



Written Contribution to the

4th CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
OF REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN ALBANIA

7 April 2024

Statement of Interest

This Report is submitted as a written contribution on the children and youth rights situation in Albania for the 4th cycle of UPR reporting. It provides information on several areas of child and youth rights. The Report was drafted from a consortium of CSOS and networks, all part of the **Human Rights House Albania**, a major human rights informal network, comprised of 3 major networks and 4 national CSO's.

Child Rights Centre Albania (CRCA) is the oldest child and youth rights organisation established in 1997. CRCA works to promote the respect of children and youth rights, to protect them from violence and exploitation, to increase child and youth participation at national and local level, through lobby and advocacy, policy and legislation improvement, capacity building, information and research, and establishment of good models of social care and protection.

Albanian Coalition for Education (ACE) represents the national movement of 20 NGO's, trade unions and networks, advocating for universal right to quality and inclusive public education.

Albanian National Youth Network (ANYN) represents the national youth movement in Albania and is composed of all major youth forums and civil society organization. ANYN works to promote youth rights at local and national level; to advocate for youth participation and representation at all levels of decision-making.

iSIGURT.al - The National Platform for Safer Internet in Albania goal is to promote safer internet in Albania, focusing on reporting sexual crimes against children and any incident of online hate speech. The National Platform for Safer Internet is a dedicated space, which serves as a unique source of information, manuals, guides related to safer Internet.

PINK Embassy Albania works for the protection and advancement of the rights of LGBTIQ persons in Albania. Its work started in the mid-2000s with a dedicated group of LGBT activists who worked for the first legal advancements regarding LGBT people and crafted the PINK Embassy idea. PINK was instrumental in challenging societal attitudes against LGBTIQ persons, by becoming a champion for advocating for inclusive laws and policies that respect LGBTIQ rights. PINK holds annually two major public events: the "Festival of Diversity", the first LGBTI outdoor public event in Albania and Tirana PRIDE.

1. Summary of the report

Children and young people make up to 37% of the population¹ (up to 29 years old). With a lower child-birth rate Albania is becoming one of the countries with the oldest population in Europe. The median age increased from 27 to 37² for the last twenty years. More than 40% of the Albanian population lived abroad³. Despite many advancements, widespread corruption, political instability, organized crime, weak public institutions and child protection system, and lack of public investment, seriously hinders the efforts to protect and advance the rights of the child and youth in Albania.

Between 2010 and 2022, more than 60,000 Albanian children registered as first-time asylum seekers in a country of the European Union. According to data collected from Eurostat, over 82 percent of asylum-seeking children from Albania are under the age of 14. At least 45 percent of them were girls while 55 percent were boys. In the same period, at least 700,000 young people migrated mostly for employment in a country of European Union⁴.

On 19 July 2022 Albania was granted the status of accession country with European Union. The positive response to Albania's candidacy for EU membership has led the country to the preparation of national and sectorial strategies as well as national legislation to fully align the Albanian legislation to the *EU acquis*.

Albania has ratified all the major UN Conventions, and the Government is generally committed to safeguard the rights of the children and youth. In 2017, Albania approved a law on the rights of the child and their protection while two years later also approved the Youth Law.

Most critical aspects for the rights of children and youth in Albania:

- **Lack of actions from the state party to alleviate child and youth poverty** is contributing further to the violation of child and youth rights, increasing their exploitation, economic migration towards EU countries and youth disenchantment.
- **The state party has failed to provide adequate support to children and young people victims of online and offline sexual violence and exploitation.** Albania has recorded an increase into sexual crimes against children and young people, with national and local authorities unable to provide support and protection to most of the victims.
- **Child Protection System remains very weak and lacks resources to protect children. Albania has extremely few social care services for youth.** Lack of financial resources means that the system is able to refer cases only to the CSOs for support, without covering their costs. The delivery of social care services is almost fully dependable on foreign funding. The situation is dire for Youth services which are almost inexistent. Few that exist are run by CSOs. None of the 61 municipalities runs any youth social care and support services.
- **Institutional and societal discrimination of children and youth on the grounds of their origin, sexual orientation and gender identity remains a critical concern.** Although there have been some positive outcomes related to protection from discrimination, in overall the authorities have done very little to eliminate proactively discrimination of children and youth.

¹Albanian Population data from 2023, INSTAT (<http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/demography-and-social-indicators/population/>)

²Population ageing in Albania, INSTAT 2022.

³Albania: Mainstreaming, acceleration, and policy support for achieving SDGs, World Bank Group, Tirana 2018.

⁴ Eurostat, Enlargement countries - statistics on migration, residence permits, citizenship and asylum, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement_countries_-_statistics_on_migration,_residence_permits,_citizenship_and_asylum&oldid=485831

- **Access to free universal health care for children and young people is not guaranteed.** Despite major investments in primary health care, the state party does not guarantee access to free medical checks and medicines for children and youth.
- **Internet safety for children and youth remains extremely weak, while the authorities are not able to respond to online bullying or sexual exploitation.** The national hotline for internet safety iSIGURT.al has been able to respond to all the request for CSAM removal in cooperation with the Police authority. However, the Police ability to identify and bring to justice perpetrators is very low.
- **Access to Justice for children and young people remains a major threat.** Despite major achievements that the state party has achieved, in practice both the legal framework and implementation of the laws remain weak.
- **Albania lacks national budget indicators to measure the country's investment for children and youth.** The national budget lacks serious indicators to measure the investment for children and youth. The Ministry of Education never published the budget based on per-child formula, while most of its national programmes (community schools / after-school) receive zero funding.

2. Situation of children and youth in Albania

2.1 Poverty

Reports estimates that 20% of children in Albania live in absolute poverty; 49% of families with more than 4 children are poor and 22% of children 0-4 years old live in poverty. 17.4% of children in Albania live in households with income less than 120 USD / month, while still 2% of children live in families with zero income⁵. Albania lacks data on youth poverty and the Institute of Statistics doesn't publish any data on this regard.

The World Bank in its latest review on Albania estimated that at least 1.6 million people will live in poverty because of Covid, including 277,000 children. That would mean that at least 1 in 3 children will live in poverty. Albania's economy will contract to 8,4 percent of its GDP⁶, making the country the fifth most affected country in Europe and Central Asia, where 41.5% of the population will live with less than 5.5 USD a day. Albania doesn't have any programme for the alleviation of child poverty, either through cash handouts or free food in schools. Children and their families often depend for their survival to the aid given by CSOs or religious organisations, while a properly organised and sustainable state food aid is non-existent.

In 2023 Albania with the support of European Union started to implement Youth Guarantee, which aims to move people from poverty and NEET into vocational training and employment. However, the Government has done very little to inform and include young people and youth CSO's on Youth Guarantee at national and local level. There is lack of clarity on how the scheme will be implemented and how youth CSOs will be able to support young people at various stages of their formation and employment.

2.2 Right to Education

Albania, in comparison to other countries in Europe, spends less on education and all the public schools are funded by the state annual budget. An 8-year review of financing public education (both child and adult education) through the national budget found that Albania invests only 2.2 of its GDP for education, which is the lowest investment for public education in Europe. The national budget does not support the implementation of the national policy for education, as the two documents are neither coordinated nor linked to each other. This makes it almost impossible to measure the impact that the national education policy has on outcomes of education. The results of Pisa 2022 showed that Albanian students were the worst performers in all subjects compared to their peers in other countries⁷.

The right of the child to education has been one of the most negatively affected during the reporting period. Despite some advancements during 2013-2018, first Covid and later violence in schools have had a tremendous impact on the quality of education. Public education is the only sector where on daily bases there are serious allegations of violations of the rights of the child.

In 2021 the Government approved a new Education Policy in Albania, with a major shift to making schools safe for every child. However, the reality is totally different. As schools lack a model of what could be considered "safe school" and the Ministry of Education so far has not provided any guidance in this regard, the term is just being used for publicity. No school in Albania fulfils the criteria to be considered a safe school and safe space. Despite calls for better cooperation between the Ministry of Education and civil society, for the last four years there has been almost no cooperation between CSO's and the Ministry.

Official data shows that around 75 percent of families of children receiving cash handouts are not able to fulfil any of the five basic needs of their children, including health care and education. At least 77 percent of the children in

⁵ Child Poverty in Albania, UNICEF: https://www.unicef.org/albania/children_24920.html

⁶ World Bank, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/344691588788182868/Global-Economic-Prospects-June-2020-Regional-Overview-ECA.pdf>

⁷ Results of Pisa 2022 can be found in the link: <https://www.oecd.org/publication/pisa-2022-results/>

the same families, aged between 16–18 years old do not attend any education. At least 65 percent of the children that miss out education come from families with very low to no income at all⁸. Roma communities due to poor economic conditions, discrimination, prejudices, early marriages, migration are some of the factors that affect the integration of Roma community within the education system.

When Albania declared the Covid epidemic, the country went in total lockdown for at least a full month. The Government did not make any provisions for children's access to education. Lessons took place mostly using WhatsUp (!) showing lack of preparedness for education in emergencies. A CRCA/ECPAT investigation found that at least 20 percent of children did not have access to online education, because they either lacked internet access at home or did not have a tablet / computer or smartphone. Despite all the calls issued to the Government to provide children with free access to internet and computer, no actions were taken. The Government never published a report to detail the level of access that children had to education and how the lack of actions of the state-party influenced their education outcomes.

A report of the Albanian Coalition for Education⁹ into the barriers that young people face into advancing to higher education found that "lack of support from the Government for youth education is one of the major contributing factors in preventing young people to advance their education." Young people do not benefit from any schemes that can support student's higher education. This means that if the families are not able to fund the burden of higher education, young people will not have any chance to follow up their university studies.

2.3 Violence against children and young people

Violence against children and young people is widespread even though legislation and policies prohibit it. At least 1 in 2 children reports physical violence from the family or at school from teachers¹⁰, while almost 20 percent of adolescents in public schools complain of being bullied or discriminated against on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity¹¹. The reports of sexual violence against children increased exponentially especially after Covid lockdowns. Meanwhile, children in street situation form a subgroup within the children exploited for labour. At least 2,600 children were reported being in street situation, mostly being used for begging. A 2024 WHO report found that at least 10 percent of young people were victims of violent bullying and violence.

Studies show that at least 1 in 10 children is a victim of online and offline sexual violence. Yet the Government, at local or national level, does not provide any services to children and young people who have survived sexual abuse and exploitation. Any services provided to the survivors is provided and funded by CSOs, while the authorities lack understanding and know-how of the magnitude of the problem and the services needed to support the survivors. Although the local government is legally required to fund social services delivery for children, none have done so far. Victims of sexual violence and exploitation for prostitution, trafficking etc, continue to suffer because of lack of freely available public services in their support¹². Reports on violence against children show that only a very small fraction of cases of violence against children are reported.

In 2020, Barnahus Albania, published their first analytical report on how the child protection system responds to the cases of online and offline child sexual violence and exploitation. The findings show that most of the sexual crimes were committed by peers, followed by 18-24 years old. The majority of the child victims belonged to the age-group 10-14 years old¹³.

⁸ UNDP Albania, [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/misc/Albanian%20Version%20-%20GoA-UN%20Programme%20of%20Cooperation%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%202017-2021%20\(Final\).pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/misc/Albanian%20Version%20-%20GoA-UN%20Programme%20of%20Cooperation%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%202017-2021%20(Final).pdf)

⁹ Barriers that prevent Students to advance into Higher Education, Albanian Coalition for Education

¹⁰ Cenko E., Hazizaj A., Haxhiymeri E., Çoku B., Violence against Children in Albania. Balkan Epidemiologic Research on Child Abuse and Neglect (B.E.C.A.N), CRCA Albania, Tirana 2013.

¹¹ Hazizaj A., Poni Mm., Discrimination of the LGBTI adolescents in the public pre-university education system in Albania, PINK Embassy Albania, Tirana 2016.

¹² Hazizaj, A., Coku, B., Cenko, E., Haxhiymeri, E., Case-based surveillance study on violence against children in Albania, CRCA Albania, Tirana 2013.

¹³ Review of responses of the child protection system to protect children's victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, Barnahus Albania & CRCA / ECPAT Albania, 2020.

The research “Albania: Voices of the Survivors” of ECPAT International and ECPAT Albania found that “none of the victims of online sexual abuse had information on official mechanisms of reporting¹⁴. A ten-year Statistical Report of CRCA/ECPAT Albania of the sexual crimes reported to the authorities in Albania, found that during the last ten years, 61 percent of the sexual crimes are children and 39 percent were adults. Over 83 percent of the victims of sexual crimes were girls under the age of 18¹⁵.

Barnahus Albania in 5 years of work has saved more than 80 children who have survived online and offline sexual violence. All the children have benefited free of charge from legal and psychological aid. During the same period Barnahus recorded 66 reports of sexual violence and exploitation against children, while three victims committed suicide¹⁶. The state party doesn’t provide any financial support to Barnahus Albania, which is funded only through private donors.

Similarly, it was established that judges should receive training on how to best protect the rights of the child; however, no training have taken place. In 2016, the General Prosecutors Office established counselling and support services to victims of violence and sexual exploitation, among other things, but as of July 2020, the office had not supported any victims of child sexual exploitation. All national action plans relating to child sexual exploitation are expiring in 2020. As of July 2020, processes have not yet begun to draft new plans. The responsibility to provide social services for child victims, legal aid and psychosocial support falls on civil society organisations. The government provides little financial support to these organisations, which means many children cannot access the services established by law.

2.4 Online safety

In 2016, CRCA Albania in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare, established a national platform for children and young people to report online inappropriate and illegal content or ask for protection. Since the establishment of National Hotline for Child Internet Safety (www.iSIGURT.al) more than 600 cases of abuse and exploitation of children and young people have been reported to the National Police Authority and child protection system in Albania.

According to ITU at least 96.5% of Albanian households had access to Internet in 2022. A survey with 1000 children (year 2019) found that 10% of respondents had experienced some form of unwanted sexual experience over the Internet in the previous year. 16% of the children interviewed met someone in person who they had first met online, and 25% had contacts online with people they had never met in person. Analysis of reports received by the Albanian National Hotline iSIGURT.al. Out of the 6,129 reports in the first half of 2020, 6,054 were pages, videos or profiles containing child sexual abuse material. Despite this information on Internet usage and children’s vulnerabilities to online risks, there are gaps in the Albanian legislative response. The state-party doesn’t provide any support to National Hotline iSIGURT.al.

Under Albanian law, there is no definition of ‘child sexual abuse materials’, and offences such as grooming, and the sexual extortion of children are not criminalised. Internet Service Providers in Albania are not legally bound to block, filter or report child sexual abuse materials on their sites, unless they are commercial in nature. Conversely, the engagement of the private sector is limited. There are no guidelines for media and journalists to report on crimes related to the sexual exploitation of children. Based on this during 2022, CRCA/ECPAT Albania trained more than 100 journalists, while a set of guidelines for the media and the journalists was developed later.

2.5 Trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation in travel and tourism

¹⁴ Press Release, CRCA/ECPAT Albania, <https://www.crca.al/sq/barnhaus-free-legal-aid-vepro-per-femijet-news-press-release-child-protection-violence-media/studimi>

¹⁶ <https://www.crca.al/sq/vepro-per-femijet-news-press-release-child-protection-violence/raporti-10-vjecar-61-e-krimeve>

Albania has taken no measures to address child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism in Albania, although child trafficking, economical and sexual exploitation of children continue to deny children their right to life, safety and protection. Foreign arrivals in Albania increased from 3,4 million in 2014 to 10 million in 2023. Yet, no Albanian travel and tourism companies are members of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (The Code). In 2018, there were 1,326 registered accommodation facilities functioning in Albania, and in 2019, there were 1,259 travel agencies, tour operators, reservation services and activities companies in operation. Since none of them has become members of The Code, there is still a lot of work to be done for the sector to address the sexual exploitation of children.

There is a significant lack of data on sale and trafficking of children. UK law enforcement agencies continue to declare annually that children from Albania continue to be the main victims of trafficking¹⁷. During 2022 Albanians were “the most common nationality referred, which accounted for 27% (4,613) of all potential victims (compared to 20% in the previous year) and the highest annual volume for this nationality since the NRM began.”

Girls may still be permitted to marry for ‘sufficient reasons’, even though the legal age of marriage is set at 18. The law criminalises prostitution but does not specifically prohibit purchasing sexual services from children, nor engaging or soliciting a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation through prostitution. Since the law makes no distinction between children and adults, there is a risk that children are treated as offenders – as someone committing a crime when in fact they have been exploited.

2.6 Access to justice and the administration of juvenile justice

Referring to official data, almost 1/2 of all criminal offenses in Albania are committed by children and young people. Girls in conflict with the law continue to be kept in the same premises as women. Child and youth criminality represent a serious threat to safety of children and youth. The Government took steps to overhaul the juvenile justice system, which is seen as a positive step to fulfil Albania’s commitments to respect the rights of the juveniles in conflict with the law. Albania does not have an early prevention programme for children and youth with anti-social behaviour. Neither child protection nor the law enforcement systems have the duty to work together to prevent children and young people from criminality. Despite some limited investments in the conditions in Police stations, including the interviewing rooms etc, the Police force has not fully embraced these developments and try to improve their approach towards the juveniles. The courts, the prosecution and the state police have no environment that fits the international standards on the rights of the child¹⁸. Training of police, child protection officers, prosecutors and judges remains limited to the new standards set by the Juvenile Justice Code.

Although the best interest of the child has been enshrined in the Albanian legislation (Law on the Rights of the Child, Juvenile Justice Code etc) in practice neither the law enforcement or justice system nor child protection system are fully implementing the legal requirements. Children who are victims of crimes, especially of sexual violence and exploitation, do not receive any support or compensation from the Government and almost in all cases their families need to cover the costs to access social and legal services. Law on Free Legal Aid although provides for free primary and secondary free legal aid, first because of lack of bylaws and later political will, it hasn’t been fully implemented, leaving thousands of children without access to justice.

In 2022, the Ministry of Justice authorised a list of 15 NGOs to provide free legal aid to anyone who fulfilled the conditions set by law, including children victims of crimes and juveniles in conflict with the law. The Ministry was required to fund these services on yearly bases, but it never did. The government so far has failed to fund the free legal aid required by children, who in most of the cases is provided by CSO’s. If the NGO’s failed to provide free

¹⁷ <https://www.isigurt.al/lajme/barnahus-shqiperi-31-femije-te-shpetuar-nga-abuzuesit-e-tyre-seksual>

¹⁸ 2022 UK Annual Report Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism. Full report can be found in this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022>

legal aid services, no child in Albania would be able to benefit and enjoy his/her right to free legal aid in any legal proceedings, making the principal “the best interest of the child” meaningless¹⁹.

The new Juvenile Justice Code and consequently the justice reform in Albania were supposed to bring an overall change in the approach that both law enforcement and justice systems had on children’s victims of crime and those who committed crimes. However, wide-spread corruption within the justice system, lack of training of police, prosecutors, and judges on the new standards of justice for children and young people, it meant that the principle was never even considered. In June 2022 the reformed High Council of Justice approved a new map of the reorganisation of courts in Albania. The document is important because it defines access to justice for every individual in Albania. The reform has been strongly criticised from the civil society in Albania, especially because it extremely limits access to justice for children and young people, who will be required to cover all the costs of transport and lodging – if the current proposed reorganisation of courts went ahead. The best interest of the child was not mentioned in the principals that led to the reform.

2.7 Disable, minority, and LGBTIQ children and youth

Albania has made some progress when it comes to developing new policies and legislation for protection from discrimination. In 2010, the state party approved a progressive law for protection from discrimination²⁰. The law protects anyone from open discrimination, including children. Since the approval of the law, the principal of non-discrimination and protection from it have become major principals in many other laws and policies.

Yet, children and young people continue to suffer from open discrimination in their right to education, access to services and equal opportunities. Roma, disabled and LGBTIQ children and young people are often the victims of open bullying, violence and discrimination. The Government has taken steps to address these shortcomings in several policies, but so far has been unsuccessful.

The situation of disabled children has improved considerably, especially at societal level. Yet many prejudices are still present and prevent children from succeeding in their life. The Government provides support in the form of cash hounds to families of children living with a disability, which is around 90 USD. Such an amount is impossible to cover the basic needs of the child. All the therapies are costly and can be accessed only in the privately run centres, which are very expensive. The range of services provided to children with disability for free is almost non-existent. Few municipalities have started to establish service centres, but such centres can reach out a very small number of children. There are around 18,000 disable children and young people. In overall the public services can cover the needs of only 4000 children and young people. A survey from the Albanian Coalition for Education into the number of disabled children attending mandatory education found that almost 78 percent of disabled children don’t go to school. There are various reasons to why this happens, starting from lack of ramps in schools, to prejudice, discrimination, violence and prejudices against children from their peers and teachers.

Roma children continue to lack access to early childhood care and education, while many schools do not provide the most basic conditions for disabled children to access schools. The Ministry of Education keeps data on Roma children school attendance, but the data is never made public. INSTAT and several CSO’s on several occasions have reported that less than 50 percent of Roma children and youth attend school, most of them dropping out of school at the end of 5th level. By the end of the 9th level (which is the last mandatory level for basic education in Albania) at least 2/3 of all Roma children and youth have dropped out of public education. Only 1 in 10 Roma youth advance in their middle or higher education.

When it comes to LGBTI children and youth, the Albanian education system is uninformed and unprepared to guarantee and protect their rights. A survey among teachers on this issue found that almost 70 percent of

¹⁹ TRANSMONEE country analytical report “Children’s Access to Justice in Albania”. The full version of the report can be accessed in the following link: https://www.unicef.org/albania/2018_ALB_Access2Justice_CAR.pdf

²⁰ Law Nr. 111 / 2017 on State Guaranteed Free Legal Aid, can be accessed in the following link: <https://www.eurallus.eu/index.php/en/library/albanian-legislation?task=download.send&id=232&catid=21&m=0>

teachers would not take any measures to protect LGBTI adolescents from bullying and violence²¹.

Albania has several laws and policies in place to prevent and eliminate the discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in education, yet the authorities have taken no measures to make schools safe for LGBTI children and youth. During the last 4-5 years the Ministry of Education has not allowed any training of teachers on LGBTI rights or the organisation of information sessions for schools that are run as community centres, which is against national policies. PINK Embassy in 2023 initiated a national campaign “Safe Schools for LGBTI Children and Youth” aiming to change the policy of not speaking to children and young people on their sexual rights. In 2023 in a hearing of the Albanian Parliament (February 2024) the Ministry of Education reported that they have recorded more than 2000 cases of violence and bullying among children, without specifying on what grounds the violence took place. The Ministry doesn’t report and records cases of discrimination in the public education among teachers or students, which makes it difficult to have a clear overview of the discrimination on the grounds of SOGI.

2.8 Child and youth migrants

Albania, as many other countries in Europe, is faced with an increased number of migrant and refugee children. Although there is a government authority responsible for the management of all the issues related to refugees, apart from the Border Police, there is constant lack of care for children and youth who cross to Albania, mostly irregularly from Greece to Albania. CRCA/ECPAT Albania published a detailed report on the situation of child and youth migrants into Albania and found that during 2020-2023, at least 70 children and minors had disappeared from a care centre in Tirana, while the law required that the young migrants were provided such services in the municipality they crossed the border. Despite raising the alarm, the Government did not provide any answer on whereabouts of these children and youth.

Although the Law on Asylum guarantee equal rights to migrant children and youth, in practise this doesn’t happen. The Government has reported that a well-functioning Accommodation Centre has been established since few years near the main international airport in Tirana. CRCA accessed during 2023 the premises but the authorities made it clear that they do not host children and young people in this facility. As this is the only state-run accommodation centre is unclear to where children and youth are officially cared for, if at all.

²¹ Law no. 10221, dated 04.02.2010, "On Protection from Discrimination, Official Gazette No. 15, 25 February 2010, published in Official Publication Center, link: <https://www.kmd.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Law-on-Protection-from-Discrimination-Albania.-2020.pdf>

3. List of Recommendations

- **Albania should establish a national programme to support children and youth living in poverty** from kindergarten to higher education. Child and youth support schemes should take into consideration particular elements such as disability, belonging to deprived minorities or social groups.
- **Every child and young person should enjoy the right to safe schools. Public Education should be free from violence and discrimination.** The Ministry of Education must urgently address issue of violence, bullying and discrimination especially against disabled, Roma and LGBTIQ children and youth in all education institutions by developing a National Action Plan against Violence and Discrimination in Schools, including financial resources to address the shortcomings, introduction of safeguards and protocols for teachers and educators. Schools should be open for interacting and learning from their communities and CSO's.
- **Albania needs to openly and strongly support the work of the civil society organizations to inform and keep children and young people safer online**, while schools should be open for the CSO's contribution to address issues related to media literacy, online safety and respect, development of positive online skills and behaviours etc.
- **The Albanian Government has the duty to support and develop social care services for children and youth across the country, in cooperation with the Municipalities.** The Social fund shall be reformed to include CSO's as direct beneficiaries of state funds for social services delivery. This would help the child protection system to be able to provide a wider range of services for children and youth across the country.
- **Albanian Government needs to have a pro-active approach towards the respect for LGBTIQ rights for children and youth**, in all areas such as education, health, social protection, sports, culture, police and army, human rights education and promotion etc. Without Government leadership the authorities at national and local level would always find it difficult to fight societal and internalised phobias related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Particular attention shall be given to transgender children and youth, that often face discrimination from early childhood to their adulthood.
- **Access to free universal health care shall be guaranteed for every child and young person in Albania.** The Law on Public Health shall be urgently amended to address the current shortcomings.
- **The Ministry of Finances should establish detailed indicators at the national budget to measure the country's investment for children and youth.** No country can advance without providing proper investment to children and young people. This would further enhance the budget transparency and enable Albania to measure its public investments into children and youth.

- **Albania should apply new models of administration, restorative justice and diversion measures** in the spirit of the new Juvenile Justice Code and Law on the Rights of the Child. Particular attention shall be given to children and youth victims of crime, including their financial retribution and support. Financial support to all the CSOs that provide Free Legal Aid shall be guaranteed and increased by the Ministry of Justice, while well-funded programmes to support access to justice, victims protection and juvenile justice services shall be established.