12 Regional Police Directorates through the General Directorate of State Police... Establishes the government's policy on combating human trafficking through the State Committee Against Trafficking in Persons, chaired by the Interior Minister...

'[The] Office of the Prosecutor General [i]nvestigates and prosecutes child trafficking cases through the Serious Crimes Prosecution Office... In 2020, the Prosecutor General's Office received a budget of [US]\$21 million, primarily for operational expenditures... The Development Center of Criminal Justice for Minors produced three documents during the reporting period, providing guidance on the rights of children... [including] who were victims of crimes (including trafficking in persons), and standard operating procedures for judicial police and prosecutors when dealing with cases involving minors...'⁶⁵

6.3.3 The USSD TIP 2022 noted:

'The national coordinator led the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (ONAC) and overall anti-trafficking efforts. The State Committee against Trafficking in Persons, composed of relevant ministry representatives, monitored and implemented various anti-trafficking efforts, though it did not meet in 2021. The government also maintained the National Anti-trafficking Task Force, composed of ministry officials, civil society representatives, and other participants who monitored the [national referral mechanism] NRM; the NRM met once.'⁶⁶

6.3.4 The USSD TIP 2022 also reported that:

'[The Albanian State Police] ASP's Criminal Police Department Directorate of Investigations of Narcotics and Trafficking maintained an Anti-Trafficking Unit, which investigated trafficking in persons in addition to drug and contraband trafficking. The government continued judicial reforms that changed prosecutorial jurisdiction for trafficking cases; [Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime] SPAK and the Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organized Crime have jurisdiction over trafficking cases related to organized crime, while [the General Prosecution Office]

⁶⁴ CoE, [GRETA report 2020](#) (paragraph 19 to 21), December 2020

⁶⁵ USDoL, '[Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)' (Albania), 29 September 2021

⁶⁶ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (page 82), 19 July 2022

GPO and district courts prosecuted trafficking cases without an organized crime nexus.⁶⁷

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6.4 Identification and the National Referral Mechanism

6.4.1 The GRETA report 2020 observed:

‘The procedure for the identification of victims of THB, as explained in GRETA’s second report on Albania, follows Standardised Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the identification and referral of victims and potential victims of trafficking, in force since December 2011, which constitute Albania’s National Referral Mechanism (NRM)... The SOPs were updated in 2018 and specify the different actors involved in victim identification and their respective roles, and provide indicators for the identification of victims in different situations. There are two phases of identification: initial identification of presumed victims, which may be carried out by the police, border police, social services, labour inspectorate, regional education directorates, regional health directorates, municipal protection child units and civil society organisations, and formal identification by a group comprising a police officer and a social worker. A so-called “Responsible Authority”, which comprised representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, Education and Sports, Health, and Foreign Affairs, as well as three NGOs, decides on the most complex cases of identification, including when Albanian victims have been identified abroad and returned to the country.

‘Following formal identification, victims are informed of their right to assistance and, if necessary, are accommodated in a shelter. There are no differences in the procedure for identification of victims of human trafficking among Albanian and foreign citizens. The provision of assistance is not conditional on the victim’s co-operation with the investigation and prosecution, despite the continued encouragement of victims of trafficking to testify in criminal proceedings. However, during GRETA’s evaluation visit, concerns were raised by various interlocutors that the police uses the identification interview to put pressure on victims to file reports against perpetrators. In addition, GRETA expressed concerns over the fact that only two victims were formally identified the authorities for 2018, out of the 95 presumed victims, raising questions as to possible delays or impediments in the procedure (see paragraph 12).

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

⁶⁷ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 81), 19 July 2022

have been signed between the local Police Directorates and the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters.⁶⁸

- 6.4.2 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted that ‘Twelve regional anti-trafficking committees comprising local officials and NGOs worked on local victim assistance and referrals mechanisms.’⁶⁹ The USSD TIP report 2022 also stated:

‘The government maintained a multidisciplinary national referral mechanism (NRM) with standard operating procedures (SOPs) for identifying and referring victims to services. First responders referred potential victims to law enforcement and state social services, which conducted joint interviews to officially recognize victims. The law provided equal services for both potential and officially recognized victims. [Mobile victim identification unit] MIUs in eight regions, consisting of social workers from NGOs and police officers, identified most of the victims every year, but the units’ sustainability was uncertain due to the lack of permanent staff, formalization, and resources; MIUs identified 126 potential victims (45 in 2020). Experts reported police did not participate consistently in the MIUs despite signing a memorandum of understanding that formalized their participation. Experts also stated law enforcement rarely initiated cases when civil society identified a potential victim, but ASP noted that definitional differences with civil society regarding what constituted trafficking caused obstacles in identification. Observers continued to report border police lacked resources, interpreters, and knowledge to screen consistently or implement SOPs for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers. As in previous years, ASP did not screen individuals in commercial sex for indicators of trafficking during raids and investigations of commercial sex establishments, and the Labor Inspectorate lacked the training to identify victims of forced labor. Law enforcement justified cases of potential domestic servitude and forced labor in forced marriages involving Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities as traditional cultural practices and customs.’⁷⁰

- 6.4.3 However, the USSD TIP report 2022 also acknowledged that: ‘Due to a lack of formal identification procedures and as it had reported in previous years, the government may have detained or deported some potential victims, including women in commercial sex, irregular migrants, and asylum seekers.’⁷¹

- 6.4.4 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

⁶⁸ CoE, GRETA report 2020 (paragraphs 154 to 156), 15 December 2020

⁶⁹ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

⁷⁰ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (pagea 81 to 82), 19 July 2022

⁷¹ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

referral in receiving services and direct assistance at the local level has increased.⁷²

6.4.5 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 Anti-Trafficking 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.'⁷³

6.4.6 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.'⁷⁴

6.4.7 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted 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."⁷⁵

6.4.8 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 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 2019'⁷⁶

6.4.9 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 noted a further comment from James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children's Society:

⁷² D&E, [Annual report 2019](#), p.15, 16 July 2020

⁷³ D&E, [Annual report 2019](#), p.15, 16 July 2020

⁷⁴ D&E, [Annual report 2019](#), p.16, 16 July 2020

⁷⁵ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#) (page 104), May 2019

⁷⁶ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.107, May 2019

‘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.’⁷⁷

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6.5 Trafficking-specific criminal investigations

6.5.1 The GRETA report 2020 also noted:

‘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.’⁷⁸

6.5.2 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted: ‘The Albanian State Police (ASP) investigated 61 cases with 27 suspects (15 suspects for adult trafficking and 12 suspects for child trafficking), compared with 31 cases with 32 suspects in 2020. The ASP investigated no suspects for “knowingly soliciting or

⁷⁷ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.108, May 2019

⁷⁸ CoE, GRETA report 2020, 15 December 2020

patronizing a sex trafficking victim to perform a commercial sex act,” compared with four in 2020.⁷⁹

6.5.3 The USSD TIP report 2022 also noted

‘... The government continued judicial reforms that changed prosecutorial jurisdiction for trafficking cases; SPAK and the Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organized Crime have jurisdiction over trafficking cases related to organized crime, while GPO and district courts prosecuted trafficking cases without an organized crime nexus. However, GRETA, prosecutors, and other observers reported district prosecutors did not have the specialized experience and capacity to prosecute trafficking cases successfully. GRETA and observers reported authorities confused overlapping elements of “exploitation of prostitution” and trafficking and at times applied the lesser charge because it required less specialization and time or due to the false belief that trafficking crimes required a transnational element. Limited resources, capacity, and reports of constant turnover within law enforcement created additional obstacles to maintaining capacity to investigate trafficking, including a lack of resources to investigate trafficking through virtual means. The government, mainly in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations, trained police officers, judges, prosecutors, labor inspectors, and victim coordinators on various anti-trafficking issues. The government reported permanently dismissing a police officer for “prostitution and maintaining a brothel,” and in 2020, the government suspended five police officials, including the Director of the Border and Emigration Directorate of Tirana and three chiefs of units, after media reported a story alleging their complicity in an organized trafficking operation. The government conducted an investigation into the officers involved, which is reportedly still under investigation by the Tirana Prosecution Office. The government extradited a suspected trafficker from North Macedonia and appointed a liaison prosecutor to the EU. GPO sent nine rogatory letters and received four rogatory letters from foreign authorities.’⁸⁰

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6.6 Prosecutions and convictions

6.6.1 The CoE’s GRETA report 2020 noted:

‘... in 2015, there were 38 criminal proceedings registered by the Prosecutor’s Office for trafficking in adults and 11 for child trafficking; in 2016, 18 for trafficking in adults and eight for child trafficking, as well as two cases of [trafficking of human beings] THB by criminal organisations; in 2017, 20 for trafficking in adults and six for child trafficking, as well as one case of THB by criminal organisations; in 2018, 12 for trafficking in adults and five for child trafficking; and in 2019, 19 for trafficking in adults and six for child trafficking.’⁸¹

6.6.2 The GRETA report 2020 further noted:

⁷⁹ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 81), 19 July 2022

⁸⁰ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 81), 19 July 2022

⁸¹ CoE, [GRETA report 2020](#) (paragraph 81), December 2020

'As regards convictions, in 2015, 10 men and one woman were convicted of THB by the Serious Crimes Court of First Instance; two of the sentences ranged from two to five years, three for five to 10 years, and six from 10 to 25 years. In 2016, 20 men and two women were convicted of THB; five of the sentences ranged from two to five years, five from five to 10 years, and 12 from 10 to 25 years. In 2017, seven men were convicted of THB; two of the sentences ranged from five to 10 years, and five from 10 to 25 years. In 2018, four men were convicted of THB; two of the sentences ranged from five to 10 years, and two from 10 to 25 years. The Appeal Court of Serious Crimes reviewed and confirmed decisions in THB cases concerning 13 men and one woman in 2015, 14 men in 2016, 5 men in 2017, and five men in 2018. The Supreme Court confirmed decisions concerning five men in 2016 and six men in 2017.'⁸²

6.6.3 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted

'The General Prosecution Office (GPO) prosecuted 60 cases with 19 defendants (six defendants for adult trafficking and 13 defendants for child trafficking), an increase compared with two cases with 12 defendants in 2020. Separately, the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) prosecuted two new cases and continued two cases from previous years. Courts convicted 11 traffickers, a significant increase compared with no convictions in 2020; all traffickers were convicted for child trafficking. Judges sentenced five traffickers with imprisonment between eight years and 25 years and two traffickers with imprisonment between two years and eight years; four traffickers received probation. Lenient sentences, such as probation, undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable, weakened deterrence, created potential security and safety concerns for victims, and were not equal to the seriousness of the crime. Observers reported continued delays in court proceedings due to the pandemic.'⁸³

6.6.4 The USSD TIP report 2022 also noted:

'The government reported five victims cooperated in investigations and prosecutions and received legal assistance. SPAK possessed equipment that allowed testimony via video conferences, though it did not record how often it was used (one case in 2020). Victims who testified against traffickers had access to the witness protection program, though no victims participated in the program. The government reported interviews and testimonies took place in the presence of a psychologist, and prosecutors separated victims and defendants during trials to prevent re-traumatization. The government maintained the Development Center for Criminal Justice for Minors with four part-time prosecutors and a judicial police officer responsible for child protection in criminal proceedings. The government maintained 22 victim assistance coordinators who provided legal assistance and guided victims in accessing services; the government appointed victim assistance coordinators to all victims assisting in prosecutions. Victims could obtain restitution through criminal proceedings or compensation through civil suits. However, judges generally rejected restitution in criminal proceedings, and civil suits required victims to submit new testimonies, causing re-

⁸² CoE, [GRETA report 2020](#) (paragraph 82), December 2020

⁸³ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 81), 19 July 2022

traumatization. Additionally, civil courts dismissed or closed civil suits if criminal courts dropped the case or acquitted the defendant. Courts granted compensation to only two victims in cases from 2010 and 2018 but did not disburse compensation to the victims—the case from 2018 remained under appeal.⁸⁴

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6.7 Barriers to enforcement

6.7.1 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 referred to difficulties in implementing policies with a particular reference to boys and men based on a number of sources:

“... [VoT] 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

‘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 2019⁸⁵

6.7.2 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...”

⁸⁴ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

⁸⁵ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.76, May 2019

'Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019'⁸⁶

6.7.3 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 also 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 2019'⁸⁷

6.7.4 A UNICEF of 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",

⁸⁶ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.139, May 2019

⁸⁷ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.141, May 2019

she acknowledges. Nevertheless, she is hopeful that the new social plan, which the municipality is preparing, will take into account such needs.⁸⁸

6.7.5 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 2019⁸⁹

6.7.6 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 included information from an interview with Professor Haxhiymeri, who 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

⁸⁸ UNICEF, [Addressing violence against children in rural Albania](#), 13 March 2019

⁸⁹ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.130, May 2019

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 2019'⁹⁰

6.7.7 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 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 2019'⁹¹

6.7.8 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.

⁹⁰ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.83, May 2019

⁹¹ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.76, May 2019

“... 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.”⁹²

- 6.7.9 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.”⁹³ 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.’⁹⁴

- 6.7.10 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.”⁹⁵

- 6.7.11 The OSCE report 2020 noted

‘The children’s rights approach is the overriding principles in the Albanian recently developed child protection legislation which highlights that the best interest of the child is the primary consideration in all actions affecting children... The limited information available makes it challenging to draw

⁹² Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.143, May 2019

⁹³ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.141, May 2019

⁹⁴ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.76, May 2019

⁹⁵ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.145, May 2019

conclusions on the effectiveness of the child protection measures. However, such a lack of information strongly suggests a lack of co-ordination among institutions to enable a protective environment for children at risk and victims of trafficking.⁹⁶

6.7.12 The OSCE report 2020 further noted:

‘On a positive note, a multi-stakeholder approach, as defined by the Decision of Council of Ministers on case management procedures was undertaken in 41 out of 45 cases... [however] we noted that in 11 cases the exploitation continued even at the post-identification phase, in spite of the [child protection worker] CPW efforts to secure assistance for the child and the family. Remarkably, 8 out of the 11 cases are girls sexually exploited, hence still in the hands of their traffickers.

‘In this context, negative gender bias could have influenced the effectiveness of the investigation efforts, leading to the continuation of the exploitation. This particular negligence requires a deeper analysis, which is not the scope of this research. In one case, the CPW stated to have been threatened by the suspected traffickers of the girl. Presumably, a weak risk assessment led to the continuation of the exploitation.

‘... the majority of cases, 31 out of 45, have not been treated with a protection order, raising concern about the efficacy of the protection measures applied to ensure basic care, safe accommodation and most importantly protection from the traffickers and abusers.’⁹⁷

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6.8 Legal aid

6.8.1 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 trafficking⁹⁸. However, Albania’s response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire explained:

‘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

⁹⁶ OSCE, [‘A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania’](#) (page 32), July 2020

⁹⁷ OSCE, [‘A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania’](#) (pages 32 to 34), July 2020

⁹⁸ UofB/IOM, [‘Vulnerability’ to human trafficking \[...\]](#), p.8, July 2018

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.⁹⁹

6.8.2 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.'¹⁰⁰

6.8.3 Different and Equal, an NGO which supported 91 VoT and 30 of their children during 2020, noted its annual report for 2020, released in 10 September 2021, that

'D&E has provided legal assistance to all beneficiaries in the program through a D&E lawyer. During the reporting period, all beneficiaries of the reintegration program were informed about their rights and were supported by legal aid according to their needs. During March, the beneficiaries were informed and advised about the measures taken due to the situation created by COVID19 and the legal procedures for obtaining services and assistance for the categories in need.'¹⁰¹

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6.9 Witness protection

6.9.1 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.'¹⁰²

6.9.2 The GETA report 2020 noted:

'The protection of victims and witnesses of human trafficking is guaranteed by provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure, including the right to be

⁹⁹ CoE, GRETA, [Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire for the evaluation \[...\]](#), p.6, 20 June 2019

¹⁰⁰ CoE, GRETA, [Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire for the evaluation \[...\]](#), p.5, 20 June 2019

¹⁰¹ D&E, '[Annual Report 2020](#)' (page 2), 10 September 2021

¹⁰² CoE, GRETA, [Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire for the evaluation \[...\]](#), p.23, 20 June 2019

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.’¹⁰³

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6.10 Children

6.10.1 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... 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...’¹⁰⁴

6.10.2 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted:

¹⁰³ CoE, GRETA, [Evaluation Report Albania, Third ...](#), Executive Summary, 15 December 2020

¹⁰⁴ UNICEF, [Child protection system](#), no date

'... 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 2019'¹⁰⁵

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.”¹⁰⁶

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Section updated: 8 September 2022

7. Shelters and short-medium term assistance

7.1.1 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted:

'The government operated one specialized shelter and supported three specialized NGO-run shelters. The government allocated 22 million leks (\$207,650) to NGO-run shelters to support 30 staff salaries, compared with 17.6 million leks (\$166,120) in 2020. The government provided an additional 6.8 million leks (\$64,180) for food support to NGO-run shelters in 2021 and 2020. The government allocated 20.9 million leks (\$197,260) to the government-run shelter, compared with 29.3 million leks (\$276,550) in 2020. The government also transferred 10.2 million leks (\$96,270) to a fund of seized criminal assets for victim support services, compared with 4.6 million leks (\$43,420) in 2020. Although the government increased resources to NGO-run shelters in 2021, NGO-run shelters continued to operate under financial constraints and relied on outside sources for operating costs. NGO-run shelters reported no funding delays from the government, as in previous years. However, experts reported the bidding process for social programs with municipal governments was not transparent and that no funds were dispersed to shelters.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Asyllos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.141, May 2019

¹⁰⁶ Asyllos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.146, May 2019

¹⁰⁷ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

7.1.2 The USSD TIP report 2022 further noted:

‘The four specialized shelters constituted the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS); victims who required services not available in one shelter were referred to another shelter within the coalition. NCATS and the government provided assistance to all official and potential victims in both 2021 and 2020, including food, mental health counselling, legal assistance, health care, educational services, employment services, assistance to victims’ children, financial support, long-term accommodation, social activities, vocational training, and post-reintegration follow-up. NGO-run shelters allowed adult victims to leave the shelter voluntarily; the state-run shelter required victims to receive permission from the shelter director for their security. One NGO-run shelter provided specialized services for victims younger than the age of 18 and rented apartments for male victims, where they received assistance from NGOs. Observers reported the shelters in the NCATS had professional staff and good quality of care, and the government reported good cooperation between NCATS and government institutions. The government and NGOs provided vocational training for 109 victims; however, experts reported a lack of resources for long-term care, employment, and other reintegration efforts, particularly for child victims and victims with children. National Employment Services offices prioritized jobseekers from vulnerable groups, including trafficking victims; 43 victims registered with the employment office for employment opportunities. Foreign victims had access to the same services as domestic victims; the law provided foreign victims a three-month “reflection period” with temporary residency status and authorization to work for up to two years. The government did not provide any temporary residency statuses but repatriated two victims to Romania.’¹⁰⁸

7.1.3 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.’¹⁰⁹ 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, Elbasan¹¹⁰

7.1.4 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

¹⁰⁸ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (page 82), 19 July 2022

¹⁰⁹ NCATS, [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania](#), no date

¹¹⁰ NCATS, [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania](#), no date

- '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'¹¹¹

7.1.5 The NCATS report set out the services offered by its 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'¹¹²

7.1.6 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'¹¹³

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¹¹¹ NCATS, [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania](#), no date

¹¹² NCATS, [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania](#), no date

¹¹³ NCATS, [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania](#), no date

8. Support and reintegration services beyond shelters

8.1 General

- 8.1.1 See also [Shelters and short-medium assistance](#) above for a complete view of support available to victims of trafficking.
- 8.1.2 Sources cited in this section provide information about a range of support services, or their lack thereof, including access to accommodation, employment and financial so should be read in conjunction with the subsequent subsections.
- 8.1.3 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.'¹¹⁴
- 8.1.4 Different and Equal set out in their annual report for 2020 also set out their services on their website and described the 'reintegration program' they provided during the year to the 91 (possible) victims of trafficking:
'Shelter, security and reintegration plan; Immediate medical assistance; Negotiation / mediation with the family; Psychological assessments and counseling; Legal support and assistance; Assistance for registration / continuation of the school system; Professional training; Social activities; Mentoring; Employment counseling and assistance; Financial support for housing; Information on services that exist in the community as well as necessary contacts / service map; Revenue-generating work programs; Assistance and support for children of victims of trafficking; Monitoring and follow-up of program beneficiaries. In addition to direct assistance to beneficiaries, D&E also supported the victim's family - for example, beneficiary children, assistance for a minor's parent to find work, family counseling, etc.'¹¹⁵
- 8.1.5 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

¹¹⁴ D&E, [About us](#), no date

¹¹⁵ D&E, [Annual Report 2020](#) (page 5), 10 September 2021

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.'¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Tjeter Vizion, [Shoqata Tjeter Vizion](#), no date

8.1.6 With regard to men and boys specifically, the Asylos/ARC report 2019 included the following reflections from Alfred Matoshi, Mary Ward Loreto Foundation, stated:

“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.”¹¹⁷

8.1.7 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 continued:

“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).”

¹¹⁷ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.144, May 2019

'Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019'¹¹⁸

8.1.8 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 2019'¹¹⁹

8.1.9 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."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.154, May 2019

¹¹⁹ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.159, May 2019

¹²⁰ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.134, May 2019

- 8.1.10 The Asyllos/ARC report 2019 noted that interlocutors had confirmed that the 'Another Vision' shelter and the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking received boys¹²¹.

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 2019’¹²²

- 8.1.11 Quoting other sources, the Asyllos/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.’¹²³

- 8.1.12 Some of the interlocutors interviewed for the Asyllos/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

¹²¹ Asyllos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.165, May 2019

¹²² Asyllos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.165, May 2019

¹²³ Asyllos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.161, May 2019

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 2019’¹²⁴

- 8.1.13 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.”¹²⁵

- 8.1.14 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

¹²⁴ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.157, May 2019

¹²⁵ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.160, May 2019

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 2019’¹²⁶

8.1.15 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 also 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

¹²⁶ Asylos/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.180, May 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 2019’¹²⁷

8.1.16 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...”¹²⁸

8.1.17 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 ...’¹²⁹

The OSCE report 2020, based on the evidence obtained from a review of 45 cases of potential child trafficking including 14 boys, noted: ‘The access to services is another major concern. Firstly, the lack of residential centres for boys identified as potential victims of trafficking, in particular those above the age of 14 who manifest drugs and alcohol addictions. They are a difficult target group for the shelters’ staff, requiring specialised services and continuous adjustment of the Individual Protection Plan’.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Asyl/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.180, May 2019

¹²⁸ Asyl/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.181, May 2019

¹²⁹ UNICEF, [‘Interview of Child Protection Specialists at UNICEF \[...\]’](#), 30 July 2020

¹³⁰ OSCE, [‘A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania’](#) (page 36), July 2020

8.2 Financial assistance

8.2.1 Quoting other sources, the Asyls/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.’¹³¹

8.2.2 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.’¹³²

8.2.3 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

¹³¹ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.161, May 2019

¹³² D&E, [Annual report 2019](#), p.14, 16 July 2020

in all 6 target areas. The initiative aims to reach around 240 people who will directly benefit from the program.¹³³

- 8.2.4 See [Employment](#) for further information on this subject.
- 8.2.5 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.’¹³⁴
- 8.2.6 In the same report, Different and Equal noted that socio-cultural activities were provided each week on 2019 for beneficiaries of the programme¹³⁵.

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8.3 Employment

- 8.3.1 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:

‘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.’¹³⁶

- 8.3.2 Quoting other sources, the Asyls/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.”¹³⁷

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8.4 Healthcare

- 8.4.1 Quoting other sources, the Asyls/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

¹³³ UNICEF, [Addressing violence against children in rural Albania](#), 13 March 2019

¹³⁴ D&E, [Annual report 2019](#), p.10, 16 July 2020

¹³⁵ D&E, [Annual report 2019](#), p.12, 16 July 2020

¹³⁶ Govt of Albania, [11th National Report on the implementation of \[...\]](#), p.6, 6 March 2020

¹³⁷ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.162, May 2019

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.’¹³⁸

8.4.2 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 2019’¹³⁹

8.4.3 Quoting other sources, the Asyls/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.’¹⁴⁰

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9. International assistance

9.1.1 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:

‘... a 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 [trafficking] 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

¹³⁸ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.162, May 2019

¹³⁹ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.180, May 2019

¹⁴⁰ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.162, May 2019

‘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.’¹⁴¹

9.1.2 The OSCE published an article in April 2020 in which it described some of its work in Albania:

‘... 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.’¹⁴²

9.1.3 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.’¹⁴³

9.1.4 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

¹⁴¹ UNICEF, [‘Interview of Child Protection Specialists at UNICEF \[...\]’](#), 30 July 2020

¹⁴² OSCE, [‘Addressing child trafficking and child protection in Albania’](#), 7 April 2020

¹⁴³ OSCE, [‘Addressing child trafficking and child protection in Albania’](#), 7 April 2020

compliance with the numerous OSCE anti-trafficking commitments and recommendations.¹⁴⁴

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10. Freedom of movement

10.1 Demography and relocation rights

10.1.1 Albania is roughly 28,000sqkm¹⁴⁵, a little larger than Wales¹⁴⁶, with a population estimated to be between 2.8million¹⁴⁷ and just over 3million¹⁴⁸, of whom almost 500,000 live in the capital, Tirana¹⁴⁹. Over 60% of the population live in urban areas and people continue to move to towns and cities, however in general there is a fairly 'even distribution, with somewhat higher concentrations of people in the western and central parts of the country'¹⁵⁰.

10.1.2 Around a third of the population is estimated to be under 24, two-fifths between 25 and 54 and remainder 55 and older. Most are ethnic Albanian, around 1% other ('including Vlach, Romani, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Egyptian') and the remainder 'unspecified'. A small majority are Muslim, while the rest are a mix of faiths, including 'Roman Catholic 10%, Orthodox 6.8%, atheist 2.5%, Bektashi (a Sufi order) 2.1%, other 5.7%, unspecified 16.2%'¹⁵¹.

10.1.3 The USSD human rights report 2021 noted: 'The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.'¹⁵² Freedom House in its report covering events in 2021 similarly noted 'Albanians generally enjoy freedom of movement, though criminal activity and practices related to historically predominant honor codes limit these rights in some areas. People are generally free to change their place of residence or employment.'¹⁵³

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10.2 Ability of women to live alone

10.2.1 There is limited up to date information on the ability of women to live alone (see [Bibliography](#)).

10.2.2 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

¹⁴⁴ OSCE, ['Addressing child trafficking and child protection in Albania'](#), 7 April 2020

¹⁴⁵ UNdata, [Albania](#), no date

¹⁴⁶ US CIA, ['World Factbook'](#) (United Kingdom), updated 31 August 2022

¹⁴⁷ UNdata, [Albania](#), no date

¹⁴⁸ US CIA, ['World Factbook'](#) (United Kingdom), updated 31 August 2022

¹⁴⁹ UNdata, [Albania](#), no date

¹⁵⁰ US CIA, ['World Factbook \(Albania\)'](#), updated 30 August 2022

¹⁵¹ US CIA, ['World Factbook \(Albania\)'](#), updated 30 August 2022

¹⁵² USSD, [Human rights report 2021](#) (section 2d), 12 April 2022

¹⁵³ FH, ['Freedom in the World 2022'](#) (Albania), February 2022

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 successfully¹⁵⁴.

- 10.2.3 The Director of the Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre commented that Kukes 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 there¹⁵⁵.

- 10.2.4 The Director of Social Services in Kukes 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 increased¹⁵⁶.

- 10.2.5 A report by the Global Initiative, a NGO based in Albania, in response to questions asked by the Home Office about Blood feuds, dated 13 December 2021, noted in regard to whether a person (male or female) could live alone in Tirana or elsewhere 'An individual can live alone in Tirana without his or her family'¹⁵⁷.

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10.3 Anonymity in Albania

- 10.3.1 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted the following views from interviewees:

"... 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."

¹⁵⁴ Home Office, [Report of HO FFM, Albania, 31 Oct-7 Nov 2017](#), para. 8.1.1, February 2018

¹⁵⁵ Home Office, [Report of HO FFM, Albania, 31 Oct-7 Nov 2017](#), para. 8.1.4, February 2018

¹⁵⁶ Home Office, [Report of HO FFM, Albania, 31 Oct-7 Nov 2017](#), para. 8.3.3, February 2018

¹⁵⁷ Global Initiative, 'Blood feuds in Albania' (page 8), 13 December 2021 (copy on request)

'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 2019¹⁵⁸

- 10.3.2 A report by the Global Initiative, a NGO based in Albania, in response to questions asked by the Home Office about Blood feuds, dated 13 December 2021, noted '... it is very easy to track someone and find people via family connections across the country. Due to the wave of internal migration from the north of the country to central and southern Albania, families that are originally from the north are now present in all in communities of Albania. It is also comparably easy to identify and trace people from the north because of their distinctive customs, accents as well as their names and surnames.'¹⁵⁹

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¹⁵⁸ Asyls/ARC, [Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#), p.159, May 2019

¹⁵⁹ Global Initiative, 'Blood feuds in Albania' (page 8), 13 December 2021 (copy on request)

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised 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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